Clyde W. Ford

Miseke and Thunder Man

United States (1999)

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions





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General information	
Title of the work	Miseke and Thunder Man
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Tanzania
Original Language	Unknown
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)
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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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

Cultural Background*: Cultural Background: Tanzania, Chaga area, also known as Waschagga, Jagga, or Dschagga. The Chaga are located on the Kilimanjaro region in northern Tanzania and are ruled by Mangis (chiefs). They believe in their liberator, assistant, merciful and tolerance god, Ruwa (also the name for sun). Also, the Chaga belief that people live through their descendants. They have important ceremonies like the Ngasi (male initiation) and the Shija (female initiation). Links: Weber, Valerie, and Tom Pelnar, eds.Tanzania.Milwaukee: G. Stevens Children's Books, 1989.

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).

*Source:

Chagga, everyculture.com (accessed: May 29, 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.55–59). 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.

Among the Chaga people, a man called Kwisaba, goes to a distant war and leaves his pregnant wife alone at home. She falls so seriously ill that she cannot even make a fire to warm herself against the biting cold. Night soon falls and she is almost dying of cold. She desperately cries out for help but there is no one around. Then out of the cloud, amid rumbling, Thunder Man appears in front of her holding an axe and with a splash of lightning, quickly splits some wood and lights a fire for her. However, before leaving he makes her promise that if she gives birth to a girl, she will give her to him as a wife. The woman survives the cold and later gives birth to a beautiful girl called Miseke.

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Kwisaba returns home to the mixed blessing. So Kwisaba forbids Miseke to play outdoors for fear that Thunder Man might see her and seize her.

One day, she sneaks out and plays with her friends outside. As she plays, beautiful beads come out of her mouth mysteriously. Kwisab quickly understands that it is Thunder Man sending gifts to betroth his daughter. So Kwasiba gives firmer instructions for her to stay indoors. One day, Miseke, sneaks out of the house to join her friends at the river where there are digging white clay. All of a sudden, dark clouds gather and a voice is heard asking for Miseke. When she appears, Thunder Man seizes her and carries her off to the sky where they immediately get married.

Over time, Thunder Man proves to be a kind husband and Miseke is happy with him. They are blessed with three children: two boys and a girl. One day, Miseke persuades her husband to allow her and the children to descend to earth and visit her parents. He accepts and provides lots of cattle and beer as gifts for her parents, and carriers for her hammock as well. He however warns her to stay on the highway and avoid walking through hidden paths. Unfortunately, Miseke and her team stray from the highway and soon meet a monstrous beast called *Igikoko* on their way. *Igikoko* asks for food and Miseke orders his carriers to serve him with drinks. After drinking, he seizes the carriers and swallows them and later the cattle. He then asks for her children. In desperation, Miseke offers the baby boy and then the girl. As the beast is devouring the girl, she asks her surviving son to run to the village, find his grandparents or uncles and inform them of what is happening. The boy soon comes back with young men, who kill the beast with their spears. But before dying the beast tells them that if they cut off his big toe, all what it has eaten will be restored to them. They do so and all the children, carriers, cattle and drinks are restored. As they start feasting, Thunder Man again appears from the clouds and carries off his family and since then he has never allowed them to visit the earth again.

Analysis

It is a common phenomenon in African mythologies whereby the gods choose their wives among mortals. Most often, the gods save the family of their brides from some danger before revealing their intentions or making their claims. Thus, humans do not have the power to reject the demands of the gods. In the above myth,

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	Kwisaba's efforts to keep his daughter, Miseke, indoors were fruitless. Parallels to Thunder Man in the above myth can be found in the Igbo and Shango in the Yoruba cultures of Nigeria amongst others. These thunder gods were often referred to as the chief of the gods, and had dominion over the sky and earth.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Disobedience Family Girls Love Obedience Relationships Religious beliefs Supernatural creatures (non-classical)
Further Reading	Ford, Clyde W., *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa*, New York: Bantam Books, 1999. Scheub, Harold, *A Dictionary of African Mythology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

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