



ETHNOHISTORIES

# Ñaglon Bata Sö

(Nänä botdä Sö) (Ngweana botdä Sö)

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 SUN AND THE MOON

It is said that there was a lady named Evia, who lived only with two very small sons, who nobody knew who was their father. But the truth is that there were two boys living with the lady. The two boys lived in unhealthy conditions, all dirty; their only place was the fireplace of the house, around which they were always sitting or lying on the ashes. Very few times did they go elsewhere.

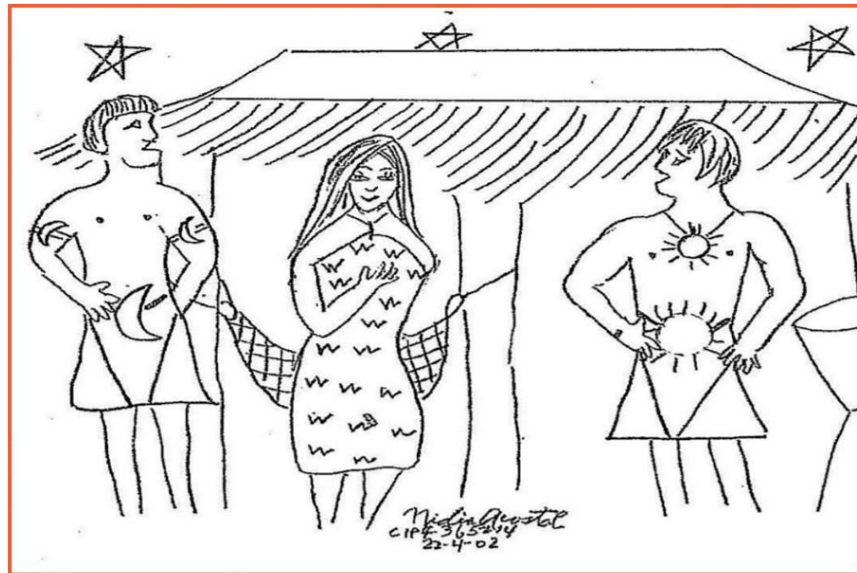


Their mother liked to be in party after party because she was a notable singer. In one of these parties, she met two men. One was dressed in gold and with a gold cane in one hand, while the other one was dressed in silver (white) and with a silver cane. The lady saw these two so attractive that she dedicated to adorning herself with all kinds of necklaces and dress herself with the best possible way to call the attention of these two men.



She dedicated to sing in front of the two and then would pass in front of the two and step on their feet to demonstrate that she liked those men. Not being satisfied with this demonstration, she decided to make gestures and mimics in front of them to call more their attention. But none of these demonstrations seemed to have any importance for these men. The only thing they would do was to move their feet and change place with the minimum interest in her.

But there was someone who did know the whereabouts of those men. In fact, they were the sons of this lady. That person warned the lady not to do such disagreeable spectacles as those men were her two sons.





She answered saying that they were not her sons, that the poor boys had stayed dirty, lying on the ashes of the fireplace in the house when she had left for the party, and that never could they be compared to the figures of those men so notable.

The two men at no moment paid attention to her and continued participating in the party without any novelty. She insisted on following them until the end of the party. Not being able to get her intention, she returned to her house. For her surprise, there were the two boys sitting by the fireplace. This gave her more confidence in believing that those two men whom she had seen in the party were not her sons. This meant that she did not know her sons nor the power that her sons had to become the men whom she had met.

Then there came the opportunity to go to another party and the coincidence that she met the same men. Without wasting any time, she renewed the same demonstrations to call again the attention of her desired men. She hoped that at least one of the two could be interested in her. But, as the first time, she did not get anything from those two men.

As the previous time, there was one person who called her attention, to please not commit such an immoral and painful act. But she did not believe anyone, as the first time when she got to the house there were the two boys in the house by the fireplace.

In spite of all her endeavors, neither this time did she achieve to interest the two men in her person. They always tried to evade her presence because of the things that she did to them.

When the party ended, she returned to the house, finding the two boys by the fireplace the same way that she had found them before. This caused her confusion and could not believe that those were her sons.

