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FREDERICK WILLIAM THOMAS

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1867–1956

FREDERICK WILLIAM, son of Frederick Thomas and his wife Frances *née* Blayney, was born at Fazeley in Staffordshire on 21 March 1867. His mother's family, of North Irish extraction, farmed at Chelmarsh in Shropshire. His father's family had moved from Wales into England in the early eighteenth century, and has left records on tombstones and tablets in Bromyard, Evesham Abbey, Tewkesbury Abbey, Cheltenham, and elsewhere. The autobiographical note, which is the evidence for these and other facts stated in the present Memoir, remarks that from Tewkesbury Grammar School Frederick Thomas always retained fragments of its Latin teaching.

In 1874 the family moved to Birmingham, and in 1876 Frederick William Thomas, at the age of nine, was admitted to the ancient Grammar School (successor of a still earlier Town Guild School), King Edward VI High School, where he came under the influence of a headmaster 'of rare wisdom, judgment, saintliness and command', the Rev. Albert Richard Vardy, at one time Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Thomas became captain of the school at the age of seventeen. In October 1885 he commenced residence at Cambridge, having been elected to a Classical Scholarship at Trinity College. In the Classical Tripos (Part I in 1885, Part II in 1887) he was placed in the First Class in Pure Classics, in Philosophy and (with distinction) in Comparative Philology. Among his teachers were Henry Jackson ('great teacher and thinker and afterwards lifelong friend') and Archer-Hind ('exquisite scholar'). He won the prizes for Greek Epigram (1887), Latin Epigram (1888) and Greek Ode (1889), and the Members' Prize for Latin Essay. While still at school he had begun the study of Sanskrit, in connexion with comparative philology, and he continued the study at Cambridge, for a time with R. A. Neil, and in his second year and afterwards with E. B. Cowell. He was placed in the First Class in the Indian Languages Tripos (later called the Oriental Languages Tripos) in 1890. This year terminated his residence in Cambridge, but not his connexion with Trinity College, for he was elected to a fellowship in 1892. Fifty years later he summed up his memories of this period of his life (1885–90) thus:

Cambridge life. Study, games (fair Lawn-tennis, Lacrosse undeserved

cap), long walks, Hare and Hounds, boating (not 'rowing'), summer afternoons (sometimes winter pre-breakfast dips) at the Bathing Sheds by the Cam, companionship and thought (including Union Society activities). Notable figures (Cayley, Adams, Westcott, etc.) still to be seen in the streets, and interesting interviews with some of the patriarchs of Classics, Benjamin Hall Kennedy, 'Johnny' Mayor, and later Jebb. Master of Trinity W. H. Thompson at first, and then Montague Butler.

In two successive years (1890 and 1891) Thomas won the Le Bas Prize for an historical essay. Both monographs were published at the time: *The History and Prospects of British Education in India* (Cambridge, 1891), and *The Mutual Influence of Muhammadans and Hindus in Law, Morals and Religion, during the Period of Muhammadan Ascendancy* (Cambridge, 1892).

After the Cambridge period, in the last year of which his father died, Thomas lived with his family in Birmingham where he was headmaster's assistant at his old school, King Edward VI High School (1891–8). He played Rugby football with the school team and was chairman of the football and sports committees. During this period he made a number of contributions to classical scholarship and philology, and in the closing year (1898) appeared his first two articles addressed to orientalists: 'Subandhu and Bāṇa' (*Vienna Oriental Journal*, xii), and 'On the Indian Game of Chess' (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, lii and liii). He was also engaged upon a work which seems likely to remain for an indefinite time the standard (as for these fifty years it has been the only) English translation of a Sanskrit classic of great literary and historical interest: *The Harṣa-carita of Bāṇa translated by E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas* (Oriental Translation Fund, Royal Asiatic Society, Cambridge, 1897).

In 1898 came his appointment to the India Office Library as Assistant Librarian under C. H. Tawney. Tawney had been, like Thomas, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, but in 1864 he went out to India in the Bengal Educational Service, and his appointment to the library came late in life, in 1893.

