

Polish-Sanskrit Kinship in the Eyes of Walenty Skorochód Majewski, the Pioneer of Polish Research on Sanskrit

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In summary to his *Dzieje starożytne Indii* ("Ancient History of India") published in 1820, Joachim Lelewel, then still a novice researcher on the history of Poland and the world, wrote the following words with unquestionable satisfaction (Lelewel 1820: 163):

In 1816, the first part of [the work about] the Slavs and their kins came out, written by Walenty Skorochód Majewski and containing a dissertation on the Sanskrit language; it attracted the attention of many people. Majewski's work is already available and the author's zeal is well known, thus, we are expecting his further remarks. His work will not cease to arouse interest. [...] It is a pleasure to direct the reader to sections four and five of the mentioned work, in which information on Indian literature after Chesi¹ and Goverdhan Kaul as well as the beautiful extract from the ramayans [sic] translated into distinct words may convince him of the truth of what was said above.²

Lelewel's enthusiasm remains quite understandable. He himself repeatedly stressed, on the one hand, the necessity of a comprehensive, almost holistic approach to the study of history, in course of which one must not avoid to learn about cultures more distant than one's own, be it Polish or European; on the other hand, he complained about the problems which the then researcher from Poland encountered primarily due to the unavailability of reliable sources. Meanwhile, in western European countries

¹ Antoine Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832), French Orientalist and scholar of Sanskrit. In chapter four of his book (Majewski 1816: 109–117) Majewski used Chézy's *Discours prononcé au Collège royal de France, à l'ouverture du cours de langue et de littérature sanskrite (...) le lundi 16 janvier 1815*, Paris 1815.

² Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Polish sources have been translated into English by the author of the article.

– in Germany, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands – scientific interests directed at far-away, non-European regions of the world were already flourishing, and the scholars’ intuition that the Europeans have much more in common with distant Persia or India than one would suspect, aided by the development of modern research disciplines including, above all, comparative and historical linguistics, more and more often found scientific justification.

Undoubtedly, on Polish ground, the author of the aforementioned work, Walenty Majewski of the Skorochód coat of arms, should be considered a pioneer of scientific research on India. Born in 1764 in the Podlachia region in a petty noble family, “blessed with a bright mind” (Batowski 1859: 315) from a very young age, and displaying a special interest in foreign languages, he graduated in 1785 – despite personal and historical perturbations – from the Warsaw Collegium Nobilium, run by the Piarist monks, in which he then took a job as a teacher, abandoning, at the same time, the idea of further university education. He remained in this position “for a few more years, to master French and German as well as to use the sources for higher sciences available there easily”, and completed his own education by himself, in which the invaluable help came from “the easiness of getting the works needed from the wealthy collection of that [Piarist] Congregation and the Załuski Public Library,³ and even from many [...] benefactors” (Majewski 1828: II).

For Majewski, a passionate scholar, the opportunity to use sources of knowledge was the same life imperative as the obligation to earn a living and maintain his family. So when in 1797 he was first employed as an interpreter and then as a secretary in the so-called Commission of Three Courts, established to “settle the debts of the late Polish king and the Commonwealth”⁴, thanks to which he gained access to the central archive (Lat. *Metrica Regnis Poloniae*), he was able to fully pursue his scholarly passions, simultaneously contributing significantly to the develop-

³ The first Polish public library built in Warsaw in 1747–1795 by Roman Catholic bishops Józef Andrzej Załuski and his brother, Andrzej Stanisław Załuski; the largest library in Poland (around 400 000 printed items), and one of the earliest public libraries in Europe.

