

Veneration of Satan among the Ahl-e Haqq of the Gûrân region

In 1976 I made two visits, of some ten days each, to the Ahl-e Haqq communities of the mountainous districts North of the Kermanshah – Qasr-e Shirin road that used to be the core of the Gûrân emirate. I had heard that these communities hold Satan, whom they know by the name of Malak Tâwûs, in special veneration. Many of the people with whom I conversed during my visits spoke quite freely of Satan or Malak Tâwûs, but I soon also discovered that there was no consensus about his place in Ahl-e Haqq cosmology. I found in fact that in this relatively small region there existed two competing views of Ahl-e Haqq cosmology, one of them more explicitly dualistic than the other. I attempted to analyse this in a lengthy article that I wrote a few years later but never published, fearing that the new Islamic regime might not look kindly on the heterodox beliefs held by these communities.¹ The invitation to present a paper at the Kraków Seminar on the Yezidi tradition provided the opportunity to revisit this old paper, have a fresh look at my old field notes and photographs, and present some old and new reflections on the subject.²

It is quite common to describe the Ahl-e Haqq religion, like that of the Yezidis, as a “little-known religion”; in fact, I have in an unguarded moment used these words myself although I am aware that we know in fact a great deal about them. Thanks to such scholars as Minorsky, Ivanow, Mokri and Safîzâde, we know much about the Ahl-i Haqq belief system and have access to a considerable amount of

¹The original article, titled “Satan’s Psalmists: some heterodox beliefs and practices among the Ahl-e Haqq of the Guran district”, remains unpublished but I shared it with some colleagues for whose work it was relevant. I wrote three other articles that are partly based on my 1976 fieldwork: Bruinessen 1991, 1994 and 2009. These can be accessed on academia.edu.

²I wish to thank Partow Hooshmandrad, who carried out extensive fieldwork in the same region in the early 2000s, for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Ahl-e Haqq sacred texts.³ The anthropologist Mir-Hosseini and the ethnomusicologist Hooshmandrad have published valuable accounts of lived religion, based on fieldwork in South Kurdistan. Earlier, the ethnomusicologist During had published important and insightful studies on sacred music in the Iranian religious traditions, most of which also concerned the Ahl-e Haqq (1989, 1993). We know by now more about the religions of the Yezidis and Ahl-e Haqq than about lived Islam in Kurdistan. If nonetheless we continue to feel that we hardly know anything about these religions, this may be because our knowledge does not constitute a single, coherent whole. There are lacunae in our knowledge and apparent internal contradictions. Our most knowledgeable and authoritative interlocutors from within these religious communities may have systematised their understanding of doctrine and sacred history, but they may fiercely disagree with one another over these issues. There is moreover an intimation of secret doctrines, or secret interpretations of public religious lore, that are not shared with outsiders or even most insiders (and some of which may be completely lost).

Faced with a number of different narratives, partly complementary, partly overlapping, and in part mutually contradictory, the scholar is tempted to make his own synthesis, combining elements from different sources, which belong to different periods or different sub-groups of the religious community, and selecting those elements from mutually contradictory sources that can be combined into a consistent and coherent whole. This is what Minorsky (1920-21) and Ivanow (1953) attempted when our knowledge of the Ahl-e Haqq was still very fragmentary, and what more recently Hamzeh'ee did (1990). This is also what, controversially, certain intellectuals from the community itself have done, notably Ne'matollâh Jay-hûnâbâdî (1966) and his son Nûr `Alî-Shâh Elâhî (1342/1963, 1966). In fact, many of the more vocal members of the Ahl-e Haqq religious community are speculative theologians in their own way and have developed their private systematizations of doctrine.

³For a detailed overview of the state of the art of Ahl-e Haqq studies, see During 1998.

THREE REPRESENTATIONS OF SATAN IN AHL-E HAQQ COSMOLOGY

I shall, in this paper, avoid acting as another systematiser myself and emphasise the existence of competing and mutually incompatible cosmological views within the Ahl-e Haqq community and even among the subgroup of the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq. The beliefs concerning Satan are especially controversial. In what follows I am much indebted to three men who each had their own more or less coherent view of who and what Satan was.



Fig. 1. Ahmad Bâbâ'î at the shrine of Bâbâ Yâdegâr

Ahmad Bâbâ'î was a young man, of my own age, whom I met in the Ahl-e Haqq *jam`khâne* in Kermanshah. He was the first person whom I heard proclaim that, yes, he was a *shaytânparast*, a Satan-worshipper, turning this stigmatizing name given to his community by their Muslim neighbours into a sobriquet proudly worn. Ahmad was convinced that Satan, or the Peacock Angel (Malak Tâwûs) was not the evil spirit that Muslims claimed him to be; he was in fact God's most loyal servant and had been rewarded with control over the material world.

Ahmad accompanied me on my first trip to the Ahl-e Haqq sanctuary of Bâbâ Yâdegâr and introduced me to the dervishes, Sayyeds and ordinary believers. He

was not an especially learned man nor did he belong to a family with religious prestige, but he was a good musician and he knew many of the sacred hymns, which earned him respect wherever we went. He taught me his understanding of doctrine and sacred history through those hymns and his comments on them, and through the discussions in which he engaged with many of the people we encountered on the way.

Not all people we met were willing to concede that they were Satan-worshippers, even after Ahmad had given them his explanation. We respect him, they would say, but we only venerate him in his manifestation as Dâwûd – one of the *haft tan*, the seven luminous angelic beings who incarnate themselves in human (or occasionally animal) form in each new cycle of sacred history, and whose essence may also manifest itself in certain objects of power. The Ahl-e Haqq religion in its present form is associated with the cycle in which the Deity manifested itself as Soltân Sahâk, who may have lived in the 14th or 15th century. Dâwûd was one of Soltân Sahâk's companions; Bâbâ Yâdegâr belongs to the same cycle.

Ahmad also accepted another name often given to the Ahl-e Haqq by their Sunni or Shi`i Muslim neighbours, `Alî-ollâhî or `Alî-Elâhî, “Deifiers of `Ali,” because `Ali was one of the manifestations of the Deity in an earlier cycle. However, the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq have no special veneration for `Ali and rather wish to distance themselves from the Twelver Shi`ites and their `Alid devotion. They venerate the Deity primarily in the manifestation of Soltân Sahâk.

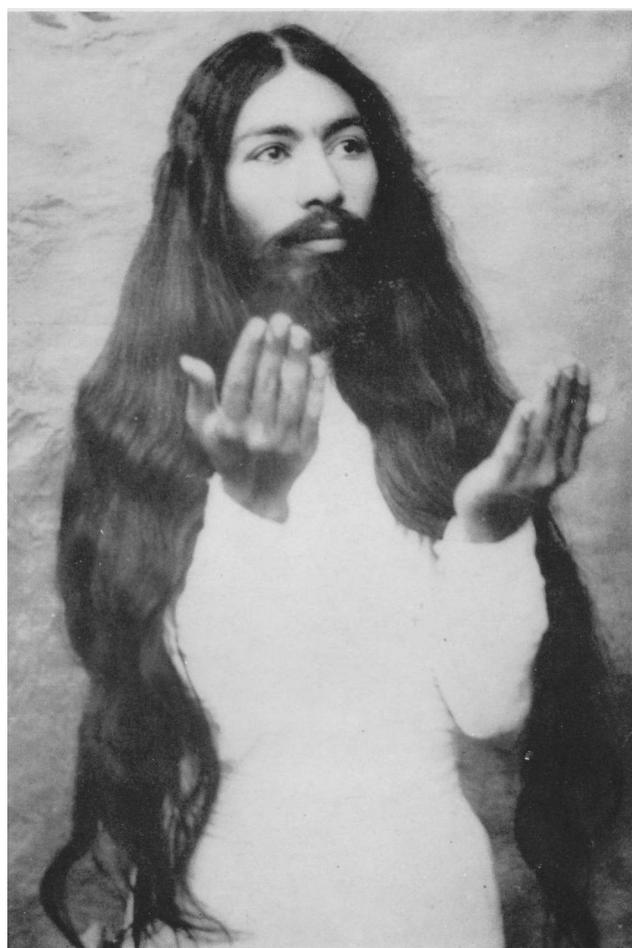


Fig. 2. Kâ Karîm, in Tutshami

Kâ Karîm was a *kalâmkhwân*, expert of the sacred hymns, living in the residence of the spiritual leader of the region, Sayyed Nasreddîn, in the village of Tûtshâmî. He was the grandson of the dervish-poet Karîm Khalîl, who had been part of the entourage of Sayyed Nasreddin's revered ancestor, Sayyed Brâka, and who had composed books of sacred poetry (*daftar*) that were considered as part of the religious canon – at least by the Ahl-e Haqq of this district. I stayed as a guest in Sayyed Nasreddîn's residence for about a week and spent much time with Kâ Karîm, whom the Sayyed had given permission to answer all my questions about religious matters.

