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THE YEZIDI PANTHEON

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General

Besides the Holy Triad,¹ constituting the so-called dogmatic base of the Yezidi religion and standing distinctly out in the cult and in the beliefs, the pantheon of the Yezidis includes a multiplicity of deities and spirit guardians, which are not too easy to determine, by many reasons other than scarcity or sparseness of the available material. Identifying the *denotata* of the Yezidi nomenclature of divine beings is obstructed by the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the revered historical personalities—Sheikh ‘Adi’s kinsmen and ambience, locally significant saints, having restricted spheres of influence, the Sufi saints (Mansur al-Hallaj, Rabi‘a ‘Adawiyya), Biblical and Qur’anic characters (Ibrahim, Musa, ‘Isa, ‘Ali, etc.), as well as simply *sheikhs* and *pirs* possessing a certain halo of saintliness. At the same time, many mythical and semi-mythical figures, saints, often even historical characters, having retained their cults in various Near Eastern religious traditions, e. g. in Islam and, in particular, in its so-called heretical environment, gained popularity with the Yezidis who worship them along with their genuine deities. A specific regional figure from this category of characters can be included in the paradigm of the Yezidi divine beings in case it has been deeply implanted in the popular mind and adapted to the religious tradition (e. g. Ibrahim-khalil, Khidir-nabi).

For the figures of the folk pantheon it is impossible to identify the unambiguous attributes of sanctity for a given figure even in the relig-

¹ The Holy Triad includes Malak-Tāwūs, Sultan Yezid, and Sheikh ‘Adi bin Musafir, a historical figure, the founder of the ‘Adawiyya Sufi order, which was later to become the main basis for the formation of the Yezidi community (cf. Asatrian, Arakelova 2003: 4-9; the detailed account of this issue see in the forthcoming monograph by the same authors, Asatrian, Arakelova).

ions having an official institute of canonisation (as in Christianity). Even more so it is related to the doctrines wherein the deification or canonisation is done informally, in the way of a popular tradition. In Yezidism, these informal criteria can be satisfied by the character being by all represented in the oral religious tradition (*Qawl-ū-bayt*'), as well as in most cases, by having been rested in a legendary burial place in Lalish.² Canonisation (deification) can be also substantiated by a genealogy going back to the relatives and subordinates of Sheikh 'Adi (Sheikh Hasan, Fakhr-ad-din, and Sheikh Shams).

The figures identified here as deities are those who patronise diverse spheres of human activities or personify the natural phenomena. This list does not include the seven avatars of Malak-Tāwūs: 'Azrail, Dardail, Israfil, Mikail, Jabrail, Shannail, and Turail (of which 'Azrail, the alleged head of the Seven, is usually identified with Malak-Tāwūs, the Seven all in all still being the emanations of the latter), as well as most of their counterparts within the system of saints—historical personalities of the 'Adawiyya order, *viz.* Sheikh Abu Bakr (Šēxōbakr), Sajad ad-din (Sijjādīn, being characterised as *qāsīdē rūhē mirīyā*—psychopomp, responsible for escorting the souls of the dead to the underworld), Nasr ad-din (identified with the angel of death; he used to be the executor under Sheikh 'Adi, killing everyone who countered him). The exceptions are Sheikh Shams, symbolising the sun, and Fakhr ad-din identified with the moon.

As regards the deities controlling the natural phenomena, most are believed to heal the diseases caused by the corresponding spheres under their command. It is to be noted that the healing function is commonly ascribed to the sanctuaries, shrines, and certain sheikhy clans, as one of the important elements of working miracles (see Arakelova 2001a).

The names of deities, spirit guardians and saints are commonly featured with the caste-related titles *sheikh* (šēx), *pīr* (p'īr), as well as *dervish* (dawrēš). The latter means, as a rule, a saint, a righteous, errant hermit, a mystic, perhaps even "the lord, the master". This word, as shown by its Old Iranian proto-form *driguška- (< *adari-gauša-), originally meant "listener, (spiritual) disciple", being attested also in the Middle Iranian texts (cf., e. g., in Sogdian *zywšk*, *δρυwšk*/*žyušk* "disciple"). Socially and semantically, dervish is comparable with the

² The valley of Lalish, in the mountains north of Mosul in Iraq, where the shrine of Sheikh 'Adi and sanctuaries of other holy beings are located (see Guest 1987: 16-17; Kreyebroek 1995: 77-80).

Indian *bhikṣu* (literally “mendicant”), being simultaneously the designation of a monastic class. In some respect, the synonym of dervish among the Extreme Shi‘a sectarians is the title *bābā* (cf. *Bābā Yādegār*, *Bābā Tāhir*, etc.), which is spread all the way to India.

More often than not, used as epithets with the names of saints, spirits, and deities are the terms *malak* (Arab. *malak*)—“angel”, *xās* (from Arab. *xāṣṣ*)—“chosen, noble”, *xudān*—“master, protector, patron”, *mēr* (lit. “man”)—“holy man”, *a’ziz* (Arab. ‘*aziz* “dear, respected”)—“holy”, *walī* (Arab. *walī* “friend, beloved, close (to god)”—“holy”, *qanj* “good, handsome”—“holy, saint” (cf. *qanjē Xwadē* “God’s saint”), and so on.

The throng of gods, goddesses, patron deities, and guardian spirits of the Yezidis are, in fact, predominantly performative entities deprived of a constant dogmatic basis. They seem to exist mostly in ritual, being usually invoked in particular cultic events related to their domains of competence.

Thus, to be counted among the gods and deities of the Yezidi pantheon, in addition to the Holy Triad, are the following figures: the Thunder-god³ (with a number of equivalent figures); the Lord of the wind and the air; the Foremother of the Yezidis and the Patroness of the women in labour; the Mistress of the pregnant women and of the infants; the deity of the phallus; the dual deities of cattle; the Lord of the earth (underworld); the Patron of wayfarers; the Spirit of the furrow, the Spirit of the household; the Spirit of the bedding; the Lord of the graves; the Universal deity (*Khidir-nabi*); the Friend of God (*Ibrahim-khalil*); the Ruler of the genies; the Builder-spirit; the deities of the sun and the moon, and that of the garment.⁴

Traditionally, a good few of the Yezidi deities, including the classical angels ‘Azrail and Jabrail, have been buried in Lalish, the existence of the legendary burial place of a saint (or a deity, all the more so), a mausoleum, a shrine or a sanctuary in the principal centre of the devotional life of the Yezidis being, to a certain extent, an indication of their canonisation.⁵

³ It is, of course, a highly conventional label not to be compared with the characteristics of the classical thunderers in the Ancient Greek, Old Indian, or Old Slavonic mythologies.

⁴ The latter, i. e. the deities of the sun (*Šēx Šams*), the moon (*Farxadīn*), and of the garment (*Šēx kirās* and *Hazmāmān*), recently described by Arakelova (2002), are herein understandably omitted.

⁵ Though this statement is contested by some authors (cf. Kreyenbroek 1995: 29), a shrine still remains a relevant factor of the so-called folk canonisation in the Yezidi beliefs.

1. *The Thunder-God. The Deity of the Lightning and the Wind*

Māma-(Mam-)rašān, or Mahmad-rašān, lit. “pouring, darting Mahmad (Muhammad)”, is the god of the thunder and the lightning. The second part of this name, -rašān, may be a *nomen agentis* from the verb řaşāndin, “to pour down, to spread”, going back to Old Ir. *fra-šān- (Asatrian, Livshits 1994: §§ III, 4, XIV, 1). The epithet of Māma-rašān is “lion” (Šēr Mahmadē řaşān, or Šēr Mahmad-rašān). The published specimens of the Yezidi religious folklore only once refer directly to the Lord of the lightning under another name—Šēx A’brūs (Jindy 1992: 10). In one of the prayers (Dirōzga) mention is made of a certain saint named Malak-Birūs, i. e. “Angel Birūs” (Celil, Celil 1978b: 393), which may be one more denomination of this deity. It is highly improbable that it is a name of another formerly existing character. Perhaps the form A’brūs (Šēx being the title) has originated from the combination *abr-birūs—“cloud-lightning”, so that in its entirety it means the “(Sheikh) of the clouds and the lightning”. As for Birūs (in combination with Malak—“angel”), it is the appellative *birūs* “lightning” (with the loss of the final -k). Thus, Malak-Birūs means “lightning angel”. That, however, is not the last line in the inventory of the Yezidi celestials controlling the thunder and the related phenomena. At the turn of the last century the Armenian Yezidis featured another image named Ābā-birūs (Avdal: 133), which is now completely forgotten (at any rate not one of the queried pundits of the Yezidi folklore amidst the spiritual castes in Armenia could recollect this name). If this deity is the same as A’brūs (which seems quite certainly to be the case), then the name can be etymologised in another way, with a good degree of authenticity, namely: < OIr. *ābā- (Old Ind. ābhā)—“radiance, brilliance”, yielding “flashing lightning” (or “outburst of lightning”), a very fitting image for a deity. In all, Māma-rašān, Ābā-birūs (A’brūs), and Bā-raš—“Spirit of the hurricane” (lit. “Black wind”, another figure mentioned by Avdal, *op. cit.*) are the names of the same deity, his differing characteristics: “pouring hail”, “darting (lightnings)”, “flashing lightning” (or “cloud-lightning”), and “hurricane, whirlwind”. However, Māma-rašān, as the most generic indication (“pouring [rain, lightnings, hail] Mahmad”), has sponged most of the thunderer’s nature, while Ābā-birūs and Bā-raš are actually featured as labels for his individual functional manifestations. All these designations have only one *denotatum*—Thunderer, though the bearers of these names are often presented as individual characters and sometimes even quarrel with one another. What has been noted is by no means a

negation of gods or deities of the wind and hurricane as individual figures of the pantheon as a whole: fortunately, there are bright images of Vayu and Vāta—the Old Iranian gods of the hurricane (death, and destiny) and the wind, however they are full-fledged cultic figures (see Wikander 1941) distinct from the Yezidi Bār-aš who is no more than a personification of the wind. The same is true about Ābā-birūsk (Malak-birūs) and Šēx A’brūs as personifications of the lightning.⁶

Another indication of the god of the thunder and lightning is perhaps ‘Abdī Rāšō (or ‘Abd Rāš), who is regarded as Sheikh ‘Adi’s servant and has obvious connections with the stone (see Kreyenbroek 1995: 115). The epithet Rāš(ō) (cf. Kurd. řaş) means “black”, the colour often used to define the names of supernatural beings.⁷ The designation of the Yezidi spirit of the wind, Bā-řaş, also has the formant řaş, “black”, as an attribute to bā—“wind”, meaning “Black wind”. It signifies also “whirlwind, hurricane”. The Yezidis believe the wind to be the breath of Bā-řaş, and the whirlwind and the hurricane to result from a dispute among Māma-řaşān, Ābā-birūsk and Bā-řaş (Avdal, *op. cit.*). The mentioned formant (-řaş) could have been traced to the same Old Iranian proto-form, *fra-šān-, meaning “Blowing (overtaking) wind”, however the Armenian dialectal designation of a hurricane or whirlwind—*sev k’ami* (lit. “black wind”)—is an unambiguous indication of Bā-řaş to be understood namely as “Black wind”. It is possible, by the way, that the second component of the Māma-řaşān’s name, -řaşān, also includes řaş (“black”), with the patronymic suffix -ān, simply meaning “Mahmad, or Mām, from the clan of the Blacks (i. e. divine beings)”. The black colour is an unambiguous symbol of the transcendental world, masculinity and chthonism (see Asatrian 2002: 81-82).

Māma-řaşān is controlling both reaping and harvest. His feast is celebrated in spring. In a draught, rain was to be summoned using the formula: *Yā Māma-řaşān* (or *Mahmad-řaşānō*), *biřaşīna*, *bārānē bi řarika bārīna* (Jindy 1992: 10-11), i. e. “Oh Māma-řaşān, sprinkle (moisture), make rain fall copiously” (Kreyenbroek 1995: 109).

⁶ The Yezidi terms for lightning—*birūsk* (< Old Iran. *wi-rauča-), *bōbalīsk* and *biřq*—are tabooed, being used mostly in cursing (cf. *Birūsk mālā ta xa*—“Let lightning strike your home”) and in some set phrases (like *gīsnē birūskē*—“plough (radiance) of lightning”). The tabooed designation of the lightning is substituted by the word *bimbārak*—“blessing, grace” (cf. *Bimbārakē lēdā*—“lightning struck”).

⁷ Mention can be made, e. g., of *Siyāh-gāleš*—“the Black Shepherd”, the Lord of cattle among the Iranian population of the Caspian area (see Asatrian 2002).

Each village owned a special ritual cup carrying the name of Māma-rašān inscribed inside in Arabic letters. It used to be named the Māma-rašān's cup—(K'āsā Māma-rašānē) and was employed in the ceremony of calling the rain. One of the sheikhs held it in both his hands standing on the roof of his house, chanting:

Māma-rašō, Māma-rašō!
 Māma-rašō, tu xāybī.
 Am gunana, Māma-rašō,
 Bārānē bida, Māma-rašō!

