



HENNING, WALTER BRUNO

HENNING, WALTER BRUNO (b. Ragnit, East Prussia, 1908; d. Berkeley, Calif., 1967; [Figure 1](#)), celebrated Iranist and linguist. An appreciation of the work of Walter Bruno Henning (in his earlier publications W[alter], from 1937 W[alter] B[runo] Henning), would almost amount to writing a history of the study of Middle Iranian languages and cultures in the 20th century. There exists hardly any discovery in this realm of knowledge to which Henning has not made major and fundamental contributions, and the fact that it is precisely this area of Iranian studies which went through an unprecedented evolution in the 20th century underlines the importance of this scholar, who can be without exaggeration considered as one of the leading philologists of the past century.

The emphasis on the philological character of Henning's work is justified not only because all his discoveries were made through deductions from or new interpretations of original sources, but also because his working system kept astonishingly aloof from theorems regarding contemporary linguistics, the philosophy of history, ethnology, and comparative religion. His philological convictions were those of the young grammarians, and concepts such as "phoneme" or references to the laryngeal theory will hardly be found in his works. When Henning dealt with questions concerning the history of religion, he made concrete references to facts regarding Zoroastrianism and Manicheism and extensively upheld and defended the tenets of Christian Bartholomae (q.v.), Hans Jacob Polotsky, and their period. His reticence with regard to the methods of scientific theories and models of his time was often



well founded. It indeed protected Henning from the lures of fruitless fashionable theories and the temptations of politically motivated trends. It did not damage the extent of his achievement, for the position of research on Iranistics was such, both in the ancient and in the classical realms, that there were (and are) mainly philological works confronting research as problems, and for these Henning was uniquely gifted and schooled. In most cases, his critical verdict about new theories and methods has proved to be right, and so has his conviction that “it is a fallacy to think that a novel opinion is necessarily right, or an old opinion necessarily wrong” (quoted in I. Gershevitch, “W. B. Henning, 1908-1967: *In Memoriam*,” in I. Gershevitch and Mary Boyce, eds., *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, London, 1970, p. xvii).

ACADEMIC CAREER

Henning was born on 26 August 1908 as the son of a land registry director in Ragnit, East Prussia. As a student he particularly excelled in mathematics, so that one of his teachers advised him not to choose languages as the object of his studies. He began studying mathematics at Göttingen University, and his interest in the history of mathematics led him to read about the achievements of medieval Muslim mathematicians, which led him to start learning Arabic. This preoccupation with Oriental subjects brought him under the spell of Friedrich Karl Andreas (q.v.), the inspiring interpreter of ancient Iranian texts with his wealth of knowledge and ideas. The fact that Henning became a specialist of Iranistics as Andreas’s student belongs to the greatest merits of this unique teacher and inspirer. He was grateful to Andreas throughout his life but did not follow him in some of his wrong tracks. After his short work in Leiden on the “Concordance of Islamic Tradition” (Hadith), Henning received his doctorate in 1930/31 with his award-winning work on “The Middle Persian Verb of the Turfan Texts” (Henning, 1933a), which has remained an indispensable aid for the study of Middle Persian. He followed systematically the pattern of Middle Persian grammar that Carl Salemann had developed in his outline of Iranian philology, which was tried and tested and was again adopted by A. Ghilain in his essay on the Parthian language. The Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin then commissioned Henning in 1932 to edit Andreas’s posthumous revision of the Iranian Turfan texts, which had remained incomplete. There appeared subsequently thematically arranged collections of Middle Persian and Parthian texts in rapid succession in the reports of the Prussian Academy of Sciences: “Middle Iranian Manichaica from Chinese Turkistan” I, 1932 (a Middle Persian cosmogonic text), II, 1933b



(shorter Middle Persian prose and metric texts), III, 1934a (shorter Parthian prose and metric texts). Henning methodically sought and showed the right way between the non-annotated editing and extensive annotation of earlier works, and he never followed Max Müller's method of transliterating and transcribing texts. In his 1934 edition, he replaced this method of transcribing with Hebrew letters—which Salemann had introduced—by an unequivocal, practical use of Latin letters for transliteration. This could clearly be typewritten for texts in all Iranian languages written in the Manichean script (Henning 1934a, p. 911), and it has since been used for rendering Iranian Turfan texts. It is regrettable that these editions do not indicate which of the discoveries issued from Andreas and which of them from Henning. What counts, What counts, however, is the high scientific value of the editions, the quality of the editorial work, the cognitive value of the texts, and their wide scope, which exceeded all earlier editions. Later research was not able to add much to the results achieved by Andreas and Henning, and when it did, it merely enhanced the value of the texts discerningly selected by the editors. An example is Hans Heinrich Schaeder's proof that the Manichean mission story M2 mentions in the figure of *ptyg* a disciple of Mani, Patticius, whose name was also that of Mani's father (Schaeder, 1934, pp. 67-68). A new expanded and corrected edition of Henning's early texts, the corrections being partially due to Henning himself, has been produced by Mary Boyce in the collection she prepared as a reader for teaching purposes (Boyce, 1975). Henning's fourth edition, "Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch" (1937), is his single and undoubtedly greatest editorial achievement. He managed to decipher a voluminous Manichean Sogdian collection, for the comprehension of which no parallels or models were available, and the vocabulary of which was practically unknown, and thus he laid the foundation for the research into Manichean Sogdian literature.

