The School of Oriental & African Studies
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
1917-1967
The School from Woburn Square
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An Introduction

C. H. PHILLIPS
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Acknowledgment

In preparing this short account of the School I have been most fortunate in being able to seek and gain the wise advice of Lord Radcliffe, Chairman of our Governing Body, of Sir Ralph Turner, whose unique experience reaches back to the early days of the story, and of Col. Hugh Moyse-Bartlett and Mr John Bracken, who as Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the School always know more than appears on paper. I am indebted also to Professor Bernard Lewis, who was a fellow student at the School in the middle 1950s; and to Miss Doreen Wainwright, who has brought into existence the nucleus of an archive on the history of the School, which we trust will be kept alive and up-to-date in the years to come.

C.H.P.
1 Beginnings

‘Although England has greater interests in the East than any other European country, yet for some unexplained reason, she is the most behindhand in encouraging the study of modern Oriental languages.’
Major C. M. Watson to Sir Frederick Abel, 20 September 1887

‘If ever the College is really established, it will be mainly owing to your perseverance and activity.’
Lord Cromer to Philip Hartog, 13 May 1914
This 'round, unvarnished tale' may be said to have a beginning in a masterly memorandum written by Richard Wellesley shortly after he had assumed the Governor-Generalship of British India in 1798. In a powerfully stated case for the creation of a British centre of Oriental studies, the nub of his argument was that 'The civil servants of the English East India Company... are in fact the ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign.... Their education should be founded in a general knowledge of those branches of literature and science which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe. To this foundation should be added an intimate acquaintance with the history, languages, customs and manners of the people of India.... No system of education, study or discipline now exists, either in Europe or in India, founded on the principles or objects described.' But his far-sighted although admittedly expensive conception of Fort William College in Bengal was so whittled down by lesser men, 'the cheeseparers of Leadenhall', unduly obsessed by policies of economy, and their own alternative, a training centre for young cadets in their late teens at Haileybury in England, was from the start conceived in terms so narrow and restricted, that it in no way fulfilled Wellesley’s purposes; and indeed justly failed to survive the transfer in 1858 of the government of India from the Company to the Crown. Not until another half century had passed and the British Empire had spread across the world, not until Britain 'held the gorgeous East in fee, And was the safeguard of the West' did the Government make a considered return to Wellesley’s charge.

Meanwhile in the development of their studies the universities of northern Europe were beginning to reflect the economic and political expansion of

* In the same period several other modest ventures were started in London to meet the needs of private individuals intending to travel 'to the eastward'. John Gilchrist, formerly Principal of Fort William College, opened in 1818 a London Oriental Institution in Leicester Square to teach modern Oriental languages, and a former missionary, Dr Robert Morrison, set up a similar school in the City, but, lacking support from Government or the London trading interests, they soon had to close down. Morrison bequeathed his library of one thousand books to University College, whence they were transferred in 1916 to the School of Oriental Studies.
Europe into Asia. In England Chairs of Arabic had existed at Oxford and Cambridge since the seventeenth century, and to these were added in the second half of the nineteenth century Chairs of Sanskrit and Chinese. In their systematic inquiries into human experience and knowledge, the philosophers and historians of ‘the European Enlightenment’ began to extend the range of scholarly research into the far corners of the world, and when the Benthamites, profoundly interested in what they called ‘the ladder of civilization’, founded University College in London in 1826, among the first of its professorships were those devoted to Oriental literature, Hindustani and Chinese; and when a few years later the rival King’s College in the Strand opened its doors, some courses were also offered there in Chinese and more generally in Oriental languages and literature. In the course of the next four decades part-time teaching was gradually extended in both places in Oriental subjects, but students were few and far between, and widely spread over the available fields of study, and although by 1882 a total sum of no more than £1,500 annually was being expended on twenty-five teachers, many of them employed part-time, the two Colleges then agreed for the purpose of economy to avoid any further overlap in Oriental studies. From this decision it was but a short step to consider the possibility of more positive forms of co-operation, and a timely external impulse was provided by the Imperial Institute which had just been established (1887) as the national memorial of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee. Largely through the initiative of one of its members, Major C. M. Watson, an engineer who had served for many years in British India and had become convinced that Britain had a national responsibility to study its rich and diverse languages, if only for the purpose of achieving more effective administration, the Institute persuaded the two Colleges to join forces in forming a ‘School of Modern Oriental Languages’, which was formally inaugurated by Professor Max Müller on 11 January 1890. But, lacking the provision of additional funds and the creation of a separate building or library, ‘the School’ remained a paper scheme, and in effect arrangements at the two Colleges continued in their former vein.
Nevertheless, at the turn of the century, when the University of London, with the two Colleges forming an important part of its nucleus, was formally reorganized as a teaching university, the fact that ‘the School’ had already been adumbrated smoothed the way for the inclusion of the teachers concerned in a newly-created University Board of Studies in Oriental Languages and Literatures, which at once provided within the new university framework a forum for discussion of the future of these studies. It was a member of this Board, Professor Rhys Davids, holder of a post in Buddhistic studies, who in 1905 with a fine scholarly impulse presented a paper jointly to the British Academy and Royal Asiatic Society urging the formation of a separate School of Oriental Studies within the University, and it was this Board of Studies which soon afterwards put forward a similar proposal to the Academic Council of the University. In November of the same year the Council set up a committee which reported in favour of the creation of a School of Oriental Studies as a constituent college within the University, and the Senate responded by sending a deputation to explore the matter with the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman.

It was extraordinary that the great age of growth in the British Empire, the political and administrative reconstruction of India, the penetration of South East Asia and Africa, the exploration of the Pacific, should have been allowed to pass without the formation in London of an Imperial training centre.* The British response to these challenges had been to devise a series of ad hoc arrangements, many of them remarkably effective, including some training for Indian Civil Service probationers at Oxford and Cambridge and at University College, London, and language courses in Hausa and Swahili as required for the Colonial Service officers at King’s College in the Strand. But by the close of the century renewed attention had been drawn to the problem of the best way of preparing British officers for the administration of the world-wide empire. Curzon’s cult of administrative effici-

* It is not irrelevant to note that in the twentieth century Government moved to set up an Institute of Development Studies when the great transfer of power from British Empire into Commonwealth was all but completed.
ency in India coincided with a growing awareness in London not only that existing arrangements in Britain for the training of officials for Imperial service were inadequate but that other European countries, Russia, France and Germany, with relatively much smaller imperial commitments, had gone ahead in this direction and also in the organization of their scholarly study of the peoples and cultures of Asia. But the factor which in the first decade of the twentieth century decisively moved British opinion in Westminster and in the City was the evidence which was beginning to come to light of the grand and growing scale of German imperial and trading ambitions in Asia and Africa. These were facts as hard as cannon-balls and it was high time for Britain to think again.

When, therefore, the University’s deputation sought its meeting with the Prime Minister and his senior Cabinet colleagues it did so in a favourable climate of official opinion, and thus found no difficulty in evoking a promise of an immediate departmental committee of inquiry into the proposal for the formation of a School of Oriental Studies.

Lord Reay, a former Governor of Bombay, who had subsequently served as President both of the British Academy and of the Royal Asiatic Society, was unanimously acceptable as chairman, and the University’s Academic Registrar, Philip Hartog, was drafted as secretary. Without delay the Committee got to work, seeing seventy-three witnesses in twenty-three days and reporting to Government in December 1908. The comprehensive evidence given to it by witnesses was overwhelmingly in favour of the creation of a School of Oriental Studies as part of the University of London. The major interested parties, the Government departments, commercial organizations, missions and scholars, one and all were agreed that their important needs in training could and should be met in such a School, and that its creation was a matter of urgency in the imperial and national interests. In putting forward their view the Committee indicated a modest scope of studies to cover the major languages of the Near East, India, Malaya and Burma, China and Japan, and East and West Africa, which would be appropriate to meet expressed practical needs and the require-
Sir Philip Hartog
Sir Denison Ross, the first Director
ments of sound scholarship, and estimated that as a start the annual recurrent cost would be about £14,000. ‘There must have been something important in it,’ Hartog later said, ‘else how should so many men agree to be of one mind?’ But it was relatively easy for those with vested interests to say the right things, and the acid test was whether they would provide the means to bring about the desired end.

An unaccountably long delay of nine months followed before the Report was published and before Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, publicly announced its acceptance by Government, and the somewhat leisurely course was then adopted of setting up another committee under Lord Cromer to formulate a practical scheme to give effect to the Report. Fortunately for all concerned, Philip Hartog, who had become a passionate convert in the cause of promoting Oriental studies, agreed to ensure continuity by carrying on as secretary of the new Committee, and with his customary skill, energy and persistence soon cleared the first, major obstacle by discovering a large building in Finsbury Circus in the City, then occupied by the London Institution,* which would be eminently suitable as a home for the proposed School. However, it was found necessary first to get passed an Act of Parliament to close down the London Institution, and to arrange for the transfer, which was not achieved until the close of 1912, and it took another eighteen months to negotiate a capital grant from Government of £25,000 to put the building in suitable order and to obtain the promise of an annual recurrent grant of £4,000. Deeming it quite impossible for the new School to make a formal start on such exiguous recurrent funds, the Committee issued in May 1914 a carefully prepared appeal for an endowment of £100,000, but no sooner had gifts begun to come in when all operations, constructional and financial, were brought to an abrupt halt by the outbreak of the first World War.

* Its full title was the London Institution for the Advancement of Literature and the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. It was incorporated in January 1807. The majority of the 940 proprietors of the Institution were satisfied to receive £25 in respect of each ‘share’ which they held, along with the retention of the right to use the reading and smoking rooms and the lecture theatre and library.
Taking courage as the months passed, by some modest indications from the War Departments that there was work of national importance waiting to be done by the new school, Hartog, never one to admit defeat, again stirred his Committee into action. On 5 June 1916 the School received its Royal Charter as a College of the University of London, and another appeal committee was at once formed. For raising large sums of money the times were out of joint, and the public, sunk in 'the mud, misery and despair' of the Battle of the Somme, responded so slowly that the appeal had to be closed at £36,267 10s, although very far short of the target. Although from the start firm in arguing that the School ought not to begin on a pound less than the Reay Committee's estimate of £14,000 annually, Hartog had at last reluctantly come round to the view that if any further delays took place the School might never come into being, and that it was necessary to 'take the current while it serves, or lose our ventures'. In November the newly-appointed Governing Body invited Dr Denison Ross, who had served with distinction in the Indian Education Service, to become the first Director and got him to take office within ten days of his appointment.* The first students were admitted on 18 January, and on 23 February 1917, in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering, at the head of which stood Lord Curzon and other members of the War Cabinet, and to the strains of music, both Western and Oriental, the School was formally opened by the King Emperor, George V.

