

A Reader's Guide to African Folktales at
the Internet Archive

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200 Books, plus an Anthology of Stories

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Norman, Jr., Norman Sr., Robert, and David, who moved ALL the books — thank you, gentlemen! This new “book of books” would not have been possible without your help.

Introduction

This book is divided into two parts: a **Bibliography of books containing traditional African stories** — folktales, epics, legends, and more — that you can find at the Internet Archive, plus an **Anthology of traditional African stories** reprinted from public domain sources (i.e. books published before 1927). I hope that these books and these stories will be useful for learners of all ages who want to find out more about traditional stories and storytellers from Africa.

The Bibliography

In choosing the 200 entries for the Bibliography, I tried to cover a wide range of materials. You will find beautifully illustrated children's books as well as monumental works of academic scholarship, each contributing in its own way to documenting the storytelling traditions of Africa. Some entries feature one book only, while others feature several related books. The most important thing is that ***all these hundreds of books are just a click away online***, instantly available to you at the Internet Archive. So, when you see a book that interests you, you can just click and start reading!

For the main book in each entry, I've included the Internet Archive address of the book, and that archive.org address is a link you can click on. There are often related book titles in an entry, and those titles are also links to the Internet Archive that you can click on. I included the URLs just in case someone is reading the print version of the book without links; you can always type the address into your web browser to access the book or search for the book using the Internet Archive's search features. Even better, though, would be to download your own

free digital copy of this book so that you can click on the links. You can download the free digital copy (PDF or epub) here: Bibliography.LauraGibbs.net.

The 200 book entries are organized alphabetically by the authors' last names. In each entry, I've tried to provide some background information about the authors and the illustrators so that they will be more than just names on a page. When I could find a Wikipedia article about an author or artist, I included a link to Wikipedia too. So, if you see a linked book title, that link goes to the Internet Archive, but if you see a linked name, that link goes to Wikipedia.

In addition, after each entry you will find suggestions for more books: more books from that same region of Africa, more books in that same genre, more books by the same author or illustrated by the same artist, etc. So, you can read through the entries in order, or you can create your own trail through the entries by following your own interests.

Some of the books included here are in the public domain, which means they are available for you to read online and even to download without any restrictions. Most of the books, however, are copyrighted works that are available via a system called "Controlled Digital Lending" — in other words, you can check out digital books for a fixed period of time from the Internet Archive just as you would check out a physical book from a physical library. After you create your free account, you can check out books for an hour at a time (sometimes longer), and you can check out the same book repeatedly, provided that nobody else is waiting to read it.

There are literally millions of books available for digital borrowing at the Internet Archive, with new books being added all the time. For more African books, and also books from the African Diaspora, you can visit my blog, *Laura's Bookshelf*, where I write about new books every day. Here's the address: Bookshelf.LauraGibbs.net

The Anthology

You will find 50 different African folktales in the Anthology portion of this book, many with illustrations. I hope that by browsing the stories in the Anthology you will get a sense of the kinds of stories that you like most. Maybe it will be the fairy tales, or perhaps the animal stories, or you might be curious about the stories that include songs and music.

Each story in the Anthology comes from a book that you can find in the Bibliography. So, when you discover a story that you like, you can instantly access that book at the Internet Archive and read more stories. You can also use the Bibliography to find related books, including more recent publications, which is something I would urge you to do. Thanks to the resources of the Internet Archive, you can go beyond the public domain books of a century ago to explore more contemporary books, especially books by African and African American authors.

And here's another thought: you too can use the old public domain books to create your own anthologies. Perhaps you are a teacher who wants to create a textbook for your students, or maybe you are a parent who wants to create a book for your children (or grandchildren or nieces or nephews), or you might be an artist who wants to create new illustrations for these old stories. That is all possible with public domain books at the Internet Archive and also at other public domain projects like Project Gutenberg at Gutenberg.org and LibriVox.org, a public domain audiobook project. It's easy to publish and even print your own books using a service like Pressbooks, which is the service I used to create this book; you can find out more at Pressbooks.com.

Meanwhile, thousands and thousands of African stories await you online. I hope this book will inspire you to explore widely, read lots of stories, and then share your favorite stories with others. That's how the stories stay alive, thanks to each and every storyteller.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

#1. Aardema, Verna. *Behind the Back of the Mountain: Black Folktales from Southern Africa*. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Published in 1973. Pages: 86.

archive.org/details/behindbackofmoun0000unse

[Verna Aardema](#) [1911-2000] was a prolific author of children's books based on African folktales, beginning with [Tales from the Story Hat](#) in 1960 and [More Tales from the Story Hat](#) in 1966; you can find out more in her memoir, [A Bookworm Who Hatched](#), published in 1992. Here in *Behind the Back of the Mountain*, you will find 10 folktales from southern Africa. The beautiful illustrations are by the African American artist [Leo Dillon](#) [1933-2012] and his wife, [Diane Dillon](#) [b. 1933]. For more books by Aardema illustrated by the Dillons, see the following two items.

More from southern Africa: [1], 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#2. Aardema, Verna. *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale*. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Published in 1975. Pages: 27.

archive.org/details/whymosquitoesbuz00aard

For more about the author [Verna Aardema](#) and the artists [Leo and Diane Dillon](#), see the previous item. This book won the Caldecott Medal, and it features a cumulative chain tale, one of the most popular African folktale genres: the mosquito begins a long chain of trouble that ends with the reason why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears. For more from Aardema and the Dillons, see the following item.

More award-winning books: [2], 38, 53, 67, 69, 72, 94, 98,
100, 104, 136, 145, 181

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#3. **Aardema, Verna. *Who's in Rabbit's House? A Masai Tale.***
Illustrated by **Leo and Diane Dillon**. Published in 1979. Pages:
30.

archive.org/details/whosinrabbitshou0000aard

This Maasai story from eastern Africa originally appeared in a book that [Verna Aardema](#) published in 1969: [Tales for the Third Ear from Equatorial Africa](#). Aardema's source for the story was A. C. Hollis's collection of Maasai folktales [see #108 below], which includes the story both in the Maasai language and in English: "[The Caterpillar and the Wild Animals](#)." To illustrate Aardema's version of the story, [Leo and Diane Dillon](#) show the events as a dramatic performance by the people of a Maasai village who wear masks representing the animal characters.

Other authors have worked with this same story, including Melinda Lilly in *Warrior Son of a Warrior Son* [see #126 below] and Tololwa Mollel in *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper* [see #143 below].

More from the Maasai people: [3], 108, 126, 134, 143

More Rabbit stories: [3], 4, 78, 103, 131, 146, 185

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#4. **Aardema, Verna. *Rabbit Makes a Monkey of Lion: A Swahili Tale.*** Illustrated by **Jerry Pinkney**. Published in 1989. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/rabbitmakesmonke0000aard

In this book, [Verna Aardema](#) collaborated with the African American artist [Jerry Pinkney](#) [1939-2021]. The story about the trickster rabbit comes from George Bateman's book of tales

from Zanzibar [see #25 below]: "[The Hare and the Lion](#)." You can also find a Swahili version of the story in Edward Steere's book *Swahili Tales as Told by Natives of Zanzibar* [see #180 below]: "[The Hare and the Lion / Sungura na Simba](#)."

Aardema and Pinkney also collaborated on a book inspired by African riddles: [Ji-Nongo-Nongo Means Riddles](#). For more from Aardema, see the previous and following items.

More from Jerry Pinkney: [4], 14, 15, 93, 199

More Swahili stories: [4], 25, 130, 180

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#5. **Aardema, Verna. *Misoso: Once Upon a Time Tales from Africa***. Illustrated by **Reynold Ruffins**. Published in 1994. Pages: 88.

archive.org/details/misosoonceuponti00aard

For this book, [Verna Aardema](#) [see #1 above] worked with the African American artist [Reynold Ruffins](#) [1930-2021; see also #89 below]. The book includes 12 stories, mostly from western Africa, with a bibliography of sources in the back.

One of Aardema's sources was "Bata Kindai Amgoza Ibn Lobagola," the African identity created by [Joseph Howard Lee](#) [1877-1947], who masqueraded for many years as a self-proclaimed "savage" from western Africa. Under that name Lee published both an autobiography and also a collection of stories, [Folktales of a Savage](#). Aardema, along with many others, took Lobagola at his word, and she retold his story "[The Man Who Thought That He Was Foolish](#)" in this book, side by side with stories from African sources.

More from African American / Diaspora artists: 1, 2, 3, 4, [5], 14, 15, 37, 38, 39, 72, 86, 89, 93, 99, 102, 104, 110, 145, 154, 157, 176, 181, 186, 195, 199

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#6. **A'Bodjedi, Enènge. *Ndòwé Tales***. Published in 1999. Pages: 257.

archive.org/details/ndowetalesIndowe00abod

Enènge A'Bodjedi begins his book with a cultural overview of the Ndowe people of Equatorial Guinea on the west coast of central Africa. As the author explains, he immigrated to the United States to escape the Macías dictatorship in the 1970s, and while in the United States he began collecting stories from other Ndowe people so that he could preserve and share their traditions in English. A'Bodjedi has included 15 stories in this book, each of which is accompanied by detailed notes.

More from central Africa: [6], 85, 147, 174, 183

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#7. **Abrahams, Roger. *African Folk Tales: Traditional Stories of the Black World***. Published in 1983. Pages: 353.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales0000unse_n5b9

This anthology by [Roger Abrahams](#) [1933-2017], a professor of folklore at the University of Pennsylvania, contains 93 stories from across Africa. The stories are organized thematically: wonder tales, dilemma tales, tricksters and animal tales, epic tales, and tales of daily life, along with a detailed bibliography of sources.

In addition to his work on African folklore, Abrahams also wrote about African American and Caribbean traditions, including this important anthology: [***African American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World***](#).

More from across Africa: [7], 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#8. **Achebe, Chinua** and **John Iroaganachi**. *How Leopard Got His Claws* [East African Educational Publishers Sparrow Readers series]. Published in 1996. Pages: 25.
archive.org/details/howleopardgothis00ache

Yes, this is a children's book by the renowned Nigerian novelist [Chinua Achebe](#) [1930-2013], author of *Things Fall Apart*. The story, first written by John Iroaganachi [b. 1928] and later revised by Achebe, uses traditional African folktale characters to create a literary fable inspired by the Biafra conflict. The "Lament of the Deer" included in the story was composed by [Christopher Okigbo](#) [1932-1967], a Nigerian poet who died fighting for Biafran independence.

For another folkloric story by Achebe, see his Tortoise tale, "[The Drum](#)," in Véronique Tadjó's *Chasing the Sun*, #187 below.

More from Nigeria: [8], 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#9. African Women's Network. *Stories from Africa*. Illustrated by the authors. Published in 2009. Pages: 35.
archive.org/details/horsestortoisesr0000unse

This book is the result of a community-based project from the African Women's Network in Dublin, Ireland, featuring 10 stories written and illustrated by members of the collective. Most, but not all, of the stories are animal stories, and each story indicates its country of provenance along with the name of the storyteller. The book is intended for use in elementary schools so that Irish children can learn about Africa and also for African children living in Ireland so that they can celebrate their heritage.

More from African authors: 6, 8, [9], 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143,

144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187,
189, 193

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#10. **Al-Shahi, Ahmed** and **Francis C. T. Moore**. *Wisdom from the Nile: A Collection of Folk-Stories from Northern and Central Sudan* [Oxford Library of African Literature series]. Published in 1978. Pages: 256.

archive.org/details/wisdomfromnile00oxfo

The 71 stories in this book provide a gateway into the Arabic storytelling traditions of northern Africa. The stories were collected by students at the University of Khartoum working with storytellers in communities along the Nile in upper and central Sudan. The authors, Ahmed Al-Shahi and Francis C. T. Moore, then translated the stories into English. There is a long introduction that puts the stories in their cultural and geographic context, and there is also a detailed glossary of words and concepts in the back of the book.

More from northern Africa: [10], 24, 50, 77, 88, 115, 142, 172
More from the *Oxford Library of African Literature*: [10],
82, 90, 169

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#11. **Amadu**. *Amadu's Bundle: Fulani Tales of Love and Djinns* [African Writers series]. Edited by **Gulla Kell** and translated by **Ronald Moody**. Published in 1972. Pages: 88.

archive.org/details/amadusbundlefula0000amad

This book contains 28 stories written by Amadu, a Fulani *malum* (scholar) from western Nigeria, as edited and translated into German by the anthropologist Gulla Pfeffer Kell [1887-1967]. Kell was working with the Ful-speaking peoples of Cameroon and Nigeria in the 1920s when she met Amadu on

his travels through the Ngaoundéré Plateau of Cameroon. He shared with her a bundle of stories he had written down; hence the title of the book [compare Rattray's work with Shaihua, a Hausa *malam*; see #165 below]. [Ronald Moody](#) [1900-1984] later translated the stories into English for the *African Writers* series; for another book in this important series, see #193 below: ***The Way We Lived: Ibo Customs and Stories*** by Rems Umeasiegbu.

More from western Africa: [11], 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, 95, 105, 131, 132, 147, 150, 160, 166

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#12. **Appiah, Peggy. *Ananse the Spider: Tales from an Ashanti Village***. Illustrated by **Peggy Wilson**. Published in 1966. Pages: 152.

archive.org/details/anansespidentale0000appi

[Peggy Appiah](#) [1921-2006] was a British-born author of children's books whose husband was from Ghana, and Appiah lived in Ghana for most of her adult life — and, yes, she is the mother of the philosopher and cultural theorist [Kwame Anthony Appiah](#) [b. 1954]. This book of 13 Spider stories was Appiah's first collection of African folktales. Appiah went on to write many more collections of Ashanti folktales and proverbs, as well as novels about life in western Africa. For more of Appiah's work, see the following item.

More Spider stories: [12], 14, 15, 18, 20, 52, 55, 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, 178

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#13. **Appiah, Peggy. *Tales of an Ashanti Father***. Illustrated by **Mora Dickson**. Published in 1967. Pages: 157.

archive.org/details/talesofashantifa00appi

For this project, [Peggy Appiah](#) has retold stories that her husband, [Joe Appiah](#) [1918-1990], told to their children. The book contains 22 stories, including stories about Spider and other animals, along with stories about human characters. Many of the stories are aetiological “why” stories: why the leopard has spots, why the snake has no legs, why nephews inherit property in Ashanti, how death came to mankind, etc. For more Spider stories from Appiah, see the previous item.

More from Ghana: 12, [13], 18, 20, 32, 37, 55, 90, 136, 165, 199

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#14. **Arkhurst, Joyce Cooper.** *The Adventures of Spider: West African Folk Tales*. Illustrated by **Jerry Pinkney**. Published in 1964. Pages: 58.

archive.org/details/adventuresofspid0000arkh

This book features 6 Spider stories that Joyce Arkhurst [b. 1921] heard from storytellers in Liberia and Ghana (her husband, Frederick Arkhurst, was a career diplomat born in Ghana). The illustrations are by [Jerry Pinkney](#). This was Pinkney's first book and does not yet have that immediately recognizable quality of his later work, although you can see hints of his style emerging even here. There is also an abridged edition, [The Further Adventures of Spider](#), published as part of the *Passport to Reading* series. For more Spider stories from Arkhurst and Pinkney, see the following item.

More from Jerry Pinkney: 4, [14], 15, 93, 199

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#15. **Arkhurst, Joyce Cooper.** *More Adventures of Spider: West African Folk Tales*. Illustrated by **Jerry Pinkney**. Published in 1972. Pages: 48.

archive.org/details/moreadventuresof000arkh

This book is a sequel to Joyce Arkhurst and [Jerry Pinkney](#)'s earlier book, ***The Adventures of Spider*** [see previous item], featuring 6 more Spider stories. Pinkney's mature style as an artist had taken shape by the time this book was published, and the illustrations are beautiful. Unlike the previous collection, in which the stories stood on their own without commentary, the stories in this book each have a brief introduction providing some cultural context, and there is also a glossary in the front of the book.

More Spider stories: 12, 14, [15], 18, 20, 52, 55, 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, 178

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#16. **Arnott, Kathleen. *African Myths and Legends*** [Oxford Myths and Legends series]. Illustrated by **Joan Kiddell-Monroe**. Published in 1962. Pages: 212.

archive.org/details/africanmythslege00arno

[Kathleen Arnott](#) [1914-2010] was an English missionary who lived for 12 years in Nigeria, arriving there in 1939 and returning to England in 1951. This book of 34 stories, with illustrations by [Joan Kiddell-Monroe](#) [1908-1972], was Arnott's first folktale anthology. The stories come from a variety of African storytelling traditions, with a bibliography of sources in the back of the book. Some of the Hausa and Fulani stories in the book were translated into English by Arnott's husband, [David Whitehorn Arnott](#) [1915-2004], a professor of West African languages at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Kathleen Arnott is also the author of [Tales of Temba: Traditional African Stories](#), which features illustrations by African American artist Tom Feelings [see #104 below].

More *Oxford Myths and Legends*: [16], 28, 142

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#17. **Atkinson, Norman.** *The Broken Promise, and Other Traditional Fables from Zimbabwe.* Illustrated by **Tali Geva-Bradley.** Published in 1989. Pages: 88.

archive.org/details/brokenpromiseoth00atki

Norman Atkinson [1932-2014] was an educator affiliated with the University of Zimbabwe (formerly the University of Rhodesia). He was born in Ireland, attended university in Ireland and England, and then came to Zimbabwe in 1970 where he spent the rest of his life. This book contains 16 stories, mostly from Shona storytellers, along with some Ndebele and Venda stories. The book is intended for teachers and students, so you will find discussion questions and suggested learning activities throughout the book.

More from southern Africa: 1, [17], 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#18. **Badoe, Adwoa.** *The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Stories.* Illustrated by **Baba Wagué Diakit .** Published in 2001. Pages: 64.

archive.org/details/potofwisdom00adwo

[Adwoa Badoe](#), a physician and a storyteller, was born and educated in Ghana; she now lives in Canada. This book features 10 Spider stories that Badoe heard growing up in Ghana. The illustrations are by Baba Wagu  Diakit  [b. 1961; see #69-71 below], an artist and writer from Mali who now lives in Oregon. Badoe dedicated the book to her mother, while Diakit 's dedication is to his grandmother, who told him that "stories teach us about the importance of all living creatures."

More from African artists: [18], 69, 70, 71, 74, 81, 96, 112, 118, 134, 139, 160, 164, 187, 196

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#19. **Barbosa, Rogério Andrade. *African Animal Tales.***

Translated by **Feliz Guthrie** and Illustrated by **Ciça Fittipaldi.**

Published in 1993. Pages: 63.

archive.org/details/africananimaltal00barb

[Rogério Andrade Barbosa](https://archive.org/details/africananimaltal00barb) is a Brazilian author, and he wrote this book based on his experiences living in Guinea-Bissau (formerly Portuguese Guinea) where he worked for the United Nations. In retelling these 10 animal stories, Barbosa has created frame-tales that set up each storytelling scene. For example, the story of “The Rain-God’s Vengeance” opens with the story of a hippo hunt, while the story of “Why Dogs Sniff Each Other” is presented as the story a grandfather tells to his grandson. The illustrations by Ciça Fittipaldi are inspired by the Yoruban art traditions of western Africa.

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, [19], 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, 95, 105, 131, 132, 147, 150, 160, 166

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#20. **Barker, William and Cecilia Sinclair. *West African Folk-***

Tales. Illustrated by **Cecilia Sinclair.** Published in 1917. Pages:

184. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/westafricanfolkt00barkrich

William Barker and Cecilia Sinclair collected these stories from African students at a teacher training center in Accra, the capital of Ghana. The students wrote down the stories in English, and the authors then selected 36 stories to include in the book, sometimes combining multiple versions of the same story into a single version. Many of the stories in the book are about Anansi the Spider, and Cecilia Sinclair’s illustrations

depict the trickster in his human form. There is also a [free LibriVox recording](#) of this book.

More from Ghana: 12, 13, 18, [20], 32, 37, 55, 90, 136, 165, 199

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#21. **Bascom, William. *African Dilemma Tales***. Published in 1975. Pages: 162.

archive.org/details/africandilemmata0000unse_q6w6

In this book, [William Bascom](#) [1912-1981], an anthropologist at the University of California at Berkeley, presents summaries of 168 African dilemma tales, often including multiple variations of the same story, along with a detailed bibliography. Each story ends with a “dilemma” in the form of two or three or more choices, with the idea being that the storyteller’s audience would then debate the options. These stories are sometimes called “riddle tales,” but unlike a riddle, the dilemma tale does not have a specific solution; instead, the dilemma is meant to be open to debate. For more from Bascom, see the following item.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, [21], 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#22. **Bascom, William. *African Folktales in the New World***. Published in 1992. Pages: 243.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales0000bascom

After his definitive work on African dilemma tales [see the previous item], [William Bascom](#) published this groundbreaking study of African folktales in the Americas. The book has 14 chapters, with each chapter focusing on a specific story that is attested in Africa and also found in the Americas. As with the dilemma tales, Bascom here provides hundreds of story

summaries along with a detailed bibliography that you can use to find the full version of each story, many of which are available at the Internet Archive.

In addition to these folktale studies, Bascom is also the author of ethnographic works such as [*The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*](#) and [*Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa*](#).

More African folklore in the Americas: [22], 59, 100, 105, 109

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#23. **Baskerville, Rosetta. *The Flame Tree and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda***. Illustrated by Mrs. E. G. Morris. Published in 1900. Pages: 113. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.] archive.org/details/flametreeotherfo00bask

Rosetta Baskerville was the wife of George Baskerville, a missionary in Uganda. This was her first book of Ugandan folktales, published in 1900, with 22 stories plus 2 songs. In 1922 Baskerville published a second collection, [*The King of the Snakes and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda*](#), which contains an additional 26 stories, 4 songs, plus a selection of proverbs. Some of the stories Baskerville heard herself, while other stories she adapted from the Baganda folktales collected by [Apollo Kaggwa](#) [1864–1927; see #113 below].

For a modern retelling of Baskerville’s “[The Story of the Frog](#)” see #126 below: ***Wanyana and Matchmaker Frog: A Bagandan Tale*** by Melinda Lilly.

More from Uganda: [23], 113, 149, 176

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#24. **Basset, René. *Moorish Literature***. Published in 1901. Pages: 281. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/moorishliteratur00bassuoft

[René Basset](#) [1855-1924] was a French linguist who specialized in the languages of the Amazigh (Berber) peoples of northern Africa. This book contains 42 folktales along with ballads, romances, and folk poetry. In addition to this book in English translation, you can find other books by Basset in French at the Internet Archive, including his monumental [Contes Populaires d'Afrique](#) (almost 500 pages long!). Some of Rene Basset's stories appear in the *Fairy Books* of Andrew Lang [see #12] below].

For a more recent collection of Amazigh folktales, see [An Anthology of Tashelhiyt Berber Folktales](#) by Harry Stroomer.

More from northern Africa: 10, [24], 50, 77, 88, 115, 142, 172

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#25. **Bateman, George. *Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa***. Illustrated by **Walter Bobbett**. Published in 1901. Pages: 224. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/cu31924029908229

The 10 stories in this book come from Swahili-speaking storytellers on the island of Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania), as retold in English by George Bateman. There is also a [LibriVox audiobook version](#) available, and you can find the original Swahili texts in Edward Steere's book, *Swahili Tales as Told by Natives of Zanzibar* [see #180 below]. The main trickster in this book is the rabbit, who is called Sungura in Swahili, and Bateman's book provided the source story for Verna Aardema's *Rabbit Makes a Monkey of Lion: A Swahili Tale* [see #4 above].

More Swahili stories: 4, [25], 130, 180

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#26. **Belcher, Stephen. *Epic Traditions of Africa*.** Published in 1999. Pages: 277.

archive.org/details/epictraditionsof00belc

This book by Stephen Belcher, an academic and writer who grew up in Africa (his father was a U.S. Foreign Service officer), provides a detailed overview of the African epic tradition, as you can see from the chapter titles: Elements of Epic Traditions, Epics of Central Africa, Hunters' Traditions and Epics, Traditions of the Soninke, Sunjata and the Traditions of the Manden, Segou and the Bamana, Traditions of the Fula, and Emergent Traditions. There is also an extremely useful appendix of "Published Epic Texts" that provides an inventory of the published versions of all the epics referred to in the book: Lianja, Mwindo, Jeki, Ozidi, Wagadu, Sunjata (by far the most widely published), Hambodedio, Samba Gueladio, and more.

More epics: [26], 33, 40, 51, 83, 90, 101, 110, 148

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#27. **Bender, Carl. *African Jungle Tales*.** Published in 1919. Pages: 64. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/bender.-african-jungle-tales-1919

Carl Bender [1869-1935] was a German-born American missionary in Cameroon. During his years in Africa, he collected folktales and eventually published 30 of them in this book. Bender indicates the cultural tradition of each storyteller, with most of the stories coming from the Kwe people of southwest Cameroon.

In addition to collecting folktales, Bender also collected proverbs, which he published in this booklet: [*Proverbs of West Africa*](#).

More from Cameroon: [27], 94, 188

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#28. **Bennett, Martin.** *West African Trickster Tales* [Oxford Myths and Legends series]. Published in 1994. Pages: 130.
archive.org/details/westafricantrick00benn

Martin Bennett, an English poet and writer, has worked as a teacher in both Ghana and Nigeria. This book contains 10 stories about Spider (called Anansi in Ghana, Gizo in Nigeria), Rabbit (called Leuk in Senegal), and other West African trickster characters.

The book was later reissued under the title *Tales from West Africa* with illustrations by Rosamund Fowler [b. 1963]. Fowler has also illustrated other *Oxford Myths and Legends* books, including [*Tales from the West Indies*](#) by Philip Sherlock [1902-2000], which features Anansi stories from the Caribbean.

More *Oxford Myths and Legends*: 16, [28], 142

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#29. **Berger, Terry.** *Black Fairy Tales*. Illustrated by **David Omar White**. Published in 1969. Pages: 137.
archive.org/details/blackfairytale00berg

In this book, Terry Berger [b. 1933] has taken 10 stories from Bourhill and Drake's *Fairy Tales from South Africa* [see #36 below] and retold them for a new audience, as she explains in the book's dedication: "This book was done especially for the Black Children who have never read black fairy tales." Berger chose some stories that resonate with familiar European fairy tales, while other stories are distinctively African, such as "[The](#)

[Fairy Bird](#),” a famous South African folktale about a magical milk-giving bird.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, [29], 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#30. **Bergsma, Harold** and **Ruth Bergsma**. *Tales Tiv Tell*. Illustrated by **A. Ajayi**. Published in 1968. Pages: 104.

archive.org/details/talestivtell0000unse

Harold Bergsma [b. 1932] and his wife Ruth Bergsma [1933-2017] spent 12 years as missionaries and educators in Nigeria, arriving there in 1955. This book of 44 stories is the result of a project they completed with students in Benue State in north-central Nigeria: the students collected stories in the Tiv language (Tiv-speakers live in both Nigeria and in Cameroon), and the Bergsmas then translated the stories from Tiv into English. The book is intended for a Nigerian audience, especially students in Nigerian schools, as you can see in the reading comprehension questions after each story.

More from Nigeria: 8, [30], 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#31. **Berry, Jack**. *West African Folktales*. With an introduction by **Richard Spears**. Published in 1991. Pages: 229.

archive.org/details/westafricanfolkt00berr

Jack Berry [1918-1980] was a professor of African languages at various European, American, and African universities. This book is the culmination of his work on West African storytelling traditions, and it contains 123 folktales with accompanying notes. Berry recorded the stories over a period of forty years, working with storytellers in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria.

The preface to the book, “Spoken Art in West Africa” (originally written in 1961) provides a very useful overview of the beauty and complexity of these oral art traditions — stories, proverbs, riddles, and songs — along with the difficulties faced both in recording the stories and also in presenting the stories to English-speaking audiences. The book was unfinished at the time of Berry’s death, but Richard Spears completed the final editing and wrote the introduction.

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, [31], 53, 64, 95, 105, 131, 132, 147, 150, 160, 166

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#32. **Berry, James. *Don’t Leave an Elephant to Go and Chase a Bird***. Illustrated by **Ann Grifalconi**. Published in 1996. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/dontleaveelephan00berr

[James Berry](#) [1924-2017], born in Jamaica, was one of the early champions of West Indian writing in England, where he lived for most of his adult life. Berry is best known as a poet, and in 1990 he was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. In addition to being a poet, Berry was also a storyteller, and in this book, Berry retells the story “[Do Not Leave an Elephant Behind to Go and Throw a Stone at the Wren](#)” from Rattray’s *Akan-Ashanti Folk-Tales* [see #165 below]; it is a tale about the trickster spider Anansi. The wonderful illustrations are by [Ann Grifalconi](#) [see also #94 and #152 below]. For more from Berry, see his book of Caribbean Spider stories: [Anancy-Spiderman](#).

More from African American / Diaspora authors: 14, 15, [32], 37, 38, 39, 44, 46, 79, 83, 100, 102, 124, 145, 181, 195, 199

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#33. **Biebuyck, Daniel and Kahombo C. Mateene. *The Mwindo Epic from the Banyanga [Congo Republic]***. Published in 1971. Pages: 213.

archive.org/details/mwindoepicfromba0000unse_f4l8

The epic story of the hero Mwindo is a tradition of the Nyanga people in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [Daniel Biebuyck](#) [1925-2019] and Kahombo C. Mateene (who was the director of Language Policy for the Organization of African Unity) created this English version of Mwindo's adventures based on oral performances in the 1950s and 1960s; you can read about their research and fieldwork in the introduction. The book includes both the Nyanga text and an English translation.

More epics: 26, [33], 40, 51, 83, 90, 101, 110, 148

More from the Congo: [33], 43, 68, 107, 167, 197

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#34. **Bleek, Wilhelm. *Reynard the Fox in South Africa, or Hottentot Fables and Tales***. Published in 1864. Pages: 94. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/reynardfoxinsou00blee

[Wilhelm Bleek](#) [1827-1875] was a German linguist who went to South Africa in 1855 to work on a Zulu grammar, thus beginning the work on African languages that would occupy the rest of his life. In this book, Bleek provides English translations of 42 stories and songs of the Khoekhoe people (then called Hottentots). Bleek assembled the texts from earlier published works and manuscripts, many of them written by missionaries, including [Johann Georg Krönlein](#) [1826-1892]. Bleek chose the title "Reynard the Fox" to make a claim for the high cultural value of these stories, in which the trickster jackal plays a role very similar to the role played by the trickster fox

Reynard in the European tradition. For more of Bleek's work, see the following item.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, [34], 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#35. **Bleek, Wilhelm, Lucy Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek. *The Mantis and His Friends: Bushman Folklore***. Illustrated with San rock art as drawn by **George Stow**. Published in 1924. Pages: 68. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/bleek-mantis-friends-1924

In 1875, [Wilhelm Bleek](#) [see previous item] and his sister-in-law [Lucy Lloyd](#) [1834-1914] began working with some San (Bushman) storytellers, documenting their stories and songs in carefully transcribed sessions. When Bleek died in 1875, Lloyd carried on his work, as did Bleek's daughter, [Dorothea Bleek](#) [1873-1948]. This book, published in 1924, is Dorothea Bleek's rendering of 22 San stories for a general audience, illustrated with San cave art as copied by [George William Stow](#) [1822-1882].

For detailed transcriptions of the storytelling sessions on which this book is based, see the monumental book [Specimens of Bushman Folklore](#), which Lloyd published in 1911 including both the San texts and English translations.

For a modern poetic rendering of some of these San stories, see [Song of the Broken String: Poems from a Lost Oral Tradition](#) by [Stephen Watson](#) [1954-2011].

More from the San people: [35], 125, 173

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#36. **Bourhill, Mrs. E. J. and Mrs. J. B. Drake. *Fairy Tales from South Africa***. Illustrated by **W. Herbert Holloway**. Published in

1908. Pages: 249. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/fairytalesfromso00bourrich

The 20 fairy tales in this book are based on Swazi and Zulu stories from Swaziland (now Eswatini) and from KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The commentary in the book's introduction is deeply racist in a way that is inappropriate for young readers today, but there is a more modern version without the same racist framework in Terry Berger's ***Black Fairy Tales***, #29 above, which retells 10 of the stories from this book.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, [36], 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#37. **Bryan, Ashley. *The Adventures of Aku***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1976. Pages: 71.

archive.org/details/adventuresofakuo00brya

[Ashley Bryan](#) [1923-2022] is an African American artist and storyteller, and this is one of his early African folktale books; see the following items for more. As the core of the story, Bryan adapted [a cat-and-dog tale](#) from Rattray's ***Akan-Ashanti Folk-Tales*** [see #165 below] with this long title: "How it came about that we shall always see Okra the cat lying on a velvet cushion, while 'Kraman the dog will sleep among the ashes of the kitchen fire."

You can find a very different take on the same Ashanti story in [The Na of Wa](#) by [Verna Aardema](#).

More from Ghana: 12, 13, 18, 20, 32, [37], 55, 90, 136, 165, 199

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#38. **Bryan, Ashley. *African Tales, Uh-Huh.*** Illustrated by the author. Published in 1998. Pages: 199.

archive.org/details/ashleybryansafri00brya

This book is a compendium containing all 13 stories from three of [Ashley Bryan](#)'s African folktale books: [The Ox of the Wonderful Horns](#) from 1971, which was Bryan's first African folktale project; [Beat the Story-Drum, Pum-Pum](#), which was a Coretta Scott King award-winner in 1981; and [Lion and the Ostrich Chicks](#), which was a Coretta Scott King honor-winner in 1987.

Another Ashley Bryan book, [Beautiful Blackbird](#), won the Coretta Scott King Award in 2004; the story in that book comes from "[How the Ringdove Came by its Ring](#)" in Smith and Dale's *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* [see #179 below].

More award-winning books: 2, [38], 53, 67, 69, 72, 94, 98, 100, 104, 136, 145, 181

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#39. **Bryan, Ashley. *The Night Has Ears: African Proverbs.*** Illustrated by the author. Published in 1999. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/nighthasearsafri0000unse

In addition to his African folktale books, [Ashley Bryan](#) also created this book of African proverbs, illustrated in his colorful, vivid, immediately recognizable style [see also #37-38 above, and #67, #157, and #186 below]. Proverbs are a vital part of African cultural traditions, and they were also a part of Bryan's childhood, as he explains in the book's preface: "I grew up in a household of proverbs. My mother had a proverb ready for any situation, attitude, or event."

More proverbs: 27, [39], 42, 82, 109, 116, 123, 154, 156, 165, 167, 182

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#40. **Budge, E. A. Wallis.** *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek*. With illustrations from Ethiopian manuscripts. Published in 1922. Pages: 241. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/queenofshebahero00kebr

The *Kebrā Nagast* or “Glory of the Kings,” is the national epic of the Ethiopian Christians, probably composed sometime in the 14th century. It tells the story of Queen Makeda of Ethiopia (the Queen of Sheba), King Solomon, and their son Menelik, who brought the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia. This translation by [E. A. Wallis Budge](#) [1857-1934] was the first complete translation of the *Kebrā Nagast* into English. Budge is also the author of [The Alexander Book in Ethiopia](#), which is a translation of the Ethiopian versions of the *Alexander Romance*, a legendary life of Alexander the Great.

There is also a shorter English version of the *Kebrā Nagast* at the Internet Archive: [The Golden Legend of Ethiopia](#) by Post Wheeler. For another study of the Queen of Sheba legend, see the work by Enno Littmann, #128 below.

More from Ethiopia: [40], 54, 66, 97, 118, 119, 128

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#41. **Burlin, Natalie Curtis, C. Kamba Simango, and Madikane Ćele.** *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*. Published in 1920. Pages: 170. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/songstalesfromda00burl

[Natalie Curtis Burlin](#) [1875-1921] was an ethnomusicologist who studied African and African American music; she was also a scholar of Native American music. To create this book of African stories, songs, and proverbs, Burlin worked with two coauthors:

the Zulu songs and stories come from Madikane Čele, and the Ndaus songs, stories, and proverbs come from C. Kamba Simango [d. 1966]. Both Čele and Simango were students at the Hampton Institute in Virginia.

Simango later studied at Columbia University with [Franz Boas](#) [1858-1942] before returning to Mozambique to work as a missionary and educator. For more Ndaus stories and proverbs, see the article Simango wrote with Boas: "[Tales and Proverbs of the Vandau of Portuguese South Africa](#)" published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1922.

More books with music: [41], 166, 176, 190, 192

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#42. **Burton, Richard Francis. *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa*.** Published in 1865. Pages: 455. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/witandwisdomfro01burtgoog

[Richard Francis Burton](#) [1821-1890] was a renowned scholar and world traveler who was fluent in many languages of the Middle East and of Africa. For this book, Burton compiled over 2000 proverbs from previously published sources, reporting the proverbs both in their original languages — Wolof, Kanuri, Ashanti, Ga, Yoruba, Efik, and more — along with English translations, plus explanatory notes. Burton also published a memoir in 1863 about his travels in West Africa: [Wanderings in West Africa](#).

More proverbs: 27, 39, [42], 82, 109, 116, 123, 154, 156, 165, 167, 182

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#43. **Burton, William. *The Magic Drum: Tales from Central Africa*.** Illustrated by **Ralph Thompson**. Published in 1961.

Pages: 127.

archive.org/details/magicdrumtalesfr0000burt

William F. P. Burton [1886-1971] was a Pentecostal missionary at the Congo Evangelistic Mission. He came to Africa in 1914 and spent the rest of his life there. This book contains 38 stories from the Luba people who live in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the introduction, Burton provides a brief overview of the traditional village life of the Luba people and the crucial role played by proverbs and stories. In addition to this collection of folktales, Burton published many other books, including a memoir: [*Missionary Pioneering in Congo Forests*](#).

More from the Congo: 33, [43], 68, 107, 167, 197

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#44. **Cabral, Len** and **Mia Manduca**. *Len Cabral's Storytelling Book*. Published in 1997. Pages: 235.

archive.org/details/lencabralstoryt0000cabr

[Len Cabral](#) [b. 1948] is a professional storyteller whose grandparents came to the United States from Cape Verde off the west coast of Africa. This book contains 8 African folktales, along with Caribbean, Native American, European, and Asian stories, and each story features detailed, encouraging suggestions to help people develop their own storytelling skills and style.

One of the stories in this book provided the subject matter for another book by Len Cabral: [*Anansi's Narrow Waist: An African Folk Tale*](#), with illustrations by [David Diaz](#) [b. 1960], who also illustrated [*Smoky Night*](#) by [Eve Bunting](#) [b. 1928], for which Diaz won a Caldecott Medal.

More from African American / Diaspora authors: 14, 15, 32, 37, 38, 39, [44], 46, 79, 83, 100, 102, 124, 145, 181, 195, 199

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#45. **Callaway, Henry. *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus***. Published in 1868. Pages: 378. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/cu31924026950968

This monumental book by [Henry Callaway](#) [1817-1890] contains 50 Zulu folktales and historical anecdotes featuring both the Zulu text and Callaway's English translation side by side. Callaway gathered these stories during his missionary work with the Zulu people in Natal in South Africa. After publishing these Zulu stories in 1868, he published [The Religious System of the Amazulu](#) in 1870, which also contains both the Zulu text and the English translation side by side.

For more literary renderings of some of these stories, see McPherson's *Native Fairy Tales of South Africa*, #138 below.

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, [45], 49, 73, 90, 108, 111, 114, 116, 127, 128, 165, 169, 180, 182, 191

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#46. **Camphor, Alexander Priestley. *Missionary Story Sketches: Folk-Lore from Africa***. Illustrated with photographs. Published in 1909. Pages: 346. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/missionarystories00camp

[Alexander Priestly Camphor](#) [1865-1919] was born to parents who had been slaves on a sugar plantation in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. After their deaths, he was adopted and raised by a Methodist minister named Stephen Priestley; you can read Camphor's own account of his early life in [The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race](#). He and his wife were among the first Black missionaries from the United States in Africa, where Camphor was superintendent of the Methodist schools

in Liberia. This book provides an account of Camphor's time in Liberia along with 20 traditional stories and also proverbs that he collected there.

More from Liberia: [46], 62, 74, 79, 102, 157, 161

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#47. **Cancel, Robert. *Storytelling in Northern Zambia*** [*World Oral Literature* series]. Illustrated with photographs. Published in 2013. Pages: 274.

archive.org/details/storytelling-zambia

Robert Cancel is a professor of African literature at the University of California in San Diego, and this book is the product of his work with Bemba storytellers in Zambia over a period of 30 years. In addition to the English translations of the 41 stories, you can watch the video recordings of the storytellers using the links at the [Open Book Publishers website](#). As Cancel explains in the introduction to the book, "the video record can at least give the narrators a greater presence in this discussion. If nothing else, these video records and my descriptions will provide a more direct representation and, therefore, some form of agency to the performers included here."

More from Zambia: [47], 73, 179

More from the *World Oral Literature* series: [47], 82, 101.

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#48. **Carpenter, Frances. *African Wonder Tales***. Illustrated by **Joseph Escourido**. Published in 1963. Pages: 215.

archive.org/details/africanwonder00carp

[Frances Carpenter](#) [1890-1972] was a folklorist and author. Her book of 24 African folktales is especially useful because most of the sources she used were in French, so you will find stories

here that you will not find in other English-language story collections.

You can find other books by Frances Carpenter at the Internet Archive, including more of her "[Wonder Tales](#)" books, plus several of her "[Our Little Friends](#)" books and "[Tales of a Grandmother.](#)"

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, [48], 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#49. **Chatelain, Heli.** *Folk-Tales of Angola.* Published in 1894. Pages: 315. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/folktalesofangol00chat

[Héli Chatelain](#) [1859-1908] was a Swiss missionary and linguist. He arrived in Angola in 1885 and was assigned the task of writing a grammar and dictionary of Kimbundu for the use of other missionaries. This book of 50 folktales contains the Kimbundu text along with an English translation, plus detailed linguistic and cultural notes. Chatelain was a strong proponent of the value of both folktales and proverbs, and he also advocated a comparative approach to cultural traditions, emphasizing the connections among cultures and maintaining that "African folklore is not a tree by itself, but a branch of one universal tree."

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, 45, [49], 73, 90, 108, 111, 114, 116, 127, 128, 165, 169, 180, 182, 191

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#50. **Chimenti, Elisa.** *Tales and Legends of Morocco.* Translated by **Arnon Benamy.** Published in 1965. Pages: 155.

archive.org/details/taleslegendsofmo00chim

[Elisa Chimenti](#) [1883-1969] was born in Italy, but her family moved to Tunis when she was a baby. When she grew up, Chimenti relocated to Morocco where she opened a school in Tangier. In addition to teaching, she was also a prolific author, writing in both French and Arabic. There are 47 stories in this book, which was originally published in French in 1959. The introduction gives an overview of the many storytelling traditions of Morocco and of Tangier in particular, and there is also a very helpful glossary.

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, [50], 77, 88, 115, 142, 172

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#51. **Clark-Bekederemo, J. P. *Collected Plays and Poems, 1958-1988***. With an introduction by **Abiola Irele**. Published in 1991. Pages: 423.

archive.org/details/collectedplayspo00clar

[J. P. Clark-Bekederemo](#) [1935-2020], who began his literary career publishing under the name John Pepper Clark, was a major figure in Nigerian literature. This collection of his plays and poems includes “[Ozidi](#),” a theatrical version of the epic adventures of the Ijo hero Ozidi. The book also features an introduction by [Abiola Irele](#) [1936-2017], author of [The African Imagination](#). In addition to this collection of Clark-Bekederemo’s poetry and plays, you can also find his 1969 collection of essays at the Internet Archive: [Their America: The Nigerian Poet and Playwright’s Criticism of American Society](#).

Clark-Bekederemo is one of the authors included in the *Twayne’s World Authors* series: [J. P. Clark](#) by Robert M. Wren.

More epics: 26, 33, 40, [51], 83, 90, 101, 110, 148

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#52. **Collins, Stanley Harold. *Ananse the Spider: Why Spiders Stay on the Ceiling*** [*Sign Language Literature* series]. Illustrated by **Kathy Kifer, Dahna Solar** and **Charla Barnard**. Published in 1997. Pages: 26.

archive.org/details/anansespiderwhys0000unse

This is a fascinating version of an Ashanti story about Anansi the spider: on the left-hand page you will see the American Sign Language version, and on the right-hand page you will see the story's text written in English with illustrations.

If you are interested in this type of bilingual sign-language book, there is another book in this same series at the Internet Archive: [Fountain of Youth, a Korean Folktale](#).

More Spider stories: 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, [52], 55, 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, 178

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#53. **Courlander, Harold** and **George Herzog. *The Cow-tail Switch, and Other West African Stories***. Illustrated by **Madye Lee Chastain**. Published in 1947. Pages: 143.

archive.org/details/cowtailswitchoth0000cour_a5o6

[Harold Courlander](#) [1908-1996] was an ethnomusicologist and folklorist who wrote many books about Africa, along with books about African American, Caribbean, and Native American storytelling traditions, plus other books about world folklore. This book was a Newbery Honor winner, and it contains 17 folktales from western Africa. Courlander's co-author was anthropologist [George Herzog](#) [1901-1983], who collected some of the Liberian stories that appear in this book. For many more books by Courlander, see the following items.

More award-winning books: 2, 38, [53], 67, 69, 72, 94, 98, 100, 104, 136, 145, 181

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#54. **Courlander, Harold** and **Wolf Leslau**. *The Fire on the Mountain, and Other Ethiopian Stories*. Illustrated by **Robert W. Kane**. Published in 1950. Pages: 141.

archive.org/details/fireonmountainot00cour

For this book of 24 stories from Ethiopia and Eritrea, [Harold Courlander](#) collaborated with linguist [Wolf Leslau](#) [1906-2006], who was an important scholar of Ethiopian languages; for more books by Leslau, see #123 below. Courlander and Leslau later reissued this book with a slightly different title — *The Fire on the Mountain, and Other Stories from Ethiopia and Eritrea* — after Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1991. For more books by Courlander, see the previous and following items.

More from Ethiopia: 40, [54], 66, 97, 118, 119, 128

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#55. **Courlander, Harold** and **Albert Kofi Prempeh**. *The Hat-Shaking Dance, and Other Tales from the Gold Coast*. Illustrated by **Enrico Arno**. Published in 1957. Pages: 115.

archive.org/details/hatshakingdanceo0000cour

This book is a collection of Ashanti stories from Ghana, which was known as the “Gold Coast” during the colonial era. Courlander’s co-author for this book was Albert Kofi Prempeh, a student from Ghana. You will find 21 stories here, many of them about Anansi. This book marks [Harold Courlander](#)’s first collaboration with Enrico Arno [1913-1980], a Jewish artist who escaped Nazi Germany and eventually settled in the United States. Arno went on to illustrate several other books by Courlander, including #56-58 and #60 below.

More Spider stories: 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 52, [55], 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, 178

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#56. **Courlander, Harold. *The King's Drum, and Other African Stories***. Illustrated by Enrico Arno. Published in 1962. Pages: 125. archive.org/details/kingsdrum0000unse

This book by [Harold Courlander](#) features 29 stories from a wide range of sub-Saharan storytelling traditions. Each story has an indication as to its cultural origin, and there are specific notes about Courlander's sources in the back of the book, along with cultural and comparative analysis. Some of the stories come from previously published books, while others are stories that Courlander and his collaborators collected. Several stories come from Albert Kofi Prempeh, who was Courlander's co-author for the previous item, #55, *The Hat-Shaking Dance*.

More from Enrico Arno: 55, [56], 57, 58, 60

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#57. **Courlander, Harold and Ezekiel Eshugbayi. *Olode the Hunter, and Other Tales from Nigeria***. Illustrated by Enrico Arno. Published in 1968. Pages: 153. archive.org/details/olodehunteroth00cour

This marks [Harold Courlander](#)'s first collaboration with Ezekiel Eshugbayi; for another book of Nigerian folktales that they wrote together, see the following item. Most of the 29 stories in the book are from the Yoruba people, along with some Hausa and Igbo stories too. The main trickster character in this book is the Tortoise, called Ijapa (or Ajapa) in Yoruba. There are detailed notes for each story, along with a brief essay about Ijapa, plus observations about jujus, the orishas, and other elements of

Yoruban culture. For more books by Courlander, see the previous and following items.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, [57], 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#58. **Courlander, Harold** and **Ezekiel Eshugbayi**. *Ijapa the Tortoise, and Other Nigerian Tales*. Illustrated by **Enrico Arno**. Published in 1969. Pages: 153.

archive.org/details/ijapatortoiseoth0000cour

This is [Harold Courlander](#)'s second book with Ezekiel Eshugbayi; their first book, *Olode the Hunter, and Other Tales from Nigeria* [see the previous item] also contains Tortoise tales. In this book you'll find 18 stories, with detailed notes in the back, per Courlander's usual practice. Some of the stories come from previously published sources, while other stories come from oral sources, including Courlander's co-author, Ezekiel Eshugbayi, who was from Ilesha in southwestern Nigeria. For more books by Courlander, see the previous and following items.

More Tortoise stories: [58], 151, 156, 187, 198, 200

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#59. **Courlander, Harold**. *Tales of Yoruba Gods and Heroes*. Illustrated by **Larry Lurin**. Published in 1973. Pages: 240.

archive.org/details/talesofyorubagod0000cour

[Harold Courlander](#) collected the materials in this book from Yoruba storytellers; you'll see a list of their names in the acknowledgments. There is an introduction to Yoruba culture, followed by an overview of the main gods, heroes, and other characters. Then the stories begin: almost 200 pages of stories, plus appendices about Yoruba traditions in the Americas. There

is also an appendix about Yoruba music in the Americas (Courlander was a musicologist as well as being a collector of folktales and mythology). For more books by Courlander, see the previous and following items.

More African folklore in the Americas: 22, [59], 100, 105, 109

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#60. **Courlander, Harold. *A Treasury of African Folklore.*** Illustrated by **Enrico Arno**. Published in 1975. Pages: 617.
archive.org/details/treasuryofafrica00cour

Here's how [Harold Courlander](#) summarizes the range of almost 300 stories contained in this massive anthology: "creation myths, myth-legends, half-legendary chronicles and historical narratives either in song or prose; tales that explain natural phenomena, tribal practices and taboos, and cultural or political institutions; stories and fables that reflect on the nature of man and his strengths and weaknesses; tales of adventure, courage, disaster, and love; epics with legendary heroes or fictitious heroes, and tales of confrontation with the supernatural and unseen forces of nature; moralizing stories and stories that define man's place and role in the universe; riddles that amuse and teach, and proverbs that stress social values; and a virtually inexhaustible reservoir of animal tales." For more books by Courlander, see the previous and following items.

More big — really big! — books: 42, [60], 73, 75, 105, 158, 167, 169, 170, 177, 179, 180, 191, 197

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#61. **Courlander, Harold. *The Crest and the Hide, and Other African Stories.*** Illustrated by **Monica Vachula**. Published in

1982. Pages: 137.

archive.org/details/cresthidea00cour

Like [Harold Courlander](#)'s earlier book, *The King's Drum, and Other African Stories* [see #56 above], this book is a collection of 20 stories from a variety of storytelling traditions in Africa: "stories of heroes, chiefs, bards, hunters, sorcerers, and common people" as Courlander explains. For more of Courlander's books, see the previous items.

The beautiful illustrations are by Monica Vachula, who also did the illustrations for Tom Gilroy's book of stories about a village in Senegal: [In Bikole: Eight Modern Stories About Life in a West African Village](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, [61], 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#62. **Creel, J. Luke** and **Bai Gai Kiahon**. *Folk Tales of Liberia*. Illustrated by **Carol Hoorn Fraser**. Published in 1960. Pages: 144. archive.org/details/folktalesofliber00cree

This is a book of Vai stories from Liberia that J. Luke Creel [1900-1985], a poet and professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College, heard from Bai Gai Kiahon. Kiahon was born in Liberia, studied medicine in Germany, and then returned to Liberia. (The book was later translated into German under the title *Der Knabe und der Löwe. Geschichten und Fabeln aus Liberia*.) There are 16 stories in the book, including several Spider stories. The illustrations are by [Carol Hoorn Fraser](#) [1930-1991], a Canadian artist.

More from Liberia: 46, [62], 74, 79, 102, 157, 161

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#63. Cronise, Florence and Henry W. Ward. *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk Tales*. Illustrated by Gerald Sichel. Published in 1903. Pages: 330. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/cunnierabbitmrsp00cronrich

Florence Cronise heard these stories told by Temne storytellers at a mission school in Rotifunk, Sierra Leone, where she was stationed from 1884-1889. She recorded the stories in the pidgin English of the storytellers, and Henry Ward then arranged 38 of the pidgin stories inside a frame tale written in literary English, much as [Joel Chandler Harris](#) [1848-1908] did with his *Uncle Remus* books. The “cunnie rabbit” of the title is not a rabbit at all; instead, this is *Neotragus pygmaeus*, a tiny antelope not even one foot tall who is one of the main trickster figures in the folktales of western Africa.

More from Sierra Leone: [63], 82, 114

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#64. Dadié, Bernard Binlin. *The Black Cloth: A Collection of African Folktales*. Translated by Karen C. Hatch, and with a foreword by Es'kia Mphahlele. Published in 1987. Pages: 140.

archive.org/details/blackclothcollec0000dadi

[Bernard Binlin Dadié](#) [1916-2019] was a novelist and playwright from Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), and a leader in the anticolonial movement. This book was first published as *Le Pagne Noir: Contes Africains* in 1955; the English translation appeared in 1987. The book contains 11 traditional folktales plus three tales that are the product of Dadié's own creation: “The Black Cloth,” “The Mirror of Dearth,” and “The Man Who Wanted to Be King.” Anansi is the thread that runs throughout the book; he appears in almost every story.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, [64], 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, 193

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#65. **Davis, Jennifer**. *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia*. Illustrated by **Libby Costandius**. Published in 1993. Pages: 84.

archive.org/details/stolenwaterothe00davi

This book contains 25 folktales that Jennifer Davis heard from storytellers in Namibia in southern Africa; see the acknowledgments for the storytellers' names. Davis explains her purpose in writing the book as follows: "Many old people I visited showed concern about the fact that young people are losing their traditions. They feel that if the youth keep in touch with their past, they will have a greater pride in their identity. For that reason I have collected these stories and retold them for children to read."

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, [65], 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#66. **Davis, Russell** and **Brent Ashabranner**. *The Lion's Whiskers: Tales of High Africa*. Illustrated by **James G. Teason**. Published in 1959. Pages: 191.

archive.org/details/lionswhiskersta00davi

Russell Davis [1922-1993] and [Brent Ashabranner](#) [1921-2016] went to Ethiopia in 1955 as part of an educational project run by the U.S. Agency for International Development, and this book is a translation into English of 31 stories that they collected while traveling the country. Russell Davis went on to become

a professor of education at Harvard University while Brent Ashabranner became a Peace Corps administrator, and they continued to collaborate on book projects, including [*Land in the Sun: The Story of West Africa*](#).

Some years after Davis's death, Ashabranner prepared a new edition of *The Lion's Whiskers* under a slightly different title: [*The Lion's Whiskers and Other Ethiopian Tales*](#). This 1997 edition contains only half of the stories, but it does include beautiful illustrations by Helen Siegl [1924-2009]; for more art by Siegl, see #194 below.

More from Ethiopia: 40, 54, [66], 97, 118, 119, 128

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#67. **Dayrell, Elphinstone. *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria***. With an introduction by **Andrew Lang**. Published in 1910. Pages: 159. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.] archive.org/details/folkstoriesfrom00dayrrich

Elphinstone Daryell [1869-1917] was a British colonial administrator in southern Nigeria who had an interest in anthropology and folklore. This book of 40 stories opens with comparative notes by [Andrew Lang](#) [for the African stories included in Lang's own *Fairy Books*, see #121 below]. Dayrell later published a second book with 34 more Nigerian folktales: [*Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*](#).

Inspired by the story "[The Sun and the Moon](#)" in this book, [Blair Lent](#) wrote and illustrated [*Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky*](#), which won the Caldecott Medal. Another of Dayrell's stories — "[Lightning and Thunder](#)" — inspired [Ashley Bryan's *The Story of Lightning and Thunder*](#).

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, [67], 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#68. **Dennett, Richard.** *Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort.* Published in 1898. Pages: 169. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/notesonfolklore00dennuoft

[Richard Dennett](#) [1857-1921] was an English ivory trader who first arrived in Africa in 1879. In addition to this collection of 32 Bakongo folktales from what was then the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Dennett also published a memoir: *[Seven Years among the Fjort.](#)*

In 1902 Dennett left the Congo and joined the Nigerian Forest Service. Based on his research in Nigeria, he later wrote several books about Yoruba language and culture, including *[Nigerian Studies: The Religious and Political System of the Yoruba.](#)*

More from the Congo: 33, 43, [68], 107, 167, 197

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#69. **Diakit , Baba Wagu .** *The Hunterman and the Crocodile: A West African Folktale.* Illustrated by the author. Published in 1997. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/dkthntr

Baba Wagu  Diakit  [b. 1961] is an artist from Mali who is now based in the United States. He both wrote and illustrated this book, which received the Coretta Scott King Award. The digital version that you will find at the Internet Archive comes from the International Children's Digital Library, a site that has been archived by the Internet Archive's [Wayback Machine](#). For more art by Diakit , see #18 above, and for more of his art and writing, see the following items.

More award-winning books: 2, 38, 53, 67, [69], 72, 94, 98, 100, 104, 136, 145, 181

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#70. **Diakité, Baba Wagué. *The Hatseller and the Monkeys: A West African Folktale***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1999. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/hatsellermonkeys00diak

This is another folktale from West Africa written and illustrated by Baba Wagué Diakité (see the previous and following items for more of his work). Following the story, Diakité explains that he first heard this folktale from his uncle, prompted by a visit from a Fulani milk-seller who was wearing two cone-shaped dibiri hats, one on top of the other. Tales similar to this one are found in many other cultures, and Diakité provides a list of parallel versions. For example, you can find another African version from the Sudan — “[The Monkeys and the Little Red Hats](#)” — in Carpenter’s *African Wonder Tales*, #48 above.

More from African artists: 18, 69, [70], 71, 74, 81, 96, 112, 118, 134, 139, 160, 164, 187, 196

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#71. **Diakité, Baba Wagué. *Mee-An and the Magic Serpent: A Folktale from Mali***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 2007. Pages: 30.

archive.org/details/meeanmagicserpen00diak

This is yet another folktale from West Africa written and illustrated by Baba Wagué Diakité. In addition to the story and wonderful illustrations by the author, there are also songs with the words in both Bambara (which is one of the languages of Mali) along with the English translation. For more from Diakité,

see the previous items, and also his memoir about growing up in Mali: [A Gift from Childhood](#).

More children's picture books: 2, 3, 4, 32, 38, 39, 52, 69, 70, [71], 72, 89, 94, 96, 98, 106, 115, 119, 126, 136, 141, 143, 145, 152, 172, 178, 181, 185, 186, 188, 199

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#72. **Diop, Birago. *Mother Crocodile: An Uncle Amadou Tale from Senegal***. Translated by **Rosa Guy** and illustrated by **John Steptoe**. Published in 1981. Pages: 27.

archive.org/details/mothercrocodilem00diop

[Birago Diop](#) [1906-1989] was a francophone poet and storyteller from Senegal and a leader of the Pan-African literary movement known as Négritude. The story in this book, "Maman-Caiman," is one that Diop learned from Amadou Koumba, his family's Wolof griot, and it is included in a collection of Koumba's stories that Diop published in French: *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba*. The translator, [Rosa Guy](#) [1922-2012], was a Trinidadian American author who met Diop while traveling in Senegal.

The illustrations are by [John Steptoe](#) [1950-1989], an African American artist and writer. Steptoe received a Coretta Scott King Award for this book, as he did also for the book *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*; see #181 below.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, [72], 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, 193

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#73. **Doke, Clement.** *Lamba Folk-Lore*. Published in 1927. Pages: 570. [This book will enter the public domain in 2023.]

archive.org/details/lambafolklore20doke

[Clement Doke](#) [1893-1980] was a South African missionary and linguist who specialized in the Bantu languages of central and southern Africa. This monumental book, almost 600 pages long, contains 159 stories told by the Lamba people of northern Zambia (which was called Rhodesia at the time) and the southern Congo (which was then called the Belgian Congo). The stories are presented both in Lamba and in English. There are also proverbs, riddles, and songs, plus a long introduction to the culture and language of the Lamba people. For more about the Lamba people, see Doke's ethnographic study: [The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia: A Study of Their Customs and Beliefs](#).

More from Zambia: 47, [73], 179

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#74. **Dorliae, Peter.** *Animals Mourn for Da Leopard, and Other West African Tales*. Illustrated by **Solomon Irein Wangboje**. Published in 1970. Pages: 69.

archive.org/details/animalsmournford00dorl

Peter Gondro Dorliae [b. 1935] is a writer and folklorist from Liberia; after working as a civil servant, he became Chief of the Yarwin-Mehnsoneh district upon the death of his father in 1966. The 10 stories he tells here come specifically from the Mano people who live in northeastern Liberia.

The illustrations are by Solomon Irein Wangboje [1930-1998], an artist from Nigeria who also did the illustrations for [A Crocodile Has Me by the Leg: African Poems](#) by [Leonard Doob](#) [1909-2000].

More from Liberia: 46, 62, [74], 79, 102, 157, 161

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#75. **Dorson, Richard.** *African Folklore*. Published in 1972.
Pages: 587.

archive.org/details/africanfolklore0000unse

[Richard Dorson](#) [1916-1981] was a professor of folklore and director of the Folklore Institute at Indiana University; he was also the editor of the *Folktales of the World* series [see #77 below]. This book is an edited volume that contains a wide range of essays about African folklore along with folktale texts from Liberia, Ghana, Mali, Cameroon, Gabon, South Africa, and the Sudan; those texts occupy about 200 pages of this 600-page book.

In the essay section of the book, you will find pieces by William Bascom [see #21-22 above], Daniel Biebuyck [see #33 above], Lee Haring [see #101 below], and Harold Scheub [see #169-171 below].

More big — really big! — books: 42, 60, 73, [75], 105, 158,
167, 169, 170, 177, 179, 180, 191, 197

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#76. **Dresser, Cynthia.** *The Rainmaker's Dog: International Folktales to Build Communicative Skills*. Illustrated by **Kate Lannas, Katerine Moir, and Tom Paisrayi**. Published in 1998.
Pages: 309.

archive.org/details/rainmakersdog00cynt

Cynthia Dresser, a specialist in English language education, wrote this textbook for use by her students in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), where she served as a member of the Peace Corps in the 1980s, and in Zimbabwe. The book contains folktales from across sub-Saharan Africa — 6 stories from Central Africa, 8 stories from Western Africa, 4 stories from Eastern Africa, 3 stories from Southern Africa

— along with additional stories from Haiti and Australia. Each story is accompanied by creative learning exercises to develop comprehension and communication skills. The illustrations and text decorations are by Tom Paisrayi, an artist from Zimbabwe; Kate Lannas, also from Zimbabwe; and Katerine Moir, an artist from Eswatini.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, [76], 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#77. **El-Shamy, Hasan. *Folktales of Egypt*** [*Folktales of the World* series]. With a foreword by **Richard Dorson**. Published in 1980. Pages: 347.

archive.org/details/folktalesofegypt00elsh

[Hasan El-Shamy](#) [b. 1938] is a scholar of the folklore of the Arab world, including the folklore of northern Africa. For this book, he has translated 70 modern Egyptian folktales into English. El-Shamy is also the author of a monumental reference work, [Types of the Folktale in the Arab World](#), which indexes Arab tales from both the Middle East and from Africa, including Algeria, Eritrea, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia.

For ancient Egyptian folktales, see El-Shamy's re-edition of Gaston Maspero's classic [Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt](#).

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, 50, [77], 88, 115, 142, 172

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#78. **Elliot, Geraldine. *Where the Leopard Passes: A Book of African Folk Tales***. Illustrated by **Sheila Hawkins**. Published in 1949. Pages: 126.

archive.org/details/whereleopardpass0000elli

Geraldine Elliot [d. 2003] was born in India and grew up in England, where she was “Aunt Geraldine” for a BBC children’s

radio program in the early 1920s. In 1928 she went to Africa when her husband, who was in the British Colonial Service, was posted to Malawi. Elliot wrote and published four folktale books during the three decades she would spend in Malawi and later in Zimbabwe. This book features 17 Ngoni folktales about Kalulu the trickster rabbit, and the book's title comes from a proverb about the rabbit and the leopard: "Where the leopard passes, there also Kalulu will go." Another of Elliot's story collections, [*The Long Grass Whispers*](#), is also available at the Internet Archive.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, [78], 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#79. **Ellis, George Washington. *Negro Culture In West Africa*.** Illustrated with photographs. Published in 1914. Pages: 290. [This book is in the public domain.]
archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.153835

George Washington Ellis [1875-1919] was an African American lawyer who served in the American delegation to the Republic of Liberia. During his posting in Liberia, Ellis undertook a decade-long study of the Vai people, and in this book he provides an overview of Vai culture, along with 52 Vai folktales plus a collection of proverbs. The title of the book — *Negro Culture in West Africa* — reflects Ellis's dedication to the cause of a shared identity uniting the peoples of Africa together with African Americans like himself and with the whole African Diaspora around the world.

