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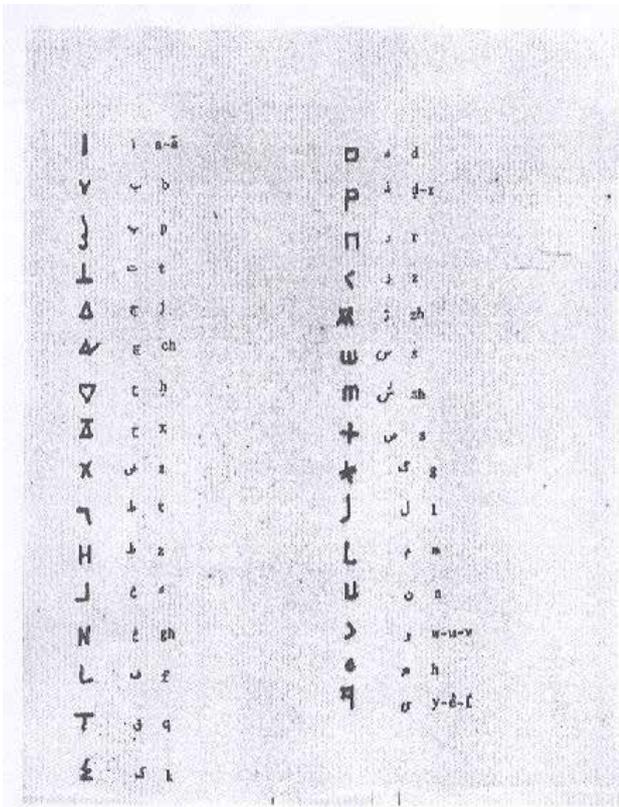


Fig. 2. Snajaq (symbol of Peacock angel), which is uncertain. Source: Archive of Author.

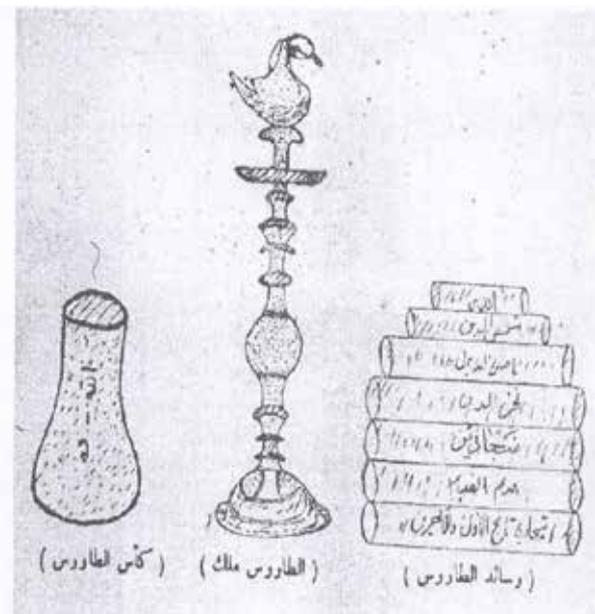


Fig.3. Yezidis holy book alphabet. Source: Archive of Author

(narrators) as they retell oral stories and chant Yezidism rituals in ceremonies. The narrators are eloquent speakers.

Yezidis were originally from the present Iraq, as their shrines are located in Iraq in Muosel, Dehouk, and Sanjar at 162 km of the west of Mousel and Shaykhan city. Shaykhan was the place where the Shaykhs reside. According to Yezidism, Yezidis were not supposed to talk about the religion and creed to the strangers representing a Yezidism maxim i.e. concealing the creed. It seems that Yezidis have been totally ignored in new studies. At present, the most significant resource is Abdol karim Ibn Mohammad Samaani, 11th historian, referring to Yezidis in the Morj area (present Islamabad) and Hulwan Mountain (Sarpol-e Zahab) in its book.

Conclusion

similar to Christianity, Jedaism, Hinduism, Zurvanism, Zoroastrian and particularly Mithraism, Yezidism dates back to a long times ago, before the advent of Islam. Similarities between Yezidism and Mithraism are as follows:

- Concealing religious instructions and opinions and lack of expression to the followers of other religions
- Holy Sunday honored at both (Yezidism believes that the Peacock angel was born on Sunday)
- Sun is respected and worshiped at both
- Congressional Eid and Mehrgan ceremony are simultaneously held
- Bull sacrificing
- The sacred seven number and the seven spiritual steps at both creeds
- Ablution before entering sacred places
- Ritual ceremonies are held by musical instruments.

