The Yezidis (5352)

Christine Allison
Exeter University
C.Allison@exeter.ac.uk

The Yezidis are a religious minority which came to international attention in 2014 when their ancestral home on Mount Sinjar in Northern Iraq was violently seized by the so-called 'Islamic State,' precipitating a mass evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people. Those who did not manage to flee along the perilous road into the region controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government faced a stark choice between conversion or death. A small minority besieged on the mountain managed to survive with outside help, but large numbers of elderly and children died. Hundreds of men were massacred – 410 in the village of Kocho alone - and thousands of women taken into slavery. More than 3,500 remain missing today.[1]The subsequent publication of Islamic State's English-language magazine in October 2014 gave a rationale for its actions, which amount to genocide.[2]

This is the latest in a long line of persecutions to have befallen a group often erroneously called 'the devil-worshippers of Kurdistan'.[3] Athough the so-called 'Islamic State' did not use this term in its literature, referring to them instead as 'polytheists,' it has provoked repeated attacks over several centuries and the notoriety associated with it has also assured the interest of curious outsiders, especially travellers and missionaries, some of whom have intervened in local politics in the Yezidis' favour. Thus the literature on the Yezidis is disproportionately large given the community's size, and although much of it is ill-informed, these writings have not only served as useful sources for non-Yezidi scholars but have also influenced the Yezidis' view of themselves.[4] This colourful reputation has also facilitated the Yezidis' incorporation into Kurdish nationalist discourse; in the part of Northern Iraq under Kurdish control since 1991 they are often portrayed as 'the original Kurds' practising an authentic non-Islamic religion.[5] Their place in Kurdish society has thus been assured, although on an everyday level they may be treated with suspicion or contempt; tensions between Yezidis and their Muslim neighbours in Iraq have erupted into violence even before the events of 2014.[6]

There is no reliable figure for the worldwide Yezidi population. Estimates of almost a million seem exaggerated, with the true figure being somewhere between 500,000 and 750,000.[7] Of these some 60,000 live in the former Soviet Union, 15,000 in

Syria, a few hundred in Turkey, 50 to 100,000 in the global diaspora and the rest in Iraq.[8] Most Iraqi Yezidis live in the 'traditional' Yezidi territories. The Sheikhan area north-east of Mosul is a collection of small and medium-sized settlements which includes the adjoined villages of Ba'shiqa and Behzane, home of the traditional singers or *Qewwal*s; the town of Ba'dre, home of the paramount Prince or *Mîr* and the holy site of Lalesh, location of the tomb of the divine figure Sheikh Adi. Mount Sinjar, overlooking the frontier with Syria, was home to several Yezidi tribes for centuries until their dispersal in mid-2014. Near Duhok, in the northern regions of the KRG administered territories, there are some large collective settlements where former inhabitants of demolished Yezidi villages now live. The Caucasus Yezidis live mostly in Armenia, in villages near Aparan and Talinn on the flanks of Mount Aragats, and on the plain of Armavir (Hoktemberyan). A significant number, mostly from the same clans as the Armenian Yezidis, live in Georgia around Tbilisi. Recent years have seen extensive economic migration to urban centres in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia, as well as to Europe. Most of the Yezidis of Turkey migrated to Germany a generation ago, though some still remain in the south-east, in the villages of the Tur 'Abdin (around Mardin) and near Viranshehir. In Syria they were traditionally settled in the Kurd-Dagh and northern Jezira. In all of these countries there is a pattern of movement away from rural work towards city life, though the ancestral villages play an important symbolic role for Yezidis living far afield. Even diaspora Yezidis are often buried in the home village, which may be thousands of kilometres away. In some rare cases, such as the communities near Tula (Moscow area), the establishment of new Yezidi cemeteries signals that roots are definitively being put down in the new territory.[9]

History

The Yezidi community as is known today appears to have emerged at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the arrival of Sheikh 'Adī b. Musāfir, founder of the 'Adawiyya order. He settled in the mountainous area north-east of Mosul, making the village of Lalesh his home and the seat of his order.[10] Although a pro-'Umayyad movement called the Yazidiyya, which venerated the caliph Yazid ibn Mu'āwiya, was active in this area at this time, it is by no means certain that this group constitutes the same people later known as 'Yezidis'.[11]

Like many other Sufi orders, the 'Adawiyya brotherhood of Lalesh seems to have been notable for its belief in the *baraka* of the Sheikh and the mystery (*sirr*) of his

sainthood. These also resided in other members of his family, who succeeded upon his death.[12] However, Al-Kutubī notes the unusual extent of veneration of ‘Adī’s grand-nephew al-Ḥasan b. ‘Adī and his inability to control his fanatical supporters among the Kurdish tribes.[13] His execution in 1254 along with two hundred followers, at the hands of Badr al-Dīn Lu‘lu‘, the Zangid Atabeg of Mosul, and the subsequent burning of the bones of Sheikh Adī, which must have been a strong focus of Yezidi devotion, shows how seriously the Yezidis were perceived as a threat. Al-Maqrīzī cites many instances of neglect and violation of Islamic laws by Yezidis, which provoked another burning of the Lalesh shrine in 1415 by ‘Izz al-Dīn al Hulwānī, a Shāfi‘ī theologian, with the military support of the Kurds of the Sindi tribe and the lord of Ḥiṣn Kayfā.[14]

Instances of Yezidi rule over larger areas which included non-Yezidis are few but noteworthy. The Emirs of Jezīra b. Omar (known in Kurdish as Cezîrê Botan) had once been Yezidis, probably before 1415.[15] In 1516 the Yezidi Sheikh ‘Izz al-Dīn managed to secure the execution of his rival Qasim Beg, chieftain of the Kurds near Aleppo, and have himself named emir of the Kurds. However, after his death he left no heirs and the title reverted to Qasim Beg’s family.[16] In 1534 the Yezidi Hussein Beg, under Sultan Suleyman, ruled briefly and brutally over the Soran tribes of Erbil, who being Shi’ites, were the Yezidis’ enemies. He was soon supplanted by a member of the previous emir’s family, and put to death in Istanbul.[17] In 1649 the Dasini Mirza Beg was briefly appointed governor of Mosul but was executed after travelling to Istanbul to seek re-appointment upon the replacement of the Grand Vizier.[18]

