



## BARTHOLOMAE, CHRISTIAN

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**BARTHOLOMAE, CHRISTIAN**, German scholar of Iranian and Indo-European studies (1855-1925).

1. *Life*. Bartholomae was born the son of a forester in Forst ob Limmersdorf (today Forstleithen near Limmersdorf), Upper Franconia, on 21 January 1855. After receiving his general education in Bayreuth he first studied the classical languages at Munich and Erlangen universities under, among others, Friedrich von Spiegel. Later he went to the University of Leipzig, at the time the undisputed center of linguistic studies, in order to study Sanskrit and comparative philology. There Heinrich Hübschmann exercised such a deep and decisive influence on Bartholomae and his scientific development that he later, in the preface to his *Das altiranische Verbum* mentioned only Hübschmann, who had won him for Iranian studies, among his teachers. Bartholomae, who was to become an outstanding Indo-European scholar, did not advance rapidly in his academic career. It took five years after receiving the state doctorate (*Habilitation*) at the University of Halle for him to be appointed as extraordinary professor there in 1884. The following year he went to Münster, Westphalia, and only in 1898 was he appointed to a full professorship at the University of Giessen. In 1909 he moved to the University of Strasburg (as the successor to Hübschmann), but later the same year he left for Heidelberg, where he taught as professor of comparative philology and Sanskrit until his retirement in 1924. Bartholomae was an ordinary member of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and from before the war also a corresponding member of the (Imperial) Russian Academy of Sciences. He



died on the island of Langeoog on 9 August 1925.

2. *Works.* Bartholomae devoted the main part of his life and work to Iranian linguistics, his chief endeavor being directed toward the integration of Iranian into the framework of Indo-European languages. With great energy and endurance he met the challenge of the Old Iranian texts, both the Avesta and the Old Persian inscriptions, breaking new ground in the linguistic investigation of these texts, establishing their phonological development and morphological structure. Bartholomae was strongly conscious of the need for combining the indigenous Indian Parsi tradition with both classical Western philological methods and those of comparative linguistics in the interpretation of the Avestan texts and in this way did much to relieve the pressure on Zoroastrian studies to base themselves exclusively upon the Zoroastrian tradition. The progress of Iranian studies around the turn of the century, especially of Iranian linguistics, is thus most clearly reflected in Bartholomae's publications on Old Iranian, from *Das altiranische Verbum* (1878) to the *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904) with its supplementary volume (1906).

Bartholomae's first book, *Das altiranische Verbum*, was intended as the Iranian counterpart to several studies by Berthold Delbrück (mainly his *Das altindische Verbum*) and was therefore the first comprehensive presentation of the morphology and syntax of the Old Iranian verb to be written. In his *Handbuch der altiranischen Dialekte* (1883) he presented a more extensive and systematic comparative study of the phonology and morphology of the three old Indo-Iranian or Aryan languages (Avestan, Old Persian, and Old Indo-Aryan). The phonological part of this study, in which Iranian forms were derived from the original common Indo-Iranian forms, set a new standard for the linguistic analysis of both Indo-Iranian and Indo-European.

A decade later, however, this pioneering work was superseded by two other momentous studies by Bartholomae: "Vorgeschichte der iranischen Sprachen" (Prehistory of the Iranian languages, 1895) and "Awestasprache und Altpersisch" (Avestan and Old Persian, 1896), both in W. Geiger and E. Kuhn's *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*. These two studies treat in detail the history of the phonology and morphology of the two Old Iranian languages, from Indo-European, via Indo-Iranian and proto-Iranian down to the individual historical languages. Bartholomae, with his by now long and profound experience with Old Iranian and Aryan linguistics and with complete command of the Iranian linguistic material, dealt with these subjects with such penetrating understanding and so thoroughly that his contributions have not



yet been replaced. In the succinct and concise “Vorgeschichte,” which is a detailed and precise comparative grammar of Old Iranian, he compared Old Iranian and Old Indo-Aryan phonology and morphology in order to reconstruct their common Indo-Iranian basis. Step by step he traced the changes of the Indo-European word forms (stem formations as well as inflectional forms) down to Proto-Iranian on the one hand, and on the other related the proto-Iranian state of the phonology and morphology to the Indo-European sources. In “Awestasprache und Altpersisch,” starting from proto-Iranian, he described in parallel the phonological and morphological changes of Avestan and Old Persian. The syntax, however, is almost totally neglected in these studies; and it was left to Bartholomae’s pupil H. Reichelt to fill this gap in Old Iranian grammar with his *Awestisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg, 1909).

