

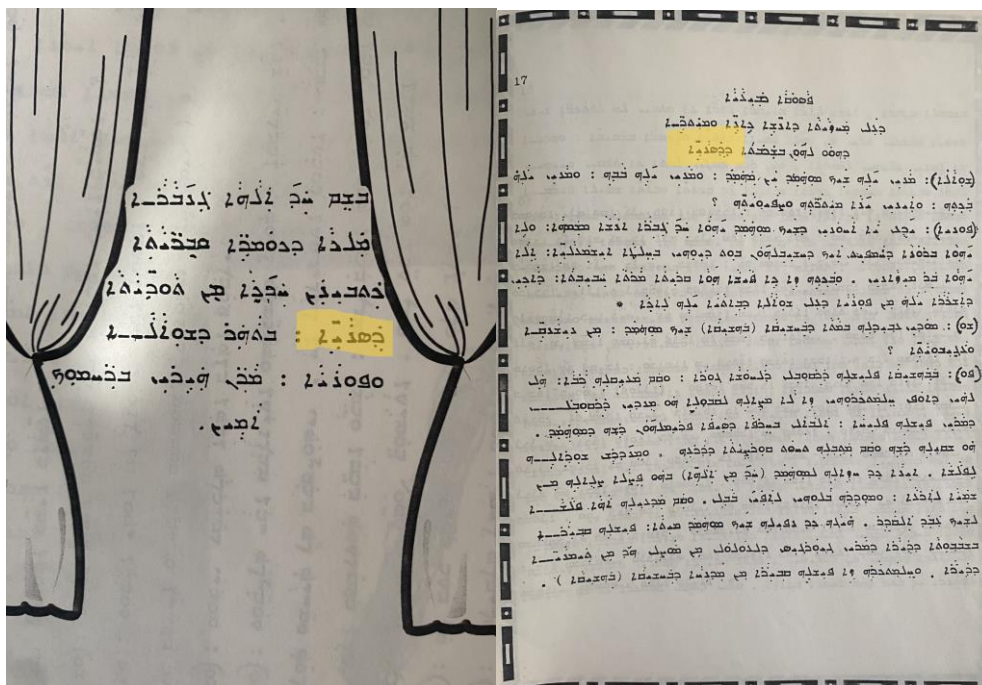
Yezidis Are Not Kurds: They Are Two Distinct Peoples

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The Yezidis are one of the most mysterious groups in the Middle East. The etymology of the word Yezidi is undefined to this day. However, the Yezidis call themselves Dasin, Dasnī, Dasenī, plural as Dawasīn or Dawašim. This self-designated name originated perhaps from an old Church of the East “Nestorian” diocese records. Yezidis are called Dasnayeh [Dasnāyē] in Syriac [Assyrian].¹ It was very common for the Assyrians, including my own father who was born in Mosul (Nineveh), to refer to the Yezidis as Dasnaye when the subject matter came up.

Michael the Great (1126–1199), compiled a vast chronicle detailing history from the Creation up to his time. He is the author of a giant, medieval world chronicle found in a single Syriac manuscript. In his *Chronicle*, he mentions the "Dasnaye," characterizing them as groups residing in mountainous regions with practices distinct from mainstream Christianity. Also, Rev. Ishaq Rehana (1909-1997) of the Assyrian Church of the East wrote in several separate volumes about church issues, including church history and various Assyrian monasteries. In his 1988 publication, he described several aspects of the Yezidis and mentioned that Assyrians called them Dasnaye.²



¹ Accessed 4/29/2025 M. Th. Houtsma, 1993, [E. J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1936](#): Volume 8 - Page 1164, Brill.

² Rev. Ishaq Rehana. Topic One: The Monastery of St. Jonah. Topic Two, Dasnaye: Faith & Habits. USA. 1988.

Furthermore, in his renowned publication, *Assyrie Chretienne* (Assyrian Christians), Fr. J. M. Fiey, a French Dominican, prominent Church historian and Syriacist, states that some people clearly seen that the Yezidis were called Dasnāyē and their country is located further east and further north than modern Sheikhan and included the entire region to the east/southeast of 'Amadia, and would cover part of the valley of the Great Zab.³ Records also indicate that this Yezidi land extended eastwards to the Khabur River. Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo writes that the Dāsan area extended across the Zab to the Assyrian tribal regions of Ṭhūmā, Bāz and Jīlū, which are described in medieval texts, such as that of St. Zay‘ā, as being located in “Upper Dāsan.” Adjacent to Dāsan was the area known as Bēth-Ṭūrē (i.e., between the mountains). Al-Jeloo adds that Fr. Fiey identifies this as the Gahrā Mountains and the valleys of Naḥlā and Ṭalānā, which were transferred from the diocese of Margā to that of Dāsan in the eighth century. According to the text of Rabbān Joseph’s *Vita*, at least four of the monks at the Bēth-Ṣayyārē Monastery during that time were Dasnāyē.⁴

The Yezidis fatherland is described as Sheikhan, the district of the Nineveh Governorate, situated at the foothills of the Hakkari Mountains, around which Yezidi villages are scattered. The Yezidis also refer to this region as Mergehê/ Margê, which is the old name of the local Nestorian diocese of Marga (of the metropolitan province of Adiabene⁵). The holy Lalish valley is located here, the cradle of Yezidism, now a place where many Yezidi shrines are situated.⁶ The proximity of the Yezidi centers and shrines to Assyrian archeological sites is neither arbitrary nor coincidental.

