An investigation into their social and religious cult.
THE YEZIDIS,
or 'Devil-Worshippers',
of ASSYRIA.

An investigation into their social and religious cult.

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PREFACE.

The Yezidis or 'Devil Worshippers', whose impressive temple adorns the wooded valley of Sheikh Adi amidst the foothills of Northern Mesopotamia at a distance of over forty miles north-east of Nineveh, are an industrious, clean and hospitable people.

To the sojourner among them they convey the impression of being cowed, melancholy and meek. Yet these traits of character, which do not feature so saliently among the Yezidis of the Sinjar hills in the north-western Mesopotamian desert, are but the scars of a history which has been replete with the toils, dangers and sufferings of a persecuted religious minority. Nevertheless when forced to take the field against the ruthlessness of Kurdish aghas or Turkish governors the Yezidis displayed enviable personal bravery and fearless devotion to their creed.

Though Classical and Syriac writers had occasional references to sects with strange religious practices in the highlands of Mesopotamia, the inaccessible habitat of the Yezidis in Kurdistan and in the desert-girt hills of the Sinjar helped to place them outwith the interest of European scholars until about the end of the 18th century. It was in 1807 that attention was attracted to them in a tract, written by a Fr. M. Garzoni, which was published that
year in Berlin. The tract was subsequently translated into French and placed as an appendix to M. Rousseau’s "Description du Pachalik de Bagdad" which was published in Paris in 1809. When once the curtain was raised, western curiosity cast its eyes towards this unknown people. Gradually more light, though still dim and uncertain, was shed upon a sect who were regarded not merely as barbarous but were even reputed to be worshippers of the devil whom they revered through the symbol of a bird.

In the first quarter of the 19th century those of the English-speaking world who were interested in Asiatic ethnology and comparative religions received further data on these "Devil Worshippers" in 'A Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan', (Vol. 2), the information being acquired during a stay in Mosul from 1820 to 1821 by Mr. Rich, the Political Resident of the East India Company at Baghdad. During the following twenty years the Yezidis were forgotten until an article in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1839 gave some information, acquired by a British traveller in those hills, on the Yezidis of the Jebel Sinjar. Yet even then the information available was sparse and inconsistent.

It was Sir Austin Henry Layard, in recording the results of his excavations of Nineveh, who supplied the
first substantial and most reliable account of these
Yezidis by including in his book (‘Nineveh and its
Remains', 1848) a chapter on those whom he called
"Worshippers of the devil".

In the middle of the 19th century two or three
writers of the English-speaking world, in recording
their travels among the millets of the Ottoman Empire,
gave further accounts of the Yezidis and their religion.
Thereafter the Kurdish hills and the Mesopotamian
desert wrapped the Yezidis in a curtain of silence
till, in the end of the 19th century and within the
present century, a few Continental publications and
some English and American writers again drew attention
to this peculiar sect.

Before he obtained the opportunity of travel

To aid the reader, who may be interested in the
Yezidis but is not free to devote extensive reading to
the subject, we extract from the bibliography to this
thesis the subjoined list which, in aggregate,
approximates a general survey of the more salient
aspects of the subject.

1. Badger - 'The Nestorians...and the Yezedees', 1852.
adorateurs du diable', Paris, 1892.
5. Giard - 'Storia di un popolo ignoto', Rome, 1900.
9. Anthropos, Vol. 6, 1911, 'La découverte des Yezidis'.
among the subjects of his interest the present writer had been investigating the social and religious beliefs of the sect. He approached the subject as one anxious for knowledge concerning a people whose material welfare was then committed to our national care. In the course of his studies of the limited writings on the subject he felt that, whilst almost each contribution had its degree of merit, nevertheless some which were instructive were incomplete and inexhaustive; others, by inconsistencies, created a sense of perplexity; others again were disturbing without convincing. There seemed to be disagreements on almost each salient aspect of the question. Opinions differed on the nature and functions of the priesthood, on the millet organisation, on the festivals, on the ceremonies and even on the locality of the temple; whilst the deepest cleavage of views concerned the mysterious, yet pre-eminent personages or deities called Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi.

The limitations which the chaotic régime of the Turks in the days before the Great War could impose on the few writers who penetrated into Yezidi localities - and also the dangers incidental to travel, by non-Moslems, in a disordered and restless territory - can substantially account for many of the
contradictions and differences in the data furnished by these travellers on a subject which is obscure not only because of its political circumstances but also by virtue of its own nature.

The aftermath of the Great War threw open the gates of many localities which were hitherto inaccessible and, likewise, bequeathed to Britain a mandate over an area which includes the main districts of the Yezidis in Assyria. Consequently, within the restrictions that were officially deemed necessary for the protection of life in the wild uncertainty of the Kurdish hills, such travellers as would venture to explore the territory can now do so. And as British influence in the 19th century considerably alleviated the lot of these downtrodden Yezidis, and as the speaking of English is synonymous among them with British nationality, the Westerner who uses that language is normally welcome among them and will receive such crude kindness as their primitive life affords.

The new political situation which has transformed these Yezidis from being the most scorned rayats of the Ottoman Empire into free citizens of the new kingdom of 'Iraq has furnished fuller opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge concerning their social and religious beliefs.
It was his intense interest in these people and the perplexities with which he was confronted by the diverse accounts given concerning them that urged the present writer to undertake a fuller exploration, if possible, of the Yezidi cult in its social and religious aspects. And when his duties as a Chaplain in the British Royal Air Force furnished him with the opportunity of residence and freedom of travel for some years in Mesopotamia his investigations there were considerably assisted by data obtained from resident British administrative officials, from ex-secret-service agents, from intelligent Christian Assyrians like Summa d'Beth Shimun (the sister of the late murdered patriarch of the Nestorians) as well as by information gathered personally at the temple of Sheikh Adi from the religious head of the Yezidis.

In this sector of Central Asiatic religions results and facts are not crowding in upon each other and merely awaiting co-ordination and alignment. To sift and refine, to analyse and co-relate the heterogeneous elements in the Yezidi social and religious cult is a task involving considerable researches into the theology, philosophy and history of the different cultures which may have left their impress on the background of the so-called worship of the devil. Such a task had to put under review the ethical ideas
of Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Hellenic civilisations in addition to the possible religious influence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The thesis seeks to submit a modern survey of the distribution and employments of the sect; their territorial and hierarchal organisation; a description of their temple with an account of their festivals; a critique of their alleged sacred books; their social codes and taboos and the nature and objects of their adoration. It also presents the writer's conclusions on what appear to him to be the source and evolution of the peculiarly Yezidi problem i.e. Sheikh Adi, Melek Taus and the origins of the cult. It likewise endeavours to vindicate his conclusion that Yezidism is not merely an agglomeration from the surrounding faiths, notwithstanding the existence of this latter view among writers on the subject, but that the important and preponderating religious theories in the Yezidi cult appear to be traceable into centuries far anterior to modern contiguous religions; that the cradle of the faith was the Ancient Assyrian pantheon but that, through the vicissitudes of its struggle for survival, the Yezidi cult could hardly escape being influenced by those religions' which subsequently held sway on the soil of Assyria. It likewise submits the conclusion,
issuing from the writer's investigations, that Melek Taus is not the devil as the latter is known in Judaism, in Christianity or in Islam; but rather, that he is an aeon and a daimon and that the designation 'devil-worshippers' is, therefore, a misnomer for that strange sect.

The effort and expense involved in investigation and travel are compensated by the belief that the thesis may fill a desideratum on the social practices and religion of a sect who received British political care but almost completely neglected by British theological interest. And the writer is submitting the results of his investigations, and especially his own explanations of the origin and nature of the faith, in the hope of arousing the interest of other prospectors towards this uncultivated belt of Central Asian religions.
CHAPTER I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

Summary Introduction.

Map of Yezidi Districts.

Yezidi Localities.

(1) Main habitat in Assyria.
    Mosul vilayet. Localisation and tribes.
    Tribes and feudal organisation, Routes to Jebel Sinjar.

(2) Exiles.

In Syria.
    Their villages.
    Livelihood and hospitality.
    Devotion to the faith.

In the Caucasus.

    Associations maintained with co-religionists.
    Fidelity to the temple.

In Teheran.

    Migrations thither common in history of Kurdistan.
    Faithful to Sheikh Adi.
Chapter 1.

General Introduction.

It is almost a sine qua non in the evolution of every nationality to evince paroxysms of political and religious rivalries which result in secessions and migrations by the party whose ideals are opposed with intolerance if not by persecution. And it is a religious antagonism that often engenders the resultant oppression and suffering. A cursory historic retrospect reveals this feature in modern as well as in earlier states. Britain produced its Pilgrim Fathers; France its Huguenots; Austria its Moravians; Russia its Deukobors; Bohemia its Hussites; the Roman Empire of Nero and Julian its Christian martyrs. Little wonder, then, that the Yezidis,* maintaining in Southern Kurdistan a precarious economic livelihood and a cult avowedly in alliance with the Devil, should experience fierce and recurrent persecutions. Even a less unhallowed creed would be suspect to neighbours more enlightened and less intolerent than the Kurds and Christians who were most propinquent to the Yezidis.

* "The family name of the tribe is Daseni, (pl. Duasen,) by which title they are frequently spoken of both by Christians and Mohammedans. They themselves also use the term, but can give no other account of its origin than that it is the ancient appellation of their race,..." ("Nestorians and their Rituals...Tenets of the Yezedees." G.P. Badger, Vol. I. p. 111.)
Surviving multitudinous vicissitudes in that eternal motherland of vigorous raiders probably since pre-Macedonian dynasties in Babylonia hundreds of years before Christ; surviving the régimes of Alexander the Great, Parthian and Sassanian kings, Roman generals, Genghis Khan the Mongol, and Tamerlane, and recurrently decimated by their Mohammadan overlords* they, phoenix-like, seemed to rise anew as if from their ashes to husband out a stern existence throughout the middle ages into the 19th century, there to encounter one of the blackest and direst chapters in their annals.1

Throughout the 19th century a murderous Nemesis harassed them with sanguinary and fanatical persecution. About 1840 the estimated numerical strength of the Melek Taus devotees approximated 150,000. But the wholesale massacre of males, the forcible removal of marriageable females to fill the hareems of Southern Turkey, the relentless destruction of their villages, the auctioning of orphan children like cattle in the principal towns and the agonising sufferings of refugees from climatic rigours and from Mohammadan and Christian odium theologicum which piously gloated in this apparent crumpling of Satan's

* Vide "Four Centuries of Modern Iraq", S.H.Longrigg, Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7, 8 and xi.

1 An account of the persecutions experienced by the Yezidis is furnished in "Les Yezidis. Episodes de l'histoire des adorateurs du diable" (J. Menant, Paris, 1892, pages 162 to 219.
pillars, reduced them to about one fourth of their number at the end of that century. The savage outbreaks of persecution by local Kurdish aghas and the Turkish political inaneness of the 19th century almost denuded the Yezidi villages in the Sheikhan area whilst depriving them of their ancient tribal independence. Regular marauding incursions into Yezidi territory were sources of remuneration for the unpaid troops of the Mosul governors; and it was only natural that the persecuted Yezidis should retaliate. At certain times the Yezidis, therefore, were the terror of the otiose governors.* Caravans were plundered; the goods were removed while the throats of the owners were quickly slit. Mohammedans who fell into their hands received speedy and final rest. On the other hand Christians, as fellow sufferers, were not molested.

Writing in 1848 Sir Henry Layard stated that some years previously the Yezidis were a powerful race and that the Sheikhan Yezidis retained their independence until their chief, Ali Bey, who was esteemed for his sagacity and bravery, fell into the hands of a hostile Kurdish Bey who did him fouily to death. Soon thereafter the Sinjar Yezidis were subdued. The

* a. "The fierce Yezidis, their hand against all men and every government", Longrigg, loc. cit. p. 8
b. Of the Yezidis (about the year 1816) a writer naively states that "their principal amusement was the plundering of poorly escorted caravans and isolated travellers", Quoted in 'Baghdad in Bygone Days', (C. Alexander.) p. 235.
latter, overwhelmed numerically though not in stamina or mountain tactics, fleeing from their barbarous Turkish oppressors hid in caves where, at the instigation of fanatical mullahs, they were suffocated by fires lighted at the mouth. Grey-haired women and aged men who were too infirm to flee were decapitated and their heads ghoulishly paraded among the rapacious troops.* The massacres under Bedr Khan, Mir of Bokhtan, about 1845, presented the features of a jehad for it extended to Christians as well as to Yezidis. Even the famous firman alleged to have been granted by the prophet Mohammad himself and treasured for many centuries by the Nestorian patriarchs was destroyed then in the village of Qudshanis. This talisman being removed, there was no further raison d'être for the Christians who, therefore, should be indiscriminately slaughtered.

The indescribable ferocity of the persecutions against the Yezidis, inaugurated in 1892 by Osman Bey, the new Turkish Vali of Mosul, continued intermittently for many years and exacted a tragic toll even from the central shrine at Sheikh Adi which hitherto had been immune from such devastations. Dr. Wigram, visiting Sheikh Adi in 1907, found it denuded of all Yezidi priests and tenanted by a Moslem mullah-curator who

2 " "The Cradle of Mankind", W.A. Wigram, p. 99 et 100.
could scoff at the impotence of the superstitious religion but who, somehow, would never venture into the innermost and dark recesses of their shrine.

Such sanguinary outbursts of racial and religious hatred are not novel on the soil of ancient Assyria whose remote kings "made war for the lust of slaughter and could say in the pride of their hearts - 'my face rejoiceth in ruins; in the satisfying of my wrath I have pleasure'; and, again, 'I slew one of every two. I built a wall before the great gates of the city; I flayed the chief men of the rebels, and I covered the wall with their skins. Some of them were enclosed alive in the bricks of the wall, some of them were crucified on stakes along the wall; I caused a great multitude of them to be flayed in my presence, and I covered the wall with their skins. I gathered together the heads in the forms of crowns, and their pierced bodies in the form of garlands.'"

Notwithstanding the strange compound of the Yezidi religion there was no quenching of the heroic fortitude and flaming enthusiasm of a faith that, in martyrdom, poured its life-blood to be consumed by the fire of a violently hostile counter-religion. The Yezidis, now reduced to the status of the most scorned rayats, of the Turkish Empire, so continued until in

1 "Transactions of the Ethnological Society, 1861, p. 23. (Yezidis, by Ainsworth).
1908 they were reinstated on an official basis as a recognised millet of the Sultan's dominions. British influence assisted in alleviating their lot early in the 19th century and, under the British mandate over the new kingdom of 'Iraq subsequent to the Great War, they rejoice in a security which disposes them to welcome, even into their most revered shrine, Westerners whom curiosity allures to the precincts of the sanctuary. It is the oppression experienced in their ancient Assyrian haunts and the quest of money for an asylum in less harassing districts that largely explain the presence of Yezidis in areas/the bounds of Kurdistan.

Yezidi Localities.
The only known Yezidi communities, apart from those in Southern Kurdistan and the Jebel Sinjar, are in Northern Syria, in the Caucasus, and in Teheran. This localisation of them is purely geographical. Whilst individually they are faithful unto death to the persecuted creed of their ancestors they, nevertheless, do not form communities that are segregated religiously from other creeds. They perform useful, though menial, duties in cities like Aleppo, Teheran and Tiflis. The new generations born and reared abroad, though still true to ancestral blood and creed, have discovered their economic sphere whilst, religiously, the shrine of Sheikh Adi calls to them from Kurdistan as Mecca allures the sons of Islam.
Map illustrating Yezidi localities in, and beyond, Mosul. Central Asia.

Red shows Yezidi localities.

Scale of Mils:

Facing Page 8.
In Assyria.

Mosul Vilayet.*

In every account of the Yezidis the vilayet of Mosul claims preponderating consideration. For there, despite many vicissitudes, still remain their racial centre and their Mir's headquarters. There, too, like a magnet that allures pilgrims from their scattered haunts throughout Central Asia, rise the whitened spires of their most sacred shrine at Sheikh Adi. There also are those tombs, those trees, and those shrines long venerated for their thaumaturgic efficacy.¹ There also are those haunts and hills where, perhaps, their ancestors joined in hunting the wild boar in the days of Sargon or waged deadly combat with the soldiers of Alexander the Great or sacrificed chosen animals to the rising sun.

By the administrative organisation for political purposes applied to 'Iraq by Midhat Pasha,² Turkish Vali of Baghdad from 1869 to 1872, Mosul became in 1879 one of the three vilayets of 'Iraq. The other two were Baghdad and Basra. The vilayet was the largest territorial unit in the political system of the Turkish Empire. The vilayet was divided into sanjaqs or sub-provinces and the sanjaq in turn was divided

* Vide Map, reproduced from Ordnance Survey of 1923, p.105 (chapter 7).
1 Badger, loc.cit. Vol.1. p.107 et seq.
2 Longrigg, loc.cit. p.312.
into qadhas or minor administrative units. The Mosul vilayet contained three Sanjaqs, (a) that of Mosul itself with qadhas of Dohuk, Zakho, Amadiyyah, Sinjar, and Aqrah; (b) that of Kirkuk with qadhas of Arbil, Raniyyah, Ruwanduz, Keui Sanjak and Kifri and (c) that of Sulaimaniyyah with qadhas of Bazyan, Halabjah, Shahribazar and Markah. The Mosul sanjaq - as above - would be an approximate ethnographical localisation of the present Mosul Yezidis.*

They are to be encountered mainly in the deltoid of the Lesser Zab and the Tigris; from longitude 43 degrees 10 minutes East, to 43 degrees 40 minutes East and latitude 36 degrees 20 minutes North to 36 degrees 50 minutes North. In the middle of the 19th century there were Yezidi villages as far north as the Tiyari mountains.

The more significant localities for Yezidis in the Mosul area are Ba'idhri, which is the residence of their Mir,1 Ba'zani their principal burial place, Basheika which is reverenced as the mausoleum of many sheikhs, and Sheikh Adi which is the central place of their religion.

* For ethnography and religious sects in Northern Mesopotamia vide sections No.J.38 and J.38_ of maps, for official purposes, produced by the Indian Survey Office, 1923.

1 Mir = territorial head. Vide also chapter 3, footnote page 36.
2 Vide Empson "Cult of the Peacock Angel" and Joseph; "Devil Worship".
Dunadi (around Dohuk), Sohrani, Missuri, Samaki (in the Midyat district), Amu'ad (around Alkosh), Rashukan (in the Jezira district) and the Havveri (in Zakho district). These are largely sedentary tribes. There are also in Kurdistan some small tribes of a nomadic type.

Localities - Jebel Sinjar.

The vilayet of Mosul contains about three-fourths of all the known Yezidis in the world. More than half of the present Assyrian Yezidis are tribes, largely sedentary, in the Jebel Sinjar which is one of the qadhas of the Mosul vilayet. The Jebel Sinjar, a range of hills rising like a coral reef from the surrounding desert to a height of nearly five thousand feet above the sea level, occupies the geographical rectangle formed by longitude East 41.25' and longitude 42.8' East, with latitude North 36.17' and latitude North 36.25'.

Like the Highlanders of Scotland the Sinjari Yezidis are of different clans. In the middle of the 19th century the following * were strong tribes in the Jebel Sinjar: - the Heskan, Mendka, Hubbaba, Merkhan (on the Eastern fringe of the Jebel Sinjar), Bukra (a small fierce tribe on the Northern border of the hills), Dakhi (Northern edge of the Sinjar), Samankah (on the North West), Kerani (on the South West), Bait Khalad and the Amera. The latter two tribes appear to have died out since then. 1 Additional but small tribes in

1 Vide Empson, loc. cit. p. 69
the Jebel Sinjar are the Gabara, Chalka, Daghi, Jowana, Jabri, Uleki, Faqir and the Kherraniya who occupy the extreme west of the Jebel Sinjar.

Tribe, as applicable to them, bears little of the patriarchal magnificence involved when the term is applied to the great Shamar tribe of the surrounding Mesopotamian desert. Tribalism among the Sinjari Yezidis largely approximates to village esprit. Whilst some sheikhs hold sway over several hundred followers the authority of others extends merely to a few villages. This limited feudalistic system, resembling the old Norman institution of Court Leet and Court Customary, whilst maintaining the local autonomy of villages, creates a general racial cohesiveness that can respond to the influence of the paramount sheikh of the Sinjar.* He in turn is responsible for matters of national interest in that area.

**Sinjari Topography.1 Routes A. and B. to Jebel Sinjar.**

The route to the Jebel Sinjar must follow tracks that hold touch with civilisation, however primitive, because desert travelling can furnish uncertainties. There are two feasible routes from Mosul to Tel 'Afar.

* Vide Chapter 3, page 36, para 3; page 40.

1 (a) Vide map of Jebel Sinjar which we have produced, facing page for guidance of the reader.

(b) Handbook of Mesopotamia, by Admiralty War Staff. Vol. 4.
* (A) Southern Route. Leaving Mosul and its indescribably putrid smells the track emerges into open, undulating country, passing occasional patches of civilisation for about sixteen miles almost westward towards Muwali, an Arab village. Beyond this village stretches similar open plain. Northwards stretches desert of uneven contours. Patches of cultivation and fair-good grazing appear ahead whilst, to the south, in its eternal loneliness, spreads the silent desert of Arabia. Primitive settlements that are definitely nomadic are passed until, skirting the side of low hills, Tel 'Afar is reached at a distance of about thirtyeight miles from Mosul.

* (B) Northern Route. Departing from Mosul, almost due west and veering slightly north, the track, for about ten miles, leads across undulating ground, spurs of hillocks and small ravines towards the little primitive Arab village of Humeidat. So far Yezidi villages are not encountered. A few miles further on is a fair sized wadi with cultivated banks and, beyond it, on a plain are a few insignificant hamlets. The ground now becomes more uneven. To the south is a small ridge of hills stretching south and east. Occasional tells appear and then the large wadi Debunah-boulder strewn. To the north and south low hills now

* For detailed account of these routes vide Admiralty War Staff Handbook of Mesopotamia: Vol.4 & Maps of 'Iraq, by 'Iraq Government, 1928.
bound the plain as one or two small villages are passed. The country gradually becomes more rugged with minor hills. For a few miles the track ascends the low range of Jebel Mehlebiyeh and then descends gradually towards the town of Tel 'Afar.

Tel 'Afar, planted in the desert, rises fifteen hundred feet above the sea level. Housing a mixed population of several thousands—including Turks, Kurds and Arabs—it is isolation renders it strategically weak against desert attacks. It lies unwalled on both sides of a river. To the north and south of the town are cultivated fields. To the east rises a sort of plateau and to the west is a hill several hundred feet high. If regular observation posts were established on these eminences a large scale attack by tribes could scarcely approach the city unobserved. Yet some of the inhabitants still recollect times when men, and even children, were trampled by the steeds of Shammar tribesmen who were looting the town of Tel 'Afar.

From Tel 'Afar to the western edge of the Jebel Sinjar.

On leaving Tel 'Afar the route strikes across expanses of undulating soil which has a slight depression southwards and is bounded by ridges on the north. It is speckled occasionally with tells and with wadis whose banks display the fertility engendered by Winter rains and by occasional snows.
Sites of ancient villages and whitening bones testify grimly to the ebullitions that disturb the silence of the desert. After ten miles of this uneven journey signs of modern cave dwellings appear. Boggy streams lead on to minor villages that scratch sparse produce from poor soil. Twenty miles further on, beyond a stretch unrelieved by human occupation, the ruins of a large khan eventually appear. In its neighbourhood are springs that attract desert nomads to argue, sometimes not amiably, with the resident Yezidis. Mohammadans, too, are there uttering the plaintive wail of the evening prayer. More tells and wadis are passed ere the monotonous horizon is relieved by the peaks of the Jebel and ere the fair-sized Yezidi village of Mikr Kan is reached. Beyond this village patches of cultivation appear and then is approached the town of Beled Sinjar.

**Beled Sinjar.** Beled Sinjar is the metropolis of the Jebel Sinjar Yezidis. From a distance its formation somewhat resembles Nebi Junus, the Mohammadan village which stands, according to Muslim tradition, on the tomb of the prophet Jonah in the ruins of Nineveh. Containing a few hundred houses, Beled Sinjar clings to the eastern slope of a valley and is sheltered on the north and west by the small range of the Tog hills. The abandoned fields on the west of the valley suggest that the town once included
an area larger than that within its present borders and that the stream in the valley was central for the citizens. To the north and south are cultivated fields that produce the major portion of the fruit and vegetables sold in the bazaar. Meal, fruits, leather, wool and the other characteristic productions of pastoral life are also available in the bazaar. The houses rather resemble the more solid erections of Mosul than the dwellings common to desert families. Old Turkish barracks and government buildings dignify this territory with what was once an unreal menace of order.

Past Beled Sinjar more Yezidi villages are encountered before the traveller enters the Bari pass on the north towards the main Sinjar range en route for the little village of Shillo. Over craggy and rough ground one approaches the village of Mamuwels which is really a summer shieling for Yezidi shepherds. A few miles further on is Bara, the frontier village of the Sinjar Yezidis. Its inhabitants, allured by the mystic spirit of the vast desert, are of semi-nomad type.

Exiles.

In Syria.

From remote centuries trans-desert Aleppo was no unknown district to natives of Assyria. A regular caravan route formerly led from Mosul and Urfah to Aleppo. Probably this was the course of the Roman
road on which the soldiers of Septimus Severus paced sentry in the end of the second century A.D. And their road may have followed a previous Seleucid track. For long the neighbourhood of Aleppo was a quasi-Botany Bay and settlement for rayats who incurred the official frown of their respective Turkish governors elsewhere. Furthermore the reputed wealth of the famous city was no insignificant enticement for unreluctant adventurers. In the Middle Ages its lace and calico even allured French and Venician merchants and, notwithstanding the discovery of the Cape route with its inevitable detraction from the commercial importance of Aleppo, a British factory was established there in the reign of James 1.

As recent as 1915 Armenians, deported by Turkish suspicion, were settled around El Bab and Membij less than a day's journey north and east of Aleppo. Even in 1924 many thousands of Monophysite Christians were forced by Turkish mis-government to quit their homes around Mardin and the mountain districts of Tur'Abdin in north-western Assyria to find refuge around Aleppo. To Syria, therefore, persecuted Yezidis appear, at times, to have migrated.

Yezidi communities in Syria are found around the Jebel Shihan, about twenty miles north and west of Aleppo, near the ruins to which the sacred fame of
Simon the Stylite attracted countless pilgrims in the early centuries of Christianity. The utilitarian Yezidis have repaired some of these ancient Christian edifices which, thus, now house the alleged disciples of Satan. The largest of their villages is Barad where still rise magnificent samples of Corinthian masonry, sarcophagi, and ruined churches. Keifar, a large village a few miles north of Barad, is also occupied by Yezidis. On the southern fringe of the Jebel Shiman are their other villages of Kefr Nebu and Basufan.* The latter is a kind of summer resort for Aleppan citizens who, wishing to be out of town during the hotter months, rent the Yezidi dwellings while the owners themselves are on the shieling.

These Yezidis eke out their meagre livelihood by agriculture, sheep rearing and, in Basufan, by letting their houses. Tobacco growing formerly was an appreciable source of trade. The quality was good and fetched satisfactory prices. But under the old Turkish régime governmental interference reduced the industry to such an unprofitable state that it practically died out.

Despite their lack of abundance the lone

* Vide "Syria, the Desert and the Sown", Gertrude L. Bell, Chap. 12.
"La Religione dei Yezidi", G. Furlani, p. 4.
traveller ever receives kindly hospitality among them. Though certain articles of diet are taboo their food is mainly that of the average Bedouin. Bread, sour curds, pilau, honey and, perhaps, a piece of mutton will soon be spread on native mats on the floor and the visitor squats on rugs around these mat tables. It is a social offence for the guest to proffer payment; but the indebtedness may be balanced by the distribution of gifts or money to the children. Even the most susceptible feelings will not be outraged by this demonstrative appreciation.

Kurdish is still their dialect. Naturally, however, by force of environment they speak a type of Arabic well interspersed with Turkish words. Half nomadic, they move at certain seasons with their flocks to pasture camps. These shielings have stone walls built crudely to a height of about five feet. The roof, which is made of goat’s hair cloth, is centrally supported by poles. Such tents of Kedar are certainly airy and conducive to maintaining the Yezidi characteristics of fine cleanliness.

Tolerated by their Christian, Jewish and Mohammadan neighbours they reciprocate this unusual relationship—qualified, however, by the reservation which is not for Islamic ears "the Christians and Jews we consider equal to us and the Moslems—we consider them to be swine".*

* "Syria, the Desert and the Sown", p. 294.
Like the exiled Jews in Babylon these Syrian Yezidis cling to their native creed and conventions. They are annually visited by a kawwal from Kurdistan who confirms them in their ancestral faith and returns with their contributions for the maintenance of their sacred shrine and its hierarchy. Traditional customs, ancient and strange as their ancestry, still pervade their social code. Blood feuds are not yet effete among them. A bride can be snatched by a gallant Lochinvar even without her parents' consent; but the vengence of the offended family can still stealthily exact the blood penalty among a people proud of their shooting skill.

In the Caucasus.

During the persecutions of the 19th century many Yezidis fled from Assyria northwards and set the frontier mountains between themselves and their foes. On the slopes of the Caucasus they found an asylum under Russian protection for many decades. Thither subsequently others followed them seeking to escape the merited penalty of violating the mythical peace of the Sultan's dominions. There they existed comfortably until the destructive demon of Bolshevism, stretching its blood-stained claws to shape even these men to its ideal, crushed many out of life.

As exiles and refugees, like their Syrian relatives, they forgot not the rock from which they
were hewn. Urged by motives, noble and altruistic, courageous deputations from the Assyrian Yezidis were often dispatched to visit the settlers in South Russia. These emissaries, commissioned in due ecclesiastical manner to convey greetings and receive contributions for the support of their fathers' religion and its shrine, endured many and varied hardships. The journey over mountains and ravines was long and arduous. Sometimes it ended fatally. Chiefs whose unfriendly territory had to be traversed smelt the cash and their treacherous cupidty found ruthless appeasement.

In Teheran.

Kurdistan and the North Persian frontiers have been, for generations, the breeding places of brigands, robbers and restless nomads who were prickly thorns to rulers of Persia and 'Iraq. Northern and Eastern Kurdistan were especially a Sargassum Sea for opponents of Baghdadi policies. This restlessness appears even in the early centuries of the Christian era and throughout the varied phases of early Islamic history in Central Asia. It continued throughout the rivalries of aspirants to 'Iraq power in the 16th century and even through the vicissitudes of Mameluk rule of the 18th century. It characterised the virile period of Ali Ridha after 1831 and the great Midhat Pasha from 1869. Allegiance was refused not
to Turkish or Persian rule as such but to anything antagonistic to age-long codes of lawlessness.* Nomad tribes crossed and recrossed from 'Iraqi borders into Persian pastures. Sometimes tribes moved from as far within 'Iraq territory as Kirkuk to as far within Persian territory as Hamadan. The routes to Persian territory were necessarily, therefore, well known to Yezidis of the Mosul vilayet. Such of the latter as lived in the northern and eastern portions of the Mosul vilayet and understood the psychology of Pashalik 'peaceful rule', and those whom recent history had taught that respectable Rowanduz rulers could celebrate their accession by the hilarity of murdering their own uncles, realised that in flight was safety when the racial and religious persecutions of the middle and latter portions of the 19th century broke out. Persia, since its Shi'ism rejoiced in the sorrows of the ungodly Turkish Sunn'ism of 'Iraq, was a congenial land for Yezidi refugees. Not a desire to forsake the land of their fathers but the persecution and vacillations that characterised the distorted administrative policies of their over-lords in Assyría explain the presence of Yezidis to-day in Teheran.

Notwithstanding a measure of religious toleration they, even yet, experience the chill patronage that reminds them of their alien race and religion. Nevertheless out of their meagre substance, eked from menial employments in the city, they remember their Mecca at Sheikh Adi to which their deepest yearnings go forth in religious adoration.
CHAPTER 2.  

NUMBERS AND EMPLOYMENTS.

1. Numerical Strength.
   In Mesopotamia.
   Beyond Mesopotamia.

2. Employments.
   In Mesopotamia. (Agricultural; Pastoral; Miscellaneous.)
   In the Caucasus, Persia and Syria. (Agricultural; Pastoral and Menial employments.)
   Military Service.
Chapter 2.

"An ill used race of men that cleave the soil,  
Sow seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat and wine and oil,  
Till they perish and they suffer - some 'tis  
whispered down in hell."

Tennyson.

1. Numerical Strength.

In Mesopotamia.

Different estimates of their numerical strength have been adduced by the few writers who found these people sufficiently interesting to merit serious attention. In view of the absence of reliable, official, statistics the disparity in the figures is almost inevitable to the subject of these estimates.

The following figures have been adduced and are inclusive of the sedentary population and nomads:

(Nau)* .................. 200,000 to 300,000
(Andrus) 1 .................. 200,000
(Layard) 2 .................. 150,000
(Menant) 3 .................. 50,000
(Joseph) 4 .................. 42,000

Of the sedentary communities a reasonably exact census can now be obtained but, even with meticulous care, the statistics relative to the nomadic tribes

1 The Encyclopaedia of Missions, New York, 1904, p.798.
2 Nineveh and its Remains, 1848.
3 Les Yezidis...adorateurs du diable. Paris 1892, p.47.
4 Devil Worship. 1919.
can necessarily be but an approximation.

The latest and, perhaps, more reliable
statistics would, however, limit them to a figure
between 30,000 and 35,000.* This estimate is based
on official statistics from "Maps of 'Iraq with Notes
for Visitors" published in 1928 by the Government of
'Iraq. On page 3 it is stated that "a rough census
by religions was taken in 1921." The figures, which
must be taken with caution, give the total
population (of 'Iraq) as 2,850,000, split up as
follows:--

"Mohammedan Sunnis....1,150,000
  " Shiah....1,490,000
  Jews ................. 88,000
  Christians .......... 79,000
  Other Religions ..... 43,000"

On page 4 (of Maps of 'Iraq) it is added that
"Yezidis or Devil Worshippers form the bulk of those
other religions."

To substantiate the writer's proposed figure
(30,000 - 35,000) account must be taken of about
8,000 to 10,000 Sabeans who, being neither
Mohammadans, Jews nor Christians, must be included in
the figure of 43,000 allotted to "other religions".

* A writer (on "The Non-Arab Minorities in
'Iraq") in the Journal of the Royal Central
Asian Society, October 1931, gives the
number of Yezidis in 'Iraq as 40,000. "It
is quite impossible", he adds, "to give
accurate numbers of the peoples of the Mosul
vilayet... The figures I now give are
compiled from the verbal estimates of the
religious heads, such as the patriarchs,
checked so far as possible by official
statistics obtained in Mosul and Baghdad and
League of Nations publications."
The lamentable decrease from the earliest statistics is attributable to the slaughters and dispersions which characterised Yezidi history throughout the 19th century.*

The sedentary and nomad tribes of the Jebel Sinjar constitute the majority of the 30,000-35,000 mentioned above. The remainder are found in the localities of the Mosul sanjaq in the qadhas of Dohuk, Zakho and Amadiyyah.

Numbers.

Beyond Mesopotamia.

Exact figures relative to the number of Yezidis in Syria and in the town of Teheran are unknown. A writer who has had acquaintance with Darwish Jamil, the present chief of the Syrian Yezidis, gives the number of Yezidis in the Aleppan district as about 4,000.

The number scattered throughout the Russian Caucasus is estimated at about 10,000(2), and to consist of two tribes, the Sipiki in the province of Kars and the Hassania in Erivan.3

Their Employments.

In Mesopotamia.

Tennyson's description of the Lotus Eaters quoted

* Vide Les Yezidiz: Episodes de l'histoire des adorateurs du diable. (Menant), Paris, 1892.
2 Scottish Geographical Magazine 1898, p. 306.
3 A.V. Williams-Jackson in "Persia, Past and Present", p. 10. (Published 1906) gives the number in the Caucasus as 12,000.
at the beginning of this chapter is almost tantamount to an epitome of Yezidi employments. Their staple occupations are agricultural and pastoral.

The Mosul vilayet is comparatively rich in soil and has sufficient rain to grow Winter cereals on a fairly large scale. In the climatic conditions of Northern 'Iraq annual crops are more suitable than perennials.* "The number of perennials that can be grown is very limited indeed, whereas by careful selection of sowing time, almost any annual can be grown with success."

There are a good many varieties of sheep; the term 'breed' or 'type' is inapplicable as there are no pure breeds. The wool of all is of low quality and is indefinite in colour. In the farther north areas the Yezidi women ply the spindle and turn the scraggy wool of their sheep and the hair of the goats into rugs, carpets and tent coverings. They milk the flocks; they wash and cook like sensible women elsewhere and, conforming to Solomon's ideal of the virtuous woman, the Yezidi lady "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Not being embarrassed by veils or hareem etiquette they mix freely with the other sex, even in the yilaks, the summer shielings in the north.

Around Amadiyyah there is grown some rice, millet and tobacco. Grapes, mulberries, pomegranates, walnuts.

dried fruit and dairy produce are sources of livelihood for the more sedentary areas. But the lack of capital and of modern machinery limits the development of these employments for large scale trade or exchange.

Mineral resources on a standard justifying heavy investments have not been discovered in the typical Yezidi districts. Unlike other sectors of Northern 'Iraq the geological structures of their districts have not been regarded as successful sources for oil operations.

In the Jebel Sinjar the rainy season is approximately from the middle of November to the middle of January. After the rainy periods patches of the desert are covered with nutritious grasses. The flocks of sheep and goats are driven over long areas across these grazing grounds. The advance of Summer, however, stunts and withers these grazing areas westwards in the desert and the nomad Yezidis tend to move farther north with their flocks.

The systematic development of arable and pastoral land for the production of special food crops for the animals is practically unknown not only among Yezidis but almost throughout the whole of 'Iraq. The purer and more desirable types of sheep are, therefore, virtually non-existent. The sturdier, and more mixed, sheep seem more capable of withstanding
the food shortage. This accounts for the low quality and inferior nature of the wool.

**Their Employment.**

**In South Russia, Persia and Syria.**

As their religion naturally exposes them to the pious opprobrium of Islamic ruffians and to the patronisings of Christian rascals the employments available for the Yezidis are usually of a menial nature. In Tiflis they act as public scavengers. Their circumstances in Teheran are somewhat similar. In the latter place they act as beasts of burden and perform such functions as are somewhat undignified for local worthies.

In Syria, however, their geographical situation permits them to live a pastoral and agricultural life similar to that of their countrymen in Northern Mesopotamia.

**Military Service.**

Throughout many centuries of Turkish rule in Mesopotamia the official attitude of intolerance and persecution towards the Yezidis produced, at times, a spirit of self defence which made these Yezidis a thorn in the side of different vilayet administrators. When persecution failed, ingenious methods of conciliation were adopted. To force them to become loyal lieges of the Turkish sovereign it was suggested to enroll their eligible fighting men as soldiers in the Turkish army. In this official
occupation the Yezidis could be prudently disciplined and, like many another "Nefer Mustafa" (Turkish "Tommy Atkins") be starved into submission.

In the year 1844 there was inaugurated by the fanatical Kurdish Mir of Bqhtan a terrible persecution and massacre of non-Mohammadans. Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, by making strong representations for the reasonable treatment of non-Moslems in Kurdistan, spurred the Turkish Government into unwilling action. In the Turkish programme for quietening the restless Kurds or, rather to have force enough to quell the Kurds, if necessary, there was included the policy of recruiting the Yezidis for service in the Turkish army. This effort, however, was frustrated in 1847 by the above named British Consul.* Subsequently, during the reign of the Sultan 'Abd ul 'Aziz, in 1872 a further attempt was made to compel the Yezidis to serve in the army. An agent of the Sultan was fortified with a firman and sent to Mosul to recruit the Yezidis. The leaders of the Yezidi districts were summoned to Mosul in order that the firman might be explained to them. But they, however, would not be too easily allured with Turkish promises of good pay. They knew that normal enlistment was for a period of five years on the active strength and seven

years in the reserve. They also knew that Turkish law as administered by local governors and minor officials was often so interpreted that, for some mysterious yet officially valid reason, "Nefer Mustafa" might become grey waiting for a discharge to which, de facto, he could not prove himself entitled. And as Yezidis could not read documents their continuance in the army could be lengthened to suit the political schemes of Turkish governors. The Yezidis, after some delay, presented a memorial* which was signed on behalf of their Mir Husein, their religious head Nasir, and several tribal sheikhs. This memorial contained sundry reasons - religious, ethical and moral - which prohibited Yezidis from accepting service along with the soldiers of Islam. The true son of Islam is accustomed, by the sanctions of his own religion, several times daily "to take refuge with Allah from Shaitan the stoned;" and a Yezidi who hears such

* This memorial was written in Turkish, Arabic and French; and as a source for the study of their religion this memorial is valuable as a kind of official declaration of the principles of their faith. It contains the essence of what is known, from their other documents and also from their traditions, concerning important elements of their religion. (Acc:Furlani,loc.cit.page 93). The present writer, however, would advise readers to remember that the memorial was intended as a plea against military service with Mohammadans and may, therefore, in its anxiety to strengthen its own case, give exaggerated, if not invented, reasons for non-acquiescence in the government's plans. To a cautious reader the contents of this memorial appear to be rather a declaration of distinctive points of difference between the Yezidi cult and Islam than a religious code which a Yezidi had to learn and practise.

1 Vide Sir R.Temple in Commentary appended to "Cult of the Peacock Angel", page 183.
blasphemy is compelled by his religion, according to this memorial, to kill the blasphemer or commit suicide.* It was further contended that in the Turkish soldiers' rations and conventions there are many items which Yezidi ritual taboos.

A Yezidi must not "dress his hair after the fashion of the Muslims, Christians or Jews; nor shave his head with the razors of these. A Yezidi entereth not the places of purification or baths of the Muslim, nor eateth food that hath been prepared by a Muslim, nor drinketh the drinks of other peoples than his own. The Yezidi may not eat fish nor cucumber, nor bamiyya, nor French beans, nor cabbage, nor lettuce."

After consideration of the strong objections to military service and, perhaps, more, especially with an eye on European political opinion, the policy of forcibly recruiting the Yezidis was abandoned. "So when they had adduced these objections to their entering the army, the government began to levy on them army rates 2 such as it levies on the Christians and Jews."

* "Cradle of Mankind", page 103.

and *1 From Arabic Ms., English translation, in appendix to "Six Months in a Syrian Monastery", page 373.

2 Badger, loc. cit. page 385 describes the iniquitous excesses characterising the collection of taxes in Kurdistan by the Turkish government through local officials who were "for the most part uneducated, unprincipled men, promoted to office by the favouritism of the Pashas from amongst their orderlies, pipe-bearers, or coffee makers."
The restless vagaries of political life in Kurdistan and the idiosyncracies of different government representatives occasionally produced periods when the millet communities enjoyed official favour on the principle that even dogs are useful for biting an enemy. Perhaps owing to that official tolerance, perhaps through a spasm of Yezidi heterodoxy or, more probably, from economic necessity we discover the Yezidis actually shouldering the matchlock as soldiers of the Sultan. Yezidis in the Aleppo district of Syria were known to be serving in the Turkish army during the early decades of the present century.* And, today, in the rank and file of the Jaish, the new 'Iraq national army, "Kurds and Turkomans are present in considerable numbers and Yezidis."1

As service in the 'Iraq army is on a voluntary basis the present day exponents of Yezidi theological doctrine must therefore differ in their exegesis from their predecessors.