⁴ Majewski’s autobiographical notes are quoted after Wójcicki (1855: 250). The Tripartite Liquidation Commission was established in 1815 to determine the royalties of the Kingdom of Poland towards the partitioning powers and Saxony.

ment of Polish archival science.⁵ Besides, he actively participated in the work of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning. From 1809 onwards he delivered lectures there, initially devoted to archival science and later also to the history of Slavs and the relationships between the Slavic and Indian worlds, which soon became his greatest scholarly passion.⁶

It was at one of the Society's meetings on June 3, 1830, when Majewski had the opportunity to meet Alexander von Humboldt. With his brother Wilhelm, an eminent German linguist, he had previously been in touch. The description of this meeting is worth quoting *in extenso*, since it clearly shows not only the great scientific commitment of the Polish researcher, but also proves that his efforts put him on an equal footing with other contemporary European scholars (Batowski 1859: 335):

His [Majewski's] attention was caught equally by his brother's [i.e. Wilhelm von Humboldt's] observations about Samskrit – about dual [in the languages] of the Slavs, forgotten by researchers but still used by folk – then he mentioned a published work in Samskrit [coming] from the royal Prussian library. The erudition shown by Majewski during conversation with Humboldt [sic] struck the learned writer, so he responded that his brother (a minister) devotes himself to philology; that he is engaged in Samskrit [studies] just like many of today's researchers, that Bopp, a professor of the Samskrit language, published many interesting texts on this subject, that his "Nalus"⁷ is being printed out for the third time and at the end of this work he is going to enclose more than just a few pieces of this ancient language, but they lack an accurate dictionary of this dialect, in addition to the difficulties with pronouncing and reading; to that Majewski answered that at the moment he is correcting his old materials for the *Grammar of Samskrit* according to Bopp's [work], and the works mentioned

⁵ In 1800, Majewski obtained the position of an archivist, and from 1808 he administered the newly established National General Archive (cf. Podolak 2012: 85).

⁶ Cf., e.g., (Kraushar 1902a: 111): "At the meeting of the science department on April 13th [1815] Skorochód Majewski read the dissertation "Research on the Origin of the Slavs" and their language as well as on the customs and traditions of Indostanees, who seem to have some similarity, as to the elements of speech and customs, to old-time Slavs. This was based on the work: *Lettres philosophiques et historiques sur l'état moral et politique de l'Inde, des Indous etc.*" The French work mentioned here is a three-part translation from English, containing chosen fragments of *Asiatic Researches*, and of works by William Jones and by other British authors who were highly valued at that time.

⁷ Bopp's translation of the Nala-Damayantī story of the *Mahābhārata* (Bopp 1819).

[by Humboldt] are partly known to him. He also took notice of his Sanskrit printing house, established with the help of less experienced domestic artists 20 years ago according to the examples from *Kuraj's grammar*⁸ in Serampur, Asiatic researches and Fra. Paulino's⁹ propaganda [sic], which he then tried to complement on the Berlin model, but as for the Berlin *Dziewa-Nagara* [Devanagari], this is not an answer at all. And he said that in Slavic mouth Sanskrit sounds similar to Italian speech.¹⁰

Looking back, Majewski can without doubt be seen as the precursor of Polish research on Sanskrit and Indian civilisation (cf. Wielińska-Soltwedel 2007: 157).¹¹ Endowed with enormous talent for language learning and thus able to find and demonstrate connections between cultures and languages of European and Asian people, he "got acquainted with Eastern dialects" (Wójcicki 1855: 86)¹² all by himself, especially, as he notes, "with the mother of tongues of ancient Asian and European Scythes, or Indo-Scythes, which has obvious linking to languages and dialects of ancient and contemporary European Slavs" (Majewski 1828: IV). He studied ancient history of various tribes too, with special focus on Slavonic ones. At the same time he showed great diligence and self-denial, often bordering on obsession. According to his friend Aleksander Batowski (1859: 338):

[h]e made his job difficult mostly because he didn't want to provide any information that he himself wouldn't be convinced about; first then, he

⁸ This apparently refers to William Carey's Sanskrit grammar (Carey 1806).

