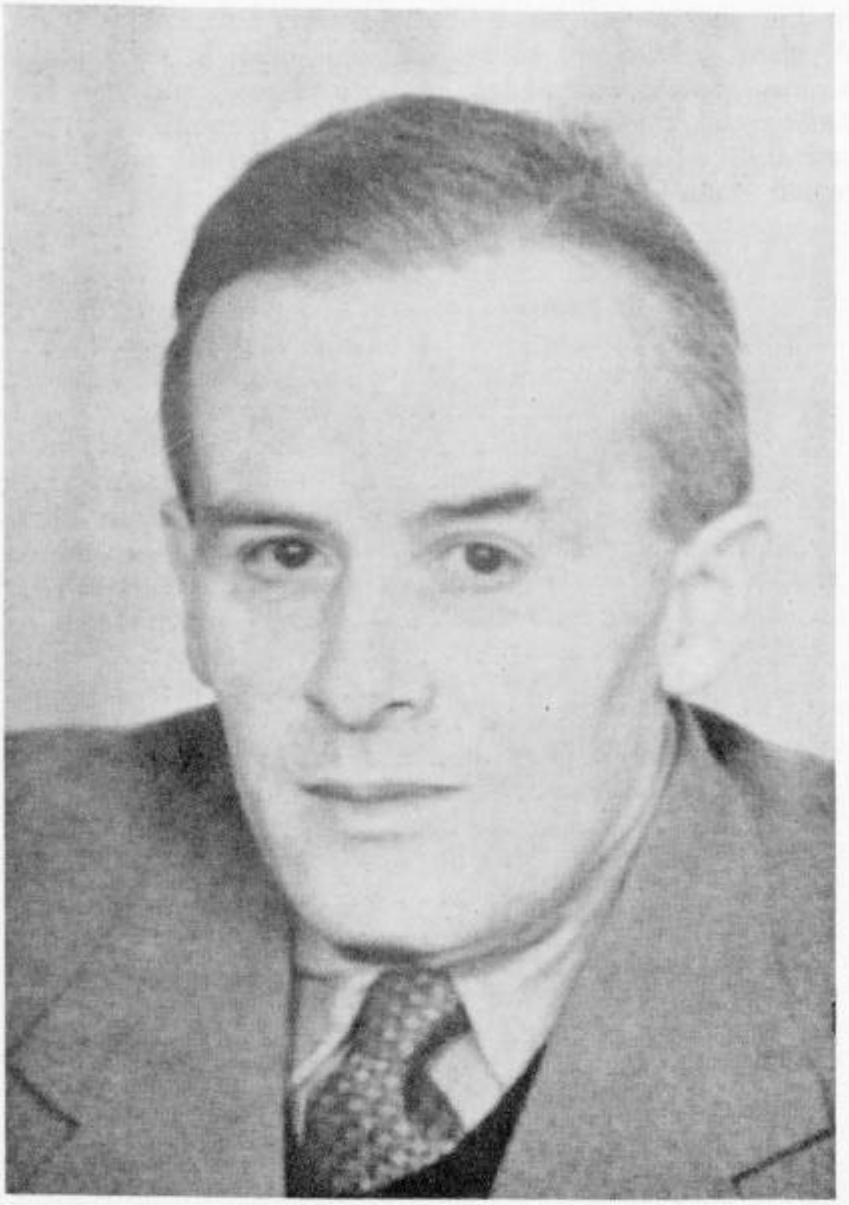
PLATE LV



W. B. HENNING

# WALTER BRUNO HENNING[1]

1908–1967

NO one familiar with Henning's writings can fail to notice that he was a wholly remarkable man to bestride the small world of devotees of Iranian studies which yet, for its size, counts an impressive number of outstanding scholars.

From the year 1932, when he edited a first group of Manichean fragments from the Turfan collection, until 1937, by which time he had to his credit editions of a second, third, and fourth group of these manuscript remains, several articles breaking new ground in the field of Manichean studies, two reviews (outstanding among a number) which revealed exceptional perception in matters of religious history and lexicography, a preliminary report on the previously unknown Choresmian language, and a dissertation which immediately became, and still is, an indispensable manual of the Middle Persian verb, the authority of the young scholar still in his twenties kept rising, until in 1938–9, as he entered his thirties, two articles of astonishing depth and originality, 'Argi and the "Tokharians" ', and 'The Great Inscription of Šāpūr I', set the seal on his greatness, and left no doubt that a new era had begun in Iranian and Central Asian studies. Its introducer was to prove a pioneer possessed of so firm a command of the wide sweep of relevant sources, and of such power of imaginative penetration controlled by relentless vigilance and security of judgement, that the chances of his taking a false step in the solution of whatever problem he decided to tackle were reduced to the minimum compatible with human fallibility.

In the former of the two articles cited he laid bare the root of the misapprehension by which the 'Tokharians' had come to be so named, instead of being called 'Tughrians' (or the like) as he showed that they ought to have been; and he established the

[1] This memoir, and the photograph, are reproduced by kind permission of Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd. and the School of Oriental and African Studies, from the *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume* (edited by Mary Boyce and Ilya Gershevitch), London, 1970, pp. vii–xxiv, where a bibliography of Henning's works follows on pp. xxv–xxxiv. The publication of the last but one item detailed in that bibliography suffered delay until 1978. The latecomer is considered below, on pp. 698 f., the paragraphs devoted to it constituting the only major alteration here introduced to the original *In memoriam*.

