Fieldwork material

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)

Yiǧǧen n urgaz isaɛ tlaṭa n lxalat, inna-yasent: "d ak°ent-bruɣ." Yiǧǧet inna-yas: "di zṭeɣ aḥram n sebaɛ aɣelmi." Yiǧǧet: "d ak-xemmeɣ aqettun n iḵeccaṭen n sebɛa yyam." Tanniṭen tenna-yas: "d ak-dd-aruɣ axennic, ssyaha d ddheb ssya d lfeṭṭa." Luxen mi dd-tenna ayen tebɣa i tserg-add-u, ɣarent, tiyaṭ. Ṛuḥent ɣur settut. Tenna-yasent: "asmi da bɣu a ru, heḏṛemt." Luxen ma s-heḏṛent, twi-dd agerfiw. D agerfiw, immut. Tcelḥ-a g lḥiṭ, txemm-as lemleḥ: txemmᵉl-a. Luxen mi ṭru, mi dd-wint-add-iṭ, lqebla-yis bac as-teqṭeɛ tamaṭṭ. Twi-dd agerfiw ddaw ecṭaṭ. Beḵri mi da bɣu a ṭru ṭmeṭṭuṭ ttasent-ed, tlaṭa, rebɛa n lxalat. Ḥedd a ḥṭer, iḥeṭṭer haḵa. Luxen mi dd-innerna iɛuq. Nettaṭ tsers-a, agerfiw-enn zzat-es, ddaw-es. Tenna-yas: "sɛeddimt, sɛeddimt, sɛeddimt i ṭmeṭṭuṭ i dd-irun agerfiw!" Aṭufan twi-yadd-u teffᵉr-a ddaw ecṭaṭ-is. Luxen, mi dd-isa urgaz-is, d ljiṛan s lferḥ bac a yut lbaṛud. Inna-yas: "tebbehdelṭ-i, miɣef tehḏeṛṭ-id ayen di dd-taruṭ-id axennic mi dd-truṭ-id agerfiw." Luxen iseqsa lxalat n ittuy ḏanna. Inna-yasent: "ameḵ dd-tru d agerfiw, mala teslamt i uṭufan-enn iɛuq niɣ mala?" Nnant-as: "ya wliḏi, nesla aṭufan iɛuq, mala mi dd-neẓra nfa d agerfiw." Luxen tiyaṭ ili ccan-nsent, nuhenti sseɣlint ccan-is. Ttett ḏa diḏ yiṭan, ttett seg ɣuɣad. Ṭṭewwi iɣelmen, ṭṭewwi lmal. Ṭanna settut-enn, teṭṭᵉf-a aṭufan-enn, twi-ya txelf tamurt.

Axennic n aḵayen ḏan n aḵayen ḏan n aḵayen ḏan, ɣur settut, n aḵayen ḏan ɣur flan, n aḵayen ḏanna… Luxen slan wini arrac n ljiṛan: ma da lɛeben ttɛayyaṛᵉn-a. Qqaṛen-as: "a wan i dd-ittwabeddlen s ugerfiw." Iwhem d acu wanna: "a i dd-ittwabeddlen s ugerfiw." Fikul nnhaṛ. Haḵen haḵen alammi d yiǧǧ ubrid, inna-yas: "a nanna di dd-tweṛṛiṭ-id, ani i dd-nnernaɣ?" "Xaṭ xaṭi." Ṭerra-yas-ed haḵen dayen. "As-xemmeɣ lɛefsa, bac i dd-texbᵉṛ-id i wac i ttɛayyaren warrac haḵa." Isseɛmel d amaṭun, iṭṭes. Tenna-yas: "a mmi, ṛuḥ i sergeṭ lmal." Netta iṭewwi ulli. inna-s: "ass-a ḥa zemreɣ a nanna ḥa zemreɣ maṭi." Inna-yas: "ḵra ul bɣaɣ a ččeɣ, dayen aɛessid i d-issan g ul-iw." Mi tsewway aɛessid, iččar-as taberrit i teyyint ani id-itewwa uɛessid-enn, inna-yas: "a nanna, d acu i gellan ḏan g teyyint d aberḵan." Inna-yas: "ḥa d aččeɣ, alma tekkesṭ-add-u." Tenna-yas: "di dd-kksᵉɣ-add-u di dd-kksᵉɣ-add-u." Luxent tegra afus-is ḏanna g teyyint, igra i ufus-is iṭṭᵉf-add-i, inna-yas: "ḥa d im-bruɣ alma tennaṭ-id i wacu i y-iɣṛan ambeddel ugerfiw." Tenna-yas: "nekk aḵ-idd-iwi seg tmurt leflani," tenna-yas: "baba-ḵ isɛa tlaṭa n lxalat luxen ibɣa i sent-ibru. Luxen mazal u nt-ibru. Nnant-as lɛayel n baba-ḵ, tenna-yas d aḵ-xemmeɣ aḥram, tayeṭ xlaf tenna-yas d aḵ-xemmeɣ aqettun s sebɛ yyam i da ṭṭef. U imma-ḵ teqqim teqqim tenna-yas d aḵ-dd-aruɣ axennic ssya d ddheb ssya d lfeṭṭa." Inna-yas: "yax d ṣṣeḥ tbeṛṛqeṭ." Inna-yas: "d ṣṣeḥ ittisiq uqeṛṛuy-iw." Inna-yas: "imi da xemmeɣ ma weṣleɣ i ɣur imawlen-iw?" Inna-yas: "d aḵ-dd-xeḏmeɣ lḥaja ameḵ di weṣleṭ." Inna-yas: "ameḵ?" Tenna-yas: "awi-d uccen di dd-tawiṭ ayḏa, awi-d ṭullat, ṭeqqenṭ-an. Ṭullat, ṭamezwart, uccen ha, uccen s deffir n tullat, ayḏa deffir wuccen. In-as tteddunt tteddunt. Ma da ḵ-anin ah

