Expanding the Comparative View: Humboldt's *Über die Kawi-Sprache* and its language materials*

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Introduction

Eight years before William Jones (1746-1794) delivered his third Anniversary Discourse before the Asiatick Society of Calcutta, with its infinitely cited ‘philologist passage’ about the common source of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin et al. (Jones 1787: 422-3), German naturalist and traveller Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) published a strikingly similar passage about a different language family, in his *Observations made during a Voyage round the World*. Like Jones, Forster found the resemblances between languages impossible to ignore:

I took particular care in collecting the words of every peculiar nation we met with, that I might be enabled to form an idea of the whole, and how far all the languages are related to each other. I soon perceived, that in general, the five nations already enumerated, spoke a language differing only in a few words, and that for the greater part, the difference consisted in a few vowels or consonants, though the words still preserved a great affinity; nay, many were absolutely the same in all the dialects. I could therefore no longer doubt, that they were all descended from the same original stem, and that the differences in the language arose only from the difficulty of pronouncing consonants, which some sounded more easily, whilst others, either changed, or entirely omitted them. (Forster 1778: 277-8)

Forster had been the naturalist on board of James Cook's (1728-1779) second voyage, and the languages he wrote about were Polynesian: the ‘five nations’ he mentions were Tahiti, Tonga, New Zealand (Aotearoa), Rapa Nui, and the Marquesas Islands. In the appended comparative table, Forster put their languages next to seven other Austronesian languages, including Malay and Tagalog, and three from Latin America: ‘Mexican’ [Nahuatl], ‘Peruvian’ [Quechua], and ‘Chileese’ [Mapuche].

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Forster was not the first to notice linguistic ‘affinities’ within Polynesia or between Malayan and Polynesian languages – Adrianus Reland (1676-1718) had done so at length (Reland 1708) – but then, neither had Jones been the first to notice similarities between Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit (or Persian).¹ In fact, Forster’s chapter “On the Causes of the Difference in the Races of Men in the South Seas, their Origin and Migrations” contains considerably more linguistic information than Jones’ Anniversary Discourse “On the Hindus”, to the point of signalling sound shifts. This is not to argue that Forster was an undeservedly neglected linguistic genius on a par with Jones; after all, spotting similarities between Polynesian languages is not particularly hard once basic vocabularies have been collected. The point is that comparative linguistics was never restricted to Indo-European, or to Indo-European and Semitic,² even before it was called ‘comparative linguistics’.

While textbook history of linguistics from Max Müller (1861) to Morpurgo Davies (1998) has followed the same linear outline from Jones via Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) and Jacob Grimm (1783-1865) to Franz Bopp’s (1791-1867) *Vergleichende Grammatik* (1833-52), and on to August Schleicher (1821-1868) and the Neogrammarians, I argue that the development of comparative method in the study of language was actually much more of a parallel process. It was so at all stages from the 1780s to the second half of the 19th century. The work of Grimm (1819, 1822-37) and Rask (1818) on Germanic languages overlaps in time with the first comparative grammar of Romance languages (Raynouard 1816-21). Bopp’s early *Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache* (1816, 1820) was contemporary with Peter Stephen du Ponceau’s (1760-1844) pioneer report on the “General Character and Forms of the Languages of the American Indians” (1819). As a dissenting voice against the rise of historical-comparative grammar, Julius Klaproth’s (1783-1835) classification of the languages of Siberia and Central Asia (Klaproth 1823), largely based on lexical comparison, deserves mention. While Bopp was systematizing the study of Indo-European languages, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was looking at the other side of the globe (Humboldt 1836-39), and doing so while regularly corresponding with Du Ponceau, who was further elaborating his classification of Native American languages as ‘polysynthetic’ (Du Ponceau 1838). For Polynesian languages, Humboldt’s work was followed up by the U.S. Exploring Expedition’s report on *Ethnography and Philology* (Hale 1846). The decade after the completion of Bopp’s compendium saw further comparative grammars of Semitic (Renan 1855), Dravidian (Caldwell 1856), Uto-Aztecan (Buschmann 1859), Melanesian (Gabelentz 1860), and Bantu (Bleek 1862-69), as well as Slavonic (Miklosich 1852-75) and Celtic (Zeuß 1853).

In this article, Wilhelm von Humboldt’s study of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, *Über die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Jawa* (1836-39) (hereafter: *KS*), will be my main example of this parallel process. Written and published in the same years as the first

¹ The first author to notice affinities between Latin, Greek, and Persian was Zuerius van Boxborn (1647); similarities between Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek were observed before Jones by Schulze (1729) and others. See Rocher (2001), App (2010).

² Identified as a language family [*genus*] by Leibniz in 1710 or earlier; first called ‘Semitic’ by Schlözer (1781) and Eichhorn (1787). See Baasten (2003)

volumes of Bopp's *Vergleichende Grammatik*, Humboldt's posthumous *magnum opus* extrapolates from an analysis of Kawi (Old Javanese), a dead literary language with ca. 50% of its vocabulary derived from Sanskrit (Zoetmulder 1982: vol. I, xi), to a comparative grammar of what he called the Malayan language family with its Malayan and Polynesian branches. Mainly remembered for the philosophy of language outlined in its book-length introduction, *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues*, it is the outcome of several decades of collecting language materials mainly from Oceania and the Americas (Mueller-Vollmer 1993; Mueller-Vollmer & Heeschen 2007; McNeely 2020).

Particularly, this article is concerned with the material and conceptual conditions for this process of expanding the comparative view. What Humboldt's sources were is clearly indicated: most important of these were three compendia by British colonial administrators (Marsden 1783; Raffles 1817; Crawfurd 1820); three recent grammars of Tongan (Mariner & Martin 1817), Maori (Kendall & Lee 1820), and Tahitian (Davies 1823); and a manuscript of the *Brata Yudha* or *Bharatayuddha*, a 12th-century Old Javanese adaptation of a section of the Indian epos *Mahabharata*, procured by his British correspondent John Crawfurd (1783-1868). As the dates of the printed works clearly show, Humboldt could write as he did because he had up-to-date, elaborate sources of information of several kinds – especially because the British Empire had temporarily taken over the Dutch East Indies during the Napoleonic Wars, and because the Church Missionary Society had extended its activities to the Pacific after that. As Trabant (2012) points out, it was precisely because this new material had literary qualities and provided historical depth (not to mention the cultural link to ancient India) that Humboldt switched his attention from the languages of the Americas to Malayo-Polynesian.

Humboldt, then, was not working from 'raw' material. Expanding the comparative view, as he did it, was done by collecting material that had already been processed and processing it further. It was the same for most of his peers. Humboldt, though, was exceptional in the degree to which he actively rewrote his source material to suit his philological standards; moreover, this process of reformulation is extensively documented in the ongoing Berlin-Brandenburg Academy edition of his *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft* (Humboldt 1993-2017), where his many notes, comparative tables, and drafts of grammars and treatises already fill eleven volumes. This makes *Über die Kawi-Sprache* an outstanding example not just of linguistic comparison expanded beyond Eurasia but also of how this process required various steps of reformulation and abstraction. More generally speaking, it allows us to analyse what happens to a language when it becomes an object of study, and the role of 'language material' at an intermediate stage between language as a means of communication and linguistic data.

Moreover, the material that Humboldt worked with was not purely linguistic; and neither were the outcomes. William Marsden (1754-1836), Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826), and John Crawfurd studied Malayan languages as part of their wider geographic, natural, ethnographic, economic, and historical surveys of Sumatra, Java, and the Indonesian archipelago. Likewise, Reinhold Forster's *Observations*, as well as

his son Georg's (1754-1794) account of their voyage (Forster 1777), were philosophical travelogues, not linguistic treatises. For Humboldt, language study was not an *Orchideenfach* but a means to trace the cultural and intellectual development of mankind (KS vol. III, 425).

