

Narya

Translated by CD

Told by the *mughorwane* Ngeryai

Kisangiro

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The *Mwana Ngho* used to have a different name which was given by their god Mbirisiyeeta. That is; they were called the Short People. They were given a rope to lasso someone with, and they could catch a person as far away as that millet over there. Then they'd pull him all the way over here.

Nadugana, a girl, went to receive a shoulder section of meat. With it, she went to Tinaga, with that shoulder of goat meat. She stayed there until she was a woman, until she was blind with old age. After she had become blind, the man who had given her the meat appeared. He was a god, and he came to Tinaga. Some of the people of Tinaga exclaimed, 'The god of Besanga has come. We see that he's come. Now choose a person who will give one of his goats as a sacrifice to welcome him.' Others answered, 'We know Jila, but we don't know this one from Besanga.' Now Jila was the name of their god.

One old man from the group said to the visitor, 'Now why is it that they refuse to come meet us? Get up, let's go to our place and look for something to eat.' Now this man had only one goat with its kid. Later the visitor (Ghambageu) said, 'Well, what's happening?' The old man answered, 'I don't understand why they have refused to slaughter anything for you.'

The visitor said, 'Why are you catching that goat?'

The man replied, 'You aren't going to sleep on an empty stomach, are you?'

The visitor: 'I won't slaughter a nursing goat. Take the young one instead.'

The man: 'Should I take the kid? It's so small it's still nursing.'

The visitor: 'It's as big as its mother. Catch it.' He caught it, he caught it. As he was strangling it, it threw out its legs in the death struggle. Each time it kicked, it grew larger and larger, until it was standing. Then he slaughtered it as it stood. Afterwards the visitor said, 'Well, take the back section and prepare it well.'

Then another person came from the people of Tinaga. He observed them very carefully. 'How is it that the goat kid from so-and-so grew to be as big as a cow?' He returned to the men of Tinaga, saying, 'A person slaughtered so-and-so's goat kid, and it grew as big as a cow!' Others said, 'Now you've gotten us into trouble!'

The visitor said, 'Prepare the back section very well.' And it was prepared, along with the kidneys. Then the visitor said, 'Well now, get up and stand over there. Ask around for a person called Nadugana.' The man answered, 'Sure - she lives here.'

The visitor: 'She lives here?'

The man: 'Yes.'

The visitor: 'Get up and stand over there. Tell her a visitor sends for her and wants her.'

He was told, 'She's lost her eyesight.'

He answered, 'Tell her to come all the same.'

So the man went out. He stood and shouted, 'Nadugana!'

She answered, 'What is it?'

'Come over here. There's a man who's calling for you.'

She said, 'Doesn't that man know that I don't see a thing?'

‘Well get someone to lead you by the hand.’ So she came, being led by the hand, and entered the house.

The visitor addressed her, ‘Nadugana.’

She said, ‘What is it?’

‘It’s me calling you.’

She said, ‘So who are you?’

‘It’s the one who saved you from the Short People when you were in Lweda.’ She jumped up, and wanted to embrace him. ‘Don’t touch me!’ he said.

‘What should I do then, since I can’t see you?’ He flicked at her eyes with his gnu-tail whisk. The eyes went *Kwee!* and she became a young woman again. He told her, ‘Here, take this meat, which is your portion. It was slaughtered here for me. You, my sister, take the back and the kidneys. Eat them.’

Now listeners, do you understand? Early the next morning, what’s going to happen? The people of Tinaga gathered together. They killed the god with a spear. Someone said, ‘Men, let’s choose someone to sacrifice a goat. Last night we procrastinated and insulted the god. What will happen today?’

In the council of elders it was said, ‘Look for four heifers- of the cows two and of the males two. And bring two young female goats.’ There was a man called Narya. Someone said to him, ‘Since you’re living close by, you should make a start by giving some animals.’

Narya said to the visitor, ‘I’m giving you this cow.’

He said, ‘I don’t want it.’

Narya replied, ‘So I’ll give you *this* one.’

‘I don’t want it.’

Narya pointed to a different one, ‘I’ll give you *this* cow.’

‘I don’t want it.’

‘I’ll give you *this* cow.’

‘I don’t want that one either.’

Narya replied, ‘Well, there are none left to give you. What is it that you really want?’