The years 1936 and 1937 can be marked as a crucial point in Henning's life and work. For himself and for Maria Polotsky, the sister of the famous German-Jewish Egyptologist and Semitist who became his wife in 1937 (he had risked his life bringing her out of Germany in 1936), his move to England in 1936 meant escaping from the Fascist regime ruling in Germany. His departure from Germany meant that teaching commitments of various kinds had to replace his research activity at the academy, but this did not mark the end of his research work. It led, on the contrary, to an expansion of his academic work to include almost all subjects of Middle Iranian philology, many problems of New Iranian dialectology, New Persian linguistic history



and Avesta research, and even research about non-Iranian neighbors. He now devoted his work and time to dealing with problems that he recognized as being soluble and which he deemed important for Iranistics. Thus he wrote articles instead of producing his previous voluminous text editions with their monographic character. The problem-solving article became the form in which Henning communicated with his readers, and although he occasionally still wrote monographs (e.g., “Sogdica,” 1940; “Zoroaster: Politician or Witch-Doctor?” 1951), these were more like highly condensed collections. A typical monograph is his “Mitteliranisch,” a classical contribution to the description of Iranian linguistics (1958). Characteristic for this period in Henning’s work is also his switching to the English language of his adopted country, which he mastered as perfectly as his mother tongue. But he never abandoned his native German language; his aforementioned “Mitteliranisch” is a typical example of the precise and concise, and yet clearly intelligible, elegant German academic language.

Henning was active from 1936 as “Parsee Community’s Lecturer in Iranian Studies” at the London School of Oriental Studies, and from 1939 as Senior Lecturer. The outbreak of World War II interrupted his academic career, and in 1940 he was interned on the Island of Man as a citizen of a hostile state. This was a very difficult period for Henning and his wife, all the more so because their daughter Anne was born at this time. After his release, he followed the School to Cambridge, to which it had been evacuated. In 1946 Henning taught Sanskrit and Iranian languages as visiting professor at Columbia University in New York. Ultimately he became Head of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East of the School of Oriental and African Studies, but in 1961 he accepted a chair at the University of California in Berkeley, where he worked as professor of Iranian Studies until his death on 8 January 1967.

The early death of this great scholar as the result of a fall sealed the fate of a man handicapped as a result of a grave illness in his early years, whose gigantic mental achievement had to be attained despite his physical affliction. “His spirit belied his body,” as was said in one of his numerous obituaries. Mary Boyce, to whom I owe several of the following recollections about Henning, wrote: “A childhood illness led to lifelong bodily frailty, but he had nevertheless immense intellectual stamina. He preferred to work through the night (a habit he had acquired as Andreas’ student), because it was a time free from interruptions.”



PHILOLOGICAL WORKS IN THE MIDDLE IRANIAN FIELD

For Henning, as for many other specialists in the study of Iran and Turkey, the study of the Turfan texts became a solid basis for further research on ancient philology. He remained true to this subject after leaving the Academy, and it may be said that he devoted most of his further research to it, achieving multiple results. Here are some examples in chronological order:

“Sogdica” (1940), in which Henning published bilingual Middle Persian/Parthian and Sogdian glossaries and Sogdian lists of words, a Buddhist-Sogdian text (cf. Kudara and Sundermann) and a fragment of the Sogdian version of the *Xvāstwānīft* (further pieces by Sims-Williams, 1991a, in Tangeloo and Giverson, eds., pp. 323-28). Henning was not able to include the great Sogdian word list T III T = So 16201, which has now been printed (Sundermann, 2002), but his little book remains an unsurpassable achievement of lexicographical research.

“Mani’s Last Journey” (1942), in which Henning published definitively the Middle Persian fragment M 3 and proved the assumption he had already expressed in 1936, namely that its content dealt with a disastrous meeting between Mani and King Bahrām I (rather than Šāpur I). The equally well presented and astutely interpreted Parthian fragments of a report of Mani’s last journey to the royal court could only later be placed within the larger context of a series of homilies in ecclesiastical history (Sundermann, 1981, p. 71).

“The Book of the Giants” (1943), in which Henning edited and described almost all fragments of a canonical work of Mani’s with the greatest possible assurance, distinguishing between parts of this work, parts of other works with the same content, and passages from different texts in the same manuscripts (see [GIANTS, THE BOOK OF](#)).

“Sogdian Tales” (1945) provides examples for the narrative art of the Central Asian Manicheans and in many cases refers to Indian motifs. This is also true of the later edited “Sogdian Book of Parables” (see Sundermann, 1985). Additions have been found to the Daēnā mythos (by Reck, forthcoming; see [DĒN](#)), to the so-called Job Story (pp. 485-87; cf. Yoshida, pp. 989-90), and to the tale of the Kar-Fish (pp. 482-84; Sundermann, 1998, pp. 173-78).

“Two Manichean Magical Texts with an Excursus on the Parthian Ending -



ēndēh” (1947) led to recognizing not only the Indian sources of the Manichean magical texts, but also their Western additions. They testify more to the syncretism of magic literature than to Manichean syncretism.

“A Sogdian Fragment of the Manichean Cosmogony” (1948) discusses, not only the description of the building of the world by the Living Spirit and the Mother of Life, but also the then little-known ideas from eastern Manicheism about the realm of light of the Father of Greatness. It is not yet known to what work of Mani’s should be attributed this fragment, which also excels by its splendid form.

In “Persian Poetical Manuscripts from the Time of Rudaki” (1962), the peculiarities of the New Persian spelling and language of the Manicheans are deciphered; and fragments of New Persian poetry are presented, which Henning attributed to the 10th century. At the time the greatest Manichean text in New Persian language was considered as lost (M 105a + b, M 106, M 901). An edition of it is now in print (Sundermann, 2003).

In “A Grain of Mustard” (1965) Henning discussed one of the many Manichean parables inculcating the necessity for the hearers to give alms to the chosen people for their salvation. What makes this article a “storehouse of scholarly contributions” (M. Schwartz) for lexicography is the analysis of the word for “white mustard” in all its Iranian forms and the comments on other terms such as Sogdian *šryw* “lion.”