This intersection of linguistics with ethnography, geography, history, and even botany presents us with two further issues. First, the question is to what extent this is representative for how the world's languages were studied throughout the long 19th century, and if so, what this implies for how we could, or should, view the history of the language sciences in relation to that of other domains of knowledge. Second, there is the issue of written traditions and philological prestige. This is particularly an issue to the extent that 'comparative method' was equated with 'historical-comparative grammar', which typically occupied itself with old texts in high-prestige languages. Malayo-Polynesian is an interesting case in this regard because the major Malayan languages indeed have a written literary and historical record, while all Polynesian languages belonged to oral cultures – in Eric Wolf's Hegelian phrase, to cultures perceived as 'people without history'.

The structure of this article follows the outline of *Über die Kawi-Sprache*: its three sections go from 1) Malayan, via 2) Polynesian, to 3) Malayo-Polynesian. First, with regard to Malayan, it compares Marsden, Raffles, and Crawfurd, whose seemingly similar works in fact had highly divergent research agendas, and the role that language played in these works (cf. Müller 2014). Second, it discusses to what extent Humboldt's Polynesian sources were 'rawer' data than the 'cooked' information provided by this trio. Third, it analyses how Humboldt dissected and re-arranged this material in order to compare sound systems and morphology – what he called 'grammatical sounds'. To put this in perspective, the final section also discusses Horatio Hale's (1817-1896) ethnolinguistic survey of the Pacific (Hale 1846) as well as the work of Humboldt's assistant Eduard Buschmann (1805-1880), who finished *Über die Kawi-Sprache* and set forth the 'Humboldtian project' both for Malayan and for Native American languages.

1. *Imperial Empiricism: Marsden, Raffles, Crawfurd*

On 24 October 1832, an excited Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote to August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) in Bonn about a treasure that had just arrived from England:

Ich habe durch Crawfurds außerordentliche Güte endlich den Text des von Raffles so fehlerhaft abgedruckten Kavi Gedichtes erhalten. Zum Theil ist eine Javanische Paraphrase der einzelnen Wörter und eine Javanische Uebersetzung dabei. Dies neue Hülfsmittel veranlaßt mich eine schon fertige Schrift über das Kavi ganz von neuem durchzuarbeiten.

[Through Crawfurd's exceptional kindness, I have finally received the text of the Kawi poem that was printed with so many flaws by Raffles. Part of it comes with a Javanese paraphrase of single words, and a Javanese translation. This new resource requires me

to rework an already finished work on Kawi from the start.] (ULB Bonn, Inv. S 507: 27; BBAW letter 1109)³

For anyone familiar with Humboldt's working habits, the phrase 'rework from the start' should set alarm bells ringing, the more as he was suffering from Parkinson's disease and had 2½ years left to live. In a lifetime of writing he filled tens of thousands of pages and published only relatively small works, while his *magnum opus* on Kawi appeared posthumously. The text that he received from Crawfurd was of course the *Brata Yudha*; it is now stored in the British Library as Add MS 12279.⁴

A version of the *Brata Yudha* - a collage of transcribed, translated, and summarized segments of its 719 quatrains - had first been printed, together with an analysis of the poem, in Raffles (1817), and it is this version, however defective, upon which most of *Kawi-Sprache* Book I is based. Dated ±1157 CE, it was by far the most popular work of Kawi literature, with more than 100 extant manuscripts, and a classic subject of *Wayang* shadow puppet plays (Zoetmulder 1974). *Kawi* means 'poet'; it was the language of a refined court culture, surviving in ceremonial use and at *Wayang* performances, somewhat analogous to the stylized archaic Japanese used in *Noh* plays. The *Brata Yudha* describes the battle that takes place after Krishna's speech in the *Bhagavad-Gita*; the Javanese version leaves out most of the metaphysics in celebrating an aristocratic warrior ethic, but devotes lengthy passages to the complaints (and ritual suicides) of the wives and mothers of the fallen.

Raffles had translated the poem with the aid of two Javanese nobles, Nāta Kásuma (1764?-1829), the regent of Sumenep on the island of Madura and Raden Saleh (*1801), a prince from Samarang, who had been sent to study at Fort William College in Calcutta and was now 14 years old.⁵ Thus, the translation was a work of triangulation: Nāta Kásuma had a rare, though still rudimentary, knowledge of Kawi; Raden Saleh spoke fluent English and had been introduced to classical and oriental philology; and Raffles turned it into an English text. That version he sent to his cousin, Thomas Raffles, to render it in iambic pentameters, part of which are reproduced in the footnotes; later, the Royal Asiatic Society sent a copy of the first page of his Kawi ms. to Humboldt.

From 1811 to 1815, Raffles (now mainly remembered as the founder of Singapore) acted as lieutenant-governor of Java; in that capacity, he collected the material that went into his *History of Java* (1817). A self-made man who had started his career as a clerk at the East India Company, he was a highly effective data gatherer rather than a trained scholar; the *History* is largely the digest of surveys that he commissioned and reports that he received. It included a comprehensive map of Java, statistics about population, agricultural production, and commercial revenue, descriptions of the Borobudur and Prambanan temple complexes, and a long footnote about the catastrophic eruption of the Tambora, which killed thousands of people and caused the 'Year without a Summer'

³ All translations in this article are my own.

⁴ "THE BRATA YUDA, or War of Barat, a Javanese version of the Sanscrit epic poem of the Mahabharat; written in the Kawi, or sacred language of Java. A recent transcript. Small Quarto." British Library, Add MS 12279; the modern Javanese translation is Add MS 12326.

⁵ Also mentioned by Crawfurd (1820: vol. I, 49); cf. De Graaf (1979: 261ff). Not to be confused with his cousin, the romantic painter Raden Saleh (1807-1880). *Raden* means 'Lord'.

in Europe. The chapter about languages and literature is the longest (vol. I, 356-479), most of it taken up by the *Brata Yudha* and shorter samples of other Kawi poems; the longest appendix (vol. II, lxxi-clxi) is a “Comparative Vocabulary of the Maláyu, Jávan, Madurese, Báli, and Lampúng Languages”, followed by shorter vocabularies of Kawi and of ten other languages of the archipelago. Raffles’ own role in compiling the first vocabulary remains unspecified in his statement of how it was made, which is rather a statement on procedure:

Copies of the Vocabulary, in the Malayan character, arranged by the late Dr. Leyden, were circulated in different parts of Java, and completed in the different languages and dialects by the natives. After collections of these were made, several intelligent natives were, from time to time, assembled from different parts of the island, and also from *Báli, Lampung, Madúra, and Sumenap*, and the vocabulary in each language was carefully revised in concert with them, at the same time that it was recopied in the native and roman character. (Vol. II, clxi)

With his tables and questionnaires, Raffles is the outstanding example of what Müller (2014: 176) calls ‘scholar-administrators’ for whom “knowledge production formed an integrated part of a well proven career-building technique” – in Raffles’ case, vindicating his policy on Java after his removal from office. Looking beyond their individual career perspectives, one can also see Raffles et al. as ‘human instruments’ (Raj 2007: 181ff) for whom knowledge production was the natural thing to do in their circumstances, partly because the EIC (and later the India Office) required rigorous documentation from them, partly because learned pursuits were part of their *habitus*.