Oh Māma-rašān, oh Māma-rašān!
 Māma-rašān, reveal⁸ yourself.
 We are pitiful, Māma-rašān,
 Give us rain, Māma-rašān!

Māma-rašān is seen as a rider, usually on a lion, holding a snake as a whip:

Māma-rašān mērakī siyāra,
 Qāmčiyē wī ma'ra. (Celil, Celil 1978b: 13)

Māma-rašān is a (lion)-rider,
 His whip is a snake.

According to the legend referred to in the hymn of “Sheikh ‘Adi and the holy men”, Sheikh ‘Adi arrived in Lalish from Bayt Fār, his native village, and appointed Māma-rašān head of the holy men. Soon the rumour of Sheikh ‘Adi was spread everywhere. When meeting a group of righteous men (*sayyids*), wishing to see evidence of his sanctity and miracle-working, Sheikh ‘Adi seated his comrade-in-arms Māma-rašān upon a rock, and the latter started prancing around, sitting astride on the stone.

Šēxādī kiribū firwāra,
 Šēr Mahmad-rašān li barakī kir siwāra,
 Gō: galī mērā wa čī haya li bāla?
 Yā Mahmad-rašān, siwār ba li barakī,

⁸ Kurd. xway-, xāy- “to reveal, show”; cf. Pers. huwaydā (kardan/šudan) “to make appear, to appear, be evident”. An Iranian form, yet without a convincing etymology. The first part of it is, for sure, from OIr. *hu-

Awān mērā hēwir namā li darakī,
 Ži wān bipirsa xabarakī...
 Čandī sayyidīna
 Dang dikin bi nihīna,
 Av bara ruh' tē nīna.
 We dibēžit šēxī sayyidā,
 Gāvā Mahmad-rašān dīta:
 Tu šēxī anī mirīdā?
 Az Mahmadē řašīma,
 Siwārē barīma,
 Az bixō mirīdē Šēxādīma.

Sheikh 'Adi gave a command:
 He made the Lion Mahmad Rashan mount a piece of rock.
 He said, "Oh holy men, what is in your minds?"
 "Oh Mahmud Rashan, mount a piece of rock,
 Those holy men (will) have no place of refuge left anywhere,
 (Then) ask them to comment!" ...
 All the *sayyids*
 Exclaimed secretly,
 "There (can be) no life in that piece of rock".
 The leader of the *sayyids* said,
 when he saw Mahmud Rashan,
 "Are you the Sheikh or a disciple?"
 I am Mahmad Rashi,⁹
 I am the rider of the rock,
 I am truly Sheikh 'Adi's disciple" (Kreyenbroek 1995: 222-223).

Upon seeing this miracle, the sheikhs who were themselves miracle-workers and could, among other things, tame a lion, admitted the sanctity and the supernatural powers of Sheikh 'Adi and welcomed him. Incidentally, in some legends Sheikh 'Adi also rides a rock.

The motif of a saint riding a rock, a wall (or a lion, which is the God's hound, by a Muslim legend), is attested also in the Sufi and the Extreme Shi'a traditions (the Chishtiyya, the Bektashis, the Zazas, Ahl-i Haqq). According to a Bektashi legend, once a righteous man, Sayyid Mahmud Hayrani from the city of Akşehir, set out to visit Haji Bektash Veli, the founder of the Bektashi order, riding a lion, a snake in his hand as a whip, escorted by three hundred Mevlevi dervishes

⁹ Mahmad Rashi (Mahmad-řaši), i. e. Mahmad- řašan: Rashi (-raši) is rather a hypocorism from Rashan (řašan) than a tribal affiliation, as suggested by Kreyenbroek (1995: 299).

(members of a *tariqat* founded by Jalal ad-din Balkhi or Rumi). Having received the news of the visitors coming, Haji Bektash said: "Those men are coming on living creatures, while we shall straddle a non-living object". Not too far, close to Kızılca Havlet, there was a red rock, as high as a wall. Haji Bektash straddled it and commanded it to move. The rock assumed the shape of a bird at once and hit the road. Since that time the rock is rumoured to have retained the shape of a bird (Mélikoff 1998: 76). There are also other versions of this story with different religious figures of Asia Minor and Albania posing as opponents of Haji Bektash: Karaca Ahmed, Hacı Bayram, Ahmad Rifa'i (see Gordlevskij 1960: 265, 363). Similar stories are being told about Sarı Saltık, another religious figure of the Extreme Shi'a movement in Asia Minor featured as a saint also in the religious beliefs of the Zazas (see Mélikoff 1998: 42-43, 59, 62; Gordlevskij: 268-269). In the early 20th century an English traveller recorded a similar legend among the Zazas (Qizilbashis).

"On reaching the western end of Dujik Baha Dagh,—the author reports,—we leave the streams, which continues south-west round the base of the mountain to join the Muzur Su near Surp Garabet monastery¹⁰ and clamber up a rugged ravine to the right, striking Dujuk Baba's northern edge. Not far from here one passes a high rock split in two, the upper portion of which bears a striking resemblance to a head surmounted by a *fêz*. This, the Kezelbash say, was the head of a hated Turk cleft in two, and the rock on which he stood with it, by a blow from the mighty sword of Hazreti Ali.¹¹ At a village hard by, called Kardéré, there is a stone wall much venerated by the Kezelbash for the part it played in the miraculous demonstration of the superior sanctity of one Seïd over another. In the old days, much rivalry existed between the various Seïds as regards their respective degrees of sanctity, and as humility was not one of the virtues that counted, they did not hesitate to parade their miracle-working powers... The Seïd of the Gureshan tribe one day mounted a lion and went to visit his neighbour, the Seïd of the Bamasurli tribe, with the intention of thus displaying his sanctity. The latter, seeing from afar his brother Seïd approaching on a lion, felt himself challenged; so he mounted the above-mentioned wall, took in his hand a snake, which he brandished as a

¹⁰ St. Karapet, or Halvori vank', a well-known Armenian monastery, equally revered both by the Armenians and by the Zazas. The monastery is particularly renowned for its power of healing the mentally ill (see Andranik 1901: 77-78, 97-108).

¹¹ Incidentally, dissection of a rock, sometimes a large tree, mostly an oak, is a conspicuous feature of the thunder-god.

whip, and thus equipped went forth to meet his guest. At this sight, the Seid Gureshan was compelled to avow that his sanctity was as nothing compared to that of Seid Bamasurly, and dismounting from the lion he kissed the latter Seid's hand" (Molyneux-Seel 1914: 58).

Sultān Ishāq (or Sohāq), one of the founders of the Ahl-i Haqq, regarded to be the fourth manifestation of the Divine essence (see Safi-zādeh Borakey 1998: 101-115), is featured prominently in similar legends; one has been recorded by V. A. Žukovskij. According to this story, Sultān Ishāq commanded his servant Dawud to build a wall on the land owned by a certain saint Mikail (Pir Mikā'il). When the latter knew about that, he mounted a lion, grabbed a horrible serpent and set out to defend his property. Dawud informed his master about the approaching threat. Without confusion, Sultān commanded Dawud to mount the partially erected wall and go ahead to meet the threat, warning that he, Sultān, was to be found at a certain place. Following the instructions, Dawud hit the road, joined Pir Mikail along the way; later they got to the river, the present-day Sorevan, with Sultān Ishāq waiting for them on the opposite bank. The tumultuous mountain river gave forth a terrible roar so that the two parties could not hear each other; this nuisance was noted by Mikail. Sultān then tamed the out-rush by throwing a little rug on it. In the ensuing stillness Sultān and Mikail sat down on the mat and entered into negotiations. To make a long story short, Mikail started to feel fits of hunger and said it to Sultān. At that very moment there was a splash, and a fish came out of the water, then it rose up at a sign or a word by Ishāq, to lie down at his feet on the rug. After a blessing, Sultān offered it to Mikail; the latter refused, thinking that the fish was raw, then, at Ishāq's request he made sure that the fish was well cooked. The meal was started, and then Sultān gathered the bones left and suggested his recent opponent to do the same. When the meal was over, Sultān read the 'word' over the remaining bones: the fish came to life and plunged into the river with a wave of Ishāq's hand. What was happening was quite enough for Mikail to acknowledge the outstanding power, sanctity and the superhuman nature of Ishāq. No further claims were relevant (Žukovskij 1888: 17).

Stories involving the saints riding lions with a serpent-whip abound also in the Sufi literature (cf., e. g. Rūmī, NN 2125-2128).

This elaborate motif, having undoubtedly ancient roots, is a product of the so-called heretical milieu of Asia Minor; it is introduced into the image of Māma-řařān (and Sheikh 'Adi) as a secondary element, linking Yezidism with the non-orthodox Islam, with the Extreme

Shi'ism in particular. It may be not an accident that in the entire New Iranian continuum, besides the Yezidis, the god of the thunder and lightning has been retained in the Extreme Shi'a community of the Zazas.¹² Dūzgin (Dūzgin-bābā or Dūžik-bābā)—the supreme deity of the Zaza folk pantheon, the Master of the Universe, the Ruler of the thunder and lightning, of clouds and hurricane, is even more authentic than Māma-řaşān of the Yezidis. He protects the people from natural disasters, as well as from alien invasions. He is ready to come to the aid of anyone or to punish anyone guilty of trespassing the moral and humane standards. He is imagined as a lightsome bearded (sometimes bald) man riding a gallant steed in the mountains. This god has a number of other names: Siltān Dūzgin, Dūzginē kamarī (the Dūzgin of gorges and mountains), Bimbārak,¹³ Aspārē astōrē kimatī (the Blue Steed Rider), Aspārō yāxiz (the Black Steed Rider), Wāyir (Master), and so on.

Dūzgin is not alone: he has a massive army of similar gallant riders ready to commit any deed at his command. His messenger is an eagle (Halīyō Siltān Dūzginī—"Sultan Dūzgin's Eagle"); it is considered a holy bird, the killing of which is a great sin.

Used by the Zazas are many invocations addressing Dūzgin. Cf.:

Dūzgin, Dūzgin, Dūzgin!
 Xō vīra maka...
 Dāl ū būdāye mi tīya, ādire mi waka.
 Sātā tangada, bāwō, xō vōra maka!

Duzgin, Duzgin, Duzgin!
 Do not forget [us]...
 You are from our branch; open our fire.¹⁴
 Do not forget us in need, oh Father!

Or:

Bērē varō jārīma,
 Hawār sērō kamarē Dūzgin,
 Ĵāyē tō rindō, barzō.

¹² What is meant is, of course, a full-fledged celestial with all divine attributes, not a mere personification of the natural elements, without clear functions and spheres of activities (like the Kurdish P'ir Sulaymān).

¹³ Cf. the same word, meaning "blessing, grace", used as a substitute for the tabooed name of lightning by the Yezidis (see above, f.n. 6).

¹⁴ I. e. "you belong to our people; give prosperity to our home".

Aspārē rāmanō yalgar ū larzō;
 Birā varō jārē tanga varā,
 Dast rā gōvānē čatini var arzō.
 Hay dilō, hay dilō!
 Wāyirō, Wāyirō, Wāyirō, Wāyirō!

Come, please!
 Our cry, let it reach the gorges of Dūzgin [mountain].
 Your place is beautiful and high.
 The rider is as fast as wind;
 Brothers, pray to him,
 Relief from trouble comes from him.
 Oh heart, oh heart!
 Oh Lord, oh Lord, oh Lord, oh Lord!

In a difficult situation it is customary to call for Dūzgin: *Yā Haqq, Yā Dūzgin!*—“Oh God,¹⁵ oh Dūzgin!”. And Dūzgin, it is believed, is sure to come to help, provided the thoughts of the caller are clean, and he is a righteous man (see in details Comerd 1997; also Dedekurban 1994: 12-15).

The etymology of the name Dūzgin remains unclear. It may be a variant of *Dūžik(-bābā)* attested in the Armenian sources, as an alternative name both for the supreme deity of the Zazas and the highest mountain in Dersim (see Asatrian 1992: 102-110; 210-212). In all appearances, this theonym (*Dūzgin/Dūžik*) is of a non-Iranian origin. It is very likely that we look here at a substrate name of a god/mountain.

Incidentally, both *Māma-řařān* and *Dūzgin*, as well as *Khidir-nabi* (among the Yezidis, see below), and *Khizir* (by the Zazas) in many ways have assimilated the elements of the cult of *Surb Sargis* (St. Sergius), the popular Armenian Christian saint in charge of the natural elements, among other things.

