Ngek Emlah Norah, Dorcace Makodjou Poka, "Entry on: Awele and the Stranger by Ogbeh Peter Ogbeh", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1340. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Ogbeh Peter Ogbeh

Awele and the Stranger

Nigeria (2018)

TAGS: African Traditions Anagnorisis Oracles Prophecy



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

General information	
Title of the work	Awele and the Stranger
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Nigeria
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2018
First Edition Details	*Awele and the Stranger*. Directed by Ogbeh Peter Ogbeh, Media/Film Freelance, 2018, 188 min.
Genre	Fiction films, Motion picture
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Ngek Emlah Norah, University of Yaoundé, gentlenorah@gmail.com Dorcace Makodjou Poka, University of Yaoundé 1, dorcacepoka@gmail.com
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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



Ogbeh Peter Ogbeh (Director)

Ogbeh Peter Ogbeh is a Nollywood film director, actor and writer. He did his college education in Bolade Senior Grammar school in Oshodi Lagos State but moved to Oniwaya High School. He graduated in Directing and Theatrical Production from the University of Benin, Nigeria. He speaks English, Igbo, Yourba and Ika. He has directed many movies: *Eyes on the Throne*, *The voice of Silence* and *Strange* just to name a few. Currently he lives with his family in Winnipeg, Canada.

Source:

Profile at the LinkedIn (acccessed: August 30, 2021)

Bio prepared by Ngek Emlah Norah, University of Yaoundé, gentlenorah@gmail.com and Dorcace Makodjou Poka, University of Yaoundé 1, dorcacepoka@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

A long time ago, there lived a very powerful lady named Awele. She was an excellent hunter. In one of her hunting expeditions she stumbled across a path which led her to the kingdom of Anye. Upon arrival she came across Prince Azuka who was being attacked by a group of warriors. Awele immediately intervened and helped fight off the prince's assailants. Prince Azuka was grateful and brought Awele to the palace. King Ezewanyi of Anye immediately offered a part of his kingdom to Awele as a sign of his gratitude for helping prince Azuka. Awele went about familiarising herself with the kingdom of Anye. Meanwhile an upcoming *Ani* (deity) festival, celebrated every fourth year, was imminent. The priestess of Anye hurriedly informed King Ezewanyi that the goddess had chosen Awele as the daughter of Ani for the upcoming festival. The king, in turn, summoned Awele to the palace and acquainted her with the news, and specified that her role was to sanctify and rid the kingdom of Anye of any evil which must be cast into the Obalidim river. To prepare for this task, Awele was required to spend two weeks with the priestess of Anye, for thorough purification and fortification, as the festival required human sacrifice to save the inhabitants of Anye.

Incidentally, Awele rescued a male stranger named Obinze, from a stream in Anye. The maidens attending to Awele were of the opinion that the rescued stranger should be one of those to be sacrificed to the gods during the Ani festival. Awele would rather hide the stranger in her hut and look after him until he recovered from the injuries he sustained. The stranger expressed the wish to return to his village but Awele warned him about the risk of being seen escaping from Anye during such a perilous moment. Some intimacy was already palpable between the two. Finally, Awele was taken to the Obalidim river where she was officially inducted to become the daughter of Ani. Upon returning home however, she discovered that Obinze was not in the hut. Annoyed by this, Awele mounted a search and eventually located Obinze before he had the chance to leave Anye. In the meantime, Ihouma, one of the maids had sensed the intimacy between Awele and Obinze and as a result had started treating Awele with contempt, to the extent that she had to go on self-exile. When Awele was taken to Obalidim river for the final ritual, a mysterious fire appeared in the calabash containing the concoction prepared for Ani. This meant that Ani was angry with the presence of a stranger in Anye. The king of Anye on the recommendations of the priestess immediately ordered

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the guards to search every nook and cranny for the stranger within Anye. Failure to find the stranger would have meant that the crops would wither, streams would dry up and the entire kingdom would be plagued by many ailments.

