

## **A Secret Language used in Druze Communications**

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Druze Orphans and Charitable Organization Newsletter. Volume 7, No. 3 and 4 (2005) ,p. 4

### ABSTRACT

In the history of communication there have been many secret languages that have emerged over the years. These secret languages were used as codes to send messages over great distances without the information being discovered. The Druze Research and Publications Institute has presented a code which was found in Druze historical writings which they desire to have broken. This code is found in a book of letters written by the Indian Prince Jata bin Sumer Rajapal to al Muqtana Baha'al-Din. These are historical letters referring to an underground religious movement. In this paper we investigate a cryptic passage that has been thought to be written in the old Irish language known as Ogham. Here we show that the code is not Ogham, but in fact is another secret language which is known as the "tree alphabet" of the philosopher Dioscorides. This alphabet has a reported key in Arabic. We have converted the cryptic code into Arabic and in turn we translate the passage into the English language. We conclude that the text presented by the Druze Research and Publications Institute is in fact from the "tree alphabet" of Dioscorides, not Ogham, and confirm that the Arabic key is valid for future translations.

### Introduction.

Rasa'il al-Hind, which translated means "Letters from India", has been published in Arabic by the Druze Research and Publications Institute (1). This book includes four letters from the Indian prince Jata bin Sumer Rajapal to al Muqtana Baha'al-Din. The second of these letters, dated 425/1033, contains a portion written in a mysterious script that stands out in stark contrast to the Arabic text of the rest of the letter.

It has been suggested that the script utilized in this passage is the Ogham language of Ireland and scholars have been invited to translate the passage using a table of characters obtained from the British

Museum (2). In the following article, we demonstrate that the passage is not written in Ogham but in the “tree alphabet” of the philosopher Dioscorides and provide a translation confirmed by the Arabic text of the letter itself.

### A Key to Ancient Alphabets

Ahmed Bin Abubekr Bin Wahshih lived in the ninth century in the time of the Calif Abdul Malik Bin Marwan. He was a prolific author and translator who took a particular interest in ancient systems of writing. One of his most notable writings was translated from the Arabic into English by Joseph Hammer and published in 1806 under the title of Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained (3). This curious tome contains a large number of archaic alphabets arranged parallel to the letters of the Arabic alphabet in such a way that passages written in one of these scripts can be translated into Arabic by simple substitution. Concerning this assortment of alphabets, the translator writes:

“Although it is difficult to say how many of the eighty alphabets herein deciphered may have been really used by nations, or how many letters in every one alphabet may have been disfigured and misrepresented either by the want of sufficient information in our author himself, or by the ignorance and blunders of the copyists; yet it is not presumption to assert, that real truth lies at the bottom of most of them, and that those which were not alphabets for common writing, were used as ciphers amongst different Oriental nations. The proof of which is evident from the circumstance, that some among these alphabets are used even at this day amongst Turks, Arabs, and Persians, as a kind of secret cipher for writing, without being understood by the generality. The commonest of them is the alphabet called by the author the *tree* alphabet.” (4)

### The Tree Alphabet of Dioscorides








It is precisely this “tree alphabet” that appears to have been utilized by the Indian Prince in his second letter to al Muqtana Baha’al-Din. Concerning this alphabet, Ibn Wahshih writes in Section XVI of Chapter IV that Dioscorides, known as the “father of medical botany”, “wrote on trees, shrubs, and herbs, and of their secret, useful, and noxious qualities in this alphabet, used since in their books by different philosophers” (5). In the same section, Ibn Wahshih provides the following table of this mysterious alphabet along with the Arabic equivalents of its various “letters” (6).

•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ا	ب	ج	د	ه	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل

•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ل	م	ن	س	ع	ف	ص	ق	ر	ش	

•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ت	ث	خ	ذ	ض	ظ	غ

This table provides a sort of “Rosetta Stone” for deciphering the cryptic passage contained in the letter from the Indian prince. The following is a sample of the cryptic passage within the letter. We have added the corresponding Arabic letters from the “tree alphabet” key.