Coming back to *Māma-řařān*, let us consider his attribute “thunderer”, which may seem too obliging for a peripheral deity. At a closer scrutiny of the image, however, this characteristic looks more justifiable. For in this now syncretic character, whereby the thunder-god becomes a saint prancing on a lion, the essential thing is the archetype, and it is just the archetype that possesses the necessary and sufficient attributes of a thunderer. At any rate, all what we know about such deities in other traditions (storm-gods, thunder-gods), above all, con-

¹⁵ Arab. *haqq*, lit. “truth”, in the mystical Islam—“Absolute Truth”, i. e. “God”.

trolling the thunderstorm, rain, lightning, the obvious links with the stone, the snake, the tree, and the like—is on the whole quite adequate to the features of Māma-rašān. Let us, for instance, look at his title “strewing (rain), darting (lightning)”¹⁶ to say nothing on his other manifestations (A’brūs or Ābā-birūsk, Bā-raš), indicating his functions directly. Meanwhile, an important attribute of the thunderer in the Indo-European tradition is just the snake symbolising the thunder (lightning, storm) unambiguously: a rider brandishing the snake is a classical symbol of a thunder-god, or a storm-god. As regards the motif of riding a lion or a rock, being related to the Sufi tradition (and in a wider sense—typical for the mystical Islam), it may have very early origin, acquired later mystical interpretation in Islam (control over the elements of nature obtained by saints through austerity, righteousness, forbearance, etc.).

Thus, Māma-rašān, with his functional variations, reflects the ancient religious concept of the thunder-god. In the Old Iranian pantheon, Māma-rašān and Dūzgin (of the Zazas) might have as counterparts Vayu, the god of hurricane and death, or the combined image of Vayu and Vāta, the god of the wind, which acquired the additional attributes on the Islamic mystical background.

The legendary tomb of Māma-rašān is in Lalish.

2. Šēx Mūsē-sōr (Šēxmūs)—*The Lord of the Wind and the Air*

Šēx Mūsē-sōr—Red Sheikh Mūs (Moses)—an atmospheric deity controlling the winds and the air. He is addressed, therefore, during the works on the threshing-floor for winnowing when what is needed is wind in fair weather to screen and clean the grain from hay.

Yā Šēx Mūsē Sōr,
Biday bāyakī zōr,
Dē bō ta pēžin sawkēd sōr

O Red Šēxmūs,
Give a great deal of wind,
Then we shall prepare for you baked red loaves

(Kreyenbroek 1995: 106).

¹⁶ If, of course, the above suggested etymology of -rašān is viable, and the latter is not a mere patronymic title from řaš “black”. But, still, even in that case, it is a clear indication of the Yezidi thunder-god’s authenticity.

At harvesting and winnowing time, or during other field works, Šēxmūs receives offerings of flapcakes and pies left, as a rule, near the field or close to the threshing-floor.

Šēx Mūsē-sōr is regarded as the companion of ‘Abdi Rašō, and through him is possibly linked with Māma-rašān, which is natural, for they are in charge of closely related elements.

The sheikhy families traditionally deriving their origin from this deity (Ojāxā Sōrē Sōrān, the branch of the sheikhy clan Adani), are known for their ability to cure the diseases of lungs, joints, rheumatism, etc.¹⁷ The sanctuary of Mūsē-sōr, his alleged *mazār* is in the village of Bahzané in the Lalish valley and, as described by E. Drower, looks like a slab with shattered crockery around (see Drower, 1941: 57). The ground around the slab is thought to have a healing action against skin diseases. The shrine is frequented by pilgrims each carrying a vessel to water the ground and apply the wet clay on the affected skin areas. Before leaving the pitcher is smashed to pieces. It is also believed that if someone would walk by the *mazār* without offering his respect to it (by kissing its wall), he would be punished—his eyes would swell up and pain (*ibid.*: 56).

Šēx Mūsē-sōr is usually glorified by the title Sōrē-sōrān, i. e. “the Red of the Reds”. The attribute sōr (“red”) may be here intended to underscore sanctity, red colour being directly opposite to blue, which is considered by the Yezidis the colour of apostasy. Sultan Yezid is quite properly indicated using this attribute as well—Silt’ān Ēzīdē sōr—“Sultan Yezid the Red”.

According to different legends (see Jindy 1992: 20), the control over the “white” wind belongs also to Šēxisin—Sheikh Hasan, who is allegedly the Lord of the Tablet and the Pen as well; therefore, only his posterity amidst the Yezidis have the right to know the literacy (Tamoyan 2001: 147). Although, in actual fact, it was Šēx Mūsē-sōr who had to be the Lord of the Tablet and the Pen, which is just the case with his counterpart among the Ahl-i Haqq, the Archangel Pīr Mūsī, the motif is clearly reminiscent of the Biblical story of Moses having received the Tablets with Testaments from God. The displacement of functions from Šēxmūs to Sheikh Hasan has been done through the contamination of images, causing also the entanglement of power controlling the wind and the air. Sheikh Hasan, having a historical archetype, is a marginal figure among the Yezidi saints, actually possessing

¹⁷ The popular mind perceives the pains in abdomen, legs, arms, joints, back, etc. as caused by the wind or air penetrating into the body.

no attributes of a deity. He is a somewhat dummy character, taking on the functions of other gods from time to time. For instance, he is often associated with the moon, although that is unambiguously the domain of Farxadin (cf. Arakelova 2002), etc.

The image of Moses in the Yezidi tradition must have had a double penetration, perhaps a parallel one: one as Šëxmūs, as a god, and one as a folkloric character, Mūsā P'ëxambar, i. e. the Prophet Moses; there is even a hymn dedicated to the latter "Qawlê Mūsā P'ëxambar" (Celil, Celil 1978b: 366-368, 438-439).

In the religious concepts of the Iranian cattle breeding communities, the Prophet Moses is a popular figure who has replaced many local characters of primitive worship (see, e. g. 'Abdoli 1992: 191-192). The Ahl-i Haqq regard Pîr Mūsî as an incarnation of Angel Israfil (Raphail), etc. (see Mokri 1966: 24, 28).

3. *Pîrā-Fāt—Foremother of the Yezidis*

The Yezidî sheikhy tradition says that, unlike all other peoples who originated from Adam and Eve, the Yezidis had only a primeval father, Adam: Eve played no role in their genesis.

Once, the Yezidi legend tells us, Eve claimed that children were produced by her alone and that Adam had no part in creating them. In order to test her claim they put their seeds in separate jars and closed them. When, nine months later, they opened Eve's jar, they found serpents, scorpions and poisonous insects, while in Adam's jar there was a beautiful moon-faced child. They called the boy Šahîd bin-jarr (i. e. in Arabic "Šahîd, the son of the pot"); he later married a *hûrî* and became Forefather of the Yezidis (see in detail Spät 2002: 27-56). This account of the origin of the Yezidis is also confirmed in one of the Yezidis' so-called Holy Books, the "Black Book" (Mash'afê řaş): *Xwadāyî gawra bimalāyikāî gôt, min Ādam wa Hawā xalq dikim wa diyānkim bi başar. Li sirî Ādam Šahr ibn-Safar dibê wa liawîş milatî li sar arz p'aydā dibê lîpāştîr milatî 'Azrayîl ya'nî Malak Tāwus kî yazîdiyāya p'aydā dibê* (Bittner 1913: 28)—"The Great God said to the angels: I create Adam and Eve, and make them human beings. From Adam's essence Šahr ibn-Safar¹⁸ will appear, and from him will originate on Earth a people,

¹⁸ This seems to be the corrupted form of Šahîd bin-jarr, though in both the Kurdish and Arabic versions of the texts published by M. Bittner, the reading is clearly *šhr 'bn-sfr* (*ibid.*). As for the name *Šahîd*, "witness", it is most probably associated with the Qur'anic description of God's Covenant with the souls of non-begotten humans (Qur'an, Al-a'rāf, 171). In reply to God's question: "Am I your God?" (*alastu birabbikum?*), the answer was: "True, we bear witness" (*balā šahidnā*).

who will later give birth to the people of ‘Azrayīl, i. e. Malak Tāwūs, who are the Yezidis”.

Another version of the same legend mentions two children in Adam’s jar (see Siouffi 1882: 259-260; Lescot 1938: 91; Drower 1941: 91).

However, this Semitic legend with its non-orthodox, probably Gnostic interpretation, is not the only popular myth that exists in this syncretic tradition.

We were recently able to record some extremely interesting details among the Yezidis of Armenia that point to the existence of another legend concerning the origin of the Yezidis: one that has Iranian roots and which is probably more authentic than the story of Adam and the jar.

According to these materials, there is a female deity called Pīrā-Fāt; she is the daughter of Farxadīn.¹⁹ Hitherto, nothing had been known of this character: scholarly works on Yezidism make no mention of her existence at all. Ph. Kreyenbroek does refer to a mythical character, Pīr Āfāt, allegedly associated with hail and damage to crops, inundations and storms (Kreyenbroek 1995: 109). However, it appears that the author, or rather his informant (*ibid.*), arrived at this name by misinterpreting the *izāfa* construction, i. e. the feminine *izāfa* formant *-ā* in *pīrā* (probably from *pīrikā*) was understood as a part of the deity’s name itself, which resulted in the form Āfāt (cf. Arabic *āfat*) meaning “damage, harm”. The presence of the *izāfa* formant in the deity’s name (formally it should be *Pīr* or *Pīrik Fāt*) supposedly emphasises her female nature.²⁰

Pīrā-Fāt is the patroness of women-in-labour, as well as of newborn babies: she protects them from the evil demoness Āl (Asatrian 2001). A parturient woman asks for Pīrā-Fāt’s help: *Yā Pīrā-Fāt, ālī min bikal!*—“Oh Pīrā-Fāt, help me!” Those present traditionally express their hope for the deity’s assistance: *Ārā Pīrā-Fāt bē hawārā ta!*—“May the seed of Pīrā-Fāt help you!” (Celil, Celil, 1978a: 434). The word *ār* in this formula means “seed”, which developed from its original meaning—“means, possibility”, via the interim meaning “liquid, medicine” (cf. Middle Persian *čarak*, New Persian *čāra*, also Arm. dial. *čār* “medicine, means”). This phrase specifically expresses the wish that the woman

¹⁹ Malak-Farxadīn (Faxr ad-dīn) is the legendary author of the Yezidi religious code. He is also considered the incarnation of Turail, one of the seven avatars of Malak-Tāwūs and simultaneously the personification of the moon (see Arakelova 2002).

²⁰ Just as, for example, the forms *Malakē/i Tāwūs* or *Šēxē A’dī*, compared with the correct forms *Malak-Tāwūs*, *Šēx A’dī*, underline the masculinity of the characters.

will give birth to a pure Yezidi, from the original seed of the Yezidi people—since Pīrā-Fāt is traditional preserver of this seed. Similarly, they invoke this seed when embarking on a journey: *Yā Pīrā-Fāt Ćārā ta sar ma*—“Oh Pīrā-Fāt, let your assistance (seed) be with us”. Pīrā-Fāt is actually the Foremother of the Yezidis, since she has saved from annihilation the seed from which this people originated.

The legend says that the seed was given to Pīrā-Fāt for safekeeping by Sheikh Abū Bakr (Šēxōbakr), the incarnation of the angel Michael (Mikail), one of the avantes of Malak-Tāwūs. Pīrā-Fāt then preserved it for seven hundred years, or, according to another version, for seven thousand years. Unfortunately, no further details of this myth are to be found. One of the religious hymns (*qawl*) merely alludes to the story, and this appears to be the only trace of this legend in the Yezidi oral tradition.

P'ādšāyē min vē yakē dilšāya,
 Faqīrak šāndīya tavakā harharē, āvak ānyīya;
 Nāvē wē dānīya šarāv, ti'ūn, a'ynil-bayzāya;
 Aw rōža, av rōža mijlisā mērē ēzdi pē būya āvāya.

(Celil, Celil 1978b: 381)

My God (lit. “King”) is happy because
 [He] sent once a *faqīr* (probably Šēxōbakr) to the seventh sphere of
 heavens; [he] brought a liquid (lit. “water”);
 They called it wine, flour, yolk and egg white,²¹
 That day, this day, the community of Yezidis appeared.

This “liquid” (āv), according to Faqir Tayar (Armavir, Armenia), consisted of four elements: fire, water, earth and air. It is directly indicated further in the same hymn. Cf.:

P'ādšāyē mine jabāra,
 Ži duřē farq (rather xalq) kirna cāra:
 Bāyā, āva, āxa ū nāra (Celil, Celil, *ibid.*)

My God (lit. King) is powerful,
 [He] created a liquid from a pearl:

²¹ None of the Yezidi sheikhs whom we interviewed in Armenia, was able to give a convincing explanation of this passage. We think, the whole complex is a group of distorted Arabic forms: perhaps, *ti'un*=Arab. *faḥīn* “flour”, *a'ynil-bayza*=Arab. *a'yn-ul-bayza* “gist, essence of egg” (i. e. “yolk and egg white”), which fits the context well.

It is wind (air), water, earth and fire.

Here the legend of origin is combined with the symbol of cosmogony, the pearl (*dur'*): the liquid, seed of the Yezidi people, represents actually the artefact of the primordial pearl, thus becoming an element of cosmogony.

