

GR51: Three folk tales

Two wood gatherers (0:24-1:40)

Two dim-witted ones (1:40-5:48)

The big fool and the fool (5:48-8:45)

D Danna, AM Amne¹, H Hadiye, U umar, S sakine, am Amne 2. K kaka, HA Hawa, HD

<AM> bahajiiki, bahajji ha amma naas tineeni šuqul sawwó, tuʔázili ta fiihum
 ‘I’ll tell you a story, I’ll tell a story, but two people what they did, you have to choose between them.’

<I> yawwa aiwa
 ‘Okay’

<AM> ezili fiihum aš šuqəlaay, as safi
 ‘Which of them is whachmacallit it, the dumbest

<X> ana baguul šunu ya rabbi
 ‘What should I say?’

<D> aʔa ásme bas inti
 ‘No, you just listen.’

<AM> tisame bas sei dugo tiguuli yatú as safi
 ‘Just listen and say who is the dumb one.’

<D> yawwa inti kula ke tihaajiina, dada (0.24)
 ‘Okay, so you now tell us the story.’

Two wood gatherers

<AM> [X] be naas waadiin humma tineeni
 ‘X they were two.’

<D> yawa
 ‘Okay.’

<AM> maašiin mášo, mášo mášo bikassuru lehum xád’ab,¹ mašo bikassuru lehum, mašo
 bikassuru lehum xád’ab
 ‘They were going, they went and went, breaking up firewood. They’d go and break it up and go and break up firewood.’

¹ This implies cutting old, dead wood off with an axe. *Gallam* ‘cut, slice off’ also could be used. *Gad’a* ‘cut’ would imply cutting a whole tree down.

<D> yawa
'Okay.'

<AM> yamta mášo bikassuru lehum xád'ab
'When they continued cutting off firewood.'

<D> aa
,Aha'

<AM> dahada kassaro lehum xad'áb, jo le qášim at turbo, dedda, al waahid nísi faaša, yamta nísi faaša kaani gaal le, al waahid ámiš jiiib, ámiš jiiib faaš gaal wəi?, ana nisiit faaši, leenšaan inazzil xád'ab hana ɾaasa ixud'd'a dugó inši, gaal le rafiiga arrajjaani, rafiiga kaani hu kula waaguf gam, hu kula ma nazzal al xád'ab hana ɾaasa waagif ala d'uul foog at turbo, be xád'ab fə ɾaasa da, ha d'aaka kula ma nazzal xád'ab hana ɾaasa radda le, le bikaan faaša, yatú fihum al as safi (1.20)

'Then they broke up firewood and they came to the edge of the path. Then one of them forgot his axe. When he realized he forgot his axe then the other one said, go and bring, go and bring the axe. He said "Okay". "I forgot my axe". He should have lowered the firewood from his head and put it down and gone.² (Instead) he told his friend, "Wait for me". His friend then he also stood straight. He as well didn't want to lower the firewood from his head and stood straight on the road, with firewood on his head, and that other one didn't lower the firewood from his head and he went back to where the axe was. Which of them is the dumb one?'

<X> siid al xad'áb
'The one with the firewood.'

<D> maalá
'Why?'

<X> alla ana maani aarfe šai ba baguula da
'Really I don't know what to say.'

<AM> siid al xad'áb yatú fihum as safi, ar radda walla, al wuguf fi t turbo arrajja yamta rafiiga d'aaka ja be xad'aba

'The one with the firewood, which is the dumb one? The one who went back, or the one who stood on the path and waited while that friend of his came with the firewood.'

<AM> ar radda haadi as safi sei, yoo
'The one who went back rather is the dumb one, okay.'

<X> ar radda bas as safi (1:40)
'The one who went back is the dumb one.'

² This interpretation is based on the use of the subjunctive (imperfect without *b-*), suggesting a counterfactual condition.

Two dim-witted ones

<AM> ha be naas waadiin humma tineeni
 ‘So there were these two people.’

<X> yowwaa
 ‘Okay.’

