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The Editor-in-Chief wishes to express thanks to Roger Jackson and Rena Crispin for their assistance in the production of this issue.
OBITUARY

Edward Conze

Edward Conze has been for contemporary Western scholars of Buddhism what Tibetan Buddhists have respectfully called certain scholars, "a great translator" (tib. lo tsa wa chen po) of the Buddhist religion. His prolific and insightful writings and translations have immeasurably helped to open Buddhism to our language and culture. With his passing away on September 24, 1979, we are reminded of his enormous contribution; grateful for his presence, we are saddened by his departure.

Professor Conze published more than 250 books and articles on Buddhism, sixty-one of which deal with his special area of interest, the literature of the Perfection of Wisdom Scriptures (skt. prajñāpāramitāsūtra). His translations of many recensions of these scriptures have provided a basis for critical analysis and his lucid explanations of their doctrines have opened the door to scholars and non-scholars alike to probe more deeply than ever before into their meanings.

Born in London on March 18, 1904, Dr. Conze lived in Germany from 1905 until 1943. Receiving his doctorate from Cologne in 1928, he soon after published his first book on Marxist dialectics (On the Principle of Contradiction). His active interest in Communism forced his departure to London where he held the position of lecturer from 1934 to 1962 at the University of London.

At the age of forty-one, stimulated by the writings of Suzuki, Professor Conze took up the study of Buddhism. Never holding a permanent teaching position he served as distinguished Professor at the University of Wisconsin, 1963-64, and the University of Washington, 1966-67, and at the University of California-Berkeley, 1971-73. He also served as a research fellow at Oxford University and Manchester College.

His memoirs, entitled A Modern Gnostic, have been recently published by Asian Humanities Press. The next volume of the Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies will contain a detailed account of his life and works. (We are grateful to Professor Lewis Lancaster for providing information for this brief notice.)

Edward W. Bastian