



ETHNOHISTORIES

**Metobo Amlen**

**Mironombo, Cronombo**

English

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# FOREWORD

To facilitate reading in Ngäbere, we have adapted, with some modifications, the system in the short Ngäbere-Spanish dictionary Kukwe Ngäbere by Melquiades Arosemena and Luciano Javilla, published in 1979 by the Directorate of Historical Heritage of the National Institute of Culture (INAC), now the Ministry of Culture, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

VOWELS	CONSONANTS
a - Like in Spanish	/b/ch/d/g/j/l/m/n/ñ/r/s/t/v/y/ Like in Spanish
ä - Deeper than in Spanish	c - Like the soft sound of the /c/ in Spanish
e - Like in Spanish	td - Intermediate sound between /d/ and /t/, like /th/ in English
i - Like in Spanish	k - Like the strong sound of the /c/ in Spanish as in "casa"
í - Guttural sound between vowel and consonant, like the "klick" of some African languages	ng - In Ngäbere it exists in initial position, but in Spanish it does not exist in initial position as in "congo"
ii - An /i/ longer than in Spanish	<b>IMPORTANT:</b> It should be noted that in Ngäbere there is no /f/
o - Like in Spanish	
ö - Deeper than in Spanish	
ó - More accented than /ö/	
u - Like in Spanish	
ü - Deeper than in Spanish	
ú - Like the /w/ in English	

It should also be clarified that this story comes from narrators residing in the village of Potrero de Caña, formerly the Tole district of the Chiriquí province, now the Müna district of the Ngäbe Buglé region, from which the Agronomist Roger Séptimo, the compiler and writer is a native. Consequently, the phonology corresponds to the dialectal or regional variation "Guaymí del Interior" (Pacific slope) which differs from the "Guaymí de la Costa" (Caribbean slope of the province of Bocas del Toro and the now district of Kusapin in the Comarca Ngäbe Buglé) in the *Guaymí Grammar* of Ephraim S. Alphonse Reid, published in 1980 by Fe y Alegría. This variant corresponds to what Arosemena and Javilla call "Chiriquí" and which contrasts with the Caribbean variants of Bocas del Toro and the coast of Bocas.

This ethnohistory was published in 1986 in Kugü Kira Nie Ngäbere / Sucesos Antiguos Dichos en *Guaymí* (Ethnohistory *Guaymí*), by the Panamanian Association of Anthropology, with the PN-079 Agreement of the Inter-American Foundation (FIA) managed by Dr. Mac Chapin, Anthropologist, who encouraged us to follow the example he had set by compiling *Pab-Igala: Histories of the Kuna Tradition*, published in 1970 by the Center for Anthropological Research of the University of Panama, under the direction of Dr. Reina Torres de Araúz.

This book represented the work of the Agricultural Engineer Roger Séptimo, when he was a student in his second year at the Center for Agricultural Teaching and Research in Chiriquí (CEIACHI), Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, University of Panama (FCAUP), not only writing in Ngäbere the stories that he had heard from his family members in his community, but also his effort to translate them into Spanish as a bilingual person that he is, like other indigenous people in Panama, who are striving to receive a formal education.

The ethnohistories were compiled, recorded on cassettes and written by the Agronomist Roger Séptimo in 1983 and 1984.

As Professor-Researcher of Anthropology and Rural Sociology at the CEIACHI of the FCAUP, Luz Graciela Joly Adames, Anthropologist, Ph.D., encouraged Roger, as one of her students, to write the stories, convince him and show him that she would not exploit or abuse his work, but that he would get credit. Consequently, the anthropologist limited herself only to making some corrections of form and style in the Spanish translations without altering their content.

We encourage students from the seven indigenous peoples in the Republic of Panama, and teachers in public and private schools, colleges, and universities in Panama, to write in their own languages and translate the ethnohistories and songs they hear in their families and communities into Spanish, as part of their informal education.

