

Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 2



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35. MAR YOHANAN (ST JOHN)

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Summary

A king had an only son called Yohanán. When the boy was young, he used to enjoy praying with a monk, who used to come to visit from time to time. When the boy grew older, he wanted to leave home and go to live in a monastery with the monk. His parents did not allow it. He left secretly with the monk. They, however, had to return due to a storm. He told his parents that he was determined to leave. His father gave him a book of the Gospel as a parting gift. In the monastery, the boy became ill since he gave away half of his food to beggars. An angel appeared in the dreams of the abbot and of Yohanán giving instructions that Yohanán should return to his parents, since he had not long to live. When he returned, he did not identify himself to his parents, who did not recognise him. Eventually, his mother identified him by the book of the Gospel he was holding and by a birth mark. He requested his mother to build a church in his name when he died.

- (1) *Mar Yoḥānan* | *brōn mālka=wewa*. | *xà brona ʔetwale malka*. |
- (2) *xa řābana ʔetwa*, | *mən deṛa ʔatēwa* | *gu d-e duktət...* ʔe *malka bəʔyāše=le*. | ʔe *brona zōra=wewa ʔaxtsa*. | ʔe *gət ʔè řābana ʔatewa*, | ʔe *brona ʔazəlwa jebu*. | *brōn mālka=wewa*. | *ʔazəlwa jèbu*. | *b-əgdade mṣaliwa*. |
- (3) *hatxa xantsa řwèle*, | *xantsa hatxa pəšle*. | *řābana gu ʔajaza ʔatewa=w pəsēwa*. | ʔe *gət řwèle*, | ʔamər *qa řābāna* | ʔana *k-ātən mənux*. | *k-ātən mənux qa dēra*. |
- (4) *babu mālke=le* | *là qabəl*. | *yəmu ʔamra*, | ʔaxni ʔàhat | *bas ʔàhat ʔətlan*. | ʔəmu | *Yoḥānan=wewa*. | ʔəmra, | ʔəmra, | ʔas ʔaxni ʔàhat ʔətan. | *pəsət šawqətan*, | *mātu k-awe?* | ʔamər, ʔəlla ʔana *k-azən mən de řābāna*. | *k-azən qa dēra*. |
- (5) *qəmlu ʔizəlu*. | *ğér dābi* | *màya ʔabriwa gu bəlam*, | *gu bəlam dābi ʔabriwa*. | *là mərə qa babu=w yəmu*, | ʔana *bizàle=wən mən řābana*. | *là mərə qatu*. |
- (6) *pəšle bərqə=w* | *məṭra=w* | *ṭòz=u* | *hawa mhursəne*. | *mār bəlam* | ʔamər, | *lèbi ʔabrən*. | ʔamər, | *lèbi ʔabrən*. | ʔamər *qa Yoḥānan*, | ʔamər, | *g-dəʔəx*. |
- (7) *dəru*. | *dəru*, | *pəšle xantsa yomàta*. | *řābana ʔamər qa Yoḥānan*, | ʔamər, ʔəgar *là [ʔa]mrət qa babux=u yəmux* | ʔana *bi-zale=wən mən də řābana*, | ʔana ʔahat *là g-nablənux*, | ʔamər *qātu*. |

(1) The story of Mar Yoḥanan. Mar Yoḥanan was the son of a king. The king had only one son.

(2) There was a monk, who used to come down from a monastery to the place where the king lived. The son was young, like this. When the monk came, the boy used to go to him. He was the son of the king. He used to go to him. They used to pray together.

(3) He grew up a little. He became this big. The monk used to come and go when he was on leave. When he (the king's son) grew up, he said to the monk 'I shall go with you. I shall go with you to the monastery.'

(4) His father was the king, he did not allow him [to go]. His mother said, 'We only have you.' His name was Yoḥanan. She said, she said, 'We have only you. How is it possible for you to go and leave us?' He said 'I insist on going with this monk. I shall go to the monastery.'

(5) They got up and went on their way. But they had to cross the water by boat, by boat they had to cross. He did not say to his father and mother, 'I am going with the monk.' He did not tell them.

(6) There was lightning, rain and dust. The air became mirky. The boat keeper said, 'I cannot cross.' He said, 'I cannot cross.' He (the monk) said to Yoḥanan, he said, 'We shall return.'

(7) They returned. They returned and after a few days the monk said to Yoḥanan, he said, 'If you don't tell your father and mother "I am going with this monk," I shall not take you [with me],' he said to him.

