

**THE ASIAN MYSTERY;
ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY,
RELIGION, AND PRESENT STATE
OF THE ANSAIREEH OR NUSAIRIS
OF SYRIA**

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The Asian Mystery; Illustrated in the History, Religion, and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria by Samuel Lyde

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SAMUEL LYDE

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THE
ASIAN MYSTERY

ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY, RELIGION, AND PRESENT STATE OF THE

ANSAIREEH OR NUSAIRIS OF SYRIA

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL LYDE, M.A.

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LONDON
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

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P R E F A C E.

IN this book I have attempted for the sect of the Ansaireeh what De Sacy has already effected for that of the Druses. My qualifications for the task have been —

First : Connexion with the Ansaireeh for many years, as the only European who has lived among them in their mountains, where alone they are unmixed with other tribes.

Secondly : Acquaintance with Ansairee belief and customs, acquired orally from Christian servants and others brought up in Ansairee districts ; and, especially, from an Ansairee lad, who has had many opportunities of gaining information.

Thirdly : Possession of an Ansairee liturgical book, called the "Manual of Sheikhs," in which all the main points of the Ansairee system, theological and ceremonial, are developed.

I have, moreover, consulted such Arab and other historians and authors as promised to throw any light on the Ansaireeh, and all published Ansairee documents that I could hear of. I could have wished for greater opportunities of examining original Ansairee writings. Indeed, I might have been inclined to delay compiling the present work, in the expectation of rendering it some day more complete, had not the state of my health made it uncertain whether I should enjoy such opportunity. As it is, I trust that it will serve as a stepping-stone to those who may follow in the same road.

I have thus employed the leisure hours arising from illness, in the hope that my labours might tend to the furtherance of missionary work among a neglected people. The letting in of light on the hidden things of darkness is always favourable, with God's blessing, to the progress of Christianity in the world.

S. L.

Cairo, 1860.

Note.—It is principally in Germany and France that Ansairee documents have been published.

NIEBUHR (Travels, vol. ii. p. 357, &c.) gives an account of an Ansairee book which had come into his possession.

DE SACY (Exposition of Druse Religion, vol. ii. p. 580, note) speaks of this book as having been lent to him by Niebuhr, and translated by him.

Both Niebuhr and De Sacy speak of a Druse book against the Ansaireeh, from which De Sacy gives many extracts.

BURCKHARDT (Travels, p. 151) speaks of an Ansairee book which had come into the hands of M. Rousseau, "who has had it translated into French, and means to publish it;" and M. Rousseau himself (*Annales des Voyages*, cahier xlii.) has spoken of the Ansaireeh.

In the Yearly Report of the German Oriental Society for 1845-6, mention is made of an Ansairee Catechism, which had been sent, with a French translation, to the King of Prussia. A translation of copious extracts from this document is given by Dr. WOLFF, in vol. iii. p. 302, &c., of the *Journal* of the same Society.

But the most complete information hitherto given with respect to the Ansaireeh is to be found in the papers of M. CATAFAGO, in the *Journals* of the French, Asiatic, and German Oriental Societies.

In the *Journal Asiatique*, Feb. 1848, he has given an account of a book of Ansairee Festivals and Prayers; and also three Masses from the same in the *Journal* of the German Oriental Society, vol. ii. p. 388.

In the *Journal Asiatique*, July, 1848, he has given the heads of the contents of an Ansairee book, which I conclude to be the one in my possession, and which, in that case, must have been once lent to him. The book itself was purchased by me from a Christian merchant in Ladikkeh for the sum of £10, having come into his hands during the troublesome times of Ibrahim Pasha, when the Ansaireeh were driven from their homes.

Finally, in the *Révue d'Orient* for June, 1856, there is a short paper on the Ansaireeh by M. VICTOR LANGLOIS. He says that his account is taken from a MS. in the library of the Mufti of Tarsus, and it is in the main correct.

The Rev. SAMUEL LYDE died at Alexandria, on the 1st of April, 1860, shortly after he had finished the work which is now published by relatives to whom he was very dear. His intention was to enlarge on some points, after reference to authorities to which he had not access in the East; but this he did not live to accomplish. His Mission is taken up by others; and his brother, whose address can be obtained through the Publishers, will be happy to give information to any one interested in it.

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