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'sisisisi,' ṭullat ṭamezwart, uccen s deffir, ayḏa s deffir wuccen. In-as: 'sisisisi mala d ḵunwi lɛabad s ugerfiw'." Tenna-yas: "ddu haḵen, ddu haḵen, ddu haḵen, alammi ma da weṣleṭ d aḵ-anin ayen nneḵni, ayen d win."

Luxen dda iṭedda s tejmaɛt i tejmaɛt, yaxi s tejmaɛt i tejmaɛt, ṭewwin ḵerrzen. Alammi gweṣel, ifa tajmaɛt ɣur tama uxxam imawlen-is. Inna-s: "sisisisi." Ṭullat ṭamezwart, uccen s deffir, ayḏa s deffir wuccen. Inna-yas: "sisisisi. Menhu i d imawlen n wan i dd-ittwabeddlen s ugerfiw?" Ikker ḏan baba-s inna-s: "neḵni d win a mmi, i gettwabeddlen s ugerfiw." Luxen lɛameḵ d as-ixemm, ittxemmim. Lɛamenhu i d settut. Inna-yas: "i ḵunwi." Inna-yas: "nneḵni." Inna-yas: "ameḵ?" Inna-yas: "mala dd-teẓram mala dayen i d tanaɣit-iw." Inna-yas: "beddel tamurt lexbeṛ anis i dd-tekka." Inna-s: "wiss, d tin i qeṭɛent tamaṭṭ uṭufan, mala ḥeṭrent." Inna-yas: "llant." Inna-yas: "settut truḥ lexber-is anis i dd-tekka?" "Mala d tin i ghetren qqaṛent-as." "Ḥaqiq, nesla-yas aṭufan ittɛuq mala mi nṛuḥ nfa d agerfiw." Issusem. Ifa imma-s. Inna-s: "di feṭ tameṭṭuṭ teččur d iɣuɣad tusex d tin i ṭewwin d tgerfa, ṭṭewwi ileɣmen." Inna-yas: "d at-tafeṭ g emḵan n leflani." Inna-yas: "rran-at d iɣuɣad, ṭṭewwi ileɣmen, ttett d iyiṭan." Inna-s: "ma d at-tafeṭ, d aḵ-dd-tehḏer." Tenna-yas, d tin i d issi-s. Iṭedda iṭedda ifa-yat ṭeṭewwi ileɣmen, d imma-s beddat-ha. Ḥa ɛellmen-at, beṣṣeḥ tehḏᵉr-as, hedren-as imma-ḵ ṭṭewwi ileɣmen. Ikka ḏan, ittuɣ-at ṭettru. Inna-s: "sisisisi." Ṭullat ṭamezwart, uccen deffir n ṭullat, ayḏa deffir wuccen. Inna-s: "sisisisi, mala ṭellaṭ d tameṭṭuṭ i dd-irun agerfiw yak?" Tenna-yas: "nnekk a mmi." Inna-yas: "d cemm?" Tenna-yas: "nnekk." Inna-s: "ḥaqiq truṭ-eḏ agerfiw?" Tenna-s: "ayes..." Tenna-yas: "aṭufan iɛuq 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 ṭacacit i ta." Txemm-as haḵa tacacit. Tenna-yas: "d aḵ-dd-hedṛeɣ, nnaɣ-as d az-dd-aruɣ yiǧǧen s lfeṭṭa d ddheb." Inna-yas: "ha aqeṛṛuy-iw." Txeḏm-as tacacit haḵa. Tegra iẓr-es. Luxen ḥkan-as kullec. Inna-yas: "awi-yi i uxxam-im, da ṛuḥeɣ diḏ-em." Inna-s: "ahu da hedṛeṭ, ahu da hedṛeṭ, d mmi-m ay llaɣ." Inna-s: "ɣur-sent wiyaṭ ṭilufa meṛṛa ameḵ." Inna-s: "ma da m-aniɣ ul ttett ḵra tiyaṭ diḏ yiṭan ahu da ččeṭ. Ma da m-aniɣ ṛuḥ diḏ iɣuɣad, ṛuḥ a ṭṭseṭ." Inna-s: "aqlin da ul ttaggad."

