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.

As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is available to read for free on the publisher’s website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found here: www.openbookpublishers.com

Cover image: The village of Harbole, south-eastern Turkey (photograph taken by Bruno Poizat in 1978 before the village’s destruction). Cover design: Anna Gaź.
29. TWO MULLAHS

Masoud Mohammadirad

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Recording: Lourd Hanna
Audio: https://kurdic.ames.cam.ac.uk/audio/234/

Summary

Two Mullahs served in the same mosque in a village around Khoshnaw. One of them would constantly miss the prayer time. He asked the punctual one to give him some advice. The punctual mullah said that he had two wives who took care of the different home tasks, helping him to get ready for work. The unpunctual Mullah believed this and took another wife. Not long after the marriage ceremony, the two wives started arguing with him, and there was constant quarrelling in the house. From then on, the unpunctual mullah would go to the mosque early—just like the punctual mullah. It turned out that they were both on time for prayers because of the same problems in their homes.
(1)  tab’an nāw-ôm Háwsar Nadzât Bāpir Řahmān Sūrtš-yā.\[1\] xarkī Šaqrawāy-ma.\[1\] dāk-ôm nāwī Jamīlā-yā.\[1\] la düy dwāzday hazār-ū nosat-ū haštā-w hašt la dāyēk bū-yma.\[1\]

(2)  wāl awa-y ka ēstān da-m-awē bās-i kam\[1\] tsirokak-ā ba nāwī dū malān.\[1\] tab’ān la nāw kaltūrī kurdawārī aw tsiroka galak jār ba ‘abrāt hātit-oawa,\[1\] lo nasihāt kārdūnī piyāwān\[1\] yā xod lo čāk kārdūnī būwārākī komālāyati yā ‘ijtīmā-yi la mābānī xarkī.\[1\]

(3)  a-lē ha-bo na-bōl kas la xwāy gawrātīr nā-bo,\[1\] la ēkak law gundakānī dawrī xošnāwati\[1\] dū malā ha-būn.\[1\] yakāk-yān\[1\] zū a-ĉūl la mēzgafē bāng’-i a-dāl.\[1\] away ḏīkā-yān\[1\] dərāng da-hāt-a mēzgaftē-ǔ nwēzh-iš-i a-ĉūl.\[1\]

(4)  ṭrožak la ōrožān,\[1\] malāy yakām la malāy duam-i pərsi\[1\] got-ī, ‘xēr-a ato?\[1\] wa lo xēr-a?\[1\] atū a-tṣi zū a-tṣi-ya baḥaṣtē-o\[1\] qāzəndz-età ziṯyātər-ə,\[1\] čunka pēš-i mən har-astə-ǔ\[1\] ham bəndz-ış a-dayl\[1\] ü ham nwēzhaka-št-ət nə-tṣi.\[1\]

(5)  ‘katsi amən\[1\] nwēż-iš-əm a-tṣi-ǔ da-m-awē bāw xēra-₍m⟩ bə-\[1\] gam,\[1\] atu-iš-əm nasihatak-əm bə-₃a bə-ʒān-₃ kū atū baw āmāndzay gayṣtī?\[1\]
Well, my name is Hawsar Najat Bapir Rahman Surchi. I am from Shaqlawa. My mother is called Jamila. I was born on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 1988.

What I am going to tell now is a tale called ‘two mullahs’. This story has often been told as a moral lesson\textsuperscript{1} in Kurdish culture, in order to give people advice or to [encourage them to] amend social problems among them.

It is said that once there was and once there was not [but] there was no one greater than God. There were once two mullahs in one of the villages around Khoshnaw. One of them would go early to the mosque and call for prayer. The other one would come late to the mosque and miss the prayer.

One day, the first mullah (i.e. the one who was late) asked the second [punctual one and] said, ‘What’s up with you?\textsuperscript{2} Really, what’s up? You will go to Paradise sooner and achieve a greater merit\textsuperscript{3} [than me], since you wake up earlier than me, you call to prayers and you do not miss your prayers [unlike me].’

[The unpunctual mullah continued] ‘As for me, I miss my prayers, but I want to have the same merit.\textsuperscript{4} Give me a piece of advice so that I know how you reached that goal?’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Lit. It has come as a lesson.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Lit. Is it goodness, you?
\item \textsuperscript{3} Lit. Your profit is more.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Lit. I want to reach that goodness for me.
\end{itemize}
(6) malāy yakam gotī-ya malāy duam, ‘hay faqīr!1 waz‘ī mēn lagar waz‘ī tū gala galak dziyāwâz-a.1 atū yak žen-ēt haya1 ba hîc ūn nā-gā.1 hatā xwearān-ēt lo hāzar a-ḵâ1 yā xud jālḵ-ū barg-ēt lo da-ynē,1 amēn la mārē d-ēm-a darē-o ba āsānī-o1 atā-š har la mārē-y-o ta‘xīr a-bī."