* It was suggested to Philip Hartog that he should become the first Director, but he declined on the grounds that the Director should be a scholar.
2 Growing Pains, 1917-39

'It is, I believe, destined to be the first School of Oriental Studies in the world.'
Sir John Hewett, first Chairman of the Governing Body, 22 June 1916

'...each year on the present financial basis involves a...nearer approach to ultimate crisis.'
Report of the Senate of the University on the School, 1928

'The School is half-starved.'
H. L. Eason, Principal of the University of London, May 1938
THE purposes for which the School had been brought into being were set out in the second article of the Royal Charter. It was 'to be a School of Oriental Studies in the University of London to give instruction in the Languages of Eastern and African peoples, Ancient and Modern, and in the Literature, History, Religion, and Customs of those peoples, especially with a view to the needs of persons about to proceed to the East or to Africa for the pursuit of study and research, commerce or a profession and to do all or any of such other things as the Governing Body of the School consider conducive or incidental thereto, having regard to the provision for those purposes which already exists elsewhere and in particular to the co-ordination of the work of the School with that of similar institutions both in this Country and in Our Eastern and African Dominions and with the work of the University of London and its other Schools.'*

In the many discussions which had preceded the foundation the primary emphasis throughout had been placed on the need to provide practical training for those about to proceed overseas, whether as representatives of Government, commerce or missions, so that against this background it was not surprising that initially the Senate of the University of London should show a proper academic caution in giving only temporary university recognition to the School for a period of three years, and that for the express and sole purpose of registering students for higher degrees.

With the Governing Body and its senior officers in being and a Director in post, with a building ready to start work in, the first task was to recruit staff.+ Twenty-six of the teachers already concerned with Oriental and African studies at University and King's Colleges, that is all but two, accepted transfer to the School, which was doubly encouraging, for out of its exiguous, recurrent income far from generous terms could be offered, representing in fact for the majority no more than part-time employment;* Parts of this Article were later modified by Orders in Council in 1932 and 1938. † The School has been exceedingly fortunate in its senior officers. Between the first Chairman, Sir John Hewett, and the present Chairman, Lord Radcliffe, there may be mentioned Sir Harcourt Butler, Lord Harlech, Lord Hailey, Sir John Cumming, Sir George Tomlinson and Lord Scarbrough.
Dr L. D. Barnett, the Lecturer in Sanskrit, for example, being offered the princely sum of £40 annually and the promise of a share of the fees if his students should ever exceed six in number. Assuming, not unreasonably, that on these terms the School was running the risk of not being able to recruit or keep really good men, the Governors made an urgent appeal for help to the Treasury, which succeeded only in producing from the Financial Secretary, the young Stanley Baldwin, the laconic reply that ‘the opportunities of earning an income from the teaching of Oriental languages must be so limited that it does not appear to me that you ought to have any difficulty in retaining your existing lecturers or acquiring new ones on existing terms’. They were, in short, to be like Robert Surtees’s gentlemen, ‘generally spoken of as having nothing a year, paid quarterly’.

With such restricted financial resources all that could be attempted in the first decade after the School’s foundation was gradually to transform the numerous part-time into full-time appointments, and simultaneously to attract a small and if possible distinguished nucleus of senior teachers. As a beginning the University title of Professor of Persian was conferred on the new Director, to which were added by 1922 four further professorships and the same number of readerships. With such names among those appointed as Thomas Arnold in Arabic, Ralph Turner in Sanskrit, Grahame Bailey in Urdu, Sutton Page in Bengali, and Henry Dodwell in History, the School was at once assured of a high academic reputation. Initially, teaching was offered in twenty subjects, loosely organized into seven groups for convenience, steadily increasing in the early years up to a total of seventy-four courses in 1932-33. But the small size of classes, only two per cent attracting eleven students or more and ninety-five per cent consisting of fewer than six, made the School highly expensive to run, and rendered inevitable the extensive use of temporary assistance paid by the hour.

In the aftermath of war Britain was suffering a painful reaction from the exertions, fears and losses of the previous five years. The national energies had run low, and the insidious effects of war-time inflation followed by a swift descent into post-war deflation were already being widely felt. Along
with other major national institutions the universities had suffered, and every part of the School’s work in the early years was bedevilled by lack of money. The glaring inadequacy of university staff salaries in London induced the London County Council to initiate improvements, but although a higher, standardized scale was introduced, the School itself was unable to make the recommended increases.

Adamant though he had been in saying that it would be folly to make a beginning on an annual sum of less than £14,000, in fact the first tentative annual estimates of income presented by Hartog were for £8,806 and for expenditure £14,065, and although the budget was eventually balanced, it was a continuing cause for anxiety that a large proportion of the income was precarious. The only certain elements were the £4,000 annually provided by the Treasury, plus one-third of that amount promised by the LCC, along with the dividends on the invested appeal monies. From the start, too, contrary to all expectations, relatively little use was made of the School by commercial firms, which kept down the income from students’ fees to less than twenty per cent of the total.

However, a general approach to the Treasury then being made on behalf of all British universities and the formal emergence of the new university grants system eased the School’s situation, so that its Treasury grant was soon raised from £4,000 to £7,000 and in 1921-22 to £12,000, and four years later, when university grants generally were restored to earlier levels, to £13,250. Even so, from 1924 onwards, the School’s annual expenditure began regularly to exceed income and fresh sources of aid had to be sought. In 1925 the Governors authorized the Director to pass round the hat to commercial firms, but entirely without success, and, two years later, the occasion of the tenth anniversary was used to issue a public appeal for funds, but, hastily conceived and ill-prepared, it produced only a slight response, barely enough, it was said, to cover the cost of the splendid lunch at which the appeal was launched.

For Ross especially, who bore the brunt, it was a dispiriting period, but he continued with unquenchable zest to seize every chance of raising money,
setting up a committee to formulate applications to the charitable trusts, dis-
patchering a memorandum to the British Indemnity Delegation at Peking,
sending begging letters to eleven of the princely rulers of the Indian States,
and not least seeking out likely donors at society dinners. But money was hard
to come by, and at the end of it all the School was better off by about a mere
£750 annually, Imperial Chemical Industries having been persuaded to
offer 250 guineas a year for five years, and the Nizam of Hyderabad £500 a
year for three years for the study of Arabic and Persian. No wonder that the
Director was heard singing in his well-known, light baritone (which it
was said had first brought him to Lord Curzon’s notice in India) the refrain
from Gilbert and Sullivan,

   It’s true I’ve got no shirts to wear;
   It’s true my butcher’s bill is due;
   It’s true my prospects all look blue –
   But don’t let that unsettle you!
   Never you mind!

As Gilbert concluded, the only thing to do in the circumstances was,

   Roll on!

On the academic side, too, the prospects seemed thin. Opinion in the
University generally was uneasy on what was thought to be the School’s
inexplicable slowness in fulfilling the high expectations of the Reay Report,
and although recognition for the registration of higher degrees had been
renewed periodically, it was generally agreed that the time had arrived for
some stock-taking. In particular, attention was directed to the disproportion
between the relatively large number of students attending the School for
short courses of an elementary and sub-university character and the very
small number actually taking university courses. In 1926-27, for example,
the student body of 528 included no more than 65 working for university
degrees or School examinations; and the only sustained demand for university
courses had been in History, coming mainly from students from India.

The Senate therefore decided to institute a thorough inquiry, and mean-
while took the apparently ominous step of extending recognition for higher
degree purposes for a period of only one year from March 1927. Against the background of a precarious financial situation, a disappointing response from commercial and industrial firms, and the slow growth of university work proper, it seemed that the School’s future as a separate institution hung in the balance.

At an early stage in the inquiry the Senate members came to appreciate the very real difficulties with which the School had been grappling, and therefore found no difficulty in agreeing that ‘it is inevitable that...the cost of instruction in the School...must always be disproportionate to the income derived from students’ fees’, and that ‘until steps have been taken which will place the School in a position to meet in full its annual liabilities, each year on the present financial basis involves a lessening of available resources and a nearer approach to ultimate crisis’. Such modest increases of expenditure as had already taken place were approved as reasonable and unavoidable ‘if the School is to fulfil its purpose’.

It was recognized, too, that the School had attracted a distinguished professoriate and with remarkable speed had achieved through the publication of its Bulletin (the initial volume of which, for instance, included many of Arthur Waley’s elegant, vital and lucid translations of Chinese poems) an unrivalled reputation in the field of orientalist scholarship, and that its library was forging a valuable instrument of research for the future. These considerations led the Inspectors to assert in conclusion that ‘the School of Oriental Studies is rendering great services to the State and to the Empire, and in doing so it is reflecting credit upon the University of London, and doing work which the University should be proud to undertake’, and since in their view ‘the School’s continuance on a sound financial basis was not only of University but of Imperial concern’, they urged the Senate to approach Government for help on behalf of the School. On its part, the Senate, fully concurring in these findings and with a gesture of faith in the future, extended the School’s recognition for both first and higher degrees, and, with a blaze of enthusiasm in the session that followed, approved the introduction of first degree courses in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati,
History (with reference to India and to the Near and Middle East), Japanese, Malay, Marathi, Persian, Sanskrit, Pali, Indo-Aryan, Sinhalese, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Hindi.

From this thorough scrutiny the School therefore emerged with great credit and, with the opening of the doors for entry into full university status, confidence among the senior members began to rise. A memorandum urging the need for expansion in both linguistic and cultural studies, including anthropology, was submitted on the occasion of a visit by the University Grants Committee, along with a request for a recurrent increase of £5,000, and university syllabuses for the approved first degree courses in sixteen subjects were eagerly prepared, even though it was not at all clear where the students were to be found. When in the same period it was asked what its own attitude would be towards the development of the newly acquired University of London site in Bloomsbury, the School without hesitation indicated that it would welcome the opportunity of moving to 'the University precinct' and coming into closer touch with the central administration and with other colleges and libraries, thus enabling its staff and students to create and enjoy 'a larger university life'. Although in some ways it would be sorry to leave the City, the School felt that it could do what was required equally well in Bloomsbury, and in any event experience had shown that the demands of the commercial world had fallen far short of the expectations of those witnesses who had given evidence to the Reay Committee. In the light of the Senate's vote of confidence, there was also some feeling among some of the members at the School, not as yet fully crystallized or forcefully expressed, that its true future lay not so much in providing ad hoc training courses as in creating an advanced centre of university studies.

Thus far, despite the accretion year by year of new subjects, the School's academic structure and administrative system had remained relatively unchanged. In theory the final word on academic policy rested with the Academic Board, but this body was too large and miscellaneous both in its composition and spread of studies to provide effective discussion, leadership
or decision, and therefore in practice the control of affairs, both adminis-
trative and academic, had remained to a very considerable extent in the
hands of Ross, the Director. Always genial, bursting with energy, enthusiasm
and good living, a great conversationalist, at heart something of an enfant
terrible, Ross carried lightly his responsibilities and the many troubles that
beset the School, and never failed to radiate confidence. But, lacking the
necessary funds, he had found it impossible to look far ahead. There was
no move to drop the initial emphasis on the provision of practical training,
and no determined attempt was made to define clear lines of academic policy
for the future and to devise the ways and means of following them. It is true
that on occasion he consulted his senior colleagues, but the system was
casual, and in the context of the challenge offered by the Senate’s report,
and by the acceptance by the University of a very wide range of new first
degree courses and the urgent need to raise funds, it became evident that
the loose, albeit comfortable administrative and academic arrangements of
the past would have to be replaced.