Raffles’ work was clearly modelled after Marsden’s *History of Sumatra* (1783), so much so in form and content that the two seem companion volumes. Marsden’s work, however, was linked to a larger linguistic and antiquarian project. Stationed in sleepy Bencoolen (Bengkulu) in the 1770s, he later became first secretary of the Admiralty (clearly, the career-building technique worked), and combined this with life as a sedentary scholar, authoring a Malay grammar (1812a) and dictionary (1812b). After his first paper “On the Sumatran languages” (1782), in which he compared Malayan and Polynesian words ‘from the mouths of the natives themselves’ and concluded upon their ‘manifest connexion’, he entertained a lifelong project to “render this comparison of languages more extensive, and, if possible, to bring all those spoken throughout the world, into one point of view” (Marsden 1811: 200; cf. Carroll 2019). The only published outcome was a catalogue of the books and manuscripts collected for that purpose. That catalogue is an overview of early modern erudition and contemporary oriental scholarship from which recent German works on comparative grammar are conspicuously absent; the manuscript section lists a set of various “Tahitian and other South-Sea or Polynesian dialects, by Mr. Banks” (Marsden 1827: 306). A further type of language material that he collected were oriental coins, which he treated as sources of early Islamic history (Marsden 1823).

“Je ne saurois Vous exprimer, combien dans ces différentes études je dois aux travaux de Vos compatriotes, mais surtout aux Vôtres”, Humboldt wrote to Marsden in April 1831 (Bibl.Jag. Cracow, Coll.ling.fol. 53: 174–5; BBAW letter 350). Two main

reasons why Humboldt purportedly valued Marsden's works 'above all' are that Marsden had written a grammar and a dictionary, and that he pointed out the difficulties of applying Latin grammatical categories to Malay (Marsden 1812a: 27ff). Malay literature is all but absent from Marsden's *History*, since his interest in it was aroused only later; but his grammar included samples of the Malayan version of the Ramayana and other literary texts in the appendix, offered as a 'Praxis'.

The differences between Marsden, Raffles, and Crawfurd are in scholarly *persona* rather than in method: Marsden the antiquarian, Raffles the data collector, and Crawfurd the philosophical historian. All three compiled comparative vocabularies, made translations, and collected Indonesian manuscripts which they bequeathed or sold to the Royal Asiatic Society (Marsden) and the British Museum (Raffles, Crawfurd). As enlightened administrators, they shared an empiricist outlook and addressed the same utilitarian subjects, albeit with differences in emphasis. Marsden stressed that he relied on autopsy and the testimony of trustworthy observers:

The greatest portion of that which I have described, has fallen within the scope of my immediate observation; the remainder is either matter of common notoriety to every person residing in the island, or received upon the concurring opinion of gentlemen, whose situation in the East India Company's service, long acquaintance with the natives, extensive knowledge of their language, ideas, and manners. and respectability of character, render them worthy of the most implicit faith that can be given to human testimony. I have been the more scrupulously exact on this particular, because my view was not, ultimately, to write an entertaining book, to which the marvellous might be thought to contribute not a little, but sincerely and conscientiously add the small portion in my power, to the general knowledge of the age; to throw some glimmering light on the path of the naturalist; and more especially to furnish those philosophers, whose labours have been directed to the investigation of the history of Man, with facts to serve as data to their reasonings. (Marsden 1783: vi-vii)

Raffles, by comparison, put a greater trust in numbers; Crawfurd, in his *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820), made classifications of everything, from islands (by size) and temples (by style) to people (by race and by class) and languages. Still, most of what Marsden says about 'the history of man' applies to Raffles and Crawfurd as well. All their Histories should be read as contributions to 'philosophical history', valuing laws, *mœurs*, and commerce over 'kings and battles' and following a model of historical development which went through consecutive stages of civilization. But Crawfurd went further in these 'reasonings' than Marsden and Raffles, whose Histories are compendia in large quarto format. Analogous to James Mill (1773-1836) in his *History of India* (1817: vol. I, xv), and to Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) in his criticism of William Jones (Stewart 1827: 101-152), Crawfurd asserted the primacy of philosophical reasoning over subjective first-hand impressions and indigenous sources and traditions ('superstition and credulity'; Crawfurd 1820: vol. III, 293). In his political agenda, rejecting indigenous sources and traditions went together with rejecting the authority of King and Bible; tellingly, his comparative vocabularies (vol. II, 125-191) begin with natural phenomena, whereas Raffles' first sample words are *God, Godhead, the Author*

of Providence, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, Eternity, Fate, and Soul. Though he drew his Lampung vocabulary from Raffles (1817) - “and its correctness may be trusted” - he redid the work of his former superior for most other languages: “the Javanese, Malay, Bugis, Macassar, Madurese, Balinese, Sunda, and Biajuk Dayak, were compiled by myself, personally, under such advantages, that I think they can be entirely relied upon” (vol. II, 120, 124). To what extent this is implicit criticism of Raffles is unclear; many images in their Histories are the same, and their works were otherwise commensurable enough to be re-arranged into a single work in French translation (Crawfurd & Raffles 1824).

Crawfurd’s criticism of his peers and predecessors is most explicit in his *Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language* (1852), published when Marsden, Raffles, and Humboldt were all dead. There, he disputes the very idea of a Malayo-Polynesian language family on the grounds that

- 1) There are not that many cognate or borrowed words: “The total number of Malayan words in the Polynesian [...] is little more than 80” (Crawfurd 1852: vol. I, ccxl);
- 2) Polynesian languages lack many consonants used in Malay and Javanese;
- 3) It is possible to form a sentence in Polynesian languages without using Malayan words;
- 4) Polynesians belong to a different – taller, prettier – race than Malaysians.

This was not a view he held in 1820, when he still praised Marsden (1782) for “distinctly pointing out the existence of a great Polynesian language” (Crawfurd 1820: vol. II, 81). At that time, he surmised that the expansion of a ‘Great Polynesian’ mother tongue reflected the spread of civilization, replacing earlier, ‘primitive’ indigenous languages, and bringing words for crops, useful arts, metals, and domestic animals. This was even quantifiable: “Such words are numerous in proportion to the civilisation of each tribe” (vol. II, 82). However, the descendant languages were woefully lacking in abstract terms, “particularly such as relate to the operations of the mind”, which were either expressed through Sanskrit or Arabic loan words or awkward translations; thus, “Whenever we press the languages of the oriental islands into our service on such occasions, we offer violence to their genius” (vol. II, 74). With all their richness in ways of saying the same in different ways, they could “justly be characterized as not *copius*, but *wordy*” (ibid.).

On the whole, Crawfurd perceived Indonesians as half-civilized or semi-barbarian, able to achieve high levels of craftsmanship and a certain level of civilization with relative ease but almost incapable of advancing beyond that; only Java qualified as ‘improved’ (cf. Müller 2020). Trained as a medical doctor and later President of the Ethnological Society of London, race was an issue for him: he was an outspoken abolitionist and advocate of equal rights but also a polygenist, partly as a consequence of rejecting Biblical accounts of one cradle of Mankind (Knapman 2016, 2017). The difference between various ‘mother tongues’, indeed, was supporting evidence for his polygenism. Like ‘other great original languages’, he assumed, the Malayo-Polynesian mother tongue must have been “a language of complex structure, a character from

which every tongue of the Eastern isles has long ago more completely departed, than the languages of any other portion of the globe” (vol. II, 94).

