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.
27. THE INDECENT NEIGHBOUR

Masoud Mohammadirad

Speaker: Jalal Sher (CK. Shaqlawa)
Recording: Lourd Hanna
Audio: https://kurdic.ames.cam.ac.uk/audio/239/

Summary

Uncle Awdo Sula stood by his house in Shaqlawa in the morning and saw a beautiful lady carrying a tray on her head passing by and coming towards him. The man was thrilled and thanked God for coming across such a beautiful woman.

She greeted him and brought berries for him and his family. He, expecting she would have had romantic intentions, became infuriated, poured all the berries on the ground, and fed them to his hens. He told the beautiful woman to go away and never return. She nor his own wife understood why he was so angry. He had felt that he was being treated like a poor person.

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I am grateful to Jonson Shamo, native of Shaqlawa, and Hejar Ergoshi for their help with interpreting the language in certain passages.


(4) got-i, ‘tsə-nə?’ wałâ awatsi’ qomāšakay har-a-dāt-awâ a-binî tûf! tû wəlâhi! ‘asabî bû. ya’nî řoh-i la bar da nā-mā. ya’nî şat šaytən-i lo hâṭən.”

2 Speech muffled.
3 Speech muffled.
I will tell this [story] too. One morning— [Uncle] Awdo Sula, as they called him, stood by his house, which was in the Betirma neighbourhood [of Shaqlawa]. He said, ‘I was sitting [by my house]. It was morning’, he said, ‘and I saw a woman coming.’ Her name was Aunt Warde—as far as I know. Yes.

He said, ‘There was a big tray [she was carrying], which was covered [with a cloth]. She was passing by our alley, heading towards our house.’ She came [closer]. I said, “God, look at that beauty. Look at her veil! God must have loved me so much for me to meet her this morning! It is a [great] life!”

It is said that it was the season of Spring. It is said that she greeted him and sat down. He said [to her], ‘What? What are you looking for?’ She said, ‘By God, I have brought you some [berries]. I thought, “I shall not eat [them and give them to you]”’.

He said, ‘What’s this? Indeed, the thing, she removed the cloth on the tray [to show him what was in the tray]. He said, ‘Wow! Indeed [the tray was full of] berries!’ He became furious. He lost his reason. He was filled with rage.

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4 Lit. One day, it was in the morning.
5 Lit. they called him Awdo Sula; his house.
6 Lit. I said.
7 Lit. he saw.
8 Lit. Soul did not remain in him.
9 Lit. One hundred evils came to him.


(7) Pəłka ... žənaka-š got-i, 'tamāšä kā!' garak mutasər bū. pašimän-iš bū nā-y-zānī. got-i, 'da ṭə ba ṭē xo! jār-əš ka nāy ēra!'

(8) žənī Məm Awdo ... got-i, 'Awdəl ato ... lò aw žəna-š fašəl kərd? gunəh-a wā ē hāt inabū-y. xuwa ya-ni tsi, kəfr-ī kərdbū?' 'na bə-šō na tū bī na aw bī. dzārī ka bā aw išāna nā-kā.'

10 Here the narrator expresses ideophones used to call for the sheep and hens to come in the direction of speaker. ŋt̪ is a labio-alveolar sound. The ŋ symbol is pronounced close to a bilabial click sound.
(5) He said, ‘Why have you brought this to us? Are we mules? What are these [berries doing here] this morning? You think that I’m poor? Do you see what’s in front of you?’—there was a barn in front of them—‘Do you think we are dying of hunger?’

(6) He said, ‘Get up! I will show you.’ He poured out all of them (i.e. the berries). He called for the hens and sheep—he had two, three sheep: Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Ba! Ba! He did this, Cluck! Cluck! ‘Come!’ The hens came [to eat the berries].

(7) [To] Pelka .... to the woman he said, ‘Look!’ The woman [noticed his vehement reaction and] became very resentful. She regretted [what she had done] and did not realise [it was so upsetting]. He said [to her], ‘Go away!¹¹ Don’t come back here anymore!’

(8) Uncle Awdo’s wife said, ‘Awdo, you—why did you get angry at that woman? She’s innocent. She came and brought us [berries]. So what, had she committed blasphemy?’ [Awdo replied], ‘No, go away! I don’t want [to hear a word from] either you or her! May she will not repeat such behaviour.’¹²

¹¹ Lit. Go on your road!
¹² Lit. things.