In 1932, therefore, the decision was taken to reorganize teaching and
research into eight departments, consisting of six devoted to the study of
languages and cultures, and two responsible for Oriental history and law,
and for phonetics and linguistics, the latter incidentally marking the formal
introduction of a new discipline into British university studies. The six
‘regional’ departments covered respectively Ancient India and Iran, Modern
India and Ceylon, South East Asia and the Islands, the Far East, the Near
East, and Africa.* To take charge in each of these a Head of Department
was appointed, and all of the Heads of Departments were brought together
in a committee under the chairmanship of the Director with responsibility
for initiating and guiding academic policy. It was a sensible arrangement
which has lasted down to the present and has served the School well.

For the first time, therefore, systematic academic planning over the whole
range of the School’s work became possible, one of the earliest consequences

* In 1936 the number of departments was reduced to six by absorbing Ancient India
and Iran, and South East Asia into other departments.
being the emergence of proposals for a purposeful scheme of research into linguistics and African languages. Thus far, teaching in African languages had been in the hands of the veteran Werner sisters, Alice and Mary, and in the discussions on what should be done on their retirement an ambitious scheme was propounded by the young phonetician Mr (afterwards Professor) Arthur Lloyd James for the establishment of an international centre of linguistic study, research and teaching giving special emphasis to spoken African languages, and an approach was made to the Rockefeller Foundation for financial support.

University institutions in the United Kingdom, not least the School, are deeply indebted to the Rockefeller Foundation, not only for the most generous financial aid, but even more for the wise counsel which when sought is always helpfully and tactfully proffered by the Foundation’s officers; and this occasion once more illustrated the rule. It was largely owing to the intervention of James Gunn of the Foundation that the rather diffuse original proposal finally emerged as a compact programme of African linguistic research with an annual budget of £3,000 for three years. Through this work, which was in fact continued with Rockefeller aid down to 1938, a nucleus of staff was created under the gifted phonetician, Ida Ward, the Department of Africa was brought into being, and the unique scheme of research and teaching was started which has continued with gathering weight and momentum down to the present. It was a natural corollary, first suggested in 1935 by Lord Lugard, one of the Governors, that the title of the School should be enlarged to include Africa, which was done three years later.

In this period the pattern of teaching in most departments had gradually assumed a new shape, with a growing emphasis on university courses, thus providing some justification for the faith recently expressed by the Senate. The pattern and content of university education in Britain had been relatively little affected by the growth of the British Empire in Asia and Africa, and apart from any provision which was sought by Government departments for the training of civil servants, there was very little academic demand by
British students for what the School could offer. To most the studies appeared exotic, even mysterious, 'gleams of a remoter world', and no one today who is concerned with extra-European studies and who did not actually grow up in Britain between the two wars can readily appreciate how restricted were the opportunities in these studies for British students. Those who have known only a land flowing with milk, if not honey, cannot easily imagine the desert. There was an almost total absence of scholarships, of travel and publication funds, of career opportunities, which deterred all but a tiny handful of dedicated young British scholars. Although British students taking university courses were few and far between, the traditional attraction of the mother country and metropolitan centre on the dependent countries of the Empire, combined with the presence of a small group of really outstanding scholars (now including, for example, 'the young men', Harold Bailey, Hamilton Gibb and Walter Henning), began to draw students from abroad, especially for postgraduate study. It was ironic that it should have been university students from overseas rather than from Britain who for many years, and until quite recently, most benefited from the School's existence. By 1927-28 there were 115 students at the School from overseas, a number which by 1936-37 had risen to 174, that is to very nearly 40 per cent of the School's total student population of 428.* Some there may be in British universities who, in the pungent words of Sir Ifor Evans, 'prefer the age of Rutherford to that of Franks', but the truth is that for many young British scholars it was a bitterly cramping period.

Despite this welcome increase in work of university standard the bulk of the teaching was still being given in short courses, usually of several months' duration and mainly for members of government, business firms and missions. The demand from firms for this type of course usually constituted no more than between ten and fifteen per cent of the whole, and a renewed attempt to redress this presumed imbalance was made by offering Commercial

* At this period the students taking university courses in Indo-Aryan, Indian History, Indian Law, Arabic and Persian were almost wholly drawn from the Indian Empire and Ceylon.
Certificates to those who completed the short courses, but the demand soon fell away and the scheme was abandoned. On the other hand the longer and more testing first- and second-year School Certificates and Diplomas, mainly in language studies, had been from the start serving a small but steady demand and were therefore maintained. It seemed that in meeting effective demand the School had already begun to take a turn away from the provision of short courses of a sub-university character towards the development of university courses, but the rate of change was so slow that it seemed almost imperceptible.

Nevertheless, it was consistent with this trend that when the University, which was actively proceeding to develop the Bloomsbury site, offered the School a place within the precinct, it should be accepted with alacrity. Negotiations for the sale of the Finsbury building were started (complicated somewhat by the need to compensate at a finally agreed cost of £5,000 the rump of the London Institution members), and in July 1936 completed for the sum of £219,000, and, pending the erection of the proposed new building in Bloomsbury, temporary premises for administration and teaching were rented in Vandon House, a cramped, red-brick building in Westminster, and for the library in Clarence House, near St James’s Park.

The Finsbury building had served its purpose admirably, and no one who worked there is likely to forget either its cellars, which for long provided the common rooms for staff and students, or its serene and lovely library reading room, whose wooden floors and panelling glowed with subdued light; there within its alcoves could always be found

\textit{tranquil solitude}

\textit{And such society}

\textit{As is quiet, wise and good.}

Had the School been able to foresee that through the vicissitudes of war and peace it was to be denied for a period of more than thirty years the facility of a new library building, it might well have hesitated to make the move.

On a calmer note of assessment, the decision to move from the City to the University precinct forms a critical turning-point in the School’s history.
Remoteness of place encouraged academic isolation; the School was in the
University but not of it. As Henry Dodwell, on the eve of retirement and
of death, pointed out later, in an unforgettably moving plea for the main-
tenance of high academic standards, it was of immense benefit for a small,
young College, in which by and large there were few long-established
traditions and standards, to move into the heart of the University; symboli-
cally right, too, that its studies should be taking a central place in the world
exchange which is developing in our own time.

Plans for the new building, which was to accommodate an academic staff
of forty, a library of several hundred thousand volumes, a small admini-
strative staff and an undeclared number of students, were quickly prepared
and readily approved by all concerned. So smoothly beguiling was this pro-
gress that the Governors could be forgiven for announcing in a mood of
optimism in 1938 that ‘the School would be installed in its Bloomsbury home
by March 1941’. Time and again in the matter of new buildings was hope
to triumph over experience.

The favourable terms of sale of the Finsbury building apparently pro-
vided for the foreseeable capital needs of the School, and therefore threw
renewed emphasis on the continuing inadequacy of the recurrent funds.
From all sources the annual income had crept up to £20,000 by the early
1920s, and slowly to £30,000 through the following decade of economic
depression. Renewed appeals to City firms had elicited no response, and by
this time it was becoming obvious that Britain’s industry and commerce
were so preoccupied with the task of extricating themselves from the
economic slump that the School’s only hope of aid lay in trying on national
grounds to obtain greater support from Government; and the gathering
political tension between the European powers and the clear signs of German
and Italian and Japanese ambitions in Asia and Africa encouraged this
switch of emphasis.

With some Departments of State the School’s association was close. From
the start the India Office had recognized the value of the School’s work in
training Indian Civil Service probationers by making an annual grant of
£1,250, soon increased to £1,500, and in 1922 raised again to £2,250, but it was remarkable that, despite the School's substantial contribution to the training of Sudan and Colonial Service officers, no similar recurring grant (except for an annual £30 from Hong Kong) had ever been made by the Colonial Office or by Colonial Governments. When, therefore, a carefully co-ordinated approach was made with the ready support of the Secretary of State, Mr Ormsby Gore (later Lord Harlech), to all the Colonial Governments, it readily evoked from fifteen of them for the session 1938-39 a vote of £4,380. At the same time the Treasury grant was raised by £1,500 to a total of £17,433.* By this period, therefore, the annual income and expenditure had climbed to close on £40,000, but with one-third of the total income still being drawn from ad hoc annual grants and donations, the School's existing programme of work was far from secure, the rate of growth of staff was small and long-term planning was impossible.

But these financial worries, although acute, were overlaid by the fears arising from the quick succession of international crises, apparently and inexorably leading to another world war, and consequently by anxious thoughts of what part in that event the School would be called on to play; and by the gravest doubts about its state of preparedness.

At this critical juncture Ross reached the point of retirement, and was succeeded by Ralph Turner, who had first joined the School in 1922 as Professor of Sanskrit after serving in the Indian Education Service and in Allenby’s army in Palestine. With a distinct flair for publicity and undaunted optimism, Ross had managed against heavy odds in a most difficult and depressing inter-war period of twenty years to keep the School alive. This was a considerable achievement, but he had not been able to make of it the imperial and practical training centre envisaged in the Reay Report, or to define clearly the School's proper function as a College of the University. It may be that the two functions were not easily reconcilable. In retrospect

* This grant for 1936-37 already included the Treasury grant fixed at £15,250 in 1925-26 and the LCC grant originally fixed at £1,535, both of which had been incorporated in 1930-31 into the block grant of £15,933 from the University Court.
The Finsbury Circus school building
The library of the Finsbury Circus building
it seems clear that the move to Bloomsbury was decisive, but time had to elapse before this could be appreciated. Meanwhile other, more urgent considerations had to be faced. Taking over in a period of national emergency, Turner naturally saw his primary task as that of preparing the School to meet any demands which British involvement in a major war in Asia and Africa would impose on it.

Disquieting news continued to reach London of the great strides in the Asian and African fields of study being taken by Germany and Italy avowedly for the purpose of exploiting future political conquests in Asia and Africa. This threw into high relief the scantiness of the School’s resources, the fragility of its academic structure, and the lack of British national policy. A case to begin to put the situation right, especially to build up the School’s coverage of strategically important languages, was therefore hurriedly prepared and submitted through the University to the Secretaries of State for India and the Colonies and to the Financial Secretary of the War Office, as a result of which an inter-departmental committee was set up to consider in the national context the cost of the School’s urgent needs. This was rapidly assessed by the committee at £25,000 annually. With such progress hopes ran high, but bitter disappointment soon followed when the Treasury on the ground of economy rejected outright the committee’s recommendation.

Meanwhile, on the assumption that in the event of war London would be immediately and heavily bombed, arrangements were made to evacuate the School to Cambridge, where some accommodation for staff and teaching was reserved in Christ’s College.

