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Elechi Amadi

The Concubine

Nigeria (1966)

TAGS: African Traditions



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

General information	
Title of the work	The Concubine
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Nigeria
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1966
First Edition Details	Elechi Amadi, *The Concubine*. Heinemann, 1966, 216 pp.
ISBN	0434900250
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Age restriction 18+
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Creators



Elechi Amadi , 1934 - 2016
(Author)

Elechi Amadi is a famous Nigerian author. He studied physics and mathematics at Government College, Umuahia, and the University of Ibadan, and served in the Nigerian Federal Army (1963–1966, 1968–1969). In the field of education, he was a science teacher in the mission schools of Oba and Ahoadan from 1935 to 1963 and the Principal of Asa Grammar School in 1967. In public administration, he was Administrative Officer from 1970 to 1974 and Permanent Secretary from 1975 to 1983 in the government of Rivers State, Port Harcourt. At one time he was an employee of the Nigerian ministry of information. He is best known for novels such as *Concubine* (1966), *The Great Ponds* (1969), *The Slave* (1978), *Isiburu* (1973), *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), *Peppersoup and the Road to Ibadan* (1977), *Estrangement* (1986), and *The Woman of Calabar* (2002). In a moving tribute to him, Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka said the following: "a soldier and poet, captive of conscience, human solidarity and justice." He received the International Writers Program grant, University of Iowa, in 1973; and the Rivers State Silver Jubilee Merit award, in 1992.

Source:

Profile at biography.jrank.org (accessed: June 4, 2019).

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Additional information

Adaptations

Film adaptation: *The Concubine* has a film version that premiered in March 2007 in Abuja, Nigeria, directed by Andy Amenech.

Summary

Attention: +18 years

The story takes place in Omokachi, a small Nigerian village comprising eleven family groups, each family group occupies a cluster of compounds and every compound has a path bursting into the main road running across the village. Emenike lives at Omokachi and is married to Ihuoma, a beautiful woman from another village, known as Omigwe, who is admired by the entire community because of her exemplary character. They have three children.

Emenike has a disagreement with another man, Madume, over a piece of land which rightfully belongs to Emenike. This leads to a wrestling duel in which Emenike defeats Madume. Madume later challenges Emenike again and beats him so badly that he is bedridden with a terrible illness known as “Lock chest” illness. Emenike finally recovers after a long time but dies shortly afterwards.

Soon after Emenike’s demise, Madume starts expressing his love for the deceased rival’s wife openly. One day, he follows her from her way to the well to her house, in order to help her bring down the pot of water she is carrying. Madume brings down the pot from head before he could get closer to her. Disappointed, he turns to go but trips over a piece of hoe half-buried in the ground. This is a bad omen in the land. So, when Madume goes to Anyika, the *dibia*, he is told that some malicious spirits, including Emenike’s will destroy him.

Later on, Madume becomes blind when he tries to harvest plantains from the disputed piece of land he fought Emenike over. Despite the numerous sacrifices recommended by Anyika, the *dibia*, Madume still dies mysteriously.

After Madume’s death, Ekwueme, who is married to Ahurole, starts making love advances towards Ihuoma. Eventually Ihuoma gives in and they plan to get married. The gods are consulted and they reveal that Ihuoma is the wife of the King of the Sea, who took the form of a human against her husband’s will. However, because of his love for

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her, he would not harm her but would not spare any other man being her husband. According to Anyika, no sacrifice can appease the Sea King. Despite this stark warning, Ekwueme insists on marrying Ihuoma. They decide to seek the help of another *dibia*, called Agwoturumbe.

Agwoturumbe makes similar findings but claims he can appease the Sea King. He demands a piece of white cloth, a white hen, a bright red cock, seven ripe plantains, a brightly coloured male lizard and other smaller items for the sacrifice claiming that the Sea King is a proud spirit and likes very bright colours. He also says that the sacrifice will be carried out as carefully as possible and will have to be performed in a canoe by a river at mid-night after which the procession for the marriage would take place.

On the day of the sacrifice, the *dibia* arrives but realises that one item, the lizard, is missing from the items. Nwonna, the son of Ihuoma, goes to hunt it. Ekwueme is on his way out of the room where he and Ihuoma have been discussing the wedding when an arrow that had been shot by Nwonna misses a lizard and hits Ekwueme's lower belly instead. All Agwutorombe's efforts to save Ekwueme come to naught a little after midnight as the spirit of death knocks at the door.

Analysis

Attention: +18 years

Man's relationship with the supernatural world has most often been intriguing as his or her desires, many a time, conflict with those of the underworld. The trend is that the terrestrial being, in such competition, always meets his nemesis, since the supernatural being has an edge over him. Pain is borne at both ends, but the being in the lower rung feels it more. Glaring examples could be seen through some Amadi's male characters in *The Concubine*, who meet their demise after attempting to share the same wife with the Sea king. This phenomenon of a sea deity falling in love with an unwilling lady is known from many mythologies of traditional marine societies.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

African Traditions

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Magic powers Relationships Transformation
Further Reading	Isacc, Messiah, "Myth and Reality: A Study of Elechi Amadi's The Concubine", *Journal of Education and Research* 2 (2012): 119–123, available at citeseerx.ist.psu.edu (accessed: June 4, 2019). Onyejekwe, Ezioam Stephanie,*The Tragic and the Supernatural in Elechi Amadi's* The Concubine, Nsuka: University of Nigeria, 2016, available at repository.unn.edu.ng (accessed: June 4, 2019).
Addenda	Novel that portrays a society still ruled by traditional gods, offering a glimpse into the human relationships that such a society creates. First edition by Heinemann (1966): print (soft cover). On 26th February, 1991 Longman republished the text. Another edition was done in August 13th 2008 by Longman Publishing Group, and the most recent, Waveland Pr Inc (Reissue edition) (April 28, 2017).

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