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Building an Academic Tradition

*Durham University and the Development of British Oriental
Studies in the Post-War Era*

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MA by Research
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2017

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List of Abbreviations

BRISMES	British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
Brown, SOAS	Brown, Ian, <i>The School of Oriental and African Studies: Imperial Training and the Expansion of Learning</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
<i>Hayter Report</i>	Hayter, Sir William (Chairman), <i>University Grants Committee: Report of the sub-committee on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies</i> (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961)
<i>Parker Report</i>	Parker, Sir Peter (Chairman), <i>Speaking for the future: a review of the requirements for diplomacy and commerce for Asian and African languages and area studies</i> (London: University Grants Committee, 1986)
PGLSC	Palace Green Library Special Collections
<i>Scarborough Report</i>	Lumley, L. R., 11th Earl of Scarborough (Chairman), <i>Foreign Office Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies</i> (London: HMSO, 1947)

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This story came to be written by accident. It began as part of a Research Masters on the personal and professional papers of I. J. C. Foster (1908-1978), the University of Durham's first Keeper of Oriental Books. Foster committed his career to the growth and expansion of Oriental Studies at the University of Durham following the Second World War where he was instrumental in developing the newly founded School of Oriental Studies and the Oriental Section of the University Library which, together with a specialist Oriental Museum, formed an independent department at the University of Durham until 1989.

My research quickly spiraled beyond the life and work of Foster to the life and work of the School and Library, spanning four decades. As I examined the unpublished correspondence and annual reports, I returned naturally to this story. I became interested in the origins of Oriental Studies at Durham, how it built such a strong reputation following the Second World War, and why a reputable Oriental body closed so abruptly. My interest in these questions grew as I realized a definitive answer to them is lacking.

Once the School and Library closed it was replaced by a Department of East Asian Studies, which became of body of some distinction as the Oriental School before it. In an ironic replaying of history this Department was also closed for reasons unclear at the time. Not before a national campaign gaining the support of two Prime Ministers, Edward Heath and Tony Blair, was mounted against what was considered to be a diplomatic mistake. Having fallen down the rabbit hole, I had little interest in climbing back out. I decided to continue my research on the rise and fall of the Department of East Asian Studies too and record the developments of Oriental Studies up to the present time. I started to look more broadly at Oriental Studies as an academic subject and its history in British universities, in doing so I found that Durham functions as a microcosm of wider trends regarding Oriental Studies in the post-War era. This paper is the result.

What had started out as an attempt to collect information about an Oriental librarian turned into a research project about the Oriental School and Library he inhabited, then to a more general history of the development of British Oriental Studies in the post-War era. I started to consider the wider political context and began to understand how the development of Oriental Studies in Durham overlaps with the foreign and commercial policies of the British government as a response to changes within the parts of the world historically known as 'the Orient'.

The reader should be aware that the Cold War of the twentieth century – an ideological battle often perceived as 'the West' versus 'the East' – forms the backdrop to the main events. The atmospherics of the Cold War therefore informed the British government's diplomatic imperatives

and the attitude towards Oriental Studies within British Universities. This paper has not wished to venture deeply into this conflict for fear of taking away its intended emphasis, but at the outset the reader should be familiar with the Cold War setting, which for the latter half of the twentieth century was imperative to informing British foreign and domestic policies.

The following story is not a work of Oriental scholarship but of British history in which educational institutions, diplomatic pressures, commercial interests, and intellectual culture are observed as interplaying forces which affect the subject that is Oriental Studies. There are many twists and turns, many perspectives and opinions, many facts and anecdotes, and most interesting of all, many characters, who at first acquaintance strike one as fictional.

People are at the heart of *Building an Academic Tradition* because during its research and writing I came to appreciate the role of individual agency in shaping the fortunes of universities. The structure of the chapters have been written to reflect this, while an unorthodox structuring, I think this appropriately illustrates that a university's primary capital is its people. This research has given me an insight into academic life: its peculiarities, its isolation, and its politics. Naturally, the role and purpose of a university rose to my attention and the final chapter aims to bring all of this together, to consider the future of Oriental Studies within the academy.

Before researching and writing this paper I would gloss over the acknowledgments when reading a book or article. In researching and writing this paper however, I have come to see that it is a valid cliché to say this would not have been possible without the support of several individuals. Any errors are my own but I am grateful to the following individuals for their contributions over the course of this project.

Christine Purcell, at the Bill Bryson Library in Durham, first alerted me to the existence of the material used to research this project. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty in ensuring I could conduct this project in a professional environment, along with any necessary resources. Secondly, Ian Doyle has also been a great support in promoting my work and his continued interest in the success of the project is much appreciated. Thirdly, I would like to thank Robert Hayward who proposed that I pursue this project for postgraduate research and whose academic guidance has been of huge benefit to its quality. Without these three individuals, not only would the project be incomplete, but it would not have started in the first place.

Adding to this list, I must also thank John Lumsden whose general knowledge of Durham far exceeds my own and whose attention to detail enabled me to look for things I would otherwise have missed. Jeremy Bonner also deserves praise for selflessly coming on board to support me as an academic supervisor when the project was at a crossroads. Also, to Lesley Forbes, whose

knowledge of Oriental Studies as well as the University of Durham is both impressive and intimidating but has been enormously helpful.

All of Christine, Ian, Robert, John, Jeremy, and Lesley are firmly rooted in Durham's modern academic history – having themselves all been a part of it – and I have had many enjoyable conversations with them about the contents of these pages. I would also like to thank Lewis Ayres for his support, despite heavy workloads as Head of the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham and ensuring, with other members of staff at the Department, that this work would be submitted to an adequate standard.

Letters, reports and any other quoted material can be found in the Special Collections at Palace Green Library, in either the Foster archive or in material relating to the Oriental School, Library and Museum where the staff are always friendly and willing to help. I also thank them for dealing with my requests willingly, especially when it concerned rarely consulted material that was tucked away in the archives. Also to the Library of the Goldsmith's Company, London, where I was able to find information on the early life of T. W. Thacker.

Naturally, I would like to thank the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University for all I have learned in my five years there; who also gave me the opportunity to spend six months at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen during this project. Also to Grey College where I have been a member throughout my time at Durham. Lastly, to my friends and family who I am sure are glad to see this finished just as much as me. I must also thank Val Grant, in whose house the final pages were completed. Lastly, I would like to thank Briony (for putting up with me).

Introduction

ORIENTAL STUDIES AS A SUBJECT

Literally meaning 'Eastern Studies', Oriental Studies employs a conceptual framework of 'the East' as a convenient antonym to European and American conceptions of themselves as 'the West'. Oriental Studies is therefore, by definition, a Western discipline. It examines the East from the perspective that it is something different to the West, specifically the notion that Eastern civilisations differ significantly in their linguistic and cultural background; meaning that appropriate disciplinary training is required to adequately understand cultural differences and similarities.

Of the features that distinguish Western civilisations from Eastern civilisations, Greco-Roman civilisation is a commonly cited hallmark. Christianity may cautiously be added. Christianity has had a ubiquitous effect on the culture and identity of the West but it is, and professes to be, a global faith. In its origins Christianity is also a Near Eastern religion and Jesus of Nazareth was a Palestinian Jew. Christianity must therefore be precisely defined when cited as a distinct Western characteristic. When Christianity is referenced as a Western characteristic it is a specific type of Christianity, which originated in the Latin West of the Roman Empire, that is meant.

This distinction became more pronounced with the split of the Roman Empire into East and West in the fifth century when the West gradually evolved into European Christendom and the Eastern half morphed into the Byzantine Empire. The split into East and West marks a point in history when the West developed a more defined understanding of itself. This East-West divide was enhanced with the coming of Islam in the seventh century and was accentuated in the medieval period when Christians in the East continued to develop stark theological differences with those in the West.

Oriental Studies is the study of regions that do not correspond to the same linguistic, political, religious and historical circumstances of the West. The Near East, the Middle East, Central Asia, South East Asia, India, China, Japan, Korea are all Oriental in accordance with this logic as they are inheritors of different civilisations. For this reason, the Slavonic peoples of Eastern Europe (usually titled Slavonic Studies) and Africa may be understood in a similar way to Oriental Studies because, significant historical events have drastically altered it from the West since antiquity – notably Orthodox Christianity and Islam. This only goes to highlight that the essence of Oriental Studies is not strictly a geographical distinction but primarily a cultural one: it is examining institutions, histories, people and languages different to those of the Greco-Roman and Christian West.

Oriental Studies is not a defined discipline with its own methods of enquiry but an enterprise of disciplines that enables Western scholars to understand Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The Orientalist – traditionally, one whose field is Oriental Studies – may employ linguistics, history, anthropology, economics, geography, sociology, philosophy, politics, theology or another discipline to more comprehensively understand his region of study. The Orientalist is not confined to antiquity or modernity but can be interested in anything which has influenced or continues to influence Asia, Africa or the Middle East. For example, the study of ancient Chinese dynasties and the modern People's Republic of China are covered by the umbrella of Oriental Studies.

While two Classicists may vary in their specialism, one in Greek poetry, another in Roman archaeology for example, they will nevertheless share a common foundation for their academic training and expertise: a linguistic grounding in Latin and Greek; the historical backdrop of Alexander the Great's Greece and Julius Caesar's Rome; and a literary canon of Homer, Herodotus, Cicero, Virgil, Ovid and other Greco-Roman writers. Two Orientalists, by contrast, will not necessarily share such common ground. One may be an Egyptologist with a background in Middle Egyptian and Coptic, the other may be a specialist in Buddhist and Confucian philosophies in China. This highlights that Oriental Studies is not a monolithic discipline but a subject employing different disciplines to explain its content. This diversity of content has resulted in a variety of Oriental sub-disciplines, including Egyptology, Assyriology, Byzantine Studies, Sinology, Sinhalese Studies, Arabic Studies, Persian Studies, and many more.

This broad definition of Oriental Studies – as something ancient and modern, cross-cultural, and multi-disciplinary – is still adhered to by major British Universities. At the University of Oxford, within the well-established Oriental Institute, undergraduate and postgraduate courses are offered on the Islamic world, Jewish studies, Orthodox Christianity, Egyptology, the ancient Near East, as well as South, Inner and East Asia. Moreover, many Oriental languages are on offer: Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Syriac, Korean, Armenian, and Cuneiform. The University of Cambridge (although not using the name Oriental) has a Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, thus it also constitutes a broad interpretation of eastern cultures and the study of them. SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies), at the University of London, is London's flagship institution for the subject and offers courses on the history, languages, politics, religion, economics and law of the ancient and modern cultures of Central, South and Far East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

In essence, Oriental Studies is the umbrella term for the study of non-Western cultures.

The majority of British Universities do not have the resources and expertise to maintain Oriental institutions as comprehensive as Oxbridge and SOAS. They therefore tend to have

departments prioritising one or two sub-disciplines of Oriental Studies, but it is well established that Oriental Studies is a varied academic field with a variety of meanings and specialisms. In North American universities, the understanding of Oriental Studies is narrower in location and period, focussing on the languages and civilizations of the ancient Near East. An example is the distinguished Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago where subjects like Egyptology, Assyriology and Archaeology are prioritised.

In 1978 Edward Said, a Professor of Comparative Literature at New York's Columbia University, published a book that has reshaped our entire understanding of Oriental Studies.¹ Said's *Orientalism* argued that the superpower status of European imperialism in the nineteenth century, and American cultural hegemony in the twentieth century, had warped the West's understanding of Asia, Africa and the Middle East – in particular, he emphasised Islam and the Arabs. Said's fundamental issue was that the Orient was believed to be the home of peoples whose values were at odds with Western civilisation.

Said acknowledged the contribution of Orientalists to linguistics and other factual areas but was critical of the judgements Western scholars placed on the values of the Orient in relation to their own. At best, Said argued, Orientalists' judgements had concluded the Orient was exotic, enigmatic and curious; at worst, they judged the Orient as barbaric and uncivilised. He argued that there is no fundamental dichotomy between the values of East and West, believing that the colonial interpretation of the Orient was wrong and that Orientalism conveyed more about the West's understanding of itself, and the power relationship between East and West, than expressing anything intrinsic about the Orient.

Said's *Orientalism* has received criticism from a range of scholars but it has also been widely accepted and its impact on the humanities and social sciences has been monumental. Although not always within specialist Oriental institutions, university studies of Asia, Africa and the Middle East have become more explicitly placed within a colonial framework, studied in reference to the negative consequences following interaction with Western Empires in modern history, as opposed to the independent and ancient civilisations in themselves.

An Orientalist is no longer the designation of a scholar but is a politically charged term to refer to someone who holds views towards the Orient of which Said was critical. Use of the term Orientalist had fallen out of fashion prior to Said however. Because Oriental Studies had traditionally referred to linguistics, the expanse of Oriental Studies into the humanities and social sciences in the twentieth century led to reduced use of the term. But also because of the misleading nature of the term due to its vastness: the Byzantine scholar has more in common with a Classicist

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

than with a Sinologist, yet under the Orientalist umbrella this is not apparent. But it was Said's intrinsic linking Orientalism to an imperial and colonial outlook which accelerated its disuse and has since led to a rejection of its use by scholars who would previously have self-identified as Orientalists. Now, Orientalists tend to define their profession by their sub-discipline or label themselves more generally as linguists or historians.

The outlook of Said challenges the validity of Oriental Studies as it has been defined here, which implies that the Orient is fundamentally different in form and values from the West – hence the need for a separate academic subject devoted to its study. To analyse a culture fully (even our own) demands critical discernment however, and it is a denial of reality to say that people who have a very different cultural make-up (historical, linguistic, religious, scientific) only differ in superficial values. Or, to phrase it more philosophically: is it even possible to analyse a culture of different circumstances without first acknowledging those differences of circumstance? Oriental Studies is Eurocentric in its origins, and remains a Western discipline today, but that is inevitable in European and American institutions. Western Oriental schools and institutes attempt to understand peoples who are the beneficiaries of a different cultural heritage from themselves, and therefore a point of difference must be acknowledged.

A point of scholarly difference does not by default equate to condescension and criticism but quite often the reverse: respect and reverence. The reputational benefits that occur from being in a large specialised academic structure should also be highlighted. Far from undermining Eastern peoples, the existence of Oriental bodies (in the form of institutes, schools, faculties, and departments) is an acknowledgement of the great contributions of non-European civilizations and a desire to learn more about them is seen as a sign of respect towards those cultures.

From an academic perspective however, a potential drawback of Oriental Studies could be that it is bad practice to situate so many diverse regions and topics under one roof. The differences between Arab and Japanese cultures are just as large as their differences from Western cultures, for example. However, consolidated departments enable economies of scale and the pooling of resources. A case in point is the resources required for Turkish, Persian, Arabic and Indian studies; all of these share Islam as an important feature therefore a departmental alliance in universities is reasonable where sound financial and resource management is demanded. The essential point of Oriental Studies however is that the cultures of study are seen to be exterior to the West – a Western Orientalist scholar is therefore studying something external to himself as opposed to a Professor of English literature who is thought to study something of direct inheritance.

This essay does not intend to be a critique of Said and *Orientalism*, but passing reference to him and his work is essential due to his influence on, not necessarily the strict disciplines of Oriental Studies, but within the humanities and social sciences in general and therefore how the West approaches Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

This is a historical paper about the development of British Oriental Studies examined primarily through the case study of the University of Durham. Oriental Studies will be used as an umbrella term to describe the broad remit of studies just described for reasons of convenience and historical accuracy – since many of the characters we meet in this story used the term themselves and self-identified as Orientalists. Orientalist, although rarely used, is used in its traditional meaning as a politically neutral term to describe an academic or scholar whose field is Oriental Studies.

By definition Oriental Studies is a Western term for the benefit of Western scholars wishing to advance their knowledge in fields of cultures beyond those which have directly and explicitly impacted on their civilisation. If it is an imperfect tool, the lack of an alternative makes it a useful one.

Oriental Scholarship

MEDIEVAL TO MODERN

The adoption of the scientific methods of Islamic scholars in the Middle Ages is an interesting development in European history and is a tempting place to begin the origins of Oriental scholarship. However, study of Oriental culture and history was not common and the medieval era can be regarded as a period of ignorance in the field.

England's first great Arabist was Adelard of Bath (ca.1080-ca.1152), the tutor of King Henry II and author of the *Quaestiones naturales* (*Questions on the Natural Sciences*) in which he invoked the reason-based 'teachings of the Arabs.'² Adelard was a prominent mathematician who translated works of arithmetic and astrology from Arabic into Latin; he also advocated the adoption of the more efficient Arabic numerals instead of the Roman system, something which remains with us today. Adelard is a prominent example of the interchange of scientific knowledge during the medieval period and is arguably the first British Orientalist.

Adelard was a rarity, however. Prior to the Crusades it seems almost no Europeans had any knowledge of Islamic theology.³ As late as the twelfth century William of Malmesbury (c. 1095-1143) was the first European to nullify the misconception that Mohammed was the God of the Muslims and revealed that he was just a Prophet, moreover that Muslims were strict monotheists.⁴ A further development occurred in July 1143 when Robert of Ketton (1110-1160) produced a complete translation of the Koran.⁵ Malmesbury and Ketton exemplify radical steps in Oriental scholarship but interaction between East and West at this time was more often antagonistic, the most famous examples being the Crusades. Disinterested inquiry and scholarly research into the thoughts and practices of the Orient (and vice versa) were more often concerned with refuting their religious convictions.⁶

The Far East was of little interest to medieval scholars and rulers because it was no immediate military threat and was commercially difficult to access. The Flemish traveller and writer, William of Rubruck (c.1220-c.1293) had been the first to comment on the ideography of

² Jeremiah Hackett, 'Adelard of Bath' in Gracia, J. E. G. and Noone, T. B., *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp.86-87.

³ The Balzan Prize winning medieval historian Sir Richard Southern counted only one time that the name Mohammed is referenced before 1120 (by Abbot Majolus of Cluny in 972). See Southern, R. W., *Western Views on Islam in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed., (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶ See Charles Tieszen, *A Textual History of Christian-Muslim Relations: Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015). Tieszen offers a range of primary source interactions between Christians and Muslims from the origins of Islam to the Early Modern period. The overwhelming quantity of material relates to discerning the true religion and refuting the wrong one.

Far East Asian languages and to examine the differences between Chinese, Tibetan, Tangut, and Uighur scripts; but little linguistic study was undertaken beyond this.⁷ Starting in the Renaissance, improvements in cosmography, navigation and cartography made the Far East a more profitable trading investment and aroused greater knowledge of the Orient. In 1580, the English explorer Sir Francis Drake took a voyage around the world and his journey was later published with a compiled list of 32 Javan words.⁸ The increased travel to the Far East by merchants and explorers like Drake led to a range of Asian words entering European languages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Some examples of words which entered English (and the date which they entered) include: *raja* (1555) meaning ‘ruler’ from Sanskrit (*rājā*); *cha* (1598) meaning ‘tea’ from Chinese (*ch’a*), and later the word *tea* (1653) from the Chinese Amoy dialect (*ti*); *litchi* (1588) for the fruit of the *Nephelium litchi* is a cognate in Chinese (*li-chi*), Malay (*li-chi*) and Cantonese (*lai-chi*); *Mandarin* (1588) was a generic term for an Asian official from Kindi and Malay (*mantri*); the popular cloth *gingham* (1615) is derived from both Malay (*gingong*) and Javanese (*ging-gang*); *pundit* (1661) from Sanskrit for ‘a learned man’ (*paṇḍita*); *amuck* (1663) from the Malay term for ‘people who run wild’ (*amuk*); and lastly, the word *ghong* (1673) from the Malay word for ‘bell’ (*gong*).⁹

The entrance of these words into English and other European languages is evident from their frequent use in trading settings by the observable feature of their practicality: they are words that have some relevance to products of trade or dealing with administration and therefore have an application for merchants. This illustrates that the impulse for learning Oriental languages was not scholarly but commercial. The Arabist William Bedwell (1561-1632) argued for the importance of knowing Arabic on the same principle, because it was ‘the only language of religion and the chief language of diplomacy and business from the Fortunate Islands to the China Seas.’¹⁰ Bedwell’s belief in the importance of Arabic for its commercial and trading importance led him to publish a lexicon of Arabic words used in Western languages from Byzantine times to the present.

A landmark in the development of Oriental Studies is therefore the scholarly interest of the subject when it entered academic study. The Council of Vienne in 1312 had officially called

⁷ D. F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume II: A Century of Wonder, Book Three: The Scholarly Discourses* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1977), p. 491.

⁸ Ibid, p. 493.

⁹ ‘Words of Asiatic Origin Introduced into the European Vocabulary (Sixteenth Century)’ in Ibid., pp. 544-555. Many of these terms and others entered other European languages such as Portuguese, French, Italian, Dutch and Latin in the same period.

¹⁰ Bedwell quoted in Arberry, A. J., *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), p.12.

for Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic to be studied at the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca.¹¹ There was neither the will or the resources to administer such subjects and the idea did not come into fruition. In the Tudor and Stuart eras Arabic and Syriac gained interest. For example, in 1574 the Flemish John Drusius had become a Syriac lecturer at the request of the Chancellor of Oxford, the 1st Earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley and Drusius had already been lecturing Hebrew, Chaldean and Syriac for two years prior to this. But, to Tudor and Stuart contemporaries Oriental languages were esoteric and referred to as ‘the left hand languages’.¹² Therefore, the establishment of Chairs in Arabic at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in 1632 and 1636 respectively is a major milestone in the development of British Oriental Studies because statutory provision for these in the form of official Chairs gave unprecedented purchase to the subjects.

The 1632 Cambridge Chair was funded by the merchant and draper, and future Lord Mayor of the City of London, Sir Thomas Adams; its first incumbent was Abraham Wheelocke. The Oxford chair was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Chancellor of the University of Oxford, William Laud (1573-1645), who invited Edward Pococke (1604-91), to fill it. Laud was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1630 and was a keen Orientalist who donated a number of Oriental manuscripts to the Bodleian Library between 1635 and 1640. The Adams and Laudian Chairs of Arabic remain to this day and have been host to some of Britain’s finest Orientalists including Simon Ockley (1678-1720), Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926), Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1895-1971) and Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969).

Ockley was a thorough scholar who used all of the sources available to him to write the *History of the Saracens*, a work which is said to have inspired the young Edward Gibbon’s fascination for Mohammed.¹³ Edward Granville Browne translated numerous works of Persian literature and poetry and wrote widely on the Persian sub-sect of Islam, Bábism, and his *Literary History of Persia*, published in four volumes between 1902 and 1924, has been reprinted frequently and remains a classic introductory work.¹⁴ Hamilton Gibb authored *Modern Trends in Islam* (1947) and taught at the University of Harvard following the Second World War.¹⁵ Gibb was also highly supportive of an Oriental department at Durham and his authority as an Orientalist was influential in convincing

¹¹ Southern, p. 72.

¹² Mark H. Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition 1558-1642: An Essay on Changing Relations between the English Universities and English Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 141 -142.

¹³ See ‘The Pioneer: Simon Ockley’ in A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), pp. 11-47.

¹⁴ ‘The Persian: Edward Granville Browne’ in *Ibid.*, pp. 160-196.

¹⁵ Gibb was the most highly respected Orientalist of his day but came under severe criticism by Said in *Orientalism* for holding an archetypal Orientalist perspective. See Said, *Orientalism* pp. 105-107.

the government on Durham's aptitude for an Oriental institute. Finally, the numerous writings on the Arabs and Persians by Arthur John Arberry are some of the most popular introductions to Islam and Muslim peoples. Arberry's 1955 highly accessible translation of the Koran into English is the highest reputed translation by a non-Muslim scholar.¹⁶

The creation of these Chairs at Oxford and Cambridge in the seventeenth century marks a milestone as the moment when British Oriental Studies can be said to formally begin. The initiative to introduce Oriental Studies into the academy indicates an institutional recognition of the subject and reflects its growing reputation in the seventeenth century during which time Oriental Studies was treated with intrigue and enthusiasm. It must be stressed however that these were by no means common. The Orient remained on the whole something distant and mysterious with few engaged in the awkward task of fathoming languages that were largely unknown or extinct.

The excellent examples of seventeenth century Oriental scholarship in Britain mostly related to Semitic languages. Brian Walton (1600-1661) co-ordinated a six volume *London Polyglot* which set out the biblical text in nine languages. Walton had floated the idea of a new polyglot in a circular of 1652 that was then completed within remarkable time, the six volumes being published between 1654 and 1657.¹⁷ The nine languages were Hebrew, Chaldee (Aramaic), Samaritan, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Ethiopic, Greek and Latin, and both Wheelcocke and Pococke were contributors. Other notable Orientalists of the period include Edmund Castle (1606-1685) and George Sale (1697-1736). Castle produced a dictionary of Semitic languages and Sale produced the first English version of the Koran, which was also the first translation into any Western language other than Latin. The fact that the first French and German translations were copied from Sale's version – not the Arabic – highlights its influence.¹⁸

The outstanding feature shared between medieval and modern Orientalists is the role played by Christianity in their thinking. Adelard was Bishop of Bath. The founder of the Laudian Chair of Arabic, William Laud, was the Archbishop of Canterbury. Pococke also, as the first Laudian Chair incumbent, had been a Christian chaplain in Aleppo from 1630-1635.¹⁹ Likewise, Brian Walton was a Bishop. English Oriental scholarship was largely theological in its momentum

¹⁶ A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008).

¹⁷ John Barnard, 'London Publishing, 1640-1660: Crisis, Continuity, and Innovation', *Book History*, Vol. 4 (2001), pp.1-16, esp. pp.10-11.

¹⁸ Paul Auchterlonie, 'The development of Arabic studies in Britain from the Middle Ages to the present day' in Burnett, David (ed.), *Arabic Resources: Acquisition and Management in British Libraries*, (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), p.4.

¹⁹ On Pococke and Laud see Cross F. L. and Livingstone E. A., eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

too, for example Arabic had an importance for transmitting Greek, and Syriac was believed to be the language of Christ and the apostles and thus warranted study. The Christian bias of the pre-modern Orientalists may be criticised but it must be fairly evaluated.

An ecclesiastical presence in academic affairs is not surprising given the institutional dominance of the church in education throughout British history and is not unique to Oriental Studies. A biblical bias was a feature of pre-modern Oriental scholarship for the added reason that the Bible was one of the only Oriental sources which was available to provide Western scholars with a connected historical narrative and a chronological framework. In the Hellenistic period, some native peoples did write such connected histories in Greek, such as Manetho for the Egyptians and Berossus for the Phoenicians, but these have not survived. In the Classical period, Greek writers displayed an interest in other nations insofar as those peoples impinged on the Greeks, or because individual writers had some kind of personal interest in them, but they did not provide broad histories of Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia or Persia with a connected narrative and chronology as the Bible did. As an indigenous account of the Ancient Near East, the Bible, in particular the Old Testament, was also highly informative about the wider context of places such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia.

This feature leads onto another aspect of Oriental Studies which has always determined its development, namely, resources. The geographical location of the Orient, in relation to the West has historically made resources for scholars limited. In 1602, Thomas Bodley's decision to open a University Library at Oxford is an early example to remedy the deficiencies in resources for scholars. Bodley collected his first Chinese book in the second year of setting up the Bodleian Library and he was not concerned that no one could read it because he believed that the long-term gathering of resources would benefit academic study.²⁰

A man who serves as a microcosm for the seventeenth century developments of Oriental Studies is Thomas Hyde (1636-1703) who was Thomas Bodley's Librarian from 1665 until 1701. Hyde was an Orientalist who, like most Orientalists of the day, was a specialist in Semitic languages and was one of the Arabic translators for Walton's Polyglot. Hyde also became the Laudian Professor of Arabic in 1691 then Regius Professor of Hebrew in 1697. Moreover, in accordance with the general enthusiasm for Oriental Studies of the day, he took it upon himself to learn Chinese, a remarkable achievement given the limited resources for such a difficult language at the time.²¹

²⁰ Timothy Brook, *Mr. Selden's Map of China: Decoding the Secrets of a Vanished Cartographer* (New York and others: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.55. For more on the origins and developments at the Bodleian Library see Walker, Gregory, Clapinson, Mary and Forbes, Lesley (eds.) *The Bodleian Library: a subject guide to the collections* (Oxford: The Bodleian Library, 2004), pp. 121-150.

The growth of European empires into Asia and Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries radically altered the perspective of Oriental Studies as well as the resources available for scholars. New archaeological discoveries meant that the Bible was no longer the only resource for Near Eastern history, and imperial expansion into the Far East sparked interest in parts of the world that were previously unknown and mysterious. Ancient Oriental languages, including Hieroglyphics, Akkadian and Assyrian, were deciphered in this period, and research groups and societies were widely established, for example the French Société asiatique (1822); the British Royal Asiatic Society (1823); and the American Oriental Society (1842).

Said argued that it was in this period that ‘Orientalism accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution.’²² This self-metamorphosis to an imperial institution begins with Napoleon Bonaparte who briefly occupied Egypt in 1798. Napoleon brought with him 165 *savants* (scientists, artists and men of letters) to learn and record information about Egypt. Arabic and French printing presses were established and the French comprehensively examined the antiquities, languages, topography, nature, architecture and economy of Egypt.²³ Their findings were subsequently produced in the monumental twenty-three volume *Description de l’Égypte* (1809-1822).

The French expedition of Egypt was brought to an end by British and Ottoman forces who besieged French troops at Alexandria in 1801.²⁴ As part of the peace agreement, the British acquired the French antiquities, most notably the Rosetta Stone (which enabled Egyptian hieroglyphics to be deciphered and is now in the British Museum). A British presence remained in Egypt for the following century and Egyptology flourished in Britain as a result. The first Chair of Egyptology was founded in 1892 under the will of Miss Amelia B. Edwards at University College, London (UCL). Edwards had founded, in association with Sir Erasmus Wilson, R. S. Poole and others, the Egypt Exploration Fund and the first occupant of the Chair at UCL was to be Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942). Under the terms of the appointment Petrie was to be sent every winter to Egypt where he would conduct work with students, Petrie’s fieldwork

²² Said, p.95.

²³ See Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, 4th ed., (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p.49-50; Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) esp. pp. 123-142 for Napoleon’s and wider French attitudes towards Islam; also see the exhibition ‘Napoleon and the Scientific Expedition to Egypt’ (Oct 2006-April 2007) at the Linda Hall Library, available online:

<<http://napoleon.lindahall.org/index.shtml>> [accessed 24/02/2016].

