



JUSTI, FERDINAND (WILHELM JAKOB)

JUSTI, FERDINAND (WILHELM JAKOB), German scholar of Oriental, particularly Iranian, studies, comparative philologist, and folklorist (b. 2 June 1837 in Marburg-Lahn; d. 17 February 1907 in Marburg-Lahn). He was a descendant of an old Marburg family of theologians, pastors, and scholars. From 1856 on, he devoted his time to linguistic and Oriental studies in Marburg and, during the year 1859/60, in Göttingen. The most influential among his teachers were Johannes Gildemeister in Marburg and Heinrich Ewald, the Indo-Europeanist Theodor Benfey, as well as the historian Georg Waitz in Göttingen. To these people Justi owed his most exact philological method. Having submitted a doctoral thesis about the formation of nominal compounds in the Indo-European languages, he was graduated at Marburg in 1861. Later in the same year an enlarged version of the same work (see Justi, 1861) was approved by the Marburg faculty as Habilitationsschrift, so that Justi quite soon was qualified as a university lecturer. In 1865 he was appointed extraordinary professor of comparative grammar and German philology in his hometown, and from 1869 he taught there as a full professor. He was a member of the Prussian and the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, and in 1887/88 he held the office of the Rector of Marburg University.

After his early studies in the wider Indo-European field, ending with the lecturer's inaugural address on the Eddaic song about Fjölsviðr, he turned nearly without exception to Oriental, and in particular to Iranian, studies. But



his work in this field is characterized by its wide range and covers all aspects of the entire Iranian world: at first, Avestan and, more generally, Zoroastrian studies came to the fore, but soon work on the history of ancient Iran and on historical geography were added, and for some time Justi dealt also with modern Iranian languages. By his publications, which are characterized by their precision in details as well as their author's farsightedness and which therefore became of the utmost significance at the end of the 19th century, Justi deserved well of Iranian studies. He was without doubt one of the leading Iranian scholars of his time and in particular was rightly regarded as the great expert of ancient Iranian history.

His doctoral dissertation about Indo-European nominal compounds (Justi, 1861) was considered among experts as an outstandingly good and important first work, although it had not dealt with its subject in a really exhaustive manner. Regarding the type and structure of the compounds, Justi clearly distinguished three stages of development: (i) old juxtapositions (like OPers. *Aura-mazdā-* [vs. Av. *Ahura- Mazdā-*] or dvandva compounds or similar), (ii) real compounds composed only of two word-stems, and (iii) improper compounds containing an additional compositional vowel or suffix. Moreover, Justi dealt with the form of the stems which appear in nominal composition, with the phenomenon of the compositional vowel, and with the accent of the various types of compounds, where it is marked at all. The meaning of the compounds and their classification according to such criteria were discussed only in the expanded version, which he completed after having gained his doctorate.

Only three years later Justi, then 27 years old, appeared in print with his *Handbuch der Zendsprache* (Justi, 1864), which was practically the first linguistic treatment devoted to both grammar and lexicon of the Avestan language (which at that time usually was still called "Zend"). This substantial and epoch-making work, to which deservedly the Volney Prize was awarded by the Institut de France, was dedicated to his teacher Gildemeister. Its main part (pp. 1-335) was a complete dictionary, the first one ever attempted, recording all the words found in the corpus of Avestan texts as contained in N. L. Westergaard's edition of 1852-54. It presented as many quotations as necessary, listing all occurrences only in cases of more rarely attested or for some reason problematic words and not for the entire lexicon, as later Bartholomae did in his *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), which eventually replaced Justi's work. (At that time Justi examined this successor



lexicon closely in a detailed review of nearly fifty pages [*IF Anzeiger für indogermanische Sprach- und Altertumskunde* 17, 1905, pp. 84-131].) The *Handbuch* also listed quite exactly the inflected forms attested and even referred to etymologically cognate words of other Indo-Iranian languages, where doing so seemed appropriate and meaningful. By this work, which was to become the first useful Avestan dictionary, Justi actually became the founder of Avestan lexicography. But this book inevitably had also its weaknesses, owing to its pioneering character, especially because it continued to use the stubborn way of transcribing the Avestan letters established by [Eugène Burnouf](#). In an appendix the Avestan vocabulary was rendered accessible by a Latin–Avestan index (pp. 336-53).

