



Al-Khadir (right) and companion Zul-Qarnain (al-Sikandar) marvel at the sight of a salted fish that comes back to life when touched by the Water of Life. "When Alexander sought he did not find what Khizr found unsought" (Sikandar Nāma LXIX.75).

## Idris and al-Khidr

**The Biblical Idris** is Enoch (Genesis V/23) who lived for 365 years on earth, a healer, teacher, one well versed in sciences and the arts and one whom God took unto himself. The consonants of the word *Enoch*, mean 'initiated'. Hebrew *Hanoch* means initiator or opener of the inner eye.

**The Koranic Idris** is al-Khidr who appears in Sura 18/66 (*Al Kalf*, The Cave), where Moses and his attendant go on a long journey to a point where two rivers met, a point to be seen even though the march would take them ages. According to revelation received by Prophet Mohammad, they meet a personage who is "one of our slaves, unto whom we had taught knowledge peculiar to us" (*wa 'allalnnahu min ladunna ilmy*). This phrase alone categorically asserts the transmission of *theosophia* or divine wisdom down the ages, through Divine Guides

or Teachers as the word *rusted* implies in the question Moses asks him: May I follow you on the understanding that you, a *rusted* teach me, what you have been taught?"

What were the hallmarks of the teachings of the *hanifs* or illuminati?

1. Laws of involutory and evolutionary cycles.
2. Laws of emanation and manifestation.
3. Science of the heart-mind (*qalb*)
4. Science of Light (*hikmat al-ilraq*)
5. The spiritual communion with the hierarchial Beings.

The periodical manifestation of Light called Logos, Christ or Word in Christianity, Buddha in Buddhism. Teerthamkara in Jainism, is termed *qutb* in Islam. Ali al Hujwiri in *Khashf al Mahajab* writes of such a hierarchy; "Besides the *Qutb* or Axis of the Universe, are three called Ifuqaba, four Awtad, seven Abrar". Ibn al-Arabi too refers to seven *Abdal*.

It is significant that over and over again, the Quran uses the words *We*, *Our*, *Us*. The sense of preservers of the cosmic order can be attributed to these words. Sura xxxvii/164 As-Saffat, Those Who Set the Ranks, reads:

There is not one of Us but hath his known position  
Lo! We, even We are They who set the  
ranks."

The Greeks call al-Khadir, Hormux (Hermes) the adept and Initiator into the Temple Mysteries of the Great Pyramid. Isaiah 19/2 of the old Testament refers to this Pyramid Temple as the "altar to the Lord in the middle of Egypt". Hermes, known to the Arabs as Idris, was called Enoch by the Hebrews.

The Spanish Arab historian Said of Toledo (d. 1069) said:

"Sages affirm that all antediluvian sciences originate with the first Hermes who lived in Said in upper Egypt."

Idris, Enoch, al Khidr and Hermes all seem to be one person. This guide al-Khidr initiates Moses into deeply esoteric lore. The *ijnaj Ilhami*, in Hadith traditions, consider al-Khadir as a holy being, mysterious and immortal whom all spiritual initiatory orders revere as the Master of the Path (*Tariqa*). Al-Khidr is often mentioned as the Green Angel Guide in Islamic writings. In fact, in Egyptian frescoes he is some times painted green with the head of an ibis.

Al-Khidr can most certainly be connected as the head of the ancient school of the Prophets, el-Khadoras on Mt Carmel (modern Haifa). This sacred mount is mentioned as having been handed back with endowment by Thutmose III in the 1449 B.C. documents which recorded his conquest of the region. He was a great initiate himself. Iamblichus, the Syrian philosopher, calls it the most holy of all mountains, forbidden of access to the profane. The Prophets Elijah, Elisha and Samuel are all recorded to have visited the schools for disciples at Naioth, Bethel and Jericho.

A very valuable text was among others withdrawn by the official circles of the Church from public use. It was the Apocalypse of Elias - a very sacred text of the mystic order of Nazarenes or Essenes, to which order Joseph, Mary, John the Baptist and Jesus himself belonged. Fortunately in 1893 Maspero discovered a Coptic translation of it in the monastic archives of the Brotherhood in Upper Egypt. It gave many details of the school of prophets where the ancient wisdom was imparted at Al Khador.

From *Theosophy and Islam*, by Theja Gunawardhana

<http://khidr.org/gunawardhana.htm>

---

# Prayer to meet Khidr (Alaihi Salaam)

**This prayer is recited in order to meet Hadrat Khidr (Alahi Salaam). Usually Hadrat Khidr appears in a dream and advises the supplicator. The condition is to say this prayer as the last thing before going to bed. The person must go to bed with wuzu without conversing with anyone after reciting this prayer. Lie down and fall asleep on the right side of the body.**

1. First read any darood 11 times.
2. Then read the following prayer 15 times.
3. Then end with recitation of the darood 11 times.

Ask Allah to send the **Hadiya** (reward) for the darood to Nabi Muhammad.

Then ask Allah Subhana wa Ta Ala to make the meeting take place, insha Allah.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ يَا حَنَّانَ الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ يَا مَنَّانَ  
الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ يَا دِيَانَ الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ يَا سُبْحَانَ  
الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ يَا بُرْهَانَ الْأَمَانَ الْأَمَانَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الزَّمَانِ  
وَجَفَاءِ الْإِخْوَانِ وَشَرِّ الشَّيْطَانِ وَظُلْمِ السَّلْطَانِ  
بِفَضْلِكَ يَا رَحِيمُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ  
وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى خَيْرِ خَلْقِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ  
أَجْمَعِينَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

**Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem**

**Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem Bismillahi al Amaan al  
Amaan**

**Ya Hanaan al Amaan al Amaan**

**Ya Manaan al Amaan al Amaan**

**Ya da Yaan al Amaan al Amaan**

**Ya subhan al Amaan al Amaan**

**Ya burhaan al Amaan al Amaan**

**Min fitna tiz zAmaani wa jafaa**

**Il ikhwani wa shar rish shaitan**

**Wa zulmis sultan be fadhlika**

**Ya Raheem Ya Rahman**

**Ya zul Jalaali wal ikraam**

**Wa sall Allahu ala khairi khaliqi**

**hi Muhammadin wa alihi wa as haabi hi ajmaeen bi**

**Rahmatika**

**Ya Arham ar Rahimeen**

**Wa sall Allahu ala Khairi  
Khaliqi Hi Muhammadin  
wa alihi wa as Haabi  
hi Ajmaeen bi Rahmatika  
Ya Arham Ar Rahimeen**

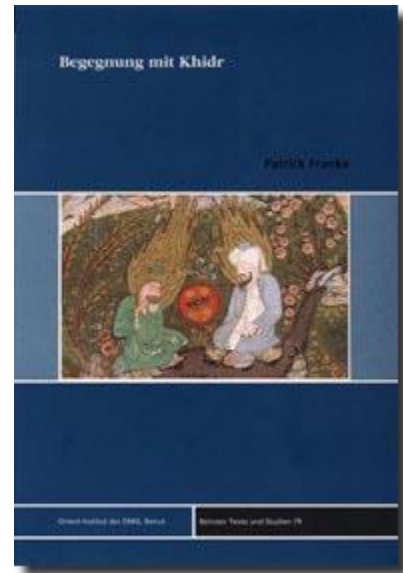
## **Al-Khidr, The Green Man**

**Khidr** literally means 'The Green One', representing freshness of spirit and eternal liveliness, green symbolizing the freshness of knowledge “drawn out of the living sources of life.” Whatever the source for this green may be, it has come to symbolize the benign presence of the divine wisdom as imparted by the Divine Himself to Khidr and to Prophet Muhammad.

Qur'ânic commentators say that al-Khidr ('The Green Man' of pre-Islamic lore) is one of the prophets; others refer to him simply as an angel who functions as a guide to those who seek God. And there are yet others who argue for his being a perfect *wali* meaning the one whom God has taken as a friend.

Khidr is associated with the Water of Life. Since he drank the water of immortality he is described as the one who has found the source of life, 'the Eternal Youth.' He is the mysterious guide and immortal saint in popular Islamic lore and the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path.

In the Muslim tradition Khidr is alive and well and continues to guide the perplexed and those who invoke his name

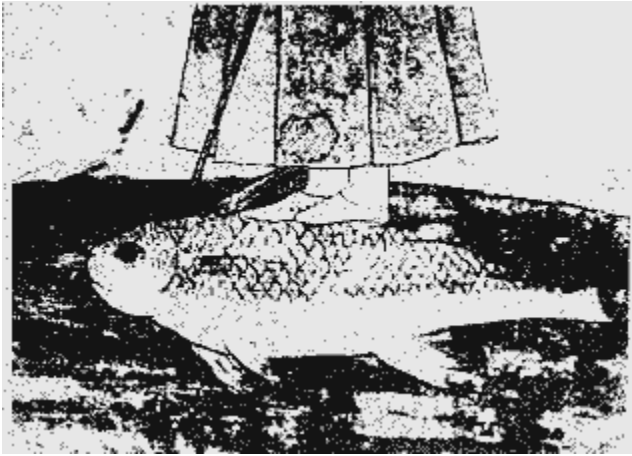


Patrick Franke. [\*Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam.\*](#) Beirut-*Stuttgart* 2000. XV + 620p, 23 ill.

## **Khwaja Khadir and the Fountain of Life in the Tradition of Persian and Mughal Art**

Press, 1989) pp. 157-167.

**In India**, the Prophet, Saint, or Deity known as Khwaja Khizr (Khadir), Pir Badar, or Raja Kidar, is the object of a still surviving popular cult, common to Muslims and Hindus. His principal shrine is on the Indus near Bakhar, where he is worshipped by devotees of both persuasions; the cult is



In western Asia, Moslem or Hindu symbolic art shows the Saint, Al Khizr, dressed in a green coat being carried on top of the water by a fish which conveys him over the river of life.

however hardly less widely diffused in Bihar and Bengal. In the Hindu cult, the Khwaja is worshipped with lights and by feeding Brahmans at a well, and alike in Hindu and Muslim practice, by setting afloat in a pond or river a little boat which bears a lighted lamp. Iconographically Khwaja Khizr is represented as an aged man, having the aspect of a *faqir*, clothed entirely in green<sup>[1]</sup> and moving in the waters with a 'fish' as his vehicle.

The nature of Khwaja Khizr can be inferred from his iconography as outlined above, and also from the Indian legends. In the ballad of Niwal Dai, which is localized at Safidam<sup>[2]</sup> in the Panjab, Niwal Dai is the daughter of Vasuki, the chief of the Serpents. The Aryan Pandava Raja Pariksit has encountered Vasuki, and forced him to promise his daughter to him in marriage, though from Vasuki's point of view this is a disgraceful misalliance. Vasuki is then stricken with leprosy, owing to a curse pronounced by the Priest Siji<sup>[3]</sup> whose cows have been bitten by the Serpents. Niwal Dai undertakes to obtain for his healing the Water of Life (*amrta*), from the closed well which she alone can open, but which is in the domains of Raja Pariksit.<sup>[4]</sup> When she reaches the well, which is covered over by heavy stones, she moves these by her magic power, but the waters sink down out of reach; this is because Khwaja Khizr, their master, will not release them until Niwal Dai, whom none but her own parents Vasuki and his queen Padma have ever yet seen, permits herself to be seen; when Niwal Dai showed herself, then Khwaja Khizr 'sent the waters up bubbling'. Raja Pariksit, aroused by the sound, gallops to the well, and though Niwal Dai hides in her serpent form, forces her to put on her human aspect, and after a long argument at the well, convinces her that she is bound by the previous betrothal, and in due course marries her.<sup>[5]</sup>

The scene at the well may also have been the original theme of the composition represented in a number of seventeenth and eighteenth century Mughal paintings, where a prince on horseback is shown at a well, from which a lady has drawn up water.<sup>[6]</sup> The motif of a dynasty originating in the marriage of a human King with a Nagini is widely diffused in India, and in the last analysis can always be referred back to the rape of Vac, the Apsaras or Virgin of the Waters whose origin is with the powers of darkness and whom the Father-Creator has not 'seen' before the transformation of darkness into light, *in principle*; in this connection it is noteworthy that in the ballad, Niwal Dai has never seen the Sun or Moon, and has been kept hidden in a whirlpool (*bhathri*) until she comes forth to uncover the Well at the World's End, in which are the Waters of Life.<sup>[7]</sup> That she assumes a human form is her 'manifestation'. It will be realised, of course, that just as in the European parallels, where a mermaid, or the daughter of a magician, marries a human hero, so in the later Indian folk tales and romances the redactor may not have always fully 'understood his material'.



*The Shrine of Khawaja Khizr, near Bukkur fort, 1838*

**I**dentified by Jackson as a view of 'Hajee Ka Tau, an island just above the fort of Bukkur on the Indus', the sketch would appear to be of the tomb of the river saint Khwaja Khizr, regarded as having been built in 925 A.D. (A.H. 341). According to the legend recorded in the Chachnama, the tomb was built in gratitude by a Delhi merchant Shah Husain who, traveling down the Indus with his pretty daughter on their way to Mecca, was called upon by Dalurai (the Hindu ruler of Alor) to surrender the daughter. In her anxiety to avoid such an impious alliance, the girl prayed to Khwaja Khizr for deliverance and as she and her father sought to escape in a boat, the saint diverted the course of the Indus towards Rohri bringing the harassed father and daughter to safety. Khwaja Khizr, known also as the Jinda or living Pir, is said to be particularly protective of travelers.

Khwaja Khizr appears again in another Indian folk tale of a very archaic type, the Story of Prince Mahbub.<sup>[8]</sup> The king of Persia has a son by a concubine, who, in the absence of any other child, becomes the heir apparent. Subsequently the true queen becomes pregnant. The first prince fears that he will be displaced, invades the kingdom, slays his father, and usurps the throne. In the meantime the true queen escapes, and is cared for by a farmer; a son is born, who is called Mahbub, and the 'Darling of the World'. Later he goes alone to court, and becomes the victor in athletic contests, particularly as an archer. The people recognise his likeness to the late king.

On his return home his mother tells him of his birth, and both set out on their travels in order to avoid the usurper's suspicion. Mother and son reach a desert land, and there in a mosque beside a mountain they meet a *faqir* who gives them bread and water that are inexhaustible, and two pieces of wood, one of which can serve as a torch, the other possessing this virtue, that within a radius of fourteen cubits from the place where it is held, the deepest sea will become fordable,

and no more than a cubit in depth. As mother and son are then wading through the sea knee-deep, they meet with a ruby-bearing current.

They cross the sea and reach India, where they sell one of the rubies at a great price. It comes into the hands of the king of that country. He finds out its source, and seeks the hero, who has in the meantime built a new and great palace by the seaside. Mahbub undertakes to procure more of the same kind. He sets out alone, lights the torch (this shows that he is about to enter a world of darkness), and aided by the rod traverses the sea till he reaches the ruby current. He follows it up until he finds its source in a whirlpool. He jumps in and falls down the black watery chimney until he touches solid ground and finds the waters flowing out from an iron gateway of a conduit.

Passing through this he finds himself in a wonderful garden, in which is a palace. In this palace he finds a room in which is a freshly severed head, from which drops of blood are falling into a basin, and are carried out as rubies with the current into the conduit and so to the whirlpool and up into the sea. Twelve *paris* [9] then appear, take down the head, bring forth the trunk, lay the parts together, and taking up burning candles execute a dance round the couch, so swift that Mahbub can see only a circle of light. Then stooping over the bed, they wail 'How long, O Lord, how long? . . . When will the sun of hope arise on the darkness of our despair? Arise, O King, arise, how long will you remain in this deathlike trance?' [10]

Then from the floor of the palace there rises up the form of the *faqir* previously mentioned, and now clad in garments of light. The *pans* bow down to him, and ask 'Khwaja Khizr, has the hour come?' The *faqir*, who is indeed none but the immortal Khwaja Khizr, explains to Mahbub that the corpse is his father's, who had been murdered by the usurper Kassab; Mahbub's ancestors have all been *magi*; [11] all have been buried in the under-water palace, but Mahbub's father has remained unburied, for none had performed his funeral rites; Mahbub, as son, should now do this- Mahbub accordingly makes prayer to Allah on behalf of his father's soul.

Immediately the head is joined to the body, and the dead king rises up alive. [12] Khizr vanishes, and Mahbub returns to India with his father, who is thus reunited with the widowed queen. When the king of India comes for the rubies, Mahbub pricks his own finger, and the drops of blood falling into a cup of water become the required gems, for as Mahbub now knows, every drop of blood that flows in the veins of the kings of Persia is more precious than rubies. Mahbub marries the princess of India. An expedition to Persia dethrones the usurper Kassab, and his head is taken and hung in the underground palace, but every drop of blood becomes a toad.



**Al-Khadir (right) and companion Zul-Qarnain (al-Sikandar)** marvel at the sight of a salted fish that comes back to life when touched by the Water of Life. "When Alexander sought he did not find what Khizr found unsought" (Sikandar Nâma LXIX.75).



The true nature of Khwaja Khizr is already clearly indicated in the two stories summarised above, as well as in the iconography. Khizr is at home in both worlds, the dark and the light, but above all master of the flowing River of Life in the Land of Darkness: he is at once the guardian and genius of vegetation and of the Water of Life, and corresponds to Soma and Gandharva in Vedic mythology, and in many respects to Varuna himself, though it is evident that he cannot, either from the Islamic or from the later Hindu point of view be openly identified with the supreme deity. We shall find these general conclusions amply confirmed by further examinations of the sources of the Islamic legends of al-Khadir.

In the *Qur'an* (*Sura XVIII*, 59-81) occurs the legend of Musa's search for the *Ma'jma 'al-Bahrain*, [13] which is probably to be understood as a 'place' in the far west at the meeting of two oceans; Musa is guided by a 'servant of God', whom the commentators identify with al-Khadir, whose abode is said to be upon an island or on a green carpet in the midst of the sea?

This story can be traced back to three older sources, the Gilgamesh epic, the Alexander Romances, and the Jewish legend of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. [14] In the Gilgamesh epic the hero sets out in search of his immortal 'ancestor' Utnapishtim who dwells at the mouth of the rivers (*ina pi narati*), like Varuna whose abode is 'at the rivers' source', *sindhunam upodaye*. *Rg Veda*, VIII, 41, 2; his object being to be informed with respect to the 'plant-life', prototype of the Avestan *haoma*, Vedic *soma*, [15] whereby man can be saved from death.

In the [Alexander Romances](#) Alexander sets out in search of the Fountain of Life, which is accidentally found, and significantly 'in the land of darkness', but cannot be found again. A recension of this legend occurs in the *Shah Nama*, where Alexander sets out in search of the Fountain of Life, which lies in the Land of Darkness beyond the place of the setting of the Sun in the western waters; Alexander is guided by Khizr, but when they come to a parting of the ways, each follows a different path, and Khizr alone accomplishes the quest. Those of Alexander's followers who bring back with them stones from the Land of Darkness find on their return that these are precious stones. [16]

The story is retold at greater length in Nizami's *Iskandar Naama*, LXVIII-LXIX; here Alexander learns from an ancient man (probably Khizr himself in human form) that 'of every land, the Dark Land is best, in which is a Water, a life-giver' and that the source of this River of Life is in the North, beneath the Pole Star.<sup>[17]</sup> On the way to the Dark land, in every arid land the rain falls and grass springs up, 'Thou wouldst have said: "The trace of Khizr was on that road; that verily, Khizr himself was with the king"'.<sup>[18]</sup> They reach the northern limit of the world, the sun ceases to rise, and the Land of Darkness lies before them.



**Khizr and Ilyas at the Fountain of Life.** Amir Khusrau, *Khamsah* Ilyas and Khizr sit down by a fountain to eat their repast, consisting of dried fish; the fish falling into the waters, comes to life, and thus the seekers are made aware that they have found the Fountain of Life, from which both drink.

Alexander makes the prophet Khizr his guide, and Khizr 'moving with greenness'<sup>[19]</sup> leads the way, and presently discovers the fountain, from which he drinks, becoming immortal. He keeps his eye on the spring, while waiting for Alexander to catch up with him; but it disappears from sight, and Khizr himself vanishes, realising that Alexander will not succeed in his quest. Nizami goes on to relate another version according to the 'account of the elders of Rum'; here the quest is undertaken by Ilyas<sup>[20]</sup> and Khizr, who sit down by a fountain to eat their repast, consisting of dried fish; the fish falling into the waters, comes to life, and thus the seekers are made aware that they have found the Fountain of Life, from which both drink.

Nizami then proceeds to the Kur'anic version, and interprets the Fountain as one of Grace, the true Water of Life being the Knowledge of God. A similar interpretation of the ancient material occurs in the New Testament, (John, 4). Nizami attributes Iskandar's failure to his eagerness, whereas in the case of Khizr 'the Water of Life arrived unsought', with reference to the fact that it is revealed indirectly by its effect on the fish, when Khizr has no suspicion that he has already reached it.

The finding of the Fountain by Ilyas and Khizr occurs in Persian art as the subject of miniatures illustrating the *Iskandar Nama*.<sup>[21]</sup> One of these, from a late sixteenth century manuscript belonging to Mr A. Sakisian, is reproduced in colour as frontispiece to his *La Miniature persane*, 1929, and in monochrome by L. Binyon, *Persian Painting*, 1933, Pl. LXIa; here the two prophets are seated by the Well in a verdant landscape, two fish are seen lying on a platter and a

third, evidently alive, is in Khizr's hand; it is clear that he is pointing out to Ilyas the significance of the miracle. Ilyas is robed in blue, Khizr wears a green robe with a brown cloak.

In another, and unpublished version of the seventeenth century, belonging to the Freer Gallery the arrangement is similar, but only one fish is seen on the platter. A third example, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and of late fifteenth century date, is reproduced in *Ars Asiatica*, XIII. Pl. VII, no. 15; Ilyas and al-Khadir are seen in the foreground beside the stream, in darkness; Alexander and his followers above, as in the Freer Gallery example, where the arrangement of the darks and lights is reversed. The Freer Gallery example seems to be the more correct in this respect, inasmuch as the whole quest takes place within the Land of Darkness, but the immediate vicinity of the Fountain of Life is understood to be lighted up by the sheen of its flowing waters. The Finders of the Well are both nimbate.

In the Syrian *Lay of Alexander*, and in the Qur'anic version, the fish swims away, and in the latter is said to reach the sea. A connection with the story of Manu and the 'fish' may be predicated in the Manu myth (*Satapatha Brahmana*, I.8.i); the 'fish' (*jhasa*) is from the beginning alive, but very small, and precariously situated, for it comes into Manu's hands when he is washing, and asks him to rear it. Manu provides it with water, and after it has grown great, releases it in the sea; and when the Flood comes, it guides the Ark through the Waters by means of a rope attached to its horn.

A noteworthy variant of the Manu legend, with a closer parallel to the Alexander and Qur'anic versions with respect to the dessication of the 'fish' occurs in *Jaimimya Brahmana*, in. 193, and *Pancavimsa Brahmana*, xiv. 5. 15; here Sarkara, the '*sisumara*', refuses to praise Indra, Parjanya therefore strands him on dry land and dries him up with the north wind (the cause of the desiccation of the fish is thus indicated). Sarkara then finds a song of praise for Indra, Parjanya restores him to the ocean (as does Khizr, though unintentionally, in the Qur'anic version), and by the same laud Sarkara attains heaven, becoming a constellation. There can be no doubt that the constellation Capricornus, Skr. *makara*, *makarasi*, is intended. *Makara*, *jhasa*, and *sisumara* are thus synonymous; [22] and this Indian Leviathan clearly corresponds to the kar-fish, 'greatest of the creatures of Ahuramazda', who swims in Vourukasha, guarding the Haoma tree of life in the primordial sea (*Bundahis*, XVIII; *Yasna*, XLII. 4, etc.); and to the Sumerian goat-fish, the symbol and sometimes the vehicle of Ea, god of the waters (Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, pp.105-6). That in the late Indian iconography Khizr's vehicle is an unmistakable fish, and not the crocodilian *makara*, need not surprise us, for other instances of the alternative use of *makara* and 'fish' could be cited from Indian iconographic sources; in some early representations, for example, the river-goddess Ganga is shown supported by a *maker*, but in the later paintings by a fish.

In the Pseudo-Callisthenes (C) version of the Alexander legend, Alexander is accompanied by his cook, Andreas. After a long journey in the Land of Darkness, they come to a place gushing with waters, and sit down to eat; Andreas wets the dried fish, and seeing that it comes to life, drinks of the water, but does not inform Alexander. Subsequently Andreas seduces Alexander's daughter Kale, and gives her a drink of the Water of Life (of which he had brought away a portion); she having thus become an immortal goddess is called Nereis, and the cook is flung into the sea, becoming a god; both are thus denizens of the other world. There can be no doubt

that Andreas here is the Idris of Qur'an, Sura xix, 57ff. and Sura xxi, 85, whom Islamic tradition identifies with Enoch, Ilyas, and al-Khadir. From the account of Idris in Ibn al-Qifti's *Tarikh al-Hukama'a* (c. 1200) it appears that he plays the part of a solar hero, and is immortal.

Al-Khadir also presents some point of resemblance with Saint George, and it is in this connection and as patron of travellers that we meet with a figure which is probably that of al-Khadir in carved relief over the gateway of a caravanserai on the road between Sinjar and Mosul, of the XI<sup>th</sup> century; the figure is nimbate, and is thrusting a lance into the mouth of a scaly dragon.<sup>[23]</sup>

The figure of a man seated on a fish occurs apparently as a Hindu work built into the bastion of the fort at Raichur, in the Deccan; it is stated to have a 'crown of river-serpent hoods', and has therefore been called a 'naga king', but these hoods are not clearly recognisable in the published reproduction.<sup>[24]</sup> Mediaeval Indian art affords numerous examples of Varuna seated on a *makara*.

