

Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 2



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33. MIRZA MUHAMMAD AND THE THREE PRINCESSES

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Summary

Mirza Muhammad is the youngest of three princes; his two elder brothers are called Muhammad Chalabi and Ahmad Chalabi. Once there was a king with three daughters who set forth a challenge for those who wanted to court his beautiful daughters. Whoever could jump over the enormous trench he had dug would be entitled to his eldest daughter. Mirza Muhammad jumps over the trench and reaches the eldest daughter who knocks him with an apple. He took her and 'reserved' her for his eldest brother by hiding her in a room inside the palace. He did the same for the second and third princess. Then Mirza Muhammad's father passed away and the three brothers started checking the state of the palace. They opened the rooms where the three daughters were hidden, and each took one for himself.

(1) 'amriwa 'əθwa xà'a,¹ xa malka 'əθwale t̪laθà bnone.¹ xa šəmeu 'Aḥmád Čālābi-wa.¹ xa Mḥāmad Čālābi-w, xa Mərzá Mḥāmad=wewa.¹ Mərzá Mḥāmad 'aw xona zūra-le.¹ 'an xəne 'an gòre-nan.¹

(2) yoma=w tre=w t̪laθa=w 'ārba,¹ xa yoma xa malka 'əθwale t̪laθà bnaθe.¹ ya'ni bnaθe ^Adāraja 'ula^A xamàθe=wewa.¹

(3) 'aw, ma l-àw malka?¹ xpəre xa xàndaq;¹ xandaq, ya'ni, rwàxta.¹

(4) mərə, 'kut šawəra 'āya xandaq,¹ brati gorta b-yawəna t̪ləu.¹

(5) kūlay hune bizàla,¹ bizàla=w,¹ bizàaala,¹ lène biyara.¹

(6) 'āxa Mərzá Mḥāmad t̪fəqle.¹ qəmle šqəle sùsteu¹ 'u surginàle.¹ 'u rkule l-xāšt susteu=w zəle.¹

(7) xəre 'əla xandaq xpərta.¹ zəle xðəre xa, tre čarxe¹ xðəre,¹ xðəre¹ 'u-fiit šitàle ganeu l-aw bara xəna.¹ kum-šawəra.¹

¹ Presumably, a combination of -na and an accidentally repeated 'an, or a muffled na'm 'yes'.

(1) It was said² there once was a king [who] had three sons. One was called³ Ahmad Chalabi; one Muhammad Chalabi, and one was Mirza Muhammad. Mirza Muhammad was the youngest brother. The others were the elder ones.

(2) A day or two, three, four [passed by]. Once⁴ a king had three daughters. You know, they were girls with beauty⁵ of the first degree.

(3) He,—what about that king? He dug a trench; that is, a wide trench.

(4) He said, ‘Whoever jumps [over] this trench—I shall give her to him [in marriage].’

(5) Everybody was going back and forth,⁶ [but] they did not dare [to jump].

(6) Mirza Muhammad happened to be here. So⁷ he took his mare and saddled her. He mounted the back of the horse and went off.

(7) He looked at the trench [that had been] dug. He went [and] walked round one, two times, walked round and round, and woosh he flung himself to the other side. He had jumped [over] it.

² Lit. they used to say.

³ Lit. his name was.

⁴ Lit. a day.

⁵ Lit. beautiful.

⁶ Lit. going, going and going.

⁷ Lit. he rose.

(8) *zəle qam-tarʔət qāšra,*[|] *xəθa gorta gu šəbāk qa-maxyala xabušta gāweu.*[|]

(9) *məri,* *‘ta xoni gōra.*^ʔ

(10) *qām-šaqla=w matula baθrət xaşeu=w nàbəla ʔaya.*[|] *nabəla, kum-darela gu xə gurfə.*[|]

(11) *məre ta xūlamwàθe,*[|] *ʔhəšār^K həwutu! là maḥkutu!*[|] *ʔābàd^A la palṭa m-kəməwxi.*[|] *ʔixala=w štayta=w kul məndi diyaw ʔjàhəz^A t-awe.*[|] *lākun⁸ ʔamrutu ʔaw muθayθa ʔay brata.*^ʔ

(12) *pəšla brata day trey.*[|] *bràtət trey,*[|] *ga ʔarta⁹ malka hule ʔàmər,*[|] *məre,*

(13) *‘yàba,*[|] *brati ʔāya də-trèy-la.*[|] *kut ʔibe šawəra ʔāya xandaq,*[|] *brati ʔpəškəš^K t̤əleu.*[|] *ya‘ni ʔhādiya^A t̤əleu.*^ʔ