Henning also involved his students in his work on the Iranian Turfan texts, and under his guidance and cooperation there emerged such fundamental works on Iranistics as *A Grammar of Manichean Sogdian* (Oxford, 1954), by Ilya Gershevitch; *The Manichaean Hymn-Cycles in Parthian* (London, 1954) and, above all, *A Catalogue of the Iranian Manuscripts in Manichean Script in the German Turfan Collection* (Berlin, 1960), by Mary Boyce. The latter work is a contribution that was and has remained indispensable for any further work on the Iranian Turfan texts.

Henning’s contributions to Turfan research are all the more admirable because they were carried out under difficult working conditions. From the time he left Germany, he was denied direct access to the Turfan texts except for a brief visit to the Academy in the year 1958. It is true that understanding supporters such as H. Lüders, R. Hartmann, and H. Grapow, who were responsible for looking after the Turfan collection, did their best under the



difficult conditions of National Socialism and the subsequent partition of Germany to supply him with text photos and to preserve his publishing rights, and that he was also able in time to benefit from the work of his students at the Berlin Academy; but those who work on Turfan texts are well aware that any publication requires the steady checking and revision of the readings with the original. Henning was prevented from doing so and was thus unable, for example, to combine fragment M 48 of the history of the Manichean mission with numerous other pieces and to obtain interesting details about the conversion of Tūrānšāh. It is, nevertheless, characteristic for Henning's perspicacity and reliable judgement that he guessed correctly the possibility of the make-up of fragments of this page: "With the help of the originals it may be possible to produce complete pages of these and a few other fragments," he wrote in 1945 (Henning, 1945c, p. 86, n. 6).

Two Middle Iranian languages, the Chorasmian and the Bactrian, were brought to light through Henning's scholarship, and he acquired basic insights into their grammatical structure and their vocabulary.

Henning was already acquainted with the Chorasmian language in 1936; and it is admirable how many details of the phonetics, form structure, and vocabulary he was able to define in the course of a few weeks from the limited material found in the *Qonyat al-monya* of Moḳtār Zāhedi (Henning, 1936). His article "The Khwarezmian Language" (1956) was written with the knowledge of the rich Chorasmian vocabulary of Maḥmud Zamaḳšari's *Moqaddemat al-adab*. A serious defect of this work of his, which mainly represents a correction of earlier research, is that it is itself teeming with errors, because he apparently never had the opportunity to read proofs of this text, which was extremely difficult to typeset. That is why it was re-set in the reprint of Henning's *Selected Papers* (II, pp. 485-500), which led to occasional new errors (cf. Sims-Williams' review in *BSO[A]S* 41, 1978, p. 166). The most difficult subject in Chorasmian grammar, the verb and its connections, was discussed by Henning in *The Structure of the Khwarezmian Verb* (1955b), especially with regard to "the presence of pause forms, the vocalic endings, the system of suffixes and its complications, and . . . the existence of anticipatory suffixes" (p. 49).

Already in 1955 Henning mentioned "nearly a complete glossary which I hope to publish in the near future" (Henning, 1955b, p. 43), but he did not have time to carry out this project. A fragment of a Chorasmian glossary, which was accessible to D. Neil MacKenzie (Henning, 1971b), was published by him from



the unpublished works. They consist of Henning's own posthumous lemmata ' to 'kw and further notes based on Henning's cross-references. Because MacKenzie's own Chorasmian vocabulary remained incomplete, Johannes Benzing's *Chwaresmischer Wortindex* remains the most detailed glossary of Chorasmian vocabulary in Arabic script. It is also Benzing to whom we owe the only complete edition of Zamakshari's *Moqaddemat al-adab*, which is to be used together with MacKenzie's explanations in his review of this work. MacKenzie himself published in 1990 the entire text of the *Qonyat al-monya* together with the *Resalat al-alfāz* (see also [CHORASMIA iii](#)).

A summary of the major results of his own works on Middle Iranian, which is as indispensable today as it was five decades ago, was published by Henning in his detailed article "Mitteliranisch" (1958, pp. 20-130), a classical contribution to the series *Handbuch der Orientalistik*. This work deserves a place of honor among all descriptions of languages. The fact that here the characterization of the (Aramaic) script as "script as a symbol of the unity of Middle Iranian" (Henning, 1958, p. 21) had already lost some of its validity by the time the work was published was partly due to Henning's own research into the Chorasmian and Bactrian scripts.

In the supplements to this work (p. 130), Henning communicated Daniel Schlumberger's discovery of the Sorḵ Kotal inscription, "which promises to provide the key to discovering the language of the Kushan kings." The discovery of this inscription in the year 1957 made the language of the Kushan kings a worthwhile subject of research. It is not surprising that from the very beginning Henning was the first to find the right answers to essential questions, in his article "The Bactrian Inscription" (1960, pp. 47-55). Henning coined the name "Bactrian" for this language (see [BACTRIAN LANGUAGE](#)), replacing the former "Eteo-Tokharian." (From the Rabak inscription, line 3, it appears, as Sims-Williams has recognized, that Kaniška traditionally called his language *ariao*.) He also realized that the inscription had not been commissioned by Kaniška, but was carried out under Huviška, and that its subject was the building of a well in a temple founded by Kaniška. In the article mentioned and in "Surkh-Kotal and Kaniška" (1965c, pp. 75-87), Henning communicated a wealth of special discoveries about Bactrian grammar and vocabulary.

