This comparative anthology showcases the rich and mutually intertwined folklore of three ethno-religious communities from northern Iraq: Aramaic-speaking ('Syriac') Christians, Kurdish Muslims and—to a lesser extent—Aramaic-speaking Jews. The first volume contains several introductory chapters on language, folklore motifs and narrative style, followed by samples of glossed texts in each language variety. The second volume is the anthology proper, presenting folklore narratives in several distinct varieties of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Northern and Central Kurdish. The stories are accompanied by English translations. The material includes different genres such as folktales, legends, fables and anecdotes, and is organised into seven thematic units. The folkloristic material of these three communities is shared to a large extent. The anthology is, therefore, a testament to the intimate and long-standing relations between these three ethno-religious communities—relations that existed in a multilingual environment centuries before the modern era of nationalism.
11. THE BRIDGE OF DALAL

Masoud Mohammadirad

Speaker: Saeid Razvan (NK. Zakho)

Recording: Masoud Mohammadirad

Audio: https://kurdic.ames.cam.ac.uk/audio/245/

Summary

A builder was commissioned to build a bridge in Cizre Bohtan. The emir cut off his right hand lest he build a similar bridge elsewhere. To take revenge against the emir, the builder fled to Zakho and accepted to build a bridge there. The arch of the bridge kept collapsing. A fortune-teller advised the builder to sacrifice the first ‘living soul’ who would come onto the bridge the next day and put it inside the bridge in order for the arch to hold together. The next morning, the builder’s daughter-in-law, Dalal, brought the workers food. She came with a dog. The dog was distracted by a mouse at the edge of the bridge. Dalal was the first to stand on the bridge. She was put into the bridge alive and the arch was completed successfully. The next day, her husband tried to take her out of the bridge. Dalal made him stop, saying that she would be happy to be a sacrifice for Zakho.
(1) az ... nāvē mēn Saʿīd Haji Sadīq Zāxoyī žē bənamālākē Zāxo yā-t kavon | nāvē bənamālā Ųazvānā | t-ēm bar-niyāsin Saʿīd Ųazvānī. |

(2) az dē nūka sar afsānā pərā Dalāl āxavom | mēn pēnj šāš partūk sar Ųāxo čē kərīna | žē kalapōr-ō | afsānā- w | mažū- w | pēzhānīyē Zāxo | bə zamānē Kurdi-o ʿArabī. |

(3) afsānā pərā Dalāl būčī nāvē wē kərīna pərā Dalāl? | ākənjīyēt Zāxo yēt kavon | yēt Ųāxō āvā kərīn | Juḥē bin | av afsānā yā Jēhiyān-a. |

(4) ū ma əš Jēhiyā go lē biya | ū ma əş day bābēt xo | əb vi šēklī go lē biya | awē às bo wa t-bēzəm |

(5) at-bēzən ... pərāk di wusā əl Jəzirā Botā hāṭbi āvākərənē | nāvē wē pərā Bāfrā. |

(6) waxtē pər bə dumāhī ināyī mīrē ... yē Jəzirā Botā gāzī hostāyī kər | got-ē | ʿdē ta xalāt kəm. | |

(7) dastē wi yē řāstē žē va-kər | got-ē | ʿtā tu čō pərē di əl čō jēhē dī āvā nā-ki! az šānāziyē bə vē pərē ...
(1) I—my name [is] Saʿid Haji Sadiq Zakhoyi; [I am from] an old family in Zakho, called the Razvan family. I am known as Saʿid Razvani.

(2) Now, I will talk about the myth of ‘the bridge of Dalal’. I have written\(^1\) five, six books on Zakho, in Kurdish and in Arabic, on its heritage, myths, history, and general information.

(3) The myth of the bridge of Dalal—why is it (i.e., the bridge) called the bridge of Dalal? The old inhabitants\(^2\) of Zakho, the ones who built Zakho, were Jewish. This myth belongs to the Jews.

