

UDC 930.1(55)
DOI: 10.34671/SCH.SVB.2019.0304.0013

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH CENTERS IN THE UK IN THE STUDY OF IRANIAN HISTORY

© 2019
ORCID: 0000-0002-3851-7377

Espandi Narges, Ph.D. program
Baku State University

(1148, Baku, Azerbaijan, 23 Z.Khalilov St., Baku State University, nespandi@yahoo.com)

Abstract. With the commencement of the 20th century a number of scientific centers in Britain were dedicated to make researches on Iranian history. This made the ground for great scientific improvement primarily in Avestan studies and subsequently the study of religious, cultural, ethical, and socio-political matters of Iran from prehistoric ages to the modern time. The outstanding British Iranologists made great achievements in this respect and through their valuable research works could successfully introduce essential facts about several issues of Persian history already unknown to the world. The interest of British scientists in the history of Iran is connected with the history of the relationship between the two countries. Great Britain, striving to occupy key positions in the region, back in past centuries, strove to maintain a balance in expanding its influence and at the same time in restraining Russia's influence here. It is a territory that includes Iran, Afghanistan and India. The centers of Iranian research at the same time consider a wide range of problems, including languages and literature, religion, history, economics, politics, international relations, music, art.

Keywords: Iranian history, Iranology centers, British scholars, Zoroastrianism, Avesta, Islam, Aryans, Persian Revolutions

РОЛЬ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИХ ЦЕНТРОВ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ В ИЗУЧЕНИИ ИРАНСКОЙ ИСТОРИИ

© 2019

Эспанди Наргес, докторант по программе доктора философии
Бакинский государственный университет

(1148, Баку, Азербайджан, ул. З.Халилова, 23, e-mail: nespandi@yahoo.com)

Аннотация. С началом 20-го века ряд научных центров в Британии посвятили свои исследования истории Ирана. Это послужило основанием для значительного совершенствования научно-методологических оснований исторической науки, прежде всего, в исследованиях Авесты, а также в изучении религиозных, культурно-этических и социально-политических вопросов Ирана с доисторических времен до современности. Выдающиеся британские иранологи добились больших успехов в этом отношении и благодаря своим ценным исследовательским работам, смогли успешно представить важные факты о некоторых проблемах персидской истории, которые ранее были не известны миру. Интерес британских ученых к истории Ирана связан с историей взаимоотношений между этими двумя странами. Великобритания, стремясь занять ключевые позиции в регионе, еще в прошлые века стремилась сохранить баланс в расширении своего влияния и одновременно в сдерживании влияния здесь России. Речь идет о территории, включающей Иран, Афганистан и Индию. Центры иранских исследований при этом рассматривают широкий диапазон проблем, включая языки и литературу, религию, историю, экономику, политику, международные отношения, музыку, искусство.

Ключевые слова: история Ирана, иранологические центры, британские ученые, зороастризм, Авеста, ислам, арийцы, персидские революции

INTRODUCTION. Since the early 20th century, along with the development of historical study of Iran in several universities, academic centers and libraries of Great Britain, a growing interest was created on the subject. These studies included all such related aspects as historical geography, tribes and dynasties, languages and literature, culture, archaeology, as well as religious and socio-political movements of this country. A number of British orientalists especially English Iranologists took active roles in these fields so that they could come to factual information of great national and international significance about Iranian history.

RESULTS. It is necessary to mention that in any individual works by the British Iranologists in the 20th century anti-colonial tendencies began to emerge. Furthermore, in describing Iranology, the study of Iranian old ages and philology took priority. Among the English scholars, the works by W. Bailey, I. Gershevitch, and M. Boyce on the ancient history, cuneiform manuscripts, old and middle ages languages were devoted to Avesta. Richard Frye concentrated on Aryan's settlement in Aryan homelands. The English Iranologists F. Gladwin, W. Ouseley, J. Elliot, J. Atkinson, N. Blend, D. Forbes, and J. Gilchrist supplied valuable projects in this area. It should be noted that the first scientific documentary study on ancient Iran had been performed for the first time at Oxford University in about 17th-18th century by T. Hyde [11, p.28-33].

A collection of information together with detailed bibliography based on analyses of some classical works and books by Persian authors was thoroughly prepared. In 1911, 1913, and 1917, three monographs were written by J. Moulton. Moreover, some materials have been obtained

from the worthy notebooks including fundamental researches by L. Grey simultaneous with these first valuable works in English language in the field of Avestology of the 20th century. A year after the publication of J. Moulton's book "The Early Zoroastrianism" during the years 1900-1910, an analysis of E. Leman's Avestan study was performed together with a brief specific explanation about the book. Historians view it as one of the most brilliant works in historiography of the Aryan lands.