What these two articles are to Old Iranian grammar, Bartholomae’s *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* is to Old Iranian lexicography. Bartholomae spent over ten years compiling this work, which has been called “one of the best and most complete dictionaries written of any language” (M. J. Dresden), deservedly gaining the sobriquet of a *chalkénteros*. In it Bartholomae claimed to have collected and commented summarily on the entire Old Iranian linguistic material (both Avestan and Old Persian), as far as it was accessible in text editions. It was intended to replace F. Justi’s *Altbactrisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1864), which had been the main source for Iranian lexicography, but had been made obsolete by K. F. Geldner’s new edition of the Avesta (Stuttgart, 1885-95) and by the deeper understanding of the Pahlavi tradition achieved by scholars like M. Haug, E. W. West, and J. Darmesteter. Bartholomae added to the work of his predecessors by taking fully into consideration the tradition of the Parsi scholars, even where he regarded it as unreliable, and by supplementing Geldner’s edition, which in fact contained fewer Avestan texts than N. L. Westergaard’s *Zendavesta* (Copenhagen, 1854), by incorporating numerous smaller texts and fragments which were less accessible, sometimes even unpublished, and often had not yet been critically edited. Moreover, Bartholomae did not depend solely upon the text as edited by Geldner, but upon the manuscript tradition itself as given in Geldner’s critical apparatus, which at times contains better readings than those printed in Geldner’s text. On the whole the *Wörterbuch* is characterized by a felicitous combination of philological and linguistic approaches. In it Bartholomae propagated the use of the same transliteration system for Avestan which was employed in the *Grundriss* and which from then became the standard one and only recently is being replaced by the more systematic and faithful transliteration system of



Karl Hoffmann. What Bartholomae intended his *Wörterbuch* to be was a summary of all the knowledge of his time, and so he did not confine himself merely to collecting the results of previous scholars but presented a lot of his own findings as well. One of the most useful features of the book is the reverse index (col. 1901ff.). The concordance of textual repetitions (pp. X-XXI) has in the meantime been replaced by B. Schlerath's *Awesta-Wörterbuch. Vorarbeiten II: Konkordanz*, Wiesbaden, 1968.

Each entry in this epochal dictionary is scrupulously exact and rests on intimate knowledge of Old Iranian. It specifies the language a word belongs to (j. = Young Avestan, g. = Gathic or Old Avestan, p. = Old Persian), then gives the forms and their meanings, all the attestations partly with translation, and in the notes discusses special questions of interpretation, etymology (briefly), the word's later development, the Pahlavi and Sanskrit renderings of the word, and occasionally discusses points of textual criticism. The alphabetical arrangement is that of Sanskrit dictionaries (except that *v* precedes *r*) and ignores unetymological anaptyctic and epenthetic vowels and the like.

The *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* was for decades and still remains the basis for all work on the Avesta and the Avestan language. It is still one of the essential tools of every Iranian scholar and is indispensable for any investigation of ancient Iranian literature. Its usefulness has by no means been impaired by the special indexes now available for many individual, mainly Old Avestan texts, nor by the new dictionary of Avestan proper names (M. Mayrhofer, "Die avestischen Namen," in *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* I/1, Vienna, 1977). It was and still is a model dictionary for any Indo-European language because of both its completeness and its critical examination and precise understanding of the vocabulary. Whatever imperfections remain in the book are due to the imperfect understanding of the texts at this early stage.

