



**Bab mentioned  
on page 196**

*Ten thousand miles in Persia  
or Eight years in Irán*

Percy Molesworth Sykes

# TEN THOUSAND MILES IN PERSIA

"Towns also and cities, especially the ancient, I failed not to look upon with interest. How beautiful to see thereby, as through a long vista, into the remote Time; to have, as it were, an actual section of almost the earliest Past brought safe into the Present, and set before your eyes!"—CARLYLE, *Sartor Resartus*.





H.I.M. MUZAFFAR-U-DIN, SHÁH OF PERSIA.

*[Frontispiece.]*

# TEN THOUSAND MILES IN PERSIA OR EIGHT YEARS IN IRÁN

By MAJOR PERCY MOLESWORTH SYKES

(QUEEN'S BAYS)

H.M. CONSUL, KERMÁN AND PERSIAN BALUCHISTÁN ;

AWARDED SILVER MEDAL BY THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, 1897; THE BACK GRANT IN 1899; AND THE  
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WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

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INDIA



HAWKING SCENE (FROM A VASE).

## P R E F A C E

My first literary effort is the outcome of many years of travel and study, not only in Persia itself, where some eight years have been spent, but also in adjacent countries, India, Russia, and Turkey having all been visited more than once.

I can claim, without fear of contradiction, that in the present generation no Englishman, and indeed no European, has travelled more extensively in Eastern and Southern Persia than myself, while my official position has given me exceptional opportunities, such as are rarely if ever enjoyed by unofficial travellers, of meeting the better classes of natives, and thereby of obtaining accurate information.

I have taken the deepest interest in the geography and history of this little known country, and have made a special study of the famous journeys of Alexander the Great and Marco Polo. Commercial questions, including the opening up of trade routes, have also been fully dealt with, from every point of view.



In the vexed question of spelling, I have practically followed the rules laid down by the Royal Geographical Society, as being most generally useful. I regret not to have seen my way to accepting Mr E. G. Browne's views on this subject.

Writing little more than a decade after the publication of the monumental work on Persia by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, I have touched but lightly on the provinces and cities exhaustively dealt with therein, and as far as possible, I have given information which is new and supplementary.

I would acknowledge my great indebtedness to many friends, but especially to Mr E. G. Browne, Major F. Younghusband, C.I.E., Mr H. B. Walters, and Miss Sykes, who have read through the whole of my proofs. Mr H. F. B. Lynch, Mr A. G. Ellis, and Mr M. Longworth Dames have also criticised the chapters relating to subjects on which they are authorities. Miss E. R. Sykes has drawn the headings to chapters from objects in my collection, and numerous friends have aided in providing the illustrations. Finally, the publishers have taken the greatest interest in the book, and have spared no expense to make it a success.

In conclusion, if this work, however deficient in literary merit, induces even a few of my fellow-countrymen to take an interest in Persia and the great problems connected with it, or furnishes any data which may be of value to those whose high mission it is to form or lead public opinion, that increasingly important influence in the Empire, my labours will be richly rewarded.

LONDON, 30th April 1902.

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fragments of blue tiling still adhering to the pillars. Underneath is a vault, showing that it was evidently a tomb, but no one in Kermán could give me any information on the subject, except that it is known as Khoja Átábeg or Sang-i-Átábeg.<sup>1</sup>

In the history of Mohamed Ibráhim it is told of *Malik* Mohamed, the seventh Seljuk sovereign, that "on the outskirts of Bardsir, he built in one line hospital, college, *caravanserai*, mosque and his own grave." It is just possible that the Kuba Sabz may also have formed part of this imposing group of buildings, and this would account for its date as given in Lord Curzon's work, 1155 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> but, at the same time, my informant was a well-educated man, and apparently read the inscription quite accurately; and as local information also corroborates the date he gave, it may be that the Kuba was built by *Malik* Mohamed and appropriated by the Kara Kitei dynasty. There is little else of interest, with the exception of a fine square touching the *Ark*, and a smaller one called after Ganj Ali Khán, Kermán presenting a maze of the usual narrow lanes and high mud walls. I will now turn to its inhabitants.

Known in Oriental phraseology as the *Dár-ul-Amán* or Abode of Peace, Kermán with its suburbs can claim a population estimated at just under 50,000. This may be divided according to the various religious sects as follows: —

Shia Mohamedans . . . . .	37,000
Sunni Mohamedans . . . . .	70
Babis (Behai) . . . . .	3,000
Babis (Ezeli) . . . . .	60
Sheikhis . . . . .	6,000
Sufis . . . . .	1,200
Jews . . . . .	70
Zoroastrians (Parsis) . . . . .	1,700
Hindus . . . . .	20
<b>TOTAL . . . . .</b>	<b>49,120<sup>3</sup></b>

Shia Mohamedans differ from the Sunnis in that they

<sup>1</sup> Or Stone of the Átábeg.