²⁴ Piers Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt: The end of Napoleon’s conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

revolutionised our understanding of Ancient Egypt as well as making established changes to archaeological methods.²⁵

Petrie's most famous archaeological discovery remains the Merneptah Stele but his greatest contribution to Oriental Studies was his systematising of Egyptology that included a dating system from Egyptian pottery. A British presence in Egypt enabled important archaeological excavations to be conducted and discoveries such as Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter and George Herbert in 1922 aroused public interest in the subject. An interest in Oriental Studies among the general population should be included as a major development in Oriental Studies because it increased awareness of the Orient in the popular imagination and offered funding and research opportunities for scholars, writers, travellers, and archaeologists. British art and architecture also saw an invigorated revival in Egyptian styles and forms in buildings, art and furniture.²⁶

The British never constructed an explicit and coherent ideology of empire. This is particularly pertinent in India where the differing strategies of governance are contradictory and inconsistent.²⁷ Contradictions and inconsistencies were however, a reflection of the pragmatism that accounted for the success of the British Raj. In order to conceive its own rule in India the British were consistent with the view that a knowledge of Indian culture was vital. This would in turn enable a more harmonious relationship between the colonised and colonisers. The defining of Hinduism is a case in point. Hinduism was a British term devised by imperialists to categorise the vastly complex religious traditions that exist in India to coherently make sense of the varied customs which nevertheless share standard texts, priests and rituals.²⁸

The first Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings (1732-1818) was to set the tone for the development of Indian studies. Hastings acknowledged that the Indians adhered to an ancient legal system that was very much intact. The British, Hastings believed, should therefore respect the customs of the Indians by learning Sanskrit and their judicial principles.²⁹ Under the

²⁵ H. Hale Bellot, *University College London 1826-1926* (London: University of London Press, 1929), p.383-384.

²⁶ For further discussion on this see James Stevens Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: An introductory study of a recurring theme in the history of taste* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), esp. chapters 6, 7, and 8 (pp. 107-194). Stevens Curl argues that the Egyptian presence in architecture and art in Europe has been a recurring theme since the Greek and Roman empires but it is almost certain from the evidence that the Napoleonic campaigns contributed considerably to a revival in the nineteenth century. Also Stevens Curl's more recent exploration of the subject: Stevens Curl, James, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

²⁷ Thomas Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India III.4: Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. pp. 1-27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9-10.

patronage of Hastings, the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established on 15 January 1784 to promote greater Oriental research.

The Society's first President was Sir William Jones (1746-1794). Jones was a polymath – a jurist, a botanist, and a linguist who was proficient in Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. He wrote a *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) but his most significant contribution to scholarship was his discovery of a shared origin between Sanskrit and European languages. This revolutionised philological understanding of the time and can be marked as the creation of Indo-European studies. As a jurist Jones spent time studying the ancient judicial system of India and in 1794 his *Institute of Hindu Law* was posthumously printed.

The Society published its research in a journal entitled *Asiatic Researches* which produced translations of sacred Hindu texts and essays on Indian culture and religion and was highly influential throughout Europe.³⁰ In November 1784, under the auspices of the Society, the first complete English translation of the sacred Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, was published. It had been translated directly from the Sanskrit by Charles Wilkins who also translated the *Institutes of Manu* (*Manusmṛiti*), the most ancient legal text of Hinduism, and also later translated the collection of Sanskrit fables, the *Hitopadesha*. Jones and Wilkins, and other writers of the *Asiatic Researches*, brought an informed and intimate knowledge of India on a scale that was previously unheard of and influenced European culture dramatically, largely thanks to their work on Sanskrit.³¹

Some of the finest British scholars of India were missionaries who were among the most accomplished linguists of Persian, Bengali and Sanskrit. Three Baptist Missionary Society members, William Carey, William Ward, and Joshua Marshman operated in Serampore as scriptural translators. They also worked on grammars of India's indigenous languages and Carey worked as the official Bengali translator for the East India Company. The role of missionaries in increasing Indian knowledge and culture is huge as they were most commonly employed by the British administration for educational matters in India thanks to their well-informed linguistic and cultural capabilities.³² Missionaries wished to convert the peoples of India but it was a common belief that in order to do that they had to be informed on the existing state of affairs in India and were therefore some of the most well informed Oriental scholars of the day.

³⁰ R. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 52-57

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³² See, Copland I., 'Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company, C. 1813-1858', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp.1025-1054. And Bellenoit, H. J. A., 'Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, c.1880-1915' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, Issue 2, March 2007, pp. pp.369-394.

The outstanding feature of Oriental Studies in the nineteenth century is its non-academic context. In both Egypt and India knowledge increased because scholarship was conducted in the form of what would now be called field work. The most obvious expression of this was the creation of the role of Surveyor General in 1815 to survey India's history, culture and geography. The first incumbent Colin Mackenzie. The government also contributed greatly to this when under the leadership of the civil servant George A. Grierson it commissioned a *Linguistic Survey of India* (1894-1928) which provided a comprehensive study of the 364 languages and dialects of British India. Linguists were almost always individuals who had first-hand experience of India – which was a very different situation to biblical Oriental scholars who were dealing with dead languages – and the first academic Chair of Sanskrit in Britain, which was privately funded, was founded at Oxford as late as 1827, and the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit was appointed in 1832, half a century after Britain had been intimately involved in India. Chairs in London, Cambridge and Edinburgh shortly followed.

The situation of Far Eastern Studies was very different from Middle Eastern and Indian Studies in this period. British Oriental Studies was dominated by Egyptology and India Studies because political influence there enabled it to be so. Far Eastern Studies did however develop in some areas. The standard for Chinese scholarship had been set since the sixteenth century by Jesuit missionaries such as Francis Xavier (1506-1552) the 'Apostle to the East', and the Italian Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). The Jesuits were missionaries but were well informed about Chinese language and traditions for which they are reported to have had an immense respect. Prior to the nineteenth century, almost all translations of Chinese works had been produced by Jesuit missionaries.

Notable examples include: Philippe Couplet's *Tabula chronologica Monarchiae Sinicae* (1686), which gave a synopsis of all the important events in Chinese history and was used by all authors who wrote on Chinese matters for the next century or more; J. B. du Halde's *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735) was multi-volume work compiled by more than twenty-seven Jesuits, including a history of China that was simple and clear that became the main source on China for the next two or three generations; numerous translators worked together to create the *Sinarum Philosophus* (1687), translations of the first three of Confucius' Four Books as well as a biography of Confucius.³³

³³ Knud Lundbæk, 'The First European Translations of Chinese Historical and Philosophical Works' in T. H. Lee, ed., *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1991), pp. 29-43.

By the time of European imperial dominance in the nineteenth century China was an economically poorer country than it had been at the time of the Jesuit missionaries and Europe did not share the same sympathy for the ancient Chinese civilisation; quite the reverse, China needed to reform because it had not progressed.³⁴ Nineteenth century missionaries were therefore hostile to the Chinese order of things and as a consequence became a most loathed and detested part of European society by the Chinese people.³⁵

Jesuits had looked to harmonise Christianity and Confucianism, but at a time when Jesuit involvement required Chinese consent.³⁶ By the time of the nineteenth century there had been an evangelical revival in Great Britain and the Great Awakening in America that was combined with a European confidence in its own civilisation abetted by military and technological superiority. What had previously been interpreted as a prosperous, peaceful and intellectual civilisation since the time of the Jesuits was reinterpreted as corrupt and unjust by works of people such as John Barrow in his *Travels in China* (1804), and a negative attitude towards China was common in Britain throughout the nineteenth century. Positive attitudes did exist however, S. Wells Williams wrote *The Middle Kingdom* (1848) about China and Chinese life. Williams had learned Chinese and believed that the strident xenophobia stemmed from the ignorance foreigners had of their language. Williams believed China to be Asiatic and pagan but did not dismiss its study, believing Chinese literature to be worthy for its representations about humanity.³⁷

As in India, missionaries were some of the most informed scholars of China. In 1815, Robert Morrison (1782-1834) of the London Missionary Society produced a Chinese grammar and with another missionary, William Milnes. Morrison had been a translator for the East India Company from 1809-1815 and in 1816 accompanied the diplomat and future Governor-General of India, William Pitt Amherst to Peking as an interpreter. In 1818 Morrison founded the Anglo-Chinese College, a missionary college with cultural inter-change as a priority. It taught the Chinese about Western culture and Chinese culture to British students. In 1819 Morrison completed a Chinese translation of Old and New Testaments, and later a Chinese-English dictionary. In 1832 a monthly magazine, *The Chinese Repository* was begun in Canton by one of the first American missionaries to arrive in China, Elijah C. Bridgman (1801-61), and was joined by Samuel Wells

³⁴ See Günther Lottes, 'China in European Political Thought, 1750-1850', in *Ibid.*, pp.65-98, p. 65.

³⁵ Paul A. Cohen, 'Christian missions and their impact to 1900' in J. K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10, Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I* (Cambridge and others: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp.543-590.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 545.

³⁷ C. Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.48.

Williams (1812-84). The magazine closed in 1852 but under their editorship it was ‘the main outlet for serious Western scholarship on China.’³⁸

The medieval city of Durham was a latecomer to Oriental scholarship in Britain. Education and learning has been established in the city since early medieval times but the University of Durham was not established until an Act of Parliament in 1832. Three years later provision was made for a Reader in Hebrew and, in 1841, a £500 stipend was proposed to fund a Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental languages within the Theology department.

From 1920-1930, Alfred Guillaume took up the position and introduced degree and diploma courses in Arabic language and literature, both modern and classical (the modern element was unique in Britain at this time). Guillaume was a distinguished Islamic scholar who had been awarded a First Class in the Oriental schools – Hebrew and Arabic with Syriac – at Wadham College, Oxford in 1913, where he won all available prizes: the Houghton Syriac and Septuagint, and the Junior Kennicott Hebrew scholarship. He mastered modern Arabic at Cairo where he was stationed during the First World War. Later, from 1947-1955, he took up the Arabic chair at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (SOAS) where he published numerous books and articles on Islam, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other subjects.³⁹

The roots of SOAS lie in a School of Modern Oriental Languages which was inaugurated by Max Müller, the nineteenth century Orientalist and specialist in Indian Studies, on 11 Jan 1880. The School was initially split between University College, London and King’s College, London.⁴⁰ It was not until 1907 however that the British Treasury appointed Lord Reay to be chairman of a committee to inquire about the provision and organisation of Oriental Studies in London.⁴¹ The Reay Committee suggested that a centre of imperial training and oriental scholarship was long overdue in the capital of the British Empire. Following the Reay Committee, a second committee, the Cromer Committee, named after its Chair Lord Cromer, was set up with the responsibility to establish a London Oriental School.⁴²

³⁸ Cohen, p. 548

³⁹ Sidney Smith, ‘Alfred Guillaume: Obituary’ in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 29, Issue 02, June 1966, pp. 478 – 481.

⁴⁰ Philips, C. H., *The School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, 1917-1967: An Introduction* (London: Design for Print Ltd., 1967).

⁴¹ Lord Reay had been Governor of Bombay between 1885-1890. He had also held a range of other notable positions by the time of the Treasury committee, including Under-Secretary of State for India, President of the British Academy and also President of the Royal Asiatic Society.

⁴² Lord Cromer was the British Consul-General in Egypt between 1883-1907. Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India between 1899-1905. The committee was therefore given tremendous clout by the presence of Cromer and Curzon.

The School of Oriental Studies, as was its original name, was officially opened on 23 February 1917 by the King-Emperor, George V, at Finsbury Circus.⁴³ Finsbury Circus had been chosen because of its proximity to the financial City of London. In addition to imperial training, it was intended that the School would serve the Chambers of Commerce in training businessmen in Oriental Languages. The hope was that commercial bodies would serve as a reciprocal funder of the School and its research. This intended relationship was not as successful as expected however, and the School eventually moved because of limited investment and students from the City and due to its being isolated from the rest of the University of London.

SOAS therefore moved to its present site in Bloomsbury in 1941 during the Second World War where it performed two vital functions. The first of these was to train servicemen and other individuals in rare languages, this became even more important as of 1941 when the War moved to the Far East; and many of the servicemen who were trained rapidly in Japanese ended up becoming influential British businessmen and diplomats in the post-War era. The second function was intelligence: translating thousands of letters in rarer languages as well as newspapers and propaganda to ensue Britain and the Allies were well informed.

In its early years, SOAS struggled to be the imperial centre it had been set up to become. The Colonial Office, India Office, War Office, and the Foreign Office had regularly preferred to invest training in the countries of deployment or at Oxford or Cambridge. The aims to advance oriental scholarship and to serve as a vocational training centre for those entering imperial service in the colonies therefore struggled. The reservation of these government bodies to use SOAS in its early use was a frustration to its staff. Further, the lack of Oriental studies provision and seeming unwillingness of the British government to invest in it (relative to other European countries prior to the Second World War) was a frequent complaint of many influential figures.⁴⁴ This frustration is understandable given that SOAS had been established in a part due to a fear the British were falling behind the French, the Dutch, the Russians and especially the Germans in Oriental languages and the negative effects this relative ignorance could have for the trade and governance of the Empire.

⁴³ 'The School of Oriental Languages' was another name considered. 'Africa' was not added to the name until 1935 when, after significant funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to the School's African linguistics and phonetics research, was it considered appropriate to include Africa in formal name. As of September 1938, the name change took effect. During the 1935 name change decisions 'Institute' was considered as a replacement for 'School' too. For more on the name changes and their reasons see Brown, SOAS, esp. p. 21, p. 63, and p. 75.

⁴⁴ Ian Brown's account of the history of SOAS cites and quotes numerous examples of senior politicians, diplomats, academics, and businessmen who were frustrated at the underinvestment of Britain into Oriental studies given the depth and breadth of British interest in the East. See Brown, SOAS, pp. 12-13, 24, 38, 59-60, 87, 106-107.

The Second World War demonstrated a direct application of the School in a time of crisis however, and following the War, the School benefitted from significant increases in funding and a renewed emphasis on its scholarly purpose. Since 1945 therefore, it has undoubtedly flourished as Britain's flagship institution of Oriental Studies.⁴⁵

This brief history of Oriental Studies is by no means an exhaustive list and comprehensive discussion of the developments from the medieval era until the twentieth century. Instead, by way of introduction, it has intended to draw out some of the main themes in the development of Oriental Studies by focussing on the major contributing, and prohibitive, factors to its flourishing with specific people and institutions which illustrate those themes.

With the exception of SOAS (which is a specialist institution), and Oxford and Cambridge (which are able to provide comprehensive teaching and research due to their being well resourced), the subject of Oriental Studies remained on the fringes – or was even non-existent – in British Universities prior to the Second World War. The subject suffered from limited resources and funding because it was believed to not carry any immediate utility and consequently was considered a subject of private interest depending mainly on private donors.

The Second World War changed this common perception because it threw into sharp relief Britain's general ignorance of the Orient, and raised the demand to remedy that fact. The government's response proved to be the next great development in British Oriental Studies and was the cause of increased financial investment in the subject at some select British Universities including a specialist School of Oriental Studies at Durham.

⁴⁵ For more on the history of SOAS and its early years see Brown, SOAS, especially Chapters 1 to 3. Provision prior to the School's opening and the origins and outcomes of the Reay committee are explored in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 deals with the early years and the difficulties faced in building up a large student network, and also the financial challenges. Finally, Chapter 3 explains the contribution of SOAS to the war effort.

The Scarborough Report

PUTTING ORIENTAL STUDIES ON THE MAP (1944-47)

On 6 November 1944, a letter was sent from the British Foreign Office, at the request of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, to the Warden of the Durham Colleges and rotational Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durham, James Fitzjames Duff.⁴⁶ The letter asked ‘whether the facilities at present available in British Universities for Slavonic and Oriental Studies will be adequate for future needs’.⁴⁷

The letter went on to explain and clarify the reason for the Government’s interest:

In the years following the end of the hostilities [the Second World War] there will be a demand for young men and women equipped with a knowledge of the languages, history and way of life of the peoples of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and other parts of Asia; and there exists some doubt in Government circles whether our Universities are adequately endowed and otherwise equipped to cater for this need and to provide facilities for research.⁴⁸

A month later, on 15 December 1944, Eden appointed a specialist committee to be chaired by Sir Roger Lumley, 11th Earl of Scarborough.⁴⁹ The committee was to determine, ‘What place should be made, in the post-war life of the British people, for the study of the languages and cultures of almost all the peoples of the world which are not of Western European origin?’⁵⁰ The committee’s findings were signed off two years later on 16 April 1946, then published in 1947 as the *Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic East European and African Studies* (hereafter the Scarborough Report). The Scarborough Report’s conclusion was straightforward: ‘The Commission has gone into this question with an open mind and has

⁴⁶ For historical reasons, the full title at Durham of the chief executive office is the Vice-Chancellor and Warden. At this period in time the University of Durham was a collection of the Durham Colleges (in Durham City) and King’s College (in Newcastle) where primarily subjects such as medicine were based. Because of this arrangement Durham had a rotational Vice-Chancellor system, whereby the Warden of the Durham Colleges would take on the role of Vice-Chancellor on a two-year recycle period with the counterpart at Newcastle. When Newcastle became an independent University in 1963, the full title at Durham was maintained. Hereafter, for the purpose of clarity, the Vice-Chancellor and Warden of Durham has been referred to as the Vice Chancellor, however, in some of the correspondence and sources cited the title of Warden is used.

⁴⁷ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Hereafter Sir Roger Lumley is called Scarborough in accordance with his Earldom even though he did not officially acquire that title until 1945 following the death of his uncle.

⁵⁰ *Scarborough Report*, p. 6.

unanimously reached the conclusion that existing provision for these studies is unworthy of our country and people'.⁵¹

As late as 1939, the majority of academic posts relating to Oriental Studies were found in theology departments: in 1939, all of the universities surveyed by the committee – Oxford, Cambridge, London (University College and SOAS), Aberdeen, Bangor, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and St. Andrews – had Professors, Lecturers or Readers in Hebrew and Semitic Languages or had arrangements for teaching Hebrew (ancient or modern) and Judaism.⁵² Oxford and Cambridge were more broadly equipped in subjects such as Arabic and Assyriology, as well as Rabbinics [*sic*] (Cambridge), Persian (Cambridge), and Egyptology (Oxford).⁵³ SOAS was best equipped with Arabic, Persian and Turkish. No universities had Readers, Lecturers or Professors in Coptic and Glasgow was the only university that provided a course in Islam and Islamic history. Far Eastern languages and history were almost non-existent.

Duff's reply to the Foreign Office in 1944 included a memorandum by Durham's Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages, T. W. Thacker, who had been stationed at Bletchley Park in the War. The memorandum, dated 1 December 1944, offered Thacker's analysis of the current strengths and deficiencies of Oriental Studies in Britain [See. App. 1].⁵⁴ Thacker offered suggestions for the curricula, primarily philological, and Durham's eligibility for an Institute of Near Eastern Studies. On 29 December 1944 Duff wrote to Eustace Percy, Rector of King's College, Durham (1937-1951), 'I had Thacker here last week in a state of great excitement about this Commission,' Duff declared, 'and very anxious to make a niche for Durham in the special field of Near Eastern studies, especially classical. We have Hebrew and Arabic already to offer, and to these Thacker himself adds Egyptology, Murray adds Coptic, and Thornhill (Research Fellow here till he went off to join Thacker in Foreign Office Intelligence) adds Turkish. I think Thacker made a good case.'⁵⁵

The suggestion of a Near Eastern Institute at Durham soon gained momentum. Thacker's memorandum was sent to Scarbrough who replied to Duff on 31 December 1944 saying that he 'read it with much interest' and believed that 'It contains a great deal of information which is

⁵¹ Ibid., p.7-8.

⁵² Ibid., p.80.

⁵³ Egyptology was also available at Liverpool and University College, London. UCL has always maintained a strong Egyptology faculty since the days of Flinders Petrie.

⁵⁴ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

⁵⁵ Raymond Thornhill was a Reader in Hebrew in the Theology department with Thacker and had a great interest in Turkish. Thornhill was also at Bletchley Park with Thacker during the War, hence Duff's reference to 'Foreign Intelligence'. Murray is presumably Hugh Alexander Murray who was a lecturer in Classics at the time of Thacker's memorandum. Letter: Ibid.

valuable'.⁵⁶ Thacker was invited to London by the Secretary of the Scarbrough Committee, R. T. D. Ledward, to meet Sir Godfrey Havard, head of the Scarbrough sub-committee on the Near and Middle East, to give his evidence of the current state of Oriental Studies and his recommendations. Eustace Percy was however critical of Thacker's emphasis on philology and languages. On 29 March 1945 Percy expressed his opinion to Duff in a letter that a different angle should be promoted in order to make a Near Eastern institute more commercially viable:

My own view is that it is highly improbable that there will be any demand outside Government service for a man who has specialised in the languages of the Near East to the exclusion of other languages, however much his course may have been salted by geography, sociology, history, and the like. It is true that some commercial firms may in the future so specialise in those parts of the world that they will want specialists, but I cannot imagine many Englishmen of ability wanting to make a permanent career as a sales agent in the Middle East. What the bigger firms will want, in proportion as they are enlightened, is what the Foreign Office wants: a man with a general facility for picking up a new language and adaptable to all sorts of countries and surroundings.⁵⁷

Duff forwarded Percy's thoughts onto Scarbrough so that he would be given a balanced view on the prospect of Durham acquiring an Oriental faculty.⁵⁸ Scarbrough replied to Duff on 6 April 1945 thanking him for all the information he had provided: 'I think that the material which you have given us combined with that sent by the other universities, will give us a great deal to consider'.⁵⁹

By 1947, Clement Atlee's Labour Government was in power with Eden no longer Foreign Secretary. He had been succeeded by Ernest Bevin, to whom the published *Scarbrough Report* was addressed. Because the report comprised many fields its research and analysis was divided as follows:

- A. *Oriental*, comprising
 - (a) Near and Middle Eastern Studies
 - (b) Indian and Sinhalese Studies
 - (c) Far Eastern Studies
 - (d) South-East Asian and Oceanic Studies
- B. *Slavonic and East European*, comprising
 - (e) Russian Studies

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Percy's criticisms relate the *principle* of Oriental Studies not Durham's specific *aptitude* for such a faculty – for which he would almost certainly be more positive given his role within the university. Percy was an educational expert in his own right with interests in educational theory. For example, he sat in Stanley Baldwin's cabinet as President of the Board of Education from November 1924 until June 1929.

⁵⁹ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

- (f) Other Slavonic and East European Studies.
C. *African*

These sub-groups were reviewed separately in sub-committees but the final Scarbrough Report outlined six outstanding features that hindered the flourishing of all of Oriental, Slavonic and African studies. The six points can be summarized as follows:

1. *Organisation*: no department, Faculty or syllabus had developed in a systematic manner. Most academic chairs were isolated examples, whereby the keeping alive of subjects was the result of enthusiastic individuals (such as Guillaume at Durham). The consequence of this disorganisation was that no bodies, faculties or syllabi developed in a systematic fashion.
2. *Comprehension*: too heavy an emphasis was placed on linguistic skills making degrees esoteric and narrow.
3. *Networks*: a lack of contacts within the Oriental world. There was little connection with institutions or opportunities for research in the Oriental world. Research was often completed by private researchers or missionaries (especially in colonial contexts such as India) instead of coordinated and funded research projects by academic institutions.
4. *Investment*: limited funding meant staff shortages and few research opportunities.
5. *Libraries*: were incomplete and barely coordinated, or non-existent.
6. *Popularity*: a failure to attract students was the most outstanding feature of all. A very small number of UK students took degrees or diplomas in Oriental, Slavonic or African studies.

The majority of the Scarbrough committee's conclusions were sound; their observations about languages, however, was short-sighted. The top-heavy concern with languages is a necessary prerequisite of an Orientalist curriculum, because a sophisticated analysis of a culture is not possible without a knowledge of its language, similar to the foundation mathematics provides for scientific disciplines. Prior to mass media and communication, it must be highlighted, material relating to the Orient (histories, newspapers, and literature) was rarely available in English translation. If one wished to acquire a wider knowledge and understanding of an Oriental culture, a linguistic foundation was necessary to provide a more sophisticated analysis later, and can therefore explain the language-heavy structure of university degrees at this time.

The situation of Oriental Studies in the interim War period is given lucid clarity in C. P. Snow's novel *The Light and the Dark*.⁶⁰ Published in the same year as the Scarbrough Report, *The Light and the Dark* tells the story of a brilliant but unstable Cambridge academic, Roy Calvert, who wrestles with various religious and political battles in his personal life.

Calvert is an excellent Orientalist whose academic work involves deciphering the lexicography and grammar of Sogdian (an ancient Eastern Iranian language). Calvert states that he

⁶⁰ C. P. Snow, *The Light and the Dark* (London: Penguin Books, 1968).

has been ‘unravelling a language which was two-thirds unknown’ and that the whole project will take him eight years.⁶¹ The narrator of *The Light and the Dark*, Lewis Eliot, describes a meeting of Orientalists at the British Academy he attended with Calvert which concretely captures the state of the subject in the late 1930s:

Perhaps sixty or seventy men were sitting in the room, and it struck me that nearly all of them were old. Bald heads shone, white hair gleamed, under the lights. As the world grew more precarious, rich young men did not take to these eccentric subjects with such confidence: amateurs flourished most, as those old men had flourished, in a tranquil and secure age.⁶²

The esoteric nature of Oriental Studies is given further emphasis towards the end of the novel when Calvert confronts a member of the London Library and asks him:

‘Excuse me, sir’ he said, ‘but I have forgotten the Soghdian [*sic*] for fish. Can you help me?’

‘The what?’

‘Soghdian [*sic*].’

‘I’m afraid not.’⁶³

Snow’s novel paints a picture of how Oriental Studies looked in Britain and Europe at this point in time with Calvert exemplifying a characteristic Orientalist of the day. For one, Calvert is working on something academically obscure and esoteric about which no-one, or very few others, is informed. Secondly, Calvert has no concern for the history and culture of Sogdiana, his interests are entirely linguistic. Thirdly, the unpopularity of Oriental Studies is clear throughout – ‘rich young men did not take to these eccentric subjects with such confidence’ – rather Oriental Studies was the remit of old and elite academics. Fourthly, the eight years Calvert believes it will take him to complete his Sogdian studies highlights the time-consuming aspect of Oriental Studies, and scholarship in general for that matter.

It might be added that the intellectual rigour of learning languages would help to ensure that graduates were able and adaptable. Since much of Oriental scholarship was European, most Orientalists would be equipped in French and German at least, almost certainly Greek and Latin, and probably more. Calvert, for example, is also a brilliant German speaker with a detailed knowledge of Germany and its culture and, following a flirtation with fascism during his time at the Oriental Faculty in Berlin, he is employed by the British government during the Second World

⁶¹ Snow, p. 25.

⁶² Snow, p. 87-88.

⁶³ Snow, p. 332.

War. Calvert is a mirror of real life, for many Orientalists were commonly employed in the Foreign Office during the Second World War for their expertise of foreign languages and cultures – not least, as has already been mentioned, Thacker and Thornhill, who were at Bletchley Park during the War.

The observations of the Scarbrough Report's outstanding features were mutually reinforcing: poor networks limited opportunities for investment; limited investment made for inadequate libraries, which limited research. A subject's popularity is always going to suffer in such circumstances. The Committee blamed the state of scholarship on arrogance:

We consider that the chief reason why these studies have not prospered in the past and why previous attempts to remedy the position have failed to achieve success lies in a traditional exclusiveness which tends to disregard and even to look down upon culture which has little in common with our own.⁶⁴

A new era of economic, diplomatic and military relations was prophesied by the committee and gave impetus to the Report's support for government funding:

In the past they [Oriental, Slavonic, and African Studies] have been looked upon only as of cultural interest, though having some small additional value for training purposes, and successive governments have in consequence left them largely to the initiative of individuals. The growing pressure, in the post-war years, of the political and other factors to which we have drawn attention calls now for a definite lead and for greater financial support in this field of study from His Majesty's Government.⁶⁵

The Committee therefore opted for three main objectives. The first of these was educational and involved the 'building up of an academic tradition comparable in quality and in continuity with those of the major humanities and sciences.'⁶⁶ The second was professional and related to the 'provision of appropriate training for careers in the countries concerned.'⁶⁷ The final objective was cultural and concerned the 'satisfaction and development of the growing interest in these regions among the general public.'⁶⁸

To achieve these aims the Scarbrough Report proposed specialist academic faculties be established. A small number of faculties of great depth, strength and prestige, as opposed to many faculties that may hinder research quality as a result of 'excessive diffusion' was the preferred options.⁶⁹ The universities to be responsible for building this academic tradition were to be Oxford

⁶⁴ *Scarbrough Report*, p.23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.90.

and Cambridge as the standard bearers of the British University system. SOAS was to expand its study to the entirety of Asian and African Studies, while other universities were to limit their specialism to specifics. One or two of the well-established universities in Scotland were included in the recommendation. Finally, the Scarbrough Report suggested that ‘one university in the north of England’ should be considered for an Oriental faculty.⁷⁰ The two it suggested were Manchester (possibly in conjunction with Liverpool) or Durham. Which of these two universities would be selected was far from decided and this paper will now analyse the history Oriental Studies at Durham following the Scarbrough Report.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.90.

T. W. Thacker

FOUNDING AN ORIENTAL SCHOOL (1948-1977)

Thomas William Thacker was born on 6 November 1911 and grew up in Adderbury, Oxfordshire. He read Egyptology at St. Catherine's Society, Oxford and graduated with Second Class Honours in 1933. Thacker's academic career might have ended there had he not received several warm references for a Senior Scholarship from the Goldsmith's Company which rewarded him with £250 that enabled him to undertake postgraduate study.⁷¹ Thacker was fortunate to gain one of six Goldsmith's Company Senior Scholarships for that year out of a total number of forty-three applicants. In his summarising letter of 19 July 1933 regarding the selected candidates to the Clerk of the Goldsmith's Company, the President of Magdalen College commented that Thacker's selection 'reads like a page from Smiles's *Self-Help*'.⁷²

The proposed topic of Thacker's PhD was 'The Relationship of Egyptian to the Hebrew Languages, with a view to elucidating the text of the Old Testament'. All references commented that Thacker's degree classification did not reflect his true abilities. One reference from Dr Francis Llewellyn Griffith, the first Professor Emeritus of Egyptology at Oxford and founder of the Griffith Institute wrote that, 'He certainly is possessed by a strong love of learning, and his mind, though slow, should develop considerably in the next few years.' Griffith expressed his view that 'his early training has been beset by disadvantages which have kept him in a backward stage in comparison to other young men at Oxford'.⁷³ Likewise, a reference from The Rev. Dr. George Albert Cooke, Regius Professor of Hebrew from 1914-1936 was most complimentary, 'He is a most deserving fellow, with a premium thirst for knowledge, and a passion for work. Some day I think he will make his mark as a scholar;' Cooke further commented on Thacker's beginnings, 'He is just the kind of man that deserves encouragement and he needs financial help'.

