

**THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND
OF AMERICAN LINGUISTICS**

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Papers of
The Third Golden Anniversary Symposium
of the Linguistic Society of America

Edited by HENRY M. HOENIGSWALD



1979

FORIS PUBLICATIONS
DORDRECHT-HOLLAND

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ISBN 90 70176 03 3

Photoset in Malta by Interprint (Malta) Ltd

Printed in Holland by Intercontinental Graphics Dordrecht

PREFACE

Fifty years, almost to the day, after its constituent session in New York, the Linguistic Society of America, holding its 1974 Annual Meeting in the same city, observed the anniversary with the third and final of a series of symposia. The European antecedents of American linguistics were to be the topic, and the participants were to be scholars who had given more than casual thought to the way in which things had developed on both sides of the Atlantic. Those invited—among them our distinguished honorary member, E. M. Uhlenbeck—accepted without hesitation. The program went off as planned, in three sessions held in the morning, afternoon, and evening of December 27 in the Grand Ballroom of the Commodore Hotel. There was lively discussion much of which, thanks to the tapes recorded by Susan Thomas, benefited the final editing of the papers.

As so often in the past, we are deeply indebted to the American Council of Learned Societies which, under the presidency of Frederick Burkhardt, made the Society the award needed to arrange the symposium.

H. M. H.

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INTRODUCTION

EINAR HAUGEN

In the preceding symposia of this Golden Anniversary we have considered first, at Amherst, Massachusetts, the present state of American linguistics, then, at Berkeley, California, the fundamental contributions which Indian languages have made to American thinking on linguistics, and now we turn to the third side of our triangular organon, the European background. In doing so, we go back well beyond the founding of the Linguistic Society, into the period of William Dwight Whitney, who was contemporary with the Neo-Grammarians, and who both learned from them and was critical of them. He established once and for all the importance of historical linguistics in America, and the value of the study of Sanskrit and Indo-European, lessons that have been followed by other early American linguists from Boas to Bloomfield. It would not be hard to list European linguists who have deeply influenced American linguistics: in plain fact, it would be impossible to consider American linguistics historically without taking into account the thinking of their European predecessors and contemporaries.

There are clearly two distinct paths by which European thinking has been diffused to America: by books and by persons. Books are primary, of course, since they are the instruments of our teaching and have been crossing the Atlantic from the days of Bopp and Brugmann to those of Saussure and Hjelmslev. But ideas have also been carried, and often more effectively, by men, either by those who studied in Europe and came back to tell what they had learned, like Whitney and Bloomfield, or by those who, born in Europe, came over here to live and teach, from Boas to Yakov Malkiel and Roman Jakobson. In the barbaric Middle Ages scholars wandered from university to university in search of learning. In our barbaric Modern Age scholars have wandered, many times in danger of their lives, from country to country in search of an opportunity to teach. Our dialect geography we owe to the work of the Swiss Jud and the French Gilliéron, brought to us by an Austrian,

Hans Kurath. Our structural linguistics we owe in many of its basic outlines to Slavic scholars of the Prague School and its predecessors, who gave us our tools, from the basic terminology of 'phoneme' and 'morpheme' to the very ideas on which our latest transformations are based. Our contemporary leaders claim to be renewing ideas overlooked by an intervening generation in the writings of Descartes, the School of Port-Royal, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Otto Jespersen. Whatever we as Americans may or may not have contributed to the linguistics of today and tomorrow, we have done it as an indissoluble part of that western culture which is the heir of Greece and Rome, with an occasional obeisance to the mysterious East of which we know chiefly the work of that Indo-European pioneer named Pāṇini.

During the first quarter century of the LSA, there was a strong drift away from the European moorings. Almost exactly midway in the half century that we are here celebrating I ventured to use my opportunity to give a presidential address in which I scolded my colleagues for their neglect of European linguistics (Haugen 1951). In private, colleagues and friends who had long suffered under the arrogance of European linguists scored me for my unpatriotic stand. I specifically said that I disapproved equally of 'those European linguists who overlook the contributions of Americans.' My plea then was for linguistics as an international science, one that would adopt a linguistic metalanguage and not a set of metadialects that required translation for one linguist to understand another.

