

Foreword to the Series

This is the first volume of a new series called *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies* – which is not intended to be a simple updating of Bühler's great collection of monographs, i. e. the *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde* that began to appear at the end of the 19th century. Scope, objectives and methods of Indology and South Asian Studies have changed considerably since then. We are no longer as optimistic as our predecessors nor, hopefully, as selective (or limited) in our approach as they were a hundred years ago when attempting a first summary of the knowledge, accumulated in the first 100 years of Indology and indeed considerable, within the covers of a few volumes.

The new *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies* thus do not aim at a simple positivistic listing up of facts and figures in a limited number of fields. Rather, we aim at a comprehensive coverage of all the fields of South Asian Studies, including, wherever possible, the indigenous understanding of South Asian Culture in all its aspects. Certain areas and fields, like literary or religious history where Indian *śāstric* sciences do not possess a corresponding approach, will, it is true, have to be described by using Western norms and approaches only (e.g. philology in the strict sense or history). The new *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies* will therefore reflect the ongoing complex process of the “encounter” and the “dialogue” between India and the West, and (and, as far as possible, also the “encounters” of India with East and South East Asia as well as that with the Near East and Central Asia).

We aim at a complete description of the various aspects of South Asian Civilization, based, first of all, though of course not exclusively, on texts – in short, a description which is philological, philology being understood as a ‘Kulturwissenschaft’ based on texts. *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies*, however, go beyond what some may regard as the narrow confines of the discipline they call “Indology” as opposed to a supposedly wider discipline of “Indian” or “South Asian Studies”. This necessitates the investigation and comparison of all aspects of South Asian culture, especially but not only of those reflected in the texts. Note must therefore be taken of fields as diverse as metrics, medicine, astronomy, flora and fauna, local geography, music, or the belief systems of tribal peoples.

The aim of each volume in the series is a brief and structured presentation of reliable knowledge in each particular field, discipline or sub-discipline, including all important facts and figures expected in a survey as well as the more important literature on the subject treated; and of course a discussion of the outstanding problems in each field will be added, as also of research desiderata or possible future avenues of research.

We propose to include reflections on method, ways of procedure commonly agreed upon, and the rarely mentioned, often unconscious presuppositions we work on— in short, we wish to include, wherever advisable, a discussion of the methodology of the various subjects treated in *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies*.

We also wish to contribute to discussion in the field of the history of ideas as revealed by the texts and by other documents of the South Asian cultures, and, naturally enough, this will include treatment of those areas which bridge two or more traditional disciplines.

Indian Philology and South Asian Studies are divided into various sections dealing with the major branches of enquiry: language, philosophy, history, religion, art, etc.; each section has its own editor. We have a framework in mind but we will be flexible in order to accommodate new developments in the various fields, and the list will hence be updated from time to time. And this is just one of many reasons for the decision to publish the plan of *Indian Philology and South Asian Studies* only later, and to count the volumes of the series in the order the authors present them for publication.

It should, however, be noted that we will also publish volumes that do not fall within one sole section, or even part of a section of the system adopted by us, but which nevertheless are, in our view, of great significance for Indian Philology and South Asian Studies. This holds good for the present volume, too, with which the series begins. For archaeology and the study of the prehistory and early history of South Asia have made great progress over the past fifty years. However, the evaluation of the materials discovered and studied has suffered from a number of drawbacks, among which the following are important: (a) the persistence of older models of interpretation in archaeology, such as the identification of a certain material culture with a certain "people"; (b) the (recently increasing) nationalistic trend in the evaluation of texts and archaeological finds; and (c), most importantly, a vicious circle in the interpretation of the various materials which still persists in the exchange of opinions and results between archaeologists, linguists, philologists and historians. For example, archaeologists all too frequently build the interpretation of their materials on the work of philologists and linguists, who, in their turn, have reached their conclusions on the basis of the work of archaeologists

— who have depended on the latter. This vicious circle has to be broken through close cooperation between scholars of the said disciplines. It is hoped that the proceedings of the Toronto Conference now being published are a beginning in this sense. The present volume offers an up-to-date view of the problems confronting the study of the earliest (pre-) historic period in South Asia, neighbouring Iran and Central Asia as far as these areas are of importance for the prehistory of South Asia.

Finally we should like to state that we invite all colleagues to make proposals and to participate in this great undertaking. It can be carried out only with the enthusiastic assistance of all interested in the progress of our discipline.

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