The most revealing reference came from the Hebrew scholar, G. R. Driver,⁷⁴ who opened with Thacker's working-class roots: 'He is of very humble origin, his father being a carrier and garage-proprietor in Adderbury'. Driver went on to describe how with 'great financial difficulty' Thacker had entered Oxford and depended on the charity of certain individuals for money,

⁷¹ The full references and Thacker's application is held and can be accessed at the Goldsmiths' Company Library in London at the reference number TIV.84-91. All quotations regarding his application can be found here. The scholarship award also appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 21 September 1933, p.13.

⁷² Now largely forgotten Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* was a best-selling self-help manual first published in 1859. It covers all matter of behaviour in business and culture and is an archetype of the Victorian values of hard-work, financial thrift, and endurance. Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help with Illustrations of Character, Conduct and Perseverance*, ed. by Peter W. Sinnema (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷³ On Griffith see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 20 June 1933.

⁷⁴ Professor Godfrey Rolles Driver was Professor of Semitic Philology at Oxford and was in charge of the translation of the Old Testament of the New English Bible.

lodgings and books. Driver concluded: ‘His need is thus extreme and, unless he can get help for the coming year, he will have to abandon learning and go back to the garage (where the Regius Professor of Hebrew found him one day filling the cars of passers-by with petrol, while an Arabic Grammar was propped up on the pump)’.

Thacker had impressed Driver when he opted to study Hebrew in addition to Egyptian and as an undergraduate Thacker even had an article published in the *Journal of Theological Studies* about a passage in the Biblical book of Isaiah and the relation of the Hebrew to Egyptian.⁷⁵ Driver finalised his case:

Mr. Thacker has two essential requirements for research (i) an enquiring mind which accepts nothing on trust, however eminent the authority, and (ii) the faculty of putting two and two together and making correct deductions. At the same time he is extremely intelligent and, I may say without hesitation, more devoted to learning than any pupil whom I have ever had. To go back to a garage will deprive him of the only thing for which he cares and will destroy his soul – but without immediate help this fate cannot be avoided. His need is desperate.

‘I may add’ Driver included in his reference, ‘that he has taught himself German, which he can read very decently, as well as French’.

A high standard of German enabled Thacker to go on to postgraduate studies at Berlin following Oxford and his knowledge of German is presumably why he was selected to work for the Foreign Office at Bletchley Park during the Second World War.⁷⁶ After a brief teaching position in Bangor, Thacker joined Durham in 1938 as a Reader of Hebrew in the Theology Department, where he returned after the War as Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages.

Following the publication of the Scarbrough Report, Thacker worked to make his vision of a Durham Near Eastern Institute a reality. The University Grants Committee (UGC) would decide how and where to allocate Government funding to universities on the basis of the Scarbrough Report’s findings.

The UGC was a government funding body that had been established in 1919 at the initiative of the Government, not the universities, to act as an intermediary between the two, and was located in the Treasury Department. It was comprised primarily of academics and began as a

⁷⁵ T. W. Thacker, ‘A Note on תורע (Is. xix 7),’ *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 134 (April, 1933), pp.163-165.

⁷⁶ Sir James Craig, ‘The School of Oriental Studies at Durham’, *Oriental Express*, July 2003, pp.2-4. Other members of the School’s first staff, including Thornhill and Simpson, were also at Bletchley. The reason Orientalists were favoured at Bletchley was because there was a perception that non-alphabetic languages were good training in code breaking because they encouraged lateral thinking.

passive advisory body, as a go-between for University Vice Chancellors and Government officials. The UGC had been reconstituted in 1943 following the growth of its influence, then following debates about its role and purpose, in 1946 its terms of reference were expanded and defined thus:

To enquire into the financial needs of University education in Great Britain; to advise the Government as to the application of any grants made by Parliament towards meeting them; to collect, examine and make available information on matters relating to University education at home and abroad; and to assist, in consultation with the Universities and other bodies concerned, the preparation and execution of such plans for the development of the Universities as may from time to time be required in order to ensure they are fully adequate to national needs.⁷⁷

A body with a foot in Government and a foot in higher education would suitably express the wishes and realities of one to the other; and as a stable and consistent body, the UGC would ensure that universities would not become victim to the fluctuating policies of transient governments. During his time as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton reiterated this view of the UGC, when he described its purpose ‘to act as a buffer or shock absorber between the Government and the Universities’.⁷⁸

By the time of the Scarbrough Report, the UGC was more than advisory. It had become body which concerned itself with the long-term strategy and planning of universities. The UGC’s funding process worked in a basic format where universities would submit a proposal which would then be reviewed by the UGC who would then allocate government grants on a quinquennial planning system to the universities who could then implement their plans. After the quinquennium there would be a review of the funding and whether future grants would be needed.

Following the Scarbrough Report, Duff was explicit to the UGC’s Chairman, Sir Walter Moberly (and the Vice Chancellor of Manchester, Sir John Stopford), that Durham was pushing to win the UGC’s funding for Scarbrough’s recommendations for a northern Oriental institute against Manchester.⁷⁹

It is difficult with hindsight to appreciate how fragile Durham’s position was in relation to Manchester. In late 1947 Thacker and Duff received a scare that Durham had lost out to Manchester when Thacker has been informed of a rumour that ‘some small amount of earmarked money had already been allocated to, and indeed received by Manchester’ from the UGC.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Lord Croham (Chairman), *Review of the University Grants Committee*, (London: HMSO, 1987), p.79-80.

⁷⁸ Shattock, Michael, *The UGC and the Management of British Universities* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), p.5-6.

⁷⁹ Moberly had been Vice Chancellor of the University of Manchester (1926-1934) and was the Chairman of the UGC from 1935-1949. Moberly was an early supporter of what later became the University of Keele where there is a building named after him.

⁸⁰ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

Thacker and Duff were reassured in a letter from the UGC on 2 December 1947 that the Manchester-Durham debate 'is still entirely open' but the experience evidently unnerved Thacker and Duff.⁸¹ Durham therefore altered its tactic. The realities involved in a competition between Durham and Manchester meant that when Durham submitted its case for a Near Eastern Institute to the UGC on 3 March 1948 Duff wrote an accompanying letter in which he was tactful but frank:

I do not like even the appearance of trying to outbid Manchester, and have not done so in the enclosed statement. The field to be covered is so wide that there may well be scope for both places without serious overlap, and without jeopardizing the Scarborough Report's recommendation that such Departments should be strong rather than numerous. "Strong" is a relative term, and at a small unit like the Durham Division a very large Department of Near Eastern studies would case a lack of balance. Our scheme accordingly limits itself to studies that have an obvious power of linking themselves to some of our existing points of strength.⁸²

Durham's case was philological, wanting an institute that would prioritise the languages of the ancient and modern Near East following on from, as Duff phrased it, 'existing points of strength' at the University, namely Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac within the Theology Department. The decision between Manchester and Durham however was still finely balanced. Duff received a letter from Scarborough himself, dated 18 March 1948, in which he was honest about the realities between Durham's and Manchester's possible selection:

Dear Duff,

You will be receiving a request from the U.G.C. to meet the Sub-Committee on Oriental Studies, at its next meeting, and I think I might, without impropriety, let you know what lies behind this request.

There is clearly going to be a struggle between Durham and Manchester about Near Eastern Studies. It is very unlikely that both Universities will receive earmarked grants for this, as the total demands for Oriental Studies are, not unnaturally, considerably in excess of the money available, and so some cutting down of demands is inevitable. There is some strong support for Manchester, but I received some most welcome assistance for Durham from Professor Gibb of Oxford.⁸³ As a

⁸¹ Ibid. In the academic year 1947-48 (a year in which Durham received no money) Manchester was granted £1,000. this fact implies that the UGC has initially favoured Manchester or had assumed that it would be selected as the northern university for Oriental Studies funding. For statistic see the *Hayter Report*, Table IVa, p.12.

⁸² PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

⁸³ The then holder of the Laudian Chair of Arabic, Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb. Gibb's authority on the subject naturally gave weight to Durham's cause. Without Gibb's intervention Durham may not have been considered given the 'strong support' Manchester had.

result of these two opinions, it was thought best to invite both Universities to meet us to state their cases.

The point about Manchester, which impressed some members, was that they already have a fairly substantial nucleus. I think the best counter to this is the point made by Gibb, that the Durham Colleges, having so much to do with theology, are always bound to have Semitic studies of their own, and that that offers a sound opportunity for building up Near Eastern Studies in general.

To this might be added a point which I made, that Durham proposes to go in for Near Eastern Studies only, while Manchester wants to do something about Far Eastern as well, and therefore the Far Eastern might go to Manchester and the Near Eastern to Durham.

One point in the Durham programme, which was made by someone, was that the emphasis on Egyptology rather weakened the case, as it would not greatly assist the building up of a well-balanced Near Eastern Department. I did not attempt to answer this, as I did not know what the answer was, but it is perhaps worth considering this point.

I hope very much that the date chosen will allow you yourself to be present. Anyway I think you will like to know what it is all about.

Yours sincerely,
Scarborough.⁸⁴

Thacker was selected to argue Durham's case to the UGC's sub-committee and Duff forwarded Scarborough's points to him. Thacker replied to Duff stating, 'I studied your letter with great care and I think I see the present position and what we shall have to contend with'.⁸⁵ Regarding the criticism of an imbalance in favour of Egyptology, Thacker did not hold his punches: 'I fear the Committee of Experts do not know what they are talking about as far as the Ancient Near East is concerned! Ancient Egypt was as much and more – a part of the Ancient Near East as Modern Egypt is of the Modern Near East'.⁸⁶ Thacker then justified Egyptology in detail on the fact of Egypt's religious, political, social, technological and military importance to ancient and modern Near East. He goes on to give his reason for the committee's underestimating Egypt: 'I suppose this is not generally realised because there are so few scholars who can control both Egyptian and Semitic sources and can see the interaction and points of contact'.⁸⁷

Thacker attended the UGC Sub-Committee on Oriental Studies on 16 April 1948 in which he presented Durham's case for a Near Eastern Institute. A letter sent by Thacker to Duff the next day explains what happened:

⁸⁴ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Dear Warden,

Victory is ours! Last night Driver rang up from Oxford to tell me what he had learned from Gibb on his return.⁸⁸ He could only give me the bare outline. This is what he said. Our programme has been accepted with a slight cut – what was to be omitted he did not know. All programmes were cut, but Oxford's and ours were the two which found the most favour. Cambridge and London have been severely axed. So also has Manchester. What they are getting he does not know, but he gathers that their Far Eastern proposals have been turned down completely. Edinburgh is to have some Sanskrit and some N.E. [Near Eastern] posts and Glasgow some African languages. St. Andrews gets nothing.⁸⁹

Three years of campaigning have thus come to a most satisfactory conclusion as far as we are concerned. I would like to offer you my most sincere thanks for all that you have done; for the backing you have given me at all stages and for the encouragement you have offered me when things looked bleak. And, if I may say so without impertinence, your generalship [*sic*] has been superb!

Now that we have our feet firmly placed on the ladder I am confident that we shall make a reputation for Durham in the world of Oriental scholarship.

In spite of my earlier misgivings I really rather enjoyed yesterday's committee. Had I been asked to select experts myself I could not have picked four more kindly disposed to us than Gibb, Bailey, Turner and Porteus.

Though it may be indiscreet I cannot resist sending you a telegramme [*sic*]!

Yours sincerely,

T. W. Thacker.⁹⁰

In the space of three years Thacker would take Oriental Studies at Durham from an esoteric adjunct to theology (as it had been through much of history) to an independently funded faculty of study. In 1948, when Thacker attended the UGC sub-committee, Durham had two teaching staff in Hebrew and Oriental Languages attached to Theology: Thacker himself and Raymond Thornhill.⁹¹ In June of the same year, with government funding granted, the Durham University Senate approved Thacker's programme for Near Eastern studies with the following posts: a Professorship of Oriental Christianity; a Readership in Egyptology; and a Readership in Turkish and Related languages. By the academic year 1950-51 'Oriental Languages' was designated as its own department with the following nine members of staff:

⁸⁸ Driver and Thacker had obviously remained close since their days at Oxford together.

⁸⁹ St. Andrew's was deeply disappointed with this decision but still proceeded with its plans for a School of Near-Eastern studies and by 1960 built up a nucleus of 3 staff with 17 students studying Arabic. *Hayter Report*, p. 18.

⁹⁰ PGLSC, UND/CC1/L8.

⁹¹ Durham University Calendar 1947-1948 (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Strawberry House Press, 1947), p.37.

Head of Department: Professor Thomas William Thacker
Reader in Egyptology: Miles Frederick Lamming Macadam
Reader in Turkish: Cyril Gordon Simpson
Lecturer in Hebrew: The Rev. Raymond Thornhill
Lecturer in Arabic: Albert James MacQueen Craig
Lecturer in Near Eastern History: Richard Leslie Hill
Lecturer in Assyriology: James Vincent Kinnier Wilson
Lecturer in Persian Studies: Fazl-ur-Rahman
Assistant in Colloquial Arabic: Mu'awiya Muhammed Derhalli.⁹²

In October 1951, the department was upgraded and renamed the School of Oriental Studies and was given the authority to award Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Oriental Studies.⁹³

As Director, Thacker adopted an entrepreneurial approach to the awkward task of finding donors and acquiring funds; skills he most likely harnessed as a young scholar at Oxford when he was dependent on donations for his studies. His initiative in this respect is a primary reason for the School's early success. He was a master at what is now fashionably termed "networking". Thacker had an affable nature which was suited to networking with ease and charm, further to this, his neat handwriting and ability to concisely argue a reasoned case strengthened his attempts to establish links for funding. Tireless efforts were made in writing in detail to individuals and organisations in North America, Europe and the Middle East.

Thacker helped the School acquire funds and donations from a wide range of bodies including the Rockefeller Foundation which donated \$30,000 in 1951 and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation who funded the establishment of a Museum (opened in 1960) with a donation of £60,000 made in 1957.⁹⁴ The most significant donors were Henry Norman Spalding and his wife, Nellie Maud Emma Spalding, of the Spalding Trust. The couple donated massive sums to the School at its nascent stages, without which it would certainly have not built the reputation it was to later obtain. The Spaldings donated £2,500 in 1950 and another £2,500 in 1951 for works on Oriental religions, philosophies and art – monumental sum in today's money.⁹⁵ As well as giving grants for Thacker's work on the Near East the Spaldings made grants to establish lectureships in

⁹² Durham University Calendar 1950-1951 Vol. I Almanack and Listings (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Strawberry House Press, 1950), p.71

⁹³ The following branches of Oriental Studies were available in 1951: Classical Hebrew and Old Testament Studies; Ancient Egyptian and Nubian Studies; Classical Arabic and Islamic Studies; and Modern Arabic Studies. See Durham University Calendar 1951-1952 Vol. II Regulations (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Strawberry House Press, 1950), p.133-34.

⁹⁴ See the Durham School of Oriental Studies' Annual Reports, PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Indian Studies and Chinese Studies. In a similar fashion, the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation was instrumental in the growth of African Studies at SOAS, enabling it to include the field of study into its official remit in 1938.⁹⁶

H. N. Spalding (1877-1953) believed that all religions, at a fundamental level, share central truths about the nature of God and humanity and he devoted his wealth to funding the study of the world's great religions at a time when funding for such studies was largely absent. Thacker built a strong rapport with the Spalding couple who shared his vision to create an internationally acclaimed faculty at Durham and H. N. Spalding is reported to have been delighted in 1951 when Durham awarded him the honorary degree of the Doctor of Civil Law. After H. N. Spalding's death in 1953 Thacker was appointed as a Trustee to the Spalding Educational Trust. Thacker was also a member of the co-ordinating committee of the Union for the Study of Great Religions (USGR) which was an organisation H. N. Spalding established to promote his beliefs and the work of the Spalding Trust on an international scale. Thacker represented the USGR when visiting American universities in 1954-55 for the negotiations that led to the foundation of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard.⁹⁷

Without these efforts to gain private donations the School would have struggled greatly. The Scarbrough Report had suggested that for the initial period, 'financial assistance destined for this purpose should take the form of special earmarked grants'.⁹⁸ Of all the English universities, Durham received the lowest total amount of state grants between 1947 and 1952, even Manchester, whose programme Thacker claimed had been 'severely axed', received more (See Fig 1).

University	Total Grants Approved 1947-1952 (£)	Capital Grants 1947-1952 (£)
Cambridge	68,500	18,350
Durham	20,000	13,500
London (SOAS)	522,000	----
Manchester	42,500	----
Oxford	32,500	14,400
Edinburgh	6,000	500
Glasgow	10,000	----
Total	701,500	46,750

⁹⁶ Philips, C. H., *The School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, 1917-1967: An Introduction* (London: Design for Print Ltd., 1967), p.24.

⁹⁷ Edward Hulmes, *The Spalding Trust and the Union for the Study of the Great Religions: H. N. Spalding's Pioneering Vision* (Spennymoor: The Memoir Club, 2002), pp. 86-88.

⁹⁸ Scarbrough Report, p. 46.

Fig. 1 gives the earmarked grants given to the recommended universities in the Scarbrough Report for Oriental and African Studies between 1947-1952.⁹⁹

Most universities had structured their development plans under the assumption of ten years of funding on the basis of the Scarbrough Report's statement that 'the additional annual expenditure which the Universities as a whole would need to incur might be in the neighbourhood of £225,000 after five years and a further £225,000 after ten years'.¹⁰⁰ Many universities had incorrectly assumed that this guaranteed them ten years of earmarked funding, but the UGC's quinquennial system meant that the funding would be reviewed after five years. Oriental faculties across the country suffered a blow to their programmes in 1952 when, after the quinquennium, the government stopped the earmarked grants.

As a consequence, nationwide university developments stagnated until the Scarbrough Report was reviewed in 1960-1961 by a sub-committee, chaired by Sir William Hayter, then Warden of New College Oxford and previously British Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The committee published its findings as the *University Grants Committee: Report of the sub-committee on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies*.

The School at Durham however witnessed a period of rapid growth throughout the 1950s: new premises were built and occupied, the two Spalding lecturers in Indian and Chinese were established, and both the Rockefeller and Gulbenkian foundations were persuaded to 'provide large funds for the purchase of funding and building of the museum' which opened in 1960.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the modest grants that Durham received, in relation to SOAS, Manchester, Cambridge and Oxford, were ultimately to its benefit since it demanded Thacker to look beyond government funding to fulfil the plans of expansion. As a result, when state funding was removed, Durham was less rattled than other institutions.

Thacker's preoccupation with funding was to the detriment of his scholarship, for which he had less and less time because of his administrative duties as Director of the School. Although Thacker wrote articles for journals and other works of reference he was criticised for his lack of academic publications. He only wrote one book, which was published in 1954 and entitled *The Relationship of the Semitic and Egyptian Verbal Systems*. Despite this criticism he was well-loved during his tenure at Durham as a gentle boss who understood how to operate university politics with an air of insouciance.

⁹⁹ Information collected from Hayter Report (Table IV.a), p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ Scarbrough Report, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ Hayter Report, p. 24.

Thacker lived in a house at the north end of Church Street overlooking the River Wear where he claimed to have witnessed Saint Cuthbert's Mist in the Summer of 1943.¹⁰² He smoked continuously and is said to have bought his cigarettes by the hundreds. He liked to drink and the *de facto* nerve centre of the School of Oriental Studies was the New Inn Pub at the south end of Church Street. His obituary in *The Times* commented that 'the conviviality of that most English of institutions the pub was a part of his life'.¹⁰³ In standards that would not be accepted today, students would be more likely to find Thacker in the pub where they would share a drink and discuss their work than they would find him in the faculty of which he was a Director.

His daily routine, which he was not shy about sharing with others, involved getting up at five o'clock in the morning and doing two hours work before eating a full English breakfast that his wife, Katherine, would cook for him. After breakfast, she would drive him to the School where he would go to his office and read through his papers (which he kept in the breast pocket of his jacket) and deal with any other business relating to the School or the Museum until twelve o'clock. At lunch time, his wife would pick him up and drive him down from the School to the New Inn (less than a five-minute walk away from the School) where he would sit in the same corner every day to enjoy some drinks and eat some lunch.

If any staff of the School wanted anything from him they needed to reach him before midday or go to the New Inn in the afternoon where they would find him in his corner covered in a cloud of smoke, usually in a good and receptive mood, perhaps having a drink with other members of University staff such as his friend and drinking partner, the medieval historian H. S. Offler, or teaching students of the School subjects such as Aramaic. At two o'clock in the afternoon he would get his exercise for the day when he would walk about 300 yards to his home where he would have a siesta until about four or five o'clock in the afternoon after which he would have his supper then work until his bed time, before doing it all again the next day.

He retired in 1977 having achieved a great deal for Durham and Oriental Studies through ambitious expansion of the University's resources. In his retirement he picked up Sanskrit and continued his visits to Germany; every summer he would visit Eisenstadt, taking with him a special briefcase with six compartments for him to bring back six bottles of the Eisenstadt wine he so enjoyed. He died on 23 April 1984.

¹⁰² Saint Cuthbert's Mist is Durham folklore of the Second World War. In the summer of 1943 the Luftwaffe bomb targeted the Durham Viaduct that acted as a vital railway link for Britain's supplies. The bombing would have destroyed Durham Cathedral in the process. But as the Luftwaffe approached Durham, a fog that has become known as Saint Cuthbert's Mist descended over the entire City, protecting every building from sight, and as a consequence the City was largely missed by the bombs.

¹⁰³ 'Obituary: Professor T. W. Thacker', *The Times*, 11 May, 1984.

I. J. C. Foster

BUILDING AN ORIENTAL LIBRARY (1950-1973)

The story of Durham's School of Oriental Studies cannot be told without reference to the Oriental Section of the University Library that accompanied it.¹⁰⁴ The Oriental Library was established in 1950 and the man who was chosen to be its Librarian-in-charge was Ian John Charles Foster. Foster retired twenty-three years later, in September 1973, having overseen the Oriental Library grow to more than one-hundred-thousand volumes.

Foster was born in London in 1908 and raised with his sister, Olive Norman Foster, whom he had a close relationship with throughout his life. His first degree was in Physics from University College, London after which he spent a brief period as a school teacher. He then studied Theology at Trinity College, Cambridge where he was admitted as an affiliated student on 1 October 1934; gaining exhibitions in 1935 and 1937.¹⁰⁵ Under the Dealtry Scholarship and the Tyrwhitt Hebrew Scholarship Foster remained at Cambridge where he took a first class in Part I of the Oriental Languages Tripos in 1937. He specialised in Hebrew and Aramaic for which he was awarded a Diploma in Oriental Languages in 1939. Semitic languages were Foster's strength and in 1951 he worked as a part-time lecturer in Mishnaic Hebrew in the Durham School of Oriental Studies.¹⁰⁶

Foster's plan to become an Oriental librarian was postponed by the Second World War in which he was part of the army evacuated at Dunkirk. He was rumoured to have suffered a ten-hour stint in the bog marshes and this trauma was thought to explain his eccentricity. Following the War, Foster took a temporary post as a Research Assistant at Bristol University before his move to Durham in 1946 where he spent 4 years re-cataloguing the Routh Library with the future University Librarian of Liverpool, Kenneth Povey.¹⁰⁷ Povey was unconventional like Foster and their work on the Routh Library was greatly informative about 17th and 18th century printing and paper, about which they published a joint essay.¹⁰⁸

Foster was appointed as Librarian-in-charge of the new Oriental Library of the University Library in 1950 that had been opened in accordance with the Oriental Studies programme

¹⁰⁴ The official title was the Oriental Section of the University Library. Hereafter it will be called the Oriental Library which will always refer to this unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰⁵ At this time affiliated students were persons with a degree from a recognised British University who wished to study for a Cambridge BA and were allowed to do so in two years.

¹⁰⁶ Durham University Calendar 1951-1952 Vol. I Almanack and Listings (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Strawberry House Press, 1950), p.72

¹⁰⁷ The Routh Library was the library of Martin Joseph Routh (1755-1854), President of Magdalen College, Oxford. Routh was a patristics scholar who bequeathed his library (a collection in the region of 23,000 items) to the University of Durham. See Doyle, A.I., 'The Routh Library', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 December 1954, p.844; and Doyle, A.I., 'Martin Joseph Routh and his books in Durham University Library', *Durham University Journal*, 48 (1955-6), pp.100-7.

¹⁰⁸ Kenneth Povey and I. J. C. Foster, 'Turned Chain-Lines', *Library*, 5th ser., V (1950-51), pp. 184-200.

following the Scarborough Report. As Librarian-in-charge Foster was responsible for acquisitions and cataloguing. Letters between Thacker and Foster from August 1950 to January 1951 inform us of the first significant acquisition for the Oriental Library.¹⁰⁹ The acquisition was the Egyptological Library of Professor B. G. Gunn.¹¹⁰

The pair wanted to acquire the Gunn Library from Sir Alan Gardiner, the world-renowned Egyptologist and friend of Gunn's. The collection was some 1,200 volumes and Thacker believed it to contain items of 'extreme rarity. There is a complete collection of Old and Middle Egyptian texts and philosophical studies, and most of the Demotic literature'.¹¹¹ Foster and Thacker felt they had bought a bargain when they acquired the collection for £1,200. Once Thacker had fully seen the collection he informed Foster in letter from 25 August 1950 of how good it really was. The 'Gunn Library is indeed a fine collection.' He added, 'On Old and Middle Egyptian philology it is first rate. With what we already have we can boast of one of the finest Egyptological libraries in the kingdom. We shall also have an almost complete collection of Demotic literature'.¹¹²

In 1950, when the Section was established, it had c. 8,000 volumes.¹¹³ The School's annual report from 1950-51 informs us that large donations from the Rockefeller Foundation and Spalding Trust helped the library to increase this figure to 18,000 volumes the following year, 7,000 volumes alone were acquired with money from the Spalding Trust.¹¹⁴ In 1951, Durham acquired the Alnwick Collection of Egyptian and Mesopotamian antiquities from the 10th Duke of Northumberland. The collection was from the 4th Duke of Northumberland who had travelled to Egypt in 1826 and had an interest in the history and culture of the region so collected a range of Egyptian antiquities in the Duke's residence at Alnwick Castle, fifty miles north of Durham. The state of the collection was a concern in 1935 when it was noted items were in need of preservation. The 10th Duke sold them to Durham, despite the interest of the British Museum (which acquired six pieces of the collection), on condition that the collection stay in England and ideally in the North East of the country. The acquisition was made possible by a £7,000 Treasury grant and an additional £6,000 from the Spalding Trust.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ The letter correspondence can be found in the Foster Papers within the PGLSC, Fos/1/7.1

¹¹⁰ Battiscombe George Gunn (1883-1950) was the successor of Griffith as Professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford, a post he held from 1934 to 1950. Gunn's prestige as an Egyptologist was first rate and the acquisition of his library was a real coup by Thacker and Foster given the embryonic status of Durham's Oriental School and Library.

¹¹¹ PGLSC, Fos/1/7.1

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Durham University Calendar 1951-1952 Vol. I Almanack and Listings (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Strawberry House Press, 1950), p.195.

¹¹⁴ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

¹¹⁵ John Ruffle, 'The provenance and resources of the ancient Egyptian, Islamic and Arabic collections of the Oriental Museum of Durham University' in Burnett, David, ed., *Arabic Resources: Acquisition and*

The enormous quantity of books and volumes entering the Oriental Library made the cataloguing a difficult task, especially given the small number of staff. The School's annual report of 1951-52 therefore acknowledged Foster's efforts: 'Our special thanks are due to Mr. Foster, the Librarian-in-charge, who has amassed and ordered this fine library. He has toiled unceasingly and unsparingly, and has thrown himself heart and soul into this gigantic task. He has not let his exertions to make the Durham Oriental School a success lag behind those of the academic staff'.¹¹⁶

In 1953 the British Treasury put up currency restrictions. This meant that the acquisition of books was made difficult because foreign items had to be received before they were paid for, something foreign books sellers were rarely happy to do. For this reason, Foster was sent to the Middle East. The School's annual report listed the details of his trip:

Mr I. J. C. Foster, Librarian-in-charge of the Oriental Section of the University Library, travelled in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan during the Long Vacation for the purpose of making contact with librarians and booksellers in the Near East and in order to investigate what sources of printed material are available for the study of the modern Near East.¹¹⁷

The trip was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation but the annual report does not specify how much was allocated for spending on books. At the same time, Albert James MacQueen Craig, Lecturer in Arabic at the School, was on research leave in the Middle East to improve his spoken Arabic and acquire books like Foster. Craig spent 16 months in Egypt, Turkey and Syria for which he was given £1200 for books and £400 for expenses; these sums may give us an indication of the amount of money Foster was given for books.

Because Foster's and Craig's trips coincided, the pair decided to meet at Aleppo, Syria. From Aleppo they planned to travel to Beirut then get a Turkish ship to Marseilles. Craig was shocked to find that when he arrived in Aleppo the Consulate informed him of where Foster was staying in a brothel. Foster was unaware of this fact but mentioned the ladies – whom he found to be quite charming – had been impressed by his use of classical Arabic. Bachelor status and unworldly naivety solidified common perceptions about Foster's oddity. Craig noted that his dress

Management in British Libraries (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), pp.143-149. Ruffle writes (op. cit. p. 145) that the cost of the collection was £12,000 and was split half and half between the Treasury grant and Spalding Trust but annual reports of the School and Library state the grant was £7,000 and the Spalding Trust donate £6,000 which would make it £13,000, PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

¹¹⁶ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

¹¹⁷ Personal photographs and postcards of the major landmarks Foster visited survive and are located at Palace Green Library's Special Collections. For the annual report see PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1. For Foster's Photographs from his visit see PGLSC, Fos/5/1-5.

was always a 'tweed jacket, baggy grey flannels and a cardigan stained with the juice from his ever-dribbling pipe'.¹¹⁸

A poem entitled *The Keeper*, authored by one of his colleagues, Bill Simpson, captures this eccentric impression of Foster:

The Keeper of this section –
 A man named Foster [Jack] –
 Is a fine impressive gentleman
 [Viewed strictly from the back].
 His front ain't so impressive
 For his waistcoat's full of grease;
 His tie knot's on his navel
 And his jacket's round his knees.
 We suspect he shaves twice weekly
 In the toilet – [does he flush?] –
 With a hatchet for a razor
 And a mophead for a brush.

