

Glossed Text

See p. 21-23 in:

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Two mothers, one eaten

The text given here is a portion from the narration of a Central African traditional tale. (The title is my own.) The original lasts about nine-and-a-half minutes and has about 2,374 words. This sample has about 444 word tokens and 95 word types. The speaker was a girl of Gbaya ethnicity, seventeen years of age, born in Bangui, who spoke no other language but Sango. The narration took place in Bangui with a small, improvised audience of young persons and children when I was making tape recordings of extemporaneous speech in 1994. The recording was transcribed by a Central African and then checked by myself several times. Footnotes clarify some ambiguities.

The story is about a man's two wives, one of whom gives birth to a daughter, the other without a child. The daughter gets married to a man who lives on human flesh. When the birthmother comes to visit her daughter and son-in-law, she follows her instructions about eating and drinking so as not to be killed and eaten. When the co-wife sees the birthmother with all kinds of gifts on her return, she also goes to visit the girl. But she doesn't listen to the girl, is killed, and eaten. She thus pays for her greed.

Mama ti du-ngo melenge-wali na a-ga.
mother of give.birth-NMLZ child-woman DEF PM-come
The birthmother of the girl came.

Lo sara a-gozo, lo sara a-yi ti go-ngo
3SG make PL-manioc 3SG make PL-thing of go-NMLZ
She prepared manioc and things to go with it, and she prepared gifts to take,

na ni, titoo lo baa na melenge ti lo. Lo go
with DEF so.that 3SG see with child of 3SG 3SG go
for the purpose of visiting her daughter. So when she went

fadeso, lo gwe ti si,¹ melenge ni a-tene, ay, mama
now 3SG go to arrive child DEF PM-say ay mother
and arrived, the girl said, “Oh! My mother,

ti mbi, zowa la a-tene mo ga zowa?! Koli ti mbi
of 1SG who FOC PM-say 2SG come who man of 1SG
who (was it who) told you to come? Because my husband

na a-ke nzoni zo ape so. Ló ga laso,² lo
DEF PM-COP good person no thus 3SG come today 3SG
is not a good person. If he comes today, isn't he

ke faa mo na mbi ape?!³ Lo ga lo tene na
COP kill 2SG and 1SG no 3SG come 3SG say to
going to kill you and me?!” This is what she said to her

mama ni toso.⁴ Mama na a-tene, a-ninga
mother DEF thus mother DEF PM-say PM-be.long.time
mother. The mother said that it had been a long time

nĩ baa lo ape, la nĩ ga ti baa lo.
1SG-LOG see 3SG no⁵ FOC 1SG-LOG come to see 3SG
since she had seen her. That's why she came to see her.

¹ Perhaps the narrator meant to say *lo gwe lo si*, because the next clause assumes her arrival.

² See the grammar for high tone on a pronoun or the predicate marker.

³ Since the once proper way of saying ‘you and me’ is to begin with the plural pronoun—*i na mo*—*na* might be interpreted as having a deprivative meaning, the opposite of a benefactive: that is, ‘he will deprive me of you by killing you.’ But it might also mean ‘you along with me.’

⁴ *toso* < *tongaso*

⁵ I try to make logophoricity a part of the translation as indirect speech unlike the practice followed in the examples in the APiCS database.

Lo ga lo mu mama ni, lo go lo hunzi mama
3SG come 3SG take mother DEF 3SG go 3SG hide mother
So she took her mother, and she went and hid her mother

*ni na mbeni ndo. Lo hunzi mama ni fadeso awe.*⁶
DEF at a place 3SG hide mother DEF now already
in an unsuspected place.⁷ So she hid her mother.

Koli ti lo na a-ngba a-ga, kol lo
husband of 3SG DEF PM-remain PM-come husband 3SG
Her husband suddenly appeared

na a-te, ni ma fen' ti zo. A-teen',
DEF PM-say 1SG-LOG smell odour of person PM-say
and said that he smelled a human being. She said,

?en'-?en',zo oko a-si ape. A-ten', me ni
no, person one PM-arrive no PM-say but 1SG-LOG
“No, no one has come.” He said that on the contrary he

ma fen' ti zo. A-ten', ?en'-?en'. A-manke
smell odour of person PM-say no, PM-must.be
smelled a human being. She said, “No.” It must certainly be

zo so lo ga a ni na bi so, si
person REL 3SG come with DEF at night this then
the person whom he brought last night and that

⁶ With a rising pitch at the end, this clause could have been a dependent one meaning ‘after she had hidden her mother.’ The speaker might have intended to use a final pitch that indicated that the sentence was unfinished, because the following clause suggests ‘when her husband arrived and said [...]’ This syntactic dependency is made explicit below with *tongana*: ‘after you’ve eaten too much’.

⁷ My translation is motivated by rhetoric. Translating *na mbeni ndo* as ‘somewhere’ has no interest.

nĩ zo na lo so la o, me zo
 1SG-LOG roast for 3SG thus FOC DEFRCCLT but person
 she roasted for him, but no one

a-ga a-pe.⁸ Anda lo hunzi mama ti lo ni.
 PM-come no actually 3SG hide mother of 3SG DEF
 came. Actually, she had hidden her mother.

Da ti tengo zo ti koli ni a-yeke nde.
 house of eating person of husband DEF PM-COP different
 The man's house for eating people was separate.