⁹ Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo (1748–1806) – Austrian Carmelite, orientalist and polyglot, also known as Paolino da San Bartolomeo, Paulinus Paathiri, Paulin de St Barthelemi, Johann Philipp Wesdin/Werdin. In 1774–1789, he was a missionary in South India (Kerala). He authored the first Sanskrit grammar published in Europe (*Sidharubam, seu Grammatica sanscritamica, cui accedit dissert. Hiss crit. In linguam sanscritamicam vulgo Samscret dictam*, Rome 1799; next edition under the title *Vyacaranam*, Rome 1804). As one of the first researchers he pointed to the close relationship between Indian and European languages.

¹⁰ See also Majewski's letter preserved in the Society's archive, quoted in full in Kraushar (1905: 368–371).

¹¹ Similarly Galewicz (2011: 235), who states that "Majewski belongs to an avant-garde of Polish Orientalism, at least in its variety concerned with India".

¹² Kazimierz Wójcicki also states (1855: 86): "He learnt languages with great ease: when in 1796 he felt the need to thoroughly learn the German language, he made so much effort that he mastered it in half a year."

explored every subject debated by many [authors] in many languages independently on the basis of foreign writers translated into Polish, and only having done this arduous and often useless work, he built up theories and supported them with evidences or, at least, with other writers' authority. Following the main idea to prove the origin of the Slavs from the Indians, he directed all the efforts towards it and was heading, little by little, to his purpose, moving on the path of history and through various tongues. That is why he did not manage to catch up with the enormity of the idea in the lifetime of one man.

Thanks to his persistence and contacts with foreign scholars, he brought to Poland and read numerous works on the history, culture and languages of Slavs and Asian peoples. He translated many of those books, enriching them with his own remarks and comments, and then published them, covering the cost of printing from his private money.¹³ In 1815, he also founded and maintained at his own expense the Sanskrit printing house, "the first in the Slavic world" (Wójcicki 1855: 88), where he used the Indian fonts he made himself.¹⁴ Majewski presented the results of his studies at the meetings of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning, discussing Sanskrit vocabulary, presenting writing systems, and also reading and translating fragments of Sanskrit texts (Wielińska-Soltwedel 2007: 160). Soon, he also began to publish articles, as well as major compilatory works.

His treatise *O Sławianach i ich pobratymcach* („About the Slavs and Their Kindered”) is an example of this type of publication, consisting largely of a collection of materials drawn from Western authors. Published in 1816, it was planned as the first part of a four-volume work devoted to “the origins of numerous Slavic nations, and of each of them in particular” (Majewski 1818: VIII). In a separate, hundred and forty-page ‘announcement’, Majewski discussed in detail the intended work in order to “show the Honorable Lovers of Nationality and the Truth that the plan laid out [by him] was not in vain” (ibid.). He specified the thematic scope of the individual parts as follows (Majewski 1818: VII–VIII):

¹³ Kazimierz Wójcicki remarks that “he devoted to this task not only his whole time, but also significant part of his assets – more than 200,000 Polish zloty” (Wójcicki 1855: 87).

¹⁴ The printing house, managed by Tomasz Piętka, was located in a Warsaw tenement, at 21 Świętojańska Street (Wójcicki 1855: 88).

1^{mo} On the kinship between the language of native European Slavs and the ancient language of Indians, commonly known as Samskrit, or rather, on the identity of both these languages which differ slightly from each other in words, but not in their character or pronunciation, and only due to their immeasurable past and distance between their locations.

2^{do} On the identity of ceremonies and religious ideas as well as on the idolatrous deities of the Slavs, and of incomparably older Indians, their kindred, or great grandfathers [who are] still retaining their ancient features [ceremonies and deities].

3^{ti} On the identity of the remnants, guarded by time, of Slavic rites, rituals and laws and of rites, rituals and laws of the eastern Indians, whose decent but rather inferior collections from times prior to Minos, Lycurgus, Solon, in a word, prior to all Legislators and Lawyers known to us from the Antiquity, has been validly dated according to the [rules of the] harshest criticism.

