

Linguist:**Speyer, Jacob Samuel****Text:**

Born December 20, 1849, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; died November 2, 1913, Leiden, The Netherlands. Pioneering Sanskrit philologist/syntactician. S's father, a mathematician, died before, and his mother shortly after S's birth. One of his father's pupils sponsored S's schooling at the Amsterdam gymnasium and his further arts studies at the Athenaeum Illustre (the precursor of the University of Amsterdam). After 1868 S continued his studies at Leiden University, mainly with Indologist H. Kern, where he defended his dissertation on Hindu birth rituals *magna cum laude* in December 1872. After teaching Greek and Latin at high school level, he was appointed lector in Sanskrit at the University of Amsterdam in 1877, then professor of Latin at the University of Groningen in 1889, and ultimately professor of Sanskrit at the University of Leiden in 1903, as the successor of H. Kern. He was admitted to the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences in 1889. S showed a remarkable familiarity with Sanskrit already in his teens, and contributed to Sanskrit philology throughout his career via translations (*Jâtakamâlâ*, 1893-1894), text editions (*Avadânaúataka*, 1902-1909), and essays (*Studies about the Kathâsaritsâgara*, 1908). But his lasting contribution to linguistics is his *Sanskrit Syntax* of 1886 (reprinted 1973), a pioneering study in a then neglected field, with copious data culled from his own lecture of classic Sanskrit poetry and prose. The work contains six sections, starting with general remarks on the structure of sentences, followed by a section on agreement and case (including periphrastic expression and productive compound formation), then sections on nominal and verbal categories, particles, and the syntax of complex sentences. An abbreviated version, expanded with a treatment of Vedic syntax, appeared as part I.6 of J.G. Bühler's *Grundriss der Indo-arischen philologie und Altertumskunde* (1896). S considered himself a 'linguistically schooled philologist', and in later years he appears somewhat out of touch with the comparative linguistics of his time. Still he was highly regarded internationally, in the words of C.R. Lanman, as "a high minded man and exceedingly learned and accomplished scholar". He wrote and taught extensively on anthropological, philosophical and religious subjects relating to classical and oriental culture, and was well acquainted with as diverse languages as Tibetan and Javanese. S kept meticulous notes of his teaching and research, as well as of astronomical and meteorological phenomena. He was a tireless worker and an avid reader, who hated sports and eschewed diversions like music and the theatre. His teaching has been described as intense, and throughout his career he was involved in matters of educational reform, where he defended the prominent position of Latin at the junior high school level.

Linguist's works:

(1886): *Sanskrit Syntax*, Leiden (reprinted Delhi, 1973). (1893-4): "Jâtakamâlâ translated from the original Sanskrit," *TLV* 8, 129-182, 254-310, 441-500 and 10, 201-256, 323-385, 616-658 (reprinted

as *The Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. 1*, Harvard, 1895). (1896): *Vedische und Sanskrit Syntax*, Strassburg (= Grundriss der Indo-iranischen Philologie I.6). (1902-1909): *Avadânaúataka: a century of edifying tales belonging to the Hînayâna*, St. Petersburg (=Bibliotheca Buddhica III). (1908): *Studies about the Kathâsaritsâgara*, Amsterdam (=Verhandelingen der KAW, Nieuwe Reeks, VIII.5).

Literature:

W. CALAND (1915): Jacob Samuel Speyer, *Jaarboek KAW 1914*, 37-77. B. FADDEGON (1915): Levensbericht van Jacob Samuel Speyer, *Levensberichten MNL 1914-1915*, 259-309.

Author:
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For the editor

Note on abbreviations:

KAW Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen, Amsterdam.

MNL Maatschappij voor Nederlandse Letterkunde, Leiden.

TLV Tijdschrift voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië, The Hague.