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Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology
with a Sample of Glossed Texts

Volume II

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in collaboration with

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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* 'ətwale malka. |
- (2) *xa rābana* 'ətwa, | *mən deṛa* 'atəwa | *gu d-e duktət...* 'e malka *bə'yāše=le*. | 'e *brona zōra=wewa* 'axtsa. | 'e *gət* 'è *rābana* 'atewa, | 'e *brona* 'azəlwa *jebu*. | *brōn mālka=wewa*. | 'azəlwa *jèbu*. | *b-əgdade mşalīwa*. |
- (3) *hatxa xantsa* 'wèle, | *xantsa hatxa* pəšle. | *rābana gu* 'əjaza 'atewa=*w pāsəwa*. | 'e *gət* 'wèle, | 'amər *qa rābana* | 'ana *k-àtən mənux*. | *k-atən mənux qa dèra*. |
- (4) *babu mālke=le* | *là qabəl*. | *yəmu* 'amra, | 'axni 'àhat | *bas* 'àhat 'ətlan. | 'šəmu | *Yoḥānan=wewa*. | 'àmra, | 'àmra, | 'bas 'axni 'àhat 'ətan. | *pəsət šawqətan*, | *mātu k-awe?* | 'amər, 'əlla 'ana *k-azən mən de rābana*. | *k-azən qa dèra*. |
- (5) *qəmlu* 'izəlu. | *gér dābi* | *màya* 'abriwa *gu bālam*, | *gu bālam dābi* 'abriwa. | *là mərə qa babu=w* *yəmu*, | 'ana *bizàle=wən mən rābana*. | *là mərə qatu*. |
- (6) *pəšle bərqə=w* | *mətra=w* | *tòz=u* | *hawa mhursəne*. | *mār bālam* 'amər, 'lèbi 'abrən. | 'amər, 'lèbi 'abrən. | 'amər *qa Yoḥānan*, | 'amər, 'g-dà'rax. |
- (7) *dəru*. | *dəru*, | *pəšle xantsa yomàta*. | *rābana* 'amər *qa Yoḥānan*, | 'amər, 'əgar *là* [*a*]mrət *qa babux=u yəmux* | "ana *bi-zale=wən mən de rābana*, | 'ana 'ahat *là g-nablənux*, | 'amər *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 | bronī dax k-azət | dax šawqətan. | ʾahat pešət mālka-w | ʾatxa-w. | ʾamər, ʾila ʾana k-azən mən de rābāna, | qa dēra k-azən. |

(9) *qəmle bābu,* | xā ktawa ʾətwale dət həngaliyūn, | 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 həngaliyūn qam-yawəle qatu. |

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

(12) ʾixalət yawīwa qātu, | janu zələmwala, | pəlgu yawəlwale qa saxòre | pəlgu ʾaxəlwale. | wədle hadax ʾitəlu, | xantsa šəne welu gu dēra. |

(13) *max...* | šəklū xləple. | šəklū xləple, | m tušət mārəq-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 (Yoḥanan) 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) *xâ yoma^l mālâxa ’izæle l-xəlmət ra’isət dəra.^l ’amər, ‘Yohānan^l mār̄yēle,^l gālak là pəšlale.^l mādəre qa bēt bābu.[’]*
- (15) *’aw mālâxa ’izæle l-xəlmət Yohānan^l qa Yohānan=iš hadax mære.^l ’amər, ‘duṛ qa bēt bābux.[’] ʔlaha lele rəš gđade xəlma xzèle.^l*
- (16) *ra’isət dəra ’àmər,^l ‘xa řābana dr̄ile mənū.[’] ’amər, ‘izul Yohānan mādəre qa duktət jānu,^l qa bēt bābu.[’]*
- (17) *dəre qa bēt bābu^l lè ydiwale,^l yəmu lè ydawale.^l ’itule l-tārət be bābu^l là mære, ‘ana bronoxun=iwən.[’] là mære qatu brôn...[’]*
- (18) *’ani-š là čādi br̄onu=le.^l šəklū xlipele.^l ’amra qa xlamàta,^l ‘memən xa...^l dukta wòdun qatu ’a lāxa.^l madam ’e řābàna ’ətyele l-tārən ’itiwele,^l hawe ’ərwanət rešət br̄onan.^l*
- (19) *xa brona ’ətan ḥarūqa.^l ’əya^l řəzqu lāxa mp̄ilele.[’] mərə, ‘hàwe lāxa.[’] məndi d axliwa xa məndi yawiwa qatu.^l ’aw ’axəl̄wale ’aw la yawəl̄wale qa saxòre.^l*
- (20) *həl mtəməmlu trè šəne^l wele l-tārət be babu.^l təməmlu trè...^l ya’ni pəšwale xantsa qa myàta,^l gālak 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) *xâ yoma*[|] *yəmu paltâwa*[|] *ʔaw ktâwa qam-xazyale gu ʔidu*[|]
xəra gu de ktâwa[|] *qam-xazyâlê*[|] *ʔamra*, *ʕe ktâwa*[|] *max daw ktawət*
ʔaxni wəlwan qa brònan[|] ʔ

