

ACCOUNTS OF SUPERNATURAL BEINGS - SPIRITS,

WITCHES, WEREWOLVES, NINKINANKO, ETC.

FROM THE MANDINKA NEWSPAPER, KIBARO.

Translated by David P. Gamble

SAN FRANCISCO

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GAMBIAN STUDIES- MANDINKA LANGUAGE

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Gambian Studies

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16 pp.

It should be noted that the material is all in the old Mandinka script. In modern writing vowel length is shown by doubling the vowel - aa, ee, ii, oo, uu. In the 1950s the assumption was made that those who spoke Mandinka would have little trouble in dealing with vowel length.

In the old style	ny	was used where	\tilde{n}	is used now.
	ng	" " "	ŋ	" " "
	ch	" " "	c	" " "

The sounds	ai	are now written	ayi
	ei		eyi
	oi		oyi
	ui		uwi etc.

Original versions 1976, 1977.

Contents

		pages
Jinolu	Spirits	1-2
Kondorongo	Bearded dwarf	3-4
Bua	Witch	5-6
Ninkinanko	Fabulous snake	7
Werewolf		8-9
Katchikali	Pool with spirits and crocodiles	10-11

Kibaro : June 1951, p.4

m bi na kuma le fo la meng mu
Baddibu Saba kuo ti.
Jine le be je, a lafita
tulungo la bake,

hani a y'a tin'a ning jenkolu
famata tulungo la,
mo si fa ila sateo to.
Wo le y'a tin'a waati o waati,
Saba ka tulungo lo.
Ning itolu ma lo i si jine
tantang kango moi ila Mayong
fara.

I am going to say something
concerning Saba in Baddibu.
There is a spirit there, which
likes play (drumming & dancing)
very much,

so that is the reason if the people
there are long without a play,
someone would die in their town.
That is the reason why always
Saba holds dances.
If they don't put on one, they
would hear the sound of the spirit's
drum in their Mayong swamp.

(Kebba Singhatey)

(David P. Gamble)

This appeared under the title Kintekunda Karanbung Dindingo,
Kintekunda Schoolboy, presumably referring to Kebba Singhatey.

Kibaro was a Mandinka newspaper, produced by the Senior Commissioner's
office, under the auspices of Mr. Humphrey Smith, and ably edited by
Mr. Sherif T. Jammeh. Publication began in August 1950 and continued
until 1956, eleven issues a year normally being produced.

Kibaro: June/July 1953, p.4

TALINGO

Nying talingo mu dinding ne
la ku ti,
dinding meng ning a fama
dorong ne mu.

Nying dindingo ning Jinolu
dalita bake le,
hani fo Jinolu ka samba
nye muto la.
ning a ning Jinolu ye nying
furundingolu tabi, a si do
sunyang, a y'a samba a fama
ma.

Nying dindingo be nying ne
la lung o lung, fo labango la,
a fama nata jakali,
a mang a long a dingo ka
nying nyeolu bondi dameng.
Lung kiling dindingo ning
a fama bee tata nyola,
hanifo i futata bantang baa
kiling koto.

Dindingo ko a fama ye
"Sele santo".

Kabiring Jinolu nata,
kataba kiling i ko
"mondong fing ne ka sera jang".

Jinolu sapita keba kang,
i y'a fa, i y'a tabi,
dindingo balanta subo domo
la.

(Abdulai S. Bojang)

A TALE

This tale concerns a child,
a child who had only his father.

This child and the Spirits were
friends,
to the extent that the Spirits used
to take him to catch fish.
Whenever he and the spirits cooked
the sprats, he would steal some,
and take them to his father.

The child was doing this every day,
until in the end,
his father began to wonder,
he did not know where his child
was getting these fish.
One day the child and his father
both went out together,
until they came underneath a huge
silk-cotton tree.

The child said to his father,
"Climb up".

When the spirits came,
immediately they said
"a black person smells here"
(there is the smell of a black person
here)

The Spirits pounced on the big man,
they killed him, they cooked him,
The child refused to eat the meat.

(David P. Gamble)

There seems to be a merging of two traditions in this story.
Large cotton trees are believed to be the abode of spirits.

Where there is a belief in witches their meeting place is
considered to be high in the silk cotton trees. They are said
to kill small children, and cook and share the flesh.

