

A NOTE ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF SANSKRIT LINGUISTICS

Luigi Romeo
University of Colorado

ABSTRACT

This note was inspired by the appearance recently (1972) of A Reader on the Sanskrit Grammarians, edited by J.F. Staal. A few observations are made on 17th, 18th and 19th century European scholarship on Sanskrit, in particular on works written in Latin and Italian.

-R2-

It is stimulating to observe that in the bewildering proliferation of hyphenated linguistics (written with or without a hyphen, as metro-linguistics, metrolinguistics), works about history and historiography of linguistics are beginning to appear on both sides of the Atlantic. This may evidence the desire to foster a renaissance of linguistics of the past just as certain cultural movements in the Italian Humanism and Renaissance led to 'discovery' of the classical authors.² If this suggestion is true, then even if it cannot establish a long-sought paternity for contemporary concepts and ideas, it may at least inspire some emulation of them. Further, it is refreshing to see that 'rediscovery' of ancient linguistics is not limited to Graeco-Roman scholarship but that it encompasses the Indic as well. I refer particularly to Staal 1972 which has done much to fill out our knowledge of the history of Indian linguistics.

In a certain way, Staal's Reader on the Sanskrit Grammarians deals an ironic twist to Graeco-Roman proto-linguistics, considering that it (as far as we know today) grew independently for over twenty centuries without benefit of Sanskrit or Indic influences. For Greek and Roman grammarians we still do not have anything comparable with Staal 1972, although plans and suggestions have been offered in the hope of producing something specifically for the study of early linguistics.³ We do possess linguistic historiography for part of the Middle Ages in Bursill-Hall 1971.

The compact Preface in Staal 1972:xi-xv clearly states the aims of the Reader, the second being (p. xi) "to throw some light on an

interesting line of development within Western linguistics itself." What Staal says for the Sanskrit grammarians could easily be applied to Greek and Roman grammarians as well, especially because of the "circularity" involving philologists and linguists.

My brief note here is based on my own reading (and on discussions with students of the history of linguistics) of Staal's informative and extremely helpful introduction to each author and selection in the Reader. Particularly in his introduction to Pons 1740, the first work represented in the selection for "Foundations of Western Scholarship," Staal (p. 30) presents a most informative and comprehensive micro-essay on historiography.

To the information gathered by Staal I should like to add some minor data from various sources, first of all from Lucchesini 1819:II. The second paragraph of Staal 1972:30 reads:

Several missionaries who worked in India came in closer contact with Sanskrit and wrote grammars of Sanskrit in Latin, for which they most probably made use of the Indian tradition. Around 1660, Henrich [sic] Roth, S.J., composed a grammar of Sanskrit, the manuscript of which was recently discovered in the National Central Library in Rome by A. Camps, O.F.M. In 1790 a grammar was brought out in Rome by Paulinus of St. Bartholomew, O.C.D. Little is known about these grammars, and they do not seem to have any direct bearing on the origins of Indology.

The quoted paragraph is a bit puzzling, frankly, since there seems to be enough information around to warrant research in the fertile

-R4-

continuum of data available from the seventeenth century to date.

Moreover, with respect to "A. Camps, O.F.M.," it would have been helpful if a complete reference had been given: the Index, although listing Camps, directs the reader to p. 30--and nothing more. Also, the word "recently" is inexplicit. From Macdonell 1927:xvii, the third edition of a nearly seventy-five-year old basic work which seems to have escaped Staal's attention,⁴ we read part of a "Brief History of Sanskrit Grammar" (pp. x-xviii):

The first Sanskrit grammar ever written by a European was composed by the German missionary Heinrich Roth, a native of Augsburg, who died at Agra in 1668, as Superior of the Jesuit College in that city. This work was never published, but the manuscript is still preserved at Rome [emphasis mine].

It can be assumed thus that "recently" should refer at least to the nineteenth century, since Macdonell mentions his 1886 abridgement of Müller 1870.⁵ My own hunch is that the existence of the manuscript was always known--at least since Benfey 1869. (Staal fails to mention this work, although his bibliography contains Benfey 1874.)

With respect to "Paulinus of St. Bartholomew," I question whether "little is known" about his grammar (Staal 1972:30) since there is no indication that the secular name of that author was Johannes Philipp [sic] Wesdin whose life and contributions are illustrated in Ballini 1935. Ballini mentions how Paulinus used Hanxleden's earlier grammar (p. 224: "la prima che sia dovuta a un Europeo, ma che rimase inedita").⁶ Macdonell 1927:xvii had earlier said the same thing in the Benfeyan tradition.

