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# *Ann K.S. Lambton (1912–2008) and Persian Studies*<sup>1</sup>

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The last occasion on which I addressed the Society, in 2000, was, like today's, a memorial lecture: to honour the memory of Professor Charles Beckingham. I spoke then about a subject that combined Professor Beckingham's interests with my own: Ibn Battuta and the Mongols.<sup>2</sup> As it happens, I have already done something similar for Professor Lambton: a 90th birthday lecture to the British Institute of Persian Studies, in 2002, when my subject was a reappraisal of the Mongol period in Iran.<sup>3</sup> This was given in the presence of the honorand: a slightly daunting experience; and those who knew her will not be surprised to learn that she was by no means uncritical, if not necessarily of what I said, then certainly of my delivery of it. So I decided that today I would talk about Professor Lambton herself, and attempt to discuss and evaluate her contribution to the field of study which she adorned for so long.

I am not entirely certain what it was that pointed the young Ann Lambton in the direction of Persia (a term she preferred to the now more academically and politically respectable "Iran"). In her early career, her two most significant mentors were Sir Hamilton Gibb (1895–1971), who was Professor of Arabic at SOAS in the 1930s, and Sir Reader Bullard (1885–1976), the British Minister and later Ambassador to Iran, for whom she worked as Press Attachée in Tehran during the Second World War. Neither of these great men had much time for Persia or the Persians; so the explanation is not to be found with them; and in any case she had already committed herself to the study of Persian before she encountered them. I first learned about her from an interview published in *The Guardian* in the late 1960s, when I was beginning to contemplate undertaking PhD work on Persia in the Mongol period. I have long since lost my copy, but I do recall that she said that her interest at least in the Middle East more generally had been aroused by reading T.E. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert* (the abridged version of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* which preceded the publication of the first generally available edition of the full text in 1935), and Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*: though she added that she had since had some doubts about Lawrence of Arabia, and that she now thought Doughty's prose hideous.

The crucial figure is likely to have been Sir Denison Ross (1871–1940), founder and first Director of the School of Oriental (later: and African) Studies (SOS), and Professor of

<sup>1</sup>The revised text of the Professor Ann Lambton Memorial Lecture, read to the Royal Asiatic Society on 15 October 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Published in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)* Third Series, Vol. 11, No. 1 (April 2001), pp. 1–11.

<sup>3</sup>Published in *Iran*, Vol. 42 (2004), pp. 131–136.

Persian there. He was a friend of Professor Lambton's parents. She was brought up at her father's racing stable in Newmarket, and had an excellent education in such skills as riding (a skill that she put to very good use in her lengthy travels in Persia in later years). She was named Ann Katharine *Swynford* after the horse which her father, in his autobiography, *Men and Horses I Have Known*, described as "by far and away the best I have ever trained".<sup>4</sup> He discusses Swynford at length, whereas his daughter, aged 12 at the time of the book's publication, is, as she pointed out to me, not mentioned. But after all, she was neither a man nor a horse. Of education in the more formal and conventional sense she had very little – none, she used to say. It was Ross who persuaded her parents to allow her to register as a student at SOS; and that might explain why her first degree was a BA in Persian, with subsidiary Arabic. She always acknowledged her debt to Ross, though she had no very high opinion of his mastery of the Persian language.

The significance of Ross's patronage is confirmed by Freya Stark, in one of her volumes of autobiography. She writes that she (Freya) "... gave my small support to her desire for Eastern travel and freedom: when her first journey to Persia was planned, she asked me down to Newmarket for a week-end to do what I could to persuade her family. Sir Denison Ross had been there the week before; his wife had a cold, and he had a new book, and they both refused to visit the famous stables: orientalist were at a discount". Dame Freya adds that "I sympathized with her efforts at emancipation, and have continued to admire her, for she studied with a thoroughness which I never attained".<sup>5</sup>