It is not my job here today to decide whether things have gone as I then hoped. In some respects they have not; we sometimes seem to have gone from metadialects to metaidiolects, with each scholar speaking in his or her glossolalic tongue. But on the whole I am hopeful. Some consensus on basics seems to have been arrived at, with Europeans learning our novel terms, and Americans referring back to European authorities to legitimize their own claims. What none of us could fully foresee in 1951 was the enormous rise in physical mobility that linguists would enjoy, the influx of foreign scholars, the many exchange programs that have spread Americans over the world and have brought all the best to our shores and our universities for longer or shorter periods, or the rise of new countries and their adoption of linguistics. In short, there has been a globalization of linguistics, the greatest step forward that we can hope for. The dream of having at least one native linguist for every language, all trained in a metalanguage usable by all: this is no longer as remote or as unattainable as it once was.

The present symposium was organized and will be chaired by Henry Hoenigswald, who in many respects represents all of the ideals I have here expressed: born and educated in Europe, teaching nearly his entire career in America, skilled in the expounding and the practice not only of his specialty, historical linguistics, but of general linguistic theory as well. I am happy to present him to this distinguished audience, as the one who will chair all of our sessions here today.

REFERENCE

Haugen, Einar 1951. 'Directions in modern linguistics', *Language* 27:211-22.

THE PAST UP TO THE INTRODUCTION OF NEOGRAMMARIAN THOUGHT: WHITNEY AND EUROPE

ROSANE ROCHER

The chapter of American linguistics which has been allotted to me on this panel is the period going from the farthest past to the introduction of neogrammarian thought. Since Amerindian linguistics has been the subject of another panel, and since we are supposed here to consider European scholarship as a backdrop for the American scene, I thought that the most promising line for me might be to examine Whitney's ties with Europe. When Whitney died, he was acknowledged (notably by Ascoli, Hillebrandt, Müller) as THE person who had planted an offshoot of European linguistics on American soil. That his ties were particularly strong with Germany (as noted by Bradke, Delbrück, Jolly, Oldenberg, and Roth 1894), to the point that German scholars (Garbe, Jolly, Oldenberg) claimed him as one of their own, is not only a result of his personal history, but also a reflection of Germany's leadership at that time in linguistics and Sanskrit philology, the twin aspects of Whitney's scholarly activity.

Whitney's ties with Europe are too many to be fruitfully reviewed in the brief compass which I have been granted. I will therefore confine my remarks to three aspects only: first, the European setting which accounts for Whitney's rejection of Indian linguistics; second, his relation to Bopp and his place in the Boppian tradition; third, his reception of the neogrammarian views of language.

The single most important influence on Whitney's development came from Rudolf Roth. Of all the teachers he had in Germany – Weber, Bopp, Heyse, Lepsius –, and indeed of all European scholars, Roth is the only one with whom he collaborated for a lifetime,¹ and about

¹ Besides the Vedic concordance written by Whitney (1852) as a student under Roth's direction, and published in Weber's journal, they published a joint edition of the Atharvaveda (Roth-Whitney). Whitney left for Roth's use an index to the verses of the Atharvaveda (1857), also published in Weber's journal, and became a valued collaborator to Böhtlingk and Roth's Sanskrit dictionary, known as the Petersburg Lexicon. Because of Roth's preoccupation with the lexicon, continued work on the Atharvaveda fell mostly to Whitney, but the two scholars continued to confer (see Whitney 1875d).

whose work he never uttered anything but praise. Roth imparted to Whitney his distrust of native oriental traditions. Whitney's first publications after his period of study in Germany² echo Roth's view that Western scholarship must free itself from the fetters of native traditions. This was true for lexicography, both Iranian (Whitney 1854a) and Indian (1854b), as well as for Indian grammatology (1854c). In a survey of Avestan studies Whitney (1855b) strongly endorsed Roth's position against Spiegel's on this issue.³ He returned forcefully to this subject thirteen years later, in an article on Vedic interpretation (1868a), in which he sided with Roth as the principal apostle of independent Western scholarship, but also with John Muir and Max Müller,⁴ against the Hindu orientation of Theodor Goldstücker. It is fitting that Whitney's (1893a) contribution to a felicitation volume offered to Roth should consist of an indictment of Sāyana's commentary on the Atharvaveda. This was written in the last years of Whitney's life, and his correspondence with Roth notes their agreement on this issue.⁵ Indeed, whereas the authors of several necrologies (Barth 1894a:181;⁶ Macdonell 614) and testimonials sent to the Whitney memorial meeting (Garbe 85–86; Pischel 99; Windisch 104) label excessive his severity with the Indian native tradition, Roth (1894:101) and Roth alone singles it out for praise.

