

Khanna Omarkhali

Georg August Universität, Göttingen

THE STATUS AND ROLE OF THE YEZIDI LEGENDS AND MYTHS¹

TO THE QUESTION OF THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF YEZIDISM, YĀRISĀN (AHL-E HAQQ) AND ZOROASTRIANISM: A COMMON SUBSTRATUM?

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the Yezidi legends and myths, the importance of which are often overlooked by scientists and by the Yezidis themselves. I shall discuss the role of the religious hymns and legends in Yezidism, their status and functions, and show that even before Sheikh ‘Adī (the reformer of Yezidism in XI–XII centuries) the same ideas that we find in the religious hymns existed in the form of legends. It was from this basis that many religious poetical hymns were composed. The aim of the present work is to show that Myths and legends, so called secondary religious material, are of great importance.

In this paper I shall present some Yezidi religious hymns and legends, the majority of which I gathered during my field research among the Yezidis in Armenia (2007), Iraq (2008) and Germany (2007/8). By analyzing these religious texts in comparison with the religious texts of two other cognates to Yezidi religious traditions, Ahl-e Haqq and Zoroastrianism, I shall try to prove the existence of an older origin and importance of the Yezidi legends, and throw light on the still intriguing question of the genesis of Yezidism and its obvious common background with Ahl-e Haqq and Zoroastrianism.

Genesis. When comparing these three religious traditions, one should understand that they are not from a single or limited time period. In fact, Zoroastrianism is the most ancient of the world’s religions of revelation and was the religion of the three Iranian Empires, which almost continuously from the 6th century BC till the 7th century AD ruled over most of the Near and Middle East.

The remaining collection of the sacred Zoroastrian canonical texts is called Avesta. Avesta consists of diverse fragments, such as liturgical texts, legendary history, religious

¹ This article is based on my report, presented during the International Symposium “Non-Islamic religions in Iran: a non essentialist perspective”. Göttingen, Germany, 6–7 July 2008. The Symposium was conducted by the support of the Research Training Group (Graduiertenkolleg) “Goetterbilder — Gottesbilder — Weltbilder”.

laws, epic subjects, and explanations for priests. They were composed in various periods in different parts of Iran. The most ancient parts of Avesta appeared in the lifetime of Zoroaster, others were written down or added by his followers and priests.

Adherents of Yezidism, Zoroastrianism and Ahl-e Haqq (self-appellations of which are Ēzdiyati, Yārisān² and Mazdāyasna), live relatively far apart from each other³ and probably had no close contacts. Nevertheless their religious traditions are very similar: they have a number of common elements, especially in their cosmogonical myths and rituals, which allows speculation about the probable common substratum of these religious traditions.

Historians and scholars haven't reached a satisfactory conclusion about the genesis of Yezidism. The French scientist R. Lescot (Lescot: 1938) adhering to the opinion of the scholar of Islam, M. A. Guidi (the author of a hypothesis about the Islamic origin of Yezidism), in his work devoted to the Yezidis of Syria, hypothesizes that Yezidism originated from Islam. B. Nikitin (Nikitin 1964). does not agree with this opinion and states that the Yezidis have never been Muslims. In the opinion of the full-member of the Academy of Sciences, N.Y. Marr (Marr 1911: 99–151), Yezidism was professed by the majority of the Kurds before they converted to Islam. A number of scholars believe that the beginnings of Yezidism are connected to Judaism, ancient Persian beliefs, Christianity and Islam. Some have mentioned the Arabian origin of Yezidis. But the most fantastic points of view belong to the Armenian authors of the 19th century, who considered the Yezidis as heretics who cut themselves off from the Armenian Church (Menteshashvili 1984: 196).

Considerable linguistic, religious and historical facts allow us to claim that at one time representatives of Indian and Iranian cultures formed a single group: the so-called Indo-Iranian community. The common elements in early Zoroastrianism, Yezidism and Vedic tradition seem to indicate shared Indo-Arian roots. The impossibility of converting to these religions, for example, division of the society based on caste-theocratic principles and objection to marriage between different castes (in Zoroastrianism probably at early stage), are but a few of such similarities.

In the view of contemporary Religious Studies it also seems important to mention such new phenomenon as the mutual interest of the adherents of these three religions:

— Among Yezidis there are some people who claim that they are Zoroastrians. Some went so far as to create a new religious hymn of Zoroaster (“Qewlê Zerdest”).⁴ In my opinion, this relates to the question of identity, which is very important among the young generation of Yezidis in the Diaspora.

² Hereafter I shall use the self-appellation of the Ahl-e Haqq, namely Yārisān.

³ Yezidis now live mostly in Iraq, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Syria, and other countries. Ahl-e Haqq live mainly in Iran: in the provinces of Kermanshah, in some districts of Lakestan, Luristan, in Azerbaijan provinces of Iran, in Khorasan, and in Iraqi Kurdistan, where they are known as Kakāyi. Some live in Turkey as well. Zoroastrians live mainly in Iran (mostly in Yezd) and in India. The Parsis (whose name means “Persians,”) in Gujarat are descended from Persian Zoroastrians who immigrated to India between the 8th and 10th century to escape persecution by Muslims.

⁴ The religious Hymn of Zarathustra (“Qewlê Zerdest”) was published in the Yezidi magazine “Laliş”. N 15, Bielefeld. 2001.

— Modern Zoroastrians (mostly in the United Kingdom and Europe) are very interested in Yezidis.

— Some Kakaī (Ahl-e Haqq) in Iraq claim that they are very near to the Yezidis.

Until today a discussion concerning the genesis of Yezidism exists. There are some similarities between Yezidism and Zoroastrianism, such as: religious observances; distinctive signs (white shirt called *sudre* (Zor.), *Toka Ezîd* (Yez.) with the little pocket called *girêban* (Zor.), *girîvan* (Yez.)); a belief that the souls of dead ancestors continue to protect their clan in the next world; a feast when these dead ancestors come down to the earth (Zor. *Hamaspātmaēdāya*); an autumn feast *Eyda Cimayê* (Yez.) and the feast of *Mehragān* (Zor.) with the sacrifice of the bull.

Yezidi religious texts. All three traditions contain big corpuses of sacred poetry and prose, handed down orally. The main sacred texts in all traditions are considered to be religious hymns, called *Qewl* (Yez.), *Kalâm* (Yār.) and *Gatha*⁵ (Zor.). They are composed in poetic forms and recited in a special manner during religious events.

Some accounts of the existence of the Yezidi Scripture are mentioned in the notes of travelers to the region. Many Westerners tried to find it. From the 1880s copies of the two Yezidi texts, which were written in Arabic, began to appear. After that in 1911, the Carmelite Father Anastase Marie published his discovery of the so-called original Kurdish versions of the Sacred Books of the Yezidis, which were written in an unknown alphabet. In a few years M. Bitner (Bitner 1913) published the translation of them into German. Since the 19th century, when two supposed Yezidi sacred Books, the “Cilve” and “Meşefa Resh” were published, there has been a big scholarly interest in Yezidi religious texts. Now practically all scientists dealing with the Yezidology agree that these two books could not be ancient authentic Yezidi books because of the Kurdish dialect of the texts and their content.⁶

According to the Yezidi tradition, there is the Holy Writ, which is either hidden somehow in a house of a Yezidi or obliterated. Yezidis from Armenia and Iraq frequently name this book “Zebûn”. Since all Yezidis claim that they had their own Sacred Book, though it was burnt or still kept in a house of a representative of a priesthood caste, perhaps this book really existed or perhaps the idea of the existence of the Yezidi Scripture appeared under the influence of the pressing question of “‘Ahl al-Kitāb”⁷ (‘People of the (Sacred) Book.’)