* Vide "Syria, the Desert and the Sown", G.L.Bell, page 293.
1 Vide "Maps of 'Iraq" ('Iraq Government 1928), page 18.

POLITICAL AND TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION.

Millet with free citizenship.
The Mirate.
Succession to the Mirate.
Maintenance of the Mir.
Mir's Residence. (photo of Kasr)
The Present Mir. (and photo of:)
Secular Organisation within the Millet.

..........................
Chapter 3.

Political and Territorial Organisation.

Until the overthrow of the Turkish régime in Mesopotamia by the Great War the Yezidis constituted one of the recognised millets, or subject religious sects, of the Ottoman Empire. Their territorial and religious organisations were on a semi-feudalistic basis within this millet status. With the emergence, however, of the new kingdom of 'Iraq after the Great War the situation was somewhat changed constitutionally though not substantially. Responsibility for the millet was assumed under the 'Iraq mandate by Great Britain; and in article 3 of the treaty of 1922 King Feisal, the king of the new Arab kingdom, undertook to frame an organic law securing the religious and educational rights of the several communities in 'Iraq. The old Ottoman attitude of mere recognition and meagre toleration was sublimated in the ideal of citizenship in the new state. Officials of the 'Iraq government have been appointed to Yezidi districts for political and civil purposes; and government agents collect taxes on behalf of the 'Iraq government. At the same time the previous religious and secular organisation of the millet is allowed to express itself freely within limits compatible with the privileges of the new citizenship. The Yezidi secular and religious organisation to-day may, therefore, be said to combine
the worthiest features of a millet system with free citizenship in the adolescent kingdom of 'Iraq.*

The Mirate.

The head of the Yezidi sect is the Mir, (sometimes Mira).1

The political organisation of the Ottoman Empire, by recognising the millet as a unit whose interests and obligations were represented through the mir, necessarily strengthened the power of the mir and curbed that of the other sheikhs of the sect. In addition, therefore, to the belief of the Yezidis - practically if not theoretically - in the divine right of the mirate this peculiar political circumstance gradually and inevitably tended to the concentration of larger powers in the mirate until at length that office became absolute and the absolutism ultimately evolved into infallibility.2 Thus, as virtual caliph

* The British High Commissioner's annual mandatory report (for 1930) on 'Iraq to the Permanent Mandates' Commission of the League of Nations states that "the Yezidis had been helped in the creation of a communal council to control their affairs."

1 Mir or Mira ("Ruler") is a form of Amir or Emir (Arabic). The title is occasionally applied to some of the local Kurdish chiefs. Cf. Syriac, "Mar" ("Lord"), a title applied by the Assyrian Christians to saints, bishops and patriarchs of their church. (Vide "Cradle of Mankind" page 89 and Glossary page 418.)

2 "I Yezidi lo riguardano come infallibile in tutto ciò che concerne la fede."

Furlani, loc. cit. page 39.
of the sect, since the appointment to the hierarchal primacy is vested in him, the mir is paramount both temporally and spiritually.

The absolutism of the mirate exists not merely in theory but as a very practical reality. Not one would dream of questioning his order - unless the mir concerned should happen to be an unpopular weakling. In that case he would not last long and his stronger successor would reassert the absolutism.

Since the mir is credited with supernatural powers "his mediation is often sought to heal obstinate diseases in men and cattle, to make the barren fruitful, to crown a journey or other undertaking with success.* The most fertile lands belong to him; the goods and even the persons of his followers are his. And, in view of his accredited holiness, monogamy is not binding on him; if he desires the handsomest woman of the sect she is surrendered to him. It is affirmed that "he has the

* since, in the opinion of a certain Mohammadan mullah "it was natural that the unclean should cast out the unclean!" (Badger, loc. cit. p. 130)

1 a. Even the Christian church, as late as the 3rd century A.D., had to exercise stern discipline against ascetics who practised the theory of 'gunaikes-suneisakoii'. "History of the Christian Church", (Professor Kurtz. Translated by Edersheim, page 130.)

b. Somewhat analogous was the 'mystical marriage' of the Sal-me priestesses of the Sumerians, (Woolley, page 107.)
seigneur's right of prima noctis which, according to accounts, he exercises"*. And, as he is infallible, if he kills one of his wives or any of his followers no one objected - formerly. But the old order is inevitably changing under the new mandate and mirs, in future, must be more circumspect.

**Succession to the Mirate.**

Succession to the mirate is hereditary in a certain venerated family. The idea of sanctity adhering in certain families is common in Kurdistan not only among Yezidis but among Christians and Kurds. Primogeniture, however, is not invariably the basis of succession; and it is not surprising in the wild culture of those hillmen to know that the steps which lead to the mirate are often stained with blood; for not a few mirs made their way to their lofty position over the murdered bodies of predecessors. The mir is dead, states a certain writer,2 "dead, by what (for a mira of the Yezidis) maybe fairly described as "natural death;" for he was just 'murdered by his successor' like any old Irish king. That the succession should be allowed to go out of the family

* "By Tigris and Euphrates", E.S. Stevens, page 177.

1 A common oath among the Northern Assyrian Christians is "By the head of Mar Shimun" - the latter being their patriarch.

2 "Cradle of Mankind", page 108.
would be a thing blasphemous to hint at; but that the rightful heir should seek to accelerate his accession is only a part of the game. It is a sporting game too; for if the adventurer fails, he dies himself by torture for sacrilege the most monstrous. But if he succeeds he is mira, with all the mira's immunities. His predecessor is promoted to paradise, and he reigns absolute in his room." Another writer gives the following story of a mira's dramatic succession. "The Mir's nephew and successor had been in foreign parts and when he came back he was received by his uncle in the presence of the people. The Mir had been presented with a sword of honour, and showed it to his nephew. "Is not the work fine?" he asked. "Very fine," was the reply. "And the steel well-tempered?" "Let me see!" said the nephew, and the sword was given into his hand. "It is indeed keen," he observed, "and I will test it." With that he attacked his uncle and killed him. "Wherefore I am now your Mira!" he added, turning to the frightened people. "Yes, thou art Mira!" they dutifully echoed. Few Mira die in their beds! "To-day such a practice could not thrive with impunity even in Kurdistan.

Maintenance of the Mir.

His maintenance is derived from dues in money or in kind levied on his subjects. The Mir personally tours the villages in the neighbourhood of his

* Stevens, loc. cit. page 189.
residence to collect the tribute and to dispense blessings and counsels. For the gathering of the contributions from the more distant localities he commissions as his deputies kawwals who combine religious ministrations with this financial mission.

It is estimated that the present mir's revenue from the lessees of the guardianship of the shrine of Sheikh Adi* and that of the shrine of 'Sheikh' Shems approaches Rupees 13,000 per annum. Whilst his people are poor he is comparatively rich and when the majority of his people can scarce afford to maintain their indispensible donkey the present mir owns several motor cars 1 and two residences.

The Mir's Residence.

The kasr, or residence, of the mirate is at Ba'idhra, a distance of about forty miles N.N.E of Nineveh and only a few hours ride from the temple of Sheikh Adi.

Erected on an eminence and silhouetting against a background of hills it resembles rather a fortress than an ordinary Oriental house. The fortress is of undressed stone and on the outer gate appear a pair of horns - a fit symbol! This outer gate leads into a typical Mesopotamian courtyard; and from this courtyard another door leads into the diwan-khana or public reception chamber. Beneath the diwan-khana are

* Stevens, loc.cit. page 185.
quarters for servants and stables for horses. From the reception room another door leads into an inner quarter which contains the mir's personal apartments and his hareem.

Around the base of the kasr, in a valley through which winds a mountain stream, lies the village of Ba'idhra with its flat-roofed houses and its abundance of olive, almond and mulberry trees. "The relative positions of castle and village symbolise not inaccurately the relations which exist between the mir and his people."* From the stream in the valley the village draws its water but the mir has a special rivulet which flows behind his fortress reserved for his own household.

Outside the village are several of the well foliaged, sacred trees; these are protected from irreverent touch by rough stone walls.

The kasr at Ba'idhra has been the family residence of the mirate for unknown centuries. It may continue as such for many future generations; but consequent on the extension of the new political order in 'Iraq or, perhaps, in anticipation of the unfortunate day when a stronger man may oust him from his heritage the mir Ali Beg, since 1928, has had another residence erected in the Yezidi village of

1 This building was in process of erection in October 1928 when the writer was at Ain Sifni.
Ain Sifni which is, conveniently, the headquarters of a Kaimakam and of a company of 'Iraq police.

The present Mir.

The present mir is Syed Ali Beg. He, too, may vacate his office by the road of blood; for it is believed that his mother, who is suspected of having connived at the murder of his father, harbours designs against the life of her son. From recent correspondence on the subject of the mirate the writer is informed by the present British Admintor * (Government administrative officer) of the Mosul liwa that "the mir is debauched, profligate: there is a strong movement against him, especially in the Jebel Sinjar, to remove him from the mirate and replace him by another member of the family - Hussein Beg." Hussein who is a forceful personality is superior in intelligence and capacity and would fill the office more successfully than Syed Ali Beg.

In the Yezidi village of Ain Sifni, thirtyfive miles N.N.E. of Nineveh, the writer first met the mir. He had a long, tapering, black beard. His face was pale, weakly and cheerless - suggesting some ground for the current accusation that the pontif of the Yezidis is excessively fond of the local arak. In their hollow sockets his eyes seemed listless and had a slightly sinister squint. He was neither tall nor handsome and, though delicate of face and physique, he

* Major Wilson, Admintor of Mosul Liwa. *(Communication of May 1931, to the writer.)
was neither prepossessing nor had he the impressive personality of a great and powerful sheikh. The ends of a plain white chefiyah which was wound round his head served as a sun-protector for his neck and shoulders. An igal, or camel-hair rope, which was tied round his brow held the chefiyah in position. He was not wearing the impressively adorned cloak of a sheikh nor the extravagantly bottomed trousers common among his fellow Yezidis. Instead he cut an amusing figure in a short dark jacket and a kind of broadcloth knicker-bockers that reached to his ankles. He wore ordinary European boots on stockingless feet. Altogether in appearance and dress Syed Ali Beg, mir of the Yezidis, would seem to suit better the role of a comic figure at a village fair than the dignity of paramount sheikh of primitive mountain tribes in Assyria.

Secular Organisation within the millet.

Like their neighbouring Assyrian Christians who constituted another millet in the Ottoman Empire the Yezidis, though ethnically and religiously homogeneous, are, nevertheless, divided into various separate tribes and sub-tribes which are mutually independent and sometimes aggressively hostile to each other.*

Each tribe has its own sheikh or chief; sub-tribes also have their local subordinate sheikh.

* Vide Layard, "Nineveh and Babylon", (abridged edition, 1874) pages 95, 97 and 110.
The respective authoritative grades within the tribes are not always maintained on a basis of complete fealty. As elsewhere in Kurdistan the perpetuation of family succession to the tribal or sub-tribal power is not necessarily guaranteed. It is not unusual for a virile and scheming local sheikh to connive at the overthrow, or death, of a superior and then, by force, to succeed to the desired power. Often their previous Mohammadan over-lords and, sometimes, their present British Political Administrators have had to save Yezidi tribes from internecine hostilities.

The writer was informed in Mesopotamia by a member of the American (Dutch Reformed) Mission at Mosul of an occasion within the last few years when hostilities broke out between certain Yezidi tribes in the Jebel Sinjar. The trouble was assuming alarming dimensions and threatening to result in much pillage and many deaths in the hills. The British area Admistrator, having tried unsuccessfully to effect a reconciliation between the tribes, sought the aid of a certain esteemed missionary at Mosul whose long years of practical and sympathetic service in Mesopotamia and Persia had made him persona grata with the Yezidis, to try and make peace between the disputants. The peace was soon brought about in an appropriately naïve manner. The missionary prepared an impressive feast in the mission courtyard. The necessary sheep were
killed and an abundant supply of honey and rice was prepared. Then the sheikhs, and their immediate retinue, of the two belligerent tribes were invited to the banquet. They came - looking like iron-clads or arsenals. Guns and daggers figured prominently as these long haired, swarthy, men entered the open courtyard where the banquet was spread. The missionary's wife placed the sheikh, with his retinue, who arrived first, at one side of the table. The tensest moment was the arrival of the other sheikh and his retinue; they, too, were armed with rifles and daggers. The anxious hostess, however, calmly welcomed them with the appropriate salutations of peace - warning them that in this holy place of the Christian faith irreverence and fighting would on no account be fitting or tolerated. The later arrivals were placed on the other side of the table opposite their foes and, ere the feeding commenced, the missionary prayed for a spirit of wisdom to prevail among them. No words were exchanged between the rivals during the meal and each of the guests ate with one hand and kept the other hand in readiness on his dagger. At the end of the meal the hostess produced a tobacco pipe which she handed to the oldest sheikh. When he had had a brief smoke she took the pipe from him and then ordered the other sheikh to smoke the pipe. When the latter had obeyed she informed them all that they had now unwittingly made peace by smoking a common pipe and friends could not, by Yezidi custom,
fight each other. She then harangued them on the futility of Yezidis fighting and impoverishing each other. She further ordered them to lay down their weapons as the two sheikhs were told to shake hands in reconciliation.

Ere long the courtyard reeked with tobacco smoke and all rejoiced that the trouble was now settled.

Whilst Syed Ali Beg is paramount sheikh of the whole millet and though his influence necessarily predominates the Yezidis of his more immediate neighbourhood in the Mosul sanjaq there are other localities where distance makes his sway less real. The exiled Yezidis of Syria, Caucasus, and Teheran are necessarily outwith his influence. They are his, however, in religion and sentiment - a sentiment that often shows its sincerity very practically by contributions to the shrine.

In the Jebel Sinjar, the stronghold of the Yezidi faith, there are several sheikhs who are sufficiently strong to be dangerous rivals to each other and, sometimes, even to the mir. Sheikh Ahmad al Matto of the Samankah tribe, Sheikh Khalaf of the Heskan, Sheikh Khidr of the Qiran, Sheikh Ishmael Beg who is a relative of the mir and Sheikh Hamu Sharu are important personages who have to be considered in the administration of the Jebel Sinjar.

Sheikh Ishmael Beg who is an amusing, if
unconventional rascal, was very active during the 1920 rebellion of Mesopotamia endeavouring to make himself mir of the whole millet or, failing that, to become an independent sheikh, with mirate authority, over the Jebel Sinjar Yezidis. Ishmael, however, was temporarily removed by British authority to Baghdad to be under official observation. Back again to his hills he still continues his "pretensions to the mirate but would not be accepted by the Yezidis. He is a shallow knave."

The paramount among the leading sheikhs of the Jebel Sinjar is the aged, though aggressive, Hamu Sharu. In territorial influence and for governmental purposes he ranks next to the Mir. For the maintenance of peace among the men of these hills Hamu Sharu was officially appointed a few years ago as Rais of the Jebel Sinjar and government Wakil at Beled Sinjar with emoluments approaching eight hundred pounds per annum. A friend of the British and a staunch Yezidi he is a progressivist who has effected several useful reforms in the life and outlook of his district. He has rationalised many customs that formerly occasioned strife among the tribes. He has limited the maximum amount of dowries, the maximum

* Communication (of May 1931 to the writer) from the Admintor, Mosul.

1 Rais baladiyah is the headman or chief of the local administrative council of a certain area.
payments for elopements and of compensation from her parents in cases where a wife leaves her husband. He has succeeded, at least in a limited way, in convincing the followers of the usefulness of education and of a reasonable attitude towards modern civilisation.

Notwithstanding the existence of these separate tribal identities and interests the Yezidi obligations as citizens of the new 'Iraq kingdom, and also their liabilities to their cult and mir, are duly fulfilled. Long tradition and sentiment have made the mirate, though not any individual mir, indispensable to their existence as a sect. And the mirate, with the cult of Melek Taus and the temple of Sheikh Adi, form the nexus that links these Yezidis racially and religiously.
CHAPTER 4.

HIERARCHY.

The Ikhti'ari Margahi.
The Pirs.
The Sheikhs.
The Kawwals.
The Qarabashis.
The Kuchaks.
Priestesses.

Maintenance of the Hierarchy.
Chapter 4.

Hierarchy.

"Mes ministres...ce sont eux qui vous instruisent de tout ce qui est invisible et qui ce rapporte à moi."

(Livre de la Revelation)

There is an organised hierarchal system* graded in subordination to a religious head. The respective functionaries are:

1. The Ikhti'ari Margahi.
2. The Pirs.
3. The Sheikhs.
4. The Kawwals.
5. The Qarabash.
6. The Kuchaks.

1. The Ikhti'ari Margahi. He is the religious head of the Yezidi faith and is preferred to this most exalted office by the mir. The importance of this office is indicated by the figure of Rupees 8,000© which he pays as a fixed annual composition to the mir for the privilege of receiving the offerings and fees of the pilgrims to the shrine of Sheikh Adi.

Appointment to this patriarchal office is hereditary in a certain family which is renowned for sanctity. The succession, however, is not necessarily governed by primo-geniture.

His living is derived from the offerings of pilgrims to the shrine of Sheikh Adi and from the fees.

* The facts, however, do not warrant the statement in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (page 830, Vol. 12.) that their priesthood is of the Mohammadan type.

1 Stevens, loc. cit. page 185.
collected from the faithful by the kawwals on their missionary journeys. He also received gifts from families on occasions of births, marriages or funerals.

As the temple and its cult form the nexus for the varied sedentary and nomadic tribes of the race the official position of the Ikhti'ari Margahi is one of much importance for the political as well as for the religious interests of the mir and his people. The religious head must, therefore, be characterised by ecclesiastical prudence and political discernment.

During the Turkish régime in Mesopotamia the Yezidis, when they were not actively persecuted, were recognised on the uncertain political status of a millet. Recognition in their case, however, by no means implied unqualified toleration. The Turks, in accordance with Kur'anic injunction, tolerated Christians and Jews as "people of a book" - the Jews having the Old Testament and the Christians possessing the Bible. But in respect of the Yezidis, who were not regarded as "people of a book" but as idolaters and followers of mere tradition, neither covenant nor oath with them was regarded as binding on Mohammadan. The peace and property of the Yezidis could be impugned at will. In these circumstances the Ikhti'ari Margahi, in collaboration with the mir whom he often excelled in the anticipation of political developments, could exercise the privileges
of his office for the warning and instructing of Yezidis who might be resident in truculent Mohammedan localities.

He is the only person of the faith who has authority to issue fatwahs or religious decrees. But his encyclicals are not the fruit of his own unaided thoughts. The mir and the most important grades of the priesthood are consulted in the production of such decrees. His pronouncements are often the means for the settling of inter-tribal disagreements.*

The Ikhti'ari Margahi, as we saw him, was a dignitary of very grave yet attractive aspect. Instead of the typical Kurdish wide-bottomed trousers that suddenly tighten at the ankles he was dressed in a long white gown and a plain white tunic. On his head was a unique circular hat of white felt which was about six inches high and flat on the top. He wore a dark cummerband and was barefooted. He lacked the rustic sturdiness of the priests but his dark, restful eyes, his well-combed beard and pale, lean features invested him with an impressive ascetic charm.

2. The Pirs. Their designation simply means elders.1 As hereditary religious dignitaries these men rank next to the Ikhti'ari Margahi in the sacerdotal order.

* Vide: Layard's "Nineveh and Babylon", edition 1874, Page 111.
They do not exercise any significant temporal power but they are credited with profound piety and are expected to lead a life of great sanctity and uprightness. They are the reverent elders who are consulted in times of providential or spiritual distress; for they are esteemed not only as intercessors in things spiritual but as exorcists of disease and insanity.

At funerals it is the duty of the pir to boil the water taken from the fountains. In this purified water the pir washes the corpse and, thereafter, places the Sheikh Adi tablets* in the arm-pits and mouth of the shrouded body.

The pirs are not restricted to any particular type of distinguishing garments apart from a white turban with a black plume.

3. The Sheikhs. The sheikhs are third on the hierarchal scale. Like the 'Ishaku' grade of the early Babylonian priesthood they have territorial and spiritual powers; and, for practical effectiveness, their temporal power commands more regard than their spiritual office.

Each locality has its own sheikh. There are others permanently resident in the temple at Sheikh Adi. The temple sheikhs are the guardians of the

* Vide Chapter 5 page 81 for Sheikh Adi tablets.
tomb. It is their duty to furnish provisions and fuel for distinguished visitors to the shrine and to collect the offerings made at the temple by pilgrims. They are also responsible for the selling of sacred relics and Sheikh Adi tablets. The sheikhs are expected to know the words and, if necessary, to lead the music of the songs associated with the religious gatherings whether at the temple or in distant villages. They must visit their adherents when the latter are dying and, in the absence of a pir, they attend the coffining of the dead and perform the ceremony of washing the body as well as that of placing the Sheikh Adi tablets on the corpse.

The heads of families are responsible for the payment of fees to their local sheikh. Contumacious members of his locality or those who fail to pay their dues can be excommunicated and even ostracised by him. And, as it is inexpedient for one tribe to welcome recalcitrant refugees from another Yazidi tribe owing to the possibility of inter-tribal hostilities, the power of the sheikhs is thus enhanced. When quarrels break out between the villages the sheikhs assume the role of mediators. They also preside at the banquets that celebrate the attainment of a peaceful settlement.

The sheikhs are allowed to marry; but only women of their own caste. If one of the hierarchy
were to marry a maiden except from the permitted class he would forfeit his religious status.*

Their dress during religious ceremonies should be entirely white except for an orange-coloured waist-sash that is the symbol of their office.

4. The Kawwals. These are the most active members of the priesthood. A combination of a Greek Minerva and a Jewish Levite would approximate the functions of these kawwals. They are official musicians of the cult. And though they are not learned in the theory or technique of music they have acquired by ear a high degree of proficiency in the traditional chants and melodies that are requisite for the celebrations of the faith. Players on flutes and tambourines, they are the leaders of the singing and dancing during the great festival at Sheikh Adi.

As religious instructors they are the missionaries who are dispatched from headquarters to distant Yezidi localities for the purpose of encouraging the faithful and soliciting support for the temple. These duties may necessitate visits to the exiles in Syria, Teheran and in the Caucasus.

At village gatherings during these missionary journeys their leadership in dance and song earns them much applause and very practical generosity. Even

* Vide: "Einiges über die Jeziden", (Von Dr. A. Dirr) in Anthropos, 1911.
their instruments are regarded as sacred so that on the conclusion of a performance these are passed among the audience to be reverently handled and kissed. To proclaim their arrival the kawwals, who often work in pairs, commence singing and playing on approaching the villages. Men and women come forth to welcome them. Sometimes a pir, carrying a censer and waving it to and fro, precedes the kawwals in a procession which is formed and moves towards the house of the local headman. Here social and religious festivities are held at which the kawwals preside. Thereafter they sell Sheikh Adi tablets and display the taus-kush. For these services they receive offerings for the temple. Should their visits coincide with the celebration of the seasonal festivals in the villages, when parties of women visit the graves of relatives, the kawwals accompany them and play on flutes and tambourines. At the graves also they lead the chanting of the appropriate odes and lamentations and they direct the festivities that ensue in the evenings.

As some of the sacred hymns are written in Arabic the kawwals have to be sufficiently acquainted with that language to act as expositors to the faithful.

* Vide Chapter 10 for tablets and for taus-kush.
Unlike the sheikhs they usually wear black turbans. Their official robes are usually white although certain kawwals do not always adhere to this colour.

As intelligent and influential officials the kawwals sometimes act as emissaries not only for religious purposes but for the private and feudal business of the mir among his scattered people.

5. The Qarabash.* They are the janitors who perform the menial duties connected with the temple. They clean the buildings; they trim and light the lamps of the temple and, during the festival seasons, they attend to the lights that are placed in various spots throughout the valley and on the hillsides. They, too, take their share in the sacred dances.

Their inferior status invests them in the eyes of the laity with a halo of sacred poverty. They receive their maintenance from the offerings of pilgrims to the temple and from the other dues that are collected among their fellow Yezidis in Northern Mesopotamia and abroad.

They are allowed to marry but only within their own caste.

The qarabashis are distinguished by a black Qarabash = a Turkish word which signifies "black heads" - applied because they wear turbans coloured black: are often given the Arabic designation "fakir" (poor). Vide also Furlani, loc.cit. Introduzione, page 40.
turban around which is wound a band of red cloth. Their trousers which must be of white cloth are of the usual baggy Kurdish type. They wear tight-fitting, sleeved, waist coats and a cummerband. Except in the coldest weather they are barefooted.

Those qarabashis whom we met at the temple had impressive features and long, black, beards resembling the ancient Assyrians. Their demeanour was characterised by a dignity which was enhanced by their genial smile as they smoked their long pipes. Though they are earnest priests of their strange cult the qarabashis of the Yezidi faith are not fanatics.

Such is their prestige among certain tribes that the garments of a qarabash, when these are suspended on a tree, will put an end to a brawl.

6. The Kuchaks.* These are visionaries claiming powers that somewhat resemble second sight among the old Highlanders of Scotland. The kuchaks, however, further claim the capacity of being mediums of occult revelations, and, when thoroughly inspired, to perform miracles. They can work themselves into ecstatic moods and into states of apparent insensibility. It is during these trances that they receive their recondite and metaphysical knowledge.

They believe that there is special reference to

* Vide Nau, loc.cit. page 238.

1 Anthropological Journal, 1911, page 206.
themselves in these words of the Yezidi "book of revelation" - "I reveal my miracles and supernatural works to those naturally disposed towards them when they ask them from me".

Their pretensions to occult insight have been so unquestioningly established that mourners resort to them, as the media of reassurance, when anxious for the spiritual welfare of departed relatives. It is the kuchaks who can proclaim the glad tidings that the departed soul has become incarnate in a new-born member of the Yezidi race; or, if the deceased was not persona grata, that the spirit has merely been metempsychosed into one of the lower animals. It is the kuchak also who indicates the duties and offerings incumbent on the relatives for the expiation of the deceased's transgressions and the restoration of his spirit to the scale of the human species.

The clothes of the kuchaks, which must be of dark colour, are the normal rough Kurdish trousers, elaborate headgear, long tunics and waist belt.

Unlike other Yezidis they are not circumcised. They can only marry the daughters of other kuchaks.

Kuchak powers are supposed to descend from father to son but, sometimes, outsiders can gain admission into this occult succession.

Experts in the exploitation of popular credulity
they, occasionally, attain to immense influence and some even aim at becoming chief of the sect. This aspiration, however, is seldom fulfilled as an over-ambitious kuchak can mysteriously be put out of the way.

The hierarchy is not restricted for residence to the temple. Each district and almost each village has its religious leader. He may be a pir or a sheikh or a kawwal or even a kuchak.

Priestesses. There are a few females resident at the temple and it was believed by certain writers that these women were actual priestesses on whom the hierarchal mantle could fall. That belief may have been well founded in the past. Now, however, they cannot be regarded as real priestesses or even like the rabbanyati* of the Nestorians. They are usually members of the leading Yezidi families. One may be the mother or sister of a deceased primate; another may be the sister of a venerable sheikh. Their residence at the temple is, therefore, due to family connections which secure for them a place of refuge if providence has otherwise left them in necessitous loneliness.

Their association with sacred things and holy persons combines with lengthy residence in the sacred

* Rabbanyati = women who, though not in convents, are self-dedicated to the religious life and will not marry.
locality to endow them in the eyes of pilgrims with a degree of sanctity approaching that of the hierarchy.

**Maintenance of the Hierarchy.** Unlike the Lamaistic Buddhism of Tibet the Yezidi cult does not bind its devotees in a servitude of soul and substance to the priesthood. Neither is the Yezidi priesthood the avenue to the prizes of wealth though, by its very nature, it is the channel which leads to much power in matters secular and sacred.

Many of the religious officials own flocks and work the soil like the laity.

The Yezidi must retain his religion if he is to preserve his identity. If he forsakes his own faith to adopt the creed of those who have been his persecutors he becomes outcast from the social as well as from the religious favours of his relatives; and as a convert he would encounter no little suspicion in the narrow-mindedness of his new spiritual home in Northern Mesopotamia. The vicissitudes of their history and the genius of their creed have, therefore, made the laity dependent on their religious officials and the hierarchy correspondingly dependent on the laity. Each must support the faith and thus protect each other.

At all religious festivals the poor receive help. "It is estimated that a Yezidi spends one fourth of his income in fees, doles to the shrines, to the
priests and alms."* The pilgrimage of over three hundred miles, return journey, to Sheikh Adi from the western fringe of the Jebel Sinjar is no insignificant liability on a poor peasant or shepherd - especially if he is accompanied by his wife or ailing children. Sheikh Adi tablets, with their accredited power of rendering innocuous evil influences, must be purchased at the temple from the hierarchy for domestic purposes. The proceeds of the purchase are for the use of the temple. The wealthier may offer sheep which the priests sell on behalf of the temple. Even the poor can afford such gifts as oil and wicks; others again new faggots and pieces of trees from the woods surrounding the temple. Thus the temple is provided with fuel. At the Great Assembly money collections are specially taken; and on the missionary journeys the kawwals auction the privilege of entertaining the sanjak or taus-kush and, though a share of the income from these journeys belongs to the mir, a major portion goes to the support of the faith.

Joy and sorrow, fasts and festivals, peace and strife, birth and death are all occasions when those who would prosper spiritually and temporally should make gifts to the temple or to their local religious

* "Tigris and Euphrates"- Stevens, page 189.
officials.*

* An indication of the temple income is given by the fact that a sum of Rupees 8,000 — (approximately £600) is paid from the temple of Sheikh Adi and Rupees 5,000 (approximately £375) from the shrine of Sheikh Shems to the mir as a rent for the right of collecting the contributions and fees from the pilgrims to the temple.
THE TEMPLE OF SHEIKH ADI.

Visiting the temple.

Regulations for travelling to Sheikh Adi.

The journey:
Across the Tigris.
Ain Sifni.
Shaks.
Photographs of Ain Sifni and Shaks.
A representative male Yezidi.
Photographs of Yezidis.
Dress of a typical female Yezidi.
Beyond Ain Sifni.

The Valley of Sheikh Adi.

The Temple.
External appearance, (photographs and diagram.)
Welcome from the priests.
The modern bungalow.
In the temple of Sheikh Adi.
The façade. (Photograph of façade.)
The water tanks.
Orientation.
Tomb of the saint.
Store for sacred oil.
Sheikh Adi tablets.
The place inaccessible.
Zemzem.

Shrine of Sheikh Shems. (Photograph of Sheikh Shems)

Hillside chantries. (Photographs of chantries)

Lights of the Darkness.
Chapter 5.

Visiting the Temple.

Although the police organisation, which was developed through British influence at the end of the Great War by officials of the Indian Police, has enforced a measure of public order exceeding even the dreams of but one decade ago, nevertheless, the novelty of the peace and the general situation demand reasonable adherence to official regulations for travellers in certain areas including our proposed destination - Sheikh Adi - in the foothills of Kurdistan.

Regulations for travelling to Sheikh Adi.

In the rules regarding the movements of European and American (ladies) in 'Iraq outside the towns of Basra and Baghdad which were issued by the 'Iraq government in 1928 travellers are "to agree to any restrictions over their movements in 'Iraq which the local authorities may consider advisable in view of local conditions. By 'local authorities' herein is meant the British Administrative Inspector of the Liwa concerned or in his absence the British Inspecting Officer of Police."* All road journeys undertaken in the Northern Liwas by ladies, whether accompanied or not, "must be performed between sunrise and sunset and journeys off the main road must not be attempted without the express sanction of the local

* "Notes for Visitors" in Maps of 'Iraq 1928.
authorities." Section 5(c) states that "ladies whether accompanied or unaccompanied must obtain the previous permission of the local authorities before visiting ..........Ain Sifni, Sheikh Adi, Tel 'Afar and Sinjar." These places are Yezidi localities. Sheikh Adi, their religious Mecca, was our destination.

The British Inspector of Police at Mosul readily agreed to instruct the Kaimakam* at Ain Sifni, 35 miles north east of Mosul, of our proposed trip in order that mounted police should be detailed, if necessary, as our escort from Ain Sifni to Sheikh Adi.

The journey.

At 7.30 a.m. we set off from Mosul towards the Bridge of Boats on the river Tigris. The approach to this bridge was already thronged. Camels grunted beneath their loads of packed wool. A refractory donkey brayed furiously whilst its driver, in full-throated curses, described its conduct, ancestors and infidel stubbornness. A typically amusing scene next merited attention as a hen, carried uncomfortably with its legs sky-wards by a bare-breasted, unshod, Arab protestingly appealed to all the powers of great Nineveh for justice while, to the danger of the hen's neck, Ali was adopting the necessary means of securing involuntary silence! There an eye appeared through a cheap veil as a bare-footed woman with a water jar on her shoulder wound her way towards the river. A

* Vide Glossary (for Kaimakam).
gluttonous-looking Osmanli in a red fez and black abba shambles ahead; a long-tressed Kurd in immensely bottomed trousers looked rustic in this urban surge.

There also a wiry Armenian in an old khaki tunic and short trousers was followed by a smart soldier of the Assyrian Levies in his cockaded hat and, further on, a helmeted 'Iraqi policeman savagely argued with a friend - or perhaps a possible criminal.

The grunting of camels, the neighing of steeds, the braying of donkeys, the jargon of dissonant voices and the surging mob in their variegated garbs gave a kaleidoscopic effect to that mosaic of races and creeds.

Across the Tigris.

To the right the ruins of ancient Nineveh loomed like spectres from the plain. In the realistic fulfilment of Nahum's ominous prophecies the great city now looked "empty, void and waste." No strains of music, no sounds of revelry now filled the air where gorgeous palaces flaunted their licentious glory in those far off days when the pomp and wealth of great Assyria was congregated here from the eastern frontiers of Persia and from western Palestine.

The desolate scene of this morning has continued long through twentyfive hundred years from that day in 608 B.C. when the somnolent air of the Orient was murky with the smoke of roasting human flesh as Sardanapalus, the last king of independent Assyria,
refused to surrender Nineveh to the besieging Medo-Babylonian armies and preferred a funeral pyre into which he hurled his children, his wives and himself. In letters of fire and smoke Ichabod was, that day, writ tragically across the grandeur of great Nineveh. Now a few black tents of nomads relieve the grey monotony of the sandy mounds. Our rugged track wound tortuously between little mounds. The chill of the morning was now yielding to the increasing warmth of the sun. Mile after mile the track led over broken ground towards Ain Sifni. The foothills were now becoming more salient. To the right, like giant hunchbacks of the plateau, arose the Jebel Maqlub as their serrated peaks were smitten with the rays of the dawn. Not many centuries ago this Jebel Maqlub was a Mount Athos of Monophysite hermitism but repeated pillaging by Kurds and the machinations of hostile Turkish Walis have destroyed the former grandeur of Deir Mattai monastery until only the bishop and two monks now reside there. To the right, also, the smoke curling high in the morning air revealed a village surrounded by trees near the base of the Jebel Maqlub. Now we passed small flocks of sheep and goats with their stoical shepherds curled in their bedraggled surtouts.

On our left and to the north-east stretched an area of level ground which was studded with black tents, sheep, goats and camels. Beyond that plain we could
see the village of Ba'idhra where Syed Beg, the feudal lord of the Yezidis, has his fortress. Three other insignificant Yezidi villages appeared beyond the plain and on an eminence near to each silhouetted a tall tree. We were now arriving at Ain Sifni, having completed the stage of our journey where we could leave orderly government - such as it is in those parts - behind, and set forth into the foothills.

Ain Sifni.

Ain Sifni is of special interest for travellers to Sheikh Adi by this route; for it is here that one obtains a real introduction to a Yezidi community.

The village is built on a traverse raised across a valley. Decorating the ascending ground are examples of the typical Yezidi shaks.

Shaks.

Shining attractively in their whitewashed cleanliness these shaks are in the form of cones or pyramids standing upon quadrangular bases and rising to a height of twenty feet or more. Many of the Yezidi villages in the Jebel Maqlub, in the Sheikhan district, and certain villages in the Jebel Sinjar have one of those monuments which they profess to have raised over great saints of their faith. But, according to a certain writer, at least some of these shaks are "mere cenotaphs made on the model of the different tombs at Sheikh Adi."

The architectural form of these shaks has been said to have been "adopted to propitiate the Evil Spirit, and the obelisk, as elsewhere, to represent a flame of fire: but the basis appears to be a relic of the well known Assyrian and Chaldean architecture, the counterpart, on a small scale, of the temples, remains of which are still scattered over the country."*

Fruit gardens abound around the villages; and on the outskirts of Ain Sifni there is a well-protected grove of tall, foliaged trees. This grove is reverenced by local tradition as the place where Noah built the ark.

A Representative Yezidi (Male).

He is about five feet and five inches in height and has a long, black, unkempt beard. On his head is wound a black and red chefiyah, held in position by a dark 'igal' (rope) of camel hair. His outer garment is a greatcoat of dressed sheep's skin with the fleecy side worn inwards. He carries a short and useful cane which has a heavy, leaden, knob at the point. Beneath this fleecy overcoat is a long, white frock or shirt which, according to Yezidi customs "they are forbidden to wear open in front and it is thus always kept closed up to the neck." 2

1 A description (interesting for students of Anthropology) of Yezidi features, size, etc. is given on page 235 of Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1898.
2 Vide "Cult of the Peacock Angel", page 64.
Around the waist is a wide, red cummerband into which is fixed his dagger. From below the white frock appears his impressive 'shirwal'. This is a kind of trousers with an enormously baggy seat which reaches almost to the ankles where it suddenly contracts to fit the width of the calf. His shoes of crude leather are turned up at the points. From his girdle hangs a little bag where useful things like tobacco and knives can be carried.

Dress of a typical Yezidi (Female).

On festive and high occasions the Yezidi women, like women elsewhere, rig themselves in their prettiest dresses and wear their most attractive ornaments. On such days the less impoverished are clad in long robes of white, or scarlet, silk or satin. These robes are sometimes shaped like the shirwal worn by the men. Over these robes are wide stomachers of wrought metal. Their necks are adorned with gaudy ornaments and their long, black, tresses are twined with wild flowers. On their heads are small, red or white turbans and around their foreheads are brow-bands from which dangle rows of glittering coins.

On more ordinary days the women wear plain, white frocks reaching to the ankles and a larger turban which may be white or speckled. Shoes are deemed unnecessary, or perhaps too expensive, except
in the coldest weather.

The colour blue must feature neither in their garments nor in their ornaments as it is one of their religious taboos.* The poorer classes necessarily wear cheaper material.

Beyond Ain Sifni.

A few miles beyond Ain Sifni we descended into a stony ravine where further progress by car was impossible. There, as the driver was inspecting the engine, an unsuspected revolver peered menacingly from his hip pocket. Fear of the mountaineers seems even yet ingrained in the Mosuli mind. We were now following a track through a narrowing detritus of loose boulders into the hills. A mountain stream that would be an exhilarating sight in the arid stretches of Southern Iraq coursed through the defile.1

* Vide Chapter 10 of this thesis. (pag 220)

1 An erroneous impression of the accessibility of the temple is given by Joseph in "Devil Worship", page 161. He states that it "lies in a narrow valley which has only one outlet as the rock rises on all sides except where a small stream forces its way into a large valley beyond."

The entrance to the valley is not such a suggested cleft; nor is there rock standing so impenetrably on all sides of the temple. Access can be had easily from any direction across the hilltops in addition to the entry from the valley below. (Vide photograph on facing page 72 (chapter 5).)

The writer of the above book could not have been at Sheikh Adi, otherwise his account would be more topographically correct.
For about two or three miles this winding climb in the ravine continued. The ravine then veered leftwards and widened into the sacred valley. Across the stream gaily dressed men are threshing with bullocks; and women in red skirts toil in the harvest field. At last, suddenly our eyes behold the white, fluted, spires of the temple. Years of interested anticipation now found realisation in that valley five thousand feet above the undulating desert.

The Valley of Sheikh Adi.

This was no Massilian grove despite its alleged Satanic patronage. It was not a place dank and gloomy where the lightning could scarce rend a passage. It was not a grove whose recesses no sylvan deity ever tenanted and where no bird sang at dawn. I was now near the precincts of the shrine and they looked neither sanguinary nor horribly fouled with gore like those of a Moloch temple. The streamlet that danced its course from the temple through the valley was not black and turbid. Nor was the entry to the valley, where workers gathered the patchy crops of tobacco and rice, a forlorn abode which none entered save pale-browed priests with trembling steps about to celebrate the awful mysteries of a terrible deity. Rather was it a paradise of sylvan charms. The valley on this October day was still clad in its harvest colours. The hillsides
were luxuriously groved. Walnuts, figs, olives, almonds, peach trees, mulberries, and other fruits flourished. In their season wild rose-bushes, the willow herb, hyacinths, oleanders, brambles, and other varieties impart rare beauty to that valley of strange assemblies. And by the stream that runs through the valley silvery poplars rear their heads in the gentle breeze.

**Temple. (External appearance.)**

There is neither village nor secular buildings in the valley of Sheikh Adi. The place contains only the temple and its appurtenances.

The temple buildings rest on foundations which seem to be grooved into the sloping hillside: the lower tier rises perpendicularly from the margin of the stream that flows through the valley. From the upper tier, which is deeply notched into the receding breast of the hill, there arise two tall spires of the characteristic Yezidi architecture. These fluted cones, brilliantly whitewashed, seemed strangely picturesque against their hillside background of oaks and olive trees. On the apex of one spire was a gilded ornament in the shape of a globe which shone resplendently in the sun: and from the base of this globe a little triangular banner flapped in the calm air.

**Welcome from the Priests of Melek Taus.**

Across the stream in the valley is a primitive
stone bridge; but as no Satanic eye was upon us we did not feel obliged to imitate the custom of the devotees who bend low and kiss the grey stones of this holy bridge. Then scrambling upwards amidst crumbling stone, and passing under an ancient arch, we eventually ascended to the level of the temple terraces and faced the entrance. It was now that the sound of several shots re-echoed through the surrounding hills. Perhaps this was a recognised signal from the workers in the fields to the temple authorities announcing the approach of strangers to the shrine. Perhaps, too, behind the shots was the fine suggestion that, whoever we might be, those workers were equipped to meet us whether our errand be peaceful or otherwise.

It was then that the guardian of the temple with his colleagues came forward and welcomed us into a reception room* or bungalow, which, by its modern nature, seemed to be the sole disappointing feature of the temple building.

The modern bungalow.

This inappropriate diwan-khana is a wooden bungalow which is well windowed and measures about twentyfive feet by fifteen feet. Its general appearance of newness, and the information we

* Descriptions of the temple, written previous to 1928, could not include this recent erection.
gathered concerning it, suggested that this western excrescence was but recently erected. No mention is made of it, even as recently as 1927, by visitors to the valley.

The floor was covered with Kurdish carpets and on the seats which stretched along the sides were many cushions attractively embroidered. In the centre of the room was a table covered with a spotless white cloth. As we rested in this room a kawwal and fakir brought us coffee in tiny glasses. It is good manners, among them, not to drink more than three cups even of that insignificant capacity, although we yearned for more. Cigarettes were then exchanged and the vicegerent of Melek Taus seemed to enjoy our brand. After an interval, during which some of our problems concerning the Yezidi religion were being discussed, the tiny cups again appeared and were three times filled with tea. Thereafter the kindly high priest with his retinue of subordinates conducted us towards the temple.