(8) qəmle mərə qa babu-w yəmu. | ʾamər, ʾāna | ʾabitun-u la
ʾabitun | ʾana hār k-azən mən de rābana. | ʾamər qātu, | wālūx | broni
dax k-āzət | dax šawqətan. | ʾahat pešət mālka-w | ʾātca-w. | ʾamər, ʾila
ʾana k-azən mən de rābāna, | qa dēra k-azən. |

(9) qəmle bābu, | xā ktawa ʾətwale dət hængaliyūn, | qam-yawəle
qātu. | bārgu wədwale qatu dət dəhwa. | bargu dəhwa=wewa ktawa. |
qam-yawəle qātu. |

(10) ʾdāna madam hār k-azət ʾamər, | pāqartux ʾāza hawya. | ha ʾe
ktāwa | hāwe qatux. | ktawət hængaliyun qam-yawəle qatu. |

(11) pselu ʾbəru. | ʾizəlu l-dēra. | ʾizəlu l-dēra | xantsa šəne, | xantsa
šəne wele gu dēra. |

(12) ʾixalət yawīwa qātu, | janu ʾaləmwala, | pəlgū yawəlwele qa
saxòre | pəlgū ʾaxəlwale. | wədle hadax ʾitəlu, | xantsa šəne welu gu
dēra. |

(13) max... šəklū xləple. | šəklū xləple, | m tušət mārāq-u | ʾāna
məndyane pəšle. | ʾəkmā šəne welu gu dēra | lā č-ādan | ʾəkma šəne. | ʾe
ga gu daw ktawa qarīwala. |

(8) He went and told his father and mother. He said, 'Whether you like it or not, I am going with this monk.' He (the king) said to him, 'Look here, my son, how can you go, how can you leave us? You will be a king,' and so forth. He (Yohanan) said, 'I insist on going with this monk, I shall go to the monastery.'

(9) His father had a copy of the Gospel. He gave it to him. He had made its cover of gold. The cover of the book was of gold. He gave it to him.

(10) 'But since you insist on going, I free you of any obligation.¹ Here let this book be yours.' He gave him the book of the Gospel.

(11) They set off and crossed [the river]. They went to the monastery. They went to the monastery and he stayed in the monastery for a few years.

(12) The food that they gave him—he used to do wrong to himself, he would give half of it to beggars and the other half he would eat. This is what he did. They came and stayed in the monastery for a few years.

(13) It was like... his appearance changed. His appearance changed, he suffered from illness and such things. I do not know how many years he remained in the monastery. They mentioned² that in the book at that time.

¹ Lit. may your neck be free.

² Lit. they read.

- (14) *xà yoma^l mālāxa ʿizāle l-xəlmət raʿisət dēra.^l ʿamər, ʿYohānan^l mēryele,^l gālāk là pəšlale.^l mādəre qa bēt bābu.^ʾ*
- (15) *ʿaw mālāxa ʿizāle l-xəlmət Yohānan^l qa Yohānan=iš hadax märe.^l ʿamər, ʿduṛ qa bēt bābux.^ʾ ʿlaha lele rəš gđade xəlma xzēle.^l*
- (16) *raʿisət dēra ʿāmər,^l ʿxa řābana drīle mēnu.^ʾ ʿamər, ʿizul Yohānan mādəre qa duktət jānu,^l qa bēt bābu.^ʾ*
- (17) *dəre qa bēt bābu^l lē ydiwale,^l yəmu lē ydawale.^l ʿitule l-tārət be bābu^l là märe, ʿana bronoxun=iwən.^ʾ là märe qatu brōn...^ʾ*
- (18) *ʿani-š là čādi brōnu=le.^l šəklū xlipele.^l ʿamra qa xlamāta,^l ʿmemən xa...^l dukta wòdun qatu ʿa lāxa.^l madam ʿe řābāna ʿətyele l-tāran ʿitiwele,^l hawe ʿərwanət rešət brōnan.^l*
- (19) *xa brona ʿətan ḥarūqa.^l ʿəya^l řəzqu lāxa mpilele.^ʾ mära, ʿhāwe lāxa.^ʾ mēndi d axliwa xa mēndi yawiwa qatu.^l ʿaw ʿaxəlwale ʿaw la yawəlwale qa saxòre.^l*
- (20) *həl mtəmamlu trē šəne^l wele l-tārət be babu.^l təmamlu trē...^l yaʿni pəšwale xantsa qa myàta,^l gālāk šər pəšle.^l*

(14) One day an angel appeared in a dream of the abbot of the monastery. He said, 'Yoḥanan is ill and has not long to live. Take him back to his father's house.'

(15) The Angel also appeared in a dream of Yoḥanan and said the same also to Yoḥanan. He said, 'Return to your father's house.' He saw the dream on three nights successively.