A brief reference may be made to European parallels similarly derivative in the last analysis from Sumerian sources. Khadir corresponds to the Greek sea-god Glaukos (Friedlander, *loc. cit.* pp. 108 ff., 242, 253, etc., Barnett, *loc. cit.* p.715). Khadir belongs to the Wandering Jew type. Parallels between Glaukos and Vedic Gandharva are noteworthy; the Avesran designation of Gandarva as *zairipasna* 'green-heeled' tends to a connection of Gandharva with Khadir. Gandharva, as suggested by Dr. Barnett, may correspond to Kandarpa, i.e. Kamadeva, and in this connection it may be observed that the erotic motif common to Glaukos and Gandharva-Kamadeva appears in connection with Khizr in the Niwal Dai ballad, where Khizr will not release the waters unless he has sight of Niwal Dai; as might be looked for if we think of him as the Gandharva, and of her as the *apsaras* or Maiden (*yosa*) of the Waters, or equally if we correlate Khizr with Varuna, cf. *Rg Veda*, VII. 33. 10-11 where Mitra-Varuna are seduced by the sight of Urvasi, as is emphasized in the *Sarvanukramani*, 1.166 *urvasim apsarasam drstva . . . reto apatat*, and Sayana, *retas caskanda* evidently following *Nirukta*, v. 13.

The same situation is implied in *Rg Veda*, VII. 87. 6 with respect to Varuna alone who descends as a white drop (*drapsa*) and is called a 'traverser of space' (*rajasah vimanah*) and 'ruler of the deep' (*gambhira-sansah*), epithets that might well be applied to Khizr. It remains to be observed that in Christian iconography the figure of the river-god Jordan,<sup>[25]</sup> commonly found in representations of the Baptism of Jesus, bears a certain likeness to the conception of Glaukos and Khizr. In some cases the Baptism was thought of as taking place at the junction of two rivers, Jor and Danus. Sometimes there is found a masculine river-god, and a feminine figure representing the sea; both riding on dolphins, like the numerous types of Indian dwarf Yaksas riding on *makaras*.

All these types in the last analysis may be referred back to prototypes of which our earliest knowledge is Sumerian, in the concept of Ea, son and image of Enki, whose essential name Enki means 'Lord of the Watery Deep'. Ea was the ruler of the streams that rose in the Underworld, and flowed thence to fertilize the land; precious stones are likewise his. In iconography, Ea has the goat-fish, and holds in his hands the flowing-vase, the source of the 'bread and water of immortal life'. Ea has seven sons, of whom Marduk inherits his wisdom and slew the dragon

Tiamat. Another son was Dumuziabzu, the ‘Faithful Son of the Fresh Waters’, the Shepherd, the Semitic form of whose name is Tammuz, well known as the ‘Dying God’ of vegetation; comparable in many respects with Soma, and as ‘Lord of the Realm of the Dead’ with Yama.

The further Sumerian parallels are too many and too close to admit of adequate discussion here.<sup>[26]</sup> It suffices to have demonstrated the wide diffusion and ancient origin of the figure of Khwaja Khizr as it occurs in Persian and Indian iconography. In connection with Mughal art may be cited the remark of H. Goetz, who in discussing the sources of Mughal art speaks of a ‘teils absolute Identitaet teils engste Verwandtschaft mit solchen der grossen alorientalischen Kulturen, und zwar zu gut Teilen schon der klassischen sumerischen Zeit’.<sup>[27]</sup> That the figure of Khizr comes into independent prominence precisely in Mughal art of the eighteenth century—all the Indian examples that I have seen are in the ‘Lucknow style’—when considered in connection with the adoption of the fish as royal emblem by the rulers of Oudh, seems to show that some revival of the cult took place at this time and in this area.

---

[1] In accordance with the meaning of al-Khadir, the ‘Green Man’.

[2] Safidam, probably a corruption of *sarpa-damana*, ‘Quelling of the Serpent’. For the legend of Niwal Dai see Temple, *Legends of the Punjab*, I, pp. 414, 418-19.

[3] Usually Sanja (perhaps for Skr. *Samjna*). This priest (Brahman) who serves Vasuki, but acts against him, suggests Visvarupa who in *Taittiriya Samhita*, LI. 5. 1 is called the Purohita of the Angels, and Usanas Kavya who in *Pancavimsa Brahmana*, VII. 5. 20 is the Purohita of the Titans, but is won over to the side of the Angels.

[4] A location of the Well in the domains of the human Pariksit is hardly ‘correct’, (it is really on the borders of both worlds, in a forest equally accessible to Vasuki and Pariksit), but it will be observed that the waters are not merely protected by the heavy stone covering, but also subject to Khizr’s will, they- are not ‘flowing’. Vedic equivalents for the ‘heavy stone’ which hinders access to the waters are abundant, e.g. IV. 28. 5 *aphitani asna*, VI. 17. 5 *adrim acyutam*, IV. 16. 8 *apah adrim*, IV. i. 15 *drdhram ubdham adrim*, IV. 18.6 *paridhim adrim*, and when the stony obstacle is broke?, then “the waters flow from the pregnant rock”, *srvantnv apah . . . babrhanasya adreh*, V. 41.12; cf. *Satapatha Brahmana* IX. 1.2.4 in connection with the baptism of the fire-altar, which begins ‘from the rock’, because it is from the rock that the waters come forth, *asmano hy apahprabhavanti*. Vasuki in the ballad corresponds to Ahi, smitten by Indra, but ‘still waxing in sunless gloom’, *Rg Veda*, v, 32. 6.

[5] In the theme condensed above it is easy to recognise the Vedic creation-myth of the conflict between Angels and Titans (Devas and Asuras), Indra and Ahi-Vrtra; the abduction of Niwal Dai is the rape of Vac, (*Rg Veda*, i. 130, where Indra *vacam musayati*); Khwaja Khizr, the master of the waters, the Vedic rivers of life, is Varuna.

[6] E. G. Blochet, *Peintures hindoues de la Bibliotheque Nationale*, Paris, 1926. Pls. V and XXIII.

[7] The world under water, the home of the serpent race (*ahi, naga*), Varuna's 'watery origin' (*yonim apyam, Rg Veda*, II, 38, 8), 'in the western gloom' (*apacinc tamasi, ib.* VI, 6, 4), is not lighted by the Sun, it is 'beyond the Falcon' (*Jaiminiya Brahmana*, III, 268), but the shining of the Waters is everlasting (*ahar-ahar yati aktur apam, Rg Veda*, II. 30.1).

[8] Shaikh Chilli, *Folk Tales of Hindustan*, Allahabad, 1913, pp. 130 ff., with a modern picture of Khwaja Khizr as an old man blessing Mahbub, Pl. XXXIII. The story of Prince Mahbub is essentially the relation of an achievement of the Grail Quest by a solar hero, the son of a widowed mother, and brought up in seclusion and innocence of his true character, as in the Perceval cycle. Mahbub corresponds to Vedic Agni and Surya; Kassab to Indra.

[9] Apsarases; Grail maidens.

[10] The 'wailing women' and 'deathlike trance' of the Fisher King are essential features of the Grail myth.

[11] Equivalent to Skr. *mahin*, 'magician', a designation especially applicable to the Titans and, secondarily to the premier Angels, particularly Agni, the 'ancestors' represent the solar heroes of former cycles.

[12] The Grail Quest is achieved.

[13] Bahrain, an island in the Persian Gulf, has been identified by many scholars with the Sumerian Dilmun, where dwelt the gardener Tagtut after the flood: see Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies*, p.178, and Langdon, *Sumerian Epic*, pp. 8ff.

[14] For Islamic legend, other parallels, and further references see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s. v. Idris, al-Khadir and Khwadja Khidr; Warner, *Shah Nama of Firdausi*, VI, pp. 74-8 and 159-162; Hopkins, 'The Fountain of Youth'. *JAOS*. XXVI; Barnett, 'Yama, Gandharva, and Claucus', *Bull. School Oriental Studies*, IV; Grierson, *Kihar Peasant Life*, pp. 40-3; Garcin de Tassy, *Memoire sur des Particularites de la Religion Musalmane dans l'Inde*, pp. 85-9; Wunsche, *Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Liebenswasser*, Leipzig, 1905; Friedlander, *Die Chahdirlegende und der Alexander-Roman*, Leipzig, 1913.

[15] Cf. Barnett, *loc. cit.*, pp. 708-10.

[16] Cf. *Rg Veda*, VII. 6. 4 and 7, where Agni is said to bring forth the Maidens (rivers of life) eastward from the 'western darkness' (*apacine tamasi*) and to bring back 'treasures of earth' (*budhnya vasuni*) 'when the Sun rises' (*udita suryasya*).

[17] Al-Khadir's realm, known as Yuh (also a name of the Sun), where he rules over saints and angels, is situated in the far North; it is an Earthly Paradise, a part of the human world which

remained unaffected by the Fall of Adam and the curse (see Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 82,124).

[18] According to ‘Umarah, Khizr is ‘Green’ because the earth becomes green at the touch of his feet.

[19] *Khazra*, either ‘verdure’ or ‘sky’.

[20] The prophet Elias, with whom Khizr is often identified.

[21] Cf. *Iskandar Nama*, LXIX. 57, ‘verdure grows more luxuriantly by the fountain’. *Ibid.* 22, (he spring is described as a ‘fountain of light’, and this corresponds to *Vendidad*, Fargad xxi, where light and water proceed from a common source; cf. also Vedic Soma as both light and life, a plant and a fluid (*amrta*, the Water of Life, cf. Barnett, *loc. cit.*, p. 705, note 1).

[22] In *Bhagavad Gita*, X. 31, Krsna is *jhasanam makarah*, the *makara* is therefore regarded as the foremost amongst the *jhasas*, or monsters of the deep. The word *makara* occurs first in *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, XXIV. 35; *simsumara* in *Rg Veda*, I. 116. 18. For a full discussion of the *makara* in Indian iconography (especially as vehicle of Varuna and banner of Kamadeva) see my *Yaksas*, 1931,11, p. 47ff. and further references there cited. The ‘fish’ vehicle, of course, implies the rider’s independence of local motion in the unbounded ocean of universal possibility; just as wings denote angelic independence of local motion in the actual worlds.

[23] Sarre und Herzfeld, *Archaeologische Reise im Euphrat-und Tigris-Gebiet*, Vol. I, pp. 13, and 37-8, Berlin, 1911.

[24] See my *Yaksas*, 11.

[25] For example, in the Baptistery at Ravenna (Berchem and Clouzot, figs. lii and 220); Jordan here holds a vase from which the waters are flowing.

[26] For the Sumerian deities see S. H. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, Ch. 2; for the flowing vase etc. Van Buren, *The Flowing Vase and the God with Streams*, Berlin, 1933, and as regards India, my *Yaksas*, 11. For the iconographic link between the Asiatic full vase and Christian Grail vessel see Gosse, *Recherches sur quelques representations du Vase Eucharistique*, Geneva, 1894.

[27] *Bilderatlas zur Kulturgeschichte Indiens in der Grossmogul-Zeit*, 1930, p. 71. ‘An in part absolute identity and an in part very close Kinship with the sources of the great cultures of the ancient East and even to a considerable extent with the sources of the classical Sumerian period.’

## El Khidr in the Popular Religion of Turkey

**F.W. Hasluck *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* 2 vols. Oxford University Press, 1929 pp. 319-336 Chapter 2: Koranic Saints**

**T**he Moslem saint **El Khidr**, **El Khizr** ('the Verdant'), though not mentioned by name in the Koran, is generally identified by commentators with the companion of Moses' travels,<sup>[1]</sup> who secured to himself immortality by the discovery of the Fountain of Life.<sup>[2]</sup> In this latter quest tradition associates him with Alexander the Great.<sup>[3]</sup>

Among orthodox Sunni Mohammedans Khidr has a certain vague popularity: his day, called the 'feast of Lydda' (23 Nishan = 23 April, Old Style),<sup>[4]</sup> is observed all over Turkey as the beginning of spring. Among the heretical Nosairi sect, whose religion is a perversion of the Shia Mohammedan, he is a particularly important figure,<sup>[5]</sup> as he is apparently among the Yezidi,<sup>[6]</sup> and the Druses.<sup>[7]</sup>

The same seems to be the case among the Shia (Kizilbash) tribes of Asia Minor,<sup>[8]</sup> whose points of contact with the Nosairi and Yezidi are at present inexactly known.

In Turkey, generally, Khidr seems to be a vague personality conceived of mainly as a helper in sudden need, especially of travellers. He has been identified with various figures of the Old Testament, notably with Elias<sup>[9]</sup> of whom he is considered a reincarnation, and with the Orthodox St. George, whose day, together with the associations of Lydda,<sup>[10]</sup> he has taken over;<sup>[11]</sup> the characteristics he has borrowed from St. George include the reputation of a dragon-slayer,<sup>[12]</sup> which St. George himself may have borrowed from a pagan predecessor.

The identification of Khidr with Elias is found as early as Cantacuzenus, who died A.D. 1380. St. George, he says, is worshipped by the Christians and worshipped by the Christians and παρ'

"In Turkey, Khidr...has been identified with various figures of the Old Testament, notably with Elias of whom he is considered a reincarnation, and with the Orthodox St. George, whose day, together with the associations of Lydda, he has taken over; the characteristics he has borrowed from St. George include the reputation of a dragon-slayer, which St. George himself may have borrowed from a pagan predecessor."



**Khizr and Ilyas at the Fountain of Life.** Amir Khusrau, Khamsah Ilyas and Khizr sit down by a fountain to eat their repast, consisting of dried fish; the fish falling into the waters, comes to life, and thus the seekers are made aware that they have found the Fountain of Life, from which both drink.



αὐτῶν τῶν Μουσουλμανῶν τιμα δέ παρ' αὐτῶν χετηρ ἡλιάς.[13] George of Hungary, our best early authority on Turkish popular saints, spent a long captivity in Asia Minor during the early fifteenth century[14] and makes clear the extraordinary vogue enjoyed by Khidr in his day.

'Chidrelles', he writes, 'is before all a helper of travellers in need. Such is his repute in all Turkey that there is scarce any man to be found that hath not himself experienced his help or heard of others that have so done. He manifesteth himself in the shape of a traveller riding on a gray horse,[15] and anon relieveth the distressed wayfarer, whether he hath called on him, or whether, knowing not his name, he hath but commended himself to God, as I have heard on several hands.'[16]

The conception of Khidr as the protector of travellers is derived for Moslems primarily from Khidr's own travels as related in the Koran, the Koranic 'type' of traveller naturally becoming the patron of travellers in general. Travel being considered abnormal and dangerous, travellers have special need of a protector in sudden necessity; this is a phase also of the Orthodox St. George.[17] In this respect it seems abundantly proved, from oriental literary sources, that the personalities of Khidr and Elias are distinguished by the learned, the former being the patron of seafarers and the latter of travellers by land.[18] But it may be doubted whether the position of the two personalities is clearly defined in popular religion. In inland Kurdistan the roles of Khidr and Elias as given above are said to be reversed,[19] which looks as if Khidr, the predominant figure, was apt to usurp the element locally of most importance. His connection with sea-travel[20] is emphasized by the fact that his day is regarded by seamen as the opening of their season.[21]

Khidr has also a physical aspect. Whereas in relation to man he is regarded as a patron of travel and a bringer of sudden help, in relation to the world of nature he is regarded as a patron of spring, being called the 'Verdant', partly in allusion to the greenness of that season, while his feast is the beginning of spring and, in Syria, the beginning of sowing.[22] His discovery of the Water of Life [23] may also have a reference to his connection with spring, while the physical conception of his functions has probably aided his confusion with Elias, the rain-bringer of the Christians.[24] It is probable that this rain-making aspect of Khidr is responsible for the number of hills bearing his name, which are to be found in the neighbourhood of towns and



**Khizr and Ilyas at the Fountain of Life.**

villages. Every Turkish town has its recognized place for the rain prayer. These are always outside the town and in the open air, generally high lying,<sup>[25]</sup> and frequently marked by a *turbe* or dome, sometimes by a pulpit. At Constantinople, for example, a pulpit for the rain prayer was built by Murad IV on the Archery Ground (*Ok Meidan*) high above the Golden Horn.<sup>[26]</sup> At Cairo Pococke remarked the pulpit on a spur of the Mokattam hills above the citadel.<sup>[27]</sup> When, as frequently occurs, the site is marked by a *turbe* or dome, this building tends to be associated with the name of a saint, who is regarded as the intercessor for rain, though in fact it is probably more often a cenotaph or commemorative monument. Thus, at Angora the hill opposite the citadel called *Khidrlik* is crowned by a cupola on open arches. This dome may have originally commemorated an appearance of Khidr or may merely have been erected in his honour. It is now regarded as the tomb of a saint,<sup>[28]</sup> named, as I was informed, Bula Khatun.<sup>[29]</sup> This development is characteristic of a simple theology which prefers its own saint unshared to a divinity of wider powers who is shared by many.

As to local cults of Khidr, we can point to two areas, the Syrian and the Turkish. In Turkey the connection between St. George and Khidr seems to be less close than in Syria, where the two seem almost synonymous. Moslems who have made vows to Khidr frequently pay them to his Christian counterpart.<sup>[30]</sup> One of the most frequented centres of the cult is a Christian monastery near Bethlehem, which is famous for its cures of madness.<sup>[31]</sup> According to Conder, sanctuaries (*makams*) of Khidr in Palestine are often found on Crusaders' sites, thus suggesting an inheritance from St. George.<sup>[32]</sup> On the strength of his identification with Elias, Khidr has occupied a chapel of the latter at Zarephath.<sup>[33]</sup> Various sites, at Nablus<sup>[34]</sup> (a spring), Jerusalem,<sup>[35]</sup> Damascus,<sup>[36]</sup> Baghdad,<sup>[37]</sup> and Mosul,<sup>[38]</sup> are associated with his name. The last three seem to be regarded as tombs, the rest, and probably all originally, as places where he has appeared to mortals<sup>[39]</sup> or merely as memorials.

As regards Turkish lands, Khidr, who is recognizable by the fact that one of his thumbs is boneless, is said to have appeared at Constantinople several times, at St. Sophia<sup>[40]</sup> and at the Valideh Atik mosque in Skutari.<sup>[41]</sup> There is a 'station' of Khidr in the mosque of Aatik All Pasha in Stambul.<sup>[42]</sup> Bars of iron engraved by the boneless thumb of the saint are shown in the mosque of Mohammed II,<sup>[43]</sup> while he is said to be present daily at one of the five prayers in the mosque of Sultan Ahmed.<sup>[44]</sup> Near Adrianople, Covel in 1677 notices a 'place of Khidr' with an imperial kiosk said to occupy the site of a church of St. George.<sup>[45]</sup> At Gallipoli a mosque called *Khizr u Ilyas Maqami*, 'the station of Khidr and Elias,' is supposed to commemorate an appearance of the saint to the poet Mehemed Yazijioglu.<sup>[46]</sup> In Albania, near Elbassan, a hot spring bears the saint's name.<sup>[47]</sup>

In Asia Minor, Khidr has replaced at Elwan Chelebi the dragon-slaying St. Theodore.<sup>[48]</sup> This is the only proved instance of his intrusion in Turkey on a Christian cult. But in many places the name *Khidrlik* ('place of Khidr') is given to hills or 'high places' of which the Christian traditions, if any ever existed, have disappeared. Such hills exist near Angora,<sup>[49]</sup> near Sinope<sup>[50]</sup> above Geredeh (Krateia Bithyniae),<sup>[51]</sup> near Changri (Gangra),<sup>[52]</sup> near Ladik (Pontus),<sup>[53]</sup> near Tarakli (Dablae),<sup>[54]</sup> and at Afiun Kara Hisar.<sup>[55]</sup> There is a mountain *Khidirli Dagh* near Kepsud,<sup>[56]</sup> while places named *Kheder Elles* are recorded near Kula in Lydia<sup>[57]</sup> and above Tripoli on the Black Sea,<sup>[58]</sup> Pere de Jerphanion, in his new map of Pontus<sup>[59]</sup> marks a village *Khedarnale* ('Horseshoe of Khidr') near Sivas, which probably claims, like Elwan Chelebi, to

possess a hoof-print of the saint's horse. Professor White of Marsovan seems to find *Khidrlik* almost a generic name for a holy place in his district,[\[60\]](#) which has a large Shia population.[\[61\]](#)

On the grounds of Orthodox Greek practice we should, perhaps, expect that St. Elias was the saint displaced on hill-top sites.[\[62\]](#) But the functions and conceptions of Khidr are at once so varied and so vague as to adapt him to replace almost any saint, or indeed to occupy any site independently. His sudden appearances make it specially easy to associate him with any spot already hallowed by previous tradition or notable for recent supernatural occurrences,[\[63\]](#) while his functions as a patron of spring vegetation and as a rain-maker recommend his cult to primitive pastoral or agricultural populations.



**Khidr sanctuary at Samandag, Turkey, with car performing ritual threefold circumambulation**

Without claiming to solve the various fusions of cult and legend which have produced the mysterious and many-sided figure of Khidr,[64] we may perhaps make the following tentative suggestions[65] as to the origin of his functions and vogue in popular religion:



**Holy rock in Khidr sanctuary at Samandag where Khidr and Moses are said to have met**

1. In the Koran the unnamed Servant of God, generally interpreted as Khidr,

travels with Moses and commits three seemingly unjust deeds.[66] A probable original[67] of this story is the Talmudic tale of Rabbi Jochanan's travels with Elijah,[68] so that its being told of Khidr would indicate another case of identifying Elias with Khidr. Such an identification, however, raises the difficulty that the association of Moses with Elias involves a serious anachronism. But it may be doubted whether that matters much in popular theology, while there is some reason to suspect that the confusion dates from a period considerably anterior to the composition of the Koran, from the sixth century in fact. Antoninus of Piacenza, who travelled in the Holy Land about A.D. 570, visited Suez and came 'ad ripam, ubi transierunt filii Israel et exierunt de mare [sic]. Ibi est oratorium Moysis.'[69] Variant readings are: 'Et in loco, ubi [or quo] exierunt de mari, est oratorium Heliae. Et transcendentis [transeuntes] venimus in locum ubi intraverunt mare. Ibique [or ubi] est oratorium Moysis.' Tobler has little doubt that the second better represents the original reading, the copyist having inadvertently omitted part: this would also explain the *mare* for *mari* in the text.[70] Granted, then, that two 'oratories', of Moses and Elias respectively, existed, as Tobler supposes, on the Red Sea, the popular mind would readily associate them with each other, however distinct they may have been in the beginning, and would thus pave the way for the anachronism in the Koran to pass undetected. There Moses is said to have found Khidr where the sea of the Greeks joins that of the Persians, that is, at Suez.[71] In this sphere of activity Khidr may therefore with some probability be said to derive from the Hebrew Elijah.

2. In his discovery of the Water of Life Khidr is brought into connection with Alexander, whose vizir he is said to have been. This story seems mostly to depend ultimately on the Pseudo-Callisthenes[72] but gathers up a number of legends which connect Elias with Enoch and Khidr.[73] From the Jewish composite figure of Elias + Enoch + Phinehas[74] come several of Khidr's aspects, *e.g.*
3. His association with learning.[75] Various traditions associate Elias with books. He is said to delight in the studies of Jewish rabbis,[76] to have written certain apocrypha,[77] and to have personally instructed Maimonides.[78] The Turks, besides confusing Elias with Enoch,[79] hold that Enoch was a great sage.
4. From the same composite figure comes Khidr's association with the high priesthood.[80] Elias is believed to perform daily sacrifice in the Temple underground.[81] His contact with Phinehas is early and has been used by Moslem theologians as a proof that Khidr and Elias are separate persons.[82]
5. Khidr's association with travel comes explicably enough in view of the above from Elias' wandering life, he being the type of the eternal wanderer. In commemoration of this, Jews lay a place for him at their Passover,[83] the idea arising especially from the text, 'And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not.'[84] Immortality is the connecting link between the components of the Enoch + Phinehas + Elias figure and leads to:
  6. Khidr's identification with St. George, whom the tyrant king tried in vain to kill.[85] This entails the fusion, it will be noted, of the aged ascetic Elias with the young soldier George.[86] Khidr (*verdant*)[87] would, on this showing, be merely an epithet derived from the immortality of the Elias prototype.[88]



Plaque in Turkish and Arabic in Khidr sanctuary at Samandag, Turkey

The results of our analysis thus tend to show that in Khidr there is no independent Moslem or pre-Moslem element. The Elias part can all be paralleled in Jewish tradition, while the George part is all Christian: only his adventure with Moses is of somewhat uncertain origin, but even that, in view of the early date of the Talmudic story,[89] is probably descended from a Jewish ancestor.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the protean figure of Khidr has a peculiar interest for the study of popular religion in Asia Minor and the Near East generally. Accepted as a saint by orthodox Sunni Mohammedans, he seems to have been deliberately exploited by the heterodox Shia sects of Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and



**Khidr festival in Trabzon, Turkey**

Albania—that is, by the Nosairi, the Yezidi, the Kizilbash, and the Bektashi—for the purposes of their propaganda amongst non-Mohammedan populations. For Syrian, Greek, and Albanian Christians Khidr is identical with Elias and St. George. For the benefit of the Armenians he has been equated in Kurdistan with their favourite St. Sergius, and, just as Syrian Moslems make pilgrimages to churches of St. George, so do the Kizilbash Kurds of the Dersim to Armenian churches of St. Sergius.[\[90\]](#)

As regards Christianity, Khidr is only one of many points of contact in the Shia heterodoxies. The Kizilbash Kurds, for example, hold that Christ was reincarnated in Ali, that the Twelve Apostles and the Twelve Imams are identical, and that St. Peter and Paul are the same persons as Hasan and Husain.[\[91\]](#) The Albanian Bektashi equate their own saint Sari Saltik to Saint Nicolas and other Christian saints.[\[92\]](#) Such points of contact may be regarded either as inheritances from Christianity or introduced with the deliberate purpose of conciliating Christians to a form of Islam. It is obvious that at all times conversion from Christianity to Islam has been aided by the considerable material advantages to be gained from it. The Shia sects to which we have referred are not forbidden outwardly to observe Sunni forms, and frequently do so; at the same time their real religion, with its many natural or artificial points of contact with Christianity, offers a compromise which spares the susceptibilities of the convert and may well have been the refuge of many harassed Christian tribes.

## **Khidr in the Islamic Tradition**

"In that wilderness I lived for four years. God gave me my eating without any toil of mine. Khidr the Green Ancient was my companion during that time - he taught me the Great Name of God."