It is a matter of opinion whether the inclusion in the *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* of the vocabulary of the Old Persian inscriptions, which was easily accessible in Weissbach and Bang's edition, was really necessary. It is one of the points on which the *Wörterbuch* was severely criticized, it being alleged that the inclusion of the Old Persian material was a poor arrangement. Today, after the publication of Kent's *Old Persian* (New Haven, 1950, 2nd ed. 1953) and the discovery of numerous new inscriptions, the *Wörterbuch* plays only a minor role for Old Persian.

The Gathas, being the oldest Avestan texts, naturally commanded



Bartholomae's special interest. He worked on these texts for the first time in 1879, when he published a text edition and a metrical and grammatical analysis of them; then, after the publication of the *Wörterbuch*, he published a translation of the Gathas (1905), combining the translations of individual Gathic words and phrases quoted in the dictionary. By the same method, Bartholomae's pupil F. Wolff later compiled a translation of the entire Avestan corpus on the basis of the *Wörterbuch* (F. Wolff, *Avesta. Die heiligen Bücher der Parsen*, Strassburg, 1910). Bartholomae expressed his view of Zarathustra's life and work in his rectorial speech *Zarathuštra's Leben und Lehre* (published Heidelberg, 1919; the speech was in fact not delivered owing to the circumstances prevailing in November, 1918).

It was not until 1904, after the appearance of the *Wörterbuch*, that Iranian studies were suddenly confronted with a wholly new situation in the epochal first publications of the manuscripts from Turfan oasis and elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan. Bartholomae at once realized the immense importance of these findings for the study of the Old Iranian languages and immediately began to investigate them. At any rate Bartholomae had already planned supplementary volumes to his dictionary in order to provide additional material and the results of new research, and he was soon able to publish such a supplementary volume (*Zum Altiranischen Wörterbuch*, 1906), containing among other things studies bearing on certain aspects of the new Middle Iranian, mainly Middle Persian, evidence, primarily on the notation of vowels in the Turfan manuscripts. As its subtitle *Nacharbeiten und Vorarbeiten* (Additional and preliminary studies) indicates, this book reflects a shift in Bartholomae's work from Old Iranian to Middle Persian.

From 1904 Bartholomae concentrated his research on Middle Persian. He eagerly familiarized himself first with these new texts from Turfan, then also with Book Pahlavi, the language of the Zoroastrian scriptures. Before this time he had used the Pahlavi translation, but only as a means to explain the Avesta; now the study of Pahlavi became a goal in itself, since the Turfan texts with their less ambiguous writing system offered welcome evidence for the interpretation of the graphically extremely ambiguous Book Pahlavi. Bartholomae's aim was again to make a thorough study of Middle Persian, thereby rendering it more accessible for Iranian historical linguistics. We need not wonder, therefore, that his two series of Middle Persian studies, *Zur Kenntnis der mitteliranischen Mundarten* and *Zum sasanidischen Recht* (both published by the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences) became an essential



stimulus for Middle Iranian studies. Bartholomae did not yet attempt a comprehensive presentation of Middle Persian grammar or a lexicon, considering this to be premature, and therefore confined himself to the study of individual texts. Of Pahlavi texts he studied the Sasanian law book *Mādayān ī hazār dādestān*, which had been published shortly before by J. J. Modi (1901) on the basis of one single defective and carelessly written manuscript. Here he focused on the philological interpretation of the text and translated and commented on only a selection of its juridical decisions. His transcription of the Pahlavi script was based on purely historical principles, and for words of unknown or uncertain interpretation or pronunciation he employed the same mechanical transliteration he had used in the *Wörterbuch*, in which one Latin letter corresponded to each Pahlavi letter, e.g., *d* for the Pahlavi letters *y/d/g*, *n* for the Pahlavi letters *w/r/n*, etc.

