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Ogres, Monsters, and Demons in the Oral Narratives of Africa:

Dodo, the Hausa Example

By David M. Westley

This paper constitutes a chapter of a projected book entitled tentatively "Ogres, Monsters and Demons in the Oral Narratives of Africa: An Anthology with Commentary."

The Hausa imaginative narrative, *tatsuniya* (plural, *tatsuniyoyi*) is a lie, a fabulous story, not to be believed. Its denizens are the hero and heroine, the trickster and helper, and finally, and paramount for our purposes, the ogre, *dodo*, (feminine *dodanniya*; plural, *dodani*). It is told by nonprofessionals, ordinary people who have passed on the tradition from generation to generation. Ideally it is told at night and there is an interdiction against telling it during the day though most of the stories I tape recorded in Nigeria were told during the day. The embodiment of the *tatsuniya* is Gizo, the trickster. At times, when a story is told during the day, *d'auren Gizo* is performed, literally, "tying up Gizo." A figure of Gizo, the spider, is drawn in the sand. A square is drawn around him and he is "tied up" by means of crisscrossing lines. Unlike the situation in many African traditions, stories are not handed down from mother to child. In Hausa culture a state of shame (*kunya*) exists between a mother and her children. "Play"(*wasa*), or a joking relationship, exists between and aunt and her nieces and nephews. I was told time and again by mothers that they could not bear to relate a *tatsuniya* to their own children. Children do, however, tell stories amongst themselves, often in mixed male and female company. So most of the narratives I collected were told among children or by aunts to their nieces.

Like the hero/heroine and trickster, the ogre/ogress is a near-universal feature of world folklore. The subject is treated in its many facets in a wealth of works. One of these is Marina Warner's *No Go the Bogeyman*, which treats myth, folklore, fairy tale, nursery rhyme and art mostly in the Western world (Warner, 1998). It is treated in depth by David D. Gilmore's global study of monsters (Gilmore, 2003), but significantly, he says relatively little about the phenomenon in Africa. As yet there is no survey of the ogre in Africa. But there are two works that concentrate on individual ethnic groups. These are G. Hulstaert's *Contes d'Ogres Mongo* (Hulstaert, 1971) and Thomas Geider's *Die Figur des Oger in der Traditionellen Literatur und Lebenswelt der Pokomo in Ost-Kenya* (Geider, 1990). My task

here is to examine the ogre as it is found among the Hausa, first of all because they are the people among whom I made a collection of stories in 1981. Aside from that, the Hausa ogre is the figure, of all African characters of this kind, who is most widely attested in the narratives themselves but also as a social phenomenon. The ogre plays an ancient role. The term comes from late twelfth-century Old French but it is older than that, probably as old as stories and, indeed, language itself. The Bantu languages provide a hint as to the antiquity of the concept. Note the following, paying special attention to the glosses (the examples come from narratives, not from dictionaries):

"Ogre"/ "Spirit" in Bantu

Language	**Term**	**Gloss**	**Source**
Giryama	zimu	"zimu"	Rassner 1980
Embu	yrimw	"yrimw"	Biersteker 1984
Zulu	izimu	"cannibal"	Callaway 1868
Xhosa	izim	"zim"	Scheub 1975
Sesotho	dimo	"cannibal"	Jacottet 1908
	Modimo	"God"	
Kikuyu	irimu	"ogre"	Kabira 1988
Pokomo	zimu	"oger"	Geider 1990
Nyanga	Kirimu	"dragon"	Biebuyck 1969
	kirimu	"ogre"	Mateene 1976
Swahili	zimwi	"zimwi"	Gethanguthi 1987
Kamba	eimu	"eimu"	Lindblom 1935
	yimu	"Geist"	Augustiny 1924-25
Mongo/Nkundo	elimu	"esprit"	Hulstaert 1971
BUT	eloko	"ogre"	
Transvaal Ndebele	uZimu	"Supreme Being"	v. Warmelo 1930
Tswana	dimu	"Dimu"	Malepe 1970
Kinyarwanda	kizimu	"kizimu"	Hurel 1922
Proto-Bantu	dimu	"spirit/ogre"	Guthrie 1967-1971
Proto-Bantu2	-dimoi	"ogre"	Bennett 2016

Clearly most of the terms are proto-Bantu reflexes whether they refer to the spirit end of the semantic range or the more fleshly, man-eating variety. I give them here to illustrate their

antiquity. By injecting Bantu terms into a discussion of a completely unrelated language that is closer to Hebrew than it is to most African languages (Hausa is a language of the Chadic family of Afro-Asiatic), I am merely making the point that ogre roots run deep. The Bantu languages have their origin in modern-day Cameroun from which source they spread 2,500 to 3,000 years ago taking these creatures with them. Hausa *dodo* may be more recent but it is undoubtedly a venerable concept. We shall see that he is not only a narrative phenomenon but basic to early Hausa belief systems.