<AM> wa čat be mureehum haw wahid dadda marta assaqaadat, yamta marta assaqaadat, yamta marta assaqaadat, kaani gaal, filaan rafiigi taal nimši nirudd marťi di, yamta mášo le biladeega qaadi
 ‘Both with their wives and one of them his wife got annoyed and went back to her family.³ When his wife got annoyed he said, so and so my friend come let’s go and return to this wife of mine back home. When they had gone into the bush there.’

<D> taalan agoodan, taalan agoodan (1.56)
 ‘Come, sit down, come and sit down.’⁴

<AM> [X] yamta mášo mášo burudduuha
 ‘When they went and returned her.’

<D> aha
 ‘Aha’

<AM> ha kaani mášo, dada ga??adoohum lehum fi beet, taalu naakul eš taalu naakul eš, hu an nasiib, gaal ke baxajal gaal mi ji?aan, gal mi ji?aan baxajal, taxajal, aha, dedda xalaas humma akalo, fi l leel dadda gamma báram báram, filaan ana tara aj ju ma xallaani, aj ju ma xallaak min ta gaalo leek ákul, gaal a?a ana baxajal haadi sei, ana baxajal haadi sei ma ákal ?eš, ha xijíl haadi yo ?ámiš gad’ leek ganaadiil, šiftihin al beet hana al beet al ga??adoona fiya be nasiibtak doola čat mišaaba, agiif barɓud’ leek, barɓud’ leek, xeed’ fi ši?ibe, ataba? l xeed’, da yamta amiš gad’di leek ganadiil haw taal, foog al, foog al xeed’ da, raɓɓad’a máša yamta simiit gad’a?a bijí dahadda halla aš ši?iibe di, halla al xeed’ al raɓad’a fi šiibe di máša raɓɓad’a fi šiibe hiil beet nasiibta (2.53)

‘So they went (to the in-laws), and they settled them in a house.⁵ “Come let’s eat food, come and eat food”. The in-law said, “I’m shy” (to his friend)⁶ and (the in-law reported to his daughter)⁷ he said he wasn’t hungry. He said he wasn’t hungry. “I’m shy” (to eat he said to his friend). “You’re shy?”. “Yes”. Then they⁸ ate, and in the night he got up and turned and turned over. “My friend,⁹ me, hunger won’t let go of me”. “Hunger won’t let go of you? A while back you were told to eat and you said ‘no, I’m shy. I’m shy, I shy” and he didn’t eat food, “and you

³ *marta assaqaadat* ‘His wife got angry’. Assaqaad has the meaning of ‘get angry, annoyed’. Collocated with *mara* ‘wife’ it implies that the woman got so angry with her husband that she went off to her family.

⁴ D is motioning for two girls to come and sit down.

⁵ *fi beet* ‘in a house’, not *al-beet* ‘the house (where the in-law lives), apparently a guest house.

⁶ In Nigerian Arab custom, the husband would not eat with his in-laws, whether in their home or any other place. Similarly a wife will not eat with her in-laws.

⁷ Note the ellipted addressees.

⁸ The friend and the in-laws together, without the husband.

⁹ The narrator uses the generic *filaan* ‘so and so’ for ‘his friend’, a somewhat unusual address term in stories.

were shy. So go cut yourself corn tassels.¹⁰ You saw them in the house, in the house where they put us with your in laws, all of the houses are like each other.¹¹ Wait and I'll tie them up for you, I'll tie them up, a string on the roof supports. Follow the thread, until you go and cut yourself some tassels and come, following the thread.” He tied it up and went and when he heard he'd cut (the tassels) and was coming and he (the friend) untied the roof support,¹² he untied the thread which he'd tied to the support and he went and tied it on the support of his in-law's house.’ (2:53)

<X> yawwa
'Right.'