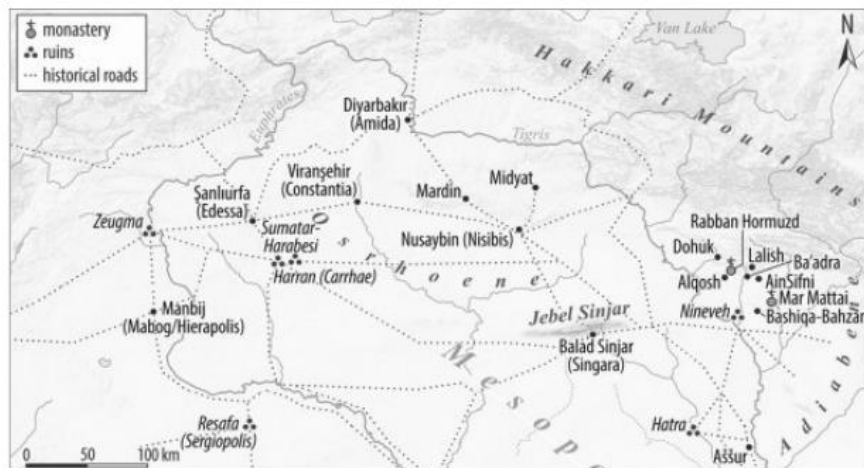


Fig. 1 – Upper Mesopotamia – map by © Artur Rodziewicz.

³ J. M. Fiey. “Assyrian Christians.” Vol. II. IMPRIMERIE CATHOLIQUE. Beirut. P. 787.

⁴ Nicolas Al-Jeloo. “Geography, Demographics, and the Value of Medieval Syriac Historical Texts: A Case Study of the *Vita* of Rabbān Joseph Busnāyā (II).” In *Banipal*, No. 48. 2023.

⁵ Accessed 5/5/2025 https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2007/Adiabene_Was_Assyrian.pdf

⁶ Artur Rodziewicz. “HEFT SUR – THE SEVEN ANGELS OF THE YEZIDI TRADITION AND HARRAN.” In *Inventer les anges de l’Antiquité à Byzance: conception, représentation, perception* édité par Delphine Lauritzen. Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance – 2021. P. 945.

The mysterious background of this ancient and intriguing ethnoreligious group continues to be debated by scholars. However, we read that “the major problem in Yezidi studies is that there are almost no written sources available which come from the Yezidis themselves and are written before the twentieth century. This results from their religious ban on writing, under which both reading and writing were considered sinful, ...” However, “beside hymns and other orally-transmitted poems which frequently mention angels, the academic world also knows (since the late nineteenth century) two short texts, the so-called Yezidi ‘sacred books:’ Kiteba Jilwe (Book of Revelation) and Meshefa Resh (Black Scripture).”⁷

This mystery regarding the ancestry of the Yezidis (and other groups, such as the Bakhtiariis, Lurs⁸, Zazas, etc.,) has prompted Kurdish nationalists to take advantage of it and make claims that the Yezidis were ethnically Kurds. This claim and others that are nationally and politically driven, help the Kurds on two fronts:

- a) It increases the Kurdish population.
- b) It gives the Kurds in northern Iraq the historical legitimacy that they do not possess, as they arrived from the Zagros Mountains where they inhabited originally.

The Kurdish claims are challenged on many fronts. Most importantly is the fact that the term Kurd originated during the Middle Persian (Sassanid) period.⁹ The term Kurd originated from Kwrt, which meant “tent-dweller nomad” and is not an ethnonym.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the identity of the Yezidi (Dasnaye), asserts Anthropologist Christine Allison, “is not an offshoot of Kurdish nationalism but a deeply rooted religious and ethnic tradition in the Mesopotamian world.”¹¹ A 2015 genetic study found that Yezidis form a distinct cluster, more closely related to other autochthonous Mesopotamian populations, such as Assyrians and Armenians, than to Muslim Kurds.¹² The study concluded that Yezidis are likely descendants of pre-Islamic indigenous populations who maintained genetic continuity through endogamy.

Kurdish nationalists and historians claim that the Yezidis speak Kurmanji, but since Yezidis themselves also call it Ezidiki, the Kurds counter by claiming that Ezidiki is a dialect of Kurmanji. Furthermore, the Kurds do not mention that the Yezidis of the towns of the Nineveh Province, such as Ba’sheqa and Bahzan, do not speak Kurdish, but rather Aramaic or Arabic as their mother tongue.¹³ There are a few reasons why the Yezidis speak Kurmanji. Many scholars agree that linguistic adoption can result from conquest, isolation, or pressure, and does not

⁷ Ibid. P. 946.

