

MARCELLE LALOU

(1890–1967)

It is always a sad duty to bid farewell to a person who has left so deep impressions in the world remaining behind. The more difficult it is to pay one's last respects to somebody who has erected a life-work out of clear-cut bricks of excellent scientific results. But the most difficult for all for one is to write the obituary of a scholar who worked in a field so close to one's own as M^{lle} Marcelle Lalou did.

All of us who knew her scholarly career have always taken great interest in the works coming from her pen. She worked in close cooperation with such scholars as Pelliot, Przyluski, Bacot and she had an important role in maintaining the great fame of the Parisian school of Tibetology after the death of her colleagues. In 1927, as a former pupil of Sylvain Levy and Jaques Bacot, she wrote her diploma-work on the iconography of the painted materials (*paṭa*) in the *Mañjuśrīmulakalpa*.¹ Iconography was also later a field of her special interest.² Coming into close contact with Tibetan texts she was one of the first scholars to devote thorough attention to the Tibetan version of the *Prajñāpāramitā*³ and lately had much to say about the Tun-huang versions of the same work.⁴ Working in the rich *Fonds* of the Bibliothèque Nationale she gave indispensable tools into our hands. Her *Catalogue* on the *Mdo-maṅ* section⁵ is a work of reference we use every day and we similarly turn frequently to her *Repertoire* to Cordier's Tanjur-catalogue.⁶ But the most important help for those who are interested in Tibetan philology, history, linguistics, and paleography are the three volumes of the *Inventaire*⁷ of the Tun-huang collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Only those who worked with these highly important but extremely difficult texts can truly esteem the work accomplished by M^{lle} Marcelle Lalou.

Being familiar with the Old Tibetan texts working with them daily as she did through a lifetime, she chose some of the most interesting specimens and presented them with scholarly modesty and clear terseness. Little fragments and lengthy texts equally gave her the opportunity to discover important facts of the early history of Tibetan Buddhism.⁸

¹ Cf. Iconographie des étoffes peintes (*paṭa*) dans le *Mañjuśrīmulakalpa*: *Buddhica* I, ser. VI (1930), 116 p.

² Notes sur la décoration des monastères bouddhiques à propos d'un livre récent de M. Goloubew: *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* V pp. 183–185, Mythologie indienne et peintures de Hautes-Asie I. Le dieu bouddhique de la Fortune: *Art. As.* 1946, pp. 97–111, Trois aspects de la peinture bouddhique: *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales* III (1935), pp. 245–261 etc.

³ La version tibétaine des *Prajñāpāramitā*: *JA* 1929, pp. 87–102.

⁴ Les manuscrits tibétains des grandes *Prajñāpāramitā* trouvés à Touen-houang: *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo*, Kyoto University 1954, pp. 259–261.

⁵ Catalogue du fonds tibétain de la Bibliothèque Nationale. IV^e partie, I. Les *mdo-maṅ*, Paris 1931.

⁶ Répertoire du Tanjur d'après le catalogue de P. Cordier, Paris 1933.

⁷ Inventaire des manuscrits tibétains de Touen-houang conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale. Fonds Pelliot tibétain I–III, Paris 1939–1961.

⁸ Notes de mythologie bouddhique. 2. Les *Rgyud-sum-pa* manuscrits de Touen-houang: *HJAS* III (1938), pp. 128–156, Document tibétain sur l'expansion du *Dhyāna* chinois: *JA* 1939, pp. 505–523. Four notes on *Vajrapāṇi*: *Adyar Library Bulletin* XX (1956) pp. 287–293. A la recherche du *Vidyādharaṇṇaka*. Le cycle du *Subāhukapa-ṣipreṣṭhā-tantra*: *Studies in Indology and Buddhism*, 1955, pp. 68–72. Preface to F. A. Bischoff, *Ārya mahābala-nāma-*

Looking deeper than the surface of the world of canonical Buddhism, she discovered the everyday life, the world of popular beliefs, the changing kaleidoscope of folk-religion.⁹ She knew the great value of the early Bon-texts and published one of their most interesting piece.¹⁰ Folk-medicine,¹¹ the beliefs of the ways of death¹² the theme of the bisexual deities¹³ are only some of the topics to which she brought her exceptional erudition.

Her book on the religions of Tibet¹⁴ gives everybody interested a useful introduction into the study of the religious life of the Land of Snow.

