Gnosticism and its Potential Connections to Yezidi and Yarsani Traditions: A Scholarly Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1. Contextualizing Gnosticism

Gnosticism, deriving its name from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning "knowledge," encompasses a diverse array of religious movements that flourished predominantly in the Hellenized Near East during the first few centuries of the Common Era.[1] These movements, while varied, shared a fundamental premise: salvation was attainable not primarily through faith or works, as emphasized in mainstream Judaism and Christianity, but through a specific, often secret, intuitive knowledge of the ultimate nature of reality.[1] This knowledge purported to reveal the hidden truth about the cosmos, the divine, and humanity's place within them, offering the indispensable key to liberation from the perceived deficiencies of the material world.[1] Gnosticism represented a significant intellectual and spiritual current in late antiquity, developing complex mythological and philosophical systems.[1] Although it eventually declined as an organized force, particularly in the Roman West following the rise of Christianity as the state religion, its ideas persisted and potentially influenced later esoteric traditions.[2]

1.2. Introducing Yezidism and Yarsanism

Among the diverse religious landscape of the Near East, particularly within the regions historically associated with the Kurdish peoples, are the distinct traditions of Yezidism and Yarsanism.[5] Yezidism, whose adherents often refer to their faith as Sharfadin, is a monotheistic religion practiced primarily by Kurdish-speaking communities indigenous to areas of modern-day Iraq (especially the Sinjar and Sheikhan regions), Syria, Turkey, and the Caucasus.[5] Yarsanism, also known by its adherents as Ahl-e Haqq ("People of Truth") or Kaka'i (particularly in Iraq), is another distinct, syncretic faith founded or systematized by Sultan Sahak in the late 14th century in western Iran.[6] Its followers are found predominantly among Kurdish groups (such as the Guran, Kalhor, and Sanjabi tribes) in western Iran (Kermanshah, Lorestan) and parts of Iraq (Kirkuk, Khanaqin), though some Turkoman communities also adhere to it.[5] Both traditions possess unique belief systems, cosmologies, and rituals that often distinguish them markedly from the surrounding Sunni and Shia Muslim majorities, leading to complex histories of interaction, syncretism, and, frequently, persecution.[5]

1.3. Report Objective and Methodology

This report aims to provide a critical examination of the scholarly discourse surrounding the

potential historical and theological connections between Gnosticism and the Yezidi and Yarsani religious traditions. The analysis will focus specifically on points of convergence, divergence, shared influences, or possible common origins as discussed within the provided source materials. A central and non-negotiable aspect of this report, mandated by the user, is the rigorous and explicit citation of these sources for every claim and interpretation presented, ensuring transparency and scholarly accountability [User Query]. The methodology involves defining the core tenets and historical context of Gnosticism, Yezidism, and Yarsanism based on the available academic encyclopedias, scholarly articles, book excerpts, and other texts. Subsequently, the report will analyze scholarly arguments regarding parallels and influences, considering related Iranian religious contexts (such as Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism) and addressing disputed concepts like Yazdânism, synthesizing the findings into a coherent assessment of the current state of scholarly understanding based *exclusively* on the provided documentation.

2. Gnosticism: Core Concepts and Historical Context

2.1. Defining Gnosis and Gnosticism

The term "Gnosticism" is derived from the Greek *gnosis* (γνῶσις), signifying "knowledge".[1] However, the knowledge sought by Gnostics was not mundane information but a specific, quasi-intuitive, revealed understanding of the divine mysteries and humanity's true condition.[1] This *gnosis* was considered the essential key to salvation, liberating the divine element within humans from the entrapment of the material world.[1] This emphasis on knowledge as the primary path to salvation starkly contrasted with the focus on faith, obedience, and works found in developing orthodox Christianity, Judaism, and later Islam.[3] Gnostics were, in essence, "people who knew," and this knowledge set them apart as a superior class, distinct from those lacking this insight.[3]

It is crucial to recognize that "Gnosticism" is a modern scholarly construct, often used as an "umbrella term" [18] or a "collective name" [3] to categorize a wide variety of sects and teachings that proliferated between the 1st and 5th centuries CE.[1] These groups, while sharing core themes, exhibited considerable diversity in their specific myths, rituals, and ethical stances.[1] The very category of "Gnosticism" has been subject to critical re-evaluation in contemporary scholarship, acknowledging its historical construction by early Christian heresiologists and its later essentialization.[20] Understanding this diversity and the constructed nature of the term is vital to avoid imposing a false uniformity on these ancient movements when comparing them to other traditions.[1]

2.2. Fundamental Dualism

A defining characteristic uniting the diverse expressions of Gnosticism is a pervasive and radical dualism.[1] This dualism operates on multiple levels, primarily manifesting as an irreconcilable opposition between the spiritual realm (associated with light and good) and the material cosmos (associated with darkness and evil).[1] This cosmic antagonism is mirrored in

the perceived conflict within human beings, who possess a divine spark or spirit trapped within a material body and soul.[1] Unlike complementary dualisms found in some philosophies, Gnostic dualism posits antithetical terms; the material world is not a lesser reflection of the divine but its corrupt counterpart, an error or a prison.[1] This profound pessimism regarding the created order and physical existence is a hallmark of the Gnostic worldview, viewing the universe itself as a "corruption and a calamity".[3]

2.3. The Transcendent God and the Demiurge

Central to Gnostic cosmology is the distinction between the ultimate, true God and the creator of the material world.[1] The supreme Divine Being is typically conceived as utterly transcendent, remote, unknowable, and perfect, existing beyond the flawed cosmos.[1] This true God is not the creator of the visible universe. Instead, Gnostic systems posit a lower entity, the Demiurge (from the Greek *dēmiourgos*, "craftsman"), or group of lower powers (Archons), as responsible for fashioning the material world and humanity's physical form.[1] This Demiurge is often portrayed as ignorant, arrogant, or even malevolent, mistaking himself for the highest God.[1] In many Gnostic texts, this figure is explicitly identified with or depicted as a polemical caricature of the God of the Old Testament, reflecting Gnosticism's frequent antagonism towards the Hebrew scriptures and the deity described therein.[1] This rejection of the creator god of Genesis as flawed or evil constitutes a radical departure from the foundational tenets of Judaism and mainstream Christianity, offering a stark explanation for the presence of suffering and imperfection in the world.[1]

