

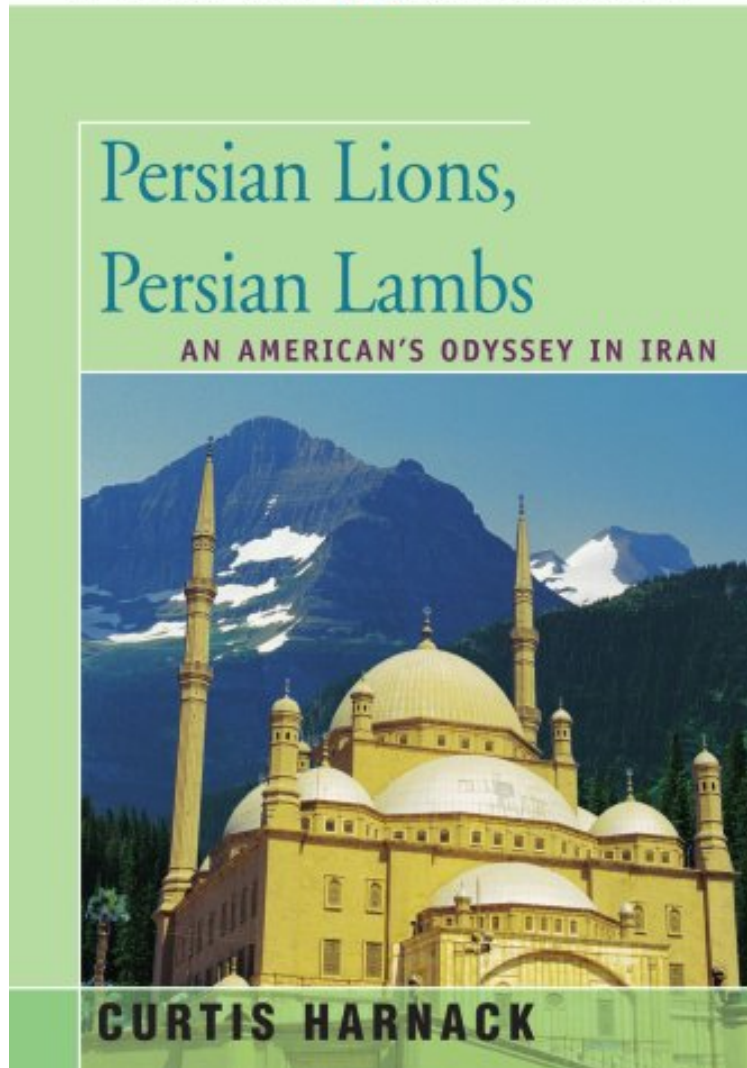
[Pdf free] Persian Lions, Persian Lambs: An American's Odyssey in Iran

Persian Lions, Persian Lambs: An American's Odyssey in Iran

Curtis Harnack

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Curtis Harnack : Persian Lions, Persian Lambs: An American's Odyssey in Iran before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Persian Lions, Persian Lambs: An American's Odyssey in Iran:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Harnack was a compassionate observer and intelligent listenerBy Thomas RicksThe Harnack book is an excellent eye-opener into Iran in the late 1950s - ie, post CIA-assisted overthrow of Iran's most popularly voted Prime Minister, Dr. M. Mossadeq. Harnack taught for one year a the

University of Tabriz as a Fulbright Scholar, but he did more than that. He became acquainted with a wide range of students and faculty in Tabriz, Iran's traditionally radical city. He also befriended many a Tabrizi whose memories of the radical 1912 Russian brutal occupation, the death of the American teacher, Howard Baskerville for the Iranian constitutional movement, and the 1919 Lahuti period in post WWI Iran were clear - one should add the population's memory of Peshavari's equally radical/liberal government of Tabriz and the region in the midst of WWII. The book is about an American's narrative of peacetime Tabriz (barely) and the rise of the American Shah following the August 1952 coup of Mossadeq. His best parts are devoted to the students and their collective visions of Iran for their careers and future. Wonderfully written and warm in text with growing compassion for the people of Tabriz, Harnack's work is worth reading about those days when the US was respected because of citizens such as Harnack who tried to understand and did listen to the "Iranian street" all of which is missing in these days of drones, massive invasions, secrets and spying on Americans and allies, etc. Refreshing view of a great people.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating look at Iran fifty years ago