I could not find Chadic roots for cognates relating to the term ogre. There are relatively few collections of Chadic-language oral traditions. Exceptions are the ogress, Nanamudo, "Mother of Death" among the Tangale (Jungraithmayr, 2002); and the ogre, Won, among the Bachama (Carnochan, 1967) (see also below, p. 4); but these are clearly not cognates with dodo. Dodo, however, has a presence, in social terms, in a lot of the traditions of northern Nigeria. Meek found in Dodo, "The embodiment of the spirits of the dead" (Meek, 1925 II, p. 18). Among the Zaranda people, "Dodo is seldom seen except at the time of circumcision." (Meek, ibid.) Among the Piti, "The public cult of the *Dodo* is animistic, the Dodo being regarded as representing the plurality of dead ancestors" (Meek, 1931, p. 136). Tremearne (1913, p. 124) says, "Dodo is a mythical monster or bogey; in fact, the *gidan tsafi* (house of magic) is often called the *gidan dodo*," i.e., house of dodo. Gunn finds, among the Kaje (Baju) a dodo associated with circumcision schools (Gunn, 1956, p. 112).

Dodo plays a role in *bori* , the Hausa system of possession trance. It is described by Barbara Callaway as follows:

> The pre-Islamic cult of the Bori, which thrived until the introduction of Islam into the Hausa States, remains a formidable presence and the particular province of women practitioners. In Bori spirits (*iskoki*) reveal themselves through human beings whom they have chosen or selected. Those chosen are summoned by appropriate drum rhythms as the spirits possess them; spectators spectators can speak directly with the *iskoki* through the one possessed, and individuals can approach the spirits separately with their needs (Callaway, 1987).

According to A.V. King, "It is officially frowned upon in present-day Northern Nigeria. In spite of this censure it flourishes in Katsina as elsewhere, both among Maguzawa and other rural *arna* (sing. *arne*; pagan) as well as in the predominantly Muslim towns of the Emirate (King, 1966, p. 105)." In a supplement King gives the names of the *iskoki* being called on. One of these is Danko. Besmer, working in Kano and environs, says of Danko: "He lives in water, either rivers or wells, and visitors to such places must beware of meeting him." (Besmer, 1983, p. 87). Among the *wak'ok'i* (songs) sung to Danko we find Dodon ruwa "Dodo of water" but indicating one who *inhabits* water. We will see that in social terms and in narrative as well there is a strong association of Dodo with water. Another description is *Dodo maci mutane* "Dodo, devourer of men." In a footnote King describes him as "The mythical monster both feared and admired for its great size and strength, " (King, 1967).

Guy Nicolas has much to say about Dodo among the *Anna* (sometimes spelled Arna) the non-Muslim Hausa of Niger (Nicolas, 1975, pp. 223-235) (They are usually referred to as Maguzawa in Nigeria). Dodo is a deity, father of all the directions, east, south, north and west as well as heaven and earth. He is masculine and is associated with dry, red vegetation and the dry season and his feminine counterpart is represented by moist, green vegetation and the wet season. Dodo is thunder and he has sexual intercourse with Damina to produce rain.

Hunter and Oumarou (2001, p. 84) comment, "The image of the Hausa Dodo is one of the most ancient and at the same time the most enduring." They go on: "A Hausa myth of origin recounts the hero, Bayajida, coming to Daura from the east and slaying a creature which inhabits the well and refuses to allow water to be drawn except at certain times. In most versions of the legend the creature is a serpent, but in some versions Dodo is the spirit of the well." According to Hunter and Oumarou, there is a proverb which states that getting permission from Dodo means you can enter the water without fear: *Samun yarda ga dodo ke sa'a shiga ruwa lafiya* (from Kirk-Greene, 1966, p. 18.) "The concept of the *dodo*," they conclude, "is enriched by images from the *arne*, from the myth of origin and from *bori,* of serpents, dangerous water, spirits; powerful forces all the more dangerous because of their unpredictability."