There are clear analogies between Crawfurd and Humboldt in how they link language to cultural and intellectual development and trace cultural influences through language. The notion of a language’s ‘genius’ goes back to 17th-century French grammarians, but both give it an ethnolinguistic twist. Indeed, in comparing Raffles’ and Crawfurd’s merits, Humboldt (KS vol. I, 7) favours Crawfurd’s ‘critical and philosophical efforts’ to reach more generally valid results, notwithstanding Raffles’ more extensive treatment of legends and stories and richer use of written sources. The analogies also end at a crucial point: Crawfurd’s philosophical history follows a fairly conventional Enlightenment narrative while Humboldt’s philosophy of language does not. For Humboldt, language connected the individual and the collective, encapsulating a worldview and offering the means for self-expression. Some languages were more ‘fertile’ in this respect than others, but it was not a linear stadial hierarchy, and there was a fundamental pluralist aspect to it (KS vol. I, CCCXLIIff).

2. *The Raw and the Cooked: Polynesian Sources*

If Humboldt’s information about Indonesia was richer than that about Polynesia, it was also seriously defective in one respect: a lack of grammars and other learning aids for languages other than Malay, the *lingua franca* of the archipelago. There was no Javanese grammar before Gericke (1831); and even with its aid, Humboldt was reverse engineering Raffles’ and Crawfurd’s translations rather than directly reading Kawi texts, complaining about the impossibility of finding back a quatrain translated by Crawfurd (KS vol. II, 21). Of these two, Crawfurd’s active command of Javanese was obviously better than Raffles’: Humboldt corrected Raffles on how to group syllables into words (Javanese script is an abugida), whereas Crawfurd sent him grammatical notes and Javanese-English / English-Javanese vocabularies with Javanese characters in his own handwriting.⁶

Humboldt’s Polynesian sources were more straightforward in this respect. They consisted of three grammars, two of which were intended as primers, and a few word lists and spelling books. These were not all direct sources, though: the Tongan and Maori grammars were heavily edited works. The Tongan grammar and vocabulary were part of an *Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, “compiled and arranged from the extensive communications of Mr. William Mariner” (Mariner & Martin 1817: title page). The Maori grammar was put together by Cambridge theologian Samuel Lee (1783-1852), at the request of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), from “materials [...] previously collected in New Zealand, by Mr. Kendall” (Kendall & Lee 1820: preface), combined with the testimony of two Maori chiefs who accompanied Kendall to England; two other Maori visitors, with whom Lee had begun to work on Maori in 1818, are mentioned in a footnote.

⁶ Samples of both vocabularies are reprinted in Humboldt (1836-39), vol. II, pl. IX-X. According to Crawfurd’s accompanying letter (28 August 1831; Bibl.Jag. Cracow, Coll.ling.fol. 53, 129–130; BBAW letter 244), they were corrected by ‘a young Javanese chief’ (Raden Saleh) who added diacritics.

What makes these grammars ‘rawer’ than those of Marsden and Crawford is that William Mariner (1793-1853), Thomas Kendall (1778-1832), and also John Davies (1772-1855) were in more direct daily contact with the language they were learning, for a period of several years each, but that they did not have the benefit of written sources and were less versed in philological matters, nor addressing philologists. Mariner had been an apprentice and captain’s clerk on board of the *Port-au-Prince*, and one of the few to be spared when the ship was ambushed by Tongans; John Martin (1789-1869) had drawn up *Tonga* partly from Mariner’s “memoranda of the principal events at the Tonga islands, in the order in which they had happened during his residence there, together with a description of the most important religious ceremonies, and a vocabulary of about four or five hundred words” (Mariner & Martin 1817: vol. I, viii), and partly from his direct testimony. Kendall was a CMS missionary later dismissed for gun trading as well as for sexual relations with a Maori woman, and had written an earlier, very sketchy, Maori primer (Kendall 1815). What he accomplished together with Lee was a more presentable text, for the use of missionaries and their Maori pupils, which would “represent their language in a manner as simple and unembarrassed as the nature of the subject and materials would admit” (Kendall & Lee 1820: preface; cf. Binney 1968: 61-2). It does so mainly through sample phrases, practical or catechistic. One section (61-6) has notes explaining the grammatical role of most words; conjugation, on the other hand, is exemplified through compound phrases in which only the pronouns change (30-52), leaving the rest of the phrase structure unparsed and rather opaque.

Without such a reader as Humboldt in mind, Kendall and Lee (1820) still furnished him with more than 100 pages of sample phrases which he could dissect further. The most ethnolinguistically interesting part of it – the collection of ritual chants and songs (105-13) - was left almost entirely untranslated by Kendall because “some passages [...] are not at present well understood by the compiler” (106). For the benefit of Maori learners, Lee added an overview of meaningful (poly)syllables (2-8) which now reads like a very primitive version of Humboldt’s identification and comparison of morphemes across Polynesian languages (KS vol. III, 524-695).⁷ Lee’s preface is very brief on how he and Kendall worked together, and on the role of their informants (among whom Hongi Hika (1772?-1828), a powerful Maori chief who started the destructive Musket Wars with weapons partly procured from Kendall):

Mr. Kendall was, with the Chiefs, sent to Cambridge, where he might have the opportunity of such retirement and assistance as would tend to advance the objects in question. After a residence there of about two months, the MS. of the work now presented to the Public was, with such assistance as I could render, completed, and put to Press. (Kendall & Lee 1820: preface)

Mariner and Martin’s *Tonga* is more scholarly in its intentions. Dedicated to Royal Society president Joseph Banks (1743-1820), who took part in Cook’s first voyage, it reads like an appendix to Cook’s and the Forsters’ *Voyages*, treating Tonga as a

⁷ From p. 569 onwards this was Buschmann’s work, as marked in the text.

specimen of human society in its infancy (Mariner & Martin 1818: vol. I, xiv). In the introduction, Martin relates in detail how he first learned about Mariner's experiences, interviewed him three or four times before Mariner sailed to the Pacific again, and received his memoranda and vocabulary upon his return; to the claim that "Not one of the ensuing pages has been written without Mr. Mariner's presence" (Mariner & Martin 1817: vol. I, ix), he adds a description of Mariner's modest, taciturn (i.e. trustworthy) character and habits, and in the second edition, the 'additional testimony' of another, even younger survivor from the *Port-au-Prince* (Mariner & Martin 1818: vol. I, xiii). Martin's two-page description of how they constructed a grammar from Mariner's memory is worth quoting in full:

As it will, no doubt, be satisfactory to the reader to know how the rules and idioms of this heretofore unwritten language have been investigated, it is proper to state that Mr. Mariner carefully selected out of an English dictionary all those words to which he could find appropriate Tonga words, or well adapted phrases; and having assiduously attended to the elementary sounds of the language, and determined upon a plan of orthography, I took upon myself the charge of arranging all the Tonga words alphabetically, by which means my ear and eye became accustomed to them, and several were stored up in my memory. In the mean while Mr. Mariner wrote down several dialogues and popular tales in the Tonga language; and I afterwards exercised myself, with his assistance, and that of the vocabulary, in making literal translations to them, and thus became acquainted, more or less, with the idiom; and, at the same time, I had the opportunity of furnishing the Tonga part of the vocabulary with other words. In the next place, having written down sundry examples in English, illustrative of every part of speech, in a variety of forms, and upon a variety of subjects, I gave them to Mr. Mariner to translate into Tonga, according to the strict idiom of that language: by this method we began to perceive what could be translated, and what could not; we discovered where the Tonga language was poor in expression, and where it was more richly endowed; what were the fundamental principles of construction, and what the particular idioms and exceptions to general rules:—and thus proceeding, step by step, the character and genius of the language were unfolded; and, at length, we arrived at that degree of theoretical knowledge of the structure of it which is now, for the first time, presented to the public. (Mariner & Martin 1817: vol. I, xii-xiii)