⁸ Lurs (Faylis) Are Not Kurds.

https://www.academia.edu/129031072/Lurs_Faylis_Are_Not_Kurds

⁹ The Sassanids existed between the 3rd and 7th centuries of the Christian Era.

¹⁰ Garnik Asatrian, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds,” *Iran and the Caucasus*, Vol. 13 (2009), 1–58

¹¹ Christine Allison. “The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan.” Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001.

¹² Ivan Nasidze, et al. “Genetic Evidence Concerning the Origins of Kurdish and Yezidi Populations.” *Annals of Human Genetics* 69 (2005): 401–412.

¹³ Accessed 4/29/2025 <https://www.yezidisinternational.org/abouttheyezidipeople/glossary/>

inherently indicate shared ethnic roots.¹⁴ Others argue the “The Yezidis’ adoption of Kurmanji likely occurred due to prolonged subjugation under Kurdish tribal leaders and forced assimilation during Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods.”¹⁵

In addition, oppression of ethnic groups by Kurds has led to the kurdification of certain tribes and people around the Zagros Mountains, southeast Turkiye and northern Iraq. However, with the absence of such external factors, people seek means to facilitate speaking their mother language. Anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen writes, “it was mostly Yezidis who pioneered modern Kurdish literature and Kurdish broadcasting in Soviet Armenia – but during the past thirty years we could observe a notable move away from Kurdish identity towards a distinct Yezidi ethnicity.”¹⁶ In early days, when Yezidi families chose a Keriv (or Kerif), who is a sort of godparent who conducts the circumcision ceremony for Yezidi boys, they often opted for choosing a Muslim kerif in order to procure protection among members of the dominant majority should the need arise.¹⁷ As van Bruinessen mentioned, there is indeed a sizeable segment of the Yezidis who are very patriotic and nationalists that see themselves strictly Yezidis, but link their past to the Medes. Unfortunately, the power and the reaching arm of Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) prevents more Yezidis from rejecting the Kurdish claims. In fact, the fear factor was present among other groups in Iraq under Pan-Arabists, for example, as many non-Arabs feared Iraqi government’s biased treatment or even retribution and opted to use the Arabic language and with time were Arabized.

Also, the ethnographic study based on two years of regular visits to the homes of Yezidi families in Arizona, their extended family networks, and large community events and a year and several months of follow-up interviews prompted Mija Sanders of the University of Arizona to state that Yezidi orthopraxy has been shaped by their cultural environment. Living among Muslims, Christians and Zoroastrians and other religious and cultural groups for centuries in Mesopotamia has formed common practices with those groups as well, just as there are many differences. Sanders noted that when the *aarti* tray of candles was passed around in a Hindu ceremony, the attending Yezidis took the blessings of the fire. It was a space in which they felt comfortable to recognize and compare their own forms of worship from Lalish.¹⁸ The *aarti* consists of a small flame burning on a wick placed on a plate that is rotated round the deity. The daily morning and evening ritual of the *aarti* makes the light of the flame dispel darkness, the incense that is burnt gives out fragrance, a bell is rung, hands are clapped while one sings. The *aarti* is a reminder of God’s greatness, because the rotated flame is symbolic of the Cosmos: the sun, the moon, and

¹⁴ Martin van Bruinessen. “The Kurds and Yezidi Identity: A Reexamination.” In Agha, Shaikh and State, London: Zed Books, 1999.

¹⁵ Philip G. Kreyenbroek. “Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition.” Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.

¹⁶ Martin van Bruinessen. Review article: “Kurds, Zazas and Alevis.” Kurdish Studies. Volume: 8, No: 2, pp. 371 – 381 Transnational Press London. October 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.33182/ks.v8i2.574>.

¹⁷ Mija Sanders. “Yezidis in ancient India, or Indians in ancient Mesopotamia? Re-imagining Ancient Yezidi Origins.” Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies Copyright 2019 2019, Vol. 6, No. 2, 68-82

¹⁸ Ibid.

the stars that are revolving around the mighty creator paying obeisance to him. This exact practice is unknown to the Kurds. Of course, aarti is different than the Chaharshanbe Suri or the Fire Jumping Festival performed by the Iranian, Azerbaijanis, Afghans, Tajiks, Kurds, etc., which is celebrated every year on the last Wednesday of the year. It is a chance to mark the end of the year and to hope for a bright New Year (Nowruz).

Percy George Badger who spent time with the Yezidis writes, In 1832, the Kurdish pasha of Rawandooz, instigated thereto by religious fanaticism and a thirst for booty, fell upon those [Yezidis] inhabiting the plains, burned their villages, carried many of them away captive, and on the mound of Kuyunjik¹⁹ massacred several thousands in cold blood who had fled thither, hoping that the people of Mosul would offer them a refuge within the city walls. About six years later, Mohammad Pasha led an army against the Yezidis of Sinjar, and after several defeats finally succeeded in crushing their power, and in reducing them to abject submission by the cruelest and barbarous measures. And as late as 1844, when Jebel Toor [Tur 'Abdin] was under the rule of Bedr Khan Beg, the Yezidis of that district were subjected to the most wanton oppression by that tyrannical Kurd, in order to force them to embrace Islamism. Many underwent imprisonment, stripes, and other indignities, and a few suffered deaths, rather than renounce their creed; but seven entire villages became the professed followers of the false prophet.²⁰ The Yezidis continue to commemorate the Yezidis' massacre by Kurdish tribal leader Bedr Khan in the village of Khtara (Khatuniye).

