

PROSELYTISM AMONG YEZIDIS OF ARMENIA*

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The purpose of the article is to analyze proselytism among the Yezidis of Armenia. The main contributing factors and the consequences of proselytism among Yezidis of Armenia are introduced. Though traditionally proselytism was not typical for the Yezidi community, over the last several decades some Yezidis have abandoned their own religion and have adopted Christianity. The converts are mostly Pentecostals, followers of different denominations of Evangelical and Baptist churches, and some of them are Jehovah's Witnesses.

The article is based on a comprehensive survey of Yezidi religious Weltanschauung and an anonymous inquiry among converted Yezidis. In the course of this study, qualitative research and comparative methods were used.

The study of the phenomenon of proselytism among Yezidis in Armenia clearly shows that many contemporary Yezidis have no idea about their own religion because of the oral, noncanonical nature of Yezidism, and also due to inconsistent and non-systematic attitude of some priests in their religious duties and towards the community. Though proselytism does not affect the religious world-outlook of Yezidis loyal to Yezidism, it can create a new type of identity among converts.

Key words: Yezidi, religion, church, priest, proselytism, convert, Yezidism, Christianity.

Introduction

Throughout history, the Yezidis have had Christian neighbors both in the cradle of their religion in Lalish (Northern Iraq) and beyond its borders. It is known that in the 19th century, some Chaldean and Jacobite Christians were scattered in Mosul and the neighboring villages, or were dwelling in the most inaccessible part of the mountains.¹⁹⁴ The Yezidis have repeatedly been massacred by Muslims. Muslims very often tried to violently convert Yezidis, because they misunderstood the religion of Yezidis and considered them to be devil-worshippers.¹⁹⁵ As a result,

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¹⁹⁴ Layard A.H., Discoveries at Nineveh and its Remains; with an Account of a Visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil Worshipers; and an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians, Paris, A. and W. Galignani and Co., Baudry's European Library, 1850, p. 18.

¹⁹⁵ Ամրյան Թ., Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 37:

a negative attitude towards Muslims was formed among Yezidis.¹⁹⁶ In contrast, the Yezidis had good relations with Christian peoples living in the area. 19th-century British scholar Austen Henry Layard mentioned: “It was not unnatural that the Yezidis should revenge themselves, whenever an opportunity might offer, upon their oppressors. They formed themselves into bands, and were long the terror of the country. No Mussulman that fell into their hands was spared. Caravans were plundered, and merchants murdered without mercy. Christians, however, were not molested; for the Yezidis looked upon them as fellow-sufferers for religion’s sake¹⁹⁷.” In this sense, the Yezidis and Christian peoples of the region shared the same fortune. Badger mentions: “For ages the Christians have been co-sufferers with them, they have lived under the same yoke of bondage and oppression, and this community of endurance has doubtless tended to engender something akin to sympathy between the two parties¹⁹⁸.”

Christian missionaries from Europe who arrived in the Middle East in the 17-18th centuries expressed their positive attitude towards Yezidis in their reports and memoirs. Some Yezidis considered converting to Christianity to be beneficial, taking into account the patronage and protection offered by the Catholic Church. In the 1660s, some Yezidis living in the territory of present-day Syria and Sinjar became Christians. Members of the Catholic Capuchin order also converted some Yezidis. The missionaries used different methods to spread Christianity among them. For example, tribal or religious leaders could be used to convert certain Yezidi groups or families. After adopting Christianity, such authorities could convert certain groups of Yezidis to Christianity¹⁹⁹. The positive attitude of Yezidis toward Christians was preserved, but later there were no cases of mass Christianity adoption in Yezidi communities living in different places.

The spiritual leader of the Yezidis, Mir Ismail was worried for Yezidis living in the Caucasus. In 1909, he sent a letter to a high-ranking clergyman in Armenian Apostolic Church – Archbishop Gevorg Surenyan. In his letter, Mir Ismail mentioned: “[Dear] Gevorg Surenyan – the deputy of reverend Catholicos, I would like you not differentiate between Armenian and Yezidi who comes to you and not to discriminate whether he/she is an Armenian or a Yezidi. I would like to leave a commandment for Yezidis – to always serve the Armenian Church as they serve our home, the Prophet’s home and and God’s home²⁰⁰.”

It is worth mentioning that even after this letter and such a “commandment” from the Yezidis’ spiritual leader, the Yezidis did not convert and did not become the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Despite the fact that Yezidis living in the neighborhood of Armenians used to visit Armenian sanctuaries²⁰¹, light candles, and sacrifice animals near some Christian chapels²⁰², they did not become the members of the Armenian Church.

