

The treatment of word-formation in the Sanskrit grammars published by European scholars between the Baroque and Franz Bopp

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The aim of this study is to analyze the treatment of derivational morphology in the very first Sanskrit grammars published by European scholars between the Baroque and Franz Bopp's work (1816). The grammars considered are the following: Roth (1660–1668, see Camp & Muller 1988), Hanxleden (1712–1732, Van Hal & Vielle 2013), Pons (1739–1771, see Filliozat 2020), Paolino da San Bartolomeo (1790, 1804, see Mastrangelo 2018), Carey (1804), Colebrooke (1805), Wilkins (1808), Forster (1810), Yates (1820), Frank (1823), and Bopp (1824, 1827, and 1832).

The work is of interest for two main reasons. The first concerns primarily linguists and the history of derivational morphology (Alfieri 2023). Between the Renaissance and the end of the 18th century, practical grammars (i.e., grammars that merely describe a language without drawing inferences about the general function of Language or its ultimate origins) do not describe (or describe very little) word formation. Sanskrit grammars (together with some Arabic and Hebrew grammars, and some missionary grammars), however, stand out as exceptions to this trend, as they describe derivation much more extensively than other practical grammars, given that such data are abundantly described in native Indian grammars, starting from Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī.

The second aspect of interest pertains to the history of Indology. Criticism, from Martineau (1867: 309) and Leskien (1867: 144) to Rocher L. (1979), Law (1993), Rocher R. (2002), and Rocher & Rocher (2013), has consistently regarded Bopp's grammars as the turning point between two phases of the history of Indian studies: "missionary" or "militant" Indology, which characterizes the first part of the 19th century, is primarily led by English scholars and is still largely dependent on the Indian grammatical tradition, and "academic" Indology, which dominates the mid-19th century, is cultivated mainly by German scholars and had by then been emancipated itself from the Indian native tradition. Generally, this otherwise correct assessment leads to another claim, namely that, thanks to Bopp, "the time-honoured framework of Greek grammar [...] has been superimposed on Sanskrit" (Law 1993: 245). However, the history of derivational morphology in the texts cited above tells a very different story from this prevailing opinion and, in fact, shows that Bopp, far from imposing the "European" descriptive model on Sanskrit, structurally modifies that model to allow for the description of word formation, which is a fundamental feature of Sanskrit as a language and one of the most studied topics in native Indian grammar.

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