Also, "during the last two-three decades almost all Yezidi settlements in Turkey (in Mardin, Diarbekir, etc.) were devastated by the neighboring Kurds; under the severe oppression of the latter, the Yezidis were forced to leave their native soil and immigrate to Germany."²¹ The Yezidis have continued to suffer from massacres perpetuated by the Sunni Kurdish tribes and radical Islamic groups. In fact, van Bruinessen asserts that many conservative Sunni Kurds whom he met in the 1970s refused to recognize Yezidis and Alevis as Kurds, in spite of their speaking Kurdish. van Bruinessen has researched the Kurds and written extensively about them. He explains that "Kurdish identity (or identities) and Kurdish nationalism (or nationalisms) have been articulated differently in different circumstances, and the demands associated with that identity have been changing accordingly."²²

¹⁹ On the mound of Kuyunjik the throne-room suite of Sennacherib's palace has re-excavated with some of its relief slabs depicting the Kings conquest still in position, the mound of Nebi Yunusj the site of the imperial arsenal 1.6 km; South of Kuyunjik, has been covered with houses grouped around a mosque, containing the reputed tomb of Jonah.

²⁰ Percy George Badger. "The Nestorians and Their Rituals." Vol. 1. First published in 1852. Darf Publishers Limited. London. 1987. Page 133.

²¹ Garnik Asatrian. "Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds." Iran and the Caucasus 13. 1-58. Brill. 2009.

²² Martin van Bruinessen. "Kurdish identities and Kurdish nationalisms in the early twenty-first century." Published in Turkish as: 'Erken 21. Yüzyılda Kürt Kimlikleri ve Kürt Milliyetçilikleri', in: Elçin Aktoprak & A. Celil Kaya (eds), 21. Yüzyılda Milliyetçilik: Teori ve Siyaset. İstanbul: İletişim, 2016, pp. 349-373

The persecution and massacring of the Yezidis by the Kurds begs the question as to why would the Kurds do that if the Yezidis were part of the Kurdish people. Few would argue that the Kurds of the 19th century were religiously motivated and were defending Islam. But then, how could one justify how the Kurds returned to cause the genocide against the Yezidis in 2014 as the Islamic State (IS) mercenaries invaded northern Iraq. A field research investigation of the Yezidis genocide concluded that, "the Yezidi men ended up failing to protect their communities is that they were betrayed by the Kurdish regional government. It repeatedly promised the Yezidis that their territory would be protected from the Islamic State by the Kurdish Peshmerga instead of the disintegrating Iraqi army. Yezidi elders then erroneously assured their families that they had nothing to fear. However, on 3 August 2014, with no warning, the Peshmerga withdrew from the stretch of the front line defending Yezidi villages in Sinjar".²³ The research team continued to receive the same feedback from Yezidi refugees, that they "do not trust the Kurdish regional government, and especially the governing KDP and its Peshmerga militias". It was for that reason that the team of the field research "tried to bypass the representatives of these institutions whenever possible, including the entrance to the refugee camps" because Yezidi women for example "were forced to talk to journalists by their families, Yezidi leaders or representatives of the Kurdish regional government".²⁴ Scholars have argued that "the failure and inability of the Kurdish military forces to protect the Sinjar area against the IS onslaught in early August 2014 generated sentiments of disillusionment and resentment among large sections of the Yezidi community. This development drew a wedge between the Yezidis and Sunni Kurds despite their common linguistic characteristics."

In another study, Mirza Ismail, a Yezidi activist from Canada, has called for India to represent Yezidis at the United Nations (Tare, 2018). In his writings, Ismail describes how the Yezidis had been "backstabbed" by the Kurdish forces, and how the U.S. had refused to give Yezidis weapons to defend themselves. He said he wasn't satisfied by the response of the international community. "The US, UK and other European countries did nothing. They support the Kurdish politically, logistically and internationally."²⁵

Additionally, Prof. Yakub Halabi of Western Galilee College, Acre, Israel asserts that the 2014 genocide of the Yezidis was not the first time that the Yezidis lived through oppressive and persecution policies. He explains that the tiny religious minorities, such as the Yezidis, Bahai, Druze, etc. have no mother state that otherwise can represent them. Thus, these tiny religious minorities are found in a self-help situation and have to manipulate the various actors in their arena in order to survive. The Ottoman Empire did not recognize the Yezidis as a separate millet or religion because Islam considers these groups as heretic movements.²⁶ The Yezidis have established interactions with local and imperial rulers since the rise of the community with its distinctive religious belief system by the 13th century; however, they remained outsiders to the

²³ Karel Černý. "Redefinition of gender roles as a result of armed conflict and forced displacement: Sinjari Yazidis after the genocide of 2014." Elsevier BV 2020.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mija Sanders. "Yezidis in ancient India, or Indians in ancient Mesopotamia? Re-imagining Ancient Yezidi Origins." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* Copyright 2019 2019, Vol. 6, No. 2, 68-82

