

The Bibliophile and the Bodleian: Solomon Caesar Malan and his Oriental Library

As the Bodleian Libraries' Head of the Oriental section, I share my office with a number of artefacts from the libraries' past history. Two items bear witness to the history of the Indian Institute Library collections; a wooden stand advertising the former Library's opening hours and a framed notice, which urges to the attention of readers the Malan Library, presented in January 1885 by the Revd. Dr. Solomon Caesar Malan, Vicar of Broadwindsor, a scholar of wide knowledge who had travelled extensively in Europe, Asia and Africa. The notice describes Malan's library as consisting of more than 4,000 volumes in more than 100 distinct languages or dialects including Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Danish, Egyptian and Coptic, Finnish, Georgian, Gothic, Hebrew, Icelandic, Lappish, Pali, Persian and Sanskrit and even North American languages such as Cree.

In this paper I will be looking at the Malan Library in the context of the history of the Indian Institute from its optimistic beginnings as a colonial centre of instruction about all things Indian to its disintegration under the pressures of battles for real estate and changes in the way that the University thought about its teaching of Indian subjects.

The building of the old Indian Institute, now the home of the Oxford Martin School, is the surviving remnant of an ambitious research institution set up in 1884 by the Boden Professor of Sanskrit, Sir M. Monier Williams dedicated to the learning and literature of India. The majority of the rarest 18th and 19th century publications in the Bodleian's South Asian collections have bookplates showing that they were originally part of the Institute's library, giving some idea of the wealth of printed resources available to members of this research institution before the dispersal of its library, museum and teaching staff to various other locations in the University in the 1960s.

The foundation of the Institute arose from the Professor's concern at the lack of support given for Indian Civil Service probationers who were expected to reside at the University for the two years of their probation who but did not take any real part in University life and an equal concern that Indian students were coming to Oxford without college attachments, studying without supervision and returning home deteriorated in character rather than improved. In order to provide a stable study environment for both I.C.S. probationers and Indian students, he formally proposed the foundation of an Indian Institute at a Congregation held on May 13th 1875. The purpose of the Institute was to form a centre of teaching, inquiry and information on all subjects relating to India and its inhabitants. It was to restore among the I.C.S. probationers the old community spirit of the East India Company's College at Haileybury, which had been closed after the Indian mutiny, and would promote the welfare of Indians in Oxford. In addition it would propagate a general knowledge of India among Oxford's ordinary students some of whom might go on to exercise control over India's destiny in Parliament.

The new Institute was to have lecture rooms, staff rooms, accommodation for Indian students and visitors and a library which was to "offer for daily use a collection of Indian manuscripts, books, maps, and plans, many of them too rare and costly to be procurable by private means."¹ The Institute was also to have a Museum that was to present a typical collection of specimens which would give a concise synopsis of the

country and its material products, its people and their moral condition.

Monier Williams' made two successful fundraising trips to India, which he followed with a series of lectures and addresses in London and Oxford. His fund raising campaign received further momentum with the official approval and support of Queen Victoria and the royal princes.

The Institute began its life in rooms hired at no. 8 Broad Street, opposite to Balliol College but in 1880 Convocation approved the plan for an Indian Institute and granted a site in the Parks along with an Endowment of £250 per annum from the University Chest, payable from the date of its opening.

Max Müller, who had been Monier Williams' unsuccessful rival for the Boden Professorship, objected to the money that had been raised being spent on new buildings. He circulated a flyleaf to Congregation urging that premises could be found on existing University property and that the donations should fund research and fellowships. He later wrote:

"What all the Indians say is that rich Oxford University went around with a hat, promised to help Indian students, and all the money they subscribed in India was spent on bricks and stuffed animals."²

Max Müller's general antipathy to Monier Williams was no doubt partly at the root of this campaign. Leaving personal animosity aside, however, Max Müller had a valid point. When the building was finally been completed, of the £33,869 11shillings that had been raised only £235, 7 shillings and 10 d remained to be handed over to the Curators for the continued running of the Institute. This was to provide woefully inadequate support and from the outset there was never going to be sufficient money to support a scholarship programme.

There was considerable opposition to the new Institute being built in the Parks and negotiations were then started with the Fellows of Merton College who consented to part with a site in Broad Street for the sum of £7,800. The building was not completed until 1896 since some of the site was held by leaseholders and the leases did not come up for renewal until 1892. Monier Williams had to raise more money to purchase this land from Merton College and managed to secure the £1400 needed from Sir Bhagvat Sinhjee, Thakur of Gondal.