However, this is still to some extent speculative. Ann Lambton was not much given to personal reminiscence, though occasionally, after a glass of wine (never more than one), she would open up a little. What she would then say was so fascinating that I more than once urged her to write her memoirs. She would not consider it. I have sometimes wondered whether this had something to do with Bullard's influence. Bullard did write an autobiography, *The Camels Must Go* (1961). It is in many ways a delightful book, and he was proud of it – I once remarked to him that it was a difficult book to find a copy of, after it had gone out of print. He replied, with a twinkle in his eye, that this might have been because when anyone had acquired the book, they were reluctant to part with it. But it is noticeable that the most interesting and frank parts of the book are the sections about his life before and after his diplomatic career. There is a certain reticence elsewhere: Bullard had a pronounced respect for the Official Secrets Act, and he may well have passed that on to the young Lambton. In the 1990s, two volumes of Bullard's letters to his family back in England were published. Not being intended for publication, they are a good deal more frank than his autobiography was. Yet even regarding them, the editor of the volume of letters from Tehran quotes Ann Lambton as saying about them that "[i]t is typical of Sir Reader, of his modesty and discretion, that his letters should reveal very little of the important part that he played in the conduct of Anglo-Persian relations and the furtherance of the Allied war effort in Persia".<sup>6</sup> The only Lambton "memoir" of which I am aware – it is interesting and revealing as far as it goes – is the published version of a lecture she gave at St Antony's College,

<sup>4</sup>The Hon. George Lambton, *Men and Horses I Have Known* (London, 1924), p. 238.

<sup>5</sup>Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates. Autobiography 1928–1933* (London, 1951), p. 184.

<sup>6</sup>Reader Bullard, *Letters from Tehran*, (ed.) E.C. Hodgkin (London, 1991), p. xv.

Oxford, in 1988, “Recollections of Iran in the mid-twentieth century”.<sup>7</sup> She would claim to have no sense of humour: a view which those who did not know her well may have found plausible. But there are passages in that lecture that suggest otherwise. For example: “camels, incidentally, were not supposed to exist: they were not modern and did not fit in with Riza Shah’s programme for modernisation. It was forbidden to photograph them”. And it is difficult to imagine that her remark about a night-time bus journey sitting next to an army officer (who was not supposed to speak to foreigners) that “being dark and in a bus the normal convention was abandoned and I had a most enjoyable journey discussing the works of al-Ghazali” was unaccompanied by a smile.<sup>8</sup>

So, in 1930, to SOS she went. The School was then in its original building, the former London Institution in Finsbury Circus. In his Preface to the 1986 number of *BSOAS* which formed a Festschrift for Professor Lambton, the late John Bracken commented that she “used to incur disapproving looks from staid senior ladies as she spent her lunch hours gleefully speeding round and round Finsbury Circus on roller skates”.<sup>9</sup> (Where did Bracken get this tale from? – not even he was at the School that long ago! – it must surely have been from the horse’s mouth.) She obtained a certificate in Persian in 1932, her BA in 1935, and a PhD in 1939. The PhD thesis – never published as such, though its subject was one to which she often returned in later publications – was “Contributions to the Study of Seljuq Institutions”. Her own master copy of this, if I remember rightly interleaved with blank pages so that she could add further material, is now at the University of Durham, to which she bequeathed her remarkable working library. A second, carbon-copy, rather roughly bound, now sits on my shelves. I first read it, I suppose, nearly forty years ago. Its opening words are as follows: “The Seljuq period marks a turning point in the history of western Asia” – a quotation, followed by “Discuss”, which I often used to set as an undergraduate essay question, though until looking again at the thesis recently, I had quite forgotten where it came from. Her acknowledgements are interesting. Her formal supervisor, Ross, receives “thanks”, but Gibb rates “deep gratitude”. Others mentioned, for help with translation, are “Professor Tritton”, presumably for Arabic, and “Mr. Taqizadeh”, presumably for Persian. The latter is none other than Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, the Tabriz hero of the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, and Iranian Ambassador to the United Kingdom during the Second World War. Also mentioned, “for advice on different matters”, is “Mr. Minovi”. This was Mojtaba Minovi, a formidable and staggeringly learned Persian man of letters of the old school. When I first went to Tehran in 1973, Professor Lambton armed me with a letter of introduction to Minovi (in Persian, of course). As a result, I too was able to obtain his advice on different matters; and he allowed me to work in his library: a magnificent collection, unparalleled in my experience as a private repository of books on matters Persian, which was on two floors, with the rest of the house, evidently thought of as less important, built around it.