PA JOHNSON NING KONDORONGO

Nying talingo keta ku le ti,
 meng y'a long ko tonya le mu.
 A kuo keta Sierra Leone ne.
 Sanji dantang tambita,
 nn karamo kiling ne be nung
 je karango la,
 wo le y'a fo nye.
 Lung kiling ne sotota keba
 kiling ne be Freetown kono
 meng mu jala-faila ti,
 i k'a f'a ye "Pa Johnson."
 Suto kiling nene baa boita,
 a bota baa kono jala fayola,
 aning nene baa.
 Silang biring a nata, a y'a
 la kulungo sembendi,
 a ye Kondorongo je.
 Biring a futata a ma
 Kondorongo ka ye ko
 "Keba n nata i makoi fo n si
 ila nyeo dolu bondi i ye.
 katu nene baa le be la.
 Adung ite kebayata le."
 Keba ka ye ko "yo, dinding".
 A ye keba la nyeolu bondi
 a ye tuma meng kola,
 a ka ye koteng,
 "N lafita i makoi la k'a
 samba i ye,
 katu i be bataring ne."
 Wo le nya keba ka ye ko
 "ila kuolu benta bake,
 katu bi jamaano dindingolu
 la keba makoyo mang feya."
 Kondorong dindingo nata keba
 nyininka, a ka ye ko
 "i be nyeo jala nying suto
 le bang, ning i futata."
 Keba ka ye ko "ha",
 m b'a jala nying suto le,
 ning wo nte janing somanda
 a si kumu."
 Kondorong dindingo ko keba
 ye ko "t'e la, nte m b'a ja
 no la i ye ne,
 katu i be bataring ne."
 Keba ye i laa nyameng,
 Kondorong dindingo ye ala

PA JOHNSON AND THE KONDORONGO
 (A mythical bearded dwarf)

This tale is something,
 which you should know is the truth.
 It happened in Sierra Leone.
 A few years ago,
 one of my teachers was once there
 studying,
 and he told it to me.
 One day it happened there was an old
 man in Freetown,
 who was a fisherman,
 and was called Pa Johnson.
 One day it became very cold,
 he returned from fishing at sea,
 very cold.
 Now when he came, and had beached
 his canoe,
 he saw a kondorongo.
 When it reached him
 the kondorongo said to him
 "Old man I have come to help you
 by unloading some of the fish for you,
 because you are very cold.
 Besides you are old."
 The old man said to him "Yes, child."
 After he had unloaded the old man's
 fish for him,
 he said to him again,
 "I want to help you carry them back,
 because you are tired."
 So the old man said to him
 "what you propose is very agreeable,
 because the children of today
 are reluctant to help the old."
 The young Kondorongo went on to ask
 the old man, and said to him
 "Will you be drying the fish tonight,
 when you reach?"
 The old man said to him "Yes",
 I will be drying them this night,
 if not, between now and morning
 they will spoil."
 The young Kondorong said to the old
 man "go and lie down, I myself will
 dry them for you,
 because you are tired."
 As soon as the old man lay down
 the young Kondorongo

nyeolu bee domo, a borita
 a tata wulo kono
 Fano keta nyameng keba
 sorita, nye ja dula,

a mang feng tara je
 fo kulu kensengo dorong.

ate all his fish and ran off,
 and went into the bush.
 As soon as dawn broke the old man
 rose early, (and went) to the fish
 drying place,
 he did not find anything there
 except for the bare bones only.

(Musa Marena)

(David P. Gamble)

Armitage School

The kondorongo is a mythical bearded dwarf, with feet back to front, that lives in the bush. Sometimes it may wrestle with a person it meets, and throw them to the ground, or it may play tricks on the person.

For beliefs among the Wolof see:

Ames, D.W. "The Dual Function of the 'Little People' of the Forest in the Lives of the Wolof,"
Journal of American Folklore, 71, Jan-Mar. 1958, 23-26.

Kibaro: September/October 1954, p.4

BUA MUSO NING KURANTO

Nying October karo tili woro,
sate do le be Dankunku dala,

i ka f'a ye ko "Babu Jobe".
Musu kiling ne be je a to mu
Mbayang le ti.
I ko bua le mu a ti.
Lung kiling a terima ka ye ko,
"n so durang to mafola,
katu nte la mafo banta le."
Mbayang ka ye ko, "nte fana
kiling ne be m bulu,
a dung nga a sang nyata le la,
fo ning nga do dila woto de."
Bitung Mbayang ye do fara
a ye wo nyeo to.
A y'a di meng na a to mu
Seinabu le ti.
Seinabu ye mafo taa a tata a
tabi.
Kabiring a ye a tabi, a y'a bo
a ning ila suknonkolu y'a domo.