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congregational ritual, which is literally means Izidi throne.

4. Washing in Zamzam fountain at the beginning and end of ceremony ending the Eid. Other important Eids (festivals) are New Year Eid, Izad Eid, Date Eid, the Long Eid, and festivals of the mid-summer and mid-winter.

Yezidism believe that they have an autonomous religion and Shariah that have so far maintained their religious texts in two oral and written forms. The Yazidi Book of Revelation (Kitēba jilwe) (Fig.1) and Yazidi Black Book (Meşhefa reş) are of Yezidism holy books. The former is assigned to Shaykh Adi and the latter to Shaykh Hassan, which have underwent many revisions, falsification, and misrepresentation up to the present. Book of Revelation is a short text consisting of five sections written like holy books i.e. the sentences are the god commands and orders to the servants. The Meşhefa reş implies black as the term reş means black in Kurdish implying reverent and grand. The books significantly differ respecting the content. Yazidi Black Book (Meşhefa reş) is a historical book retelling ancient events, customs, and the story of angels and mankind creation. In 19th century, some scholars and researchers have attained the books' texts and tried to publish. One of the orientalist was Priest Anastas Mari who provided two scripts of the book in 1912 and decoded it over two years. The book almost follows Latin alphabet (Fig.2).

Another critical religious customs of Yezidis is the religious expedition to the angel of peacock. The statue of this angel is worshiped naming as Sanjiq (Fig.3). The statue consists of two components of bird and candlestick. The candlestick is divided into seven sections each representing one of the seventh angels and a bird, like a duck or pigeon is attached symbolizing the peacock. Each area and country may benefit some Sanjiqs, which may have been seized by Ottoman governors or stolen by robbers and sold to the museums over centuries. However, they

have been refund to the Yezidis. The rational to this stems from secretion in the Yezidi creed; the real Sanjiqs were secretly protected and preserved by Yezidis grandees. Common Sanjiqs shared little similarity to the peacock more resembled to a holy object in Hinduism creed in south of India named as 'Dipa'. Priest Sarkis, in an article published in 1974 in Mouselih, claims that "once an Ottoman king sequestered the Sanjiq; my grandfather told that there is no need to concern as it was an Indian Sanjiq".

Yezidis enjoy an integrated religious system divided into seven classes from top to bottom are: Amir, Baba Shaykh, Baba Faghir, Pir Ghaval, and Kuchak (little) reminding the seven-step Mithraism system. The lowest religious level is the Littles literally means 'Gaveh Chak' i.e. the one who obeys the orders; the next is Ghavalan

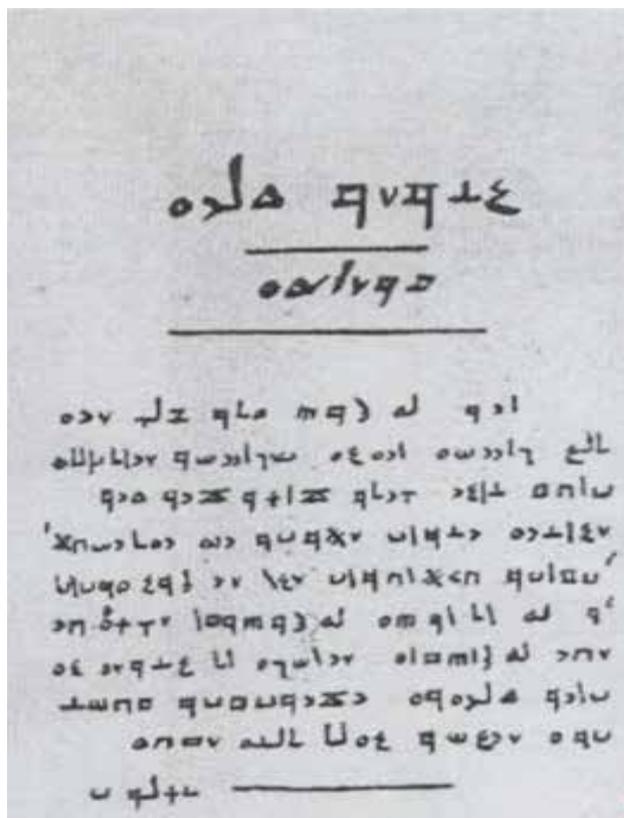


Fig.1. A page of Yazidi Book of Revelation (Kitēba jilwe). Source: Archive of Author.

establisher of the Yezidi; rather, he has revived this creed in Islamic age.

