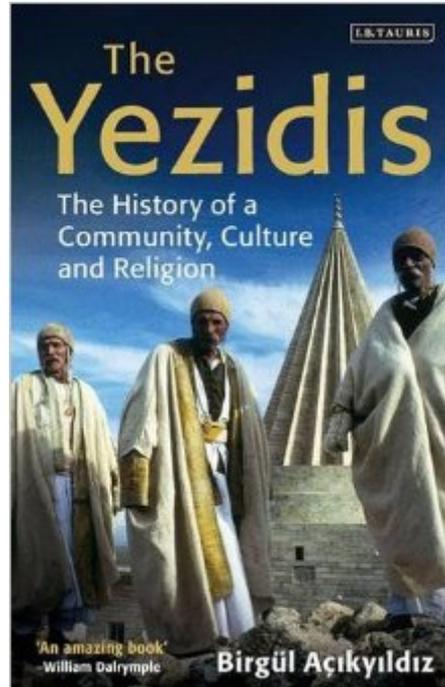


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The Yezidis: The History Of A Community, Culture And Religion



Synopsis

The minority communities of northern Iraq are under increasingly severe threat from Islamic State jihadists. Among these minorities, the Yezidis have one of the most remarkable legacies of any tradition in the Middle East. Yet not just their religious and material culture but now their entire existence is in peril as entire populations seek refuge from their violent oppressors. But who are the Yezidis (or 'Yazidis' as in much of the Western media)? The community has been misunderstood and oppressed for centuries. Predominantly ethnic Kurds, and the target of persecution over many centuries, until now they have succeeded in keeping their ancient religion alive despite the claim that they are 'devil worshippers.' This is the essential guide to a threatened tradition. It reveals an intricate system of belief influenced by Zoroastrianism and Sufism and regional paganism like Mithraism. It explores the origins of the Yezidis, their art and architecture and the often misunderstood (and now progressively life-threatening) connections between Yezidism and the Satan/Sheitan of Christian and Muslim tradition. Extensively illustrated, with maps, photographs and illustrations, this pioneering book is a testimonial to one of the region's most extraordinary and ancient peoples.

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Customer Reviews

This book focusses mainly on the culture and history of Yezidis. Since the Fall of 2014, the atrocities of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) committed in Iraq and Syria came into light, the world learned that thousands of innocent Yezidis were slaughtered. Their plight and sufferings are too gruesome to describe. Since then there has been a surge of interest in understanding the culture

and traditions of Yezidi people. This book gives a comprehensive introduction to Yezidi society, and examines Yezidism not only as a religion but also as a social and historical phenomenon. A brief summary of this book is as follows: Yezidism did not have liturgical or historical writing before 12th century, but the contemporary religious practices and hymns orally transmitted over generations hint at various layers of development. Modern Yezidis are mainly of Kurdish origin whose ancestors practiced a proto Indo-Iranian religion. Yezidis pray God through the banners of the Peacock Angel and consider celestial gods like sun, fire, water and earth as sacred. They generally pray in the direction of sun, and perform fire sacrifices. Fire is an important part of many ceremonial rituals, and Yezidis are strong believers in reincarnation. They also have a caste system and observe the rite of baptism. All these practices are traced to a proto Indo-Iranian practices that is clearly documented in the Rig Veda and ancient Sanskrit literature of Hinduism. For example, the hymns of Rig-Veda of Hinduism were orally transmitted for 3,000 years in Brahmanical system. The Islamic practices were introduced to Yezidis much later in 12 century by Sufi Sheikh Adi. After his death in 1162, the Yezidi successors blended his doctrine with Islamic beliefs, which became the modern Yezidi doctrine as we know today.

Before a year a couple of years ago many people had never heard of the Yezidi, now people know of them because they were victimized by the radical group, ISIS. Now they have been driven from their homelands and their women and young girls have been sold into white slavery. Most people do not know anything more about these people. Which makes this book great because it discusses their origins, history, religious observances, societal structure and material culture. In the introduction this Kurdish woman from Turkey discusses the challenges of traveling to the different areas where the Yezidis live. Those with a slight familiarity with the Middle East know that many people have mistakenly called the Yezidis devil worshippers. The peacock has been conflated with the devil. It was the peacock that led Iblis into paradise so he could deceive Adam and Eve. In Zoroastrian mythos the wicked god Angra Mainyu made a peacock to display that he could make something good. The peacock is also a metaphor for Satan, decked out in colorful attire yet his feet are totally ugly. The peacock has even more meaning. The peacock was also a symbol for Tammuz, the Greenman of Mesopotamia. According to Yezidi mythos. God created the world as a giant pearl and then placed it on the back of a bird that he created called Anfar. Later he sent the Melek Taus and the heptad of angels to break the earth apart and make it come to life. According to one legend of the Yezidi Melek Taus was the head angel, like Lucifer and since he refused to bow to man God chose him to lead the planet Earth. According to another legend Melek

Taws rebelled against the creation of man but then later repented and god accepted his repentance.

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