Yezidism was and still is based on oral tradition, and to wait for One Sacred Book is probable but most likely unproductive. In my opinion, the existence of the Sacred Book

⁵ According to the words of Sarah Stewart (06. 06. 2008, Göttingen), now common Zoroastrians say: “Our book is Gathas and our *mesheb* is Avesta.”

⁶ Another kind of Yezidi written religious texts, namely “Mişûr”, should be mentioned here. According to tradition, there are 40 of them, which are kept in the Yezidi Pîrs houses. I have heard about the existence of several of Mişûrs, and saw by my own eyes two manuscripts of Mişûrs in the homes of Pîrs: in Iraqi Kurdistan and one among Yezidis in Armenia. Here by their wish I do not write their names and locations.

⁷ ‘Ahl al-Kitāb (Arab. “People of the (Sacred) Book”), in Islamic thought, those religions such as Jews and Christians who are possessors of divine books (i.e. the Torah and the Gospel), as distinguished from those, whose religions are not based on divine revelations.

is not central: It seems more sensible to perceive all existing religious texts as one religious tradition. Look at, for instance, Avesta, which is in fact not one book: Avesta is what remained from a collection of the sacred Zoroastrian canonical texts.⁸

The basis of Yezidi dogmas is maintained in the oral tradition, literature which is represented by different kinds (genres) of religious poetry and prose: Qewl, Beyt, Dua, Dirozge, Mishabet, Terqîn, Şehdetiya Dîn, Çîrok, Çivanok, me'na, etc. The usage of different terms for the various categories of the Yezidi religious texts is rather strict and important. An inter-changeability of the terms "Qewl" and "Beyt" to the same text can occur, but it is very rare.

From the late 1970's and during the last few decades many of the religious texts were gathered among Yezidis from Armenia and Iraq and published by the brothers Ordikhane Jalil and Jalile Jalil (Jalil, Jalil 1978), Kh. J. Rashow (Rashow 2004), Khidir Pir Sileman, (Khalil 1979), Bedele Feqîr Haji (Bedelê Feqîr Hecî 2002) (*in Iraq*), and partly in some other sources (Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005).

It is already possible to speak with confidence that Yezidism is going through a new stage of its development: the transition to a written tradition.

Yezidis always had a great fear of writing down their religious texts, and hence avoided the practice. Even if Yezidis from Armenia did write down religious hymns (or allowed me to do so) they did it only in red or black ink, but never in blue. The color blue is considered to be forbidden for Yezidis. Furthermore, some Yezidis from Armenia and Iraq believe that if someone looks at a sacred text he may become blind. All these statements testify that Yezidis attribute a special mysterious nature to the written religious texts.

It is possible that Yezidis will soon solve the problem of the canonization of their religious texts which for a number of reasons relating to Yezidi history never occurred earlier. During this process Yezidis will be confronted with many questions, the most significant of which are:

1. Which texts should be included in the corpus of the canon?
2. Who has the authority to begin the process of canonization?

Both the Yezidi and Yârisân are basically oral traditions and the question of an organized process of canonization is very complicated. The Yârisân community now faces the problem that different *Khândâns*⁹ have different variants of "canonical" hymns — *Kalâms*. Just within the Kurdistan province of Iran there are about eleven *Khândâns*, which are not united concerning the canonical variants of their religious hymns (*Kalâms*). It is well possible that an unorganised process of canonisation of the Yezidi religious texts could lead the Yezidi community towards the same problem of disunity from which the Yârisân community suffers.

⁸ It includes "Videvdât", "Visperad", "Young Avesta", "Yasna" (with the religious hymns *Gathas*), "Yasht". Sacred Zoroastrian literature is also preserved in the middle-Persian (Pahlavi) language, which is also considered sacred, for example: the Bundahishn ("Creation"), Menog-i Khrad ("The Spirit of Wisdom"), Denkard ("Acts of Religion"), etc.

⁹ *Khândân* means a big Yârisân family lineage.

Yezidi Religious Hymns and Legends

Origin of Qewls. Figures to whom recorded Yezidi religious hymns have been attributed, include Şêx Fexrê Adiya(n),¹⁰ Pîr Reşê Heyran, Derwêş Qatan, Babekrê Omera,¹¹ Hesedê el-Tewrî, Dawidî bin Derman, Şêx Obekir, Dewrêş Hebîb, Koçek Cem, Derwêş Qotik, Şêx Havind, Derwêş Tajdîn, Abû Bekrê Cezîrî, Pîr Xidir, Gavanê Zerza, Lawikê Pîr (Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005: 53; Bedelê Feqîr Hecî 2002: 3), among others.

Although we know that there were real historical figures who authored a number of the Yezidi religious hymns, there are different views on the origin of Qewls. All of these views narrate the divine origin of the Qewls.

All Qewls together are called by the Yezidis “the knowledge of God” (*ulmê Xwedê*) or presented as a symbol of esoteric knowledge “the ocean” (*behr*). The other genres of the religious poetry and prose are respected, but not considered divine.

The Yezidis from Iraq use such terms as “me’na” (‘meaning’), “pîrs” (‘question’) and “şirove” (‘interpretation’) for the Yezidi legends. Yezidis from Armenia call them “me’na”, and sometimes “pîrs”.¹²

1. Reciting. In the reciting of religious hymns and narrating the legends there are some principle differences. Religious hymns are composed in poetic forms, while the legends and myths are prose narrations. The meanings of the religious hymns are more implicit and allusive, while in legends they are explicit. The language of the religious hymns, in comparison with the legends, is much more complicated and full of rich terminology, while the legends are narrated in more straight forward common oral form. Hymns are recited only by men and with the distinctive melody called *kubrî*.

Category	Qewl — a religious hymn	Me’na — a legend
Style of narrative	Poetic	Prose
The meaning	Allusive; implicit	Direct; explicit
Terminology	More terms are used	Less terms are used
Language	Ancient and complex	Spoken language
Variants	Not many variants: the form is very important	Many variants: the content is very important
Reciters	Only by men, often Qewlbêj (reciters) and Feqîrs, ¹³ in Armenia priests	By men and women as well
Melody	Recited with its own distinctive melody called <i>kubrî</i>	Prosaic naratives

¹⁰ I.e. Şêx Fexredîn.

¹¹ Whose name is also given as *Babekê Omera* or *Bav Bekirê Omera*.

¹² While some Yezidis in Iraq call their legends “çîrok”, Yezidi religious authorities would never do so. This is because “çîrok” literally means “fairy tale”, implying the legends in question are tales.

¹³ Especially Feqîrs from Shingal (i.e. Sinjar).

2. Functions. The Yezidi religious hymns (Qewls) sometimes take a form of dialog between, for instance, the Earth and the Heaven; different calendar Months; and Sheikh and Aqûb.¹⁴

There are also usually some dialogues presented in the prosaic narratives of Yezidi myths and legends. They are between, for example, the Seven Angels and God / the Soul / Adam / the Earth, etc.

Contemporary Yezidi legends are usually narrated:

— to interpret some parts of a religious hymn: usually between some stanzas (*sebeq*). Such legend could be incorporated (inserted) between stanzas.

— to add a storyline to a religious hymn: usually before or between stanzas (*sebeq*).

— as prose versions of the *Qewls*. The role of prose versions of the religious hymns began to be more important especially in the Armenian and Turkish Yezidi communities, where Yezidis live rather far from the religious centre — Lalish and the usual form of the transmission of the religious knowledge began to change.

So the legends and myths act to simplify and explain Yezidi religious principles for all Yezidis. It is interesting to note that it is forbidden to “jump over” one *sebeq* to another one, but it is not forbidden to stop and explain the previous *sebeq* with a legend and after that continue the Qewl. Nevertheless Yezidis avoid doing that during an important performance.

Yezidi Legends that have Analogy in the Yezidi, Yârisân and Zoroastrian Religious Texts

There are some Yezidi legends that:

- have no equivalent in the Yezidi religious hymns;
- have analogy in the Yezidi religious hymns;
- have analogy in the Yezidi and Yârisân religious hymns;
- are common for Yezidi, Yârisân and Zoroastrian storylines.