After five years as Assistant Librarian Thomas was Librarian for twenty-four years (1903–27), a period equalled by another great Librarian, Reinhold Rost (1869–93), and exceeded only by the first Librarian, Sir Charles Wilkins (1801–36), whose service was terminated by his death at the age of eighty-six. Thomas begins his account of his librarianship with the remark that 'the Library by reason of its vast collections and its traditions is in constant communication with foreign and British

Orientalist scholars'. He then refers to 'arrangements for several extensive catalogues of MSS. etc.': and passes to a more detailed account of his extra-mural activities, including his eight-months visit to India in 1920–1. He mentions a list of his publications, perhaps the detailed bibliography of 217 items covering the years 1891–1939 included in the volume presented to him on his seventy-second birthday: *A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies in Honour of Professor F. W. Thomas* (New Indian Antiquary, Extra Series I; Bombay, 1939). The various extra-mural activities (dating largely from the period of his librarianship) which kept his personal contacts alive can be conveniently recorded in almost the words of his own note. He was Reader in Tibetan from 1912 in University College and the University of London (but rarely had a pupil), and from 1908 held regular classes twice weekly as Lecturer in Comparative Philology at University College. He took part in the arrangements for the institution of the London University's Master of Arts Degree in Comparative Philology, and subsequently in the institution of the Board for Comparative Philology of which he was the first chairman (1925). He made not infrequent visits abroad (in 1904 to St. Petersburg and Moscow, in 1905 to Norway, in 1906 to Vienna), in addition to attending as delegate and officiating at the five International Congresses of Orientalists held at Rome (1899), Hamburg (1902), Algiers (1905), Copenhagen (1908), and Athens (1912). The next congress, the Seventeenth, which was to have been held at Oxford in 1915, did not assemble there until 1928, when Thomas (having become Boden Professor of Sanskrit in 1927) was a member of the General Committee of the Congress, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and President of the Section for Central and Northern Asia. It was, as he notes with justifiable satisfaction, 'a great gathering'.

Thomas held office in the various societies of which he was a member, but it was the Royal Asiatic Society with which he was most closely and continuously associated. He began to contribute to the society's *Journal* in 1899—his earliest article, 'Two Lists of Words from Bāṇa's Harṣa-carita', connecting with the translation by Cowell and himself published in 1897 in the society's Oriental Translation Fund series—and thereafter it is not easy to open an annual volume of the *J.R.A.S.* without finding two or three contributions by him. He was a Member of Council during various periods, Honorary Secretary in the period 1920–7 and Director 1921–2. He represented the society in 1922 at the Centenary of the Société Asiatique, and in 1923 he functioned as

Honorary Secretary at the society's own Centenary, at which he notes that the Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister were present. He was active in the arrangements for limited gatherings of orientalists in London (1919) and Paris (1920) to bridge the long gap in regular congresses between 1912 and 1928. Thomas was an early member of the India Society (founded in 1910, now the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society) and took part in carrying through some of the society's early publications, notably Mrs. Herringham's *Ajanta Frescoes*. Other societies in which he held office were the Philological Society, of which he became a member in 1923 and was President from 1926 to 1929, and the Aristotelian Society, of which he was Honorary Treasurer from 1923 to 1928. In the Aristotelian Society's *Proceedings* he published three articles on key-topics of Indian philosophy (a leading interest throughout his life and one not yet fully documented by his published work, as will appear in a further reference below): *Indian Ideas of Action and their Interest for Modern Thinking* (1918); *An Indian Doctrine of Perception and Error* (1922); *Existence and Conventional Existence* (1926). He was editor of *Epigraphia Indica* from 1916 to 1922. In 1920–1 he spent eight months in India 'with official instruction to see Libraries' and 'travelled very widely and met many Indian scholar-friends. About a fortnight in Nepal (Maharaja's Library) and three weeks in Tibet as far as Gyantse . . . Visits to numerous monasteries (their Libraries, etc.) . . . Public lectures Universities of Mysore, Calcutta and Bombay.' This visit to India is fully covered by his letters home, and by a very detailed diary, from which it would be possible to reconstruct in detail the amazingly strenuous itinerary which took him the length and breadth of the Indian sub-continent, sometimes spending the night, even several successive nights, in trains, sometimes staying in a dak bungalow and sometimes the guest of Government House or of officials or friends: apparently insensitive to heat or cold, and never missing the chance to see a notable place or to meet more people; recording satisfaction, on occasions when interviews were arranged for him with princely or gubernatorial personages, in the words 'we had a good talk'. His visit to Nepal recalls an incident from his reminiscences of his Cambridge life, as told in his own words: 'with friend . . . accomplished a two days' walk Cambridge to Lincoln, with detour and at the end conscientious *extra* to complete the 100 miles.' His incursion into Nepal from Darjeeling, the last stage over some very bad roads, and undertaken in the second half of May, was just such another con-

