FRANKLIN EDGERTON

Franklin Edgerton was born on 24 July 1885 and died on 7 December 1963, at the age of 78, after several months of hospitalization and lingering illness following upon a fall. His death has removed from among us almost the last of the great generation of American linguistic scholars who founded the Linguistic Society of America and whose achievements made the second quarter of this century so brilliant a time to think back upon. Of the twenty-nine men who signed the call for the organization of the Society in 1924, George Melville Bolling predeceased Edgerton by but a few months, and only Claude Meek Lotspeich of the University of Cincinnati now remains.

Franklin Edgerton was born in Lemars, Iowa, the eldest of three sons of Charles Eugene Edgerton and Annie Benedict (White) Edgerton. His father came of a line of merchants in upper New York State. After Hamilton College he engaged in banking in several towns of the Middle West, where his first two sons were born, then in business in Binghamton, N. Y., where the third son was born; after graduate work at Cornell and Columbia in economics and statistics, he held various posts in the civil service in Washington, D. C., until his retirement to Ithaca. Franklin's two brothers, Henry White Edgerton (born 1888) and William Franklin Edgerton (born 1893), made careers as distinguished as that of their elder brother, in the law and in Egyptology respectively, and William Franklin also, of course, has long been a member of this Society.

Franklin recorded in an early vita that he attended the public schools of Binghamton, Ithaca, and Washington. He gained his A.B. degree at Cornell University in 1905. The following year he spent at the Universities of Munich and Jena. In the years 1906 to 1909 he was a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins University, holding a university fellowship in Sanskrit and comparative philology for the two years from 1907 to 1909. There he studied Sanskrit and comparative philology, Greek, Latin, and Germanics, under Professors Maurice Bloomfield, B. L. Gildersleeve, Kirby Flower Smith, Hermann Collitz, and James W. Bright. His Ph.D. in 1909 involved as dissertation the 100-odd pages on *The k-suffixes of Indo-Iranian, Part I: The k-suffixes in the Veda and Avesta.* In the further years 1909–1913 at Johns Hopkins he served successively as assistant, instructor, and Johnston scholar in Sanskrit and comparative philology. In 1910 he spent some months in Russia as a student of the language. He moved to the University of Pennsylvania for the years 1913–26, first as assistant professor of Sanskrit, in the last year as professor. In 1926 he became Salisbury professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology in Yale University. In 1946 he joined the illustrious ranks of the Sterling Professors of that university. In 1953 he became professor emeritus. It is no longer possible for a professor of Sanskrit not to know India at first hand (as it was possible for Maurice Bloomfield, for instance). Edgerton spent the first year of his Yale professorship (1926–27) in India (his pupil George V. Bobrinskoy taught the beginning class in Sanskrit that year), and was there again in the second half of 1938, in the year 1953–54

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when on a Fulbright grant he was Holkar visiting professor of Indology at Banaras Hindu University, and in 1956 when he was a state guest of the Government of India for the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death.

Edgerton's writings seldom hark back sentimentally to his early days—his very few book-dedications include that of his Vikrama volumes 'to my father and mother'. The dedication, however, of the Gītā volumes 'to the memory of Maurice Bloomfield' and the extremely personal obituary for Bloomfield in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* in 1928 are indicative of the strongest scholarly influence on his career. It was said that his undergraduate and graduate studies went so far in classics that he might well have developed into a brilliant Hellenist. Maurice Bloomfield's influence and example, however, diverted him into Indology and for a long while channeled his interests. Bloomfield was, among other things, a Vedic scholar (one of the most powerful of his time), a student of early Indian religion, and a student of the Indian folktale, especially as it is seen in literary collections. Edgerton followed him in these three fields.

A series of studies of Vedic and Upanishadic problems of interpretation and studies of Vedic linguistic problems, notably his dissertation and the study of the elliptic dual and the dual dvandva compounds, and an edition of the 6th book of the Kashmirian Atharvaveda, preluded his inheritance of Bloomfield's projected *Vedic variants*. Three volumes were completed and published in a masterly way in 1930, 1932, and 1934 (in the third volume I was given the honor of collaborating). His Vedic studies continued to the very end of his life, the last publication in this field being his Atharvan article in the W. Norman Brown Festschrift volume in 1962. An outgrowth of his Vedic studies, which began in the 30's and continued to the end of his life, was his epoch-making study of the Vedic and Indo-European semivowels ('Sievers-Edgerton's law') and related matters. The earliest paper, 'Sievers's law and IE. weak-grade vocalism', appeared in *Language* in 1934, 'The Indo-European semivowels' in 1943, 'Indo-European "*s* movable" ' in 1958, and 'The semivowel phonemes of Indo-European: A reconsideration' in 1962.