In 1960, Henning referred to "a document written in a closely related language" which he and Mary Boyce were preparing for publication (Henning, 1960, p. 55, n. 8). This was the unique Bactrian fragment in Manichean script



and with Manichean content M 1224 (cf. Boyce, 1960, p. 69), the editing of which was entrusted to Ilya Gershevitch after Henning's death. Gershevitch reported about it in his article "The Bactrian Fragment in Manichean Script." The publication of this fragment is expected from Sims-Williams.

That Henning's works in the Middle Iranian field did not also lead to publications about the Saka languages, which he must have known, is probably because he considered Harold Bailey to be the authority for them.

Henning's strictly source-oriented way of research and the discovery of a large number of important and extensive inscriptions of the Middle Iranian period in the 20th century turned him into a pioneer epigraphist. His study also included coins, seals, and gems, of which he emphasized the great significance for Iranistic research (Henning, 1958, p. 45). He made his own photographs of inscriptions when he was staying in Persia in 1950 as the guest of the Persian government. Results of this important journey, which was devoted, among other things, to studying Sasanian inscriptions in the province of Fārs, are his casts of rock inscriptions, as, for example, the Kerdīr inscription of Sar Mašhad, which he made under the most difficult conditions. On Henning's instigation, complete and readable photographs were also made of the inscriptions and rock reliefs of Tang-e Sarvak in Kuzestān (Henning, 1952a, pp. 154-55).

A result of these successful efforts regarding the Sasanian rock inscriptions was the founding of the international association *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (q.v.) in London in 1954 for the purpose of collecting and publishing Iranian documents and inscriptions. Henning successfully served as its first chairman and director until his death. No other academic society has contributed so much to the publication and dissemination of epigraphic source materials. Henning himself published in the series his reproductions of the Kerdīr inscriptions of Sar Mašhad (1955) and Naqš-e Rostam (1957), as well as "Minor Inscriptions of Kartīr together with the End of Naqsh-i Rustam" (1963). His photographs of Šāpur's inscription at the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt were, however, first included in the publication of this text by Philip Huyse, who emphasized the great value of these documents (Huyse, pp. 4-5).

In no other area of his studies was Henning's almost clairvoyant gift for recognizing foreign scripts and decoding undeciphered texts more brilliantly shown than in his work on epigraphic materials. Each of his articles devoted to this subject is of such convincing and apparently effortless clarity that it



makes one wonder why he himself did not manage to solve the problem.

Already in his first major epigraphic work, “The Great Inscription of Shapur I” (1939), which was written (March 1939) when only the Middle Persian version of the great royal inscription at the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt was known, and the additions of the Parthian and Greek versions were not available, Henning managed to solve the questions of authorship (Šāpur I, not Narseh), of the subject (report about victorious campaigns against the Romans and about the foundation of sacred fires, not “lists of cities”) as well as the dating (probably 262; see Henning, 1939, p. 845; for the dating, cf. Huysse, pp. 10-14). The article is a treasure trove for research on place names; and for its treatment of the persons named in the inscription, cf. Henning, 1954a, pp. 40-54.

In “The Aramaic Inscription of Asoka Found in Lam-pāka,” Henning explained that the non-Aramaic words that had so far been considered as Iranian were Middle Indian (1949a, pp. 84-87).

In “The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak” (1952a), Henning solved the problem of the script and language of the inscription by referring to already partially read legends of the tetradrachmas of Elymais (pp. 163-64). He thus proved that their language was pure Aramaic (pp. 165-66), which at the same time demonstrated the spread of this language as far as Kuzestān.

In the article “A Farewell to the Khagan of the Aq-Aqatārān” (1952), Henning’s contribution to explaining the Paikuli inscription does not only consist of the replacement of the “Khagan of Aq-Aqatārān” by the place name Hāyān ī Nīkātōr. He also discusses places and persons mentioned in the Paikuli inscription (as well as in the Šāpur inscription at the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt). His observations have been largely incorporated in the definitive edition of this inscription by Helmut Humbach and Prods Oktor Skjærvø (1983).

Among his shorter epigraphic works, “The Inscription of Firuzabad” (1954b, pp. 98-102) deserves to be pointed out. The deciphering of the inscription was carried out under the most difficult conditions, took years, and resulted in the truly sensational recognition that it was a testimony of the mighty and famous Sasanian vizier Mehr-Narseh, who flourished in the 5th century.

The fact that etymologies belong to the hazards of philology is well known. Henning’s etymologies are the accomplishments of a master who possessed an almost un-limited knowledge and an inexhaustible wealth of ideas, as well as



sound common sense. We can only read and admire such brilliant miscellaneous works as “Oktō(u)” (1949), “Ein unbeachtetes Wort im Awesta” (1954), or “The Middle-Persian Word for ‘Beer’ “ (1955).

HENNING AS HISTORIAN

For a scholar as intensely interested in history as Henning was, philology could not be solely an end in itself. It also served his historical research. Decisive for the latter was also Henning’s old fondness for mathematics, which he never gave up. This caused him to become a historian who worked with scientific precision and was particularly concerned in solving chronological questions.

Already in the cosmogonic text “Middle Iranian Manichaica I” (Andreas and Henning, 1932), Henning had made an astute distinction between two levels of composition, a basic text from the years 235-38 C.E. and a supplementary one from the period around the early 7th century (see Henning, 1934b, pp. 32-35); hence he concluded that the basic one was a work by Mani. (Tubach, 1987, pp. 73-95, explains the discrepancies of the text as resulting from bad recensions, but largely reaches results similar to those of Henning.)

Among Henning’s historical works one may count his polemical *Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-doctor?* (1951), which originated as lectures he delivered at Oxford in 1949 as one of the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures. Henning had been asked by the organizers to talk about the books concerning Zarathustra by Ernst Herzfeld and Henrik Samuel Nyberg, which were much discussed at that time.