The existence of two popular legends of genesis in one and same tradition is fascinating *per se*, providing clear evidence of the tradition's syncretic roots. As mentioned above, the basic legend, which has been perfectly preserved, is most probably a Gnostic hangover of Yezidism. The second myth, which has been preserved only partially, mainly in secondary indirect references to the deity Pīrā-Fāt, is, no doubt, more typical for the Iranian world. Another indirect reflection of this myth can be found in the following passage from a hymn by Sheikh Arabaḡī Antūzī—an example of the genre of hymns involving theological polemics with the representatives of other confessions (in fact, the whole contradiction between two anthropogonic mythes is reflected here):

Nawērim bik'ēlimīm;
Wakī az bēžim, sunata barī Ādama,
Azē birījimīm.
Sunata barī Ādama,
Aw ma'nika mazina... (Celil, Celil 1978a: 5).

I cannot speak;
If I say that [the people of the] *sunna* (here probably, the Yezidis)
had existed before Adam,
I will be accursed.
[But] in the precedence of Adam,
The great meaning [is hidden]...

The name of the deity, Pīrā-Fāt, literally means “old woman Fāt”, and apparently, goes back to the name of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, Fātima. This character absorbed many of the features of pre-Islamic patron deities of fertility and family, and she is worshipped all over the Muslim world, especially among the Shi'as. The Virgin Mary (Mariam) has almost the same function in Islam, and women in labour appeal, as a rule, to both these saints (Donaldson 1938: 31). Fāt is shown to be a variant of Fātima by the fact that in certain contexts both forms of the name are used for the Prophet's daughter. The

hymn dedicated to ‘Alī, the Lion of God (Bayt’ā A’lī Šērē Xwadē), offers clear evidence of this (Celil, Celil 1978b: 403).

Či sibaka nahīna!
 Digrī A’yš, Fāt ū Zīna
 Savā hard kurē A’līna.
 A’lī dihāta māla,
 Fātimē pērā sa’ū qāla;
 Gōta: “Ta girtī kirina zīndānē”,
 Aw Fātīma dēm šalāla.

What a horrible morning!
 Aysha, Fātīma (Fāt in the text) and Zaynab (Zīn) were weeping
 For the two sons of ‘Alī (i. e. Hasan and Husayn).
 ‘Alī was coming home,
 Fātīma was arguing,
 [She] said [to him]: “You jailed the prisoners!”
 That Fātīma with a shining face!

The shortening of the name Fātīma, or, to be more precise, the omission of the end syllables, obviously results from the Kurdish interpretation of the name: Fātīma (or Fātīma) was understood as *izāfa* construction *Fātī ma* (*Fātī ma*), i. e. “our Fāt”.

“The palm of Fātīma”, the symbol of the five main characters in Shi‘ism, the prophet Muhammad, ‘Alī, Fātīma, Hasan and Husayn, is an essential element of the talismans and amulets that offer protection from evil spirits and demons (Wallis Budge 1961: 467-472). A metal representation of “The palm of Fātīma” is a significant accessory of any god-fearing Shi‘a house, alongside a portrait of ‘Alī, whose image has also accumulated certain characteristics of Old Iranian mythical personages—from Verethragna to Rustam.

Fātīma’s many features in the popular Shi‘a interpretation strikingly remind those of Anahita (Anāhitā), the Old Iranian goddess (*ya-zata-*) of fecundity and procreation, who is directly connected with water. Pīrā-Fāt’s role as the preserver of the first seed in the Yezidi religion associates her still more with her archetype Anahita.²² What is especially important here is that Anahita is in charge of the man’s

²² Or, rather, with the ancient Iranian concept of the female deity of procreation, fertility and abundance. It would be methodologically quite unacceptable to directly trace the origin of Pīrā-Fāt to Anahita, as the latter herself is only one of the manifestations of this concept in the ancient Iranian tradition (cf., e. g. Nanai, from the same category of goddesses, see Gall 1986).

seed, as well as childbirth: she is the purifier of all men's seed and all women's wombs.

Yā vīspanam aršnam xšudrū yaoždadāiti,
 Yā vīspanam hāirišinam zθai garewan yaoždadāiti,
 Yā vīspā hāirišš huzamitō dadāiti,
 Yā vīspanam hāirišinam dāitim raθwim paēma ava-baraiti
 (Ardvīsūr-yašt, V, apud: Reichelt 1911: 4).

In Darmesteter's translation this passage is rendered as follows:

Who [Anahita] makes the seed of all males pure,
 Who makes the womb of all females pure for bringing forth [so that
 it may conceive again—Phl. tr.],
 Who makes all females bring forth in safety,
 Who puts milk into breasts of all females in the right measure and
 the right quality (Darmesteter 1887: 54).

Moreover, Pīrā-Fāt's function as the original seed-keeper also matches that of Armati-Spandarmat in preserving the seed of the First man (Gayōmart) and, hence, ensuring the procreation of the first human couple—Mašyak (Martiyak) and Mašyānak (Martiyānak) (Adam and Eva in the Semitic tradition). In Bundahishn, this myth reads as follows: "When Gayōmart was dying and dropped his seed, a part [of it] was imbibed by Spandarmat [Earth]. For forty years it remained in the earth. In forty years, Mašyak and Mašyānak grew up as Rhubarb plants out of the earth... Then [they] turned into humans, and *xwarr*—their soul—entered into them" (Zaehner 1956: 75-76; see also Nyberg 1938: 28, 481).

Preservation of the primordial seed in various environments is in general a common mythologeme in the Iranian tradition (cf. the story of Zoroaster's seed, which was kept for 99,999 years in lake Kansaoya-Hāmūn; the story of Satana and a shepherd in the Ossetic Nart epic, etc.).

The examples given above confirm the authenticity of the myth about Pīrā-Fāt, the seed-keeper in the Yezidi tradition. Although this is not explicitly stated in the extant materials, it was most probably Pīrā-Fāt who produced the first Yezidi from the primordial seed.

4. *Xātūnā-farxā—The Mistress of Pregnant Women and Infants*

Xātūnā-farxā literally means “The Dame of Children” (Arab. farx—“chicken”, meaning “infant”). Incidentally, a similar attribute used to be given also to evil creatures. Cf. the well-known demoness Āl (Arm. Alk’), the enemy of infants and women in labour, is named *’umm uṣṣib-yān*—“mother of children”. This type of definition, however, is an attribute of a demonised deity (see Asatrian 2001).

It is assumed that Xātūnā-farxā mostly cares about a woman during pregnancy. It is likely that both labour and the postnatal periods fall under the cognisance of Pīrā-Fāt. The name of Xātūnā-farxā does nonetheless unambiguously indicate the function of protectress of infants during the initial 40 days of life in particular. It is believed that she is staying in the house, side by side with the woman in labour and with the newborn child, protecting them in every way from the encroachments by Āl. It is strictly prohibited to bath the baby during the *čilla*—the initial forty days, for it is believed that the baby will be invaded by evil spirits, which lose their malignant power when this term expires with the first bathing of the baby after ending the *čilla*. Before bathing they pour seven times forty spoons of water on baby’s head reiterating the following formula:

Čilla čū xwařā,
Zāřōk mā mařā.

Chilla left for home,
[And] the child will stay with us.

In fact, Xātūnā-farxā is a frail duplicate of Pīrā-Fāt with a reduced scope of activities: many features in their images are coincidental. Xātūnā-farxā, like Pīrā-Fāt, is a daughter of Malak Fakhr ad-Din (Farxadīn); she is addressed for help in childbirth (when seeing a pregnant woman, they say: *Xātūnā-farxā bē hawāra ta!*—“May Xātūnā-farxā help you!”); like Pīrā-Fāt, Xātūnā-farxā protects the newly-born from Āl and other evil creatures.

Although Xātūnā-farxā has her own genealogy (rather controversial), has kin (brother, husband), the legendary tomb in Lalish, and is even the eponym of the sheikhy clan Shekhe-Khatune (Šēxē Xātūnē) (Tamoyan 2001: 153), she is, nevertheless, a secondary figure, budding from the image of Pīrā-Fāt, the kinship and genealogical links resulting perhaps from secondary development. The existence of two goddesses

with nearly similar functions, almost identical origin and activities cannot be logically substantiated. Perhaps, the epithet *Xātūna-farxā*, i. e. “the mistress of infants”, had been primarily an attribute of *Pīrā-Fāt*, however in all, the name of the goddess was *Pīrā-Fāt—xātūnā-farxā*, i. e. *Pīrā-Fāt—the Lady of infants*. Later, probably, the attribute may have been recognised as an individual entity with restricted functions and a self-sustained life within the popular mind, overgrowing with personal features and image elements.

5. *The Holy Angel—Deity of the Phallus*

It seems to be that the Yezidi *Milyāk’atē-qanĵ*, i. e. the Holy Angel,²³ is the only example of the *Deus Phalli* in all New Iranian folk pantheons. Moreover, similar personages have never been attested in Iran, neither in ancient nor in medieval periods.

As far as we know, the only written reference to this deity is to be found in Amin Avdal’s book published in 1957 in Armenian (see Avdal 1957: 93-94). Nor is any mention made of *Milyāk’atē-qanĵ* in recordings of Yezidi folkloric texts. Our thorough fieldwork in the Yezidi communities of Armenia, as well as among the Northern Iraqi Yezidis, has not added much to the existing data. Most of the female informants, incidentally, tried to avoid this subject altogether, denying the very existence of a phallic deity in the Yezidi beliefs.

Still, the information gleaned from our research thus far, allows us to reconstruct at least the general idea of this deity, once probably a popular image among the Yezidis.

Naturally, *Milyāk’atē-qanĵ* is far from being the popular Priapus of ancient myth, who had a variety of functions. The Holy Angel is a classic example of an authentic phallic deity charged with the sphere of Eros and impregnation. The comparison with Priapus is significant, for the difference between them points to the more primeval nature of the Yezidi fallic personage. The authenticity of the Holy Angel is one of his most important characteristics. Any religious form that attempts to rid itself of “historical” accretions will tend to gravitate to its authentic archetype (Eliade 1999: 418). Thus, whereas the humanised god of the Ancient world expresses resistance to the sacral, and hence a departure from authenticity, *Milyāk’atē-qanĵ* in this respect is authen-

²³ *Milyāk’at* (*malak*) means “angel” in Kurmanji (Arab. *malak*, *malakīyat*). For the second component of the name, *qanĵ*, as an attribute meaning “holy” (lit. “good, nice, etc.”), see above, under *General*.

ticity itself. He does not merely personify his functions, but is himself the very organ. The Holy Angel is imagined only in a phallic form. In this regard the Yezidi deity can be duly compared with the Indian Liṅgam, one of the avatars of Shiva, which is also a bare phallus *per se* (cf. Mattelaer: 54-68).

Convinced that a child could be conceived only with the blessing of Milyāk'atē-qanĵ, young brides traditionally wore a silver or stone pendant called *xiyār*, i. e. "cucumber", which was shaped like a phallus to symbolise the deity.²⁴ "Cucumber" is, definitely, a metaphoric euphemism, as is the deity's name—"Holy Angel". At earlier stages, no doubt, the deity may well have had another name, most probably, one that pointed more directly to his functions²⁵ and was, therefore, formally tabooed later on and replaced by the euphemistic expressions. Milyāk'atē-qanĵ was supposed to cure sterility and to help women conceive a boy. The Yezidi women turned to him with the following words:

Yā Milyāk'atē-qanĵ, wara hawārā min.
Bar mi rūnī;
Da'w ba, risq ba;
Kur vī, qīz vī.²⁶

O Milyāk'atē-qanĵ, help me [to conceive a child],
Impregnate me (lit. "Sit upon me");
Let me have yogurt, let me have good;
Let me have a son, let me have a daughter.

According to the same informant, whose data are indirectly substantiated in the Adval's book (*op. cit.*: 94), the Yezidi women would walk to the mountains after the wedding ceremony and made a sacrifice to Milyāk'atē-qanĵ before large phallic-shaped stones. The sacrifice was considered the guarantee of multiple progeny.

Barren women performed a fertility ritual by sitting down on the stones and making rubbing motions invoking the deity: *Yā Milyāk'atē-qanĵ, mi āvis ka*—"O Milyāk'atē-qanĵ, make me pregnant" (the same informant). This formula, incidentally, offers a very special example of

²⁴ Similar pendants were recorded among the archaeological items from Ancient Mesopotamia (see Black, Green 1992: 152).

²⁵ Probably, *kūr*, or *kilūr*, meaning "penis" in Kurmanji.

²⁶ Informant—Xatuna Xajo, 80 years old, Talin region, Armenia.

verbal magic. In particular, it should be noted that the word *āvis* (here meaning “pregnant”) is normally applied only to cattle. The proper terms to apply to a human pregnancy are *girān*, *duhālī* or *hamla*. And if such an aischrology really occurred in the verbal part of the rite dedicated to the Holy Angel, this could be one of the reasons for the taboo (on the role of aischrology in the phallic cults see, e. g. Nillson 1961: 453; Burkert 1985: 103-105, 242-246; cf. also Abramian 1983: 97, 102).