The PhD thesis had already been preceded by several visits to Persia, and by her first published book and article. She first visited the country in 1934, for the summer vacation. She returned for a full year in 1936/7, and was there again when war broke out in 1939. Her

<sup>7</sup>Published in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (October 1988), pp. 273–288.

<sup>8</sup>*Idem.*, pp. 278, 280.

<sup>9</sup>*BSOAS*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1986), p. 4.

book was *Three Persian Dialects*, and it was published by the Royal Asiatic Society as Volume XVII of the James G. Forlong Fund, in 1938. Like so many scholars of her generation, the Second World War interrupted her career: as I have mentioned, she spent the period between 1939 and 1945 as an official of the British Legation, later Embassy, in Tehran. Her service earned her the OBE in 1942. Incidentally, I have it on good authority that at the time of her retirement, it was proposed to elevate her to DBE. Unfortunately this was in 1979, not an auspicious year for publicly honouring someone prominent in the study of Iran, so it did not happen. The war years were a time about which she would, very occasionally, reminisce. I remember her telling me how, in the period immediately before the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, the streets of Tehran were utterly deserted, as everyone gathered around radio sets, to listen to the BBC Persian Service's not very complimentary broadcasts about His Imperial Majesty (the broadcaster was the future Professor L.P. Elwell-Sutton). The *Times* obituarist, who was in a position to know, says that she "did propaganda work, particularly supplying information to the Persian Service of the BBC about Reza Shah's corruption and greed"<sup>10</sup> – though she never admitted this to me, as far as I recall. She also talked a little about her experience of the Russian occupiers of northern Iran. I wish I could remember the details of what she said.

Once the war ended, she returned to London and joined the academic staff of SOAS, ascending rapidly from Senior Lecturer to Reader to, in 1953, Professor of Persian, which she remained until her retirement in 1979. No attempts to lure her away were successful, though she did once tell me that had she ever been offered a chair of Persian at Durham – very much home territory for a Lambton – she might have considered it. Her teaching covered three main areas: the Persian language, the history of Iran, and the history of Islamic political thought. Her warmest admirers – of whom, obviously enough, I am very definitely one – could not have described her as a gifted undergraduate lecturer, technically speaking. She read from a complete text, without any particular connection, let alone rapport, with her audience. At the end of the hour, she would mark her place in the text, turn, and walk out. It was not fun. But many of her students found that the notes they had taken were lucid, informative and well organised: just what they needed.

Once installed at SOAS, she did not become entirely divorced from involvement in public affairs. She was certainly consulted by the British government about matters Persian at various times, though needless to say she would not have dreamt of talking about such matters to anyone else. She was well connected politically: members of the family of one Conservative Prime Minister were among her close friends, and she was cousin to another. The best-known occasion on which she became involved in high politics was the crisis over the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry and the coup that overthrew Prime Minister Mossadeq in 1953. The documentation of her early involvement became available as a result of the release, under the 30-year rule, of a Foreign Office minute of 1951, which related how Ann Lambton was asked about what, in her opinion, the British government ought to do. She recommended working towards Mossadeq's overthrow by covert means, and suggested employing the services of R.C. Zaehner, who had been her Deputy Press Attaché in Tehran during the Second World War and who, she said, had been very successful in

<sup>10</sup> *The Times*, 23 July 2008, p. 52.

covert propaganda against the Russians regarding their policy in Azerbaijan in 1944. In some ways the most interesting feature of the document is the light it sheds on Zaehner, the future Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at All Souls. He certainly thought highly of his former embassy superior. In 1973 I had to undergo the most terrifying interview, so far, of my life: for a Fellowship at the British Institute of Persian Studies. I faced apparently extremely hostile questioning from the chairman, Sir Max Mallowan (but I gather he was just as unpleasant to all candidates); Sir Mortimer Wheeler sat there looking sombre; Basil Gray was characteristically courteous; and Zaehner giggled throughout. I heard years later that on arriving that morning, he had announced: "I have only come in order to support Professor Lambton's candidate" – whoever, one assumes he was thinking, that might be.