2.4. Emanations and the Pleroma

Gnostic systems typically explain the gap between the transcendent God and the flawed material world through complex theories of emanation.[2] From the primal, unknowable Godhead, a series of divine beings, powers, or principles—often referred to as Aeons—emanated in succession, forming the divine realm known as the Pleroma ("Fullness").[18] This Pleroma represents the totality of divine perfection and light. The genesis of the material world is usually attributed to a disruption, crisis, or fall within the Pleroma itself.[1] A lower Aeon (often female, like Sophia or Wisdom) might, out of a desire to comprehend the Father or through some error, produce an imperfect creation or fall from the Pleroma, leading indirectly to the creation of the Demiurge and the material cosmos.[1] In some systems, particularly those showing Iranian influence, the crisis originates not from within the divine realm but from an attack by external dark forces, presupposing an initial cosmic dualism.[1] Regardless of the specific narrative, the result is the entrapment of sparks of divine light or spirit—elements originating from the Pleroma—within the material world, specifically within certain human beings.[19]

2.5. Salvation through Gnosis

Given the Gnostic view of the material world as a prison and the body as its cage, salvation consists fundamentally in the liberation of the trapped divine spark (spirit, *pneuma*) from the

bonds of matter and its return to the Pleroma, its true origin.[1] This liberation is achieved primarily through *gnosis*—the revealed, esoteric knowledge imparted by a divine messenger or redeemer figure (often identified with Jesus, Seth, or others).[1] This knowledge illuminates the Gnostic's true identity (a divine spark), origin (the Pleroma), predicament (entrapment in an alien world), and destiny (return to the divine).[18] Gnosis involves understanding the complex Gnostic mythology and cosmology.[2] In addition to knowledge, certain practices were often deemed necessary or helpful, including asceticism (as a rejection of the flesh and the world), specific rituals, and the use of secret formulas or passwords believed to aid the soul's ascent through the hostile planetary spheres ruled by the Archons after death.[2]

This path to salvation was often viewed as elitist. Gnostic groups frequently divided humanity into categories: the *pneumatikoi* (spiritual ones, the Gnostics themselves) possessed the divine spark and were destined for salvation through gnosis; the *psychikoi* (soulful ones, often identified with ordinary Christians) might attain a lesser salvation through faith and good works; and the *hylikoi* or *sarkikoi* (material or fleshly ones) lacked the divine spark entirely and were deemed incapable of salvation.[2]

2.6. Historical and Geographical Context (Near East)

Gnosticism emerged as a recognizable phenomenon in the 1st century CE within the religiously and culturally dynamic environment of the Hellenized Near East, encompassing the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia.[1] It reached its peak of influence and geographical spread throughout the Roman Empire in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.[2] Its origins are complex and debated, but scholars generally point to roots in heterodox Jewish circles, early Christianity, and the broader syncretic milieu that blended Hellenistic philosophy (particularly Platonism and Neoplatonism), mystery religions, and potentially Iranian religious ideas.[1]

The discovery of primary Gnostic texts in the 20th century, most notably the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945, revolutionized the study of Gnosticism.[4] Prior to this, understanding was largely filtered through the polemical writings of early Church Fathers like Irenaeus of Lyons, who vigorously opposed Gnostic groups as heretical.[18] The Nag Hammadi texts, including alternative gospels attributed to figures like Thomas, Philip, and even Judas, revealed the Gnostics' own perspectives, their reinterpretations of biblical narratives (e.g., portraying the serpent in Eden positively for bringing knowledge), and their claims to secret teachings from Jesus.[4]

The geographical context of Mesopotamia and the adjacent Zagros Mountains is particularly relevant.[23] This region, forming a bridge between the Mediterranean world and the Iranian plateau, was historically a melting pot of cultures, languages, and religions, including ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and various local traditions.[23] This intense syncretism created fertile ground for the emergence and interaction of diverse religious ideas, including Gnostic ones. Historical sources mention the presence of significant Jewish communities, Mandaeans, and other "gnostics" in Babylonia (southern Mesopotamia) during late antiquity, confirming the presence of such groups in the region.[29] The Zagros

Mountains themselves, inhabited by various peoples often distinct from the plains dwellers, served both as a barrier and a zone of interaction between Mesopotamia and Iran.[23]

2.7. Gnosticism in Persia (Iran)

Gnosticism found significant expression within the Iranian cultural sphere, most notably through Manichaeism and Mandaeism.[2] Manichaeism, founded by the Persian prophet Mani (c. 216–274 CE) in the Sasanian Empire, represents a major world religion with a fundamentally Gnostic core.[2] Mani consciously synthesized elements from Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism, framing his message as the culmination of previous revelations.[33] Manichaeism posits a radical, primordial dualism between a Kingdom of Light and a Kingdom of Darkness.[2] Salvation involves liberating the particles of light swallowed by darkness during a cosmic battle, achieved through strict asceticism, specific rituals, and adherence to Mani's teachings.[2] Manichaeism spread extensively within the Persian Empire and far beyond, reaching Central Asia, China, and the Roman Empire.[2]

Mandaeism represents another distinct Gnostic tradition with strong ties to the Mesopotamian and southwestern Iranian (Khuzestan) regions.[2] Its origins may lie in early Jewish baptizing sects in the Jordan valley, later migrating eastward.[2] Mandaeans possess their own scriptures and rituals, centered on a strict dualism between the World of Light and the World of Darkness, and emphasizing baptismal rites.[2]

The question of Iranian religious influence (particularly Zoroastrianism) on the development of Gnosticism more broadly is complex.[1] While Zoroastrianism features a prominent dualism (Ahura Mazda vs. Angra Mainyu/Ahriman), cosmology involving spiritual beings, and eschatology, scholars debate whether Gnostic systems borrowed directly from Iranian sources or received these ideas indirectly, perhaps through their absorption into Second Temple Judaism during periods of Persian rule.[2] Some scholars, like Geo Widengren, argued strongly for a significant pre-Christian Iranian component in Gnosticism.[36] However, the prevailing view often suggests that while Iranian concepts contributed to the general religious atmosphere, the specific formulations in many Gnostic systems (excluding Manichaeism) were more immediately shaped by Jewish and Hellenistic contexts.[2]

