

Benjamin Emeada

Why Humans and Animals Co-habit the Earth

Nigeria

TAGS: [African Mythologies](#) [African Storytelling](#) [African Traditions](#)



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Why Humans and Animals Co-habit the Earth
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	Nigeria
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	Nigeria
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database</i>	Nigeria
<i>Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Database</i>	October 15, 2018
<i>More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database</i>	Ada- Irri, in Isoko South Local Government, Delta State
<i>Genre</i>	Myths
<i>Target Audience</i>	Crossover (Young adults + adults)
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Creators



Benjamin Emeada (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 79 (in 2018)

Social status: An elder in the community

Profession: Retired school teacher

Language of narration: English

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: The Isoko people are found in the South East of Delta State in Nigeria. They are one of the smallest minority ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region*. They have two local government areas, Isoko North with the headquarters in Ozoro and Isoko South with the headquarters in Oleh. They are made up of nineteen clans. They are a peaceful people whose major occupations are farming, fishing and trading. They are believed to have originated from Benin. The Isoko people are mostly idol worshipers. They believe in the supreme creator and in ancestral spirits which are seen as god's messengers. They consult diviners over issues and also in fortifying themselves but majority of them are now Christians by virtue of the spread of Christianity.



Photograph of a typical village house in Ada-Irri, taken by the researcher, Franca Okumo.

* Source: nigeriagalleria.com (accessed: April 15, 2019).

Summary

When Oghene, the Supreme Being, created the earth and the Isoko people, his initial intention was for men to live forever. However, this idea was short-lived because the earth became overpopulated by animals which were also created by him. Due to this, there was a serious controversy between the animals and men. As they gathered to make deliberations as to the way forward, "toad" suggested that men should stay while the animals leave the earth but the "dog" contradicted the suggestions, so, they agreed that whoever gets to Oghene first in a race between the dog and the toad, will win. As they embarked on the race, the dog outran the toad. Realizing how far back the toad was, it decided to rest for a while and then it fell asleep. Surreptitiously, the toad passed by the dog and got to heaven first, where he met Oghene and tabled his point of view. Oghene who did not want to evict the animals then told the toad that he will not extinct them but will allow men to have control over them. Since then, man has been in control of the animals and the earth.

Analysis

The creation story has as many versions as there are cultures in the world. It attempts an explanation of how the world, together with its inhabitants (humans and animals alike) came into existence. These myths hold that everything on earth was created by a supreme being and for that reason, has a right to existence. That is why in the above myth, the question as to whether animals or humans should leave the earth for the other is not an issue for the creator. However, in the story, man is given dominion over the animals. Therefore, animals have accompanied humans in their civilization processes since ancient times, with man using the animals for a variety of purposes.

The story of the toad and the dog is a local variant of the Aesop's fable of the race between a fast and a slow animal – *The Turtle and the Hare*.

In all, the myth underscores the near indispensability of animals to humans, sharing the same physical and cultural space with them thus demonstrating the usefulness of all creation.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

[African Mythologies](#) [African Storytelling](#) [African Traditions](#)

[Animals Communication Invention](#)

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

Further Reading

Aesop, *The Hare and the Tortoise* [[Χελώνη και λαγώς](#)] (accessed: December 28, 2020).

[How Sickness, Old Age and Death Began](#) (accessed: December 28, 2020).

Matateyou, Emmanuel, *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon*, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1997.

[The Origin of Eternal Death](#) (accessed: December 28, 2020).

[Why People Die and Do Not Come Back](#) (accessed: December 28, 2020).

Addenda

Researcher: Franca Okumo

Method of data collection: Tape recording and writing

Editor: Daniel A. Nkemleke