**In the temple of Sheikh Adi.**

From the diwan-khana we descended thirteen steps into an open court over which mulberry trees formed a natural pergola. Opposite these steps is the façade of the temple.

**The façade of the temple.**

This façade is of stone and has a small arched
doorway in the left hand corner.* On the façade several strange signs are incised in low relief as if by amateur hands. Among these symbols are a hatchet and a comb. But the most prominent and suggestive of the strange signs is a snake several feet long which is vertically carved on the right hand side of the doorpost, and fittingly coloured deep black. Its tail reached to within a foot of the ground.1 The priests, incapable of assigning any feasible cabalistic significance to these signs,2 affirm that they are but meaningless ornamentations by the builders. Such affirmations, however, though feasible are scarcely convincing as an explanation of the almost unique nature of these signs. It is not unusual to observe extracts from the Kuran figuring on

* Vide photograph facing page 77 (Chapter 5)

1 Owing to repeated outbreaks of hostility, against the Yezidis, which resulted in the partial destruction of a temple which Kurds and Turks alike regarded as a 'collegio illicita', rebuilding was necessary. Consequently the façade now appears distinctly different to a lithographic print made of the façade in 1852, (vide, Badger Vol.1.) And a photograph taken as recent as 1909 (in G.L. Bell's 'Amurath to Amurath') shows a door which is not exactly similar to the present main door of the temple.

2 Their more northern Nestorian neighbours ascribe to a comb, or its symbol, protective powers against a spirit hostile to birth. This "Spirit khwarha", a night hag that carries off and destroys children, is, however, terrified of being entangled by her hair in the teeth of a comb and, therefore, avoids the nursery where a comb is displayed.

the doors of Mesopotamian mosques; and one can still visualise Old Testament quotations incised on the Kotel Maarabi (Wailing Wall) of the Jews in Jerusalem. It is difficult to believe that these symbols on the façade of the Yezidi temple are meaningless; and the present ignorance concerning them may be attributed to the general illiteracy of the Yezidis and to the sudden, and often unnatural, death of those of their priestly caste who may have known the meaning. Perhaps the very antiquity and eclectic nature of this religion is a more feasible reason for the mystery of these symbols.

The water tanks.

With quiet dignity our guides proceeded across this stone-paved courtyard towards the 'snake door'. As it is a custom in the East - even in many Christian localities - not to enter holy places except unshod, we removed our shoes and helmets although the courteous priests gave no indication that this was expected. They led us within their temple. The first impression was of gloomy silence, barrenness of surroundings, stone floors, age and humid air. The studied whispers of our guides intensified the eeriness of the dim place. But, becoming accustomed to the obscurity, we could now see a trickling rivulet issuing from a large stone tank near the junction of
the south and west walls. In the temple several water tanks of varied capacity were seen. Here it is to be remembered that the Yezidi cult, like many religions, has its system of lustrations; and water itself is among the elements which they adore as symbols of creative deity.

Orientation.

The body of the temple, which is orientated east and west, is divided longitudinally on a twin-nave arrangement with a roof of the barrel-vaulted type. The supporting columns are decorated with green and red drappings. Between these columns hang primitive lamps fitted with hand-woven wicks which float in oil extracted from the olives of the sacred valley. The grease spluttering from those lamps seemed to be left untouched on the floor. Not only the nature of the site but certain sun-worshipping features of the Yezidi creed may explain this orientation.

Further on to the right the solemn guides descended some steps to the lower nave. At its eastern end a door opened leftwards into a rectangular chamber beneath the smaller of the fluted white spires.

Tomb of their saint.

Beneath the larger spire we came upon a square chapel with sides measuring about seven yards. An iron grilled door opens into this chamber. Here, in hushed tones, the priest indicated the tomb of Sheikh
Adi' which is the central shrine and Holy of Holies of their faith.

The venerated tomb of this mystic personage is surrounded with eerie dimness. The few rays of light which are admitted to the dark recess percolate through small apertures in the roof. The tomb itself is a rectilinear figure about seven feet long, four feet wide and five feet high and is constructed of plastered clay. It is shrouded with embroidered cloth in colours of red and green. Except for its coloured drappings it was reminiscent of the little sombre apartment within the dome erection, near Jerusalem, called the Tomb of Rachel. This room, too, is reputed to contain the headquarters' sanjak—though we had not the fortune to behold it.

Silently we passed on pondering the mysterious nature of a cult which is alleged to acknowledge Satan as its patron but, at the same time, cherishes with profound reverence a spot which is accepted as the shrine of a saintly man or, perhaps more likely, as that of an anthropomorphic deity.

Have we here a survival of the early Babylonian pantheon arrangement? In order to be secluded from the gaze of the profane the 'paraku', or holy of holies, in the temple of E-saggil at Babylon was situated in the deep recesses of the building. Here

1 Vide for "sanjak" (religious symbols) Chap.xi.
was the holy seat, the place of the Gods who determined destiny, the spot where they assembled together, the shrine of fate wherein on the festival of Zalmuk at the beginning of the year, on the eighth and eleventh days, the divine king of heaven and earth, the lord of the heavens, seats himself, while the gods of heaven and earth listen to him in fear and stand bowing down before him."

Beyond the tomb a door leads on to a dark room which is the storehouse for the many clay jars that contain the sacred oil of the temple. Here the spell of things strange and ancient was broken when we beheld, in a corner, modern petrol tins serving as containers of holy oil in this temple of Sheikh Adi.

Sheikh Adi tablets.

At the eastern end of the temple were more store rooms which, however, we did not visit. In these rooms are kept the temple supply of Sheikh Adi tablets. These tablets consist of earth which is taken from the vicinity of the Sheikh Adi shrine and kneaded by the priests into dough with water from the temple tanks. Of wafer-like size the tablets are then dried in the sun. As various virtues are ascribed to this compound of sacred water and holy earth, the tablets feature much in the religious and social ceremonies of the Yezidis.

* Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia; published by British Museum: Quoted in the Hibbert Lectures of 1887.
In the absence of a religious official the breaking of one of the tablets will consecrate a marriage. At funerals these sacred tablets are deposited on various parts of the corpse.* The tablets, therefore, are regarded as a talisman against adversity and a viaticum when death comes.(1) When given to messengers by the local religious or social leader they are recognised as a summons to meetings or convocations.

The Place Inaccessible.

It is contended by a certain writer on the Yezidis that pilgrims "are not allowed to retrace their steps through the central hall"2 but must emerge by some other door. Either this statement is a misconception of the temple conventions or our guides must have been peculiarly indulgent; for to our disappointment, the priests now retraced their steps towards the main entrance. Their readiness to satisfy our curiosity had hitherto been so accommodating that it would have been discourteous to urge our desire to see through a certain door in the eastern corner but from which they guided us towards

* Vide Funerals, Chapter 10. (223-226)

1 What is said of certain symbols in an earlier religion in Mesopotamia is substantially applicable to the Yezidi tablets. "The little clay figures...which we find in the ruins of the houses and in the graves may mean simply more magic brought into the home, but equally they may bear witness to a faith more intimate, more simple and more genuine than that contained in elaborate sacrifices and set liturgies." Woolley "The Sumerians", p.129.

2 Empson, loc.cit. page 126.
the serpent gate. This was intentional. No strangers, perhaps not even their own laity, are permitted to pass through that door. Of the few Westerners who ever visited Sheikh Adi only two* have recorded their experience of penetrating beyond that door and of exploring its secrets. During the régime of the Turkish Osman Bey, Wali of Mosul, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a severe persecution of the Yezidis was launched. It resulted in their quitting even their sacred shrine which hitherto had been immune. Sheikh Adi was then ransacked by rapacious Kurds whose piety made them eager to despoil the temple. It was during this evacuation that, in 1907, Dr. Wigram penetrated beyond the forbidden door. Beyond it he found merely an unlit flight of stairs descending into a vast natural cavern which teemed with trickling water. This cavern seemed to be the source of the spring which supplies the stone tanks in the outer courts of the temple and then meanders through subterranean passages and across floors until it issues from the front wall of the temple into the outer valley. This sacred stream they designate as


1 The Joseph MS. (vide our chapter 8) states that at the Great Assembly the pilgrims "swim in the waters of Zemzem". (p. 73 Amer: Jour: of Semi: Langs:) This is inexact; for in this stream scarcely one person could swim far less thousands of pilgrims.
Zemzem. A ridiculous tradition among them declares
that the stream has its source in Mecca.

What awe-inspiring mysteries, what unapproachable
attributes appertain to this gloomy cave no alien is
ever informed. Perhaps not even their own hierarchy
can shed illumination on the secret, or explain the
reason for that profound reverence which may have its
roots in the dim ages of antiquity. Be the cause
what it may, into this nether darkness no prying eye
is readily granted admission.

The Shrine of 'Sheikh' Shems.

On the hillside above the temple is another
shrine with a white fluted spire rising from a flat
roof. This, we were informed, is the sanctuary of
'Sheikh' Shems. It is so constructed that the first
rays of the sun strike upon it. Into the wall are
built votive tablets.

With suggestive similitude to features of the
ancient Mithraistic sacrifices a white bull is driven
round the base of this spire during the great annual
festival by selected young men. This "Bull of the
Sun", as it is called, is thereafter ceremonially
slaughtered and the gavdush* is distributed among the
poorer pilgrims.

* Their special term for "the flesh of the
consecrated ox". Vide MSS.in Parry, loc. cit. page 386.
The Hillside Chantries.

On the hillsides which surround the temple of Sheikh Adi are a number of primitive oratories. These are the supererogation works of certain perfervid devotees or of enthusiastic communities. Each oratory belongs to a specific district or tribe and, as the pilgrims, according to their different places of origin, reside in them during the festivals each portion of the valley is named after the tribe which occupies those oratories. The founders of such chapels are credited with the acquisition of special merit and, despite the challenge of rational criticism, it is believed that these chantries will be transported, in a suitably immaterialised form, with the founder to serve as his especial mansion in the future existence. This may probably ensure undisturbed separation in the otherwise ideal life of Paradise from the company of those who were once uncongenial Mohammedans or Christian sheep stealers or profiteering Jews.

Lights of the Darkness.

At sundown in these oratories the qarabashis, who are the lower order of priests and resemble the Zendavesta "Atharva" (guardians of the fire), light crude lamps fuelled with olive oil. The ragged wicks of these lamps splutter gloomily for some time.
Simultaneously the temple itself is illuminated in salient parts with similar sulky lamps whose sacred fuel is extracted by pious hands from the olive trees abounding on the sides of the valley.

On festival nights the whole valley and hillsides glimmer with lights as the oratories, convenient crannies in the rocks, and even the hollowed stumps of trees are being turned into temporary lamp stands. As the night shades are refracted amidst the mellow foliage of the hills that surround the valley a fairy glamour of shimmering illumination transforms the neighbourhood of this strange citadel into an enchanted realm. The splendour of an October night in the hills of Kurdistan is in itself a memorable sight. But now, as these lights flicker plenteously throughout the temple and on the hillside and as the flares of the camp-fires reveal the moving forms of devotees preparing their night meal beneath the spreading trees, there is presented a scene of almost peerless impressiveness.

* The assertion by a certain writer that "pilgrims are forbidden to cook their food, as all must obtain it from the kitchen of the shrine and pay for it", (page 214 Journal of the Royal Anthropol: Institute, 1911) is erroneous. A writer (Layard - "Nineveh and its Remains" page 288) who was present at the Great Assembly states that pilgrims do prepare their own food - "Men, women and children were congregated round their cauldrons, preparing for their evening meal."

It is to be remembered that when there are thousands at the festival it is impossible, because of the limited size and primitive facilities of the temple kitchen, to cook the food for all the pilgrims in the kitchen of temple.
CHAPTER 6.

FESTIVALS AND FASTS.

Festivals.

Fasting.

Indigenous festivals.

Features of local festivals:
- Largely homogeneous.
- Lustration of home and persons.
- Selection of rendez-vous.
- At the gathering.
- Kawwals at local festivals.
- Revealing the taus kush.
- Selling the tablets.
- Faith healing.
- The night dance.
- Marriage during festivals.
- Baptism during festivals.

Peculiar features of certain festivals:
- Spring festival.
- Summer festival.
- Boie-nay.
- Sari-sali.
- Rogation of the Ninevites.

Fasts

Sacred Days.
Chapter 6.

Festivals and fasts.

Their cult, like other religions, enjoins the due observance of special religious festivals.

The heterogeneous agglomeration of beliefs which passes under the designation of Yezidi religion displays an almost unique catholicity in its assimilations from other religions. Judaism and Christianity both accept the Old Testament. Mohammadanism, too, has accepted many features from the Old Testament though moulding them to its own ideals. And Yezidism in the course of its evolution and permutations has put these three religions under substantial* tribute. Furthermore, in the struggle for survival, its sense of expediency has disposed the Yezidi cult not only to incorporate significant ceremonies from these contiguous faiths but also to coincide in form and season some of its native practices with those of the above mentioned faiths — thus securing a degree of toleration which might otherwise be forfeited. Whilst, therefore, certain festivals would appear to have been directly borrowed there are others which are synchronised with Jewish, Christian or Mohammadan celebrations but which are


1st Rogation of Ninevites, etc.
essentially independent in their origin and purpose. And even some of these that seem to be borrowed may be re-erections, with modern features, on the ruins of ancient indigenous observances.* Their festivals, like their fasts, may be categorised as indigenous or incorporated; and may be celebrated locally or at Sheikh Adi.

**Fasting.**

As their idea of fasting is extremely lax, and as almost every ceremony inclines to end on a note of mirth, it is difficult to tabulate under specific captions what are fasts as distinct from festivals. The method that would, therefore, appear most fruitful in the consideration of these religious ceremonies is to discuss them seriatim with an analysis of their particular characteristics. By this method it is possible to indicate the element of fasting in ceremonies which are preponderantly festive and also to show the festive element in their so-called fasting.

**Indigenous festivals.**

There is one of those held in each season of the year. And though each is celebrated with due ardour the circumstances of climate, employments and tradition have combined to give distinct pre-eminence

* Vide page 939 New International Encyclopaedia.
to the Great Assembly* which takes place in the Autumn at Sheikh Adi. All pious Yezidis who are fit to travel are supposed to attend this gathering. As for the other festivals, whether indigenous or incorporated, although they are duly observed at the temple by the resident priests it is the custom for the villages to hold their own under the superintendence of the sheikh or such other religious leaders as are resident locally.

Features of Local Festivals.

The limited number of people present and the familiar environment of these local festivals are not conducive to the production of the peculiar impressiveness and mass excitement that characterise the Great Assembly at Sheikh Adi. Nevertheless during some years the local festivals derive greater significance from the presence of itinerant kawwals from Sheikh Adi.

1. Largely homogeneous. The local festivals are largely homogeneous in the various localities. What differences exist are merely of degree as governed by local customs. The semi-nomad villages in the western frontiers of the Jebel Sinjar have certain conventions which are necessarily somewhat dissimilar to those among the sedentary tribes one

* The importance to their cult of the Great Assembly merits a consideration which requires a special chapter. e.g. Chap. 7.
hundred and fifty miles further east in the foothills of Kurdistan.

2. **Lustration of home and persons.** These seasons of religious festivity are welcomed by the populace in a spirit of joyous anticipation. Even the children share in the general gladness of their seniors. The houses and domestic utensils are cleaned in preparation for the mirthful day which is inaugurated by a general lustration. All have a thorough scrub; and as certain aspects of village conventions are different to the town codes there is little privacy about the washing. In some villages it is the men who have the use of the domestic tub in the shelter of the home while the women proceed to a near stream for their bath. The women, thereafter, decorate their hair with ribbons or garlands and their arms and ankles with bangles: they may even wear native slippers on their stockingless feet. The men, too, don their best garments and the children get some little gifts or items of new clothing.

3. **Selection of rendez-vous.** A rendez-vous is selected. This may be the leading house in the village. Open spaces in the village may be chosen or local shaks or places, between villages, which tradition has vested with special merit or appropriateness.

Parties then set out from their houses to the
meeting place. Sometimes the men go together and the women follow but, as there is reasonable freedom between the sexes, the crowd is usually mixed. A musician generally leads the procession which moves on amidst growing excitement and hilarity. At times the musician is excelled by the mass as they lustily sing their sacred and secular songs. Rest intervals follow as other parties join the procession towards the place of assembly.

When the religious and tribal leaders arrive they are accorded welcome and due reverence.

4. At the gathering. At the rendez-vous the women enjoy a general gossip. The men smoke their long pipes and discuss matters of mutual interest to the surrounding villages. Here a party of youthful men and maidens seem mysteriously drawn together. A musician commences on his flute or tambourine and attracts an admiring and jesting crowd who soon break forth into an enthusiastic dance. In this free mood of amusement a large portion of the day is occupied.

Should the Yezidis concerned be resident in villages surrounded by tolerant Mohammadans, such as many of the Turcomans of the Jebel Sinjar who are lacking in all religious enthusiasm, these neighbours may even share in the fun. But if the occasion be honoured by the presence of a kawwal the actual religious rites are performed for the benefit of
Yezidis only and, consequently, within some building. And since it is a spiritual and social honour to be the host of the taus-kush* the most important local house usually becomes the scene for the enacting of these peculiar ceremonies. To this house, therefore, the crowd proceed in the evening and there the ecclesiastical officials commence their functions.

5. Kawwals at local festivals. The kawwals convey greetings on behalf of the mir and of the temple priesthood of Sheikh Adi. They then commence to chant their sacred odes and request those of the audience who are able to do so to join in the melody. As the music is wafted out of doors and the straggling crowd, who have not yet gained entrance, take up the simple notes the waves of strange singing echo in the evening air. At this stage the pir may relate certain memorable incidents of the faith. These expositions might consist of reviewing comparatively recent experiences in Yezidi history which revealed courage and unwavering fidelity to the faith of their fathers in times of peril. Such steadfastness is then shown to have its parallels in the lives of divinely approved men like Abraham, Lot, Moses and Christ. The kawwals may now expound some abstruse doctrines of their theology like the theory of creation, the number and functions of angels in

* Vide Taus Kush described in chapter XI.
Yezidi dogma, the meritorious nature of certain deeds and the rationale of the Yezidi faith.

By such means the flame of religious patriotism is fuelled and the identity of the sect is commended and perpetuated.

6. Revealing the Taus Kush. A spirit of unfeigned reverence now prevails as the most solemn act of the festival is about to take place. This is the revealing of the taus kush. From the saddle of his horse, where it is carried when on journeys, the kawwal extracts this icon. He then removes its covering of red fabric and places the symbol in a vessel filled with water. The vessel is thereafter covered with a piece of clean silk. And, as the interested spectators intently gaze, the kawwal suddenly assumes an attitude of fatigue and, foaming at the mouth, he falls into a state of complete exhaustion with his head close to the taus kush. The audience stand spellbound till the kawwal, as if emerging from this trance, softly croons, sways and staggers to his feet. He then "inform[s] the worshippers that the spirit of Melek Taus has entered the image through the water. He then questions Melek Taus, who is supposed to answer."* The image is thereafter removed from the water-filled vessel, uncovered and placed in some prominent position. The

* Empson, loc.cit. page 140.
people within the house and those outside are allowed, in rotation, to come near to touch and kiss it and to deposit their offerings in a near-by receptacle.

7. **Selling the tablets.** The kawwal then produces the Sheikh Adi tablets which are purchased by the more pious worshippers and cherished by them as their talisman against adversities.

8. **Faith healing.** It is at this stage that a tragic spectacle of primitive credulity is revealed as invalids are carried in by friends to find health by touching the sacred symbol or by drinking the water in which the taus kush has been immersed.

9. **The night dance.** The consciousness of the sanctity which has been newly recovered through the rites of the festival, and also the volatility of their primitive minds, ere long dispel the atmosphere of sobriety and a mood of levity reappears. The religious officials and the laity now fraternise freely. At night the kawwals again commence to play. Many of the erstwhile worshippers reassemble and join in the music or form themselves into dancing parties. The excitement grows more and more intense until, by some reckless enthusiasts in a spirit of burlesque, the taus kush itself is sometimes made to dance. Each dance ends on a terrific blast of instruments, loud clapping of hands and raucous rounds of applause. In this manner these dances continue far into the night.

It is their mixed nature and the fact of their
being held within closed doors that principally account for the defamatory charges of licentiousness levelled against these dances by unsympathetic or misinformed members of other faiths.

10. **Marriage during festivals.** At the Spring celebration marriage is allowable only for kawwals. The other festive seasons may be the occasion selected by some romantic pair to get married as the performing of their wedding ceremony by the visiting kawwals confers special social and religious distinction. Such a wedding during the festivals affords additional cause to the friends of the couple for singing and dancing and, in the case of the less impoverished families, for the liberal consumption of the intoxicating arak that is made from their own raisins. "Sobriety is not, I fear, to be numbered among the Yezidi virtues." 1

XI. **Baptisms during festival season.** If an opportunity was not available during the previous day the kawwal administers baptism to the unbaptised infants of the locality in the morning before he departs. For this purpose he carries on his journey a skin bag containing water from the sacred tanks of

* Vide chapter 9 of this thesis.

1 "Amurath to Amurath", page 280.
the temple at Sheikh Adi.

**Peculiar features of certain festivals.**

While the characteristics described on the previous pages generally feature in all the local religious festivals there are, nevertheless, differences peculiar to certain seasonal celebrations.

1. The Spring festival. On the eve of this feast, which coincides with the new moon in the month of Nisan (April) the families of the pastoral tribes kill one of their lambs* and the families of the sedentary communities purchase meat. This meat is intended as an offering for the spiritual welfare of deceased friends.

In the morning all are astir early "and at break of day youths and maidens set off over the hills to make nosegays of wild flowers."1

Having decorated their homes with flowers the women then assemble carrying the meat and other food which they have prepared. A kawwal or, in his absence, other religious musicians playing on flutes or cymbals lead this female concourse to the graves of their relatives. The food is quietly deposited on the graves as the religious officials mournfully chant hymns. In this manner the meat and food

* "As with Moslems and Jews no beast may be eaten till bled by Yezidis." "The Faiths of Man", Vol.3. page 110. T.G.R. Forlong.

1 Stevens, loc.cit. page 185.
become sacred offerings that are believed to ensure blessings for the giver and to give pleasure to the spirits of the friends who are being commemorated. Thereafter the offerings are brought back and distributed among the poorer families of the community.

When the women have returned from their visit to the cemetery a big meal is consumed and the rest of the day is devoted to the religious merriment that generally characterises their religious festivals.

2. The Summer festival. An interesting feature marks the Summer festival, which takes place on the appearance of the new moon in the month of Tammuz*, at Sheikh Adi. A white ox is slowly escorted round the base of the white fluted spire that rises from the Shrine of the Sun. This "ox of the sun" is then slaughtered and roasted on wood which is brought from a store house of the Sheikh Adi temple. The flesh is then used to feed the poorer pilgrims.

3. Boie-nay. ('Christmas'). In the Yezidi doctrine of their Seven Great Spirits the second place of eminence is accorded to Melek Isa, King Jesus. This second spirit became incarnate and his physical life was distinguished by meekness,

* Middle of June to middle of July in our calendar.
forgiveness and holiness. The nativity of this spiritual potentate is an occasion of great joy and is observed in the festival of Boie-nay.

In general outline this festival resembles the Christmas celebration among the modern Christian Assyrians. Of course the practice among these neighbouring Nestorians of having Holy communion and services of Messianic adoration on Christmas eve are absent from the Yezidi observation since Melek Isa is venerated among the latter only as one of several prophets and not as the Redeemer.

In certain localities a vigil is maintained far into the night before Christmas and then the more religiously minded expound the significance of this season in their faith. Those who can afford to do so purchase a sheep or a lamb which they prepare as a meal of hospitality. Portions are given to the more impoverished and more pious among the villagers. The festival commences in a spirit of happiness; gifts are made to the women and children; friends exchange visits and an opportunity is thus provided for lovers to call on the family from which they contemplate taking a wife. The evening is occupied with music, song and dance and not a few of the cronies celebrate the joyous day by sampling the year's blend of the local arak.
4. **Sari-sali. "New Year"**

The Yezidi year does not commence with that of the Mohammadans but with that of the Eastern Christians whom the Yezidis also follow in the sequence and designation of their months.* Sari-sali, which lasts for three days is a most solemn period at the temple and even among the laity. Usually, however, there are but few pilgrims at the temple for this season and these are generally the more pious and the afflicted.

As on the occasion of every festival the kawwals play on their instruments but the music for the New Year must be of a solemn and plaintive nature. On the first day of the Sari-sali all merriment is forbidden and a spirit of humiliation prevails - for it is believed that on this day God "sits on his throne arranging the decrees for the coming year, assigning to dignitaries their various offices and delivering to them their credentials under his signature and seal". Mortals, therefore, must be reverent when the creator is determining their destiny for the New Year.

5. **Rogation of the Ninevites.** This is the fast which commemorates the repentance of the Ninevites when Jonah declared that in four days Nineveh would be

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1 Sir J. Frazer in "The Golden Bough" derives this custom from a period which is long antecedent to the Moslem Lailat al Qadar, - Kur'an, Sura. 97.
overthrown. "So the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."* To this day the different religions in Northern Mesopotamia observe that fast for three days in the beginning of February.

Among the Yezidis the fast is of a penitential character as with neighbouring faiths. With the surrounding Jewish, Christian and Mohammadan religions fasting is a strict obligation during special seasons. Lady Surma d'Bait Mar Shimun, sister of the late martyred Patriarch Mar Shimun of the Nestorians, in writing of this "Ba'utha d'Ninewayi" records the case of a Nestorian priest "whose custom it was to fast for the whole of the three days...until the close of the rogation of the third day."1 Among the Yezidis, however, the practical interpretation of fasting, even during the Rogation of the Ninevites, is very loose. The hierarchy, however, do not take food between sunrise and sunset; and some of the more pious of the laity dispense with certain meals during the first day. Others visit the graves of relatives or go on pilgrimages to certain local shrines. Others merely abstain from acts of amusement or pleasure. And, except for slight acts of self denial, certain pastoral tribes pursue their normal occupations during the fast.

* Book of Jonah, Chap 5/5.
1 Assyrian Church Customs (Surma d'Bait Mar Shimun) page 22.
(2) The fast has no fixed date, as it follows the date of Ersri.
Certain harmless customs associate with the conclusion of the rogation. If bread is made from a mixture of different grains and is eaten that day by lovers their dreams on that night are believed to come true. Childless women, anxious for motherhood, make vows to saints or even to certain sacred spots and pledge to make gifts to the poor or give special offerings to local shrines if their yearnings are fulfilled.

Fasts.

1. Can be by proxy. Among the Yezidis there is belief in fasting but the practice of this belief does not lie heavily upon them. The fasting which is normally of three days' duration takes place at the appearance of the new moon that ushers in their New Year.* But their fasting can be performed by proxy. A number of Yezidis, or even a whole village, select from among themselves some man of acknowledged sanctity to fast in their stead. To him they confess the acts that need expiation and, after an arrangement is made for the necessary monetary reward, this sin-bearer vicariously suffers for his clients. The hierarchy, however, perform the obligations of their own fasting.

1 "Cradle of Mankind", page 105.
Sacred Days.

Certain days are accounted sacred among them. These are Wednesday and Friday. The Christian Sabbath is also regarded as worthy of veneration. But on those days no one actually fasts nor is there any refraining from work. Visits to the local shaks seem to be the only sanctification of these days.

The cause of this lavish quota of sacred days is, perhaps, traceable to that utilitarianism which regarded expediency more feasible to their political status than an untractable repudiation of contiguous practices whose observation would involve more practical gain than loss of principle. Friday being the Mohammedan holy day and Sunday that of the Christians there would be no material or spiritual loss in including them along with Wednesday which is the specific holy day of the Yezidis. There may, however, be a more ancient and less empiric principle underlying the observation of Friday and Wednesday by a cult with such traces of antiquity as appear in Yezidism. These two days were observed as 'dies stationum' by the Christian church as early as the 2nd century A.D.*

* History of the Christian Church (Kurtz) translated from German by Edersheim.
CHAPTER 7.

THE GREAT ASSEMBLY.

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Chapter 7.

THE GREAT ASSEMBLY.

The profoundest religious aspiration of the zealous Yezidi is to attend the Great Assembly in the valley of Sheikh Adi. All who are able to travel are expected to be present at the temple for this most important gathering of their faith. The assembly, which lasts for eight days, takes place in the beginning of October and not as certain writers* affirm in August or in April.1

The raison d'etre of this assembly is the manifestation of religious devotion or, rather, of

* In Hastings' Ency. of Religion and Ethics (Vol. 12 page 830) the writer of the article on the Yezidis (probably basing his statements for the date of the Great Assembly on the article in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society Vol. 9, page 425; and for the locality of the festival on an article on the Yezidis in the Ency. of Missions, New York 1904, page 526) erroneously states that "their greatest festival is on the 10th August when a procession of flagellants takes place in the village of Ba'adri. There is the grave of their great saint 'Sheikh Adi...'"

a. The feast does not take place in August. Vide Stevens (loc. cit. page 184); Wigram 'Cradle of Mankind' page 105. Both say October. The present writer was at Sheikh Adi in the middle week of October 1928 and the Great Assembly had just ended on the previous week.

b. The feast does not take place at Ba'idhra but at Sheikh Adi. Vide Layard - 'Nineveh and its Remains', page 281.

c. The 'grave' of Sheikh Adi is not at Ba'idhra but in the valley of 'Sheikh Adi' which is about six miles, over precipitous hills, beyond Ba'idhra. Vide Luke 1.c. page 129. Wigram, l.c. p. 90. Seabrook, 'Adventures in Arabia', p. 290. Furlani, l.c. p. 4 and map facing page 150 of this chapter.

Sectarian zeal. At this festival the long pent emotions of these normally serene pilgrims surge joyously at the attainment of their sacred ideal. The massed gathering of sympathetic co-religionists and the general atmosphere of excited animation constitute an environment that fosters an ecstasy which finds expression in physical and spiritual exercises. The physical expression of this mood, however, does not resemble the ridiculous gymnastics of the early Darwishes nor is it repellant with the squalid hysteria of the Yogi religious ceremonies at Benares.

The Congregation.

Picturesque indeed in the gathering for the Great Assembly. They come from the northern valleys of the Dohuk, from the hill slopes of the Sheikhan district, from Persia, from Syria and some zealous devotees brave the arduous journey even from the Caucasus. Men from the Sinjar hills are here. Swarthy but terribly sinewy, these Sinjaris are impressive even in that motley of rustics. Their long, plaited hair, their piercing eyes, their white robes floating loosely in the breeze, the daggers in their belts and the guns on their shoulders invest them with a stern wild dignity.

The nomad women* appear in their silken antaris. Wild flowers adorn their long hair; their foreheads

are decorated with bands of shining coins and their necks with strings of coloured beads and polished stones.

The shepherds from the hills of ancient Adiabene are present in their gaudy jackets and speckled turbans. Their coloured girdles are stuffed with many fantastic weapons.

Poverty stricken families from the Mosul district are there. Their white robed women seem less sturdy and more careworn than their sisters from the tents of the desert.

The call of the Yezidi Great Assembly brings together a most impressive congregation.

The procession of the mir.

Residents in Ba'idhra, in Ain Sifni and in other villages within reasonable distance of the shrine set off from home on the first day of the assembly amidst much excitement.

The mir, well armed and attired in his best garments, issues forth with a select party* including his private retainers - who, too, are resplendent with daggers and guns. His journey from Ba'idhra to the shrine is a mule ride of about three hours. Before

1 This procession - and not necessarily an Islamic origin for the faith of the Yezidis - provides a measure of justification for the ascription of the title "Mir Hagg" to the Mir. c.f."Il capo politico della setta, chiamato Mir Hagg, Principe del pellegrinaggio". (Furlani, loc.cit.introduzione, page 4.)
reaching the sacred valley he may be joined by other pilgrims from neighbouring villages. The struggling procession is preceded by exuberant musicians who extract from tambourines, chanters and flutes terrible, yet apparently popular, melodies in which the whole mob occasionally join. Love songs or — the only alternative in these primitive fastnesses — songs of battle, of heroism, or of sudden death constitute the repertoire. The mood of merriment is intensified by the capers of riders engaging in mimic fights, firing their guns and otherwise behaving in a manner peculiarly strange in view of their religious mission.

En route many stone cairns left by pious pilgrims as memorials of their visits are passed on the track. Sacred trees protected by walls, and occasional sacred tombs, appear and seem to inflame the zeal of the pilgrims. From the hilltops of the white-washed spires of the temple appear in the valley below, the pilgrims express their joy by singing, by shouting tribal cries, and by discharging their guns. To this devotion response is made in a similar manner by pilgrims from other localities who have already reached the holy valley. As no one can effectively engage in the Great Pilgrimage, those who have already done so may return home to sit in solemn silence. The pilgrims' lustration, as no one can effectively engage in the Great Pilgrimage, those who have already done so may return home to sit in solemn silence.
Assembly without having previously purified his body, and even his garments, the pilgrims from the villages nearest Sheikh Adi perform these ablutions before commencing the journey. A few may be satisfied with splashing in some humble utensil at home. The easier method, however, is to proceed to a near-by stream where the men select a spot and there treat themselves to an al fresco bath.* Some little distance away, and divested of all their garments, the women, taking their scrub, walk about coram publico quite unconcerned. Narrow minded people in more conventionalised countries might accuse these Yezidis of a lack of decency. That, however, is a libel; and it would be more correct to say that it is the sense of indecency that is absent as it was absent from the Garden of Eden.

Pilgrims arriving from distant localities cleanse themselves in the sacred stream of Sheikh Adi where it emerges from the valley at a distance of about a mile from the temple.

The Levee.

When the ceremony of lustration is finished the pilgrims approach the shrine. As they reach the rude bridge beyond the temple walls they bow and reverently kiss its stones.

* This al fresco washing is also a custom among the neighbouring Nestorians.
To welcome the new arrivals the mir, the leading tribal sheikhs and the Ikhtiar Margahi with the temple hierarchy take up positions in the temple courtyard or, since 1928, around the recently erected diwan-khana at the main entrance of the temple.

The pilgrims pay their devoirs by kissing the hand of the mir and that of his primate; certain of the priests, too, receive this same salutation. Arrivals during subsequent days accord the same respect to the mir, to their own tribal sheikhs and to the hierarchy whether these be met formally in the diwan-khana or encountered elsewhere in the valley.

The lodging places.

The pilgrims then proceed to select a place which is to be their abode during their stay. If the hill-side bothies are already occupied the shelter of a spreading tree or merely a hollow in the ground will suffice. Carpets and domestic utensils are then unloaded from the mules or donkeys and sufficient dry wood is soon collected for fires. Ere the first evening falls the smoke of thousands of fires arises in the calm air of the hills.

The sacrifice to Melek Taus and Melek Isa.

Different groups purchase a sheep from local shepherds; and capable men assisted by their tribal sheikh, if he is so inclined, ceremoniously slaughter it. Before the groups consume their first meal of
these victims portions are distributed to the most impoverished pilgrims among themselves because special spiritual and material blessings are believed to accrue when offerings, in the form of parts of an animal that is slaughtered during the Great Assembly, are thus given to the poor.

There is also an official killing of seven sheep as a sacrifice to Melek Taus; thereafter another sheep is slain as a sacrifice to Melek Isa (Christ). These latter sheep are apportioned among the different tribes and a share is allotted to the temple.

_Sellers at the temple._

The early arrivals occupy the afternoon in various secular engagements with merchants and mirth-makers.

As in the sacred centres of other religions the festival at Sheikh Adi attracts the men of trade. In the khans of the outer courts of the temple, and even in strategic places on the hillsides, these packmen ply their calling.

_Cloths of varied colours, chefiyahs, abbas, cummerbands, trousers, ornaments and other attractions are spread for inspection._ Even the branches of trees are festooned with bizarre articles to attract customers. The produce of the herds and gardens also finds sale in this vast assembly of hungry mouths.

_By this merchandise some of the pilgrims defray the expenses of their journey._
Among the Yezidis, as with other Orientals, bargaining is almost synonymous with lengthy and intense arguments; and the unsophisticated temperament of the mob can suddenly transform keen commercial contests into events of uproarious amusement even in this holy valley.

The friendly groups.

From their hillside resting-places many drift towards the temple around which they squat in parties. Here a number of old men and tribal sheikhs encounter old friends and discuss topics of tribal and creedal interest. Higher up on the hillside another group gathers round a popular raconteur who, with familiar gestures, is telling tales of love or of comedy. Elsewhere a party of desert shepherds, with their curly hair falling in plaits over their shoulders, congregate around one of their pastoral bards who is crooning the monotonous 'guranis', or folksongs, that send the audience sometimes into ecstasies of laughter and sometimes into tears. The priests, revealing their pastoral interest, wander among the respective parties - renewing acquaintances with friends or smiling approvingly on youthful braves who cast admiring glances in the direction of eligible females.

Displaying of the Sanjak.*

In the early evening when the mir, the tribal

* Vide chapter 10 for explanation of Sanjak.
sheikhs and holy fathers of the faith have gathered, a ceremony to which members of other religions are not admitted takes place in the temple. This ceremony which is repeated on subsequent days for the benefit of late comers is the displaying of the sanjak.

The most important men of the tribes accompany the mir and the hierarchy into that inner chamber of the temple in which is the tomb of their saint. Beside the tomb, and covered in a shroud of striped green and red cloth, is the sanjak. The sanjak is now reverently uncovered and exposed to view and it is fondly handled by the leading men present as a kind of fidelity-pledge to their religion. Thereafter, with quiet solemnity, this palladium of the sect is carried by the kawwals to the main courtyard of the temple where it is exhibited to the laity.

Information soon spreads through the valley that the displaying of the sanjak is taking place and, ere long, many gather to behold the sacred symbol and to receive the mysterious benefits which credulity derives from contact with it. Having touched the sanjak some then pass their hands over their foreheads and heart as an act of consecration and over other parts of the body according to their sense of ailment or their anxiety for the fulfilment of certain desires.

Dedication of the exen.

A rite which is curiously suggestive of Assyrian
ancestry takes place in the evening as the sun is disappearing behind the Kurdish hills. This is the dedication of the "ox of the sun".

A herdsman leads a white ox into a stall attached to the shrine of "Sheikh" Shems. As late as the middle of the 19th century when the Yezidis were still numerous and powerful a drove of white oxen was provided for dedication to the Sun during the Great Assembly.* Sometimes the purchase of this sacrificial ox is defrayed by the mir and sometimes by the more affluent tribal sheikhs. Normally, however, the temple funds provide this victim; and the priests attend the dedication and slaughter of the ox.

Fires are then made of boughs near the shrine of the Sun and, on these, pieces of the ox are broiled. Other portions of the victim are carried by priests and by willing helpers from among the pilgrims to the kitchens of the temple of Sheikh Adi. In the latter place pieces are boiled in Sheikh Adi water and other parts are roasted with wood taken from a central storehouse. The mir and hierarchy receive a share of this Sun-offering whilst the remainder is allotted to the tribal sheikhs for distribution among the most impoverished of their accompanying pilgrims.

1 "Amurath to Amurath", page 278.
The flame of purification.

As the night quickly envelopes the landscape - for there is scarcely any twilight in that latitude - the qârabâshis, wearing their black turbans, baggy trousers and tight fitting waistcoats, come forth from the temple. In one hand they carry jars of holy oil and bunches of crude rag-wicks and in the other hand a flaming torch. They proceed to trim and light the primitive lamps that are placed in certain niches of the temple courtyard. As they make their way towards other lamps that are fixed in the hillside oratories and even on hollowed tree trunks throughout the valley some of the watching crowd eagerly pass their right hand through the flame of the torch and then rub their foreheads and lips with this hand. The hand has acquired merit by passing through the fire. Pilgrims on the edge of the crowd who cannot get near to the torch seek out more fortunate friends whose hand has touched the flames; and, thus, by mutual contact the blessing is mediated. The sick touch their ailing parts: mothers, too, rub the foreheads of their children with the hand that has touched the flame, thereby securing protection for the children from evil spirits.

There still would seem to survive among the Yezidis - though in a somewhat shadowy form - the
beliefs that prevailed among their ancient Assyrian predecessors in that land of strange cults that "fire is endowed with divine attributes: it purifies and burns up all that is foul"* and that even the stick which, by friction, produced fire must be regarded with special veneration since the flaming torch is an intermediary between gods and men.

The night dance.

Above the general murmur of the different groups there arise the sounds of flutes and the beat of drums. These are the preliminaries of a dance that is commencing beneath the olive trees on the hillside. Hundreds of pilgrims eagerly make their way thither to watch the many performers.

The dance which is general among the hill folk of Assyria makes little demand on skill or deportment. The musicians play and the dancers form a circle—holding each other by the hand as in an English Paul Jones. The dance leader holds aloft a coloured cloth with which he directs the time and movements of the dance. At first they move slowly shifting the right foot forward, touching the ground with it and then drawing it back to its original position with a kind of locomotor ataxia thud. Then the left foot is

* Sayce, "Babylonian Religion" (Hibbert Lectures) page 179.

1 This dance is similar to the 'hosa' (dance) of the Marsh Arabs— the primitive dwellers in the marshy area which is formed between Qurnah(40 miles N. of Basra) and Qalat Salih, by the confluence and overflow of the Tigris and Euphrates. Vide "Haji Rikkan", by Fulanain, page 204.
moved leftwards and placed with the toes pointing forward whilst the right foot is brought with a stamping effect into touch with the left. The left foot then gets its chance to perform the movement previously done by the right. This alternation of forward- and sunwise movement seems to constitute the complete principles of the dance. The music quickens and the rhythm and thump of bare feet are accelerated. Faster grows the music and the dance now develops into an exaggerated hornpipe. As the music further quickens and the movements and contortions of body and limb become terribly extravagant the women who gaze on now screech the tahlel. This is a prolonged shrill sound produced by the combined motion of the tongue and larynx whilst the hand is vibrated rapidly over the mouth.* Then in a final leap and with a terrible yell the dance suddenly ceases as the performers, amidst applause, subside to the ground in complete exhaustion.

_Hymns of the night._

It is now well into the night. The pilgrims have had their evening meal and the stars spangle brilliantly in the deep blue of the October sky.

Suddenly in the valley arise the strains of music,

* c.f. "The Lu-lu-lu, or 'Tahlil' is peculiar to women, and is formed by raising the voice to its highest pitch, vibrating it at the same time by rolling the tongue, whose modulations express now joy, now grief."

plaintive and solemn like chords unexpectedly heard in the dimness of an ancient abbey. At first the voices of men and women sing slow accompaniment to the notes of flutes. Then in gradual crescendo this choir, which is as yet invisible, swells to a fortissimo which ends in a terrifying clash of cymbals and tambourines. An interval of muffled silence ensues. Again the singing breaks forth and the notes ascend on the chromatic scale and become louder and quicker till they reach their former terrifying climax. Now the thousands of pilgrims assembled in their hillside chantries or gathered by the fires beneath the spreading trees take up the strain of the strange melody. Thus the music, in slow undulations, swells and dies away throughout the valley and anew awakens to die again in the impressive silence of the darkness.

These 'hymns of the night' originate in the temple. In the inner court are assembled the mir, the Ikhtifari Margahi and the priests of the faith. Primitive oil lamps relieve the gloom of this inner chamber and dimly illumine the walls of the shrine. On one side of the court are ranged the mir, the primate and the sheikhs. On the other side are seated the kawwals performing on tambourines, flutes and cymbals; and the qarabashis, in their sombre garments, stand around. There are also present a few
white robed women whose acknowledged piety secures for them admission to this sacred place. No other persons are admitted within this chamber. It is this exclusive party within the inner court that starts and directs the music of the night hymns.

