

PROFESSOR JAMES DOUGLAS PEARSON 1911–97

J. D. (Jim) Pearson died on Friday, 1 August 1997, at the age of 85. He had suffered a stroke about a week previously.

Professor Pearson was the founder of *Index Islamicus*, and one of the most eminent, and pioneering, librarians and bibliographers in the field of Islamic studies. Born in December 1911, he grew up and was educated in humble circumstances in Cambridge. First employed in Cambridge University Library at the age of 16 as a book-fetcher, he developed a taste for, and skill in, “exotic” languages, and was awarded a scholarship (for Hebrew) at St John’s College. After studying also Arabic and Persian at Pembroke College, he graduated in 1936. He was then employed in the Oriental Section of the Library until 1941, when he was enlisted for war service until 1945. He worked again in Cambridge University Library as an Assistant Under-Librarian from 1945 until 1950.

In 1950 he was appointed Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, and from then until 1972 oversaw the drastic expansion and development of the SOAS Library in what were probably the most important years of its history. In the mid-1950s, he decided that, in addition to maintaining the normal catalogue of books, it would be useful also to compile a catalogue of the articles contained in the Library’s periodicals and other collective volumes. He reasoned that, in Islamic studies especially, a very important part of the scholarly literature is produced in this form, and that this material is of lasting importance to researchers. If left uncatalogued, much of it, especially in the less obvious sources, would tend to be overlooked, and work would be duplicated. With a team of helpers at SOAS, he eventually compiled a register of more than 25,000 articles in this field, published in the fifty years from 1906 to 1955. Although conceived initially as a catalogue, rather than a bibliography, the holdings of libraries other than SOAS came to be included, and so the obvious next step was to arrange the list in classified form, and to publish it, for the benefit of scholars world-wide. Thus emerged the first *Index Islamicus*, published in 1958, containing details of 26,076 articles.

The volume was well received, and soon found its way onto the reference shelves of nearly all libraries with interests in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. Pearson was therefore encouraged to continue the project, and a series of supplements was produced. In 1977 he started to issue the bibliography also in quarterly parts, and to record monographs as well as articles,

so that the character of a comprehensive bibliography was then assumed. The work became an internationally recognised research tool, and did more than anything to establish Pearson's reputation as a bibliographical scholar.

He was also responsible for a number of other reference tools and surveys, most notably *Oriental Manuscripts in Europe and North America* (1971), the *World Bibliographies of African* and *Oriental Bibliographies* (1975), the Supplement to Creswell's *Bibliography of the Architecture, Arts and Crafts of Islam* for 1972–80 (1984) and the series of comprehensive surveys of British archives relating to Asia, Africa and the Middle East (1965–94). He was still working on a further volume (on the Middle East) in this series at the time of his death.

In 1972 he was appointed Senior Fellow, and subsequently Professor of Bibliography with reference to Asia and Africa in the University of London. He retired from this post in 1979 and moved back to his native Cambridge, while still working on *Index Islamicus*. In 1982, after a quarter of a century of devoted work on it, he finally retired from the editorship, and handed over responsibility for its continuation to Cambridge University Library. He continued, however, to devote himself to other bibliographical projects until shortly before his death.

Apart from his own work as librarian and bibliographer, he was active in encouraging and inspiring colleagues elsewhere in Britain and other countries to follow his lead. In 1967 he took the initiative in establishing the Middle East Libraries Committee (MELCOM)—now MELCOM (UK)—which brought together most British librarians in this field, and gave birth to a long series of major and minor bibliographies and research tools, in several of which Pearson himself actively participated. He was closely involved also in the beginnings of a European dimension to this activity in 1979, resulting eventually in the formation of MELCOM International. An enthusiastic and assiduous traveller, he visited many colleagues, Orientalists and scholars throughout the world, including especially those in MELA. He became well known for his genial conviviality, as well as his practical advice.

He will therefore be greatly missed and mourned by a wide international circle of friends, companions and collaborators, and by all those who have benefited from his bibliographical legacy.

Bibliography of Publications of J. D. Pearson

A bibliography by Ann Walsh, complete up to the time of his retirement in 1979, appeared in *Middle East studies and libraries: a felicitation volume for Professor J. D. Pearson*. Ed. B. C. Bloomfield. London: Mansell, 1980. 225–231.

What follows is a supplement to that list.

Books**1979**

(with H. Pearson)

The Encyclopædia of Islam, new edition; *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, nouvelle édition: *Index to Volumes / des Tomes I-III*. Ed. E. van Donzel. Leiden: Brill; Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose.

