



ETHNOHISTORIES

Mironombo, Cronombo, Metobo

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	IMPORTANT: 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.



MIRONOMBOS and CHRONOMBOS turned METOBOS into stones and trees. On the left photo of carved stone in the Guaimí Reserve of Alto Laguna, South of Costa Rica. On the right tree in a private farm in Colón.

The *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* changed the *Metobos* in the forms of trees and stones. That is what is commented since a long time ago. The *Metobos* were big and tall persons, while the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* were small persons, of a low height, and looked silly and with entangled or matted hair. For this reason, they were considered mediocre and incapable by the *Metobos* who considered themselves of a more advanced social class.

The *Metobos* would go to the seashore to extract salt, while the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* would hunt and fish in the rainforests near the seashore. The *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* would bring smoked fish and meats of wild pigs (*Tayassu pecari*), but the rappers would take it away from them on the trail. After a while, the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* would hunt and fish again; the same would occur again on their way home; they would become victims of the *Metobos*, as before.



All the things that the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* would bring, the *Metobos* would take them on the trail home, and would then hit them. The *Metobos* would say whatever they wanted at that moment to the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos*: "We have done this to you (the humiliation); for this reason, ¿what will you do to us? You are going to change us in the forms of stones and trees; then we tell you that we will live for long days. ¿What are you going to do? ¡Say it!" The *Metobos* would say these things in a humiliating tone to injure them deeply in their inner self.

The *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* would go again after a long time, and the same would occur; they could never be safe from the *Metobos*. Until one time, one of the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* went to the seashore again. When he reached the seashore, he practiced and measured his strength and power with his sons who accompanied him.

The father got a stick, broke it, and split the wood; then he threw it to the ground. The firstborn son went running, got it in his hands, joined the pieces again and it became perfect as originally. The father again broke it into pieces and again threw it to the ground. The other son came running, got it in his hands as his brother before him did, joined the pieces and was able to get the stick as originally it was before, as if never had been broken and split.

As the firstborn, the second son did the same again. He broke the stick and then threw it to the ground. The other brother who followed him picked it from the ground, then joined the pieces, and it became magnificently well as originally, as was done by his brothers before.

The exercise was completed four times. The four sons were able to have the strength and power as their father. Then they had the cargo ready to return home as usual, the fish and wild animals, as smoked fish and smoked meats. This time, as in previous times, they met the *Metobos* on the trail, who took their cargo, as always. Then they told the *Metobos*: "You won't believe it, there are fishes and wild animals bigger than these for you in the sea and in the rainforest". They said it in a defiant and arrogant tone, indicating that their calm had come to an end and that they were ready to confront the *Metobos*.



Illustration by @Madison Heltzel on the cover of the bilingual book in Wayuu and Spanish *Resguardo Junna münakat* (The mangroves) of *Marine Conservation without Borders*. Citation: Thigpen, Robert; Guariyu, Aminta P.; Munar, Alvaro M. M.; (2018) *Tü wunu'ulia Junna münakat* (The Mangroves: Treasures of the Caribbean, Wayunaiki Edition) *Conservacion Marina sin Fronteras*, Florence, SC.

The *Metobos* then answered in a scoffing tone: "For this, then, what will you do? You are going to convert us into stones and trees; if it is that way, then we will live for some days." After saying this, the *Metobos* went home with the fish and meats that they had taken from the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos*, without the latter offering any resistance.

When the *Metobos*, walking, got near a hill called Klira, then the sky got dark. All the sky got covered with black clouds and a great rain fell. Then they began to construct a shack with palm leaves to cover themselves from the rain. When they covered the shack with the leaves of the royal palm, the rain would not pass through the leaves, but then the water would come out inside the house from the surface of the ground. Everywhere sprang streams of water inside the house, so that the shack fell to the ground.