Like my friend Ahmad Bâbâ'î, Kâ Karîm was fascinated by the figure of Shaytân, and unlike Ahmad and most other people in the region, he stressed that Satan also had a fearsome aspect and was, in a sense, a rival of God. Kâ Karîm's grandfather, Karîm Khalîl, mentions Satan in several poems, which we read together.

Moreover, Karîm Khalîl is believed to have been *Dâwûd-mehmân*, i.e. the bodily vehicle in which the angel Dâwûd manifested himself, and he had therefore a special, if indirect, bond with Satan.



Nûr `Alî-Shâh en 1920.

Fig. 3. Nûr `Alî Elâhî in his years as an ascetic
[from: Elâhî 1966]

The third systematizer did not belong to the *Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq* but his synthesizing reformulation of *Ahl-e Haqq* doctrine was based on his interpretations of the older *Gurani* sacred texts (besides other materials). The reformer Hâjj Ne`matollâh Jayhûnâbâdî (d. 1920) lived among the *Kurdish Ahl-e Haqq* of the *Sahne* district to the Northeast of *Kermanshah*. He had a more sophisticated knowledge of *Islamic esoteric and mystical doctrines* than most of the *sayyed* and *kalâmkhwân* of that district; his synthesis met with considerable resistance from the latter. His (unpub-

lished) work *Forqân ol-akhbâr* was already recognized as an important restatement of Ahl-e Haqq doctrine by Minorsky (1936) and was recently the subject of a dissertation by Mojan Ozgoli-Membrado (2007).⁴ His major published work is the *Shâhnâme-ye Haqîqat*, which narrates the Ahl-e Haqq sacred history in Persian verse. In this work, Hâjj Ne`matollâh gives the traditional Muslim account of Satan's disobedience and punishment, making him the Lord of Hell and the tempter of mankind (Jayhunabadi 1966, pp. 94-8).

Jayhûnâbâdî's reformulations brought Ahl-e Haqq doctrine closer to the esoteric Shi`i tradition and did away with the belief in divine incarnation that was a central tenet of the traditional belief system. His ideas remained controversial and were rejected by the various communities of South Kurdistan, but were to become influential in Tehran, where his son and successor, Nûr `Alî Elâhî, and his grandson Bahrâm Elâhî later gathered a group of more highly educated followers around them.

Nûr `Alî Elâhî, as far as we can gather, held the same religious views as his father but he went further and divulged his synthesis of Ahl-e Haqq teachings, which had previously only been taught to initiates, to the general public by publishing them in a book, *Borhân ol-haqq*, that was widely disseminated (Elâhî 1342/1963; cf. Weightman 1964). Even more explicitly than his father, he presented Ahl-e Haqq doctrine as a form of esoteric Shi`ism. Another text by Nûr `Alî Elâhî was not much later published in an annotated French translation by Mohammad Mokri, who was to become the most prolific scholar of Ahl-e Haqq scripture (Elâhî 1966).⁵

The books by these reformers represent an important step in the scripturalization of the Ahl-e Haqq religion. Previously, the sacred texts had existed in written form, as manuscripts used by the *daftardân* and *kalâmkhwân*, but they were handed down orally, in face-to-face contact, and the manuscripts were used as memory aids but not as reading materials. Most of the hymns were, moreover, in the Gurani language, which few people understood perfectly. Hâjj Ne`matollâh and his son presented the teachings in Persian, in a new and more systematic form. Their

⁴Mrs Ozgoli-Membrado has announced her forthcoming French translation of this text.

⁵In the same year, Mokri also published a major Persian text by Hâjj Ne`matollâh, the *Shâhnâme-ye Haqîqat* (Jayhûnâbâdî 1966), and this was followed by his edition and translation of numerous Gurani texts.

books moreover had proper indexes, which enabled different styles of reading. Due to these qualities they have loomed large over Ahl-e Haqq studies, and most if not all scholars working on other Ahl-e Haqq communities than Elâhî's followers have also had recourse to these texts as somehow authoritative, although they are firmly rejected by traditionalist authorities.

FIRST CONTACTS: THE TEHRAN GROUP

By the time I began my research in Kurdistan, Nûr `Alî Elâhî (d. 1974) had passed away and the Tehran congregation, which included some Western foreigners, was led by his son Bahrâm Elâhî. It was from a member of this congregation, who had made the pilgrimage to Bâbâ Yâdegâr, that I first heard about the Satan-worshippers living in the region around the shrine. A sophisticated, middle-class townsman, he described his pilgrimage as an adventurous and perilous journey; the mountains were, he said, infested with robbers and hostile tribesmen, who allowed no strangers to pass except Ahl-e Haqq pilgrims. His contacts with the local population had been minimal, and he looked upon them as ignorant folk without proper understanding of the religion to which they claimed to belong. (In his understanding, only some of the locals were Satan-worshippers; others were Ahl-e Haqq but these too were ignorant of the true teachings of this religion.)⁶

I later found that most members of the Tehran congregation shared these negative views about the Kurdish and Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq. In my one interview with Bahrâm Elâhî, the master insisted that the Ahl-e Haqq of Kurdistan, and especially those of the Gûrân districts around Kerend and Sar-e Pol-e Zohab, had deviated far from the true teachings. He condemned especially their lenient views of Satan, and told me he had witnessed tribesmen making a vow at the shrine of Dâwûd,

⁶In an early study of Nûr `Alî Shâh's *Borhân ol-haqq*, the author mentions having visited the same region and interviewed local Ahl-e Haqq about their beliefs concerning Satan, which he found 'inconsistent with anything we know of the A.H.' He thought these views could have been introduced into the region by a pocket of Yezidis he found to be living to the Northwest of Kerend (Weightman 1964: 84n). None of my local informants had ever heard of Yezidis living there, and Weightman probably assumed that people called *Shaytânparast* by their neighbours must be Yezidis.

asking Satan for support in a raiding party and promising him a share of the booty as offering.

Paradoxically, the writings of Hâjj Ne`matollâh and his successors are based on the oldest *kalâm* in Gurani, which have been preserved by, and are most closely associated with, the communities of South Kurdistan. Before these reformers became influential in Tehran, the Ahl-e Haqq communities of the capital and of Northern Iran in general were affiliated with another branch of the Ahl-e Haqq religion known as Âteshbegî, which represented a later stage of its development and had sacred texts in Azerbaijani Turkish and Persian. The reformers reconnect these communities with the earlier, Kurdish phase of development but reinterpreted the older texts to make them compatible with esoteric Shi`a doctrine. The *sayyed* and *kalâmkhwân* of Sahne and especially of the Gûrân districts, who hold on to what in their own view is the old tradition, have in the view of the reformers deviated from the true path of their religion.

In their few references to Shaytân, Nûr `Alî and Bahrâm Elâhî distance themselves from even the faintest hint of dualism. In *Borhân ol-haqq*, Nûr `Alî mentions Shaytân or Eblîs a few times, but the references are drawn from standard Shi`i theological texts. Once he also mentions the name of Malak Tâwûs, but only to state that this is the title (*laqab*) by which the Yezidis know him (Elâhî 1354/1975: 416-7). In a book written for his French followers, Bahrâm emphasizes that Satan is not a dark force opposing God:

The one whom people call the Devil has in reality no power to work evil. His name "Satan" means: he who rebelled and whom God the one Creator has thrown out. (...) Creatures thrown out by God are immediately imprisoned in a defined and limited location, they lose all power and have no freedom. (...) Many people [nonetheless] attribute all sorts of bad things to an invisible and omnipresent being named Devil or Satan. Without being aware of it, they believe in a god of evil opposed to the one God, which is blasphemy, a relapse into polytheism (...) The idea of the Devil is nothing but an echo of the struggle [in ourselves] between the carnal soul and the angelic soul. There is no evil outside us; evil only exists because of us. (Elâhî 1976: 58-62, my translation)

Satan is, in other words, not Ahriman in disguise but a powerless and irrelevant spirit, whom only ignorant people may fear of worship. Elâhî does not reject dualism entirely, for he recognizes that there is a struggle between light and darkness but this struggle takes place entirely inside ourselves, between what the Sufis call the *nafs`ammâra* and the *nafs lawwâma* and *nafs mutma`inna*.