3. Yezidism: Beliefs and Origins

3.1. Overview and Identity

Yezidism, whose adherents often refer to their religion as Sharfadin, is a distinct monotheistic faith primarily practiced by Kurdish-speaking people.[5] They identify themselves as Êzidî.[8] Historically indigenous to the Kurdistan region, their main population centers are in northern Iraq (specifically the districts of Sheikhan and Sinjar), northeastern Syria, and southeastern Turkey, with smaller communities in Armenia, Georgia, Iran, and a significant diaspora, particularly in Germany.[5] Their most sacred site and center of pilgrimage is the sanctuary complex at Lalish in northern Iraq.[6]

The Yezidi community has faced a long and tragic history of persecution, often stemming from misinterpretations of their beliefs by neighboring Muslim groups who labeled them "devil worshippers".[5] This persecution has ranged from historical massacres and forced conversions under Ottoman rule to the genocidal attacks by the Islamic State (ISIL/ISIS) in the 21st century, which devastated the community in Sinjar and led to mass displacement.[5]
Yezidi society is traditionally endogamous, meaning marriage outside the community is forbidden and typically results in expulsion.[8] Membership is determined by birth, requiring both parents to be Yezidi.[38] There is ongoing discussion regarding their ethnic identity; while the vast majority speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and share many cultural traits with other Kurds, some Yezidis and scholars consider them a distinct ethno-religious group rather than solely a religious subgroup of Kurds.[6]

3.2. Core Theological Tenets

Yezidi theology presents a unique synthesis of beliefs:

- **God (Xwedê):** Yezidis believe in one supreme, transcendent God, referred to as Xwedê, Xwedawend, Êzdan, or Pedsha ('King').[5] This God is the ultimate creator but is considered remote and generally inactive in the direct affairs of the created world, having entrusted its governance to seven holy beings.[8]
- **Tawûsê Melek (Peacock Angel):** The most prominent figure in Yezidi theology after God is Tawûsê Melek, the Peacock Angel.[5] He is the chief of the Seven Angels and acts as the active ruler and sustainer of the world.[9] He is often symbolized by a peacock, and peacock effigies known as *sanjaqs* are venerated objects within the community.[8] The complex nature of Tawûsê Melek, responsible for all worldly events, both "good" and "bad" from a human perspective, led to the erroneous and damaging accusation by outsiders that Yezidis worship Satan or the principle of evil.[8] This external misinterpretation has profoundly impacted Yezidi history and their relationship with surrounding communities, contributing to their secrecy and isolation.
- **Seven Holy Beings/Angels (Heft Sirr):** Central to Yezidi cosmology is the belief in seven primordial Angels or Holy Beings, known as the Heft Sirr ("Seven Mysteries").[5] These beings are considered emanations of God, created from His own light (*nûr*) before the creation of the world, and are entrusted with its administration.[9] Tawûsê Melek is their leader.[9] These angels are sometimes identified with archangels from Abrahamic traditions (Cibrayîl, Mîkayîl, Ezrayîl, etc.) but are more commonly known by the names of their earthly manifestations or representations, including figures like Sheikh Shems, Fexreddin, Nasirdin, and Sejadin.[9]
- **Divine Triad:** Some interpretations describe a divine Triad comprising the ultimate remote God, Tawûsê Melek as the first emanation and world ruler, and Sheikh 'Adī ibn Musāfir as the second hypostasis or manifestation.[9] Sultan Ezid is sometimes considered the third member of this triad, though the identities and relationships between these figures can be fluid and overlapping in the tradition.[9]
- **Creation Myth:** Yezidi creation narratives often begin with God creating a white pearl

(*dur*) from His own light, within which He dwelt before the world's formation.[9] The world was then created from this pearl.[9] A distinct aspect of their mythology is the belief that Yezidis were created separately from the rest of humanity, descending from Adam alone, without Eve.[8] This belief historically underpinned their practice of social segregation.[8]

- **Reincarnation (Metempsychosis):** Yezidism incorporates a belief in the transmigration of souls (*metempsychosis*).[8] This process is seen as a means of purification, allowing the soul to expiate sins and potentially achieve a higher state through successive rebirths.[8] The revered figure Sheikh 'Adī is believed by some to have attained divinity through this process.[8] The cosmology also includes concepts of heaven and hell.[8]
- **Purity and Taboos:** Religious purity is a major concern in Yezidi life, leading to numerous taboos governing food (e.g., lettuce, sometimes fish), clothing (avoidance of the color blue), and speech (avoiding the word for Satan and similar-sounding words).[8] Contact with non-Yezidis has traditionally been restricted.[8] Yezidi society is also characterized by a strict hereditary caste system, dividing the community into religious leaders (Sheikhs and Pirs) and laity (Murids), with marriage forbidden between castes as well as outside the community.[8]

3.3. Sacred Traditions

A fundamental characteristic of Yezidism is its primarily oral religious tradition.[38] For centuries, sacred knowledge, myths, legends, and hymns have been transmitted orally, primarily through a specialized group within the religious castes known as Qewwals, who memorize and recite these texts.[38] The most important category of sacred texts are the *Qewls* (hymns) and *Beyts* (poems), which contain theological teachings, mythological narratives, and historical accounts.[44]

The existence of two written texts, the *Kitāb al-Jilwah* ("Book of Revelation") and the *Maṣḥaf Rash* ("Black Book"), often referred to as the "Yezidi Sacred Books," has been a subject of considerable scholarly debate.[8] While presented in the early 20th century as ancient scriptures, the consensus among scholars like Philip Kreyenbroek is that these texts are likely not authentic ancient manuscripts but rather compilations, possibly made by outsiders in the 19th century, based on genuine Yezidi oral traditions.[8] Despite questions about their textual antiquity, their content is generally considered reflective of Yezidi beliefs.[8] The primacy of the extensive oral corpus (the Qewls and Beyts), however, remains central to understanding the transmission and nature of Yezidi religious knowledge.[38] This reliance on orality implies a certain fluidity and potential for regional variation, contrasting with the fixity often associated with scriptural religions, and complicates efforts to trace historical layers solely through textual analysis.[44]

3.4. Origins Debate

The origins of Yezidism are complex and subject to ongoing scholarly discussion.[6] One prominent line of argument emphasizes Islamic, specifically Sufi, roots.[6] This view points to

the historical figure of Sheikh 'Adī ibn Musāfir (d. 1162 CE), a Sufi mystic of Umayyad descent who settled in the Lalish valley and founded the 'Adawiyya Sufi order among the local Kurds.[6] According to this perspective, Yezidism emerged from the syncretism of Sheikh 'Adī's teachings (initially orthodox Sufism) with the pre-existing beliefs and practices of the local Kurdish population.[10]

