



MIRDREKVANDI, 'ALI

MIRDREKVANDI, 'ALI, nicknamed “Gunga Din,” author of “Irradiant,” a popular epic written in broken English in the mid-20th century. Little is known about 'Ali Mirdrekvandi, except that he was a poorly educated native of Luristan who had, incredibly, taught himself enough English to write “Irradiant.” He attached himself to British and American military circles in Tehran in the early 1940s as a menial worker, and thus he met John F. B. Hemming, who helped him with his study of English and asked him in August 1943 to write a story. Thus prompted, Mirdrekvandi began to write the story he entitled “Irradiant,” which was based on stories he had heard from his grandfather. He wrote this work of some 600,000 words in pencil on loose sheets and scraps of paper. Hemming later showed the complete work to the scholar Robert Zaehner, who drew attention to its possible implications in a series of articles written in the early 1960s. One of these articles, however, seemed to have disappeared before it could be published, as did Mirdrekvandi's manuscript. However, some thirty years later it was discovered that these and other relevant papers were still in Hemming's possession. Some further academic discussion of “Irradiant” has taken place since (see Zaehner, 1992). On Hemming's death the papers were bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The main interest of “Irradiant” lies in the striking similarity between some of its contents and the Zoroastrian cosmogony. The opposition between “Heavenly God” and “Lionish God” results in an attack by the latter, which is repulsed. This is followed by an “agreement” between the two to wage war



until one of them is destroyed. During his next attack, Lionish God hears a triple pronouncement by Heavenly God, and is temporarily defeated. The work then describes the long battle between the opposing forces, until Heavenly God's earthly champion, the boy "Irradiant" (*Nur-afkan*) finally triumphs.

The fact that the work distinguishes clearly between the Devil and his brother "Lionish God," who is not wholly evil and has helped man to survive in the world, seems reminiscent of Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Yezidi beliefs. Further research is needed to answer the many questions raised by this singular work.

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