In this part of the paper I shall explore a few Yezidi religious myths that have an analogy in the Yezidi religious hymns, as well as in Yârisân and Zoroastrian texts. As examples I shall examine some Yezidi myths connected with the Time of Creation, which has strong similarities in the three religions.

Cosmogony. The Yezidi myth of Creation begins with the description of the emptiness (“Berê ne e’rd hebû, ne e’zman bû, ne e’rş bû” QZM¹⁵; “Ne e’rd hebû ne e’zman bû, Ne çiya ne sikan bû” DBwr., seb. 1 (Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005: 104)) and the absence of order in the Universe. Afterwards God brought the order to the Universe (“Hingî [Xweda] dane hed û sed e” QZM¹⁶). According the Yezidi and Yârisân traditions, prior

¹⁴ Aqûb is a Kurdish variant of the name of the prophet Jacob (Arabic Ya’qûb).

¹⁵ Pîr Tosinê Qero.

¹⁶ Pîr Tosinê Qero.

to the Time of Creation of the World God created a Pearl (“Pedşê min bi xo efirandî dura beyzaye” QB&A, seb. 6 (Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005: 72)), which was not in the material form. God created it from his own pure Light (“Padişê min Dur ji xo çê kir” QSh.¹⁷) and alone dwelt in the Pearl (“Pedşa li nav durê li xewle bû” DBwr., seb. 1 (Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005: 104)). Zoroastrians believe that there was a “big light space”, which was the place of Ahura-Mazda (“...the region of light is the place of Ohrmazd, which they call ‘endless light’...” Bnd., Fr. 1: 2).¹⁸

In all three religions there was an esoteric or non-material world, and after that the differentiation of some phenomena took place. After the manifestation of these phenomena, they came down to the earth.

Before the creation of this world God created seven angels, the Leader of whom was appointed Tawusî Melek (Yez.), Pîr Binyamîn (Yâr.), Ahura Mazda himself (Zor.). In one case it is mentioned that God created six angels which gave scientists the opportunity to suggest that God is the seventh one (QAD, seb. 19; Kreyenbroek 1995: 187).

The creation in Yezidi Cosmogony ends with the myth of the creation of the first man, who is also called Adam in Yezidism. The end of Creation is closely connected with the leaving (moving away) of the Creator from the Universe’s affairs, His creation of mankind and the transition from mythological time to historical time. Before that, however, God assigned all the worlds’ affairs to the seven angels.

In the following scheme I show the most important similar points in the Cosmogonies of the three religions:

Category	Yezidism	Yârisân	Zoroastrianism
God created a Pearl from His own pure Light.	X	X	The Light is the place and location of Ohrmazd (GBnd., Fr. 1: 1–2).
God dwelt alone in the Pearl.	X	X	Ahura Mazda was alone in the Light.
Differentiation of some phenomena.	X	X	X
The world was first created in the spiritual and then in the material form.	X	X	Ahura Mazda has created the world in two stages. First all has been created in a spiritual condition (Phl. <i>menog</i>) when Angra Mainyu unsuccessfully tried to attack. Then Ahura Mazda gave to all a material form or material existence (Phl. <i>getig</i>) which was, unlike spiritual, vulnerable for evil forces.

¹⁷ Merwanê Xelîl.

¹⁸ Ph. Kreyenbroek thinks that it is “clearly the equivalent of the narrow stone Sky which contained the embryonic creation in the Pre-Zoroastrian myth” (Kreyenbroek 1992: 68).

There are Seven Angels (Divine Beings).	X	X	<i>Amesha Spenta</i> (Pl. <i>Amashaspand</i>) — the highest spiritual beings sometimes referred to as “archangels” created by Ahura Mazda to aid him in his work (Yasht 1. 25, 2. 1–3, 19. 18).
Seven Divine Beings (Angels) are responsible for this world.	X	X	Seven Amesha Spentas are considered as patrons and defenders of seven kind creations, namely: the sky, the water, the earth, plants, cattle, the human being and fire.

There is a group of the Yezidi myths, an analogy to which we can find in the Yezidi and Yārisān religious hymns, as well as in the Zoroastrian religious texts. Let us examine a few of them.

Before we begin to explore the Yezidi religious texts and to make a comparative analysis of the religious texts of the traditions of Ahl-e Haqq and Zoroastrians, let us look at the main structure of the Yezidi world history, beginning from the Time of its Creation and ending with the End of Time.

A structure of the Yezidi history of the world:

1. Before the Time of Creation

— “Enzel” precedes the Time of Creation of the World. In *Enzel* there was nothing but God. Its characteristic elements are darkness, static time, and absence of movement.

— Before the Time of Creation a Pearl was created by God from His essence.

— It is said that 90,000 years *leaven* (or Mystery) of a Yezidi man was in the Qendîl (Light/Lamp).

2. The Time of Creation of the World

— The Pearl was broken, 4 elements were produced from it. Seven Angels and 18,000 creatures were created. Units of time (days, months, and a year) were created.

— A Pact between God and the Earth (through angels as mediators) was made.

— Creation of Adam’s body.

— For 700 years Adam’s body stood without a soul.

— A Pact between God and Adam’s Soul (through angels as mediators) was made.

— Adam’s Soul entered his body.

— Adam was taken to Paradise, where angels dwelt as well, and Adam stood there for 100 years.

3. Leaving Paradise

— Adam left Paradise. (Changing from the mythological to historical time).

— After 100 years on Earth, Eve was created from Adam.

— Creation of Yezidis from Adam only, and creation of 72 other peoples/nations (from Adam and Eve).

4. First Tofan

— The End of a world period by the *Tofan* of Water (*Tofanê Avê*). Continuation of the Life. There is an idea of a separate rescue of the Yezidi community.

5. The Time of Sheikh ‘Adî

- The Time of Sheikh ‘Adî and 7 Mysteries. Manifestation of God and Angels.
- People now live in this period of history.

6. Two other Tofans

— The End of a world period by Fire — “Tofanê Agir”. A lot of people will die. Continuation of Life and the World. There is a belief of a separate rescue of the Yezidi community.

— The End of a World period by Wind — “Tofanê Ba”. Continuation of Life and the World.

7. The Last Day or the Day of the End of Time

— 40 years before the End of Time (“*Roja Axirzemanê*”) will be marked by coming of Mehdi (who is Sherfedîn), and Îsa (i.e. Jesus), who will rule over 40 years. It will be a very good time.

- The End of the Time (“*Roja Axirzemanê*”).

8. Probable continuation of the World

- The beginning of a new life in this world is not clear, but possible.

I. Disobedience of the soul

In Yezidism. There is a Yezidi myth¹⁹ which tells of an insubordination of the Soul, which at first did not want to enter the body of Adam. After the wishes of the Soul were accepted by the Seven Angels, it entered the body of the first man.

¹⁹ This myth I recorded in some very similar variants among the Yezidis from Armenia: Pir Tosinê Qero, Sheikh ‘Ezîzê Miraz; from Turkey: Pêshîmam Hesen, Feqîr Elî; from Iraq: Merwanê Xelîl, Feqîr Hecî.