The Indian grammarians, like the Vedic commentators, were part of a native tradition which Whitney distrusted.⁷ In one respect, in the matter

² While a student in Germany Whitney had already sent as a first communication to the American Oriental Society a paper (1853) which was a direct emanation of his studies under Roth, and had translated an article by Roth (1853) for the Society's journal.

³ He was to reiterate these views later: see the abstract of his paper (1871d) on Roth's contributions to the interpretation of the Avesta read before the AOS, and the related paragraph in *The Nation* (1871f).

⁴ Although Whitney and Müller happened to be on the same side at this early date, Whitney could not refrain from pointing out that Müller affected a non-controversial tone in the debate. Later on, in the thick of their increasingly personal controversy, he was to downgrade Müller's work on the Rigveda, denying his claim to the authorship of the *editio princeps* of the Rigveda, and granting him only the title of 'responsible editor of the *editio princeps* of Sāyana's commentary' (1876a:786).

⁵ See the extract of a letter from Whitney to Roth, dated June 16, 1893, reproduced Silverstein 214. Note that Silverstein is mistaken in describing Whitney's contribution to the Roth Festschrift as a study of Hindu grammar.

⁶ He did not repeat this criticism in his testimonial (1894b) to the Whitney memorial meeting.

⁷ Of Indian science in general he said: 'it is the characteristic of Hindu science generally not to be able to stop when it has done enough' (1884a:290; reprinted Silverstein 298). His lack of sympathy extended to Indian thought, religious and philosophical: see his derogatory comments on the Bhagavadgītā, and his characterization of Hindu philosophies as 'examples of acute and hair-splitting subtlety' (1872).

of the accent, he accepted the correctness of their observations. But this was an isolated case: Pāṇini's teachings in this regard meshed with the data in the Prātiśākhya, the phonetic treatises attached to each Veda, in which Whitney showed great interest,⁸ and proved congruent with the facts recorded in accentuated texts.⁹ About Pāṇini and his followers, Roth, a Vedic scholar, had little to say specifically. Whitney, on the contrary, denounced them repeatedly,¹⁰ and fostered an aggressive attitude in his students.¹¹ With regard to Pāṇinian linguistics, a second

⁸ He edited and translated with notes the Atharvavedaprātiśākhya (1862a) and the Taittirīyaprātiśākhya with commentary (1871c), and reported to the AOS on several aspects of these studies (1862b; 1863b; 1871e, with full publication of this last report in 1880a). Note also that Whitney's expressly stated (1861:314; reprinted Silverstein 230) approval of the sonant-surd distinction recognized by the Indian grammarians, as opposed to the soft-hard distinction adopted by Lepsius and others refers specifically to observations of phoneticians, rather than to theories of Pāṇinian grammarians.