-R5-

The most comprehensive presentation of Paulinus' contributions (besides Ballini 1935 and various entries in the Enciclopedia Treccani) is Lucchesini 1819:II, pp. 5-6 (pages 205-210 of this work contain a rich bibliography) but Lucchesini's work is as rare in the United States as that of Paulinus.⁷ I have never seen it quoted or mentioned anywhere, though it is of primary importance for the history of European linguistics in the eighteenth century. While so fortunate as to own Lucchesini's two volumes myself, I doubt that it is known even in Italy. Lucchesini is most likely biased in favor of Paulinus, but is fair enough to acknowledge the contributions of previous scholars such as Beschi 1738, Peanio 1772, and others who never appear anywhere.⁸ Is it that scholars who read Latin do not also read Italian? Whatever the reason, an objective analysis of these works, as well as a translation of basic treatises (similar to what Bursill-Hall is doing for the medieval period), would shed some light on what was happening BEFORE the highly touted 1786 communication by Sir William Jones.⁹

Speaking of 1786 (perhaps at the risk of seeming overly petulant) I should like to point out another missing link in the chain of historical events leading to Sir William Jones' communication before the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. This has to do with the position of Coeurdoux in the history of linguistics as already indicated en passant in Romeo 1966:223. Nearly a hundred years ago (1875), Breal wrote the following, based on proper documentation:¹⁰

On attribue d'ordinaire à William Jones l'honneur d'avoir, le premier, mis en lumière ce fait (the relationship between the languages of Europe and of India) qui est devenu l'axiome

-R6-

fondamental de la philologie indo-européenne. Mais vingt ans avant Jones et avant l'Institut de Calcutta, le même fait avait déjà été publiquement exposé à Paris. Il y aura bientôt un siècle que l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres a été saisie de la question.

Neither is this mentioned by Staal although it is part of a one hundred year tradition, from Benfey 1869 and Bopp 1875 (French edition) to Pagliaro 1930 and Bolelli 1965.

Quousque tandem? Of course Staal did not intend to write a 'complete' history of Indic linguistics seen by Western scholars. He hoped merely to set up some milestones along a route by which generations of English speaking and reading linguists are trained. Surely that trail has barely been opened by historians and historiographers. But if a scholar like Staal falls into the traditional snare, who else will pave the way to better understanding of the past? There is a real danger of failing to perceive some milestones if one's gaze is fixed on the other side of the trail or if one is simply traveling too fast.

As a matter of fact, this is not the first instance of milestones being unrecognized in English and American scholarship, and my fear is that once disregarded--or never acknowledged (for whatever reason) they cannot make their contribution to the study of history which is so necessary for the understanding of the present. Take the case of Sanctius-- a diversion here, but a case in point. In both the ninth and eleventh editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica, he is listed under Sánchez (Francisco). His name was not only dropped from subsequent editions, including the 1962 American version, but the latter does not even include

-R7-

him in the index (as is usual with names mentioned in articles but not entered singly). Luckily, in the case of the Britannica it was the best thing that could have happened to Sanctius, for according to the anonymous scholar compiling that entry in previous editions, "Sanctius (1523-1601) [was] successively professor of Greek and rhetoric at Salamanca, whose Minerva, first printed at that town in 1587, was long the standard work on Latin grammar." Compare, for its relationship to metrolinguistics nowadays, Lakoff 1969, Michael 1970, Calboli 1972, and Percival's "Deep and Surface Structure in Renaissance and Medieval Syntactic Theory" in Parret's forthcoming work.¹¹

Is the history of linguistics going to be written anew? We hope so, if only for the sake of Western linguistics, which has never been afflicted with ethnic complexes. We are eagerly awaiting "a new general introduction to the study of the Sanskrit grammarians, which is presently under preparation (Joshi, Kiparsky and Staal)" as indicated in Staal 1972:xi. Such a new introduction, dealing more comprehensively with our 'European' antecedents in the study of Sanskrit grammar, should evoke recognition of the scholarly role they performed despite primitive conditions and difficulty of communication. Knowing the diligence, devotion, and erudition of Professor Staal, we can feel assured that scholarship on this side of the Atlantic will be provided with a new and valuable experience by his work.

