



WILEY

Review

Author(s): T. H. H.

Review by: T. H. H.

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 5 (Nov., 1921), pp. 384-385

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1780891>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 10:10 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Geographical Journal*

who have been entrusted by the Chinese with practical problems in administration and finance.

Mr. Bland follows these questions and their reaction on Japan with sustained interest, and stimulates thought on the problem of the Pacific and the Far East. A. R.

A History of Persia.— **Brig.-General Sir Percy Sykes, K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G.** 2 vols. Second Edition. London: Macmillan & Co. 1921. *Maps and Illustrations.* 70s. net.

The history of every country in the world being both expansive and progressive, it follows that no history can possibly be complete unless the historian is able to keep pace with the progress of events and add to the original records such fresh information as may be derived from new discoveries in old historical fields or from modern developments in new fields. It is, indeed, very seldom that any history can claim to be other than a record strictly limited between definite periods within which much light might still be thrown on the progress of events could human knowledge gained from fresh sources be applied thereto. The history of Persia by Sir Percy Sykes may fairly claim in this second edition to be free from such limitations, and to be well up to date. The earlier chapters required the light of recent antiquarian discovery to be thrown on the first dawn of Persian history; the later chapters had to be extended to include the later phases of that history as influenced and moulded by Western politics and modern military movements. Both the beginning and the end wanted careful revision. On the whole this has been most excellently well supplied by the author. No one probably in England is so well qualified as Sir Percy Sykes to explain the effect on Persia of the wayward policy of the Western Powers ever since the Russians first appeared as conquerors in Central Asia. No one knows the country and the people so thoroughly, or could bring to bear on its history those direct evidences of correctness in detail which can be gained only by personal discovery *in situ* allied to powers of acute observation. It is but a truism that the geography of a country moulds its history; but it is a truism that is persistently overlooked by those who, whilst compelled to acknowledge its validity in times past, still seek to shape the future without regard to it. Sir Percy Sykes is a scientific geographer even before he is an historian, and consequently much of the value of his history is derived from the constant recognition of the dependence of the many nationalities with which he has to deal in treating of so wide a subject on their geographical relationship with the Persian plateau for their development in commerce and trade, or even (as in the case of Elam) for their very existence. Persia for historical purposes is taken as reaching to the extreme limits of the Empire at its widest, so that the author deals incidentally with Asia from the Oxus to the Indus and from the Mediterranean to the Chinese frontier. He is naturally far more at home on the Iranian plateau than on the eastern and western outskirts of so vast a region, and, if criticisms are permissible, they apply to the outskirts of empire, to Mesopotamia or Afghanistan rather than to the great centres of Persian life along the old-world routes which connect Tehran with Herat and Balkh, or Shiraz with Makran and the Indian frontier. Even then such criticisms revolve round matters of opinion rather than of fact, or point to modern authorities which have apparently not been consulted and which might modify certain views of antiquarian or ethnographical interest. For instance, Colonel Miles' important book on the peoples (both Arab and Persian) of the Persian Gulf region gives details regarding Persian occupa-

tion of regions in Oman, including that extraordinary Carmatian expedition to Mecca (briefly referred to by Sir Percy Sykes) when the sacred black stone was carried off. In view of our present knowledge of South Arabia, this was the most amazing feat of arms ever accomplished by any quasi-Shiah force. At the other end of the geographical scale (Afghanistan) it may be remarked that the Duvani Afghans certainly do not adopt the theory that they descended from Judah. They believe themselves to be Beni Israel, with a recorded descent from Kish, and as such they hate the Jews as much as did the Israelites of old. There is nothing in the nature of historical, geographical, or ethnographical evidence which does not support their contention rather than otherwise. They are certainly Semitic both in physique and character. What is wanted now is some "serious student" to investigate the matter scientifically. The same may be said of the traces and traditions of Greek occupation, both pre-Alexandrian and Baktrian. The early history of Persia is incomplete without a better knowledge of that intercommunication between Assyria and the East through Persian highways which must have existed for so many centuries. Perhaps when Balkh is dug up we shall get it.

One great attraction of this book lies in its illustrations, many of which (if not most) are derived from Oriental sources. Some of them are quite delightful in their quaintness, and all are interesting. They prove that if the potter's and the weaver's art (with all which the author is familiar and about which he has much to say) were derived from Assyria (as doubtless they were), pictorial art at least must have been indigenous. No Assyrian or Egyptian would depict such a horse as the Persian artist delights in. It seems strange that at a period when Greece produced the sculptured human form in such perfection that it has never been approached before or since, and Greek art was at its highest and best, the Persian artist learnt nothing at all from Greek models, and has ever since been content to portray humanity with all the grotesque irregularity illustrated in the present pictures. A quality of the book much to be commended is its readable style. It is interesting all through, and this quality is doubtless derived from the fact that the author was wholly in love with his subject. It is not only the "captains and the kings" and their spectacular performances which make up most histories, but the poets and the artists, and the leaders and teachers of the people appealing to the sympathies of the historian, and, through him, to us, which make the story fascinating. Persia is to be congratulated on having found a literary champion who can translate Persian prose history much as Fitzgerald translated her poetry.

T. H. H.

AFRICA

West African Forests and Forestry.— A. H. Unwin, late Senior Conservator of Forests, Nigeria. London: T. Fisher Unwin. [1920.] *'63s. net.

The vast stretch of tropical West African forests extending from Gambia, through the Gold Coast and Nigeria and other lands, to the mouth of the Congo, represents an area of which our botanical knowledge is fragmentary as regards both flora and ecology; moreover, it is a source of supply of mahoganies and of many other timbers of whose identities, properties, and uses little is known with certainty. Where such considerable gaps in our knowledge exist the author of a book on the subject has indeed a difficult task if he is to distinguish between impressions and sound knowledge, and that difficulty is enhanced when he elects, as does Dr. Unwin, to include information as to forestry, forest treatment of species, forest laws, facilities for the exploitation of

2 D