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BISMILLA

This Soqotran folklore tale was recorded from Sa'ad al-Keshri, a citizen of Qalansiya, the second town of Soqotra, while he was studying in At-Tiwahi (Aden) in 1979-80. The tape-recorded text was then transcribed by me with Sa'ad's kind help. The text is presented as it was told orally - with some repetitions and slips in the narrator's speech. [Ed. note: Part Two of this tale is continued in the Winter, 2007, issue.]

Bismilla

1) kana ṭru mutṣaḥibi

there were two friends

2) ṭaharo ṭoy yom, ḍomor ṭot,

(they) went one day, one (of them) said:

3) ḍomor: yo qaqa! ṭal ṭa-ḵ na-a 1-ḵihiro?

(he) said: O, brother! Don't you want now to go?

4) l-itmaššiyō 1-ḥa, 1-ḵihiro 1-ḥa

to take a walk here, to go here

5) kar de ḥadib d-ḥa diš bi digdege?

up to this place that (is) here on this plain?

6) ḍomor: ṭik! ṭaharo.

(he) said: (I) want. (they two) went.
7) min 'a{l y’ado ḥa, 'omor ṭoṭ...

when (they two) were going here, the one said ... (1)

8) gedah rah ....

the wind has come.

9) 'omor ṭoṭ ... 'isra' ḥadib ... 'omor: bismilla!

the one said... (2) the place disappeared. (he) said: bismilla!

10) 'omor: tinqana' mo-k niye!

(he) said: your mind went mad!

11) ta'amir "bismilla" - diya' "bismilla"

you says: bismilla! bad is bismilla!

12) la-'eder mo-k 'alla 'ed!

Alla save your life!

13) 'omor: "bismilla" diye!

(he) said: bismilla is good!

14) 'omor: la', diya' "bismilla"

(he) said: no, bad is bismilla!

15) 'omor: b-inhem 'inhi 'indark

(he) said: what do you stake for me

16) keremo diye "bismilla"?
when \textit{bismilla} is good?

17) \textit{omor}: \textquote{erimmo (\textquote{enimmo}) diya \textquote{bismilla}}

(he) said: if \textit{bismilla} is bad

18) \textit{indark ha-k}: raqah min-e \textquote{eni},

I stake for you: (you will) take out my two eyes,

19) wa tige\textquoteright{sel} min-e hid\textacute{e},

and break my two arms,

20) wa tige\textquoteright{sel} min-e \textquote{cir\acute{e}on}!

and break my legs!

21) \textit{omor}: wa het?

(he) said: and you?

22) \textit{omor}: wa ho, \textquote{erimmo diye \textquote{bismilla}} -

(he) said: and I, if good (is) \textit{bismilla},

23) \textit{endark ha-k} min-e \textquote{b-\acute{e}yni},

(will) stake from me to you my two eyes,

24) wa min-e \textquote{b-yidi}, wa min-e \textquote{b-\acute{e}r\acute{e}on}!

and my two arms, and my legs!

25) \textquote{tah\acute{e}yro, \textquote{ado}, min \textquote{al yi\textquote{ado}}} -

(they two) went, walked. when have been walking

26) kseyo \textquote{t\textacute{o}t} di... gin(n)
(they two) met one... Jinn.

27) ginn ye’amer: diya’ “bismilla”!

the Jinn says (3): bad (is) bismilla! (4)

28) ’amero: ’e ginn!.. ’amero: ’e šuḥar!

(they two) said: O, Jinn... (5) O, man!

29) ši ḥa le-ḥa , šinidırki ḥa:

there is something with us, we two have bet:

30) d-yo qaqa ye’omer: diye ”bismilla”!

my brother says: good (is) bismilla!

31) wa ho ’a’amer: dyah ”bismilla”!

and I say: bad (is) bismilla!

32) ginn ’omar: ”bismilla” di’!

the Jinn said: bismilla (is) bad!

33) diya’ ”bismilla”!

bad (is) bismilla!

34) ’omar: diya’ ”bismilla”? 

(he) said: (is) bismilla bad?

35) ’omar: diya’ ”bismilla”!

(he) said: bad (is) bismilla!
36) ṯāḥar, ʿomar: naʿa qaqa

(he) went, (he) said: now, brother,

37) ʾik (h)a-k tzaʾa th-o l-ḥa-na diš šegara d-buk

I want you to take me now to this tree (that is) there

38) diš ʾot d-buk

this doom-tree (6) (that is) there

39) wa tigešel min-e ʾirʾon, wa raqah min-e ʾeyny !

and to break my legs, and to take out my two eyes.

40) ʾomar: hey! zaʾe-š l-ḥa-ne šegara.

(he) said: hey, (he) took him up to the tree

41) wa fone, dunya fone tinaffed d-si ʾindar.

and once upon a time, people once upon a time fulfilled their promise.

