

Oluwagbemiga Ogboro-Cole

Mami Wata

Short Stories in Nigerian Pidgin English

ATHENA

Introduction

During the colonial era in Nigeria, both the missionaries and the elite considered Nigerian Pidgin English as a means of communication with a subversive undertone. The language was described as part of the ongoing passive resistance to colonial rule. There was a lot of prejudice against the language. The language was, in fact, classified ›Broken English‹, the term stuck to it. Surprisingly, today, the language has gained acceptance among students, professors, the mass media, the entertainment industry, government agencies and the religious sector. People from these fields believe they had in earlier times been deprived the use of this language.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Several languages are spoken in the country by its numerous ethnic groups. There arose, therefore, a need for a common medium of communication among the diverse ethnic groups. Apparently, this would facilitate understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and harmony among the various peoples. Pidgin serves this purpose of a language of contact. The popularity Pidgin English enjoys presently can be attributed to the awareness given to it by the youth. Although Pidgin English is believed to be the most logical choice as a lingua franca, it has received little recognition from the people responsible for language policy in Nigeria. Today, modern linguistics has contributed to a reversal in attitude towards Pidgin English. The Language is now recognized by scholars all over the world.

The folktales in Mami Wata are written in Nigerian Pidgin English. Mami Wata literally means Mother of Rivers. In Yoruba folktales, it refers to the Mermaid, who is an iconic figure symbolizing the goddess of the sea. This goddess has magical powers. With these powers, she can provide every person's needs. Till this day, the Mami Wata is worshiped by her followers as a deity. In some quarters, the Mami Wata is called ›Yemoja‹ (mother of the fish) or ›Yeye Olokun‹ (mother of the Atlantic Ocean), while some other people call her ›Yeye Osun‹ (mother of the Osun River). Osun River is located in Osogbo, Osun State, in the western part of Nigeria. Osun River is interwoven with the history of the Yoruba people. It represents the creation of the city life of Ile Ife and the adventures of past Yoruba warriors. These warriors are highly respected and deified by the Yorubas and have been immortalized. Yoruba folktales frequently use animal

imagery, characters, skin patterns, forms, their pace and weaknesses etc. to create visual images and as forms of expression. Among the Yorubas, parents use speech forms derived from Yoruba folktales (many of them involve animal characters) to communicate with their children and vice versa. This is because everyone, in spite of his or her educational or social status, can relate to these folktales. For example, the tortoise is used as a moral figure to teach a child the difference between right and wrong. The stories in *Mamy Wata* are based on childhood stories my mother told me in Yoruba. It is hope that the book would also contribute its part in making society have a more positive attitude towards Pidgin English, a reversal of the trend in colonial times.

»Mami Wata« Introduction

Pidgin English dem don say »di language no get head« dat na so di book pipul for Nigeria and di Christian oyinbo pipul wey come for our land Naija long long time ago.

Wetin come dey surprise me now for Naija today, mani mani pipul come see say our language Pidgin English dey veri veri important naim mak pipul like, Proffessor, Musican, Religion pipul, and our gofument too come see am too.

For our country Nigeria wey bi say language plenty well well wit 36 state and Abuja our head for all di state wey we get for Naija, wey show say we dey speak like almost 250 langauges.

All dis language no even bring we naijas together for di sake of say we no fit to talk to each other with one language and di tin be say e no help we. And instead mak di tin help na divid e dey divid us. Our book pipul and gofument dem don try make we for get another language. Dem try sote come try di language we dem call WAZOBIA.

Di problem bi say di onli language wey we all dey talk take understand each other dem come band am, say di tin no bi language say Pidgin English no get head say dem no go take am as language for our land Naija.

Di tin wey make me write dis book for Pidgin English na for di same reason we bi di down look wey dem dey take see anibodi wey talk for Pidgin English wey dem no wan take as language for Naija.

»Mami Wata« na stori book wey I write for Naija Pidgin English, wey bi popular language, wey mani mani pipul dey talk for Naija.

Naija Pidgin English dey different from all di 250 languages wey we dey talk for Naija, di reason wey Pidgin come bi di language wey pipul dey talk today na because of our young children dem wey come see say Pidgin English no dey bad at all as dem take teach dem for school. Dem tell us wen we dey like pikin say Pidgin English no bi good language say na bad language wey person wey go school mus not speak.

Our children dem don see Pidgin language as wonderful language, naim come make dem dey use am for dem music today wey dem dey call rap or hiphop.

Pidgin hiphop don nearly over take all di music wey dey for naija today, but we no fit talk about di reason wey Naija Pidgin English come popular today make we no tank di pipul wey start dey use use am.

Pidgin English for Naija today, we no fit dey write about am make we no call di name of di papa dem all wey make di language watin e bi today.

Pipul like Baba Abami eda »Fela Anikulapo« wey dey use di Pidgin dey write im music wey dem dey call Afro Beat wey come dey popular today for Naija and di world, we mus not forget pipul like Bola Johnson wey bi di first person wey come write Naija Pidgin Newspaper for Naija.

»Mami Wata« na human fish wey dem dey call »Mama of all river« wey bi say for all Yoruba stori dem dey use Mami Wata as God of river dem wey dey give anybody wey see am or ask for anitin like richness and all di fine fine tin wey person want.

Mami wata today na like God like di Christian and Muslim religion, for Naija e get pipul wey dey worship am as dem God and e dey gif dem watin dem want from im.

Some pipul dey call »Mami Wata« Yeye Osun »Mama Osun river« wey be also di history for Yoruba Land wey come from history of how we di Yoruba come for di world, and all di worior dem wey don help Yoruba land and im pipul.

Osun river dey for Osun state for Naija till today wey mani mani pipul from all di world dey come worship.

Mani mani Yoruba stori wey dem dey use animal for inside, dem dey take am talk to small small pikin dem. Dem dey use am mak dem for no why animal bi dis or dat.

After I come look wel well for inside di stori wey dem dey tell small pikin dem for Yoruba land, I come see say dem jus use different animal for di stori dem to fit describe how animal dey clever and how im bodi or how e dey run or slow. So na all dis tin dem naim dem dey talk with small pikin dem make dem for know watin dey good and bad.

Tortis na one of di animal wey be say e day for almost di stori for Yoruba land, and tortis for Yoruba stori e dey do good and e day do bad, so everi pikin dey use mak e no watin good and bad.

Yoruba stori na from generation to generation wey be say e most continue to go from one person to other and our pikin pikin wey bi Yoruba pikin.

Di stori wey dey inside »Mami Wata« na for mai pikin time wey mai mama tell me wen I dey small. Mai mama tells me di stori for Yoruba, I come retell am for Naija Pidgin English.