She went to another party and the same inexplicable phenomenon repeated again, for her luck. The thing that most worried her was that, although she liked those men, there was always someone who mortified her conscience telling her that those were her sons.

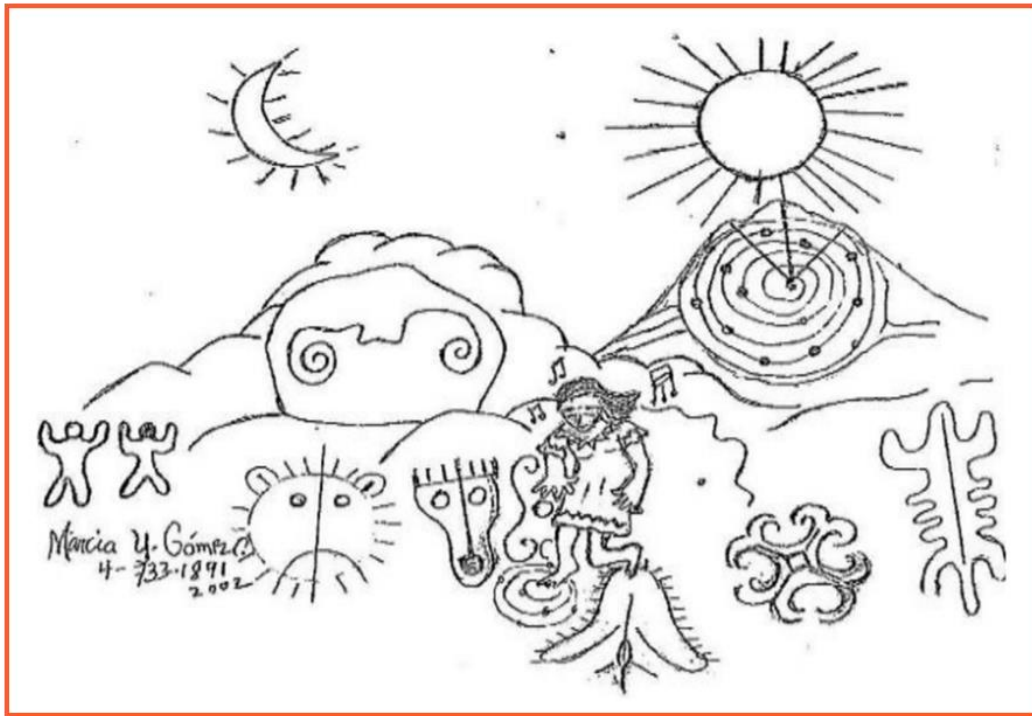
This time, more confused than ever, she returned to her house and, for her luck, the two boys were in the house.



When there came the time to go to another party, for the fourth time she found those two men. To get rid of any doubt, she left for the party; but, by the middle of the road, she hid on one side of the

road to wait if those men were her sons. Then she would see if they came out behind her and in this way, she could see them go by. For her surprise, she saw the same men pass behind her to go to the party. Motivated by this surprise, she did not go to the party and decided to return to the house to find out the fact.

When she got to the house, the two boys were not where they usually sat by the fireplace. This caused her at the same time sadness and much grief. She only limited herself to wait for the return of her two sons to see in which form they would arrive, if as boys or as the men she had seen several times.



She sat thinking. There, thinking thousands of things and singing, she began to mark the ground, scratching it with the fingers of her hands and feet, in diverse forms that came to her mind.

These are the signs and marks that are found engraved on rocks in different places of the earth. Those engravings are the fingerprints of her hands and feet and, of course, her inspiration.



*Petroglyph in the water intake of the Boquete aqueduct, Chiriquí, Republic of Panama.*





*Petroglyph in the yard of the school in San Carlos, Coclé, rescued by a profesor of science and her students after it was thrown into a ditch when the road in Copé of San Carlos was made.*

It seems that from that moment on, she dedicated herself to do no other thing but only that thing, until her two sons returned. They came, not in the form of naked and dirty boys whose refuge to sleep was the ashes by the fireplace, but as the men of extraordinary physical appearance and impeccably dressed in gold and silver, just as she had seen them in three occasions in the parties when her efforts were in vain to conquer them as admirers or as husbands. In this way her doubt was dismissed. She did not even demonstrate to her sons' anguish or sadness when they arrived. Neither did the sons speak to her. Both the mother and the sons only limited themselves to observe each other, as if meaning that nothing had occurred to be sorry about.





