

THE OXFORD SURVEY  
OF THE  
BRITISH EMPIRE



ASIA

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TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY  
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VOLUME II

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## ASIA

INCLUDING THE INDIAN EMPIRE AND  
DEPENDENCIES, CEYLON, BRITISH  
MALAYA & FAR EASTERN POSSESSIONS

With 34 Photographs, 5 Coloured Maps, and 19 Figures in text

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Edited by

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and

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of Science

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O X F O R D  
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1914

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## PREFACE

THE object of this series is to furnish a survey of the British Empire and its constituent parts in their geographical and allied aspects, together with their economic, administrative, and social conditions, at the present time. History has not been included as an integral part of the scheme, except for the inclusion of a general historical summary in the General Volume; for the rest, historical references have been included only in so far as they were found desirable for the explanation of existing conditions. The history of the Empire has been brought under review elsewhere, notably in the Oxford *Historical Geography*, edited by Sir Charles Lucas.

The series is in six volumes, and the subject-matter is thus distributed :

- I. The British Isles and Mediterranean territories (Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus).
- II. Asiatic territories.
- III. African territories (with adjacent islands, Mauritius, &c., St. Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha).
- IV. American territories (with the Falkland Islands and dependencies).
- V. Australasian territories (including islands in the Pacific Ocean and the British sector in Antarctica).
- VI. General.

The Editors have been in close consultation throughout as to the general plan and details of the work. They have shared between them the arrangements with the contributors, for whose collaboration they express their thanks. Professor Herbertson has undertaken the major part of the work connected with the maps; Mr. Howarth has carried out the greater part of the editorial work in its later stages, has dealt with the illustrations (in the five topographical volumes), and has seen the volumes through the press.

It is desired to acknowledge Mrs. Howarth's collaboration in the work of indexing, and Mr. O. Brilliant's assistance in the compilation of the gazetteer references in the topographical volumes.

Notes in the text enclosed in square brackets are editorial.

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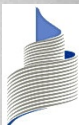
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# INDIA

## CHAPTER I

### PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

BY R. D. OLDHAM

THE Empire of India comprises, and is almost entirely comprised by, two distinct geographical unities. One of these may be regarded as India proper, bounded on the north by the great range of the Himalayas, on the west by the mountains of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and on the east by a complex of hills, which runs southwards into the Arakan Yoma and forms the western boundary of the eastern province, known as Burma. Here again we have a distinct geographical unity, almost coincident in its limits with the drainage area of the Irawadi river, and bounded on the east by the mountain plateau of the Shan States. Geographical division.

Each of these two areas possesses an individuality, and presents so many differences in geological history and existing features—differences which are reflected in a strong contrast of vegetation, of ethnology, of history, and administration—that it will be convenient to treat them separately.

India proper may be divided into three parts, each having great variety of climate and aspect, but each preserving throughout these variations a certain unity, and at the same time a certain distinctness from the others. These parts are firstly, the Peninsula; secondly, the great alluvial plains of the Indus and the Ganges Rivers; and thirdly, the mountain ranges fringing the Gangetic plain on the west, north, and east.

The Peninsula of India is one of the oldest land areas of the world. From a very ancient period of geological history it has never been submerged beneath the sea which forms its boundary on either side. Broadly speak- The Peninsula.

ing, it is a region of open valleys and easy slopes, in which rivers flow with gentle gradients. Locally there may be steeply scarped hills cut by narrow steep-sided valleys, or sharp-crested ridges may rise from the plain, and great granite tors and bosses are found in certain regions; but, striking as these may be, they do not alter the general truth of the statement that the Peninsula is a region of open valleys and gentle slopes, from which true mountain ranges are absent.

Mountains.

The mountain ranges of the Peninsula, so called, are almost without exception the scarped edges of more or less elevated plateaux, but some of these are extensive and lofty enough to deserve special names and description. Their nomenclature presents many difficulties, as it is a rare exception for a name to be applied by the people of the country to any range throughout its length. Peaks and passes often have well-established names, but the ranges have none, and where any general term exists its application is usually so vague that it becomes useless for geographical purposes unless some conventional restriction is adopted. Thus the name Vindhya, which is now usually restricted to the hills north of the Narbada valley, formerly applied generally to the hills separating Hindustan proper, or the Gangetic country, from the Deccan or southern country, and included what are now called the Satpura hills, if, indeed, these latter were not more particularly those indicated by the name.

Western Ghats.

The most conspicuous and important of the so-called mountain ranges of the Peninsula is that known as the Sahyadri or Western Ghats, which runs parallel to the western coast, but set back by an intervening tract of lowlands. It forms an imposing scarp and barrier, through which access may be had to the uplands behind through certain passes, or *ghats*, which have given rise to the term generally applied to the range as a whole. Running parallel to the coast throughout its length, interrupted only by the Palghat gap in the Coimbatore district, the range presents a general similarity to a upraised sea cliff, yet, although there is good reason t