



REICHELTL, HANS

REICHELTL, HANS (b. 20 April, 1877 in Baden near Vienna, d. 12 May 1939 in Baden), Austrian scholar of Indo-European and Iranian studies ([FIGURE 1](#)). The son of a printer he enrolled in 1896 at Vienna University for taking up studies of classical, Germanic and Indo-Iranian philology and comparative linguistics with Georg Bühler, Friedrich Müller, Rudolf Meringer and others; later he went to Giessen, where [Christian Bartholomae](#) became his teacher in the stricter sense. In 1900 Reichelt obtained his doctorate with a thesis encouraged by Bartholomae on the *Frahang ī oīm*. After several years' teaching at grammar schools in Lower Austria he returned as a librarian to Giessen, where in 1908 he qualified as a university lecturer for Sanskrit, comparative philology and history of religion with a study of Avestan syntax as his habilitation dissertation, which he later included in his *Awestisches Elementarbuch* (see below). In 1911 he was appointed the first extraordinary professor of comparative philology at the easternmost university of the Habsburg Empire in Czernowitz (now Chernovtsy). When Bukovina was annexed to Romania at the end of World War I and the university was closed, Reichelt first taught as a honorary lecturer in Innsbruck and Graz, but in 1920 after Johann Kirste's death he was appointed full professor of Indo-Iranian philology in Graz. In 1926 he was appointed professor of Iranian studies at Hamburg University, before in 1930 he returned to Graz, and took over the chair of Sanskrit and comparative philology held until then by his teacher Meringer. In 1938/39 academic year, he was Rector of his university. Among his disciples were the Iranist Olaf Hansen (1902–69) and Wilhelm Brandenstein (1898–1967), the author of various studies about Old Persian and



the Achaemenid royal inscriptions in general.

Among Reichelt's publications are a number of studies on the Indo-European languages in general, especially on Greek and Latin, but the focus of his attention were the Old and Middle Iranian languages, more particularly, Avestan and Sogdian studies. All his work is characterized by his philological acumen, his linguistic good judgement and thoroughness as well as his keen insight; he often was able to draw conclusions for cultural history from the linguistic data.

Reichelt's doctoral thesis was a new and the first critical edition of the small *Frahang ī oīm* (Reichelt, 1900) in original script and in transliteration, based only on the old and good texts found in two miscellany codices preserved in the libraries of Copenhagen (K 20) and Munich (M 51a), the latter being preferred by him as the better manuscript. He recorded the variants of K20 in the notes. His edition was an improvement on Hoshangji Jamaspji and Martin Haug, who in their edition of 1867, entitled *An Old Zand-Pahlavi Glossary*, had given preference to some secondary manuscripts. In this glossary lexical and grammatical notes are provided, so that it is of linguistic interest for both Avestan and Middle Persian. But it is of textual-philological importance, too, because it enlarges our knowledge of the lexicon of both these languages by quoting a number of words and phrases, even complete sentences, not attested in the extant Avestan texts. Reichelt is responsible for subdividing the text in chapters and sections, which are missing in the manuscripts. In the second part of his study (Reichelt, 1901), he added an index containing all the Avestan words and their Middle Persian renderings, adding more details as, for instance, the meaning of the words or some critical comment only in more difficult cases.

In his *Awestisches Elementarbuch* (1909), which totally follows Bartholomae, Reichelt presented a detailed, though sometimes confusingly arranged manual, which despite its title is anything but an easy introduction to the Avestan language suitable for elementary instruction. Its orientation is not purely descriptive, but a more historical one, often starting from Proto-Indo-European or Proto-Aryan. His linguistic method, however, is quite accurate and careful. Although phonology and morphology are based on the relevant chapters of the *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie* authored by Bartholomae as well as on his *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, it is all too clear that Reichelt had a good command of his subject. It is, however, the rather detailed treatment of the Avestan syntax (pp. 218–387), that was something completely novel at that



time and which makes the book indispensable even today, since it has not been replaced in any regard. His account of Avestan syntax covers all relevant data reliably attested in the Avestan texts, presenting them in a wealth of well-selected examples. It is therefore the most independent part of the book, which remains a standard work, if rather demanding.

