Nancy Tata Kinyuy, "Entry on: A Royal Turmoil by Ngwa J. Neba", 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/213. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Ngwa J. Neba

A Royal Turmoil

Cameroon (2005)

TAGS: African Traditions



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

General information	
Title of the work	A Royal Turmoil
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2005
First Edition Details	Ngwa J. Neba, *A Royal Turmoil*. Douala: ANUCAM Publishers, 2005, 157 pp. (paper back)
ISBN	995450006
Genre	Fiction, Magic realist fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
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Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Ngwa J. Neba , b. 1962

Ngwa J. Neba is a Cameroonian author who has also published the following books: *The Golden Arrow* (2000), *Manka'a* (2002), *The Farmer's Son* (2004) and *The Angler* (2004). Mr Neba currently lives in Cameroon and in a short telephone conversation with him, he said the main objective of his writing is to show that Africans have something of value to offer to the world.

Bio prepared by Nancy Tata Kinyuy, University of Yaoundé 1, tata.nancy@yahoo.com

Questionnaire

Mr Ngwa J. Neba presently lives in Limbe, Cameroon. In a telephone conversation with me*, he said he has written a number of books with the main goal of promoting African culture and values. He was glad to be told that his book is one of the entries for a database on young adults' literature across the world. He is committed to help collect children's books for our database, in the Anglophone part of the country he lives in.

* Date of interview and contact of the author: September 13, 2007 at 16:20 PM.

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Additional information

Summary

The novel begins with the Fon* startled by the noise that has awakened him from sleep: lightning, thunder and then a storm; things that are unusual in the dry season. Before this happens, he had a dream in which three of his wives (queens) left his presence and excrete on the path leading up to their houses. In the same dream, he saw the sacred tree of the village in flames and a voice from nowhere telling him to “cleanse the village”. All these led the Fon to the conclusion that all is not well in the village. In this state of uncertainty, he quickly summons his kingmakers** so that he can ask them to find out the curse that has befallen the village. Tabirh, the Fon’s most loved child while taking a nap in his office in the city, dreams and sees his father advising him to take care of everything when he has gone. To Tabirh, this is a sign of bad things to come. Not long after this, his father dies without leaving a Will and the struggle for succession to the throne begins. His half-brothers are already fighting for the property when their father has not been laid to rest. The burial arrangements are made and the Fon is finally buried. After the burial, his ghost keeps on appearing to Tabirh and giving him directives on how to keep things right in the palace. He is asked to go to the village in order to do what is to be done. This means that he is the one take over the throne. Following this instruction in a spiritual encounter, Tabirh comes back to the village and upon his arrival, he notices that many things have gone wrong after his father’s death. There is no unity between his late father’s many wives and children and some of these women are already giving gifts to some noblemen of the palace to lure them to choose one of their sons to inherit the throne, but this cannot be possible because Tabirh has been chosen by his father to take over the throne.

For Tabirh to fulfil his father’s wish that he comes back to the village and put things in order, he calls for a family meeting and tries to address all the problems he has noticed that are going wrong in the family. A day is set aside for the death ceremony of their father and all the necessary preparations are made for this event to be successful. As tradition demands the children must all go to consult the other Fons of the neighbouring villages, who have come to witness the death ceremony of their former colleague, concerning the suitability of the day and to know which of the noblemen of the palace will assist them throughout the ceremony? After this consultation, their father’s best friend is chosen amongst the nobles to assist them with this

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ceremony. Meanwhile, one of the notables, Tah Munewo, had begun to plot to have Mbanshe, Tabirh's half-brother, enthroned as the new Fon. He plans to bribe some of the queens who will now go and convince the Fons from the neighbouring villages to enthrone Mbanshe and not Tabirh, the rightful heir. After a while, Tah Munewo's wife calls him on the phone to find out how things are happening in the village. He explains to her how the last woman of the palace has made one of her sons to know that he is the heir to the throne and how the young man is already disposing of their father's property. This is, of course, not true.

In order for Tah Munewo to carry out his plans of bribing the queens to convince the Fons to crown Mbanshe as the successor, he goes to the village market square distant from the palace and sends a prince of about six years old to call for the queens. The queens come to the market square where he has been waiting for them. They discuss the matter and the three queens agree with him to go and convince the Fons, after collecting gifts from him. The three queens come together for a meeting to deliberate on how their late father's burial rites will be. The third and fourth wives leave the meeting after a quarrel with their children. The first wife of the late Fon is left alone. Few days before the crowning of the successor, there are strange happenings in the village. The secret tree of the village catches fire, a situation that has never happened in the village before. The Fons from the neighbouring village also have a dream that the late Fon excretes*** along the path leading to the houses of the three queens who had been sent to convince them to enthrone Mbanshe. It is later discovered by the noblemen that the three queens were being bribed by Tah Munewo, who has been doing everything for Mbanshe to become the successor because of his own selfish interest.

The negotiation for the day of the death celebration is successful and a day is set for the coronation of the new successor. According to the tradition, all male children of the late Fon have to stand on a line. From this line, a successor will be selected by a special person wearing a special mask. When the masquerade comes it dances around the male children who are standing on a line, and finally, Tabirth is snatched and taken to a sacred house signifying that he is going to be the successor. Tabirh is crowned by the Fons of the neighbouring village in attendance, in the midst of the villagers. After the coronation, the Fons ask what punishment they will give to Mbanshe for attempting to change the Will of the late Fon. Mbanshe says there is no need to banish him as his duty is to bring people

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together and not to separate them. Tah Mbanshe who was plotting with him decides to go on self-exile. Mbanshe tells his wives that it is better for him to go on exile alone than for the whole family to be banished. The Fons from the neighbouring village say “we have had more than enough bad moments to last the rest of our days here on earth” and to this, Tabirh, the newly enthroned Fon, replies “it was a royal turmoil”.

* A traditional title of a village chief in the North-West Region of Cameroon.

** These are members of the judiciary arm of the Fondom n the North-West Region of Cameroon.

*** This is a sign of disapproval according to the interpretation of the dream in the local community.

Analysis

The theme of succession is prevalent in many traditional societies in the world. This theme shows how power is being handed down from father to son, and the conspiracy that sometimes characterises such events. In African traditional set-ups, succession is by heredity; a dying king wills his heir, usually one of his sons, before he finally departs. Even with this knowledge, not every villager and/or sons are always satisfied with the king’s choice as heir. This often leads to attempts at either twisting the last testament or conspiring in one way or another to deprive the rightful heir of his position. In most cases, such conspiracies fail, probably due to the intervention of the gods or by the hand of fate.

A Royal Turmoil also highlights elements of sibling rivalry overpower – another predominant motif directly connected with succession. This sort of rivalry has existed since the dawn of time.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Traditions

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Justice Magic Parents (and children) Relationships Religious beliefs Siblings Society Tricksters
Further Reading	Omara, Tom, "The Exodus" in: *Short East African Plays in English*, David Cook & Miles Lee (eds). London: HEB, 1968, 46–66.
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 ANUCAM specializes in publishing school books of all disciplines, including literature for children and young adults. ANUCAM has branches in many towns in Cameroon.

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