²⁶ Yakub Halabi. "Tiny Religious Minorities in the Middle East: The Case of the Bahai, Druze and Yazidi Minorities." <http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.110304>

Ottoman millet system offering limited tolerance and autonomy to non-Islamic groups such as Christians and Jews.²⁷ Halabi mentions the Yezidis, Bahai and Druze in his study mentioned above. It is interesting that the Yezidis claim that the Druze are Yezidis. It is said that when the Jews were brought to Gozan, in the captivity, they were carried off to Lebanon, but soon became corrupted, and refused to receive the *kawahls* from Assyria. So they were called Dur (far off) Yezd (God), or People far from God.²⁸

The fact remains that religion continues to dominate the life of many people of the Middle East, including the Kurds despite signs of moderation and efforts by western media to present the Kurds as secular people. The Kurdish federal self-rule region in northern Iraq is relatively small, still, there are almost 6,000 mosques, mostly built after the 1991 establishment of the No-Fly-zone in northern Iraq, but mainly after 2003 US invasion and the creation of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq.²⁹

Prof. Victoria Arakelova focuses on the historical analysis of the term Yezdistan (Ēzdīstān), attested in a Yezidi legend, having obvious parallels with the Shahnameh's "Tale of Zahhak". It is particularly interesting that this plot does not occur in any of the Kurmanji versions of the Shahnameh ever recorded in Armenia and represents, in fact, a separate legend out of the epic context. In order to find the solution of this enigma, Arakelova writes, "We have to once more turn to the classical version of the Shahnameh, which says that in the mountains the survivors form "the tribe of kurds"—kurdān. Of course, kurdān in the Shahnameh is not an ethnonym but, rather, a social term, signifying generally cattle-breeders and nomads (Malamīr 2008; see also Asatrian 2009). However, starting from the end of the 19th century, this detail, alongside with other ideological myths, has been actively used in the nationalistic Kurdish circles with the purpose of artificial archaisation of the newly-shaping Kurdish ethnos (see, e.g., MacKenzie 1963; Asatrian 2009), in particular, for the justification of numerous legendary versions of the Kurdish ethnogenesis. The latter were allegedly supposed to prove the autochthonous character of various parts of the Kurdish conglomerate on the territories of its present habitation." The author finally asserts that "the virtual term Yezdistan as denoting the "land of the Yezidis", could emerge in a narrative ad hoc, as a parallel and reaction to the increasingly spreading term Kurdistan, which initially was not either correlated with any historical state, but artificially applied to any territory inhabited by any part of the Kurdish-speaking element."³⁰

Cultural aspects that differentiate the Yezidis from the Kurds must be addressed, because the only argument that the Kurds have to substantiate their claim that Yezidis are Kurds is that part

²⁷ Güneş Murat Tezcür, Zeynep Kaya, Bayar Mustafa Sevdeen. "Survival, Coexistence, and Autonomy: Yezidi Political Identity after Genocide." 2021. Accessed 4/29/2025. https://www.academia.edu/97728570/Survival_Coexistence_and_Autonomy_Yezidi_Political_Identity_after_Genocide

²⁸ Rev. W. S. Tyler. Memoir of Rev. Henry Lobdell, M.D. Late Missionary of the American Board at Mosul Including the Early History of the Assyrian Mission. The American Tract Society. Boston. 1859. Page 224.

²⁹ Accessed 5/6/2025. 129 more mosques built in Iraqi Kurdistan in one year: Ministry of Endowments. <https://theinsightinternational.com/mosques-built-iraqi-kurdistan-2023-03-28>

³⁰ Victoria Arakelova. "Yezdistan versus Kurdistan: Another Legend on the Origin of the Yezidis." Iran and the Caucasus 21 (2017) 376-380.

of the Yezidi people speak Kurmanji, which I have touched on. In Iraq, it is well known fact that the KDP coopt politicians or individuals from within the Yezidis (and Assyrians), control them and ensure that they act and speak in favor of the Kurdish interests and go as far as claiming to be Kurdish. However, many independent Yezidi leaders and those who do not reside under the influence of the Kurdish rule assert that they are not Kurds. Three Yezidi leaders, including Saring Mahmoud, have asserted strongly that Yezidis and Kurds were different and they did not intermarry.³¹

Other scholars assert that the Yezidis are the descendants of the ancient Sabians. It is known that the name Sabii, who are said to be from Harran or to have lived in this region, comes from Arabic or is related to Arabic. Citing Henri Lammens, the author links the Yezidis to the Sabis, who belonged to Assyrian, Semitic and other ancient cultures.³² And citing Erol Sever, the Yezidis themselves, including Prince Anwar Muawiya Ismail, the head of the Yezidi Religious Centre, identify themselves as Assyrian and Babylonian, not Kurdish, and reject claims that they are of Kurdish origin.