⁹ A survey of Whitney's writings on the Sanskrit accent reveals how reluctant he was to concede this. In his early critique (1855a) of Bopp's *Accentuationssystem*, written immediately upon returning from his period of study in Germany, Whitney accepted the validity of the Indian grammarians' observations, but dismissed their theories. His acceptance was also provisional, until enough accentuated texts would be published, and scrutinized for this particular purpose. Such a study, published the following year, took the grammarians to task, and reiterated his conviction that 'a rational and exhaustive theory of the principles producing the phenomena of verbal accentuation in Sanskrit, could only be arrived at by a careful study of the phenomena themselves, as laid before us in the various accented Vedic texts' (1856:388). In a later comprehensive study of the Sanskrit accent he was forced to concede the importance of the grammarians' testimony: 'In investigating the nature of the Sanskrit accent, we are not limited to the drawing of inferences from the facts of accentuation laid before us in the texts; our chief sources of knowledge are the Hindu grammarians, who have treated the subject, as they have most other departments of grammatical theory, with great fulness and acuteness. The great grammarian Pāṇini, whose work has become the acknowledged authority for all after time, is clear and intelligible in his statements as to accent; and upon the foundation of his work and its commentators alone, without access to any accented texts, Böhtlingk gave in 1843 an acute, intelligent, and very correct account both of the theory and of the main facts of Sanskrit accent, one that in many respects has not been surpassed or superseded by anything that has since appeared' (1871a:21; reprinted Silverstein 262). This uncharacteristic praise of the grammarians' work was tempered by more grudging comments in his usual style (1871a:22, 38; reprinted Silverstein 263, 279). In the recast of this article published in the second series of *Oriental and linguistic studies* (1874a:318–40), the encomium of Pāṇini was allowed to stand, but the admissions made in the first sentence of the above quotation were dropped (1874a:321), while the negative comments were consolidated (1874a:322–23). See also his criticisms (1871b; 1874d) of Haug's reliance on modern recitation practice of the Veda.

¹⁰ Besides criticisms of the Pāṇinian grammarians and of their modern admirers and followers scattered throughout his writings, he devoted three widely publicized articles to their systematic condemnation (1884a and 1893c, published in the *American Journal of Philology* and simultaneously read before the AOS: 1884c and 1893d; and 1893b, published in Europe).

¹¹ Edgren's (1882, first read before the AOS in 1878) attack on the Dhātupāṭhas (lists of

influence strengthened the general distrust of native science which he had learned from Roth: that of the Berlin school of Indology.

I will come back in a few moments to Whitney's relation to Bopp. For the time being I shall only say that, in spite of disagreements on other points, as far as his attitude toward Indian linguistics is concerned, Whitney was a direct product of the Berlin school of Indology founded by Bopp. It is interesting to compare him in this respect with Otto Böhtlingk, who was Roth's collaborator on the Petersburg lexicon, but who was a product of the rival Bonn school of Indology. Of the two scholars, Whitney was a linguist, Böhtlingk a philologist at heart. One might therefore have expected Whitney, the linguist, to react favorably to the linguistic methodology developed by Pāṇini and his followers. The opposite is true. It was the philologist, Böhtlingk, who was to found Pāṇinian studies in the West,¹² and who, when faced with the seemingly impossible task of describing the language of the Yakuts (Böhtlingk 1851), applied Pāṇinian methods of linguistic description. But Böhtlingk had been trained differently. After a brief stay in Berlin, where he was disappointed with Bopp, he had gone on to Bonn, to work under Lassen, and devote his Ph.D. dissertation (Böhtlingk 1839–40) to a study of Pāṇinian grammar.

Whereas the leaders of the Bonn school of Indology, Schlegel (1832: 31–37) and Lassen (1830), had taken Bopp to task for ignoring the testimony of the Indian grammarians, Whitney viewed it as Bopp's principal merit. He praised Bopp as 'the first who had knowledge and independence enough to begin effectively the work of subordinating Hindu to western science, using the materials and deductions of the former so far as they accorded with the superior methods of the latter, and turning his attention to the records of the language itself, as fast as they became accessible to him' (1884:295; reprinted Silverstein 303).

Footnote 11 continued

roots) antedates his master's most violent diatribes against the Sanskrit grammarians, yet shares their spirit. It preceded the publication of Whitney's list of Sanskrit roots (1885b, to supplement his Sanskrit grammar of 1879), which was based exclusively on texts, without consideration for the Dhātupāṭhas of the grammarians (see also the chronological list of roots, 1886, derived from this monograph). Edgren (1885) later read a second paper in the same vein.

¹² See Salemann and Oldenburg for a bibliographical list, complete up to 1891, of Böhtlingk's works. Note particularly his editions of Pāṇini's grammar (items 1 and 74) and of other grammatical treatises (items 7 and 17), his studies of grammatical texts (items 58, 59, 69, 75, 78, 92), and his attempts to use the works of the grammarians to analyze Sanskrit (items 4 and 5).