Henning’s attempt to establish the period and place of Zarathustra was undoubtedly of major importance in this work (pp. 35-42). It was not only important as an argument against Nyberg’s thesis that Zarathustra had been a pre-historic shaman, but was also an end in itself. Henning found a precise year in the life of Zarathustra in the traditional year 258 before Alexander, although he no longer sought its confirmation in a Manichean text fragment, on the testimony of which he had greatly relied before (Henning, 1943, p. 73, n. 3). Henning’s dating of Zarathustra has remained controversial. Characteristic for this ongoing controversy is the fact that one of his students, Ilya Gershevitch, always believed in it and most recently argued for it in an article (see Gershevitch, 1995), while another student of Henning, Mary Boyce, dated Zoroaster within the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. (most



probably around 1200 B.C.E.; see Boyce, 1992, pp. 27-45).

Of great effect also was Henning's thesis following Josef Markwart's findings about the Chorasmian home of Zarathustra (Henning, 1951, pp. 42-45). An essential point in Henning's argument was the more than century-old relationship between the Avestan and the Chorasmian languages (Henning, 1951, pp. 41-42). The validity of this assumption was denied by Helmut Humbach (1985, pp. 330-31) and qualified as "not proven" by D. Neil MacKenzie (1988, p. 92); but Henning himself explained his idea of Zarathustra's home as an area including Marv and Herat, and hence not limited to the Chorasmian-speaking world.

This assessment of Henning's Zarathustra book would be inadequate unless we were also to mention the numerous convincing explanations of words which make it a treasury of Iran's lexicography and cultural history. One might mention Henning's discovery that the Avestic *ban̥ha-* and the Middle Persian *mang* do not mean "hemp," that Middle Persian *bang* and *mang* mean "henbane," and that New Persian *bang* did not acquire the meaning "hemp" before the 12th century (Henning, 1951, pp. 31-34; cf. Flattery and Schwartz, pp. 126-27).

The greatest importance of Henning's research no doubt concerned chronology and calendar calculation. Henning's efforts to find a trustworthy definition of Mani's dates were closely connected with the equally problematic chronology of the first two Sasanian rulers, for the Manicheans themselves had dated the events of the life of Mani within the years of the reigns of these kings. As for the early Sasanians, Theodore Nöldeke's dates (*Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 409-14) were: first year of the reign of Ardašir I, 226/27; first year of the reign of Šāpur I, 241/42; last year of Šāpur I, 271/72. These datings contradicted the ones in the inscription on the Bišāpur stele, which established that Ardašir's first year was 223/24 and Šāpur's first year 239/40 (Haloun and Henning, p. 199, n. 4). Henning in 1957 (p. 116), comparing his dates with those calculated by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda, concluded that Ardašir's first year must be from 27/9/223, his ascension to the throne on 28/4/224, Šāpur's first year from 23/9/239, his coronation on 12/4/240, and his death in May 270; he also dated the death of Hormozd I to June 271 and of Bahrām I to September 274 (qq.v.).

This dating, however, is not compatible with the fact that, according to the testimony of the Mani Codex of Cologne, which became known in 1970,



Ardašir I was still alive in the year 240-41, when he conquered the city of Hatra (Koenen and Römer, 1988, pp. 10-13; cf. Sundermann in *EIr.* VI, cols. 44b-45a). Indeed, he perhaps died as late as 241-42 (Koenen and Römer, 1988, pp. 112-13, with n. 2). Ardašir must thus “have reigned at least up to part of the year 240,” a fact that contradicts the early chronology on this point (see Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, p. 126). It is possible that during the early years of the Sasanian dynasty, two parallel ways of counting the king’s years of reign were applied, the count from establishing the royal fire and the count from the king’s ascension to the throne (as autocrat of the entire kingdom?); in that case the datings of both Henning and Nöldeke would have been right.

These dates, as applied to Mani’s life and especially connected with new chronological discoveries acquired by Henning in cooperation with G. Haloun from the Chinese “Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light” (Haloun and Henning, pp. 189-94, 196-201), led to confirming 12 April 240 as the date of the coronation of Šāpur I. With this date the Manichean tradition connected the first emergence of their master (Haloun and Henning, p. 201), and this realization was brilliantly confirmed in the Cologne Mani Codex (Koenen and Römer, 1988, pp. 10-11, where the date is determined as 17/18 April, and elsewhere 18/19 April; cf. Sundermann, 1990, pp. 295-96).

Perhaps the most important discovery made by Henning when studying this compendium was the exact date of Mani’s birth as 14 April 216 (Haloun and Henning, p. 200). It should be noted, however, that this is a date which, according to Paul Pelliot (“Meoutseu ou les doutes levés,” *T’oung Pao* 18, 1917, p. 338), was also mentioned in some Chinese sources as the birthday of Buddha (cf. Puech, 1949, p. 115, n. 109), a fact which suggests the possibility of hagiographic stylization after a Buddhist pattern.

For the year of Mani’s death, Henning found in the compendium a confirmation of an early dating; having corrected a calculation of Albert von Le Coq’s, he changed this to 2 March 274 (Haloun and Henning, p. 201; Henning, 1957, p. 121). This dating was not, however, accepted, perhaps especially because it relegated into the realm of legend the unanimous assertion of the Manichean sources that Mani had lived for 60 years. Thus the dates that were later proposed were: 6 March 276 (Klíma, 1966); 14 February 276 (Böhlig, following Schaefer in the latter’s rev. of Schmidt and Polotsky, 1933, in *Gnomon* 9, 1933, p. 351, n. 4); 28 February 276 (also Böhlig, 1980, p. 310, n. 103); Werner Sundermann agreed with Taqizāda’s date of 26 February



277, and so did Böhlig in one of his assumptions.

