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The one replaced by a crow **An Amazigh tale from Eastern Kabylia** **(Tasahlit/English)**

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1. Metadata

This tale was recorded in December 2022 in Melbou (Aït Segoual confederation, Aït Bouhafan fraction, Eastern Kabylia, Algeria) by Youdas N' Saâdi Lbuhfani from his mother Tabaâmrant. It's told in Tasahlit, a northern Amazigh language, precisely in the Aït Segoual variety, called Tasegwalit, which is one of the Tasahlit dialects studied in my doctoral thesis (GARAOUN 2024).

It is a marvelous tale composed of several episodes, many of which are already known in the North African oral literature, although I have not come across a published version that closely resembles it. The recorded oral version lasts 12,35 minutes. The English translation of the story is literal. I have only taken liberties with the punctuation in certain places (placing a few commas where the storyteller has not paused) so that certain sentences remain understandable to non-Amazigh speakers.

Tasahlit is spoken in the Babor Mountains by around 200,000 people. The Tasegwalit variety is spoken along the massif's coastline, in a region of coasts, peninsulas and hills. Tasahlit is a little-described Amazigh language, belonging to the Afroasiatic phylum. Tales transcribed in Tasahlit and translated in French are available in studies by GENEVOIX (1955) for the Aït Smaïl variety, and BERKAÏ (2014) for the Aït Mhend, Aït Bouaïsi and Aït Waret Ou Ali varieties.

In the future, I hope to provide a narrative and linguistic study of this tale and a few others, to be published in the *Journal of African Languages and Literatures*.



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2. *Amdebbel ugerfiw* (original version)

Yiğğen n urgaz isae tlaṭa n lxalat, inna-yasent: “d ak°ent-bruy.” Yiğğet inna-yas: “di zṭey aḥram n sebae ayelmi.” Yiğğet: “d ak-xemmey aqettun n iḳeccaṭen n sebae yyam.” Tanniṭen tenna-yas: “d ak-dd-aruy axennic, ssyaha d ddheb ssya d lfeṭṭa.” Luxen mi dd-tenna ayen tebya i tserg-add-u, ṡarent, tiyaṭ. Ruḥent yur settut. Tenna-yasent: “asmi da byu a ru, hedṡrent.” Luxen ma s-hedṡrent, twi-dd agerfiw. D agerfiw, immut. Tcelḥa g lḥiṭ, txemm-as lemleḥ: txemm°l-a. Luxen mi ṡru, mi dd-wint-add-iṭ, lqeblyayis bac as-teqṭee tamatṭ. Twi-dd agerfiw ddaw ecṭaṭ. Bekri mi da byu a ṡru ṡmetṡuṡ ṡtasent-ed, tlaṭa, rebae n lxalat. Hedṡ a ḥṡer, iḥeṡṡer ḥaḳa. Luxen mi dd-innerna ieuq. Nettaṭ tser-sa, agerfiw-enn zzat-es, ddaw-es. Tenna-yas: “sēddimt, sēddimt, sēddimt i ṡmetṡuṡ i dd-irun agerfiw!” Aṡufan twi-yadd-u teff°r-a ddaw ecṭaṭ-is. Luxen, mi dd-isa urgaz-is, d lḡiran s lferḥ bac a yut lbaṡud. Inna-yas: “tebbehdelt-i, miyef tehdert-id ayen di dd-taruṡ-id axennic mi dd-ṡruṡ-id agerfiw.” Luxen iseqsa lxalat n ittuy ḡanna. Inna-yasent: “ameḳ dd-ṡru d agerfiw, mala teslamt i uṡufan-enn ieuq niy mala?” Nnant-as: “ya wliḡi, nesla aṡufan ieuq, mala mi dd-nezra nfa d agerfiw.” Luxen tiyaṭ ili ccan-nsent, nuḥenti sseyḡint ccan-is. ṡtett ḡa diḡ yiṡan, ṡtett seg yuyad. ṡṡewwi iyelmen, ṡṡewwi lmal. ṡanna settut-enn, teṡṡf-a aṡufan-enn, twi-ya ṡxelf tamurt.