By Timothy J. Bazzett

I found out about this book from the author himself after writing to tell him how much I enjoyed his memoir, *WE HAVE ALL GONE AWAY*. While this book might be classified as a memoir of sorts, it is perhaps more of a very personal travelogue. Harnack held a rather unique position in Cold War Iran in 1959, as a visiting Fulbright Professor of literature. He had intended to teach some American authors, but found that his students' command of the English language was not up to the task, and the conditions at the university in Tabriz were much too primitive for any real study of literature. So instead Harnack did what he could to try to improve his students' English skills, even inviting small groups of them to his apartment for evenings of music and conversations which covered a wide spectrum of topics. Perhaps some of the most interesting parts of his story are his descriptions of his travels in northern Iran - on a skiing trip to Shibbeh Pass with a group of students, a hunting expedition for mountain sheep on Eshek Island in the salt Lake Rezaieh, a vacation trip to the Iran-Soviet border on the shores of the Caspian Sea, his trip to a remote village where he rubs shoulders with budding revolutionaries and communists who would see the Shah's government overthrown in the very near future. And nearly everywhere, as he travels about the northern hinterlands of Iran, he sees evidence of grinding poverty, primitive living conditions and hopelessness, so very unlike the bright civilized world of the country's cosmopolitan capital. When he does visit Teheran on his way out of the country at the end of his year's tenure, he finds that the diplomats and players of the "great game" simply sniff in disgust at the mention of Tabriz and the northern territories, as if those areas are beneath their interest. Harnack's estimable powers of description are in powerful evidence throughout the book, so much so that you can almost smell the dung and the dust and open sewers, as well as the flowers and the food of the region. No matter what subject Harnack touches on here, he makes it interesting. Like his memoir, this is writing of the highest calibre. Iran has been much in the news lately, and for anyone interested in learning some of the country's background, this book would be an excellent place to begin. I'm so happy I found this book and I hope a new generation of history-minded people will also discover it. - Tim Bazzett, author of the Reed City Boy trilogy

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Perceptive, poetic and predictive

By feather pen

At first it seemed this might develop as a studied American tromp through the year, written in maybe 1964, it's a bit studious. He is in Tabriz, on a Fulbright to teach English at college. However, it progresses into a lively memoir as Harnack's acquaintances develop characters; he makes delicate observations, such as how they observe his American wastefulness of things like plastic, cans, thread, paper, and make efforts to save what he throws away. Watching their lives, he realized how wasteful they are of what we consider the most valuable elements: time, energy, purpose and even life itself, as he learns many relatives of his students had been killed by the government. A cat stalking a crow's nest draws 73 people to watch; they have little else to do; life is cheap, so is time. As a teacher he cuts his own path to help the students learn a bit more of American life and literature, not just the word usages. He notices the college students are generally taught that they must memorize extensive passages to get good grades; he finds they have not learned to think analytically, or to write a paper. One student asks him how many irregular number verbs there are in English, and when he doesn't know, replies "Ah, sir, I thought you were a smart teacher!" as if that would be good for any American college prof to know! The students also do not grasp how democracy works, what is freedom, or why anyone would be a benefactor; there is an expectation that there should be a personal gain for anyone doing what we might think is a social responsibility. They attribute much of their plight to destiny, and largely figure it cannot be changed, or fought. He brought a record player, and some quite enjoy it, particularly a Russian emigre, some consider Beethoven to be cacaphony. The poverty of life is palpable, all around, and illnesses, sickness is often unattended; with few newspapers, radio, or other contact it is hard for the students to get an understanding of how other governments work, though they do see their own as corrupt, and it becomes clear that most anything can be bought: entry into the college, the final grade, if you get a job you get when graduated. They take it for granted that Savak is everywhere, in the classrooms, and it does become apparent as he travels that he is watched. Although some students can reach out of their culture enough to see what happens around the world, their sense that the rich just get richer, their government is doing less and less for them, there is no hope for the future, they respond with proverbs, even though they mostly despise the old religion. A contingent of observant Muslims are there, but not powerful. Some talk revolution, and see it would be good that the Shah is overthrown; mainly for a re-distribution of the wealth. They predict the Kurds would seek

independence. One student though, too interested in politics, may have been put in a bad position by an American he introduces him to, inadvertently alerted to their police, and it is sad we do not hear what happened, as he is not there to bid goodbye with the other students. His students are quite fond of him by the end, they loved getting a taste of the outside world he opened up for them. This book gives us a taste of what people in Tabriz were like, and it is lovely to get a sense of how it was.

At the height of the Cold War a young American teaches in provincial Iran, near the Russian border. His students reveal their inner selves, their struggles to be modern, while still caught in ancient Persian traditions. Hailed as a travel book in the great tradition, the Chicago Tribune called it "a delicious rarity that one is sorry to finish but happy to recommend," and the London Sunday Telegraph: "Observant and often poignant, it is profound in its questions." The New York Times Book Review: "An urbane and well-written account Mr. Harnack has eminently succeeded."

About the AuthorCurtis Harnack's linked novels set in rural Midwest are *The Work of an Ancient Hand*, *Love and Be Silent*, and *Limits of the Land*. He wrote *Gentlemen on the Prairie*, a history of British settlers; a collection of short fiction, *Under My Wings Everything Prospers*; an acclaimed memoir, *We Have All Gone Away*, plus a sequel, *The Attic*.