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978-1-107-16442-0 - The School of Oriental and African Studies: Imperial Training and the Expansion of Learning

Ian Brown

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## The School of Oriental and African Studies

The School of Oriental and African Studies, a college of the University of London, was established in 1916 principally to train the colonial administrators who ran the British Empire in the languages of Asia and Africa. It was founded, that is, with an explicitly imperial purpose. Yet the School would come to transcend that function to become a world centre of scholarship and learning, in many important ways challenging that imperial origin. Drawing on the School's own extensive administrative records, on interviews with current and past staff, and on the records of government departments, Ian Brown explores the work of the School over its first century. He considers the expansion in the School's configuration of studies from the initial focus on languages, its changing relationships with government, and the major contributions that have been made by the School to scholarly and public understandings of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Ian Brown was a post-graduate student at the School of Oriental and African Studies between 1968 and 1974, returning in 1979 as a lecturer in the economic history of South East Asia. He retired from the School in 2013 as Research Professor, having been Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities between 2007 and 2011. His major publications include *Burma's Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2013), *Economic Change in South-East Asia, c. 1830–1980* (1997), and *The Elite and the Economy in Siam, c. 1890–1920* (1988).

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For my granddaughter, Ada

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Ian Brown