

JAINA STUDIES

Edited by Peter Flügel

Volume 1

2016

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Johannes Klatt

Jaina-Onomasticon

Edited by Peter Flügel
and Kornelius Krümpelmann

2016

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet
at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany

ISSN 2511-0950
ISBN 978-3-447-10584-2

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Acknowledgements

The editors are indebted to the *Asien-Afrika-Institut* of the Universität Hamburg, which entrusted the handwritten manuscript of Johannes Klatt's Jaina-Onomasticon, bound in eight volumes, for almost six years to them for the purpose of editing. Birte Plutat, Librarian of the Abteilung für Sprache und Kultur Indiens und Tibets, facilitated the cooperation between the editors and the Institute in numerous ways.

The edition of the Jaina-Onomasticon would not have come about without seed-funding from the Faculty of Arts & Humanities Research Fund of the *London School of Oriental and African Studies* (SOAS) in 2010, which helped financing the initial photography of the manuscript, by Isra Jawat and Mohammad Mirbashiri, and a preliminary transcription of two volumes by Christopher Gibbons. The creation of the present edition of the Jaina-Onomasticon was rendered possible by *Leverhulme Trust Research Grant RPG-2012-620*, covering the period from October 2013 until February 2016. Without it Johannes Klatt's *magnum opus* would still lie unpublished.

Siegfried Schmitt, Eef Overgaauw, Nicolé Fürtig, and their colleagues of the *Handschriftenabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz* offered generous support over the entire period of the research project, including practical help and advice in locating relevant documents. Gabriele Zeller (Universitätsbibliothek, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen) and Agnes Stache-Weiske (Universität Würzburg) selflessly shared information and unpublished documents from their personal archives on the correspondence between 19th century Sanskritists. Agnes Stache-Weiske also transliterated several letters by Albrecht Weber, whose idiosyncratic handwriting is notoriously difficult to decipher.

For the sending of scans or photos of rare printed texts, handwritten manuscripts, letters, archival information, and the facilitation of copyright permissions we are indebted to Christoph Albers and Anja Belza (Zeitungabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), Sabine Arens (Bonner Stadtarchiv), Susanne Dietel (Bereich Sondersammlungen Digitalisierung Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig), Vera Enke & Wiebke Witzel (Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), Irene Friedl (Universitätsbibliothek, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), Karin Keller

(Universitätsarchiv, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg), Hanno Krümpelmann (Leipzig), Amruta Chintaman Natu (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune), Olle Qvarnström (University of Lund), and Vincenzo Vergiani (University of Cambridge). Chhaya Goswami (Mumbai) kindly helped negotiating access at the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai.

We are grateful to the librarians at other significant collections, who offered their help in the search for Klatt's sources, and made it possible for the editors to use manuscripts and rare printed texts on the spot: Gisela Bélot and Daniel Bornemann (Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Strasbourg), Reinhold Grünendahl (Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen), Pasquale Manzo (British Library, London), Roberta Masini and her team (Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze), Friedrich Simader (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien), Sylvia Stapelfeldt (Fachbereichsbibliothek, Südasiens-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde, Wien), Pamela Stückler (Universitätsbibliothek, Wien).

Wolfgang Stein and Anka Krämer de Huerta (Museum Fünf Kontinente, München, formerly Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde) are to be thanked for identifying the Pārśvanātha altar piece referred to by Klatt, and for the rights for publishing two photographs depicting it. Janet Leigh Foster (Centre of Jaina Studies, SOAS) kindly edited the photos of Klatt's manuscript taken by the editors and proof-read parts of the final manuscript.

Klaus Karttunen (University of Helsinki) was of great help at the early stages of the project, by sharing his biographical notes on Johannes Klatt, which pointed us in the right direction for further bio-bibliographical research.

The editors also profited from discussions with Matthäus Heil (Prosopographia Imperii Romani Project, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften) on the academic *Zeitgeist* at the University of Berlin in the second half of the 19th century.

Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the three advisors to the project, particularly to J. C. Wright, Honorary President of the Centre of Jaina Studies at SOAS, whose good counsel was invaluable, to Renate Söhnen-Thieme of SOAS, and to Willem Bollée of the University of Heidelberg.

Life and Work of Johannes Klatt

by Peter Flügel ¹

¹ All unattributed translations in the text are the author's. Selected, previously unpublished, primary sources are presented in footnotes. A set of Klatt's letters and postcards is published in FLÜGEL (2017).

