

OBITUARY NOTICES

Émile Charles Marie Senart

The greatest part of M. Senart's productivity as a scholar was concerned with Buddhism. In 1871, at the age of 24, he made his début, in the *Journal Asiatique* (vi, xvii, pp. 193-540), by a publication of Kaccāyana's Pali Grammar, *sūtras* and commentary, a work of great difficulty; the translation and notes betrayed no signs of immaturity and manifested a familiarity with the Sanskrit grammarians, whose model Kaccāyana had followed. Next, published likewise as a series of articles in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1873-5, and issued as a volume in 1875, came the celebrated *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, a book which has always been provocative to the more literal Buddhologists. No one can doubt that the story of Buddha, largely miraculous, is also in part mythological. The speciality of M. Senart's theory was that the person of Buddha had absorbed not merely isolated mythological factors, but a fairly compact body of conceptions, originally solar. The case would be parallel to a well-known illustration accompanying one of Thackeray's essays and showing three designs: (1) Rex (an imposing royal costume, standing by itself), (2) Ludovicus (a mere man), and (3) Ludovicus Rex, the combined awe-inspiring figure. It seems rather clear that the idea of the *cakravartin* was pre-Buddhistic and ultimately solar: the events preceding the abandonment of home are at least highly poetical, the accounts of the birth and childhood in fact mythical: the detailed incidents of the illumination and the defeat of Māra are surely mythology, and, even if the Bodhi-tree was an actuality, it was a conventional adjunct of ascetics, and, as such, symbolical too—though the symbolism need not have been solar. M. Senart may not have gone too far in suggesting a doubt whether Māyā is a fictitious name for Buddha's mother or even that of Śuddhodana for his father; but

clearly it was imprudent to doubt the existence of Kapilavastu. How much can be retained of the theory of the Viṣṇuite or Kṛṣṇaite character of the legend it would not be easy to say. But, in fact, the legendary part of the Buddha story would hardly now be seriously considered by scholars, who are more concerned to discover what views were propounded by the person who figures in the Pali dialogues and why both he and Mahāvīra founded not schools, but sects.

In 1877, M. Senart published a short article, entitled *Sur quelques termes buddhiques*, wherein he took note of certain forms of words occurring in the Buddhist texts, such as *upādiseśa*, which seemed to point to an earlier canonic dialect more developed (*plus altéré, plus prakritisant*) than appears in their surroundings. His preoccupation with the dialects was also evidenced by a long and suggestive review of Cunningham, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, 1877. The articles containing his own edition of the *Inscriptions de Piyadasi* began to appear in 1880.¹ The completed work (1881) was translated by Sir George Grierson in the *Indian Antiquary* (xviii, 1889—xxi, 1892). M. Senart was able in some instances to make use of new facsimiles furnished by Dr. Burgess. But the great advance in the interpretation was due mainly to his own insight and his familiarity with the Pali language and literature. The concluding chapters are devoted to a study of the date and chronology of the inscriptions and the general questions of Buddhist chronology so far as connected therewith; the author of the inscriptions, his faith and his measures; the language and the several dialects, whereof full grammatical sketches are given; the linguistic chronology of India and the interrelations between Sanskrit, Mixed Sanskrit, the Prakrits, and Pali. Almost all the conclusions at which M. Senart arrived (including his acceptance of the date A.D. 319 for the commencement of the Gupta era) still hold good. But there is one great matter which seems in his argument to retain some of its previous

¹ *Journal Asiatique*, VII, xv, pp. 287–347—VIII, viii, pp. 384–478.

