Eleanor A. Dasi, Adaobi Muo, "Entry on: Why the Human Back Has a Median Line by NzeUmeokwonna G.C. Ezechukwu", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/746. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

NzeUmeokwonna G.C. Ezechukwu

Why the Human Back Has a Median Line

Nigeria

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 Human Back Has a Median Line
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Nigeria
Original Language	Igbo
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Nigeria
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	June 30, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Igbo-Ukwu
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults + adults)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com Adaobi Muo, independent researcher, deskola2011@yahoo.com
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Creators



NzeUmeokwonna G.C. Ezechukwu (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 62 (in 2018)

Social status: Chairman NzeN'Ozo Ngo Village and Vice Chairman NzeN'OzoIgbo-Ukwu

Profession: Retired Principal Grade 3

Language of narration: Igbo

Bio prepared by Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com and Ada Muo, University of Lagos, deskola2011@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	Background: Igbo-Ukwu (see the entry) Occasion: Staged Performance

Summary

In ancient times, the world of humans and the world of the spirits were in close communion. Spirits visited human beings and human beings returned such visits. One day, a group of people visited the land of the spirits. The spirits welcomed them very well and entertained them with well-pounded foo-foo and bitter leaf soup, garnished with a lot of dried meat and fish. They ate to their fill. The spirits then served their visitors pots of fresh palm-wine. They drank and were merry. However, because the palm-wine was very sweet, the visitors could not stop drinking and soon some of them became drunk.

In their drunkenness, the people hurled acerbic insults on their hosts. The spirits were infuriated and decided to punish them for their impudence and ingratitude. When the human beings heard that resolution, they realized their mistake and became very afraid. Propelled by fear, they got up and began to run back to the land of the living. The spirits chased them as they ran and jumped across seas, jungles and hedges. As the human beings jumped over the last gully between the land of the living and spirits, the fastest of the spirits extended his hand and scratched the back of the last man giving him a deep mark that stretched from below the neck to the bottom of his back. He bore that mark till death and since then every human being has a groove at the back.

Analysis

The above myth accentuates the belief that the bond that had existed between the physical and spiritual realms was terminated due to the carelessness and immodest nature of humans, which also earned them permanent physical mark in the form of a median line.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs,

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Humanity Punishment Religious beliefs
Further Reading	Matateyou, Emmanuel, “Why the Thumb is Short'' in *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon*, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1997, 49–50. *Why the Thumb is Short* (accessed: January 4, 2021).
Addenda	Method of data collection: Note taking and tape recording Researchers: Adaobi Muo (trans.) Editor: Daniel A. Nkemleke

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