The Foreign Office memorandum did not at first attract much notice, though my eagle-eyed friend the late Michael Burrell spotted it at the Public Record Office, which is how I came by my copy. Another scholar who saw it was the most distinguished non-British historian of the British Empire, Wm. Roger Louis of the University of Texas at Austin. The document is discussed in his *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945–1951*,<sup>11</sup> where it is treated perceptively and unsensationally – which has not always been its fate in later publications. Louis concludes that "[i]n that minute may thus be found the origins of the 'Zaehner mission' and the beginnings of the 1953 coup".<sup>12</sup> On almost the last occasion when I visited Ann Lambton at her home in Northumberland, I took her a copy of the document, which she said she had never seen. I watched as she carefully read it through. "Yes," she said, "Yes. That is exactly as I remember the conversation" – which had been fifty-five years earlier.

Her Persian language course was deservedly famous. By modern standards it was not pedagogically advanced – I have commented elsewhere that it is unlikely that the phrase "language laboratory" ever passed her lips. But for any student who could survive the course – not everyone did – it worked. It would, I suspect, be impossible to remove a basic knowledge of Persian from the brain of any graduate of the Lambton Persian course. In my 90th birthday lecture, I mentioned Michael Burrell's suggestion that there ought to be a Lambton Persian Course Survivors' Club: it would have a club tie, the motif being Lambton's *Persian Grammar*, with blood dripping from it. She was visibly delighted with this idea. Many of the students who took the course were from the Foreign Office: usually young diplomats who were about to be posted to Tehran. The *Independent's* obituarist quoted a passage in James Bill's *The Eagle and the Lion* – a study of US-Iranian relations – in which the author contrasted the low level of Persian language competence among American diplomats in Iran in the 1970s with the much higher standard to be found among their British counterparts, and ascribed this to their rigorous training under Ann Lambton's tutelage, and to the exacting nature of the examinations they were required by her to pass. When I took the course, in 1970/1, I was one of five students. There was one undergraduate, a British Council official who was to go as its representative to Afghanistan, and two diplomats. The British Council man is notable as the only known Lambton Persian course survivor to have treated it as a rest cure (this was possible because of his superb command of Arabic, on which he was able to fall

<sup>11</sup>(Oxford, 1984): at pp. 659–661.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 660.

back whenever necessary). Of the diplomats, one eventually became British Ambassador to Iran, while the other ended his career as High Commissioner to Jamaica, where presumably he did not much use his Persian – though as it happens, he was not the only Lambton alumnus to serve in that capacity. At the end of the course, the four other students went off to their respective exams. “What about you?” she asked me. “Shall we set one for you?” I replied that I thought I had taken enough exams for one lifetime. “Quite right,” she said; and the subject was not referred to again. I have always supposed that the subtext to this was that Professor Lambton thought that she might make a reasonable historian of me, but was under no illusions about my abilities as a Persian linguist. The results of an examination would probably have been inconveniently embarrassing for all concerned. The language student she rated the best she had ever taught was a diplomat at the beginning of his career who took the course three years after I did. So far as I know, he is unaware that he holds this distinction (he is currently the British Ambassador in Paris).