In “The Manichean Fasts,” Henning explained the complicated relations between the four Manichean two-day fasts mentioned in the *Ketāb al-fehrest* of Ebn al-Nadim (ed. Tajaddod, p. 397), the seven *yimkis* of the Old Turkish *Xvāstwānīft*, and the five two-day fasts of the Sogdian calendar lists (1945b, pp. 146-64). He compared the *yimkis* with their commemorations of the seven martyrs of the Manichean church with the five double-fasts of the Sogdian text, among which one fast was devoted to the “three Presbyters” who followed Mār Sīsin into death (Henning, 1945b, p. 148), and he declared the list of the *Ketāb al-fehrest* to be defective, because one of the double-fasts took place within the fasting month and could thus be ignored (Henning, 1945b, p. 147). To my mind, this and the clarification of questions regarding the Sogdian calendar raised the article to perhaps one of the most significant achievements of Henning as a historian. It was also commendable to have the cooperation of Taqizāda, who reached the important conclusion for the history of Central Asian Manicheism that the calendar lists belonged to the 10th century (see Henning, 1945b, pp. 156-58). A calendar fragment unknown to Henning, Otani 6191 (see Kudara, Sundermann, and Yoshida, 1997, I, pp. 197-98; II, pl. 110), mentions, in confirmation of Henning’s realizations (1.) *Xurmazd[ā-vaye yimki]*, (3.) *Yišo’ yimki*, and (5.) *γāδūkī y[imki]*, i.e., the “Bēma-yimki,” on the 27th and 28th day of the fasting month, which is thus identified with the Mani-yimki postulated by Henning (Henning, 1945b, p. 248). The so far not etymologized word *yimki* (cf. Henning, 1945b, p. 147) was explained by Alexander Böhlig as a Turkish development from the Parthian *yamag* (cf. the Middle Persian *yamagānīg*, which also goes back to Parthian, an adjectival derivative of feast-day names), which in its meaning “twin” designates continued two-day fasts (Böhlig, 1989, p. 246).

For research on the history of the Sogdians in Central Asia and the extension of their mercantile activities all the way to China, Henning’s article “The Date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters” (pp. 601-15) made a basic contribution. Revising Aurel Stein’s assumption that the so-called Old Letters dated from the first half of the 2nd century C.E., Henning described the events in China reflected in the second Old Letter as the conquest and destruction of the cities of Loyang, Chang’an and Ye (Henning’s Yeh, as the name of which he identified the Sogdian spelling *’nkp’*; cf. Henning, 1948b, pp. 608-9) by the Xiongnu (in text *xwn*) in the years 311 and 312. Henning established the year 312, or preferably 313, as the date of the second letter; and, based on that, he



marked the years 312 and 313 as the period of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th letter (Henning 1948b, p. 615). These dates were, however, disputed by A. Fujieda and János Harmatta.

Since 1962, Harmatta has argued against Henning's dating of the second Ancient Letter in numerous lectures and publications (cf. the list of his publications in *EIr.* II, pp. 8-9). Harmatta pointed out that the events described in the letter might just as well have happened in the years 190 to 195 (revolt of the Yellow Turbans, conquest of Loyang by the commander Dong Zhuo, the latter's assassination, arrest of the emperor, chaos, appealing to the Xiongnu, bloody fights in Chang'an). This is true except for the mention of the destruction of Ye, about which nothing is said in connection with the events of the 2nd century. Unfortunately, Harmatta never sufficiently accounted for his readings of the second letter; and the statement on the fourteenth line, which is crucial for his argument, is based on a reconstruction of the text (as is also Henning's alternative solution of the problem).

Akira Fujieda's dating of the Ancient Letter within the 6th century is merely due to an analysis of the quality of the paper and does not refer to Henning's arguments (Fujieda, 1971, pp. 142-43).

A defense of Henning's explanation was provided by Nicholas Sims-Williams and Frantz Grenet in 1987, who took into account the philological, historical, paleographic, and material-technical arguments. Particularly important is the reference to a description of the events in the year 311 in the *Tong jian gang mu* (tr., *Tong-kien-kang-mou* by De Mailla), which states that the emperor managed to flee from Loyang, thus removing an apparent contradiction that exists in Henning's interpretation, describing the second Ancient Letter (p. 110). When completing Henning's work, Sims-Williams edited the entire second letter with a philological commentary (Sims Williams, 2001).

The fact that not all results of Henning's chronological studies have met with unanimous or full approval is due to the deficiency, ambiguity, and inconsistency of the sources. Henning himself was fully aware of this. In "The Dates of Mani's Life" (p. 115), he repeatedly emphasized the hypothetical character of his explanations. This article is also an admirable demonstration of persuasive fairness in a debate involving many unknowns. Henning preceded his own expositions with a translation of Taqi-zāda's views in *Mani wa din-e u* (ed. Afšār), which he himself did not share, the Persian text of which would otherwise not have been accessible to all his readers.



HENNING AS A SCHOLAR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

What Henning wrote about Zarathustra's teachings and his importance in the history of ideas is an impressive testimony to his personal admiration for the first dualistic thinker of the world and the founder of a religion of intellectual honesty and good sense. But it was certainly not Henning's intention to provide a further contribution of his own to modern research about Zarathustra and the Gathas. Henning's only systematic description of Zoroastrianism, which also refers to Manicheism (1944b, pp. 290-96), is to be judged likewise. It mainly follows the descriptions of Christian Bartholomae (q.v.) and his school. As for Henning's criticism of the image of Zarathustra as presented by Henrik Samuel Nyberg, we can merely underline Mary Boyce's judgement: "Had he had more interest in the general history of religions, it is possible that he might have judged Nyberg's interpretation a little less harshly" (Boyce, 1967, p. 783). This is true, as Philippe Gignoux pointed out, especially for a presence of shamanistic motifs in the Zoroastrian tradition.