At the very first recorded meeting of the Indian Institute Curators on Nov 5th 1884 the third item on the agenda was a discussion about the insufficiency of endowment of £250 per year and discussions about the problem of under-funding appear with regularity in the minutes from then on.

Monier Williams himself provided the foundation book and manuscript collection for the Institute by donating his substantial library of over 3,000 items to its Library and a copy of his printed catalogue, which records the price of each book and manuscript, survives as part of the Head of the Oriental section's reference collection. At the time that Monier Williams was engaged in the creation of the Indian Institute, the avid Oriental bibliophile, Reverend Solomon Caesar Malan, former holder of the Boden

Sanskrit scholarship, graduate of St. Edmund Hall and long-time Vicar of Broadwindsor was reluctantly considering retirement due to deteriorating health. Retirement brought with it the necessity of disposing of his considerable library and the desire to prevent his beloved collection from being scattered asunder by the auctioneer's hammer, a fate that was too painful for him to contemplate. The idea of possibly donating them to the library of his old University, the Bodleian, gave rise to a long correspondence with Monier Williams, which resulted in him being persuaded to give his library, instead, to the Boden Professor's new Institute.

He agreed to do so in a letter of 9th April 1884, on condition that the books and manuscripts should be kept together, bear his name and to be catalogued within 8 months, as he said, "You can easily get the catalogue made at Oxford."³

A recurring theme in the history of library development, as true today as it was then, is the tension between the donor who wishes to be memorialised by preservation of their personal library intact within an institutional setting and the working needs of that institution and its users. As the Indian Institute was a 'new build', it was possible for Monier Williams to offer the separate room that Malan so desired for his collection and this may well have been the reason he chose it over the Bodleian Library, which wrote to him in 1886, regretting that his library had not gone there instead. It soon emerged, however, that the promised room was conceptual rather than actual and in a letter of April 25th 1884, Malan expressed his worries to Monier Williams,

"Am I to gather from what you say that the library will only be finished in 4 or 5 years and that until then, my books would take their chances on the shelves of a lecture room? If so, I would demur to it altogether."⁴

The promise of a library space being ready to accept Malan's library by his target date of October 1884 seems to have been made and Malan confirmed his gift to the library in a letter on April 29th. From the outset, the broad nature of Malan's collection meant that it sat somewhat uneasily within the context of an institution devoted to the study of India and its culture. It is interesting that this is something that Malan himself recognised. His letter to Monier Williams of April 14th 1884 suggests Malan's original idea had been for him to choose the languages that he wished to take for the Institute.

"I sent you a rough list of the languages that make up my library, for you to *choose* what part you wish to have. *Would you have the whole?* Yet what good the Fathers, Old and Modern Divinity, Hebrew Syriac, etc., etc., do to your object in connection with the Indian Institute. They certainly would make a good show, as there are many folios and 4tos. – and all have cost me much money, trouble, and pleasure."⁵

It may well have been the 'good show' that made Monier Williams so keen to secure the entire library. Certainly he made much of it at the official opening ceremony on July 1st 1896 where he said that, "Even the Bodleian over the way, with its plethora of wealth, had not some of the treasures to be found on their shelves."⁶

While Malan continued to send books to the Indian Institute throughout his life, the bulk of his library left Broadwindsor in one trip on January 16th 1885, which did not go according to plan. The books were carried from Malan's library in relays, their

estimated weight being between five and six tons and two extra horses had to be found before the van could be persuaded to move. His wife in a letter to Monier Williams then described how,

“The van, in starting to go away was “coxed wild” as my rowing son would say, and it ran into some turf, where one wheel became embedded, which caused the poor loser of the books to stand about on the grass while two more horses were fetched. Congestion of the lungs followed, and he is still in bed.”⁷

Yet another pair of horses had to be added to the four horse team in order to get the van up Hollis Hill before it could finally leave the village and the books start their journey to Oxford.

Much of the attraction of the collection for the Indian Institute’s Curators lay in the rich collection of bibles and other works in Indic languages and the framed notice in my office records that all volumes referring to India in the Malan library were included in the card catalogue of the main library but that a catalogue of the other books had yet to be prepared. Malan had made a start, creating a catalogue of his Greek, Latin, and Arabic books, but, the making of the catalogue was an acknowledgement of the passing of his beloved collection from private to public ownership and, as he said in a letter to Monier Williams, “it was like making my own coffin, and I could not go on.”⁸ Some of Malan’s original catalogue slips survive in a card index in the Bodleian’s archives that seems to represent the efforts of successive librarians to catalogue the collection. After the transfer of the bulk of his library, Malan became increasingly anxious about a catalogue. He wrote to Monier Williams saying that,