More from Liberia: 46, 62, 74, [79], 102, 157, 161

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#80. **Ennis, Merlin.** *Umbundu: Folk Tales from Angola*. With comparative notes by **Albert Lord**. Published in 1962. Pages: 315. archive.org/details/umbundu0000unse

Merlin Ennis [1874-1964] was a missionary who lived in Angola for forty years. After arriving in Angola in 1903, he began translating the Bible into Umbundu while also collecting Umbundu folktale texts. After he retired and returned to the United States, he published this collection of 95 Umbundu folktales translated into English, along with a collection of proverbs.

The book includes commentary on the stories by [Albert Lord](#) [1912-1991], one of the leading folklorists of the time and a specialist in oral performance and composition, best known for his book about the oral tradition of the Homeric epics: [The Singer of Tales](#).

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, [80], 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#81. **Fairman, Tony.** *Bury My Bones but Keep My Words: African Tales for Retelling*. Illustrated by **Meshack Asare**. Published in 1994. Pages: 192. archive.org/details/burymybonesbutke0000fair

Tony Fairman wrote this book for use in schools, including notes for teachers about how to help students engage in their own storytelling activities. The 13 stories come mostly from Kenya and from southern Africa, and there are some stories from Nigeria and the Gambia also.

One of the best features of this book is the art by [Meshack Asare](#) [b. 1945], a children's book author and illustrator from Ghana. There is another book by Asare also available at the Internet Archive — [Sosu's Call](#) — about a boy who cannot walk but who nevertheless saves the people of his village when

disaster is about to strike. A version of that story also appears in Véronique Tadjo's ***Chasing the Sun***, #187 below.

More from African artists: 18, 69, 70, 71, 74, [81], 96, 112, 118, 134, 139, 160, 164, 187, 196

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#82. **Finnegan, Ruth. *Limba Stories and Story-Telling*** [Oxford Library of African Literature series]. Published in 1967. Pages: 352.

archive.org/details/limbastoriesstor0000finn

[Ruth Finnegan](#) [b. 1933] has been a professor of anthropology and sociology at universities in Europe, Africa, and the United States. This book contains 95 Limba stories that Finnegan recorded in Sierra Leone in the 1960s, along with riddles and proverbs plus an overview of Limba storytelling traditions. Finnegan's audio recordings have been digitized and put online as part of the [World Oral Literature project](#), which means you can listen to them here: [Ruth Finnegan: Limba Stories and Songs](#).

Finnegan is also the author of [The Oral and Beyond: Doing Things with Words in Africa](#) and [Oral Literature in Africa](#), reissued as part of the *World Oral Literature* series.

More from Sierra Leone: 63, [82], 114

More from the Oxford Library of African Literature: 10, [82], 90, 169

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#83. **Ford, Clyde. *The Hero With an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa***. Illustrated by **Tanya Pérez-Rock**. Published in 2000. Pages: 228.

archive.org/details/herowithafricanf0000ford

Clyde Ford [b. 1951] first worked as an engineer at IBM and then changed career paths, becoming a chiropractor and therapist. He wrote this book of African myths and stories in order to promote personal growth and also to further racial healing. Ford interweaves his own commentary with the stories, reading each story in three different ways, layer by layer: he starts by telling the story itself, then he looks for the story's mythic dimensions, and finally he explores the meaning of the story in the context of human life and of his own life experience.

More from African American / Diaspora authors: 14, 15, 32, 37, 38, 39, 44, 46, 79, [83], 100, 102, 124, 145, 181, 195, 199

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#84. **Frobenius, Leo. *African Genesis: Folk Tales and Myths of Africa***. Translated by **Douglas C. Fox** and illustrated by **Kate Marr**. Published in 1937. Pages: 236.

archive.org/details/africangenesis0000frob

[Leo Frobenius](#) [1873-1938] was a German anthropologist and archeologist. This book, translated from German, is an anthology of 29 stories from a range of African cultures, including the Kabyle people of northern Africa; the Mande, Nupe, and Hausa peoples of western Africa; and the Ngoni and Hungwe peoples of southern Africa. The book also contains numerous drawings of African art from the Frobenius Institute at Goethe University in Frankfurt. You can find other English books by Frobenius at the Internet Archive also, including [The Voice of Africa](#) and [The Childhood of Man](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, [84], 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#85. **Fuchs, Peter.** *African Decameron: Folk Tales from Central Africa*. Translated by **Robert Meister**. Published in 1963. Pages: 203.

archive.org/details/africandecameron00fuch

Peter Fuchs [1928-2020] was an Austrian anthropologist. He published *Afrikanisches Dekamerone* in 1959, and the English translation appeared in 1963. The book contains 48 tales from the Hadjerai people of Chad, specifically from a small village named Mukulu on Mount Guéra (the name “Hadjeraï” is itself an Arabic word, meaning “the mountain people”). In addition to the stories, Fuchs interweaves information about the village of Mukulu and about the culture of the Hadjerai people.

More from central Africa: 6, [85], 147, 174, 183

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#86. **Fuja, Abayomi.** *Fourteen Hundred Cowries, and Other African Tales*. Illustrated by **Ademola Olugebefola**, and with an introduction by **Anne Pellowski**. Published in 1971. Pages: 256.

archive.org/details/fourteenhundredc00fuja

Abayomi Fuja [b. 1900] originally collected these 31 stories in Nigeria in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He first published the book in 1962 with the title: *Fourteen Hundred Cowries: Traditional Stories of the Yoruba*. This new edition, re-titled *Fourteen Hundred Cowries, and Other African Tales*, appeared in 1971 and features beautiful illustrations by Ademola Olugebefola [b. 1941], one of the leading figures of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. The introduction by [Anne Pellowski](#) [b. 1933] provides an overview of Yoruba storytelling traditions.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, [86], 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#87. **Gibbs, Laura.** *Tiny Tales from Africa: The Animals [Volume 1]*. Published in 2021. Pages: 230.

archive.org/details/africantinytales1

This book is part of the *Tiny Tales* series by Laura Gibbs [b. 1964]. It contains 200 animal stories retold from a wide variety of African sources, and each story is just 100 words long. There are creation myths; tales about Spider, Tortoise, Rabbit, and other tricksters; plus stories of adventure and magic involving humans and animals. There is also a second volume available — [Tiny Tales from Africa: The Animals \[Volume 2\]](#) — and you can find all the other books in the [Tiny Tales](#) series at the Internet Archive.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, [87], 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#88. **Gilstrap, Robert and Irene Estabrook.** *The Sultan's Fool, and Other North African Tales*. Illustrated by **Robert Greco**. Published in 1958. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/sultansfoolother00gils

Robert Gilstrap [1933-2013] and Irene Estabrook collected these stories in the mid-1950s while Gilstrap was stationed at a U.S. Air Force base in Tripoli and Estabrook was a teacher at the base school. Arabic is the main language spoken in Libya, and the 11 stories in this book reflect Arabic storytelling traditions with tales of sultans and caliphs, viziers and their courtiers, along with court jesters and fools.

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, 50, 77, [88], 115, 142, 172

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#89. Gleeson, Brian. *Koi and the Kola Nuts*. Illustrated by **Reynold Ruffins**. Published in 1995. Pages: 27.

archive.org/details/koikolanutsra00bria

Brian Gleeson wrote this book for the *Rabbit Ears* series, a project by the same company that produced the *Rabbit Ears* television show in the 1980s and early 1990s. The book features beautiful illustrations by [Reynold Ruffins](#) [see #5 above]. Gleeson wrote several other books for this *Rabbit Ears* series, including [Anansi](#), which is based on Jamaican Anansi stories.

A Liberian version of the story — “[Koi and the Kola Nuts](#)” — appeared in 1960 in [Tales from the Story Hat](#) by [Verna Aardema](#) with illustrations by Elton Fax [1909-1993], an African American artist who illustrated several of Aardema’s early books, including [The Sky-God Stories](#), [Otwe](#), and [The Na of Wa](#).

More children’s picture books: 2, 3, 4, 32, 38, 39, 52, 69, 70, 71, 72, [89], 94, 96, 98, 106, 115, 119, 126, 136, 141, 143, 145, 152, 172, 178, 181, 185, 186, 188, 199

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#90. Goody, Jack. *The Myth of the Bagre* [Oxford Library of African Literature series]. Illustrated with photographs. Published in 1972. Pages: 381.

archive.org/details/mythofbagre0000good

[Jack Goody](#) [1919-2015] was a social anthropologist at Cambridge University who worked with the Lodagaa people in Ghana throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This book focuses on the ritual ceremonies associated with the Bagre myth, presented here both in the original Lodagaa language and in English translation. One part, the White Bagre, sets the ritual in motion, while the other part, the Black Bagre, provides a cosmic dimension, narrating the adventures of a culture hero who makes an ascent to heaven accompanied by Spider.

Goody was the author of many other books that you can find at the Internet Archive, including [*Technology, Tradition, and the State in Africa*](#).

More from the *Oxford Library of African Literature*: 10, 82, [90], 169

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#91. **Grainger, Lisa. *Stories Gogo Told Me***. Illustrated by **Celia von Poncet** and with a foreword by **Iman**. Published in 2015. Pages: 190.

archive.org/details/storiesgogotoldm0000grai

In this book Lisa Grainger [b. 1964] has retold 44 stories that she heard from grandmothers (*gogos*) and other storytellers in her own home country of Zimbabwe, and also in Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa. For each story, she provides the storyteller's name and additional information; for example: "told to me in Bemba by Godfrey Chanda, a subsistence farmer near Kalamazi rose farm, outside Lusaka, Zambia." The book also features a forward by Iman [b. 1955], who grew up in Somalia in eastern Africa and who fondly remembers the traditional stories she heard from her father: "those stories, like stars, illuminated my path when I was lost."

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, [91], 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#92. **Greaves, Nick. *When Hippo Was Hairy, and Other Tales from Africa***. Illustrated by **Rod Clement**. Published in 1988. Pages: 144.

archive.org/details/whenhippowashair0000grea

Nick Greaves [b. 1955] first came from England to Africa in 1976. He worked as a geologist in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and

South Africa. He now lives in England, working as a writer and photographer while also leading safaris in eastern Africa. A distinctive feature of Greaves's approach is that he includes detailed geographical and ecological information about the animals who appear in the 36 stories in this book.

You can also find two other books by Greaves at the Internet Archive, both focused on animal stories: [*When Lion Could Fly, and Other Tales from Africa*](#) and [*When Elephant Was King, and Other Elephant Tales from Africa*](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, [92], 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#93. **Green, Lila. *Tales from Africa*** [*The World Folktale Library* series]. Illustrated by **Jerry Pinkney** and with an introduction by **Moritz Jagendorf**. Published in 1979. Pages: 96. archive.org/details/talesfromafrica0000gree

In this book Lila Green has retold 10 stories from both western and eastern Africa. What makes the book especially noteworthy is that it features illustrations by [Jerry Pinkney](#).

The introduction is by [Moritz Jagendorf](#) [1888-1981], who was the editor of the *World Folktale Library* series. You can find other books from the World Folktale Library at the Internet Archive, including [*Ancient Greece*](#), the [*British Isles, Hispanic Lands*](#) (also by Lila Green), [*Russia*](#), and the [*United States*](#),

More from Jerry Pinkney: 4, 14, 15, [93], 199

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#94. **Grifalconi, Ann. *The Village of Round and Square Houses***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1986. Pages: 31. archive.org/details/villageofroundsq00grif

[Ann Grifalconi](#) [1929-2020] wrote this Caldecott Honor book after a trip she made to Cameroon. The story is based on a folktale that she heard in a village located in the foothills of one of Cameroon's volcanoes, and she later wrote two more books inspired by this same village: [Darkness and the Butterfly](#) and [Osa's Pride](#).

In addition to Grifalconi's Africa-themed books [see #32 above and #152 below], she wrote and also illustrated books on African American subjects, including [Ain't Nobody a Stranger to Me](#), a book about the Underground Railroad which Grifalconi wrote and [Jerry Pinkney](#) illustrated, and [The Jazz Man](#), a Newbery Honor book by Grifalconi's mother, [Mary Hays Weik](#) [1898-1979], which Grifalconi illustrated.

More from Cameroon: 27, [94], 188

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#95. **Guillot, René. *African Folk Tales***. Translated by **Gwen Marsh** and illustrated by **William Papas**. Published in 1964. Pages: 160.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales00guil

[René Guillot](#) [1900-1969], who was born in France, lived and worked for twenty years in what was then French West Africa (now Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger). He was the author of many children's books in French, and this book contains 23 folktales selected from his books *La Biche Noire*, *La Brousse et la Bête*, *Au Pays des Bêtes Sauvages*, and *Nouveaux Contes d'Afrique*. The illustrations are by [William Papas](#) [1927-2000], a cartoonist, artist, and writer who was born in South Africa.

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, [95], 105, 131, 132, 147, 150, 160, 166

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#96. **Guirma, Frédéric. *Princess of the Full Moon***. Translated by **John Garrett** and illustrated by the author. Published in 1969. Pages: 30.

archive.org/details/princessoffullmo0000guir

[Frédéric Guirma](#) [b. 1931] is a Mossi writer and politician from Burkina Faso. He was born in Ouagadougou, the capital of what was then Upper Volta; the country's name was changed to Burkina Faso in 1984. When Upper Volta gained its independence in 1960, Guirma became his country's first ambassador to the United States, and he later had a career as a United Nations diplomat. Guirma wrote this book in French based on stories he heard as a child, and he also provided the beautiful illustrations.

More from African artists: 18, 69, 70, 71, 74, 81, [96], 112, 118, 134, 139, 160, 164, 187, 196

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#97. **Habte-Mariam, Mesfin. *The Rich Man and the Singer: Folktales from Ethiopia***. Illustrated by **Christine Price**. Published in 1971. Pages: 86.

archive.org/details/richmansing00mesf

Mesfin Habte-Mariam collected these 31 stories when he was a university student in Addis Ababa. Some stories come from his mother, and others come from his teachers and friends. He later collaborated with Elizabeth Laird [see #118 below] in the [Ethiopian Folktales](#) online project. Christine Price [1928-1980], the author of many folktale and art books, met Habte-Mariam when she visited Ethiopia in 1968; she edited this book and provided the illustrations.

Price also wrote [Talking Drums of Africa](#) and [The Mystery of Masks](#), plus the *Made-In* series, including the books [Made in Ancient Egypt](#) and [Made in West Africa](#). See #166 below for more of her work.

More from Ethiopia: 40, 54, 66, [97], 118, 119, 128

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#98. **Haley, Gail. *A Story, A Story: An African Tale***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1970. Pages: 32.

archive.org/details/storystory0000hale

[Gail Haley](#) [b. 1939] wrote and illustrated this Caldecott Medal book about the adventures of Spider with illustrations depicting Spider in his human form. In telling the story, Haley makes good use of epithets and ideophones to convey a sense of oral storytelling style; for example, Osebo the leopard is “the leopard-of-the-terrible-teeth,” and Spider runs “yiridi yiridi yiridi” along the path to escape him.

More Spider stories: 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 52, 55, 63, 64, 90, [98], 114, 136, 159, 178

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#99. **Hambly, Wilfrid. *Talking Animals***. Illustrated by **James Porter**. Published in 1949. Pages: 100.

archive.org/details/hambly-animals

[Wilfrid Hambly](#) [1886-1962], an anthropologist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, was a member of the Field Museum’s expedition to Angola, which Hambly documented with an ethnographic study, [The Ovimbundu of Angola](#). Hambly also worked with storytellers in Nigeria, and this children’s book contains 45 stories both from Angola and from Nigeria. The illustrations are by [James Porter](#) [1905-1970], an African American artist who was also a professor of art at Howard University; his groundbreaking book, [Modern Negro Art](#), was published in 1943.

More from African American / Diaspora artists: 1, 2, 3, 4,
5, 14, 15, 37, 38, 39, 72, 86, 89, 93, [99], 102, 104, 110, 145, 154,
157, 176, 181, 186, 195, 199

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#100. **Hamilton, Virginia. *A Ring of Tricksters: Animal Tales from America, the West Indies, and Africa***. Illustrated by **Barry Moser**. Published in 1997. Pages: 111.

archive.org/details/ringoftricksters00hami

[Virginia Hamilton](#) [1936-2002] was one of the great children's authors of the 20th century. Most of her books are about African American stories and characters, and in this book she brings together African American tricksters with tricksters from Caribbean and African storytelling traditions; the 4 African stories come from Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

The beautiful illustrations are by [Barry Moser](#) [b. 1940], who also did the illustrations for two other books by Virginia Hamilton: [When Birds Could Talk and Bats Could Sing](#), which is a collection of African American folktales, and [In the Beginning](#), a Newbery-winning book of creation stories from around the world, including two African creation stories.

More African folklore in the Americas: 22, 59, [100], 105,
109

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#101. **Haring, Lee. *How to Read a Folktale: The Ibonia Epic from Madagascar*** [World Oral Literature Project series]. Published in 2013. Pages: 152.

archive.org/details/how-to-read-a-folktale-the-ibonia-epic-from-madagascar

Lee Haring [b. 1930] began studying African folk traditions when he taught in Kenya and Madagascar during the 1970s;

he later became a professor at the City University of New York. He has published several books on the storytelling traditions of Madagascar, including this book on the Ibonia epic, which is the first complete English translation of the epic. Ibonia is the name of the hero — more specifically, he is Iboniamasiboniamanoro, “he of the clear and captivating glance.” In addition to the translation of the epic, Haring provides an overview of the cultural context and history of the epic text.

More from the *World Oral Literature* series: 47, 82, [101]

More epics: 26, 33, 40, 51, 83, 90, [101], 110, 148

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#102. **Haskett, Edythe.** *Grains of Pepper: Folktales from Liberia*. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1967. Pages: 120. archive.org/details/grainsofpepperfo00hask

Edythe Haskett worked as a teacher in Liberia in the 1960s where she collected these 25 Vai folktales and proverbs. The book’s title alludes to the names “Pepper Coast” and “Grain Coast” that were used by European traders in reference to the melegueta pepper, or “grain of paradise,” a pepper-like spice that grows in Liberia. Haskett provides a brief overview of the history of Liberia in the book’s introduction, with an emphasis on the American Colonization Society and the African Americans who settled in Liberia in the 19th century.

More from Liberia: 46, 62, 74, 79, [102], 157, 161

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#103. **Heady, Eleanor.** *Jambo, Sungura! Tales from East Africa*. Illustrated by **Robert Frankenberg**. Published in 1965. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/jambosunguratale00head

Eleanor Heady [1917-1979] traveled to Africa in the late 1950s with her husband, [Harold Heady](#), a forester and ecologist. On those travels she collected these 16 stories from Swahili storytellers. “Sungura” in the book’s title is the Swahili name for rabbit; “jambo” is Swahili for “hey” or “hello.” Throughout the book, Heady uses the Swahili names for the animals, so the hippopotamus is Kiboko, the elephant is Tembo, and so on. For another book by Heady, see the following item.

More Rabbit stories: 3, 4, 78, [103], 131, 146, 185

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#104. **Heady, Eleanor. *When the Stones Were Soft: East African Fireside Tales*.** Illustrated by **Tom Feelings**. Published in 1968. Pages: 94.

archive.org/details/whenstoneswereso00head

This is another book by Eleanor Heady [see previous item], featuring 14 stories from eastern Africa that she collected in the late 1950s during her travels in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. For this collection, Heady focused on “how-and-why” stories: how animals got their tails, why goats live with people, etc.

The illustrations for this book are by [Tom Feelings](#) [1933-2003], who also illustrated two Caldecott Medal books about Swahili words and numbers written by his wife, Muriel Feelings [1938-2011]: [Jambo Means Hello: A Swahili Alphabet Book](#) and [Moja Means One: A Swahili Counting Book](#).

More from eastern Africa: 103, [104], 116, 120, 127, 137, 144, 175

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#105. **Herskovits, Melville and Frances Herskovits. *Dahomean Narrative: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*.** Published in 1958. Pages:

490.

archive.org/details/hersokovits-dahomean

[Melville Herskovits](#) [1895-1963] and his wife Frances Herskovits [1897-1972] studied African cultures and also African cultural legacies in the Americas. This book presents 155 stories that they collected in Benin (French Dahomey at that time) from Fon storytellers in the 1930s. The detailed notes make it a work of great scholarship (almost 600 pages long), but it is also very readable for a general audience. In addition, they published an ethnography of the people of Dahomey: [Dahomey, An Ancient West African Kingdom](#).

To learn about Melville Herskovits's advocacy for the importance of African cultural heritage in the Americas, see his groundbreaking book, [The Myth of the Negro Past](#).

More big — really big! — books: 42, 60, 73, 75, [105], 158, 167, 169, 170, 177, 179, 180, 191, 197

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#106. **Hofmeyr, Dianne.** *The Magic Bojabi Tree*. Illustrated by **Piet Grobler**. Published in 2013. Pages: 26.

archive.org/details/magicbojabitree0000hofm_a3i2

Dianne Hofmeyr [b. 1947] is a South African writer now based in London, and the marvelous illustrations are by Piet Grobler [b. 1959], also from South Africa and now based in the U.K. [For more art from Grobler, see #146.]

You can find an earlier version of this story published in 1923 by [Edith Rickert](#) [1871-1938] with illustrations by [Gleb Botkin](#) [1900-1969]: [The Bojabi Tree](#). Rickert's source was an even earlier book: Robert Nassau's *Where Animals Talk*, which features a story called "[Tortoise and the Bojabi Tree](#)" from a Benga storyteller in Equatorial Guinea; see #147 below.

More children's picture books: 2, 3, 4, 32, 38, 39, 52, 69, 70, 71, 72, 89, 94, 96, 98, [106], 115, 119, 126, 136, 141, 143, 145, 152, 172, 178, 181, 185, 186, 188, 199

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#107. **Holladay, Virginia.** *Bantu Tales*. Illustrated by **Rocco Negri** and with a foreword by **Louise Crane**. Published in 1970. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/bantutales00holl

Virginia Holladay [1899-1951], a Presbyterian missionary, worked as a schoolteacher in what was then the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) from 1927 until her death in 1951. Over the years, Holladay collected these stories from Baluba and Lulua storytellers and distributed them in booklets to her friends and family. One of Holladay's students, Louise Crane [1917-2006], later selected 19 of those stories and published them in this book in 1970, which also includes beautiful woodcuts by Rocco Negri [1932-2012]. The book opens with a brief biography of Virginia Holladay, and you can read more about Holladay in Crane's memoir, [*Ku Mputu: An African Journey*](#).

More from the Congo: 33, 43, 68, [107], 167, 197

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#108. **Hollis, Alfred Claud.** *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore*. Published in 1905. Pages: 359. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/masaitheirlangua00holluoft

[Alfred Hollis](#) [1874-1961] was a British colonial administrator in Africa from the 1890s through the 1920s, mostly in eastern Africa, and he was then governor of Trinidad from 1930 until his retirement in 1936. This book, published in 1905, contains

a grammar of the language spoken by the Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania (then British East Africa), along with 36 stories presented both in the original Maasai version and in English translation, along with proverbs and riddles, plus an account of traditional Maasai cultural practices and beliefs. This book has been a source of stories for several children's book authors, including Verna Aardema [see #3 above] and Melinda Lilly [see #126 below].

In addition to this book about the Maasai people, Hollis also published a book about the Nandi people of Kenya: [*The Nandi: Their Language and Folklore*](#).

More from the Maasai people: 3, [108], 126, 134, 143

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#109. **Ibekwe, Patrick.** *Wit and Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa and the Caribbean*. Published in 1998. Pages: 210. archive.org/details/witwisdomofafri0000ibek

Patrick Ibekwe [b. 1964], born in Nigeria and now living in London, has collected proverbs from all over Africa and also from the Caribbean. The proverbs are organized by theme, and for each proverb Ibekwe provides information about the proverb's origin. There is also a detailed bibliography in the back of the book and a helpful map of the African diaspora. Ibekwe also published an abridged version of this book under the title [*The Little Book of African Wisdom*](#).

More African folklore in the Americas: 22, 59, 100, 105, [109]

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#110. **Jablow, Alta.** *Gassire's Lute: A West African Epic*. Illustrated by **Leo and Diane Dillon**. Published in 1971. Pages:

64.

archive.org/details/gassireslutewest0000jabl

Alta Jablow [1919-1992] was a professor of anthropology at Brooklyn College, and in this book she has retold the story of Gassire's lute, an epic of the Soninke people of the old empire of Wagadou in western Africa, with beautiful illustrations by [Leo and Diane Dillon](#) [see #1-3 above and #145 and #176 below]. The story of Gassire's lute does not have the same rich oral tradition as other African epics, and the only published source for this story is a version recorded by Frobenius [see #84 above].

Jablow is also the author of a collection of African folktales, [Yes and No: The Intimate Folklore of Africa](#), and [The Myth of Africa](#), an anthology of British writing that documents the colonial imagination, co-authored with Dorothy Hammond [1917-1980].

More epics: 26, 33, 40, 51, 83, 90, 101, [110], 148

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#111. **Jacottet, Édouard.** *The Treasury of Ba-suto Lore.* Published in 1908. Pages: 287. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/treasuryofbasuto01jaco

Édouard Jacottet [1858-1920] was a French missionary in Lesotho for over thirty years, and he was also a linguist. In collecting and publishing these Sotho stories, Jacottet was inspired by the work of Callaway in collecting Zulu stories [see #45 above]. Like Callaway, Jacottet published both the original versions of the stories in addition to the English translation. You will find 42 folktales in this book, accompanied by very useful notes.

For literary renderings of some of these stories, see McPherson's *Native Fairy Tales of South Africa*, #138 below.

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, 45, 49, 73, 90, 108, [111],
114, 116, 127, 128, 165, 169, 180, 182, 191

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#112. **Jordan, A. C. *Tales from Southern Africa***. Illustrated by **Dumile Feni**, with a foreword by **Pallo Jordan**, and an introduction by **Harold Scheub**. Published in 1973. Pages: 277.
archive.org/details/talesfromsouther0000jord

[Archibald Campbell Jordan](#) [1906-1968] was a South African novelist and also a scholar of African languages and literature. Forced into exile in 1961, Jordan became a professor at the University of Wisconsin, where he encouraged [Harold Scheub](#) [see #169 below] to study Xhosa storytelling traditions; Scheub wrote the introduction to this book, and there is a foreword by Jordan's son, [Pallo Jordan](#) [b. 1942], a South African politician. The book contains 13 traditional Xhosa stories, and the illustrations are by [Dumile Feni](#) [1942-1991], a Xhosa artist from South Africa who, like Jordan, was exiled because of his opposition to the apartheid regime.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78,
80, 91, 111, [112], 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#113. **Kalibala, Ernest Balintuma and Mary Gould Davis. *Wakaima and the Clay Man, and Other African Folktales***. Illustrated by **Avery Johnson**. Published in 1946. Pages: 145.
archive.org/details/wakaimaclaymanot00kali

Ernest Balintuma Kalibala [b. 1902] grew up in Uganda where he attended missionary schools, and in 1924 he came to the United States to pursue his education at the Tuskegee Institute. He eventually came into contact with [Franz Boas](#) at Columbia University and later completed his Ph.D. at Harvard

in 1946. In this book, he has retold 13 traditional folktales from his childhood, and there is also an author's note at the end of the book about traditional Baganda storytelling. His coauthor, [Mary Gould Davis](#) [1882-1956], was a librarian at the New York Public Library where she was the "supervisor of storytelling" for over 20 years.

Kalibala also translated [Apollo Kaggwa's](#) *[Customs of the Baganda](#)* into English.

More from Uganda: 23, [113], 149, 176

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#114. **Kilson, Marion. *Royal Antelope and Spider: West African Mende Tales*.** Published in 1976. Pages: 374.
archive.org/details/royalantelopespi0000unse

Marion Dusser de Barenne Kilson [b. 1936] worked with Mende storytellers in Sierra Leone as a graduate student in 1959 and 1960; her husband, the political scientist [Martin Kilson](#) [1931-2019], was also conducting research in Sierra Leone at the time. Marion Kilson later returned to Sierra Leone in 1972 for further research and then published this book, which contains 100 Mende folktales in both the original Mende and in English translation. The introduction provides an overview of Mende culture along with detailed information about Mende storytelling traditions.

The "royal antelope" of the title is the *Neotragus pygmaeus*, a tiny antelope that is not even one foot tall, also called "cunnie rabbit" in the pidgin English of Sierra Leone; see #63 above for Florence Cronise's collection of "cunnie rabbit" stories.

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, 45, 49, 73, 90, 108, 111, [114], 116, 127, 128, 165, 169, 180, 182, 191

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#115. Kimmel, Eric. *Rimonah of the Flashing Sword: A North African Tale*. Illustrated by Omar Rayyan. Published in 1995. Pages: 31.

archive.org/details/rimonahofflashin00kimm

[Eric Kimmel](#) [b. 1946] based this story on a Jewish folktale from Egypt that he found in [Miriam's Tambourine: Jewish Folktales from around the World](#) by [Howard Schwartz](#) [see #172 below for more from Howard Schwartz]. The beautiful illustrations are by Omar Rayyan [b. 1968], an artist from Jordan now based in the United States.

Kimmel is also the author of a series of books inspired by Spider stories, including [Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock](#), [Anansi Goes Fishing](#), [Anansi and the Talking Melon](#), [Anansi's Party Time](#) and [Anansi and the Magic Stick](#).

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, 50, 77, 88, [115], 142, 172

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#116. Kituku, Vincent Muli Wa. *East African Folktales from the Voice of Mukamba* [*World Storytelling* series]. Illustrated by Kelly Matthews. Published in 1997. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/eastaficanfolkt00kitu

Vincent Kituku was born in Kangundo, Kenya. After graduating from the University of Nairobi in 1985, he came to the United States for his graduate education, completing a Ph.D. at the University of Wyoming; he is now a motivational storyteller and writer based in Idaho. In this book Kituku shares 18 traditional Kamba folktales from Kenya, including both the Kamba text and an English translation.

Kituku is also the author of an illustrated bilingual collection of Kamba-English proverbs: [Sukulu Ite Nguta: The School with No Walls](#).

More from eastern Africa: 103, 104, [116], 120, 127, 137, 144,
175

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#117. **Knappert, Jan.** *African Mythology: An Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend* [*Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend* series]. Illustrated by **Elizabeth Knappert**. Published in 1995. Pages: 272.

archive.org/details/africanmythology0000knapp

[Jan Knappert](#) [1927-2005] was a Dutch academic who taught at European and African universities. He specialized in Swahili language and literature, while also studying a wide range of African and other world literatures. This book is labeled an “encyclopedia,” but the entries are very story-oriented. Given the limited bibliography, this is not really a reference work, but it is a pleasure to read, providing a good overview of stories from across Africa.

Knappert is also the author of [Kings, Gods and Spirits from African Mythology](#), along with other mythology handbooks including [Indian Mythology](#) and [Pacific Mythology](#). You can also find one of his Swahili works at the Internet Archive: [Traditional Swahili Poetry](#).

More secondary literature: 26, [117], 129, 145, 158, 159, 171,
198

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#118. **Laird, Elizabeth.** *When the World Began: Stories Collected in Ethiopia*. Illustrated by **Yosef Kebede, Emma Harding, Grizelda Holderness, and Lydia Monks**. Published in 2000. Pages: 96.

archive.org/details/whenworldbeganst0000lair_v6u7

[Elizabeth Laird](#) [b. 1943] is a British author who has worked extensively with Ethiopian storytellers. She heard these 20 stories during her travels in Ethiopia in the 1990s, and there are illustrations from several artists, including Yosef Kebede, an Ethiopian artist based in Addis Ababa who also illustrated Laird's novel about the street children of Addis Ababa: [The Garbage King](#). You can learn more about Laird's work in Ethiopia in this memoir: [The Lure of the Honey Bird: The Storytellers of Ethiopia](#).

In addition to her published books, Laird's website — [Ethiopian Folktales](#) — features hundreds of folktales in Amharic and in English [accessible also via the Internet Archive's [Wayback Machine](#)]. For more from Laird, see the following items.

More from Ethiopia: 40, 54, 66, 97, [118], 119, 128

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#119. **Laird, Elizabeth** and **Abba Aregawi Wolde Gabriel**. *The Miracle Child: A Story from Ethiopia*. With illustrations from an 18th-century Ethiopian manuscript. Published in 1985. Pages: 30.

archive.org/details/miraclechildstor0000lair

This book by [Elizabeth Laird](#) tells the story of a 13th-century Ethiopian saint, Tekle Haymanot. Laird's coauthor is Abba Aregawi Wolde Gabriel, a priest in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Saint Tekle Haymanot was a historical figure, although this book emphasizes the legendary stories told about him, beginning with his miraculous birth. The beautiful illustrations are from an 18th-century Ethiopian manuscript held in a collection in London, and the book contains helpful notes accompanying the images, identifying the characters and important details. For more books by Laird, see the previous and following items.

More children's picture books: 2, 3, 4, 32, 38, 39, 52, 69, 70, 71, 72, 89, 94, 96, 98, 106, 115, [119], 126, 136, 141, 143, 145, 152, 172, 178, 181, 185, 186, 188, 199

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#120. **Laird, Elizabeth. *The Ogress and the Snake, and Other Stories from Somalia***. Illustrated by **Shelley Fowles**. Published in 2009. Pages: 96.

archive.org/details/ogresssnakeother0000lair

[Elizabeth Laird](#) first visited Somalia in the late 1960s. Then, thirty years later, she returned to the Somali region of Ethiopia where she collected these 8 stories in the town of Jigjiga; the introduction tells you about the storytellers she met and worked with there. The book also features illustrations by Shelley Fowles [b. 1956], an artist from South Africa now based in the U.K. You can find more stories from the Somali region of Ethiopia at Laird's [Ethiopian Folktales](#) website; see #118 above.

More from eastern Africa: 103, 104, 116, [120], 127, 137, 144, 175

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#121. **Lang, Andrew. *African Folktales in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang***. Edited by **Laura Gibbs** and illustrated by **Henry Justice Ford**. Published in 2021. Pages: 316. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/lang-fairy-books-africa

[Andrew Lang](#) [1844-1912], a Scottish writer and folklorist, published twelve Fairy Books with stories from around the world, starting with the [Blue Fairy Book](#) in 1897 and ending with the [Lilac Fairy Book](#) in 1910. Of those twelve books, eight contain African folktales, and this ebook assembles all 25

African folktales from those books, including the original illustrations by [Henry Justice Ford](#) [1860-1941].

You can also find all of Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* at the Internet Archive: [Blue](#) — [Red](#) — [Green](#) — [Yellow](#) — [Pink](#) — [Grey](#) — [Violet](#) — [Crimson](#) — [Brown](#) — [Orange](#) — [Olive](#) — [Lilac](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, [121], 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#122. **Larson, Thomas.** *Tales from the Okavango*. Illustrated by **Rufus Papenfus**. Published in 2002. Pages: 118.

archive.org/details/talesfromokavang0000lars

The 19 stories in this book come from the Hambukushu people of the Okavango Delta of Botswana. Thomas Larson [b. 1917] was a cultural anthropologist who lived with the Hambukushu people in the 1950s; he published this book in 1972. The beautiful illustrations are by Rufus Papenfus [1927-2012], a South African artist and cartoonist.

Larson also wrote a short novella, [Dibebe's Choice](#), published in 1978, about a young Hambukushu man who is choosing whether to go to South Africa to work in the mining industry or to continue his schooling.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, [122], 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#123. **Leslau, Charlotte** and **Wolf Leslau.** *African Folk Tales*. Illustrated by **Grisha Dotzenko**. Published in 1963. Pages: 62.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales00lesl

[Wolf Leslau](#) [see #54 above] was a linguist specializing in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia, and he also studied the

languages of Yemen and South Arabia. He and his wife, Charlotte Leslau [1910-1998], wrote this anthology of 25 African folktales. Charlotte and Wolf Leslau also wrote a book of [African Proverbs](#). Both books are enjoyable to read, but they do not contain any bibliographical references, so they are not well-suited to any kind of research work.

More proverbs: 27, 39, 42, 82, 109, 116, [123], 154, 156, 165, 167, 182

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#124. **Lester, Julius. *How Many Spots Does a Leopard Have?***

Illustrated by **David Shannon**. Published in 1989. Pages: 72.

archive.org/details/howmanyspotsdoes00lest

[Julius Lester](#) [1939-2018] was an African American writer and civil rights activist who taught for many years at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In this book, Lester has retold 10 African folktales, along with two Jewish legends. (In 1982, Lester converted to Judaism, prompted by reflections on his own ancestry: his maternal great-grandfather was a Jewish immigrant from Germany who married a freed slave.)

Another must-read from Julius Lester is his brilliant retelling of the Brer Rabbit stories collected by Joel Chandler Harris, most of which are African in origin: [Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales](#), with beautiful illustrations by [Jerry Pinkney](#).

More from African American / Diaspora authors: 14, 15, 32, 37, 38, 39, 44, 46, 79, 83, 100, 102, [124], 145, 181, 195, 199

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#125. **Lewis-Williams, J. David. *Stories That Float from Afar: Ancestral Folklore of the San of Southern Africa***. Published in 2000. Pages: 285.

archive.org/details/storiesthatfloat00jdle

[David Lewis-Williams](#) [b. 1934] is a South African archeologist and anthropologist who specializes in the rock art of the San peoples of southern Africa. This book contains 34 San stories arranged by topics — stories about Mantis and his family, other animal stories, accounts of hunters, shamans, and more — plus a lengthy introduction with a detailed and deeply moving account of the San storytellers who told their stories to [Wilhelm Bleek](#) and to his sister-in-law [Lucy Lloyd](#); see #35 above for more about Bleek and Lloyd.

Lewis-Williams is the author of other books about the San people, including [San Spirituality: Roots, Expression, and Social Consequences](#), and he has also written about Neolithic art and culture: [The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art](#).

More from the San people: 35, [125], 173

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#126. **Lilly, Melinda. *Warrior Son of a Warrior Son: A Masai Tale*** [*African Tales and Myths* series]. Illustrated by **Charles Reasoner**. Published in 1998. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/warriorsonofwarr0000lill

Melinda Lilly [b. 1963] wrote this book based on a Maasai story in A. C. Hollis's book of Maasai legends [see #108 above]: "[The Caterpillar and the Wild Animals](#)." You can see a different treatment of the same story by Verna Aardema in *Who's in Rabbit's House?* [see #3 above] and by Tololwa Mollel in *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper* [see #143 below]. In her version of the story, Lilly has framed the storytelling scene as a grandmother telling the story to her granddaughter.

The beautiful illustrations are by Charles Reasoner [b. 1949], who collaborated with Lilly on several other books in this *African Tales and Myths* series, including [Wanyana and Matchmaker Frog: A Bagandan Tale](#), [Kwian and the Lazy](#)

[*Sun: a San Myth, Spider and His Son Find Wisdom: An Akan Tale*](#) and [*Zimani's Drum: A Malawian Tale*](#). For more of Reasoner's artwork, see [*Emerald Tree: A Story from Africa*](#) and [*The Golden Flower: A Story from Egypt*](#) both by Janet Palazzo-Craig.

More from the Maasai people: 3, 108, [126], 134, 143

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#127. **Lindblom, Gerhard. *Kamba Tales of Animals***. Published in 1928. Pages: 111. [This book will enter the public domain in 2024.]

archive.org/details/archivesdtud18a20uppsuoft

[Gerhard Lindblom](#) [1887-1969] was a Swedish anthropologist who worked with the Akamba people in eastern Africa during the 1910s. He published a series of three books of Kamba folklore: volume 1 contains animal tales, volume 2 contains supernatural stories and volume 3 contains riddles, proverbs, and songs. These books are not available at the Internet Archive, but you can find the animal stories as originally published in volume 20 of the *Archives d'Études Orientales*, [starting on p. 488](#). Lindblom provides the Kamba text for 30 animal tales with an English translation, plus detailed notes and commentary for each story. You can also find the 32 supernatural stories in that same volume, [starting on p. 614](#).

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, 45, 49, 73, 90, 108, 111, 114, 116, [127], 128, 165, 169, 180, 182, 191

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#128. **Littmann, Enno. *Tales, Customs, Names and Dirges of the Tigre Tribes***. Published in 1915. Pages: 344. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book

for some stories.]

archive.org/details/publicationsofpr02littiala

[Enno Littmann](#) [1875-1958] was a German linguist who, in 1905, lived with the Tigre people of Eritrea in what was then Abyssinia. He later published five books documenting what he learned about Tigre culture: [volume 1](#) contains the Tigre texts of 80 folktales, plus accounts of folk beliefs and customs; [volume 2](#) contains the English translations of those texts; [volume 3](#) contains the Tigre texts of the songs that Littmann collected; and [volume 4A](#) and [volume 4B](#) contain German translations of the songs.

Littmann also wrote a book about Queen of Sheba stories in Ethiopia: [The Legend of the Queen of Sheba in the Tradition of Axum](#). For more about the legends of the Queen of Sheba, see Budge's English translation of the *Kebrä Nagast* above, #40.

More from Ethiopia: 40, 54, 66, 97, 118, 119, [128]

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#129. **Lynch, Patricia Ann.** *African Mythology A to Z*. Published in 2004. Pages: 137.

archive.org/details/africanmythology00lync_0

The "A to Z" in the title of this book gives the impression that it's a kind of encyclopedia, but it's more of a storybook, with the stories arranged alphabetically based on the main characters — African gods and goddesses along with heroines and heroes, supernatural beings, and also sacred geography. Some folkloric characters are included too, like Abu Nowas. The bibliography is limited, so this is more of a book to read for fun and exploration, much like Knappert's *African Mythology*, #117 above. For research purposes, Peek's *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia* [see #158 below] is a better choice.

Lynch is also the author of a similar project for Native American traditions that you can find at the Internet Archive: [*Native American Mythology A to Z*](#).

More secondary literature: 26, 117, [129], 145, 158, 159, 171, 198

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#130. **Madan, Arthur. *Kiungani, or: Story and History from Central Africa***. Published in 1887. Pages: 291. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/kiunganiorstoryh00john

[Arthur Madan](#) [1846-1917] was a missionary and also a linguist. He arrived in Zanzibar in 1880 as part of the Anglican Universities' Mission to Central Africa, and while there he compiled a Swahili dictionary and grammar, completing the work begun by Edward Steere [see #180 below]. The 31 stories in this book were written by students of the St. Andrew's mission school at Kiungani in Zanzibar, and Madan then translated the stories into English.

In 1906 Madan was transferred to Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), where he wrote a [*Lala-Lamba Handbook*](#) that contains a dozen folktales in Lala and Lamba, along with English translations — and you can also find many more Lamba folktales in Doke's *Lamba Folklore* [see #73 above].

More Swahili stories: 4, 25, [130], 180

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#131. **Magel, Emil. *Folktales from the Gambia: Wolof Fictional Narratives***. With a preface by **Edris Makward**. Published in 1984. Pages: 208.

archive.org/details/folktalesfromgam0001unse

This book by Emil Magel [b. 1945], a professor of African languages and literature at Kentucky State University, features 45 Wolof stories that he recorded during visits to the Gambia in the early 1970s and then translated into English. Many of the stories are animal stories, including tales of Leuk the rabbit and Bouki the hyena. Magel has arranged the stories by themes, and he provides an introduction putting the stories in cultural context. In addition, there is a very informative and thought-provoking preface by Edris Makward, a professor of African languages and literature at the University of Wisconsin who was born in the Gambia.

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, 95, 105, [131], 132, 147, 150, 160, 166

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#132. **Mama, Raouf. *Why Goats Smell Bad, and Other Stories from Benin***. Illustrated by **Imna Arroyo**. Published in 1998. Pages: 138.

archive.org/details/whygoatssmellbad0000mama

Raouf Mama [b. 1956] is a storyteller from Benin and also a professor of literature at Eastern Connecticut State University. In this book he shares 20 folktales from the Fon people of Benin. The stories are illustrated with wonderful woodcuts by [Imna Arroyo](#) [b. 1951], a Puerto Rican artist who is also on the faculty at Eastern Connecticut State University.

In addition, Mama is the editor of [The Barefoot Book of Tropical Tales](#), a collection of folktales that includes three African tales, along with stories from South Asia and the Caribbean; see #141 below for more about the *Barefoot Books* series.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, [132], 134, 139, 140, 141, 143,

144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187,
189, 193

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#133. **Mandela, Nelson.** *Favorite African Folktales.* With illustrations by many artists. Published in 2007. Pages: 143.

archive.org/details/nelsonmandelasfa00nels_0

[Nelson Mandela](#) [1918-2013], was a leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Imprisoned for 27 years, he later became the President of South Africa, serving in that office from 1994 until 1999; he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. This selection of 32 folktales chosen by Nelson Mandela as his favorites first appeared in 2002, followed by this fully illustrated edition in 2007. Most of the stories come from southern Africa, but there are also stories from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Morocco.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76,
84, 87, 92, 121, 123, [133], 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#134. **Mbugua, Kioi wa.** *Inkishu: Myths and Legends of the Maasai.* With photographs by **Adrian Arbib** and illustrations by **Kang'ara wa Njambi**, **Samwel Ngoje**, **Kahare Miano**, and **Godfrey Nyotumba**. Published in 1994. Pages: 73.

archive.org/details/inkishumythslege00kioi

Kioi wa Mbugua, with funding from Oxfam International, visited Maasailand (specifically the Narok district of Kenya) to document these 4 stories told by a traditional Maasai storyteller named Ole Parkisua. The word “Inkishu” in the Maa language means “cattle,” and the stories in the book feature what the author calls the three essentials of Maasai life: their God, their land, and their cattle. Although the stories come from a

traditional storyteller, the author has retold the stories in literary English rather than trying to convey an oral storytelling style.

More from the Maasai people: 3, 108, 126, [134], 143

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#135. **McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Girl Who Married a Lion and Other Tales from Africa*.** Published in 2005. Pages: 189.

archive.org/details/girlwhomarriedli0000mcca_c7i8

[Alexander McCall Smith](#) [b. 1948] is best known as the author of the [No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency](#), but he is also the author of several books of African folktales. *The Girl Who Married a Lion* is the most complete of his folktale books, containing 34 stories. Some stories the author heard from Ndebele storytellers while traveling in Matabeleland in Zimbabwe (where he was born and grew up). The rest of the stories come from Botswana, collected and translated by Elinah Grant.

McCall Smith's earlier book, [Children of Wax: African Folk Tales](#), contains the Ndebele stories only. A later book, [Folktales from Africa: The Baboons Who Went This Way and That](#), includes some previously published stories along with a few new stories too.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, [135], 138, 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#136. **McDermott, Gerald. *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti*.** Illustrated by the author. Published in 1986. Pages: 37.

archive.org/details/anansispider00gera

[Gerald McDermott](#) [1941-2012] wrote and illustrated many children's books featuring folktales and mythology from around the world. This Anansi book was his first children's

book, published in 1972, and it received a Caldecott Honor award. McDermott went on to write two other books based on African folktales: [*The Magic Tree: A Tale from the Congo*](#) and [*Zomo the Rabbit: A Trickster Tale from West Africa*](#).

In addition to his books inspired by African folktales, McDermott wrote a series of books about trickster characters from around the world, including [*Monkey: A Trickster Tale From India*](#), [*Jabuti the Tortoise: A Trickster Tale From the Amazon*](#), [*Coyote: A Trickster Tale From the American Southwest*](#), and [*Raven: A Trickster Tale From the Pacific Northwest*](#).

More award-winning books: 2, 38, 53, 67, 69, 72, 94, 98, 100, 104, [136], 145, 181

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#137. **McNeil, Heather.** *Hyena and the Moon: Stories to Tell from Kenya*. Illustrated by **Joan Garner**. Published in 1994. Pages: 171.

archive.org/details/hyenameonstor00mcne

Heather McNeil is a storyteller, author, and educator. The 10 stories in this book come from her travels in Kenya in 1987, and she provides detailed cultural background for the storytellers that she and her translator, Peter Kagathi Gitema, worked with. For each story, McNeil provides her own version in English, and she also provides the word-for-word translation so that you can see how she has adapted the story.

In addition to her work as an author and storyteller, Heather McNeil is the editor of the *World Folklore* series; some of the titles in that series include [*From the Winds of Manguito: Cuban Folktales*](#), [*The Eagle on the Cactus: Traditional Tales from Mexico*](#), [*The Corn Woman: Stories and Legends of the Hispanic Southwest*](#), [*From the Mango Tree and Other Folktales from Nepal*](#), [*Princess Peacock: Tales from the Other*](#)

[Peoples of China](#), and [Gadi Mirrbooka: Australian Aboriginal Tales](#).

More from eastern Africa: 103, 104, 116, 120, 127, [137], 144, 175

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#138. **McPherson, Ethel. *Native Fairy Tales of South Africa***. Illustrated by **Helen Jacobs**. Published in 1919. Pages: 191. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/mcpherson-fairy-tales-south-africa-1919

Ethel McPherson, a resident of Cape Town in South Africa, used the Zulu stories published by Henry Callaway in 1868 [see #45 above] and the Sotho stories published by Édouard Jacottet in 1908 [see #111 above] to create this book of 22 stories for children, adapting the literal translations of Callaway and Jacottet into literary English. Helen Jacobs [1888-1970], an English artist, did the beautiful color illustrations. One of the stories included in the book is the famous legend of “The Snake with Five Heads,” which is also the inspiration for John Steptoe’s *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*; see #181 below.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, [138], 146, 163, 169, 184, 196

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#139. **Medlicott, Mary. *The River That Went to the Sky: Twelve Tales by African Storytellers***. Illustrated by **Ademola Akintola**. Published in 1995. Pages: 96.

archive.org/details/riverthatwenttos0000unse

Mary Medlicott [b. 1946], the book’s editor, is a storyteller based in the U.K. She has collected 12 stories for this book, all told by African storytellers, including [Gcina Mhlophe](#) [see #140-141]

below]. The beautiful illustrations are by Ademola Akintola [b. 1952], an artist from Nigeria now based in the U.K. Some of the stories in this book are traditional folktales, while others are contemporary stories, like the story by [Sousa Jamba](#) [b. 1966], “My Godfather,” which is based on his flight from Angola in 1975 to escape the civil war.

Medlicott is also the author of [The Little Book of Storytelling](#), a handbook about telling stories for and with very young children.

More from African artists: 18, 69, 70, 71, 74, 81, 96, 112, 118, 134, [139], 160, 164, 187, 196

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#140. **Mhlophe, Gcina. *Stories of Africa***. Illustrated by various artists. Published in 2003. Pages: 53.

archive.org/details/storiesofafrica0000mhlo

[Gcina Mhlophe](#) [b. 1958] is a South African activist and writer from KwaZulu-Natal. As a storyteller, she performs in four languages: English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and Xhosa. This book of 10 stories was published by the University of Natal Press in South Africa, but it is not limited to stories from South Africa; you will find a wide variety of stories here, with beautiful illustrations by a group of artists based in Durban. As Mhlophe explains in the introduction, some of the stories she heard from her grandmother, while others she learned through her work as a storyteller traveling across Africa. For more by Mhlophe, see the following item.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, [140], 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, 193

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#141. **Mhlophe, Gcina. *African Tales: A Barefoot Collection.***

Illustrated by **Rachel Griffin**. Published in 2018. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/africantalesbare0000mhlo

This is another collection of stories by South African storyteller [Gcina Mhlope](#); for more about her work, see the previous item. This lovely book features 8 stories from across Africa, and for each story there is a page of cultural information providing context for the story, plus beautiful illustrations by Rachel Griffin, a children's book illustrator based in England.

This book is published by Barefoot Books, and you can find other Barefoot books at the Internet Archive too; here are just a few of their titles: *Tropical Tales* [see #132 below], [Trickster Tales](#), [The Wise Fool](#), [Mother and Son Tales](#), [Father and Son Tales](#), [Heroic Children](#), [Giants, Ghosts, and Goblins](#), [Freaky Tales](#), [Monsters](#), [Animal Tales](#), [Earth Tales](#), and [Stories from the Stars](#).

More children's picture books: 2, 3, 4, 32, 38, 39, 52, 69, 70, 71, 72, 89, 94, 96, 98, 106, 115, 119, 126, 136, [141], 143, 145, 152, 172, 178, 181, 185, 186, 188, 199

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#142. **Mitchnik, Helen. *Egyptian and Sudanese Folk-Tales***

[*Oxford Myths and Legends* series]. Illustrated by **Eric Fraser**.

Published in 1978. Pages: 115.

archive.org/details/egyptiansudanese00mitc

Helen Mitchnik [b. 1901] was born in Omdurman on the west bank of the Nile in the Sudan, and she spoke Arabic as her first language. She later attended school in Khartoum and then relocated to England where she worked as a translator. This book contains 17 stories that Mitchnik heard from her Sudanese mother and grandmother when she was a child, and also during her years spent traveling throughout both Egypt and the Sudan.

The book is part of the *Oxford Myths and Legends* books, along with Arnott's ***African Myths and Legends*** [see #16 above] and Bennett's ***West African Trickster Tales*** [see #28 above]. You can find other books in this series at the Internet Archive too, including [West Indian Folktales](#), [Chinese Myths and Fantasies](#), [Japanese Tales and Legends](#), [Yugoslav Folk Tales](#), [Russian Tales and Legends](#), [Irish Sagas and Folk Tales](#), and more.

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, 50, 77, 88, 115, [142], 172

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#143. **Mollel, Tololwa. *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper! A Maasai Tale***. Illustrated by **Barbara Spurll**. Published in 1991. Pages: 30.

archive.org/details/rhinosforlunchel0000moll

Tololwa Mollel [b. 1952] is a Maasai writer who grew up in Kenya and is now based in Canada. This book was inspired by a Maasai legend, and you can compare other takes on this same type of story by [Verna Aardema](#) [see #3 above] and Melinda Lilly [see #126 above].

Mollel has written other books inspired by Maasai stories, like [The Orphan Boy](#), along with books inspired by stories from across Africa, including [The Flying Tortoise: An Igbo Story](#), [The Princess Who Lost Her Hair: An Akamba Legend](#) [illustrated by Charles Reasoner; see #126 above], [Ananse's Feast: An Ashanti Tale](#), [The King and the Tortoise](#), [Kitoto the Mighty](#), and [A Promise to the Sun](#) [illustrated by Beatriz Vidal, who also did the illustrations for [Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain](#) by [Verna Aardema](#); see #1 above].

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, [143], 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, 193

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#144. **Muluka, Barrack.** *Why Dog Left the Forest* [East African Educational Publishers Sparrow Readers series]. Illustrated. Published in 1996. Pages: 24.

archive.org/details/whydogleftforest0000mulu

Barrack Muluka [b. 1958] graduated from the University of Nairobi and is now a researcher at the University of Leicester in England. This folktale book featuring the adventures of Dog and Hyena is part of the *Sparrow Readers* series from East African Educational Publishers, where Barrack Muluka was CEO for many years. For another book in the *Sparrow Readers* series, see Chinua Achebe's *How Leopard Got His Claws*, #8 above.

More from eastern Africa: 103, 104, 116, 120, 127, 137, [144],
175

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#145. **Musgrove, Margaret.** *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*. Illustrated by **Leo and Diane Dillon**. Published in 1976. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/ashantitozuluufr00musg_0

This lovely book by Margaret Musgrove [b. 1943], with illustrations by [Leo and Diane Dillon](#), provides an overview of African peoples from A to Z. The book won a Caldecott Medal, along with many other awards. Musgrove has taught high school in both the United States and in Ghana, and she later became a professor of writing at Loyola University Maryland. Musgrove is also the author of [The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth](#), illustrated by Julia Cairns, who did the illustrations for Onyefulu's *Girl Who Married a Ghost* [see #153 below].

More from Diane and Leo Dillon: 1, 2, 3, 110, [145], 176

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#146. **Naidoo, Beverley.** *The Great Tug of War and Other Stories*. Illustrated by **Piet Grobler**. Published in 2006. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/greattugofwaroth0000naid

[Beverly Naidoo](#) [b. 1943] is a South African writer best known for her 1986 novel, [Journey to Jo'burg](#). Imprisoned for her anti-apartheid activities, she left South Africa for England in 1965, where she became a schoolteacher in London. In this book, Naidoo has retold 8 folktales, many of which feature Mmutla, the trickster hare (Naidoo uses the Setswana names for the animal characters). There are delightful illustrations by Piet Grobler, who also illustrated Hofmeyr's *The Magic Bojabi Tree*; see #106 above.

In addition to this book of African folktales, Naidoo is the author of a fascinating book of Aesop's fables retold in an African context: [Aesop's Fables](#), also illustrated by Grobler.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, [146], 163, 169, 184, 196

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#147. **Nassau, Robert.** *Where Animals Talk: West African Folk Lore Tales*. Published in 1912. Pages: 250. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/whereanimalstalk00nass_0

[Robert Nassau](#) [1835-1921] spent four decades as a medical missionary in Africa, arriving at Corisco Island, now part of Equatorial Guinea, in 1861; he also worked in the regions now known as Gabon and Cameroon. This book contains 61 folktales that Nassau collected during his career in Africa: 16 stories from Mpongwe storytellers in Gabon, 34 stories from Benga

storytellers in Equatorial Guinea, and 11 stories from Fang storytellers in Cameroon, all of which Nassau translated into English. For each story there is a list of the cast of animal characters, which provides the Mpongwe, Benga, and Fang names for each animal.

More from central Africa: 6, 85, [147], 174, 183

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#148. **Niane, Djibril Tamsir.** *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali.*

Translated by **G. D. Pickett.** Published in 2006. Pages: 96.

archive.org/details/sundiataepicofol00dtni

[Djibril Tamsir Niane](#) [1932-2021], born in Guinea and educated in Senegal and France, heard this version of the traditional epic about Sundiata, the 13th-century ruler of the empire of Mali, from the griot Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate. Niane translated that version into French, and G. D. Pickett has translated the French version into English.

You can find some other versions of this epic at the Internet Archive also. For example, the book [Sunjata: Gambian Versions of the Mande Epic](#) includes a version by Bamba Suso and another version by Banna Kanute, both translated by Gordon Innes. John William Johnson translated a version by the griot Fa-Digi Sisoko in [The Epic of Son-Jara: A West African Tradition](#). There is also a collection of essays about the epic edited by Ralph Austen: [In Search of Sunjata: The Mande Oral Epic as History, Literature and Performance](#).

More epics: 26, 33, 40, 51, 83, 90, 101, 110, [148]

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#149. **Nyabongo, Akiki.** *Winds and Lights.* Illustrated by **B.**

Hewitt. Published in 1939. Pages: 37.

archive.org/details/nyabongo-african

Prince [Akiki Nyabongo](#) [1907-1975] was the second son of King Kyembambe of Toro state in Uganda. He studied at Howard University and at Yale, and then received his D.Phil. from Oxford University in 1939. This book is a collection of 10 traditional Ugandan stories. Nyabongo is also the author of a novel, [Africa Answers Back](#), about the tensions between native African traditions and the incursions of European education.

More from Uganda: 23, 113, [149], 176

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#150. **Offodile, Buchi. *The Orphan Girl and Other Stories: West African Folk Tales*** [*International Folk Tale* series]. Published in 2001. Pages: 260.

archive.org/details/orphangirlothers0000offo

Buchi (Onyebuchi) Felix Offodile, born in Nigeria, is a professor at the Kent State University Business School. In this book he has collected 41 stories from all over western Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. There is a brief introduction for each country with cultural and geographical information. If you're interested in exploring the stories by theme, there's a thematic index in the back of the book.

This book is part of the excellent *International Folk Tale* series from InterLink Publishing, and you can find some other volumes in this series at the Internet Archive, including [From the Land of Sheba: Yemeni Folk Tales](#), [The Snake Prince: Burmese Folk Tales](#), and [The Grandfathers Speak: Native American Folk Tales](#).

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, 95, 105, 131, 132, 147, [150], 160, 166

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#151. **Ogumefu, M. I. *Yoruba Legends***. Published in 1929. Pages: 87. [This book will enter the public domain in 2025.]

archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.54438

Margaret Irene Ogumefu [1905-1990] was the British-born wife of Michael Gladstone Egun Ogumefu from Lagos, Nigeria; he died in 1927, just 25 years old, and after his death she published this book of Yoruba legends, dedicating the book to him. You will find 40 stories here, including a cycle of stories about the trickster Tortoise. She published this book of Yoruba legends under her married name, M. I. Ogumefu, and later published books under her maiden name, Margaret Baumann, and she also published romance novels under the pen name, Marguerite Lees.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, [151], 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#152. **Olaleye, Isaac. *In the Rainfield: Who Is the Greatest?*** Illustrated by **Ann Grifalconi**. Published in 2000. Pages: 31.

archive.org/details/inrainfieldwhois0000olal

Isaac Olaleye [b. 1941] is a Nigerian writer who now resides in California. In this lovely children's book, he tells the story of the struggle among Wind, Fire, and Rain to determine who is the greatest of the three. The illustrations are by [Ann Grifalconi](#); see #32 and #94 above for more of her work.

Olaleye is also the author of fictional stories set in Africa, including [Lake of the Big Snake: An African Rain Forest Adventure](#), [Bitter Bananas](#), and [Bikes for Rent!](#)

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, [152], 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, 193

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#153. **Onyefulu, Ifeoma. *The Girl Who Married a Ghost and Other Tales from Nigeria***. Illustrated by **Julia Cairns**. Published in 2010. Pages: 111.

archive.org/details/girlwhomarriedgh0000onye

In the introduction to this collection of 10 Nigerian folktales, [Ifeoma Onyefulu](#) [b. 1959] writes about growing up in a village in eastern Nigeria and hearing stories from all her family and her family's friends, and there are Igbo words and phrases sprinkled throughout the book. Tortoise was the most popular character in the stories Onyefulu grew up with, so you will find animal stories in this book, and supernatural stories too. The illustrations are by Julia Cairns, a British-born illustrator who lived in Botswana and is now based in New Mexico. For more of her work, see #145 above.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, [153],
156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194

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#154. **Opoku, Kofi Asare. *Speak to the Winds: Proverbs from Africa***. Illustrated by **Dindga McCannon**. Published in 1975. Pages: 63.

archive.org/details/speaktowindsprov00opok

Kofi Asare Opoku [b. 1933] is a scholar and author from Ghana who specializes in traditional African religion and also the study of proverbs. There are proverbs from across Africa included here (but no source information as to their provenance), organized thematically: Children, Wisdom, Human Conduct, etc. What makes this collection really remarkable is the beautiful artwork by [Dindga McCannon](#) [b. 1947], an African American artist and author who was born and raised in Harlem.

More proverbs: 27, 39, 42, 82, 109, 116, 123, [154], 156, 165, 167, 182

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#155. **Orlando, Louise.** *African Folktales and Activities.*

Illustrated by **Michelle Hill.** Published in 1995. Pages: 80.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales0000orla

Louise Orlando [b. 1966] is the author of educational books for children, and in this book each of the 13 African folktales from various sources comes with information about the story's cultural and geographical context. There are also learning activities intended for children ages 5-9, plus abundant illustrations and text decorations.

You can find other books by Orlando at the Internet Archive, including [The Multicultural Game Book](#), which describes 70 traditional games from 30 different countries, including 10 games from Africa.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, [155], 162, 164, 168, 170, 200

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#156. **Owomoyela, Oyekan.** *Yoruba Trickster Tales.* Published in 1997. Pages: 218.

archive.org/details/yorubatricket00owom

Oyekan Owomoyela [1938-2007], was born in Osun, Nigeria. After completing his Ph.D. at UCLA with a dissertation on Yoruba theater, he became a professor at the University of Nebraska. In this book he retells 23 stories about the trickster tortoise, whose Yoruba name is Ajapa (or Ijapa).

Owomoyela is also the author of [The African Difference: Discourses on Africanity and the Relativity of Cultures](#) and he edited [A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures.](#)

In addition to those print publications, he created a remarkable website with thousands of Yoruba proverbs in both Yoruba and English that has been archived by the [Wayback Machine](#).