The basic text, of course, was Lambton’s *Persian Grammar*, first published in 1953: a standard teaching tool for several decades. It is still in print, though not as widely used as it once was; there are now some practical alternatives available. It was joined, in 1954, by her *Persian Vocabulary*, an immensely useful selective dictionary. The art teacher, biographer and art historian Wilfrid Blunt, who had a strong interest in Persia, took a term’s sabbatical from Eton in 1956 to travel in the country, and in parts of Afghanistan. He was more or less, though not avowedly, retracing the steps of the journeys that Robert Byron had made two decades earlier, which resulted in that justly celebrated book *The Road to Oxiana*. Blunt’s own extremely enjoyable travelogue, *A Persian Spring*, was published in 1957. He recounts how, on arrival in Isfahan, he was crippled by an attack of lumbago, and struggled to explain what was the matter. He sought the help of Lambton’s *Persian Vocabulary*. “Miss Lambton,” he wrote, “must suffer from rude health: she gives no word for ‘lumbago,’ ‘rheumatism,’ ‘sciatica,’ or any of the complaints from which ordinary mortals suffer. Even ‘plague’ she refers to ‘pestilence,’ and many a victim may well have died before he could bring himself to make that extra effort. . . . How gladly would one exchange ‘pigeon-fancier,’ ‘parasitologist’ or even ‘milch-cow’ for information of a more practical kind!”<sup>13</sup> After reading Blunt’s book, I asked her why she had not included the Persian word for lumbago. “Because there isn’t one,”<sup>14</sup> she replied. I might have known.

1953 was something of a vintage year. It saw the publication not only of the *Persian Grammar*, but also of *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, which will probably prove to be her single most enduring contribution to Persian studies. Its subtitle indicates its scope: *A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration*. Part 1 deals with the period from the Arab conquest to the end of the nineteenth century, and Part 2 mostly with the reign of Reza Shah. It should be remembered that she had a profound knowledge of agriculture, as well in its British as in its Iranian form. I mentioned in my address at her memorial service the astonishment of my father and brother, who were farmers, at her encyclopaedic knowledge of different breeds of sheep (“Is there nothing that woman doesn’t know?” asked my brother).

<sup>13</sup>Wilfrid Blunt, *A Persian Spring* (London, 1957), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup>Though Haim’s Persian–English Dictionary records *dard-i kamar* or *kamardard* (literally ‘waist pain’) as meaning ‘lumbago’.

Part 2 of *Landlord and Peasant*, I suggested in my 90th birthday lecture, is to some degree a primary rather than a secondary source, being based on her on the ground knowledge of Iran in a period which can never again be experienced first-hand as she experienced it. Part 1 is a different matter. The subject has moved on as research – much of it her own – has progressed. Consequently, when she was asked to reprint the book, nearly forty years after it was first published, she included a 35-page Preface in which she discussed more recent developments. Incidentally, she experienced some difficulty at that time in finding a copy of the original from which the new edition could be made. She had a number of copies on her shelves, but she had annotated all of them, and they were unusable. She therefore borrowed my copy, which I had not tinkered with, for the purpose.

In a sense, a sequel to *Landlord and Peasant* was *The Persian Land Reform 1962–1966*, published in 1969: a study of the reform which was part of Mohammed Reza Shah's "White Revolution". It was not a book well calculated to please the Shah. Such credit as she thought was due, she mostly attributed to the Minister of Agriculture, Hasan Arsanjani, rather than to the Shah himself. Arsanjani had since fallen into imperial disfavour; and before long another British scholar was found who was prepared to write a more acceptable account, in which the Shah received the credit and Arsanjani was not even mentioned. I understand that the author was awarded the Order of Homayun, Third Class, for his efforts. Ann Lambton did not have a high opinion of the Shah, and this was more than reciprocated by His Majesty. The people she thought well of and felt most at home among were at the other end of the social scale. There is a telling passage in the book's Preface, in which she writes that "since this is a book largely about the Persian peasants and their reception of land reform, it is fitting that I should also express my esteem and affection for them. I am deeply indebted to them for much hospitality over a long period of years, and their friendship has contributed to my knowledge and understanding of the Persian countryside".<sup>15</sup> As she says in her "Recollections" lecture, "Casual hospitality . . . was offered at all times and places with enormous generosity and kindness. Particularly heart-warming was the warmth with which one was welcomed on revisiting a village".<sup>16</sup> It seems unlikely that any non-Iranian has known the countryside and its people as well as she did. Many of her former students remember the enormous map of Iran which hung on the wall of her office at SOAS. It was immensely detailed, and close inspection would reveal how villages, here and there, had been moved an inch or two to what she considered to be their correct locations. The map was passed on to me when she retired: I hope it is still safely stored somewhere at SOAS. Incidentally, other items which she did not have room for when she moved to Northumberland came to me – various duplicate copies of books, and an airline bag containing three Persian pots. "I wonder if you would like to have these pots," she said. "I think they may be rather old". Shortly afterwards I showed them to Dr John Curtis of the British Museum. Ah, yes, he said, they are typical of the pottery associated with the Indo-European invasions of Iran, 1000 – 900 BC. They are now possibly the oldest human artefacts in private hands in Madison, Wisconsin.