4^{to} [...] historical observations collected from the works by Indian, Greek, Roman writers who lived before and after Christ as well as from the commentaries of Slavic writers and those inhabiting the neighbouring countries.

However, perhaps due to the lack of interest among the recipients, and consequently for financial reasons (a large announcement was to encourage potential readers to subscribe to subsequent volumes [cf. Majewski 1818: CXXXVIII–CXXX]), the planned work was never created in the form intended originally by the author, apart from the first part published two years earlier.

The treatise “About the Slavs and Their Kindred” is the first of Majewski’s works in which he set himself the goal to prove the relationship between Slavic and Indian worlds. The work comprises of a short author’s preface; an introduction in which, apart from presenting the purpose of the dissertation and the reasons for its creation, Majewski gives various examples of Sanskrit phrases and sentences together with their meaning in Latin and Polish, as well as a table showing the characters of Grantha, Bengali and Nagari scripts; then two chapters devoted to the Sanskrit language and grammar, prepared on the basis of Paulinus of St. Bartholomew’s grammar and, most probably, using some work of Adelung;¹⁵ a fragment of Carey’s grammar, translated from English; ex-

¹⁵ Majewski is probably referring to Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806), a German librarian and lexicographer, author of, among others, the three-volume linguistic work *Mithridates, oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde* (posth. rend. 1806–1817), in which he argued for the relationship between Sanskrit and European

tensive extracts (also translated from English) from the article on Old Indian literature written by William Jones¹⁶ and published in the first issue of *Asiatic Researches*; a translation (from French) of Chézy's speech delivered on the occasion of establishing the Sanskrit chair in Collège de France in 1815;¹⁷ two fragments of the *Rāmāyaṇa* translated into Polish after French translation by Chézy; and finally, a glossary of about 750 Sanskrit words and phrases (of which actually only a part can be found in the text of the dissertation, often in a slightly different form). It can be clearly seen that Majewski's work is to a large extent a compilation of fragments of various publications by foreign authors which, translated into Polish and accompanied by merging remarks and comments by Majewski himself, were, on the one hand, to familiarise the Polish reader with the Indian linguistic and literary tradition, and on the other, to demonstrate the similarities between Sanskrit and Polish (or rather Slavic) languages. As he notes, this dissertation is the result of his long-term studies and presents his observations, which, in his opinion, clearly indicate the kinship he attempts to find (Majewski 1816: [3]):

For thirty years I have been reading and recording the most important observations [...]. The great similarity which I noticed between the speech, customs, rituals, laws, deities of ancient Indians and ancient Iranians, as well as ancient Slavs, prompted me to gather [those] scattered remarks.

The idea of kinship between Sanskrit and Slavic languages was not Majewski's original concept – the evidence of their common lineage had already been recognised by some researchers.¹⁸ However, the author of

languages or, to his nephew Friedrich Adelung (1768–1843), author of, among others, dissertation on Sanskrit and Russian language (*Rapports entre la langue Sanscrit et la langue Russe*, St. Petersburg 1811). Cf. also Wielińska-Soltwedel (2007: 165).

¹⁶ This refers to William Jones's "On the Literature of the Hindus" (Jones 1788). Although the name of William Jones is not mentioned in this article in the first volume of *Asiatic Researches*, there is no doubt that he is the author of this text, which includes a fragment of an unidentified Old Indian work translated from Sanskrit (probably in cooperation with the Kashmiri brahmin Goverdhan Caul) and Jones's own commentaries. See also the edition of the same text in *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 4 (Jones 1807: 93–113).

¹⁷ Cf. footnote 1.

