

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)]
Zheshu	Jesus of Nazareth [loanword]

Text

Wóoban Méri Batha

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!”

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

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

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

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

Bíide thi with zhath Méri wáa.

Your English Translation

Wóoban Méri Batha

En: _____

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!"

En: _____

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

En: _____

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."

En: _____

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

En: _____

Notes

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! Baa melothel nen radaleth? Bíi rilrili meloláad thul nenetha lhohoth." I thib with i bel bi áwitheth i naya bi beth.

En: _____

Bíide thi with zhath Méri wáa.

En: _____

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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 = BABY + MASC	AND	GIVE	XHON1	NAME + OBJ	JESUS	BABY + MASC + GOAL	TRUSTED

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	menedebe
ANDTHEN	BE SUDDEN + MANN	PL + FINISH + COMEGO = ARRIVE	LIVESTOCK + DOER = SHEPHERD	#>5

i	noline	menedebe	i	wothidá	nedebe	wáa.
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?"

Bíide di with biyóodi, "Wulh hath áwitheláadewan! Methi ra bash i methi ra shall!"—i loláad bi ílhith. Izh di bi "Wil sha" zhonal: "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"	zhonal:	"Bóo	mesháad
DISGUST + OBJ	BUT	SPEAK	XHON1	OPTV	HARMONY	SOUND + MANN = ALOUD	REQ	PL + COMEGO

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 mendebe!"

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

Éde	benem	mélhewith.	Lith	with	"Raláadá	mendebe!"
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 + COMEGO	TIME	AND	PL + COMEGO	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.

Bíide eril thi with zhath Méri wáa.

Bíide	eril	thi	with	zhath	Méri	wáa.
DECL + NARR	PAST	HAVE	PERSON	NAME + OBJ	MARY	TRUSTED

That woman's name was Mary.

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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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