Wo samo Seinabu ko a siso le
ka a dimi.
Arjuma lungo a k'a ke ye ko
"N siso kang n dimi bake,
adung ning Mbayang mang m bula
n te wuli la."
A kema to mu Usman Mbai le ti.
Usman Mbai tata Mbayang ya,
a ka ye ko "Seinabu siso b'a
diming na, a dung a ko ite le
ye mafo di ala,
wo le y'a muta."
Mbayang ka a ye ko "nte
jakalita ko,
katu nte nene mang wo moi
kabiring n wuluta fo bi."
Seinabu kotoma Omar Nket tata
Mbayang ya ka ye ko
"Wuli i ye boro dada Seinabu
ye ning i lafita kairo la."
Mbayang tata boro nyining,
Omar Nket tata a no ma
a y'a busa karawasola siny
nani,
Mbayang ye i bori a dunta
wulo la, fo Dankunku Sajino
bota nang, a nata a muta Yoro
ya.

THE WITCH AND THE SICK WOMAN

This October on the sixth
there is a certain village beside
Dankunku,
called Babu Jobe.
There is a woman there, her name
is Mbayang.
She is said to be a witch.
One day her friend said to her,
"Give me dried-fish for sauce,
for mine is finished."
Mbayang said to her "As for me
I have only one,
which I bought for threepence,
but I will give you some of it."
Then Mbayang cut off some
for her from that fish.
The woman she gave it to was called
Seinabu.
Seinabu took the dried fish and went
and cooked it.
When she cooked it, she took it
and she and the people of her
compound ate it.
Next morning Seinabu said her chest
was paining her.
On Friday she said to her husband,
"my chest is paining me very muuch,
and if Mbayang does not leave me
alone, I will never rise again."
Her husband's name was Usman Mbai.
Usman Mbai went to Mbayang's place,
and said to her "Seinabu's chest is
paining her, and she says the
dried fish you gave her,
that is what has caught her."
Mbayang said to him, "I am indeed
puzzled,
because I have never heard the like
since I was born until today."
Seinabu's elder brother Omar Nket
went to Mbayang's and said to her,
"Get up and prepare medicine for
Seinabu if you want peace."
Mbayang went to look for medicine,
Omar Nket went after her
and struck her with a whip four
times,
Mbayang ran away and went into
the bush, until the Sergeant from
Dankunku came and eventually caught
her at Yoro.

A y'a muta a nata fe Babu Jobe.

Bitung i ya tara Seinabu fata.
Omar Nket ye fango ta,
a ko a bita Mbayang dingo fala.

Mbayang kema ye Omar Nket y'a
muta, i nata Dankunku Seyfo ya.

Seyfo ye i nyiningka.
I bee ye la kumolu fo Seyfo ye.

Seyfo ko Omar Nket ye ko,
"mune ya tinna i ye fango ta
i ko i be a dingo fala ?"

Seyfo ye Omar Nket sorong.
Nying kuo keta bala fa ku ba
le ti.

He arrested her and took her to
Babu Jobe.

Then they found Seinabu had died.
Omar Nket took a cutlass,
and said he was going to kill
Mbayang's child.

Mbayang's husband seized Omar Nket
and came to the Chief at Dankunku.

The Chief questioned them.
They all told their stories to the
Chief.

The Chief asked Omar Nket,
"Why did you take a cutlass
with the intent of killing the
child ?"

The Chief locked up Omar Nket.
This matter was a very tragic
affair.

(Keba S. Sise)
Dankunku

(David P. Gamble)

This incident took place in a Wolof village.
For an account of beliefs regarding witchcraft among the Wolof
see: David W. Ames "Belief in 'witches' among the rural Wolof
of the Gambia." Africa, XXIX, July 1959, pp. 263-73.

Kibaro: August/September 1955, p.3

KOMBO BAKAU NINKINANKOLU

Nga mira naa Gambia jang
sate jamaa le ye ninkinanko
soto.

a
Ning sate meng mang /soto
woto wo mu sate fala dima
le ti.

Ninkinankolu tara dula
mu baa ning konkolu le ti.