Thus, when war finally broke out in September 1939, the School found itself in temporary quarters in Cambridge, with its financial resources fully committed to a half-completed building in Bloomsbury, with its staff scattered, its library in storage and the bitter knowledge that compared even with the Reay proposals of 1909 its teaching establishment was still deficient in every department. Founded in the closing stages of the first World War to meet national needs, financially half-starved in the two decades of peace, it nervously braced itself to respond to a challenge of a totally new order.
3 The Years of War, 1939-46

'During the war the advice of scholars has again and again been thrust aside by unimaginative officials, military as well as civil, only to be taken later, sometimes too late.'
Professor R. L. Turner to the Earl of Scarbrough, 1 October 1945

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

'The foresight of the Senate and the Court in urging upon the Government the need for an expansion of the School was amply proved by the experience of war.'
Report of the Court of the University of London, 6 January 1947
IT was only after the greatest hesitation and on Government’s advice that
the School had left the metropolitan centre for Cambridge, and as soon as it
became clear that despite German air raids it was possible to resume work
there, a return was made in July 1940. Only sixty-two students had followed
the School to Cambridge, falling to twenty-six in 1940-41; and there had never
been any question but that in time of war the School’s proper place was to
be in close touch with the Service Ministries and Departments of State.

The School’s half-completed building in Bloomsbury had become an
early casualty of the bombing, receiving in September 1940 a direct hit,
which incidentally quite demolished the newly-constructed (and fortunately
empty) air raid shelter in the basement, but repairs were at once made and
building continued.

Anticipating an early entry into its new home, the School itself had
found temporary quarters in eleven small and overcrowded rooms in Broad-
way Court, overlooking St James’s Park station, and was therefore filled
with consternation to learn that the Ministry of Information, already in-
stalled since the outbreak of war in the Senate House of the University,
wanted to play cuckoo in the School’s nest by occupying the whole of the
new building. Immediately a battle of argument was joined for possession,
Sir Philip Hartog, at this period a Governor and as dedicated and selfless as
ever, energetically jumping in to lead what proved to be his last fight on
behalf of the School, but it was not until February 1943, and then only after
final reference to the Cabinet and House of Commons, that a solution was
found by which the shell of the whole building as originally planned was
to be completed, a matter of the greatest subsequent importance, the
School occupying the two upper floors and part of the basement, and the
Ministry the remainder on condition that it would vacate six months after
the end of the war.

It had been taken for granted in the discussions leading to its foundation
towards the close of the first World War that the School would have a signifi-
cant national part to play in any future world conflict, but by the outbreak
of the second World War and despite the long, preceding period of increasing
international tension only the most tentative indication had been given by the War Office that in the event of hostilities it foresaw the need for some courses for officers in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Japanese and Siamese. But no steps had been taken to put the School in funds or to make sure that in the event teachers would be available, and by late 1941 only two of these courses for a total of twenty officers had in fact been firmly requested. Meanwhile some work of a voluntary character had been contributed, including research by the Phonetics Section into radio-telephone speech for the Air Ministry, and an ad hoc short, intensive course which had been organized for officials of the Colonial Office and British Council. This constituted a ludicrously small contribution to the war effort, and the Director found it alarming that despite the increasing scale of the war in the Middle East and Africa and the threat of war in the Far East, no far-reaching programme of language training for the Services was even being considered, especially since at that stage of the war there happened to be many students at universities awaiting delayed call-up into the Services who would have provided admirable recruits for such training. As a partial gesture the School itself volunteered to provide a short course in Urdu for officers and cadets intended for the Indian Army, the cost of fees being met by the War Office, and, although no maintenance grants were provided, some 365 cadets and officers took advantage of the offer.

Acutely dissatisfied by this hand-to-mouth treatment of the problem, the School in the summer of 1941 made formal representations to both the Foreign Office and War Office, and in view of the threatening posture of Japan pointed to the critical British shortage of experts in Japanese and to the long period of training which servicemen would have to undergo to acquire a knowledge of that language. It was true that at that particular juncture the Services were stretched to the utmost, already quite unable to meet the manpower needs of the vast, widely scattered theatres of war, but the School would have been doing less than its duty if it had not urgently continued to seek discussion of a problem which sooner or later would have to be faced and solved. However, the War Office's response, when it came
in August 1941, was discouraging, and expressed in a style which no doubt would have earned the Prime Minister’s censure. ‘So far as can be reasonably foreseen at present,’ it said, ‘in spite of the kaleidoscopic changes which have taken place in the countries which might in the future develop into theatres of war, we feel we are at present reasonably insured in the matter of officers knowing Oriental languages.’

Two months later Britain was at war with Japan, and by the end of the year, Malaya and Singapore had been overrun, and the British Intelligence Departments were desperately casting around for men able to read and speak Japanese, only to find that, despite the War Office’s recently expressed optimism, the supply compared with the demand, as they had been informed by the School, was almost non-existent. When the School renewed the offer its services were accepted, but some eight months were still to elapse before any servicemen were actually sent to begin their instruction. Once trained, the men were eagerly snapped up, and so great was the military need in the Indian and Far Eastern fields of war that those whose only training was a ten weeks’ course at the School in recognising and recording Japanese radio signals, were on arrival in India pressed into translating documents, pending the arrival of translators proper, who could at the earliest not be ready before August 1943. However, after this agonisingly slow start, these basic courses were built up steadily and satisfactorily, and by October 1945 nearly 600 men had qualified.

Large numbers of radio-telephonists with some knowledge of Japanese were required in the Far Eastern theatre of war, especially by the Royal Air Force, but the preparation of a short, effective course offered peculiar difficulties. In the early days of the war, Professor Lloyd James, Head of the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, had made some useful explorations of the problems, abruptly cut short by his tragic illness and death, and his successor, the immensely energetic and ingenious J. R. Firth, went on to devise a system by which men could be trained in a very short period to record accurately. The RAF sent its first men for this course in October 1942, and at the same time, on the not unreasonable assumption that the
Fleet Air Arm would have like needs, the School gave a similar invitation to the Admiralty. But the latter showed no immediate interest. Within a year, however, the Navy was vainly trying to borrow men so trained from the RAF and by August 1943 had started to send its own men for training to the School.

As the Japanese pressed home their early military successes in Burma, and the British sought to consolidate their defensive positions in Assam, it became obvious that links with China would be of great importance, and the Director therefore sought to draw the War Office into discussions on the likely need for men trained in Chinese. But he got little encouragement, reporting: 'Later, when a Chinese army was coming to our help over the passes into Burma, I again sought an interview at the War Office to urge the training of even a small number of officers in Chinese. I received my answer: educated Chinese spoke English; our liaison officers had no need to speak Chinese. In what era was this senior officer of the Intelligence Department living? I have heard that Chinese soldiers, even if they could speak English, were not pleased that their own language was so little regarded; and the imponderable has weight even in war. The story is as before. The advice, rejected in 1942, begins to be taken in 1945. This year the Services have already sent 71 for Chinese, and more are to follow.'

As the demands of war mounted and as the Service Ministries became able to assess their manpower and to project their forward needs more accurately, the School was called on to undertake a wider range of work. The Postal and Telegraph Censorship Department enlisted the School's aid in reading letters in languages which could not be dealt with in the Uncommon Languages Section of the censorship, more than 52,000 altogether in 192 languages being in this way dealt with during the war, reaching a peak of more than 1,000 a month in the early part of 1945. The demand by the Services for intensive courses in a variety of languages continued to grow, bringing into the School, for example, in the session 1943-44 about 1,000 servicemen, and in the process overwhelming the School's restricted accommodation and necessitating the transfer for the remainder of the war of the
Far Eastern courses under the wise and maternal care of Professor Eve Edwards to a group of converted houses in Sussex Gardens. Altogether 1,674 servicemen passed through courses at the School between 1942 and 1946.

With the accompanying sharp rise in income from fees, the School’s financial troubles seemed to be over, and modest annual financial surpluses accrued, reaching £8,140 in 1942-43, £5,910 in 1943-44 and £3,712 in 1944-45. But the School’s financial buoyancy was more apparent than real, its annual recurrent grant from the University being still no more than £21,000 and, casting a look ahead to the post-war period, it seemed certain that the School’s financial position would be no more secure than in the pre-war days. ‘Wars and rumours of wars’ there might be, but this factor it seemed was to remain constant.

During the long months of preparation to invade Hitler’s Europe, thought in Britain was everywhere leaping ahead to the post-war world, creating a climate of opinion in favour of development and change. It was to be expected that in the context of its assumed national role and its somewhat chastening experiences in the pre-war and early war years, the School should wish to re-examine its own position, and the adequacy of the provision of those studies in Britain for which it carried a major responsibility. The incidence of war, especially the initial military débâcle in the Far East and the associated failure of British military intelligence, could not but provoke renewed discussion on national needs, both practical and academic.

The plain fact was that in many respects the School’s provision of studies still fell short of what the Reay Report had proposed in 1909, and the sharp comparison of reality with what appeared urgently necessary to sustain the war effort evoked from the School’s departments a succession of plans for development, first for Near and Far Eastern studies, then for Indian studies, and in February 1944 at the Foreign Office’s request another consolidated statement of need. Some months later a comprehensive summary of all of these proposals was gathered together and put forward as a plan for the expansion of the School over a ten-year period from the date of the end of the war.
The School founded its case not so much on the actual military needs of the nation in wartime, which were only too evident, but on the likelihood of great changes in Asia and Africa in the immediate post-war period. 'The tide of nationalism,' it said, 'is running high in every Oriental and African country, and the peoples of those countries will look forward to great economic development, industrial, commercial and agricultural. In this they will welcome the assistance of the West, but not in the bygone spirit of submission to Western authority.' An expansion of Oriental and African studies in British universities, it was argued, would assist in preparing and equipping Britain to take a full and sympathetic part in these changes, and in adjusting her own outlook and policies accordingly. The School estimated that it would need an annual recurrent grant of £35,000 rising to £125,000 by the end of the decade, along with a capital grant of £100,000 to enlarge its accommodation.

Meanwhile, in interviews with the Minister for War, Richard Law, and with Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India, the Director had expressed the conviction that the time was ripe to set up a Government Commission to review the future of Oriental and African studies in Britain, and Lord Hailey, at this time Chairman of the School, at once added his powerful voice. The movement of world affairs, the ebb and flow of British fortunes, favoured the proposal, and the great changes brought about by the war in Asia and Africa, and the implications of the wartime alliance with Russia had made it urgently necessary to make a fresh appraisal of Britain's position in relation to these major areas.

In June 1944 Mr Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, therefore announced among other measures the Government's intention of setting up a commission 'to examine the facilities offered by universities and other educational institutions in Great Britain for the study of Oriental, Slavonic, East European, and African languages and cultures, to consider what advantage is being taken of these facilities and to formulate recommendations for their improvement'.

