

*Founders of Western Indology: August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Henry Thomas Colebrooke in correspondence 1820–1837.* By Rosane Rocher & Ludo Rocher. (= *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 84.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013, xv + 205 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-06878-9. €48 (PB).

Reviewed by Leonid Kulikov (Universiteit Gent)

The present volume contains more than fifty letters written by two great scholars active in the first decades of western Indology, the German philologist and linguist August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1789) and the British Indologist Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837). It can be considered, in a sense, as a sequel (or, rather, as an epistolary appendix) to the monograph dedicated to H. T. Colebrooke that was published by the editors one year before (Rocher & Rocher 2012).

The value of this epistolary heritage left by the two great scholars for the history of humanities is made clear by the editors, who explain in their Introduction (p. 1):

The ways in which these two men, dissimilar in personal circumstances and professions, temperament and education, as well as in focus and goals, consulted with one another illuminate the conditions and challenges that presided over the founding of western Indology as a scholarly discipline and as a part of a program of education.

The book opens with a short Preface that delineates the aim of this publication and provides necessary information about the archival sources.

An extensive Introduction (1–21) offers short biographies of the two scholars, focusing, in particular, on the rise of their interest in classical Indian studies. The authors show that, quite amazingly, in spite of their very different biographical and educational backgrounds (Colebrooke never attended school and university in Europe, learning Sanskrit from traditional Indian scholars, while Schlegel obtained classical university education), both of them shared an inexhaustible interest in classical India, which arose, for both of them, due to quite fortuitous circumstances. In case of Schlegel, it was caused by the early death of his brother Karl (1771–1789), who spent seven years in India and participated, as an adjutant, in military operations. Karl's untimely death ended the rise of a potentially deep scholar of India but inspired the profound interest of his two brothers, Friedrich

(1773–1829) and August Wilhelm, in India and connected their lives with classical Indology. August further witnessed Friedrich's work on his book *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (F. Schlegel 1808), which became epoch-making in Indian and Indo-European studies. He started learning Sanskrit in Paris in 1814, attending classes of the French professor Antoine-Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832), who held the first chair of Sanskrit founded in Europe, and, more extensively and effectively, of the great German linguist Franz Bopp (1791–1867), then a 23-year-old scholar, later to become professor of comparative grammar and Sanskrit in Berlin and the founder of Indo-European comparative linguistics.

Importantly, Schlegel's education was heavily influenced by the tradition of linguistic analysis adopted in classical philology and Greek and Latin grammatical studies. This created a solid basis for his seminal observations that marked the beginnings of typology as a separate branch of linguistics, notably his famous formulation of the three main types of languages — 'isolating', 'agglutinative', and 'inflectional' ('fusional')<sup>1</sup> — elaborating the twofold distinction proposed ten years earlier by his brother Friedrich in his 1808 book (see the evaluation of this generalization by Greenberg 1974: 37–38).

This contrast between the research attitudes of the two scholars seems to continue, *mutatis mutandis*, into modern times, underlying two opposite approaches (though with many intermediary subtypes and nuances) to the study of ancient Hindu religion, Sanskrit philology and linguistic material. It is interesting to note that a similar difference is to be found between two approaches to editing ancient Indian (in particular, Sanskrit) texts: Schlegel gave clear priority to critical editions over mere reprinting of manuscripts (ordered in great number by Colebrooke in Calcutta), dismissed by him as "manuscrits multipliés par l'impression" (A. Schlegel 1832: 46). Quite consistently, Schlegel further denied the scholarly value of translations of texts before critical editions of them had been undertaken, spurning such activities as "mettre la charrue devant les bœufs" (*ibid.*: 56).

To conclude the list of the most remarkable differences between the two great Indologists, one should mention that Colebrooke showed virtually no interest in taking any academic position, nor in teaching or popularizing his science, while Schlegel obviously paid serious attention to this sphere, teaching (at the University of Bonn), educating young researchers, publishing in periodicals, and even launching his own journal, *Indische Bibliothek*, which would play an important role in the development of western Indology. One of the most eminent of his

---

1. In Schlegel's terminology, "les langues sans aucune structure grammaticale, les langues qui emploient des affixes, et les langues à inflexions" (A. Schlegel 1818: 14).

students was Christian Lassen (1800–1876), one of the founders of Sanskrit studies in Germany. Another great name to be mentioned here is the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), Schlegel’s student and disciple, mentioned on p. 15, n. 61, but missing from the index.

This interesting and profound comparative analysis of the two scholars, both ardently dedicated to classical Indology, makes it clear how valuable and instructive their correspondence is for the history of Indological studies in Europe and for the history of the human sciences in general.

The analytical Introduction is followed by four chronologically ordered chapters. Each chapter opens with a short introduction briefly characterizing the corresponding period of the life of the two scholars, followed by letters (or drafts) from this period. The texts of the letters are conveniently provided with necessary notes and commentaries, mostly biographical and bibliographical, adding, where necessary, other relevant information.

