



WALDSCHMIDT, ERNST II. RESEARCH

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ii. Research

Towards the end of the 19th century, Russian scholars inaugurated the scientific exploration of the Turfan oasis in [Chinese Turkestan](#), on the northern Silk Road. Until the mid 1930s, British, French, Japanese and German expeditions followed in the footsteps of their Russian colleagues. All teams removed from the site thousands of art objects, as well as many more fragments of manuscripts, in order to pursue the study of these artifacts at their home institutions. In 1904, [F. W. K. Müller](#) (1863-1930) succeeded in deciphering some of the manuscript fragments in Berlin's Turfan collection, written in the [Manichean script](#), which is closely related to the Estrangelo script of Syriac. Müller identified these texts as pieces of Manichean literature, a momentous discovery since up to this point scholars had assumed that no Manichean literature had been preserved. In the following, philological research, primarily on manuscripts from the Turfan collection, allowed for the recovery of [Manichean](#) dogmatic and liturgical texts. Since the religion had spread from the Near East to China, some Manichean manuscripts, such as the important scroll which Sir [Marc Aurel Stein](#) (1862-1943) had brought from [Dunhuang](#) to London, preserve Manichean literature in Chinese (BL Or. 8210/S. 2659). Since Waldschmidt had a masterly



knowledge of Chinese, he was asked to prepare with the Iranian studies scholar Wolfgang Lentz (1900-1986) the edition and translation of this Manichean manuscript, known as the Hymns Scroll. In addition, they co-authored two probing contributions to Manichean studies.

But the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection were even more important for Waldschmidt's academic career. When Waldschmidt moved to Berlin in 1920, Lüders introduced him to the Turfan collection and to the intricate work with very small manuscript fragments. Lüders himself had started to work with the Turfan collection after 1908, when he had been appointed to the Indian Studies chair in Berlin, where his predecessor Richard Pischel (1849-1908) had published shortly before his premature death the first edition of Sanskrit texts preserved in the Turfan collection (Pischel, 1908; cf. Oldenberg and Pischel, 1883). Lüders continued Pischel's research on the Turfan collection with the assistance of his wife, Else Lüders (1880-1945), editing not only several Sanskrit texts, but also identifying a huge number of greater and smaller fragments. This painstaking work provided the foundation for the later cataloging of all the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection, a project initiated by Waldschmidt in the 1950s and currently under the direction of Jens-Uwe Hartmann at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities (cf. Wille).

Lüders supervised Waldschmidt's edition of the Sanskrit *Bhikṣuṇī-Prātimokṣa* of the Sarvāstivāda school, based on Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection, since Waldschmidt was well-versed in the basic languages in which Buddhist scriptures circulated in Central and East Asia (see also [KHOTAN iv. Khotanese Literature](#)). This challenging project produced an edition, which Waldschmidt defended as his doctoral dissertation in 1924 and published in 1926. In 1932, Waldschmidt published his edition of fragments of Buddhist sutras from the *Madhyamāgama* of the Sarvāstivādins. A careful transcription of the text as preserved in the manuscripts is followed by a critical reconstruction of the literary work on the basis of parallel versions in Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan whenever available. The juxtaposition of transcription and reconstruction became the model for all later editions of Sanskrit texts from the Turfan collection, such as Waldschmidt's own masterly editions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, the *Mahāvadāna*, and the *Catuṣpariṣat* sutras. Waldschmidt continued to publish about every year, almost until his death, an edition of a Sanskrit text from the Turfan collection; these articles were republished in two monographs in 1967 and 1989, respectively. Editions of a



great number of smaller fragments were made available in the first five parts of the catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection, edited by Waldschmidt with colleagues and published between 1965 and 1985. To further facilitate research on the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection, Waldschmidt conceived the project of a Sanskrit dictionary-cum-thesaurus for the Turfan collection, the fourth and final volume of which will be completed within the next few years. Several of Waldschmidt's students, in particular Herbert Härtel (1921-2005), Valentina Stache-Rosen (1925-1980), Chandrabhal Tripathi (1929-1996), Dieter Schlingloff (b. 1928), Kusum Mittal, and Lore Sander, have continued the philological research of their teacher.

As a young curator at Berlin's Museum of Ethnography Waldschmidt developed an abiding interest in the arts and material culture of India and Central Asia. His very first book was the 1925 introduction to the arts in early medieval Central Asia (see [GANDHARAN ARTS](#)). Even though his proposed dates for the Buddhist murals in the Turfan oasis, published in 1928 and 1933 in co-authored books on Buddhist art, were not universally accepted, Waldschmidt prepared, together with his wife Rose Leonore Waldschmidt, the revised edition of the seminal study of Buddhist art in India by [Albert Grünwedel](#) (1856-1935), the first edition of which had been published in 1893. Traveling widely in South Asia, Waldschmidt became also interested in folk art and handicrafts. After his retirement, he and his wife published books on *ragamala* miniatures and the arts of Nepal.

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