

Henri Maspéro

Victims of the German terror, Professor and Madame Maspéro were arrested in Paris on 26th July, 1944, because their son was taking part in the resistance movement. The professor, sent to Buchenwald Camp, died on 15th March from the conditions prevailing there. Madame Maspéro, imprisoned in Pomerania, was liberated by the Russian advance.

Henri Maspéro was born in Paris in 1883, son of the famous Egyptologist Gaston Maspéro, who intended him to pursue the same career. But the counter attraction of the Far East claimed him, and after a grounding in Chinese he went in 1908 to a post in the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* at Hanoi, where three years later he became a professor. Until 1920 he remained there, except for two archæological excursions into China, engaged in research, teaching, cataloguing the library, and writing sinological articles. From Hanoi he went to the *Collège de France* to succeed Chavannes as *Professeur de la chaire de langue et littérature chinoise et tartare-mandchoue*, the appointment being dated 24th December, 1919. This post he held to the end, his labours in Paris being interrupted only during a stay in Tōkyō at the *Maison franco-japonaise*.

One cannot in these few lines do more than hint at his great services to sinology nor enumerate the honours that came to him, among them the presidency in 1944 of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. His writings extend over an extraordinary range of erudition: comparative linguistics, astronomy, textual criticism, mythology, archæology, epigraphy, history, and conspicuously the history of religions. Courteous if he criticized fellow sinologues, he wrote without exulting in discovery and without pedantry. His chief work for popular consumption, *La Chine antique*, is a fascinating masterpiece of summarization; it stands alone. Henri Maspéro was a kindly friend, always ready to help and so modest and retiring as to appear shy and diffident. Not only specialists deplore the stilling of his pen, a larger world had looked to him for interpretation of Chinese culture.

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