It is possible to consider the outstanding articles of the huge 12-volume book by the Scottish scholar James Hastings "Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" the most enormous step in this field. Its first edition was published in Edinburgh from 1908 to 1922. Over 50 of its articles are devoted to religious beliefs of early Iranian history. The book may not be of very great value in historiography though; it is highly valued in terms of bibliography. Today, these articles are good informative means in order to learn about Avesta and Zoroastrianism.

The British Iranologist, the professor of Cambridge University, Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926), has been one of the most prominent researchers in early Iranian history and Babi and Baha'i doctrines. Although he is mostly identified with his widespread surveys on Persian literature, from his thirties up to death, he had been busy studying about Iranian history [10]. His fundamental services in this respect consist of the publication of a complete collection of valuable research works and translations of materials on the early history of Babi-Baha'ism. Nowadays, great emphasis is laid on protecting these works for their scientific historical value (3).

Another scholar of Iranian history is Guy Le Strange (1854-1933). Even though he studied in Paris, he passed the years 1877-1880 in Iran. Having been employed in 1907 in Cambridge University, he started to work with Browne. He has several publications and also translations of valuable historical sources. In 1905, he published the materials he had collected during his research work on historical geography of Iran titled as "The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia, from the Moslem Conquest to the Time of Timur" in Cambridge University.

The 20s and the 30s of the 20th century can be marked as a period of profound development of inquiries in some specific issues of Iranian history. One most noteworthy of such events was the creation of Avesta historiography in the articles and studies by L. Gray's on Iranian religions. Two other perfect studies were Ahmad Kasravi Tabrizi's article on Khuzestan entitled "Five Centuries of the History of Khuzestan" and his book "Azari or the Ancient Language of Azerbaijan" which attracted public attention and were highly appreciated by British scholars (4). In 1927-8, Kasravi led the way in establishing the ancestry of the Safavid dynasty with the publication of three influential articles. The works by Kasravi were placed in research centers of the UK as reliable sources for acquisition of specific information on certain issues of Iranian history [9, p.39-44].

Laurence Lockhart (1890-1975), the prominent British historian, and a student of Browne at Pembroke College, played an extremely important part in the study of Iranian history. In 1935, he received his Ph.D. degree from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Two of the most noticeable works on Persian history, "Nadir Shah" (1938) and "The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia" (1958), have remained standard references in making researches on Iranian history.

After his retirement in 1948, Lockhart pursued research activities fulltime. This eventually led him back to Cambridge, where he resided from 1953 to his death in 1975. Over this period, he made several trips to Iran; meanwhile, he produced a series of articles while being involved in helping to establish a center for Middle East studies at Cambridge. He was made a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (Litterarum Doctor) degree from Cambridge University in 1960, as well as being awarded the Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal of the Royal Central Asian Society in 1964 [12, p.41].

In the years 1950-1966, the British orientalist and historian John Andrew Boyle investigated Iranian history at Manchester University. He is best known for studying widely the Mongol period. His English version "The history of the world-conqueror" (1958) of Ata-Malik Juvaini's "Tarikh-e Jahangosha" played a special role in studying the Mongols' history in Iran. He maintained his contribution to the study of Iranian history through his editorship of the 5th volume of "The Cambridge History of Iran," investigating the Saljuq and Mongol Periods, published in 1968 [4].

In the 20th century, the development of Iranology in the UK was characterized by a growing interest in socio-economic and contemporary issues. A group of remarkable researches on history, culture, classical poetry, and ancient languages of Iran have been reflected in the books by English authors (E. D. Ross, W. Bailey, I. Gershevitch, etc). Some research works (by L. Lockhart and A. J. Arberry) on the publication of Iranian medieval sources are also accessible to the researchers interested on the subject. Some English scholars K. Lambton, L. Elwell-Sutton, etc. worked on socio-economic problems of Iran. The English scholar C. A. Storey provided a complete bibliography of historical sources and literary works in Persian language.

Among the fundamental editorial works by the Iranian-born Professor Ehsan Yarshater, the third volume of "The Cambridge History of Iran" can be mentioned. This work covers the history of Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods. The founder of Encyclopedia Iranica covering all aspects of Iranian history and culture as well as Iranian lan-

guages and literature, Yarshater started the job in 1972, and in the mid-90s, he succeeded to carry it out. Meanwhile, he prepared "Inscriptions of Eastern Mazandaran" for academic edition in the "Corpus Inscriptionem Iranicarum Series" in London in 1978 [13, p.126].

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) has been studying and preparing materials and articles at high-level scientific value on Iranian history. The Center has also maintained cooperation with other UK institutions in this area. At the same time, lectures, seminars, and conferences on Iranian history are organized at this center. Basically, the central scientific organization created for Iranian studies in Europe is the European Society of Iranology (Societas Iranologica Europea). Moreover, the Iranian Heritage Foundation, with its base in London, supports researches and studies on Iran and sponsors all large-scale cultural and public events in this respect.