The mother observed attentively the movements of her sons. The two simultaneously said: "Let's make beverages of cocoa: white and red cocoa" (1).

(1) **Cocoas:** Different types of ground cocoas are mixed and they are cooked for a certain time until thick. To drink, it is not as a chocolate beverage as is usually done in great quantity, but water is heated aside. Then, this water is distributed in small vases, in which the prepared cocoas are taken with a stirring stick in a small quantity and mixed with the water to drink.



They agreed who was going to prepare both the red and white cocoa drinks. One prepared from white cocoa and another from red cocoa. Not being entirely satisfied, they wondered what other type of drink they were going to prepare, and they told themselves that it was going to be cocoa concentrate and oil.

Then they agreed to have the drinks. But before taking them, they told themselves that they had to bathe first and then drink and they went to bathe in the river; They warned her mother of danger, that she should not come near to see that thing that they had left in the covered pot, that she did not dare to appear to see.



But the mother did not pay attention to the warning, arguing that the two were her sons and she had full authority over the two and, as their mother, she had the right to see and know what her sons were doing. For her, who had raised her two sons since very small, they did not have to forbid her anything nor hide anything as a secret from her presence. She uncapped the two pots to see. What she saw were two children: a girl (red cocoa) and a boy (white cocoa). Both had sticks in their belly buttons as if being roasted alive. In the pots those two children were boiling in hot oil that splattered constantly and violently. As she put her face to see, immediately a drop of hot oil fell on her eyes. Immediately both eyes were burned and she became blind forever. She rolled on the ground with immense pain.

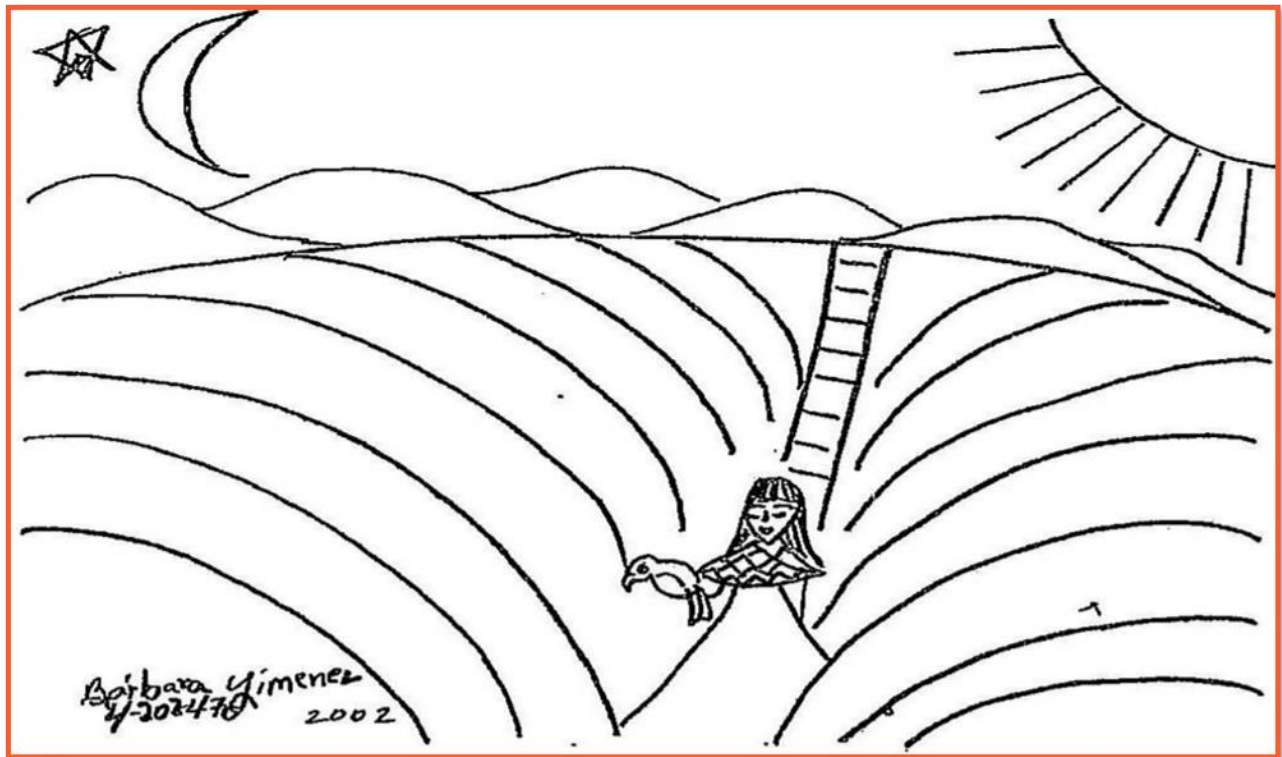
For their surprise, when her sons arrived, they found their mother rolling on the ground. With disgust, one of them said: "It is not possible, I warned her!" There being no other alternative, they drank the

