Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Why The Sky and The Earth Are Apart by Matthew Ojongnsi", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Eleanor A. Dasi and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/454. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Matthew Ojongnsi

Why The Sky and The Earth Are Apart

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions





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

General information	
Title of the work	Why The Sky and The Earth Are Apart
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Pidgin English
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 17, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Eyumojock
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and adults)
Author of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com
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Creators



Matthew Ojongnsi (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 55 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Farming

Language of narration: Pidgin English

Bio prepared by Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: The Ejaghams of Manyu Division are found mainly in Eyumojock Sub-Division. The Ejaghams are of Bantu stock and probably migrated because of wars and the need for a peaceful settlement. A majority of their population is found in Cross-River state in Nigeria. They are also known as the Ekoi. Like many other tribes of this part of the globe, they believe in the supremacy of the ancestors whom they worship in cults. As a custom, they do not sell land to strangers and new comers in the belief that the land is owned by their ancestors (the first settlers) and they are simply heirs. They hold the Lake Ijagham as their sacred cradle. As an art, the people are good sculptors but their produce ends at the level of local consumption. Their main economic activity is fishing and farming (yams, maize, plantains) both for subsistent and commercial purposes. Some remote villages in the Ejagham tribe still practice female genital mutilation.

Occasion: Staged

Summary

Many years ago, when there were no trees on earth, there was an affable and visibly strong bond between Sky and Earth. They were fun of each other as the birds are to the trees. In fact, their interactions passed for a belief that they were bounded by the blood of a common pedigree. Though they both had large families, Sky had impeccably beautiful daughters with sky-like complexions while Earth had strikingly attractive sons, with muscles and fine brown skins. Since Sky and Earth were close, they allowed their children to curry favour with each other.

Among Sky’s beautiful daughters, was Arrah whose beauty was not only seemingly flawless, but she was also the first fruit of the Sky’s passionate and memorable courtship with his love, Moon. Earth too had so many sons, but was particularly fond of Ntefak, his eldest son. Ntefak was not only handsome, brave and strong, he was also romantic and intelligent. Ntefak found pleasure in Arrah and so began courting her.

After courting for some time, they decided to get married. At first, Sky didn’t want it because of his love for, and strong bond with his daughter, Arrah. However, because of his commitments to Earth, he

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accepted the marriage. He cautioned Earth and Ntefak to always make sure that his daughter was fairly treated like the princess she had been since her birth. Arrah and Ntefak got married in the magnificence of the sky and shortly after that, Ntefak brought his wife to his earthly dwelling. In order to make life better for his daughter, Sky decided to rain on the Earth to make it green and beautiful for the princess. This brought about many great forests and huge trees.

Not too long afterwards, the love between Arrah and Ntefak burnt out like wood into ashes and Ntefak began treating Arrah with much aloofness and resentment. Earth gradually grew so deaf to understand Arrah's frustration and this made Arrah to regularly cry out to her father for help. One day, while she was crying "Arrah! Arrah! Arrah!", her father heard her voice and felt the glooming desolation in her grief. He came down with precipitous lightning, but was stopped by the great trees and forests that depended on Earth for their survival. Sky tried again and again, but each time he stroke down in anger, he was always stopped by the tall giant trees. The trees then vowed that for them to continue to exist, they must never let Sky touch Earth. Out of frustration and disappointment, Sky took his dwelling further up, away from Earth and vowed never to come down to Earth again. But because he knew the princess was still on Earth, he kept raining from time to time to make life bearable and comfortable for her. That is why Sky and Earth are apart. That notwithstanding, the people still consider them as their principal deities.

Analysis

This myth exposes the African belief in communal living, precisely that of marriage as a union between two families, rather than two individuals. Hence, parents always dissuade their children from marrying out of their communities and people they do not approve of. Youths who think that their parents should have no say in their relationships, especially long term relationships such as marriage are warned of the consequences. It reveals the ephemeral nature of youthful passions and the ultimate tragedy that awaits those who keep their parents out of their lives. It also shows that in the African worldview, the bond of marriage is almost irrevocable and divorce is anathema.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adversity Conflict Emotions Family Love Nature Religious beliefs
Further Reading	*Why Moon and Sun Live in Sky* (accessed: December 07, 2020).
Addenda	Researcher: Daniel A. Nkemleke. Assistant Researcher: Julius Angwah. Method of data collection: Tape-recording. Editors: Divine Che Neba and Eleanor A. Dasi.

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