Elâhî's view of Satan differs from that of many prominent Sufis, who perceived in Iblis' refusal to prostrate himself before Adam not simple disobedience but a radical monotheism and loyalty to God alone.⁷ I encountered echoes of the Sufi view, combined with the belief that Satan, contrary to Bahrâm Elâhî's claims, is in fact a very powerful entity, among the Ahl-e Haqq of the Gûrân district.

SATAN IN KERMANSHAH

I may owe my first contact with the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq to the unkempt moustache I had at that time. It was January 1976, coinciding that year with Moharram, and I was spending some time in Kermanshah in order to witness how the Kurdish Shi`is of that city celebrated the martyrdom of Hoseyn. In my hotel, I overheard the staff commenting on my moustache and speculating whether I was a *shaytânî* – reminding me that I might be able to find out more about the alleged Satan-worship among the Gûrân. After a visit to the Khâksâr *khânaqâh* of Kermanshah, where I chatted with the few dervishes who were present and enquired about the connections between the Khâksâr Sufi order and the Ahl-e Haqq, I was addressed by two men with long moustaches, who had been listening to the conversation and asked me in a whisper if I belonged to their religion (“*tu tâyfe`î?*”; *tâ`ife* being one of the names for the Ahl-e Haqq community). I denied but added that I had a strong interest in the *tâ`ife* and should like to meet members whom I could interview. They took me to a *jam`khâne*, and it was there that I met Ahmad Bâbâ`î, who volunteered to be my guide.

⁷The theme of Satan as the true lover of God is found, from Hallaj onwards, with many Sufis. See: Awn 1983 and Nurbakhsh 1986.



Fig. 4. The author and Ahmad Bâbâî taking a rest on their hike to Bâbâ Yâdegâr

I had been aware that the Ahl-e Haqq, like the Yezidis, the Bektashis and other minority religious communities in the region, distinguished themselves from their neighbours by not trimming the moustache, but not of the crucial importance they attach to this facial hair. In the *Borhan ol-haqq*, Nûr `Alî Elâhî devotes an entire chapter to the moustache, referring to a wide range of Muslim authorities in support of either shaving it or allowing it to grow long. He cites a hadith in which the Prophet enjoins the trimming of the moustache “because Satan hides there and makes it his residence.” Another tradition has it that “to shave the moustache is to protect oneself from Satan, and it is part of the *sunna*.” (Elâhî 1354/1975: 164-165). These hadith are followed by many other authoritative sources that make facial hair style a matter of personal choice, but it is remarkable that he explicitly cites the Muslim association of the moustache with Satan.⁸

⁸Elâhî had himself refrained from shaving and hair-cutting during the twelve years he spent in ascetic retreat and meditation, and later photographs show him with a long moustache. In 1991, his son Bahram proclaimed that a message had come from the master (who after his death communicated through his blind sister, Sheykh Janî) ordering the community to shave their moustaches, which caused a radical break with the traditionalist Ahl-e Haqq communities (Mir-Hosseini 1994b: 223).

Of all the Gûrân whom I met, Ahmad was perhaps the most consistent and explicit in his apology of Satan. His story of Satan's fall echoed the Sufi version but was more radical in its consequences.

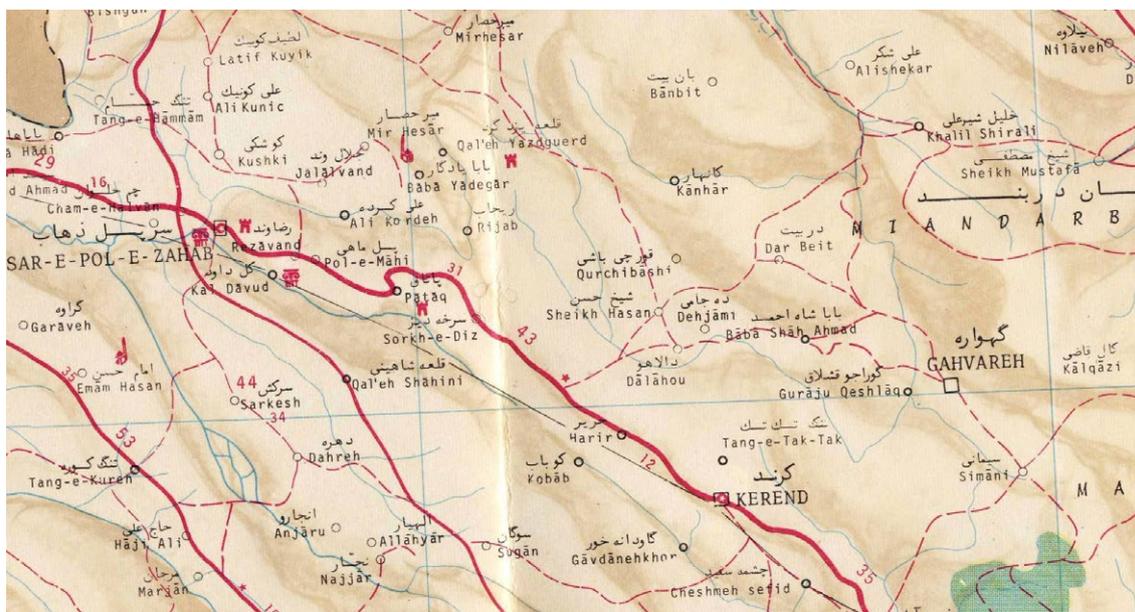
Satan, or Malak Tâwûs, was one of God's most beloved angels, created from God's own light before God created the world and its inhabitants. When God had completed the action of creation by blowing His own breath into Adam, whom He had moulded from clay, He ordered all His creatures to prostrate themselves before Adam. Malak Tâwûs was the only one to refuse, protesting that "it is not right that one created from God's own light should kneel before a creature of mere clay; I only prostrate myself before God Himself." So far, this does not differ from the narrative of the Sufis, but Ahmad gave a different twist to the end of the story. By giving this order, God had in fact been testing the angels and other creatures, and Malak Tâwûs was the only one who proved to be a true monotheist. Rather than punishing him, as human slander has it, God rewarded Satan by giving him power over the affairs of the world. Adam and his descendants never forgave Satan for not showing him the same respect that he showed God. Adam once tried to oblige Satan to bow his head by inviting him to a house with a very low door, but the angel noticed this of course and raised the top beam of the opening so that he could enter without bending. Ever since, many humans have made it a habit to curse him, as the Muslims do. But people of knowledge and understanding are aware that he is the lord of this world. In matters of this world, it is wise to invoke Satan's support; he will help, whereas God is too distant and does not directly intervene.

Malak Tâwûs, Ahmad told me, was a manifestation of the spirit that in the period (*dowre*) of Soltân Sahâk was embodied in Dâwûd. In the shorthand used by Ahmad and most of the Gûrân with whom I spoke, Malak Tâwûs *was* Dâwûd. The same spirit had manifested itself numerous times: as `Ali's loyal servant Qanbar, as the poet Nesîmî and as Haji Bektash, as Majnûn's beloved Leylâ.⁹ But for the Gûrân, Dâwûd was the primary manifestation and Dâwûd's simple shrine or altar at Zarda, on the way from Sar-e Pol-e Zohab to Bâbâ Yâdegâr, was the main place

⁹For a long list of (minor) incarnations of Dâwûd, culled from old Gurani texts, see Mokri 1974: 63-4.

where this spirit was venerated.¹⁰ Some other Gûrân informants, who were less eager to speak of Satan-worship than my guide Ahmad, told me that they respected Satan but only worshipped him in his incarnation (*dûn*) as Dâwûd.