There are limitations to this method of reconstruction, and Martin was aware of them: "Mr. Mariner of course only obtained a practical knowledge of the language, for the natives themselves have no other" (vol. II, 391n). One cannot wholly blame him or Mariner for missing some distinctive grammatical traits of Tongan which do not fit into a classical (Latin) grammar, like ergativity (as does Krupa 1973: 21); the paragraph on syntax (vol. II, 391ff), begins with a disclaimer that "we are at present only in the act of making an investigation, in which the reader is requested to accompany us". There were limitations as well, however, to Martin's philosophical perspective, in which "the structure of their speech forms part of the history of the human mind" (vol. II, 352). Like Crawford, he earnestly sought to understand the 'genius' of the language in

relation to the wider cultural system of Tongan society, but by the same token he could not view the language as fully developed:

A language which is only spoken by a nation ignorant of every principle of grammatical construction, and possessing not the least knowledge, nor the most remote idea, either in theory or practice, of the art of writing, cannot be supposed to be richly endowed with variety of words, choice of expression, or clear and accurate definitions, except of those ideas which are in common use. (vol. II, 353)

The language material in *Tonga* is much richer than in Kendall & Lee (1820); the ‘Syntax’ section revolves around three texts – an origin myth, a song, and a speech – that also figured in the main text, but analysed in more detail with parallel translations and elucidated phrases. Humboldt (KS vol. III, 442-63) in turn took over these texts in full with an even more multilayered translation, highlighting compound phrases and function words. Martin presented his material as the basis for a future comparison between Tongan and Malay, Fijian, and other languages “to which it may be supposed to have some affinity” (Mariner & Martin 1817: vol. II, 409), adding a 60-word Tongan-Malay-English glossary. Special attention is devoted throughout *Tonga* to relations with neighbouring Fiji (and thus with Melanesia), and this is reflected in the sample texts: in the origin myth, two sons of the god Tangaloa settle on Tonga, and one is banished to Fiji after killing his brother; the song laments how Fijians brought war to Tonga; the speech of King Finow Fiji [Finau Feletoa (†1809)], famous for killing many Fijians, implores his chiefs and subjects to make peace among themselves and direct their aggression hence. Humboldt noted these connections and comparisons between Tonga and Fiji with due interest, but could add little more than side remarks (e.g., that the resemblances of the sons of Tangaloa to Cain and Abel were only superficial), given his lack of information about Fijian.

Davies’ (1823) Tahitian grammar is considerably ‘rawer’ than the previous two. It is a work made and printed *in situ*, in less than ideal circumstances, and of an approximative nature: the word ‘seems’ is common in it. Davies did not revise it in the second edition (1851), though he added a dictionary. Humboldt is relatively brief about it; Hale (1846: 230), however, rated it among “the only [printed works] which have been of much service” in his section on ‘Polynesian Grammar’, and Du Ponceau recommended it to him as a standard for Polynesian orthography (Mackert 1994: 5). The British Library copy of the first edition (Gen.ref.coll. C.33.b.45; probably Davies’ own) has more than 100 pages of appended notes in several hands, including sections on pronouns, case, and adverbs. Davies also translated most of the Gospels, of which Humboldt possessed the Gospel of John; but for lack of better aids, Humboldt could only analyse isolated phrases in it with something approaching certainty (KS vol. III, 471ff).

Though Humboldt complained how his sources, “which always start from our own or from Classical languages”, distorted how language lived “in the mouth of the people” (KS vol. III, 476), he did not have to rely on indirect testimony alone: there was a native Hawaiian in Berlin, Harry Maitai (1807-1872), whom he could use as an informant. He tried, with meagre results:

Er ist sehr schwer zu zusammenhängenden Redensarten in seiner Sprache zu bringen, so daß er zur Erlernung der Grammatik weniger zu gebrauchen ist, als zur Wörterkenntniß. Überhaupt scheint er schon viel von seiner Sprache vergessen zu haben. Doch habe ich das vollständige Sandwich-Pronomen durch ihn erhalten, und mich deutlich überzeugt, daß die Sandwichische und Tahitische Sprache sich bloß als Mundarten, meistens nur durch leicht zu erkennende Buchstabenverwechslung, von einander unterscheiden.

[It is very hard to get him to produce coherent expressions in his language, so that he is less useful for learning the grammar than for learning words. Anyway he seems to have already forgotten much of his language. Still I acquired all the Hawaiian pronouns through him, and convinced myself that Hawaiian and Tahitian differ only as dialects, mainly through easily recognizable letter swaps.] (KS vol. III, 438-9)

The fault need not all have been Harry Maitai's; quite probably Humboldt, the elder statesman, intimidated his 20-year-old guest with technical questions, and according to Appel (2017), Humboldt fundamentally misunderstood the highly polysemous nature of Hawaiian. At any rate, after one interview, their meetings were not continued.

3. *'Grammatical Sounds': Austronesian as a Linguistic Puzzle*

In the opening lines of vol. III, Humboldt made a programmatic statement on the science of language. He had made that statement before, at the beginning of a paper on Pacific languages read at the Berlin Academy (Humboldt 1907a, 2017: 63-76) and of an earlier version of *Über die Verschiedenheit[en] des menschlichen Sprachbaues*, published much later in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (Humboldt 1907b; cf. Buchholz 1986: 146-54). Repeated again, it may count as his final statement on the matter. It was a daunting task indeed that Humboldt imposed upon linguistics and upon himself:

Die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues aufzusuchen, sie in ihrer wesentlichen Beschaffenheit zu schildern, die scheinbar unendliche Mannigfaltigkeit, von richtig gewählten Standpunkten aus, auf eine einfachere Weise zu ordnen, den Quellen jener Verschiedenheit, so wie ihrem Einfluß auf die Denkkraft, Empfindung und Sinnesart der Sprechenden nachzugehen, und durch alle Umwandlungen der Geschichte hindurch dem Gange der geistigen Entwicklung der Menschheit an der Hand der tief in dieselbe verschlungenen, sie von Stufe zu Stufe begleitenden Sprache zu folgen, ist das wichtige und vielumfassende Geschäft der allgemeinen Sprachkunde.

[To investigate the variety of human language formation; to capture its essential nature; to arrange its seemingly endless diversity in a simpler way, from a proper standpoint; to trace that diversity to its origins, as well as its influence on the speaker's mental powers, sensations, and senses; and to follow the intellectual development of mankind as reflected in and deeply intertwined with language through all the stages of historical transformation; that is the important and very extensive task of general linguistics.] (KS vol. III, 425)

The question is how that philosophical conception of the aims of language study translated into linguistic practice, and how it relates to the work of other language

gatherers. The editors of *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft* have presented his programme as if it were a grand unfulfilled promise, the linguistic counterpart of Alexander von Humboldt's (1769-1859) description of nature as a cosmos of interlocking processes, biospheres, currents, and climate zones (Reutter 2011; Trabant 2012). But they have also put Humboldt in context: how he drew upon materials collected by Johan Severin Vater (1771-1826) and Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro (1735-1809), exchanged information about American languages with Du Ponceau and John Pickering (1777-1845) (Verlato 2013, 2015), and was involved in Klaproth's project to update *Mithridates* (Tintemann 2014). Trabant (1990) has drawn a larger picture of traditions of linguistic thought converging in Humboldt's work; Ringmacher (1996) describes the afterlife of Humboldt's project in Heymann Steinthal's (1823-1899) language classification and *Völkerpsychologie*.

