Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 2

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12. A 'PIOUS' FOX

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Summary

There was a cunning fox called *Mām Telona* 'Uncle Fox'. One year there was famine in the land and many of the animals died. As a result the fox could not find animals to prey on and he went hungry. He grew his beard and sought atonement from God by praying with a rosary and setting off on holy pilgrimage. He met a rooster, who at first did not believe his sincerity, but subsequently joined him on the pilgrimage. They met a sparrow, who did not trust the fox, but eventually joined them. They spent the night in a house and the fox said that he needed to rest and that he would eat anybody who made a sound. At dawn the rooster crowed and the fox seized him. The sparrow, however, escaped.

(1)   ʾana šəmi Serā́n ʾǍdày Šer=ile.⌇ ʾe šəmət yə̀mi⌇ Ḥane ʿAwdu Surìnu.⌇ šatət ʾalpa=w təša ma=w ʾəšti=w xamša gu Šaqlawa hwète=wan.⌇ ʾəti ḥŭčita gu šəmət mām telòna.⌇

(2)   ʾətwa=w lə̀twa⌇ xa mằm telona ʾətwa.⌇ ʾe mằm telona,⌇ ʾaxni kŭlan čằdəx,⌇ xa ʾadya fèḷbāz=ile⌇ ʾawàle=le⌇ … g-mqašmər ʾələt ḥay-wanā́t zore ḥatta ʾaxə̀lu,⌇ …⌇ g-mande naše gawət măšằkəl⌇ ḥatta ʾawa màḥṣəl.⌇

(3)   xà šata mən šənàne⌇ kə̀pna ʾətwa gu de manṭăqa.⌇ kə̀pna ʾətwa.⌇ ḥaywanā́t metiwa mən kə̀pnu.⌇ ʾixala lə̀twa.⌇ fằ⌇ gằlak kpəne ʾe mām telòna.⌇ bəxdare=le ʾixala lìtən.⌇ yaʿni ʾan ʾətwa=š psèwalu.⌇ ʾaw qam-ʾaxəlu qam-ʾaxə̀lu,⌇ psèle.⌇

(4)   mà ʾawəd?⌇ pə̀šlu⌇ yàrxe fətlu reša=w⌇ tre ṭlahà yarxe,⌇ mām telona zằʿif pəšle.⌇ bas gəlda=w gàrme pəš gawu.⌇ ʾàmər,⌇ ʿʾazən xazən ʾe karma mà ʾət gawu.ʾ⌇

(5)   baraw payəzàne=le.⌇ tsə məndi lìtən.⌇ ʾixalàne=š litən.⌇ ʾaxni čằdəx payəzane pày̆əš⌇ la făwàkəh ʾitən.⌇ ḥaywanā́t kŭlu k-uri gawət … burgagət jànu.⌇ baraw sə̀twa k-azəx.⌇

(6)   psèle,⌇ xa qṭèfa xzele⌇ mtùltewale.⌇ trè gaye⌇ ʾidata ʾàtxa mxélelu,⌇ ʾàtxa mxélelu.⌇ là ṭpélelu.⌇

(1) My name is Seran Adday Sher. My mother's name is Hane Awdo Surino. I was born in Shaqlawa in 1965. I have a story to tell about Uncle Fox.

(2)   Once upon a time there was an Uncle Fox (*mām telona*). This Uncle Fox, as we all know, is scheming and mischievous. He makes tricks on small animals in order to eat them, he gets people into problems so that he may gain.

(3)   In one year there was famine in the area. There was famine and animals died of hunger. There was no food. Therefore, Uncle Fox became very hungry. He searched for food but could not find it. I mean the ones[1] that used to be around had left. He ate some of them and left.

(4)   What should he do? Months passed by. Two or three months went by and Uncle Fox became very thin. Only skin and bones remained on him. He said 'I shall go and see what there is in this orchard.'

(5)   It was nearly autumn and there was nothing. There was no food. We know when it is autumn, there are no fruits and all animals enter into their holes, as we approach winter.

(6)   He went off and found a bunch of grapes hanging (from a tree). Twice he thrust his hands towards it, he thrust them towards it thus, but could not reach it.