important identification of the kingdom called *Arg* in Iranian sources, with that called *Ien-k'i* (=*Argi*) by the Chinese, deriving its Sanskrit name *Agni* from *Arg*. Ten years later he was to prove by a brilliant discovery that the language to which the 'Tughrian' name referred was actually the language of *Argi*/*Agni*, the one for which the name 'Tokharian A' had been adopted. He illuminated another aspect of the 'Tokharian' problem in 1960 when, introducing his momentous identification of the gist of the Greek-letter inscription on the monolith of Surkh Kotal, he gave reasons why the language of this inscription should not be mistaken for that of the 'true Tokharians', but should be defined as the long-lost native speech of Bactria. Five years later he boldly, but on grounds that seem incontrovertible, defined this speech as the mother-tongue of the Kushan rulers. Finally, in 1962, but reaching print posthumously only in 1978, he gathered up the 'Tokharian' problem in a context of breath-taking sweep. It was the Tukri and the Guti, he now suggested, two western border nations of Babylonia in about 2100 BC, to whom ancestry should be traced of the two Yüe-chih groups that in Central Asia between AD 500 and 800 produced the literature we call Tokharian: the 'Tughrian' speakers (who to start with, therefore, had been 'Tukrian', a name of which 'Tokharian' became a variant) of 'Tokharian A' in the kingdom of Argi; and the natives of the kingdom of Kuči, speakers of 'Tokharian B'. He pointed out on the one hand that the name *Kuči* is the expected Tokharian outcome of *Guti*, and on the other that *Guti* is the very form which in 1929 had been reconstructed, without recognition of its historical reality, as underlying the ancient Chinese rendering which in modern Mandarin is pronounecd *Yüe-chih*. And for good measure he threw in the Argippaeans of Herodotus as the earliest recorded 'inhabitants of Argi'.

There has been no time as yet for reaction in print to this bold bid for a perfect answer to one of the biggest among the most hotly debated questions, notorious for its intractability, of ancient Asiatic history. Henning's answer, by stringing together the above considerations, is simply that a powerful group of Indo-European tribes, after emerging in sources of the third millennium BC as invaders of Babylonia from western Persia—where presumably they had arrived by way of the Caucasus—veered round and forcefully thrust north-eastward to the limits of China, reducing huge territories to domains of their nomadic exploitation; after nearly two millennia, overthrown by the Hsiung-nu, their main body made for the west and invaded

Bactria, which country in consequence came to be known as Tokharistan, 'land of the Tokharians'; among those who remained behind it was the settlers of Argi and Kuči who, more than half a millennium still later, supplied us at last with the native language of this long-lived nation, a form all of its own of Indo-European speech.

If accepted, as its merits bid fair to bring about, this spectacular determination of the earliest Indo-Europeans in history (their appearance in sources antedates even the Hittite nations) may well become Henning's most widely acclaimed achievement. But viewing it in perspective one would rather call it merely a bonus: what in his final article falls into place so neatly are after all largely pieces which over the years he had himself retrieved from the tangle, each by itself a major discovery of his. It was left to him to hit also upon the surprise resolution, but strict observance of the direction he had established must seem bound in due course to have led to it anyway. The survey of his other achievements, now to follow, bears out the need for a perspective view to be taken in any attempt to get the measure of the man.

If the first of the two quoted studies which crowned his pre-war activities took him to the extreme east of his chosen field of studies, with the second he found himself closer to Rome than with any other. At the time when he wrote it, only the Pahlavi version of the Shapur inscription had been recovered, the worst-preserved of the three. From it both Henning and Arthur Christensen, working independently, identified the author of the inscription as Shapur I.[1] But the great merit of providing the decipherment, and analysis in depth, of this long and complex record of Persia's triumph over Rome is Henning's alone, who promptly declared it, and proved it to be, 'the most important document of the Sasanian empire that so far has been discovered'.

When subsequently the beautifully preserved Parthian and Greek versions of the inscription, meanwhile unearthed, became available, one could only marvel at how little they added to what Henning had made out from indifferent photographs of the defective single version at his disposal, the formidable difficulties of which, inevitable in an unknown text written in Pahlavi, he had solved to a large extent before the archaeologists found the

[1] Previously Narseh had been suggested. When Christensen reported his identification in a communication to the 20th International Congress of Orientalists in Brussels (1938), it was Sir Harold Bailey who announced that Henning, absent from the Congress, had made the same discovery.

key buried in dust. To appreciate the full extent of his achievement one must bear in mind that Henning's complementary study of the Shapur inscription, devoted to those parts of it which concerned internal rather than external Persian affairs, although its publication was delayed until 1954, was written and sent to Bombay in March 1939 before he knew either the Parthian version (whose discovery he had foretold in print) or the Greek.

Henning now stood revealed as an epigraphist and historian of the rarest order, the Sasanian 'Behistun' inscription having itself, as it were, put the seal of approval on his reading and interpretation of it. Twenty years later another decipherment of his, epoch-making in Iranian and Central Asian studies, was followed at its heels by dramatic confirmation. No sooner had he identified the above-mentioned inscription on the monolith of Surkh Kotal, written in the previously unknown Bactrian language, as Nokonzok's account of the circumstances which had driven him to build a well, than Daniel Schlumberger's archaeological team, working on the site, found a well at some 15 yards from the monolith. And as if to dispel the last doubt that the inscription related to the well, *two* more versions of Nokonzok's text came to light inside the well's own staircase.

With clinching independent proofs furnished, when tests were most arduous, that Henning's verdicts came close to mathematical truths, the reliability of his numerous decipherments of other inscriptions required no confirmation beyond their self-evidence, with less than which he was never in any case content. Many of his epigraphic contributions consist of improvements on readings previously suggested, being sometimes mere dots he decisively placed on what only thanks to them could be seen to be *i*'s, and sometimes substantial *i*'s which he provided as base for precariously floating dots. Of the latter category an outstanding example is the elaborate farewell with which he dismissed in 1952 the unfortunate Khagan of the Aq-qatārān; of the former, the surprising metamorphosis (in 1958) of a sovereign queen into the eunuch commanding her bodyguard. Occasionally, as with the Dura-Europos ostracon $O_3$, his correction (in 1954) amounted to supplying all the *i*'s, as well as every dot.

Such corrections, minor and major, all subtle, and providing in their aggregate an invaluable manual on how to avoid pitfalls when reading inscriptions, are found scattered through text and notes of many of his writings. They reflect his keen interest

and sovereign competence in epigraphic material of vastly disparate character and provenance, written in a wide range of languages and scripts, the latter sometimes Greek or cuneiform, but usually Aramaic, when the vital determination of *which* form of Aramaic script is present often constitutes a major hurdle.