In addition to the dictionary itself, this manual contained also a full account of the grammar (pp. 357 ff.) and a short anthology of texts (in transcription) selected from the *Yasna*, *Yašts*, and *Vidēvdād*. In the grammatical part Justi intended to put together as completely as possible all the linguistic data relevant for fully describing the phonology and morphology of this language, but without treating the dialect of the [Gathas](#) separately. His chief aim was only to summarize all the results of philological work with the Avestan texts achieved since Burnouf's first publications. This attempt at a full grammatical and lexicographical survey of the Avestan language was successful: for decades the *Handbuch* became the necessary tool for studying this language. With regard to Justi's approach to the Avesta, it must be said, that he was convinced (like [Friedrich von Spiegel](#) and others) of the authoritativeness and reliability of the Parsi tradition and of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) translation of the Avesta. His taking side with the "traditional school" led to a sharp controversy with Martin Haug, who, like his teacher Rudolph von Roth, was of the opinion that the Avesta had to be explained from itself by comparing the Veda. In 1868 Haug criticized the *Handbuch* in a devastating review. On the other hand, Roth, the champion of the "Vedic school," praised Justi's work for its appropriate and masterly arrangement.

This view that for understanding and interpreting the Avesta the Pahlavi tradition is of fundamental significance induced Justi to familiarize himself and to deal intensively with the Middle Persian language of the Zoroastrian writings. For that purpose and for closer research into the Holy Scriptures of the Zoroastrian religion and into their Parsi tradition, he chose the *Bundahišn*, a work compiled in post-Sasanian times and dealing with the cosmogonic and cosmographic ideas prevailing among the Zoroastrians in the Sasanian period.



In 1868 he published in *Der Bundehesh* (Justi, 1868) an edition of what nowadays is called the *Indian Bundahišn*, that is, the shorter recension of that work, which at the same time, however, exhibits the text in a more corrupt form. Contrary to N. L. Westergaard's edition of 1851, which presented only a lithographed copy of the Copenhagen manuscript K 20, Justi included in his book, in addition to the lithographed copy of the text and a transcription into Persian characters, a full German translation (pp. 1-47) and a glossary (pp. 49-288). But apart from K 20 he used also a number of manuscripts which for several years had been accessible in London and Oxford and which are descendants from Haug's manuscript H 6 (now housed in Munich and known as M 51b). These other manuscripts, which Justi collated and copied with the utmost care and meticulousness, present the Pāzand version, that is, they often use Avestan letters; and by utilizing and comparing these variants, which he listed *in extenso* on pp. 85*-118*, Justi was able to publish the first critical edition of that noteworthy literary work.

Justi's *Bundehesh* was to become an important aid for Middle Persian studies at that time, because Justi had brought those studies a decisive step further by reading the Pahlavi words in a way more exact than before and particularly by solving part of the problems regarding the Aramaic elements of those texts. He recognized that the words written in an Aramaic form actually were pronounced as Persian words; that means that he was the first to help pave the way for their modern interpretation as Aramaic "heterograms." In order to appreciate Justi's work and his achievements in a fitting manner, we have to point out that even today there is neither a complete and reliable critical edition of the *Indian* nor of the (longer) *Iranian Bundahišn*, although the situation of Middle Persian studies has improved fundamentally since then in many respects.

In the preface of his book Justi discussed in detail the problem of dating the *Bundahišn*, but by leaning all too much on alleged Arabic words in the text he went astray on this question with his proposal of a date around 1000 CE (and not later than Ferdowsi). Of greater philological relevance are his observations concerning the two groups of Pahlavi manuscripts distinguished by him and also his assessment of the Parsi manuscripts as of comparatively smaller value. In contrast to the then customary habit of transcribing (seemingly transliterating) the Pahlavi characters into square Hebrew letters, Justi used the Persian script—without, however, finding acceptance.