A similar rite existed also among the Armenians. A woman rubbed her navel against a large phallic-shaped stone called *portak’ar* (lit. “navel-stone” in Armenian), and then hammered a nail into a stone crack, transferring her ailment to the stone (Lisic’yan 1969: 284-287).²⁷ Turkic speaking women living in enclaves in the Zangezur region of Armenia used to perform the same rite (*ibid.*: 285).

Generally, a stone as an object of *Sexualkult* is seen in many different cultures: in some, a bride climbs on top of a stone, or a ritual dance accompanied by obscene gestures is performed, etc. All such rituals are aimed at curing sterility and ensuring fertility in general (see in detail Meyer I: 57). Moreover, stone worshipping in this connection cannot be explained exclusively by the logic of imitative magic, but primarily by the fact that a stone was considered a deity’s abode—one of the universal elements of the primitive religions (see in details Frazer 1983: 38-39, 185, 273-280). Present day rites of this kind, however, have more or less lost their original essence, communion with the hierophany. What they reveal instead is secondary perception, the result of the symbol’s degradation to an object of the imitative magic.

Milyāk’atē-qanj was obviously supposed to be present during the circumcision ceremony, which is completely forgotten by now. The ceremony was performed by the “Brother of the Next world” of the family,²⁸ who cutting the boy’s prepuce, appealed to the Holy Angel: *Yā, Milyāk’atē-qanj, barak’atī bida; birā zēda ba qawatā vī kūr*—“O Milyāk’atē-qanj, give prosperity, [and] may the force of this boy be increased”. After the ceremony they used to sacrifice a sheep and distribute the meat among the poor.

The Holy Angel, as could be expected, is also traced in the wedding rites. The Yezidis used to adorn one of the trees in front of the groom’s house, and put a phallic-shaped wooden stick in between its

²⁷ Cf. a colourful description of this rite in a novel by Sero Xanzadyan, a prominent Armenian writer (Xanzadyan).

²⁸ On this religions institution, see Asatrian 1999-2000.

boughs. They called it *Milyāk'atē-qanĵ*. Before entering the house, a new-married couple stayed for a while under the tree, and the groom's friends shook it uttering: *Žavā ū būk mīna vē dārē bibār bin*—"May the groom and bride be fertile (fruitful) like this tree", or *Mālā zavē t'iži zārō bin*—"May the groom's house be full of children".

Odd traces of the phallic cult have been preserved in the Yezidi festival *Barān-bardān*—"Releasing of Rams", celebrated on the fortieth day of autumn, i. e. at the end of the first decade of October. The feast is described by the Armenian Yezidi writer Arab Shamilov in his novel *Šivānē kurd* ("Kurdish Shepherd") and later—in his short story *Barbāng* (Day-spring). "This day the whole world is joyful, as if they were celebrating the wedding of their sheep. Young people dance; some of them fight, bubbling over with joy... The shepherds and wranglers (*dūšivān*) are the most exalted ones, as they receive their payment for the whole summer season [on this day]. During the *Bāran-bardān*, they drive ewes into a sheepfold, and then release the rams, which have been grazed separately the whole summer. They do this in order that the sheep will produce their young simultaneously in the spring. The moment the rams are released to the ewes, people start shooting from rifles, as if they wanted to celebrate the wedding of their sheep..." (Ereb Şemo, *Šivanē Kurd*, apud: Wikander 1959: 46; idem 1960; cf. also Asatrian 1998; idem 2000).

"They hang bunches of coloured wool, small bells and amulets on the sheep's horns and necks—it seems as if the sheep know themselves that this is their wedding: holding their heads high, they jostle each other, then stand quietly for a while, then try to prove themselves again, looking proudly at the shepherds and the gazing folk around. Then young girls take off their kerchiefs and tie them around the sheep's necks, and young lads come and take them off: in this way they reveal their secrets, for by taking a kerchief of a certain girl, a lad shows his intention to merry her (the result of their flirtation during the Summer pasture). The girls' parents look on from afar to see who will take their daughter's kerchief..." (Şemilov 1969: 60-61; see also a brief reference to this feast in Bayazidi 1963: 43, 127). They released the rams to the ewes in late evening when the Ram constellation (*Barānī*) appeared in the sky. The Yezidis believed that the Ram was the celestial twin of *Mamē-šivān* and could increase the sheep's get. While releasing the rams they used to utter: *Yā Barānī, yā Māmē-šivān, hūn pazē ma zēdakin*—"O, Ram, o, Mamē-šivān, increase [the number of] our sheep!". Other details of this feast have been described in the ethnographical literature: red apples are speared on sheep's horns; their fore-

heads are decorated with pieces of mirror; young girls bring the rams to the ewes, holding them by their horns; in some cases a young maiden straddles a ram, etc. (Davrešyan 1977: 77).

Of course, the ceremonies described above are not directly connected with the cult of Milyāk'atē-qanj. Still, to ensure the fertility of the flock and, to a certain extent, that of the young people attending the feast, ample use is made of phallic symbolism: in the indirect means used to deliver kerchiefs to the girls' chosen fellows; in the way the young maidens hold the rams' horns; in the use of red apples as tokens of defloration and of mirrors to symbolise doubling and fertility, and so on.

In earlier times the rite probably involved people's active participation in the "wedding" ceremony as well—if not through outright *coitus*, then at least through ritual (gestural and verbal) obscenity, etc.

In Medieval Iran this feast was probably called *gušn-hilišnih, the exact equivalent for which in Classical Armenian was *xoy-t'otowt'iwu*, i. e. "the releasing of the rams". The Middle Iranian form cited above can be traced to OIr. *waršni-hřdzana- (cf. Av. varšni-haršta- "die Zulassung der Widder", see Bartholomae 1904: 1381; Asatrian 1998).

A Yezidi lady of around 90 from Aragats region of Armenia (Gulizar Mamoyan), added, in a short talk, a new detail of utmost interest to the story of the Yezidi phallic cult. She remembered that when she was young, the barren and newly married women, in summer quarters (*wārga*), used to pick up small red mushrooms—*kārīēd sōr*—on the mountain slopes. They strung the mushrooms on threads and hanged them on the necks. They believed, she said, that mushrooms could cure sterility and induce the productivity of women's wombs. The women also performed a round-dance (*gōvand*) around big mushrooms appeared after rain, in a secluded place, far from men's eye. The old lady remembered a short part of the incantation accompanying the rite:

Kārī, kārī,
Laz mi bika ārī!
Zikē mi bika p'ētak,
P'ētakā mi—jērē ēr,
Jērē mi bika p'ētak...

"Mushroom, mushroom,
Help me soon!

Make my womb a box (here a wooden box for keeping cereals),
 [Make] my wooden box a flour's jar,
 [Make] my jar a wooden box..."

The significant role of the mushroom in magic and cult is a well-known fact. Mushrooms are universally known as aphrodisiacs. The swelling and growing of a mushroom must have been perceived as imitation of *phalloi*. The red colour of the mushrooms used as objects of magic by the Yezidi women, is itself an obvious sign of masculinity.

The whole complex of cults devoted to Milyāk'atē-qanj has been virtually lost by now. Nevertheless, he may well have been a rather influential deity, who initially had wider functions. It is also quite possible that Milyāk'atē-qanj was the women's deity *par excellence*, a kind of secret fetish that was concealed, formally of course, from men.

6. *Mamē-Šivān and Gāvānē-Zarzān—The Lords of Cattle*

In the pantheons of the peoples with overwhelming cattle farming in the traditional lifestyle, usually the most venerated figures are deities patronising livestock.

The Antique mythology has retained a very colourful image of Old Greek Pan and his Roman counterpart Faunus. The playful Pan, Patron of herds, forests and fields and a great judge and fan of the shepherd's pipe, is ambivalent, like any chthonic image. He, at the same time, patronises the destructive elements of earth, one of his favourite games being to spread the panic.

In the customs and beliefs of the Iranian peoples, despite deeply rooted Muslim outlook, a close scrutiny will reveal an array of pagan images patronising domestic and wild animals, certainly going back to the earliest layer of religious thinking.

In many cattle-breeding Iranian communities, earlier gods of cattle were converted into guardian spirits of animals, being generally featured under a polysemantic term *pīr* and having no institutional manifestations.²⁹

However, the Yezidis, the Zazas, the peoples of Caspian coastal areas known for archaic lifestyle and adherence to traditions, as well as

²⁹ Pers. *pīr*—"old, elder" also means a saint, or else a tomb of a holy man, a place of worship (a mausoleum, sacred tree, etc.). In the language of the Yezidis, the Kurdish dialect of Kurmanji, this term occurs in two forms: with the initial voiceless p- (*pīr*), meaning "old, elder" (*pīrik*—"old woman"), and with the aspirated p'- (*p'īr*)—in all other meanings, including as a caste-name.

the highlanders of the South-Western Iran, have retained to date the gods-lords of livestock in their authentic images, with the relevant characteristics and original names.

Among the Yezidis it is Mamē-šivān, i. e. “shepherd (for small cattle) Mam”, and Gāvānē Zarzān—“herdsman (for neat cattle) Zarzan”.³⁰ They protect the livestock from the wolves, from misfortune and disease. Mamē-šivān patronises small cattle, Gāvānē Zarzān protects the heavy beasts. Meanwhile, the cultic value of the former is distinctly more visible in the prayers of popular usage, perhaps by virtue of the prevailing role of small cattle-breeding in the agricultural activities of the Yezidis. Cf. e. g., *Mamē šivān puštivānē ta ba*—“Let Mamē-šivān be your protector”, or *Du’ae Mamē šivān sar mālē ta ba*—“Let the blessing by Mamē-šivān be upon your home”, etc.

The Yezidi shepherds rely upon these gods, calling on them when putting cattle to pasture: *Am pištī ta, Mamē šivān, dičīn bar vī pazī; pištī ta, Gāvānē Zarzān, dičīn bar vī dawarī; am pištī ta, Mamē šivān, paz xway dikin, am pištī ta, Gāvānē Zarzān, dēwēr xway dikin*—“Relying on you, Mamē-šivān, we follow that flock (of sheep); relying on you, Gāvānē Zarzān, we follow the herd (of cows); relying on you, Mamē-šivān, we go after the small cattle; relying on you, Gāvānē Zarzān we go after neat cattle” (Davrešyan 1977: 74).

The young shepherds only starting work, address them with hope for help: *Gumānā ma hūnīn; gumāna ma tuī, yā Mamē šivān; gumānā mā tuī, Gāvānē Zarzān*—“You are our hope; you are our hope, o Mamē-šivān; you are our hope, o Gāvānē Zarzān!” (*ibid.*).

The cultic significance of Mamē-šivān and Gāvānē Zarzān is vividly traced during the celebration of the Yezidi New Year—*A’ydā sar-sālē*, celebrated on the first Wednesday in April (Old Style), or, according to other sources, on March 8 (hayštē ādarē). Put into a big New Year pie—*kulučē sarē sālē (tōtkē sarē sālē)* is a bead (a blue one, according to some sources, which is remarkable, since the blue colour is a taboo in Yezidism) or a coin. The pie is cut into pieces marked out for different gods and guardian spirits, as well as to the family members, except infants who cannot discern virtue from sin (*xēr ū guna*).

³⁰ Both names are *izāfa* constructions, with -ē masculine suffix. *Mam* is a shortened form of Mahmad (Muhammad), but *Zarzān* (or *Zarzā*) does not have a convincing explanation. The first element of this name (*zar-*) probably is “gold”, the second (*-zān*) could be from *zāyīn* “give birth”, the whole compound meaning “producing gold”. As for *šivān* “shepherd” (cf. also Persian *šabān*, *čūpān*), it has a well-known etymology (<OIr. *šū-pāna-); *gāvān* “shepherd of neat cattle” is a secondary formation by analogy with *šivān*—from *gā* (Persian *gāv*) “cow”, with the suffix -vān (< *pāna-). It is hardly an old compound, from *gāwa-pāna-.

The pie is divided between Mamē-šivān and Gāvānē Zarzān, the Spirit of the household (Xudānē-mālē) augmenting the welfare, the Spirit of the furrow (Xatā-jōt) patronising the land farming, and further—among the family: master of the house—*malxwē mālē*, mistress—*kavānīyā mālē*, and so on. Depending on whoever is getting the bead, either one of the gods is going to be particularly benevolent to the family in the new year, or one of the family members is going to be particularly fortunate (Davrešyan, *op. cit.*: 73; see also Aristova 1986: 175; Asatrian 2002: 83).

Mamē-šivān used to be addressed by a special incantation within a particular rite during the Barān-bardān festival. The Protector of small cattle was propitiated by mixing the sheep wool with ram wool, spreading it on the ground and letting children wallow on it chanting the song, appealing to the deity for more cattle yield.

