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ROGERS, J.M.
pp. 3-8.

Basil Gray. Iran 17 (1979)

Owen was educated in Switzerland and England but took no degree. In the 20s and 30s he worked as a journalist and businessman on the China Coast before joining the camel-trains out of Peking into Xinjiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia and Central Asia, in happy conjunction with his beloved wife, Eleanor Holgate, whom he married in 1926 and who, in 1965, predeceased him.

From 1934 to 1941 he edited *Pacific Affairs*, the journal of the US Institute of Pacific Relations. In 1941, President Roosevelt appointed him as his personal representative to General Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the Chinese Nationalist Government. From 1942 to 1944 he was Deputy Director of Pacific Operations for the US Office of War Information. He was Director at Johns Hopkins University of the Walter Hines Page School of International Relations from 1939 to 1953, continuing to lecture at that university until 1963 when he led the Department of Chinese Studies at Leeds University until his retirement in 1973. He became, in the 1970s, a member of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

In 1950, Senator Joe McCarthy of the Committee for Un-American Activities accused him of being "the top Soviet espionage agent in the United States", charges described in the same year by a Senate Foreign Relations Committee as "baseless". In 1952, after the McCarran Commission, he was indicted for perjury on several charges by a Grand Jury: all charges were dropped by the Justice Department in 1955. Many years later, in an Ulan Bator drawing-room, we heard the Chinese media attack him as an "international spy": he was delighted when my wife asked him if that meant that *everybody* paid him.

For us, during four happy years in Mongolia and, later, in England, Owen was not a didact but a friend and guide to custom, to the present and its roots in the past, to much there that would otherwise have been unexplained, even unobserved. Our politics were greatly dissimilar but not permitted to conflict with a relationship which allowed him to propose in 1975 that I should write his Life.

Although he later decided in favour of autobiography, it was with the words: "Mine may create a market which a book by you could later fill". His own book, however, when it appears may be so rich that it leaves space for no other: even from those already in print, it must be said that: "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*".

John Colvin

British Ambassador to the MPR 1970-75

On 10 June, slightly over a month before his 85th birthday, the world of Oriental learning and connoisseurship lost **BASIL GRAY**, one of its most senior exponents. Born on 21 July 1904, he was educated at Bradfield and New College Oxford, which he entered in 1923 to read "Greats". In 1928 he joined Stanley Casson in his British Academy dig at Istanbul beginning his life-long interest in things of the east and in particular the art of Islam and China.

Narrowly avoiding careers in banking and then publishing, Gray joined the staff of the British Museum in December 1928. He was drawn to friendship with Lawrence Binyon, Keeper of the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings, oriental scholar and poet, and later his father-in-law. In due course he succeeded Arthur Waley in that section as Binyon's assistant.

By the time Binyon retired in 1933 the Museum's oriental collections were united to form the Department of Oriental Antiquities under the administration of R L Hobson. Hobson's first instructions to him were to demolish the displays in the old oriental religions room set up in the days of Sir Hercules Read and to replace them with a display of Indian sculpture. Under his Keepership and that of his successors, this section grew to be one of the world's greatest collections of Indian antiquities, along with those of China, Islam and Japan. He was to spend nearly 40 years in the Museum, finishing his career there as Acting Director of the Museum.

Gray was steeped in the great European tradition of museum management. He was a classic example of the scholar-administrator, pursuing to great effect on the one hand his work on Persian painting and Chinese ceramics in his important publications beginning in the 1930s, and on the other capably managing (from 1938) an important and growing collection in a new Museum department. Following the retirement of Hobson, although in those days too young for a Keepership, Gray nevertheless ran the Department and took it into the war, supervising the safe removal and storage of the collections as well as their return and restoration to the public galleries after the conflict. The establishment of the oriental collections in the great King Edward VII wing of the Museum took place under his leadership and the gradual development of this building into a fine oriental museum in its own right, an integral part of the larger British Museum, is part of his legacy.

Over the years of his Keepership Gray established and maintained friendships and connections with all the major collectors and connoisseurs of oriental art in this country and many abroad. The collections of the British Museum were increased enormously

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yakom manṭaq-e jaṅgi. Kordestān, Bāktarān, Ilām, Kūzestān. Daftar-e tabliḡāt-e eslāmi-e Ḥawza-ye 'elmi-e Qom, Qom, 1364 Š./1985. *Šedā wa simā-ye Jomhuri-ye eslāmi-e Irān. Ketāb-e gerāfik-e sāl-e 65-66.* Tehran, 1366 Š./1987. *The Holy Qur'ān*, tr. A. Yusof Ali, Riāz, 1403/1983. War Information Headquarters, Supreme Defence Council, *The Imposed War: Defence vs. Aggression*, 5 vols., Tehran, 1987. Wezārat-e āmuzeš o parvareš, *Fārsi-e awwal-e dabestān*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973 and 1372 Š./1993.

