



The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion (Library of Modern Religion)

Birgöl Acikyildiz

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Yezidism is a fascinating part of the rich cultural mosaic of the Middle East. Yezidis emerged for the first time in the 12th century in the Kurdish mountains of northern Iraq. Their religion, which has become notorious for its associations with "devil worship," is in fact an intricate syncretic system of belief, incorporating elements from proto-Indo-European religions, early Persian faiths like Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, Sufism and regional paganism like Mithraism. Birgül Acikyildiz offers a comprehensive appraisal of Yezidi religion, society and culture. Written without presupposing any prior knowledge about Yezidism, and in an accessible and readable style, her book examines Yezidis not only from a religious point of view but as a historical and social phenomenon. She throws light on the origins of Yezidism, and charts its historical development -- from its beginnings to the present -- as part of the general history of the Kurds. The author describes the Yezidi belief system (which considers Melek Taus -- the "Peacock Angel" -- to be ruler of the earth) and its religious practices and observances, analyzing the most important facets of Yezidi religious art and architecture and their relationship to their neighbours throughout the Middle East. Richly illustrated, with accompanying maps, photographs and illustrations, the book will have strong appeal to all those with an interest in the culture of the Kurds, as well as the wider region.

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