More Tortoise stories: 58, 151, [156], 187, 198, 200

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#157. **Paye, Won-Ldy** and **Margaret Lippert**. *Why Leopard Has Spots: Dan Stories from Liberia*. Illustrated by **Ashley Bryan**. Published in 1999. Pages: 50.

archive.org/details/whyleopardhasspo0000paye

Won-Ldy Paye is a Dan storyteller from Tapita in northeastern Liberia. His maternal grandmother initiated him into the storytelling tradition, and he is also a drummer and dancer. He first came to the U.S. in the 1980s to study theater and, unable to return to Liberia for political reasons, he settled in Seattle; he is now based in Connecticut. His coauthor, [Margaret Lippert](#) [b. 1942], is a Seattle-based storyteller and writer. This book of Liberian folktales contains 6 stories, including two stories about the trickster spider. The stories are beautifully illustrated by [Ashley Bryan](#) [see #37-39 and #67 above, plus #186 below].

Two of the stories in this book have also been published as separate storybooks, both illustrated by Julie Paschkis, a Seattle-based artist: [The Talking Vegetables](#) and [Mrs. Chicken and the Hungry Crocodile](#). Paye and Lippert also wrote this book based on another Liberian folktale: [Head, Body, Legs](#), again with illustrations by Paschkis.

More from Liberia: 46, 62, 74, 79, 102, [157], 161

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#158. **Peek, Philip** and **Kwesi Yankah**. *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*. Published in 2004. Pages: 593.

archive.org/details/africanfolklore0000unse

This excellent encyclopedia was edited by Philip Peek [b. 1943] and [Kwesi Yankah](#), with a board of consultants that included Ruth Finnegan [see #82 above], Lee Haring [see #101 above], and Harold Scheub [see #169-171 below]. There are over 150 contributors, with a list of entries from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Each entry contains its own bibliographical reference section, making it easy to do further research. Also, by using the digital edition at the Internet Archive, you can search the text by words or phrases, in addition to the index provided at the back of the book.

More big — really big! — books: 42, 60, 73, 75, 105, [158],
167, 169, 170, 177, 179, 180, 191, 197

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#159. **Pelton, Robert Doane.** *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*. Published in 1980. Pages: 312.

archive.org/details/tricksterinwesta0000pelt

Robert Doane Pelton [1935-2020] was a Catholic priest who studied at McGill University and then completed a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago Divinity School. In this book based on his 1974 doctoral dissertation, Pelton examines four different West African traditions: Ananse stories from the Ashanti of Ghana, Legba stories from the Fon of Benin, Eshu stories from the Yoruba of Nigeria, and Ogo-Yurugu stories from the Dogon of Mali. He also provides an introductory overview of scholarship on trickster traditions, plus his own theory of the trickster as inspired by these African traditions.

You can find other important studies of the trickster at the Internet Archive also, including [From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom](#) by John W. Roberts, [The Trickster: A Study in American Indian](#)

[Mythology](#) by Paul Radin [see #164 below], and [Trickster Makes This World](#) by [Lewis Hyde](#).

More secondary literature: 26, 117, 129, 145, 158, [159], 171, 198

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#160. **Petersen, Kirsten Holst** and **Anna Rutherford**. *Cowries and Kobos: The West African Oral Tale and Short Story*. Illustrated by **Uche Okeke** and **Adebisi Akanji**. Published in 1981. Pages: 177.

archive.org/details/cowrieskobosw00pete

This book provides a selection of both traditional oral narratives from western Africa along with contemporary literary stories, including stories by [Chinua Achebe](#) [see #8 above] and [Cyprian Ekwensi](#) [1921-2007]. There is a very helpful introductory essay by Donald Consentino [b. 1941] about the similarities and also differences between oral tales and written tales. Each section of the book has its own introduction, with Nigerian folklorist Helen Chukwuma [b. 1942] providing the introduction to the selection of 8 oral tales. The illustrations are by [Uche Okeke](#) [1933-2016] and [Adebisi Akanji](#) [b. 1930], who are both artists from Nigeria.

More from western Africa: 11, 14, 15, 19, 28, 30, 31, 53, 64, 95, 105, 131, 132, 147, 150, [160], 166

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#161. **Pinney, Peter**. *Legends of Liberia*. Published in 1973. Pages: 299.

archive.org/details/legendsofliberia00pinn

Peter Pinney [1922-1992], an Australian world-traveler and writer, collected these 133 stories from across Liberia during the 1950s, working with Bandi, Bassa, Belle, Gio, Gola, Grebo,

Kepelle, Kissi, Kru, Loma, Mah, Mende, Putu, Sapa, Sikon, and Vai storytellers. Pinney then presented the collection in book form to President Tubman of Liberia sometime in the early 1970s. The book was reissued by the European Union's European Development Fund in 2017 in order to preserve and promote the storytelling traditions of Liberia, with copies distributed to all universities, colleges, libraries, and reading centers throughout the country.

More from Liberia: 46, 62, 74, 79, 102, 157, [161]

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#162. **Pitcher, Diana.** *Tokoloshi: African Folk-Tales*. Illustrated by **Meg Rutherford**. Published in 1981. Pages: 64.

archive.org/details/tokoloshiafrican0000pitc

Diane Pitcher [b. 1921] attended Natal University in South Africa and later worked as a teacher in Durban and then in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time) and in England; when she retired, she returned to South Africa. The 17 stories in this collection come mostly from Bantu-speaking peoples in southern and also central Africa, along with a few stories from eastern Africa and western Africa. The title character of the book, Tokoloshi, is a goblin-like creature found in Zulu and Xhosa storytelling traditions. The lovely illustrations are by Meg Rutherford [1932-2006], an Australian-born artist based in England.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, [162], 164, 168, 170, 200

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#163. **Postma, Minnie.** *Tales from the Basotho*. Translated by **Susie McDermid**, and with notes by **John Vlach**. Published in 1974. Pages: 177.

archive.org/details/talesfrombasotho00minn

[Minnie Postma](#) [1908-1989] was a South African writer who grew up in the Orange Free State Province of South Africa on the Lesotho border. She spoke both Afrikaans and Sotho as a child, and her books helped to popularize Basotho stories for an Afrikaans audience. This collection of 23 Sotho legends has been translated from Afrikaans into English by Susie McDermid [1926-2011], a South African journalist who later settled in the United States; she has also written a very helpful introduction to the book. John Vlach [b. 1948], a professor at George Washington University, provided the tale type and motif index.

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, [163], 169, 184, 196

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#164. **Radin, Paul. *African Folktales and Sculptures***. Published in 1952. Pages: 322.

archive.org/details/africanfolktales0000unse_g7m8

[Paul Radin](#) [1883-1959] was an American anthropologist who specialized in Native American studies; he is best known today for his classic [The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology](#). When Radin published this anthology of 81 traditional African stories in 1952 it was a major event; there had not been an anthology of African folktales like this available in English before. The original 1952 edition of the book also contained an appendix with 165 photographs of African sculpture; in 1964 the book was reissued in a text-only edition, and the Internet Archive has copies of both the [1952 edition](#) and [the 1964 edition](#). You can also listen to a recording of Eartha Kitt reading 7 stories from Radin's book: [Folk Tales of the Tribes Of Africa](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, [164], 168, 170, 200

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#165. **Rattray, R. Sutherland.** *Akan-Ashanti Folk-Tales*. Illustrated by Ashanti, Fanti and Ewe artists. Published in 1930. Pages: 275. [This book will enter the public domain in 2026.]
archive.org/details/akanashantifolkt0000ratt

[R. Sutherland Rattray](#) [1881-1938] studied anthropology at Oxford University and then went on to join the British civil service in Africa. During his 25 years in Africa from 1906 until his retirement in 1930, he published several major collections of African stories and proverbs. This monumental collection of Akan folk-tales from Ghana (then the Gold Coast) contains 75 stories both in Akan and in a very literal English translation, along with illustrations by members of the Ashanti, Fanti, and Ewe tribes with whom Rattray lived and worked.

Rattray is also the author of [Ashanti Proverbs](#), [Hausa Folklore](#), and [Folklore Stories and Songs in Chinyanja](#), all of which contain the African language text along with an English translation.

More bilingual books: 33, 35, 42, 45, 49, 73, 90, 108, 111, 114, 116, 127, 128, [165], 169, 180, 182, 191

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#166. **Robinson, Adjai.** *Singing Tales of Africa*. Illustrated by **Christine Price**. Published in 1974. Pages: 80.
archive.org/details/singingtalesofaf0000robi

You will find 7 song-stories from West Africa in this book. Each one includes the story in English, the song lyrics in the original African language and in English translation, the musical transcription, plus notes about the story's cultural context. The author, Adjai Robinson, is from Sierra Leone [b. 1932], and he was a storyteller on Radio Sierra Leone before he relocated to the United States to attend Columbia University; he then

returned to Africa in 1975, teaching at the Nigeria Teachers Institute in Kaduna. The illustrations are by Christine Price; for more of her work, see #97 above.

More books with music: 41, [166], 176, 190, 192

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#167. **Ross, Mabel** and **Barbara Walker**. *On Another Day: Tales Told among the Nkundo of Zaire*. With a foreword by **Daniel Crowley**. Published in 1979. Pages: 596.

archive.org/details/onanotherdaytale0000unse

This book contains 95 stories from Nkundo storytellers in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). The majority of the stories were collected by Mabel Ross [1909-2001] in the early 1970s when she was a missionary. Ross's co-author, folklorist Barbara Walker [1921-2007], wrote detailed notes and commentary on the stories; see #194 below for Walker's books of Nigerian folktales. The introduction is by [Daniel Crowley](#) [1921-1998], a major scholar of both African and Caribbean folk traditions.

For examples of Mongo texts, see [Mongo Proverbs and Fables](#) by Edward Algernon Ruskin [1871-1943].

More from the Congo: 33, 43, 68, 107, [167], 197

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#168. **Savory, Phyllis**. *The Best of African Folklore*. Illustrated by **Gina Daniel**. Published in 1991. Pages: 111.

archive.org/details/bestofafricanfol0000savo

Phyllis Savory [1901-1991] was a prolific South African author who wrote numerous anthologies of African folktales in English, focusing primarily on folktales from southern Africa. Like Minnie Postma [see #163 above], Savory began collecting stories as a little girl growing up in what was then Rhodesia

(now Zimbabwe). This “best of” collection contains 39 stories from Savory’s *Fireside* books.

You can also find two of Savory’s *Fireside* books at the Internet Archive — [Zulu Fireside Tales](#) and [Congo Fireside Tales](#) — along with two more of Savory’s books: [Bantu Folk Tales from Southern Africa](#) and [Lion Outwitted by Hare and Other African Tales](#).

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, [168], 170, 200

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#169. **Scheub, Harold.** *The Xhosa Ntsomi* [Oxford Library of African Literature series]. Published in 1975. Pages: 446.

archive.org/details/xhosantsomi00sche

[Harold Scheub](#) [1931-2019] was a professor of African Cultural Studies at the University of Wisconsin. He began his work on South African oral storytelling as a graduate student, and he spent four years walking 1,500 miles up and down the eastern coast of South Africa, tape-recording Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swazi and Sotho storytellers. For this book, as Scheub explains in the preface, he watched over 2000 different storytellers in the Transkei and kwaZulu-Natal. The resulting book contains 40 stories in Xhosa with an English translation. In addition to the performance text and translations, there is also an introduction (nearly 200 pages long) that discusses the composition, content, and performance of these Xhosa stories.

You can learn more about one of the storytellers, Nongenile Masithathu Zenani [d. 1985], in another of Scheub’s books: [The World and the Word: Tales and Observations from the Xhosa Oral Tradition](#).

More from the *Oxford Library of African Literature*: 10, 82, 90, [169]

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#170. **Scheub, Harold.** *The African Storyteller: Stories from African Oral Traditions*. Published in 1990. Pages: 494.

archive.org/details/africanstorytell0000unse

In this book, [Harold Scheub](#) [see #169 above] has crafted an anthology intended for college students, providing a comprehensive survey of African storytelling traditions including both North African and sub-Saharan traditions, as well as both ancient (i.e. Egyptian) and modern stories. In addition to the 59 stories in the book, you will find observations about African cultures and storytelling performances, along with notes and commentary on the individual stories. Some of the stories come from previously published books, while others are stories that come from Scheub's own work with South African storytellers. For more books by Scheub, see the previous and following items.

More big — really big! — books: 42, 60, 73, 75, 105, 158, 167, 169, [170], 177, 179, 180, 191, 197

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#171. **Scheub, Harold.** *A Dictionary of African Mythology: The Mythmaker as Storyteller*. Published in 2000. Pages: 368.

archive.org/details/dictionaryofafri00sche

This book is not exactly a dictionary; instead, [Harold Scheub](#) has taken 400 traditional African stories in highly abbreviated form and arranged them alphabetically based on the name of the main character (a god or goddess, heroine or hero, etc.). There is a very detailed bibliography along with indexes by country, by language, by culture, and by themes. Unlike traditional tale type and motif indexes, Scheub has organized this thematic index based on what he sees as the “grand myth” and its components: Beginnings – First Connections between Heaven

and Earth – Separation – Struggle between God and Man – Second Connections – Endings. For more books by Scheub, see the previous items.

More secondary literature: 26, 117, 129, 145, 158, 159, [171], 198

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#172. **Schwartz, Howard** and **Barbara Rush**. *The Sabbath Lion: A Jewish Folktale from Algeria*. Illustrated by **Stephen Fieser**. Published in 1992. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/sabbathlionjewis0000schw

[Howard Schwartz](#) [b. 1941] is a widely published folklorist specializing in Jewish storytelling traditions. His co-author for this book, Barbara Rush, is a storyteller in Israel. In this book, they have retold a Jewish folktale from northern Africa. Schwartz also included the story of the Sabbath lion in this anthology of Jewish folktales: [Leaves from the Garden of Eden: One Hundred Classic Jewish Tales](#) in which you will find 10 North African stories. For more from Howard Schwartz, see #115.

Schwartz and Rush also collaborated on [A Coat for the Moon and Other Jewish Tales](#), an anthology of Jewish folktales that contains 2 Egyptian and 2 Moroccan tales, and [The Diamond Tree: Jewish Tales from Around the World](#), which features a Jewish folktale from Morocco.

More from northern Africa: 10, 24, 50, 77, 88, 115, 142, [172]

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#173. **Seed, Jenny**. *The Bushman's Dream: African Tales of the Creation*. Illustrated by **Bernard Brett**. Published in 1975. Pages: 119.

archive.org/details/bushmansdreamafr00seed

Jenny Seed [b. 1930] is a prolific South African writer best known for her works of historical fiction, although she has also written books inspired by traditional folktales. In this book, Seed takes the Mantis stories told by San storytellers and recorded by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd [see #35 above] and retells the separate stories as a book-length cycle. Each chapter can stand on its own, while the book as a whole creates a sense of dramatic development from story to story.

You can also find one of Jenny Seed's fictional books for children at the Internet Archive: [Tombi's Song](#).

More from the San people: 35, 125, [173]

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#174. **Seid, Joseph Brahim. *Told by Starlight in Chad*.** Translated by **Karen Haire Hoenig**. Published in 2007. Pages: 71. archive.org/details/toldbystarlighti0000seid

Joseph Brahim Seid [1927-1980] was born in Chad and later completed his education in Egypt and in France. He then served as Chad's ambassador to France in 1962 and later as Chad's Minister of Justice. In addition to his political career, Seid was also a writer. This book of 14 folktales was originally published in French, *Au Tchad sous les étoiles*, in 1962.

This 2007 English translation is by Karen Haire Hoenig, a scholar of African literature who has taught at African and American universities; she is now at Principia College in Illinois. Her father, John Norman Haire, had begun translating the book when he was a lecturer at the University of N'Djamena in Chad during the 1970s, and she completed the project after his death.

More from central Africa: 6, 85, 147, [174], 183

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#175. **Seitel, Peter.** *See So That We May See: Performances and Interpretations of Traditional Tales from Tanzania.*

Published in 1980. Pages: 307.

archive.org/details/seesothatwemayse0000seit

Peter Seitel [b. 1942] worked as a folklorist at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. This book of 35 Haya folktales from northwest Tanzania is based on recordings of traditional storytelling and riddling performances that he made in the late 1960s. The introduction to the book explains how he has represented some of the dynamics of oral performance in the written versions of the stories, and the introduction provides an overview of Haya traditions and culture.

In addition to his own research, Seitel has been involved in cultural heritage preservation projects around the world; you can learn more about those efforts here: [*Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment.*](#)

More from eastern Africa: 103, 104, 116, 120, 127, 137, 144, [175]

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#176. **Serwadda, W. Moses.** *Songs and Stories from Uganda.*

Translated by **Hewitt Pantaleoni** and illustrated by **Leo and Diane Dillon**. Published in 1974. Pages: 83.

archive.org/details/songsstoriesfrom00serw

Moses Serwadda, born in Mukono, Uganda, was a scholar of African music and dance. After working as a schoolteacher in the 1950s and 1960s, he studied at the University of Ghana and then joined the faculty at Makerere University in Uganda; he also worked with UNESCO. In this book Serwadda has collected 13 traditional songs from Uganda folklore, together with their stories. The songs are in Luganda, including a phonetic pronunciation, plus an English translation with conventional

musical notation provided by [Hewitt Pantaleoni](#) [1929-1988], an American scholar of African music. The beautiful artwork is by Leo and Diane Dillon; see #1-3, #110 and #145 above.

More from Uganda: 23, 113, 149, [176]

More books with music: 41, 166, [176], 190, 192

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#177. **Skinner, Neil.** *Hausa Tales and Traditions: An English Translation of Tatsuniyoyi Na Hausa by Frank Edgar.* Published in 1969. Pages: 440.

archive.org/details/hausatalestradit0001edga

Neil Skinner [1921-2015] was posted to northern Nigeria by the British Colonial Office during World War II, and there he began his lifelong work on Hausa and other African languages. He later went on to become a professor of African and Arabic Studies at the University of Wisconsin, and he also taught at Bayero University in Nigeria. The stories in this book are English translations of Hausa stories from Frank Edgar's *Tatsuniyoyi na Hausa* published in 1911. You will find 268 stories here, including animal stories, stories about human characters and types, moralizing stories, stories of men and women, and dilemma tales [for more dilemma tales, see #21 above].

The Internet Archive also has Skinner's [Hausa Comparative Dictionary](#), along with his book of [Hausa Readings](#).

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, [177], 185, 191, 193, 194

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#178. **Skivington, Janice.** *How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories: An African Folktale from the Ashanti Tribe* [Adventures in Storytelling series]. Based on a story by Donna

Washington. Published in 1991. Pages: 47.

archive.org/details/howanansiobtaine0000skiv

This book is a fascinating storytelling experiment: there are beautiful illustrations by Janice Skivington for the story of Anansi and the Sky God, but without any text. Then, at the back of the book, you can read the version of the story that inspired Skivington's illustrations as told by Donna Washington [b. 1968; see #195 below for more from Washington]. The idea is for parents or teachers to use the illustrations as storytelling prompts while engaging with young readers.

Washington also provided stories for two other books in the *Adventures in Storytelling* series: [*The Baboon's Umbrella: An African Folktale*](#) illustrated by Ching and [*Double Dutch and the Voodoo Shoes: A Modern African-American Urban Tale*](#), illustrated by Melodye Rosales, who also wrote and illustrated [*'Twas the Night b'fore Christmas: An African-American Version*](#).

More Spider stories: 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 52, 55, 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, [178]

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#179. **Smith, Edwin** and **Andrew M. Dale.** *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia.* Published in 1920. Pages: 433. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/ilaspeakingpeopl02smituoft

This book features stories of the Ila people living along the Kafue River in Zambia (formerly northern Rhodesia). Andrew Murray Dale [d. 1919] was a captain in the British Army who fought in the Matabele Wars and the Boer War; he was later the magistrate for the Namwala district where Edwin Smith [1876-1957] was a missionary. Together they wrote this ethnographic study, published as two separate volumes. The second volume contains 60 folktales, including a long cycle of

stories about the trickster hare. There are also chapters about the Ila language and Ila religion, along with chapters about games, proverbs, riddles, and dilemma tales (“conundrums”).

More from Zambia: 47, 73, [179]

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#180. **Steere, Edward. *Swahili Tales as Told by Natives of Zanzibar***. Published in 1870. Pages: 504. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/swahilitalesasto00stee

[Edward Steere](#) [1828-1882] was an Anglican missionary who first arrived in Africa in 1863, working in Nyasaland (now Malawi). He later spent many years in Zanzibar. In addition to this book of 23 Swahili stories from Zanzibar, which includes both the Swahili text and an English translation, Steere also translated the Bible into Swahili. You can find both his [Handbook of the Swahili Language as Spoken at Zanzibar](#) and [Swahili Exercises](#) at the Internet Archive.

For a selection of stories from this book re-written and illustrated for children, see George Bateman's ***Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa***, #25 above.

More Swahili stories: 4, 25, 130, [180]

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#181. **Step toe, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale***. Illustrated by the author. Published in 1991. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/mufarosbeautiful00step_1

In his all-too-brief life, [John Steptoe](#) [1950-1989] created a remarkable series of children's books, including this book based on a famous African folktale. It won the Coretta Scott King Award and was also a Caldecott Honor book. You can find other books by John Steptoe at the Internet Archive too,

including [Stevie](#) (which Steptoe published when he was just sixteen years old), and [The Story of Jumping Mouse](#) (another Caldecott Honor book). In Steptoe's honor, there is now a "John Steptoe Award for New Talent" presented annually by the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee.

Steptoe also created the beautiful artwork for Birago Diop's ***Mother Crocodile: An Uncle Amadou Tale from Senegal***; see #72 above.

More award-winning books: 2, 38, 53, 67, 69, 72, 94, 98, 100, 104, 136, 145, [181]

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#182. **Stewart, Dianne. *Wisdom From Africa: A Collection of Proverbs***. Illustrated by **Caine Swanson**. Published in 2005. Pages: 159.

archive.org/details/wisdomfromafrica0000unse

[Dianne Stewart](#) [b. 1952] is a South African author who has written many books inspired by African storytelling traditions, especially the Xhosa traditions of southern Africa (she is a fluent Xhosa speaker and did her graduate work in African Languages at the University of Natal). This book of proverbs, organized thematically, provides both the original saying as well as the English translation, along with a brief explanation to help illuminate the proverb's meaning.

You can also find some of Stewart's folktale books at the Internet Archive, including [Daughter of the Moonlight and Other African Tales](#) (illustrated by Gina Daniel; see #168 above for more of her work) and [Folktales from Africa](#) (illustrated by [Marjorie van Heerden](#)),

More proverbs: 27, 39, 42, 82, 109, 116, 123, 154, 156, 165, 167, [182]

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#183. **Strong, Polly. *African Tales: Folklore of the Central African Republic***. Illustrated by **Rodney Wimer**. Published in 1992. Pages: 95.

archive.org/details/isbn_9781878893154

Polly Strong [b. 1938] worked as a missionary teacher in the Central African Republic from 1965 until 2014. This book features 12 stories that she heard told in the Sango language by Mandja and Banda storytellers that she then translated into English. Following the stories, Strong adds an essay about storytelling practices in the Central African Republic and the social importance of the stories; she also provides an overview of the cosmic trickster named Tere who appears in many of these tales. The illustrations are by Rodney Wimer [b. 1960], who grew up in the Central African Republic and attended the high school where Strong was a teacher; he is now an artist based in North Carolina.

More from central Africa: 6, 85, 147, 174, [183]

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#184. **Stuart, Forbes. *The Magic Horns: Folk Tales from Africa***. Illustrated by **Charles Keeping**. Published in 1976. Pages: 93.

archive.org/details/magichornsfolkta00stua

This book by Forbes Stuart [b. 1924] contains 8 stories that Stuart remembered from his childhood in Bechuanaland (Botswana); he was born in Cape Town, South Africa. The wonderful illustrations are by the English artist [Charles Keeping](#) [1924-1988].

In 1962, no longer able to abide the system of apartheid, Stuart left South Africa and moved to London. He then began studying British folklore, publishing [The Witch's Bridle and Other Occult Tales](#) and other books of English folktales. Stuart and Keeping worked together again on another book of

folktales from the British Isles: [*The Mermaid's Revenge: Folk Tales from Britain and Ireland*](#).

More from southern Africa: 1, 17, 29, 34, 36, 45, 49, 65, 78, 80, 91, 111, 112, 122, 135, 138, 146, 163, 169, [184], 196

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#185. **Sturton, Hugh. *Zomo the Rabbit***. Illustrated by **Peter Warner**. Published in 1966. Pages: 128.

archive.org/details/zomorabbittales0000stur

Hugh Sturton is the pseudonym of Hugh Anthony Stephen Johnston [1913-1967], who served in the British Civil Service in Nigeria from 1936-1940 and 1945-1960; during World War II he was a pilot in the Royal Air Force. You will find 11 stories in this book that Johnston heard from Hausa storytellers during his time in Nigeria. The animal characters have their Hausa names throughout: Zomo is the rabbit, Giwa is the elephant, Kunkuru is the tortoise, etc. The drawings are by Peter Warner [1939-2007], a British illustrator.

For another book about Zomo the Rabbit, see #136 above, Gerald McDermott's ***Zomo the Rabbit: A Trickster Tale from West Africa***.

More Rabbit stories: 3, 4, 78, 103, 131, 146, [185]

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#186. **Swann, Brian. *The House With No Door: African Riddle-Poems***. Illustrated by **Ashley Bryan**. Published in 1998. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/housewithnodoor00swan

Brian Swann [b. 1940] is a poet, novelist, and translator. Born in England, he attended Queen's College in Cambridge and then did his Ph.D. at Princeton University; he later became a professor at The Cooper Union in New York City. In this book,

Swann presents 14 riddles from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zambia. The illustrations by Ashley Bryan sometimes provide hints about a possible answer to the riddle — although, as Swann notes, there are often many answers to a riddle. In the back of the book you will find a list of possible answers along with a bibliography of sources.

You can find two more books of Swann's riddles at the Internet Archive: [A Basket Full of White Eggs: Riddle-Poems](#) and [Touching the Distance: Native American Riddle-Poems](#).

More from Ashley Bryan: 37, 38, 39, 67, 157, [186]

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#187. **Tadjo, Véronique** (editor). *Chasing the Sun: Stories from Africa*. Illustrated by the editor. Published in 2006. Pages: 144. archive.org/details/chasingunstorie0000unse

[Véronique Tadjo](#) [b. 1955] is a writer and artist from the Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). She studied at the University of Abidjan and then completed her doctorate at the Sorbonne. She has since taught at the University of Abidjan and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, while also leading workshops across Africa focused on children's books. In this book, Tadjo has collected and also illustrated 12 stories from African authors, including stories that are written in a traditional oral style such as "[Leuk-the-Hare Discovers Man](#)" by [Léopold Sédar Senghor](#) and [Chinua Achebe](#)'s Tortoise story, "[The Drum](#)" (for another folkloric tale by Achebe, see #8 above).

You can find more books from Tadjo at the Internet Archive, including [Lord of the Dance](#), [Mamy Wata and the Monster](#), and [Talking Drums](#).

More Tortoise stories: 58, 151, 156, [187], 198, 200

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#188. Tchana, Katrin. *Sense Pass King: A Story from Cameroon*. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Published in 2002. Pages: 29.

archive.org/details/sensepasskingsto00tcha

Katrin Tchana [b. 1963] first heard this African fairy tale from her husband, Eugene Tchana, who is from Cameroon; they met when Tchana was working as a Peace Corps volunteer. Katrin Tchana's mother, the artist [Trina Schart Hyman](#) [1939-2004], provided the beautiful illustrations.

Tchana and Hyman have collaborated on other books also. Their collection of heroine tales, [The Serpent Slayer and Other Stories of Strong Women](#), contains three African folktales, and their book of goddess stories, [Changing Woman and Her Sister: Stories of Goddesses from Around the World](#), features two African goddesses: Isis and Mawu.

More from Cameroon: 27, 94, [188]

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#189. Tembo, Mwizenge. *Legends of Africa*. Illustrated with photographs. Published in 1999. Pages: 96.

archive.org/details/legendsof africa00temb

Mwizenge Tembo [b. 1954] studied sociology and psychology at the University of Zambia and completed his graduate studies at Michigan State University. He then taught at the University of Zambia and is now a professor at Bridgewater College in Virginia. This book opens with a chapter on traditional myths including creation myths and the origins of people and their ways of life across a wide range of African cultures. The folktale chapter features 10 different stories, including stories about Kalulu the trickster hare. Finally, there is a section on both traditional and contemporary legends, including stories of resistance, adaptation and urban legends. The book is

abundantly illustrated with photographs both of African art and also of African people and places.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, [189], 193

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#190. **Tracey, Hugh. *The Lion on the Path and Other African Stories***. Illustrated by **Eric Byrd**. Published in 1968. Pages: 127. archive.org/details/liononpathothera0000trac

As a young man, [Hugh Tracey](#) [1903-1977] emigrated from England to Zimbabwe, and in 1934 he began working for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, making over 35,000 recordings as he traveled the continent. He is perhaps most well known for popularizing the instrument known as the kalimba. This book includes 25 folktales from southern Africa with musical transcription, plus illustrations by South African artist Eric Byrd [1905-1983].

Tracey's book about the musical arts of the Chopi people of Mozambique is also available at the Internet Archive — [Chopi Musicians: Their Music, Poetry, and Instruments](#) — and you can listen to an album of music from eastern Africa that he produced together with [Alan Lomax](#) [1915-2002]: [World Library of Folk Music: British East Africa](#).

More books with music: 41, 166, 176, [190], 192

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#191. **Tremearne, Arthur J. N. *Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to the Folk-Lore and the Folk***. Published in 1913. Pages: 548. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some

stories.]

archive.org/details/cu31924026472278

[Arthur John Newman Tremearne](#) [1877-1915] was born in Australia and studied at Cambridge University in England. He fought in the Boer War and was then posted to western Africa; he was killed in the Battle of Loos in World War I. During his time in Nigeria, Tremearne began an intensive study of Hausa culture. This book contains 100 Hausa folktales in English, with the Hausa texts appearing separately: [Hausa Folk-tales: The Hausa Text](#).

You can find Tremearne's other books at the Internet Archive also including [The Tailed Head-hunters of Nigeria](#) and [The Ban of the Bori: Demons and Demon-dancing in West and North Africa](#), plus his memoir, [Some Austral-African Notes and Anecdotes](#). In addition to his scholarly Hausa publications, Tremearne published a book of Hausa stories adapted for children: [Fables and Fairy Tales for Little Folk, or: Uncle Remus in Hausaland](#), co-authored with his wife, Mary Tremearne.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, [191], 193, 194

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#192. **Tucker, Archie. *Disappointed Lion and Other Stories from the Bari of Central Africa***. Illustrated by John Farleigh. Published in 1937. Pages: 97.

archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.36412

[Archie Tucker](#) [1904-1980], born in South Africa, was a linguist who specialized in African languages, especially the languages of eastern Africa and the Sudan. This book features 10 stories that Tucker heard while living in South Sudan in the 1930s, and his introduction to the stories describes Bari village life during that time of social and cultural transition. He has retold the

stories for children (he originally wrote them for a children's radio show), and there are musical transcriptions for the songs. The illustrations are by British artist [John Farleigh](#) [1900-1965].

The Internet Archive also has some of Tucker's scholarly works, including [The Non-Bantu Languages of Northeastern Africa](#).

More books with music: 41, 166, 176, 190, [192]

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#193. **Umeasiegbu, Rems. *The Way We Lived: Ibo Customs and Stories*** [*African Writers* series]. Illustrated by **Peter Edwards**. Published in 1969. Pages: 139.

archive.org/details/waywelivedibocus0000umea

[Rems Nnanyelugo Umeasiegbu](#) [b. 1943] is a Nigerian folklorist. He received his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania and went on to teach at universities both in the United States and in Nigeria. The first part of the book describes traditional Igbo customs (childbirth, circumcision, marriage, divorce, funerals, festivals, games, etc.), and the second part features 55 folktales, including stories about the trickster tortoise.

More from African authors: 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 51, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 86, 96, 97, 109, 112, 113, 116, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 166, 174, 176, 187, 189, [193]

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#194. **Walker, Barbara and Warren Walker. *Nigerian Folk Tales***. Illustrated by **Margaret Barbour**. Published in 1961. Pages: 113.

archive.org/details/nigerianfolktale00idew

Barbara Walker [1921-2007] and Warren Walker [1920-2002] were American folklorists, and in this book they have

transcribed 37 Yoruba stories told to them by two Nigerian students studying in the United States: Olawale Idewu was a medical student from Lagos, and Omotayo Adu, also from Lagos, was studying chemistry.

Barbara Walker later published another book with an additional 11 stories told by Olawale Idewu: [*The Dancing Palm Tree, and Other Nigerian Folktales*](#), with illustrations by Helen Siegl [see #66 above]. For Walker's contribution to a book of Nkundo stories, see #167 above.

More from Nigeria: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, [194]

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#195. **Washington, Donna. *A Pride of African Tales***. Illustrated by **James Ransome**. Published in 2004. Pages: 70. archive.org/details/prideofafricanta00wash

Donna Washington [b. 1967] is a storyteller and writer based in North Carolina. The illustrator, [James Ransome](#) [b. 1961], was born in North Carolina but is now based in New York. In this book, they have retold 6 traditional African folktales from the Congo, Nigeria, and Cameroon, beautifully illustrated.

Washington provided the story for ***How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories*** and ***The Baboon's Umbrella*** [see above, #178], and she is also the author of two books about Kwanzaa: [*Li'l Rabbit's Kwanzaa*](#) and [*The Story of Kwanzaa*](#).

Ransome has illustrated a wide range of books, including many on African American themes such as [*How Animals Saved the People: Animal Tales From the South*](#) by J. J. Reneaux and [*Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*](#) by Deborah Hopkinson.

More from African American / Diaspora authors: 14, 15, 32, 37, 38, 39, 44, 46, 79, 83, 100, 102, 124, 145, 181, [195], 199

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#196. **Waters, Mary Waterton. *Cameos From the Kraal.*** Illustrated by a Xhosa artist. Published in 1926. Pages: 58. [This book is in the public domain.]

archive.org/details/cameosfromkraalw00wateiala

Mary Waterton Waters [1886-1961] was the daughter and granddaughter of missionaries in the Cape Colony in South Africa. In addition to this collection of 12 Xhosa folktales and anecdotes rendered in English, she was the first white writer to compose a play in Xhosa: *U-Nongqause*. From this same era of South African story collections, you can compare [Old Hendrik's Tales](#) by Arthur Owen Vaughan from 1904 and [Outa Karel's Stories: South African Folklore Tales](#) by Sanni Metelerkamp from 1914. Somewhat later, but very much in the same genre, is [Koos, the Hottentot: Tales of the Veld](#) by Josef Marais, published in 1945.

More from African artists: 18, 69, 70, 71, 74, 81, 96, 112, 118, 134, 139, 160, 164, 187, [196]

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#197. **Weeks, John. *Congo Life and Folklore.*** Published in 1921. Pages: 468. [This book is in the public domain; see the Anthology in the back of this book for some stories.]

archive.org/details/congolifefolklor0000week

[John Weeks](#) [1861-1924] began his missionary work in the Congo in 1881, remaining there until 1912. During that time he collected both Bakongo and Boloki folktales; this book contains 41 Bakongo folktales. The first part of the book is a narrative of "Life on the Congo" that presents a series of 8 stories as told by storytellers in specific settings with the names of the storytellers and other details. The second part of the book contains 33 additional stories, but without any description of

the storytelling occasion. For Weeks's Boloki folktales, see his book [*Among Congo Cannibals*](#).

One of the Bakongo stories, "[How the Sparrow Set the Elephant and the Crocodile to Pull Against Each Other](#)," inspired a children's book by Edel Wignell: [*The Mighty Sparrow: A Trickster Tale of the African Congo*](#).

More from the Congo: 33, 43, 68, 107, 167, [197]

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#198. **Werner, Alice.** *The Mythology of All Races: African*. Published in 1925. Pages: 344. [This book is in the public domain.]

[archive.org/details/mythologyofallra71gray](https://www.archive.org/details/mythologyofallra71gray)

[Alice Werner](#) [1859-1935] was a scholar of Bantu languages who first began studying African languages in the 1890s; she later went on to teach at the School of Oriental Studies in London. In this groundbreaking study of African mythology, Werner provides an overview of African gods and goddesses, origin myths, ancestral spirits, heroes, ogres, animal stories (with separate chapters on Hare, Tortoise, and Spider), along with stories of witchcraft.

Werner is the author of other books and articles about African folklore, including [*Myths and Legends of the Bantu*](#). In addition to her scholarly research, she was also a poet; see, for example, her book [*A Time and Times: Ballads and Lyrics of East and West*](#).

More secondary literature: 26, 117, 129, 145, 158, 159, 171, [198]

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#199. **Wilson, Beth.** *The Great Minu.* Illustrated by **Jerry Pinkney.** Published in 1974. Pages: 28.

archive.org/details/greatminu0000wils

Beth Wilson [1909-1991] was the second African American school teacher hired by the Oakland, California school system, and she taught there until she retired in 1960 and began publishing children's books. The story for this book, "[Honorable Minu](#)," comes from Barker and Sinclair's book of West African folktales [see #20 above], and the beautiful illustrations are by [Jerry Pinkney](#).

In addition to this book, Wilson was the author of several books on African American themes, including [Giants for Justice: Bethune, Randolph, and King](#) and [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

More from Jerry Pinkney: 4, 14, 15, 93, [199]

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#200. **Winther, Barbara.** *Plays From African Tales.* Published in 1992. Pages: 145.

archive.org/details/playsfromafrican0000wint

Barbara Winther [1926-2018] began writing folktale plays when she was working as a teacher in California and could not find any folktale scripts to perform with her students. In this book you will find 14 plays in script form with production notes, including stories about Anansi the Spider, Ijapa the Tortoise, and the trickster Hare, plus dilemma tales and fairy tale adventures. Although the book is copyrighted, the plays are licensed as free to use for school performances.

You can also find Winther's [Plays from Hispanic Tales](#) and [Plays from Folktales of Asia](#) at the Internet Archive, along with these other books of scripts inspired by African folktales: [The Reader's Theatre of Folklore Plays: African, Asian, and Latin-](#)

[*American Stories*](#) by Henry Gilfond and [*Plays from African Folktales*](#) by Carol Korty.

More from across Africa: 7, 16, 21, 22, 48, 56, 60, 61, 75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 121, 123, 133, 155, 162, 164, 168, 170, [200]

ANTHOLOGY

The Stories

The stories in this Anthology come from books in the public domain, meaning books no longer copyrighted because they were published before 1927. As such, these are racist books from colonial times, written for white audiences, and must be read with that caution in mind. At the same time, these old books provide precious written evidence of African storytelling traditions from a century ago, and those stories in turn connect us to the many centuries of storytellers who came before.

My hope is that this anthology of stories taken from the public domain will inspire you to keep on reading and to explore stories from contemporary sources, especially books by African and African American writers — books that are just a click away at the Internet Archive, and also in your local libraries and local bookstores too.

The stories are arranged in the order of the sources, with the first part of the story's number referring to the item in the Bibliography portion of this book. So, for example, 19-1 here is the first story in the Anthology, and it comes from item #19 in the Bibliography portion of this book. I've edited the stories in small ways — trying to use a consistent punctuation style, resolving ambiguous pronouns, etc. — in order to make the writing more accessible to today's readers. There is also a **Notes** section following the stories with some additional commentary. When the stories were illustrated, I have included the illustrations too.

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19-2. Ghana. *Wisdom and the Human Race.*

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- 23-5. Uganda. *The Buffalo Maiden*.
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- 197-50. Congo. *How the Squirrel Repaid a Kindness.*

1. How We Got the Name "Anansi Tales"

[From [West African Folk-Tales](#) by William Barker and Cecilia Sinclair, 1917. See item #19 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Cecilia Sinclair.]

In the olden days, all the stories which men told were stories of Onyankopon, the chief of the gods. Anansi, who was very conceited, wanted the stories to be told about him.

Accordingly, one day he went to Onyankopon and asked that, in future, all tales told by men might be Anansi stories, instead of Onyankopon stories. Onyankopon agreed, on one condition. He told Anansi that he must bring him three things: the first was a jar full of live bees, the second was a boa-constrictor, and the third a leopard. Anansi gave his promise.

First, Anansi took an earthen vessel and set out for a place where he knew were numbers of bees. When he came in sight of the bees, he began saying to himself, "They will not be able to fill this jar" — "Yes, they will be able" — "No, they will not be able," until the bees came up to him and said, "What are you talking about, Mr. Anansi?"

He thereupon explained to them that Onyankopon and he had had a great dispute. Onyankopon had said the bees could not fly into the jar — Anansi had said they could. The bees immediately declared that of course they could fly into the jar, which they at once did. As soon as they were safely inside, Anansi sealed up the jar and sent it off to Onyankopon.



Next day Anansi took a long stick and set out in search of a boa-constrictor. When he arrived at the place where one lived, he began speaking to himself again. “He will just be as long as this stick” — “No, he will not be so long as this” — “Yes, he will be as long as this.” These words he repeated several times till the boa came out and asked him what was the matter. “Oh, we have been having a dispute in Onyankopon’s town about you. Onyankopon’s people say you are not as long as this stick; I say you are. Please let me measure you by it.” The boa innocently laid himself out straight, and Anansi lost no time in tying him onto the stick from end to end. He then sent him to Onyankopon.

The third day Anansi took a needle and thread and sewed up his eye. He then set out for a den where he knew a leopard lived. As he approached the place, he began to shout and sing so loudly that the leopard came out to see what was the matter. “Can you not see?” said Anansi. “My eye is sewn up and

now I can see such wonderful things that I must sing about them." "Sew up my eyes," said the leopard, "and then I too can see these surprising sights." Anansi immediately did so. Having thus made the leopard helpless, he led him straight to Onyankopon's house.

Onyankopon was amazed at Anansi's cleverness in fulfilling the three conditions, and he immediately gave him permission for the future to call all the old tales Anansi tales.

2. Wisdom and the Human Race

[From [West African Folk-Tales](#) by William Barker and Cecilia Sinclair, 1917. See item #19 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Cecilia Sinclair.]

There once lived in Fanti-land a man named Father Anansi. He possessed all the wisdom in the world. People came to him daily for advice and help.

One day the men of the country were unfortunate enough to offend Father Anansi, who immediately resolved to punish them. After much thought, he decided that the severest penalty he could inflict would be to hide all his wisdom from them. He set to work at once to gather again all that he had already given. When he had succeeded, as he thought, in collecting all the wisdom in the world, he placed it in one great pot. This he carefully sealed and determined to put it in a spot where no human being could reach it.

Now Father Anansi had a son whose name was Kweku Tsin. This boy began to suspect his father of some secret design, so he made up his mind to watch carefully. Next day he saw his father quietly slip out of the house with his precious pot hung round his neck. Kweku Tsin followed.

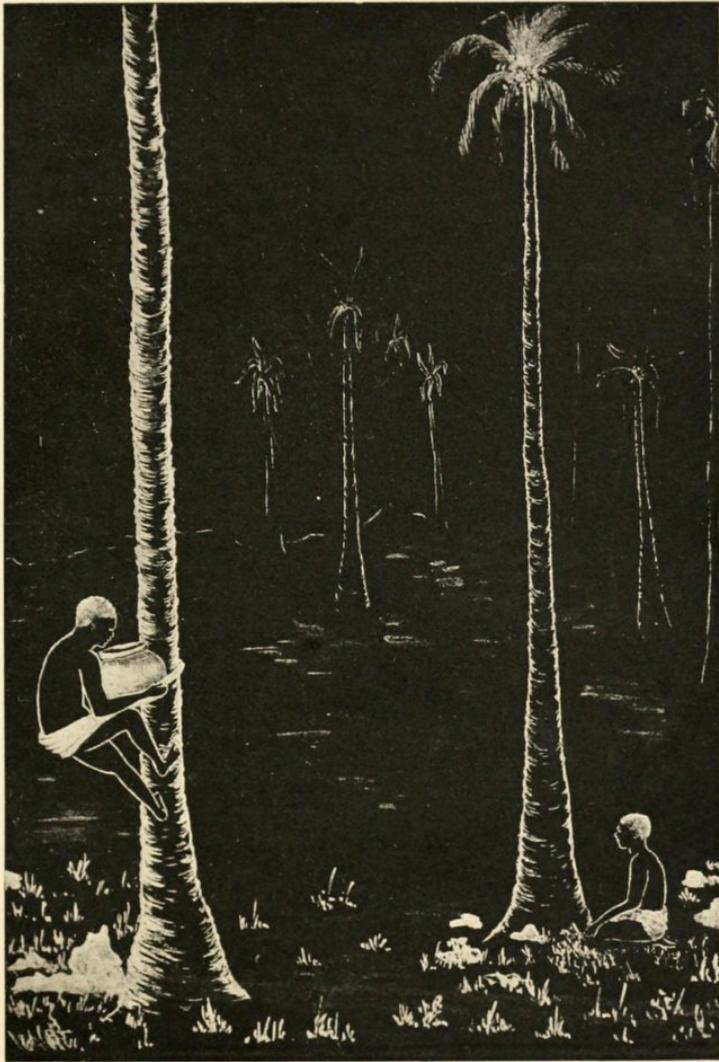
Father Anansi went through the forest till he had left the village far behind. Then, selecting the highest and most inaccessible-looking tree, he began to climb. The heavy pot, hanging in front of him, made his ascent almost impossible. Again and again he tried to reach the top of the tree, where he intended to hang the pot. There, he thought, wisdom would indeed be beyond the reach of everyone but himself. He was

unable, however, to carry out his desire. At each trial the pot swung in his way.

For some time Kweku Tsin watched his father's vain attempts. At last, unable to contain himself any longer, he cried out, "Father, why do you not hang the pot on your back? Then you could easily climb the tree."

Father Anansi turned and said, "I thought I had all the world's wisdom in this pot. But I find you possess more than I do. All my wisdom was insufficient to show me what to do, yet you have been able to tell me."

In his anger Anansi threw the pot down. It struck on a great rock and broke. The wisdom contained in it escaped and spread throughout the world.



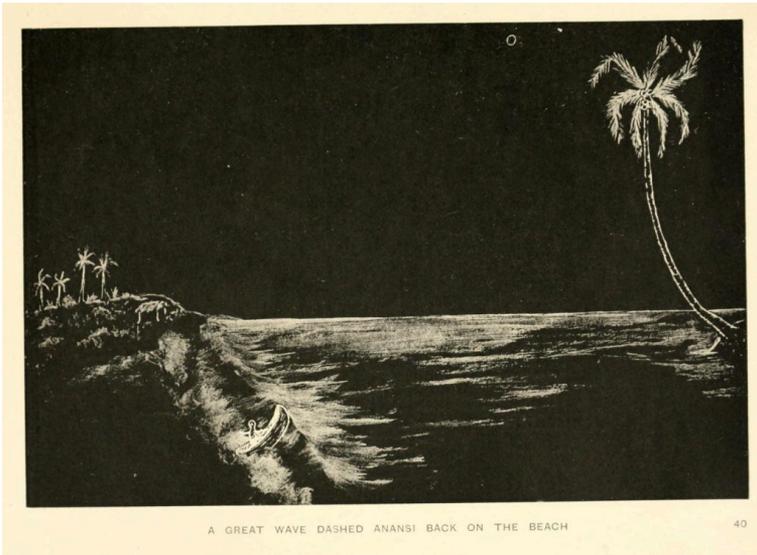
AGAIN AND AGAIN ANANSI TRIED TO CLIMB THE TREE

3. Thunder and Anansi

[From [West African Folk-Tales](#) by William Barker and Cecilia Sinclair, 1917. See item #19 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Cecilia Sinclair.]

There had been a long and severe famine in the land where Anansi lived. He had been quite unable to obtain food for his poor wife and family. One day, gazing desperately out to sea, he saw rising from the midst of the water a tiny island with a tall palm-tree upon it. He determined to reach this tree — if any means proved possible — and climb it, in the hope of finding a few nuts to reward him. How to get there was the difficulty.

This, however, solved itself when he reached the beach, for there lay the means to his hand in the shape of an old broken boat. It certainly did not look very strong, but Anansi decided to try it.



A GREAT WAVE DASHED ANANSI BACK ON THE BEACH

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Anansi's first six attempts were unsuccessful — a great wave dashed him back on the beach each time he tried to put off. He was persevering, however, and at the seventh trial he was successful in getting away. He steered the battered old boat as best he could, and at length he reached the palm-tree of his desire. Having tied the boat to the trunk of the tree — which grew almost straight out of the water — he climbed toward the nuts. Plucking all he could reach, he dropped them, one by one, down to the boat. To his dismay, every one missed the boat and fell instead into the water until only the last one remained. This he aimed even more carefully than the others, but it also fell into the water and disappeared from his hungry eyes. He had not tasted even one, and now all were gone.

He could not bear the thought of going home empty-handed, so in his despair he threw himself into the water too. To his complete astonishment, instead of being drowned, he found himself standing on the sea-bottom in front of a pretty little cottage. From the latter came an old man, who asked Anansi what he wanted so badly that he had come to Thunder's cottage to seek it. Anansi told his tale of woe, and Thunder showed himself most sympathetic. He went into the cottage and fetched a fine cooking-pot, which he presented to Anansi — telling him that he need never be hungry again. The pot would always supply enough food for himself and his family. Anansi was most grateful and left Thunder with many thanks.

Being anxious to test the pot at once, Anansi only waited till he was again seated in the old boat to say, "Pot, pot, what you used to do for your master, do now for me." Immediately good food of all sorts appeared. Anansi ate a hearty meal, which he very much enjoyed.

On reaching land again, Anansi's first thought was to run home and give all his family a good meal from his wonderful pot. A selfish, greedy fear prevented him. "What if I should use up all the magic of the pot on them and have nothing more

left for myself! Better keep the pot a secret — then I can enjoy a meal when I want one.” So, his mind full of this thought, he hid the pot.

He reached home, pretending to be utterly worn out with fatigue and hunger. There was not a grain of food to be had anywhere. His wife and poor children were weak with want of it, but selfish Anansi took no notice of that. He congratulated himself at the thought of his magic pot, now safely hidden in his room. There he retired from time to time when he felt hungry and enjoyed a good meal. His family got thinner and thinner, but he grew plumper and plumper.

His family finally began to suspect some secret and determined to find it out. His eldest son, Kweku Tsin, had the power of changing himself into any shape he chose, so he took the form of a tiny fly and accompanied his father everywhere. At last, Anansi, feeling hungry, entered his room and closed the door. Next he took the pot and had a fine meal. Having replaced the pot in its hiding-place, he went out, on the pretence of looking for food.

As soon as he was safely out of sight, Kweku Tsin fetched out the pot and called all his hungry family to come at once. They had as good a meal as their father had had. When they had finished, Mrs. Anansi, to punish her husband, said she would take the pot down to the village and give everybody a meal. This she did, but alas — in working to prepare so much food at one time, the pot grew too hot and melted away! What was to be done now? Anansi would be so angry! His wife forbade everyone to mention the pot.

Anansi returned, ready for his supper, and, as usual, went into his room, carefully shutting the door. He went to the hiding-place — it was empty. He looked around in consternation. No pot was to be seen anywhere. Someone must have discovered it. His family must be the culprits; he would find a means to punish them.

Saying nothing to anyone about the matter, he waited till morning. As soon as it was light, he started off towards the shore where the old boat lay. After he got into the boat, it started of its own accord and glided swiftly over the water, straight for the palm-tree. Having arrived there, Anansi attached the boat as before and climbed the tree. This time, unlike the last, the nuts practically fell into his hands. When he aimed them at the boat, they fell easily into it, not one dropping into the water as before, so he deliberately took them and threw them overboard, immediately jumping after them. As before, he found himself in front of Thunder's cottage, with Thunder waiting to hear his tale. This he told, and the old man showed the same sympathy as he had previously done. This time, however, he presented Anansi with a fine stick and bade him good-bye.

Anansi could scarcely wait till he got into the boat, so anxious was he to try the magic properties of his new gift. "Stick, stick," he said, "what you used to do for your master, do for me also." The stick began to beat him so severely that in a few minutes he was obliged to jump into the water and swim ashore, leaving boat and stick to drift away where they pleased. Then he returned sorrowfully homeward, bemoaning his many bruises and wishing he had acted more wisely from the beginning.

4. The Flame Tree



[From [*The Flame Tree and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda*](#) by Rosetta Baskerville, 1900. See item #23 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Mrs. E. G. Morris.]

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived in the village of Si in Kyagwe country. Her parents had no other children, and as she grew older they saw with joy that she was more beautiful every day. People who passed through the village saw her and spoke of her beauty until everyone in Kyagwe knew that the most lovely girl in the country lived in the village of Si — and everyone in the province called her “the Maiden.”

The Maiden was a gentle, sweet child, and she loved all the animals and birds and butterflies and flowers, and played with them and knew their language. Her parents were very proud of her, and they often talked of the time when she should be grown up and marry a great chief with many cows and gardens and people, and bring great wealth to her tribe.

When the time came to arrange her marriage, all the chiefs came and offered many gifts, as the custom of the Baganda is, but the Maiden said, “I will marry none of these rich chiefs; I will marry Tutu the peasant boy, who has nothing, because I love him.” Her parents were very grieved when they heard this and would have tried to persuade her, but just then a messenger arrived from the local chief to say that the King of Uganda was going to war with Mbubi, the Chief of the Buvuma Islands, and all the chiefs went away to collect their people for the king’s army.

Then the Chief of Si called all his men together, and Tutu the peasant boy went with them. The army marched down to the Lake shore to fight the Islanders who came across the blue waters in a fleet of war canoes, painted and decorated with horns and feathers and cowry shells and beads. The Maiden was very sad when she said good-bye to Tutu. “Be very brave

and win glory,” she said. “Then my father will let me marry you, for I will never marry anyone else.”

But when the men had marched away and only the women and children were left in the village with the old people, the Maiden forgot her brave words and only thought how she could bring Tutu safely back. She called to her friend the hawk. “Come and help me, Double-Eye; fly quickly to the Lake shore and see my peasant boy — tell him I think of him day and night. I cannot be happy till he returns.”

The hawk knew Tutu well, for often on the hillside he saw how Tutu had played with the children (the Baganda call the hawk “Double- Eye,” for they say that with one eye he watches the Earth and with the other he sees where he is going).

The Baganda reached the Lake, and there was a great battle, and Tutu the peasant boy was killed by a stone from an Islander’s sling, but the Baganda rallied and drove the enemy back to their canoes, and Mbubi beat the retreat drum and his men returned to Buvuma.

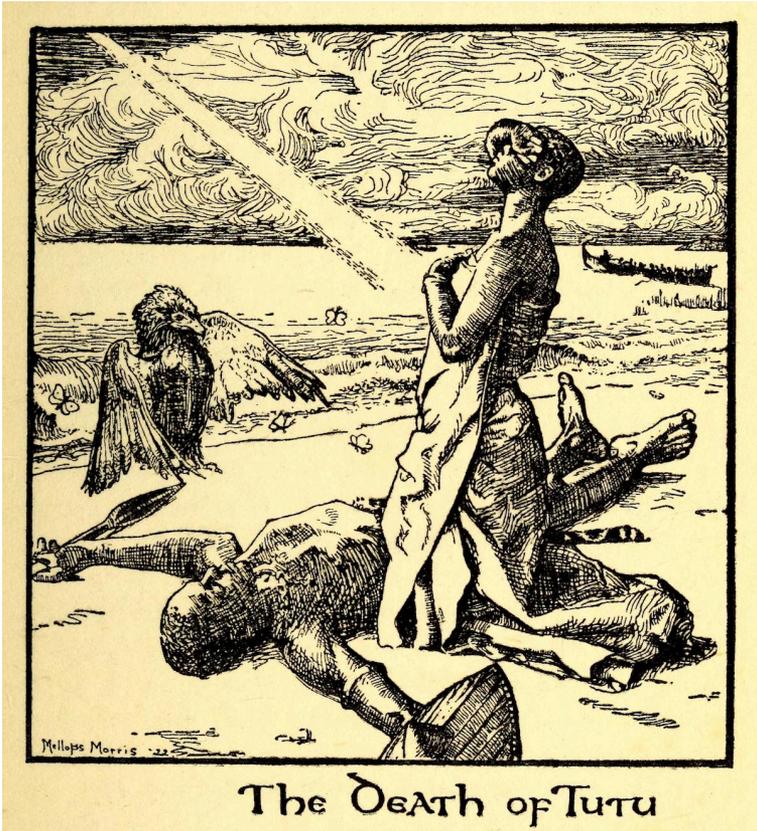
The hawk flies very quickly, and while he was still a long way off, he saw Tutu lying where he had fallen on the Lake shore. The soldiers were burying the dead, and the hawk watched to see where they would bury the peasant boy of Si so that he might show the Maiden his grave.

Meanwhile, the Maiden waited on the hillside for the hawk’s return, and the moments seemed like hours. She called to a bumblebee who was her friend. “Go quickly to the Lake side and greet my peasant boy; tell him I wait here on the hillside for his return.”

The bumblebee flew away quickly, and when he reached the Lake shore, he asked the hawk for news.

“The Islanders have fled in their canoes,” said the hawk, “but Tutu the peasant boy is dead; a stone from a sling killed him. I wait to see his grave so that I may show it to the Maiden.”

The bumblebee was afraid to go back with the news, so he stayed near the hawk and watched.



Meanwhile the Maiden waited in a fever of impatience, ever gazing at the distant Lake while pacing up and down. She saw a flight of white butterflies playing hide-and-seek round a mimosa bush and called to them. "Oh, white butterflies, how can you play when my heart is breaking? Go to the Lake shore and see if my peasant boy is well."

So the white butterflies flew away over the green hills to the Lake and arrived on the battlefield just as the soldiers were digging Tutu's grave, and they settled sadly down on a tuft

of grass, their wings drooping with sorrow, for they loved the Maiden who had often played with them in the sunshine.

Far away on the Si hills, the Maiden watched in vain for their return. Filled with fear, she cried to the Sun, "Oh, Chief of the Cloud Land, help me! Take me on one of your beams to the Lake shore so that I may see my peasant boy and tell him of my love."

The Sun looked down on her with great pity, for he had seen the battle and knew that Tutu the peasant boy was dead. He stretched out one of his long beams, and she caught it in her hands, and he swung her gently round until she rested on the Lake shore.

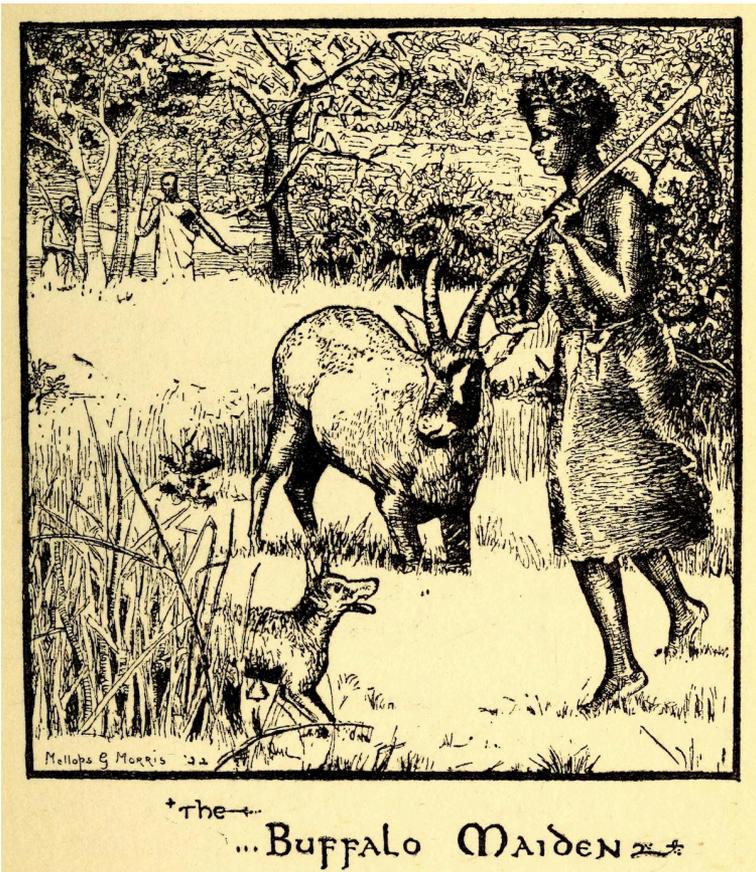
When she saw the soldiers lifting Tutu's body to lay it in the grave, she cried to the Sun, "Oh, Chief of the Cloud Land, do not leave me! Burn me with your fire, for how can I live now that my Love is dead?"

Then the Sun was filled with pity and struck her with a hot flame, and the soldiers were very sorry for her too, and they dug a grave for her next to Tutu's.

And when the people of Si visited the graves the next year, they found a wonderful thing, for a beautiful tree had grown out of the graves with large flame-coloured blossoms which ever turned upwards to the sun, and they took the seeds and planted them in their gardens. And now the country is full of these beautiful trees which are called Flame Trees, but the old people call them Kifabakazi because the stem is as soft as a woman's heart and a woman can cut it down.

5. The Buffalo Maiden

[From [*The Flame Tree and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda*](#) by Rosetta Baskerville, 1900. See item #23 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Mrs. E. G. Morris.]



There was once a little girl who lived with her uncle and aunt. Her uncle loved her, but the aunt was always unkind to her. Now this aunt was really a witch, but no one knew it. One day she said to her husband, "You must send that little girl away! I cannot stand her anymore; she is so naughty. But go first to the Forest to the old wizard who lives there, and he will tell you what to do."

So the man went to the Forest, but he did not know that his wife had told the wizard what to say. The wizard said, "Take the little girl to the Forest and leave her there." Then he was sorry for the man and added, "If you do this, good fortune will come to the child, but many years must pass."

Very sadly the man returned home. He took a gourd of milk and some maize and told his little niece to follow him into the Forest. When they had walked a long way, they sat down to rest, and the child was so tired that she fell asleep at once. Then the uncle put down the gourd of milk and the maize and went sorrowfully home.

When the child woke, it was very dark in the Forest, and she was terrified at the sounds round her and feared the wild animals might come and eat her, but she heard a chirping voice in the tree above her and saw a large cricket sitting on a branch just over her head. "Climb up into this tree," said the cricket, "and you will find a nice bed to sleep in."

So the child climbed up into the fork of the tree, and there was a lovely place full of dry leaves where she cuddled down and was soon fast asleep again. The next morning she saw that several buffaloes were resting under her tree and, as she was very hungry, she thought, "I will go and ask the cow buffalo to give me some milk."

The buffaloes were very sorry for the child left all alone in the Forest, and they said, "You will soon die of hunger here — come and live in our kraal in the jungle, and you shall have milk every day and a little hut all of your own."

So the little girl climbed on the old cow buffalo's back, who was the granny in the herd, and went with her to the kraal which was hidden away in the thick jungle. At first she was sad and unhappy and homesick. She wanted her uncle and her friends in the village at home, and the old granny buffalo could do nothing to comfort her.

Then the great bull buffalo who ruled the herd called a Council of Animals together and said, "How can we make this child happy who has come to live with us in the Forest?"

The animals were much distressed, for they all wanted to be kind. But the child sat and sobbed, for she was lonely and homesick.

Just then an old tortoise who had been asleep for many years woke up and came shuffling into the Council. "The child will be quite happy if you take away her heart," he said. "For it is the heart of a woman that brings all the trouble into the world: if she cannot love, she will give no trouble; if she has no heart, she will be quite happy."

So they cut out the little girl's heart and tied it up in wild plantain leaves and hung it up in a cedar tree, and they built her a hut under the cedar tree, and she settled down happily and cried no more, and her heart hung far above, out of reach where no one could touch it.

From that moment, the child changed. At first the buffalo granny was pleased because she stopped crying and was quiet, but soon she grew puzzled, for the little girl was so strange. Every day she did unkind things and laughed when she hurt the animals. She pushed the little cubs into the Forest pools when they came to drink, and she climbed up into the trees and threw little birds that couldn't fly out of their nests, and when the mothers cried, she laughed at them and clapped her hands.

There was one animal who had not been at the great bull buffalo's Council: the little hare was away at the time on a long journey, but when he returned and the other animals told him

about it, he looked very grave. The little hare knows more about people than any other animal, for he often goes to the villages and he understands men's language. He watched the little girl, and every day he grew sadder. Years passed by, and the child grew up into a beautiful woman, but she had no friends in the Forest. All the animals were afraid of her; none of them loved her. If they growled, she stared at them and they slunk off, for her eyes frightened them.