But correcting earlier readings, which exercise occasionally caused resentment, was to him merely a necessary evil. To place on a sound basis epigraphy, this most difficult of disciplines, which until he took it up had remained the Cinderella of Middle Iranian studies, the ground *had* to be cleared of misconceptions. On the ground so cleared he erected his models of decipherment, without a close study of which no one will be likely to do justice to new finds, even if he has the essential prerequisites which Henning modestly described as 'einige Übung, und wohl auch ein wenig Geschick für dergleichen Arbeit überhaupt'.

Of these models, apart from the towering ones described above, two may be mentioned to illustrate his versatility and the creative thoroughness with which he learnt to master also non-Iranian languages and traditions when required for a given purpose. First, in 1949, his treatment of the surviving fragment of an Aramaic inscription of Asoka found in Lampāka, in the identification of the gist and every detail of which he displayed an intuition and ingenuity one can never cease to admire. Not only did he recognize that the Aramaic text includes Prakrit words, but he accounted for their presence by a *tour de force* of imagination so daring that even the down-to-earth outcome has a glow of magic.

Secondly, three years later, his lifting of the mystery which had surrounded the monuments and inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak. The recognition that these were memorials set up in Aramaic language by Elymaic kings would alone have sufficed to secure him a place of honour among both epigraphists and historians.

Other remarkable decipherments, on any material, from rock to coins and seals down to cloth, abound in his work. Two short ones are favourites of mine, the first, it is true, consisting of no more than the introductory formula of a Parthian letter on parchment (1954). Transcribed by him the text now looks commonplace enough, especially as Henning has shown that its roots reach back into the fifth century BC. But the eyes and experience which unravelled that text would awake envy in

anyone who has struggled to decipher letters. The second is of an inscription on a piece of textile. Its identification by Henning as being written in Sogdian and including the name, attested in Islamic sources, of the fabric itself (1959), was a boon described by D. G. Shepherd as 'unique in the annals of the history of textiles'. Pieces of the same make are found in many museums and churches of Europe. Their origin has ceased to be unknown.

In 1950 Henning's renown as the foremost Iranian epigraphist brought him an invitation from the Iranian government to study and record the Sasanian inscriptions of Fars. The quality of the latex impressions and photographs which he brought back, and the publications which followed upon this journey, are gifts hard paid for by the discomforts he himself, a man of delicate health, endured, and which he inspired courageous and able assistants to endure. This is how, in his words, he secured a latex impression of the Sar-Mašhad inscription, in mid-twentieth century: 'A skilled workman, 'Alī Murād, applied latex to the inscription as well as he could, with a brush fixed to the end of a reed-pole five yards long, and backed the latex-surface with sacking as far as he could reach. The impression thus created had to be taken off before it was entirely dry. The same workman—a brave man—was placed in a sack, which was pulled up by long ropes from the top of the rock; for two or three hours he hung, very insecurely placed, free in the air, up to six or seven yards above the rocky ground and, owing to an overhang, about two yards away from the inscription towards which he had to be pushed with long poles.' If need be Henning would take instruction even from Ctesias.

Back in London his first concern was to ensure the publication of the hard-won material. Two portfolios of facsimiles of Sasanian inscriptions were the first publications of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, founded in 1954, of which he was chairman from its inception. He published a third portfolio in 1963, but did not live to reveal the light which surely in his mind had been shed on many of the difficulties which these texts present.

As stated above, Henning's earliest publications were devoted to the Iranian Manichean texts of the Turfan collection, into which his teacher, F. C. Andreas, an expert of them surpassed, after his death in 1930, only by Henning himself, had given him a unique initiation. It was Andreas who had first recognized that in the Iranian material of the collection two distinct languages were represented beside Middle Persian (which was

previously known only in its 'Pahlavi' form): Sogdian, the discovery of the identity of which was one of Andreas's great achievements, and another language which he at first called 'the North-West dialect', but in the end recognized to be Parthian. For the first three groups of Manichean texts which Henning edited, written in Middle Persian and Parthian, he had at his disposal work-notes left by Andreas, as well as notes which he and other students had taken down from Andreas's teaching. These texts range in content from cosmogony and hymns to missionary history. Their edition is exemplary, and the relatively few corrections to it which one has to bear in mind when using it today were mostly made by Henning himself in subsequent years.

With the fourth group, published under the title *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch* (1937), whose most difficult part was a long text belonging to a Sogdian Confession, Henning, having discharged his duty by Andreas, stood on his own. Although Buddhist and Christian Sogdian texts had by then come in for close attention, hardly anything was known of Manichean Sogdian, the vocabulary and special features of which 'dialect' it fell in the main to Henning to identify. He did so admirably, by a judicious use of linguistic comparison and of parallel passages in other languages. To this day hardly anything is obsolete in this important work, which has become a kind of 'Bible' for students of Manichean Sogdian. The book would have done credit to a seasoned Sogdianist who had spent years over the Buddhist and Christian material. Its young author began to *learn* the Sogdian language in May 1935, and handed the completed work to the printer in June 1936.

It is not as if during that year nothing else had engaged him. A lecture he delivered in January 1936, which was published in *ZDMG* in the same year, was crammed with discoveries, and constitutes a kind of programme of the contributions by which he was greatly to enlarge, in years to come, previous knowledge of Manichean literature and history. The main items of this 'programme' were:

(*a*) The role which Sogdian Manicheans had played in the migration of tales and fables from East to West and *vice versa*. The ample evidence for it which he had recognized in the Turfan material was presented by him in an article published in 1945.

(*b*) The recovery of the outlines, and of substantial details, of Mani's lost *Book of Giants*. The ingenuity he displayed in the identification and restoration of the small disconnected Turfan

fragments in four languages from this book, which he assembled, together with the Coptic fragments he had identified, in an article published in 1943, is on a level with his finest epigraphic work. To the introduction of his edition we owe, among other knowledge, an awareness of the subtleties of the disconcerting Manichean practice of 'translating' foreign names.

