



ETHNOHISTORIES

Rogara Meto

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:

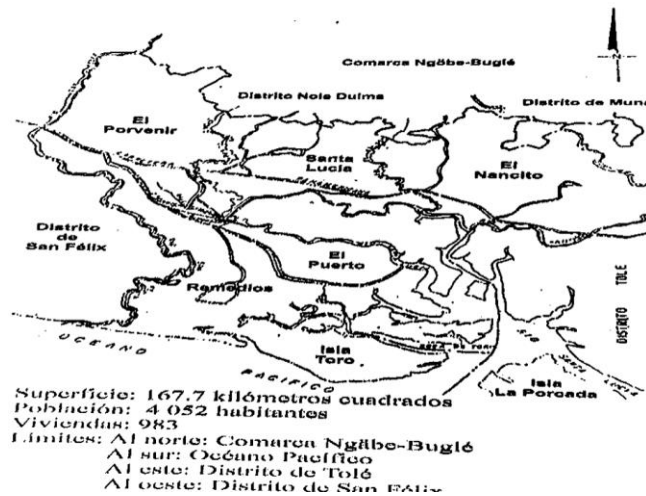
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, promote and pass on to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to name and maintain their communities, places, and people.
2. The States shall adopt effective measures to 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.



Rogatu (toponym in ngäbere) or Pan de Azúcar (toponym in Spanish) hill from which Gö Caballero threw himself to the Pacific Ocean Sánchez Pinzón, Milagros. Remedios: Tierra Legendaria. Panamá: Editorial Culturama Internacional. 2011:77.

ROGARA METO OR GÖ CABALLERO

This character was a *suguiá* who lived in the mountain ridge between the districts of Tolé (now Muna, Comarca Ngäbe Bugle) and Remedios.



On the left side of the map of the district of Remedios is the river San Felix that divides de district of San Félix from the district of Remedios. Sánchez Pinzón, Milagros Olimpia Remedios: Tierra Legendaria. Panamá: Editorial Culturama Internacional, 2011:34.

He had a very particular characteristic, by which almost all the indigenous people who lived in that area knew him. It is said that he could become two persons or could be in two different places at the same time.

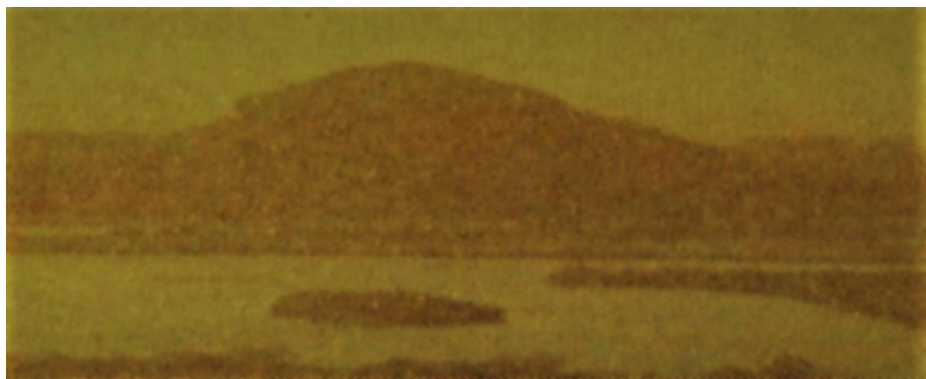
In times of the colonization and until a few days ago, the *suguiás* were persecuted by the colonizers, and after by their descendants, because, according to them, they were witches who attacked their expeditions, ruined their projects, produced failures, and did not let them be in peace. And any other phenomena that occurred to them, as they did not know its origins and the reason of the same, then it was blamed on the *suguiás*, considering them as witches. Nowadays, inclusive, they are considered the same way by non-indigenous elements.