(16) The abbot of the monastery said, 'Assign a monk to be with him.' He said 'Go and take Yoḥanan back to his place, to his father's house.'

(17) He returned to his father's house. They did not recognise him. His mother did not recognise him. He sat at the door of his father's house and did not say, 'I am your son.' He did not say to them that he was their son.

(18) They likewise did not know that he was their son. His appearance had changed. She (his mother) said to the servants, 'Bring a... prepare a place for him here. Since this monk has come to sit at our door, let it be a work of charity for the sake of our son.'

(19) We have a son who is far away. Fate has it that his sustenance will be here.' She said, 'Let him stay here.' They used to give him something out of what they used to eat. He used to eat what he ate and what he did not [eat] he used to give to beggars.

(20) He was at the door of his father until two years passed. Two [years] passed, he was about to die, he had become very weak.

(21) *xà yoma[|] yəmu paltàwa[|] ʔaw ktàwa qam-xazyale gu ʔidu[|] xəra gu de ktàwa[|] qam-xazyàle[|] ʔamra, ʕe ktàwa[|] max daw ktawət ʔaxni wəlwalan qa brònan.[|]*

(22) *ʔamra, ʕmax dàwe-le.[|] ʔamra, ʕe ktàwa max daw wəlwalan qa brònan ʔe ktawa,[|] max dàwe-le,[|] ʔamra.[|] mərə qa mālka,[|] ʔamra, ʕčādət ma?[|] ʔamra, ʕe saxòra,[|] ʔe d lāxa ʔitiwe-le,[|] ʔamra, ʕa ktawa ʔət mənū,[|] ʔamra, ʕmax dāw ktawət ʔāt qa Yohànan qam-yawəte.[|]*

(23) *ʔawa=š ʔamərra,[|] ʔizolun mabrūn-ile.[|] ʔamər, ʔlèbi ʔawrən.[|] šər pəšwale.[|] mūqawāma la pəšwale,[|] quwətu xləšwala.[|]*

(24) *ʔamər qa dan gūlamwàta,[|] ʔtònun-ile[|] memun-ile ʔa lāxa.[|] qam-matìle.[|] ʔamər, ʕe ktawa mèkalux?[|] ʔamər, ʕgnàwta wide-wət?[|] naše mušəlxə-wət?[|]*

(25) *ʔamər, ʔlā gnawta wide-wən=u[|] là ...[|] ʔamər dəd jàni-le.[|] ʔamər, ʕdəd janux ʔāt mèka?[|] ʔamər, ʕbàbi wìlu-le qatì.[|] ʔamər, ʕa ma ʔāt brònan-iwət?![|]*

(26) *ʔamər qa yəmu[|] ʔamər, ʕahat brōn janax là čādāte?[|] ʔamra, ʕbà.[|] ʔamər, ʕtsə nišāne lətwale?[|] ʕbà,[|] ʔamra, ʕa šama ʔà lāxət pāqàru ʔətwā.[|] ʕa šama ʔàtxa.[|] ʔamra, ʕa lāxət pāqàru ʔətwā.[|]*

(27) *pāqàru qam-makəpla qataw.[|] ʔe šama qam-xazyàla[|] ʔidela brònaw-ile[|] qam-daryàle gu xpaqaw.[|] ʔamra, ʕmatu ʔāt ʔe trè šəne l-tāran mpìle-wət?[|] ʔamra, ʕana ... maləkta gawàye[|] ʔāt gu daya razàla bəʕyaše-wət?[|]*

(21) One day as his mother was leaving the house, she saw the book in his hands. She looked at the book and she saw it. She said, 'This book is like the book that we gave to our son.'

(22) She said, 'It is like that one.' She said, 'This book is like the one we gave to our son, it is like that one,' she said. She said to the king, she said, 'Do you know what?' She said, 'The beggar who is sitting here,' she said 'he has a book with him,' she said 'which is like the book you gave to Yoḥanan.'

(23) He then said to her, 'Go and bring him in.' He (Yoḥanan) said, 'I cannot enter.' He had become weak. He had no resistance left in him. His strength had gone.

(24) He (the king) said to the servants, 'Carry him and bring him in here.' They brought him. He said, 'Where did you get this book from?' He said 'Have you stolen it or robbed somebody?'

(25) He (Yoḥanan) said, 'I have neither stolen nor ... It is mine.' He (the king) said, 'Yours? But where did you get from?' He said 'My father gave it to me.' He said, 'Surely you are not our son?!'

(26) He said to his mother, he said, 'Do you not recognise your son?' She said, 'Yes.' He (the king) said, 'Didn't he have any marks [on his body]?' 'Yes,' she said, 'there used to be a mole right here on his neck, a mole like this.' She said, 'It was right here on his neck.'

