

GERMAN LINGUISTS AND PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is not quite clear why German linguists got interested in Philippine languages since the Philippines has never been within the German sphere of influence and most of these linguists did not even set foot on Philippine soil. But it is a fact that throughout the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, quite a number of German linguists did studies on Philippine languages or used data from Philippine languages for their comparative studies. By German linguists I mean not only linguists from Germany proper, but also linguists from German-speaking countries like Austria and Switzerland. Here, I will try to give a chronological survey of these linguists and their most important works.

2. NINETEENTH CENTURY LINGUISTS

The first German study of a Philippine language appeared in 1803 in Vienna — *Ueber die Tagalische Sprache* by Franz Carl Alter. The author, an Austrian Jesuit, taught Greek at the University of Vienna, and was quite well-known for his publications on Sanskrit and the Slavonic languages. One day in 1799, someone showed him a manuscript of a Spanish-Tagalog dictionary and asked him what the Tagalog language was. He could not answer this question immediately and had to admit that he did not know this language and had never read or heard anything about it. But his curiosity was aroused and he found Tagalog mentioned in Pallas (1787) *Vocabularium catharinae*, a compilation of words from about 200 languages. Thinking that the manuscript in his hands was of great importance for philologists, Alter started to compare its entries with other Asian languages and published the result of his endeavors in 1803. His work has 273 entries under Latin headings.

For the history of Philippine linguistics it would be interesting to find out on what Spanish manuscript Alter based his study. (I have discussed this problem more extensively in my introduction to my translation of Alter.) There is some evidence that it could be an earlier version or a copy of Francisco Blancas de San Joseph's dictionary. It is very closely related to the manuscript found at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Unfortunately, Alter either did not know Spanish very well or he could not decipher the manuscript, so that his study is full of errors. But whatever the scientific value of his book, it is still the first comparative study of Austronesian languages, 35 years before Humboldt's *Ueber die Kawi Sprache* (1838).

Alter was followed by Johann Christoph Adelung, who published between 1806 and 1817 the four volumes of his *Mithridates*, a general study of languages based on the "Our Father" in almost 500 languages. The first volume gives a general description of the Philippines, followed by a bibliography and a short grammatical sketch of Tagalog.

Then comes the "Our Father" in the Tagalog of 1593 and the "Our Father" in "modern" Tagalog. The first "Our Father" is obviously from the *Doctrina Cristiana* of 1593, the first book printed in the Philippines. Both versions are followed by three pages of grammatical analysis of every word, an exercise which is likewise repeated for the subsequent Bisayan version of "Our Father".

Alter, Adelung, and Pallas (the latter a German scientist in the service of the Russian empress Catherine) do not yet belong to the school of historical linguistics. They were compilers and continued an eighteenth century tradition.

The nineteenth century was the era of comparative and historical linguistics, more especially of the Indo-European languages. This period of linguistics was dominated by German scholarship. The European discovery of Sanskrit was the start of this development, and some early scholars in historical linguistics were Sanskritists, like August Wilhelm Schlegel and his brother Friedrich Schlegel, as well as Franz Bopp. It was Friedrich Schlegel who used the term "comparative grammar" for the first time in his book *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808). The comparative method was actually used before that by the natural sciences like anatomy, biology, and paleontology. The key word of the new linguistic science would be much less the word "system" or "structure" than the word "organism". Linguistics would be marked by it for about a century. The early comparativists concentrated on the comparison of the morphology of Sanskrit and the other Indo-European languages.

Franz Bopp, who is usually called the founder of comparative grammar, published his thesis on the conjugation system of the Sanskrit language in comparison with that of the Greek, Latin, and Germanic languages (1816). In 1821, Humboldt called him to Berlin to occupy the professorial chair of Sanskrit.

The extraordinary development which comparative linguistics would know in Germany was at the very start encouraged by an intelligent and influential man like Humboldt and by the general intellectual climate of the time: German romanticism. It was turned entirely towards the discovery of the national past, including the German language and its history. The Indo-European language family – which was called quite improperly Indo-Germanic by German linguists – was discovered. This led to the interest in other language families, among them the Malayo-Polynesian language family.