<AM> yamta máša ɾabbad'a fi beet nasiibta, ha kaniye, ha kaaniye tabaʔa, tabaʔa tabaʔa ja daxal, ja daxal fi beet nasiibta, hu ma bidiri, harrak, haw ákal, fi lubb beet nasiibta da, harrak haw akal, yamta gamma, filaan inta gum taal ɗuug maayí, máša dabbas nasiiba, dadda nasiiba gaal haw raaini, raajil zeen, da wallá beet, xáram [X] da gade, hillitum čat xallaaha, ha kaniye al waahid gade kula raddo, al waahid mi ligiiya fi waahid da
'When he'd gone and tied it on his in-law's house, so then he (the husband) followed it and followed and followed and came and entered his in-law's house. He didn't know (he was in their house) and he roasted¹³ (the corn) and ate it, inside his in-law's house, he roasted and ate it. When he got up (to go he said) “My friend, you get up and taste it with me”. He went and he patted his in-law. Then his in-law said “Wow, take a good look at me, my good man. This isn't the house.” He (the husband) left. He left the village completely and then the other one (his friend) returned again as well. So didn't the friend get the best of husband?’¹⁴

<X> mmha (3.24)
'Mhm'

<AM> ha gade kula raddo, yamta raddo, gede kula d'aaka kula mar̄ta assaqaadat, yamta marta assaqaadat, marta assaqaadat kani, hu kula, gaal filaan nisí, nisí šúqul as sowwá leeya da, gaal filaan taal ninši, taal ninši mar̄ti, d'allagooha, yo zeen nimši ninši, haw hu kaarib šúqul as sawwá leeya gabul da fi gal̄ba, yamta raddo mášo, da kaani, hu kula hu kula taalu akulu eš akulu eš, an nasiib gaal aʔa, hu kula min al eeb gaal ma biyaakul, raddo leya mar̄ta, min aššabaa binšu, ha kan dedda, gaʔado (3.57)

'And they returned again. When they returned his wife (of) the other one got annoyed this time and went to her family. When his wife got annoyed then, he said, he (the friend) forgot, he forgot what he had done to his friend, and he said “come let's go. Let's go.” My wife, they've divorced her.¹⁵ “We're going, we're going”. But he remembered what his friend had done to

¹⁰ *Ganaadiil* 'tassels' can be of guinea corn or corn (maize). However, the assumption here is 'corn' since corn is sowed near to a house.

¹¹ He says this in order to justify what he is going to do, namely to tie a thread on his in-law's house, rather than the guest house they are staying in.

¹² Narrator corrects herself. He untied the thread, not the roof support.

¹³ *Harrag* 'roast' = *šawa*

¹⁴ *al waahid mi ligiiya-a fi waahid da* 'The one got the best of the other', fixed expression *ligi fi* lit. 'get at-X, subject get (best of) at X'.

¹⁵ *Ďallagooha*. This refers to a practice whereby not only the husband but also other members of his family can order the divorce from a wife. A younger brother (*d'ariid*) in particular has influence in this matter. However, a final divorce (“divorce” stated three times) can only be made by the legal husband.

anger him earlier.¹⁶ When they returned and went, then, he said “Come eat food, eat food. The husband¹⁷ said ‘no’. He wouldn’t eat because he felt ashamed, and they returned his wife to him. They were going in the morning but were still at the house (of the in-laws).’ (3:57)

<X> [X]

<AM> gaʔado, ha dadda gaʔado, yamta gaʔado, am buruddu l mara kaaniye, hu kula gaal fi l leel aj ju kaʔaba, aj ju karabak, ha niseyyi keef dugut da, yo d’iikiya at tamuráa fi š šederá di jam beet nasiibak di, at tamuráa al fi beet jamb nasiibak di, arkab, yamta tirkab, amma hi birraḥḥad’o laha, kareek čat silla, attaffar, dugooni arkab, kaaré kuṛut sallá, attaffar ríkib foog, jaab la d’allaaya rakkaba, ha yamta rakkab, gad’d’a ke, gad’d’a ke bidissa haw biyaakul gad’d’a ke haw yamta baddat fi təraab alla

‘They were staying and staying (in the night), and when they stayed, they were returning the wife. So then he (whose wife had been returned) said in the night he felt hungry. “You feel hungry? So what should we do? Aha that one the tamarind in this tree near the house of your in-law, the tamarind that’s in the compound near your relative. Climb up it”. When you’ve climbed up, but they’ll tie a loincloth on you and your clothes, take them off and just tie a loincloth around your waist, then climb up”. He took out all of his clothes and tied it around his waist and climbed up. He brought a ladder to climb up with. When he’d climbed up, he cut them off, he’d cut one off and put it in the bag and eat it until it was all over the ground.’¹⁸

<X> mm (4:30)

‘mm’

<AM> kan d’aaka rafiiga waahid hu kula bisid leya aš šúqul as sawá leya gábuḷ, šaal ar rakkaaba di máša labbadha haw hu kula jára

‘When that one this friend of his, still remembering what he had done to him earlier,¹⁹ he carried away the ladder and went and hid it and then he ran away.’