scientious *extra* to his Indian tour. Having reached Darjeeling just one month after he had left Kalimpong for his 'delightful little expedition into Tibet' he writes (11 May 1921): 'As the sailing of my boat is now postponed until June 11th, I have arranged to fill up the interval with a visit to Nepal, and accordingly I start to-morrow for Kathmandu.' He accomplished his purpose and his last letter from India is dated 1 June, 'in train en route for Calcutta', where he was due to deliver lectures at the University on 3 and 6 June and to visit the Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi: which done, he caught his boat at Bombay on 11 June, and was back in London by 29 June 1921, after an absence of just eight months.

The perpetual task of making the ever-increasing collections of the library accessible by the compilation and publication of catalogues was still burdened with arrears inherited from early days when the East India Company's 'Oriental Repository' continued to be (what the name implies) a place in which curiosities from the Indies could be deposited. Thomas collaborated with his Librarian C. H. Tawney in the compilation of the catalogue of the Royal Society's Sanskrit Manuscripts (1903): and with A. B. Keith in the compilation of volume II of the Catalogue of the *India Office Sanskrit and Prakrit Manuscripts* (1934) which completed one part of Rost's comprehensive plans. Progress was made also with a second volume, by H. Ethé and E. Edwards, of the *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, of which the first volume (by Ethé) had been published in 1893. Tawney's plans for the cataloguing of books and manuscripts in modern Indian languages were carried into effect in the compilation by J. F. Blumhardt of a series of catalogues covering the languages of northern India, many of which were published between 1900 and 1926. In 1918 Thomas drew up in minute detail rules for a revised catalogue of all the Sanskrit books in the library and in 1924 took the opportunity afforded by the presence in England of Dr. Pran Nath of the Benares Hindu University to appoint him as cataloguer. Aufrecht, the author of the great *Catalogus Catalogorum*, the catalogue of catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts, had also collected manuscripts and indexed their contents. The Aufrecht collection was acquired by the library in 1904 and was described by Thomas in the *J.R.A.S.* of 1908. His arrangements for the cataloguing of European manuscripts preserved in the library resulted in the publication, during his tenure of the librarianship, of two volumes: *The Mackenzie Collections Part I: the 1822 and the Private Collection*, by C. O. Blagden (1916), and

The Orme Collection, by S. C. Hill (1915). To this record of Thomas's cataloguing activities belongs his contribution to the description of manuscripts belonging to the Royal Asiatic Society: *A Description of South Indian MSS. by M. Winternitz with an Appendix by F. W. Thomas* (1902).

When in 1864 Brian Houghton Hodgson (to whom in 1948 Thomas dedicated his work on the Nam language as 'the founder of Himalayan and Tibetan linguistics') presented to the India Office what he describes as 'a great mass of MSS collected by me during a long course of years in Nepal as Resident at the Court of Kathmandu', he observed that 'how crude soever their present state . . . by being deposited in the India Office Library they are most likely to be turned to use'. Thomas turned this crude mass into the long rows of bound volumes in which the Hodgson papers now stand in the Library. Hodgson had previously presented to the Library thirty Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts, and (in 1835) a complete set of xylographs, of both series of the Tibetan canonical books, the Tanjur and the Kanjur. Thomas described the manuscripts in his contribution to the second volume of the Library's *Catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrit Manuscripts*; and Hodgson's xylographs facilitated his earliest contribution to Tibetan studies, 'Notes from the Tanjur' (*J.R.A.S.* 1903 and 1904). These Notes were still in the main concerned with topics of interest to Sanskritists, such as the readings in the Tibetan version of a Sanskrit treatise on poetics, the *Kāvyādarśa*. But circumstances had made it almost inevitable that Tibetan, for Thomas, should become an interest in its own right and no longer a mere ancillary to Sanskrit studies. For literary treasure trove, preserved by the sand of Khotan and Chinese Turkestan, and in the 'hidden library' near Tun-huang, was being discovered by Marc Aurel Stein; and in the division of the Stein collections all documents in Tibetan came into the possession of the India Office Library. Tibetan was an indispensable key to the interpretation of these collections. In 1907 Thomas contributed an Appendix, 'Extracts from Tibetan accounts of Khotan', to Stein's *Ancient Khotan*, the account of the first (1900–1) of three expeditions, of which the second (1906–8) is documented by his *Serindia* (1921), and the third (1915–16) by his *Innermost Asia* (1928). The Stein Tibetan collection is so large that it now—as the result of Thomas's arrangements for its preservation and convenient housing—stands as eighty bound volumes of paper manuscripts and fifty-six compartmented box-volumes of wooden documents. (Libraries have long memories