Despite the turbulence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Yezidism remained widespread and influential in the politics of the area. Sheref Khan Bitlisi’s S*heref-name* of 1597 cites seven of the Kurdish tribes as being Yezidi, at least in part. These included the Boti around Jezira,[19]and the Daseni around Sheikhan. The Yezidis of Syria had their origins, according to Sheref Khan, in the element of Saladin’s army which came from Hakkari.[20] Further east were the Dunbeli, to the west of Lake Urmiya, and the Mahmudi south-east of Van.[21] To the North were the nomadic Khaliti (east of Batman) and the Basian near Silvan.[22] In his description of his travels of 1655-1656, Evliya Çelebi also counts Yezidi tribes, especially the Rojkî, among the supporters of Abdal Khan Bitlisi, whose rebellion against the Ottoman emperor he chronicles.[23] He also gives an account of visits to the Dasini near Dihok and the Yezidis of Sinjar.[24]

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw Yezidi influence and numbers decline. The end of the semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities and the series of

Tanzimat reforms of from the mid-nineteenth century onwards made the region more vulnerable to localised political instabilities. The 1832 massacre by 'the Blind Prince' of Rawanduz of the Yezidi Prince, Ali Beg, along with many of his followers in the valley that still bears his name, left a deep scar on the Yezidis of Sheikhan.[25] Religious tensions inherent in the *millet* system became more evident, with attacks on Yezidis and other minorities by chieftains such as Bedir Khan Beg of Cezîrê Botan.[26] Without the status of 'People of the Book' the Yezidis were deprived of religious rights, and in the words of C.J. Edmonds:

> 'they tended to be regarded … as apostates and were thus exposed to the danger that persons in authority, high and low…might think it not only legitimate but even meritorious to maltreat them.'[27]

On a policy level, Yezidis were targeted for conversion to Islam by the civilising mission of the Ottoman state, which developed in the nineteenth century.[28] Catholic and Protestant missionariesalso targeted the Yezidis, but mostly without success.[29] After repeated interventions by Stratford Canning, British ambassador to Istanbul, and A.H. Layard, excavator of Nineveh and Babylon their status officially changed in 1849, when an Ottoman edict was issued giving the Yezidis a degree of legal status.[30] Nevertheless, attempts at forced conversion were still not prevented at higher levels and local tribal politics remained dynamic and often uncertain, especially for the settled Yezidis of Sheikhan who were less able to defend themselves than the tribally organised semi-nomads of Mount Sinjar, Van and Kars provinces. The Yezidis' aversion to military service, as evidenced in the so-called '1872 Petition', presented to the governor of Baghdad to request exemption, irked the Ottoman authorities (see below). In 1892 'Umar Wehbi Pasha was sent from Istanbul to the Mosul vilayet to reclaim outstanding taxes and recruit *Hamidiye* regiments of converted Yezidis.[31] The ensuing violence saw many civilians killed in Sheikhan, the annexation of Lalesh as an Islamic *waqf* and the forced conversion of the Mir, Mirza Beg.[32] The Sinjaris were able to repel government forces but the whole grievous episode is remembered in the oral tradition and still inspires fear.[33]

The great upheaval for the Yezidis of Van, Kars and Bayazid was the massacres of the First World War. Along with many Armenians they fled *en masse* from the Ottoman Empire into Armenia, following those of their kinsfolk who had fled to Russian

territories upon the Russo-Turkish wars of 1828-29 and 1877-78.[34] The Yezidis' role in the decisive battle of Sardarapat of May 1918, that saw the defeat of the Turkish army, is commemorated by their Armenian neighbours.[35]After the First World War, Yezidi communities were divided by new international frontiers that became more difficult to cross as the twentieth century moved on. The Caucasian Yezidis, separated from the *qewwals* of Sheikhan, relied exclusively on their own men of religion, who were few in number and could be punished with exile if caught practising religious rites. However, despite the difficulty of life in the villages and the uncertainties of the political climate, especially from 1937-1952, Soviet education policies brought literacy to the villages and created an educated professional class of Yezidis. Many were active in publishing and broadcasting; a few became historians, ethnographers or folklorists.[36]

The twentieth-century history of the Yezidis of Syria and Turkey is more obscure, with fewer sources available. Syria came under French mandate after the Treaty of Lausanne; the Yezidis were studied by French scholars such as Roger Lescot and Father Thomas Bois.[37] More recently, the Yezidis have been subjected to the general 'invisibilisation' policies applied to Syrian Kurds, including a lack of formal recognition and sometimes a lack of citizenship.[38] The great majority of Turkey's Yezidis left to become guest-workers in Germany in the 1970s; although the younger generation has a strong political profile in the Kurdish movement there, the religious discourse is largely guided by influential Iraqi Yezidis who migrated there in the early 1990s.[39]

The period of British mandate in Iraq saw a Yezidi rebellion led by Dawûdê Dawûd, chieftain of the Mêrkan of Sinjar, in 1925, which provoked air strikes by the RAF.[40] He rebelled again in 1935 in protest against attempts to conscript Yezidis into the Iraqi army. During this period tensions also grew between the Sheikhan and Sinjar communities, especially on the issue of the control of the princely family and the revenues accruing to it.[41] For most of the twentieth century the Iraqi Yezidis remained rather isolated, with few living in the towns alongside others. Even the Government collectivisation projects, which for Yezidi settlements began after 1975, resulted in large but exclusively Yezidi collectives.[42] The first generation of Yezidi university students in Iraq emerged in the late 1970s, and in 1977 two Yezidi students at the University of Baghdad published the first collection of Yezidi sacred texts.[43] This heralded a new area of public Yezidi reflection on their own religion and identity.

Religion

Yezidism has been for many centuries a highly syncretistic orally transmitted religion. A comparatively small religious elite ministered to a population scattered over a wide area of Eastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq. It is a non-proselytising religion of orthopraxy; i.e., Yezidis are born, not made. To be a good Yezidi, one must live well and act virtuously, but knowledge of religious lore and intimate relations with the divine, though respected, are not prerequisites. The concept of a *shahada* known to all adherents was until recently alien to Yezidism.[44] On everyday matters most Yezidis would follow the advice of their local men of religion; consequently there are many differences in practice of Yezidism between the Caucasus, Syria and Iraq. The body of scholarly writings deals mainly with the religion as practised in Iraq, which today adds to the influence of this strand of Yezidism. However, it would be more accurate to think in terms of 'Yezidisms'.