Extensive and solitary cross-country journeys were the foundation for the book on land reform. Her detailed diaries survive, now in the custody of the Durham library. I suspect they

<sup>15</sup> *The Persian Land Reform 1962–1966* (Oxford, 1969), p. vi.

<sup>16</sup> "Recollections of Iran", p. 276.

could form the basis of at least one PhD thesis. I cannot resist telling one anecdote about her travels. She had been on perhaps surprisingly good terms with General Teymour Bakhtiyar, who, before falling from royal favour and being murdered in exile, was the founder of SAVAK, the Shah's notorious secret police force. She said, "You know, when I was travelling around while General Bakhtiyar was the head of SAVAK, I never had any trouble at all." "Really," I replied, "how very surprising." This, from someone thought, even by herself, to lack a sense of humour!

In her early career, she had from time to time written about contemporary Iran, and she occasionally returned to this later on, as well as writing on land reform. One article of this kind, it has been alleged, was influential in unexpected circles. This was "A reconsideration of the position of the *Marja' al-Taqlid* and the religious institution", published in 1964.<sup>17</sup> In this, she discussed some recently published ideas on the part of several Iranian thinkers about how the supreme office in Twelver Shi'i Islam might best be conceived in the modern world. According to Amir Taheri, in his biography of Ayatollah Khomeini, it was interpreted by Khomeini's followers, because of Ann Lambton's well-known connections with the British establishment, as "an endorsement of their views by Britain." "Her essay," he writes, "has been described by opponents of the Ayatollah as the earliest version of the manifesto Khomeini was to publish years later under the title of *Hokumat-e-Eslami (Islamic Government)*".<sup>18</sup> I made a xerox copy of the relevant pages of Taheri's book, and sent it to her. She was, I think, slightly startled to find herself portrayed as a kind of intellectual godmother to the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Ann Lambton's two major books after *The Persian Land Reform* were both based on series of lectures. For many years she regularly lectured on Islamic political thought, and this ultimately resulted in *State and Government in Medieval Islam. An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: the Jurists*, published in 1981. I attended the lectures, and read the book both in manuscript and proof; so if I know anything at all about the subject, that is probably why. What she does is to go painstakingly through the various major thinkers, from the early Islamic period to the Safavid era, telling the reader what it was that they said. That is its usefulness: if one wants to know what al-Mawardi, al-Ghazali or Ibn Khaldun actually wrote, there it is. It is perhaps a book to consult rather than one to read from start to finish. But it is distinctly worth consulting. The writer who may have been her favourite, at least among medieval Persians, is only incidentally mentioned in the book, though she wrote extensively about him elsewhere. This was Nizam al-Mulk, vazir to the Seljuk sultans Alp Arslan and Malik Shah, and author of the *Siyasat-nama*, the Book of Government. Anyone who went beyond elementary Persian with her was likely to be required to read and translate lengthy passages from the *Siyasat-nama*. She insisted on using the late nineteenth-century edition by Charles Schefer, refusing to have any truck with more modern – and according to most, better – editions such as those of Hubert Darke. Looking at her copy of Schefer, it is possible, perhaps, to see why her affection for it remained undimmed. It is extensively annotated both by her and by its previous owner, Edward Granville Browne (it was accompanied by a French translation by Schefer, but I could see no evidence that that

<sup>17</sup> *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 20 (1964), pp. 115–135.

