



BAGLEY, FRANK RONALD CHARLES

BAGLEY, FRANK RONALD CHARLES (b. 15 October 1915, Cheshire, England/d. 7 August 1997, Kent, England; [Figure 1](#)), British diplomat, translator, and professor of Persian and Arabic at Durham University and McGill University.

Bagley was born into an affluent and highly educated family in Cheshire, England. Late in the 1910s, he attended St. Peter's Court Preparatory School in Broadstairs, Kent. Later he attended the famous English boarding school, Eton College, at Windsor, where he was a King's Scholar. On a Williams Exhibition scholarship, Bagley then attended Balliol College, Oxford, to pursue his studies toward a degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE). He graduated in 1937.

Between 1938 and 1952, Bagley worked for the Foreign Office. As a diplomat, he was posted to Turin, Lisbon, Baghdad, Budapest, [Isfahan](#), and Batavia (Jakarta). He had passed Foreign Office examinations in Arabic and Persian, and the Middle East, particularly Iran, was at the center of his studies and diplomatic activities. He was British Consul in Isfahan in 1952, when the British and American diplomats were expelled from Iran amid the dispute over the nationalization of the oil industry in the country (see [ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY](#)). After leaving the Foreign Office in 1952, Bagley settled into an academic career. He first taught Arabic at McGill University in



Canada from 1952 to 1958. Afterwards, he joined Durham University in England, where he was appointed as Lecturer in Persian Studies, the position he held until his retirement in 1981.

Bagley's first publication, titled *Arabs and the Middle East*, was a 20-page booklet issued in limited number in 1956 by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in Toronto. The book presents an analysis of the events and trends in the Middle East during this formative phase of the seizure of power in Egypt by Gamal Abdel Nasser (Jamāl 'Abd-al-Nāṣer). In the 1960s, Bagley's English translation of Abu Ḥāmed Moḥammad Ġazālī's Naṣiḥat al-moluk (as *Book of Counsel for Kings*) represents the apogee of his scholarly career. His translation, which is based on the Persian edition of the text (ed. J. Homā'i, Tehran, 1972), includes an introduction, in which he contextualizes the significance of Ġazālī's contribution to the genre of "mirror for princes." At the time of its publication, notwithstanding some concerns about his heavy reliance on the Persian edition, Bagley's translation received altogether a warm welcome among scholars of Islamic studies.

Another major project undertaken by Bagley over an extended period was translation from German to English of a four-volume collection of articles on Islamic civilization and dynastic history by the German scholar Bertold Spuler and others (see Bibliography, 1981-96). Late in the 1970s, Bagley translated a narrative source by Badr al-Moluk Bāmdād (d. 1987) on reforms and campaigns for women's rights in Iran during the first part of the 20th century. He also translated a collection of Sadeq Chubak's short stories (1982) and 'Ali Dašti's controversial account on the life of the Prophet Mohammad (1985).

Bagley's contribution to *Encyclopædia Iranica* began in the late 1970s, when he was commissioned to prepare four entries: "Afšin b. Divdād," founder of the semi-independent Sajid dynasty in Azarbaijan (r. 276/889–317/929), with 'A. Kārang; "Badiha-sarā'i," the composition and utterance of something improvised; "Borhān-al-Din, K'āja Abu Naṣr Faṭḥ-Allāh," a vizier (d. 1358) eulogized by Ḥāfeẓ in two *ġazals*; "Elgood, Cyril Lloyd" (1893-1970), British historian of medicine in Iran.

At the same time, Bagley was commissioned to translate from Persian, French, and German at least 78 medium-sized and small entries, plus several major entries which required a good deal of professional expertise and relevant knowledge. These included "Alqāb and 'Anāwin" (titles and forms of address, with three subentries and 8,000 words), "Ašāyer" (tribes of Iran, in four



sections and 15,000 words), “Aždaha iii. In Persian Literature” (dragon, 4,400 words), “Armenia and Iran vi. Armeno-Iranian Relations in the Islamic Period” (9,700 words), “Anahid iii. The Cult and Its Diffusion” (2,500 words), “Aṭṭār, Farid-al-Din” (5,500 words); and “Adab i. Adab in Iran” (8,000 words).

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