One day the local chief's men were hunting buffaloes, and one of them followed a wounded animal through the jungle when, to his surprise, he saw a lovely girl come down the Forest path. When she saw the wounded buffalo, she laughed and went back, and the man was so frightened that he went back the way he had come and told the other hunters, and they told the chief.

Then the chief sent a party of men to the Forest and they followed the hunter's trail and came to the buffaloes' kraal, and there they saw a beautiful girl milking a buffalo and singing:

*I am the Buffalo Maiden;
The Buffalo Kraal is my home;
The Jungle Land is my Kingdom,
Wherever I will I roam.*

*I hate the golden sunbeams
That fill the glades with light;
I hate the silver moonbeams
That chill my hut at night.*

*The birds are dumb when they see me;
The animals are my foes;
For I am the Buffalo Maiden,
As all the Jungle knows.*

The men were afraid to speak, and they went quietly back. Then the local chief went to the capital and told all the chiefs in the King's Council, and the King and all the Princes heard that a beautiful girl lived all alone in the depths of the Forest in a buffalo kraal.

There was one Prince braver and kinder than the others, and he was sorry for the girl, so he took one man with him and went to the Forest to find her. When he found her, he loved her very much, but the girl only laughed and threw stones at him. Some of the stones hit him and hurt very much, and every day he grew more and more miserable.

One day while he was walking in the Forest, he found a doe with a sharp thorn in her foot. He took the thorn out and carried the poor tired creature to her home. The doe was very grateful and said, "Tell me what I can do to thank you."

And the Prince answered, "Tell me how I can make the girl I love love me."

The doe was very sorrowful. "You will never make her love you; she is unkind and cruel to everyone. But I will ask the other animals, and perhaps they can give me advice."

So when the doe's foot was healed, she went to the big grey elephant and asked his advice. "Tell your Prince," said the big grey elephant, "that the girl is cruel and unkind; he had better seek a wife in the capital."

So the doe went to the lion. "If the Prince has been kind to you, he is much too good for the girl," he said. "She is hard and cruel and never sheds tears as the women in the villages do."

All the animals said the same thing, and at last the doe met the little hare and told him her trouble. "It isn't her fault," said the hare. "They took her heart away from her when she was a little girl. How can she be kind without a heart? Let the Prince steal her heart that hangs in the cedar tree, and then she will love him."

So the doe went and told the Prince, "You must steal her heart which hangs in the cedar tree above her hut, but you must go alone at night."

So the Prince went alone through the dark Forest at night and came to the buffaloes' kraal. The moonlight was shimmering through the grey shadows as he picked his way between the sleeping buffaloes up to the maiden's hut, and

there above him in the cedar tree hung the heart. He climbed the tree and clasped the heart in his arms and, as he did so, the girl asleep in the hut below felt a great fear. "Someone has touched my heart," she cried.

Softly and tremulously she opened the door and saw the Prince and fell at his feet, sobbing. "Oh, my lord, you have my heart in your arms. Take me too!" So the Prince took her away to the capital, and they lived happily together for many years.

The big grey elephant called a Council together, and they passed sentence on the old tortoise and killed him because his advice had been bad, for this is the law of the Mabira Forest — if any animal gives bad advice to the Council, he is killed. And the Council sent a messenger to the Prince and told him what they had done. And he was glad, for though the heart of a woman causes all the trouble in the world, it also brings all the joy, and a woman's tears are like the spring rains and make the earth beautiful.

6. The Elephant that Wanted to Dance

[From [*The Flame Tree and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda*](#) by Rosetta Baskerville, 1900. See item #23 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Mrs. E. G. Morris.]

Once upon a time, the King of the Animals, the big grey elephant, gave a great feast and invited all the animals in the Mabira Forest to come to a beautiful glade that no man had ever seen, and there they feasted in the moonlight and sang songs and made jokes and danced. There was one little hare who danced better than any other animal, and the big grey elephant said, "Little hare, you are a marvel; you dance like a sunbeam."

There was a foolish young elephant at the feast, and he watched the hare dancing to and fro and up in the air, and he wished he could dance too. He thought so much about it that for some days after the feast he was quite ill and did not sleep at night, and at last his mother asked him, "Have you any sorrow, my child?"

He did not like to tell even his mother what was worrying him, but he went off alone to the hare's house and implored him to teach him to dance. The hare was very surprised and did not know what to say at first. He looked at the elephant's heavy legs, and he said kindly, "One must begin very young to dance; you elephants can do so many clever things which the other animals cannot do. I don't think it would suit your figure to dance."

So the young elephant went sorrowfully home. When the other hares heard of his visit, they laughed very much, for who had ever heard of an elephant dancing?

A week passed, and the young elephant invited the hare to his house. He gave him a beautiful dinner and then said, "I must learn to dance. I think of this all day, and I dream of it all night. You must teach me to dance."

The hare looked at him in despair. "Your legs are too heavy," he said at last. "Your hind legs are much too heavy." Then he went home, rather annoyed. Again the elephant sent for him, but this time the hare would not go. He sent a message, saying, "If you can get a doctor to cut off some of your heavy flanks so that you will be lighter on your feet, I will try and teach you to dance."

The foolish elephant called in an ape who professed to be a great doctor, and the ape cut all the flesh off his hind legs until only the bones were left, and then he sewed the skin up again. The elephant sent the meat to the hare with a message: "Now you will see that I am in earnest. When my legs have healed up, we will begin the dancing lessons."

The hares laughed and laughed when they got the message, but they said, "Well, we will have a good feast anyway." So they sent for all their relations and had a big dinner of elephant steak with sem-*sem* sauce.

A few days afterwards, the elephant sent an antelope with a message: "I am very ill indeed; my legs do not heal up, and my doctor thinks he had better sew on the flesh he cut off, so will you please send it back by the antelope?"

What was to be done? Some of the steak remained left over from the feast, but they could not send it back for it had been cooked. The dancing hare said to the antelope, "Stay here and dine with us, and afterwards we will talk over the business." He said this to gain time and think of a plan.

When the antelope tasted the elephant steak, he said, "This is very good meat. What is it?" And the hare said, "Little rock

conies that we catch on the hillside; if you like, we will hunt some before you go home.”

The antelope was delighted and they set off, but the hare led him to a pit trap, and the antelope fell in and was killed. When the antelope did not return, the elephant sent a buffalo with the same message, and the hares played the same trick on him.

The young elephant was very ill indeed, but when the buffalo did not return, he made a last effort and sent a crafty old leopard. None of the Forest animals like the leopards very much, for they have such bad manners, and the leopard would not have carried any message for anyone, but he was a little afraid to refuse the young elephant who was a relation of the King of the Forest, so, very grumpily, he agreed to go.

The hares were terrified when they saw him coming, and the old mother hare said, “I suppose we must give him dinner, but I don’t like it a bit; his table manners are awful.”

The leopard gave the young elephant’s message, sniffing and snuffling as he spoke and stopping every now and then to give a little grunt, and the hares kept up their courage all through dinner, and the dancing hare led him to the trap.

The leopard had seen many traps, and he sniffed suspiciously round this one. Then he snarled at the hare, “You young villain,” he cried, “I can see what you have done to the other messengers.” He turned suddenly round in great anger, all his teeth bared, and would have caught the dancing hare, but the hare slipped away and ran down the hillside.

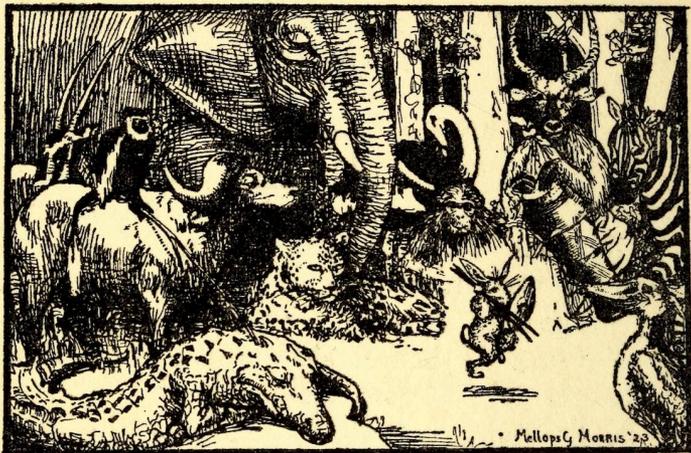
There was a river at the bottom of the hill, and the hare ran in and out of the papyrus clumps where the leopard could not follow him, and then the hare let himself down into a water hole till he was quite wet and ran back again.

Meanwhile, the leopard had lost the scent entirely and was running up and down the bank, sniffing and grunting. When he saw the hare so wet that his fur looked like a black rag, he thought it was some queer creature that lived in the swamp.

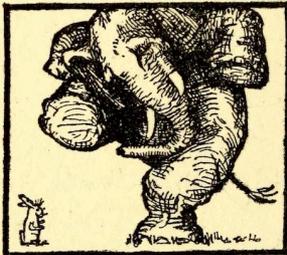
“Little wet animal,” he cried, “have you seen a hare anywhere about?”

“No,” answered the hare. “They seldom come here; they live in the Forest.”

“I know that! You are stupid,” said the leopard rudely, and as the sun was setting and he was very hungry, he hurried back to tell the elephant his story, but when he arrived near home, he found much sorrow in the Forest, for the poor foolish elephant was dead. And though the hares were really very sorry — for they loved their King, the big grey elephant, whose relation the young one was — yet they felt it really was his own fault for being so silly and for believing anything an ape said, for no one in the Forest who has any sense takes the advice of an ape.



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7. The Language of the Beasts



[From [Moorish Literature](#) by René Basset, 1901. See item #24 in the Bibliography. The 18th-century illustration of a jerboa is from the Wellcome Trust at [Wikimedia Commons](#).]

Once upon a time there was a man who had much goods. One day he went to market. There came a greyhound, which ate some meat. The butcher gave it a blow, which made it yelp. Seeing this, the heart of the man was touched with compassion. He bought of the butcher half a piece of meat and flung it to the greyhound. The dog took it and went away. The dog was the son of the king of the netherworld!

Later, Fortune changed for the man. He lost all his possessions and began to wash for people. One day, he had gone to wash something; he stretched it on the sand to dry. A jerboa appeared with a ring in its ear. The man ran after it, killed it, hid the ring, made a fire, cooked the jerboa, and ate it.

A woman came out of the earth, seized him, and demanded, "Haven't you seen my son, with an ear-ring?"

"I haven't seen anybody," he answered, "but I saw a jerboa which had a ring in its ear."

"It is my son." She drew the man under the earth and told him, "You have eaten my son; you have separated me from him. Now I will separate you from your children, and you shall work in the place of my son."

The son of the king of the netherworld who had been changed into a greyhound saw this man that day in the netherworld and said to him, "Is it you who bought some meat for a greyhound and threw it to him?"

"It is I."

"I am that greyhound. Who brought you here?"

"A woman," answered the man, and he recounted all his adventure.

"Go and make a complaint to the king," answered the other. "I am his son. I'll tell him, 'This man did me a good service.' When

he asks you to go to the treasure and take as much money as you wish, answer him, 'I don't want any. I only want you to spit a benediction into my mouth.' If he asks you, 'Who told you that?' answer, 'Nobody told me.'

The man went and found the king and complained of the woman. The king called her and asked her, "Why have you taken this man captive?"

"He ate my son."

"Why was your son metamorphosed into a jerboa? When men see one of those animals, they kill it and eat it." Then, addressing the man, he said, "Give her back the ear-ring." The man gave it to her.

"Go," said the king to the woman. "Take this man to the place from which you brought him."

The son of the king then said to his father, "This man did me a favor; you ought to reward him."

The king said to him, "Go to the treasure; take as much money as you can."

"I don't want money," the man answered. "I want you to spit into my mouth a benediction."

"Who told you that?"

"Nobody told me."

"You will not be able to bear it."

"I will be able."

"When I have spat into your mouth, you will understand the language of beasts and birds; you will know what they say when they speak. But if you reveal it to the people, you will die."

"I will not reveal it."

So the king spat into the man's mouth and sent him away, saying to the woman, "Go and take him back where you found him." She departed and took him back there.

The man mounted his donkey and came back to his house. He unloaded the donkey and took back to the people the linen he had washed. Then he remounted the beast to go and seek some earth. He was going to dig when he heard a crow say in

the air, "Dig beneath; you will sing when God has made you rich."

He understood what the crow said, dug beneath, and found a treasure. He filled a basket with it. On the top he put a little earth and went home, but he often returned to the spot.

On one of these occasions, his donkey met a mule, which said, "Are you still working?"

The donkey replied, "My master has found a treasure, and he is taking it away."

The mule answered, "When you are in a crowd, balk and throw the basket to the ground. People will see it, all will be discovered, and your master will leave you in peace."

The man had heard every word of this. He filled his basket with earth only. When they arrived at a crowd of people, the donkey kicked and threw the load to the ground. Her master beat her till she had enough.

The man applied himself to gathering the treasure and became a rich merchant.

He had at home some chickens and a dog. One day he went into the granary, and a hen followed him and ate the grain. A rooster said to her, "Bring me a little."

She answered, "Eat for yourself."

The master began to laugh.

His wife asked him, "What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing."

"You are laughing at me."

"Not at all."

"You must tell me what you are laughing at."

"If I tell you, I shall die."

"You shall tell me, and you shall die."

"Tonight."

He brought out some grain and said to his wife, "Give alms." He invited the people, bade them eat, and when they had gone, he brought food to the dog, but the dog would not eat.

The neighbor's dog came, as it did every day, to eat with this dog. Today it found the food intact.

"Come and eat," the neighbor's dog said.

"No," the dog answered.

"Why not?"

Then the dog told the other, "My master, hearing the chickens talk, began to laugh. His wife asked him, 'Why are you laughing?' 'If I tell you, I shall die,' he said. She said, 'Tell me and die.' That is why," continued the dog, "he has given alms, for when he reveals his secret, he will die, and I shall never find anyone to treat me as well as he has."

The other dog replied, "As he knows our language, I tell him this: let him take a stick and give it to his wife until she has had enough. As he beats her, let him say, 'This is what I was laughing at. This is what I was laughing at. This is what I was laughing at,' until she says to him, 'Reveal to me nothing.'"

The man heard the conversation of the dogs and went and got a stick. When his wife and he went to bed, she said to him, "Tell me now what you were laughing at."

Then he took the stick and beat her, saying, "This is what I was laughing at. This is what I was laughing at. This is what I was laughing at," until she cried out, "Don't tell it to me. Don't tell it to me. Don't tell it to me."

He left her alone. When the dogs heard, they rejoiced, ran out on the terrace, played, and ate their food.

From that day the wife never again said to her husband, "Tell me that!" They lived happy ever after.

If I have omitted anything, may God forgive me for it.

8. Half-a-Rooster

[From [Moorish Literature](#) by René Basset, 1901. See item #24 in the Bibliography.]

In times past, there was a man who had two wives, and one was wise and one was foolish. They owned a rooster in common. One day they quarreled about the rooster, cut it in two, and each took half. The foolish wife cooked her part. The wise one let her part live, and he walked on one foot and had only one wing.

Some days passed thus; then Half-a-Rooster got up early and started on his pilgrimage. At the middle of the day he was tired and went toward a brook to rest. A jackal came there to drink. Half-a-Rooster jumped on the jackal's back, stole one of his hairs, which he put under his wing, and resumed his journey. He proceeded until evening and stopped under a tree to pass the night there.

He had not rested long when he saw a lion pass near the tree where he was lying. As soon as he perceived the lion, he jumped on his back and stole one of his hairs, which he put with the hair of the jackal.

The next morning he got up early and took up his journey again. Having arrived at the middle of a forest, he met a boar and said, "Give me a hair from your back, as the king of the animals and the trickiest of the animals have done — the jackal and the lion."

The boar answered, "As these two personages so important among the animals have done this, I will also give you what you request." He plucked a hair from his back and gave it to Half-a-Rooster. The latter went on his way and arrived at the palace of a king. He began to crow and to say, "Tomorrow the King will die, and I will take his wife."

Hearing these words, the King gave to his servants the command to seize Half-a-Rooster and cast him into the middle of the pen of the sheep and goats to be trampled upon and killed by them so that the King might get rid of his crowing. The servants seized him and cast him into the pen to perish.

When he landed there, Half-a-Rooster took from under his wing the jackal's hair, preparing to burn it in the fire. As soon as the hair was near the fire, the jackal came and said, "Why are you burning my hair? As soon as I smelled it, I came running."

Half-a-Rooster replied, "You see what situation I am in. Get me out of it."

"That is an easy thing," said the jackal, and immediately he yowled in order to summon his brothers. The jackals gathered around him, and he gave them this command: "My brothers, save me from Half-a-Rooster, for he has a hair from my back which he has put in the fire. I don't want to burn. Take Half-a-Rooster out of the pen, and you will be able to take my hair from his hands." At once the jackals rushed to the pen, strangled everything that was there, and rescued Half-a-Rooster.

The next day the King found his stables deserted and his animals killed. He sought for Half-a-Rooster, but in vain. The next day at the supper hour, Half-a-Rooster began to crow as he did the first time. The King called his servants and said to them, "Seize Half-a-Rooster and cast him into the cattle-yard so that he may be crushed under the cattle's feet."

The servants caught Half-a-Rooster and threw him into the middle of the cow-pen. As soon as he landed there, he took the lion's hair and put it into the fire. The lion came, roaring, and said, "Why do you burn my hair? I smelled from my cave the odor of burning hair and came running to learn the motive of your action."

Half-a-Rooster answered, "You see my situation. Help me out of it."

The lion went out and roared to call his brothers. They came in great haste and said to him, "Why do you call us now?"

"Take Half-a-Rooster from the cattle-yard, for he has one of my hairs which he can put into the fire. If you don't rescue Half-a-Rooster, he will burn the hair, and I don't want to smell the odor of burning hair while I am alive."

His brothers obeyed. They at once killed all the cattle in the pen. The King saw that his animals were all dead, and he fell into such a rage that he nearly choked to death. He looked for Half-a-Rooster to kill him with his own hands. He searched a long time without finding him and finally went home to rest.

At sunset Half-a-Rooster came to his usual place and crowed as on the former occasions. The King called his servants and said to them, "This time when you have caught Half-a-Rooster, put him in a house and shut all the doors till morning. I will kill him myself."

The servants seized Half-a-Rooster immediately and put him in the treasure-room. When he landed there, he saw money under his feet. He waited till he had nothing to fear from the masters of the house, who were all sound asleep, and then he took from under his wing the hair of the boar, started a fire, and placed the hair in it. At once the boar came running, shaking the earth. He thrust his head against the wall. The wall shook and half of it fell down and, going to Half-a-Rooster, the boar said, "Why are you burning my hair at this moment?"

"Pardon me; you see the situation in which I am, without counting what awaits me in the morning, for the King is going to kill me with his own hands if you don't get me out of this prison."

The boar replied, "The thing is easy; fear not. I will open the door so that you may go out. In fact, you have stayed here long enough. Get up; go and take money, enough for you and your children."

Half-a-Rooster obeyed. He rolled in the gold, took all that stuck to his wing and his foot, and swallowed as much as he

could hold. He took the road he had followed the first day, and when he had arrived near the house, he called the mistress and said, "Strike now; be not afraid to kill me." His mistress began to strike until Half-a-Rooster called from beneath the mat, "Enough now. Roll up the mat."

She obeyed and saw the earth beneath the mat all shining with gold.

At the time when Half-a-Rooster returned from his pilgrimage, the two women owned a dog in common. The foolish one, seeing that her companion had received much money, said to her, "We will divide the dog between us."

The wise woman answered, "We can't do anything with the dog. Let her live; I will give you my half. Keep her for yourself. I have no need of her."

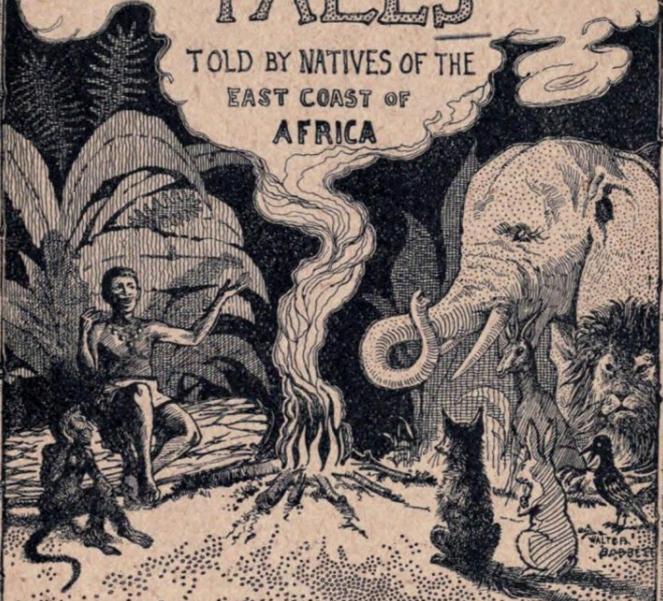
The foolish one said to the dog, "Go on a pilgrimage as Half-a-Rooster did and bring me some gold."

The dog started to carry out the commands of her mistress. She began her journey in the morning and came to a fountain. As she was thirsty, she started to drink. As she stopped, she saw in the middle of the fountain a yellow stone. She took it in her mouth and ran back home. When she reached the house, she called her mistress and said to her, "Get ready the mats and the rods; you see that I have come back from the pilgrimage."

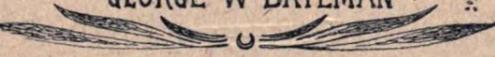
The foolish woman prepared the mats under which the dog ran as soon as she heard the voice of her mistress; then the dog said, "Strike gently." The woman seized the rods and struck with all the force possible. The dog cried out to her a long while for her to stop the blows. Her mistress refused to stop until the animal was cold. She lifted up the mats and found the dog dead, with the yellow stone in its mouth.

ZANZIBAR TALES

TOLD BY NATIVES OF THE
EAST COAST OF
AFRICA



TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SWAHILI
BY
GEORGE W. BATEMAN



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Bookoo and the hare started off immediately.

9. The Hare and the Lion

[From [*Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa*](#) by George Bateman, 1901. See item #25 in the Bibliography. The illustrations are by Walter Bobbett.]

One day Soongoora, the hare, roaming through the forest in search of food, glanced up through the boughs of a very large calabash tree and saw that a great hole in the upper part of the trunk was inhabited by bees; thereupon he returned to town in search of someone to go with him and help to get the honey.

As he was passing the house of Bookoo, the big rat, that worthy gentleman invited him in. So the hare went in, sat down, and remarked, "My father has died and has left me a hive of honey. I would like you to come and help me to eat it."

Of course Bookoo jumped at the offer, and he and the hare started off immediately.

When they arrived at the great calabash tree, Soongoora pointed out the bees' nest and said, "Go on; climb up." So, taking some straw with them, they climbed up to the nest, lit the straw, smoked out the bees, put out the fire, and set to work eating the honey.

In the midst of the feast, who should appear at the foot of the tree but Simba, the lion! Looking up and seeing them eating, he asked, "Who are you?"

Then Soongoora whispered to Bookoo, "Hold your tongue; that old fellow is crazy."

But in a very little while Simba roared out angrily, "I say, who are you? Speak, I tell you!"

This made Bookoo so scared that he blurted out, "It's only us!"

Upon this the hare said to him, "You just wrap me up in this straw, call to the lion to keep out of the way, and then throw me down. Then you'll see what will happen."

So Bookoo the big rat wrapped Soongoora the hare in the straw, and then called to Simba the lion, "Stand back; I'm going to throw this straw down, and then I'll come down myself." When Simba stepped back out of the way, Bookoo threw down the straw, and as it lay on the ground, Soongoora crept out and ran away while the lion was looking up.



After waiting a minute or two, Simba roared out, "Well, come down, I say!" and, there being no help for it, the big rat came down.

As soon as he was within reach, the lion caught hold of him and asked, "Who was up there with you?"

"Why," said Bookoo, "Soongoora the hare! Didn't you see him when I threw him down?"

"Of course I didn't see him," replied the lion in an incredulous tone, and, without wasting further time, he ate the big rat and then searched around for the hare but could not find him.

Three days later, Soongoora called on his acquaintance Kobay, the tortoise, and said to him, "Let us go and eat some honey."

"Whose honey?" inquired Kobay, cautiously.

"My father's," Soongoora replied.

"Oh, alright; I'm with you," said the tortoise eagerly, and away they went.

When they arrived at the great calabash tree, they climbed up with their straw, smoked out the bees, sat down, and began to eat.

Just then Mr. Simba, who owned the honey, came out again and, looking up, inquired, "Who are you up there?"

Soongoora whispered to Kobay, "Keep quiet," but when the lion repeated his question angrily, Kobay became suspicious and said, "I will speak. You told me this honey was yours; am I right in suspecting that it belongs to Simba?"

So, when the lion asked again, "Who are you?" Kobay answered, "It's only us." The lion said, "Come down then!" and the tortoise answered, "We're coming."

Now Simba had been keeping an eye open for Soongoora since the day he caught Bookoo the big rat and, suspecting that Soongoora was up there with Kobay, he said to himself, "I've got him this time for sure."

Seeing that they were caught again, Soongoora said to the tortoise, "Wrap me up in the straw, tell Simba to stand out of

the way, and then throw me down. I'll wait for you below. He can't hurt you, you know."

"Alright," said Kobay but, while he was wrapping the hare up, he said to himself, "This fellow wants to run away and leave me to bear the lion's anger. He shall get caught first." Therefore, when Kobay had bundled the hare up, he called out, "Soongoora is coming!" and threw him down.

So Simba caught the hare and, holding him with his paw, he said, "Now what shall I do with you?"

The hare replied, "It's of no use for you to try to eat me; I'm awfully tough."

"What would be the best thing to do with you then?" asked Simba.

"I think," said Soongoora, "you should take me by the tail, whirl me around, and knock me against the ground. Then you may be able to eat me."

So the lion, being deceived, took the hare by the tail and whirled him around, but just as he was going to knock him on the ground, the hare slipped out of his grasp and ran away, and Simba had the mortification of losing Soongoora again.

Angry and disappointed, he turned to the tree and called to Kobay, "You come down too."

When the tortoise reached the ground, the lion said, "You're pretty hard; what can I do to make you eatable?"

"Oh, that's easy," laughed Kobay. "Just put me in the mud and rub my back with your paw until my shell comes off."

Immediately on hearing this, Simba carried Kobay to the water, placed him in the mud, and began to rub his back, or so he thought, but the tortoise had slipped away, and the lion continued rubbing on a piece of rock until his paws were raw. When he glanced down at them, he saw his paws were bleeding and, realizing that he had again been outwitted, he said, "Well, the hare has done me today, but I'll go hunting now until I find him."



The lion continued rubbing on a piece of rock.

So Simba the lion set out immediately in search of Soongoora the hare and, as he went along, he inquired of everyone he met, "Where is the house of Soongoora?" But each person he asked answered, "I do not know," for the hare had said to his wife, "Let us remove from this house." Therefore the folks in that neighborhood had no knowledge of his whereabouts. Simba, however, went along, continuing his inquiries, until presently one answered, "That is his house on the top of the mountain."

Without loss of time, the lion climbed the mountain and soon arrived at the place indicated, only to find that there was no one at home. This, however, did not trouble him; on the

contrary, saying to himself, "I'll hide myself inside, and when Soongoora and his wife come home, I'll eat them both," he entered the house and lay down, awaiting their arrival.

Pretty soon along came the hare with his wife, not thinking of any danger, but the hare very soon discovered the marks of the lion's paws on the steep path. Stopping at once, he said to Mrs. Soongoora, "You go back, my dear. Simba the lion has passed this way, and I think he must be looking for me."

But she replied, "I will not go back; I will follow you, my husband."

Although greatly pleased at this proof of his wife's affection, Soongoora said firmly, "No, no! You have friends to go to. Go back."

So he persuaded her, and she went back, but he kept on, following the footmarks, and saw — as he had suspected — that they went into his house.

"Ah!" said he to himself. "Mr. Lion is inside, is he?" Then, cautiously going back a little way, he called out, "How d'ye do, house? How d'ye do?" Waiting a moment, he remarked loudly, "Well, this is very strange! Every day, as I pass this place, I say, 'How d'ye do, house?' and the house always answers, 'How d'ye do?' There must be someone inside today."

When the lion heard this, he called out, "How d'ye do?"

Then Soongoora burst out laughing and shouted, "Oho, Mr. Simba! You're inside, and I'll bet you want to eat me, but first tell me where you ever heard of a house talking!"

Upon this, the lion, seeing how he had been fooled, replied angrily, "You wait until I get hold of you; that's all."

"Oh, I think you'll have to do the waiting," cried the hare, and then he ran away, the lion following.

But it was of no use. Soongoora completely tired out old Simba, who, saying, "That rascal has beaten me; I don't want to have anything more to do with him," returned to his home under the great calabash tree.

10. Goso the Teacher

[From [*Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa*](#) by George Bateman, 1901. See item #25 in the Bibliography. The illustrations are by Walter Bobbett.]

Once there was a man named Goso who taught children to read, not in a schoolhouse but under a calabash tree. One evening, while Goso was sitting under the tree deep in the study of the next day's lessons, Paa the gazelle climbed up the tree very quietly to steal some fruit and, in so doing, he shook off a calabash, which, as it fell, struck Goso the teacher on the head and killed him.

When Goso's scholars came in the morning and found their teacher lying dead, they were filled with grief; so, after giving him a decent burial, they agreed among themselves to find the one who had killed Goso and put him to death.

After talking the matter over, they came to the conclusion that the south wind was the offender. So they caught the south wind and beat it. But the south wind cried, "Here! I am Koossee, the south wind. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Koossee; it was you who threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Koossee said, "If I were so powerful, would I be stopped by a mud wall?"

So they went to the mud wall and beat it. But the mud wall cried, "Here! I am Keeyambaaza, the mud wall. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Keeyambaaza; it was you who stopped Koossee the south wind, and Koossee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Keeyambaaza said, "If I were so powerful, would I be bored through by the rat?"

So they went and caught the rat and beat it. But the rat cried, "Here! I am Paanya the rat. Why are you beating me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Paanya; it was you who bored through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koossee the south wind, and Koossee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Paanya said, "If I were so powerful, would I be eaten by a cat?"

So they hunted for the cat, caught it, and beat it. But the cat cried, "Here! I am Paaka the cat. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Paaka; it is you who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koossee the south wind, and Koossee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Paaka said, "If I were so powerful, would I be tied by a rope?"

So they took the rope and beat it. But the rope cried, "Here! I am Kaamba the rope. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Kaamba; it is you that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koossee the south wind, and Koossee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Kaamba said, "If I were so powerful, would I be cut by a knife?"

So they took the knife and beat it. But the knife cried, "Here! I am Keesoo the knife. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Keesoo; you cut Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Keesoo said, "If I were so powerful, would I be burned by the fire?"

And they went and beat the fire. But the fire cried, "Here! I am Moto the fire. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Moto; you burn Keesoo the knife, that cuts Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Moto said, "If I were so powerful, would I be put out by water?"

And they went to the water and beat it. But the water cried, "Here! I am Maajee the water. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Maajee; you put out Moto the fire, that burns Keesoo the knife, that cuts Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it."

But Maajee said, "If I were so powerful, would I be drunk by the ox?"

And they went to the ox and beat it. But the ox cried, "Here! I am Ngombay the ox. Why do you beat me? What have I done?"

And they said, "Yes, we know you are Ngombay; you drink Maajee the water, that puts out Moto the fire, that burns Keesoo the knife, that cuts Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka

the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Ngombay said, “If I were so powerful, would I be tormented by the fly?”

And they caught the fly and beat it. But the fly cried, “Here! I am Eenzee the fly. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said, “Yes, we know you are Eenzee; you torment Ngombay the ox, who drinks Maajee the water, that puts out Moto the fire, that burns Keesoo the knife, that cuts Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

But Eenzee said, “If I were so powerful, would I be eaten by the gazelle?”

And they searched for the gazelle, and when they found it, they beat it. But the gazelle said, “Here! I am Paa the gazelle. Why do you beat me? What have I done?”

And they said, “Yes, we know you are Paa; you eat Eenzee the fly, who torments Ngombay the ox, who drinks Maajee the water, that puts out Moto the fire, that burns Keesoo the knife, that cuts Kaamba the rope, that ties Paaka the cat, who eats Paanya the rat, who bores through Keeyambaaza the mud wall, which stopped Koosee the south wind, and Koosee the south wind threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. You should not have done it.”

The gazelle, through surprise at being found out and fear of the consequences of his accidental killing of the teacher while engaged in stealing, was struck dumb.

Then the scholars said, “Ah! He hasn’t a word to say for himself. This is the fellow who threw down the calabash that struck our teacher Goso. We will kill him.”

So they killed Paa the gazelle, and avenged the death of their teacher.



11. Mkaah Jeechonee, the Boy Hunter

[From [*Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa*](#) by George Bateman, 1901. See item #25 in the Bibliography. The illustrations are by Walter Bobbett.]



Sultan Maajnoon had seven sons and a big cat, of all of whom he was very proud. Everything went well until one day the cat went and caught a calf. When they told the sultan, he said, "Well, the cat is mine, and the calf is mine." So they said, "Oh, alright, master," and let the matter drop.

A few days later the cat caught a goat, and when they told the sultan, he said, "The cat is mine, and the goat is mine," and so that settled it again.

Two days more passed, and the cat caught a cow. They told the sultan, and he shut them up with "My cat, and my cow." After another two days, the cat caught a donkey; same result. Next it caught a horse; same result. The next victim was a camel, and when they told the sultan, he said, "What's the matter with you folks? It was my cat, and my camel. I believe you don't like my cat and want it killed, bringing me tales about it every day. Let it eat whatever it wants to."

In a very short time the cat caught a child and then a full-grown man, but each time the sultan remarked that both the cat and its victim were his, and he thought no more of it.

Meantime the cat grew bolder and hung around a low, open place near the town, pouncing on people going for water or animals out at pasture, and eating them. At last some of the people plucked up courage and, going to the sultan, they said, "How is this, master? As you are our sultan, you are our protector — or ought to be — yet you have allowed this cat to do as it pleases, and now it lives just out of town there and kills everything living that goes that way, while at night it comes into town and does the same thing. Now what on earth are we to do?"

But Maajnoon only replied, "I really believe you hate my cat. I suppose you want me to kill it, but I shall do no such thing. Everything it eats is mine."

Of course the folks were astonished at this result of the interview and, as no one dared to kill the cat, they all had to remove from the vicinity where it lived.

But this did not mend matters because, when the cat found no one came that way, it shifted its quarters likewise. So complaints continued to pour in until at last Sultan Maajnoon gave orders that if anyone came to make accusations against the cat, he was to be informed that the master could not be seen.

When things got so that people neither let their animals out nor went out themselves, the cat went farther into the country, killing and eating cattle and fowls and everything that came its way.

One day the sultan said to six of his sons, "I'm going to look at the country today; come along with me."

The seventh son was considered too young to go around anywhere and was always left at home with the womenfolk, being called by his brothers Mkaah Jeechonee, which means Mr. Sit-in-the-Kitchen.

Well, they went and presently came to a thicket. The father was in front and the six sons following him when the cat jumped out and killed three of the sons. The attendants shouted, "The cat! The cat!" and the soldiers asked permission to search for and kill it, which the sultan readily granted, saying, "This is not a cat; it is a Noondah. It has taken from me my own sons."

Now, nobody had ever seen a Noondah, but they all knew it was a terrible beast that could kill and eat all other living things. When the sultan began to bemoan the loss of his sons, some of those who heard him said, "Ah, master, this Noondah does not select his prey. He doesn't say, 'This is my master's son; I'll leave him alone' or 'This is my master's wife; I won't eat her.' When we told you what the cat had done, you always said it was your cat and what it ate was yours, and now it has killed your sons, and we don't believe it would hesitate to eat even you."

And the sultan said, "I fear you are right."

As for the soldiers who tried to get the cat, some were killed and the remainder ran away, and the sultan and his living sons took the dead bodies home and buried them.

Now when Mkaah Jeechonee, the seventh son, heard that his brothers had been killed by the Noondah, he said to his mother, "I too will go so that it may kill me as well as my brothers, or I will kill it."

But his mother said, "My son, I do not like to have you go. Those three are already dead, and if you are killed also, will not that be one wound upon another to my heart?"

"Nevertheless," said he, "I cannot help going, but do not tell my father." So his mother made him some cakes and sent some attendants with him, and he took a great spear as sharp as a razor and a sword, bade her farewell, and departed.

As he had always been left at home, he had no very clear idea what he was going to hunt for, so he had not gone far beyond the suburbs when, seeing a very large dog, he concluded that this was the animal he was after, so he killed it, tied a rope to it, and dragged it home, singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people."

When his mother, who was upstairs, heard him, she looked out of the window and, seeing what he had brought, she said, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." So he left the dog's carcass outside and went in to talk about it, and his mother said, "My dear boy, the Noondah is a much larger animal than that, but if I were you, I'd give the business up and stay at home." "No indeed," he exclaimed, "no staying at home for me until I have met and fought the Noondah."

So he set out again and went a great deal farther than he had gone on the former day. Presently he saw a civet cat and, believing it to be the animal he was in search of, he killed it, bound it, and dragged it home, singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people." When his mother saw the civet cat, she said, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." And he threw the civet cat away. Again his mother

entreated him to stay at home, but he would not listen to her and started off again.

This time he went away off into the forest and, seeing a bigger wild cat than the last one, he killed it, bound it, and dragged it home, singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people." But directly his mother saw it, she had to tell him as before, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." He was, of course, very much troubled at this, and his mother said, "Now where do you expect to find this Noondah? You don't know where it is, and you don't know what it looks like. You'll get sick over this; you're not looking so well now as you did. Come, stay at home." But he said, "There are three things, one of which I shall do: I shall die, I shall find the Noondah and kill it, or I shall return home unsuccessful. In any case, I'm off again."

This time he went farther than before, saw a zebra, killed it, bound it, and dragged it home, singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people." Of course his mother had to tell him once again, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people."

After a good deal of argument, in which his mother's persuasion, as usual, was of no avail, he went off again, going farther than ever, where he caught a giraffe, and when he had killed it, he said, "Well, this time I've been successful. This must be the Noondah." So he dragged it home, singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people." Again his mother had to assure him, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." She then pointed out to him that his brothers were not running about hunting for the Noondah, but staying at home attending to their own business.

But, remarking that all brothers were not alike, he expressed his determination to stick to his task until it came to a successful termination, and he went off again, a still greater distance than before. While going through the wilderness, he espied a rhinoceros asleep under a tree and, turning to his

attendants, he exclaimed, "At last I see the Noondah." "Where, master?" they all cried, eagerly. "There, under the tree." "Oh-h! What shall we do?" they asked. And he answered, "First of all, let us eat our fill; then we will attack it. We have found it in a good place, though if it kills us, we can't help it." So they all took out their arrowroot cakes and ate till they were satisfied. Then Mkaah Jeechonee said, "Each of you take two guns; lay one beside you and take the other in your hands, and at the proper time let us all fire at once." And they said, "Alright, master."

So they crept cautiously through the bushes and got around to the other side of the tree, at the back of the rhinoceros; then they closed up till they were quite near it, and all fired together. The beast jumped up, ran a little way, and then fell down dead. They bound it and dragged it for two whole days until they reached the town, when Mkaah Jeechonee began singing, "Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people." But he received the same answer from his mother, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." And many persons came, and looked at the rhinoceros, and felt very sorry for the young man.

As for his father and mother, they both begged him to give up, his father offering to give him anything he possessed if he would only stay at home. But Mkaah Jeechonee said, "I don't hear what you are saying; good-bye," and was off again. This time he still further increased the distance from his home, and at last he saw an elephant asleep at noon in the forest. Thereupon he said to his attendants, "Now we have found the Noondah." "Ah, where is he?" said they. "Yonder, in the shade. Do you see it?" "Oh, yes, master! Shall we march up to it?" "If we march up to it and it is looking this way, it will come at us, and if it does that, some of us will be killed. I think we had best let one man steal up close and see which way its face is turned."

As everyone thought this was a good idea, a slave named Keeroboto crept on his hands and knees and had a good look at it. When he returned in the same manner, his master asked,

“Well, what’s the news? Is it the Noondah?” “I do not know,” replied Keeroboto, “but I think there is very little doubt that it is. It is broad, with a very big head, and, goodness, I never saw such large ears!” “Alright,” said Mkaah Jeechonee, “let us eat, and then go for it.”

So they took their arrowroot cakes and their molasses cakes, and ate until they were quite full. Then the youth said to them, “My people, today is perhaps the last we shall ever see, so we will take leave of each other. Those who are to escape will escape, and those who are to die will die, but if I die, let those who escape tell my mother and father not to grieve for me.” But his attendants said, “Oh, come along, master; none of us will die, please God.”

So they went on their hands and knees till they were close up, and then they said to Mkaah Jeechonee, “Give us your plan, master,” but he said, “There is no plan; only let all fire at once.” Well, they fired all at once, and immediately the elephant jumped up and charged at them. Then such a helter-skelter flight as there ever was! They threw away their guns and everything they carried and made for the trees, which they climbed with surprising alacrity. As to the elephant, he kept straight ahead until he fell down some distance away. They all remained in the trees from three until six o’clock in the morning, without food and without clothing. The young man sat in his tree and wept bitterly, saying, “I don’t exactly know what death is, but it seems to me this must be very like it.”

As no one could see anyone else, he did not know where his attendants were, and though he wished to come down from the tree, he thought, “Maybe the Noondah is down below there and will eat me.” Each attendant was in exactly the same fix, wishing to come down but afraid the Noondah was waiting to eat him.

Keeroboto had seen the elephant fall but was afraid to get down by himself, saying, “Perhaps, though it has fallen down, it is not dead.” But presently he saw a dog go up to it and smell

it, and then he was sure it was dead. Then he got down from the tree as fast as he could and gave a signal cry, which was answered, but not being sure from whence the answer came, he repeated the cry, listening intently. When it was answered, he went straight to the place from which the sound proceeded and found two of his companions in one tree. To them he said, "Come on, get down; the Noondah is dead." So they got down quickly and hunted around until they found their master.

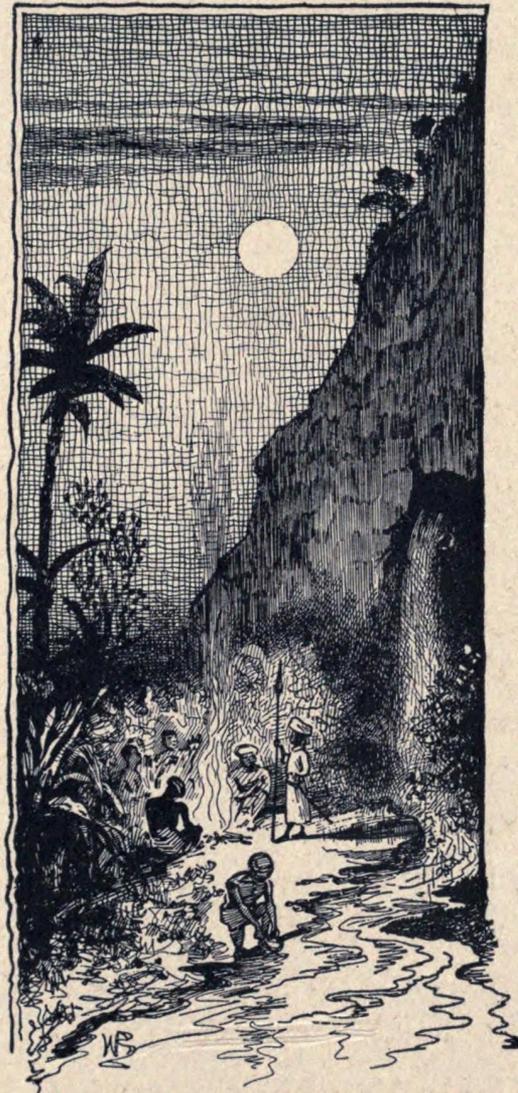
When they told him the news, he came down also, and after a little while the attendants had all gathered together, and had picked up their guns and their clothes, and were alright again. But they were all weak and hungry, so they rested and ate some food, after which they went to examine their prize. As soon as Mkaah Jeechonee saw it, he said, "Ah, this is the Noondah! This is it! This is it!" And they all agreed that this was it.

So they dragged the elephant three days to their town, and then the youth began singing, "Oh, mother, this is he, the Noondah, eater of the people."

He was naturally quite upset when his mother replied, "My son, this is not the Noondah, eater of the people." She further said, "Poor boy! What trouble you have been through. All the people are astonished that one so young should have such a great understanding!"

Then his father and mother began their entreaties again, and finally it was agreed that this next trip should be his last, whatever the result might be.

Well, they started off again, and went on and on, past the forest, until they came to a very high mountain, at the foot of which they camped for the night. In the morning they cooked their rice and ate it, and then Mkaah Jeechonee said, "Let us now climb the mountain and look all over the country from its peak." And they went and they went until, after a long, weary while, they reached the top, where they sat down to rest and form their plans.



They camped for the night.

Now, one of the attendants, named Shindaano, while walking about cast his eyes down the side of the mountain and suddenly saw a great beast about half way down, but he could not make out its appearance distinctly on account of the distance and the trees. Calling his master, he pointed it out to him, and something in Mkaah Jeechonee's heart told him that it was the Noondah. To make sure, however, he took his gun and his spear and went partly down the mountain to get a better view. "Ah," said he, "this must be the Noondah. My mother told me its ears were small, and those are small; she told me the Noondah is broad and short, and so is this; she said it has blotches like a civet cat, and there are the blotches; she told me the tail is thick, and there is a thick tail. It must be the Noondah."

Then he went back to his attendants and bade them eat heartily, which they did. Next, he told them to leave every unnecessary thing behind because, if they had to run, they would be better without encumbrance, and if they were victorious, they could return for their goods. When they had made all their arrangements, they started down the mountain, but when they had got about halfway down, Keeroboto and Shindaano were afraid. Then the youth said to them, "Oh, let's go on; don't be afraid. We all have to live and die. What are you frightened about?" So, thus encouraged, they went on.

When they came near the place, Mkaah Jeechonee ordered them to take off all their clothing except one piece and to place that piece tightly on their bodies so that, if they had to run, they would not be caught by thorns or branches. So, when they came close to the beast, they saw that it was asleep, and all agreed that it was the Noondah. Then the young man said, "Now the sun is setting; shall we fire at it, or let be till morning?" And they all wished to fire at once and see what the result would be without further tax on their nerves; therefore, they arranged that they should all fire together.

They all crept up close, and when the master gave the word, they discharged their guns together. The Noondah did not move; that one dose had been sufficient. Nevertheless, they all turned and scampered up to the top of the mountain. There they ate and rested for the night. In the morning, they ate their rice and then went down to see how matters were, when they found the beast lying dead. After resting and eating, they started homeward, dragging the dead beast with them. On the fourth day, it began to give indications of decay, and the attendants wished to abandon it, but Mkaah Jeechonee said they would continue to drag it if there was only one bone left.

When they came near the town, he began to sing, "Mother, mother, I have come from the evil spirit's home. Mother, listen while I sing, while I tell you what I bring. Oh, mother, I have killed the Noondah, eater of the people!"

And when his mother looked out, she cried, "My son, this is the Noondah, eater of the people."

Then all the people came out to welcome him, and his father was overcome with joy, and loaded him with honors, and procured him a rich and beautiful wife, and when he died, Mkaah Jeechonee became sultan, and lived long and happily, beloved by all the people.

12. How Mafani Earned His Bride

[From [African Jungle Tales](#) by Carl Bender, 1919. See item #27 in the Bibliography.]

Once upon a time there lived a boy whose name was Mafani.

One day Mafani came to his Grandmother and said, "Grandmother dear, do let me have a cutlass! I want to go and set some bird traps!"

"I cannot let you have a cutlass, my son. I fear you will hurt yourself," the Grandmother said.

But Mafani was not so easily discouraged. He picked up a fragment of a cooking pot, sharpened one end of it on a stone, and used it instead of a cutlass. Then he went and cut a number of long and slender shoots, covered them with a thick sticky mass which he had prepared from the sap of the gum-tree, and planted them in the midst of a grass-patch.

He had hardly placed the traps when a turtle-dove perched on one of them and was caught, and Mafani took the dove to his hut and prepared it for his noonday meal. But his Grandmother took the bird and ate it.

Then Mafani said to his Grandmother, "When I asked you for a cutlass, you would not let me have it, but now you have eaten my bird. It is only just that you pay me for it." And his Grandmother gave him a cutlass.

Then Mafani took the cutlass and went on a trip. On the way, he met some people who were building a dam so that they would have enough water for the dry season. They had some difficulty in ramming the sticks because they were not properly sharpened.

Mafani watched them for some time. Finally he walked up and said, "Why don't you folks sharpen your sticks? How foolish of you to waste your time and strength in this way!"

"But we have no cutlass wherewith we could sharpen the sticks," the people replied.

"I have an excellent cutlass with me, sharp enough to cut a log," said Mafani. "I can let you have it if you care to!"

So they took Mafani's cutlass and sharpened their sticks. But in their eagerness to be through in a hurry, they used the cutlass rather roughly and broke it in two.

Then Mafani said, "You have broken my cutlass and must pay for it." And they gave him some calabashes filled with drinking water. This he took and went on.

After a while, he met some people who were collecting edible ants. Having been out in the heat for some time, they suffered from thirst. So when Mafani came along, they begged him to let them have some water.

"I am willing to help you out, but don't drink it all," said Mafani. But when the people tasted the water, they kept on drinking until not a drop of it was left. And Mafani said, "Now pay me for the water!" And they gave him a measure of ants.

As Mafani passed on, he saw some birds busily engaged in collecting oil-seeds for their evening meal. And he asked them and said, "Why do you eat these seeds? They will surely make you sick. Better try some of these ants. Here, help yourself and give me back the rest!" And he handed them the measure of ants.

And the birds commenced to eat, and they kept on eating until the last ant was done away with. Then said Mafani to the birds, "Now that you have eaten all the ants, it is only fair that you pay me for them." When the birds heard this, they flew to a tree nearby and plucked plenty of fruit. This they gave in exchange for the ants. Mafani took the fruit and passed on.

After he had gone some distance, he came to a big hill. He was too tired to climb the hill with a load on his head, so he

threw himself down in the shadow of a palm-tree to rest. There he met a party of hunters. They were very hungry and wistfully looked at Mafani's fruit. When Mafani saw this, he told the men to help themselves. In a short time they had eaten all the fruit and not a bit of it was left.

This was not at all to Mafani's liking, and he said, "Listen, friends! I invited you to help yourself to some fruit, but I did not give you permission to eat it all. Now that you have actually eaten every bit of it, I must insist that you pay me for it." And they paid him with the leg of a pig.

As Mafani passed on again, he came to a lonely hut where an old woman was drying some salt by the fire. And he placed the meat which the hunters had given him on the fire to roast. When it was well done, the old woman took it and ate it all up. Then Mafani said to the woman, "Since you have eaten all my meat, it is only just that you pay for it." The woman consented and gave him a measure of salt.

Shortly after, as Mafani was passing over the top of the hill he met the Wind, who was driving some dry leaves and fibers from a nearby ceiba tree before him. "How foolish of you," said Mafani to the Wind. "You had better take some of my salt instead." Thereupon the Wind took hold of the salt, and in the twinkling of an eye it was all gone.

Then Mafani said to the Wind, "Did I not tell you to take only a part of my salt? Now that you have taken all, you may as well pay for it." Then the Wind called another Wind, caught it in a bag, and gave the bag of wind to Mafani.

As Mafani passed on again, he met the wife of a chief who was cleaning corn. And Mafani said to the woman, "How strange that you, the wife of a powerful chief, should clean the corn yourself! Why not use some of the wind in my bag?"

And the woman took the bag and untied it to make use of the wind. In a moment all the dust and shells were blown away, and only the clean and full weighted corn remained. But the bag which had contained the wind was empty. "Why did you

take all the wind?" Mafani asked. "Now you can pay for it too. I was willing to do you a favor, but I do not care to be robbed!" And the woman, being well to do, paid him with a double measure of corn.

After Mafani had left the woman, he noticed a flock of wild pigeons by the wayside, busily engaged in picking berries. And he said to them, "For land's sake! How can you live on such miserable fare? Why not try a bit of my corn?" And he opened his bag and set it before them.

In an incredibly short time the pigeons had eaten all the corn. Not a solitary kernel was left. When Mafani asked the pigeons to pay for the corn, they gave him a measure of oil-seed. Of this he made oil, put it into a calabash, and passed on.

And he came to a town where a woman had died. They were just making preparations for her burial. Everything they needed was on hand, except one very important item — oil wherewith to anoint the body. When Mafani heard of their trouble, he offered them some of his oil. When they had used the last bit of it, Mafani demanded other oil in return. Being unable to pay, they let him have the dead woman. Mafani took the body and went away.

When, shortly after, he came near another town, he took the body, placed it against a tree on the edge of a precipice, and entered the town, where a wrestling-match was just going on. Mafani stood and looked on for a while. Then he said to one of the maidens near him, whose beauty and rich apparel had attracted his attention, "I pray you, go and call my wife, who is waiting for me just back of the town. Her name is Mawum."

And the maiden went and found the woman leaning against a tree and sound asleep, as it seemed. And she called, "Mawum! Mawum!" When there was no answer, she went to wake her. But when she touched the body, it fell over and rolled down the precipice.

The maiden was almost frightened to death. When she had sufficiently recovered from the shock, she ran back and told

Mafani, "Your wife has fallen down the precipice!" And Mafani said to the maiden, "What have you done? I shall hold your father responsible for my loss!" Thereupon the maiden's father gave his daughter to Mafani and said, "Take her; she is yours. May she be the life of your life and the joy of your heart."

And Mafani took his bride and returned to his Grandmother. They were very happy together and lived to a good old age.

13. How the Turtle Outwitted the Pig

[From [African Jungle Tales](#) by Carl Bender, 1919. See item #27 in the Bibliography.]

Mrs. Turtle one day heard of a dance which was to take place in a neighboring town. She was very anxious to go, but she had no necklace to put on.

After thinking over the matter, she went to her friend, Mrs. Pig, who lived at the other end of the town, to borrow her necklace. Her friend was only too glad to help her out, and with great expectations of a jolly good time Mrs. Turtle hurried off.

During the dance in the midst of all the excitement, the necklace was stolen from Mrs. Turtle. This greatly troubled her mind and caused her to leave the dance before time.

On her way home, she stopped in at Mrs. Pig's place.

"Have you come back with my necklace?!" Mrs. Pig asked.

"They have stolen it from me," replied Mrs. Turtle in a sorrowful tone.

"Then you shall pay for it," indignantly answered Mrs. Pig.

Several moons had passed. During all this time, nothing was seen of Mrs. Turtle. So Mrs. Pig one day said to her husband, "Grunty, you had better go to the hut of the Turtle and see about the payment for my necklace. I must have another in time for the big dance at the next full moon. You had better be up and doing. There is no time to be lost!"

So Grunty went to the hut of the Turtle. When the Turtle saw Grunty the Pig coming toward his hut, he said to his wife, "If the Pig comes in here, you tell him that I am not at home!"

Then he threw himself down, bottom side up, and pulled in his head and legs. In this position he looked very much like a whetstone.

After the Pig had entered, he asked, "Where is the Turtle?"

"He is not in," the Turtle's wife lied.

On hearing this, the Pig got very angry and, noticing what he supposed to be a whetstone lying on the floor, he said, "I am going to take his whetstone." And he picked up the imaginary whetstone, not knowing that it was the Turtle turned bottom side up, and with it left the hut.

He hid the imaginary whetstone in the grass by the wayside and marked the place with a stick. Then he went back to the hut of the Turtle to await his return.

Immediately after Grunty the Pig had left him, the Turtle righted himself and walked off.

In the meantime the Pig was impatiently awaiting the Turtle's return. After some time, the Turtle returned to his hut and there met Grunty the Pig. The Pig, on seeing the Turtle, at once blurted out, "Pay me for the necklace which your wife has borrowed and lost!"

Just at this moment, Mrs. Turtle, who was in an adjoining room and had heard the words of the Pig, stuck her head through the door and said, "The Pig took your whetstone away while you were gone!"

Then the Turtle said to the Pig, "First bring back my whetstone if you want me to pay."

And the Pig went back to the place where he hid the whetstone, only to discover that the whetstone was gone. He searched all over the place but could not find it.

The Pig was in a rather gloomy mood when he came back to the hut of the Turtle and said, "Someone must have stolen the whetstone. I had hidden it in the grass, but it is no longer there. In some mysterious way it has disappeared, and I cannot find it."

When the Turtle heard this, he said to the Pig, "Do not think for a moment that you can get your necklace before you have returned my whetstone!"

The Pig is still looking for the whetstone. So anxious is he to find it that he has even taught his children to grub up the ground.

14. The Punishment of the Turtle

[From [African Jungle Tales](#) by Carl Bender, 1919. See item #27 in the Bibliography.]

A great and wonderful tree, laden with luscious fruit, stood in a clearing in the jungle. In its shadow all the animals from far and near had assembled. As they beheld the beautiful and tempting fruit, the very sight of it made their mouths water. "To eat of it must be a real treat," they thought.

"Let us send a messenger to the King and ask his permission," said the Giraffe, who had, secretly, tasted the fruit. The suggestion of the Giraffe was received with applause and, after a somewhat lengthy deliberation as to who should go, the Rabbit was commissioned to bring their petition before the King.

The Rabbit, on arriving at the King's court, was most graciously received. The King, on hearing the petition, said to the Rabbit, "Go back and tell my subjects that they are free to eat of the fruit, but the choicest and sweetest they must not touch, for that belongs to me!"

The Rabbit, after hearing this gladsome message, hurried off, all the while repeating to himself the words of the King, "Tell my subjects that they may eat of the fruit, only not of the choicest and best, for that belongs to me!"

As he hurried on, heedless of obstacles in the way, he ran against a stone, turned a summersault in the air, and landed on his back. It all had come so unexpected and sudden that he forgot to repeat the King's message and, when he got on his feet again, it had entirely slipped his mind.

On hearing what had happened, the animals immediately dispatched another messenger — this time the Goat. When the Goat arrived at the King's court and delivered his message, he was given the same answer as the Rabbit before him: "Go and tell my subjects that they are free to eat of the fruit, only not of the choicest and best, for that belongs to me!"

On hearing the message, the Goat, fleet-footed as he was, hurried off, all the while repeating to himself the words of the King, "Go and tell my subjects that they are free to eat of the fruit, only not of the choicest and best, for that belongs to me!"

As he sped along, heedless of obstacles in the way, he suddenly, and with the full weight of his body, ran against a boulder and tumbled head over heels into a ditch. When, after a while, he came to himself and got on his feet again, the King's message had entirely slipped his mind.

Again the animals sent a messenger to the King — this time the wise and circumspect Turtle. Slow but sure, the Turtle wended his way toward the King's court. When at last he stood before the King and made known his request, he too received exactly the same answer as the Goat and the Rabbit before him. Ceremoniously the Turtle bowed himself out of the King's presence and started for home.

Slowly as he had come, he made his way back, all the while repeating to himself the words of the King, "Go and tell my subjects that they are free to eat of the fruit, only not of the choicest and best, for that belongs to me!"

As he went on, he was so wrapped in thought and taken up with the King's message that he failed to notice a log in the way. He walked straight into it and, from the force of the shock, fell flat on his back. But he had presence of mind enough to continue repeating the words of the King. After many futile efforts, he also succeeded in righting himself and getting on his paddles again. Unable to climb over the log, he walked around it and passed on. In due time he arrived at the tree, where the animals were impatiently waiting for his return.

When at last they saw the Turtle coming along, they knew at once by the triumphant look in his face that he was the bearer of good news. And so it proved to be: "We may eat of the fruit," cried the Turtle, "only not of the choicest and best, for that belongs to the King."

At these words a storm of applause rent the air. "Up and let us climb the tree!" they all cried. "Come on, Turtle! You too climb the tree! You must not fail to get your share after bringing such good news! Tuck yourself up and get busy!"

"How can I climb the tree?" said the Turtle. "I am too small. I can't even think of such an attempt, handicapped as I am." And he sat down and looked on while the others climbed the tree and helped themselves to the fruit. They all had a jolly good time and ate to their heart's content.

During all this time, the Turtle was sitting in the grass below, harboring all kinds of evil thoughts. He was brooding over plans that would enable him to get some of the King's fruit without being caught.

At sunset the animals came down. They were all very tired, so they stretched themselves out in the grass and soon were fast asleep. At last the Turtle's opportunity had come! He was just aching to get some of the King's fruit. Stealthily he approached the tree, climbed it without any difficulty whatever, and helped himself to the King's fruit.

When he was well satisfied, he cautiously slipped to the ground. Some of the fruit which he had taken along down he placed by the side of the sleeping Elephant. In this way he hoped to deceive the other animals and cover up his guilt.

Just as the first rays of the morning sun appeared on the horizon, the animals awoke, rubbed their eyes, and stretched their limbs. Then they went to the river to bathe. On coming back, they chanced to look at the tree and noticed, to their horror, that the King's fruit had disappeared during the night.

"Oh, what shall we do?!" they exclaimed. "This thing will surely bring the wrath of the King and well merited

punishment upon us! Who in all the world could have done this?"

When they saw the Turtle sitting nearby, they cried with one accord, "Turtle, you are the sinner!"

"I?" said the Turtle. "The insinuation! I can't even climb a tree, and you all know it! If you have eyes to see, then just have a look at the Elephant and the fruit by his side! It also explains why he preferred to stay here when the rest of you went to the river!" Thus lied the Turtle.

Not taking time to consider and believing the Elephant guilty, the animals got so enraged that, without further thought, they rushed upon the Elephant and killed him. In this wise, the innocent and good-natured fellow paid with his life for the guilt of the Turtle. His body they cut up, and they divided the meat between them. The Turtle, in recognition of his services, was given one of the haunches. Then they formed a procession and started for home.

On the way, the Turtle, puffed up with pride and in a mocking way, began to sing:

*Meat have I, more than I can eat!
By cunning I have beaten all;
The giant I have caused to fall
And to the monster brought defeat.*

"Say, Turtle, what kind of a song is this you are singing?" the animals asked.

"I am only singing about myself," answered the Turtle, and he commenced to sing again.

*Woe is me, my back is bent,
Because my burden is too great;
The haunch which you upon me laid
Will surely hasten on my end
Unless you quickly lend me aid.*

“Poor Turtle!” the animals exclaimed. “You will surely break down under your load. We will relieve you of your burden. Come, let us take off the haunch and give you a shoulder instead!” So they took off the haunch from his back, gave him one of the shoulders, and passed on again.

They had not gone very far when the Turtle sang again:

*Meat have I, more than I can eat!
By cunning I have beaten all;
The giant I have caused to fall
And to the monster brought defeat.*

“Listen, the Turtle is singing again!” said the Leopard.

“Say, Turtle, what are you singing this time?” the animals asked.

“What am I singing? I have but one song to sing, as you all know. It is this,” and the Turtle sang:

*Woe is me, my back is bent,
Because my burden is too great;
The shoulder you upon me laid
Will surely hasten on my end
Unless you quickly lend me aid.*

“Let him carry the liver!” one of the animals cried. So they took the shoulder off his back and gave him the liver.

They had hardly started again when, for the third time, they heard the song of the Turtle. This time they understood. “Stop!” they all cried. “This time we have you! You are the culprit, and not the Elephant, whom you have killed by your cunning and deceit. Poor Elephant! What a pity that the good and honest fellow became the victim of the crafty Turtle! But do not deceive yourself, Turtle! Just and well merited punishment will be meted out to you in due time!”

Not long after this had happened, a big feast was proclaimed which was to come off at a certain time and place, and they

started to go there in a body. They had almost reached their destination when they came to a high bridge — a giant cotton tree which lay across the stream. On the other side of the stream was a big hill, on the top of which they were to offer sacrifices and have their feast.

The long and tedious journey through the jungle had wearied them, and so they decided to rest a bit before crossing. When at last they had reached the top of the hill, a fattened bullock was killed and preparations were made for the feast.

A chilly breeze swept over the hill-top. This was very annoying to some of the animals, and so it was decided by a majority vote to have the feast in the valley below. The meat of the bullock they apportioned in loads and carried down on their heads and shoulders. The intestines — which, together with the stomach, were considered as rarebits — they carefully wrapped up by themselves in the hide of the bullock. The Turtle was to remain at the top of the hill where he would be subject to torture by evil spirits and demons. This was to be the punishment for all his wickedness and deceit.