(22) *ʔamra*, *ʕmax dâwe-le*[|] ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕe ktâwa max daw wəlwan*
qa brònan ʔ *e ktawa*[|] *max dâwe-le*, ʔ *ʔamra*[|] *məra qa malka*[|] ʔ *ʔamra*,
ʕčādət ma? ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕe saxòra*[|] ʔ *e d lāxa ʔitiwe-le*[|] ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕa ktawa*
ʔət mənū[|] ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕmax dâw ktawət ʔât qa Yoħànan qam-yawâte*[|] ʔ

(23) *ʔawa-š ʔamərra*[|] ʔ *ʕizolun màbrun-ile*[|] ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʔlèbi ʔawrən*[|] ʔ[|]
šəṛ pəšwale[|] *mūqawāma la pəšwale*[|] *quwətu xləšwala*[|] ʔ

(24) *ʔamər qa dan gülamwàta*[|] ʔ *ʔònun-ile*[|] *memun-ile ʔa lāxa*[|] ʔ[|]
qam-matîle[|] ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕe ktawa məkalex?* ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕgnàwta wide-wət?*[|]
naše mušəlxə-wət? ʔ

(25) *ʔamər*, *ʔlā gnawta wide-wən-u*[|] *lā ...*[|] ʔ *ʔamər dəd jàni-le*[|] ʔ[|]
ʔamər, *ʕdəd janux ʔât məkə?* ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕbàbi wilu-le qatî*[|] ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕqa*
ma ʔât brònan-iwət?! ʔ

(26) *ʔamər qa yəmu*[|] ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕahat brøn janax lā čādāte?* ʔ *ʔamra*,
ʕbà[|] ʔ *ʔamər*, *ʕtsə nišàne lətwale?* ʔ *ʕbà*[|] ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕa šama ʔà lāxət*
pāqàru ʔətwā[|] *xa šama ʔàtxa*[|] ʔ *ʔamra*, *ʕa lāxət pāqàru ʔətwā*[|] ʔ

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

(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) ʿamra, ‘qà ma la mæru^x qatan^l ʿât brònan-iwæt?’^ʔ ʿamær, ‘ana tsəhyi bälāš k-azəlwa^l ʿăgar ʿamrænwa bronòxun-iwæn.^l ʿaxtòxun-iš^l g-mqahritunwa,^l tsəhyi-š bälāš k-azəlwa.^l mar tsəhyi bälāš là [ʿa]zəl.^ʔ

(29) ʿamær, ‘bas xa wāšiya g-darən ʿə^{lax}.^l ʿe gæt mètən,^ʔ ʿamær, ‘āna dzūli là šamṭātu mæni.^l ʿāna dzūlæt ʿə^{li}-na^l ʿāna ʿə^{li} hawi,^l gu dāna dzūle qawrāti.^l

(30) bas, ʿamær, ‘xà ʿeta^l ʿà lāxa banyat^l gu šəmæt Yoḥānan.^l ʿawdāta gu šəmæt Yoḥānan.^ʔ ʿamær, ‘gu šəmæt Mar Yoḥānan ʿawdāta.^ʔ

(31) yəmu^l gälak gälak mquhəra=w mutʿəθər pəšla.^l ʿamra, ‘mātu ʿana^l tre šəne bronⁱ ʿəl tāran hawe nṗila^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.^ʔ ʿamra, ‘āna ...^ʔ yàʿni^l maxyawa l-jāna,^l mqahràwa,^l baxyàwa.^l mḥayfàwa qatu gälak.^l

(32) ʿe gæt mət^{le} mtèla^l dzūlu^l qam-šamṭātu mænu.^l qam-qawrile l-de duktət ʿàwa mære.^l ʿamra, ‘xa ʿeta g-banyan^l ʿa lāxa gu šəmæt dawa.^ʔ

(33) ʿenaw... kòr pəšlu.^l ʿenaw kòr pəšlu,^l ʿamra zòlun^l ʿamra, ‘qawrət Yoḥānan ptòxun-ila.^l ʿāna jūlu šməṭṭe-wan mænu,^l flan dukta mtütu-wan.^l mälbəšun-ina ʿə^{lu}.^ʔ

(34) ʿamra, ‘wāšiya drewale ʿə^{li} ʿamra^l dābi ʿāna dzūle ʿə^{lu} hawi.^ʔ ʿamra, ‘qa hādax ʿeni kòr pəšlu.^ʔ ʿamra, ‘mèmun^l ʿāna dzūle malbəšun-ina ʿə^{lu}.^ʔ

(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-šamtiwalu mənū[|]
 qam-malbəšilu 'əlu,[|] qam-qawri[|]le.[|] xa 'èta bnèla qatū[|] l-šəmət Mar
 Yoḥānan l-ṭamma.[|] 'āya qəšətət 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.