Chapter 1, “First contact and queries (1820–1823)”, encompasses the period of the first acquaintance of Schlegel with Sanskrit. Soon after studying Sanskrit with Franz Bopp, Schlegel was appointed professor of literature and art history in Bonn, where he offered, in 1819, his first Indological course, “Allgemeine Uebersicht der indischen Althertümer und Litteratur.” In 1820 he started publishing *Indische Bibliothek*, and the growing need for Indian books caused him to seek out contacts with colleagues in India, among whom Colebrooke was undoubtedly one of the greatest authorities. The authors offer a detailed account of Schlegel’s opinion of Colebrooke before their first contact (initiated by a letter written by Schlegel in July 1820) and show how it determined the character of their relationship.

Chapter 2, “Schlegel in England (13 September–12 November 1823)”, contains only one letter written by Schlegel after he spent two months in England, where he met Colebrooke in person, along with several other British scholars.

Chapter 3, “Scholarship and Education (December 1823–May 1826)”, presents a vivid correspondence, often of more personal character, due to the fact that Colebrooke’s son John, together with another pupil, Patrick Johnston, were being tutored by Schlegel, both staying at Schlegel’s home.

Chapter 4, “Memories (1827–1837)”, contains a few letters written after the departure of John Colebrooke from Schlegel’s house and covers the last ten years of Colebrooke’s life, when their relations became somewhat alienated. In fact, the last letter written by Colebrooke and Schlegel’s response date from February and March 1828, respectively — a few months after John, aged 16, committed suicide in November 1827.

The book concludes with bibliographical references and an index (including names, literary works etc.).

Altogether, the materials published in the volume can be considered an invaluable addendum to existing biographies of the two great scholars (especially August Schlegel, whose personality is paid somewhat more attention in this book), based exclusively on the most reliable epistolary evidence. Furthermore, the volume contains rich information which helps us to evaluate the quality of research and publications (grammars, dictionaries, research papers, anthologies etc.) in the field, putting the reader into the atmosphere of Indological research almost 200 years ago. The editors have done enormous work providing all letters with detailed comments and explanations. Of course, minor oversights are almost unavoidable in this kind of project. Thus the enigmatic term ‘Silanese’ in a letter of Colebrook (“one [translation] in Silanese or Pali”, p. 50) is worthy of at least a brief explanation. It is likely to represent an older (or non-standard) spelling of *Ceylonese* and thus might perhaps mean, in more accurate terms, ‘Sinhalese’. But such minor (and very few) flaws by no means diminish the value of the great job performed by the editors. Numerous observations richly scattered throughout the main text (letters and introductions) and footnotes help the reader to evaluate the contribution of Schlegel and Colebrooke to the development of Sanskrit scholarship and to see how they figured out themselves the most important tasks of their science. Thus, on p. 64, a long footnote (160) accompanying Schlegel’s brief mention of Horace H. Wilson’s (1786–1860) 1819 Sanskrit dictionary explains that Schlegel was very preoccupied with possible improvements in Sanskrit dictionaries, paying particular attention to the issue of reordering the multiple meanings of polysemous words.

The volume brings to light materials that are of great value for research into the history of classical European Indology in general and Sanskrit studies in Europe in particular. Alongside a few other recent works, for instance, Brückner & Zeller’s (2008) publication of Otto Böhtlingk’s (1815–1904) letters to Rudolf (von) Roth (1821–1895), or Rocher & Rocher (2012), it illuminates the first steps of the new science, which was then in its infancy. All Sanskritists, Indologists and historians of science should be immensely thankful to the editors for this careful, time-consuming work.

## REFERENCES

- Brückner, Heidrun & Gabrielle Zeller, Hrsg. 2008. *Otto Böhtlingk an Rudolf Roth: Briefe zum Petersburger Wörterbuch 1852–1885*. Bearbeitet von Agnes Stache-Weiske. (= *Glasesapp-Stiftung*, 45.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Greenberg, Joseph. 1974. *Language Typology: A historical and analytic overview*. The Hague: Mouton.

- Rocher, Rosane & Ludo Rocher. 2012. *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company*. London: Routledge.
- Schlegel, August Wilhelm [von]. 1818. *Observations sur la langue et la littérature provençales*. Paris: Librairie Grecque-Latine-Allemande.
- Schlegel, August Wilhelm. 1832. *Réflexions sur l'étude des langues asiatiques adressées à Sir James Mackintosh; suivies d'une lettre à M. Horace Hayman Wilson*. Bonn: Weber; Paris: Maze.
- Schlegel, Friedrich [von]. 1808. *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde*. Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer. (New ed. with an introduction in English by Sebastiano Timpanaro (transl. from the Italian by J. Peter Maher), ed. with a preface by E.F.K. Koerner. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1977.)
- Wilson, Horace H[ayman]. 1819. *A Dictionary, Sanscrit and English, translated, amended and enlarged from an original compilation prepared by learned natives for the College of Fort William*. Calcutta: Hindoostanee Press.

*Reviewer's address:*

Leonid Kulikov  
Ghent University  
Linguistics Department  
Blandijnberg 2  
B-9000 GHENT  
B e l g i u m  
e-mail: Leonid.Kulikov@UGent.be