(*c*) New evidence on Mani's life and writings, and on Manichean missionary activity. What he wrote in fulfilment of this part of his 'programme' includes the articles entitled 'Mani's last journey' (1942), 'Waručān-Šāh' (1945)[1], and that masterpiece of condensation within a minimum of space, of a maximum of important new information combined with closely argued demonstration and chronological calculation, namely the two Appendices he wrote in 1952 to the article in which he published G. Haloun's translation of the Chinese *Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani*. To the new date of AD 274 which he here argued for Mani's death, he published a sequel in 1957, when he defended it, with all the weighty repercussions it has on the dates of the early Sasanian rulers, against no less an authority on chronological matters than S. H. Taqizadeh. The latter's arguments, translated from the Persian by Henning himself, and his own counter-arguments constitute a model of ennobling controversy, conducted with dispassionate acumen and profound reciprocal regard.

(*d*) The discovery, among the Turfan fragments, of Manichean-Sogdian letters referring apparently to a division of the community into two sects, and relating gossip which, though partly obscure, throws interesting light on the private lives of its members. The edition of these difficult documents, which Henning was uniquely equipped to undertake, was intended to form part of his book *Sogdica*. The evil of his internment for six months in 1940–1 prevented its inclusion. He never made up the gap.

Over and above the implementation of this Manichean programme and his earlier edition of important Manichean texts, Henning's achievements in the Manichean field of studies, apart also from his massive contribution towards a better understanding of the languages in which Iranian Manichean texts are written, extend in many directions, of which the following may here be mentioned:

[1] To be read in conjunction with *BSOAS*, XII/1, 1947, 49 n. 1; in the offprint I have from Henning he deleted lines 3–20 on p. 89, and lines 14–16 on p. 90.

(1) The determination, on the strength of Sogdian calendar lists, of the number, dates, and occasions of the Manichean fasts, which he published in 1945 with an Appendix containing further chronological considerations by S. H. Taqizadeh.

(2) The discovery of the existence of a Manichean magical literature, the Parthian products of which were heavily influenced by Buddhist models (1947).

(3) The proof which he offered in 1951 of acquaintance by early fourth-century Manicheans with the source which later, Christian writers used for their anti-Zervanite diatribes.

(4) The publication, in 1948, of the one surviving Sogdian fragment of the most elaborate account so far known of Mani's cosmogony.

(5) The confirmation (1940) that the famous Turkish Khwāstwānēft had been translated from a Sogdian original.

(6) The discovery (1959) that the first canto of the Parthian Hymn-cycle *Huwīdagmān* had been translated not only into Chinese, but also into Uyghur Turkish, the reason being that it played a part in the ritual of the Eastern Manichean Church.

(7) His magnificent, patient work, later continued by Mary Boyce, in the reconstruction of the text of the Parthian Hymn-cycles, the authorship of which he had assigned to Mani's apostle Mar Ammō.

From Henning's contributions to epigraphy and to the elucidation of the Manichean religion, literature, and history, we now turn to what he produced in other branches of Iranian studies, leaving to the end his monumental philological achievement, which is the rock underlying everything else he did.

His mathematical training and gifts, which help to account for the excellence of his chronological work on Mani's dates and the Manichean fasts, shine out supreme in his study of the astronomical chapter of the Bundahišn (1942). Among its numerous important results is the realization that the Late Avestic system of measures is the Greco-Roman one, and that the lunar mansions were introduced from India to Persia only towards the end of the Sasanian period.

On different grounds he dated to the same period the Pahlavi *Ayādgār* of Vuzurgmihr, a piece of 'Wisdom literature', showing in 1956 that parts of an Arabic translation of this work had been preserved by Miskawaih.

For the extreme east of former Iranian settlement he also accomplished a dating feat, this one of wide general interest, when in 1948 he delved deep into Central Asian history to prove

that the Sogdian 'Ancient Letters', until then believed to represent the oldest paper documents in existence (first half of the second century AD), were in fact written in 312 and 313. With this went the liberating confirmation that, to use the late J. A. Boyle's wording, 'the Huns and the Hsiung-nu are in fact one and the same people'.[1]

In Avestic studies Henning's greatest merit is to have put a halt to what he termed their 'disintegration', namely to the liberty of emendation many experts had felt entitled to take with Younger Avestan verse-lines on the ground that their hetero-syllabic appearance was due to corruption. He showed (1944) that the Middle Iranian Manichean verses displayed a hetero-syllabism that varied within limits similar to the Avestan. His suggestion that stress-metre would account for the structure of both has discredited all emendations based on metre, and has helped to restore confidence in the text of the Avestan Vulgate.

In his treatment of metrics Henning, as cautious and fair an advancer of theories as one could wish to find, and only in emergencies inclined to offer a theory rather than nothing, made it clear that his accentual *explanation* was secondary to the *fact* he had established, viz. that in Western Middle Iranian verse 'the metrical value of a word is wholly independent of its number of syllables'. But although he regarded his stress-theory merely as one which 'offered better prospects' than the syllabic one, he refined it with his customary thoroughness, achieving results which will stand even if the theory itself should not gain general acceptance. Thus with its help he was able to offer in 1950 a convincing metrical analysis and vocalization of one Pahlavi and two Manichean poems, ending up with a surprise: his discovery of the presence of conscious rhyme in another Pahlavi poem, which had remained unnoticed.

His knowledge of Zoroastrian literature, and the thought he had given to the many problems it presents, were of the most exhaustive ever entertained. Their extinction by premature death is in itself a tragedy for Iranian studies. An edition by him of what he had studied of Pahlavi literature (which except for a few texts is the least scientifically treated, though longest known,

[1] Having failed to single them out in my original *In memoriam* (see p. 697 n. 1), I have been longing, ever since receiving Boyle's letter thereafter, to make good the omission. 'Of Henning's innumerable discoveries', he wrote, 'you do not mention one that particularly interested me.' Few scholars were better entitled than Boyle to miss justice being done to this major eye-opener.

of the Middle Iranian period), with the strict critical method and pervasive intuition which characterize all his work, would almost certainly have improved the understanding of it beyond recognition, and enhanced its usefulness far beyond the present limits. The pioneering work he devoted to inscriptional Pahlavi and to literatures other than the Pahlavi prevented him from turning to such a task. But he frequently related his discoveries in other fields to what he knew so well from his exploration of Zoroastrian texts, and in many of his writings threw out precious remarks that add up to a substantial contribution towards a better understanding of Zoroastrian Pahlavi.