42) ʾal ʿad yisober yhi.

he didn't stay waiting.

43) ʾirqah ʿa-y ʾeyny, wa gīšel ʿa-y hidī,

(he) took out his two eyes and broke his two arms,

44) wa gīšel mo-y širhon -

and broke his legs -

45) ʾeqal (h)-iy buk naʾa.

abandoned him there now.
46) gedah 'esfar bi-lilhe, gedah me-san 'esfar...

there came birds at night, came some birds.

47) me-san di 'ad ši kuketen.

some of them are - doves.

48) 'omero toy 'esfiro, 'omero: 'ah qaqa!

one (f.) bird said, (she) said: o, sister!

49) l-'am 'ino na'a tōt 'uwher

if there is now one blind

50) wa ze' e di' r diš min šegara d-ḥa,

and (he) took blood of this tree that (is) here

51) 'omar ta d-hi b-'eyni - yiṭorif d-hi 'eyni!

and made so to his two eyes - his two eyes will be cured.

52) 'omero toy: 'ah qaqa! l-'am 'ino tōt

the one (f.) said: o, sister! if there is one

53) gišel mo-y hed wa 'omer d-ye di hed,

his arm has been broken - and made to his arm (7)

54) 'omer (h)-is ḥa l-ḥa-ne di ḥoyhi

made to it (f.) now this earth now

55) l-ḥa-na diš šegara d-ḥa -
of this tree that (is) here -

56) tširáqah he-y d-i hed!

his arm will be corrected (will go out)!

57) 'omero òuy: qaqa! l-àm 'ino òot gišel šir' on

the one (f.) said: sister! if there (is) one his legs (are) broken

58) wa qodof diš min šegara d-ḥa,

and broke off from this tree that (is) here

59) wa 'irqah mo-s dí'r - 'omar d-i d šir' on -

and the blood went out from it - made it to his legs -

60) tširáqah (tšaqah) ha-y d-hi šir' on!

his legs will be corrected (will go out)!

61) 'ima šuḥar.

the man heard.

62) loṭ 'ima šuḥar, 'amor te-n' a.

when the man heard, made so now (immediately).

63) 'amor d-hi 'eyni, 'amor te d-ḥoyhi, 'amor...

made to his two eyes (8), made with earth, made...

64) 'am qadom.

until saw.

65) 'amor te d-hi di hidi,
made so to his two arms

66) ʾamor hi l-ḥa-ne ḫoyhi d-šegara,

he made this now earth of the tree

67) wa ʾamor mo-s ...

and (he) made from it ...

68) wa šiṭo mo-s ṭoy, wa qoṭof šegara,

and felt a smell from it and broke off (from) the tree

69) ʾamor h-i širʿon.

(he) made to himself legs.

70) wa šiqah te d-hi širʿon wa d-hi ʾeyni.

and so were his legs and his two eyes corrected (went out).

71) w-osbāḥ yiʿaber d-i b ʾeyni,

and (he) became seeing by [could see out of] his two eyes,

72) wa yuʿud d-hi b širʿon,

and going by his legs,

73) wa yiti d-hi b hidi.

and eating by his two arms.

74) ʾam tšabāḥ - ʾšalef,

when it become morning - (he) left.
75) ʂise (kise?) d-i qaqa, d-i ʂaᦤab di d-fona
   (he) found his brother (friend), that friend that (was) that time.

76) kse-s (š) tɔy be 'obher min 'al ye'amer:
   (he) found him near a well saying:

77) 'igib riyho, ʈimik.
   I want (some) water, I have a thirst [am thirsty].

78) ʈime, wa bɪsi mɪsiyo d-'ɔmar bi-s riyho.
   he had a thirst, but there (was) no pail wich is made water by it.

79) 'ɔmar: qaqa, het na'a?!
   (he) said: brother, (it is) you now?

80) 'ɔmar: qaqa! 'ifol ta qhon?
   (he) said: brother, how it was?

81) mon d-'ɪrqah ha-k d-et 'eyni?
   who corrected (made out) you your two eyes?

82) mon d-kole ha-k d-et ʂir'on wa d-et hidi?
   who cured you your legs and your two arms?

83) 'ɔmar: ho, 'iḥamdu-lilla!
   (he) said: I, 'il-hamdu-lilla!

84) 'al ta'amer fona "bismilla" diya'?! 
   havn't you been saying that time bismilla (is) bad?!
85) diye "bismilla"!

good (is) bismilla!

86) ḍūmar: qetnaḥ ḍenhi di-ho hidi wa di-ho šir’on.

returned to me my two arms and my legs

87) ḍūmar: mon d-kole ha-k?

(he) said: who cured (they) for you?