As a supplement to the *Elementarbuch*, in which the students could find only a small selection of Avestan texts (pp. 388–411) with the corresponding glossary (pp. 412–514), Reichelt published shortly after a larger anthology of Avestan texts in his *Avesta Reader* (1911), which is written in English on the special request of the Parsis. The texts selected are much more numerous (pp. 1–90) and are chosen from all parts of the Avestan corpus, including passages from minor texts like *Niyāyišn*, *Sīrōza*, *Hādōxt Nask*, and *Nīrangistān*. In this, Reichelt was led by the intention to present texts of special importance from the viewpoint of both philology and history of religion, i. e. of their linguistic form and their religious content. And indeed he succeeded in compiling such a selection. By and large the texts presented by him is that of Geldner's edition (as far as the texts may be found there), all diversions from it being marked, but without a critical apparatus. The rather detailed notes on the texts (pp. 91–209) outline first their content and then comment fully on all essential points in a quite profitable and reliable manner. These exegetical notes aim at making possible for the reader the correct translation and understanding of the texts. But his commentary refrains from any reference to the Parsi tradition or to data from other Iranian languages. At the end a glossary of the words that occur in the selected texts and a subject index covering the notes are added for the users' benefit.

Reichelt's surveys of the state of Iranian linguistic studies, especially the detailed account on "Iranisch" (Reichelt, 1927) must be seen within the context of the "History of Indo-European comparative philology founded by Wilhelm Streitberg. Here one can find a condensed but comprehensive discussion of all the results achieved by Iranologists until that time and of the tasks to be undertaken by them in the future. Already a decade before, Reichelt had tried to make a first attempt in this respect about Khotanese, the language first called "Nordarisch" (Reichelt, 1914), on the basis of the earliest relevant publications by Rudolf Hoernle, Sten Konow, and Ernst Leumann. He could distinguish already at that time a later development of this language from an earlier stage, the more archaic morphology of which he explained by drawing on the development of the language of the Northwestern Indo-Aryans which



was better known at that period. Regarding the position of Khotanese Saka among the family of the Iranian languages Reichelt emphasized the many correspondences between this language and the Pamir dialects, especially Wakhī. It is to be regretted that Reichelt's plans in 1902 for an expedition to southern Persia, for taking photographs and making squeezes of Old and Middle Persian inscriptions could not be realized.

During the 1920s, when preparing the edition of the Sogdian texts of Sir Aurel Stein's collection, Reichelt in several minor articles repeatedly dealt with questions of Sogdian grammar and lexicon. They heralded a two-volume book which was to become a milestone of Sogdian studies. The aim of this work (1928–31) was to publish for the first time in transcribed form and together with a literal translation into German all the fragments in Sogdian language found at Dunhuang and preserved in the Library of the British Museum (today British Library). Part I contains the Buddhist texts: parts of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, *Dhūta-sūtra* and *Buddhadhyāna-samādhi-sāgara-sūtra* as well as some minor pieces, all Sogdian versions of Indian originals and largely known only in the Sogdian version, so that understanding and translating them was not always an easy task, particularly insofar as the special Buddhist terminology was concerned. Of the same importance for the knowledge of Sogdian are the so-called “[Ancient Letters](#)”, which are the showpiece of the non-Buddhist texts published in Part II, with rich annotations, a full glossary and the facsimiles of the text. Beside some supplements to the Buddhist texts, included in Part II is also a short fragment, which obviously belongs to a lost description of the legend of Rostam. His careful and reliable edition unfortunately does not contain however the complete Sogdian glossary he had planned from the very beginning.

As mentioned above, Reichelt dealt also with other languages and with special problems of the Indo-European protolanguage such as the ablaut, the nature of verbal roots, the conjugation and the vexed question of the labiovelar consonants (Reichelt, 1922). Following the way shown by his teacher and later colleague Meringer, Reichelt tried to combine linguistic studies with those of cultural history. His most successful work in this field is the article on “Der steinerne Himmel” (Reichelt, 1913). Starting from Av. and OPers. *asman*– “heaven” and its equivalents Ved. *ásman*– and Gk. *ákmōn* with their double meaning “stone” and “heaven” and analyzing lexical evidence and mythological traces found among several other Indo-European peoples, Reichelt was able to suggest, that the conception of a stone vault of heaven is



of Indo-European origin and is older than the conception of the daylight heaven reflected in IE. **d̥ieǵs*-. Although, e. g., Heaven is worshipped as a god in the Avesta (Y. 16.6; 42.3) and Gk. *Ákmōn* is the father of Kronos, this view is much disputed. As clear continuants in the Rigveda and scattered remnants in Iran suggest, an Indo-European myth of a stone heaven cannot be dismissed entirely, however, which his son (born from Mother Earth) smashed with his hammer, so that light and rain, which were enclosed before in a rock, could eventually find their way to the earth.

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