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JOHN BROUGH

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JOHN BROUGH was born in 1917, and educated at Dundee High School. He then read Classics at the University of Edinburgh, where he was fortunate enough to be able to start the study of Sanskrit with Arthur Berriedale Keith. He obtained the MA degree with First Class Honours in 1939 and then came to Cambridge as an Affiliated Student with a major scholarship in Classics at St John's College. He was placed in the First Class in Part II of the Classical Tripos in 1940, gaining a mark of distinction in the comparative philology option, and in Parts I and II of the Oriental Languages Tripos in Sanskrit and Pali (including Prakrit) in 1941 and 1942 respectively. He was awarded the Bendall Sanskrit Exhibition and the Brotherton Prize for Sanskrit by the University, and was elected to the Hutchinson Studentship by his College.

He then began work on an edition and study of the *Gotra-pravara-mañjarī*, and followed that with an edition and translation of the Nepalese Buddhist Sanskrit text *Pāpāparimocana*. He went on to make an edition and translation of a collection of Newari Buddhist tales, the *Aṣṭami-vrata-māhātmya*. He had meanwhile been engaged in war-work in agriculture, and during the period 1943-4 was an agricultural research assistant. In 1944 he was appointed as Assistant Keeper in the Department of Oriental Books and Manuscripts in the British Museum, where he remained until 1946. In 1945 his dissertations based upon the *Gotra-pravara-mañjarī* and the *Pāpāparimocana* led to the award of the D.Litt. degree of the University of Edinburgh and to his election to a Fellowship at St John's College, Cambridge, as a Research Fellow from 1945 to 1946, and as a Supernumerary Fellow while working away from Cambridge from 1946 to 1948. In 1946 he was appointed to a lectureship in Sanskrit at the School of

Oriental and African Studies in London, and in 1948 he was elected to the second Chair in Sanskrit which had been established at the University of London as a result of the Scarbrough Report, and was appointed head of the Department of India, Pakistan and Ceylon at the School. In 1961 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy, and in 1967 he succeeded Sir Harold Bailey in the Chair of Sanskrit at Cambridge, where he was elected to a Professorial Fellowship at his old College. He was Director of the Royal Asiatic Society 1961–2 and President of the Philological Society 1960–3.

In 1953 one of the dissertations he had written in the previous decade was published in book form.¹ This included the first critical edition of a very difficult text, whose manuscript tradition had been badly corrupted, with an English translation and an introduction dealing with the organization of ancient brahmanical society in exogamous clans (*gotras*). He had meanwhile published two articles in the same field,² and a later note on the Brahmin clans appeared soon afterwards.³ His other work from the same decade has never been published; an edition and translation of the *Dhvanyāloka* which he made as long ago as 1957 also remains unrevised and unpublished.

At the School of Oriental and African Studies he became acquainted with Professor John Firth and his work, and an interest in linguistic theory was awakened. Brough's work in the field of Sanskrit grammatical and linguistic studies led to the publication of papers on the theories of general linguistics in the Sanskrit grammarians,⁴ and on Indian theories of meaning,⁵ both of which made such a valuable contribution to the subject that they were adjudged worthy of being reprinted twenty years later in Frits Staal's reader on the Sanskrit grammarians.⁶ A growing involvement with the grammar of Sanskrit and other Indian languages was shown in his study of the *Līlātilaka* (a Sanskrit tract on Malayalam grammar and poetics),⁷ and a paper on Audumbarayana's theory of language.⁸

¹ J. Brough, *The early brahmanical system of gotra and pravara* (Cambridge University Press, 1953).

² 'The early history of the gotras', *JRAS* (1946), 32–45 and (1947), 76–90.

³ 'Additional notes on the Brahmin clans', *JAOS*, 74 (4) (1955), 263–6.

⁴ 'Theories of general linguistics in the Sanskrit grammarians', *TPS* (1951), 27–46.

⁵ *TPS* (1953), 161–76.