Mo be duniya da o da, i bee
ka ninkinankolu kibarolu
moi le.

Ninkinanko menu ka a je
i ko a jeo ning kurang ning
saya le be tembering.

Kombo Bakau sateo dala,
molu sobita ko ninkinanko
be je le.

Lung kiling i ko nying Bakau
ninkinanko, kabiring sanji
baa keta, a bota nang baa
kono, a seleta tintito la (?),
bari dung, a ka dung nung
dinko meng kono,
wo lung sanjo ye wo dinko
bee taa le.

Wo le nyama nying ninkinanko
tata daka muta bolong kiling
dala.

Bari hani bi mo o mo
finjata wo bolongo mafang,
i kuntiyolu bee si i tama.

Tubabolu y'a kata sio bee'l
la, i ma muta no.
Tubabolu ye fanfelendangolu
ke je nya o nya, i mang feng
no a ma.

Mo dolu sotota menu lata ko
ninkinanko kungo to, safero
le be je, adung ning meng
y'a je, i be fala le.

Jola musu woro nene ye
ninkinanko je Bakau dala
ye le, bari i bee le fata.

(Sawalo Jack)

NINKINANKO (A FABULOUS SNAKE)
AT BAKAU IN THE KOMBO

I believe that in our Gambia here
many villages have ninkinanko.

If a village is without one,
there that is a village full of
pleasantness.

The places ninkinanko are found
are the river and hills.

(A hill near the river ?)

Wherever a person is in the world,
stories about ninkinankolu are to
be heard.

Whoever sees a ninkinanko
they say (by) seeing it sickness
and death are close.

Beside Bakau village in the Kombo,
people suspect that ninkinanko
is there.

One day they say this Bakau
ninkinanko, after heavy rain fell,
he came out of the river,
he climbed on the bank,
but then, the hole he used to go
into,
that day rain had taken (filled)
the whole hole.

In that way this ninkinanko
went to take a place beside a
creek.

But even now if anyone comes
near that creek,
their headmen (1) all would go away.

Europeans have tried in every way,
but have not caught him.

Europeans have put mirrors there
however they have not been able to
do anything to him.

Some people are there who believe
on ninkinanko's head, writing (a charm)
is there, and if anyone sees it, they
will die.

Six Jola women once saw ninkinanko
beside Bakau,
but they all died.

(David P. Gamble)

(1) The text says kuntiyolu headmen, but I wonder if
kuntinyolu head-hair is meant.

Kibaro: May 1955, pp. 1-2

JARRA KABADA KIBARO

Jarra Kabada Njamakuta, ke
kiling ne be je meng na
fansung murado mu luntang
jiya le ti.

Bari dung a fango mu mo
song tiyo (1) le ti fanang.
Ning julolu ning luntang
kotengolu be tambila
i bita Casamance, a si i
bendung ko mo nyimma,
a s'a fo ye ko "ali na nnga
ta suo kono, ali ye i ming,
adung ali nene mang tambila
ali si i munya hani fo
suo ye ku, katu Faransi
Duwanyolu ka tilibula tamo
le ke."

Julolu ning luntang tambilalu
mennu si song nying keo la
kumo la.

Ning nying Kabada Toranko ye
mo soto lung meng na,
a si wo kachandi ko mo nyimma
hani fo suo ye ku,
bitung a si ta wo bondi ka
silo yitand'a la.

Ning a ning meng tata hanifo
wula jango kono,
a si yelema suluo ti,
a ye wo mari bai,
hanifo meng be wo bulo,
wo s'a fai,
bitung ate si wo tombong
a ye sai nang su.

Nying Kabada Toranko be wo
le nyama hanifo wati jang.

Lung kiling a tata jula
kiling bondi, a yelemata
suluo ti wo fanang bulu,
a ye wo la fengo bee ta,
A y'a kodi a be saila suo^{kono,}
wo fanang bulata a noma,
kabiring wo y'a je
a be yelema mo ti nyameng
wo y'a bung bori munko la,

NEWS FROM JARRA KABADA

(WEREWOLF)

In Njamakuta, Jarra Kabada, there
was one man whose only business
was to be a host to strangers.

But then he himself was also a
werewolf (were-hyaena).
When traders and other strangers
were passing
and going to the Casamance, he would
meet them like a good person,
and say to them "Come let us go to
my home, so that you can drink,
and before you cross
you should rest until
night falls, because French Customs
go on day patrols.