¹⁸ One of the first scholars who noticed the similarity between different European

“About the Slavs and Their Kindred” picked it up with enormous zeal, pointing out numerous phonetic, grammatical and semantic similarities between the Polish and Sanskrit languages. At the same time, he was almost certain that for every Sanskrit word one can find in Polish (or, more broadly, in Slavonic languages) an equivalent not only similar in sound, but of convergent meaning. Therefore, he was diligently looking for confirmation of this thesis, and deliberately chose Polish equivalents of Sanskrit words in such a way that they were similar to each other phonetically – thus translating, for example, Skt. *gadati* (“to talk”) as Pol. *gadać* (“to chatter”); Skt. *pralaya* (“dissolution; end of the world”) as Pol. *przelanie, potop* (“overflow, flood”); Skt. *hara* (“destroyer”) as Pol. archaic *haraburda* (“loud argument”); Skt. *gopa* (“cowherd”) as Pol. *gap* (“a person watching something mindlessly, staring at something”); Skt. *vāri* (“water”) as Pol. *war wody* (“boiling water”); Skt. *dhāvati* (“to run”) as Pol. *dawać koniem* (“to ride a horse very fast”, a very colloquial expression, difficult to translate into any language). Sanskrit words quoted by Majewski were also quite often distorted to make them phonetically similar to their Polish equivalents. For example, he wrote *dzina* (“day”) instead of Skt. *dina*, to make it similar to Pol. *dzień* (“day”); *niebah, nabo, nebo* (“sky”) instead of Skt. *nabhaḥ*, similar to Pol. *niebo* (“sky”); *hora* (“mountain”) instead of Skt. *giri* – cf. *hora* (“mountain”) in Czech and other Slavic languages; *kuma* (“love”) instead of Skt. *kāma* – probably by association with Pol. *kuma* (“godmother; female friend”). Sometimes, to make the similarity even more evident, Majewski modified both form and meaning of Sanskrit words, for example writing *kala* instead of Skt. *khala* (“villain”) and translating it as Pol. *kalny, brudny* (“defiled, unclean”); *prasiada* instead of Skt. *prasāda* (“welfare”) as Pol. *biesiada* (“feast”); or Skt. *divyati* (“to praise, joke”) as Pol. *dziwić się* (“to wonder”). Finally, it happened that he created neologisms to serve the intended purpose, for example **moklec* (“the one who is bedraggled [in Pol.: *mokry, przemoczony*] because

and Asian languages (including Greek, Latin, German, Slavic, Celtic and Persian) was the Dutch scholar and university professor in Leiden, Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn (1612–1653) who created the theory of a common proto-language, described by him as “Scythian language”. Majewski often refers to this term in his works. The term “Indo-European languages” – even though used for the first time as early as 1813 by the British researcher Thomas Young – has spread only after Majewski’s death, largely thanks to research in comparative linguistics conducted by the German linguist Franz Bopp.

of his occupation”) to translate the mysterious word *Mokwah*,¹⁹ or **psoliziec* (from Pol. *pies* “dog” and *lizać* “to leak”) to explain the Skt. word *śvalih*²⁰.

The search for linguistic similarities led Majewski deep into etymological considerations – he tried to independently justify the origin of some words or phrases through the prism of the desired Sanskrit-Slavic convergence, although many books available to him offered the correct explanation of their sources. An example of such an attempt is his explanation of the etymology of the word “Sanskrit”, in which he omits the information contained even in the work of Paulinus²¹ (Majewski 1816: 23):

[...] [T]his shortened word consists of two roots: *samos*, *saman* (“alone [Pol. *sam*], loner, perfect, scholar monk, hermit”), as well as *krit* (“scream [Pol. *krzyk*], speech”), what is confirmed by a word *kridati* (“to joke”) and words *krita sakta* (“screaming [Pol. *krzyczące*], talking trinkets”), *prakrit* (“common speech”), etc. – this language we will call Samskrit, or the speech of loners, hermits or scholars, or, finally, the perfect, or the only, speech.

