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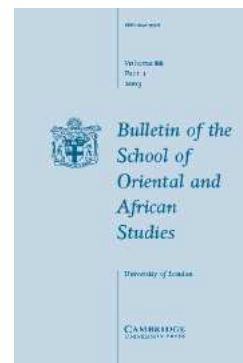
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WILLEM VOGELSANG: The Afghans. (The Peoples of Asia.) x, 382 pp. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

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do with these technical aspects of book production. His book is roughly divided into two parts—the first three chapters, giving the background, take up 73 pages, while his last two chapters on the major themes and aesthetics cover 65, and it is here in the second part that the book springs to life, for it allows his wide, first-hand experience of the paintings to be displayed. Grabar clearly loves his subject; he has written on it for years in many articles (how refreshing that he does not make reference to these by title, but only by inference!) and has thought long and deep on the implications. He touches on the question of a mystical dimension to the paintings, a subject extensively researched by Anne-Marie Schimmel and Christoph J. Bürgel, but remains uneasy because of the lack of knowledge of the circumstances in which the paintings were created. The huge amount of work still to be done on the subject springs off the page so that a student should be inspired to see areas for future research. And this too is wonderfully refreshing—it is only a scholar who truly loves his work who can admit to gaps in his knowledge and point the way forward. The many references within the text to studies by others in the subject read almost like a report on Grabar's ability as a teacher, for most of the new generation he quotes learned their craft at his feet. It must be admitted, as a word of criticism, that the book is not always easy to digest—at times where a survey is made of, say, the manuscripts and collections, someone less familiar with the cited documents can get bogged down in the references. It is hard, however, to see how this could be avoided in such an ambitious and comprehensive book; it is only a word of warning to those who expect the subtitle to indicate a superficial approach. On the contrary, the reader, whether new to the subject or not, will be asked to think long and hard. His text, as Grabar explains is the case in the subject of his book, is the primary concern, and just as essential to allow an understanding of the treasure-trove of images.

SYLVIA AULD

WILLEM VOGELSANG:

The Afghans.

(The Peoples of Asia.) x, 382 pp. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

Willem Vogelsang's study of Afghanistan and the Afghans went to press just before the events of September 11 2001, and the subsequent repercussions for Afghanistan are addressed only briefly in the preface. However, this in no way detracts from the value of this book, by an eminent Leiden scholar, as a comprehensive overview of Afghanistan's history and peoples from ancient times to the modern era.

Vogelsang's deep knowledge of and interest in archaeology and ancient 'Iran' are reflected in the chapters he devotes to the Indo-Iranian invasions of the second millennium BCE, the Persian Achaemenids, and the advent of Hellenism in the wake of Alexander the Great. For Vogelsang, Alexander's campaigns in Afghanistan were particularly important in view of the number of 'geographers, botanists, historians, biographers and others [who] collected a wealth of information about the campaign itself and about the terrain and the people the Macedonians encountered' (p. 116). Forty per cent of the book is devoted to pre-Islamic Afghanistan, a period often marginalized in studies of medieval and modern history.

The opening chapters of this book look firstly at the geography and

geology of the Hindu Kush and secondly at the ethnic patchwork that constitutes modern Afghanistan. The term 'Afghan' is first unambiguously recorded in the tenth-century Persian work, the *Hudud al-'Ālam*, and it becomes a common term in the histories and travelogues of the medieval period. It would seem generally to refer to the Pathan tribes, though it sometimes encompasses all tribes inhabiting the Hindu Kush mountain region. Vogelsang commits more space to examining the Pathans than to the other ethnic groups that make up Afghanistan no doubt because the Pathans have always been the dominant group in the area and account for between 40 and 50 per cent of the population. However, space is given to such little-known groups as the Aymaq and Pasha'i speaking Dihgān.

Post-Islamic conquest history and the modern era are covered in nine well footnoted chapters, while the advent of Islam is discussed in one revealing chapter depicting Afghanistan from the mid-seventh century until the mid-ninth century as a battlefield shared by Arabs, Chinese, and Tibetans fighting for control of the 'Silk Road' and the passes between east and west. It is often forgotten that Afghanistan is more a Central Asian rather than a Middle Eastern state.

The chapters covering the Islamic period and the modern era are of necessity narrative in style and afford only an outline of events—footnotes are provided for scholars interested in additional research and the ample thirty pages of bibliography supply much food for further scholarly pursuit. However, for what is in many ways an historical account there is a noticeable lack, either listed or cited, of primary source material, much of which is now readily available in edited and translated form.

Willem Vogelsang has written a comprehensive overview of a region now very much in the public eye and the welcome result is a readable, lucid and easily accessible guide to what in many ways is a painfully complex subject.

GEORGE LANE

SOUTH ASIA

THOMAS OBERLIES:

Pāli: a grammar of the language of the Theravāda Tipiṭaka, with a concordance to Pischel's Grammatik der Prakrit-Sprachen.

(Indian Philology and South Asian Studies, 3.) 385 pp. Berlin:

Walter de Gruyter, 2001. €128.

Since the early 1990s, indological research has produced a number of signal reference works pertaining to Pali and Middle Indo-Aryan philology and literature. In some cases, these publications were revised, edited and updated reprints of earlier achievements, such as Oskar von Hinüber's *Das ältere Mittellindisch im Überblick* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil-Hist Klasse, 467, 2001, first published in 1985) or K. R. Norman's emended version of Batakrishna Ghosh's English translation of Wilhelm Geiger's *Pāli Literatur und Sprache* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1916) produced for the Pali Text Society (Oxford, 1994) under the title *A Pāli grammar*. Other works contain expositions of important new research. Two notable publications of this category are Oskar von Hinüber's *A handbook of*