Then they covered the shack with palm leaves very closely woven, but the rain would go through the palm leaves and the shack got all wet inside. Although this time the water did not throw the shack down, the contrary occurred that everything got wet. This motivated them to throw the shack down

and build another one. They covered the shack thinly with palm leaves and the same thing occurred as before: the rain would not pass through the palm leaves, but the same phenomenon occurred that streams of water appeared everywhere inside the shack that fell again. They covered the shack densely with palm leaves; then occurred the reverse, the rain would pass through but did not throw the shack down. Over and over again, they tried to avoid this phenomenon, but could not achieve it, until it became night.

When nighttime came, then there was no house near there. However, suddenly, near to where they were, a bright light from a lamp could be seen. One of them said to the others: "There is a house near here and we are being enslaved here unnecessarily by this rain." They looked and saw a big house very near, inside of which they could see the light clearly reflecting, with many people walking inside the house, to their amazement. They, without losing time, said: "There is a house near here and we are losing time under this rainstorm; let's go to the house"; and they went walking.

When they got at the foot of the house, then there was a person as porter. They looked inside the house and saw many persons walking inside the house. On another place they saw an enormous seat of polished wood inside the house. All of them seemed to coincide in seeing the same panorama. When they got to the entrance of the house, then the person who was there as porter, advanced and got the hand of the first one and seated him on the wooden seat inside the house and continued taking one by one until he accommodated all on the seat.

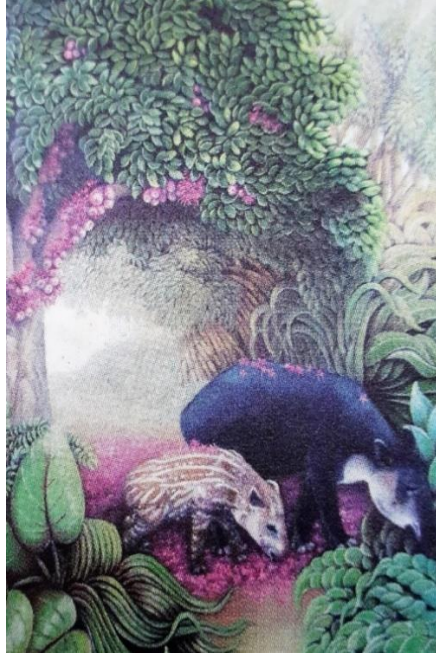
One by one all were accommodated on the seat. Then, only one remained outside, a person of little value, who accidentally met the group without belonging to the class of *Metobos*. He was the last one on the line and only he remained outside. He also wanted to go inside the house with the group, but the porter put his hand on the chest of that person and pushed him out avoiding his entrance. "That piece of manioc has no value, garbage, throw him back." At that instant, there was an enormous sound as if the door had been forcefully stretched and immediately in his sight everything darkened and with that the house and the lamp disappeared from his sight, being all in the darkness and in sepulchral silence. There he remained without moving. When dawn came, then he was, to his surprise, standing at the foot of the Klira hill.

When daybreak very clearly appeared, such a house did not exist. There were no signs of persons, nor marks that there was someone living near there.

Even so, there was another group that did not get to the foothill. With the daybreak, they continued their way home. This was a considerable group that still remained safe and sound.

They arrived at their respective houses. In one of the houses, a boy went to the stream that was near the house, which was used by them for bathing. Suddenly, the boy appeared running toward the house and with astonishment said: "What big fishes are swimming in the pool of the stream!" The old men who were in the house went to see. Then, to their surprise, in the pool that they used for bathing, were many big shads (Brycon). They immediately went running and caught the shads, then cooked them and ate them.

The fish provoked them diarrhea and vomiting, that soon took them to their death, all who ate the fish. The rest who was alive went to the rainforest to hunt. They accommodated themselves at strategic points where the animals pass, to kill them as the animals passed.