Axennic n akayen ḡan n akayen ḡan n akayen ḡan, yur settut, n akayen ḡan yur flan, n akayen ḡanna... Luxen slan wini arrac n lḡiran: ma da leeben tteayyare°n-a. Qqaren-as: “a wan i dd-ittwabedden s ugerfiw.” Iwhem d acu wanna: “a i dd-ittwabedden s ugerfiw.” Fikul nnhar. Ḥaḳen ḥaḳen alammi d yiğğ ubrid, inna-yas: “a nanna di dd-twerriṡ-id, ani i dd-nnernaṡ?” “Xaṡ xaṡi.” Terra-yas-ed ḥaḳen dayen. “As-xemmey leḡsa, bac i dd-texb°r-id i wac i tteayyaren warrac ḥaḳa.” Isseemel d amaṡun, iṡṡes. Tenna-yas: “a mmi, ruḥ i sergeṡ lmal.” Netta iṡewwi ulli. inna-s: “ass-a ḥa zemrey a nanna ḥa zemrey maṡi.” Inna-yas: “kra ul byay a cṡey, dayen aēssid i d-issan g ul-iw.” Mi tsewway aēssid, iṡṡar-as taberrit i teyyint ani id-itewwa uēssid-enn, inna-yas: “a nanna, d acu i gellan ḡan g teyyint d aberḳan.” Inna-yas: “ḥa d aṡṡey, alma tekkeṡ-add-u.” Tenna-yas: “di dd-kks°y-add-u di dd-kks°y-add-u.” Luxent tegra afus-is ḡanna g teyyint, igra i ufus-is iṡṡf-add-i, inna-yas: “ḥa d im-bruy alma tennaṡ-id i wacu i y-iyṡan ambeddel ugerfiw.” Tenna-yas: “nekk ak-idd-iwi seg ṡmurt leflani,” tenna-yas: “baba-ḳ isea tlaṭa n lxalat luxen ibya i sent-ibru. Luxen mazal u nt-ibru. Nnant-as leayel n baba-ḳ, tenna-yas d ak-xemmey aḥram, tayeṡ xlaf tenna-yas d ak-xemmey aqettun s sebe yyam i da ṡṡef. U imma-ḳ teqqim teqqim tenna-yas d ak-dd-aruy axennic ssya d ddheb ssya d lfeṭṭa.” Inna-yas: “yax d ṡṡeḥ tberriṡeṡ.” Inna-yas: “d ṡṡeḥ ittisiṡ uqerriuy-iw.” Inna-yas: “imi da xemmey ma weṡley i yur imawlen-iw?” Inna-yas: “d ak-dd-xedmeṡ ḡaja ameḳ di weṡleṡ.” Inna-yas: “ameḳ?” Tenna-yas: “awi-ḡ uccen di dd-tawiṡ ayḡa, awi-ḡ tullat, teqqeṡ-an. Tullat, ṡamezward, uccen ḥa, uccen s deffir n tullat, ayḡa deffir wuccen. In-as ṡteddunt ṡteddunt. Ma da ḳ-anin aḥ

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‘sisisisi,’ tullat t̄amezwart, uccen s deffir, ayda s deffir wuccen. In-as: ‘sisisisi mala d kunwi leabad s ugerfiw.’ Tenna-yas: “ddu haken, ddu haken, ddu haken, alammi ma da wešet d ak-anin ayen nnekni, ayen d win.”

