



Yah

From Yahweh to Trinity

M. P. Manoj, Rajagiri (2019)

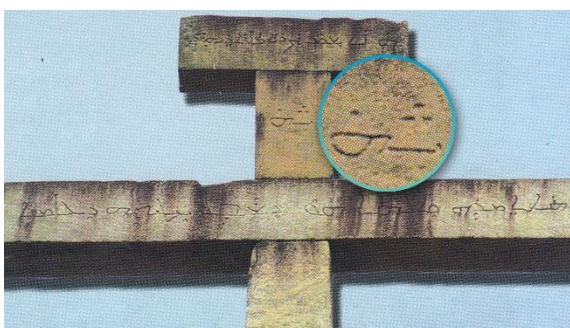
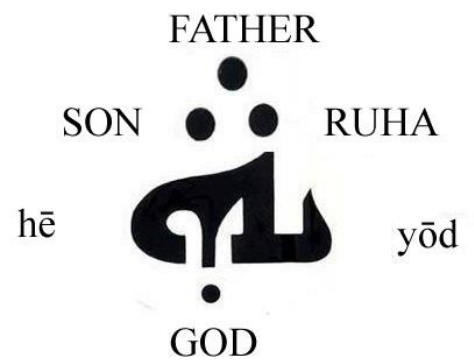
Acrylic on canvas (46 x 46 cms)

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The image in the center with two letters and four dots represents two religions, two testaments, and two complementary revelations of God in human history. The letters are yōd and hē from the Semitic (Hebrew/Aramaic/Arabic) alphabet. They are from the name that God revealed to Moses on Mount Horeb: “I am who am” (Exodus 3:14), YHWH. YAH became a short form for the Tetragrammaton. Fast forward to the New Testament times, the three dots above the letters represent the three persons in the Holy Trinity, and the dot below represents the One God. Thus, the journey from Yahweh to Trinity took several centuries, but the strictly monotheistic concept of God remained the same. Finally, the reason behind using the first person plural in the first of the two stories of creation in the Book of Genesis ---Let us make man in our image (Genesis 1:26)--- comes to light. Meanwhile, YAH became another name for God. The use of YAH continued in the Hebrew and Aramaic prayers in the oft-repeated phrase Halleluiya[h] (“praise ye the Lord”).



Inscriptions on the top of the open air Cross.
St. Mary's Forane Church, Koratty.

The artist places the YAH inside an effulgent flame against the green backdrop that resembles a monstrose on a mountaintop. Moses, now eighty years old (Exodus 7:7), a shepherd, removes his sandals, throws his staff in amazement, and raises his hands in submission to the commanding voice of God. Overwhelmed by the divine transcendence, Moses turns his face away from the burning bush. In contrast, the joyful sheep and birds in the area, unafraid, move toward the source of the revealing sound and light. It would seem that they knew Yahweh before Moses did (Psalm 50:11).

The idea of juxtaposing YAH and Trinity in a symbol may be of Middle Eastern origin. The Syriac Christians adopted it at a time when Syriac literacy was prevalent in Kerala. They used the symbol on liturgical books, vestments, altars, and open-air crosses.

Currently, the painting is in the CMSIndia collection in Kochi, India.



Yah on the main altar.
Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Elanji, Pala.

Joseph J. Palackal, CMI
19 May 2022.