As a book, *Über die Kawi-Sprache* is almost unreadable. Buchholz (1986) and Mueller-Vollmer and Heeschen (2007) single out its 'idiosyncratic, impenetrable' structure and composition and 'obscure' argumentation as reasons why the bulk of the work has long been neglected. It starts as an essay on philosophy of language and the study of language, then turns into a philological exercise in close reading, and ends as a compilation of data. Throughout, it is formulated as a running commentary and re-arrangement of Humboldt's sources. Buschmann's redaction consisted of first completing the lengthier comparative overview sections, like the Malayan comparative vocabulary (vol. II, 229-57), Malayan numerals (vol. II, 264-79), and Polynesian particles (vol. III, 569-695), and then writing the remaining 333 pages, the sections on Polynesian parts of speech and their formation (vol. III, 695-1028). What Buschmann could not do was set forth Humboldt's line of argument where it was broken off. If there is a conclusion, it is at the beginning, in the introduction *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues*, and in the final paragraph of Book I, 'Feststellung des Begriffs des Kawi' (vol. II, 187-203).

Not all Humboldt's Austronesian language material was Indonesian or Polynesian. Tagalog – now seen as belonging to a separate Philippine branch - occupied a special place in his comparative grammar, on account of its morphological complexity (cf. Mueller-Vollmer & Heeschen 2007: 448-51). As far as Humboldt could judge, it contained "den Formenbau des mal.[ayischen] Stammes" in its full ripeness, not yet abbreviated and worn down by time (KS vol. II, 319). Therefore, the grammatical forms of Malayo-Polynesian languages had to be explained with reference to Tagalog; Humboldt went as far as comparing it with Sanskrit and its descendants in this regard. His information about it came from several Jesuit missionary grammars (esp. Totanes 1796 [1745]), which he found unreliable as representations of Tagalog grammatical categories, and repeatedly corrected about the role of specific affixes. He made no use of the printed Tagalog literature that existed by that time, and there is only a marginal reference to language samples in his manuscripts (Mueller-Vollmer 1993: 149); however, an appendix (KS vol. II, *78-*97; copied from Humboldt 1832) is devoted to the *Baybayin* script traditionally used for Tagalog, which he recognized as derived from Kawi.

The section about Tagalog conjugation (KS vol. II, 347-96) is symptomatic for how Humboldt went about identifying what he called ‘grammatical sounds’ [*grammatische Laute*]. What he meant by that are morphemes rather than phonemes. One of his manuscripts (Humboldt 2017: 463-71) contains a list of prefixes and lexemes that he excerpted from Jesuit grammars, and which he used to check where and how these occurred. In the section on Polynesian particles (KS vol. III, 569-695), he and Buschmann applied this procedure on a larger scale: for each particle listed there, the entry sums up various uses and cognates in Tongan, Tahitian, Maori, and Hawaiian.

‘Grammatical sounds’ were the puzzle pieces from which Humboldt’s comparative grammar was put together. They were “the most convincing evidence of language relatedness” (vol. II, 220), yielding more insight than comparative vocabularies and more substance than an abstract comparison of grammatical structures. They were “what gave a language its individuality”, without which grammar was just “a fabric of the mind” [*ein ideales Gewebe*] (vol. II, 432). From a methodological standpoint, the great advantage of this approach was that it allowed Humboldt to circumvent Latin grammatical categories in making linguistic comparisons, and to give a structural analysis of languages that some of his sources viewed as grammatically deficient (cf. Heeschen 2017: 17-19). In doing so, he harked back to a philological notion of ‘analogy’, i.e. the regular structure of words: if a word was not analogous, it was probably a loan word.

Humboldt’s comparisons did not stop at the borders of language families. Especially Sanskrit, Chinese, and American languages served as a frame of reference to elucidate grammatical features of Malayo-Polynesian languages. Sanskrit figured both as a concrete source of loan words in Kawi and as a model of inflection in its purest form. North American languages had been an earlier subject of his morphological analysis (Verlato 2020). After years of studying American languages, Humboldt kept hoping for a missing American-Oceanic linguistic link, and cited corroborating anthropological evidence while warning against hasty conclusions (KS vol. III, 429). His notes about analogies between Polynesian languages and Chinese are particularly perceptive:

An das Chinesische erinnern diese Sprachen auch dadurch, daß die Wörter, welche in ihnen die grammatischen Verhältnisse bezeichnen, meistens abgesehen dem Ausdruck des Begriffes vorangehen oder nach folgen, so daß sie eher, als die meisten andren Sprachen, mit einer der Chinesischen ähnlichen Schrift geschrieben werden könnten. Durch die Beständigkeit und Regelmäßigkeit dieser Bezeichnungen bilden sie aber eine Art Übergang von der Chinesischen zu den mit Affixen versehenen Sprachen.

[These languages also bring to mind Chinese in that the words which designate grammatical relations in them generally precede or follow the expression of the concept separately, so that they can be written in a script resembling Chinese characters more easily than other languages. Yet through the consistency and regularity of these designations, they form a kind of intermediary between Chinese and affixing languages.] (vol. III, 430-1)

The implication of this is that Chinese does not ‘stand apart’ as an isolating language, but rather is one pole of a typological continuum, with Sanskrit at the other end. Moreover, to the extent that Polynesian languages consist of independent particles, they could be written in Chinese characters (vol. III, 439-42); one could reverse the argument to imply that Chinese has agglutinating traits which are occluded by its writing system.

In at least three ways, Buschmann set forth Humboldt’s project after his death. First, as a librarian at the Royal Library (now the Staatsbibliothek) he kept collecting materials about the world’s languages, and excerpting, collating, and rewriting them. Second, in his writings on Athapascan and Uto-Aztecan languages from the 1850s-60s, he sought to do what Humboldt did for Austronesian. In his own *magnum opus* on Uto-Aztecan (Buschmann 1859), Nahuatl occupies the same key position as Kawi held for Humboldt; but Buschmann had no Aztecan *Brata Yudha*, and the work is sometimes more a bibliography than a treatise. Third, he completed Humboldt’s works, not just *Über die Kawi-Sprache* but also the Nahuatl dictionary, which remained in manuscript until it was published as *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft* vol. III.3 (Humboldt & Buschmann 2000). However, his attempts to publish Humboldt’s writings about American languages in a unitary form, as promised in the foreword of *Kawi-Sprache* vol. III, were stalled (Ringmacher 2016: 9-11).

The BBAW edition has given Buschmann due credit as an editor and continuator of Humboldt’s work but left out of consideration some of his later contributions to the Humboldtian project and to the *Collectanea Linguistica*, the stock of language material (Staatsbibliothek, Berlin / Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Cracow) reassembled by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer on which the edition is based. Notably, neither Mueller-Vollmer (1993) nor the editors of Humboldt (2017) mention that Buschmann compiled a Javanese grammar (SB, Coll.ling.fol. 118) and Kawi-Javanese dictionary (SB, Coll.ling.fol. 117). Made of paper slips pasted on what seem to be pages of Humboldt’s old catalogues, sometimes a dozen or more slips per lemma, these are gigantic working documents (weighing approx. 15 and 30 kgs) rather than publishable manuscripts. Buschmann’s dictionary is an inventory of references and variants with only unsystematic (English or Dutch) translations; the grammar follows an outline somewhat analogous to *Kawi-Sprache* vol. III, analysing elements and stages of word formation. I do not yet fully understand how (and to what degree) it is structured, but it is wholly unlike a conventional grammar with conjugation and declension tables.⁸

What Mueller-Vollmer (1993: 28-40) has described at length is the polemic that unfolded between Bopp and Buschmann following Bopp’s review of *Über die Kawi-Sprache*. Bopp (1840, 1841) argued that the Malayo-Polynesian languages were effectively a degenerate branch of the Indo-European language family that had lost its grammar. Buschmann decried this expansionism as ‘Pansanskritismus’ and responded by defending the autonomy of languages and language families, both in an edition of

⁸ The general outline of Coll.ling.fol. 118 is clear enough, laid out on the first VIII pages: I. Casus, II. Wortbildung (with different word groups and stages of word formation), III. Redetheile (Art., Subst., Adj., Pron., Zahlen, Verba). The paper slips are arranged in that order throughout the rest of the manuscript. It has the appearance of a procedural system, but there is no introduction or other explanatory text.

