

ANANSI THE SPIDER

A WEST AFRICAN GOD

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Retold by Ruud Schinkel

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First published in 2014 by Eenvoudig Communiceren, Amsterdam.

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Printed in Malta by Melita Press

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data (CIP) is available for this title.

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ISBN 9781783225415

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Foreword

This book contains folktales about Anansi the spider.

Folktales are sometimes passed on for hundreds of years.

The folktales of Anansi were first told in West Africa.

Anansi is said to have been born there, in the West African country of Ghana.

Anansi means 'spider' in the Akan language. The Akan are a tribe from Ghana.

The Anansi stories were very important to the people of Ghana.

Between 1550 and 1700, many people were captured and taken from Ghana to the Caribbean as slaves.

They had to work very hard there.

Many slaves died from hunger, violence or exhaustion.

The slaves were not permitted to take anything of their own culture,

but the tales of Anansi could be told secretly, so they brought comfort in this time of oppression.



The Anansi stories were also a sign of protest. Anansi the spider is small but very clever.

This made him a model for the slaves.

Another character from the Anansi stories is Tiger.

Tiger is strong but stupid.

He is an example of the oppressor, the boss of the slaves.

The slaves from Ghana took their stories with them to the Caribbean,

so Anansi the spider became known in Surinam, Aruba, Curaçao, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, and even in the southern United States.

In the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, the spider is known as Nansi.

Many people from Surinam and the Antilles now live in the Netherlands, so the Anansi stories have also spread to the Netherlands.

More about Anansi

According to the Akan, the tribe Anansi comes from, Anansi is a magical animal.

Anansi can spin a web that goes all the way to heaven.

This means he can go up and down between heaven and earth, forming a connection between God and people.

Anansi tells God what happens on earth.

Anansi is a magical creature, but he's not just good.

He's also very cunning.

He's always preoccupied with getting

precisely what he wants: food, sleep, peace and quiet, money.

He doesn't mind stealing or cheating for it.

At the same time, he's very honest about this, and he's brave and clever.

Anansi is a little hero who always wins against those stronger than him.

You can read the Anansi stories, but they're really meant for telling out loud.