The traders and passing strangers
who would agree to this man's
word.

If this Kabada Toranko had a person
on a given day,
he would chat with him like a good
person until night fell,
then he would go to see him off and
show him the way.

When together they went as far as
the far bush,
he would change into a hyaena,
and chase that person,
until what he was carrying
he would throw away,
then he himself would pick it up,
and return home.

This Kabada Toranko was doing this
for a long time.

One day he went to see a trader off,
and changed into a hyaena on him,

and took all his things.

He was about to return home,
when that person followed him,
when he saw
he was about to change to a person,
he shot him with a magic powder,

a mang yelema no kotenke
mo ti,
fo a kungo ning a bulolu
dorong.

Meng ye nying kumo soso,
i si ta Jarra Kabada
Njamakuta sateo to.

(Lamin B. Fofana)
of Pakalinding

he could not change back to a
person again,
except for his head and arms.

If anyone doubts this story,
he should go to Njamakuta in
Jarra Kabada.

(David P. Gamble)

- (1) I am uncertain about the phrase song-tiyo. The context indicated werewolf (hyaena).

Kibaro: June 1955, p. 1

KOMBO BAKAU KACHIKALA

Nga mira mo jamaalu be kering
mennu nyanta a long na ko,
kabiring nntolu saing molu
la mo fololu jamanolu i ka
Alla batu dula jamaa le soto
nung.

Mo folo dolu ka berolu le batu,
dolu ka ninsolu le batu,
adung dolu fanannu ka yirolu
le batu ko ila Alla

Bari Kombo Bakau sateo dala,
dala kiling ne be je meng
to mu Kachikala ti.

Nying Kachikala dalo be sutu
baa le kono,
ndung mo dolu ko a dalo ka
bo nang Saro woyo le to.
Nying Kachikala dalobambolu
le be je.

Nying bambolu, dolu be koiring
dolu be finding,
dolu be mampatarang.

Juma lung o Juma lung
bamba koyo le ka funti.

Nying Kachikala dalo i ko
Bakau Bojang Kunda le taa mu.
Molu ko nunto ning mo fata
Bakau Bojang Kunda,

nying bambo koyo ning kumbo
si bo dalo to hanifo
Bojang Kunda fango kono.

Kabiring nna mo fololu jamaano
la, nying Kachikala bambolu
buka ma,

mo buka i bung bere la,
sako kidi.

Katu ning meng ye i ka fa,
saya le ke i sata.

Ning jido soto koleyata meng
fe nung Bakau, Bojang Kunda-
nkolu ka wo muso samba nying
Kachikala dalo le to,
i y'a ku je.

Ning i be musu meng samba la je,
wo ka ke jongo le ti,
tabirolu si ke,
tantang koso ning dongo,

KACHIKALA, AT BAKAU, KOMBO

I believe there are many people
who ought to know that,
from the time of our ancestors to now
there were many places for
worshipping God.

Some of the first people used to
worship rocks,
others used to worship cattle,
and others used to worship trees
as their God.

But beside Bakau in the Kombo,
there is a lake which
is called Kachikala.

This Kachikala lake is in a grove
of trees,
and some say its lake originates
in Saro stream.

In this Kachikala, tame crocodiles
are there.

These crocodiles, some are white,
some are black,
some are brown.

Every Friday
a white crocodile comes out.

This Kachikala lake they say
Bojang Kunda in Bakau owns it.

People say that formerly if a person
died in Bakau Bojangkunda,
this white crocodile would come out
out of the lake crying, (and go) even to
Bojangkunda itself.

From the time of our first people,
these Kachikala crocodiles are not
touched,
people don't throw stones at them,
let alone shoot at them.
because if a person were to kill one,
death would follow him.

If having children was difficult for
anyone in Bakau formerly, Bojangkunda
people would bring that woman to
Kachikala lake,
and would bathe her there.

If they were taking a woman there,
that would be a big "play",
there would be cooking,
drumming and dancing.

Jamaa, jamaa ning Bojang Kunda
ye musu meng samba nying dalo to,
a muso buka me ding sotobali.
Kachikala mu dula le ti
meng ye molu jakali bake.

(Sawalo Jack)

Never, if Bojangkunda
has taken a woman to this lake,
will she be long without a child.
Kachikala is a place
which has puzzled people greatly.

(Translated by D.P.Gamble)