

*A Cymmrodor claims kin in Calcutta: an assessment of
Sir William Jones as philologist, polymath,
and pluralist*

by Garland Cannon and Michael J. Franklin*

It was a custom among the Ancient Britons (and still retained in Anglesey) for the most knowing among them in the descent of families, to send their friends of the same stock or family, *a dydd calan Ionawr a calennig*, [New Year's gift] a present of their pedigree; [...] [T]he very thought of those brave people, who struggled so long with a superior power for their liberty, inspires me with such an idea of them, that I almost adore their memories.¹

This genealogical present, of inherent interest to all the 'earliest natives' [Cymmrodorion] of Wales and beyond, was sent in a letter of New Year's Day 1748 by the 'learned British antiquary' and co-founder of this society, Lewis Morris (1701-65) to his friend William ap Sion Siors (son of John George), known in London as William Jones, FRS (c.1675-1749), 'Longitude Jones', celebrated mathematician, disseminator of Newtonian theory, and father of the future Orientalist.² This document, now sadly lost, showed that the Morrisises and the Joneses were closely related, sharing an ancestry deriving from Hwfa ap Cynddelw and the princes of Gwynedd.

Exactly why a seemingly insignificant Ynys Môn parish should produce within two generations a scholar of the calibre of William Jones sen. and polymaths of such importance as Lewis Morris and Sir William Jones remains something of a mystery.³ This new study of Jones the linguist and literary

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¹ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, ed. Anna Maria Jones, 13 vols. (London, 1807), rpt. in *Collected Works*, ed. Garland Cannon (Richmond, Surrey and New York, 1993), 1: 2-3; henceforth *Works*. Like the Morrisises, William Jones sen. must have loved Welsh antiquities, for he purchased Moses Williams's library, and employed the first President of the Cymmrodorion, Richard Morris, to catalogue it. Sadly on his early death these precious manuscripts were bequeathed to his former pupil, the Earl of Macclesfield, and they gathered dust at Shirburn Castle, inaccessible to Welsh scholars.

² Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (Cambridge, 1990), 1-4.

³ Perhaps it was something in the enlightening air, or in the milk of 'Mam Cymru', as Anglesey was traditionally known; the secret of their 'common source' might lie in the soil and in the significant appellation of their village: Llanfihangel Tre'r Beirdd (The Parish of St Michael, Town of the Bards). The district is rich in associations with both the Druids and the British saints, see

artist, with necessary attention to the other disciplines that crystallized his theory of families of languages within his polymathic career may provide a partial answer to the question.

Considering the careers of William Jones senior and Lewis Morris, one discovers the elements which nourished the intellectual patrimony of the Orientalist: that interlocking mixture of the pragmatic and the speculative, the practical and the antiquarian, the poetic and the scientific, all reinforced by the precision of the mathematician (Jones sen.) or the composer in the strict metres of *cynganedd* (Morris). The West Indian voyages of William Jones sen. had inspired his fascination with longitude and latitude, and his *New Compendium of the Whole Art of Navigation* was published in 1702. Mapping of the waters also absorbed Lewis Morris as Admiralty surveyor and hydrographer of the western coastline of Wales; but, although his travels were limited geographically, his boundless intellectual versatility, his commitment to ancient Celtic literature, and his personal magnetism united a circle of scholars who pioneered a Welsh cultural renaissance.⁴

Sir William Jones was just such an intellectual navigator, re-drawing the map of European thought, and the Welsh preoccupation with genealogy he shared with his close relation Lewis Morris was extended far beyond a fascination with the descent of individuals in his life-long dedication to researches into families of nations, racial groups and languages that could partially explain human advancement. Secure in his own origins, his capacity for original thought allowed him to stress the interconnexions between the familial and the familiar. Indeed, it is the hallmark of Jones as cultural mediator that he sought to locate similitude rather than difference, reinforcing the homologising tendencies of the Enlightenment even while inspiring Romanticism's intense yearning for Oriental alterity.

Unlike Jones sen., his son, who was born at 11 Beaufort Gardens, Strand, was a true London Welshman; and it was only as a young barrister that he really got to know the ancient land of his fathers. From 1775 for almost eight years he chose to practise mainly on the Carmarthen circuit; and his lively letters to his former pupil, George John Spencer, Viscount Althorp, colourfully evoke Welsh scenery and culture to reveal his delighted discovery of the Celtic sublime.⁵

While savouring Sir Roger Mostyn's luscious peaches and nectarines in the

Camden's *Britannia*, ed. Edmund Gibson (London, 1695), col. 675; Henry Rowlands, *Mona Antiqua Restaurata. An Archaeological Discourse on the Antiquities, Natural and Historical of the Isle of Anglesey, The Ancient Seat of the British Druids* (Dublin, 1723).

⁴ See Michael J. Franklin, "'And the Celt knew the Indian': Sir William Jones, Oriental Renaissance and Celtic Revival", in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes, (Cambridge, 2003), 20-37.

⁵ See Caryl Davies, "'Romantic Jones": The Picturesques and Politics on the South Wales Circuit, 1775-1781', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 28 (1994), 255-78; Michael J. Franklin, *Sir William Jones* (Cardiff, 1995), 52-53.

summer of 1775, Jones surveys his patrimonial island, eliding yeoman origins to envisage a princely and presidential ancestral role: ‘We had on one side a prospect of the isle of Anglesey, the ancient Mona, where my ancestors presided over a free but uncivilized people’.⁶ Thus despite ‘the fresh oysters as fine as any I have tasted’; ‘the excellent dinner of trouts fresh from the river [...] *Towy* (which is much more beautiful than its name is melodious’; ‘the best tarts I ever tasted, they are made of *bogberries*’ (*Letters*, 1: 189); his Welsh experience was not confined to the prandial and the picturesque. ‘Market-day at Llandilo’ simultaneously confirms class distinction while introducing Jones to the ‘otherness’ of the internal colony:

I could not help fancying myself in a Flemish town; it was at least wholly unlike an English one, as the language, manners, dress, and countenances of the people are entirely different from ours; I speak of the lower sort, for the gentry are not in any respect distinguishable from us.

(*Letters*, 1: 189).

But Jones at this stage in his life was at the foot of a very steep learning curve; such patrician conceptions were swiftly abandoned as his professional experience gained pace with his social expertise. Ancient Celtic liberties had been eroded by the arbitrary power of an Anglicised squirearchy, and Jones’s egalitarian principles were becoming apparent in his legal representation of the colonised Welsh. Increasingly his letters to the Spencers describe the oppression of the ‘yeomanry and peasantry of Wales’ at the hands of rack-renting squires and English-speaking monoglot magistrates and judges.⁷ Defending poor farmers and workmen from powerful adversaries and frequently representing impoverished clients gratis, Jones was learning lessons which were to hone a radical edge to his Whig politics and prepare him for his future role as an imperial administrator.