The major centres of the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq are located to the North of the road from Kermanshah to the Iraqi border at Qasr-e Shirin. The towns of Kerend and Sar-e Pol-e Zohab, on this road, have large Ahl-e Haqq populations. Gahwara, to the Northeast of Kerend, was the central town of the Gûrân emirate and it is still a major cultural centre for the Ahl-e Haqq, where some of the best *kalâmkhwân* reside. The Haydarî family, the leading sayyeds of the Gûrân, have their residence in the village of Tutshami, in the district of Gahwara. Kerend has two major Ahl-e Haqq shrines, of Benyamîn and Pîr Mûsî. The shrines of Dâwûd and Bâbâ Yâde-gâr, the latter of which is considered the most important Ahl-e Haqq sanctuary, are located further West and have to be approached from Sar-e Pol-e Zohab.



Before reaching the town of Sar-e Pol-e Zohab, the road from Kermanshah passes by an impressive rock-cut tomb from Achaemenid times, known locally as

¹⁰Partow Hooshmandrad informs me that there are sacred points identified with Dâwûd near other major shrines, such as that of Soltân Sahâk in the village of Sheykhān further North in Hawramân. Pilgrims on the way to the main shrine will ask Dâwûd's permission to proceed, symbolically kissing (*ziyârat*) the Dâwûd point by kissing their own hands (personal communication, 10 January 2014). In Zarda, people kissed the rock altar called Dâwûd; my guide Ahmad believed it to be the main site where Dâwûd's essence was present.

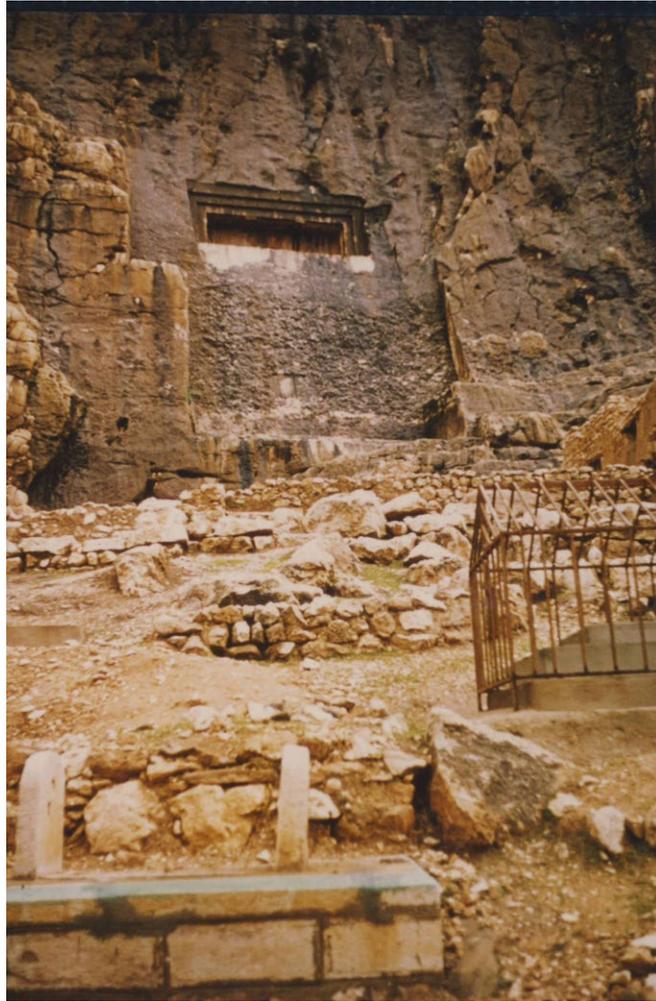


Fig. 5. Dokkân-e Dâwûd

Dokkân-e Dâwûd, “Dâwûd’s shop” or rather “Dâwûd’s workshop.” According to one local tradition, Dâwûd was a blacksmith and this was his workshop.¹¹ It was clear that the place was held in veneration: I noticed that numerous candles had been lighted here, and there were remnants of *niyaz* offerings. At the foot of the rock in which the tomb was cut there were many relatively recent graves, another indication that this location was considered sacred.¹²

¹¹ Appropriately, the blacksmith Kâwa, the famed slayer of the dragon-king Zakhâk in the *Shâhnâma* and Kurdish oral tradition, is said to be an incarnation of Dâwûd (comment by Partow Hooshmandrad).

¹² See also the archaeological descriptions of the tomb, with a few comments on surviving cults around the site, in Gabriel 1971: 17, 35-6, 126 and, based on new investigations of the site, von Gall 1995.

The first European to mention Dokkân-e Dâwûd was Major Rawlinson of the Bombay army, who served in this region for three years in the 1830s, commanding a regiment of Gûrân soldiers. Rawlinson notes that the Gûrân and a section of the Kalhur tribe are Ahl-e Haqq (he calls them `Ali-Elahi) and believe in numerous successive incarnations of the Godhead, which include the Haft Tan who lived in this region. All incarnations are in reality one; only the bodily manifestation changes; “but the most perfect development is supposed to have taken place in the persons of Benjamin, David and `Alí”.¹³ He mentions especially the Ahl-e Haqq veneration of Dâwûd, their conviction that he was a blacksmith and that the rock-tomb was his workshop. He writes:

David is really believed by the `Alí-Ilâhîs to dwell here, although invisible, and the smithy is consequently regarded by them as a place of extreme sancticity. I never passed by the tomb without seeing the remains of a bleeding sacrifice, and the Alí-Ilâhî, who come here on pilgrimage from all parts of Kurdistân, will prostrate themselves on the ground, and make the most profound reverence immediately that they come in sight of the holy spot. (Rawlinson 1839: 39).

Rawlinson does not mention the identification of Dâwûd with Malak Tâwûs or Satan. The first outsider to refer to this was the American missionary F.M. Stead, who was based in the Kermanshah region for two decades in the early 20th century and who had many contacts with the various Ahl-e Haqq communities. He notes that “one section of the `Ali Ilahis is more attached to David than the others, and invokes his aid on all occasions” (Stead 1932: 184). Moreover,

One of the branches of the `Ali Ilahi cult, known as the Tausî, or Peacock sect, goes still further afield, and venerates the devil. While these people do not actually worship Satan, they fear and placate him, and nobody in their presence ventures to say anything

¹³Rawlinson 1839: 36. Rawlinson was at pains to show a Jewish influence in the Ahl-e Haqq belief system, to be explained by the presence of a significant Jewish community of considerable age, which had already been visited by the 12th-century traveler Benjamin of Tudela. Rawlinson identifies Dawud with the Jewish king and prophet David.

disrespectful of his Satanic majesty (...) There are three principal divisions of the `Ali Ilahi sect, viz., the Davudî, the Tausî and the Nosairî” (ibid.: 185-6).

The last sentence is confusing, but suggests that there were Dâwûd-worshippers who identified him with Malak Tâwûs and Satan (the Tâwûsî), and others who did not make this identification. Stead does not mention the name of Malak Tâwûs and explains the name of Tâwûsî by relating the well-known tradition that the Peacock was the guardian of Paradise, who let Satan in so that he could seduce Adam and Eve (cf. Awn 1983: 42-3).

I never heard the names Tâwûsî or Dâwûdî during my visits to the Gûrân. The name of Malak Tâwûs was known, however, and Satan was acknowledged as a basically benign spirit, or even the highest of God’s angels, by all my Gûrân interlocutors, as well as many of the Qalkhani, Sanjabi and Kalhur tribesmen with whom I spoke.¹⁴ No one, however, referred to either themselves or others as Tâwûsî or even Dâwûdî. The association with Dâwûd or Malak Tâwûs appeared not to be as important to their social identities as other affiliations. In spite of his proud proclamation of being a Shaytânparast, my friend Ahmad did not show the devotional attitude at Dokkân-e Dâwûd and at Dâwûd’s shrine that he later showed at Bâbâ Yâdegâr and the various sacred springs, trees and graves around it.

