

“Ziyan Digging for his Roots”

Ahmed Essadki

Translated by Mohamed Daoudi

“Ziyan ixebcen x iżewran,” from the collection: Reɛyad n tmurt (The Battle Cry of the Earth), pp. 44-50

Aalsmeer, the Netherlands: Dabar-Luyten, 1997

For an audio recording of the poem: [Click here](#).

Ziyan ixebcen x iżewran	Ziyan Digging for his Roots
Ahmed Essadki	Ahmed Essadki
<p>Ziyan d aḥudri d ameẓyan yesseqdeε reεqer ines, ixebbec x iżewran. Yarezzu ad yessen manis d-qqarsen iseywan d min iweqεen di zman i yeεdan.</p> <p>Yesseqsa refquyat, wer yefhim min da-s nnan. Yesseqsa imeḥḍan, nnan-as lektub xwan lektub dag-sen Afransis d Uliman d Uglinzi, d Umarikan d ttarix n ttujjar uneggaru n zman ttarix itarran yaẓiḍ d asiwan d manaya igg yeḡḡan a Ziyan dwa d ttarix n yuran wer yessiwir la x Eebdekrim la x wenwar, la x Dhar Ubaran.</p> <p>Nnan εawed nnan Ziyan wer yefhim min nnan. yetraḥ itas-ed, wer-t yeksi wemkan amwacmi dag-s asennan. Yeggur yetseqsa iwdan x min iweqεen gi zman i yeεdan.</p> <p>Jedd-es d jida-s netnin ḥḍan iraḥ ɣar-sen yesseqsan min yeεna Eebdekrim? min iweqεen deg Unwar d Dhar Ubaran?</p> <p>Tessiwer jida-s, igencicen teεjijjin tenhezzen wḍan-as-dd imetṭawen am tḥebba n aremman ɣar tqesmirt msagan:</p>	<p>Ziyan is a young man His sharp mind, burdened with questions. He’s digging in search of his roots, for what happened in bygone times.</p> <p>He asked the clerics they said things he didn’t understand. He asked the students, they told him books are empty and vain. Books bear the glories of the French and the Germans and the English and the Americans and the history of the crooks of the new times the history that turns chickens into falcons. This is all that there is, Ziyan, this is the history that is written. It says nothing of Abd-el-Krim, nor of Anwal, nor Abarran.⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Many stories he heard Ziyan didn’t understand. Uneasy and restless, he wandered; a thorn in his flesh, he felt. He set out on a quest for answers asking what happened in bygone times.</p> <p>He asked his grandparents for they witnessed and saw. Who is Abd-el-Krim? What happened in Anwal and Dhar Abarran?</p>