After his death, stories of his miracles and supernatural events have been widely narrated among Yezidis such that he was valued as a mythology and named as the 'Peacock angel/ Azazel'. He was succeeded by Shaykh Shamsadin Hassan Abo Mohammad named as Abo Al-Barakat from 1185 to 1246 ruling over Hekari Region and the surrounding, Mosul, and Dahuk. He was a competent and thoughtful man. All evidences reveal that he has designed and formulated the Yezidi ideology with Islamic face. Depicting the mythological visage of Shaykh Adi, especially rebuilding his tomb as an Islamic holy place, has led to a gathering site for Yezidis that annually came to the Dare lash for pilgrimage. The place was already a Christianity sacred place and probably earlier people. However, the rituals and ceremonies were associated to pre-Islamic religions, particularly Mithraism.

At the entrance of Lash Valley, a 200-m length pathway leads to the right from the main road paved with white stones naming "As-Sirāt" bridge. As Yezidis believe in metempsychosis; the spirits would inevitably have two mortal and immortal heavens. That is why a mortal As Sirat bridge has been considered. In front of the entrance gate of Shaykh Adi shrine, there can be seen a canopy named as Bab Al-Ghafour. At the north of the shrine, some cells have been carved in the heart of rocks. A column of stone named as 'Morad' has been carved following 'Hannan pillar' in Medina and the Prophet shrine. There is a sacred fountain located at the left where the pilgrims do ablution; it is referred as 'Ain Al-Bayza'-locally named as Kani Sep (white fountain). Therefore, Lash is the most sacred place in the universe for Yezidism as the tombs of Shahykh Adi, Abo Al-Barakat, and other grandees have been located there. Further, they also believe that god would descend in this land on the Day of Resurrection, and the peacock angel has descended here for the first time on Wednesday. Yezidis are highly interested in

ceremonies and celebrations; they have several festivals the most important of which is the 'Great Eid' or 'Al-jama'ah (Congregational) Eid' coinciding with Hajj from October 5 to October 12. It is considered the greatest Yezidism Eid that people came to Lash from various neighborhoods to celebrate Hajj. In the following, specific ceremonies and traditions for this Eid are briefly described:

1. Ablution in Well of Zamzam or Ain Al-Bayza, which was compulsory for all unbelievers.
2. 'Ghapaq' ritual meaning collective shooting; at the end of the fifth day, they climbed up the shrine surrounding mountains and shoot in the honor of New Year. Then, they returned to the shrine area, sang and danced. The great Shaykh, then, presented a white bull to the shrine and asked the audience to symbolically protect it from the harm of others. Armored adolescents follow the bull toward the tomb of Shaykh Shams Al-din chanting religious words commit to safely return the white bull to the Shaykh Adi shrine. Meanwhile, two unknown Yezidis steal the bull. All attendances crying of the bull has been stolen chase the robbers to save the bull. In spite of appointing ten powerful men to the guard; the robbers try to take the bull again, sacrifice it next to the Shams Al-Din shrine sharing its meat to the people. According to Yezidism, it would lead to fertility and growth in agriculture and husbandry. It is also said that each blood drop of the sacrificed on the land would lead to growing plants and happiness. There are several evidences that prove the Mehr rituals were performed in this festival, but in a new form. Such as taking ablution in the Cheshme Sepid or kaani Sep which is translated as white spring in the Persian or cow sacrificing in the front of Sheikh Shamsaddin tomb (the symbol of sun). There might not be by coincide that the start and the end of the festival is similar to the Mehregan ceremony on 21th of Mehr (seventh month of the Persian calendar). for the folks.

3. Establishment of the deity throne is another

customs through new forms such that they are interwoven to Islamic traditions that may not be distinguished.

Many theories and hypotheses have been stated on Yezidism and how they have established in Islamic period some of which are briefly described the first hypothesis is that they were Yazid followers. as follows:

1. They followed Yazid. This hypothesis may be rejected due to Yazid personality, caliph of the Umayyad caliphate, who did not have consistently firm philosophical and religious thoughts. However, political and racial dependency, and or wealth and power may assign Yezidis to this caliph. But, a mythical leader generally has an ethical- scientific characteristic who gathers the followers accordingly, what could not be found in the Yazid's character. the major master is usually a scientific-ethical character whose disciples gather around that was not true about Yazid. On the other hand, Yezidis are located in the vicinity of Yarsan or Ahl-e Haqq; hence, assigning them to the caliph of the Umayyad caliphate is could be totally rejected.

