

Foreword

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History of Linguistics 1996: Volume 1: Traditions in Linguistics Worldwide

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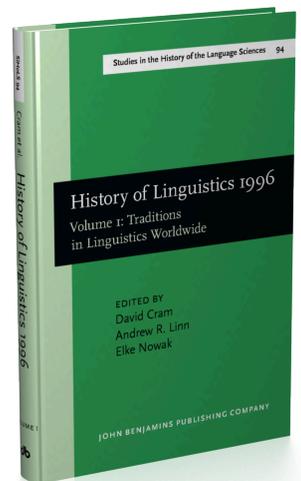
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FOREWORD

The papers printed here are a selection from those presented at the *Seventh International Conference on the History of Linguistics* which was held at Keble College, Oxford, 12-17 September 1996. Upwards of a hundred titles were accepted by the Selection Committee¹ for inclusion in the conference programme, on topics representing the full range of current historiographical research. It was subsequently almost eerie to find that, although delegates from abroad were arriving by plane, train and bus from twenty-nine different countries, not a single paper announced in the programme failed to be presented. Perhaps the remarkable spell of bright fine weather — an unexpected Indian summer — had something to do with this.

The success of the event posed a problem as regards the published proceedings, since even after a second vetting by the Committee, the pool of papers was over-large. Two strategies present themselves in such circumstances: one is to cherry-pick a small number of outstanding papers, at the risk of unrepresentative coverage; the other is to aim at broadly representative coverage, at the risk of including a few less substantial contributions in areas of significant interest. Commercial considerations alone would of course weight the choice heavily in favour of the first option, and it is greatly to the credit of John Benjamins that his company very generously gave the go-ahead for a publication of the second sort. He is to be thanked in particular for the encouragement this will give to the younger scholars starting out on their research in these areas.

It was decided that the proceedings should take the form of two relatively independent volumes. The first, presented here, is organised around the variety of traditions in linguistics world-wide, starting with a section devoted to “missionary linguistics”, a term which is not universally accepted but which conveniently covers the range of first contacts between Europeans and non-European languages. Subsequent sections treat diverse linguistic traditions from the Celtic to the Chinese and the Georgian to the Japanese. The second volume is organized chronologically, beginning with the report of a round-table discussion on problems in translating ancient Greek grammatical texts, and with

¹ A list of the members of the Selection Committee, which included two representatives of each of the national societies devoted to the history of linguistics, can be found on page xi below.

subsequent sections devoted to the following centuries. In both volumes problems of protocol and precedence have been solved by adopting a simple alphabetic order for sections and for papers within a section.

Since this is the primary place where thanks can be registered to those whose help made the conference itself possible, the late Leslie Seiffert should be remembered here in first place, since it was he who extended the initial invitation for the conference to be held in Oxford, and who would have presided had not his death tragically intervened. The eventual conference co-ordinator would like to express thanks for help from various quarters, in particular to members of the Henry Sweet Society, who officially hosted the event, to the organisers of the two preceding meetings, Anders Ahlqvist and Kurt Jankowsky, for their advice and encouragement, to the staff of Keble College for the excellent accommodation and board and to Jesus College for coping with the mail. We were grateful to Pierre Swiggers and Alfons Wouters for organising the session on translating ancient grammatical texts. The local team was a small one, each being the more importantly load-bearing: special thanks are due to Lance Brown, David Harley and Dorothy Johnson who held fort in the conference office.

The proceedings have been produced by a team of three, as undersigned, the papers being divided equally for academic editing and for correspondence with authors where necessary. The final editing and formatting was done at Oxford, and during this stage Anthony Parry-Jones was of major support, contributing his expertise not just as a theoretical linguist but more crucially as a computing trouble-shooter. Tony Klijnsmit helped with formatting the Hebrew text in the paper by David Téné, who very sadly died in the year following the conference. Last but not least, Anke de Looper, the desk-editor for the volume, must be thanked for her professional and personal support in bringing the project to fruition. Publication is later than expected, but we hope that the proverb holds: *Ende gut, alles gut*.

David Cram (editor)
Andrew Linn, Elke Nowak (co-editors)

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