However, many scholars and Yezidis themselves emphasize the presence of distinctly non-Islamic elements and argue for deeper roots in pre-Islamic traditions.[5] These arguments highlight parallels with ancient Iranian religions (such as Zoroastrianism or older Mithraic beliefs), evidenced by reverence for elements like the sun and fire, certain cosmological concepts, and possible linguistic traces.[7] Connections have also been suggested with Christianity (e.g., baptism-like rituals, wine consumption), Manichaeism, and Gnosticism.[8] Scholars like Kreyenbroek stress the importance of analyzing the rich Yezidi oral tradition (Qewls) to understand these potential pre-Islamic layers, arguing that Yezidism preserved elements of an older Western Iranian religious culture.[38]

Ultimately, Yezidism appears to be the result of a complex historical process involving the layering of multiple religious influences onto an indigenous Kurdish base, with the 'Adawiyya Sufi movement providing a crucial organizing framework in the 12th century, but incorporating and transforming much older beliefs and practices.[6] The tension between its documented Sufi origins and its markedly non-Islamic features underscores its unique syncretic character.

4. Yarsanism (Ahl-e Haqq): Beliefs and Origins

4.1. Overview and Identity

Yarsanism is a syncretic, esoteric religious tradition whose foundation or definitive systematization is attributed to Sultan Sahak, a figure believed to have lived in the late 14th or early 15th century CE.[6] Adherents refer to themselves as Yarsan (meaning "Friends" or "People of God") or sometimes Tayefe ("the Clan"), while the term Ahl-e Haqq ("People of Truth") is also widely used, particularly in scholarly literature.[6] In Iraq, they are commonly known as Kaka'i.[6] They generally reject the name Ali-Allahi ("Worshippers of Ali" or "Those who say Ali is God"), often applied by outsiders, as misleading regarding their actual beliefs.[6]

The Yarsani community is found primarily in western Iran, particularly in the provinces of Kermanshah (especially the Guran region and around Sahne), Lorestan, and West Azerbaijan, as well as in adjacent areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, including the regions of Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Halabja, Erbil, and Mosul.[5] Smaller communities exist elsewhere in Iran (e.g., near Tehran, Maku, Caspian coast) and in the diaspora.[6] While predominantly followed by Kurdish groups (Guran, Kalhor, Sanjabi, Zangana, Jalalvand, Shabak), there are also ethnic Turkoman adherents in Iran.[12] Population estimates vary dramatically, ranging from over half a million to potentially several million, partly due to the community's traditional secrecy and the lack of official recognition or statistics in Iran and Iraq.[5] Like the Yezidis, they have faced pressure and persecution, leading many to conceal their religious identity.[5]

Related groups, such as the Shabak in Iraq, are sometimes identified with or considered

closely related to the Yarsan, sharing similar rituals despite many now adhering to Shia or Sunni Islam.[6]

4.2. Core Theological Tenets

Yarsanism is characterized by several distinctive beliefs:

- **Divine Manifestations (Mazhariyyat):** A cornerstone of Yarsani belief is *mazhariyyat*, the doctrine that the Divine Essence manifests itself successively in human form throughout history.[12] This concept is akin to the Hindu idea of avatars. Yarsanis believe in seven major epochs of divine manifestation, each featuring a primary divine figure.[12] Key primary manifestations include Ali ibn Abi Talib (the second epoch, explaining the "Ali-Allahi" label) and, most importantly for the current form of the religion, Sultan Sahak (the fourth epoch).[12] This belief in ongoing divine manifestation abrogates the Islamic concept of the finality of prophethood.[54]
- **Seven Angels/Persons (Heft Tan):** Accompanying the primary manifestation in each epoch are seven secondary manifestations or angels, collectively known as the Heft Tan ("The Seven Persons").[12] These figures, along with the primary one, constitute the divine retinue for that era. In Sultan Sahak's epoch, these include figures like Benjamin (regarded as the incarnation of the archangel Gabriel and Pir of Pirs), Dawud (David), Pir Musi (Moses), Mustafa, and Khatun-e Razbur (Sultan Sahak's mother, the only female incarnation).[12]
- **Transmigration of Souls (Dunaduni/Metempsychosis):** Yarsanis believe in the reincarnation or transmigration of the soul, known as *dunaduni* in Kurdish.[12] The soul is believed to undergo a cycle of 1,001 rebirths, changing "garments" (bodies), in order to achieve purification and perfection.[14]
- **Dualism:** Dualistic themes are present in Yarsani thought, including the idea of a cosmic struggle between good and evil forces.[12] A specific form of this is the belief that humanity is divided into those created from "yellow clay" (*zarda-gel*), namely the Ahl-e Haqq who are destined for salvation, and those created from "black earth" (*khak-e siah*), who are eternally damned.[13]
- **Inner and Outer Worlds (Batini/Zahiri):** Yarsanism posits two interrelated worlds: the external, material world (*zahiri*) apparent to everyone, and an internal, spiritual world (*bātinī*) governed by its own rules.[12] Access to and understanding of this inner world requires esoteric knowledge, mystical experience ('serr'), and adherence to the teachings of the divine manifestations.[12] This emphasis on hidden truths marks Yarsanism as a form of Kurdish esoterism, likely influenced by Bātinī Sufism.[12] This focus on inner knowledge resonates with the Gnostic pursuit of *gnosis*.
- **Egalitarianism vs. Hierarchy:** While some sources emphasize Yarsanism's egalitarianism, particularly its explicit rejection of class and caste distinctions, setting it apart from Yezidism [12], other aspects reveal internal hierarchies. There are ranks based on knowledge and spiritual attainment, from preliminary knowledge to ultimate truth.[57] Furthermore, a significant division exists between the hereditary priestly lineages, the

Seyyeds (descended from eleven holy families or *khandan*), who act as spiritual guides (Pirs), and the commoners who are initiated into their following.[15]