In narrative the feminine counterpart of Dodo is Dodanniya. "Little Kutungayya," is a performance I recorded in Kano in 1981 which appears in my doctoral dissertation (Westley, 1986), and in Hausa only, in the online African Languages Material Archive, edited by John Hutchison (Westley, n.d.) A certain woman, who has nine sons, is pregnant with the tenth. Though she implores them not to, the boys go off to get haircuts from Dodanniya. The tenth son speaks from the womb, demanding to be born. The woman squats and gives birth to the boy fully formed who is called Little Kutungayya. Immediately he rushes off to save his brothers but they rebuff him. When they arrive at Dodanniya's place they are fed and put to bed while Dodanniya's daughters sleep in another room. Dodanniya begins sharpening her knife and Little Kutungayya puts the boys' clothes on the girls and the girls' clothes on the boys. In the middle of the night Dodanniya, unaware of the switched clothing, ends up slaughtering her own daughters. The boys escape. Dodanniya plots revenge and she and the hero take turns trying to outsmart each other. Many other ruses and counter-ruses ensue but in the end Little Kutungayya plays a final trick on her. Dodanniya remains alive but chastened. (A new translation of the full narrative is added as an appendix to this paper).

So the question is: What do we do with this? Myth has been a topic of fascination since time immemorial but the study of "folklore" began with nationalistic movements in Europe in the nineteenth century. With imperialism, missionaries and colonial officers became the first recorders of African traditions, which had been mostly oral up until that time. Since Christians were not allowed to proselytize among the mainly Muslim Hausa, it was explorers and indirect rulers in the British colonies who were the first to gather narrative materials.

When Europeans began uncovering African traditions the first thing they discovered was that so many of their elements were widespread. When we look at the narrative presented here perhaps the most startling image is the one in which the ogress slaughters her own children. I have another version of this story taken down from a niece of Talatuwa

named Gambo. The basic outline is the same but the details and even many episodes are wildly different. Still, the slaughter is the centerpiece of the story. Another version collected by Tremearne (1913, pp. 428–432) substitutes a witch for Dodanniya (in Gambo's version the ogress is named Gutsunniya). In another narrative that I discovered in a Bachama collection (Bachama is a Chadic language) the hero changes the identity of the ogre's sons with that of his own brothers and the ogre slaughters his own children (Carnochan, 1967). The same pattern occurs in "Hop-'-My-Thumb" collected by Perrault in seventeenth-century France and it appears in the Scottish "Molly Whuppie" in John Jacobs' *English Fairy Tales* (1898). It recurs in "Der Dreissiger" in a German collection (Moser-Rath, 1966), and I found the same story outline as far away as Colombia (Bierhorst, 2002).

Folklorists have been noting this and other patterns for over a century from Finnish scholar Antti Aarne (1910) through its revision and translation by Thompson (1928) and finally Uther's 3-volume compilation *The Types of the International Folktale* (2004). The number of this tale type is 327B and it is found all over the world occurring in the following traditions: Finnish, Swedish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Faeroese, Icelandic, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, German, Corsican, Maltese, Hungarian, Mongolian, Syrian, Yemenite, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Spanish-American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Colombian, Mayan, Peruvian, Brazilian, Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan, Algerian, Sudanese. Goldberg (2003) finds 327b in Africa and the Middle East, but as far as I can tell it is not found in Bantu. Lambrecht (1967) and Arewa (1967), who cover Bantu, do not record it nor is it found in the Bantu sections of Klipple (1992).

These studies begin to answer the question of how narrative elements travelled from location to location through word of mouth, borrowing or, my guess, an origin in the beginnings of language and storytelling themselves. Another idea suggests that similarities in stories come about because of the actual hard-wiring of the human mind itself. Freud and Jung found in imaginative narrative the psychic revelations of inner struggles. For Freud, every trauma had a sexual origin. Jung dropped the obsession with sex and focused often on actual stories that included many studies in which monsters are central.

Whatever the virtues of the works of Freud and Jung themselves, the contributions of their followers are worth considering. Though accused of everything from child abuse (e.g., Bernstein, 1990) to plagiarism (Dundes, 1991), Bruno Bettelheim composed a milestone Freudian study of children's fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1975). Monsters feature prominently in his studies of Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Quoting Tolkien, he speaks of fantasy, recovery, escape and consolation. Through encounters with terrifying ogres and ogresses, giants and witches, the child becomes more whole. The work of Joseph Campbell is heavily influenced by psychoanalytic theory. His "monomyth" (the term itself was borrowed from *Finnegan's Wake*) can be stated most simply as separation – initiation – return, a formulation that clearly refers also to ritual stated most clearly in Van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage*, 1960. Campbell speaks of "the tyrant ogre" …. "Stated in direct terms: the work of the hero is to slay the tenacious aspect of the father (dragon, tester, ogre king) and release from its ban, the vital energies that will feed the universe"(Campbell, 1949, p. 352). Both Bettelheim

and Campbell make worthwhile contributions that can help us understand the psychic aspect of imaginative oral narratives whatever we call them.

