

GÖTTINGER ORIENTFORSCHUNGEN

III. REIHE: IRANICA

Neue Folge 18,1

Herausgegeben von
Philip G. Kreyenbroek

2020

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Philip G. Kreyenbroek | Yiannis Kanakis

“God First and Last”

Religious Traditions and Music
of the Yaresan of Guran

Volume 1:
Religious Traditions
by Philip G. Kreyenbroek

2020

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet
at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2020

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.
Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission
of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies
particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage
and processing in electronic systems.

Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: Rosch-Buch Druckerei GmbH, Scheßlitz

Printed in Germany

ISSN 0340-6334

ISBN 978-3-447-11424-0

Contents

Abbreviations	VII
Preface	IX
Acknowledgements	XI
Terminology and Transcription	XIII
Introduction	1
General.....	1
History of the Study	2
The Gurani Tradition	5
Aspects of the Yāri World-view	6
Aims and methods	7
The hymns in book form: collections of texts.....	7
Chapter One: the Religious Background	9
The Indo-Iranian Religion: some relevant aspects.....	9
Zoroastrianism in Western Iran	13
Roman Mithraism and the ancient Western Iranian religion	16
Hellenistic cults	17
Gnostic Movements of late Antiquity, Manichaeism.....	18
Christianity	18
Islam	19
Yezidism.....	25
Alevism.....	29
Chapter Two: The Yāresān Community and its Social Organisation.....	31
Languages	31
Geography.....	33
‘Caste’, ritual functions, social institutions.....	36
Chapter Three: Mythical and Factual History	43
Mythical History	43
Factual History.....	58
Chapter Four: The Religious Universe	73
Aspects of the Yāri Worldview.....	73
Divine and Great Beings.....	85
The Dowres.....	92
Eschatology.....	96

Chapter Five: Ritual and Observance	97
Music	97
The Jam.....	97
The Nazr	101
The Niyāz or Shokrāne	103
Sar Sepordan	103
Feasts and Fasts.....	109
Funerary observances.....	113
Other observances	114
Yāri Observances and Twelver Shi'ite influences	115
Chapter Six: Religious Narratives and Sacred Texts	117
Texts and storylines	117
The Form of the Kalāms	118
Texts and Performance	119
Texts and Religious Knowledge	121
Collections of Kalāms	123
The Perdiwari Kalāms.....	125
The role of the kalāms in religious life	130
APPENDIX 1: Extracts from the 'Exegesis' of Sayyed Wali	133
[On Creation]	133
[The History of Religions]	135
[The Dowres]	136
APPENDIX 2: Views from Iraqi communities	141
Interview with Sayyed Khalil Āghābāb Kāka'i, Iraqi Kurdistan	141
Beliefs of the Perdiwari Community, near Halabja	145
APPENDIX 3: Another View of Yāri. Sayyed Khalil Ālinezhād from Sahne	149
APPENDIX 4: Authoritative Muslim Comments on Yāri.....	168
APPENDIX 5: <i>Kalāms</i> in recent compilations	170
Bibliography	173
Index	181

Abbreviations

Journals

<i>AION</i>	<i>Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli</i>
<i>Alr</i>	<i>Acta Iranica</i>
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>RANL</i>	<i>Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>RMM</i>	<i>Revue du Monde Musulman</i>
<i>ROC</i>	<i>Revue de l'Orient Chrétien</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli Studi Orientali</i>
<i>StIr</i>	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Other

A.	Answer
AH	Ahl-e Haqq
A.H.	<i>Anno Hegirae</i>
Al	Alevis
AAM	Ali Akbar Moradi
App.	Appendix
Ar.	Arabic
b.	ibn, ebn (son of)
BCE	Before Common Era
c.	century
CE	Common Era
Ch.	Chapter
d.	died
et al.	and others

fem.	feminine
fl.	<i>floruit</i>
fn.	footnote
Fr.	French
Gur.	Gurani
H.Q.	<i>Hejri Qamari</i>
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i>
i.e.	that is
Ism.	Isma'ili
Ir.	Iranian
lit.	literally
Kurd.	Kurdish
loc. cit.	<i>loco citato</i>
m.	masculine
NP.	New Persian
n.pl.	no place
n.v.	<i>non vidimus</i>
op. cit.	<i>opere citato</i>
part.	particle
Pers.	Persian
PK	Philip Kreyenbroek
PM	Parwin Mahmoudveyssi
Q.	Question
q.v.	<i>quo vide</i>
r.	ruled
SF	Sayyed Fereidoun Hosseini
s.o.	someone
Sor.	Sorani Kurdish
s.th.	something
s.v.	<i>sub voce</i>
SW	Sayyed Wali
Turk.	Turkish
viz.	Namely
Y.	<i>Yasna</i>
Yar.	Yāresān(i)
Yez.	Yezidi
YK	Yiannis Kanakis
Yt.	<i>Yasht.</i>

Preface

This is the first of a two-volume work aiming to describe and analyse significant aspects of the religious culture of the Yāresān (Ahl-e Haqq) of the Guran area in the Kurdish-speaking region of Iran. The Guran tradition differs in many ways from other Yāresān traditions, such as those of Sahne and the Kāka'i communities in Iraq. Although some valuable articles on the Gurani community are available and the few existing monographs on the Yāri religion make a definite contribution, it was felt that a detailed analysis of key aspects of this particular religious tradition, based on recent research, was a desideratum for the study of the Yāresān, and of minority religions in the Middle East generally.

