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**A Survey of Old Middle Indian**

[“Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick”]

(Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasiens, H. 20)

Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986; 209 pp.

In spite of their great importance as the link between Sanskrit and Modern Indian, the Middle Indian languages have never been investigated from a linguistic point of view with the thoroughness that is to be desired. The grammars of W. Geiger and R. Pischel, pioneering and meritorious works in their time, no longer meet the methodological demands of the present; furthermore, they treat the two languages in isolation from each other and only in relation to Sanskrit, with the result that a survey of the whole complex remains blocked and the reader obtains a survey only of partial areas. A work such as that reviewed here, which for the first time gives an account of Middle Indian as a whole, is thus to be warmly welcomed. It was of advantage to the author that he is acquainted not only with literary Middle Indian but also with the inscriptions, which are of such importance for the history of the language.

A short introduction (pp. 2–24), which sketches the position of the Middle Indian languages within the history of Indo-European and Indian, is followed by a detailed presentation of sources, highly disparate in extent and linguistic value; the inscriptions (Aśoka and after), coins, literary sources (Buddhist, Jaina and secular texts), and the native grammars and lexica. The individual Middle Indian languages are presented with their phonetic and morphological characteristics in a further section; in this section the treatment of the *Paśācī*, based on the author's own research, are of particular interest. There follows a comparative grammar, divided between phonology and morphology, in which the author, by incorporating all new investigations and his own observations, advances beyond all textbooks available hitherto. Strict attention is paid in the phonology to regularity; a remarkable feature here is the first systematic inclusion of Modern Indo-Aryan languages. In the morphology the careful presentation of the development of the declension system should be emphasized. In addition, the compendious brevity and lucidity of the presentation, which the author achieves in spite of all the variety of the material, can be regarded as a step forward in comparison with older textbooks. The book is an indispensable help for anyone concerned with Middle Indian linguistics.

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