Barān-bardān, jān, Barān-bardān!
 Barak'at ba Barān-bardān;
 Birā hāzir ba Mamē šivān,
 Pazē ma xwayka ži yadā-balā.

Baran-Bardan, glory to you!
 Let there be abundance (prosperity);
 Let Mamē-šivān attend [the holiday],
 Let [him] protect our cattle from misfortune.

By some sources, the wool from the rams and sheep was plucked by an old man, sitting on the back of his old wife (Avdal: 126).

Mamē-šivān is considered, among other things, an earthly twin-representative of the constellation of the Ram.³¹

An interesting legend has been preserved on Gāvānē Zarzān about Sheikh 'Adi entertaining members of his community at his home; each came with a due gift and obtained a blessing and the proper empowerment. Gāvānē Zarzān, being a poor shepherd of neat cattle, brought a barley loaf to the Patriarch, the only thing that he had found. However, when approaching the chamber of Sheikh 'Adi, he became shy and stood in a humble posture with the loaf under his dress. The all-seeing Sheikh addressed him with the following words: "Take courage, your modest gift is worth more for me than a whole

³¹ Probably, it is conditioned by the fact that this constellation's name is Barāni (barān in Kurmanji means "ram, sheep").

cow”, then he blessed the shepherd: “Go, and be the protector of the cows! Let your patronage over the herds of my people remain in ages and ages!” (Asatrian 2002: 83-84).

Healing the small cattle is a special procedure whereby the representatives of clergy (a *sheikh* or a *pīr*) wash the diseased sheep with water from the miracle-working bowl of Mamē-šivān (t’āsā Mamē-šivān). Such bowls (made commonly of copper, ornamented inside in Arabic writing style) were kept in wealthy families in the home bedding (stēf), which was regarded as holy (see below). The bowl is removed when needed only by spiritual persons or unmarried girls or young men. A certain offering is due to the bowl annually. It is provided also for treatment of sheep of other families who have paid a tribute to the host (a length of cloth, butter or cheese), or made an offering (Davrešyan 1977: 79).

Making part of the shrine of Mamē-šivān in Lalish, in a cave-like recession with the so-called “Wishing Pillar” (stūnā mirāza), the visitors put their palms to the column believing that it will help fulfill desires.

The name of Mamē-šivān has become eponym of a family of pīrs at a village in Sheikhan, called Mamē-šivān and known also as “Little Lalish” (Kreyenbroek 1995: 111-112).

Interestingly, the cults of cattle guardians in a dual form and linguistically resembling the Yezidi patrons of cattle have been registered in Central Anatolia, in Dersim (now Tunceli), among the Zazas, originating from Daylam (South Caspian area) and confessing a particular type of Extreme Shi’ism (see Asatrian 1995). Meanwhile, the Kurds, a linguistically proximate people to the Yezidis, have only an indiscriminate spirit of domestic animals—P’ir. The gods protectors of cattle amid the Zazas are Sārikō-šuān and Mamō-gāvān (or Wāyirō xēr, i. e. “Master of Prosperity”). The Zazas have also the evil spirit, enemy of the cattle, Wāyirō xirāv (i. e. “Master of Evil and Destruction”), the persecutor, the torturer of animals, smothering them by mounting them, causing them to run wild screaming in despair. Therefore, when the cattle return from the field in the afternoon, after closing the door on them the Zaza custom prescribes to mention Sārikō-šuān and Mamō-gāvān, at the same time defaming Wāyirō-xirāv (Comerd 1996).³²

³² About the interesting parallels of cattle deities among the Lurs (Namad-kāl) and the Caspian population of Iran (Siyāh-gāleš), see in details Asatrian 2002: 83-84.

7. *Dawrēʿe-aʿrd—Lord of the Earth (Underworld)*

One of the rare gods in the Yezidi pantheon, carrying in his name the direct explication of his domain, in contrast to others commonly named after mythical or semi-mythical characters. *Dawrēšē-aʿrd* literally means “Saint (Master or Host) of the earth”.³³ According to some data, *Dawrēšē-aʿrd* is identified with Sheikh Abu Bakr (Šēxōbakr), personifying Angel Michael (Mikail), the fourth avatar of Malak-Tāwus. *Dawrēšē-aʿrd* is mentioned in three sacred texts: *Dirōzga* (“Prayer”), *Duʿāya օxirē* (“Prayer of fortune and bounty”), and *Duʿāya tʿasmīlī (tʿasīmī) aʿrdē* (“Prayer for committing to earth”), performed during the funeral rites. The latter is also called *Duʿāya Dawrēšē-aʿrd*—“A Prayer to the Lord of the earth”.

In the former of the abovementioned texts the name of this god was brought up only casually, in the only expression (Xātīrā *Dawrēšē aʿrd*—“In the name of *Dawrēšē-aʿrd*”) when enumerating the names of some saints; in another text, i. e. in the “Prayer of Fortune”, to be read prior to setting out for travel, *Dawrēšē-aʿrd* is addressed for protection along the way, among other things, that he keeps the belongings of the traveller from being damaged or lost. Cf. the end lines of this prayer talking about the “Lord of the earth” (Voskanian 1999-2000: 159):

Yā xwadē, milē Ēzdid pʿarda ba sar ma,
Yā Pīrā-Fāt, čārā ta sar ma,
Yā Xwadē, *Dawrēšē aʿrd*, ānamatē ma ta.

Oh God, [may] the shoulder of [Sultan] Yezid be thy courtain over us,

Oh Pīrā-fāt, [may] thy help (lit. “seed”) be with us,

Oh God, *Dawrēšē-aʿrd*, [may] our belongings be in thy storage.

A detailed information on the functions of this god can be found in the “Prayer for committing to earth” read quietly by a *sheikh* or a *pir* from among the five spiritual guides of the deceased (pēnǰ tʿirēqē farzē)³⁴ when the body is committed to earth, and the funeral train (except the guides) leaves the graveside.

³³ The second part of this name is from Arabic *ard* “earth”. For *Davrēš* (dervish) see above, under *General*.

³⁴ On the system of five obligatory relationships for every Yezidi individual, see Asatrian 1999-2000: 89, 94.

Du'āya t'asmīlī a'rdē is one of the most sacral prayers of the Yezidis; its performance is banned not only outside the rite, but also within the hearing range of the laymen, all the more so of the aliens. Any representative of clerical castes should know the prayer of committing to earth by rote. Here is the text of the prayer as recorded by M. B. Rudenko (Rudenko 1982: 132; Voskanian, *op. cit.*: 160).

T'asmīlī t'aslīma ta,
 T'aslīmī Dawrēš-a'rd.
 Yā, Dawrēš-a'rd,
 Avī a'vdī, harga žina, harga mēra,
 Bixafirīnī, bisif'irīnī.
 Sāhibtū ruh'ē wī/wē bikī.
 Barxē Ezdīda,
 Tōqā Tāwūsē Malak stūyē wī dāna.
 Banē ādam, wē bēna sar ta Naka ū Mankīna,
 Pirskin: "Xwadē ta k'īya?"
 Bē: "Xwadēyē min azdā,
 Xwadēyī hišyār ū mastāna,
 Xwadēyē čōl ū bistāna,
 Xwadēyē h'am ū xwadāna,
 A'vd ū banī nizāna.
 Aw xāliqē mawl ū māwiya,
 Bē čandara, bē gunaya;
 Aw na bīna, na žī bāya,
 Aw na awsiya, na nafsīya!
 H'aft xwazilā min vī nafsī,
 Awī rah'm lē pirsī,
 Waka a'malē ta rah'mē xwadē li ta ba.

We commit you [to earth with] commitment,
 We commit you to the Lord of the Earth.
 Oh Lord of the Earth,
 This slave [of God], whether a man or a woman,
 Shelter and appease [him/her],
 Take care of his/her soul.
 [He/she] is a lamb of [Sultan] Yezid,
 The cord-ring of the Peacock Angel is on his/her neck.

Oh offspring of Adam, you will be visited by Naka and Mankī,³⁵
 They will ask [you]: “Who is thy God?”
 Answer: “My God from the Absolute Beginning³⁶ is
 The God of vigilants and inebriates,³⁷
 The God of desert and gardens,
 The God of all gods.
 The slaves³⁸ [of God] cannot comprehend [Him],
 [As] He is the Creator of people and [of all] substances,
 He is without essence, without sin;
 He [has] no smell, no breath,
 He [has] no passion, no soul!”
 Seven times for the soul [of the deceased]
 I would beseech to be pardoned by Him;
 [May] the mercy of God be equal to thy deeds!³⁹

V. Voskianian cites two more versions of this prayer, more concise than the first one published by Rudenko (Voskianian, *op. cit.*: 161-162). The relevant formula of these texts would be as follows:

Yā Dawrēšī aʾrd,
 Tʾasmīlī ta av aʾvd,
 Birā tu rʾuhʾē vī mirī birahʾmīnī.

O Lord of the earth,
 (We) commit to you this slave [of God],
 Let your mercy be over the soul of this dead man.

The Lord of the earth is addressed also in mandatory toasts in his honour—right upon the tomb and during the memorial meal after the funeral. The toasts are pronounced by the “Afterlife brother” of the deceased. The toast on the tomb is as follows: *Aʾšqā Dawrēšē aʾrd! Birā*

³⁵ Nakīr and Munkar, the names of two angel-executors in Islamic eschatology, attending the deceased in the grave after the funeral. In the Yezidi religious texts they are also presented as a single character—the horrible demon Niknikīn.

³⁶ We consider *azdā* as an adaptation of *azil-dā*, i. e. “from the beginning (pre-eternity)” (cf. Arab. *azal* “eternity without beginning”). It is hardly from *az dā Xwade* “God granted me”, as suggested by Rudenko (1982: 135) based on the Yezidi popular etymology of the form.

³⁷ Inebriate is in fact a Sufī term, meaning “one in love with God”, yet practically not adapted to Yezidism (see Arakelova 2001b: 190-191, notes 11, 21).

³⁸ *Aʾvd ū banī* must be understood as a copulative formation from two synonymic words—*aʾvd* (Arabic ‘abd) “slave”, and *banī* (OIr. *bandaka-), with the same meaning.

³⁹ The text and translation of this prayer have been corrected in several places by the authors. Lines 12 and 13 had not been previously translated at all.

Dawrēšē a'rd r'uḥē vī mirī birah'mīna—"To the Lord of the Earth! Let Dawrēšē a'rd pardon the soul of this deceased!" The toast in the house of the deceased: *A'šqā nāwē Dawrēšē a'rd!*—"In the name of the Lord of the Earth!" At the ritual memorial meal toasts are pronounced for Sheikh 'Adi, Malak-Tāwūs, Šixālī-Šamsān (see below) and other divinities of Yezidism, the mandatory number of toasts being odd: three or seven. By the records made by Rudenko (1982: 63-64), the first cup is drunk to the Yezidi faith (or in another version, to the soul of the deceased and his parents), the second one to Malak-Tāwūs, the third one to the Lord of the earth, the fourth one to the Patron of wayfarers (Šixālī-Šamsān), the fifth one to the "Lord of the graves" (P'ir Mandīgōrā), the sixth one to Sheikh 'Adi, and the seventh one to the daily bread, to the giver of the daily bread—*qadrē řisqā, yē ku řisq dida sāzā*.

The toast to saints, angels or outstanding personalities is named *a'šq* (Arab. 'ašq), the toast to a person's health is *sālix* (sālxīyā ta). There is also a special manner of drinking: standing, glass in both hands, held using six or all fingers.

An important function of the Lord of the earth is preservation of people's possessions either hidden or pawned. *Yā Dawrēšē-a'rd, tasmīlī ta av āmanat* ("O Lord of the Earth, (I commit) to you this pledge")—that is the formula uttered when hiding some object at a secret place. They believe that it will remain intact provided the hider's clothes do not include the tabooed blue colour.

It can thus be seen that the basic competence of Dawrēšē-a'rd is safekeeping of the entrusted objects within the boundaries of earth, whether it is a dead body or any object. That may explain the tradition to call for him when planting grain (Kreyenbroek 1995: 113).

M. Eliade formulates connection between agriculture and the world of the dead: "Agriculture is concerned with the world of the dead at two different levels, both as a profane activity and as a cult. The former level is chthonic, for only seeds and dead people get into an underground dimension. The latter level is managing the fertility, life, which is self-reproductive. That is the domain of agriculture, while the dead are directly involved with the mystery of revival, with the cycle of Creation, with the inexhaustible fertility. Like a seed lying dormant in earth's lap, the dead, too, are expecting the return to life in a new form" (Eliade 1999: 321-322).

As shown by the material, Dawrēšē-a'rd can be described as god of the Earth and of the Underworld at the same time, with all ensuing functions of the deity of fertility and vegetation. Meanwhile he has also accredited with the power of pawn.

