

SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON YEZIDISM

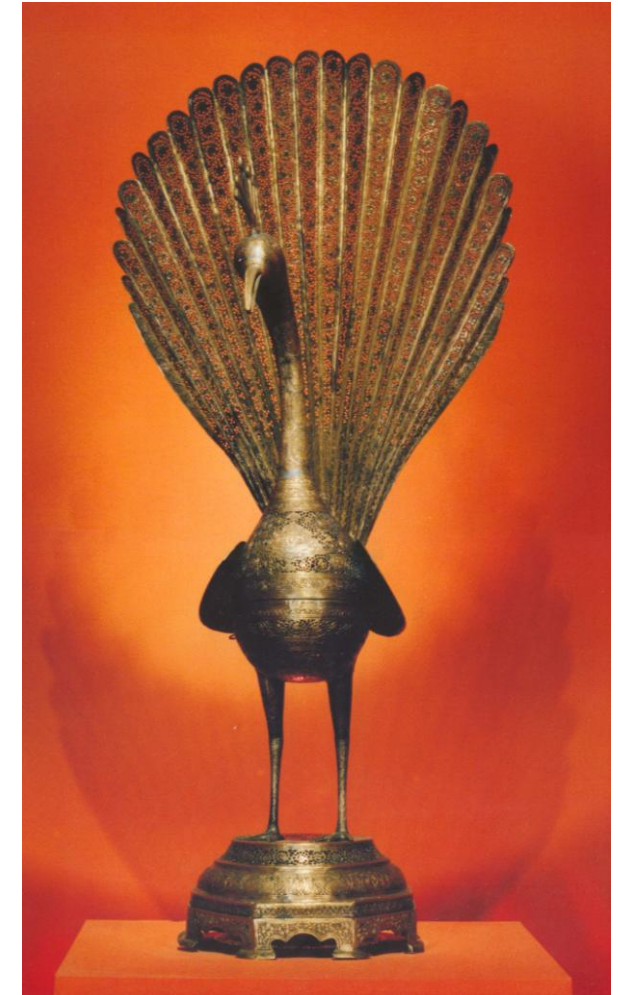
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Comments:

YEZIDISM AN ANCIENT KURDISH RELIGION: A VIEW FROM INSIDE

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By Dr. Khanna Omarkhali
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen



Tawusi Melek – a Yezidi Symbol

Dr. Khanna Omarkhali
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
Seminar für Iranistik
Weender Landstr. 2
37073 Göttingen
Deutschland / Germany
Email: omarxala2005@yandex.ru

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace
and Gulan Promoting Kurdish art and culture

YEZIDISM

Êzdîti known in literature as Yezidism is one of the ancient monotheistic religions of the Kurds. Yezidism has the basic features of known religions, e.g. the dogmas, theology, sacraments, complex rites and ceremonies as well as priesthood hierarchy. Yezidism also preserves the separation of the castes, which are actually the basis of the Yezidi theocratic society.

DEMOGRAPHY

No exact data is available about the number of Yezidis. According to unofficial estimates, the population of the Yezidis in the world exceeds 700,000, approximately 2.3% of the Kurdish population. Yezidis live in Iraq, Russia, Germany, Armenia, Georgia, Syria, the Ukraine, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, Poland, Iran, the USA, the UK, etc.

YEZIDI RELIGIOUS CENTRE

The only centre of the religion and its ceremonial rituals, Lalish, is located in the Sheykhani region in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to Yezidi religious literature, Lalish was appeared on the Earth from the Heaven. It was erected at the same place, where God first created the Earth basis.

BELIEFS

Yezidism is a monotheistic religion. Yezidis appeal to God – *Xwedê*, *Êzîd*, *Êzdan*, and *Heq*. Yezidis believe in one God and respect seven archangels, who were created by Him before the Creation of the world.

During prayer a Yezidi should face towards the Sun. For this reason they were often called “sun worshipers”.

Yezidis believe in metempsychosis, which plays an outstanding role in Yezidi religiosity and is named *kirasgorîn* (‘change of [one’s] shirt’). There is also a belief that some of the events of the time of Creation repeat themselves in cycles in the exoteric history.

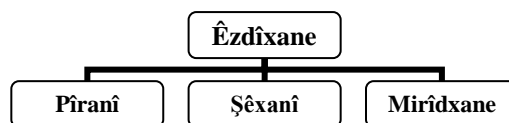
ETHNOS AND LANGUAGE

Today all Yezidis are Kurds. The Yezidis speak northern dialect of the Kurdish language, i.e. Kurmanji, in which practically all their religious texts are composed.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

In the beginning of the 20th century two so called Yezidi scriptures were found, which raised much scholarly interest, but now they are considered as not ancient authentic Yezidi books. The basis of Yezidi dogmas is kept mainly in the oral tradition. The divine origin is added only to poetical religious hymns, called *Qewls*.

STRUCTURE OF THE YEZIDI SOCIETY



YEZIDI CASTE SYSTEM

1. There are three hereditary castes in Yezidism; two of them, namely *Sheikhs* and *Pîrs* are clergies, and *Mirîds* are laymen.

2. The main functions of *Sheikhs* and *Pîrs* are carrying out Yezidi rituals and rites.
3. A Yezidi belongs to a caste by his/her birth. Both parents should be descended from the same caste.
4. Changing castes in accordance with someone’s desire is impossible.
5. All taboos and limitations with the exception of some particular cases apply to all representatives of Yezidism.
6. All boys pass through the *rites of passage* regardless of which caste each boy belongs to.

MARRIAGE

There is a strict endogamy in Yezidism: marriages between castes are forbidden. Marriages in the *Sheikh* caste are possible only among representatives of each of three clans: *Adanî*, *Shemsanî* and *Qatanî*. Marriages in the *Pîr* caste are possible among each other, with the exception of *Pîrs* of *Hesmeman* clan, who can marry among representatives of their own clan. Marriages in the *Mirîd* caste are possible among all representatives of this caste.

GENESIS OF YEZIDISM

A number of researchers write with confidence that Yezidism has sprung up in the 12th AD, and its founder was *Sheikh ‘Adi b. Musafir*, in fact the reformer of Yezidism. In Yezidi Religion, however, side by side with mainly Kurdish religion of Ahl-e Haqq, one can obviously observe very ancient cults with roots embedded deeply into past millennia.