

Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 2



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9. THE BRIDGE OF DALALE

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Summary

A builder tried to build a bridge in Zakho, but the structure continued collapsing. One day, he heard a voice saying that in order for the bridge to stand, he must sacrifice a member of his own family. He considered his three daughters-in-law (and apparently no other family member), eventually picking the one who was called Dalale. He reasoned that since she was a foreigner, his reputation in the community would suffer the least damage. When Dalale approached the bridge unsuspecting, he killed her and put her inside the construction. The bridge was completed successfully. The story ends with a sung ballad which laments poor Dalale and curses the murderous builder.

- (1) ʿana šəmmi madlèn-ile,¹ brat Pattu Nagara... Pattu Nagara—
šəmmət babi,¹ ʿay xərtā Pattu Hòrməs.¹ ʿumri tmani ʿarbà šənnē.¹ ʿana
daha b-amran ʿan məndyàne.¹ šamútule kùllawxu.¹
- (2) ʿaw Dālale qam-garəšle.¹ k-əbe t-ət qapətle lele... lèle
bəbraya.¹ qəmle šmele xà qala.¹ ʿawən ʿəθwale tlaθá bnone=w tlaθa
kalàθa.¹ mərə mà b-awðən?¹ ma t-ile bədraya hole mpàla.¹
- (3) qəmle θele xà qala.¹ mère,¹ ʿən la darət xa mən bəytux... yaʿni
gəšra là-k-ṭabəq.¹ yaʿni là-g-bare,¹ max là-g-ʿamər.¹ qəmle mtuxməlle.¹
mere, ʿmì b-awðən?¹
- (4) ʿən darən kalθi Həne,¹
- (5) bi babah našət dārta,¹
- (6) naxpən yatwən ʿàlulta.¹
- (7) ʿən darən kalθi Həne,¹
- (8) bi babah wal rešāne,¹
- (9) b-naxpən yatwən b-diwàne.¹
- (10) b-darən kalθi Dālale.¹ bi babah m-naxrayùta,¹ là g-naxpən.¹

¹ The idiolect of this speaker differs in (at least) one feature from that of the other Christian Aramaic speaker from Duhok. Here, M. P. Nagara realises the transitive perfective past preverb qam-, the other speaker gəm- (see e.g. ChA. Duhok, *A Man and A Lion*, 13 & 15).

(1) My name is Madelene, the daughter of Pattu Nagara. I am Pattu Nagara. My father's name is, I mean, Pattu Hurmez. I am 84 years old. I'll now tell all these things. Listen to them all of you.

(2) The one who pulled Dalale, he wanted to connect the two ends of the bridge-arch but they would not connect. Then he heard a voice. He had three sons and three daughters-in-law. 'What shall I do?' he said. Whatever [material] he puts [to connect the two ends of the bridge], it falls down.

(3) Then he heard a voice telling him, 'You must put a member of your family into the bridge otherwise it will not be possible to connect [the two ends of the arch], I mean it will not succeed, it will not stand.' He started to think, 'Who shall I put [into it]?

(4) 'If I put [into it] my daughter-in-law Hane,

(5) her father's family belongs to this community

(6) and I be ashamed to sit out in the street.

(7) If I put [into it] my daughter-in-law Hane,

(8) her father's family are village chiefs,

(9) I shall be ashamed to sit in the receptions.

(10) I'll put [into it] my daughter-in-law Dalale. Her father's family [come] from afar, so I shall not be ashamed.'

(11) ʔaya-š ʔiθwala xa bròna, | năʕam, | ʔiθwala xa bròna. | qəmle ʔaw bròna, | qəmle ʔay kalθa pəšla bəlyāša. | drela layša d-lāyša, | ʔay Dālāle. | hola bəlyāšaḥ lāyša. | bəlyāša xazyā bronah bxèle. | qam-kasyāle layša. | qəmle bronah bxèle. | zəlla, | zəlla qam-mamsāle. | hola mamošaḥ čəčča, | xəmyana qam-qarəla. |

(12) k-imər ‘Dalle, Dàlle!’ k-əmra, ‘màha?’¹ leba d-amrawale xàbreḥ. | mera, ‘mì k-əbət baba?’¹ mere ‘hayyu b-azan ḥal gəšra—t-ət Dālāle.’¹ là-k-əða mi ḥale. | qəmle zəlla baθrèḥ, | mət ʔamèra. | moṭèc wewa qāmāyθa. | lewa max dàha naše. |

