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© 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates Born in Minna in the Niger State of Nigeria, Cyprain Ekwensi, an Igbo from Nkwelle Ezunaka in the Anambra State, was educated in Nigeria, Ghana, and at the Chelsea School of Pharmacy in London. After quitting the pharmaceutical profession for writing and cultural pursuits, he served as director of Nigeria's Federal Information Services, and during the civil war (1967-70) he was director of Biafra's external publicity. At the end of the war, he briefly traded in plastics and subsequently served as a commissioner in the government of Anambra State (1983). He now lives in retirement at Enugu, the state capital, writing and traveling to give occasional lectures or to attend literary meetings. A popular novelist, Ekwensi has frequently stated that he writes for the masses. One of his earliest works was a highly successful romantic novella, *When Love Whispers*, published in 1948. Filled with moralistic and sentimental overtones, it typifies Onitsha market literature, a genre that was until recently very popular among the masses, especially in Nigeria and Ghana. Ekwensi's reputation as a novelist was established with *People of the City* (1953). Urban decay (political corruption, squalor, and overcrowding) is the dominant theme running through this and many of Ekwensi's other works. Consequently, Ekwensi earned the reputation of being Africa's foremost "city novelist." In Ekwensi's best-known city novel, *Jagua Nana* (1961), he skillfully weaves into the story of a high class, middle-aged prostitute vivid scenes of Lagos high life, against the backdrop of political intrigue. This book earned praise in Africa and abroad, and has been translated into more foreign languages than any of his other books, but it also elicited considerable controversy, especially in Nigeria. Some prudish critics were incensed by the graphic descriptions of explicit sexual encounters in the book and called for a ban. Others, however, considered it a timely portrayal of the realities of Nigerian city life and awaited eagerly a projected but unsuccessful attempt to release a feature film based on it. Although Ekwensi is known as a chronicler (as well as critic) of city life, he is by no means one-dimensional. *Burning Grass* (1962), for example, is a sensitive look at migratory patterns of the Fulani cattlemen of Northern Nigeria. Ekwensi's firsthand knowledge of the traditional rural areas of the Muslim north of Nigeria surfaces in this work, as well as in *An African Night's Entertainment* (1962). He has also produced numerous children's books, the best known of which is *The Drummer Boy* (1960), based on the life of a blind beggar in Lagos. Ekwensi is undoubtedly a pioneer and a major influence in contemporary African literature. His strengths are reflected in his social commitment to the topics on which he has chosen to write, coupled with the relevance of these topics to modern Africa. Indeed, his impact seems broader than one might at first suspect, as evidenced by his being awarded the Dag Hammarskjold International Prize for Literature in 1968. Please choose whether or not you want other users to be able to see on your profile that this library is a favorite of yours. Allow this favorite library to be seen by others Keep this favorite library private Save Cancel Finding libraries that hold this item... Tumi va a Johannesburg en taxi. Mais le taxi tombe en panne et ensuite se fait arreter par un policier. Tumi arrivera-t-il a Johannesburg? Read more... Home » Nigeria » Cyprian Ekwensi » Burning Grass Cyprian Ekwensi: Burning Grass The story is set among the Fulanis of Nigeria, a tribe that makes it living from cattle. Mai Sunsaye is the local chief, though he is challenged and hated by Ardo. Unusually, Mai only has one wife, Shaitu. He has three sons (two have previously died). Jalla has left the family home. Hodio and Rikko remain but Rikko, the youngest, is his favourite, something Hoido is only too well aware of. At the start of the novel Mai, Hoido and Rikku are watching the cattle, when they see a young woman running towards them clearly frightened. She throws herself at Mai's feet and begs him for help. She is being pursued by a dark-skinned man (Fulani are lighter-skinned) who claims her as his slave. On further questioning, he admits that she is not his slave, but the slave of his master, Shehu, who has a reputation and is known as The Killer. Mai offers to buy her and Hoido suggests that she is worth five cattle, a high price but one Mai is prepared to pay. Shehu's servant does not agree and warns Mai that Shehu will seek his revenge but takes the cattle. The woman, Fatimeh by name, stays with Mai and his family and, inevitably, both Hoido and Rikku fall for her. Eventually, Hoido and Fatimeh elope. Rikku is mortified and claims he is too ill to look after the cattle and Mai agrees to go and find the couple. However, he is struck by sokogo, the wandering sickness. He sees a dove carrying a talisman and chases it. It turns out that this is a trick on the part of Ardo who, while Mai is absent, attacks the family. Rikku is caught and bound, while his mother manages to escape. Meanwhile, more by luck than judgement, Mai has stumbled onto the village where Jalla now lives. Jalla is well off and has a large amount of cattle. He has been helped by Dr McMinter, the local medical officer, who has injected the cattle against rinderpest. Jalla welcomes his father and, eventually, Mai's wife and Rikku turn up with tales of woe. But Mai still has sokogo and he is off again on his travels, where he finds a village that has been abandoned under instruction of the white man because of sleeping sickness. There is one slightly insane man still there and, after an initial altercation, he and Mai get on well together, though Mai is bitten by a tsetse fly. Mai eventually leaves, to go to the place where the village has been relocated to and, perhaps not surprisingly, the first person he meets is his son, Hoido. Hoido is now in the sugar-making business, using modern technology and is doing well. Fatimeh has gone but is with Amina, whom he took from Jalla. However, Shehu is on the prowl and the two come into conflict. The rest of the book follows the various adventures of the family. Mai continues to have the wandering sickness and sets off on various occasions, travelling around the country, meeting people, coming across his family and having various adventures, including meeting a lion and seeing his son flogged, as part of a pre-marriage ceremony. Rikku, meanwhile, is having his own adventures, which involve kidnapping, cattle stampedes and tax collectors but, most of all, help him to grow up and become a man. Jalla is moving his cattle around, trying to avoid the tax collector. Meanwhile a strange woman is moving cattle around at night. This is certainly a very colourful novel and, interestingly enough the white man is seen as generally positive (protection against rinderpest and sleeping sickness) though the tax collector is obviously not liked and the characters try various devious ways to avoid him. Ekwensi does not let up with the conflicts, the adventures and the descriptions of the people and their customs, as well as of the countryside. It works very well and is a very enjoyable read and is enhanced by the strange idea of the wandering sickness. 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