<X> mm (4.37)

‘mm’

<Am> dadda, aš šabá gaʔabat, nasiiba xaram le aš šalah, gaal hu da šunu abuḥwad’wad’a katalna, d’aaka d’aaka, biʔawi, yamta sawwa ke, raaʔa leeya naadim, gaal sarraak, al hille kurud, allammo fooga, bizagzugú bizagzugú bizagzugú marṭa ar raddaaha leya kula min aššabaa kula gaalat, yamta xaramat gaalat hi di, hu digé, hu da miné, hu digé yamta, zagzagó zagzagó ya ilḷah yamta wága fi təraab aḷḷa, yamta wagiita di, gal xaram jara yetú fiyum al ligiiha fi waahid (5.03)

‘Then when morning dawned, his in-law emerged for the prayer. He said, what’s this? Bats²⁰ have devastated us. This and here he was shouting. When he did this, he caught sight of a man

¹⁶ *kaarib fi galb-a* ‘holding in his heart’, idiom for ‘dislike s.o.’ (See Owens 2015 for extensive discussion of idioms.)

¹⁷ *An nasiib*. In this case the designations have been switched around. The husband is the in-law (*nasiib*) to his father-in-law (also a *nasiib*). *Nasiib* is a reciprocal designation.

¹⁸ *Xalla* designates a space owned by no individual, public land or waters.

¹⁹ *Bi-sid ley-a aš šúqul as sawá ley-a gábuḷ*, lit. ‘He shut the thing that he had done to him earlier’. He kept it shut in his heart.

²⁰ Which eat fruit, like tamarind.

and shouted “thief”. The whole village gathered around him and kept on pelting him and pelting him with stones. His wife whom he had returned to in the morning also said, when she came out she said, “So this one now? What’s going on here?²¹ Then when they’d kept on stoning him, wow and fell to the earth. After falling, he ran away. Which of them surpasses the other (whose trick is better?)?” (5:03)

<D> da kula bagga min ad daar da kula bagga min ad daar, haw čatt sawwo
‘This one left the country and the other one as well left the country, they both did.’

<AM> aʔaa raddo
‘No, they returned.’

<D> umhum
‘Mhm’

<AM> raddo sei gede kula jo le marat rafiiga al wahade
‘They returned again in fact and came to the wife of his friend.’

<X> yo (5:13)
‘Okay.’

<AM> yatú, ar ríkib le at tamuráa ad dinayat kurut lammat fooka walla, walla ar řábad’ a la aš šiibe fi beet nasiibta yamta máša da bas nasiibta
‘Which one, the one who climbed up the tamarind tree and everyone gathered around him, or the one who tied the roof supports in the house of his in-law and went into his in-law’s house.’

<X> ar rikíb fi at tamurá
‘The one who climbed the tamarind tree.’

<D> hu haadi a, maalaa gulti ke
‘That one. Why did you say that?’

<X> ha
‘Ha’

<D> lenšaan šunu,
‘Why?’

<AM> lenšaan šunu
‘Why?’

<D> aa, ha zeen, inti hajjiina ankuun inti taʔarfi hijje

²¹ The sense here is that the wife recognizes her husband and asks herself what he’s doing. *hu digé, hu da mine digé* ‘after all’ (< Kanuri *diyé* (<* dige) ‘surely, only, entirely’) is a discourse marker which usually gives a counterfactual coloring to the proposition: *mašee-t digé* ‘You did go after all (against expectations)’ or ‘I did in fact go (your supposition I didn’t is wrong)’. *Hu digé* gives the idea of ‘What in the devil is he doing here?’, while *hu da miné* is a rhetorical question. Since *hu* ‘he’ is known, *miné* isn’t literally asking who he is. The question is rather along the lines of ‘who is he who has no business being up there on the roof?’.