¹⁹⁶ Ասատրյան Գ., Փոլադյան Ա., Եզդիների դավանանքը // Պատմաբանասիրական հանդես, № 4, Երևան, 1989, էջ 131-132:

¹⁹⁷ Layard A. H., Discoveries at Nineveh and its Remains; with an Account of a Visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil Worshippers; and an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians, Paris, A. and W. Galignani and Co., Baudry’s European Library, 1850, p. 94.

¹⁹⁸ Badger G., The Nestorians and Their Rituals: With the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844, and of a Late Visit to those Countries in 1850, Vol. 1, London, Joseph Masters, 1852, p. 128.

¹⁹⁹ Guest J., Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis, London, Kegan Paul International, 1993, pp. 51-58:

²⁰⁰ Կանայանց Ս., Եզդիներ // Տարազ, № 1, 1910, էջ 18:

²⁰¹ Տէր-Մանուէլեան Ս., Եզդիի-կուրմանժ, Ախալցխա, Տպարան Եդը. Մարտիրոսեանների, 1910, էջ 25:

²⁰² Աբովյան Խ., Եզդիներ // Երկերի լիակատար ժողովածու, հատոր 8, Երևան, Հայկական ՍՍՐ ԳԱ հրատարակչություն, 1958, էջ 406:

In response to the question why the Yezidis did not adopt the doctrine of Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian clergymen unanimously replied that the Armenian Apostolic Church, as a religious institution, is somehow national. The Armenian Apostolic Church would hardly baptise outsiders or non-Armenians. Non-Armenians and rare foreigners who have expressed a special desire can be baptised in Armenian Apostolic Church. In this sense, the Armenian Church does not send missionaries to foreigners²⁰³.

However, presently there is another tendency among the Yezidis living in Armenia. There are so-called “Christian Yezidis” in different Yezidi inhabited villages and in Yerevan. Some groups of converted Yezidis live in Sadunts village in Aragatsotn province and in a village called Janfida situated in Armavir province. Those people are members of various Evangelical and Baptist churches²⁰⁴. There also many Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses among converts. There is no information about the number of converted Yezidis living in Armenia. However, mainly members of the Yezidi laity become Christians²⁰⁵.

Research Method

The article is based on a comprehensive survey of Yezidi religious Weltanschauung and an anonymous inquiry among converted Yezidis. In the course of this study, qualitative research and comparative methods were used. Some Yezidis who had adopted Christianity did not mind sharing with us during our fieldwork. They told us about adopting a new religion and their spiritual experience²⁰⁶. They, however, asked us not to make their names public in order to avoid being “persecuted” by their Yezidi compatriots who do not accept their choice. Our informants mentioned that many people in the Yezidi community, especially Yezidi sheykhs and pirs, strongly condemn the proselytism among Yezidis. According to converted Yezidis, they are very often represented as “traitors of the nation” in Armenian media. In this sense, they pointed out some materials which appeared in media due to some Yezidi NGO activists. The activists of Yezidi NGOs insist that Christian Yezidis misinterpret the Yezidi religion and insult the Yezidis’ national dignity²⁰⁷. Nowadays the converted Yezidis are not abandoned by their relatives and are not “exiled” from the community, but very often they are ignored and neglected in the community. Yezidi priests do not consider converted Yezidis to be pure Yezidis, very often Yezidi priests criticize them and call them “betrayers of the faith”. Converted Yezidis, however, consider themselves to be Yezidis, they call themselves “Yezidis” or “Christian Yezidis” which means that a new type of national identity is being formed among converts.

²⁰³ The survey was conducted via Facebook.

²⁰⁴ Փղարյան Ա., Հայաստանի եզդիադավանների շրջանում կրոնափոխության դեպքերի մասին // Հայաստանի կրոնները, 13.09.2012, <http://www.religions.am/arm/articles/%D5%80%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%AB-%D5%A5%D5%A6%D5%A4%D5%AB%D5%A1%D5%A4%D5%A1%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AB-%D5%B7%D6%80%D5%BB%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4-%D5%AF%D6%80%D5%B8%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%83%D5%B8%D5%AD%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%A4%D5%A5%D5%BA%D6%84%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AB-%D5%B4%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%AB%D5%B6/> (accessed 18.12.2015):

²⁰⁵ There are 3 castes in the Yezidi community: sheykhs (*šēx*) and pirs (*pīr*) are priests, the mrids (*mirīd*) are laymen.