⁶ J. F. Staal (ed.), *A reader of the Sanskrit grammarians* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 402–23.

⁷ 'Līlātilaka: a Sanskrit tract on Malayalam grammar and poetics', *BSOAS*, 12, (1) (1947), 148–62.

⁸ 'Audumbarāyaṇa's theory of language', *BSOAS*, 14 (1) (1952), 73–7.

His field of activities expanded from India proper to the neighbouring regions, and he published papers on Nepalese legends⁹ and Buddhist ritual in Nepal.¹⁰ An increasing interest in Buddhist texts resulted in his examination of the common introductory phrase 'Thus have I heard', which is found at the beginning of each canonical sūtra,¹¹ and he was able to show that the conventional punctuation of the phrase is not necessarily the correct one. The emphasis upon Buddhism became marked in his masterful review article on Franklin Edgerton's *Dictionary and Grammar of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*,¹² which made a valuable contribution to the subject, since it dealt at length with the idiosyncracies of Nepalese scribes, and warned against the danger of treating those idiosyncracies as authentic dialect features. In a detailed examination of the varieties of language used in Buddhist texts in Sanskrit Brough identified more than the three varieties defined by Edgerton, and he made a strong case for the retention of the term 'Buddhist Sanskrit' for the form of language which is virtually Classical Sanskrit in all but vocabulary, as well as the introduction of Edgerton's 'Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit' for the forms of language which represent varieties of Prakrit Sanskritised to greater or less degrees.

The opportunity afforded to his colleague Professor R. S. Rice in Leningrad to photograph the unpublished portions of the birch-bark manuscript known as the MS Dutreuil de Rhins led to John Brough being asked to prepare an edition of all that was known to exist of that text. In a typically methodical way he prepared himself for this task by examining all material in the Kharoṣṭhī script which had been published to that date, and in fact adding to that material by publishing an article on a Kharoṣṭhī inscription from China.¹³ His edition of the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*¹⁴ will undoubtedly be regarded as the definitive work on the subject, and specialists will consider it to be Brough's greatest contribution to Buddhist and Indological studies.

There are, however, other, mainly traditional, scholars who regard his views on the relationship between the Gāndhārī

⁹ 'Legends of Khotan and Nepal', *BSOAS*, **12** (2), (1948) 333-9.

¹⁰ 'Nepalese Buddhist rituals', *BSOAS*, **12** (3-4) (1948), 668-76.

¹¹ 'Thus have I heard ...', *BSOAS*, **13** (2) (1950) 416-26.

¹² 'The language of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts', *BSOAS*, **16** (2), (1954), 351-

75.

¹³ 'A Kharoṣṭhī inscription from China', *BSOAS*, **24** (3) 1961, 517-30.

¹⁴ *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada: edited with an introduction and commentary* (Oxford University Press, 1962).

version and other versions, especially the Pāli *Dhammapada*, as unacceptable and are almost neurotic in their opposition to his conclusions. The reason for this reaction is not hard to find. Brough stated in the introduction to his edition¹⁵ that although Buddhism had its own share of great art he politely dissented with those who had rated the *Dhammapada* among the masterpieces of Indian literature. He expressed his view that those who wrote in this way could 'hardly have made any serious comparison with great literature; nor could anyone with a sense of literary values describe the whole collection in terms scarcely merited by its best parts, if he had himself lived day and night close enough to these verses for long enough to arrive at an assessment of his own disencumbered of hearsay'. Brough was a poet in his own right, as his translations of Sanskrit poetry show, and his view should not be disregarded lightly by those who, almost certainly, have not lived as close to the text as he did for several years while dealing with the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*. Brough also shook his head sadly over those who, despite all the discoveries of the last 100 years in Chinese Turkestan, still thought that the Pāli version of the *Dhammapada* was the oldest and best. Of his decision to place the verses of the Pāli *Dhammapada* alongside their parallels in the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* he wrote: '... it must not lead anyone to assume that there is a special degree of kindship between our text and the Pali, still less that the Pali represents a norm from which other versions have deviated. Perhaps this last warning is superfluous, since any such theory has long been obsolete; but I am not sure that it is entirely extinct'.¹⁶