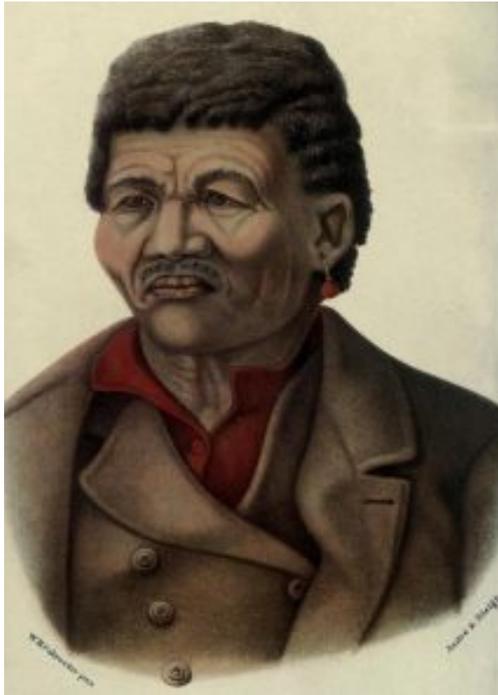
But once more the Turtle outwitted them all! Being fully aware of their designs, he managed, unnoticed by anyone, to crawl into the empty stomach of the bullock before the bundle was tied and carried down the hill.

After the animals had reached the valley below, they laid down their loads and prepared for the feast. A great surprise awaited them — for when they opened the load that contained the stomach of the bullock, the Turtle crawled out.

Thereupon, the animals expelled the Turtle from their society and made him live in a desert place all by himself. Barren rocks and sandy wastes are his abode, and he is in constant danger of being trampled upon or crushed under the hoofs of the Buffaloes.

15. Mantis and Will-o-the-Wisp

[From [The Mantis and His Friends: Bushman Folklore](#) by Wilhelm Bleek, Lucy Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek (1924). See item #35 in the Bibliography. The portrait of the San storyteller ||kabbo is from Bleek and Lloyd's book [Specimens of Bushman Folklore](#). For a version of this story in literary English, see [Chapter 6](#) of Jenny Seed's [The Bushman's Dream](#), #173 in the Bibliography.]



The Mantis caught sight of Will-o-the-Wisp walking about; he asked where Will-o-the-Wisp came from. Will-o-the-Wisp told him that he was hunting about.

While Will-o-the-Wisp was answering him, the Mantis put down his quiver, he took out a knobkerrie, he looked to see where Will-o-the-Wisp's eyes were. He looked him up and down, he walked all round him seeking his eyes.

He asked Will-o-the-Wisp where his eyes might be. Will-o-the-Wisp said that his eyes were not anywhere, and the Mantis asked him how he could walk about like a man who had eyes.

Then the Mantis threatened him, and Will-o-the-Wisp dodged. And the Mantis said, "See now, why did you spring aside when I threatened you? That looks as if you had eyes, you seem to have seen that I meant to beat you."

And the Mantis searched Will-o-the-Wisp again; again he looked him over, seeking his eyes. And the Mantis told him that he was really going to fight him.

And Will-o-the-Wisp told the Mantis that he might fight him if he wanted to do so.

Then the Mantis threatened him and Will-o-the-Wisp dodged him. And the Mantis told Will-o-the-Wisp that he must have hidden his eyes, for how else could he dodge like a man who had eyes?

Then the Mantis struck at him, and he sprang aside stooping, and the Mantis hit the ground while Will-o-the-Wisp stood on one side. Then the Mantis asked him whether he were a sorcerer, for he did not understand why he did not see his eyes, and Will-o-the-Wisp told him that he had no eyes, yet when he struck him Will-o-the-Wisp dodged away from his stick. He acted like a man who had eyes.

Then Will-o-the-Wisp said, "Now I will fight you," and he took up the knobkerrie.

The Mantis said, "That was a lie you told just now when you said your eyes were not anywhere. Where are your eyes with which you mean to fight me?" When Will-o-the-Wisp was

about to hit him, the Mantis struck at Will-o-the-Wisp; then Will-o-the-Wisp struck him. The Mantis said, "How is it that you have hit my head after telling me you had no eyes?"

Then the Mantis struck at Will-o-the-Wisp again, and he dodged away stooping, and the Mantis hit the ground. And Will-o-the-Wisp hit the Mantis's head and broke it, and hit it again. And the Mantis sprang aside and ran away because he felt he could not bear it any longer.

Then he called to the quiver and the shoes so that his things should follow him home.

The things came to him at home, and his son-in-law Kwammanga asked him, "Whom have you been fighting, who has broken your head like this?"

And Mantis answered, "Will-o-the-Wisp was the one whom I saw. It was he who did this to me. I was looking for his eyes, I did not know where they could be. So I tried to strike him and knock him down; it was he who broke my head."

And Kwammanga told him that Will-o-the-Wisp's eyes ought to be on his feet between the great toe and the next. And the Mantis said he wanted to go back and look for Will-o-the-Wisp again. And Kwammanga said, "Why is it that whenever you meet any man, you want to fight him? First sleep a little; afterwards you shall seek Will-o-the-Wisp and fight him if you really want to fight."

Then the Mantis asked, "What am I to do?"

And Kwammanga said, "Do you not know what you should do to Will-o-the-Wisp if you want to fight him?" And Mantis replied that he did not know how to fight Will-o-the-Wisp. Kwammanga then said, "When you see him, you must threaten him and see whether he dodges aside as he did before. Then you must look at his feet and you will see the eyes peeping out between the toes. Then you must kick dust into his eyes, and while he sits rubbing his eyes there, you must keep hitting his head."

And the Mantis went out in the morning and soon saw Will-o-the-Wisp and ran up to him. Then he threw dust into the other's eyes, and while Will-o-the-Wisp rubbed his eyes, the Mantis sprang up and beat his head and broke it.

And Will-o-the-Wisp said, "Did not Kwammanga tell you about me? Is not that why you are breaking my head?"

And the Mantis answered, "You are lying, I always knew about you. I meant to find out if you were really cunning; that is why I allowed you to break my head. This time I get you. Therefore I shall break your head. You seem to have thought you were really strong enough to break my head, but I will conquer you. Then I will take your things to show to Kwammanga, for he would not believe me if I merely told him that I had seen you."

Will-o-the-Wisp replied, "Go back, go and tell him how you have fought me. You know Kwammanga told you about it, for you would not have beaten me like this if you had not known."

And the Mantis answered that he had always known. The other day he had not dreamt well. "That was how you broke my head. For you would not have beaten me thus, if I had not dreamt badly."

Will-o-the-Wisp said, "Why did you not fight me in the same manner then that you are fighting now? It looks as if you really did not know. For if you had known, you would have beaten me last time we saw each other."

The Mantis answered that he had really known last time. It had happened that he had dreamt a bad dream; therefore he had fought badly. That was not his usual way of fighting.

Will-o-the-Wisp said, "Who was the person who told you that I have eyes?"

"Nobody told me, for I always knew that you had eyes."

And Will-o-the-Wisp answered, "Kwammanga told you how to fight me. For I know that you are a stupid thing who would not have known how to fight me."

The Mantis said, "Am I a child that Kwammanga should teach me? I am not a child that he should teach me, as if I were not

clever. I am a grownup person who is also cunning; therefore I am clever.”

Will-o-the-Wisp said, “Somebody told you that my eyes are on my feet between the toes. You acted as if someone had told you. I saw that by your walk when you came out of the house. You did not walk in the same manner as you did the other time when we met. It looked as if you were rejoicing because you thought you were going to beat me. You did not go slowly because you knew what you had to do to beat me.”

16. Mantis and Aardwolf

[From [*The Mantis and His Friends: Bushman Folklore*](#) by Wilhelm Bleek, Lucy Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek, 1924. See item #35 in the Bibliography. The photograph of the aardwolf is by Derek Keats at [Wikimedia Commons](#).]



Kwammanga and his family were going to see other people, to visit Kwammanga's people. He was going to visit the Aardwolf, because she was his aunt. The Mantis said he would go with them. Kwammanga said to his son, the young Ichneumon, "Child, you must tell Grandfather that we are going to see Aunt Aardwolf."

The young Ichneumon said, "O my Grandfather Mantis! Father says we are going to see Aunt Aardwolf, and her home is not near, therefore you should sit still." Then the Mantis said he must be with Kwammanga; he had to accompany Kwammanga wherever he went. And the young Ichneumon said, "You must sit still."

Then Kwammanga said, "You will have to let Grandfather go with us, for he will not listen."

So the Mantis went with Kwammanga. They went along, they reached the home of the Aardwolf. Then Kwammanga begged his Aunt, the Aardwolf, to give him a little Aardwolf. She was inside the hole, as she usually is.

So when the Mantis came up to them and saw the Aardwolf spoor, he called out, "Stop, stop, Grandson! Kwammanga must think that an Aardwolf is here." Then Kwammanga looked at the young Ichneumon, for he wanted him to tell the Mantis to be silent. The young Ichneumon said, "O my Grandfather Mantis! You always go on like this when you come to anyone's home."

Then Kwammanga laid down his things, he sat down.

The Mantis said, "Where are the people whose footmarks are here?"

Kwammanga said, "O my Aunt! Come out and give me one so that I may put it to roast for myself."

Then the Mother Aardwolf came out, she sat in front of the hole, looking at the Mantis, because she did not usually see him. Therefore she stared at him.

Then Kwammanga said, "I have begged you to give me one so that I may rub off the dust, for you see I am white with dust." And the Mother Aardwolf said, "O man, my children are not grown up yet, they are still little." And Kwammanga said, "Do you think I do not feel covered all over with dust, and the dust burns?" Then the Mother Aardwolf went in and did not come out at once, for she was thinking inside the hole that she did not want to give a child. Then she caught hold of a little

Aardwolf and pulled it out, because it was a lean one. She gave it to Kwammanga.

Kwammanga took hold of the little Aardwolf, he cut it open and laid it down. He gathered firewood, and brought it. He dug out a hole for the fire, he put wood into the hole, he put stones to heat on the wood, he lighted the fire with his tinder-box; he let it blaze up and singed the little Aardwolf. Then he took it out and scraped it and skinned it and put it down. He went to the fire, he scratched the coals aside, he put the little Aardwolf down to roast, he covered it up and made a fire above it. Then he arose and sat down, for he sat waiting for the little Aardwolf to roast. Then he got up and went to it, and rolled it out, and shook off the ashes and put it to cool. Then he took it up, and cut it up and gave the heart to the Mantis, and they ate. They put away pieces of meat, for they felt that they must keep some for the women who were hungry. They returned home.

The Mantis was greedy; therefore he turned back to the Aardwolf. He went up to her hole, he laid down his things, he gathered wood, he scratched open the ashes, he put bushes on the fire. He put stones to heat on the bushes, he lighted the fire with his tinderbox, he made it blaze. When the fire had burnt up, he said, "O my Aunt, come out, give me a little thing to cut up."

The Aardwolf was inside and would not come out. The Mantis sat waiting for her; he was alone, for Kwammanga had gone home. He spoke again, "O my Aunt, come out, give me a little thing to cut up so that I may rub off the dust from myself." Then the Aardwolf stuck out her head while her body was inside; she sat looking at the Mantis. Then the Mantis sat looking, sat and sat and said, "Why are you staring at me because I wanted you to give me a little thing with which to wipe off the dust?"

The Aardwolf did not speak to him; she went in and took a little girl Aardwolf and pulled her out. And the Aardwolf held her fast while she gave her to the Mantis. For she thought that when the Mantis seized the little Aardwolf, she would try to

catch the Mantis while she kept hold of the little Aardwolf's other arm. Then the Aardwolf caught hold of the Mantis with one arm, she pulled the Mantis onto the fire while she kept fast hold of the little Aardwolf. She knocked the Mantis down on the fire which he had shown her.

Then the Mantis said, "Oh blisters!" for he wished to fly out of the fire. Then he flew away, flew to water. He descended when he saw the water was near. He alighted, he popped into the water, he said, "Oh blisters! Oh dear! That fire into which the Aardwolf mother put me was hot."

And he came out of the water, he picked up the cloak, he threw it over his shoulders, he picked up the quiver, he slung it on. He went homewards, he came along moaning, he said, "Hng, hng, hng, hng," because of the burns. Moaning, he found the hut.

Then Kwammanga spoke, "Child, tell Grandfather that I wanted him to come quietly. For he seems to think we are used to go back again to the Aardwolf, but when the Aardwolf has already given us a little one, we do not turn back. For the Aardwolf generally acts like this." Then the young Ichneumon said, "O my Grandfather Mantis! Father wants me to say that he told you to come quietly, for the Aardwolf generally acts like this to us."

17. The Rooster's Kraal: A Swazi Tale

[From [*Fairy Tales from South Africa*](#) by Mrs. E. J. Bourhill and Mrs. J. B. Drake, 1908. See item #36 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by W. Herbert Holloway.]

Once upon a time there lived a great King who ruled over many thousands of men. The city in which he dwelt was so large that it would have taken you many hours to walk round it, and no one had yet counted the multitude of his cattle. But in spite of his great wealth, he was of so grasping a disposition that he never seemed to have enough, nor did he care whether he gained his ends justly. You shall hear the story of the misfortunes he incurred through this same passion of greed.

One day he sent out a party of men headed by his bravest commander to hunt for otter-skins for the royal body-guard. This regiment was the finest of his army, and he prided himself on its perfect equipment. To show how highly he esteemed the men belonging to it, he allowed them to wear otter-skins, the royal fur, and long, waving head-dresses of ostrich feathers; no soldiers equaled them in all the land.

The hunting-party had good sport, traveling for many miles down the river and attacking the otters by night when they assemble under the great rocks. The nights were warm and pleasant, and day after day they followed their quarry till they were far from home and found themselves in a new country. Then in a few hours, the weather changed. Clouds came up and covered the hills, and then followed a cold misty rain. It grew colder and colder, and they had no shelter and were drenched to the bone. They tried to light a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together, but the wood was damp and

no spark came. They tried flintstones, but the rain had spoiled their tinder. They then thought of going to a neighbouring kraal and there obtaining fire, but the country round was bare and empty; not a soul was to be seen. And the rain continued to fall heavily.

At last they decided to mount a hill and see if any habitation could be found. They ascended the highest point within reach, and far away, in the middle of a great plain on the other side, they saw a single column of smoke. They all set out at once in the new direction, and at the end of some hours they arrived at the gate of a big kraal. Many hundreds of huts stood round the cattle-pen, and there were oxen in plenty and large herds of goats and sheep, but not a single human being could they see. The men walked round the whole city, but the only occupants of the huts were fowls of every size and colour who walked in and out of the doors, and seemed busy and occupied on important affairs. The commander grew more and more puzzled.

At last they reached the great entrance of the cattle-kraal, and there a magnificent golden Rooster stood on the fence, whence he could survey the whole city. He did not move at their approach, but surveyed them boldly with his bright yellow eyes.

“What do you want?” the Rooster asked in the tones of a man.

The commander and his warriors were so surprised that they could not answer for a moment.

“Do you seek shelter?” repeated the Rooster. “If so, my people will help you.”

“We thank you,” said the commander. “We only want fire. We are far from home and have no means of warming ourselves or cooking food.”

“You shall have all you want,” said the Rooster. “I am a man like yourselves, but a wicked King who was stronger than I has bewitched me and all my people. He was a cannibal, and he

actually asked for the hand of my daughters in marriage for his sons. I refused to allow them to have anything to do with such a wicked race, whereupon his magicians changed me and all my subjects into roosters and hens.”

“Can you not win back your old form?” asked the commander.

“Only if I overcome a more powerful King than myself, and that I shall find difficult in my present shape,” said the Rooster sadly.

Then he took the commander and his men to two beautiful huts, gave them food and drink of the best and, when they departed, provided them with a thin stick lighted in the fire which would smoulder for many hours. The hunting-party went back to their otter-skins, lighted a fire, and presently returned home with their booty.

They related all their adventures to the King and gave him a full account of the enchanted Rooster, his beautiful kraal, and his great flocks and herds. The King’s greed awoke at once, and he cried, “What fools serve me! Why did not you take the cattle and come back with them at once? Could you not overcome a few roosters and hens?”

“Great King,” said the commander, “there was no order to conquer. Why should we steal from the Rooster, who gave us all we wanted freely?”

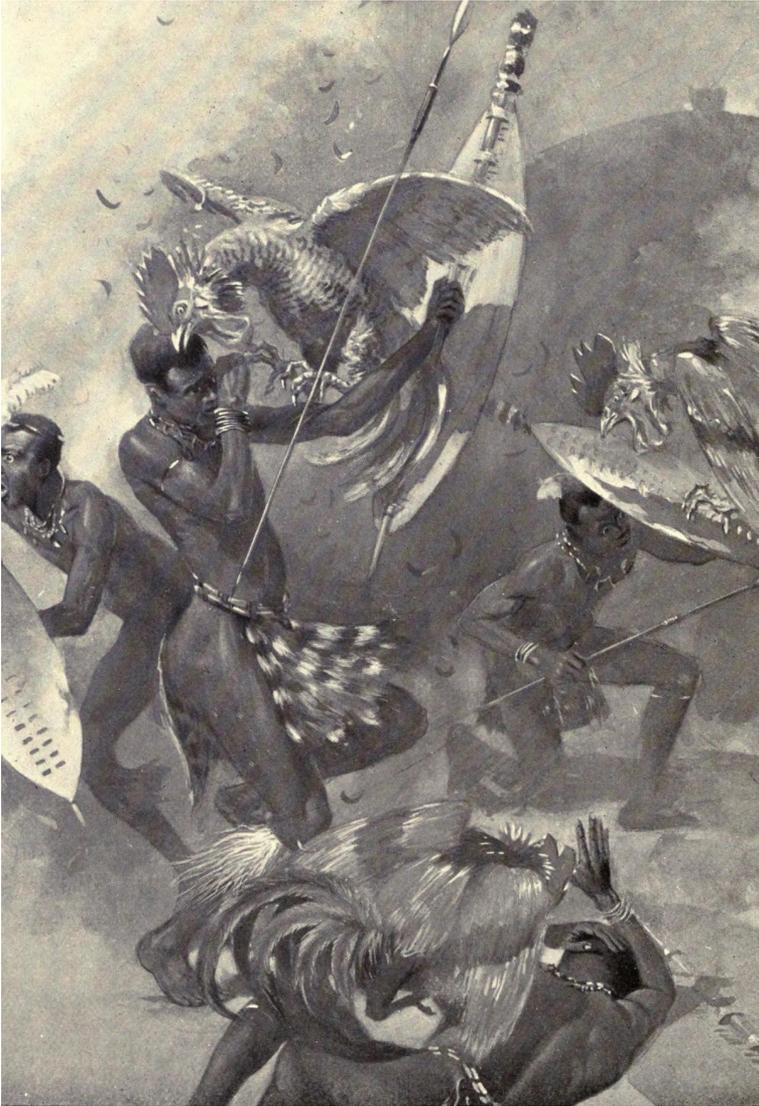
“How could you possibly miss such a chance?” said the King. “I will see to the matter myself at once.”

Then he ordered one of his regiments to start for the Rooster’s kraal forthwith, and he waited at home for the expected spoil.

His men soon found the path and, after a few days’ traveling, arrived within sight of the enchanted city.

The golden Rooster was at his usual post at the gate of the cattle-kraal. As he saw the regiment approach in battle array, he called all his sheep and cattle and sent them into the kraal. Then he flew to the main hut and called to all the fowls who

lived in the city, “Come out, come out! Here are warriors who have come to take your cattle. Come out, come out, and defend your homes.”



The fowls flew in from their lands in hundreds and thousands and stood each at the door of his hut. Directly the regiment set foot in the city, each picked out his man and flew towards him, flapping his wings around his enemy's head. In a few minutes, each bird had pecked out the eyes of his opponent, and such was their strength and ferocity that but two or three men escaped alive out of the whole regiment.

The King was greatly incensed when he heard the news. His blood was up, and he instantly sent forth his royal bodyguard, the flower of his army, under the command of his favourite son. They set out, clad in rich otter-skins and crowned with long black feathers, each man a perfect warrior.

Many long days passed. Every evening at sundown the King looked for the victorious army driving before them great herds of lowing cattle, themselves scarcely visible in the clouds of golden dust. But no one came, and the days grew into weeks. At length one night at dusk, a wretched fugitive arrived, footsore and scarcely able to drag himself along. His plumes were gone; a fragment of otter-skin was still about his loins.

"Great King," said he with many groans, "I am all that remains of the royal bodyguard."

"Is my son also dead?" cried the King in horror.

"Great King, the Prince is dead and all our men; no one can stand against the assault of the enchanted fowls. The golden Rooster spared me alone so that the fate of our warriors might be known. He bade me say he is still ready for you."

But the King owned himself beaten. "How can I fight anymore?" he said. "My bodyguard is destroyed and my bravest son killed. Let the Rooster keep his city and his cattle."

As the words fell from his lips, the golden Rooster and all his men regained once more their rightful shape. They had conquered in fair fight and now ruled over a great land in happiness and peace.

18. The Three Little Eggs: A Swazi Tale

[From [*Fairy Tales from South Africa*](#) by Mrs. E. J. Bourhill and Mrs. J. B. Drake, 1908. See item #36 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by W. Herbert Holloway.]

It was very early morning in mid-winter. The sun was just rising over the great plains in a silver haze which melted into pale gold as the wide stretches of veld came into view, burnt dry with the summer heat. The rains had long ago been over. The sun shone every day and all day, with a pleasant temperate heat in a clear heaven. The whole country appeared golden, save where the watercourses ran, and a few great evergreen trees stood up in vivid contrast to the bleached summer grasses.

By the side of a great fig-tree there was one poor little hut surrounded by a plaited fence. Close to it was a little patch of cultivated ground where a few dried mealie-stalks were still standing. The air was very cold and raw so that it chilled you through and through, but the sun had barely touched the top of the great tree when a woman came out hurriedly from the hut and passed through the kraal gate. You could see she was a married woman by her full kilt of black ox-skins and her peaked headdress. Besides, she carried on her back the dearest little baby girl, wrapped in a goat-skin and half asleep, and by her side ran a merry little boy. The mother herself was still young and pretty, but her face was worn and thin, and if you had looked close, you would have seen that her arms were covered with scars and burns, as if she had been badly used.

She stood for a few minutes and looked first towards the wide plains. Then she turned to the other side where great

hills rose up, ruddy and golden in the early sun. She seemed to hesitate; then she turned to the mountains and was soon on a tiny pathway which led by many windings to a wooded gorge hundreds of feet above the plains. She did not sing as she went, and often cast frightened looks behind her. But no one followed and, after a time, as the hut disappeared from view and the sun made all things warm and pleasant, she grew less anxious and went on her way more quietly.

For she was running away from her husband. She had been married now four years, and every year he had been more unkind. He not only worked her very hard and gave her scarcely anything to eat, but he also often beat her and had even branded her with hot irons till she screamed with pain. She was good and obedient and tried hard to please him, but he only became more and more cruel to her and her children. Two days before he had gone off to a big dance in a far-away kraal. The poor woman so dreaded his return that she decided to run away and beg her living as best she could. She knew there were great chiefs on the other side of the mountains, and big cities; she was a good worker, and doubtless they would give her food.

She walked on and on, and the baby girl woke up and began to laugh and play. They were now following the course of a stream, but only a tiny trickle of water remained, and the ferns were withered, and the thick bushes dry and leafless. All at once the mother saw a fluffy white nest hanging on a long bough.

"How pretty!" said she. "That will be the very thing to amuse my baby."

She went to the bough and detached the soft white nest while her little son looked on with much interest. To her great surprise, for it was yet many months to spring-time, she found it contained three little eggs.

“Hold it fast,” said she to her little baby, “and do not smash the little eggs on any account.”



Then she journeyed on once more. The sun was sinking fast, and the air grew colder and colder, for on the hill-tops there is sharp frost every night. No hut was in sight, though they were now on more level ground, and the poor mother had no covering but her one goat-skin, and no food. "Where shall I rest tonight?" said she to herself. "There is nothing to be seen but the open country."

Then she heard a tiny voice at her ear, "Take the road to the right; it will lead you to a safe place."

She turned and looked, and found it was one of the little eggs in the fluffy white nest! In very truth she saw there was a tiny pathway to the right which she had not noticed before. She took it at once, and just as the sun disappeared and the white frost began to show, she found a beautiful hut under the side of a great rock. No one seemed to live there, but it was warm and cosy, and all ready for her use. Beautiful karosses of ox-skin and goat-skin hung on the walls; food was already prepared in little red pots — crushed mealies and peanuts, and in the calabashes was an abundance of delicious thick amasi. The little boy and baby girl cried with delight, and you can imagine how pleased the poor mother was. The little nest was first carefully laid aside. Then both mother and children ate a good meal, for they were very hungry.

The little boy fell asleep at once, covered with the warm skins, but his sister cried and would not lie down quietly. So her mother tied her on her back once more and sang a cradle-song, which is as pretty a thing as you will hear. She swung gently to and fro, moving her arms as well in time to the low chant:

Tula, mtwana;
Binda, mtwana;
U nina u fulela;
U nina u fulela;
Tula, mtwana.

*Be quiet, my baby;
Be still, my child.
Your mother has gone to get green mealies;
Your sisters are all gone gathering wood;
So be quiet, baby, be still.
Your father has gone a-walking;
He has gone to drink good beer.
Your mother is working with a will;
So be quiet, baby, be still.*

Soon the tiny head leaned forward, the little round arms relaxed, and the baby girl was fast asleep. The tired mother laid her down, and in a few moments was dreaming by her children's side.

The next morning they set forth again, much refreshed; they continued on the same path, and the baby girl carried the little eggs as before. Towards mid-day they came to a place where two ways met. The mother stood looking at the two paths for a long while, uncertain which to take. Then a tiny voice spoke in her ear. It was the second little egg this time. "Take the road to the left," said he.

So she turned and followed the left-hand path till she came in sight of an enormous hut, three times as big as any she had ever seen before. She went straight up to it and looked in at the door, full of curiosity. It was like no hut she had ever seen. The calabashes and pots were all blood-red in colour, and very thin; as the breeze came in at the door, they swayed like bubbles and nearly fell for they were as light as air. One big pot was blown right across the room, and as the poor mother's eyes followed it, she all but screamed aloud for, on the other side, lay a huge monster, fast asleep. He was immensely tall and very stout, his body was covered with tufts of brick-red hair, on his head were two horns, and his long tail lay curled across his knees. He was an Inzimu, without any doubt, and if he awoke he would kill the mother and both her babies and eat them up.

“Whatever shall I do?” cried the mother as she ran from the door. “My little ones will both be killed.”

Then the third little egg spoke up. “Do you see that big stone? Carry it with you and climb on top of the hut.”

The mother looked around, for many rocks were near. She soon saw a round white stone, just of a size to drop through the thatched roof of the hut and kill anyone it fell on. But it was far beyond her power to lift it.

“However can I pick it up?” said the poor woman. “It is so heavy.”

“Do as I bid you,” said the egg.

So she stooped down and tried to lift the stone. To her great surprise, she found it quite light, and she took it to the back of the hut. Then she lifted her babies onto the roof and climbed up herself afterwards with the stone in her hand.

“Now let the stone drop on top of the monster,” said the egg.

The mother was just peering through the thatch to find the exact spot under which the monster lay when the door opened and in came a second ogre, dragging after him several dead bodies.

“Now we shall certainly be seen,” said the mother. “All is over.” But she kept quiet and did not move. The second Inzimu began to chop up one of his victims for the evening meal. Once he stopped, sniffed the air, and said, “There is something good hidden in this hut, but I can’t make out where it is.”

He looked all round carefully but never thought of the roof, and presently he put his supper on to boil and sat down to watch it. Soon both Inzimus were fast asleep. The mother then looked at her stone and said, “Here are two Inzimus; I cannot kill both. What am I to do next?”

“Come down as quietly as you can,” said all the little eggs at once, “and run with the babies as fast as possible.”

She slipped quietly down, and the little boy helped her with the baby. In a few minutes they were away, trembling in every

limb, but the Inzimus did not wake up, and soon the big hut was out of sight.

The poor mother breathed again and hoped that now at last she would find a kraal and human beings to talk to. The path wound in and out among bushes. They grew ever thicker and more thorny, great trees began to appear, and it was soon impossible to walk save in the one direction. The path gave a sudden turn, and there, under a huge evergreen tree, was a horrible ogress. She lay right across the path, fast asleep, for the afternoon sun was warm. No doubt she was on her way home to the big hut. She was even uglier than the Inzimus, for she had a hideous snout like a wolf's and one little horn just between her eyes. She snored most terribly, so that the branches of the tree shook.

Then the mother thought her last hour had really come, for she could not return and the bush was too thick on either side for her to escape.

But the little eggs did not desert her; two little voices sounded together. "Look on your right: there lies a big axe."

She looked and, sure enough, a great axe lay winking in the sun. It was so large that it must have belonged to the ogress, but the mother seized it quickly.

"Now," said the little eggs again, "take that in your hand, go softly to the tree, and lift your babies into the low branches. When they are safe, climb up yourself and creep along the great arm which is over the monster's head."

The mother crept softly to the tree and lifted her little son up into the branches. The trunk was smooth and round, and the branches were many and not far from the ground, so the little boy was able to hold his baby sister when they were safe among the leaves; the mother mounted herself and crept forward right over the monster's head, the axe in her hand. She nearly fell off with fright, but the little eggs spoke again.

"Aim the axe at the monster's head."

She threw it with all her force and hit the ogress just above her horn, but the ogress was only stunned, not killed.

“Slip down from the tree,” said the third little egg, “and chop off the monster’s head quickly before she revives.”

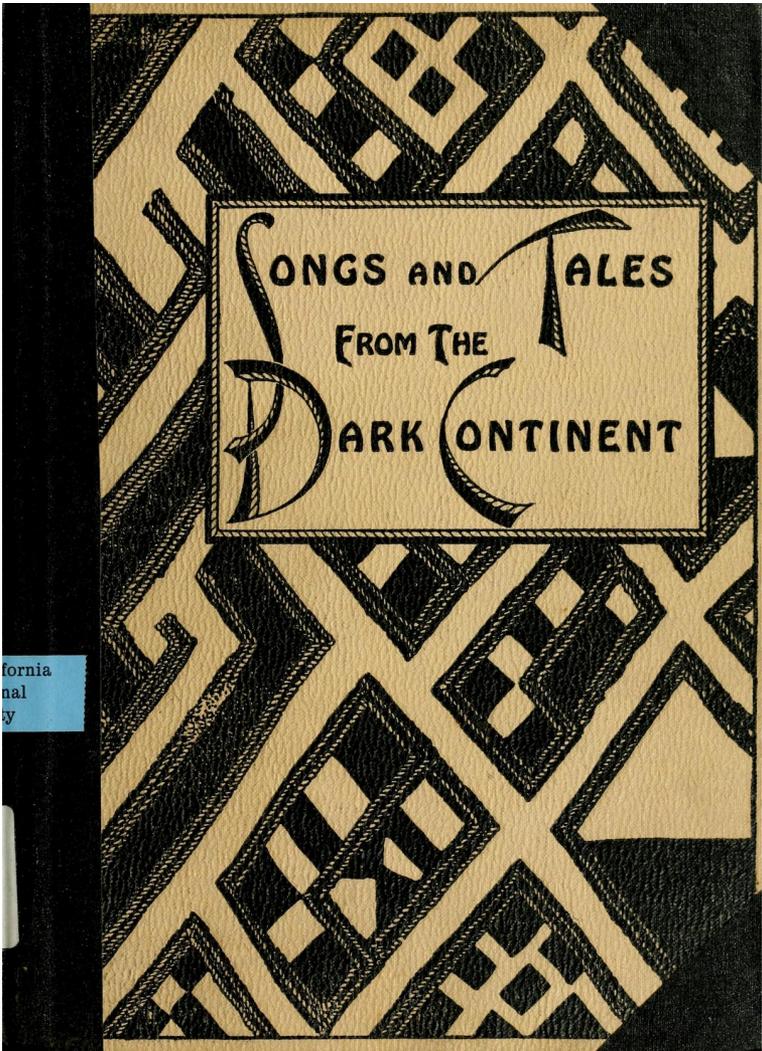
The mother was down in a moment, ran forward with desperate courage, and in a few minutes she had severed the monster’s head from its body.

When it was done, she stood back to recover herself, but could scarcely believe her eyes as she looked. For out of the monster came men, women, and children, cattle and goats, one after another, till they filled the path and had to pass along to open ground. Many hundreds appeared, for the ogress had eaten every kind of animal and whole families of men in her wicked life. When all had come, there were enough to people a great kraal. Each one on his arrival turned to thank the poor mother and her children, and, when all were there, the leaders came forward to ask her to be their Queen.

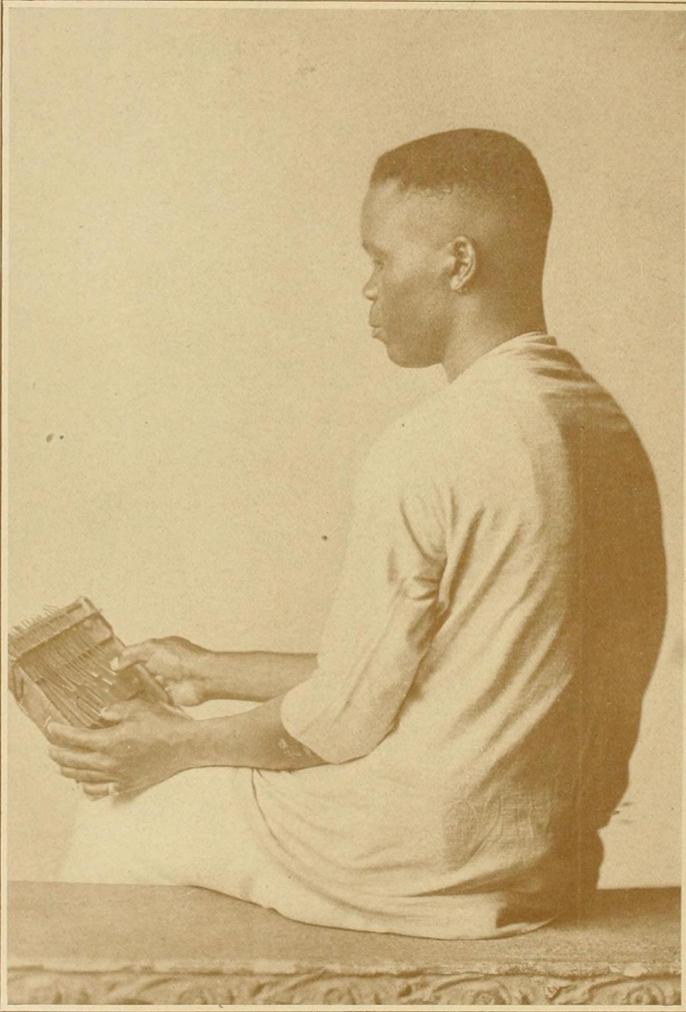
“But I should never have done it without the three little eggs,” said she, and turned to show them the little white nest. She barely touched it with her hands when it vanished away, and instead appeared three handsome Princes. The eldest took her hand and said, “You have freed us from a wicked enchantress by your courage. Your cruel husband is dead; he was killed in a quarrel the day you fled from home. Be my wife, and we will rule over these people forever.”

So the poor mother and her children found a happy home and much honour. And all the people shouted for joy because they had now both a King and a Queen.

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SONGS AND TALES
FROM THE
DARK CONTINENT



C. KAMBA SIMANGO

19. How the Animals Dug Their Well

[From [*Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*](#) by Natalie Curtis Burlin, C. Kamba Simango (who is shown in the photograph playing a kalimba), and Madikane Ćele, 1920. See item #41 in the Bibliography.]

Once there was a terrible drought. No rain fell, the lakes dried up, and the animals had no water. So Mphonholo the Lion, who was King, called all the animals together and said, "You must dig a well. Each of you must do his share and take his turn."

But Shulo the Hare, said, "I shall not waste my time nor trouble myself with any digging. Let the others do that." So he ran off by himself.

But the other animals all gathered to do their share; they came from many different parts of the country and each one, as he trotted in to the place chosen for the well, sang as he ran:

*Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje.
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot.*

Then the animal began to dance, for he thought that by dancing he would kick up the ground. That was his way of digging. And as he danced he sang:

*Kuputu, kuputu, bukuta mphuli!
Kuputu, kuputu, the dirt is flying!*

Then he made way for the next animal, saying:

Ti no lu kanda kuna, Va Njou!
I give my place to you, Sir Elephant!

Then Njou the Elephant would dance and sing:

Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje.
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot.

Kuputu, kuputu, bukuta mphuli!
Kuputu, kuputu, the dirt is flying!

At the end of his dance Njou would say:

Ti no lu kanda kuna, Va Nyati!
I give my place to you, Sir Buffalo!

Then Nyati the Buffalo would dance and sing:

Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje,
Chinya'nje-nje'leka nje.
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot,
I'm coming joggy-jog trot.

Kuputu, kuputu, bukuta mphuli!
Kuputu, kuputu, the dirt is flying!

At the end of his dance Nyati would say:

Ti no lu kanda kuna, Va Shelen!
I give my place to you, Sir Bushbuck!

So it went on until all had sung and danced and dug, yet no water was in sight. Now, of course, though the animals thought they were digging, they were really only packing the earth down harder and harder by dancing in the same place.

So they all took counsel together and the King called Hamba the Tortoise, and Hamba said, "The water is under the earth." And so instead of dancing on top of the earth, he dug down, way underneath, far into the ground, and there he found the water!

When the well was finished, the animals were very happy for they knew that they would have plenty to drink. But they also knew that they could not trust Shulo the Hare. They said, "Though Shulo would not help and has done none of the digging, we know that he will come at night and try to steal our water." And they said, "Each night one of us must watch the well." And Bongo the Hyena said, "I will watch the first night."

Shulo, meanwhile, was planning how he could get the water, and he filled his calabash with honey and went to the well. There was Bongo just as he expected. Shulo said, as though talking to himself, "I've got something here so sweet that anybody who tastes it would have to be tied up before I'd give him a second taste."

Bongo said, "Ho, Shulo! Give me some of that sweet stuff." And Shulo dipped a stick in the calabash and smeared a little of the honey across Bongo's mouth. Bongo licked his lips. "More!" he cried. Shulo said, "Anybody who tastes this would have to be tied up before I'd give him a second taste." Bongo answered, "Tie me up, Shulo, but give me some more." So the Hare tied the Hyena hand and foot, but instead of giving him any honey, he went to the well and drank all he wanted and filled his water gourds. Then he jumped into the water and splashed around; then he ran away, leaving the well all muddy and dirty.

The next night the animals set Kamba the Leopard to watch. And along came Shulo again, talking to himself and saying, "I've got something so sweet that anybody who tastes it would

have to be tied up before I'd give him a second taste." Kamba said, "Let me taste it, Shulo!" So Shulo smeared the Leopard's mouth with honey and Kamba licked his whiskers and said, "More!" But Shulo answered, "Anybody who tastes this would have to be tied up before I'd give him a second taste." Kamba said, "Tie me up as tight as you like, Shulo, but give me another taste." So the Hare tied the Leopard, all four paws, but he never gave him any honey at all. He filled his gourds and then drank at the well; then he jumped into the water and splashed and muddied it. Then he ran away, leaving it all dirty.

The next night they set Mphofu the Antelope to watch, and when the moon was rising, along came Shulo saying, "I've got something so sweet that anybody who tastes it would have to be tied up before I'd give him another taste." And Mphofu said, "Let me taste it, Shulo!" Then Shulo smeared the Antelope's mouth with honey. Mphofu had never tasted anything like that before, and he licked his nose and said, "Give me some more!" But Shulo answered, "Anybody who tastes this would have to be tied up before I'd give him a second taste." Mphofu too was willing to be tied up for another taste of the honey, so Shulo bound him, all four hoofs, and then he not only drank his fill at the well but bathed in the water and muddied it and ran away home.

So it happened every night, and always Shulo carried full calabashes home to his kraal and all through the drought his family had plenty to drink.

At last it came the Tortoise's turn to watch by the well, but instead of waiting on the bank, wise Hamba the Tortoise went down into the water and lay quietly at the bottom. When Shulo saw that there was no one at the well, he laughed to himself and said, "So they have given it up! And the well is mine without any work and without any digging." So he set his calabashes out on the rim of the well and he jumped into the water. But no sooner was he in than Hamba, who was lying quietly on the bottom, opened his mouth and snapped at Shulo's foot. He

caught Shulo and held him tight so that he could not move. When Shulo saw the fix that he was in, he said, "Is that you, Hamba? I've got something so sweet that I'll let you have a taste if you want some." He hoped that Hamba would open his mouth and let go of the Hare's foot. But Hamba never said a word. He held Shulo tight and fast till the daylight came, and when the other animals came to the well for their morning drink, there was Shulo caught at last.

They bound him and they took him before Mphontholo the Lion to be judged. Mphontholo said, "You would not help to dig the well, but night after night you have stolen the water and made the well all muddy for the other animals. You must die." And the Hare said, "Oh Mphontholo, oh King! If I must die, grant me first one little request. Let me sing just one little song, let me dance just one little dance before my death." The King thought, "There can be no harm in that, for all the animals will sit around in a circle and watch Shulo so that he cannot escape." So the Lion was merciful and granted Shulo his wish.

Then the Hare began to sing and clap his hands and he danced and sang:

Nandi Shulo kupembela-u

Novi yalin?

Mangwan!

Hi, oh Hare, going away,

Returning when?

Tomorrow!

Iwe Shulo kupembela-u

Novi yalin?

Mangwan!

You, O Hare, going away,

Returning when?

Tomorrow!

Kuti Shulo wapembela-u

Wozvi yalin?

Mangwan!

If, O Hare, going away,

Returning when?

Tomorrow!

Now the other animals, seeing Shulo dance, began to beat time to the music and to clap too, and soon they began to sing with Shulo, for it was a most irresistible song! And soon their feet began to move because they could not keep still with all the singing and clapping, and in a little while all the animals were dancing. Because of the drought, the earth was so dry that a thick cloud of dust arose from all those dancing feet, and when the animals stopped dancing, tired out — for it was a fine dance! — they could not see one another for the dust.

And when the dust cleared, where was Shulo? He had run away!

From the Folk-Tale
"How the Animals Dug Their Well"

Song I
The Animals' Dance-Song

Not fast ($\text{♩} = 72$)



Faster ($\text{♩} = 96$)



Spoken: Ti no lu ka'nda ku'na, Va Njou!
I give my place to you, Sir Elephant! etc.

* The h is an aspirate; "ph" in the African dialect is *not* pronounced "f"; as in English, but like p followed by an aspirate h.

Song II
The Hare's Dance-Song

Very light and quick ($\text{♩} = 168$)



* The hand-clapping is only used for dancing, never when the song is sung by a story-teller as part of the narrated tale.

** When sung a second time, substitute for the word "na'ndi" the word "i'we". When sung a third time, substitute the word "ku'ti" and for "no v'ya", substitute "wozo'ya".

The Hare's Dance-Song

(English Paraphrase.)

Very light and quick ($\text{♩} = 168$)

Hand-claps
(used only for
dancing.)

Hi, O Hare, go-ing a-way, re - turn - ing when? —

T^l-mor - row! You, O Hare, go - ing a - way, re -

turn - ing when? — T^l-mor - row! If, O

Hare, go-ing a - way, re - turn - ing when? — T^l-mor-row!

20. Death of the Hare

[From [*Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*](#) by Natalie Curtis Burlin, C. Kamba Simango, and Madikane Čele, 1920. See item #41 in the Bibliography.]

One day Shulo the Hare was visiting Jongwe the Rooster's home and he saw the Rooster standing on one leg. His other leg was gone, and his head was gone, too! The Hare was so astonished that he stood stock-still, and then ran home and told his wife.

Next day he went to see the Rooster again. But the Rooster was up in a tree, and his head was there again and so were both his legs.

The Hare was still more astonished, and he said, "When I saw you yesterday, your head was gone and you had only one leg."

"Oh," said the Rooster, "that's nothing! My head and my leg went visiting. They went off to another kraal, and we had singing and beer-drinking. I often enjoy myself that way without trouble. I tell my wife to cut off my head and my leg, and then my head and leg go visiting and have a good time. It is very easy."

So the Hare thought, "I'm going to try that, too! If Jongwe can do that, why can't I?"

So he ran home and told his wife. "Wife, take a sharp knife and cut off my head and my leg so that they can go visiting like the Rooster's. I saw Jongwe again today, and his head and leg were on again, and he told me that they had been away to another kraal, dancing and singing and drinking beer. Now I want my head and leg to do the same, so cut them off!"

"But if I cut off your head," said the wife, "you will die!"

"No, I won't," said Shulo, the Hare. "Jongwe is not dead. I saw him one day with his head and leg gone, and I saw him the next day with his head and leg on again. You do what I say."

So the wife took a sharp knife and cut off the Hare's leg and then his head. She waited for the head and leg to fly off visiting, but they never moved. And there lay Shulo the Hare, dead.

So she ran to the Rooster's kraal.

"My husband is dead!" she cried. "What shall I do? His leg and his head have never gone visiting at all! How shall I put them on again and bring him to life?"

Then Jongwe the Rooster laughed to himself, for he knew that his own head and leg had never been cut off. He had only drawn his leg up under him to rest it while he went to sleep, and as for his head, he had simply tucked it under his wing. The visits he had had were pleasant dreams of singing and beer drinking in other kraals.

21. Cunning Rabbit and His Well

[From [*Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk Tales*](#) by Florence Cronise and Henry W. Ward, 1903. See item #63 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Gerald Sichel, correctly showing “cunnie rabbit” as a tiny antelope. You might prepare for this story by reading a version in literary English by Virginia Hamilton: “[Cunnie Rabbit and Spider Make a Match](#)” (see #100 in the Bibliography). After reading the story in literary English, it will be easier to read the pidgin version here.]



Long tem, Cunnie Rabbit en all dem beef bin gadder. Den meet up to one place fo' talk palaver, because de country dry too much. Dey no get one grain wattah sotay all man wan' fo' die. Dey all get word fo' talk, f'om de big beef to de small, but nobody no able fo' fine sense fo' pull dem f'om dis yeah big trouble.

Cunnie Rabbit he no bin say notting, he jus' listen wey dem beef talk; he t'ink say, "Wey ting I go do fo' get wattah?"

Bimeby he grap, he go home, he begin fo' dig well. He dig, he dig, he dig. De wattah come plenty. He drink sotay he done satisfy.

Now dem beef heeree dat Cunnie Rabbit get well. Spider he grap fo' go walker to Cunnie Rabbit. He say, "Fren', we no get one grain wattah fo' drink, we go die. Make yo' gie we."

Cunnie Rabbit tell um, he say, "De pusson wey wan' make me gie um wattah, make he come fet me."

Spider say, "All ret."

Now Spider en Cunnie Rabbit dey fet. Cunnie Rabbit hase Spider up to dah sky. He come down, he lay down flat. He grap, he hase Cunnie Rabbit up. Cunnie Rabbit go to de sky; he blow one horn wey he hole nah he han'. W'en he blow um, dark come, w'en he blow um agin, do' clean. He fa' down, he grip de wuld, VIP! He han' long, dey go inside de groun'. Cunnie Rabbit get up back, he hase Spider up. One rainy season, one dry season he stay 'pon top de sky. W'en he come down, w'en he too fa' down 'pon de groun', he say, "Ee! Ee! Ee! Fren', I no able agin." Den he shake Cunnie Rabbit he han'; he say, "Oonah 'trong man."

Dem beef all come, dey try, dey no able. Elephan' come, he say, "Wey de man wey say he de mos' 'trong? Make he come one tem, make we fet, so I go take wattah. I too t'irst."

Cunnie Rabbit come, he boas', he say, "Nar me dis."

Elephan' take he long mout', he wrap Cunnie Rabbit, he wrap um 'trong. He fling um, turn, turn um, he hebe um up, so he jam to de sky. De sweat wey he bin sweat, dat nar de hair

'pon heen skin. Cunnie Rabbit come, he 'tan' up, he hase de Elephan' up.

Elephan' heen long mout' come nah groun', he wrap den 'tick fo' hole hese'f, he broke um w'en he go up. He say, "Cunnie Rabbit wey leelee so, nar he do me so?"

He hole Cunnie Rabbit wid heen long mout' agin, he drag um, he make big noise 'pon de groun' w'en he drag um. He pin Cunnie Rabbit down; den fet, den fet, den fet. De place wey den fet he big pass dis town, he double um four tem fo' big. Dey fet tay fiah ketch dah place. Dah one wey box he cumpin, fiah ketch; dah odder one wey box he cumpin, fiah ketch. De place he bu'n clean, so-so san'-san' lef' no mo'.

Well, dem beef dey all duh try, dey no know how fo' do. Dey all go make bargain. All dem beef dey pull plenty clo'es, so plenty dey done full dis town heah, dey full Freetown. En dis yeah clo'es dey gie um all to Cunnie Rabbit. Dey say, "Do; ef yo' no gie we wattah we go die."

Cunnie Rabbit say, "All ret. Make all man take one one cup wattah drink.'

But de bargain dis. Ef de pusson no done all, he fo' take one piece clot' en gie um to Cunnie Rabbit, en say, "Dis nar fo' de wattah weh I wais." De cup he cover dis whole town, he cover 'Merica, he cover Englan', he cover Freetown fo' big oh!"

Now Elephan' say, "Make me fus' drink."

He take de cup, he full um nah well. He put heen long mout inside so, he draw de wattah; he draw um, he draw um, he draw um sotay he done um. Lepped say, "Make me come try." Dey full de cup, Lepped he drink, he drink, he drink sotay he done de wattah. De beef all drink, dey all done um. Den leelee beef dey done de wattah inside de big cup. Dey all no able fo' go agin. Fo' walker go home dem no able, but den able fo' grap cook. Dey cook big, big, big ress. De pot fo' cook de ress — Lie man say de pot big lek dis whole town heah, Grimah all, Moshengo all. Well, me wey no duh lie, I no lie anyt'ing, I jus' put leelee salt fo' make he sweet, I say he big lek all Temne country,

all white man country, double all two, I put half 'pon um agin en mo' town, so de pot big.

Dey yeat dah ress, goat all, cow all, fowl, sheep, all dem elephan', dey yeat dah ress.

One big, big wattah spread 'pon dem all, dey all no know which side he come out. De ashes f'om de fiah he spread 'pon dem beef all. Well, dey all swim, dey all go to dem yown home. One tem beef all bin white, but since w'en de ashes bin deh 'pon dem long tem, some kin red, some kin brown, some black, some spot-spot.

22. A Ghost Story

[From [*Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk Tales*](#) by Florence Cronise and Henry W. Ward, 1903. See item #63 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Gerald Sichel. For help with the English used here, see the [vocabulary listing](#) in the book. Something important to know: a “die pusson” is a “dead person,” i.e. a ghost.]

One tem one country bin deh. Dem people wey get dis country, dey lek fo' dance Wongko. Well, odder people f'om odder country kin come dance wid um. Well, dem people wey come out f'om de odder country fo' dance, dey all get fren', so w'en dey wan' fo' go back to den place, den fren' kin follow um leelee way, go lef den nah road. So dey bin do all de tem.

But one ooman bin deh, he lek he fren' too much. One day w'en den 'tranger come dance nah de town, w'en dey go back, all man go lef he fren' nah road. W'en dey duh go, one dog go wid dem nah road. Dey done go leelee far, den some of dem young man, dem tell den fren' “Goodbye,” dem say, “we go meet nex' moon.”

Some of dem ooman go back, but some tell den fren', say, “Anyway wey yo' go nah wuld, we all go go; ef now yo' die, we all go die.”

Well, w'en dey go far agin, dey reach to one big, big valley. Now all den man dey tell den fren' wey bin say dey go die wid um, dey say, “Oonah go back. W'en de nex' moon kin white, we go come agin.”

So dey all go back. But one no go, he say he mus' follow sotay he reach dah place wey he fren' bin lib. De dog deh wid de ooman.

Dah man tell de ooman, he say, “Go back!” De ooman say, “No!”

De man say, "I lek yo' too much, lef nah town. W'en I come back I go come to yo', but no follow me to dah place wey we duh go."

Dah ooman say, "I go go!"

Well, dis ooman no know say dis man nar die pusson, oh! W'en dey kin get dance nah town, den die pusson all, dey kin come out den grabe, dey come dance wid dem people, but dem people nebber know quick fo' say dey bin die pusson. But w'en dey know, dey tell all de ooman, dey say, "W'en pusson come out far country, come dance, oonah no mus' go wid um; sometem bimeby dey die pusson, yo' no know."

Dis girl too, dey bin tell um, say, "Die pusson kin come out de grabe fo' dance, so no get fren' wey come out far 'way." But de ooman he get 'tronger yase, en he get dis heah die pusson fo' fren'.

W'en dey done go sotay den odder die pusson done los', den gone to de grabe, but de one man lef'. He en dis girl den go to heen town, but de ooman no know say dis die man town. W'en dey go, dey reach nah net, but den jus' meet one ho'se nah de place.

Well, de girl see de place white, no mo', because soso die pusson wey get white clo'es bin deh. Well, de man done los' f'om he han', en dis ooman he dey inside de one ho'se. Den die pusson jus' come curse um, suck teet' 'pon um, no mo', but de ooman done 'fraid, he no get nobody. He see white clo'es, no mo'; den come suck teet', den los' agin; he hearee um, he no see pusson.

But oonah no know dog get witch yi? He duh see den die people heah, he begin fo' holler 'pon dem fo' make dem go back. Well, dis dog yeah he turn pusson, he ax de ooman, he say, "Ef I pull yo' f'om dis trouble yeah, ef yo' go home, yo' cook fo' yo' fren', en I go tief all de ress en de fis' — ef yo' call me dog yo' go die." He no wan' de girl call um dog, because he done turn pusson.



A GHOST STORY.

De girl 'gree, he say, "Come go, kare me back." De dog done turn dog agin, so he able fo' holler 'pon dem die pusson. He 'tan' up befo', w'en dem die pusson come, he holler 'pon dem, en dem go back.

Well, w'en dis girl en dis dog go far nah road, dey no know de country, den meet one big, big wattah, den no know how fo' cross um, en de dog say, "Come, lay down 'pon me back." So de girl lay down, en de dog cross um over dah big, big wattah. W'en dey done cross de ooman tell de dog 'Tankee, tankee.' Long tem he tankee um.

Well, den de dog say, "I 'gree fo' de tankee, but yo' no mus' call me name dog, oh! w'en yo' go to de town, oh! but yo' fo' gie me odder fine name lek pusson." He no wan' turn pusson w'en he reach de town, because de people go ax de girl, "Which side de dog done go, wey bin follow yo'?"

Well, dah dog kare de ooman sotay dey done reach nah home. De ooman tell he people all dah trouble wey he see, he say, "Dah t'ing wey follow we two, so, he sabe me," but he no call he name dog.

Well, dis girl people kin do dis dog good. No matter fo' de people ef dey call um dog, but only de girl no mus' call um dog. Well, one day dah ooman cook fine sweet ress fo' he fren', not fo' de die pusson, but odder fren' in de town. W'en he done cook um, w'en he go call he fren' fo' come yeat dah ress, w'en he come back he meet dah t'ing done yeat um. He no talk anyt'ing, he go cook odder ress, he gie he fren'. Well, dah dog duh yeat de ress wey de girl cook, all de tem.

One day he done vex 'pon de dog. He cook one fine ress wid fat beef fo' he good fren' nah de town. Well, w'en he go call he fren', he meet dah dog done yeat dah sweet, sweet ress, en he lay down close de bowl wey he done yeat. Dah ooman vex, he say, "Dah dog tief me ress all de tem, look how he come tief me ress wey I cook fo' me fren'." Wen de girl call um dog, de dog look um, en de girl fa' down, he die. Story done.

23. The Hunter and His Friends

[From [Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria](#) by Elphinstone Dayrell, 1910. See item #67 in the Bibliography. The photo of metal currency from Nigeria comes from the [Smithsonian National Museum of African Art](#).]



Many years ago there was a Calabar hunter called Effiong who lived in the bush, killed plenty of animals, and made much money. Everyone in the country knew him, and one of his best friends was a man called Okun, who lived near him.

But Effiong was very extravagant and spent much money in eating and drinking with everyone, until at last he became quite poor, so he had to go out hunting again, but now his good luck seemed to have deserted him, for although he worked hard and hunted day and night, he could not succeed in killing anything.

One day, as he was very hungry, he went to his friend Okun and borrowed two hundred rods from him and told him to come to his house on a certain day to get his money, and he told him to bring his gun, loaded, with him.

Now, some time before this Effiong had made friends with a leopard and a bush cat whom he had met in the forest whilst on one of his hunting expeditions, and he had also made friends with a goat and a rooster at a farm where he had stayed for the night. But though Effiong had borrowed the money from Okun, he could not think how he was to repay it on the day he had promised. At last, however, he thought of a plan, and on the next day he went to his friend the leopard and asked him to lend him two hundred rods, promising to return the amount to him on the same day as he had promised to pay Okun, and he also told the leopard that if he were absent when he came for his money, he could kill anything he saw in the house and eat it. The leopard was then to wait until the hunter arrived, when he would pay him the money, and to this the leopard agreed.

The hunter then went to his friend the goat and borrowed two hundred rods from him in the same way. Effiong also went to his friends the bush cat and the rooster, and borrowed two hundred rods from each of them on the same conditions, and told each one of them that if he were absent when they arrived, they could kill and eat anything they found about the place.

When the appointed day arrived the hunter spread some corn on the ground, and then went away and left the house deserted. Very early in the morning, soon after he had begun to crow, the rooster remembered what the hunter had told him and walked over to the hunter's house, but found no one there. On looking round, however, he saw some corn on the ground and, being hungry, he commenced to eat.

About this time the bush cat also arrived and, not finding the hunter at home, he too looked about and very soon he espied the rooster, who was busy picking up the grains of corn. So

the bush cat went up very softly behind, and pounced on the rooster, and killed him at once, and began to eat him.

By this time the goat had come for his money, but not finding his friend, he walked about until he came upon the bush cat, who was so intent upon his meal off the rooster that he did not notice the goat approaching, and the goat, being in rather a bad temper at not getting his money, at once charged at the bush cat and knocked him over, butting him with his horns. This the bush cat did not like at all, so, as he was not big enough to fight the goat, he picked up the remains of the rooster and ran off with it to the bush, and so lost his money as he did not await the arrival of the hunter.

The goat was thus left master of the situation and started bleating, and this noise attracted the attention of the leopard, who was on his way to receive payment from the hunter. As the leopard got nearer, the smell of goat became very strong and, being hungry, for he had not eaten anything for some time, he approached the goat very carefully. Not seeing anyone about, he stalked the goat and got nearer and nearer until he was within springing distance. The goat, in the meantime, was grazing quietly, quite unsuspecting of any danger as he was in his friend the hunter's compound. Now and then he would say, "Baaaa!" But most of the time he was busy eating the young grass and picking up the leaves which had fallen from a tree of which he was very fond. Suddenly the leopard sprang at the goat and, with one crunch at the neck, brought him down. The goat was dead almost at once, and the leopard started on his meal.

It was now about eight o'clock in the morning, and Okun, the hunter's friend, having had his early morning meal, went out with his gun to receive payment of the two hundred rods he had lent to the hunter. When he got close to the house, he heard a crunching sound, and, being a hunter himself, he approached very cautiously and, looking over the fence, saw the leopard only a few yards off busily engaged eating the goat.

He took careful aim at the leopard and fired, whereupon the leopard rolled over dead.

The death of the leopard meant that four of the hunter's creditors were now disposed of, as the bush cat had killed the rooster, the goat had driven the bush cat away (who thus forfeited his claim), and in his turn the goat had been killed by the leopard, who had just been slain by Okun. This meant a saving of eight hundred rods to Effiong, but he was not content with this, and directly he heard the report of the gun, he ran out from where he had been hiding all the time and found the leopard lying dead with Okun standing over it.

Then in very strong language Effiong began to upbraid his friend and asked Okun why he had killed his old friend the leopard, saying that nothing would satisfy him but that he should report the whole matter to the king, who would no doubt deal with Okun as he thought fit.

When Effiong said this, Okun was frightened and begged him not to say anything more about the matter as the king would be angry, but the hunter was obdurate and refused to listen to him, and at last Okun said, "If you will allow the whole thing to drop and will say no more about it, I will make you a present of the two hundred rods you borrowed from me." This was just what Effiong wanted, but still he did not give in at once; eventually, however, he agreed, and told Okun he might go, and that he would bury the body of his friend the leopard.

Directly Okun had gone, instead of burying the body, Effiong dragged it inside the house and skinned it very carefully. The skin he put out to dry in the sun and covered it with wood ash, and the body he ate. When the skin was well cured, the hunter took it to a distant market where he sold it for much money.

And now, whenever a bush cat sees a rooster he always kills it, and does so by right, as he takes the rooster in part payment of the two hundred rods which the hunter never paid him.

24. Of the Fat Woman who Melted Away

[From [*Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*](#) by Elphinstone Dayrell, 1910. See item #67 in the Bibliography.]

There was once a very fat woman who was made of oil. She was very beautiful, and many young men applied to the parents for permission to marry their daughter and offered dowry, but the mother always refused as she said it was impossible for her daughter to work on a farm because she would melt in the sun.

At last a stranger came from a far-distant country and fell in love with the fat woman, and he promised if her mother would hand her to him that he would keep her in the shade. At last the mother agreed, and he took his wife away.

When he arrived at his house, his other wife immediately became very jealous because when there was work to be done, firewood to be collected, or water to be carried, the fat woman stayed at home and never helped, as she was frightened of the heat.

One day when the husband was absent, the jealous wife abused the fat woman so much that she finally agreed to go and work on the farm, although the fat woman's little sister, whom she had brought from home with her, implored her not to go, reminding her that their mother had always told them ever since they were born that she would melt away if she went into the sun.

All the way to the farm, the fat woman managed to keep in the shade, and when they arrived at the farm, the sun was very hot, so the fat woman remained in the shade of a big tree.

When the jealous wife saw this, she again began abusing her and asked her why she did not do her share of the work. At last the fat woman could stand the nagging no longer, and although her little sister tried very hard to prevent her, she went out into the sun to work and immediately began to melt away. There was very soon nothing left of her but one big toe, which had been covered by a leaf. This her little sister observed and, with tears in her eyes, she picked up the toe, which was all that remained of the fat woman and, having covered it carefully with leaves, she placed it in the bottom of her basket.

When she arrived at the house, the little sister placed the toe in an earthen pot, filled it with water, and covered the top up with clay.

When the husband returned, he said, "Where is my fat wife?" and the little sister, crying bitterly, told him that the jealous woman had made her go out into the sun and that she had melted away.

She then showed him the pot with the remains of her sister and told him that her sister would come to life again in three months' time quite complete, but he must send away the jealous wife so that there should be no more trouble; if he refused to do this, the little girl said she would take the pot back to their mother, and when her sister became complete again, they would remain at home.

The husband then took the jealous wife back to her parents, who sold her as a slave and paid the dowry back to the husband so that he could get another wife.

When he received the money, the husband took it home and kept it until the three months had elapsed; then the little sister opened the pot and the fat woman emerged, quite as fat and beautiful as she had been before.

The husband was so delighted that he gave a feast to all his friends and neighbours and told them the whole story of the bad behaviour of his jealous wife.

25. The Leopard, the Squirrel, and the Tortoise

[From [*Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*](#) by Elphinstone Dayrell, 1910. See item #67 in the Bibliography.]

Many years ago there was a great famine throughout the land, and all the people were starving. The yam crop had failed entirely, the plantains did not bear any fruit, the peanuts were all shriveled up, and the corn never came to a head; even the palm-oil nuts did not ripen, and the peppers and okra also gave out.

The leopard, however, who lived entirely on meat, did not care for any of these things, and although some of the animals who lived on corn and the growing crops began to get rather skinny, he did not mind very much. In order to save himself trouble, as everybody was complaining of the famine, he called a meeting of all the animals and told them that, as they all knew, he was very powerful and must have food; that the famine did not affect him, as he only lived on flesh; and that as there were plenty of animals about, he did not intend to starve. He then told all the animals present at the meeting that if they did not wish to be killed themselves, they must bring their grandmothers to him for food, and when they were finished, he would feed off their mothers. The animals might bring their grandmothers in succession and he would take them in their turn so that, as there were many different animals, it would probably be some time before their mothers were eaten, by which time it was possible that the famine would be over. But

in any case, he warned them that he was determined to have sufficient food for himself, and that if the grandmothers or mothers were not forthcoming, he would turn upon the young people themselves and kill and eat them.

This, of course, the young generation who had attended the meeting did not appreciate and, in order to save their own skins, they agreed to supply the leopard with his daily meal.

