

## MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

### SACRED BOOKS OF THE YEZIDIS

In July, 1916, I wrote an article in this *Journal* (505-26) on the Yezidis and their sacred books. In it I endeavoured to set forth my reasons for believing why the paternity of the recently discovered Yezidi books had to be traced back to some subtle forgers. Nothing that appeared since that date induces me to change my views on the subject; on the contrary, much has come to light to confirm them.

Captain H. P. W. Hutson, R.E., a prominent member of our Mesopotamian expeditionary force, who has had the unique opportunity of studying on the spot the habits and customs of the community of the Yezidis or Devil-worshippers, was fortunate enough to procure a manuscript purporting to contain the sacred books of the Yezidis in their original language. Believing them to be written in Kurdish he began to correspond with all the Orientalists who in his opinion were able to read Kurdish. Eventually the manuscript was sent to me for examination, and I immediately discovered that, apart from some short prayers written in Kurdish, it contained nothing but an Arabic text similar to that of the Yezidi books of which I had previously treated at some length. Appended to the manuscript was a colophon which in view of its importance for the criticism of the Yezidi books I want to publish *in extenso* as it stands:—

سنة ٢٢٠٠ سنة اليونانية سنة ١٨٨٩ سنة المسيحية

سنة ١٣٠٥ سنة الهجرية الداعي بالديانة اليزيدية بكل

وقت امير شيخ اسمعيل بن امير عبيد من ذرية شيخ

آدى وهذا الكتاب تاريخ يازيدية سنة ٢١٦٠ كان ضاع

وسنة ١٨٨٩ مسيحية جلبه بطرك بطرس على ملة السريان من الهند ووجده وجلبه ووضع بهدير الزعفران وثاني بتاريخ سنة ١٩١٤ مسيحية انا المذكور تواجعت مع مطران الياس الموصل و قال لي لنا كتاب بدير الزعفران وحالا سافرت لماردين مع عائلي وابني وحصلت امر المحافظين للدرب من والي الموصل ووصلت لماردين وبعده بكم يوم رحت لدير بعزة واكرام وجلبنا هذا الكتاب معنا.

“The year 2200 of the Greeks is the year 1889 of the Christian era and 1305 of the Hijra.<sup>1</sup> (From the one) who professes the Yezidi faith at all times, the Amīr Sheikh Ismā'il, son of the Amīr 'Abdi from the descendants of Sheikh Ādi: this book containing the history of the Yezidis was lost in the year 2160,<sup>2</sup> and in the Christian year 1889 Peter, the Patriarch of the Syrian community, brought it from India, where he had found it, and put it in the monastery of Za'farān (near Mardin). Then in the Christian year 1914 I, the above-mentioned, had an interview with Bishop Alyās of Mosul, who told me that we had such a book in the monastery of Za'farān. I journeyed immediately to Mardin with my family and my son, and I obtained from the vali of Mosul the services of some *gendarmes* to protect us on the way. Some days after I reached Mardin I went to the monastery, and we brought the book with us.”

<sup>1</sup> 1305 A.H. corresponds with A.D. 1887 (19 Sept.).

<sup>2</sup> 2160 of the Greeks corresponds with A.D. 1849.

On this important colophon the following short commentary may be found useful:—

(a) The colophon is undoubtedly written by the same hand that wrote the manuscript itself.

(b) We have in it the spectacle of a prominent Yezidi sheikh knowing nothing of the fact that his community possesses any sacred books. The existence of such books is revealed to him by a Christian bishop in A.D. 1914.

(c) These sacred books were mysteriously lost in A.D. 1849 from the mountain of Sinjār, near Mosul, and by an uncommon stroke of fortune they were in 1889 discovered in India, where they had been taken away, no one knowing how, or when.

For those interested in the Yezidis and their sacred books it may not be out of place to remark that after the date of my article in this *Journal*, three important publications have appeared on the subject: A. Dirr, *Einiges über die Jeziden (Anthropos)*, 1918, 558–74; Isya Joseph, *Devil Worship*, pp. 220 (Boston, 1919); and F. Nau, *Recueil de textes sur les Yézidis (Rev. de l'Or. Chrét.)*, 1917, pp. 142–200, 225–77).

A. MINGANA.

#### THE KITAB MA'ANI AS-SI'R, BY IBN QUTAIBA

In 1906 Rhodokanakis published in the *Nöldeke Festschrift* (pp. 385 ff.) a description of the manuscript of the Kitāb aš Ši'r, which he had discovered in the library of the Ayā Sofia Mosque in Constantinople. The manuscript contained only the first part of the work, namely, the first three books. The Constantinople manuscript has fifteen lines to the page, and at the end it is stated that the next book would begin with the chapter on flies ذَبَاب. During a visit to the India Office on the occasion of the Joint Session of the Oriental Societies in London in September, 1919, I was attracted by a manuscript of the same work exhibited in the reading-room