and it is still inevitable in the present connexion to speak of the late Mr. G. H. Baker, who retired from the post of Head Messenger in 1931 after forty-seven years' service in the India Office Library. He made a 'finding list' for the Stein Tibetan manuscripts when they were bound after Louis de la Vallée Poussin had catalogued them. La Vallée Poussin's catalogue still awaits publication, and 'Baker's list'—described as 'a remarkably accurate compilation'—remains in use.)

This ancient material was to become the principal field of Thomas's investigation and the most constant subject of his publications during the last thirty years of his life. But, although he had in a high degree the capacity to be intent on a plurality of topics in a given period of time, time imposes its own limitations. Indologists in the first quarter of the present century were preoccupied with the interpretation of accumulated and ever increasing evidences, literary, epigraphical, numismatic, and archaeological, which raised questions urgently requiring answers for the purpose of such a synthesis as was achieved in the publication of the first volume of the *Cambridge History of India* (*Ancient India*, 1922). Thomas contributed three chapters to this volume, under the titles 'Chandragupta, the Founder of the Maurya empire', 'Political and social Organisation of the Maurya Empire', and 'Aśoka, the Imperial Patron of Buddhism'. His contribution to the assessment of the evidences on which the views expressed in his own and other chapters in the volume are based, is to be found in journals of this period. Between 1908 and 1916 he published a score of articles (many on epigraphical topics including a number on the edicts of Aśoka), which may be regarded as his prolegomena to the history of ancient India. It is this sort of prolegomena to a history of ancient India that Thomas had in mind when in his Calcutta University Readership lectures delivered in 1938 he spoke of 'the long labour and concentration which in the domain of Indology, after the labours of generations of able scholars, is requisite for the establishment of even a single new fact'.

'Cowell and Thomas', the translation of Bāṇa's *Harṣa-carita* (1897) previously mentioned, is of course often called in evidence by the historian, but the volume is primarily a contribution to the study of Sanskrit literature as such, to which Thomas's next major contribution was published in 1912: *Kavīndra-vacana-samuccaya*, edited with introduction and notes (Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta). It is the *editio princeps* of this valuable anthology of Sanskrit verse, based on a single manuscript in Nepalese

script of the twelfth century, and it was, until recently, the only edition of a work ever since widely read and frequently cited. Further manuscript evidence has recently made known the existence of a longer anthology (*Subhāṣita-kośa*) of which the manuscript edited by Thomas contained about one-third. This has now been edited by Professor D. D. Kosambi, and published in the Harvard Oriental Series; but Thomas's edition will remain a classic of Sanskrit scholarship. A principal purpose of his edition was 'to collect, as completely as possible, the *pratīkas* of the verses anywhere attributed to the poets there appearing' . . . 'the first serious attempt to bring together anthology verses ascribed to particular authors was made by Aufrecht. . . . The moderate degree of completeness here attained would have been quite impossible had I not been able to consult the volumes of indexes compiled by that wonderful scholar.' He rendered valuable service to a wider circle of readers in his publication *The Beginning of Buddhist Art and Other Essays in Indian and Central Asian Archaeology*, by A. Foucher, revised by the author and translated by L. A. Thomas and F. W. Thomas, with a preface by the latter (1917). His article in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1915) on the Buddhist Sanskrit poet Mātṛceṭa, a person about whose identity and date Tibetan and Chinese traditions are in conflict, sums up conclusions reached in a series of articles commencing with a paper read at the International Congress of Orientalists held at Hamburg in 1902, *A Note on Mahārājakanika*. Other contributions to the study of early Mahāyāna literature followed in the *J.R.A.S.*—two notes relating to Aśvaghoṣa, 'Saundarananda Kāvya VIII 35' (1911) and 'A New poem of Aśvaghoṣa' (1914); and a long article in collaboration with H. Ui, 'The Hand Treatise: a work of Āryadeva' (1918). A new sort of evidence in this field was published in *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature found in Eastern Turkestan*; by A. F. R. Hoernle (1916). The manuscripts edited and translated in this volume form part of the India Office Library's Hoernle Collection—remains of Buddhist Mahāyāna literature mainly in the ancient languages of the localities from which August Friedrich Rudolf Hoernle had procured them in the decade preceding Stein's first expedition. In this volume Thomas edited eleven fragmentary *sūtras* in Sanskrit.