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[1] I.e. the animals.

(7)   ʾàmər,ˈ ˁo qṭèfaˈ dyara g̀lak xămùṣe=wət.ˈ ʾăgar xămuṣa là
(a)wətwa k-awənwa ʾixìlux.ˈˈ mà ʾawəd?ˈ kasu bədwaqa ʾəlu mən
kə̀pnu.ˈ ʾàmər:ˈ

(8)   *dunyā awanda=y nằ-wē*ˈ
        *hazārē bə-kawīt=a dāwè̀*ˈ
        *dunyā dè̀=ū da-řwằ*ˈ
        *wā čằk=a řū bə-kam ba xwằ*ˈ

(9)   qam ʾaməra ʾằya=wˈ ʾăya k-amrila màtlaˈ ʾe gət naša be zar
payəš mən jànuˈ ˁal ʾăsằsˈ toba=w tyawùta byade=le,ˈ daʾər l-ʾurxət
ʾàlaha.ˈ băsa mən dan šulanət wìde=leˈ ʾaw ʾatìqaˈ kűlu k-šawə̀qlu.ˈ
ʾurxət ʾalàha g-dawəqla.ˈ

(10)   fa dəqnu qam-maṛpèle.ˈ xa tasbəḥe drèle gu păqàrtu.ˈ
bitaye=le=w bizàle=le,ˈ rešu m ăxa bəsràdu=le.ˈ ha ʾàdyaˈ hàyhut=uˈ
hàyhut byadaw=ileˈ max dằnətˈ … ʾegatətˈ … ʾăna ʾadya k-udilu ʾăna
sàyəde,ˈ ʾurxət ʾe gət k-azi qa ḥàj.ˈ

(11)   rešu ʾatxa byàdu=lu,ˈ rešu ʾatxa byàdu=lu.ˈ daf dwiqe=le gu
ʾidàtu.ˈ bəxzàyu=naˈ ʾajòbe=na.ˈ ˁe mām telòne=leˈ mām telona lèwe?!ˈ
dăbi mà hawe?!ʾ

(12)   kằḷăbàbaˈ janu là qam-dawəqla.ˈ hàr ʾamər,ˈ ˁmằm telona,ˈ
ʾăya mà=wət wida l-janux?ʾ ˈ

(7)   He said 'Oh bunch of grapes, it is clear that you are very sour. If you were not sour, I would have eaten you.' What should he do? In his stomach he felt pangs of hunger.[2] He said:

(8)   (Song in Kurdish)
        [Living in] the world does not require that much
        [in the way that] thousands get trapped in it.
        The world comes and goes.
        It is better for me to turn to God

(9)   He said this. People say this as a proverb when someone becomes depressed about life, so that they repent and ask for atonement and return to God's path. Enough with what he has done in the past days, he leaves them (i.e. the bad deeds) all and takes the path of God.

(10)   So, he (Uncle Fox) let his beard grow long. He put a rosary around his neck. He started moving up and down and spinning his head, and uttering the sounds *hayhut hayhut* like those made by Sunni clerics on their way to the pilgrimage.

(11)   He began moving his head this way, moving it that way. He held a tambourine in his hands. People gazed and were astonished. 'Is it really Uncle Fox?![3] What could it be?!

(12)   The rooster could not contain himself. He said, 'What have you done to yourself, Uncle Fox?'

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[2] Lit. His stomach was seizing him due to hunger.
[3] Lit. Is it Uncle Fox, is it not Uncle Fox?