As the kawwals play the others sing. After the initial notes the music quickens. The tambourines break in oftener and are beaten with increasing vigour. The flute-notes are accelerated, the singers rise to a louder and higher pitch and the thousands outside take up the singing. As the climax of voice and instrument is reached the agitated musicians hurl their instruments into the air and then, straining their bodies into various contortions, they fall limply on to the floor. When this explosive climax is heard outside the multitude of pilgrims unitedly raise a shout that resounds with terrifying effect through the darkness of the hillside.

* "I never heard a more frightful yell than that which rose in the valley. It was midnight. The time and place were well suited to the occasion..... I did not marvel that such wild ceremonies had given rise to those stories of unhallowed rites, and obscene mysteries, which have rendered the name of Yezidi an

abomination in the East.* "They have been accused," says another writer,† "besides worshipping Mephistopheles, of adopting and practising the rites of Semiramis, the priestess of the lascivious cult of the worship of the sexual organs." But, continues Sir Henry Layard, who spent several nights at their Great Assembly "notwithstanding the uncontrollable excitement which appeared to prevail amongst all present, there were no indecent gestures nor unseemly ceremonies."‡

The accusation of unhallowed behaviour would seem to have no more justification than the exaggerated expression of Mohammadan and, perhaps, Christian aversion to a cult which was not only different from their own but was largely misunderstood and somewhat feared.³

* "On the 10th day of the moon, in the month of August", (states a writer in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. IX, p. 425) "they hold a meeting at the tomb of Sheikh Adi, which lasts a day and a night and at which all the married women and men assemble. After dark the lights are extinguished and they hold promiscuous intercourse till morning."

As this writer's information, both concerning the date of the festival and its duration, is incorrect the remainder of his allegation may be similarly judged. He himself had not the opportunity of attending the festival and his information, which was not likely derived from a Yezidi source, would appear to be a baseless calumniating of people whose morals could bear comparison with those of their neighbouring detractors.

1 "To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise", (Soane) p. 100
3 "The consumation of marriage at the shrine is not permitted because in their eyes it is a holy place." MS in Parry's "Six Months in a Syrian Monastery" p. 386.
Far into the night the strange programme of singing continues. When it ends the choristers issue from the temple to mingle with the people outside. Soon an atmosphere of cheerfulness develops as parties join in merry discussion with friends or as the kawwals respond to the desire of certain enthusiasts for more melody of a less sacred strain. As the night hours advance towards the dawn the enthusiasm for song and devotion wanes and exhaustion overcomes the mob. The murmur of voices ceases and the hillside fires die one by one till, at length, the valley - so suited to strange deeds - is wrapped in silence.

"The entire ceremonial - from the manner of its occurrence in a sacred grove to the weird music with which it was accompanied - was stamped as a survival of rites that existed in the Land of the Two Rivers ages before the Hebrew traditions were in sufficient circulation to identify the prince of evil as Shaitan - the Fallen Angel. The rites go on today as they have always gone on - less furtively perhaps now that the tolerant English government is to be seen behind the throne that is the symbol of power in Moslem 'Iraq. And they probably will go on until new philosophies replace the rifle and bayonet as civilising influences in the Kurdish hills."

* "Baghdad and Points East", page 250. (R.J. Casey)
Adoration of the Sunrise.

On the second and subsequent days the programme of the first day is repeated for the benefit of new arrivals and the other pilgrims, being satisfied with the excitement of the previous day, now prepare for the performance of a further rite. This is the ceremony of the "Adoration of the Sunrise".

Those tribes who occupy the sector of the hillside near the shrine of "Sheikh" Shems (the sun) bestir themselves early and proceed to that shrine to anticipate the rising of the sun. As the first rays smite the white fluted spire of the shrine these primitive people crowd round to kiss the door and certain stones in the walls of the shrine and certain spots of the ground near the entrance to the shrine.* There many linger long while others are busy reverently decorating the dry-stone walls with bunches of bright and scented flowers from the valley.

This spectacle of hundreds of men at dawn, amidst the hills of old Assyria, bowing in adoration of the rising sun suggests the survival of the ancient scene recorded in the Assyrian hymn of adoration to the "Lord of the temple of the Mighty Light...who makes the light from the horizon to the zenith of Heaven." - 'Thy will is made known on Earth and the spirits thereof kiss

* Badger, loc.cit. page 116.
the ground before thee."*

Certain other significant activities take place before the conclusion of the Great Assembly:—

Unshrouding the Tomb.

In the afternoon of one of the final days of the Great Assembly the priests gather within the inner court around the tomb of the saint. The sheikhs then remove the covering from the tomb and the kawwals play and sing. As the music and song continue the shroud is solemnly carried into the outer court to be displayed to the crowd. In turn all approach and touch the holy cloth; many even kiss it and, thereafter, rub their hands over their right eye, heart and other parts of their body. When every one has had an opportunity of reverencing the shroud it is again solemnly borne back into the inner court and replaced on the tomb. As many of the faithful as can be accommodated in this inner court are then made to sit down and the kuchaks bring round food and drink.

Collections for the shrine.

At this stage collections are taken for the maintenance of the shrine. The pilgrims give generously of their possessions and the collections include the produce of the flocks, herds, fields and

gardens as well as money.

Selling the Tablets.

From within the shrine the priests now produce a large supply of the sacred Sheikh Adi tablets and these are soon purchased by the zealous spectators.

Baptisms at the Great Assembly.

Pilgrims from far and near have brought with them their children who have not yet been baptised and as the associations of the Great Assembly are specially auspicious for the administering of this sacrament many infants are now presented for baptism. In the baptismal ceremony the Ikhti’ari Margahi is assisted by the sheikhs and kawwals. Even apart from the religious value attached to the receiving of baptism in the most sacred centre of their faith the mere sprinkling with Sheikh Adi water is in itself believed to confer upon the children special protection against illness and evil spirits.

Satisfied with the pilgrimage to their Mecca and having taken their part in the ceremonies of the Great Assembly some leave the valley before the concluding day. But as the eighth day dawns the other pilgrims are ready to return from the scene of their religious felicities to their village homes or distant shielings. The mir and hierarchy bid
friendly adieu to the devotees; and as the faithful disappear over the hill tops some, hopeful of repeating their visit, rejoice in the sacred souvenirs that are to ward off evil from themselves and from their possession. It is natural, however, that others, especially the very aged, should cast lingering glances at the valley that some of them will see no more.
CHAPTER 8

EDUCATION AND SACRED BOOKS.

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Yezidis as "people of the book".
Poem of Sheikh Adi.

Purported Scriptures.
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(Facsimile of 'l'alphabet Yezidite et sa transcription'.
(Facsimile of commencement of Black Book.
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Authenticity of the manuscripts as Yezidi scriptures.
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Conclusions on the Manuscripts.
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Education and the Sacred Books.

Illiteracy in the cult.

Writers on the Yezidis believed that illiteracy was a tenet of the Yezidi religion. "It is considered unlawful to know how to read and write" states a writer* in 1848; and, he continues, "there are only one or two persons amongst the Yezidis who can do either. Those who know how to read have only been taught, in order that they may preserve the sacred book, and may refer to it for the doctrines and ceremonies of the sect." As recently as 1923 another writer1 says that "reading and writing are at all times forbidden arts" with the Yezidis.

That prohibition, however, cannot now be regarded as receiving practical observation. Nor is illiteracy now esteemed as an index of devotion to the faith. Actually the situation at present is that education is welcomed where economic circumstances allow; and illiteracy, therefore, is to be regarded rather as a factor incidental to their economic and social order. An agricultural and pastoral life which, in many instances, is largely nomadic provides few inducements to the pursuit of education. Sons are intended as an asset and not as a liability to the parents. Even at a very early age the lads, as

1 Stevens, "By Tigris and Euphrates", page 200.
elsewhere in the rural life of Mesopotamia, can assist in herding the flocks. Education for girls is, of course, not a normal consideration in any religion in Northern 'Iraq. That the Yezidis are illiterate is, therefore, true in the same sense that their neighbouring Kurds are uneducated. The period and expense requisite for training in education is a luxury which cannot be afforded in view of geographical and economic circumstances; and there is no specialised industrial life that offers pecuniary rewards to mental qualifications. It is largely from this utilitarian consideration that "they entertain the strongest prejudice against learning of every kind." *

There is submitted (facing this page) a picture, taken on the roof of the American (Presbyterian) Mission House at Mosul in 1928, of a son of Sheikh Ishmael Beg of the Jebel Sinjar. This boy, then about nine or ten years of age, had been sent by his father as a regular pupil into the classes of the mission school where the boy took the ordinary school curriculum including Bible knowledge. A sister of this boy was also a pupil in the mission school and was taught the ordinary lessons of her class. If illiteracy were a very pronounced tenet of the cult

* Badger, loc.cit. page 134.
we would not expect this sheikh to send his family so far from home to acquire education.*

Schools.

In the endeavour to improve the life of the Yezidi millet under the British mandate the government of the new kingdom of 'Iraq opened a new school in the Jebel Sinjar soon after the Great War. And at the present time there is another school for boys at Ain Sifni in the Mosul sanjaq.

Text books.

For these schools the text books, which are in Arabic, have been purged of such words as were

writer

* A recent/records that the Darwish Aga, the head of the Yezidi settlement in the Aleppo district, enrolled his two sons as students in the American Mission School at Aleppo. The Darwish Aga was murdered towards the end of 1931 and the eldest son, Jamil, who had then been several years in the school, was elected to succeed his father as leader of the Aleppan Yezidis.

"When he learned of his father's death he at once left school and went to his village. About three days later he came to us, with his uncle, asking us for some advice. He had just been elected to succeed his father and he felt the burden of the office. He said 'Now before we talk I want you to lead in prayer asking God to help us'. This shows something of his faith. He is an honest, quiet young man of character: a real Christian at heart. He is interested in a school in his village."


1 Vide (chapter 8) page 152; also chapter 10 (page 221.)
calculated to give theological offence to the Yezidi parents. "Kurdish is not taught in these schools, though naturally the medium of instruction or explanation is Kurdish which is the only language known to the boys when they enter school."* The fact of these boys being allowed to attend school with the knowledge of Yezidi religious officials would suggest that illiteracy is either not a tenet of the cult or, on the other hand, that the tenet is accorded no meticulous observance.

Yezidis as "people of the book".

Moslem law, in defining the attitude of followers of Mohammad towards other religions, inculcates favourable treatment of those sects who are "people of the book" - i.e. sects whose religion is based on recognised sacred books.

Judaism and Christianity, having respectively the Old Testament and the New Testament were, therefore, accorded toleration - theoretically if not practically. But notwithstanding the catholicity of their beliefs the Yezidis were not regarded as qualified for that toleration. They were not recognised as "people of the book". Transactions with them, therefore, need not be bound by any code of ethics or morality. The

* Communication (May 1931) to the author from Major Wilson, Admintor of Mosul liwa.

1 Kur'an IX, 29.
repeated persecution experienced by the Yezidis can be largely traced to this religious attitude of Mohammadanism.

That the intolerance of their overlords might be avoided by qualifying as a "people of the book" would, therefore, be an expedient device for the Yezidis. This utilitarian consideration could, however, find opposition from the sectarian zeal of some of their own tribes. Furthermore, in view of the general illiteracy of the Yezidis, if the device of making holy books, even with the secret help of writers from other religions, were adopted would the resultant scriptures be an exhaustive and defensible basis for a cult which was already existent and which was interpreted and practised somewhat differently in different localities? Again, even if the Yezidis had sacred books of long antiquity and if these books taught that "toutes les religions sont faussés, que les soi-disants prophètes n'étaient au fond que des imposteurs plus ou moins rusés;" therefore, according to the view given in Père Anastase Marie's article* "si les Musulmans ou les Chrétiens viennent leur banissement ou en exécuteraient un massacre général" on the Yezidis.

In the 19th century there began to emerge a rumour that the Yezidis did possess holy books - whatever their cause or origin. But the secret of the contents and whereabouts of these books had to be so completely preserved that any Yezidi who gave information concerning them was to be put to death. Even as late as the middle of the 19th century the contents of these alleged books were unknown. A traveller* who visited the Jebel Sinjar in 1838 heard of the existence of what was alleged to be a Yezidi sacred book. Another writer¹ states, in 1848, - "they have, I believe, a sacred volume containing their traditions, their hymns, directions for the performance of their rites, and other matters connected with their religion... It is regarded with so much superstitious reverence that I failed in every endeavour to obtain a copy, or even to see it."

Alongside these statements of belief in the possession by the Yezidis of sacred books there must be considered the observation of a writer² who was a contemporary traveller in Kurdistan with the above protagonists of the existence of Yezidi sacred books. That writer incorporated in his chapter on the Yezidis an English translation of a poem (reproduced on our next page) which he "obtained after much

¹ Layard, "Nineveh and its Remains", page 306.
² Badger, "Nestorians...and Tenets of the Yezedeens, Vol.1. page 115."
trouble from the Sheikh". That curious rhapsody, which was written in Arabic, is entitled "The Poem of Sheikh Adi". "I believe", continues the writer, "this poem to be the only fragment now extant in any way connected with their creed...I very much doubt whether they ever had any sacred scriptures... Their occasional pretentions to possess such must be regarded as another artifice to evade the hatred of the Mohammedans." These words were written in 1852.

The Poem of Sheikh Adi.

"My wisdom knoweth the truth of things,
And my truth hath mingled with me.
My real descent is from myself;
I have not known evil to be with me.
All creation is under my control;
Through me are the habitable parts and the deserts,
And every created thing is subservient to me.
And I am -he that decreeth and causeth existence.
I am he that spake the true word;
And I am he that dispenseth power, and I am the ruler of the earth,
And I am he that guideth mankind to worship my majesty,
And they came unto me and kissed my feet.
And I am he that pervadeth the highest heavens;
And I am he that cried in the wilderness;
And I am the Sheikh, the one, the only one;
And I am he that by myself revealeth things;
And I am he to whom the book of glad tidings came down
From my Lord who cleaveth the mountains.
And I am he to whom all men came,
Obedient to me they kissed my feet.
I am the mouth, the moisture of whose spittle
Is as honey, wherewith I constitute my confidents.
And by his light he hath lighted the lamp of the morning.
I guide him that seeketh my direction.
And I am he that placed Adam in my paradise.
And I am he that made Mimrod a hot burning fire.
And I am he that guided Ahmet mine elect,
I gifted him with my way and guidance.
Mine are all existences together,
They are my gift and under my direction,
And I am he that possesseth all majesty,
And beneficence and charity are from my grace.
And I am he that entereth the heart in my zeal;
And I shine through the power of my awfulness and majesty.

And I am he to whom the lion of the desert came,
I rebuked him and he became like stone.
And I am he to whom the serpent came,
And by my will I made him like dust.
And I am he that shook the rock and made it tremble,
And sweet water flowed therefrom on every side.
And I am he that brought down an authentic verity,
A book whereby I will guide the prudent ones.
And I am he that enacted a powerful law,
And its promulgation was my gift.
And I am he that brought from the fountain water
Limpid and sweeter than all waters;
And I am he that disclosed it in my mercy,
And in my might I called it the white fountain.
And I am he to whom the Lord of heaven said:
Thou art the ruler and governor of the universe.
And I am he who manifested some of my wonders,
And some of my virtues as seen in the things that exist.
And I am he to whom the flinty mountains bow,
They are under me, and ask to do my pleasure.
And I am he before whose majesty the wild beasts wept;
They came and worshipped and kissed my feet.
I am Adi of the mark, a wanderer,
The All-Merciful has distinguished me with names.
And my seat and throne are the wide-spread earth.
In the depth of my knowledge there is no God but me.
These things are subservient to my power.
How, then, can ye deny me, O mine enemies?
Do not deny me, O men, but yield,
That in the day of the resurrection you may be happy in meeting with me.
He who dies enraptured with me, I will cast him
In the midst of paradise, after my pleasure, and by my will;
But he who dies neglectful of me
Shall be punished with my contempt and rod.
And I declare that I am the essential one:
I create and provide for those who do my will.
Praise be to mine essence; for all things are by my will,
And the world is lighted with some of my gifts.
I am the great and majestic king;
It is I who provide for the wants of men,
I have made known to you, O congregation, some of my ways.
Who desireth me must forsake the world.
I am he that spake a true word;
The highest heavens are for those who obey me.
I sought out truth, and became the establisher of truth;
And with a similar truth shall they attain to the highest like me."

"
Purported scriptures.

At the end of the 19th century and in the early decade of the 20th century a few writers submitted translations of what were regarded as the sacred books of the Yezidis.

In 1895 Professor E.G. Browne published, in an appendix to Mr. O.H. Parry's "Six Months in a Syrian Monastery", an English translation of an Arabic text which was transcribed from a Garshuni copy which was preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, (Fonds Syriaque page 306 and 325.)

This text, which had belonged to Professor Robertson Smith, is said* to have been written by a native of Mosul; and it consists of "somewhat from their book entitled Jilwa and other matters."

In the Journal Asiatique (ser. ix, t, vii, 1896. pp 100 ff.) M.J.B. Chabot edited a Syriac text from the same source - (Bibliothèque Nationale) which, except for some slight variations, corresponds to the second portion of Browne's account (in Parry, loc. cit. 380-383) and seems to be a translation of it.

In 1900 Monsignore S. Giamil edited, in Rome, a Syriac text and supplied an Italian translation under the title "Monte Singar; storia di un popolo ignoto".

* Parry, loc. cit. page 356.
1 Parry, ibid.
The text of this edition was from a manuscript preserved in the monastery of Notre Dame des Semences at Alkosh, N.E. of Mosul. That manuscript deals with the Yezidis according to the knowledge of a Syrian priest named Isaac who claimed to have dwelt among them in order to know them better than others did.

In 1909, in the American Journal of Semitic Languages, (Vol.xxv, pp 112 ff) Dr. Isya Joseph published an Arabic text, with an English translation, containing the Book of Revelation, the Black Book and a Yezidi prayer. There is added to this Arabic text a lengthy narration of Yezidi customs which was compiled by a certain Jeremias.* Dr Isya Joseph states that the Arabic manuscript was given to him in Mosul by a certain As-Saigh as a memento of friendship.1

The Anastase Marie manuscript.

It was in 1911 that what was claimed to be the greatest contribution to the solution of the problem of Yezidi sacred books was made. In that year there appeared in a French journal2 an article which not only proclaimed the discovery of the real and original sacred books of the Yezidis but also submitted a facsimile of them with a minute description of the

* Reference to this Jeremias is again made in connection with the authenticity of the sacred books. (Chap.8, page 154, 160, 170 elc.)
1 Ibid, page 111.
2 Anthropos, 1911, Vol.6.
books themselves, an account of how they were discovered and a French translation of them.

The author of the article, Père Anastase Marie who was a Carmelite monk in Baghdad, relates that, in 1898, a Yezidi from the foothills of Kurdistan came to him to be instructed in the Christian faith. Habib, the Yezidi, claimed to have been a servant for seven years with the religious chief of the Yezidis; thereafter he found employment with Chaldean priests in the neighbourhood of Alkosh where he was, apparently, impressed by the sanctity of the lives of these men. Habib further alleged that he had had a dream in which Christ came to him; that Christ asked him to abjure the cult of Melek Taus and, by living the life of a Christian disciple, to prepare for his death which was not far away.

Habib was put under instruction and, and after some time, was requested to prove his sincerity in the Christian religion by revealing what he knew of the Yezidi religion and scriptures. It was several months before the catechumen, who was assured that his disclosure of any of the secrets of the sect would not be made public as long as he lived, gave the information about the sacred books. The period during which he had been a servant of the religious chief of the cult had given him opportunities to know something about them. He informed the Père that the scriptures,
consisting of two manuscripts, were locked in a box which was hidden in a cave in the Jebel Sinjar. The neophyte further stated that the two sacred books had been translated into Arabic by a Yezidi who had learned Arabic in a Christian school in Mosul. This translation was alleged to have been made long ago - "autre fois, quand on connaissait bien la langue de la secte." The reason for the translation was to preserve the secrecy of the original sacred books which were "reputes écrites par Dieu lui-même, et du temps d'Adam." (Anthropos 1911).

According to Habib the box containing the manuscript measures 33 centimetres long, 22 centimetres wide and 7 centimetres high. It is made of wood and is ornamented with silver plaques. On the lid are silver symbols; a fowl resembling the peacock; the sun, the moon, the morning star, two zig-zagging lines suggesting a river, three flames rising from a common base, the circle of the sky and the globe of the earth. There are three keys to the box, one being held by the mir, one by the primate and one by the curator of the box. Only on festival occasions are the manuscripts exposed; and it is forbidden even to those who hold the keys to retain them for more than three hours except in the presence of the other two.

* The Yezidi dialect of Kurdish is, of course, believed to have been the language of Paradise!
Habib died in 1899 and, in 1904, Père Anastase Marie decided to visit the Jebel Sinjar to make fuller investigations concerning these sacred books. On his journey to the Sinjar he visited Mosul where he made the acquaintance of a certain Kas 'Aziz Yusuf, who assured the Père that he (Kas 'Aziz) had a copy of a translation of the Yezidi sacred books. This copy he showed to the Père who states that it appeared to be very faulty and, from internal evidence, of very recent date.

Père Anastase Marie records that in the Jebel Sinjar he found Hamu, the curator of the box and that he told Hamu of the information disclosed by the convert Habib. The Père writes that, by an offer of a sum of money which seemed lavish to the poor Yezidi, he succeeded in persuading Hamu to make reproductions of the two books. To obtain exact facsimilies the Père supplied transparent paper and promised to forward Francs 20 for every page which he received, via agents, from Hamu. The total of the bribe to Hamu was Frs.500 for the complete reproduction of the two books. The work of tracing took two years as access to the box was rare. In 1908 Hamu died and Père Anastase Marie, in giving his researches to the world, affirms with elation - "Je peux dire que je livre aujourd'hui au public un des plus grands trésors litteraires de notre siècle, et le plus secret qui

* Kas = priest; vide also chap.8, page 162 for Kas 'Aziz.
Description of the two books.

Language. After a lengthy and perplexing study of the facsimilies Père Anastase Marie discovered that the books were written neither in Arabic, Turkish nor Persian but in a blend of these three languages with an admixture of strange words from an ancient Kurdish dialect which, though not now spoken, still survives dispersed among several other dialects in Kurdistan.

Alphabet.

The characteristic of the alphabet is that the letters are without pointing or supplementary signs to distinguish one letter from another as, for example, in Arabic.1

Script.

The script has peculiar characteristics of which some, according to Père Anastase Marie, resemble Arabic, others resemble Hebrew, others resemble Chaldean, others Mandean.2

* Vide "L'acquisition des deux manuscrits originaux" in Anthropos, 1911, Vol. 6.
1 Vide facsimile of "L'alphabet Yezidiket sa transcription" (from Anthropos 1911, Vol. 6.) (facing page 141 of this Thesis.)
2 Professor M. Bittner, of the University of Vienna published the Kurdish original of Père Anastase's text side by side with an independent Arabic transcription, translation and annotations which differ considerably from previously known texts. The Kurdish part of the book was deciphered by means of the alphabet of which there appears a facsimile facing page 141.

Bittner's work "Die heiligen Bücher der Jeziden oder Teufelsanbeter" appears in (Vienna 1913) the series Denkschr. der Kaiserl. Akad. der Wissensch., in Wien.
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Kitab al Jalwah. (Book of Revelation).

This manuscript is written on gazelle-skin parchment. The book consists of separate leaves - each measuring 27 cms: in length, and 19 cms: wide. One side of each leaf is blank; the written portion occupies 17 cms: by 11 cms: of 16 regular lines. Each page commences with the final word of the previous page and the pages are decorated with symbols like those on the box in which the books are kept.

Mashef Ras. (Black Book.)

This, too, is written on the same kind of parchment as the other manuscript. The pages measure 23 cms: long, 21 cms: wide; the written portion on each page is 11 cms. The Black Book has a total of 152 lines and the writing is not so neat as in the Book of Revelation.

Neither of the manuscripts bears the name of the author nor the date of composition.

The Book of Revelation and the Black Book.

(A translation of Père Anastase Marie’s French version.)

The Book of Revelation.

Preface.

1. The first of all beings is Melek Taus.

* To illustrate differences between Anastase’s version, drawn from a Kurdish original, and the other versions drawn from the Arabic MSS. we have added the continuation called "Another Account" from Browne’s MS (in Parry, loc. cit. pp. 380-382.)
2. It was he who sent Ab'taus into this world to instruct and educate his elect people and to deliver them from aberration and error.

3. This was done first verbally, then by means of this book called Jalwah (Revelation) - a book which no one who is a stranger to the religion is allowed to read.

1.

1. I was, I am, and I shall be until the end of time; having sovereign dominion over all creatures and administering the interests and affairs of all who are under my suzerainty.

2. I am swift to help all those who trust in me and who invoke me in their need.

3. I am omnipresent. I take part in all those events which infidels call evils: They only name them thus because they do not correspond to their wishes.

4. Each age has its master according to my order. Each age differs from that which precedes it. The master of this world, and those who rise to eminence, pass away in their turn after having fulfilled their task.

5. I allow created Nature to accomplish that which is natural to it with all justice.

6. He who opposes me will have regrets and vexation.
7. The other gods do not interfere in my affairs and they are unable to hinder me from accomplishing that which I have resolved, whatever it may be.
8. The books which are in the hands of strangers to my religion have no authenticity and are not written by the prophets. These hapless people are gone astray, avoiding the road of truth, and devising a way for themselves. It is thus that each of their prophets abrogates that which his predecessors established.
9. Moreover, truth and deceit are recognised by experience.
10. My chastisements are reserved for those who speak against me, however clever and powerful they may be. I reserve certain things for myself. I forbid certain actions; the whole in time and place.
11. I instruct and direct in the true way those who follow my doctrine and they find true pleasure in conforming to my precepts.

2.
1. I punish and recompense all men according to my knowledge.
2. In my hand is found all that exists on earth, above it, and beneath it.
3. I do not permit the worlds to clash.
4. I do not oppose their appropriate good, especially when this good benefits my own people who obey me implicitly.
5. I confide my interests to those whom I have proved and whom I have found conforming to my desires.

6. I reveal myself, in one manner or another, to those who are faithful to me or who follow my admonition.

7. It is I who give and take away, I who enrich and make poor, I who produce the happiness of man or permit his misfortune; but everything is according to circumstance and time.

8. No one has the right to interfere with that which I do, nor has anyone the right to resist me.

9. I send sicknesses and infirmities to those who refuse to obey me.

10. He who strives to satisfy me dies not like the generality of men.

11. I do not allow man to live longer than what I have allotted him; however, if I deem it suitable, I shall send him again to this earth - twice or three times in different forms.

3.

1. I give instruction without book. I direct in the good path, but in an invisible manner, my friends and faithful ones. My education costs nothing and is always conformable to circumstances.

2. I punish in the other world all those who act against my law.
3. The children of Adam ignore that which is reserved for them beyond the grave; also behold them delivered up to many errors.

4. All depend on me, the animals of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea; all these are in my hand.

5. The treasures and ores hidden below the earth are known to me and I only disclose them gradually to those whom I wish.

6. I reveal my miracles and my supernatural works to those who are disposed towards them and who ask them from me.

7. The infidels who oppose me, or who reveal themselves as my enemies, only do harm to themselves; and they are not aware that it is I who give honours and riches and that I award them only to those who are worthy of them among the children of Adam.

The government of worlds, the revolution of centuries, and the confusion of those who are thereto appointed have been preordained from eternity.

4.

1. I do not yield my rights to any of the other gods.

2. The four elements, the four seasons, and the four bases (the four cardinal points) have been established for the necessity of the creatures.

3. The books of the infidels are accepted in such part
as is in accordance with my law and conforms thereto. As for the part which is in disaccord, that is their own special invention.

4. Three things are hateful to me and I abhor three other things.

5. Those who preserve intact and in secret my mysteries will have the reward which I reserve for them.

6. Those who suffer patiently the troubles and misfortunes of this world I will not fail to reward in one of my worlds.

7. I desire that my devotees shall unite themselves together in a bond to confront the stranger.

8. Oh! ye who have followed my commandment and precept, renounce all that which is not conformable to my law and avoid pronouncing my name or mentioning my qualities to any one for fear he should commit sin, because ye do not know what strangers will do to my religion and to my doctrine.

5.

1. Render all possible veneration to my statue and to my image; for they will keep my memory before you, which you have neglected for years. Observe my commandments, hearken to my ministers, for these are they who will teach you that which is invisible and pertains to me.

End of the Book of Revelation.
1. In the beginning God created a great white pearl from the depths of his mysterious and impenetrable being. He further created a bird called Anfer and placed the great pearl on his back, and sat on it during forty thousand years.

2. God created on the first day, which is Sunday, an angel of the name of Izrail. He bears also another name, that of Taus Melek, (the angel-peacock or the angel-cock) and he is prince of all the angels.

3. On the second day God created the angel Dardail, who is the Sheikh Hassan.

4. On the third, he created Izrafail, who is the Sheikh Shems-ed-Din.

5. On the fourth he drew from the void the angel Mishael, who is the Sheikh Abu-Bekr.

6. On the fifth day, the angel Gabriel, who is Sajjad-ed-Din, appeared from the void.

7. On the sixth day Shammail was created; he is known by us under the name of Nasir-ed-Din.

8. It was only on the seventh day that there appeared Huranail, who is Fakhr-ed-Din.

9. Melek Taus was established as supreme lord of all the angels.

10. God then created the seven heavens, the earth, the sun and the moon.

11. Fakhr-ed-Din created man, the animals, the birds,
and the wild beasts. He then placed them into the pockets of his vesture and from these emerged a great pearl accompanied by a multitude of angels. He then uttered a great cry against the big pearl and it immediately divided into four pieces; and from its middle there gushed forth the water which formed the sea. At this period the earth was round and without fissure.

12. God then gave to Gabriel the form of a bird. He sent him to establish the four corners of the earth. He then created a boat in which Gabriel placed himself during thirty thousand years. He afterwards came to dwell in Lalish. In his turn he cried against the earth and the earth became solid. Having become solid this earth began to tremble. Then Gabriel took a portion of the pearl and placed it under the earth to give it stability; and he put another piece on the gate of the heavens to adorn it. It is this portion of the pearl that became the sun and the moon. Then he strewed around these two luminaries a powder which resulted from the breaking of the pearl and which became the stars of the firmament. The whole was suspended on high.

13. It was Gabriel also who caused to come forth from the earth fruit-trees and plants. It was he also who caused the mountains to arise into view to ornament the surface of the globe. He then established the
celestial throne and placed it upon the carpet of glory.

14. The sovereign lord then said, "Oh, angels, I am going to create Adam and Eve and I shall make them human beings. From their seed will be born Sahr ibn Safar from whom will issue a nation upon the earth. From this same Adam will issue the nation of Israel, namely, the privileged nation of Taus Melek, otherwise called the Yezidis".

15. The Sheikh Adi ibn Mosafir will come afterwards from the country of Syria to inhabit Lalish.

16. The Lord descended then upon the Black Mountain. He cried, and immediately created thirty thousand angels. He caused them to be divided into three choirs and, immediately they began to adore him; and this was during forty thousand years. He delivered them then to Taus Melek and he caused them to ascend into the heavens.

17. The Lord then descended to Jerusalem and ordered Gabriel to bring a little earth from the cardinal points of the globe. It was done. He added to this earth some air, some fire and some water, and it was thus that he created the first man. He gave him a soul, breathing into him of his own almightiness. He ordered Gabriel to place Adam in Paradise. He did so. God allowed this first man to eat the fruit of all the trees, but he forbade him to touch corn.
18. At the end of a hundred years Taus Melek said to God - "How will Adam be multiplied? Where then is his seed?" God replied to him, "I have placed all in thy hands; do as thou wilt."

Taus Melek then addressed himself to Adam and said to him "Hast thou eaten corn?"

"No", said Adam, "because God forbade me to touch it."

"Eat, for it will do thee good."

Scarcely had Adam eaten thereof when his belly began to swell. Taus Melek then ascended into heaven, having abandoned him to whom he had given this counsel.

19. Adam experienced great torture of pain in his bowels because he was unable to obey the call of Nature; he was so perfectly formed that there was no fissure in his body. God, moved by compassion, sent to him a bird with a large beak, which pecked him in a convenient part of his body. Adam found immediate relief.

20. Gabriel separated from Adam: Adam was sad and wept for his counsellor during this long period (of a hundred years).

21. God then ordered Gabriel to create Eve. The angel, obedient to his master's order, drew the future companion of the first man from the hollow of Adam's left armpit.

22. When the duration of the hundred years was accomplished Taus Melek descended from heaven to earth
in order to concern himself with our nation, then created. He gave us, besides the ancient Assyrian sovereigns, the following kings: - Nesroox, otherwise called Nasir-ed-Din; Cambyses, or the angel Fakhr-ed-Din; Artymus, or the angel Shems-ed-Din; then two other monarchs who were renowned amongst us, to wit, the two first (monarchs) named Sapor. Their reigns lasted together a hundred and fifty years. From them, in direct descent, come our Emirs to the present time.

23. We hate four potentates.
24. Here observe the things which we forbid unto you: -
Firstly, the eating of lettuce (khass) for it is sacred to our prophetess Khasieh:
2. haricot beans.
3. the colour blue: and, consequently, it is forbidden to wear a blue garment or to possess any article which has this colour.
4. It is absolutely forbidden to eat fish, out of veneration for our prophet Jonah;
5. The gazelle is equally forbidden to us because it is the sheep of one of our prophets.
6. The Sheikh and his disciples must not touch the flesh of a cock, for this bird represents the image of Taus and he is one of the seven great gods who rule the universe.
7. The same must never even think of eating pumpkin.
8. It is strictly forbidden to make water whilst in a standing position.
9. No one may pull on his drawers whilst he is seated.

10. To relieve nature there must not be a fixed place of convenience.

11. Public baths are strictly forbidden to us.

12. Here is a list of the names which one must not pronounce:— Shaitan (Satan) for it is the name of our god: nor must any one pronounce any word which resembles the word Shaitan such as, for example, kitan (rope), shatt (river) or sharr. Never must the mouth pronounce the words malaun (accursed), laaneh (curse), naal (horse shoe, also vulgarity for curse), and others like it.

25. Before the advent of Jesus into this world our religion was called paganism. The Jews, the Christians and the Mohammadans have always shown themselves the enemies of our religion. The Persians (the Mazdaeans) equally so.

26. Among our ancient sovereigns was one called Ahab. He commanded each of us to give him a particular name; and our people of that time called him the god Ahab, or Baalzebub. Today he is known among us by the name Pir Bub.

27. We had in Babylonia another king called Nebuchadnezzar; in Persia the king Ahasuerus and,
finally, at Constantinople, Agrinkalus.

28. Before heaven and earth existed God moved on the seas. He made for himself a vessel in which he travelled everywhere at his pleasure.

29. God created a large pearl which he commanded during forty years; then he grew angry with it - giving it a kick with his foot.

30. The terrible noise caused by its breaking caused the mountains to arise; the little gave birth to the hills, and the vapours which arose from it produced the heaven. It is since then that God ascended into the heavens, that he condensed them, and established them without pillars.

31. He locked with a key the earth and its abysses; then he took a pen into his hand and wrote the events of creation.

32. He then created six gods of his own essence and from his own light; but he created them in the same manner that a man lights one lamp from another.

33. The first god said to the second, "I have drawn from the void the sky alone; as for thee, ascend to it and create something". He ascended and became the sun. He said the same to the third and he became the moon. The fourth became the orb of the celestial bodies, the fifth proclaimed himself the star of the morning and the sixth transformed himself into atmosphere.
"ANOTHER ACCOUNT" (Added to 'Book of Revelation' in Browne's MS.)*

"The Yezidis say that there are seven gods, one of whom descended to earth and created hell and paradise. After this he created Adam and Eve and all animals. And Adam and Eve disputed and were vexed with one another as to the generation of the human race, each of them saying, "From me shall it be begotten". And they saw the beasts mating, and the male pairing with the female, and how they brought forth their young. Then each one of them put their seed (some say their spittle) into a jar; and they closed the mouths of the two jars with their seals. And after nine months they opened their jars; and in Adam's jar they saw a pair of children, exceeding fair; but in Eve's jar only two white worms. Then God created paps for Adam wherewith he suckled them; and they were male and female, and from these two was the Yezidi people begotten. After this Adam knew Eve, and children were born of them, and from these sprang the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, and the rest of the human race. But Seth, Enoch, Noah, and other good men are of us - us, the Yezidis; from Adam alone are they descended, and not from Eve. At that time

* The 'other account' appended to the Book of Revelation is not claimed to be a part of the sacred books. It is but a narration of certain aspects of Yezidi belief and practice, added by the priest Jeremias. (For Jeremias vide chapter 8, pp. 160, 170.)
arose strife and enmity betwixt the man and his wife. And when they came before a just man for arbitration, he decided between them and sent them away. And the cause of this strife was that the man would say, "She is my wife", and the woman would say, "He is not my husband." Therefore were the drum and horn introduced (at the marriage ceremony) in order that whoever heard the sound of them might inquire and know that such an one was wedded to such an one, and that they (who heard) might be witnesses against them when one of them denied the rights of the other.

They say also that the deluge of Noah was the last flood in this world; and that the Yezidi people descend and spring from a noble personage, the King of Peace, whose name if Nu'ma, whom they now call Malik Miran; and that the rest of mankind are from the seed of Ham, who mocked his father.

They likewise say that God Almighty talked with our father Adam in the Kurdish tongue, which was the first tongue, and was from of old in the world; and that the Ark of Noah rested once in the village of Ayn Sifni, which is near to Sheykh'Adi, and distant about seventeen hours from Nineveh. Men are wicked because they condemn and despise our religion; wherefore God sent against them the second deluge.

And when the Ark of Noah rose and floated on the water, it drifted and passed onwards to the Mountain of Sanjar.
which is distant about eighteen hours from Mosul; and there it struck on a rock which pierced it, and the serpent coiled itself up, and pushed itself into the hole, and stopped the leak. Then the Ark halted, and stood still over the Mountain of Judi, which is distant about twentyfour hours from Mosul. And when the race of serpents multiplied, Noah caught them and burned them, and from their bones fleas were produced.

From the Deluge until now about seven thousand years have elapsed, and every thousand years one of the seven gods descends to earth bringing signs and wonders, and ascends again into heaven. The Holy Temple and other sacred spots are ours, and in the hands of our people. At this time Allah-Yezid descended to teach and confirm us. For Muhammad the Prophet of God, whom God illuminated, had a servant by name Mo'awi. And he (i.e. Muhammad) walked not in the way of God uprightly, wherefore he was afflicted with pain in the head. One day he said to his servant Mo'awi, "Scarify my head, for it pains me." But when he scratched it too violently the blood flowed from it, whereupon he, that is Mo'awi, licked it with his tongue. And when Muhammad perceived this, he said to him, "What hast thou done? For (now) from thee shall come forth a people and a nation which
which shall vex and hurt my people." Then Mo'awi answered, "Then will I not wed, so that I may have no offspring." But after a while Mo'awi fell sick, until at length the physicians agreed that he must either marry or die. So they married him to an old woman aged seventy years; and he lay with her. And next morning, behold, she was a young girl of twenty-five, and she conceived and brought forth Yezid, our god. Those of other faiths and races say that when our god descended to earth, he was cast out and cut off from the Great and Almighty God; wherefore they blaspheme and revile him. In this they err and go astray. When he descended to this earth, he gave us banners, and tokens, and signs; then did ascend into heaven. Hell was created in the first days of Adam. At that time, too, he begat a son called Ibriq Asghar, and for him he created companions. For a period of six years he was afflicted in his eyes; and his nose, hands, and feet ached. And he had a little ewer, and into this ewer his tears ran whenever he wept, until it was filled. Then he emptied it and poured its contents over hell, and the fire thereof was quenched. They say that each of the seven gods made for him a banner, that is to say, a flag for a token; and these were for a time in the keeping of Solomon the Wise, who bequeathed them after his death to our kings. And when our god was born, he took them and gave them to our Amir, and they have remained in our hands till now...."
The Authenticity of the Manuscripts as Yezidi Scriptures.

The problem now arises as to the source and authenticity of these manuscripts as Yezidi scriptures.

A certain writer* thrusts back the composition of these manuscripts as Yezidi scriptures into the 12th century A.D. The same article affirms that their author was a Sheikh Adi who is stated to have died in 1162 (A.D.) and that this Sheikh Adi "gave more consistency to their religious system - still very confused and illogical - and greater stability to its organisation by committing to writing its tenets and traditions. His work, which is the authority for their belief, is named El Jilwah, i.e. the Revelation. The original is the only copy existing, and it is esteemed as most holy and is guarded at Sheikh Adi with the most scrupulous care. It is in the Arabic language and character."

The above account, however, is not to be accepted without question as an authoritative and final verdict on the case of the manuscripts as Yezidi scriptures. It supplies no reason for this allocation of the date and origin of the manuscripts on the faith; and modern inquiries among the most friendly Yezidis of the Sheikhan and even among the hierarchy at the temple have failed to discover any

* In "Encyclopaedia of Missions", New York, 1904.
knowledge of the existence there of such an ancient codex of their faith. And the deeper the investigations are pursued the more profound becomes the conviction that such professed ignorance is justified.

A tradition alleged to exist among the Yezidis and which was related in 1898 by the neophyte Habib to Père Anastase Marie seeks to shed the halo of great antiquity on the MSS. as scriptures of the faith since they were "reputed to be written by God himself in the time of Adam" (Anthropos'). But modern analysis of these MSS. which are alleged to be the Yezidi scriptures leads to the belief that their date is no more ancient than their source is divine.

On the question of the authenticity and veracity, as Yezidi scriptures, of the Browne, Giamil, Joseph and Anastase Marie texts the most substantial and most powerful challenge is presented by Dr. Alphonse Mingana in an article contributed in 1916 to the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Mingana, by textual and historical criticisms, seeks to show that the MSS. of Browne, Giamil, Joseph and Marie are not based on official Yezidi religious texts. "I think", he writes, "that these well-

*A brief article subsequently submitted by Mingana to the same Journal (1921) shows his adherence to his conclusions in the 1916 article.
intentioned scholars have possibly been misled. The author of all these texts is probably Shammas Jeremias Shamir, a native of 'Ain Kawa in Adiabene, and a deserter from the monastery of Alkosh, who died ten years ago at a very advanced age." These words of Mingana were published in 1916.

This Shammas Jeremias Shamir is described by Parry*, in 1892, as "a traveller, with the manner of an Englishman, and the heart of a Syrian... He deals too, in manuscripts and ancient books, Persian, Arabic, Syriac; and once on a time over-reached himself in this pursuit. Among some books, which I was examining, he showed me one more especially commendable. Its actual personality so shamelessly belied its decent age and virtue as described by Shammas that he drew forth a request that even if he loved gold he should spare my folly. But with a candour, quite disarming rebuke, he drew out a letter, which he regarded as a high testimonial to his integrity as a dealer in palimpsests, but, in fact, containing so sound a rating of a rascal, that it seemed to bear more on the subject than perhaps the old man would have cared to acknowledge. Yet he reads and understands English well; truly these people have a strangely twisted sense of straightness, or more dullness than they get credit for."

