'THE LANGUAGE OF THE MEDIANS'

In his article 'Caucasia' Professor H. W. Bailey drew attention to an interesting article by A. Shanidze, 'The newly-discovered alphabet of the Caucasian Albanians and its significance for science', in a sadly inaccessible periodical. 'The discovery of the lost alphabet was made by I. Abuladze in an Armenian manuscript of the fifteenth century containing a miscellany of alphabets, Greek, Syriac, Latin, Georgian, Coptic, Arabic, and Albanian.'

In the same Armenian manuscript is preserved in seven different languages the Monophysite liturgical prayer "Ἄγιος ὁ θεός, ἅγιος ὁ χυρός, ἅγιος ὁ δόξαντος, ὁ σταυρωθένς δε' ἡμᾶς, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.' One version is said to be in the language of the Medians (Marāc'). . . . The other versions, all in Armenian script, are in Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.'

At first glance one would expect the 'language of the Medians' to mean that of the Kurds, the only sizeable nation of the area not otherwise mentioned. And surely, in Shanidze's words, 'there is no doubt that we have before us a Kurdish text.' Shanidze has established that the MS was copied in the first half of the fifteenth century, probably between 1430 and 1446, from a presumably much older original brought to Armenia from Feodosia in the Crimea. Since the earliest Kurdish literary work extant is the Dīwān of Malādū Jīzrī, who probably died c. 1480, these few words, for what they are worth, may constitute the earliest record of Kurdish.

It may be of interest to reproduce here, for comparison, some of the other versions. They are given here in transliteration, from the excellent plates illustrating Shanidze's article. The accompanying interpretations follow those of Shanidze only in part. It will be seen that the original translations and transcriptions into Armenian letters had varying success.

**Persian.**
P'ak'i xuda, p'ak'i t'ova na, p'ak'i bēmark, xvar xāch šodi bahri ma. Rah māt k'm'vār ma.

**Arabic.**
Yodīs allāh, yodūs slyaddar, yodūs maqīdāx sīmāt, aldī ꞌin sulāp, in hamma.

*Quddūs allāh, quddūs al-qādir, quddūs mā-yixīdāh [<& yā'xudhu]-al-mawrī, allāhī in su'alah, 'rhamnā.*

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1 J.R.8., 1943, 4.
2 Izvestija Instituta Jazyka, Istorii i Material'noj Kul'tury im. akad. Marra Gruzinaskogo Fīdaln Akademii Nauk SSSR (Tbilis), rv, 1939. I am most grateful to Professor Bailey for the loan of his copy.
3 Ed. Martin Hartmann, *Der kurdische Dīwān des Schēch Ahmad*, Berlin, 1904.

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Turkish.  
Ağ t'anvrî, ağ guç  
u, ağ ajalsîz, yisa ki  
zaç'â ãëxtônk. Rahmat  
yolgil bizâ.

*Ağ tänvrî, ağ guçû, ağ ajalsîz, yisa ki zaçâ ãeqtûn, rahmât qûylîl bizâ.

'Median'.

Pâkîz xodê, pâkîz zähm,  
pâkîz vëmrëk, kôy hat'  
i zaç'ë, sëkôrma. Rahmât'  
ë ma.

Professor Henning has recently 1 quoted from this text, characterizing it as 'ein nordiranischer Dialekt allerdings nicht sehr alten Gepräges'. There can be no questioning his etymology of sëkôrma 'for us' (< až-kord-, cf. MPers., Parth. aĉ êd kird 'for this (reason)'), a form now replaced in Northern Kurdish by ëz bû ma, or bônû ma. But the word hat' allows of a simpler explanation than his '“hanged” (older haxt, cf. NPers. âhîxt etc.).' Comparison with the phrase from John xix, 20,

(i) au ëz . . . lo k'ô k'î Isa hat'ë zaç'ë k'ëron,
(ii) ëu êi Yûsûs lë hat'ä zaç'ë k'ëron, ²  
ö rôpôs . . . öpôs ëstûaçpôdû dë ëtôsôs,

with the normal Northern Kd. periphrastic passive 'came to crucifixion', shows that we have here also the verb hâtûn 'to come' (< *a-gata-). pâkîz,  pâqiţ 'clean, pure' and zaçm 'strong' are common Northern Kd. words. It seems, therefore, that the text is to be read as

*Pâkîz xudê, pâkîz zahm, pâkîz vëmrëk, kôy hâtû zaçê 'zô kir ma, rahmatë ma.

A modern translation of 'who was crucified' might read kô yê hâtû(n) şalb kirinê, with the 'Demonstrative Izafe' yê serving as a relative pronoun. The koj of the text may well also contain a relative element -y, beside the subordinating particle kô (MPers. kû).

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1 Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abt. I : Der Nöhe und der Mittlere Osten, IV. Bd. : Iranistik, 1.  

² From Kurdish translations of the Gospels in Armenian script, (i) BFBS, Constantinople,  
  1857 ('translated by Stepan, an Armenian of Hainech'), (ii) ABS, Constantinople, 1911 ('translated  
  by Mesrs. Amirkhanian, Der Ghazarian and Abalahadian').

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