(14) *ga ʔarta Mərzá Mḥāmad rkule l-xaşət susa xwàra.*[|] *ʔaw kòme=wa,*[|] *ʔaw susa qāmāya.*[|] *rkule l-xaşət susa xwàra.*[|] *ga ʔarta zəle=w zəle=w zəle=w, qam-šawəra ga ʔarta xandaq.*[|]

(15) *ʔay brata də-tre qam-maxyala xabušta gāweu.*[|]

⁸ Some other NENA dialects use the phrase *na kun* in the sense of ‘lest’, which is similar to the Northern Kurdish imperative plural form of the verb ‘do’ (p.c. G. Khan), i.e. *na kən* ‘do not!’. The /ə/ would have shifted to /u/. There could also be a connection with the Kurdish conjunction *neku* ‘lest’. Otherwise it is reminiscent of the Persian imperative singular *nakon*, as well as the Arabic imperative singular of the verb *kwn* ‘be’.

⁹ < *ga xərtə* ‘once more’.

(8) He went to the palace gate, the eldest sister [being] at the window. She hit him with an apple.¹⁰

(9) '[This one is] for my eldest brother,' he said.

(10) He lifted her, put her on the horseback and took her along. After he took her, he put her in a room.

(11) 'Be careful!' he told his servants. 'Don't say anything.¹¹ Never let a word out of your mouth. Food and drink and everything will be supplied to her¹². Never say he [has] brought that girl [here].'

(12) The second daughter remained. The king said¹³ once again about his second daughter, saying¹⁴

(13) 'Folks, this is my second daughter. Whoever is able to jump [over] this trench—I will give my daughter to him as a gift [in marriage].' I mean, as a present for him.

(14) Once again, Mirza Muhammad rode on the back of a white horse. It was black—the first horse. He rode on the back of a white horse. Once more he kept going and then¹⁵ jumped [over] the trench again.

(15) The second daughter hit him with an apple.¹⁶

¹⁰ Lit. hit the apple at him.

¹¹ Lit. don't speak.

¹² Lit. of hers.

¹³ Lit. is saying.

¹⁴ Lit. he said.

¹⁵ Lit. went and went and went.

¹⁶ Lit. hit the apple at him.

- (16) *məre, ʿey ta xoni palgàya.*¹
- (17) *qam-šaqa-la=w matula baθər xaşeu=w nabəlla ʿap ʿaya.*¹ *ḵum-nabəla ḵum-matula gu xà ġurfa ʿarta.*¹ *yaʿni lè k-iðe xaθaw gawaw.*¹ *ḵum-matula gu dè ġurfa xərta.*¹
- (18) *nafsə məndi:*¹ *məre ta xūlamwàθe,*¹ *ʿiya brata*¹ *masmūtula bala.*¹ *lakùn ʿət palṭa,*¹ *ʿu là ʿamrutu ču xa.*¹
- (19) *pəšla ʿay zurta.*¹ *pəšla ʿey zūrta, məre,*¹
- (20) *ʿay dīyi=la.*¹ *ʿàyka b-xalša!*¹
- (21) *ʿè,*¹ *ga ʿarta*¹ *hule malka ʿàmər.*¹ *məre, ʿyaba, hula pəšta ʿaya brati zūrta,*¹ *kut šawəra ʿāya xàndaq*¹ *ṭàleu=ila p-aya.*¹
- (22) *qəmle*¹ *rkule l-xašət susa smòqa.*¹ *qəmle*¹ *npəle b-àn rakawe.*¹ *kut ... kət dan rakawe ḵum-taqəley b-xa bəra.*¹
- (23) *mərey, ʿbābu,*¹ *malàxa=le.*¹
- (24) *zəle=w θèle*¹ *zəle=w θèle=w*¹ *šitəle ganeu l-aw bara xəna.*¹

(16) 'This one [is] for my middle brother.'

(17) He lifted her, put her on his back and took her along as well. After he took her, he put her in another room. That is, she did not know her sister was there. He put her in this other room.

(18) The same thing, 'You take care of this girl,' he told his servants. 'She cannot go out and do not say tell anyone.'

(19) The youngest remained. As the youngest remained, he said,

(20) 'This one is mine. Where shall she escape [to]?'

(21) Yes, the king once again made an announcement.¹⁷ He said, 'Folks, my youngest daughter is left. Whoever jumps [over] this trench—she, too, is for him.'

(22) Then¹⁸ Mirza Muhammad¹⁹ rode on the back of a red horse. He attacked²⁰ these knights. Each of the knights he threw²¹ in another²² direction.

(23) They said, 'Dear God, he's [like] an angel.'

(24) He went back and forth, back and forth.²³ He flung himself to the other side.

¹⁷ Lit. is speaking.

¹⁸ Lit. he rose.

¹⁹ Lit. he.

²⁰ Lit. he fell on.

²¹ Lit. lifted.

²² Lit. one.

²³ Lit. he went and came, he went and came.