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The name of Johannes Emil Otto Klatt (1852-1903), Classical and Oriental philologist, Librarian at the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin, and pioneer of Jaina Studies, has almost entirely disappeared from the records of 19th century intellectual history; despite the fact that, between 1873 and 1892, as librarian and bibliographer, he became one of the pivotal figures in Oriental Studies. Klatt was one of a handful of scholars, coalescing around his teacher Albrecht Weber (1825-1901) of the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin, who, together with Georg Bühler (1837-1898) in Surat and Vienna, effectively established Jaina Studies as an academic field. Not only is Klatt 'not recognised as standing among the major German Indologists of the nineteenth century',² he is not mentioned in any of the many recent studies on the history of Oriental research, not even in those dedicated to the history of Indology in Germany, few of which touch on Jaina Studies at all.³ Histories of the Royal Library at Berlin, where Klatt occupied a prominent position for twenty years, also hardly take note of his existence.⁴ The only exceptions are Ernst WINDISCH (1917, 1920), who in his classical work *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde* records two of Klatt's scholarly contributions,⁵ and Wilhelm RAU (1982), whose book *Bilder 135 deutscher Indologen* offers a rare photo of Johannes Klatt and thereby includes him in the Indological lineage.⁶ Whoever wanted to know anything further about Klatt's 'work-filled life and his writings'⁷ had to consult a footnote which Klatt's friend Ernst Leumann (1859-1931) inserted in Klatt's last, posthumously published, article.⁸ It has remained the single authoritative bio-bibliographical source on Johannes Klatt's life and work to date.

At the occasion of the posthumous publication of Klatt's magnum opus, the *Jaina-Onomasticon*, which Walther Schubring (1881-1969) repeatedly praised as one of the principal accomplishments of 19th century Jaina research,⁹ the time has come to re-discover its author and his still relevant work; not merely for posterity, but also as a paragon and tool for the ongoing exploration of South Asian history and culture. The reconstruction of Johannes Klatt's life and work, tragically cut short by illness, is not an

easy task, though, and, to a certain extent, remains a puzzle to be solved, due to the absence of literary remains and substantial archival vestiges. On the basis of the presently available documents, hardly anything can be said about Klatt's personal and family life. Many aspects of the context of his academic work remain opaque as well; particularly his motivation to specialise in Sanskrit philology, in the first place, and the scientific rationale informing the Jaina-Onomasticon; a question, which may never be elucidated, unless conclusive evidence is brought to light. Klatt's career as a librarian, his day-to-day work, and some of his professional engagements, are relatively well-documented in personnel files and his few surviving letters of 1874-82 to Albrecht Weber, both held at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and in the letters of 1881-91 to his close collaborator Wilhelm Adalbert Ernst Kuhn (1846-1920) in Munich, which are preserved at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. The details of Klatt's routines and working methods are of general interest for intellectual history. They offer a glance into the ways in which 'normal science' was conducted in the 19th century, by a civil servant engaged in Oriental Studies, and how information was processed in the Königliche Bibliothek zu Berlin (KBB), the Prussian Royal Library, at a time of exponential influx of published and unpublished data from all over the world. Even after the creation of an independent University Library at the Königliche Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität zu Berlin (KFWUB), mainly a teaching collection, the Prussian Royal Library (now: Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz) remained the principal research library in Germany. At the time of Klatt, it had already become the main resource centre for the network of universities, libraries, scholars, and publishers, who set the tone for academic life in the newly created German Empire. However, the main source for the following reconstruction of the life and work of Johannes Klatt remains Klatt's published work, a complete list of which is offered in the bibliography of this bio-bibliographical essay.

2 BALBIR (2003: 253f.).

3 EMINENT ORIENTALISTS (1922), STACHE-ROSEN (1990), G. G. SENGUPTA (1996), MCGETCHIN (2004), SCHÜTTE (2004), SENGUPTA (2005), RABAULT-FEUERHAHN (2008/2013), MARCHAND (2009), GRÜNENDAHL (2012), ADLURI & BAGCHEE (2014), etc.

4 See the literature in the bibliographies of BALCKE (1925), KUNZE, DUBE & FRÖSCHNER (1961), KITTEL (1961), and PAUNEL (1965) (until 1884).

5 WINDISCH (1917: 51; 1920: 296, 349-51) mentions only KLATT's (1873) dissertation on Sanskrit gnomic literature,

and his first article on Jaina chronicles (1882a). Klatt's annual reviews for the DMG, which Windisch must have used for his own book, are not listed.

6 RAU (1982: 62): '* 31. Oktober 1852 Filehne/Posen † 27. August 1903 Berlin'. The photo is from Robert Birwé, Leverkusen-Rheindorf, Schnepfenflucht 10 (p. 142).

7 SCHUBRING (1935 § 4: 8, Fn. 2): 'Über sein arbeitsreiches Leben und seine Schriften vgl. LEUMANN IA 23, 169'.

8 LEUMANN (1894: 169, Fn. 2). See page 135.

9 SCHUBRING (1935 § 4: 8; 1944: vi-vii; 2000 § 7: 10).