## Introduction

Ibn Jarir Tabari (d. A.D. 935), the great Muslim historian, used as a title "The History of Prophets and Kings" for his encyclopedic classic *Oevrue* for the purpose of emphasizing that Islamic history has a prophetic quality. In Tabari's view, history has been thus suffused with prophecy, to the extent that it is impossible to extricate the 'sacred' from the 'profane'.

Looking at it with a critical modern perspective, Islamic history revolves around a great many legends and historical events that cannot be proven by modern science. Nevertheless, the great dynamics of Islamic history, in the view of Tabari and other major Muslim historians, has been the Islamic revelation and its historical interpretation. The goal of existence in Islam is a prophetic existence. Although prophets are not sinless, they represent the perfect human model, and embody the ultimate human quality in God's eyes. Because of their unique role as the standard bearers of the divine-human and human-divine relationship, prophets become the special focus of human history.

There are numerous prophets, 'saints' and other heroes of Islam who have exerted a great influence on aspects of Islamic history. One among them is Khidr. In Islamic folk literature, one finds a variety of names and titles associated with Khidr. Some say Khidr is a title; others have called it an epithet. He has been equated with St. George, identified as the Muslim "version of Elijah" and also referred to as the eternal wanderer. Scholars have also called and characterized him as a 'saint', prophet-saint, mysterious prophet-guide and so on.

The story, or the 'legend' as it is often called, of Khidr finds its source in the Qur'ān, chapter 18 (*Sūrat Kahf*) verses 60-82,

Then they found one of Our votaries whom We had blessed and given knowledge from Us.

These verses primarily deal with an allegorical story relating Moses' journey in search for truth. Full of symbolism, the Qur'ānic story introduces the mysterious figure of Khidr, who symbolizes "the utmost depth of mystic insight accessible to man. Khidr is not mentioned in the Qur'ān by name. However, the commentators have generally agreed, partly on the basis of *Hadīth* literature, that the mysterious person with whom Moses' meeting takes place, i.e. the meeting mentioned in 18:65, and who is called in the Qur'ān as "one of Our votaries", is no other than the 'eternal' Khidr.

In the context of the above, a number of questions come to mind:

1. Is Khidr a name or does it represent a title?
2. Is Khidr a messenger and/or a prophet, or simply a *Wali*? and
3. Is he one of the 'eternal'?

These questions have engaged the minds of many Qur'ān commentators and scholars of Islam. The purpose of this paper is to look at the various ways in which the figure of Khidr is understood by them. The questions most pertinent to our enquiry deal with three different aspects of Khidr:

1. his identity;
2. his status; and
3. his relevance.

## Khidr in History

Khidr is one of the four prophets whom the Islamic tradition recognizes as being 'alive' or 'immortal'. The other three being *Idris* (Enoch), *Ilyas* (Elias), and *'Isa* (Jesus). Khidr is immortal because he drank from the water of life. There are some who have asserted, however, that this Khidr is the same person as Elijah. He is also identified with St. George. Amongst the earliest opinions in Western scholarship, we have Rodwell's understanding where he claims that the name "Khidr is formed from Jethro."

Interestingly enough, there is a link here between Khidr and the classical Jewish legend of the 'Wandering Jew'. Krappe, in his major work on folklore, says:

it is difficult to dissociate the figure [of *the Wandering Jew*] from that of Al-Khidr, one of the Arabic prophets. .. With the crusades Europeans became familiar with this legendary figure and out of it developed the character of Ahasuerus or Isaac Laquedem.

Haim supports and even quotes Krappe to provide the link between 'the Wandering Jew legend' and the story of Khidr. On the basis of some similarities of occupation, Khidr is also identified with the prophet Jeremiah or rather it is the other way around; Jeremiah is likened to Khidr.

As far as the identity of Khidr in Islamic history is concerned, there are as many opinions as there are commentators. Enormous detail is found pertaining to his name, genealogy, appearance, origin and status in the chronicles of Muslim commentators and historians since the beginning of Islamic scholarship. Most of this literature exists either in connection with the commentary of S.18 of the Qur'ān, or it is linked with the tales of the prophets (*Qisas al-Anbiyā'*).

Historically speaking, Islam inherited the tradition of Khidr from "earlier myths and faiths. Sale has argued that Muslim tradition confounds Khadir with Phineas, Elias, and St. George, saying that his soul passed by a metempsychosis successively through all three."

From a critical historical perspective, the legend of Khidr is found to be linked with some of the most ancient legends known to us today—the epic of Gilgamesh, the Alexander Romance, and the Wandering Jew, just to name a few. These, at the same time, are also perceived to be the three main sources of the episode of Khidr, implying, as it were, to be the 'source' of the whole Qur'ānic narrative of the story of Moses and Khidr; in fact, of the whole of 8.18 (*Kahf*). However, a modern commentator has this to say about the historical links of Khidr,



The nearest equivalent figure in the literature of the People of the Book is Melchizedek... In Gen. xiv. 18-20, he appears as king of Salem, priest of the Most High God...

However, since the advent of Islamic folk literature, Khidr has become an integral part of Islamic folklore as well as serious Sufi literature. Just as the figure of the 'Wandering Jew' became the main allegory of the Jewish people during their diaspora, the figure of Khidr became an allegory for the travelling sufis.

### Khidr in the Qur'ān

In the Qur'an the story begins by Moses' declaration to his servant/companion that "I will not give up till I reach the confluence of two oceans". Moses and Joshua had begun to search for "a servant of Allah" from whom Moses was to learn the 'secret knowledge given him by God. As seen above, Muslim tradition identifies this "servant" as Khidr.

Qur'ānic commentators have related several opinions with regard to the status of Khidr. Some say he is one of the prophets; others refer to him simply as an angel who functions as a guide to those who seek God. And there are yet others who argue for his being a perfect *wali* meaning the one whom God has taken as a friend.

Some commentators who have thought of Khidr as a prophet, have mainly argued on the basis of the Qur'ānic reference to him as *rahma*. What does this term, *rahma*, mean in its Qur'ānic context? As related above the Qur'ān relates in S.18:65; Khidr is one of those "...whom We had blessed...". This characterization usually applies to the prophets. *Rahma* comes from the root RHM meaning 'womb'. Other translations of S.18:65 include,

And there they found a devotee among Our devotees. We had blessed him with Our grace...

...they found one of our servants unto whom we had granted mercy from us...

Similarly in S.43:32, the Qur'ān, while expounding one of the characteristics of God's prophets, declares them as "the ones who dispense the favour of your Lord" as against those who are seemingly "wealthy" and hold important positions (chiefs) in this world. Here the Qur'ān argues for the Prophet as the one who embodies God's *rahma* due to God's will alone and not due to any worldly title or position which he did or did not have.

The Qur'ānic usage of *rahma* here is the same as in 8.18:65. It deals with the quality of being a *Rahīm* —the "ever-merciful"; the superlative degree of which is applied to God alone. So God being a *Rahīm* sends His messengers (and prophets) as symbols of His *rahma*. And as a result they become a channel through which God's *rahma* is dispensed among mankind.

Another prominent example of this is found in S.21:107, towards the end of *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'*, wherein referring to Prophet Muhammad the Qur'ān says, "We have sent you as a benevolence to the creatures of the world", using again the word *rahma* denoting the sending of the Prophet as "the mercy" from God.

Other verses which bear similar association between the prophets and the *rahma* are S.11:28 and 63 where Noah and Salih respectively speak of God's "grace" and "blessings".

In the second part of the same verse i.e., 18:65b, we read, "and [Khidr has been] given knowledge from Us." Sale continues the translation of this verse as, "...and whom we had taught wisdom from before us." Amir-Ali puts it as "...and endowed him with knowledge from Ourselves."

So Khidr is a "mercy" from God and he has been given knowledge from God. Here it seems plausible to argue that these qualities certainly allude to his elevated status. To possess divine knowledge is a quality of saints and prophets, but Khidr is evidently more than a saint, since he symbolizes God's "mercy" which in the Qur'anic sense clearly refers to prophecy.

Commentators are more or less in agreement that the status of Moses is certainly higher than that of Khidr, since he (Moses) is not only a Messenger (*rasūl*) but also a prophet (*nabi*), bearer of the divine revelation and provisions of the law. Khidr, on the other hand, does not hold these titles, although the Qur'ān calls him a 'Servant' of God. Ibn 'Arabi's account of this encounter also sheds some light on the nature of their relationship. Netton, for example, points out that there is an

...overwhelming emphasis on rank and knowledge...for al-Khadir is aware that Moses hold the exalted rank of Messenger (*rasūl*) which he, al-Khadir, does not...

However, to analyze the subsequent verse of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, verse 66, in this context, we find that it deals with Moses' request to be instructed by Khidr, which, seemingly at least, puts Khidr at a higher position than that of Moses. This further confirms the status of Khidr as a prophet, as mentioned in the previous verse.

The emphasis here is on two key words which perhaps determine the overall meaning of the verse, *atabi'ka* and *tu'allimanī* which may have direct bearing upon the status of Khidr. Ahmed Ali translates it as,

"...May I attend upon you that you may instruct me in the knowledge you have been taught of the right way?" (emphasis added)

Amir-Ali has translated the key words as,

"...May I follow thee so that thou mayst teach me something of thy wisdom?" (emphasis added)

As we can see here the translation of *tu'allimani* is 'instruct me' or 'teach me'. Moses, therefore, is requesting Khidr to "instruct" him "in the knowledge...of the right way" (S.18:66b). Since Moses in the Islamic tradition is regarded as a prophet as well as a messenger; bearer of the divine commandments, and conveyer of God's truth to his people, his seeking of knowledge from a non-prophet does not fit the criterion of the divine wisdom given to all prophets. A prophet is *rahma* of God as well as a bearer of the knowledge given to none other than prophets. It can be said that it would not be possible for Khidr, firstly, to have knowledge from God, and,

secondly, to “instruct” Moses in that knowledge he is given by God, without being a prophet or for that matter *rahma* himself. It would be absurd to believe that Moses of all God’s messengers was less in knowledge than a non-prophet. On the other hand, it is also argued that Moses with whom Khidr’s meeting takes place is not the Moses of Banu Israel. In fact there is an *hadīth* which mentions such a claim while refuting it at the same time on the authority of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās.

At this point, however, it must be noted that the concept of *rahma* is closely linked with divine ‘guidance’ either in the form of revelation given to the prophets or simply by their mere presence and witness unto mankind. The prophecy of Khidr thus is the ‘prophecy of saintship’ (*nubuwwatu’l-wilāyat*) whereas that of Moses is characterized as the ‘prophecy of institution’ (*nubuwwatu’l-tashrī*).

Going back to the origin of the story we find a different set of arguments emerging from the rationale behind Moses’ search for and subsequent meeting with Khidr. And this sheds further light on an overall understanding of the story. It begins with Moses making a claim about being the most learned of all men in the world.

[Due to this belief]...he no longer tried to acquire more knowledge. So God sought for an occasion to stimulate him to obtain more knowledge...[and one day after his address to his people] one of them asked him: ‘Can there be found anybody more learned than you?’ He replied: ‘No, such a man I never met’. Then God revealed: ‘Yes, such a man does exist. Our servant Khidr is more learned than you are’...

As we can see, Moses, by holding such a belief, created a necessity of being instructed by someone who surpassed him in knowledge. Although one may argue that the reason for such an ‘instruction’ was the mannerism in which he proclaimed it, the fact remains that Moses was the most knowledgeable of all men of his time as he was a prophet of distinction in steadfastness and yet there was a sense of ‘the absolute’ in his tone for which God had instituted his meeting with Khidr.

It is in this context that most commentators regard Khidr as one of the prophets. For as the Qur’ānic concept of *rahma*, analysed above, also suggests the same and moreover indicates that both Moses and Khidr possess “some divine knowledge not possessed by the other.’

On the one hand, Moses is placed above Khidr in rank as a messenger; on the other, it is argued that they both possess different sets of knowledge. This latter position is particularly held by Ibn ‘Arabi, mainly, its order to present the elevated status of the esoteric knowledge and,

of the gnosis that perceives not only the necessity for and validity of [the] Law, hut also the inescapable validity and necessity of those aspects of cosmic becoming that elude the Law...

## Khidr in Sufism

Khidr is associated with the water of life. Since he drank the water of immortality he is described as the one who has found the source of life, 'the Eternal Youth.' He is the mysterious guide and immortal saint in the popular Islamic piety.

Sometimes the mystics would meet him on their journeys; he would inspire them, answer their questions, rescue them from danger, and, in special cases, invest them with the *khirqā*, which was accepted as valid in the tradition of Sufi initiation.



Dervishes sitting beneath a tree. Isfahan, 17th century

In Sufi tradition, Khidr has come to be known as one of the *afrād*, those “who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation.” He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path like some of those from the Uwaisi tariqa. Uwaisis are those who “enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master.” Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being “initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint Khidr.”

Khidr has thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role of an initiator. Through this way come several Sufi orders which claim initiation through Khidr and consider him their master. It has become yet another possible way of initiation through “a source other than a human master.” Besides the Uwaisis, history records that Ibn ‘Arabi, the great mystical giant from Islamic Spain, claimed to have received the *Khirqā* from Khidr. Khidr had thus come to symbolize “the third path” to the knowledge of God, purely and constantly supernatural, giving access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself. In the writings of ‘Abd al-Kartm al-Jili, Khidr rules over ‘the Men of the Unseen’ (*rijalu’l-ghayb*)-- the exalted saints and angels.

Khidr is also claimed by and included among what in the classical Sufism are called the *abdāl* (‘those who take turns’) or the ‘saints’ (*awliya*) of Islam. In a divinely instituted hierarchy of such saints Khidr holds the rank of their ‘spiritual head. They are called *abdāl* due to their role of becoming a ‘substitute’ for Khidr and taking turns in “helping in his mission of assisting and saving good men in danger and distress,”

Here one may ask the question how Khidr can relate to a disciple who materially and organically exists in this world of space and time! In other words, as Corbin puts it, is the “disciple’s relation to Khidr similar to the relation he would have had with any visible earthly” master! It seems, as Corbin also suggests, that questioning the nature of such a relationship is to question the historical existence of Khidr himself. Whereas Khidr, as we know, is ‘transhistorical’ and by

virtue of being “immortal” transcendent. Further the danger in describing the phenomenon of Khidr is more than real.

If, taking the standpoint of analytical psychology, we speak of Khidr as an archetype, he will seem to lose his reality and become a figment of the imagination, if not of the intellect. And if we speak of him as a real person, we shall no longer be able to characterize the difference in structure between Khidr’s relationship with his disciple and the relationship that any other *shaykh* on this earth can have with his.

Hence the experience of being a disciple of Khidr “invests the disciple, as an individual, with a transcendent ‘transhistorical’ dimension.” It is an experience which lies beyond the spatio-temporal conditions of our sense perception.

The immortality of Khidr is a symbol of the immensity of his knowledge and providential wisdom. By virtue of being immortal and counted among the four immortal prophets (mentioned above), he is revered in the Muslim tradition and looked upon by the Sufis in great veneration. But Sufis have also used Khidr’s symbolism in another way. ‘Attar, in his long allegorical poem *Mantiq al-Tayr*, presents Khidr as the opposite of what a Sufi may desire. In a dialogue with a “fool of God” and Khidr, Khidr’s life style is shown to be that of an antinomy to the ‘Way’. In this dialogue Khidr asks the ‘fool of God’, “Oh perfect man, will you be my friend?” And the reply from the one, in the Way of God, is,

You and I are not compatible, for you have drunk long draughts of the water of immortality so that you will always exist, and I wish to give up my life.

### Symbolism of Khidr

Khidr literally means ‘The Green One’, representing freshness of spirit and eternal liveliness, green symbolizing the freshness of knowledge “drawn out of the living sources of life.” It implies regeneration as Schwarzbaum has pointed out. The color green has also been related to Khidr’s disappearing ‘into the “green landscape’ after departing from Moses. It is a sort of ‘becoming green’, or by way of disappearing and teaching a lesson, making knowledge ‘afresh’ for the one who is being taught. It is afresh because it is “drawn from Allah’s own knowledge.”

It could also be taken to imply the connection with the wilderness, fields etc. where Khidr is most likely to meet the lost and troubled whence he could guide them. Whatever the source for this green may be, it has come to symbolize the benign presence of the divine wisdom as imparted by the Divine Himself to Khidr and to Prophet Muhammad—hence the inseparable association between the prophetic love and praise in pious Muslim religious ceremonies and the color green. It is also well known that the cloak of the Prophet is associated with either white or green. Interestingly, however, not all accounts of Khidr’s appearance describe him in green. Nicholson, in his classical work on Islamic mysticism reporting about Abu Sa’id ibn Abi’l-Khayr’s self-imposed exile, says:

... he [Abdul Khayr] would flee to mountains and wilderness, where he was sometimes seen roaming with a venerable old man clad in white raiment... [who as] he declared [later] was the prophet Khadir.

Besides the symbolism which revolves around the figure of Khidr himself, the story of Moses and Khidr is full of other imageries and divine allusions. First of all there is a mention of the fish which is a symbol of knowledge; then there is mention of water, a symbol of life, as well as the sea, symbolizing the limitless immensity and vastness of knowledge, especially esoteric knowledge.

Further, the symbolism reaches its height in the fish's disappearance in a 'parting of the sea', symbolizing the meeting of the two domains of knowledge, viz., the esoteric and the exoteric. Now this fish (wisdom) was to be Moses' breakfast, which is precisely what Moses needed before he understood the subtlety of the events which occurred while he was with Khidr. The fish was dead when it was with Moses and Joshua, only to become alive soon after, thus suggesting the need for them to follow its 'way to knowledge.'

The reason why Joshua may have forgotten to tell Moses about the disappearance of the fish is yet another sign alluding to the divine mystery. Regarding this Shāfi' says: Maybe he (Joshua) forgot due to the reason that his thoughts wandered away thinking about his homeland, since he is in travel. The twist here is in the link between the symbolism of the 'fish' (a way of knowledge) which is being carried during the travel (*jihād*: one of the means of knowledge) in order to arrive (understand) the 'meeting of the two oceans' (the perfect knowledge). The two oceans, once again, are parallel to the two kinds of knowledge, the exoteric (that of Moses) and the esoteric (that of Khidr); 'perfect knowledge' is the coming together of the two. Furthermore, travel is inevitably linked with the attainment of divine wisdom. Hence another aspect of Khidr, as patron-saint of travelers, is highlighted in the tradition. However, whatever may be the reason for Joshua's forgetfulness, it certainly seems to contain yet another moral for the humankind.

In his case the 'forgetting' was more than forgetting. Inertia had made him refrain from telling the important news. In such matters inertia is almost as bad as active spite, the suggestion of Satan. So new knowledge or spiritual knowledge is not only passed by in ignorance, but sometimes by culpable negligence.

Overall, the episode of Khidr in the Qur'ān is a reflection and representation of the paradoxes of life. Above all, it symbolizes the delicate balance between 'patience and faith as they were enjoined' on Moses after he understood the meaning of those paradoxes explained to him by Khidr himself.

What is implied by the story is that such wisdom is only attainable by the will, mercy, and grace of God, and that even the prophethood and bearing of the divine law could not bring that "most subtle knowledge" because it is "only known to him who has become the instrument of God."

[Moses was shown these events] to illustrate the manner in which God may provide contrivances or reconditionings for the benefit of his creatures. Then God uses one of His servants as an instrument for the accomplishment of an intended operation...

Thus is Moses given a lesson by God about the infinitude of knowledge, with subtle but momentary knowledge belonging to Khidr, but universal knowledge to Moses.

(The fact of the matter is that) provisions of the law bear on universal principles...whereas contrivances bear on affairs conducive to a particular prudence...All this is a most subtle knowledge...[Thus Moses] comes to understand precisely the underlying idea of events...

As it may be said here, there is a sense of Khidr being 'superior' to Moses. Based on that, one may suggest that there are "glimmerings of a theophany" in the personage of Khidr who as God's servant is as human as Moses, yet seems to be embodied with the divine attributes of "God's mercy [*rahma*] (eternal salvation) and...Divine knowledge (eternal prescience)." Symbolically it may imply that Moses' encounter with Khidr is actually his encounter with the aspects of the Divine in an attempt to equip him (i.e. Moses) with the infiniteness of knowledge. As Netton has rightly said, it may all be summed up as a Divine Testing of Moses.

The legend of Khidr is an excellent example of the fact that human beings constantly need to seek the union with God in Whom all knowledge rests. Since there is no end to the divine knowledge, it is unwise to assume, as Moses did, that one may know it all.

The episode in the story of Moses is meant to illustrate four points... that wisdom [does] not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, in the sciences and the arts, and in literature...[is accumulated] (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual). (2) Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time. (3) There is a kind of knowledge [like the one Khidr represents] which is in ever in contact with life as it is actually lived. (4) There are paradoxes in life: apparent loss may be real gain; apparent cruelty may be real mercy...[and that] Allah's wisdom transcends all human calculation.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that the symbolism of Khidr has traveled far and beyond the geographical as well as ideological boundaries of its origin. The legend has truly lived up to its universal quality as it spreads across a variety of cultures and civilizations around the world. In the subcontinent folklore Khidr has appeared "as a substitute for the Hindu gods of the water and is particularly revered by sailors and fishermen." It is in connection with Khidr being a patron-saint of sailors that his name is invoked down to this day by the sailors every time a boat is being launched in parts of the Middle East and Northern India.

Today Khidr can be found in the verses of Iqbal, in the poems of Rumi, and 'Attar. He has immensely influenced the lives of many a mystic, ascetic and man of God throughout the history of Islam, such as 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, Ibn 'Arabi, Mansur al-Hallaj and so on. In the Muslim tradition Khidr is alive and well and continues to guide the perplexed and those who invoke his name

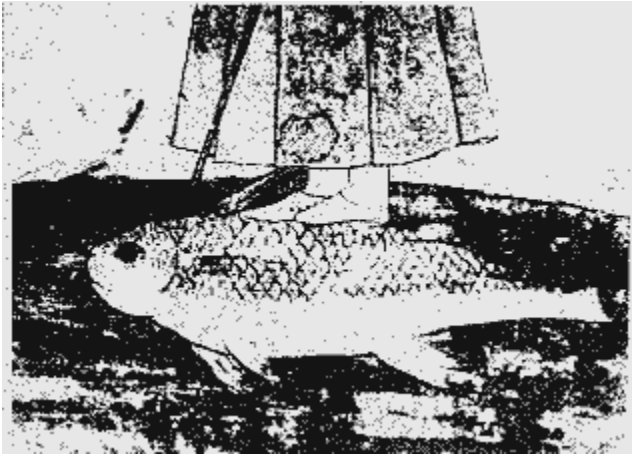
## **Sura al-Kahf: Moses seeks al-Khadir**

As stated in Sura 18 (*al-Kahf*) of the Holy Qur'ān:

**And Moses said to his servant:** "I will not cease from my wanderings until I have reached the place where the two seas meet, even though I journey for eighty years". But when they had reached the place where the two seas meet, they forgot their fish, and it took its way through a stream to the sea.

And when they had journeyed past this place, Moses said to his servant: "Bring us our breakfast, for we are weary from this journey".

But the other replied: "See what has befallen me! when we were resting there by the rock, I forgot the fish. Only Satan can have put it out of my mind, and in wondrous fashion it took its way to the sea".



In western Asia, Moslem or Hindu symbolic art shows the Saint, Al Khizr, dressed in a green coat being carried on top of the water by a fish which conveys him over the river of life.

Then Moses said: "That is the place we seek". And they went back the way they had come. And they found one of Our servants, whom we had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom. Moses said to him "Shall I follow you, that you may teach me for my guidance some of the wisdom you have learnt?"

But he answered: "You will not bear with me, for how should you bear patiently with things you cannot comprehend?"

Moses said: "If Allah wills, you shall find me patient: I shall not in anything disobey you".

He said: "If you are bent on following me, you must ask no question about anything till I myself speak to you concerning it".

The two set forth, but as soon as they embarked, Moses' companion bored a hole in the bottom of the ship.

"A strange thing you have done! exclaimed Moses, "Is it to drown her passengers that you have bored a hole in her?"

"Did I not tell you", he replied, "that your would not bear with me?"



"Pardon my forgetfulness", said Moses, "Do not be angry with me on this account".

They journeyed on until they fell in with a certain youth. Moses' companion slew him, and Moses said: "You have killed an innocent man who has done no harm. Surely you have committed a wicked crime".

"Did I not tell you", he replied, "that you would not bear with me?"

Moses said: "If ever I question you again, abandon me; for then I should deserve it".

They travelled on until they came to a certain city. They asked the people for some food, but the people declined to receive them as their guests. There they found a well on the point of falling down. The other raised it up, and Moses said; "Had you wished, you could have demanded payment for your labours".

"Now the time has arrived when we must part", said the other, "But first I will explain to you those acts of mine which you could not bear with in patience.

'Know that the ship belong to some poor fishermen. I damaged it because in their rear was a king who was taking every ship by force.

"As for the youth, his parents both are true believers, and we feared lest he should plague them with his wickedness and unbelief. It was our wish that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more righteous and more filial.

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city whose father was an honest man. Beneath it their treasure is buried. Your Lord decreed in His mercy that they should dig out their treasure when they grew to manhood. What I did not done by caprice. That is the meaning of the things you could not bear with in patience ...

The person referred to as "One of our servants, whom We had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom" is the figure of Khidr, "the Verdant One" who plays a pivotal role in Islamic mysticism.

## **Dhul-qarnain (Alexander the Great) and al-Khidr**

The aspect of Khidr-as-Friend is evident in the episode of Dhul-qarnein who in Islamic mysticism is equated with Alexander the Great ("The Two horned One"), and also Moses. Surah 18 (*Kahf*) says:

"They will ask you about Dulqarnein. Say: "I will give you an account of him.

"We made him mighty in the land and gave him means to achieve all things. He journeyed on a certain road until he reached the West and saw the sun setting in a pool of black mud. Hard by he found a certain people.

"Dhulqarnein", We said, "You must either punish them or show them kindness.

He replied: "The wicked" we shall surely punish. Then they shall return to their Lord and be sternly punished by Him. As for those that have faith and do good works, we shall bestow on them a rich reward and deal indulgently with them.