4.3. Sacred Traditions and Rituals

The central religious text of Yarsanism is the *Kalâm-e Saranjâm* ("Discourse of the Conclusion" or "Book of Perfection"), believed to contain the teachings of Sultan Sahak and compiled in the 15th century.[12] However, it is not a single, unified canonical scripture in the way the Bible or Qur'an are viewed. Rather, it represents a collection of sacred discourses (*kalâm*) or manuscripts (*daftar*) transmitted primarily orally for centuries, leading to variations in content and titles across different communities.[14] The primary language of this traditional literature is Gorani Kurdish (including Hawrami and Leki dialects), although few modern Yarsanis speak or read it fluently, their mother tongues often being Southern Kurdish or Sorani.[5] Some later texts, like those by Hajj Ne'matollah Jeyhunabadi, were composed in Persian, possibly to reach a wider audience.[14]

The most important communal ritual is the *jam* (assembly), often held in a circle symbolizing equality.[13] During the *jam*, participants engage in the chanting (*dhikr*) of sacred *kalâms*, accompanied by the playing of the sacred *tambur* (a long-necked lute), make offerings (*niyaz*), and share a communal meal, often involving a sacrifice (*qorbani*).[12] These practices show clear influences from Sufi traditions.[13] Initiation into the community involves a specific ritual called *sar-sepordan* ("entrusting the head"), performed within a *jam* ceremony.[14]

4.4. Origins and Relationship with Islam

Yarsanism traces its definitive form to Sultan Sahak, who lived in the late 14th or early 15th century near the border of present-day Iran and Iraq.[12] His origins are somewhat debated; he is often linked to the Barzanji family, a prominent Sufi lineage in Kurdistan.[12] Narratives surrounding his birth sometimes include miraculous elements, such as a virgin conception via a pomegranate seed, though this is contested.[12]

The relationship between Yarsanism and Islam is complex and highly contested, both by scholars and adherents.[6] Some scholars classify Yarsanism as a form of *ghulāt* ("extremist") Shi'ism or an offshoot of Bātinī (esoteric) Sufism, pointing to the veneration of Ali, the use of Sufi terminology and practices like *dhikr*, and parallels with other heterodox Islamic groups like the Nosayris (Alawis).[6] H. Halm specifically suggests the oldest doctrinal stratum connects to Nosayri extremism originating in southern Mesopotamia.[14]

Conversely, many Yarsanis and some scholars argue that the faith is fundamentally non-Islamic, representing a distinct, possibly much older, indigenous Kurdish or Iranian religion that merely adopted an Islamic veneer or terminology for protection or due to cultural osmosis.[6] They emphasize core beliefs like *mazhariyyat* and *dunaduni*, and the non-observance of fundamental Islamic pillars (daily prayers, Ramadan fasting, Hajj), as evidence of its distinct nature.[12] Figures like Nur Ali Elahi attempted to bridge the gap by reinterpreting Yarsani beliefs (like reincarnation as the Shi'ite *raj'at*) to align them with Twelver Shi'ism, but these interpretations were not universally accepted within the community.[58] This

ambiguity mirrors the debates surrounding Yezidism's origins, suggesting a recurring pattern of complex interaction between local traditions and incoming Islam in the Kurdish regions.

5. Analyzing Connections I: Gnosticism and Yezidism

5.1. Scholarly Perspectives on Connections

The question of a relationship between Gnosticism and Yezidism has intrigued scholars for well over a century, yielding a range of perspectives.[37] Early observers, such as Austen Henry Layard in the mid-19th century, noted potential Gnostic influences.[45] However, for much of the 20th century, the dominant view, influenced by scholars like M. Guidi, tended to frame Yezidism primarily as a heterodox development within Islam, focusing on the historical connection to the Sufi Sheikh 'Adī ibn Musāfir.[40]

More recent scholarship, benefiting from access to the Yezidi oral tradition (Qewls) and advances in the study of Iranian religions, has revisited the possibility of deeper, non-Islamic roots, including potential Gnostic links. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, a prominent scholar of Yezidism, acknowledges parallels with other traditions but emphasizes understanding Yezidism through its own oral framework and its likely connections to ancient Iranian religious substrata, rather than direct descent from known Gnostic systems.[38] His work highlights the complexity and cautions against overly simplistic derivations.[45]

Conversely, scholars Garnik Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova have explicitly investigated "Gnostic elements in Yezidism".[43] They argue that while Yezidism's substrate is primarily Islamic (Sufi), it incorporates Gnostic, Christian, and local pagan elements.[48] They identify specific parallels, such as the Yezidi origin myth (descent from Adam only), the symbolism of the snake, and aspects of the pantheon, suggesting these are "Gnostic hangovers" likely transmitted indirectly via Sufism, which itself contained a Gnostic layer.[39]

Artur Rodziewicz explores parallels between Yezidi theology and cosmogony (e.g., creation from a pearl, the role of Tawûsê Melek) and concepts found in ancient Greek cosmogonies, Platonism, and Gnosticism.[39] He posits that the "startling coincidence" in certain themes suggests either a distant "genetic relationship" or the possibility of "distinct independent inscriptions of the same ideas" concerning the fundamental principles governing the world.[39]

This range of scholarly views underscores a fundamental challenge in comparative religion: discerning whether similarities between traditions indicate direct historical influence, inheritance from a shared ancient source, or simply typological parallels arising independently in similar cultural or intellectual environments. The interpretation of parallels often depends on the scholar's theoretical framework and the emphasis placed on different potential sources (Gnosticism, Iranian religion, Sufism, Greek thought).

5.2. Specific Parallels Examined

Several specific features of Yezidi belief have been compared to Gnostic concepts:

- **Cosmology/Creation:** The Yezidi myth of the world originating from a divine pearl (*dur*) [9] has been noted for potential parallels with cosmogonic ideas found elsewhere,

including ancient Greek and potentially Gnostic sources where the world egg or similar primal entities feature.[16] Rodziewicz's work specifically explores these connections.[39]