(13)   ʾamǝr, ʿlà čădǝt?ˈ ʾamǝr, ʿʾana xlɔ̀ṣlaˈ toba=w tyawùta byade=wǝn.ˈ la tsǝ naša k-ɔ̀xlǝnˈ là=šˈ ḥile=w ʾăwalta mǝn tsɔ̀ naša la k-udǝn.ˈ

(14)   ʾànaˈ m ăxa=u bàwbalˈ jani ḥàzr byadawe=wǝnˈ toba=u tyàwta.ˈ k-azǝn qa ḥàdz.ˈ dǝqni lewǝt bǝxzaya mùrpyu=wǝn?ˈ ʾu ʾe tasbìḥe=š?ˈ

(15)   ʾe tasbiḥe bǝgdalu=le gu ʾidàtuˈ har bitaya=w bizàle=le,ˈ har ṣawṣòre tasbiḥe.ˈ har, ʿya ʾằḷḷa ya ʾằḷḷa mare=le.ʾ

(16)   ʾamǝr, ʿhaymǝn là g-mhaymǝnǝn ʾǝlux.ʾˈ ʿwălux,ʾ ʾamǝr, ʿhay-mǝnǝt la mhaymǝnǝt b-kefǝt jànux=ile.ʾˈ ʾamǝr, ʿʾana har na marǝn mǝn lǝbǝt jàni.ˈ lewǝt bǝxzaya ʾay dɔ̀qna?ˈ ʾăgar là,ˈ qa mà ʾay dǝqna marpyɔ̀ne.ˈ ʾe tasbìḥe qa ma darǝn gu ʾidati?ˈ

(17)   ʾàmǝr,ˈ ʿhèmǝn,ʾ ʾamǝr, ʿmằm telona,ˈ lèwǝnˈ gùˈ … lèwǝn mhaymone ma maḥčoye=wǝt.ˈ bas yàlla,ˈ mar păsǝx gu ʾùrxux.ʾ k-amǝr, ʿpsu gawǝt batṛǝt ʾurxǝt duglana hàl xazǝx l-eka g-maṭpelux.ʾ ʾàmǝr.ˈ

(18)   kằḷăbáb=iš xa ʾaqla=w xa qàma bizale=le xa ʾaqla bǝdʾare=le qa bàtṛa.ˈ sǝqa lǝte gàwuˈ mà ʾawǝd?ˈ ʾăxìra=w yăwằš yăwằšˈ tela[4] ʾamǝr, ʿmar păsǝx xàzǝxˈ l-eka g-maṭpǝtan.ʾ

(19)   psèluˈ xantsa psèluˈ xàntsaˈ šŭpùrṭaˈ qam-xazyàlu.ˈ ʾamra, ʿhay hày! mām telona=w kằḷăbàba!ʾ ʾamra, ʿʾ ìman piše=witun xur-awàta?ˈ qa lèka bizale=witun?ʾ

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[4] This should be *kằḷăbāb*.

(13)   He said, 'Don't you know?' He said 'It is over for me. I am now leading a life of repentance and atonement. I shall not eat anybody, nor shall I play tricks and cunning pranks on anyone.

(14)   From now on, I am preparing myself (to seek) repentance and atonement. I shall go on pilgrimage. Can't you see how I have grown my beard, and [I have] this rosary?'

(15)   He wound the rosary around his hand, walking up and down, and turning the rosary saying, 'O God, O God.'

(16)   He said, 'But I don't believe you.' 'Well,' he (the fox) said 'it is up to you to believe or not to believe.' He said 'I'm telling you the truth.[5] Don't you see this beard? Otherwise, why would I grow this beard. Why would I have this rosary in my hands?'

(17)   He (the rooster) said, 'To be honest', he said, 'Uncle Fox, I do not believe what you are saying, but any way, let's go down your way.' It is said 'Go down the road of the liar until we see where he will lead you.' So it is said.

(18)   The rooster went one step forwards and one step backwards (i.e. he was hesitant). What could he do, since he did not trust him. Eventually the rooster[6] said, 'Let's go and see where you will lead us.'

(19)   They went along for a little. A sparrow saw them. She said, 'Come (and see) Uncle Fox and a rooster!' She said 'Since when have you become friends? Where are you going?'

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[5] Lit. I am telling from my heart.
[6] The speaker says 'fox' by mistake.