(8) malā fokrāk’-ē hīnā-w1 fokrāk’-ē bōrd.1 got-ī, ‘ba xwāy1 amēn-īs da-m-hawe1 żū bā-čm-ā bahaštē.1 tsandē amēn zūrē1 bā-čm-ā sar mēnāra-y-o1 bānqī bō-dam1 awandā xwā lē-m ūzī a-bī."

(9) lo-ya nā-tsār bū1 fukrī kōrd-ūrawā-w1 ženak’-ē jowān-ū tař-ī hīnā,1 got-ī do ṭoḏ pē tšūn.1 hār-o waz‘āk-ī lo dārūst bē-bū,1 jahanmāk bū aw mārā na-bit-awba.1 nā away malāy yakam bās-ī kōrbū1 hāt-a dī nā hīts.1
(6) The first mullah (the punctual one) said to the second (the late one), ‘Poor you! My situation is very different from that of yours. You have one wife who cannot cope with\(^5\) anything [including your daily tasks]. By the time she brings you your food or brings you your clothes, I’m already out of the house [heading towards the mosque], but you keep being delayed.’

(7) He (the late mullah) said, ‘What’s your situation then?’ He replied ‘I have two wives. My first wife brings me my socks, my second wife brings me my robe. The second one serves me food; the first one brings me the turban. That’s why I reach the mosque earlier than you, [while] you’re still sitting at home, the sun rises,\(^6\) and you miss the [morning] prayer.’

(8) The [late] mullah kept thinking.\(^7\) He said, ‘Indeed I would also like to go to Heaven soon. The earlier and steadier I climb the minaret and call for prayers, the more God will be pleased with me.’

(9) He had no option but to ponder over the subject. Finally, he married a beautiful, youthful\(^8\) woman. Two days [of his marriage] passed by. He began to struggle. The house became a hell to him.\(^9\) It was nothing like the other mullah had said.

\(^5\) Lit. Does not arrive at anything.
\(^6\) Lit. The sun comes upon your head.
\(^7\) Lit. He brought a thought, he took a thought.
\(^8\) Lit. fresh.
\(^9\) Lit. The house became such a hell to him that it was not.
(10) buw-a šar-u āžāwak bū. 1 arē šēxałā bū yakakī a-go 1 ba šar hātbūn la sar yakdi. 1 yakā a-go, 1 ‘gū ba qābr-ē malāy! 1 yakā a-go, 1 ‘gū ba šidāy malāy! 1 yakā a-go, 1 ‘gū ba qābrē bāb-i! 1 awā a-go, 1 ‘gū ba qābrē dâk-y-i!’

(11) malā nā-tsār bū 1 aw šawā hār xaw-i lē na-kat. 1 sā’at sē-y šawē 1 čū-a sar mēnārāy. 1 ū xū-y māt kērd. 1 dī-ē kas lō māzgoftē nē-ya. 1 xo-y māt kērd xo-y māt kērd 1 hatā malā-y lo wa diyār kat. 1

(12) got-ī, ‘ādi nā-m-got?! 1 malāy dú žēna, 1 dzārg-ī kunkūn-a. 1 away dú žēn-i ha-bi zūtēr d-ēt-a sar mēnārē! 1 got-ī, ‘hay la’nāti xwā-t lē na-dāl! 1 aw āgrāy la mārē tu bū 1 da mārē mēn-išt bar-dā! 1 amēn tsēz-ēm dābū la dú žēnān?! 1

amēn-išt hātm-ū l xalās bū bērāw-a-w 1 hīts-ēm pē na-bōrā. 1
29. Two Mullahs (CK. Shaqlawa)

(10) It (the house) became [full of] arguments. Even though he was a sheikh, they (i.e. the wives) became united in quarrelling. One [of the wives] would say, ‘May shit be on the mullah’s tomb!’ The other one would say, ‘May shit be on the mullah’s ancestors!’ One would say, ‘May shit be on his father’s tomb!’ The other one would say, ‘May shit be on his mother’s tomb!’

(11) The mullah could not sleep\textsuperscript{11} that night. He had no option but to go up the minaret at three o’clock in the morning. He did not make a noise. He saw that there was no one in the mosque. He stayed silent until the other mullah appeared before him.\textsuperscript{12}

(12) He (i.e. the usually punctual mullah) said, ‘Did I not say so?! A mullah with two wives is heavy-hearted.\textsuperscript{13} One who has two wives goes up the minaret earlier!’ The [usually unpunctual] mullah said, ‘May God curse you!\textsuperscript{14} Your life was hell and you inflicted the same hell upon me!\textsuperscript{15} What [benefit] was there for me in marrying two women!?\textsuperscript{16}

As for me, I have come [from the events of the tale]. It’s finished. Nothing was allocated to me [by the characters of the story].’

\textsuperscript{10} Lit. origin.
\textsuperscript{11} Lit. Sleep did not fall at him.
\textsuperscript{12} Lit. became visible to him.
\textsuperscript{13} Lit. his heart is perforated.
\textsuperscript{14} Lit. Should not God curse you?
\textsuperscript{15} Lit. The fire that existed in your house, you threw it at my house too.
\textsuperscript{16} Lit. I would not have stung two women.