



## DRESDEN, MARK JAN

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**DRESDEN, MARK JAN** (b. Amsterdam, 26 April 1911; d. Philadelphia, 16 August 1986), American iranist of Dutch origin. He was born to a family of eminent musicians and studied classics and Indology at the University of Amsterdam, receiving a master's degree in 1937. He then transferred to the University of Utrecht, in order to study Vedic ritual texts with Jan Gonda; his doctoral dissertation was a translation entitled *Mānavagṛhyasūtra. A Vedic Manual of Domestic Rites* (Groningen, 1941). In 1937-38 Dresden studied with [Émile Benveniste](#) at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris as a French government exchange fellow; in 1938-39 and again, after wartime hardships, in 1945-49 he taught Greek and Latin at the secondary school that he had himself attended in Amsterdam. During the same period he gradually shifted his interest from Indology to Iranian studies, under the influence of J. H. Kramers. His main publications from this period are two bibliographical guides in Dutch on Sogdian and Khotanese ("Iranica I. Bibliographia Sogdiana Concisa," *Ex Oriente Lux* 8, 1942, pp. 729-34; "Introductio ad Linguam Hvatanicam," *Ex Oriente Lux* 9, 1943-44, pp. 200-06) and a survey of postwar studies on Sogdian (in English, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 6, 1949, pp. 28-31).

From 1947 to 1949 Dresden spent almost every summer in Cambridge, supported by the Dutch government, in order to study with H. W. Bailey and W. B. Henning. In 1948, while in England, Dresden met W. Norman Brown of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, who was then considering introducing Iranian studies into the curriculum; he invited Dresden to the university, where he taught Persian, then various Old and Middle Iranian



languages from 1949 until his retirement in 1977.

Dresden continued to work on Khotanese secular, especially literary texts until his death. “The Jātakastava or ‘Praise of the Buddha’s Former Births’”(ed. and tr., *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S. 45, pt. 5, Philadelphia, 1955, pp. 397-508) is a study of a collection of Late Khotanese jatakas (stories of the Buddha’s former lives) in verse in a manuscript recovered from Dunhuang at the eastern end of the Tarim basin by Mark Aurel Stein. In addition to comparison with the jatakas known in other languages, he provided a grammatical and lexicological analysis, the first for Late Khotanese. His other significant works on this language include “Khotanese (Saka) Manuscripts. A Provisional Handlist,” *Acta Iranica* 12, 1976, pp. 27-85, a classified list of all extant Khotanese manuscripts, with bibliographical notes; “Note on Khotanese Poetry” (in E. Bender, ed., *Indological Studies in Honor of W. Norman Brown*, New Haven, Conn., 1962, pp. 42-50); and “A Lyrical Poem in Khotanese” (in *Beiträge zur Indienforschung. Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Veröffentlichungen des Museums für Indische Kunst 4, Berlin, 1977, pp. 81-103), his last published work. He was working on a sequel when illness struck him in 1982.

Dresden also wrote “Sogdian Language and Literature” (in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, pp. 1216-29) and “Introductory Note” (in G. Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting. The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981, pp. 1-10). He published a facsimile edition of the most important manuscript of the *Dēnkard* (ed. Dresden), as well as a long introduction to the text (“Note on the ‘B’ Manuscript of the Dēnkart,” in *J. M. Unvala Memorial Volume*, Bombay, 1964, pp. 198-268) and a survey of Pahlavi manuscripts in various universities and public libraries throughout the world (“Pahlavi Manuscripts,” in *Sir J. J. Zarthoshti Madressa Centenary Volume*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 74-83). His article “Indo-Iranian Notes” (in *Henning Memorial Volume*, London, 1970, pp. 134-39) deals with a wide range of materials, from the Avesta and Old Persian to modern Iranian dialects.

In 1958 he and several associates compiled *A Reader in Modern Persian* (New York, 1958). One of the most useful tools for students of Iranian linguistics and philology is his general survey “Middle Iranian” (in T. Sebeok, ed., *Current Trends in Linguistics* VI, the Hague, 1970, pp. 26-63), containing lists of both primary and important secondary sources on each of the six Middle Iranian languages and descriptions of the grammatical characteristics of each. Every year from the early 1970s until illness made the work impossible he published



a classified bibliography of the entire field of Iranian linguistics in the relevant section of *M.L.A. (Modern Language Association) International Bibliography*. He also wrote “Survey of the History of Iranian Studies” (*HO*, Abt. I, IV, pt. 2/1, Leiden, 1968, pp. 168-90) and “On the Genesis of Anquetil Duperron’s Oupnek’hat” (in P. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli, *Mémorial Jean de Menasce*, Louvain, 1974, pp. 35-43), dealing with a period when Indology and Iranian studies were not quite separate.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(For cited works not found in this bibliography, see “Short References.”).  
*Répertoires I. Bio-bibliographies de 134 savants*, Acta Iranica 20, Leiden, 1979, pp. 122-24.