Nevertheless, there are some distinctive and universal features of Yezidism. God, for the Yezidis, is present but distant and the world is in the hands of the seven Holy Beings (often called *melek*, 'Angels' or the *heft sirr*, 'Seven Mysteries') who may reincarnate in human form. Chief among this Heptad is the Demiurge, Melek Tawûs, the Peacock Angel. He came to earth in the form of both Sultan Ezî and, most recently, Sheikh Adi, whose historical identity as 'Adī b. Musāfir was not known to Yezidi oral tradition until the twentieth century.[45] This type of holy reincarnation is called a *khaṣṣ*. The overall importance of the *sirr* or 'mystery' of the *khaṣṣ* outweighs the individual characteristics of one manifestation. Kreyenbroek and Rashow note that some Yezidis do not wish to accept that Sheikh Adi was a Muslim; others regard this fact as irrelevant given that his Mystery is Yezidi.[46] Indeed, in speaking of the *khaṣṣ*, Yezidis may cite exploits accomplished in lifetimes separated by hundreds of years without differentiation, which has contributed to their reputation for dullness among Orientalist writers. However, as Edmonds puts it, the reincarnation is no more relevant to the Yezidis than a change of clothes and indeed they refer to the reincarnation as *kiras guherrîn*, 'changing one's shirt'.[47] Thus, in oral tradition, Sheikh Hesen (the historical Sheikh 'Adī's grand-nephew) is identified with the seventh century CE scholar Ḥasan al-Basri. Such a conceptual framework permits an extensive syncretism, with many motifs and practices from other religions included at different periods. Now that this complexity is much clearer, scholars no longer seek a single 'origin' for Yezidism.

Another dominant feature of Yezidism is a strong preoccupation with religious purity, which permeates all aspects of life. Taboos concerning diet, speech and dress have been noted by outsiders since Evliya Çelebi, particularly those against eating lettuce, pronouncing words that might sound like 'Sheitan' and wearing the colour blue.[48] Some of these are mysterious even to Yezidis, and colourful stories abound explaining their origins. However, many make perfect sense within context: in Kurdish the word for 'lettuce', *khās*, sounds like *khaṣṣs*, the Holy Being; pronouncing the name 'Sheitan' shows sacrilegious disrespect for Melek Tawûs, and the word for 'blue' *şîn*, also means 'mourning'. The taboo against reading and writing can probably be explained by Yezidi anxiety (still prevalent in some places) about mixing with Muslims in the school environment. The same reservation can be seen in the Yezidis' long-standing aversion to military service as evidenced in their petition of 1872 to the Ottoman government.[49]

The concern that like should mix with like and that unlike things are incompatible is seen not only in everyday customs and taboos but more dramatically in Yezidi social structures and the rules concerning them. Most Yezidis are laymen, known as *murîd*, and the priestly castes are the *pîr* and the *sheikh*, who have specific roles in rites of passage in life and rituals after death. Every Yezidi has a *pîr* and a *sheikh*, determined by ancestry, and must choose (usually from a sheikhly family) a Brother or Sister of the Hereafter. In Iraq they also have a *murebbî* (preceptor) and for men, a *kerîf*, a sponsor on whose knees one sits when circumcised, and who may be a Muslim.[50] All these relationships create complex and lifelong social obligations. Sometimes these important figures are described as *penc fêrz* or 'five obligations' in themselves. Moreover, Yezidis must marry within caste or (traditionally) risk ostracism and for women, death. Whilst the *murîd* may marry freely amongst themselves, and most of the forty *pîr* clans may intermarry, the Sheikhs are divided into three endogamous sections, Shamsani, Adani and Qatani, only one of which may intermarry with the princely family. Not surprisingly Yezidis usually have a good knowledge of their own clan histories and structures as these have a direct influence on their marital options and reputation in the community.[51]

There are also kinship groups with special roles. The *Qewwals*, bearers of sacred lore who live in Ba'shiqa and Behzane in Sheikhan, perform sacred music on the *def* (frame-drum) and *ṣebab* (flute), sing and explain the sacred hymns, and accompany the effigy of the peacock in the *Ṭawûsgerran* (see below). *Feqîrs* lead holy and ascetic lives and wear a sacred black garment called the *xirqe*. The term *koçek* is used for families

from all three castes who serve the holy shrines, and for visionaries and wonder-workers. The best known is probably Kochek Mirza of Sinjar, who predicted the end of Islam at the time of ‘Umar Wehbi Pasha.[52]

Origins

It is easy to detect elements from different religions in Yezidism. Contemporary Yezidis see themselves as very distant from Islam but there is no doubt that ‘Adi b. Musafīr was a Muslim. Much Yezidi religious terminology derives from Islam, albeit with altered meanings; the *qewls* attest that at one time the Yezidis gave praise to God for belonging to the Sunna and not being Shi’ites, and that some figures such as Yezid b. Mu‘awiya were respected.[53] It is important to emphasise that such elements have not formed part of Yezidi practice for hundreds of years; moreover, an exclusively Islamic origin cannot explain certain aspects of Yezidi history and religion. The relative swiftness with which the Kurdistan branch of the ‘Adawiyya (for the most part a respectably ‘orthodox’ brotherhood) became viewed as heretical would seem to suggest a non-Islamic influence. If it is Islamic, Yezidism ought to fall at the ‘ultra-Sunni’ end of the spectrum, which makes the striking similarities with the supposedly ‘ultra-Shi’ite’ religion of the Ahl-e Haqq of Iraq and Western Iran awkwardly problematic. The most coherent explanation of this, by Kreyenbroek, has shown that the cosmogonies and mythologies of both groups are remarkably similar.[54] For both, the Creation myth involves a beneficent sacrifice by a demiurge that set an enclosed, static world into motion and life. For Yezidis this demiurge, Melek Tawûs, may bring good or evil as he sees fit but he does not embody either principle. Zoroastrianism’s scenario is similar but portrays the static world as ideal, and the act as destructive rather than beneficent. Thus the benevolent demiurge of the Yezidis behaves similarly to the Zoroastrian Ahriman, or Evil Principle, since unlike the Yezidis and Ahl-e Haqq, Zoroastrianism is dualist.