(20)   *kăl̆ăbaba ʾamər, 'qa ma là čădat?'ˈ ʾamra,ˈ 'là mhemənˈ mà čădan?ˈ ʾana har ʾəl šmằye=wan.ˈ xo l-ʾăra lèwan hăta yădan ma wìde=witun.'ˈ*

(21)   *ʾamər, 'hèmənˈ mām telònaˈ toba=w tyawuta byàde=leˈ bizàle=le qa ḥadzˈ ʾana=š bizàle=wən mənu.'ˈ ʾamra, 'ʾawja ʾàhatˈ gu qəsət mām telona npale=wət gawət ʾùrxa?'ˈ*

(22)   *ʾamər, 'la, là.ˈ lewət bəxzaya dèqnu?ˈ dəqnu muyrə̀xule.ˈ maʿqū́l … ʾələt tsə məndi ʾay dəqna muṛpìyu=le?ˈ tasbìḥeˈ bəxzaye=wət tasbiḥe gu ʾidàtu.ˈ ʾe de xzi daf har mxàye=le.ˈ ʾe ʾurxət malkùta ham bəzwànan=ile.'ˈ*

(23)   *yaʿni ʾamra, 'mà?!ˈ mhuymə̀nux gu maḥčetu?'ˈ 'hemən,' ʾamər, 'ʾana psàye=wən gu ʾurxu.ˈ ʾahat de tà ʾăta ʾati=iš mənan.'ˈ ʾamra, 'ʾana la k-àtyan mənoxun.'ˈ*

(24)   *ʾamər, 'de pso psò!ˈ xo məni bəz zawda lèwat.'ˈ ʾamra, 'ʾànaˈ bas k-pàrxan.ˈ là k-azan mənoxən gu ʾăra.'ˈ ʾawja ʾamər, 'b- kèfət janax=ila.'ˈ*

(25)   *psèlu,ˈ psèlu,ˈ psèlu,ˈ psèlu.ˈ ʾani har psàye=na.ˈ har ʾamər, 'la ṭpèlan ʾəl ḥadz?'ˈ 'wəlux' ʾamər, 'ḥadz lăxa lèlaˈ be qằza bən.ˈ ʾurxət ḥadz ḥărùqte=la!ˈ mdamət ʾăta raʾsan k-ṭàpət?'ˈ*

(20)   The rooster said 'Don't you know?' She (the sparrow) said, 'I believe not. What should I know? I am always in the sky. I am not on the ground so that I may know what you have done.

(21)   He (the rooster) said, 'Believe me, Uncle Fox is performing repentance and penitence. He is going on the pilgrimage and I am going with him.' She (the sparrow) said, 'So you are telling me that you yourself have listened to Uncle Fox and are going with him!?'

(22)   He (the rooster) said, 'No, no. Don't you see his beard. He has grown his beard. It stands to reason that he would not have grown his beard for nothing. Can't you see the rosary in his hands? See how he is beating the tambourine! He is buying the road to heaven for us.'

(23)   She said, 'What?! Do you believe what he says?' 'Believe me' he (the rooster) said, 'I am going on the road with him. Why don't you come with us now?' She said 'No, I shall not come with you.'

(24)   He said, 'Go away! For sure, you are not better than me.' She said, 'I shall only fly. I shall not walk with you on the ground.' He said 'As you please.'

(25)   They went on and on. They kept walking. He (the rooster) said, 'Have we not arrived at the [place of] pilgrmage yet?' 'Look man,' he said, '[the place] of pilgrimage is not here nearby, with respect.[7] The [place of] pilgrimage is a long way away. Do you think you will reach it at once?'

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[7] Lit. Be without trouble!

(26)   ʾè,ˈ *dunye xšə̀kla=w*ˈ *kằlằbaba ʾamər, ʿdunye xšə̀kla=w*ˈ *là k-ṭapəx.*ˈ *ʾamər, ʿxa beta ʾìtən lắxa.*ˈ *xà*ˈ *ʾàdye=le*ˈ *beta zòre-le.*ˈ *k-azəx k-yatwəx l-ṭàma.*ˈ *lele k-qadə̀xle l-ṭama.*ˈ *ʾàwdza*ˈ *xuškə̀nta*ˈ *xuškənta hàya k-pắsəx.*ˈ *ʾamər, ʿbə̀š-ila.*ˈ