"He then journeyed along another road until he reached the East and saw the sun rising upon a people whom We had utterly exposed to its flaming rays. So he did; and We had full knowledge of all the forces at his command.

"Then he followed yet another route until he came between the Two Mountains and found a people who could barely understand a word.

" Dhulqarnein", they said " Gog and Magog are ravaging this land. Build us a rampart against them and we will pay you tribute."

"He replied: "The power which my Lord has given me is better than any tribute. Lend me a force of labourers, and I will raise a rampart between you and them. Come, bring me blocks of iron."

"He dammed up the valley between the Two Mountains, and said: "Ply your bellows." And when the iron blocks were red with heat, he said: "Bring me molten brass to pour on them."

"Gog and Magog could not scale it, nor could they dig their way through it. He said: "This is a blessing from my Lord. But when my Lord's promise is fulfilled, He will level it to dust. The promise of my Lord is true."

On that day We will let them come in tumultuous throngs. The Trumpet shall be sounded and We will gather them all together.



**Al-Khadir (right) and companion Zul-Qarnain (al-Sikandar) marvel at the sight of a salted fish that comes back to life when touched by the Water of Life. "When Alexander sought he did not find what Khizr found unsought" (Sikandar Nâma LXIX.75).**

On that day Hell shall be laid bare before the unbelievers, who have turned a blind eye to My admonition and a deaf ear to My warning.

Courtesy: [Allamaiqbal.com](http://Allamaiqbal.com)

# An Ancient God in Modern Turkey: Some Aspects of the Cult of Hizir

Journal of  
American  
Folklore 86  
(1973)  
By Warren S.  
Walker and  
Ahmet E. Uysal  
Texas Tech  
University,  
Lubbock, Texas



Khidr festival in Trabzon, Turkey

After the Prophet Mohammed and the Caliph Ali, the most revered figure among the Turks of Turkey is a Moslem saint named Hizir. Either through personal acquaintance or through hearsay, everyone in Turkey is familiar with the visible form in which Hizir appears to human eyes, that of a frail and aged dervish with a long white beard and sometimes a large white turban. Hizir walks the earth with men more than any other Moslem immortal, and he does so in order to fulfill certain functions peculiarly his own.

Hizir is the last-minute rescuer from disaster, a *deus ex machina*, when all other assistance, natural and supernatural, has failed. Among the many rescues by Hizir that we were told about, one of the most impressive occurred during the Korean War.

When I was serving in the Turkish Brigade in Korea [our informant recalled], a Turkish soldier from my village was confronted by four Chinese soldiers who ordered him to lay down his arms or they would kill him. The young man shouted, ‘Ya Hizir!’ and Hizir

appeared as 100 soldiers to the eyes of the four Chinese. They were so frightened that the Turk was able to take all four of them prisoner. The Americans rewarded him for his bravery that day, and he sent home 40,000 liras to Isis village on behalf of Hizir. A large bridge was built there with this money.

We thanked our informant and promised to visit his village some day to see with our own eyes the bridge financed, indirectly, by Hizir.

Hizir is also the patron saint of travelers, protecting them by his personal intervention from the hardships and hazards of the road. From the many accounts of such protection in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative at Texas Tech University, the following report, dated 1968, may serve as a good example:

A bus full of people was going from Ankara to Samsun [on the Black Sea Coast]. I was a passenger on that bus. Near Havza, where we were passing through a heavy forest, an old man came down a footpath to the road and waved his hand at the bus. The driver stopped the bus and asked the old man what he wanted. The old man looked poor and he was dressed very shabbily. He said he had a sick child at home, in critical condition, and he wanted to take him to a doctor at Havza. The driver agreed to wait, and the old man said he would return within ten minutes, for his house was not far from the road.

The ten minutes passed, Efendi, but there was no sign of the old man and the sick child. We waited another ten minutes, but still no one came. Then several passengers said the old man would not come and urged the bus driver to move on. But the bus did not move, and the driver sat motionless. It was then discovered that he had had a heart attack and was sitting there dead at the wheel. In this way the lives of thirty-five people were saved by Hizir, who had detained the bus for ten important minutes.

Once a year—May 6 on the modern Gregorian calendar but April 23 on the “Old Style” calendar—Hizir is the recipient of all requests, properly submitted, for special favors. In a silent ritual before sunrise on May 6 Turks construct, in their gardens or yards, models of the things they wish for most: a new house, an automobile, a business of one’s own—or anything under the sun that one might wish for. Sometime during the following year, Hizir willing, the request may be granted; if not, one tries again the ensuing year. The founder of a well-known Turkish school credited the building of that institution to the fulfillment of a May 6 prayer to Hizir. A schoolteacher told us that she had realized a lifelong dream of visiting England as a result of a similar request. We have never yet, incidentally, met a Turkish family that did not attribute at least one of its achievements or possessions to the springtime blessing of Hizir.



**Al-Khadir (right) and companion Zul-Qarnain (al-Sikandar) marvel at the sight of a salted fish that comes back to life when touched by the Water of Life. "When Alexander sought he did not find what Khizr found unsought" (Sikandar Nâma LXIX.75).**



**In western Asia, Moslem or Hindu symbolic art shows the Saint, Al Khizr, dressed in a green coat**

The foregoing accounts of Hizir typify those one might elicit from literate, urban Turks in Istanbul, in Ankara, or in Izmir. Move out to the villages, however, and encourage the peasants to talk

being carried on top of the water by a fish which conveys him over the river of life.

about Hizir, and you begin to hear some strange undertones. Visit rural Hizir shrines, often difficult to locate and identify because they are not approved of by the Moslem Establishment, and you become aware of a very definite Hizir cult. They listen to peasant folktales, in which vestiges of primitive myth often survive into the present, and you begin to sense the great antiquity of certain aspects of this Hizir cult.

Hizir may well be one of the oldest gods of the Middle East—pre-Moslem, pre-Christian, pre-Roman, pre-Greek — a vegetation god and a water deity. The Turkish name *Hizir* is transliterated from the Arabic *Al-Kidr*, an epithet that means, literally, ‘The Green One’ or ‘The Green Man.’ (Because of the flexibility of implicit vowels in Arabic, the name appears as *Al-Kadr*, *Al-Kedr*, or *Al-Kidr*. The Jews call him *Hudr*; the Persians, *Kisir*; and the Turks, *Hizir*.) His identity has become obscured by time and by that curious syncretism through which Islam has always appropriated and transmuted elements of surrounding cultures. But in certain contexts, always involving water, the god still puts forth his features sharply and unmistakably.

His presence is most visibly objectified in the long line of shrines that stretches along the Mediterranean coast from Antalya, Turkey, through Syria to the environs of Beirut, Lebanon. Whitewashed stone structures, the larger ones domed and encircled with high steel fencing, they stand at intervals along the shoreline like a system of miniature lighthouses. There is a steady flow of pilgrims to these shrines throughout the year, with the heaviest attendance on July 1, the day on which farmers bring their flocks to be baptized in the sea.

At Arsuz (between Antioch and Iskenderun) 20,000 to 30,000 people participate in this daylong ceremony that climaxes when the salt water turns fresh and everyone wades into the sea, leading approximately a quarter of a million head of livestock. It is an annual fertility rite enacted in high religious fervor. One of our informants who had attended this ceremony at Arsuz testified with solemn oath to the miracle that occurred that day: “By Allah, out there I drank the sea water, and it was as sweet as sherbet.” (By way of parenthesis, it may be observed here that collecting information about rites of this type is usually difficult and often dangerous. Orthodox Islam is strongly opposed to the elevation of Hizir from the role of a saint to that of a god, and thus much of the ritual of the cult has been driven underground, open only to the initiate. Furthermore, many of the larger shrines are controlled by communities of the minority Shi’ite or Alevi sect, which is fiercely protective of the secrecy of all its forms of worship. On July 1, armed guards are posted for miles along the shore to prevent other Moslems and Christian infidels from witnessing the fertility ceremony.)

Our own quest for Hizir has been made entirely through the medium of the current oral tradition in Turkey, and the hypotheses we have advanced have been based on data collected during field trips in recent years. There is also evidence in the written tradition, however, that sheds additional light on this elusive figure, evidence collected and analyzed by Israel Friedlander, Ernest Budge, and other scholars. Although Hizir is not named in the *Koran*, he is universally acknowledged to be the Servant of Allah whose activities are described in Chapter XVIII of that

holy book. In the *Koran* Hizir is shown teaching divine truths to Moses, and he is associated, in what is said by then to be already an old tradition, with the *Abu-Hayat*, or the Water of Life. His immortality, in fact, is time result of his having drunk of the Water of Life. The Koranic account, dating from time seventh century, draws upon two, and perhaps all three, of the earlier versions of this Middle Eastern myth about the Water of Life: (1) the Greek “Alexander Romance” of the fourth century; (2) the Jewish Talmudic legend of Rabbi ben Levi from the third century; and (3) the Sumerian Gilgamesh epic that reaches back to the third millennium B.C. Whether cause or effect (perhaps some of both) of this ancient literary tradition, there is a high correlation in Middle Eastern folktales between time occurrence of the Water of Life motif and the presence of Hizir.

An equally ancient tradition that associates Hizir with water is his identification with the biblical prophet Elijah. In the Old Testament book of I Kings, as in later Talmudic literature, Elijah is pictured primarily as a rainmaker, and to this day hundreds of Elijah Shrines in the Middle East and in Greece testify to his continuing effectiveness in this capacity. Hizir is the Moslem equivalent of Elijah, but, curiously enough, the Turkish folk mind, influenced here as much by the Jewish as by the Arabic tradition, has refused to allow the image of Elijah to be completely assimilated by that of Hizir. Instead, the two exist side by side as doubles, a situation most noticeable in the naming of the Hizir celebration on May 6. It is always called Hizir-Ilyas Day — the Turks usually shorten this name to *Hidrellez*—the *Ilyas* being the Turkish form of the word *Elijah*. Since Hizir and Ilyas are the same, and since both serve the same functions in their respective cultures, the folk imagination must have been at first hard pressed to explain what they were doing together. Several centuries ago—and it is impossible to be more specific than that—it was agreed that Hizir and Elijah met each Hizir-Ilyas Day to reaffirm their agreement about the parts of the world in which each would serve as last-minute rescuer and patron of travelers. Elijah is sometimes said to be the protector of travelers by sea and Hizir of those by land, though the folk are not consistent on this point. They are quite consistent about time location of the meeting place—always on the seashore between dry land and water. (It is often thought to be along the *Shatul Arap*, that stretch of water between the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the open sea.) Having concluded their annual formalities, Hizir and Elijah then proceed, like devout Moslems, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca together.

Still another tradition that both draws upon and contributes to Hizir lore is the “Green George” festival in Greece and other Balkan states. In the rites of spring, the vegetation god “Green George” is represented by a young man clad from head to toe in green leaves. After performing a long series of ritual gestures that symbolize planting, harvesting, and procreation, this surrogate for the god is thrown into the water. Identified at a very early date with Saint George, the pagan “Green George” still survives in countless Christian communities. The “Green George” festival and the Feast of Saint George are celebrated on the same day, and it is no accident that that day is April 23, time day sacred to Hizir on the older calendar.

No one has yet undertaken a thorough study of Hizir in Turkey—or, more accurately, in Asia Minor, for Hizir preceded the Turks in that part of the world by at least 3,000 years. Our exploratory probings have revealed that there is a tremendous body of Hizir lore and legend and that much of it has deep religious significance for the rural Turks who constitute 75 percent of the country’s population. As we have indicated, Hizir seems to us to be associated in the folk

mind with fertility, with the annual renewal of vegetation, and with the seasonal life cycle—all of which are dependent on water, more obviously amid more dramatically so in an arid land. But what are the various forms of sacrifice and ritual practiced by devotees of Hizir? How consciously do modern Turks think of Hizir as the latter-day water god he so clearly is? How do devout Moslems—and most rural Turks are very devout Moslems—rationalize adherence to so primitive a nature cult? These are among the many questions that cannot be answered until considerably more research on the subject has been completed.

## Al-Khadir, Alexander and the Fountain of Life

### *Kataragama's Islamic Legacy*

**In worldwide Islamic tradition**, the story of the prophet or saint known as Khwaja Khadir (Khizr) occupies a role of special distinction. A popular and familiar figure since early pre-Islamic times, al-Khadir (Arabic: 'The Green Man') is reputedly the only soul who has gained life immortal from tasting of the *Ma'ul Hayat* or Fountain of Life once in the distant past, possibly at Kataragama or Khidirgama, 'the home of al-Khadir' according to oral traditions that likewise live on to this day.



Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was depicted in Greek coinage as ram-headed, (Arabic: Zul-Qarnain 'Lord of Two Horns') indicating that he was regarded as a living deity while yet a man. Called in Arabic al-Sikandar or Iskandar, in pan-Indian context the Sikandar name and legend are equally associated with Skanda, the pan-Indian wargod and god of Kataragama.

In spite of the scorn and disbelief evinced by modern-educated Muslims, the great majority of Islamic believers have long accorded the utmost respect toward this mysterious figure whom theologians variously class as a saint, a prophet or even as an angel. Elusive yet omnipresent, al-Khadir has long been said to reveal himself to those who are worthy of his companionship, to whom he transmits the *sirr* or divine secrets. Even today, face-to-face encounters with Khwaja Khadir are not uncommon among Islamic mystics in Sri Lanka and worldwide.

By assembling a composite picture of al-Khadir as he is portrayed in the Holy Qur'an, in Persian literature and pre-Islamic legendary sources, a possible basis for Kataragama's long association with the ever-youthful 'servant of Allah' emerges. Intriguing patterns come to light that relate al-Khadir to Iskandar or Alexander the Great, who may represent the historical archetype from which evolved into the pan-Indian cult of the war god Skanda.



Popular tradition concerning al-Khadir also finds ample support among learned scholars, the *ulema*. Some say that Khizr lived at the time of the biblical prophet Abraham and that he still may be seen at sacred places. According to the Isaba, 882, he was given immortality after a conversation with his friend the archangel Rafa'il in order to establish the true worship of God on earth and to maintain it.

According to *hadith* or canonical account, al-Khadir was seen at the funeral of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (sal) offering condolence to the Prophet's bereaved companions. Khizr lives on an island (al-Tabari, i, 442) or upon a green carpet in the heart of the sea (al-Bukhari, Tafsir, sura 18, bab 3). He can find water beneath the ground and talks the language of all peoples (al-Suri). Others say that he can make himself invisible at will. Khizr and the biblical prophet Elijah perform haj annually and often appear in the disguise of bedawis. Both are entrusted with the duty of protecting travelers on their journeys. Elsewhere, al-Khadir's realm is an earthly paradise within the human world where Khadir rules over saints and angels; known as Yuh (also a name of the sun), it is situated in the far North.

According to early Islamic historians, Khizr was the vizier (Arabic: *wazir*) of Zul-qarnain, 'The Two-Horned', who is generally considered to be identical with Alexander the Great of Macedonia (4th cent. BC). Al- Baizawi says, "He was Sikandar ar-Rumi, King of Persia and Greece." Says al-Qastalani, the commentator on al-Bukhari, "Zul-qarnain was a king named Sikandar, whose wazir or chancellor was Khizr."

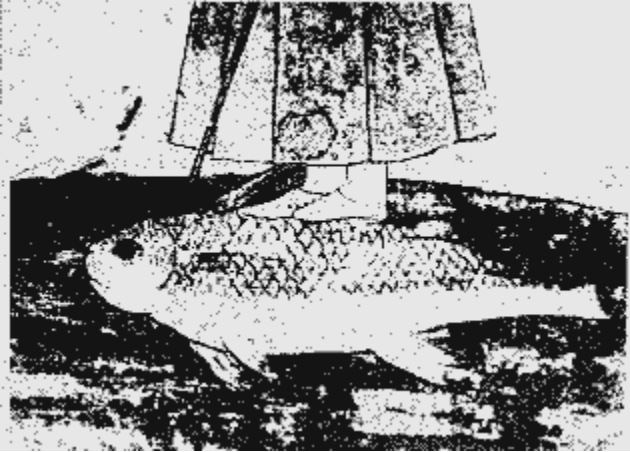
In Islamic tradition, al-Sikandar or Iskandar is recalled as a saintly leader or prophet whose armies conquered both East and West. Together with Khizr, who is variously portrayed as Alexander's cook, vizier or general leading the vanguard of his troops, Alexander is represented as having set out to reach the End of the World or the Land of Darkness in search of the Water of Life. "Alexander is guided by Khizr, but when they come to a parting of the ways, each follows a different path, and Khizr alone accomplishes the quest.

"Nizami attributes Iskandar's failure to his eagerness (deliberately, in planned fashion) whereas in the case of Khizr 'the Water of Life arrived unsought.'" Khizr the cook, general or vizier did so naturally and in the course of duty, whereas Alexander was following his 'own' plan, i.e. with a sense of personal accomplishment or authorship. In this sense, Iskandar failed in the grail quest because he was, as it were, seeking to set himself up as a divinity, a purely hypothetical partner to Allah, Who alone is real. In contrast, Khizr found the Water of Life without even suspecting it.

In the Holy Qur'an, passages concerning al-Khadir and Zul-qarnain occur in the eighteenth Sura called, significantly, Kahlf (Arabic: 'cave'; cf. Sanskrit *Guha* 'cave', also a name of Skanda), a compendium of mystical secrets revealed in response to three questions about legendary figures put to the Prophet Mohammed (sal) by skeptical Jewish doctors. One concerns the legend of time-traveling sleepers sealed up in a cave.

## **Idris and al-Khidr**

**The Biblical Idris** is Enoch (Genesis V/23) who lived for 365 years on earth, a healer, teacher, one well versed in sciences and the arts and one whom God took unto himself. The consonants of the word *Enoch*, mean 'initiated'. Hebrew *Hanoch* means initiator or opener of the inner eye.



In western Asia, Moslem or Hindu symbolic art shows the Saint, Al Khizr, dressed in a green coat being carried on top of the water by a fish which conveys him over the river of life.

**The Koranic Idris** is al-Khidr who appears in Sura 18/66 (*Al Kalf*, The Cave), where Moses and his attendant go on a long journey to a point where two rivers met, a point to be seen even though the march would take them ages. According to revelation received by Prophet Mohammad, they meet a personage who is "one of our slaves, unto whom we had taught knowledge peculiar to us" (*wa 'allainnahu min ladunna ilmy*). This phrase alone categorically asserts the transmission of *theosophia* or divine wisdom down the ages, through Divine Guides or Teachers as the word *rusted* implies in the question Moses asks him: May I follow you on the understanding that you, a *rusted* teach me, what you have been taught?"

What were the hallmarks of the teachings of the *hanifs* or illuminati?

1. Laws of involutory and evolutionary cycles.
2. Laws of emanation and manifestation.
3. Science of the heart-mind (*qalb*)
4. Science of Light (*hikmat al-ilraq*)
5. The spiritual communion with the hierarchial Beings.

The periodical manifestation of Light called Logos, Christ or Word in Christianity, Buddha in Buddhism. Teerthamkara in Jainism, is termed *qutb* in Islam. Ali al Hujwiri in *Khashf al Mahajab* writes of such a hierarchy; "Besides the *Qutb* or Axis of the Universe, are three called Ifuqaba, four Awtad, seven Abrar". Ibn al-Arabi too refers to seven *Abdal*.

It is significant that over and over again, the Quran uses the words *We*, *Our*, *Us*. The sense of preservers of the cosmic order can be attributed to these words. Sura xxxvii/164 As-Saffat, Those Who Set the Ranks, reads:

There is not one of Us but hath his known position  
Lo! We, even We are They who set the ranks."

The Greeks call al-Khadir, Hormux (Hermes) the adept and Initiator into the Temple Mysteries of the Great Pyramid. Isaiah 19/2 of the old Testament refers to this Pyramid Temple as the "altar to the Lord in the middle of Egypt". Hermes, known to the Arabs as Idris, was called Enoch by the Hebrews.

The Spanish Arab historian Said of Toledo (d. 1069) said:

“Sages affirm that all antediluvian sciences originate with the first Hermes who lived in Said in upper Egypt.”

Idris, Enoch, al Khidr and Hermes all seem to be one person. This guide al-Khidr initiates Moses into deeply esoteric lore. The Ijraj Ilhami, in Hadith traditions, consider al-Khadir as a holy being, mysterious and immortal whom all spiritual initiatory orders revere as the Master of the Path (Tariqa). Al-Khidr is often mentioned as the Green Angel Guide in Islamic writings. In fact, in Egyptian frescoes he is some times painted green with the head of an ibis.

Al-Khidr can most certainly be connected as the head of the ancient school of the Prophets, el-Khadoras on Mt Carmel (modern Haifa). This sacred mount is mentioned as having been handed back with endowment by Thutmose III in the 1449 B.C. documents which recorded his conquest of the region. He was a great initiate himself. Iamblichus, the Syrian philosopher, calls it the most holy of all mountains, forbidden of access to the profane. The Prophets Elijah, Elisha and Samuel are all recorded to have visited the schools for disciples at Naioth, Bethel and Jericho.

A very valuable text was among others withdrawn by the official circles of the Church from public use. It was the Apocalypse of Elias - a very sacred text of the mystic order of Nazarenes or Essenes, to which order Joseph, Mary, John the Baptist and Jesus himself belonged. Fortunately in 1893 Maspero discovered a Coptic translation of it in the monastic archives of the Brotherhood in Upper Egypt. It gave many details of the school of prophets where the ancient wisdom was imparted at Al Khador.

From *Theosophy and Islam*, by Theja Gunawardhana

[Home](#)

## A Parable of Blessing

### [The Significance and Message of the Qur'anic Account of 'The Companions of the Cave'](#)

#### [The Parable of 'The Companions of the Cave' in Context](#)

**The eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an**, entitled “The Sūra of the Cave” (*Sūrat al-Kahf*) has long been recognized among Muslims to be a goldmine of spiritual riches and guidance for those who would recite it, contemplate it, and thereby plumb the depths of meaning contained therein.

Its virtues are extolled in a number of *hadiths*. According to one of these, this *sūra* was “spread abroad by 70,000 angels.” Another proclaims that “whoever recites the *sūra* of the Companions of the Cave on Friday will have all of his sins forgiven until the following Friday, plus three days more, he will be given light that reaches to Heaven, and he will be protected from the temptations of the Anti-Christ (*al-dajjāl*).”

Al-Tha’lab relates on the authority of Samurah ibn Jundub that the Prophet once said, “Whoever recites ten verses of *Sūrat al-Kahf* from memory will not be harmed by the wiles of the Anti-Christ, and he who recites the entire *sūra* will enter Paradise.” Moreover, given that the crowning miracle of Islam “is not the incarnation of God, but a book,”<sup>3</sup> the central importance of this *sūra* may be seen in the striking parallel drawn by one author between the Friday recitation of *sūra* 18 and the Christian liturgy of the Eucharist. “In Islam the Body is the book, and the part that represents the whole is *sūra* 18.”<sup>4</sup>

*Sūra* 18 begins with an introductory section which sets forth the themes which recur throughout the *sūra* as a whole. The focus of the present study is the parable of “the Companions of the Cave” (*ahl al-kalf*) in verses 9-26. This parable is followed by a series of exhortations to the Prophet concerning truth-telling, forbearance toward believers, and promises of rewards to the faithful (vv. 27-31), after which he is urged to relate another parable (*mathal*) concerning... [incomplete]

---

This article appeared in *The Muslim World* Vol. LXXXIII, No. 3-4, July-October, 1993

## The Green Prophet, Khizr: Islam's Patron Saint of Cannabis

**"To the follower of Islam the holy spirit in bhang... is the spirit of the great prophet Khizr, or Elijah."**

As noted by Joseph Campbell over a century ago, in his epic 1894 study for the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission, *On The Religion of Hemp*: "To the follower of Islam the holy spirit in bhang... is the spirit of the great prophet Khizr, or Elijah." That bhang should be sacred to Khizr is natural, as Khizr means green, the revered color of the cooling water of bhang. So the Urdu poet sings "When I quaff fresh bhang I liken its color to the fresh light down of thy youthful beard."

Islam inherited Khizr from many earlier myths, as can be seen from stories that associate him with such luminary figures as Moses and Alexander the Great. By medieval times he came to represent the type of esoteric knowledge which breaks the trance of everyday existence through shock, usually in the form of outrage, laughter, or both at once.

Wilson explains that Khizr was seen as "the initiator of Sufis who have no human master." In the 1990 book *Green Man*, William Anderson describes Khizr as "the voice of inspiration to the true aspirant and committed artist. He can come as a white

light or the gleam of a blade of grass, but more often as an inner mood. The sign of his presence is the ability to work or experience with tireless enthusiasm beyond one's normal capacities."

In his 1993 book *Sacred Drift, Essays on the Margins of Islam*, Peter Wilson writes "When you say the name of Khezr in company you should always add the greeting Salaam alieikum! since he may be there... immortal and anonymous, engaged on some karmic errand. Perhaps he'll hint of his identity by wearing green, or by revealing knowledge of the occult and hidden. But he's something of a spy, and if you have no need to know he's unlikely to tell you. Still, one of his functions is to convince skeptics of the existence of the Marvelous, to rescue those who are lost in deserts of doubt and dryness. So he's needed now more than ever, and surely still moves among us playing his great game."

Originally a sort of vegetation spirit in whose footprints plants and flowers were said to magically sprout, Wilson explains that "nowadays Khezr might well be induced to reappear as the patron of modern militant eco-environmentalism... Khadirian Environmentalism would rejoice simultaneously both in [Nature's] utter wildness and its 'meaningfulness.' Nature as tajalli (the 'shining through' of the divine into creation; the manifestation of each thing as divine light), Nature as an aesthetic of realization."

With the wealth of esoteric lore, environmental products and medicines sprouting from the renaissance of his beloved cannabis, it seems that Khizr is once again trying to communicate to humanity through his most holy of plants.

Interestingly, there are legends of Khizr in which he is dismembered and reborn. As well, certain prophecies connect him with the end of time and the revealing of esoteric truths.