Losing little time, the commission of fourteen members started its
inquiries in 1945 under the chairmanship of Lord Scarbrough. Deeply interested in these studies through his service as Governor of Bombay and as Minister for India and Burma, and subsequently to become their life-long patron, no one more eminently fitted could have been chosen for the task, and with the admirably prompt report of his Commission’s findings in April 1946 and their publication in the following year, scholars had good cause to invoke the poet, Horace, in hailing

\[ \textit{Maecenas atavis edite regibus} \]
\[ \textit{O et praesidium et dulce decus meum.} \]

The Scarbrough Report formed a milestone in the development of these studies in Britain. Without beating about the bush, it declared that the course of war had already given a clear indication of the importance which increasing contacts between countries would assume after the war and of the relatively growing significance of the countries of Asia, Africa and the Slavonic world, and had at the same time revealed Britain’s deficiencies in the number of persons available to provide expert knowledge and teaching about the governments and peoples of these parts. In its opinion, this kind of knowledge in a world at peace no less than at war had to find a permanent and growing place in British culture, starting in the universities, where the existing scale of research and teaching was quite inadequate to meet Britain’s immediate needs.

The first requirement in the Commission’s view was to build strong university departments, primarily in the study of languages with some related cultural studies, in place of the few isolated professorial posts which for centuries had existed in several British universities. As a means to recruit staff for these new departments, Treasury studentships were proposed, and provision was also to be made for those so trained to keep up-to-date by travel abroad. The Commission was not deterred by the expectation that for some time to come the number of undergraduates in these departments would be small, and declared that the national importance of these studies and the evident need for much more research justified exceptional treatment. In this proposed programme of growth it recognized that all fields of
study relating to Asia and Africa would be developed in the University of London, mainly at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and that for economy, convenience and efficiency the study of the languages of Africa and South East Asia in particular should be concentrated there. Incisive in its analysis and practical in its recommendations, the report was given a warm and unanimous welcome in Britain.

The fulfilment of the recommendations of the Report was envisaged as requiring a period of ten years, the likely cost at the half-way stage being assessed at £225,000 annually, with a similar increase to follow over a second five-year period. Capital expenditure, too, would be required for new premises to accommodate this expansion.

So far as they affected the universities, the Government promptly accepted these recommendations and allocated the recurrent sums required as an earmarked grant for the first five years, and the University Grants Committee at once invited selected universities, including London and the School, to submit their proposals for development. Although general reference had been made in the Report to the need for capital funds for building, no specific proposals were included, and the post-war priority rightly given to the repair of bomb damage, associated with a strictly applied licensing system caused the subject to be deferred, much to the School’s disadvantage later.

In the confidence that its importunate pressure on Government and its own contribution to the war effort had played no small part in clearing the way for the commission, the School submitted the scheme of expansion which it had long since drawn up, being promptly asked by the commission’s chairman to raise its sights and increase the scale of its proposals.

Thus at the beginning of the post-war period, which happened conveniently to coincide with the start of the first post-war quinquennium for the universities, the prospect for the development of Oriental and African studies seemed set fair, and orientalists everywhere rejoiced in ‘The innocent brightness of a new-born day’.
4 Expansion and Development, 1946-67

'Adopted, the Scarbrough Report will be a new charter for Oriental and African studies in this country…'
Professor R. L. Turner to the East India Association, 19 June 1947

'The School’s work should be related to the conditions of the time…. With the rising importance of Asia and Africa in the modern world, Oriental and African studies should take their proper place as a normal part of the education of western society.'
The School to the Rockefeller Foundation, 16 October 1957

'The School of Oriental and African Studies has built up a pre-eminent position, nationally and internationally, in the depth and range of its activities.'
Statement of the Chairman of the University Grants Committee to the University of London, 21 October 1965
THE SCARBROUGHB EXPANSION

Well in advance of any of the monies which might be forthcoming under the proposals of the Scarbrough Report, the School had been promised by the Court of the University of London that its recurrent grant would be raised to £60,000 annually for the period of the 1947-52 quinquennium. At the same time the adoption by Government of the Devonshire Report on training for the Colonial Service had assured the School of a grant for African language studies, so that for the first time ever, it knew that it could rely on an ample surplus and therefore could make an immediate start on its post-war programme and at the same time take long views on future development. At last there was 'some honey and plenty of money'.

Consistent with the proposals of the Scarbrough Report and with its own long-standing intention, a period of expansion over ten years was envisaged in which the academic establishment starting at 63 posts would rise at the half-way stage to a total of 218 posts and at the close in 1957 to 256 posts, providing for general growth and spread in the humanities across the vast expanse of Asian and African studies, with emphasis on the study of history, language and literature and including a very modest addition in law and anthropology.

Against a background of three decades of financial stringency and of academic frustration and of the more recent disturbance and distortion caused by the war, this was undoubtedly a formidable and far-reaching programme. Yet in the post-war climate of opinion it was in keeping with the times, for in Britain policies of expansion were in demand. A new Government, pledged to a policy of reform and development, had taken office, the unexpectedly quick victory and armistice in the Far East had uplifted the national spirit, and the minds of people everywhere were set on fulfilling the many ambitious plans which had been formulated to keep hope alive in the dark days of war.

Death met I too,
And saw the dawn glow through.

In this context there was no reason why those who for many years had
called for the expansion of the School should question the correctness of this policy or the School’s ability to carry through such a massive enterprise. But there was one factor of supreme importance. Before the war the School had been fortunate in getting teachers of distinction from the missionary societies and the overseas services, not least the civil and education services in India, but with the winding down of these Services it was obvious that everything depended on the School’s ability to attract young British scholars into these new fields of study. In justification of their own optimism they were able to point to the existence of a score of temporary teachers, especially in Chinese and Japanese, recruited from among young service-men to run the wartime courses, who already provided a reserve, and to the large numbers of demobilized servicemen about to return from the Asian and African theatres of war, many of whom it was assumed would have gained an enduring interest in those areas. From these sources alone the School thought that it could fill as many as one hundred Scarbrough training studentships.

Bearing in mind the advice of the Scarbrough Commission that it was important to build strong departments, the School sensibly proposed to expand on the one side around the existing four nuclei formed by the teachers of the principal languages and literatures of Asia and Africa, whose work had long been organized on a regional basis, that is, for Africa, the Near and Middle East, India, Pakistan and Ceylon, and the Far East, and on the other side around the long-established although still small units of phonetics and linguistics and of history and law. However, these existing structures were partial in extent and variable in character, so that although all six departments at once set to with a will to recruit and train staff, some made quicker progress than others. Under the stimulating, not to say provocative sway of Professor Firth, an outspoken and shrewd Yorkshireman, the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics expanded in numbers and maintained its role of leadership in these fields. In History, the whole of the proposed quinquennial programme of filling twenty new posts was completed, so that the nucleus of teaching staff was trained for all the major Asian areas in the
Some senior members of the staff, 1936
Left to right – Professor (later Sir) Hamilton Gibb, Professor H. H. Dodwell, Professor Sir E. Denison Ross, Professor (later Sir) Ralph Turner and Dr T. Grahame Bailey
The Common Room, Finsbury Circus
study of ancient and modern times, and a start was even made in opening up the relatively unexplored pre-European history of Africa, which in fact had not been envisaged in the Scarbrough programme. Attracting students throughout the world, especially from South Asia, the History Department grew within a decade into the largest research department in history in a British university. In the regional departments the principal increases were made by India, Pakistan and Ceylon (twenty-nine established posts), by the Near and Middle East (twenty-six established posts) and the Far East (twenty-six established posts), with roughly half disposed on the language side, chiefly on the modern spoken tongues, and half on related studies in philosophy, religion, the history of art and archaeology. The Africa Department reached an establishment of twenty posts in language studies, but progress in the South East Asian field generally was slow, for the Department itself, which had been dissolved in 1936, had first to be recreated under Professor J. A. Stewart before the difficult task of recruitment and training could be started in earnest.*

On the advice of the University Grants Committee the very small number of teachers in the subjects of law and of anthropology, who were already attached to other departments, were grouped together in 1947 and 1949 respectively to form Departments of Law and of Anthropology, under Professors Vesey FitzGerald and Führer-Haimendorf, but not without an expression of doubt by substantial groups of teachers in some of the regional departments who, fearful that the process of sub-division once started might be taken to extremes, preferred the policy of bringing or holding together all disciplines of study within the existing departments.† But this would undoubtedly have produced overlarge and administratively cumbersome, regional departments, cutting across, moreover, the established lines of development.

* Five members for the Department of South East Asia and the Islands were trained in the principal languages of this area by the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, creating an intimate relationship between the two departments.
† Around a nucleus of study of language and literature, the regional departments included and still include the study of philosophy, religion, archaeology, art history and music.
in other major colleges of the University in which the tradition of closely-linked undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through single-subject disciplines was strongly maintained. Desirable though in some ways it may have been to promote regional or 'area studies', the regional departments in the School had not yet turned their attention to this problem of organizing area studies within their existing framework of teaching either at the undergraduate or postgraduate stages. Moreover, the creation of new departments by discipline of study on the same lines as the existing Departments of History and of Phonetics and Linguistics not only facilitated their rapid growth by evoking both understanding and a ready acceptance throughout the University, but also ensured the maintenance of high standards by establishing them as integral members of the relevant University schools and boards in these studies. These were critical decisions, for once taken it became virtually impossible, even if desirable, to accept 'area studies' as the sole conceptual framework within which to foster the whole of the School's work.

As part of the general scheme of academic growth in this first post-war quinquennium, several related, important policies were tested by the School and incorporated into its working routine. A cadre of language assistants was created consisting of research informants annually recruited from the field areas, and a system of overseas research leave was carefully worked out by which a dozen or so members of the permanent academic staff annually proceeded to countries in Asia and Africa for research. The School, too, took the responsibility for setting up and administering a new Foundation of Chinese Art, containing a unique and priceless collection of Chinese ceramics, which had generously been donated to the University by Sir Percival David.

In defining and applying these plans, especially in recruiting and training young scholars to open up fresh fields of study whilst simultaneously maintaining the normal routine of university teaching and administration, the whole attention and energy of the senior members of staff was absorbed often at the expense of their own research, and in several instances of
their health. The School's debt to a small circle of dedicated heads of departments, not least to Professor Eve Edwards, Professor John Firth, Professor Walter Simon and Professor Ida Ward, who, along with the Director, carried the burden of the day, was immeasurable.

On the foundation laid by them a whole new generation of young British scholars entered and transformed the Asian and African fields of study.

Nevertheless, despite high hopes and great endeavours, many of the quinquennial objectives were not achieved. It was found possible to award no more than twenty-four of the Treasury studentships, compared with the figure of one hundred which had been aimed at; and by the close of the quinquennium the net increase in the School's academic staff amounted to about one hundred, which constituted only two-thirds of the programme as originally proposed. However, all initial plans had been made on the assumption that there would immediately follow a second period of five years with earmarked financial support, and that the presence of a large and vigorous body of young scholars, already introduced into its fields of studies, was bound in this second quinquennium to have cumulative effects of the greatest academic importance.