This theoretical debate impacts on the sensitive issue of ‘devil-worship’. Although some Sufis such as Mansur al-Hallaj and Ahmad al-Ghazali advocated great respect for Iblis, there is no evidence that Sheikh ‘Adi b. Musafir held such views. Moreover, the pre-Islamic Armenian writer, Eznik of Kolb refers to the Peacock as ‘the bird of Ahriman’ in Zoroastrianism.[55] Thus the connection of the peacock with evil is present in the region before Islam. The Zoroastrian view of the Peacock may well explain the ambivalence of Melek Tawûs, though the concept of an Evil Principle is alien to

Yezidism and he is in no way propitiated but venerated as an emanation of the Divine as are other members of the Heptad.

Sacred Texts

Despite the famous taboo, literacy has had a role in traditional Yezidism. A number of Arabic *qaṣīda*s attributed to Sheikh ‘Adi were published in the twentieth century.[56] Another Arabic, work, *Kitāb al-Jilwa li-Arbāb al-Khalwa* (‘The Book of Illumination for the people of solitude’) was written by his grand-nephew Ḥaṣan. This was probably the origin of the name ‘Jilwa’ (Kurdish *Cilwe*) for one of the mysterious Yezidi Holy Books whose existence has been rumoured since the seventeenth century;[57] the other is known as *Meshefa Reṣ* or ‘Black Book’. These two names probably referred to the same ‘Holy Book’ that no outsider had ever seen. The Adani sheikhs, permitted to acquire literacy, have for generations kept books known as *Cilwe*; apparently these are used mainly for divination.[58] The terms of the taboo notwithstanding, some Pîrs keep *miṣûr*, manuscripts containing family trees and relevant clan lists. Other manuscripts called *keṣkûl* exist, which include prayers and historical narratives.[59]

Oral traditions have played a much more important role in Yezidi life. The sacred hymns, known as *qewl* and *beyt*, were performed at various festivals and rites, and during the *Tawûsgerran* or ‘Parading of the Peacock’, when a sacred effigy representing the Peacock Angel was taken round the villages and venerated. The Hymns were recited, as were their *çîrok* or explanatory ‘stories’, and *miṣhabet* or sermons were preached on them. Alms thus collected were an important source of revenue for the Sheikhs and princely family of Sheikhan.

The thirst of outsiders for the elusive ‘Sacred Books’ was only partly slaked by the publication of the supposed *Meshefa Reṣ* and *Cilwe* by the Carmelite Anastase Marie de St Élie in 1911, which were edited and translated by Bittner in 1913. They were supposed to have been copied from manuscripts kept secretly in Sinjar, and to constitute the original Kurdish versions of texts that had originally appeared in Arabic, their sale mediated through local Christians.[60] However the Kurdish of Anastase’s texts is not the dialect spoken by Yezidis; their authenticity was challenged convincingly on a number of grounds by Alphonse Mingana in his 1916 publication. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, when more examples of the *qewl*, *beyt* and *çîrok* tradition had been transcribed and published, it became clear that the contents of the published ‘Sacred Books’ did in fact come from

this loosely-defined oral corpus and were in this sense genuine.[61] However, they only constitute a small part of the oral tradition.

The 1977 publication of many of the sacred texts by Suleyman and Jindy , which was considered controversial by many Yezidis at the time, can be recognised with hindsight as a defining event. It paved the way for partnerships with Western scholars, whose work was henceforth much more solidly grounded in Yezidi views and traditions.[62] More importantly, as more Yezidis gained access to higher education, it showed that the sacred texts could be used in new ways and that publication conferred authority on specific variants. Yezidis outside the religious elite could have ready access to texts, and think of them and discuss them in ways consistent with their formal education. Emphasis and authority have become less closely linked to the provenance of the tradition and the status of the bearer ('This is correct because Sheikh X said it') and has begun to reside more within the text ('The text says A, and therefore we can deduce B and C'). Most unprecedented of all, the texts are treated as sources to be interpreted for guidance on controversial issues, such as exogamy or homosexuality, just as they may be in Christianity or Islam.[63]

Yezidism is fast becoming a scriptural religion. Initiatives to collect and transcribe all the sacred hymns were partly motivated by the needs of the youth of the diaspora, especially those educated in Germany, who sought to make the religion of their parents more comprehensible.[64] Yezidis everywhere participate in online debates and discussions of their religion and identity; the cultural centres, especially the Lalesh centres of Northern Iraq and the centre in Oldenburg, Germany, generate numerous newspaper and magazine articles.[65]

Festivals

Some Yezidi festivals are moveable, linked to the lunar calendar; it is clear that they are counterparts of Islamic festivals and that Lalesh is at these times seen as a counterpart of Mecca. An example of this is *Şeva Berat*, a counterpart of *Laylat al-Barā'a*, when God is believed to decide what will happen during the following year. A *hajj* festival also exists, when men of religion gather in Lalesh, climb a mountain which is called Mount Erefat, and descend to wash their hands and face in the Zemzem Spring. However, the most important Yezidi festival, the great autumnal Feast of the Assembly (*Cejna Ceme'iye*) is immovable and during its seven days many rituals of Iranian origin are practised. The community at large decamps to Lalesh, with great festivity and the meeting of friends old

and new. More solemnly, the gathering of the religious elite, according to traditional beliefs, is paralleled by a conclave of God and the Seven Angels at this time. This is commemorated by a series of *sema'* or sacred processions. The high points include the sacrifice of a bull at the shrine of Sheikh Shems ('Lord Sun'), reminiscent of the Zoroastrian festival of Mithra called *Mehragān*, and also the Washing of the Bier of Sheikh Adi.[66]

The Yezidi New Year is celebrated in April and includes not only feasting and the decoration of eggs as symbols of New Life, but also lamentation by women at the graves of ancestors. In the Caucasus communal feasting takes place at the gravesides on certain specified days that vary by region; both sexes may sing songs of lamentation and everyone feasts and toasts the dead. Yezidism also has forty-day fasting periods in summer and winter, though these are observed in their entirety only by certain men of religion. Besides the 'Forty Days of Winter' a three-day fast, culminating in the celebration of the birth of Ezîd, is kept in December by many ordinary Yezidis. Other winter celebrations seem to be more localised – the *Gurka Gay* celebrating the return of flocks from the high pastures, and the two *Belinda* festivals, the second and more widespread of which takes place on the day the dead will rise again. *Batizmiye*, where sacrifices are made and special foods consumed, seems confined to tribes originating in Turkey. The Caucasus Yezidis celebrate *Khidir Nebî*, a localised version of the more general *Khidir Elyas*, which is notable for its carnival atmosphere, with disguise, cross-dressing and a general reversal of the normal order.[67]

