Editorial

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It is widely recognised that Sanskrit and more generally the study of the languages of South Asia played an extremely important role in the development of historical and comparative linguistics during the nineteenth century. Besides, it has been witnessed the same regarding the study of Indian grammatical tradition, especially Sanskrit grammatical tradition, which sees Pāṇini as its greatest exponent and representative. However, until the end of the first decade of twenty-first century, no single journal in Western countries has been devoted to the linguistics of these languages. This is a relevant fact, considering the importance of old Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages for the study of diachronic linguistics, grammatical tradition and/or textual criticism – thanks also to the multitude of texts representing the various phases of linguistic evolution of these languages – and considering the high linguistic diversity of South Asia and, consequently, its importance for the study of multilingualism, language contact and language policy and planning. With the exception of *Indian Linguistics*, the quarterly journal (produced annually) of the Linguistic Society of India, only recently, in fact, specific academic journals started being published whose focus is the linguistic analysis of South Asian languages. This is the case of the *Journal of South Asian Linguistics* which is an online and open access publication edited by Sameerud ud Dowla Khan and Emily Manetta (initially by Miriam Butt and Rajesh Bhatt) that, from 2008 onward, publishes original research articles and book reviews. John Benjamins Publishing Company (Amsterdam and Philadelphia) publishes the *Journal of South Asian Languages and Linguistics* the first volume of which came out in 2014. The focus of the journal is on descriptive, functional and typological investigations, but descriptive studies are also en-

couraged to the extent that they present analyses of lesser-known languages, based on original fieldwork. The editor-in-chief is Leonid Kulikov (initially Anju Saxena).

It is important to note that the scope of these journals is not a single group/family of South Asian languages, but, on the contrary, all languages used, today and in the past, in the region and, moreover, the South Asian linguistic landscape as a whole. Certainly, this is the result of a changing approach in studying these languages. As a matter of fact, according to this relatively new approach, in order to have a correct view not only on the characteristics of the contemporary languages of this region, but also of what their evolution must have been, even recently, it is necessary to consider language contact as an essential factor of language change in the Indian sub-continent. As Hock (2016, 1) has pointed out, this change of perspective has been a consequence of the fact that this region started to be studied, from the point of view of linguistics, as a linguistic area. Emeneau's papers (1980) on this topic were fundamental in this respect (especially Emeneau 1956), followed in importance by Masica's study of 1976. Thence, over the past five-six decades there has been a growing interest in the study of South Asian languages from different perspectives and adopting various methodological approaches. More recently, this interest has also expanded to the field of endangered and unwritten languages to the extent that it has now become an established field of research for various academic projects around the World (cf., for example, the *Himalayan Languages Project*, as well as the various studies, grammars and/or documentation works published in the context of the *Hauns Rausing Endangered Languages Project* and *Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages*).

Notwithstanding this ferment in the discipline with the increasingly presence of a new generation of established scholars, in some countries the impact of linguistic studies on South Asian languages has not been as relevant as it has been in other countries. In this regard, Italy is a case in point. As a matter of fact, after the pioneering work of some eminent scholars dealing with Middle Indo-Aryan or New-Indo-Aryan languages (the emblematic example is represented by Luigi Pio Tessitori, in particular by his well-known *Grammar of the Old Western Râjasthânî With Special Reference to...* 1914-16), the few Italian linguists who studied some of the various languages of South-Asia have devoted their attention to the analysis of Vedic, especially from an Indo-European perspective, or Sanskrit grammatical tradition. Unfortunately, with rare and recent exceptions, most of these few studies are written in Italian language, thus difficult to access for foreign scholars.

It is precisely in this context that *Bhāṣā. Journal of South Asian Linguistics, Philology and Grammatical Traditions* has been launched. Starting from an idea of Antonio Rigopoulos and mine and patronised

by the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, this new peer-reviewed, international research journal on the languages of the Indian subcontinent welcomes submissions adopting evidence-based approaches to all areas of linguistics related to South Asian literary (classical and modern/contemporary), spoken and/or endangered languages. The Journal is published online by Edizioni Ca' Foscari, which was created in 2011 with the aim of encouraging dissemination of research results within the University and from here to both the national and international scientific community. For this reason, all publications are made available online with free and open access in order to bolster and encourage the free sharing of knowledge.

The main purpose of the Journal is twofold.