In the field of the modern Iranian languages we come across Justi's name



particularly with regard to Kurdish. August Jaba, who was Russian consul in the Anatolian town of Erzerum, had a special interest in the Kurdish language spoken there and made a great contribution to Kurdish studies by his collections of texts and linguistic material. He entrusted two handwritten dictionaries (one Kurdish–Russian–French, the other French–Russian–Kurdish) to the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. On behalf of the Academy Justi, obviously enjoying a good reputation as an Iranist, published the *Dictionnaire kurde-français* (Justi, 1879), which by its wealth of material (including numerous phrases and sayings) became the first noteworthy dictionary of the Kurdish language and is still today of some value. He incorporated with Jaba’s manuscripts other previously published Kurdish materials (glossaries as well as texts), such as those of Peter Lerch, and he even added references of a comparative kind. By-products of Justi’s Kurdish studies may be seen in some special articles dealing with foreign words in Kurdish, Kurdish names of animals, or the Kurdish spirants.

Based on all those materials, handwritten or printed, and also on the texts collected by Albert Socin among the Nestorian “[Assyrians](#)” in the Tur ‘Abdin, Justi published already in the following year his *Kurdische Grammatik* (Justi, 1880). Also with this Justi did pioneering work, because his grammar is the first attempt of compiling and analyzing all the available texts and other materials for drawing up such a grammar. In his book, which actually is a comparative grammar of the Kurdish dialects, Justi clearly showed that Kurdish is different from the other Iranian languages and in particular from New Persian in several peculiar developments concerning not only the vocabulary, but still more phonology and morphology. The differences are plainly visible above all in the verbal system and in the formation of the numerals combining tens and units. Those parts of the book were commended in a special manner, and so it is no wonder that, in view of his clear account of the facts, his comprehensive knowledge of the language, and his command of linguistic methods, Justi was given the Prize of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences for that book.

One of the Central Iranian dialects, the relatively archaic dialect of Yazd (traditionally called Gabri, at least when spoken by Zoroastrians) is described in an article of considerable size (“Ueber die Mundart von Jezd,” *ZDMG* 35, 1881, pp. 327-414), so far as it is different from the New Persian literary language. Based on translations of one section of the Book of Genesis and two chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel from Persian found in the estate of the



Oriental scholar J. H. Petermann, Justi dealt with the phonology of the dialect and with the formation and the use of its word forms. The second part (pp. 367-414) consists of a German–Yazdi vocabulary.

But long since, Justi had turned to a quite different field of work, to historical studies and the study of historical geography of Iran, for Justi always had the realities in mind, too. Thus already in 1869/70 he was one of the first scholars to publish specifically about the ancient geography of Iran in the prospectuses of Marburg University (cf. Justi, 1869-70).

Justi became better known, however, by his *Geschichte des alten Persiens* (Justi, 1879), an account of the history of pre-Islamic Iran written for a broader public and for a quiet read and therefore without notes, references, and all scholarly apparatus, based, however, on a firsthand knowledge of both the Oriental sources (wherever available) and the Greek and Roman authors. The same is true for the more universally oriented *Geschichte der orientalischen Völker im Altertum* (Justi, 1884), which, as the first volume of a universal history of the world, is characterized by its survey of the historical connections over long periods and the vast geographic regions of the Orient. For Justi presented there a condensed account of the pre-Islamic history of Egypt and the entire Near and Middle East up to India based on the literary, epigraphic, and archeological sources of all those peoples. He tried there to draw an overall picture of the entire ancient world before and aside from the Greeks and the Romans. All aspects of human civilization are included in this view: religion and customs are described, and the readers' attention is drawn also on the works of art, as far as they were known at that time. Justi always endeavored to enrich the general picture he drew of the large historical context with informative, concrete details. Owing to the steady influx of new discoveries and excavations and the immense progress philology and archaeology have made in all the fields of scholarship involved, these works are hopelessly outdated today and remain of interest only for the history of relevant studies.