This motivated the colonizers, the creoles, and their descendants to maintain an arduous campaign to liquidate all the *suguiás* who were living in the Guaymí (Ngäbe) region. They made constant trips by the

mountain ridge in search of the *suguiás*, making surveys, interviewing the indigenous people so that they would give them information about the existence of *suguiás*, to look for them and take them to the city, to then put them in jail or even kill them, with the intention of gradually eliminating the *suguiás* (witches), to avoid disagreeable and negative phenomena in their efforts to own the lands and natural resources of the indigenous people.

The Guaymies (Ngäbe), in their efforts to safeguard the physical integrity of the *suguiás*, very little or nothing said to the investigators. For that reason, their enemies, and strange elements, non-indigenous, very little knew about *suguiás*; there is nothing written about them, and, if there is, it has not been revealed to strange elements of the indigenous people in order to keep it occult.

Such were the circumstances in which Gö Caballero had to live, confronting the inclemency of those times. It seems that, in the search for *suguiás*, they found Gö Caballero and took him as a prisoner, taking him to the headquarters in Remedios where he would pay his fault for his witchcraft. But the notable Rogara Meto or Gö Caballero, did not even consider it important and only limited himself to follow the guards to go to jail.



Cerro Rogatu (toponym in Ngäbere) or Pan de Azúcar (toponym in Spanish), seen from the Mirador de El Nancito. Sánchez Pinzón, Milagros. Remedios: Legendary Land. Panama: Editorial Culturama Internacional. 2011: 77.

Remedios was a town with some houses built of wood and with roofs of the *maquenque* palm (*Oenocarpus* Mart.). Some houses were used as grocery stores, that were supplied by the merchandise coming from Spain, that arrived in the ships that continuously arrived at the port of Remedios.



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

The formidable Gö never suffered in the jail, as he would escape from it without the guards who guarded the penal site becoming aware of the fact. And as he could become two persons, he could be found in some other part when supposedly he should have been in the jail of Remedios. When the guards less thought, Gö would appear on the street eating bread and other things that he would take out of the store without the owner becoming aware of it. He would be put in jail again, but it was in vain; the same feat would repeat, Gö would always be walking on the street of Remedios with his characteristic voice “Gö”, from which comes his name Gö Caballero, by which the executioners knew him.

In such circumstances, the guards, and the store owners, with time, could not stand anymore Gö Caballero and were looking for a way to kill him. When his enemies became aware that they could not kill him at their will and tired of his mischief tricks and the intranquility that he caused, then they asked him in which way he would die and how could it be realized. He, without hesitation, would indicate the way in which he could die. Immediately, his enemies would execute it without any result.

His frustrated enemies would tell him that he was deceiving them successively, intent after intent, without being able to kill him. They would tie him to a pole and would then try to shoot him, but, at that precise moment, they would find him standing in another part, without being tied, and saying “Gö”. That is, at the moment of the shooting, he would miraculously escape from that place, provoking firing in the air.

It seems that Gö was also becoming bored of being in Remedios and, one day, he said to his executioner that he was tired and would definitely give orders and indicate the way to execute him so that he could die. He said that the only way to kill him was to tie him and cover all his body with straw, dry leaves, and garbage, and then burn him, by which he would be completely extinguished forever. His executioners, in their desire to really finish with his life, they did what he said and more; they, before burning him, bathed him in kerosene so that he would burn faster and become ashes. When they put fire on him, for the surprise of the guards and the observers, Gö was covered with flames, rose, and went jumping over each house, burning the roofs, until the whole town was in flames in an enormous fire. Then, he elevated himself with an enormous sound, throwing himself into the Pacific Ocean, from the top of the hill that still conserves his name “Rogatu”, for the Guaymí (Ngäbe), and fell into the ocean forever.

The Guaymies (Ngäbe) remember that this was the worse fire that destroyed the town of Remedios, caused by the formidable Rogara Meto, in answer to the intentions of his enemies to finish with his life as a *suguiá* and as a witch.



JOLLY

Luz Graciela

PUBLIC DOMAIN CONTENT