“Unless you know what you have, you cannot know what you miss. And as you have many tempting volumes, it would be no more than what happens at the Bodleian, that some of them disappeared unknown to you. I therefore hope for the sake of the Indian Institute that the cataloguing of the books will not be delayed unnecessarily.”⁹

One of the very last items to leave Malan for the Indian Institute was his manuscript *Notes on the Proverbs* where verses from the Book of Proverbs are brought together with what he described as “kindred passages from the writings of some of the children of the East country.”¹⁰ It was a labour begun as an undergraduate and continued for over half a century, resulting in around 16,000 entries recorded on blue foolscap and bound by Malan himself into a massive volume. Malan intended the publication of this lifetime’s work to be his retirement project but ill health, deteriorating eyesight and separation from his library left him unable to verify many of his references. While the reference for each entry is given in a numbered footnote, the abbreviations made it near impossible for any but the most expert reader to interpret the name of the work and author, much less the language of the quotation. Malan was asked to supplement his work with a brief philological and historical notice of every authority quoted but by this time the task was beyond him. *Original notes on the Book of Proverbs according to the authorised version* were published by Williams and Norgate in three volumes, dated respectively 1889, 1892 and 1893 but attracted little interest in the press. Malan was deeply disappointed, “Reveiwers have agreed amongst themselves that it shall be still-born: either because they are too stupid to see anything in it; or, rather, they ignore it from prejudice, which is more likely.”¹¹ The

manuscript was in the last box of books to leave Malan's house a few weeks before his death on Nov. 25th 1894.

The catalogue of Malan's collection was still unfinished at the time of Malan's death and Monier-Williams wrote to the Times after his death pleading for funds to complete the task,

"Obviously we need several specialists, and some experts have already helped us; but I am sorry to say that we lack the means as well as men. Cataloguing is after all, a mere question of pounds, shillings and pence. Oriental scholars and specialists are to be had, even in England, but cannot be expected to work for nothing."¹²

He also took the opportunity to plead for the development of an endowment fund for the Institute itself as, "Unhappily the pecuniary resources of the Oxford Indian Institute are utterly inadequate."¹³

Over time the Curators of the Indian Institute found management of Institute's the Library increasingly irksome. In the minutes of a meeting held on Nov. 13th 1924 the Keeper complains that although there is an assistant as well as a chief librarian, he often finds that neither of them are to be found in the library. Then in 1925, 30 books from the Malan collection were found to have been removed from the library without signing for them by a Mr. A.S. Domiack from Wadham. These books had subsequently been offered for sale to a book dealer who luckily noticed the Indian Institute stamp and returned them.

On Oct. 26th 1926 Dr. Cowley, Bodley's Librarian, approached the Curators of the Indian Institute with a proposal that the Bodleian should take over the management of the Indian Institute Library. Unfortunately the typewritten and printed papers which outline the proposal are missing from the minutes book so it is not clear what benefits that Dr. Cowley felt the Bodleian would gain from connecting itself with the Indian Institute. It is possible that the opportunity of laying claim to Malan's library, which it had hoped to acquire in 1885, had something to do with Cowley's approach. The Curators of the Indian Institute came to an agreement in which they paid the Bodleian £275 per annum to connect the Indian Institute Library with the Bodleian as a special department for Indian studies. Cowley took over management of the library in 1927 and while the Librarian remained to assist him the assistant librarian was replaced with a Bodleian employee. The deal proved expensive for the Bodleian because by 1928 Dr. Cowley is complaining that the administration of the Indian Institute Library is by no means covered by their contribution and has involved a considerable expenditure from Bodleian funds.

The academic programme for the Institute was initially ambitious and inclusive. In his the opening ceremony lecture of 1884 Monier Williams described how the Institute had already appointed a number of teachers in Indian subjects and was able to offer one Indian classical language, Indian Law, History, and Political Economy.¹⁴ The Institute's academic programme was intended to be the first step in a process whereby Oxford and other Universities would eventually take over the entire process of educating and examining Indian Civil Service Probationers. The teaching programme would also answer the needs of the future doctors, lawyers and missionaries of the university who

would end up working in India.

The academic programme was intended to go hand in hand with the interchange of knowledge that would naturally arise from mixing young Englishmen with Indians studying in England. Monier Williams saw the young Indians gaining active dynamic qualities such as courage and determination while the young Englishmen would learn passive qualities such as patience and obedience to authority.¹⁵ At Oxford the corrosive influence of Indian philosophy to treat action as a mistake leading to future rebirths would be eradicated and Indian students would learn that work was part of religion.