-R8-

NOTES

1. Just after the final draft of this note was completed for limited circulation, I was able to read one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of linguistics, i.e., Rosane Rocher, Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824): A Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1968). Too late to rewrite my note in the light of Rocher's contributions regarding Paulinus vs. Hamilton, I just wonder why Staal 1972 did not take into consideration Rocher's basic research reflecting the controversies surrounding Paulinus and Hamilton, although Rocher 1968 appears in the bibliography. I feel that Paulinus and Hamilton are very important for an objective evaluation of the 'paradigm' gripping early nineteenth century linguistics.

2. The Indiana University Series, Studies in History and Theory Linguistics, is likely the very first in the Sixties to promote, through Robins 1968 [1967], basic works on history of linguistics. However, we remember tendencies typified, say, by the Symposium presented at the 1962 meeting of the Anthropological Association entitled "History of Linguistics" and published in AL 5:1 (1963), and by the Newberry Library Conference on the History of Linguistics on February 1968 (the proceedings are still to be published, apparently through Indiana University Press). Forthcoming are several other works including the series organized by E.F.K. Koerner in connection with Historiographia Linguistica and appearing, hopefully, in Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science; Vol. 13 of Current Trends in Linguis-

Contemporary Linguistics edited by H. Parret.

3. Cf. Collart 1954; Romeo's "Classical Antiquity: Rome" forthcoming in Current Trends in Linguistics, Vol. 13:111-257 (particularly p. 194); and Romeo's "Notes for a Paradigmatic History of 'Latin' Linguistics" forthcoming in Parret above.

4. Macdonell is by no means a newcomer to Sanskrit scholarship in all its aspects, at least not in Europe. Some of his later works, such as Macdonell 1927 (third edition), are still being translated and published in European languages other than English. A rereading of Macdonell's "Brief History of Sanskrit Grammar" sheds additional light on Roth's contributions to Kircher 1667, who seems to have escaped Staal's attention, at least for the purpose of his Reader. It would probably have also been fruitful to analyze and correlate Zachariae's works reported by Macdonell 1927:xvii and Tagliavini 1969, I:21, note 2.

In singling out the lacunae above I do not mean to disparage anyone, for the writing of any segment of linguistics historiography is too large a task for anyone to cope with alone. I merely want to say that I am aware of no recent history of linguistics in English referring to Sanskrit and tracing its historiography according to scholarly work recorded in Latin. The one earlier product of a certain comprehensiveness based on Latin sources is still Pagliaro 1930:31 (which refers to Windisch 1917, and thus Tagliavini 1969): "...il suo [of Indic Philology] inizio è propriamente segnato dalla grammatica sanscrita di Fra Paolino di S. Bartolomeo pubblicata a Roma il 1790."

5. Benfey 1869 is one of those few nineteenth century scholars to elaborate upon the knowledge of Sanskrit tradition in the West starting

-R10-

with observations made by Sasseti. As a matter of fact, Benfey is still basic reading, much more informative than Staal 1972 so far as historiographic background is concerned. I refer the reader to Benfey 1869, Sect. II:333-357, entitled "Beachtung des Sanskrit durch Europäer bis zu Einführung desselben in die deutsche Wissenschaft," and in particular the paragraph on p. 335 beginning: "Im Jahr 1664..."

6. Again, Benfey 1869:335 had previously written of "der Jesuit Hanxleden, welcher 1699 nach Indien ging...Er war der erste Europäer welcher eine Sanskrit-Grammatik schrieb..." Additionally, on the same page Benfey gives plenty of notes and bibliographical information on the relationship between Paulinus (alias Wesdin) and Hanxleden, and refers the reader to Fr. von Schlegel 1808:XII.

7. A probably complete list of Paulinus is found in Lucchesini 1819, II:208-209. One should also read Barone 1888 for comprehensive analysis of Paulinus' exciting life, precursors, and scholarly contributions.

