

Lesson 62

Translation 9

This is a Nativity story from Mary’s perspective, and is the first story ever written in Láadan. It was written, of course, by Suzette Haden Elgin. Reportedly, it was published in the Fall of 1982 in the journal *Women and Language News*; Suzette Haden Elgin states:

The story may well have been published in other places without my having been notified. It would be safe to use the Fall 1982 citation and to add the customary “Suzette has no information in her records on the publication history of this story.”

A few small grammatical errors have been corrected, so have fun sleuthing for them if you find this story elsewhere.

On the other hand, several archaic case endings and other forms *remain* un-updated; this is one of the older texts in respect of which the archaic forms have been presented throughout these lessons.

Vocabulary

- éde nevertheless
- rathóo non-guest: someone who comes to visit knowing perfectly well that they are intruding and causing difficulty [ra- (NON) + thóo (guest)]
- wée cry (of babies)
- womil livestock
- womilá shepherd [womil (livestock) + -á (DOER)]

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Your English Translation

Wóoban Méri Batha

E: _____

Bíide eríli wóoban with wemaneya wáa. Wóoban bi áwithid i ban bi zhath "Zheshu" áwithidedi wáa. Shi áwithid bith, i di bi eba bithodi, "Bíili, bre aril tháa ra áwithehóo, ébre aril míi le!"

E: _____

Id—bishibenal—menosháad womilá menedebe i noline menedebe i wothidá nedebe wáa. Medi, "Bóo aril meláad len áwithideth oyinan lu."

E: _____

Bíide di with biyóodi, "Wulh hath áwitheláadewan! Methi ra bash i methi ra shall!"—i loláad bi ílhith. Izh di bi "Wil sha" zonal: "Bóo mesháad nen i meláad."

E: _____

Yide áwithid Zheshu i lili be wi. Nawée be i nówée be. Éde benem mélhewith. Lith with "Raláadá menedebe!"

E: _____

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Suzette's English Translation with Morpheme-by-Morpheme Analysis

Wóoban Méri Batha

Wóoban Méri Batha

GIVEBIRTH MARY XLOVE1(THIRD PERSON, SINGULAR, BELOVED) + POSSBIRTH

The Birth-Giving of Mary the Beloved

Bíide eríli wóoban with wemaneya wáa. Wóoban bi áwithid i ban bi zhath "Zheshu" áwithidedi wáa. Shi áwithid bith, i di bi eba bithodi, "Bíili, bre aril tháa ra áwithehóo, ébre aril míi le!"

Bíide eríli wóoban with wemaneya wáa. Wóoban bi
DECL + NARR FARPAST GIVEBIRTH PERSON WINTER + TIME TRUSTED GIVEBIRTH XHON1

áwithid i ban bi zhath "Zheshu" áwithidedi wáa.
INFANT + PERSON AND GIVE XHON1 NAME + OBJ JESUS BABY + MASC + GOAL TRUSTED = BABY + MASC

Shi áwithid bith, i di bi eba bithodi,
TOPLEASE BABY + MASC XHON1 + OBJ AND SPEAK XHON1 SPOUSE XHON1 + POSS + GOAL

"Bíili, bre aril tháa ra áwithehóo, ébre aril míi le!"
DECL + LOVE IF... FUT THRIVE NEG BABY + FOCUS ...THEN FUT BEAMAZED I

Long ago, a woman gave birth in the wintertime. She had a baby boy, and she named him "Jesus." The baby pleased her, and she said to her spouse, "If this baby doesn't do well, I'll be very surprised!"

Id—bishibenal—menosháad womilá menedebe i noline menedebe i wothidá nedebe wáa. Medi, "Bóo aril meláad len áwithideth oyinan lu."

Id —bishibenal— menosháad womilá
ANDTHEN BESUDDEN + MANN PL + FINISH + COMEGO = ARRIVE LIVESTOCK + DOER = SHEPHERD

menedebe i noline menedebe i wothidá nedebe wáa.
#>5 AND ANGEL #>5 AND WISDOM + MASC + DOER #2-5 TRUSTED

Medi, "Bóo aril meláad len áwithideth oyinan lu."
PL + SPEAK REQ FUT PL + PERCEIVE WE>5 BABY + MASC + OBJ EYE + INSTR PLEASE

And then—suddenly—there arrived many shepherds, many angels, and several wise men. They said, "May we please see the baby?"

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Bíide di with biyóodi, "Wulh hath áwitheláadewan! Methi ra bash i methi ra shall!"—i loláad bi ílhith. Izh di bi "Wil sha" zhoneal: "Bóo mesháad nen i meláad."

