

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* includes a series of historiographical papers. Outstanding figures of the history of linguistic research in Hungary are presented with an eye to a non-domestic readership. Our aim was not simply to discuss those linguists whom we find important for the development of the discipline within the confines of the Hungarian community, but to point out also in what ways their work had some bearing on general linguistic concerns.

The selection was dependent upon many contingencies, and thus some important figures have not been included. Ferenc Verseggy, József Budenz, Zoltán Gombocz or István (Stephen) Ullmann, to name but a few, certainly would have deserved to be discussed in this volume. Hopefully, justice will be done to their persons and work some time in the future. The ones who have been included are important for a variety of reasons, which we will now briefly describe by way of an introduction to the volume.

János Sylvester is the first to have written a grammatical work concerned with Hungarian. His book is of a comparative nature; its practical aim was to introduce schoolchildren to Latin grammar with the help of Hungarian parallels and explanations. But the book grew into much more than that in the course of its writing, as Sylvester's attention turned to the features of Hungarian that are unparalleled in Latin and to general/comparative/ideological points with which Humanistic grammar in the 16th century was so deeply concerned all over Europe. Pál Pereszlényi, who worked in the following century, represents a more mature stage of early modern grammatical work in his comprehensive grammar of Hungarian, and one of his chief achievements consists in a morphological analysis that grows out (like all morphological analysis at the time) of the study of Hebrew, Latin and German, and is successfully applied to a language structurally very much unlike any of those three. The next two protagonists are generally regarded as the founders of serious Finno-Ugric comparative scholarship. János Sajnovics and Sámuel Gyarmathi worked in the last decades of the 18th century and elevated comparative linguistics to heights not seen before them. Sámuel Brassai, the odd genius of

Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

the 19th century, one of the last polymaths, who remained completely unknown outside Hungary, was a linguist whose work in several ways anticipates contemporary Hungarian syntactic studies.

With Zsigmond Simonyi and József Szinnyi we are already in the period of institutionalised science at the turn of the twentieth century. They were active in several fields (historical, comparative and descriptive linguistics), and were accomplished scholars of the best kind as well as established teachers who were responsible for the formation of generations of students and did not find it below their dignity to write popularising works and textbooks for lower-level education. Gyula Laziczius, almost the only early structuralist of any note in Hungary, could have very easily become a towering figure on account of his unparalleled qualities and his scholarly output, had it not been for unfortunate circumstances beyond his influence including his politically motivated removal from professorship in 1947. He was well known and appreciated outside Hungary and his contributions especially to phonology earned him the respect of such figures as Trubetzkoy and Jakobson. Perhaps his most famous student, Iván Fónagy was a truly renaissance scholar in the width of his interests and knowledge and the variety of the fields to which he contributed significantly in his exile. Zsigmond Telegdi was the (re)founder of general linguistics in post-war Hungary (in that capacity also a successor to Laziczius), and also an accomplished orientalist widely known and respected for his expertise in Iranian, Hebrew and Arabic.

András Cser