Rather than division over the nature of Satan, I found among the Gûrân a serious division in their view of another spiritual being, who according to some was one of the *haft tan*, the seven luminous divine emanations and according to others the Prince of Darkness. This was Shâh Ebrâhîm, who is in many respects the closest counterpart to Bâbâ Yâdegâr – either as his brother, resembling him as the left eye resembles the right eye, or as his opponent, persecutor and murderer. Related to this, there are conflicting beliefs concerning the second heptad of spiritual beings,

¹⁴Some of my Ahl-e Haqq informants of the Sanjabi and Kalhur tribes, however, regarded Satan as the Evil One, who always attempts to lead mankind astray. Five educated persons from the Sanjabi tribe who were visiting Baba Yadegar, schoolteachers with a modern outlook, laid a different emphasis again. Shaytân, they explained, is not only very powerful but also appears to intervene in the world more directly than God ever does. Therefore it is only logical that one directs prayers for help and support in worldly affairs to him. Whenever people have to carry out an important, difficult or dangerous task, they make a pilgrimage to Dâwûd's grave near Zarde and invoke his support.

the *haftawâne*. Some consider them as complimentary to the *haft tan*, though more this-worldly in character, but for others they are not just a dark and material counterpart to the luminous and purely spiritual *haft tan* but their cosmic opponents. The *haftawâne* are sons (in some sense) of Soltân Sahâk, born through ordinary human procreation unlike the *haft tan*.

Shâh Ebrâhîm, the son of one of the *haftawâne* and therefore a grandson of Soltân Sahâk, is the ancestor of the prominent Shâh Ebrâhîmî *khânadân* of sayyeds. This *khânadân* used to be very influential among the Gûrân but has lost its dominant position. It remains probably the most influential of the *khânadân* in the Sahne district as well as among the Kaka'i, the Ahl-e Haqq of Iraqî Kurdistan (Mir-Hosseini 1994a; Edmonds 1969).

At the shrine of Bâbâ Yâdegâr, there was a small community of resident sayyids and dervishes, whom Ahmad appeared to know well. The dervishes were men who had dedicated their lives to serving the saint; the sayyeds were needed to perform ritual functions; every *niyaz* offering has to be consecrated by a sayyed. None of these men were particularly knowledgeable about doctrine, but they had their favourite myths that they would tell visitors. All of them appeared to share Ahmad's beliefs about Satan's benign nature. Most also shared his view of the *haftawâne* and especially Shâh Ebrâhîm as dark forces, although this was a subject on which they would only speak in whispers, fearing to be overheard by pilgrims who happened to be affiliated with the Shâh Ebrâhîmî *khânadân*. It appeared that it was the Shâh Ebrâhîmî who claim that their ancestor belonged to the *haft tan*, and the followers of the other main *khânadân* in the region, Khâmûshî and Yâdegârî, who held the more strongly dualist view.

MALAK TÂWÛS IN *KALÂM*

Ahmad sang many *kalâm*, in the *jam`khâne* of Kermanshah and Sar-e Pol-e Zohab, for the dervishes and sayyeds at Bâbâ Yâdegâr or for me privately, as a way of explaining the Ahl-e Haqq worldview. I once asked him – we were sitting with a group of local people in the *jam`khâne* of Sar-e Pol-e Zohab – if he know of any *kalâm* mentioning Malak Tâwûs or Satan. Ahmad did not, nor did any of the

kalâmkhwân I later met. But one of the men in the *jam`khâne* told me to look up Mâshâ`allâh Sûrî's book, for he had seen the name there. It was the first time I became aware that there were educated Ahl-e Haqq for whom the oral tradition embodied in the *kalâmkhwân* of their own district was complemented by written and published sources. I later also met Gûrân who claimed to have read Hâjj Ne`matollâh's and Nûr `Alî Elâhî's books (and fiercely disagreed with them). Sûrî's book, which I later found in Tehran, is a collection of *kalâm*, edited without explanatory comments. The mention of Malak Tâwûs occurs in a *kalâm* that enumerates various manifestations of the Deity and angels:

Nâwaš Nâwûs bî * Zâta Šâh Xôšîn nâwaš Nâwûs bî
 `Alî Mortazâ ham Kay Kâwûs bî * Xâja `Alâ`adîn Malak Tâwûs bî

He was named Nâwûs, the essence of Shâh Khôshîn was named Nâwûs; [the Imam] `Ali was also Kay Kawus, and Khwaja `Ala' al-Din was Malak Tâwûs (Sûrî 1344/1965: 175).

Nâwûs or Nâ`uth was minor manifestation of the Deity (chronologically between Shâh Khôshîn and Soltân Sahâk); so was the legendary Persian king Kay Kâwus. `Ali and Shâh Khôshîn are two of the major manifestations. The last part no longer concerns the Deity: Malak Tâwûs is said to have been incarnated in a Khwâja `Alâ` al-Dîn. I have not come across the latter name in any other Ahl-e Haqq text.¹⁵ This seems to confirm the marginality of Malak Tâwûs in the corpus of sacred poetry.¹⁶

Mokri mentions that a manuscript in his possession, titled *`Âlam-e Haqîqat*, identifies Dâwûd with Malak Tâwûs (Mokri 1974: 90). This appears, however, to be a comment of the copyist preceding the Gurani text proper, which discusses other qualities of Dâwûd (*ibid.*: 90-2).

¹⁵There is a medieval Central Asian Naqshbandi of that name, Khwâja `Alâ` al-dîn `Attâr (d. 802/1400) but I cannot see a reason why he would be mentioned in a Gurani *kalâm*.

¹⁶Partow Hooshmandrad informs me that the Peacock, Tâwûs, is mentioned repeatedly in the Gurani *daftar*, and that he is associated with Dâwûd, but that to her knowledge he is never referred to as *Malak Tâwûs*, 'Peacock Angel.'

There is, finally, another mention of Malak Tâwûs in a brief Ahl-e Haqq prose text in Persian that was published by Ivanow (1948). This *risâla* was part of a bundle of manuscript papers that Ivanow had acquired in 1914 in Shiraz, where there was then still a recognizable community of descendants of Gûrân who had come there in the mid-18th century in the retinue of Karim Khan Zand. Most of the texts were in Gurani or Kurdish, which none of Ivanow's informants could read. The Persian text narrates various Ahl-e Haqq cosmological myths, the last of which, unfortunately incomplete, is reminiscent of the Muslim tale of Satan's fall:

There was a reign of Fire (*saltanat-e nâr*), when fiery beings like the jinn dominated the world. It lasted five thousand years, until the appearance of Adam, who was made from earth. Adam came forth from earth, the Peacock was resurrected in fire (*nashr-e Âdam bûd az khâk, hashr-e Tâ'us bûd dar nâr*). The Divine Essence (*jawhar ke noqte-ye awwal bâshad*) called out to the jinns, 'I am the soul of all souls, the spirit of all spirits, who created you all on the first day. Come to the reckoning!' Those created from Fire and from Water believed themselves to be equal to the Essence and said, 'we are just like you.' The Essence called Mostafâ-e Dâwûdân [one of the *haft tan*, who is the angel of death] and ordered him to bring all these creatures to the *jam`*. Mostafâ brought forty sorts of painful calamities upon the jinn until they were weakened. They turned to their king, Malak Tâ'us and said, 'O King, it is clear that the Day of Resurrection has arrived.' Malak Tâ'us looked into the box of trust (*sandûq-e amânat*), saw that the Day of Resurrection had arrived and said to Mostafâ, 'take me to the King of Love.' (Ivanow 1948: 177 (trl), 183-4 (Persian text)).

Ivanow believed that the reference to Malak Tâwûs in this text had to be a borrowing from the Yezidis, for his Ahl-e Haqq informants were not aware of this name and insisted that the evil spirit was known instead as Dâ'ûd-e Rash, i.e. "Black Dâwûd" (in Kurdish).¹⁷ That again is a term I never heard or saw while

¹⁷Ivanow 1948: 167n. Ivanow mentioned that most of the descendants of the Gûrân living in Shiraz no longer were Ahl-e Haqq, and most of his Ahl-e Haqq informants belonged to the Atesh-begi tradition, a later phase of development (cf. Ivanow 1953). This Persian *risâla* may, however, represent an older Guran tradition.

among the Gûrân,¹⁸ but it would fit the image of Dâwûd as a blacksmith; and the blacksmith's mastery of fire logically connects him with hell and the jinn.