Bíide di with biyóodi, "Wulh hath áwitheláadewan!
DECL + NARR SPEAK PERSON XHON1 + REFLX + GOAL SUCHA... + PEJ TIME BABY + PERCEIVE + PURP

Methi ra bash i methi ra shall! —i loláad bi
PL + HAVE NEG COMMONSENSE AND PL + HAVE NEG MANNERS AND PERCEIVEINT XHON1

ílhith. Izh di bi "Wil sha" zhoneal: "Bóo mesháad
DISGUST + OBJ BUT SPEAK XHON1 OPTV HARMONY SOUND + MANN = ALOUD REQ PL + COME GO

nen i meláad."
You>5 AND PL + PERCEIVE

"What a horrible time for a baby-viewing!" the woman said to herself. "They have no common sense and no manners!"—and she was disgusted. But aloud she said, "Please, come and see."

Yide áwithid Zheshu i lili be wi. Nawée be i nówée be. Éde benem mélhewith. Lith with "Raláadá menedebe!"

Yide áwithid Zheshu i lili be wi. Nawée be i nówée be.
BEHUNGRY BABY JESUS AND BEWET X1 SELFEVID BEGIN X1 AND CONT X1 + MALE + CRY

Éde benem mélhewith. Lith with "Raláadá menedebe!"
NEVERTHELESS STAY CROWD + PEJ THINK PERSON NON + PERCEIVE + DOER #>5

As would be obvious to any thinking person, the Baby Jesus was hungry and wet. He started crying, and he kept on crying. Nevertheless, the crowd stayed on. "What a lot of blind, deaf, dumb, thick-headed creatures!" the woman thought.

I lámála with áwithideth i náluth beth. Bíid mesháad hath i mesháad hath. Doól di with biyóodi, "Bóo melith nen woho! Bíi ril nen rathóo wi! Báa melothel nen radaleth? Bíi rilrili meloláad thul nenetha lhohoth." I thib with i bel bi áwitheth i naya bi beth.

I lámála with áwithideth i náluth beth. Bíid
AND CARESS PERSON BABY + MASC + OBJ AND CONT + Rock X1 + OBJ DECL + ANGER

mesháad hath i mesháad hath. Doól di with
PL + COME GO TIME AND PL + COME GO TIME ATLAST SPEAK PERSON

biyóodi, "Bóo melith nen woho! Bíi ril nen
XHON1 + REFLX + GOAL REQ PL + THINK You>5 #ALL DECL PRES You>5

rathóo wi! Báa melothel nen radaleth?
NON + GUEST + IDENT SELFEVID Q PL + KNOW You>5 NON + THING = NOTHING + OBJ

Bíi rilrili meloláad thul nenetha lhohoth." I
DECL HYPOTH PL + PERCEIVEINT PARENT You>5 + POSSBIRTH SHAME + OBJ AND

thib with i bel bi áwitheth i naya bi beth.
STAND PERSON AND BRINGTAKE XHON1 BABY + OBJ AND CAREFOR XHON1 X1 + OBJ

And she held the baby close and rocked him. Time went by.... and more time went by. At last the woman said to herself, "All of you, please **think!** You're not guests any longer, you're nothing but trouble! Don't you know **anything?** Your parents would be ashamed." And she stood up and took the baby and took care of him.

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Comments

There are several words Suzette Haden Elgin created for this story that demonstrate the flexible nature of Láadan word-building. These are all on-the-fly formations that would probably *not* be included in a dictionary.

First, “wulh” (what a horrible...) [wu (what a; such a) + -lh (PEJ)]. Usually, we’ve seen the pejorative affixes used directly on the thing that is being reviled; in this case, however, it’s attached to “wu” (such a...; what a...) to bring the pejorative to the situation rather than the noun that is being discussed.

Next, “wothidá” (wise man) [woth (wisdom) + -id (MASC) + -á (DOER)]. There’s an interesting commentary going on within the formation of this word. We’ve seen “wothá” (wise person; sage), and the step to “wotháhid” (male sage; wise man) is a natural one. However, in this word, Dr. Elgin has gone a different direction: she starts with “woth” (wisdom), then adds the masculine ending “-id” to give “wothid” (male wisdom; wisdom as perceived by men) and only then does she add the agentive suffix “-á” to give “wothidá” (doer of male wisdom)—a very different slant from the common English notion of “wise man.”

Next, “áwitheláad” (baby-viewing) [áwith (infant) + láad (perceive)].

Finally, mélhewith (crowd, pejorative) [méwith (crowd) + -lh- (PEJ)]. Do you remember, from when we were studying the pejorative, that the usual use for the pejorative infix is in creating new words? Well, this word makes use of the fact that “méwith” (crowd) is formed from “with” (person) with a variant of “me-” (plural in verbs; also used in forming nouns meaning “larger/more important”); Dr. Elgin simply inserted the pejorative infix between these two word-parts.

Regarding the word-part “mé-”: it has recently been defined as a collective-noun prefix. In words like “mébabí” (flock of birds) it stands for “flock;” in “méthili” (school of fish) it stands for “school;” and so on. This has the added benefit of regularizing “méwith” (crowd) as a collective form for people.

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