(13) qəmle ʔawa-ži qəmle zəllay. | ʔawa ʔəθwale, | maḥšūm, | təkram, | xa kàlba. | aw kalba gròsa wewa, | ʔàqəl wewa. | mpəqlay d-zalay ṭlāṭnay, | kalba mpəqle qāmāya. | xəmyana xəkle. | mera, ‘tamì xəklux?’¹ mere, ‘tamì kalba napəq qāmāya?’¹ gəral ʔàt hawayat e... qamāyθa.¹

(14) pəšla qāmāyθa, | là ʔiðela. | ʔegət mṭela kəb gəšrət Dālāle, | qayəm xemyàna qam-qatəlla ʔarəla. | ʔegət qam-ʔarəla... we wiða xa max ʔəta hatxa, | ʔota ṭàlah, | wewa muḥəðra max hənna ta kud d... yaʕni ʔawəðle ʔay t-ət qapəṭle hənna, | gəšrət Dālāle, | d-ṭabəqle yaʕni b-ḥaləqle. |

(15) qəmle qam-šaqaḷla Dālale | ʔu qam-darela tama-w muṭya, | ʔaw qəmle, qəmle, qam-banele-w drele xa kawə gəwaḥ, | qəmle qam-šawəqla ʔaya tàma, | qam-maʕmərə ʕmere. | mì k-iwəðwala ta Dālale? | g-nabəlwala kùdyum laxma-w miyya. | k-əmri:

(11) She had a [baby] son, yes, she had a son and the son ... The daughter-in-law began making bread. Dalale prepared the dough to make bread. She was making bread. As she was making bread, she saw that her son started crying. She covered the dough. Her son cried. She went, she went to breastfeed him. As she was breastfeeding him, her father-in-law called her.

(12) ‘Dalle, Dalle,’ he said. ‘What is it?’ she said. She could not disobey him. ‘What do you want, father?’ she said. ‘Come, I am going to the bridge—of Dalale.’ She did not understand the matter. She got up and followed him, whatever he said to her. In the past, people were obedient, not like now.

(13) So he got up and went as well, they went. He had a dog, if you excuse me, a big, wise dog. The three set off and the dog went ahead of them. Her father-in-law laughed. She asked ‘Why did you laugh?’ He said, ‘Why is the dog going ahead of us? You should go first.’

(14) She took the lead. She had no idea. When she arrived at the bridge of Dalale, her father-in-law upped and killed her, then seized her. When he had seized her... Earlier, he had prepared a place like a chamber, a chamber for her. He had prepared the chamber for anyone who... I mean, who would finish the bridge of Dalale, I mean, who would cover it, I mean would close it.

(15) So, he seized Dalale and put her there, she was placed there. Thus he completed [the bridge] and put a window inside it. He left her there [in the window] and thus completed his building. What did he do for Dalale? He would bring her bread and water every day. They say:

- (16) *‘Dalle=w Dālāle²*
 (17) *kma iwat šar=u šapāle³*
 (18) *šuqlax darguštət yāle.[|]*
 (19) *ya bronax palgu myāša*
 (20) *ʿu layšax palgu lyāša.[|]*
 (21) *Dalle Dalle ʿarya l-xəmyāna.[|] xəmyani kalba kōma.[|]*
 (22) *ʿəlləḥ la zarəq yōma.[|]*
 (23) *Dalle ʿarya l-xəmyānaḥ.[|]*
 (24) *qam-darela gu day hənna,[|] gu daw gəšrət Dālāle.[|] gəšrət*
Dālale tḥəḏqle.[|] Dālale pəšla... məḥla,[|] ʿu ʿayi qəšša diyyaḥ xləšla.[|] è.[|]

² Paragraphs 16-22 are a sung ballad.

³ *šar=u šapāle* is a phrase borrowed from Kurdish, most likely directly from the Kurdish version of this ballad. Its meaning is not entirely clear. In the context, it is best taken as an expression of pity for Dalale, or perhaps her bravery. Ergin Öpengin (personal communication) has suggested that *šar* is related to Northern Kurdish *šur/šir* ‘exhausted, pale’, while *šapāle* is related to the verb *šapilyan* ‘to get confused’. The (resultative) adjective *špila* ‘lazy, tired’ used in ChA. Duhok is probably from the same Kurdish verb.

- (16) Dalle, Dalale,
- (17) How miserable (brave?) you are.
- (18) You have left behind your children's cradle.
- (19) Your half-fed baby
- (20) and your half-baked dough.
- (21) Dalle, Dalle, was captured by her father-in-law. My father-in-law is a black dog.
- (22) May the sun not rise over him.
- (23) Dalle was captured by her father-in-law.
- (24) He put her there, in the Bridge of Dalale. So the Bridge of Dalale was completed. Dalale became... she died and her story ended. Yes.

