



## OBITUARIES

### JOHN BROUGH

Professor John Brough, M.A. (Cantab.), M.A., D.Litt. (Edinburgh), F.B.A., Professor of Sanskrit in the University of London from 1948 to 1967, Honorary Fellow of the School since 1967, Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge since 1967, tragically died on 9th January 1984 after having been knocked down by a car within yards of his home. By his death Orientalist scholarship has been deprived of one of the most formidable Sanskrit scholars of his generation, who could nevertheless wear his deep learning lightly enough to love communicating its beauties to a wide circle; for he was a lover of beauty, not only in Sanskrit—and Greek—literature but also in the worlds of music and of flowers; he showed not only an intellectual awareness of European literature but a deep capacity for digesting and retaining it (he seemed to be able to recall whole chapters of Shakespeare, Milton, William Dunbar, Goethe, the *Nibelungenlied* and many more, at only the slightest prompting); he was by no means unrecipient to or intolerant of new ideas; and he always seemed to have time for his friends, who miss him deeply.

John Brough was born in 1917, and educated at the Dundee High School. Later at Edinburgh University, where he found time to start the study of Sanskrit under Arthur Berriedale Keith, he achieved First Class Honours in Classics in 1939, and was awarded the Vans Dunlop Classical Scholarship. (He also found time, he told me, to 'learn to play the bassoon very badly'; I never heard him, but from my knowledge of Brough I should think that his competence was far more than minimal.) A major scholarship in Classics took him that year to St John's College, Cambridge, where his run of first class honours was continued: In Part II of the Classical Tripos in 1940, with distinction in comparative philology; in Part I of the Oriental Languages Tripos in 1941, in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, when he was awarded the Bendall Sanskrit Exhibition; and in Part II in 1942, when the Bendall Exhibition was renewed, he received the Brotherton Sanskrit Prize, and was elected to the Hutchinson Studentship. He continued at St John's while at the same time undertaking war-work in agriculture, where his slight frame was toughened by 'carrying bushel baskets', moving on to becoming an assistant in agricultural research; but his major work was a critical analysis of difficult and corrupt late-Vedic material on Brahman exogamous clans, 'The early clan and family system of the Brahmans, together with a translation of the *Gotra-pravara-mañjarī*' in 1944, followed in only the following year by an edition and translation of the Nepalese Buddhist Sanskrit text *Pāpāparimocana*, with a critical analysis of the text and its Newari commentary. He also edited and translated a Newari collection of Buddhist tales, the *Aṣṭamī-vrata-māhātmya*, Add.Ms.1366 in the Wright Collection of the Cambridge University Library. These dissertations won for him his Edinburgh D.Litt. degree and a Fellowship of St John's.

By October 1944 he had already been appointed Assistant Keeper in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts in the British Museum, where he was working on the descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts, continuing Bendall's work of 1902, and throwing himself avidly into further studies of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. A year later came his first formal connexion with this School when he was appointed to the Panel of Additional Lecturers. He applied at this time for the Sanskrit chair at Edinburgh; but—happily for us—the chair was not filled, and in 1946 he joined us

as Lecturer in Sanskrit. Before long, in the expansion of Oriental studies brought about in the train of the Scarbrough Report, he was appointed to the second Chair of Sanskrit in the University (the other, of course, being Turner's), becoming also Head of the Department of India, Pakistan and Ceylon when Professor Vesey-Fitzgerald moved across to the new Department of Law. With this came his membership of the Board of Studies in Oriental and African Languages and Literatures, and the now sadly defunct Board of the Faculty of Arts; I mention these not for mere completeness of the record, but because Brough enjoyed the cut and thrust of their meetings, and appreciated their importance in maintaining scholarly standards. Membership followed of the Boards of Studies in Comparative Philology and in Palaeography, and later—to his great delight—Music.