The Path of the Tapir. Oil on canvas by the penonomeña painter Sonia Solanilla Morales, Museum of Penonomé, Pictorial Exhibition "De Mi Terruño, December 12 to 20, 2003, National Institute of Culture (INAC) in the Centennial of the Republic.

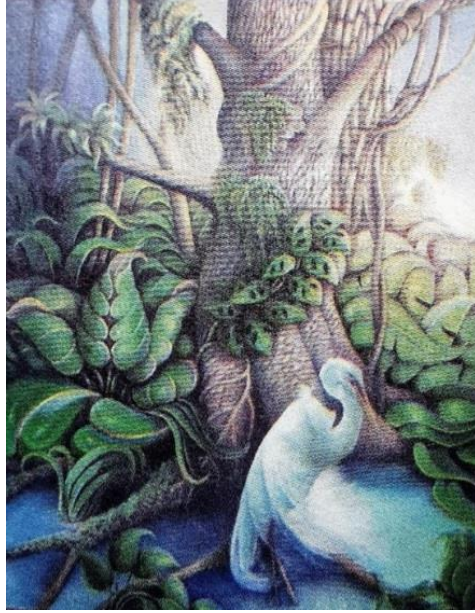
They accommodated themselves at the top of the mountain ridge, waiting for their prey to pass: deer, *sainos* (*Tayassu tajacu*), wild pigs (*Tayassu pecari*), and others. There those *Metobos* became trees that are still there.



*Whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), saino (*Tayassu tajacu*), wild pig (*Tayassu pecari*) Linares, Olga F. "Garden Hunting in the American Tropics" in *Human Ecology*, Vol. 4, No. 4:331-349, 1976; "Cacería en Huertas" en los Trópicos Americanos. en *Evolución en los Trópicos, Panamá: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute y Editorial Universitaria*, 1982: pags.255-268.*

The rest who stayed home, one of them went to bathe himself and did not return home. Someone went to find him, and did not see him in the stream, where there was only an enormous stone well accommodated in the bathing pool. What happened was that the *Mironombos* and *Cronombos* converted him into that stone in the pool.

That is what happened a long time ago, commented the storytellers. They believe that when the sunset comes, then the *Metobos* will again become human persons. The sentencing storytellers added: "They are alive, only that they have been transformed, and so they remain stable and inert waiting for the final day."



Riveras del Zarafí. Oil on canvas by the penonomeña painter Sonia Solanilla Morales, Museo de Penonomé, Pictorial Exhibition "De Mi Terruño, December 12 to 20, 2003 National Institute of Culture (INAC) in the Centennial of the Republic.

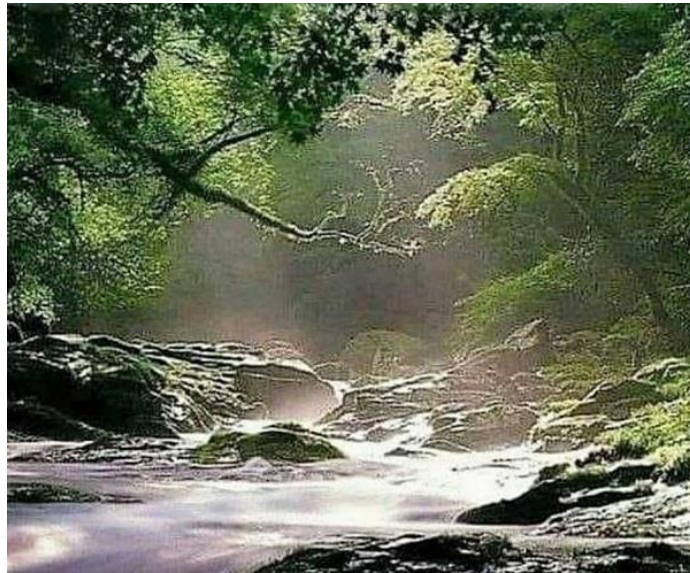


Photo taken of good morning greeting on Facebook.

JOLLY

Luz Graciela

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