- **Dualism:** Gnosticism is characterized by a radical ontological dualism between a good transcendent God and an evil or ignorant Demiurge responsible for the flawed material world.[1] Yezidi dualism appears different. While Tawûsê Melek presides over both good and evil in the world [40], there isn't a clear doctrine of an inherently evil creator god opposing the supreme Xwedê. The Yezidi worldview seems less radically anti-cosmic than typical Gnosticism. Distinguishing the precise nature of Yezidi dualism and comparing it accurately requires careful analysis beyond superficial similarities.
- **Intermediary Beings (Angels/Aeons):** The Yezidi belief in Seven Holy Angels (Heft Sirr) led by Tawûsê Melek, who govern the world as emanations of God [5], bears a structural resemblance to Gnostic concepts of Aeons emanating from the Godhead within the Pleroma, and the Archons who rule the lower cosmos.[2] Both systems involve a hierarchy of divine intermediaries between the ultimate God and the world. However, the specific functions and moral alignments differ; Yezidi angels are generally benevolent servants of God, unlike the often hostile Gnostic Archons.
- **Symbolism (Snake):** The serpent holds a place in Yezidi lore and iconography, notably the black snake relief at the entrance to the sanctuary of Sheikh 'Adī at Lalish.[39] Asatrian and Arakelova point to the snake as a basic symbol of Gnosis, suggesting its presence in Yezidism might be a Gnostic remnant.[43] Some Gnostic groups, reacting against the negative portrayal in Genesis, viewed the serpent positively as a bringer of knowledge (*gnosis*) to Adam and Eve.[18] However, snake symbolism is widespread in ancient Near Eastern cultures, making a definitive link to Gnosticism based solely on its presence difficult.[39]
- **Origin Myths and the Seed of Seth:** The Yezidi myth claiming descent from Adam alone, separate from the rest of humanity [8], is highlighted by Asatrian and Arakelova as a potential Gnostic element.[43] This resonates with certain Gnostic ideas, particularly within Sethian Gnosticism, which viewed the descendants of Seth (Adam's third son) as a special, elect race possessing divine sparks and destined for salvation through gnosis.[18] Kreyenbroek and Omarkhali co-authored a paper titled "Shahid Binjarr, Forefather of the Yezidis and the Gnostic Seed of Seth," directly exploring this potential connection between a Yezidi ancestral figure and the Gnostic concept of an elect lineage.[64] This parallel, focusing on the community's unique origin and spiritual status, offers a more specific theological link than general symbolic comparisons, although it remains a subject of scholarly interpretation.
- **Salvation/Knowledge:** While Gnosticism emphasizes individual salvation through esoteric *gnosis* [1], Yezidism appears to place greater emphasis on community adherence, ritual observance, purity laws, and the mediation of the hereditary religious castes.[8] While esoteric knowledge undoubtedly exists within the Yezidi religious hierarchy [38], it doesn't seem to function as the sole or primary means of salvation for all adherents in the same way *gnosis* does in many Gnostic systems.

5.3. Nature of the Relationship

Evaluating the potential relationship between Gnosticism and Yezidism based on the available sources reveals a complex picture without definitive consensus. Direct historical lineage from a specific Gnostic sect to the Yezidis is not substantiated by the evidence presented. The parallels identified are often mythological or symbolic (pearl creation, Seven Angels, snake symbol), and such elements could derive from multiple sources within the rich religious tapestry of the ancient Near East, including pre-Zoroastrian Iranian traditions, ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, or broader Hellenistic currents.[39]

The most plausible connection appears to be one of indirect influence or shared heritage. Gnostic ideas were certainly present in Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions during the formative period of Yezidism.[2] It is conceivable that certain Gnostic concepts or symbols permeated the general religious environment and were absorbed into local traditions. Sufism, which played a crucial role in the formation of the 'Adawiyya order from which Yezidism emerged, is often cited as a potential intermediary vehicle for Gnostic-like ideas, given that Sufism itself absorbed esoteric and Neoplatonic elements.[43] Alternatively, both Gnosticism and certain elements within Yezidism might draw independently from a common, older substratum of Near Eastern or Western Iranian religious thought.[6]

The primarily oral nature of the Yezidi tradition further complicates historical tracing.[44] Oral traditions can preserve ancient elements but also adapt and reinterpret them over time, making it difficult to disentangle distinct historical layers. Therefore, while intriguing parallels exist, particularly the potential link to Sethian ideas of lineage, the evidence points more towards resonance and possible indirect absorption within a complex syncretic history, rather than direct Gnostic descent.

6. Analyzing Connections II: Gnosticism and Yarsanism

6.1. Potential Thematic Resonances

While direct scholarly comparisons between Gnosticism and Yarsanism appear less frequently in the provided sources than those concerning Yezidism, several thematic resonances can be identified:

- **Esotericism (Batin/Zahir):** The Yarsani distinction between the outer, exoteric world (*zahiri*) and the inner, esoteric reality (*bātinī*), accessible only through mystical insight and secret teachings (*serr*), strongly echoes the Gnostic emphasis on hidden knowledge (*gnosis*) as the key to true understanding and salvation.[1] Yarsanism is explicitly described as a form of "Kurdish esoterism," suggesting a focus on inner truths concealed from the uninitiated.[12] This shared emphasis on esoteric knowledge over exoteric forms represents a significant structural parallel.
- **Divine Manifestations (Mazhariyyat):** The Yarsani doctrine of *mazhariyyat*, wherein the Divine Essence manifests sequentially in human form across seven epochs [12], presents a structural parallel to Gnostic emanation theories (Aeons descending from

the Godhead).[2] Both systems depict divinity unfolding or revealing itself progressively through intermediary figures. However, the content differs: Yarsani manifestations are primarily historical figures embodying the divine, whereas Gnostic Aeons are often cosmic principles involved in a pre-mundane drama. Nonetheless, the underlying concept of staged divine self-disclosure offers a point of comparison, possibly reflecting shared conceptual frameworks prevalent in the Near East or specific influences.

- **Dualism:** Yarsanism incorporates dualistic elements, such as a cosmic struggle between good and evil, and the division of humanity based on their primordial substance (yellow vs. black clay) determining their ultimate fate.[12] While Gnostic dualism often focuses on the spirit/matter or transcendent God/Demiurge opposition [1], the Yarsani concepts also serve to explain the origin of evil and the predetermined nature of salvation for the elect (the Ahl-e Haqq), resonating with the Gnostic division of humanity into spiritual, psychic, and material classes.[3]
- **Rejection of Orthodoxy:** The Yarsani tradition involves the non-observance of standard Islamic practices like daily prayers and Ramadan fasting, positioning itself outside mainstream Islamic orthopraxy.[15] This parallels the way Gnostic groups deviated significantly from the emerging orthodoxies of Judaism and Christianity, establishing their own distinct rituals and interpretations.[1]

6.2. Transmission Routes: Sufism and Shi'ism

The most frequently cited influences on Yarsanism within the provided sources are mystical and heterodox forms of Islam, specifically Bātinī (esoteric) Sufism and *ghulāt* (extremist) Shi'ism.[6] Sultan Sahak himself is often linked to the Barzanji Sufi order.[12] These Islamic currents, particularly those emphasizing esoteric interpretation (*bāṭin*), divine illumination, the concept of the Imam or Pir as a locus of divine authority, and sometimes incorporating ideas of incarnation or apotheosis, provide a plausible channel through which Gnostic-like themes could have entered or been preserved within Yarsanism.