Another result of the preoccupation with the past was the search for the *Ursprache* or proto-language. Because Sanskrit is older than Greek or Latin and because its morphology is transparent, Bopp thought that he could retrace in it the original language, arrive at the original words, at the monosyllabic roots.

Wilhelm von Humboldt was also greatly interested in the origin of language and that is one reason why he was so fascinated by the study of Austronesian languages. He wrote one of the early basic works on comparative Austronesian, *Ueber die Kawi-Sprache* (1838). He developed his theory of language in an essay, *On the diversity of human language structure and its influence on the mental development of the human race* (1836), which forms a lengthy introduction to the book on the Kawi language. Humboldt thought that language is a creative ability. The human mind has the capacity for language; otherwise language would never have emerged and could not change. Only this capacity can explain the mystery of language: that it can make infinite use of its finite resources (Humboldt 1836: ciii). A little later, he explained why he preferred Tagalog for his studies. In his opinion, Tagalog shows the Malayan language structure in its most complete and purest form (1836: ccciii). And he added that it was

important to include the South-Sea languages in his study because their structure seemed to be more original, i.e. closer to the origin of language. He gave examples of root-words in Tagalog and of their possible combinations:

Even very simple sounds which really belong to the roots of the language, carry very often the meaning of certain objects, as *pay-pay* 'shoulderblade, fan, parasol' which all contain the concept of stretching. This can be seen in *sam-pay* 'to hang clothes in the air on a clothes line, a stick etc.', *ca-pay* 'to row with the arms if there are no oars, to wave one's hands while calling' and other combinations. (1836: ccccviii)

Since Humboldt was interested in the original, general meaning, he was quite critical of the scientific value of the books written by Spanish missionaries:

De los Santos' Tagalog dictionary is like most, especially older, missionary works of this kind – only intended to be a guidance to write and preach in the language. Therefore it gives only the most concrete meanings of the words, at which it has arrived by usage and goes rarely back to the original, general meaning. (1836:cccvi).

After this lengthy introduction, there are still three volumes in *Ueber die Kawi-Sprache*. The first treats the relations between India and Java, the second the Kawi language itself, and the third discusses the Malayan language group. After a general classification and comparison of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, Humboldt focused on Tagalog:

I start here with Tagalog, because it can be considered to be the primitive language and the origin of the others, since it possesses the typical structure of these languages in the most complete and clearest form. It possesses all the forms taken together of which only some can be found in the other languages; and it has conserved these forms, except for some unimportant exceptions, unmutilated and in continuous analogy. (1836: III, 368).

Humboldt gave a detailed description of the Tagalog language, especially the Tagalog verb, following closely the grammar of Totanes. But he was quite critical of Totanes, whom he accused of following the division of the Tagalog verb into 17 conjugations only because it was the traditional division among Spanish missionaries, and not because it corresponded to the nature of the language. Still, Humboldt considered the Tagalog verb system as the most developed and most complete verbal system in the whole Malayan language group.

The work of Humboldt was continued by Franz Bopp, the eminent linguist who is generally considered to be the founder of comparative linguistics. In his important work *On the relationship of the Malayo-Polynesian languages with the Indo-European* (1841), Bopp tried to prove that the two language groups were closely related.

H. L. von der Gabelentz wrote a comparative study of the passive (1861), giving a world-wide view of the subject. Gabelentz discussed Ilokano, Pampango, Tagalog, Bicol, and Bisaya in detail and gave a summary of the passive in Philippine languages.

Another topic which preoccupied not only German, but also French, linguists in the nineteenth century was the origin of the writing systems found in South-East Asia. The Viennese linguist Friedrich Müller wrote a paper on the origin of the script of the

Malayan people (1865), in which he compared the Javanese, Pali, Batak, Makasar, Bugi, Tagalog, Redjang, and Lampung writing systems. He concluded by asserting that they had their common origin in Indian script.