LOOKING FOR SATAN IN THE 'HOUSE OF THE LORD' (MÂL-A ÂGHÂ), TUTSHAMI

Ivanow reports that he was often told by Ahl-e Haqq informants "that the heads of the sect, whose headquarters are in the hills near Kerind (...) possess a library of Saranjâm literature, the books of which are stored in rows (*qatâr ba qatâr*)" – a claim that he was quite sceptical about (Ivanow 1948: 151). In my conversations at Bâbâ Yâdegâr, especially when I asked something to which my interlocutors did not have a satisfactory answer, their response was similar to that of Ivanow's respondents. They would point me to the *mâla âghâ*, the House of the Lord where, they said, all sacred knowledge – embodied in *daftar*, manuscript volumes of religious poetry – was kept. The *mâl-a Âghâ* is the residence of the Haydarî family of sayyeds in the village of Tutshami, which some people referred to as the capital of their religious community (*pâyetakht-e tâyefe*). This family has for a century and a half been the spiritual and worldly leaders of the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq, and the incumbent head of the family was commonly believed to be an incarnation of one of the *haft tan*. In 1976, Sayyed Nasreddîn was the uncontested leader of the community, and my guide Ahmad told me that he was *Yâdegâr-mehmân*, i.e., a minor incarnation of Bâbâ Yâdegâr.¹⁹ (Sayyed Nasreddîn himself, I should add, proved to be a most unassuming man, who tried to dissuade his followers from holding exaggerated beliefs about him.)

The Haydarî family belongs to the Khâmûshî lineage of sayyeds and it owes its name and prominent position to an illustrious ancestor, Haydar, who became better known by the sobriquet of Sayyed Brâka ('Brother') and who was believed

¹⁸Partow Hooshmandrad, however, informs me that Dâwûd-e Rash (or Dâwûd-e Siyâh) are in fact mentioned in the *Daftar*:; '...all the *Daftar-khwâns* I worked with also knew this term very well.' (Personal communication, 12 January 2014).

¹⁹The Ahl-e Haqq distinguish two types of divine incarnation: as a full manifestation, such as in the case of Soltân Sahâk and `Alî, who were complete incarnations of the Deity, and as an indwelling (*holûl*) in an otherwise human person, in which case the term *mehmân*, 'guest,' is used.

to be the human vehicle of several of the *haft tan*. The highly charismatic Sayyed Brâka, who flourished in the first half of the 19th century,²⁰ and his grandson and successor, Sayyed Rostam, who was still alive in 1920, wielded great spiritual but increasingly also worldly authority over the Ahl-e Haqq of the Gûrân district and beyond. The German physician J.E. Polak, who lived in Qazwin in the mid-19th century and was in contact with Ahl-e Haqq there, comments on their super-human veneration for their spiritual leader in Kermanshah province (Polak 1865, vol. I: 349). This leader must have been our Sayyed Brâka. An even more remarkable testimony is that of the American missionary Trowbridge, who worked around the turn of the 20th century at `Ayntab (present Gaziantep) in Southeast Anatolia and knew many local Alevis. one of his observations shows that the authority of the sayyeds of Tutshami in his day even extended to the Alevis of Southeast Anatolia:

The Geographical Centre of [the Alevi] religion is in the town of Kirind, Kermanshah province, Persia. Four of Ali's male descendants now reside in Kirind. They are by name, Seyyid Berake, Seyyid Rustem, Seyyid Essed Ullah, Seyyid Farraj Ullah. Seyyid is correctly said only of Ali's descendants. *These men send representatives throughout Asia Minor and northern Syria for preaching and for the moral training of their followers.* (Trowbridge 1909: 342-3, emphasis added)

The British consul in Kermanshah, H.L. Rabino, relates how around 1900 Sayyed Rostam incited the chieftains of the Gûrân tribes to rebellion against the *khan*, the paramount (and governmentally recognized) chief of the Gûrân confederacy, and succeeded in gradually stripping the latter of both political authority and economic power (Rabino 1920: 24). This was probably only the culmination of a long process started under Sayyed Brâka, in which the sayyeds of Tutshami gradually replaced the tribal *khan* as the supreme leaders of the Gûrân. The *khans* never regained their power; but the sayyeds were finally to lose much of theirs under Reza Shah's centralizing regime.

²⁰ Mokri (in Elâhi 1966: 111) gives his dates as 1785-1863.



Fig. 6. The Mâl-a Âghâ, the mansion of the Haydarî family in Tutshami.

Sayyed Brâka was often mentioned in the conversations I had with Ahmad Bâbâ'î and others at Bâbâ Yâdegâr. Several of Ahmad's favourite *kalâm* were composed by dervishes from the entourage of Sayyed Brâka. These dervishes, who regularly gathered in the *takya* (lodge) beside the sayyeds' residence, were thirty-six in number, and each was believed to have composed a *daftar* of divinely inspired *kalâm*. The most beloved of them, whose *kalâm* are most frequently performed, was Nowrûz, a convert from Sunni Islam. Each of the dervishes was believed to have been the human vehicle for one of the four angels (*ĉwâr malak*, a subgroup of the *haft tan*): nine were *Benyâmîn-mehmân*, nine *Dâwûd-mehmân*, nine *Pîr Mûsî-mehmân* and nine *Mostafâ-mehmân*.



Fig. 7. The *takya* of Sayyed Brâka.

Ahmad accompanied me on my first visit to Tutshami and told me many stories of the days of Sayyed Brâka and the dervishes. The *takya* was, it appeared, a major place of pilgrimage too. We met groups of Qalkhânî and Tofangchî tribesmen (which formerly belonged to the Gûrân confederacy) performing their *ziyarat*. They kissed the threshold and door posts, window sills, and the fireplace (*ôjâgh*), which is considered most sacred and associated with the charisma of the Haydarî family – the term *ôjâgh* refers both to the fireplace and to the *khânadân*.²¹

²¹ Among the Alevi of Anatolia: the families of hereditary religious specialists (*dede*) and their central residences are similarly known as *ocak*, ‘fireplace,’ and the actual fireplace is considered sacred; visitors kiss the ground in front of this *ocak*. In the Bektashi *tekke*, too, there was a physical *ocak*, as observed by Birge: ‘Perhaps in the middle of one of the long sides of the room is an alcove like a fireplace and called the *ocak*, fireplace, or sometimes *Fatma Ocağı*, the fire-place of Fatma, or simply *kûre*, furnace or fireplace.’ (Birge 1937: 178; cf. Noyan 2010: 62, where a more elaborate description is given). The candles that have to be lighted in the Alevi and Bektashi ritual are lit from the fire in the *ocak* or, if there is no actual fireplace, from a central light that takes its place.



Fig. 8. The *ôjâgh* in the *takya*.

Several old *kalâmkhwân* lived in the sayyeds' residence, and allowed me to record *kalâm* they sang and explained to me. I took a strong liking to Kâ Karîm, who, during my second visit later that year, and with Sayyed Nasreddîn's permission, became my chief teacher about the *kalâm* and their interpretation.

KÂ KARÎM ON SATAN

Kâ Karîm was aware of the name of Malak Tâwûs but had never encountered it in any of the *daftar* of *kalâm*.²² He could, however, recite from memory several *kalâm* mentioning Satan. He told me that my first guide Ahmad and his friends had painted a one-sided portrait of Satan in stressing his benign aspect and denying his fiery nature. Unlike the other angels, Satan was not created out of God's light only (as my friend Ahmad believed) but out of *nâr o nûr*, fire and light.²³ And whereas

²²The one *kalâm* in Sûrî's book, cited above, in which Malak Tâwûs is mentioned is not part of the Gûrân canon and is attributed to a poet affiliated with the Shâh Hayâsî *khânadân*, which is not represented here.

²³Cf. the brief Gurani text on Dawud in Mokri 1974: 90-2, where it is said that Dawud "is the one who flies without wings in light and fire" (*paranda-y bî-par nûr [o] nâr Dâwûd*).