Probably more independent of Bloomfield in general was Edgerton's work on early Indian religion, as seen first in the important series of articles on the philosophic materials of the Atharvaveda (here he was following in the footsteps of his teacher, the greatest of Atharvanists) and on Upanishadic thought. The culmination in this field, however, came in the 1925 interpretative book on the Bhagavadgītā and the ancillary article on the terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga*. The 1944 edition of the Gītā was a further distillation of his profoundly detailed knowledge of this text; its influence will continue through the 1964 publication of the translation and interpretation. On the Gītā the ground had not even been broken by Bloomfield.

Bloomfield's work on the literary folktales seemed in large part to center on the Jain collections. This work, along with other work on Jainism, was carried on directly by others of his pupils. Edgerton continued folktale work, but in a direction that was strongly original. He early began to examine the Pañcatantra collection, which in the first two decades of the century was being worked on by the German Johannes Hertel. Dissatisfaction with Hertel's methods and results

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led Edgerton to undertake an all-out effort at comparison of all the versions of the Pañcatantra and to arrive at a brilliant reconstruction of the lost original text. This forms the highly important two-volume publication of text and translation in 1924, the scholarly work having been begun as early as 1914. The impact and lasting influence that this has had on Sanskrit studies are seen in the Indian publication of the reconstructed text in Devanagari script in 1927–30, the German translation in 1952, the request of a Mysore publisher for permission to publish a Kannada translation in 1958 (it is not known whether this was published), and the projected UNESCO publication of the English translation. The comparative edition of the recensions of the Vikramacarita, which was published in the Harvard Oriental Series with date 1926, was completed in 1917 (so the preface is dated); its production was delayed by the First World War. This work was begun before that on the Pañcatantra. It did not, in fact could not (1.xxiii n. 2), lead to the sort of reconstruction that the materials available for the Pañcatantra allowed. Important as the Vikrama work was, in itself and as a part of what was envisaged by Bloomfield in folktale studies, it was greatly exceeded in originality and literary importance by the reconstructed Pañcatantra.

Edgerton's first Indian trip marked a break with his earlier interests. In August and September of 1926, in Poona, he read with a pandit, who was a specialist in the *mīmāṃsā* philosophy, the elementary text that commonly is used in India to introduce students into this branch of philosophy, Āpadeva's *Mīmāṃsā-nyāyaprakāśa*. He undertook this, presumably to have the experience of using Sanskrit as Indian students have to use it, as the medium in which they are instructed; incidentally, he built on this experience to the point where he could make introductory Sanskrit remarks at considerable length when he lectured in India to learned audiences. But the text that he read in this way had not been presented in any western language, and he found it worth publishing (1929) as a book in Sanskrit with English translation. He did not go any further with his study of the *mīmāṃsā* system.

Another tentative step in new directions was his translation, published in 1931, of a curious text that had been published in 1910 in Trivandrum, Nīlakaṇṭha's *Mātaṅgalīlā*. This is a work setting forth the elephant lore of the Hindus, a representative of the *gajaśāstra* or 'body of technical learning on elephants'. Why Edgerton was tempted to translate the text we do not know, but he was clearly pleased by the discovery that it elucidated several literary passages in Sanskrit and Prakrit, especially a verse in Kālidāsa's play Śakuntalā. This was perhaps the only work in which he used extensively for interpretation books having to do with the 'Realien' of Indian life; he even in this case went to the zoological treatises for help.

In the 20's and 30's Edgerton's reputation as a Sanskritist became great indeed. So much was this so that when the death of the great Czech scholar Winternitz cut short hopes of his editing the only book of the Mahābhārata that had been entrusted to a non-Indian for the critical edition undertaken at Poona, the general editor Sukthankar in 1937 turned to Edgerton to carry out this task. It was a signal honor for Edgerton and for the Sanskrit scholarship of America. The work was begun in 1937; from July to September 1938 Edgerton worked

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on the collation sheets at Poona; by 1940 the preparation of copy was finished; and in spite of the delays caused by the war the edition of the Sabhāparvan, the second book of the Mahābhārata, appeared in 1944. A believer in omens would note that in 1914 Edgerton had proposed a very attractive etymology for the word *sabhā* 'assembly'. Several papers on epic subjects grew from work on the edition, notably a very important metrical study, 'The epic triṣṭubh and its hypermetric varieties'.