The work is divided into two separate parts: Vol. 1, by Kreyenbroek, focuses on general aspects of the religion, whilst Vol. 2, by Kanakis, discusses Gurani and Yāresān music. The authors were trained in different disciplines (Iranian Philology and History of Religions, and Social Geography and Ethnomusicology respectively), and belong to different generations. This has the advantage that readers will be offered complementary approaches, rather than having their understanding of the subject informed by a single point of view.

It should be stressed that this work does not seek to reveal the deeper esoteric knowledge of Yāri, which is the province of learned Yāresān specialists. Since most believers appear to be aware of the existence of this knowledge without having direct access to it, it is sufficient for our purpose to recognise that such secret knowledge exists, without focusing on its contents.

The title refers to the phrase *Awwal o Ākher Yār*, which is heard frequently during Yāri rituals. It literally means 'The Friend first and last', and in the Guran tradition¹ clearly refers to God, as a Friend to mankind. When faced with the title 'God first and last', some Yāresān informants stated that, for them, the word *Yār*, with its associations of love and benevolence, evoked a different feeling than the neutral word 'God'. After some discussion, however, it was decided to keep the simple translation 'God' in the title because 'the Friend' would not be intelligible to many Western readers, while 'the Beloved' might suggest a stronger influence of Islamic mysticism than can in fact be found in Yāri.

Few academic books on religion can do justice to the faith and spirituality that are core parts of many people's religious experience. Although this work is partly based on oral testimonies and takes into account the role of music in Yāresān devotional life, it is probably no exception. Still, it is hoped that its appearance will be a

1 For another view, which regards the word as referring to Ali, see App.3, Question 38.

step towards a better understanding of this particular group, and of the unity and variety that characterise the traditions of the Yāri religion.

Samos, June 2019

Philip G. Kreyenbroek

Acknowledgements

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Volkswagen Foundation for funding the Research Programme ‘Documentation of Gorani, an endangered language of the Kermanshah province of Iran’, conducted by Prof. Ludwig Paul, Prof. Geoffrey Haig, and PK. This project, which formed part of a Volkswagen Project for Documenting Endangered Languages (DoBeS), focused on documenting linguistic material but also promoted research on the cultures that speak these languages. We thank all our colleagues on the Project, and in particular Dr Parwin Mahmoudweysi, who accompanied PK on a research trip to Iraqi Kurdistan, where her native knowledge of Gurani/Hawrami proved invaluable.

Very special thanks are due to Sayyed Fereidoun Hosseini, who gave freely of his time and his enormous knowledge of Gurani Yāri to help us throughout the research for this book, and to the well-known Yāresāni musician Ali-Akbar Moradi, who was always prepared to help and explain questions about his culture and its music. The late Sayyed Falakeddin Kaka’i and his daughter, Mrs Prshng Kaka’i, have done much to help us gain at least some understanding of the complexity of Kāka’i affairs in Iraqi Kurdistan. Dr Partow Hooshmandrad generously sent us a copy of her valuable thesis on Gurani Yāresāni music. Discussions with Dr Khanna Omarkhali on similarities between Yāri and Yezidism proved very fruitful, and we are very grateful to her for her help with Indexing the text. Dr Behrouz Geranpayeh introduced PK to the Turkic-speaking Yāri tradition, and thereby gave us a valuable point of comparison. Dr Shahrokh Raei advised PK in various matters concerning the Khāksār derwishes and their links with the Yāresān. Dr Behrooz Chaman-Ara’s doctoral work on the Kurdish *Shāhnāme* has greatly improved our understanding of this (for the Yāresān) semi-religious genre, and we are grateful to him for helping PK with recordings in certain Kurdish dialects. Dr des. Alireza Zahedi Moghadam’s research on the prophetic texts of the Yāresān throws new light on this subject. Prof. Albert de Jong provided us with documentation that could only be found in the University of Leiden. Furthermore, we would like to express our thanks to Mr Arif Biter for formatting the book, and to the House of Harrassowitz for its assistance during the production process. Last but not least, we are indebted to our wives, Mieke Kreyenbroek and Dr Sophie Richter-Devroe, for their patience, support and encouragement.