<p>Eebdekrım ammi-inu ira yeğğā d benneeman ireqqeḥ deg urawen n yewdan. Eebdekrım ammi-inu ira yeğğā d taziri di rweṣt n yetran. Eebdekrım ammi-inu ira yeğğā d r̄unsar n waman ṣfan sessen iwessura d īezriyyen d isegman. Ḡerben xes imeṭṭawen, tested yessiwer baba-s ameqran:</p> <p>Eebdekrım ammi-inu ira yeğğā d tassejjart necnin d iẓewran. Eebdekrım ammi-ini ira yeğğā d refqi necnin d imeḥḍan yesḠar-aneḠ ibriden ig tawyen Ḡar tudart igg yeknan. Eebdekrım ammi-inu wer yeğğī zi refqumat n unaggaru n zman gguren x ūeddis dewren d ifiḠarn reeqer deg uḥebbi, d min zi Ḡa ccaren adan. Eebdekrım ammi-inu ira yetmetta x r̄heq imes̄an gi kur amkan, mani ma ḡḡan s ifaḡḡaḥen, d ixeddamen, d imeḥḍan. Eebdekrım ammi-inu wer yeğğī am ttujjar n uneqqaru n zman g ij ufus teṭfen axedmi, ijjen d lquraan x uremmuẓ n weḠrum teqsanen idewḍan tḥewwasen lwiz d iyezran</p> <p>Eebdekrım ammi-inu wer yeqbir tammurt nney ad tewḍan rēdawat i dd yeẓwan aman Aseppanyu, d Ufransis, d Uḡalyan. Raḥ ammi-inu, raḥ sseqsa yetran raḥ ammi-inu, raḥ sseqsa idurar, sseqsa iyezran netnin ẓrin, cehden, ḥḍan. ẓrin Eebdekrım x uyes, leklaṭa Ḡar yedman tarwa ines bedden munen am idewḍan uzren-dd, sfin-dd zi kur amkan s umeẓyan d umeqran</p> <p>TimḠarin ssrehan-t isegman ssewjaden-t tizewḍiwin n yewzan tazren-t sriwriwen-t deg igran tawyent-idd izran</p>	<p>His grandmother spoke first, lips trembling, her tears flowed like pomegranate seeds then joined at the end of her chin: Abd-el-Krim, son, was a moon amidst the darkness. And-el-Krim, son, was a spring of water so pure and clear, where old men drink, and the infants and the young. Tears overwhelmed her, her voice faded into silence. The grandfather began to speak:</p> <p>Abd-el-Krim, son, was the tree, and we, the roots. Abd-el-Krim, son, was the teacher, and we, the pupils. He showed us the paths to a life of dignity. Abd-el-Krim, son, is not one of the preachers of these new times, Crawling with greed like a serpent, Concerned with filling their bellies. Abd-el-Krim, son, fought for the rights of the powerless in every corner, and every place, peasants, workers, and students. Abd-el-Krim, son, is not one of those crooks of the new times, carrying a knife in one hand, and in the other, the Quran, cutting off the fingers of the hungry, for a stolen bite of bread while looting riches and pillaging gold.</p> <p>Abd-el-Krim, son, stood up tall when our homeland was being carved up among the foes that came from across the seas, the Spanish, the French and the Italians. Go son, go ask the stars. Go ask the mountains, and the rivers, for they witnessed and saw. They saw Abd-el-Krim mounting his horse, the rifle slung over his shoulder. His sons united and lined up like fingers of a one hand.</p>
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x yemjehden n Dhar Ubaran.
raḥ amemmi-inu, raḥ sseqsa yetran
raḥ sseqsa idurar, sseqsa iyezran
netnin zrin, cehden, ḥḍan.

Raḥ sseqsa adrar n wenwar
I dd iyemyen gi Temsaman
netta yeḥḍar umenyi d ameqran
Aseppanyu s ruruf thedm-it tqebbit n yewdan
din igg yedhec Silvestri, d min kid-s d rqebḥan
wen ṭṭfen ndun-t yzin-as imeḍran
wer yawren ccin-t igedman.
Raḥ ammi-inu, raḥ sseqsa yetran
sseqsa idurar, sseqsa ra d iyezran
netnin zrin, cehden ḥḍan di kur amkan.

yeccuqeḍ Ziyān zeg uzeḡḡif ḥetta ar iḍan
idammen ines dewren ḥman
wer ten kessin iẓewran.
Iraḥ yejja baba-s ameqran
yeqqim I dd tt-ari x idurar, ihegg^w a x iyezran.
g ij n ḡḡiret yuḥḥer Ziyān
yeẓẓer yetxezzar ḡar yetran
ibedd-edd xes Eebdekrim jar n yiḍes d rfiqan
yenna-s awaren ksenna-as aksum x yexsan:

A Ziyān amemmi, tigram-dd gi zman d aḡeffan
rqebb yedwer ḡar iḍan
amnus nkum iḡedb-ay deg imeḍran
ddewrem am isemyān,
gi reswaq tmenzan
yemma-t-kum tammurt xewxen-t ifiḡran
tetru am ubujir gi nhar ameqran.