It was the same with the Avesta, every bit of which seemed to be ever present in his mind, ready to be called upon when required, with great profit to it and to what it was brought in to elucidate, but on which scripture *per se* he wrote comparatively little. Nevertheless his impact on the understanding of the great outlines of its form and contents was decisive. As regards form, his rehabilitation of the Vulgate from the slur of metrical corruption is mentioned above. On contents his considered views were set forth, and have held the field ever since, in the three Ratanbai Katrak Lectures which he delivered at Oxford in 1949, and published in 1951 under the title 'Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-doctor?'.

In attempting to do justice to this important little book I cannot, least of all in a survey of Henning's main merits, leave unchallenged an opinion expressed in her survey by a distinguished colleague and friend, which, as that of the pupil of Henning's who apart from myself knew him longest, is bound to have attracted attention. On p. 783 of her valuable and moving obituary of Henning,[1] Professor Boyce states that 'these lectures showed one slight limitation of sympathy, namely a lack of imaginative comprehension of some of the obscurer forms of religious life', and that 'had he had more interest in the general history of religions, it is possible that he might have judged Nyberg's interpretation a little less harshly'.

Like Professor Boyce I have had inculcated by Henning, and maintain, a very high regard for the late Professor Nyberg. It is part of this regard to refuse to believe[2] that he would have

[1] *BSOAS*, XXX/3, 1967, 781–5, to be consulted also for biographical data.

[2] There was no presumption in my choice of these words, since when I wrote them in 1969 I was aware as co-editor of the *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume* that on p. 348 of it Nyberg's warm tribute would appear, to the scholar who so effectively had disposed of his aberration.

wished me to concur, tacitly or avowedly, with an admission which I feel to be unjustified of intellectual failure on Henning's part.

Henning was simply incapable of not comprehending shamanism imaginatively, nor was he limited in 'sympathy', an *Einfühlungsvermögen* into the shaman's mentality, this being in fact the quality through exercising which he was forced to decide that Nyberg's interpretation required uncompromising rejection. Henning was also incapable of not inquiring, before publicly upholding the common opinion from which Nyberg had diverged, whether the general history of religions perchance favoured at least slightly the divergent opinion against the common. He found that it did not. Accordingly, having sympathetically taken in what the shaman had been about, he turned with unemotional detachment to what he always turned to when considering a problem: the authentic sources.

Instead of assuming that the definition of Zoroaster's doctrine was to be found in shamanism, or even in the crude 'religious mixture'[1] attributed to the prophet by Younger Avestan priests intellectually in no way on his level, Henning rehearsed in his book (pp. 45 f.) the account given of Zoroaster's doctrine by Zoroaster himself, in the Gathas. He saw confirmed the conclusion which the giants of Gathic studies, Bartholomae, Andreas, Meillet, and Lommel, had found inescapable, viz. that Zoroaster's own doctrine differed radically from earlier Indo-Iranian doctrine as known to us, and was distinct also from the 'mixture' which passed as Zoroaster's doctrine after his death. Like the true historian of thought (as well as of facts) which he was, Henning laid his finger on the cause of the difference: for the first time (to our knowledge) there had emerged on the soil of ancient Indo-Iranian religious thought a philosopher, a strikingly clear and original thinker, far ahead of the times and *milieu* in which he lived. To such a one shamanism had nothing to offer, and we can learn his views from general history only if general history quotes them from *him*.

In the light of the reasons advanced by Henning for his rejection of Nyberg's interpretation, the severity of the judgement can be seen to have been due not to lack of sympathy or imaginative comprehension, nor to insufficient interest in general history, but to hard-won familiarity with the Gathas

[1] The term is one I learned from Henning, who rightly objected to the use of 'syncretism' as a definition of what had happened in Younger Avestan times.

on the part of a born historian.[1] What can nevertheless justifiably be argued is that the severity of the judgement would have been conveyed less harshly had Henning delivered his lectures many years later. For by 1965 he had mellowed, to the extent of disarmingly admitting, no doubt chiefly with these lectures in mind, to an 'inclination to harsh criticism'.[2]

The lectures, although written in what superficially looks a light vein, are pervaded by an urgent appeal to reason. Their message, presented with utmost simplicity, and logic all the more compelling, is that all consideration of Zoroaster must rest on three pillars: his date, his place, and his dualism. On all three Henning, who so often had surprised readers with the originality of his views, surprised them instead with what one may call his original support of the common opinion. This opinion is of course common because the facts thrust it on one. But it was left to Henning to show that it is also an opinion 'not altogether absurd' (p. 51), in other words, the only defensible one.

On the date, with which left in a haze 'all discussion on Zoroaster will remain futile' (p. 35), Henning may be said to have provided certitude that the Zoroastrian tradition places it correctly in the first half of the sixth century BC.

On the place, he upheld and strengthened what had long been maintained, that the home of the speakers of Avestan was somehow connected with the ancient Choresmian empire of pre-Achaemenian days.

On Zoroaster's dualism he ineluctably concluded that it must have arisen from a 'purely monotheistic' belief to which the prophet had been committed. This conclusion could hardly have been reached by someone whose interest in the general history of religions had been insufficient.

To students of Zoroastrianism Henning's little book will remain the solid rock of common sense, ever available as the sober base to which thought on the subject may return, and from which it may grope its way further. To its author, however, averse to printing anything stale, the beating of an old drum, even with new sticks, was a task only moderately congenial. He

[1] Henning's judgement, read out in 1949, had by then been familiar to me since 1942, a year in which he devoted much thought to Nyberg's book and talked about it with his usual conscientiousness and attention to detail. Already in 1938, when I first joined Henning's classes, his views on Zoroaster largely coincided with what had by then become the common opinion, based on Zoroaster's own formulation of his doctrine.

[2] *Asia Major*, XI/2, 1965, 179.

beat it because without it the orchestra would stray into confusion, and because the Electors had asked him to provide guidance. He introduced humour to rivet attention. But after three lectures, instead of the expected six, he had enough. Pointing out that what had seemed so shattering was in fact nothing new, he bowed out with the reflection that 'it is a fallacy to think that a novel opinion is necessarily right, or an old opinion necessarily wrong'.