Percy George Badger, an English Anglican missionary, and a scholar of oriental studies, writes, “The Yezidis is an ancient appellation of their race, which according to their account existed in these parts [of Ba’sheqa, near Nineveh] from time immemorial. Badger continues to state that he has no doubt that the Yezidis are “descendants of the ancient Assyrians” “³³

W. A. Wigram, a Church of England priest and author, writes, “the “Rogation of the Ninevites” which commemorates the repentance of the men of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and is said to have gone on from that day to this. However, that may be—and it was certainly reformed, if not instituted, by a zealous 6th century bishop—there seems to be evidence of great antiquity for the custom. The Yezidis, who are not usually credited with the habit of borrowing their observances from Christians, keep this fast year by year—and it is the only one that they do normally keep.”³⁴

One of the greatest archeologist, Austen Henry Layard, writes that at the sanctuary of Sheikh Shams or the Sun [perhaps shamash] an invocation to the latter is carved on a slab near the door, one or two votive tables are built into the walls. The interior, which is very holy, is lighted by a few small lamps. At sunset, a herdsman led into a pen a drove of white oxen that were dedicated to Sheikh Shams, but were never slain except on great festivals when their flesh is distributed among the poor. The dedication of the bull to the sun probably originated in Assyria, and the

³¹ Susan Meiselas. “Kurdistan.” Random House. New York. 1997, p. 36

³² Murat Gökhan DALYAN and Muhammet Nuri TUNÇ. “YEZIDIS IN AND AROUND MOSUL.” In OSMANLI’DA TOPLUM, ŞEHİR VE TİCARET IV. UZUN DİJİTAL MATBAA, SONÇAĞ YAYINCILIK. Aralık 2024 ANKARA.

³³ Percy George Badger. “The Nestorians and Their Rituals.” Vol. 1. First published in 1852. Darf Publishers Limited. London. 1987. Pages 111-112.

³⁴ W. A. Wigram. “The Assyrians and Their Neighbours.” First published by G. Bell & Sons, London in 1929. Republished by Gorgias Press LLC, New Jersey in 2002. Page 199.

Yezidis may have unconsciously preserved a myth of their ancestors.³⁵ Layard writes that the Yezidis hold traditions such as baptism in water like the Christians³⁶; circumcise children in the same manner of the Mohammadans; and reverence the sun, and have many customs that are common with the Sabaeans. However, Layard adds, they seem to have more in common with the Sabaeans.³⁷ The Yezidis have a tradition that they originated from southern Mesopotamia, from the land watered by the lower Euphrates, but they migrated to Syria and then settled in the Mount of Sinjar and the districts they were inhabiting now.³⁸

Jean Spiro, a professor at the University of Lausanne writes, “I forget to mention a very strange tradition among the Yezides, of which I was informed a few days ago. Several of them, who were with me, insisted on leaving in order, they said, to go and observe their fast. But what fast? I asked them. They answered me: that of Nineveh.”³⁹

Çakır Ceyhan Suvari draws upon his fieldwork among the Yezidis of Viranşehir (Şanlıurfa), Mardin and Batman in Turkey. He writes: While some Yezidis are influenced or used by the Kurds, others, such as Veysi Bulut, living in Beşiri, has also said that the Yezidi belief came from the Zoroastrian religion and claims that in this respect, their religion is the oldest monotheistic religion. Bulut explains this process as follows: “The origin of the Yezidi belief is Zoroastrianism. There were gods and goddesses taking orders from a great God in Babel [Babylon] and Ninova [Nineveh]. This situation reached Zarahustra after the evolution during the historical process. There is the concept of one single God in Zoroastrianism. The King Nebuchadnezzar brought the Children of Israel to the lands of Babel. The Children of Israel met with the concept of a single God here and they returned to Palestine and formed the well-known monotheistic religions.” Bulut hereby states that Zoroastrianism, which he sees as the first monotheistic religion, also affected other monotheistic religions apart from the Yezidi belief. Other Yezidi people like Bulut are seeing themselves as the main representatives or descendants of Zoroastrian belief. For this reason, they claim that their history dates back to the Assyrian and then to Zoroastrianism and they insist that they are one of the oldest societies of Mesopotamia. The author writes that when he told the interviewees that some Kurdish authors identify the Yezidis as Kurds, they intensely objected to this view, because they do not establish any connection with the Kurds in today’s conditions. They also explained that “some of the Muslim Kurdish tribes were Yezidis before, but they changed their religion so the Yezidis had no more connection with them”. In the same way, we see that the Yezidis living in Northern Iraq are also sharing similar ideas. So much so that, despite the Kurdish dominance within the region, the Yezidis in Northern Iraq are intensely refusing the historical and ethnical links between themselves and the Kurds. They even feel themselves closer to the Assyrian people and they claim that they are also of Assyrian origin.

³⁵ Austen Henry Layard. *Nineveh And Its Remains*. Edited by H. W. F. Saggs. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. First Published 1849. This edition published 1970. Page 202.

³⁶ In his foreword, Allan Cunningham calls it Nestorian Christian, p. xvii. In John Guest. *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival*. KPI. London. 1987.

³⁷ Austen Henry Layard. *Nineveh And Its Remains*. Edited by H. W. F. Saggs. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. First Published 1849. This edition published 1970. Page 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Page 210

³⁹ Jean Spiro. “*Les Yezidi: Les Adorateurs Du Diable.*” Neuchatel. 1900.