In 1953 there appeared the *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit grammar and dictionary*, his greatest monument. It was the outcome of work that had been started almost twenty years earlier and had been carried on in spite of distractions and interruptions, such as the epic edition, the Indo-European and Vedic semivowels, and the war with its calls upon all American linguistic scholars for promotional and scholarly efforts. A *Reader* accompanied the *Grammar and dictionary*. In 1954, as part of the duties of the Holkar professorship at Banaras, Edgerton published *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit language and literature*, ten public lectures which contain in popularizing form a summary of and introduction to his views. A series of papers on various phases of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit grammar, meter, semantics, and etymology preceded and followed the great work.

To complete an account of Edgerton's scholarly and academic life, it should be said that he was an active member of two professional societies. He was, as I said above, a founding member of the Linguistic Society of America, and was honored by the presidency in 1934, and by an issue of *Language* (29:3) dedicated to him in 1953. His enthusiastic and active work in the Society's affairs, both as member of innumerable committees and informally, as member of many Linguistic Institutes, and as one of its members called upon to assist in the promotion of war efforts, is part of the history of the Society. He was equally active in the American Oriental Society: corresponding secretary 1915–19, editor of the *Journal* 1918–26, vice-president 1926–28, president 1928–29.

He was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1920, and a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1935. He was a corresponding member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, of the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, and of the Göttingen Academy; and an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain, of the Linguistic Society of India, of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (Poona), of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute (Allahabad), and of the Bihar Research Society (Patna). At the Yale commencement in June 1961 he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

His first marriage, by which there was a son, Charles Eugene, terminated in 1952. After his retirement from Yale, he moved to Laramie, Wyoming, where he spent a happy old age with his second wife, Eleanor (Hill), by whom he is survived.

Edgerton's published work is contained in about 200 items, which the bibliography sets forth, and in much unsigned work which he performed as editor of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. His interests covered a broad chronological and sectarian range of Indological subjects, to all of which he applied

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philological interpretation in the older sense—determination of the accurate form and meaning of the texts, and reconstruction of their history, whether cultural, verbal, or linguistic. His scholarship was critical and ingenious, meticulous, accurate, and, above all, based on the data. If at times this proved distasteful to intuitive- and mystic-minded scholars or to those who preferred the accepted view to the unsettling critical view, so much the worse for them; Edgerton with his tremendous command of the data and his sanely critical method of interpretation was more likely to be correct than they. His energy, when applied to the handling of large masses of material, made some of his achievements seem almost superhuman. All his major works were marked by this characteristic, from the beginning of his career to the end, from the Pañcatantra, through the *Vedic variants*, to the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit works. It has in fact been a continuing characteristic of the best of the American Sanskritists—William Dwight Whitney, E. W. Hopkins, Maurice Bloomfield, Edgerton himself. Edgerton's linguistic work has been all of a piece with his other Indological work, marked by meticulousness, based on massive data, historical-minded but not to the neglect of description, and, above all, always based as closely as possible on the data. His tremendous feat of description and historical tracing of the details of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit will endure. His secure basing of the reconstruction of the Indo-European semivowels in all their structural ramifications will also endure. Imaginative, but sane, treatment of the Vedic data is the basis; less securely based use of laryngeals and schwa secundum is for those who temperamentally are fitted to handle them, but Edgerton could not bring himself to use abstractions for which he could not find overwhelming evidence in his great mass of data. Because of his very positive qualities, Edgerton takes his sure place in the line of great Sanskritists and great linguistic scholars. His vitality, dynamism, and energy made him an inspirational teacher to many more than to his immediate pupils, as they made him a most influential member of the faculty of orientalists and linguistic scholars at Yale, of the American Oriental Society, and of the Linguistic Society of America. We have lost a great teacher, a great friend, and a great man.

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The bibliography is based on a full critical list compiled by Franklin and Eleanor Edgerton; to the latter goes our gratitude for permission to use the list.

Journal abbreviations are as follows:

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (Poona)
AHR	American historical review
AJP	American journal of philology
AP	The Aryan path (Bombay)
IIJ	Indo-Iranian journal
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
KZ	(Kuhn's) Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung
Lg.	Language
NIA	New Indian antiquary
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society

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YBAPS Year Book of the American Philosophical Society
YR Yale review, new series
ZII Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik

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