<sup>18</sup> Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah. Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution* (London, 1985), pp. 123–124.

had ever been so much as opened by either Browne or Lambton). So, among the treasures now in the custody of the Durham University Library is a copy of one of the major works written in medieval Persia, annotated by the two greatest British scholars of Persian studies in the twentieth century. Browne died in 1926: he and Lambton can never have met. I think she was given the book by Browne's friend Guy le Strange, who helped her when she was in the early stages of learning Persian.

Nizam al-Mulk features much more prominently, as one would expect, in the other book that was based on a series of lectures, which was also her last: *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia. Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th-14th Century*, published in 1988. Whereas *State and Government* derived from a course of undergraduate lectures which had been given many times, and which appeared in book form when Ann Lambton, having retired, had no more teaching obligations, *Continuity and Change* originated in an invitation from Professor Ehsan Yarshater to give a series of five "Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies" in New York in 1981. The book, which has ten chapters and is 425 pages long, contains a great deal more than can have been included in the original lectures: hence the seven-year delay before publication. It provided her with the opportunity to sum up her life's work on, as the book's subtitle indicates, the administrative, economic and social history of Persia, especially during the Seljuk period. 1980 had seen the publication of a Variorum reprint volume of twelve important articles and chapters on these themes, as well as on political thought. It had the title (which I thought appropriate, since it was suggested by me!), *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government*.

*Continuity and Change*, however, ranged far beyond the Seljuk period which had been her original field of research. It dealt also with the Khwarazm-shahs and, more importantly, with the Mongols. She was quite prepared to admit that her interest in the Mongol century was largely my fault. When she took me on as a PhD student in 1970, her main area of research interest was probably the Qajar period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If one thinks of some of the most notable of the research students she supervised – Michael Burrell, Gad Gilbar, Alexander Morton, Shaul Bakhash (jointly with Dr John Gurney), and Norman Calder (jointly with Professor John Wansbrough) – it is interesting that, with the exception of Calder, they all worked on Qajar subjects. In 1988 she published a collection of eleven reprinted articles, *Qajar Persia*. A comparison of their original dates of publication with those of the articles in *Theory and Practice* shows that they are mostly later than the medieval pieces. And in 1970 her major project was a three-volume history of the Qajars. This never saw the light of day – a fact much regretted by some, though I have to say that it has not caused me to lose a great deal of sleep. What happened was that she began to supervise my research – she was, in my experience and that of many others, a superb research supervisor, one who took endless time and trouble over her students. Supervising me, she said, reawakened her interest in the Persian Middle Ages; and in particular, in the Mongol period, which she had never previously examined as closely as she had the Seljuks. Hence the extensive Mongol sections in *Continuity and Change*, as well some important articles, notably a study of a newly-discovered work on agronomy by the great Ilkhanid historian and minister Rashid al-Din, and a two-part article, "Mongol fiscal administration in Persia", published in *Studia Islamica* in 1986/7, which is particularly significant in that much of it is based on the history of Wassaf: a work whose importance is matched only by its elaborate

incomprehensibility. Few scholars, Iranian or foreign, can make much sense of him: Ann Lambton was one of those few. So I take comfort from the reflection that, at least once in my career, in pointing my supervisor back in a medieval direction, I did something that was genuinely useful.

