

PREFACE

In this little book it has not been my aim to give a systematic account of the Yazīdī people and their religion. As I said of the paper reproduced as Part I, so in the other Parts, except where the contrary is made quite clear, I have set down only such things as I have seen with my own eyes or have learnt at first hand in the course of my official duties or in conversation with the votaries themselves. Just as there are many earnest churchmen in this country whose knowledge of early Church history is defective or whose exposition of Christian dogma would hardly command general acceptance, so too I make no claim that what I have recorded here is a definitive statement of Yazīdī beliefs and practices with which all would agree.

The matter is based for the most part on entries in my diaries between 1930 and 1945. Now that, twenty or more years later, I have found time to collate these disjointed notes I realize that many of the gaps and obscurities in my picture could have been filled or clarified by quite short periods of sustained inquiry. My hope is that they will prove useful to future research workers in this field, as a starting point, perhaps, for some, for others as a new source worthy of consideration with other sources with which they are already familiar.

Proper names have been transliterated in accordance with the rules recommended by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for Arabic and Kurdish place names, except that to represent Arabic *ā* in Arabic names I have preferred *-a* to *-ah* as more convenient for a region where Arabic and Kurdish names are found side by side, and are not always easily distinguishable. Kurdish words and phrases quoted as such have been transliterated according to the system used in the *Kurdish-English Dictionary* compiled by Colonel T. Wahby and myself (the Clarendon Press, 1966): of this I only need explain here that the vowels *a* and *o* are always long, other long vowels are distinguished by the circumflex accent, the consonants *c* and *j* have their Turkish values of English *j* and French *j* respectively, and *x* represents *خ*.

There have been many changes in Iraq since I left the country in 1945, and I have often found it difficult to decide whether to

use the present or the past tense; I must ask the reader's indulgence for any inconsistency he may detect in this respect.

I have to thank Sir Reader Bullard and Professor A. K. S. Lambton, who kindly read through the typescript, for valuable comments and advice.

Although for many years I held posts in Her Majesty's Foreign Service and under the Government of Iraq any views expressed in this book, and the responsibility for them, are mine alone.

C.J.E.