The younger Gabelentz was also a comparative linguist. But in his comparison of the Melanesian, Micronesian, and Papua languages (1883), he used data from only one Philippine language, that of the Negritos of Zambales. His co-author, Adolf B. Meyer, had actually been in the Philippines and done field-work among the Negritos. In his article on the languages of Mindanao (1873), he gave some general comments on the major languages, followed by vocabularies of Tirurai, 'Moro' of Jolo, 'Moro' of Siau, and 'Negrito' of Mariveles and Zambales. He published some more articles on the Negritos (1874, 1878) and finally a book on the Negritos in the Philippines (1893), of which there exists an English translation (1899).

Adolf B. Meyer should not be confused with Hans Meyer, who went on a trip around the world and published a book about it, which contains an appendix on the Igorots with a Guinan-Tinguan vocabulary (1884).

Another great traveller was Fedor Jagor, who wrote a book on his travels in the Philippines (1873), which is mostly political and geographical in nature, but also contains a chapter on the language situation in the Philippines.

A little later, Alexander Schadenberg came to the Philippines to do ethnographic research. He published an article on the Negritos (1880), which is mainly ethnographic in nature, but includes some text material and a vocabulary of Bataan and Pampango Negrito with Tagalog and German equivalents. His article on the inhabitants of Southern Mindanao and Samal (1885) has comments on tribal names and a Bagobo wordlist. Then he turned his interest to the people of the Central Cordillera in Luzon. In his "Contributions to the knowledge of the Banao people and the Guinaangs" (1887), he gave ethnographic data on the two groups and a vocabulary of some 660 words in the Kalinga dialect of Guinaang. In a later article on the tribes living in the interior of Northern Luzon, he gave word lists of about 1000 sets of comparative vocabulary of Bontok, Banawe, Lepanto, and Ilokano with German translations.

Ferdinand Blumentritt was a contemporary of Adolf Meyer and Alexander Schadenberg, but he never came to the Philippines. He was a teacher at the Ateneo de Leitmeritz, Bohemia (then part of Austria, now in Czechoslovakia) and a friend of Jose Rizal. Actually, Blumentritt was an anachronism in his time. During this era of comparative linguistic studies and ethnolinguistic fieldwork, he produced mostly compilations like Pallas, Alter, and Adelung 80 years earlier. But some of his compilations are quite interesting, like for instance his publication on the Spanish spoken in the Philippines (1882) where one finds many indigenous words like "apoy" and "barangay" etc. The same topic was treated by Schuchardt (1885), a linguist who specialized in dialectology and linguistic geography. Although Schuchardt focused on "Tagalog-Spanish" he also mentioned other creoles. Blumentritt also produced an ethnographic map of Mindanao (1884), which is very different from what is now known about Mindanao, several list of the ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines (1887, 1890, 1893, 1895), a list of Philippine names referring to religion (1894), and a list of Philippine ethnographic and zoological terms (1899). Although Blumentritt was not really a linguist, but more of a compiler, he did a lot to make the Philippines known in Europe.

3. TWENTIETH CENTURY LINGUISTS

The outstanding figure in comparative Austronesian linguistics at the beginning of this century was Renward Brandstetter. Actually a professor of Greek and Latin at the cantonal lyceum in Lucerne, Switzerland, he was introduced to the Indonesian languages by Professor Nieman from the Indic Institute in Delft, Holland. With his help, Brandstetter worked through one Indonesian language after another and soon became the leader in the field of comparative Indonesian linguistics. He transferred the methodology of Indo-European linguistics to his new field of interest and excelled in the formulation of sound laws in what he identified as *Ur-Indonesisch* (Proto-Indonesian). Brandstetter always followed the same procedure in presenting the results of his research: in the introduction, he stated his thesis, and he then followed this up with the systematic presentation of his material in accordance with his thesis. In 55 years of research in Indonesian languages, Brandstetter produced an enormous number of works: 10 volumes of *Malayo-Polynesische Forschungen* (1893-1908), 13 volumes of *Monographien zur indonesischen Sprachforschung* (1910-1917), 11 volumes of *Wir Menschen der Indonesischen Erde* (1929-1937). Some of his studies have been translated into English by C. O. Blagden (1916), others have been translated into Indonesian.