In this respect Dawrēšē-a'rd can be compared with Ārma(i)ti (Sṗnta Ārmaiti), the Old Iranian goddess of cultivated land, vegetation and fertility, having a link with the rite of inhumation, banned in Zoroastrianism.⁴⁰ She is attested in the Middle Iranian period both in Eastern and in Western Iranian traditions, among the Persians, the Sogdians, the Sakas. Cf. in Bundahishn (137, 3-5): *Spandārmāt xvēš-kārīh parvartārīh dāmān har ēr ī pat dāmān bavandak bē kartan ut-š gētik zamīk xvēš*—“the peculiar work of Spandārmāt is the nurture of creatures to make complete all wealth among the creatures, and the material earth belongs to her” (Bailey 1967: 140). Cf. also *Spandārmāt rōč varz ī zamīk kunēh*—“Am Tage Spandārmāt sollst du das Feld bestellen” (Nyberg 1934: 48-49).

The classical Armenian texts contain two Middle Iranian dialectal variants of this deity's name: with the initial *sp-* and *s-* (going back to the North-Western Iranian initial group **sp-* and South-Western **s-*), i. e. *Spandaramet* and *Sandaramet* respectively. In the Armenian folk-beliefs reflected by Tovmay Arcrouni, a 9th century author, *Erkir pandoki ē Spandaramet astouacoy*—“the earth is the inn of the god Spandaramet” (Bailey, *op. cit.*: 138).

Dawrēšē-a'rd is the unique example of a chthonic deity of this type, with the obvious ancient roots, within the whole new West-Iranian area.

8. Šīxālī-Šāmsān—The Patron of Wayfarers

Šēx A'li Šāms (Šīxālī-Šāmsān) is protector of wayfarers, captives, exiles, all who are in strange lands. Son of Sheikh Shams—a mythical character, one of the seven Yezidi saints (counterpart of Israfil in the group of the seven Avatars of Malak-Tāwūs), traditionally considered a disciple of Sheikh 'Adi. According to the legend reported by the recognised Armenian Yezidi theologian Sheikh Hasane Kalashe, Sheikh Shams had nine sons and three daughters identifiable with the twelve months of the year.

According to the legend, Šīxālī-Šāmsān got into captivity, was held in a fortress in Sham (Syria) and released two days before the 'Ayd al-fiṭr holiday, marking the termination of Ramadan. Being joyous at the return of his pupil, Sheikh 'Adi commanded all the Yezidis to cele-

⁴⁰ She occupies the fourth canonical place among the six Aməša Sṗnta-s (Amahraspands) of Ahura Mazdā (see Nyberg 1938: 91 et sq., 109-114; Widengren 1964: 11 et sq.; Kellens 1991: 27).

brate this day as the holiday of Šixālī-Šamsān (Kreyenbroek 1995: 157). Our informant reported however, that this holiday is celebrated on the first Wednesday in April. A hymn dedicated to Šixālī-Šamsān describes this event as follows:

Čāršama sarē nīsānē,
 Dang balābū ēzdīyē šarqē ū Šāmē
 Šixālī-Šamsā k'aramkir hāta diwānē,
 Žērā kirin a'ydā qurbānē
 Vakirin daftarā imānē (Celil, Celil 1978b: 305).

On a Wednesday of the month Nisan (April-May),
 A rumour moved among the Yezidis of Syria and the East
 That Šixālī-Šamsān came back to the Divan (“Council” of
 Sheikh ‘Adi),
 A sacrificial festival was arranged for him,
 The Tablets of faith were opened.

When having a meal, festive or mournful, they drink to Šixālī-Šamsān. The toast in his honour is called *ašqā Šixālī-Šamsān*. He is addressed particularly before hitting the road, with the following formula: *Šixālī-Šamsān, hara hawārā girtīyē hafsā, nafsē tangā, řevīyē řīyā*—“O Šixālī-Šamsān, go to help the prisoners, the aggrieved and the wayfarers” (reported by Sheikh Hasane Mamud). The legendary tomb of Šixālī-Šamsān is located at Lalish.

9. *Xatā-jōt*—*The Spirit of the Furrow*

The name of the deity (*Xatā-jōt*) means literally “the furrow of the plough”. It is a marginal image, evidence is scarce, except that a piece of the New Year pie is owing to her. *Xatā-jōt* is almost certainly a female character.

Literature makes no references to her; field research has not revealed much: we have not succeeded in recording whatever addresses, incantations or prayer formulas. Nonetheless, it is a real image, having its own niche in the religious concepts of the Yezidis. Perhaps, the marginal position of this character can be explained by a secondary role of agriculture in the economic set-up of the Yezidis who are mostly cattle breeders.

Xatā-jōt is commonly assumed to boost the crops and the efficiency of agricultural production.

Although the furrow in ancient Iran had no direct protector, but the “Spirit of the fields” has been attested. That is *šōiθrapaiti*, that later generated amid the Armenians the class of spirits called *šahapet vayrac*—“spirits of localities” featured mostly in the form of snakes (see Štakel’berg 1900: 20-21).

A parallel of *Xatā-jōt* under the name of *Bobo-dehqan* (lit. “old peasant”) is attested among the Tajiks and the Uzbeks. He is mentioned in the formula pronounced when planting: “Let it (be) our hand and the hand of *Bobo-dehqan*” (Basilov 1970: 17).

Meanwhile the Old Indian folk-beliefs contain an exact match of *Xatā-jōt* in the form of a female spirit of the furrow, named *Sītā* (“Genie der Ackerfurche”), her favour had to be gained by offerings (Meyer III: 159-160).

10. *Xudāne-mālē*—*The Spirit of the Household*

The name of this character, *Xudānē-mālē*, can be translated as “Master of the house”. He embodies the welfare of home and the family, supports the family morals, facilitates the cattle breed and crop yield. *Xudānē-mālē* dwells in the fire-place,⁴¹ but sometimes, assuming the form of a serpent, he crawls out of the house. Therefore, killing the domestic snakes is a great sin that can turn off fortune, cause trouble and adversity.

This type of attitude to home-dwelling snakes is almost a universal element in nearly all cultures of the East and West, from India to Europe, Asia Minor, including Armenia and the Caucasus area as a whole (see, e. g. Christensen 1941: 83-84; Seferbekov 2001: 140-141).

In his habitual image *Xudānē-mālē* is a human-like creature, sometimes visible to children and those experienced in wizardry.

Xudānē-mālē has to be given offerings or mentioned at different rites or religious offerings (see, e. g., above, ā 6).

Some authors (cf. Avdal 1957: 91) call the home spirit *Dawlat*, which is essentially the same.⁴²

A very similar spirit having the same functions resides in the pantheon of the Zazas: *Wāyirō čēi*—“Master of the house” (Comerd 1996).⁴³

⁴¹ *Kurmanji* *ōjāq/x*, or *tandūr*—an open-hearth furnace on which the fuel or dried animal-dung is exposed to the flame.

⁴² The attribute of *Xudān* (“master, host”), *māl*, literally means “property, house” (cf. Arab. *māl*); *Dawlat* is also an Arabic loan-word meaning “wealth, welfare”.

Reverence of the fire-place was widely spread in ancient Iran, when, e. g., during the Sasanid period, any home fire was considered to be a holy altar, although it was placed low in the hierarchy of the sacred fires. Avesta names *Ātar*, the god of the fire, as *vīspanam nmānam nmānō-paitīm* (Y.17, 11), i. e. “Hausherrn aller Häuser” (Eilers 1974: 308-309).

In all, the spirit protectors of the household and fire-place are common to many cultures—Slavonic peoples (cf. Russian *domovye*), the Armenians, the Georgians, the peoples of the North Caucasus, including the Ossetians, and so on.

11. *Pīrā-stēř*—*The Spirit of the Bedding*

Pīrā-stēř or *Pīrikī stēř*, lit. “the old woman of bedding”, is a unique deity having no parallels, at least in the Near Eastern region and in the Caucasus.

Pīrā-stēř is an old woman, invisible to the eye. She is considered protectress of the bedding—*stēř* (from OIr. *straya-; *star- “make the bed”); she cares about the welfare of home and family. She dwells in the bedding getting out to roam about the house at night. Therefore, after the sunset the Yezidis withdraw the curtain fencing off the bed so that the “Old woman” could freely move away from her abode. Roaming about the house, *Pīrā-stēř* emits some sounds continually: that is her talk with other good spirits: *Xudānē-mālē*, etc. She warns the household of danger (fire, etc.), wakes them up when thieves are in the house, and herself is trying to drive them off assuming the appearance of a night-time monster.

Pīrā stēř is entitled to treatment and sweets left on the bedding in a special bowl.

12. *Šēx Mand* or *P’īr Mandī-gārā*—*Lord of the Graves*

The son of *Malak Faxr ad-dīn* (*Farxadīn*), brother of *Pīrā-Fāt* and probably of *Xātūnā-farxā*. In one hymn *Šēx Mand* introduces himself in the following way:

Az pisē *Malak Farxadīnim*,
Ba’zīkī *čang nurīnim*,

⁴³ The *Zaza Wāyir* and the Yezidi *Xudān* are virtually different phonetic reflections of OIr. *xwatawān-. The *Zaza* *čē* “house, home” comes from OIr. *kata-.

Az sar t'axtē zēřīnim (Celil, Celil 1978b: 312).

I am the son of Malak Farxadīn,
I am a hawk with sparkling claws,
I am sitting on the golden throne.

Šēx Mand is an eponym of a sheikhy family from the Shamsani clan (the clan's symbol is a snake), whose members are regarded to be snake charmers, known as healers of the snake-bites (Kreyenbroek 1995: 103-104). They are also experts in catching snakes and taming them (Bois 1966: 100).

In the religious texts the Lord of the graves is posing as Šēx Mandē-Farxā (or -Faxrā), with the patronymic definition of belonging to Farxadīn (as his son) or, perhaps, to Xātūnā-farxā (as her brother).

Birāō, gō, birāē mina a'sāsa,
Birā Šēx Mandē-Farxā řūnī dīwānēd xāsā,
A'sqē har p'ēnj t'irēqē wī bigērīnin dōrān ū k'āsā
(Celil, Celil 1978b: 332).

Brothers, I say, my true (lit. “basic”) brothers,
Let Šēx Mandē-Farxā sit in the Council of saints,
And you drink to all the five of his spiritual guides.

He was apparently called, among other things, the Black Sheikh, as reflected in one of the most secret hymns—*Qawlē bōrabōrē*.

Yā h'ēkimī p'īrānō,
Azē qulē Šēx Mandē-Farxā—šēxē řařim (Celil, Celil 1978b: 451).

O wisest amid the pirs,
I am a slave of the Black Sheikh—Šēx Mandē-Farxā.

A cave in Lalish called “the Gorge of Šēx Mand”, harbours many snakes, and it is regarded as the tomb of their lord (Kreyenbroek 1995: 80). However, as noted by S. Drower (see Drower, 1941: 28), Šēx Mand has one more tomb in the village of Bahzan (Bahzané), where also is the *mazār* of Šēx Mūsa-sōr.

A dismal chthonic image, beside the snakes having power over scorpions, spiders and other creepy-crawly creatures, Šēx Mand understands their language (Tamoyan 2001: 151). He is also the spirit of

cemeteries overlooking the graves, which explains his name—P'ir Mandī-gōrā, i. e. “P'ir Mand, (guard) of the graves”. In this position he is approached as the one “in charge of the affairs of the dead”, which generally links him with the executor, also visiting the grave Naka and Mankī, or Niknikīn. Cf., e. g., the passage describing Niknikīn's appearance in the grave:

Niknikīn hāt ū hādirī,
 Ćōmāxē dastē wī p'ēt ū āgiri ...
 Ta ĉa'v mīnā ĉa've ma'rā,
 T'ili—nōt'lānī bērā,
 Naynuk—nōt'lānī k'ērā,
 Wē nāvē tištakī nāvēžin xudānī xērā.
 Ta ĉa'v nōt'lānī t'ās,
 T'ili—nōt'lānī risās,
 Naynuk—not'lānī da's,
 We nāvē xudānē xērā haq dinās!
 Ta ĉa'va řa'šin mīnānī faqīr,
 Šēbiska řa'šin mīnānī harīr,
 Bandē bivinin dīndārā mīr (Celil, Celil 1978b: 386, 387-388).

Niknikīn came and stood,
 Staff in his hand, burning coals and fire.
 Your eyes are like the eyes of snakes,
 Your fingers are like spades,
 Your nails are like knives,
 This name is hardly fit for Lord of goodness.
 Your eyes resemble drinking cups,
 Your fingers are like lead,
 Your nails are like sickles,
 Is that the just Lord of goodness?
 Your eyes are black as eyes of a *fakir*,
 Your hair is black as silk,
 Let the devout servants perceive the face of God.

We are, however, not inclined to identify P'ir Mand with the executor. Contrary to the threatening functions of the latter, the management of the affairs of the dead by P'ir Mand is rather the caretaking for the correct burial to be performed, so that the body in the grave should undergo all the necessary ritualisation, which has to maintain the well-being of soul in the underworld.

