

OBITUARIES

PROFESSOR LOUIS RENOÜ

With the death of Professor Louis Renou at the age of 69 on 18th August, 1966, the Society has lost one of the most distinguished of its Honorary Fellows. His contribution to the development of Vedic and Classical Sanskrit studies was outstanding, and he was beyond question one of the great scholars of our times.

Louis Renou was born in Paris in 1896. After a brief period as Professor at the University of Lyon (1925–28), he returned to Paris in 1929 as Directeur d'études à l'École des Hautes Études, and from 1937 onwards was Professor at the Sorbonne and Directeur de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne. In 1948–49 he visited India, and was called upon to advise on the scope and planning of the projected *Dictionary of Sanskrit on historical principles*, which had been undertaken by the Deccan College, Poona—a noteworthy indication of the quite unusually high esteem with which he was regarded by Indian Sanskrit scholars. In 1953 he was Visiting Professor at Yale University, and from 1954 to 1956 was Director of the Maison franco-japonaise in Tokyo. Apart from these few visits abroad, he taught and worked in Paris.

Renou's eminence was recognized by his election in 1946 as a member of the Institut de France, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, of which he was President in 1958. He was an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society since 1948, a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Japan since 1953, and a Corresponding Member of the School of Oriental and African Studies since 1958. In 1951 he visited London to deliver the inaugural series of Jordan Lectures on Comparative Religion, afterwards published (1953) under the title *Religions of ancient India*.

From the time of the publication in 1925 of his doctoral dissertation, *La valeur du parfait dans les hymnes védiques*, Renou produced a steady stream of writings, which are as astonishing in their quantity as they are admirable in their high quality of scholarship. These numerous books, articles, and reviews extend into all the main aspects of Sanskrit literature and culture, and show him as a master of the whole range of ancient Indian philology, in the most liberal sense of the term. His writings, frequently concise and concentrated, disclose both a wealth of information and a penetrating judgement. The fields of study to which he most devoted himself were grammar and lexicography, and Vedic exegesis; but these subjects by no means absorbed all of his interests. The following is only a brief selection of titles: *Bibliographie védique* (1931); *Dictionnaire sanskrit-français* (with N. Stchoupak and L. Nitti, 1932); *Ṛtra et Vṛṣabrahma* (with E. Benveniste, 1934); *Terminologie grammaticale du sanskrit* (1942); *La grammaire de Pāṇini* (1948–54); *Prolegomènes au Vedānta* (1952); *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes* (1955–66); and numerous other scholarly writings. In addition, there are translations of Sanskrit literary works, and books designed for the general reader and for students. Particularly valuable is *L'Inde classique* (1949–53), virtually an encyclopaedia of Indology, written in collaboration with J. Filliozat, P. Demiéville, and others, of which however Renou himself wrote almost half. Of Renou's last major work, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, fifteen volumes had appeared by the time of his death. The greater part of these volumes consists of a systematic annotated translation of hymns of the Ṛgveda. There can be no doubt that his aim was to translate the whole of the Ṛgveda, and some two-thirds of this huge task had been completed. It is a tragedy for Vedic scholarship that Renou did not live to finish this work.

Renou's colleagues and pupils had prepared for publication a volume of studies in his honour, to be presented to him on his seventieth birthday. This volume is now being published as a memorial volume.

J. BROUGH.