Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Kwasi Benefo by Clyde W. Ford", peer-reviewed by Courage Yaah and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/178. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Clyde W. Ford

Kwasi Benefo

United States (1999)

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Underworld





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

General information	
Title of the work	Kwasi Benefo
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Ghana
Original Language	Unknown, but presumably the local Asante/Ashanti
First Edition Date	1999
First Edition Details	Clyde W. Ford, *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa*. New York: Bantam Books, 1999, 227 pp.
ISBN	0553105442
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	1999 (date of publication of the book from which the story was summarised)
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemelekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Clyde W. Ford (Author)

Clyde W. Ford is African-American native of New York City. He is the author of three other books: *Where Healing Waters Meet: Touching Mind and Emotion Through the Body* (1989); *Compassionate Touch: The Body's Role in Healing and Recovery* (1993) and *We CAN All Get Along: 50 Steps You Can Take to Help End Racism* (1993). As a prominent guest speaker on American TV, he has taken part in more than 150 TV shows. He has written numerous articles in journals and newspapers. For more on Ford see here (accessed: July 3, 2018).

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Date and place of collection: Unknown. However, Clyde Ford states in the Preface to his book that "the myths in this book come from numerous sources, principally from the published transcriptions and translations of missionaries, ethnographers, and anthropologists" (p. xiii).

Cultural Background*: Ashanti

The Ashanti tribe of central Ghana is the largest tribe in the West African rainforest. They are fierce fighters who are known by their slogan, "If I go forward I die, If I go backward I die, Better go forward and die" (see source here, accessed: July 9, 2019). The Ashantis place more value on the mother's clan than the father's and their religion is a mixture of spiritual and supernatural powers; with the belief in fairies, monsters, and the strongly held belief that plants, animals and trees have souls. Communal living is practiced by every member of the Ashanti tribe.

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* Sources:

Ashanti People Traditions & Culture, africancraftsmarket.com (accessed: July 9, 2019).

The Ashanti Region, ghanaweb.com (accessed: July 9, 2019).

Summary

The full text of this myth is found in: *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa* by Clyde W. Ford, in the United States and Canada by Bantam Books, 1999, pp. 21–27). This is only a brief summary of the story. The full text of the myth and others can be read in the book cited above.

Kwasi Benefo, a young Asante man in Ghana, by dint of hard work has acquired a lot of wealth but is unable to find a wife and have children. Finally, after a long search all over the village, he finds a lovely wife. They quickly get married and begin to enjoy a blissful matrimony. Unfortunately, Kwasi's joy is blighted by the sudden death of his wife, who had not even been pregnant for him. Heart-broken, Benefo buys

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an *amoasie** and buries her. Then after a long period of mourning, he is comforted by his family and persuaded to take another wife. He assents but decides to get a new wife from a different village hoping to avoid the calamity that had befallen him in his own village. But the same fate befalls him. His relatives try and are unable to comfort him this time around. The family of the deceased wife offer him one of their daughters again, to replace the dead one. He accepts and just before he starts enjoying this new marriage, death snatches his new wife away. He buries her with the same ritual and items as the others. After a long period of mourning, his family succeeds in convincing him to take a fourth wife. She lasts a bit longer and even bears him a son. But one day, news comes of the death of the fourth wife to Kwasi in the farm: a tree had fallen on her as she returned from a journey. Utterly grief-stricken, Kwasi takes his son to his mother's people, leaves him there and retires to some distant forest. After several years, he leaves the forest and starts a new normal life in another village, living all by himself. Then he has a strange dream directing him to *Asamanda* the land of the dead where the spirits of his dead wives reside. Upon waking, he embarks on the journey, passing through a dark forest to the bank of a deep river. As he thinks of how to cross, an old woman Amokye appears at the far end of the river bearing a brass pan containing beads and *amoasies* – handed to her by the recently dead before crossing the river to the land of the dead. She asks Kwasi what has brought him to these distant parts and Kwasi tells her he has come to look for his dead wives. She tells him he cannot be allowed to cross the river alive, so Kwasi promises to stay there until death. Moved to pity, she lowers the tides of the river and Kwasi is able to cross. Kwasi's wives come to him with food and water but he can only hear their voices since they are spirits. They promise to show themselves to him when he dies. They promise to help him regain his life again in the land of the living. Kwasi then falls into a deep sleep and later wakes in the forest on the other side of the river. He returns home, gets married and lives a long and happy life with his new wife.

* A piece of silk-cotton cloth to cover her genitals, and beads to go around the waist.

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Analysis	Sometimes, misfortune befalls humans without any just cause. It is believes that such unfortunate events happen to test our commitments, and expose us to some other realities like the afterlife. Kwasi Benefo loses his wives not because he was evil but probably because he had been destined to experience the underworld, through his firmness and love, before ever making his final departure to it. This journey into the underworld is often provoked either by a quest for an object of desire, the quest for knowledge, or the quest for divine power. The phenomenon of journeying to the underworld is known in many mythologies and folktales. The myth is an illustration of the test of love, patience and endurance, which are virtues encouraged in young people.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Underworld
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Emotions Family Journeys Loss Love
Further Reading	Egbe Ifie, *Marriage with Gods and Goddesses: In Classical and African Myths*, Ibadan: End-Time, 1999.

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