ART. XXVII.—*Early Documents in the Persian Language.*
By D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

I. *Persian Deed for the Sale of Land, discovered by
Dr. Hoernlé.*

THIS document is described by Dr. Hoernlé in a Report on the British Collection of Antiquities from Central Asia, reprinted from the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. lxx, pt. i, extra No. 1, p. 27. On the discovery of these documents Dr. Hoernlé's *Note on the British Collection of Central Asian Antiquities*, Oxford, 1899, should be consulted. The Persian leaf is now in the British Museum. There is with it another of about the same period, but almost illegible. They formed crumbled up lumps of waste paper, and required very careful unfolding and smoothing out.

The facsimile shows a date given in line 11, for the reading of the words *ta'rikk* and *sāl* (date and year) admits of no doubt. Nor, indeed, does any doubt attach to the reading of the words "and one from the Flight of the Prophet, on whom be peace"; but the signs before 'and one' are not very clear. Words they must be, since 'and one' is in words; otherwise one might be inclined to imagine them to be some sort of *siyāk* numeral. Two authorities whom I have consulted agree with me that the words most probably stand for 'four hundred,' and we are probably safe in reading the date "four hundred and one from the Hijrah." This corresponds with 1010–1011 A.D. The places mentioned, "the river Kala-Asppa" and "the village Almayah (?) in Nikotanj (?)," do not at present admit of identification; since all this country was buried in sand, these names probably perished with the places to which they belonged.

For the source of the document is the Takla-makan desert, of which Sven Hedin has given a powerful description in his book *Through Asia*, pp. 788-805.

It is clear from the signatures that the people of this region had only just adopted Islam, since, though their own names are Moslem, the names of their fathers are barbarous. This fact is felicitously harmonized with the date 401 by Dr. Hoernlé: "The date of the document refers it to the reign of the great Yilik Khan, *alias* Sultan Satuk Bughra Khan, who is said to have lived H. 333-429 (A.D. 944-1037) to the age of 96 years. He was the founder of a very extensive but short-lived Uigur kingdom, with its capital at Kashgar. In his time the first permanent introduction of Islam into Eastern Turkestan took place. Tradition says that his father, Tangri Kadir Bughra Khan, was still an idolater; so was his uncle and immediate predecessor, Harun Bughra Khan. He himself is said to have adopted Islam when he was 12 years old, and to have been the first convert to Muhammadanism in Eastern Turkestan."¹ Of the fathers' names one, *Shirgu*, with a slight difference of spelling, is familiar in Arabic records; another, *Likokongo* (Mr. Platts would read *Liko-kuhi*), is unfamiliar. A third (*Kiligh*) resembles the familiar Turkish name *Kilij*, 'sword,' but I am not clear that the two can be identified. *Kiligh* and *Shirgu* further style themselves by a word which I formerly read *Sipāsi*, the name of a sect, real or fictitious, of which a lengthy account is given in the *Dabistan* (translated by Shea & Troyer, Paris, 1843, vol. i, ch. i, sec. 2). It would, however, be rather strange for the Moslem sons to mention in their signatures that their fathers had been of a different religion; and since the *Sipasis*, if the *Dabistan* is to be believed, were Zoroastrians, we should not expect Turks to be of this religion. Hence I am now inclined to read the word *Subāshi*, and identify it with a name which occurs in the chronicles of this period: a *Subashi* Takin was the head of the army of Ilk Khan

¹ See T. D. Forsyth, *Report on a Mission to Yarkound*, 1873, p. 122 sqq.

(Ibn Athir, ix, 111), and a Subashi was the chamberlain of Mas'ud of Ghazna (ibid., 311; Kazimirski, *Minoutchehri*, p. 111). The word (spelt according to Osmanli orthography Şubashi) is familiar in Turkish history, and means an official subordinate to a Sanjak; Pavet de Courteille renders it (for Eastern Turkish) *commissaire de police*; Redhouse says "a police-magistrate under the Timariot system"; further notices of them are to be found in Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs*, iii, 129. In the Turkish-Turkish dictionary of Sami, dated Constantinople, 1318 A.H., the constable is said to have been called 'Water-head,' because the Bedouins were always quarrelling about water, and therefore when a district had to be put in order the first business which required permanent settling was the water supply: such persons would also be naturally employed as witnesses. I fear that, like *chawushes* whom I have myself met, they were unable to sign their names: the names are signed by the scribe who wrote the deed, and they made their marks as do the illiterate in this country. It may be doubted whether the scribe wrote their names with the necessary accuracy.

