



HOERNLE, AUGUSTUS FREDERIC RUDOLF

HOERNLE, AUGUSTUS FREDERIC RUDOLF, philologist of Indian languages and decipherer of Khotanese (1841-1918). Born in Secundra, India, the second of nine surviving children of the Rev. C. T. Hoernle, he was sent to Europe for his education in 1848. In 1858, he went to Basle University and, from 1860, studied Sanskrit in London under Theodor Goldstücker. He obtained his Ph.D. from Tübingen in 1872.

Hoernle was ordained in 1864 and returned to India in 1865, where he was posted by the Church Missionary Society to Mirat. His duties included preaching and teaching, with special responsibility for schools in outstations, and occasionally taking charge of a Christian orphanage and a model farm ("Statement of my clerical and missionary duties since my ordination" in British Library/Add 43629, foll. 24-25). In 1869, at his own request, he was transferred to educational work and became Professor of Sanskrit and Philosophy at Jay Narayan College, Benares. From 1874 to 1877 he returned to England on leave to write a comparative grammar of the North Indian vernaculars (Hoernle, 1880) and, in 1877, married Sophie Romig. They had one son, the philosopher R. F. Alfred Hoernle (1880-1943). From 1878 to 1881, Hoernle was Principal of the Cathedral Mission College, Calcutta. In 1881, he joined the Indian Educational Service as Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah, where he worked until his retirement in 1899, when he returned to England and settled in Oxford.



In 1891, Hoernle reported on the Bower manuscript, a fifth-century medical birch-bark manuscript in Sanskrit discovered near Kucha in 1889 (Hoernle, 1891; 1899, p. x; and 1893-1912; for a detailed description and evaluation of Hoernle's work and the Hoernle Collection, see also Skjærvø, 2002, introduction). Such was the interest aroused by Hoernle's report that the super-powers were soon engaged in a competitive hunt for archeological and manuscript finds in Central Asia. Between 1895 and 1911, the Government of India, through various agents, sent Hoernle manuscripts for decipherment. These formed what became known as the Hoernle Collection, or the British Collection of antiquities from Central Asia. Hoernle was also sent the manuscripts in Brahmi script from Sir Aurel Stein's first two expeditions, which he was responsible for cataloguing (Stein, 1907, pp. 295-303, pp. 439-40; 1921, pp. 1432-59) and dividing between the British Museum and the Government of India (as represented by the India Office Library, London, and the National Museum, Delhi).

Throughout this period and until his death in 1918, Hoernle worked extensively on the Central Asian collections. Among the material he was sent for examination there was a certain amount in various undeciphered scripts (see Hoernle, 1899, 1901; these in fact later proved to be forgeries by Islam Akhun, q.v.), but his main preoccupation was the decipherment and identification of the unknown languages in Brahmi script: Tokharian and Khotanese.

In 1893 Hoernle published details of a collection of manuscripts he had received in 1892 from the Rev. F. Weber, a Moravian missionary in Leh in Ladakh. This included 25 leaves of a Tokharian manuscript, which he published in transcription in 1901, together with a further 17 sent to him in 1896 (Hoernle, 1901, p. 19 and appendix; 1899, pp. x-xii; facsimile ed., 1902). Already in 1893, Hoernle identified the language as being the same as that of S. Oldenburg's "Kashgar" manuscript (Oldenburg, 1892), which he thought might be "some kind of Mongolian, with Sanskrit technical terms interspersed" (Hoernle, 1893, p. 40).

In 1897, Hoernle published photographs and transcriptions of thirteen manuscripts in Brahmi script, which had been sent to him in 1895, which he described as being of "language and purport unknown." By 1901, when Hoernle republished these and several additional manuscripts, he was more familiar with the script and provided transcriptions that were mostly correct. As to the identification of the language, Hoernle was still uncertain. He



believed that there were two unidentified languages written in two distinct varieties of Brahmi script, a formal “sutra” script (Hoernle’s “upright Gupta”) used for Buddhist religious texts and a “cursive” script occurring in secular documents. The former, he conjectured, might be “a very early form of Tibetan, or a speech akin to it” (BL/IOR/MSS EUR F 302/17: report submitted 23 Nov. 1905 to the Under Secretary to the Government of India). Of the other he wrote more accurately: “Only a few of the words or phrases have, as yet, been determined, but these seem to prove clearly that the language of the documents is an Indo-Iranian dialect . . . To me it appears that it has its nearest congeners in the so-called Ghalchah dialects of the Pamir” (Hoernle, 1901, pp. 32-33).

From 1906, Hoernle enlisted additional help from Sten Konow (q.v.) of Oslo and Ernst Leumann (Strassburg), but also continued his own work, in particular on the new material from Stein’s second expedition (1906-08). He published photographs and transcripts of excerpts from the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (the *Diamond Sutra*) and the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* (*Sutra on Immeasurable Life Span*, Hoernle, 1910) and several syllabaries (Hoernle, 1911). By this time he realized that the two varieties of Brahmi script were both used to write a single language, which he finally named Khotanese (Hoernle, 1916, pp. x-xi, following J. Kirste, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 26, 1912, p. 395).

In 1916, when vol. 1 of his *Manuscript Remains* was eventually published, Hoernle edited the Khotanese text of the Khotanese-Chinese and the Khotanese-Tibetan bilingual fragments from Hoernle Mss. nos. 142 and 143 (pp. 387-404). In 1917, he published two extracts from the Khotanese medical text *Jivakapustaka* (Stein ms. Ch. ii.003), a fact long overlooked by later scholars (Emmerick, 1982). At the time of his death in 1918, he was working on an edition and translation of this text for a second volume of *Manuscript Remains*. A proof copy of this work is in the British Library (BL/IOR/MSS EUR D 723; see also Pargiter, 1925).