obscurity. He holds that the alphabets show by their inadequacy that they could not have been used for writing Sanskrit (or, we may add, Pali). The first Sanskrit to be written was the Mixed Sanskrit of certain inscriptions, which had been known as the Gāthā dialect and for which M. Senart had himself previously proposed the name Buddhist Sanskrit. This ceased to exist at the moment when the philological exactitude of the old Brahman schools extended its influence. The Prakrits and the Pali also assumed a definite form when controlled by a similar influence. The process may have begun about A.D. 100 and have been completed before the Gupta period. The matter is certainly puzzling, and it is clear that the Aśokan alphabets must have been developed in certain points before they could be fitted for the writing of Sanskrit. But the inference that at the time there was no written Sanskrit, and in fact no worldly Sanskrit at all, seems inadequately grounded. The influence of the learned language upon the popular speech did not commence with Pāṇini: it must have begun from the moment when the vernacular began to diverge from the language of the texts (*Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads*, and so forth). What Pāṇini discriminated was the correct language of the *śiṣṭas*, the scholars. We know from the early references in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* and elsewhere that there were whole classes of writings of a worldly character, and these must have been composed in fairly popular speech. Thus in principle the Mixed Sanskrit must go back many centuries B.C., and we cannot doubt that stages of it existed in the time of Buddha and in that of Aśoka. The character of the Buddhist Sanskrit was, of course, fully recognized by M. Senart, and his divergence from the view of Burnouf that it was a language of persons who, with inadequate competence, were trying to write the literary language is a little hard to seize. The Mixed Sanskrit is Sanskrit with faults, a variety of that "bad Sanskrit" which we find in Vedic *Parīṣiṣṭas*, manuals of crafts, arts, etc. Its only excuse for existence was its actual currency, and it was no doubt the

spread of grammatical training that ultimately expelled it from all higher literature. To this extent we cannot but subscribe to M. Senart's view. But, then, for the Mixed Sanskrit the Aśokan alphabets are no less inadequate than for the scholarly form ; so that we should have to deny that the Mixed Sanskrit itself was written prior to the use of double consonants, differentiation of the sibilants, the nasals and so forth. We must, it seems, stop short of this and hold (1) that writing was first employed in connection with popular speech, for business purposes, and so forth, (2) that the Sanskrit, like the Mixed Sanskrit, may at first have made shift with the imperfect alphabets as used in the Aśoka inscriptions (possibly writing double consonants with *virāmas* and so forth), (3) that the inscriptions themselves, being written in merely popular and official dialects, may have been content with alphabetic practice less developed than that which at the time was in actual use for literary purposes—this last proposition is in fact maintained by Bühler. M. Senart's discrimination of the different dialects represented in the Edicts, his recognition of the Māgadhi as official over an area wider than its currency and of its particular intrusions in the texts of the other dialects have been generally confirmed ; and his detailed accounts of the features of the several dialects have been merely amplified in later works.

M. Senart's study of the early inscriptions in the Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī alphabets continued throughout his life as a scholar. New materials and new discoveries were regularly referred to him, and they gave occasion to a long series of articles, for the most part published under the running title *Notes d'Épigraphie Indienne*,¹ always characterized by the most scrupulous examination of the copies and the most penetrating explanation of the texts. His editions of the

¹ *Journal Asiatique*, VIII, ix (1888), pp. 498–504 ; xi (1888), pp. 504–33 ; xii (1888), pp. 311–30 ; xiii (1889), pp. 364–75 ; xv (1890), pp. 113–63 ; xix (1892), pp. 472–98 ; ix, iv (1894), pp. 332–53, 504–78 ; vii (1906), pp. 132–6 ; xiii (1899), pp. 526–37 ; xv, (1900), pp. 343–60 ; x, vii, pp. 132–6 ; xi, iv (1914), pp. 569–85 ; vii (1916), pp. 425–42 ; *JRAS.* 1900, pp. 335–41.

Karle and Nasik inscriptions (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. vii, pp. 47–74; viii, pp. 59–96) brought those texts up to the level of modern scholarship. When the time came for a republication of volume i of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, his preoccupations did not allow him to undertake the task, which was discharged in a thorough manner by that very sound, careful and fair-minded scholar, Professor Ernst Hultzsch. The last articles by M. Senart on these subjects were his discussion (1916) of the new Aśoka edict found at Maski in Hyderabad and—in collaboration with the Abbé Boyer and Professor Rapson—an examination (1918) of a poem inscribed on a Kharoṣṭhī tablet from Chinese Turkestan.

We have still, however, to take account of an analogous task of great difficulty, wherein M. Senart collaborated with the same two scholars. The materials consisted of documents, chiefly wooden tablets, discovered by Sir A. Stein in the course of his three expeditions to Chinese Turkestan. The general features of the script and language, as well as some tentative transliterations and translations, were the subject of a communication by Professor Rapson to the Algiers Congress of 1905. But the developed form of the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet, including unprecedented combinations of signs, and the mixed character of the vocabulary, which comprises a large number of local proper names and titular designations, entailed a long period of joint manipulation: two fasciculi, containing the bulk of the material, were published, under the title *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions*, in 1920 and 1927.