1980

A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to the Middle East and North Africa. Compiled by N. Matthews and M. D. Wainwright. Ed. J. D. Pearson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1982

International African Bibliography 1973–1978: books, articles and papers in African studies. London: Mansell.

1983

Index Islamicus 1976–1980. Part 1: *Articles*. London: Mansell.

(with W. Behn)

Index Islamicus 1976–1980. Part 2: *Monographs*. London: Mansell.

1984

(with M. Meinecke & G. T. Scanlon)

A bibliography of the architecture, arts and crafts of Islam by Sir K.A.C. Creswell. Second supplement *Jan. 1972 to Dec. 1980 (with omissions from previous years)*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

1989

(with H. Pearson)

The Encyclopædia of Islam, new edition; *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, nouvelle édition: *Index to Volumes / des Tomes I–V and to the Supplement, Fascicules / et du Supplément, Livraisons 1–6* Ed. E. van Donzel. Leiden: Brill; Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose.

A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South-East Asia. Volume 1: *London*. A supplement to Wainwright and Matthews *A guide to Western manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia*. London: Mansell.

1990

A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South-East Asia. Volume 2: *British Isles (excluding London)*. A supplement to Wainwright and Matthews *A guide to Western manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia*. London: Mansell.

1993

A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to Africa. Volume 1: *London*. London: Mansell.

[New ed. of the work of the same title by N. Matthews and M. D. Wainwright, London 1971.]

1994

A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to Africa. Volume 2: *British Isles (excluding London)*

London: Mansell.

[New ed. of the work of the same title by N. Matthews and M. D. Wainwright, London 1971.]

Articles

1968

(with Ruth Jones)

“African bibliography: a report on the international conference organized by the International African Institute and held at University College, Nairobi, 4–8 December 1967.” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 38 (1968): 293–331.

1978

“Asian reference bibliography: Asia (general); the Middle East.” Ed. G. R. Nunn. *International Association of Orientalist Librarians Bulletin*, 14 (1978): 11–15.

1979

“Western language documents in the British Isles relating to Arabia.” In *Sources for the history of Arabia*, part 2. (Studies in the History of Arabia: proceedings of the First International Symposium on Studies in the History of Arabia . . . 1977 . . . Riyadh . . . I/2). Pp. 135–143. Riyadh: University of Riyadh Press.

1981

“Index Islamicus and the cataloguing of current books on Islam and the Muslim world.” *New Books Quarterly*, 1 ii & iii (1981): 11–13.

1982

“Recent developments in Islamic bibliography in Britain.” *Collections in British libraries on Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, ed. P. Auchterlonie. Pp. 89–80. Occasional Papers 12. Durham: University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

1983

“Bibliography of translations of the Qurʾan into European languages.” *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*. (Cambridge History of Arabic literature [1]). Pp. 502–520. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Documentation on Oman.” *Journal of Oman Studies* 6 (1983): 65–76. (Unpublished material . . . in Great Britain in libraries, archives and other repositories.)

“Manuscripts, libraries and archives.” *Bibliographical guide to Iran: the Middle East Library Committee Guide*, ed. L. P. Elwell-Sutton. Pp. 20–39. Brighton: Harvester Press; Totowa: Barnes & Noble. (Pearson also contributed to “Pre-Islamic Iran: Archaeology,” 164–167.)

“Published works of Robert Bertram Serjeant.” *Arabian and Islamic studies: articles presented to R. B. Serjeant*, ed. R. L. Bidwell & G. R. Smith. Pp. 268–278. Harlow: Longman.

1984

“Bibliography of Charles Fraser Beckingham.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984): 179–188.

1988

“Bibliography of Thomas Muir Johnstone.” *A miscellany of Middle Eastern articles in memoriam Thomas Muir Johnstone 1924–83, Professor of Arabic in the University of London, 1970–82*, ed. A. K. Irvine, R. B. Serjeant & G. R. Smith. Pp. 226–231. Harlow: Longman.

Reviews**1976**

R. Büren. *Gegenwartsbezogene Orientwissenschaft in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen, 1974). *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 3 ii (1976): 128

1980

T. J. Martin. *North American collections of Islamic manuscripts* (Boston, 1977). *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 7 i (1980): 58

1985

F. A. Clements. *United Arab Emirates and Kuwait* (World Bibliographical series, 43 & 56, Oxford & Santa Barbara, 1983 & 1985). *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 12 ii (1985): 243

1988

V. Chauvin. *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux arabes* (Liège, 1892–1922, rp. Paris, [1987?]). *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 15 i–ii (1988): 147

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