In the early days of the Institute, however, there were insufficient Indian students to provide the kind of counterbalance to the I.C.S. probationers that Monier William's rosy vision of an East West interchange of moral qualities required. An attempt to secure six Government scholarships for visiting Indian scholars had failed because the Secretary for India overruled a promise made to Monier Williams by the Viceroy, being disinclined to single out Oxford University for special favour.¹⁶ In an article that appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge undergraduate journal of May 10, 1883 the author knew of only three native Indians in Oxford and did not believe there could be more than a dozen.¹⁷ On the other hand there were some 50 I.C.S. probationers at the time of the Institute's foundation.

Richard Symond's in his book *Oxford and Empire* suggests that it was the strong I.C.S focus of the institute, coupled with a decline in interest in Sanskrit, the subject of its ex-officio Keeper, that was to prove its eventual undoing as a centre for Indian studies.¹⁸ I.C.S. probationers no longer studied Sanskrit and Classical studies, which had provided a steady stream of students attracted by the relationship of the language to Latin and Greek, and numbers reading Sanskrit started to decline from the 1920's onwards. Between 1921 and 1930 only four candidates sat for honours in Sanskrit and in 1931 there had been no candidate for the Boden Sanskrit scholarship for six of the eight previous years.

I.C.S. probationers ceased to come to Oxford after the start of the Second World War in 1939 and in the post-war years the Indian Institute came under unwelcome scrutiny from the University Chest, which was in need of further accommodation. The Indian Institute Curators in 1947 allowed the University Land Agent to take over three rooms on the ground floor, claiming that no more could be offered as all other accommodation was needed by the Institute for its own purposes. It is clear from the minutes of Curators' meetings, however, that Indian Institute rooms were being put to uses that had nothing to do with Indian studies. A Chinese lending library was set up in Indian Institute accommodation and the Institute was also storing Turkish books on behalf of the Faculty of Oriental studies.

The Oriental Faculty, as shown by its use of Indian Institute rooms, desperately needed further accommodation and it was proposed that a new Oriental Institute should be set up near the Ashmolean Museum. It was suggested that the Indian Institute should cease to exist and that the Indian Department and library should become part of the new Oriental Institute, much to the dismay of classical Indologists such as V. Raghavan who declared that such a move would be ruinous to Indian

studies at Oxford.¹⁹ In 1955 the Hebdomadal Council passed a decree to establish the Oriental Institute, which was to include "full provision for Indian studies." The decree was passed along with a further resolution to lift restrictions on the use of the Indian Institute to allow the use for University purposes of any spare accommodation in the Indian Institute exclusive of the library, galleries and rooms already occupied by persons whose work required proximity to the library.²⁰ The Indian Institute Library was to be allowed to remain because Bodley's Librarian and Curators had adamantly opposed the move of Bodleian material away from the central site and won general support for their position.

In 1956 the University obtained a High Court order allowing it to use the site and buildings of the Indian Institute as general property of the University in consideration of a fund of £20,000 set up as a permanent endowment for the promotion of Indian studies. To begin with it appears that the plan was to reconstruct part of the building and adapt it for the use of the University Chest at the same time extending library space by putting a floor in the Malan room and then allowing the library to take over the space to be vacated by the museum when it moved to the Ashmolean.

In 1960 the plan seems to have become a more ambitious proposal to knock down the old building put up an entirely new structure on the Indian Institute site for the use of the University Offices. It appears that accommodation for the Indian Institute Library did not figure as part of the plan and that the Indian Institute books were expected to be absorbed into the stacks of the Bodleian. On May 25th 1961 the Curators of the Indian Institute Library decided that the Keeper of the Indian Institute should write to the Registrar stating that they considered it most important that the Indian Institute Library should be maintained as a separate entity and not absorbed into the general collections of the Bodleian. A letter followed this to the editor of the Oxford Magazine pointing out that the library had been attracting an increasing number of students from many different faculties and arguing that it was imperative that the Library remained as a working unit.

In 1964 the Hebdomadal Council started discussing a proposal with Curators of the Bodleian, which was to result in the resignation of Bodley's Librarian and the University's Readers in Indian History and Indian Sociology. The proposal was that the Bodleian, which was badly in need of further accommodation, should be offered the Proscholium, to serve as a main entrance and the Divinity School for an exhibition room. In addition the Indian Institute Library was to be moved from the Indian Institute building to a roof extension, which was to be built on the north range of the new Bodleian and joined to deck B, which would be used for open shelf Indian Institute material.

The Indian Institute building would then be assigned to the Central Offices for redevelopment from the date of the completion of the roof extension. In return for the reduction of stack space that the Bodleian would suffer by incorporating Indian Institute material it was to be offered the underground area between the Clarendon Building and the Old Bodleian for excavation of new stack areas.

