

Now both Sayd Āqā and his son Mir Hāšem are gone, but not without a conspicuous memorial standing in Saburā's courtyard: the two-story shed in the yard of her house. Such sheds, called *nefār*, are typical for the Caspian rural houses to stack the fodder and the like above the moist ground. They serve also as a chicken coop to keep the fowls out of the reach of foxes at night. Even this ordinary structure in the courtyard is loaded with mystery in Saburā's account (Text III): after all, it is a memorial from Sayd Āqā and his son who built it. Saburā's father-in-law and husband still visit her frequently; reality and dreams are inseparable in her mind. Her memories are always with her.

The songs are those usually sung by women while working in the rice fields of the Caspian littoral. The dominant form is a quatrain (*dobeyti*) consisting of four rhyming hemistiches of eleven or twelve syllables each. The songs belong to various genres, mainly popular songs (V-IX), in which quatrains are supplemented by a recurring piece of four shorter verses. Songs X-XIII are melodically different as they are performed in the genre of *bolbol sar-e dār*, each piece of which is a quatrain followed by a couplet beginning with the phrase *bolbol sar-e dār gene* "the nightingale on the tree says". Some of the quatrains belong to the famous genre known as *amiri*, which usually begin with the prologue *Amir gete* or simply *gete* 'he would say'. Being oral in nature, the songs, *amiris* included, are extemporised freely by the singer and interpreted according to the circumstance. In this case the singer's brother and occasionally a lover are often referred. The texts conclude with a short popular song (XIV) and a lullaby (XV).

## I

1. *sizde-sāle bíme ši hākérdeme. me ši-pier, véne kafš gerdése. xā, sayyed bíte-mā.*
2. *me mār-re āl bavérde, ša:bon-e sare, me xurde-berār. ve o véne gate-pier tefeng dāštēno. ve tefeng dar hedāf—yétā ín-var-e dim, yétā ún-var-e dim. kam-kam me nenā huš bemúo xār báie.*
3. *vešun unje mére badíne. véne piér-esse biamúne xāsgār. emā rāzi náibimi. ungeder bāútene, "emā véne vére Mir Hāšem-esse xār hākenim". nenā-re sar daxétene,<sup>2</sup> bobā rāzi náie.*
4. *kam-kam men nexār báime, čeng báime. šiš mā-e temum me das haminti mis bíte. étā jā kat bíte.*

<sup>2</sup> A variant of *daketene*.

5. *éttā šō xō vímbo véne gate-pier bemúe bāúte, “váčel te čeči ε berme kéndi?” bāúteme, “berme kerdemo me pier dánio me dass-o-bāl čeng báie”. bāúte, “ve te čeči pier ε?! men te pier hásseme. me vače-e kār-re hačel níngen! me vače-re zan hádin!”*
6. *ba:d ez un, esā badíme éttā kamer-šāl déno bāúte, “intā-re hič kás-esse beruz náde! éttā xār-e jā vānni, še sar-tann-ε šūnni, te xār vóni. me vače-re zan hádin! me vače-e kār-re hačel níngenin!”*
7. *me<sup>n</sup> sevāi-sari rāss báimo badíme me sarín-sar éttā kameršāl káto. bāúteme, “nénā! éttā ō garm hákenin, me še sar-tann-ε bášurem”.*
8. *unmo:qe sābun dāni-bie. anjili-e gelām o āquz-e gelām o angir-e gelām o kenji-e gelām-re báitemo še sar-tann-ε bašósseme.*
9. *me nenā o me xāxer, Mašti Habbā, vešun ō-re bavérdene kelum-e dele. kelum éttā sulāxi dášte. vešun in sulāxi-je mére ešāne. men in kameršāl-ε baitemo ō-e dele bieštemo badíme in kameršāl-e ō sabze-mod báio. véneje še sar-tann-ε bašósseme.*
10. *me xāxer bāúte, “bóbā! nádumbe čeči ō-e dele dáre, ō sabze-var báie”. [áme pier] bāúte, “gab názen! véne ru níār! mére <sup>ε</sup>m xābnemā hākérde Āqā Dāi”.*
11. *ba:d ez in men xār báime. xār báime, me pier búrde raj o vešun gesben biārdeno aqd hākérdeno ārusi hākérdemi.*

#### SABURĀ’S MIRACULOUS RECOVERY AND MARRIAGE

1. I was 13 when I married. My father-in-law [Sayd Āqā] was endowed with miraculous powers.<sup>3</sup> After all, he was a sayyed (i.e. descendent of the Prophet).
2. [The story goes as follows.] My mother was haunted by the *āl*<sup>4</sup> when she was delivering my younger brother, Ša’bān. And the grandfather [Sayd Āqā] had a rifle. He fired his gun—once on this side of [her] face and once on the other side. Gradually, my mother regained consciousness and [eventually] recovered.
3. They [Sayd Āqā and his family] saw me there for the first time. Suitors came [to solicit me in marriage] for her father.<sup>5</sup> We were not content. Then they said: “We must match her with

<sup>3</sup> Lit. “his shoes would turn around”. It is a general belief that people with meta-physical power have the ability to rotate the shoes left at a doorway of, say, an *emānzāda*, i.e. a shrine to a minor saint.

<sup>4</sup> *Āl* is a female supernatural being believed to attack and kill a mother after she delivers a child.

<sup>5</sup> Here the informant pointed at her daughter who was listening.

Mir Hāšem". They were very demanding of the mother (lit. 'they fell on the mother's head'), [yet] the father was not content.

4. Gradually I became ill. I was paralysed. For a full six-month period my hand was clenched in a fist. I sat in a corner.
5. One night I dream[ed] that her<sup>6</sup> grandfather [i.e. Sayd Āqā] came and said: "Child! What are you weeping for?" I said: "I was weeping [because] my father was not here and my arm was paralysed". He said: "What kind of father is he to you? I am your father. Don't ruin my son's affairs! Furnish my son with a wife!"
6. After that I saw him offering [me] a cloak and he said: "Don't make this known to anyone! You will take [it] to a certain safe place, wash your head and body, [then] you will be well. Furnish my son with a wife! Don't ruin my son's affairs!"
7. I rose early in the morning and saw there was a cloak lying at my headrest. I said: "Mom! Heat up some water [so] that I can wash my head and body".
8. There wasn't any soap at that time. I took [some] leaves of fig, walnut-tree, vine, and sesame, and I washed my entire body [with them].
9. My mother and my sister, Mashti<sup>7</sup> Habbā—they brought the water into the stable. The stable had a hole [on its wall]. They would watch me through this opening. I took the cloak and placed it in the water and [then] saw that the water turned greenish. With that I washed my body thoroughly.
10. My sister said: "Father! I do not know what it is in the water [that] turned the water green". [Father] said: "Stop talking! Don't bring [it] to her attention! Āqā Dāi [i.e. Sayd Āqā] appeared in my dreams, too".
11. Afterwards I got well. [When] I recovered, my father went after [them]. They brought [a] sheep [to sacrifice], contracted for the marriage, and we had a wedding ceremony.

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<sup>6</sup> Saburā again pointed at her daughter who was Sayd Āqā's granddaughter.

<sup>7</sup> *Mašti*, or more properly *Mašhadi*, is a title carried by those who have made at least one pilgrimage visit to Mashhad in the north-eastern Persia, where the eighth Shi'ite Imam is buried.