<sup>2</sup> *Malik* Mohamed died in A.H. 551 (1156).

<sup>3</sup> These numbers are only approximate, and represent the mean of several estimates.

consider Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, to have been the first *Caliph*, whereas his three predecessors Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman are execrated. As regards doctrine, the special Shia tenet is that of the *Imámate*, Ali its first holder being ordained by Mohamed, while his successors rule by divine right, and are believed to be immaculate, infallible, and perfect guides to men. The few Sunnis are mainly traders from Aváz, near Lár.

The sect of the Bábis was founded by *Mírza* Ali Mohamed of Shiráz, who in 1844 began to declare that he was the *Báb*<sup>1</sup> or Gate of Grace between some great person still behind the veil of glory and the world. As he was of the merchant class, and not erudite, his claims and writings appeared to be supernatural, and gained him many adherents. He was finally imprisoned, and in 1850 was sent to Tabríz for execution. Nearly a whole regiment fired at him, but when the smoke of the volley cleared away, there were no traces of the *Báb*, who was however eventually found quite unwounded, and was again bound and shot. In 1852, four Bábis attempted to assassinate the Sháh, and the sect was put down in the sternest fashion, the victims being allotted to the officials of all classes to be done to death.

The *Báb* had appointed *Mírza* Yáhyá, *Subh-i-Ezel*,<sup>2</sup> to succeed him, and for ten years he was acknowledged, but his position was challenged by his elder half-brother, *Mírza* Husein Ali, *Beha Ulla*,<sup>3</sup> who in 1866 proclaimed himself as "Him whom God shall manifest." Since this declaration his party has been in the ascendant, and that of the *Subh-i-Ezel*, who is living in Cyprus, has waned. Friendly relations among mankind, abolition of religious wars, and the study of all beneficial sciences, are inculcated, and these enlightened views are gaining thousands of converts, although mostly in secret. It is to be hoped that the doctrines of the *Báb* will eventually aid the cause of civilisation in Persia.<sup>4</sup>

The Sheikhí sect, albeit this is stoutly denied, holds almost identical views on many subjects with the Bábis. It was founded by *Sheikh* Ahmad of Ahsá or Lahsá in Bahrein, who was born about 1750. He gained a great reputation for learning at Kerbela,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Báb-et-Mandeb and also The Sublime Porte.

<sup>2</sup> Or Dawn of Eternity.

<sup>3</sup> Or the Splendour of God. He died in 1892.

<sup>4</sup> Vide *The Episode of the Báb*, by E. G. Browne.





ĀGHĀ MOHAMED KHĀN (CHIEF OF THE SHEIKHI SECT).  
[To face p. 196.]



THE FOUNDER OF THE SHEIKHI SECT.  
[To face p. 196.]

and being invited to Persia by Fath Ali Sháh, finally settled at Yezd. He taught that at the resurrection men would not rise in the flesh, but only spiritually, and he believed that he was under the special guidance of the *Imám*. A "master of the Dispensation" was expected, and accordingly many of the sect followed the *Báb* when he revealed his claims. A majority, headed by *Háji* Mohamed Kerim Khán, son of Ibráhim Khán, Kájár, *Zahír-u-Dola*, utterly declined to accept the new teacher, and became his bitterest opponents. The Sheikhis claimed that there must always be a *Shia-i-Kámil* or Perfect Shia, to serve as a channel of grace between the absent *Imám* and his church, and that *Háji* Mohamed Kerim Khán was that channel. His son, *Háji* Mohamed Khán, is now head of the sect, which numbers 7000 followers in the province of Kermán, and perhaps 50,000 in Persia.<sup>1</sup> He is a distinguished-looking man, possessing charming manners and a knowledge of the outer world which makes his society most agreeable, especially as he is entirely free from fanaticism.

The Sufi creed is a form of religious mysticism which has from earliest times deeply appealed to mankind in the East. Even Plato<sup>2</sup> drank of its fountains, and thereby influenced all Western thought. It is difficult to define, but a pure theism and the immortality of the soul are inculcated in allegorical language, wherein human love typifies that love of God which is alone real, everything else on earth being illusory. The *Murshid* or Spiritual Guide at Kermán, who is the religious head of the Máhun shrine, is a typical Sufi, frankly maintaining that all religious fanaticism is the result of ignorance, and should be swept away to make room for universal love. In any case, a Sufi is tolerant, and the spread of such doctrines would do much to remove the ignorance and fanaticism still so rife in Asia.

We next come to the Jews of Kermán, who are in a wretched condition, and yet, as petty dealers, are absurdly grasping, their ideas of profit being extortion. They are an offshoot of the larger Yezd colony, which is said to have travelled east from Baghdád.

Among the most ancient religions is that of the Zoroastrians, which appeals so strongly to our interest as having survived from a

<sup>1</sup> Hamadán and Tabriz are, after Kermán, their chief centres.

<sup>2</sup> Still more so the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria.