

IMPORTANT BOOKS OF THE MIDDLE EAST TO BE SOLD DURING ISLAMIC WEEK AT SOTHEBY'S

The Library of Robert Michael Burrell

AN OUTSTANDING collection of books on the Middle East will be offered for sale at Sotheby's in London on Thursday, October 14, 1999.

Collected over a period of 40 years, the Library of Robert Michael Burrell (1943-99), comprises some 10,000 volumes, dating from the 15th century to the present day and covering a diverse range of subjects, including works on Arabic culture, language, history, exploration, archaeology, art, bibliography, current affairs, and economics. As well as some 300 works on the Gulf War of 1990-91, the library also includes a comprehensive selection of works on oil and the oil industry in Arabia, Persia and America.

DR ROBERT MICHAEL BURRELL

A respected expert in Middle Eastern affairs, Michael Burrell was also a passionate bibliophile. It is this combination of academic knowledge and enthusiasm which informs the collection, explaining its scope, its rarities and its comprehensiveness and making it one of the most remarkable collections of books on the Middle East ever to come to auction.

Dr. Burrell lectured in the Contemporary History of the Near and Middle East at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) from 1970 to 1996. An inveterate and intrepid traveller, he knew the Middle East well, especially Iran and the Persian Gulf. He published numerous articles, principally on the recent history and contemporary situation of Persia.

THE LIBRARY

An important collection of letters by the painter Sir Robert Ker Porter (1777-1842) written to his family during his travels in Asia, is estimated at £10,000-15,000. The letters give detailed descriptions of Porter's experiences in Tiflis, Tabreez, Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Baghdad and Persepolis where he made many valuable drawings and transcriptions: "[26 December 1818]... My Epistles are but slightly interesting as to detail to what I hope you will find my Journal to be... I cannot express to you the feelings and enthusiastic pleasure with which I for several days wandered over the ruins of Babylon... no description can convey the effect that the Birs Nimroud (the Ancient Temple of Belus) had upon me..."

Porter was a remarkable pioneer in the science of Near Eastern archaeology and also a restless traveller, being employed and honoured in various courts and other venues in Europe and Russia during the momentous period of the Napoleonic campaigns.

By Sir Aurel Stein (1862-1943), one of the most important explorers, archaeologists and geographers of Central Asia, is a first edition of his book, *Innermost Asia*, a comprehensive and scientific report of his third exploration of 1913-16. It contains detailed reports of his explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su and Eastern Iran carried out and described under the orders of H.M. Indian government and is expected to fetch £2,500-3,500.

The *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* records the travels of Sir Richard Francis Burton, the first English Christian to enter Mecca and the first European to travel between the Holy Cities of Islam by the Eastern Route. This first edition published in 1855-56 is estimated at £2,000-3,000.

Further travel books include James Wellsted's *Travels to the City of the Caliphs*, a first edition published in 1840. Wellsted's short career was devoted almost entirely to surveying the Red Sea, Arabia and Oman between 1830 and 1837. His death at the age of 37 was attributable to a failed suicide attempt made in the grip of fever while exploring Oman. The work, in two volumes with lithographed frontispieces is estimated at £2,000-2,500.

A rare first edition of *Journal of the British Embassy to Persia* by William Price is expected to fetch £1,000-1,500. Price was assistant secretary and interpreter to the embassy of Sir Gore Ouseley in Persia in 1811-1812. The text

consists of an account of his travels through Madeira, Ceylon, Bombay and the Persian Gulf to Ispahan.

Sir Percy Molesworth's *A History of Afghanistan* is estimated at £300-500. The first edition presentation copy is inscribed to the Marquess of Zetland and is extremely rare as many copies were destroyed in a warehouse fire during the London blitz.

An extremely rare first Latin edition of the Qur'an, printed from the 12th century translation made for Peter of Cluny, is estimated at £4,000-5,000. The copy is the first of three separate editions, and the only one to bear the name of Martin Luther on the title page. It also contains the two-page preface by Martin Luther, which is normally only found in copies of the second of the three editions.

Mecca by Christian Snouck Hurgronje is an important work in the early history of photography of the region and the largest single illustrated monograph on Mecca of its time. Hurgronje was a respected Dutch orientalist and one of the first non-Arab photographers of the Hijaz and this work was compiled on the eve of the Western modernisation of Arabia. The plates are among the earliest published photographs illustrating Mecca and pilgrims from all parts of the Islamic world taken by the author himself. It is estimated at £3,000-4,000.

First editions of two famous 9th century astrological texts by Albumasar are expected to fetch £8,000-10,000. The first, *Introductorium in astronomias*, was the principal source of medieval knowledge of the laws governing the ebb and flow of the tides and their relation to the phases of the moon. The second work entitled *Flores astrologiae* is a brief treatise on prognostications. Press Enquiries: Helen Griffith, Sotheby's Press Office Tel: 0171 293 5168 Fax: 0171 293 5947 www.sothebys.com