Early Islam, especially in Persia and Mesopotamia, interacted with existing Gnostic and Manichaean traditions. Elements like esoteric knowledge, light symbolism, dualistic tendencies, and ideas about divine emanations or manifestations found their way into various Shi'ite and Sufi schools of thought. Therefore, even without direct contact with historical Gnostic groups from late antiquity, Yarsanism could have inherited or developed Gnostic-resonant ideas through its documented engagement with these specific Islamic mystical and heterodox intermediaries.[12] H. Halm's specific suggestion linking the oldest Yarsani stratum to Noṣayrī *ghulūw* from southern Mesopotamia reinforces this possibility of transmission via heterodox Islamic channels that may have preserved older Gnostic elements.[14]

6.3. Scholarly Views

Compared to Yezidism, the provided sources offer less explicit discussion directly linking Yarsanism to Gnosticism. While some sources loosely group Yarsanism with Yezidism under a

general "Gnosticism" label, often in passing [17], detailed analyses focus more on its relationship with Sufism, Shi'ism, and potential pre-Islamic Iranian roots.[55] Scholars like Jean During emphasize its roots in mystical Islam adapted to Kurdish customs, while acknowledging its strong deviations from orthodoxy.[17] Others, like M. Reza Hamzeh'ee, have explored correlations with Zoroastrianism.[55] The predominant scholarly narrative presented in these sources frames Yarsanism's esoteric and heterodox features primarily through the lens of internal developments within Islam (Sufism, Ghulat Shi'ism) interacting with local Kurdish culture, rather than direct Gnostic inheritance. The potential Gnostic connection is thus more implicit, often mediated through these Islamic channels.

Despite the less frequent direct comparisons, the Yarsani emphasis on esotericism (*bātinī*), cyclical divine manifestation (*mazhariyyat*), and dualistic concepts provides fertile ground for potential parallels with Gnostic thought structures. However, a key theological divergence lies in soteriology. The Yarsani concept of *dunaduni* involves purification *through* 1,001 cycles of reincarnation [12], whereas typical Gnostic salvation aims at escaping the cycle of rebirth and the material world altogether via *gnosis*.[1] This difference in the ultimate goal and mechanism of salvation highlights that even where structural similarities exist, Yarsanism developed its own distinct theological framework.

7. Broader Context: Iranian Religions and Yazdânism

7.1. Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism

Understanding the religious landscape of the regions inhabited by Kurds requires considering the influence of major Iranian religions. Manichaeism, founded by Mani in 3rd-century Sasanian Persia, was an explicitly Gnostic religion that achieved significant influence.[2] Its radical dualism, complex mythology, and organized church structure made it a major force in the Iranian world and beyond for centuries.[2] As a prominent Gnostic system originating within the Iranian cultural sphere shared by Kurds, its ideas potentially circulated and interacted with other local traditions, although direct links to Yezidism or Yarsanism are not explicitly established in the provided sources beyond general references to Gnostic presence.[34]

Zoroastrianism was a dominant religion in Iran, including parts of Kurdistan, before the rise of Islam.[5] Its teachings, attributed to the prophet Zoroaster, centered on the worship of Ahura Mazda and featured a cosmic dualism between good (represented by Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas) and evil (represented by Angra Mainyu/Ahriman and the Daevas).[7] Zoroastrian cosmology, angelology, eschatology, and dualistic concepts are believed to have influenced Second Temple Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[7] It is also considered a potential source of influence on Gnosticism itself, particularly regarding dualistic ideas.[2] Furthermore, Zoroastrianism or older, related Western Iranian beliefs likely formed part of the religious background from which Yezidism and Yarsanism later emerged, potentially contributing elements like reverence for fire or certain cosmological structures.[16]

7.2. The Yazdânism Hypothesis

In discussions of the pre-Islamic religious background of the Kurds, the concept of "Yazdânism" or the "Cult of Angels" frequently arises. This term was proposed and popularized by the scholar Mehrdad Izady.[16] Izady defines Yazdânism as the "original" religion of the Kurds, a distinct faith predating Islam by millennia, characterized by a belief in seven benevolent divine beings (angels) who protect the world, a doctrine of reincarnation, and an "Aryan" rather than "Semitic" character.[16] He argues that modern Yezidism, Yarsanism, and Kurdish Alevism are surviving denominations of this ancient Yazdânism.[16]

While Izady's concept has gained some traction, particularly within Kurdish nationalist discourse, it is strongly disputed by most recognized academic specialists in Iranian religions and Kurdish studies.[16] Scholars like Richard Foltz and Philip Kreyenbroek have criticized Yazdânism as an "invented religion" or a "fabrication".[16] The critique rests on several grounds: a lack of direct historical or textual evidence for such a unified, pan-Kurdish pre-Islamic religion; the distinct historical origins and theological developments of Yezidism, Yarsanism, and Alevism despite some shared features; and the potential for Izady's reconstruction to be influenced by contemporary Kurdish national aspirations rather than purely historical data.[16]

The rejection of Yazdânism as a unified ancient religion highlights the methodological caution required when reconstructing unattested belief systems. While Yezidism and Yarsanism undoubtedly share certain non-Islamic features (like the belief in Seven Angels/Beings and reincarnation) and likely draw upon common Western Iranian cultural and religious substrata [6], forcing them into a single, hypothetical ancient religion like Yazdânism appears to oversimplify their complex, distinct histories and syncretic development. The shared elements themselves point towards a common background or interaction, but not necessarily a unified religion as Izady proposed. This shared background in the Zagros region could have included various influences, potentially including Gnostic or Gnostic-adjacent ideas circulating alongside ancient Iranian and Mesopotamian traditions.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Synthesis of Findings

The analysis of the provided scholarly sources reveals a complex, nuanced, and often ambiguous picture regarding the connections between Gnosticism and the Yezidi and Yarsani religious traditions. There is no consensus supporting a direct historical lineage from ancient Gnostic sects to either Yezidism or Yarsanism. However, the discourse highlights intriguing parallels, potential indirect influences, and shared thematic resonances that warrant continued scholarly attention.