With these remarks I have already touched on Henning's importance for research regarding the religions of ancient Iran. In this connection, we might also mention his late study "A Sogdian God" (1965), in which he pointed out a parallel in the Rg-Veda, suggesting a Sogdian god of weddings and married bliss, *Vayi* (pp. 246-49). He thus alluded to a problem much discussed in Iranistics about the relationship between the god Mithra and a divine figure called *baga* (etc.), who according to Josef Markwart was Mithra himself, according to others an unnamed, different divinity, and according to Henning the name of another god. This was met with full or qualified acknowledgement (Gershevitch, Duchesne-Guillemin, Gignoux, etc.) or rejection (Dietz, 1978; St. Zimmer in *EIr.* III, pp. 405-6). Nicholas Sims-Williams accepted and developed Markwart's theory (1991b), while Boyce (2001, pp. 239-57) basically accepted Henning's conclusions, but modified them by considering Iranian *Baga* to be the great Vedic god Varuna, one of whose by-names, as the god of married bliss, yielded Henning's god *BHaga*.

PHILOLOGICAL STUDIES IN NEW AND OLD IRANIAN FIELDS

It is evident that Henning's Middle Iranian studies and especially his etymologies always properly took account of the old and new Iranian languages. In a few cases his familiarity with them led to important publications, which, however, usually had a pre-New Iranian point of departure or reference. This is true, for example, of his article "The Ancient



Language of Azarbaijan” (1955), the title of which already shows that during his stay in Persia he had done research into issues of the old Iranian language of Azarbaijan. The latter could no longer be made out, but Henning’s field research led to a definition of the position of the Tākestāni dialect, enriched through data gathered about local Iranian dialects of Azarbaijan.

Henning was aware of the fact that, even at that time, many Iranian dialects were about to disappear, so he himself participated in their documentation. In addition, he encouraged field research and language descriptions by qualified students of his, which led to the study of Kurdish dialects by D. Neil MacKenzie and of southern Tati dialects by Ehsan Yarshater.

Henning’s position with regard to the problems of the ancient Iranian period is to be judged otherwise. This is especially true of his most important contribution to Avestan research, “The Disintegration of the Avestic Studies.” The reason why this work is not so often quoted today is certainly the great success it achieved and the unopposed acknowledgement of its results. Almost simultaneously with Harold W. Bailey (*Zoroastrian Problems*, pp. 177-94) and Georg Morgenstierne (1942, pp. 30-82), Henning objected to any attempts at reconstructing the original text of the Avesta by lending it a totally octosyllabic neo-Avestan text (see [GELDNER](#)), and by declaring the written text to be a faulty transliteration of an Arsacid archetype (see [ANDREAS THEORY](#)). Henning’s major argument was the proof that certain phonetic deviations of Avestan from Persian and from related old Indo-Iranian languages have parallels in Sogdian and in other Eastern Iranian languages. For his theory of neo-Avestan versification depending on stress, he found a parallel in Middle Persian. This recognition proved fruitful for further research, as especially shown in the studies of Mary Boyce (1954, pp. 45-59) and Gilbert Lazard (1985).

PHILOLOGICAL WORKS IN NON-IRANIAN FIELDS

Perhaps no other non-Iranian language has played so great and constant a part in Henning’s work as “Tocharian.” As early as 1938 he devoted the major part of his article “Argi and the “Tokharians”” to the name of this people and their language. Starting out with a careful analysis of the form of names of the Tokharians, who once lived in ancient Bactria (*txuār* in the west, *toxār* in the east), he distinguished a tribe whose name was spelt *twɣry* in Uighur script, who lived along the northern Silk Road between Kučā and Bišbāliq, and in whose name the second consonant was a *ɣ* rather than an *x*. As a probable reading of this name which was adopted from Sogdian, Henning postulated



tuyrē/ě or *toyrē/ě*. The important question whether there was an original connection between the Tokharians of Bactria and the Tuyri of the northern Silk Road was left in suspense by Henning (Henning, 1938, p. 561), who showed that all name forms of both tribes can be traced back to the same origin (p. 562). Eleven years later, Henning refuted a counter-argument against his strict distinction between *toxār* and *tuyri* in “The Name of the ‘Tokharian’ Language” (1949): the colophon of an old Turkish *Maitrisimit* manuscript had (in the translation of F. W. K. Müller) ascribed the *twγry* translation to the work of a scholar from Nagardeśa, that is, from Jalālābād in Afghanistan; but Henning now proved that the correct reading of the place name was *Agnideśa*, that is, Qarašahr, and that in this case, too, *tuyri* marked a language stemming from Chinese Turkistan.

Henning’s last and posthumously published article, “The First Indo-Europeans in History,” is also devoted to the Tokharian problem (1978, pp. 215-30). Henning traced back the history of the Central Asian “Tokharians” to the period around 2000 B.C.E. and to the Zagros mountains, from where their ancestors, the Guti and Tukri, then threatened and at times ruled over Mesopotamia. How they got from there to Central Asia and how the name Tukri became the name of the Tokharians is a story that reads like a breathtaking detective novel, but this is nevertheless a well-founded theory. Like all theories it has certainly been challenged, but W. Thomas considers Henning’s account to be a working basis (1985, pp. 14-17). The progress made with regard to earlier works is implicit. Thus tracing back the name of the Tokharians to *tukri* rules out the prototype **t’γur*, reconstructed in 1938 as the original form, and the Sanskrit term for Kuchean as *tokharika* (Henning, 1978, p. 230) at least shows that the family of the Central Asiatic *tuyri* languages could already have been called “Tokharian” in antiquity. Even in this late work of his, Henning had to fight against the misunderstanding of his having said that “the two names, *Tuyri* and *Tuxār*, had no connection with one another” (Henning, 1978, p. 225). He had in any case assumed their ethnic connection.