I suggested earlier that *Landlord and Peasant* may prove to be the most enduring of Ann Lambton's books; and that that is partly because some of it is not susceptible to being superseded. I remember once hearing a memorial lecture at the Society, in which the lecturer remarked that the late honorand had been able, in his eighties, to republish a volume of articles he had written in his twenties, without finding it necessary to change a single word. This was held up for our admiration. I whispered to my neighbour in the audience that if that happened in my own field of study, I would regard it as evidence that the field was dead. All good historians, at least, should hope and wish, ultimately, to be superseded: there is no "last word". So *Continuity and Change* will doubtless, in time, be superseded. But that will not be soon, and in the meantime it will remain essential and basic reading for students of the Seljuk and Mongol periods. John Masson Smith Jr., in his review of the book,<sup>19</sup> made it clear that he had learnt from it new and important things about the Mongols: and one might have been forgiven for thinking that what Smith did not know about the Mongols was hardly worth knowing. Another reviewer, Donald Richards, is a Seljuk specialist; and he expressed some interesting reservations about the Lambton approach. But he said of the book: "Any section of it will provide valuable insights and abundant illustrative material".<sup>20</sup> And it provides light in perhaps unexpected corners: who would have anticipated, for example, that it would contain a chapter on "Women of the Ruling House"? Another respect in which it differs from *Landlord and Peasant* is that it is distinctly more readable. This may be in part because it began as lectures, which the earlier book, as far as I know, did not. But I think that in general, the Lambton prose style, which was rather hard going in earlier years, did tend to become to some degree more accessible as time went on.

In her later years, Ann Lambton continued to work on Persian and Islamic subjects. But her interests had shifted, most notably in the direction of Christian theology, about which she expressed regret at not having spent more of her time earlier. When, as her literary executor, I went through her library after her death, I found that about four-fifths of it consisted of books on Persia, the Middle East and Islam. Most of the rest was Christian theology. She became a Reader Emeritus in the Anglican diocese of Newcastle, and its then bishop, Dr Alec Graham (who preached at her funeral) became perhaps the only man to rank with Gibb and Bullard in her personal esteem. Despite having considerable reservations about the propriety of the ordination of women, she regularly, until very late in her life, conducted services, and preached, at village churches in Northumberland. Regarding her sermons, she told Bishop Alec, "I don't spare them, Bishop, I don't spare them." As I said at her memorial service, having been in her congregations many times, I can testify that this was absolutely true. She was particularly pleased by an invitation to preach at Durham Cathedral to mark her 90th birthday, and by the award in 2004, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, of the Cross of St Augustine. She also gave several series of Lenten addresses, on such subjects

<sup>19</sup>*Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1989), pp. 84–85.

<sup>20</sup>*MESA Bulletin*, Vol. 22 (1988), p. 209.

as the Caroline Anglican divines and the Fathers of the Church. These were not intended for publication, and are probably not publishable. But they are nevertheless very well worth reading.

Ann Lambton lived an ascetic life, though not at all ostentatiously so. Those she entertained to tea will perhaps remember the cracked and ancient cups and saucers she used to the end: waste not, want not, no doubt. She was an austere person, often seeming somewhat forbidding, especially to those who did not know her well, and were unaware of the fact that she was rather shy. She had a good many of the characteristics of a saint; and saints are not always comfortable people for lesser mortals to be with. But underneath was an exceedingly kind and generous woman. My young daughters, to whom she was almost an honorary grandmother, had no idea that, to some, she seemed a little frightening. Many of those who knew her well became very fond of her indeed; and I imagine it must by now be evident that I am one of those. I conclude with a personal anecdote. It is a story I would not have dared to tell during her lifetime, on pain of her intense displeasure. After the birth of our first daughter, my wife and I decided to move from our London flat to a house in what passes, within the thirty-mile residence radius then required of SOAS academic staff, for the country. We found a suitable house, and Ann Lambton closely cross-examined me about it, discovering that we were worried about a financial shortfall. "Oh," she said, "I can lend you that." She took out her cheque-book, and forthwith wrote me a cheque for what was then a very substantial sum of money. A few years later, I told her that I was now in a position to repay her loan. She denied all knowledge of any loan, while conceding that she might possibly have made me what she called a small gift. I very much doubt if I was the only person to experience this kind of generosity from her. On the passing of some notable person, we often quote Hamlet, remarking that we "shall not see his [or her] like again".<sup>21</sup> In this instance, I cannot think that many would deny that it is true.

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<sup>21</sup> *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 2.