

BOOK REVIEW

Klaus MYLIUS 2020. *Vergleichende Grammatik der literarischen Prakṛt-Sprachen.* [Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 34.] Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. xiii, 139 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-11560-5.

Reviewed by *Gyula Wojtilla**

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As Professor Jost Gippert (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main) deservedly puts it in the introduction to the recent volume, Mylius tops his immense oeuvre off with this book. Here he offers a comparative study of the grammars of Prakrit dialects that have been previously discussed by him in separate volumes.¹ The number of comprehensive works on Prakrit dialects is minimal and therefore Mylius book fills a gap. The standard work in this field is still Pischel's *Grammatik der Prakrit Sprachen* (Strassburg 1900 and its English version in 1957 and its reprints); however, the arrangement of the rich material makes it anti-didactic and as such discourages students seeking proficiency in any Prakrit dialect. A. C. Woolner's *Introduction to Prakrit* (Calcutta, 1928) is rather an elementary guide to the different Prakrits. Sukumar Sen's *A Comparative Grammar of Middle Indo Aryan* (Poona, 1951, 144 pp.) and V. V. Vertogradova's [B. B. Вертоградова] *Праकृत्य* (Moskva, 1978, 109 pp.) are primarily meant for linguists. On the other hand, Mylius, having utilized Pischel's *Grammatik* and the relevant parts of the specialized literature, has succeeded in compiling a useful textbook. Here, instead of supplying forms, laws and exceptions from them, his main aim was to present what is absolutely necessary for the would-be students. He has accomplished this on the basis of his rich teaching experience gathered during his work at the universities of Leipzig, Bayreuth and Frankfurt am Main.

The volume is divided into eight parts, preceded by a preface by Gippert and a foreword by the author. In the foreword he justly states that an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit presupposes the learning of Prakrits.

Part One provides a brief sketch of the position of Prakrit in Indian linguistic history, and the importance of literary Prakrits in the cultural history of India. Part Two gives room to a concise

* University of Szeged

¹ See Gy. Wojtilla's reviews on them in *AOH* 67/4 (2014): 501–502, *AOH* 68/1 (2015): 144–145, *AOH* 72/4 (2019): 465–467 and *AOH* 73/2 (2020): 332–334.

overview of the Prakrit sound system and sound change compared to Sanskrit and the rules of euphonic combination.

Part Three on morphology comprises of the declension of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals and the system of conjugation. Declension does not depart so much from Sanskrit as conjugation. Departures are characterized by simplification. The paradigms representing the different categories are arranged in the following order of dialects: Ardhamāgadhī, Śauraseni, Māhārāṣṭrī and Māgadhī. This arrangement allows us to observe the dialectal differences and to make certain comparisons. Mylius has carefully selected from the rich material which is really essential for to-be-learners and provided students of general linguistics with ample information. In the absence of perfect, aorist and imperfect tenses, past perfect participles (PPP) have gained a special position in the verbal system of Prakrits. With an auxiliary verb they fulfil the role of those in expressing past tense. So the inclusion of long lists of PPP forms taken from the above mentioned dialects is quite reasonable and surely meets didactic ends as well.

Part Four is devoted to different types of composites and word formation by suffixes. In Part Five on syntax, the author touches upon various issues. He is engaged with word order and the reduction of cases: dative and genitive merge, ablative is later absorbed into genitive. From among the modes, all Prakrits preserved only the indicative, imperative and optative. From the syntactical point of view optative has peculiar interest. The present tense can stand for actual present and then for past and also future. The *praesens narrativum* has the meaning of the praeteritum. The first persons of the present can serve as imperatives. Past tense forms are formed by PPP and auxiliary verb. The future tense expresses future action and also possibility and uncertainty. Passive voice is much liked, constructions with absolutives are widely used. The numbers are two: singular and plural, dual is extinct.

Part Six is a supplement on the history of research into Prakrits. The pioneers are the traditional Indian scholars like Vararuci (perhaps before 500 A.D.) and the polymath Hemacandra (1089–1172). In modern ages this discipline was almost exclusively cultivated by German scholars like Albrecht Weber, Hermann Jacobi, Richard Pischel, Richard Schmidt and Walter Schubring. It is a pity that the study of Prakrit dialects practically escaped the interest of Indian scholars in modern times.

Part Seven is a bibliography of secondary literature, it is nearly complete and informative. Here I miss only S. M. Katre's² and Vit Bubenik's³ valuable books. Part Eight contains various useful indices: a register of grammatical terms, persons and words from the Prakrit dialects discussed in the volume.

I hope that the book will fulfil the aims of the author and largely promote the teaching of Prakrits at the universities of German speaking countries. It is a clearly written, well edited and methodically sound textbook. An English version may also be desirable as far as it would give a fresh impetus to Prakrit studies at a worldwide level.

The book is neatly printed, there are neither errors nor misprints in the text. Thanks are due to Professor Jost Gippert, head of the Institut für Empirische Sprachwissenschaft for supporting the Prakrit language programme at Goethe Universität and for encouraging Professor Mylius to undertake this special task. Great merit should go to Professor Dieter B. Kapp for his manifold help during the preparation of the manuscript and taking the work in the successful series and also to Harrassowitz Verlag for its publication.

² Katre, Sumitra Mangesh 1945. *Prakrit Languages and Their Contribution to Indian Culture*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

³ Bubenik, Vit 1996. *The Structure and Development of Middle Indo-Aryan*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