Our Keeper is a man of wit
 Who walks about and talks about
 His projects, plans, procedures, files,
 His underlings [incompetent!],
 His own abilities and powers
 [All to himself] for hours and hours.

If I were the Keeper
 I'd tear down the bloody lot,
 I'd burn the books and sack the staff,
 Insult the readers for a laugh.
 The files into the Wear would go
 And Elvet Hill would be aglow
 With the blaze from the catalogue.
 And in the flames I would espy
 A writing figure by and by,
 A portly frame with beady eye,
 Muttering 'Oh, where is file Y?
 No doubt we'll find it, Diyaaana and I –
 There's a simple explanation.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Sir James Craig, 'The School of Oriental Studies at Durham', *Oriental Express*, July 2003, pp.2-4.

¹¹⁹ *The Keeper*, authored by Bill Simpson and quoted with his permission.

Bizarre idiosyncrasies perhaps overshadowed Foster's intelligence and passion as an Oriental librarian. He lacked the ease of Thacker to work with – being far more awkward and less diplomatic – and his traumatic experiences at Dunkirk may explain this. However, he was proficient in many ancient and modern languages and his commitment awarded him with an enormous amount of respect among his peers. In 1957 the Spalding Trust received an anonymous donation of \$50,000 from an American benefactor for the purchase of books to the fill gaps in Durham's Oriental Library and for general works of the School – in the same year Foster had visited North American university libraries and could well have inspired the anonymous donor: given the timing this is not implausible but by no means definite.¹²⁰

In 1958, in line with the growing reputation and prestige of Durham's Oriental collections, Foster's title was changed to Keeper of Oriental Books. The Oriental Library was fitted with a newspaper room, containing the daily newspapers relevant to Orientalists, along with the ever-increasing breadth and depth of books and periodicals.

Prior to his retirement Foster wrote a memorandum to the then University Librarian, Nance McAulay, dated 21 November 1972.¹²¹ The memorandum provides an insight to Foster's beliefs about his profession and the virtues that make a successful librarian in which he states the ultimate 'criterion of importance' is the ability to acquire books. The memorandum also addresses the specific difficulties of an Oriental librarian. On the diversity of the field, Foster comments, 'for our purposes we can regard orientalism as embracing the field of the Old Orient (including Old Testament and Oriental Christianity) Islamics, Indianism and the Far East'. Because Durham was active in all these fields Foster highlights the importance of being well-versed in all areas of Oriental Studies even if one may be a specialist in one aspect.

The memorandum also engages with the classical-modern dilemma that Oriental Studies – and other arts and humanities subjects – face today, namely the degree of relevance classical studies has to the modern world. Foster gives an unequivocal answer to this question, as he addresses whether an Oriental 'classicist' or 'modernist' should be selected to be his successor:

We unhesitatingly say that the classicist should be preferred. We have found over and over again that a person trained in ancient subjects and in classical literatures can "turn his hand" very quickly and very intelligently to modern subjects ... On the other hand the "modernist" has the greatest difficulty in acquiring the key knowledge of fields (notably ancient and classical fields) other than his own which it would be essential for the appointee to have if he were to do the work satisfactorily. This knowledge of,

¹²⁰ Edward Hulmes, *The Spalding Trust and the Union for the Study of the Great Religions: H. N. Spalding's Pioneering Vision* (Spennymoor: The Memoir Club, 2002), p.87 and annual reports, PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

¹²¹ PGLSC, Fos/1/7.2.

and interest in, ancient and classical subjects we feel ourselves, may well be a *sin qua non*.¹²²

In 1975 Foster was appointed as Honorary Bibliographer in Oriental Studies and continued to regularly visit the library. Foster died five years into his retirement on 16 September 1978. His obituary in the *University Gazette* from 31 January 1979 was fitting:

He maintained throughout his life the highest standards of intellectual enquiry. Many scholars in Durham and elsewhere remember with gratitude the help he so unstintingly offered to them. He delighted in professional debate and his contributions to policy discussions were always enthusiastic and had, at times, a touch of genius. Those of us privileged to know him recall with gratitude a kindly and sensitive colleague. He was a well-known and distinctive figure in Durham – a character in the true old-fashioned sense of the word. He is sadly missed.¹²³

Durham is particularly indebted to Foster, not just for his work as Keeper of Oriental Books but because in his will he left financial provisions for the purchase of books and periodicals relating to the topic of early Christian practice, something he referred to as palaeochristianity. Palaeochristianity was a passion of his which he researched in his spare time and is a subject he had explored in a series of illustrated public lectures he delivered between 1961 and 1969.¹²⁴ Following the death of his sister in 1991 the bequest for the book fund was realised. Since then over £86,000 has been spent.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Obituaries, *University Gazette* (Durham), 31 January 1979

¹²⁴ These drafts to the lectures are available within the Foster archive at PCLSC where they are transcribed and edited: Preece, E. A., *The Life and Lectures of I. J. C. Foster* (Add Ms 2054).

The Hayter Report

GROWTH AND EXPANSION (1955-1985)

The School and Library had started life in a handsome terraced house opposite Durham Jail in No. 29 Old Elvet in Durham City. Larger facilities were soon in demand as a consequence of the quick accumulation of books and increases in staff. The department briefly moved to Southend House on South Road before settling in a more sizeable building nearby on Elvet Hill, Elvet House (a country house designed around 1820 by Ignatius Bonomi and located on Millhill Lane between South Road and Potters Bank).

Elvet House was formally opened on 13 October 1955 by H. N. Spalding's son, John Spalding. The staff common room was called the Spalding Room to acknowledge the immeasurable contribution of the Spalding Trust. John Spalding commented on the Trust's respect for the School in his address:

[M]y father could only look with delight on the enterprising spirit in which this University set about the task of enlarging the [S]chool of Oriental studies, and he counted himself fortunate to be able to help in an undertaking so much after his own heart. He was delighted, too, at the speed with which it grew and at the way in which its reputation became so great among students of the East in so many countries. He was sorry that Durham's enterprise was not always equalled elsewhere, but would now be glad to know that some other Universities are belatedly beginning to follow Durham's lead in this respect ...¹²⁵

H. N. Spalding's widow had originally planned to give the address but ill health prevented her. She nevertheless wrote to Durham expressing her appreciation: 'It would have greatly pleased my husband that this room is to be used for the interchange of ideas and for friendly talk (assisted by cups of coffee) ... He worked hard but he enjoyed relaxation and play too'.¹²⁶ These new premises were a platform for the School and Library to go from strength to strength and would remain the base of the Oriental School and Library until their closure.

The Spalding Room was jokingly referred to as the Last Outpost of the British Empire because so many of the staff members had held imperial and diplomatic positions. Members of staff would meet twice daily in the Spalding Room where coffee would be served at 11:00 in the

¹²⁵Edward Hulmes, *The Spalding Trust and the Union for the Study of the Great Religions: H. N. Spalding's Pioneering Vision* (Spennymoor: The Memoir Club, 2002), p.88

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.88.

morning then tea at 3:15 in the afternoon. Occasionally, an object from the Museum would be present and form a topic of discussion.

An important development in the School and Library's new premises was the creation of the Sudan Archive. The School's 1957-58 annual report mentions an 'Appeal for Preservation of Records of the Sudan' at the suggestion of Mr K.D.D. Henderson.¹²⁷ Kenneth David Druit 'Bill' Henderson had been the Governor of the Darfur Province of the Sudan from 1949-1953 after which he was asked to become the Secretary of Spalding Trust, a position he held until 1986. Sudanese independence in 1956 brought an end to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium period (1898-1955) and it was the belief of Henderson and others that valuable information from the region would be lost if efforts were not made to preserve it.

Durham therefore proposed to collect and archive material from the Sudan Political Service, missionaries, soldiers, business men, doctors, agriculturalists, teachers and others who had served or lived in the Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. This initiative was supported by Thacker and Foster and in particular Richard Leslie Hill (1901-1996) who took charge of the archive. As lecturer in Near Eastern history at Durham between 1949-1966, Hill was one of the foremost scholars on the Sudan. He had already been building up a personal archive of Sudanese material, having himself lived and worked there between 1927 and 1949. In 1992, at the age of 91, for his scholarship and his work as a (self-styled) 'servant of the Sudan Archive' Hill was awarded an honorary DLitt by Durham University.¹²⁸

Over the years the Sudan Archive has acquired a most impressive collection of historical material about South Sudan and Sudan. It is of international importance to the study of nineteenth and twentieth century Sudanese, Near Eastern and British history. Foster was preoccupied with expanding the library and cataloguing the huge number of volumes so never had time to organise the Sudan Archive. It was his successor, Lesley Forbes, who managed to get the archive into working order. The quantity of material received was huge – in a variety of forms – and was therefore a time-consuming task. Forbes first obtained a British Library grant, and other funding, and in 1990 a designated archivist was appointed, enabling the Archive to develop into the pre-eminent research collection it is today.¹²⁹

In addition to general papers of the Sudan Political Service's officials, the Sudan Archive contains the papers of General Sir Reginald Wingate (1861-1953), Sir Rudolf, Baron Slatin (1857-

¹²⁷ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

¹²⁸ On Richard Hill see Daly, M. W. (ed.) *Modernization in the Sudan: essays in honor of Richard Hill* (New York: Lilian Barber Press, 1985), esp. L. E. Forbes 'The Sudan Archive, Durham, as a Source for the Study of Modernization in the Sudan', p.161. Also Nicolas Barker, 'Richard Hill: Obituary' *Independent*, 2 April 1996.

¹²⁹ L. E. Forbes, 'The Sudan Archive of the University of Durham' in *Middle East Studies and Libraries: a felicitation volume for Professor J. D. Pearson*, ed. B. C. Bloomfield (London: Mansell, 1980), p. 51.

1932), Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Clayton (1875-1929), Sir Harold MacMichael (1882-1969), Sir James Robertson (1899-1983), the papers of the Gordon Memorial College Trust Fund.¹³⁰ The collection also includes the administrative papers, official and personal correspondence, diaries and notebooks, articles speeches and photographs from K. D. D. Henderson's own career in the region. In recent years the scope of the Archive has extended to the period after independence and now contains material up to the present day.¹³¹

The biggest development of Oriental Studies in this period at Durham was the establishment of a museum. To accommodate a growing number of artefacts the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation donated £60,000 in 1957 for the building of an Oriental museum. Thacker had always believed that the study of material culture was a necessary part of Oriental Studies and in his 1944 memorandum he had mentioned that a museum was an eventual goal. He reiterated this in a letter from 17 October 1947 in which he gave more specific proposals for an Oriental Museum at Durham and shortly after, in August 1950, a proto-museum was set up at Hatfield College where the Alnwick Collection was stored. The 'museum' at Hatfield however was closed down in 1956 and the objects put into storage.

The case for a designated Oriental Museum was strengthened following the curation of impressive Oriental exhibitions at Durham in 1953 and 1954. The 1953 exhibition honoured the Queen's coronation and displayed Chinese bronzes from the collection of Mr A. E. K. Cull; Raymond Dawson, the School's lecturer in Chinese, was the curator. It was followed in 1954 by an exhibition in Bishop Cosin's Library at Palace Green of Chinese books and textiles.

These early exhibitions resulted in donations of the MacDonald Collection of Chinese ceramics from the Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, later Chancellor of the University, and the Hardinge Collection of over 2,000 pieces of Chinese jade, carved hard stones and metal sculptures given by Sir Charles Hardinge. In 1954 also with money donated by Mrs Spalding, Durham purchased the Selboe-Indic collection from Norway, some 1,200 volumes of Sanskrit and other

¹³⁰ A description of the material in the 1980s is available at Jill Butterworth, 'Middle East Library Resources in Durham' *Collections in British Libraries on Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, ed. P. Auchterlonie (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, 1981), pp. 34-42, p. 40. Likewise, for a more up-to-date description of the archives see the Universities website:

<<https://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/theme/sudan-resources.htm/>>

¹³¹ While new material is continuously added, at the time of writing, the archive comprises approximately 800 boxes of papers, 50,000 photographs, 1,000 maps, portraits, cinefilms, museum objects and a large amount of related printed material. See PGLSC.

Indian languages that had been organised by Professor Swami Sri Ananda Acharya of Calcutta, an Indian monk.¹³²

On 28 May 1960, the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archaeology was formally opened by the Chancellor of the University, none other than the Earl of Scarborough.¹³³ Over the years the Museum grew to acquire important collections from the ancient Near East, India, China, Japan, Tibet and Islamic countries and the Yetts Collection of Tibetan and Chinese paintings was added to Alnwick, MacDonald and Hardinge as a permanent collection.

The range of Far Eastern collections and the standard of the School's research and teaching was much enhanced by the existence of a museum. The Museum became a symbol of Durham's pride in Oriental Studies and enabled it to develop a more comprehensive Oriental department. Many of the Museum's staff participated in degree courses and lectured in the School on the art and archaeology of India, China and the Middle East.¹³⁴ It is the last standing remnant of the School, Library and Museum which from 1960 to 1989 formed the department.

In 1959 the UGC established a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Sir William Hayter to review the developments which had taken place in Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies following the Scarborough Report. The Hayter Committee started work in January 1960 and presented their report in May 1961. As part of its research, the Hayter Committee visited Durham on 31 October 1960. It inspected the facilities at Elvet Hill in the morning followed by discussions with the Warden in the afternoon then dinner in Hatfield College at 4pm where they were hosted by the staff of the Oriental School, Library and Museum before catching the 5.20pm train to Edinburgh.¹³⁵

Durham's hosting efforts paid off in the form of a positive review from the Hayter Committee: 'The new School of Oriental Studies in Durham is an entirely post-war venture ... Unlike most other universities which were receiving official encouragement, the School started from rock-bottom with a single shelf of books, no premises, and no courses for the training of

¹³² Edward Hulmes, *The Spalding Trust and the Union for the Study of the Great Religions: H. N. Spalding's Pioneering Vision* (Washington: The Memoir Club, 2002), p.87.

¹³³ *Durham University Gazette*, Vol. VII (New Series) No. 6, 4 July, 1960. Scarborough became the Chancellor of the University of Durham in 1958 and held the position until 1969.

¹³⁴ In 1981 the Museum's name was changed to the 'Durham University Oriental Museum'. The Report of the Vice Chancellor and Warden for the year 1981/82 gives the reason: 'The change has been made to counter the common misconception that part of the Gulbenkian Collection is housed at Durham and that the Museum is supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Trust. The name Gulbenkian will, however, continue to be associated with the existing building.'

¹³⁵ PGLSC, Fos/1/7.25

Arts students'.¹³⁶ Following the cessation of earmarked grants, the School had particularly impressed the committee: 'Durham deserves special mention for its efforts during this difficult period ... it made the most vigorous efforts to fulfil a further instalment of its plans by securing private support'.¹³⁷

The Hayter Report was concerned with the low intake of Oriental students nationwide; in the academic year 1959-1960 Durham had only ten undergraduate students. The Report concluded that attention to modern languages and living societies may remedy this problem, accompanied by travel bursaries for researchers. The most significant recommendation of the Report was a revised multi-disciplinary method that would incorporate social sciences into Oriental Studies.

This recommendation was inspired by a Rockefeller funded trip the sub-committee had taken to North American universities as part of its research. The prominence of area studies in the North America particularly impressed the sub-committee. Area studies were institutes and centres where varying disciplines combine to study a specific region or topic, which the Hayter Report stated was beneficial for 'the stimulus a centre can give and the way it can break down the barriers between disciplines and bring linguists, geographers, social scientists and historians into closer contact with one another'.¹³⁸

SOAS was similarly praised by the Hayter Report but also noted for its heavy concentration on linguistics. This was due in part to the Director of SOAS from 1937 to 1957, Ralph Turner, who was a Professor of Indian Linguistics. Turner's Directorship had seen SOAS' expertise in rare Oriental and African languages increase greatly from the generous grants it had received following Scarborough. Turner's successor as Director from 1957 to 1976 was Cyril Henry Philips, Professor of Oriental History and Head of the History Department. Philips recognised the disciplinary imbalance and his predecessor's failure to encourage posts and research in history, philosophy and law to the extent of Oriental languages.

In particular, Philips felt there to be an overemphasis on classical studies and not enough on the living civilisations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East at SOAS. Philips sought to redress this by investing greater resources into social scientific subjects, which was almost certainly aided by (and perhaps a reason for) the conclusions of the Hayter Report. In fact, although Philips was not on the Hayter committee, the Hayter Report's conclusions reiterated Philips' ambitions for

¹³⁶ *Hayter Report*, p.15.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

SOAS and the Hayter Report can be seen as an extension of his philosophy as Director of SOAS. Philips even claimed in his autobiography to have been a major influence on the Hayter committee's approach.¹³⁹

As for Durham, the Hayter Report proposed an area studies centre or institute for the Middle East. The existing curriculum was believed to be top-heavy on ancient history and classical languages. A new centre, specialising on the Middle East and incorporating Islamic studies, would encourage a greater knowledge of the contemporary Middle East while making use of existing strengths: 'We consider that Durham could very well develop into a centre, in the full sense, and combine classical and modern, linguistic and non-linguistic studies'.¹⁴⁰

The recommendations were accepted and the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (CMEIS) was established the following year at Southend House, a short walk from the Oriental School of which it was effectively an extended arm. In accordance with the desire to increase the role of social sciences, a professor from the Department of Geography, W. B. Fisher, was selected to be its first Director.

In October 1970, the Centre decided to establish a Middle East Documentation Unit (MEDU) to extend and benefit its work. MEDU was also located in Southend House and was a collection of contemporary primary source documents covering all the countries of the Arab world, North African countries, Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Turkey, and the sub-Saharan countries peripheral to the Middle East, and even Malta. MEDU comprised primary sources, data and statistics that were not easily accessed. Examples of the sources available were Chambers of Commerce bulletins, official gazettes, population censuses, regional and urban development plans, central bank reports, government ministry reports, and reports of regional and international organisations.¹⁴¹

The Centre still exists today, now named the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS) as an extended body of the School of Government and International Affairs, and the MEDU continues to expand in its location on the ground floor of the Bill Bryson Library.

¹³⁹ For Ralph Turner's Directorship see Brown, *SOAS* pp. 152-156 and for C. H. Philips era as Director, the general expansion into the social sciences at SOAS as of the 1960s, and the impact of the Hayter Report at SOAS, see Chapter 5 'Expansion into the social sciences' in Brown, *SOAS* pp. 157-205, esp. pp. 172-174.

¹⁴⁰ Hayter Report, p. 80.

¹⁴¹ Heather Bleaney, 'The Documentation Unit of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies of the University of Durham' in *Arabic Resources: Acquisition and Management in British Libraries*, ed. David Burnett (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), pp.79-83.

Study of the Near and Middle East was one of Durham's main strengths but the School and Library embodied a wide Oriental institution. In the 1950s the Spalding Trust had sponsored two lecturers to specialise in India and China and the Museum Collections were particularly strong in the Far East. The Hayter Report expressed an interest in Durham expanding Far Eastern studies but not if this would diminish its progress in its priority of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.¹⁴² Hayter expressed the same sentiment on Far Eastern languages:

Demand does not justify any extension to other universities at the present time. Indeed we were at first doubtful if there was a sufficient case for the teaching of Chinese and perhaps Japanese at Durham. We would however like to see one university in the North providing these studies in addition to Oxford, Cambridge and London, and, if so, Durham seems the obvious candidate. We do not wish to be dogmatic on this point as there might be equal advantages for Durham to expand its regional and linguistic studies to include countries closer to the Middle East.¹⁴³

Far Eastern languages were, however, introduced and by the 1970s, along with Arabic, Chinese comprised the biggest intake of students. Durham's desire to strengthen its depth of Far Eastern Studies was exemplified by the employment in 1969 of a Far Eastern specialist for the Oriental Library, Dr Raghavendra Char, a Far East specialist, for the Oriental Library.

The Oriental Library was probably the biggest beneficiary from the publication of the Hayter Report which was sympathetic to its difficulties: 'Durham's need arises from its late start, its ambitious policies and the small size of the university as a whole'.¹⁴⁴ Hayter noted how the Oriental Library grew from one shelf to 55,000 books in twelve years, 'but', it added 'four fifths of this expansion has been from private benefactions'.¹⁴⁵ While the Hayter Report commented that this was a fine achievement it was also unsustainable if it wished to become the main School for Oriental Studies in the north of England: 'Durham has given ample evidence of its vigour. Its circumstances are exceptional and it is the only department for which we recommend an additional library grant to cover linguistic studies'.¹⁴⁶

The positive response from Hayter was not plain sailing however. Thacker saw that the new plans could mean greater interference into the Oriental Library's book purchases from newly incorporated departments. He feared Foster would not take kindly to the Hayter changes if they were to prohibit the active role he had adopted in acquiring books. Thacker sent a memorandum to Foster on 6 February 1963 stating the official position of the School of Oriental Studies towards

¹⁴² *Hayter Report*, p. 81.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

the new Hayter arrangements and stressing that a period of tactfulness was necessary. Regarding the new Middle East Centre, Thacker wrote, 'We must observe propriety and etiquette and, above all, scrupulously adhere to the regulations laid down by the Council, the Curators of the Library and the Committee of the Centre, if the Library is to survive in its present form and if your present position in it is to be maintained'.¹⁴⁷

The tone of the memorandum implies that Thacker was not naïve to the possibility that the extent of Foster's role could well be under threat from the University which was examining its structure in line with the Hayter sub-committee's proposals. The memorandum is a touching example of Thacker's tact in manoeuvring to ensure Foster – whose combination of social awkwardness and unpredictability could be damaging – would not harm his own position. Thacker added in his memorandum, 'I know you will forgive an old friend for speaking frankly. A tricky period lies ahead of us and I have no desire to see you fall on the rocks, through taking an ill-advised step. No one is so secure that he cannot fall, and committees can be harsh judges, as well I know'.¹⁴⁸ In the end all worked out and if anything, Foster's role was strengthened in its importance because of the inter-departmental role the Oriental Library now had.

As great for the School as Hayter was, it never fully remedied the funding issues which have always plagued Oriental departments in Britain. A case from 1970 illustrates the point. Thacker was contacted by Gerald Bonner, an Augustinian expert from the Department of Theology and Religion, regarding a Rev. Paul B. Denninger of the American Episcopalian Church with an impressive academic résumé. Denninger had served as a missionary in China where he had married a Chinese lady, after his return to America in 1947, Bonner explains, he worked as a translator of captured Chinese documents for the American Army in the Korean War. Denninger reportedly held a 'fondness for England' and Bonner inquired as to the possibility of any positions in the field of Oriental Studies for which Denninger could apply.

Thacker replied on 19 June 1970 in a response that encapsulated the financial problems of Oriental Studies:

I have consulted my sinologist colleagues and they say that Mr. Denninger is a person whom any Chinese Department would be glad to have. Unfortunately, however, they know of no vacancies in Oxford, Cambridge, Leeds and Edinburgh. The Chinese departments in these universities, like our own, are starved of money and they think it very unlikely would be able to raise funds for a temporary post. There remains the

¹⁴⁷ PGLSC, Fos/1/7.3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

School of Oriental and African Studies in London. It is possible that they will be looking for a replacement.¹⁴⁹

Thacker may have been being polite to a candidate he thought may not be suited to an academic post at Durham, but the extent to which he expresses the lack of funding in all the universities stated illustrates the dilemma.

Despite these worries, Hayter certainly aided the School in a great many ways. There was a continual growth of books and, as a consequence of Hayter, from this point the School was less dependent on private donations. The main benefit to the Oriental Library from this period of growth and expansion appears to be the economies of scale as consequence of its hybrid functions. Following the move to Elvet House in 1955, the developments that occurred enabled the Library to flourish as it functioned with multiple purposes: as a specialist library for the School, a research library for the Museum, a centre library for CMEIS and MEDU, in addition to being a branch of the University library for any general researchers; all of which functioned to strengthen the reputation of the School as a home of leading teaching and scholarship.

¹⁴⁹ Letter in private hands of Dr. Jeremy Bonner and quoted with his permission.

The Durham Difference

ACADEMIC LIFE AT THE DEPARTMENT

The linking of an Oriental School, library and museum was the basis of a dynamic and interesting culture among members of staff at Durham. Naturally, given the nature of the subject, students were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. The Library had an exceptional reputation and acted as a magnet to top researchers, moreover the proximity of researchers and teachers of ancient Semitic languages, Egyptology, Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Indian Studies, Chinese, Korean and Japanese facilitated a healthy working environment where individuals could share ideas.

The ambition of the department, and the wider impression given to prospective students, was that the School of Oriental Studies at Durham functioned as a miniature SOAS where the staff enjoyed the atmosphere and valued Durham's close-knit ethos. Relations with students were close and there existed a well-established alumni network. The School was host to many students from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, with many of the language assistants being native speakers. Durham was also the first British university to have students from Communist China, six of them in total. Some children of diplomats studied at the School and the links to the British government were always intimate.

Durham and SOAS had taken the initiative to provide government departments and the armed services with Arabic courses, and the Hayter Report praised the two universities for their 'vigour and enterprise' in providing these services.¹⁵⁰ These courses had been instituted following the 1956 Suez Crisis for which Thacker had been an advisor to the Foreign Office. The British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, reportedly wrote to Thacker during the Suez Crisis stressing the importance of Arabic to British strategy. Eden included the need for students to learn about the centrality of religion in the Middle East because of the influence it had on culture and politics.¹⁵¹

Eden's view is not surprising when it is remembered that he, as Foreign Secretary during the Second World War, had appointed the Scarborough Committee and that he was himself an Orientalist. Eden obtained First-Class Honours in Arabic and Persian from Christ Church, Oxford and it is one of the great ironies of modern British political history that the Prime Minister who

¹⁵⁰ *Hayter Report*, p. 86.

¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, Eden's letter no longer survives, the mentioned letter was lost during the School's closure when many of Thacker's Director's Correspondence were thrown out. The evidence for Thacker's serving the Foreign Office during the Suez Crisis can be found in the School's Annual Report of 1956/57, see PGLSC, UND/DB20/A1.

was the most well informed about the Middle East was also the one whose Prime Ministerial career was ended by diplomatic failures relating to it.

Students also came from the US State Department to study and batches of British servicemen studied at the School every year, usually learning Arabic, Persian or Turkish, for which they were given their own lecturer and were discouraged from fraternising with other students. Many Durham students went on to careers in the Consular and Diplomatic Services or the Foreign Office but likewise many international businesses benefitted from the expertise of students pursuing careers in international trade and commerce. At heart however, the School was a place of academic excellence, where research and facilities for Oriental Studies were first rate, and many continued further study to become academics and lecturers.

In 1977, when Thacker retired as Director of the School, Oriental Studies at Durham had grown from a sub-discipline of theology to a thriving independent department of international repute in its field with a dedicated and sizeable group of staff members. Students could read for a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Oriental Studies and specialise across its remit: Classical Hebrew and Old Testament Studies; Egyptology; Classical Arabic and Islamic Studies; Modern Arabic Studies; Modern Arabic Studies (with subsidiary Persian or Turkish); Modern Persian Studies; Modern Turkish Studies; and Chinese Studies were all available.

Thacker was replaced by the distinguished Egyptologist, Professor John Richard Harris. In Harris' first year as Director undergraduate numbers were healthy for an Oriental faculty: there were 85 general degree students, 22 students taking subsidiary courses, 8 full-time and 1 part-time postgraduate students. The majority of undergraduates were studying Chinese and Arabic, with the more esoteric and ancient subjects suffering in popularity – a trend that would continue throughout the 1980s. In the academic year 1980-1981 there was a total of 57 undergraduates unevenly dispersed between the School's subject options: Classical Arabic (2); Modern Arabic (15); Persian (5); Turkish (3); Modern Middle Eastern Studies (3); Chinese Studies (22); Egyptology (6); Hebrew (1).¹⁵² Subjects such as Hebrew struggled in their popularity, but this was deceptive since many students from Theology would take the course; moreover, J. F. Healey – who replaced Raymond Thornhill as Lecturer of Hebrew in 1981 – was appointed to a position shared between the School of Oriental Studies and the Theology Department.

¹⁵² PGLSC, UND/CB1/07/6ii.

By the time of Thacker's retirement, Lesley Forbes was well established as Keeper of Oriental Books, and under her guidance the Oriental Library continued to thrive. In 1980, the Oriental Library received on deposit from the Mohamed Ali Foundation the personal papers of Abbas Hilmi II (1874-1944), the last Khedive of Egypt and Sudan. Abbas II was the great-great-grandson of Muhammed Ali (1769-1849), the Ottoman Commander and first Khedive of Egypt. It is a mark of the reputation which the Oriental Library had acquired that the Mohammed Ali Foundation selected Durham to receive the papers on loan. The papers covered Abbas Hilmi II's Khedivate (1892-1914), and his period of exile in Geneva until his death in 1944. The range of political, diplomatic and personal items were in French, Arabic, German, English and Ottoman Turkish and was in total some 326 Files and 140 Pamphlets.¹⁵³ Since 1980, a considerable amount of new material has been added, including more files, photographs and printed material.¹⁵⁴

Dedicated and skilled staff enabled the Oriental Library to flourish. Book acquisitions and donations were impressive and wide ranging, with books in over thirty ancient and modern languages. The scale and achievements of the Oriental Library throughout its existence is quite remarkable when all things are considered. This is not only the number of books which were acquired by a sub-section of the main University Library but also the nature of the Oriental Library.