8. I take the opportunity here to stress the fact that Paulinus wrote not just one grammar, but two, i.e., the Sidharubam seu Grammatica Sanscritamica (Roma, 1790) mentioned by Staal, and the Vyacarana seu locupletissima Sanscritamicae linguae institutio (Roma: Typis S. Congr. de Propag. Fide, 1804). Cf. Windisch 1917-1920, I:20-22, and Library of Congress Catalog 115:67. Ironically, Paulinus is not remembered as he really should be, namely for his Dissertatio de antiquitate et affinitate linguarum Zendicae, Sanscritamicae et Germanicae (Padova, 1798) and his De latini sermonis origine et cum Orientalibus linguis connexione (Padova, 1802), two fundamental works in the historic and

-R11-

comparative Indo-European 'genetic' relationship. For additional data see Lucchesini 1819,II:6 and 208, and cf. Benfey 1869:352-357 for a critical evaluation of those works and effort to assemble data in a historiographic paradigm. Even the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, 24:159, lists two grammars. Contemporary editions, however, seem to have dropped Paulinus altogether. For examples of likely lacunae in the Graeco-Roman tradition, see Romeo and Tiberio 1971.

9. It would be useful to research the mutual influence (if any) between Sir William Jones, Paulinus, and Colebrooke (but that is another story!). Cf. Benfey 1869:608-609.

10. Michel Bréal's "Introduction" to Bopp 1885 is in itself a chapter on history of linguistics in the nineteenth century, ever-fresh reading that should be required for many young historians before they delve into Indo-European linguistics, especially respecting the position of Bopp in scholarship. Written originally in 1865 (see p. LVII), Bréal's "Introduction" was revised in 1875 (see pp. LVII-LVIII). Careful attention should be paid, however, to the position of Halhed 1778 with regard to Coeurdoux (for his 1776 documentation nach Bréal) since, as specifically reported by Benfey 1869: 261-262 and 343-344, Halhed had already declared (quoting from Benfey, p. 344): "I have been astonished to find this similitude of Sanskrit words with those of Persian...and even with Latin and Greek." The fate suffered by Halhed in contemporary scholarship, which tends to forget the only history represented by Benfey, is similar to Sanctius' in the finest editorial tradition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica whose 11th edition contained

-R12-

an anonymous summary of Benfey's entries.

11. I agree perfectly with Falk 1973:48: "Any knowledge a person may have of formatives and rules of word formation in Latin will be of relatively little help in creating words in English." Cf. p. 15:

"The layman's description of German, for example, as a 'gutteral' [emphasis mine] language is really quite uninformative."

-R13-

REFERENCES

- Ballini, Ambrogio. 1935. "Paolino da S. Bartolomeo (al secolo Johannes Philipp Wesdin)." Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, XXVI:224-225. Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana.
- Barone, Giuseppe. 1888. Vita, precursori ed opere del P. Paolino da S. Bartolommeo (Filippo Werdin [sic]). Contributo alla storia degli studi orientali in Europa. Napoli: Morano.
- Benfey, Theodor. 1869. Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland seit dem Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts mit einem Rückblick auf die früheren Zeiten. (Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Deutschland. Neuer Zeit. Achter Band.) München: Cotta.
- _____. 1874. Einleitung in die Grammatik der vedischen Sprache. Göttingen: Dieterich.
- Beschi, Costantino Giuseppe. 1738. Grammatica Latino-Tamulica, ubi de Tamulicae linguae idiomate... Trangambariae: Typis Missionis Danicae.
- Bolelli, Tristano. 1965. Per una storia della ricerca linguistica: Testi e note introduttive. Napoli: Morano.
- Bopp, Francois. 1884-1889. Grammaire comparée des langues indo-européennes comprenant le Sanscrit, le Zend, l'Arménien, le Grec, le Latin, le Lithuanien, l'Ancien Slave, le Gothique et l'Allemand. Traduite sur la seconde édition et précédé d'Introductions par M. Michel Bréal. Troisième édition. 5 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. [The index, vol. 5, was published in 1884; vol. 1 in 1885; and vol. 4 in 1889.]
- Bréal, Michel. 1885. "Introduction" to Bopp 1885, I: i-lviii.
- Brekke, Herbert H. (ed.) 1966. Grammaire générale et raisonnée, ou la grammaire du Port-Royal. [By C. Lancelot and A. Arnauld.] 2 vols. Tome I, Nouvelle impression en facsimilé de la troisième édition de 1676. Tome II, variantes et annotations. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromann.
- Bursill-Hall, G.L. 1971. Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages: The Doctrine of the Partes Orationis of the Modistae. (Approaches to Semiotics, 11.) The Hague: Mouton.
- Calboli, Gualtiero. 1972. La linguistica moderna e il latino. I casi. Bologna: Pàtron.

