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Plans for the presentation of a "Festschrift" to Professor Lessing on his eightieth anniversary in February of this year were suddenly altered by his death on 31 December 1961. My contribution to this volume is a translation (now considerably revised) made twenty years ago as a part of my doctorate, upon which Professor Lessing spent many weary hours with me. The preparation of this article for publication brought to mind a host of half-forgotten memories of my former teacher. As his first student in the United States, and as a close friend during the ensuing years, it seems appropriate for me to give a brief sketch of his academic career.

Professor Lessing was born on 26 February, 1882 in the Westphalian city of Essen, not far from the borders of Holland and Belgium. A serious interest in Far Eastern studies manifested itself at an early date, for when he was only eighteen years of age he had already begun the study of the Chinese language and Buddhism. In 1905, after graduating from the Gymnasium at Lingen, Hannover, and completing two years of study at the University of Berlin, he received his first appointment in the academic world. This was an assistantship at the Museum für Völkerkunde, where he came under the influence of several famous scholars of that time, including Otto Kümmel, F. W. K. Müller, Grünwedel and von Le Coq. Two years later, at the age of twenty-five, he went to China to continue the study of Chinese and Buddhism. He remained in China for seventeen years, supporting himself principally by teaching German and Sanskrit in a number of colleges and universities in Tsingtao, Peking, and Mukden. During this long period of continuous study, he developed a fluency in the spoken language and a knowledge of the classical language seldom attained by a westerner.

His studies in Buddhism eventually led him to specialize in Lamaism. Having at his command a thorough knowledge of such necessary languages as Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Mongolian, as well as a background in ethnology and comparative religion, Lessing was admirably prepared for work in this difficult field. In the latter part of his stay in China, he undertook a formidable project in the way of a detailed study of Yung-ho-kung, the great Lama temple in Peking. This study was intended to emphasize primarily the highly complex iconography connected with every aspect of this temple, but it also included its architecture and ritual, as well as the linguistic aspects of the scriptures involved. Unfortunately, work undertaken at the request of the United States Government during the Second World War prevented him from completing more than one volume of a projected four before his death. The rest of the study is more or less complete in an original German draft, but remains in manuscript in need of considerable editing.
Professor Lessing returned to Germany in 1925, and was appointed Professor of Chinese in the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen at the University of Berlin. He was awarded his Ph.D. the following year for a linguistic study, *Vergleich der wichtigsten Formwörter der chinesischen Umgangssprache und der Schriftsprache*. Shortly after this time, he was appointed Professor and Head of the Eastern Department in the Museum für Völkerkunde, the institute in which he first worked in 1905. He took leave from the Museum to become a member of the 1930-1933 Sino-Swedish Expedition under the leadership of Sven Hedin, and during this time he carried out further studies on the Yung-ho-kung and traveled extensively in North China, Mongolia, and Yünnan.

In 1935, Professor Lessing was invited to come to the University of California, Berkeley, as Agassiz Professor of Oriental Languages and Chairman of the Department of Oriental Languages. He worked unceasingly and with great energy to raise this Department from a position of obscurity to one of the outstanding centers of Far Eastern Studies in this country today. Shortly after his arrival in California, the King of Sweden honored him by conferring upon him the title of Knight Commander of the North Star. In 1942, at the request of the American Council of Learned Societies, Professor Lessing started teaching Mongolian, the first time this language was taught in the United States. In order to do this, it was necessary for him to prepare texts for the use of students, and this, in turn, led to the undertaking of another formidable project, the compilation of a definitive Mongolian-English dictionary. This dictionary, published a few months before his death, was completed nineteen years later and is a monument to Lessing’s scholarship and perseverance, but for it he sacrificed the completion of his more important work on Yung-ho-kung. In recognition of his contribution to the academic stature of the University and to Far Eastern scholarship, the University of California awarded him an honorary LL.D. in 1960.

As a graduate student in close daily contact with Lessing for several years, I soon came to appreciate his remarkable talent as a teacher and a scholar, and as a close personal friend for twenty-five years, I came to know him as a man and to appreciate his human qualities. A polyhistor with a phenomenal memory, great demands were made upon his time by students, colleagues and outside agencies. Absolutely unselfish with time which he desperately needed for his own research, his office was always open and his vast learning at the disposal of even the humblest student. No one ever associated even briefly with this gentle and truly gifted person will fail to remember his generosity, his kindness, and his sincere interest in his students and friends.

Richard C. Rudolph, Los Angeles
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