

# THE CHAMELEON AND UBOR'S DAUGHTERS

## Introduction

In this story, wisdom is projected as a key element in achieving one's ambitions or goals. The story presents a chameleon who employs a clever method to win the hand of Ubor's beautiful daughter in marriage. Here the chameleon is presented as the wisest of all in the village even though in Konkomba folklore that character trait is mostly the preserve of the rabbit or bunny. As evidenced here, therefore, the chameleon (and sometimes the tortoise) assumes the role of the wisest animal character who uses wisdom and tricks to outwit others. In this tale, the chameleon's wisdom makes him to succeed at what others fail at.

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

## Story

"Here goes my story," Waja announces. Once upon a time, there lived a Ubor who had three daughters. One of them was very pretty and always had an aura of calmness around her. These three daughters were raised in isolation and so no one in the village knew their names. When they became of age and started interacting with other members of the village, everyone wanted to know their names, but the girls always refused to reveal their names, for their father forbade them from doing so.

One day Ubor sent word throughout the village that his beautiful daughter was of age to marry and that any young man who was able to tell him the names of his three daughters would have her hand in marriage. All the interested young men tried in vain to get the girls to tell them their names.

One day the chameleon announced his intention to take up Ubor's challenge and uncover the names of the girls so as to marry the beautiful one. The next day he spent his time spying on the girls. The girls decided to go and collect firewood later that day so on hearing that the chameleon quickly ran ahead and hid atop a tree along the path the girls would take when going to collect the firewood.

When eventually the girls were approaching, he plucked some leaves, chewed them, and spat the contents on the girls when they were passing right under the tree on which he was hiding. One of the girls looked up and spotted the chameleon hiding in the tree. The chameleon started changing the color of his skin from one color to another, whereupon the girl called out to one of her sisters, "Alewa, look at this amazing spectacle." On seeing it, the second girl in turn tapped the third girl and said: "Dindilinya, look at this." The third sister looked up and on seeing the color-changing chameleon, asked the sister who first saw the chameleon: "Alakusa, what is that?" The chameleon got to know their names, so when the girls finally left, he descended and headed straight to Ubor's palace.

On reaching the palace he told Ubor and his elders that he knew the three girls' names and that Ubor should summon the entire village so that he would tell everyone the girls' names. When everyone assembled, the chameleon then told the village the names of the girls. After hearing the names, Ubor nodded in affirmation, everyone clapped for the chameleon, and the girl was given to him in fulfillment of Ubor's promise.

In this life, if you are wise, you will always succeed where others fail. *Maa tiin gur, ki gur, ki gur ki m-muun, ki muun ke n-yajah agbenja na.*

## Glossary

**Maa tiin gur, ki gur, ki gur ki m-muun, ki muun ke n-yajah agbenja na.:**

transliterated as “May my story diminish and diminish and diminish whilst I grow and grow as tall as my grandfather’s male Kapok tree.” This is one of the numerous ways in which a Konkomba storyteller can end his/her story. This particular type of ending suggests that Konkombas believe that storytelling (or entertainment in the broader sense) has a health benefit, especially healthy physical growth. The association of storytelling with physical growth is so entrenched in Konkomba belief system that it is even believed that when a child engages in storytelling at daytime—for Konkomba storytelling sessions are held normally in the evenings after supper/dinner—he or she will have stunted growth. Also, the reference to the grandfather’s male Kapok tree in this type of ending points to the patriarchal nature of traditional Konkomba society.

**Uɔɔ:**

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