Luxen twella-yeḏ twi-dd ileɣmen. Tenna-yas: "ah a mm ileɣmen, mm iɣuɣad twella-yed i menhu i twiṭ-ed diḏ-neɣ?" Tenna-s: "yiǧǧen d amsafer in-as senset-i." Tehḏᵉṛ ameḵ as-ihḏeṛ. Inna-s: "mreḥban diḏ-es, lɛaslama, anis i truḥeṭ?" Inna-yas: "ṛuḥeɣ seg tmurt ibeɛden." Inna-s: "iṭṭᵉf-i ubrid faɣ tah, ṭṭewwi ileɣmen, ḵlaɣ diḏ-es." Tinni xemmᵉn-as iɣuɣad. Tenna-s: "xaṭ xaṭi." Ṭegguma a ṛuḥ. Inna-s: "nnaɣ-am, nnan-am ṛuḥ, qqel i yiɣuɣad a ṭan i dd-irun agerfiw." Mi ttɛeccan dayen inna-s: "d ṣṣeḥ tru-d agerfiw naɣ?" "Ay amexluq, d ṭameṭṭuṭ-a i dd-tru agerfiw." Inna-s: "ya wliḏi a mmi, d ṣṣeḥ, recleɣ tlaṭa n lxalat, bɣaɣ asent-bruɣ ṭanha ṭenṭeq s lḥaja, ṭanha ṭenṭeq s lḥaja, ṭanniṭen ṭenṭeq s uxennic." Inna-yas: "nekk da ruɣ axennic azgen d lfeṭṭa azgen d

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ddheb." Inna-s: "asmi dd-tru menh at-iqeblen?" Inna-s: "tqebl-at settut." Inna-yas: "ayen-hi tura?" Inna-yas: "ulac." Inna-s: "ḵunemti d ṣṣeḥ tru-dd agerfiw?" Ahnant as-innan: "ih tru-dd agerfiw." Ṭinni lxalat-enn. Inna-s: "ḥaḥiq tru-dd agerfiw?" Nnant-as: "yyeh ih." Ixemm-as i baba-s haḵa. Inna-s: "a mmi waqila cekk!" Igra iẓer-s luxen. Tinniṭen mmuṭent s lxelɛa, aqerṛuy aḵen icemmṭen. Inna-s: "cekk ay d mmi!" Inna-s: "nekk ay d mmi-ḵ." "Ameḵ alammi yi-twellaṭ?" Inna-s: "d ṛebbi i dd-ixebrᵉn-id." Luxen, inna-yas i yimma-s, inna-yas i baba-s: "ameḵ da cerṭeṭ a nxemm i tinhi? ameḵ d asent-nxemm?" "A nt-neɣɣ, a nt-neṭṭef, a nt-neǧǧ i ccer, ṭura cekk da cerṭen cekk d imma." Nettaṭa tenna-yas: "xemm-asent ameḵ ant-ittuɣ xeddment-i: a ṭwint a ṭṭsent g ɣuɣad a ččent d iyiṭan, ameḵ ttuɛeqbeɣ di ttuɛeqbent."

Taha i d taḥḵayt 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

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[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 chechia[3] 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

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[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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