Ahmad had told me that Satan had always remained God's favourite angel, Kâ Karîm claimed that Satan had long been an opponent of God, and even His direct rival.²⁴ He had fallen from grace not for refusing to pay homage to Adam but for refusing to kneel before God Himself. The rivalry had lasted until their incarnations in the persons of Soltân Sahâk and Dâwûd, when the latter became the former's most intimate associate again. Even now, Kâ Karîm added, Satan is extremely powerful, the only angel with a certain degree of independence vis-à-vis the Deity. In spite of this, Kâ Karîm vehemently denied all connections between Satan and the Ahriman of Mazdaism.

Explicit praise of Satan is rare in the older *kalâm*, but occasionally we find there the Sufi empathy with Satan's plight. One *kalâm* has Satan complaining,

bâra la`natî har az im kîşân,
the burden of curses, I have carried it all alone.

This complaint is followed, however, by a threat:

girdî mûkerân mowzî aw halâtî,
I throw all who deny [my majesty] out into the endless desert.²⁵

It is only in the *daftar* written by the thirty-six dervishes in Sayyed Brâka's entourage, collectively known as *Zabûr-e haqîqat*, "Psalms of Truth," that we find explicit praise of Satan. Nowrûz, probably the greatest of these poets, reputedly writes in one of his *kalâms* that he had learnt all that he knew "in the school of Shaytân"²⁶. Kâ Karîm read with me, and tried to explain, a number of poems referring to Shaytan — most of which were by his own grandfather, dervish Karîm Khalîl. Like many Gurani poems, they were so cryptic that even when all linguistic

²⁴This is reminiscent of a theme also found in the 11th-century heterodox text *Umm al-Kitab*: the angel `Azâzîl (i.e., Shaytân) is not only disobedient but actually pretends to be the equal of the Deity (Ivanow 1932: 451),

²⁵Kâ Karîm had memorized these lines, which he once read in an old *daftar* of *kalâm*, he did not remember which.

²⁶Kâ Karîm remembered this as one of Nowrûz' sayings, but could not find it again in the *daftar* of Nowrûz that he owned.

problems could be solved (which was not always the case), I often remained in the dark as to what was really meant. But it is obvious that the more positive appreciation of Satan here did not yet turn him into an entirely benevolent angel, such as he has become in the views of some of my earlier informants.

Dervish Karîm Khalîl was himself *Dâwûd-mehmân* and therefore in a way host to Shaytân. (Kâ Karîm was quite pleased when I teased him jokingly that he was therefore a grandson of Satan). In several of his *kalâms*, Karîm Khalîl explicitly associates himself with Satan. Somewhere he says:

šana Šaytân im, tîra bâšbulûka šana Šaytân im

I am Satan's archer, I am the arrow of the commander of Satan's archers

and elsewhere:

gâ gâ na šanûya šamâla Šaytân im.²⁷

at times I am in Satan's northern gale

In both cases the impression intended appears to be one of fierceness. This fierceness is matched by terrifying looks: in another *kalâm*, Shaytan, with whom the poet again explicitly associates himself, is depicted as having six horns, or rather antlers, with six branches each, which does not exactly project a benign image:

da`wâš han wa das Šaytâna šaš šâx * har šâxê šaš pal damâx wa damâx

His cause is in the hands of the six-horned Satan; six branches on each horn, [and the horns] all on top of his head.

A few lines further the poet concludes with:

Karîm Šaytânim hâ wa šâxawa * har šâxê šaš pal wa damâxawa.

My, Karim's Satan exists by his horns; horns of six branches each, on top of his head.

²⁷In the older Gurani texts edited by Mokri, *Dâwûd* is also associated with the Northern wind, *šamâl* (see Mokri 1974: 55 and the passages referred to there). Mokri notes that in the folklore of Kermanshah, violent winds are associated with the Devil (ibid.:54).

The first of these lines is from a *kalâm* in which various other avatars of Dâwûd and some of their attributes are mentioned. Such enumerations of successive incarnations are quite common in *kalâm*; an authoritative example occurs in the *Dawra-y Dîwâna Gawra*, one of the older texts in the Gurani Ahl-e Haqq corpus (Mokri 1977). Here Dâwûd addresses Soltân Sahâk:

Dâwûd maramu: Soltân-i azîm,
tu ka`ba`-i mi`râj, min Mûsâ-y kalîm
tu Mortazâ-y dîn, min Qammar pêşîn
tu Xôşîn-i nuhsad, min Čalabî-y zîn
tu Xodâ-y barra, min Nasîm-i dîn

Dâwûd declares: O great Soltan,
you were the Ka`ba of the Mi`raj, I was Moses, who spoke with God;
you were the Mortazâ of religion [=`Ali], I was [`Ali's servant] Qanbar of yore;
you were Khôshîn of the nine-hundreds, I was Chalabî in the saddle;
you were the god of the lamb [=Shâh Fazl], I was the Nasîm of religion.²⁸

The names mentioned as incarnations in this *kalâm* are all part of (esoteric) Muslim tradition. Karîm Khalîl, in what was perhaps a deliberate provocation, goes beyond this and proclaims that Laylâ (of the famous romance of Laylâ and Majnûn), Qanbar (`Ali's groom), Shaytân and Dâwûd are all one. It is as if he wished to say, "yes, Satan is terrifying and can be a scourge to man; but that is only one aspect of Dâwûd, who is also utterly lovable (Laylâ) and the most reliable helper (Qanbar)." The empathy with Satan in Karîm Khalîl's poetry seems to reflect an effort to distance himself from Islam, and especially from those Muslims

²⁸After Mokri 1977: 143, 370. Note that the Deity is not only recognized in human incarnations but also in the spiritual Ka`ba encountered by Muhammad during his nightly voyage through the heavens. Shah Khoshin is in Ahl-e Haqq lore associated with nine hundred groups of nine hundred (nine hundred musicians, nine hundred practitioners of each craft, etc.); Chalabi was one of his companions. Shah Fazl is named here after a lamb that he owned, which he and his companions would eat and afterwards restore to life; the Guran tradition makes the Horufi poet Nasimi one of his companions (cf. Bruinessen 1995).

who make claims of spiritual advancement. He criticizes and threatens the hajis and shaykhs, who wage war on Satan:

čand šayxa warîn da`wây xodâ`î * šaytân na da`wây jâr bâzî šânin.

Some shaykhs even pretend to divinity themselves; well, Satan knows how to deal with such pretenders.

Satan was the most powerful symbol by which he could identify himself as different from his Muslim neighbours.

DÂWÛD THE BOAR

There is yet another symbol by which the Gûrân, or at least the Yâdegârî and Khâmûshî among them, insist on distinguishing themselves from the Muslims: they have always been known to eat pork, and they proudly proclaim that they do so.²⁹ There used to be wild boar in abundance in the mountains here, but by the time of my visit they appeared to have virtually died out, and people could only talk about them as if they were still eating them. In Tutshami, however, Sayyed Nasreddin's family still kept four boars as pets, which were treated with loving care, quite unlike other animals. Most visitors showed great interest in them, more than just the curiosity aroused by a rare species. The boar appears once to have had a special meaning to (at least some of) the Gûrân. One of my informants told me that the fierce nomadic Qalkhânî consider the boar as the preferred animal for the sacrificial offering (*nazr*) and kiss the meat of the slaughtered animal before consuming it. They reputedly dub the boar *barra-y Dâwûd*, "the [sacrificial] lamb of Dâwûd," stressing the association of Dâwûd with the boar.

²⁹Minorsky heard from a Gûrân informant that the Yâdegârî ate pork, while the Ebrâhîmî did not (Minorsky 1920: 49). He also quotes an earlier Turkish source to the effect that some of the Ahl-e Haqq of Kermanshah province do not eat pork but it remains unclear to which Ahl-e Haqq community this refers (ibid., 58).