## **The Coming of Mystery Imam al-Mahdi**



His Holiness Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani

## A Turkish Grandsheikh visits Kataragama each year to look for signs of the coming of a saviour

---

**In this age** of unrest and accelerating change, modern social and political pundits have been left behind by the rapid pace of events. A new world order is on the cards, all agree. But war clouds loom over the horizon in the current Mideast and modern textbooks offer little solace to the common man, let alone to world leaders in a period of deepening crisis.

In such a time as this, thoughtful men and women pray for a godsend, the clear voice of inspired guidance and direction. With the whole world now inching to the brink of fully modern war and masses of people clamoring for one thing and another thing, today it is welcome for sages and saints to return to public life after many long years of obscurity.

**His Holiness Sheikh Nazim Adil Al-Haqqani**, world leader of the **Naqshbandhia Order**, is respected as a servant of Allah throughout the Islamic world. A native of the island of Cyprus and Turkish by descent, the radiant, blue-eyed Moulana ('wise one') is a striking figure in mullah's robes and white turban crowned with the green pointed *kulah* cap of Naqshbandhi *sheikh* (literally, 'old man').

Almost fifty years ago, he was a biochemistry student living in Istanbul when *kismet* (destiny) struck and made him to have change of heart. He left everything and set out to find a *sheikh* or spiritual guide.

In Damascus he met Grand Sheikh Abdullah Daghistani, the thirty-ninth sheikh in the Golden Chain beginning from the Prophet Muhammad. For twenty-two years, Sheikh Nazim performed *haj* annually. Finally, his Grand Sheikh told him to "Take Islam to Europe." From England and Germany his following has expanded to Asian countries including, for the last five years, Sri Lanka.

Each year Sheikh Nazim and his *mureeds* (disciples) go to Kataragama to pray at the mosque and shrine and to look for signs of [al-Khidr](#), the mysterious undying teacher of Islam who, according to local belief, is the presiding spirit of *Khidr-gama* or **Kataragama**.



HH Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani with mureeds in Cinnamon Gardens, Colombo, in October 1990

Earlier this month, the Moulana and his *mureeds* from East and West left Sri Lanka after a hectic fortnight of travel, prayer, and speaking engagements. Before he left, I was privileged to accompany Sheikh Nazim for the final four days of his visit here.

During that time, many like myself heard His Holiness speak in English and Arabic about issues that deeply affect every human being, whether Muslim or otherwise.

With Sheikh Nazim's kind permission, I record here just a few of his remarkable utterances that spring from a heart immersed in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet (Sal). Expressed in simple English, they deliver a message to all that even greater changes may be expected shortly.

"I am not a teacher or lecturer," he says with typically self-effacing modesty. "I am only a humble servant of Almighty Allah."

"I am happy that Almighty Allah has willed that I come to Serendib, to your honoured island even though

"I am now in my seventies, and to be with you. You must believe that I am a knowing person. If a person knows, you don't say that he believes."

"I am also one of the people who are expecting a saviour and who is looking in the morning and in the evening to hear his news. That is the only news that I am waiting for."





**Above:** Kataragama Mosque & Shrine.

**Below:** His Holiness Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani with murids, seen here within Khidr Maqaam at Kataragama.



He has informed us of these very signs passing before our eyes and fast approaching.

"For all the people he will appear in the Great War. The Great War will break out between East and West. These will be very difficult days for mankind. There will be very strong fighting. Very many people will be killed."

"Then the Lord will command al-Mahdi Alaihi as-Salam to appear. Now he is in a cave, in a big, deep cave. No one can approach it. *Jinns* (genies) are protecting and guarding him."

## Arrival of Anti-Christ

" As believers of the traditions, we believe in a saviour who will come first, before Jesus Christ. We have in our traditions his name, which is **Muhammad d'ul Mahdi.**"

"He is coming, but his arrival will be after a great war. It will be the fight of the big powers with each other.

And in that war the saviour will come like a divine hand from heavens to the earth and stop the war."

" After a short time a tyrant will appear, well-known through traditions as the Anti-Christ. When Jesus Christ was on earth he never touched a sword, but now he is coming as a saviour. In his time all technology will be finished."

"His sword can reach any point to where He sends it. It is a miraculous sword, a heavenly sword. His Lord gave it to Him. He will save the people from the hands of the Anti-Christ."

"We are getting closer to **al-Qiyamah**, the Day of Resurrection. There will be a day when the people are going to be in the Divine Presence of Allah Almighty.



Archangel Gabriel blowing his horn

"Mahdi Alaihi as-Salam and his ninety-nine Caliphs are there (in the Empty Quarter of Arabia). They are waiting and expecting the Holy command of Allah Almighty to appear. And his appearance should be soon, Inshallah."

"When he comes, he will say, **Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar** (Allah is the Greatest) and this will be heard from East to West without a doubt."

Speaking at Cinnamon Gardens after Jumma prayers recently, Sheikh Nazim said he was "very happy to be in Serendib as a pillar of understanding and peace for everyone." He warned, however, that the spirit of Shaitan was alive and working herein Sri Lanka in recent years and that it was the duty of good people when they saw the mischief-makers to catch them. Justice and faith, he said would give them the strength to do this.

"In our times the devils are establishing their kingdom on this planet -from East to West and from North to South, We (mankind) are supporters of their kingdom, We are supporters, strong supporters. Soon huge events will come on earth because we are supporting Satan and his kingdom,"

"Therefore the saviours, Mahdi and Jesus Christ must come. And they will destroy the kingdom of devils on earth,"

"There is only one Commander in the entire universe and everyone must follow His Commands. No one can command Him. He commands all. The angels are also absolutely under the Divine Command."

"Our *nafs* (ego) forces us to obey it, not to obey Allah Almighty or anyone else. In order to overcome this, we have been ordered to fight the ego. That is the Jihad-ul Akbar, the greatest holy war."

"The ego always wants to do the opposite of what Allah Almighty orders, just the opposite thing. Therefore there can be no agreement with the *nafs* because the *nafs* is against its Creator and against all prophets. Its friendship is with Shaitan only,"

"You Muslims must keep yourself far away from *fitna* (strife and commotion). You must be obedient to Allah Almighty and to His beloved Prophet. Whoever comes to power in Sri Lanka must take care for you well. Don't worry, the Prophet's word is the best and true one, This news I am conveying to you of the coming days for Muslims,"

"This country, this Ceylon-Serendib is a holy country. So many saints always come and go. The spiritual power must be in this land. Serendib is like a busy airport, so many saints are always going and coming. You are lucky people."

"Allah Almighty turned Adam and Eve out of paradise and sent them to Serendib. He sent His *nabis* (prophets) to Serendib to guide you. Now soon time is coming for the Beloved One."

"That day is coming when East and West will recognize that Allah is God without any second, without any partner. One person's physical body cannot do that, It must be a universal personality. He is the greatest one, coming with a big weapon to take away all the rubbish that is mankind's lack of respect. It is a divine seal from heaven passing through each and every heart. May Allah forgive us for our bad doings towards His prophets."

"There are people in this world whose feelings are dead, They are becoming like rocks or robots without any feelings. Dogs are happy and they are glorifying their Lord, You can't find any creature, not even ants, who are not glorifying God. And you, mankind! You are not glorifying your Lord!"

"Mahdi is the descendant of the Holy Prophet (Sal) in the fortieth generation. The fortieth. Now he is living, but he is not with people, It is impossible for people to look at him because he has such a heavy power,"

Implying that the current Mideast crisis could erupt into the long-expected Armageddon war, Sheikh Nazim urged all mu'minin (believers) to stay calm and be happy, The unbelievers rushing about at that time, he says, will be blown away by the gale of the Spmt that is coming soon.

"Our Holy Prophet (Sal) said, "Oh people, in the days of *fitna*, if you hear of something happening, stay away from it, And if you are seated, do not get up even to see what is going on there, because he who is seated is in safety. Whoever walks towards *fitna* to look at what is happening is going to get caught in it. It is dangerous, so please keep away, Oh people."

But Sheikh Nazim says there is a guarantee for people during the great war of Armageddon:

"There are three points. If they are kept, the person cannot be hurt in the wars. First: it is impossible for those who deny the Creator to survive. Second: cruel people will not survive. Third: envious people, the enemies of mankind, will not survive."

"It is impossible for believers to be killed during Armageddon or for people with good actions and good intentions to be killed. That is impossible. But those who harm humanity and have enemies and are denying the Creator, they must be killed. That is their punishment."

"The highest degree (of *islam*, 'surrender') is to give up your will to your Lord and to say 'As You Like!'"

### **Huge events in a short time**

"On this radar screen they have just appeared. We are expecting it to come down, but it could be in a few years. The General of Staff of the friends of Allah knows. Because one of them is commanding. He comes from the heavens. And we are now waiting for that which will happen. Huge events will come in a very short period of time."

"We know that this world is being prepared for huge appearances. In a short while there will be a common change, physically and then spiritually. Time is now over. All nations and all mankind are being prepared for something that is approaching soon. **These are huge events, unexpected huge events.**"

"If an announcement is made from the East to the West that a ruby the size of a big ball is to be found in the mountains of Sri Lanka, who would trouble to look for it? There is in fact such a ruby to be found and it shall be brought out when Mahdi Alaihi as-Salam comes. So many things will come out, when Mahdi comes."

A novel aspect of Sheikh Nazim's prophetic vision is his prediction that all technology, currently in the service of Shaitan, shall turn back upon itself. The very weapons of Shaitan -- the Devil's own tricks -- will also be his own undoing.

"It will not be a secret appearance. He (Mahdi) will appear with power, with so much power that everything will be taken away that technology is supporting and people are trusting in. He is coming with miraculous powers and he will open the seed of faith and make it grow up in the hearts of the people."

"Everything, every bomb is under control. None of them will go off without control. Every warhead on every missile as a *jinn* (genie). They are all under the command of al-Mahdi."

"We Muslims do not need to carry pistols or machine guns. There is a need for this for Muslims today because they have no *Imam* ('pillar' or exemplary leader). There should be one Imam for all believers and for the whole Islamic world, not many kings and presidents like today.

"That is the united way that is known through our Shariah (laws) and that is to have one Islamic world and one person to command and the rest must obey. Only this Imam may declare war or fighting."

"In the last days so many men will be killed that for one man there will be forty women. This is because men are mostly cruel people. So they will die and the women will survive."

"The Grand sheikh used to say that from every seven six will die and one will remain. When Mahdi comes he will bring so many new people with him who will be coming from around this earth. There are so many unknown worlds around from our world."

"If you don't like to live in Sri Lanka and if you are not happy with the laws in Sri Lanka, then leave. It is a big and wide *dunya* (world)."

" Anyone who runs away from the Truth (*al-Haq*) will be punished. They will punish themselves by themselves. Who comes to the truth will be in safety."

"Who are the true ones? They are the ones who promised to Allah on the Day of Promises, saying "You are our Lord and we are Your servants, only Your servants."

"They were the ones who did not change this promise to become servants of their egos, or servants of *dunya*, or servants of Shaitan. They are the servants of Almighty Allah only."



# Khidr

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Khidr** or **al-Khidr** (Arabic: الخضر *al-Khidr*; also transcribed as **Khidr**, **Khizr**, **Khyzer**, **Qeezr**, **Qhezr**, **Qhizyer**, **Qhezar**, **Khizar**, **Xızır**, **Hızır**) is a mystical figure that some believe to be described in the Quran as a righteous servant of God possessing great wisdom or mystic knowledge. In various Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, Khidr is described as a messenger, prophet, wali or in some cases as a deity who takes the worldly place of an otherwise passive God. The figure of al-Khidr has been syncretized over time with various other figures including Vishnu in India, Sorūsh in Iran, Saint Sarkis the Warrior and John the Baptist in Armenia, Saint George in Asia Minor and the Levant, etc.<sup>[1]</sup>

Because of the linguistic similarities between the name "al-khidr" and the Arabic word for green ("al-akhdar"), the meaning of the name is often taken colloquially and sometimes academically to be "the Green One" or "the Verdant One." Some scholars disagree with this assessment, however the some others point to a possible reference to the Mesopotamian figure Utnapishtum from the Epic of Gilgamesh through the Arabization of his nickname, "Hasisatra". According to a new view the name Khidr is not an Arabic variant or an abbreviation of Hasisatra, it directly comes from the name of the Canaanite god Kothar-wa-Khasis<sup>[2]</sup> and it may be later assimilated to Arabic term al-akhdar.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Contents

- 1 Quranic narrative
- 2 Reports in the Hadith
- 3 Islamic perspectives
  - 3.1 In Shia Islam
  - 3.2 In Sufism
  - 3.3 In Ahmadiyya
- 4 In Zoroastrianism
- 5 Al-Khidr in "The History of al-Tabari"
- 6 Comparative mythology
- 7 In popular culture

**al-Khidr**



17th century Mughal painting of al Khidr

**Mystic, Green One, The Verdant One, Teacher of the Prophets**

**Honored in** Islamic and Islamicate area

**Influenced** Countless future Sufi saints and mystics

- 8 Ugaritic god Kothar-wa-Khasis
- 9 Ritualistic murder and the origins of the cult of Khidr
- 10 The astrological representations of the Khidr as a mythical character
- 11 See also
- 12 Notes
- 13 References
- 14 External links

## Quranic narrative

In chapter 18, verses 65–82, Moses meets the Servant of God, referred in the Quran as "one from among Our friend whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves".<sup>[4]</sup>

Muslim scholars identify him as al-Khidr, although he is not explicitly named in the Quran and there is no reference to him being immortal or being especially associated with esoteric knowledge or fertility.<sup>[5]</sup> These associations come in later scholarship on al-Khidr.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Quran states that they meet at the junction of the two seas and Moses asks for permission to accompany the Servant of God so Moses can learn "right knowledge of what [he has] been taught".<sup>[7]</sup> The Servant informs him in a stern manner that their knowledge is of different nature and that "Surely you [Moses] cannot have patience with me. And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?"<sup>[8]</sup> Moses promises to be patient and obey him unquestioningly, and they set out together. After they board a ship, the Servant of God damages the vessel. Forgetting his oath, Moses says, "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing." The Servant reminds Moses of his warning, "Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?" and Moses pleads not to be rebuked.

Next, the Servant of God kills a young man. Moses again cries out in astonishment and dismay, and again the Servant reminds Moses of his warning, and Moses promises that he will not violate his oath again, and that if he does he will excuse himself from the Servant's presence. They then proceed to a town where they are denied hospitality. This time, instead of harming anyone or anything, the Servant of God restores a decrepit wall in the village. Yet again Moses is amazed and violates his oath for the third and last time, asking why the Servant did not at least exact "some recompense for it!"

The Servant of God replies, "This shall be separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience. Many acts which seem to be evil, malicious or somber, actually are merciful. The boat was damaged to prevent its owners from falling into the hands of a king who seized every boat by force. And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them. God will replace the child with one better in purity, affection and obedience. As for the restored wall, the Servant explained that underneath the wall was a treasure belonging to two helpless orphans whose father was a righteous man. As God's envoy, the Servant restored the wall, showing God's kindness by rewarding the piety of the orphans' father, and so that when the wall becomes weak again and collapses, the orphans will be older and stronger and will take the treasure that belongs to



Dome of Al-Khidr, Temple Mount, Old City of Jerusalem.

them."

## Reports in the Hadith

Among the strongest transmitted proofs about the life of al-Khidr are two reports, one narrated by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Al-Zuhd* whereby Muhammad is said to have stated that Elijah and al-Khidr meet every year and spend the month of Ramadan in Jerusalem and the other narrated by Ya'qub ibn Sufyan from Umar II whereby a man he was seen walking with was actually al-Khidr. Ibn Hajar declared the claim of the first fair and that of the second sound in *Fath al-Bari* (1959 ed. 6:435). He goes on to cite another sound report narrated by Ibn 'Asakir from Abu Zur'a al-Razi whereby the latter met al-Khidr twice, once in his youth, the other in old age, but al-Khidr himself had not changed.

al-Khidr is believed to be a man who has the appearance of a young adult but a long, white beard. According to some authors like Abdul Haq Vidhyarthi, al-Khidr is Xerxes (not to be confused with Xerxes I), who disappeared after being in the lake regions of Sistan that comprise the wetlands of the Irano-Afghan border today, and after finding the fountain of life, sought to live his entire remaining life in service of God and to help those in their path/journey to Him.

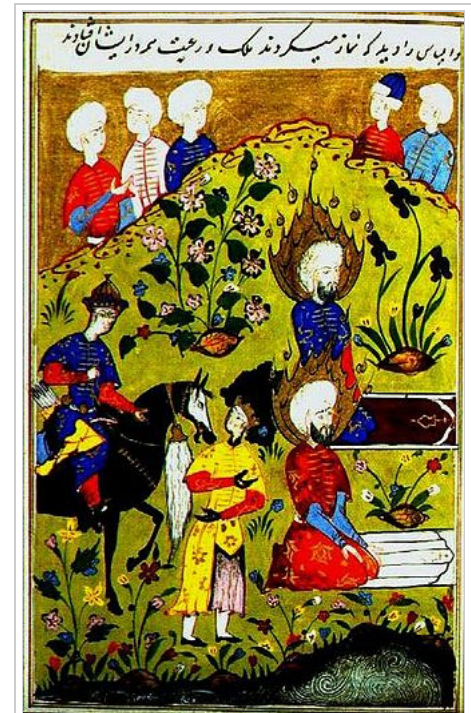
Muhammad al-Bukhari reports that al-Khidr got his name after he was present over the surface of some ground that became green as a result of his presence there. There are reports from al-Bayhaqi that al-Khidr was present at the funeral of Muhammad and was recognized only by Ali from amongst the rest of the companions, and where he came to show his grief and sadness at the death of Muhammad. Al-Khidr's appearance at Muhammad's funeral is related as follows: *A powerful-looking, fine-featured, handsome man with a white beard came leaping over the backs of the people till he reached where the sacred body lay. Weeping bitterly, he turned toward the Companions and paid his condolences. Ali said that he was Khidr.*<sup>[9]</sup>

In another narration al-Khidr met with Ali by the Kaaba and instructed him about a supplication that is very meritorious when recited after the obligatory prayers. It is reported by Imam Muslim that during the time when the false Messiah appears and as he approaches at the outskirts of the city of Medina, a believer would challenge him, whom the false Messiah will slice into two piece and rejoin, making it appear that he caused him to die and be resurrected, to which this man would proclaim the falsehood of the Dajjal who would try again to kill him (or make show of it) but would fail and thus his weakness and inability being made revealed. According to the commentators and transmitters of this narration the person who will challenge the Antichrist and humiliate him will be al-Khidr.

## Islamic perspectives

### In Shia Islam

Many Shia Muslims believe al-Khidr accompanied the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, in meeting one Sheikh Hassan ibn Muthlih Jamkarani, on 22 February 984 CE (17 Ramadan 373 A.H.) and instructing him to



A Persian manuscript depicting Elijah and al-Khidr praying together from an illuminated manuscript version of *Stories of the Prophets*.



build a mosque at that site of their meeting, known as Jamkaran.<sup>[10]</sup> The site, six kilometers east of Qom, Iran, has been a pilgrimage destination for the Shia for some time. In the last few years, however, it has become very popular, particularly with young people, and drawn crowds of tens of thousands.<sup>[11]</sup>

In Ismailism, al-Khiḍr is of greater importance as one of the 'Permanent Imams'; that is those who guide people through the ages of history.<sup>[12]</sup>

## In Sufism

To Sufis, al-Khiḍr holds a very dear place. Although amongst the Sunni scholars there is a difference of opinion about him being still alive, amongst Sunni Sufis there is almost a consensus that al-Khiḍr is still alive, with many respected figures and shaykhs, and prominent leaders claiming having had personal encounters with him. Examples of those who have claimed this are Abdul-Qadir Gilani, al-Nawawi, Ibn Arabi, Sidi Abdul Aziz ad-Dabbagh and Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi. Ibn Ata Allah's *Lata'if al-Minan* (1:84-98) states that there is consensus among the Sufis that al-Khiḍr is alive. In fact there are orders that claim origin with al-Khiḍr himself, or that al-Khiḍr was part of their chain, for example some of the Naqshbandi, the Muhammadiyyah, the Idrisiyya, and the Senussi are tariqat that had al-Khiḍr as one of the central figures connecting them to the spiritual outflow of Muhammad.

In Sufi tradition, al-Khiḍr has come to be known as one of those who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation. He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path, like some of those from the Uwaisi tariqa. Uwaisis are those who enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master. Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint al-Khiḍr.

al-Khiḍr has had thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role as an initiator. Through this way come several Sufi orders which claim initiation through al-Khiḍr and consider him their master. Al-Khiḍr had thus come to symbolize access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself. In the writings of Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khiḍr rules over 'the Men of the Unseen' (*rijalu'l-ghayb*)— the exalted saints and angels. Al-Khiḍr is also included among what in classical Sufism are called the "abdāl" ('those who take turns'). In Sufi hierarchy, "abdāl" is a mysterious rank. It is thought in Sufism that God decides who will be abdal for a decade before an abdal is born. Adbals are thought as the gainers of mysterious power that is knowing the future also called Ilm-e-ladunni. They are deployed to protect Islam from some unwanted evil activities that threaten the existence of Islam. In a divinely-instituted hierarchy of such saints, al-Khiḍr holds the rank of their spiritual head.

The Sri Lankan Sufi Bawa Muhaiyaddeen gives a unique account of al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr was on a long search for God, until God, out of his mercy, sends the Archangel Gabriel to guide him. Gabriel appears to al-Khiḍr as a wise human sage, and al-Khiḍr accepts him as his teacher. Gabriel teaches al-Khiḍr much in the same way as al-Khiḍr later teaches Moses in the Quran, by carrying out seemingly unjust actions. Al-Khiḍr repeatedly breaks his oath not to speak out against Gabriel's actions, and is still unaware that the human teacher is actually Gabriel. Gabriel then explains his actions, and reveals his true angelic form to al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr recognises him as the Archangel Gabriel, and then Gabriel bestows a spiritual title upon al-Khiḍr, by calling him *Hayat Nabi*, the Eternal Life Prophet.

The French scholar of Sufism, Henry Corbin, interprets al-Khiḍr as the mysterious prophet, the eternal wanderer. The function of al-Khiḍr as a 'person-archetype' is to reveal each disciple to himself, to lead each disciple to his own theophany, because that theophany corresponds to his own 'inner heaven,' to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality. Accordingly, al-Khiḍr is Moses' spiritual guide, who initiates Moses into

the divine sciences, and reveals to him the secret mystic truth.

## In Ahmadiyya

Ahmadiyya identifies al-Khidr to be the symbolic representation of Muhammad himself. Ahmadis believe that the Quranic passage of Moses' encounter with the "Servant of God" is closely linked, contextually to the subject matter of surah Al Kahf in which his story or parable is cited. According to Ahmadi exegesis on al-Kahf, which draws upon external and internal, religious and historical evidence to show that Moses' journey towards, and his experience with the "servant of God" was not physical but by way of vision, similar to the Mi'raj (ascension) of Muhammad.

The righteous 'servant of God' otherwise known as al-Khidr is not believed to be a historical figure but rather a symbolic figure who signifies the person of Muhammad whom Moses had desired to see and whom he saw in this vision. Muhammad has been called the 'servant of God' in many places within the Quran and is believed to be the servant of God par excellence who has been called a mercy to the whole world;<sup>[13]</sup> he is also believed to have been vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure.

The place of the meeting of the two seas signifies the time when the Mosaic dispensation meets the Islamic dispensation, i.e. when the Judaic dispensation will be superseded by the Islamic one.<sup>[14]</sup>

The first action of "the servant of God" of making a hole in the boat is interpreted as signifying the commandments laid down by Muhammad which would, as it were make a hole in the boat, which in spiritual terms denotes worldly riches, i.e. he would see to it that wealth is fairly distributed and does not accumulate in the hands of a few. The "poor people" to whom the boat belonged represent the Muslims, and making a hole in it means that Islam would exhort its followers to spend in the way of God by way of Zakat and charity that would seem to be a source of economic weakness, but in fact would be one of economic strength and prosperity.

The tyrant king who confiscates the boats were the Byzantine and Persian Empires who would have seized Arabia had it not seemed to them a poor and barren land not worth conquering. Thus the Arabian land in which Muhammad was to appear, represented as the damaged boat had been safeguarded from being conquered or "taken by force".

The youth, is interpreted as ignorance, strength and wild impulses, thus the second action of the "servant of God", the killing of the youth signifies that the teachings of his religion would require its followers to bring about a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions. The source of these carnal desires, impulses and passions is the human body and soul combined, from which all moral qualities spring. Islamic theology holds that every human is born virtuous, thus because his parents have been called "believers", this means that the believers may be dragged into vice by the impulses represented as the "youth". Islam seeks to eradicate these impulses and leaves man with the soul and body combined to develop along beneficent lines to achieve the high purpose of human life.

