

Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 2



**Geoffrey Khan, Masoud Mohammadirad,
Dorota Molin and Paul M. Noorlander**
In collaboration with Lourd Habeeb Hanna,
Aziz Emmanuel Eliya Al-Zebari and Salim Abraham



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2022 Geoffrey Khan, Masoud Mohammadirad, Dorota Molin and Paul M. Noorlander, in collaboration with Lourd Habeeb Hanna, Aziz Emmanuel Eliya Al-Zebari and Salim Abraham.



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Geoffrey Khan, Masoud Mohammadirad, Dorota Molin and Paul M. Noorlander, *Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq: A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts, Volume 2*. Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures 12. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0307>

Copyright and permissions for the reuse of many of the images included in this publication differ from the above. Copyright and permissions information for images is provided separately in the List of Illustrations.

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0307#copyright>

Further details about CC BY-NC licenses are available at, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Updated digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0307#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

Semitic Languages and Cultures 12.

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 9781800647695

ISBN Hardback: 9781800647701

ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781800647718

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0307

Cover images:

Cover design: Anna Gatti

6. JOSEPH OR ZAMBILFROSH

Dorota Molin

Speaker: Zarifa Toma (ChA. Enishke)

Recording: Lourd Hanna

Assistants: Aziz al-Zebari

Audio: <https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/audio/219/>

Summary

This story fuses the Quranic narrative of Joseph the Egyptian with the Kurdistani tale of the wandering basket-seller who resists seduction, Zambilfrosh. The protagonist was the son of a king who was wandering through the world and was imprisoned in a foreign country. One day, he was able to explain the king's dream, after which the king made him his advisor. The king's wife tried to seduce him and tempted him with great wealth. Zambilfrosh, however, resisted, claiming that he was a simple basket-seller who did not deserve any royal privileges or a royal wife.

One day, the protagonist's brothers came for grain. Zambilfrosh tricked them by accusing them of theft, but then revealed his identity to them. The brothers were reconciled and Zambilfrosh became their leader.

(1) 'aw brət mālka wewa. | brət mālka wewa, | 'awa=w beθa là θele
l-uxḏaḏe. | šqeḏe b-dānye xəšle. | xəšle b-dānye qam-xazele wəre gu xa
'aθra xəna, | xa xayatuθa xəna. | qam-dawqile, darile gu sàjən. |

(2) malka mà xzele b-xulme? | har malka b-gane xzele b-xulme
'əštá tawraθa zābun | xala 'əštá tṛiše. | 'u mà xzele b-xulme diye har
'awu b-gane? | 'awu b-gane mà xzele b-xulme ^Anaḏs əl-lele? | xzele b-
xulme, | hole xzada dàxla, | 'əšta baqaθa daxla¹ šədlā l-baqe diyye. |

(3) mərə 'ana yīḏənnā māndi-la, | bas lè maxkənnā. | mərə
'māndi-le? | mākkele māndi-le! | mərə lè maxkənnā, | lè haneli. | 'ana=w
xunwəθi=wax. | t-aθe yoma 'an xunwəθi p-sāhdi 'əlli, | bas qam-
tardili. |

(4) mərə 'la, 'ad 'awa b-yīḏəle xulmət dawa mālka, | mnabləxle. |
xəšle kəsle diye mərə 'māndi-la qəşəttā, | faqira? | māndi-le qəşəttət
'əštá tawraθa zābun 'axli tṛiše? | mərə 'pt-aθelux 'əštá šənne xa
xəḏḏa, | xa garāni, | 'ajebūθa. |

(5) m-daha mhāmi, | mḏile guniye, 'anna maxazən diyux xətte=w
dābra, | b-barya garani b-xəla. | ya'ani xelānta. | 'əštá šənne garani pt-
'awya. | 'awa mjume'le mjume'le mjume'le mjumè'le. |

(6) 'ayya baxte diye drela 'ena 'əlle diyye. | 'azawa bəθre, | bəθre, |
'amra 'hayyu l-beθa xōl-u šti. | hal hədax qam-awḏale, | mərə b-yanne
tāj mālka ṭalux. |

¹ Or perhaps *d-daxla*, i.e. with the genitive particle *d-*.

(1) He was the son of a king, the son of a king he was. He did not get along with his family. He left, wandering about in the world. He travelled around, they saw him enter another country and began a new life. They arrested him and put him in prison.

(2) The king saw something in his dream, the king himself saw in his dream: six skinny cows devouring six healthy cows. What did [Joseph] see in a dream, what did he see in his dream the same night? He saw in his dream that they were harvesting wheat. Six bundles of wheat worshipped his bundles.

(3) [The next day, Joseph told those in prison about his dream.] He said, 'I know what it is [about], but I won't tell.' They said, 'What is it? Tell us what it is!' 'I won't tell, I am not comfortable telling,' he said. 'It is about me and my brothers. A day will come when my brothers will kneel down before me, but they have expelled me.'

(4) They said, 'He will be able to interpret the king's dream, let's take him [to the king].' He went to him. He said, 'What is the story, poor fellow? What is the story of six skinny cows devouring fat ones?' He said, 'You will have six years of famine, a rise of prices, something astonishing.'