Nkwaleago and Olanna, Awele's maidens, suspected that the stranger in question must have been Obinze and that Ihouma's knowledge of it might have prompted herself exile. To salvage the situation, Awele journeyed to Unwei to seek help from the great Dibia. Dibia rather told her that the whole village must consent to her quest. Frustrated, Awele returned to Anye, only to discover that Obinze had been arrested and taken to the palace. The priestess decreed that Obinze would be sacrificed while Awele would be decapitated in three days. Curiously, Ani who has never rejected a human sacrifice before, unless the intended sacrifice was an inhabitant of Anye, rejected Obinze as sacrifice. This necessitated an investigation into the true identity of Obinze. Obinze was forced to call on Isoma, his mother, who acknowledged having given birth to twins (a boy and a girl) and saved them by sending them out of the village, not without giving the girl a mark. At that moment, Awele lifted her dress and discovered that she had the mark and that she was indeed Obinze's twin sister. At this revelation, king Ezenwanyi and the priestess were terrified as they vividly remembered that Obinze and Awele were the twins born twenty-seven years earlier to the Anabewele family, but rejected by Anye. The birth of the twins, it had been prophesied, would orchestrate a traditional rebellion against the King of Anye. The king decreed that the twins must be terminated and ordered that they should be locked up. However, prince Azuka released them and when the king learned of it, he became furious and faced the prince with a ferociously sharp blade but the queen intervened and stabbed the king from behind and he dropped dead. Awele rejoiced with Prince Azuka who was crowned king. He also reinstated some elders in the council of elders who had been evicted by the late king. To instill lasting peace in Anye, Awele recommended and King Azuka, after consulting with elders, decreed into law that human sacrifices be abolished throughout Anye. But for this to take effect, the Dibia of Unwie had to be consulted and sacrifices offered. The Dibia confided in Awele that the sacrifice would be enormous. Awele proposed sheep, cows, and fowls for sacrifice but the Dibia turned them down. Awele paid the ultimate sacrifice by offering herself to be sacrificed. Satisfied, the Dibia handed Awele a black clay which she handed over to king Azuka. King Azuka took the pot to Ani's shrine and performed incantations in

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the name of their god, Obiligwe. After that, he broke the clay pot at the centre of the shrine and Awele proclaimed a new dawn in the land, before dropping dead. The kingdom of Anye lived in peace from then onwards.

Analysis

Oracles in the Igbo culture, as well as in most other African cultures, are intermediaries through which deities pass to deliver prophecies to the people. These prophecies are believed to invariably come to pass; no matter what man does to avert them. In the discussed movie, the deity had prophesied the birth of twins who would begin a rebellion against the King of Anye. Despite the King's attempt to separate the twins (Awele and Obinze) at birth; and to exile them from Anye, they were finally reunited and this effectively ushered in a rebellion against King Ezewanyi. The movie shows the helplessness of man in the hands of the gods. According to the movie, in spite of humans' efforts, what the gods have planned and revealed in prophecy will come true!

Furthermore, the issue of sacrifices is not an unusual phenomenon in the Igbo culture. It is believed that sacrifices to the gods help either to appease them or to ward off doom threatening the life of the person or community who makes the sacrifice. In extreme cases, a human sacrifice is performed. Even though human sacrifices are not practiced anymore, in the distant past, they were believed to be effective in extreme cases in the Igbo culture when a village had to be cleansed or a serious request had to be granted by the gods. Also, a king would be buried with his servant in order for him to serve the king in the other world. (see Ilori 2016)*. In the myth above, in order for the gods to authorize that human sacrifices should be abolished, Awele sacrificed herself, and consequently the request is granted.

The motif of the inevitability of fate and fulfillment of prophecies present in the movie resembles Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* which describes Oedipus' attempt to avert his fate prophesied by the oracle (killing his father and marrying his mother). Despite all his efforts, he finally unknowingly fulfills the prophecy.

* Similar stories may be found in Yoruba culture of Nigeria. For example, see: Wole Soyinka, *Death of the King's Horseman*, New York: Norton, 1975. In this play the king is buried with his servant so that

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	he may serve him in the other world.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Traditions Anagnorisis Oracles Prophecy
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Prediction/prophecy Sacrifice Siblings Tradition Twins
Further Reading	Ilori, Oluwakemi Atanda, *The Theatre of Wole Soyinka: Inside the Liminal World of Myth, Ritual and Postcoloniality,* Diss. University of Leeds, 2016. Soyinka, Wole, *Death of the King's Horseman*, New York: Norton, 1975.
Addenda	**Cast:** Ewewanyi: Ebere Okoro, Ezeani: Sam Obiagu, Awele: Belinda Effah, Obinze: Jerry W.

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