Hoernle’s role as the primary decipherer of Khotanese was not acknowledged until 1992 (Emmerick, 1992, p. 6; Skjærvø, 2002, p. lxix). In the case of the Khotanese scholar H. W. Bailey, Emmerick (2001, p. 31) suggests that: “Bailey’s neglect of Hoernle’s work seems to have been due to a fundamental scepticism towards him that arose as a result of Hoernle’s having at one time failed to recognize that some of the documents on which he had been working were forged.” Others have also criticized Hoernle for this failure (Hopkirk, p. 109;



Walker, p. 112), somewhat unjustly in view of the quantity and novelty of the new material being discovered in Central Asia at the time.

In the course of his career, Hoernle wrote extensively on many subjects. In addition to his work on Khotanese, he published numerous articles on Indian numismatics and epigraphy, a comparative grammar of the Gaudian languages of North India, a comparative dictionary of Bihari (with George Grierson), and studies of Sanskrit medical texts and Indian medicine. The Hoernle Collection of Central Asian manuscripts and antiquities is now divided between the British Museum and the British Library, London. Hoernle sold the Weber manuscript, which he had purchased himself, to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in 1902, and his private collection of eighty Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Hindi manuscripts was sold to Tübingen University Library in 1908 (see Hoernle's handlist, preserved in Tübingen University Library); eight others were sold separately the same year to Otto Harrassowitz (*ibid.*). Hoernle's papers, including registers and unpublished work, are in the British Library (Pargiter, 1923; Skjærvø, 2002, pp. xlv-xlvii).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

G. A. Grierson, obituary of Hoernle in *JRAS*, 1919, pp. 114-24 (this also contains an almost complete bibliography of Hoernle's published works).

Works by A. F. R. Hoernle. *A Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages with Special Reference to the Eastern Hindi*, London, 1880; also published as *A Grammar of the Eastern Hindi Compared with the Other Gaudian Languages*, London, 1880.

"Remarks on Birch Bark MS.," in *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January to December 1891, Calcutta, 1892, pp. 54-65.

"The Weber MSS.—Another Collection of Ancient Manuscripts from Central Asia," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JASB)* 62, pt. I, 1893, Calcutta, 1894, pp. 1-40.



The Bower Manuscript. Facsimile Leaves, Nagari Transcript, Romanised Transliteration and English Translation with Notes, Calcutta, 1893-1912.

“Three Further Collections of Ancient Manuscripts from Central Asia,” *JASB* 66, pt. I, 1897, pp. 213-60; repr. Calcutta, 1897.

“A Report on the British Collection of Antiquities from Central Asia. Part I,” *JASB* 68, pt. I, 1899, extra no., Calcutta, 1899.

“A Report on the British Collection of Antiquities from Central Asia. Part II,” *JASB* 70, pt. I, 1901, extra no. 1, Calcutta, 1902.

Facsimile Reproduction of Weber Mss., Part IX and Macartney Mss., Set I with Roman Transliteration and Indexes, Calcutta, 1902.

“The «Unknown Languages» of Eastern Turkestan. [I],” *JRAS*, 1910, pp. 834-38, 1283-1300.

“The «Unknown Languages» of Eastern Turkestan. II,” *JRAS*, 1911, pp. 449-77.

Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature Found in Eastern Turkestan, Oxford, 1916; repr., St. Leonards and Amsterdam, 1970.

“An Ancient Medical Manuscript from Eastern Turkestan,” in *Commemorative Essays Presented to Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar*, Poona, 1917, pp. 415-32; repr. as *R. G. Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume*, Delhi and Varanasi, 1977.

Other works. R. E. Emmerick, “Hoernle and the Jivaka-Pustaka,” *BSOAS* 45, 1982, p. 343.

Idem, *A Guide to the Literature of Khotan. Second Edition Thoroughly Revised and Enlarged*, Studia Philologica Buddhica. Occasional Paper Series III, Tokyo, 1992.

Idem, “Harold Walter Bailey 1899-1996,” in C. E. Bosworth, ed., *A Century of British Orientalists 1902-2001*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 10-48; repr. from *1998 Lectures and Memoirs*, Proceedings of the British Academy 101, Oxford, 1999, pp. 308-49.

P. Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road. The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*, London, 1980.



S. Ol'denburg, "Kashgarskaya rukopis' N. F. Petrovskago" (N. F. Petrovsky's manuscript from Kashgar), *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva* 7, 1892 (1893), pp. 81-82 with 1 plate.

F. E. Pargiter, "Dr. Hoernle's MS. Papers," *JRAS*, 1923, pp. 551-58.

Idem, "The Late Dr. Hoernle's MSS.," *JRAS*, 1925, pp. 110-11.

P. O. Skjærvø, *Khotanese Manuscripts from Chinese Turkestan in The British Library. A Complete Catalogue with Texts and Translation. With Contributions by Ursula Sims-Williams*, London, 2002.

M. A. Stein, *Ancient Khotan. Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, Oxford, 2 vols., 1907.

Idem, *Serindia. Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*, 5 vols., Oxford, 1921.

A. Walker, *Aurel Stein. Pioneer of the Silk Road*, London, 1995.