(5) Therefore, believe [me], you need to gather wheat and fill your sacks, your storehouses with wheat and corn, because a strong famine will come, I mean. There will be a terrible famine for six years.' [The king] began to store wheat, more and more.

(6) [Meanwhile,] his (the king's) wife began to look at him with desire. She would follow him and say, 'Come, eat and drink.' She did this: she told him, 'I'll give you the king's crown.'

(7) *mære* ‘*ana Zambil Fròš-iwen*,² *y-zaqrən zanbire-w haqqi b-yatte xa lîra*,[|] *pt-âzən*.[|] ‘*aw wele šulî*,[|] ‘*ana lè pešən malka* ‘*ana*.[|] *lè hawən malka*.[|] *wele šule diye hadax-u malka qam-kəbele-w mənne mənne*.[|] ‘*u* ‘*ap* ‘*awa mənne mən d-àwa*.[|]

(8) *θela xa zawna xunwaθa diye hîre*,[|] *šmelu gu flān dawla* ‘*əθ dabra mزابòne*.[|] *xəšle xa b-xa mənne*.[|] *mà wədle* ‘*awa*?[|]

(9) ‘*awa=le kyala* ‘*àn xətte*[|] ‘*u dráyəlla tèlehi*.[|] *šqalle xa kaset dehwa* ‘*əθwale y-dari b-kasət dèhwa*,[|] *qam-darele gu tenet xa mənne*.[|] *xəšle*,[|] *rxəqle t-məte l-mōita*,[|] *xəšle har jèš baθr diye*.[|]

(10) *mære har* ‘*awa*,[|] *mære ta malka* ‘*ana hātxa pt-awðən*,[|] *qam-ganwila* ‘*ayya* ‘*amana dīyyux*.[|] ‘*anna xunwaθa diye=le*.[|] *xəšle baθre hal qurbət mōitey*,[|] *ya‘ani wàra*,[|] *qam-dawqile*,[|] *meθile*.[|]

(11) *mære* ‘*qày*,[|] *màx wiðe*?[|] *çù mändi*,[|] *lèx wiðe* ‘*axni*.[|] ‘*mære là*,[|] *wutu gniwella tazət dèhwa*.[|] ‘*daxxi*, ‘*axni mätu b-gənwaxla*?[|] *yallā yallā mēla dabra* ‘*əllan-u naše kulla mətla mkupna t-mamtax l-mōita*.[|] *mære* ‘*pθuxu gūniyatexu*.[|] ‘*har* ‘*awa qam-paθəxle* ‘*ay guniya*.[|] *mære də-mbarbi* ‘*àxxa*.[|] *plətla kasət dehwa tàmā*.[|]

(12) ‘*anna mà wədle*?[|] *qam-šaqlile* ‘*aw xoneh*.[|] *ya‘ni yðele* ‘*əbbe diye*.[|] *qam-šaqlile xunwaθa diye* ‘*aw t-ile kəs mālka*.[|]

(13) *xəšle* ‘*əbbe b-dabra dīyye*.[|] *kut mändi t-awèðwa*,[|] *lèθwa lā‘a*.[|] ‘*əštá šanne y-sahdiwa* ‘*əlle dīyye*.[|] *y-‘abdīwale*.[|] ‘*u hul* ‘*egət t-ile piše gore=w gwire külle*,[|] ‘*aw xona rayyəs diyehi wèwa*.[|] ‘*ana* ‘*o mändi tnəyallax*.[|]

² ‘Basket-seller’ is said in Kurdish. In the Aramaic versions of the story, ‘Zambilfroš’ is either ‘basket-seller’ or the protagonist’s name, or sometimes even both at once.

(7) He said, 'But I am a basket-seller. I weave baskets for which I earn one lira, and then I leave. This is my profession. I will not become a king. I will not be a king.' This was his job. The king liked him and helped him, and he in turn helped [the king].

(8) A time came when his brothers were in distress, they heard that in such-and-such a country, there was wheat for sale. They all went to him, one by one. What did he (Zambilfroš) do?

(9) It was he who measured the grain and put it in their sacks. He took out a golden cup which he had—they used golden cups for measuring out [the grain]—and he put it in the sack of one of them. [As] they went back to their [home] city, an army went pursuing them.

(10) [Zambilfroš] said, he told the king, 'This is what I am going to do. I'm telling you—they have stolen your cup.' They were his own brothers. They chased them until outside their city, I mean, [they were] outside when they captured them and brought them [back].

(11) They said 'But why? What have we done? Nothing, we have done [nothing].' 'You have stolen the gold cup.' 'How [could it be?] Why would we steal it?! The wheat would have barely reached our city and our people would have died of hunger before we could bring [it] to the city!' He said, 'Open your sacks.' He himself opened the sack. He told them to empty it here—and the golden cup appeared.

(12) So what did they do? They took away their brother. I mean, they recognised him. [Then] they took him with them, the brother who was with the king.

(13) They went away with their grain. There was no objection to anything he did. They would kneel before him for six years, they worshipped him. And until they all grew up and got married, that brother was their chief. This is what I am telling you.