Fourteen years later he went into print for the last time on religion, to communicate his discovery of the one-time existence of an Iranian god Baga in charge of marriage. In the same article he briefly delivered many other original observations on religious matters, as if he knew that time had run out on him to develop them fully. It is easy to see that they will bear rich fruit in years to come. Like his earlier work, they are bound to turn the tide of Iranian religious studies back to facts, respect for the sources, and disciplined thinking, with healthy repercussions, perhaps, on the pursuit of religious history even beyond the Iranian field.

It is not of Henning that it can be said that he did not see the wood for the trees.[1] But whether he looked at trees or the wood, there would always be something attracting his attention which had not been noticed before. The writings described in the preceding pages are those of a historian who was a discoverer, not a compiler, of history. Such a man takes nothing at second-hand, but goes to the sources and lets or makes *them* speak, drawing his conclusions from what *they* say. Sources, however, only speak to those who know their languages, and the early Iranian and Central Asian languages require of him who would know them a creative philological talent brought to bear increasingly in depth on an ever-widening range of material. Henning could not have been the historian he was, the greatest among those who wrote on the Middle Iranian period, had he not also been a philologist of the rarest calibre, spending much of his life-work on languages of the Iranian group.

For Iranian studies are a waste of time unless one takes strictest account of the letter of each original source, this being the one safe guide to its spirit. It was by philological means that Henning cleared up in his publications the letter of one source after the other, with the result that philological distinction is a conspicuous common denominator of all of them. But so is the fact that in each instance he had through the letter reached the spirit.

[1] A forest-official's son, he grew accustomed to sizing up woods as a boy while accompanying his father on walks of inspection.

If it is true, therefore, that he was first and foremost a philologist, this is so only in so far as without being that he would not have been an Iranianist. He became an Iranianist, on the other hand, out of an interest not in philology, but in the history of thought and human endeavour.[1] Philology was to him no more than a means to historical ends, a tool, though admittedly a tool without absolute control and constant refinement of which, and strict regard to what it brought to light, he would have considered it farcical to pronounce on history.

His very etymologies proclaim the historian. He held no brief for any which rested on mere formal artifice or semasiological adjustment. Only such etymologies seemed to him justified as arose spontaneously from the correctness of some comparison. His own, therefore, often partake of the nature of historical truths, as when he defined Av. *ašti-* 'palm of the hand, breadth of four fingers' as a singular to a close cognate of which IE **okt̂ō(u)* 'eight' was the dual, or recognized OP *ardastāna-*, and with it its exact meaning, in NP *āstān* 'sill', or tore the veil from the OP title spelled *hpthpt'* in Aramaic, or concluded from Snāviδka's having had hands of stone that his epithet *srvō.zana-* was more likely to convey leadenness of jaw than horniness of race.

Because of his strictness and because (except in a minority of purely philological articles) he confined remarks on language to the minimum required for the understanding of source-texts, his published etymologies are few in relation to what had occurred to him, though perhaps all the more memorable. They would have been much more numerous had he lived to publish his Persian dictionary. Even so we have his etymologies of many of the Iranian words whose meaning and grammatical function it had been he who had established from parallel versions or from context. His recognition of their cognates in other languages often threw light on the phonology of the language in which he had found them. In his astonishing penetration into the Late Choresmian language etymology even took pride of place as a means of orientation: without the bold use he deliberately made of it in this case, the Protean phonology of the strangest (at

[1] A report current in Henning's family had it that, when he reached school-leaving age, one of his teachers told him that with his excellent brains he might take up any subject he chose, except, of course, languages, at which he had not distinguished himself. He did, in fact, go to Göttingen to take up the study of mathematics, became interested in the works of Arabic-writing mathematicians, decided to learn the language in order to read them in the original, and thus became involved with languages after all.

least in its late form) of Middle Iranian languages could not have been established.

The recovery of this language from sources brought to light by Zeki Velidi Togan was an extraordinary achievement to accomplish single-handed. His puzzling out the form and structure of Choresmian as it appears in Persian-Arabic script in texts written from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries AD, in particular his discovery that Choresmian words unexpectedly had pause-forms contrasting with sentence-interior forms, and his disentanglement of the complex Choresmian system of suffixation despite partial disguise by contraction, these were philological feats which place Henning among the greatest ever of Iranological pioneers. It was only fitting that to him, 'the founder and undisputed master of Khwarezmian studies'[1] should fall also the merit of recognizing the crucial missing letters of the *Old* Choresmian indigenous script, attested in documents which he dated in the second century AD and in the seventh to early eighth. The significance of what he did for Old Choresmian in the one article he devoted to it has received a telling testimonial from Dr Livshits.[2]

That it was also Henning who identified the Bactrian language, subsequently finding a reason for recognizing in it Kaniṣka's mother tongue, was mentioned above. So was his prize-winning Göttingen dissertation, an analysis of the Middle Persian verb, which filled one half of a wide and sorely felt gap. To fill the other half, relating to the Parthian verb, Ghilain later wrote the companion treatise which closely followed the pattern set by Henning, and for which he acknowledged ample help received from Henning in the provision and interpretation of material.[3] Thus it is due largely to Henning, directly through the former work, indirectly through the latter, that knowledge of the Western Middle Iranian verb, with all that follows from knowledge of the core of speech, has improved and grown beyond recognition since the twenties, especially if account is taken also of the observations he published subsequently on the Pahlavi ending *-DŠ/ḤḤ*, on inscriptional forms, and 'revolutionarily' (as he himself had to admit) on the survival of the ancient imperfect tense in early Western Middle Iranian.[4]

[1] Martin Schwartz, *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, 385.

[2] V. A. Livshits, ibid. 260 n. 14.

[3] A. Ghilain, *Essai sur la langue parthe*, Louvain, 1939.

[4] In 1958 Henning considered his *Verbum* 'jetzt in vielen Punkten überholt' ('Mitteliranisch', p. 100). To bring it up to date, however, would largely mean quoting from his own later work.