Suvari goes on to explain that in this respect a speech by Prince Anwar Muawiye İsmail, Chairman of the Yezidi Religious Center, which was part of 1996 Sever's book titled 'Yezidis and Origin of the Yezidis', reflects the opinion of the Yezidis against the Kurdish identity: Both the Yezidis and Assyrians were founded with a common history, on common lands and with the principle of a single flag and by sharing the same fate [faith]. History has taught us that the Assyrians and the Yezidis are the real descendants of the great Assyrian Empire. They have a common nationality. These two societies have been connected to each other with strong fraternal links during the different ages of history, especially in the times of massacre and disaster. They survived next to each other against the attacks. Fortunately, the protection of common nationalities are permanent as solid rocks. I would like to define once more in front of all related international organizations; the Assyrians and Yezidis have the same fate [faith] and single nationality and they are hoping to live in peace under the same flag. With this announcement, we warn all Kurdish parties especially [Mesoud] Barzani and [Jalal] Talabani to stop representing the Yezidis at all international levels and stop their unfounded lies telling the Yezidis belong to the Kurdish nationality and stop their demands in Sinjar and Sheikhan under the authority of their administrative regions ...⁴⁰

On March 11, 2000, Prince Anwar Muawiye on the occasion of the establishment of the Sweden based Assyria TV talked about the brotherhood of Assyrians and Yezidis. This fact has been verified by several authors. Citing Erol Sever, the Yezidis themselves, including Prince Anwar Mu'awiya İsmail, the head of the Yezidi Religious Centre, identify themselves as Assyrian and Babylonian, not Kurdish, and reject claims that they are of Kurdish origin.⁴¹

W. Francis Ainsworth, an English surgeon, traveler, geographer, and geologist, writes, "Next to the splendid discoveries effected in recent times by the disentanglement of the monuments of Assyria, interest of ethnologists in groups such as Yezidis and Sabaeans who are present in the same neighborhoods as descendants of some branches of the ancient Assyrians." (p.1) Some of the most characteristic practices of the Assyrians are still found to be in vogue amongst them. They are widely diffused throughout Assyria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Armenia. (p.2) With Christians and Jews, they treat, make peace, and live; but with Muslims they have no intercourse. (p. 4) Among the Yezidis, certain springs are subject of veneration and the scene of sacrifices, which Yezidis make pilgrimages to them. One such spring that is at Sheikh Adi falls into a basin. The Yezidis were in a habit of throwing gold and silver into it in honor of the sheikh. This holy character with which certain springs are invested appears to be of Assyrian origin. The whole of the ravine of Bavian, near Sheikh Adi is supposed by Layard to have been a sacred spot, devoted by the Assyrians of old to religious ceremonies and to national sacrifices. Here, among other monuments of bygone times, there exist a series of basins cut in the rock, and descending in steps to the river Gomel. (p. 6) At the entrance of one of the deep ravines which runs into the Jebel Maklub, a clear spring gushes from the grotto in the hill side, which the Yezidis have also made the spot a place of pilgrimage. (p. 7) Next to Satan, Among the Yezidis,

⁴⁰ Çakır Ceyhan Suvari. "Yezidis: An Ethno-Religious Group in Turkey." Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics. Vol. 4, No. 2. Winter 2016.

⁴¹ Murat Gökhan DALYAN and Muhammet Nuri TUNÇ. "YEZIDIS IN AND AROUND MOSUL." In OSMANLI'DA TOPLUM, ŞEHİR VE TİCARET IV. UZUN DİJİTAL MATBAA, SONÇAĞ YAYINCILIK. Aralık 2024 ANKARA.

but inferior to him in might and wisdom, are seven archangels: Gabrael, Michael, Raphael, Azrael, Dedrael, Azraphael and Shemkeel. This number of seven, in the hierarchy of the celestial host, as in many other sacred things, appears to have been connected with Babylonian and Assyrian traditions and celestial observations. (p. 15) Also, a tradition among the Yezidis is that they came from southern Mesopotamia (Basrah), where they followed the Euphrates to immigrate to upper Syria first and ultimately took the nearby Sinjar mountain as a home later. This, according to Layard, is interesting because of the Yezidi ceremonies point also to the Sabaeen, Chaldean or Mandeian origin. (p. 32) However, the Assyrian origin of the Yezidis came from the discovery that the Yezidis' chief sanctuary and place of pilgrimage was also a most sacred spot devoted to the religious ceremonies and national sacrifices of the Assyrians. Here the late M. Rouet, French consul at Mosul, first met with the rock sculptures, which Layard declares to be the most important that have yet been discovered in Assyria. They represent the great king Sennacherib, recording his deeds, and invoking Ashur and the great deities of Assyria; and over the head of the royal Assyrians are the sacred symbols, to which there can be little doubt that the celebrated Melek Taus—the representative of the demon bird of the Assyrians—bears a real analogy. (p. 33)⁴²

Yezidism is a syncretic faith whose structure bears little resemblance to Islam or Zoroastrianism, the two religions most often claimed as its roots. Instead, it exhibits clear continuity with pre-Abrahamic Mesopotamian religion. The seven divine beings in Yezidi belief echo the seven planetary gods of the Assyrian-Babylonian tradition. Their central figure, Tawûsê Melek (the Peacock Angel), is a solar and peacock-associated being often interpreted as a cultural memory of the Assyrian god Ninurta or Ashur.⁴³ However, certain scholars assert that the Yezidi religion includes elements from both ancient Mesopotamia and Iranian religions in addition to elements of Judaism, Church of the East (Nestorian) Christianity, and Islam.