Luxen dda it̄edda s tejmaet i tejmaet, yaxi s tejmaet i tejmaet, tewwin kerrzen. Alammi gwešel, ifa tajmaet yur tama uxxam imawlen-is. Inna-s: “sisisisi.” Tullat t̄amezwart, uccen s deffir, ayda s deffir wuccen. Inna-yas: “sisisisi. Menhu i d imawlen n wan i dd-ittwabdellen s ugerfiw?” Ikker dan baba-s inna-s: “nekni d win a mmi, i gettwabdellen s ugerfiw.” Luxen leamek d as-ixemm, ittxemmim. Leamenhu i d settut. Inna-yas: “i kunwi.” Inna-yas: “nekni.” Inna-yas: “amek?” Inna-yas: “mala dd-tezram mala dayen i d tanayit-iw.” Inna-yas: “beddel tamurt lexber anis i dd-tekka.” Inna-s: “wiss, d tin i qeṭeent tamaṭt uṭufan, mala ḥetrent.” Inna-yas: “llant.” Inna-yas: “settut truḥ lexber-is anis i dd-tekka?” “Mala d tin i gḥetren qqarent-as.” “Ḥaḥiq, nesla-yas aṭufan itteuq mala mi nruḥ nfa d agerfiw.” Issusem. Ifa imma-s. Inna-s: “di feṭ tamettut teččur d iyuyad tusex d tin i tewwin d tgerfa, ttewwi ileymen.” Inna-yas: “d at-tafet g emkan n leflani.” Inna-yas: “rran-at d iyuyad, ttewwi ileymen, ttett d iyitan.” Inna-s: “ma d at-tafet, d ak-dd-tehder.” Tenna-yas, d tin i d issi-s. It̄edda it̄edda ifa-yat ttewwi ileymen, d imma-s beddat-ha. Ḥa eellmen-at, beṣṣeḥ tehder-as, hedren-as imma-k ttewwi ileymen. Ikka dan, ittuy-at tettru. Inna-s: “sisisisi.” Tullat t̄amezwart, uccen deffir n tullat, ayda deffir wuccen. Inna-s: “sisisisi, mala t̄ellat d tamettut i dd-irun agerfiw yak?” Tenna-yas: “nnekk a mmi.” Inna-yas: “d cemm?” Tenna-yas: “nnekk.” Inna-s: “ḥaḥiq truṭ-ed agerfiw?” Tenna-s: “ayes...” Tenna-yas: “aṭufan ieuq ma iḥbes nfa d agerfiw.” Inna-s: “ayen-hi tura tanna im-iqeblen?” Tenna-s: “lexber-is anis i dd-tekka.” Luxen, inna-yas: “xemm-as tacacit i ta.” Txemm-as ḥaka tacacit. Tenna-yas: “d ak-dd-hedrey, nnay-as d az-dd-aruy yiḡḡen s lfeṭta d ddheb.” Inna-yas: “ha aqerriy-iw.” Txedm-as tacacit ḥaka. Tegra izr-es. Luxen ḥkan-as kullec. Inna-yas: “awi-yi i uxxam-im, da ruḥey did-em.” Inna-s: “ahu da hedret, ahu da hedret, d mmi-m ay llay.” Inna-s: “yur-sent wiyat tilufa merṛa amek.” Inna-s: “ma da m-anij ul ttett kra tiyat did yitan ahu da čcet. Ma da m-anij ruḥ did iyuyad, ruḥ a tset.” Inna-s: “aqlin da ul ttaggad.”

Luxen twella-yed twi-dd ileymen. Tenna-yas: “ah a mm ileymen, mm iyuyad twella-yed i menhu i twiṭ-ed did-ney?” Tenna-s: “yiḡḡen d amsafer in-as senset-i.” Tehder amek as-ihder. Inna-s: “mreḥban did-es, leaslama, anis i truḥet?” Inna-yas: “ruḥey seg tmurt ibeēden.” Inna-s: “it̄ef-i ubrid fay tah, ttewwi ileymen, klay did-es.” Tinni xemm-n-as iyuyad. Tenna-s: “xaṭ xaṭi.” Tegguma a ruḥ. Inna-s: “nnay-am, nnan-am ruḥ, qqel i iyuyad a tan i dd-irun agerfiw.” Mi tteccan dayen inna-s: “d ṣṣeḥ tru-d agerfiw nay?” “Ay amexluq, d tamettut-a i dd-tru agerfiw.” Inna-s: “ya wliḍi a mmi, d ṣṣeḥ, recley tlaṭa n lxalat, byay asent-bruy tanha t̄enteq s lhaja, tanha t̄enteq s lhaja, tanniṭen t̄enteq s uxennic.” Inna-yas: “nekk da ruy axennic azgen d lfeṭta azgen d