An apparent link of P'ir Mandī-gōrā with chthonic entities—the snakes and other creatures of this class is an unambiguous indication of the domain of death and, consequently, burial. This character, as evident from his name, is rather master or guard of the tombs, manager of the burial process. P'ir Mandī-gōrā is toasted at the ritual meal in the house of the deceased (see above, § 7).

13. *Xidir-nabī (-navī)*—*A Universal Deity*

This character attested, beside the Yezidis, among many nations of the Near East: the Arabs, the Persians, the Zazas, the Kurds, the Talishes, the Central Asian nations (the Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Kyrgyzes, etc.), and particularly popular in the mystical Islamic doctrines. It is to be noted, however, that in all the mentioned traditions, except the Yezidi and the Zaza,⁴⁴ Xidir-Nabī is regarded as a saint. That is natural, since the orthodox Islamic environment, while recognising the sainthood (by no means canonised), admits no deification.

The name Xidir-nabī (-navī) can be translated as Prophet Xidr (Arab. al-Xiḍr, Pers. Xizr, or Xezr). Xidir-nabī is often identified with the Prophet Elijah, which caused the emergence of a character with a double name (see Papazian 1986; Krasnowolska 1998: 141-159), but in essence being the same figure. The double form occurs also in the Yezidi tradition: Xidirnabī-Xidiraylās (Celil, Celil 1978b: 308), or Xirdaylās.

Xidir-nabī, having obviously the Muslim roots (a hint at him, perhaps without mentioning his name, is in Qura'n: XVIII, 59-81), has been shaped as a deity among the Yezidis and the Zazas under the influence of Surb Sargis (St. Sergius), a popular saint in the Armenian folk-Christian pantheon, embodying a military principle and controlling the storms (on Surb Sargis see Harut'yunyan 2002; cf. also Comerd 1998). The saint Xidir-nabī amid the Kurds, having the image nearly coincidental with the Yezidi deity, naturally merits the same characteristic.

In all, it can be assumed that both Xidir-nabī of the Yezidis and the Zaza Xizir are in essence sort of reflections of Surb Sargis, for while distinctly carrying his characteristics, they have assimilated the universal qualities and functions relevant to other figures of both the

⁴⁴ Alongside with Dūzgin, Xizir is one of the two supreme gods of the Zaza pantheon (Comerd 1998).

pantheons, duplicating them in many aspects (e. g., Xizir is the same Dūzgin along many features). This situation points to a fuzzy type of this image within the popular mind and consequently, to its being a secondary figure.

Xidir-nabī is one of the sons of Sheikh Shams; he is a celestial warrior in the first place, a rider on a white horse (haspē sīyārē bōz), rushing tirelessly along the mountains and gorges: mērē gāz-gēdūkā—“the man of mountains and gorges”.

He is a patron of the young, the travelling, and those in love; he helps those caught in the tempest, helps to live in plenty and to get people out of a mess. While taking care of a travelling friend or kinsman, it is customary to address Xidir-nabī: *Yā Xidir-nabī, tu bēyi hawāra rēvīyē rīyā*—“O Xidir-nabī, be a help to the wayfarers!”.

Xidir-nabī festival is an important event in the Yezidi calendar. It is celebrated on the first Friday after February 13 preceded by a 3-day lent (řōžiyē Xidir-nabī) (Şēx K’eleş 1995: 33-34). In another version—on the fourth Wednesday after 16-20 February (Davreşyan 1977: 73). The Armenian Surb Sargis is celebrated on one of the Saturdays between January 18 and February 23.

On the day of the festivities the main beams of the house were painted with flour, the pictures showing figures of cattle, celestial bodies, people, etc. There was a teeter mounted in the house, and the members of the family were given a few swings each saying *Gunē xwa dāwāšīna*—“Shake out your sin”. Incidentally, a ritual rocking at a festival is also noted with the peoples of Central Asia. The Turkmens, e. g., believed that teetering removes the sins accumulated during the year (see Basilov 1970: 17). According to L. Šternberg, the ritual swinging was “an imitative sexual act with regard to the deity of fertility” (Šternberg 1936: 466).

One day before the festival the young girls baked salted pies, ate those never drinking any water during the rest of the day, so as to see their betrothed, the one who would come in their dream to give them water. A bowl with flour made of roasted grains was put on the bedding (stēř) for the night in the belief that Xidir-nabī would notch it with his spear or with the hoof of his horse. On the day prior to the festival and during the festival, young men kindled fires (guřīk, guřguřīk, or t’alālōk), jumping over them and muttering:

Ādānā giškā dyā minřā,
Ādānā dyā min zēdaba.

The milk of all is to my mother,
Let my mother have more milk (Davrešyan, *ibid.*).

On the festive night, during the late-time meal named *pašiv*,⁴⁵ two dishes of food have to be put out in the courtyard. One is a tribute to the souls of the deceased, while the other one is for the Old man of the late-night meal—Bāpīrē-pāšiv, a saint, who when alive had been a righteous man but had no children. It is believed that, after his death, God rewarded him with the capacity to enrich the families who give alms to him and to the souls of the dead on the eve of the Xidir-nabī festival (Şēx K'eleş 1995: 33-34).

Further, starting with the night of the festivity until the next morning, people visited one another wishing fortune and plenty to the families of the neighbours and kinsmen. There was free food and handouts to the beggars. The whole ceremony was named Laylaqadr, which was an exclusively Muslim concept, for at Laylatu l'qadr—the “Night of Greatness”,⁴⁶ according to the Muslim beliefs, the Qur'an was god-sent to people, which is commemorated by a great holiday, 'Īd al-qadr. The night-time visits (šavā Laylaqadr) during the Xidir-nabī holiday, being an important occurrence in the religious calendar of the Yezidis, is of primary importance for the destiny of a devotional Yezidi, according to the definition of Sheikh Hasane Sheikh Kalashe (Şēx K'eleş 1995: 34).

The description of the festival is largely coincidental with the celebration of Surb Sargis by the Armenians, Tearñəndaraj (Shrovetide), as well as partially with the Persian festival lahār-šambe-sūrī, following the Nowruz. The motif of a saint leaving a trace on food as a visible sign of his blessing, is recurrent in the folk tradition of Iran, not only in reference to Hazrat-e Xezr, but also to Saint Fāteme Zahrā (Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad), Bibī Hawā (mother of Eve), Bibī Seşambe (mother-Tuesday, Patroness of weavers), etc. (Krasnowolska 1998: 146).

In all, it can be stated that Xidir-nabī is a regional character with a very extensive range of functions, an incomer from the Muslim environment, though having been shaped as a pantheon figure against the Armenian cultural and historical background, which is also the case with regard to Xizir of the Zazas.

⁴⁵ The Yezidis traditionally have four meals a day: at dawn—*tašē*, at noon—*frāwin*, in the afternoon, at 6-7 p.m.—*šiv*, and late at night, at 10-11 p.m.—*pāšiv*.

⁴⁶ In different versions it is on the first, the seventeenth, the twenty-first, the twenty-third, or the twenty-seventh day of the holy month of Ramadan.

14. *Ībrāhīm-Xalīl—God's Friend*

In the name of this deity we certainly see the Biblical Prophet Abraham, who is, like Moses (see above, § 2) very popular in folk beliefs not only of Muslims but the Christians as well (see Russel 1987).

Including *Ībrāhīm-Xalīl* (xalīl–Arab. “friend”) into the Yezidi pantheon is, of course, quite provisional, for he has neither definitive spheres of influence, nor specific functions in the cultic practice. That is perhaps a deified saint, to be addressed during a meal, a ritual meal in particular. The following prayer is read during a ritual meal after the funeral by the “Brother of the Afterlife” or by the Sheikh of the deceased:

Sifrayī jalīl—
 Barak'ata Ībrāhīm-xalīl!
 Har'ika dāya av tam;
 Buhušt lē biva miqām,
 Dōža lē biva h'arām!
 Nāv dik're ta,
 Ālēki-ma salām! (Sheikh Hasane Mahmud).

A splendid meal—
 [By] the kindness of Ībrāhīm-xalīl!
 Who gave this taste [to food],
 Let paradise be his abode,
 [While] from hell let him be banished!⁴⁷
 In mentioning of you,
 Peace be with you!

During the meals on the occasions of offerings, the pans containing the meat of offered animals are to be opened by the “Brother of the Afterlife” of the head of the family or the Sheikh of the family.

Sifrayī jalīl,
 Qurbānē Ībrāhīm-xalīl!
 Qabūl-maqbūl ba! (Arame Chachan).

A splendid meal,
 Let us become an offering to Ībrāhīm-xalīl!

⁴⁷ Literally: “Let hell be ritually disallowed for him”.

Let (God) accept (this offering)!

Ībrāhīm-xalīl is mentioned in the following prayer of good wishes:

... Nānī ži xiznā Šixādī va,
 Hāvēnī ži Kāniyā-spī va,
 Sifra bi dastē Jalīl va,
 Barak'at gōtinā Ībrāhīm-xalīl va (Celil, Celil 1978b: 435).

(Let) the bread be from the granaries of Sheikh 'Adi,
 Leaven from the White spring-well (a holy spring in Lalish),
 [And] let the cloth be spread by the Splendid (i. e. Ībrāhīm-xalīl),
 [And] abundance at the command of Ībrāhīm-xalīl.

Ībrāhīm-xalīl is, as a rule, remembered while taking ordinary meals, like dinner or supper. The head of the family recites the following prayer prior to a meal: *Rahmā Ībrāhīm-xalīl li vē sifra ba*—“Let grace of Ībrāhīm-xalīl be on this cloth”. He is perhaps associated with plentiful food, probably the only sphere tracing the role of the “Friend of God”.

15. *Jin-Tayār—The Lord of the Genies*

This deity is believed to be the Ruler of the jinns. However, his name means literally “flying jinn” (Arab. *ṭayyār*). He has obvious links with Sheikh Shams: the latter’s shrine in Lalish is believed to be his abode. *Jin-tayār* is believed to grant cure to the mentally ill: appealing to him is an effective means of exorcising the evil spirits from the possessed, since he is dominating over all invisible entities. Therefore, the mentally ill and those possessed by the spirits are advised to visit the sanctuary of Sheikh Shams (Jindy 1992: 12). The sanctuary of *Jin-tayār* in the village of Vache of the Ashtarak region in Armenia, is located in the house of a Sheikh belonging to this famil (Šēxē *Jin-tayārē*).

Both *Jin-tayār* and *Māma-řaşān* are associated with the stories of riding a stone or a lion, with a whip, becoming a snake (Tamoyan 2001: 152). These common features, probably, explain the fact that the sheikhy Rashan clan (having *Māma-řaşān* as their eponym) is known also as *Ojaxā Jin-tayār* (i. e. the family of the Lord of the genies). It is believed that this family possesses the capabilities to heal the maladies of the soul (Ankosi 1996: 10; Arakelova 2001a: 325).

Jin-tayār is a fuzzy image, lacking precise explication within the cult. Perhaps, he is one of the functional manifestations of Sheikh Shams personifying the sun, or Māma-řařān, the thunder-god.

16. *P'irē-Libinā(n)*—*The Builder-spirit*

P'irē-libinā(n) literally means “Pir (a spirit or patron) of unfired brick (Arab. laban)”. The religious tradition ascribes to him the building of many sanctuaries in Lalish during the times of Sheikh 'Adi. P'irē-libinā(n) is also the patron of the household and matrimonial union. He is alleged to arrange the marriages. Therefore, he is addressed to facilitate marriages (Jindy 1992: 32). It is believed that his prayer of intercession for an object of love will always be heard: *du'ā-qabūl P'irē-libnā* (Kreyenbroek 1995: 218). P'irē-libinā(n) is named as an embellishment of a number of deities and saints of Yezidism, like Sheikh 'Adi, Sultan Yezid, Sheikh Mand, etc. Cf.:

P'irē libnānō, gyānō,
Zaynat' bi suřā Šēx Mandē Faxrānō (or Šēxē Ādiya,
Silt'ānē Ēzīda, etc.)

Oh beloved P'irē-libinān,
The ornament of the Mystery of Sheikh Mand, the son of Fakhr
(The Mystery of Sheikh 'Adi, Sultan Yezid, etc.)
(Kreyenbroek 1995: 236, 237).

He is addressed during the Xidir-nabī festival.

P'irē-libinā(n) seems to be an image imported from the local cults. In Lalish, he has been nearly forgotten, while the Transcaucasian Yezidis ignore him completely.

Conclusion

The cited material is most probably inclusive of the complete inventory of divinities comprising the Yezidi folk pantheon. Most of them have long been sunk into oblivion; even among the spiritual castes not all of them form sustainable associations. Because of irregular or vaguely targeted research some deities and their associated characters had not been known except by name, with many remaining completely unidentified. That will explain the great difficulties of recon-

stucting the total picture of the folk pantheon, which has been herein performed by gleaning scattered data and fragmented materials, using comparative techniques.

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