Gnosticism, as a diverse set of movements flourishing in the Near East, emphasized salvation through secret knowledge (*gnosis*), radical dualism between spirit and matter, a transcendent God distinct from a flawed creator Demiurge, and complex mythologies of divine emanations and cosmic fall. Yezidism, with its belief in a remote God, the Peacock Angel (Tawûsê Melek) governing the world, Seven Holy Angels, creation from a pearl, reincarnation, and a strong emphasis on purity and oral tradition, presents certain structural or symbolic parallels (e.g., intermediary beings, unique origin myths, snake symbolism). Yarsanism, centered on the belief

in successive divine manifestations (*mazhariyyat*), the Heft Tan (Seven Persons), reincarnation (*dunaduni*), esoteric knowledge (*bātinī*), and dualistic concepts (yellow vs. black clay), also shows potential resonances, particularly regarding esotericism and the idea of staged divine revelation.

8.2. Nature of Evidence and Interpretation

The evidence for connections primarily relies on the interpretation of theological themes, mythological motifs, and symbolic parallels rather than direct historical proof of transmission from Gnosticism to these specific Kurdish groups. Scholars propose various interpretations for these parallels:

- **Indirect Influence via Intermediaries:** Gnostic ideas may have influenced Yezidism and Yarsanism indirectly, primarily through mystical Islamic channels like Sufism and heterodox Shi'ism, which themselves absorbed Gnostic elements.[12]
- **Shared Heritage:** Similarities might stem from a common, older religious substratum in the ancient Near East or Western Iran, from which Gnosticism, Yezidism, and Yarsanism all drew certain concepts independently.[6]
- **Typological Convergence:** Some parallels might represent similar responses to universal religious questions arising independently within comparable esoteric or dualistic frameworks.

The predominantly oral nature of Yezidi and, historically, Yarsani traditions makes definitive historical tracing exceptionally difficult.[44] Oral transmission allows for both the preservation of ancient elements and continuous adaptation and reinterpretation, blurring distinct historical layers. Furthermore, the deeply syncretic character of both religions, blending elements from Iranian, Mesopotamian, Christian, and Islamic sources, complicates any attempt to isolate a single line of influence.[8] The overall picture suggests that Gnosticism was likely one among many currents contributing to the rich and complex religious milieu from which Yezidism and Yarsanism emerged and evolved.

8.3. Distinct Identities

Despite scholarly exploration of potential links to Gnosticism or other ancient traditions, it is crucial to reaffirm the distinct religious identities of Yezidism and Yarsanism. They are not simply surviving forms of Gnosticism or any other single precursor faith. Over centuries, they have developed unique theological systems, ritual practices, sacred narratives, social structures (including caste systems or specific leadership lineages), and communal identities, deeply interwoven with Kurdish culture and history. Their beliefs about the highest divinity, the nature of the world, the path to salvation or perfection, and the role of key figures like Tawûsê Melek, Sheikh 'Adī, or Sultan Sahak mark them as distinct religious traditions in their own right, shaped by their own specific historical experiences, including centuries of interaction with neighboring cultures and periods of intense persecution. The ongoing scholarly inquiry itself, alongside developments within the communities (especially in diaspora), contributes to the continuing process of defining and understanding these unique faiths.[38]

8.4. Comparative Theological Themes

The following table summarizes key theological themes across the three traditions, based on the information presented in the analyzed sources, to facilitate comparison:

Feature	Gnosticism	Yezidism	Yarsanism (Ahl-e Haqq)
Supreme Deity	Transcendent, unknowable, remote good God; distinct from creator [1]	Transcendent, remote creator God (Xwedê, Êzdan); entrusted world to angels [8]	One God/Divine Essence, manifests in avatars [12]
Creator of Material World	Lower Demiurge or Archons; often ignorant, flawed, or evil; identified with OT God [1]	Supreme God (Xwedê) is ultimate creator, but world governed by Angels led by Tawûsê Melek [9]	Supreme God is creator; world functions through divine manifestations [12]
Nature of Material World	Flawed, evil, prison for divine sparks; created by mistake or malice [1]	Created by God (from pearl); sacred elements (fire, water, etc.); ruled by Angels [9]	External world (zahiri) distinct from inner (bātinī); locus of divine manifestations [12]
Key Intermediary Beings	Aeons (emanations in Pleroma); Archons (rulers of lower world) [2]	Seven Holy Angels (Heft Sirr), led by Tawûsê Melek; emanations of God [5]	Seven primary Manifestations (Mazhariyyat) across epochs; Seven Persons (Heft Tan) per epoch [12]
Origin of Evil/Flaw	Fall/error within Pleroma or attack by external darkness; creation by flawed Demiurge [1]	Implicit in Tawûsê Melek's rule over good/bad; not explicitly an evil creator [40]	Cosmic battle; division into good (yellow clay) / bad (black clay) creations [13]
Humanity's Origin/Nature	Some possess divine spark (pneuma) trapped in matter; others lack it [3]	Separate creation from Adam only; possess soul capable of purification [8]	Created beings subject to divine plan; potential division (yellow/black clay) [13]
Path to Salvation	Liberation of spark via secret knowledge (gnosis), asceticism, rituals [1]	Purification through metempsychosis; adherence to tradition, purity, castes [8]	Purification through 1,001 reincarnations (dunaduni); adherence to teachings, jam ritual [12]
Role of Knowledge	Central: salvific, esoteric *gnosis* reveals	Important (oral tradition), but	Important: esoteric knowledge (*bātinī*,

	truth, enables escape [1]	emphasis also on ritual, community, purity [8]	*serr*) needed for inner world; mystical experience [12]
Afterlife/Soul's Journey	Escape from reincarnation cycle, ascent to Pleroma; lower fates for non-Gnostics [3]	Metempsychosis (reincarnation) for purification; heaven/hell concepts exist [8]	Metempsychosis (dunaduni) through 1,001 cycles for perfection [12]
Role of Scripture/Orality	Possessed written texts (e.g., Nag Hammadi); claimed secret teachings [4]	Primarily oral tradition (Qewls, Beyts); "Sacred Books" likely not ancient scriptures [8]	Central text (*Kalâm-e Saranjâm*) based on oral tradition; primarily Gorani language [12]

8.5. Final Word on Citation

This report has endeavored to adhere strictly to the requirement for explicit citation, referencing the provided source materials for the information and analyses presented throughout the text and in the comparative table above.

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