



ARBERRY, ARTHUR JOHN

ARBERRY, ARTHUR JOHN, British orientalist. Born at Portsmouth on 12 May 1905, he went to Cambridge University in 1924 with a classics scholarship and subsequently studied Persian and Arabic with R. A. Nicholson and other noted scholars. After graduation and a study year in Cairo, during which time he also visited Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, he was appointed head of the classics department at Cairo University in 1932, but returned to London in 1934 as assistant librarian at the India Office. With the outbreak of war in 1939 he was transferred to the War Office and then to the Ministry of Information in London. It was during this period that he edited the highly successful Persian monthly journal *Rūzgār-e now* (The new age) as well as other publications in Persian and Arabic. In 1944, his war work finished, he was appointed to succeed V. M. Minorsky in the chair of Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University; two years later he transferred to the chair of Arabic. In 1947 he was appointed to the Sir Thomas Adams professorship of Arabic at Cambridge, where he remained until his death on 2 October 1969.

Arberry's academic honors included the *Nešān-e Dāneš* First Class awarded by the shah of Iran in 1964, an honorary doctorate from the University of Malta (1963), and membership in the Iranian Academy, the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, and the Arab Academy of Damascus. His complete bibliography shows a total of some ninety books that he wrote, translated, or edited, a similar number of scholarly articles, and many reviews and other short contributions. His writings include edited texts of Persian and Arabic works, translations of classical Persian and Arabic poetry, Koranic studies,



Islamic theology and philosophy, Sufism, Persian and Arabic language, bibliography and library catalogues, readers and anthologies for students, Maltese literature, and popular works on such varied subjects as modern Islam, British orientalism, and ‘Omar Ḳayyām and Fitzgerald. His most outstanding work was the English translation of the Qur’ān, which superseded all previous efforts in this field. His catalogues of the oriental manuscripts in the India Office, Cambridge University, and Chester Beatty libraries provide an essential tool for all scholars working in the Islamic field. It is Arberry’s principal achievement to have made the fruits of his own scholarship available not only to students following in his footsteps, but also to the general public.

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