Today, when translations of classic works are readily available and books can be easily accessed with online purchases, it is difficult to appreciate that the resources with which the Oriental Library was equipped were not readily available elsewhere. The newspaper room contained newspapers from all over Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and enabled staff and students to be comprehensively and frequently informed when they needed to be. Moreover, the range of scholarly works – references, grammars, history, politics – were first rate, and a large part of Durham's appeal to top scholars.

Following the Hayter Report two major changes occurred which affected the nature of Oriental Studies in Britain, and also Europe and America. The first of these was changes to academic curricula and the courses on offer at universities. The second was changes in the political and economic situations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East which affected the interests and needs of government and business in academic study.

The Hayter Report's recommendations and allocation of funding was symptomatic of a wider trend in academic study since the 1960s. The gradual adoption of social scientific methods

¹⁵³ See Jill Butterworth, 'Middle East Library Resources in Durham' Collections' in *British Libraries on Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, ed. P. Auchterlonie (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, 1981), pp. 34-42, p. 41-42.

¹⁵⁴ PGLSC, GB 033 HIL. More information is available on the University's website.

and subjects becoming more mainstream and prioritised over more traditional methods of arts and humanities study had slowly been gaining momentum since the Second World War. This was promoted by C. H. Philips, Director of SOAS from 1957, and reiterated by the Hayter Report. Consequently, the methods and approaches of Oriental Studies saw a reduced emphasis on linguistics and a greater increase in publications relating to the present politics and economies of the regions with which Oriental Studies is concerned.

The publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, and other works prior to this, written with a post-colonial perspective, also influenced Oriental Studies. This cultural and academic change witnessed the political tenor of Oriental Studies publications taking a more critical attitude towards European colonies and their impact on the past and contemporary societies and economies of Asia and Africa. In conjunction with a non-imperial generation and wider counter-cultural changes in the 1960s, traditional British Oriental Studies was questions of purpose and function. During the 1960s, at SOAS in London, many staff became disillusioned with students whose far-left movements, such as protests against the Vietnam War, seemed to disregard much of what the School represented.¹⁵⁵ While the same vigour for radical change was not as strong among Durham students as those in the capital, staff and students would nevertheless have been attuned to the social and intellectual changes brewing in British universities.

International relations, particularly in regard to 'the Orient', had witnessed massive changes since the Hayter Report in 1961 and the time when Harris became Director of the School in 1977. International relations during this period was defined by the battle of East versus West, in the format of the Cold War. Part of which had seen America engaged in the lengthy Vietnam War. China had seen the start of the Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong. India witnessed one of the first women to lead a nation in the election of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1966. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict had reached boiling point in both the Six-Day War in 1967 then the Yom Kippur War of 1973 followed by Arab embargo of its oil products to Western powers which saw Britain reduced to a three-day working week and in 1971 Qatar was declared independent from Britain.

Such dramatic events it seems only increased in the late seventies and eighties. In 1979 Iran witnessed a religious revolution which saw the implementation of a theocratic government that still exists. This was followed not long after by an Iran-Iraq war that lasted eight years from 1980 to 1988, in addition to the Soviet-Afghan War that lasted from 1979 to 1989. All the while the Cold War went into overdrive with Ronald Regan as President of the United States.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, *SOAS*, pp. 188-192.

Not all change in Asia, Africa and the Middle East was about conflict and radical change however. The most notable development for Oriental scholarship in the 1980s was a shift in the emphasis to prioritising the Far East, particularly Japan, as the most important area of study. Japan had become of huge economic importance to the world economy, which had boomed in the sixties and seventies and continued to grow in the eighties. In the 1980s the British government prioritised investment and exchange. Therefore, Japanese Studies became a new priority, in the hope of training more people with greater business capabilities in the region.

In 1980 the University of Stirling opened a Centre for Japanese Studies; in 1983 the University of Sheffield established a Japanese Business Services Unit drawing on its existing Centre for Japanese Studies and its Korean Studies Unit. In 1984 the University of Warwick founded the Japanese Business Policy Unit in addition to launching undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Japan. Warwick also offered consultancy services to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the automotive industry. In the same period the University of Essex, with the assistance of nine Japanese companies, established a Centre for the Study of Contemporary Japan, a body which organised conferences and symposia and also taught language and area studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Large Japanese companies were also sponsoring degree programmes at selected universities such as Nissan at Oxford and Toyota and Suntory at the London School of Economics.

In accordance with the general trend in Oriental departments of the 1980s, the Far East attracted greater attention in this period. The department started an Oriental Music Festival which began in 1976 and was repeated in 1979 and 1982. The origins of the Oriental Music Festival were with the Lecturer in Chinese, Keith Pratt who had visited Korea for research, where he had been given lessons in string and wind instruments by two top Korean musicians. The Oriental Music Festival was therefore proposed as a way the department could express its gratitude and strengthen its Korean relations and following the first Oriental Music Festival, in 1978, Durham appointed Dr (later Professor) Robert Provine, a world authority on Korean traditional music, to a post in the Music School.

The final Oriental Music Festival in 1982 was particularly special, with H.R.H. Princess Alexandra of Kent, who was President of the Festival that year, attending a concert event as part of the festival of Korean music at 7.15pm in Caedmon Hall, College of St Hild and St Bede, on 14 July 1982. The concert received particular praise from guests in the form of letters to the then Vice-Chancellor and Warden, Fred Holliday. Holliday received a further letter on 26 July 1982 from Young Hoon Kang, the Korean Ambassador, who commented, 'We are most happy that

Durham University continues to host the Oriental Music Festival and it is certainly becoming an event which tangibly strengthens our cultural ties year by year'.¹⁵⁶

As early as February 1982 Harris had written to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Fred Holliday, expressing that popularity for Chinese accounted for 'more than half of the total applications received, and just under half of the overall number of Honours students attached to the School'.¹⁵⁷ In 1984 there were visits from a Mr. X. Jin, Second Secretary of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, and a Mr. Jun Wada, Director of the Japan Foundation in London. In the Michaelmas term of the same year students organised 'a week of lectures and other events relating to Japan, and in the Epiphany term the Chinese department, with the support of Grey College, put on a very successful Chinese play. A fortnight of Asian films – classics from China, India and Japan – was also presented during Epiphany term'.¹⁵⁸

In October 1981, the Royal Academy was holding a Great Japanese Exhibition in London and Durham received a request to host a supplementary exhibition the same year as part of a nationwide promotion. Moreover, the UGC contacted Durham about increasing its work in Japanese Studies and Don Starr, Spalding Lecturer in Chinese Language and Civilization, wrote to Holliday on 5 January 1982, remarking that he was pleased the UGC 'would look favourably on a limited Japanese presence' in Durham.¹⁵⁹ In the same month, the widow of Mr. Shigeru Yoshida, late Prime Minister of Japan who had also been the Ambassador to Britain, presented the Oriental Museum with a painting of Japanese flowers by her husband which was much appreciated.

Other areas of study were not neglected however. In May 1984 Durham arranged a major symposium on the future of energy in cooperation with the Petroleum Information Committee of the Arab Gulf States. As late as 1985, John Norton, Lecturer in Turkish at the School drew up a proposal for a postgraduate programme on modern Islam for Turkish students. On 17-19 April 1986 the School held a symposium on the 'Literature and Society of Iran between the two World Wars' in conjunction with CMEIS.¹⁶⁰

The philosophy beating at the heart of the School was cultural. This had been emphasised by Thacker in his 1944 memorandum to the Scarborough Committee and it remained central throughout the life of the School. A prospectus for the Durham School of Oriental Studies from the 1980s concisely expressed the philosophy of the School:

All eight courses have this in common, that they are not wholly linguistic or literary in content, but they aim to give the student a comprehensive picture of the civilisation

¹⁵⁶ PGLSC, UND/CB1/07/6ii.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A2.

¹⁵⁹ PGLSC, UND/CB1/07/6ii.

¹⁶⁰ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A2.

and achievements, cultural and material, of a people who have played, or are playing, a major part in the history of the world, and who have made a significant contribution to human progress.

To only teach the language was seen as insufficient to the overall purpose of an education. This did not however undermine the centrality of Oriental languages as an instrument as the prospectus continues:

The core of all courses is, however, inevitably language study and most of the student's time will be spent in acquiring a sound knowledge of a language or languages. The reason is this. If the student wishes to enter a career which involves research or independent investigation of any kind, not necessarily academic, he must be able to use original sources, whatever his interest, whether it lies in history, art, religion, or any other branch of knowledge, because only an infinitesimal part of the vast body of oriental writings has been translated into English, or indeed into any western language.

The study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East had never been mainstream in British universities, and the academic communities specialising in these subjects had changed little from the time of the Scarbrough Report: they were small and closely linked with one another. The way Chinese functioned, for example, was that only a few places taught it – Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester, Oxford, and SOAS – and those that did, did so in relatively small departments. Each institution was valued as carrying its own specialism: Leeds had a modern Chinese centre, Edinburgh prided itself on Chinese literature, and Durham considered itself to be particularly strong in Chinese history, so on and so forth.

Because these communities were close knit within and between one another, there was rarely a need to transfer to another institution, with people usually appreciating the idiosyncrasies of their own institution. The selling point of Durham was its atmosphere: staff were close knit and intertwined with other Orientalist disciplines and a continuity was evident by the fact that several leading staff members – Heinz Kuhn, John Norton, Keith Pratt, and Lesley Forbes – had been students at the Durham School.

The Parker Report

ORIENTAL STUDIES AT A CROSSROADS (1986-1989)

On the surface then, Oriental Studies was thriving at Durham which had a well-established School, Museum and Library and area studies centre for the Middle East. The first cracks of decline occurred when it was announced that Indian Studies would be phased out with the planned retirement of the Spalding Lecturer in Indian Philosophy, Karel Werner in the early 1980s, set to retire in 1989. The School decided it would not continue offering Indian Studies due to the subject's low popularity once Werner retired. This was the first case of a policy of retrenchment towards staff and subjects in the School's history.

The second major blow was the retirement in 1984 of the School's Reader in Coptic, K. H. Kuhn (1919-2013). Heinz Kuhn's academic career acts a microcosm of the developments of Oriental Studies at Durham in the post-War era. He had studied Theology at Durham as an undergraduate then, in 1949, gained a Scarborough Research Studentship and soon after a Research Fellow, in 1953. In 1955, the same year the School moved to Elvet House, Kuhn became a lecturer at the School in Hebrew and Aramaic. In 1970, he was appointed editor for Coptic Christian texts for the Louvain based *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, a post he held for thirty years. In 1977 he was promoted to be Reader of Coptic, and this was made to a personal Readership in 1982.

Kuhn's reputation as a scholar was first-rate, and in 1987 he was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy. He had been great friends with Thacker and he was widely liked for his kindness, supportive demeanour and the calm atmosphere he brought to a room. His obituary in *The Times* said of him that, 'The dismantling of Thacker's vision for the Durham school in the late 1980s was perhaps the only matter on which colleagues might hear him speak with real bitterness'.¹⁶¹ Kuhn's retirement did not explicitly contribute to the School's closure, but following his retirement his position was not replaced. A later consequence would be that the loss of reputable scholars like Kuhn reduced the academic cachet of the School in defending its existence against those who argued reason to close it.

The consequence of Kuhn's retirement led the Director of the School to speak with the then Vice Chancellor to discuss the situation of Egyptology. Harris and Holliday struggled to agree on whether there could be a replacement for Kuhn. Harris argued that if a replacement could not be provided for then the School's reputation in Egyptology would diminish and maybe even result in its closure. The breakdown in relations between the Director of the School and the University's

¹⁶¹ 'Obituary: Professor Heinz Kuhn', *The Times*, 25 June 2013.

central administration staff was an unfortunate trend which harmed the School's standing within the University. However, the explicit consideration to close the department did not occur until after the publication of a UGC report two years later which has come to be known as the Parker Report.

The Parker Report was submitted to the UGC in February 1986 under the official title "*Speaking for the Future*": *A Review of the Requirements of Diplomacy and Commerce for Asian and African Languages and Area Studies*. Sir James Craig, onetime Lecturer in Arabic at the School who then went on to become the British Ambassador in Saudi Arabia and in Syria had been selected to head the enquiry in 1984 but retired from it in May 1985. The man who replaced Craig was the Secretary to the UGC, Sir Peter Parker, a British businessman who had studied Japanese during the Second World War at SOAS and later became the Chairman of the British Railways Board, 1976-1983.

Parker wished for British universities to acquire a higher profile in commercial and diplomatic circles. To be specific, he wanted universities to be seen as the 'nerve-centre', the ultimate expert resource, which businesses and diplomats could consult when conducting work in Asia or Africa.¹⁶² Parker believed present courses were failing to achieve this due to esoteric content and an over-literary bias. He had also been unimpressed by the lack of an 'effective system of co-ordination' between institutions teaching Asian and African studies and he wished to see joint centres established between universities.¹⁶³

The Parker Report recommended that university courses needed to be more explicitly linked to careers and occupations from undergraduate level. A way to achieve this would be to run courses with modules in business studies and applied sciences. Increases in postgraduate research fellowships were also recommended to ensure provision for future teaching staff. As were increases to travel funds for postgraduates and linguists, so that expertise would remain updated and personal contacts in the regions of study maintained. Parker argued that the requirements of diplomacy and business must be met by the universities to which he added that the 'cost of keeping the system going are small compared with the potential benefits. It is absurd to let it run down'.¹⁶⁴

For commerce, Parker argued that a reliance on English was not sufficient to remain competitive in Asian and African markets, 'It can even be a disadvantage', Parker added, 'through encouraging complacency and a lack of sensitivity'.¹⁶⁵ Evidence of the firm connection between

¹⁶² *Parker Report*, p.49.

¹⁶³ See cover letter attached to the *Parker Report* addressed to the universities' Vice Chancellors and Principals who received the Report, dated 18 February 1986.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

foreign language capabilities and better export performance of businesses in non-English speaking markets was used by Parker to exemplify his point. On diplomacy, the Parker Report argued for widespread provision in languages and training. The Report argued that local expertise in languages and culture helped to define and execute foreign policy aims more precisely and more effectively. Furthermore, wide language capabilities would cater for unpredictable circumstances due to the fluctuating nature of foreign policy objectives.

At Durham student numbers in the School were low relative to other departments in the University but the Oriental Library had a leading reputation and the staff of the School were reputed to be of a leading standard in their field. All parts of Oriental Studies at Durham – the School, the Library, the Museum and CMEIS – welcomed the Parker Report and its general tenor, believing it to be analogous to the Scarbrough and Hayter Reports from which Durham had greatly benefitted. Throughout 1986 and 1987 however, a feeling of unease grew at Durham when it became apparent how the UGC intended to fund Oriental Studies in British Universities and its impact on Durham.

On 28 April 1987, the then Chairman of the UGC, Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer sent a circular letter to all the relevant university Vice-Chancellors and Principals affected by the UGC's conclusions on where and to whom they would allocate future funds for Oriental Studies. Swinnerton-Dyer's circular letter stated that the UGC 'is making the best use of the resources available by concentrating on a few main centres and it regrets that it has not been able to support many interesting and innovative developments that would have merited support in more favourable financial circumstances'.¹⁶⁶ The UGC's allocation of funds for Universities teaching Oriental and African studies is in Figure 2:

University	Subject Area	Number of Posts
University of Birmingham	West African Studies	1
University of Cambridge	Arabic, Chinese, Japanese	3
University of Durham	Chinese (with Newcastle)	2
University of Exeter	Arabic	1
University of Hull	South East Asian Studies	1
University of Leeds	Chinese plus Mongolian	2
SOAS, University of London	All Languages and Areas	18
University of Manchester	Persian and Turkish (with Salford)	2
Newcastle University	Japanese (with Durham)	2
University of Oxford	Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Akkadian	5

¹⁶⁶ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

University of Salford	Arabic (with Manchester)	2
University of Sheffield	Japanese plus Korean	2
University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University	Joint Centre for Middle Eastern Studies	2
University of Stirling	Japanese	2

Fig. 2 UGC funding allocations for Oriental and African Studies following the Parker Report.¹⁶⁷

The UGC positively promoted the suggestion of the Parker Report to have joint ventures between universities: Durham was to have a joint Chinese-Japanese centre with Newcastle; Arabic, Turkish and Persian was to be shared between Manchester and Stirling; and a Middle East Studies Centre between Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt. In theory, these joint ventures were sound and sensible and made efficiency savings by pooling resources. In practice, it was an administrators ambition, with the academics not believing they would work, and not a single one of the joint institutions survives today.

In Durham's copy of Swinnerton-Dyer's circular letter to the Vice Chancellors a personal letter was written to Fred Holliday in which Swinnerton-Dyer expressed his hope that Durham would accept the joint venture with Newcastle to establish a Chinese and Japanese studies centre.¹⁶⁸ The reality of the situation for Durham was that their efforts in Middle Eastern Studies would no longer receive allocated funding from the UGC. Swinnerton-Dyer expressed his sympathies: 'The Committee regrets that it is unable to give additional resources to support your work in Middle Eastern studies, but it hopes the university will be able to maintain its activity in this field'.¹⁶⁹ The University Librarian, Nance McAulay, summed up the general feeling among University staff in a letter to Holliday dated 8 May 1987: 'I can of course see and indeed also welcome the coherent strategy behind the UGC's decisions following Parker although the result is very harsh for Durham's Middle East interests'.¹⁷⁰

With UGC funding removed for Middle Eastern studies and now concentrated on the Far East, the University had to make decisions on a future funding strategy at a time when the University's budget was being squeezed. A Policy Committee was set up to visit the School of Oriental Studies, the Oriental Library, CMEIS and the Museum. The Policy Committee was given the task of analysing Durham's current outfit and evaluating a future University strategy to get the

¹⁶⁷ Information is also available in *BRISMES Bulletin*, Issue 2, June/July 1987, p.2.

¹⁶⁸ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

most out of the subjects. The Policy Committee visited on 13 May 1987 after which it submitted a report.¹⁷¹ The report's decisions came as a shock to almost everyone.

Due to the lack of government funding and the low popularity of many of the Oriental subjects, the Policy Committee recommended that the School of Oriental Studies should be closed. In the School's place a specialist department of East Asian Studies was to be established which would link to the UGC funded joint-centre with Newcastle. Teaching of the Middle East would be relocated to CMEIS which would become a department in its own right within the Faculty of Social Sciences and the staff would be assigned to a new Board of Studies for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. CMEIS would have responsibility for undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in Arabic, Middle Eastern History, and Islamic Studies. While Arabic would be taught at CMEIS, the department would be social science based, with Arabic acting as a subsidiary to subjects such as politics, geography, economics and law.

The Policy Committee decided that subjects with low student numbers ought to be removed. Persian and Turkish, which had no undergraduate intake in October 1987, were to be phased out. As planned, Indian Studies would be phased out by 1989 with the retirement of Karel Werner. The most surprising decision was the removal of Ancient Near Eastern studies which the Policy Committee stated 'should be reduced, becoming eventually a service function in support of the Museum'.¹⁷² Members of staff affected by these matters were to be given early retirement, redeployment within the university, or transferred to another university in order to secure the long-term interests of Durham.

The corollary of losing an Oriental faculty was that there would be no need for a specialist Oriental Library. The Oriental Library was to be closed and its books and the Middle East Documentation Unit relocated to the University's Main Library. The Sudan Archive and any valuable manuscripts were to be relocated to Palace Green Library.

There was dissatisfaction with the proposed plans within the School of Oriental Studies at Durham and many of the members of staff wrote to Holliday candidly about the situation. There was objection to the proposed plans for CMEIS on the grounds that it was ludicrous to have an acclaimed specialist Middle East and Islamic centre that was isolating Arabic as a subsidiary part and phasing out Turkish and Persian, and many of the staff formally expressed their dissatisfaction to Holliday.

¹⁷¹ PGLSC, UND/EA3/GA20.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

On 28 May 1987 John Healey sent an incensed letter to Holliday commenting that the Policy Committee recommendations were ‘so deficient so as to be unacceptable’.¹⁷³ The decision to wind down Ancient Near Eastern studies, a major strength of the faculty, was absurd. Healey expressed that it was unacceptable to reduce academics, teachers, supervisors and researchers of the Ancient Near East to a ‘service function’ for the Museum. Many of the staff had tenure contractual agreements and Healey drew attention to the fact that the Policy Committee’s Report had specifically praised the research and staff of Durham’s Ancient Near Eastern Studies in paragraph 7b. Healey also expressed his disagreement at the Committee’s suggestions for Arabic teaching and what that meant for individuals such as Senior Lecturer in Arabic, Rex Smith, who it had been decided should be moved to the CMEIS:

The position of Dr Rex Smith is left obscure. To force him to become part of the service teaching of modern Arabic within the faculty of Social Sciences would be an act of academic vandalism to one of the best scholars in the University. It would lead to his early departure from Durham and to the loss of the considerable income he generates. A secondary effect would be that the Saudi educational authorities would be so incensed by the University’s treatment of the subjects Dr Smith deals with that they would probably never send students to Durham again for *any* subject.¹⁷⁴

On 1 June 1987, there was an extraordinary general meeting of the full-time permanent members of staff of the School of Oriental Studies to discuss the Policy Committee’s conclusions. They responded as follows: the idea of a separate East Asian Studies budget and board was undesirable; Arabic teachers wanted to remain within the Faculty of Arts at the School of Oriental Studies, they did not want to go to CMEIS unless there was a clear and firm basis for outside funding and, on the condition that the corresponding staff from social science subjects such as Geography and Politics were also willing to leave their existing department and transfer to CMEIS.

It was unanimously agreed that it was improper to phase out Turkish and Persian but accepted that Indian studies would have to be phased out as planned. With no motivation for funding on Ancient Near Eastern studies, and little clout to fight for it because of exceptionally low student numbers, defeat was accepted. While tenure for Ancient Near Eastern staff was to be maintained it was upsettingly noted that, ‘it is recognized that ultimately, when the existing posts fall vacant, this area of study will probably have to disappear from the University’.¹⁷⁵

Despite the desires of the staff working in Oriental Studies, the University accepted the Policy Committee’s recommendations. Most anger stemmed from the lack of consultation which

¹⁷³ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ PGLSC, UND/EA3/GA20.

had occurred regarding the staff involved. Holliday received many letters from the staff about the way in which things were being dealt. Many of the staff of Arabic and the Middle East said they wanted no part in the reorganisation because they did not believe that isolating Arabic as a subsidiary would enable Durham to compete with other British universities.

On 23 July 1987, Peter Sluglett, Lecturer in Modern Middle East History, wrote to Holliday requesting a transfer to another university on the basis that the suggested structure would put him into an academic cul-de-sac.¹⁷⁶ Rex Smith, Senior Lecturer in Arabic, whose correspondence seem to show a sense of confusion about the situation, wrote independently of Sluglett to Holliday on the same day. Smith seems to have expressed an initial desire to leave Durham among the chaos of the proposed changes and his disagreements but contemplated remaining in the hope that the changes would not be as severely implemented as people were suggesting: 'The more I ponder the recent widespread dissemination of misinformation regarding the School ... I hereby withdraw my resignation'.¹⁷⁷ Smith eventually decided the new outfit would be inadequate and went to Manchester University.

Other staff members such as John Healey, Lecturer in Hebrew; Paul Luft, Lecturer of Persian; John Tait, Lecturer in Egyptology; and William Hale, Senior Lecturer of Politics of the Middle East, also left for universities where permanent positions were offered. (Hale's departure was unrelated to the closure of the School however, since he was located in the politics department, and left because a position came up at SOAS, his leaving did however have consequences for the Oriental Library).

Tait went to UCL where there was a long-standing department of Egyptology. Sluglett remained at Durham and transferred to CMEIS despite warning the University that the proposed structure would have negative results, he left Durham in 1994. Healey, Luft and Smith all went to Manchester. Despite the security of tenure, all these staff left because the newly proposed academic environment at Durham was inadequate. The decisions taken by the University to disband one of its finest and most reputable faculties was a shock in British academic circles. Manchester saw an opportunity to capitalise on this and did so with the acquisition of Healey, Luft and Smith.

Manchester had recently lost their Professor of Persian and were looking for a replacement. They had also benefitted from two UGC Parker posts in Middle East fields and therefore wanted to build on their prestige in this area of research. Two individuals at Manchester, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Professor of Arabic Studies, and Philip Alexander, Professor of Post-Biblical Jewish Literature, saw an opportunity to seize the outgoing individuals from Oriental Studies at Durham

¹⁷⁶ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

and transfer them to Manchester. Bosworth and Alexander cleverly navigated university politics and managed to convince Manchester to put up money for all three of the Durham scholars who they gained for a fraction of their academic value, a bargain Bosworth and Alexander could not really believe had happened. Forty years after Thacker and Duff had outmanoeuvred Manchester to win government funding for Durham's Oriental project the situation had been reversed.

The reputational damage this did to Durham at the time cannot be underestimated. Throughout the summer of 1987 Holliday was frequently confronted about Durham's decisions towards its Oriental department. On 2 June 1987, Sir James Craig, in his capacity as Director General of The Middle East Association, wrote a distressed letter to Holliday about a rumour that Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Egyptology were to be discontinued at Durham, 'If you could get someone to tell me the position I should be very grateful. In the meantime I reserve the right to remonstrate later. If the news were true I should be dismayed; and as an Honorary fellow of the Durham School of Oriental Studies I have a *locus standi* however frail'.¹⁷⁸

Holliday's reply to Craig corrected him that Arabic would remain but could not deny the reality of the other subjects that were going. Craig was stunned by the bureaucratic misjudgements being made and replied on 12 June 1987:

I am of course not equipped to assess either the reasons for or the merits of the proposals. But I am concerned about one thing in particular: the chief reason for commissioning the Parker Report (as I know well, because it was originally going to be the Craig Report) was to avoid piece-meal decisions by individual universities, each one of which would have been reasonable in its local context but, when combined with all the others, disastrous.¹⁷⁹

Holliday replied to Craig on 18 June 1987: 'You will appreciate that I too am dismayed at what we have been compelled to do. I say "compelled" in that we approached the UGC over the continuation of special funding for our work in Middle East Studies. That approach was unsuccessful'.¹⁸⁰ Craig's final reply on 1 July 1987 expressed the general feeling among the Orientalist community: 'It is indeed a sad story. I understand that the matter is to be brought up at the Annual Conference for Middle East Studies at Exeter in July. So in my perplexity I shall say no more. But you have my sincere sympathy'.¹⁸¹

The matter was mentioned in the 1987 summer newsletter of the British Society for Middle East Studies: 'The major 'new story' in British Middle Eastern studies this year has, without doubt,

¹⁷⁸ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

been the allocation of new funding from the University Grants Committee (UGC) for Middle Eastern Studies ... It has been deemed important, however, to give publicity to the highly negative effects which the allocation efforts have had on one of the leading centres of study on the Middle East in Britain: the University of Durham'.¹⁸² Commenting on the situation in the newsletter, University of Durham staff member Dr R. J. Wilson argued that, 'The new UGC funding has weakened rather than strengthened Middle Eastern interests in Durham, and the only hope for the future must be in private funding'.¹⁸³

The week following his correspondence with Craig, Holliday was hassled by the Standing Committee of the University Teachers of Turkish (SCOUTT). The SCOUTT met on 9 July 1987 after which the Chairman, Professor C. H. Dodd, wrote a detailed case for why Durham should resist the temptation to drop Turkish given its excellence of teaching staff, materials and facilities: 'In the Committee's view, it would be a tragedy if, at such a promising juncture, Turkish language teaching were to cease at Durham'.¹⁸⁴ To add gravity to the diplomatic consequences of Durham's actions Dodd copied several distinguished individuals into the letter including Sir Peter Parker as Secretary of the UGC; Mr R. Gümrukçuoğlu, the Turkish Ambassador; Mr T. Daunt, British Ambassador to Turkey; Mr M. Weston, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences at Durham.

Those in Durham's hierarchy were hit with a bigger backlash than they had expected. The diplomatic and charitable links that were being severed were causing huge reputational damage to the University which was appearing to casually discard its relationships with external bodies and some of its most esteemed staff members. Holliday was probably exhausted by the resignations and complaints heading his way about a decision which had initially been considered as a sensible restructuring of the University's subjects. His correspondence on this subject became routine: while he regretted the situation, he would remark, the financial circumstances could not cater to funding such studies.

Even the British Academy expressed its displeasure at the decisions being made at Durham. On 7 August 1987 Sir Randolph Quirk, as President of the British Academy, wrote to Holliday informing him that 'recently a number of expressions of concern have reached me regarding cuts said to be in prospect at Durham in Oriental Studies'.¹⁸⁵ The Registrar and Secretary of Durham, J. C. F. Hayward attempted to smooth out the situation in a letter of 12 August 1987 by claiming that there 'seems to be some confusion or misinformation about what is happening at

¹⁸² British Society for Middle East Studies Newsletter. Issue 2, June/July 1987, p.1

¹⁸³ British Society for Middle East Studies Newsletter. Issue 2, June/July 1987, p.3.

¹⁸⁴ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Durham in Oriental Studies' followed by an explanation of what was happening.¹⁸⁶ The situation was murky however, and negative rumours rippled through the academic world about what had happened to Oriental Studies at Durham.

Hayward attempted some damage control when he wrote to the following people to reduce any further unwanted publicity: Mr Sami Habib, Cultural Attache, Sultanate of Oman; Mr Abdullah M. al-Naser, Educational Attache, Saudi Arabian Education Office; and Professor Subhi al-Qasim, Dean of Higher Studies, University of Jordan.¹⁸⁷ By that time however most rumours had spread about the dropping of subjects and leaving of reputable staff members. The real puzzle was how this had been allowed to happen in the first place.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

J. R. Harris

DECLINE AND CLOSURE (1977-1989)

The question of how a well-established department with its own library came to such a rapid closure is one of the central questions of this essay. A simple answer is that the strength of the School and its antecedent parts had evidently been more fragile than its common appearance, and that the roots of closure went back further than the publication of the Parker Report.

The suggestion at the time was that the lack of UGC funding following the Parker Report was the reason for the decision to close the School of Oriental Studies. It is clear from what has been written here that the Parker Report alone was not cause for the School's closure. Its recommendations were concerned with how to make Oriental Studies more commercially available but, as to the subjects themselves, Parker had argued for their necessity. In particular, Parker had argued for the importance of languages that many see as peripheral to the major Oriental languages of Arabic, Chinese and Japanese, such as Korean, Thai, Hindu, Persian and Turkish, some of which were offered at Durham.