Wali ni, lo oko la a-ke lango na ya ti
 wife DEF 3SG one FOC PM-COP sleep at interior of
 The wife, she alone regularly slept in the

da.⁹ Ngbi, a-ga ti sara lango ota,¹⁰ wali ni
 house long.time PM-come to do day three wife DEF
 house. A long time passed, about three days later, the wife

a-ga a-tene fadso, a-tene, A! koli ti mbi, baa, mama
 PM-come PM-say now PM-say ah! man of 1SG see mother
 said, "Oh, Husband, look, my mother

ti mbi a-ga fade, ge, na ndo ti mo ge,
 of 1SG PM-come recently here at place of 2SG here
 just came, here at your residence here,

titoo lo ba i o, a-ten', ka kogar ti nĩ
 so.that 3SG see 1PL DEFRCCLT PM-say but in.law of 1SG-LOG
 in order to see us so if you don't mind." He said, "But where

⁸ One notes the absence of INDF *mbeni* with *zo*.

⁹ Without the definite article in the phrase *na ya ti da* one would expect it to mean 'indoors' (as opposed to outdoors).

¹⁰ I take *a-ga ti* as suggesting rather than asserting that three days had passed.

na a-k wa. Lo ngba lo ten na mama
DEF PM-COP where 3SG remain 3SG say to mother
is my mother-in-law?” Immediately she told her mother

lo na a-sigi. Mama lo na a-sigi,
3SG DEF PM-go.out mother 3SG DEF PM-go.out
to come out. Her mother came out

a-teen', kogara, mo ga dipii? Kogara lo
PM-say in.law 2SG come long.time.ago in.law 3SG
and said, “Son-in-law, has it been long since you came?”

na a-te, ba gango ti ni la ni ga
DEF PM-say see coming of 1SG.LOG FOC 1SG.LOG come
The son-in-law said that he had just come as she could see.

so. Lo ga fadeso, a-ten', kogara, mo e te nyama
thus 3SG come now PM-say in-law, 2SG COP eat meat
So then he said, “Mother-in-law, what kind of meat do you

ti nyen'. A-teen', ?en' ?en', kasa kwe ni te, me
of what PM-say no stew all 1SG.LOG eat but
eat?” She said that she ate all stews, but that she didn't

ni te ka nyama ape. Lo ngba¹¹ lo mu
1SG.LOG eat HAB meat no 3SG remain 3SG take
eat meat. Immediately he got some

holengo nyama, lo mu na wali ti lo, a-to na
dried meat 3SG give to wife of 3SG PM-cook for
dried meat, and gave it to his wife to cook for the

¹¹ The use of ‘remain’ may be a calque from Gbaya, whose verb is used similarly in narrative.

mama ni. A-ga ti si na bi,¹² melenge na
mother DEF PM-come to arrive at night child DEF
mother. When night was approaching, the girl said

a-ten na mama na, a-tene, mama, mo duti. To
PM-say to mother DEF PM-say mother 2SG sit when
to the mother, “Mother, sit down. When

lo ga ti mu na mo mbeni kasa so a-ke
3SG come to give to you some stew REL PM-COP
he comes to give you some stew that is fatty, don’t

mafuta, ma za ti te kasa na ape. Mo te kasa ni
fat 2SG leave to eat stew DEF no 2SG eat stew DEF
eat the stew¹³. Eat just two portions of the stew,

gi use, a-we, mo zaa, me to mo te a-bon’
only two PM-finish 2SG leave but if 2SG eat PM-surpass
that’s all, leave the rest! But after you’ve eaten too much,

ndö ti mo aw, lango a-ke fatige mo, lo
top of 2SG already sleep PM-COP overcome 2SG 3SG
sleep will overpower you and he will

ga ti faa mo na ni o.¹⁴ Mo te kasa ni mingi
come to kill 2SG with DEF DEFRCCLT 2SG eat stew DEF much
kill you by that means, I’m sorry to say. Don’t eat much

ape. Mo ma awe?! Mama na a-te, een’, ni
no 2SG understand already mother DEF PM-say yes 1SG
stew. Have you understood?” The mother said yes, she

¹² See note 7 for *a-ga ti*.

¹³ One might understand *za ... ape* as a double negative.

¹⁴ The use of *na* here is instrumental, but since no object is cited, one takes the meaning to be ‘by that means’, that is, ‘he’ll kill you by first putting you to sleep.’

ma awe. A-ten', mo ma awe? Mama
 understand already PM-say 2SG understand already mother
 understood. The wife asked, “Have you understood?” The mother

na a-ten', melenge ti mbi, mbi ma awe. Lo
 DEF PM-say child of 1SG 1SG understand already 3SG
 said, “My child, I’ve understood.” Then he

ga fadso, lo ten', a! kogara, ba mbeni pendre nyama
 come now 3SG say ah in.law see some nice animal
 said that his mother-in-law should look at the nice animal

so nĩ fa. Mafuta ti lo a-bon' ndö ni.
 REL 1SG.LOG kill fat of 3SG PM-surpass top DEF
 he killed.¹⁵ “It has a lot of fat.

Mo te ti mo nde o. A-ga a-fún' ti kogara
 2SG eat of 2SG apart DEFRCLT PM-come PM-serve of in-law
 Please eat yours separately.” Then the mother-in-law’s

lo ni. Kogar lo na a-te gi use na poko ti
 3SG DEF in.law 3SG DEF PM-eat only two at back of
 portion was served. His mother-in-law ate only two portions

yanga ti melenge ni. A-do tanga na a-zaa.
 mouth of child DEF PM-stamp remainder DEF PM-leave
 according to what the daughter had said. She cast the
 remainder aside and left it.

¹⁵ The direct address to the mother-in-law with the indirect logophoric pronoun leads to an awkward translation.