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Joël Ebouémé Bognomo

A Wonderful Grandmother [Une Merveilleuse Grand-Mère]

Cameroon (2002)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions



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

General information	
Title of the work	A Wonderful Grandmother [Une Merveilleuse Grand-Mère]
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	French
First Edition Date	2002
First Edition Details	Joël Ebouémé Bognomo, *Une Merveilleuse Grand-Mère*. Yaoundé: Éditions Akoma Mba, 2002, 26 pp. [non paginé].
ISBN	9789956100095
Genre	Fiction, Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (8+)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Creators



Joël Ebouémé Bognomo (Author)

Joël Ebouémé Bognomo is a Cameroonian author and works with the International Board of Books for Young People. He also collaborates with the Akoma Mba publishing house. Apart from *A Wonderful Grandmother*, he has also written and published other children's books titled *Madoulina: A Girl who Wanted to go to School* (1999) and *And What Had to Happen, Happened* (2021).

Source:

frankfurtrights.com (accessed: May9, 2022).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Summary

Nondo is a ten-year-old orphan who has been adopted by his grandmother Balacia. She treats him like a baby and insists on bathing him. They are always together, and she always finds something to occupy them like peeling vegetables and deshelling groundnuts. When the weather is bright, they go to the farm across the river. Nondo is very afraid each time they cross the river because his parents got drowned in it. This river is situated in the heart of the Bambua village and legend has it that a crab is at its origin. This crab vomits water at all seasons and only sorcerers can see it. Sacrifices are offered to it once every harvesting season.

At 65, grandmother Balacia is still very physically strong. She resists the heat of the sun when it is overhead and is determined to finish work on a carved-out portion of the farm. When Nondo gets tired, she asks him to roast cassava tubers for snacks. He uses the opportunity to frighten away birds and monkeys from the groundnut farm. Then he hunts for crickets, caterpillars, birds and rat moles with which to eat the roasted cassava.

Once Nondo wounded his leg, his grandmoter harvested some leaves and squeezed their juice into the wound. The wound would later scar off. She also teaches Nondo how to treat a wasp sting.

On the eve of market days, they prepare petty merchandise to sell. Amongst these is usually cooked cassava paste wrapped in leaves in the shape of cord-like sticks. Those that are not neatly wrapped; those wrapped by Nondo, are reserved for the house. They eat their evening meal and go to sleep on their bamboo beds. At night, Nondo dreams that he has grown big, strong and hardworking. Grandma is by his side, but she can no longer work. She smiles down at him and says, “you are now a man. I’m proud of you” (24).

Analysis

In many world societies, the role of grandmothers cannot be overemphasized. They usually have a close connection with their grandchildren. In African societies particularly, grandmothers play the role of nurturer, mentor, historian, role model, disciplinarian and cultural custodian. Grandma Balacia in the story is all of these. Orphaned, Nondo is adopted and tended by her. She trains him in

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culinary, farming and herbal skills of the land. In addition, Nondo is also equipped with cultural knowledge by way of the stories of the land and the myths of the people, for example, that are associated with the river Bambua. This knowledge does not only give Nondo a sense of place and belonging but also arms him to face the world as projected in his dream.

Again, in most African societies, taking care of family is a cycle. When parents raise children, these children are expected to take care of them when they are old, weak and inapt. Nondo respects this cycle by projecting himself grown up, hardworking and taking care of Grandma Balacia who is now unable to work but who is nonetheless proud of having raised a strong and hardworking young man.

The illustrations are vivid and give an insight into the relationship between the grandmother and her grandson while at the same time offering a panoramic view of the home, the landscape and the activities of Grandma Balacia and Nondo.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Family Knowledge Learning Orphans Tradition

Further Reading

Ntarangwi, Mwenda, "Introduction: Parents' Involvement in Children's Lives in Africa", *Africa Development / Afrique Et Développement* 37.3 (2012): 1–18 (accessed: May 9, 2022).

Whyte, Susan R., et al., "Lifetimes Intertwined: African Grandparents and Grandchildren", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 74.1 (2004): 1–5 (accessed: May 9, 2022).

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