His edition of the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* was not, however, restricted to Indian studies, for the extensive notes contained frequent comparisons with Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Dharmapada*, *Udānavarga*, and other texts. The very long introduction dealt not only with the problems of the Kharoṣṭhī script and the Gāndhārī language, but also with the relationship between Indian and Chinese versions of Buddhist texts. It was this latter aspect of his studies which occupied an ever greater part of Brough's time for the remainder of his life. A period of study-leave to pursue the study of Buddhist Chinese led to an examination of an alleged translation of Ārya-sūra's *Jātaka-mālā* into Chinese,¹⁷ where he was able to show that two Sanskrit 'experts' in

¹⁵ Ibid., p. xvii.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. xvi.

¹⁷ 'The Chinese pseudo-translation of Ārya-sūra's *Jātaka-mālā*', *Asia Major* (n.s.) II (I) (1964-5), 27-53.

Sung China, knowing no Sanskrit grammar and little Sanskrit vocabulary, and hence incapable of understanding the text they were translating, produced a translation which corresponded only occasionally with the original they had before them. His interest in the extra-Indian cultural field was not, however, restricted to literature. Further study of the Chinese source material for Central Asia led to an article on the history of Shan-shan.¹⁸ Not all his interpretations of the material upon which his article was based found favour with his colleagues in Chinese studies, but in his reply to these comments in a supplementary note on the same subject¹⁹ he defended his initial findings. It is notable that in this excursion into historical matters Brough's interest was primarily in the texts themselves. The history of Shan-shan formed the subject of a lecture he gave on his first visit to Japan in 1965, and a Japanese translation of this appeared in 1966.²⁰ Other lectures which he gave in Japan, on that and subsequent visits in 1973 and 1977, have never been published.²¹

If Brough had left London because he objected to the growing emphasis upon modern studies there, and the consequential neglect of classical Oriental studies, he was not to find things much different in Cambridge. The introduction of Hindi and modern Indian history into the Oriental Studies Tripos in 1964, as a result of the Hayter Report, meant that the small but steady intake of those wishing to read Sanskrit all but dried up, as undergraduates who believed that a modern spoken language would provide better chances of employment chose the modern rather than the classical Indian option. The numbers of those reading Sanskrit dropped to one or two a year, but as the one and only teacher of Sanskrit in Cambridge Brough, paradoxically,

¹⁸ 'Comments on third-century Shan-shan and the history of Buddhism', *BSOAS*, 28 (3) (1965), 582-612 (a revised version of a lecture given in Turin [*Il regno di Shan-shan: una tappa nel viaggio del Buddhismo dall'India alla Cina*, Torino, 1965]).

¹⁹ 'Supplementary notes on third-century Shan-shan', *BSOAS*, 33 (1) (1970), 39-45.

²⁰ 'Saiiki shutsu-do Indo-kei go monjo', *Tōhōgaku*, 32 (1966), 164-72. This is not included in the Bibliography of John Brough's published works by Professor J. W. de Jong, which appears at the end of the obituary by John Burton-Page in *BSOAS*, 48 (2) (1985), 333-9. Also omitted there are a reference to his article on I-ching in Vol. I of the *Dictionary of Oriental Literature*, and his review of Dr J. D. Smith's *Viśaḍadevarāsa* in *Modern Asian Studies*, 12 (1978), p. 704. See also n. 33 below.

