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AIM AND SCOPE

Historiographia Linguistica (HL) serves the ever growing community of scholars interested in the history of the sciences concerned with language such as linguistics, philology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, neurology, and other disciplines.

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schlagewerk darbietet.⁶ Der Verfasserin gebührt jedoch Dank und Anerkennung.

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⁶ Wenn die Vf. S.568 zwischen "Historiograph" und "Historiographin" sowie "er" und "sie" differenziert, ist das ein feministischer Unsinn, der in einer Wissenschaftsgeschichte nichts zu suchen hat, ridikul wirkt und damit einem außerhalb der Wissenschaft geführten feministischen Anliegen keinen Nutzen bringt.

... *and the Word was God: Missionary Linguistics and Missionary Grammar*. Ed. by Even Hovdhaugen. (= *Studium Sprachwissenschaft*; Beiheft 25.)
Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1996. Pp. 128.

Reviewed by CRISTINA ALTMAN, *Universidade de São Paulo*

The unpretentious booklet under review is a good attempt to institutionalize a subject of study in History of Linguistics which seems to be drawing more and more attention in specialized circles. As pointed out by the editor in his Preface (p.7), the book brings together extended versions of papers previously presented by their authors — Hovdhaugen himself, Elke Nowak, Michael Mackert, and Rüdiger Schreyer — at a colloquium on 'Missionary Linguistics' held at the University of Oslo, in September 1994 (cf. the brief report in *HL* 22:3.441, 1995). One is also informed that the group decided to take steps to open up the field one year before, in 1993, at the *Sixth International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences* (ICHoLS VI) in Washington, D.C. Since then, they have been involved in various activities, among them, the publication of this small collection. One may regret the choice of the title of the book, as well as the designation given to the specialty, but, on balance, the authors' initiatives are positive. One trusts that they will succeed in their purpose of moving to the center of interests in linguistic historiography this emergent (and fascinating) field of research usually dubbed 'Missionary Linguistics'.

The four papers presented here barely scratch the surface of the various possibilities of this area of study and the richness of still largely unexplored materials. I do not mean to imply that they lack useful information or good proposals for future research. On the contrary, an effective programmatic effort is made by the opening papers of Hovdhaugen (9-22) and Nowak (23-44), who try to define the scope, methods and objectives of this area of research. The other two papers, Mackert's description of a pioneering grammatical sketch of Nimipu-tímt, or Nez Perce, a language spoken in the former Oregon territory (45-76), and Schreyer's overview of the beginnings of Huronian linguistics in New France (77-121) may be taken as 'case' studies. A small but useful *Index nominum* (123-128) concludes the booklet.

By considering the grammars written by church men — defined as pedagogical and synchronic descriptions of a particular language, "created as part of

missionary work by non-native missionaries" (p.15) — the intersection point between the history of missionary linguistics and the history of grammar writing, Hovdhaugen maps out his research program: the contribution of the missionaries' practices to the development of Western linguistic traditions. In this sense, one regrets that the sketch of the history of Western grammar writing drawn by Hovdhaugen (10-13), from the Greek and Roman grammarians till the 19th century, is far too brief. Hovdhaugen highlights for future research (17-20), illustrated by data from the Samoa missions in the 19th century — the clarification of the differences in the general attitude towards grammar writing among the missionary societies, their linguistic policy, the grammatical models they adopted; the degree of accommodation to Latin grammar patterns; or the influence of Hebrew on their grammatical analysis. These illustrations are interesting; more challenging is his proposal of the investigation of the contribution of missionary linguistics to some current concepts in general linguistics (such as the *ergative*, or *polysynthesis*), as well as its contribution to the development of an empirical linguistic culture less dependent of classical values.

Nowak's approach to the subject is challenging too. She tries to show how the Western tradition has been overvalorizing the theory-oriented approaches in the study of language to the detriment of empirical ones, even in historical investigation. Nowak observes that much less attention has been given to the history of linguistic descriptive methodology than to the history of linguistic ideas, philosophies or theories. As a result, the simplistic image of descriptive linguistics as an "ancillary branch of theoretical linguistics" (p.24), if not thoroughly rethought, as she suggests, tends to persist. Missionary grammars should be included in this rethinking, once they are the *ab quo* instance of this history. Step by step, with examples, Nowak shows how the interest for the universal approach within the rationalist grammar tradition conflicted with the empirical experience of language diversity; how different approaches to grammatical description interfered with the perception of the linguistic data (grammars are not bare facts, indeed); how each approach can represent the stage of the development of our linguistic knowledge, and how, in sum, the relationship between the 'discovery procedures' in linguistics, the linguistics data and their representation, is far from obvious. The question, however, if this asymmetrical valorization of theoretical and empirical orientations in language study can be changed, remains open. Nowak's argument in favour of a descriptive approach is trenchant, but convincing.