My own approach to imaginative oral narrative has been chiefly influenced by Harold Scheub, former professor of African Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin. I innocently took a course with him as an undergraduate at that university and I quickly became a graduate student in that department in 1972 where I began taking courses in African literature, oral traditions, and linguistics. I studied Bantu languages but got two opportunities to teach in northern Nigeria where I became proficient in Hausa, though I had never studied that language formally. Scheub was one of the outstanding scholars of oral narrative of the late twentieth century. His emphasis was on the fundamental dichotomy between oral and written modes of communication, a theme developed also by Parry (1930) and Lord (1970), who studied Homeric and Serbo-Croatian epic performance in tandem, Goody (1977), who investigated literacy in traditional societies, and Ong who composed two works, *The Presence of the Word* (1967) and *Orality and Literacy* (1982) which encapsulated this train of thought. Ong summarizes it best as follows:

> Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the duel, the hero's "helper," and so on), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, in other mnemonic form. (*Orality and Literacy*, p. 34)

Some writers have reacted to this line of thinking, finding fault with it because, they believe, it creates a similar "we/them" antithesis which Goody, at least, hoped to replace. Vail and White in *Power and the Praise Poem* (1991) complain about "The Invention of Oral Man," finding in it, an echo of anthropology's early association with imperialism. Finnegan (1988) and Furniss (2014) likewise criticize the dichotomy, deciding that the distinction in not so absolute. Nevertheless, the difference between the oral and the written enables the researcher to emphasize performance, an obsession of Scheub, his students, and like-minded scholars. For a study based on character the distinction between character *development* allowed in modern novels and the character *types* found in oral tradition is crucial. But the sheer *presence* of the oral performer enables the narrative to go beyond types to interpretation through vocal intonation, gesture and body language. Furthermore, the narrative structure is adapted to the oral context. In "The Technique of the Expansible Image," Scheub emphasizes repetition (Scheub, 1970).

In a Hausa story collected by Connie Stephens in Niger, a woman tricks her pregnant co-wife into going to fetch water with a vessel that she has filled with sand and topped with water (Stephens, 1981, pp. 907–918). When she cannot lift it, Dodo comes to her rescue and pours out the contents, making a deal that when the baby is born he will get to keep it. But after she delivers a son, she substitutes a lizard and gives it to Dodo. The son, who grows immensely strong, is called Janjanjaratu. Dodo waits for him. As various shepherds pass, he

sings: "Little boy, or are you Janjanjaratu, the cattle herder/Strong of leg and arm?" And each herder answers, "Janjanjaratu is behind." This exchange is repeated four times until Janjanjaratu arrives and the pattern is shifted as the boy answers, "Yes, indeed. I am the great one, Dodo." They wrestle each throwing the other repeatedly until one of the hero's calves arrives and rips open Dodo's chest, killing him.

Repetition exists in the oral tradition so that the performer can easily move the narrative from conflict to resolution by means of a structure that is dramatic for an oral audience, but which is flattened out on the written page. Repetition is found everywhere in Hausa oral tradition though it needn't be as rote as it is here in this extreme example.

In another article, Scheub demonstrates what he refers to as "parallel image-sets." (Scheub, 1971). An example is the classic African story in which sisters go on successive quests, the first stopping to help an old woman on the way and being rewarded. The second sister refuses to help and is punished. I collected two versions of a tale of this kind in which a series of sisters on the way to meet a man each hopes to marry encounter an old woman sitting in a river who asks each to scrub her back. Each refuses and none is told the name of the boy who will only marry one who knows his name. But when the final girl passes by, she agrees to scrub her back which caves in to reveal riches for her and she is told the name of the boy who, on her arrival, promptly marries her, while her sisters become her menials. The first version merely gives the plot outline while the performer of the second version, telling the same story, embellishes it with rich details. There is nothing monstrous about these versions but they demonstrate the role of creativity in oral performance. The two versions of "Little Kutungayya" involve even more creativity since they use distinctive episodes not merely detail.

Another example of parallel image-sets, "The Story of the Two Sisters and Dodo," published by Edgar (1913) is a narrative in which village girls are so jealous of the fairest maiden that they plot to destroy her. They trick her into a well where she is left for dead. But Dodo comes and rescues her and marries her. She subsequently gives birth to a boy and, later, a girl. Meanwhile, back in her village, her mother gives birth to another daughter who grows up and goes in search of her missing sister. She tricks Dodo and rescues her. Upon arriving home the village is divided into two and each is given half. Dodo falls into the River Niger and drowns.