²⁰⁶ We managed to interview 20 converted Yezidis (16 Pentecostals, 4 members of Evangelical and Baptist churches). Some parts of the interviews are mentioned in the article. Our informants asked us not to mention their names in the article.

²⁰⁷ Շահումյան Ա., «Մարդկանց ուղեղները լվացել են». Բորիս Թամոյան, Առավուր, 31.01.2013, <http://www.aravot.am/2013/01/31/155983/> (accessed 5.04.2015); Եզդիաբնակ Սադոնց գյուղում աղանդավորական ինչ-որ կազմակերպություն մանկապարտեզ է հիմնել (տեսակոչ) // Թերթ.am, 26.10.13, <http://www.tert.am/am/news/2013/10/26/sinjar/902633> (accessed 5.04.2015):

Key Findings and Discussion

During interviews, our informants expressed some ideas and concerns that were common for most of them. For example, Yezidis who adopted Christianity have a vague idea about the essence of Yezidi religion. One of the converted Yezidis said: “I do not know anything about my former religion, and I did not know anything about it before²⁰⁸.” Another informant said: “I know nothing about Yezidi religion: I even do not know whether it is a religion or not? In my mind, there is no faith in Yezidi religion²⁰⁹.”

Yezidis who have converted to Christianity used to present some misinterpretations from Yezidi beliefs and introduce that as proof. Some of them expressed thoughts like: “I know that Yezidis worship idols... That is all I know about Yezidi religion²¹⁰.” “The Yezidi religion is paganism, Yezidis worship various gods²¹¹.” “Yezidis are pagans, they do not believe in the true God.²¹²” Yezidi religion was born in the Middle Eastern non-dogmatic environment. However, it is a monotheistic religion. The worship of some saints, guard-spirits, and patrons in Yezidi beliefs cannot be considered to be paganism. Most of the Yezidi saints are Sufi leaders or hermits who were deified in the Yezidi religion²¹³.

Some interviewees described the Yezidi religion as Sun worship. One of the informants said: “I know about my former religion that people believed in the saint in the shape of a peacock²¹⁴, sacrificed animals when visiting the houses of the Yezidi sheykhs and pirs²¹⁵, bowed in front of the Sun, believed in the existence of different good and evil forces and feared them²¹⁶.” Another one mentioned: “Yezidis worship the Sun, which is not holy: it is just created by God²¹⁷.” There is worship of Sheykh Shams (*Šēx Šams*) in Yezidi beliefs. In religious tradition, Sheykh Shams is identified with the Sun, because of his name (Arab. *šams*, “Sun”)²¹⁸. The worship of Shams in the Yezidi religion, however, can not be regarded as a remnant of paganism and cannot be considered Sun worship.

Some converted Yezidis consider Yezidi religion to be devil-worship. This consideration is based on the wrong interpretation of the image of Tausi Malak²¹⁹ (*Tāūsī Malak*, lit. Peacock Angel) - one of the main saints of Yezidi religion. Converted Yezidis expressed thoughts like: “People in Yezidi religion worship Tausi Malak, which is the embodiment of evil²²⁰...” “...Tausi Malak, whom Yezidis worship, is the angel that fell from heaven²²¹.” “Yezidis worship Satan, fear him, make sacrifices for him... Who was Tausi Malak, whom our ancestors believed in? [Tausi Malak] was the same devil, the fallen angel²²².” It should be noted that the image of Tausi Malak

²⁰⁸ Woman, 56 years old.

²⁰⁹ Woman, 67 years old.

²¹⁰ Man, 37 years old.

²¹¹ Woman, 49 years old.

²¹² Woman, 58 years old.

²¹³ **Ամրյան Թ.**, Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 44-52:

²¹⁴ She remarks one of Yezidi saints Tausi Malak. See below about Tausi Malak.

²¹⁵ Out of cradle of Yezidism the homes of Yezidi priests were pilgrimage sites for Yezidis (**Ավրալ Ա.**, Եզդի բրդերի հավատալիքները, Երևան, «Գիտություն», 2006, էջ 39):

²¹⁶ Woman, 53 years old.

²¹⁷ Man, 58 years old.

²¹⁸ **Arakelova V.**, Three Figures from the Yezidi Folk Pantheon // Iran and the Caucasus, Vol. 6.1-2, 2002, pp. 59, 66:

²¹⁹ Very often called Malak Taus.