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ddheb.” Inna-s: “asmi dd-tru menh at-iqeblen?” Inna-s: “tqebel-at settut.” Inna-yas: “ayen-hi tura?” Inna-yas: “ulac.” Inna-s: “kunemti d šṣeḥ tru-dd agerfiw?” Ahnant as-innan: “ih tru-dd agerfiw.” Tinni lxalat-enn. Inna-s: “ḥaḥiq tru-dd agerfiw?” Nnant-as: “yyeh ih.” Ixemm-as i baba-s ḥaḳa. Inna-s: “a mmi waqila cekk!” Igra iḟer-s luxen. Tinniḥen mmutent s lxelea, aqerḟuy aken icemmḥen. Inna-s: “cekk ay d mmi!” Inna-s: “nekk ay d mmi-k.” “Ameḳ alammi yi-twellat?” Inna-s: “d ḟebbi i dd-ixebr^en-id.” Luxen, inna-yas i yimma-s, inna-yas i baba-s: “ameḳ da cerḥet a nxemm i tinhi? amek d asent-nxemm?” “A nt-neyy, a nt-netḥef, a nt-neḡḡ i ccer, tura cekk da cerḥen cekk d imma.” Nettata tenna-yas: “xemm-asent amek ant-ittuy xeddment-i: a ḥwint a ḥṣent g yuyad a ččent d iyṭan, amek ttueeqbey di ttueeqbent.”

Taha i d taḥkayt n ambeddel ugerfiw.

3. *The one replaced by a crow* (English translation)

A man had three wives, and he said to them: “I’m going to repudiate you.” One said: “I will weave a blanket from seven sheep.” One said: “I will make a bundle of wood for seven days.” The other said: “I’m going to give you a boy, made of gold from here and silver from there.” When she said she was going to give birth, the others became jealous. So, they went to the vixen. She told them: “When she gives birth, speak up.” When she told her, she brought a crow. It was a dead crow. She had dried it on the wall, salted it and wrapped it up. When she gave birth, the other women brought in a mid-wife to cut the cord. She brought the crow under her pan. In the old days, when a woman gave birth, three or four women would come. They came to assist like this. When the child was born, he cried. The vixen put the crow in front of her, underneath her. She said: “Parade-see, parade-see, parade-see the woman who gave birth to a crow!” She grabbed the infant and hid it under her pan. Then, when the man came with his neighbours for the party to shoot the bark, he said to her: “You have disgraced me, why did you talk like that, that you’d give birth to a boy when you gave me a crow!” He questioned the women who had been present. He said to them: “How did she give birth to a crow!? Did you hear the baby crying or bawling?”

The boy was there, he was there, he was there, at the vixen’s, who was there at someone, he was over there... Then they heard them, the neighbours’ children: when they played, they laughed at him. They’d say to him, “O the one who has been replaced by a crow.” He was astonished: “Oh, O the one who has been replaced by a crow.” Every day. And so, and so, until one day, he said: “O grandmother, will you show me where I was born?” “No, no.” She answered him only like this. “I’m going to find a trick, so she can tell me why children laugh like that.” He pretended to be ill, asleep. She said: “O son, go and bring out some animals.” He used to take the

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sheep out to graze, and he said to her: “Today I can’t do it, Grandma, I can’t do it at all.” He said: “I don’t want to eat anything; my heart only wants Asida.”¹ When she was preparing Asida, he filled the pot with goat droppings and said: “O grandmother, what’s in the pot, it’s black,” he said, “I won’t eat until you take it out.” She said: “I’ll take it out, I’ll take it out.” Then she plunged her hand into the pot, he put his hand in and grabbed her and said: “I won’t let you go until you tell me why they call me ‘the one replaced by a crow’.” He said: “I brought you from the land of so-and-so,” and she said: “Your father had three wives, and then he wanted to repudiate them. But he hadn’t repudiated them yet. It is said that your father’s wife told him: ‘I’m going to make you a blanket’, another said to him: ‘I’m going to make you a bundle of wood that will last seven days’. And your mother stayed, stayed, and told him: ‘I’m going to give birth to a boy for you, made from here of gold, from there of silver’.” She said to him: “It’s true that you shine.” He said: “It’s true, my head is glittering!” He said: “How am I going to get to my parents? She said: “I’ll find out how you can reach them.” She said: “Bring a wolf, you will then bring a dog, bring a sheep, tie them up. The sheep first, the wolf here, the wolf behind the sheep, the dog behind the wolf. Tell them to come forward, come forward. When they say ‘Sisisisi’,² the sheep first, the wolf behind, the dog behind the wolf, say to them: ‘Sisisisi, are you the people with the crow?’” She says to him: “Go like this, go like this, go from there, until they tell you it’s us, then it’s them.”