On the one hand, to collect papers devoted to general synchronic linguistic analysis (including sociolinguistic analysis) of a particular language (even as testified in a specific text) and even those incorporating a comparative analysis with other languages. According to this aim, the papers submitted can have a theoretical and/or a descriptive approach, in both respects adopting a typological and functional perspective.

On the other hand, one of the major aims of *Bhāṣā* is to better understand the evolution of the various languages employed in South Asia today and in the past. The term 'evolution' is here understood from the point of view of linguistic history – according to a pure diachronic linguistic perspective – as well as from the point of view of the history of these languages, concerning thus the dynamics existing between a specific language and the culture and socio-political context of the society where this language is spoken. For this reason, the Journal also includes in its scope the analysis of the history of reading and reception studies in South Asia and, accordingly, articles focusing on textual details and criticism and on the history of manuscript traditions and circulation will also be considered. In fact, it is our firm belief that only through the study of the relationship occurring between the languages of 'texts', with their marked bias toward the educated classes, and their variants (the languages of non-[canonised] texts) that it is possible to understand the sociolinguistic relationship between a more standard, established language and a plethora of sub-standard 'languages'. Above all, we are wondering how the studies of philology and historical sociolinguistics can come to the aid of historical linguistics analysis. Therefore, the Journal is not solely devoted to the 'pure' linguistic study of South Asian languages with a synchronic or a diachronic approach. Indeed, one of the main purposes of this Journal is to transcend the old dichotomy of synchrony and diachrony and to combine philology and linguistics through some of the papers that will be submitted. Last but not the least, particular emphasis is also placed on the study of

grammatical traditions that have thrived in the South Asian regions.

A considerable part of *Bhāṣā. Journal of South Asian Linguistics, Philology and Grammatical Traditions* will be devoted to reviews of new books or specific important papers related in some way to the aims of the Journal. The Journal predominantly publishes articles in English but will occasionally also publish in Italian, French and German.

In this first issue, *Bhāṣā* offers to the academic reader five innovative papers that show the results of some of its research themes. We look forward to future article's submissions mostly dealing with research themes related to the topics of this new Journal, but also, and especially, focusing on the whole of South Asian languages and on the Indian grammatical tradition – i.e. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Tamil, etc. – as well as on the grammatical tradition of Modern Indian languages.

The paper by Peterson and Chevallier offers a very detailed (even if preliminary according to the authors) typology of negation based on a database of 25 structural features for 39 languages from three language families and two language isolates providing thus a first analysis of the distribution of these different negative-marking strategies throughout the subcontinent. In some cases of language contact, the data also allows us to determine with some certainty the type of contact situation that has led to the negative-marking patterns documented.

The paper by Hook and Koul explores a particular formulaic construction specifically dedicated to the expression of sarcasm in many Indo-Aryan languages. Even if the focus of the two authors is on a particular language, i.e. Kashmiri, their aim is to show that this particular construction is attested non only in the majority of Indo-Aryan languages, but also in some but not all of the major Dravidian languages. As a consequence, they suggest that this specific construction is another clear example of 'trait' of South Asia as a linguistic area.

The article by Patrick McCartney deals with 2001 and 2011 *Census of India* data in which L1-L3 (first to third language) Sanskrit tokens were returned during census enumeration. The main goal of the paper, that is part of the *Imagining Sanskrtland* project, is on locating and documenting how, where, and why the most important literary Indo-Aryan language, Sanskrit, is spoken in the twenty-first century. In particular, a theo-political discussion of Sanskrit's imaginative power for faith-based development is provided, in order to discuss how 'Sanskrit-speaking' villages signify an ambition toward cultural renaissance.

The article by De Notariis is conceived as an introduction to questions concerning the relationship between various versions of a Buddhist text known in its Pāli variant as *Milindapañha*, and in its Chinese versions as *Nàxiān bǐqiū jīng* (那先比丘經; T 1670 versions A and

B). With respect to the latter, particular attention to the Western reception and the problem related to the reconstruction of a possible archetype, adopting the guidelines provided by Gérard Fussman, are provided.

Carnesale's paper deals with the semantic/pragmatic-syntactic interplay of Hindi predicative possessive constructions, especially taking into account the concept of linguistic iconicity. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to show that each possessive construction in the largest new Indo-Aryan language of modern South Asia is customised to encode specific semantic properties.

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