In the light of its achievements in these first years, the School felt confident that in the second quinquennium the whole of its Scarbrough programme could be fulfilled, and therefore looked forward in the period 1952-57 to adding another ninety-six academic posts to its establishment, roughly as large an increase as had been achieved in the first post-war quinquennium. No new major disciplines or departments were envisaged, and the expressed aim was to extend and consolidate existing studies in the humanities, along with modest growth in law and anthropology, and to continue to advance along the broad regional front, great reliance being once more placed on the possibility of attracting and training recruits to the staff by means of the award of Treasury studentships. In anticipation of an expansion of staff on this scale, some attention was paid to the pressures which would fall on the School's already inadequate buildings, and to the need for new accommodation for the library, which was rapidly growing in
size; but, possibly because the minds of the senior members were still concentrated on the vexed question of how best to recruit and train staff, unfortunately no more than a general reference of need was made at this stage. Many and severe were the obstacles – the unfinished state of the existing building, the lack of a new site, of decanting space and of capital funds – but failure in this matter of new accommodation to make more decisive progress in this period was later to create grave difficulties and a bottleneck to further growth.

THE END OF SCARBROUGH EXPANSION

But the sky which had seemed to be set fair suddenly clouded over. The start of the second quinquennium in 1952 unfortunately coincided with one of Britain’s recurring post-war financial crises, and the universities at once felt the cold wind of economy. In the sharply increased competition for funds within each university the Oriental departments with a relatively small proportion of undergraduate students were ill-placed to assert their priority. Thus far they had been protected by the earmarking of their grants, but this policy was generally suspect in the universities, and the Scarbrough Commission itself, while clearly intending to provide for a ten-year period of expansion, had committed itself to the view that it did ‘not think it necessary or even desirable that this arrangement should be a permanent one’. With these considerations in mind, the University Grants Committee decided to discontinue the earmarked grants in the quinquennium just about to begin and ‘in the best interests of the Oriental and African departments’ to leave them to compete for funds with other University departments.

With a poor competitive position, especially in the face of the demands of the scientists, the Oriental faculties and departments fared very badly indeed, and in most universities their growth came to an abrupt halt. By virtue of its separate existence as a grant-receiving college of the University of London, the School continued in its own right as a college to enjoy the steadfast support from the University Court, and therefore suffered less than
most. But all Colleges in London were suffering cuts and here, too, the setback was severe, the School's rate of increase in its annual recurrent grant, which had varied in the first quinquennium between £15,000 and £50,000, dropping sharply in the second quinquennium to an average of £8,000, a sum which, moreover, was increasingly subject to erosion by the prevailing financial inflation. However, out of these additional monies it was still possible to maintain some momentum, and in the following five years twenty-six new academic posts were added to existing departments, which represented in effect one-eighth of the programme which had been put forward.* But overall the School had entered a phase in which the only rule which seemed to apply was 'jam tomorrow, and jam yesterday, but never jam today'.

Disappointed in their ambition of reaching the Scarbrough targets, it was understandable that, when the time arrived in 1955 to prepare plans for the following quinquennium, 1957-62, the departments of the School should reaffirm their intention of completing their original proposals by seeking to add another fifty-three posts. Like the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo they thought that the right policy was 'Hard pounding, gentlemen; let's see who will pound longest'. But by this time the realization was beginning to grow in some quarters that the School was likely to command neither the money nor the space to do this, and that the wiser course might well be to review the whole situation afresh.

By this stage the regional departments had reached a considerable size, India, Pakistan and Ceylon comprising twenty-six posts, the Near and Middle East thirty-one posts, the Far East twenty-eight posts and Africa twenty-one posts, so that a reasonable scale of teaching had already been provided for all the major and many minor languages, and also for a number of associated studies. One adverse consequence of the general preoccupation with the policy of expanding the teaching staff in the face of continuing difficulties in recruitment was that inadequate attention was given to the existence of

* The net staff increase was only twelve because a number of existing posts were for various reasons allowed to lapse.
potentially disturbing, underlying trends. First among these in a period in which there had been a general expansion in the numbers of students at British universities was that the Oriental faculties and departments, including the departments at the School, had been failing to attract British undergraduates to their courses. Despite the very large increase of the academic staff, the number of undergraduates at the School actually fell from sixty-two in 1952-53 to fifty-six in 1956-57, so that the question which sooner or later had to be answered was how far the Scarbrough policy of building strong departments, independent of undergraduate demand, was to be taken, and in particular how far young scholars were to be recruited and trained for posts which by their nature would inevitably be largely devoted to research.

It had rightly been taken for granted that the total number of students at the School would decline from the very large figure at the close of the war, especially because of the termination of the courses for servicemen and the running down of the training courses for the Indian Civil Service and the Sudan and the Colonial Office probationers consequent on the transfer of power from British Empire into Commonwealth. Some decline, too, in the demand for short courses for representatives of commercial and industrial firms was to be expected as the bigger firms instituted their own post-war training schemes. Moreover, the Scarbrough Commission had recognized that ‘the number of undergraduate students in most of these studies is likely to be relatively small’ and that ‘any increase can only be gradual’, and the conclusion had been drawn that in any event the right policy was to create strong departments ‘independent of undergraduate demand’. At the same time there was doubtless an expectation that some growth in the number of students taking full-time university courses would follow the large increases in staff. Yet in 1956-57, ten years after the adoption of the Scarbrough Report, there was no sign of an increasing undergraduate demand in Oriental and African studies, and in particular the failure to attract British students both at the undergraduate and postgraduate stages appeared likely to undermine the future of these studies in
the United Kingdom. Between 1947 and 1957 the number of British under-graduates at the School had fallen from fifty-five in 1947-48 to twenty-seven in 1952-53 and to twenty-two in 1956-57, a situation which was even more disturbing because British graduate students already constituted such a small minority, in 1960-61, for example, providing only twenty out of 217 from all countries. While this situation obtained it was clearly impossible to provide a solution for the difficulties of staff recruitment. To make matters worse at this juncture, a Treasury decision to promote economy by restricting the award of Scarbrough studentships to persons who were already assured of eventual appointment to a university post, had the effect of sharply cutting back the programme itself, and, because the universities simply did not possess an adequate financial surplus to make the new system work, the studentship scheme itself slowly withered away. In a situation in which very few British graduates were coming forward to study Oriental and African subjects this was a disastrous loss.

PROBLEMS OF ACCOMMODATION
These trends, which were evident in all Oriental faculties and departments in British universities, raised questions of great importance for the future of Asian and African studies and of the School itself, including the place of these studies in British education; but such questions were not susceptible of easy or quick answer, and thorough consideration of them at the School had unfortunately been deferred so that by this period they were rather overshadowed by the even more pressing problem of how to accommodate in the pre-war building the already enlarged number of staff and the rapidly growing book collections in the library.

The School’s buildings as originally planned in the mid-1930s were meant to provide for a staff of about one-third the number that had been reached by 1957 and for a library collection of about one-quarter the size; of those buildings, one wing and a fourth floor over the whole block remained unbuilt, while the east wing was still a shell divided into rooms by temporary partitions. In the library, expedients, such as reducing to a minimum
the width of gangways and raising the height of stacks, storing books in a
number of widely scattered, often unsuitable store-rooms, putting stacks in
corridors and on landings throughout the School – in short, every con-
ceivable expedient – were adopted, including the deposit of many thousands
of books at Englefield Green, some thirty miles away from the School. Five
houses in the adjoining Woburn Square and some rooms in Tavistock
Square, helpfully made available by the University, provided sub-standard
accommodation for some fifty to sixty members of staff, but there was a
complete absence of primary facilities such as large classrooms, and through-
out the School, accommodation was put to uses for which it was not
designed. Intended to be used for public lectures, the assembly hall was set
aside as a library reading room and the pathetically small and unsuitable
provision for social and athletic amenities for the students was lamentable.
If its work was to be done in an efficient and civilized manner, enlarged
and suitable accommodation had become the over-riding need of the School.
The University was persuaded to allocate a site for development adjacent
to the School, but among the large number of colleges of the University
which were still suffering from the devastation of war and obsolesc­
ce, the School’s priority for capital funds for building was low. In this
situation, to press on with an expansion of staff or student numbers was to
run the risk of turning the School into an academic workhouse.

In 1957 Sir Ralph Turner retired from the directorship, being succeeded
by Professor Cyril Philips, who had been Head of the Department of
History since 1947. In Turner’s twenty years as Director, the School had
been transformed and given a heightened sense of national significance and
purpose. Although the Scarbrough programme in its entirety had not been
completed, nevertheless something like two-thirds of the intended increase
of staff had been achieved. A substantial number of young British scholars
had been attracted to the study of Asia and Africa, and strong departments
had been created with a fresh outlook and great vitality and a broad and
sound foundation of scholarship had been laid, particularly in the study of
languages and history in both their modern and classical aspects.
**Problems of Policy and Development**

Relative success ever brings in its train a host of problems. Important questions and choices of policy could no longer be deferred. It was high time to look well ahead, to make guesses about the future, to take the Duke of Wellington's sober, sound advice when he said, 'All the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do; that's what I called "guessing what was at the other side of the hill".' The School's proposals to the Scarbrough Commission had constituted a programme of expansion, based on the general purpose of creating a centre in Britain where sooner or later all significant knowledge about Asia, Oceania and Africa would be available; but, like water finding its own level, expansion had naturally proceeded fastest where recruitment permitted, and it was by no means clear in what particular directions of development the School was headed. It was already plain that the recently announced grant for the new quinquennium 1957-62, which yielded an annual recurrent increase of £9,000, would neither enable the School's departments to complete what they still regarded as the phase of their Scarbrough expansion nor permit any considerable redeployment of academic resources. There was some realization, but by no means general, that in the face of the School's failure to attract undergraduates it would be a mistake at that stage to add even more academic posts which by their nature could have little relevance to undergraduate studies and to an increase in student numbers; and that the time had arrived to broaden the School's range of teaching, and in particular to emphasize its interest in the study of the modern and contemporary societies of Asia and Africa, by further expanding its work in history, law and anthropology and by including within its scope the major social sciences of economics, politics and sociology, and also the subject of geography, which as an established study in the curriculum of schools could exert an important influence in attracting British students.

But the majority of departments had a prior and legitimate interest in wishing to complete the original Scarbrough programme, and a critical
internal discussion therefore arose on how to reconcile these desirable proposals, which in a period of financial stringency were apt to be seen as competitive.

In any event the policy of attempting to build up the social sciences rested upon a host of uncertainties; whether any money for the purpose could be obtained from sources outside the UGC grant; whether both senior and junior scholars could be attracted in subjects such as economics, politics and sociology in which there was a known national scarcity and in which the period of training was bound to be arduous, expensive and long; whether the co-operation of established departments in the western aspects of these subjects, particularly at the London School of Economics and University College, could be gained, and lastly upon the very big question whether, if and when scholars were duly recruited and trained, the money would be forthcoming at the right time from the UGC to enable the School to incorporate their posts in the permanent structure of the School. What was required was, in Charles Dickens’s words, ‘a kind of universal dovetailed-ness with regard to place and time’.