Even at the end of his life Whitney¹³ rose to Bopp's defense when younger scholars repeated Lassen's judgment that Bopp's neglect of Pāṇini was due to ignorance. Bopp knew Pāṇinian grammar well enough, and even used it too much, Whitney claimed. His merit was to have subjected Sanskrit for the first time to European grammatical science, and the new method of comparative grammar. And on this basis Whitney declared Bopp to have been 'the real Sanskrit teacher to Europe, in a manner and degree far beyond the reach of Lassen' (1893c:196). In this way he gave new expression to the claims of the Berlin school against its archrival Bonn. Characteristically the Bonn alumnus, Böhtlingk (1893), who was not generally fond of polemics, felt compelled to answer Whitney's attacks.¹⁴ In this dispute of the 1890's, the lines between the Berlin and Bonn schools of Indology were still clearly drawn, long after the original protagonists had disappeared.

Of course it would be easy to turn things around, and point out instead what exactly in Pāṇinian grammar offended Whitney. With regard to linguistic categories, Pāṇini ignores the dichotomy which, from Aristotle to modern times, is at the center of Western linguistic analysis, that of subject and predicate. Pāṇini's grammar is neither historical nor comparative, and was at odds with the thrust of nineteenth century linguistics. Pāṇini's rules, which are couched in the most general terms possible, shocked the scholar who made statistics and specificity the basis of his statements. All this is understandable enough. My point is that it offended other contemporary scholars less than it did Whitney.

Whitney was prepared to view Indian linguistics in two ways. Being Indian, it represented an attempt at scientific enquiry by an infant people, an attempt which had some interest, but only in the same way and to

¹³ In a stern critique (1893c) of several publications by two newcomers to the field: Bruno Liebich and R. Otto Franke. He was particularly harsh on Liebich, who had ventured (51-61) to refute his censures of the Sanskrit grammarians, and even accuse him of referring to them superficially and inaccurately in his Sanskrit grammar.

¹⁴ Although Böhtlingk and Whitney disagreed on this issue, they appreciated each other's scholarship. Whitney (1854b) had lauded Böhtlingk and Roth's Petersburg lexicon right from the start; Böhtlingk (1885) had written a favorable review of Whitney 1885b. Whitney's (1890) review of Böhtlingk's editions of two Upaniṣads was laudatory, with minor criticisms of Böhtlingk's respect for Pāṇinian teachings. Whitney was a much appreciated collaborator to Böhtlingk and Roth's lexicon, and he joined in the defense when Max Müller attacked the lexicon and derided its contributors as a mutual-admiration society (see Whitney's reactions in *The Nation*, 1876b, c, d, which testify to their rapidly worsening quarrel). Böhtlingk's decision to direct an article against Whitney in defense of Pāṇini is all the more remarkable for their previous close association.

the same extent that Indian astronomy¹⁵ could arouse curiosity. As linguistics, however, he could measure it only by the standard of his own nineteenth century Western linguistic principles.¹⁶ As such he found it wanting, and to be discarded altogether. It was left to his more philologically minded colleagues, like Böhtlingk, to accept Indian grammatical texts on their own terms. We thus have in the 1890's a replay of the discussion which, in the first half of the century, had opposed the two schools of Indology, that of Berlin, led by Bopp, which emphasized historical and comparative linguistics, and that of Bonn, led by Schlegel and Lassen, which stressed the study of Indian culture.

The position which Whitney took was to have important consequences. It reduced considerably the influence which Indian linguistics might have had in the West. In Sanskrit studies, Whitney's grammar was a landmark, and remains a classic. The fact that it turned its back on Pāṇinian grammar, has steered generations of Sanskritists away from Indian linguistic methods. In general linguistics, even though one can point to some Indian influence in phonetics, on the concept of zero, and the analysis of compounds (Robins 134–49), the Indian input has been fairly limited. Certainly it is almost absent in matters of syntax and semantics, where the Indian tradition can boast remarkable insights.

I now come to the second point which I mean to take up: Whitney's relation to Bopp, and his place within the Boppian tradition of comparative grammar.