supposed cocoas that were in the pots. It seemed that in doing this they were consummating the disgrace of their mother.

They decided to throw their mother away from the house. This decision reflected the disgust that she had caused them. For them, she did not mean anything at that moment. But even so, there seemed to be a division of criteria between the two. The son dressed in gold seemed to be more angry and he proposed the immediate execution of his mother. But the one dressed in silver seemed to still feel compassion for his mother and he abstained to take the decision of his brother and refused to accept that condition.

After so much consultation between the two, it seemed the most adequate decision to throw their mother far away, from where she could not return to the house and let nature take care of her life. They threw her by the east. When they least expected her, she returned again to the house. Making all kinds of gestures and talking, she said to her sons that they had thrown her away from the house so that she could only eat the skins of the soursop, mamey, pineapple, and other fruits, but never have the opportunity to eat the real fruits.

When they threw her out of the house, they sent her with her parrot. That was the only companion she would have in her exile.



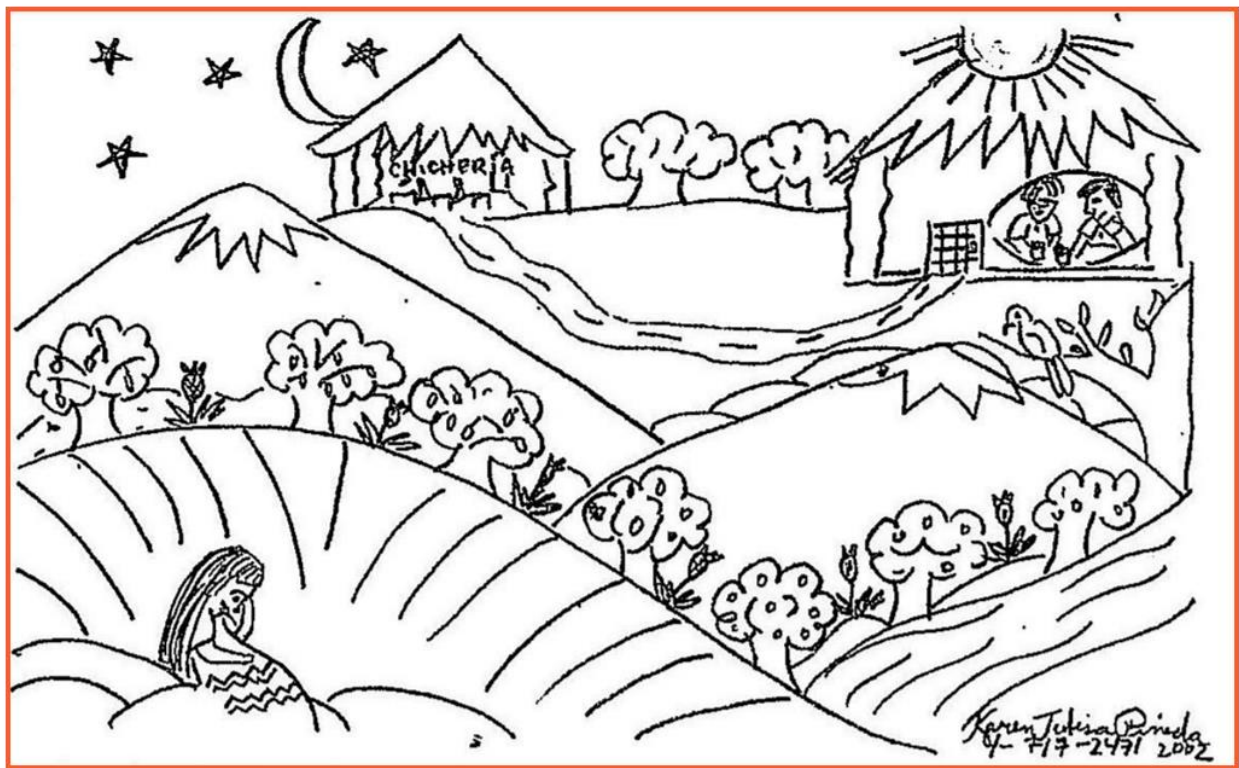
The sons, seeing that their plan did not work out, then they again threw her out of the house, but this time to the west. Neither did it work out. She returned in the same way as before.

