Marcelle Roseline Akamba, "Entry on: The Faces of Gold [Les visages de l'or] by Baba Aoudou Hervé ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/206. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Baba Aoudou Hervé

The Faces of Gold [Les visages de l'or]

Cameroon (2015)

TAGS: African Traditions Hero(es)



Courtesy of Ifrikiya, publisher.

General information	
Title of the work	The Faces of Gold [Les visages de l'or]
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon; perhaps other French-speaking Central African countries
Original Language	French
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Baba Aoudou Hervé, *Les visages de l'or*. Yaoundé: IIfrikiya, 2015, 60 pp. (paperback)
ISBN	9789956479634
Genre	Didactic fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Baba Aoudou Hervé , b. 1972
(Author)

Baba Aoudou Hervé is a Cameroonian novelist. Despite his intense professional activities at the Ministry of Finance where he works, he still finds time to write about the things that are happening in his society. *Les visages de l'or* is his second novel after *Ville morte* published in 2011. *Ville morte* is however not a children's story book, but it highlights the political problems that affected Cameroon in the early 90s, which indirectly had a negative impact on children.

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Additional information

Summary

The novel opens with a question contained in the first chapter. This question is: what is gold? Ndinga, the main character, is a peasant farmer of forty years, who ended his studies at Primary School. One morning, he took game he had killed for sale at the Sub Divisional Officer's residence. Ndinga has never set foot in the Sub Divisional Officer's house, which has the reputation as the most beautiful place in the village. The Sub Divisional Officer buys his hedgehog at 3,000 franc CFA (approx. 6 USD). On his way home, Ndinga keeps thinking of the beauty of his landlord's residence, something he only hopes to possess one day. This landlord is rich and powerful, but Ndinga is just a single (unmarried) poor person. He lives in a cabin. All these images haunt him and he decides that the time has come for him to change his life. He must have money too! But how? After a few days of reflection, he considers gold activity. There has been gold in the village ever since and people have been extracting it using crude instruments and in a very limited way. Ndinga sets up a dynamic team to meet the challenge to extract the largest amount of gold ever in the whole of this district. He gathers some of his peasant friends among whom are: Kombo, his old friend; Kaigama, the younger friend; Golike, the former civil servant; Zangué, the wife of Kombo and Azimi, a young woman. Ndinga tells them about his big project and they all hope to get rich. The work of digging gold is familiar to them. There is a river in the village called Zoéguéné which is associated with village superstition. It is said everywhere that it is a mystical river, and therefore the hideout of witches. It is also known as a cleansing river. The job of digging gold that Ndinga and his team are engaged in will destroy the harmony, the sacredness and the beauty of this river. But they prefer not to give any serious thought to this danger. On their way to this adventure, they are confronted with the question of the evolution of man. This evolution is a real drama according to Kombo since man evolves in the opposite direction. Wisdom is necessary but the problem is that it is acquired with age. This means that once we are old we will not have the vigour to put our experience into practice. The conversation of the group is prolonged in the hope that they will find a way out of their situation. Each member of the group dreams of his future, and of his plans. But Wanto returns from the farm and brings them back to reality. He is sceptical about their new project. He is sceptical about the ambition of peasant farmers to become rich through gold mining. And for these reasons, it is said that Wanto sees evil everywhere. Adults treat him as a scatter-brained, and for

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children, he is the idiot of the village. Besides, he has no wife.

Sunday is the day of rest for Ndinga and his group. In the village, there is the Protestant church left by the Americans, the strong Catholic Church with its social works, and the mosque, inheritance of the former Bororo nomads. Ndinga practices Christianity but in secret. He prefers to go to the bar* "pink shade" (Ombre Rose), where he orders a beer and discusses with one of his friends who complains of his position as a city councillor. After a few exchanges with Ndinga, this friend learns that when you have the money you also have the power. This is the reason why he embarks on this gold adventure. It is Monday! The work of gold-digging resumes. The gravel level is reached and the motor pump makes it possible for them to extract water from the hole. Zangué and Azimi wash the first stones, just to test. Ndinga is satisfied because the women have obtained a small portion of the gold. This quantity is nothing yet, but it bodes well. In the evening Ndinga goes to a gold collector to sell the few sequins obtained during the day. But the collector buys it at a very low price. Days pass and Ndinga and his companions continue digging. The hole has become very deep because of the rain of the day before flooded it. Ndinga goes to borrow two motor pumps to accelerate the extraction of water. Several people come to help. But a good part of the land sags and pours on the crowd in the hole, seventeen meters deep. Everyone comes out except Konga, a young woman, who had come to lend a helping hand. She dies instantly. Two years have gone by. Ndinga and his companions had multiplied the worksites but without much success. Today their determination is even stronger despite the numerous setbacks. CAPAM** is organizing a meeting with the gold miners. The state wishes to supervise and organise a gold activity in the area and this appears to be good news for Ndinga and his mates. CAPAM begins to implement its task in the village by asphalting the road. This revives the hopes and ambitions of Ndinga and his group, who are becoming famous in the village and the entire sub District. Everyone, including the Sub Divisional Officer, goes to the construction site to witness its evolution. Even Wanto does so, too. A journalist from the capital city comes to report on the gold of Betare-Oya, and Ndinga is chosen as a guide. He is very happy. He feels important. But there is still much to do at the mine. The prospect of reaching the goal soon galvanises them. Ndinga wants a nice house, a car and above all to be respected. Kombo would like his children to go to school, and further their studies. Income-generating activities are created around the site. When the evening comes, the workers return

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and the two guards arrive earlier and set to keep watch. Ndinga and Kombo leave last. There is hardly anything left to do. They guess that in two days the gold will come out of the ground. The rain falls all night, almost a deluge. In the early morning, the two guards come to announce bad news to Ndinga: the mine is completely flooded and landslide has plugged all the holes. The work is lost forever after three years of effort. The whole village goes to the mine site, and Wanto passes by Ndinga and his companions without saying a word. The presence of Wanto recalls the curse of gold. In the end, his comments are mocking. Ten years after Wanto tells the story of Ndinga to the little children he likes to gather around him. Azimi is married and has several children; while, Kombo and Zangué are now successful producers of yams. Kaigama works with CAPAM; whereas, Goliké teaches at the Protestant school. Ndinga is an independent pastor***. He preaches the good news from one village to another. Wanto concludes by telling the children that everyone has his gold, and this gold is in each of us.

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* A place for alcohol drinking.

** A local mining company.

*** In recent years, many Cameroonians have taken up evangelism as careers, because they make money out of it. Generally, individual would form their own churches and be independent pastors.

Analysis

The story of Ndinga emphasizes the values of perseverance, courage, hard work and determination, which are universal motifs associated with success in any endeavour. One lost opportunity is not the end of life. Ndinga's gold project fails, but he finds a way to occupy himself by becoming a successful evangelist - every human being is endowed with an innate potential (a gold, a germ) which, when exploited, can help them overcome difficult situations and emerge as heroes.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

African Traditions Hero(es)

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Desires Heroism Intellect Invention Religious beliefs Success and failure
Further Reading	Reynolds, Richard, *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology*, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.
Addenda	Note that *The Faces of Gold* is not an official translation since the book exists only in French

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