Early in the present century two discoveries of importance were made, by R. Shama Sastri and T. Ganapati Sastri respectively. The former's *editio princeps* of the *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya appeared in 1909, and the latter began to publish the

thirteen plays attributed to the pre-Kālidāsan playwright Bhāsa in 1912. The *Artha-śāstra* was of course a primary authority for the picture of the Mauryan polity which Thomas gives in the *Cambridge History of India*, where he speaks of it as 'perhaps the most precious work in the whole of Sanskrit literature in virtue of the abundant light which in detail it sheds on the life of the people. . . . Its date clearly falls within or near the Maurya period.' His contributions to the discussion of the date and authorship of the thirteen Trivandrum plays appeared in the *J.R.A.S.*: 'The Plays of Bhāsa' (1922); 'Bhāsa-kṛta Svapna-Vāsavadatta' (1925); 'Bhāsa and Accusatives Masculine Plural in -āni' (1925); and in a paper read at the International Congress of Orientalists at Oxford in 1928, and published in the *J.R.A.S.* in the same year, 'The Date of the Svapna-Vāsavadatta'. In the field of *dharma* he published 'A Bṛhaspati Sūtra' (and translation) in *Le Muséon* (1916) which in 1921 reappeared (probably by arrangements made when Thomas was in India in 1920–1) as a volume in the Punjab Sanskrit Series.

This record has reached the year 1927, the year of Thomas's sixtieth birthday and of his retirement from the India Office Library on his election to the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit, and the year in which he was elected Fellow of the British Academy and became C.I.E. In 1908 he had married Elinor Grace, eldest daughter of Walter Hammond, and by 1915 they were living with their two children at Chaldon in the Caterham district of Surrey. They gave up their house there in 1921 when Thomas went to India, and on his return in 1922 they took the house in Sevenoaks which they occupied until the removal to Oxford in 1927. The pattern of Thomas's way of life and work set in these years; but there must now have been a lessening of tension. Merely to live in the place of his work was a saving of effort; and the atmosphere of the place itself, and long vacations (giving more leisure for walking in the Welsh mountains), may be presumed to have been felt as a not unwelcome relief from what one of his letters speaks of as a 'satiety of London engagements'. It is not unreasonable to imagine that his feelings at this time might have been expressed in a verse or two of the *Canticum*, dated *a.d.VI Id. Mai. A.D. MDCCCXCVII*, which, as he says in its preface, *prae se fert puerorum ludo post exactum jam annum abeuntium*:

> Sat jam lusimus, et satis
> Quidquid tristius, O! nimis,
> Frontem traximus; ilicet
> Solvit meta laborem.

Rivus nos pitylo tremens,
Pontus margine saeviens,
Raptantque ardua montium et
Ruris somnus opaci.

This composition has been forgotten since its publication in the *King Edward's School Chronicle* of April 1897. Nine years earlier a Latin composition by Thomas had won the approbation of Benjamin Hall Kennedy himself. Among letters to Thomas printed in the *K. E. S. Chronicle* of March 1958 there is one dated 1888 from the Master of his college congratulating him on having won the prize for Latin Epigram, and adding 'I have heard it twice from the lips of Dr. Kennedy who was much pleased by its point and terseness'. Here is the epigram as printed in *Prolusiones Academicae*, in which his other prize compositions may be seen:

Εἷς ἐμοὶ μύριοι, ἐὰν ἄριστος ᾖ.
Sollicito centum curis erit una saluti:
Ut curas fugiam, sis mea cura, Chloe.