In his article, Scheub shows how metaphor arises as the result of parallel image sets. From my concern, the parallel encounters of the two sisters with Dodo, while not as precise as the example of the two versions of the same story outlined above, result in metaphor. Narrative metaphor is central to storytelling. Something is implicitly likened to something else. A classic example of narrative metaphor is found in the parable of the prodigal son from the New Testament. I remember that when we were children the story puzzled us since it seemed that the prodigal was being unfairly rewarded over the loyal son but, as we grew up, we realized that the prodigal son was *like* the sinner and the father was *like* God the Father and that the point of the story was that the sinner was forgiven many times over no matter how heinous his crimes.

There is no one-to-one correlation in the Edgar story. What the story does is to show that marriage in the story is *like* marriage in real life in the sense that it is a fearful rite of passage. When the hideous groom is removed, harmony is returned but it can only be removed when a double is introduced who heroically rescues the helpless bride. Thus, there are two parallel movements to the ogre's lair, the first resulting in negation, the second resulting in affirmation. The implied audience no doubt realizes this on an emotional level, not as an intellectual process. This theme is similar to what Bettelheim refers to as the "animal groom" type (Bettelheim, 282–285).

There are some narratives in which metaphor is even more multivalent. In an influential article entitled "Polytropy," Paul Friedrich expands the discussion to a consideration of metonymy and synecdoche (Friedrich, 1991). Metonymy is at play in another well-attested Hausa narrative, "The Story of Abara and Auta" (I use the version of Mischlich, 1929). Here a daughter and son are born to a father and mother who are about to die. The daughter, Abara, is told that she is never to give her brother, Audu, grief over anything he chooses to do. Immediately Audu decides to perform precipitously negative and self-destructive deeds. Each time he announces what he is about to do, his sister cautions him but is reminded of their father's injunction. Audu systematically destroys all the crops and livestock of their wealthy homestead until they are completely destitute and forced to travel the land. He kills innocent children, and, in many ways the greatest sin of all, he defecates on the head of the emir. Towards the end of the story, he encounters Dodo and succeeds in killing him, a feat that earns him the acclaim of the emir who awards him half the town and is given rule over it upon the death of the emir. He shits on the *head* of the emir but becomes *head* of the town, in other words. Auta is first presented as a totally immoral character whose deeds upset the norms of the society but when he enters adulthood his defeat of the ogre results in his redemption. The story uses a great deal of repetition that is barely hinted at in this summary and involves a great deal of further narrative detail which is not noted here. Through a combination of metaphor and metonymy the themes of the story are given shape. Once again the implied audience can be said to perceive the meaning of the story though, once more, a moral is not given.

What I am saying here is not new. It is demonstrated in Connie Stephens' dissertation, which concerns not only Dodo but other social symbols as well and in the work of Hunter and Oumarou. But I realized that Dodo, whatever his social manifestations, especially as outlined by Nicolas, is, in narrative itself, nothing more than a foil. Reflecting on her collecting experience in Niger, Stephens says, "Although he may have once headed the Hausa pantheon Dodo is regarded as imaginary by every storyteller I questioned. When I asked one woman to describe his physical appearance she smiled at my ignorance, explaining, 'Dodo is a lie, a thing we've never seen'" (p. 220). All the ogres I have encountered throughout Africa so far are narrative foils. They provide polarity for the other characters and actions in the stories. Ogres serve as narrative contrasts not necessarily with the forces of good (as the story of Abara and Auta makes clear) but with protagonists who always win in the end. This allows for the play of metaphor (of which metonymy is a part). But metaphor is not always clear. In the variants of "Little Kutungayya" it is harder to discern since contrast and similarity are both apparent. The hero is contrasted with the ogre