(4) We have heard it [the myth] from the Jews. We have heard it from our parents in the manner I am going to tell you about.

(5) It is said that another bridge like this (i.e. the bridge of Dalal) had been built in Cizre Bohtan, called the bridge of Bafit.

(6) When the construction of the bridge was finished, the emir of Cizre Bohtan summoned the builder\(^3\) [and] said, ‘I will give you a gift.’\(^4\)

(7) [The emir] cut off his right hand [and] said to him, ‘Lest you make another bridge [like] this anywhere else! I [take] pride in this bridge.’

\(^1\) Lit. produced.

\(^2\) The speaker uses the word ākənjī, which is apparently a modified form of Turkish word ekinci ‘sower’.

\(^3\) I.e. the master.

\(^4\) Lit. I will gift you.
(8) damā hāti Zāxo| ṭavī hāt Zāxō bə xo| mūrē Zāxō dāxoz žē kər| pərakē lə sar ġābîrê čē kət| əl ŋožhalâtê bâžeri.| 


(10) ƚə gərâ| əl darkârê bâkôrê Zãxû| bə taqriban pâzda bist kilomôtrâ| bar ŋo wērê inân.| du bar žî bə ŋêvê ət-katân| hatâ nûkâ žî lə Dãrozânê mawjud-ən.| 

(11) ū dâs âvêt-a pərê| ā čêkərənə pərê.| damā t-gahašt-a kəvânâ nîvë| dâ tamâm kət.| ŋožâ dî dâ ət| âw kəvân| wē hêl-wašâyî.| 

(12) aw̲e̲ pərsyârâ| əb 'Arabi t-bēzh-ê "ərâf'| bə kurdî am ət-bēzh-ê 'xêuviðkê' yân aw̲e̲ təštî bə xo b-zântə| got-ê, 'az pərê husâ āvâ t-kəm| ət-hêl-wašêt!|
When the builder\(^5\) came to Zakho—he fled and simply came to Zakho—the emir of Zakho demanded that he build a bridge on the Khabur river\(^6\) in the east of the city.

Contrary to [what] the emir of Cizre [had told him], he (i.e., the builder) said, ‘Alright, I will build [one].’ He went and gathered some builders around him. He himself was a mason, that is, he was not an architect. However, he had built that the bridge\(^7\).

He looked around. He brought the stones [necessary for the construction of the bridge] from [a distance of] around 15–20 kilometres north of Zakho. Two of the stones were dropped on the road [to Zakho]; they can still be seen\(^8\) in Darozan.

He started\(^9\) building the bridge. Whenever he completed constructing the arch in the middle of the bridge, the next day, he would come to the bridge [and] the arch had collapsed.

The builder\(^10\) asked [a fortune-teller, who is] called ‘\(\text{	extasciitilde r\textasciitilde r\textasciitilde f}\)’ in Arabic. In Kurdish, we call them \(x\text{\textae}v\text{\textae}nk\), meaning ‘someone who knows about things by themselves.’ He said, ‘I am building such a bridge, [but] it keeps collapsing.’

\(^5\) Lit. he.
\(^6\) Khabur or Little Khabur is the name of a river that joins the Tigris at the conjunction of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.
\(^7\) Lit. it.
\(^8\) Lit. are existent.
\(^9\) Lit. He threw hands at the bridge, at building the bridge.
\(^10\) Lit. he.

(14) řožā di səpə de Dalālē bo yē xärən ūnāt. Dalāl bıkā wī bi. šæ Dalālē əl pēşiye bi.

(15) kayfā hustāyi galāk hāt. damā gahaštî nəzik pərē šayî maškāk dīt bâr dā-ye Dalål ot-sar pərē kat avā dē bət-a qurbānī.

(16) mämē wē got-ēl waxtē čūyî mämē wē gərî řāndāk až čāvē wî hātn-a xārē. got-a mämē xo, ‘mäm, tu boči t-ərî?