Identity

Apart from the *qewwal* families of Ba'shiqe-Behzane who speak Arabic, the overwhelming majority of Yezidis speak Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) as their mother tongue, and many claim to be Kurdish. Their material culture, oral literature and music take the same forms as those of their Kurdish Muslim neighbours. However the construction of their identity, by themselves and by their rulers, has varied according to time and context. Current ethnic identity is usually perceived as primordial and closely linked to religious origins; scholarly debates and hypotheses by outsiders have had real political impact on the ground, and have been used to serve political purposes by ideologues and politicians.[68] For example, In the1970s, attempts to classify Yezidis as 'Umayyad Arabs formed part of governmental Arabisation projects in the Kurdish areas of Iraq. Some members of the princely family and the religious elite were receptive to

this; however, they were probably outnumbered by the dissenters, some of whom were active fighters in Mulla Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and from 1975 onwards, in Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In any case, Yezidi villages were as much the target of village demolition and collectivisation as other Kurdish communities; in Sinjar, already surrounded by Arab settlements, the policies were deeply resented but rather successful in the longer term, with Arabic being used in public contexts and Kurdish reduced for many to a household language. A member of the princely family in the European diaspora, Prince Mu'awiyah, responded to the 'Ummayad discourse with a book entitled, *To Us Spoke Zarathustra* (Paris, 1983) asserting a Zoroastrian identity. This idea was by no means new, having been considered a possibility by George Percy Badger in 1852,[69] but was probably introduced into Kurdish circles by Kamuran and Celadet Bedir Khan, pioneers of modern Kurdish nationalist ideology, in the 1930s. [70]

Clearly such an account of Yezidi orgins explains many of the similarities in the Yezidi and Zoroastrian world-views; moreover, Zoroastrianism as an Iranian religion is entirely compatible with Kurdishness. This view has become the norm in the Kurdish movement in Turkey and is part of PKK ideology.[71] Prominent Yezidis who oppose the PKK, such as Khalil Jindy Rashow, have hypothesised other origins such as Sumerian.[72]

In Armenia, Soviet ideology taught that the Yezidis were Kurds, like their Muslim brethren. However, since the overwhelming majority of Muslim Kurds left during the Karabagh War, the community is divided on the question of whether Yezidism is a religion (and hence its practitioners Kurds) or a separate ethnicity (and its members non-Kurds). Proponents of the latter have become influential; they have produced their own radio programmes and their own writing systems and textbooks, which are in turn refused by Yezidi schoolteachers who consider themselves to be Kurds.[73] However the violence between the two sides, which was a feature of the early 1990s, has largely abated. This schism, though damaging, is largely a local phenomenon and Yezidis from Georgia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union are less touched by it.

The Future

The full impact of the genocide of 2014 on the Yezidis of Northern Iraq may not be felt for some time. Currently there some 385,000 Yezidi IDPs in the Kurdish governorates of Northern Iraq, with complex humanitarian needs both physical and psychological, especially for the women who have managed to escape captivity and

return to their families.[74] Sinjar was not under Kurdish administration until 2003 and even before 2014 there was resentment among Sinjari Yezidis against the Kurdistan regional government and even, to some extent, towards the Yezidis of Sheikhan.[75] It was not only economically impossible for many Sinjari Yezidis to move to the more prosperous Kurdish-governed zone, but the Kurdish government actively sought to keep them in Sinjar for political reasons, to strengthen its own claim to the area.[76]

. .[77]

There were also serious security concerns; before 2014, the greatest loss of life took place in August 2007, when two Yezidi collective villages in Sinjar, Al Qahtaniya and Al-Jazīrah, were bombed using trucks loaded with explosives.[78] In April of the same year, within the Kurdish zone, a young Yezidi woman, Du'a Khalil Aswad, was killed by a mob of Yezidis because she had fallen in love with a Muslim and, it was said, tried to elope with him. She was declared to be a martyr by Islamist groups and in reprisal twenty-six Yezidis were killed in Mosul later that month.[79] Meanwhile women's groups in Erbil demonstrated against the 'honour killing'.[80]

Even these events pale by comparison with August 2014; few Sinjari Yezidis identfy themselves as 'Kurds' now, after the peshmerga forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government saved themselves by evacuating Sinjar without alerting the civilian population.[81] At that time, the only effective military support was provided by Syrian Kurdish militias aligned with the PKK, who opened a corridor for the refugees to escape, and some Yezidis joined these; others joined the Yezidi militias supported by the Kurdistan Regional Government. Both sets of militias combined to retake Sinjar, but the area is not yet safe enough to permit civilian return. A high-level Yezidi delegation visited Washington in October 2014; perhaps their major achievement was in alerting policy-makers to the dissent and anger of minorities in the area. Both Yezidis and displaced Christians in Nineveh province (which would include Sinjar) demand some degree of autonomy to enable the return, and it is clear that the future of these communities depends on wider settlements for Iraq as a whole.[82]

The diaspora poses more insidious dangers for Yezidism. Here the fears voiced by elders are not so much of persecution as of loss of identity. Many Yezidis in the diaspora are founding community centres and solidarity groups.[83] Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the global community is linked to the issue of exogamy. More and more young diaspora Yezidis are wanting to 'marry out', which is officially forbidden, but in

practice occasionally tolerated. Nevertheless the children of such marriages have difficulties finding Yezidi partners and the community diminishes in size. The long-term survival of the Yezidi diaspora community may depend on finding a coherent and consensual strategy for addressing this issue, which become all the more pressing if security cannot be assured in the homeland. If Yezidis were to leave the homeland altogether, the prospects for the long-term survival of the religion would be bleak indeed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Açıkyıldız, B. (2006). *Patrimoine des Yézidis: Architecture et "sculptures funéraires" au Kurdistan irakien, en Turquie et en Arménie*, PhD thesis, Paris I.