And Brough enjoyed his colleagues. He had, obviously, much common interest with men like Henning and Walter Simon, but there was another luminary who broadened his interests considerably. Many of us in the early 1950s fell, critically or uncritically, under the charisma of the late Professor John Rupert Firth; Brough fell, critically, and so started a most profitable friendship, each stimulating the other. There was an unofficial 'club', led by Firth, which met for lunch in the small dining-room in the Senate House, at a time when the standards of the Senior Refectory at S.O.A.S. were at their least inspiring; here Brough again enjoyed the cut and thrust, giving as good as he got, led on by Firth into explorations of linguistic theory which had not previously come his way, and able to counter, repudiate or reinforce the theories from the Indian grammarians and semasiologists. But this was no mere lunch-time *badinerie*; Brough produced solid scholarly papers on theories of general linguistics in the Sanskrit grammarians, and Indian theories of meaning, for the Philological Society, in whose activities he took an increasingly interested part (eventually, in 1960–63, becoming its President).

This concern with linguistic problems widened Brough's interests, but did not divert them; indeed, he had already shown his attraction towards the linguistic field in a study of the *Līlātīlaka*, a Sanskrit tract on Malayalam grammar and poetics, to which he had turned his attention while working on the British Museum catalogue, and had also immersed himself in theories of poetics in Sanskrit (within a few weeks of joining the School I found myself caught up in Brough's *dhvani* seminar). Bhartṛhari was a great love of his (Firth used to rib Brough by referring to that philosopher as 'Bertie Harry'), and the anonymous *Dhvanikāra* even more so; alas, Brough's edition and translation of the *Dhvanyāloka*, finished as long ago as 1957, has remained unpublished. Those Departmental seminars were good value, but hard work; Brough encouraged his staff towards critical work, and publication, of their own, always prepared to listen, discuss and advise, and always leading from the front by his own example. His own series of Departmental lectures on Indian poetics, and on Indian textual criticism, were especially memorable. His work on the *gotras* appeared in book form in 1953; not his first book, for in 1951 he had produced *Selections from classical Sanskrit literature*, with translations and notes, aimed at introducing the student to the diversity—and beauty—of Indian genres. His consciousness of duty towards a wider public had already been expressed in a lecture on 'The study of the Indian Classics' before the Royal Society of Arts. Meanwhile his interest in Nepal, especially Nepalese Buddhism, and Buddhist Sanskrit (how he hated it being described as Buddhist *Hybrid* Sanskrit!) had been sustained, and by 1955 he was ready to make his first excursion to undertake a programme of research, with five colleagues, in Nepal. To see something

of the world in between, especially the flowers, he elected to drive there—in a pre-war Morris saloon! He said, laconically, before departure, ‘Of course I shall take a few spare parts’, and was not the least put out by David Friedman’s lugubrious ‘I should want a spare *car*!’ He got there, with singularly little trouble, and seemed as excited as a schoolboy when I met the Broughs the day after their arrival in Delhi. If some of his observations on current Buddhist learning in Nepal proved disappointing, and some of his efforts to obtain access to materials were frustrated, he nevertheless brought back a number of valuable manuscripts. ‘A hundred and eight of them,’ he said; ‘I thought that that would be an auspicious number.’

Arrived back, he was appointed to the chair of the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin*, in which capacity he was to serve the journal for the following nine years. For the Turner Festschrift (*BSOAS*, xx, 1958) he produced a characteristic article, where Buddhist legend was analysed with reference to Buddhist Sanskrit from Nepal, Tibetan and Chinese versions, side-glances at Sogdian etymologies, and Buddhist onomastics explained with references to the *gotra* systems, at once a summary of his interests so far and an indication of the direction in which his thoughts were to lead him. He also wrote an elegant Sanskrit *śloka* to preface the volume, with his own prose Sanskrit commentary, in the style of the Sanskrit paṇḍits, as a tailpiece—with much chuckling. ‘I had to bring in Africa’, he said, ‘and of course since there’s no Sanskrit word for it I’ve had to do the best I could. It may be a little malicious—but I don’t expect the Africanists will read the commentary!’ (The curious will find that example of his roguish humour seven lines from the bottom.)