Then Moses and the "servant of God" approach a town, ask its people for food and are refused to be accepted as guests. This signifies that both Moses and Muhammad would seek co-operation from Jews and Christians but it would be denied. The two orphan boys to whom the wall belonged are Moses and Jesus and their 'righteous' father is Abraham. Their treasure was the true teaching bequeathed by them to their peoples, which was in danger of being lost due to the latter's irreligiousness. Thus the third act of the 'servant of God' (Muhammad) of rebuilding the wall signifies that the treasure or true teachings were to be safeguarded in the Quran, so that they (the people of Moses and Jesus) may accept it after having awakened to a realization of the truth of the Quranic teachings.<sup>[15]</sup>

## In Zoroastrianism

There are many figures in Iran who Khidr took their places by the Islamisation process. One of them is paradoxically a female figure Anahita. It is clear from a shrine in Yazd. Among the Zoroastrians, for the pilgrims to Yazd, the most important of the six *pirs* is *Pir-e Sabz*. It is still a functional temple and the holiest site for present-day Zoroastrians living in Iran.<sup>[16]</sup> Each year from 14–18 June, many thousands of Zoroastrians from Iran, India and other countries make a pilgrimage to Yazd in Iran to worship at a hillside grotto containing the sacred spring dedicated to *Pir e Sabz*. Here the worshippers pray for the fertilising rain and celebrate the greening of nature and the renewal of life. It generally refers to the sacred meal made from wheat, barley or lentil sprouts ceremoniously consumed in honour of Pir e Sabz. In Persian the term *sabz* means 'green' and *pir* means 'shrine' among the Zoroastrians of Iran. The name of the shrine derives from the greenness of the foliage growing around the sanctuary.<sup>[17]</sup> It is actually known *Pir-e Sabz Banu* 'the old woman in the mountain' or *Chek Chek*, but also *Pir-e Sabz* 'the green saint'. Because *pir* means also 'elder' in Persian.<sup>[18]</sup> As Babayan says, "*Khizr is related to the Zoroastrian water goddess Anahita, and some of her former sanctuaries in Iran were rededicated to him (Pir-e Sabz)*".<sup>[19]</sup>

## Al-Khidr in "The History of al-Tabari"

Persian scholar, historian and exegete of the Qur'an Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, writes about Khidr in a chapter of his *The History of al-Tabari*, called "The Tale of al-Khidr and His History; and the History of Moses and His Servant Joshua." Al-Tabari describes several versions of the traditional story surrounding al-Khidr. At the beginning of the chapter, al-Tabari explains that in some variations, al-Khidr is a contemporary of the mythical Persian king Afridun, who was a contemporary of Abraham, and lived before the days of Moses.<sup>[20]</sup> Al-Khidr is also said to have been appointed to be over the vanguard of the king Dhul-Qarnayn the Elder, who in this version is identified as the king Afridun.<sup>[21]</sup> In this specific version, al-Khidr comes across the River of Life and, unaware of its properties, drinks from it and becomes immortal.<sup>[22]</sup> Al-Tabari also recounts that al-Khidr is said to have been the son of a man who believed in Abraham, and who emigrated with Abraham when he left Babylon.<sup>[23]</sup>

Al-Khidr is also commonly associated with Elijah, even equated with him, and al-Tabari makes a distinction in the next account in which al-Khidr is Persian and Elijah is an Israelite. According to this version of al-Khidr's story, al-Khidr and Elijah meet every year during the annual festival season.<sup>[23]</sup>

Al-Tabari seems more inclined to believe that al-Khidr lived during the time of Afridun before Moses, rather than traveled as Abraham's companion and drank the water of life.<sup>[24]</sup> He does not state clearly why he has this preference, but rather seems to prefer the chain of sources (the *isnad*) of the former story rather than the latter.

The various versions in al-Tabari's *History* more or less parallel each other and the account in the Quran. However, in the stories al-Tabari recounts, Moses claims to be the most knowledgeable man on earth, and God corrects him by telling him to seek out al-Khidr. Moses is told to bring a salted fish, and once he found the fish to be missing, he would then find al-Khidr. Moses sets out with a travel companion, and once they reach a certain rock, the fish comes to life, jumps into the water, and swims away. It is at this point that Moses and his companion meet al-Khidr.

Al-Tabari also adds to lore surrounding the origins of al-Khidr's name. He refers to a saying of Muhammad that

al-Khidr ("the Green" or "the Verdant") was named because he sat on a white fur and it shimmered green with him.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Comparative mythology

There are several versions of the Alexander romance in which al-Khidr figures as a servant of Alexander the Great. In one version, al-Khidr and Alexander — identified with Dhul-Qarnayn — cross the Land of Darkness to find the Water of Life. Dhul-Qarnayn gets lost looking for the spring but al-Khidr finds it and gains eternal life. In the *Iskandarnamah* by an anonymous author, al-Khidr is asked by Dhul-Qarnayn to lead him and his armies to the Water of Life.<sup>[26]</sup> Al-Khidr agrees, and eventually stumbles upon the Water of Life on his own.<sup>[27]</sup>

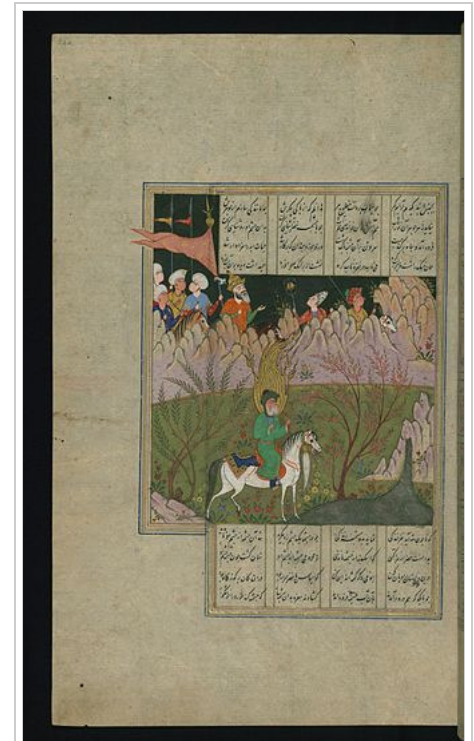
Some scholars suggest that al-Khidr is also represented in the Arthurian tale *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as the Green Knight.<sup>[28]</sup> In the story, the Green Knight tempts the faith of Sir Gawain three times. The character of al-Khidr may have come into European literature through the mixing of cultures during the Crusades.<sup>[29]</sup> It is also possible that the story derives from an Irish myth which predates the Crusades in which Cú Chulainn and two other heroes compete for the curadmír, the select portion given to champions, at feasts; ultimately, Cú Chulainn is the only one willing to let a giant — actually a king who has magically disguised himself — cut off his head, as per their agreement.

The story is also similar to one told by Rabbi Nissim ben Jacob in the eleventh century of a journey made by the prophet Elijah and Rabbi

Joshua ben Levi.<sup>[30][31]</sup> The first house where they stay the night belongs to a pious old couple who give the prophet and the rabbi the best of their food and beds. However, the couple's cow dies in the night. Elijah later explains that the Angel of Death came and he persuaded the angel to take the cow instead of the wife. The next house, as in the al-Khidr story, is that of a rich miser, and Elijah repairs his wall so that he will not, in having it repaired, find the treasure hidden under it.

A third potential parallel to the legend surrounding al-Khidr is the Epic of Gilgamesh.<sup>[32]</sup> The episode in question takes place after the death of king Gilgamesh's closest friend Enkidu. Gilgamesh goes on a journey to find his ancestor Utnapishtim, a wise figure who was granted immortal life and who lives at the mouth of two rivers.<sup>[32]</sup> Ultimately, although Gilgamesh finds Utnapishtim, he is not able to attain immortality. Although the parallel is not exact, the story shares several major themes with both Surah 18 in the Quran and the Alexander romance, namely, the presence of a wise figure in all three stories, and the quest and ultimate failure to attain immortality in the epic of Gilgamesh and the Alexander romance.<sup>[33]</sup>

In certain parts of India, al-Khidr is also known as *Khawaja Khidr*, a river spirit of wells and streams.<sup>[34]</sup> He is mentioned in the *Sikandar-nama* as the saint who presides over the well of immortality, and is revered by both Hindus and Muslims.<sup>[34]</sup> He is sometimes pictured as an old man dressed in green, and is believed to ride upon a fish.<sup>[34]</sup> His principal shrine is on an island of the Indus River by Bhakkar in Punjab, Pakistan.<sup>[34]</sup>



al-Khidr and Alexander the Great in front of the Fountain of Life

In *The Unreasoning Mask* by famed science fiction writer Philip José Farmer, while Ramstan, captain of the al-Buraq, a rare model spaceship capable of instantaneous travel between two points, attempts to stop an unidentified creature that is annihilating intelligent life on planets throughout the universe, he is haunted by repeating vision of meeting al-Khidr.

## In popular culture

Hızır is revered as helper among some Muslims, vehicles of emergency such as *Hızır Acil* named after it (Turkey).

## Ugaritic god Kothar-wa-Khasis

According to Turkish academic Bilal Aksoy, the most compelling modern hypothesis on Khidr's prototype compares him with the Ugaritic god **Kothar-wa-Khasis**.<sup>[35]</sup> First of all, both figures possess wisdom and secret knowledge. According to the Quran, "Khidr" (although not named directly) has a special wisdom and esoteric knowledge (**hikmah** and **ilm al-ladun**). Kothar has also special wisdom and his name means "Skillful and Wise" or "Adroit and Perceptive" or "Deft and Clever". **Hasisu** means wisdom, intelligence in Babylonian, also in some ancient Near Eastern languages. Not only his name, but according to some scholars Kothar's epithet **hyn** also means wise or clever (Syrian *hawna*: intelligence or ability).<sup>[36]</sup> Kothar is a craftsman god and in the mythology almost all blacksmiths and craftsmen are wise, clever and skillful figures. Because people believed that they have some secret powers and wisdom to work metals,<sup>[37]</sup> for example in Greek epic, Hephaistos is praised not only for his craftsmanship, but with intellectual epithets appropriate to Odysseus.<sup>[38]</sup> He is described as *klytomētis* (renowned for mind) and *klytotechnēs* (renowned for skill) by Homeros.<sup>[39]</sup> Blacksmiths and craftsmen played a central role in ancient society. They made many tools that people needed, from agricultural tools like the reaping-hook (the sickle or scythe) to weapons like arrows, spears, axes and swords. They made musical instruments, too. Therefore, the metalworkers or craftsmen were considered the lords of many social inventions like agriculture, music, writing, fire, etc. As a direct result of their social status, they were seen as wise, intelligent figures in mythology, Kothar too.

Secondly, Kothar and Khidr are dragon slayers or they help some figures to kill a dragon. Kothar helps Baal to kill Yam-Nahar by making weapons for him. Khidr helps Sufis or *wali's* like Sarı Saltuk to struggle with a dragon. According to some other stories he plays a central role, not that of a helper, and slays the dragon himself. For example, the people who live in Antakya (*Turkey*) tell a story about this feature of Khidr<sup>[40]</sup> and it originates from the story of Baal and Yam Nahar. Strabo tells the same story, but his characters are different; Zeus and Typhon.<sup>[41]</sup> The another one which mentioned Khidr himself as a dragon slayer, quoted by Flemish ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (XVI. century).<sup>[42]</sup> In some regions, especially in the frontiers of Asia Minor, Khidr is seen as a dragon slayer, because he took the place of Saint George or other warrior saints like Saint Theodore (Theodore of Amasea) who fights against the dragons.<sup>[43]</sup> However, it can't be explained only by this continuity. The myth of the dragon slayer was very popular in the ancient Near East and the divine smiths were usually assistant figures to make weapons for the chief gods of this mythological scenario, but they were also seen as a dragon slayer in some myths. In Kurdish mythology Kaveh the blacksmith (*Kawa*) kills an evil king Zahhak who was only a personification of the Avestan dragon Azhi Dahaka. According to a Scottish tale, from the another side of the world, the blacksmith of Kirkudbright defeated the White Snake of Mote Hill. Moreover, Kothar has fought against Behemoth and some other monstrous beings in Ugaritic mythology.<sup>[44]</sup> A Ugaritic text tells it: *In the sea are Arshu and the dragon, May Kothar and Hasis drive (them) away, May Kothar-and-Hasis cut (them) off.*<sup>[45]</sup>

Kothar and Khidr are known as "sailor" figures who are symbolically associated with sea, lake and rivers. **Chusor** is an inventor of the boat and he saves sailors. It believed that he was the first voyager on a boat. Khidr helps people when they need help. Most of these dangerous conditions are about seas, lakes and rivers, etc. For example, he sometimes helps children when they are drowning in the water or he helps boatmen during stormy weather. The Alevi Kurds of Dersim saw him as a savior and describe him as a "sovereign of the seas". He is a patron "saint" of the rivers in India. This characteristic feature of Khidr is not only from new syncretisms, it is basically connected with Kothar's characteristic features. Because Chusor (*Kothar*) was inventor of the boat and sailors believe that he protects them when they voyage. One of his epithets was **bn ym** (son of the sea).<sup>[46]</sup> Khidr often has some characteristics of a sailor, even in cultural areas which are not directly linked to the sea, like mountainous Dersim. It may be evident that Khidr originally comes from the culture of a people who inhabited the seashore. He has transformed to a wanderer by the cultural effects of darwishes and wanderer Sufis.<sup>[47]</sup>

Above their all characteristics, the status of Kothar can't be denied to show this continuity. Kothar is an assistant or "*a servant god*" in Ugaritic mythology. He helps Baal and builds a palace for him, but he is actually a "*servant of supreme god EL*".<sup>[48]</sup> Thus, he is accepted as one of the divine servants in Ugarit, because Keret, son of El, is also called a "*servant of El*".<sup>[49]</sup> It's a very interesting point, because according to the Quran, Khidr is "*a servant of Allah*" (**abd min 'ibādinā**).<sup>[50]</sup> Besides, the names of *Allah* and *El* are very similar to each other. It is known that they come from a common root. By the similar or common elements, it can be seen easily as part of their continuity.<sup>[51]</sup>

Kothar and Khidr bring fertility. Kothar controls and customizes the seasons. Like some craftsmen or blacksmiths, Kothar is associated with agriculture. Among the Dogon people of Mali the heavenly smith has a role of civilizing hero; he brings down grain from heaven and reveals agriculture to mankind.<sup>[52]</sup> In the Bible **Cain** (meaning perhaps *smith*) was a farmer and 'blacksmith', although he was not the inventor of agriculture. The Welsh smith *Govannon* had agricultural powers as well, for it was he who cleaned the plows at the end of planting, to ensure that the tools abundance would serve another year.<sup>[53]</sup> Evidently, Kothar's profession, which is associated with agriculture among some cultures, has a good reason for him to get a new position in time. Some peoples of the Levant, especially the people of ancient Cyprus, believed that **Kautar** (that is Kothar) was father of **Tamoza**/Tammuz (deity), the god of fertility.<sup>[54]</sup> Thus, Khidr became a special figure of new syncretisms in late periods. Because Kautar (later Khidr) and his son Tamoza (Adonis)<sup>[55]</sup> have been compared with Ali <sup>[56]</sup> and his son Hussein (**Husayn**). In some contexts they identified with each other. Khidr and Ali have almost the same position in Islamic mystic thought and some Shiite beliefs and they can take the place of each other. In some contexts Khidr is identified with Husayn, sometimes with the last imam or **Mahdi**. The mythological scene show very strong syncretisms. It can be described like this: El (deity) and his son Baal,<sup>[57]</sup> Kautar (Kothar) and his son Tamoza (*Adonis*), Ali and his son Hussein.<sup>[58]</sup> The names of El (deity) and Ali are similar to each other and it was an onomastic invitation for some new beliefs about Ali, Husayn and Khidr. There are many other connection points like their abodes. El's abode is at the source of two rivers, according to the Quran. "Khidr"s abode is **majma-ul bahrayn**; that is, the junction of two seas. In ancient texts El's abode is described as *the stream of two seas*. Du Buisson pointed to parallelism between El's abode and *majma-ul bahrayn*.<sup>[59]</sup> It's very important that Arabic *al-Kawthar* which means a river of the paradise, is etymologically connected with the name of Ugaritic divine craftman, **Kothar**.<sup>[60]</sup>

Kothar was the lord of wise words and good speech. He is also a soothsayer and magician, creating sacred words and spells, in part because there is an association in many cultures of metalworking deities with magic. Sanchuniathon says that Chusor invented the art of composing chants and incantations. In Ugaritic texts

**kotharat** means singer women.<sup>[61]</sup> Actually in mythology the blacksmiths and craftsmen play important role as a poet, musician and magician. The same associations are to be found among the Turco-Tartars and Mongols, where the smith is linked with heroes, singers and poets.<sup>[62]</sup> Like them, Khidr teaches a kind of dhikr (Arabisch ذِکْر; "*remembrance* (of God)", "*pronouncement*", "*invocation*") to some Sufis like Abdulhalik Gucduvani. But it seems that it was not only an echo of Kothar, it is also a strong effect of Surush (or *Surosh*) who was originally a Zoroastrian divinity Sraosha and Khidr took his place when Islam was introduced to Iran and became the dominant religion there.<sup>[63]</sup> By the Islamisation process in Iran, Surush (*Sraosha*) was accepted as a messenger angel and also identified with Jibril (Gabriel). Because at the same time Surush was an inspirational figure to poets.

According to a rumor the Islamic prophet Muhammad has learned a devotion by Khidr.<sup>[64]</sup> It's more interesting that Khidr is seen as their ancestral master or pir (Sufism) among the ashiks. According to the ashiks' tradition, Khidr gives to apprentices the art of poetry and he helps them for their initiation.<sup>[65]</sup> The continuity is comprehensible, because in mythic mentality the eloquence and especially the poem is associated with the ritm and melody of craftsmen's work. Its echo can be understood with the origins of the English word *poem* (and poetry). It comes from Latin *poēma*, from Ancient Greek ποίημα (*poiēma*), from ποιέω (*poiēō*, "I make"). On the other hand, Sufis accept Khidr as a master of the calligraphy while Kothar were indirectly associated with the art of writing. In ancient times the people thought that the writing was a magic work. It's often regarded at first as an instrument of the secret and magic power. Therefore, it might be created by craftsmen and blacksmiths who have same power. Besides, the cuneiform was a craft. First of all; it was not easy to write on a clay tablet and to produce a good clay tablet must have been one of the first tasks of an apprentice scribe.<sup>[66]</sup> Although Kothar was not a patron of scribes, it is very important that Nabu [grandchild of Babylonian god Ea (god)] was known as a patron of the scribes, because some scholars think that Ea is a prototype of Kothar. According to another opinion, Kothar's prototype is Egyptian god Ptah. Ptah's son Imhotep was known as a patron of the scribes.<sup>[67]</sup> It points that the divine craftsmen and blacksmiths who were also gods of good speech or wise words in mythology, have been transformed to lords of the writing in time. It can be seen in some mythologies that the lord of eloquence is inventor of the writing, too. For example, Irish god Ogma was the lord of eloquence, poetry, and rhetoric. But he had a truly remarkable skill as a poet and he invented the earliest system of writing used in Ireland: Ogham.<sup>[68]</sup> The another one, Sigurd who was one of the most famous mythological German heroes, had learned the skill of the rune writing by the smith Regin.<sup>[69]</sup>

The another characteristic continuity between Kothar and Khidr is their soft and skilled hands. In Ugaritic texts, Kothar is mentioned as a skilled hand (*hrsh yd*). Actually, most blacksmiths in mythology were described with such attributions. One of the epithets of the Greek blacksmith Hephaistos, which was used less frequently, was "*skilled with both hands*". There are many linguistic remainders which show a symbolic connection between the smithy, skillfulness and hand. For example, in the Ethiopian language, **äḡāma** or **äḡamma** means blacksmith, skillful and it comes from **äḡ** which means hand. In Ethiopian language, **äḡä wāxe** and **äḡä wārḳ** means also blacksmith, but literally of good or golden hand.<sup>[70]</sup> In Igbo language the word for arts and craft is **nka** which derives from the another Igbo word **aka** and aka means hand.<sup>[71]</sup> In this context it is very important that Khidr can be recognize by his soft hands among the people. Because the people of Levant and Asia Minor believe that he has boneless hands. Actually hand or soft hands metaphorically refers skillfulness, generosity and abundance. There is a term in Arabic for skilled men and women which derived from Arabic hand (*yad*).<sup>[72]</sup> On the other hand Arabic **semahat** used in Islamic mysticism for to be generous and to be soft.

Like some blacksmiths and craftsmen, Kothar indirectly, Khidr is directly associated with immortality. In mythology blacksmiths and craftsmen have secret power to get immortality and the healing powers were often attributed to them.<sup>[73]</sup> In many countries the smith is seen as a medicine man. Vedic craftsman Tvastar is the

former of the bodies of men and animals and invoked when desiring offspring, called **garbha-pati** or *the lord of the womb*. He is also the guardian of Soma that conveys the experience of immortality, is a healer and gives absolution. He made of the goblet for Soma drink.<sup>[74]</sup> In Welsh beliefs Govannon (Gofannon) yeasted a kind of immortality beer. In Yakut mythology **K'daai Maksin** (Kıdaai) is the divine blacksmith and he repairs the broken or amputated limbs of heroes. According to the another Yakut belief their ancestor Elliei was the first blacksmith and he has been seen as a healer. Because they believe that smiths have the power to cure by natural means without the assistance of spirits, as do the Shamans. According to an Acanti myth a blacksmith sent by the God to Earth to make a dozen men and animals. Mircea Eliade shows in his work *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy* that the divine blacksmith of mythology makes elixir of immortality as an alchemist. In Irish mythology, Cú Chulainn (*Culain*) made a new dog for himself after his savior dog was dead. Mcleish thinks that Ugaritic craftsman Kothar has also same feature. Khidr is described as a holding a cup/goblet in some Alevi divine songs. The cup or goblet symbolize the immortality. On the other hand the Nusayris of Antakya (*Turkey*) believe that Khidr can operate men like a surgeon.<sup>[75]</sup> According to some Islamic epic romances he repairs the broken limbs of warriors. It's told in *Danishmendname* that Khidr has repaired the broken hand of Artuhi who was a friend of Melik Danishmend Gazi.<sup>[76]</sup> He heals also mental illness. For example the shrine of Beit Jala (near Bethlehem) is associated with Khidr by Muslims who believe it's miraculous cures of mental illness. Even more importantly Khidr known everywhere as an immortal figure, from Balkans to India.

The Alexander romance is also originated from ancient Levant. Kothar and some mythological figures who were syncretized with Kothar, have played a role in Alexander's legendary voyage. The siege of Gaza (or *Gazza*) and Tyre were important events for Alexander romance. Both of them were very problematic. First of all Alexander's army have been faced with drought during the siege of Gaza. The capture of Tyre ended in July. Then the army marched 160 miles and arrived in Gaza. It was perhaps in early August and the time of drought. According to D.W. Engels the army needed in round number 100,000 gallons of water within a day. It means 6,000.000 gallon water for this adventure, because the siege of the city took two months. The another problem was the topographical position of Gaza. Because Gaza was built on a hill. Thus, he has made a mound to capture Gaza<sup>[77]</sup> and the troops entered to the city in this way. Some sources writes that the height of the mound was almost 250 feet and it built by the engineers from Tyre who had long been for their cleverness and skill. So that the skillful builder of Bible Hiram Abiff whom King Solomon procured from Tyre for the temple. But Arrian wrote that the engineers were from Cyprus and all Phoenicia.<sup>[78]</sup>

The siege of Tyre was also problematic. Because the New Tyre was on an island and had walls right up to the sea and the mainland settlement of the city which originally called Ushu.<sup>[79]</sup> It was more like a line of suburbs than any one city. The New Tyre itself, which was on an island just off shore, and the associated settlement of **Ushu** (Greek *Usoos* or *Ousous*) on the adjacent mainland. Alexander the Great connected the island to the mainland coast by constructing a causeway, a bridge land during his siege of the city, demolishing the old city to reuse its cut stone. Alexander the Great became a mythological figure also in this region. Because elements of Alexander romance -like a barrier, Yajuj Majuj (Bible Gog and Magog), the water of immortality- refers to the hill which made by Alexander's order during his Gaza siege and the bridge land of Tyre, the craftsmen peoples of the region -for example Tyre's craftsmen-, the god of sea **Usoos** and **Melqart** who associated with immortality etc. It can to note that the name of Usoos may be connected with a transliteration of **Hasis** and he was also known as an inventor of the dugout. Usoos or Ousous is later syncretized with Baal of Tyre and has turned to Melqart, the god of the city. There were two temples for this god. The main temple of Melqart was on the island (New Tyre) and there was another one on the mainland (Old Tyre).<sup>[80]</sup>

That is, the another mythological figure who played role in this myth, was Melqart ("*King of the City*"). Melqart was a god of the sea and fertility like Kothar. He was seen as Heracles by the Greeks. Because Heracles has



shown some same characteristics. For example he was known as a voyager like him. The people of Alexander's time call Heracles as a travel companion, not as a helper for difficult situations.<sup>[81]</sup> According to legends that Alexander believed, his father's family traced its roots to Heracles. Heracles was demigod, thus half human, half god. It might be important for Alexander who wants become an immortal. According to a rumor about Alexander the Great's last days which was maintained at Metz Codex, Alexander called Zeus and he said that "*if you decide my dead, please accept me as a mortal, as a third one (mortal)*". He means Heracles and Dionysus, that is demi-gods.<sup>[82]</sup>

There are more common elements between Alexander romance in Syriac language, the story of Moses (*Qur'an* 18:61-5) and of Dhul-Qarnayn (*Qur'an* 18: 83-96) and some historical events or ancient mythological figures of the region. For example, the rocky (Arabic *shahrat*) which is mentioned in the Quran (18:61-3) as a place where companion of Moses forgot their food, correspond to two rocks (*stelae* or 'pillars') of Tyre which symbolized immortality. *Tyre* means rock in Semitic languages. It is mentioned as *Shur* in the Bible (Hebrew *shur*, rock).<sup>[83]</sup> Their food is dried fish which is another connection. Because Old Tyre was a famous shore city for the fish industry and sailors have got dried salted fish to eat, before they went to the sea journey. Besides, Kothar wa-Hasis was also known as a fisher of the goddess Asherah and Chusor was inventor of fishing tools and the boat. In this context like Tyre, Sidon which is located on the 25 miles north of Tyre, may be shows a symbolic association with the story of Moses (*Quran*). Because it is possible that **Sidon** originally comes from a word which means fish.<sup>[84]</sup> But in the same time it may be an astrological sign of Pisces (astrology) like two 'pillars' which is erected by Melqart (originally by Usoos/Ousous and his brother) in Old Tyre.<sup>[85]</sup> Both of them symbolize the immortality. In astrology two parallel columns denote the zodiacal signs of Cancer (astrology) and Capricorn (astrology), which formerly placed in the chamber of initiation to represent birth and death, as seen in the Masonic Lodge.<sup>[86]</sup> Wallace B. Fleming points to manufactural industry of glass in Tyre and he writes in his work *The History of Tyre* (New York, 1915: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 143, 148); "*The pillar of the temple of Melkart which 'shone brightly in the night' must have been a hollow cylinder of green in which a lamp perpetually burned*". The another one was in the temple at Aradus (Arwad).<sup>[87]</sup> There were two great pillars of glass. This possibility is comparable with the greenness of Khidr.