Owing to the difficulty of identifying the places the interest of this deed is moderate. Does Nikotanj (?) stand for Khotan?—early forms of which word, it must be confessed, bear no resemblance to this variety. On the other hand, the precautions taken by the purchaser are noteworthy. Seven witnesses, four of them magistrates, attest the purchase of the property. Four boundaries are described, and the owners of the adjoining lands are stated to be orthodox Moslems. The vendor, though the purchaser is connected with him by marriage, cannot sufficiently asseverate that neither he nor his blood relations can make any further claim to the property.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(1) این خطست کی نبشته می آمد بدستی مصلح مردمان

(2) حسین بن لیکو کونفی خال من در من چل پی خود

- (3) المایه روستای در نکوسج جز از تخم زمین
- (4) یحیی بن ایوب را فروختم بهای تمام یافتم زمین به
- (5) ودست تاویز من که آن زمینی کوتاه شد از ملک من
- (6) زمین فروشنده حد دوم جوی کلا اسبا حد سیو[م]
- (7) محمد و احمد این چهار حد بیع مسلمانان به درستی
شریعت اند
- (8) بیرون کردم از آمد فریاد ملک یحیی
- (9) خصوصت کند آن همه زور فساد و بهتان و نا حلالیست و
- (10) بیرون آمد و از ملک خویشانان من بیرون آمد و از عرض
- (11) حجت باشد تاریخ سال چهار صد و یک از هجرة النبی علیه
[السلام]
- (12) شهید بدلک زکریا بن لیکوکنعی
- شهید بدلک حسین بن لیکوکنعی
- شهید بذلک یعقوب بن شرکوا سباشی
- شهید بذلک عمر بن قیلغ سبا[شی]
- شهید بذلک محمد بن قیلغ سباشی

TRANSLATION.

- (1) This is the document that was written by the hand of the agent
- (2) Husain, son of Liko-kongo, my maternal uncle, in the year 40 (of his age ?)
- (3) Almayah (?), a village in Nikotanj (?), part of the boundary of the land of
- (4) To Yahya Ibn Ayyub I sold : I received the full price ; the land at
- (5) And my hand . . . that land was taken out of my property ; and its boundaries are first the property of

- (6) The seller of the land: second boundary the stream
Kala Asppa: third boundary . . . : *and fourth
boundary the estate of*
- (7) Mohammed and Ahmad. These four boundaries are
the property of orthodox Muslims.
- (8) I have removed from the possibility of complaint (?) the
property of Yahya : *and if
anyone*
- (9) Litigate, his case is all falsehood, error, fiction, and
wrong.
- (10) It went out: and from the possession of my relations it
went out: and from the property
- (11) May be evidence. Dated the year 401 from the Flight
of the Prophet, on whom be *peace*.
- (12) Witnessed by—

Zachariyah, son of Licocongo.

Hasan, son of Licocongo.

Jacob, son of Shirkū, Subashi.

Omar, son of Kiligh, Subashi.

——— son of Kiligh, Subashi.

Mahmud, son of Kiligh, Subashi.

——— son of Shirkū.

II. *Persian Verses in the Syriac Character, discovered by Mr. Conybeare.*

That the Persian Christians, of whose sufferings the Acts of the Martyrs tell us so much, had some literature in the language of their country, seems likely, and, indeed, a version of the Bible in Persian is mentioned by both Jewish and Christian authorities of pre-Mohammedan times. Mr. F. C. Conybeare has observed that a letter of the sixth century addressed by the Armenians to the Persian Christians was in Persian as well as Armenian; *գրեցաք հայերէն և պարսերէն* “we have written in Armenian and Persian” are the words with which the writers describe the language

of their letter.¹ He was also fortunate enough to discover in a Nestorian Ritual (Gazza No. 1 of the Library of the Propaganda, Piazza di Spagna) some fragments of a Persian hymn, written in the Syriac character. They are on p. 233; Dean Maclean describes them thus:—

“The Persian lines are inserted close to one another in four stanzas of an Epiphany ‘Canon,’ where they are obviously out of place and intruded. The first three Persian stanzas are intruded into three consecutive Syriac stanzas, then follows an uninterpolated Syriac stanza, then the fourth Persian stanza is interpolated in the next Syriac stanza. They only spoil the sense of the Syriac, and it is hard to say why they have been interpolated in that particular place I should conjecture that some scribe, who knew the Persian lines well and wished to preserve them, interpolated them not very skilfully into this Canon.”

The MS. is said to belong to the thirteenth century.

Persian is practically unknown to the Nestorians of Persia of our time: they speak (besides their own vernacular) Turkish or Kurdish; and there is a ritual which I have seen at Urmi in which Turkish is mixed with Syriac, somewhat as Persian is mixed with it here. The Syriac verses in this passage show Mohammedan influence, since they rhyme in a definite consonant; the date of the Persian verses is harder to settle, since the history of rhyme and versification in Persian is obscure. But they contain no word that can be termed Arabic except *dinā*, ‘religion’; and the questions connected with that word are too difficult to permit of our basing much on its occurrence.