N	Yezidi myth in Kurmanji	English translation
1	<p><i>Dîsa viya ruhî ber qelbî biken, dîsa ewî ruhî daxwazêt xo kirin. Go: "Wextê ez bikevime ber vî qelbî da, wextê eva bite beşer, ev beşer dê xêrê pê hebin, dê şerê pê hebin". Go: "Hingî kê tehemila wê xeletiyê diket?" Go: „Wextê bite beşer û nefsa wî hebit, ew nefş her tiştî dixwazit. Hingî ew însan dê gelek sûc û gunehkariya jî biket. Wextê ew însan bimirit, hesab ya axretê ser ruhê ye yanê ser qelbî ye?“</i></p>	<p>Again [they] wanted the soul to enter the body [of Adam], again the soul expressed its wishes. [It] said: “When I enter this body, when it becomes a human being, this human being will have a good and a bad side.” [It] asked: “Then who will be responsible for these sins?” [It] said: “When it becomes a human being and it has <i>Nefs</i>, this <i>Nefs</i> will want everything. Then this person will commit a lot of sins. When the person dies, will the account in the hereafter be made on the soul or on the body?”</p>
2	<p><i>Melayêka gotê: „Na, qalib pêş axê çêbûye, dê çite nav axê, dê bite ax. Bes hesab dîminite ser ruhî. Ruh namrit!„ Go: „Ez nekevime ber!“ Go: „Ez bikevime ber vî qelbî da, min daxwazêt xo yêt heyn“. Gotin: „Daxwazêt te çî ne?“</i></p>	<p>The angels answered: “No, the body was created from the earth, it will return to the earth, and will become the earth. The account will be made on the soul. The soul does not die!” It said: “I will not enter [the body]!” It said: “If I enter the body, I shall have my wants.” [Angels] asked: “What are your wishes?”</p>
3	<p><i>Go: “Min divêt şaz û qudûm²⁰ hebin û pêşiya ruhî da biçin“. Gotine: „Erê“. Go: „Min divêt Xerqe hebit, min Xerqe ken!“ Gotine: „Erê!“ Go: „Min divêt Heft Melayêka xo berdane ber qelbî berê min! Û min divêt ez biçime behîştê. Êk ji Melayêka bo min bibe îman, li behîştê gerêt...”.</i></p>	<p>[It] answered: “I want a tambourine and a flute present and precede the soul.” [The Angels] answered: “Yes”. [It] said: “I want a <i>Kherqe</i>, put the <i>Kherqe</i> on me!” [They] answered: “Yes!” [It] said: “I want Seven Angels to enter the body before me! And I want to go to paradise. One of the Angels will be for me an [object of] belief, [and] will guide me to paradise...”</p>
4	<p><i>Hingî daxwazêt wî Melayêka qebûl kirin. Heft Melayêka berê ruhê xo berdane ber qelbî. Melayêka bi rengê Surê derkeftin²¹ êd çava ra, êd devî ra, êd guha ra, ... Wextê ruh kefte berê, ew qalib li E'rdî ax bû û bú xûn û goşt, bú xûn û goşt, hijiya, hingî Adem rûnişt.</i></p>	<p>Then the Angels accepted its wishes. Seven Angels entered the body before the soul. The angels went out²² [of the body] in the form of Mysteries: from the eyes, from the mouth, from the ears, [and from the nostrils]. When the soul entered the body, this body was in the Earth from soil and became blood and flesh, became blood and flesh, trembled, then Adam sat up.</p>

²⁰ In the religious hymns the words „şaz û qudûm” instead of “def û şibab” (‘tambourine and flute’) are used.

²¹ The Soul asked the angels to enter the body of Adam, and in this legend the angels entered the body and went out of it. In Qewls there is only the mentioning of the entering of angels the body of Adam, but not going out. It is interesting to notice that in the classical Persian language (especially in the 11, 12th centuries) the verb “dar amadan”, which is in Kurdish “der ketin”, meant “enter”, “go into”, while in the Modern Persian (Farsi) it means “go out”. Could we guess that this Kurdish verb also could had such meaning in the old Kurmanji?

²² Understanding that the language and this legend is very ancient, one could think that it would be logical to translate this verb here as “go in”.

The analogy to this legend we can find in the Yezidi religious hymn “Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr”, but the legend is more detailed, and moreover it raises some very important questions that Qewl does not talk about. Let us compare the parts from the legend, to which we can find the analogy in QZM:

From the legend

Gotin: “Daxwazêt te çi ne?” (2)

[Angels] asked: “What are your wishes?”

Go: “Min divêt şaz û qudûm hebin û pêşiya ruhî da biçin” (3).

[It] answered: “I want a tambourine and a flute present and precede the soul.”

Heft Melayêka berê ruhê xo berdane ber qelbî (4).

Seven Angels entered the body before the soul.

Wextê ruh kefte berê, ew qalib li E’rdî ax bû û bû xûn û goşt, bû xûn û goşt, hijiya, hingî Adem rûnişt. (4)

When the soul entered the body, this body was in the Earth from soil and became blood and flesh, became blood and flesh, trembled, then Adam sat up.

From the religious hymn QZM²³

Go, ruhê, boçî naçiyê nave?

[They] asked: “Oh, soul, why do you not enter [the body]?”

Heta bo min ji bana neêt şaz û qudûme Nîveka min û qalibê Adem pêxember zor tixûme.

Until the flute and tambourine come from above, There will be a big barrier between me and Adam’s body.

Heft Sur hatine hindave.

The Seven Mysteries came from above.

Ruh hat û tê da giheyê Lew cesetê Adem pêxember geriya goşt û xûne. Adem pêxember ... Hijiya, Goşt lê dihuriya, xûn tê geriya.

The soul came and made its home (in the body) Therefore to the prophet Adam came flesh and blood.

The Prophet Adam ... Trembled, His flesh became animated, blood circulated inside him.

There are some important points that are not mentioned in the QZM, but one can read them in the legend:

From the legend

Go, “wextê ez bikevime ber vî qelbî da, wextê eva bite beşer, ev beşer dê xêrê pê hebin, dê şerê pê hebin”. (1)

[It] said: “When I enter this body, when it becomes a human being, this human being will have a good and a bad side.”

Go: “Hingî kê tehemila wê xeletiyê diket?” Go: „Wextê bite beşer û nefsa wî hebit, ew nefş her tiştî dixwazit. Hingî ew insan dê gelek sûc û gunehkariya ji biket. (1)

Important points

An important point is named here, which partly explains the existence of evil things in this world: The Soul is originally pure and sinless, but a human being has *Nefs*, which is responsible for all humans’ sins.

²³ According to Merwanê Xelîl.

[It] said: “When it becomes a human being and it has Nefs, this Nefs will want everything. Then this person will commit a lot of sins.

Wextê ew însan bimirit, hisab ya axretê ser ruhê ye yanê ser qalibî ye?” (1)

When the person dies, will the account in the here-after be made on the soul or the body?”

Melayêka gotê: „Na, qalib pêş axê çêbûye, dê çite nav axê, dê bite ax. Bes hesab dimînite ser ruhê. Ruh namrit!” (2)

The angels answered: “No, the body was created from the earth, it will return to the earth, and will become the earth. The account will be made on the soul. The soul does not die!”

The soul raises the question if it would be responsible for the human’s sins after the death?

Angels not only answer that the account remains on the soul, but also tell that the soul is immortal.

The Soul expresses more wishes:

Go: „Min divêt Xerqe hebit, min xerqe ken!” (3)

[It] said: “I want a Kherqe, put the Kherqe on me!”

Go: „Min divêt Heft Melayêka xo berdene ber qalbî berê min! (3)

[It] said: “I want Seven Angels enter the body before me!

Û min divêt ez biçime behîştê. (3)
And I want to go to paradise.

Êk ji Melayêka bo min bibe îman, li behîştê gerêt... (3)

One of the Angels will be for me an [object of] belief, [and] will guide me to paradise...”

The soul wants the hair-shirt (*Kherqe*),²⁴ as a symbol of the different from mankind nature, put on it.

The Soul wishes Seven Angels to enter the body of Adam before it enters the body.

The soul wants to go to paradise, which provides us with the information that the body of the first man was created not in the paradise, but in some other place.

The soul wants to have one of the angels as its guide in the paradise.