The decision taken to phase out Persian and Turkish from Durham is one of the strangest occurrences in this story. It was justified on student numbers, for example there had been no undergraduate intake in Turkish or Persian at Durham in 1986/87 and was therefore financially untenable.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, nationwide, no centre in the UK reported postgraduate enrolments in Persian in 1985/86.¹⁸⁹ However, the Parker Report had been very staunch in its defence of valuable commercial and diplomatic languages regardless of their popularity: 'The general educational base on which training and expert opinion ultimately depends should not be allowed to be eroded in languages or area studies simply because they are *currently* out of fashion'.¹⁹⁰

Britain had military and strategic interests in the Persian Gulf, and the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the establishing of a theocratic government only served to increase the need for experts on Persian history, Shi'a Islam, and Iranian nationalism to aid Britain's commercial and diplomatic work. All of this goes without saying anything on the importance of Iranian oil to world markets. Parker himself commented on this, 'Despite current difficulties, Iran remains important for British interests with a significant market and great potential for development. A knowledge of Farsi [Persian] is essential for much of HMG's work'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ PGLSC, UND/EA3/GA20.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ *Parker Report*, p.6.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.26.

Turkey, because of its geographical location and cultural balance, was a hinge between European and Islamic markets. As a member of NATO Turkey was also an important nation for diplomatic and commercial ties. Parker had alluded to the strategic importance of Turkish for its diplomatic and economic links when he wrote that there ‘are significant advantages to be gained from speaking Turkish and HMG will continue to need some representatives who can do this’.¹⁹² Further to these points is that Iran and Turkey had large populations with sizeable upper and middle-class populations with disposable incomes and were therefore potentially important business markets. Not to mention the intellectual interest of these cultures and the rich histories of Persia and entities such as the Ottoman Empire.

That the UGC only allocated funding for Turkish and Persian to Manchester seems strange and suggests that Parker’s recommendations were never really the binding influence on the UGC’s actions. Persian was only offered on its own at SOAS and in conjunction with other courses at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Durham.¹⁹³ In all of Britain, only SOAS, Oxford, Durham and Edinburgh offered Turkish. Although the University was being squeezed for money, and the UGC had little to offer, it is strange that a stronger case was not put for Durham’s Middle East provision which was providing rare services to a recognised high quality. That Durham had not managed to acquire anything for Middle Eastern studies externally and internally implies that a poor case was fought.

The reasons for the UGC’s decision is complicated and can only briefly be explained here. By 1986 the UGC was no longer the influential body it had been following the Scarborough Report and was in a state of decline. The UGC had been admired as a balanced government body and equivalent bodies had been set up in the Commonwealth countries of Australia and New Zealand. The decline of the UGC began in 1963 when it had been moved from the Treasury to the Department of Education and Science (DES) where it struggled to act as the ‘buffer’ it had been set up to be. Within the Treasury it had acted as an advisory body to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (on the belief that it carried expertise in educational matters where the Treasury had little knowledge). When the UGC was moved away from the Treasury to DES it became a cog in government performing a largely bureaucratic role of advising the education department on educational matters. Being external to the Treasury made the UGC vulnerable to cuts, and the UGC’s resources and powers were gradually appropriated to DES.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.73.

Among these appropriations, some are worthy of comment for the impact they had in reducing, and eventually nullifying, the UGC. In 1967, the UGC lost its role over university salaries to the National Incomes Commission. Another major blow was the abrupt removal of the quinquennial funding process in the 1970s. This was because of the system's inability to adapt to developments during the quinquennium; to which can be added the failure of the system to overlap each quinquennium with the next. The major reason for the removal of the quinquennial planning system was the eroding effect of high inflation on the value of the grants which in the 1970s at times was running upwards of 20%.¹⁹⁴ With the UGC's powers reduced, so was its influence. Consequently, matters of financial initiative were passed on to the universities, a trend that was accelerated during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, whose government encouraged British universities to seek independent funding and to become less dependent on state subsidies and grants.

This attitude is exemplified by the Jarratt Report, an efficiency report issued by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in 1985 to help universities become more cost-effective. As a result, the UGC was given less freedom to hand out money to noble ideas without justifiable and measurable reasoning.¹⁹⁵ Losing its purpose and function, by the time of the Parker Report in 1986, the UGC had minimal grants it could hand out. Added to this, as Chairman of the UGC, Swinnerton-Dyer instituted large scale rationalisation measures throughout the UGC's funding tactics which had the effect of concentrating less popular disciplines in fewer institutions, as illustrated by the UGC posts offered following the Parker Report.

In 1987, the same year the UGC allocated its Parker grants, the Croham Report – a comprehensive review of the UGC and its functions – was published.¹⁹⁶ The Croham Report proposed that the UGC be changed to a University Grants Council under the sponsorship of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. The University Grants Council would consist of no more than 15 members and have a balance of academic and non-academic members. It would have a Chairman from the non-academic world with an interest in higher education, and a Director General from the academic world who had held high office in a university with substantial experience. A government White Paper from the April of the same year, *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*, spelled out the replacement of the UGC with moderate amendments to Croham's recommendations. It established a University Funding Council (UFC): 'To clarify responsibilities,

¹⁹⁴ For a history of these developments see, Michael Shattock, *The UGC and the Management of British Universities* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994).

¹⁹⁵ Sir Alex Jarratt (Chairman), *Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities* (London: Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985).

¹⁹⁶ Lord Croham (Chairman), *Review of the University Grants Committee* (London: HMSO, 1987).

improve financial accountability and increase effectiveness, the University Grants Committee will be reconstituted as a smaller, statutorily incorporated, University Funding Council (UFC).¹⁹⁷ *Meeting the Challenge* also suggested a Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) which was established in the Education Reform Act, 1988.

However, within four years, both of these bodies had been swept away on the recommendations of a 1991 White Paper, *Higher Education: A New Framework* that suggested three separate Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales and led to the creation of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These remain the main University funding bodies to this day.

The limitations of the UGC explains much about how Durham failed to acquire sufficient government funds for its Oriental operations. But does not fully explain how one of the University's most reputable faculties was simply allowed to close. Universities were finding their budgets squeezed and found themselves needing to rationalise in areas that were felt to be wasteful or financially untenable. The School of Oriental Studies and the Oriental Section of the University Library were expensive to run and maintain. Low student numbers made it an easy target for University cuts when it had also failed to obtain any UGC funding to boost its case.

Although the School was expensive and had low demand, the adopted path by the University was not the best logic. The cost of reorganising the School and creating a new departmental structure would be high and it strikes one as strange that the University was removing Turkish and Persian, and also making Arabic a subsidiary of social sciences, while pursuing the establishment of CMEIS as a specialist Middle East studies department in its own right. Part of the explanation must be given to the nature and principles of the School which were out of keeping with academic trends.

The ethos of those employed at the Oriental School, Library and Museum had always been one that valued classical studies as one of the most valuable and informative exercises to understanding modern culture. For example, CMEIS (while still part of the School) had formally responded to the University during the discussions following the Parker Report on 27 May 1986 and highlighted this point: 'We would like to stress that the cultural, classical and ancient aspects of Oriental Studies are not without significance in terms of commercial advantage and cultural diplomacy'.¹⁹⁸ While the Middle East Documentation Unit was of obvious use to diplomacy and

¹⁹⁷ *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge* (London: HMSO, 1987), p.v.

¹⁹⁸ PGLSC, UND/EA3/GA20.

commerce, the subtle and sensitive benefits of Durham's approach were less easy to define. As Director, Harris was quoted in the Parker Report defending this view:

I cannot but say that Britain is seen to underrate the practical value of 'ancient' subjects in terms of cultural politics; *vide* the use that has long been made by the French, and the importance attached to them now by the Communist bloc. Most of the countries concerned are suitably conscious of their illustrious past and anxious that this should be recognised and cultural links are more neutral and often more durable than those of immediate expediency.¹⁹⁹

Social sciences, with a modern and general approach to examining issues were seen to be more relevant by those in charge than the traditional arts and humanities approach which the School espoused. This is evident by the fact that those subjects which were taught with a classical studies emphasis (or were themselves classical) were the subjects which were most badly hit, or completely removed, by the changes.

Many universities had already received these changes, for example, the well-established Department of Semitic Studies at the University of Leeds dropped Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac in 1979 and was changed into a Department of Modern Arabic Studies. Another perspective may therefore be that Durham had managed to maintain studies which were inevitably on their way out for a longer time than most places. By the late 1980s, neither the UGC or Durham were willing to continue funding Oriental Studies at Durham in its current format. A format which was believed to be lacking in immediate uses for diplomacy and commerce. This is exemplified by the fact that CMEIS was to be a department located within the Faculty of Social Sciences and was to prioritise contemporary social, economic, and political issues over the classical and medieval Arabic history.

This trend had begun in earnest with the Hayter Report. As Director of SOAS, C. H. Philips later seemed to lament his influence on the Hayter Report for an increased emphasis on modern studies and wanting to reduce the imbalance that had traditionally favoured of language studies. Philips found he had been misunderstood with 'unreal and harmful distinctions' about the relationship between classical and modern studies and the language and non-language. At SOAS, friction existed between the more recently founded social science departments and the traditional linguistic departments who felt they were being marginalised. Philips' disappointment rested in a perceived but false dichotomy between departments and disciplines which were intended to mutually reinforce one another.²⁰⁰

Furthermore, Philips successor as Director of SOAS, Charles Donald 'Jeremy' Cowan as of the late 1970s had to oversee the early retirement of many SOAS staff due to government

¹⁹⁹ *Parker Report*, p.52.

²⁰⁰ Brown, SOAS, pp. 188-192. C. H. Philips quoted on p. 191.

pressure for financial savings. Languages were disproportionately cut in relation to social science subjects too, however the Parker Report remedied much of these cuts at SOAS, with Parker being an ex-student of SOAS and favourably disposed to its mission, and claiming in his Report that it had suffered excessive cuts to its staff and resources.²⁰¹ Aside from the Hayter and Parker Reports, both of which had understood the vital necessity of language training, the move towards social sciences was part of a wider trend in the humanities at British universities. Subjects which had traditionally been justified as part of a liberal education increasingly needed to justify their existence with a greater proof of direct utility and application than had been expected in the past.

At Durham, the specific subjects being cut were ancient, esoteric or both and therefore comprising a small number of students, making them financially untenable. The intake of students in Classical Hebrew, Egyptology, Turkish and Persian were very low, never more than five, and sometimes even none. While modern Arabic and Chinese did better, even these struggled in relation to other subjects within the University. This was not a Durham problem but was a persistent reality to all Oriental faculties and departments. For example, SOAS (during a supposed period of expansion) actually saw a decline in the intake of undergraduate numbers from fifty-five (1947-48), to twenty-seven (1952-53) to twenty-two (1956-57).²⁰² The lack of popularity of Asian and African studies for formal academic study has been a recurring theme, and without the resolve of those with the money to fund these subjects they will always struggle.

In short, Durham's closure was a monetary issue, the university was now required to pay its own way for Oriental subjects which the UGC could not fund. It was unwilling to do so for subjects that did not bring an obviously measured financial return, those of immediate utility to the global economy or international affairs were favoured instead. Quite understandably, the University was not willing to support courses which had very low popularity and very niche career outlets.

Following the School's and Library's closures Harris was given a compulsory retirement package as Director and had there been a different approach to leadership in this period then the School of Oriental Studies and the Oriental Library may have weathered the storm.

Harris had entered Durham as a highly competent scholar with a world leading reputation in the field of Egyptology. He was a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford and his PhD was on the lexicography of ancient Egyptian minerals and remains a leading work on the topic.²⁰³ About his

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 206-214 and 223-228.

²⁰² Philips, C. H., *The School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, 1917-1967: An Introduction* (London: Design for Print Ltd., 1967), p.51.

²⁰³ J. R. Harris, *Lexicographical studies in ancient Egyptian minerals* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961).

upbringing little can be said, but he dedicated his PhD to his parents ‘in sincere gratitude and affection’ and likewise thanked his supervisor, Professor J. Černý, ‘to whom the inception of this work was due, and without whose help and encouragement its completion would hardly have been possible’.²⁰⁴

Like Thacker, Harris had studied at Berlin, and was also, like Thacker, a great admirer of Germany and would visit Munich every summer. He had been at Durham once before for the academic year 1969-1970 when he had been a Reader in Egyptology, and was therefore familiar with the Durham system.²⁰⁵ Prior to his appointment as Director of the School he spent several years at the University of Copenhagen, which has been a leading institution of Egyptology since 1924, and by the time he returned to Durham as Director he had edited what is still one of the most accessible and informative books on ancient Egypt, *The Legacy of Egypt*.²⁰⁶

Harris’ appointment was therefore logical: he had experience of Durham and was a well reputed scholar in one of the School’s main academic strengths. There was also a vacancy for the Professor of Egyptology, and the appointment of Harris would kill two birds with one stone by replacing the Directorship and filling a vacant Professorship of Egyptology; moreover, it was a fitting tribute to Thacker to be replaced by an individual of the same discipline.

The Museum was an area of Durham which thrived during Harris’ tenure, and he was actively engaged in its welfare. Harris was friends with John Ruffle, who had become curator in 1980, and the pair shared a philosophy on the nature and purpose of a museum that is evident from the School’s 1985 annual report:

The Keeper [John Ruffle] and Professor Harris have between them visited seven Rotary Clubs, the Bishop Auckland Inner Wheel, and the Durham Housewives’ Register to talk about the Museum. As a result, most of these have subsequently made special group visits to the Museum, but the most rewarding visit this year was one by some twenty people from Hartlepool Workshop for the Blind, who much appreciated the special facilities that were arranged for them to handle objects from the collections.²⁰⁷

Harris’ wife, Eve Harris, was an archaeologist of Roman Britain in her own right and an invaluable volunteer at the Museum too. The couple had published a joint work entitled *The Oriental Cults in Roman Britain*, likewise a very thorough and scholarly work.²⁰⁸ When the couple departed Durham in 1989, friend of Harris and Professor of Organic Chemistry, W. K. R.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.5.

²⁰⁵ Durham University Calendar 1969-79 (Cumbria: Titus Wilson & Son Ltd., 1969), p.108.

²⁰⁶ J. R. Harris, ed., *The Legacy of Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁰⁷ PGLSC, UND/DB20/A2.

²⁰⁸ Eve Harris and John R. Harris, *The Oriental Cults in Roman Britain* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965).

Musgrave, wrote on 15 May to the Friends of the Oriental Museum regarding a retirement present for John and Eve Harris for the ‘enormous effort which they have both put into the creation and the success of the Friends of the Oriental Museum, finding lecturers and organising excursions to name only two of their contributions’.²⁰⁹

Such high regard for Harris and his contribution to Durham was unfortunately not a universal sentiment. Karel Werner, the Spalding Lecturer in Indian Philosophy since 1969, took an incident to the Vice-Chancellor, in a letter dated 22 October 1987, in which he recounted an incident where a student in Theology had asked Werner if she could take the option of Buddhism and Buddhist Scriptures, to which Werner had willingly obliged (Werner had maintained that he would teach as normal until his scheduled retirement in 1989).²¹⁰

Werner was later confronted by the student, visibly upset, who was told that she would not be allowed to take the option. When Werner inquired further he discovered that Harris had informed the Theology Department the ‘course could not be guaranteed by the School’.²¹¹ Werner was unaware of this policy and had not been consulted. He still had postgraduates who did not finish until 1989/90. He also taught anthropology students who were wanting to take a final paper in 1988/89. He had promised them, and a student in philosophy, that his courses would be on offer until he left and he did not understand why this could not be so. Werner continued in his letter:

When I approached Prof. Harris for explanation, I was unable to get a clear statement from him as to when and by whom a decision was made that no commitment should be entered into with regard to teaching Indian Studies from next year changing the previously taken decision of phasing them out by the end of 1989/90.²¹²

Another written example from the same year helps us to formulate a greater insight to Harris’ Directorship. On 16 March 1987, a memorandum was sent from the Treasurer of the University to the Vice-Chancellor explaining that Edward Hulmes, a trustee of the Spalding Trust, had telephone called and, due to the announced closures of the Oriental Library and School, asked for a return of £5,000 that the Spalding Trust had donated in 1981 for a planned extension of the Oriental Section of the University Library. Hulmes also mentioned ‘the distress of the trustees at the idea that the Spalding Lecturer in Indian Civilization might not be replaced’. What else Hulmes said is not known but at the end of the memorandum the Treasurer wrote, ‘All in all there are

²⁰⁹ PGLSC, UND/CB1/8.

²¹⁰ PGLSC, UND/CB1/O7/7i&ii.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

bridges to be repaired; and it is clear that Harris is not the man to do it and does not command their [the Spalding Trust's] confidence'.²¹³

What Harris had specifically said or done to lose the confidence of the Spalding Trust is not clear, but it is not surprising for a man who was not known for his diplomatic charm or controlled temper. At the bottom of the memorandum a comment is scribbled by the Vice-Chancellor: *Noted; I feared something like this. FH*.²¹⁴ The Trust were incandescent with the decisions taken by Durham regarding Oriental Studies, for which they evidently held Harris in some way responsible. As a consequence of the University's actions in this period, the Spalding Trust no longer grants money to the University.

Holliday's memo is evidence that Harris' Directorship neglected the networking charm which had been prioritised under Thacker. This all occurred at a time when Thacker's entrepreneurial approach to gaining funding was needed most: when the British government was trying to reduce its expenditure as much as possible. For example, in 1992, the Government's White Paper *Higher Education: A New Framework* reiterated the philosophy which British Universities were now expected to follow:

The multiplicity of tasks undertaken by higher education institutions calls for a range of sources and styles of funding. Some activities attract, and on any showing should attract, funding from other sources than the public purse.²¹⁵

In niche departments like Durham's Oriental School and Library, the government's funding policy required independent donors more than ever. Private funding could give justification to maintain government funding, but it could also act as a life raft if the government was unwilling to fund. Harris' failure to maintain a strong relationship with bodies such as the Spalding Trust proved fatal at a time when the School could have called upon such bodies for financial support.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ *Higher Education: A New Framework* (London: HMSO, 1991), p.2.

Lesley Forbes

THE PURPOSE OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY (1973-1989)

The closure of the School angered and saddened many people at Durham. The greatest bitterness and resentment however occurred following the closure of the School when disputes arose over what to do with the Oriental Library's resources, built up over nearly half a century.

Lesley Forbes, in her capacity as Keeper of Oriental Books, had been one of the most vocal critics of the University's decision to close the School and the Oriental Library, writing frequently to the Vice-Chancellor and others in the summer of 1987. Forbes wrote to Holliday on 14 May 1987, the day after the Policy Committee had met, in which she stressed the long-built strengths of the Oriental Library in the Middle East and Ancient Near East were being neglected by the University. The decision to *de facto* replace Middle Eastern Studies for Chinese Studies at Durham (in conjunction with Japanese at Newcastle), Forbes commented, was dismissive of the Library's greatest assets and naively optimistic about the same being achieved in a short space of time with Chinese and Japanese Studies. She wrote that 'Durham could not, even in the medium term, if ever, build up a comparable level of resources in library, archive and documentation terms as are currently available here for the Ancient Near and Middle East'.²¹⁶

Miss Agnes (Nance) McAulay, University of Durham Librarian, summed up the Library's position on 1 June 1987 in a letter to Holliday, by which time it was apparent that without UGC funding the School and Library would not survive in their current form: 'It is disheartening to have to dismember the best Oriental Library outside the "Golden Triangle". It is a collection built up over 40 years which represents an immense investment both in financial and in human terms'.²¹⁷

After numerous attempts by Forbes to salvage something for the present Oriental Library, a letter from Mr J C F Hayward, the Registrar, from 5 June 1987, finally and explicitly expressed that reductions in staff and expenditure were inescapable. Hayward agreed that the position was sad, but added, 'I think, however, that you underestimate the seriousness of the financial situation'.²¹⁸ That the Oriental Library would be assimilated into the Main Library when there was no longer any need for it to be a departmental library for the School was then accepted by Forbes and the staff of the Oriental Library. Special collections, such as the Sudan Archive, would be relocated to Durham's Palace Green Library.

²¹⁶ PGLSC, UND/EA3/GA20

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

With the School closing and the Oriental Library being relocated it would seem that the battle was lost for those who had wanted to keep the present outfit of Oriental Studies at Durham. Bitter fallouts were to occur however when it became apparent that those staff leaving Durham for other departments of Middle Eastern Studies had been promised that as part of compensation for being, in effect, forcibly transferred, they could take the books and journals that were relevant to their research and teaching from the Oriental Section at Durham to their new institution.

On one side of the argument were Forbes and the University Library staff who believed that the books were the property of the University and should therefore remain. Since becoming Keeper of Oriental Books, Forbes had increased the Library's collections to over 155,000 volumes, which extended it to a grand total of 3900 linear metres. The Library argued that the time and dedication which it takes to build a top-quality research library was being casually dismissed. While these subjects may be being reduced for the time being, if ever the University wanted to resurrect these subjects then it would be sufficiently equipped – fitting to a leading British University – with the resources at hand. The Library argued that the Oriental Library was more than a faculty library, but also a wider resource for the whole of the North East, as well as a subsidiary library to other faculties which had research interests in Oriental Studies.

On the other side of the argument were those staff leaving Durham who had the support of the Director of the School, John Harris. They argued that because Durham was dropping the courses and subjects relating to those books, they should be transferred to institutions where they would be used. They added that Durham had only acquired a strong and varied Oriental Library on the request of staff members for those books; many donations to the library had been given with the intention to aid the academic research of staff members and students. Without those staff members and students, the books would not be there in the first place and now they were leaving there would be no future need of them. Because the academic staff's tenure was not being honoured, it was argued that they had a right to take the books, which had been a primary reason for many of them coming to Durham in the first place, and were a necessary part of carrying out their research.

These arguments were accentuated by the fact that the books were for Orientalists who required rarer material than other academics. This increased the need of scholars for the books but also the value of them to the library. The reality of the situation was probably not as big as it was bitterly fought because Durham staff were being transferred to three institutions which were

similarly endowed : UCL, SOAS and Manchester.²¹⁹ UCL, where Durham's Egyptology was being moved to, had the oldest Chair of Egyptology in the country and had a well-equipped library. SOAS, as the main Oriental institution in Great Britain was unlikely to need much, and Manchester had a strong Arabic library, and Hebrew material for Healey had the backing of Durham's most established department, Theology, and was therefore largely protected.

The main material needed for transfer was therefore the Persian material, for which Durham had built a superb collection. With the exception of Persian then the fight may have been more symbolic than real – the fight from Durham to not throw away its reputation – but in many instances the fight over the rarer books was a serious issue because books and periodicals which specialist libraries like UCL and SOAS did possess were even more valuable on account of the fact that they did not have them.

Those leaving had to meet with Nance McAulay and justify every book which they wished to take. It was an upsetting time for those involved and cause a rift between the librarians and scholars which centred around a difference in opinion on the nature and purpose of books in a university. One such fallout occurred over some books on Persia in Russian which Luft had assumed would not be used by anyone else but himself, and therefore believed they would be better served in active use by him in Manchester. The University Library contacted the Russian department to ensure the books remained at Durham despite the fact that they related to Persian Studies. It was incidents such as these that led to bitter fallouts.

These disputes were made worse by the involvement of Harris who unequivocally took the side of the departing scholars. Harris had helped to negotiate solid academic positions for those leaving Durham in their new universities. As part of his negotiations however it seems he used the taking of the books as a bargaining tool. In his thinking if they weren't to be used at Durham then they should go. The position of Harris hardened the opinion of those who felt he never held Durham's interests at heart. Both sides had valid points which both struggled to see amidst their own personal and professional crises which made an unfortunate end to forty years of Oriental Studies at Durham.

A compromise on the issue was finally reached. At a Board of Studies meeting in Oriental Studies on 18 April 1988 and agreed unanimously that if Oriental Studies were being transferred

²¹⁹ Although William Hale was not leaving on account of any closures or breaking of contracts, the end of Turkish at Durham involved him in the debate, as it made sense to many for him to take the books relating to his work with him.

as part of the UGC's nationwide rationalisation, then the 'Library collections connected with the teaching and research of the members of staff concerned should be made available for transfer with them to the receiving universities'.²²⁰ The condition of this however was that the books would go on loan for five years after which point they would be returned.

The dismantling of the Oriental Section's 155,000 volumes and their moving and reclassification into the Main Library had started in September 1987. The manuscripts, early printed books, Sudan Archive, and Abbas Hilmi II papers were transferred to Palace Green Library in November 1987. Shortly after, in December 1987, the Oriental Section was closed. From January until July 1988, with the Oriental Section closed, there was a re-cataloguing project of all the books that remained at Durham into the Main Library. Books from the store at Elvet House were evacuated and occupied at a new store at Belmont industrial estate, north east of Durham city, in December 1988. The staff were split between the Main Library, Palace Green and Education and Lesley Forbes was given the new position of Head of Technical Services.

From the correspondence files around the time of the School's and Oriental Library's closure, it seems at times only Forbes was fighting to maintain anything. While many were sad about what was going on, few expressed much opinion about it, at least not in writing. Largely this seems to stem from a view that the staff felt powerless about what inevitably was happening in the University. What comes through in Forbes' letters is her philosophy of a library in relation to a university.²²¹ Issues of stock management, communication and resources relate to the administration of a library and are important but because a university's primary capital is people.

A library is a tangible and material expression of the seriousness with which a university takes its subjects – much in the same way laboratories function for natural sciences – and therefore carries great symbolic clout. The casual dismissal of some of Durham's Oriental collections in this period was an example of just how poorly many of the University's staff understood that; while many of those leaving understood the need to be well resourced. At the end of 1998 she left Durham and in 1999 took up the post of Keeper of Oriental Collections at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

The Durham University Library's Annual Report for 1989-1990 was vague in its wording about what had happened when it subtly commented that there was a 'recataloguing project for Oriental material and the transfer of some oriental stock to other institutions, as a consequence of

²²⁰ PGLSC, UND/CB1/8.

²²¹ This is clearly expressed in L. E. Forbes, 'The management of orientalist library collections: Durham policy and practice and the Arab Middle East' in Burnett, David, ed., *Arabic Resources: Acquisition and Management in British Libraries* (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), pp.107-120.

rationalisation in the range of Oriental Studies subjects taught at Durham'.²²² The Annual Report also briefly listed that Oriental material was transferred to SOAS, UCL and Manchester accompanying the relevant members of staff. The Annual Report summarized the nature of the final agreement of what would happen to Oriental Materials:

There was an extensive period of consultation with teaching departments in Durham before agreement could be reached on what material was to be transferred. Some items which were considered to be important for future teaching and research needs in Durham were deposited on loan, pending a review in five years' time, under terms agreed by the Senate and Council. In summary the Library dispatched in September: to SOAS outright 119 monographs, 5 periodical titles (in 5 volumes and 319 parts) and 1 Newspaper in 28 parcels, together with 155 monographs on deposit; to University College, London outright 371 monographs and 7 periodical titles (in 6 volumes and 69 parts), together with 172 monographs and 1 periodical title on deposit; and to Manchester outright 2303 monographs, 48 periodical titles (in 64 volumes, 522 parts and 73 fiches) together with 31 newspaper titles. The question of the deposit of material in Manchester is still under discussion.²²³

Written evidence of which books eventually came back and when is not available.

²²² PGLSC, UND/EA1/A1/5.

²²³ Ibid.

Oriental Studies Continued

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF (1989-Present)

In 1 October 1989 the Department of East Asian Studies – teaching Chinese, Japanese and Korean courses – was created out of the School of Oriental Studies. Thus, what had been a comprehensive University department – comprising a School, Library and Museum – was rationalised. Due to practicalities the plan for the shared Chinese-Japanese centre between Durham and Newcastle soon failed, as many of the academics had claimed. The proposed joint ventures between Salford and Manchester and Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt also failed. Barring this setback, the Department of East Asian Studies continued where the School of Oriental Studies left off and upheld the reputation of Oriental Studies at Durham.

From 1989 until 1997 Keith Pratt was Head of Department, whose passion for Korea filtered into the curriculum. In 1983 Pratt, who had been the architect of the Oriental Music Festival, had been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Korea-Great Britain Centennial Committee for his services to the promotion of Anglo-Korean understanding. The Department offered a range of undergraduate modules on Korean language, history and culture as well as more specific postgraduate modules on the Korean War, Korean art, and the archaeology of China, Korea and Japan which were shared between Pratt and Gina Barnes, who succeeded Pratt as Head of Department in 1997 and held the post until 2000 when she was succeeded by Don Starr. The presence of Korean specialties in the Department was a unique selling point of the department which distinguished it from other Oriental faculties in Britain.

In 1999, the University's Senate formally recognized a Contemporary Chinese Studies Centre within the department for a period of five years which was to be responsible for developing taught postgraduate courses on China. Dr. M. S. Dillon, who taught postgraduate courses on the modern history, politics and society of China, was selected to be its Director. HEFCE published a *Review of Chinese Studies: Report of a HEFCE Review Group on Chinese Studies* in which it raised the fact that many of the Hayter appointees would be reaching retirement which would require additional funding for their replacements.²²⁴

The Report came at a time when the British government was working to maintain strong relationships in China following the handover of sovereignty to Hong Kong on 1 July 1997. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the academic community voiced their concerns that Britain was deficient in specialist Chinese knowledge, language provision, facilities, and funding, and the Report concluded that higher education in Britain 'was not equipped to respond to the

²²⁴ HEFCE, *Review of Chinese Studies: Report of a HEFCE Review Group on Chinese Studies*, February 99/09, p.11.

opening up of trading and political relations between the UK and the People's Republic of China'.²²⁵ The cause of these deficiencies was summarized by the Report when it stated: 'The principal overarching issues to emerge from our enquiries is the extent to which provision for Chinese studies is vulnerable to fluctuations in demand from students and research users'.²²⁶

Subsequently, HEFCE made substantial funding available to Chinese Studies in Britain. Durham submitted a 'Chinese Studies Bid for Special Funding to HEFCE' in which attention was drawn to the breadth of degrees, courses and research and also to the work of the new Contemporary Chinese Studies Centre which was aiming 'to consolidate existing research on society, culture, economy, and business in China (including Greater China)'.²²⁷ The Vice Chancellor, Kenneth Calman, submitted the bid to HEFCE on 17 August 1999. HEFCE replied on 9 November 1999 saying that Durham's bid had been successful and an annual grant of £150,000 was to be awarded for up to five years.²²⁸

Despite the positive steps taken in the closing years of the millennium, the Department of East Asian Studies was to suffer the same fate as the School of Oriental Studies. On 12 April 2002, Starr sent an apology to the Deputy Director of the Japan Foundation saying he would be unavailable to attend an event hosted by the Foundation, 'I am extremely sorry, but I have a meeting here on that day which I must attend. The situation here is still very tense, (we have a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor on Monday to discuss the Department's future) and discussions about the whole University's future shape are on-going'.²²⁹ The discussions to which Starr was referring was a restructuring plan which was being undertaken by Durham which was official labelled as the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

The decisions made by Durham regarding its restructuring plan made headlines in the national newspapers when it emerged that the Department of East Asian Studies (one of only seven in Britain) was to close as part of the £8.7 million restructuring plans.²³⁰ It was agreed that all students admitted as of October 2003 would be able to finish their degrees, meaning there would be no new intake of students as of 2004 and that the Department would be closing at the end of the academic year in 2007. In addition to this, CMEIS was to lose its undergraduate teaching and become a postgraduate research Institute of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS). All

²²⁵ Ibid., p.1.