A more unusual case occurred in Haverfordwest in 1780. He defended Isaac Phillips, a yeoman of St Martin, charged with alarming a Pembrokeshire village with a report of a French invasion. One of the indicting magistrates was John Zephaniah Holwell, former governor of Bengal, an influential figure with whom it would have been in the best interests of Jones (whose application for an Indian judgeship was pending) to curry favour. Despite this, Jones argued that the magistrates’ abuse of power indicated that despotism was by no means an oriental preserve, and obtained Phillips’ release.⁸

⁶ *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 vols (Oxford, 1970), 1: 199; henceforth *Letters*.

⁷ See, for example, *Letters*, 2: 468-69.

⁸ See National Library of Wales, MS 4 Wales 821/5; *Letters*, 1: 430-31. On the ironies involved in this cause, see Michael J. Franklin, ‘Accessing India: Orientalism, “Anti-Indianism” and the Rhetoric of Jones and Burke’, in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, ed. Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson, (Cambridge, 1998), 48-66.

That very spring, on 26 March 1780, Jones wrote to his friend and fellow-member of Dr Johnson's Turk's Head Club, Edmund Burke, to protest at Burke's proposal to abolish the circuits of the Welsh judicature:

Ought a few thousand to be saved to the revenue by a plan, which will either distress the yeomanry and peasantry of Wales or deter them from applying at all for justice? How many industrious tenants will then be even greater slaves than they are even now to the tyrannical agents and stewards of indolent gentlemen. (*Letters*, 1.354)

What lies beneath the anger here is not the self-interest of the Welsh circuiter but Jones's renewed awareness of his family background. This London Welsh celebrity was, after all, the grandson of an Anglesey sheep-farmer. When 'Persian' Jones was not exchanging learned witticisms with Gibbon and Garrick, Sheridan and Reynolds in the metropolis, he was representing his distressed and frequently monoglot Cymric clients in south west Wales, thereby increasing his familiarity with 'the language of heaven'.⁹

Lamentably, Jones never utilized his extensive knowledge of Celtic culture to compose a separate academic study; but his fascination with the researches into the *cynfeirdd* (early poets) and *gogynfeirdd* (poets of the princes) undertaken by the Morris circle and by his fellow Cymmrodorion (he had joined the society of Cymmrodorion by 1778), led to his initiating the society of the 'Druids of the Teifi'. For it wasn't all work in Wales: fellow-lawyers and

⁹ In listing the twenty-eight languages with which he was familiar, Jones placed Welsh among the 'twelve studied least perfectly, but all attainable'; *Works*, 2: 264-65. Jones's social mobility was reflected in the staggering breadth of audiences he could reach. His most accomplished political poem, 'Ode in Imitation of Alcaeus' (1781), written in 'my chaise between Abergavenny and Brecon', was addressed to a Viscount, distributed to fellow-members of the Club of Honest Whigs such as Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, Charles Dilly, Ralph Griffiths, Thomas Day, and Benjamin Franklin, and ultimately given a huge popular audience through being distributed gratis by Major Cartwright's Society for Constitutional Information, and being republished by Thomas Spence in the radical 1790s journal *Pigs Meat* (the voice of Burke's 'swinish multitude'). Jones's radical pamphlet *The Principles of Government, in a Dialogue between a Scholar and a Peasant* (1782), written to convince Franklin that the mysteries of the state might be made intelligible to the working man, and the subject of a notorious seditious libel trial at Wrexham, was not only distributed by the Society for Constitutional Information, but translated into Welsh to become the first Welsh political tract. See Garland Cannon, 'Freedom of the Press and Sir William Jones', *Journalism Quarterly*, 33 (1956), 170-88; and Emyr Wyn Jones, *Yr Anterliwt Goll: Barn ar Egwyddorion y Llywodraeth ... Gan Fardd Anadnabyddus o Wynedd* (Aberystwyth, 1984), and *id.*, *Diocesan Discord: A Family Affair, St Asaph 1779-1786* (Aberystwyth, 1988). On the specific and complex issue of the attitude towards the Welsh language in Welsh courts, see Mark Ellis Jones, "'An Invidious Attempt to Accelerate the Extinction of Our Language": The Abolition of the Court of Great Sessions and the Welsh Language', *WHR*, 19 (1998), 226-64.

some of the more enlightened gentry congregated upon the flowery banks of the Teifi under the ivy-clad walls of Cilgerran castle for lobster and champagne fêtes champêtre. Entertainment was provided by Jones who seems to have served as ‘bardd teulu’ (family bard). Many aspects of Jones’s character coalesce in this recreational Celticism: his social mobility; his ‘clubbability’ and Enlightenment associational tendencies; and his reputation as a writer of occasional (often extempore) verse with a pronounced radical bias. The pantheistic hedonism of a lyric such as ‘The Damsels of Cardigan’ (1779) anticipates Wordsworthian themes:

Leave Year-books and parchments to grey-bearded sages,
Be Nature our law, and fair woman our book. (ll. 48-9)¹⁰

If this applied a self-mockery to his own scholarly tendencies and avocations, an extempore piece written in an hour clearly points the directions – both geographical and intellectual – in which Jones was moving. ‘Kneel to the Goddess whom all Men Adore’ (1780) marks the exasperated response of his Enlightened deism to the anti-Catholic Gordon riots of early June 1780; it playfully urges his fellow Druids to teach Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Parsis, pagan Greeks and Romans that they all hymned one goddess - be she called Diana, Mary, Astarte, or Gangā. The impassioned syncretism of this lyrical *jeu d’esprit* prefigures the universalizing tendencies of his groundbreaking discourse ‘On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India’ (1784). A couplet in its fifth stanza which deals with the devotion of the Brahmans neatly, if unintentionally, encapsulates the familial patterns of cultural and linguistic revelation his career in the subcontinent would establish:

But from Sanscritan Vedes
The discov’ry proceeds (‘Kneel to the Goddess’, ll. 35-6)¹¹

From the banks of the Teifi to the banks of the Hooghli is no inconsiderable distance; but when Jones assumed his post on the Bengal Supreme Court of Judicature in September 1783, and soon surpassed even Charles Wilkins’s knowledge of Sanskrit to facilitate just rulings on Hindu religious texts, the stage was set for his Sanskrit discoveries.

As Jones is universally credited with providing a major impetus in the development of scientific linguistics, close analysis of the devising of his famous ‘philologer’s’ formulation of 1786, especially a detailed reading of all

¹⁰ *Works*, 1: 357-58; *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. Michael J. Franklin (Cardiff, 1995), 54-55; henceforth *Selected Works*.

