

“Ziyan Digging for his Roots”

Ahmed Essadki

Translated by Mohamed Daoudi

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

Aalsmeer, the Netherlands: Dabar-Luyten, 1997

Ziyan ixebcen x iżewran Ahmed Essadki	Ziyan Digging for his Roots Ahmed Essadki
<p>Ziyan d aḥudri d ameẓyan yesseqḍeε 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 imeṭṭawen am tḥebba n aremman ɣar tqesmirt msagan: Eebdekrim ammi-inu ira yeḡḡa d benneεman</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? His grandmother spoke first, lips trembling,</p>

<p>ireqqeḥ deg urawen n yewdan. Eebdekrim ammi-inu ira yeḡḡa d taziri di rweṣt n yetran. Eebdekrim ammi-inu ira yeḡḡa d rεunsar n waman ṣfan sessen iwessura d iεezriyyen d isegman. γerben xes imetṭawen, tested yessiwer baba-s ameqran:</p> <p>Eebdekrim ammi-inu ira yeḡḡa d tasejjart necnin d iḡewran. Eebdekrim ammi-ini ira yeḡḡa d refqi necnin d imeḥḍan yesγar-aney ibriden ig tawyen γar tudart igg yeknan. Eebdekrim ammi-inu wer yeḡḡi zi refquyat n unaggaru n zman gguren x uεeddis dewren d ifiyarn reεqer deg uḥebbi, d min zi γa ccaren adan. Eebdekrim ammi-inu ira yetmetta x rḥeq imesεan gi kur amkan, mani ma ḡḡan s ifaḡḡaḥen, d ixeddamen, d imeḥḍan. Eebdekrim ammi-inu wer yeḡḡi am ttujjar n uneqqaru n zman g ij ufus teṭfen axedmi, ijjen d lquraan x uremmuḡ n weγrum teqsanen idewḍan tḥewwasen lwiz d iγezran</p> <p>Eebdekrim ammi-inu wer yeqbir tammurt nney ad tewḍan reεdawat i dd yeḡwan aman Aseppanyu, d Ufransis, d Uṭalyan. Raḥ ammi-inu, raḥ sseqsa yetran raḥ ammi-inu, raḥ sseqsa idurar, sseqsa iγezran netnin ḡrin, cehden, ḥḍan. ḡrin Eebdekrim x uyes, leklaṭa γar yedman tarwa ines bedden munen am idewḍan uzren-dd, sfin-dd zi kur amkan s umeḡyan d umeqran</p> <p>Timγarin ssrehan-t isegman ssewjaden-t tizewḍiwin n yewzan tazren-t sriwriwen-t deg igran tawyent-idd izran x yemjehden n Dhar Ubaran.</p>	<p>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. They came gathering from every corner,</p>
--	---

raḥ amemmi-inu, raḥ sseqsa yetran
raḥ sseqsa idurar, sseqsa iyezran
netnin zrin, cehden, ḥḍan.

Raḥ sseqsa adrar n wenwar
I dd iẏemyen gi Tamsaman
netta yeḥḍar umenyi d ameqran
Aseppanyu s ruruf thedm-it tqebbit n yewdan
din igg yedhec Silvestri, d min kid-s d rqebṭan
wen ṭṭfen ndun-t ẏzin-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 Ziyan zeg uzeḡḡif ḥetta ar iḍan
idammen ines dewren ḥman
wer ten kessin iẏewran.
Iraḥ yejja baba-s ameqran
yeqqim I dd tt-ari x idurar, ihegg^w a x iyezran.
g ij n ḡḡiret yuḥḥer Ziyan
yeẏẏer yetxezzar ẏar yetran
ibedd-edd xes Eebdekrim jar n yiḍes d rfiqan
yenna-s awaren ksenna-as aksum x yexsan:

A Ziyan amemmi, tigram-dd gi zman d aεeffan
rqebb yedwer ẏar iḍan
amnus nkum iεedb-ay deg imeḍran
ddewrem am isemẏan,
gi reswaq tmenzan
yemma-t-kum tammurt xewxen-t ifiẏran
tetru am ubujir gi nhar ameqran.

Kkar-t awradi, ffẏ-ett zeg ifran
bedr-ett zman,
qber ma ac kum ccen wucnan
qerεet ariri, skemḍet asennan
ẏẏut nwar, neqcet aremman
sqeḍeεet imegran
qber ma ad yendran
cḥar i ẏa tekkem tnekkarem tweṭṭam
tkessim tesrusam

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;
Ziyan 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.
Ziyan lay back and watched the stars
Half-asleep, he saw Abd-el-Krim
standing there beside him.
He told him things, and Ziyan could feel his body
no more:

Ziyan, 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
on the day when all other children celebrate and
rejoice.

	<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>
--	--

- (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)*.