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HEIDRUN BRÜCKNER, GABRIELE ZELLER (hrsg.), *Otto Böhtlingk an Rudolf Roth: Briefe zum Petersburger Wörterbuch 1852–1885*, bearbeitet von Agnes Stache-Weiske, Glaser-Stiftung 45, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008, pp. xxii+870. ISBN 978-3-447-05641-0 / 3-447-05641-X (hbk), € 98.00

This volume includes almost 500 letters written by one of the greatest Sanskritists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Otto Böhtlingk (1815–1904), between 1852 and 1885 to his colleague, the no less eminent scholar Rudolf Roth (1821–1895), in the course of their joint work on the famous (*Great*) *Petersburg Dictionary of Sanskrit* (Böhtlingk and Roth 1855–75). This dictionary still stands as the unsurpassed achievement among Sanskrit dictionaries.<sup>1</sup> The letters, all addressed to Tübingen (where Roth was living during this period), were written in the different places Böhtlingk was working on the dictionary: St Petersburg and small spa villages and summer resorts nearby, such as Lepelä or Wendelä (1852–1868); a number of cities visited by Böhtlingk during his trip to Germany and Switzerland in 1866 (Berlin, Jena, Weimar, Zürich, Bern); Jena (1868–1881); and Leipzig (the last letter, dated 28 April 1885). This historiographic treasure was recently discovered by Gabrielle Zeller (Tübingen University) in the Tübingen University Library and published by her and Heidrun Brückner (University of Würzburg). The editors thus rendered an immense service to all those interested in the history of Sanskrit studies in Europe.

The book opens with a very interesting and informative editorial Preface, which clarifies the scientific background of this greatest academic indological project of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The bulk of letters are dedicated to the minute details of the titanic work performed by Böhtlingk and Roth over more than 30 years. Framed by remarks about many details from Böhtlingk's everyday life (departure to and return from resorts, health of family members, visits of friends and colleagues), these letters contain thousands of conjectures, emendations, and corrections (in references, translations of forms and quotations, etc.) scattered throughout the pages of the volume.

Not only does this epistolary monument allow the reader to peep into the intellectual 'back room' of the great scientist; it also half opens the curtain hiding

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<sup>1</sup> The gigantic Indian project entitled the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles*, which now comprises 7 volumes (Ghatage et al. 1976–), still remains on letter A.

the interlacement of the academic and personal relations of the academic society of that remote past. We can clearly see the great sympathy of Otto Böhtlingk towards Albrecht Weber; his friendly and encouraging attitude towards a scholar of the younger generation, Berthold Delbrück;<sup>2</sup> his reserved and cool terms with another eminent Sanskritist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Max Müller;<sup>3</sup> and his negative evaluation of Theodor Benfey.

The letters are accompanied by ample footnotes, mostly of biographical and bibliographical character, carefully compiled by the editors, who provide the reader with all necessary personalia and references to the scholarly work mentioned by Böhtlingk.

The book concludes with an index of names. An index of the roots and forms discussed would perhaps have been of some use as well, but is not really necessary since the presentation largely follows Sanskrit (Devanāgarī) alphabetic order. Of special interest might have been an index of passages: the book offers quite a rich collection of short discussions, references, or conjectures about some difficult and unclear passages from Vedic, Epic and Classical Sanskrit. But performing this task would of course have heavily delayed the work of the editors, titanic and time-consuming as it was and for which all indologists and historians of learning should be immensely thankful to them.

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Leonid KULIKOV, Ghent University

<sup>2</sup> Delbrück's name first appears in the letter dated 11/23 March 1867, where '[e]in Dr. Delbrück, der hier [in St Petersburg—L.K.] fleißig den R[g]V[eda] studirt hat' (p. 604) is mentioned. In the letter dated 13 October 1870, written in Jena, Böhtlingk mentions his intention to introduce Delbrück to the academic community ('Heute führe ich ihn im Club ein', p. 710). We also learn from the letter of 10 November 1870 that it was Böhtlingk who had encouraged Delbrück to undertake an ambitious project aimed at a collection of verbal forms from the Ṛgveda ('Ich habe Delbrück aufgefordert alle Verbalformen im R[g]V[eda] zu sammeln und zusammenzustellen', p. 712), which resulted in the seminal work Delbrück 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Noteworthy is the crushing criticisms and characteristics given by Otto Böhtlingk to Max Müller, such as the following: 'Müller ist es, wie man aus Allem ersieht, nicht sowohl um die Wahrheit, als um den momentanen Eindruck, die Popularität, zu thun' (letter of 21 March/2 April 1855, p. 117).