²¹ See Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical notes*, p. 205 n. 45.

found himself doing more hours of teaching than he had done for years. A long struggle to persuade the University to create a lectureship, or even an assistant lectureship, in Sanskrit or to convert the lectureship in Tibetan which had remained unfilled for several years into one in Sanskrit, was unsuccessful, although a small sum of money was made available to the Faculty of Oriental Studies annually to provide supplementary teaching in Sanskrit. Brough was a good teacher, although his enthusiasm for his subject sometimes led him into realms far removed from the immediate needs or even capabilities of his students. A graduate student, already far advanced along the course of research leading to Ph.D. degree, was once overheard to say that he had only just understood something which John Brough had mentioned years before in an undergraduate lecture.

At this difficult time Brough found himself torn between the two opposing aims of attracting students to read Sanskrit and maintaining the high standards which he believed were essential for the well-being of his subject. His attempts to do the former by urging school teachers to introduce their pupils to Sanskrit (as his London colleague Sir Ralph Turner had been so introduced at the Perse School by W. H. D. Rouse, and as in a slightly different way Brough himself had been introduced by Keith while he was nominally studying Classics at Edinburgh), revealed how much he was out of touch with modern conditions and syllabus problems in schools, and were met with incredulous stares by teachers. His attempts to ensure that only bright students read Sanskrit had the result that the forthright opinions which he offered to enquirers about their chances of doing well in examinations undoubtedly deterred some who might otherwise have changed to Sanskrit after taking Part I in some other subject. Consequently, in a world which makes decisions, not upon the academic value of a subject, but upon staff-student ratios, when the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge was subjected to a University investigation into its scope and future, the decision was made to suppress the Chair of Sanskrit after Brough's retirement and to replace it by a lectureship. That decision was implemented at Brough's death.

John Brough's hobbies were music and gardening. His interest in horticulture not only led him, with his wife Marjorie, herself an expert botanist, to lay out and cultivate a fine garden at their home in Bishop's Stortford, but also involved him in a controversy with R. Gordon Wasson, when the latter attempted to identify the Soma plant of the Vedas with the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita*

muscaria). In his review article on Wasson's book²² and a subsequent paper on the Soma-mushroom theory,²³ he examined in great detail the references to Soma in the *Rgveda* and Haoma in the *Avesta*, and showed that the interpretation which Wasson wished to put upon many passages could not be sustained philologically. He also showed that the botanical features which had led Wasson to suggest his identification did not fit the descriptions which are given of Soma in the texts. It is hard to imagine any other Indologist who would have been capable of dealing with the botanical and philological arguments in the way which Brough did. His contribution to the controversy was almost entirely negative, in that he showed convincingly that Wasson was not likely to be correct, but did not put forward a candidate of his own. Although he mentioned the fact that the modern Zoroastrians identify the Haoma-plant as a species of Ephedra, he concluded that much work needed to be done in botany, chemistry and pharmacology before it would be sensible to make a further attack on the problem of the botanical identity of the Soma-plant. One wonders whether he would have been persuaded by the recent attempt by Harry Falk²⁴ to prove that the Soma-plant of the *Rgveda* was, in fact, Ephedra.

His botanical interests had another result. Rather than leave the garden on which he and his wife had lavished so much time and energy, he obtained special permission from the University of Cambridge to continue to reside there, staying in his rooms in St John's College during the week and returning to Bishop's Stortford each weekend. Consequently, having cut himself off from social life with his former colleagues in London, he entered but little into a new social life in Cambridge. This situation led to a growing isolation, particularly when his wife's ill-health demanded that he spend more and more time at home. He would come to Cambridge to do his teaching, and then make his apologies for absence from meetings unless his presence was absolutely essential, so that he could hurry back to look after his wife.

John Brough was a kindly gentle man, whose writings showed wit and humour. When he made fun of Dumézil's theory of the

²² 'Soma and *Amanita muscaria*', *BSOAS*, 34 (2) (1971) 331-62.

²³ 'Problems of the "Soma-mushroom" theory', *Indologica Taurinensia*, I (1973), 21-32.