Not being satisfied, the sons threw her to the south. Neither did it work out, as she returned again. Not being any other alternative, they threw her away again to the abyss of the earth. This time she did not return, but they could hear her parrot singing.



Handicraft with seashells representing the four cardinal points of a petroglyph in the Archaeological Park of Nancito, district of Remedios, province of Chiriquí, Republic of Panama.

The sons went to see and found the parrot hanging by a part of the abyss. They took it and broke its head and then threw it behind their mother forever, so that they would never see her face nor hear her voice.



When there was an earthquake, it was that this lady wanted to return to the surface of the earth. Her effort to climb up always resulted in vain and she only would shake the earth. The earth is like a house with a loft upstairs, where to climb up there it is with a ladder, and in doing so the whole house would move in her climbing. The intention of the lady to climb to the loft was to see if the soursops, mameys, pineapples and other fruits were ripe. These fruits in our days are the people who inhabit the earth.

The lady will return when the sun is setting on the west, meaning by the sunset the end of the world. In other words, this lady is not dead, but is paying her pain and at the end of the world she will appear as such.





*On the left: face of the sun and solar and lunar calendar. Right: painted stone, Caldera, Boquete, Chiriquí, Panama.*

Having consummated this act, the sons took care of the earth and each one took charge of a job for all eternity. These two men mutually agreed to do the great mission of caring for the seeds on earth (meaning the seeds on earth the people who inhabit the earth). The one dressed in gold took charge of caring during the daytime, while the one dressed in silver took charge of caring at night. Becoming the sun the one dressed in gold and the moon the one dressed in silver, being their mission to shine over the earth for all eternity.

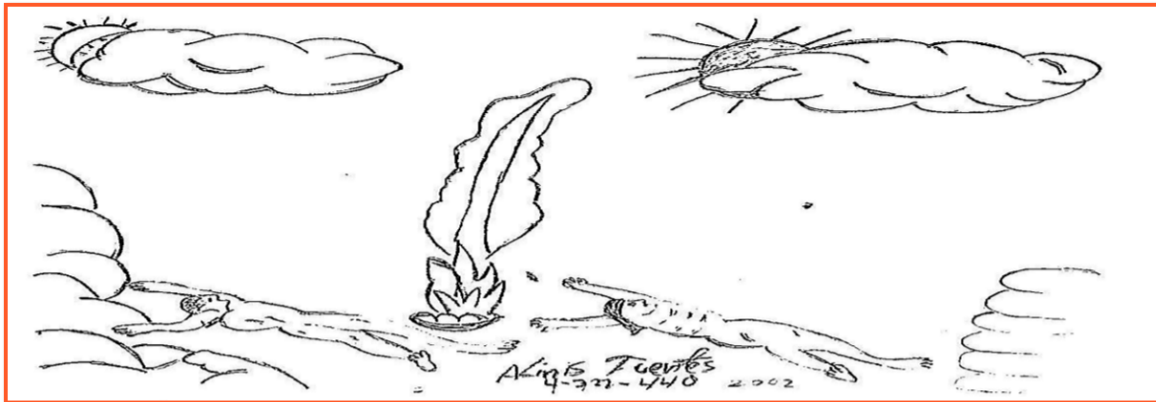
The man dressed in gold was of hot blood and, therefore, was aggressive and fierce as the hot light of the sun. That is why he was so enraged that he took such an outrageous decision with his mother. In other words, he was a bad son. On the other hand, the one dressed in silver was of cold blood, therefore, patient, kind, and of agreeable presence, such as the moon, with its cool light that doesn't burn nor is hot as the sun. For his kindness and good heart, even after the disgrace of his mother, he loved his unfortunate mother. That's why he has earned the fame of being a good son, not aggressive, kind in his ways.



