



## JAGARḲWIN

---

**JAGARḲWIN** (or Cegerxwin), pseudonym of Şêxmûs Hesen (b. 1903, d. Stockholm, 22 October 1984), considered by many the leading Kurdish poet of the 20th century writing in Kurmanji. He was born into a poor family in the village of Hesar in present-day Turkey, and was orphaned at an early age. He was unable to attend a regular school because of poverty and his family's frequent moves, but he received lessons in reading from the Qur'ân from mullahs in the villages where his family settled. He earned his living as an agricultural laborer and shepherd, and from these early experiences he began to absorb impressions of Kurdish life and to memorize the poems and songs he heard from dervishes that later were to inspire his social poetry (*Hayat hikâyem*, pp. 59-60, 82). Beginning in 1920, he studied in traditional schools (*madrassa*) in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. He got married in 1927, and from 1928 until 1936 he served as a mullah in several villages. He also composed his first *divân*, now lost, during the same period (Özalp, ed., p. 25). His first published *divân*, *Agir û pirûsk*, appeared in 1945 (Khaznadar, p. 539).

From the 1930s on he devoted himself to social activism and poetry. The plight of peasants struggling to make ends meet convinced him that the prevailing social and political order was unjust. He witnessed the brutal suppression of the Shaikh Sa'îd Pirân rebellion in Turkey in 1925, which profoundly affected him as both an activist and a poet (*Hayat hikâyem*, pp. 157-67). Deeply moved by these experiences, he adopted as his pseudonym, JagarḲwin (Cegerxwin "bleeding heart"). Eager to bring about change, he helped to found various associations, including "Ciwankurd" (Young Kurd) in 1938 to promote the



study of the Kurdish language and history, and in 1946 “Civata Azadî (Society of Freedom) and “Yekîtiya Kurd” (Kurdish Unity), which had pronounced political goals. He joined the Communist Party of Syria in 1949 and thus associated himself with the international Communist movement, becoming a strong supporter of the Soviet Union’s campaign against Western colonialism. Such activities led to several arrests, the first in 1949. He eventually broke with the Communists in 1957 over principle, as he had made the emancipation of his people his chief goal and joined the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria as an alternative (*Hayat hikâyem*, pp. 307-14, 343-44).

Jagarkwin’s commitment to Kurdish emancipation never wavered, but it increasingly took on cultural and literary forms. He moved from Syria to Iraq in 1958 following the overthrow of the royal regime and became a lecturer in Kurmanji language and literature at the University of Baghdad (from 1959 to 1963). In 1961 he published a grammar of the Kurdish language, *Destûra zimanê kurdi*, for his students. It was followed in 1962 by two volumes of his Kurdish dictionary, *Ferhenga kurdi Ceger-xwîn*, a work that reveals his sensitivity to the expressiveness and nuances of his native language. In the same year the Iraqi government forced him to return to Syria.

He spent some years in Syria, went again briefly to Iraq, and then to Lebanon before settling in Stockholm in 1979, where he died. He continued to write poetry, publishing four divans before his death, and worked on his autobiography, *Jînenîgariya min*, and his history of Kurdistan, *Tarîxa Kurdistan*, both published posthumously. The latter covered the history of the Kurds from their origins down to the 13th century in striking detail, although he modestly described it as a work of intuition.

As a poet Jagarkwin was both a classicist and a modernist, a mystic and, at the same time, an atheist, and a patriot and socialist; but, above all, he was a seeker of truth, a mission that led him to explore all corners of the Kurdish homeland and all layers of Kurdish society. He came out of the tradition of Kurdish classical poetry and was thus thoroughly familiar with the works of Eli Heriri (10th-11th cent.), Emed Mele Batê (1417-91), Meleyê ceziri (1570-1640), Ehmede Kāni (ca. 1650-1706), and Nāli (Mela Kîdir;1791-1855), among others. To some extent, he followed in their footsteps. His classicism undoubtedly owed much to his studies in the traditional schools (*madrassa*). Another potent source of inspiration was folk poetry, which he avidly collected during his travels back and forth across Kurdistan.



The language of his poetry is varied but, above all, simple and straightforward. He uses a natural, colloquial language because he is addressing, in the first instance, the general reading public, but it is also literary, as many poems display a charming elegance of expression (e.g., see *Şefaq*, p. 159). He uses modern Kurdish and excels at putting new and old words together, thus creating almost a parallel language (e.g., see *Hêvî*, p. 11). His modes of expression are socially engaged; he takes sides, always favoring the poor and downtrodden over the rich and powerful, but his language is also nurturing and comforting, as he freely offers hope and encouragement to his fellow Kurds.

The dominant theme of his poetry is his Kurdish homeland. He writes of its beauties and its bountiful nature, but these sentiments are often clouded by the knowledge that the Kurd is not master in his own land. He is unforgiving in his criticism of the Turkish authorities, because of their repression of Kurdish aspirations, and he wonders what kind of Muslims they can be who refuse fellow Muslims even the right to study their own language (*Sewra azadî*, p. 181). Yet, political liberation for him also meant the achievement of social justice within the Kurdish community itself, that is, the liberation of the Kurdish peasant from the exploitation of shaikhs and aghas (*Sewra azadî*, pp. 116-20). He also perceived an international dimension to the Kurds' struggle, as he condemned British and American imperialism and praised the Soviet Union as the protector of oppressed peoples.

Even though he wrote many beautiful love poems and touching poems about everyday life, it was his militancy on behalf of freedom for Kurdistan that assured his recognition as a national poet. The poems themselves constitute a national epic of the Kurdish people in the 20th century.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Works. Poetry: *Agir û pirûsk (Dîwana 1an)*, 1st ed., Damascus, 1945, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.



*Sewra Azadî (Dîwana 2an)*, Damascus, 1954, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Kîem Ez (Dîwana 3an)*, Beirut, 1973, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Salar û Mîdya*, Beirut, 1973, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003. *Ronak (Dîwana 4an)*, Stockholm, 1980, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Zend-Avista (Dîwana 5an)*, Stockholm, 1981, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Şefaq (Dîwana 6an)*, Stockholm, 1982, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003. *Hêvî (Dîwana 7an)*, Stockholm, 1983, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Aşitî (Dîwana 8an)*, Stockholm, 1985, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

*Şerefnameya menzûm*, Beirut, 1977, 2nd ed., Istanbul, 2003.

#### Other Works:

*Cîm û Gulperî: ji keç u xortan re diyari*, Çîroka Yekem, Damascus, 1948.

*Reşoyê darê*, Çîroka Duyem, Damascus, 1956, [Zurich] 1973. *Destûra zimanê kurdi*, Baghdad, 1961.

*Ferhenga kurdi Ciger-xwîn*, 2 vols., Baghdad, 1962.

*Tarîxa Kurdistan*, 3 vols., 3rd ed., Stockholm, 1985-99.

*Folklorê kurdi: Kurmanci*, Stockholm, 1988.

*Jînenîgariya min*, Stockholm, 1995; tr. into Turk. by Gazi Fincan as *Hayat Hikâyem/Jînenîgariya min*, Istanbul, 2003.

#### Studies:

Ordîxanê Celîl, *Cegerxwîn'in Yaşami ve şiir anlayışı*, Istanbul, 2004.

Marouf Khazandar, *Mêjui edebi kurdi VI*, Erbil, 2006, pp. 537-45.

Davut Özalp, ed., *Jînenîgarî, têkoşîn û berhemdariya Cegerxwîn*, Istanbul, 2003.



Bavê Zozanê, *Dengê Cegerxwîn*, n.p., 1990.