Apart from a reference to the Congress of Orientalists in Oxford in 1928, Thomas records nothing of the years of his professorship outside the normal round of his professorial duties—'lectures, pupils, Boards, examinations, research'—and such other matters as arrangements for public lectures by outside personalities, and much business in connexion with the Indian Institute including alterations in the building and the Museum. But no doubt we have the style and substance of his lectures in some publications of this period, such as his two chapters on 'language and literature' in *The Legacy of India* (1937). Seventy small octavo pages are a confined space for an account of the languages and literatures of India through the ages: yet nothing essential to the truth and completeness of the picture would seem to be wanting, and he found room enough for illuminating discussion and pregnant observation upon a wide range of topics. 'What gives to the Upanishads their unique quality and unfailing human appeal is an earnest sincerity of tone as of friends conferring upon matters of deep concern.'

There is a temptation to continue quoting from Thomas, and not least his occasional incisive criticisms which are but the necessary negative complement and cutting edge to a just and deep appreciation of the great qualities of India's intellectual and literary achievement. Of classical Sanskrit poetry he says: 'Such is its intellectual charm that scholars too deeply imbued

with it are apt to find all other verse inane or require to be recalled to the appreciation of the unrivalled clarity and dignity of the Greek, or the less schooled quality of modern European poetry. It may be said that in amount of cleverness per square inch no poetry surpasses the Sanskrit kāvya.' The schooling requisite for the writing of a *kāvya* is described in an article 'The Making of the Sanskrit Poet' contributed by Thomas in 1917 to a volume of *Commemorative Essays presented to Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar*. Thomas himself could turn an *āryā* couplet as well as a Latin epigram, and his defence of learned poetry may in part reflect his own susceptibility to the intellectual charm of a *genre* which delights by cleverness. He recognizes and states the limits within which this style is effective, but he contends that 'in the main the sentiment of the Indian poet is not artificial. Even his aesthetic theory, much more his philosophic mysticism, has deep emotional potency; if he nourishes devotion (*bhakti*) to a personal deity, it is a consuming passion; in regard to external nature he has a refined sensibility and a feeling of communion; and the charms, graces, and wiles of women, without deceiving, entirely fascinate him.'

In 1937, on his seventieth birthday, Thomas received an address signed by ninety-nine British, continental, and American colleagues in orientalist studies; and in that year he vacated his professorship and his Balliol fellowship and went to India to preside over the Ninth All-India Oriental Conference, held at Trivandrum. In his Presidential Address he recalls his previous visit to Travancore. 'Delightful indeed is the memory of my first visit, in December 1920, to this State; the entrancing vision of moonlit forest glades when at night I drew my curtain in the train; the flourishing paysage inclined towards the radiant Indian Ocean which the first daylight revealed. . . .'

The record of this tour in India (1938, after the Trivandrum Conference in December 1937) is summarized thus by Thomas:

Going on to Calcutta to attend the Indian Science Conference was invited to act as temporary Lecturer in Calcutta University Postgraduate Department: stayed on about 7–8 weeks, had Classes (about 2 hours, 4–5 days a week), and delivered 8 quasi-public lectures, published in 1942 under the title 'Indianism and its Expansion'. Went to Dacca to deliver University Lecture. Returned to Trivandrum for consultations *re* the contemplated Travancore University *en route* reception and address at Andhra University and Annamalai University and three public lectures in the University of Madras. Going north from Trivandrum gave

lecture in Mysore University and proceeded *via* Poona and Bombay to Bikaner State in Rajputana for some very interesting days with a Jaina religious sect in the country, thence to visit and address another Jaina community in Karachi. Thence *via* Lahore and Delhi and Allahabad (where delivered an address in the University), Benares (University), and Patna, to Nepal, where very pleasant three weeks. After a week in Darjeeling, and a few days in Burma, started homewards *via* Madras, Agra (where quasi-public meetings with very kind Jaina friends), Karachi, Persian Gulf, Irak, Beyrout, Cyprus, Athens, etc., home . . . I hope you get an impression of a strenuous time, and, what is foremost in my memory, of wonderful kindness and of intellectual keenness on the part of Indian scholar friends.