In Zoroastrianism. According to the Zoroastrian book Greater Bundahishn, Fravašis²⁵ at first refused to come down into the world, and after agreed:

²⁴ Kherqe (lit. “hair-shirt”) is a black woollen tunic, which is venerated by all Yezidis. It is mostly worn by Feqîrs.

²⁵ The Fravašis are conscious beings who existed with Ahura Mazda long before the creation of the universe. The Fravašis help both divine and human beings by warning and guarding against evil, and by promoting all that is useful and advantageous (Bundahishn 2. 10; Yasht 13. 17–19). Like the Amesha Spenta and the Yazata, the Fravašis are allotted their respective tasks by Ahura Mazda.

N **Pahlavi**²⁶

Translation²⁷

23 *Aûhr-mazd, awâ A-mahra-spendân, pa Rapitpîn-gâs, minûy Yazisn frâz sâkht; andar Yazisn [kûnisn, dâm hama] bê-dât, awâ Bôd Fra-vahr-î marômân aûskârt, û Khraç-î har-visp-âkâsîh pa marômân frâz bôrta gûpt, ku: "Kaçâr-tân sût-aûmand-tar sahêç, ka-tân bê ô gêtâh brêhînom: tan-karçîhâ awâ Drûj bêkûkhsîç, û Drûj bê-awa-sahîniç, vatân pa fra-jâm dûrest an-ôsa awâz ví-râyêç, vatân awâz ô gêtâh dahom, hamaî gâs a-margua-zarmân, awê-hamê-mâl bawîç, ayûp-tân hamaî pânayîh ez Aiba-gaç âwâyey kartan?"*

Ohrmazd performed the spiritual Yazishn ceremony with the Beneficent Immortals in the Rapithwin Gah. He produced [all the creations] during [the performance of] the Yazishn, deliberated with the Consciousness and Farohars of men, and having brought the Wisdom of all knowledge onto men He asked: "What appears more advantageous to you when I may create you into material life: will you contend with the Druj in the embodied existence, and destroy the Druj, shall I restore you perfect and deathless in the end, and reproduce you in material life, so that you become deathless, undecaying and without enemy forever; or, is it necessary to protect you forever from the Adversary?"

24 *[Vasân] diç Fra-vahr-î marômân, pa ân Khraç-î har-visp-âkâsîh, anâyîh i ez drûj Ahri-man, andar gêtâh, paças rasêç, û awadûm awê-hamêmâlih-î ez Pêtî-yâra; û dûrest û an-ôsa awâz bawisniç î pa tan-î pas-in, andâ hama u hama-rûbisniç râ, pa sûtân-î ô gêtâ ham-dâtastân bût-hend (GBnd. 3: 23–24) (Zand-Âkâsîh, 1956: 44).*

[They] the Farohars of men saw, by means of the Wisdom of all knowledge, the evil that would arrive in the material world on account of the wicked Ahriman, and the final inoffensiveness of the Adversary; and they agreed to go to the material world, in order to become perfect and deathless again, in the final material life, up to eternity and eternal progress.

The legend about the disobedience of the soul is one of the legends, the analogue of which we can find in the different religious texts of Yezidis, as well as in Zoroastrianism.

II. Disobedience of the Earth

Both in Yezidism and Yârisân traditions there is a storyline, where the Earth — *Eçrd* (in Yez.), *Xak* (in Yâr.) that was to form Adam's body refused to assume that shape.

In Yezidism: There is a Yezidi legend, the storyline of which does not agree with the storyline in the QZM.

²⁶ Greater Bundahishn (Fr. 3: 23–24).

²⁷ Translation by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria. Zand-Âkâsîh, 1956: 45.

N Yezidi legend in Kurmanji

English translation

- 1 *Bes E'rd nemyî, nebû ax. Melayêka yêd mayîn û Reb il-'Alemîn, Sura Wî çûye bi Qendîla, çûye bi ezmana ... û E'rd nemyî! Xo lêk neda. Go, deng hat. Deng hat ji E'rdî. Go, gotê: „Hûn dê min bo çi çêkana?“ Go, melayêka gotê: “Em dê te çêkeyne, em dê beşeriyê ser te çêkeyn, û ev beşeriyet dê te bi kar tînê.”*
- 2 *Gotê: “Ew beşeriyet, dê xetayêt wî hebin ana?” Gotê: “Xetayêt wî jî pêk hebin”. Gotê: „Çengû xêra wî jî dê hebit û şerê wî jî pê hebit.” Go, hingi E'rdî got: “Ez xo lêk nadem! Ez nacebirim!” Melayêka gotê: “Daxwaza te çi ye?”*
- 3 *Go: “Hûn bo min qirarekî bînin ji Xudê: Çi gava beşeriyet ser vê dinyayê zêde bûn, û sîc û xeta û gunêt vî beşeriyetî bûne gelek, wextê ez şikyata xo bigeyînimê ezûra xo Reb il-'Alemîn, lazîm [e] ew Reb il-'Alemîn şikyata min qebûl biket! Lazîm [e] şikyata min qebûl biket, û bi rengekî Reb il-'Alemîn ew beşeriyet xirab biket.*
- 4 *Vêca qirara E'rdî gel Xudê ew bû, gel gawî, kîfir ser vî E'rdî zêde bû, çi gava evî E'rdî şikiyat li ezûla Reb il-'Alemîn li wextî kirin, bedîlî ken, lazîm Reb il-'Alemîn vî E'rdî paqij bike. Aşiqa jê xeber da, yenî gotin Reb il-'Alemîn: “Daxwaza E'rdî eva ye”. Go, gotê: “Min qebûl kir”. Wextê Xudê qirara wî qebûl kir, E'rdî xo lêk da.*

Just the Earth did not condense, did not become soil. The other angels and God of two worlds, His Mystery went to *Qendîl*, went to the heavens ... and the Earth did not condense! It did not condense itself. [People] said, the voice came. The voice came from the Earth. [It] Said: “For which purpose will you create me?” Angels answered: “We will create you, we will create human beings on you, and these people will use you.”

[The Earth] asked: „Will mankind have weaknesses or not?” [The angels] answered: “They will have weaknesses as well”. [They] said: “Because he will have a good and a bad side”. Then the Earth said: “I will not condense! I will not tighten!” The angels asked: “What is your wish?”

[It] answered: “Bring to me the answer (decision) from God: When mankind in this world increases in number, and the weaknesses and sins of mankind rise, when I bring my complaints to God of the two worlds, it is necessary that God of the two worlds will accept my complaint! It is necessary [that God] accept my complaint, and in a way God of the two worlds will destroy this mankind.”

So the agreement of the Earth with God was the following: when the sins increase in the Earth, [and] when the Earth brings its complaints to the God of the two worlds, it is necessary that God of the two worlds cleans (purifies) this Earth. The Enamoured (Lovers) said to Him, i.e. said to God of the two worlds: “The wish of the Earth is so and so.” [He] said: “I accept.” When God accepted its condition, the Earth tightened.

Nevertheless in the religious hymn QZM it is said that the Earth condensed only when Lalish came down from the heaven:

E'rd mabû yê bihiitî

The Earth remained unsettled

Û bi xidûdekî xiditî

And a fissure appeared

Gote: Ezîzê min, e'rd be Surê netebitî.

[The Angels] said: ‘My dear, the Earth without the Mystery will not become tranquil.

Be'dî çil salî bihîjmare

After forty years

Eʿrdî bi xo ra negirt hişare

The Earth did not become solid

*Heta sikanê Lalişê bi nav da tîne xware.*²⁸

Till the place of Laliş brings down [to the Earth].

According to the Yezidi tradition, there are three *Tofans* in the whole history of the world, which we, based on our knowledge from this legend, can interpret as so to say “purification” of the world from the sins of the people. A lot of people, but not all, will die because of them.