Only the studies having to do with Philippine languages will be discussed here. Brandstetter used material from at least 12 Philippine languages and dialects. According to Frei (1951), Brandstetter personally knew Rizal and used his Tagalog translation of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* for his studies of Tagalog. He also personally knew Conant and Cecilio Lopez. The first time Brandstetter used Philippine languages for comparative purposes was in an article on the Minahassa language of Celebes (1901). But here the languages of Celebes were still the center of interest and Philippine languages were only used for comparison. One year later he published his study on the Tagalogs and the Madagascans (1902), which is a linguistic comparison of Tagalog and Malagasy. The word corpus was divided into semantic categories, followed by a discussion of the sounds of the two languages and a comparison of roots, word formations, and word classes. This was followed by a comparative study of final and initial sounds in Indo-Germanic and Malayo-Polynesian languages (1903), dealing with the sandhi-effects on the initial and final segments of words which are parallel in Indo-European and Malayo-Polynesian languages. Philippine languages, Indonesian languages and Malagasy provided the examples. Brandstetter was interested in Indogermanic linguistics in relation to Indonesian linguistics, but he did not claim that the two language groups were definitely related or had a common origin. He even mentioned Bopp's failure to prove his thesis that the two languages were related.

In 1906, Brandstetter published an introduction to a comparative dictionary of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, in which he formulated some sound laws. The announced dictionary was never published. Instead, Brandstetter published a semantic study of everything having to do with nature, plants, animals, etc. (1908), wherein he compared these terms in Philippine and Indonesian languages.

Brandstetter's article on the difference between root and word in the Indonesian languages (1910) was strongly criticized by the Danish linguist K. Wulff (1910), who declared that Brandstetter's writings had no depth and presented only material which was self-evident. Brandstetter reacted strongly to this criticism in an appendix to his

study on common Indonesian and Proto-Indonesian (1911), which is an early attempt to verify the existence of the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. In his introduction, he stated that such language data as appear without change or transformed according to strict sound laws in many Indonesian languages can be called "common Indonesian". He cited the word *langit* 'heaven, sky' as an example, because it is the same in many Indonesian languages. He described the phonology, accentuation, morphology, and syntax of "common Indonesian" in detail and then proceeded to a reconstruction of Proto-Indonesian.

In his series of publications *Wir Menschen der Indonesischen Erde* (1929-1937), Brandstetter defended the Indonesian people against the Indogermanic presumption of superiority. Brandstetter sought to prove the equality of the Indonesian people by finding words and expressions of love, soul, compassion, etc. in the Indonesian languages. He thought that this series was the most important of his works, but the other linguists did not share his enthusiasm.

The Austrian anthropologist and linguist Father Wilhelm Schmidt did a number of studies on language families which culminated in his book on language families and language areas (1926), a typological cataloguing of many languages in the world. He was the first to establish the existence of the Mon-Khmer group of languages and to call the Malayo-Polynesian language family Austronesian, a term which has become widely accepted now. Father Schmidt tried to establish a correlation of certain grammatical features with certain cultural features. He was also fascinated by the problem of the Negritos and, in his article on the language of the Pygmies (1942-1945), he cited Vanoverbergh, who had written that some Philippine Negritos had ceremonial chants which were different from their present-day Malayo-Polynesian language. This could imply the existence of an earlier non-Malayo-Polynesian language for these people.

Father Schmidt's culture area theory was discussed by Dempwolff in an article (1930) criticizing its application to linguistics. Otto Dempwolff was a linguist from Hamburg who has contributed tremendously to the scientific study of Austronesian. He started by publishing a small book on the Indonesian labials (1920), followed by a long article on the L-, R-, and D- sounds in Austronesian languages (1924-1925) which includes a comparative phonology, correspondence sets, reconstructions, and down-tracing in several languages. The Philippine data were based on early missionary works; they include Tagalog, Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Sangir, Iloko, and Nabaloi. In his article on Ivatan (1926), he declared that Ivatan was a "test-language" for Proto-Austronesian ! since it has only one correspondence: *l*. He declared himself very satisfied that this sound actually occurred in a living language.