Thomas ends his autobiographical note with two entries: 'In 1939, on occasion of 72nd birthday, received "A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies" . . . (many of the 48 contributors Indians). On same occasion invited to Dinner by Balliol Common Room. In 1941 was awarded the Triennial Gold Medal of the Royal Asiatic Society.' It must be added that in 1934 at the celebrations held at Tokyo to mark the 2,000th anniversary of the death of Buddha he was awarded a medal for Buddhist studies; and that in 1948 he received the Campbell Gold Medal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Memory records that Thomas began his speech at his seventy-second-birthday dinner with the warning remark that he liked to have a long innings; and to about this period belongs his forecast that he still had twenty years' work to do. The forecast was accurate, and he carried the projected work to a practical completion; but he did not live the full twenty years contemplated in this estimate; and so, in the preface to the last published volume, Part III (1955), of his *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents concerning Chinese Turkestan*, he speaks of 'a Part IV, long dormant in typescript . . . for which there is now a moderate urgency'. This work, the publication of which extended over twenty years (in the Royal Asiatic Society's *Oriental Translation Fund Series*, vols. xxxii, xxxvii, and xl; 1935, 1951, and 1955), was one of four in which during his retirement he collected, revised, and supplemented the results of researches extending over many years. The other three works in question are *Nam: An Ancient Language of the Sino-Tibetan Borderland*, a publication of the Philological Society (1948); *Ancient Folk-literature from North-Eastern Tibet*, a publication of the Berlin Academy of Sciences which appeared in 1957 after Thomas's death, but was in the main seen through the press by him and has his own preface,

dated December 1955; and an unpublished work on the Żaṅżuṅ language which Professor Tucci hopes to edit.

How far the broad conclusions to which Thomas was led by long years of study of the texts and documents made accessible in these three major works, and how far in detail his interpretations of the texts themselves may prove to require modification as Sino-Tibetan studies progress, may be open to question. But the outstanding importance of his contribution to these studies is not in question, and the general consent of those able to judge has accorded him in this field also a degree of eminence similar to that he held among Indologists. Apart from the literary texts from the Tanjur and Kanjur translated and discussed in Part I of *Texts and Documents*, all the Tibetan evidence for Chinese Turkestan for the three centuries following A.D. 665 is to be found in the Stein collection in the India Office and the Pelliot MSS. from Tun-huang. In Parts II and III of this work he made accessible, in transliterated text, translation, and facsimile the evidence of the documents excavated from abandoned sites in Chinese Turkestan, supplemented by some of the Tun-huang MSS. But the Tun-huang MSS., although they belong to the same civilization as that represented by the literary fragments found in the abandoned sites of Chinese Turkestan, have a unique character as being the library of a monastic order settled in Chien-fo-tung who were forced by some crisis to deposit and wall up their books in a shrine in which they were left for a thousand years. The library consists largely of Mahāyāna Buddhist works in various languages, such as are represented by fragmentary remains exhumed from abandoned sites. But it also included some items unique in languages or content. One such item was a paper roll (sixteen and a half feet long, with a Chinese translation of part of the *Sad-dharma-puṇḍarīka* on the verso) inscribed in Tibetan script with a continuous work in the unknown language to which Thomas gave the name *Nam*. This manuscript, received in the India Office Library in 1926, was the subject of articles contributed to the *J.R.A.S.* in 1928 and 1939, and by 1941 he had the transliterated text ready for the press. The hope of finding the same or a parallel text in a known language was not realized, and the interpretation of the language and the text, published in *Nam* (470 pages, 1948), rests on linguistic affinities. The posthumously published work, *Ancient Folk-literature from North-Eastern Tibet* (Berlin, 1957: comprising 287 quarto pages, facsimiles, and map), is a study of certain manuscripts from the 'hidden library' differentiated from the

bulk of Tibetan literature by linguistic and stylistic peculiarities, and by their subject-matter, which preserves an ancient and primitive mythology and folk-tradition.

In conclusion it remains to mention some work in the field of Indian philosophy and logic left unpublished. A translation of the Jaina philosopher Mallişeṇa's *Syād-vāda-mañjarī* has been accepted for publication by the Berlin Academy. Arrangements were being made in 1933 for the publication of a translation by Thomas of the well-known logical manual *Bhāṣā-pariccheda* with its author's commentary *Nyāya-siddhānta-muktāvalī* and the important sub-commentary of Dinakara Bhaṭṭa. These arrangements for publication were not carried to completion, and Thomas's translation is still unpublished. There has been found also a bundle of pencilled translations from the *Tattva-cintāmaṇi*, the great work of Gaṅgeśa which is the foundation of the 'new' school of Indian logic. Thomas cited his own translation of one or two passages of this work in his 1921 article *An Indian Doctrine of Perception and Error*. Thomas was exceptional, perhaps unique, among western Sanskritists, in taking the terminological complexities introduced by the 'new' logic as a serious contribution to the problems of logic, and what he has left on this difficult text will be of value.