(13)  [The fortune-teller] said, ‘Tomorrow morning, any living soul\textsuperscript{11} that comes onto the bridge’—there are two sayings [regarding the fortune-teller’s advice]. The first is [the fortune-teller] said, ‘Behead the living soul and rub its blood on the bridge.’ The second saying is narrated more frequently. [According to this the fortune-teller] said that he (i.e. the builder) should put [the living soul] alive into the bridge. [The fortune-teller said,] ‘Cover it with a carpet, and seal it (i.e. the bridge).’

(14)  The next day, in the morning, Dalal brought him (the builder) food. Dalal was his daughter-in-law. Dalal’s dog was in front of her.

(15)  The builder was very pleased. When they came closer to the bridge, the dog saw a mouse and headed towards it. Dalal walked onto the bridge,\textsuperscript{12}[meaning that] she was going to be the sacrifice [for the bridge].

(16)  Her uncle (i.e., her father’s brother) said to her—when she came, her uncle cried, tears streamed down his face.\textsuperscript{13} She said to her uncle, ‘Uncle, why are you crying?’

(17)  He said, ‘The fortune-teller’s saying\textsuperscript{14} is like this: I must put you into the construction of the bridge.’

\textsuperscript{11} Lit. the owner of soul.
\textsuperscript{12} Lit. Dalal fell on the bridge.
\textsuperscript{13} Lit. teardrops came down from his eyes.
\textsuperscript{14} Lit. the state and problem of the fortune-teller is such.
ē got-ē, ‘bələ| akar av pəra sar mə če bə-bət| az-ē xo kəm qurbānīyā vi bāžeri.| ya‘nī čünkə az žənək-əml| hin mə bə čavakī nərinə ol mə et-fəkərən?
(18)

řә-bi johe wē če kər-o| dárrək kər-o| fārš da-ynān sar.|
(19)

havšiňe wē| zaḷāmē wē| na l māl bi.| pəstī řožakē žəvərī-va| pərasyār kər, ‘kə havšinā mən?
(20)

bābē wi got-ē,| hāl-ü masala avā-ya| ma yē kərī et pərē dā.| bābē wi got-ē,| hāl-ü masala avā-ya| ma yē kərī et pərē dā.
(21)

(22)

čə| həndi məholā da-ynād-ē| awē kər-ə gāzū got-ē, ‘bās-ə! tu wusā mə pətər da-əščini!| āv pəra dē mint-ə sar məlēt mən| həndi mən šiyāyī.’
(23)

ya‘nī ava kurtiňa afsānā pərā Dalāl.| bas wak mə goti ta| ava əž Jəhīyä hāti-ya sətəndən.
(24)
She said, ‘Alright! If this bridge is going to be built on me, [then] I will make myself a sacrifice on behalf of the city. Just because I am a woman, do you have a false belief in me?\textsuperscript{15}

[The builder] made her a place [in the bridge], laid her down and put a carpet on her [and successfully built the bridge].

Her (i.e., Dalal’s) spouse, her husband, was not home. He returned [home] a day later [and] asked, ‘Where is my spouse?’

His (Dalal’s husband’s) father (i.e., the builder) said, ‘The story is as follows: we have put her into the bridge [for the bridge to hold together].’

[Dalal’s husband said] ‘How could you do this? How?!’ He grabbed\textsuperscript{16} the stone hammer [and] said, ‘I will go and take her out.’

[Dalal’s husband] went and hammered the bridge so much. Dalal\textsuperscript{17} started to call him [and] said to him, ‘That’s enough! You are hurting me more by doing so! This bridge will stand on my shoulders as long as I am able [to hold it].’

This [was] a summary of the myth of the bridge of Dalal. However, as I had told you, the myth has been transmitted\textsuperscript{18} from the Jews.

\textsuperscript{15} Lit. You think of me through a negative eye.
\textsuperscript{16} Lit. He threw hands at the stone hammer.
\textsuperscript{17} Lit. she.
\textsuperscript{18} Lit. taken.