Mingana points out that the texts of Browne, Giamil, and Joseph rest on one Syriac and two Arabic MSS. He then submits these MSS. to external and internal criticism.

The Syriac Manuscript.

He states that he carefully examined the Syriac MS. which is kept at the monastery at Alkosh and from which was drawn the text published in 1900 at Rome by Giamil. His examination, by linguistic and historical tests, convinced him that the Alkosh MS. cannot be earlier in date than 1865. This verdict of Mingana is also the conclusion of a writer (A. Scher in Journal Asiatique, 1906) in the article entitled "Notices sur les MSS Syriques conservés dans la Bibliothèque du Couvent de Notre Dame des Semences," 1906, p.76, Cod.144.

The Arabic Manuscripts. (Browne's MS.)

The first of these Arabic texts in order of publication is Browne's. It was drawn up from the MSS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Syriaque, 306 and 325.

In the Journal Asiatique, (ser. ix, t. viii, 1896) there appears an article entitled "Notice sur les MSS. Syriques de la Bibliothèque Nationale acquis depuis 1876." This article, or report, was prepared by M. Chabot who catalogued these MSS. acquired since 1876. (Codex 300). In that report, according to Mingana,
"by the colophon of fol.34b we are informed that this MS." (from which Browne's text was derived) "has been written by 'Abdul 'Aziz in the year 1889, and Cod.323, p.12, fol.164, tells us that the copyist, the Subdeacon 'Abdul 'Aziz, wrote it for the deacon Jeremias.*

"I know the Subdeacon 'Abdul 'Aziz; he has since that time," adds Mingana, "been ordained priest for the Jacobite community at Mosul; and he is now known by the name of Kas'Aziz." 1

Arabic Manuscripts (Joseph's MS.)

The Joseph MS. is believed by Mingana to be even more recent than the MS. of Browne's text. In publishing his MS. in the year 1909 Joseph states that "the Arabic MS. here printed was presented to me before I left Mosul by my friend Daoud As-Saigh, as a memento of our friendship. 2

We have already described the Joseph MS. as an Arabic text containing the Book of Revelation, the Black Book, a Yezidi prayer and a narration on Yezidi customs written in Arabic by a certain Jeremias. Mingana makes a critical internal analysis of the Joseph MS. and shows:

1. that between the 'books' themselves (i.e. (Book of Revelation and Black Book) and

* Vide account concerning this Jeremias on page 160 and 161 (of this thesis).
2 American Journal of Semitic Languages, 1909, p. 111.
the appended narrative there is a similarity so striking as to suggest that the books and the narrative are the production of the same mind. And the narrative is admittedly written by Jeremias.

2. The grammatical construction of the books and of the narrative repeatedly shows similar peculiarities in the use, in Arabic, of certain constructions which are against the rules of Arabic syntax but which are correct in Syriac — the mother-tongue of Jeremias.

3. The Syriac mode of thinking obtrudes in the books as well as in the narrative.

4. The books contain certain allusions which are both modern and Christian in concept. The Black Book contains certain historical allusions which unwittingly show that the writer of the book could not have lived earlier than the middle of the 19th century. We read in the Black Book (of the Joseph MS.) that Russia is a district to which the kawwalls must go to collect money. Russia, however, only conquered Transcaucasia after the first quarter of the 19th century. Consequently the writer in the Black Book must have lived after that period.

From the similarity of grammatical peculiarities appearing in the narration (which was written by Jeremias) and in the books: and since these peculiarities strongly suggest Syriac authorship; and, again, because of the above historical allusion to Russia one is disposed to conclude that Jeremias, the author of the narration, has had not a little to do with the compilation of the Black Book — if not also with the earlier section called the Book of Revelation.

Jeremias was a deserter from the monastery of Notre Dame des Semences at Alkosh where the Syriac MS.
which was composed originally by the priest Isaac, was preserved. Jeremias would know of the Isaac (Syriac) MS. in the monastery and could, perhaps, transcribe it and thereafter emend and manipulate his transcription to his own satisfaction. There is little to dissuade one from the belief that the Joseph MS. is, therefore, traceable to the Syriac MS.

The Anastase Marie Manuscript.

We have already summarised in this chapter the stirring account by Anastase Marie in the Journal 'Anthropos' of how his text was acquired through the agency of a librarian in the Jebel Sinjar who was bribed to make a transcription from a MS. alleged to be concealed in the Sinjar.

The circumstances which instigated the acquisition of the transcription are interesting and intriguing. In 1898 - six years after the publication of Browne's text - an unknown pilgrim from the Kurdish foothills unexpectedly appears in Baghdad which is at least 300 miles from his home. There he relates his strange call to renounce his ancestral faith and to adopt the Christian religion since, according to his dream, he was soon to die. It is surprising that Habib, the Kurd, should overlook the existence and proximity of an abundant number of Christian priests and ministers in his own Mosul area who could instruct him in the principles of the
Christian faith. It is possible, of course, that he may have been specially concerned to be instructed by this European Carmelite monk in Baghdad. Habib's account of his spiritual call is characterised by a splendour of style, ornateness of thought and a colour of expression which are amazing in the mouth of a rustic from a fierce and restless locality where the sword is mightier than the pen and where contemplation and depth of introspection can but meagrely exist. "We cannot help wondering at the literary proficiency of our Kurd, who awakens a suspicion that he has been piously assisted in his description by his spiritual father."

According to the neophyte Habib, the secret Yezidi scriptures were translated from their secret language into Arabic by a Yezidi who acquired Arabic in a school in Mosul. But as all the Yezidis speak Kurdish and very few of them understand Arabic such a translation would be of no special, if any, religious use to them. And, as it is said in the Black Book (Joseph's edition) that God spoke to the Yezidis in Kurdish, there is no normal reason why they should abandon their own divinely acknowledged Kurdish for the Arabic of their Mohammadan oppressors.

Furthermore the text of the Anastase Marie MS, which is affirmed to be a facsimile of the secret

scriptures, was written neither in Arabic, Turkish nor Persian but in a blend of these three languages with a sprinkling of old Kurdish words which survive in other Kurdish dialects in Kurdistan. The script in which the MS. is composed is no less strange. It has peculiar features of which, according to Anastase Marie himself, some resemble Hebrew, others resemble Chaldean and others Mandean. And the Yezidi who could translate into Arabic the alleged secret original MS. - which would puzzle the best Turanian and Semitic scholars - had to be no mean student in Turkish, Persian and archaic Kurdish. Yet the existence of such a learned man in their almost illiterate sect appears to have been unknown to Yezidis both lay and hierarchal.

The publication of the Anastase Marie MS. aroused no little curiosity among those who were interested in the Yezidis. Within two years of its publication investigations were made among the Yezidis of the Sinjar and of the Sheikhan districts for further, or any, information concerning the alleged scriptures of the cult. A missionary who had spent nearly a lifetime among the inhabitants of Kurdistan and who was highly esteemed among Yezidis and Christians for the reputed exercise of his good offices on their behalf, actually journeyed to the Sinjar and to the Sheikhan districts and there made lengthy inquiries
for any knowledge concerning the Anastase Marie MS. and its locality and origin. But after spending weeks on his investigations his inquiries merely caused surprise and astonishment. Nobody in the Sinjar knew anything concerning the existence there either of sacred books or librarian.

The story by Habib, the convert, did not specify where his 'religious head of the sect' who knew of the secret MS. lived or who he was; but one would be inclined to infer from his story that this religious head of the sect would either be the mir or the hierarchal chief at the temple. Likewise a critical consideration of the geographical localisation mentioned in the story created difficulties. The place where the ancient MSS. were concealed is stated to be in the Jebel Sinjar - which district is about one hundred and fifty miles westwards from Ba'idhri, the residence of the mir, and still further from the temple of Sheikh Adi where the hierarchal chief resides. But neither the mir nor the religious head knew anything of such scriptures; and it would be surprising that such an ancient codex of the faith should be unknown to them and yet be in the possession of some "religious head" somewhere in the Jebel Sinjar so far from the territorial and religious headquarters of the sect.
If such ancient MSS. existed as Bibles of the faith we would expect to hear of them being read in the seasonal festivals and, especially, at the Great Assembly of the Yezidis. But those Christians who were present at the festivals heard of no such scriptures being used. And since Christian and Moslem families are resident in Yezidi villages; and since Yezidi villages have Christian and Moslem villages as their neighbours, it would be scarcely possible for the Yezidis to possess scriptures of their faith for hundreds of years completely unknown to their prying neighbours.

A feasible method of suggesting the possible source of the Anastase Marie MS. is by collating it with the Browne and the Joseph texts.

Browne's text is the same in content as the Anastase Marie and the Joseph texts - except that it is less inclusive. In essence and general substance the Book of Revelation in Browne's text is the same as the Book of Revelation in the other two texts. The Black Book in the text of Joseph and Anastase Marie is, however, more inclusive than the "other account" added to the Book of Revelation in Browne's text.

The Book of Revelation and the Black Book in the Joseph and Anastase Marie texts are practically the same although a minute analysis of the two texts
discloses certain differences of detail, like abbreviations, omissions and transpositions. It was, perhaps, to avoid giving offence to some readers, or to Père Anastase Marie himself, that certain crudities, like the story of the descent of the Yezidis from Adam's jar and the eccentric anecdote concerning Huwiyah, (both quoted on our pages 154 and 156) are excluded from the Anastase Marie text though included in the Joseph MS. These differences and emendations may, however, be traceable to the copyist's errors or to his variable sense of aesthetics.

The most significant characteristic of these texts (Browne's, Joseph's and Marie's) is a preponderating similarity in ideas, in type and mode of thought which suggests some common origin.

It is not suggested that Père Anastase Marie's account of the circumstances which originated his efforts and ended in his obtaining a MS. alleged to be a transcription is, in any aspect, an unwarranted record of his experience. But it is to be observed that he did not see the alleged original MS. Nor was he in personal association with his agent while the transcription was assumed to be in the process of development. Anastase Marie, however, displays no anxiety or concern in the possibility of his agent being, in turn, but a useful ally of some other mind
who, like Jeremias, the writer of the narration which is appended to the Joseph edition, "deals in manuscripts and ancient books, Persian, Arabic, Syriac."

The collation of the Browne, Joseph and Marie MSS. leads to what can scarcely be regarded as a rash conclusion if we believe that these MSS. were fashioned in the same mould and that their common origin is Jeremias, the ex-priest from the monastery of Alkosh, who would know of the Syriac MS. preserved at Alkosh and on which he could base subsequent editions.

Conclusions on the MSS.

The preceding consideration of the different MSS. is supplied to indicate that -

1. the MSS. are not ancient.
2. their earliest date cannot precede the middle of the 19th century;
3. they have not been issued as a codex or text books, of the Yezidi faith by religious official authorities of that sect.

The value of the MSS.

What then, it may be asked, is the value and significance of these MSS. in an investigation of the religious and social cult of the Yezidis? The answer to this is that any source which sheds light, however dim, on the obscure subject of Yezidi belief and practice is to be welcomed as an aid in studying the cult.
The Syriac MS. in the monastery of Alkosh, on which subsequent MSS. are based, is the work of the priest Isaac of that monastery. He sought to consolidate such information on the Yezidis as he was able to acquire by observation of their practices in his own Sheikhan district and by inquiries among some of themselves concerning their dogma. The subsequent MSS. may likewise be regarded as attempts to furnish further information on the sect. But it is to be observed that certain Yezidi districts may be separated by a distance of about 150 miles in Mesopotamia alone; and this distance is intensified through tribal individuality and environment. Such separation tends to emphasise certain peculiarities of belief and practice in different districts; and that emphasis eventually develops into varieties that make an account concerning one district - e.g. the sedentary tribes of the Sheikhan - not completely appropriate to a distant area like that of the nomadic tribes in the Western Sinjar.

The information of the MSS. is generally instructive though not faultless; and the MSS., in as far as their accounts are objective, are useful sources of information, though the information is not to be regarded as universally applicable throughout the different and separated districts. The accounts in
the MSS. refer principally to the Yezidis of the Sheikhan district. But, in the matter of analysis and subjective interpretation of Yezidi dogma supplied by the MSS., contradictions and even inaccuracies have been disclosed by the modern facilities for safer and easier inquiries among a people who, having had a stern history on the fringes of civilisation, were not formerly too ready to regard as disinterested any inquiries by sojourners in their territory.
SOCIAL CODES.

Romance.
Consanguinity.
Pre-marriage settlements.
Relationship of the sexes.
Polygamy.
Endogamy.
Child marriages.
Elopement.
Purpose of marriage settlements.
Betrothal and marriage preliminaries.
A Yezidi marriage.
The month of no marriages.
Divorce.
Infidelity and abduction.
Neither the struggle for a meagre existence in a stern pastoral and agricultural life nor yet their chequered history have infected them with a pessimistic view of life. Their rustic life, sincere and unadulterated by the intrusion of city superficialities, provides them with joys, amusements and the excitement of local interests. The women, toiling hard in field and home, are unaffected, humorous, bold yet discreet. And despite the burdens of family and tribal concerns the older men find time to exchange hospitalities and, with their fellow seniors, to taste the year's vintage to the accompaniment of smoking and the repeating of crude tales. Nor is youth too exhausted to snatch from their simple life occasions for song and dance and merrymaking.

Romance.

Romance among the Yezidis finds expression in customs that are generally similar to those prevailing among the other inhabitants of Northern Mesopotamia. Nevertheless the Yezidi social conventions have certain features that are unlike those of their neighbouring Jews, Christians and Mohammadans and
which are substantially sui generis.*

Consanguinity.

The degrees of consanguinity within which marriage is disallowed are not regulated among them as among the Jews. It is "generally thought desirable and praiseworthy for a man to marry his sister-in-law and for a woman to marry her brother-in-law."1

Pre-marriage settlements.

Their pre-marriage settlements resemble the practices governing these matters among the surrounding Kurds. On the other hand the facility for the dissolution of marriage which characterises the lower grades of the Mohammedan populace of Northern Mesopotamia does not exist among the Yezidis.

Relationship of the sexes.

Freedom of the sexes prevails among them but it is, of course, a freedom which is qualified by customs peculiar to the primitive life of the Jebel and the chol.2 Within the ambit of these customs the code of morals is unimpeachable. The women, as among other creeds in Kurdistan, are neither veiled nor condemned to a life of hareem seclusion.3 They take their

* Yezidi pre-marriage arrangements resemble very much - as far as modern law allows - those which prevailed in the social organisation of the old Sumerians. (as described by C.L. Woolley (1930) in "The Sumerians", (London, 1930) Chap. 4.
1 Badger, loc. cit. page 133.
2 Chol = North Mesopotamian name for a part of the desert which is sparcely covered with grass and stunted shrub.
3 "Amurath to Amurath", G.L. Bell, page, 274.
Appropriate share in the usual outdoor employments and pleasures of their husbands; and, in contrast with the pampered life of the secluded Mesopotamian city women, the Yezidi women pay for this freedom in scanty fare and arduous toil.

The homes of the sedentary tribes are arranged to provide a measure of domestic privacy; and even the tents of the nomads are homes more than sleeping places.

The organisation of many of the agricultural districts into small separate villages fosters a community of interest and a freedom of association which is beneficial to the local social outlook and makes marriage less of a lottery for the Yezidi girl than it is for her Mohammadan sister who may never have been her husband till he is married to her.*

Thus in the majority of hamlets, as among the neighbouring Christian Assyrians, the village lads can visit the homes of the village maidens.

Polygamy.

The cult allows polygamy and there is no rule governing the number of wives permitted to a polygamously disposed Yezidi. This explains the divergence of opinion among writers concerning the maximum number of wives permitted to a Yezidi.

* Stevens, loc. cit. page 297.
1 Polygamy is restricted to a few rich men who have at most two wives". Scott, Geographical Mag. Vol. 14, p. 306. "Polygamy is allowed among them to the number of three wives." Badger, loc. cit. p. 133.
"A Yezidi may take four wives", Stevens, loc. cit. p. 177. "Polygamy is allowed among them to the number of six wives", Ency. of Missions, New York, 1904, p. 526.
Notwithstanding the freedom for polygamy few Yezidis avail themselves of this latitude. Not that they necessarily disapprove of the system but economic and domestic factors incline them to a state of almost complete monogamy. To a town-sweeper or porter in Teheran one wife is a sufficient financial liability. On the other hand, to the crofter who is an intense cultivator of his patches of rice, tobacco and millet in Kurdistan a second wife may be an agricultural asset.

The mir, of course, is not governed by any matrimonial convention. The absoluteness of his status liberates him from all restrictions—social and otherwise. If he is disposed to be polygamous he gratifies his wish. Normally, however, for the preservation of his family prestige, his wife or wives should come from the posmîr (noblest) houses of his creed.* But he can dispense even with this consideration. He can acquire a new wife or dispense with a superceded one according to his whim. In practice, however, this unrestricted power is exercised by the mir far less frequently than by sheikhs of the Bedouin Arabs.1

The hierarchy can only marry women of their own

* Anthropological Journal, loc.cit. page 208.
1 Of a Bedouin sheikh, Layard, "Nineveh and its Remains", p.100—writes "it was one of Sofuks weaknesses to take a new partner nearly every month and at the end of that period to divorce her and marry her to one of his attendants."
caste. Sheikhs marry the daughters of sheikhs; kawwals marry the daughters of kawwals. Only the kuchaks are exempt from this obligation. It is a heinous crime for a layman to elope with, or marry, the daughter of a member of the hierarchal grades. The disparity in economic circumstances of the laity and hierarchy is in itself an almost complete barrier to the possibility of such intermingling of castes.

Endogamy.

In general, they are endogamic and even "forbid unions between persons of different tribes"; yet it is not unknown for Yezidi women to marry men of other creeds. But it is considered tantamount to religious infidelity for a Yezidi to take a wife from any religion but his own.

Child marriages.

Child marriages are unknown among the Yezidis. The sternness of economic circumstances disallows marriage even to adolescents. But, as among other races in that semi-tropical climate, maturity is attained very early and adult marriages may, therefore, take place when the bride is over twelve years of age.

Elopement.

Elopement is not unknown in Yezidi communities.

* Vide Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol. 14, p. 295. Cf. Leyard, "Nineveh and its Remains", page 103. Ferrah, a Yezidi, was one of the wives of Sofuk the sheikh of one of the desert tribes, but she dare not sit, without permission, in the presence of his first wife who came from a Bedouin (Arab) tribe.
The normal causes for its occurrence are inter-tribal and inter-village hostilities. An argument between shepherds from contiguous nomad tribes may mean the temporary severance of all relationship between these tribes. And as the ethics of the desert are intolerant of restriction the ancient foraging instincts may then re-emerge to capture by force its object - even if it be a wife.

Another element which occasioned elopements was the excess amount, whether in cash or kind, which was demanded by the bride's father from the groom's family before sanctioning the transfer of his daughter from her father's home to that of another. In the Jebel Sinjar, as the amount required from the more affluent families sometimes approximated Rupees 1500*, elopements were more numerous than elsewhere in the millet. Once the gallant youth got his bride safely into his own village, or tribe, her stay was usually guaranteed by the whole fighting strength of his village or tribe; and it was less easy to effect her extradition than to agree on an equitable marriage settlement, especially since marriage can be consecrated, even in the absence of any religious officials, by the breaking and exchanging of a Sheikh Adi tablet in the presence of witnesses by the romantic

* Stevens, loc.cit. page 100.
couple. The bargain was thus with the bridegroom's family even although the law of elopement demands double payment for the stolen bride.

Reforms have, however, taken place in the marriage, assessment of women; the scale of fees to the bride's father has been rationalised and graded according to the social and economic value of the bride.

Purpose of marriage settlements.

These sums paid by the bridegroom, or rather by his family, to the bride's father or curator are not to be understood as being a purchase price for a wife*. Among the Yezidis women are not sold for marriage as in certain cities of Southern Arabia.1 The sum is but a regular marriage settlement which forms a trust conveyed to her father or curator for the woman's future welfare should she be unjustifiably divorced or deprived of her rights on her husband's decease. It is from this settlement and from what her relatives add to it that she buys her ornaments and jewellery which are at the same time decorative and also capable of being converted into money when necessary.

Betrothal and marriage preliminaries.

Betrothal as still practised among the Jews in Assyria is unknown with the Yezidis. Among the former there is a betrothal ceremony which is as

* Parry, loc. cit. (page 366) is hardly correct in stating that "the bride is looked upon as a property or purchase"

binding as marriage and, as long as her betrothed lives, the Jewess of 'Iraq cannot marry another.*

The Yezidi marriage preliminaries rather resemble those of Mohammedans in Mesopotamia.

The intended groom has had at least some occasion to encounter the desired lady and she herself may not be unconscious of the sentiment which she has inspired. When a marriage is contemplated a mutual friend of the young couple will launch the necessary feelers to ascertain the possibilities of an alliance. The respective mothers thereafter exchange visits on the matter; and when an agreement to marry is made the amount of the 'dowry'1 is argued and fixed by the fathers or curators.2 Sometimes the local religious leader, whether sheikh, pir or kawwal, sheds sanctity on the prospects and finality of the agreement by attending the conference at which the marriage settlement is fixed. A few weeks before the marriage the 'dowry' must be paid.

A Yezidi marriage.

This seems to be an occasion for joy and merriment.

* Stevens, loc. cit. page 234.
**The Yezidi marriage settlement is thus similar to the Muslim idea of the 'mahr'.

2 The dowry payable for a woman who is a widow is lower than in the case of a spinster; vide Dirr in "Anthropos".
for the whole assembled village. Everybody can sing, dance and be merry—except the bride.

While she is yet in her father's house the male friends of the bridegroom, resplendent in daggers and gund, gather at the latter's house where they are fortified for the subsequent activities of the happy occasion with liberal quantities of native arak. The women, too, gather and consume coffee and sweets. Latter in the day the men and many of the women, accompanied by a pir or sheikh and usually followed by a ragged retinue of interested children, set off in uproarious mirth to the home of the bride. Some of the riders, now appreciably drunk, perform wonderful feats with their horses. Players on flutes and drums increase the noisome medley. On arriving at the bride's home they repeatedly discharge their guns; and when inquired by her father concerning their errand they roar a demand for his daughter as a wife for their friend. Meanwhile the whole village, young and old, are interested spectators of this melodrama. The parents then lead forth their daughter to the friends of the bridegroom.

The bride is attired in scarlet robes: she wears a big stomacher of wrought silver and her gaudy jewellery. Her features are attractively regular; her eyes are dark and brilliant and her skin is tawny
with the sun. On her hands and ankles are varied tatoos.

The friends of the bridegroom, with great cheering, lead her to the home of the bridegroom's parents where more arak is consumed. The kuchak or such other religious official as presides over the marriage festivities is supposed to keep sober.* To lengthen the joyous journey the concourse may follow a circuitous route by certain shaks or sacred trees or even towards Christian churches where the bride must make obeisance. As she approached the home of the bridegroom a sheep is killed: its blood is sprinkled on the threshold and the bride must walk through this blood into her future home. When she has entered the house the bridegroom "throws a water pot full of small bells at the wall above her head, and then breaks a loaf of bread on her head so that she may always show herself charitable to the hungry."2 She is then


1 In Kurdistan many shrines, credited with sanctity and healing virtues, are visited by all creeds indiscriminately.

In connection with many Assyrian (Christian) churches, which are not very near to a road, a cross is incised in a stone on the roadside at the point nearest to the church. This is done for the convenience of passers-by who wish to kiss the cross.

2 Stevens, loc. cit. page 178.
led to a room from which, for modesty's sake, she must not emerge during the three days of her wedding festivities.*

Meanwhile in the courtyard or on a sward outside the house the merriment proceeds. Men and women dance to the sound of flutes and drums; and as newcomers join in the throng the friend of the groom, at the end of each dance, discourses amusingly whilst small sums of money are given to him to recoup the groom for the expense of the festivities. For three evenings the mirth continues and on the third afternoon the bridegroom, escorted by friends, calls at the different houses of the village and receives at each some wedding present.

On the evening of the third day the actual marriage ceremony takes place when the bridegroom obtains the woman as his wife. The local religious official who presided over the wedding festivities now takes the groom to the bridegroom, joins their hands, and asks an expression of their wish to marry. This being given he marks their foreheads with red ink and hands to them a stick which they break. Some Sheikh Adi tablets are thereafter given to them; then a loaf, which is supplied from a kuchak's house, is divided.

* The writer observed the same custom at Assyrian (Christian) weddings in Mosul.
between them and must be eaten by them together.

Seven days must elapse ere the young couple are expected to resume the work of the croft or the herding of their flocks.

As a sign of her marriage the wife henceforth wears a white kerchief round her head and tied under her chin.

The month of no marriages.

During the month of Nisan (middle of March to middle of April) marriage is prohibited to the laity but not to the hierarchy.*

Divorce.

The annulment of marriage is not a common feature of Yezidi society. Of course the elasticity and variety of practices in different and far-separated

* In the Babylonian mythology there was a month during which marriage was not celebrated. This was the period when Ishtar was in the kingdom of Aralu, the underworld. "During the absence of Ishtar, the goddess of love, no marriage was celebrated, no animals begat offspring, and the whole course of nature both in man and beast was changed." -


"In the absence of the goddess of love, the rites of love could no longer be performed. The passions of animals and men were suspended." "Dawn of Civilisation", Maspero, page 695.
communities prevent the development of a unified outlook on domestic sanctions. Consequently the practice of divorce somewhat varies according to geographical and economic situation.

Among the Yezidis divorce is governed more by economic factors and domestic humanism than by religious or moral laws. Divorce involves the restitution of her marriage settlement to the wife; and, as a portion of this has necessarily been expended, an impoverished agriculturalist would be seriously embarrassed to provide the obligatory reimbursement. This compensation-aspect involves the interest of the wife's relatives. Divorce, therefore, is not a matter of interest merely for the husband and wife; it has certain repercussions that are calculated to restrict the practice of divorce. The acquisition of a new wife also entails additional liabilities in the form of her marriage settlement.

Their free and open-air life is not conducive to low standards of morals. Violations of moral conventions are, therefore, reprobated as reflections not only on the parties concerned but also on their relatives and tribe. The punishments, however, vary with the local outlook. Penal views among the primitive tribes on the desert fringes of the Jebel Sinjar are not exactly coincident with those of communities that are nearer the influence of urban civilisation.
The decision for divorce is taken after serious consideration and, in cases of leading families, an appeal may be made to the mir for a decision or confirmation of the divorce.*

Their views on divorce may be summarised as:
- there is no religious barrier against it,
- their moral code recognises its possibility but
- economic and social circumstances tend to curb the practice.

Infidelity and abduction.

Infidelity could formerly be punished with death; but under the British mandate such procedure is not allowed free exercise.

Abducting the wife of another required restitution from the offender. The compensation may be in money or in kind. Sometimes the offender had to surrender his "sister, mother, daughter or wife."¹ The unfaithful wife could be put to death or abandoned in her unforgiveable shame.

Unjustifiable neglect of the wife for a lengthy period can constitute, if she wishes, a ground of separation. Among the reasons submitted by the Yezidis in 1872 as preventing them from accepting military service was that if a Yezidi was absent from his wife for a year she had a right to desert him and no other woman would marry him.

¹ MS. in Parry, loc. cit. page 384.
Yezidism: not a religion systematised by one great leader.

Yezidism: a qualified monotheism.

Transcendentalism of Khuda.

Cosmology.

Eclectic theories.
Chronology and onomation of the seven great spirits.
The great spirits as emanations.
"Supreme lord of all the angels".
Constellating of the great spirits.
Formation of the earth.
Theophany and astro-theology.
Creation of mankind.
Man in Paradise.
Creation of Eve.
The origin of the Yezidi race.
(Cosmology graph.)
The flood.

Prayer.
Kiblah.
Oaths.
Baptism.
Circumcision.
Sun worship and Ignicolism.
Sacred stones.
The sacredness of water.
Groves and sacred trees.
Hagiology.
Shaks.
Prophets.
Thaumaturgics.
Colour Red; Shamanistic powers of the priesthood:
Protection by the tablets; Baptismus Clinicorum.
Taboos.
Colour Blue; Diet; Language; Personal Behaviour.
Eschatology.
Funerals; Heaven; Paradise; Hell; Re-incarnation and Metempsychosis; The Guardian Spirits.
Chapter 10.

THE FAITH.

Not a religion systematised by one great leader.

The Yezidi cult is not a religion that has been woven into one harmonious system by some great leader; nor is it a religion directly traced by its adherents to one great prophet or reformer who propagated a definite and original code of spiritual dogma by which the faith and practice of the adherents must be governed. "From what source they derived their creed, what is meant by many of their religious observances are subjects upon which the Yezidis of the present day are thoroughly ignorant."* Even "the term Yezidi itself is of uncertain origin"1. Their own explanations of their beliefs and even of the significance of their religious practices are often illogical, contradictory and chaotic.

To present, therefore, an account of their religion in the form of an orderly, harmonious system is a laborious task involving very considerable difficulties. The problem is also rendered more difficult by the eclectic and syncretic nature of a cult which seems to have not only distinctly indigenous characteristics but also certain features which are

* Badger, loc.cit. Vol.1, page 111.

apparently borrowed from, or cognate with, the various religions and philosophies that successively influenced Northern Mesopotamian thought since the polytheism of Assyria even before the Sargonid Empire. Again, some of these features which appear to be of external origin and would, superficially, seem to have been incorporated from extant contiguous religions may, in slightly different form, have prevailed in Assyria in periods antecedent to the appearance there of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Greek Gnosticism, Magianism, Christianity and Islam. The adaptations of old religious creeds to new political and theological circumstances is not an unusual factor in Mesopotamian history.* And in view of the history of the Yezidis such an adaptation could be an expedient procedure for obtaining a larger measure of toleration than could otherwise be expected in the perpetual restlessness of Kurdistan for a peculiar and minority religion.†

Interpretations which are substantially divergent on certain salient features of the cult have been suggested by some of those writers who have essayed to analyse the Yezidi doctrines. That divergence of opinion occurs principally in relation to the

* Vide "The Babylonian and Assyrian Civilisation" (L. de Laperre), translated from French by V. Gordon Childe, page 136.
† Vide Trans. of Ethnological Society, 1861, p. 40.
significance and purpose of the symbol Melek Taus and also relative to the part and status held in the cult by the mysterious attributes, or deities; called Sheikh Adi, Yezid and Melek Taus. But as this problem and the possible reconciliation of these different, though instructive, views is considered in a subsequent portion of this thesis the purpose of the present chapter is to submit, in an objective manner, an account of those features of the Yezidi faith which can be furnished by a critical and analytic study of the traditions and the practices of their religion.

Yezidism: a qualified monotheism.

"La religione dei Yezidi e monotheistica."* (the religion of the Yezidis is monotheistic.) Whilst this is so far true the statement would be more valuable had it rather affirmed that the Yezidis have attained to a qualified monotheism. A clearer and more inclusive statement of their faith is that "the Yezidis combine monotheistic belief with a conception of a dual divinity.1 The cult is an incomplete effort to bring unity from plurality; and the qualified monotheism is not identical with Judaistic monotheism.

"The Yezidis unquestionably believe in a God."2

1 Journal of the Royal Anthropol. Institute, 1911, page 204.
He is their Khuda, the God who precedes and is superior to other theistic agencies who are hazily revered sometimes merely as messengers of Khuda and sometimes as invested with the powers of deity themselves. This God is "the first cause of all."*

**Transcendentalism of Khuda.**

The relationship of Khuda to the material universe is relative transcendentalism. The nature of Khuda is magnitude and infinitude in all the attributes of power and goodness; and, since the work of creation was completed, the divine personality exists in a state of measureless exaltation above creation and above mortal activities. Their God, they say, "is the Lord of Heaven, and takes no account of earth."1 "He is so far away that we can have no contact with him and he, on his part, has no knowledge or interest of any sort concerning human affairs."2

**Cosmology.**

Eclectic theories. Their ideas on cosmology are a chaotic assembling of unsystematised theories which reveal distorted versions of Babylonian and Assyrian creation legends in addition to imperfect reproductions of certain cosmological ideas from the more modern religions that found a footing in that

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* Encyclopaedia of Missions, New York, 1904, page 526.
1 "Cradle of Mankind", page 103.
2 "Adventures in Arabia", W.E. Seabrook, page 300.
land of many creeds.

Their cosmological theories appear to be a confused mixture of the two cosmological systems - the creative and the emanational. And the construction of a harmonised system of cosmology from the Yezidi chaos of chronology and of theories demands a very critical analysis of their oral traditions assisted by accounts in the MSS. concerning the sect. In view of that necessity the present writer has endeavoured to reduce the variety into a summarised alignment by means of a pictorial representation (vide graph facing page 196) of information which is subsequently discussed in this chapter.

**Chronology and onomation of the seven great spirits**

The creation graph supplies the following information:

Khuda, from his own essence, created matter in the form of a great white pearl which moved in space for forty thousand years.

On successive days: Khuda created seven great spirits, or demi-urgoi. The following arrangement gives the chronology and designation of the great spirits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Izrail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Dardail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Israfil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Mishael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Shammail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Nuranail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The great spirits as emanations. Elsewhere the Mashaf Ras gives another origin to the seven spirits. This is a genealogical or emanation origin. Khuda produced the great spirits from his own essence but "he created them in the same manner that a man lights one lamp from another" (Mashaf Ras). These seven spirits would, therefore, appear to be emanations, the first of which issues immediately from the essence of Khuda; the second is an emanation from the first; the third emanates from the second; the fourth from the third and, similarly, to the seventh. Each of these spirits is to rule the universe for 10,000 years.1

"Supreme lord of all the angels." One of the great spirits received the additional name of Melek Taus and was appointed "supreme lord of all the angels." It is unknown which of the seven angels became Melek Taus. And in the subsequent processes of creation the designations "sovereign lord" and "supreme lord of all the angels" are intricately mixed up; thus "sovereign lord" (who may be Khuda) may actually signify Melek Taus, whilst Melek Taus is elsewhere designated "supreme lord of all the angels."

Constellating of the great spirits. The great spirits or divine emanations, except one, were

* As in the Chaldean and Hebrew religious systems the figure seven holds a prominent place in the Yezidi cult.

1 Menant, "Les Yézidis", page 87.
voluntarily constellated into the solar deity, the lunar deity, the firmament, the morning star and the atmospheric phenomena.

**Formation of the earth.** The spirit Gabriel is given the form of a bird and to him is allotted the task of fixing the corners of the earth. For forty thousand years Gabriel drifts throughout liquid matter in an ark. Thereafter the bird-form Gabriel produces solid earth and dry land.

The earth then produces mountains and vegetation.

The Mashaf Ras affirms that Gabriel then broke the primordial pearl which became the Sun and Moon. Then Gabriel "sowed the powder, which resulted from the breaking of the pearl, about the Sun and Moon; this powder became the stars."

**Theophany and astro-theology.** Khuda then descended from Dunja-jor, the supernatural abode of Khuda, to the Black Mountain of this world (i.e. Lalish, which are the hills around Sheikh Adi) where he created thirty thousand angels whom he formed into three choirs to adore himself. Khuda and the angelic choirs remain on earth for forty thousand years. The control of the angelic host is then given to the spirit Melek Taus and he, then, translates these beings from earth to heaven.

**Creation of mankind.**

Man. Different spirits seem to have had a share
Descent of Khuda to Black Mountain (Latish).

Constitution of Man.
- Air
- Fire
- Water
- Breath of Khuda

Adam in Paradise begat:
- Boy
- Girl

Yezidis from Adam, but not from Eve.

Gabriel created Eve:
- From Adam and Eve.
  - Jews
  - Christians
  - Moslems

Other Origin of Yezidis:
- Noah.
  - Shem
  - Ham
  - Jepheth

Rule over Angels given to Melek Taus who constellates them.

30,000 Angels adore him for 40,000 years.
in the creation of mankind. The spirit Huranail is credited with the creation of mankind and animal life. Elsewhere it is the God Khuda who produces mankind. Khuda descends to Jerusalem where he created Adam.

Man was made of earth which was collected from the four corners of the globe. To this was added air, fire and water. Khuda then breathed upon man and this breath is the soul of man.

Man in Paradise. Adam is placed by the spirit Gabriel in a paradise. Man can possess all the produce of that paradise save that he is forbidden to eat corn. Adam retained his uprightness until Melek Taus, to whom Khuda had by now given administrative dominion over Adam and paradise, came and allured him to eat the forbidden corn - as it would do him good. No sooner was the deed of disobedience completed than Adam began to receive punishment in the form of bodily pain. From the agony occasioned by this disobedience Khuda alone can redeem Adam by means of a helper in the form of a bird. (Vide page 150/par.18-19 of this thesis).

Creation of Eve. Khuda pities the lonely lot of Adam in paradise and orders Gabriel to create Eve. Gabriel thereupon produced Eve from a part of Adam's shoulder and brought her to the man. But it is not from her that the Yezidis derive their origin.
The origin of the Yezidi race. Certain traditions among the Yezidis claim for them a unique racial descent from Adam though not from Eve.

The Sinjar Yezidis say, according to a native of Mosul,* that there were seventy-two Adams. Each of these populated the world - his seed remaining on the earth for ten thousand years. Between the creation of each Adam ten thousand years elapsed, during which time the earth was uninhabited. Each Adam was more perfectly constructed than his predecessor. The Yezidis are the children of the seventy-second Adam but not the offspring of Eve. "Adam and Eve disputed and were vexed with one another as to the generation of the human race, each of them saying, 'from me shall it be begotten'. And they saw the beasts mating, and the male pairing with the female, and how they brought forth their young. Then each one of them put their seed (some say their spittle) into a jar; and they closed the mouths of two jars with their seals. And after nine months they opened their jars; and in Adam's jar they saw a pair of children exceeding fair; but in Eve's jar only two white worms. Then God created paps for Adam wherewith he suckled them; and they were male and female and from these two was the Yezidi people begotten."

* Quoted in "Tigris and Euphrates", page 194.
1 "Other account" in Parry: MS.
When pressed with criticisms on this unsophisticated line of descent the more rational Yezidis express disbelief in such genealogy and resort to an alternative origin while, with the unthinking mob, however, a quasi-religious belief which has its roots deep in tradition is not quickly abandoned. The alternative descent which still provides a worthier ancestry for the Yezidis than for Jews, Christians, or Mohammadans is that whilst other races are descended from Ham, that son of Noah who mocked his father, the Yezidis descend from Japheth, the dutiful son who sought to conceal his father's weaknesses.

The flood. They have traditions concerning the flood which suggest a mixed version of the Biblical account in Genesis and a blend of the Babylonian epic of the pre-Noahistic deluge.

As the waters of the flood arose the ark floated and came to Jebel Sinjar where it grounded and was pierced by a rock. Another tradition locates the grounding of the ark on the hills around the temple of Sheikh Adi. The serpent which was on board twisted itself into a ball, by which it filled the hole and thus saved the ark.

There is also a belief among them in another deluge which took place in days far antediluvian to the
Noahistic flood; but they have no distinct legends concerning the incidents of that event in the dim past.

Prayer.

It is said that "prayer is a superfluous observance according to the Yezidis."* "They have", states another writer, "no forms of prayer, and it is shocking to any Christian mind to hear them allow with the utmost indifference that they never pray."

These statements, however, are to be viewed critically since the available evidence would suggest that, after their own fashion, they do believe in prayer.

The common Kurdish ejaculations involving the name of Allah are often on their lips though this may probably be mere habit. In the translation of a letter supplied by the secretary of the mir to a certain visitor2 to the Jebel Sinjar and addressed, as a recommendation of the traveller, to the Yezidis of the Jebel Sinjar there appear phrases like - "May God the most high watch over you all;" "We never forget you in our prayers before Sheikh Adi, the greatest of all sheikhs." Furthermore a visitor3 to Sheikh Adi writes that, as she was ushered through the door of the

* "Tigris and Euphrates", p.186. (This writer elsewhere states that a kuchak, at a funeral service in the house of the deceased, places himself in a room so that he may pray to Sheikh Adi. page 103.

1 Badger, loc.cit. page 117.

2. Layard, (as recorded in "Nineveh and its Remains", page 309.

3 G.L. Bell, (as recorded in her "Amurath to Amurat Ph.

page 276.
temple, her guide "murmured a Kurdish prayer in which I heard the frequent repetition of Sheikh Adi's name."

An English translation of a 'Yezidi prayer' is given in the article on the Yezidis in the Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1898, Vol. 14, page 299. The writer of that article - Mr. Victor Dingelstadt, states that he derived his principal information from two articles in the magazine of the Russian (Caucasian section) Geographical Society to which they were contributed by a Mr. Eghiazarof and a Mr. Kartsef* - the latter having been for some years a Russian Consul in Mosul. In the American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature Vol. xxv, 1909, page 243 there also appears an English translation of a "prayer of the Yezidis." 1

Though in these two English translations there are important variations and omissions nevertheless the prayers are sufficiently similar to suggest a common original text from which an inexact scribe made copies which were abbreviated or altered according to his mood.

* This would appear to be the Consul expected in Mosul in 1892 (vide Parry, loc. cit. page 253) and whose arrival was known in advance to the ecclesiastical gossip, Shamma Jeremias Shamir (vide, Chap. 8, page 160 of this thesis).

1 A version of the prayer, from the Russian publication mentioned above, appears in the article "Einiges über die Jezidin", in "Anthropos" xli - xlii. A version of the (Kurdish) prayer appears in H. Makas, "Kurdische Studien", Heidelberg, 1900, p. 40-41, and a French version is given by Nau, loc. cit. page 167-168.
Analysis of the Prayer. The prayer commences on a note of invocation and seeks mediation through the merits of names usually associated with Moslem hagiology. But "the meaning of the names is not certain. Some believe that they are archangels, others different attributes of God. Perhaps they are the seven amshaspands of Zoroaster."*

Adoration then follows in expressions that could fit the lips of the most monotheistic Jew.

Confession of sin next declares - "Lord, thou art enthroned King and I am a fallen sinner; a sinner, but not abandoned by thee; thou hast led me out of darkness into light." (Dingelstadt version)

There is no mention of Melek Taus or of Sheikh Adi but there is a curious Christian suggestion in the brief affirmation, "Lord, thou hast created the sinner Adam, Jesus and Mary."

There is in this "Yezidi prayer" nothing which can be regarded as more peculiar to the Yezidi cult than to other religions in Northern Mesopotamia; and it savours too much of post-Islamic religious outlook to be accepted readily as other than an intentional co-ordinating of extracts from the prevalent religious thoughts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and arranged with sufficient unsectarianism to be inoffensive to the neighbouring religions.

* Dingelstadt in "Scottish Geographical Magazine" (page 299).
"Prayer of the Yezidis." (The Dingelstadt version and the version in American Journal of Semitic Languages.)

Portions which are omitted from the prayer in the American Journal appear in the Dingelstadt version and are here added in red ink. And portions of the prayer in the American Journal which do not appear in the Dingelstadt copy are here bracketed in black ink.

The Prayer.

   Sole Almighty, Creator of the Heavens, I invoke thee,
2. Through the intermediation of Sams-ad-Din,
3. Fahr-ad-Din, Nasir-ad-Din,
4. Sajad-ad-Din, Seih Sin (Husein)
6. Lord, thou art gracious, thou art merciful: and from eternity thou art God.
7. Thou art God, king of kings and lands, of all creatures, seen and unseen, of all saints,
8. King of joy and happiness,
   Thou art worthy of praise and thanksgiving.
   Thou art terrible and glorious,
10. From eternity thou art eternal.
11. (Thou art the seat of luck (happiness) and life,
12. (Thou art lord of grace and good luck,
13. (Thou art king of jinns and human beings,
14. King of the holy men (saints,)
   Thou art terrible and glorious,
15. Lord of terror and praise.
   Thy abode is beyond the heavens,
The abode of religious duty and praise.