²²⁰ Man, 48 years old.

²²¹ Woman, 39 years old.

²²² Man, 58 years old.

was not perceived properly by the peoples of the Near and Middle East²²³. Muslims living in the neighbourhood of Yezidis considered Tausi Malak to be the embodiment of the devil, identified him with the angel expelled from paradise²²⁴, and called the Yezidis “Devil worshippers”²²⁵. On the other hand, the peacock was a symbol of beauty, majesty, luxury in the East, and had its unique place in Sufi aesthetics²²⁶. In Yezidi beliefs, Tausi Malak is one of the incarnations/embodiments of God²²⁷.

Converted Yezidis are very often disappointed with Yezidi priests and clergymen. One of our informants said: “Many times I asked sheykhs and pirs about Yezidi religion, but none of them gave me a satisfactory answer²²⁸...” Another informant said: “My poor mother shared everything with the sheykh’s wife, who was my mother’s ‘sister of hereafter’: my poor mother believed that after the death her ‘sister of hereafter’ would intercede for her [in front of God]²²⁹...” Another informant mentioned: “In the past I gave money to the Yezidi sheykhs and pirs who did not teach anything about religion, they did not give any spiritual food”²³⁰. In my former religion, I had a ‘brother of hereafter’ who did nothing for me. Now, I have Christian spiritual brothers, and we take care of each other all the time²³¹.” One of the religious traditions of the Yezidis is to have ‘the brother (sister) of hereafter’ from families of priests. The sheykhs and pirs must take care part in important events of the layman’s (*mirīd*) life, and the laymen must from time to time give gifts and money to sheykhs and pirs. According to religious beliefs, it is the duty of a ‘brother (sister) of hereafter’ is to intercede in front of God for his/her *mirīd*, so that the soul of *mirīd* may go to paradise²³².

Obviously, many Yezidis who adopted Christianity have been dissatisfied with the attitude of Yezidi priests, their mistakes, their attitude towards their responsibilities and the community of believers. Many priests failed to properly fulfill their responsibilities as religious and spiritual teachers. One of our informants pointed out: “In the Yezidi religion, people do not communicate with God and his miracles. We are closer to God in Christianity²³³.” Another informant said: “There is a principle ‘you give something to me, then I will give something to you’ in Yezidi religion, but there is another principle in Christianity. There is the principle of taking care of each other’s souls in Christianity. The spiritual sisters and brothers of our church fasted, prayed for my soul to be revived: they suffered for my soul like a mother who suffers before her child is born. I accepted Jesus to be saved. But there was no such thing in Yezidi religion, sheikhs or pir were not careful²³⁴...” Another informant mentioned: “I remember when I was a child, the pir used to come

²²³ Joseph I., Devil Worship: The Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidiz, Boston, R.G. Badger, 1919, pp. 153-154:

²²⁴ Açıkyıldız B., The Yezidis. The History of a Community, Culture and Religion, London, I.B.Tauris, 2010, pp. 74- 75:

²²⁵ Աբովյան Խ., Եզդիիներ // Երկերի լիակատար ժողովածու, հատոր 8, Երևան, Հայկական ՍՍՌ ԳԱ հրատարակչություն, 1958, էջ 410:

²²⁶ Ամրյան Թ., Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 37:

²²⁷ Минорский В., Курды. Заметки и впечатления, Петроград, Типография В. Ф. Киршбаума, 1915, с. 24.

²²⁸ Woman, 53 years old.

²²⁹ Woman, 47 years old.

²³⁰ Yezidi religion has an oral nature, and traditionally Yezidi priests were main teachers of religion.

²³¹ Man, 42 years old.

²³² Асатрян Г., О «брате и сестре загробной жизни» в религиозных верованиях езидов // Страны и народы Ближнего и Среднего Востока, № 13, 1985, С. 262; Asatrian G., The Holy Brotherhood: The Yezidi Religious Institution of the “Brother” and the “Sister” of the Next World // Iran and the Caucasus, Vols. 3-4, 1999-2000, p. 79:

²³³ Man, 40 years old.

²³⁴ Man, 47 years old.

to our home every Spring and say: ‘Give me money and butter’. He did not tell us anything about the salvation of the soul or faith - he just came and made money for himself²³⁵.” Every Yezidi layman family is linked to a proper family of Yezidi pirs. Those pirs are called *p’irē zik’ātē* (lit: “pir of donation” Arab. zak’āt, “donation”). They visit the homes of laymen every Spring, pray, bless the salt and are given money and gifts²³⁶.