While access to manuscripts in Nepal had proved frustrating, he achieved great success in acquiring from Russia photostatic copies of unpublished sections of the birch-bark Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*, far and away the oldest surviving manuscript of a Buddhist text, which was to occupy him for the next few years. It was an immense labour, taking him into Kharoṣṭhī palaeography and the rarer aspects of Prakrit philology as well as requiring parallel study of the Buddhist Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese and Tokharian Dharmapadas, to say nothing of the work of literary and grammatical detection required from the text-fragments themselves, and reassembling them like a vast jigsaw puzzle; yet he managed to publish it, with an introduction and commentary, by 1962. By then his health was giving rise to some anxiety, and he was relieved of some of the pressures on him by a grant of nine months’ study-leave in the U.K. to pursue the study of Buddhist Chinese.

The pressures were brought about by more than just the great labours entailed by the *Dharmapada*. He had become increasingly disappointed, even disillusioned, about the direction of academic studies in London, most especially the disadvantaging of classical Orientalism, and much of his energy was expended in his defence of what he passionately believed in. He was proud of his Department, most of whose members had grown to academic maturity under his aegis, and was distressed at the erosion of its position brought about by a new expansion into studies where a deep knowledge of a country and its culture through its language no longer seemed to be required. This perhaps made easier the break when it came, by his appointment as Professor Sir Harold Bailey’s successor in the Chair of Sanskrit at Cambridge in 1967. Before that happened, though, he had had another spell of study-leave, this time to Japan in 1965–6, partly to avail himself of an invitation to conduct seminars at the University of Kyoto. He went via the United States of America, partly on family business and partly to visit scholars and centres of learning, but wrote that ‘seven

weeks was about two or three weeks too long for the U.S.' Japan, however, seems to have been more profitable, for besides being able to study much Buddhist Sanskrit material in Japanese collections and to discuss parallel Chinese versions with local scholars, he was able to start contemplating the great task of organizing, with Japanese colleagues, a Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit dictionary. Another reason for his growing sadness in London could well have been the sudden death of Arnold Bake; nowhere has Brough's sensitivity been more movingly shown than in the obituary he wrote for the *Bulletin* on that occasion when, his feelings too deep for words, he found the perfect expression of them in the third movement, *Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo*, of Beethoven's late F major quartet.

'Sensitivity' is the word which comes to mind also when one thinks of his *Poems from the Sanskrit*, which appeared in the Penguin Classics after he had gone to Cambridge; but it was largely composed before his move, and he shared his translations with many of us round the coffee-table. The sensitivity shows itself equally in his appreciation of the nuances of the originals and in the elegance of his translations. The introduction is a masterpiece in its own right, and has much fresh to say about poetry in general, and translation of poetry in particular, enhanced by felicitous illustrations taken largely from the Greek Anthology. He showed a command of language of a brusquer kind, at least in private conversation, when the monstrous idea was floated that the Soma, the ancient ambrosia of the Indian heavens, was to be identified with the hallucinatory mushroom *Amanita muscaria*; but on paper his debunking took the form of a scholarly and detailed refutation. Debunked the idea had to be, but probably only Brough had at once sufficient expertise in both Vedic Sanskrit and in botany.

Other contributions to scholarship continued to flow until about five years ago, when he devoted most of his time and strength, still bothered by health problems, to the idea of organizing that Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit dictionary which would have crowned his labours. If such a thing should ever come into being, it will have to be at the hands of the Japanese colleagues he inspired, for there is no Buddhologist of his calibre left in the West; nor is there a Sanskritist of his achievement and sensitivity, and with his love and appreciation of beauty in all its forms, left in the world. We mourn a great scholar, a great man, and a great friend.

'The High Song is over. Silent is the lute now . . .'

JOHN BURTON-PAGE

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Compiled by J. W. DE JONG

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<sup>1</sup> This index, which includes brief notes, is believed to be complete at the time of going to press.

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