²²⁶ Ibid., p.14.

²²⁷ PGLSC, UND/DB20/F10.

²²⁸ The Contemporary Chinese Studies Centre was opened in August but was not officially acknowledged by the University's Senate until September of 1999. It seems likely that the opening of the Centre was rushed through to boost Durham's HEFCE application.

²²⁹ PGLSC, UND/DB20/F3.

²³⁰ Donald MacLeod, 'Durham axes Asian studies in £8.7m revamp', *Guardian*, 19 June 2003; and, Liz Lightfoot, 'Durham scraps courses to gain subsidy', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 2003.

aspects of Oriental Studies for which there was provision at Durham were therefore dealt a huge hit. The funding and student places for East Asian Studies and CMEIS were to be concentrated in departments of greater popularity such as English, history, philosophy, law, geography, chemistry and maths.

The decision was mystifying to onlookers. The department had acquired a distinguished reputation in its field being the first choice for 55% of all UK higher grade candidates in Chinese and Japanese.²³¹ Part of the problem was size and the staff to student ratio. The Department only accounted for an annual intake of a very small number of students, the total size of the undergraduate body in 2004 being 115 undergraduates with 47 students from other departments taking modules for twenty members of staff (15 teaching staff, 2 support staff, three Estates and Buildings).²³² The official justification however was a reduction in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) from a five-star rating in 1996 to a four-star rating in 2001. In addition to this the University cited that the department had marked 21 out of 24 by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Both of these however later came into contention and were severely criticized as improper justification, given further weight when it emerged that the results of both assessments were questionable.

As in 1989, the plans were met with opposition from the academic community, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council argued it was a shortsighted decision. An international campaign was even created to prevent the proposed closure – Save Durham Department of East Asian Studies (Save Durham DEAS) – by a 1993 graduate of Chinese and German, H. J. Colston.²³³ Regarding Middle Eastern studies, Sir James Craig wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* about his disappointment at Durham's decision to neglect Oriental Studies for a second time in less than twenty years:

The new proposals therefore come as a sad shock. It is a mitigation that graduate studies will survive. But from where will they recruit their students? Throughout our universities, the teachers and researchers in oriental studies are increasingly coming from abroad. The professors of Arabic at Oxford, Cambridge and London are all foreigners. The list of members of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies based at Durham paints a similar picture. The preponderance of overseas scholars is an honour to us, but it creates an imbalance which, without undergraduates, is likely to grow.

Long ago, the legendary Cambridge orientalist E.G. Browne wrote: "Often I reflect with bitterness that England, though more directly interested in the East than any other country save Russia, offers less encouragement to its sons to engage in the

²³¹ Matthew Killeya, 'Last man standing', *Guardian*, 25 September 2007.

²³² PGLSC, UND/DB20/F12.

²³³ Richard Alleyne and Liz Lightfoot, 'Foreign Office joins campaign to reverse closures at Durham', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 2003; and, Rebecca Smithers, 'Fight to save Asian studies', *Guardian*, 16 July 2003.

study of oriental languages than any other great European nation.” Are we returning to a similar myopia?²³⁴

In spite of the concerns expressed, on 15 July 2003 Durham’s highest governing body, the University Council, announced that they had accepted the proposals of the £8.7 million Strategic Improvement Plan on the grounds that it was beneficial to Durham University as whole as a means to keep it more competitive.²³⁵ Once the proposals had been accepted they were later ratified, in what came as a shock to bystanders, when the University’s academics ratified the proposals on 29 September 2003 in the form of the Senate in what was described as ‘a rather fraught meeting’, in which 44 academic representatives voted for the changes, 16 voted against, 3 abstained, and 1 spoilt paper; the University Council then ratified their decisions the following day.²³⁶

The Save Durham DEAS campaign increased its efforts, getting more of its graduates on board as an international campaign emerged with Edward Radcliffe, a 1993 graduate, and former Treasurer of the British Chamber of Commerce in China, emerging as a leading spokesman. Radcliffe drew attention to the improper procedure with which the closure was being handled and the impact on diplomatic relations it would have with the Chinese Government.²³⁷ The decisions would be a double edged sword because it would limit the capabilities of Britain in East Asia (at this point Durham accounted for 15% of all graduates in single or combined honours in Japanese and Chinese Studies), and also in bruising the opinion with which East Asian countries such as China and Japan would hold Britain who were cutting back on provision for the study of their culture.

Sir Kenneth Calman, Durham’s Vice-Chancellor and Warden since 1998, who had been the leading light behind the new measures, defended the decisions of the Senate and the Council in a frank interview for Durham’s online independent news website, *Durham21*.²³⁸ Calman argued in favour of the idea of dispersing East Asian modules throughout stronger departments and also on building relationships with East Asian universities when he claimed, “This is not a watering

²³⁴ Excerpt from letter of Sir James Craig to *Daily Telegraph*, ‘Scrapping of oriental languages is myopic’, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 2003.

²³⁵ Polly Curtis, ‘Durham votes for department closures’, *Guardian*, 16 July 2003; John Crace, ‘The axe falls’, *Guardian*, 22 July 2003.

²³⁶ Polly Curtis, ‘Academics vote to close East Asian department’, *Guardian*, 29 September 2003.

²³⁷ ‘University risks Chinese ire by axing department’, *Guardian*, 30 September 2003.

²³⁸ ‘The Eleventh Hour’, an interview between Matt Killea, Sir. Kenneth Calman and Nicola Parker (Academic Registrar), posted on Durham21 on 2 November 2003, (Hereafter, The Eleventh Hour). Transcript available at:

<<http://www.durham21.co.uk/2003/11/the-eleventh-hour-the-transcript/>>

down of the University's commitment to Asia. This is a mechanism of strengthening it'.²³⁹ Calman went on the offensive towards the Department of East Asian Studies, arguing that the decisions largely occurred out of their stubbornness and refusal to become more commercially viable by reforming and adapting their degree programmes.

They knew that this was happening. We know from our spies in the department, because we have the occasional one here and there, and they said 'Well, we knew this was coming. We knew two years ago that this was coming'. Don't let them tell you that they didn't know about it, because it's so obvious to anybody. That's what's so frustrating about it, in that I think we could have resolved this and we can still ensure that we teach East Asian languages and actually your problem of teaching out would be resolved. But if we don't get any help and support, it's going to be very difficult for me to do that.²⁴⁰

Inserting 'spies' in a Department seems like a poor way to build trust in an academic community but Calman also commented about how he felt his attempts to work a solution out were being sabotaged by the organised campaign against the closure, citing that for an explanation to the negative responses from the Chinese and Japanese Embassy:

Now that September 30th is over [the date the proposals were finally ratified by the University Council], the war is finished. The real issue now for the staff in DEAS [Department of East Asian Studies] is how are they going to win the peace? Including how we develop the language and culture side of things and I think it would be really nice to get them to help us with that. They have, over the last three months, blown up significant bridges across the world in terms of East Asian Studies.²⁴¹

Moreover, Calman argued, the opportunities for there to be a positive outcome from all of this were there if the Department was willing to cooperate:

There is an opening for them [DEAS] if they want to take it, there's a very open door there. If they keep blowing up all the bridges then it will go down the chute, I will not be able to save it. But if they're actually helpful to us, we could actually save quite a lot of it.²⁴²

Three reviewers of the Department – Tim Barrett, Penny Francks, and Jonathan Rigg – all claimed that Calman had misrepresented their opinions following their four-star ratings of the department.²⁴³ Professor Tim Barrett, who chaired the review, commented on the subject, 'It is

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Polly Curtis, 'Durham's reputation suffers following east Asian course closure', *Guardian*, 7 November 2003; Matthew Killea, 'Durham VC 'misrepresented' views of research assessors', *Guardian*, 15 December 2003.

clear that DEAS, on this matter, at the very least have not been given the benefit of the doubt. A pause for reflection would be a good idea'.²⁴⁴ Starr cited this as a disturbing cause for concern of how flawed the process had been in deciding the future of the department. One such complaint was the fact that one of the reviewers had come from Durham's Department of Geography – a department which was to directly benefit from the closure.²⁴⁵

The campaign to prevent the closure exploded. Prominent members in the world of politics, diplomacy and business came out in support of keeping the Department open including the former Prime Minister, Edward Heath. Support reached a climax when the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, intervened following a complaint from a constituent in his nearby constituency of Sedgefield who was graduate of the Department of East Asian Studies, arguing that the decision was short sighted.²⁴⁶ Durham University's Chancellor, the actor Sir Peter Ustinov, shortly before his death, also sent a handwritten letter to Starr expressing his staunch opposition in what he described was 'the destruction of a valid and valuable department'; concluding the letter, Ustinov commented to Starr, 'Make what use of this letter you see fit'.²⁴⁷

The discord led the Education Secretary, Charles Clarke, in 2004 to draw up plans to stop the closing of departments of national importance, of which East Asian Studies was one high profile example.²⁴⁸ However, Clarke's intervention highlighted that Durham's closure of East Asian Studies was not an isolated incident but part of a wider trend. In addition to Durham's East Asian Studies, the closure of the architecture department at Cambridge received high profile protest. Chemistry was dropped at a number of institutions such as King's College, London, Queen Mary, London, Kent and Swansea. Many other subjects and departments were closed or came under threat.²⁴⁹

The numerous examples all cited the various governmental pressures – most of which related to finances or popularity – one article concisely summarized the reality: 'Vice-chancellors said they had no alternative but to concentrate their scarce resources on departments with the

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ While this complaint was given, it must be highlighted that the review occurred long before the closure of the Department of East Asian Studies was public knowledge or official policy – this is therefore perhaps a harsh supposition.

²⁴⁶ Polly Curtis and Matt Killea, 'Blair urges Durham to save Asian studies', *Guardian*, 22 June 2004.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ 'Clarke plans to support 'unpopular' degree subjects' *Daily Telegraph* 16 September 2004 [Liz Lightfoot];

²⁴⁹ Sarah Cassidy, 'Universities' Cash Crisis: No subject is safe as financial woes deepen', *The Independent*, 11 December 2004.

strongest research record and on those offering courses such as media and sports studies that most appeal to students'.²⁵⁰

While on one side a national campaign of academics, diplomats, politicians, newspapers and corporations allied against university bureaucrats, it is perhaps too simplistic to label Calman as the scapegoat. The first thing to note is that, in spite of the political pressure – that included the University's Chancellor and two British Prime Ministers – the reasoning for closing the department must have been persuasive in order for the University's academics to vote in favour of it (the counter to this argument being that many departments benefitted from this closure by way of increasing funding and student places in their own departments). Furthermore, the closure of several other departments and removal of subjects from universities nationwide illustrated that Durham was, in many ways, trapped in a wider mechanism of limited resources and increased pressure requiring forceful measures to be taken.

There is also the point, as emphasized by Calman, that the Department was given a long-time period of discussion and many opportunities to reform prior to the announcements and that their unwillingness to do so left the University with little option but to advocate closure. It is odd that the University would be eager to remove a quality department without good cause, and the Department's low intake of students would require some compromise. During the closure of these departments for example the commentator Simon Jenkins voiced a minority opinion in favour of the nationwide departmental closures and those with the courage to close them – arguing it to be a necessary measure in order to keep universities as efficient and viable institutions.²⁵¹ The Chief Executive of HEFCE, Sir Howard Newby, also downplayed the panic arguing that the changes being made to universities was part of a necessary modernisation in universities and response to changing student demand.²⁵² HEFCE had actually offered aid to keep the Department open but the University was unwilling to put up funds to match it.

Similar to the School of Oriental Studies, it is clear that the closure of the Department of East Asian Studies was badly managed; resulting in a breakdown of communication and trust between all parties involved. John Crace, writing in *The Guardian*, following the initial announcement of the closure in 2003, drew attention to some of the dubious aspects of the

²⁵⁰ John Clare and Roger Highfield, 'Alarm over loss of vital college courses', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 2004

²⁵¹ Simon Jenkins, 'Make a dash for freedom' *The Times*, 3 December 2004.

²⁵² Tony Halpin, 'Closure of key subjects is 'not a crisis'', *The Times*, 29 June 2005/

decision.²⁵³ The argument was put forward by some that Durham's decisions were not a response to government pressures but actually a response to Durham's being highly leveraged and in need of drastic financial reform. Further suspicion arose from the reasons given for the closure which was not obvious choice.

The University of Durham Business School had gained only a 3a in the research assessment (one of the worst in the university). Rather than bring this under the same scrutiny and closure as East Asian Studies, in 2002 as part of restructuring the University renamed it the Durham Business School and relocated it to the Department of Economics and Finance. Other than the name, no other changes were made to the Business School. But naturally, as a cash cow – attracting high intake of international and overseas students – it was not a department considered for closing. Crace concisely summarized the decisions as follows: 'Yet the way in which the decisions on closure and investment were made is instructive, both from the university's and the national perspective. For the driving force behind the change appears to be short-term cash gains at the expense of long-term academic and strategic interests'.²⁵⁴

The four-star RAE rating was a major reason cited for the Department of East Asian Studies closure. It was used to claim it was not a rising department. Several things about this were dubious. In 1996 the Department had gained a five-star rating but then was reduced in 2001 to four. The Department criticized the manner of the assessment arguing that it did not follow the proper RAE guidelines. It also did not match the facts since the research output had massively increased since the 1996 assessment. Furthermore, the assessors were not east Asian experts and therefore, Starr protested, were not qualified to assess the quality of their research.

A further reason cited against the Department was that it only obtained 21 marks out of 24 in the QAA. However, it was acknowledged that two of those points came as a result of the central university system and were therefore aspects external to the Department's control.²⁵⁵ The foundations for the departments closure were therefore insecure and understandably came in for criticism.

Given the national attention which the Department of East Asian Studies received, the situation of CMEIS was given little attention. CMEIS had become a teaching department in its

²⁵³ John Crace, 'The axe falls', *Guardian*, 22 July 2003.

²⁵⁴ John Crace, 'The axe falls', *Guardian*, 22 July 2003.

²⁵⁵ For the University's response see 'The Eleventh Hour' interview between Matt Killeya, Sir. K. Calman and Nicola Parker (Academic Registrar), *Durham21*, 2 November 2003.

own right as of 1988 with responsibility for undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in Arabic, Middle Eastern History, and Islamic Studies. Undergraduate students could study for Bachelor degrees in Arabic with Middle Eastern Studies, another Modern European Languages, or a range of social science subjects. While a range of one-year and two-years Masters programmes were on offer.²⁵⁶ CMEIS had problems from the start however due to its being a *de facto* subsidiary of social sciences – limiting the study of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies in their own right. It is no surprise therefore that the strongest development at CMEIS occurred when social science staff with expertise in Middle Eastern international relations joined.

In 2003 it was announced that, as part of the Strategic Improvement Plan, CMEIS would lose its undergraduate teaching capacities and was to become and postgraduate Institute of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS). This change occurred in August 2004 when the IMEIS was merged with the Department of Politics to create the School of Government and International Affairs. Arabic teaching was moved to the School of Modern Languages and Cultures where it remains to this day. The majority of Middle Eastern modules likewise went or were transferred to the School of Government and International Affairs where they are taught today. Likewise, there are modules on Islamic finance within economics and even a Masters in Islamic Finance within the Durham Business School. The Middle East Documentation Unit continues to grow and remains an excellent resource for students and researchers.

CMEIS had been based in Southend House. In 1996 money was given to fund an extension of the building in order to increase provision for teaching. The planned extension however was blocked due to a protected tree; thus a new building was built nearby on Potter's Bank that is now the Al-Qasimi Building which the School of Government and International Affairs uses for teaching in addition to Southend House.

Calman retired as Vice-Chancellor in 2007 having gained a reputation for building Durham in the University rankings. The fiasco with the Department of East Asian Studies and its publicity in the national press unfortunately clouds his period as Vice-Chancellor. The same year Calman left, the Department of East Asian Studies closed. All of the staff except Starr took voluntary severance. Starr fought hard against the decision in the four-year window he had between 2003 and 2007 to reverse the University's decision to close the Department. He could not prevent the closure but in 2006 Starr wrote a strong letter to the University entitled, 'The Case for Taking East Asia Seriously' in which he eloquently defended the importance of understanding East Asian

²⁵⁶ See *BRISMES Journal*, Issue 3, November 1987

history, culture, literature, philosophy, religion, film, and drama, and that East Asia was a necessary feature of a university if it wished to be world leading and therefore competitive.²⁵⁷

On 8 December 2006, Starr wrote again to the Vice-Chancellor with a convincing case for maintaining staff of the Department at Durham in Modern Foreign Languages where research could continue and modules offered – arguing that it would be untenable for a leading university to not offer language such as Chinese and Japanese. Starr was later interviewed by Matthew Killeya for *The Guardian* as the department was coming to a close in which he reaffirmed his view that the university was making a foolish mistake regarding Japan (back in 2007 being the world's second largest economy) and China (having recently overtaken Britain as the fourth largest economy). As Starr said: 'It was clear then and is even clearer now that the focus of the world is turning towards East Asia'. Starr added a comment he had heard from a representative of the Japanese Embassy to the Calman which said, 'The people of Japan will never forgive you for what you have done'.²⁵⁸

The comment said to Calman by the diplomat highlighted that the decisions made at an administrative level have far reaching consequences. Calman may have presented the conflicts surrounding the Department of East Asian Studies as a war – a civil war would perhaps have been more precise – but as with all wars there is collateral damage. The removal of subjects, in 2003 as in 1989, concerned not just a curriculum but also the employment and study of the members of a department. The implications for graduates and staff who would have to look to other institutions or businesses for work would be severely hampered by the reduced clout a defunct department offers. During the furor of these decisions, on 3 August 2003, a letter was sent from a Helen Minter in Isleworth to the *Sunday Times* which illustrates that reality:

My son is awaiting his A-level results. He intends to take a gap year before studying linguistics and Japanese at university. He received a conditional offer from Cambridge which he turned down in favour of a conditional offer from Durham (linguistics with east Asian languages). Now Durham plans to close both the east Asian languages and the linguistics departments before 2004. Cambridge has refused to reinstate the original offer. The possibility of the closures at Durham was discussed before the date on which my son had to make a decision about his choice of course. I feel Durham misled my son by not warning him about the possible closures. Does Durham have a contractual obligation towards my son's education? Can we seek redress for the distress and inconvenience suffered?²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ PGLSC, UND/DB20/F3.

²⁵⁸ Matthew Killeya, 'Last man standing', *Guardian*, 25 September 2007.

²⁵⁹ Letter from Helen Minter in Isleworth to *Sunday Times*, 'Cheated' by the sudden closure of a degree course', *Sunday Times*, 3 August 2003

With regard to the Japanese diplomat's comments, Starr added, the people of China and Japan feel like the University said: 'You're not important'.²⁶⁰ Chinese and Japanese were moved to the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures where Starr remains as a Lecturer.

²⁶⁰ Starr quoted in Matthew Killea, 'Last man standing', *Guardian*, 25 September 2007.

Oriental Studies Today and Tomorrow?

THE STATE OF THE ACADEMIC TRADITION

The story of Oriental Studies at Durham is one of fluctuation. Many innovative and passionate individuals have promoted the subject but have often been surrounded by financial insecurity. This is the main lesson of the history just told: subjects considered esoteric rely on the charisma of their adherents. While they may thrive in times of plenty, in times of scarcity they are never the priority. Often considered a luxury or eccentricity, Oriental Studies cannot take liberties as other subjects which are secure in their being considered a default part of the academic canon. Their defenders must therefore work hard to ensure their presence in the academy.

One need not look far to see that Asia, Africa and the Middle East is in vogue. The pace of economic development – especially in China and India – and the dependency of resources from the regions of study, and now too their manufacturing sectors, are some reasons for this. The size and scale of these countries alone makes them important, as William Antholis recently observed when he travelled through India and China, where one third of humanity lives.²⁶¹ Moreover, countries like Japan, Korea, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and more, are countries of sizeable populations with significant industries and resources which make them important associates. If Britain is to deal effectively with these countries – commercially or diplomatically or otherwise – then a greater understanding of their languages, histories and cultures is required than is presently the case. Their becoming mainstream in academia is perhaps an unrealistic idyll, but their being obscure and rare should not be the case.

In military matters too, an intimate understanding of the languages, culture, history, politics and geography of the Middle East, Africa and Asia is required. The latter half of the twentieth century was dominated by a Cold War perceived as a battle of ‘East versus West’ and recent history has rarely seen a decade when the United States (and often Britain) has not been intimately involved or actively engaged in the military conflicts of these regions: Korea (1950-53); Vietnam (1964-75); Iran-Iraq (1980-1988); the Gulf (1990-91); Afghanistan (2001-14); Iraq (2003-11); Libya (2011); and today the situation of the Syrian Civil War, and the predominance of the terrorist group ISIS in Syria and Iraq, has seen NATO involved in military supplies, to this active military engagement is not an impossibility. In Iran and North Korea western countries are attempting to

²⁶¹ Antholis, W., *Inside Out India and China: Local Politics Go Global* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013). The outstanding feature of Antholis’ analysis is the prevalence of regional provinces in China and individual states in India and the role of local leaders and institutions to understanding them. His point is that there cannot be a generic approach to countries which are sub-continentals but a detailed knowledge of their localities is required for effective and healthy relations.

reduce nuclear capabilities. The enduring conflict of statehood between Israel and Palestine also remains a heated topic and can dominate foreign affairs.

Since Scarbrough, foreign policy has always been one of the main features behind Oriental Studies in British universities. When the Hayter Report issued its recommendations, they were ‘conditioned by our belief that this country must be better equipped to understand and to contribute to developments in Asia, Africa and eastern Europe’.²⁶² Assuming the desire of Hayter’s recommendations still stand, then Oriental Studies has an important future. The instability of much of the region of study in Oriental Studies, its strategic positioning geographically, its possession of important resources, and the emergence of countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East as economic powerhouses, indicate that the involvement of western countries in ‘the Orient’ is far from over. In fact, *if* present trends continue, this engagement will accelerate and intensify over the course of the twenty-first century making it even more apposite.

Such notions are gaining ground among a more general audience too. In the best-selling *The Silk Roads*, Peter Frankopan offers a history of the world in which the economic interactions between people and their territories – most often between East and West for resources such as silk, grain, gold, silver and oil – has driven much of history; globalisation is therefore not a recent phenomenon.²⁶³ Similarly, while post-War history may be pessimistically considered a decline of the West, Pankaj Mishra in *From the Ruins of Empire* has hypothesised that people may soon look back on our present time from the other side – not as a decline of the West but as the ascendancy of eastern countries as dominant super powers.²⁶⁴ Merging these perspectives, we may not just be witnessing today a re-emergence of the Orient, primarily far east Asia, but one could argue that we are seeing a recalibrating of the world to a more natural balance than the western dominance of the last half millennium.

A decline of the West is not an inevitable consequence of the rise of the East – there is too much we do not know to guess what may happen. But the point does stand that the West cannot neglect the East and act independently in geo-political decisions. These observations about international relations, if correct, must include more practical elements. One of these is educational: if the future will be one in which global interaction will intensify on an economic, social and political level, then it is imperative that citizens and scholars are well informed about

²⁶² *Hayter Report*, p.63.

²⁶³ Frankopan, Peter, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

²⁶⁴ Mishra, Pankaj, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

the world with which they interact. The practical question is how should we go about achieving this through educational policy?

As Sir Peter Parker commented, in a cover letter to his report which addressed the universities' vice chancellors on 18 February 1986, 'It cannot be right that every other decade the country goes into a spasm of concern. I must hope that this Enquiry, the latest of them, will offer an opportunity to develop a more coherent policy – with stamina'.²⁶⁵ This could have been written at any point between 1947 and 2017, and this paper has tried to illustrate by specific historical example, some of the consistent challenges to Oriental Studies which must be addressed if the subject is to flourish.

Two recurring problems arose in the history just told: the funding for and popularity of Oriental Studies. The two are separate but also connected. Few are willing to fund expensive subjects when there are limited students, yet people are less inclined to take poorly resourced subjects with little promotion. Several obstacles persist. One is promotion. Few people are aware of the Oriental degrees that are on offer. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding about who can take them, it is for example not always clear that you need not have studied the languages before applying. Linked to this is the fact that fewer schools and colleges promote European languages from an earlier age where provision is low which equips children with the capabilities to pursue the study non-European languages and cultures at University level.

A positive is that within British higher education the quality of research is still world leading and provision of Oriental Studies is surviving. At Durham for example, we see many positive things. Chinese and Japanese are making a comeback, Arabic remains in modern foreign languages where also Persian is now taught, again. While subjects like Assyriology and Egyptology have lost the standing they once had, the Oriental Museum remains a popular attraction and the reputable Archaeology, Classics and History Departments offer modules relating to these areas and other parts ancient history. The Theology Department has maintained several of the languages the School taught which would otherwise have been lost: Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic and Middle Egyptian are all on offer as well as more general historical, anthropological and religious courses. The Sudan Archive and MEDU also remain leading resources for researchers.

As good as these efforts are, they are not comparable with what was achieved by the School of Oriental Studies, and later the Department of East Asian Studies. The destruction to the infrastructure – of people and their expertise – which both the 1989 and 2003 closures caused, led to institutional damage and the loss of interesting and dynamic courses. Scholarship thrives in a

²⁶⁵ See cover letter of *Parker Report*.

collegial atmosphere, where resources can be pooled and ideas shared, but this has been weakened with the loss of designated departments. The Oriental influence in Archaeology, History, Economics, Politics, Theology and more will benefit those subjects no doubt, but the lack of a specialist body or institute for Oriental Studies as existed before means that subjects are atomised into separate pockets.

For example, although Arabic is based in modern foreign languages, modules of Islam are found in the School of Government and International Relations as well as the Business School.²⁶⁶ In such circumstances, students and researchers formally outside of Oriental Studies will benefit from acquiring more general knowledge of the Asia, Africa and the Middle East but the studies themselves will progress little with the lack of an independent community which is financially stable providing opportunities for scholarships and fellowships, travel grants and conferences, and other forms of leading research for consistent publication in their field.

Nationwide, the picture is similar. Where Oriental Studies is well endowed at specific bodies like SOAS, Oxford and Cambridge then Britain is home to leading scholars who are an asset to the prestige of the university system. Moreover, museums like the British Museum in London, the Ashmolean in Oxford, or the Oriental Museum in Durham, are fine examples where leading Oriental collections are housed and provide an opportunity for academics to conduct research or the general public to increase their knowledge. General provision is not bad either – a quick scan through the modules and courses available at many British universities shows that one can gain knowledge of the history, culture and even language of a plethora of societies in a variety of departments. These are usually an anomaly however, students may take the odd course, but there is a general absence of people immersing themselves entirely in Oriental Studies and languages.

When one considers the present opportunities, this should not be the case. The internet could provide an abundance of educational opportunities. Already library resources are made available to students through online journals and e-books which previously would be limited to one or two copies. Information is also more freely available because international news can be accessed through online newspapers and other outlets from around the world which can enable students to keep informed about many regions of study. Furthermore, television, radio, film, food and various elements of different cultures are more accessible to people due to the growth of

²⁶⁶ As an aside this is a remarkable illustration of present perceptions and understanding of the Middle East, that Islam – the world's second biggest religion – is taught from the perspectives of finance and government. Such an understanding, it could be argued, poorly registers the role of Islam on the cosmological and anthropological understandings of the world for Muslims by not locating it first and foremost as a religion.

international trade which can open opportunities to learn about different cultures and may inspire people to consider higher education in a field of interest, if they are aware of its availability.

Furthermore, on language study, online learning platforms are being created and these will grow in sophistication in time, such platforms will also give experience for people wanting to learn languages who may not have access to a personal tutor, this may even help ancient and modern Oriental languages expand beyond the academy too. On travel, commercial flights and links between universities internationally has also made exchanges easier from the time of the Scarbrough Report. There is also the added point that among mass immigration an educational policy could capitalise on the bi- or multi-lingual abilities of many immigrants here in language teaching at school, university or commercial level. A changing demographic in a globalised world may also see traditional notions of East and West abandoned or replaced – thus the concept of Oriental Studies made redundant – but for the time being the distinction is there and academic study valuable.

The lack of popularity for Oriental Studies is not simple. Even with these potential changes to learning, one cannot hide from the fact that Oriental languages are hard and therefore acquiring a knowledge of history, literature and politics is not easy either. Learning obscure scripts and dialects with a syntax and vocabulary very alien to English is not easy. It can be intimidating and incentives may be required to encourage people to take subjects which are academically rigorous and difficult. The time taken to master such subjects can be a lifetime which may not appeal to people seeking a qualification to secure them a job. Potential applicants' concerns about a stable career path could be aided by scholarships and effectively marketing the exciting and necessary careers in diplomacy, business, media or academia which await those with the determination to undertake a degree in an Oriental Studies subject.

For example, a 2016 review published by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the savvy diplomat Tom Fletcher outlined some needed changes to revamp British diplomatic service.²⁶⁷ Fletcher's recommendations included language skills as part of the need for greater professional skills and expertise as one of the recommendations. Likewise, the number of international corporations – in addition to small and medium enterprises – who would benefit from an Orientalist's ability to analyse markets and offer services in Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries cannot be understated. Alternatively, Orientalists by training may not enter a career which directly uses their subject, but the lateral thinking required to learn about different cultures and the range of skills developed in a well-orchestrated degree exemplify an individual of

²⁶⁷ See, *Future FCO Report*, published on 9 May 2016. Also 'Modern Diplomacy: Foreign Office moves to enlist more Bauers' in *Financial Times*, 9 May 2016, p.4.

academic rigour, intellectual stimulation, and general knowledge which is attractive and useful to employers in a variety of industries.