Then he set off, walking from group to group, yes group to group, they were grazing and plowing. Until he arrived, he found a group next to his parents’ house. He said: “Sisisisi,” the sheep first, the wolf behind, the dog behind the wolf. He said: “Sisisisi. Who are the parents of the one who has been replaced by a crow?” Then his father stood up and said: “It’s us, O my son, who have been replaced by a crow.” Then, who knows how he was going to do it. He thought and thought. Who could the vixen be? He said: “And you?” He said: “It’s us.” He said: “How?” He said: “Have you seen, is this my only fight.” He said to him: “Change country, how did the information get through?” He says to her: “I don’t know, is she the one who cuts the infant’s cord?” “If they were the ones who attended, tell them.” “Really, when we heard the infant crying, then we went and found it was a crow.” He was silent. He found his mother. He said to her: “You’ll find a woman full of ashes, dirty, she’s the one who grazes a crow, who grazes camels.” He said to him: “You will find her in such and such a place.” He said to him: “We throw ashes at her, she makes the camels graze, she eats with the dogs.” He said: “When you find her, she’ll talk to

¹ Boiled semolina dish.

² Little formula with no literal meaning sung by the storyteller.

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you. She said: "These are his daughters." He walked and walked and found her grazing camels, exactly like his mother. They hadn't told him, but she spoke to him, they had told him that his mother was grazing camels. He passed by and she was crying. He said to her: "Sisisisi, are you the woman who brought a crow into the world?" She said: "It's me, O son." He said: "Is it you?" She said: "It's me." He said to her: "Is it true that you gave birth to a crow?" She said: "I don't know...", she said, "Where do you know that from?" Then he said: "Put a chechia³ on that one." So, she put on the chechia. She said to him: "I'll tell you what, I told him I was going to give birth to a child of silver and gold." He said: "This is my head." He put the chechia on her like this. She rushed at him. Then they told each other everything. He said: "Take me to your house, I'll go with you," he told her, "Don't talk, don't say I'm your son!" he said, "The others are full of tricks," he said, "When I tell you, don't eat with the dogs, don't eat. When I tell you to leave with the ashes, go to sleep," he said, "I'm here, don't be afraid."

Then, she went back on herding camels. She said to him: "Hey, the one with the camels, the one with the ashes is back, who did you bring to our house?" She replied: "A traveller, he asked me to sleep at my place." She told him as he had told her to say. She said to him: "Welcome to him, greetings, where are you from?" He said to her: "I come from a far-away country," he said to her, "I was taken by the length of the road. I met her who was grazing camels and spent the day with her." The others put ashes on her. She said: "No, no." She refused to leave. He said to her: "I told you they told you to go back to the ashes, O she, the one who gave birth to a crow." When they had dinner, he said: "Is it true that she gave birth to a crow?" "O creature of God, this woman has given birth to a crow." He said: "O my son, my son, it is true, I married three women, when I wished to repudiate them, one told me this, one told me that, and the other told me that she would make a boy, she said to me, 'I will give birth to a boy, half silver and half gold'." He said to him: "When she gave birth, who was it who assisted her?" He replied: "It was the vixen who gave birth to her." He said: "Where is she now?" he said, "She's not here," he said, "You, is it true that she gave birth to a crow?" Together they said: "Yes, she gave birth to a crow," them, the women. He said: "Is it true that she gave birth to a crow?" They said to him: "Yes, that's right." He did to his father like that.⁴ He said: "O my son, I believe it's you!" Then he rushed at him. The others were terrified, their faces became ugly. He said: "It's you, my son!" He replied: "I am your son." "How did you come back to me." He replied: "God told me." Then he says to his mother, he says to his father: "How am I going to make them pay? How are we

³ Type of headgear.

⁴ The storyteller made a gesture as if she was taking off the headgear.

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going to do with this one, what are we going to do to them?" "We're going to kill them, we're going to catch them, we're going to let them starve. Now I'm going to ask the price they cost to my mother." She told him: "Do to them what she did to me. They'll graze in the ashes, they'll eat with the dogs. As I was punished, they'll be punished."

This is the story of the one replaced by a crow.

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