One converted Yezidi spoke about Yezidi priests in the following way: “There were shaykhs in our village who remembered us only when somebody died or when a boy was born in somebody’s family. The sheikhs organized some rituals during burials and read prayers. After a boy was born in somebody’s family, the sheikh organized a ritual called *bisk bir’in* (lit: “to cut a bunch of hair”). Only in these cases did priests remember us”²³⁷. The ritual *bisk bir’in* is held only for boys²³⁸. Family members do not cut the hair of the child till the day of the ritual. Then *the brother of hereafter* visits the family, prays and cuts a bunch of hair from the head of the child²³⁹. Family members give money and presents to the brother of hereafter. This simple ceremony symbolizes the boy’s entry into the Yezidi brotherhood²⁴⁰. Additionally, it is the duty of the brother of hereafter to read religious hymns and to hold proper rituals during burial²⁴¹.

Some Yezidis do not know about proper religious traditions, because their priests hardly talk about them. For example, one of our informants said: “I had faith in God, I believed, but I did not even know what to do, what path to follow when I have sincere faith... Christianity gave me the right path”²⁴².” Another informant mentioned: “There is no idea about salvation of human soul in Yezidi religion... After I became Christian, I am convinced that Christ will forgive my sins and will save my soul on the Day of Judgment”²⁴³.” As in many religions, there is the idea of the salvation of the soul, the paradise and the hell in Yezidism²⁴⁴. Many priests do not talk about this with the laymen. Thus, many people have no information about it and try to find it in other religions. There are many tales about the Day of Judgment, the savior, and the hereafter both in Yezidi oral tradition and religious hymns. One of the saints, Sharfadin (*Šarfadīn*) is considered to be the Messiah (*mahdī*) in the Yezidi religion. According to Yezidi beliefs, *Mahdi Sharfadin* will save pious people on the Day of Judgment²⁴⁵. It is mentioned in one of Yezidi religious hymns:

Awē rōzē Šarfadīn dē bita *mahdī*

Čil sālī mīh ži gurgī nātirsī. (Qawlē Šarfadīn)²⁴⁶

When Sharfadin comes as a Messiah,

The lamb will not be afraid of the wolf for forty years.

²³⁵ Woman, 75 years old.

²³⁶ Ամրյան Թ., Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 78:

²³⁷ Woman, 40 years old.

²³⁸ Ամրյան Թ., Կնքելու և ծեռնադրելու ծեսերը Եզդիականության մեջ // ՀՀ սոցիալ-տնտեսական կայուն զարգացման հիմնախնդիրները, № 3 (19), 2013, էջ 214:

²³⁹ Асатрян Г. О «брате и сестре загробной жизни» в религиозных верованиях езидов // Страны и народы Ближнего и Среднего Востока, № 13, 1985, С. 262-272.

²⁴⁰ Ամրյան Թ., Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 184:

²⁴¹ Ամրյան Թ., նշվ. աշխ., էջ 203-210:

²⁴² Woman, 49 years old.

²⁴³ Man, 40 years old.

²⁴⁴ Arakelova V., Amrian T., The Hereafter in the Yezidi Beliefs // Iran and the Caucasus, Vol. 16.3, 2012, pp. 169-178:

²⁴⁵ Ամրյան Թ., Եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքը, ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, Երևան, 2016, էջ 226-232:

²⁴⁶ Bedelê Feqîr Hecî, Bawerî û Mîtologîya Êzdiyan, Çendeha têkst û Vekolîn, Dihok, Hewlêr, 2002, rûp. 109.

In Armenia, many Yezidi laymen know nothing about the concept of the Day Judgment in the Yezidi religion. So it is not surprising that Yezidis who adopt Christianity are very often attracted by the image of the Messiah in the new religion.

Thus, the Yezidis who have adopted Christianity have a vague conceptualization of the Yezidi religion. Before adopting Christianity, those people lived according to the traditions and so-called unwritten rules. Their perception (պատկերացումները) of the Yezidi religion was spoiled and depreciated due to the shortcomings of some Yezidi priests. As a result, people became disappointed with the Yezidi religion. It is, therefore, not surprising that converted Yezidis have a critical attitude towards their former religion and priests.