(27) He bent his neck for her. She saw the mole. She realised that he was her son. She embraced him. She said, 'How is it possible for you to be lying at our door these two years,' she said, 'when I am a queen inside and you were living in such abject poverty?'

(28) 'amra, 'qà ma la mæru^x qatan^l 'ât brònan-iwæt?'^l 'amær, 'ana tsəhyi bālāš k-azəlwa^l 'āgar 'amrənwa bronòxun-iwən.^l 'axtòxun-iš^l g-mqahritunwa,^l tsəhyi-š bālāš k-azəlwa.^l mar tsəhyi bālāš là ['a]zəl.^l

(29) 'amær, 'bas xa wāšiya g-darən 'ə^lax.^l 'e gət mètən,^l 'amær, 'āna dzūli là šamṭātu mənī.^l 'āna dzūlāt 'ə^lli-na^l 'āna 'ə^lli hawī,^l gu dāna dzūle qawrāti.^l

(30) bas,' amær, 'xà 'eta^l 'à lāxa banyat^l gu šəmæt Yoḥānan.^l 'awdāta gu šəmæt Yoḥānan.^l 'amær, 'gu šəmæt Mar Yoḥānan 'awdāta.^l

(31) yəmu^l gālak gālak mquḥəra=w mut'əθər pəšla.^l 'amra, 'mātu 'ana^l tre šəne bronī 'əl tāraⁿ hawe npīla^l le dan bròni-le=w^l gu de rāzàlat hawe=w^l la gu xyàpa=w^l la gu qliwùta=w^l la gu tsè mändi=w.^l 'amra, 'āna ...^l yà'ni^l maxyawa l-jāna,^l mqahràwa,^l baxyàwa.^l mḥayfàwa qatu gālak.^l

(32) 'e gət mət^lle^l mtèla^l dzūlu^l qam-šamṭātu mənū.^l qam-qawṛile l-de duktət 'àwa mære.^l 'amra, 'xa 'èta g-banyan^l 'a lāxa gu šəmæt dawa.^l

(33) 'enaw... kòr pəšlu.^l 'enaw kòr pəšlu,^l 'amra zòlun^l 'amra, 'qawṛət Yoḥānan ptòxun-ila.^l 'āna jūlu šmètṭe=wan mənū,^l flan dukta mtùtu=wan.^l mālbašun=ina 'əlu.^l

(34) 'amra, 'wāšiya drewale 'ə^lli^l 'àmra^l dābi 'āna dzūle 'ə^lli hawī.^l 'amra, 'qa hādax 'eni kòr pəšlu.^l 'amra, 'mèmun^l 'āna dzūle malbāšun=ina 'əlu.^l

(28) She said, 'Why didn't you tell us you were our son?' He said, 'My toil would have been in vain, if I had told you that I am your son. You would have been sad and my toil would have been in vain. Let my toil not be in vain.'

(29) He said, 'But I shall request of you only one thing. When I die,' he said, 'do not take off these clothes from me. These clothes that are on me, let them be on me and bury me in these clothes.'

(30) But,' he said, 'build a church right here in the name of Yoḥanan. Build it in the name of Mar Yoḥanan.' He said, 'In the name of Mar Yoḥanan build it.'

(31) His mother became very sad and upset. She said, 'How could it be that when my son was lying at our door for two years, I did not know that it was my son, and he was in an abject condition, without washing or cleanliness, without anything.' She said, 'I ...' She beat herself, became sad, wept felt very sorry for him.

(32) When he died, she brought his clothes. She took them off him. They buried him in the place that he had mentioned. She said, 'I shall build a church here in his name.'

(33) Her eyes became blind. Her eyes became blind. She said, 'Go and open the grave of Yoḥanan. The clothes that I have taken off him, I have put them in such and such a place. Dress him in them.'

(34) She said, 'He left me instructions saying that these clothes should be on him.' She said 'For this reason, my eyes have become blind.' She said, 'Bring the clothes and put them on him.'

(35) 'izəlu qawru ptixâlu=w[|] 'an dzülət qam-šamṭiwalu mənū[|]
 qam-malbəšīlu 'əlu,[|] qam-qawrile.[|] xa 'èta bnèla qatū[|] l-šəmət Mar
 Yoḥānan l-ṭamma.[|] 'āya qəṣətət Mār Yoḥānan-wawa.[|]

(35) They went and opened his grave and clothed him in the clothes that they had taken off him and buried him. She built him there a church in the name of Mar Yoḥanan. This was the story of Mar Yoḥanan.