There is no evidence to indicate that Thomas would have subscribed to the tenets of any positive system of philosophy. His attitude is perhaps best indicated in his own remark that 'the philosophy of Buddhism may, like other philosophies, not be true; but its principles are still alive in the metaphysical debate'. He was very young when in 1887, in the elegiacs on the theme *ὀρθὸν ἀλήθει' ἀεί* which won him the prize for Greek Epigram, he wrote

> *μηκέτ' 'Αλήθειαν σκολιοῖς θηρᾶτε λόγοισιν,*
> *Σωκρατικοί· βαίνει δ' ἡ θεὸς ὀρθὸν ἀεί.*

Fifty years later, in his Presidential Address to the 1938 Conference at Trivandrum, he does not hesitate to become 'somewhat philosophical'; and when he describes the conference as 'an organ of clarity for that great self-transforming Person the Indian people', or as itself being 'one of those philosophically important entities which we may designate "hypothetical persons" ', there is a temptation to search what metaphysic might inform the metaphor. But, however that may be, his practical and characteristic conclusion was that 'Perhaps not *sursum corda* is the maxim most in need, but *sursum intellectus*, if it can only be

free of *ahaṃkāra* of every kind'. In speaking to an Indian audience he uses the categories of Indian thought. But it does not follow that he would have accepted the metaphysical implications of the terminology.

A significant part of his intellectual output took the form of introductions and notes and active editorship contributed to important publications by others; for example, his introduction and notes to Jagmandarlal Jaini's *Outlines of Jainism* (1916); his introduction to and editing of Barend Faddegon's translation of the *Pravacana-sāra* with Amṛtacandra's commentary (1935), and his editing of Faddegon's earlier work, *The Vaiśeṣika System* (1918), and of Hakuju Ui's *Vaiśeṣika Philosophy according to the Daśapadārtha-śāstra* (1918). His collaboration with Japanese scholars, in particular, is generously recognized in Professor Shoson Miyamoto's memoir of him published in the *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* (Tokyo, March 1958). Miyamoto had read under Thomas's supervision for his doctor's degree at Oxford, and more than thirty years later visited him at Bodicote. Thomas, then in his eighty-ninth year, spoke of his discovery of two languages of Tibeto-Burman affinity, Žaṅ-žuṅ and Nam, and mentioned with gratification a suggestion made by Giuseppe Tucci for a lecturership in Himalayan languages to be held by him.

Thomas had a personality which brought him the high regard and affection of a wide circle of lifelong friends, and an intellectual distinction in which all who came in contact with him recognized the quality of greatness. In 1902 one of the friends of his lifetime, Sten Konow, wrote: 'I should be very unhappy if I should not be able to see you before leaving. . . . You have contributed so much to the high conception I shall take back of a thorough Englishman.' Thomas was in fact thoroughly English in his acceptance of the values of the English way of life. Punctilious discharge of the obligations imposed by his many loyalties was another expression of the complete integrity of his service of truth. He died at Bodicote on 4 May 1956. A verse from his epigram on Truth might have been his epitaph—

ὃς δ' ὀρθὴν ὁρθαῖσιν ὁδὸν φρεσὶν ἔσπετο θαῤῥῶν,
τῷ δὲ τέλος κείνη πάντα μάλ' ὄρθ' ἔπορεν.

Much in this memoir is based on an autobiographical note in Thomas's hand supplemented by a small selection from the great mass of his correspondence. I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Thomas for the use of this invaluable material. I have further had at my free disposal the resources of the India Office Library;

for which, as for assistance readily given in other ways, my thanks are due to the Librarian, Mr. S. C. Sutton. Thomas retained close contact with the library to the end of his life, devoting much time in particular to the preparation for the press of La Vallée Poussin's *Catalogue of the Stein Tibetan Manuscripts*, with the assistance of Miss A. F. Thompson, Assistant Keeper in the Library. She worked with him during the last eight years of his life, and the knowledge of him which she then acquired has provided valuable material for the present account. I am further indebted to her for generous co-operation and most helpful criticism. She has also contributed the bibliography of his later publications which is appended. I owe to the Rev. R. G. Lunt, M.C., Chief Master of King Edward's School, Birmingham, and to Mr. N. S. F. Craig of the School, a copy of the *Canticum*, and to the Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge, copies of the prize compositions.

H. N. RANDLE

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