We also encourage readers of these ethnohistories in Ngäbere, Spanish and English, to draw the scenes that they liked the most, as they did in 2002, students in an Education and Society course, directed by Dr. Joly, at the Faculty of Education, Autonomous University of Chiriquí.

Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved by the General Assembly, in its 107th plenary session on September 13, 2007:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, promote and pass on to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to name and maintain their communities, places, and people.
2. The States shall adopt effective measures to ensure the protection of this right and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and make themselves understood in political, legal and administrative actions, providing for this, when necessary, interpretation services or other appropriate means.



## **The *Metobos* against the *Mironombos* and the *Cronombos***

These were the *suguiás* who maintained a fierce conflict to measure their powers, to determine the dominion of each band. The confrontation was a personal encounter at a distance by means of spectacular events, uncommonly seen in the region. The narrative recalls that there never was tranquility in the region, above all, among *suguiás* who supposedly had the mission to look after their people and give them the necessary protection planting peace and tranquility among the inhabitants. Then, they themselves started the conflicts among themselves, when they were those who should have given the example of good will, fraternity, and equal opportunity.

It seems that the conflicts were produced to establish selfish and individualistic dominions. These *suguiás* did not want to have rivals, so they tried to crush any other *suguiá* who came to equal his condition or any other who tried to displace him. These conflicts would go to such extreme positions, so that the opposing bands would try somehow to definitely liquidate their opponents.

Thus there occurred a constant combat for power among the bands composed by the *Metobos*, such as Ore Meto, Dego Meto, Rogara Meto, and others against bands composed by the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos*.

These were secret confrontations and, sometimes, occult, that they had among themselves. Their followers only knew the results when they had finished the conflict. In one of the many conflicts to death, the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* won the *Metobos*, transforming them into rocks that, according to the narrative, are still in that form. In Lajero, district of Remedios, there is one rock that is said it is Ore Meto.

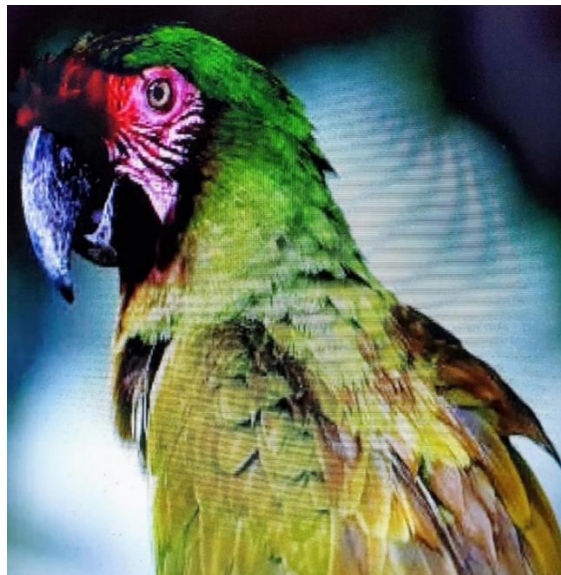
It is said that, when he was going to the mountain ridge, towards the Atlantic region from where he was originally, and came to visit his brother Rogara Meto who lived in Remedios, on his return he stopped to rest with his wife and right there they were converted into rocks.

In that place there is a huge rock that has a smaller rock on top and to one side has another rock of regular size. It is said that the small rock was the son of Ore who at that moment was carrying the boy on his shoulder, and they sat down to rest, and they are still there without moving for a long time. The same occurred to Dego Meto who was also converted into a rock, but he is situated in a mountainous region in the Atlantic zone of what is now the province of Bocas del Toro. This is known thanks to the indigenous men who annually went to a *balsería* (contest with balsa sticks) in the Bocas del Toro region and, by coincidence, had to pass by this place.



*Drawing of the ritual play Krung Kita or Balsaería. Guillermo Jiménez Miranda, In Pueblos Indígenas de Panamá: Hacedores de cultura y de historia. UNESCO-Panamá. 1998:169-175.*

According to those who saw it, they say that it is an enormous rock located on the bank of a stream, and that the rock has nose and eyes. With confidence and unique certainty, the indigenous men said that in the rainy season they could see in the middle of the green eyes' macaws (*Ara militaris*).