Kkar-t awradi, ffy-ett zeg ifran
bedr-ett zman,
qber ma ac kum ccen wucnan
qerḡet ariri, skemḍet asennan
ẓẓut nwar, neqcet aremman
sqeḍeḡet imegran
qber ma ad yendran
ḥar i ḡa tekkem tnekkarem tweṭṭam
tkessim tesrusam

They came gathering from every corner,
young and old.

The women croon to their babies
while preparing pots of iwzan.⁽²⁾
They rush ululating across the fields
singing and chanting songs
honoring the fighters of Dhar Abarran.
Go son, go ask the stars
Go ask the hills, and the rivers
for they witnessed and saw.

Go ask the mountain in Anwal
Rising in Tamsaman⁽³⁾
For it witnessed the great battle,
when the Spanish, in the thousands,
were knocked back by a handful.
Silvestre and his captains
were all confused and shocked,
Some captured, some buried,
Some fled and perished over the cliffs.
Go son, go ask the stars
Go ask the mountains and the rivers
for they witnessed and saw.

Words sent shivers down his spine;
Ziyān felt his blood boiling,
wanting to flow unrestrained.
He left and set off roaming
up and down the valleys and the rivers
then one night, he was tired of it all.
Ziyān lay back and watched the stars
Half-asleep, he saw Abd-el-Krim
standing there beside him.
He told him things, and Ziyān could feel his body
no more:

Ziyān, dreadful times beset you, son
When everything is turned upside down
your troubles fill me with anguish in my grave
for you have become slaves,
in markets, you are bought and sold
your motherland is hollowed up by serpents.
She is crying like an orphan

	<p>on the day when all other children celebrate and rejoice.</p> <p>Stand up, my sons, and come out of the caves, let the tides be turned before you're devoured by the wolves. Tear off oleander⁽⁴⁾ and burn up the thorns, plant the flowers and grow the pomegranate, sharpen the scythes before they rust. How long will you go on trying to stand and then falling down again?</p>
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- (1) Anwal and Abarran (or Dhar Abarran, meaning Mount Abarran) are two sites in the eastern Rif, at which the Spanish colonial army established advanced military outposts. The attack of the Riffian resistance on Abarran (June 1921) was an important moment which initiated the war of liberation in 1921, and was followed by a series of attacks on all the outposts between there and Melilla, leading in that summer to the costly costly retreat from Anwal (July 1921). This is commonly known in Spanish history as the "Disaster of Anwal," which, in the words of British historian Sebastian Balfour, is the most "severe" military disaster ever suffered by a European colonial power (Balfour, p. 52).
- (2) iwzan: barley which is broken down with the use of a hand mill "so that four or five pieces result from each grain. It is thrown into a pot of boiling water and cooked until swollen, then eaten with a spoon like boiled rice" (Coon, p. 57). Coon does not mention that butter or olive oil are added before eating. Another common way of preparing it is by smoking it then mixing it with buttermilk.
- (3) Temsaman is the tribal territory where the two outposts of Anwal and Abarran are located.
- (4) Oleander (ariri) is often used metaphorically in Rif Tamazight as a synonym for bitterness. It may also be understood in this poem as a call to throw off superstitious thinking. Carleton Coon, citing both E. Laoust and Justinard, mentions that oleander was "important in the manufacture of magical concoctions." (Coon, p. 9).

Ahmed Essadki was born in Ait-Ta'a, in the region of Al-Hoceima in 1959. He earned his Bachelor degree in Political Science at the University of Fes. In 1985, he moved to The Hague in The Netherlands where he earned a degree in Social Work. He published two collections of poems in Riffian Tamazight (with Dutch translations): *The Battle Cry of the Earth (Rɛyad n tmurt)* in 1997 and *The Depths of Life (Radjay n thudath)* in 2019. His third forthcoming collection is titled *Tattoo of Memory (tiggaz n twengint)*.