- (25) *ham ʿay kum-maxyala xabušta gawe.*[|]
- (26) *mære, ʿaya diyi=la.*[|]
- (27) *qam-šaql=u matula baθər xaşeu=w,*
- (28) *ʿaya ʾāla^A.*[|]
- (29) *zəle[|] [ǎ]ya kum-nabəla. | kum-nabəla, | ga ʾərta kum-darela b-xa gurfə xərta.*[|]
- (30) *mære ta xūlamwàθe diye, | ʿdraw bàla[|] lakun ʾət ʾamrutu ta çù naša. | ʾăya brata holi muθyəla.*[|]
- (31) *ʾap ʾay kum-ʾaməreŷ, | ʿxàlta=w[|] štàyta=w[|] ʿkaməl^A m-kùl məndi. | là maḥkutu.*[|]
- (32) *mæreŷ, ʿmà-yxaləf^A.*[|]
- (33) *pəšla xa fàtra; | babay məθle. | babət Mərzá Mḥammad=u ʾAḥmád Čălābi=w Mḥammad Čălābi, | məθle bəbay. | malka məθle.*[|]
- (34) *ʾăwa xona zura mære, | ʿde qaymax jaylax gu qəšra[|] xazax balki məndi hàle, | ^Kanbàran^K, | məndi diyan t-ìlay ʿfīne, | t-ìlay xrìwe, | xətṭe mǎθalan, | b-dàw zawna.*[|]
- (35) *ʾè. | qəmle[|] jəlay gu ʾəna ... gu qəšra. | zəle[|] pθəxle tarʾa day ʾodá ʾət xàθa gorta, | ʾay qāmàŷθa.*[|]
- (36) *mære, ʿăya mǎ=yla?*[|]

- (25) She, too, hit him with an apple.²⁴
- (26) ‘She is mine,’ he said.
- (27) He took and put her behind his back.
- (28) ‘Oh God,’ [he said.]
- (29) He went [and] took her along. After he took her, he once again put her in another room.
- (30) ‘Be careful not to say anything to anybody,’ he said to his servants. ‘I’ve just brought this girl [here].’
- (31) He told them [about] her, too, ‘Her food, drink, everything [will be provided] completely. Don’t speak [about it].’
- (32) ‘That’s all right,’ they said.
- (33) A while passed; their father died. The father of Mirza Muhammad, Ahmad Chalabi and Muhammad Chalabi—their father died. The king died.
- (34) The²⁵ youngest brother said, ‘Let’s get up [and] wander in the palace to see if we can find anything, lest our grain repositories are, for example, rotten [or] damaged at this time.’
- (35) Yes. So²⁶ they wandered in—what’s-it-called—in the palace. They went and opened the door of the eldest sister’s room, the first one.
- (36) ‘What is this?’ they said.

²⁴ Lit. hit the apple at him.

²⁵ Lit. this.

²⁶ Lit. they rose.

- (37) *məre,* | 'xòni, | 'aya t̤àlux. | d̤iyux=ila 'aya. ' |
- (38) 'xòni, | 'ana lèn zila. '
- (39) *məre,* | 'àn=ən šq̤l̤ala. | t̤àlux=ila. | d̤iyux=ila 'aya. ' |
- (40) 'aya k̤əm-yawəla ta xòna gora. |
- (41) *pθəxle* 'oda də-tray. | 'ay brata də-trey palgàyθa. |
- (42) *məre,* 'xòni, | 'adiya 'àya=š̤i | d̤iyux=ila. ' |
- (43) *məre,* 'xòni, | 'ana lèn zila čə dukθa. ' |
- (44) *məre,* 'bàle, | 'aya diyux 'əlli šq̤ila. ' |
- (45) *pəšla* 'e zurta. | zəle | pθəxle tar'a l-e zùrta | tuta p̤-àya. |
- (46) *məre,* 'hāma 'aya d̤iyi=la. ' |
- (47) *pəšna* bə'yaša. | ham babay məθle. | babay məθle; xləšla. |

- (37) He said, 'My brother, she is for you. She is yours.'
- (38) 'My brother, *I* haven't been [anywhere].'
- (39) 'I [am the one who] has taken her,' he said. 'She's for you. She's yours.'
- (40) He gave her to the eldest brother.
- (41) They opened the second room. The second, middle girl was in there.
- (42) He said, 'My brother, now this one is yours.'
- (43) 'My brother,' he said, 'I haven't been anywhere.'
- (44) He said, 'Indeed, I [am the one who] took that [girl] of yours.'
- (45) The youngest [girl] was left. He went [and] opened the door to the youngest [while] she [was] seated.
- (46) 'So, that one is mine,' he said.
- (47) They remained alive but their²⁷ father passed away. Their father died; [the story] is over.

²⁷ I.e. the princesses' father.