One among the important works by the prominent professor of London's School of Oriental Studies, E. D. Ross, on Iranian history is the translation of Mohammed Haydar's book "The Tarikh-i-Rashidi: A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia" and an article entitled "The Early Years of Shah Isma'il: Founder of the Safavid Dynasty." Following Denison Ross, the Great Russian scholar Vladimir Minorsky came on the job. He moved to Cambridge for a short while during the war and, after retirement in 1944, continued his work until his death in 1971. The history of Iran does not have such an area that Minorsky has not commented on. He published a number of his numerous articles in a collection in 1960 [9, p.67]. He is highly respected in Iran for his services to Iranology.

From the time of its establishment in 1961, the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) was supposed to have a specialized journal dedicated to its findings about Iran. Accordingly, the first volume of the institute's envisaged annual journal "IRAN" appeared in 1963 under the editorship of Laurence Lockhart. In 1967, G. Herrmann, a member of the Institute of Archaeology, University of London succeeded Lockhart, and from that year onwards the journal possessed a specific part containing helpful information on historical and archaeological findings about Iran; it was printed under "Survey of Excavations in Iran" and provided a list and short resumés of excavations and surveys currently taking place there [5].

The British novelist James Aldridge's socio-political novel "Diplomat" (London, 1949) is of great importance to learn about the events that took place during the Second World War in Iran both its civil and international status. It is a social novel describing large-scale social conflicts with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist inclinations. It portrays Iranians' prolonged fight against colonism and imperialism. At the same time, it is also a political novel in which the philosophical tendencies of the individuals are clearly expressed. Historical and public events of 1945-1946 are the main interest of the book. Having chosen such a topic, the writer has been able to adequately reflect the major social conflict of the modern era. He describes the national liberation movement in Iran after World War II, as well as social conflicts and political forces in the Middle East [2].

Peter Avery, a lecturer at the London School of Oriental and African Studies, has done a remarkable job in introducing the Persian history. His book "Modern Iran" published in 1965 has remained long one of the best in this area. Even though his translations from classical Persian poetry was the main cause for his fame, his significant contribution to the study of the ancient history of Iran brought him much popularity. "Modern Iran" has gained universal fame for exploring Iranian history from Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic.

Dr. Mary Boyce, the professor of Iranian studies at London University, is known to be one of the most prominent scholars of Iranology and a seasoned expert on Zoroastrianism in the modern age. She is the author of many valuable works on the culture and history of Iran and the

neighboring countries [14]. She has made a great deal of investigations on Zoroastrianism, including the history of its early and new era. Her book "Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices" (1979) is a very useful and timely book for researchers on early history of the Aryan land. It provides the readers with a long history of Zoroastrianism gathering solid factual materials on its doctrines, customs, and so on.

This British scholar has conducted scientific research works in Iran among the orthodox Zoroastrians of the 24 villages of Yazd in 1963-1964, resulting in her discovery of this vital issue of Iranian history. In 1975, she presented the results of her researches at a series of lectures at Oxford University. In the same year, she published the first of her 4-volume magnum opus "The History of Zoroastrianism." In 1977, another one of her lecture series was published as "A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism" [3].

The first volume of "The History of Zoroastrianism" was devoted to the early stages of the development of this religion. In this volume, Boyce develops the fact that the location of the Aryan tribes in the northern desert provinces is entirely in line with the historical linguistic materials about the socio-economic structure and culture of indigenous Indo-Iranians. The second volume of the book includes complicated and controversial problems of the Median and the Achaemenid era, during which the relationship between the religions of Western Iranians and Zoroastrianism was reflected. The third volume covers the subsequent period up to the Sassanid era, and finally the fourth volume represents the following stage from the fall of the Sassanid dynasty to the modern era.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) and the Islamic Revolution (1979) were a matter of interest for several British scholars. Two instances of such scholars who focused on the Constitutional or Mashrute Movement are Edward Browne and David Fraser. The activist in Iranian history and politics Ervand Abrahamian (1940-), the professor of history at Oxford, New York, and Princeton University, has analyzed in detail the history of Persian revolutions. He came to several scholarly achievements using the newspapers, memoirs, and biographies published in Tehran between 1906 and 1980 while he was conducting scientific searches based on the archives of the British Foreign Office and the British Ministry for Indian Affairs. He analyzed the Iranian history and politics between the Revolution of 1905-1909 and the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 in his work "Iran Between Two Revolutions," and noted the interaction between political organizations and public forces. He also investigated books and periodicals disseminated by emigrant groups spread throughout Europe and North America in the years 1953 to 1980 from the interviews of politicians and from the Iranian Parliament and the Senate, and resigned and active politicians [1, p.348].