Marquesan and Tahitian texts and vocabularies from Humboldt's corpus (Buschmann 1843) and in an unpublished work, *Die Selbständigkeit der Sprachen, und des malayischen Sprachstammes insbesondere, der Sanskrit-Vergleichung entgegengestellt* (SB, Nachlaß Buschmann, Kasten 2.3). Mueller-Vollmer presents this polemic as a clash between a pluralistic Humboldtian programme and the Indo-Europeanist mainstream, ending with the former's marginalization; still, Bopp's theory was never widely accepted, and Buschmann's argument for Malayo-Polynesian as a third great language family on a par with Indo-European and Semitic equally described Polynesian as a degenerate branch of Malayan, "less the state of nature of a language in its infancy, than a deterioration of the more vigorous type of the West Malayan languages" (Buschmann 1843: 36).

While Buschmann was setting forth Humboldt's compilations, Horatio Hale was doing ethnolinguistic fieldwork in the Pacific as part of the United States Exploring Expedition (1838-42). Hale's report (1846) refers only twice to Humboldt, and he could have seen *Kawi-Sprache* only upon his return; it would be wrong to view him as a continuator. He did start from largely the same printed sources, supplementing them with manuscripts and (Bible) translations acquired from missionaries and with his own notes. But he insisted that these printed sources "have been rather consulted than copied, the rules and examples [...] having been drawn almost entirely from manuscript notes, or from the translations", and claimed "[a] familiarity with the general structure of the Polynesian speech, and with the minuter peculiarities of some of the dialects, which was acquired during three years spent among the islands" (Hale 1846: 230). Much of what he did fits Humboldt's definition of the 'task of general linguistics': combining 'Ethnography and Philology', reconstructing the chronological order of Polynesian migrations through sound shifts (117-96), and subsuming Polynesian language variety to a general analysis, in which the various Polynesian 'dialects' represent variants of a unified Polynesian grammar and lexicon (229-356). Inevitably, much of this analysis is devoted to the various 'affixed particles'. And like Humboldt, Hale practiced a kind of revisory reading of his sources, though Hale's revisions were based on observation rather than on close reading and expert judgement.

Hale's process of revision is harder to reconstruct since his linguistic collections have been destroyed or dispersed – unlike the ethnological and natural history collections of the U.S. Ex. Ex., which formed the basis for the newly founded Smithsonian Institutions. One set of notebooks is in the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; four of these ("Horatio Hale Notebooks, 1838-42", MLMSS A320 1/2/4; "Dialects of New Zealand and of the South Seas", MLMSS C356, pp. 63-94) contain neat but not definitive versions of sections of Hale (1846). Another part consists of notes and excerpts which reflect how Hale mixed compilation and observation:

(A321) Ca. 600 words Samoan-English and 300 English-Samoan, plus sample phrases, "obtained from Mr. John Davenport, who joined the expedition as interpreter, & quitted it at Rio on account of ill-health. He had spent about three years [1832-35] at the Navigator Islands, where he had been left by the captain of a whale-ship at his own request. Being a person of considerable intelligence, who had enjoyed the advantages

of a common school education, he was able to give a very good account of his observations while at the islands, & as he took particular pains to acquire the language correctly, it is probable that the words & sentences given by him are as correct as can ever be when not obtained from the natives themselves.”

(C356, pp. 1-17) Excerpts from Kendall & Lee (1820) and Davies (1823), the latter with Hale’s own additions.

(C356, pp. 23-58) Tongan, Raratongan, Maori, Samoan, and Hawaiian words, phrases, and paradigms, from unnamed missionaries. At the other end of the notebook (95-143) is an abortive first attempt at a comparative vocabulary, with only 30 words on paper slips.

(C357, pp. 1-59) Hale’s own notes from a visit to a ‘miserable mud village’ six miles up Rio Negro in Chile, with a short ‘English-Chilean-Araucanian’ vocabulary, and Tehuelche words and phrases ‘obtained from a southern Tehuéhika’ (cf. Hale, 1846: 651-6).

(C359) Alphabetical dictionary and grammar of Kiribati, “as recorded by the two sailors, Kirby & Grey, who had been left on the Islands”, supplemented in A320 2 by words ‘directly from natives’. In Hale (1846: 435-7) variant readings are set in parallel columns, to “show the allowances which must be made for mispronunciation in the words given solely on the authority of the two seamen”; Hale judged Kirby the most intelligent and the best informant of the two.

Hale’s language material extended from Australia to the American West Coast; a notebook from the University of Western Ontario Archives that formed the basis for the section on “The Languages of Australia” (Hale 1846: 479-531; cf. Belton 2009) was on display in Sydney when this article was written. In this regard, Hale’s interests were as broad as Humboldt’s. In Rio de Janeiro, he gathered vocabularies of Bantu languages from enslaved Africans; later in life, he made a philological edition of the *Iroquois Book of Rites*, which he called an ‘Iroquois Veda’ (Hale 1883: 37) on account of its conservation in oral literature before it was written down in the 18th century.

Hale’s ethnological insight into Polynesian and other non-Western worldviews was certainly richer than Humboldt’s, even though the expedition’s contacts with islanders were often cursory, and destructively violent on Fiji (Joyce 2001). But he did not link this ethnological insight to the structure of their language. Unlike Humboldt, Hale did not identify language with a worldview; in Hale (1846: 379), there is only a passing reference to “the genius of the Vitian language”. His most theoretical statement on human language variety was much later, in Hale (1886), where he articulated the almost proto-Chomskyan view (Levelt 2019) that “the origin of linguistic stocks is to be found in what may be termed the language-making instinct of very young children” (Hale 1886, 191) and inferred that even the first language must have been “a full, expressive, well-organized speech, complete in all its parts” (196).

4. *Conclusions: A Parallel Process*

The point of this comparison is to make clearer how Humboldt's work was part of a parallel process. Though the *Kawi-Sprache* introduction was unique in 19th-century literature as a philosophy of language, it does not follow that his grand ethnolinguistic project should be regarded as a sleeping beauty or as the touchstone for other such projects. Expanding the comparative view was a process with many loose ends. Klaproth wanted to redo *Mithridates* (Tintemann 2014); Richard Lepsius (1810-1884) wrote only one of the three grammars of African languages that he promised (Solleveld 2020a); Wilhelm Bleek (1827-1875) abandoned his Bantu grammar after vol. II and drafted several chapters of a Polynesian grammar, as well as a /Xam dictionary and the outline of a Herero grammar.⁹ Though the *Collectanea Linguistica* form an exceptionally large collection of language material, George Grey's (1812-1898) collections in Auckland and Cape Town (supplemented by Bleek) are in the same range. It is difficult to compare them with the collections of Klaproth, Hale, or father and son Von der Gabelentz, which have been dispersed and partly destroyed or auctioned off.

