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Volume 8

1985

Number 2

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OBITUARIES

David Friedman (1903–1984)

David Friedman, Reader in Indian Philosophy in the University of London from 1959 until 1970 and a noted Buddhistologist, died in London on April 11, 1984, at the age of 81.

Born on February 25, 1903, in Amsterdam, where he also went to school, he was endowed with linguistic acumen and outstanding intellectual curiosity which enabled him to benefit most from a classical education. A keen interest in the history of ideas led him into the field of research in Buddhist philosophy, in respect of which he was awarded the degree of D.Litt. et Phil. at Leiden in 1937. His published thesis, a study of Sthiramati's *Madhyāntavibhāṅgaṭikā* (ch.I.), was the culmination of his earlier studies under Professors W. Caland at Utrecht, and J.Ph. Vogel and N.J. Krom at Leiden. Having spent a further year on a post-doctoral course of study in Buddhist Sanskrit under Prof. E.H. Johnston at Oxford, he was appointed lecturer at Leiden, where he taught Pāli, Buddhist Sanskrit and history of Buddhism (and Indian Philosophy) in India and Asia.

His academic career was interrupted, when in November, 1940, he was dismissed by the German occupying authorities. He, however, continued his lectures secretly until August 1941, when he left Holland with his family for New York. There, he joined the war effort, working for the Dutch Government Information Service, disseminating information on the conditions of life in Holland under the occupation. He lectured and wrote on this from personal experience.

In 1946 Dr. Friedman was appointed full professor at the University of Jakarta in Java, where he helped to develop the teaching of Sanskrit, Buddhist philosophy and the cultural history and art of India. In addition he taught History of Art in Asia at the Bandung Institute of Technology.

In 1950 he joined the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, as Lecturer and later Reader. He thus belonged to the distinguished group of European Orientalists who, having been uprooted from their home countries by the German occupation, were available to take part in the post-war expansion of Oriental studies in Britain, and the creation in British universities of centers of excellence in their respective fields. Friedman's scholarly interest

was centered on Buddhist thought, in particular on textual studies in the field of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. But a major part of his endeavor was devoted to conveying, both in the classroom and in a variety of extra-mural activities, the richness and diversity of Indian culture. Even after his retirement in 1970 he was persuaded to return and lecture in an honorary senior capacity at King's College, University of London.

David Friedman was an avid reader, his mind a treasure house of wide-ranging Western and Eastern cultures. From his early childhood to his last days he had a taste for the beautiful in music and the visual arts, both European and Asian. This aesthetic interest and sensitivity added a special dimension to the quality of his teaching. His approach to Buddhism may be characterized by his article entitled "The creative force of Buddhism" (in *The Buddhist*, XXVIII, 2, p. 116, Colombo, June 1957), where he wrote: "Whatever the real character of Buddhism was and is—and scholars are still steeped in controversy about the meaning and purport of its complex philosophical theories—one thing is certain. It was not only a highly original religious-philosophical doctrine and ethico-psychological discipline. It also became a civilization inspired by truly creative ideas, purifying and ennobling the lives of the peoples who embraced the Sad-dharma."

Among his many students were foreign postgraduate youngsters, notably from India and Sri Lanka, who not infrequently were lonely or stranded. In their teacher they found not only a patiently devoted guide and supervisor for their research work but also an immensely caring friend. They, as well as his colleagues, remember him gratefully for his boundless *mettā*, the Buddhist quality of friendly compassion.

Tuvia Gelblum