						
ل	ا	د	ب	ع	ن	م



ا ب



ب



ب



ب



س



س



س



س



ا



ا



ا



ا



ي



ي



ي



ي



ا



ا



ا



ا



و



و



و



و



ح































ح

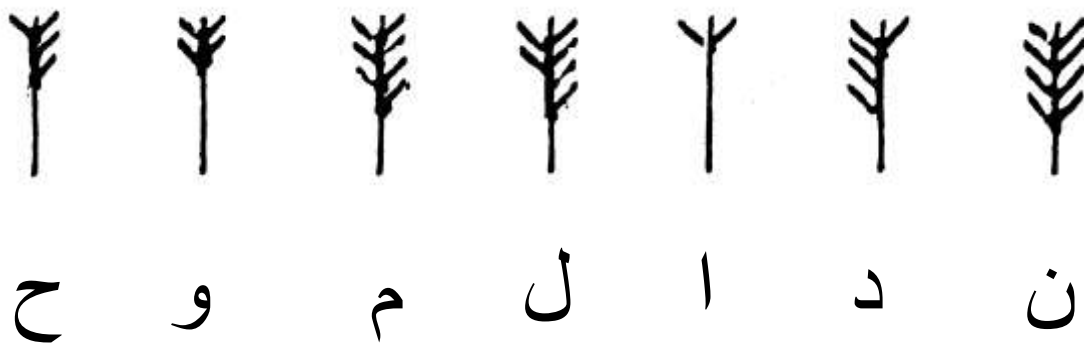


ح



ح

						
و	س	ن	ب	ر	ت	ر
						
ب	ه	ج	ر	ز	ر	ح
						
ح	ز	ج	ر	ر	ت	ر
						
ر	ح	ج	ر	ر	ت	ر



### Translating the Passage by Substitution

Each symbol has a corresponding Arabic letter which is substituted in from the key provided earlier. Once put together the Arabic letters form words. The difficulty lies in the fact that single Arabic letters appear differently than when they are part of a word. An analogy would be a typed English letter compared to a cursive letter. For the untrained eye it may be difficult to distinguish the individual letter from the word. Below are the separate Arabic letters and then those letters put together to form the “cursive” words.

من عبد المولى الداعي الى سبل الرشاد بالراد جات ابن  
 رشاد بالراد جات ابن س وم ازرجه بال الى  
 ذي الايدي سن دال م وح دي ن

من عبد المولى الداعي الي سبل الرشاد بالراد جات ابن  
 سومارجه بال الـذي الايدي سنـد الموحدين

### Confirming the Translation

After putting the Arabic letters together to form words it becomes evident that the text is identical to the Arabic text which follows the cryptogram in Rasa 'il al-Hind:

] مِنْ عَبْدِ الْمَوْلَى الدَّاعِي إِلَى سُبُلِ الرَّشَادِ بِالرَّادِ  
 جَاتَا بِنِ صُنُومًا زَرْجَهُ بِالَ إِلَى ذِي الْأَيْدِي ، سَكَنَدِ  
 الْمَوْجِدِينَ ، وَمَنْهَلِ الْغِرْفَانِ ، الشَّيْخِ الْمُقْتَنَى أَبِي الْحَسَنِ  
 الْوَقُورِ .

\* تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى مَوْلَانَا الْحَاكِمِ الْفَرْدِ الْحَقِّ الصَّمَدِ . أَمَّا بَعْدُ

When the pattern of letters we have put together from the key is compared to this Arabic passage it is evident that the two are identical. This means that the cryptic passage was already translated into Arabic by the author of the book. We provide an excerpt from the cryptic passage translated from Arabic into English below. The translation is subject to interpretation because the language used is somewhat different than the modern Arabic writings. This is from the first letter of correspondence between the Indian prince and al Muqtana Baha'al-Din.

**From the slave of The Owner who leads to the right pathways:**

**From: Balrad Jata bin Somar Raja Bal**

**To: The giver, the supporter of believers, the source of knowledge., the respectable Sheik Abu Al Hasan**

**I left my daily life to God the one and only and righteous. And so I send a first letter to Mr. Al Hasan and I did not get an answer. I was going astray, trying to find reasons and could not find any until despair overcame many souls of those who were waiting (Muaheddin). In the evening my soul told me to write this letter. To summarize and point to the holy symbol....**

#### Conclusions

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether the cryptographic script could be translated. We have identified it as the “tree alphabet” of the philosopher Dioscorides and have confirmed that the Arabic conversion key is accurate. When converted and the Arabic letters put side by side it becomes apparent that the text matches a passage which appears further on in the book ( [Rasa 'il al-Hind](#) ). The author presents this Arabic passage directly following the cryptic passage and it represents the

translated letters. We then were able to translate the Arabic passage into English to prove that it is in fact a letter from the Prince.

#### References

1. Rasa 'il al-Hind. New York: Druze Research and Publications Institute.
2. <http://www.druzeinfo.com/news.htm>
3. Ahmad Bin Abubekr Bin Wahshih, English translation by Joseph Hammer: Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained; with an account of the Egyptian Priests, their Classes, Initiations, and Sacrifices. London: W. Bulmer and CO., 1806.
4. Ibid, p. iv
5. Ibid, p.8
6. Ibid, p. 38

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank Dr. Mazen Mardini for helping us in the translation from Arabic to English.