Archipel

Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien

98 | 2019

Varia

Jürg Schneider: *Vom Gebrauch der Philologie. Der Luzerner Sprachforscher Renward Brandstetter (1860–1942)* (On the Use of Philology. The Lucerne Linguist Renward Brandstetter (1860–1942)

Marlies Spiecker-Salazar

Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/1547>

DOI : 10.4000/archipel.1547

ISSN : 2104-3655

Éditeur

Association Archipel

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 3 décembre 2019

Pagination : 275-276

ISBN : 978-2-910513-82-5

ISSN : 0044-8613

Référence électronique

Marlies Spiecker-Salazar, « Jürg Schneider: *Vom Gebrauch der Philologie. Der Luzerner Sprachforscher Renward Brandstetter (1860–1942)* (On the Use of Philology. The Lucerne Linguist Renward Brandstetter (1860–1942) », *Archipel* [En ligne], 98 | 2019, mis en ligne le 11 décembre 2019, consulté le 19 mars 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/1547> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.1547>

Association Archipel

Les petits éditeurs amateurs sont plus courageux, comme c'est souvent le cas en France. L'Association culturelle franco-indonésienne Pasar Malam a publié une douzaine d'ouvrages traduits de l'indonésien en sept ans. Hélas, depuis que sa présidente et fondatrice, Johanna Lederer, a pris sa retraite, l'Association a décidé d'arrêter sa petite maison d'éditions du *Banian*.

C'est bien dommage.

Jean-Claude Trutt

Philologie

Jürg Schneider: *Vom Gebrauch der Philologie. Der Luzerner Sprachforscher Renward Brandstetter (1860–1942)* (On the Use of Philology. The Lucerne Linguist Renward Brandstetter (1860-1942), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2019, 163 p., illustrations, ISBN: 9783447112482

This small book is the biography of a Swiss linguist who was an outsider in Indonesian studies. Working as a professor at the local Gymnasium of Lucerne, Brandstetter had a strong interest in philology and used it first to do research in the dialects and folklore of his native Lucerne. On an excursion in 1884 he met the Dutch professor G.K. Niemann, who taught Malay to missionaries and colonial administrators at the Academy in Delft. Brandstetter got interested in Indonesian languages and started to study Malay, Buginese and Makassarese. He was really fascinated by these languages and became a very prolific writer.

Between 1885 and 1937 he published at his own expense many booklets on “Indonesian” languages and literatures between Madagascar and the Philippines. His publications can be divided into several series: In the first series of his Malayo-Polynesian researches, in 1893 to 1898, he did mostly literary translations; from 1902 to 1908 he ventured into comparative studies of Malayo-Polynesian languages; from 1910 to 1915 he published 7 monographs of Indonesian Linguistics. In his third series of publications “We people of the Indonesian Soil” he published 11 monographs; a 12th written in 1940 was published posthumously in 1992 by W. Marschall.

The English linguist Otto Blagden translated four of these papers into English and published them in 1906 in London under the title *Introduction to Indonesian Linguistics*.

Brandstetter's other publications were only known in the scientific community on the continent. Like Ferdinand Blumentritt (1853-1913), the specialist and advocate of the Philippines from Leitmeritz in Bohemia, who was also a high school professor all his life, Brandstetter didn't have a university position, and therefore was an outsider in the academic world, but he joined many learned societies to engage in a dialogue with scientists in his field.

Brandstetter was fascinated by the concept of common roots of words as in his *Wurzel und Wort in den indonesischen Sprachen* ("Root and word in the Indonesian languages") of 1910. It was not really a new idea. Wilhelm von Humboldt had already written about this in his *Über die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Java* ("On the Kawi language on the island of Java"), 1836-1838. Humboldt had also looked for traces of the *Ursprache* (i.e. the original or protolanguage) of the Malayo-Polynesian language family.

Brandstetter presented in 1911 the first reconstruction of *Ur-Indonesisch* (proto-Indonesian). This was later systematized in a more scientific way by Otto Dempwolff (1871-1938).

The last series *Wir Menschen der indonesischen Erde* ("We people of the Indonesian Soil") in 1921 starts with a very emotional prologue¹⁸:

We people of the Indonesian soil whose faces are tanned by the sun, stand before you people with white bodies, to let our word talk to you. There was a time, when all of you, except for a few weak voices, believed that nature had given you a nobler humanity than us, and even now there are voices who think that and many of you proclaim that. Especially for those is meant our word. We will establish before you the proof that our souls are of the same quality and of the same value as yours, and that therefore nature endowed us with a human nature that is just as outstanding as yours.

This seems more like a political manifesto for the people of Indonesia than the introduction to a dictionary. Brandstetter was an idealist who identified with the people of Indonesia and its neighbors, although he knew them only through European studies of their languages.

His pathos found little sympathy among his colleagues. Not everybody appreciated his effusive style. Some thought that it was too lyrical and his approach too unscientific. The Danish linguist Kurt Wulff criticized Brandstetter's ideas in "Wurzel und Wort" as too superficial and Brandstetter who was rather thin-skinned reacted strongly in his answer "To my critic" in 1911. Brandstetter was especially hurt by the criticism of C.C. Berg on the occasion of the defense of his doctoral dissertation in 1929 at the University of Leiden. In this dissertation Berg had expressed some doubts about the thesis of Brandstetter that all Indonesian languages came from one original language.

Brandstetter reacted again strongly and after that there was a certain estrangement between the Dutch school of linguistics and Brandstetter, even leading to the rumor that he had sold his notes for a comparative dictionary of all Indonesian languages to the Sorbonne, instead of donating them to a Dutch Institute.

The biographer places Brandstetter's life and work in its historical context,

18. We quote here our translation that was published in Marlies Spiecker-Salazar, *Perspectives on Philippine Languages. Five Centuries of European Scholarship*. Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University Press. 2012, p. 152.

showing his Swiss roots and his many European scientific connections. Schneider completes the picture by writing about language developments in Indonesia and a long chapter on Jose Rizal, the Filipino national hero whom Brandstetter called “my only Indonesian friend” although Brandstetter probably never met Rizal who was not an Indonesian, but a Filipino. Sometimes the biographer seems to digress from linguistics. Why devote too many pages to a minor work by Rizal, his translation of Schiller’s “Wilhelm Tell,” or to the fact that a Swiss sculptor did the statue of Rizal in Manila? Why devote two pages to a Swiss painter comparing his forest painting to Brandstetter’s research? When Brandstetter used the word “Wanderungen,” he certainly didn’t mean forest hikes, but in a metaphorical sense “peregrination” through the world of Austronesian languages.

Schneider would have done better to devote more attention to the informational details of the biography. The bibliography is incomplete and the footnotes are not always correct.

Marlies Spiecker-Salazar