‘Aa, good. You tell us a story maybe you know one.’

<X> ana ma baʔarif (5.39)

‘I don’t know any.’

<X> kan mat taarfi yalla gummi, šatab

‘If you don’t know, get up and leave, shut up.’²²

<AM> saakine ke

‘Sakine?’

<S> ana di ma baʔarif, wadda laha ke (5.48)

‘Me I don’t know. Pass it to her.’ (5:48)

²² ‘Shut up’, a codeswitch of sorts.

The Big Fool²³ and the Fool

<AM> fi naas humma tineen, waahid binaadú safi, ha kani maṛt al quul be maṛat as safi gaadiin fi beet waahid, kulli yoom biddaawasu, mine kula bidoor iguulu, iguulu raajila faayit, fi l qawaliye, dedda, nahaar d'aaka maṛt as safi hi mafi, ha kaani, hi maafi mášat le ar raf ha xallat saqiirha, as safi yamta šaaf laaya laaya, tid'ubux, kani šiil al laaya at tid'ubux di, diirha²⁴ le s saqiir, fi qašima, haggina, yamta bihaggin fiya bihaggin fiya hu as saqiir bibki hu kan biyaasib gaal ma šibi haadi, bihaggin fiya bihaggin fiya, yamta qašima amḃaraṭ, al maṛa yamta jaat axadat as saqiir da qašima čat amḃaraṭ, (6.28) ha kan yama deel²⁵ mart al, maṛt al ʔuul, taxayyid leha gaal, šaalat laa šúqul al bixayyid'u al marabá hana kuure da, gaal taxayyit gaal taxayyit, haw mafi šai fiya, ha hu kani yamta ja, gaal laha, ha inti mušood'ine a, gaalat aʔa, sei baxayyit leek marabá lenšaan al marabá, mən naḃaafitha da mafi naadim bišiiifha, (6.48) taxayyid' ha fúsux saakit, ha kani, yama deel, dedda, xayyad'at xayyad'at šarat laha magas tɔgalləm gaal, šuqulha fusux tidoor taxayyit, xayyad'at, kani gaalat lea, sil kaareek, salla kaaré, čatha gaal tɔseyy ša tilabbisa, gaal, ana ka básəma šaba mafi šai fi jildí gal, al marabá haadi mən naḃafədhha mafi naadim bišiiifha fi jildak, xalaas, deda hu ka gáʔad ke, dada, maṛat al as safi kani, yamta jaat kan gaal le, yalla argut argut argut maak naší, maak naší, gaal maani naší haadi, maak naší maak naší, ha kani dedda šarrabata dáwa, šarrabata dáwa gaalat tumuut, (7.26) bamuut, ana²⁶ tumuut, mášat šarat al káfan jaat dássata fiya, haw mášad naadat an naas gaal raajilí maat, jo šaaló mášo dassó fi n nugura, ha hu rafiiga d'aaka al ma leya marabá haw gaal labbasó marabá da, yamta sími rafiiga maat, kaani attaba rafiigak, hu kula kani máša le bikaan as sutura, yamta máša, an naas yamta šaafó čihiko, dedda hu kani fi lub an nugura gaal ke, aguufu ana kula annaawad'a ašiiifa, yamta annaawad'a šaaf, annaawad'a šaaf kani an naas šatto gaal keef, hu da, gaal aʔa ana ma mut sei maṛtí haadi gaalat ana mut, yetu fihum al quul, humma tineeni (7.59)