Part of the parallel process can be traced through the trajectories of language materials. The most telling example of that is probably how twelve Middle and South American grammars and vocabularies gathered by Humboldt's brother inspired Schlegel's (1808: 46n) notion of agglutinative languages, were used in volumes III.2 and III.3 of *Mithridates* (Adelung & Vater 1806-19; cf. Trabant 2012: 68-73, Mueller-Vollmer 1993: 63-7, 401-6), and reached Du Ponceau via that source. In this article, we have seen how specimens of Malayan languages found their way into Marsden's antiquarian compilations, Raffles' data collections, and Crawford's philosophical history before reaching Humboldt in Berlin, and how words were put in tables, phrases translated and dissected, writing systems collated, genealogies drawn, and Sanskrit loan words etymologized in the process. In the course of this process, language undergoes changes, like a plant that is drawn 'true to nature', dried and preserved, and labelled according to genus and species.

The analogy between language materials and dried plants is illustrative in various regards. Humboldt, like most 19th-century German linguists, conceived of language as an organism, and treated language materials as collectibles; Hale (1846) wrote repeatedly of language 'specimens', and words were collected together with plants by Forster, Marsden, Raffles, Alexander von Humboldt, and the U.S. Exploring Expedition. In ethnolinguistic overviews like Hale's, such 'specimens' represented a language as well as its speakers, like tokens of a type. As such, they informed Hale's maps of Polynesian migrations and of the tribes of the West Coast. It is precisely through such trajectories of language materials that different domains of knowledge intersected, and that a 12th-century Old Javanese adaptation of a Sanskrit epic became part of Raffles' chorographic data collection, Crawford's philosophical history, and

⁹ "Oceanic Languages", "Notes on the Fijian Language": George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Central City Library, GNZ MSS 303-4. "Bushman Dictionaries", vol. I-IV: University of Cape Town Special Collections, BC151_A_A1.A1.3.1-4. "Entwurf einer Grammatik der Herero-Sprache. Erster Theil": National Library of South Africa, G.47.c.7.26

Humboldt's study of human language variety. Pickering (1836: 137), in his instructions to Hale, even drew an analogy with geology, comparing linguistic facts to "specimens of antediluvian bones, and impressions of vegetable and other productions" waiting for a new Cuvier who "will compare and classify all the specimens of language".

The dissection that these language materials underwent also changed the status of the language as an object of research. Crawford and Martin made Polynesian languages 'part of the history of the human mind'; Humboldt gave them a mother tongue, placed Kawi firmly in the Malayan language family (Mueller-Vollmer & Heeschen 2007: 445-7), and subjected Martin's specimens to more thoroughgoing philological analysis; Hale's reconstruction of Polynesian migrations via sound shifts gave non-written languages historical depth. As Hale wrote at the beginning of his section on 'Polynesian Grammar',

The changes, also, which the general language undergoes, in passing from one group to another, are thus made apparent, and the principles which govern these changes, being once discerned, will prove, it is believed, of no little importance to the science of philology. (Hale 1846: 229)

Thus, Malayan and Polynesian acquired a higher status for Humboldt and Hale than they held for Crawford and Martin. Humboldt's comparisons with Chinese and Sanskrit did not quite put them on a par with Chinese and Sanskrit, which for Humboldt represented the two poles of condensed clarity of expression (KS vol. I, CCCXXXVIII-CCCXLI); yet his dissection of Polynesian 'grammatical sounds' emphasized their unique – but also universally and quintessentially human – expressive quality, and the status that he conferred upon Kawi also reflected upon the Malayan and even the Malayo-Polynesian family as a whole. With this combination of textual criticism and comparative grammar, Humboldt was emulating what Grimm had done for Germanic languages, like Bleek would later seek to do for Bantu and Khoisan (Solleveld 2020b). Hale, in turn, was emulating Pickering and Du Ponceau (Mackert 1994).

A note about the meaning of 'philology' is in place here. For Hale, as in 19th-century English usage in general, 'philology' was still a container notion for the study of languages and literature at large. In German academia, meanwhile, philology and linguistics were growing apart. For Humboldt, philology and linguistics were different but interlinked pursuits, the one concerned with literary monuments (*Sprachdenkmäler*), the other with the analysis (*Zergliederung*) of language as such (KS vol. I, CCXVIII). Still, the core of what Humboldt did as a linguist was close reading; he studied language materials like a textual critic. Crucial elements of his linguistic project were inspired by the study of antiquity; Trabant (2016) sees its origins in his early tracts *Über das Studium des Alterthums* and *Latium und Hellas* (Humboldt 1896a,b). Much as he struggled to escape the confines of Latin grammar, and described the process as entering 'a totally different world' (KS vol. III, 476), his way of imagining fundamentally different worldviews was that of Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* more than that of Franz Boas on Vancouver Island.

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SUMMARY

Wilhelm von Humboldt's *Über die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Java* can be seen as the first comparative grammar of non-Indo-European languages. While Humboldt's practice of collecting and re-assembling linguistic information has been documented extensively in the Berlin Academy edition of his *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft*, this article puts his work in perspective by tracing it back to its sources and treating it as part of a wider parallel process of expanding the comparative view. In three sections, this article discusses 1) the research agendas of the three British colonial scholars upon whose works Humboldt drew for Malayan languages; 2) to which extent his Polynesian language material was 'rawer' than these compendia; and 3) how he reworked this material into a comparative Malayo-Polynesian grammar. Finally, a comparison is drawn with the work of his assistant and continuator Eduard Buschmann, and with Horatio Hale's slightly later survey of the languages of the Pacific.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wilhelm von Humboldts *Über die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Java* kann als die erste vergleichende Grammatik nicht-indoeuropäischer Sprachen gelten. Humboldts Sammlung und Überarbeitung von Sprachmaterialien ist durch die BBAW-Ausgabe seiner *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft* ausführlich dokumentiert worden. Dieser Aufsatz ergänzt den Forschungsstand durch eine vergleichende Perspektive, indem er die Kawi-Arbeit auf seine Quellen zurückführt und als Teil eines breiteren parallelen Prozesses der Erweiterung sprachvergleichender Perspektiven erläutert. In drei Abschnitten untersucht der Aufsatz: 1. die Forschungsagenden der drei britischen kolonialen Gelehrten, auf deren Arbeiten Humboldt für die malaiischen Sprachen zurückgreift; 2. inwieweit Humboldts polynesisches Sprachmaterial ‚roher‘ war als das in jenen Kompendien; und 3. wie er diese Sprachmaterialien überarbeitet und daraus eine vergleichende malayo-polynesische Grammatik gemacht hat. Abschließend wird ein Vergleich mit der Arbeit seines Assistenten Eduard Buschmann und mit Horatio Hales etwas späterem Überblick über die Sprachen des Pazifik angestellt.

RÉSUMÉ

L'œuvre posthume de G. de Humboldt, *Über die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Java*, peut être regardée comme la première grammaire comparée sortant du champ des

langues indo-européennes. L'édition de l'Académie de Berlin des *Schriften zur Sprachwissenschaft* de Humboldt a documenté en détail sa collecte et son traitement des matériaux linguistiques. Dans cet article, nous reconduisons l'œuvre de Humboldt à ses sources, et l'envisageons comme faisant partie d'un processus parallèle plus large d'expansion du comparatisme. Les trois sections de l'article discutent 1. les programmes de recherche développés par trois savants de la sphère coloniale britannique, chez qui Humboldt a puisé pour son étude des langues malaises ; 2. la nature de ses données linguistiques polynésiennes, dont on se demande dans quelle mesure elles étaient plus 'brutes' que leurs contreparties malaises ; et 3. la manière dont Humboldt a retravaillé ces matériaux pour élaborer une grammaire comparée malayo-polynésienne. La dernière partie est consacrée à deux prolongements de l'œuvre de Humboldt : sa continuation directe par son assistant Eduard Buschmann, et le tableau des langues pacifiques dressé par Horatio Hale quelques années plus tard.

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