Yezidi populations are historically concentrated in Shingal (Sinjar), Sheikhan, and the Nineveh Plains—areas that were central to ancient Assyrian civilization. These regions include sacred Yezidi sites like Lalish, which lies only a few kilometers from ancient Assyrian cities such as Nineveh and Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad). Their sacred geography overlaps almost identically with that of the Assyrian religious landscape.⁴⁴ The very long existence of Yezidis in such core Assyrian territory suggests continuity rather than a migratory influx.

Lastly but not least, Asatrian, an expert in Kurdish history writes “Despite the bedlam created by Kurdish and Kurdophile groups all over the world around the so-called Yezidi “separatism”, the Yezidis possess a strong awareness of belonging to a closed and esoteric community, which excludes *eo ipso* any “Kurdishness”.”⁴⁵

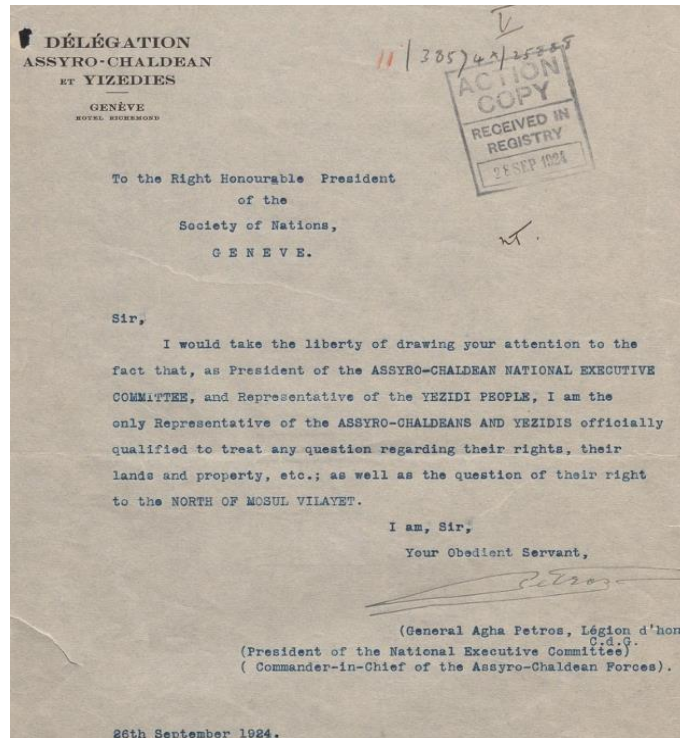
⁴² W. Francis Ainsworth. “The Assyrian Origin of the Izedis: Or Yezidis—The So-Called “Devil Worshippers”. First published in 1861. Reprint Isha Books, India. 2013.

⁴³ Khanna Omarkhali. “The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written.” Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017.

⁴⁴ Simo Parpola. “Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today.” *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 5–22.

⁴⁵ Garnik Asatrian. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds.” *Iran and the Caucasus* 13. 1-58. Brill. 2009.

It is interesting to know that in 1924 during the deliberations of post 1923 Treaty of Lausanne to settle the borders dispute between Iraq and Turkey, the Assyrian (Assyro-Chaldeans as known in France) representative was communicating with the League's commission as the representative of the Assyrians and Yezidis.⁴⁶



It is very distressing that Kurdish historians and politicians have reverted to immoral ways of corrupting history narratives and every possible way to erase the Yezidis' history and present that rich history as Kurdish. Asatrian writes that in a recent publication (Kreyenbroek/Rashow 2005: 221-222), we witness a deliberate interpolation of "Kurdish" terms into the archaic liturgical Yezidi poetry aimed at giving the text a "Kurdish" flavor. The editors, instead of Ezdixana (meaning "the Yezidi community") in the original text, introduced a geographic term, Kurdistan, referring by that to the so-called "Yezidi cultural memory", having allegedly kept the reminiscences about the primordial "homeland" of this people in its remote folders. The problem is that if the forgery of historical documents, various amulets, and parchments in "Old Kurdish" have always been an inseparable part of the history of Kurdish Studies, and are, therefore, predictable for a student of Kurdology, such intrusion upon the Yezidi authentic tradition is an absolutely new, unprecedented phenomenon also in terms of the involvement of Western scholarship in the falsification.⁴⁷

In a free society, people should never be forced to participate in a lie. We have an obligation to tell the truth.

⁴⁶ The document provided is courtesy of Deacon James Esha Barchum.

⁴⁷ Garnik Asatrian. "Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds." Iran and the Caucasus 13. 1-58. Brill. 2009..