Sanskrit lexemes were written by Majewski in such a way as to resemble the Polish words as much as possible. He did so because he was convinced that “the meaning and value of Sanskrit forms are very close to the Slavic [languages]” (Majewski 1816: 37). In his record, therefore, he marks neither the length of vowels, nor those consonants that do not exist in Polish – mainly retroflex consonants, which he unifies with dentals; he also generally mixes voiced and voiceless consonants (cf. Majewski 1816: 10f.). The sibilants (in Sanskrit *s*, *ś* and *ṣ*) are written in a completely arbitrary way (as Polish *s*, *ś* and *sz*), but usually the nasalisation is marked, using the Polish characters *q* or *ę*.

Due to the notation described above, the Sanskrit words and phrases in Majewski’s polonised record are often difficult or even impossible to decipher, hence the need to compare the fragments that could be identified with source texts – i.e. mainly, but not exclusively, with Paulinus’s grammar and articles included in the first issue of *Asiatic Researches*. Thanks to such parallel reading, however, we find that some of the errors and inaccuracies committed by the author of the dissertation were the result of previous mistakes made by the writers whose works he used –

¹⁹ Probably distorted English *Mopplah* – the name of a Muslim community from Kerala, whose members often perform the profession of a fisherman.

²⁰ Cf. *śva-lih* “licking up or lapping like a dog” (Monier-Williams 1960: 1105.1).

²¹ Cf. Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo 1799: 14.

like improperly applied sandhi rules, or mixing letters *d* and *bh* (as, for example, in: *diszak* instead of *bhiṣak* “doctor”; *darah* instead of *bhara* “large amount”; *bideti* instead of *bibheti* “be afraid of”) caused by an almost identical form of Grantha characters used by Paulinus to designate both sounds. Though Majewski should not be blamed directly for such errors, they undoubtedly resulted from his poor knowledge of Sanskrit which often made it impossible for him to properly recognise individual lexems. Apart of that, he also committed mistakes that we do not find in the source texts, and which testify to his insufficient mastery of Sanskrit grammar rules.²²

The imperfections of Majewski’s approach were also noticed by his contemporaries, who criticised, above all, the deficiency of the presented comparative material and the research method itself. In the archive of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning, one can find a devastating review of the dissertation “About the Slavs and Their Kindred” (Kraushar 1902b: 30f.):

Before the general meeting of both Departments that was held on April 21 [1816], the Faculty of Science devoted his attention to the dissertation of Walenty Skorochód Majewski *On the Sanskrit Language*, in which he attempted to prove the kinship of this language with the Slavic ones.

Deputies in this issue, appointed to evaluate the author’s views: Lipiński²³ and X. Szwejkowski²⁴ did not recognise the arguments provided by Majewski in defense of his thesis as sufficient and complete.

To prove – the experts adjudicated – that the construction of two languages is the same, you need to base it not only on an equal number of parts of speech and their variations – such as similarity found between the Slavic languages and Latin, even though the latter is not their kindred; but to do it one has to examine declensions of every single part of speech and trace similarities on the actual examples. Moreover, to prove the kinship in meaning, one has to demonstrate more numerous examples and more extensive sentences, that not only the original words but also derivatives correspond to each other at least – as the author claims – in one third.

²² The examples of errors of this type can be found in the introduction to the newest critical edition of Majewski’s work, cf. Kuczkiewicz-Fraś (ed.) 2018: XIX–XX.

²³ Józef Lipiński (1764–1828) – educationalist, theater critic, novelist, poet and translator, from 1805 a member of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning.

²⁴ Wojciech Anzelm Szwejkowski (1773–1838) – Piarist, pedagogue and linguist, one of the most outstanding education activists of Congress Poland, author of dissertations on Polish grammar and spelling.

Thus, for this reason, and because of the length of the dissertation, the deputies suggested that the author would read in the public only the first part of his work, namely the one comprising the description of language and its literature, as well as the excerpt from the narrative poem: *the fight of Sakszmana* [sic] with the giant Attikeya.