Justi, who was a talented graphic artist and painter, drew part of the illustrations of these books himself and also drew the geographical maps included in his books, although he never had been in Persia. It is recorded that the famous Swedish traveler [Sven Hedin](#) was accustomed to use Justi's maps, because there were no better ones, in his view. Moreover, in these writings Justi deliberately expected quite a lot of his reader, who for the most part were not on close terms with Oriental studies, by quoting everywhere, even when



not necessary to the understanding, the exotic and strange Oriental proper names in great numbers. Already here we see at work the future author of the *Iranisches Namenbuch* (see below).

Compared with the more general historical accounts of 1879 and 1884, Justi's large chapter on the history of pre-Islamic Iran found in the second volume of the *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie* (see Justi, 1896-1904) is much less comprehensive, but much more specialized and more scientific, giving the reader a wealth of notes referring to the relevant sources and to further literature. While turning to the experts here, Justi also made observations and interpretations not then generally accepted and sometimes even proposals of his own for controversial problems. It cannot be denied that Justi compiled all literary and other sources available to him for the prehistory of the Iranians, the Median, Lydian, and Achaemenid empires, as well as for the history of the Arsacids and the Sasanians, and thus created a standard work. But today this too is only of historical value.

This outline of the early history of Iran to a certain extent is supplemented by a long article on "The Life and Legend of Zarathushtra" (cf. Justi, 1904), which is practically a review of [A. V. W. Jackson's](#) *Zoroaster* (New York, 1899). Justi underlined there in particular the more or less legendary character of all the traditions about Zoroaster and his life, which had induced him to leave this problem aside in his account of the actual history of Iran. In that article Justi declared himself in favor of a lifetime of Zarathushtra in the 7th-6th cent. BCE and a homeland in northwest Iran (i.e., Media), and not in Bactria. (Therefore he usually called the Avestan language "(Old) Median" and no longer "Old Bactrian" during his last years.)

Justi's most important work, even as the historian of today sees it, is his monumental *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Justi, 1895). For an undertaking like this Justi was just the right man, because he was a skilled linguist and at the same time a historian with a wide knowledge of both the history of Iran and her relations to the neighboring peoples. Wilhelm Eilers, himself a well-known onomastician, was of the opinion (see Martin and Eilers, 1958, pp. 134 f.), that this study perhaps is the most daring project ("vielleicht das kühnste Projekt") Justi ever realized. Further, Eilers put the question, who nowadays as an individual would dare to compile the entire anthroponomastic material concerning three millennia of Iranian history. For in principle Justi already was going to collect, not only the names attested in the Iranian-language sources from the oldest Avestan texts up to his time, but also all the names



recorded since the 9th-century BCE in the literary, epigraphical, numismatic, and other traditions of all those peoples with which Iranians have come into contact at some time or which report on the bearers of Iranian-language names. From his engagement in a project initiated for replacing Justi's now hundred-year-old work, the present author only can subscribe to Eilers' words.

The *Namenbuch*, being the result of decades of historical studies and of excerpting and collecting the anthroponyms from the Oriental and Western sources and the literature he read and analyzed, thus became the sum total of all the personal names attested for Iranian people. Actually being only the by-product of writing several books and contributions on Iranian history, it contains nearly 4,500 names and 9,500 different persons, that are presented with all the necessary documentary proof and evidence. It arose from Justi's historical research and therefore set great value on the prosopographical part. This is also the reason that a great number of family trees of noble, royal, and other—even legendary—dynasties are added in order to illustrate and to make clearer the prosopographical and genealogical data given in the relevant entry.

The wide range of this work is just as astonishing as its author's knowledge of literature and languages, which made it possible to bring together here all the proper names that were attested then anywhere in some branch of Iranian literature (Avestan, Middle and New Persian, or other) or beyond it in some foreign-language (including Assyrian, Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian) source reporting on Iran. But Justi strove for completeness not only in collecting the personal names as such (without chronological restriction), but also in recording all the different bearers of those names mentioned in the available sources. In this way the *Namenbuch* is a "historical onomasticon," in which all the anthroponyms based on an Iranian-language form are collected, and at the same time a prosopographical lexicon of the persons bearing those names, therefore to a certain extent a "Who was who among Iranian-speaking peoples."

