

government, but really under the protection of Great Britain. It is at present the chief seat for the study of Shiah theology. The majority of the inhabitants are Shiahs. There is a considerable number of Sunnis also, besides a small minority of Christians and Jews.

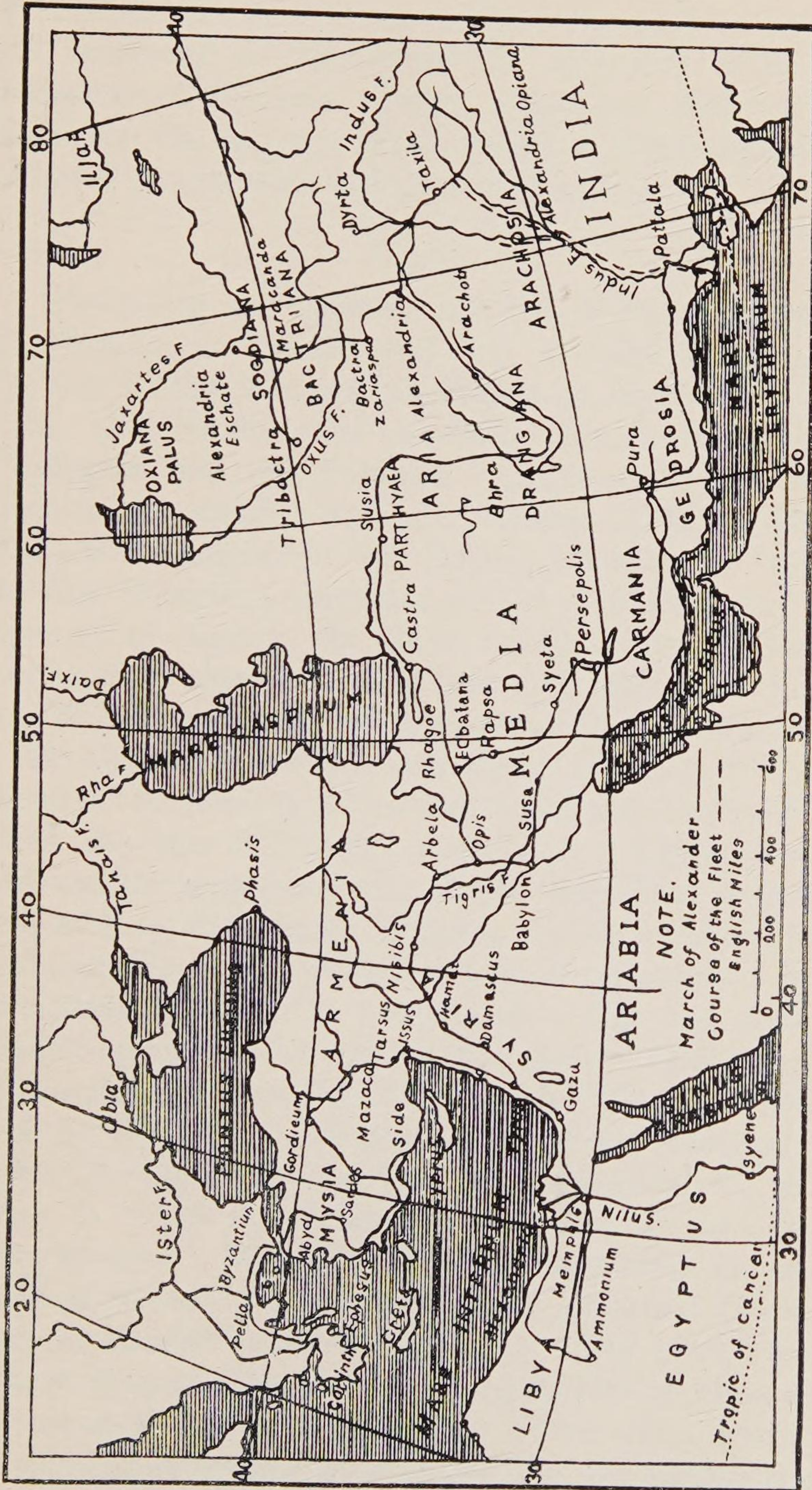
#### IRAN.

The Iranian plateau extends from the Tigris to the Suleiman Mountains in the east and from the Jaxertis to the Persian Gulf in the south. Its area is over a million square miles. Its historical period begins with the rise of Median Dynasty, who were succeeded by the Achæmenians. After the short foreign occupation of Alexander and the Seleucide, a new Iranian Empire was formed under the Parthians, who ruled for about 450 years. The next dynasty, called the Sasanian, was formed at the fall of Parthians and lasted till the rise of Islam. The last great Sasanian king was Khusroe II (Parviz). After his deposition and assassination, anarchy prevailed in Iran for over ten years and the condition of the government was so bad that the empire collapsed and became an easy prey to Arab invaders. The Prophet had foreseen the spread of Islam beyond the Euphrates and had foretold that Muslims in the near future would be masters of Syria and Iraq. Abu-Baker, the first Khalif, taking advantage of the chaos and misrule that prevailed in Iran, despatched an army and his successor followed his policy. By the end of 650 A.D., Arab rule had been extended to the most distant parts of Iran. Their ascendancy may be divided into two periods. The first was the period of pure Arab rule, which lasted from the reign of the second Khalif upto the establishment of Abbasid dynasty. The second may be called the Perso-Arabian and the Turko-Iranian supremacy, when semi-independent and independent States and Empire were formed in Iran, which, however, recognized the Khalif at Baghdad as their nominal spiritual and temporal head. Iranian conversion to Islam was gradual and in most cases voluntary. They found some similarity

between their old Zoroastrian creed and Islam and willingly or with the hope of gaining a better social status or political rank, or as the result of benevolent treatment and the desire to create confidence in their rulers, accepted the new religion. They took great interest in Arabic language, literature, theology and philosophy. The majority of Iranians were of the Sunnat-Jammat sect of Islam till the rise of the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century, when Shiahism became the State religion. At present the Iranian plateau is divided into the independent kingdoms of Iran and Afghanistan. Khawrezm and Sughd are under Russia and have been formed into the Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkamanistan and Tajikistan. Kurdistan and Baluchistan are partly under Iran and partly under Turkish and English rule. With the exception of Iran proper, in other parts of the Iranian plateau the Sunnat-Jammat sects are in the majority.

#### RUSSIA AND SIBERIA.

Chengiz Khan, the great Moghal conqueror, after subduing the Moghal chiefs, invaded Iran, and, as narrated by almost all eastern and western historians, his hordes slaughtered men and women including children, plundered and razed cities, cut down forests and destroyed whatever they could not carry with them. After Chengiz Khan, his vast Empire covering China, Siberia, Iran and a portion of Russia, was divided among his sons. Ogotay became the supreme Emperor; Jogotai occupied the Eastern Turkestan; Baku, the land surrounding the Caspian Sea, became known as Khan of the Golden Horde. Tulay obtained possession of Iran, but the first actual Moghal Emperor of Iran was Holagu, who founded a dynasty destined to last about a century and a half. Shamanism was the religion of Moghals. As conquerors, they came in contact with the three world religions of Asia, *viz.*, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Leaders of these religions tried to convert their rulers and each in turn succeeded to some extent. For some time Christianity appeared to be gaining



THE CAMPAIGNS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