The first to appear with his aged grandmother was the squirrel. The grandmother was a poor decrepit old thing with a mangy tail, and the leopard swallowed her at one gulp and then looked round for more. In an angry voice he growled out, "This is not the proper food for me; I must have more at once."

Then a bush cat pushed his old grandmother in front of the leopard, but he snarled at her and said, "Take the nasty old thing away; I want some sweet food."

It was then the turn of a bushbuck and, after a great deal of hesitation, a wretchedly poor and thin old doe tottered and fell in front of the leopard, who immediately despatched her, and although the meal was very unsatisfactory, he declared that his appetite was appeased for that day.

The next day a few more animals brought their old grandmothers, until at last it became the tortoise's turn but, being very cunning, he produced witnesses to prove that his grandmother was dead, so the leopard excused him.

After a few days all the animals' grandmothers were exhausted, and it became the turn of the mothers to supply food for the ravenous leopard. Now although most of the young animals did not mind getting rid of their grandmothers, whom they had scarcely even known, many of them had very strong objections to providing their mothers, of whom they were very fond, as food for the leopard. Amongst the strongest objectors were the squirrel and the tortoise.

The tortoise, who had thought the whole thing out, was aware that, as everyone knew that his mother was alive (she being rather an amiable old person and friendly with all-

comers), the same excuse would not avail him a second time. He therefore told his mother to climb up a palm tree and that he would provide her with food until the famine was over. He instructed her to let down a basket every day and said that he would place food in it for her. The tortoise made the basket for his mother, and attached it to a long string of tie-tie. The string was so strong that she could haul her son up whenever he wished to visit her.

All went well for some days as the tortoise used to go at daylight to the bottom of the tree where his mother lived and place her food in the basket; then the old lady would pull the basket up and have her food, and the tortoise would depart on his daily round in his usual leisurely manner.

In the meantime, the leopard had to have his daily food, and the squirrel's turn came first after the grandmothers had been finished, so he was forced to produce his mother for the leopard to eat as he was a poor, weak thing and not possessed of any cunning. The squirrel was, however, very fond of his mother, and when she had been eaten, he remembered that the tortoise had not produced his grandmother for the leopard's food. He therefore determined to set a watch on the movements of the tortoise.

The very next morning, while he was gathering nuts, he saw the tortoise walking very slowly through the bush and, being high up in the trees and able to travel very fast, the squirrel had no difficulty in keeping the tortoise in sight without being noticed. When the tortoise arrived at the foot of the tree where his mother lived, he placed the food in the basket which his mother had let down already by the tie-tie and, having got into the basket and given a pull at the string to signify that everything was right, he was hauled up and, after a time, was let down again in the basket. The squirrel was watching all the time and, directly after the tortoise had gone, he jumped from branch to branch of the trees and very soon arrived at the place where the leopard was snoozing.

When the leopard woke up, the squirrel said, "You have eaten my grandmother and my mother, but the tortoise has not provided any food for you. It is now his turn, and he has hidden his mother away in a tree."

At this the leopard was very angry and told the squirrel to lead him at once to the tree where the tortoise's mother lived. But the squirrel said, "The tortoise only goes at daylight when his mother lets down a basket, so if you go in the morning early, she will pull you up, and you can then kill her."

To this the leopard agreed, and the next morning the squirrel came at cockcrow and led the leopard to the tree where the tortoise's mother was hidden. The old lady had already let down the basket for her daily supply of food, and the leopard got into it and gave the line a pull but, except a few small jerks, nothing happened, as the old mother tortoise was not strong enough to pull a heavy leopard off the ground.

When the leopard saw that he was not going to be pulled up, he scrambled up the tree, being an expert climber. When he got to the top, he found the poor old tortoise whose shell was so tough that he thought she was not worth eating, so he threw her down on to the ground in a violent temper, and then he came down himself and went home.

Shortly after this, the tortoise arrived at the tree and, finding the basket on the ground, he gave his usual tug at it, but there was no answer. He then looked about, and after a little time he came upon the broken shell of his poor old mother, who by this time was quite dead. The tortoise knew at once that the leopard had killed his mother, and he made up his mind that for the future he would live alone and have nothing to do with the other animals.

26. The Spider and Nzambi's Daughter

[From [Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort](#) by Richard Dennett, 1898. See item #68 in the Bibliography. The photograph of a Nzambi carving is from the Brooklyn Museum at [Wikimedia Commons](#).]



Nzambi-on-Earth had a beautiful daughter, but she swore that no earthly being should marry her unless he could bring her the heavenly fire from Nzambi Mpungu, who dwelt in the heavens above the blue roof. And as Nzambi's daughter was very fair to look upon, the people marveled, saying, "How shall we secure this treasure? And who on such a condition will ever marry her?"

Then the spider said, "I will, if you will help me."

And they all answered, "We will gladly help you if you will reward us."

Then the spider reached the blue roof of heaven and dropped down again to the earth, leaving a strong silken thread firmly hanging from the roof to the earth below. Then he called the tortoise, the woodpecker, the rat, and the sandfly, and bade them climb up the thread to the roof. And they did so. Then the woodpecker pecked a hole through the roof, and they all entered the realm of the badly dressed Nzambi Mpungu.

Nzambi Mpungu received them courteously and asked them what they wanted up there. And they answered him, saying, "O Nzambi Mpungu of the heavens above, great father of all the world, we have come to fetch some of your terrible fire for Nzambi who rules upon earth."

"Wait here then," said Nzambi Mpungu, "while I go to my people and tell them of the message that you bring."

But the sandfly, unseen, accompanied Nzambi Mpungu and heard all that was said. And while he was gone, the others wondered if it were possible for one who went about so poorly clad to be so powerful.

Then Nzambi Mpungu returned to them and said, "My friend, how can I know that you have really come from the ruler of the earth, and that you are not impostors?"

"We are not!" they said. "Put us to some test that we may prove our sincerity to you."

“I will,” said Nzambi Mpungu. “Go down to this earth of yours and bring me a bundle of bamboos so that I may make myself a shed.”

And the tortoise went down, leaving the others where they were, and soon returned with the bamboos.

Then Nzambi Mpungu said to the rat, “Get beneath this bundle of bamboos, and I will set fire to it. Then if you escape, I shall surely know that Nzambi sent you.”

And the rat did as he was bidden. And Nzambi Mpungu set fire to the bamboos, and lo — when they were entirely consumed, the rat came from amidst the ashes unharmed.

Then Nzambi Mpungu said, “You are indeed what you represent yourselves to be. I will go and consult my people again.”

Then they sent the sandfly after him, bidding him to keep well out of sight to hear all that was said and, if possible, to find out where the lightning was kept. The sandfly returned and related all that he had heard and seen.

Then Nzambi Mpungu returned to them and said, “Yes, I will give you the fire you ask for, if you can tell me where it is kept.”

And the spider said, “Give me then, O Nzambi Mpungu, one of the five cases that you keep in the chicken-house.”

“Truly you have answered me correctly, O spider! Take therefore this case, and give it to your Nzambi.”

And the tortoise carried it down to the earth, and the spider presented the fire from heaven to Nzambi, and Nzambi gave the spider her beautiful daughter in marriage.

But the woodpecker grumbled and said, “Surely the woman is mine, for it was I who pecked the hole through the roof, without which the others never could have entered the kingdom of the Nzambi Mpungu above.”

“Yes,” said the rat, “but see how I risked my life among the burning bamboos; the girl, I think, should be mine.”

“No, O Nzambi! The girl should certainly be mine, for without my help the others would never have found out where the fire was kept,” said the sandfly.

Then Nzambi said, “No! The spider undertook to bring me the fire, and he has brought it. The girl by rights is his — but as you others will make her life miserable if I allow her to live with the spider, and as I cannot give her to you all, I will give her to none, but will give you each her market value.”

Nzambi then paid each of them fifty lengths of cloth and one case of gin, and her daughter remained a maiden and waited upon her mother for the rest of her days.

27. A Different Story about Nzambi's Daughter

[From [*Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort*](#) by Richard Dennett, 1898. See item #68 in the Bibliography.]

Nzambi had a most beautiful daughter, and she took the greatest care of her. As the child grew up, she was kept within the house and never allowed to go outside, her mother alone waiting upon her. And when she arrived at the age of puberty, her mother determined to send her to a town a long way off so that she might be undisturbed while she underwent her purification in the paint-house.

She gave her child a slave, and these two left Nzambi's town for the distant place where the paint-house was situated.

"Oh, see there, slave! What is that?" said Nzambi's daughter.

"Give me your anklets, and I will tell you," answered the slave. The daughter of Nzambi gave the slave the anklets. "That is a snake."

And then they walked along for some time, when suddenly the daughter of Nzambi said, "Oh, slave, what is that?"

"Give me your two new cloths, and I will tell you." Nzambi's daughter gave the slave the two cloths. "That is an antelope."

They had not gone far when the daughter again noticed something strange. "Slave, tell me what that thing is?"

"Give me your bracelets." The girl gave the slave her bracelets. "That thing is an eagle."

The princess thought it wonderful that the slave should know so much more than she did, and when she caught sight of a

thing rising gently from the ground, she turned to her again and asked, "And what is that?"

"Give me your coral necklace." The girl gave the slave the coral. "That is a butterfly."

The next time she asked the slave for information, the slave made her change her clothes with her, so that while she was nearly naked, the slave was dressed most beautifully. And in this fashion they arrived at their destination and delivered their message to the prince.

After the proper preparations, they placed the slave in the paint-house with all the ceremony due to a princess, and they set the daughter of Nzambi to mind the plantations. In her innocence and ignorance, the daughter of Nzambi at first thought all this was in order and part of what she had to go through, but in a very short time she began to realize her position and to grieve about it. She used to sing plaintive songs as she minded the maize of how she had been mistaken for a slave while her slave was honoured as a princess. And the people thought her mad.

But one day a trade-caravan passed her, and she asked the trader where he was going, and he answered, "To Nzambi's town."

"Will you then take a message to Nzambi for me?"

The trader gladly assented.

"Then tell her that her daughter is as a slave watching the plantations, while the slave is in the paint-house."

He repeated the message and, when she had said that it was correct, he went on his way and delivered it to Nzambi.

Nzambi and her husband immediately set out in their hammock, accompanied by many followers, for the town where she had sent her daughter. And when she arrived, she was greatly shocked to see her daughter in that mean position and would have punished the prince, had she not seen that he and his people were not to blame.

They called upon the slave to come out of the paint-house. But she was afraid and would not come out. Then they entered and, having stripped her of all her borrowed finery, they shut her within the house and burnt her.

28. The Rabbit and the Antelope

[From [*Notes on the Folklore of the Fjord*](#) by Richard Dennett, 1898. See item #68 in the Bibliography.]

It was during an almost rainless hot season when all who had no wells were beginning to feel the pangs of thirst that the rabbit and the antelope formed a partnership to dig a deep well so that they could never be in want of water.

“Let us finish our food,” said the antelope, “and be off to our work.”

“No!” said the rabbit. “Had we not better keep the food for later on, when we are tired and hungry after our work?”

“Very well, hide the food, rabbit, and let us go to work; I am very thirsty.”

They arrived at the place where they purposed having the well and worked hard for a short time.

“Listen!” said the rabbit. “They are calling me to go back to town.”

“No, I do not hear them.”

“Yes, they are certainly calling me, and I must be off. My wife is about to present me with some children, and I must name them.”

“Go then, dear rabbit, but come back as soon as you can.”

The rabbit ran off to where he had hidden the food, and ate some of it, and then went back to his work.

“Well,” said the antelope, “what have you called your little one?”

“Not-Done-Yet,” said the rabbit.

“A strange name,” said the antelope.

Then they worked for a while.

"Again they are calling me," cried the rabbit. "I must be off, so please excuse me. Can't you hear them calling me?"

"No, said the antelope, "I hear nothing..."

Away ran the rabbit, leaving the poor antelope to do all the work, while the rabbit ate some more of the food that really belonged to them both. When he had had enough, he hid the food again and ran back to the well.

"And what have you called your latest child, rabbit?"

"Half-Done-Now."

"What a funny little fellow you are! But come, get on with the digging; see how hard I have worked."

Then they worked hard for quite a long time.

"Listen, now!" said the rabbit. "Surely you heard them calling me this time!"

"No, dear rabbit, I can hear nothing, but go and get back quickly."

Away ran the rabbit, and this time he finished the food before going back to his work.

"Well, little one, what have you called your third child?"

"All-Done," answered the rabbit.

Then they worked hard, and as night was setting in, they returned to their village.

"I am terribly tired, rabbit; run and get the food, or I shall faint."

The rabbit went to look for the food, and then, calling out to the antelope, told him that some horrid cat must have been there, as the food was all gone and the pot quite clean. The antelope groaned and went hungry to bed.

The next day the naughty little rabbit played the antelope the same trick. And the next day he again tricked the antelope. And the next, and the next, until at last the antelope accused the rabbit of stealing the food. Then the rabbit got angry and dared him to take casca.

"We'll both take it," said the antelope, "and let him whose tail is the first to become wet be considered the guilty one."

So they took the casca and went to bed. And as the medicine began to take effect upon the rabbit, he cried out to the antelope, "See, your tail is wet!"

"No, it is not!"

"Yes, it is!"

"No, but yours is, dear rabbit; see there!"

Then the rabbit feared greatly and tried to run away. But the antelope said, "Fear not, rabbit; I will do you no harm. Only you must promise not to drink of the water of my well and to leave my company forever."

Accordingly the rabbit left him and went his way.

Some time after this, a bird told the antelope that the rabbit was drinking the water of the well every day. Then the antelope was greatly enraged and determined to kill the rabbit. So the antelope laid a trap for the silly little rabbit. He cut a piece of wood and shaped it into the figure of an animal about the size of the rabbit, and then he placed this figure firmly in the ground near to the well and smeared it all over with bird-lime.

The rabbit went as usual to drink the waters of the well and was much annoyed to find an animal there, as he thought, drinking the water also.

"And what may you be doing here, sir?" said the rabbit to the figure.

The figure answered not.

Then the rabbit, thinking that it was afraid of him, went close up to it and again asked what he was doing there.

But the figure made no answer.

"What!" said the rabbit. "Do you mean to insult me? Answer me at once, or I will strike you."

The figure answered not.

Then the little rabbit lifted up his right hand and smacked the figure in the face. His hand stuck to the figure.

"What's the matter?" said the rabbit. "Let my hand go, sir, at once, or I will hit you again."

The figure held fast to the rabbit's right hand.

Then the rabbit hit the figure a swinging blow with his left. The left hand stuck to the figure also.

“What can be the matter with you, sir? You are excessively silly. Let my hands go at once, or I will kick you.”

And the rabbit kicked the figure with his right foot, but his right foot stuck there. Then he got into a great rage and kicked the figure with his left. And his left leg stuck to the figure also. Then, overcome with rage, he bumped the figure with his head and stomach, but these parts also stuck to the figure. Then the rabbit cried with impotent rage.

The antelope, just about this time, came along to drink water, and when he saw the rabbit helplessly fastened to the figure, he laughed at him and then killed him.

29. Motikatika

[From [African Folktales in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang](#), originally published in *The Crimson Fairy Book* (1903), based on a story in *Les Ba-Ronga: Étude ethnographique sur les indigènes de la baie de Delagoa* by Henri Junod, 1898. See item #121 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Henry Justice Ford.]



Once upon a time, in a very hot country, a man lived with his wife in a little hut which was surrounded by grass and flowers. They were perfectly happy together till, by and by, the woman fell ill and refused to take any food. The husband tried to persuade her to eat all sorts of delicious fruits that he had found in the forest, but she would have none of them, and she grew so thin he feared she would die. "Is there nothing you would like?" he said at last in despair.

"Yes, I think I could eat some wild honey," answered she. The husband was overjoyed, for he thought this sounded easy enough to get, and he went off at once in search of it.

He came back with a wooden pan quite full of wild honey and gave it to his wife. "I can't eat that," she said, turning away in disgust. "Look! There are some dead bees in it! I want honey that is quite pure." And the man threw the rejected honey on the grass and started off to get some fresh.

When he got back, he offered it to his wife, who treated it as she had done the first bowlful. "That honey has got ants in it; throw it away," she said, and when he brought her some more, she declared it was full of earth.

In his fourth journey he managed to find some that she would eat, and then she begged him to get her some water. This took him some time, but at length he came to a lake whose waters were sweet. He filled a pannikin quite full and carried it home to his wife, who drank it eagerly and said that she now felt quite well.

When she was up and had dressed herself, her husband lay down in her place, saying, "You have given me a great deal of trouble, and now it is my turn!"

"What is the matter with you?" asked the wife.

"I am thirsty and want some water," answered he, and she took a large pot and carried it to the nearest spring, which was a good way off. "Here is the water," she said to her husband, lifting the heavy pot from her head, but he turned away in disgust.

“You have drawn it from the pool that is full of frogs and willows; you must get me some more.” So the woman set out again and walked still further to another lake.

“This water tastes of rushes,” he exclaimed. “Go and get some fresh water.” But when she brought back a third supply he declared that it seemed made up of water-lilies and that he must have water that was pure, and not spoilt by willows, or frogs, or rushes.

So for the fourth time she put her jug on her head and, passing all the lakes she had hitherto tried, she came to another where the water was golden and sweet. She had stooped down to drink when a horrible head bobbed up on the surface.

“How dare you steal my water!” cried the head.

“It is my husband who has sent me,” she replied, trembling all over. “But do not kill me! You shall have my baby, if you will only let me go.”

“How am I to know which is your baby?” asked the ogre.

“Oh, that is easily managed. I will shave both sides of his head and hang some white beads round his neck. And when you come to the hut, you have only to call ‘Motikatika!’ and he will run to meet you, and you can eat him.”

“Very well,” said the ogre, “you can go home.” And, after filling the pot, she returned and told her husband of the dreadful danger she had been in.

Now, though his mother did not know it, the baby was a magician, and he had heard all that his mother had promised the ogre, and he laughed to himself as he planned how to outwit her.

The next morning she shaved his head on both sides, and hung the white beads round his neck, and said to him, “I am going to the fields to work, but you must stay at home. Be sure you do not go outside, or some wild beast may eat you.”

“Very well,” answered he.

As soon as his mother was out of sight, the baby took out some magic bones and placed them in a row before him. "You are my father," he told one bone, "and you are my mother. You are the biggest," he said to the third, "so you shall be the ogre who wants to eat me, and you," to another, "are very little; therefore you shall be me. Now then, tell me what I am to do."

"Collect all the babies in the village the same size as yourself," answered the bones. "Shave the sides of their heads, and hang white beads round their necks, and tell them that when anybody calls 'Motikatika,' they are to answer to it. And be quick, for you have no time to lose."

Motikatika went out directly, and brought back quite a crowd of babies, and shaved their heads, and hung white beads round their little necks, and, just as he had finished, the ground began to shake, and the huge ogre came striding along, crying, "Motikatika! Motikatika!"

"Here we are! Here we are!" answered the babies, all running to meet him.

"It is Motikatika I want," said the ogre.

"We are all Motikatika," they replied. And the ogre sat down in bewilderment, for he dared not eat the children of people who had done him no wrong, or a heavy punishment would befall him. The children waited for a little, wondering, and then they went away.

The ogre remained where he was till the evening when the woman returned from the fields.

"I have not seen Motikatika," said he.

"But why did you not call him by his name as I told you?" she asked.

"I did, but all the babies in the village seemed to be named Motikatika," answered the ogre. "You cannot think the number who came running to me."

The woman did not know what to make of it, so, to keep him in a good temper, she entered the hut and prepared a bowl of maize, which she brought him.

"I do not want maize; I want the baby," grumbled he, "and I will have him."

"Have patience," answered she. "I will call him, and you can eat him at once." And she went into the hut and cried, "Motikatika!"

"I am coming, mother," replied he, but first he took out his bones and, crouching down on the ground behind the hut, he asked them how he should escape the ogre.

"Change yourself into a mouse," said the bones, and so he did, and the ogre grew tired of waiting and told the woman she must invent some other plan.

"Tomorrow I will send him into the field to pick some beans for me, and you will find him there and can eat him."

"Very well," replied the ogre, "and this time I will take care to have him," and he went back to his lake.

Next morning Motikatika was sent out with a basket and told to pick some beans for dinner. On the way to the field, he took out his bones and asked them what he was to do to escape from the ogre. "Change yourself into a bird and snap off the beans," said the bones. And the ogre chased away the bird, not knowing that it was Motikatika.

The ogre went back to the hut and told the woman that she had deceived him again and that he would not be put off any longer.

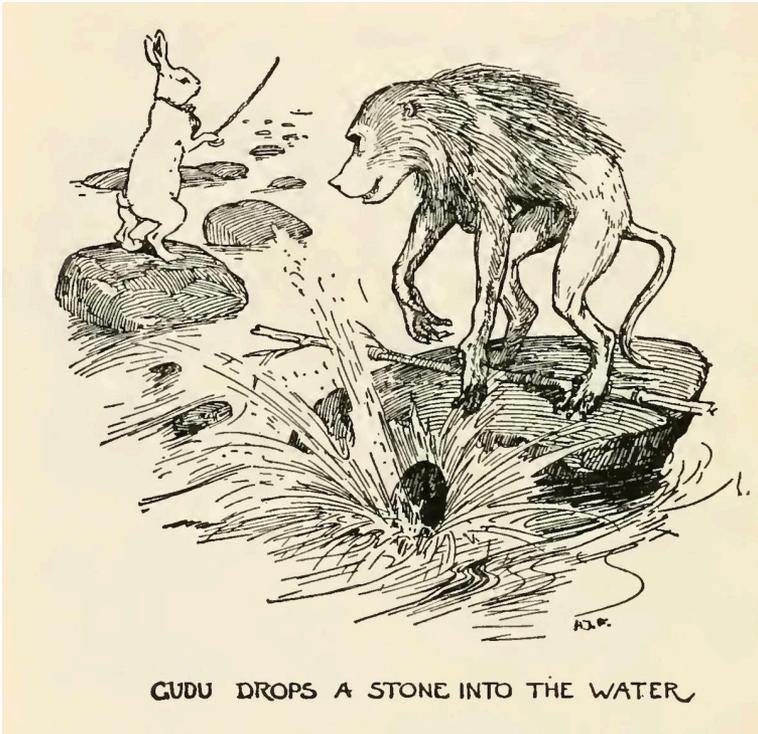
"Return here this evening," answered she, "and you will find him in bed under this white coverlet. Then you can carry him away and eat him at once."

But the boy heard and consulted his bones, which said, "Take the red coverlet from your father's bed and put yours on his," and so he did. And when the ogre came, he seized Motikatika's father and carried him outside the hut and ate him.

When his wife found out the mistake, she cried bitterly, but Motikatika said, "It is only just that he should be eaten and not I, for it was he, and not I, who sent you to fetch the water."

30. How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu

[From [African Folktales in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang](#), a Shona story originally published in *The Orange Fairy Book*, 1906. See item #121 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Henry Justice Ford.]



Far away in a hot country, where the forests are very thick and dark and the rivers very swift and strong, there once lived a strange pair of friends. Now one of the friends was a big rabbit named Isuro, and the other was a tall baboon called Gudu, and so fond were they of each other that they were seldom seen apart.

One day, when the sun was hotter even than usual, the rabbit awoke from his midday sleep and saw Gudu the baboon standing beside him.

“Get up,” said Gudu. “I am going courting, and you must come with me. So put some food in a bag and sling it round your neck, for we may not be able to find anything to eat for a long while.”

Then the rabbit rubbed his eyes, and gathered a store of fresh green things from under the bushes, and told Gudu that he was ready for the journey.

They went on quite happily for some distance, and at last they came to a river with rocks scattered here and there across the stream.

“We can never jump those wide spaces if we are burdened with food,” said Gudu. “We must throw it into the river, unless we wish to fall in ourselves.” And stooping down, unseen by Isuro who was in front of him, Gudu picked up a big stone and threw it into the water with a loud splash.

“It is your turn now,” he cried to Isuro. And with a heavy sigh, the rabbit unfastened his bag of food, which fell into the river.

The road on the other side led down an avenue of trees and, before they had gone very far, Gudu opened the bag that lay hidden in the thick hair about his neck and began to eat some delicious-looking fruit.

“Where did you get that from?” asked Isuro enviously.

“Oh, I found after all that I could get across the rocks quite easily, so it seemed a pity not to keep my bag,” answered Gudu.

“Well, as you tricked me into throwing away mine, you ought to let me share with you,” said Isuro. But Gudu pretended not to hear him and strode along the path.

By and by, they entered a wood, and right in front of them was a tree so laden with fruit that its branches swept the ground. And some of the fruit was still green, and some yellow. The rabbit hopped forward with joy, for he was very hungry, but Gudu said to him, “Pluck the green fruit; you will find it much the best. I will leave it all for you, as you have had no dinner, and take the yellow for myself.” So the rabbit took a green fruit and began to bite it, but its skin was so hard that he could hardly get his teeth through the rind.

“It does not taste at all nice,” he cried, screwing up his face. “I would rather have one of the yellow ones.”

“No! No! I really could not allow that,” answered Gudu. “They would only make you ill. Be content with the green fruit.” And as the green ones were all he could get, Isuro was forced to put up with them.

After this had happened two or three times, Isuro at last had his eyes opened and made up his mind that, whatever Gudu told him, he would do exactly the opposite.

By this time they had reached the village where dwelt Gudu’s future wife, and, as they entered, Gudu pointed to a clump of bushes and said to Isuro, “Whenever I am eating and you hear me call out that my food has burnt me, run as fast as you can and gather some of those leaves that they may heal my mouth.”

The rabbit would have liked to ask him why he ate food that he knew would burn him, only he was afraid and just nodded in reply, but when they had gone on a little further, he said to Gudu, “I have dropped something; wait here a moment while I go and fetch it.”

“Be quick then,” answered Gudu, climbing into a tree. And the rabbit hastened back to the bushes and gathered a quantity of the leaves, which he hid among his fur. “For,”

thought he, "if I get them now I shall save myself the trouble of a walk by and by."

When he had plucked as many as he wanted, he returned to Gudu, and they went on together.

The sun was almost setting by the time they reached their journey's end and, being very tired, they gladly sat down by a well. Then Gudu's betrothed, who had been watching for him, brought out a pitcher of water, which she poured over them to wash off the dust of the road, and two portions of food. But once again the rabbit's hopes were dashed to the ground, for Gudu said hastily, "The custom of the village forbids you to eat till I have finished." And Isuro did not know that Gudu was lying and that he only wanted more food. So he sat hungrily looking on, waiting till his friend had had enough.

In a little while Gudu screamed loudly, "I am burnt! I am burnt!" though he was not burnt at all. Now, though Isuro had the leaves about him, he did not dare to produce them at that moment lest the baboon should guess why he had stayed behind. So he just went round a corner for a short time and then came hopping back in a great hurry. But, quick though he was, Gudu had been quicker still, and nothing remained but some drops of water.

"How unlucky you are," said Gudu, snatching the leaves. "No sooner had you gone than ever so many people arrived and washed their hands, as you see, and ate your portion of food."

But, though Isuro knew better than to believe him, he said nothing and went to bed hungrier than he had ever been in his life.

Early next morning they started for another village and passed on the way a large garden where people were very busy gathering peanuts.

"You can have a good breakfast at last," said Gudu, pointing to a heap of empty shells, never doubting but that Isuro would meekly take the portion shown him and leave the real nuts for himself. But what was his surprise when Isuro answered,

"Thank you; I think I should prefer these." And, turning to the peanut kernels, Isuro never stopped as long as there was one left. And the worst of it was that with so many people about, Gudu could not take the nuts from him.

It was night when they reached the village where dwelt the mother of Gudu's betrothed, who laid meat and millet porridge before them.

"I think you told me you were fond of porridge," said Gudu, but Isuro answered, "You are mistaking me for somebody else, as I always eat meat when I can get it." And again Gudu was forced to be content with the porridge, which he hated.

While Gudu was eating it, however, a sudden thought darted into his mind, and he managed to knock over a great pot of water which was hanging in front of the fire and put it quite out. "Now," said the cunning creature to himself, "I shall be able in the dark to steal his meat!"

But the rabbit had grown as cunning as the baboon and, standing in a corner, Isuro hid the meat behind him so that the baboon could not find it.

"O Gudu!" the rabbit cried, laughing aloud. "It is you who have taught me to be clever." And calling to the people of the house, he bade them kindle the fire for Gudu would sleep by it, but that he would pass the night with some friends in another hut.

It was still quite dark when Isuro heard his name called very softly, and, on opening his eyes, he beheld Gudu standing by him. Laying his finger on his nose in token of silence, Gudu signed to Isuro to get up and follow him, and it was not until they were some distance from the hut that Gudu spoke. "I am hungry and want something to eat better than that nasty porridge that I had for supper. So I am going to kill one of those goats and, as you are a good cook, you must boil the flesh for me." The rabbit nodded, and Gudu disappeared behind a rock but soon returned dragging the dead goat with him.

The two then set about skinning it, after which they stuffed the skin with dried leaves so that no one would have guessed

it was not alive, setting it up in the middle of a lump of bushes which kept it firm on its feet. While Gudu was doing this, Isuro collected sticks for a fire and, when it was kindled, Gudu hastened to another hut to steal a pot which he filled with water from the river and, planting two branches in the ground, they hung the pot with the meat in it over the fire.

“It will not be fit to eat for two hours at least,” said Gudu, “so we can both have a nap.” And he stretched himself out on the ground and pretended to fall fast asleep but, in reality, he was only waiting till it was safe to take all the meat for himself. “Surely I hear him snore,” he thought, and he stole to the place where Isuro was lying on a pile of wood, but the rabbit’s eyes were wide open.

“How tiresome,” muttered Gudu as he went back to his place and, after waiting a little longer, he got up and peeped again, but still the rabbit’s eyes stared, open wide. If Gudu had only known, Isuro was asleep all the time, having put flat white stones over his closed eyes to fool the baboon, but this Gudu never guessed, and by and by he grew so tired with watching that he went to sleep himself.

Soon after, Isuro woke up, and he too felt hungry, so he crept softly to the pot and ate all the meat, while he tied the bones together and hung them in Gudu’s fur. After that he went back to the wood-pile and slept again.

In the morning, the mother of Gudu’s betrothed came out to milk her goats, and on going to the bushes where the largest one seemed entangled, she found out the trick. She made such lament that the people of the village came running, and Gudu and Isuro jumped up also and pretended to be as surprised and interested as the rest. But they must have looked guilty after all, for suddenly an old man pointed to them and cried, “Those are the thieves!” And at the sound of the old man’s voice, the big Gudu trembled all over.

“How dare you say such things? I defy you to prove it,” answered Isuro boldly. And he danced forward, and turned head over heels, and shook himself before them all.

“I spoke hastily; you are innocent,” said the old man. “But now let the baboon do likewise.” And when Gudu began to jump, the goat’s bones rattled, and the people cried, “It is Gudu who is the goat-slayer!”

But Gudu answered, “No, I did not kill your goat; it was Isuro, and he ate the meat, and hung the bones round my neck. So it is he who should die!”

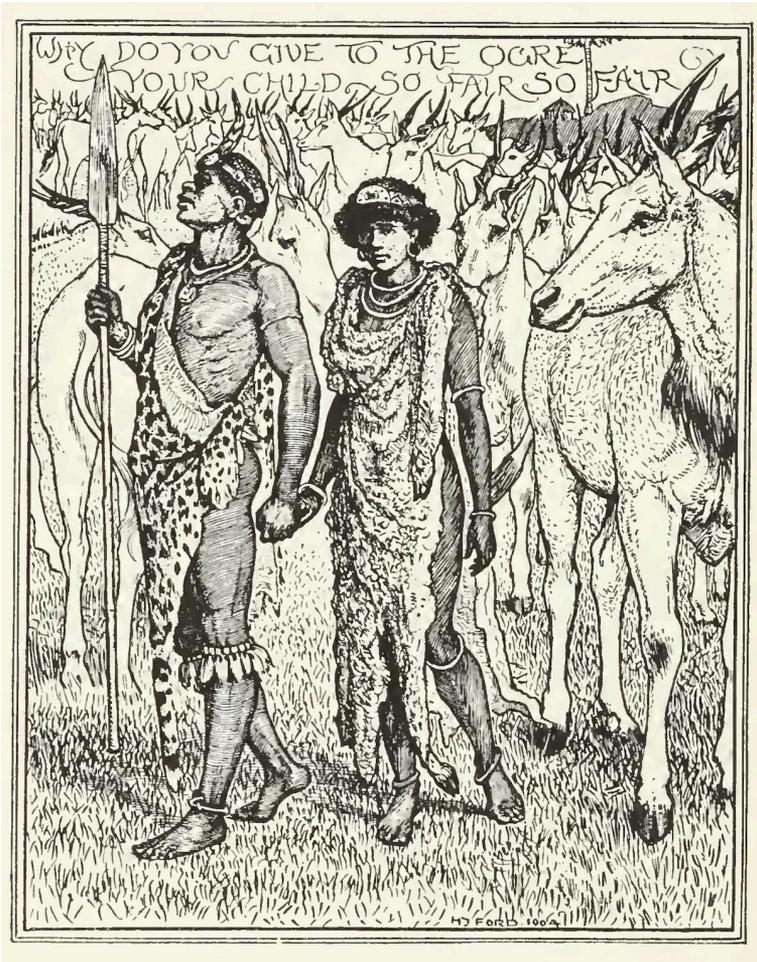
And the people looked at each other, for they knew not what to believe. At length one man said, “Let them both die, but they may choose their own deaths.”

Then Isuro answered, “If we must die, put us in the place where the wood is cut and heap it up all round us so that we cannot escape, and set fire to the wood, and if one is burned and the other is not, then he that is burned is the goat-slayer.”

And the people did as Isuro had said. But Isuro knew of a hole under the wood-pile and, when the fire was kindled, he ran into the hole, but Gudu died there.

When the fire had burned itself out and only ashes were left where the wood had been, Isuro came out of his hole and said to the people, “Lo! Did I not speak well? He who killed your goat is among those ashes.”

31. The Sacred Milk of Koumongoe



[From [*African Folktales in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang*](#), originally published in *The Orange Fairy Book* (1906), based on a story in *Contes populaires des Bassoutos* by Édouard Jacottet, 1895. See item #121 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Henry Justice Ford.]

Far away, in a very hot country, there once lived a man and woman who had two children, a son named Koane and a daughter called Thakane.

Early in the morning and late in the evenings the parents worked hard in the fields, resting when the sun was high under the shade of some tree. While they were absent, the little girl kept house alone, for her brother always got up before the dawn when the air was fresh and cool and drove out the cattle to the sweetest patches of grass he could find.

One day, when Koane had slept later than usual, his father and mother went to their work before him and there was only Thakane to be seen busy making the bread for supper.

"Thakane," he said, "I am thirsty. Give me a drink from the tree Koumongoe, which has the best milk in the world."

"Oh, Koane," cried his sister, "you know that we are forbidden to touch that tree. What would father say when he came home? For he would be sure to know."

"Nonsense," replied Koane, "there is so much milk in Koumongoe that he will never miss a little. If you won't give it to me, I won't take the cattle out. They will just have to stay all day in the hut, and you know that they will starve." And he turned from her in a rage and sat down in the corner.

After a while Thakane said to him, "It is getting hot; had you better drive out the cattle now?"

But Koane only answered sulkily, "I told you I am not going to drive them out at all. If I have to do without milk, they shall do without grass."

Thakane did not know what to do. She was afraid to disobey her parents, who would most likely beat her, yet the beasts would be sure to suffer if they were kept in, and she would perhaps be beaten for that too. So at last she took an axe and a tiny earthen bowl, and she cut a very small hole in the side of Koumongoe, and out gushed enough milk to fill the bowl.

"Here is the milk you wanted," said she, going up to Koane, who was still sulking in his corner.

"What is the use of that?" grumbled Koane. "Why, there is not enough to drown a fly. Go and get me three times as much!"

Trembling with fright, Thakane returned to the tree and struck it a sharp blow with the axe. In an instant there poured forth such a stream of milk that it ran like a river into the hut.

"Koane! Koane!" cried she. "Come and help me to plug up the hole. There will be no milk left for our father and mother." But Koane could not stop it any more than Thakane, and soon the milk was flowing through the hut downhill towards their parents in the fields below.

The man saw a white stream a long way off and guessed what had happened. "Wife, wife," he called loudly to the woman, who was working at a little distance. "Do you see Koumongoe running fast down the hill? That is some mischief of the children's, I am sure. I must go home and find out what is the matter." And they both threw down their hoes and hurried to the side of Koumongoe.

Kneeling on the grass, the man and his wife made a cup of their hands and drank the milk from it. And no sooner had they done this than Koumongoe flowed back again up the hill and entered the hut.

"Thakane," said the parents severely when they reached home panting from the heat of the sun, "what have you been doing? Why did Koumongoe come to us in the fields instead of staying in the garden?"

"It was Koane's fault," answered Thakane. "He would not take the cattle to feed until he drank some of the milk from

Koumongoe. So, as I did not know what else to do, I gave it to him.”

The father listened to Thakane’s words but made no answer. Instead, he went outside and brought in two sheepskins which he stained red, and then he sent for a blacksmith to forge some iron rings. The rings were passed over Thakane’s arms and legs and neck, and the skins fastened on her before and behind. When all was ready, the man sent for his servants and said, “I am going to get rid of Thakane.”

“Get rid of your only daughter?” they answered, in surprise. “But why?”

“Because she has eaten what she ought not to have eaten. She has touched the sacred tree which belongs to her mother and me alone.” And, turning his back, he called to Thakane to follow him, and they went down the road which led to the dwelling of an ogre.

They were passing along some fields where the corn was ripening when a rabbit suddenly sprang out at their feet and, standing on its hind legs, it sang:

Why do you give to the ogre

Your child, so fair, so fair?

“You had better ask her,” replied the man. “She is old enough to give you an answer.” Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane,

Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts;

For without Koumongoe

They could not go to the meadows.

Without Koumongoe

They would starve in the hut;

That was why I gave him

The Koumongoe of my father.

And when the rabbit heard that, he cried, “Wretched man! It is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter.”

But the father paid no heed to what the rabbit said and only walked on the faster, bidding Thakane to keep close behind him. By and by, they met with a troop of great deer called elands, and they stopped when they saw Thakane and sang:

Why do you give to the ogre

Your child, so fair, so fair?

"You had better ask her," replied the man. "She is old enough to give you an answer." Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane,

Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts;

For without Koumongoe

They could not go to the meadows.

Without Koumongoe

They would starve in the hut;

That was why I gave him

The Koumongoe of my father.

And the elands all cried, "Wretched man! It is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter."

By this time it was nearly dark, and the father said they could travel no further that night and must go to sleep where they were. Thakane was thankful indeed when she heard this, for she was very tired and found the two skins fastened round her almost too heavy to carry. So, in spite of her dread of the ogre, she slept till dawn when her father woke her and told her roughly that he was ready to continue their journey.

Crossing the plain, the girl and her father passed a herd of gazelles feeding. They lifted their heads, wondering who was out so early, and when they caught sight of Thakane, they sang:

Why do you give to the ogre

Your child, so fair, so fair?

"You had better ask her," replied the man. "She is old enough to answer for herself." Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane,

Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts;

For without Koumongoe

They could not go to the meadows.

Without Koumongoe

They would starve in the hut;

That was why I gave him

The Koumongoe of my father.

And the gazelles all cried, "Wretched man! It is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter."

At last they arrived at the village where the ogre lived, and they went straight to his hut. He was nowhere to be seen, but in his place was his son Masilo, who was not an ogre at all but a very polite young man. He ordered his servants to bring a pile of skins for Thakane to sit on but told her father he must sit on the ground. Then, catching sight of the girl's face which she had kept down, he was struck by its beauty and put the same question that the rabbit, and the elands, and the gazelles had done.

Thakane answered him as before, and he instantly commanded that she should be taken to the hut of his mother and placed under her care, while the man should be led to his father.

Directly the ogre saw the man, he bade the servant throw him into the great pot which always stood ready on the fire, and in five minutes he was done to a turn. After that, the servant returned to Masilo and related all that had happened.

Now Masilo had fallen in love with Thakane the moment he saw her. At first he did not know what to make of this strange feeling, for all his life he had hated women and had refused several brides whom his parents had chosen for him. However, they were so anxious that he should marry that they willingly accepted Thakane as their daughter-in-law, though she did bring any marriage portion with her.

After some time a baby was born to her, and Thakane thought it was the most beautiful baby that ever was seen. But when her mother-in-law saw it was a girl, she wrung her hands

and wept, saying, "O miserable mother! O miserable child! Alas for you! Why were you not a boy!"

Thakane, in great surprise, asked the meaning of her distress, and the old woman told her that it was the custom in that country that all the girls who were born should be given to the ogre to eat.

Then Thakane clasped the baby tightly in her arms and cried, "But it is not the custom in MY country! There, when children die, they are buried in the earth. No one shall take my baby from me."

That night, when everyone in the hut was asleep, Thakane rose and, carrying her baby on her back, she went down to a place where the river spread itself out into a large lake, with tall willows all round the bank. Here, hidden from everyone, she sat down on a stone and began to think what she should do to save her child.

Suddenly she heard a rustling among the willows, and an old woman appeared before her.

"What are you crying for, my dear?" said she.

And Thakane answered, "I was crying for my baby — I cannot hide her forever, and if the ogre sees her, he will eat her, and I would rather she was drowned than that."

"What you say is true," replied the old woman. "Give me your child and let me take care of her. And if you will fix a day to meet me here, I will bring the baby."

Then Thakane dried her eyes and gladly accepted the old woman's offer. When she got home, she told her husband she had thrown the baby in the river, and as he had watched her go in that direction, he never thought of doubting what she said.

On the appointed day, Thakane slipped out when everybody was busy and ran down the path that led to the lake. As soon as she got there, she crouched down among the willows and sang softly:

*Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one,
Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!*

And in a moment the old woman appeared holding the baby in her arms. Dilah had become so big and strong that Thakane's heart was filled with joy and gratitude, and she stayed as long as she dared, playing with her baby. At last she felt she must return to the village lest she should be missed, and the child was handed back to the old woman, who vanished with her into the lake.

Children grow up very quickly when they live underwater, and in less time than anyone could suppose, Dilah had changed from a baby to a woman. Her mother came to visit her whenever she was able, and one day, when they were sitting talking together, they were spied out by a man who had come to cut willows to weave into baskets. He was so surprised to see how like the face of the girl was to Masilo that he left his work and returned to the village.

"Masilo," he said as he entered the hut, "I have just beheld your wife near the river with a girl who must be your daughter, she is so like you. We have been deceived, for we all thought she was dead."

When he heard this, Masilo tried to look shocked because his wife had broken the law, but in his heart he was very glad.

"But what shall we do now?" asked he.

"Make sure for yourself that I am speaking the truth by hiding among the bushes the next time Thakane says she is going to bathe in the river and waiting till the girl appears."

For some days Thakane stayed quietly at home, and her husband began to think that the man had been mistaken, but at last she said to her husband, "I am going to bathe in the river."

"Well, you can go," answered he. But he ran down quickly by another path, and got there first, and hid himself in the bushes. An instant later, Thakane arrived and, standing on the bank, she sang:

*Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one,
Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!*

Then the old woman came out of the water, holding the girl, now tall and slender, by the hand. And as Masilo looked, he saw that she was indeed his daughter, and he wept for joy that she was not lying dead in the bottom of the lake.

The old woman, however, seemed uneasy, and she said to Thakane, "I feel as if someone was watching us. I will not leave the girl today but will take her back with me," and, sinking beneath the surface, she drew the girl after her. After they had gone, Thakane returned to the village, which Masilo had managed to reach before her.

All the rest of the day he sat in a corner weeping, and his mother who came in asked, "Why are you weeping so bitterly, my son?"

"My head aches," he answered. "It aches very badly." And his mother passed on and left him alone.

In the evening he said to his wife, "I have seen my daughter in the place where you told me you had drowned her. Instead, she lives at the bottom of the lake and has now grown into a young woman."

"I don't know what you are talking about," replied Thakane. "I buried my child under the sand on the beach."

Then Masilo implored her to give the child back to him, but she would not listen and only answered, "If I were to give her back, you would just obey the laws of your country and take her to your father, the ogre, and she would be eaten."

But Masilo promised that he would never let his father see her and that now she was a woman no one would try to hurt her, so Thakane's heart melted, and she went down to the lake to consult the old woman.

"What am I to do?" she asked when, after she clapped her hands, the old woman appeared before her. "Yesterday Masilo beheld Dilah, and ever since he has entreated me to give him back his daughter."

"If I let her go, he must pay me a thousand head of cattle in exchange," replied the old woman. And Thakane carried her answer back to Masilo.

"Why, I would gladly give her two thousand," cried he, "for she has saved my daughter!" And he bade messengers hasten to all the neighbouring villages and tell his people to send him at once all the cattle he possessed. When they were all assembled, he chose a thousand of the finest bulls and cows and drove them down to the river, followed by a great crowd wondering what would happen.

Then Thakane stepped forward in front of the cattle and sang:

*Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one,
Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!*

And Dilah came from the waters holding out her hands to Masilo and Thakane, and in her place the cattle sank into the lake and were driven by the old woman to the great city filled with people which lies at the bottom.

32. The Jackal, the Dove, and the Panther

[From [*African Folktales in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang*](#), originally published in *The Pink Fairy Book* (1897), based on a story in *Contes populaires des Bassoutos* by Édouard Jacottet, 1895. See item #121 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Henry Justice Ford.]

There was once a dove who built a nice soft nest as a home for her three little ones. She was very proud of their beauty and perhaps talked about them to her neighbours more than she need have done, till at last everybody for miles round knew where the three prettiest baby doves in the whole countryside were to be found.

One day a jackal who was prowling about in search of a dinner came by chance to the foot of the rock where the dove's nest was hidden away, and he suddenly bethought himself that if he could get nothing better, he might manage to make a mouthful of one of the young doves. So he shouted as loud as he could, "Ohe, ohe, mother dove."

And the dove replied, trembling with fear, "What do you want, sir?"

"One of your children," said he, "and if you don't throw it to me, I will jump on your nest and eat you up, and the others as well."

Now, the dove was nearly driven distracted at the jackal's words but, in order to save the lives of the other two chicks, she did at last throw the little one out of the nest. The jackal ate it up and went home to sleep.

Meanwhile, the mother dove sat on the edge of her nest, crying bitterly, when a heron, who was flying slowly past the

rock, was filled with pity for her and stopped to ask, "What is the matter, you poor dove?"

And the dove answered, "A jackal came by and asked me to give him one of my little ones, and he said that if I refused, he would jump on my nest and eat us all up."

But the heron replied, "You should not have believed him. He could never have jumped so high. He only deceived you because he wanted something for supper." And with these words, the heron flew off.

He had hardly got out of sight when again the jackal came creeping slowly round the foot of the rock. And when he saw the dove, he cried out a second time, "Ohe, ohe, mother dove! Give me one of your little ones, or I will jump on your nest and eat you all up."

This time the dove knew better, and she answered boldly, "Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort," though her heart beat wildly with fear when she saw the jackal preparing for a spring.

However, he only cut himself against the rock and thought he had better stick to threats, so he started again with his old cry, "Mother dove, mother dove! Be quick and give me one of your little ones, or I will eat you all up."

But the mother dove only answered as before, "Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort for I know we are safely out of your reach."

The jackal felt it was quite hopeless to get what he wanted and asked, "Tell me, mother dove, how have you suddenly become so wise?"

"It was the heron who told me," replied she.

"And which way did he go?" said the jackal.

"Down there among the reeds. You can see him if you look," said the dove.

Then the jackal nodded good-bye and went quickly after the heron. He soon came up to the great bird, who was standing on a stone on the edge of the river and watching for a nice fat

fish. "Tell me, heron," said he, "when the wind blows from that quarter, to which side do you turn?"

"And which side do you turn to?" asked the heron.

The jackal answered, "I always turn to this side."

"Then that is the side I turn to," remarked the heron.

"And when the rain comes from that quarter, which side do you turn to?"

And the heron replied, "And which side do you turn to?"

"Oh, I always turn to this side," said the jackal.

"Then that is the side I turn to," said the heron.

"And when the rain comes straight down, what do you do?"

"What do you do yourself?" asked the heron.

"I do this," answered the jackal; "I cover my head with my paws."

"Then that is what I do," said the heron; "I cover my head with my wings," and as he spoke, he lifted his large wings and spread them completely over his head.

Then, with one bound, the jackal had seized him by the neck and began to shake him.

"Oh, have pity, have pity!" cried the heron. "I never did you any harm."

"You told the dove how to get the better of me, and I am going to eat you for it."

"But if you will let me go," entreated the heron, "I will show you the place where the panther has her lair."

"Then you had better be quick about it," said the jackal, holding tight onto the heron until he had pointed out the panther's den. "Now you may go, my friend, for there is plenty of food there for me."

So the jackal came up to the panther and asked politely, "Panther, would you like me to look after your children while you are out hunting?"

"I should be very much obliged," said the panther, "but be sure you take care of them. They always cry all the time that I am away."

So saying, she trotted off, and the jackal marched into the cave, where he found ten little panthers, and instantly ate one up.

By and by, the panther returned from hunting and said to him, "Jackal, bring out my little ones for their supper."

The jackal fetched them out one by one till he had brought out nine, and he took the last one and brought it out again, so the whole ten seemed to be there, and the panther was quite satisfied.

Next day she went again to the chase, and the jackal ate up another little panther, so now there were only eight. In the evening, when she came back, the panther said, "Jackal, bring out my little ones!"

And the jackal brought out first one and then another, and the last one he brought out three times, so that the whole ten seemed to be there.

The following day the same thing happened, and the next and the next and the next, till at length there was not even one left, and the rest of the day the jackal busied himself with digging a large hole at the back of the den.

That night, when the panther returned from hunting, she said to him as usual, "Jackal, bring out my little ones."

But the jackal replied, "Bring out your little ones, indeed! Why, you know as well as I do that you have eaten them all up."

Of course the panther had not the least idea what the jackal meant by this, and so she repeated, "Jackal, bring out my children." As she got no answer, she entered the cave but found no jackal, for he had crawled through the hole he had made and escaped. And, what was worse, she did not find the little ones either.

Now the panther was not going to let the jackal get off like that, and she set off at a trot to catch him. The jackal, however, had got a good start, and he reached a place where a swarm of bees deposited their honey in the cleft of a rock. Then he stood

still and waited till the panther came up to him, "Jackal, where are my little ones?" she asked,

And the jackal answered, "They are up there. It is where I keep school."

The panther looked about and then inquired, "But where? I see nothing of them."

"Come a little this way," said the jackal, "and you will hear how beautifully they are singing."

So the panther drew near the cleft of the rock.

"Don't you hear them?" said the jackal. "They are in there singing." Then the jackal slipped away while the panther was listening to the song of the children.

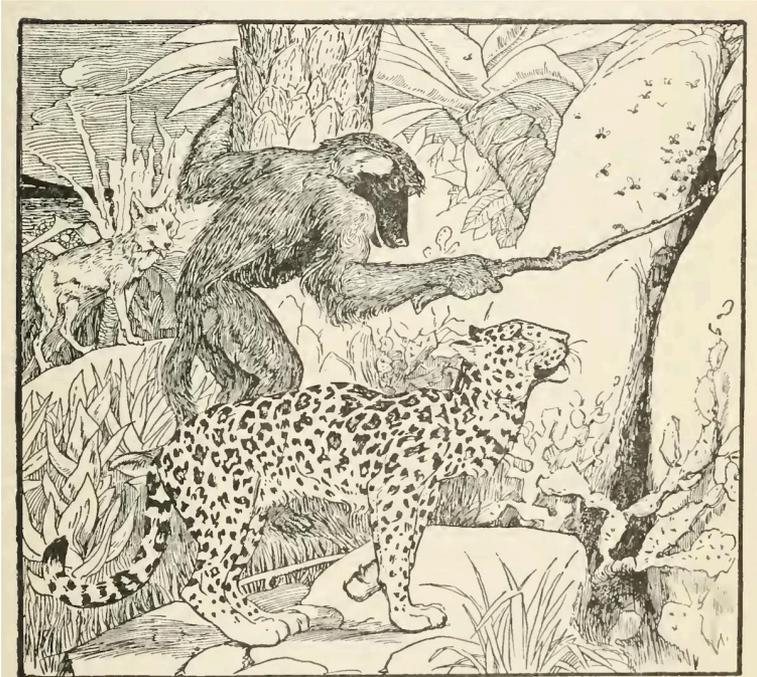
She was still standing in the same place when a baboon went by. "What are you doing there, panther?" asked the baboon.

"I am listening to my children singing. It is here that the jackal keeps his school."

Then the baboon seized a stick and poked it in the cleft of the rock. "Well then," he exclaimed, "I should like to see your children!"

The bees flew out in a huge swarm and made furiously for the panther whom they attacked on all sides, while the baboon soon climbed up out of the way, and as he perched himself on the branch of a tree, he cried, "I wish you joy of your children!" Meanwhile, the jackal's voice was heard from afar exclaiming, "Sting her well! Don't let her go!"

The panther galloped away as if she was mad and flung herself into the nearest lake, but every time she raised her head, the bees stung her afresh, so at last the poor beast was drowned altogether.



◦ THE ◦ BABOON ◦ WISHES ◦ TO ◦ SEE ◦ THE ◦ PANTHER'S ◦ CHILDREN ◦

33. The Lion, the Hyena, and the Fox

[From [*Tales, Customs, Names and Dirges of the Tigre Tribes*](#) by Enno Littmann, 1915. See item #128 in the Bibliography.]

The lion and the hyena traveled together, and on their way the lion found a bull, and the hyena a cow; the cow was far advanced in pregnancy. And they put the bull and the cow together, and the hyena tended them.

But afterwards, when it was time for the cow to bring forth, the lion said to the hyena, "You stay at home today; I shall tend the bull and the cow."

The hyena knew that her cow was about to give birth but, being afraid, she stayed at home.

And when the lion had gone away with them to the pasture, the hyena's cow gave birth to a calf. And the lion, wishing to take the calf for himself, took the placenta of the cow and stuck it into the behind of his bull. Furthermore, he let the calf suck milk from its mother in the field so that afterwards the hyena should not see the calf sucking.

And in the evening when he came home, he said to the hyena, "My bull has given birth to a calf, and this is his placenta."

The hyena said to him, "Does a bull give birth to a calf like a cow?"

The lion said to her angrily, "Yes, certainly he does!" and he sought to kill the hyena. But the hyena was afraid of him and sat down crying.

The next morning the lion took the calf and his bull and the cow and went away with them, and the hyena stayed at home, crying.

And while she was crying, the fox came to her and said, "What has happened to you, hyena?"

She said, "My cow gave birth to a calf, and the lion said to me, 'My bull birthed the calf; your cow did not calve,' and he took it from me."

And the fox said to her, "Be silent! Do not cry; tomorrow I shall make him give it to you."

And the next day when the lion and the hyena were together, the fox, carrying a waterskin, passed by them.

When they saw him, the lion said to him, "Where are you going, fox?"

The fox answered him, "Last night my father gave birth to a boy, and I am going to ask for the milk of his child-bed."

The lion asked him, "Does a man give birth like a woman?"

And the fox said to him, "If a man does not give birth like a woman, give the hyena her calf."

The lion jumped upon him to kill him, but the fox ran swiftly away from him into a certain place.

Now the lion hid himself in the hole of the fox to kill him by craft.

Then, when it grew evening, the fox came to his hole, but he saw the tracks of the lion at the mouth of his hole and said to himself, "Perhaps the lion is hidden here in my hole," and he said, standing at the mouth of his hole, "O my house, good evening to you!"

But the lion kept silent.

Again the fox repeated, "O my house, good evening to you! Previously you used to answer me, 'May your evening be good!' and that is how I know you are my house."

The lion, thinking that the fox's house had formerly talked to him, said to him with a disguised voice, "May your evening be good!"

And the fox said, "My house! You are not my house; you are really the lion!" and he fled from him.

The lion looked for the fox, seeking to kill him, but as he did not find him, he returned to the hyena and gave her her calf. In this way the fox, by his craft, made the lion give the hyena her calf.

And men say as a proverb, "Give the hyena her calf," said the fox."

34. How the Fox Followed the Elephant

[From [*Tales, Customs, Names and Dirges of the Tigre Tribes*](#) by Enno Littmann, 1915. See item #128 in the Bibliography.]

The fox and the elephant were together. When they started, the elephant said to the fox, "Where are you going, fox?" The fox answered him, "I am going with you." The elephant, however, said to him, "Stay here; you cannot endure hunger and thirst." But the fox said to him, "I can endure it; I shall not say to you that I am hungry or thirsty." And the elephant said to him, "Very well then." And they went together about a day's journey.

Then the fox said to the elephant, "Uncle, I am thirsty!" But the elephant replied, "Didn't you tell me you wouldn't be thirsty? How is this now?" And the fox said to him, "When did I think that we should go through such a dry country?" The elephant said, "Go then, drink from that water-pit there and come back!" And the fox went and, after having drunk, he filled up the pit and returned to the elephant. And the elephant asked him, "Have you had a drink?" but the fox replied, "No, I found the pit filled up."

Thereupon after they had marched awhile, the fox said to him, "Uncle, I am thirsty!" The elephant said, "Go then, drink from such and such a well; then come." The fox went, drank, filled up the well, and said, "I found nothing in it; it was filled up."

And again after they had marched on awhile, the fox said to him, "Uncle, I am thirsty!" The elephant said to him, "Go then and drink from such and such a well; then come!" And that one also the fox covered up and said, "I found nothing."

While the fox spoke thus and the elephant showed him every well, they came into a country which the elephant did not know. The fox said to him, "Uncle, I am thirsty!" The elephant answered, "I do not know the wells of this country. But there is water within my belly; enter here through my behind, and when you've had a drink, come back without turning right or left." So the fox entered through the behind of the elephant, drank from that water, and came back in his tracks.

Afterwards when they had marched on from there, the fox said to the elephant, "Uncle, I am thirsty!" And the elephant replied, "Enter into me as before, and when you've had a drink, come back!" The fox entered into him, and on his return after he had drunk, he saw the fat in the belly of the elephant swinging; he tore a bite off from the fat and ate. The elephant said to the fox inside him, "Fox, how could you betray me? May you be betrayed likewise!" But the fox sat there inside the elephant in order to eat from the fat. The elephant said, "Why don't you come out?" The fox said, "How am I supposed to come out?" The elephant replied, "Go out the way you came in!" The fox said, "If I do that, you'll poop on me!" The elephant said, "Come out through my mouth!" The fox said, "Uncle, if I do that, you'll break me into pieces with your tusks." "Come out through my foot!" "If I do, you'll squash me." "Come out then through my ear!" "Then the wax of your ear will get all over me." "Come out through my trunk!" "If I do, you'll catch me with it." And whatever way the elephant told him, the fox refused to come out.

The elephant said to him, "Now then, since you have refused to come out, I shall throw myself with you down from this precipice." But the fox said to him, "What do I care? Throw yourself down!" And the elephant, intending to perish together with the fox, jumped from the precipice and all his bones broke into pieces. But the fox went out through his behind when the elephant began to jump down, and he was safe.

Thereupon the fox took out the elephant's entrails and, while unrolling them and dragging them along, he was met by traveling merchants. And he recognized his cousin among the merchants, and they greeted each other. Said his cousin to him, "Where have you come from, fox?" And he told him his adventures and said to him, "To my luck and your luck, I have found an elephant fallen down." So his cousin informed his company, and they asked the fox, "Where is the elephant?" The fox answered, "These, his entrails, will guide you; just follow them!" "But who will stay with our things for us?" said they. The fox replied, "I shall stay with them."

And after they had gone to the elephant, the fox opened their skins and drank the melted butter that was in them; then he filled the skins with piss and poop, but from the skin of his cousin he kept away. And when they returned, they said to him, "You have stayed here for us, fox; you have done well." And then they said, "Let's make a meal for him!" And when they had made the meal for him, the fox asked them, "Make me butter-sauce out of the skin of my cousin; my aunt's butter I know well — it is good." So they made a sauce of it for him. And after he had eaten, he went away from them.

When the merchants entered the town, they opened their skins in order to sell the butter, but they found nothing but piss and poop in their skins; only the skin of the fox's cousin was good. The merchants said, "The fox has done this to us," and they went to seek him. But the fox had mixed with other foxes who were his friends, so they did not recognize him.

Then the merchants gathered all the foxes, planted a spear in the ground, and said to them, "Jump over it." The other foxes jumped over it, but the fox who had drunk their melted butter could not jump. The merchants said, "It is he! Because he has drunk our butter, he is now unable to jump," and they seized him. And after they had tied him to a tree, they went away with the words, "Let us fetch switches with which to scourge him!"

While he was thus tied, the jackal came to him, herding several goats and playing a song on his harp. He said to him, "Fox, what has happened to you? Why are you tied up?" The fox replied, "My family told me to become their chief, but I refused the chieftainship." The jackal said, "Does he whom they tell to become chief ever refuse the chieftainship?" The fox replied, "If you want it, untie me, and I'll give the chieftainship to you. I'll tie you in my place, and when they come to lash you with switches, tell them: I will be chief; let me alone!" The jackal untied him, and after that the fox tied him to the tree. Then the fox went away, taking from the jackal his several goats and also his harp.

Now when the merchants returned and lashed the jackal with the switches, he said to them, "I will be chief; let me alone!" When they saw he was not the fox, they asked him, "Who are you? And who told you that you would become chief?" He answered, "I am the jackal, and the fox has betrayed me! He told me, 'My family told me to become their chief, but I refused the chieftainship.' And I said, 'Does he whom they tell to become chief ever refuse the chieftainship?' And he said, 'If you want it, untie me, and I'll give the chieftainship to you. I'll tie you in my place, and when they come to lash you with switches, tell them: I will be chief; let me alone!' And he took my several goats and my harp and went away." Then they said, "The traitor has escaped us," and they untied the jackal.

And in this way the fox escaped from them. This is what they say.

35. The Debbi

[From [*Tales, Customs, Names and Dirges of the Tigre Tribes*](#) by Enno Littmann, 1915. See item #128 in the Bibliography.]

The so-called debbi is a wild animal; its height is less than that of a dog. They say that it frightens all the wild animals.

Once upon a time, a man went down to a lonely river to fetch water. But at the river he found all the eatable and uneatable animals drinking. So the man hid himself in a certain place until all the animals had drunk and gone away.

But while the man was hiding thus, he observed all the animals. And after they all had drunk, each went to its place. And the elephants were romping together, and the lions together, and the hyenas together. And they all were scuffling, each with its kind.

Now, while they were in this state, the debbi came down to the river. And when it came, all the animals became wildly excited and fled instantly, and all left the riverbed.

The man was very much astonished and exclaimed, "Thy wonder, God! What is this?"

Thereupon the debbi came down to the well and, after it had drunk, it went up; then it wallowed at a certain spot and went out by the way in which it had come down.

Now, when all had gone away from the riverbed, the man rose from his hiding place, wondering that all the eatable and uneatable animals had fled from the little one. He drew water from the well and started on his way.

But then he thought, "I had better try to find out exactly of what sort that is which has put them all to flight." And he came to the place where it had wallowed, and there he found a hair. Then the man took the hair and tied it up with a knot in the corner of his cloak.

Afterwards when he entered a village, all the people of the village fled from him. But the man did not know for what reason they fled from him.

And he went to another village, but the people of that village also fled from him.

And the man was frightened and said to himself, "What have I become, that all flee from me as from a madman?"

But from among the people of the village, a brave and courageous man stood before him and shouted at him, saying, "You, man! What do you have with you by which you put us to flight?"

The other replied, "I have no weapons; on the contrary, you flee from me by yourselves!"

Again the man said to him, "No! Do you perhaps have some root with you?"

Then he thought of the hair and answered him, "I have no root, but I went down to a riverbed and, because I found there all the wild animals, I hid myself until they made room for me. And from my hiding place I observed this: a little hairy one smaller than a dog came down to the river, and when the animals saw it, they all fled from it, even the elephants. And, after it had drunk from the well and gone up, it wallowed at a certain spot. Thereupon, wondering very much, I took a hair from its wallowing place, and it has been in the end of my cloak until now."

And the other man bought the hair from him with money. Then he sewed it up in a leather case, and it became a talisman unto him, and he hung it around his neck. And the people of every village and tribe were afraid of him. Whatever he took raiding, he brought home, and when his village was raided, he made the raiders give up their booty. And there was nobody who could stand before him in a fight.

But afterwards, when he lost the talisman with the hair, warriors killed him, they say.

And now men say about a man who has something frightful about him: "He has probably a hair of the debbi with him."

