Marie Charlaine Afuh Douovour, "Entry on: The Myth of Etarunyarha by Egbe Ifie", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Eleanor A. Dasi and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/160. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Egbe Ifie

The Myth of Etarunyarha

Nigeria (1999)

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es)



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General information	
Title of the work	The Myth of Etarunyarha
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Nigeria
First Edition Date	1999
First Edition Details	Egbe Ifie, *Marriage with Gods and Goddesses*: *In Classical and African Myths*. Ibadan: End-time Publishing House Ltd, 1999, 199 pp.
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	1999 (date of publication of the book from which the story was summarised)
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Delta region, Nigeria
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults + adults)
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Creators



Egbe Ifie (Author)

Egbe Ifie was a teacher of Classical Mythology and African Cultures in the University of Ibadan, where he taught for several years. He is the author of several books, including on mythology. His date of birth is not available. He died some years ago.

Bio prepared by Carine Fonyuy, University of Yaoundé 1, lifotercarine@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	Background: See here

Summary

The original version of this myth appears in Egbe Ifie's *Marriage with Gods and Goddesses*: *In Classical and African Myths* published by End-time Publishing House Ltd, Ibadan, 1999: pp. 34–35. This is a summary of the myth. The full text can be read in the book cited above.

Etarunyarha and his wife virtually subsisted on good men's charity. One day, as Etarunyarha was strolling on the sandy bank of the river, thinking of how to bring his family out of poverty, he came across a lady who introduced herself as the daughter of King Ovie of Ewu. Rumours held it that the latter had left her husband in town, suspecting him of sacrificing their son. In their discussion, the woman told Etarunyarha that she could help him out of his abject poverty. The desperate fisherman made a deal with his Samaritan who gave him a set of instructions to follow accurately. She spoke to him in these words:

> "Raise and neatly dress an altar on the river bank on which you will keep a plate with coins and lay a lantern to maintain the flame of the light."

The stage was soon set for prosperity. Etarunyarha had to respect a few additional rules like avoiding sexual intercourse on holy days during which he welcomed his spiritual soul mate, Edewo. In addition, he had to manifest his heart of gold towards the poor, avoid big-headedness, and keep the secret of his wealth untold. Soon, the man started reaping the fruits of his obedience to the cult. His business was flourishing as all his stocks of merchandise got sold out. He was grateful and happy.

Unfortunately for Etarunyarha, time made the weight of his secret heavier. On some sacred nights, he visited his wife to wipe suspicion off her mind. Further, he was led to temptation by a divine creature that aroused his desire. In the meantime, Edewo, his spiritual mate, was bearing grudges against her protégé because of his disloyalty. Her jealousy and anger grew over time. But still Etarunyarha was

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	transgressing the rules of the deal. One evening, Uko, his wife, offered rotten foodstuffs to a wretched old man, defying her husband's instructions to take care of the old and needy. This last straw broke the camel's back. She triggered a deluge of losses in Etarunyarha's business till he became poorer than before. Then one night, a wave suddenly wiped out the altar the fisherman had raised on the bank of the river. Today, there is deep area between the towns of Orere and Ogoda, believed to have been Etarunyarha's home before he was deserted by the spiritual mate (water nymph).
Analysis	Abandonment is a universal theme in most world myths. In this myth, like in most riverine myths in Nigeria, it results from the breaking of a secret covenant between Etarunyarha (the mythic hero) and his spiritual mate, Edewo. The consequence is restoring the protagonist to his original state of lack. In other related myths of abandonment in Africa, the protagonist ends up as an outcast in his society, or a center of attraction, whose joy is usually short-lived, as the other partner continues to cast spells on him or her to inflict vengeance. A case in point is the mistreatment meted out to Ihuoma, the heroine of *The Concubine*, by the Nigerian novelist, Elechi Amadi. In the novel, the Sea King, who is Ihuoma's husband, punishes by death or diseases all men who had contacts with her. She ends up living a tragic life on earth as a result of abandoning the Sea King.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es)
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adversity Emotions Obedience Punishment Relationships Religious beliefs

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Further Reading

Elechi Amadi, *The Concubine*, Heinemann, 1966.

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