As far as possible Justi quoted each name in the oldest form attested. For the anthroponyms recorded in some foreign (script and) language, their foreign form is given as lemma, unless the Iranian original form can be established without difficulty.

Although August Friedrich Pott (1802-87) had recognized the significance of



collecting and etymologizing the Persian names attested in Greek and Roman authors already at a quite early date and, apart from him, also scholars like Michel Bréal (1832-1915), Philipp Keiper (1855-1927), and others pursued onomastic studies, Justi's work is the first overall summary of anthroponomastic research done in the Iranian field. In this way it became an important component of Indo-European anthroponomastics generally, since August Fick (1833-1916) long before had established the fact that the Iranian system of personal names originally was identical with the system of the other ancient Indo-European languages and that they all originate from the Indo-European proto-language. It was Fick, too, who in his review of Justi's *Namenbuch* (*Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen* 24, 1895, pp. 305-16) and on its basis provided additional evidence for integrating the Iranian material into the Indo-European anthroponomastic system.

Being a trained linguist, Justi himself had added etymological remarks wherever he regarded a proposal as certain or at least very probable. In view of Justi's mainly prosopographical approach, however, the linguistic interpretation is of secondary importance for him. But two detailed registers appended on pp. 483-526, in which Justi sometimes expressed mere assumptions, listed (i) the compound names according to their second elements and (ii) the one-stem forms according to the derivational (often hypocoristic) suffix used. With this organization the registers well provided a first clue to the etymological interpretation and therefore are even today of some linguistic relevance (see Schmitt, 1978, who made them accessible by an index).

In the Introduction to this standard work (pp. III-XVIII; supplemented by a short article "Miscellen zur iranischen Namenkunde," *ZDMG* 49, 1895, pp. 681-91) Justi expounded, even if not systematically, some more general observations about the principles of name-giving among the Iranians, about onomastic customs, the motivation of choosing some particular name, and the like. Also more technical questions are dealt with there, such as the transcription and, in some more detail, the morphology of anthroponyms with compound names, short names, hypocoristics, and other forms (see [PERSONAL NAMES, IRANIAN](#)). Justi became aware also of the linguistic significance of the personal names manifesting itself chiefly in two points: (i) the continuity in the use of names over centuries and millennia (from which eventually linguistic conclusions may be drawn and phonological changes may be demonstrated); and (ii) the survival of lost common nouns in the forms



of anthroponyms (enlarging the vocabulary of earlier stages of the development of the Iranian languages).

Although it is a thorough and indispensable manual even today, the *Namenbuch* in the meantime has become somewhat outdated in several respects due to the immense wealth of anthroponomastic materials discovered during the 20th century. It will be replaced therefore by a large project with numerous collaborators, namely the Vienna project of the *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* initiated by Manfred Mayrhofer and prepared by the Institute for Iranian studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Because until now only two volumes and some fascicles of that work have been published, Justi's *Namenbuch* is actually replaced only in small part (for Avestan and Old Persian), whereas it must be consulted as always for all the other sections.

Those major works of Justi's were complemented by a great number of articles and reviews published in journals, as well as of contributions to various collective volumes. Here Justi dealt, for example, with Middle Persian texts and seal legends, and with the Old Persian inscriptions and the problem (still rather disputed at that time) of the Old Persian month names. However, a complete list of all his writings has never appeared in print.

Apart from Iranian studies, Justi enjoyed dealing with the customs and traditions of his Hessian homeland, in particular with the world of the country folk. On long hikes from an early age he drew with crayons and painted in watercolor the sights and attractions around Marburg and captured all aspects of rural life, tools, and costumes. In his last book (see Justi, 1905) he published those drawings (made when black-and-white photography had just become available), commented upon them in a scholarly manner, and thus taught to understand the history of the traditional costume. By this work a full impression of Hessian folklore of that far-off time was preserved for future generations.

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