This debbi is only seen sometimes, and then everybody, be it man or animal, flees from it. But he who finds some of its hair fallen on the ground and carries it on his body is feared by all men. And the abiding-place of the debbi is generally the Gash-Barka region, but it is not often seen.

36. The Elephant and the Rabbit

[From [*Kiungani, or: Story and History from Central Africa*](#) by Arthur Madan, 1887. See item #130 in the Bibliography.]

There was once an elephant, and he made a brew of beer and said, "I should like to have a dance for my friends, but at my drinking-bout I will have none who have not horns. I want all who have horns, but no one else."

So one day he collected together all his friends who had horns, but no one else. And they all assembled. And he asked his friends, "Whom shall we appoint policeman to keep the door for us?"

They all said, "Perhaps the hyena would do."

Someone was sent to go and find the hyena. The hyena was soon found, he and a very little cub of his, and they were brought to the elephant. And the elephant said, "I want you to be our policeman and just keep the door for us."

"Oh, certainly," said the hyena. "Very well. Agreed."

The arrangements were made for the dance. It was a dance called "Njipa." First they conversed, and presently beer was brought, a jar and a half full, and they drank. When they had done drinking, they fell to dancing, and the song to which they danced was this — "*Njipa, mwiwale zale? Uwanywo hatupiyakao mwanzi pwanabwa ngoo*" — which means, "This dance, where did you hear of it? And we are by no means at home yet, oh, no!" That is what it meant.

Well, while they were dancing away and highly delighted because the dance was a very good one, suddenly they saw a very handsome young person coming with antlers like a stag.

They called the stag and asked him, "Is this a relation of yours or not?"

The stag replied, "I do not know. Possibly it is a relation of mine."

The elephant said at once, "Give this young person a place and let him dance. It is alright; he has horns." A place in the dance was given him at once. But he would not dance in the sun, as he was afraid his horns would come off — for he was only a rabbit really and had no horns at all, just horns of wax.

So they danced till they began to be tired. Presently they went to have another pull at the beer, just by way of refreshment. When they had refreshed themselves, then at once they fell to dancing again. And then the rabbit got in a sunny place, and in a moment both his horns melted off, and one horn flew off and hit the elephant near the nose. "Collar that fellow there!" exclaimed the elephant to the hyena.

"Where?" answered the hyena. "I have not got sight of him yet." The rabbit had not got out; he had hidden himself near where the hyena was. The very moment the hyena went out of the door, the rabbit bolted out too.

When the hyena saw him, he went after him at full speed. Suddenly the rabbit dived into a hole. The hyena and his young cub dug away with a will but could not get at him. Presently the hyena said, "Wait here and don't let him out. Stuff grass into the hole; I will go and get fire."

"Very well." said the cub.

As soon as the hyena was well on his way to fetch fire, the rabbit rose up from inside, and while the cub was gathering grass, the rabbit came out. As soon as he was safe outside, he came up from behind and asked the cub who was gathering grass, "Where has your father gone?"

"He has gone to get fire," answered the cub.

"What is the fire for?" the rabbit inquired.

"To smoke the rabbit out," said he. "He's there inside the hole. I will stuff grass in the hole."

“Oh!” said the rabbit. “It is no good stuffing grass in. He will get out. Don’t use grass! Put your paw in, and keep singing like this: *Too-oo tee-ay-lar, too-oo tee-ay-lar.*” After the cub put his paw in the hole, the rabbit said, “Now then, begin singing. And go on till you see your father coming with the fire; then stuff the grass in. Do you understand, you little cub?”

“Oh, yes!” said the cub. The rabbit was off in a moment, and the cub never saw where the rabbit went to.

And the cub attended to what the rabbit had said to him and did exactly as he was told: he put his paw in the hole and kept singing, “*Too-oo tee-ay-lar, too-oo tee-ay-lar.*” And as soon as the cub saw his father coming, he stuffed the grass into the hole.

Presently his father came up and asked his cub, “Is the rabbit in there?”

“Yes, father, he is there.”

So they lighted a fire and put it in the hole and puffed away at it till the hole was quite full of smoke. Then they fell to digging again. They dug and dug till they came to the end, and not a thing did they find inside it after all.

The father promptly asked his child, “Why is the rabbit not in there inside the hole? Where has he gone to? I know you have let him out.”

The young one answered at once and said, “Well, I did see a rabbit. He came up behind me, and he said to me, ‘What are you waiting for here?’ And I replied, ‘I am waiting for a rabbit. He is here in this hole.’ And he said to me, ‘If you are waiting for a rabbit, it is no good stuffing grass in the hole; he will be out and away in a moment.’ And I answered, ‘Well, what am I to stop the hole with?’ ‘With your paw,’ said he, ‘and besides, keep singing like this: *Too-oo, tee-ay-lar, too-oo tee-ay-lar!*’” — which means “stopping up and letting out,” that is its meaning.

When the cub’s father heard this, he was very angry, for he was afraid the elephant would kill him.

Well, the hyena hunted for the rabbit but could not find him, as the rabbit had gotten clean away. Then the hyena and his cub went back to the elephant and found them all dancing away just as before. And the dance was in full swing, too. The hyena went up to the elephant and said to him, "I have not caught the rabbit."

"What rabbit?" said the elephant hastily.

"The one you told me to collar," said the hyena.

"I never told you any such thing," said the elephant. The fact was, the elephant denied it because the dance was quite delightful; the dancing and the singing were quite exquisite. So the hyena went back to his post and kept the door again as before, he and his cub with him.

The company continued to dance and drank up the beer. The beer was not quite so good at first, but now there were the dregs at the bottom, and they were particularly nice — nicer than all the rest together. Then they made up another dance, and presently they saw a young person with the horns of a buffalo, and very fine horns indeed they were. They welcomed him at once in high good-humour, and the rabbit (for it was the rabbit again) joined in the dance without more ado.

At first, he took great care not to get into the sun for he was afraid his horns would melt off at once. So he danced in the shade. Presently the elephant called out, "Stop dancing. Now let us finish off what is left of our beer." They lost no time in gathering together, and very soon the beer was brought, and they drank till they had finished it all up, and the rabbit with them.

When they had done drinking, they stood up to dance, and they danced away vigorously, and the dance got into a famous swing. And the rabbit got into the sun, because he was so taken up with the dancing. And in a moment, while the rabbit was dancing, both his horns melted right off and flew up and hit the buffalo. And the rabbit made a rush for the hyena, who was keeping guard at the door, and the hyena entirely failed to

collar the rabbit. And the rabbit bolted into a cemetery, and the hyena tried to hunt him down but could not catch him, for in the cemetery there were a great many footmarks, so he did not know which was the track of the rabbit.

And the hyena went back and said to the elephant, "I could not catch him for he ran into the cemetery, and I do not know the track which he made for there are a great many footmarks there."

"Well," said the elephant, "what are we to do? He has contrived to drink our beer, and he has joined in our dance, and he has got off scot-free. And he has hurt us, too, with those beastly horns of his."

But the company danced and enjoyed themselves, and then they took leave of each other, and everyone went away highly delighted. So the dance came to an end.

As for the rabbit, he took care not to appear a third time.

37. The Frog and the Chameleon

[From [*Kiungani, or: Story and History from Central Africa*](#) by Arthur Madan, 1887. See item #130 in the Bibliography. The photograph of the chameleon is by Charles J. Sharp at [Wikimedia Commons](#).]



One day a frog spoke to his fellow frogs and said, "I have heard that there is a chameleon about. The day I see him, he shall be my friend."

Well, one day they met, the frog and the chameleon, and they at once wished each other good morning, and after wishing each other good morning, they made mutual

inquiries. First the frog asked the chameleon, “How are you getting on?”

“Capitally,” replied the chameleon. “And how are you — well or badly?”

“Excellently,” said the frog, “and how have you been this long time past?”

“In peace and quietness,” answered the chameleon, “passing all understanding.”

“My friend,” said the frog, “you have given me an answer, but it has a fatal flaw. Peace cannot pass all understanding, unless you ascribe it to Almighty God, who created us, me and you. You, my friend, speak to me of a peace passing all understanding without naming your Creator, yours and mine, the Creator of all things, Almighty God.”

“Quite true,” answered the chameleon. “You have a very fine sense of propriety.”

Well, the frog and the chameleon clung to each other as the ring to the finger, and so remained for many a day, the frog and the chameleon.

At last the frog got up and said to the chameleon, “My friend, we are still unmarried. Let us go and look for wives, and so marry.”

“By all means, my friend,” said the chameleon, “let us go in search of wives.”

So off they went to search for wives, and they traveled for many a day without finding what they were in search of. However, one day they saw a town and said, “Suppose we enter this town. It is possible we shall get them here.”

So they entered the town and were at once made welcome — “Welcome, welcome, strangers.” They sat down, and food was brought in abundance, and they made a meal on the spot. In the morning they were asked, “How are things going in your parts — well or badly?”

“As well as could be,” answered they. ” But there is just one thing to mention: we are in want of wives.”

“What do you say?” rejoined the people of the town.

“Wives,” said they, “simply wives.”

Now in that town there was a certain man who had two children, both girls, and just at that time the two daughters of this man appeared and passed in front of the frog and the chameleon, who noticed that they were fine girls, and they asked the people of the town, “Where is their father?”

The people answered and said, “He is the man you were just now talking to here. They are his daughters.”

“We should like,” they said, “to marry his daughters.” Their father and their mother were at once called. The frog and the chameleon said, “We should like to marry your daughters.”

The man had a little conversation with his wife. “Well, what do you think, my dear? Our daughters are asked in marriage by the frog and the chameleon. Now what do you think, my dear? Are they to marry or not marry?” “Just as you like, my dear,” replied his wife. “Well,” said he, “for my part, I should think they had better marry. These are gentlemen of quality, and I really cannot say no to them.” Then the wife remarked, “I won’t have my children live in want. I won’t have my children find life all worry and trouble.”

So the husband replied to the frog and the chameleon, “Is it really the case that you have the means to provide well for your wives?”

The frog and the chameleon answered and said to the father, “We have, sir, never fear. We have, we have indeed, sir.”

Then the mother put in her word, “I want sons-in-law who know how to dig.”

“We will try,” replied they, but the frog added a boast on his own account and said, “I have no doubt, madam, I can dig, no doubt at all.” But the chameleon only said, “I will try, but I do not think I can.”

So the wedding of the frog and chameleon was celebrated, and it was as grand as could possibly be, the wedding of the chameleon and the frog. Fifty days lasted the wedding

festivities of the frog and the chameleon, with slaughter of oxen and slaughter of sheep and goats. As to chickens, they were beyond counting. So a very grand affair was the wedding of the frog and the chameleon.

Well, when the wedding festivities were over, the father-in-law said to them, "Well, sons-in-law, what line of life will you take up now?"

"In this country," said they, "we are strangers," and they added, "We want spades and axes and sickles. We will do field-work." They said further, "Of course we are going to dig. Should we take your daughters and do nothing for it?"

Their father-in-law bought spades, axes, and sickles — everything required for field-work their father-in-law bought. He gave them the things and said, "I want you to farm. Only support your wives, and I won't take a single sixpence from you."

"By all means," they replied, and the frog said, "For my part, one spade and one axe are by no means enough for me. I require twelve spades and ten axes and nine sickles. Then I shall do rare work."

"Gently, gently," interrupted his friend the chameleon. "Are you speaking the truth, my friend? How do you propose to work with twelve spades?"

"Oh! Oh!" cried the frog. "Just because the chameleon is a rare stick-in-the-mud — he's a whole year getting anywhere; he just crawls one foot at a time — I won't have you make me out a do-nothing, Mr. Chameleon! I want twelve spades. None of your nonsense for me. Out of the road there!" The chameleon moved off, and then the frog was given his twelve spades, and he said, "Now I shall do rare work" — and he was given spades, and axes too, and sickles, just as he had requested.

But the chameleon was given one spade and one axe and one sickle. And his father-in-law said, "The frog has told me you are a thorough idler. That's why I gave you one spade and one axe and one sickle, because you are lazy."

“Very good, father-in-law,” said the chameleon, “you will see if I am lazy. Thank you, thank you; one spade and one axe and one sickle will do for me, father-in-law. Thank you. Let the frog there have your spades.”

So the matter ended, and they went off to work.

Well, whenever the frog went out to work, he used to cover himself with sand and cover himself with mud, and when he came home to his father-in-law’s house, he bragged, “I have done a fine stroke of work today; I want a good pile of food on my plate today.” His mother-in-law cooked for him, and he took his meals by himself, and the frog was very greedy and would go presently to his mother-in-law and say, “I have worked hard today, mother-in-law, but as to the chameleon, he does not do a single stroke of work — he goes off a ramble without you seeing him; he carries off his spade in the morning, but don’t you believe that he is at work. He is a liar and a do-nothing.” Then the mother-in-law got to hate the chameleon heartily, because he was lazy. The frog had made mischief, and he said to her, “Keep your love for me, I who work like a man, while the chameleon does nothing.” When the frog came from his fields it was always the same thing: he covered himself with mud so as to get a name for hard work and be praised by everybody.

When the chameleon came from the fields, he would oil himself and bathe himself and go back to his house, and when he goes indoors, his wife sees him, and flies into a passion, and demands of her husband, “How much digging have you done today?” and the chameleon answers his wife, “I have fine games. I don’t dig. The frog is the great digger; he has it all to himself — no one else has a chance with him in digging.” His wife would answer and say, “You are an idle do-nothing, you! Everyone tells me you are. Is there a man in the world who comes from the fields and all to oil himself? Where did you ever see one? Tell me.”

“No, I never did,” said the chameleon. “But still, suppose it is a way a man has; what are you to do?” His wife made no reply. At

last she said to him, "Just try to dig a bit. Don't be lazy, my dear. Look at your friend the frog; when he comes from his fields, does he oil himself or not?"

The chameleon said to his wife, "No, he does not."

"Well," said his wife, "then you are an idler; you do not dig."

"Just so, an idler," was his answer to his wife.

So the chameleon went off to his fields. The fact is, the chameleon was uncommonly industrious at digging, while the frog never put spade to the ground. The frog was the regular do-nothing. Every day it was just the same. The frog would go to his field and stay a long time, doing nothing but amuse himself; then he would spatter himself with mud and come home, bragging to his wife, "Ah, my dear! I have done a fine day's work. I trust Almighty God may send down rain tonight, and then tomorrow I will go and sow my field. A very large field it is, too." So bragged the frog.

Well, that night there was a heavy fall of rain. In the morning, the frog said to his wife, "Go to your mother and say I want seed." She went and cried, "Mother, mother, may I come in? My husband wants seed to sow." "Oh! By all means," said her mother. Then the daughter asked, "What sort of seed do you want baskets of, my husband — maize or millet?" The frog replied, "I want eighteen baskets of maize, and ten of millet, and nineteen of rice." And the frog got all his seed of all kinds together.

Then the chameleon was asked, "How many baskets do you want?"

"Just what you can supply me with," said he. "I shall make no fuss, mother-in-law."

"Quite right," said his mother-in-law, and she produced some baskets of maize, and of millet, and of rice. And of each kind of seed his mother-in-law gave him two baskets only, because, thought she, "The chameleon knows nothing about digging." The chameleon went off to sow his seed.

What did the frog do but carry off his baskets of seed, and go and dig a hole and put all his seed in the hole — that was all the field the frog had. But the chameleon went to his field and sowed the seed which his mother-in-law had given him — the chameleon sowed his seed until his seed was all gone. As to the frog, his seed, too, was all gone, of course — the frog's seed being simply put in a hole.

Then the frog lodged another request for seed with his mother-in-law. "I want," said he, "nineteen more baskets of maize, and the same of millet and the same of rice, nineteen baskets — of each kind of seed nineteen baskets." His mother-in-law did not like to be outdone, so she procured the seed and conveyed the seed to her son-in-law the frog, and oh! oh! oh! — the frog was overjoyed, and he went again to dig a hole and put in it the whole lot of seed which his mother-in-law had given him. Then the frog said, "No, that is enough now; I don't want any more seed. What you gave me is sufficient. Now I have only got to keep the ground clear of weeds."

Then the chameleon was asked, "Do you want any seed?"

"I am a mere do-nothing," said he. "I want none of your seed, mother-in-law. I will get seed myself."

"Very good," said his mother-in-law. So the chameleon sowed his field and kept his eye on it till the seed sprouted and came up, and he kept the ground clear of weeds, and in the chameleon's field things were uncommonly flourishing. In his field there were bananas, in his field the maize was past all reckoning, and so was the sugar-cane in his field, the chameleon's.

Harvest-time came, and the frog was summoned by his mother-in-law, who said to him, "I want to go and see your fields, son-in-law. It is harvest-time, you know."

"Indeed it is, mother-in-law," he said. "It is harvest-time." But the frog quaked with terror at deceiving his mother-in-law. However, he said, "Certainly. Suppose we go tomorrow morning early?" And his mother-in-law said, "By all means."

They slept till morning, and then his mother-in-law went to the frog's house and said, "Well, what say you? Are we to go to your field, son-in-law?"

"But," replied the frog to his mother-in-law, "are you sure you are equal to a very long walk? It is a very long way to the place where I have worked, mother-in-law."

"Never mind," said his mother-in-law. "Let us start and take it quietly, and we shall get there at last." The frog was at his wits' end, and his mother-in-law said, "Alright, come along." His mother-in-law carried a basket with her, thinking she would take some of the maize.

Well, they went on, and on, and on, and his mother-in-law kept asking, "Son-in-law frog, son-in-law frog, where are you going to?" The frog uttered an ejaculation, which meant, "Come along, mother-in-law; come along, mother-in-law." So they went on till it was mid-day, and the frog said to his mother-in-law, "We have left the field behind us. Let us go back, mother-in-law." His mother-in-law was fatigued, and so were the people who were with her, and she said, "What have you given us all this trouble for nothing for?"

The frog quaked at the voice of his mother-in-law. The frog was at his wits' end for an idea. "I had better say the seed was devoured by swarms of vermin. Yes, rats in swarms. I had better say that, and my mother-in-law will let me off." The frog racked his brains. "I had better say it." So he said to his mother-in-law, almost beside himself with terror, "That seed you gave me was eaten by rats and vermin. They came in swarms and devoured it wholesale, and the rats routed up all the seed I planted, and here's the rats' hole." Well, his mother-in-law simply could not bear the sight of this wicked waste of seed. She could not call him her son-in-law, but said to him, "Frog, you are no friend of mine. You have given me all the trouble of a laborious hunt after seed, and now you have spoiled it all in this way. And then you have worried me with a hunt after spades and axes —

everything, indeed, I had to hunt up, and now I should like to know, where are your fields?"

"I couldn't dig," whimpered the frog, "because I was all by myself." And the frog was terribly ashamed; he could not look his mother-in-law in the face. Then his mother-in-law said, "Frog, you are no longer my son-in-law. You have done very wrong." So they went back to the town in a ferment, the frog not having a word to say for himself and only expecting to be summarily expelled.

The next day the chameleon was summoned. "Well, chameleon, how are you? Have you not been digging either?" The chameleon answered his mother-in-law, "Come to my field and see. But I am a sad idler, I am, just as you said yourselves, just like the frog said. However, come along and see the results of my idling." So they went to the chameleon's field, they went on and on, and at last they reached it. When she set eyes on the chameleon's field — and that field was something enormous — then his mother-in-law gave a cry of surprise and said, "Well, I never! Son-in-law chameleon, who has dug here? All this field, you by yourself?"

"Oh! I'm a lazy dog," said the chameleon. "You see how lazy I am." His mother-in-law was quite astounded. Then in a moment the chameleon gave orders for a house seven stories high, and there it stood in a moment. Then in a moment he gave orders to his maid-servants to convey his mother-in-law upstairs, and she was carried up. The news spread to the town, and a man was sent off to bring the father-in-law from the town. Very soon he was brought to the chameleon's residence. The father-in-law was astounded too, and said, "How have you managed to dig all this ground by yourself?" The chameleon gave orders to his men-servants to convey his father-in-law upstairs to a room, and people began to come into the chameleon's house, and he received them in state. The chameleon went to his field, and plucked some half-ripe maize, and gave it to his servants. "Make haste and cook this for my

guests to eat.” His father-in-law was in the seven-storied house, and he was in raptures and said, “I have got a fine son-in-law.” And he added, “Now I will not have another son-in-law, only the chameleon now, and no one else. As to the frog, I will have nothing to do with him whatever.”

So he sent people, saying, “Tell the frog to take himself off. Don’t let me see him when I come to the town. Don’t let me see him a single moment.” The people went to the town, and the frog was told, “Your father-in-law is at the chameleon’s house, and he says, ‘Take yourself off this very day! Don’t stay here today; go away.’ Now then, you are a do-nothing, you frog, you! Hit him! Hit him!”

Off the frog ran into the forest, and he was never seen again.

When the father-in-law came back to the town, he asked, “Has the frog gone?” The people of the town replied, “Yes, he has run off into the woods. We were going to kill him, but he ran away.”

Well, the frog’s wife was given to the chameleon, and so the chameleon had two wives. And the chameleon said to his father-in-law, “Come now, let us walk about my fields.” So they walked about till the father-in-law was tired, and then he rested. When he was ready, he got up and went away. The father-in-law told everyone, “I have got a fine son-in-law indeed.”

So the chameleon lived with his two wives in the house of seven stories, and they lived in peace and quietness. His father-in-law died, and the mother-in-law only was left, and presently she died too. Then the chameleon was left and his two wives and a number of servants, male and female. They had nothing to do but eat and drink.

This is the story of the chameleon and the frog. And the frog ran away into the woods — that was what became of the frog. As to digging, the chameleon handed that all over to his servants.

This is the end of the story of the chameleon and the frog.

38. The Man and the Sheep

[From [*Kiungani, or: Story and History from Central Africa*](#) by Arthur Madan, 1887. See item #130 in the Bibliography.]

There was a man named Msamya, and he was a rich man, and he went to the market and saw a sheep for sale, bought it, and went home with it to his house. This man, Msamya, who bought the sheep, was by trade a tailor, and he had a son named Magala.

Early in the morning he said to his son Magala, "I am going to my work. At eight o'clock take out this sheep to graze in the pasture."

When the hour came, the lad was late — he did not know that it had struck eight o'clock. The sheep spoke and called to him, "Magala, Magala, Magala."

"Here I am," he replied.

The sheep spoke and said to him, "When Msamya went to his work, what did he say to you?"

Magala answered and said, "He told me, 'When it strikes eight o'clock, take the sheep to graze in the pasture.'"

"Why did you not take me?" said the sheep.

The boy took it to the pasture. When he had done taking it there, the boy ran off and went after his father to the place where he worked, and he said to his father, "That sheep can speak."

Msamya caught up a bit of wood which he used in his work, and struck him with it, and said, "Oh! Oh! My boy, where have you found a sheep that can speak?" The boy ran away.

The next day Msamya said to his son, "When you see it is ten o'clock, take this sheep here to yonder baobab tree."

The hour came, but the boy did not know it. So the sheep called him, "Magala, Magala, Magala."

"Here I am," he replied.

The sheep spoke and said to him, "When Msamya went to work, what did he say to you?"

The boy answered and said, "He said to me, 'When you hear the clock strike ten, take this sheep and lead it to the baobab tree.'"

So the boy took the sheep and led it to where the baobab tree stood. When he had done taking it, the boy ran off and went after his father to the place where he was working, and the boy said to him, "Father, you will not believe when I tell you, but the sheep speaks, really and truly."

"Very well, my boy, if it speaks, I will come myself and see if it does speak, really and truly."

The day following, Msamya gave his son the same directions, but he came himself and kept watch at the door to hear if the sheep would speak. And he said to his son, "Be late on purpose so that I may hear if it speaks."

And so it all happened. Msamya stood outside the door, and Magala played about outside. Presently the sheep called, "Magala!" and Magala said to his father, "Do you hear, father? You thought I was telling a lie."

His father replied, "I have heard, my child. It is a marvelous thing. Come, set off and take it to the pasture yonder."

Well, Msamya went off to consult the medicine-men, and the medicine-men said to him, "Take your son, and go and cut two heavy logs, one for you and one for your son. When you find the sheep asleep, first do you throw your log down on it, and then let your son come and do the same. You will kill it in a moment."

Msamya followed this advice. They went together, the man and his son, and cut two very large logs, one for each of them. They came and found the sheep asleep out of doors, the sun

being hot. Msamya threw down his log upon it, but the sheep slipped aside and said, "Msamya, look, you nearly killed me. But of course you did not see me, and it's very hot, and you must be tired." As the sheep was saying this, Magala came up and threw down his log upon him, but the sheep avoided this too, and said, "Ah! Do you want to kill me? Look! Your father threw down his log and almost killed me. And you, look! You have thrown down yours and almost killed me."

Magala answered and said, "It was not on purpose. Why, you see yourself how hot it is, and we have come a very long way with these logs, and in all this heat. That's why we threw them down on you. We did not see you clearly, because we were so tired."

The sheep answered and said, "It is of no consequence, and I saw myself that you were tired."

Then Msamya went to another medicine-man, and this medicine-man said to him, "Go and dig a large pit. In it put spears and all kinds of dangerous things; put them inside it, and at the top cover it over with grass. When it is finished, go and say to your sheep, 'Come, let us go for a stroll.' Go in front yourself, and let the sheep follow behind you. When you arrive at the pit, cross over the corner of it, and stand on the further side, straight in front, and call your sheep, 'Come, make haste and come along.' Then, if it comes, it will fall into the pit. When it has fallen in, fill in the earth as fast as you can, and it will die in a moment."

So Msamya went and dug the pit and put all kinds of dangerous things in it, and at the top he finished it off cleverly with grass. When the pit was ready, he went and called his sheep and said to it, "Let us go a walk together today, I and my sheep."

Msamya went in front, his sheep followed behind, and he arrived at the pit. Msamya himself crossed over the corner, and stood on the further side just opposite, and said to his sheep, "Come, make haste and come along."

When the sheep came to the pit, it saw that there was danger and took a jump across to the other side where Msamya was standing. And the sheep said to Msamya, "Oh! Msamya, come and look. Some villain has laid a trap for us."

"Who can it be," said Msamya, "who laid the trap for us? And we are not people of wealth; we are only poor people."

"I do not know either," answered the sheep. "Possibly people are envious because you have got possession of me, and they want to kill us both at one blow."

"Very likely," replied Msamya. And then he said to the sheep, "Let us go home again, or we may have some more adventures." So Msamya returned home to his house, utterly speechless with grief at having been outdone by the sheep.

Next he went to a third medicine-man. This man said to Msamya, "Go and build a hut of coconut leaves, and sleep in it four days. The fifth day remove all your things; do not forget a single thing inside, but do not bar the door. Then take your sheep, and fasten it inside, and set fire to the hut, only not forgetting to leave nothing in it. Then the sheep will die."

Msamya went and built the hut, and when that was done, he slept in it four nights. On the fifth he removed all his things from the hut and fastened the sheep inside, but his son Magala forgot his spear and left it and a piece of cloth in the hut. Then they set fire to the hut.

When the sheep saw the hut was burning, it cut the cord with which it was tied, took the spear and piece of cloth, and brought them to Msamya. "Look! Your son has forgotten his spear and cloth. If it were not for me, they would have been burnt."

But when Msamya saw the sheep coming out from inside, he got very angry.

The sheep said, "Why are you angry? Tell me."

"Why I am angry," said Msamya, "is that somebody has burnt my hut."

"Who has burnt your hut?" said the sheep.

"I don't know," answered Msamya, "who it is that burnt it." But really Msamya was very angry because of his hut and because he was outdone by the sheep.

Then Msamya went to a fourth medicine-man. This medicine-man gave him straightforward advice and said, "Go and kill a goat; take the flesh and put it somewhere to get a little putrid, say for three days. Then take and cook it, and make a very full meal on it, and drink the gravy at the same time. When you wake up in the morning, call your sheep and take it for a ramble along a cliff. Go in front yourself, and let the sheep follow behind you. When you come to the cliff, see that the sheep is following close behind you. Then, give a burp. The sheep will die in a moment."

Msamya went home, killed his goat, and did as he was told, made a full meal on it, and drank the gravy till he was ready to burst, and then went to sleep. In the morning he woke up and said, "Today, I will go a ramble with my sheep." So he called out, "Come, my sheep! Let us go for a ramble."

The sheep came and followed him. Msamya went before, and the sheep followed behind him, and they went till they arrived at a very high cliff. Msamya gave a burp.

The sheep listened and thought, "No! It's nothing!" Then it spoke and said, "Oh! Msamya, why did you do that?"

"It is just a sort of relief," replied Msamya, "to us men — just a relief to me."

"Well now," replied the sheep, "don't you do it again. I cannot stand it a second time."

"Very well," said Msamya.

They went a little farther, and Msamya burped the same again. "Msamya! Msamya!" said the sheep. "What did I say to you just now?"

"Just a relief to me," answered Msamya, "but I forgot."

Then the sheep said, "Msamya! Msamya! If you do that a third time, you lose a sheep for good. True, the mutton may just be worth eating."

"I am penitent now," said Msamya.

Again they went on a little farther, and Msamya burped the same again. Well, this was too much for the sheep. It tried to stop its ears, but in a moment was seized with giddiness, and fell over the cliff, and died then and there.

When Msamya turned round, he saw its legs twitching, and he took to his heels and did not stop till he got to his house. He was in a terrible fright.

When he reached his house his wife asked him, "Well? What news?" but he was quite speechless.

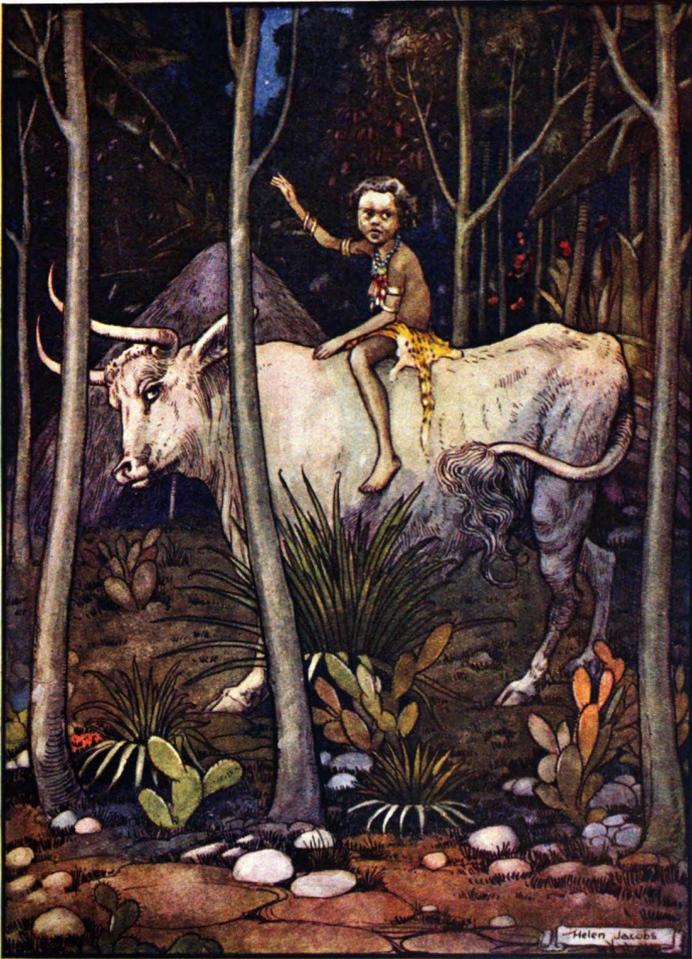
Then all the people came and questioned him, but not a word did he say. They brought him food, but he could not eat, but he went to his house and sat there all by himself, for he was dreadfully afraid, thinking, "Perhaps that sheep will come to life again and come after me."

However, early next morning, he woke up and went to the cliff, and looked over the rock, and saw that the sheep was dead beyond a doubt — one side had been eaten by hyenas. And every hyena which ate a piece of that sheep was sick on the spot.

Well, when Msamya saw that the sheep was really and truly dead, he went home in a transport of delight and sounded his horn and his drum, and all his relations assembled together, and he made them a feast, which it took four happy days to eat.

Neither he nor his relations ever let a sheep enter their house again to this day. That day was enough to convert them all.

39. The Horns of Plenty



HE RODE OUT INTO THE NIGHT

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[From [*Native Fairy Tales of South Africa*](#) by Ethel McPherson, 1919. See item #138 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Helen Jacobs.]

At the entrance to a kraal, a boy sat watching the sunset. He was thin and small. The other children were laughing and shouting, but he did not join in their play, for his heart was sore. He had had no supper, and the women of the kraal were all so busy looking after their own children that they had forgotten him. The boy's mother had died when he was a babe, and ever since he had been driven from one hut to another. His father was out all day hunting and snaring birds, and when he came back at sundown, he seldom spoke to his little son. That day, one of the women had beaten him because the load of firewood which he had brought back was small, and his heart was hot with anger.

"I will go away and never come back," he said to himself. So when darkness settled over the land and all were sleeping, he rose from the ground and, going to the cattle-shed, he took one of his father's oxen. Having mounted it, he rode out into the night.

He did not know where he was going, but he wanted to leave behind him all the women who were so cruel to him and who let him hunger.

When he was far from the kraal, he got down from the ox and lay under a tree. He slept until the sun came up again over the edge of the world. Then he continued his journey, rejoicing at being far away from those who had ill-treated him.

By and by, he noticed a cloud of dust on the horizon, and presently he saw that it was caused by the feet of a herd of cattle coming toward him. At the head of the herd was a great bull, fierce and strong of aspect.

"Get down from my back," said the ox he was riding. "I am going to fight the bull, but have no fear, for it is I who will be the victor."

The boy dismounted and stood aside to watch the fight between the two strong beasts, who ran at one another with heads lowered and with angry bellowings, pawing the ground till they were hidden from sight in the cloud of dust raised by their trampling feet. The struggle was long and fierce, but at last the ox overthrew his foe, as he had foretold. Then he bade the boy mount again, and once more they went on their way.

As the day wore on, the boy grew hungry. The ox said to him, "Strike my right horn, and food will come forth."

The boy did as he was commanded, and there came forth meat and drink, and he ate till his hunger was satisfied.

When he had finished his meal, the ox said, "Strike my left horn."

The boy obeyed, and the food still remaining entered the horn.

All through the long hot day they journeyed across the veld till, when the sun was low, the boy saw another herd of cattle coming toward them, led by a bull even stronger than the one which they had encountered that morning.

Wearied with the long march and the struggle with his first foe, the ox walked with a slow and heavy tread. But he bade the boy once again dismount, saying, "I am going to fight with yonder bull. I shall be overthrown and death will take me, but have no fear. When I am dead, remove my horns and carry them with you wherever you go, for they will give you food and drink when you are hungry and thirsty."

The boy dismounted and, summoning all his strength, the ox rushed toward his foe with lowered head. The fight was long and fierce — fiercer far than the struggle of the morning, but victory was not to the ox, and with a deep groan he sank dead upon the earth.

The boy's heart was sad at the loss of his friend but, remembering the ox's command, he took the horns from his head and went his way.

Night fell, but he journeyed on till he came to a hut where he found a man dwelling by himself. The boy asked for a night's lodging, and the man bade him welcome but said that he could give him no food, for famine had fallen upon the countryside, and everywhere men hungered, eating weeds instead of corn.

The boy laughed. "I have something better to offer you than weeds," he said.

Thereupon he struck the right horn of the dead ox. Forthwith it yielded meat and drink in abundance, and they ate and were satisfied. Then the boy stretched himself on the ground and slept soundly, but the man, who had known the pinch of hunger for many a weary day, lay awake thinking how he might deceive the boy and secure for himself the bountiful horns. At last among the lumber in the hut he found two horns which exactly resembled those his guest had brought, and he laid them beside the sleeping lad, taking away those which belonged to the boy by right.

At daybreak, the boy was ready to start on his travels once more and, suspecting no evil, he picked up the horns that lay beside him and journeyed toward the rising sun.

When the sun beat down fiercely upon the plain at noon, he sought the shadow of a rock and struck the horn, expecting that as before it would satisfy his need, but no food came.

He struck twice and thrice; then, guessing that his host of the night before had robbed him, he retraced his steps and reached the hut just as the sun was setting. He paused outside and listened; the man was begging the horn to give him food, but the horn, answering to no voice save that of its real owner, remained sealed. Then the boy entered and, fearing his vengeance, the man ran out into the night, nor did he return. The boy made a good meal of the food which the horn supplied to him and lay down to rest.

Next morning he once more set out, and at nightfall he saw a hut standing by itself on the plain. He went up and boldly

asked the man who dwelt there for a night's lodging, but he got a rude answer, for he was dusty and travel-stained, and the owner of the hut had no mind to entertain a vagabond.

Hurt by the man's roughness, the boy wandered farther till he came to a river in which he bathed his dusty limbs. Then he struck the horn, for he was hungry as well as weary, and from it there came not only meat and drink, but a mantle of skins and ornaments of brass, such as those worn by the sons of a chief. Clad thus, the next day the boy traveled farther on till he reached a village, and at the sight of the stranger in such regal attire, the headman came forward and bade him to a feast. He was treated with all honour and remained with the headman for many days.

Now the headman had a beautiful daughter and, seeing how fair she was and how gentle, the boy loved her, and the girl's heart answered to his. This being so, her father ordered oxen to be slain and a great feast prepared to celebrate their marriage.

Ever after they lived in peace and plenty, for the horns never failed to yield food and raiment, and all good things in abundance.

40. Tanga, the Child of Night

[From [*Native Fairy Tales of South Africa*](#) by Ethel McPherson, 1919. See item #138 in the Bibliography.]

Long ago there lived a woman who had no children, and her husband never ceased to reproach her on this account. Her grief was bitter, and she suffered much from his unkindness until he left her. In her loneliness she was happier than in the days when she had to bear his harsh words.

Left to herself, she often lingered by the river, and when at night the moonlight turned the surface of the stream into a silver mirror, she would sit for hours on its banks. Her favourite resting-place was beneath a spreading date-palm, and there she would remain through the quiet hours listening to the plash of the waters till the sun came up in glory over the world's edge.

Sometimes she wept, thinking of the child which would never now be hers. One night when her tears had fallen fast, she heard the piping of a bird and, looking round, she saw a little wagtail hopping about restlessly in front of her. She held out her hand; the bird perched on her finger and then sprang to her shoulder, straining to reach her ear. It was clear that he had something to say to her, so she bent her head to catch his message. Before long, he twittered softly that she would possess a baby girl, fairer than any other that had gladdened a mother's heart. She was to be named Tanga, and lest ill should befall her, she must never leave the shelter of the hut from the rising of the sun until its setting. Under the starlit sky, in the gracious moonlight, she would grow more beautiful than the moon herself.

The woman's heart sang with gladness, and night after night she sat beside the river thinking of the joy that was to be hers. The little bird came always to share her happiness, but when at last her babe was born, the bird vanished and was heard no more.

Now began happy days for the mother. Through the hours when the sun, the Eye of Day, ruled in the heavens, she kept the child safe within the hut, but when night fell, she took her to her resting-place beneath the date-palm and watched her grow in beauty, softly bright like unto the moon and stars.

Years passed, till Tanga was a full-grown maiden. The fame of her beauty spread about the countryside till it reached the ears of her father, who, filled with remorse and a longing to see his fair daughter, returned to his wife. He gave a great feast to which were bidden all the chiefs from the neighbouring kraals, and among them were many suitors for Tanga's hand. The girl's choice fell upon a youth who, for strength and courage, was worthy of her.

When the wedding feast was over, Tanga took leave of the mother who loved her so tenderly and left the home of which she had long been the joy.

The bridal procession set forth under the stars, for the bridegroom had been warned that evil would befall his wife if she went abroad by day, and he had sworn to shield her from harm.

Tanga would have been happy and blessed in her new home as her husband loved her with a great love, but for his father's hatred. From the first he had distrusted this strange bride who kept within the shelter of the hut while the sun ruled and who wandered forth only at night. He called her harsh names and gave her cold looks, nor was he kinder when her child was born, but he continued to lash her with his tongue in spite of his son's remonstrances.

When the boy was but a few months old, Tanga's husband had to go upon a long journey. After his departure, her troubles

increased, for the old man grew more cruel every day. Knowing that Tanga dared not venture into the daylight, he plotted to make her leave her hut before sunset, and one morning he commanded her to fetch him water from the spring. In vain she begged him not to send her; he swore that if she did not go, he would beat her.

In her hut there was water standing in a calabash; this Tanga sent to him as if she had fetched it from the stream. But the old man, who had been watching, knew that she had not ventured into the daylight and flung it to the ground, saying that it was not fresh. Going in anger to her hut, he raised his stick and compelled her to leave its shelter. Tanga, weeping, took the pot to the river, but when she leaned over the bank to fill it, the Water Spirit rose and dragged the water from her hand.

She returned to the kraal with the empty pot, but though she told the tyrant what had happened, he drove her back again. This time when the Water Spirit rose, he seized her and bore her to his home beneath the waters where he dwelt in state. Wooing Tanga very tenderly, he begged her to be his wife, bringing her chains of rare shells to hang round her neck and crowning her with garlands of blue water lilies. But Tanga said no to all his entreaties and wept ceaselessly for the baby boy whom she had left.

There was sorrow and consternation in the kraal at her disappearance, and the old man began to fear his son's anger. None of the women could soothe her babe's cries, and when night fell, the nurse took him in her arms and carried him to the stream. The sound of his weeping reached Tanga beneath the water, and she rose to the surface, holding out her arms. The little thing knew her, and with a gurgle of delight he stretched out his own arms in return. Fairer than ever in her garland of blue lilies, with the chain of gleaming shells round her neck, Tanga took him to her heart and held him in a close embrace till the night faded and the sun rose over the horizon. Then she gave him to the nurse, bidding her return at sunset.

Each night the nurse came back with the child and, soothed by the hours spent with his mother, he thrived and ceased to fret in the daytime.

The old man, suspecting that Tanga was alive and in hiding, questioned the nurse as to where she went when she was out with the child. She answered that she walked in the woods and fed him on wild berries which satisfied his hunger.

Time passed, and at last Tanga's husband returned and demanded to know what had become of her. When he learnt what had happened, his anger knew no bounds; he would listen to none of his father's excuses. Seeing, however, that the child was thriving, he also questioned the nurse, who told him all.

That evening he too went down to the river and hid himself among the reeds. As Tanga rose to the surface of the water at the sound of her baby's cries, he came out and flung round her a rope he had brought. But the Water Spirit, who knew all Tanga did, seized her and dragged her down again, with a roar of anger causing the waters to rise till they overflowed the banks. So enraged was he that the tide was red as blood, and the blood-red tide followed Tanga's husband back even as far as the kraal.

For many moons Tanga was not seen again, and the child wept uncomforted. But night after night she was heard singing beneath the waters, and her husband, seated on the riverbank, heard her voice raised in pleading. "Why do they not send to my father and mother?" she chanted sadly. "Here I lie a captive, but my mother could bring me back to earth." Then the singing ended, and there was no sound, none save that of weeping.

As her husband went back to the kraal, wondering whom he could send to her parents as a messenger, a rooster stepped in front of him, saying, "Master, send me. They will heed what I say."

"Go," he replied, "and luck be with you."

For two days and two nights the rooster journeyed till he came to the kraal where Tanga's parents dwelt.

As he entered, the boys threw stones at him, but he lifted his wings and flew on to the roof of the chief's hut, where he crowed so loudly that all the people came running to know what might be the meaning of the disturbance.

All having assembled, he told the story of Tanga's captivity and of the cruel father-in-law. When he had ended, he was fed with corn, and Tanga's parents treated him with great honour. With him for a guide, they set out to rescue her, for Tanga's mother was a worker of spells and charms. When they reached the village where dwelt Tanga's husband, her mother ordered an ox to be slain — an ox which bore her daughter's name and was for her use alone. The beast having been slain, she cut up its flesh into pieces, muttering charms as she did so. These pieces she flung into the river; as they sank, Tanga rose to the surface and swam to the bank, for now the power of the Water Spirit was ended forever.

Her husband was waiting there to receive her, holding their child in his arms. In triumph, Tanga, the lost wife, was led back to the village, where the rest of her days were spent in peace and happiness with those she loved.

41. The Snake with Five Heads



Fr. A GREAT SNAKE WITH FIVE HEADS WAS CLOSE BESIDE HER

[From [*Native Fairy Tales of South Africa*](#) by Ethel McPherson, 1919. See item #138 in the Bibliography. The illustration is by Helen Jacobs.]

At the foot of a high mountain there dwelt a man who had two daughters, the elder of whom was named Kazi and the younger Zanyani. Kazi was a tall, beautiful girl, but she was selfish and bad-tempered and always quarreling with her father and Zanyani. She was lazy, too, and never took her share of the work, but left Zanyani to gather the firewood, draw the water, and mend the thatch of the hut. If she could help it, she would never grind the corn, and when she baked the bread, it was always burnt to cinders.

In fact, Kazi was so disagreeable and troublesome that as soon as she was grown up, her father determined to find her a husband so he and Zanyani might be able to live in peace.

One day he set out upon a journey, leaving the girls to take care of themselves. When he came to the village to which he was bound, he got through his business as quickly as he could and then went to drink beer and talk with his friends.

They told him all the news of the village — how there had been a swarm of locusts which had eaten half the crops, how a leopard had come down from the hills and killed three sheep, and, most exciting of all, that the chief wanted a wife. The chief of this village was a great and powerful ruler, but he had never been seen by his people. Some said that he had five heads, each with cruel jaws and a pointed tongue, and that he ate all who angered him.

When Kazi's father heard that the chief was looking for a wife, he said to himself that his elder daughter would be just the right bride for him since she was so proud and so self-willed that she would never allow him to bully her, while she was so haughty that he knew she would never consent to marry anyone less than a chief.

When he reached home again, he said to his daughters, "Which of you would like a chief for a husband?"

"I would," said Kazi, not giving Zanyani a chance to speak.

"Let it be so," answered the father. "Tomorrow I will call together my friends, and we will escort you to a great chief who is seeking a wife."

"I do not want you or your friends," answered Kazi rudely. "I will go by myself."

At this her father was angry, for it was not fitting that a daughter of his should go unattended to her bridegroom, or without an ox for the wedding feast. Knowing, however, that it were easier to check the wind in its course than to tame the will of his daughter, he bade her do as she pleased.

Early next morning Kazi rose and adorned herself with her anklets and armlets of brass, hanging round her throat a necklace of bright-coloured beads. When she looked at her image in the clear pool beside the hut, she laughed with pleasure, for in truth she was fair enough to win the heart of any man, even if she came to him empty-handed.

Then she ran back to the hut and, having filled a basket with bread and wild fruit, she set out on her journey. The sun was rising over the edge of the veld, touching the hill-tops with golden light; the air was frosty, and Kazi ran as quickly as her feet could carry her till the blood tingled in her veins, and she began to sing for gladness. She cared nothing for her father's displeasure. Why should not she, the beautiful Kazi, go unattended to the village of her bridegroom? Let girls less fair than she take gifts of oxen; let these, if they chose, go escorted by their fathers and the village folk!

When she was a league or so from home, Kazi sat down beside a tall aloe to eat her morning meal and to bask in the warm sunshine.

By and by, something touched her foot and, glancing down, she saw a mouse which looked up at her as if it had something to say.

“What is it, little sister?” she asked, and the mouse replied, “Shall I show you the way to the chief?”

Kazi laughed scornfully and said, “Go away, you foolish little creature. Do you think I cannot find my way to him without the help of a little brown mouse like you?” And she pushed it roughly from her.

“If you go alone, you will meet with trouble,” said the mouse, but Kazi only laughed, and the small creature ran away.

When she was rested, Kazi rose and continued her journey till she came to a brook which was overhung by trees. Sitting down on the bank, she put her feet into the cool running water. It was now noon, and the warm silence was unbroken save for the croaking of the frogs. Feeling much refreshed, Kazi again went on her way.

By and by, she saw an old woman sitting on a stone by the wayside. The old woman greeted her and said, “I know who you are and where you are going, and therefore I give you warning. Toward sunset you will come to a wood where the trees grow thick as the blades of grass. When you enter this wood, they will mock you with their laughter, but heed them not, for they cannot hurt you unless you laugh back. If you do, then beware, for harm will befall you. On the edge of the wood you will see a calabash of amasi lying on the ground, but no matter even if you are faint with hunger, touch it not. When you have gone farther, you will meet a man carrying a pot of water, and he will offer you a draught, but though your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, beware of letting a drop pass your lips.”

“First a mouse, and now an old woman,” said Kazi, tossing her head. “What wise counselors! Thank you for your good advice, but I shall do just as I please!”

The old woman made no answer, and Kazi went her way, singing defiantly. By and by, she came to the wood of which she had been told, and in the gathering darkness she heard the sound of mocking laughter. She entered boldly, but soon

her anger rose, for it seemed as if the trees were pointing their branches like long fingers and making fun of her.

The mocking laughter grew louder as she went deeper into the wood, and the trees bent and shook with merriment. Kazi grew still more angry. How dare they laugh at her expense! Were not all who knew her proud spirit afraid of her, and was she to be jeered at by trees? The wood was dark and thickly grown, and from its secret places came the cruel sound in rising notes. It was too much; Kazi stamped her foot in anger and then laughed back — a laugh as cruel and mocking as that of the trees.

For a moment there was silence, and so still was the air that the girl's heart stopped beating. Thick darkness gathered round her, and there was a deep roll of thunder. Then from the depths of the wood came a peal of laughter, louder and more pitiless than before.

Kazi was so terrified that she began to run and never stopped till she reached the edge of the wood and found herself out on the open veld. Panting with fear, she lay down on the grass to rest and to regain her courage, and by and by, when she was refreshed, she sat up and looked about her. A few yards away lay a calabash of amasi, just as the old woman had foretold, but though Kazi remembered the warning, she did not heed it and eagerly drank the milk.

It was now almost dark, but Kazi had no mind to lie down to rest so near the wood of mocking laughter. So she continued her journey, and after she had gone some little distance, she saw coming toward her the strange figure of whom the old woman had spoken.

It was a sight to make anyone shake with fear, for as he drew near, Kazi saw that under one arm the man carried his head, and a water-pot under the other. He was bent almost double and walked with a strange, shuffling gait.

Kazi was a bold girl, but if she had not been determined to set at naught the old woman's warning, she would have run away

from him. Conquering her fears, she walked boldly up to him and asked him for a drink of water.

Without a word he handed her the calabash, and the girl drank, trembling the while, for the black eyes of the head which he carried under his arm rolled without ceasing, and its teeth chattered noisily.

When the man was out of sight, Kazi lay down and slept, and early next morning she made ready to enter the village where lived the chief whose bride she intended to be.

When the people saw the tall, beautiful stranger, they gathered round her, asking who she was and why she had come.

"I have come to be the wife of your chief," she answered haughtily.

"But where is your escort, and where are your oxen? Who ever knew a bride come to her husband without a retinue? The chief is away and will not return till nightfall, but you had best go yonder into his hut and prepare his food."

The women of the kraal then led the stranger to the empty hut and gave her corn to grind.

Now Kazi had always left the grinding of the corn to her sister, and because she was unaccustomed to the task, the flour was full of hard lumps. The next thing was to make the flour into cakes and put them to bake, but so careless was Kazi that she let them burn black.

"I can't grind corn, and I can't cook," said she, "but what does it matter? For when I am the wife of the great chief, I shall do no work."

It was now growing late, and Kazi went to the door of the hut to watch for the coming of her bridegroom. The moon had risen and was flooding the veld with light, but there was no sign of an approaching figure, and long did Kazi wait, wondering whence he would come.

All at once the sky was darkened, and the hut was suddenly filled with a rushing wind. In a moment the storm ceased, and

Kazi saw that a great snake with five heads was close beside her. In each of the five heads gleamed a pair of fiery eyes, which were fixed upon her.

“So you are my wife,” said the terrible being. The proud Kazi meekly bent her head and waited the pleasure of this horrible bridegroom.

“You are fair to look upon,” he said, “but bring me the cakes you have made ready for my supper. I am hungry.”

Kazi looked at the blackened cakes, and for the first time in her life she felt sorry that she was so poor a cook. Trembling, she laid them before the snake, who glanced at them with scorn.

“True,” he said, “you are fair to look upon, but you are a careless, idle woman,” and he struck her a blow which killed her.

About a year after Kazi’s death, news went round that the chief was again seeking a wife, and Zanyani’s father asked her whether she would like to be the bride. The girl consented, and her father chose from his herd a fat ox for slaughter at the wedding feast. Then he summoned his companions to escort the bride, and Zanyani, like a well-mannered maiden, raised no objection.

When all was ready, she set out, attended by her father and a procession of warriors in their bravery of waving plumes and brightly polished spears. As they went upon their way, they sang and rejoiced.

On the first part of the journey, they met with no adventures. They passed through the mocking wood, hearing no sound but the rustle of leaves, and no headless monster met them, but when they neared the village the little mouse ran out and stopped in front of the bride, saying, “Shall I show you the way?”

“If it please you, little sister, ” answered she, and the mouse guided them to a place where two roads met, and then it vanished into the bush.

At the crossroads the old woman was waiting, and she bade them follow the road to the left.

About half a mile from the village to which they were bound, the procession halted to rest, and Zanyani strayed a little from the path. Presently a girl carrying a water-pot came toward her and stopped to ask her who she was and why she thus wandered by herself.

"I have come to be the bride of the chief of yonder village," she answered.

"He is my brother," said the stranger. "Since you are to be my sister, let me tell you that, strange and fierce as he seems, he is gentle and good to those whom he loves, and you need not fear. Go to his hut with your father and the bridal escort," she continued. "There my mother will give you corn to grind. When you have ground it, bake it into cakes, and if these are good, my brother will treat you well."

Zanyani thanked the girl and took leave of her; then, returning to her father, she told him what had happened.

The journey was now resumed, and the procession escorted Zanyani to her husband's hut. As the friendly stranger had said, the chief's mother was waiting to receive her new daughter-in-law. She gave the bride corn to grind and then left her alone in the hut.

By and by, there lay ready a row of cakes made of fine flour, baked as only a skilled cook could bake them, and Zanyani sat down to wait the coming of the bridegroom.

Night fell, and presently there came the sound of a rushing wind, and the snake with five heads came forth. He glanced first at the bride and then at the cakes, and into his fierce eyes came a gentler light.

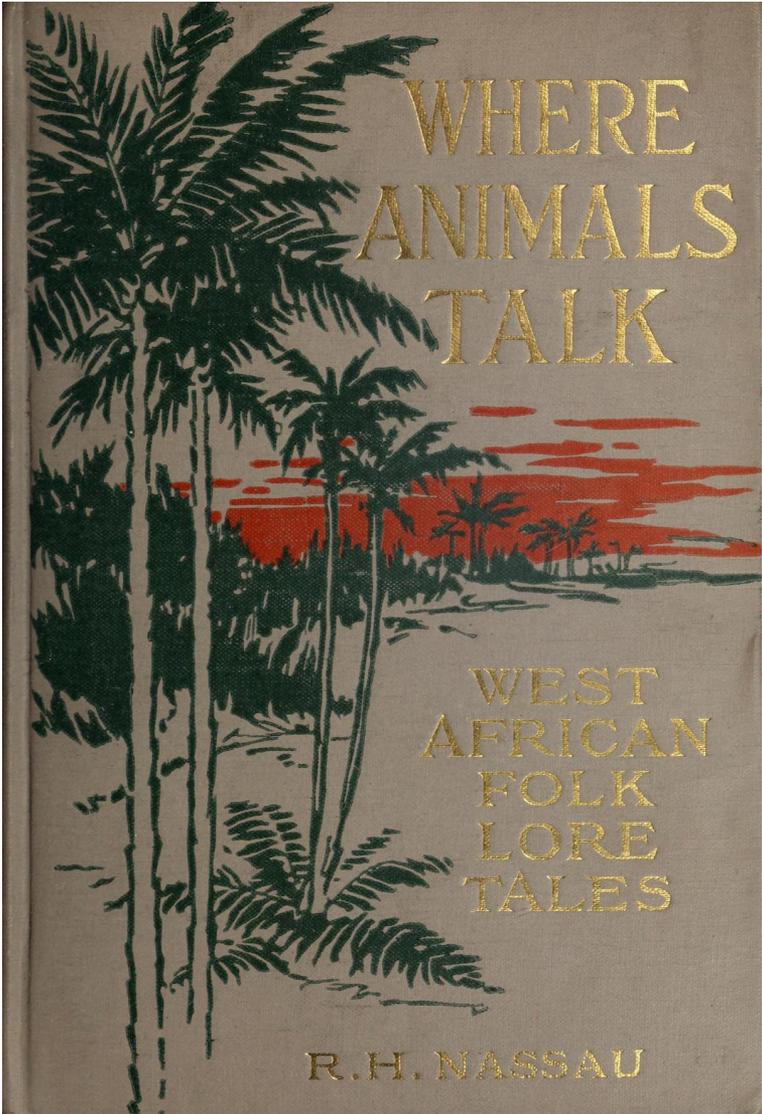
Having swallowed the cakes and finding them good, he turned to Zanyani, saying, "Are these of your baking?"

Zanyani bent her head in assent, and the horrible form began to change. From the scaly slough of skin that fell from him

there rose a tall and handsome warrior. He looked tenderly upon the girl.

“You have freed me from the spell which has lain upon me this many a year,” he told her. “It could only be broken by the willing service of a gentle wife.”

Then the chief came forth among his people, and the wedding was celebrated with feasting and joy.



42. The Leopard of the Fine Skin

[From [*Where Animals Talk: West African Folklore Tales*](#) by Robert Nassau, 1912. See item #147 in the Bibliography.]

At the town of King Ra-Mborakinda, where the king lived with his wives and his children and his glory, this occurred.

The king had a beloved daughter, by name Ilambe. He loved her much, and sought to please her in many ways, and gave her many servants to serve her. When she grew up to womanhood, she said that she did not wish anyone to come to ask her in marriage; she herself would choose a husband. "Moreover, I will never marry any man who has any blotch on his skin, not even so much as a little bit."

Her father did not like her to speak in that way; nevertheless, he did not forbid her.

When men began to come to the father and say, "I desire your daughter Ilambe for a wife," he would say, "Go, and ask her yourself." Then when the man went to Ilambe's house and would say, "I have come to ask you in marriage," her only reply was a question, "Have you a clear skin and no blotches on your body?" If he answered, "Yes," Ilambe would say, "But I must see for myself; come into my room." There she required the man to take off all his clothing. And if, on examination, she saw the slightest pimple or scar, she would point toward it and say, "That! I do not want you." Then perhaps he would begin to plead, "All my skin is right, except — ." But she would interrupt him, "No! For even that little mark I do not want you."

So it went on with all who came, she finding fault with even a small pimple or scar. And all suitors were rejected. The news

spread abroad that Ra-Mborakinda had a beautiful daughter, but that no one was able to obtain her because of what she said about diseases of the skin. Still, many tried to obtain her. Even animals changed themselves to human form and sought her, in vain.

At last, the leopard said, "Ah, this beautiful woman! I hear about her beauty and that no one is able to get her. I think I better take my turn and try. But first I will go to Marange the magic-doctor." He went to that magic-doctor and told his story about the king's fine daughter, and how no man could get her because of her fastidiousness about skins. Marange told him, "I am too old. I do not now do those things about medicines. Go to Ogula the sorcerer."

So, the leopard went to Ogula. The sorcerer jumped into his fire and, coming out with power, he directed the leopard to tell what he wanted. So the leopard told the whole story again and asked how he should obtain the clean body of a man. The sorcerer prepared for him a great medicine by which to give him a human body that was tall, graceful, strong, and clean. The leopard then went back to his town, told his people his plans, and prepared their bodies also for a change if needed. Having taken also the sorcerer's name as his own human name, Ogula, he then went to King Ra-Mborakinda, saying, "I, Ogula, wish your daughter Ilambe for wife."

On his arrival, the people admired the stranger and felt sure that Ilambe would accept this suitor, exclaiming, "This fine-looking man! His face! And his gait! And his body!" When he had made his request of the king, he was told, as usual, to go to Ilambe and see whether she would like him. When he went to her house, he looked so handsome that Ilambe was at once pleased with him. He told her, "I love you, and I come to marry you. You have refused many. I know the reason why, but I think you will be satisfied with me." She replied, "I think you have heard from others the reason for which I refuse men. I will see

whether you have what I want.” And she added, “Let us go into the room, and let me see your skin.”

They entered the room, and Ogula removed his fine clothing. Ilambe examined him with close scrutiny from his head to his feet. She found not the slightest scratch or mark; his skin was like a babe’s. Then she said, “Yes! This is my man, truly! I love you, and I will marry you!” She was so pleased with her acquisition that she remained in the room enjoying again a minute examination of her husband’s beautiful skin. Then she went out and ordered her servants to cook food and prepare water for him, and he did not go out of the house nor have a longing to go back to his town, for he found that he was loved.

On the third day, he went to tell her father the king that he was ready to take his wife off to his town. King Ra-Mborakinda consented. All that day, they prepared food for the marriage-feast. But, all the while that this man-beast, Ogula the leopard, was there, Ra-Mborakinda by his magic fetish knew that some evil would come out of this marriage. However, as Ilambe had insisted on choosing her own way, he did not interfere.

After the marriage was over and the feast eaten, Ra-Mborakinda called his daughter and said, “Ilambe mine, now you are going off on your journey.” She said, “Yes, for I love my husband.” The father asked, “Do you love him truly?” She answered, “Yes.” Then he told her, “As you are married now, you need a present from me as your bridal gift.” So, he gave her a few presents and told her, “Go to that house,” indicating a certain house in the town, and he gave her the key of the house and told her to go and open the door. That was the house where he kept all his charms for war and fetishes of all kinds. He told her, “When you go in, you will see two horses standing side by side. The one that will look a little dull, with its eyes directed to the ground, take it, and leave the brighter-looking one. When you are coming with it, you will see that it walks a little lame. Nevertheless, take it.” She objected, “But, father, why do you not give me the finer one, and not the weak one?” But

he said, "No!" and he made a knowing smile as he repeated, "Go, and take the one I tell you." He had reason for giving this one. The finer-looking one had only fine looks, but this other one would someday save her by its intelligence.

She went and took the horse and returned to her father, and the journey was prepared. The father sent with her servants to carry the baggage and to remain with and work for her at the town of her marriage. She and her husband arranged all their things, and said good-bye, and off they went, both of them sitting on the horse's back.

They journeyed and they journeyed. On the way, the leopard, though changed as to his form and skin, possessed all his old tastes. Having been so many days without tasting blood or uncooked meats, as they passed through the forest of wild beasts the longing came on him. They emerged onto a great prairie and journeyed across it toward another forest. Before they had entirely crossed the prairie, the longing for his prey so overcame him that he said, "Wife, you, with your horse and the servants, stay here while I go rapidly ahead, and wait for me until I come again." So he went off, entered the forest, and changed himself back to the leopard. He hunted for prey, caught a small animal, and ate it, and another, and ate it. After being satisfied, he washed his hands and mouth in a brook and, changing again to human form, he returned on the prairie to his wife.

She observed him closely and saw a hard, strange look on his face. She said, "But all this while, what have you been doing?" He made an excuse. They went on.

And the next day, it was the same, he leaving her and telling her to wait till he returned, and hunting and eating as the leopard. All this that was going on, Ilambe was ignorant of. But the horse knew. He would speak after a while, but he was not ready yet.

So it went on, until they came to Ogula's town. Before they reached it, by the preparations he had first made he had

changed his mother into a human form in which to welcome his wife. Also the few people of the town, all with human forms, welcomed her. But they did not sit much with her. They stayed in their own houses, and Ogula and his wife stayed in theirs. For a few days, Ogula tried to be pleasant, deceiving his wife. But his taste for blood was still in his heart. He began to say, "I am going to another town; I have business there." And off he would go, hunting as a leopard; when he returned, it would be late in the day. So he did on other days.

After a time, Ilambe wished to make a food-plantation, and she sent her men-servants to clear the ground. The leopard would go around in the forest on the edge of the plantation and, as he caught one of the men, there would return that day one servant less.

One by one, all the men-servants were thus missing, and it was not known what became of them, except that Ogula's people knew. One night the leopard was out and, after he met one of the female servants, she too was reported missing.

Sometimes, when Ogula was away, Ilambe, feeling lonesome, would go and pet the horse. After the loss of this maid-servant, he thought it was time to warn Ilambe of what was going on. While she was petting him, he said, "Eh! Ilambe! You do not see the trouble that is coming to you!" She asked, "What trouble?" He exclaimed, "What trouble? If your father had not sent me with you, what would have become of you? Where are all your servants that you brought with you? You do not know where they go to, but I know. Do you think that they disappear without a reason? I will tell you where they go. It is your man Ogula who eats them; it is he who wastes them!" She could not believe it and argued, "Why should Ogula destroy them?" The horse replied, "If you doubt it, wait for the day when your last remaining servant is gone."