The *Mahāvastu* is a Sanskrit Buddhist text, which with its apparatus criticus fills in M. Senart's edition more than 1300 pages octavo. It is a work of great importance, belonging to the Vinaya of one of the old Buddhist sects, that of the Māhāsāṅghikas. It is a mine of old Buddhist story, observation, reflection, and wit in unlaboured prose and flowing verse: a book which in another literature might be made a life's study. Unfortunately, it is but a drop in the ocean of Buddhist

literature, which we must somehow encompass as a whole, if we are not to be engulfed in it. Still more unfortunately, perhaps, it is written in the Mixed Sanskrit, a text presenting at every step irregularities, and even regularities, which may have been imported into it at any stage in its long history. The MSS., of modern date and all from Nepal, have by their discrepancy involved the editor in an enormous labour of collation. If we had copies of older date or of different provenance (say from Central Asia), we should be confronted (as many analogies show) with divergences far more numerous and in many cases on a much larger scale. A definitive text is hardly to be hoped for. The difficulty, however, is in the main a matter only of grammar or language. M. Senart has given us an important canonical text of one of the most influential early sects. Its further study cannot fail to yield continual fruit, and M. Senart's closely printed commentary of about 400 pages is itself a mine of new and valuable observations upon textual and linguistic matters and upon Buddhist thought and terminology.

Still a different dialect appears in the MS. Dutreuil du Rhins, the Kharoṣṭhī *Dhammapada*, concerning which M. Senart read a paper before the Paris Congress of 1897, and which he edited in the *Journal Asiatique*.¹ Among the papers of the ill-fated traveller some birch-bark fragments were noted by M. Sylvain Lévi as inscribed in Kharoṣṭhī characters. The fragments were for the most part small, in many cases minute; but M. Senart had no difficulty in recognizing a version of the celebrated collection of moral and religious verses known in Pali under the title *Dhammapada*. The formidable task of decipherment was thus lightened, and M. Senart was able to find Pali equivalents for most of the verses and fragments. It was unfortunate that another part of the same MS. (the Petrovsky fragments), which had found its way to St. Petersburg, was not fully available for incorporation. The MS. did not originate in Chinese

¹ ix, xii (1898), pp. 192-308.

Turkestan : it had been brought from north-western India, and it furnished a new early Prakrit dialect, which has yet to be fully explored.

There remains for commemoration only one extensive work by M. Senart. This is his monograph on caste (*Les Castes dans l'Inde*, 1895, reprinted without change in 1927), a subject in regard to which the examination of prior views is almost more onerous than the direct study of the facts. M. Senart's three chapters are devoted respectively to the present, the past, and the origins, including a criticism of the traditional Brahmanic theory and the conclusions of Nesfield, Ibbetson, and Risley. The main originalities of his own view are (1) the distinction between the original classes, *varṇa*, of Brahman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra, at first two "colours", *varṇa*, namely Āryan and Śūdra, and the specific endo-exo-gamic groups properly denoted by the word *jāti* "caste", (2) the tracing of the latter organizations to an Āryan source in a *gentile* constitution of society such as existed in early Greece and Rome. It must be admitted that for *gentes* in the required sense we do not find much evidence in early India (that is by no means conclusive) and that among the castes mentioned by Manu and other ancient writers (we need not take into account the castes of modern times, after a development of about 2,500 years) we find designations professional, genealogical, tribal, and local, but hardly any of a gentilician import. Also we ought to be able to point to Brahman and Kṣatriya *gentes*: can this be done? Yet M. Senart's view does account for two main features of caste, namely the endogamic principles and the rules as to common meals. It remains possible that a gentilician constitution of society did leave these features as a legacy to new divisions of very various origins, developing in the complex Indian people.

Besides the works which we have cited we owe to M. Senart a number of studies of less extent. Such are his striking little work on Buddhism and Yoga, his papers on the *Abhisambuddha-gāthās* of the Pali Jātaka, on the Vajrapāṇi in early