Dean Maclean’s description proceeds: “The Canon is Deut. xxxii, 21^b–43, each two (Syriac) clauses of which are ‘farced’ with a Syriac stanza. The interpolated stanzas are as follows”:—

Deut. xxxii, 40: Mix, O Lord, our Hallelujahs with the Hallelujahs of the angels, and our hymns with their hymns, and our songs with their songs.

(First Persian passage.)

¹ *Գիրք թղթոց*, Tiflis, 1901, p. 47.

Deut. xxxii, 41^b : *And my hand shall take hold on judgment, and I will render vengeance :*

May Thy will, O Lord, be pleased with the service of Thy worshippers, and may our prayers be received before the throne of Thy majesty.

(Second Persian passage.)

Deut. xxxii^a, 42^a : *I will make my arrows wet.*

مبصلا حلي افا .
 اى مذب هزلهل ففا .
 سمها لافافا هزفا .
 ففبه افبه ففا ففا .

(Syriac) Pour out thy grace upon us,
 Yea, Lord, and hear our prayer,
 And be gracious to him that has sinned and
 done evil
 Seventy times seven seven.

(Third Persian passage.)

Deut. xxxii, 42^b : *And my sword shall devour of the blood of the slain.* Syriac stanza rhyming in N.

Deut. xxxii, 42^d : *From the head of the crown of the enemy : therefore, ye nations.*

له ففملا افبه ففملا .
 هلهفلا حب ففملا .
 ففملا ففملا ففملا .
 ففملا ففملا ففملا .

Come, ye peoples, sound a hymn,
 and thanksgiving by sacrifice (?)
 in this glorious feast
 of the Baptism of Christ.

(Fourth Persian passage.)

The Persian verses are as follows : they are printed from a copy of Mr. Conybeare's photographs made by Dean Maclean, collated by J. P. Margoliouth and myself.

(1) p. 233*a*.

خاسته هیلا بپایست خن دمه .
 دین محراب ایله ده دین . ضعیفه
 حله ذهب . دینا خنر معینا دین .

(2) p. 233*a*.

خنر دین محراب . یکنه ذهب
 اے صلب . دینا دمه خنر دین .
 دینا خنر معینا دین .

(3) p. 233*b*.

معینا دین دمه دمه . دمه
 خنر بپایست دمه . اوصه انر دین
 خنر دمه . دینا خنر معینا دین .

(4) p. 233*b*.

صعبه اضا دین دین . دمه صعبه دین
 خنر دین . له خنر دین دین .
 له ضل خنر دین .

(1) May be transliterated :

بهر سوی نگاه کردم دیدم که استواری پیوسته بترسائی دین پاک
 مشیقا را

*I looked to every side : I saw that security is bound up with
 Christianity. The pure religion is Christ's.*

The spelling استوارا and دینا for استواری and دین may be dialectic. The alteration دیدم دی دیدم که is very slight.

(2)

می خوری می خری می فروشی زبان کنی راه راست بگیری
دین پاک مشیحا را

*Thou eatest, thou buyest, thou sellest, thou revilest, thou takest
[not?] the right way. The pure religion is Christ's.*

Here, again, راه راست is spelt راه راست.

(3)

مشیحا را دوستارم
زکس مگو نگاه دارم
از کو اندوه باز آرم
دین پاک مشیحا را

*I am the friend of Christ. Bid me fear no-one. I remove
trouble from the road. The pure religion is Christ's.*

The spelling *anduh* is noteworthy. The second line is not perfectly clear: **دِه مِه لِه لِه دِه**. I think, however, the emendation **دِه = ازکس** is fairly certain. With the **مگو نگاه دارم** we may compare the familiar use of **گو** as a periphrasis for the imperative of the third person.

(4) The Persian begins—

حَمْدُ اِلهِ اَبَدِ اَی
هَذِهِ سَمْعُهُ عَمَادَةُ ثَلَاثِ
تُو قَدَش تَرَسَائِی
وَتُو بَمَا بَخْشَائِی

*Thou art baptized in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Ghost:*

*Thou art holy, a Christian:
And thou dost bestow on us.*

The sense of this last stanza is obscure, because it is not clear whether it is addressed to the baptized Saviour or to the baptized Christian.

If this be a fragment of pre-Mohammedan hymnody, its value for the history of the Persian language is great. In any case, I think we are justified in supposing that the name for Christian ترسا 'fearing' is pre-Mohammedan, and that the Arabic راهب, often used for *monk*, but sometimes signifying Christian merely, is a translation of it. ترسا, in its turn, is probably a translation of the Greek εὐσεβής.

The mixture of Syriac with Persian in the last stanza is curious.

Is the Persian rhyme, as it appears in these verses, borrowed from Arabic versification or from Christian versification, such as appears in Latin? If the lines belong to the early Persian Church, the second explanation must be true.