



INSTITUTE FOR IRANIAN PHILOLOGY I. FORERUNNERS

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Although the Institute was founded only in 1961, it has a long prehistory, since it is the natural culmination of about 200 years of Iranian studies in the Kingdom of Denmark. This scholarly activity arose from theological and linguistic interests. The most prominent names and contributions are the following, in chronological order:

Friedrich Münter (1761-1830), professor and bishop, in his 1802 publication (see [EPIGRAPHY i.](#)) established the historical setting of the Old Persian inscriptions

Jens Lassen Rasmussen, Professor of Oriental Languages 1815-26, pupil of the illustrious Silvestre de Sacy in Paris, published valuable interpretations of Hāfez.

Rasmus Rask (1787-1832), one of the major early Indo-European philologists, wrote his *Om Zendsprogets og Zendavestas AElde og AEgthed* (On the antiquity and authenticity of the Zend language and Zend Avesta) in 1821, although it was not published until 1826. This work marks a turning point in the history of Avestan philology; it proves that the Avestan language was a language in its own right with its own historical development. In the same work he determined the reading of the Old Persian word *xšāyaθiyānām* “of kings” and



thus deciphered the characters *na* and *ma*. The Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts collected by Rask in India form the main stock of the famous collection of Iranian manuscripts in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

N. L. Westergaard, Professor of Indian Philology from 1850, used Rask's manuscripts for his edition of the Avesta (*Zend-Avesta or the Religious Books of the Zoroastrians, Vol. I. The Zend Texts*, København, 1852-54), a model edition, to which K. F. Geldner (q.v.) could add little. Already in 1851 Westergaard had published an edition of a Pahlavi text, the first edition in Europe, viz. the *Bundahišn* (q.v.), together with copies of the Hajiābād (q.v.) inscriptions (used by H. S. Nyberg in his edition in *Øst og Vest. Festskrift for Arthur Christensen*, København, 1945). Like Rask, Westergaard had acquired manuscripts in the Near East. One of them was the original Pahlavi text—previously considered lost—of the *Mēnōg ī xrad*, which was published by F. C. Andreas (q.v.) in 1882.

Edvard Lehmann, Docent of the History of Religions, 1900-10, then professor in Berlin and Lund (Sweden), Dr.phil., 1896, with his thesis *Om forholdet mellem religion og kultur I Avesta* (On the Relationship between Religion and Culture in the Avesta). His principal work was *Zarathushtra. En bog om persernes gamle tro* (Zarathushtra. A Book on the Ancient Beliefs of the Persians, vol. I, København, 1899; II, København 1902). He was one of the teachers of Arthur Christensen (q.v.).

Christensen in 1919 became the first Professor of Iranian Philology in Denmark. (For a complete list of his works, see *Proceedings of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences*, June 1945-May 1946, pp. 83-101.) He died on 31 March 1945, which was his last day in office; in his will he presented the University of Copenhagen with his private library, an almost complete collection of Iranica up to 1945. However, it only became possible to create a worthy setting for this sizeable library in the more prosperous financial conditions around 1960. Since the founding of the Institute, the library of Christensen has been supplemented with all kinds of Iranica published since 1945. It also holds Christensen's handwritten notes and drafts, Kaj Barr's *Bundahišn* vocabulary on cards, and a few manuscripts (Judeo-Persian mss. of works of Šāhīn Šīrāzī and 'Emrānī; mss. of Sādeq Hedāyat, a personal friend of Christensen).

See also [DENMARK](#) and individual entries for the above.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a general overview of the university, see Svend Erik Stybe, *Copenhagen University. 500 Years of Science and Scholarship*, Copenhagen, 1979.