

Vladimir Agafonov

Moscow

Tale of Two Brothers

This Soqotran tale was recorded from Fatima Salim Sho'o (ca. 19) near her family small cave at Mauna Mountain in the north-western Muri area of Soqotra island just near the airfield and the camp in 1980. Her father Salim 'Abdella Sho'o, her mother Maryam Keshen, and both of her brothers Sa'id and Sa'ad were also there. Fatima, a young clever Bedouin woman, never went to school. Here is a beginning of the tale which is very close to the famous Egyptian tale of Two Brothers from the d'Orbiney papyrus. (With English translation.)

'a'ho

1. tru 'agi ya 'tidano , ya 'tidano - 'in 'egi 'a'ho.

two men loved each other, loved each other - because the two men (are) brothers.

2. 'omar : 'ah , ninhi!

(the one of them) said: o, brother!

3. 'omar : 'a?

(the other) said: what?

4. 'omar : 'inim yi 'ezin-ki?

(he) said: what will divide us (du.)

5. 'omar : ye 'ezin-ki ? nefa 'en 'aze.

(he) said: will divide us (du.)? deed of a woman.

6. - mon - nefa 'en 'aze ? 'ep ! bidik!

who - deed of a woman? ep! (you) lied!

7. 'omar : suwa 'a' , bidik . 'in kar 'ol bidik!

(he) said: good, (I) lied! but (I) didn't lie!

8. sfer , sfer hag (1) - wa yhi ba 'al.

the man went away, went away - and he got married.

9. **'uqal , ħimi t-š d-hi 'ize** (2) , **wa d-se hag , seher-a-s** (3),
(he) left, (he) married to him(self) his wife, and her man, her brother-in-law*,

[*here "her man" is not her husband but her brother-in-law]

10. **'uqal 'iyhe ħa.**
(he) left them (du.) here.

11. **'igebe 'ize , 'igebe hag , seher-a-s.**
the woman wanted, the woman wanted the man, her brother-in-law.

12. **we seher-a-s 'ol 'igib (h)i-s.**
and her brother-in-law didn't want her.

13. **'in 'adin d-hi min ninhi,**
because (he) loved his elder brother,

14. **we ħtaram (4) (h)o-s de t-'iħteram d-hi ninhi.**
and respected her the same as his elder brother.

15. **min 'ayyat-ulla 'ime 'e d-se b-'ag gedaħ.**
one day of Allah('s days) (she) heard her man came (home).

16. **to 'ime 'e - bedare d-se ħalaq,**
once (she) heard - (she) tore her dress,

17. **bedake d-se ħanq,**
broke her necklace,

18. **bedare d-se sarwil (5) - *ša' al (6) 'aqalo.**
tore her pantaloons - made herself abandoned*.
[*proposed translation]

19. **'omero : ya' ! 'a tqab de-he ! ber ho 'aryana (7)!**
(she) said: hey you! don't enter to me! because I (am) naked!

20. **'omar : mon ta t-šige?**
(he) said: who (is) who did (it) so?

21. **'omer o : d-(h)et ninhi!**

(she) said: your brother*!

[*the same Soqotri word is used for "an elder brother" and "a brother" regardless of his age]

22. d-(h)et ninhi de t-`uqalk het `inhe de-ḥa –

your brother who left you to me here* –

[*or "with me"]

23. ṣege b-e (8) te-ne (9).

(he) made me so (now).

24. `omar : suwa`!

(he) said: good!

25. `omar : na`a , fel ho-ṣ l-iṣga-ṣ?

(he) said: now, what (is for me) to do to him for you?

26. `omere : na`a , tṣoge-ṣ , tṣoge-ṣ `inhe –

(she) said: now, (you) do to him, (you) do to him for me -

27. teqadof mo-y hed (10), teqadof mo-y hed!

cut off his hand, cut off his hand!

28. `um ba`d `ol ~ tṣoge-ṣ - tiqadof mo-y hed ~ - ṭahar.

after this, "do to him - cut off his hand," (he) went (away).

29. w-ol `ad bileq , kise min `ol yiḥaleb l-hi `ileyten,

and (he) didn't let, (he) found (him) among milking his cows.

30. ṭo kise min `ol yeḥaleb l-hi `ileyten –

once (he) found (him) among milking his cows -

31. qodof mo-y hed be sayre.

(he) cut off his hand with a knife.

32. `omar : hat ! `ol `omark ha-k?

(he) said: you! didn't (I) say (to) you?

33. biṣi d-yi`ezin-ki k-ol mere?

nothing (is) to divide us (du.) but a woman?

34. ṭahar w-ol `ad bileg - khon giṣṣes (11) ...

(he) went away and (he) didn't let - became a castrate* ...
[“castrate” is our suggested translation]

NOTES

- (1) - hag < 'ag is not a dialectal variant but a variant of the pronunciation within the same North-Western Soqotri dialect which seems to be stylistically determined
- (2) - 'iže < 'aže - see (1)
- (3) - seher-a-s = seher- + -s with additional -a-
- (4) - Arabic borrowing " 'ihtarama "
- (5) - from Arabic "sirwa:l"
- (6) - this item is not clear.
- (7) - Arabic borrowing - in Soqotri it should be " foto' o " (m. fota')
- (8) - b-e < b + ho
- (9) - te-ne < ta + na' a
- (10) - the word here ("hand") is used as a euphemism for penis.
- (11) - gisseṣ < qiṣa:ṣ Arabic law term for punishment through cutting off.

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