Dempwolff's most important work is the three-volume *Vergleichende Lautlehre des Austronesischen Wortschatzes* (1934-1938), which seems to have become a kind of bible for Austronesian linguistics. In the preface, he acknowledged his debt to Brandstetter and stated that he had adopted his phonology of Proto-Indonesian to a large extent, but that he had not imitated his literary style. He expressed the hope that, in spite of his dry style, his work would contribute to give Austronesian linguistics its due place among the other branches of linguistics. The first volume is an inductive reconstruction of an Indonesian Proto-language, based on three Indonesian languages, namely Tagalog, Toba-Batak, and Javanese. His sources were mainly dictionaries of these languages, although he also worked with native informants, his informant for Tagalog being Cecilio

Lopez. After having reconstructed his Proto-Indonesian language, Dempwolff proceeded in his second volume to a deductive application of Proto-Indonesian on Austronesian languages, namely three Indonesian languages: Malay, Ngadju-Dayak, and Hova, two Melanesian languages: Fiji and Sa'a, and three Polynesian languages: Tonga, Futuma, and Samoa. Actually he had done deductive studies on more than 20 Indonesian languages, he had finally chosen only three as the most representative. The same is true for the Melanesian and Polynesian languages where he had studied a great number of languages before choosing the more representative ones. The third volume is an Austronesian Vocabulary, which consists of two parts: a Proto-Austronesian-German word-list with illustrations from the different source languages, and a German-Proto-Austronesian word-list without illustrations. Dempwolff's *Vergleichende Lautlehre* . . ., the result of 20 years of research, is still unequalled in its scholarly and thorough approach.

In this discussion of German linguists who were interested in Philippine languages, we should not forget two men who came to live in the Philippines for different reasons, but who became linguists in the process, namely Otto Scheerer and Hermann Costenoble.

Otto Scheerer came to the Philippines in the 1880's and found employment in a German firm in Manila. He founded La Minerva Cigar Company, and later moved to the Mountain Province and planted coffee. In 1900, he was appointed Provincial Secretary of the Mountain Province by the Americans; during that time, he wrote two valuable reports on the Benguet Igorots or Ibaloi. This was probably the origin of his linguistic interest, for he published a study of the Nabaloi dialect some years later (1905). Between 1901 and 1907 Scheerer lived in Japan. He also went to Formosa and noticed the cultural similarities of the aboriginal population of Formosa with the people of Northern Luzon. He published several articles in German, one on the ethnology of the islands between Luzon and Formosa (1906), one on the island Botel Tobago with comparative linguistic remarks (1908), and another one on the legends of the Atayals in Formosa (1932). Upon his return to Manila he was appointed lieutenant governor of the subprovince of Batanes. There he wrote a study on the Batan dialect (1908). Later on, he became a professor of German at the University of the Philippines and in 1924 he became the head of the Department of Philippine Languages. He published about 30 studies on Philippine linguistics and was the teacher of such linguists as Carlos O. Brandes, Gabriel A. Bernardo, Cecilio Lopez, and Felizberto B. Viray. In a way, he was a pioneer of linguistics in the Philippines.

Hermann Costenoble was a sugar chemist who worked in a sugar central in Carmen, Pampanga, but whose real interest was historical linguistics. He corresponded with Dempwolff and published a number of articles in the *Philippine Magazine* (1936a, 1936b, 1937a, 1937b). Later he published an article in German on the sound-shifts of Tagalog (1940) and a book on the Chamorro language (1940). Costenoble disappeared when the Japanese entered Manila in 1942, but he gave a copy of the manuscript of his *Dictionary of Proto-Philippine* to Cecilio Lopez, who translated it into English (1979).

After the Second World War, there has not been much research on Philippine languages in Germany. The only exception is Hans Mohring, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on consonant clusters in Tagalog (1964). He published an article on words for 'human being' in Austronesian languages (1968) and contributed to the *Parangal kay Cecilio Lopez* with an article on "The word *anito* and its associations" (1973). At the moment, Mohring seems to be the only linguist in Germany who is still interested in Philippine languages.

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