Ackermann, A. (2004). 'A double minority: notes on the emerging Yezidi diaspora', in W. Kokot, Kh. Tölölyan, C. Alfonso (eds), *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research* (London: Routledge) 156-88.

_____ (2008). 'Diaspora, Cyberspace And Yezidism: The Use Of The Internet Among Yezidis in Germany', *Journal of Kurdish Studies VI*, 54-83.

Allison, F.C. (2001). *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (London: Curzon).

_____(2008) "Unbelievable Slowness of Mind: Yezidi Studies, from Nineteenth to Twenty-first Century, *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, vol. VI, Peeters, 2008, 1-23.

_____ (2009). 'Representations of Yezidism and Zoroastrianism in the Kurdish newspapers *Hawar* and *Roja Nû*' in Allison, C, Joisten-Pruschke, A. and Wendtland, A. *From Daēnā to Dîn: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt, Festschrift für Philip Kreyenbroek zum 60. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz) 285-92.

_____(2013) 'Addressivity and the Monument: Memorials, Publics and the Yezidis of Armenia *History & Memory,* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2013), pp. 145-181.

Amnesty International (2014) 'Escape From Hell: Torture and Sexual Slavery in Islamic State Captivity in Iraq' Special Report published online at http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amnesty.org.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles

%2Fescape_from_hell_-_torture_and_sexual_slavery_in_islamic_state_captivity_in_iraq_-_english_2.pdf&ei=hqcaVbm0O9DYarX2gLAE&usg=AFQjCNHlKYRyWx41uEZr8VAoqPi3F6XXug&sig2=eX_tvmodNLpPnaJ0vYJ_Rw, consulted 31 March 2015.

Amy de la Bretèque. E. (2011)'Le pleur du duduk et la danse du zurna. Essai de typologie musicale des émotions dans le calendrier rituel Yézidi', in, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, volume 56, no. 2, pp.385-411. .

Badger, G. P. (1852). *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2 vols, (London: J Masters).

Barber, M.T. (2014) 'Islamic State Officially Admits to Enslaving Yazidi Women', *Syria Comment* on joshualandis.com, 15 October 2014, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/islamic-state-officially-admits-to-enslaving-yazidi-women/, consulted 31 March 2015.

_____(2015) 'Expelled, Enslaved, Exterminated: The Campaign to Ethnically Cleanse the Yazidi Minority of Iraq' *CMES Newsletter* Winter 2015, University of Chicago, online at http://cmes.uchicago.edu/, consulted 31 March 2015.

Benningsen, Alexandre (1960). 'Les Kurdes et la kurdologie en Union Soviétique', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 1-2, 513-30.

Bittner, M. (1913). *Die Heiligen Bücher der Jeziden oder Teufelsanbeter: (Kurdisch und Arabisch)*, Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-Hist., Klasse, Band LV, Vienna.

Celil, O., and Celil, J. (1978). *Zargotina K'urda (Kurdish Oral Tradition)* (Moscow: Nauka).

Charmoy, F.B. (ed.) (tr.) (1868-1875). *Chéref-Nameh ou Fastes de la Nation Kourde; par Chéref-oudīne, Prince de Bidlīs, dans l'Iiâlet d'Erzeroûme*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg: Commissionaires de l'Academie Imperiale des Sciences).

Chol, Emir Muawwiyah (1983). *To Us Spoke Zarathustra* (Paris: Association Zoroastrienne de France).

Dankoff, R. (1990). *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis: the relevant section of the Seyahatname edited with translation, commentary and introduction* (Leiden and New YorkBrill).

Dehqan, M. (2008). 'The *Fatwā* Of Malā Sālih Al-Kurdī Al-Hakkārī: An Arabic Manuscript On The Yezidi Religion,' *Journal of Kurdish Studies VI*, 140-62.

Deringil, S. (1998). *The Well-Protected Domains* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris).

Dirr, A. (1917-18). 'Einiges über die Yeziden', *Anthropos* 12/13, 558-74.

Drower, E.S. (1941). *Peacock Angel* (London: J. Murray).

Dulz, I, Savelsberg, E, and Hajo, S. (2008). 'Persecuted And Co-Opted - The Yezidis In The "New" Iraq', *Journal of Kurdish Studies VI*, 24-43.

Dündar, F. (2006). *L'ingénierie ethnique du comité Union et Progrès et la Turcisation de l'Anatolie 1913-1918*, Ph.D. thesis, EHESS, Paris.

Edmonds, C.J. (1967). *A Pilgrimage to Lalish* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland).

Evliya Çelebi (ed. Cevdet *et al*.) (1896-1938). *Seyahat-name* (Istanbul).

Frank, R. (1911). *Scheich 'Adī der grosse Heilige der Jeziden* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller).

Frayha, A. (1946). 'New Yezidi Texts from Beled Sinjār, 'Iraq' *JAOS* 66, 18-43.

Fuccaro, N. (1997). 'Ethnicity, State Formation, and conscription in postcolonial Iraq: the case of the Yazidi Kurds of Jabal Sinjar', *IJMES* 29, 559-80.

_____ (1999). *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris).

Gökçen, A. tr. Tee, C. (2010) Notes from the Field: Yezidism: A New Voice and an Evolving Culture in Every Setting, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, December 2010 37(3), pp. 405–427.

Guest, J.S. (1993). *Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis*, 2nd ed. (London: Kegan Paul International).

Guidi, M. (1932a). 'Origine dei Yazidi e Storia Religiosa dell'Islam e del Dualismo', *RSO* 12, 266-300.

_____ (1932b). 'Nuove Ricerche sui Yazidi', *RSO* 12, pp. 377-427.

Joseph, I. (1909). 'Yezidi texts' *AJSL* 25, 111-56, 218-54.

Kreyenbroek, P.G. (1995). *Yezidism - Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston, N.Y.; Lampeter : Edwin Mellen).

_____ and Jindy Rashow, Kh. (2005). *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect:Sacred Poems and Religious Narratives from the Yezidi Tradition* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

_____ with Kartal, Z., Omarkhali, Kh. and Jindy Rashow, Kh. (2009). *Yezidism in Europe: Different Generations speak about their religion*, Goettinger Orientforschungen: Iranica, Band 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

Layard, A. H. (1849) *Nineveh and its Remains*, 2 vols. (London).

_____ (1853) *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: John Murray, 1853 (London : Spottiswoode and Shaw).

Lescot, R. (1936). 'Quelques Publications Récentes sur les Yézidis', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 6, 103-8.