¹¹ See *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. Lady Llanover, 2nd series (London, 1862), 2: 539-41; *Selected Works*, 58-61.

eleven of his Anniversary Discourses to his Asiatic Society of Bengal, reveals how his post-1786 work with language families metamorphosed his compact 1786 explanation of resemblances among what is now termed 'Indo-European' languages into an innovative theory of language families and their development. This helped to motivate the later, crucial advances into modern linguistic theory and details by Friedrich Schlegel in 1808 and 1822, particularly Rasmus Rask in 1816 and Franz Bopp, and then Jakob Grimm.

In Jones's immediate answer to a linguistic query of the Polish prince Adam Czartoryski in February 1779, he referred to unnamed scholars who derived the Celtic languages, Persian, Greek, and Latin from 'a very old and almost primæval language' (*Letters*, 1: 285). He was probably recalling various old comments on Greek and Latin lexical commonalities and mainly the fragmentary, isolated generalizations about genealogical relationships by Filippo Sasseti and Père du Pons. As Jones did not correspond with Père Gaston Coeurdoux, he presumably did not know Coeurdoux's assertion of the 'commune origine' of numbers of Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit words, which was unpublished before 1808. Jones did know Lord Monboddo's theorizing in *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* that Sanskrit and Greek were related, and he extensively corresponded with that early anthropologist.¹² As yet Jones had no notion of language change through descent into language families, for he admitted to the prince: 'How so many European words crept into the Persian language I know not with certainty.' His citing of Procopius's description of extensive trade implied borrowing as a partial explanation.

In August 1783 Sir William Jones, on the deck of the *Crocodile* frigate during his passage to India, envisioned an Asiatic Society that would systematically investigate the totality of Indian culture and ideas, and transmit the findings to the West. Arriving in Calcutta on 25 September 1783, Jones immediately rose to the intellectual challenge of 'the vast regions of Asia'. By January 1784 his enthusiasm and reputation galvanised a dedicated group of East India Company employees into the pioneering Asiatic Society of Bengal, modelled, like the *Cymmrodorion*, on the Royal Society. The organ of the Society, *Asiatick Researches*, effectively marked the beginnings of Indology, transforming Western conceptions of a marginalized subcontinent, and placing India at the centre of both comparative historical linguistics and of European Romanticism.

Bengal contained a significant number of excellent European linguists and Orientalists on account of the determination of Warren Hastings, Governor and Governor-General of Bengal from 1772 to 1785, that British sovereignty

¹² James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 6 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1774), 2: 530-31. See Garland Cannon, 'The Correspondence between Lord Monboddo and Sir William Jones'; and Rosane Rocher, 'Lord Monboddo, Sanskrit and Comparative Linguistics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 100: 1 (Jan., 1980), 12-17.

should be exercised in Indian ways.¹³ This obviously entailed methodical study of Mughal statecraft and political theory, of Hindu and Muslim precedents, but Hastings was no mere pragmatist. As he stated to Dr Johnson in August 1775, he regarded the encouragement of research ‘into the history, traditions, arts, or natural productions of this country’ as ‘among the duties of my station’.¹⁴ Hastings expected the transmission of India knowledge to accomplish three important goals: it would advance his plan ‘for reconciling the People of England to the Natives of Hindostan’; ‘free the inhabitants of this country from the reproach of ignorance and barbarism’; and by no means least, free the servants of the East India Company from very similar reproaches aimed at the all too easy target of the Nabob.¹⁵ As Jones inherited Hastings’s project to codify Muslim and Hindu law, his necessary collaboration with native informants became closer and mutually rewarding; and his friendship with Wilkins, translator of the *Bhāgvat-Gēētā* (1785), inevitably led to delight complementing duty in his acquisition of Sanskrit:

I am in love with the *Gopia*, charmed with *Crishen*, an enthusiastick admirer of *Ram*, and a devout adorer of *Brinha-bishen-mehais*: not to mention that *Judishteir*, *Arjen*, *Corno*, and the other warriors of the *M’hab’harat* appear greater in my eyes than Agamemnon, Ajax, and Achilles appeared, when I first read the Iliad.

(*Letters*, 2: 652)¹⁶

Although his reputation and intellect eclipsed Wilkins’s, Jones, as President of the Asiatic Society, always proved ready to acknowledge his debt to his friend and fellow founder-member ‘without whose aid I should never have learned [Sanskrit]’.¹⁷ His linguistic researches were also aided by the polyglot court-interpreter William Chambers; the translators William Davy and John Herbert Harington (who was preparing an Arabic-Persian edition of the Persian poet Sa’dí); as well as the historian Francis Gladwin; the physician

¹³ See Michael J. Franklin, ‘“The Hastings Circle”: Writers and Writing in Calcutta in the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century’, in *Authorship, Commerce and the Public: Scenes of Writing, 1750-1850*, ed. Peter Garside et al (Basingstoke, 2002), 186-202.

¹⁴ See G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, 3 vols (London, 1841), 2: 18. Dr Johnson declared: ‘It is new for a Governour of Bengal to patronise Learning’, Johnson to Hastings, 29 January 1781, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford, 5 vols (Oxford, 1992-94), 3: 324.

¹⁵ Hastings to Jonathan Scott, 9 Dec. 1784, BL Add MS. 29129, fo. 275.

¹⁶ Hastings’s own reaction, if less lyrical, is no less enthusiastic: ‘I hesitate not to pronounce the *Gēētā* a performance of great originality; of a sublimity of conception, reasoning, and diction, almost unequalled; and a single exception, among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines’, Introductory letter to *Bhāgvat-Gēētā* 10.

¹⁷ Preface to *Sacotalá*, *Works*, 9: 373.