Buddhist art, on *Rajas* and the theory of the three *Guṇas* in the Sāṃkhya philosophy. In 1922 he published an elegant translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. All his writings are distinguished by a refined linguistic sense and a clear unbiassed judgment. There is also nothing second-hand or compilatory in his work : on the contrary, his tendency was always towards new and vital conceptions. Considering the combined brilliance and solidity of his work, it cannot be said that in the qualities of a scholar he was surpassed by any Indianist of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is well known that M. Senart possessed advantages of fortune which might have proved an obstacle to a strictly scholarly career. Fortunately science and letters can point to not a few instances of men of means who were not merely thinkers or amateurs, but specialist investigators whose work would not have been modified by being professional. M. Senart was always counted among the Indianist circle of the University of Paris, and not only of the Société Asiatique, in which he was successively member of Council (1872), Vice-President (1890), and President (1908). After the death of M. Barth, to whom in 1914¹ he paid a touching tribute, he was, so to speak, the father of the Paris Indianists. In the Académie des Inscriptions he was the outstanding representative of oriental studies. In such matters as the foundation of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, the Pelliot mission to Central Asia, the Commission Archéologique of the Academy his was usually the directing influence. When the time came for celebrating the centenary of the Société Asiatique the full burden of organization and leadership in the splendid succession of ceremonies and festivities recorded in the published record was unflinchingly borne by him. Nor could anything surpass the patience, the courtesy, and the distinguished eloquence and dignity with which at the age of 75 he carried out the whole programme.

¹ On the occasion of the presentation recorded in the then collected edition of M. Barth's writings, pp. vii-xii.

From the time of the Paris Congress of 1897, M. Senart was regarded outside France as the leading French orientalist. He was a prominent figure in the gatherings at Rome (1899) and Algiers (1905). He was a member of the permanent international committee, and he also represented the Institute at the international conferences of Academies. In 1917, in order to meet the situation created by the war, and also in view of certain features of the pre-war Congresses, he made formal proposals, on behalf of the Société Asiatique, for special co-operation with the Royal Asiatic Society, providing for mutual privileges, annual gatherings, and joint enterprises. The agreement, to which also the American Oriental Society, the Scuola Orientale of the University of Rome, and the Asiatic Society of Japan became parties, is fully recorded in this *Journal* (1918, pp. 186-97). The first Joint Session was held in London on September 3-6, 1919, and the proceedings are reported in the *Journal* for 1920, pp. 123-62. There were further meetings at Paris in 1920 and at Brussels in 1921. From the gathering in 1919 four new Orientalist societies directly or indirectly originated, namely in Belgium, Holland, Norway, and Sweden, of which the second, the Oostersch Genootschap in Nederland, has since held annual assemblies of a partly international character. In 1923 the centenary of the Royal Asiatic Society was honoured by M. Senart's presence as a representative of France. When in 1926 the question of resuming the old series of international gatherings assumed a practicable aspect, M. Senart and his colleagues of the Société Asiatique were consenting parties in the negotiations and approved the outcome. Shortly afterwards, in March, 1927, M. Senart's eightieth birthday was made an occasion for messages of congratulation from friends and colleagues both in France and abroad. A critical illness prevented any formal presentation; but the messages did not fail to receive an individual and gracious acknowledgment. Ever scrupulous in the minor offices of social life, a punctual correspondent, a

delightful host, and a loyal friend, he realized an ideal of urbane unselfishness, in which only the winning exterior disguised a renunciatory quality. His increasing frailty was naturally as perceptible to himself as to others; but he anticipated its denouement, which took place on February 21 of the present year, without either satisfaction or regret.

He was born at Rheims on March 26, 1847. His relations with the Société Asiatique have already been particularized. In 1882 he was elected a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. He was also at various times chosen as a member of the Academies of Belgium, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, and Russia, of Berlin, Göttingen, and Munich, and an Honorary Member of numerous societies. In this country the Royal Asiatic Society paid him that tribute in 1892, and the India Society in 1922 elected him a Vice-President; in 1923 he received the Honorary Doctorate of the University of Oxford. The death of his wife evoked many expressions of sympathy from orientalists who had enjoyed her hospitality at Paris in 1897; it left M. Senart without descendants.

Canon W. H. T. Gairdner

To have known Temple Gairdner must be accounted one of the privileges of life. His attractive temperament, his serious purpose, and his rare gifts in language and music made an unusual combination. Some one happily described him and his friend Douglas Thornton as the "poetry and prose of the Cairo Mission", an apt description of two splendid men of different types. Now the poetry and prose have both gone and the Mission can never be the same again.

Gairdner was born in Ayrshire nearly 55 years ago. He was the son of a distinguished President of the British Medical Association, Sir William Gairdner, of Edinburgh, who for 38 years held the chair of medicine in Glasgow University. His mother was English. After leaving a preparatory school in Moffat he went on to Rossall and then to Oxford, where he was an exhibitor of Trinity College. His missionary