Some interpreters thought that Moses of Sura al-Kahf is not Moses, he symbolized Alexander the Great. Moses was in Bible depicted as horned like Alexander the Great of the Quran. It originated from a linguistic fault of Bible translators in the Middle Ages and Moses is depicted wearing horns in Christian art of the Middle Ages. Torah (*Exodus* 34: 29-35) reports that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, the skin of his face was radiant. When the Bible has been translated to Latin, the translators mistakenly attributed to Moses "*horns of light*", Because the Hebrew verb **karan**, *to shine*, has the identical spelling as **keren**, *horn*.<sup>[88]</sup> Dhul-Qarnayn figuratively means the "*two-horned one*" in Arabic and the most of scholars thinks that he is Alexander the Great. But not only mythological and historical characters, also events and narrations were confused with each other. It can be say ultimately, all the common elements show that the Alexander romance and also the story of the Quran (18: 60-5) is basically originated from mythology and some historical events of this region, thus from ancient Levant.<sup>[89]</sup>

## Ritualistic murder and the origins of the cult of Khidr

The new hypothesis about the cultural origins of the figure of Khidr points to an another common element by a religious tradition in Near East. Like Alevis the people make flour of roasted wheat on the day before the festival for Khidr. They keep it somewhere in the kitchen to see later for Khidr's traces. Next day in the morning if they see some signs on the flour, it means that Khidr came there to bring abundance and blessing for them. Later they bake some kind of cake which is called *Qavut*, *Kavut*, *Köme* or *Göme*.<sup>[90]</sup> Thus, it takes different

names among variously ethnic groups.

The tradition for Khidr originated from the mythico-rituals of Ancient Near Eastern dying gods like Osiris, Adonis (and also Melqart) and the process which shows the transformation of the grain to flour symbolizes cremation (*death*) of the god.<sup>[91]</sup> Frazer's opinion about Adonis and Osiris rites indirectly clarifies this ritualistic acts. He writes: "The women bewail him (Adonis), because his lord slew him so cruelly, ground his bones in a mill, and then scattered them to the wind. The women (during this festival) eat nothing which has been ground in a mill, but limit their diet to steeped wheat, sweet vetches, dates, raisins, and the like".<sup>[92]</sup> It is actually associated with shamanistic initiations and also with smith's world. Eliade completes this analogy in his important work *The Forge and the Crucible*: "*The identification of shamanism with the art of smith likewise appears in the ceremonial spectacles of certain shamanic initiations. In their dreams or initiatory hallucinations the future shamans watch themselves being torn to pieces by the 'demon'-masters of the initiation. Now these traditional spectacles entail, directly or otherwise, gestures, tools and symbols belonging to the sphere of the smith...*"<sup>[93]</sup>

In the last analysis the roasting of the grain and making flour of it by the hand mill symbolizes the process of the death of the god. It means the beginning of a new period. Because as a cosmic machine, mill produces periods of time.<sup>[94]</sup> Thus, the mill doesn't mean only worldly, also cosmic and it is often made by a mythological smith like Finnish blacksmith Ilmarinen. He makes a mill which is called Sampo. In Serbian tradition the blacksmith gives the water mill to people.<sup>[95]</sup> This symbolic and cultural association between the smith and mill, is really remarkable for the continuity between Kothar and Khidr.

In brief there are many mythico-rituals for the dying gods in Ancient Near East which indirectly correspond to the ritual for Khidr. For example, **Melqart** was also cremated in Tyrian ritual. According to the Pseudo-Clementines, people used to speak of a place near Tyre where Melqart had been consumed in flames. Representations of the god at Pyrgi show him enveloped in flames.<sup>[96]</sup> The death of the god is also a part of Masonic rituals. So that some researchers reinforced the link between ancient sacrificial rites of the mystery religions and Freemasonry. Patiagorsky emphasised the ritualism in the death of the divine male Deity and the Masonic protagonist Hiram Abiff, where as Howard underlines the pattern of ritual murder in the ancient world. Thus, the ritualistic murder of the Masonic initiations can be traced to the sacrifice of the divine male Deity to the Great Mother Goddess, the divine female principle.<sup>[97]</sup> More important point that Hiram Abiff is thought to be identified with Melqart who might be a variant of Adonis.<sup>[98]</sup> Unlike some other writers John Sebastian Marlowe Ward points in his work that Hiram Abiff symbolizes **Adonis**, not **Osiris** (*Why Hiram Abiff Represents Adonis and Not Osiris*). As death of the god, Hiram is murdered after building of Solomon's Temple.

Consequently, Kothar has got this feature as father of **Tamoza** (*Tammuz*) in some mythologies of the Levant and also as a smith. Besides, he is comparable figure with the master of stonemason Hiram and the servant of Allah (*Khidr*) who repairs a wall (Quran 18: 77-82).<sup>[99]</sup> Because Kothar is a master-builder as well as a master-smith. He built a palace for Baal on sacred mountain Saphon.<sup>[100]</sup> It means that there are many similar or common elements that show possibility of the cultural interaction between all these characters. It means that it can find the effects of the cult of Khidr on some Masonic rituals. It was introduced by the Christian sects like Knights Templar and Carmelites. According to Idris Shah the chivalrous Order of the Garter was actually modelled after the Middle Eastern Order of Khidr. Shah maintains that the Order of Khidr had been a Holy Grail Order of Cupbearers overseen by the Sufis, who divided up the membership into circles of thirteen participants each, called *halkas*.<sup>[101]</sup>

On the other hand, the cult of Saint George was strengthened by the Crusaders in Europe. England, Aragon and Portugal assumed him as their patron saints, and so did most of the chivalrous orders founded at the date of

these wars. For example, in 1245 Frederic of Austria instituted an order of St. George, on his day. In the early thirteenth century Genoa had a military order under his protection, and in 1201 an order was founded in Aragon, 'the Knights of St. George of Alfama'.<sup>[102]</sup> It can say that the city of Tyre has played important role for the association between two mythological figures; Saint George and Khidr. Because the martyrdom of St. George was sometimes placed at Melitene (today Malatya); but it was also located at Tyre<sup>[103]</sup> and the city was of unusual importance, not only because of its wealth, but because it was "*caput et metropolis*" of the Christian churches of Phoenicia, and fourteen cities were suffragen to the Archbishop of Tyre.<sup>[104]</sup> Tyre might be important also for the Knights Templar.<sup>[105]</sup>

## The astrological representations of the Khidr as a mythical character

The mythological mentality is not only about the world and terrestrial facts, it tells also stories about the celestial beings and their adventures. Thus, at the same time the most of the ancient myths firstly signifies the astrological movements. It is very likely that the Alexander romance and the story of the Moses and "Khidr" have some astrological representations, although some scholars who have an interesting to study these myths, are not fully aware yet about it. They are only focused to social, historical dimensions of the myths, that is some social, historical events and characters. However, the fish, the source of water and the immortality, twin pillars or rocks/stone and the mill are clearly celestial signs. The journey on the sea may be also an astrological motif as well as worldly. Because the ship Argo is one of the most remarkable of the constellations. It will be found that this ship descends under the horizon, when the Sun is in the sign of Capricorn.<sup>[106]</sup>

Moreover, the killing a child is an ancient sacrificial ritual which has been seen in some cultures, is an astrological motif as well as socio-cultural. The story of Moses and "Khidr" in the Qur'an (*see below*) tells that the servant of Allah ("Khidr") kills a child and Moses discussed with him about it. Perhaps it can be traced to the cult of Melqart/Herakles in Tyre. Because Herakles like Melikertes is a "child-killer" and he kills his enemy's child. Lykophron (second century BC) calls Herakles the Child Destroyer (*Teknoraistēs*). Lykophron also reports version that have Herakles kills the children of his brother Iphicles alongside his own. Pache finds an echo of this version in the first-century BC historian Nicolaus of Damascus, in which Herakles in his madness first kills two of Iphicles's son.<sup>[107]</sup>

The sacrificial killing of first-born children which often called Moloc or Molok in Phoenicia, was widely practiced from the beginning of the first millennium BC among Canaanites in general, but particularly in the Phoenician colonies throughout the whole Mediterranean area. Although lambs sometimes also were killed sacrificially, the male infants were "real" victims. Their bodies cremated and buried under the foundations of palaces, fortresses and temples.<sup>[108]</sup> It recalls the dying of the widow's son Hiram and Melqart. First of all the widow has astrological meanings and she symbolized the mourning goddess such as Mary (mother of Jesus). Secondly, some mythic figures like Herakles, Nergal and Melqart who represent the planet Mars in the astrology, are described as a child or young man.<sup>[109]</sup> For example Armenian war-god Vahagn was called **patenenik** means 'youth' or 'child'. In Edda the Norse Thor bears the epithet **sveinn**, signifying 'boy' or 'youth'. The Egyptian Horus was known as the 'youth'. The one of his epithet means 'young child' (**hrd nhn**). The Aztec war god was known as **Telpochtli**, 'the young male'.<sup>[110]</sup>

The ancient authors like Strabo, Arrian, Pomponius Mela and Appian refer many times to the worship of Melqart in Tyrian colonies, but never describe the sacrifices offered to Melqart.<sup>[111]</sup> Although this relatively weak point, this sacrificial ritual also points an astrological thema and it may be occurs in the Quranic story about Moses and the servant of Allah (that is 'Khidr').<sup>[112]</sup> This possibility shows again that Khidr is originally from syncretic form of Kothar (*Ousoos*) who was syncretized with Baal in Tyre.<sup>[113]</sup> After this transform of the

god, Melqart became a god of travellers and sailors. Ousoos who erroneously is accepted as Kothar's brother by some scholars, was actually no other than Kothar and his name (*Ousoos*) means *hasis*, that is the Ugaritic divine craftsman.<sup>[114]</sup> According to Philo of Byblos Ousoos was invented the dugout and he was the first sailor.

Although all these, the social and historical events make an illusion for most scholars. They only focused the similarities between the mythic and historical characters or events. But the other hand some mythologists believe a structuralist analyses to explain the myths. Because they can find easy too much common elements between some myths as a result of the effects of astrology. A myth actually can have an astrological or historical roots or both of them. The myth of the Khidr is an astrological as well as socio-cultural and historical. Therefore, Wensinck was partly right, when he has tried to find the continuity between the Gilgamesh Epic and the Alexander romance.<sup>[115]</sup> Consequently, Khidr who kills a child, is different from the Khidr of the popular legends and the folk religions. Thus, Quranic Khidr shows some original features of the syncretic form of Kothar (*Ousoos*< *Hasis*) and he has shown some astro-mythological characteristics of Mars and Mercury (planet). But in the folk beliefs he is represents mostly Mercury.

## See also

- Malamatiyya
- Muslim views on the intercession of saints
- Saint George#Interfaith Shrine
- Mahis
- Jamkaran

## Notes

1. ^ Gürdal Aksoy, *Dersim: Alevilik, Ermenilik, Kürtlük*, Ankara, 2012, p. 65-80, Dipnot yayınevi (in Turkish), ISBN 9786054412501
2. ^ Dalley defends traditional opinion: "The name or epithet of Atrahasis is used for the skillful god of craftsmanship Kothar-wa-hasis in Ugaritic mythology, and is abbreviated to Chousor in the Greek account of Syrian origins related by Philo of Byblos. A similar abbreviation is used in the name of the Islamic sage Al-khidr..." Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, Oxford, revised edition 2000, p. 2 ISBN 0-19-283589-0 [http://culturalstudies101.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/dalley\\_myths-from-mesopotamia\\_atrahasis.pdf](http://culturalstudies101.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/dalley_myths-from-mesopotamia_atrahasis.pdf)
3. ^ Gürdal Aksoy, *Dersim Alevi Kürt Mitolojisi*, İstanbul, 2006, Komal yayınevi, ISBN 975710213X
4. ^ [Quran 18:65 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/018-qmt.php#018.065>)]
5. ^ Wheeler, Brannon M. (2002). *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis*. London: Routledge Curzon. p. 23.
6. ^ Wheeler, Brannon M. (2002). *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis*. London: Routledge Curzon. pp. 23–24.
7. ^ [Quran 18:66 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/018-qmt.php#018.066>)]
8. ^ [Quran 18:68 (<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/018-qmt.php#018.068>)]
9. ^ Ibn al-Jazari, 1994, p. 228
10. ^ "History of Jamkaran Mosque" ([http://www.jafariyanews.com/oct2k2/22\\_jamkran.htm](http://www.jafariyanews.com/oct2k2/22_jamkran.htm)). Jafariya News. Retrieved 2013-03-10.

11. ^ Nasr, Vali, *The Shia Revival*, (Norton, 2006), p.220
12. ^ Concise Encyclopedia of Islam, C. Glasse, Ismailis: “[Ismailis believe in] a 'permanent Imam'.”
13. ^ Quran 21:108
14. ^ "The Holy Quran" (<http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=1474&region=E1>). Alislam.org. Retrieved 2013-03-10.
15. ^ "The Holy Quran" (<http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=1522&region=E1>). Alislam.org. Retrieved 2013-03-10.
16. ^ Michael Strausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, Leiden, 2004: Brill, p. 563; Payam Nabarz, *The Mysteries of Mithras. The Pagan Belief That Shaped the Christian World*, foreword C. Matthews, CANADA, 2005, p. 99-100.
17. ^ Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction*, India, 2010: I.B. Tauris, p. 123.
18. ^ Nabarz 2005: 100.
19. ^ Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*, USA, 2002, p. 368.
20. ^ Al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. pp. 1–2.
21. ^ al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. p. 2.
22. ^ al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. pp. 2–3.
23. ^ <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. p. 3.
24. ^ Al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. pp. 4–5.
25. ^ Al-Tabari (1991). *The History of al-Tabari*. Albany: State University of New York. p. 17.
26. ^ Anonymous (1978). *Iskandarnamah*. New York: Columbia University. p. 55.
27. ^ Anonymous (1978). *Iskandarnamah*. New York: Columbia University. p. 57.
28. ^ Lasater, Alice E. (1974). *Spain to England: A Comparative Study of Arabic, European, and English Literature of the Middle Ages*. University Press of Mississippi.
29. ^ Ahmad, Hadhrat al-Hajj Mirza Bashirudeen Mahmood -Khalifatul Masih II. *Tafsir e Kabir* iv. (10 Volumes. Rabwah, 1962).
30. ^ Nissim ben Jacob ibn Shahin, *Sefer Ma'asiyyot ha-Hakhamim wehu Hibbur Yafeh meha-Yeshu'ah*, (Judeo-Arabic, 11th century);  
modern translation by William M. Brinner as *An Elegant Composition concerning Relief after Adversity*: Yale 1977 (Yale Judaica Series vol 20), ISBN 978-0-300-01952-0; pbk 1996, ISBN 1-56821-984-9  
extracted in Polano, H. (1876). *The Talmud: Selections*. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/pol/pol47.htm>)
31. ^ Brannon M. Wheeler, The Jewish origins of Qur An 18:65-82? Reexamining Arent Jan Wensick's theory ([http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_go2081/is\\_n2\\_v118/ai\\_n28711540/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go2081/is_n2_v118/ai_n28711540/)), *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, **118**, 153–171, April–June 1998 (via findarticles.com)
32. ^ <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "al-Khadir (al-Khidr)" ([http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM\\_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr)). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.
33. ^ "al-Khidar (al-Khidr)" ([http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM\\_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM_0483?s.num=4&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr)). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.

34. <sup>^</sup> <sup>*a b c d*</sup> Longworth Dames, M. "Khwadja Khidr" ([http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khwadja-khidr-SIM\\_4126?s.num=0&s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khwadja-khidr-SIM_4126?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=khidr)). *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Retrieved 21 April 2012.
35. <sup>^</sup> Gürdal Aksoy 2006: 215-93
36. <sup>^</sup> Ayali-Darshan points that *hyn* is connected with the name of Mesopotamian god Ea and the terms derived from the Akkadian form *hasīsu*, frequently occurs in Hurrian and Hurro-Hittite material as a customary epithet for Ea (Noga Ayali-Darshan, 'The Meaning of *Hyn dhrš ydm* in Light of a Parallel from Emar', *Ugarit-Forschungen*, Band 43, 2011, p. 1-6). This connection makes strong the continuity between Kothar and Khidr. Because Ea is almost same type god with Kothar. He is wise figure among the gods and at least he has more than twenty epithets which mean wise, clever, intelligent etc (for some epithets, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sümerlerin Kurnaz Tanrısı Enki*, çev. H. Koyukan, İstanbul, 2000: Kabalcı, p. 417 ISBN 975-8240-33-1).
37. <sup>^</sup> for details see Aksoy 2006: 237-9; about blacksmiths and craftsmen, see Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy*, Chicago, 1978: University of Chicago Press
38. <sup>^</sup> Morris 1992: 85-6
39. <sup>^</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis; Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, foreword by G. Murray, New York, 1950: Henry Schuman, p. 155
40. <sup>^</sup> Aksoy 2006: 236
41. <sup>^</sup> The myth of Khidr and the dragon which, mentioned by the people of Antakya, can be traced to ancient times. This myth tells a story about the origin of the Orontes river. About its origin, see Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion*, Leiden, 1969, E.J. Brill, p.32-3
42. <sup>^</sup> Oya Pancaroglu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia", *GESTA XLIII/2*, 2004, p. 151, 158 see [http://www.imtlucca.it/attachments/gerevini\\_pancaroglu\\_dragon\\_slayer.pdf](http://www.imtlucca.it/attachments/gerevini_pancaroglu_dragon_slayer.pdf)
43. <sup>^</sup> Ethel Sara Wolper, "Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 90, issue 3-4, 2000, p. 309-322; Pancaroglu 2004; see also Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, Great Britain, 2003: Ashgate ISBN 1 84014 694 X
44. <sup>^</sup> 'BEHEMOTH was a terrifying monster of Hebrew mythology, the dry-land equivalent of the monstrous sea serpent LEVIATHAN' (Arthur Cotterell-Rachel Storm, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*, London, 1999, Lorenz Books, p. 272 ISBN 0-7548-0091-1).
45. <sup>^</sup> B.F. Batto, 'Behemoth', in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, second extensively revised edition, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1999, Brill, p. 168 ISBN 90-04-11119-0
46. <sup>^</sup> Aksoy 2006: 223-25, 236
47. <sup>^</sup> Aksoy 2006: 239-40 and Pertev Naili Boratav, "Hızır (Türklerde)", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, VII, 1967, p. 465–66 (in Turkish)
48. <sup>^</sup> Arthur Cotterell-Rachel Storm, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology, An A-Z Guide To The Myths And Legends Of The Ancient World*, 1999, p. 293, Lorenz Books, ISBN 0-7548-0091-1
49. <sup>^</sup> for the *divine servants*, see Mark Smith-Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cyle*, Vol. II, Leiden, 2009, p.50-1, 452, 577: Brill ISBN 978 90 04 15348 6; for Keret, see T. Kleven, "Kingship in Ugarit", in *Ascribe to the Lord, Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. by Lyle Eslinger-Glen Taylor, 1988: Sheffield Academic Press, ISBN 1-85075-189-7.

50. ^ In Arabic '**abd min 'ibādinā** means "one of our servants/worshippers". The Arabic word for worship, *ibadah* comes from the Arabic word *abd* which means servant or slave.
51. ^ F.W. Bussell, "The Persistence of Primitive Beliefs of Theology: A Study of Syrian Syncretism: 'Ali, Elyun, El, Helioss and Eliyah", *Folklore* 28, No. 3, 1917
52. ^ "All the entire mass of palaeo-Nigritian culture bears witness to a whole complex of religious activities concerning the smith, whose ideological foundations are to be found in the myth of the Celestial Smith and the Civilizing Hero. It would nevertheless be an error to explain this ritual significance of the smith solely on the basis of his role in the making of agricultural tools. Neither iron itself nor the smithy is necessarily exalted in agricultural civilizations..."  
Eliade 1978: 30, 94
53. ^ Patricia Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, New York, 2004, p. 225 ISBN 0-8160-4524-0
54. ^ Kothar is the Phoenician Chusor mentioned by Sanchuniathon and by Mochos of Sidon. According Albright, he is also *Kautar* said by Melito of Sardis to have been the father of Tammuz (Gaster, p. 154 fn).
55. ^ The epithet of *Tammuz* is from *adon* which means lord in Semitic languages.
56. ^ *cousin of Mohammad*.
57. ^ *Baal* means lord like *adon*.
58. ^ His epithet *al-Sayyid* also means lord in Arabic, as Adonis in Syriac. Moreover, Adonis is known as a handsome god and Husayn is an Arabic name which is the diminutive of Hassan, meaning "good", "handsome" or "beautiful". Gürdal Aksoy writes that it could be an easy way to mythologize Husayn by this common elements (also about the origins of Ta'zieh ritual, see Aksoy 2009: 222).
59. ^ Aksoy 2006; for Ta'zieh ceremony and its origins, see Aksoy 2009: 212-22; Robert Du Mesnil Du Buisson, *Nouvelles Etudes sur les Dieux et les Mythes de Canaan*, Leiden, 1973, p. 4, E. J. Brill
60. ^ John Pairman Brown, "Kothar, Kinyras and Kythereia", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. X, ed. by C.F. Beckingham, 1965, p. 199-200 and D. Pardee, "Kothar", *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter Willem Van Der Horst, 1995, p. 914, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, ISBN 9789004111196
61. ^ In Ugaritic texts the *knr* which was a type of lyre, appears with the other names of musical instruments. In an Ugaritic text, the *knr* is listed first among an ensemble of instruments which seem to be described as the 'beloved companions' of Kothar. The *knr* (Hebrew *kinnôr*), once divinized, itself becomes a god, *Kinyras* (Cinyras). He was a priest-king, lover of Aphrodite and also father of Adonis. By this characteristic he seems like Kothar. Because Kothar is accepted as father of *Tamoza* (Tammuz/Adonis). Besides, its translation is *kithara* in the Septuagint and some think that it come from *ktr*, that is Kothar (see J.C. Franklin, "Lyre Gods of Bronze Age Musical Koine", *JANER* 6, nr. 1, 2006, p. 39-70 <http://www.kingmixers.com/FranklinPDFfiles/LyreGodsWeb.pdf>; Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, An Ancient Name of the Lyre, *ArOr* 67/4, 1999, p. 585-600 [http://www.pies.ucla.edu/IESV/1/VVI\\_lyre.pdf](http://www.pies.ucla.edu/IESV/1/VVI_lyre.pdf); John C. Franklin, "Kinyras at Pylos", <http://www.kingmixers.com/FranklinPDFfiles/KinyrasPylos.pdf>)
62. ^ Eliade 1978: 98–99
63. ^ The *silence dhikr* is associated with Zoroastrian *baj*. It is a silence prayer. *Srosh-baj* is one of the daily prayers of Parsees.
64. ^ Aksoy 2006: 218, n. 1

65. ^ Pertev Naili Boratav, *Türk Mitolojisi (Oğuzların, Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Türkmenistan Türklerinin Mitolojisi)*, 1. baskı, Ankara, 2012, p. 71 ISBN 978-9944-795-41-8; Theo Maarten van Lint, "The Gift of Poetry: Khidr and John the Baptist as Patron Saints of Muslim and Armenian Āṣīqs – Aṣūls", Van Ginkel J.J., Murre-van den Berg H.L., Van Lint T.M. (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, Peeters, 2005 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 134), p. 335-378 ISBN 90-42914181 and Aksoy 2012: 76-9
66. ^ Andrew Robinson, *The Story of Writing*, London, 2007, new edition, p. 82, Thames and Hudson ISBN 978-0-500-28660-9, ISBN 0-500-28660-4 and Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, London and New York, 2002, p. 91, Routledge [http://monoskop.org/images/f/ff/Ong,\\_Walter\\_J\\_-\\_Orality\\_and\\_Literacy,\\_2nd\\_ed.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/f/ff/Ong,_Walter_J_-_Orality_and_Literacy,_2nd_ed.pdf)
67. ^ Aksoy 2006: 230-5
68. ^ Aksoy 2006: 235; Cotterell-Storm 1999: 156; <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rjohnso/ancientirish.pdf>
69. ^ C. Scott Littleton, *Gods, Goddesses and Mythology*, Vol. 10, China, 2005, p. 1300, Marschall Cavendish, ISBN 0-7614-7569-9
70. ^ Wolf Leslau, *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*, Vol. I, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, p. 265-6 [http://books.google.nl/books?id=S7ckMbbwiHQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=ethiopic+etymological+wolf+leslau&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=jx8jUoirD4\\_LtAa1vICYAw&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=blacksmith&f=false](http://books.google.nl/books?id=S7ckMbbwiHQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=ethiopic+etymological+wolf+leslau&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=jx8jUoirD4_LtAa1vICYAw&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=blacksmith&f=false)
71. ^ Michael Okoh, *Fostering Christian Faith in Schools and Christian Communities through Igbo Traditional Values. Towards a Holistic Approach to Christian Religious Education and Catechesis in Igboland (Nigeria)*, Bonn, 2012, p. 117 ISBN 978-3-643-90168-2
72. ^ Hasan Taşdelen, Arap Deyim ve Atasözlerinde 'El' Motifi, *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 18, sayı 2, 2009, p. 212 (in Turkish) [http://ucmaz.home.uludag.edu.tr/PDF/ilh/2009-18\(2\)/M10.pdf](http://ucmaz.home.uludag.edu.tr/PDF/ilh/2009-18(2)/M10.pdf)
73. ^ Littleton 2005: 1426
74. ^ About *Soma* or *Haoma*, see David Stophlet Flattery and Martin Schwartz, *Haoma and Harmaline: The Botanical Identity of the Indo-Iranian SacredHallucinogen "Soma" and its Legacy in Religion, Language, and Middle Eastern Folklore*, 1989: <http://www.ebookdb.org/reading/2CGC3BG81E6D34GD23342869/Haoma-And-Harmaline--The-Botanical-Identity-Of-The-Indo-Iranian-Sacred-Hallucino>
75. ^ Aksoy 2006: 240-5; Eliade 1978 and Kenneth Macleish, *Myth: Myths and Legends of the World Explored*, London, 1996, p. 570, Bloomsbury, ISBN 9780816032372
76. ^ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *İslam-Türk İnançlarında Hızır yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü*, İstanbul, 2012, p. 199-200 ISBN 978-605-5272-05-0 (in Turkish)
77. ^ Arrian, *History of Alexander and Indica* I, trans. by P.A. Brunt, London, 1976, II: 26; 3-4, William Heinemann Ltd; Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander*, Vol. I, Books I-V, trans. by J.C. Rolfe, London, 1971, I: 21, William Heinemann Ltd; Donald W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, Los Angeles and Berkeley, 1978: University of California Press
78. ^ for more details, see Aksoy 2006: 257-63
79. ^ It was called later as *Palaetyrus* by the Greeks, meaning "Old Tyre".
80. ^ Josette Elai, 'The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period', *JANES* 13, 1981, p. 23
81. ^ Michael Burgan, *Alexander the Great*, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 15, Compass Point Books, ISBN 978-0-7565-1872-1
82. ^ Aksoy 2006: 265
83. ^ For more detail, see Aksoy 2006: 257-69