_____ (1938). *Enquête sur les Yezidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjar* (Beirut: [Institut français de Damas]).

Maisel, S. (2008) 'Social Change Amidst Terror and Discrimination: Yezidis in the New Iraq', *Middle East Institute Policy Brief* no. 18, Washington DC: Middle East Institute.

Mingana, A. (1916). 'Devil-worshippers: their Beliefs and their Sacred Books', *JRAS*, 505-26.

Murad, J.E. (1993). *The Sacred Poems of the Yazidis: An Anthropological Approach*, Ph.D. thesis, University of California at Los Angeles.

Nau, F. and Tfinkdji, J. (1915-1917). 'Receuil de textes et de documents sur les Yézidis', *ROC*, 2nd series, vol. 20, 142-200, 225-75.

Omarkhali, K. (2008). 'On The Structure Of The Yezidi Clan And Tribal System And Its Terminology Among The Yezidis Of The Caucasus', *Journal of Kurdish Studies VI*, 104-19.

Spät, E. (2005). 'Changes in the Oral Tradition of the Yezidis of Iraqi Kurdistan', *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 5, 73-83.

_____ (2005). *The Yezidis* (London: publisher).Saqi Books

Suleyman, Kh. (1985). *Gundiyatî* (Baghdad:). Alhwadaṭ

_____ and Jindi, Kh. (1979). *Êzdiyatî liber Roṣnaya Hindek Têkstêd Aîne Êzdiyan (Yezidism: in the Light of Some Religious Texts of the Yezidis)* repr. 1995 in Latin script.(Baghdad: publisher). unknown

Siouffi, N. (1882). 'Notice sur la secte des Yézidis', *JA*, ser. 7, vol. 19, 252-68.

_____ (1885). 'Notice sur le Cheikh 'Adi et la Secte des Yézidis', *JA*, ser. 8, vol. 5, 78-100.

Strohmeier, M. (2003). *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden and Boston: Brill).

Tamoyan, A. (2001). *Menk' Ezdi Enk'* (*We are Yezidi*) (Yerevan: VMV.

Tejel, J. (2009) *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Van den Toorn, C. (2014) 'How the U.S.-favored Kurds Abandoned the Yezidis When ISIS Attacked' *The Daily Beast,* 17 August 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/08/17/how-the-u-s-favored-kurds-abandoned-the-yazidis-when-isis-attacked.html, consulted 31 March 2015.

Vanly, I. Ch. (1992). 'The Kurds of the Soviet Union', in Kreyenbroek, P.G. and Sperl, S. *The Kurds a Contemporary Overview* (London: Routledge).

Zaehner, R.C. (1955). *Zurvan: a Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Clarendon).

1 These events were extensively reported on international news networks – on the accounts which emerged, see for example: 'Mount Sinjar: Yazidis' tales of survival as thousands cling on for life', 12 December 2014 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-30440514, accessed 11 March 2015. I am grateful to Matthew Barber for precision on the Kocho death toll, and to Khidher Domle, Director of New Media at the University of Duhok and specialist on minority affairs, for updating on the number of women still missing.

2 Specifically the magazine (*Debiq*, issue 4, October 2014, published online) called the continued existence of Yazidis something that Muslims should 'question', saying they might be called to account for it on the day of judgment. In the same issue they justified the sexual slavery of women on Islamic grounds. See Barber 2014 for translation and discussion of the article concerned.

3Kreyenbroek 1995, 1; 59-61.

4 The most engaging and informative introduction to the Yezidis is Spät, 2005 that is based on her fieldwork over a period covering the war of 2003.

5 Posters declaring the Yezidis to be 'the original Kurds' were in evidence in Northern Iraq in 1992; one was photographed by Mieke Kreyenbroek in Duhok in March of that year.

6 See Maisel 2008 for details.

7 This is based on an estimate of 350,000 Yezidis as IDPs in early 2015 given to me by Khidher Dommle; besides these, the community in Sheikhan remains largely *in situ* as does that of Dihok.

8 For the former Soviet Union see Chatoev 1965, 9; Aristova 1966, 19; Müller, 2000. For Turkey see Gökçen 2010, 407

9 See Allison 2013, 160.

10 Kreyenbroek 1995, 31-2. On consideration of the Christian sources Ramisho‘ Barhebraeus and Ishak of Bartella, Kreyenbroek considers it more probable that the first Sheikh ‘Adi, and not his nephew ‘Adi who later led the order, settled there. However, Fuccaro 1999, 14 is convinced by the text and considers that it was the second ‘Adi. See Açıkyıldız 2006 for an architectural survey of the Lalesh site, which finds against the Ramisho‘ narrative. The Syriac sources on this are reproduced in Nau and Tfinkdji 1915-1917.

11 Kreyenbroek, 1995, 27-8.

12 The current princely dynasty, the Chol family, supplanted Sheikh ‘Adī’s family in the seventeenth century.

13 Al-Kutubī and Ibn Ṯaymiyya are both cited by Kreyenbroek 1995, 31-2.

14 Kreyenbroek 1995: 34-5 bases his translation of this passage from the *al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifa Duwal al-Mulūk* in Frank 1911, 87-91.

15 Guest 1993, 44-5.

16 Guest 1993, 47. Qasim Beg had enjoyed the support of the Ottoman sultan Selim but Sheikh ‘Izz al-Dīn clearly outmanoeuvred him by ingratiating himself with the Ottoman governor of Aleppo installed after Selim’s recapture of the city from Egyptian control.

17 Guest 1993, 48.

18 Guest 1993, 49.

19 Charmoy 1868 vol. 1 part 2, 28, 42.

20 Charmoy 1868 vol.2 part 1, 66-9.

21 Charmoy 1868 vol. 2 part 1, 158-77.

22 Charmoy 1868 vol. 1 part 2:28; vol.2 part 1:116.

23 Dankoff 1990, 175. The longest list of Yezidi tribes fighting for the Khan is given by Dankoff 1990, 207 as: Khalitî, Chekvanî, Bapirî, Jûlovî, Temanî, Mervanî, Beddî, Tatekî, Gevarî, Gevashî, Bezikî, Mudikî, Kanekhî.