²⁴ H. Falk, 'Soma I and II', *BSOAS*, 52 (1) (1989), 77-90.

tripartite ideology of the Indo-Europeans,²⁵ in the interests of 'fair play' he warned readers of possible bias in his comments, arising from the quotation of passages out of context, which might perhaps lead to distortions of perspective. He could rebuke when rebuke was called for, but he did it in a civilized way, giving the benefit of whatever doubt could be imagined. In the introduction to his *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*²⁶ he had occasion to point out that the way in which Barua and Mitra, in their study of the text,²⁷ referred to Senart in a contemptuously patronizing tone, and corrected his errors in the manner of a schoolmaster reproving a careless pupil, was altogether unjustified, but he immediately noted that there was no reason to suppose that this was intended, and he suggested that, since the authors were writing in a foreign language, they might have been entirely unaware of the implications which their form of statement would convey to an English reader. Nevertheless, since his own standards were high, he did not hesitate to draw attention to any publication which claimed to be academic rather than popular but did not come up to the standard which he demanded. He showed little mercy when reviewing books in fields where he had particular interests, and authors of books about Indian botany or Kharoṣṭhī epigraphy could expect to have all their shortcomings specified in great detail.

Despite his excursions into other fields, John Brough remained firmly rooted in the field of Classical Sanskrit. His first major publication²⁸ was intended to provide the student of Sanskrit with a representative selection from the classical literature, which could give him a general view of the leading characteristics of that literature, and at the same time serve as reading material for practice in the language. For this very purpose the text was transliterated throughout, to help the beginner through the initial stages of studying Sanskrit when the Devanāgarī script makes reading extremely laborious and slow. A hint towards the future lay in the translations which were provided for each portion selected.

²⁵ 'The tripartite ideology of the Indo-Europeans: an experiment in method', *BSOAS*, 22 (I) (1959), 69–85.

²⁶ p. 4.

²⁷ B. M. Barua & S. N. Mitra, *Prakrit Dhammapada, based upon M. Senart's Kharoṣṭhī manuscript, with text, translation and notes* (Calcutta, 1921).

²⁸ J. Brough, *Selections from Classical Sanskrit Literature* (Luzac, 1951, repr. SOAS, 1978).

In 1968 he published *Poems from the Sanskrit*,²⁹ a set of translations of some 260 Sanskrit poems, many of them exquisite examples of English poetry in their own right. The introduction is a lengthy essay on the subject of translation, elaborating his theories on the matter, giving good and bad examples, and providing an insight into the special features of the Sanskrit language which are employed in poetry. Since this book appeared in the widely available Penguin Classic series, it is likely to be the book by which John Brough will best be remembered by non-specialists.

John Brough worked slowly. He was a meticulous scholar and perfectionist, who refused to publish until he was certain that what he was saying was correct. When he was preparing the edition of the *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, he several times told the present writer, who was impatient to know when the book would appear, that he was reluctant to send the manuscript to the press until he had wrung from it every drop of information which could be extracted. While his output of printed articles in his earlier years was of a very high standard, the quantity did not match the quality. In his later years even that small output diminished, and he was forced to refuse invitations to contribute to Felicitation and Commemoration volumes for friends and colleagues. This was partly because of his own ill-health and that of his wife, and partly because all his efforts were devoted to the planning of a *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, dealing on historical principles with the translation of Sanskrit and Prakrit words into Chinese. His work on Chinese translations from Indian languages had shown him the inadequacy of existing dictionaries, none of which was organized on sound historical principles. His aim was to produce a dictionary in which examples were to be arranged so as to illustrate the changes which had taken place in translation over the course of time.