84. ^ About this etymological comment and its critics, see Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Sidon: A Study in Oriental History*, New Jersey, 2007, p. 11-12, Gorgias Press ISBN 978-1-59333-592-2
85. ^ "Pillars of Hercules. The name given to the two promontories guarding the eastern passage to the Strait of Gibraltar, connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The name, originating in classical mythology, refers to a belief that the 'pillars' were once connected but were split and pulled apart by Hercules to join the two seas" (William Stewart, *Dictionary of Images and Symbols in Counselling*, London, 1998: Athenaem Press, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, p. 318 ISBN 1-85302 412-0). It seems parallel to two *stelae* ('pillars') of Melqart (*Tyrian Heracles*), not only by symbolic representations, also by geographical position (for more information, see Gabriela Bijovsky, 'The Ambrosial Rocks and the sacred precinct of Melqart in Tyre', in: C. Alfaro, C. Marcos and P. Otero (eds.) *XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismatica*, Madrid - 2003. Actas - Proceedings - Actes I. Madrid. Pp. 829-834. [http://www.mcu.es/museos/docs/MC/ActasNumis/The\\_Ambrosial\\_Rocks.pdf](http://www.mcu.es/museos/docs/MC/ActasNumis/The_Ambrosial_Rocks.pdf)).
86. ^ Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, San Francisco, 1928, H.S. Crocker Company, p. 1928. But some writers notes that two pillars denote the sign Gemini (astrology) in astrology (see Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Masonry*, fifth printing, 1996, Guildford, Biddle Ltd. p.32).
87. ^ The island of Aradus was used as a bridgehead or staging area by the Crusaders during the later part of the 13th century, in the time of the Crusades. It was the last piece of land that the Crusaders maintained in the Holy Land, as they were fighting a losing battle against the Muslims (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arwad>)
88. ^ Ellen Frankel-Betsy Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, USA, 2004, p. 76, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, ISBN 978-1-5682-1742-0
89. ^ for details see Aksoy 2006: 257-69; more information about old Tyre, see H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre, from the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C. E.* Jerusalem, 1973: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research
90. ^ (Aksoy 2006: 288-292)
91. ^ (Aksoy 2006: 288)
92. ^ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion, Part IV, Adonis Attis Osiris*, third edition, The Macmillan Co. p. 189-91.
93. ^ for more information, see Eliade 1978: 83-4.
94. ^ For more information, see Giorgio de Santillana-Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill, An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and It's Transmission Through Myth*, fourth printing, USA, 1998; Tom Chetwynd, *A Dictionary of Sacred Myth*, London, 1986: Unwin Paperbacks, p. 126-7
95. ^ Radomir Ristic, 'Blacksmith as Magus', *The Crooked Path, A Journal of the Nameless Art*, Issue 1, No. 1, Spring 2008, p. 28
96. ^ Ev Cochrane, *Starf\*cker: The Catastrophic Conjunction of Venus and Mars*, Iowa, 2006: Aeon Press, p. 81, ISBN 9780977285129
97. ^ Ernest Millington, *Shadow Rulers: The Euro-American Trojan Horse. The Hidden History of Dynastic Overlords and Their Plan for World Domination*, Bloomington, 2009, p. 105-6 ISBN 978-1-4401-2296-5 (pbk) ISBN 978-1-4401-2297-2 (ebk)
98. ^ Millington 2009: 105
99. ^ According to Flavius Josephus Hiram constructed a temple to Melqart at Tyre as well as the temple at Jerusalem for King Solomon.

100. ^ The palace of Baal in heaven is equivalent to the construction of his temple on earth (S.D. Ricks-Michael A. Carter, 'Temple-Building Motifs: Mesopotamia, Ancient Israel, Ugarit and Kirtland', *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry, USA, 1994, p.155 ISBN 0-87579-811-X).
101. ^ Mark Amaru Pinkham, *Guardians of the Holy Grails, The Knight Templar, John the Baptist and the Water of Life*, Illinois, 2004, p. 79 ISBN 1-931882-28-2; see also Ocak 2012: 79
102. ^ John P. Brown, *The Darwishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by H.A. Rose, Haarlem, 1968: Frank Cass Co. Ltd, p. 174-5, fn. 8
103. ^ Joseph Fontenrose, *Python. A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959: Univ. of California Press, p. 516
104. ^ Wallace B. Fleming, *The History of Tyre*, New York, 1915: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 89
105. ^ see Templar of Tyre.
106. ^ William Drummond, *The Ædipus Judaicus*, London, 1811, printed by A. J. Alpy, p. 20
107. ^ Corinne Ondine Pache, *Baby and Child Heroes in Ancient Greece*, USA, 2004, p. 54-5 ISBN 978-0-252-02929-5; Cochrane 1997: 46
108. ^ Alexander Piatigorsky, *Freemasonry*, London, 1999, The Harvill Press, p. 320-1 ISBN 978-1860462658
109. ^ It is important that Mars represents also blacksmiths: "*Mars's Astrological Rulership (...) 6. Occupations: As the god of war, Mars is naturally associated with all military professions as well as in the creation of weapons and the use of sharp instruments. Surgeons, blacksmiths, metallurgists, dentists, butchers, barbers, and carpenters are thus under its influence*" (Alan Oken, *As Above, So Below. A Primary Guide to Astrological Awareness*, New York and Canada, 1973, Bantam Books, p. 285). Oken writes in his same book; "*Mars is warrior and murderer, but he is also the surgeon and healer*".
110. ^ for more details see Ev Cochrane, *Martian Metamorphoses: The Planet Mars in Ancient Myth and Religion*, Iowa, 1997, p. 124-5 ISBN 978-0965622905
111. ^ But the rites for Melqart performing by Alexander the Great at Tyre can compare with the performing of the 'Khidr' in Quran. Because he sacrificed to Melqart ('Herakles') and dedicated to him the engine which battered down the wall, as well as the Tyrian sacred schip (Josette Elai, 'The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period', *JANES* 13, 1981, p. 23 <http://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1981%2013/Elayi13.pdf>). Alexander is a hero like Herakles. Because both of them visit to Egypt. According to Herodotus when Herakles visited Egypt, -like Alexander he sacrificed to Jupiter (that is Ammon) (Thomas William Doane, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, New York, 2007: Cosimo, p. 69-70 ISBN 9781602069510
112. ^ The **Servant** is a constellation in the Egyptian civilisation and according to Brugsch it means Pegasus (constellation) (Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, 1963, 1963, Dover Publications, p. 20 ISBN 978-0486210797). It is not more important than the status of Kothar among the Ugaritic gods. Because he was a *servant* of the El, the chief god.
113. ^ Than he has turned to Melqart (*Herakles*). Coulter and Turner writes about Melqart: "*Originally a solar deity, but later became god of travellers, sailors, and of the city Tyre (...) He is associated with both Baal and the Greek Heracles*". (C.R. Coulter-Patricia Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities*, Chicago and London, 2012: Routledge, p. 317 ISBN 1-57958-270-2). But not only this, it is said that his name is a Phoenician translation of the Sumerian name Nergal, and thus, they are very closely assimilated (Cochrane 1997: 44, ft. 37).
114. ^ for *Ousoos*, see Baumgarten 1981: 163-5

115. ^ for some common astrological elements between Herakles, Gilgamesh (or *Izdubar*) and Samson, see Thomas William Doane, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, New York, 2007, Cosimo, Inc. p. 69-74 ISBN 9781602062030

## References

- Bilal Aksoy, *Çağdaş Bilimlerin Işığında Nuh'un Gemisi ve Tufan*, Ankara, 1987 (in Turkish)
- Michael Astour C. *Hellenosemitica. An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaen Greece*, with a foreword by Cyrus H. Gordon, Leiden: Brill
- Michelangelo Chasseur: *Oriental Elements in Surat al Kahf*. Annali di Scienze Religiose 1, Brepols Publishers 2008, ISSN 2031-5929, p. 255-289 (Brepols Journals Online (<http://brepols.metapress.com/content/v64518701256k28t/>))
- Oliver Leaman: *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*. Taylor & Francis 2006, ISBN 0-415-32639-7, p. 343-345 (restricted online version (Google Books) ([http://books.google.de/books?id=isDgI0-0Ip4C&pg=PA343&dq=Al-Khidr&lr=&as\\_brr=3](http://books.google.de/books?id=isDgI0-0Ip4C&pg=PA343&dq=Al-Khidr&lr=&as_brr=3)))

## External links

- Article Claiming Al-Khidr Is Still Alive (<http://seekingilm.com/archives/168>)

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Khidr&oldid=624085587>"

Categories: Islam and Judaism | Sufism | Islamic mythology

- 
- This page was last modified on 3 September 2014 at 23:50.
  - Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.

## Wikipedia

### Al Khidr

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Redirect page

[Al-Khidr](#)

### Al-Khidr

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the Palestinian village west of Bethlehem, see [al-Khader](#).

**Al-Khidr** (**Arabic**: الخصر "the Green One", also transcribed *Khidr*, *Khidar*, *Khizr*, *Khizar* and (**Persian**: خضر), **Turkish**: *Hızır*) is an enigmatic figure in Islam; some say he is a *‘Abdan Ṣālih* (righteous servant of God)<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> while others say he is a **prophet**. Al-Khidr is best known for his appearance in the **Qur'an** in **sura al-Kahf**.<sup>[Qur'an 18:65]</sup> Although not mentioned by name in the *āyah* (verse), al-Khidr is assumed to be the figure that **Musa** (Moses) accompanies and whose seemingly violent and destructive actions so disturb Moses that he violates his oath not to ask questions.

Islamic tradition sometimes describes al-Khidr as *Mu'allim al-anbiya* (Tutor of the Prophets), for the spiritual guidance he has shown every prophet who has appeared throughout history. The one prophet whom al-Khidr did not teach is Muhammad; significantly, it is Muhammad who taught al-Khidr. This is an unsurprising reversal of the master-disciple relationship exemplified by al-Khidr and Moses. Having the young, unlettered Muhammad teach the wise, ancient al-Khidr underscores the superiority of Muhammad's prophethood and the fact that he too is a repository of divine knowledge (*ilm ladunni*).<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

**Hızır** is also an important figure in **Alevism** as well as the subject of a major Turkish holiday, **Hindrellez**. In the **Jordanian** city of **Mahis** there is a Mausoleum to al-Khidr.

## Contents

- [1 Quranic narrative](#)
- [2 Reports in the Hadith](#)
- [3 In Sufism](#)
- [4 In Shi'ite Islam](#)
- [5 In Ahmadiyya](#)
- [6 Relation to other stories](#)
- [7 See also](#)
- [8 Notes](#)
- [9 References](#)

- [10 External links](#)

## Quranic narrative

In ayat 18:65-82, Moses meets al-Khiḍr, referred in the Quran as "one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves,"<sup>[Quran 18:65]</sup> at the junction of the two seas and asks for permission to accompany him so Moses can learn "right knowledge of what [he has] been taught".<sup>[Quran 18:66]</sup>

Al-Khiḍr, realizing that Moses had the [Torah](#) and divine knowledge to draw upon, informs him in a stern manner that their knowledge is of different nature and that "Surely [Moses] cannot have patience with me." Moses promised to be patient and obey Al-Khiḍr, and they set out together.

After they board a ship, al-Khiḍr damages the vessel. Forgetting his oath to follow quietly, Moses says, "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing."

Al-Khiḍr reminds Moses of his warning, "Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?" and Moses asks not to be rebuked.

Next, al-Khiḍr murders a young man. Moses again cries out in astonishment and dismay, again Al-Khiḍr reminds Moses of his warning, and Moses promises he will not violate his oath again. They then proceed to a town where they are denied hospitality.

This time, instead of harming anyone or thing, al-Khiḍr restores a decrepit wall in the village. Yet again Moses is amazed and violates his oath for the third and last time, asking why al-Khiḍr did not at least exact "some recompense for it!"

Al-Khiḍr replies, "This shall be separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience." Many acts which seem to be [evil](#), malicious or somber, actually were merciful. The boat was damaged to prevent its owners from falling into the hands of "a king who seized every boat by force. ... And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them." God will replace the child with one better in purity, affection and obedience.

As for the restored wall, al-Khiḍr explained that underneath the wall was a treasure belonging to two hapless orphans whose father was a righteous man. As God's envoy, al-Khiḍr restored the wall, showing God's kindness by rewarding the piety of the orphans' father.

## Reports in the Hadith

Among the strongest transmitted proofs about the life of al-Khidr are two reports, one narrated by Imam Ahmad in *al-Zuhd* whereby Muhammad is said to have stated that Ilyas and al-Khidr meet every year and spend the month of Ramadan in Jerusalem and the other narrated by Ya'qub ibn Sufyan from the 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz whereby a man he was seen walking with was actually al-Khidr. Ibn Hajar declared the chain of the first fair and that of the second sound in *Fath al-Bari* (1959 ed. 6:435). He goes on to cite another sound report narrated by ibn 'Asakir from Abu Zur'a al-Razi whereby the latter met al-Khidr twice, once in his young age, the other in his old age, but al-Khidr himself had not changed.

Al-Khidr is believed to be a man who has the appearance of a young adult but a long, white beard. According to some authors like Abdul Haq Vidhyarthi, al-Khidr is Xerxes (not to be confused with [Xerxes I](#)), who disappeared after being in the lake regions of [Sijistan](#) or [Sistan](#) that comprise the wetlands of the Irano-Afghan border today, and after finding the fountain of life, sought to live his entire remaining life in service of God and to help those in their path/journey to Him.

Bukhari reports that al-Khidr got his name after he was present over the surface of some ground that became green as a result of his presence there. There are reports from al-Bayhaqi in his *Dala'il an-Nubawwah* that al-Khidr was present at the funeral of Prophet Muhammad and was recognized only by Abu Bakr and Ali from amongst the rest of the companions, and where he came to show his grief and sadness at the passing away of the Prophet. Al-Khidr's appearance at Muhammad's funeral is related as follows: *A powerful-looking, fine-featured, handsome man with a white beard came leaping over the backs of the people till he reached where the sacred body lay. Weeping bitterly, he turned toward the Companions and paid his condolences. Abu Bakr and 'Ali said that he was Khidr.* (Ibn al-Jazari 1994, p. 228.)

In another narration al-Khidr met with [Ali](#) by the [Kaabah](#) and instructed him about a supplication that is very meritorious when recited after the obligatory prayers. It is reported by Imam Muslim that during the time when the false Messiah appears and as he approaches at the outskirts of the city of [Medina](#), a believer would challenge him, whom the false Messiah will slice into two pieces and rejoin, making it appear that he caused him to die and be resurrected, to which this man would proclaim the falsehood of the Dajjal who would try again to kill him (or make show of it) but would fail and thus his weakness and inability being made revealed. According to the commentators and transmitters of this narration the person who will challenge the Antichrist and humiliate him will be al-Khidr.

Sidi Abd al-Aziz ad-Dabbagh is reported in *al-Ibriz* to have said about al-Khidr, that he is not a prophet but rather a saint who has the same status as that of the *ghawth* (a level where the saint acquires resemblance to the heart of Israfil) and who attained this status in front of God as a direct blessing without the aid of any spiritual guide.

The picture to the right shows al-Khidr to be meeting [Dhul-Qarnayn](#).

## In Sufism

To Sufis, al-Khiḍr holds a very dear place. Although amongst the Sunni scholars there is a difference of opinion about him being still alive, amongst Sunni Sufis there is almost a consensus that al-Khiḍr is still alive, with many respected figures and shaykhs, and prominent leaders claiming having had personal encounters with him. Examples of those who had claim this are Ghawth Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Imam an-Nawawi, Muhyideen Ibn Arabi, Sidi Abdul Aziz ad-Dabbagh and Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi. Ibn 'Ata' Allah in *Lata'if al-Minan* (1:84-98) states that there is consensus among the Sufis that al-Khiḍr is alive. In fact there are orders that claim origin with al-Khiḍr himself, or that al-Khiḍr was part of their [chain](#), for example some of the Naqshbandiyya, the Muhammadiyyah, the Idrisiyyah, and the Sanusiyyah are tariqahs that had al-Khiḍr as one of the central figures connecting them to the spiritual outflow of the Prophet Muhammad.

In Sufi tradition, al-Khiḍr has come to be known as one of those who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation. He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path, like some of those from the Uwaisi tariqa. Uwaisis are those who enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master. Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint al-Khiḍr.

Al-Khiḍr has had thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role of an initiator. Through this way come several Sufi orders which claim initiation through al-Khiḍr and consider him their master. Al-Khiḍr had thus come to symbolize access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself. In the writings of Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khiḍr rules over 'the Men of the Unseen' (*rijalu 'l-ghayb*)—the exalted saints and angels. Al-Khiḍr is also included among what in classical Sufism are called the *abdāl* ('those who take turns'). In a divinely-instituted hierarchy of such saints, al-Khiḍr holds the rank of their spiritual head.

Sufis draw many analogies supporting [natural theology](#) from this Qur'anic passage, such as the need for earthquakes to act in contrast to earth's stability, disease to contrast good health, and countless other analogies. The question of [accountability](#) raised by some is answered through the fact that al-Khiḍr was acting as God's envoy and not according to his personal judgment.

The Sri Lankan Sufi [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen](#) gives a unique account of al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr was on a long search for God, until God, out of his mercy, sends the Archangel [Gabriel](#) to guide him. Gabriel appears to al-Khiḍr as a wise human sage, and al-Khiḍr accepts him as his teacher. Gabriel teaches al-Khiḍr much in the same way as al-Khiḍr later teaches Moses in the Qur'an, by carrying out seemingly unjust actions. Al-Khiḍr repeatedly breaks his oath not to speak out against Gabriel's actions, and is still unaware that the human teacher is actually Gabriel. Gabriel then explains his actions, and reveals his true angelic form to al-Khiḍr. Al-Khiḍr recognises him as the Archangel Gabriel, and then Gabriel bestows a spiritual title upon al-Khiḍr, by calling him *Hayat Nabi*, the Eternal Life Prophet.

The French scholar of Sufism, [Henry Corbin](#), interprets al-Khiḍr as the mysterious prophet, the eternal wanderer. The function of al-Khiḍr as a 'person-archetype' is to reveal each disciple to himself, to lead each disciple to his own theophany, because that theophany corresponds to his own 'inner heaven,' to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality. Accordingly, Al-

Khidr is Moses' spiritual guide, who initiates Moses into the divine sciences, and reveals to him the secret mystic truth.

## In Shi'ite Islam

Many [Shī'ī](#) Muslims believe al-Khidr accompanied the Twelfth Imām, [Muhammad al-Mahdi](#), in meeting one Sheikh Hassan ibn Muthlih Jamkarani, on 22 February 984 CE (17 Ramadan 373 A.H.) and instructing him to build a mosque at that site of their meeting, known as [Jamkaran](#).<sup>[1][2]</sup> The site, six kilometres east of [Qom](#), [Iran](#), has been a pilgrimage destination for the Shī'ah for some time. In the last few years, however, it has become very popular, particularly with young people, and drawn crowds of tens of thousands.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Shia believe that this is the point where the Mahdi will reappear and are often seen putting letters down a well where they believe he will re-emerge. One of the most prominent believers is the current President Ahmadinejad who has invested large sums of money in developing the area. (CNN)

## In Ahmadiyya

[Ahmadiyya](#) Muslims believe that the Quranic passage of Moses' encounter with the "Servant of God" is closely linked, contextually to the subject matter of surah [Al Kahf](#) in which his story or parable is cited. According to Ahmadi exegesis on *al-Kahf*, which draws upon external and internal, religious and historical evidence to show that Moses' journey towards, and his experience with the "servant of God" was not physical but by way of vision, similar to the [Mi'raj](#) (ascension) of [Muhammad](#).

The righteous 'servant of God' otherwise known as al-Khidr is not believed to be a historical figure but rather a symbolic figure who signifies the person of Muhammad whom Moses had desired to see and whom he saw in this vision. Muhammad has been called the 'servant of God' in many places within the Qur'an and is believed to be the servant of God *par excellence* who has been called a *mercy to the whole world*;<sup>[Qur'an 21:108]</sup> he is also believed to have been vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure.

The place of the meeting of the two seas signifies the time when the Mosaic dispensation meets the Islamic dispensation, i.e. when the Mosaic dispensation will be superseded by the Islamic one.<sup>[4]</sup>

The first action of "the servant of God" of making a hole in the boat is interpreted as signifying the commandments laid down by Muhammad which would, as it were make a hole in the boat, which in spiritual terms denotes worldly riches, i.e. he would see to it that wealth is fairly distributed and does not accumulate in the hands of a few. The "poor people" to whom the boat belonged represent the Muslims, and making a hole in it means that Islam would exhort its followers to spend in the way of God by way of [Zakat](#) and charity that would seem to be a source of economic weakness, but in fact would be one of economic strength and prosperity.



The tyrant king who confiscates the boats were the [Byzantine](#) and [Persian](#) Empires who would have seized [Arabia](#) had it not seemed to them a poor and barren land not worth conquering. Thus the Arabian land in which Muhammad was to appear, represented as the damaged boat had been safeguarded from being conquered or "taken by force".

The youth, is interpreted as ignorance, strength and wild impulses, thus the second action of the "servant of God", the killing of the youth signifies that the teachings of his religion would require its followers to bring about a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions. The source of these carnal desires, impulses and passions is the human body and soul combined, from which all moral qualities spring. Islamic theology holds that every human is born virtuous, thus because his parents have been called "believers", this means that the believers may be dragged into vice by the impulses represented as the "youth". Islam seeks to eradicate these impulses and leaves man with the soul and body combined to develop along beneficent lines to achieve the high purpose of human life.

Then Moses and the "servant of God" approach a town, ask its people for food and are refused to be accepted as guests. This signifies that both Moses and Muhammad would seek co-operation from Jews and Christians but it would be denied. The two orphan boys to whom the wall belonged are Moses and [Jesus](#) and their 'righteous' father is [Abraham](#). Their treasure was the true teaching bequeathed by them to their peoples, which was in danger of being lost due to the latter's irreligiousness. Thus the third act of the 'servant of God' (Muhammad) of rebuilding the wall signifies that the treasure or true teachings were to be safeguarded in the Quran, so that they (the people of Moses and Jesus) may accept it after having awakened to a realization of the truth of the Quranic teachings.<sup>[5]</sup> The Quran does not denote that Moses was dreaming or in some kind of dream realm or spiritual realm. These interpretations are only considered by the Qadianis who are follows of Mirza Ghulam Qadian. Hence the reason why sunnis and shias declare them non-Muslims.

## Relation to other stories

Al-Khidr also figures into the [Alexander Romance](#) as a servant of [Alexander the Great](#). Al-Khidr and Alexander cross the [Land of Darkness](#) to find the [Water of Life](#). Alexander gets lost looking for the spring, but al-Khidr finds it and gains eternal life (see [Alexander the Great in the Qur'an](#)).

Some scholars suggest that al-Khidr is also represented in the Arthurian tale, [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight](#), as the [Green Knight](#).<sup>[6]</sup> In the story, the Green Knight tempts the faith of Sir Gawain three times. The character of al-Khidr may have come into European literature through the mixing of cultures during the [Crusades](#).

It is also possible that the story derives from an Irish myth which predates the Crusades in which [Cuchulainn](#) and two other heroes compete for the [champion's portion](#) at feasts; ultimately, Cuchulainn is the only one willing to let a giant—actually a king who has magically disguised himself—cut off his head, as per their agreement.

The story is also similar to one told in the [Talmud](#) of a journey made by the prophet [Elijah](#) and Rabbi Jochanan.<sup>[7]</sup> The first house where they stay the night belongs to a pious old couple who

give the prophet and the rebbe the best of their food and beds. However, the couple's cow dies in the night. Elijah later explains that the Angel of Death came and he persuaded the angel to take the cow instead of the wife. The next house, as in the al-Khidr story, is that of a rich miser, and Elijah repairs his wall so that he will not, in having it repaired, find the treasure hidden under it. This story could have been adapted by religious figures to suit Elijah, taking the essence away from Moses having to learn from someone else. This could have been seen to belittle Moses. Hence was adapted to suit someone else.

Al-Khidr is also said to be lord [Vishnu](#) of the Hindu religion by Riaz Ahmed [Gohar Shahi](#).

## See also

- [Malamatiyya](#)
- [Muslim views on the intercession of saints](#)
- [Saint George#Interfaith shrine](#)
- [The Green Man](#)
- [Mahis](#)
- [Jamkaran](#)

## Notes

1. [^ English](#) (click on "Brief History")
2. [^ History of Jamkaran Mosque](#)
3. [^ Nasr, Vali, \*The Shia Revival\*, \(Norton, 2006\), p.220](#)
4. [^ The Holy Quran](#)
5. [^ The Holy Quran](#)
6. [^ Lasater, Alice E. \(1974\). \*Spain to England: A Comparative Study of Arabic, European, and English Literature of the Middle Ages\*. University Press of Mississippi.](#)
7. [^ Polano, H. \(1876\). \*The Talmud: Selections\*.](#)

## References

- Oliver Leaman: *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*. Taylor & Francis 2006, ISBN 0415326397, p. 343-345 ([restricted online version \(Google Books\)](#))

## External links

- [Comprehensive site on Al-Khidr](#)
- [Shrine Devoted to Al-Khidr](#)
- [Article Claiming Al-Khidr Is Still Alive](#)