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Obituary

Henk Bodewitz (1939–2022)

On 18 August 2022, Henk Bodewitz, former editor-in-chief of the *Indo-Iranian Journal* and emeritus professor of Sanskrit at Leiden University, passed away in his hometown of Utrecht.

Hendrik Wilhelm Bodewitz was born on 13 October 1939 in Gramsbergen, the son of Johan Adriaan and Jennigjen (Lenters) Bodewitz. After Gymnasium between 1952–1958, he entered Utrecht University, where he received a BA in 1963 in Classical Languages, and an MA in 1966 in Indo-Iranian Studies. He completed his PhD research at the same university in 1973 under Jan Gonda. From 1966 to 1968 he was assistant professor at Utrecht University, and from 1969 to 1976 associate professor at Leiden University. In 1976 Bodewitz returned to Utrecht where he was appointed professor of Sanskrit and Indo-European Languages, succeeding his teacher Gonda. He held this position until 1992, the year in which Indology in Utrecht was merged with the department in Leiden. This merger led to his return to Leiden University where he was appointed professor of Sanskrit, a post he held from 1992 to 2002. Thanks to the leadership of Henk Bodewitz, the study of South Asia, and in particular that of Sanskrit and the ancient cultures of South Asia, continues to flourish in Leiden.

Henk Bodewitz's scientific work was devoted to the study of Vedic literature and the culture expressed in it. His dissertation, entitled *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1–65: Translation and Commentary, with a Study: Agnihotra and Prāṇāgnihotra* (1973; published as *Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina* 17), concerns, as the title suggests, a detailed philological study of a Vedic text on the fire offering (*agnihotra*). The strong philological character of Bodewitz's work is also apparent from titles such as *The Daily Evening and Morning Offering (Agnihotra) according to the Brāhmaṇas* (1976; *Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina* 21), *The Jyotiṣṭoma Ritual: Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 66–364* (1990; *Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina* 34), and *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad: Translation and Commentary with an Appendix Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka IX–XI* (2002; *Groningen Oriental Studies* 16). Particularly striking is the attention to detail, and the empathetic nature of his work, based on the conviction that Vedic culture should be understood first and foremost from within, without an imposed theoretical framework from the outside. This

attitude also comes through in his last work, a collection of previously published studies, *Vedic Cosmology and Ethics* (2019; Gonda Indological Studies 19).

Besides being an academic and teacher, Henk Bodewitz was also a committed director and editor. For several years he was dean of the Faculty of Arts at Utrecht University and chairman of WOTRO Science for Global Development (NWO). In 1987, he was appointed as a member of the Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW), where he also performed board work, perhaps most notably as the first Chair of the Jan Gonda Fund, which continues to support the study of Classical Indology in the Netherlands. From 1990 to 2002, Bodewitz served as editor-in-chief of the *Indo-Iranian Journal*. In 1993, he founded the *Gonda Indological Studies* book series, which just as this journal, continues to be an active player in the Indological field.

Henk Bodewitz had a strong personality, a good dose of humor, and he did not mince his words. A quote from his farewell speech as professor of Sanskrit at Leiden University (*De late 'ontdekking' van het Sanskrit en de Oudindische cultuur in Europa*, 2002) is illustrative of his character, as he termed himself: "someone who has continuously switched from one side to the other with the flexibility of an Afghan (from Utrecht to Leiden, from Leiden to Utrecht, from Utrecht to Leiden) should not complain."

Henk Bodewitz died in Utrecht, three weeks after his wife Janneke. They are survived by their two children, Jord and Wanda, and two grandchildren, Soesja and Kai.

A full bibliography can be found on the website Dutch Studies on South Asia, Tibet and classical Southeast Asia maintained by Dory Heilijgers: <https://www.dutchstudies-satsea.nl/participants/hendrik-wilhelm-henk-bodewitz/>.

Peter C. Bisschop