2. Yezidism is an ancient Kurdish tradition and creed, which may only assign to Kurdish people. According to Yasemi, the historian and scholar, "Yezidis were wrongly ascribed to Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya while they were originally derived from Yazdan Parasti (theistic). It is referred as 'Yazta' in Avesta; Yazd in Pahalavi; and Yazdan in new Persian" (Yasemi, 1984). In fact, Yezidi is attributed to Mitra deity as Yezidis were descendants of Mithraism underwent some changes in Islamic era and peacefully coexisted with Muslims.

3. Prior to the universe creation, god has started to create seven angels in seven days to aid him. In the first day, he created 'Azazel' or 'the greatest angel' and appointed him as the head of angels. Azazel characteristics mostly resembled 'devil' or 'Satan'. That is why 'Satanists' are referred as Yezidism, too.

4. Yezidism dates back to pre-Islamic era as the tracks of Babylon, Jewish, Christianity, Hindu,

and Zurvanism, especially Zoroastrian, and Mithraism can be easily seen in their tradition. At the time of Arabs' arrival, they pretend to the new creed as they were afraid. However, then, they moved to impassable mountains of Hulwan (Sarpol-e Zahab) in Iran, and later, northern mountains of Iraq (Sinjar).

5. Some historians also believe that "Yezidism has been established in 11th and 12th centuries by Shaykh Adī. Shaykh 'Adī ibn Musāfir al-Umawī was born in the 1070s in the Beqaa Valley of present-day Lebanon in a Muslim family. Adī is said to have been born in the village of Bait Far, near Baalbek. Shaykh 'Adī spent much of his early life in Baghdad. To attain a sufi life and seclude himself he sought a quiet haven in Mesopotamia. He then moved to a mountainous area in north of Iraq, 'Lash' and resided in a cave. Lash is a mountainous village located in the ten kilometers of northeast of Shaykhan town. People gradually gathered and followed him due to Shaykh virtue and piety. He died at the age of 90 (1162 CE or 557 Hijra). According to others, he died in 1160 CE (555 Hijra) in the hermitage that he had built himself in the mountains, where his descendants lived after his demise" (Britannica).

According to other historians including Sadig al Damlooji, "there was no such sect characterized with these beliefs and ideology mentioned in historical references prior 12th century. Its advent dates back to Shaykh 'Adī ibn Musāfir". However, this theory may not be maintained. Although, no historical references referred to Yezidism since the advent of Islam in the north of Mesopotamia to 1162 (when Adi died); It is located at the eastern part of Tigris, 35 Km to Dehuk and 54 Km to Mosel. Lash their largest shrine is 10 Km to the Sheikhan province. it does not justify the ancient existence of Yezidis prior Shaykh Adī. It can be also stated that Yezidis refused to be assigned under the name of Yezidism when they lacked a leading unified head. Regarding the few limited Yezidism written works; indeed, Shaykh 'Adī ibn Musāfir was not the founder and

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Studying Yezidism Traditions and Beliefs

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Abstract

Kurdish people have resided over with their specific traditions centuries in the northern parts of Iran land and impassable mountains of Mesopotamia with typical customs. they follow some of the ancient Persian and Mesopotamian rituals and keeps their belief secret like gemstone. they consider themselves Yezdis collection of Persian and Mesopotamian ancient rituals that secretly keep and veil their beliefs as a precious gemstone, and consider themselves as ‘**Yezidis**’ (*Êzidî*). They built some resorts in highlands of Hulwan and Sinjar in order to protect their they constructed some buildings on the Hulwan and Sinjar highlands to protect ancient religion. They are honest, brave, and committed to their testament. The present paper briefly studies their creed and some customs.

Keywords: *Yezidis, Creed and customs, Ancient rituals, Kurdish.*

Introduction

Ideology of Yezidis was concealed prior to the war between Iraq and Syria, but the war and the imposed system has provided an opportunity to identify Yezidis and their religious and customs. ‘Yezidis’ or ‘Êzidî’ (Satanist) are of ancient Persian tribes and some branches of Aryan Kurds. The population prior the war was 1.5 million people living in the geographical

area of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, and Iran; however, there is no new detail of the current population. New studies have totally disregarded Persian Yezidis despite the fact that Iran has been of the primary significant origins and settlements of this nation along the history. Yezidis are descendent of ancient Mesopotamia creeds, especially Iran that have survived in Islamic period and more or less have maintained the traditions and



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