Worthy of praise and thanks.

Lord! Protector in journeys.

Sovereign of the moon and of the darkness.

(God of the sun and of the fire)

God of the great throne,
Thou art a god of benevolence; supreme judge of kings and subjects.
Thou art the administrator of the whole world,
Lord! thou hast created the sinner Adam, Jesus and Mary,
Thou art the fountain of joy and beatitude.

Lord of goodness,
(Thy appearance,
how thou art,
Thy face it is not known what is thy
Thy stature, or thy movements
Thy substance or thy number)

Lord! Judge of kings and beggars,
Judge of society and of the world.
created the sinner Adam
revealed the repentence of Adam, Jesus and Mary,
(Lord! thou hast no house; thou hast no money)

Thou hast no wings; hast no feathers,
Thou hast no voice; hast no colour,
(Thou hast made us lucky and satisfied,)
Thou hast created Jesus and Mary,

Lord! thou art gracious,
Merciful, faithful.

Thou art Lord; I am nothingness;
I am a fallen sinner,
A sinner by thee remembered.
Thou hast led us out of darkness into light.
40. Lord! (pardon) my sin and my guilt,
41. (Take them and remove them).
42. O God, O God, O God, Amen."

Like certain other features of their cult
prayer is not a regular individual exercise among
them. The Yezidi largely leaves that duty to his
priests. The acquaintance of the latter with the
ritual of prayer preserves for the hierarchy a
professional esoterism which fans the devotion and
respect of the laity who, quite unconcernedly, confess
that "the kawwals pray but we do not know what they say."

Kiblah.

Like other religions they have a kiblah or place
in the direction of which they turn when performing
their ceremonies of adoration. Whilst the Jew turns
towards Jerusalem and the Mohammadan faces towards
Mecca the Yezidis lift their faces towards the
position in the firmament where the North star rises.

Oaths.

When occasions arise that require settlement on
oath there are certain forms in which the oath is taken.

In the Sinjar a dagger is stuck in the ground; a
piece of white cloth is thrown over the dagger and the
person giving the evidence places his right hand on

* Badger, loc. cit. page 108.
the cloth and thereby pledges that his word is true.*

In the Sheikhan district the administration of an oath follows a different ritual. There the procedure is simply to draw a circle on the ground around the man to whom the oath is propounded. He is then warned that the ground within the circle which surrounds him is now dedicated to Melek Taus; and perjury within such a circle is unthinkable.

If there is a shrine in the locality the parties may resort there, as for example, to the shrine of Mohammad Rashshan at Ba'sheikha. In the precincts of the shrine a circle is drawn on the sacred ground and the parties are sworn in the name of the saint who is deceived by no falsehood and whose punishment inevitably pursues the perjurer.

Baptism.

This is a feature which holds no insignificant place in their beliefs and practices.

The form which the baptism normally - though not invariably - assumes is that of infant immersion. Certain circumstances, however, may change the nature of the baptism. Water from the shrine of Sheikh Adi is used in the baptismal ceremony; and children born in the Sheikhan area in villages not far from Sheikh Adi are brought to the valley of the temple for

their baptism. The itinerating kawwals as they visit the distant villages have, attaching to the saddle of their horse, a rouwis* filled with Sheikh Adi water which they use for baptism. The sanctity and thaumaturgic value of this limited supply of Sheikh Adi water necessitates that the form of baptism should be by sprinkling. In the absence of that water local water from special fountains and streams will suffice.

On the first occasion when locally baptised children visit the temple, whether they are now youths or grown to maturity, their ceremonial ablutions in the valley are regarded as serving for baptism. Parents coming to the Great Assembly from distant localities sometimes bring with them ailing children for sprinkling and immersion in the valley. It is believed that the ceremony serves the dual purpose of baptism and physical healing.

As some time may elapse before the ceremony of baptism takes place a name is early selected for the child. The day of giving the name is an occasion for visits from friends; and after the name is declared there is a joyous ceremony of sewing coins into the bonnet which the infant is wearing.  

* i.e. bucket which is made of bullock skins and used for carrying water.

1 A similar practice prevails among the Assyrian Christians, Vide, Surma D'Bait Mar Chimun, loc. cit. page 5.
Circumcision.

Circumcision is likewise a feature of the Yezidi cult. But like the majority of their other ceremonies this rite and its practice may vary in different districts. A certain writer erroneously states that "all males are circumcised."* It is more exact, however, to state that "circumcision is by no means universal" among them.1

The apparently contradictory verdicts of two writers, both of whom resided in Mesopotamia, may be reconciled by the knowledge available on different Yezidi localities since the time of these writers. One states that "they circumcise their children in infancy, and do not like the Mohammadans defer it until they are thirteen years of age."2 The apparently opposite view affirms that "they circumcise at the same age, and in the same manner, as the Mohammadans."3 Both these views may, however, be correct - if accepted as complements of each other and having only a relative application to certain

1 Sir R. Temple in Commentary to "Cult of the Peacock Angel", page 193.
2 "The Nestorians", A. Grant, page 319.
3 "Nineveh and its Remains", Layard, page 300.
districts in Kurdistan.* The custom may vary appreciably in districts that are not very far separated; and not only are all males not circumcised in infancy or at thirteen years of age, nor is circumcision deemed indispensable in every Yezidi locality. "The large tribe of the Khaletiyeh on the Tigris about Radhwan do not practice circumcision, nevertheless they are held to be orthodox Yezidis."

Sun Worship and Ignicolism.

It is not surprising to discover in the land of

* In Islamic Jurisprudence "there would appear to be no settled agreement on the strict obligation of circumcision. Certain collections of the figh refrain from mentioning it or only mention it in passing, and allow this practice, which some have insisted on regarding as the symbol of initiation into Islam, to be postponed until the age of fifteen." "Islam:Beliefs and Institutions", H,Lammens,Professor of Arabic, St.Joseph's university, Beyrut,translated from French,London,1929.

Among certain South Arabian Bedouin "the nomad son is circumcised being come to the strength of three full years", Doughty,"Arabia Deserta",Vol.1,page 340.

With certain South Arabian tribe (the Curaysh)the "rite is deferred until the subject reaches the age of puberty",Lutter, "Cities of Arabia", Vol.2,page 55.

In "Around the Coast of Arabia" (Ameen Rihani; London,1930) there is an account of the barbarous form in which this rite is performed on adults in a certain tribe before they are married.

The age for circumcision varies much in different localities (vide,Ency.of Religion and Ethics, Vol.3.) whilst, in practice it is seldom, if ever, omitted.

1 Badger, loc.cit. page 129.
the deity Adad - the composite nature god of Assyria - that there still survives a simple form of sun worship and ignicolism. The moon does not seem to be accorded any special acts of adoration.

Adoration of the Sun.

"The sun is regarded as an exalted spirit without whom there would be no stability to the universe, and therefore, worthy of respect and worship.* When the Yezidis behold the rising sun they are to bow and kiss the earth "three times with their faces towards the East." The obeisance should be repeated as the sun sinks beyond the hills. But, as with other religions, the practice of certain obligations is liable to be performed imperfectly; and the less devotional among the Yezidis are not meticulous in their observance of the adoration of the great luminary. Their sense of religious vicariousness combines with faith in their religious officials to delegate to the latter the regular performance of the sun adoration in Mesopotamia. If, however, the account given by one of the Yezidis in Syria is reliable these exiles in Syria are more faithful in the observance of this element of their cult. "We worship under the open sky. Every day at dawn we worship the Sun."2

* Encyclopaedia of Missions, New York, 1904, page 528.
1 Grant, loc. cit. appendix A, page 322.
2 "Syria, the Desert and the Sown", C. L. Bell, p. 233.
The system of adoration by proxy breaks down at the Great Assembly. There the pilgrims, some day during the gathering, must personally greet the dawn at the shrine of the sun and combine this obeisance with the kissing of certain spots in the wall and in the precincts of that shrine. The festival adoration and the ceremony of sacrificing the 'ox of the sun' perpetuate the adoration of the sun as a significant factor of their cult.

Irnicolism.

The Yezidis have profound veneration for fire either as lightning or as flame. It is a religious transgression to spit into a fire. Even the chantries and niches around the great temple where the illuminations are placed at sunset by the qarabashis are regarded as sacred. In the daylight pilgrims resort to these spots to kiss the stones which are now blackened with the smoke from fires of countless gatherings.

On the occasion of the Great Assembly there is rivalry among the crowd to touch the flame as the qarabashis proceed with a blazing torch to light these nooks and chantries. Parents with ailing children vie with one another to touch the torch in order, thereafter, to rub on their children the hands which have been purified and which are, therefore,
credited with curative powers.

Fire and light, as being elements cognate with that of the sun, are revered by the Yezidis "as symbols of deity."*

Sacred Stones.

They have in different localities stones which they hold in profound adoration. The sanctity of these stones is not inherent but is derived from their association with holy persons or religious incidents. They may, as at the shak of Sheikh Mohammad Rashan at Ba'sheikha and Sheikh Hand at Bahazani in the Mosul Sanjak or like the shak of Murad in the Northern portion of the Jebel Sinjar, be traditionally regarded as the resting places and, perhaps, the prayer places of saints and have thus become a type of 'baituloi' on which shaks have been erected which now attract the adoration of credulous minds.

Some of the stones outside the temple of Sheikh Adi are regarded as sacred. On these the mir and the Ikhai'ari Margahi sit when they rest outside the main entrance of the temple at festival seasons among the pilgrims. A little distance farther down in the valley there is a primitive stone bridge across the stream; and pilgrims must bow and kiss its grey stones and remove their shoes before crossing it on their way

* Badger, loc. cit. page 117.
to the temple. In the wall and in the precincts of 'Sheikh' Chem are several stones to which adoration is given by the pilgrims who assemble there to revere the rising sun.

The Sacredness of water.

Water is regarded as not less sacred than the sun and fire. "Sacred fountains by the dozen may still be met with in these outlandish regions."

Each festival, each religious exercise must be preceded by a ceremonial lustration; and to derive the fullest efficacy these lustrations should take place by a running stream. These sacred streams must not be used by aliens to the faith.

Public baths, where water may be sullied by stagnation, are disallowed.

The repeated 'baptisms' of adults, the superstitious immersion of delicate children, the sacrifices made by the poorest to secure a share of the water carried by the visiting kawwal, the unspeakable sanctity of the water in the temple tanks, the preparation of the dead for burial by washing in water from a running stream or in water purified by boiling - all demonstrate the existence among the Yezidis of a belief in the sacredness of water.

Groves and Sacred Trees.

In the Jebel Sinjar and throughout the Mosul "Cradle of Mankind", page 100.
sanjak almost each shak is surrounded by a grove or has a sacred tree, inclosed by a wall, in its immediate neighbourhood.

Certain trees like "Sitt Hafisa" at Ba'sheikha, 'Abdi Rash' in the village of Kabbara and 'Sheikh Baleko' at Ba'hazani still retain such a reputation for sanctity that they are given the above titles of sheikhs or female saints.

Hagiology.

The conception of hagiology in the Yezidi creed is as chaotic as other elements in that museum of theological relics. Sometimes the doctrine of the saints is nothing else than the anthropomorphism of the seven great spirits and of other celestial agencies.

The Yezidis believe in the occasional incarnation of these divinities in various holy men; but that golden age of divine incarnation ended in, the far off past when these holy men were translated to a higher sphere where their influence is exercised benevolently on behalf of the Yezidis through the medium of the priesthood and of the thaumaturgic ceremonies.

In the number of the saints there are well known names like Sheikh Hasan*, Sheikh Shems-ud-Din,1

* Sheikh Hasan: probably the famous saint Hasan ul Basra.
1 Sheikh Shems-ud-Din: there have been so many important holy personages of this name that identification of the Yezidi allusion is almost impossible.
Sheikh Abdul Kadir'îl Gilani,* Sheikh Mohammad Rashan, Sheikh Mansur al Hallaj,\textsuperscript{1} Sheikh Kadhibî'îl Ban,\textsuperscript{2} Sheikh Rumi and others.

Shaks.

Shaks erected on the graves or, perhaps, supposed graves, of saints are pointed out in different localities. The shaks are usually in a grove or close to a sacred tree or sacred stream. Districts as far separated as the Jebel Sinjar and Sheikhan in Kurdistan may each have a shâk to the same saint or, at any rate, shaks bearing the same designation. But all Yezidi saints are not thus honoured with a shâk.

Within some of these shaks there is displayed a crudely ornamented box which is alleged to contain the remains of the saint to whose memory the fluted spire was erected.

There is no reliable Yezidi account or consistent tradition regarding the persons who are accorded the honour of shaks. Who these saints were, whence their origin, what their peculiar merit and what their era

\* Sheikh Abdul Kadir'îl Gilani: Persian; founder of the Kadiri derwishes, fl. cir. 1078-1165, A.D.

1 Sheikh Mansur al Hallaj: born at Turs in Pars, Persia; cir. 858 A.D. Grandson of a fire worshipper: pilgrim and ecstatic mystic, decapitated in Baghdad 922 A.D. vide "Baghdad the City of Peace" (R. Levy, 1929.)

2 Sheikh Kadhibî'îl Ban: contemporary of Abdul Kadir'îl Gilani, buried, according to tradition, near Meydan Gate, Mosul, vide "Ibn Khallikhan", trans. by De Slane, Vol. 2.
no one seems to know except that, as Yezidis generally affirm, "they lived before Mohammad."*

Notwithstanding this vague belief in the age of these shaks it is known that the grave of a kawwal Husein, near Ossofa in the north of the Jebel Sinjar, and the grave of another venerated man, close to Mirkhan in the north of the Jebel Sinjar - both of whom died in the 19th century - have become places of pilgrimage. Rude walls, which are decorated with the horns of sheep sacrificed at the tomb, have been erected round these graves which may, in due course, be dignified with shaks.

His own investigation into their hagiology leads the writer to the conclusion that some of the saints to whom the shaks have been raised are but the personification, or theriomorphism, of virtues ascribed by a process of 'a posteriori' reasoning concerning the success, at these sites, of thaumaturgic practices which wield such immense influence in Yezidi lives.

Prophets.

A category somewhat distinct from the saints is that of prophets.

The genius of the Yezidi faith is sufficiently flexible to acknowledge as prophets certain persons pre-eminent in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. 1 In

* Badger, loc. cit. page 118.
1 The Yezidis respect the Old Testament as the sacred book of the Jews; the New Testament as that of Christians and the Kur'an as that of Islam.
this category of prophets there are included Abraham, Moses, Jonah and Christ, New Testament apostles and Mohammad.

Among these prophets some are esteemed beyond their comperss. To Mohammad the Yezidis accord no special honour or offering. The rogation of the Ninevites is their commemoration of Jonah. Moses and Abraham, though receiving no dedicated offering, are reverenced as having been representations of the Deity.

Melek Isa.

Special recognition is given to Christ whom they designate Melek Isa. Sometimes he is esteemed next in eminence to Melek Taus and to Yezid: sometimes he follows next to Sheikh Adi and sometimes he is regarded as the second of the seven great spirits.* At the Great Assembly a sheep is specially sacrificed to Melek Isa.

The Yezidi ideas concerning Christ seem to be a vague form of Ebionite Gnosticism. Sometimes they say that he was one of the seven great spirits but became incarnate through human birth; sometimes they affirm that he was but an emanation or aeon who

* "They regard Christ as an angel in human form". (Ency:of Religion and Ethics, article Yezidis).
occupied a phantasmic body;* that at his crucifixion, which was premature and caused by the foolishness of men, the aeon returned to the celestial world, but, since his mission was cut short, Melek Isa – who is plenteous in mercy – is to return again and will be the Messiah of the Christians.

Thaumaturgies.

Even in countries possessing European civilisation of the 20th century it is not rare to discover credulity and superstition still finding expression in forms and ceremonies that are credited as media which are efficacious for the production of physical and spiritual benefits. Little wonder then that a people with the ancient traditions of the Northern Mesopotamian foothills should cherish practices that appear primitive and superstitious. And in certain districts, since trained medical skill is almost unknown, various devices and rites are requisitioned in the quest for relief from afflictions of body and of mind.

Birth, the course of life and even death and

* A Yezidi story (given in "Amurath to Amurath", page 278 2nd edition 1924) and which would appear to be a distorted version of the New Testament record (Math. 28/2-8, Mark 16/1-6) states that when the two women came to the grave of Christ they found no body there. Then there appeared unto them Melek Taus in the form of a derwish who told them that he had snatched Melek Isa away from the cross and left a phantom in his stead. When the women disbelieved the story Melek Taus took a cock which had been killed and boiled and, in their presence, restored it to life. He then vanished having informed them that henceforth he, Melek Taus, was to be worshipped through the form of a peacock.
burial are subject to the influence of these rites. And the different sacred objects of the faith, like fire, shaks, holy water, etc. are put under tribute to these superstitious practices.

The colour red seems to have some symbolic, protective significance. In the Jebel Sinjar it is common to find the inside walls of houses daubed with red and white colouring. Red flowers are often placed above the lintel of the door to ward off evil spirits. Women anxious for motherhood journey to sacred trees, as for example, to 'Sheikh Balika' the famous tree close to the sacred stream in Bahazani. To the branches of the tree they tie pieces of red and scarlet cloth and, meanwhile, the petitioners secretly express their wish. It is not only criminal but almost sacrilegious for any subsequent visitor to remove these rags until they rot or are blown away by the winds.

Fire as a curative and purifying agency has been discussed earlier in this thesis.

Shamanistic powers of the priesthood. The mediation of kuchaks, pirs and others of the priestly grade is often sought by a faith which attributes power over evil spirits and over evil influences to these religious officials. Sick, and even the insane, are often brought for cures to the house of certain religious functionaries where they are subjected to
recognised traditional rituals. The priest may make a prescription consisting of the blood of cows or of sheep mixed with the dung of oxen, or mud from the shake and sacred water. Rules governing the method and time for applying these cures to certain parts of the body must be strictly followed as also the obligation of depositing offerings at the local shrines, or in certain spots like clefts in sacred rocks. Sometimes the patient, if near a Christian church, will proceed there and repeatedly make the sign of the cross.

**Protection by the tablets.** A house possessing no Sheikh Adi tablets is exposed to many lurking evils. The tablets are a most indispensible protection for home and for possessions and are necessary not only throughout life but even at death when small portions of them are placed on certain parts of the corpse before burial.

**Baptismus Clinicorum.** Not only as a protection against future adversities but also as a present cure for physical and spiritual evils there is profound confidence placed in immersion into sacred streams as also in sprinkling with water from the kawwals' rouwis or with the water in which a sanjak was placed.

As the wishes expressed are often realised and as many patients who performed the ritual of healing subsequently recover - the popular conclusion is 'post hoc ergo propter hoc.' Where the ritual fails it is because the will of Khuda is inevitable.
Taboos.

The cult has not only positive obligations but likewise negative injunctions. These negative injunctions, or taboos, receive no less practical respect than many of the more spiritual aspects of the faith. The orthodoxy of a Yezidi is assessable more by what he will not do than by his constructive religion; and these taboos apply to various and strange aspects of daily life. They apply to (a) raiment, (b) food, (c) language and (d) other aspects of personal behaviour.

The colour blue. Neither ornaments nor garments bearing signs of blue colour are to be worn by young or old. Blue is forbidden because it is regarded as a colour so sacred that it is not to be used by sinful mortals.*

Diet. Certain articles of food are not to be eaten by Yezidis. This taboo applies to lettuce, haricot beans, pumpkin, fish, the flesh of pigs, and

* A small shop for the production of indigo was conducted by a Christian at Bahazani at the time of Badger's visit. Yezidis used to go there on pilgrimage and kiss the doorposts.

Parry, loc. cit. page 373, footnote, is not quite correct in agreeing that the 'Yezidis are said always to wear white garments and to hold the colour blue in particular aversion'. The facts are that, although white is a predominating colour, garments coloured red, dark brown and grey are worn by male and female. Blue is not worn because of the prevalent reverence for that colour.
gazelle flesh - the latter because, according to the Black Book, "it is the sheep of one of our prophets".*

The taboo includes the cock because of its similarity to the bird on the sanjak.  

Fish is taboo, according to a certain writer, "as a delicate compliment to Jonah." Water must not be taken from a narrow necked vessel except when the latter is covered with gauze.

Language. There are certain words which the tongue of a faithful Yezidi should never utter. Such are words which in any way resemble the word 'Shaitan'. All words beginning with a sound similar to the initial syllable in 'Shaitan' are not to be pronounced, as for example, sharr -(evil), shatt -(river). All words suggestive of cursing are forbidden, e.g. mal'un - (accursed), la'annah (curse), na'al (horse shoe - a colloquialism for curse) and na'alband (farrier). For

* The flesh of the gazelle and that of the pig were taboo among the early Assyrians. (Cf. page 83, "Babylonian and Assyrian Religions", Sayce.)

1. This taboo, as that on pumpkin, applies to "the sheikh and his disciples" (Mashaf Has).

2. Luke, loc. cit. page 127. It is to be observed, however, that fish - as the progeny of the river deity Ea - was regarded as sacred in Assyria in days long antecedent to Jonah.

3. Vide page 227 (of this chapter) as supplying the reason for this injunction.

4. "Les Yezidis", by Menant, page 80.- "en parlant d'une rivière, ils ne disent pas Shatt, parce que ce mot a trop de rapport avec la première syllabe du nom Satan,"Sheitan, le Diable", mais ils emploient l'expression Nahr." A writer in the magazine of the Royal Air Force College, (Vol.1.1931) mentions that great consternation was caused among some Yezidi recruits of the 'Iraq army in the Mosul district when they first heard their British drill instructor yelling - "'Shun."
these words synonyms are substituted. *

**Personal behaviour.** Certain rules of their behaviour are comprehensible as having some justification either of a religious or social nature. They have, however, certain other rules of conduct which, like the Yezidis and their religion, are weird and baffling.

Public baths are not allowed though public lustrations are common in different districts. Creedal sectarianism, too, accounts for the prohibition against baths which are used by Mohammedans. But only the queer genius of their own cult could furnish such a peculiar injunction as another of their taboos; and esteeming it discreet to restrict his interrogations to questions of higher importance and to avoid the possibility of unnecessarily terminating his conversation with the temple officials, the present writer cannot be emphatic as to the general prevalence among them of this strange taboo. But several writers, in addition to the Black Book, state that "it is forbidden to make water in a standing position: to relieve nature there must not be a fixed place of convenience."

* The books provided for Yezidi children in the schools at Ain Sifni and Tel 'Afar have been purged of these offensive words and synonyms are substituted.
Eschatology.

Funerals. Their funeral customs afford instructive insight into the volatile mentality of these primitive people.

The local pir carries out the functions of an undertaker. Water is taken from a running stream; but if running water is not available some is taken from a fountain and boiled and allowed to cool. With this purified water the pir washes the body. Thereafter the body is laid out on a white sheet; portions of Sheikh Adi tablets are placed in its mouth, under the armpits and on other parts of the body. The white sheet is then wound round the body and sewn up at the sides and ends. A bandage of white linen is thereafter tied round the sheet in which the body is wound. The body is thus prepared for removal.

To apprehend the fate of the disembodied spirit a kuchak, if available, takes up a position beneath the bier in a room where he must not be disturbed. There for some time he supplicates, as it is believed, Sheikh Adi and Yezidi saints concerning the welfare of the departed friend. The kuchak then falls into a trance and begins to foam at the mouth as the evidence of his being energised by occult powers. It is during this catalepsy that he receives his apocalyptic visions. When the trance has passed he sleeps until he is disturbed by the solititous relatives offering him food.
and drink. His visions may not always be consoling. If the deceased had been generally accredited with uprightness of character the kuchak makes the happy disclosure that the emancipated soul is even now being reborn into a child of their own race. But should the deceased have been of wild and irreligious characteristics the kuchak conveys the tragic information that the soul has already entered "into the body of a dog, ass, horse, or other animal."* To effect the emancipation of that dishonoured soul and to ensure its reincarnation in the human species, offerings must be presented to the local shrines and also to the religious local leaders. On the appearance of each new moon for a year an offering, however small, must be provided for the poor in the name of the deceased.1

The funeral procession. To convey the body to its resting place often the entire male adults of the village attend. In the procession may be a kuchak and a sheikh as well as the pir. Women, too, accompany the procession. If the deceased left a widow she comes forth from her house attired in her best white robes and carrying in her hand her husband's knife. As the cortege moves on the women slowly chant and wail:

* Stevens, loc.cit.page 193.
1 Joseph("Devil Worship",page 193) in stating that "the poor kill four or five sheep: the rich, a hundred", gives an exaggerated idea of the capacity of Yezidis to provide so lavishly.
the widow now smears her hair with clay and throws dust over her head and face. After some distance the procession halts and men, carrying drums, make muffled sounds on their instruments. The widow and her friends now commence moving round the corpse in slow measured steps. Gradually the pace is accelerated till the motions resemble a dance. Now the widow, with her husband's knife, cuts off tresses from her hair in token of her terrible sorrow. Again the procession moves on for some distance and again halts to go through a repetition of the lamentation-dance. The progress of the procession thus consists of certain stages, rests and lamentation-dances till the place of interment is reached.

After the body, which is buried facing the North Star,* is lowered into the grave the white shroud is temporarily raised from the face whilst a small quantity of Sheikh Adi dust is sprinkled on the face. Thereafter, as the grave is closed in, the widow and the women raise their voices in lamentation and heap dust on their heads. The relatives of the deceased who have brought with them certain offerings in the form of flowers hand these to the kuchak who places them on tombs of holy men buried in the cemetery.

The return from the cemetery is often characterised by outbursts of emotion which, ere long,

* "Cradle of Mankind", page 101.
pass from the pathetic to the cheerful. When the house of bereavement is reached the virtues and prowess of the deceased are commemorated in repeated drinks of native arak.* Bouts of this type of mourning continue intermittently for three evenings.

For several successive days, in the evening, the relatives of the deceased visit the grave. The women engage in lamentations as, sometimes, the men burn incense. Then, gazing in profound silence upon the grave for some time, they return to their homes.

Heaven. They believe in heaven as the abode of those who are finally emancipated from the cycles of reincarnation. Heaven is, to them, a metaphysical sphere: its citizens are spirit beings for whom time and space have neither secret nor mysteries. In their loftier estate these victorious souls are vigilant for the welfare of their fellow Yezidis who still toil in this world's captivity.

Paradise. One cannot readily agree with the statement that the Yezidis "have Islamic notions of Paradise as a place of eating and drinking, together with the pleasures of physical love."

The answers to our interrogations on their eschatological beliefs would rather agree with another writer who quotes a

* The Yezidis "pride themselves on the superiority of their religion over Islam in that their religion (unlike Islam) has no injunction against the use of intoxicating liquors."—Badger, loc. cit. page 123.

1 Encyclopaedia of Missions, New York, 1904. page 527.
member of the hierarchy at Sheikh Adi as stating that "in Paradise all differences of sex would again be wiped out, and that each soul would inhabit an angelic body which would be neither male nor female, but the perfect union of both in one."* They believe that in this paradisal life "there is no marriage, for in the presence of God there can be nothing but holiness."

Hell. They believe in hell; but, as can be inferred from theories current in certain of their localities, it is a hell essentially vanquished. No soul is to be eternally condemned though those persons whose earthly character ran counter to the acknowledged laws and obligations of Yezidism will inevitably receive penalty. This penalty assumes the form of reincarnation and metempsychosis.

Reincarnation and Metempsychosis. There prevails among them a nebulous belief in the doctrines of reincarnation and metempsychosis. "They never say 'such a one is dead' but that he is changed." And it is because of this belief that the kuchak occultism discovers a sphere in which it thrives.

* Seabrook, "Adventures in Arabia", page 304.
1 Journal of Anthropological Institute, page 205. (1911)
2 The Caucasian Yezidis say that Satan's sufferings and tears, in his penalty of 7,000 years in hell, have quenched hell. (Vide "To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise", Soane, page 100). The Sheikhan Yezidis have a story of a child of Adam who was afflicted in his head, hands and feet. His tears were preserved in a vessel and, these tears of a suffering child, being poured over hell, quenched its fires.
3 "Mesopotamia and Assyria", (Baillie Fraser) page 169.
An analysis of the popular attitude to these doctrines shows that transmigration and reincarnation are only the lot of wicked souls. Only those whose character was deficient according to the recognised religious conventions are subject to these reincarnations: and their reappearance on earth serves the paradoxical purpose of penalty and blessing. In the second or subsequent reincarnations the soul is liable to the laws of metempsychosis. The soul of a fierce transgressor may do its probation in the body of a dog; a less reprobate soul may be reincarnated in a horse. or a

The theory of reincarnation accounts for their taboo on the use of narrow necked vessels. It was by the entry of the disembodied soul of the mystic Sheikh Hallaj into a narrow necked water vessel from which his sister unwittingly drank that she brought forth a child in whom her brother's soul was now incarnated as her son.

Expiation and emancipation are attainable according to the meritorious activities of the soul in its first or successive incarnations. The conduct which conduces to the ultimate triumph of the soul is a synergism of human action with the goodwill of Khuda.

The Guardian Spirits.

The finally victorious souls, with their
infinitude of wisdom, exercise benevolent watchfulness by disclosing secrets and mysteries to those Yezidis whose comprehension is as yet bound by the limitations of an earthly existence.*

* The Yezidis believe that the souls of their ancestors can act as advocates with God: and for this reason one should strive to obtain the favour of these spirits by memorial feasts and funeral wakes.

Von Dirr in "Einiges über die Jeziden". in Anthropos, 1911.
CHAPTER XI.

YELLEK TAUS, YEZID, SHEIKH ADI and ORIGINS OF THE FAITH.

Yezidism as an agglomerate from other religions.

Summary of apparent incorporations:
- From Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam.

Resume of features not apparently derived from surrounding faiths:
- Sun-worship, fire-worship, sacred fountains, sacred stones, groves and sacred trees, astrology, anthropomorphism (and Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi).

The Sanjak - "Melek Taus".
- Number and distribution of,
- Description of and sketch,
- As Taus Kesh,
- Functions of,
- Significance of,

The Deity Melek Taus,
- In Yezidism,
- Origins of,
- Taus as Tammuz,
- Commemoration of Tammuz,
- Summary alignment of Taus and Tammuz.

Yezid,
- Origins of; (1) Mohammadan, (2) Persian-Kurdish.
- In the Yezidi cult.

Sheikh Adi.
- Suggested origins: (1) Syrian Sufi, (2) Kurdish gardener, (3) disciple of Mani.
- In the Yezidi faith.
- Who is he?
- As the Assyrian deity Adad and, therefore, a composite deity.

Summary Conclusion.
Chapter XI.


To apprehend in its fuller sense the significance of the accounts given in the previous chapter concerning the objects and nature of the faith, consideration must now be given to the question of the probable setting and evolution of the cult.

A conception of the possible religious and mythological environment from which there emerged what is now called Yezidism can scarcely be attained without an analysis of the significance in the cult of those important beings, or deities, called Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi. It is around these latter names that the whole cult rotates. And when the analysis of those deities is thereafter related to the accounts already given of the objects of Yezidi faith and adoration and, when the combined result is then compared and contrasted with other known religions in Assyria, some light may thus be radiated on the background of the religious thought in which the fundamental elements of the present Yezidi cult may have been born.

In his investigations, which were motivated purely by the desire for knowledge, the writer sought to discover the answer to the obscure problem of the religious origin of this strange sect who have so long
endured the reproach which dogs a minority religion and whose chequered history makes a potent appeal to the imagination.

Their illusive dogma and their primitive ceremonies have forged these devotees into the material of which martyrs are made; and it is because of this devotion that neither persecution nor the sword have eliminated from the Assyrian hills a creed which would appear to be as persistent as it is unique and which still cherishes practices that seem to have been outlined in the childhood of history.

Neither synagogue, church nor mosque satisfy the religious yearnings of this party. Nevertheless some features of their faith would appear to warrant the view of certain writers who regard Yezidism as an eclectic agglomeration of beliefs and practices incorporated from different surrounding religious systems like Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Yet the present writer, notwithstanding his readiness to welcome any feasible contribution towards the elucidation of the difficult problem of Yezidi religious origins, cannot dismiss the substantial body of evidence which would suggest for this unique faith an origin at once different to, and more ancient than, those faiths from which Yezidism is alleged to be/inciporporation.
The Yezidis do not regard themselves as Jews, Christians, nor Muhammadans. Nor do they retain any reliable traditions that link them, as a direct offspring, to these major religions. Yet on the other hand an analysis of the cult discloses several aspects which not only resemble features in some of these larger faiths but which appear to be directly traceable to these religions. History here shows, as often elsewhere, that geographical proximity results in religious and theological borrowings. But what can be accepted as definite and unquestionable incorporation from these other religions is actually a very limited portion of Yezidi dogma and practice. The question, therefore, still persists as to the source of those other elements that do not appear in these major faiths but which, nevertheless, constitute the body and principal substance of the Yezidi cult.

To assist the disinterested inquirer in reaching an independent view as to whether or not the Yezidi cult is in reality an agglomeration from surrounding faiths we submit:

1. A summary of those features in Yezidism which seem to have been absorbed from these other religions.
2. A resume of the features which are not apparently derived from any of these surrounding religions but which, nevertheless, constitute the substantial and characteristic body of Yezidism.
A. Summary of features which would seem to be absorbed

1. From Judaism.
2. From Zoroastrianism.
3. From Christianity.
4. From Islam.

B. Resume' of features which are not apparently borrowed from the above religions.

1. Sun-worship.
2. Fire-worship.
3. Sacred water and fountains.
4. Sacred stones.
5. Groves and sacred trees.
7. Melek Taus.
8. Yezid.

Summary of features in Yezidism which seem to be absorbed from surrounding faiths.

From Judaism. The presence in Yezidism, as prophets, of Abraham, Moses and Jonah; and the Rogation of the Ninevites. These may have been taken from Judaism directly or possibly from Islam.

Circumcision. This rite is, however, not universally practised among the Yezidis. (Vide, Chap.10, page 208). And circumcision is not an exclusively Jewish practice. It was known among the Babylonians as well as with the Jews.*

Belief in the Flood and an Ark. But the Yezidi tradition of the flood is a very mixed version of the Biblical account and contains suggestions of the ancient Babylonian Epic of the Deluge. The Yezidi

legend of the flood records that a serpent which was on board the ark coiled itself into a ball and thus filled the hole which was caused in the ark when the latter grounded and was pierced by a rock. In Yezidi tradition the ark rested on the Sinjar hills; sometimes it is said to have come to rest on the mountains around Sheikh Adi in the foothills of Kurdistan.

There were numerous 'arks', or ships, in the Assyrian tradition from the remote days when the water deity Ea was held in high esteem. In the Assyrian tradition the ark of the Chaldean Noah rested on "the mountain of Nizir" which was regarded as being in Kurdistan.*

The Yezidis profoundly reverence the serpent. Its symbol is prominently incised on the main door of their temple. But they themselves supply no explanation for the origin of the symbol. It is not impossible that the Yezidi recognition of a serpent in the creed may have been derived from, or partially based on, Jewish doctrine - although the Yezidi attitude to the symbol of the serpent is that of profound veneration. On the other hand it is known that at a certain stage of Chaldean religious mythology the serpent was regarded as the symbol and representation of the water deity Ea. The serpent,

* Sayce, loc.cit. page 361.
too, was a symbol of Nina, the patron deity of Nineveh, whose name was interchangeable with that of the serpent; and in Chaldean mythology it was this water deity Ea - represented in the serpent - who saved humanity from total destruction in the Chaldean flood.

It is, therefore, not impossible that in the Yezidi traditions of the flood there survive definite, though fragmentary, evidences of the ancient Chaldean legends.

Satan. This title may have been borrowed from their Jewish neighbours as its import approximated the Yezidi idea of a principal of evil spirits.* But belief in deities of the lower world existed in Assyria from pre-historic days.

Judaism is severely monotheistic. Yezidism is not so. If Yezidism originated in Judaism we would expect the Old Testament to be the standard of Yezidi faith and practice. Yezidism, however, merely acknowledges it as one of other holy books - like the New Testament and the Kur'an.

Features in Yezidism which would appear to have been absorbed from Zoroastrianism.

"The recognition of the principles of good and evil which it (Yezidism) perpetuates is derived in all likelihood from the Persian dualists: from Persia, too.

* Vide Chap.XI (page271) for recognition in Yezidism of power called Shaitan.
the Yezidis may have drawn their cult of the Sun."*

Thus states one writer. Another states that, "in Khode Qanj and Malik Tawus of the Yezidis we recognise Ormuzd and Ahriman, the good and evil principles of Iranian mythology."1

It is possible that the general Iranian (Zoroastrian) doctrine of Ormuzd (the Lord Wisdom) as warring with Ahriman (the Evil principle) may have had some influence upon the religious ideas of people who were living in the Assyrian foothills and who were not completely isolated from possible contact with the religious doctrines of the near provinces of Urumiyah and North West Persia. Religious ideas cannot easily be geographically confined. But in like manner the primitive Assyrian nature worship of Sun, Moon, Earth and Lower World was not unknown in Iranian localities centuries before the rise and propagation of Zoroastrianism. The struggle between the powers of good and evil was known in Assyria since the remote days of Sargon of Accad.

There may have been a common natural stalk from which there developed different branches. But transplantings, migrations and geographical environment could lead to the emphasising of particular

* "Mosul and its Minorities", page 125.
1 Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1911, page 201.
peculiarities and even to the emergence of new features. And, notwithstanding the apparent newness of the principal doctrines of Zoroastrianism, "there is evidence of concessions being made in Zoroastrianism to previous religious views or time-honoured practices. The glorification of the sun, moon and stars as part of God's universe could not be omitted from the popular creed."

Such adoration of the sun, moon and stars prevailed, centuries before the formulating of Zoroastrianism, in the very section of the ancient Assyrian kingdom where the Yezidis are still to be encountered. Yezidism, therefore, need not import from Zoroastrianism practices which were popular from early centuries in Assyrian thought.

In fact one is not warranted in acquiescing too readily in the discovery, within the Yezidi cult, of the Zoroastrian doctrine of Ormuzd and Ahriman. The doctrines of good and evil in the creed of Zoroaster can hardly be regarded as similar to the Yezidi conception of the relationship of Khuda to Melek Taus; nor does Zoroastrianism furnish any counterpart to the Yezidi deities, Yezid and Sheikh Adi.

* Jackson, "Persia; Past and Present", page 66. Zoroaster is generally believed to have founded his religion in the 7th century B.C. "The year B.C-660 was perhaps the date of Zoroaster's birth - although much uncertainty has prevailed on the subject and some scholars argue that he flourished a century or two earlier."

Jackson, loc.cit. page 60.
The Yezidi Khuda is a deity whose transcendentalism puts him in a state of aloofness from the affairs of the earth. The Zoroastrian Ormuzd, the principle of good, is the foe who is in active hostility to the completely evil power Ahriman. Ormuzd has his amshaspands - Good-thought, Best Righteousness, Wished-for-kingdom, Holy Harmony, Saving Health and Immortality. These personified abstractions attend around the throne of Ormuzd with a company of yazatas, (or attendant angels) and are the allies of Ormuzd in the struggle with Ahriman who, with his vile crew of daevas (archfiends) and legions of drujes (demons) huddle together in the murky depths of hell with mocking howls and ribald cheers. The struggle is to be ceaseless until falsehood is overcome with annihilation.

These metaphysical subtleties of the Zoroastrian doctrine of Good versus Evil do not fit into the Yezidi scheme of theology. The Yezidi Melek Taus was a celestial collaborator of God in the work of creating and administering the world. Melek Taus, however, through disagreement with God lost his pristine eminence and became ruler of the lower-world. But, like other deities in Assyrian mythology, he was elevated - or as other Yezidis say, will be restored in due time - to a celestial status as chaperon of
Yezidi souls on their attaining emancipation from the penalties of reincarnation.

At the present day neither in their ritual at festivals nor in the ceremonies relating to death or funerals is there a similarity which would relate Yezidi religious practices with the Parseeism of Persia or of Bombay.

The claim to recognise Persian dualism in modern Yezidism would, therefore, seem to have to be abandoned as a result of comparing Zoroastrianism with Yezidism and Yezidism with the creeds of the Assyrian pantheon.

Features in Yezidism which would appear to have been absorbed from Christianity.

Christ. Christ is accorded an eminent place in the Yezidi faith.* But even that eminence relegates Him to a status inferior to the deities Melek Taus and Sheikh Adi. The festival of Christmas is observed; and a sheep is sacrificed to Christ during the Yezidi Great Assembly. Their traditions regarding His nature, death and mission, seem to be a vague blend of Ebionite Gnosticism.

Christian Symbols. Their respect for Christian

* It may be suggested that the presence in Yezidism of a belief in Christ (Melek Isa) may be derived from Islam rather than from Christianity. But Christianity was virile in Northern Mesopotamia centuries before the propagation there of Islam.
churches and for the names of the Christian apostles, as, likewise, the practice of the sign of the cross are doubtlessly derived from surrounding Christian influence.

**Baptism.** But in form or significance the sacred lustrations of the Yezidis cannot definitely be viewed as reproductions of the Christian sacrament of baptism. Baptism in Yezidism is a ritual credited with producing physical and spiritual benefits; and such lustrations were a feature of Assyrian life in days long before the appearance there of Christianity.

Features which would appear to have been absorbed from Islam.

Perhaps from political expediency, or more likely through the generous catholicity of the Yezidi cult, the prophet Mohammad is allotted a place among other Yezidi prophets like Moses, Abraham and Christ. But no offering or special honour is otherwise given to him.

The Yezidis accept the belief in the return of the Islamic Imam Mahdi; but Ali, Hussein and Fatima are not granted any special place or reverence in the faith.

The measure of respect paid to the Kur'an as a holy book does not exceed the esteem in which they regard the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Mecca is recognised as a holy place - for Mohammadans. The temple of Sheikh Adi is, however, the holiest of all temples for the devout Yezidi.
The above few elements seem to constitute the distinctly Islamic characteristics in the religious cult of the Yezidis.

A resume of features which are not apparently derived from surrounding religions.

Sun Worship. Sun worship is sternly forbidden in the Old Testament. The person who was convicted of violating the commandments against the worship of sun, moon and stars was to be stoned to death.* Orthodox Judaism, deriving its devotional guidance from the Mosaic code, could scarcely be the source from which sun-worship could be incorporated into Yezidism. The worship of the sun was apparently introduced among the Jews in Palestine by the Assyrians and was formally established by Manasseh in contravention of the Mosaic prohibitions.

The Kur'an also (Sura 41) prohibits the worship of the sun.

Whilst adoration of the sun appears in Zoroastrianism its presence there may be regarded as a concession to previous religious views or time-honoured practices among Iranian worshippers. "The glorification of sun, moon and stars as part of God's universe could not be omitted from the popular creed of Zoroasterl.