In spite of continuous efforts made for many years to attract wider audience and find students who would continue the pioneering work of the “first Polish indologist”, or obtain funds for the publication of subsequent works²⁵ or, at least, recover his private money spent for printing, Majewski succeeded neither in spreading his works nor in gaining recognition or approval from the Polish scientific community. His public speeches went unnoticed, only laconically and by rule mentioned in the records of meetings of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning. But there were also those who admired his pioneering work and appreciated the meticulous research, such as another distinguished nineteenth-century expert in Slavic studies, anthropologist and historian Wawrzyniec Surowiecki, who summed up Majewski’s activity as follows (Kraushar 1902b: 366):

Although other obligatory jobs have not allowed the author to develop his work properly, he must be credited with paving the way to familiarizing us with our most ancient ancestors, and also with the fact that in connection to his subject he refers to numerous sources [written by] ancient classical and social writers.²⁶

A great advocate of Majewski’s scholarly output was also the writer and philosopher Edward Dembowski, who wrote an extensive biographical feature devoted to him in his journal *Przegląd Naukowy* (“Scientific Review”) (Dembowski 1842: 881):

Majewski’s work – says Dembowski – is characterised by a grand idea, at that time not very common, to bring the Slavs back to their original seat, to India; but this thought is neither created nor worked out properly. Majew-

²⁵ Majewski managed to publish only a small part of his works, leaving most of it (21 volumes) in manuscripts. Cf. Batowski 1859: 338ff.

²⁶ *Uwagi Surowieckiego nad rozprawą W. S. Majewskiego O śledzeniu początku narodów słowiańskich* (1816) [Surowiecki’s remarks about W. S. Majewski’s dissertation “On Tracing the Beginings of the Slavic Nations” (1816)], in Kraushar 1902b: 366.

ski, always striving for historical truth, sees it in the distant darkness of the past, but does not hurry towards it, does not light up the items he comes across, does not feel a tempestuous drive to know the truth, but with the cold mind of a scholar from the 18th century he examines his subject as if for fun, even though with all strength he wants to recognise it.

Dembowski grieves over the indifference towards the dissertation "About the Slavs and Their Kindred": "its reception was cold, even though some of the scholars noticed the importance of Majewski's work; but it did not meet the approval of the majority" (Dembowski 1842: 883). At the same time he claims that (ibid.: 872)

[...] for the greatness of his ideas, his learned life, his superhuman persistence at work he deserves the eternal gratitude not only of his compatriots, but of all the Slavs – because in his works, purely Slavic spirit flutters, and the hottest love towards all mankind blushes with alive fervor.

Nevertheless, Majewski's work was known among various foreign authors. Even Friedrich Adelung mentions it together with the Sanskrit grammars of Colebrook, Wilkins, etc. (Adelung 1830: 37), stressing that the book contains a comparison of Sanskrit "especially to the Polish language" (ibid.: 57).

Over time, Majewski's ideas and conclusions, so revolutionary and difficult to verify during his lifetime, have found partial confirmation in the further course of the study of languages and their mutual connections as well as of genetic relationships between far and often seemingly alien peoples. On the other hand, the progress of knowledge already a few decades later helped identify mistakes and glitches that Majewski committed – involuntarily or intentionally – in his works. Less than a hundred years after publication of "The Layout and Content of the Work on the Origin of Numerous Slavic Nations" (*Rozkład y treść dzieła o początku licznych Sławiańskich Narodów*, 1818), Ignacy Chrzanowski noticed (Chrzanowski 1906: 450):

The assumption of this work is the concept of a close relationship between the ancient Indians and the Slavs, which is supposed to be based on the similarity of languages, religious rituals and ideas, customs and laws. There are many apt remarks and observations here, but also a lot of involuntary falsities and arbitrary remarks, refuted subsequently by developing studies which prove that Sanskrit and the Slavic languages flow from one source but are not more closely related than other Indo-European languages [...].

Walenty Skorochód Majewski, the first Polish Sanskrit scholar and pioneer of Indo-Slavonic comparative research, died in Warsaw on July 3, 1835, firmly believing in the rightness of his observations and deeply convinced about the meaningfulness of his research.

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