Being a par excellence philologue she was devoted to all questions necessary to the interpretation of the old Tibetan texts. She discussed problems of the old tibetan language¹⁵ dealt with the most ancient rolls found in Tun-huang¹⁶ and published an interesting text on the early Buddhist library of the time of king Khri-sroñ Lde-bean.¹⁷ The historians of the social structure of the old Tibetan society also received valuable source materials placed at their disposal by M^{lle} Lalou.¹⁸

She was engaged in teaching, the least spectacular part of scientific activity where efforts and results are written only into the memory of pupils and it is left to chance whether they fall through or are retained in the sieve of the followers' mind. But judging from the success of her pupils her long work as *Directeur d'études* on the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études* was really very fruitful. She kept improving her Manual of Classical Tibetan¹⁹ and this work has become a useful aid in the teaching of Tibetan in universities all over the world.

From the beginning she shared the work and later the responsibility of editing of the famous *Bibliographie Bouddhique*.²⁰ From the 3rd volume she signed it together with J. Przyluski and from 1949 she had to undertake the task of the edition singlehanded. This series gives more than its title suggests. Everybody working on the various problems connected with the countries, languages and cultures of the Buddhist world can find a useful aid and a scholarly documentation in the 32 volumes hitherto published. And this is due in no small measure to the organising ability, wide-ranging interest and indefatigable work of M^{lle} Lalou.

As the editor of the *Journal Asiatique*, between the years 1950 and 1966, she made great efforts to keep the profile of this journal in its former sharp.

She was chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

mahāyānasūtra (Paris 1956) pp. IX—XII. Sutra du bodhisattva „Roi de la loi”: *JA* 1961, pp. 321—332, La version tibétaine du *Rainakuta*. Contribution à la bibliographie du Kanjur: *JA* 1927, pp. 233—259, Un traité de magie bouddhique: *Études d'orientalisme publ. par le Musée Guimet à la mémoire de Raymonde Linossier*, Paris 1932, pp. 303—322 and many other items.

⁹ Notes à propos d'une amulette de Touen-houang: *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* IV (1936), pp. 135—149, Documents de Touen-houang. I. Deux prières de caravaniers tibétains, II. Croix tournantes, III. Écriture tibétaine verticale: *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* VIII (1947), pp. 217—226, with Przyluski, Récits populaires et contes bouddhiques: *JA* 1936, pp. 177—191 etc.

¹⁰ Rituel *bon-po* des funérailles royales (Fonds Pelliot tibétain 1042), *JA* 1952 pp. 339—361.

¹¹ Le culte des Naga et la thérapeutique: *JA* 1935, pp. 1—19, Texte médical tibétain: *JA* 1941—1942, pp. 209—211.

¹² Les chemins du mort dans les croyances de Haute-Asie: *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 1949, pp. 42—118, Le thème des dieux bisexuels et celui des plantes herbacées dans les légendes de la Race solaire: *BEFEO* XLIV, pp. 577—580.

¹³ Les religions du Tibet, Paris 1957.

¹⁴ Tibétain ancien *Bod/Bon*: *JA* 1953, pp. 275—276. Together with J. Przyluski: Le *da drag* tibétain: *BSOS* VII (1953), pp. 87—89.

¹⁵ Cf. also her Littérature tibétaine in: *Histoire des littératures*, Paris 1955, pp. 1119—1139.

¹⁶ Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-sroñ Lde-bean: *JA* 1953, pp. 313—353.

¹⁷ Fiefs, poisons et guérisseurs, Manuscrits de Haute Asie conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (fonds Pelliot) *JA* 1958 : 2, pp. 157—201, Revendications des fonctionnaires du Grand Tibet au VIII^e siècle: *JA* 1955, pp. 171—212.

¹⁸ Manuel élémentaire de tibétain classique. Méthode empirique, Paris 1950.

¹⁹ The first three volumes appeared as parts of the second series of *Buddhica* in 1930, 1931 and 1933 respectively. Here Lalou was secretary to the *Comité de patronage*. From volume III (1934) the serial became independent.

Hungarian Tibetologists owe special thanks to her helpfulness. With her always obliging readiness on several occasions she made it possible for us to use by microfilm the Tibetan original texts of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Our collaboration was also marked by the fact that she presented one of her papers in our journal.²¹

Loosing in her a good scholar we are all convinced that her memory will be immortalized by her works.

A. Róna-Tas

²¹ Notes d'onomastique 'Aža: *Acta Orient. Hung.* XV (1962), 207—209.