

## APPENDIX C

# THE JUDAEO-PERSIAN DOCUMENT FROM DANDĀN-UILIQ

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THE document which is printed, transliterated, and provisionally translated below, was discovered by Dr. Stein in circumstances which have been recorded in his own words. The evidence obtained by different lines appears to point to this document being not later than the eighth century A.D., which would make it more than 200 years earlier than the oldest document in Judaeo-Persian as yet known, viz. the Law Report of the year 1020, preserved in the Bodleian Library, and published by me in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for 1899. But it would also be the earliest document in modern Persian of any sort, since the earliest manuscript of a prose work in ordinary Persian appears to be the Vienna copy (dated 1055 A.D.) of the treatise by Muwaffaq Ibn 'Ali of Herat, composed between 961 and 976 A.D., and the earliest specimen of a Persian poem ostensibly bears the date 808 A.D., but has been shown by convincing grounds to be centuries later<sup>1</sup>.

It seems, however, that this document does not belong to the end of the eighth century, but to the beginning. For in line 23 there occurs a sentence 'since Yazid sent a . . . to the Ispahbad,' and something more is told us of the Ispahbad, of which, however, owing to the loss of words, the sense is not quite clear. Now the Ispahbad was the prince of Tabaristan, and in spite of Moslem conquests the title was retained in that region for many centuries: a prince who bore this title is mentioned by Ya'kubi (ob. circ. 912; *Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vii. 276), and also by an author of the seventh century (Schefer, *Chrest. Persane*, ii. 99)<sup>2</sup>. When therefore the letter mentions communications between Yazid and the Ispahbad, it is natural to suppose the reference to be to those of *Yazid son of Al-Muhallab* son of Abu Šufrah, who conquered parts of Tabaristan in the days of Sulayman son of 'Abd al-Malik, about 99 A.H. or 717 A.D. The history of his exploits is told by Baladhuri, pp. 335-9; Ṭabari, ii. 1320, &c.; Yāqūt, s.v. *Ṭabaristān*; Ibn Khallikan, s.v. *Yazīd*: and correspondence between Yazid and the Ispahbad is mentioned by these authorities (e.g. Ṭabari, p. 1324). Now this Yazid was imprisoned by Omar son of Abd al-'Aziz, who reigned from 99 to 101 A.H., and died about 102 A.H. His message to the Ispahbad cannot have been later than 99 A.H., or 717 A.D. And the context of the Judaeo-Persian document (so far as it is intelligible) implies that the writer is describing an event, not of the distant past, but of the immediate past. Hence (if this identification be correct) the date of our letter will be about 100 A.H. or 718 A.D.

That Persian (in the ordinary sense of the word) was at this time a commonly used vernacular is quite certain, though there may have been no books written in it. But that would not prevent it from being a vehicle for correspondence. Arabic writers frequently put Persian sentences into the mouths of persons of

<sup>1</sup> Pizzi, *Storia della poesia Persiana* (1899), i. 66.

<sup>2</sup> See also E. G. Browne, *Ibn Isfandiār's History of Tabaristan*, 1905.