Francis Balfour (who was collecting Arabic borrowings in Persian and Hindustani); the astronomer Samuel Davis (who was studying the Sanskrit names of stars with originally Arabic names); and the artist John Zoffany.¹⁸

For a few weeks in 1784 he renewed acquaintance with Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, whose *Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778) provocatively describes kinship forms in an overview of North Indic languages derived from Sanskrit.¹⁹ Though Jones's notes and correspondence do not indicate that the two old Oxford friends discussed this influential book or Indic languages at that time, Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776) had helped motivate Jones to seek the Bengal judgeship as the best means of getting to India for first-hand study, and would be helpful in his pioneering, monumental translation of the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, that indigenous system of jurisprudence, which not only possessed great prestige among Hindus and the respect of Muslim rulers, but was also to stimulate Western scholarship. Indeed, the *Monthly Review* asked Jones to review Halhed's *Code*, but dedication to his law practice and study required a declination. But Halhed's innovative remarks on the structure of Sanskrit, of some Bengali forms in terms of Sanskrit kinship, and of relationships between Sanskrit and Greek and Latin may have influenced Jones.²⁰

Intensifying his long interest in Arabic and Persian,²¹ in order to protect the Indian people's rights, Jones had to study these languages more thoroughly and now to learn Sanskrit, as Wilkins was urging. A month after arrival in Calcutta, Jones wrote to his fellow judge, Sir Elijah Impey: 'My days have been so taken up with Arabs and Persians in the morning, Hindūs in the evening, and [court] writers from time to time' (*Letters*, 2: 620). He urged all

¹⁸ On Gladwin, see the introduction to the *Ayeen Akbery: or, The Institutes of Emperor Akber* (1783-86) in *Representing India: Indian Culture and Imperial Control in Eighteenth-Century British Orientalist Discourse*, ed. Michael J. Franklin, 9 vols (London, 2000), 5: v-x, and the introduction to *The Asiatic Miscellany* (1785) in *The European Discovery of India: Key Indological Sources of Romanticism*, ed. Michael J. Franklin, 6 vols (London, 2001), 2: v-xx. On Wilkins, see the introduction to *The Bhāgvat-Gēetā* (1785), and *The Hēētōpādēs of Vēśhnōō-Sārmā* (1787), *ibid.*, 1: xv-xxxiii.

¹⁹ Rosane Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry and the Millennium* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983); and her 'Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Sir William Jones and Comparative Indo-European Linguistics' *Recherches de Linguistique: Homage à Maurice Leroy* (Brussels, 1980), 173. See also Michael J. Franklin, 'Cultural Possession, Imperial Control, and Comparative Religion: The Calcutta Perspectives of Sir William Jones and Nathaniel Brassey Halhed', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 32, (2002), 1-18.

²⁰ Cannon, *Life of Jones*, 244. Jones's unpublished translation of the 12,608 words of the Sanskrit Dictionary, the *Amarakośa*, is in the Texas A&M University Library. A *Code of Gentoo Laws* is reprinted in *Representing India*, vol. 4; and *Institutes of Hindu Law: or, The Ordinances of Menu*, *ibid.*, vol. 9.

²¹ Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones's Persian Linguistics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 78 (1958), 262-73.

his Society members to learn Oriental languages to underpin their research and official duties, and to complete the needed translations of key Arabic and Sanskrit law books.²² On 15 January 1784 he addressed the inaugural session of the Asiatic Society, inspiring its members with his vision and barely contained excitement:

[I]f to the *Persian, Armenian, Turkish, and Arabick*, could be added not only the *Sanscrit*, the treasures of which we now hope to see unlocked, but even the *Chinese, Tartarian, Japanese*, and the various insular dialects, an immense mine would then be open, in which we might labour with delight and advantage.²³

Jones writes of treasure being unlocked, of mines of immense value, feeling himself an intellectual pioneer in a vast field of scholarly, philosophical and literary potential. A few years earlier beside the Teifi and contemplating the splendour of Welsh country estates such as Dynevor or Coedmore, Jones had written:

Admit that our labours were crown'd in full-measure,
 And gold were the fruit of rhetorical flowers,
 That India supplied us with long-hoarded treasure,
 That Dinevor, Slebeck or Coedmore were ours;
 ('The Damsels of Cardigan', ll. 55-8)

The imagery of the poems he composed in India, especially the nine (out of a projected series of eighteen) 'Hymns to Hindu Deities', reveals his captivation with the 'long-hoarded treasure' of Sanskrit literature. As he learned that 'celestial tongue', 'the language of the gods', he pictured himself as one who

Draws orient knowledge from its fountains pure,
 Through caves obstructed long, and paths too long obscure.
 ('A Hymn to Súrya', ll. 186-7)²⁴

²² See David Ibbetson, 'Sir William Jones (1746-1794)', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 7 (2001), 66-82.

²³ 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society' (1784), *Works*, 3: 7. One reviewer commented: 'How grand and stupendous is the following plan! [...] We may reasonably expect to enlarge our stock of poetical imagery, as well as of history, from the labours of the Asiatic Society [...] to combine the useful and the pleasing', *Critical Review*, 59 (1785) 19-21; another, praising Jones's 'A Hymn to Camdeo', the Hindu god of love, similarly expected 'a rich mine of Oriental literature, arts, and antiquities', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 55 (Jan. 1785), 50-51.

²⁴ *Selected Works*, 152. With their emphases upon the seminal and amniotic waters of creation, upon creativity and the nature of perception, Jones's hymns focussed Romantic attention on the analogies between divine and poetic creation. Jones's prefatory Argument to 'A Hymn to Náráyena' (1786) asserting that 'the whole Creation was rather an energy than a work', and that objects 'exist only so far as they are perceived' is a seminal document for Romanticism; see Franklin, *Sir William Jones*, 95-105.

In Britain, Jones's letters had frequently revealed a determination to abandon Oriental studies in order to concentrate upon his legal career; but in Bengal, 'delight and advantage' were to be inextricably combined in his studies of Sanskrit. His adherence to the policy that Indians should be governed by their own laws implemented Hastings's realisation that this might achieve a dual reconciliation: the reconciliation of Indians with their European governors and the reconciliation of British public opinion with a new breed of Company servant which attempted to compensate for the depredations of the Clive generation. Abiding ironies reside in the facts that Jones, who was ultimately to regard his Indian instructors with such warm affection, was led to learn Sanskrit through suspicion of Bengali pandits, and that the father of comparative linguistics 'ever considered languages the mere instruments of real learning, and think them improperly confounded with learning itself.' Jones was not a real field linguist. He viewed preparers of dictionaries and grammars who did not *apply* their linguistic knowledge to be little more useful to society than those who only collected and analysed written and oral language data as valuable in their own right.²⁵

In India, the dishonesty of a few court pandits and maulavis, who misquoted Hindu and Muslim laws out of bribery or ignorance, can be seen as ultimately responsible for Jones's dedication to translations which were to effect a transformation in European awareness of India. Culture was being translated and transmitted to Europe; the human and intellectual gains in pluralism and mutual understanding were on an international scale. Mastering Sanskrit enabled Jones to open Indian literature to the West and align the history of the subcontinent with the chronology of the world. It was no part of Jones's project to essentialize Asia's timelessness and fixity, a practice which Edward Said perceived as a key element of the agenda of official academic Orientalism.²⁶ The Orientalist research of Jones, through its construction of India's past, restored a measure of agency and self-esteem to a colonized subcontinent, especially through his work on Indo-Iranian languages.²⁷

The explicitly described segmental morphemes in Pāṇinian grammar reminded Jones of cognates that he knew in Latin, Greek, and Persian, and suggested other cognates along the same analytical lines in other Indo-European languages. The Sanskrit resemblances that he collected were too

²⁵ See Rosane Rocher, 'Weaving Knowledge: Sir William Jones and the Pandits', in *Objects of Enquiry: The Life, Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine (New York, 1995), 51-79. 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society' (1784), in *Works*, 3: 7.