There are three *Tofans* in the world’s history: Tofanê Avê (was, and usually called “Tofanê Nebî Noh”), Tofanê Agir (will be caused because of the big war) and Tofanê Ba (will precede the End of the Time (Roja Axirzemanê)).²⁹

In accordance with this perception, the three sacred elements, namely water, fire and air, purify the fourth one, the earth. In any case, these events should not be considered as eschatological events. They occur during the life of people. Although the purificatory action causes many deaths, ultimately life continues.

In Yâresân. The analogy of the above legend of the disobedience of the Earth one can find in the Yâresân religious hymn (*Kalâm*) (Sorûdhâ-ye Dîni-ye Yârestân 1344: 76–81), which tells:

N	Kurdish — Gorani ³⁰	Translation
5	<i>Farmâ malakân akhî Cîbrâîl</i>	He commanded to the angels, my brother Jibra’îl,
6	<i>Bichin khâk bârin ez kû Sarândîl</i>	Go and bring [with yourself] the earth from the Serandîl mountain.
7	<i>Balkay bonyâdê âdamîzâd kaym</i>	In order that I shall create (provide) the basis of a human being
8	<i>Dalê âdamî vay dinyâ shâd kaym</i> ³¹	[I] shall gladden the heart of Adam in this world.

N	KG	Translation
1	<i>Malakân yak yak dâkhi³ bîn va khâk</i>	Angels one after another entered the Earth

²⁸ According to Feqîr Hecî.

²⁹ According to Pîr Tosinê Qero and Sheikh Ezîzê Miraz. But the last Tofan according to some narrations of Yezidis from Iraq already happened before Tofanê Avê (“Tofanê Nebî Noh”).

³⁰ Futher in the quotations of the Ahl-e Haqq religious texts will be used such abridgments as KG for “Kurdish-Gorani” texts.

³¹ Sorû

dhâ
-ye Dîni-ye
Yârestân
, 1344: 76–77.

2	<i>Va hukmî m'eaçiz pâdishây bê bâk</i>	By order of the fearless Lord, Creator of wonders
3	<i>Khâk hâshâ makard magrêvâ shîvan</i>	The Earth refused, began to cry and moan:
4	<i>Âmânân tâqat âdamûm niyan</i>	I have no patience to take Adam.
5	<i>Malakân yak yak arz kardan va Shâh</i>	The Angels told God one by one:
6	<i>Khâk âdamî makarû hâshâ</i>	The Earth has refused the existence of Adam.
7	<i>Farmâ 'Azrâ'îl va tâb, tâcîl</i>	[God] quickly commanded to 'Azrâ'îl:
8	<i>Tu ma'amûrê khâk va kîy Sarândîl.</i> ³²	"You are responsible [to bring] the Earth from the Serandîl mountain".

N KG

Translation

1	'Azrâ'îl va qâr dâxi ³ bî va khâk	'Azrâ'îl getting angry entered the Earth
2	<i>Va hukmî mu'acîz pâdishây bê bâk</i>	By order of the fearless Lord, Creator of wonders
3	<i>Khâk hâshâ makard magiravâ zâr zâr</i>	The Earth refused, cried and moaned:
4	<i>Baw khashm û nâz bînây Kirdigâr</i>	[I swear by] God's anger and tenderness
5	'Azr'âîl zarrz râm nâward va di ³	'Azrâ'îl did not take [even] a small part of the mercy to his heart
6	<i>Nîshê sar kacêsh mahkam vast vagi³</i>	A spike lodged into the intractable Earth
7	<i>Quvvat dâ shâhparr va câ vêrêzâ</i>	Gave the power and rose on his wings
8	<i>Bâ³ dâ va ham nîsht va rûy hawâ.</i> ³³	Flapped the wings and sat on the air.

N KG

Translation

1	<i>Khâk âvard nîyâ va huzurê shah</i>	The Earth said in the presence of the Lord
2	<i>Vaday khidmatim âvardsam va câ</i>	Said: "I carried out the order"
3	<i>Shâh vât: malakân akhî Cibrâîl</i>	The Lord told Angels and Jibrail:
4	<i>Âw mishtê khâka bêkayn va xamîr</i>	"Make a dough from this part of the earth
5	<i>Âw khâk tayâr khamîrish bisâz</i>	From this pure earth make a dough
6	<i>Âdam îcâd kan va sidiqê nîyâz</i>	Create Adam with the sincere faith.
7	<i>Va chihâr 'inâsar khamîrish sâkhtan</i>	Create from the four elements the paste."
8	<i>Va shik³ⁱ mawlâm qâ³bish sâxtan</i> ³⁴	And the body of him make in the image of my Master.

³² Ibidem: 78.

³³ Ibidem: 79.

III. Tree

The basic motives of cosmogony is an establishment of a centre, which is often called the “Centre of the World” and it is sacred. Through this point the world’s axis passes, binding in this way in the shortest way the Earth and a human being with heaven and the Creator (Toporov 1973: 114). That is probably why in the traditional beliefs of the nations of the Middle Asia “the special place occupies the axis, mountain, column, the King’s throne, cosmic tree (the Tree of Life)” (Litvinskiy 1975: 257). In the Yezidi traditional belief the special place is occupied by the axis, which is a tree, called “Endless Tree” (*Dara Herherê*).

In Yezidism. There is a myth among Yezidis about the time preceding the Time of the Creation of the World. The myth narrates that in the beginning there was the Big Ocean (Sea) and in the middle of the ocean (or in some variants, sea) grew the Endless Tree, called *Dara Herherê*. On it perched a Big White Bird as a Light (Nûr) and it was God (*Xweda*) himself. Jibrā’îl in a form of a bird was near the Big Tree where God was, but angel Jibrā’îl did not know who was near him, until, with the help of the Melek Shêkhisin, who had also been created before the Time of the Creation of the world, he understood that the big white bird, who “as a Light on the Tree” was his Creator. Only after that the Creation of the World begins.

This myth was told to me by many Yezidis from Iraq, Turkey and Armenia.

N	Yezidi myth in Kurmanji	English translation
1	<i>Fv dinya behr bû. Dareke di nêveka dinyayê da bû. Digotinê “Dara Herherê”. Xudê bi şiklê teyrî hate ser vê Darê dana. Go, Cibraîl hate miqabilî Wî sekinî. Hingê melayîka Xudê û yek-û-du nedinasîn. Cibraîl hat li ber dana.</i>	This world was the ocean. In the middle of the world there was a tree. It was called “Endless Tree”. God came [and] in the form of a bird sat on this Tree. [It is] said that Jibrā’îl came [and] stood in front of Him. At that time angels did not know God and each other. Jibrā’îl came [and] stood in front of [Him].
2	<i>Go, Xudê gotê: “Tu kî yî û ez kî me?”. Go, wî (Cibraîl) gotê: “Tu tu yî, ez ez im”. Wextê gotê: “Tû kî yî, ez kî me?” û gotê: “Tu tu yî, ez ez im”, go: “Ezê tişteki deme te. Here, ba vê qulînçka dinyayê dane”. Mesele, xerbê dinyayê danê. Yenî dibêjin, heta ev dinya cebirand her çar aliyê dinyayê her yekê nişanek danayê. Her çar tişteke [bi] devî kir, bir aliyekî dinyayê danaye. Ew Cibraîl bû.</i>	God said: “Who are you and who am I?” He (Jibrā’îl) answered: “You are you, I am I”. When he asked: “Who are you, who am I?” and [Jibrā’îl] answered: “You are you, I am I.”, [God] said: “I’ll give you something. Go [and] put it into this corner of the world”. For example, put it into the west [corner] of the world. I.e. it is said [that] till He pulled together the world, He put a sign in each four parts of the world. Each time [He used to] put something into his mouth, took and put it into every part of the world. It was Jibrā’îl.

³⁴ Ibidem: 80–81.