24 Evliya Çelebi vol 4: 61-71, cited by Guest 1993, 50.

25 cf. Allison 2001, 57; Guest 1993, 68-69.

26 See Guest 1993, 96-7, who also reports that during the reign of Bedir Khan Beg, perhaps the last of the semi-autonomous Kurdish princes, there were many attacks and forced conversions of Christians.

27 Edwards 1967, 59.

28 Deringil 1998, 192.

29 See Guest 1993, 76-123 for an account of various missions and their relations with the Yezidis.

30 Layard 1853, 4.

31 Most Yezidi communities, like their former Armenian and Syriac neighbours, remember the Hamidiyeh with fear as enforcers of a militant Sunnism. Yezidi tribes are usually portrayed by

Armenians as sheltering them from such forces. However, a Yezidi subsection of the Milli tribal confederation, led by Ibrahim Pasha and inhabiting the region around Viranşehır, did enlist. Their leader, Hesen Kenco, converted to Islam but his followers seem to have kept their Yezidism. Hesen may have been instrumental in having 'Umar Wehbi Pasha recalled to Istanbul. See Guest 1993, 140.

[32] Guest 1993, 134-40.

[33] Allison 2001, 87-101.

[34] Guest 1993, 193-8.

[35] In summer 2007 the author photographed the display commemorating the role of the Yezidi leaders Cahangir Agha and Usib Beg in this battle, at the Sardarapat museum. A monument to the former has also been erected in Yerevan.

[36] In the author's opinion, Vanly's chapter on the Kurds of the Soviet Union, in Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1991, 143-70 understates the significance of this cultural production. The Kurdish-language outputs of Radio Yerevan had an impact across the region. I would also contest the portrayal by Guest 1993: 202 of a benighted community when he describes a visit to the Caucasian community in 1977 by Beyazid Beg, a member of the princely family, as a 'ray of light from abroad [which] pierced the darkness of the age'. At this time, when many Iraqi Yezidis remained in their villages and few went to school, the Caucasian Yezidis had had multilingual schooling for decades, and as well as some being involved in high-prestige careers such as medicine and engineering, were producing novels, poetry, films, stage plays, newspapers, magazines and radio programmes.

[37] See for example Lescot 1938 .

[38] See Tejel 2009 for details of the Kurds in Syria

[39] The Yezidi organisation in Oldenburg, which has its own community centre and publishes *Dengê Êzidiyan* ('Voice of the Yezidis'), was founded by a Yezidi from Turkey, Telim Tolan, but its publications show a strong contribution from such influential figures as Pir Khidir Suleyman from Iraq. Khalil Jindy Rashow was similarly influential in the Organisation of Yezidis Outside the Homeland, based in Hannover.

[40] Fuccaro 1999, 96-100 gives a fascinating account of Yezidi relations with the government in general and of inter-communal relations, especially interactions with Christians.

[41] Fuccaro 1999, 136-48.

[42] See Allison 2001, 29-30.

[43] Suleyman and Jindy 1977.

[44] For a discussion of this see Allison 2008, 9-11.

[45] Siouffi 1885 made this identification.

[46] Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005, 22.

[47] Edmonds 1967, 6.

48 cf. Kreyenbroek 1995, 148.

49 The document states not only that it is impossible for Yezidis to serve in the Army, but also that they may not share such items as combs, spoons, cups with members of other religions (Muslims are cited in particular) and that they may not go into public baths. For the text see Kreyenbroek 1995, 6-7; for the circumstances of its production, Guest 1993, 122.

50 Intermarriage with the family of the *kerîf* is impossible and the institution is often used to cement intercommunal relations in Iraq. It was also observed among the Muslim Kurds of Turkey, sometimes to make links with influential Ottoman officers.

51 Omarkhali 2008.

52 Guest 1993, 140.

53 Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005, 131-72. In the *Çîroka Pêdabûna Sura Êzî* or 'Story of the Appearance of the Mystery of Ezi', Yezid is distanced as far as possible from his father Mu'awiya, and a prophecy is made foretelling that he will bring the end of Islam. See Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005, 131-56.

54 Kreyenbroek 1995, 46-61; see also his chapter on 'Ahl-e Haqq' in this volume.

55 Zaehner 1955,438.

56 Joseph 1909; Frank 1911; Frayha 1946.

57 See Dehqan 2008 for an edition of a Muslim *fatwa* against the Yezidis which makes mention of this book.

58 Few outsiders have seen these; the author relies on descriptions and photographs by Kreyenbroek.

59 Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005, 42-3.

60 Guest 1993, 146-163; Kreyenbroek 1995, 10-16.

61 Kreyenbroek 1995, 15.

62 These partnerships, such as Kreyenbroek and Rashow, are discussed in Allison 2008.

63 I am indebted to Philip Kreyenbroek for this (personal communication, 2012).

64 Kreyenbroek 2009, 229-31.

65 Ackermann 2008; Spät 2005, 82-86; Dulz *et al.*, 39-40.

66 Spät 2005, 50-60; Kreyenbroek 2005, 15-18.

67 Amy de la Bretèque 2011.

68 The government's Arabisation initiatives were well remembered and described by my interviewees in 1992.

69 Badger 1842 vol. I, 112-13.

70 Strohmeier 2003, 167 n. 17; Allison 2009, 285-89.

71 For a discussion of how this is playing out in Turkey see Allison 2014.

72 I am grateful to Sheikh Khalil Jindy Rashow and Philip G. Kreyenbroek for this information.

[73] These events were unfolding during my fieldwork in Armenia from 2005-2007.

[74] See Amnesty International 2014 for details.

[75] I am grateful to Ezster Spät for this information. Dulz, Savelsberg and Hajo 2008, 42 underline the pragmatic approach of Sinjari Yezidis towards their identity. See also Maisel 2008.

[76] Dulz *et al*. 2008, 35-6.

[77] Dulz *et al* 2008, 26-33.

[78] See Maisel 2008, 1.

[79] See Maisel 2008, 4.

[80] Although Western media, especially the German press, are apt to represent honour crime as rife among the Yezidis, it is a problem of Kurdish rural society in general.

[81] See van den Toorn 2014

[82] See Barber 2015 for an op-ed on the current situation.

[83] The most long-standing of these are the centres in Oldenburg 'The Yezidi Cultural Forum' and Hannover 'Foundation for Yezidis outside the Homeland', founded in the 1990s.