Conclusion

Based on the study, we can conclude that the reason conversions in the Yezidi community of Armenia occur is not only the oral and non-written nature of the Yezidi religion and the active propagandistic activity of some Christian churches, but also the inconsistent and irresponsible attitude of some Yezidi priests towards the flock of Yezidi believers. It can be said that Yezidi religion in the form practiced in Armenia sometimes does not satisfy the spiritual needs of community members. Some people try to find answers to their questions in other religions. Such conversions, however, can not change the religious perception of the Yezidis who are loyal to the Yezidi religion. Converted people do not add a new element to the religious perceptions of the community, they just stop being carriers of that religious world outlook. Nevertheless, **among converted** Yezidis another kind of identity can be formed where national self-consciousness becomes more important than Yezidi religious self-identification.

ԿՐՈՆԱՓՈԽՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԵԶԴԻՆԵՐԻ ՇՐՋԱՆՈՒՄ

ԹԵՐԵԶԱ ԱՄՐՅԱՆ

*Երևանի պետական համալսարանի արևելագիտության ֆակուլտետի
իրանագիտության ամբիոնի դասախոս,
պատմական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ,
ք.Երևան, Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն*

Հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել Հայաստանի եզդիների շրջանում տարածվող կրոնափոխությունը: Հոդվածում ներկայացվում են Հայաստանի եզդիների շրջանում կրոնափոխությանը նպաստող հիմնական գործոնները և կրոնափոխության հետևանքները: Չնայած այն հանգամանքին, որ ավանդաբար կրոնափոխությունը բնորոշ չի եղել եզդիական համայնքին, վերջին տասնամյակներին որոշ եզդիներ հրաժարվում են իրենց կրոնից և ընդունում են քրիստոնեություն: Կրոնափոխվածները հիմնականում հոգեգալստականներ են, Ավետարանական և Մկրտական եկեղեցիների հարանվանությունների հետևորդներ, կան նաև Եհովայի վկաներ:

Հոդվածը հիմնված է եզդիական կրոնական աշխարհայացքի համապարփակ ուսումնասիրության և կրոնափոխ եղած եզդիների շրջանում անցկացված անանուն հարցումների վրա: Ուսումնասիրության ընթացքում օգտագործվել են որակական հետազոտությունների և համեմատական մեթոդները:

Հայաստանում եզդիների շրջանում կրոնափոխության երևույթի ուսումնասիրությունը հստակ ցույց է տալիս, որ ժամանակակից եզդիներից շատերը գաղափար չունեն իրենց կրոնի մասին: Դրա պատճառը ոչ միայն եզդիականության բանավոր, ոչ կանոնիկ բնույթն է, այլև որոշ հոգևորականների անտարբեր և չհամակարգված վերաբերմունքն իրենց կրոնական պարտականությունների ու

համայնքի նկատմամբ: Թեև կրոնափոխությունը չի ազդում եզդիական կրոնիս հավատարիմ եզդիների կրոնական աշխարհայացքի վրա, այնուամենայնիվ կարող է կրոնափոխվածների շրջանում ձևավորել նոր տիպի ինքնություն:

Հիմնաբառեր՝ *եզդի, կրոն, եկեղեցի, հոգևորական, կրոնափոխություն, դավանափոխ, եզդիականություն, քրիստոնեություն:*

ПРОЗЕЛИТИЗМ СРЕДИ ЕЗИДОВ АРМЕНИИ

ТЕРЕЗА АМРЯН

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Целью данной статьи является изучение прозелитизма среди езидов Армении. В статье представлены факторы, способствовавшие смене вероисповедания езидов Армении и последствия этого процесса. Хотя, как правило, прозелитизм не был характерен для езидской общины, тем не менее, на протяжении последних десятилетий некоторые езиды отказались от своей религии и приняли христианство. Новообращенные становятся в основном пятидесятниками, последователями разных конфессий евангелистских и баптистских общин, а некоторые из них – Свидетелями Иеговы.

Статья основана на всестороннем исследовании религиозного мировоззрения езидов и на анонимном опросе среди неофитов. В ходе исследования были использованы качественные и сравнительные методы анализа.

Изучение феномена прозелитизма среди езидов в Армении ясно показывает, что многие современные езиды не имеют представления о своей религии из-за устного, неканонического характера езидизма, а также непоследовательного и несистематического отношения некоторых священников к своим религиозным обязанностям и к общине. Хотя прозелитизм не влияет на религиозное мировоззрение езидов – последователей езидизма, однако он может создать новый тип идентичности среди новообращенных.

Ключевые слова: *езид, религия, церковь, священник, прозелитизм, новообращенный, езидизм, христианство.*