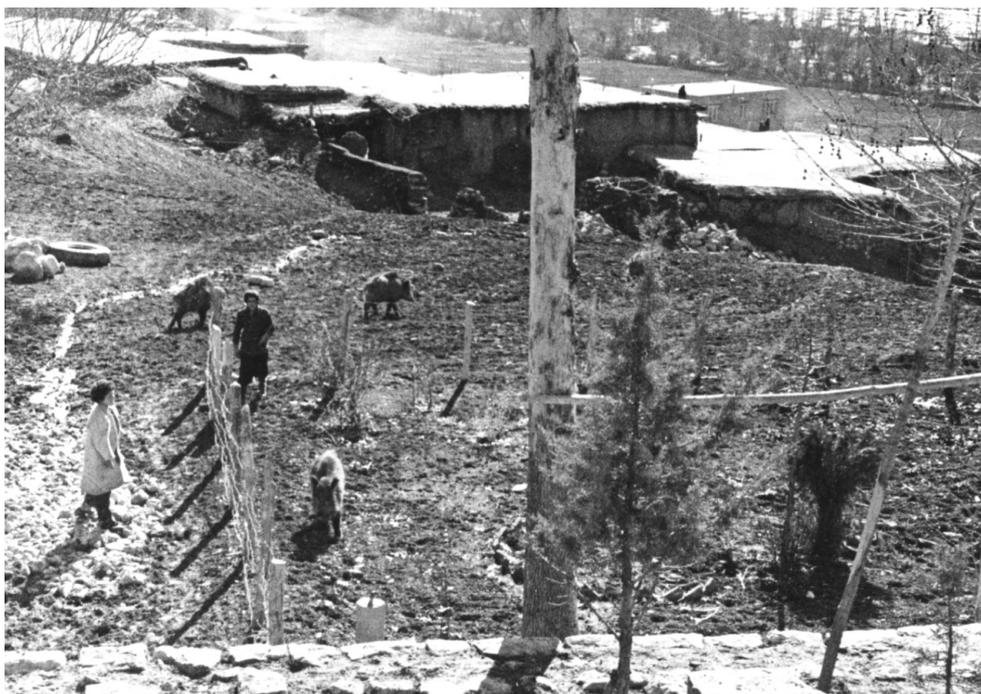


Fig. 9. Three wild boar kept as pets in front of Sayyed Nasreddin's residence in Tutshami

None of the people whom I interviewed knew anything about the origins of this particular attitude to the boar, but it is certainly not a recent deviation. There are references to it in two Gurani Ahl-e Haqq texts, published by Mokri, that may date back to the 16th century. In the *Dawra-y Dîwâna Gawra*, Dâwûd is twice referred to as a boar (*dungiz*), and in the *Dawra-y Dâmyârî* it is Soltân Sahâk's companion Benyâmîn who, speaking of one of his earlier incarnations, proclaims he has eaten a morsel of pork (*na dawra Kâkâ nōçîm dungizin* – “when I was Kâka Ridâ I took a mouthful of *dungiz*”).³⁰ In the learned editor's interpretation, this referred to a ritual meal and the text implies that Benyâmîn may have symbolically partaken of the essence of Dâwûd in this ritual.³¹

It is perhaps worth noting that the word used here for boar is Turkic *dungiz* (*toñuz*; modern Turkish *domuz*) and not the more common Gurani word *warâz* or *gurâz*, which is the term used in another old Ahl-e Haqq text describing a boar hunt

³⁰Mokri 1977: 125, 136-7 (Gurani text: 383, 375); Mokri 1967: 67 (Gurani text: 197). Mokri believes both texts to be 18th-century redactions of works that may originally have been compiled in the 16th century (1977: 16).

³¹There is no unanimity on the association of the boar (*dungiz*) with Dâwûd, however. One of Partow Hooshmandrad's learned informants believed the boar to have the essence of Benyâmîn rather than Dâwûd.

(Mokri 1966: 5, 108). As J.P. Roux (1969) has shown, the oldest Ahl-e Haqq texts show a significant stratum of pre-Islamic Turkish religious symbols and beliefs, which suggests there may have been interaction with the Turkish or Turkicized syncretistic communities that were the precursors of Alevism.³² There are some indications that the boar had a special place in this Turkish syncretism.³³

At present, it seems to be the Yâdegârî and the Khâmûshî among the Gûrân who emphasize their fondness of pork, whereas this is played down or simply denied by the Shâh Ebrâhîmî. Sociologically, therefore, it is closely correlated with the tendency towards dualism and with veneration of Satan. A logical connection with these two features cannot be detected, apart from the fact that both the boar and Satan are associated with Dâwûd and both are abhorrent to Muslims.

CONCLUSION

The veneration of Satan among the Gûrân Ahl-e Haqq appears to be grafted on an older cult of Dâwûd. There is no single view on the nature of Satan; different individuals and sub-communities hold mutually incompatible (and possibly self-contradictory) views on his love for or opposition to the Deity, but most concur on his lordship over this world. This positive appreciation of Satan cannot, however, simply be attributed to contacts with Yezidis, as several authors have suggested. The Gûrân speak quite freely of Satan by this name, and what their oral tradition and sacred texts say of him is rather different from the Yezidis' Malak Tâwûs (or Tâwûsê Melek, as the published sacred texts name him).

Some of the Gûrân also know Satan by the name of Malak Tâwûs, but this name does not occur in their canon of sacred texts – which do mention, however, the Peacock (Tâwûs) and associate him with Dâwûd). Malak Tâwûs is mentioned

³²It has to be noted, however, that both Roux and myself depend strongly on the interpretations of the Gurani texts by Mohammad Mokri, which are far from self-evident.

³³One example, which I owe to Professor Irène Mélikoff (personal communication): after the Turkish conquest in the 13th century, the city of Laodicea in Phrygia, which was long held by an emir of Germiyan, was renamed Toñuzlu, suggesting that the Germiyan too (who were known to hold to heterodox religious views) held the boar in special regard. In later times the reading of the name was changed into the current, more innocent, Denizli.

(very) occasionally in later texts, originating in other branches of the Ahl-e Haqq. Other non-Yezidi heterodox communities also know Satan by the same name. I have heard the same name, for instance, from an old Kurdish Alevi informant in Erzincan, Turkey, who told me a version of the story of Satan's disobedience similar to the one Ahmad Bâbâ'î told me.³⁴ The peacock, Tawus, is associated with Satan in myths found among various syncretistic communities in the Middle East (Müller 1967: 368-73; Fauth 1987). The name, therefore, is not unique to the Yezidis although a well-read person would tend to associate it directly with them.

The Gûrân's denial of Satan's evil nature means that to (many of) them he is not involved in a struggle for power and influence with the Deity. Religious dualism appears to be denied here, or at least resolved in a higher-order monotheism. However, many Gûrân do believe in the very real existence of an occult struggle (*jang-e bâtenî*) between forces of light and darkness, of which the *haft tan* and *haftawâne*, as well as Bâbâ Yâdegâr and Shâh Ebrâhîm are the main protagonists. Interestingly, there is in Dersim a similar belief in an occult struggle in which the spirits of local saints are involved. Here it is Avdel Mursa (T.: Abdal Musa, a well-known Turkish Alevi saint) and Duzgî (T.: Düzgün Baba, the major saint of Dersim) who are involved in a permanent struggle. The former, from the occult world (*Xeyv*), leads evil jinn in a struggle against mankind, and the latter, from the higher spiritual station of Botin, counters the evil forces and protects mankind (Gezik & Çakmak 2010: 23-4, 70-3).

One important difference between the Yezidis and the Gûrân Ahl-i Haqq is that the latter do not frown on literacy. I met many educated people among them, who were deeply interested in other religious communities with whom the Ahl-e Haqq had beliefs or practices in common. They knew of the Yezidis, as they knew of Bektashis and Alevis, of Druze and Nusayris, of the Zekeri of Baluchistan and a whole range of Indian sects whom they believed to belong to essentially the same

³⁴A slightly different version is given in a recent dictionary of religious terms of the Alevi religion of Dersim (Gezik & Çakmak 2010: 118-19). Melekê Tavus is the name of Satan in the other world. He had adopted the form of a peacock when he persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He was banned from his high position when he refused to prostrate himself for Adam, but he remains in control of this world, unlike the Deity, who has withdrawn from the world. Mankind has freedom of will but is incessantly tempted by Satan; guidance for mankind is provided by saints and prophets.

religion. Their knowledge, acquired from reading or perhaps travel, would not enter the written tradition, for the canon is said to be closed, but it served to interpret and comment on that tradition and some of this knowledge appears to have become part of the oral tradition.

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