Whitney's feelings toward Bopp were lukewarm at best. He was

¹⁵ A topic in which Whitney showed not a little interest. It originated in his extensive work (1860) on the notes given to the AOS by the missionary Burgess, which prompted him to read papers at meetings of the Society (1859a, b). He felt strongly enough about the subject to engage in controversy (1863a; 1866) with the French astronomer Biot, Max Müller, and his former teacher Albrecht Weber, and even to send an article (1865a) opposing H. T. Colebrooke to a society of which Colebrooke's son was the president. He summarized his views in the second series of *Oriental and linguistic studies* (1874a:341–421), but was drawn to return to the subject by the new edition of Colebrooke's *Miscellaneous essays* (Whitney 1874c), and by the use which some scholars made of astronomical evidence to date the Rigveda (Whitney 1885c; 1894b).

¹⁶ Whitney put his faith in logic and reason; he did not seem to entertain self-doubts, or to contemplate that his reasoning might be culturally or temporally bound. When he discerned 'monstrosities, unfounded in phonetic reason', he claimed that 'we not only may, but ought to, refuse to admit them, Pāṇini or no Pāṇini' (1890:410). He swept aside the grammarians' testimony when it conflicted with patterns recognized by comparative philology, branding them as 'no matter who authorizes them, . . . horrible barbarisms, offenses against the proprieties of universal Indo-European speech' (1893c:192). As for Pāṇini's syntactical categories, they were dismissed as 'crude' and 'unphilosophical' (1893c:171–72).

clearly disappointed with Bopp as a teacher, and with Bopp's last years as a scholar. Before he became Bopp's student in Berlin, Whitney had already been subjected indirectly to his influence. Both his brother, Josiah Dwight, and his first teacher at Yale, Salisbury, had attended Bopp's classes. He himself studied Sanskrit with the help of a copy of the second edition of Bopp's Sanskrit grammar, brought back by his brother, during the summer of 1849, even before entering Yale (see Lanman 10–13). A paper (1850) published while he was still a student at Yale, and devoted to a comparison of the Greek and Latin verbs, quoted Bopp's *Vergleichende Grammatik* as a primary source. It is then all the more remarkable that his comments on Bopp's scholarship after he returned from his study period in Germany, were less than complimentary. His review (1855a) of Bopp's *Accentuationssystem*, written at that time, is extremely critical. Even his obituary (1868b) of Bopp contains strong negative judgments;¹⁷ that should have been one occasion when praise only might be expected.

And yet Whitney was, over the years, a staunch defender of Boppian orthodoxy in comparative grammar. When new voices protested that too much emphasis was laid on Sanskrit in Indo-European studies, and that too little attention was paid to non-Indo-European families of languages, Whitney continued to stress the special place of Sanskrit within Indo-European, and the special importance of the Indo-European family within the general study of language.¹⁸ He also rejected Oppert's endeavor to drive a wedge between linguistic and genetic relationship.¹⁹ He was later to defend (1873c) the established Stammbaumtheorie against Johannes Schmidt's Wellentheorie.²⁰ He clung to the last to Bopp's theory that collocation, agglutination, and integration, had been the exclusive means by which Indo-European had

¹⁷ 'Bopp lived long enough to see his science carried further, in many points, by his followers than by himself. At the same time, he was not one who readily assimilated the results won by others. The later years of his life were comparatively unfruitful of valuable additions to science; and when at length he passed away, it was rather the presence of the man than the work of the scholar that was missed by us' (1868b:49).

¹⁸ Repeating (1867c:522–25; reprinted 1873a:200–3) against T. Hewitt Key the arguments he had put forward in his recent book (1867a:225–37).

¹⁹ 1867c:542–54; reprinted 1873a:224–38, arguing on the basis of his general considerations in 1867a:370–83 (incorporating 1867b).

²⁰ A widely circulated article – also in German translation – included the Wellentheorie, without mentioning Schmidt by name, in an enumeration of unacceptable views of language: 'another bold doubter makes a great stir by denying the ordinary family-tree theory of linguistic kinship, and putting in its place a theory of wave-motion, propagated from a centre' (Whitney 1875b:714; German version 1875c:260).