Nothing at all, however, could be attempted without additional funds, and it was therefore the evident readiness of the Ford, Leverhulme, Nuffield and Rockefeller Foundations to support new academic enterprises at the School to the extent of several hundreds of thousands of pounds, to provide, as it were, T. S. Eliot’s ‘little dish of cream’, which tipped the internal balance of decision, and enabled the School to embark on the long and costly operation of training small but coherent cadres of economists, economic historians, sociologists, political scientists, geographers and lawyers with reference to the major areas of Asia and Africa, equipped with a knowledge not only of their own disciplines but also of the languages, history and cultures of these areas, reinforced by first-hand experience in the field. This undertaking was a difficult pioneer effort of the first importance because no such development on this scale for the major regions of Asia and Africa had been envisaged or attempted previously in the United Kingdom, and success, if achieved, would be bound in the long run not only to enhance the scholarly
and practical contribution of the School but also to exert a revolutionary influence upon British studies in these fields.

Meanwhile the basic question of how to attract students, especially undergraduates, for the already established departments had come under close study. This matter had assumed a fresh urgency because of a growing awareness in these departments that the concentration of a large body of young university lecturers in the School without offering at a reasonably early stage some scope and challenge in teaching, preferably for both first and higher degrees, was already beginning to create a situation in which the maintenance of high academic morale was difficult. In History, where a rich choice of courses was already offered, combining the study of Europe with that of Asia or Africa, the general educational position was academically satisfactory, attractive to would-be students, and capable of substantial development. But the majority of courses for honours degrees offered at the School were in the study of Asian and African languages and literatures, many of which, for instance, in subjects such as Marathi, Gujarati or Burmese, were never likely to be in steady demand. By comparison, courses for first degrees in Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese had attracted substantial numbers of students, but were in need of review. Based on a three-year period of study, their adequacy and suitability as university courses for British students in particular, who had to begin these studies from scratch, had to be reconsidered. Almost all the teachers concerned supported the view, especially in relation to British students, that the educational case for a four-year undergraduate course was very strong; so that gradually this change was brought about in the majority of courses in the study of language. Some teachers, however, were convinced that a good, general education for undergraduates in Asian or African studies could be best provided through a twin-subject syllabus with a specific area reference, extending over four years of study, combining the study of language with an equal emphasis on a related discipline, or combining any two of the disciplines with reference to a major area or civilization within the School's purview. An experiment of this kind, including study in both language and anthropology with
specific reference to Africa, had been started as early as 1955, but relatively few students had been attracted, and the other regional departments of the School were cautious about extending this kind of course to Asia, preferring the conservative choice of gradually diversifying their essentially single-subject syllabuses by adding optional and special subjects, and simultaneously introducing some much-needed tutorial teaching. At the same time an ancillary programme of producing sets of teaching materials and aids for the study of languages along with a general scrutiny of the usefulness of language laboratories did much to bring new vitality and effectiveness into long-established courses.

While some of the existing degree syllabuses were being revised and made more attractive to British students, the related questions of how to make direct contact with prospective students and how to enlarge the catchment area of students in Britain were examined. Some sporadic contacts with schools had already been made through a modest programme of lectures, but if an assumption made by the Director was correct, that ‘with the rising importance of Asia and Africa in the modern world, studies relating to these areas should take their proper place as a normal part of the education of western society’, and if British boys and girls of the right quality and aptitude were to be attracted session by session, then it was essential for the School itself not only to devise the appropriate university courses but also to create a direct, close and cumulative association with a large number of schools. Such a programme with this aim and on this scale could best be achieved by forming an extramural division to make personal contact in the first instance with headmasters and headmistresses and with their staffs. As a beginning, therefore, an education officer, supported by a committee, including representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Overseas Development, local education authorities and schools, was appointed to do this. Meetings between schools and small teams of teachers from the College were held in selected centres throughout the United Kingdom, and a regular programme of lectures and of one-day courses for schoolteachers and sixth-formers was devised, and, with the aid
of the Leverhulme Trust, a promising scheme of schoolteacher fellowships was later instituted. What was in process of creation was a national network of extramural relationships, rich in potential growth in the general field of education, with the result that the School, or SOAS, as it is often familiarly called, not only became well-known throughout the educational system, but also began to be accepted as the national headquarters for this kind of work. Assisted no doubt, too, by the national rise in the demand for university places, the declining trend in the undergraduate intake was by this policy quickly reversed and the number of British undergraduates at the School rose from thirty-one in 1957-58 to 137 in 1961-62, the sum total of undergraduates in that session being 199. Thereafter the undergraduate intake, while steadily rising in quality, was maintained at about this level, which was as much as the School's extremely restricted accommodation would allow.

As this juncture these new directions of policy at the School received a blessing and powerful impetus from a report published in the summer of 1961 by a committee of the UGC which had been set up under the chairmanship of Sir William Hayter to review the progress made under the Scarbrough Report and to advise on future developments. After drawing pointed attention to the severe blow suffered in 1952 by the Oriental departments of British universities through the premature removal of their earmarked grants, and after analysing such progress as had subsequently been made, mainly at the School, the Hayter Report concluded that in terms of national need and of attracting more British students, the over-riding consideration was not so much the completion of the Scarbrough expansion as the reinforcement of the study of the modern societies of Asia and Africa in all their aspects, and especially from the point of view of the social sciences. This should be done, the Report said, with earmarked grants extending over a ten-year period. So similar was the Committee’s general analysis of past progress and prescription for the future to the conclusions already drawn and acted upon in the School that some said that the Report must have been drafted there. But immediate reactions among the academic staff of the
School on its merits were mixed, despite its very high commendation of the School’s achievements since 1947, of its actual and potential national and international role and of its plans for the future.

Government duly accepted the Hayter programme, upon which the UGC established a special sub-committee to supervise the allocation of earmarked funds in the first five years, 1962-67, and to provide a ‘pool’ of lectureships, and some concentration and extension of effort in six selected university centres of Asian and three university centres of African studies, also including the School within each group. These proposals, which immediately assured to the School a relatively modest allocation of ten posts out of the ‘pool’ of lectureships, came at the right moment with just enough support to enable the social scientists already in training under Foundation funds to be absorbed into the permanent staff, and to facilitate the creation of a Department of Economic and Political Studies under Dr (later Professor) Edith Penrose (1962), a new section in sociology under Professor Ronald Dore and a new Department of Geography under Professor Charles Fisher, besides permitting the School out of general funds to add to strength in the regional departments and in anthropology, history and law. The fact that on such modest increases it was possible to do so much strikingly illustrated the opportunity that can be afforded for academic redeployment by a relatively small financial reserve. Without this reserve, stagnation might well have occurred. With these additions, the School’s broad framework of studies in the humanities and the social sciences with reference to the major areas of Asia and Africa was erected and given a new orientation, so that fresh thought was stimulated on the provision of courses for undergraduates and postgraduates, and on the magnificent opportunities which were being opened for advanced work and research.*

In the changed climate of opinion brought about in British universities, not least in the University of London, by the publication of the Robbins

* The growth of the study of art history, archaeology and musicology also provides some base for future development; and no doubt other fields such as psychology and demography require early investigation.
Report (1963), earlier hesitations and reservations at the School about the desirability of introducing undergraduate courses in combined and area studies were swept away, and additional degree courses in history and language, and in languages and anthropology with reference to the major areas of Asia and Africa, were devised as likely to attract students and serve a national need. Simultaneously, the introduction by the University of a one-year course for the Master’s degree provided the opportunity to organize in London a comprehensive postgraduate programme of combined studies by courses of instruction for each of the major extra-European areas of the world, including the areas covered by the School. The scale and quality of applications by British students for places in the first courses for the Asian and African regions indicated that a quite new source of recruitment had been uncovered. These developments in turn opened the way for discussions on the formation of a London graduate school in international studies which would be unique of its kind and size in the world. To this the School could obviously make a big and original contribution, radically affecting not only its own character but also that of the University as a whole.

Within the School the introduction of postgraduate courses on this scale and complexity precipitated the long-discussed formation of five Area Centres for African, Near and Middle Eastern, South Asian, South East Asian and Far Eastern studies respectively, through which postgraduate teaching, and particularly inter-disciplinary and research studies, could be fostered and extended. These Area Centres, each of which included all of the members of staff relevant to the study of the area, were intended to reinforce and complement, not to replace the departmental system, to create an organic scheme of area study and to encourage the initiation of programmes of work of national and international relevance.

Thus by the start of the session 1966-67 the School had put itself into a position to offer a comprehensive, attractive and relevant range of courses to students from Britain and overseas and to enlarge and intensify its already formidable scale of research. The interaction between its many
disciplines and studies, between its undergraduate and postgraduate pro-
grammes and between its own programmes and those of other universities
at home and abroad had become cumulative, and therefore pregnant with
immense possibilities of growth for the future, so that in all discussion of
forward plans a prospective student population of from 1,200 to 1,500 stu-
dents, a high proportion of whom would doubtless be graduates, had to be
reckoned with.

A POLICY OF SELF-HELP
More than ever before, with an academic staff some 200 strong, rising
prospectively to 250, with an enlarged student body and the prospect of a
sharp increase in the number of graduate students, with a big and fast grow-
ing library, attention was concentrated on the vexed problem of accommoda-
tion. Shocked by the School’s lack of amenities, the Hayter Committee had
declared: ‘A bottleneck to further expansion of studies and students is caused
by the lack of elementary facilities such as classrooms and seminar rooms
and most serious of all, of a library building. The School has received no
money for building since the war… The Committee regards the congestion
in the School as a serious barrier to progress and a discouragement to the staff.’
Ceritainly, no surer method of slow strangulation could have been devised
than to provide on the advice of two Government Reports and as a matter
of Government policy, handsome and earmarked recurrent monies for
development without any associated capital grants for building. There
could be no clearer example of not letting ‘thy left hand know what thy
right hand doeth’.

In the absence of a direct grant from Government and of top priority on
the University of London’s long building list, it was plain that the School
would have to set about helping itself. Funds were scraped together from the
remnants of the pre-war sale of the Finsbury building and from accumulated
surpluses in order to extend accommodation in Tavistock Square and to add
a fourth, top floor over the whole of the main building. Intended ultimately
for use as refectories, this provided space for classrooms and for thirty
Sir Ralph Turner, Director 1927-57 (photo: Lafayette)
The Director and students on the site of the proposed new building
members of staff, and prospectively, in the hope of future extensions, a useful ‘decanting’ area.

For the new library a private appeal was directed by Sir Neville Gass, the Treasurer, a man of vision, charm and unsparing endeavour. Whenever there were difficult, embarrassing jobs to be done, he was willing to do them, caring little about the credit. Nearly a quarter of a million pounds was quickly raised which enabled the School to claim a characteristically generous offer from the staunchest of the School’s benefactors, the Rockefeller Foundation. Plans for the new building were put in hand under the architect Mr Denys Lasdun, but it was apparent that the costs would be high, probably well over £1½ million, and until the School should find itself at the top of the University Court’s priority list, there was nothing for it but to show a brave face, to go on bursting at the seams and by ‘patching, darning and letting down’ to do everything possible to avoid the direst effects of indecent exposure.

CUMULATIVE GROWTH
By this period, despite the cramping effect of inadequate accommodation, the cumulative effects of the School’s growth since 1947 had become very evident in every aspect of its work, especially in its research and advanced studies.

