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OBITUARY

Ernst Waldschmidt (1897–1985)

Ernst Waldschmidt, Professor emeritus of Indology at the University of Göttingen, passed away on February 25, 1985, at the age of 87. Waldschmidt made essential contributions to Indian and Buddhist studies and was one of the most eminent Buddhologists of his generation.

He was born on July 15, 1897, in Lünen (Westphalia). In 1919, he enrolled at the University of Kiel. Here, his teachers included Paul Deussen, who greatly contributed to the study of ancient Indian philosophy, and Emil Sieg, who became famous as the decipherer of the "Tokharian" language. Later, he continued his studies in Berlin under Heinrich Lüders, receiving his Dr. phil. there in 1924. His doctoral dissertation was an edition of the Sanskrit text of the Sarvāstivādin *Bhikṣuṇī-Prātimokṣasūtra* from Central Asian manuscript remains. During the following years, Waldschmidt served as an employee of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin. In 1929, he was appointed "Kustos" and Director of the Indian collection of the museum. In 1930, he obtained *venia legendi* for Indology at the University of Berlin. From 1932 to 1934, Ernst Waldschmidt, together with his wife Rose Leonore Waldschmidt, who is an expert in the history of handicrafts, undertook a journey through India and Sri Lanka. They collected a considerable number of objects of Indian and Ceylonese popular art and handicrafts, which now form the so-called Collection Waldschmidt.

In 1936, Waldschmidt was appointed Professor of Indology at the University of Göttingen, succeeding his former teacher Emil Sieg. He held this post until his retirement in 1965. In 1957, he donated his residence at Hainbündstrasse 21 to the university as a permanent home for Indian and Buddhist studies in Göttingen.

Waldschmidt's name is closely tied with the evaluation of the materials that were discovered by the four Royal Prussian Turfan Expeditions in Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) between 1902 and 1914 and partly removed to the Ethnological Museum and to the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. He first concentrated on the study of the art objects that now count among the most valuable parts of the collections of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art. His studies on their style and chronology have retained their importance for the

history of Central Asian art until today. Waldschmidt also completed the monumental series, "Buddhistische Spätantike in Zentralasien," which was begun by Albert von Le Coq, by contributing the two last volumes (1928–1933).

Waldschmidt never lost his interest in and love for Indian art. Many years later, he wrote *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art* (2 vols., Berlin, 1967–1975), and compiled the detailed descriptive catalogue *Nepal, Art Treasures from the Himalayas* (German edition, Recklinghausen, 1967; English edition, London, 1969).

Waldschmidt's contributions to the philology of early Buddhist texts may be considered even more important. He was the author of a long series of editions and studies of the scriptures of early Buddhism, most of them based on the evaluation of the Central Asian manuscripts. With these works, he started a new period in the study of early Buddhism. After his dissertation on the *Bhikṣuṇī-Prātimokṣa*, which was published in 1926, he continued this work with *Bruchstücke buddhistischer Sūtras aus dem zentralasiatischen Sanskritkanon* (Leipzig, 1932). He evaluated all existing versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in a masterly way in *Die Überlieferung vom Lebensende des Buddha* (2 vols., Göttingen, 1944–1948). During the following years, Waldschmidt edited the Sanskrit versions of *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (3 vols., Berlin, 1950–1951), *Catuṣpariśatsūtra* (3 vols., Berlin 1952–1962), and *Mahāvadānasūtra* (2 vols., Berlin 1953–1956), together with the parallel versions in Pāli, Chinese and Tibetan, and he added detailed philological comments. By these works, he set new standards for Buddhist philology. A considerable number of papers published in various journals and felicitation volumes contains similar critical editions of other canonical texts in Sanskrit. At the same time, the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin (now Academy of Sciences of the G.D.R.) appointed him editor of the eleven-volume series, *Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden* (1965–1975). He took painstaking care to see all those volumes prepared in accordance with the methodology he had developed and the high standards he had established for his own publications. Together with his co-workers, he then began compiling a complete survey of all the Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts of the Berlin collection, in his monumental *Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* (which forms part of the *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*). Five volumes, covering more than a thousand more or less fragmentary manuscripts, have been published so far, the last one posthumously (Wiesbaden, 1965–1985). This project is being continued, as is the dictionary of these texts, also initiated by Waldschmidt (*Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden*, Göttingen, 1973 ff.).

Ernst Waldschmidt was a devoted academic teacher, and he deeply influenced the development of Indian and Buddhist studies in Germany and abroad. He was elected member of the Academies of Sciences in Göttingen and in Berlin, honorary member of the Société Asiatique in Paris, of the Royal Asiatic Society in London, of the Archaeological Survey of India and other

learned societies, and, last but not least, an honorary fellow of the International Association of Buddhist Studies. On the occasion of his 70th birthday, collected minor writings of Ernst Waldschmidt were published along with a bibliography (*Von Ceylon bis Turfan*, Göttingen, 1967). A supplementary collection will be published soon in the series of the Glaserapp-Stiftung (*Kleine Schriften*, Wiesbaden, in the press).

With Ernst Waldschmidt, the learned world has lost a great scholar who was in the forefront of Indian and Buddhist studies for more than half a century.

Heinz Bechert