Eleanor A. Dasi, Ndoubangar Tompte, "Entry on: Metamorphosis [Njeh bôlh je] by Losngar Nodjidoumngar", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/744. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Losngar Nodjidoumngar

Metamorphosis [Njeh bôlh je]

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	Metamorphosis [Njeh bôlh je]
Country of the First Edition	Chad
Original Language	Mbay Doba
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Chad
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	July 15, 2017
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Mbanga
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults + adults)
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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



Losngar Nodjidoumngar (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 60 (in 2018)

Social status: Married

Profession: Farmer

Language of narration: Mbay Doba

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com and Ndoubangar Tompte, University of Maroua, ndouwengartom3@yahoo.ca

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	Njeh bôlh je – Literary meaning: Metamorphosis.

Summary

In ancient times, the Mbanga people lived and interacted with animals and trees in their everyday activities. Among those people, there was a man called Bath, who could transform into an owl, a hippopotamus and a lion at the same time. One day, he discovered that another man in a far off tribe, called Mongh, had the herb that could give a person the power to transform into other creatures, just like his own plant did. The challenge for Bath now was how to get to Mongh's place and steal that herb. Bath transformed into an old, big and malicious owl and decided to fly to Mongh's village. He flew for hours upon hours before he arrived. On arrival he located the tree under which was found the powerful herb used by Mongh to help people transform into animals. The plant grew and interlaced into different branches around the tree, such that somebody could pick it easily. As the chief of his tribal clan, Mongh always sat under that tree to watch and protect the sacred plant. Members of the village traditional secret society would always sit around him to entertain him and share food with him. On that fateful day, as Mongh was busy entertaining his subjects, Bath flew down and quickly snatched a piece of that plant. Mongh raised his eyes into the tree and saw the owl holding the herb in its beak. Mongh yelled at the owl and condemned it for violating his home and immediately turned into a fox to go after the owl.

All the other members of Mongh's entourage turned into foxes and flew to attack the owl. The owl was faster than its attackers. They chased after the owl for hours upon hours and just when they were about to get hold of the owl, they realized that the owl was close to the river of its ancestors, the Pende river, and with the assistance of his own ancestors, the owl sank into it. The foxes had no hope of catching the owl, because they stayed on both sides of the Pende river expecting that the owl would come out. Rather, it transformed into a crocodile and then swam to the other end, then transformed into a human and ran to his home to plant the herb. From that time, the family of Bath (the owl) had the power to metamorphose more than before since they could now turn into any animal they wished. The family of Bath has become very powerful. It can henceforth decide to

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	travel anywhere in the region not as human beings but as lions. It suffices to cut that herb “Tâârh” and apply it to the human body and it is able to turn into any animal you like.
Analysis	Shapeshifting or the art of therianthropy in myths and legends abound in many world cultures. In African cultures the ability for humans to transform into animals was a common belief which is still alive among clan rulers and sorcerers. Usually, the clan rulers are thought to be able to take the form of either a lion or a tiger, which are considered symbols of royalty. The phenomenon is also common among the Bayangs of the South West Region of Cameroon where individuals have particular animals whose forms they can take at any time and with whom they share the same soul. Usually, the intentions of taking up animal shapes vary according to the whims of the individual; it may either be to cause some mischief, to dominate, to practice witchcraft on someone, or to revenge some evil deed. In the above myth, Bath’s intention of stealing the herb that enables therianthropy is simply motivated by the desire to grow strong in the art and assume supremacy over others.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Transformation
Further Reading	Scheub, Harold, *A Dictionary of African Mythology: The Mythmaker as Storyteller*, Oxford University Press, 2000. *The Deity of Umudike Kingdom*. Directed by Kester Onuigbo. Nigeria:

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Werner, Alice, “Totemism and Animal Stories” in *The Mythology of All Races*, vol. 7, Boston: Archaeological Institute of America, 1925, 271–290.

Addenda

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Editor: Daniel A. Nkemleke

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