One other activist whose role in the study of Iranian history is of great importance is Prof. Hamid Algar. He received his formal training in Islamic studies at Cambridge University. In the University of Berkeley he has taught for years courses including Tafsir, Sufism, Shi'ism, the history of Islam in Iran, Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. Algar is the author of more than 100 articles in the Encyclopedia Iranica.

Following his extensive research and studies on Islam, Algar converted to this religion and became a Shi'ite Muslim. He considers his tendency toward Shi'ism a result of his familiarity with the Shi'ite clergy, especially Ayatollah Khomeini and his role in the development of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Becoming acquainted with Sayyed Mojtaba Mousavi-e Lari and studying and translating his book series "Lessons in Islamic Doctrine" and thus acquiring vast knowledge of Shi'a Islam was another reason for his conversion. His gravitation to Shi'ism was so influential that some university students and professors in the United States converted to Shi'ism too [15].

Algar met with Ayatullah Ruhullah Khomeini in exile in Paris and on brief occasions in Iran after the Islamic

Revolution in 1979. He translated Imam Khomeini's selected writings and speeches on Islam and Revolution and also gave his own account in a book entitled "The Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran." In the book, he has introduced the Islamic Revolution of Iran as "the most significant, hopeful, and profound event in the entirety of contemporary Islamic history" [15].

The study of Iranian history has been a widespread interest in many universities of the UK. Dr. Andrew J. Newman, a reader in Iranian and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, has shown especial attention in this respect. He has made prolonged studies in the history of Shi'i, Iran, Islamic Law, Persian language and literature and has been conducting scientific researches in these areas. Dr. Newman joined the IMES in 1996 as a researcher and made a lot of research works both in Oxford University and in Green College, on the history of Islamic medicine and pedagogy. He organized the Third International Round Table on Iran Safavids in 1998; within three days, 41 researchers made reports on various fields of Safavids. The articles selected from the Round Table were published in different scientific periodicals [16].

CONCLUSION. The important role of research centers in Britain in making the world familiar with Persian history is undeniable. It was largely due to the activities of these centers that historical topics of Iran important both to the United Kingdom and the rest of the world were explored in detail. As a matter of fact, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the study of Iranian history turned to a specific field of interest in England; the history of Iran was essentially equivocal for the English nation during the earlier centuries. It was over this century that academies and institutions which laid their focus on Iranistic studies were developed in Britain. Thanks to the contribution of several Iranology scholars in these scientific centers, a great deal of authentic research works and translations of Persian historical works with highly scientific and academic value were published many future researchers may refer to as reliable sources.

REFERENCES:

1. Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, 561p.
2. Aldridge, James. *The Diplomat*. London: The Bodley Head, 1949, 631p.
3. Boyce M. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol.1, *The Early Period*. Leiden & Koln: Brill, 1975, 363p.
4. Boyle, John Andrew. *Encyclopedia Iranica*. n. d. <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/boyle-john-andrew-1>>.
5. Bosworth, Edmund C., and Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis. *Iran*. // *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*. BIPS. Vol. XIII, Fasc. 5 (2006): 483-485.
6. Buck, Christopher. *Edward Granville Browne*. 17-33. *British Writers Supplement XXI*. Ed. Jay Parini. Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons: 2014, 560p.
7. Denison Ross, Sir E. *Review of Kasravi's book, Azari* // *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. First Quarter 1927: 148-157.
8. Minorsky, Vladimir. *Iranica Twenty Articles*. Publications of the University of Tehran, Vol. 775. Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1964, 332p.
9. Raymar, Mino. *Sayyed Ahmad Kasravi, Historian, Language Reformer, and Thinker*. Durham Theses. Durham University, 1969, 436p.
10. Scheglov, N.V. *Edward Browne as a Researcher of Babism*. <<http://www.rambler.ru>>.
11. *The history of Persian literature of the XIX-XX Centuries*. Moscow: Publishing Firm "Eastern Literature" RAS, 1999, 379p.
12. Wadham-Smith, Nick, and Danny Whitehead, eds. *Didgah: New Perspectives on UK-Iran Cultural Relations*. London: British Council, 2015, 293p.
13. Yarshater, Ehsan, and David Bivar, eds. *Inscriptions of Eastern Mazandaran, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*. London: Lund and Humphries, 1978, 646p.
14. Johnson, D. M. *Papers in Honour of Prof. Mary Boyce*. *Acta Iranica*. 24-25 (1985): XXI-XXVI.
15. Moqaddammanesh, Homa. *Reviewing the views of Hamed Algar on Iran in the Qajar era based on the book of the role of the leading clergy in the Constitutional Movement*. *Kharazmi Historiography*. Spring 2014: 155-188.
16. Newman, Andrew J., ed. *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East*. // *3rd International Round Table on Safavid Persia*. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data. University of Edinburgh, 1998.