Two days after that, at night, another maid-servant disappeared. Another day passed. On the next day, Ogula the

leopard went off to hunt beasts with the intention that, if he failed to get any, at night he would eat his wife.

When he had gone, Ilambe, in her loneliness, went to pet the horse. He said to her, "Did I not tell you? The last maid is gone. You yourself will be the next one. I will give you counsel. When you have opportunity this night, prepare yourself ready to run away. Get yourself a large gourd and fill it with peanuts, another with gourd-seeds, and another with water." He told her to bring these things to him, and he would know the best time to start.

While they were talking, the leopard's mother was out in the street, and she heard the two voices. She said to herself, "Ilambe, wife of my son, does she talk with the horse as if it was a person?" But she said nothing to Ilambe, nor asked her about it.

Night came on, and Ogula returned. He said nothing, but his face looked hard and bad. Ilambe was troubled and somewhat frightened at his ugly looks. So, at night, on retiring, she began to ask him, "But why, Ogula my husband? Has anything displeased you?" He answered, "No, I am not troubled about anything. Why do you ask questions?" "Because I see it in your face that your countenance is not pleasant." "No, there's nothing the matter. Everything is right. Only about my business, I think I must start very early." Ogula the leopard had begun to think, "Now she is suspecting me. I think I will not eat her this night but will put it off until next night."

That night, Ilambe did not sleep. In the morning, Ogula said that he would go to his business but would come back soon. When he was gone away to his hunting work, Ilambe felt lonesome and went to the horse. He, thinking this a good time to run away, they started at once, without letting anyone in the village know and taking with them the three gourds. He said that they must go quickly, for the leopard, when he discovered them gone, would rapidly pursue. So they went fast and faster,

the horse looking back from time to time to see whether the leopard was pursuing.

After they had been gone quite a while, Ogula returned from his business to his village, went into his house, and did not see Ilambe. He called to his mother, "Where is Ilambe?" His mother answered, "I saw Ilambe with her horse, talking together; they have been at it for two days." The leopard began to search and, seeing the hoofprints, he exclaimed, "Alas! Ilambe has run away. I and she shall meet today!"

Ogula instantly turned from his human form back to that of the leopard and went out, and pursued, and pursued, and pursued. But it took some time before he came in sight of the fugitives. As the horse turned to watch, he saw the leopard, his body stretched low and long in rapid leaps. He said to Ilambe, "Did I not tell you? There he is, coming!" The horse hastened, with foam dropping from his lips. When he saw that the leopard was gaining on them, he told Ilambe to take the gourd of peanuts from his back and scatter them along behind on the ground. Leopards like peanuts, and when he came to these nuts, he stopped to eat them. While he was eating, the horse gained time to get ahead. As soon as the leopard had finished the nuts, he started on in pursuit again and soon began to overtake them. When he approached, the horse told Ilambe to throw out the gourd-seeds. She did so. The leopard delayed to eat these seeds also. This gave the horse time to again get ahead. Thus they went on.

Having finished the gourd-seeds, the leopard again went leaping in pursuit and, for the third time, came near. The horse told Ilambe to throw the gourd of water behind, forcefully, so that it might crash and break on the ground. As soon as she had done so, the water was turned to a stream of a deep, wide river between them and the leopard. Then the leopard was at a loss. So he shouted, "Ah! Ilambe! Alas! If I only had a chance to catch you!" and he had to turn back.

Then the horse said, "We do not know what he may do yet; perhaps he may go around and across ahead of us. As there is a town which I know near here, we had better stay there a day or two while he may be searching for us." He added to her, "Mind! This town where we are going, no woman is allowed to be there, only men. So, I will change your face and dress like a man's. Be very careful how you behave when you take your bath, lest you die." Ilambe promised, and the horse changed her appearance. So, a fine-looking young man was seen riding into the street of the village. There were exclamations in the street, "This is a stranger! Hail, stranger! Hail! Who showed you the way to come here?" This young man answered, "Myself! I was out riding; I saw an open path, and I came in." He entered a house and was welcomed, and they told him their times of eating and of play.

But on the second day, as this young man went out privately, one of the men noticed and said to the other, "He acts like a woman!" The others asked, "Really! You think so?" He asserted, "Yes! I am sure!" So, that day Ilambe was to meet with some trouble for, to prove her, the men had said to her, "Tomorrow we all go bathing in the river, and you shall go with us." She went to ask the horse what she should do. He rebuked her, "I warned you, and you have not been careful. But do not be troubled; I will change you into a man."

That night, Ilambe went to the horse, and he changed her. He also told her, "I warn you again. Tomorrow you go to bathe with the others, and you may take off your clothes for you are now a man. But it is only for a short time because we stay here only a day and a night more, and then we must go."

The next morning all the town went to play and, after that, to bathe. When they went into the water, the other men were all expecting to see a woman revealed, but they saw that their visitor was a man. They admired his wonderfully fine physique. On emerging from the water, the men said to the one who had informed on Ilambe, "Did you not tell us that this was a

woman? See how great a man he is!" As soon as they said that, the young man Ilambe was vexed with him and began to berate him, saying, "Eh! You said I was a woman?" And she chased him and struck him. Then they all went back to the town.

In the evening, the horse told Ilambe, "I tell you what to do tomorrow. In the morning, you take your gun and shoot me dead. After you have shot me, these men will find fault with you, saying 'Ah! You shoot your horse, and did not care for it?' But do not say anything in reply. Cut me in pieces and burn the pieces in the fire. After this, carefully gather all the black ashes and, very early in the following morning, in the dark before anyone is up, go out of the village gateway, scatter the ashes, and you will see what will happen."

The young man did all this. On scattering the ashes, he instantly found himself changed again to a woman and sitting on the horse's back, and they were running rapidly away.

That same day, in the afternoon, they came to the town of Ilambe's father, King Ra-Mborakinda. On their arrival there, they — but especially the horse — told their whole story. Ilambe was somewhat ashamed of herself for she had brought these troubles on herself by insisting on having a husband with a perfectly fine skin. So her father said, "Ilambe, my child, you see the trouble you have brought on yourself. For you, a woman, to make such a demand was too much. Had I not sent the horse with you, what would have become of you?"

The people gave Ilambe a glad welcome. And she went to her house and said nothing more about fine skins.

43. Tortoise in a Race

[From [Where Animals Talk: West African Folklore Tales](#) by Robert Nassau, 1912. See item #147 in the Bibliography.]

Kudu the Tortoise had formerly lived in the same town with several other animals. But after a while, they had decided to separate, and each built his own village.

One day, Tortoise decided to roam. So he started and went on an excursion, leaving his wife and two children in the village. On his way, he came to the village of Mbalanga the Antelope. The latter welcomed him, killed a chicken, and prepared food for him, and they sat at the table, eating.

When they had finished eating, Antelope asked, "Kudu my friend, what is your journey for?"

Tortoise answered, "I have come to inquire of you, as to you and me, which is the elder?" Antelope replied, "Kudu! I am older than you!" But Tortoise responded, "No, Mbalanga! I am the elder!" Then Antelope said, "Show me the reason why you are older than I!" Tortoise said, "I will show you a sign of seniority. Let us have a race, as a test of speed." Antelope replied derisively, "Aiyee! How shall I test speed with Kudu? Does Kudu race?" However, he agreed and said, "Well, in three days the race shall be made."

Tortoise spoke audaciously, "You, Mbalanga, cannot surpass me in a race!" Antelope laughed, having accepted the challenge, while Tortoise pretended to sneer and said, "I am the one who will overcome!"

The course chosen, beginning on the beach south of Batanga, was more than seventy miles from the Campo River northward to the Balimba Country.

Then Tortoise went away, going everywhere to give directions, and returned to his village. He sent word secretly to

all the Tortoise tribe to call them. When they had come very many of them together, he told them, "I have called my friend Mbalanga for a race. I know that he can surpass me in this race unless you all help me in my plan. He will follow the sea-beach. You all must line yourselves among the bushes at the top of the beach along the entire route all the way from Campo to Balimba. When Mbalanga, coming along, at any point looks around to see whether I am following and calls out, 'Kudu! Where are you?' the one of you who is nearest that spot must step out from his place and answer for me, 'Here!'"

Thus he located all the other tortoises in the bushes on the entire route. Also, he placed a colored mark on all the tortoises, making the face of every one alike. He stationed them clear on to the place where he expected that Antelope would be exhausted. Then he ended, taking his own place there.

Antelope also arranged for himself and said to his wife, "My wife! Make me food, for Kudu and I have agreed on a race and it begins at seven o'clock in the morning."

When all was ready, Antelope said to the one whom he supposed was Kudu, "Come! Let us race!" They started. Antelope ran on and on, and came as far as about ten miles to the town of Ubenji, among the Igara people. At various spots on the way Tortoise apparently was lost behind but seemed to reappear, saying, "I'm here!"

At once, Antelope raced forward rapidly — *pu! pu! pu!* — to a town named Ipenyenye. Then he looked around and said, "Where is Kudu?" A tortoise stepped out of the bushes, saying "Here I am! You haven't run very fast."

Antelope raced on until he reached the town of Beya. Again looking around, he said, "Where is Kudu?" A tortoise stepped out, replying, "I'm here!"

Antelope again raced until he reached the town Lolabe. Again he asked, "Where is Kudu?" A tortoise replied, "Here I am!"

Again Antelope raced on as far as from there to a rocky point by the sea named Ilale-ja-moto, and then he called, "Wherever is Kudu?" A tortoise, ready, answered, "Here I am!"

From thence he came on in the race another stretch of about ten miles, clear to the town of Bongaheli of the Batanga people. At each place on the route when Antelope, losing sight of Tortoise, called, "Kudu! Where are you?" promptly the tortoise on guard at that spot replied, "I'm here!"

Then on he went, steadily going, going, another stretch of about twenty miles to Plantation Beach. Still the prompt reply to Antelope's call, "Kudu, where are you?" was: "I'm here!"

As he started away from Plantation Beach, the wearied Antelope began to feel his legs tired. However, he pressed on to Small Batanga, hoping for victory over his despised contestant. But, on his reaching the edge of Balimba, the tortoise was there, ready with his "I'm here!"

Finally, on reaching the end of the Balimba settlement, Antelope fell down, dying, froth coming from his mouth, and then he lay dead, being utterly exhausted with running. But when Tortoise arrived, he took a magic medicine and restored Antelope to life, and then exulted over him by beating him, saying, "Don't you show me your audacity another day by daring to run with me! I have surpassed you!"

So, they returned separately to their homes on the Campo River. Tortoise called together the Tortoise tribe, and Antelope called all the Antelope tribe. And they met in a Council of all the animals. Then Tortoise rose and spoke. "All you Kudu tribe! Mbalanga said I would not surpass him in a race. But this day I have surpassed him!"

So the Antelope tribe had to acknowledge, "Yes, you, Kudu, have surpassed our champion. It's a great shame to us, for we had not supposed that a slow fellow, such as we thought you to be, could possibly do it, being able to out-run a Mbalanga."

44. A Chain of Circumstances

[From [*Where Animals Talk: West African Folklore Tales*](#) by Robert Nassau, 1912. See item #147 in the Bibliography.]

Kudu the Tortoise was a blacksmith, and he allowed other people to use his bellows.

Etanda the Cockroach had a spear that was known of by all people and things. One day, he went to the smithy at the village of Tortoise.

When Cockroach started to work the bellows, as he looked out in the street he saw Kuba the Chicken coming, and he said to Tortoise, "I'm afraid that Kuba will catch me. What shall I do?" So Tortoise told him, "Go and hide yourself off there in the grass." At once, Cockroach hid himself.

Then arrived Kuba the Chicken, and he, observing a spear lying on the ground, asked Tortoise, "Is not this the spear of Etanda the Cockroach?" Tortoise assented, "Yes, do you want him?" And Chicken said, "Yes, where is he?" So Tortoise said, "He hid himself in the grass on the ground yonder; catch him." Then Kuba the Chicken went, and caught Etanda the Cockroach, and swallowed him.

When Kuba was about to go away to return to his place, Tortoise said to him, "Come back! Work for me this fine bellows!" As Chicken, willing to return a favor, was about to stand at the bellows, he looked around and saw Uhingi the Wildcat coming in the street. Chicken said to Tortoise, "Alas! I'm afraid that Uhingi the Wildcat will see me; where shall I go?" So, Tortoise says, "Go and hide!" Chicken did so.

When Wildcat came, he, seeing the spear, asked, "Is it not so that this is the spear of Etanda the Cockroach?" Tortoise replied, "Yes." Wildcat asked him, "Where is Etanda?" He replied, "Kuba the Chicken has swallowed him." Wildcat inquired, "And where is Chicken?" Tortoise showed him the place where Chicken was hidden. And Uhingi the Wildcat went and caught and ate Chicken.

When Wildcat was about to go, Tortoise called to him, "No! Come work this fine bellows." Wildcat set to work, but when he looked into the street, he hesitated, for he saw Nje the Leopard coming. Wildcat said to Tortoise, "I must go, lest Nje should see me!" Then Tortoise said, "Go and hide in the grass." So Wildcat hid himself in the grass.

Leopard, having arrived and wondering about the spear, asked Tortoise, "Is it not so that this is the spear of Etanda the Cockroach?" Tortoise answered, "Yes." Then Leopard asked, "Where is Etanda?" Tortoise replied, "Kuba the Chicken has swallowed him." "And where is Kuba?" Tortoise answered, "Uhingi the Wildcat has eaten him." Then Leopard asked, "Where then is Uhingi?" Tortoise asked, "Do you want him? Go and catch him! He is hidden yonder there." Then Nje the Leopard caught and killed Wildcat.

Leopard was then going away, but Tortoise told him, "Wait! Come work this fine bellows." When Leopard was about to comply, he looked around the street, and he saw a Man coming with a gun carried on his shoulder. Leopard exclaimed, "Oh, Kudu, I do not want to see a Man; let me go!" Then Tortoise said to him, "Go and hide!" Leopard did so.

When the Man had come, and he saw the spear of Cockroach, he inquired, "Is it not so that this is Cockroach's wonderful spear?" Tortoise answered, "Yes." And the Man asked, "Where then is Cockroach?" Tortoise answered, "Chicken has swallowed him." Man asked, "And where is Chicken?" Tortoise answered, "Wildcat has eaten him." Man asked, "And where is Wildcat?" Tortoise answered, "Leopard has killed him."

Man asked, "And where is Leopard?" Tortoise did not at once reply, and Man asked again, "Where is Leopard?" The Tortoise said, "Do you want him? Go and catch him! He has hidden himself over there."

Then the Man went and shot Leopard,
Who had killed Wildcat,
Who had eaten Chicken,
Who had swallowed Cockroach
Who owned the wonderful spear
At the smithy of Tortoise.

HAUSA SUPERSTITIONS AND CUSTOMS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
FOLK-LORE AND THE FOLK

A. J. N. TREMBEARNE



45. The Spider Passes on a Debt

[From [*Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to the Folk-Lore and the Folk*](#) by Arthur J. N. Tremearne, 1913. See item #191 in the Bibliography.]

There was once a certain old woman who had a daughter, and, when she was going to give her in marriage, the daughter said that she had no bowls and no plates, and that she would not be married without them. So the old woman, who had a bull, took it to the slaughter-men and asked them to buy it; ten bowls and ten plates was the price. But they said that they could not give that for it.

Now the spider heard, and he came up and said that he would buy the bull from the old woman, and that when her daughter's marriage was about to be performed, he would bring ten plates and ten bowls. So the old woman handed over the bull to the spider, and he took it home and killed it.

When the spider had cooked it, he poured the broth into a pot, and took it, and placed it in the road, and he climbed a tree above, and hid there. Now the goat was passing, and he was very thirsty, so he came up and put his nose into the pot, and immediately the pot caught hold of his nose.

Then the spider slid down and said, "Good." And he continued:

"The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you now, O goat!"
And the goat replied, "Very well, I agree."

So the goat went to the river to drink water, and there a crab seized his beard, and then the goat said:

“The crab is the catcher of the goat’s beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider’s broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman’s bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O crab.”
And the crab replied, “Very well, I agree.”

Now when the daughter came to the stream, she trod upon the crab, and the crab said:

“The daughter has stepped on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat’s beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider’s broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman’s bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O daughter.”
And the daughter said, “Very well, I agree.”

So the daughter took the water that she had come to get and was going home when the slipperiness caused her to fall, and she spilt the water. Then she said:

“The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat’s beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider’s broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman’s bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O slipperiness.”
And the slipperiness said, “Very well, I agree.”

Now the slipperiness stayed on the ground, and soon afterwards a termite came and made a passage across the wet place. Then the slipperiness sang:

“The termite has built on the slipperiness;

The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat's beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O termite."
And the termite said, "Very well, I agree."

After a little while, a certain bird came and built a nest upon the termite's hill, and then the termite said:

"The bird has alighted on the termite's hill;
The termite built on the slipperiness;
The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat's beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O bird."
And the bird said, "Very well, I agree."

Now the bird stayed there, and one day a boy who was shooting came along, and when he saw the bird sitting on the termite-hill, he shot it. Then the bird said:

"The boy is the shooter of the poor little bird;
The bird alighted on the termite's hill;
The termite built on the slipperiness;
The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat's beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O boy."

And the boy said, "Very well, I agree."

So the boy went home, and just as he had opened his mouth to tell his mother about it, she covered him with blows. Then the boy said:

"The mother is the beater of the poor little boy;
The boy is the shooter of the poor little bird;
The bird alighted on the termite's hill;
The termite built on the slipperiness;
The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat's beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O mother."
And the mother said, "Very well, I agree."

Now it happened soon afterwards that a certain blacksmith burned one of the mother's cloths, and then she said:

"The blacksmith is the burner of the mother's cloth;
The mother is the beater of the poor little boy;
The boy is the shooter of the poor little bird;
The bird alighted on the termite's hill;
The termite built on the slipperiness;
The slipperiness made the daughter fall;
The daughter is the stepper on the poor little crab;
The crab is the catcher of the goat's beard;
The goat is the drinker of the spider's broth;
The spider is the buyer of the old woman's bull
For ten large bowls and ten large plates;
The payment is upon you, O blacksmith."
Then the blacksmith said, "Very well, I agree."

Immediately all the blacksmiths started work, and made ten bowls and ten plates, and took them to the mother.
The mother took them and gave them to the boy.
The boy took them and gave them to the bird.
The bird took them and gave them to the termite.
The termite took them and gave them to the slipperiness.
The slipperiness took them and gave them to the daughter.
The daughter took them and gave them to the crab.
The crab took them and gave them to the goat.
The goat took them and gave them to the spider.

And at last the spider took ten bowls and ten plates and gave them to the old woman, just as he had promised when he bought the bull whose flesh he ate.

That is an example of the spider's cunning: he himself ate the flesh of the bull, but he made others make the payment for him, thus giving nothing in return for what he had got.

46. The Hyena and the Spider Visit the King

[From [*Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to the Folk-Lore and the Folk*](#) by Arthur J. N. Tremearne, 1913. See item #191 in the Bibliography.]

This is about a Hyena and a Spider.

The Spider said, "O Hyena, buy honey, and let us go and do homage to the King," and the Hyena replied, "Agreed."

So they bought honey, and they were traveling on and on when the Hyena said to the Spider, "I am going into the bush for a minute." Then the Spider said, "Very well, but put down your pot of honey and leave it here until you come back." But the Hyena replied, "Oh no, surely it is my own!" So she went into the bush and drank the honey, and when she had done so, she placed some dirt in the pot instead, and then she returned to the Spider.

When they had arrived at the city, they went and saluted the King, and they were made welcome and were given a lodging in the palace. Then they took their pots — the Spider took his pot, and the Hyena hers — and they said, "Here is the offering which we make to the King." So the Hyena's pot was taken and placed in the house, and the Spider's was placed in the entrance-hall, and when the Hyena's pot was opened, dirt was found in it, but when the Spider's pot was examined the people found honey. So they went and told the King, and said, "Lo! In the Hyena's pot is only dirt," and the King answered, "Oh, very well, they have come to get something good from me; I know what kind of a good thing the Hyena will get."

In the evening, sleeping-mats were brought, and the people said, "These are for the Hyena to sleep upon." Then skins also were brought, and they said "These are for the Spider."

Now the Hyena would not agree to this, but the Spider said, "Look here, Hyena, they said that I was to sleep on the skins, and you on the mats. You say you will not agree; you want to eat the skins, that's why." But the Hyena replied, "No, no, a real friend would not act thus," and so the Spider said, "Very well, but look here, if you eat the skins, you will make me ashamed of you." So he gave her the skins, and she gave him the mats, and he went and lay down.

During the first sleep she arose and started eating the skins, and the Spider called out, "Oh, so you have begun eating them?" But she replied, "No, no, it is a mouse." Before dawn had come, she had eaten the skins all up; there was nothing left of them. And then the Spider said, "Alright, O Hyena, how are you going to excuse yourself? How are you going to get out of the scrape?" But the Hyena replied, "Oh! Cannot we say that a thief has been here and has stolen the skins?" "Well, Hyena, even if you do say it, the King will not believe you; he will know it is you," said the Spider. "I found a way in; I will find a way out somehow," was Hyena's reply. So the people told the King, and said that a thief had stolen the skins. But he replied, "Oh no, I know quite well that the Hyena has eaten them."

Then the King said, "I will say good-bye to them today." And he brought a bull and said to the Spider, "On account of the present which you brought to me, I give you this bull." But an old goat was brought and given to the Hyena. Then the Spider said that he thanked the King, and the Hyena said that she also thanked him.

So off they started, and they were traveling on and on; the Hyena was dragging the old goat along, when she said, "Let me eat a leg! You can become lame; you are lame now." So she pulled off a leg and ate it, and kept saying to the goat, "Travel with three-three, travel with three-three." Then she pulled off

another leg and ate it, and kept saying to the goat, "Travel with two-two, travel with two-two." Then she pulled off a third leg and ate it, and kept saying, "Travel with one-one, travel with one-one." Then she pulled off the remaining leg and ate it, and kept saying, "Travel with none-none, travel with none-none." Then she took the rest of the body and ate it, but she left a small piece of the liver which she gave to the Spider, and he ate it.

Now they were traveling on and on when the Hyena said, "Give me my piece of liver." Then the Spider pointed out to her the sun, which had nearly set and was very red, and said to her, "See, there is fire over there; go and get some and return, and we will eat the bull." So the Hyena went off at a run, and ran on and on, but the sun was always afar off. And when she had gone, the Spider killed the bull, and took off the hide, and climbed up a tree with the lot, not even the skin or a bone did he leave, and he covered up the blood on the ground.

When she had become tired, the Hyena returned, and kept calling, "Where is the Spider? Where is the Spider?" At last she sat down on her haunches by a tree, and lo: it was the very tree in which was the Spider.

After a little he threw a bone onto her head, and she said, "Well, I never, will God give me food at the foot of a tree?" But when she had eaten the bone, she looked up and saw the Spider, and said, "Oh, so it is you? I thought that it was God," and she continued, "Spider, for God's sake give me one of the legs." But the Spider said that he would not do so, and she replied, "Very well, you are very brave because you are up in the tree, aren't you? I will get one who is taller than you to come and seize you in the tree."

Then she went and found the Ostrich, but when the Ostrich came, the Spider made a noose of tie-tie, and he caught her, and as he dragged her, she let fall an egg. Then the Hyena pounced upon the egg, and ate it, and called out, "O Spider, drag her so that the eggs will fall out." But the Ostrich said, "Oh,

Hyena, is that how you would treat me? Release me, O Spider.” And the Spider did so. Then the Hyena said, “Now let us have a race,” and she went off at a run, and the Ostrich followed, but she just escaped.

As for the Spider, he descended from the tree and went home.

47. The Woman who Bore a Clay Pot

[From [*Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to the Folk-Lore and the Folk*](#) by Arthur J. N. Tremearne, 1913. See item #191 in the Bibliography.]

There was once a certain woman who had no son, and she prayed to God saying, "Let me have a child, even though it be a clay pot." So God caused her to conceive, and after nine months she brought forth a big clay pot which she took and placed among her crockery.

Now, next morning, when the mother had gone to the forest to look for firewood, the son, who was in the pot, emerged, and also went to the forest to look for firewood. After a time he came upon the place where the beasts of the forest had made a hedge, and he began cutting it.

Then Gazelle said, "Hey, who is cutting this hedge?" for Gazelle had been told to watch the place until the other beasts returned. The boy said, "Let me come in and you will see me," and, when he had entered it, he said, "Here I am; I have come." "What is your name?" she asked. "The-Gift-of-God," he replied, and he continued, "Will you not give me some water to drink?" So she brought him some, and he drank it, and then he said, "Bring me some water to bathe my head." When he had been given it, he said, "Get up, and let us wrestle."

So he wrestled with Gazelle and threw her, and he plucked out her hair and tied her up with it. Then he went and cut the wood, and took it home, and re-entered his clay pot.

In the late afternoon, the beasts of the forest returned to their settlement, and when they saw what had happened, they said, "O Gazelle, whatever have you been doing that you are tied

up?" And she replied, "A certain boy came and started cutting wood, and when I remonstrated, we wrestled, and he bound me up." Then Hyena said, "Oh well, tomorrow I shall stay here and keep guard."

Next morning the boy came again and started to cut the wood, and Hyena said, "Who are you?" He replied, "It is I; who are you?" So Hyena said, "Enter, that I may see you." When the boy had come into the cleared space inside the hedge, he said, "Give me water to drink." When she had given it to him, he said, "Get me some water so that I may bathe my head," and when she had brought it, he said, "Get up, and let us wrestle." Then Hyena thought, "That boy has no sense; I am big and he is tiny." So she sprang upon him to seize him, but he caught her and threw her on the ground, and he bound her, and left her, and went back to his clay pot.

In the afternoon when the beasts returned, they loosed Hyena, and said, "Whatever have you been doing that you are bound thus?" And she replied, "A certain boy came and I wrestled with him, but he threw me on the ground and bound me." Then Elephant said, "Oh! Very well, tomorrow I myself shall stay and keep guard."

When the morning came, the boy arrived and began cutting the trees — *kop-kop-kop* — and Elephant said, "Who is that?" He replied, "It is I," and he entered the clearing. Then he said to Elephant, "Give me water to drink," and, when she had given it to him, he said, "Get me some water so that I may bathe my head," and when she had brought it, he said, "Get up, and let us wrestle." And he threw Elephant also and bound her, and then he went home.

Now when the beasts returned, they said, "This is quite enough; since even Elephant is conquered, we must run away." So they began tying up their loads that afternoon in order that they might flee.

But the boy, who had guessed their intention, came by night to where they were, and got inside a jar of oil, and hid. When

dawn came, the beasts said, "Now, let each take his load and escape, lest he come and catch us." So off they started, and they entered the depths of the forest far, far away.

After a time Hyena began to lag behind, and she said to the others, "You go on; I will catch you up later," and then she opened the jar to steal some oil. But the boy dealt her a blow and said, "Lift it up, and go on." She was so frightened that she took it up again, and ran, and ran, until she had overtaken the others.

So they went on and came to the place which they were going to make habitable, and then they said, "O Hyena, come here and give us some oil." But she said, "No, no," for she was afraid of the boy. They said, "For goodness' sake, come and give it to us," but she still said, "No."

Then Elephant grew angry, and seized the jar, and opened it, and at once the boy dealt her a blow — *pau!* — and sprang out. As he did so, all the animals ran away and left their belongings behind, so he returned to the town and told the people, and they came and seized all the loads and took them to his mother.

After that he left the clay pot, and he never lived in it again.

48. How the Gazelle Won His Wife

[From [Congo Life and Folklore](#) by John Weeks, 1921. See item #197 in the Bibliography.]

Once upon a time there was a Gazelle that went in search of a wife. While journeying, he met a beautiful girl, and stopped, and said to her, "Miss So-and-so, have you any water? If so, please give me a drink, for I am very thirsty."

The girl replied, "Yes, sir," and, taking a calabash well ornamented with rows of brass nails, she gave it to him full of water.

He drank eagerly, and as he handed the calabash back, he said, "The water is as nice to drink as the girl is beautiful." The Gazelle inquired of her and, finding she was not married, he asked her, "Will you marry me?"

She answered, "I don't know; I must ask my mother."

So together they went to seek the mother's consent. When she heard all about the affair, she said, "If you want to marry my daughter, you must first bring me the dried flesh of every animal and bird in the forest."

The Gazelle was at first disconcerted by such a difficult task but said, "Alright, I will do it," and went his way to think out a plan by which he could win his wife. The Gazelle thought of first one way and then another, and at last he sought for and found a shell and filled it with various powerful medicines, and thus having made a strong fetish, he started for the forest.

He had not walked very far before a Dove came to him and said, "Behold, there are ten animals down there. I fired at them but did not kill a single one; if therefore you have a hunting fetish, teach me how to use it."

“Yes, I have the kind of fetish you want,” replied the Gazelle, “but before you can learn how to use it, you must be killed, roasted, and dried, and then I will restore you to life and teach you how to use the fetish.”

“Very well,” said the Dove, “I am ready to be roasted.” So the Gazelle killed, roasted, and dried the silly Dove and took the flesh to his store-room as the first part of the dried meat he had to give to his future mother-in-law.

Soon after returning to the forest, an Antelope came running up to him and said, “We hear you have a strong fetish to help hunters to kill animals. Teach me how to use it, for I have had no success in hunting for a long time.”

“Well, I have such a fetish,” answered the Gazelle, “but before you can learn about it, I must kill, roast, and dry you. Then I will bring you to life again and teach you the use of the fetish.”

“Do with me whatever you like,” said the Antelope, “so long as I get a fetish with which to kill plenty of game.” The Gazelle drew his knife and told the Antelope to lie down on the ground. “What are you going to do with that knife?” cried the Antelope.

“How can you be roasted and dried unless you are first killed?” quietly asked the Gazelle. So the Antelope stretched himself out, and was soon killed, dried, and carried to the store. “Well,” ruminated the Gazelle, “I have found a way to win my wife, for these animals will believe any foolish thing so as to possess power to kill others. I must now try a big beast.”

Again he went to the forest, but he had not gone very far into it before he met a Buffalo running. “Where are you going?” asked the Gazelle.

“I am off to look after my farm, for I have no luck in hunting,” replied the Buffalo.

“I have a strong hunting-fetish,” said the Gazelle, “but before you can use it I must cut out your heart, and roast and dry you; after that, I will call you back to life and teach you my fetish, which will give you plenty of hunting skill.”

“All right,” said the Buffalo, “but I am a big person and your knife will not enter my body.” With that he fell on the ground, but directly the Gazelle had thrust his knife into the body, the Buffalo cried out, “Please stop! Do stop!” but the Gazelle said, “Just wait a moment only,” and he pushed in the knife, and the Buffalo died. In a very short time the Buffalo’s flesh was roasted, dried, and carried to the store.

In this way the Gazelle caught and roasted the Lion, the Leopard, the Elephant and all the other animals and birds of the forest. By and by, he carried all the dried meat to the mother of the beautiful girl and said to her, “My respected mother-in-law, do not be angry because I have been a long time doing the task you set me. You know all about hunting, and that it is very slow and laborious work. Sometimes one shoots and does not kill; however, here is the meat for which you sent me.”

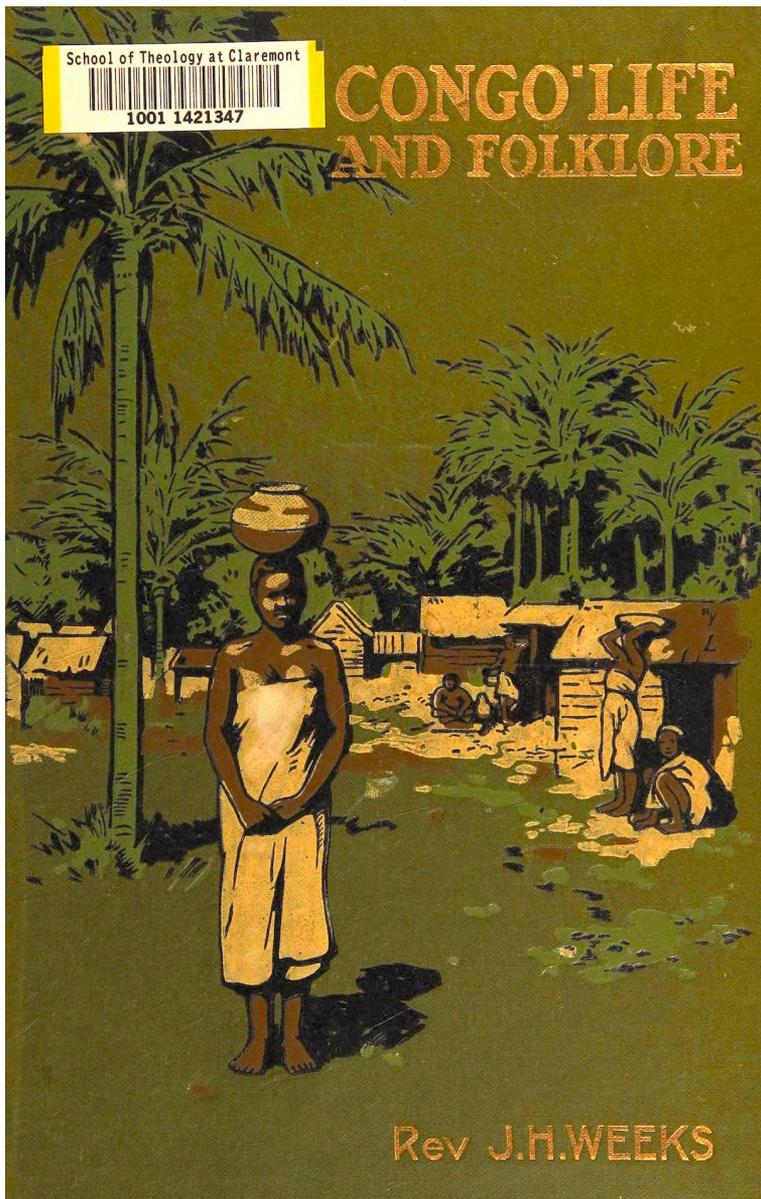
The old woman answered, “I thank you, and now you can take your wife and go your way.”

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CONGO' LIFE AND FOLKLORE



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49. How the Fox Saved the Frog's Life

[From [Congo Life and Folklore](#) by John Weeks, 1921. See item #197 in the Bibliography.]

A Frog, having built a nice town, received a visit from several well-dressed young men. The Frog welcomed them, and they very civilly answered his greetings. The Frog asked them where they were going, and they replied, "We are not going anywhere in particular; we are just walking about, visiting the towns."

The Frog called out his thirty wives to come and pay their respects to the visitors, and they came out of their houses and greeted the young men. The wives asked their husband how he came to know them, and he replied, "I do not know them but, seeing them well dressed, I saluted them."

"Oh! You welcomed them because they are well dressed," they retorted, "yet ever since we married you, we have never received any new clothes from you."

"Never mind," he said. "I am well known as a great chief who has built a whole town and married thirty wives."

"Oh yes," they answered, "you are well known, but we work and farm, and we have no clothes, only rags; hence you don't respect us like those who are well dressed."

The Frog could say nothing in reply to his wives.

Then he asked the young men where and how he could buy some clothes, and they told him that if he carried some peanuts to Mboma, he could buy plenty there, and the road was not difficult to find, for if he followed the river he would reach there in a few days. The Frog was glad to hear this, and thereupon he killed six chickens and made a feast for his friends, and he told each of his wives to bring him a large

basket of peanuts in the morning, for he said, "Although I am a big chief of a large town, I feel ashamed because my wives have had no new clothes since I married them, and they do not dress properly."

The next morning the peanuts were brought and tied into a load, and for the journey some food was prepared, and the Frog started, telling his wives that he would be back in twenty days. On the third day of his journey, the Frog reached a large baobab tree that had fallen across the road, and while he was considering how he, a person with such short legs, could jump over it, he heard a voice say, "If you are a strong man, please put down your bundle and save me, for as I was on my way to visit my wife's family, this tree fell on me and has held me here for twenty months. Have pity on me, and help me now from under this tree."

When the Frog heard this, he at once put down his load and went under the tree, and swelled and swelled until he lifted it and the Snake (for that was who was under the tree) was able to crawl out; then the Frog let the tree down again and went to pick up his load to continue his journey.

The Snake, however, immediately caught him by the leg and told him to get ready to be swallowed. The Frog said, "What have I done that you should swallow me? For although I had a right to be paid for helping you, yet I did not ask for anything! Let me go on my way to Mboma."

While they were arguing about this, an Antelope arrived, and he was asked to judge between them, but when he had heard the whole matter, he was afraid to settle the affair properly, for he said to himself, "If I let the Frog go, who is right but little, then the Snake will kill me." So the Antelope gave the verdict in favour of the Snake.

The Snake quickly said, "Do you hear that? Get ready at once and I will swallow you."

But the Frog cried, "He would have given me the verdict, only he is afraid of you."

While they were discussing this point, a Fox arrived on the scene, and he wanted to hear all about it. When the case was laid before him, the Snake said, "Am I not in the right? For I am very hungry and want to swallow the Frog."

But the Fox said, "Did the Frog truly lift that tree?" and would not give the verdict until he had seen the Frog lift the tree, so he said to the Snake, "Release the Frog's leg, and let him go and raise the tree," which the Frog did at once.

The Fox said, "Truly, the Frog is very strong to lift so large a tree. Now, Snake, you go under it, and show us how you were lying beneath the tree."

So the Snake went, thinking he would surely win the case as the judge was taking so much trouble over it, but the Snake was no sooner under the tree than the Fox called out, "Frog, let go the tree," and down it came right on the Snake, holding him so that he could not get away.

The Fox then said to the Snake, "You are entirely in the wrong, for your friend did a kindness to you in helping you in your trouble, but you want to repay him by a bad deed — you want to swallow him."

Thereupon they all went away, leaving the Snake under the tree, as no one would help him again for fear of his ingratitude. The Frog thanked the Fox for saving him and gave him his load of peanuts, and they became great friends.

50. How the Squirrel Repaid a Kindness

[From [Congo Life and Folklore](#) by John Weeks, 1921. See item #197 in the Bibliography.]

There was once a man named Tunga who had a house, a wife, and a nice little baby. Tunga used to catch partridges, guinea-fowls, palm-rats, and squirrels in his traps, and sometimes he would trap three and four of these at a time.

One day he caught as many as fifteen partridges, and when he took them home, his wife said, "We will save some of these for another day so that our child may not be hungry should you not catch any."

But Tunga said, "No, we will eat them all now, for I am sure to catch plenty of meat every day."

Some time after, Tunga went to look at his traps and found only one squirrel in them, and this squirrel had some bells round its neck. And just as Tunga was going to kill him, the squirrel said, "Oh, please don't kill me, and I will help you another day."

Tunga laughed and said, "How can a little thing like you help me?"

But the squirrel pleaded for his life and promised to help the man whenever he was in trouble, so at last Tunga let the squirrel go. He then plucked some leaves and went home to his wife and told her what he had done. She was very angry and quarreled so much about there being no food for the baby to eat that she picked up the child and went off to her own family, who lived in a distant town.

The man waited some days until he thought his wife's anger had passed away, and then he took a large calabash of palm-

wine and started for his wife's town. On arriving at the crossroads, Tunga met an imp that had neither arms, legs, nor body, but was all head, like a ball.

The imp said, "Let me carry your calabash for you. You are a great man and should not carry it yourself."

"How can you carry it, when you are all head and no body?" asked Tunga.

"Oh, you will see, " said the imp as he took the calabash, balanced it on his head, and went bounding off along the road in front of Tunga.

After traveling a long way, Tunga became very tired, so they sat down under a tree to rest, and while they were sitting there, a leopard came up and, noticing the palm-wine, he asked for a drink, and the man was too much afraid to refuse. When Tunga was going to pour out some of the palm-wine into a glass, the leopard said, "I drink out of my own mug, not yours, " and he brought out of his bag the skull of a man and said, "Here is a mug. I have already eaten nine men, and you will be the tenth."

Poor Tunga was so filled with fear that he did not know what to do but, by and by, a squirrel arrived and, after exchanging greetings, he asked for some of the palm-wine, and as Tunga was going to pour it out, the squirrel said, "What! Have you no respect for me? I carry my own mug," and putting his hand into his bag, he brought out the skull of a leopard, and said, "There, I have eaten nine leopards, and this one here will be the tenth," and as he repeated the words again and again very fiercely, the leopard began to tremble and go backwards until he was in the road, and then he turned tail and fled, with the squirrel after him.

Tunga waited, and at last he and the imp started again on their journey. He was now glad that he had been kind to the squirrel and had saved his life.

On reaching the town, Tunga and the imp were welcomed by the people, a good house was given to them, and they were well feasted. After resting there some days, Tunga and his

wife started on their return journey home, but before leaving the town, Mrs. Tunga's family gave them a goat as a parting present.

When they reached the crossroads, Tunga said to the imp, "I will kill the goat here and give you your half."

"Alright," said the imp, "but you must also give me half of the woman."

"No," replied Tunga. "The woman is my wife, but you shall have half the goat."

The imp became very angry and called to his friends, and a great crowd of imps came to fight Tunga. While they were wrangling, the squirrel arrived and asked what was the cause of the row. They told him, and he said, "If we divide the goat and the woman, how are you going to cook them? You have neither firewood nor water. Some of you fetch water, and others go for firewood."

The squirrel opened his box and gave to some of the imps a calabash in which to fetch water, but while the water was running into the calabash, it sang such a magic tune that the imps began to dance, and they could not stop dancing.

Then the squirrel opened his box again and let loose a swarm of bees that stung the other imps so badly that they all bounded away and never returned again to trouble Tunga.

Then the squirrel said to Tunga, "You now see that if you had not been merciful to me, I should not have been able to save you from the leopard and from the imps. Your kindness to me has saved your own life and your wife's."

Tunga thanked him for his help and went his way home.

Notes to the Stories

#1. *How We Got the Name “Anansi Tales.”* Anansi, or Ananse, is the Akan name for “Spider,” and he is one of the most famous African tricksters. Spider has other names in other West African languages; in Hausa stories, for example, Spider is called Gizo. I have changed the name “tiger” to “leopard” in this story; the word “tiger” in African folktales refers to leopards, cheetahs, servals, and other wild cats (there are no actual tigers in Africa). Leopard is often the dupe of the trickster; see story #6, *The Elephant that Wanted to Dance* and story #32, *The Jackal, the Dove, and the Panther*, in which it is the trickster rabbit who fools the leopard.

#2. *Wisdom and the Human Race.* Fanti-land refers to the home of the Fante, an Akan people who live in Ghana. The name of Anansi’s son, Kweku Tsin, is from the Akan day-name system; Kweku is a name given to a son born on a Wednesday. For more stories from Ghana, see these books in the Bibliography: 12, 13, 18, 20, 32, 37, 55, 90, 136, 165, 199.

#3. *Thunder and Anansi.* Greed is one of the most distinctive traits of trickster characters like Anansi, as you can see both in this story and in the previous story. For more Spider stories, see these books in the Bibliography: 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 52, 55, 63, 64, 90, 98, 114, 136, 159, 178.

#4. *The Flame Tree.* This story is set in the Kyagwe region of central Uganda. The Lake referred to here is Lake Nalubaale (Lake Victoria), which is one of the Great Lakes in the East African Rift Valley. The Buvuma Islands are an island chain in the northern part of the lake. You can see pictures of actual flame trees at [Wikipedia: Spathodea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spathodea). For more stories from Uganda, see these books in the Bibliography: 23, 113, 149, 176.

#5. *The Buffalo Maiden.* The Mabira Forest is a rainforest in central Uganda. This story includes a song; songs-in-the-stories are a regular feature of African folktales. Most folktale collections do not include the music, but you will find a transcription of the music in #19, *How the Animals Dug Their Well*.

#6. *The Elephant that Wanted to Dance.* As in the previous story, the setting is the Mabira rainforest of Uganda. The sem-sem sauce referred to in the story is made with peanuts and sesame. The animals called “rock conies” are also known as rock hyraxes. Although hyraxes look like rodents (hence the name “rock conies”), they are actually in the same animal family, *Paenungulata*, as elephants and manatees.

#7. *The Language of the Beasts.* This is an Amazigh (Berber) story from northern Africa. The jerboa referred to here is a tiny rodent with a very long tail, as in the English “gerbil.” The story of the man who learned the language of the animals is a famous folktale that appears in many variations (Aarne-Thompson-Uther type 670), often focused on punishing the wife, as here. This variation is distinctive for the elaborate explanation of just how the man gained his unusual power. For more examples of ATU 670, see Ashliman’s collection of stories which you can read at the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine: [The Language of Animals](#).

#8. *Half-a-Rooster.* This is another Amazigh (Berber) story from North Africa. For more stories from northern Africa, see these books in the Bibliography: 10, 24, 50, 77, 88, 115, 142, 172. For another pairing of wise-and-foolish like the two wives in this story, see the story of the two sisters, #41, *The Snake with Five Heads*.

#9. *The Hare and the Lion.* Sungura, or Soongoora in Bateman’s spelling, is the Swahili name for the hare, and you will find other Swahili names for the animals in this story. For

more Swahili stories, see these books in the Bibliography: 4, 25, 130, 180. For a different trickster using the “hey, house!” trick, see #33, *The Lion, the Hyena, and the Fox*.

#10. *Goso the Teacher*. This story is an example of a chain tale, which is an extremely popular folktale genre in Africa. This specific type of chain tale is called a “cumulative tale,” and you can find out more at [Wikipedia: Cumulative Tale](#). Cumulative tales are found in folk traditions around the world, but they are most widespread in Africa and in India. For more cumulative chain tales, see story #44, *A Chain of Circumstances*, and story #45, *The Spider Passes on a Debt*.

#11. *Mkaah Jeechonee, the Boy Hunter*. The name of the sultan in this story, Maajnoon, is an Arabic name meaning “madman,” which certainly fits his role as a foolish ruler here. This story is an example of a Swallowing Monster type of story, a widespread tale type in Africa. For another Swallowing Monster, see story #18, *The Three Little Eggs*. For another royal child who is not able to recognize the animals in the world around them because they have led a sheltered life, see story #27, *A Different Story about Nzambi's Daughter*.

#12. *How Mafani Earned His Bride*. This story from the Wute people of Cameroon provides another example of a chain tale (see story #10); this time it is a “trading up” type of story where, from a small start, the hero gains in wealth, trade by trade by trade. The ashes from the ceiba tree (silk-cotton tree) were used as a substitute for salt, which is why the wind is glad to receive the salt instead of the ashes.

#13. *How the Turtle Outwitted the Pig*. This is a story of the Kwe (Wakweli) people of Cameroon. The turtle, or tortoise, is another one of the great African trickster characters. For more Tortoise stories, see these books in the Bibliography: 58, 151, 156, 187, 198, 200. The next story, #14, *The Punishment of the Turtle*, is also about the trickster turtle.

#14. *The Punishment of the Turtle.* This is a Basuto legend from southern Africa. The boastful and greedy character of the trickster is on full display here, and the story features a song sung by the trickster turtle. In this case, the song has incriminating lyrics in which the trickster boasts about his crimes (“By cunning I have beaten all”), but he sings his song once too often.

#15. *Mantis and Will-o-the-Wisp.* The Mantis in this story is the trickster god of the San people. Mantis is brave but also boastful, and his boasting can get him into trouble. The opponent that Mantis faces in this story is called Will-o-the-Wisp (a name borrowed from English folklore), and he is also known as “Eyes-on-his-Feet.” Writing in 1901, J. T. Hahn explained how the creature supposedly “roams around the veld and kindles a big fire at night to attract people who have lost their way; then he fries and eats them” (cited by Sigrid Schmidt in *South African !Xam Bushman Traditions*, p. 53).

#16. *Mantis and Aardwolf.* The Afrikaans name “aardwolf” means earth-wolf, a relative of the hyena; its scientific name is *Proteles cristata*. In this story you will meet Mantis’s son-in-law Kwammanga again (his name means “rainbow”), and also his grandson, Ichneumon, an African mongoose. For more stories from the San people, see these books in the Bibliography: 35, 125, 173.

#17. *The Rooster’s Kraal.* Otters are found throughout sub-Saharan Africa; you can read more about them at [Wikipedia: African Clawless Otters](#). For another story about transformation and the lifting of a curse, see story #41, *The Snake with Five Heads*. For another story with a rooster as one of the main characters, see story #8, *Half-a-Rooster*.

#18. *The Three Little Eggs.* In a footnote, the authors explain that another word for the monster here called “Inzimu” is “Imbula.” A “kaross” is an animal skin garment worn by the

Khoekhoe and other peoples of southern Africa, and the word “amasi” refers to fermented milk that is something like yogurt.

#19. *How the Animals Dug Their Well.* This is one of the Ndau stories with songs that C. Kamba Simango contributed to the book; the photo shows Simango playing a kalimba. You can find more examples of music in these books in the Bibliography: 41, 166, 176, 190, 192. For another story about the rabbit stealing water, see story #28, *The Rabbit and the Antelope*.

#20. *Death of the Hare.* This is another one of the Ndau stories contributed by C. Kamba Simango. For more stories about the trickster rabbit (or hare), see these books in the Bibliography: 3, 4, 78, 103, 131, 146, 185. For another story of foolish imitation and its dangerous consequences, see the final episode of story #8, *Half-a-Rooster*.

#21. *Cunning Rabbit and His Well.* The “cunnie rabbit” here is not a rabbit at all; instead, this is the tiny antelope, *Neotragus pygmaeus*, who is a trickster figure in western Africa; see [Wikipedia: Royal Antelope](#). For help with the English used here, see the [vocabulary listing](#) in the book. You can find out more at [Wikipedia: West African Pidgin English](#). The author supplies a footnote for the phrase “do’ clean” as follows: “When into the darkness of a mud hut the first rays of dawn penetrate sufficiently to afford from within a clear-cut outline of the doorway, the time is designated by *do’ clean*.”

#22. *A Ghost Story.* See the previous note for information about the pidgin English used in this story. For another story about an animal who is able to become a human, as the dog does here, see story #42, *The Leopard of the Fine Skin*. For more stories from Sierra Leone, see these books in the Bibliography: 63, 82, 114.

#23. *How a Hunter Obtained Money from His Friends.*

Calabar, referred to in the story, is a cultural center in southern Nigeria. The “rods” referred to in the story are metal rods that were used as a form of currency in western Africa. This is another example of a chain tale; for a similar type of chain tale, see story #44, *A Chain of Circumstances*.

#24. *Of the Fat Woman who Melted Away.* In this story, the new wife cannot go out in the sun because the sun’s heat will melt her. For another story about a bride unable to go out in the sunlight, see story #40, *Tanga, the Child of Night*. For more stories from Nigeria, see these books in the Bibliography: 8, 30, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67, 86, 151, 152, 153, 156, 177, 185, 191, 193, 194.

#25. *The Leopard, the Squirrel, and the Tortoise.* The motif of “eating the mothers” is one that recurs in different African folktales. In this story, the tortoise does not succeed in saving his mother, but in other stories, the trickster uses some cunning trick to save his mother, as in this Bulu folktale from Cameroon: [Tortoise, Leopard, and Their Mothers](#).

#26. *How The Spider Won and Lost Nzambi’s Daughter.* In Congo mythology, there is a sky-god called Nzambi Mpungu, and there is also a goddess, Nzambi, who rules the earthly realm. This story and the next story are about the goddess Nzambi, while Nzambi Mpungu also appears in this story as well. The ending of this story is very similar to a dilemma tale, but instead of leaving the competing claims open for the audience to debate, the storyteller lets the goddess Nzambi provide her own surprising resolution to their dispute. For another example of a trial by fire, such as the rat undergoes here, see the final episode in story #30, *How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu*.

#27. *A Different Story about Nzambi’s Daughter.* See the previous story for a note about Nzambi, goddess on the earth. Here is a note provided by the author about the paint-house,

where young women were taken after their first menstrual period: "Here she is painted red, and carefully fed and treated until they consider her ready for marriage, when she is washed and led to her husband. But if she has not a husband waiting for her, she is covered over with a red cloth and taken round by women to the different downs until someone is found anxious to have her."

#28. *The Rabbit and the Antelope.* The rabbit's use of incriminating names (Not-Done-Yet, Half-Done-Now, All-Done) is similar to the use of incriminating song lyrics in which the trickster boasts of his tricks; see, for example, the boasting turtle in story #14, *The Punishment of the Turtle*. The cascade in this story refers to the use of an emetic, *Erythrophleum guinense*, to prove guilt or innocence. There are many different forms of ordeal-by-poison; according to the practice described in this story, the one who gets sick first is the guilty party. The sticky figure that traps the rabbit here is the African origin of the famous "tar-baby" motif in African American folktales: [Wikipedia: Tar Baby](#). For another story about the rabbit stealing water, see story #19, *How the Animals Dug Their Well*.

#29. *Motikatika.* There are many forms of divination used in Africa, including the use of bones as in this story. For more information, see [Wikipedia: African Divination](#).

#30. *How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu.* This story involves another trial by ordeal (this time with fire); for another trial by ordeal also involving the rabbit, see story #28, *The Rabbit and the Antelope*. For another story about rival traveling companions, see #46, *The Hyena and the Spider Visit the King*.

#31. *The Sacred Milk of Koumongoe.* For another story about an underwater world, see #40, *Tanga, the Child of Night*. In that story, it is the mother, not the child, who dwells under the water.

#32. *The Jackal, the Dove, and the Panther.* The jackal is another one of the important African animal tricksters, and he is also a major trickster in the folktales of India. This story shows how a trickster tale can grow as the focus shifts from one episode to another and to another: jackal and dove, jackal and heron, jackal and panther, and then finally the panther, the baboon, and the bees, but with the jackal still chiming in from a distance. For another trickster story that plays out in a series of episodes, see #34, *How the Fox Followed the Elephant*.

#33. *The Lion, the Hyena, and the Fox.* This story features yet another one of the important African animal tricksters: the fox, who is also a major trickster in the European folk tradition. For another story where the fox wisely intervenes, see #49, *How the Fox Saved the Frog's Life*. For a different trickster using the "hey, house!" trick, see #9, *The Hare and the Lion*.

#34. *How the Fox Followed the Elephant.* As in the previous story from Ethiopia, the fox is once again the trickster, and the story plays out in a series of episodes: fox and elephant, fox and merchants, fox and jackal. For another trickster story that plays out in a series of episodes, see #32, *The Jackal, the Dove, and the Panther*.

#35. *The Debbi.* The story makes reference to the Gash-Barka region in what is now Eritrea, to the north of Ethiopia and east of Sudan. For more stories from Ethiopia and the countries around it, see these books in the Bibliography: 40, 54, 66, 97, 118, 119, 120, 128. For more about fetishes, see story #42, *The Leopard of the Fine Skin*, and #48, *How the Gazelle Won His Wife*.

#36. *The Elephant and the Rabbit.* In this story, the rabbit tricks the foolish little hyena into singing a song with incriminating lyrics ("stopping up and letting out"). For another example of incriminating lyrics, see story #14, *The Punishment of the Turtle*, in which the trickster turtle sings an incriminating song about himself.

#37. *The Frog and the Chameleon.* In this animal courtship story, the frog and the chameleon begin as friends, but they end as rivals. Compare the rivalry between the rabbit and the baboon in story #30, *How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu*. For another story about an animal courtship, see #48, *How the Gazelle Won His Wife*.

#38. *The Man and the Sheep.* This story begins with realistic details but quickly turns into a supernatural story. For another story that involves consulting with medicine-men, see story #42, *The Leopard of the Fine Skin* (in that story it is the animal who does the consulting).

#39. *The Horns of Plenty.* This story of the magical horns is a popular folktale type in southern Africa. For another animal helper, see the horse in story #42, *The Leopard of the Fine Skin*.

#40. *Tanga, the Child of Night.* For another story of a bride who cannot come out in the daytime, see story #24, *Of the Fat Woman who Melted Away*, and for another story about an underwater world, see story #31, *The Sacred Milk of Koumongoe*. In that story, it is the child, not the mother, who dwells under the water.

#41. *The Snake with Five Heads.* The amasi referred to in the story is a kind of thickened milk, something like yogurt. For a modern retelling of this story, see John Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, which is book #181 in the Bibliography, and for another story about the lifting of a curse, see story #17, *The Rooster's Kraal*.

#42. *The Leopard of the Fine Skin.* Nassau's book contains stories from Mpongwe, Benga, and Fang storytellers. This story comes from a Mpongwe storyteller at Libreville, in what is now Gabon. For another story that involves consulting with medicine-men (as the leopard does here), see story #38, *The*

Man and the Sheep. For another animal helper, see the ox in story #39, *The Horns of Plenty*.

#43. *Tortoise in a Race*. This story comes from a Benga storyteller. Tales about a slow animal who defeats a fast animal in a race by using substitutes like this is one of the most popular African folktale types: different slow animals (tortoise, snail, etc.) race different fast animals (antelope, rabbit, etc.), and the slow animal wins by using substitutes. The tortoise's trickery here stands in sharp contrast to the tortoise in the famous Aesop's fable about the race between the tortoise and the hare, where "slow and steady wins the race."

#44. *A Chain of Circumstances*. This cumulative chain tale (see note #10 above) comes from the Fang people who live in Equatorial Guinea and also in northern Gabon and southern Cameroon.

#45. *The Spider Passes on a Debt*. This Hausa story is another example of a cumulative chain tale; see the note to story #10 above for more information. For more Hausa stories, see these books in the Bibliography: 165, 177, 185, 191.

#46. *The Hyena and the Spider Visit the King*. This Hausa story focuses on the greediness of the hyena, who is not very cunning, in contrast to the spider's combination of both cunning and greed as seen in other spider stories. For another story about rival traveling companions, see #30, *How Isuro the Rabbit Tricked Gudu*.

#47. *The Woman who Bore a Clay Pot*. Tremearne has preserved here in the English version some of the ideophones used by the storyteller, such as "*kop kop kop*" for chopping the wood and "*pau*" for when a blow is struck. You can read more about ideophones, which are a distinctive feature of many African languages, at [Wikipedia: Ideophones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideophones). For another story featuring a heroic supernatural child, see story #29, *Motikatika*.

#48. *How the Gazelle Won His Wife.* You can learn more about African fetishes at [Wikipedia: Fetishism](#). For an example of medicine that really does bring the dead back to life, see story #43, *Tortoise in a Race*. For another story about animal courtship, see #37, *The Frog and the Chameleon*.

#49. *How the Fox Saved the Frog's Life.* The story of tricking a foolish animal back into the trap is a famous folktale found in many traditions (Aarne-Thompson-Uther type 155). For more examples, see Ashliman's collection of stories which you can read at the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine: [Ingratitude Is the World's Reward](#). The story starts out being about the frog and his many wives, but we don't find out what happens to the wives in the end of the story. Since the fox ended up with the peanuts, I'm afraid the frog's wives never did get any new clothes! For another story where the fox wisely intervenes, see #33, *The Lion, the Hyena, and the Fox*.

#50. *How the Squirrel Repaid a Kindness.* This delightful story comes from the Congo; for more stories from the Congo, see these books in the Bibliography: 33, 43, 68, 107, 167, 197.

Appendix: Timeline

This timeline includes the main book for each bibliography item along with other African books mentioned in that item, but I have not included the non-African books mentioned in the bibliography.

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#42. Burton, Richard Francis. *Wanderings in West Africa*. [1863]

#34. Bleek, Wilhelm. *Reynard the Fox in South Africa, or Hottentot Fables and Tales*. [1864]

#42. Burton, Richard Francis. *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa*. [1865]

#45. Callaway, Henry. *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus*. [1868]

#180. Steere, Edward. *Swahili Tales as Told by Natives of Zanzibar*. [1870]

#45. Callaway, Henry. *The Religious System of the Amazulu*. [1884]

#68. Dennett, Richard. *Seven Years among the Fjort*. [1887]

#130. Madan, Arthur. *Kiungani, or: Story and History from Central Africa*. [1887]

#49. Chatelain, Heli. *Folk-Tales of Angola*. [1894]

#68. Dennett, Richard. *Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort*. [1898]

#23. Baskerville, Rosetta. *The Flame Tree and Other Folk-Lore Stories from Uganda*. [1900]

- #24. Basset, René. *Moorish Literature*. [1901]
- #25. Bateman, George. *Zanzibar Tales Told by Natives of the East Coast of Africa*. [1901]
- #63. Cronise, Florence and Henry Ward. *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk Tales*. [1903]
- #128. Littmann, Enno. *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba in the Tradition of Axum*. [1904]
- #196. Vaughan, Arthur Owen. *Old Hendrik's Tales*. [1904]
- #108. Hollis, Alfred Claud. *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore*. [1905]
- #165. Rattray, R. Sutherland. *Folklore Stories and Songs in Chinyanja*. [1907]
- #36. Bourhill, Mrs. E. J. and Mrs. J. B. Drake. *Fairy Tales from South Africa*. [1908]
- #111. Jacottet, Édouard. *The Treasury of Ba-suto Lore*. [1908]
- #130. Madan, Arthur. *Lala-Lamba Handbook*. [1908]
- #46. Camphor, Alexander Priestley. *Missionary Story Sketches: Folk-Lore from Africa*. [1909]
- #84. Frobenius, Leo. *The Childhood of Man*. [1909]
- #108. Hollis, Alfred Claud. *The Nandi: Their Language and Folklore*. [1909]
- #67. Dayrell, Elphinstone. *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*. [1910]
- #68. Dennett, Richard. *Nigerian Studies: The Religious and Political System of the Yoruba*. [1910]
- #191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *Fables and Fairy Tales for Little Folk, or: Uncle Remus in Hausaland*. [1910]
- #35. Bleek, Wilhelm. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. [1911]

#147. Nassau, Robert. *Where Animals Talk: West African Folklore Tales*. [1912]

#191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *The Tailed Head-hunters of Nigeria*. [1912]

#67. Dayrell, Elphinstone. *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*. [1913]

#84. Frobenius, Leo. *The Voice of Africa*. [1913]

#165. Rattray, R. Sutherland. *Hausa Folklore*. [1913]

#191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to the Folk-Lore and the Folk*. [1913]

#191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *Some Austral-African Notes and Anecdotes*. [1913]

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#196. Metelerkamp, Sanni. *Outa Karel's Stories: South African Folklore Tales*. [1914]

#191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *Hausa Folk-tales: The Hausa Text*. [1914]

#191. Tremearne, Arthur J. N.. *The Ban of the Bori: Demons and Demon-dancing in West and North Africa*. [1914]

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#165. Rattray, R. Sutherland. *Ashanti Proverbs*. [1916]

#20. Barker, William and Cecilia Sinclair. *West African Folk-Tales*. [1917]

#180. Steere, Edward. *Swahili Exercises*. [1918]

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- #197. Weeks, John. *Congo Life and Folklore*. [1921]
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- #40. Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek*. [1922]
- #43. Burton, William F. P.. *Missionary Pioneering in Congo Forests*. [1922]
- #106. Rickert, Edith. *The Bojabi Tree*. [1923]
- #27. Bender, Carl. *Proverbs of West Africa*. [1924]
- #35. Bleek, Wilhelm, with Lucy Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek. *The Mantis and His Friends: Bushman Folklore*. [1924]
- #198. Werner, Alice. *The Mythology of All Races: African*. [1925]
- #196. Waters, Mary Waterton. *Cameos From the Kraal*. [1926]
- #73. Doke, Clement. *Lamba Folk-Lore*. [1927]
- #127. Lindblom, Gerhard. *Kamba Tales of Animals*. [1928]
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- #198. Werner, Alice. *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*. [1932]

- #40. Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Alexander Book in Ethiopia*. [1933]
- #99. Hambly, Wilfrid. *The Ovimbundu of Angola*. [1934]
- #113. Kaggwa, Apollo. *Customs of the Baganda*. [1934]
- #149. Nyabongo, Akiki. *Africa Answers Back*. [1936]
- #40. Wheeler, Post. *The Golden Legend of Ethiopia*. [1936]
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- #192. Tucker, Archie. *Disappointed Lion and Other Stories from the Bari of Central Africa*. [1937]
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- #78. Elliot, Geraldine. *The Long Grass Whispers*. [1939]
- #149. Nyabongo, Akiki. *Winds and Lights*. [1939]
- #196. Marais, Josef. *Koos, the Hottentot: Tales of the Veld*. [1945]
- #113. Kalibala, Ernest Balintuma and Mary Gould. *Wakaima and the Clay Man, and Other African Folktales*. [1946]
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