- 3 *Hingî Cibraîl hatiye nik Melek Şêxisin û jê pirsiyar kir, go: „Teyrekî ser vê darê wekî Nûrekê pirsyarê ji min diket, dibêjite min: “Tû kî yî, ez kî me?” [Melek Şêxisin] go: “Tu çi dibêjî?” [Cibraîl] go: “Ez dibêjimê: “Tu tu yî, ez ez im”. ” Go: “Nal” Go: “Em ji wî Nûrî hatine xuliqandin. Ew Xudayê me ye!” Go: “Bêje: ‘Tu Xuliq î, ez mexlûq im’.”* Then Jibrâ’îl came to Angel Shêkhsin. And asked him, said: “A Bird [that is] like a Light on this Tree questions me, saying: “Who are you, [and] who am I?” [Angel Shêkhsin] asked [Jibrâ’îl]: “What do you answer?” [Jibrâ’îl] answered: “You are you, I am I.” [He] said: “No!”. Said: “We were created from this Light. He is our God!” [Angel Shêkhsin] said: “Tell [Him]: ‘You are the Creator, I am a creature’.”
- 4 *Vêja wextê Cibraîl çû dana, [Xudê] gotê: “Tu kî yî, ez kî me?”. Cibraîl hingî gotê: “Tu Xaliq î, ez muxlûq im”. [Xudê] gotê: “Rehme li Seydeyê te!” Yenî, Şex Hesên hostayî bo Cibraîl kir. Vêja hingî dinyayê çê kir.* So when Jibrâ’îl went [and] sat [on the Tree], [God] asked [him]: “Who are you, who am I?”. Then Jibrâ’îl answered: “You are the Creator, I am the creature”. [God] said: “Let mercy be upon your preceptor”! That is Sheikh Hesên instructed Jibrâ’îl. So at that time [He] created the world.

We can find in the Prayer of Belief (Du’a Baweriyê) the references to the Tree (DBwr., seb. 5–7; Kreyenbroek, Rashow 2005: 104), which has its roots in higher spheres and its top rested on the earth, bringing celestial elements into the world and this Tree is in the middle of the Ocean.

The special image of the Tree, which has its roots in higher spheres and its top rested on the earth, can also be found in the Indian religious texts. What should be understood from the image of this upended Tree? It reminds us of the Tree in the middle of the ocean, which preceded the Creation of the World. At first, God created the spiritual world, and that only after was the material world created. Therefore we know that this Tree existed (/exists) in the spiritual world and we understand that the so-called “reverse Tree” is reversed only from the people’s view looking up from the material world below.

	KK	En.
	<i>Her nod û neh hezar salî darek jê mekanê wîye.</i>	For as long as ninety-nine years a tree [growing] from it (ocean) was his abode.
N	KK	En.
1	<i>Ew bû dara bi nav xewa</i>	That was the tree named Ghew
2	<i>Serî li xwar rehêt wê li hewa</i>	Its head below, its roots above
3	<i>Meleka rahîşt nûra li sere sera</i>	The angels took the light from the uppermost height
4	<i>Padişaya êk jê ew e.</i>	The King was one (aspect) of that.
N	KK	En.

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | <i>Ew bú dara bi nav xeware</i> | That was the tree named Ghewar |
| 2 | <i>Kok li hewa serî li xware</i> | Its roots in the air, its head below |
| 3 | <i>Ji qudretê av vedixware.</i> | By (God's miraculous) power it drank water. |

In Yârisân. The Yârisân myth of cosmogony, which is very similar to the Yezidi one, states that God created Jibra'îl who is also known as Pîr Binyâmîn. In some accounts it is said that Jibra'îl roamed over the surface of the primeval waters at first without knowing his Creator.³⁵ The Yârisân myth of cosmogony also narrates that Jibra'îl who flutters over the water before the Creation of the world, had a birdlike fashion. This legend is mentioned in the work of the sometimes-called “Ahl-e Haqq reformist” Hâjj Ne'mato'llâh Ğayhûnâbâdî (d. 1920 C. E.) (Haqq ol-haqayeq...).³⁶ This book is a collection of the verses of Ğayhûnâbâdî in the new Persian language (Farsi), while the original Kalâms are recognized only in the poems composed in Goranî. Ğayhûnâbâdî's poems are not recognized as original religious hymns (Kalâms) by the people of Yârisân. But even understanding that these verses are not Kalâms, their author obviously took this legend from the oral tradition of Yârisân, where this legend exists not in the form of a poetic hymn, as among Yezidis, but in the form of a legend.

In Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrianism there is a reference to the Tree. In Bundahishn it is said that “a triune bird Sen” (Avestan *mərəyō Saēnō* — ‘the bird Saēna’) is the biggest bird (Bundahishn 1997: 282), it was created first before all other birds, not for this world (Bundahishn 1997: 299), it excels over even the bird Chamrosh (Pahl. čināmrōš, Pazend. čamrōš) (Bundahishn 1997: 300), which is a mythical bird, perches near Simurg on the branches of the same Tree — “All-curing Tree” or the “Tree of all seeds” (Bertels 1997: 167).

In the Greater Bundahishn there is the reference to the Tree that grew up in the middle of this Earth and grew forever:

N Pahlavi

- 11 *Cehârûm, Aûrvar dât; nazd-ist, ô miyâna-î in Zamî, awar rôst, chand pâê bâlâ, awê-azg, awê-pûst awê-khâr, û tar, û sîrîn; vas visp sarça zûr-î aûrvarân, andar chîhar, dâst; Vas dât, ô ayiyârîh-î Aûrvar, û Âw û Âtas; - chi, har hâvan-ê aûrvarân, âw ê srêsk pa sar, âtas chehâr angûst pis; pa ân zûr, hama rôst (GBnd., Fr. I, a: 11).*³⁷

English translation

Fourthly, He produced the Tree; first, it grew up in the middle of this Earth, several feet high, without branches, without bark, without thorn, fresh and sweet; it had, in its germ, all kind of force of the trees; He produced the Water and the Fire, for the help of the Tree; for every bark of the trees has a drop of Water at the top, and Fire before it at a distance of four fingers; it grew forever with their strength.³⁸

³⁵ Ph. Kreyenbroek refers to M. Mokri (1966).

³⁶ To this work Ph. Kreyenbroek (1992: 68) and M. R. Hamzeh'ee (1990: 70) refer in their works. Hâjj Ne'mato'llâh Ğayhûnâbâdî writes about this book that it “contains material that is undoubtedly ancient, and sometimes yield more information than older texts...” (Kreyenbroek 1992: 67).

Conclusion

Although there is no belief in the divine origin of the legends and myths (like of the Qewls), the importance of the legends seems to be obvious and they should be seriously explored.

We can conclude that:

— Before Sheikh ʿAdī (11th–12th centuries) the ideas that we can find in the religious hymns probably existed in the form of the legends and myths.

— It seems likely that on the basis of the legends a lot of religious poetical hymns were composed.

— Nowadays these legends are used for the interpretation of the religious hymns.

The analogy to a number of Yezidi legends in the Yārisān and Zoroastrian traditions, besides other similar features in their religious observances, lead us to the statement that they have the common substratum, which, probably, goes back either to the Indo-Iranian tradition(s), or even to some local variants common to the Kurdish area tradition. Which religious system was the background for them, we cannot claim with certainty now, but their common substratum is obvious.

Terminology

Çirok — Lit. “story”. In some works one can find that Yezidi legends and myths are called Ç. But reciters of the religious hymns (Qewals) and other knowledgeable Yezidi authorities never use the term Ç. in the meaning of the Yezidi religious prose texts, legends. They use the terms “me’na” and “pîrs”, sometimes also “çirove.” See **Me’na**.

Dur — Lit. “pearl”. D. plays an important role in the Yezidi Cosmogony.

Gatha — The Gathas (Gāθās) are the 17 Zoroastrian religious hymns believed to have been composed by Zarathushtra.