²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).

²⁷ See O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838* (Delhi, 1988).

numerous to explain by borrowing or accident.²⁸ His knowledge of comparative law provided additional, comparable resemblances plus keen analytical tools. And Sir Joseph Banks's urging him to botanize throughout the subcontinent to supply useful plants for George III's new botanical garden at St. Vincent prompted Jones's intensive botanical study and search for the Sanskrit plant-names, which was paralleled by his groundbreaking research into Indian fauna, anatomy, chemistry and mythology.

Jones's botanical researches were cutting-edge; even a playful poem, 'The Enchanted Fruit; or, The Hindu Wife', based upon an incident in some *Mahābhārata* recensions concerning the polyandrous princess Draupadi, demonstrates how concepts of the familial and the generic were running in his mind:

For *India* once, as now cold *Tibet*, [See the accounts published in the *Philosophical Transactions* from the papers of Mr. *Bogle*.]
 A groupe unusual might exhibit,
 Of sev'ral husbands, free from strife,
 Link'd fairly to a single wife!
 Thus Botanists, with eyes acute
 To see prolific dust minute,
 Taught by their learned northern *Brahmen* [Linnaeus.]
 To class by *pistil* and by *stamen*,
 Produce from nature's rich dominion
 Flow'rs *Polyandrian Monogynian*,
 Where embryon blossoms, fruits, and leaves
Twenty prepare, and *ONE* receives. (ll. 61-72)²⁹

The Comte de Buffon and particularly that 'northern *Brahmen*' Linnaeus, whose binomial nomenclature in grouping the species of each order into genera, invited description of the vast number of Indian plants and some fauna unknown in the West. Biota were proved to be mutable, changing and/or dying without biblical cause and hinting at evolution. To Jones, one of the few polymaths among great linguists like Grimm, languages could similarly change or die. This realization produced one of the most dramatic formulations in the history of ideas, which Jones perceived as an imperative *component* of world, polymathic knowledge:

²⁸ See Murray Emeneau, 'India and Linguistics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 75 (1955), 145-53; Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Language Families, and Indo-European', *Word*, 43 (1992), 49-69.

²⁹ Whereas eighteenth-century biologists, in the Eurocentric application of their totalizing taxonomic vision, generally had little interest in indigenous knowledge about landscape, flora and fauna, Jones's research was deeply sensitive to both the Sanskrit names of species and the place they occupied in Hindu culture and medicine. See 'Botanical Observations on Select Indian Plants', in *Works*, 5: 163; and *Selected Works*, 82-83.

The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure: more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothic* [Germanic] and the *Celtick*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family,³⁰

Modern scholars immediately notice Jones's contemporary value judgments, and his unmentioned (because then undiscovered) Hittite and Tocharian. Much more importantly, he did not innovate language research of the day by seeking the systematic phonological changes within a guiding principle that later so excited Grimm and Karl Verner. However, though not specifying a family tree with successive branches, Jones explained similarities in terms of a **family**, in a planned sequence beginning with Indo-European because of its natural interest to the West, and proceeding to Asian non-Indo-European languages within the Asiatic Society's purview. His succinct formulation went far beyond Dr Johnson's omissive statement of 'Roman [French and Latin] and Teutonick ... (Saxon, German, and all their kindred dialects)'.³¹

Jones's taxonomically vital formulation employed perhaps the first use of the word *family* to describe the genealogical kinship of languages. Once he fleshed out the Indo-European framework and applied the concept to diverse Asian languages in his next four Anniversary Discourses, for which he was already collecting data, his formulation was elevated into a theory. So his Indo-European formulation was not a last-minute, incidental insertion in the long 'Third Anniversary Discourse', as can be hastily surmised if one does not perceive it to be the originating generalization in a sequence devoted to individual language groups and cultures.³² The four most dependable, major sources for Jones's expansive purposes in the Discourses were the languages and letters, philosophy and religion, the actual remains of the peoples' old sculpture and architecture, and the written memorials of their sciences and arts. It was not accidental that **language** would initiate five separate Discourses on the Indians, Chinese, Tartars, Arabs, and Persians, who 'have in different ages divided among themselves, as a kind of inheritance, the vast

³⁰ 'The Third Anniversary Discourse: On the Hindus', *Works*, 34-35.

³¹ This was in the Preface to his 1755 *Dictionary*; see Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, 245.

³² Theodor Benfey, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* (1869; rpt. New York, 1965), 346-50.

continent of *Asia*, with the many islands depending on it'. Jones viewed language as central to the preservation and transmission of knowledge, though, like some other early scholars, he sometimes equated racial groupings like the Chinese with their language groups, as Thomas Trautmann has pointed out. Jones's overall plan, amid a horrendous court-schedule and difficult climate, was breath-taking in its scope and imagination:

who they severally were, *whence*, and *when* they came, *where* they now are settled, and *what advantage* a more perfect knowledge of them all may bring to our *European* world, will be shown, I trust, in *five* distinct essays; the last of which will demonstrate the connexion or diversity between them, and solve the great problem, whether they had *any* common origin, and whether that origin was the *same*, which we generally ascribe to them.³³

Thereby Jones diachronically and synchronically meshed history, anthropology, religion, law, and ancient preserved literature into his wide-ranging plan. His meshed polymathy made him the greater scholar, while enriching his language conclusions, especially the 1786 formulation that has chiefly excited modern scholars and humankind toward an integrated world knowledge. In the Discourses the Indic branch of Indo-European is said to contain at least Vedic Sanskrit, the Prakrits, Bengali, the contemporary Hindustani, and Romany, though Romany's differing lexicon troubled Jones. The many lexical similarities between Sanskrit and Old Persian showed relationships between the Indic and Iranian branches. The Iranian branch contained at least Persian, Pashto, and Baluchi, with Iran as the likely focal area. Misled by some of Monboddo's speculations about the origin of language and humankind, particularly when Jones found what seemed to be six or seven pure Sanskrit words in every ten in the *Zend-Avesta*, he pronounced Avestan to be at least a Sanskrit dialect or Prakrit. Thus he erroneously concluded: 'The oldest discoverable languages of *Persia* were *Chaldaick* and *Sanscrit*', from which Pahlavi and Avestan descended respectively, among other errors usually involving derivation within a given language family. He gave Armenian its own branch, which he admitted to have never studied because he had found no Armenian texts, but wrongly surmised it to derive from Old Persian or Avestan because of its early geographical location.³⁴

³³ 'The Third Anniversary Discourse: On the Hindus', *Works*, 3: 27-28; 3: 27-28.