Such a task would have been immense, and it is doubtful whether, even if he had lived on into his retirement, he would have been able to finish it single-handed. Realizing this, perhaps, in 1982 he paid a fourth visit to Japan, where his scholarship was well-known, and there was a chance of finding the collaborators and the financial backing which would be essential to complete the task. His own health and that of Mrs Brough were giving considerable cause for alarm, and the long journey cannot have

²⁹ J. Brough, *Poems from the Sanskrit: translated with an introduction* (Penguin Books, 1968).

helped either of them in any way but, while he was there, his friend Minoru Hara of the University of Tokyo was able to establish the dictionary project in Japan and to secure the necessary funds to ensure the eventual publication of the finished work in co-operation with Professor A. Hirakawa. The change in the scope of the project meant that Brough's contribution was likely to be much less than at first envisaged. His part, beside the planning and organization, was now to consist of a section in the preface on the transliteration of Indian names and terms into Chinese. A foretaste of what such a section might have contained was given by his identification of various Sanskrit words in a paper dealing with I-ching's comments on the Sanskrit grammarians.³⁰ In the event, his death meant that he played no part in the production of the dictionary, beyond being its initial stimulus. The most recent reports on the dictionary's progress indicate that, upon investigation, it transpired that the number of words which could be identified as transliterations, rather than translations, from an Indian language into Chinese were rather fewer in number than had been thought, and the Buddhist-Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary was likely to be along more conventional lines than Brough had originally planned.

Most of the articles he wrote in the last years of his life reflected his interest in Buddhist Chinese studies. Some of them were etymological studies of individual words,³¹ but he also produced the brilliant piece of philological detective work which solved the problem of the mysterious order of words in the description of the Buddha's schooling found in the earlier of the two Chinese translations of the *Lalita-vistara*.³² By deducing the identity of the original Sanskrit terms which underlay the Chinese translations, and taking their initial letters, he was able to show that they were in the order of a syllabary, not the standard Sanskrit syllabary, but the well-known Buddhist esoteric syllabary named Arapacana after its first five letters. He also made an analysis of the traditional accounts of the incident in which the Buddha gave permission to his followers to recite his words in various languages.³³ His last

³⁰ 'I-ching on the Sanskrit grammarians', *BSOAS*, 36 (2) (1973) 248-60.

³¹ 'Nugae Sericae', *W. B. Henning memorial volume* (London, 1970), pp. 81-8; 'Buddhist Chinese Etymological Notes', *BSOAS*, 38 (3) (1975), 581-5.

³² 'The Arapacana syllabary in the old *Lalita-vistara*', *BSOAS*, 40 (1) (1977), 85-95.

³³ 'Sakāya niruttīyā: cauld kale het', in H. Bechert, *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung* (Göttingen, 1980). This is not included in Professor J. W. de Jong's Bibliography of John Brough's published works (see n. 20 above).

published work, however, showed a return to the field of twenty years earlier, for it dealt with a fragment of a sculpture containing figures of the Bodhisattvas Amitāvha and Avalokiteśvara with a short Prakrit dedicatory inscription in the Kharoṣṭhī script.³⁴ Typically, Brough had the photograph of the inscription in his possession for almost twenty years before publishing it, since he 'hesitated to publish prematurely, in case some alternative reading [of the inscription] might suggest itself'.

Ironically John Brough died only a few yards from the garden which had kept him in Bishop's Stortford. Crossing a busy road on a dark January night in 1984, to post a letter, he was knocked down and killed by a passing car. He had been due to retire at the end of September in that year. Although John Brough would not have claimed to be an expert in either Chinese or Tibetan, his command of those languages and his virtually unparalleled expertise in Sanskrit, both Classical and Buddhist, entitle him to be counted as one of the greatest among Western Indologists of the twentieth century. A wide circle of colleagues and correspondents will miss the wise advice and guidance which, as some of them have testified in their notices of his death,³⁵ he was always ready to give. His death leaves a gap among British Indologists which will not easily be filled.

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³⁴ 'Amitāvha and Avalokiteśvara in an inscribed Gandhāran sculpture', *Indologica Taurinensia*, 10 (1982 [1983]), 65-70.

³⁵ I wish to express my gratitude to Professor P. S. Jaini, Professor T. H. Barrett, Professor J. C. Wright, Professor J. W. de Jong, Professor D. McMullen and Dr John Burton-Page, who have generously supplied me with information and material upon which to base this memoir.