HENNING AS A TEACHER

Regarding Henning as a teacher, one may refer to his pupil Boyce, who says: “Henning’s gifts as a teacher were exceptional. He had at times an almost telepathic insight into his students’ thoughts and an admirable sensitiveness for directing their research into different ways, congenial to each” (personal communication). A detailed description of Henning’s pedagogical system of



work is also provided in the obituary by Yarshater, which includes the following description: “It was in the years when he taught at the University of London when Henning trained most of his students who are now spread over different parts of the world and pursue Iranian Studies in research and teaching. Henning was an outstanding instructor, a sharp-sighted and capable guide and teacher. In his teaching he was strict and exacting, and he had no student who did not repeatedly sit facing him, ashamed about his ignorance and lack of imagination because he was unable to answer his questions properly. Nor was there any keen and steadfast student who did not experience his friendliness and encouragement or did not appreciate being in his cherished and knowledge-imparting presence. He could not stand incapable and superficial students and tried to dissuade them from studying Iranistics; he considered spending time on such students as a waste. He did not dwell on preliminaries; he expected the students attending his classes to have already learnt such preliminaries as the script, the grammar and the meaning of the text that was to be discussed as well as the historical and literary prerequisites, etc. that were necessary for its comprehension. In the classroom, the main object was discussing the difficulties. He treated his students with the same clear-cut and uncompromising approach as he employed in his scholarly critiques. But in his teaching and speech he was totally unpretentious. He rarely referred to the works of others, and he never dazzled his students by the outpouring of what he had accumulated in his awe-inspiring memory” (Yarshater, 1967, pp. 730-31).

It is not surprising that many of the dissertations written under Henning emerged as basic works on Iranistics (for a selected list, see bibliog.). But the number of Henning’s students who made themselves a name in Iranistics, Indo-European studies, and comparative religion is much greater. Among them are such well-known scholars as Jes Peter Asmussen, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, Richard N. Frye, Wolfgang P. Schmid, Shaul Shaked, and Ahmad Tafazzoli.

HENNING AS A CRITIC

An even merely approximate picture of Henning’s work would be a torso unless we were also to call him the critic who set the standards through his own works and his approach to the works of others. The number of Henning’s reviews is astonishingly low. He more often voiced his opinions of other scholars in his own works. His judgements could be merciless verdicts on works that had gone into print which he recognized as false, and at times even



on the authors. Some of his sharpest criticisms were directed against Nyberg. Concerning his criticism of Nyberg, Boyce has made the following statements to the author: “There developed what was widely regarded as a feud between the two scholars. This had its origin in a spirited response by the youthful Henning to what he considered to be unjustified criticism by Nyberg of some of Andreas’ work. But although Henning clearly enjoyed their subsequent battles, he had a considerable respect for the Swedish scholar, and was at pains to instill this in his students.” He realized that in some cases his verdict was unduly severe (cf. Henning, 1965d, p. 179). But it is also true that he willingly praised and encouraged wherever he found a reason or need to do so. I have been witness to a praise from Henning’s mouth being considered as highly as a scholarly patent of nobility.

UNFINISHED AND POSTHUMOUS WORKS

Henning’s untimely death prevented him from carrying out a large number of major projects he had planned. We may naturally assume that he had at least planned to edit those Sasanian inscriptions that he had already published in photos. For Middle Iranian studies, as well as research about Manicheism, it is an irreplaceable loss that large groups of Turfan texts in Manichean script which Henning had planned to publish together with Boyce, announced in her catalogue of Middle Iranian texts (Boyce, 1960, p. XXXVIII), could not be brought to press. Among his lexical notes from Middle Persian and Parthian Turfan texts there already appeared “A List of Middle Persian and Parthian Words” in the year 1937, but this work was not continued and completed by Henning. From the project of compiling an etymological vocabulary of the New Persian language, only specimens, written in 1943 and published as late as 1971 in French translation, became known to the public in the Persian journal *Irān-šenāsi* (Henning, 1971a). His Chorasmian vocabulary, the result of thirty years of studies, also remained a fragment, although he had planned to work on it during a free semester in 1967. Henning’s unpublished work has essentially remained inaccessible to scholars. It is to be hoped that things will change, although the chances of finding a competent and committed publisher are not growing with the course of time. Thus it has been of the greatest benefit to the study of Iranistics that Henning used the energy and time he was allotted in the best possible ways in order to clarify a whole range of selected problems of which he recognized the importance and solubility.

A selection of Henning’s important works made and prepared (anonymously) by J. Duchesne-Guillemin was reprinted in 1977 (Henning, *Selected Papers*). It



has become an indispensable vademecum for scholars of Iranian studies, and it is regrettable that it still lacks a comprehensive index. The fact that some important writings of Henning's are not included in this collection, in view of the standard of all his works, is an inevitable compromise with the possible. What the scholar of Manichism particularly misses is the work written jointly by Henning and Haloun (1952c). Henning's "Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-Doctor?" was omitted, but Robert Charles Zaehner reprinted excerpts of it in one of his studies of Zoroastrianism (1961, pp. 349-59).

Henning's academic achievements were acknowledged by his election as Fellow of the British Academy of Sciences in the year 1954, as corresponding member of the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin in the year 1957, and as member of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences in the same year. It is remarkable how many books by his students were dedicated to their master in gratitude. After his death, both the work and the author were honored in numerous obituaries (see below).

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