Kalām — Religious hymn of Yārisān (Ahl-e Haqq).

Kas — Lit. “cup”. K. plays a very important role in the Yezidi religious hymns, as K. often facilitates the transition from the esoteric to the profane world.

Xerqe — Lit. “hair-shirt”. It is a black woollen tunic, which is venerated by all Yezidis. It is worn by Feqîrs.

Me’na — Lit. “meaning”. Yezidi legends and myths are called M. by the Yezidis from Armenia and Iraq. Now M. are explanations of the Yezidi religious hymns.

Nefs — Ego-soul, which is believed that every person has. But one should make a strict difference between the person’s Soul and Nefs.

Pîrs — Lit. “question”. See **Me’na**.

Qewl — Yezidi religious hymn, traditionally believed to be of divine origin, reflects the essential sanctity of the religious knowledge.

Sebeq — Stanza of Yezidi religious poetic composition.

Sur — Lit. “mystery”. S. is one of the basic religious terms in the both Yezidi and Yārisān traditions.

³⁷ Zand-Ākāsīh 1956: 24.

³⁸ Translation by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria. Zand-Ākāsīh 1956: 25.

Şirove — See **Me'na**.

Informants

Feqîr E'fî — Feqîr from the caste of Pîrs from the Omerkhalî clan. Was born in 1935 in the village Hamdûn in Turkey. The interview with him was made at 10.12.2007, Celle, Germany.

Feqîr Hecî — Feqîr from the caste of Mirîds from the Reshî tribe. Was born in 1923 in the village Gabara, Iraq. The interview with him was made at 13 and 15.04.2008, Beedrê, Iraqi Kurdistan.

Merwanê Xelîl — Qewlbêj (reciter of the religious hymns) from the caste of Mirîds. Was born in 1981 in the village Babîr in Iraq. The interview with him was made at 22. 07 and 09. 12. 2007, Nienhagen, Germany.

Pêshîmam Hesen — Pêshîmam from the caste of Sheikhs from the Sherfedîn clan, from the Adanî home. Was born in 1935 in the village Hamdûn in Turkey. The interview with him was made at 10. 12. 2007, Celle, Germany.

Pîr Tosinê Qero — Pîr from the Kemalî clan. Was born in 1929 in Armenia. The interview with him was made at 16. 10. 2007, Dûzkend, Armenia.

Sheikh Ezîzê Miraz — Sheikh from the Shekhubekîr clan, from the Qatanî home. Was born in 1966 in Armenia. The interview with him was made at 04 and 10. 10. 2007, Senger (before Qarxûna), Armenia.

Abbreviations

Bnd.	Bundahishn
DBwr.	Dua' Baweriyê
Fr.	Fragard (a chapter of a Zoroastrian religious text)
GBnd.	Greater Bundahishn
KG	Kurdish Gorani
QAD	Qewlê Afrîna Dinyayê
QZM	Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr
QB&A	Qewlê Bê Elif
QSh.	Qewlê Shêxûbekîr
seb.	sebeq
Yâr.	Yârisân (Ahl-e Haqq)
Yez.	Yezidism
Zor.	Zoroastrianism

Bibliography

Religious text

1. Yezidi

Bedelê Feqîr Hecî, 2002, *Bawerî û mîtolojiya êzidiyan. Çendeha têkist û vekolîn (Belief and mythology of Yezidis. Some texts and their investigation)*. Dihok.

Jalil, O., Jalil, J., 1978, *Qewl û Beytê Êzdiya (Religious Verses of the Yezidis)*, [in:] Jalil, O., Jalil, J., *Zargotina Kurda (Kurdish Folklore)*. Vol. I, II. Moscow/Yerevan.

- Khalil, K. S., Pir Khidir Sileman, 1979, *Êzdiyatî: liber Roşnaya Hindek Têkştêd Aîniyî Êzdiyan (Yezidism: in the Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis)*. Baghdad.
- Kreyenbroek, P. G., Rashow, K. J., 2005, *God and Sheikh Adi are perfect. Sacred poems and religious narratives from the Yezidi tradition*. Wiesbaden.
- Mashafa Rash*, [in:] Joseph, I., 1919, *Devil Worship: the Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidis*. Boston. 36–49.
- Rashow, K. J., 2004, *Pern ji edebê dinê êzdiyan*. Duhok. Vol. I, II.

2. Yârisân (Ahl-e Haqq)

- Namê-ye Saranjâm yâ Kalâm-e Xazânê. Yekî az mutûn-ê kohen-ê Yâresân (Ehl-ê Heqq)*, 1375 H., *Tehqîq û tefsîr ez Seddiq Sefizâde*. Teheran.
- Sorûdha-ye Dîni-ye Yâresân*, 1344 H. Mashâllah Sûri. Iran.

3. Zoroastrian

- Bundahishn, 1997, [in:] *Zoroastriyskiye teksty. Suzhdeniya Dukha razuma. Sotvoreniye osnovy i drugiyte teksty*.
- Chunakova, O. M. *Pekhleviiskii slovar' zoroastriiskikh terminov, mificheskikh personazhei i mifologicheskikh simvolov*. Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura, 2004.
- Zand-Âkâsh. Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, 1956. (Transliteration and translation in English by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, M.A). Bombay.

Literature

- Bertels, A. E., 1997, *Khudojestvenniy obraz v iskusstve Irana IX–XV vv. (slovo, izobrajeniye)*. M.
- Bittner, M., 1913, *Die heiligen Bücher der Jeziden oder Taufelsanbeter (Kurdisch und Arabisch)*. Vienna (Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, Band LV).
- Hamzeh'ee, M. R., 1990, *The Yaresan: a Sociological, Historical and Religio-Historical Study of a Kurdish Community*. Berlin.
- Kreyenbroek, Ph. G., 1992, *Mithra and Ahreman, Binyâmîn and Malak Tâwûs: traces of an ancient myth in the cosmogonies of two modern sects*, [in:] Gignoux (ed.), *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions: from Mazdaism to Sufism*. Paris. 57–79.
- Lescot, R., 1938, *L'Enquete sur les Yesidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjâr. Memories de L'Institut Francaise de Damas*. Vol. IV. Beyrouth.
- Litvinskiy, B. A., 1975, *Pamirskaya kosmologiya // Strany i narody Vostoka*. Moskva. Vypusk XVI.
- Marr, N. Y., 1911, *Eshe o slove "chelebi". K voprosu o kulturnom znachenii kurdskey narodnosti v istorii Peredney Azii*. ZVOIRAO XX. Sankt Peterburg. 99–151.
- Menteshashvili, A. M., 1984, *Kurdy. Ocherki obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskix otnosheniy, kultury i byta*. Moskva.
- Mokri, M., 1966, *Shâh-nâma-ye Haqîqat (Le Livre des Rois de Vérité: Histoire traditionnelle des Ahl-e Haqq)*. Vol. I. Teheran/Paris [Bibliothèque Iranienne 14].
- Nikitin, B., 1964, *Kurdy. Per. s frants., vstupidelnaya statya i redaktsiya I.O. Farizova*. Moskva.
- Toporov, V. N., 1973. *O kosmologicheskikh istochnikakh ranneistoricheskikh opisaniy*. Ucheniye zapiski Tarturskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Tartu. Vypusk 308. T. VI.

Abstract

The paper is devoted to the investigation of the role of Yezidi legends and myths: their status and functions. Many of the legends and myths are presented here for the first time in published form. They were recorded during field research among Yezidis from Armenia and Iraq. Using the comparative method to analyze these religious texts with those of two other cognates to Yezidi religious tradition, namely Ahl-e Haqq and Zoroastrianism, the significant age and importance of the Yezidi legends is shown. In this discourse the question of the genesis of Yezidism and its obvious common background with Ahl-e Haqq and Zoroastrians is also discussed.