While occupied with these Middle Iranian studies, Bartholomae compiled a detailed catalogue of the Zoroastrian manuscripts and related collections of the Bavarian State Library in Munich (from the estates of M. J. Müller, M. Hang, and F. Windischmann), the largest collection of its kind in Germany. This catalogue (*Die Zendhandschriften*, 1915) includes not only “Zend” manuscripts (as its title incorrectly suggests), but all kinds of Zoroastrian (Parsi) literature including texts in Middle Persian (Pahlavi, Pazand, and Parsi), New Persian, Sanskrit, and Gujarati. Müller’s manuscripts were copies this scholar had made in the 1830s from manuscripts in Paris (already catalogued by E. Blochet in his rather scanty *Catalogue des manuscrits mazdéens*, Besançon, 1900), but Haug’s manuscripts, which had been brought from India by Haug himself, were in part of great scholarly value, and Bartholomae describes in minute detail their material and formal conditions as well as their contents, giving extensive extracts of the texts themselves. Various points of textual criticism, lexicography (e.g., the many rare words in ms. M51a.10), etymology, etc., make this book a rich source of information.

Outside the strictly Iranian field Bartholomae dealt with general problems of both Indo-European comparative linguistics and other Indo-European languages. The so-called “[Bartholomae’s Law](#)” was first formulated in his *Arische Forschungen* I, 1882, pp. 3ff.

3. *Evaluation*. Bartholomae was a sensible and objective scholar, whose judgment was usually cautious and prudent. Influenced by the Neogrammarians (K. Brugmann and his followers) and characterized by ardor and love for his subject and exceptional patience, he eagerly worked at the



same corpus of texts for more than two decades. Thus he was able to publish several major reference books of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Old Iranian languages and literature, while embodying in them in a way typical of him countless secondary results of his special research. In the first place it was the mystery of the Avestan language that he unraveled by his bold initiative, and this he did so thoroughly that most previous studies fell into oblivion, some perhaps unjustly.

Of Bartholomae's work, the most criticized is undoubtedly his translation of the *Gathas*; he has been blamed for a total disregard for morphology, syntax, and especially word order (see, e.g., H. Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra* I, Heidelberg, 1959, pp. 66ff.).

The reasons for the defects in Bartholomae's translation must be sought first in the fact that it followed the Pahlavi version and the tradition laid down by his predecessors among Western scholars too closely, and second in the manner in which it was put together, i.e., from the translations of individual words and phrases in the *Wörterbuch* (see above). Had he rid himself of these ties to the past and approached the problem of translation more systematically and from a purely linguistic point of view the result might have been different.

The principal merit of Bartholomae's life work was unquestionably his illumination of the linguistic aspect of the Old Iranian languages and his finding a firm place for them within the discipline of Indo-European comparative linguistics. The sum of his investigations is laid down in his two articles in the *Grundriss* and in his *Wörterbuch*. These three contributions contain a complete exposition of Avestan and Old Persian phonology, morphology, and vocabulary, and are the culmination of Bartholomae's researches on these subjects. But it must be emphasized that, when looking at Iranian, Bartholomae always viewed Indo-Iranian as a unity. This point of view becomes clear in his "Vorgeschichte der iranischen Sprachen" (1895), his three volumes of *Arische Forschungen*, and in numerous other studies containing the word *arisch* (Aryan) in the title (e.g., "Arica" in 19 issues of *IF* 1-42, 1892-1924; see also the comprehensive review articles of A. Fick and J. Wackernagel in *ZDMG* 48, 1894, pp. 504-31; 50, 1896, pp. 674-735). How strong Bartholomae's influence was on subsequent generations of scholars, becomes obvious from the fact that no attempt at a systematic description of proto-Indo-Iranian was made until 1980 (A. Erhart, *Struktura indoiránských jazyků* [The structure of the Indo-Iranian languages], Brno, 1980), although, considering the progress made in Iranian linguistics, such a work was long



overdue. Bartholomae's *Wörterbuch* is still the only comprehensive dictionary of any Old or Middle Iranian language (other than Old Persian); thus the compilation of a vocabulary of words of common Indo-Iranian stock remains a desideratum.

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