

# WHY THE BROOM'S NECK IS TIED

(As told by Nimobi Sagnan on 4th November 2019 in Chamba, Ghana)

## Introduction

The following story gives an explanation as to why the individual broom sticks of the local broom are bound together into a bundle. The story revolves around the illicit amorous relationship between an *Ubor* and his mother, which is witnessed and made public by the broom through gossip. At the center of the tale therefore are issues of incest and gossip and their consequences—*Ubor* among them being the damage to *Ubor*'s reputation and the broom's perpetual suffocation as punishment.

If you want to listen to the Likpakpaln narration, [click here](#).

## Story

A long, long time ago, *n-ɲaan* existed as individual broom sticks. Whenever it was time to use it to sweep, all its parts were then brought together. A rope was never tied around *n-ɲaan*'s neck as is the case today. Should I tell you why the broom is now tied? Nimobi asks his audience.

'Why;yes, tell us; we want to know,' audience resond variously.

There once lived a great *Ubor* who had several wives and children. He was very wealthy and generous. For this reason, he was much loved and highly respected by all. But *Ubor* had a dark secret that was known only to *n-ɲaan* who lay in *Ubor*'s mother's room. What was this secret? Despite having numerous wives, he was in an incestuous relationship with his biological mother. At night, whenever his wives and children went to bed, he snuck into his mother's bedroom and slept with her.

*N-ɲaan* , who lay in *Ubor*'s mother's room all the time, witnessed the abominable act but never opened his mouth to anyone about the illicit affair. The affair therefore continued for a very long time without anyone's knowledge. One day the mouse, who also lived in *Ubor*'s palace, was running across the rooms on top of the *nlɔkja* in search of materials to construct his bed, spotted *n-ɲaan* lying in *Ubor*'s mother's room, and descended to take some of *n-ɲaan*'s sticks to make his bed. *N-ɲaan* however begged for his life in exchange for a big secret he was ready to divulge to the mouse. The mouse retorted:

"What can you who stays indoors all your life possible tell me that I don't already know?"

After much persuasion, the mouse obliged and spared *n-ɲaan*'s life. The latter then told the former:

"Our *Ubor* has been having carnal knowledge of his mother right in this room."

The following day, whilst the mouse was on some errands, he ran into the cat who started pursuing him to eat him. When the cat eventually caught the mouse, the mouse in turn begged for his life, promising to tell the cat a big secret he alone was privy to. On sparing him, the mouse then told the cat:

"Our *Ubor* has been having carnal knowledge of his mother."

When asked how he came by that information, the mouse disclosed that *n-ɲaan* saw it with the naked eyes and told him. Shortly after this encounter, the cat was on his way home and also ran into the dog and a hot pursuit ensued. Just when the dog caught the cat and was about to snuff out his

life, the cat also asked for clemency in exchange for a big secret he had heard. The dog spared his life and was told about the affair between Ubɔr and his mother.

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The next morning, the dog went to drink water from the village river but *ukpindaan* wouldn't allow him. *Ukpindaan* pounced on him to swallow him but the dog begged for his life, promising to tell *ukpindaan* a big secret if he let him live. The latter got curious, spared the dog's life, and was told that Ubɔr was in an amorous relationship with his mother. Armed with this information, *ukpindaan* spent the rest of the day sunbathing and narrating the story to all who went to fetch water from the river.

Ubɔr's illicit affair soon became talk of the village and he eventually got wind of it and ordered the arrest of *ukpindaan*. When questioned regarding the source of his story, *ukpindaan* disclosed that the dog was the source. The dog in turn confessed, upon interrogation, to hearing it from the cat. The cat was also picked up for questioning, whereupon he revealed that the mouse told him. When interrogated, the mouse pointed Ubɔr to *n-ɲaan* as his source. Ubɔr summoned *n-ɲaan* immediately and upon questioning, *n-ɲaan* said:

"I witnessed it with my naked eyes."

Ubɔr became furious and ordered that from that day onward, *n-ɲaan*'s neck be tied with a rope to choke him slowly to death.

That is why till date *n-ɲaan*'s neck remains tied. This is the end of my story. Whether my story is interesting or not, I hand over the mantle to Sanja.<sup>1</sup> (*Nimobi points at one of his listeners to tell the next tale*)

## Note

1. In Konkomba storytelling, the storyteller can nominate anyone from his or her audience to tell the next story, as Nimobi does above

## Glossary

### **Ubɔr:**

the political head of a Konkomba community. Ubɔr is usually the eldest male member of the royal family. He inherits that position from his father after the latter's demise.

### **N-ɲaan:**

A local broom made up of tiny, soft sticks tied together with a rope into a bundle and used for sweeping. One would usually have to hold it by the neck and bend down (rather than stand) to sweep the floor.

### **Nɔkja:**

The main wood or log (ridge) at the center of the roof to which all rafters are tied before thatch or aluminum roofing sheets are placed over a room or building.

### **Ukpindaan:**

Transliterated as "the owner-of-the-river." It is the euphemism Konkombas use for the crocodile out of reverence. The crocodile is believed to be the embodiment of the Konkomba river god/goddess. As a result, Konkombas typically do not kill crocodiles even though some people who do not subscribe to this belief do kill them. The actual Likpakpaln name for the crocodile is unyii.