

Gabelentz, Hans Conon von der, b. Oct. 13, 1807, Altenburg, Germany, d. Sep. 3, 1874, Lemnitz, near Weimar, Germany; gentleman linguist.

Trained in law and fiscal affairs, as was the custom in his well-to-do family, G. was a high-ranking civil servant who served the duchy of his native Altenburg in various capacities, with a brief interlude at Weimar, and resigned the presidency of the Altenburg council only a few years before his death.

G.'s favorite pastime, apart from regional history, was general comparative linguistics. In what continued to be largely a domain of gentleman scholars, G. had an ambition to emulate W. v. → Humboldt, and he did not at all do badly. Reluctant to speculate about the general principles of language or about genetic affiliations on slight factual knowledge, G. acquainted himself with some eighty languages, mostly on the basis of texts that were meticulously excerpted, and took note of countless others in passing, thus covering a fair proportion of the approximately thousand languages that he believed were in existence. His excellently stocked private library in Poschwitz, near Altenburg, assembled with the help of friends abroad (such as Anton Schiefner, Reinhold Rost, and Edwin Norris) and benefiting many a scholar of more modest means (including his friend A. F. → Pott, as well as his son, Georg v. d. → G., a judge, who was to become a professional linguist), provided the raw materials for numerous and by no means amateurish publications, often appearing in the Transactions of the Royal Saxon Society for the Sciences or in the major not strictly Indo-Europeanist journals, *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, and Albert Höfer's *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft der Sprache*.

Some of G.'s publications were philological. Noteworthy are the editions he published together with his friend Julius Loebe, of Ulfilas' Gothic bible (1836/43) and the translation of a table from his Manchu collection (1877). But more characteristic was a steady stream of descriptive grammars or grammar sketches of out-of-the-way languages not yet well known in the comparatists' community, including Uralic ones, such as Zyrian (1841), Votyak, Cheremis, Mordvin, and Samoyedic; Altaic ones, such as Manchu (1832); Austronesian ones, such as Dayak; Bantu ones, such as Swahili; American ones, such as Dakota, Cherokee and Kiriri (all 1852); and the extinct isolate Kassite (1858).

Paramount among G.'s endeavors to put genetic groups of dubious standing on a firmer footing was his establishment, on phonological,

morphological, and syntactic rather than lexical grounds, of the unity of the languages of the Melanesian islands (with particular attention focused on Aneityum, Eromanga, Tanna, Malakula, Nengone, Lifu, Duauru, Bauro, the Guadalcanal group, and Fijian) and his proposal of a common origin of Melanesian and Polynesian languages (1861b/73), laying the foundation for today's Austronesian.

Taking his lead from Humboldt, who had called for a moratorium on typological speculation until individual grammatical categories had been examined on a worldwide basis (with himself contributing little more than a fragment on the dual), G. devoted a monograph to the passive (1861a) that has remained a model of its kind. Beginning with a working definition of this verbal voice and with remarks on its functions, uses, and synchronic and diachronic relations to other categories, the bulk of *Über das Passivum* is a taxonomy of the forms of passives, taking into account no less than 208 languages. If languages lack a passive or do not morphologically distinguish it from the active, they may use nominalizations, periphrases with auxiliaries, active verbs accompanied by reflexive pronouns, impersonal, and intransitivized or neutral constructions as syntactic means of passivization, or may employ some kind of verbal morphology for this purpose, in particular combinations of verbal stems with the copula, with causative-reflexive, reflexive, and adjectival or stativizing formatives. While there were languages more fond of passives than of actives, what G. did not find were ones with exclusively and non-derivatively passive morphosyntax; passivization was always accomplished by means originally intended for other purposes but suitable to be adapted to perform the functions of the passive voice, central among which, according to G., is that of representing events from the perspective of the patient. Neglect of G.'s *Über das Passivum* has been the cause of much spilled ink ever since.

(1832): *Éléments de la grammaire mandchoue*, Altenburg. With LOEBE, J., eds. (1836/43): *Ulfilas: Veteris et novi testamenti versionis gothicae fragmenta quae supersunt*, 2 vols., Lipsiae. (1841): *Grundzüge der syrischen Grammatik*, Altenburg. (1852): *Beiträge zur Sprachenkunde*, I: *Grammatik der Dajak-Sprache*; II: *Grammatik der Dakota-Sprache*; III: *Grammatik der Kiriri-Sprache*, Leipzig. (1858): "Grammatik und Wb. der Kassia-Sprache", *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften. Philol.-hist. Classe* 10, 1–66. (1861): "Über das Passivum: Eine sprachvergl. Abhandlung", *Abhandlungen der philol.-hist. Classe der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* 3 (= *Abhandlungen der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wiss.* 8), 449–546. (1861/79): "Die melanesischen

Sprachen nach ihrem gramm. Bau und ihrer Verwandtschaft unter sich und mit den malaiisch-polyne-sischen Sprachen", I, ib. 3 (= ib. 8), 1-266/II, ib. 7 (= ib. 17), 1-186 (for the first time 1873 by Königlich Sächsische Akad. der Wissenschaften).

GABELENTZ, G. von der (1886): "H. C. v. d. G. als Sprachforscher", *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlich-Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, philol.-hist. Classe* 38, 217-41.

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