-R14-

Collart, Jean. 1954. "Pour une anthologie des textes grammaticaux latins."
Revue des Études Latines, XXXII: 88-92.

Current Trends in Linguistics. (ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok) Vol. 13: The
Historiography of Linguistics. The Hague: Mouton, (forthcoming in) 1974.

De Cara, Cesare A. 1884. Esame critico del sistema filologico e linguistico
applicato alla mitologia e alla scienza delle religioni. Prato:
Giachetti.

_____. 1887. Del presente stato degli studi linguistici: esame
critico. Prato: Giachetti.

Falk, Julia S. 1973. Linguistics and Language: A survey of Basic Concepts
and Applications. Lexington, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing.

Halhed, Nathaniel Brassey. 1778. A Grammar of the Bengali Language.
Hoogly, Bengal.

Kircher, Athanasius. 1667. Athanasii Kircheri e Soc. Jesu China monumentis,
quæ sacris quæ profanis... Amstelodami: Apud Joannem Janssonium à
Waesberge & Elizeum Weyerstraet.

Lakoff, Robin. 1969. Review of Brekle 1966 in Language, 45:343-364.

Lucchesini, Cesare. 1819. Della illustrazione delle lingue antiche e
moderne, e principalmente dell'italiana procurata nel Secolo XVIII
dagl'Italiani: Ragionamento storico e critico. Parte I: Della
lingua italiana e delle altre lingue moderne d'Europa. Parte II:
Delle lingue antiche e delle altre moderne, che si chiamano
orientali. Lucca: presso Francesco Baroni Stampatore Reale.

Macdonell, Arthur A. 1927. A Sanskrit Grammar for Students. 3rd ed.
London: Oxford University Press.

Michael, Ian. 1970. English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition
to 1800. Cambridge: University Press.

Müller, Friedrich Max. 1866. A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners. London:
Longmans, Green and Co. (2nd ed., 1870.)

Pagliariò, Antonino. 1930. Sommario di linguistica arioeuropea. Fascicolo
I: Cenni storici e questioni teoriche. (Pubblicazioni della Scuola
di Filologia Classica presso la R. Università di Roma, II, 2.J.)
Roma: L'Universale.

Parret, Herman. (ed.) 1974. History of Linguistic Thought and Contemporary
Linguistics. The Hague: Mouton, [forthcoming in] 1974.

-R15-

- Peanio, Clemente. 1772. Alphabetum Grandonico-Malabaricum, sive Samscrudonicum. Romae: Typis S. Congr. de Prop. Fide.
- Percival, W. Keith. "Deep and Surface Structure Concepts and Mediaeval Syntactic Theory." Forthcoming in Parret 1974.
- Pons, Jean Francois [de]. 1743. "Richesse et énergie de la langue Samskret, et comment et par qui elle a été réduite en Grammaire" in Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères, par quelque Missionnaires de la Compagnie de JESUS, XXVII Recueil, 222-227. Paris. [As reported by Staal 1972, Bibliography, but see Oeuvres de monsieur l'abbé de Pons. Paris: Prault, 1738.]
- Robins, R.H. 1968. A Short History of Linguistics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (1967).
- Romeo, Luigi. 1966. Review of Waterman 1963. Annali dell'Istituto Universitario di Napoli, Sezione Linguistica, VII (1966), 218-226.
- _____. "Classical Antiquity -- Rome." Forthcoming in Current Trends in Linguistics, 13:111-257.
- _____. "Notes for a Paradigmatic History of 'Latin' Linguistics." Forthcoming in Parret 1974.
- _____. and G.E. Tiberio. 1971. "Historiography of Linguistics and Rome's Scholarship." Language Sciences, 17:23-44.
- Staal, J.F. (ed.) 1972. A Reader on the Sanskrit Grammarians. (Studies in Linguistics, ed. by Samuel Jay Keyser.) Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Tagliavini, Carlo. 1969. Introduzione alla glottologia. 7^a edizione. 2 vols. Bologna: Pàtron.
- von Schelegel, Friedrich. 1808. Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder. Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer.
- Windisch, E. 1917-1920. Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indische Altertumskunde. 2 vols [G. Bühler, Grundriss der indo-arischn. Philologie.... I bd., 1hft., B.] Strassburg: Trübner.