(27)   *wəru gawət … beta gòrin.*ˈ *ʾàmər,*ˈ *ʾamər, ʿkut xa l-dùktu,*ˈ *xa dukta dàwəq ta janu*ˈ *lắxa dàməx=u*ˈ *ma məndyane ʾìtən.*ˈ *bas,ʾ ʾamər, ʿʾana xà šarṭ ʾəti.*ˈ *kằlằbáb mə̀re,*ˈ *ʿe mà šarṭi-la?*ˈ *har ʾaxtsa zor šàrṭe=š matwət rešan.*ˈ

(28)   *ʾamər, ʿlà*ˈ *šarṭi gorīn ằye-le.*ˈ *ʾana tsə̀hye=wən,*ˈ *čằdìtun?*ˈ *mən xùškənta gu ʾaqlati=wən,*ˈ *fa dằbi ʾana ʾistəràhat ʾawdən.*ˈ *la k-awe tsə naša qàla ʾawəd reši*ˈ *hắta mxuškənta hawebi pằsən,*ˈ *tsunka ʾàna ʾurxa maxwoye=wən ʾəloxən.*ˈ

(29)   *xo ʾaxtun ʾurxa là čằditun=ila?*ˈ *ʾana ʾurxa bət ʾurxa čằdə̀na=w*ˈ *dằbi ʾàna*ˈ *ʾaga hawe l-jàni=w*ˈ *bằš ter=u ter=u pə̀ř damxən.*ˈ *ʾamri, ʿbə̀š-ila,*ˈ *ʾətəfaqux mà=ile?*ˈ *ʾamər, ʿaw qala àwəd k-əxləxle.*ˈ

(30)   *ṣŭpərta xəra gu kằlằbàba.*ˈ *ʾamra, ʿṛàzi=wət gu de ʾətəfắq?*ˈ *ʾe ʾaw dza mằni qala k-awəd?*ˈ *ʿʾaxni tfiqe=wəx ʾəlaw.*ˈ *là ʾidele ʾe ga ʾawa xuškənta ʾawa k-qàyəm.*ˈ *ʿè,*ˈ *ʾàmər,*ˈ *ʿdè*ˈ *bə̀š wədlux.*ˈ

(26)   Now, it got dark and the rooster said, 'It has become dark. We shall not get there.' He (the fox) said 'There is a house here. It is a small house. We shall go and stay there. We shall spend the night there. Then in the morning, early in the morning, we shall set off.' He (the rooster) said, 'All right.'

(27)   They entered the house. He (the fox) said, 'Let each one have his own place, let each one find a place for himself and sleep sleep there, whatever places are available. But' he said 'I have a condition.' The rooster said, 'What is this condition! Do you still make conditions on us?'

(28)   He (the fox) said 'No, my condition is this. I am tired, don't you know? I have been on my feet since the morning. So, I need to rest. It is not allowed for anyone to disturb me with any noise, so that I may be able to walk in the morning, because it is I who is showing the way for you.

(29)   You do not know the way, do you?. I know the way very well and therefore; I need to be alert and sleep very well.' They said 'All right, but what is your condition?'[8] He said 'We shall eat anyone who makes a noise.'

(30)   The sparrow looked at the rooster. She said, 'Are you happy with this agreement? But who is going to make noise?' (The rooster said,) 'So, we have agreed to it'. He did not know then that it was he who would rise early in the morning. 'Yes' he said, 'That is all right.'

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[8] Lit. agreement.

(31)   ṣŭpə̀rta˥ səqla xa … mḗz zùrta ʾətwala.˥ l-ṭàma˥ wə̀dla=w˥ kăḷăbaba=š rəš xà ṣiwa sməxle.˥ mām telòna=š˥ ʾəl xa balət ʾằra˥ štə̀ḥle.˥

(32)   pə̀šla˥ ʾàdya˥ baraw băyàni.˥ tabʿan ʾaxni čădəx ʿadət kăḷăbàba.˥ har xantsa yòma bayəz˥ qàla k-awəd,˥ qàre.˥ xa tira tre gaye ṭlaha gaye mšurèle gu qraya.˥