Humanity has suffered as a consequence of draughts caused by the sun. On the other hand, humanity has paid little importance to the moon as a determinant luminous body of the heavens in caring for the earth.



Those were the two dirty boys who slept on the ashes and it was the fireplace from where they rose as giants to govern the world with their light for a long time.



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Note by Agricultural Engineer Roger Séptimo Jiménez

Among the meanings that are given to this legend, according to social and moral behavior, the following can be signaled out:

- Mothers who do not give importance to their children, who abandon and are careless with their children, to dedicate themselves to other activities to satisfy their selfish and individualistic desires, take the risk or luck that their children, when they are adults, will pay them back with the same coin.
- A mother cannot dedicate herself to do all the things that she freely wants to do in front of her children, who, even though they are children, will easily be aware of their mother's behavior, and it will be engraved in their minds forever. At some time, when the rebel, they will let their mother know what she had done and, therefore, for them, their mother does not mean much.
- Women not only have to do the role of being mothers and bring children into the world, but this implies duties and responsibilities to dedicate their lives and time to their children, to give a good education to their children with good examples and not dedicate themselves to an easy life of little sacrifice in detriment of the wellbeing of their children.
- Children who rebel against their mother for the life that she has, may definitely abandon her and exile themselves from her presence forever, or do an evilness to her to get rid of her.

- Mothers cannot think that their children will be defenseless all the time, but the children will grow up someday and will act according to the teachings and way of life in which they have grown as persons and will try to imitate or act all the contrary according to their convenience.
- In the particular case of this legend, mothers cannot have the life of husband and wife with their sons. These acts are shameful and contemptible in society and, therefore, unconceivable. It means that any action of this nature that occurs in the society, is not allowed according to social and moral criteria, and is condemned as immoral.
- It can be interpreted as blindness of a mother toward her sons and that, because of the life that she lives, is not aware of it. As in this legend, it can be a mistake of the mother in various ways; but, as it is said that errors are incurable, it is not worth lamenting independently if the act is done or not.

**CONOCE EL ARTE RUPESTRE EN PANAMÁ: Algunos Petroglifos en Chiriquí**

## CAMINO DEL ARTE RUPESTRE

Aprende a cuidar nuestro patrimonio histórico y cultural, jugando al caminar por este camino del arte rupestre. Usa dos tapitas o haz dos caritas que representen a las jugadoras/es. Escribe en cada una la pieza el nombre de cada jugador(a). Pon las piezas en **EMPEZAR**. Las jugadoras/es se turnan para lanzar al aire una moneda. **CARA** mueve **DOS** espacios hacia delante. **SELO** mueve **UN** espacio hacia delante. La/el primer jugador que llegue a la **META** es la/el ganador(a).

**Participa y Gana Premios!!!**

**Premios:**

- Tatuaje con Jagua
- Pisa Papel de Alfarería
- Pintar un Piedra

Alianza Estratégica para la Conservación  
- y la Divulgación del Arte Rupestre en Panamá

# JOLLY

**Luz Graciela**

PUBLIC DOMAIN CONTENT