Many of the concerns and opportunities highlighted above are not unique to Oriental Studies, their being dilemmas for the humanities in general, but they are accentuated for Oriental Studies, due to its perceived esotericism. Throughout this paper Oriental Studies has been understood as belonging to the humanities but seen a gradual encouragement towards the social sciences. As the Hayter Report sought to promote, Orientalists may where appropriate employ the tools of social sciences and other disciplines, but the underlying motive of these subjects is to understand society ‘scientifically’ – in a way that can be explained by a set of principles or axioms irrespective of cultural idiosyncrasies. The traditional Oriental Studies promoted by Scarborough differs to this because its attention was to achieve a comprehensive understanding of elements that are particular to a culture in its own right.

Oriental Studies has been no exception to attempts which wish to turn traditional arts and humanities more social scientific. This trend was observable in Durham, positively following the Hayter Report, and in the less positive decisions taken after the Parker Report. The under subscription of language students applies to modern European languages just as it does to modern Oriental languages; and classical European languages are in a similar position when struggling to defend their validity of study for similar charges of relevance and utility.²⁶⁸

Although languages suffer, they benefit (particularly modern ones) from their having some immediate application. Arts and humanities subjects are suffering from declining enrolment due to a common perception that they are irrelevant to the practicalities of modern industries. Characteristic pressures to change this perception is a move from a traditional humanities approach to a social scientific one. This involves a reduced emphasis on linguistic and cultural specifics in favour of an increased focus on modernity applied with general theories about society. Such an approach is more digestible to students (and therefore more straightforward to teach) and is seen as having some broad applicability to a career.

This differs significantly to the previous humanities approach, espoused by the department created by Thacker and others, which sought to promote an awareness of deep rooted history of a culture in addition to its languages thus instilling a comprehensive understanding of a specialism, on which contemporary issues could receive an informed opinion. This lack of an immediate utility

²⁶⁸ There was a negative swing of 3% (for postgraduate) and 5% (for undergraduate) in first year language student enrolments from the 2013/14 to the 2014/15 academic years. See, ‘Higher education student enrolments and qualifications obtained at higher education providers in the United Kingdom 2014/15’ at Higher Education Statistics Agency, 14 January 2016.

– something that is measurably transferable – is a challenge facing the humanities. Subjects which cannot be seen to offer something of immediate use – in either the information it gives you or in the relevance it has to a specific job – are dismissed as wasteful and unimportant.

This can be seen in the suggestions outlined above about how to help Oriental Studies: the suggestions seek to promote the usefulness of the subject of Oriental Studies. This is a necessity because, as Harris found to his peril, justifying courses on their intellectual credit alone has little benefit when bureaucratic administration must combat funding bodies which grapple with the most fundamental of economic problems: scarcity of resources against infinite demand.

A further lesson of this paper has been how difficult it is to justify scholarship – which is a lengthy investment and creates an expertise which is not easily quantified. While scholarship may be in a joint enterprise with things like commerce and diplomacy, this is not always apparent. Because a university's primary capital rests in its people, the greatest threat to their position (and to investment in future experts) is myopia. When budgets are hampered by low funds and limited resources, myopic moves are easily made, as the history of Oriental Studies at Durham illustrates.

One response to this is that usefulness can change, what is useful now may not be tomorrow. Teaching subjects on their usefulness alone has its flaws therefore and should not be the only consideration. Another challenge may be made that the need to learn about a culture is being reduced in a world dominated by global corporations where products and services are becoming standardized worldwide. The suggestions outlined above are therefore only temporary. The real challenge concerns answering the existential crisis of the humanities, namely, convincing people they matter. In asking this one cannot escape the even bigger question concerning the purpose(s) and functions of a university.²⁶⁹

The humanities are difficult to justify because their value lies not necessarily in their content – although that is of interest and value – but primarily in the people they shape. While having people who comprehensively understand regions of the Middle East, Africa and Asia has

²⁶⁹ Far more experienced and qualified individuals than this author have dealt with this issue which is beyond the scope of the present work. The seminal work on this question is John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). Newman's original intention regarding theology in a university has been supplanted as a text which is seen to justify a liberal education. Likewise, a work by Sir Walter Moberly, who played a part in this story as Chairman of the UGC, *The Crisis in the University* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1949) is a reflective work by a sincere Christian following the insecurity of the Second World War which takes stock of the variety of threats to a University and a set of solutions. More recently, Stefan Collini in *What are universities for?* (London: Penguin, 2012) deals at length with the place of the humanities within the context of a university. Finally, a creatively written book by a Professor of Sociology at Goldsmith's, Les Back, *Academic Diary: Or Why Higher Education Still Matters* (London: Goldsmiths Press, 2016) gives personal insight into his thoughts on a lifetime working in academia. These are just some of the many works – among which novels, surveys and more can be included – which deal with the nature and purposes of higher education.

practical uses, this is not the fundamental purpose of their having that expertise from the perspective of the humanities. Utility is a by-product of a cultured person, a type of person which the humanities seeks to cultivate. The study of subjects like history, literature, religion and philosophy are studied for their own sake, and if there is a use then that is all the better, but ultimately their use – if we must give them one – is in the people they help flourish.

As long as the consideration is utility and the attempts are scientific, then Oriental Studies, and other humanities, are in the precarious position of relying on the charisma and skill of the scholars, which all too often leaves them at the mercy of the enthusiasm or hostility of the bureaucrats.

Appendix 1: T. W. Thacker's 1944 Memorandum

This memorandum by T. W. Thacker was sent to Room 17 of the British Foreign Office on 1 December 1944. It was sent on request of the Scarborough Committee as part of their research to hear the opinion of an expert about the present condition of Near Eastern Studies in Great Britain. Thacker provides a comparative assessment to the subject's study in other countries but it is here where he first formally proposes a specialist institute at Durham. A copy can be found at the Palace Green Library Special Collections UND/CC1/L8.

T.W. Thacker's Memorandum on the Importance of Near Eastern Studies and the case for a Durham Institute. Sent to Room 17, Foreign Office on 1st December 1944.

1. Importance of Near Eastern Studies to Britain.

In the years following the present war it will be vital for Great Britain to devote far more attention to the study of the languages, history and culture of the Near East, viz. Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Persia, than she has hitherto done. On the one hand these Oriental peoples are becoming more westernized and more nationalistic, and must therefore be treated as partners of equal standing in the world of politics and commerce, and on the other hand, other great powers, allied as well as enemy, have been taking an increasing interest in Near Eastern Affairs and are equipping themselves presumably for active intervention there. If Great Britain is to hold her own in the Near East she must produce a much greater number of men well versed in its languages and ways of life, men who are competent to represent British interests of whatever kind there. She must also endeavour to produce scholars in the various fields of Oriental learning, not only as evidence of her sympathy with the Oriental peoples and her interest in them, but also as a proof to the world at large that her attainments in this sphere of scholarship are in no way inferior to those of other nations. As Mr. Eden very rightly observes, "the prestige of British scholarship is an important contributing factor in the consolidation of our influence abroad."

The importance of the living languages of the Near East is so obvious as to need no further insistence. It may not, however, be generally realised how essential it is that Great Britain should encourage the teaching of the ancient tongues of that region. In the following paragraphs, therefore, an attempt will be made to demonstrate the wisdom of not allowing these studies to pass into oblivion in this country, as they are now in danger of doing. If more space in this memorandum is devoted to the Ancient East than the Modern, it is not because the importance of Modern studies is underrated, but because the Ancient studies are at first sight so remote from

modern politics and problems that their value to the Nation may well pass unnoticed. Their case, therefore, needs the greater emphasis.

2. Pride of the Near Eastern Peoples in their Past.

In recent years the peoples of the Near East have become aware of the glorious past of their countries. For decades they have observed the archaeologists at work in their lands, and the results of these excavations – monuments, statues, exquisite works of art of all kinds – are housed in their national museums for all to see. Western scholarship has shown them that their countries are the sites of [o]ld civilisations which each in its turn made great contributions to the progress of mankind, and which in antiquity far surpass that of the oldest western peoples. Of this they are, and may justly be, extremely proud. Nationalists have arisen who have made great play of the ancient history and achievements of their countries, with the result that the modern peoples delight to regard themselves as the direct descendants of the earlier inhabitants of their territories, even where there is little scientific support for their claims.

Native archaeologists are now conducting excavations and themselves publishing the reports. They are staffing their museums with their fellow-countrymen, while professors and lecturers of their own nationality are giving instruction in ancient languages and history in their universities. In schools their ancient history is a regular subject in the curriculum.

The younger generation of the Near Eastern Countries have therefore a very real and lively concern for all that pertains to their past, the more so because it is a recent discovery, and not part of a national heritage handed down through the centuries, as is the case with the traditions of a European country.

3. Importance of the Cultivation of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Great Britain.

The study of the Ancient Near East has therefore passed from the realm of pure scholarship to that of practical expediency – and even that of practical politics. Any western state which cultivates these studies will have a most effective weapon of propaganda at its disposal, operating in three ways:–

- (a) The Near Eastern peoples will be gratified and flattered by the interest shown in their past. Moreover, unlike the Modern studies there is no apparent ulterior motive to be discerned

here. No government which subsidises the Ancient studies could be accused of imperialistic or commercial aims.

- (b) The prestige of that state will be enhanced by its scholars and their publications, both in the East itself and also in the occidental countries. A striking example of the effectiveness of scholarship as propaganda may be seen in the case of Lewis's "British Contributions to Arabic Studies". Originally written as talks for the Arabic service of the B.B.C. they were so warmly received in the East that they were printed in the form of a pamphlet in Arabic and circulated throughout the Arabic speaking world. Spontaneously they were reproduced wholly or in part by various organs of the Arabic press. This led to a similar treatment of British and Allied contributions in other branches of Oriental scholarship with like success, and evoked a spirited rejoinder from Germany.
- (c) A University with a good faculty of Ancient Oriental Studies will attract many foreign students, Oriental and European, and our cultural ties with other nations will thus be strengthened. To capture the goodwill and friendship of members of the Near Eastern intelligentsia, many of whom would be studying Ancient Eastern subjects with a view to becoming lecturers and school teachers in their own countries is, perhaps, not the least of the services a university can render the state.

4. Achievements of British Scholars in Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

In no department of learning have our achievements as a nation been higher. We can boast of such men as Rawlinson the decipherer of cuneiform, Griffith the expert in the scripts of Ancient Egypt, Crum the lexicographer of Coptic, Petrie the archaeologist in Egypt and Palestine, and Wright the Semitist, all pioneers in their subjects. These and other scholars have ensured a high place for Britain in the history of Oriental studies and have set a lofty standard of scholarship for their successors. Their names are venerated in all countries where Oriental learning finds a place. Unfortunately, from every point of view, very few of them have been teachers at a university or have otherwise earned their livelihood by means of the pursuits in which they so distinguished themselves. If we examine the annals of British scholarship in this field we shall find that many possessed considerable private means and made Oriental studies their hobbies. Had this not been the case, the world would not have profited from the fruits of their labours, because our universities are so poorly endowed with teaching posts in Oriental subjects that there was no place for these scholars.

5. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Britain and the British Universities.

While then individual British scholars, some living and many long since dead, are held in the greatest respect abroad, it must be admitted that Great Britain and the British universities enjoy no reputation as centres of Ancient Oriental learning. The reasons are not far to seek.

Firstly, the British Universities are very poorly provided with Chairs and teaching posts in Near Eastern Studies. Many subjects, well represented in other countries, are completely neglected in Britain, while others [have] perhaps one or at the most two or three teaching posts. This is true of the modern languages as well as the ancient. (See Appendix A). Thus an impression of unconcern for Oriental culture is created amongst the Eastern peoples. Another result is that scholars without private incomes have had to renounce the subjects to which they feel themselves attracted because of the uncertain future these subjects have to offer. Where only two or three Chairs in a subject exists, it very frequently happens that a man cannot support himself until one of these posts falls vacant and so he drifts into another profession. Thus many promising scholars have been lost to this country. If this state of affairs is allowed to continue British scholarship will be completely eclipsed, as the class of wealthy scholars dies out.

Secondly, teachers of Oriental Studies in the provincial universities are required to cover such a wide field of learning that they dissipate their energies and find little time for research and publication. Often a Professor of Semitic languages, usually the only Chair of Oriental subjects in a British university, assisted by perhaps one or two lecturers, is required to teach Hebrew, Old Testament History and Criticism, Palestinian Archaeology, all the Semitic Languages (Arabic, Aramaic, Accadian, and Ethiopic) and their literatures, as well as to have a knowledge of the histories and civilisations of all the Near Eastern countries, ancient and modern, He must therefore cover the field of at least a dozen experts and spend his leisure striving to keep abreast of research in all these fields. His own work is often delayed years in consequence.

Corresponding to the lack of teachers is a lack of suitable libraries in the provincial universities. Books on Oriental subjects are costly and few teachers can afford to build up well stocked libraries of their own.

There are, moreover, no bursaries and grants to enable poor men and women to read Ancient Oriental languages and Ancient Near Eastern subjects, apart from a few Hebrew scholarships.

It is small wonder then that not more than a handful of foreign students have elected to study Ancient Near Eastern subjects in this country, and the few who have come have been attracted by some eminent teacher. Indeed it is a source of amazement and jest in every Oriental faculty of Europe that Great Britain, with her vast colonial empire and her interests and commitments in the Near East, should pay so little heed to the ancient languages and civilisations

of the countries under her patronage with whom she has close ties. To the Oriental, even the most friendly disposed towards this country, it is a source of annoyance and despair.

6. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Other Countries.

(a) European Countries.

On the Continent of Europe the picture is very different. Ancient Near Eastern studies are everywhere encouraged. Even the smaller countries have cultivated them, and their scholars have acquired international reputations. Thus Czecho-Slovakia has fostered Hittite studies, Denmark and Sweden Old Persian and Iranian studies, and Belgium Egyptology and Coptic, and that by no means to the exclusion of the other branches of the subject. Czecho-Slovakia also has a very fine school of Egyptology and Denmark has done much good work in Assyriology. Germany, France and Russia are outstanding in the field and must be treated separately.

(b) Germany

Germany is regarded by the Near East and Europe as the leader in Oriental Studies, especially the ancient ones. For over fifty years she has enjoyed this reputation and German scholarship has become a by-word in Oriental countries and throughout the world. Young scholars from every country in Europe, including Great Britain, France, America, as well as Egypt, Iraq, Persia and Turkey visited her universities right up to the outbreak of the war, and researched in her libraries, museums and institutes. Germany is only too well aware of the propaganda value of her scholars and universities. Foreign students, whatever their nationality were received with the greatest courtesy and were offered every facility and encouragement. Students from Oriental countries were doubly welcome. They were made to believe that Germany was the only country where Ancient Oriental Languages could be satisfactorily studied and that Germany was therefore the true friend and admirer of their peoples. The undeniable lack of support for Oriental studies in Great Britain became the subject of many an artful homily. This propaganda has had the desired effect for many years. Students sent by the Egyptian, Iraqi, Persian and Turkish governments returned home full of zeal for Germany and German scholarship and recommended their friends and pupils to follow their example. Thus there is a deeply ingrained belief amongst the Orientals that, whatever Great Britain accomplished in the past, she has now yielded first place to Germany and that the British Government is contemptuous of Oriental studies. However crushed and beaten Germany may be, this impression will persist and the only way to eradicate it is for Britain to improve the position of her Oriental scholarship.

That Germany has many fine achievements to her credit in the realm of Ancient Eastern scholarship is undeniable, nor can it be gainsaid that she has shown far more interest in the Near East than any other country in the world. Every university in Germany possesses teaching posts in the various ancient languages and civilisations, each professor with an adequate staff of lecturers and assistants.²⁷⁰

As may be imagined, with all these scholars the volume of research work coming forth from Germany is enormous and works written in German far outnumber those in any other language. The Germans are able to undertake impressive tasks of considerable magnitude, such as large corpora of hieroglyphic and cuneiform texts. Similarly more learned journals concerned with ancient Oriental scholarship appear there than in any other country.

Although a defeated Germany will cease to be a major power in Europe it must not be imagined that she will suffer her universities to fall into decay. Experience after the last war has shown that she will make every effort to preserve this aspect of her cultural life. She will strive to maintain her lead in scholarship, and so retain all the advantages that accrue from it.

(c) France

In France we have a somewhat similar picture. French universities and institutes are well staffed with orientalists and attracts a number of students from the Near East, especially Syrians, Egyptians and Iraqis. Next to Germany she is the most popular centre for the Ancient studies among orientals. Her position in Egypt where French officials have the care of the ancient monuments gives her much standing in Egyptology. Her scholars are amongst the finest in the world and she has done much pioneer work in all branches. Her archaeologists are known throughout the Near East.

(d) Russia

It is difficult to discover what facilities exist in Soviet Russia for the study of the Ancient Near East. One thing is certain and that is that it is actively encouraged. As evidence for her interest may be mentioned the steady flow of pamphlets and books on Egyptology and Coptic from Leningrad and Moscow which were beginning to reach this country shortly before the outbreak

²⁷⁰ The reference work "Minerva, Handbuch der gelehrten Welt" was consulted to attempt to discover the number of teachers of these subjects in the German universities, but without success. In most cases only the professors were mentioned, and often these were given such vague titles as "Professor der orientalischen Philologie."

of war. These works were of a surprisingly high standard considering her long isolation from scholarship of other countries.

(e) America

America is far ahead of this country in facilities for Ancient Near Eastern Studies. She possesses the magnificent and imposing Oriental Institute at Chicago, the envy of all orientalists. Her scholars have produced much creditable work in increasing volume, and they have several ambitious projects in hand, amongst which may be mentioned a thesaurus of the Assyrian and Babylonian languages on the scale of the Prussian Academy's *Wörterbuch de ägyptischen Sprache*. She has spent considerable sums of money on excavations in the Near East.

There are many signs that she will intensify her activities in the ancient studies as part of her program for a more intensive cultivation of Near Eastern Studies generally. She appears to be especially interested in the antiquities of Iraq and Persia.

7. Requirements of the British Universities.

Such then is the state of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in the universities of Britain and the other powers. If the Modern Studies had been dealt with in similar detail the picture would have been the same. Our universities are quite unable to compete with those of other nations unless they receive substantial aid. If they are to hold their own the Government must do everything in its power to improve and enlarge the Oriental departments of all the universities where these subjects are taught. The task will not be a light one. Not only will Britain have to keep pace with countries which are expanding Oriental departments already well endowed and the reputations of which are well established, but she will also have much leeway to make up. There can be no room for half hearted measures. In the past we have had to rely upon the generosity and foresight of private individuals and business concerns for the founding of teaching posts, with the result that the present provision for Oriental studies, ancient and modern, is woefully inadequate. The Government must recognise its responsibility in these matters and take energetic measures to ensure that our universities are suitably equipped. Only in this way can Britain hope to maintain and increase the prestige of her Oriental scholarship abroad, and to make her universities world-renowned centres of eastern learning on a par with Chicago, Leningrad, Berlin or Paris, and even Leyden, Copenhagen or Prague, to mention but a few of the foreign universities respected by all orientalists.

It is not only a question of competing in the world of scholarship. Unless the facilities for the teaching of the modern studies are considerably expanded the Universities will be unable to

supply the nation with the flow of trained men she must have for service in the Near East. In the coming years this must be the primary concern of the Universities.

The needs of the Universities is fourfold:

- a) We require more teaching posts, junior and senior.
- b) We require State Scholarships in our subjects to attract and support students who wish to study them.
- c) We require better libraries, without which no research is possible. Only in Oxford, Cambridge and London can the research worker hope to find the books and periodicals he needs.
- d) We require travel allowances which would enable students and teachers alike to visit the countries of their studies.

8. Durham and Near Eastern Scholarship.

It is now time to indicate the part the University of Durham might play in propagating Oriental Studies and how it may best assist the Government in its desire to improve the teaching of Oriental languages and to maintain the standard of Oriental scholarship in this country. At the present time it teaches several of the ancient Semitic languages and suggestion has already been made that the existing courses should be expanded, as far as the limited resources permit, so as to provide Honours Degrees in Ancient Eastern Studies. A regional rather than a linguistic treatment was envisaged, so that, for example, there would be a course in the language, history, civilisation and archaeology of Ancient Palestine rather than a philological course in which Hebrew was treated as one of the Semitic languages. Durham also offers two diplomas in Arabic, in one of which proficiency in the modern literary idiom is demanded. She then has the nucleus of a department of Ancient as well as Modern Eastern Studies. If the faculties for Oriental studies were increased at Durham there is no doubt that many would avail themselves of the opportunities provided. Over a period of several years before the war there were repeated requests for subjects not included in the existing curriculum.

What is most needed in this country is an Institute of Near Eastern Studies, ancient and modern, and it is suggested that Durham's contribution might best be such an Institute. This is an ambitious proposal and will require some justification.

It is very desirable that the Modern Studies (including Mediaeval) should not be divorced from the Ancient, and vice versa. As in other regions the ancient, medieval and modern world are inextricably bound up with one another. In order to understand the civilisation of a country it is necessary to review its history and development from remote antiquity. What has happened once

in a land is apt to occur several times again, and the past is often the best guide to the present or the future.

It is likewise desirable to regard the Near East as a unity. To study some countries and to neglect others will destroy the balance. In the modern world the unifying factor is Islam. It would be impossible to study the Persian language and civilisation without knowing a good deal of those of the Arabs, and it would likewise be impossible to study the Turkish language and culture without a knowledge of both the Persians and Arabs. As in the modern world, the geographical structure of the Near Eastern region has led to an intermingling of civilisations and peoples in the ancient. Thus one can never understand the history of Palestine without knowing something of that of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Persia. So the languages themselves exerted a mutual influence upon one another.

The advantages of an institute are many. Firstly, it would be a symbol of British respect for the history and culture of the Oriental peoples. Were it founded and sponsored by the Government and given suitable publicity, it would be a tangible sign of the Government's interest in them, and would gratify them and delight their national pride as nothing else could. Secondly, it would be more effective for scholarly purposes. There would be greater concentration of resources and co-operation between members of its staff. Interrelation of subjects and teaching would be possible. Thirdly, it would be more attractive to students at home and abroad. Fourthly, by subsidising individual publications or series of publications it would win wide recognition in learned circles throughout the world.

Its functions and aims should be as follows. It should aim to produce men and women trained in the languages and ways of life of the modern peoples. It should endeavour to provide the nation with trained scholars in the ancient and modern spheres so as to ensure that our tradition of scholarship is upheld. Its teachers should undertake projects of research which would add to the national prestige. It should do all in its power to attract Oriental and European students, and so form a chain of cultural contacts between Britain and the other nations. In short it should be a British counterpart of the Oriental Institute of Chicago or the Orientalisches Seminar at Berlin.

9. Subjects to be Covered.

The teaching staff should be selected and the courses so arranged that the subjects in the following table could be taught if required: –

Country	Ancient Studies	Mediaeval and Modern Studies
Egypt	Ancient Egyptian language and scripts, history, archaeology, civilisation, Coptic languages, Early Christianity in Egypt. Graeco-Roman Egypt.	Classical Arabic Language. Modern Arabic Language. History and Institutions of Egypt from Arab Conquest to present day.
Iraq	Sumerian language. Babylonian and Assyrian languages. Mesopotamian History and Archaeology, and civilisation.	Classical Arabic Language. Modern Arabic Language. History and Institutions of Iraq from Arab Conquest to present day.
Palestine	Biblical Hebrew language. Old Testament Studies, Biblical Criticism. Palestinian History and Archaeology.	Classical Arabic Language. Modern Arabic Language. Modern and Medieval Hebrew. History of Palestine from fall of Roman Empire.
Syria and Lebanon	Aramaic Dialects (including Syriac). Syrian History, Archaeology. Phoenician language and North Semitic Epigraphy.	Classical Arabic Language. Modern Arabic Language. History of Syria from Arab Conquest to present day.
Saudi Arabia	South Semitic Epigraphy. Pre-Islamic Antiquities.	Classical Arabic Language. Modern Arabic Language. History and Institutions of Arabia from Mohammed to present day.
Turkey	Hittite languages. Hittite Archaeology.	Ottoman Turkish Language. Modern Turkish Language. History and Institutions of Turkey.
Persia	Old Persian and Avestan language, history, archaeology and civilisation.	Classical Persian Language. Modern Persian Language. History of Persia.

In addition, since most of the languages involved are semitic, there should be provision for a course in Comparative Semitic Philology. The Religions of the Near East should also be included.

10. Staff

(a) Ancient Studies.

The above list embraces a wide range of subjects, but it would not be necessary to have a specialist to deal with each one of them. One scholar would be capable of teaching and directing

research in several. Obviously, however, the larger the staff, the larger the number of pupils it is capable of handling, and the larger the output of research. The following would be the minimum requirements:

Egypt:	Teacher of Egyptology. Teacher of Coptic.
Iraq:	Teacher of Assyriology.
Palestine:	Teacher of Hebrew and Semitic Philology. Teacher of Palestinian History and Archaeology.
Syria and Lebanon:	Teacher of Aramaic and North Semitic Epigraphy.
Turkey:	Teacher of Hittite Studies.
Persia:	Teacher of Old Persian Studies.

Each of these experts should know at least one modern Near Eastern language, so that he can keep abreast of what is being written on his subject in the country concerned. He should also consider it part of his duty to read the press of the land in whose past he is interested, and to cultivate the acquaintance of Oriental scholars. He should also know something of a modern spoken idiom.

(b) Mediaeval and Modern Studies.

There is not in the same variety of languages in the Modern world as in the Ancient. In Egypt, Iraq, Palestine (Arab districts), Syria and Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the current language. While one standard Arabic, differing little from Classical Arabic, is used for the written word, the dialects of Arabic spoken in these countries differ considerably from one another. If the spoken dialects were excluded – and these can be learnt satisfactorily only in the countries themselves – the following would be the minimum staff for teaching the Mediaeval and Modern Studies: –

- Arabic (Classical and Modern): 1 Specialist
- Turkish (Ottoman and Modern): 1 Specialist
- Persian (Classical and Modern): 1 Specialist

Hebrew (Mediaeval and Modern): 1 Specialist

Islamic history and Institutions: 1 Specialist.

This staff could be considerably supplemented and reinforced by their colleagues in the Ancient Studies. As already mentioned they should, and almost certainly would, be proficient in one modern language. While they would not reach a high degree of specialisation in a modern tongue, they would be quite competent to give elementary instruction up to the second year standard. If circumstances demanded there could be four or five teachers of Arabic, two of Turkish, two of Persian and two of Modern Hebrew.

The staff as a whole should be made up of energetic and enthusiastic young men who are willing to travel in Europe and the East so as to let other countries know what we are doing for Oriental Studies in Britain. They should work together as a team and not be allowed to develop into isolated specialists. Much could be accomplished by interchange of subjects, beneficial to teachers and student alike. Above all they should have the interests of their subjects at heart and be resolved to further research.

11. Tasks to be undertaken.

It may not be out of place to outline some of the scholastic work which an institute of the kind described above could undertake. Firstly, there is a lamentable shortage of beginners' text-books written in English by Englishmen in all the ancient subjects. The table given below will show the nationality of the author of the standard text-books in the various subjects, book which a teacher would be compelled to put into the hands of a first year student. Where the language is not the same as the nationality of the author it is given in brackets.

Subject.	Ancient Language.			Ancient Civilisation	
	Grammar.	Reader.	Dictionary.	History.	Civilisation.
Egyptology	Brit.	Germ.	Germ.	Amer.	Germ.
Coptic Studies	Germ.	Germ.	Brit.	-	-
Assyriology	Germ.	Germ.	Germ. or Amer.	Amer.	Germ.
Hittite Stud.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
Aramaic Stud.	Germ.	Germ.	Germ.	-	-
Iranian Stud.	Fr.	Sw. ²⁷¹ (Germ.)	Germ.	Amer.	Danish (Fr.)

²⁷¹ Sw. = Swedish.

Hebrew Stud.	Brit.	Brit.	Brit.	Brit.	Brit.
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Only in Hebrew Studies is there an adequate range of text-books for beginners. In the calendar of Universities, where these subjects are taught one reads "Candidates should have a knowledge of German", or "A knowledge of German will be assumed". Should an Oriental wish to study at a British University this could not but fail to produce a bad impression of British scholarship.

In the Modern Studies the situation is rather better, but there are still many urgent needs. A text-book of Modern (literary) Arabic is required. In Modern Turkish there is no suitable grammar for beginners, nor is there a good Modern Turkish Reader. An anthology of Ottoman Turkish literature would be useful. There is no adequate grammar of Persian in English, nor is there a reader. Text-books of Modern Hebrew are completely lacking.

These are but a few of the tasks which might be undertaken by the members of the staff of an Institute of Near Eastern Studies.

12. Suitability of Durham as a Site for an Institute of Near Eastern Studies.

Durham is eminently suitable for the location of an Institute of Near Eastern Studies. She is the oldest of the Provincial Universities of England and the first of them to teach Oriental languages. Her Professors of Oriental Languages have been distinguished scholars. Amongst them are Dr. Guillaume, the Arabist and authority on Arab philosophy, and Professor D. Winton Thomas, Hebrew Scholar and Semitist. The famous Arabist and Persian scholar Gertrude Bell, showed her interest in the University of Durham by bequeathing her fine library of Oriental books to one of the University Libraries. Moreover, such a provision as already exists for Oriental Studies in England is confined almost exclusively to the South, while the North is all but barren. It is certain that many students of the Northern counties would read Oriental languages, ancient and modern, if they were afforded the opportunity of doing so.

Durham is a collegiate university of the type of Oxford and Cambridge. The cost of living and tuition is much less than in those older universities, and for this reason alone it is likely to attract foreign students, especially those from the smaller European countries. It is housed in ancient buildings in picturesque surroundings and countryside, within easy reach of the modern industrial city of Newcastle. Durham's an historic English city in which a foreigner would delight to reside and work.

(signed) T.W. Thacker.

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