*Green Macaw (Ara militaris) en.wikipedia.org*

The rock in Lajero has no eyes nor nose; there are only three rocks of different sizes.

Another fact that is known about the rock of Dego Meto, is that the indigenous men who would go to the *balsaería*, when they got to where the rock was, they would paint the face of the rock with red designs, the same as they painted their faces for the *balsaería*, until one day it seems that the rock could not stand anymore this treatment, and it yelled a loud moan, which scared the men, so then they stopped painting the face of the rock.



Facial paintings for a Balsería. Sarsaneda Del Cid, J. NI NGOBE TO BLITDE NO: *Cómo hablan los ngóbe*. Panamá: Acción Cultural Ngóbe. Fotos of Héctor Endara Hill and Jorge Sarsaneda Del Cid, on front and back covers. 2009.

Nowadays, the hill known as Pan de Azúcar\*, located near the coast of the Pacific Ocean, near the town of Remedios, has the name of Rogara Meto, known by the toponym Rogatu, because it is thought that there was where he lived before, he disappeared.

\*The raw sugar that is usually called panela in Panamá, used to be in a conical form, with a special knife to scrape the dark sugar, when the Spaniards introduced this sugarcane product from the Philippines.



Cerro Pan de Azúcar (Rogatu) Remedios: *Tierra Lejendaria*. p.40  
 Milagros Sánchez Pinzón, David, Chiriquí, Panamá: Editorial Culturama Internacional. 2012.



Rogatu hill: on the left, from the viewer balcony on the road to Nancito; on the right, from the Santa Lucia delta in Remedios. Fotos: Milagros Sánchez Pinzón, in Remedios:Tierra Lejendaria, p.77. David, Chiriquí, Panamá: Editorial Culturama Internacional, 2012.

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### Note by Agricultural Engineer Roger Séptimo Jiménez

The *Mironombos*, *Cronombos*, and *Metobos* were groups of *suguiás* who constantly lived quarrelling with each other. These quarrels went from simple offenses to frontal battles that risked the life and existence of each group, without any authority to mediate between them. There only prevailed the law of the strongest, the most clever, and, above all, the most capable to do any extraordinary feat.

The contest sought to obtain absolute dominion and, consequently, eliminate the weakest. The *suguiás* did not use weapons like bows and arrows to fight against each other. They only used their powers as diviners and the natural environment present to achieve their endeavor.

This narrative presents the *Metobos* humiliated and subesteeming the capacity of the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos*. The latter insisted in not quarrelling, until one day they lost their patience, rebelled, and won the *Metobos* without major difficulty. The defeat involved that the *Metobos* were converted into any worthless object, so that they could never again fight nor be enemies of any consideration for their rivals. To this is due their conversion into trees and rocks.

In reality, this rivalry practiced by the *suguiás* always was and has been so until a few time ago. That is why each narrative presents the same struggle, but with different characters and places.

This reflects that the real guides or leaders of the guaymí (ngäbe) people, independently of the obligation that they had to orient, guide, and care for their people, they had an internal struggle without limits to decide who had the most power, without the necessity to alter their primary function to care for the welfare of their people. They were men who loved their people and were willing to fight for their people against their common enemies, without giving them any truce. But, also, they lived internal crisis without truce, as for them whoever decided to give a truce meant that he was giving up and had lost.

The fight among the *suguiás* has always been from generation to generation, of one community against another, of one region against another region, and, therefore, without limits. The narrative written cannot be interpreted as a struggle carried out in one day or in one year, but it refers to a contest that took several years to decide who won. On the other hand, the narrative generalizes and tries to gather a conglomerate of events that have similarities, distinguishing only a key and conclusive point in the development of the events.

# JOLLY

**Luz Graciela**

PUBLIC DOMAIN CONTENT