(33)   baraw băyani yoma ptə̀xle,˥ kăḷăbaba šrèle gu qraya.˥ kăḷăbaba šrèle gu qraya.˥ mām telòna˥ smixe=le kăḷăbaba qàre.˥ lèwa dmixa˥ hăta ʾe furṣa dawəqle=w˥ ʾaxə̀le.˥

(34)   ʾamər xəre gawu ʾamər, 'kăḷăbaba ʾăya mà=ila?˥ ʾaxər ʾətəfa-qan mà=ile?'˥ ʾamər, 'ʾaw dza ʾāt là čădət ʾana mxuškənyata k-qemən qàrən=u˥ b-idati lèwa?'˥

(35)   hèmən˥ qam-dawə̀qle.˥ ṣŭpurta ʾàmra, 'wəj wəj wə̀j!˥ ʾahat la ʾamrət toba=w tyawuta wìde=wən?'˥ ʾamra,⁹ 'ʾaxər ʾətəfaqan mà=wewa?˥ la məran tsə naša qala là [a]wəd?'˥

(36)   ʾida wəṛe l-adya ʾələt ṣŭpurta gòrīn.˥ ṣŭpùrta˥ ʾàmra, 'ʾāt mà məlat=iwət?˥ məran ʾaxni bizale=wəx qa ḥadz=u mə̀ndi=w?'˥

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⁹ It seems this should have been *ʾamər* 'he (the fox) said'.

(31)   The sparrow went up … (on) a small table that she had [found there]. She stayed there while the rooster stood on a piece of wood. Uncle Fox stretched on one side of the floor.

(32)   Dawn began to break.[10] Of course, we know the habit of a rooster. As soon as day begins to break,[11] it makes a noise, it crows. He started to crow once, twice, three times.

(33)   Dawn had broken and the rooster started to crow. Uncle Fox was waiting for him to crow. He was not asleep (but awaited) the opportunity to seize him and eat him.

(34)   He (the fox) looked at him and said, 'Rooster, what is this?! What have we agreed on?' He said 'But don't you know that I rise early in the morning and crow and that I cannot help it?'[12]

(35)   So, he seized him. The sparrow cried, 'Chirp chirp chirp. Didn't you say you have started a life of repentance and penitence?' He (the fox) said 'What was our agreement? Did we not say that nobody should make a noise?'

(36) He stretched a hand towards the sparrow. The sparrow said, 'What community do you belong to? Did not we said we are going on pilgrimage and the like?'

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[10] Lit. It became towards morning.
[11] Lit. spread.
[12] Lit. it is not in my hands.

(37)   ʾàmər,⌐ ʿʾana măḥammàdi=iwən.ʾ⌐ ʾe gət məre ʿmăḥammad =iwən' kəmu ptɔ̀xle⌐ ṣŭpurta ʿərɔ̀qla.⌐ ʿʾawhù!⌐ ʾana qa mà məri măḥammadi?⌐ hawənwa mira jərjəs=iwən ʾàna,⌐ la k-awèwa,⌐ har k-oyawa ʾàdya,⌐ k-awənwa bɔ̀lyaw.ʾ⌐

(38)   ʾana=š ʾitèli⌐ tsɔ̀ məndi la wəlu qati.⌐ ʾe ḥŭčita=š k-əmrìla⌐ ta naša səqa là mate gu dan našət⌐ šulane xrìwe hawi wide.⌐

(37)   He said, 'I am Muslim'. When he said, 'I am Muḥammad', he opened his mouth and the sparrow fled away. 'Oh! Why did I say I am Muslim? If I only had said I am Christian it would not have happened, she would have still been (in my mouth), and I would have swallowed her.'[13]

(38)   (Narrator:) I have come back [from the events of the story], but they [the characters in the story] have given me nothing [to prove it]. This story is told so that people do not trust those who have done bad things.

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[13] I.e. if he had said *jərgəsi*, during the pronunciation of this word he would have pressed his jaws together and so held the bird in his mouth, but when pronouncing *măḥammadi* he opened his jaws.