He answered, ‘If you refuse to give me that spotted cow over there, you haven’t brought me anything.’

‘That one?’

‘Yes.’

‘With the spots? The spotted one? That spotted one goes everywhere with Narya. It dies with me, and not before.’

‘Fine, just forget it,’ answered the visitor, ‘I’ll be going.’

Haven’t you seen how a goat sleeps with its young? They sleep all huddled together. And all the young of the spotted cow huddled together with it. When the visitor left, all the spotted cows followed on his heels like dogs. So Narya called to his wife, ‘Mama so-and-so!’

She said, ‘What?’

‘Bring me the spear.’

‘Where are you going?’

‘I’m going to kill that spirit that came. He’s not going to take my spotted cow just like that!’ The wife gave him the spear. He pierced the man’s thigh. The man took out the spear and threw it back. Narya picked up his spear and pierced that man’s lungs. The spear broke the backbone, and he fell on his back. The mob gathered. ‘Now you’ve killed the god of Besanga. We’re finished! Get up everyone.’ At that time the spring called Ruyyaga wasn’t there yet. Their only

water source was the Meryane, on which they depended. The men carried his body. When they put him down, maggots came out of the body, and caused the water of Ruyyaga to flow. The water flows in three directions.

He was carried again until they reached Lodimi. Maggots emerged and the water started flowing. He arrived at a place called Ngaramodi, which has a little water. Maggots fell and water started flowing. He was moved til they came to Lorogegi. Maggots fell down and the water flowed. He was brought to Orijani ja Mesiro, and the maggots fell. There, where he was finally brought, was the place he had come from. They found a place, about as large as from here to the river, shaped like a circle. I don't know if you've heard of a place called Mguengine. That's where people were singing in a circle. There he met his sister and his wife, and he said to them, 'I'm not able to live among those people anymore. I'm going. But don't you go outside when I leave. When you hear a sound, don't go outside to look.'

The pool was encircled by people who were still singing and dancing. Weren't they singing to god? He told his sister, who was called Naroi, 'Take care of this woman whom I'm leaving. She's pregnant. When she bears the child, put him in the cattle gate. Tell all the people of Mageri that they should pass their cattle through this one gate. Put the infant in the middle of the gateway like this. If you find any cowdung clinging to him, don't nurse him. If you find any dust on him, abandon him. Don't nurse him. And when it comes to pass that people want to honour their god by slaughtering a cow, the cows will be as untamed as buffalos. Tell them that they should cut strips of bark off the *mugumu* tree, and twist it into his birth bracelet. Then is their demise. Their cattle will leave them.'

Then he covered up his chest with skins, threw the spear into the water, and dived in himself. Great splashes flew into the air, *MUUU!* until they reached the clouds. All the people surrounding the pool turned to dust. They died. The next morning his wife bore the child. The council of elders decided to slaughter a cow in his honour, to give him the blessing of birth bracelets. The cows, when chased, charged like buffalos. Then his sister told them, 'I'm telling you, leave the cows alone. Go cut strips from the *mugumu* tree, then come. Cut and twist the bracelets.'

And so it was that they went to see whether the child was covered with dung, but there was none. And there was no dust on him. So he was taken home and they all slept. The next morning when they awoke they heard, '*bilibi, bili.*' When they came to look they saw a male eland standing outside. The child said, 'My father's cow has come. Slaughter it for me so that I will have birth bracelets.'

The animal was thrown down. It was hit on the back of the head. It was sacrificed for the birth. The boy said, 'This meat is not for women.' The man's sister replied, 'But how can you leave your mother in such need?' The boy asked; 'What is it you're saying?'

His aunt answered, 'It's impossible for you to leave your mother without even a share of meat.' The child said, 'I reached the bottom rib in the womb, so she can have the whole innards. But anything above the bottom rib is not suitable for women.'

Now you're asking, what are the ribs? Don't the ribs include all the skin covering them and the lungs? When they reached up to here, the ribs, the men took the front legs, the neck and the head. But when they got past the lungs, they gave the rest to the woman who had borne the child. Don't the people of Erughata have the same tradition nowadays? (addressed to the interviewer) Don't *you* do it like this? Ha! I was just kidding. Anyway, that's how it came about that eland meat is unsuitable for women.