In addition to the verb Henning's imprint is set deep also on Middle Persian and Parthian lexicology and phonology, and interpretation of spelling. What he wrote in 'Mitteliranisch'[1] on the writing systems in which Middle Persian and Parthian were recorded introduced order and sense where understanding had been haphazard. His preoccupation, in that manual, with scripts is characteristic of his insistence on always taking first things first, a precaution which, though elementary, it often fell to him to make good the neglect of. To it he owed his success in sorting out tangles as different as Middle Iranian spelling conventions and Zoroaster's meaning, or (1952) Narseh's: he never spurned going back to rock-bottom, the beginning, whether that was an alphabet, a set of poems, or the detour Herzfeld was forced to make on his way to the monument of Paikuli.

To pass on to Sogdian, this too is a Middle Iranian language on any of whose aspects useful work has become unimaginable without constant reference to Henning's decisive contributions. It was he who opened up its Manichean variety with the linguistic commentary he published in that prodigious novice's work, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*.[2] Thereafter he remained the sole editor of Manichean Sogdian texts, continuing to produce, on separate occasions, difficult specimens ranging from tales to lists, from cosmogony to calendar texts, from prophetology to glossaries. Important observations of his on Sogdian language problems arising from Manichean texts abound in these editions, therefore also in his book *Sogdica*, and in my own *Grammar of Manichean Sogdian*, where I frequently found myself acting as mouth-piece for his perceptiveness. But Henning's interest extended over the whole gamut of Sogdian language manifestations, from the earliest coin legends to Al Biruni's quotations, from the 'Ancient Letters' to Sogdian loanwords in Persian; at whatever piece of Sogdian writing he might look, so it seemed, be it the Rustam fragments, the Paris texts so excellently edited by Benveniste, or other odd Buddhist or Christian or Muγ texts, or even the textile mentioned above, he would make some discovery and improve on the existing knowledge of language and text.

And so, except for Khotanese, on which language he was content to profit from Sir Harold Bailey's massive pioneering work, there is no Middle Iranian language the study of which cannot today be seen to have passed through a 'Henning era',

[1] *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (ed. B. Spuler), IV/1, 1958, 20–130.

[2] *APAW*, 1936, no. 10.

in which it progressed decisively (in two instances from nescience) as a direct result of his high-powered concentration on it, much as Avestan studies bear the indelible imprint of having passed through the Bartholomae era. To try, in fact, to read any of the languages concerned ignoring Henning's work would be like trying to read Avestan ignoring Bartholomae's, or even, if the comparison is with Choresmian, Anquetil's. Henning was fortunate, though, in that his era was also the era of several other outstanding Iranianists, from whose work, in particular Benveniste's numerous and important contributions to Sogdian studies, he derived much stimulus and help.

Such radical influence on the growth of Middle Iranian philology could have been exerted only from a base encompassing the study of Iranian languages of all periods. Like Andreas, Henning was as keenly interested in Modern Iranian dialectology as in the Gathas. He took a share in the posthumous publication of Andreas's field-notes in 1939. His own major contribution to dialectology, written in quest of the ancient language of Azerbaijan, came in 1955. It proved a revelation for the relationship between the Harzani group of dialects on the one hand, and the 'Tat' dialects in the neighbourhood of Qazvin and in Khalkhal on the other, and led to the vigorous pursuit of the study of the latter by Professor Yarshater.[1]

While confirming through his own example that the thorough inspection of any of the Iranian languages is bound to lead to a better understanding of any other of them—the principle of the indivisibility of Iranian—Henning insisted on the overriding claim to attention of the most cultivated among them: Modern Persian, which had received rather less than its philological due since the great days of Horn and Hübschmann. In order to bring to bear the full weight of the Modern Persian vocabulary on the study of other Iranian languages, including the older forms of Persian, it was necessary first of all to verify the authenticity of many of the words quoted by Persian lexicographers. Henning's dictionary, had he lived to publish it, would have greatly added to the number of Persian words safely quotable after he had checked their forms and meanings in the sources, providing many an etymology as well. In pursuing this major undertaking, Henning acquired a unique experience in critical lexicography.

[1] Ehsan Yar-Shater, *A Grammar of Southern Tati Dialects*, The Hague, 1969, is dedicated to Henning's memory. The same dedication is borne by Martin Schwartz's *Studies in the Texts of the Sogdian Christians*, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1968.

Few scholars could decide with equal authority whether a Persian dictionary-word was real or a ghost, or show the reason, if it were a ghost, for its apparition.

Henning's familiarity with Persian sources, especially the early ones, a familiarity which in part already preceded his dictionary work, was a major factor in the solidity of his background. It shows in his published work on many occasions, notably in 'Mitteliranisch', which treatise is altogether an object lesson in the range of learning from which concentration on Iranian languages becomes most profitable. To the sources he himself added a new kind, by publishing fragments of Persian poetry written in Manichean script (1962). He identified Bilauhar and Būdīsaf verses written in the first half of the tenth century AD, and ingeniously surmised that an even earlier *Qaṣīde* had been transliterated into Manichean script from the Arabic, in which it had constituted a Manichean poem in Muslim disguise.

So gifted a philologist was understandably not daunted by *any* language with which the circumstances of his work brought him into contact. Able to look up in the original whatever source he required, he made useful contributions to a better understanding also of some non-Indo-Iranian sources, elucidating terms occurring in Chinese, Old Turkish, Mongolian, Arabic, Armenian, Elamite, Babylonian, and above all Aramaic. In the last of these languages he achieved an expertise which even specialists have admired, as one of whom his brilliant decipherment of Aramaic inscriptions may well seem to entitle him to be counted.

Except where the subject-matter required catalogic treatment, Henning's writings are masterpieces of composition. They bear re-reading not only because they are 'filled in every rift with ore'[1] but also for the sheer pleasure of savouring his skilful presentation. This often corresponds in principle to a plot with surprise resolution, episodes which heighten suspense being interposed at suitable points.

His style matched this careful planning and the lucidity of his thinking, combining literary merit with conciseness and meticulous precision. Human touches are provided by his piercing insight into the outlook or habits of his dramatis personae, whether they be prophets, kings, or scribes, by his ability to recapture with a few words the feeling of situations belonging to bygone ages, or simply by his humour, which was apt to make one's sides shake in silent amusement.