88) ḍūmar: ḍal ʿodola’ ha-k!

(he) said: I will not tell you!

89) ḍūmar: ʿel-ḥaseel - diye "bismilla"!

(he) said: the result (8) (is) bismilla (is) good!

90) ḍūmar: heyya!

(he) said: let it be.

91) ḍūmar: w-al ḍak taʿd (h)i-ki d-riyho,

(he) said: and don't (you) want to go upon water for us (du.),

92) kūr diye "bismilla"?

if bismilla (is) good?

93) ḍūmar: ʿaʿod (h)i-ki d-riyho.

(he) said: I (will) go upon water for us (du.)!

94) ṭahar, qufod b-qeyd,
(he) went, came down by a cord.

95) qufod bi qeyd yiʿamer (h)i-hi rīho.

(he) came down by a cord to make for them (du.) (some) water.

96) qufod b-qeyd...

(he) came down by a cord ...

97) ṣam yeʿaraḥ d-geme, ṣomar: bismilla!

when (he) comes down, (he) said bismilla!

98) ṣomar: hayye! taʿomer “bismilla”!?

(he) said: hey, (you) say bismilla!?

99) t iqofod d-geme!

(you) are coming down!

100) ḍebhad he-y, ḍaf yiṭoreb d- ḍebher,

(he) waited for him, until (he) gets down into the well,

101) yella, qoṣ ṣe-y qeyd.

hey, (he) cut his cord.

102) qoṣ qeyd d-izʿem šuḥar buk naʿa.

(he) cut the cord (which) the man was sitting on it there now.
NOTES:

(1) and (2) the right order of events should be as follows: “when (they two) were going here, the wind came, the place disappeared, the one said, (he) said: bismilla!”

(2) and (4) and (5) the story-teller is in a hurry: the two men didn’t know that the man they met is a Jinn. He was “a man” for them.

(6) in Arabic

(7) “hed” (sg.) ia an arm in Qalansian and North Western dialects of Soqotri. In Hadebo it is “*ed”.

(8) The informant made a plot mistake: it should be a blood of the tree not the earth of it be made to the eyes.

FREE TRANSLATION

Bismilla

There were two friends. One day one of them said: “Hey, brother! Do you want (us) to go for a walk?! To that place on this plain?!” “Yes, I do”, this friend said. They went. When they went the strong wind came and the whole place disappeared.

“Bismilla!” said the one. “What do you say?!” asked his friend, “Your mind went mad! Bismilla is bad! Alla save your life!”

“Bismilla is good!” the first friend said. “No. It’s bad!” the second said, “what will you stake when bismilla is good?” “If bismilla is bad you will take off my eyes, and break my arms and my legs,” the friend said. And you?” “And I too, if bismilla is good, will give you my eyes, and my arms, and my legs to do the same,” the other friend said.

They went walking and met a man who really was a Ginn. “Hey, man!” they said to him, “there is a dispute between us. One of us says: bismilla is good and the other said it is bad...”

“The Ginn said: “Bismilla is bad! Bad!” “Bad?” they asked one more time. “Yes, bad!” the Ginn said again.

“Now,” the first friend said, “I want you to take me to that doom-tree there and take off my eyes, break my arms and legs!” That time the people kept their promises.

“Yes,” the second friend said. They went to that tree and there he took off his friend’s eyes, broke his friend’s arms and legs, left him there and went away.

In the night there came dove-birds. The first of them said: “O, sisters! If there was a blind man and take a little blood of this tree – his eyes will recover.” The second said: “O, sisters! If there was one with broken arm and make the earth from around this tree to his arm – his arm will recover.” And the third said: “O, sisters! If there was one with broken leg and make a little blood (1) of this tree to his leg – his leg will recover.”

The man heard all this and made as the birds said. He put his arms to the earth at the foot of the tree and they returned as they had been. He broke the bark of the tree and made its blood to
his eyes – and they returned to see. Then he made its blood (1) to his broken legs – and his legs returned to walk in full health.

In the morning he went away but soon he met his friend which he called “brother” sitting by the well. He was thirsty but there was no leather pail to take some water from it. “Brother, it is you now?!” he asked. “How could it be? Who returned you your eyes, and your arms, and your legs?”

“I would not tell you,” the first friend said. “The result is – bismilla is good!” “Hey, I am thirsty,” the second friend said, “would you like to get down to take for us some water from the well when bismilla is good?!” “Yes, I would,” the first friend said. He came down by the cord to the bottom of the well and said: “Bismilla!”

“Yes, do you say bismilla ?!” his friend said. He saw his friend is at the bottom of the well – and cut the cord...

Notes:

(1) From the formal logic the “blood” of the tree should be for eyes and the “bark” (or something else relating to the tree) for legs. Although in the original text the “blood” is for treating the both.