* Vide Leviticus 17/2-7: also Deuter:4/19, etc. 1 Jackson, loc.cit. page 66.
In Assyrian religious thought the Sun-god prevailed in days far anterior to the establishment of Zoroastrianism whether we regard the founding of the latter faith as taking place either in the 10th or 8th century B.C. The Sun-god was one of the early and persistent nature deities in Babylonian and Assyrian religion. We find him mentioned as far back as 4,200 B.C. He again appears at the head of the inscription which bears the laws of Hammurabi, cir: 2,100, B.C. And in the 7th century B.C. the Assyrian king Ashur-bani-pal was present at the festival of the sun deity Ishtar of Nineveh. "He himself guided the car on which the image of the goddess was set, and made a triumphal entry into the city in the midst of the acclamations of the multitude."*

There were several solar deities in early Mesopotamian religion; and in the evolution of religious thought some of these were incorporated in other, and more potent, deities. Yet, notwithstanding the process of incorporation and transformation, there continued the adoration of the great lord of life who threw open the gates of the morning and raised his head over the horizon - thus illuminating the heavens and energising the earth with his beams.

* Oxen were a favourite sacrifice to the Sun-god as

they are still the sacrifice of the Yezidis to the sun at the shrine of 'Sheikh' Shems in the valley of Sheikh Adi.

As a study of Assyrian early religion reveals the practice of sun worship within that territory long before the rise of Zoroastrianism in Persia there would, therefore, appear no ordinary reason why the practice of sun worship within the Yezidi cult should be an incorporation from Persia as the practice, which features generally in very primitive religions, was already prevalent and systematised in Assyria.

Fire-worship. Fire as an element cognate with the sun is profoundly reverenced by the Yezidis. Even the chantries and niches and rocks around the temple, where the evening illuminations are placed by the priests, are regarded as having special sanctity. And, as shown in previous chapters, the devotees vie with each other to touch the purifying flame of the priestly torch at the Great Assembly.

It might be suggested that this fire-adoration may be traced to the influence of Zoroastrianism - a faith in which fire-worship was a cardinal doctrine and where even portable fire-altars were used. But, like certain other natural elements in Zoroaster's creed, fire-worship had existed before his time. The
fire-god was one of the leading deities honoured in Assyria.* Fire that burns and purifies all that is foul was there regarded as a divine agent; and this divine messenger subsequently became a deity itself with the privileges and rank of that exalted status. In course of time this Assyrian fire-god Kibir became identified with the great sun-god Shamash. The worship of fire and of the sun were thus combined and were known in Assyria before the rise of Zoroastrianism in Persia.

Whilst, therefore, it is not impossible that the spread of Zoroaster's cult in Persia may have given a fresh impetus to the practice of fire-worship in Northern Assyria the cult of the fire-god itself could be discovered in remoter days throughout Assyria where its evidences are still to be encountered among the Yezidis.

Sacred Fountains. With the Yezidis the water in the tanks within the temple of Sheikh Adi is specially sacred. It is used in the most solemn ceremonies of

*Cf. Prayer to the fire-god on an Assyrian tablet: 
"O Nusku, thou mighty one, thou Offspring of Anu, thou Image of the Father, First-born of Enlil, Produce of the Ocean, Created One of Ea! I have raised on high the torch, and I have given light unto thee. The magician hath enchanted me; with the spell wherewith he hath bound me, bind thou him! ...And may the Fire-god, the mighty one, make of no effect the incantations, spells and charms of those who have made figures in my image, and drawn pictures of my form, who have caught my spittle, who have plucked out my hair..." "A Guide to Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities: British Museum, 1922, page 200.
their cult - whether for purification and healing of the living or for the preparation of the dead for burial.

The dark cavern beneath the holy of holies in their temple is so extraordinarily sacred that admission into it is almost totally disallowed to those who do not belong to the faith. This cavern, teeming with rills of trickling water, is the birthplace of the sacred stream which supplies the temple tanks and forms the source of the rivulet which flows through the glen outside the temple. In this watery cavern, perhaps, "we have the key to the time-honoured sanctity of Sheikh Adi. It was primarily a seat of that fountain worship which was one of the earliest of all known cults."*

The sanctity of water, whether as fountain or stream, was almost a universal feature in primitive religions and still is in different cults in Mesopotamia. "Sacred fountains by the dozen, and sacred trees by the score, may still be met with in these outlandish regions. But in Christian and Moslem villages they are reverenced somewhat shamefacedly. Among the followers of a lower religion the old superstition has retained a firmer hold."1

In the land of the powerful river-god Ea it is not

* & 1 Wigram, "Cradle of Mankind", page 100.
surprising to discover traces of his cult still surviving.*  "In the Kurdish highlands paganism would die but slowly. The worship of sun, moon and morning star, and of the elements of earth, fire, air, and water seems to speak of a Nature-worship as old, perhaps, as the human race in these regions."  

Sacred Stones. The Yezidi adoration of sacred stones (described in our chapters 5, 7 and 10) is no isolated example of that practice in early religions; and even faiths more developed and more systematised provide examples of this reverence for sacred stones. Israel had its 'bethel' - though it was not any inherent sanctity of the stone but the association of sacred incidents which consecrated these stones, or pillars, into altars of God. The cult of the 'bethel' was general in Arabia, in Phoenicia and in Syria as well as in Babylonia and Assyria. So firmly rooted was the primitive belief in the sanctity of the famous black stone of the Kaaba at Mecca in Muhammad's day that even he was unable to eradicate the belief.

* An ancient hymn addressed to the river respectfully petitions: - "Grant me (to bathe in) the straight course of thy waters, The (impurity) which is in my body to thy channel carry it, even to the channel. (Take) it, bear it down into thy stream. (Deliver) me, and it shall not come nigh my altar. (Purify) my sin that I may live." Quoted in Sayce, loc. cit., page 404.

† in the Assyrian legend of the Flood Gilgamish is restored to health by being immersed in a fountain with healing water. Vide "Guide to Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities", 1922, page 220.

Stevens, "By Tigris and Euphrates", page 198.
The veneration of sacred stones in Yezidism need not, therefore, be a derivative from any of the major religions which surround Yezidism. The roots of the practice lie deep in early religious thought.

Groves and Sacred Trees. In Jewish history the sacred grove and sacred tree were known. The adoration of them was, however, regarded by the religious thinkers as inconsistent with fidelity to the worship of Jehovah and worthy of prophetic declamation.*

In the Iranian thought, within which Zoroastrianism developed, the theory of sacred trees and groves was well known in thaumaturgic ceremonies.1

The presence in these respective religious systems of veneration for sacred trees was, however, but the expression of a feature common in early religious thought.

Within the very Assyrian territory where Yezidism now survives there existed from pre-historic eras a recognition of "trees of life" and "trees of healing".

In the Babylonian account of the Deluge there is record of a plant which prolonged life. In the Assyrian transcept of the British Museum there are sculptures showing the Assyrian king Ashur-nasir-pal (B.C.883-859) attended by priests performing rites

1 "The Zoroastrian Homa, or sacred tree, was preserved by the Persians, almost as represented on the Assyrian monuments, until the Arab invasion." "Nineveh and its Remains", Vol.2,p.472
before a tree which was sacred to the deity Ashur; and the memorial stone (in the Assyrian Room of the British Museum) which records the restoration of the walls and temples of Babylonia by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (cit.681-669 B.C.) has on its top a sacred tree. The tree is a common feature on Assyrian cylinders and often appears incised in prominent positions in the palace of the Assyrian kings.

It would thus seem that the respect which prevails among the Yezidis for sacred trees may be a heritage which was known to their predecessors in Assyria.

**Astro-theology and anthropomorphism.** The chaotic relics of astro-theological ideas and anthropomorphism surviving in Yezidism are more peculiar to Assyrian primitive thought than to any of the subsequent and more harmonised systems of religion which surround Yezidism.

The cuneiform inscriptions testify that this astro-theology goes back to a remote era - for the ideograph of a deity was a star.

The ancient Chaldeans are generally regarded as among the earliest speculators in the science of astrology and in the organising of the Zodiacal system. They recognised that regular and consistent activities, or laws, underlay the planetary movements. The sun,
moon and evening star had become objects of worship in remote epochs; and the sacredness attached to them would naturally be reflected upon the other heavenly bodies with which they were associated. In the evolution of religious mythology these celestial bodies became identified with eminent deities of the higher world. Gods of earth and even of the lower world were also translated to become divinities of the higher world and were identified with celestial bodies which now received worship as constellated natural objects. It was similarly believed that celestial deities and other lesser beings made descents to the world and, again, returned to their own celestial residence.

In the elevated and more spiritual thought of subsequent religions, belief in the association of heavenly agencies with this earth certainly prevailed. But the Yezidi doctrine, unlike Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is of the grosser form which has either been inherited from the Assyrian primitive standard or, otherwise, has degenerated to that level.

The above resume of features which do not appear to be incorporations from surrounding faiths is incomplete without an account of Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi who are the important and peculiar factors of the Yezidi cult. It is the special significance
of that triad in an investigation of this strange sect that necessitates the following and more exhaustive explanations.

The Sanjak 'Melek Taus'.

The Yezidi faith has given visible representation to a cardinal element of its dogma in the form of symbols to which the profoundest veneration is accorded. These symbols or sanajik (plural of sanjak = Turkish, 'standard') are the palladium of the faith and have the peculiar designation of Melek Taus.

The designation Melek Taus can be a source of perplexity in view of the fact that this is the same title which they apply to one of the most potent deities of their faith.* The bird-symbol and the deity called Melek Taus are thus apt to be regarded as synonymous. Constant vigilance is, therefore, necessary to preserve the different and dual applications of the name Melek Taus. In this section dealing with the standard of the faith - the terms sanjak and bird-symbol are used instead of Melek Taus to avoid confusion.

Number and distribution. It is believed that there are normally but seven of these cherished symbols in existence; and they are esteemed so important that the distribution of them can sometimes be a subject of

* The deity Melek Taus is considered on subsequent pages of this chapter.
deep concern not only to the mir but also to the officials of the mandatory power responsible for the administration of the millet.* The exact number of the sanjak now among the Yezidis, and the location of these symbols, is a problem which is made more mysterious by the reluctance of the Yezidis to reveal the symbols to members of other religions. This unwillingness prevails into the present time; and even friendly Europeans who visit the temple are made to feel indiscreet when urging their desire to gaze upon a sanjak. The secrecy may have been originally founded on religious injunctions. Perhaps, however, it was devotion to a belief in the sanctity of these symbols that resorted to the prudent device of hiding them from hostile irreverence.

The mir has a sanjak at his kāsr at Ba'idhri; another is retained at the temple of Sheikh Adi; another is allotted to the Jebel Sinjar and one is supposed to be given to the Yezidis in Syria. The sanjak allotted to the Caucasus Yezidis was lost during the Great War when the symbol and its guardian completely disappeared.

It is maintained that in 1837 several of the sanjak were captured by Reshid Pasha. The Kurds also affirm that they carried away the headquarters'.

* Government orders had to be issued for the redistribution of the sanjak at the end of the Great War.
Sketch of Figure in British Museum.

Sketch made from photograph appearing on frontispiece of "Mosul & its Minorities.

(See British Museum emblem.)
sanjak when they looted the temple in 1892. The priests retorted that the symbol had already been hidden and that only a dummy was taken by the Kurds. "The Kurds would, of course, say they took it, even if they did not; and the priests would equally of course deny it, even if they did. Both alternatives are equally probable."*

It is believed that there is a sanjak in the state museum of Jaipur, India. Another is stated to have been discovered in the Baghdad bazaar where it was purchased by a Christian residenter of that city. It is a picture of this sanjak which appears with the article of Pere Anastase Marie in the journal 'Anthropos'. Sanjak found its way in 1912 to the British Museum.

**Description of the symbol.** The sanjak in the British Museum is a bronze or copper figure of a bird. (Vide, figure 1 on opposite page) It consists of three parts; it is thirtyfive inches in height and rests on a plinth base. The body of the bird is inlaid with antimony; the tail, which is extended is ornamented with human and animal figures and the head is gilded with turquoise.

A sketch made by his wife, at Ba'Sheikha, of what friendly Yezidis assured her was their sanjak

* "The Cradle of Mankind", page 98.
appeared in Badger's book in 1852. Describing the sanjak he states that "the figure is that of a bird, more resembling a cock than any other fowl, with a swelling breast, diminutive head, and wide spreading tail. The body is full, but the tail flat and fluted, and under the throat is a small protuberance intended perhaps to represent a wattle. This is fixed on the top of a candlestick, round which are two lamps, placed one above the other and each containing seven burners, the upper being somewhat larger than the under. The whole is of brass, and so constructed, that it may be taken to pieces and put together with the greatest ease."

A comparison of the sketch (in Badger's book) with the symbol in the British Museum discloses certain dissimilarities. And the most recently acquired photograph of a sanjak* would suggest points of difference between itself and both of the former. For these dissimilarities there are feasible explanations. The loss of some of these symbols would necessitate the making of new ones; and as the metal-worker in the bazaar of Mosul or of Teheran would construct the sanjak from verbal instructions - since he would not likely be trusted to see one of the remaining number - his finished article might differ somewhat from the

* Reproduced, in sketch, on frontispiece of "Mosul and its Minorities", published 1925.
original sanjak. A dissimilarity of technique and detail need not, therefore, be a criterion for assessing whether some of the symbols are real or imitation. The policy of concealing them makes it almost impossible to distinguish what may be a real sanjak and what is not. It should be observed, however, that a recently-made sanjak can become endowed with virtues similar to those far anterior to it in age.

Taus Kush. As a further precaution against the loss of any of the sanajik small reproductions of them are made and are used, in times of danger, as substitutes for a real sanjak by the kawwals when on their journeys among the distant Yezidis. These reproductions, which may sometimes be made of wax, are called Taus Kush and are credited with religious efficacies similar to the real bird-symbols and are, therefore, accorded similar honour and reverence.

The functions of the symbols. If at all available a sanjak, or taus kush, must figure at religious and social festivals. Its presence there confers more than normal sanctity and importance on the occasion. Its medicinal virtues enhance the welcome given to the symbol by the different localities; and even the water in which it is immersed becomes a powerful antidote to various kinds of illness and
affliction. The presence of a sanjak is likewise necessary for collecting the dues, both for the temple and for the mir, in distant localities and at Sheikh Adi.

The privilege of entertaining the sanjak in its procession through the villages is granted to the person who bids the highest for the honour; and as the highest bidder is usually the kiahya (headman) of the village the ikon thus secures the patronage of the leading men of the different localities and, through them, claims the reverence of the whole sect.

The significance of the symbol. — In the absence of any lucid tradition among themselves either for the genesis and development of their beliefs or for the specific significance of the symbol called Melek Taus, the problem of the interpretation of that symbol becomes difficult.

What the actual bird represented on the sanjak might be would appear, on superficial consideration, to be a matter of little, if any, consequence. The subject, however, is not insignificant if we realise that the acceptance of the bird as representing only a peacock - as also the acceptance of the Satanic significance symbolically attributed to that fowl - might tend to the production of a view which regards the Yezidis merely as worshippers of the devil.
An American writer (Isya Joseph in "Devil Worship", page 152) states that "taus is the Arabic word meaning peacock, just as melek is the Arabic word meaning king or angel", and that the symbol Melek Taus "denotes the devil and nothing else". To his own query as to how the Yezidi god came to be represented by the form of a peacock he finds an answer in a Muslim tradition (vide Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, page 31) that when Adam and Eve forfeited paradise through eating the forbidden fruit a peacock and Satan figure as sharing the same penalty and that, according to Sura 2/28-31, Kur'an, the crime of Satan was pride: and that, since the peacock is well known as the proverbial personification of pride, (vide Encyc:Brit: Vol.18, page 443) therefore, "we may infer that the notion of the peacock as a symbol of pride together with the Koranic idea of Satan's sin led to the formation of the myth."

This would be interesting if there were convincing evidence that the Yezidis do regard the sanjak merely as the symbol of pride or as the symbol of the Devil only. A narrow or restricted interpretation of the bird and of its significance is not expedient in the consideration of a subject so very obscure as Yezidism since this restriction may exclude various factors that are important in
ascertaining the actual, and perhaps varied, significance of this symbol in a cult still surviving on the soil of ancient Assyria.

That the Yezidis apply the name Melek Taus (the peacock angel, or king peacock) to the symbol no writer denies. Why it is thus named the Yezidis themselves do not definitely know. Nor do they seem to have any historical idea as to when the symbol began to feature in their cult.* While some writers regard the bird on the sanjak as a peacock there are others who hesitate to be dogmatic either on the identity of the bird or on the exact significance of the symbol. Some of these writers have described the bird as a cock.1 Another, more cautiously, calls it "Un coq ressemblant à un paon" (Anastase Marie); while another (Ainsworth in "Trans. of the Ethnological Institute 1861, page 23) states that "it is a bird: no specific fowl is necessarily intended."

Certainly from the few known specimens of the symbols and from an investigation into the setting and background of the Yezidi religion it is unsafe to be emphatic as to what particular fowl, if any special fowl, is represented on the symbol. From appearance the bird need not be merely a peacock.

*A legend among them which seeks to account for the acceptance of the peacock as symbolising the deity Melek Taus is given on our page 277.

1 It is because of its similarity to their sacred symbol that the Yezidi priests do not eat the flesh of a cock.
notwithstanding the name "taus" (Arabic, 'peacock') which is applied to it. The bird, from appearance, may be a dove or a cock or various similar fowls which have no such symbolism of Satanic pride as is attributed to the peacock. And the profound adoration accorded by the Yezidis to their sacred symbol displays an attitude in which there is expressed a consciousness of there being represented in the symbol other, and more sacred, elements than pride.

It should be remembered that the bird-symbol is reverenced among them in the wider sense of being representative of the different attributes which are regarded as constituting the nature of that divine triad consisting of the deities Melek Taus, Sheikh Adi and Yezid to whom the devotees proffer their adoration. And, as is intended to be shown subsequently in this chapter, the deity Melek Taus himself is, among the Yezidis, a deity whose nature includes more and nobler elements than pride. A certain writer affirms that "the sacred cock stands for him (Sheikh Adi) also: so that he (Sheikh Adi) is worshipped at the same time as Melek Taus; and at his tomb the sanjak of Melek Taus is reverenced equally with the tomb (of Sheikh Adi). The two eternal principles have thus equal honour and by this
arrangement no one can worship the one without equally worshipping the other."*

All that we are safe in affirming is that the standard of the faith is the symbol of a bird which resembles a peacock, a dove, a cock or some similar fowl.

We know that bird-symbols often featured in the religious and military pageantry of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, the Hittite Empire, Palestine and Greece. And the bird which was favoured on the standard of some of these religions had close similarity to the bird-symbol in others of these faiths. In fact some of the symbols seem to be so completely alike that in the absence of written explanations it would be impossible, by mere observation, to specify which bird is actually represented.

There is available sufficient evidence to show that in the polytheism of early Assyria and Babylonia bird-symbols were not uncommon as representations of deity. Examples of these winged representations of divinity can be seen in the Assyrian saloon of the British Museum. The Nimrud Gallery of that Museum also exhibits sculptures, discovered in the palace of Ashur-nasir-pal, King of Assyria, (B.C. cir: 883-859,) on which there appear priests wearing winged apparel

* Ency: of Missions, 1904, page 528.
and bird-headed masques. And among the relics discovered at Babylon was a cone on the base of which was engraved a priest, or deity, with wings like a bird and standing in an attitude of adoration before a fowl.* It is also known that at a certain period of their history a bird was an emblem on the standard of the Assyrians when they went forth to war.

A bird was likewise the symbol of the great Assyrian and Babylonian deity Ishtar whose career is a process of incorporating and transforming various theological and mythological ideas which prevailed throughout Central Asia and of which some would seem to appear today in the religion of the Yezidis.

A similar practice of representing deities by bird-symbols existed in other cults contiguous to Assyria. To the north-east of Assyria proper the scenes depicted, by the order of Darius the Great, on the Behistun rock show a figure supposed to be the god Ahuramazda girt with a winged circle. To the west, among the Syrians and Phoenicians, the predominant and favourite deities were represented in the form of bird-symbols;1 and to the north and west the Hittites, whose empire at a certain period (cir:1925 B.C.) actually extended from the Taurus mountains to the city

* "Nineveh and Babylon" (Edition 1867, page 304.)
1 Vide "The Hittite Empire", Garstang, 1928, pp. 3, 105, 123.
of Babylon, had representations of their deities in the form of birds.

It is known that in the fluctuations and evolution of Assyrian and Babylonian religious history deities which were hitherto distinct and independent were confused, blended and transformed. A result of these permutations was that the bird-symbol which at one time represented one deity could subsequently represent another, or more deities, according to the fusing and incorporating in one or more deities of different religious ideas. By this process the earlier significance of the bird-symbol could vary and, consequently, the ultimate significance of the symbol might almost be the antithesis of its earlier import. We find, in Assyria, that a bird resembling a cock or peacock was the symbol of Nergal (the Cuthite god of the lower world*) and, in another phase of the Assyrian mythology, a bird similar to the fowl of Nergal was the symbol of Ishtar as a sun goddess.

The modern religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - which exist is Assyria do not have symbolic representations in bird-form of the deity. Yezidism could not, therefore, borrow the symbol from these

* Nergal (appears also as Nin-ki-gal) was a baal of Assyria; was a god of the lower world whose messengers were diseases, nightmares, plagues and troubles that oppressed mankind. (Vide, Sayce, Hibbert Lectures 3rd Edition, 1891, pp.145-148.)
surrounding faiths. The emergence of the Yezidi symbol must, therefore, have been entirely spontaneous and independent of Judaism, Christianity and Islam; or, on the other hand, it must be derived from some source which is different from these religions and which is indigenous to the Yezidi environment within the bounds of Assyria. And in view of the prevalence of these sacred bird-symbols in Assyrian religious mythology and in neighbouring primitive cults it is not improbable that the inability of the Yezidis to account for the source and era of their own sacred symbol may be traced to the possibility that the sanjak has its roots in times and practices that are very remote in Assyria and of which Yezidi tradition has retained no account.

It is feasible that owing to the similarity to a peacock (ta'us: Arabic, 'peacock') of the bird which is represented on the sanjak the name or description ta'us was thus given to the symbol. The ascription of the prefixial title Melek ('king', or malak = 'angel': Arabic), may be but another example of the custom prevalent among the Yezidis of assigning important titles to honoured things or persons.*

* Sheikh (and its feminine counterpart Sitt) are titles which the Yezidis apply even to sacred trees and sacred stones. Vide (chapter 10) page 213.
Furthermore, in view of the variable and alternating significance attributed to these Assyrian symbols — sometimes as representing deities of evil, deities of good, deities of the natural seasons, deities of the darkness of the lower world and, sometimes, as deities of solar splendour — it is inadvisable to be dogmatic regarding the specific significance of the Yezidi sanjak Melek Taus. The symbol is an expression of the Yezidi consciousness of evil agencies but, on the other hand, the nature of their reverence for the symbol likewise reveals their sense of its being representative of a deity, or deities, of goodness who are concerned with human life and destiny.

The summary evidence submitted on the foregoing pages concerning the part occupied in Central Asiatic religions by bird-symbols is intended to show:

1. that the Yezidi bird may be a peacock but that it need not necessarily be that fowl;

2. that even if it were a peacock it need not be symbolic merely of pride or of Satan — as that evil potentate is understood in Judaism, Christianity and Islam;

3. that the symbol may be, and probably is, a perpetuation of a religious symbol which has survived among other religious legacies inherited from a remote past in which such symbols featured in Assyria;

4. that it symbolises not actually the devil but those different religious ideas which are collectively represented by the deities Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi, and that
5. the similarity of the bird to a peacock (ta'us) combined with the likeness of the word ta'us to Tammuz, the composite deity of Assyrian and Babylonian religious mythology, probably suggested the designation Ta'us for the symbol.

The Deity Melek Taus,

In the Yezidi faith the deity Melek Taus is very nebulous and illusive both as regards his nature and status. Nevertheless he stands eminent at the centre of the cult.

Several of those who essayed to explain the cult regard him as the devil who was hurled down from heaven by a wrathful God into hell for disobedience. One writer states that "the Devil is a creative agent of the supreme God, in as much as he produced evil; hence," according to that writer's interpretation of Yezidism, "he deserves our adoration".* But because God is so good he cannot but forgive and, therefore, needs not to be worshipped.1

These interpretations of Melek Taus are, however, not exhaustive of the Yezidi perception of that deity. In the perplexing inconsistencies of Yezidism the characteristics of Melek Taus are substantially, if not essentially, different to the evil attributes of the Satan of the Old Testament. If the Yezidi Melek Taus

is the Devil he is not the Devil either of Judaism, Christianity or of Islam.

Melek Taus in Yezidism. An analysis of Yezidi doctrine leads to the conviction that in the nature of this mysterious being, who is so profoundly revered through the sanajik, goodness eclipses evil. The code of conduct recommended by Melek Taus does not liberate his followers from the obligation of a life of moral and ethical righteousness. "They are under no obligation to make evil their good."* The writer in the 'Book of Revelation' defines the ethical attitude enjoined by Melek Taus as - "if any one obey me and conform to my commandments he shall have joy, delight and goodness". In fact their concept of Melek Taus, in as far as they do have distinct and separate ideas on the nature and functions of the triad consisting of Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi, leads the Yezidis into lofty henotheistic beliefs.

Melek Taus comes into view as a being with directly antithetic functions. He is good; he is bad; he is administrative potentate of this earth; he is also the 'mighty angel' of the lower world whilst he is also believed by some to have been reinstated as the celestial chaperon of Yezidi spirits.1

* "Cradle of Mankind", page 88.
1 Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1898, page 299.
Glimpses of Melek Taus in several stages of his evolution are known. He was the first created of the seven great spirits and was with them as primus inter pares. He had active fellowship with God in cosmogonic activities. It was he who was invested with authority over the thirty thousand angels on the 'mountain of the world' and it is he who metamorphosed them into constellations and atmospheric phenomena.

He was made administrative ruler of the affairs of this earth; and the Yezidis assigned to him, in his administrative capacity, a rôle so important as to eclipse completely the supreme deity.*

It was he who ordained as his spiritual ministers the Yezidi hierarchy; and it is to them that the devotees must give obedience. He causes both happiness and misery; life and death are directed by him.

He is not only ruler of earth but of the waters. The beasts of the earth, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are all under his control.

At another stage of his career the collaborator of God emerges early in human history in a strange predicament. As earthly administrator and concerned with the perpetuation and increase of the human species Melek Taus approaches God on this problem. When the latter reminds him of his (Melek Taus') allotted duty

* Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 1911, page 201.
as world ruler Melek Taus proceeds to Paradise and forthwith urges Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. But obedience to the counsel of Melek Taus produced pain for Adam though not for Eve; whereupon Melek Taus, displaying an unexpected fickleness of character, abandons him whom he had counselled. It is another of the seven great spirits that comes effectively to Adam's aid.* In the performing of his duties as potentate of the earth Melek Taus is not regarded as revealing a rebellious will against that of the Supreme Deity. On the contrary his intention is to confer benefits and not evil on his subjects.

His rule was destined for ten thousand years; and on the expiry of that period his earthly administration was to be surrendered to another of the seven great spirits.

A hiatus follows in the theological career of Melek Taus. He now appears in the lower world where his period is for ten thousand years. Whether that period has expired is uncertain. Some Yezidis believe that seven thousand years have already elapsed; others affirm that the kingdom of the lower world has been ended by the tears of a suffering child and that Melek Taus has already returned to the higher world. But

* Vide (chapter 8) page 150.

1 Dingelstadt in Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1898, page 299.
that his rule of earth has, however, not been surrendered to a successor spirit.

The diverse roles of his career are thus seen to be so varied and alternated that in the Yezidi religious consciousness the deity Melek Taus does not consist merely of the evil attributes represented by Satan. He is regarded rather as a demiurgos who alternately fills the roles of ruler of this earth and temporary dweller in the lower world whilst he is also a deity returned to an original celestial status as companion of God; and, as one of the seven great spirits, Melek Taus is the Messiah of the Yezidis whose souls he will carry upon a tray on his head into the final realms of spiritual victory.

Of course the Yezidis believe in the activities of evil spirits. The thaumaturgic ceremonies prove that a consciousness of evil spirits is ever vividly present with them and that their physical and spiritual interests, their homes, families and animals are exposed to the assaults of these hostile agencies. Rites and rituals are, therefore, performed to render innocuous these evil spirits. To regard the Yezidis, then, as adoring the devil (because according to a writer on the Yezidis in Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics) - "in as much as he produced evil hence he deserves our adoration" - is a very strained interpretation of
their ceremonies and of their devout reverence for the symbol Melek Taus.

It is not to be forgotten that the Yezidis likewise believe in the existence of good spirits whose mediation and influence are sought through ritual and offerings. These latter spirits may be regarded sometimes as the emancipated spirits of departed saints or as daimones friendly to human welfare.

His study of the Yezidi perception of the character of the deity Melek Taus and his investigation of the Yezidi ceremonies and rituals do not appear to the present writer to produce any conclusive evidence that the Yezidi worship is a worship of the devil.

It is, among other things, a worship of Melek Taus; but the Yezidi Melek Taus is not the devil.

At the same time it is difficult to agree with the somewhat positive statement of Dingelstadt (in Scottish Geographical Magazine 1898) that "the Yezidis do not believe in the Devil at all." That same writer, however, approximates the correct position in his statement elsewhere in that article that - "in opposition to the belief of their neighbours they do not regard Melek Taus as an evil spirit but as a true divinity."

It has already been shown in the previous chapters that the flexible genius of the Yezidi religion is sufficiently accommodating to incorporate features and terms from surrounding faiths: and
possibly among such incorporations is the belief, along with Jews, Christians and Mohammadans in the evil potentate called Satan. The character of Satan, the prince and power of evil, as accepted in these other faiths is not rejected by the Yezidis. But no convincing evidence is produced, if such can be produced, by any writer that in Yezidism Satan and Melek Taus are one and the same. And it is to Melek Taus, with Yezid and Sheikh Adi, that the Yezidis offer their adoration in ritual and ceremony.

Origins of the deity Melek Taus.

Several attempts have been made to discover reasons and origins for the Yezidi deity Melek Taus.

Melek Theos. One writer* puts forward the theory that Melek Taus is but Melek Theos - 'the Lord God', and was originally the attribute of the Almighty - the title being snatched by the celestial mayor of the palace and conferred upon himself. There is very little probability in this theory though the transference and combination of the names of deities was no uncommon practice in Babylonian and Assyrian early religions. Gods of the lower world evolve, or are transformed, to bear the title of gods of the higher world; and the reverse procedure was also known.1

* Nau, "Recueil de Textes et de Documents sur les Yézidis", page 16 and 114.
1 Vide "Myths and Legends of Babylonia and Syria", L. Spence, pp.229,268, etc.
Nevertheless it is a matter of much doubt whether the measure of Hellenic influence introduced into Kurdistan through Macedonian and pre-Alexandrine religious thought affected that district sufficiently to supercede the designations of formerly popular divinities within their pantheon by the new term ὸς Theos.

Taus as Tammuz.

A suggestion that Taus is a survival of an ancient deity was put forward by another writer.* That writer reasons that the word Taus embodies an ancient deity but that it is difficult to ascertain which deity in view of the obscurity surrounding the origin of Yezidism. The writer shows that there was a feast of a god Tammuz in the month of that name and that the Yezidi Taus is a survival, through folk-etymology, of that deity. The theory, which is refreshing by virtue of its feasibility, was, however, not developed.

Lidzbarski's theory has been criticised by a subsequent writer (Joseph in "Devil Worship", pp.147-150) and rejected with reckless finality. "It is not true," states Joseph, "that the word taus signifies an ancient deity. It denotes the devil and nothing else." He adds that "in the Yezidi conception of Melek Ta'us

there are no traces of the notion which is held respecting Tammuz." He then proceeds to explain this 'notion' by a quotation that Tammuz was "originally a sun-god and son of Ea and of the goddess Sirdu; and the bridegroom of the goddess Istar. The legendary poems of Babylonia described him as a shepherd, cut off in the beauty of youth, or slain by the boar's tusk in Winter, and mourned for long and vainly by the goddess Istar. The god Tammuz made his way to Canaan, Cyprus and thence to Greece. He has ceased to be the young and beautiful sun-god, and had become the representative of the vegetation of spring, growing by the side of the canals of Babylonia, but parched and destroyed by the fierce heat of the Summer. Hence in Babylonia his funeral festival came to be observed in the month of June, and in Palestine two months later. Tammuz had changed his character in passing from country to country, but the idea of him as a slain god, and of his festival as the idealisation of human sorrow, a kind of All Souls' Day, was never altered wherever he was adored."

"Such beliefs", adds Joseph, "are not found in the Yezidi view of their King Peacock. On the contrary his festival is for them the occasion of joy and pleasure."*

These observations of Joseph are neither exhaustive nor final. Which of their festivals is to the Yezidis "the occasion of joy and pleasure" the critic Joseph does not indicate - although there are several festivals in the cult; and at some, or all, of them the symbol Melek Taus or a Taus Kush, may be present. Even were Joseph's quoted version of the career of Tammuz complete he himself states elsewhere that during the time when the symbol Melek Taus is in a Yezidi

* "Devil Worship", page 150.
village "all profane festivals are suspended"; and this last statement is substantiated by the report of an eye witness.*

But the quotation, in Joseph, on the career of Tammuz id by no means exhaustive. There are many other aspects in the nature and history of that very important deity. And, furthermore, in treating of the Yezidis it should be observed that with them the sense of the sacred and of the secular is very close and interblended. In fact their most sacred festival may begin with joyous excitement and be followed with periods of solemnity and of sacred chanting. The reverse is likewise true. Their Great Assembly is a demonstration of primitive volatility where joy alternates with sorrow. Even a funeral is, with them, but an occasion of joyous sadness.

Therefore before summarily denying the possibility of the persistence, in a strange cult within his native land, of a deity who was once very powerful in Assyrian religion a very cautious quest for evidence is requisite before acquiescing in the sweeping verdict of Joseph that Taus "denotes the Devil and nothing else".

Taus as Tammuz (Contd.) Notwithstanding certain stubborn and primal characteristics, the career of Tammuz - like other Babylonian and Assyrian deities - throughout Assyria and Babylonia and even westwards

* Vide Badger, loc. cit. page 123.
where he was worshipped under different names, (e.g. Adonis and Attys*) is that of absorbing new topical features and of rejecting the more distinctly foreign characteristics. The cult of Tammuz could be localised or expanded just as he absorbed or superceded other deities.

1Authorities inform us that the Assyro-Babylonian form of Tammuz is Duzu, a contraction from Duwuzi which is again a modification of the original Accadian Duwuzi-apsu, meaning "the offspring of the spirit of the deep."

The 'spirit of the deep' was the deity Ea; and Ea is also the deity of fresh water and of fountains. On Assyrian cylinders Ea appears dressed in the skin of a fish. This skin is thrown over him like a priestly cloak. Ea had the body of a fish and, like a fish, sank into the waters when the day was closed.2 As god of the rivers Ea acquired the designation of the 'lusty gazelle'.3 The deity Ea had a daughter Nina. This Nina is both a fish goddess and the divinity whose name was interchangeable with that of the serpent.4

1 Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, 3rd Edition, 1891. "Golden Bough". "Babylonian and Assyrian Civilisation", (Delaporte) etc.
2 Sayce, ibid, page 232.
3 Sayce, " " 282.
4 Sayce, " " 281.
In this family relationship of different deities we find the god Tammuz associated with the deity of fresh water, with the fish goddess and with the serpent deity. A subsequent paragraph will reveal his association with other deities and will show that in the evolution of his cult - when he has absorbed, or become identified with, several deities - it is difficult to assign to him any one specific department of nature or to say that he is a river god, a serpent deity or god of the fountains; for he possesses the attributes of several of these deities and is become associated with, if not represented by, the different signs or emblems of these different deities.

Tammuz was primarily a sun-god in Southern Mesopotamia though not the solar deity. Among the Semites* the solar character of Tammuz is indicated by his ideograph which signifies 'maker of fire'.

In another phase of Assyrian religious mythology Tammuz appears as the consort of Ishtar. The worship of his spouse became so universal as sometimes to replace that of Tammuz himself. Among the Assyrians his wife had three sanctuaries - one at Kalah, one at Nineveh and another at Arbil where she, as a beltis, was also regarded as the wife of the sun-god Shamash.

* The Assyrians were an essentially Semitic people.
The sacred bird on her symbol was a dove. It was also her symbol in her more westerly designation of Ashtaroth and Aphrodite.

We thus find Tammuz blended in theological thought with the divinity Ishtar and with the great Assyrian sun-god Shamash; and, not infrequently, he is regarded as combining with his other attributes the different characteristics of these two deities.

The epic of Tammuz and Ishtar records how Ishtar proceeded into the lower world—the kingdom of Aralu*—in quest of Tammuz. For his release from the kingdom of Aralu appeal had to be made to Shamash, the chief sun-god of Assyrian mythology, and to Ea who had then become deity of the earth. The epic does not show if the errand of Ishtar was successful but it must have achieved its intention because the resurrection of Tammuz and his ascent to the higher world were commemorated in festivals.

**Commemoration of Tammuz.**

The time and form of the festivals of Tammuz vary in different localities—notwithstanding the quotation given by Joseph (on page 273 supra).

In Assyria and Babylonia the festival commemorating his death, or descent into the lower world, took place in the month of Tammuz. This commemoration was characterised by great sorrow and by the wailing of Aralu is the god Nergal whose symbol was a fowl resembling a cock.
flutes.* A similar festival of weeping for Adonis (i.e. Tammuz) was annually celebrated during the month of Tammuz at Byblos, the great centre of the Adonia festivals, eight miles north of Beyrouth.

The Egyptian cult, with its commemoration of the resurrection of Osiris, influenced the Adonis cult of the Syrians. Days of mourning were, therefore, succeeded in the Adonis cult by days of rejoicing. Thus joy and sorrow combined in the Adonis death festival. Subsequently a festival of the resurrection of Adonis (Tammuz) took place in Syria after the ingathering of the harvest in October.1 In Babylonia also "there must have been a season when the name of Tammuz was commemorated, not by words of woe, but with joy and rejoicing. But it could have been only when the fierce heats of the Summer were past."2 We learn elsewhere that "the very ancient Tammuz festival was celebrated in the Autumn and commemorated his death and resurrection."3

Joseph's quotation4 that "the idea of him (Tammuz) as a slain god, and of his festival as the idealisation

* Cf. Ezekiel 8/14 "Women of Jerusalem weeping for Tammuz".
"The dirges were seemingly chanted over an effigy of the dead god which was washed with pure water." (Golden Bough, "Adonis", Vol. 1. page 9.
1 Sayce, loc. cit. page 231.
2 Sayce, ibid, page 230.
4 "Devil Worship", page 150.
of human sorrow, a kind of All Souls' Day, was never altered wherever he was adored" can refer only to the commemoration of the death of Tammuz.

Consequently the 'joy and pleasure' which, according to Joseph, characterise the Yezidi festivals can not be appropriate to the commemoration of the death of Tammuz.* But, as shown above, (pages 274, et seq: chapter XI) the quotation is a restricted view of the worship of Tammuz whose resurrection was commemorated as well as his death. For the festival of his resurrection, therefore, joy and pleasure would be appropriate. But when the two purposes of commemoration, i.e. his death and resurrection, became amalgamated in one festival there necessarily follow the composite expressions of joy and sorrow as in the Yezidi Great Assembly at Sheikh Adi.

The cult of Tammuz reached its culmination in Assyria in the reign of Ashur-bani-pal (668-626 B.C.). With the downfall of Assyria at the hands of the allied Medo-Babylonian forces of Cyaxares and Nabopolassar in 606 B.C., and with the subsequent overthrow of the Babylonian dynasty by the Persian Darius, the older

* Joseph's statement that the festival of Melek Taus is the occasion of joy and pleasure is inexact. The Yezidi Great Assembly, and, in fact, all their festivals are characterised both by sorrow and by joy. Cf. account by an eye-witness in Layard's "Nineveh and its Remains" (re Great Assembly).
endemic deities were now officially superceded by the faith of the victorious Persians. With the passing of the centuries the original and distinctive significance of these ancient deities was dimmed. Only the most ineradicable features survived and even these, by the attrition of the years, were transposed and amalgamated until the remaining features of several deities coalesced in certain seasonal festivals.

**Summary alignment of Taus and Tammuz.**

Melek Taus of the Yezidis is a celestial deity; one of the seven great spirits who collaborated with God in the works of creation.

He is potentate of this earth - with rule over man's life, over beasts of the earth, over fowls of the air and fish of the waters.

He is temporary governor of the lower world and is variously regarded as having already ascended to his original celestial status or, in due time, is to ascend from the lower world and, again, be active as a heavenly potentate.

The Yezidi Autumn festival reveals the primitive form and nature of their religious ceremonies. There the adoration of the bird-symbol Melek Taus, the sacrifice of the oxen of the sun, the sacred lustrations and the veneration for fire and water find fullest expression.
The taboos of the faith extend to fish which is sacred as the product of the waters. The gazelle, which was a symbol from early Assyrian periods of the water deity Ea, is likewise taboo; so also is the cock because of its similarity to the fowl on the sanjak.

Melek Taus is thus involved in the providence and in the spiritual affairs of his followers, in the positive and negative aspects of their religious codes and in their ultimate triumph as emancipated souls in the future existence.*

The functions of Yezidi Taus are strongly suggestive of those pertaining to the early Tammuz who is still remembered throughout Central Asia by the month of that name.

Tammuz was a sun-god. His solar character is indicated by his ideograph which signified 'maker of fire'.

His parent was Ea, "the sovereign of the waters and the personification of wisdom."1 This Ea was also the representation of the bottomless deep. Ea had the body of a fish and, like a fish, sank into the waters when the day was closed. As god of the abyss Ea, the parent of Tammuz, acquired the designation of 

* "Dumuzi, Duuzi, the Tammuz of the Western Semites, was both god of the earth of the living and of the world of the dead, but by preference the god who caused vegetation to grow, and who clothed the earth with verdure in the spring."


1 Maspero, page 538.
the lusty gazelle.* Water, as the representation of
the parent of Tammuz was reverenced from very remote
days among the Assyrians. With the Yezidis water,
whether as stream or fountain, is regarded as sacred
and especially that in which the sanjak Melek Taus
is immersed.

Ea had a daughter Nina who was patron of Nineveh,
the later capital of the Assyrian empire. This Nina
is both a fish goddess and the divinity whose name was
interchangeable with that of the serpent;¹ and as
the symbol of Nina (the sister of Tammuz) fish was
sacred in these distant days as it is still sacred
among the Yezidis.

Tammuz becomes the husband of Ishtar. She was
the divinity whose primary function was that of
goddess of nature's fertility. This Ishtar was, like
Nina and Tammuz, an offspring of Ea who had complete
knowledge of the past, present and future. Among the
Assyrians Ishtar became a very potent deity and was
symbolised by a dove. The adoration of Tammuz as a
sun-god thus became mingled with the adoration of
Ishtar as a nature goddess.

Tammuz, like the Yezidi Taus, had a descent into
the lower world. Festivals of lamentation
commemorated his tragic descent. He was, however,
restored through the efforts of Ishtar; and his

* Sayce, page 282.
1 " " 281.
resurrection was celebrated joyously in the Autumn among the northern Assyrians. Thus when his death and his resurrection were combined in this Autumn festival the elements of joy and sorrow both featured in the form of commemoration as they still do in the Yezidi Great Assembly.

In the vagaries of Assyrian religious mythology deities of the lower world and of the earth may alter their function and be elevated into celestial deities. Tammuz is deeply and inextricably involved in such processes of transformation. His parent Ea is translated to heaven where she took her place beside the great sky-god Anu. The sky and the deep, the sun and the waters are thus brought together. Similarly Ishtar,* (the daughter of Ea) who was already the bride of Tammuz becomes also the wife of Shamash who was chief sun-god of the Assyrians; and the worship of Ishtar - who now combines the functions of a sun-beltis with her former office as deity of nature's fertility - almost superceded that of her husbands Shamash and Tammuz.