(PETER CHELKOWSKI)

GRAPES. See ANĠŪR

GRAY, BASIL (b. 21 July 1904; d. 10 June, 1989), art historian and the keeper of Oriental antiquities at the British Museum (1946-69). He was the younger son of a surgeon in the Army Medical Corps. He was educated at Bradfield School and at New College Oxford, where he studied classics and modern history.



His initiation into eastern art, for which there was then no provision at any British university, came in 1928, when he worked for a season on the excavations at the great palace of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople, followed by study in Vienna under Josef Strzygowski, who was, however, already sunk deep in diffusionism. Predictably, Gray only lasted three months, which put paid to his hopes of pursuing an advanced degree. Instead he joined the Department of Printed Books in the British Museum late in 1928, transferring in 1930 to the sub-department of oriental prints and drawings (from 1933 the Department of Oriental Antiquities), under Laurence Binyon, the poet and distinguished orientalist. Work on the Persian exhibition of 1931, to which for the first time the great libraries of the East had lent extensively, was well advanced. The catalogue of the Persian paintings lent to it, *Persian Miniature Painting* (London, 1933), by Binyon, James Vere Stewart Wilkinson and Gray, has become a standard work. By the outbreak of World War II, his writings covered the whole field of eastern art, Islam, India, China, and Japan. Though he continued to write on all these subjects right up to his death in 1989, his abiding interest was the relations between China and Islam, especially in Persia – Tang and Song exports to the Middle East; the Mongols in Persia, particularly the copying and illustration of Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh's monumental *Jāme' al-tawāriḡ*; and chinoiserie in the arts of the Timurid and Turkman courts in the late 14th and 15th centu-

ries, particularly as it is manifested in the famous albums in the libraries of Istanbul and in the manuscripts patronized by the Timurid ruler, Eskandar Solṭān (q.v.) at Shiraz. The culmination of that work is his important contribution, as editor and joint author, to *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia, 1307-1506* (UNESCO, 1979), which definitively analyzed the role of princely patronage in the painting of eastern Islamic cultures.

During his long keepership of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, Gray strengthened it with a series of carefully chosen talented younger specialists. He had an unerring eye for quality, and through the generosity and public-spiritedness of such great collectors as George Eumorfopoulos, Oscar Raphael, Sir Bernard Eckstein, Sir John Addis, and the Misses Godman, whose confidants he became, the oriental collections in the British Museum (and what, since the secession of the British Library, is now the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books), were richly augmented. In 1968 he was appointed Acting Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum.

Gray's outstanding achievement was recognized by his election as fellow of the British Academy in 1966. He was closely associated with the foundation of the British Institutes of Persian and of Afghan (later South Asian) Studies, advocating major excavations at Sirāf and at Qandahār. His chairmanship of exhibitions of Islamic art in Cairo (1969) and Beirut (1974) culminated in the exhibition, *The Arts of Islam* at the Hayward Gallery (The Arts Council, 1976), the most important of its kind since the Munich exhibition of 1910. He was president of both the Third International Congress of Turkish Art (Cambridge, 1967) and of the Sixth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology (Munich, 1976). Because of subsequent events in Persia, this turned out to be the last of the series, but his distinguished contribution to the study of Persian art was marked by his election as first president of its successor, the Societas Iranologica Europaea (1983-87).

In 1933 Gray married Nicolette, daughter of Laurence Binyon, herself a distinguished mediaevalist, designer of inscriptions, and the author of important monographs on lettering. Her *Lettering as Drawing* (London and New York, 1971) is an acute discussion of the practicalities of writing not only Greek and Latin but also Arabic scripts. Their eldest daughter, Camilla (d. 1971), the historian of the Russian avant-garde, married the son of the composer Sergei Prokof'ev.

To a generation dominated by specialization and research projects, the all-rounder museum man, like Friedrich Sarre or Ernst Kühnel, may appear outmoded, even suspicious. Basil Gray was certainly fortunate in beginning his career in the pre-war years: travel was easier, and the world of scholarship infinitely smaller and less dispersed. His lack of oriental languages was offset by close friends who included Mojtabā Minovi and Vladimir Minorsky; and the novelty and vast scope of his material favored general treatment rather than detailed study. Notwithstanding, most of the conclusions