Co-operative and inter-disciplinary research by groups of staff members regularly found expression in the organization of study conferences, attended by the leading authorities in the world on the subject under investigation. Meetings on ‘Historical Writing on the Peoples of Asia’ (1956 and 1958), ‘African History and Archaeology’ (1953, 1957, 1961), and on ‘Linguistic Comparison in South East Asia and the Pacific’ (1961 and 1965) not only produced important advances in knowledge but created a foundation and framework of reference within which the subject was to grow in future. Advanced study groups, some short- and some long-term, the work of most of which was designed to lead to publication, as, for example, on agricultural reform in contemporary China, or revolution in Asia and Africa, or the
partition of India, or the economic history of the Middle East, have become a normal activity of the School. One mark of a university’s standing is the readiness of the great foundations to contribute to its research funds, and in these years Ford, Leverhulme, Nuffield, Gulbenkian, Rockefeller and Wenner Gren between them have made grants to the School amounting to many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The School’s contribution by research is remarkable. Its Bulletin, long since accepted as one of the outstanding journals of orientalist scholarship in the world, does much to maintain its international reputation; and from the School as an institution and from members of its staff as individuals there has flowed an impressive and varied stream of publications. New journals have been introduced to blaze trails along and across the frontiers of knowledge, Asia Major, a joint venture with Oxford and Cambridge, and in the last few years, the Journal of African History, the Journal of African Law, the Journal of African Languages, the Journal of Development Studies; and in 1966-67 in co-operation with the new Asian Centres at Cambridge, Hull, Leeds and Sheffield, a journal, Modern Asian Studies, devoted to the study of modern societies. In addition the School itself, through its active Publications Committee, maintains three series of publications: an Oriental Series of monographs, a series of African Language Studies, and, as a reflection of the increasing attention being paid to the contemporary scene, a series of Studies on Modern Asia and Africa. It sustains, too, a comprehensive revision of the Encyclopaedia of Islam and supports a large and important lexicographical and bibliographical programme. Wisely expending its originally modest grant of funds in order to sponsor work of quality which was unlikely to find a place on the commercial market, the Publications Committee has been so successful that from 1965-66 it has actually earned some £15,000 annually on income from sales!

A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ROLE
The scope of the School’s overseas research leave programme continued to grow and was by this period fully matched by the scale of secondment of
its staff to Commonwealth and foreign universities and to governments overseas for specialist work. Invitations to members of staff to teach in the universities of the United States were embarrassingly frequent; and requests from the Soviet Academy of Sciences and similar bodies in Czechoslovakia and Hungary for a regular interchange of staff were welcomed and incorporated as part of the School’s routine. Academic honours are frequently bestowed on members of the staff. Attracting professors from other universities both at home and abroad to its chairs and senior appointments, the School in turn sends out a steady flow of trained men and women to play a part in the political, administrative and educational life of their own countries. At the same time generous schemes have been devised to enable overseas students to pursue advanced studies at the School and, along with the increase in the intake of undergraduates, to give selected British students the opportunity of spending short periods in their areas of study in Asia and Africa; and similar advantages are offered to postgraduate students. As natural as leaves to a tree, this ever-increasing nexus of firm and cordial relationships with governments, universities and peoples overseas is an organic and spontaneous growth, inspired and constantly nourished by the School’s dedication to the study of Asian and African civilizations and cultures.

Advanced research in the humanities and social sciences depends on the support of well-endowed and well-equipped libraries; and in these respects the School has been doubly fortunate in its own library collection, steadily built up over the years, and in its easy access to the great libraries and museums of London, which enjoy the fruits of Britain’s commercial, imperial and Commonwealth roles. Yet, bearing in mind the need of Britain in a rapidly changing world order to maintain her position in the Asian and African fields of study, it must be noted with disquiet that the most serious under-provision in British universities in the years since the war has been in the realm of libraries. To provide for the routine needs of undergraduates and to enable British scholars to reach and maintain the highest level and quality of research it is necessary to mobilize much larger
financial resources for libraries than are at present available, and, if and when obtained, to use them in the most economically efficient ways. Fortunately, in a small, compact country like Britain, much which would otherwise be impossible can be achieved, and money can be made to spin out and do more through the adoption of co-operative library policies by universities and other national libraries. From the beginning, and on an increasing scale in the past couple of decades, the School has allocated a good proportion of its income in order to build up its library into what is today recognized as a major national and international resource, with a current total size of some 290,000 volumes, and to make it generally available to all serious students in the United Kingdom through a generous policy of lending, all the more valuable because such facilities are not afforded by the British Museum or by Oxford and Cambridge. It has also come to appreciate that Asian and African studies offer a splendid field nationally in which to devise and test a variety of co-operative library enterprises and to examine the feasibility of using computerized systems; and that, if rightly conducted, such a policy might play a role as a pioneer national venture.

Recognizing the force of these arguments, and emphasizing the central and formative role which the School can play within the British educational system, the Hayter Committee put forward and the University Grants Committee accepted the proposal that the School’s library should be given financial support ‘to operate fully as a national library’. From this decision two lines of policy stemmed, on the one hand that the School should take the initiative in promoting the closest co-operation between interested university libraries, including the newly established Asian and African Centres, and on the other hand, with a view to creating in these fields a national lending library, that the School should prepare a union catalogue of all works on Asia and ascertain the annual cost of acquiring all new and significant publications relating to Asia and Africa. At prices ruling in the summer of 1965 this was found to be £35,000 annually, and with the help of the University Grants Committee, the School at once set itself to reach this scale of book collection, which meant doubling its existing outlay, and to
increase accordingly the size of its staff of specialized librarians. Within a short period agreements between the relevant libraries were reached, providing for a division of responsibility in acquiring materials relating to African countries, and a start was made in the same direction for India, and also in exploring the possibility of co-operation among librarians in making field visits for book purchases, and in book selection and cataloguing. If centres of academic excellence are to continue to exist in Britain, it is through national policies of this kind that they can best be cherished and nourished; and for the example they are setting the librarians deserve praise.

The School has obligations and privileges which extend beyond the national context, for it has become an established international centre, now attracting scholars and students, many of the highest quality, from some seventy countries spread throughout the world. They come to enjoy and share in teaching and research of distinction. In turn the School scatters its scholars about the world, their knowledge bringing forth racial sympathy and understanding, which are among the greatest of mankind’s needs. Without them, our statesmen and scientists cultivate ‘a barren and dry land where no water is’.

While maintaining a dynamic equilibrium, the School must continue to grow and change because its Asian and African interests daily become more significant and central in the contemporary dialogue between the developed and developing countries, encompassing the civilizations of the Far East now in search of a new role on the world stage, the cultural and relatively unexplored kaleidoscope of South East Asia, the great Indian sub-continent where Asian democracy has taken root, the ferment of the Islamic countries of Asia and the Mediterranean, the peoples of Africa stirring at last from their long slumber.

Each change of many-coloured life we drew,
Exhausted worlds and then imagin’d new.

And within Britain the ways and means have still to be found and explored to make these studies a meaningful and permanent part of the changing pattern of education throughout our national system.
With its considerable size and comprehensive spread of studies, with its ready access to the unrivalled resources of London, with its record of achievement and tradition of fine scholarship, and established capacity for leadership, the School in its own fields has a unique potential for cumulative growth. It possesses the power and experience along with the duty and privilege to maintain itself nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence, and thus to make a nobler, richer and more profound contribution to the welfare of mankind. But one lesson for the School, perhaps the outstanding lesson of the first fifty years of its history, is that institutions, like men, must continue to make their opportunities, as oft as find them.
Appendix: Organization of Departments, 1966-67

**KEY**
P = Professor
R = Reader
SL = Senior Lecturer
L = Lecturer
AL = Assistant Lecturer
F = Fellow
Department of the Languages and Cultures of India, Pakistan and Ceylon

Indo-Aryan Languages
- 2P of Sanskrit
- R in Sanskrit
  - R in Bengali
  - R in Pali & Buddhist Sanskrit
  - R in Urdu
- L in Sanskrit
  - L in Bengali
  - L in Pali & Oriya
  - L in Sinhalese
  - 2L in Hindi
  - L in Urdu
  - L in Marathi & Gujarati
  - 2F in Indian Studies

Dravidian Languages
- L in Tamil

Indian Music
- L in Indian Music

Philosophy & Religions
- R in Indian Philosophy
- L in Indian Religions
Department of the Languages and Cultures of South East Asia and the Islands

Burmese  
P of Burmese  
2 L in Burmese

Tai  
R in Tai Languages & Literatures  
L in Tai

Vietnamese  
R in Vietnamese Studies  

Mon-Khmer  
R in Languages & Literatures of SE Asia  
L in Cambodian

Austronesian  
R in Old Javanese  
L in Malay  
F in SE Asian Studies

R in Oceanic Languages

Art & Archaeology  
L in Art & Archaeology of SE Asia
Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Far East

Chinese
- P of Chinese
  - R in Classical Chinese
    - R in Chinese
      - R in Chinese Philosophy

Japanese
- P of Japanese
  - R in Japanese
    - SL in Japanese
      - 2 L in Japanese

Korean
- L in Korean

Mongolian
- R in Mongolian

Tibetan
- R in Tibetan
  - L in Tibetan
    - F in Tibetan Studies

Buddhist Studies
- L in Far Eastern Buddhism
Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East

Arabic
- P of Islamic Studies
- 2R in Arabic
- SL in Arabic
  - SL in Arabic
  - L in Islamic Art & Archaeology
  - L in Berber (jointly with Department of Africa)

Persian
- P of Persian
- R in Persian
  - L in Persian

Turkish
- R in Turkish
  - L in Turkish
  - F in Turkish

Iranian & Caucasian Studies
- P of Iranian Studies
- R in Iranian Languages
  - L in Iranian Studies
  - L in Central Asian Art & Archaeology

Semitic Languages
- P of Semitic Languages
- R in Modern Hebrew
  - L in Semitic Languages
  - AL in Modern Hebrew
  - F in Hittite

P of Assyriology
P of Ethiopian Studies (jointly with Department of Africa)
Department of Phonetics and Linguistics

Phonetics
- P of Phonetics (SE Asian Languages)
- R in Phonetics (W African Languages)
- SL in Phonetics (Indian Languages)
- 4 L in Phonetics (Chinese, Turkic Languages, African Languages, Tibeto-Burman Languages)

Linguistics
- 2 P of General Linguistics (Indo-European, Amerindian)
- L in Linguistics (Oceanic Languages)
- L in Comparative Linguistics (Indo-European)

Department of History

Africa
- P of History of Africa
- R in History of Africa
- 2 L in History of Africa
  - L in History of S Africa
  - L in History of W Africa
Department of the Languages and Cultures of Africa

Bantu Languages

2 P of Bantu Languages

5 L in Bantu Languages

2 L in Swahili

F in Southern Bantu Languages

West African Languages

P of West African Languages

R in Hausa

SL in West African Languages

5 L in West African Languages

L in Hausa Studies

North East African Languages

P of East African Languages

R in Cushitic

P of Ethiopian Studies
(jointly with Department of N & M East)

Berber

L in Berber
(jointly with Department of N & M East)

Music

L in African Musical Studies
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