³⁴ See 'The Sixth Anniversary Discourse: On the Persians', *Works*, 3: 119; 'The Eighth Anniversary Discourse: On the Borderers, Mountaineers, and Islanders of Asia', *Works*, 3: 178; Garland Cannon, 'The Correspondence between Lord Monboddo and Sir William Jones', *American Anthropologist*, 70 (1968), 559-61.

Positing the Romance and Slavic branches, Jones declared Hellenic to include Aeolic, Doric, and Attic. These linguistic relationships were further demonstrated by anthropological, archaeological, and religious data, including cultural transmissions and geographical migrations (or peoples remaining in isolation, when the lexicon would undergo less change because of the absence of borrowings). In short, a good linguist must be a polymath, in what was an early Language-Culture-Area orientation.

Jones's most elaborate description of Asian languages was of Sanskrit and Arabic. For Arabic he postulated a Semitic family containing at least Syriac, 'Ethiopic, is a dialect of old *Chaldean*, and a sister of *Arabick* and *Hebrew*'.³⁵ His Finno-Ugric family contained at least Lappish, Finnish, and Hungarian. He corrected the assertion of the antiquary James Parsons that Hungarian is Slavic, recognizing that it had borrowed its many Slavic words from its Slavic environment.³⁶ The Tartar language belonged to a family ranging from Turkish of the Turkic branch in the west to Mongolian's branch in the east, all of which proceeded from an earlier, unidentified source. The Manchu and Tungus branches are not mentioned. By extending his explanation of lexical and morphemic resemblances to non-Indo-European languages, Jones argued for the universality of language families, where the originating language of each family might well be dead. This conclusion had to expand from a single, fairly detailed Indo-European family to encompass all languages. Otherwise, other sets of resemblances would unacceptably have to be explained by chance or borrowing; and there would not have been a theory, thus massively diminishing Jones's linguistic achievements.

He did not posit a troublesome super-family like Nostratic, or a divine source for the 'first' language. His Indo-European was not an inadequate, primitive system of communication spoken by Asian savages. He used Sanskrit *aryas* 'Aryan' to name the people of the Gupta Golden Age. His Indian and earlier writings and translations contain pioneering Roman transliterations of many words from Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, most with such later low currency that they are still unrecorded in English dictionaries, even after the massive additions in *Oxford Online* (2001-). He used at least 118 different transliterated nouns in his artistic 1789 translation of *Śakuntalā*, for which he made practical use of his theory by employing an intermediate, interlinear Latin rendering. And scattered among his potential loanwords is what is the first known written use of a few dozen like Sanskrit *avatar*, *Brahma*, *champac*, *lat*, and *Vedanta*; Arabic and/or Persian *Avesta*, *ghazal*, *hamza*, *Pahlavi*, *Sassanian*, *simurgh*, and *Turanian*; and Turkish *Osmanli*.

³⁵ 'On the Borderers, Mountaineers, and Islanders of Asia', *Works*, 3: 166; cf. 'The Fourth Anniversary Discourse: On the Arabs', *Works*, 3: 52-56.

³⁶ James Parsons, *Remains of Japhet: Being Historical Enquiries into the Affinity and Origin of the European Languages* (London, 1767).

Jones's 1786 formulation was remarkably lucid, at a time when Newton and other scholars had been trying to date the creation of Adam and Jason's search for the Golden Fleece, and to locate the Garden of Eden. Jones reached his integrative theory in a scientific method anticipating comparative linguistics. After he read the Indian Discourse containing the formulation to thirty-five Asiatic Society members on 2 February 1786, presumably there was the usual searching discussion, so that the finished version of the formulation may have benefited from the queries of linguists like Wilkins and Chambers. Jones presented his amanuensis' copy to the newly created Society library, where it resides today. He did not change one word when he minutely edited the additional papers to appear in *Asiatick Researches* 1 (December 1788), nor in the years until his death in 1794, as the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society* demonstrate.³⁷ Evidently keeping an open mind as he tested his conclusions based on data from many, varied languages, he found no new elements that would require revision of his theory. Nor has posterity changed his basic framework.

Jones wanted to make his conclusion known in Europe and America, though he modestly never termed it a theory. To him language research was a tool for discoveries that might assist humanity, in the humanistic tradition and anticipatory of modern applied linguistics, rather than as research valuable in its own right. So he frequently interpolated details in letters to learned friends, whether or not they were language scholars, over the last eight years of his life. He had always maintained a large scholarly correspondence with intellectuals like Banks, Edmund Burke, Monboddo, Dr Johnson, Edward Gibbon, Benjamin Franklin, and Wilkins later.³⁸

General Charles Vallancey, the chief proponent of Phoenicianism, wildly speculated to him about Irish. When the Celtomane Vallancey's *A Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland, Proved from the Sanscrit Books* (1786) arrived in Calcutta, Jones scathingly condemned its erroneous etymology and abuse of Indology: 'it is very stupid. [...] I conceive [it] to be visionary'.³⁹

³⁷ *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society, 1784-1800*, ed. Sibadas Chaudhuri (Calcutta, 1980), vol. 1.

³⁸ See Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 29 (1975), 105-30; *id.*, 'Sir William Jones and Edmund Burke', *Modern Philology*, 54 (1957), 165-86; *id.*, 'Sir William Jones and Dr. Johnson's Literary Club', *Modern Philology*, 62. (1965), 20-37; *id.*, 'Sir William Jones and Benjamin Franklin', *Oxford University College Record*, 4 (Oct. 1961), 27-45.

³⁹ Jones wrote to Althorp: 'According to him, when silly people gave me the surname of *Persian*, they in fact call me *Irishman*. Do you wish to laugh? Skim the book over. Do you wish to sleep? Read it regularly', *Letters*, 2: 768-69. However, in letters to the eminent Irish antiquarian Joseph Cooper Walker he wrote much more tactfully concerning Vallancey's linguistic researches; see Franklin, 'Sir William Jones, the Celtic Revival, and the Oriental Renaissance', 33-37.