It has been held against him that he sometimes used his wit to

[1] Mary Boyce, *BSOAS*, XXX/3, 1967, 784.

devastating effect. He did so only if an idea which he knew to be wrong could not be discussed with its promoter for lack of premisses shared, so that illumination from a new, unexpectedly humorous angle seemed the most reasonable way to demonstrate its untenability. He never exercised his wit on views which, though unacceptable to him, had been conceived on common ground with due respect for sources.

Henning may have been an unusually strict judge of other people's work. But of nobody's work was he so critical after publication as of his own before, relentlessly practising on it the precept which he had learned from Andreas and which he never tired of enjoining on his pupils: 'look over your own shoulder'. It is therefore no wonder that anybody who had failed to do likewise before going into print had, in his opinion, let down the profession. At any rate as Henning, by strictly adhering to the precept, had acquired an exceptionally sharp eye for what was right and what was wrong, such expressions of approval or disapproval as he found occasion to put on record constitute a valuable public service rendered.

Henning's greatness found ample recognition in his lifetime. He had proved right so often, against odds so heavy and in circumstances at times so remarkable, that a kind of *ipse dixit* attitude had come and continues to be taken towards his pronouncements. It is for the sceptics to prove it misguided. Until they do so, the privileged at least, to whom as pupils Henning gave unstintingly of his time, have every reason to feel confident that on major issues at any rate the chances of Henning having actually committed to print opinions which will turn out to have been serious errors of judgement are negligible; so that unless proof decisive by his own strict standards can be offered of their wrongness, profit is much more likely to arise from accepting them and continuing on the lines he had indicated than from disregarding them.

For his pupils know, having so often watched it at work in his study, the intelligent thoroughness of the consideration from every angle which preceded public delivery of his mind. They also know that he never went into print without deep concern for the expert's responsibility of providing reliable guidance, determined that *his* signature, at any rate, remain a hall-mark of soundness.

With this knowledge in mind they will not only be wary of contradicting him without first making sure that they have rehearsed and understood the chess-game of reasoning played

against himself which invariably underlies even brief statements of his on important issues, but they will above all hesitate to add to his printed production by posthumously quoting from what he had merely *told* them even on minor issues. For before he would have allowed them to attach in print his jealously guarded signature to any opinion he had ventured to throw out in the past on any of the countless obscure points which arise in the course of reading difficult texts with students, he would have subjected it afresh to such searching scrutiny that the outcome might well have been rejection, adoption of the opposite view, or the conclusion that the point in question was precisely one of the many on which he did *not* wish posterity to have his opinion, as he saw no assurance that any opinion he might consign to print would withstand the test of time. Going into print was much too serious a matter for Henning for him not to give beforehand every chance to his prerogative to change his mind, a prerogative of which he freely made use during informal consideration of problems, and without which no scholar would find it possible to progress.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Henning was a staunch defender of a scholar's right to be judged by posterity exclusively on the strength of what he had personally approved for printing; and he deplored and dreaded the unauthorized posthumous publication of great men's titbits, often lamentably indiscriminate, uncomprehending, and damaging to their reputations. He recognized, however, that posthumous publication, provided that the most rigorous safeguards were taken on behalf of the dead author, was necessary in certain circumstances, namely if pioneering work on which much care and energy had been lavished by a scholar uniquely equipped and able to undertake it would otherwise be lost. It was this consideration which induced him to publish the three sets of *Mitteliranische Manichaica* out of Andreas's *Nachlaß*, and Haloun's translation of the Chinese *Compendium* referred to above. Apart from these two major publications, however, he merely made known, in his dissertation and very rarely in later work, a few of Andreas's ideas, out of the innumerable ones he had heard from the master, and prepared for the press, as mentioned above, some of the latter's dialectological field-notes.

The responsibility and scruples which Henning felt on the occasion of the two major editions just referred to are in evidence in the introductions with which he prefaced them,[1] from the second of which the following extract deserves to be quoted: 'Anyone

[1] *Mitteliranische Manichaica, I* (*SPAW*, 1932, X), 175 f.; *Asia Major*, III/2, 1952, 185–7.

who has ever been concerned with the editing of a posthumous work will know of the hesitation that overcomes one from time to time and most of all when the moment of publication arrives; for *one may do harm to one to whom one tries to do a service*:[1] τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ;'

It is clear, therefore, that posthumous quotation from Henning's own work-notes, or from notes taken while he was teaching, if it is to take place at all, is justifiable only in respect of explanations which even after the most exhaustive of tests still appear so indisputably excellent, that one has no doubt that Henning would have positively *wanted* one to publish them. For it is not to be imagined that even Henning's standing would not suffer from the attribution to him of indifferent or controvertible views which he is no longer in a position to repudiate, as he would have indignantly done were he alive. If he was capable of entertaining *such* views—it would soon be said—why hesitate to part ways with him in respect of such and such others?

Scholarship at large does not thrive on mere facts, suggestions, and counter-suggestions. Over and above these ingredients it needs to be able to rely on the wisdom of the few whose intuition has consistently proved felicitous. To follow them with intelligent confidence does not mean demeaning oneself; it merely means increasing the likelihood that one is not wasting time in blind alleys, but may achieve instead valid results by forging ahead from where they left off. But the greater the just reputation of a dead leader's wisdom, the more easily his credit in the eyes of those needing guidance is shaken by even slight false steps attributed to him, perhaps merely through misunderstanding his intentions, in unauthorized posthumous publications, and progress is delayed through insufficient reliance on his judgement. Thus what Henning called the 'harm' done to the standing of a great scholar deceased affects also the health of the field of studies in which he toiled.

It is not merely the hard facts discovered by Henning which are his bequest to posterity, but also his outlook, and soundness of reasoning distilled to perfection, by which the hard facts were won. This second bequest, conveyed in his published writings by words of his own choosing, but depending for acceptance on his credit, is by now even more valuable than the discovered facts which prove its validity, as it is a key to the discovery of any number of further hard facts, and to the dissipation of chimeras.

ILYA GERSHEVITCH

[1] My italics.