In June 1965 two contentious debates were held on the future of the Indian Institute site. D. Pocock, the Reader in Indian Sociology, said that treating India as a branch of

Oriental studies failed to reflect equal numbers of research students from other disciplines such as Modern History, Anthropology, Geography and Agriculture and Forestry. He felt that to ally Indian studies so closely with Oriental studies gave a wrong impression to those outside Oxford of the Universities interests in South Asia. It was argued that the Indian Institute site should not only retain the library but also provide rooms to allow for the development of a proper South Asian Regional Studies centre such as had just been set up by Cambridge.

Bodley's Librarian J. Myres was in a difficult position. University procedure meant it was impossible for him to oppose the Indian Institute proposal without causing the whole decree to be rejected. He had suggested the plan for taking over the Proscholium and Divinity school himself and objected to the way that Council had tacked on to it a proposal which he considered totally unacceptable. If he supported opposition to the Indian Institute proposal, the Bodleian could lose space, which it desperately needed. He proposed to therefore to support the decree but declared his intention, in open opposition to the Curators of the Bodleian, of voting for the deletion of the clauses concerning the Indian Institute at a later date.

When the decree was brought before Congregation on June 15th, and the decree was carried by 55 votes. Since the decree had achieved a majority of less than two thirds it had to go to Convocation, the body of all the M.A.s of the University. The voting was again close and the decree was carried by a mere 18 votes. A Times article of June 30 1965 suggested that the narrow victory was due to Hertford College, which hoping for a share in the site of the Indian Institute, had invited all its M.A.'s to come and vote in return for a free lunch.

The press reaction in India was unfavourable and on Dec 31st Bodley's Librarian resigned. Before giving his papers to the Bodleian, Myres unfortunately weeded them so no reference remains to this episode but his strong feelings on the matter can be guessed from an article, which appears in the March issue of the Oxford Magazine in 1968. For the supreme irony is that having fought so desperately for the use of the Indian Institute site the University decided to transfer the whole University Office complex to Wellington square. As Myres drily remarks:

"Had they reached this obvious conclusion two years ago, as they were strongly urged from many sides to do, it would have saved one or two of us, who found it impossible to reconcile Council's previous policy with the best interests either of the administration or of the Bodleian, some measure of inconvenience."

The obvious solution might have been to leave the Indian Institute Library where it was but as Myres writes:

"so innocent a notion is quite alien to our administrative proprieties. Money has been allocated for moving the Indian library out of the Indian Institute, and on this move, however, senseless, that money must now be spent".

The move went ahead as Myres predicted and the Indian Institute building became the Modern History Faculty and later on the Oxford Martin School. While the Indian Institute's Indian collections survived in their purpose built Reading Room in the New

Bodleian until its closure in July 2011 to make way for the refurbishment of the Weston Special Collections Library, the Malan collection was dispersed into the main Bodleian stacks. A donor record exists for Malan's manuscripts and their current shelfmarks but there is no equivalent list for his printed books. As the promised printed catalogue of the entire collection was never undertaken, it would be extremely difficult to reconstitute the Malan collection today, although some of the collection's printed material is beginning to be identifiable in the virtual world. As electronic records for the language collections are being created, Malan's name is recorded as donor and one day it may be possible to re-unite his collection in the virtual, if not the physical world, something that I am sure would have pleased this founder donor of the Indian Institute Library collections.

¹ *A record of the establishment of the Indian Institute in the University of Oxford: being an account of the circumstances which led to its foundation.*

Oxford : Compiled for the Subscribers to the Indian Institute fund, 1897 p. 4

² Symonds p. 110

³ Arthur Noel Malan *Solomon Caesar Malan, D.D.: memorials of his life and writings.*
London : Murray, 1897 p. 348

⁴ Malan p. 349

⁵ Malan p. 348

⁶ Malan p. 372

⁷ Malan p. 359

⁸ Malan p. 348

⁹ Malan p. 363

¹⁰ Malan p. 395

¹¹ Malan p. 402

¹² Malan p. 371

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *A record of the establishment of the Indian Institute in the University of Oxford: being an account of the circumstances which led to its foundation.*

Oxford : Compiled for the Subscribers to the Indian Institute fund, 1897 p. 42

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Symonds p.111

¹⁷ *Oxford review: the Oxford & Cambridge Undergraduates review.* May 10, 1883

¹⁸ Symonds p. 121

19. V. Raghavan (ed.) *Sanskrit and allied indological studies in Europe*.

Madras : University of Madras, 1956 p.68

20. Oxford University Gazette 3 June 1955 p. 1003-4