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## REVIEWS

## ASIA

**Die 'Abbāsiden-Residenz Samārrā. Iran im Mittelalter nach den arabischen Geographen.**— **Paul Schwarz.** (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Erdkunde, Band I., III., VI., IX.) Leipzig, 1909, 1910, 1912, 1921.

THESE volumes form part of a series, published under the general editorship of Dr. Stube, the purpose of which is to make known important materials for historical geography that are available in sources not easily accessible to the ordinary reader, such as early Arabic, Chinese and old Russian accounts. In the first of these Prof. Schwarz has collected the historical and topographical notices given by Arabic writers of the city of Sāmarrā. Alarmed by the hostility shown by the populace of Baghdad towards his Turkish body-guard, the caliph Mu'tasim in 836 moved his capital to a site further up the Tigris, about 70 miles north of Baghdad. Sāmarrā soon outrivalled Baghdad in the magnificence of its palaces and public buildings, and Mu'tasim and his two sons who succeeded him spent fabulous sums in the embellishment of the new royal residence. But it was abandoned as a capital less than fifty years after its foundation, and lost its importance even earlier. The recent excavations carried out on the site of this city by Profs. Sarre and Herzfeld have drawn attention to its importance for archaeological investigation, especially as its architectural and other monuments all fall within a limited and definite period; the cases containing their finds had been packed up before the outbreak of war, but fell into the possession of the British troops at Basrah.

The volumes dealing with the historical geography of Persia are a continuation of the 'Habilitationsschrift,' which Prof. Schwarz published in 1896 when he was first admitted as a lecturer in the University of Leipzig. So far, he has dealt with four provinces—Fars, Kirman, Khuzistan, and Jibal. From the mediæval Arabic geographers he has extracted and arranged in a systematic manner the information they provide regarding the natural features, climate, etc., of each province—its boundaries and administrative divisions; the physical appearance of the inhabitants, their mental characteristics, dress, manners and customs, etc.; the mineral resources of the province, its trade and commerce, means of communication, its revenue and taxation; a detailed account is also given of each separate town. For the English student, much of this material is already available in Mr. Guy Le Strange's 'Lands of the Eastern Caliphate,' but this invaluable work takes in Mesopotamia and Central Asia as well as Persia; whereas Prof. Schwarz, by confining himself to Persia, is able to adopt a much more detailed method of treatment, and much of the material he has collected has not hitherto been available to those who have not had access to the original Arabic sources.

T. W. A.

**La Relation sur le Tonkin et la Cochinchine de Mr. de La Bissachère.**— **Charles B. Maybon.** Société de l'histoire des Colonies Françaises, Paris. 1920.

Pierre Jacques Lemonnier de La Bissachère was a French missionary who went out to Tongking in 1790, and worked there for some eighteen years, when ill-health obliged him to leave the country. At Macao in 1807 he met a French cavalry officer, Sainte Croix, at whose request he wrote an account of Tongking. This account, modified and rearranged, was included by Sainte Croix in his 'Voyage Commercial et Politique aux Indes Orientales,' published in 1810, and also used by the Baron de Montyon in a work on Tongking which