but there are ways where the two are clearly alike. Little Kutungayya is, in many ways, an archetypal hero. He is the last born, "little," and in that sense he fits into the role of what in some stories is the "unpromising son." But, on the other hand, his birth is miraculous since he demands to be born from inside the womb and emerges fully formed. The plot outline is that of a quest as he sets out to save his brothers from the machinations of the ogress. However, features of the trickster figure are found not only in the hero, but in the ogress herself. The story is structured around a central aspect of trickster narratives, disguise. First, the hero disguises the brothers, leading to the slaughter of the daughters. Next Dodanniya, herself, disguises herself as a pumpkin in a ruse to capture the gullible brothers. She fails this time but next she becomes a mare and flies off with the brothers who are subsequently imprisoned. The hero, disguised as a colt, rescues them. Dodanniya then masquerades as a Fulani milkmaid and succeeds in shooting out the eyes of one of the brothers. Little Kutungayya pulls Dodanniya's daughter, Deluwa, to her death in a well (a water image again) and disguises himself as that daughter and succeeds, through a ruse, in retrieving his brother's eyes as well as the recipe for replacing them. In the end he reveals his identity to Dodanniya and she is left bereft, all her tricks and disguises having failed and all her daughters having been killed. She cannot follow him since to do so would be to cross water. (There is a narrative discrepancy here, discrepancies being common in the oral tradition: "They went home and fried up all the fish." But the end of the narrative occurs at the edge of the river.). Stephens, who devotes an entire chapter to water as a symbol, finds ambiguity between destructive and creative aspects of Dodo, based on his association with water in Arna symbolism, but especially in narrative, his association with wells and rivers. However, Dodo lives in the water, for some reason can't cross over water, and drowns in water. So Dodo is definitely associated with water but to conclude that he is somehow, at least in part, a creative force in narrative seems doubtful to me. In fact, I have found only one case in which Dodo has a clearly positive role, and that is after skimming through most of all the Hausa oral narrative collections, which are the most numerous of any African collections (see Westley, 1991). It occurs in a collection by S.B. Ahmad in which dodo (which he translates as "monster") protects a maiden from other dodos (including his own monster children) (Ahmad, 2002, English text, 118–125; Hausa text, pp. 195–201). Just for the record, Baba Yaga, in Russian stories, *is* ambiguous, at least according to Andreas Johns (2004), since she plays the terrifying witch as well as a motherly role. Whatever the case, in "Little Kutungayya," in a sense, the hero and the ogress are likened to each other in their trickster qualities and their uses of disguise but, as always, the hero wins in the end. So in a sense, metaphor is at play here. Despite its gruesome qualities, or perhaps because of it, the audience found this performance to be hilarious. A general principle is at issue here and that is that the meaning of the narrative is really the experience of the narrative itself and that holds true for all four stories considered here even though we are removed from them. The immediacy of a story recorded by Edgar over a century ago is clearly lost but story itself, as Scheub's later work demonstrates, is what shines through.

The narratives examined here illustrate the Hausa ogre in action. It is worth noting that he or she is never described and adjectives are never used. The ogre is defined by action and more importantly by interaction. Meaning for Hausa audiences has probably never been

found in homiletic conclusions. Some stories, like the parallel adventures of the two sisters who encounter a crone asking to have her back scrubbed, do reveal simple moral lessons on a fairly superficial level, but that doesn't change the fact that these are artistic creations which are developed differently by different performers.

Ogres, monsters, and demons are found in cultures throughout the world but in narrative it is the context of story itself that gives these creatures their valence. Lest this seem a tautology the emphasis here is on something that hasn't been fully developed in this chapter and will be treated more fully elsewhere. In the end I rely on Harold Scheub to describe what I am trying to say: "Story has to do with emotion … it is the essence of storytelling." (Scheub, 1998, p. 8).

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Little Kutungayya

This story was performed by a woman named Talatuwa, about forty-years old, on July 21, 1981, in a house in Sarari Quarters, Kano, for a group of boys and girls. The opening formula is "Here's a story for you!" to which the audience responds, "Let the story come and we'll listen." The truncated closing formula is "Off with it!" referring to what in longer versions refers to the "rat's tail."

There was a woman who had nine children, all boys. When she was advanced in pregnancy with her tenth child, her boys heard news about Dodanniya and her hairstyles. They wanted to get their hair styled by Dodanniya but if they did she would eat them up. Whoever went would never return but they decided to go anyway to get their hair styled. Their mother pleaded with them not to go but they said they were determined to get their hair styled. Their mother prepared them for the journey giving out packages of food. When it was time to go they said goodbye to her and off they went.

The youngest brother, the one who was still inside his mother, said, "Mother, I'm going to follow them myself."

She answered, "I see the power of God is inside me. How else can there be a voice inside?"

"I'm going to follow them," he said.

She crouched down and gave birth to him.

He said, "I'm off to follow them so let me go for if I don't follow them they'll all be killed."

So he set off.

The boys kept going along paying no attention to anything behind them.

"Wait for me!" he shouted.

"Who is it?" and off they ran.

"Wait for me!"

"All right. Let's stop and listen to whoever is calling us."

They turned around and saw a boy no bigger than a baby.

"You, boy. Where'd you come from?"

"I'm your brother."

"How is it that you came to be our brother?"

"Didn't you see that our mother was pregnant?"

"Yes, we just left her."

"Well, I'm the one who was born. So don't tell me not to follow you."

"We're not taking you with us," they answered. "We're big and we're all going to be killed, they say. You're a baby. How can you follow us? Anyway, you'd just be killed."

He tried his hardest but they said he should go home. Yes, they believed he was their brother but he should go home.

He turned into a fly and stuck to them.

They went about their business. After they had traveled for some time, they came to Dodanniya's house. In the meantime she had been frying up some rats. She kept on frying them up.

"Now let me pound some millet," she said. As she was pounding her millet they took some leaves and threw them in the mortar.

"Who added the leaves?" She picked them out and threw them away. She continued to pound then saw that they had thrown in some leaves again. She picked them out and threw them away again.

Then, at last, she said, "Let me raise up my eyes and see the power of God." She raised up her eyes and saw—humans—up in a tree!

"Well, hello there!" she said. "Greetings! Welcome!" She was pleased. "Meat and bones have arrived."

She made beds for them. She was delighted. "Here is your bedroom." She cooked for them. They ate and went into the room. "I'll see you in the morning." She began sharpening her knife and kept on sharpening it.

"We're really in this now," they said. "This woman really and truly eats people. Well, we've brought ourselves, all nine of us, to this place. Now she's going to eat us up!"

The youngest of them said, "Why? Since I've been following you, she won't eat you."

"Where's this talking coming from?" they asked.

"Here I am again!" he said

"All right," they said, "Come and help us."

"Wait until she comes to kill you. You once said I shouldn't follow you so I won't come out until she comes. *Then* I'll help you."

Dodanniya herself had children, all girls. It got dark out. She had put the boys and the girls in one room. The youngest took the boys' clothes off and put them on the daughters while he hid the girls' clothes. Little Kutungayya ("Player of Tricks"), for that was his name, smashed a doorway through the back of the house.

"All right, move!" he said, "It's every man for himself! And if you wait to get a hairstyle, she'll make gravy of your hairstyle!"

She got up in the middle of the night. She saw all of the boys (but they were really her daughters) and she slaughtered all nine of them. The next morning she woke up one of them

and saw that she had had her throat cut. She saw the rest of them and found that all of them had had their throats cut.

She said, "Oh! How could I kill my own children?" She started screaming. "I really have a problem. Today I have slaughtered all of my children. All right, so much for that. I think I'll roast them since I don't want any meat to get spoiled." So she roasted them. She roasted her children and while she was roasting them she wept.

"It is I, Little Kutungayya!" exclaimed the youngest. "I incited you by playing a trick on you that you can't avenge. A while ago you were going to kill my brothers. But I made you kill your daughters, all nine of them at one time and now you haven't got any children except one girl."

She went on crying and crying and he made his way home. They had a hard time getting home.

She said she was going to get revenge. How was she going to get revenge? She went into town and became a pumpkin, a big one on a rock. Whoever passed by could pick it up for free.

They said, "Here's a pumpkin."

"I'm telling you, don't eat the pumpkin," he said. "If you eat a pumpkin like that I refuse to have anything to do with you. Perhaps Dodanniya has come by. Would a pumpkin just be sitting on top of some garbage for free?"

"There's no problem," they answered. "God will take care of us."

They went and took the pumpkin. As soon as they got home, they set the pumpkin down.

"Wonderful!" she said. "I've come to Little Kutungayya's home." But they ran off and left her behind at their home. She ripened and spread out to no avail.

"You saw through me, didn't you?" she said. "I didn't take revenge this time but I *will* take revenge!"

She became a mare. Whoever came could mount her and she would gallop with him. Little Kutungayya didn't fall for it. Then one day his brothers mounted her all at one time. They came and got on, they came and got on and she didn't throw them. She just let every one of them mount and galloped off with them. But Little Kutungayya didn't mount her.

At home there were no children making noises.

Their mother said, "Neighbors, not a single one of those boys has come home yet."

"I think they're going to where the mare lives," he said. "Perhaps it was Dodanniya who came here."

No matter where they went they couldn't catch the mare. She had reached her home.

"What shall we do?" they said

He said, "I told them they shouldn't ride the mare. But there's no problem. I'll follow them."

So he went for he knew where Dodanniya's house was. He went and found them. She had put them behind iron walls. They were crying. She had a pot in which to roast them.

"Wo!" he said "How did you end up here again?"

"We just mounted the mare." they said. "She threw all the other riders but when the nine of us mounted she didn't throw us. Then we felt her fly off like a bird. She said, 'I have caught Little Kutungayya and I will kill him.'"

"There's no problem now," he said. "She won't kill you."

"Here's my child, my mare," she said. "If her pregnancy produces a female, well, that's that. If she gives birth to a male, it will be Little Kutungayya. If she gives birth to a female, it will not be Little Kutungayya."

While she was talking like that, the mare gave birth, she gave birth to a female.

"So it's not Little Kutungayya."

But it really was Little Kutungayya.

He started a commotion as she was saying, "Since Little Kutungayya made me eat my fat children, I'll kill you, too, when you're all fattened up and filled with suet."

The colt started a commotion in front of the mother.

She said, "Come out, boys, and drive this bastard colt from me. He's bothering me." They hadn't been out in all this time so they said, "All right," for they were overjoyed to be out. They played and played with the colt.

"You can see I'm not a colt," he said. "I'm really Little Kutungayya. It wasn't a colt inside there, it was me. I went into the mare so I could come out here with you. All right, now that we're outside, let's shit and piss and run."

They shat and pissed and ran.

"Boys! Boys!" she said. "I'm done with the work. Come home."

Then a piece of shit said, "We're coming! We're coming!" But they weren't there. They had already run away.

They got home.

"We ought to move," he said.

"Yes, let's move. If she comes here she'll find us."

They moved leaving that house behind.

"Oho!" she said. ""He's gone away with his brothers. *Ai*, and I ate them up. He made me eat me up my nine children. Since he made me eat up my nine children, I did eat them up."

They set out. Which way should they go? They moved. She went, too, but she couldn't find them. She searched everywhere and tried every trick in the world to find them but she didn't find them. She set out and turned into a Fulani woman selling milk, milk and butter, milk and butter in the market. As she went selling milk she asked, "Please, where is the house of Little Kutungayya. He's my brother and I'm looking for him."

"No, we don't know where they've gone."

"Oh, all right, then."

"Please, where is Little Kutungayya's house?"

"We don't know where they've gone."

"Oh, all right, then."

Finally some people said, "Oh! Little Kutungayya? We haven't seen Little Kutungayya but we've seen one of his brothers. There's his brother sleeping in the market."

"All right, show me where he is and I'll wake him up."

When she arrived she shot him in the eye with an arrow then shot him again. She removed his two eyes. He began screaming there in the market.

"Since I couldn't get Little Kutungayya I got Kutungayya's brother and avenged myself. God willing, I'll finish them off."

She ran back home.

After a time Little Kutungayya said, "What am I going to do now? Here's my brother with no eyes. How am I going to get his eyes back for him? No problem!"

But he didn't know how he was going to do it. Then, after a while, he said, "Aha! Here's a plan! I know the place where she goes fishing."

He set off. He found a well and climbed inside. Her daughter, Deluwa, said, "Give me some water to drink."

"Wait until I'm done eating tigernuts."

"Please give me some tigernuts."

"All right," he said. "Let down the bucket and I'll pour some for you."

She let down the bucket. In fact, he wasn't eating tigernuts at all. He pulled her into the well. She fell in and he undid her clothes and dressed up like a woman, just like her. He went along, crying, to the place where Dodanniya was catching fish. He kept on crying.

"What is it, my Deluwa"?

"One of my boyfriends was fighting with his playmate and he plucked out both of his eyes and they spilled out. He is crying because he has no eyes."

"Oh, is that all you're crying about? Be quiet. I have the eyes of Little Kutungayya's brother. If you go home they'll be there. I'll let you have them."

"All right. But after I find them, how will I put them in for him?"

"I have certain skills that I can teach you that will enable you to put them in for him for I have medicines. Stop crying and let's get done with our fishing."

He helped her to catch fish and they went home and fried up all the fish.

"I want to go and take him the eyes," he said.

"All right, just a moment." She brought him Little Kutungayya's eyes and gave them to him.

"Go and get some bran that has been soaked in water, collect some flies and put them in it. When the flies are dead, spread them in the sun to dry, pound them all up and sprinkle them over the eyes. That's all there is to it. The eyes will be good again."

"All right," he said.

"When he reached the other bank of the river he said, "Aha! I'm really Little Kutungayya! I now have my brother's eyes!"

There was nothing she could do since she was on the other side of the river from him.

"Come and catch me!" he said.

"How will I be able to catch you unless I go all the way around?"

"If you come after us," he said, "We'll have moved to another town anyway. We'll be on the other side of the river. Even if you come you won't catch us."

"I guess that's the end of that," she said.

She was overcome by sadness.

"And as for your one remaining child, Deluwa: I killed her. She's over here. I drowned her in a well and put her clothes on. I played a trick on you. I'm Little Kutungayya! I've taken revenge that you cannot avenge. You don't have a single child left. We're over here. These are my brother's eyes. Now I'm going to put them in for him. And *you* taught me how to do it!"

That was that. Off with it!

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