As poet rather than philologist, Jones himself had explored the literary potential of the Phoenician tradition in his 1770 sketch of a projected 'verse epic of tremendous scope' entitled 'Britain Discovered', for he could appreciate arguments, used by patriot Englishman and Celtomane alike, that the Tyrians were prestigious ancestors considering their priorities in colonialism, commerce and letters. Prior colonization by the cerebral Phoenicians represented a proud cultural genealogy which reversed the binaries of contemporary imperialism, simultaneously elevating the Asiatic and the Celtic colonized. The founder of Britain, the Levantine Britanus is neither sensual nor supine; he is as energetic, rational, and decisive as any Western colonialist. Revising his planned Anglo-Indian epic at Calcutta in 1787, Jones writes: 'The discovery of the BRITISH ISLES by the *Tyrians*, is mentioned by *Strabo, Diodorus, and Pliny*; and proved as well by the *Phœnician* monuments found in IRELAND, as well as by the affinity between the *Irish* and *Punic* languages'.⁴⁰ He enthusiastically incorporated into his new plan a sympathetic portrayal of the Hindu goddess Gangā, who fears the future Britons might: 'profane her waters, mock the temples of the *Indian* divinities, appropriate the wealth of their adorers, introduce new laws, a new religion, a new government, insult the *Bráhmens*, and disregard the sacred religion of *Brihmá*.'⁴¹ Such prescient concerns are allayed, however, by Britanus's attendant spirit, a Druid, complete with harp and oaken garland, who, like Jones, 'recommends the government of the Indians by their own laws'. To represent the eponymous founder of Britain as an Oriental colonist instructed in empathy with Hindustan by a Welsh 'descendant of a tribe of Brahmins' is certainly a novel means of 'problematizing concepts of empire; European and English superiority is challenged in a radical realignment of the families of nations.'⁴²

A few months after Jones read the Third Discourse to the Society, he wrote to Viscount Althorp, now the powerful second Earl Spencer: 'I find Sanscrit to be a sister of the Latin'. Two months later, he wrote Sir John Macpherson, the new Bengal Governor-General, who could implement Jones's recommendations for the Indian people: 'By rising before the sun, I allot an hour every day to Sanscrit, and am charmed with knowing so beautiful a sister of Latin and Greek' (*Letters* 2: 711, 727). Jones's use of the term *sister* may echo the comment of James Parsons: 'I count the *Irish* and *Welsh* to be sister-

⁴⁰ *Works*, 2: 452. Jones tentatively suggests a parallel between the Irish Ogham alphabet and the Sanskrit texts called Āgama, see his 'Sixth Anniversary Discourse', *Works*, 3: 123-24.

⁴¹ *Works*, 2: 446-47.

⁴² Thomas Maurice, whose efforts to reconcile the Hindu Trimurti with the Christian Trinity were so reliant upon the researches of Jones, claimed: 'The celebrated order of Druids, anciently established in this country were the immediate descendants of a tribe of Brahmins', *Indian Antiquities*, 7 vols (London, 1793-1800), 6, pt. I, 19-20.

dialects of the [pre-Hellenic] *Pelasgian* language'.⁴³ The personal discussions and correspondence with Richard Morris Jr. (1762-1803) concerning the editing of, and best mode of publication for, Lewis Morris's long-delayed *Celtic Remains* led Jones to place Welsh and its Celtic subfamily squarely within Indo-European.⁴⁴ Jones declared to Richard Morris Jr.: 'As one of the Cymro-dorians, I am warmly interested in British antiquities and literature', and ever mindful of his Celtic heritage, promised an old circuit colleague 'a General Epistle to the Druids of the Tivy' (*Letters*, 2: 877; 692).

Western knowledge of Jones's theory and ethnographic findings was conveyed primarily by the vast Western circulation of his four volumes of *Asiatick Researches* (1788-94) and its many pirated reprints, which were devoured with avidity. Jones's speculation about mankind's monogenesis and the primeval source of his civilization became the centre of scholarly enquiry throughout Europe. But Jones was communicating his Indian experience for the drawing-room as well as the study. Having located in its classical language a 'more exquisitely refined' sister of Greek and Latin, he detected in Sanskrit literature a complementary refinement with which Europe was to fall in love in a far from brotherly fashion. Jones's ode to the subcontinental Phoebus Apollo, 'A Hymn to Súrya' (1786), had announced that '*Sanscrit* song':

Be strown with fancy's wreathes,
And emblems rich, beyond low thoughts refin'd (ll. 189-90)⁴⁵

Three years later the Occident was simultaneously enlightened and delighted by his translation of the fourth-century Kālidāsa's *Sacotalá*. The eponymous heroine, the beautiful daughter of a Brahman sage and a heavenly courtesan, was designed for an age of Sensibility. Blending a perfumed exoticism and a divine eroticism, Śakuntalā embodied the earthly and vegetal paradise of the India of the imagination. Mary Wollstonecraft, reviewing the London edition of 1790 for the *Analytical Review*, discovered delicacy, refinement, and a pure morality in *Sacotalá*, the very qualities Jones was anxious to stress in his representation of Hindu culture. She emphasizes its novelty and breadth of appeal:

This Indian drama, translated by Sir William Jones, if we may credit common fame, will undoubtedly be thought not only by the man of taste, but by the philosopher, a precious *morçeau*; for whilst the latter has the opportunity of tracing human passions clothed in a new modification of

⁴³ Parsons, *Remains of Japhet*, xii.

⁴⁴ Garland Cannon and Caryl Davies, 'Sir William Jones and Lewis Morris' *Celtic Remains*', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 48 (1996), 291-95.

⁴⁵ *Selected Words*, 152. Fittingly, the name 'Sanskrit' means 'cultivated or refined literary speech'.

manners, the former will immediately be gratified by the perusal of some pathetic scenes, and beautiful poetic similes.⁴⁶

The balanced analytical tone of Wollstonecraftian appreciation was soon replaced by the exaltations of German Romanticism. The play was for Herder his 'indische Blume'; Schiller rhapsodized about Sacontalá as the ideal of feminine beauty; Novalis lovingly addressed his fiancée as 'Sakontala'; Friedrich Schlegel pronounced India as the source of all human wisdom; and Goethe captured the essence of *Sacontalá* fever in the line: 'Nenn ich, Sakontala, dich, und so ist Alles gesagt' (When I name you, Sacontalá, everything is said). With Sanskrit as your classical sister and Śakuntalā as your fragrant fiancée, the 'Śakuntalā era' had arrived for both linguistics and literature in a celebration of genetic and elective affinities.

