

The Expression of Parenthood through the Oral Tradition of Storytelling

By

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Introduction

- What can we learn about parents/children relationship, particularly about the educational relationship?
- How can these relationships be conceived in a current changing environment?



Bwa people of Mali

- Demographic change : decrease of mortality rate = increase of the proportion of children in the population (40% in 1976, between 48 and 50% since the 1990s in the study area).
- School enrolment since the 1990s (50% today)
- Expansion of youth labour migration (90% of the women born after the mid-1970s)

Tales from Oral Tradition

- 1995 : Tales broadcasted by a private radio station in boomu language
- 39 tales about parenthood / 200





1/ The abused child ; the orphan // The spoiled child

- *hinbwe* (« die and return »)
- The abused orphan (ex. tale n°2, « Nyani »)
- Tale n°5 : Masira
- Tale n°22 : The orphan whose whole milk has been drunk
- The success of the orphan is thus a lesson of courage and perseverance, but orphans are also often faster and better educated than the others.




Initiatory scope of tales

- Tale n°15 : The Orphan
 - The girl is put to the test several times. She is separated from his comrades. She is subjected to extra chores including sorting seeds for which she is helped by ants. She is oriented on a bad road. She meets an old woman-jinn who asked her to wash her back, which she does willingly. In return, dressed and braided, she is ready to be married to the son of the chief. We only recommend him not to guffaw like a girl: she is a woman now.
- The orphan = the good girl



The spoiled child (tale n°30)

- “Father, what happens to me, I asked for it. Mother, what happens to me, I asked for it”.
- The end of the tantrums.
- Parents are not the best teachers for their children.



2/ The antisocial child, the "terrible" child, the disobedient child and the difficult girl // the obedient child

- Tale n°6 : The lazy girl
- The asocial girl finds a way to become an educated woman, through a test which is imposed.
- All disobedient children don't succeed in becoming educated.




- A disobedient child plays an educational role for his own father (tale n°39, “The rich man”).
- He finds his fallen father and introduces himself as wise and just, respectful of social rules and generation. He gives him a lesson of life, late but salutary.

The obedient child

- Jealousy of the father = immaturity
- Confidence of the child = success





3/ The child who is never afraid // The child who is too afraid

- Children with extraordinary powers = dangerous behaviour
- Tale n°26 : Excess is a family fault. The son is finally more reasonable than his mother.
- The child who is too afraid cannot become a man. But after to be put on test, he is strong enough to be one.



4/ The child who has too many qualities // the child who has too many faults

- The child who is too beautiful = source of misfortune

Conclusion

- The desire for children
- Pride
- Jealousy
- Denial that children grow
- How do tales echo back to current realities?
- Children's education, or parents' education?