'There were two people. One was named "Fool". And the wife of the big fool and the wife of Fool would sit at home every day arguing. Each one wanted to prove that her husband surpassed the other in stupidity. The one day the wife of Fool wasn't around. She went to visit and left her child at home. When Fool saw some dough that she was cooking, so he took the dough she was cooking and poured it into the mouth of the child. He kept on pouring it into the child, into his mouth. He spoon fed it in. When he'd fed it in and fed it in, the child cried. But he interpreted (the crying to mean) that it wasn't filled up. And he continued to spoon feed it in. When his mouth got chapped... When the wife came she took the child whose mouth had chapped and the skin peeled away (6:28). And around then the wife, the wife of the monster was sewing something. She took something that they had sewn a long time ago and claimed she was sewing and sewing. However, there wasn't anything in it. And when he came, and told her, "are you mad?" She said "No; aren't I sewing you a shirt, it's a shirt, so nice that no one can even see it. (6:48). She was sewing but it was an empty lie. So then, at the time, then she kept on sewing and bought herself scissors to cut with, though it was an empty lie as if she wanted to sew, and she was sewing and then told him, "Take your clothes." He took his clothes. Then she made as if to dress him up and he said, 'But I feel like there's nothing on my body.'" "But the

²³ *Quul* is either 'monster' or 'fool' while *safi* is 'fool'. In order to keep the two apart, *quul* will be translated here as 'big fool'.

²⁴ *Šiil*, *diir*, both imperative forms. This recalls the hypothetical imperative noted in texts C21 and TV44, but in this case the situation is not hypothetical. The construction needs further clarification.

²⁵ *Yama deel* for *yoom-aat deel* 'these days'.

²⁶ It seems the pause comes after *ba-muut*, whereas it would be expected after *ana*.

shirt, because of its elegance nobody can see it on your body. So he just stayed there like that. Then the wife of Fool, when she came he told him. “Let’s go lie down lie down, you’re not well.” He said “I’m not well?” “You’re not well you’re not well. Then she had him drink some medicine. She had him drink some medicine and said “You’re going to die”. (7:26). “I’m going to die?” “You’re going to die”. She went and bought the white shroud and came and put it on him and she went and called the people and said ‘My husband has died’. They came and went and placed him in the hole (grave) and that friend of his who didn’t have a shirt and was told they’d dressed him in a shirt, when the people saw him they laughed. Then the other one from inside the grave said, “Wait, let me look out for him so I can see him. When he stuck out (his head) for him to see, all the people scattered. He said, “what’s going on?”. He said “No, I didn’t really die. It’s just my wife said I did.

Which of them is the big fool, of the two?’ (7:59)

<S> iyoo
‘Right.’

<D> waahid gaal ke gal kan tawwa, mi gaalo leya maat da, gaal hu kula bəṭak, amma dugut maat da kan gaal ma bəṭak fi lubb an naas, haw hu ma maat, be ruuha, yawwa [Y] al waahid ‘One of them said, a bit ago, didn’t they say he had died? But he was laughing as well. But (if) he was dead he wouldn’t laugh amidst the people, so he hadn’t died. He was alive. Right, the one ...’

<AM> ha fi [Y]
fi lubb an nugura haadi yamta sími rafiiga d’aaka ja an naas ḍihiko fooga (8.17)
‘And in the middle of the grave, when he heard that friend of his came and the people laughing at him’ (8:17)

<D> hm
‘Mm’

<AM> yamta ma leeya marabáa da,
‘Once he didn’t have a shirt.’

<D> um um
‘Mhm’

<AM> hu fi lubb an nugura kani aṇṇaawad’ gaal ana kula ašiifa
‘He was in the grave but he stuck out (his head) and said, “Let me see it as well”

<D> wəi
‘Ya’

<AM> haw hu kula gaal aṇṇaawad’ haw ḍihik
‘And he as well, he peaked out and laughed.’

<D> yawa yatu fihum as safi
‘So which of them is the fool?’

<Am> [Y1] haw d’aaka marta

‘And that one whose wife.’

<D> al gaalo leya marabaita kweese [Y2]

‘Who said his shirt was nice.’

<AM> wəi ma bišiiifuuha

‘Ya, that they don’t see it.’

<D> haw máša sundul ke ya l mastara

‘And he went naked to the graveyard.’

<H> hu da bas al quul, hu bas al quul, al máša sundul da bas (8:40)

‘That one the big fool who went naked.’

<D> yo ha dugut dada

‘Okay, so now.’

<AM> ke tihajju (8:45)

‘That’s how you tell stories.’