At a time when few Europeans expected to find either refinement or family in India, both his 'Indo-European' thesis and his translations from Sanskrit literature radically adjusted pre-conceptions of Western cultural superiority, introducing disconcerting notions of relationship between the rulers and their black subjects. Europe and America sat up and listened when, with an authority produced by both reputation and conviction, he concluded in the same 'Third Anniversary Discourse' (only a few pages beyond the philologist passage), that it is not possible 'to read the Vedanta, or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India'. Thus, to the linguistic was added a philosophical family reunion. Jones's experience of reading the Vedas, unlike that of Hegel, who held that the *Bhagavadgītā* could not be understood by the Western mind because its conceptions were irrational, did not confirm an impression of the exotic or irrational Other. Instead, he discovered that Indian philosophy possessed the reassuring familiarity of Platonic thought which might be apprehended equally by the twice-born Brahman or the Enlightened rationalist.

It is in such ways that the binaries of imperialism are reconfigured. Jones's ideas concerning both comparative linguistics and the common identity of the Platonic, Vedantic, Sufistic and deistic traditions blurred European and Asian cultural margins. Acknowledging the importance for India of the syncretic legacy of Mughal rulers such as Akbar and Dara Shikoh, Jones's enthusiasm for contemporary Hindustani poets such as Mir Taqī Mir, Sauda and Mir Muhammed Husain balanced his antiquarian fascination with classical Sanskrit Gupta culture. His translation of the macaronic lyrics of the Indo-Persian Sufi poet Amir Khusrau reveal a delight in intellectual/linguistic play,

⁴⁶ *Analytical Review*, 7 (August 1790), 361-73, 361. Neither the Calcutta (1789) nor the London edition bore Jones's name on the title-page.

and his sympathy for a syncretic ideology accommodating both Hindu and Muslim traditions.

Whereas Jones and the Orientalists of the Asiatic Society might be accused of appropriating India's past to bolster British control of the subcontinent, Orientalism, through its construction of India's past, helped shape the way Indians perceived themselves. It was James Mill, however, who was to win celebrity as 'the first historian of India', fostering a prejudice which was to be reinforced by Hegel, that precolonial India had no history. Anglicists and utilitarians were to win the day in India, and interestingly the young Girish Chandra Ghose, a Bengali dramatist writing in 1862, uses a familial discourse to convey the significance of this change :

As regards Indian literature [...] history, antiquities, the present race of Anglo-Indians [the British in India] are lamentably ignorant. Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson [...] respected our fathers and looked upon us hopefully at least with melancholy interest, as you would look on the heir of a ruined noble. But to the great unwashed abroad today, we are simply niggers - without a past; perhaps without a future. They do not choose to know us.⁴⁷

Comparative historical linguistics, however, was not to renounce acknowledgement of familial relationship. Four years later, in the April 1866 issue of the *Quarterly Review* (with simultaneous publication in America), a review essay entitled 'The Science of Language' indicated the general acceptance of the theory, echoing linguists' earlier concurrence:

The key to modern comparative philology was set before the world in one passage (of Jones's 1786 Discourse) [...] The interest of these remarkable sentences does not lie wholly in the announcement of a great discovery. They are an example of the true philosophic temper.⁴⁸

Jones's theory presented a thorny challenge to biblical authority, in which he and his fellow Orientalists used India as an object of ethnological study to produce an interdisciplinary 'racial' theory of Indian civilization.⁴⁹ Trautmann perceptively argues that, by articulating the kinship between the Indians and the British within an Aryan concept, these early Orientalists forcefully implied that race is socially rather than biologically based. Thereby they created a new way of looking at the past by incorporating antique India

⁴⁷ *Selections from the Writings of G.C. Ghose*, ed. M.M. Ghose (Calcutta, 1912), 434, cited in David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance; the Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley and London, 1969), 291.

⁴⁸ *Quarterly Review*, 119 (1866), 394-435, 399-400.

⁴⁹ Garland Cannon, review of Trautmann (see following note), *Anthropological Linguistics*, 40 (1998), 348-51.

into world history, utilizing Jones's conceptualization of the Indo-European family.⁵⁰

Jones's language-family theory ultimately became the definitive rejection of the view that God gave Hebrew to Adam as a direct gift, that all languages derived from Hebrew (which Herder had already rejected), and that God's destruction of the Tower of Babel dispersed the single worldwide language into immutable, mutually unintelligible tongues.⁵¹ In 1792 Jones explicitly referred to 'the primitive language from which all others were derived, or to which at least they were subsequent'.⁵² This crucial separation from religion permitted linguistics to move toward science, even as Jones's scholarly stature prevented his being attacked in the way that Darwin was attacked seventy years later. In a prescientific matrix Jones presented common source as the explanation of language change, where an archetype provides the members of the given family. Drawing on many known but isolated facts from many languages, Jones meshed these and his own data into a broad, integrated canvas. This formed an interdisciplinary theory considerably dependent on the chronologically, geographically remote Sanskrit language and culture, in a philosophical, historical framework transcending the linguistic revelations and placing it within the history of ideas.

Jones was like a Darwin who meshed many isolated evolutionary facts known by predecessors into a grand theory of evolutionary change documented and expanded by his own field research. Jones ultimately revolutionized linguistics primarily in a pithy statement that has been more quoted than perhaps any other succinct formulation in the history of ideas. In a different, more limited way the formulation is comparable to Marco Polo's non-intellectual opening of the magical world of Cathay to the West. Jones had allowed India to get its feet under the Mosaic ethnological table of the human family, achieving a memorable family reunion as Sanskrit re-entered the company of her sisters, Greek and Latin.

While popularizing in the West the pleasures and values of language study, Jones helped to inspire the Indian Renaissance and India's cultural assimilation into the modern world. Like Lewis Morris with his family tree, Sir William Jones had claimed kin, acknowledging a common patrimony if not consanguinity. The Welshman had traversed immense intellectual distances, but in one abiding sense he had simply acknowledged family likeness, relating the 'language of heaven' to the 'language of the gods'.

⁵⁰ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley and London, 1997), 165-89; 190-228.

⁵¹ See Michael J. Franklin, 'The Building of Empire and the Building of Babel: Sir William Jones, Lord Byron, and their Productions of the Orient', in *Byron East and West*, ed. Martin Prochazka, (Prague, 2000), 63-78.

⁵² 'The Ninth Anniversary Discourse: On the Origin and Families of Nations', *Works*, 3: 199.

JONES, Sir WILLIAM (b. London, 28 September, 1746; d. Calcutta, 27 April, 1794; Figure 1), orientalist and judge, son of William Jones FRS, and Mary Nix, the gifted daughter of a cabinet-maker. His father, a distinguished Welsh mathematician and collector of early Welsh manuscripts, was a friend of Sir Isaac Newton and Edmond Halley, and a close relation of the Anglesey polymath Lewis Morris, whose pioneering researches facilitated the Celtic revival. Jones senior did not live to see young William's third birthday, but his wife's advanced educational ideas ensured that her child's mind was con