Nancy Tata Kinyuy, "Entry on: Zoba and his Gang by Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo", 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/209. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo

Zoba and his Gang

Nigeria (2009)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions



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

General information	
Title of the work	Zoba and his Gang
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon; Nigeria
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2009
First Edition Details	Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, *Zoba and his Gang*. Lagos: Lantern books, 2009, 57 pp.
ISBN	9789788198260
Genre	Graphic novels, Novellas
Target Audience	Children
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Creators



Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo (Author)

Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo is one of Nigeria's leading female authors: a novelist, an essayist, an oral artist, a critic etc. She holds a PhD in literature from the University of Ibadan and has travelled extensively in Africa, Europe and the United States. She has adapted features of Nigerian folklore to write about contemporary issues affecting children in post-independent Nigeria. She has written five novels, more than a dozen children's books, two plays and three collections of poems. Her trilogy, *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), *House of Symbols* (2001), and *Children of the Eagle* (2002) focuses on the identity of the Igbo (in Nigerian) woman in the traditional society. The major concerns in her collection of children's stories is kids' adventures, the problems of children upbringing, child abuse, child trafficking, human rights, the conflicts between children and parents in an increasingly urban environment etc. Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's works have earned her several awards including the WORDDOC short story prize in 1994, ANA spectrum prize (2001), Zulu Sofola prize (2002) for women writers, Flora Nwapa prize (2003) etc.

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Additional information

Summary

The story opens with Zoba, the protagonist, standing in front of his family house and watching some group of boys of his age play football. He longs to play with them but he cannot because his mother wants him to sell vegetables to his neighbours and to carry some around from house to house for sale. Zoba, his mother and two sisters live in a village called Koko, his mother is a trader and his father was a fisherman and a painter before he died. Zoba's suffering began after his father's death.

Another day comes and some boys are playing football at the playground in front of Zoba's family house again. He sees one of the boy scores a goal and his team shouts with joy. Zoba shouts too and his mother calls from inside the house if he has forgotten that he has to sell vegetables. Zoba looks at the basin of vegetables and frowns and tells his mother that he wants to go back to school. His mother tells him that she is sorry that she hasn't got money to send him to school. His sisters come up with the suggestion that their mother should go and ask Chief Like, the village head and friend of their late father, to help them, since their father died painting the town hall, and he was not even paid for doing that job. But his mother refutes the idea, telling them that the chief and the people had forgotten about them long ago.

Zoba goes to sell the vegetables. He walks past the playground and gets to a house with cracked walls and stops to see his friend, Ahmed. Zoba asks his friend about school and he says he is not in school because his uncle stopped him so that he can take him to the streets where he begs for alms. Zoba asks Ahmed to meet him at their home tonight. The two boys meet at 8. p.m at the back of Zoba's family house and Zoba asks Ahmed if he wants to go to school, and that he has a plan that can help then return to school. They all agree on a day to work out the plan and decide to include Deji, one of their friends. At the appointed day, the three boys get into Zoba's family house. Zoba brings out a tin of paint from the store and they carry it to the top of a tree, and a person passes under that tree, they drop the red paint on them. The victims usually run away with great fear. For one week the three boys splash paint on people in different parts of Koko, and the people live in fear. Many people stop going out at night or stay out late. The people report the matter to the village chief and he is very worried.

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One day, the three boys ask to see Chief Like. They tell him that they know what is going on in the village and they also know what can be done about it. The chief is so anxious to listen to them. They tell him that they all had dreams about the situation. Zoba starts with his own dream. He says in his dream, he saw an old woman and she asked him to tell the chief that Koko will suffer endless misfortune if he (the chief) continues to neglect the children of the village. He continues and says the old woman told him to tell the chief that no child should pay school fees in Koko.

Ahmed continues with his own dream. He says in his dream he heard a voice saying that Christians and Muslims in Koko must not fight or kill one another and that Christians and Muslims must work together for peace. Everyone will suffer if there is another religious riot*. The third boy, Deji, is asked by the chief to tell his own dream. He says in his dream he saw an angel spoke in a loud voice saying that all the people in Koko must fear God and work for peace. He also says the angel said that the Koko people must not use "juju"** or witchcraft to kill other people. If this practice is not stopped, there would be trouble in Koko. Chief Like thanks them and calls for a meeting of village elders to discuss the dreams of the three boys and also to discuss the way forward. After the meeting, the boys are proclaimed heroes. One of the resolutions of the meeting is that primary and secondary education is free in Koko and religious riots are banned.

Everybody is happy that the night attacks have stopped. No one ever finds out that the attackers were the three boys. Zoba's mother sends him and his sisters back to school. In the end, the boys are happy that their plan has finally worked and they are able to help not only themselves but also the children of Koko to have free education.

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* This is a reference to the frequent religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

** "Juju" refers to any frightful, masked individual that performs in certain traditional dances and events in most traditional communities in Cameroon. The concept is also common throughout English-speaking West Africa. Because "Juju" is often frightful in appearance, mentioned of it frightens children, and parents use this to keep children disciplined. Juju has also come to be associated with black magic and the practice of witchcraft in many local communities in

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	West Africa.
Analysis	The adventures of Zoba and his gang can be classified under trickster tales. In this light, the three boys can be considered trickster characters who break societal rules and create situations that will re-establish a new order. Such characters are usually young people, highly intelligent, mischievous and cunning, who use these attributes to survive the dangers and incongruities of the society. They are common in folklore and mythologies around the world. A prominent example in African orature can be seen in the character Anansi, originally from the Ashante in Ghana, but which has spread to other West African communities and the African diaspora. Some of these trickster figures have been employed as characters in cartoons watched by children the world over. Examples of these characters are Bugs Bunny, Robin Hood and Reynard the Fox and also some characters from various mythologies (Hermes, Loki). Children and young adults emulate the wisdom and cunning nature of these characters sometimes copy and use them to effect positive change in society just as Zoba and his companions do.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Character traits Child, children Coming of age Intellect Knowledge Learning Multiculturalism Prediction/prophecy School Society Sport Tricksters Values Violence
Further Reading	Hyde, Lewis, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art,* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. Ryan, Allan J., *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary*

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Native Art, Washington: University of Washington, 1999.

Addenda

We were unable to reach the owner of the copyright to the cover. We invite those who could facilitate such contact to communicate with the author of the entry Daniel A. Nkemleke at nkemlekedan@yahoo.com.

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