Mackert's study of the first grammatical sketch of Nimip-tímt (Nez Perce) focuses on the work of Asa Bowen Smith (1809–1886), "a Congregationalist missionary who resided among the Native Americans in the Oregon territory"

(p.46). The author offers interesting information about the Presbyterian missionaries' linguistic policy in the region — quite similar to the Catholic missionaries' in South America two centuries before, by the way — and, in the following pages (50-71), dissects Smith's description of Nez Perce: the alphabet utilized, the word formation; the inflection of nouns and verbs. Although, in the introduction of his paper, Mackert underlines the interest of Smith's grammatical sketch for our contemporary understanding of early descriptions of Native American languages, one cannot help wondering what Mackert may have found so interesting in such a personage of the beginning of the 19th century. One learns that Smith reached Oregon with his wife in 1838, was more educated than some of his colleagues in the mission, had a talent for languages, wrote the first grammar of Nez Perce and left the Territory in 1841, to be forgotten forever. In his descriptive work, Smith, as well as other missionaries, followed John Pickering's (1777–1846) one-to-many correspondence alphabet of 1820 closely (52-55), as it had been recommended by the *American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions*. Smith used his knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin to grasp the complex structure of Nez Perce and was able, at the same time, to recognize *sui generis* structures of the language, irrespective of those which served him as a standard of comparison (p.71). Smith's case is a good illustration of how many filters there are between the perception of linguistic data and their representation. In the end, we have to agree with Mackert's conclusion that Smith produced an excellent piece of work (and in a short time). But a great part of his merit may possibly be due to Mackert's talent to present him to us as an accomplished linguist.

The last paper, by Schreyer, approaches the study of the Huronian language from other angles. Focusing more on its historical setting and presenting generous samples of 16th and 17th centuries documents (although some quotations may be considered too long), including, as he does, an English translation (111-114) of the Recollet Franciscan Gabriel Sagard's (1610–1650) introduction to the small Huron dictionary appended to his *Grand Voyage du pays des Hurons* (Paris: Denys Moreau, 1632), and a small ancient map of New France (p.115). Huron is an extinct Iroquoian language and the map places Huronia in today's Ontario (Canada), side-by-side of the territories then occupied by other Iroquoian tribes and the Algonquians.

By reviewing the historical surveys of North American Indian linguistics, Schreyer observes that one could be wrongly tempted to think that the pre-19th century linguistic production on these languages is less important than it deserves to be, due to the relatively small space dedicated to it. As a compensation, Schreyer reviews in detail the French (missionary) linguistic production

on Huron. Like in English and Iberian centers of colonization, the knowledge of the Huron language by the French began in the 16th century with the kidnapping of natives and with the 'immersion' of some Frenchmen (e.g., Étienne Brûlé or Bruslé [c.1592–1533]) into the native ambiance. The purposes were practical: both were supposed to serve as interpreters or guides for the French travelers and traders. The result of these first contacts was the recording of words lists and phrase books as well as the formation of a trade pidgin.

The first grammars and dictionaries of the language would appear only during the 17th century when the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries reached the region. Their production was quite respectable: besides Sagard's dictionary, the Jesuits left thousands of reports published between 1632 and 1673 (edited by Thwaites 1898–1901 in 73 volumes). The reader not familiar with this literature may be resentful of a certain lack of distinctive hierarchy in the way Schreyer presents it. And it is a pity that in the end he has too few pages left to expatiate on his statement that the (biased) European view of the American Indians and of their languages was molded mainly by the 18th-century literature and how it "stimulated 18th century theoretical history of language" (p.110), briefly referring to, *inter alia*, Louis Armand, Baron de Lahontan's (1666–1715) *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrional* (La Haye: Les Frères L'Honoré, 1703), but mainly to (Father) Joseph François Lafitau's (1681–1746) *Moeurs des sauvages Américains* (Paris: Saugrain l'ainé, 1724).

It goes without saying that the field is more vast than one could think at a first sight. Over the centuries missionaries participated in the European colonial enterprise, and quite often became responsible for everything related to education, language description and language teaching in the conquered territories of Asia, America, and Africa. As a consequence, the missionary literature — catechisms, glossaries, dictionaries, and grammars — has a double-sided interest for the contemporary linguist. On the one hand, the missionaries' manuscripts are the only documents we have left from a variety of now extinct languages. On the other hand, these materials can attest how people learned, through the centuries, to deal with linguistic diversity and to represent it. If one of the tasks of linguistic historiography is to lay bare the (sometimes unconscious) assumptions that these linguists brought to their practices and to point to the consequences of these views for the development and improvement of our linguistic knowledge, the systematic investigation of the conditions under which Europeans missionaries registered, described and presented the data of languages typologically so different from their own is indeed an important step in the direction of our better understanding of the essential features of the Western grammatical tradition.

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