The elevation of deities to the celestial rank reacted on the ideas held regarding the nature of each. Originally the deities enjoyed a personality sufficient for the fulfilment of their obligations.

* In Assyrian prayers Ishtar is invoked as "the Lady of Nineveh...daughter of the Moon-god, the twin-sister of the Sun-god...the Lady of heaven and earth." Guide to British Museum, Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, page 204.
within their specific sphere whether in heaven or on the earth or in the waters. As he attained popular ascendancy over any rival the god became invested with the qualities of that other deity. In this manner even great deities like Ba, Ishtar and Tammuz were influenced and altered until their original form could scarcely be distinguished. Whilst retaining the nucleus of their original being their personalities gradually incorporated the attributes of the other deities with whom they were associated.

Thus, latterly, in the intricate and confusing relationship of the deities we can see Tammuz as offspring, consort and joint-husband respectively of the deity of the deep, of the goddess of nature's provision and of the divinity of the sun. His manifold connections in the theological family and the accident of his commemorative festivals which were so congenial to Oriental mentality supply the stamina which enabled him to flourish when his less empiric allies had fallen from their eminence.

The functions performed by Tammuz as the residuum of different deities are those accredited to their Melek Taus by the Yezidis; and the elements which acquired sanctity through their association with Tammuz are those which are still venerated by the Yezidis.

That Taus of the Yezidis is therefore the Tammuz
of the Assyrians is the conclusion to which the present writer has been directed by his investigations. That conclusion disagrees with the belief of writers who recognise in Melek Taus merely the devil and who regard Yezidism as worship of that evil potentate. But mere worship of the devil fails to supply a reason for the veneration of the many natural objects in the cult which are in no way associated by the Yezidis with the Devil. Furthermore it would be surprising, though not impossible, to alight, in the Assyrian foothills, upon a form of religion completely isolated from, and unrelated historically and theologically to, its own geographical background and environment.

The nature of the case would suggest that it is more feasible to recognise in Melek Taus none else than the mythological deity Tammuz - a native of his own Assyrian environment but with his features changed by the attrition of the centuries.

Yezid.

The term Yezid is of uncertain origin and its presence in the cult has produced an instructive diversity of opinion. Like their views on other aspects of their faith the ideas of the Yezidis concerning him are illucid.

The term Yezid is supposed to be eponymous: that
the cult originated with a person, or place, of that name and that the person was subsequently elevated into the triad of Yezidi deities or, alternatively, that the source of the name has been mistakenly regarded as being that of a deity.

Nevertheless, at the present time, Yezid is one of the deities to whom adoration is rendered by the pious among the Yezidis. His part and status in the cult are, however, faint and largely eclipsed by the deities Melek Taus and Sheikh Adi.

The sources from which the name Yezid is believed to be derived may be classified as:-

1. The Muhammadan source.
2. The Persian-Kurdish origin.

The Muhammadan source. The protagonists of this genesis are divided among themselves. Some discover the name Yezid to be that of Yezid ibn Mo'awiyah, the Omayyad caliph (680-683 A.D.) who features in Islamic history as causing the death of Husein, the grandson of the prophet. The Shi'ites when in power found in this derivation a further argument for persecuting the Yezidis. It is possible, however, that the latter encouraged this misconception; for while the Omayyad caliphate was supreme the name of Yezid may have helped to gain for them a measure of toleration.*

* Similar subterfuges were adopted by Assyrian Christians in changing the name of certain churches, e.g. Mar Mattai (St. Matthew), Mar Behnam, etc. to 'Sheikh' Mattai, 'Sheikh' Behnam, etc. Takiyyah (the doctrine of the right to dessemble one's faith) was recognised by Islam. (Margoliouth, "Mohammedanism", page 175.)
There is, however, no evidence that Yezid ibn Mo'awiyah either propounded the principles of any new religion or inculcated doctrines greatly dissimilar to the religion of Mohammad himself. Yezid ibn Mo'awiyah was neither a theologian, mystic nor a person of much depth of piety. Rather was he, in the words of a certain writer,* "a man of sports and chase, clothed in soft garments" who was more anxious to enjoy the present life than the life hereafter.

Another of the Islamic eponymous derivations explains the name Yezid to be that of a certain Yezid ibn Unaissa, an apostate from orthodox Islam, who - according to a Mohammadan writer Ash Sha'rastani (A.D.1047-1133) was the founder of a Kharijite subsect in the early days of Islam; and that the present Yezidis are descendants of his followers who retained in their creed the name of the founder.1 According to the writer Ash Sha'rastani:- "The Yezidis are the followers of Yezid ben Unaissa who said that he would keep friendship with the first Mühakkama, before the Azarika; he separated himself from those who followed after them, with the exception of the Abadiyah, for with these he was friendly. He believed that God would send an apostle from among the Persians, and would reveal to him a book that is

* Sir Mark Sykes' "The Caliphs' Last Heritage", p.153
1 Joseph, "Devil Worship", page 119.
already written in Heaven, and would reveal the whole (book) to him at one time, and as a result he would leave the religion of Muhammad, the Chosen One - may God bless and save him! - and follow the religion of the Sabians who are found in Harran and Wusit. But Yezid associated himself with the People of the Book who recognised the Chosen One as a Prophet, even though they did not accept his (Muhammad's) religion. And he said that the followers of the ordinances are among those who agree with him; but that others are infidels and give companions to God, and that every sin, small or great, is idolatry."

In the restlessness which developed within Islam as a result of the arbitration and disagreements concerning the death of Othman and, subsequently, of Husein, it is possible that there may have appeared an enthusiastic Kharijite who adventured on the establishment of a further sub-sect. But it is surprising, if that sub-sect were the origin of the cult accepted by the present Yezidis, that the doctrines of Islam should be almost completely excluded from the faith - as they are generally excluded from the faith of the present-day Yezidis. One would likewise expect that a place of prominence would be accorded to the whole of the Kur'an if

Yezidism were founded on enthusiasm for Islam. But Yezidism gives to the Kur'an no greater acknowledgment than it accords to the sacred books of the Jews and of the Christians. Furthermore - at least here and there in some Yezidi districts - one would expect to encounter a mosque honoured and used by the Yezidis. But such is not the case. And although a Kharijite named Yezid may have gathered followers around him such a foundation for Yezidism cannot account for the appearance in the Yezidi creed of those mysterious deities Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi and of the abundant examples within Yezidism of the very primitive nature-worship which existed in Assyria long before the birth of Mohammad.

"It would be rash to attribute a preponderant authority to Ash'Sahristani, even if this quotation refers to the Yezidis of our day. Muhammadan writers have sometimes a mania for bringing back everything to Islam; and one can count, even in our days, many convents which, at the time of Muhammadan Khan's invasions, have been renamed after a Moslem Sheikh. Moreover, the above account seems somewhat unlikely, owing to the mention of the problematic pseudo-prophet having come from Persia."*

Another writer more positively asserts that the Yezidis "are not a Muhammadan sect, for they despise

Muhammad and his doctrines.*

As against this Kharijite eponymous origin it is perhaps worth noticing that less than a century after Ash-Sharistani an entirely different origin is given to the Yezidis by Assyrian writings. In 1841 a writer states that he found in the possession of the Nestorian patriarch a volume called "The Gennerbusame" which was compiled in 1253 A.D. from various older sources. This volume stated that the Dasenai, a name by which the Yezidis are known among themselves and by their Christian neighbours, were one of the sects or divisions of the Hebrews of the Assyrian captivity.

These Islamic origins can not, however, account for the elimination from Yezidism of Ali, Hasan, Husein and of the prophet Mohammad himself whose recognition in the cult consists merely of his being included in the category of prophets like Abraham and Moses. The omission of Ali, Husein and Hasan can be taken as fairly strong evidence against the derivation of Yezidism from Shi'ite Islam. If Yezidism had arisen in Shi'ite beliefs these names would naturally be accorded some position of eminence in the cult. On the other hand a religion deriving from Yezid ibn Mo'awiyah would hardly give a place to the Ali family.


1 Dr. A. Grant in "The Nestorians....", page 320.
though Mohammad himself might thus have been honoured.

The Kurdish-Persian origin.

The Kurdish origin. One theory* suggests that the name Yezid is derived from the Tarhoya Kurds who, as late as the Christian era, had a tutelary deity called Yezid. His worship was centralised at Mogham, a town on the borders of the Caspian Sea, and was associated with groves and trees.

Whilst it is not impossible that the Yezidis in Kurdistan might have had religious associations with these Tarhoya Kurds it is to be remembered that grove and tree worship was not restricted to the Caspian borders nor to one Kurdo-Persian tribe. The theory of the sacred tree and sacred grove was a factor in religious thought throughout northern and eastern Assyria in days far anterior to Christianity. And the ascription of the name Yezid to their tutelary god by these Tarhoya Kurds would not be an unnatural procedure for people on the Persian borders to whom 'Yazd' was a well known designation for the supreme deity.

The Persian origin. The theory for the derivation of Yezid from Persian sources is twofold:—

a. Yezid is but a race designation for the Yezidis as a people who primarily belonged to the Persian city

Yezd.

But even if their association with that city were undeniable nevertheless that cannot account for the nature of their priesthood, for Melek Taus, for Sheikh Adi and for other features of the faith which are not present in any known Persian religion. And to trace the wanderings of a special sect amidst the kaleidoscopic movements of Persian border tribes and to follow their arrival and settlement in the Mosul vilayet is almost an impossible task. This task has not been attempted by those who otherwise accept the Yezid of this cult in Assyria as an eponymous derivation from the Persian city Yezd.

b. In view of the genius and form of the Yezidi faith the most feasible of the different derivations for Yezid is that it is the Kurdo-Persian term 'Yazd', which was one of the titles applied by the Persians to the supreme being.

Accepting this Yazd as the origin and significance of Yezid certain writers, therefore, find in the Yezidi cult strong evidences of Persian dualism. This, however, is principally due to the acceptance of Melek Taus as synonymous with Ahriman, the evil principle of Zoroastrianism. But an earlier portion of this chapter has already sought to show that what is often termed Persian Dualism was no new thing in Assyria; and

* "Persia, Past and Present", (Jackson, 1906, p.XI.)
Babylonia even before the rise of Zoroastrianism. The deities of good and the spirits of evil had been struggling against each other in these religions since the remote days of Sargon of Accad.*

**Yezid in the Yezidi cult.** One who lived for some time among the Yezidis states that Yezid is held by them to be the good deity and that to him the hierophants of the sect offer worship. "Water", he adds, "also is held by them to be a symbol of Yezid, it being a most powerful agent in communicating temporal blessings to mankind. Hence almost every fountain and spring is considered sacred."

The status of Yezid is very much shadowed by the deities Melek Taus and Sheikh Adi; and his functions would appear sometimes to be largely absorbed by one or both of these, his colleagues, in the divine triad of the Yezidi faith. Perhaps it is because Yezid is esteemed as a god of goodness that the Yezidis largely direct their concern towards evil agencies to the neglect of this benevolent deity. In the curious henotheism of this strange cult Yezid appears to be a faintly immanent version of Khuda who is altogether transcendental; and, notwithstanding the accusation of neighbouring Christians and Mohammedans who regard them as godless pagans, the Yezidis, by the

* Vide Sayce, loc. cit. page 347.
1 Badger, loc. cit. page 115, 117.
adoption of a term which signified the deity, demonstrate that they too, are worshippers of God whilst, at the same time, they admit the existence of other deities of good and of evil within their own faith.

Badger quotes the religious head of the Yezidis as affirming - "We are Yezeedees, that is, we are worshippers of God". In the statement of another writer - "While they see their numbers diminishing they console themselves with the thought that they are Yezid'ı - God's chosen."*

Sheikh Adi.

In an almost illiterate community a natural curiosity often essays to discover causes for the factors of tradition. Sometimes this quest results in the establishment of crude origins which, though receiving popular acquiescence, may be essentially invalid in the light of critical analysis. The Yezidis point out the temple and its shrine as the visible commemoration by their ancestors of some person, or being, called Adi.

Suggested origins. Who Sheikh Adi was the Yezidis do not know. Even the epoch of his existence they do not know - except that, in the popular belief, he lived before Mōhannad.

A few different traditions prevail concerning the

origin of Sheikh Adi and, therefore, of the temple of that name.

One of these traditions discovers in Sheikh Adi a Sufi named Adi who is stated to have been a scion of the Omayyad dynasty.* He is variously reported to have come either from Beyt Qar, near Baalbeck in Syria or from the Hauran; that he retired into the Kurdish hills and was buried, in the 12th century (1162 A.D.), on the site of the present temple; and that because of his cult the Yezidis took him as their patron and made his grave their Mecca.

It is possible that a Persian of that name and with the Sufi creed may have established himself for a time in these fastnesses of the Kurdish foothills and there cherished his religious ideas. In fact in

1 "Amurath to Amurath" - Bell, page 278.
2 According to a tradition (given in Journal of Anthrop. Institute, 1911, page 203) Sheikh Adi went to Mecca where he stayed for four years. In his absence the devil appeared to his disciples in the likeness of the sheikh and instructed them in their religion. After his departure Sheikh Adi himself returned but the Yezidis refused to acknowledge him saying that the real sheikh was now in heaven. So they slew him and buried him. The devil appeared once more and told them of their error - after which they built to Sheikh Adi a shrine which became the chief place of Yezidi pilgrimage.
the religious, as in the political, fluctuations of history in Kurdistan few things, however strange, are quite impossible. At the same time if this Adi had to do with the formulating of the Yezidi cult it is strange that there now survive few, if any, evidences of Sufism in the Yezidi religion. And religious ideas, especially if these happen to be original or salient characteristics of the faith, seldom die quickly in Mesopotamia. It is likewise surprising that even the principal religious officials of the Yezidi faith should neither hold, nor propagate among their followers, the theories of spiritual illumination, human perfection and mystical union with God which constituted the characteristic doctrines of Sufism. Indeed such Sufi doctrines are inconsistent with the Yezidi sense of the transcendentalism of Khuda. With the Yezidis the real religious life consists almost entirely of the external performance of ritualistic ceremonies. Sufism, on the other hand, held these at a discount and insisted on the importance of developing the spiritual, inner life. Again, if the Yezidis, as stated in the theory of Joseph (given in this chapter page 237), were a Kharijite sub-sect founded by Yezid ibn Unaissa we could not expect them to exhibit enthusiasm or tolerance towards a Sufi; for the
Kharijites "prohibit the cult of the saints, local pilgrimages and Sūfī fraternities."* Even if there were historical proofs that such a Sūfī were the original of the name Adī in the Yezidi faith there, then, arises the paradox that this Adī propagated theories concerning external ceremonies which Sūfīsm necessarily disowned, and that he established a system of worship which was alien to the spiritual motive of his own life.

As against this 12th century Sūfī origin of Sheikh Adī a Syriac manuscript,¹ alleged to be written in 1452, sees in Sheikh Adī a 13th century A.D. Kurdish gardener who was the steward in a Nestorian monastery on the site of the present temple of the Yezidis. The gardener and his sons plotted successfully for the overthrow and subsequent death of their employers and then seized the convent to which Adī then gave his own name.

The author of this tradition is a Nestorian monk with, perhaps, a bias for the Nestorian origin of the property. The value of the manuscript, however, in a treatise on the Yezidis is that it shows a different tradition current concerning the origin of the name Sheikh Adī two centuries after the death of the Sufī Adī.

* "Islam; Beliefs and Institutions", H. Lammens, p. 142
¹ Vide, Tau, "Recueil de Textes et de Documents sur les Yezidis". pp. 5-8, 31-37.
The Yezidi Sheikh Adi is also suggested to be one of the disciples of Mani.* In this case Yezidism would be a reproduction - with, perhaps, some variations - of the religion of Mani. But Manichaeism is saliently and essentially different to Yezidism. The former rejected the theory of transmigration.

In Mani's cult, likewise, the struggle between light and darkness, the alliance between God and his aeons for the defeat of Satan and for the emancipation of mankind are not the same as the Yezidi doctrine of the descent of Melek Taus into the lower world and his re-establishment as a celestial deity. The holy days of Mani's cult were Sunday and Monday but the Yezidi sacred days are Wednesday and Friday. The great festival of the commemoration of Mani took place in the month of March but the Yezidi Great Festival takes place in Autumn. The prohibitions of the Mani faith are largely contrary to the Yezidi taboos. Furthermore there is no evidence that the devotees of Mani deified any of his followers but the Adi of Yezidism is regarded as a deity.

In view of the position occupied by Sheikh Adi in

* Badger, loc. cit. page 112 (footnote).

1 In Mani's cult the 'signiculum oris' forbade the drinking of wine; Yezidism prides itself on its freedom to consume 'arak. The 'signiculum sinus' (in Manichaeism) forbade all sex gratification, including marriage: Yezidism allows polygamy.
Yezidi belief it would seem that the suggested eponymous derivations are but attempts at the elucidation of a name whose origin was even then lost in the mists of antiquity.

The mere ascription of the designation 'Sheikh' Adi to the temple and to the shrine is no assurance that a person called Sheikh Adi or, in fact, any other person was buried there. As shown elsewhere in this thesis the title of 'Sheikh' and 'Sitt' are a common designation of honour applied even to sacred trees and to sacred localities among the Yezidis.

The fons et origo of the name and its presence in a cult which gives it the most profound reverence would seem to lie deep in the life of the Assyrian foothills from which the succession of different faiths has not yet eliminated a veneration for sacred fountains, groves, sun, thunder, fire and for a general expression of a primitive nature-worship.

Sheikh Adi in the Yezidi faith. Omnipresent, yet immediately involved in Yezidi material affairs, Sheikh Adi is credited with the rule of natural laws. Though Melek Taus is the administrator of events in the sphere of personal, or character, experience Sheikh Adi is regarded as a god above and beyond Melek Taus and is accepted as the source and ruler of nature's provision for mankind and for the animal kingdom.
Not even the sanctity of the temple nor the dim solemnity of the shrine can beget in the Yezidi mind profounder reverence than does the name of Sheikh Adi. Only in tones of fear and awe is his name mentioned or invoked. He is esteemed greater than any prophet or saint; he is sometimes thought to be the only god. His 'tomb' is the holy of holies; and the devoutest act of a Yezidi life is the pilgrimage to the shrine of this god of their providence. The very soil from the precincts of his temple when mingled with water from the sacred stream of the valley, is a protection without which Yezidi villages are indeed defenceless against evil to persons, to homes, and to property.

That Adi is not regarded as a human being, despite Islamic and (Christian) Assyrian traditions, is evidenced by the conversation between a certain writer (Badger, "The Nestorians...", page 108-109) and Sheikh Nasir, the religious chief of the Yezidis at that time.

"Question. Where is Sheikh Adi?"

N. Where is Jesus? Where is Mohammed? Where is Ali?

Q. Jesus is everywhere; but what has that to do with Sheikh Adi?

N. If Jesus is everywhere, so is Sheikh Adi.

Q. From whence if Sheikh Adi? Who was his father?

N. Sheikh Adi has no father.

....................
Q. Who was his mother?
N. He has no mother.

Q. Then you make him greater than Jesus, whose mother was the blessed Virgin Mary?
N. So it is; Sheikh Adi is greater than Jesus. He is without parentage, and is from the light.

Q. When did Sheikh Adi die?
N. He is not dead, neither can he die.

"An investigation into present Yezidi doctrines and a study of that chaotic rhapsody entitled "The Poem of Sheikh Adi" (reproduced in our chapter 8) provide further glimpses of the nature and functions of this all-pervading being.

All creation is under his control. His activities pervade the highest heaven and the wildernesses of the earth. He is the deity of the fountains. He is the god of rain and of thunder. He provides the fructifying rain and he inspires terror with his thunder. He is god of sun and of fire; he shines through the power of his majesty.

He is regarded as a universal sovereign. To him all creatures come for his good purposes and gifts. It is he who provides for the wants of mankind who, therefore, should yield him worship.

Sheikh Adi is a beneficent deity. "They call him the god of that which is good, of day and of life".*

All benevolence and charity are from him but

malevolent attributes are dissociated from him.
Yet, in the expression of his rule, he wields, as his
scourge, nature's weapons - thunder, storm, drought
and famine.

His rule is celestial as well as terrestrial.
Whilst Melek Taus is to be the Messiah of Yezidi souls
who have been finally emancipated from rebirth and
from judgment Sheikh Adi claims a wider celestial
sovereignty. Those who die neglectful of him shall
be punished with his contempt in the future existence
but the highest heavens are for those who obey him.

Who is the Yezidi Adi? Adi is suggested to be
cognate with the Hebrew 7א the first two letters
of Adonai, 'the Lord'.* In fact a writer (Grant... "Nestorians...Yezeedees") maintains that the whole
Yezidi cult is a derivative from a decadent form of
Judaism which developed among the descendants of the
Israelitish tribes who were taken captive to Assyria
in the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmanezer in the
8th century B.C.

Grant develops his theory as follows:-

The Yezidis are descendants of the Jewish tribes
because -

a. they practice circumcision,
b. they offer sacrifices,
c. they observe the Passover in the month of Nisan,
d. they abstain from meats prohibited to the Jews,
e. the Jews had degenerated at the time of the
captivity almost to idolatry and, therefore,
readily accepted the new doctrines of Zoroaster
who, according to Grant, was a Hebrew educated

* Badger, loc. cit., page 112.
e. (Contd.) and reared in the Jewish religion: that they passed from Zoroastrianism to Magianism, then to Christianity, and afterwards to Islam. In this protean process - "one form of religion has been engrafted on to another, till finally all had become blended or absorbed in the heresy of Manicheas, which readily took root in such a soil, and, under the culture of his disciple Adde, grew into the anomalous form in which we now behold the faith and practice of the reputed worshippers of the prince of darkness." (Grant, page 326)

On analysis, however, Grant's case for the Jewish origin of the Yezidis can scarcely succeed because -

a. Circumcision was known in Mesopotamia before the 8th century B.C.*

b. The practice of offering sacrifices does not commence in Assyria with the arrival there of the Jewish captives. The pre-Semitic Accadians and Sumerians had a law and ritual of sacrifice long before the 8th century B.C.

c. The fact of a Yezidi festival being celebrated in the month Nisan is no evidence that this festival is an observance of the Jewish Passover. Religious festivals were celebrated in that month in Assyria and Babylonia long before the captivity of the Jews.1

d. The Yezidis do abstain from certain meats prohibited to the Jews but the former include in their taboos certain articles of food, e.g. fish2 and certain fruits which the Levitic code does not prohibit. On the other hand certain articles of food which were not prohibited by the Levitic code, e.g. gazelle flesh, cocks, etc. are disallowed by Yezidi taboos.

The alleged Jewish origin of the Yezidis would

* Vide Sayce, loc. cit. page 83, (quoting Cuneiform inscriptions of Western Asia: British Museum, Vol. 2., 17:63)
1 Cf. Delaporte, page 163.
therefore seem to be unsubstantiated.

The Yezidi Adi as the Assyrian deity Adad.

It is known that the designation Adi was used in Assyria and Syria as a title of honour by the invokers of deity. The vocative then could become a generic title. Sir. J. G. Frazer writes concerning the Syrian god Adonis that "the true name of the deity was Tammuz, the appellation of Adonis is merely the Semitic Adon - "lord," a title of honour by which his worshippers addressed him.*

The Jewish term Adoni would certainly be known to the Assyrians in the area now included in the Mosul vilayet - and even beyond that limit - through the use of that appellation by the Jewish captives who were settled in areas in which we now find Yezidis. Nor would the title 'Adoni' (my lord) sound very alien to the native Assyrians - since one of their own eminent deities, who was most frequently mentioned on the Assyrian historical texts was called Adad.2

A study of the history, characteristics and functions in Assyrian religion of this great deity

1 Even to this day there are descendants of these Jewish captives scattered throughout Assyria in districts as far separated as Urumiyah, Bashe Qa'llah, Amadiyah, Zakho, Mosul, Urfah and Birijik. (Vide, Admiralty War Staff, "Handbook of Northern Mesopotamia and Kurdistan", Vol. 4.
2 Delaporte, "The Babylonian and Assyrian Civilisation", page 310.
Adad, and a comparison of these characteristics and functions with the Yezidi deity Adi has convinced the present writer that the Assyrian Adad, the god of natural laws and providence, is the same as the present Yezidi deity Adi.*

The Assyrian god Adad was not one of the ephemeral or insignificant deities. His worship spread throughout Assyria. It went northwards to the non-Semitic tribes of the Taurus; it went across the desert where, as Rimmon,¹ he became the supreme sun-god of the Syrians. His worship went as far west and south as Edom.²

Adad was one of the ancient deities. He appears on Assyrian tablets as early as 2300-2100 B.C. (3) and seventeen centuries afterwards he still yields sway as a potent deity. In the 19th century (B.C.) a temple was erected to him at Ashur by the Assyrian king Shamsi-Adad; and in the records of the king Adad-Nirari I (the first) of Assyria (cir:1300 B.C.) "beneath whose feet the gods Anu and Ashur, and Shamash, and Adad and Ishtar have forced all princes,

* Adad's counterpart as the sun-god of the Hittites was called Attis and was likewise identified with Tammuz (Vide Garstang, Hittite Empire, pp.153,114.)
1 It is possible that it is he who appears with the compound name Hadad-Rimmon in Zechariah Ch.xii/xi.
2 Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p.203-204.
and rulers to bow down in submission" there is mention of the restoration of the temple of Adad at Ashur. In these records of Adad-Nirari there is contained the following imprecation on any successor who would neglect the maintenance of the temple - "may the god Adad (the Storm-god) overwhelm him with a deadly storm; may flood and destructive winds, and rebellion, and hurricane, and tempest, and want, and famine, and drought, and hunger, be ever in his land; may he (i.e. Adad) overwhelm his land like a flood; may he turn it into heaps and ruins, and may he blast it with a bolt of destruction."*

Bricks of the reign of Tiglath Pileser 1 (B.C. 1115-1103) likewise record the rebuilding of a temple to the god Adad at Ashur;1 and that king himself petitions Adad to grant him "abundant rains, years of fatness and prosperity."2

In the Assyrian class of prayers called "the prayers of the lifting of the hands," there is a prayer of Ashur-bani-pal (B.C. 668-662) to Adad who is invoked as "prince of heaven and earth at whose command mankind was created".3

Thus throughout the seventeen centuries between 2300 B.C. and 600 B.C. there appear official mentions

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1 Delaporte, loc.cit. page 312.
2 British Museum Guide (cit:) page 203.
of this great deity Adad.

Adad, like Adi, was a composite deity.

The career of the god Adad is marked in Assyrian religious mythology by the absorption and concentration in himself of the various deities Saru (wind-god), Matu (wintery tempests), Mer-mer (storm) and Sararu (the shining firmament). He absorbed the beneficent elements of these deities and rejected their malevolent aspects. He was thus regarded as a benevolent deity whilst, at the same time, he was profoundly feared.

Matu (wintery tempests) whom he absorbed was an off-spring of Ea, the god of the deep and of fountains, who was the parent of Ishtar. Subsequently Adad becomes the spouse of Ishtar. But, as has been indicated elsewhere in this chapter, Tammuz was also a husband of Ishtar. Thus Tammuz and Adad are both included in the family of the deity Ea through marriage with his daughter Ishtar. Subsequently Tammuz and Adad, as husbands of Ishtar, also become associated with, and eventually are mistaken for, Shamash the great sun-god who was also a bridegroom of Ishtar.

Adad was god of the atmospheric phenomena - of storms, rains, lightning, cloud and thunder. So is Adi of the Yezidis. Adad was to be reverenced with awe among a people whose sustenance was derived from
his benevolence. He was both lord of plenty and
"lord of the hurricane".* He was not only the
fructifying rain but the inundator who could flood
the fields of the unjust. Like Adi of the Yezidis
he could wield, as his scourge, drought or flood,
parching sun or blighting frost. He had power over
bewitchment, spells and unclean diseases and - also
like Adi of the Yezidis - he could render these evils
innocuous.

Oxen and, sometimes, bulls) were the special
offering to Adad as they were likewise the offering to
Shamash, the sun-god, with whom he became identified.
And the Yezidi sacrifice of the 'oxen of the sun' to
'Sheikh' Shems is simultaneously an offering to Adi.
In the vagaries of mythological celebrations the
festival of Adad was - like the festivals of Tammuz -
sometimes held during the Spring in the southern areas
of Mesopotamia where his resurrection was the motive
of the commemoration. But in the Assyrian highlands,
owing to colder temperature, a festival which
commemorated his death took place in the Autumn; and,
in the course of centuries, the identity of Adad was
mingled in these festivals with that of Tammuz and
Shamash. The names of these respective deities -

* Babylonian and Assyrian Civilisation, p.157,
  Delaporte.
1 Adad is depicted on cylinders as clad in a short
garment, standing on a bull, armed with the
thunder-bolt and brandishing a weapon over his
head. Vide Delaports, page 142.
Adad, Tammuz and Shamash - survived but their individual characteristics were inextricably blended.

The functions which were performed by the Assyrian god Adad as the source and ruler of nature's providence for mankind and, likewise, the status occupied by him as god of the seasons, of elemental powers, as god of the exalted sun and as deity of earthly scourges are those functions which are now ascribed by the Yezidis to their deity Adi. In Adi of the Yezidis we, therefore, recognise Adad of the Assyrians.

Resume, and summary conclusion, of thesis.

The Yezidis are a peculiar religious sect - generally called devil-worshippers - whose principal habitat is in the foothills of Northern Mesopotamia and in the Sinjar hills within the North Western Mesopotamian desert. Through persecution, by Turkish governors and fanatical Kurdish aghas, Yezidi refugees fled thence to Syria, to Persia and to the Caucasus.

In Mesopotamia - where their number, according to recent estimates, has decreased to between thirty-five thousand and forty thousand - some are sedentary agriculturalists, others are pastoral and
others semi-nomad. The Yezidis in Syria (estimated at twenty thousand) and in the Caucasus (approximate assessment ten thousand) are generally agricultural and pastoral. The Yezidis in Persia are principally menials.

**Political status.** Until the British assumption of a mandate over Mesopotamia at the end of the Great War the political status of the Yezidis was that of a scorned millet of the Turkish empire and nominally under their own territorial chief (mir). Their present status in Mesopotamia is that of a millet with a semi-feudalistic autonomy sublimated in the ideal of citizenship in the new kingdom of 'Iraq.

The mir, whose fortress-residence is at Ba'idhra (cir: 35 miles north east of Nineveh), is regarded as almost infallible though the holder of the office is sometimes murdered by a rival successor.

**Religion and mirate as their nexus.** The Yezidi Mecca is an impressive temple within the sacred valley of Sheikh Adi in the foothills of Kurdistan. Close to the temple is their shrine of the sun.

Attached to this temple, which is supported by the contributions of the sect, are the religious head and other members of their hierarchy.

Some of these religious officials undertake occasional missions to the different and distant Yezidi communities for the performance of religious
ceremonies and to collect financial support for the temple and for the mir. These journeys are likewise intended for the encouragement of the different tribal religious men who, in their respective communities, direct the social and religious activities.

The temple and the mir are the nexus that links the Yezidis of the different localities whether in Mesopotamia or in exile.

Festivals and fasts. The Yezidis have festivals of which some would appear to be emaciated relics of primitive Assyrian naturalistic celebrations; others, again, may be traceable to the influence of modern contiguous religions.

They believe in fasting and that fasting can be efficaciously done by proxy.

They have holy days but these are characterised by little, if any, cessation from the activities of their normal day.

The sublimest ideal of the faithful Yezidi is to participate in the peculiar rites of the Great Assembly which takes place during Autumn at the temple. This gathering of a vast congregation is characterised by a combination of primitive mirth and religious zeal which demonstrates its enthusiasm in lustrations, animal sacrifice, dancing, singing, adoration of the sun rise, veneration of the creedal symbol, the
purchase of sacred talismans and the making of offerings for the support of the shrine.

**Education.** The Yezidis are almost entirely an illiterate peasantry unchanged in their mental furniture from remote days. Their rural economy offered no stimulus to educational pursuits. Writers even maintained that illiteracy was a tenet of the cult. The present thesis, however, shows that if illiteracy were a tenet of Yezidism it is now disregarded even by prominent sheikhs of the sect. The territorial chief of the Yezidis in Syria is an ex-pupil of an American Presbyterian Mission School; and when an end comes to the erratic career of Sheikh Ishmael Beg of the Jebel Sinjar his successor there will probably be his son who is a pupil of a Christian missionary school at Mosul.

**Sacred Books.** To be 'people of the book', and thus acquire the toleration which Muslim tradition allows to religion founded on sacred books, a claim emerged in the 19th century for the existence of Yezidi sacred books. Investigation, however, would seem to dispose of the claim for any official or ancient origin for these pseudo-scriptures which appear to originate from sources extraneous to official Yezidism.

**Social Codes.** Neither their meagre economic
existence nor their chequered history have eliminated from their midst a spirit of unsophisticated social fellowship.

Their freedom of the sexes is conducive to romance, elopement and marriage. Abundant mirth associates with the three evenings during which the wedding festivities continue among them.

Their pre-marriage settlements approximately resemble those prevailing among their Muslim neighbours.

They are generally endogamous; child marriage is unknown but the early attainment of maturity allows of very youthful marriage.

Infidelity, though not completely unknown, is rare among them. Polygamy, though not disallowed, is restricted by economic circumstances.

In respect of divorce, whilst there is no religious barrier to it and while their moral code acknowledges its possibility, nevertheless economic and social circumstances restrict the practice.

Religion.

Yezidism is not a religion which is systematised and traceable to one great prophet who propounded a definite ethical and spiritual code. Its origin and development, and even the significance of many of its practices, are unknown to the devotees.
The cult is a qualified monotheism. It acknowledged a deity who is transcendental. It has a cosmological system which appears to be a blend of the Biblical account and the Babylonian Epic of the Flood. It has doctrines of theophany and astrotheology. It has a primitive sense of the effectiveness of prayer, of vicarious fasting, and of baptismal purification. Circumcision, too, is practised though it is not universal among them. The creed also has belief in sun-worship, ignicolism, sacred stones, sacred water, groves, sacred trees and other elements which seem to ally the cult with the primitive naturalistic beliefs which were developed in the religious mythology of the Assyrian pantheon.

It has an incoherent type of hagiology in which there are included prominent personages from Judaism, from Christianity and from Islam in addition to saints peculiar to the sect. Of the indigenous saints some, in the writer's view, are but the personification and theriomorphism of virtues accredited by primitive superstition to certain places as the result of successful thaumaturgic rites which, from unknown times, have been performed there.

Its eschatology includes belief in survival after death, in a paradise, and in a realm of ultimate spiritual victory. Reincarnation and metempsychosis
are accepted as the channels of purification for otherwise imperfect souls. Final spiritual triumph is achieved by a synergism of the soul with the goodwill of the supreme deity.

The Sacred Triad.

The religion of the Yezidis is affirmed by certain writers to be an agglomeration from the surrounding faiths of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. His own investigations, however, have forced the present writer to the conclusion that while the genius of the faith is sufficiently elastic to incorporate salient elements from the above faiths, nevertheless, the peculiar and prominent characteristics of Yezidism, i.e. Melek Taus, Yezid and Sheikh Adi, are unknown in the above faiths and their origin must be sought elsewhere.

Melek Taus. Melek Taus, as a mysterious and powerful deity, stands at the centre of the cult. This is the potentate whom a majority among the few writers on Yezidism identify as the devil. In their interpretation of Yezidism he was a celestial spirit who, for disobedience, was hurled from heaven into hell by the wrath of God; and that the Yezidi adoration and offerings are methods for propitiating this evil power since the supreme God is all loving. Yezidism is thus regarded as worship of the devil.
It is to be remembered, however, that notwithstanding a suggestive similarity to devil worship, the Yezidis themselves maintain that their worship is the worship of God. But despite these protestations they are designated devil worshippers and are, therefore, scorned alike by Christians and Mohammadans and are made the object of gross accusations which are adorned by Oriental hyperbole. But if Melek Taus is the devil he is not the devil of Judaism or of Christianity or of Islam.

It is not denied that in dogma and practice the cult emphasises the propitiatory rather than the eucharistic aspect of the religious life. This, however, is not surprising in a faith which is conscious of many and ubiquitous evil agencies but which lacks the objective of a specific prophet who attracts positive devotion to his own personality.

The present writer's analysis of the perplexing Yezidi conception of Melek Taus is that, in Yezidism, he holds antithetic and alternating functions. He is reverenced as the chief of seven great spirits whom God created. He was celestial co-adjutor of the supreme deity. He was also made administrator of the temporal, or earthly, sphere with rule over earth, over sea and over nature's seasons. He subsequently becomes potentate of the lower world but, as infernal
monarch, goodness eclipses evil in his character. He is even then concerned with the welfare of the Yezidis since he is likewise to be their messiah in the realm of final spiritual victory.

In the inconsistencies of Yezidi doctrine he is the most active member of an immanent theological triad in which he is allied with Yezid and Sheikh Adi.

In view of the alternating functions of Melek Taus in Yezidism, and because of the probable theological origin of this unique cult in Assyria, Melek Taus would appear, in the writer's judgment, to be a daimon representative of the attributes and functions of the Assyrian deity Tammuz at that ascendant stage of the latter's mythological evolution when he had coalesced with the Assyrian deity of sky, earth and the lower world.

Yezid. Yezid would appear to be a faintly immanent version of the transcendental supreme deity.

Sheikh Adi. In a gloomy chamber within the temple there is their holy of holies which they call the shrine of Sheikh Adi. Who Sheikh Adi was they do not know. Writers variously identify him as a 12th century (A.D.) Syrian Sufi; as a 13th century Kurdish gardener and even as a disciple of Mani.

Owing, however, to the preponderence in Yezidism of elements which would seem to be relics from the old
Assyrian pantheon the present writer was forced to reject these alleged origins and supply alternatives. His investigations led him to the conclusion that 'Sheikh' Adi is a metamorphosed, synthetic version of the sun deity Adad who featured in primitive mythological ideas throughout Northern Mesopotamia, the Taurus mountains and Syria. The thesis seeks to show that in the later phases of Assyrian religious thought this deity evolved into the eclectic representation of other deities. Through the attrition of the centuries and by the evolution of polytheism the distinctive functions of these deities became nebulous whilst the original personality and functions of Adad were enlarged through his absorbing the ineradicable and more empiric qualities of these other deities whose functions this virile god ultimately assumed. The gods with whom Adad coalesced, or whom he absorbed, included the Assyrian deities of the watery abyss, of the lower world, of fish, of the sun, of the elements, and of natural fertility; and as the composite representation of these deities it is his presence which perpetuates the reverence accorded to these natural elements in the Yezidi cult.

The individual who relishes the abnormal may be disappointed to discover this strange sect threatened
with the despoiling of its notoriety as a cult of the devil. To the theological investigator the sect, however, is not unattractive as a museum of theological relics and as the eminent contemporary paradox of latitudinarianism engrafted on an extreme religious sectarianism.

Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam had aspects kindred to certain portions of the old naturalism which was developed in the Assyrian religious mythology. Such aspects had the merit of being innocuous if admitted into the Yezidi cult whilst, at the same time, this exhibition of affinity with the successive creeds was the possible source of a toleration which might otherwise be replaced by a hostility backed with the force of larger numbers if not by governments. Whilst recognising the existence of these expedient incorporations the writer was forced by his investigations to the conclusion that it is unnecessary to proceed beyond the precincts of the Assyrian pantheon, with its nature worship and its plethora of gods, to discover the cradle of Yezidism.

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APPENDIX.

Itineraries from Britain for visiting Yezidi temple.

In the absence of private means a substantial travelling scholarship would be indispensable to a student intent on making a study of the Yezidis within their own environment in Northern Mesopotamia.

On the present international rate of exchange the approximate expense necessary to reach the town of Mosul is suggested in the appended itineraries. From Mosul the investigator's movements to the Yezidi localities, which are in the Kurdish foothills and in the Jebel Sinjar, would demand horse or mule convoys to the more inaccessible objectives. To certain salient points there are tracks suitable for motor vehicles.

**Itinerary 1. London - Basra - Mosul.**

- By steamer, London to Basra, 29 days.
- Basra to Baghdad. Train available on Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- Depart Basra, Wednesday at 22.00 hours.
- Arrive Baghdad, Thursday at 18.50 "
- Depart Baghdad, Thursday at 19.20 "
- Arrive Kirkuk, Friday at 07.30 "
- By motor convoy, depart Kirkuk, Friday at 08.30 "
- Arrive Mosul, approximately at 16.30 " (Friday).

The cost of a return journey (London - Mosul - London) amounts to between £110 - £120 (1st class), and requires between 65 and 70 days.

From Mosul, to the temple of Sheikh Adi, by car and horse, would cost approximately £5.

**Itinerary 2. London, overland route to Istanbul and Mosul.**

1st day, Depart London for Paris, Lausanne, Milan, Sofia;
4th day, arrive Istanbul at 18,45 hours,
5th day, depart Istanbul by steamer (Wednesdays and
Saturdays) at 09,40 hours,
6th day, depart Hyderapasa at 10,40 hours for Aleppo,
6th day, arrive Aleppo at 23,20 hours (Thursday & Sunday),
7th day, depart Aleppo at 00,10 hours,
7th day, arrive Tel Ziouane at 13,06 hours,
8th day, depart Tel Ziouane (motor transport) at 13,30
hours,
8th day, arrive Mosul approximately 18,40 hours.

Return journey by this itinerary involves nearly 20
days and costs (approximately) £110 (1st class), or
£85 (2nd class).

**Itinerary 3.** London, Paris, Marseilles, Beyrout, Baghdad, Mosul,
1st day, depart London for Paris at 11,00 hours,
2nd day, arrive Marseilles at 07,51 hours,
steamer Marseilles to Beyrout, approx: 9 days.
12th day, depart Beyrout, motor transport,
13th day, arrive Baghdad; thence to Mosul as per
relevant portion of itinerary No. 1.

This itinerary (No. 3) - return - requires about 30
days and costs approx: £115 (1st class) and £85 (2nd class)

**Itinerary 4.** London, Egypt, Galilee, Baghdad, Mosul.
1st day, depart London,
12th day, (average) arrive Port Said,
By Air, on Tuesdays,
Depart Cairo for Galilee at 12,00 hours,
Arrive Baghdad (Wednesday) late afternoon,
Baghdad to Mosul (train and car) as per relevant portion
of Itinerary No. 1.

& £130 (2nd class).
requires about 35 days.

For each itinerary a sum of at least £10 should be
available for incidental expenses.
Commissariat arrangements, expenses of local
travelling, and residence among tribes in the Jebel
Sinjar should be made in Mosul under the guidance of
resident British police advisors.
GLOSSARY.

Chol - Portion of the North Mesopotamian Desert, sparcely covered with grass and stunted shrub.

Gavdush - The flesh of the sacrificed ox.

Guranis - Folk songs.

Kaimakan - Administrator of a minor district.

Kiahya - Village headman.

Liwa - A major administrative district, or province.

Qadha - A minor administrative unit and part of a Liwa.

Rabbanyati - Women of the Nestorian faith who, though not in convents, are self dedicated to the religious life and will not marry.

Rouwis - Bucket which is made of animal skin and used for carrying water.

Yilak - Summer shielings.
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