



IN MEMORIAM

Murray Barnson Emeneau
Professor of Linguistics and Sanskrit, Emeritus
Berkeley
1904 — 2005

Murray B. Emeneau died in his sleep at home on August 29, 2005, at the age of 101. In a long and active career spanning many transformations in American linguistics, he not only created the field of Dravidian linguistics — the analysis and comparative study of the Dravidian languages of South Asia — but also defined linguists' modern conceptions of "language areas". At the University of California, Berkeley, where he chaired the Department of Classics, founded the Department of Linguistics and the Survey of California Indian Languages, and was closely involved with the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies (founded after his retirement), Murray is fondly remembered by many generations of students and colleagues.

A valuable window on Emeneau's life is opened by a family history beginning 350 years ago amidst the Anglo- French wars in Europe and the New World. Expelling the Acadians on their North American odyssey, the British colonial authorities in Nova Scotia arranged to import Protestants of various nationalities. So it was, sailing in 1752 on the *Speedwell* out of Rotterdam, that Samuel Emoneau and his son Frederick brought their families to Halifax from the *Payée de Montbéliard*, then a francophone Lutheran principality and now a part of France. In the following year, together with other Montbéliardians and English, German, and Swiss Protestants, the Emoneaus were among the founding settlers of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. French may have fallen out of use by the early nineteenth century, but German was still used in public as late as 1888 in Lunenburg.

In this multilingual context Murray Emeneau was born on February 28, 1904. As a student of languages — French, German, and Latin — he was the top high school student in Nova Scotia three years running. He studied Greek and Latin at Dalhousie University, where he got his bachelor's degree in 1923, then at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and finally at Yale University as a graduate student in classics. At that time George Bobrinskoy, Franklin Edgerton, and Eduard Prokosch taught Indo- European and Sanskrit at Yale, and with them Emeneau moved into the study of Sanskrit. He received his Ph.D. in 1931, preparing for his dissertation an edition of Jambhaladatta's *Vetalapañcavinsati*. Academic positions in Sanskrit were hard to come by in the Depression, and Emeneau worked at Yale for several years as a lecturer and research Sanskritist. During those years linguistics at Yale was transformed by the 1931 arrival of Edward Sapir, perhaps the greatest linguist of the twentieth century. Emeneau attended Sapir's classes, among them a famous field methods class on the American Indian language Wishram, and on Sapir's suggestion he went to India in 1936 to work not on Sanskrit or its Indo- Aryan descendants but on Toda, a non- literary Dravidian language. He stayed in India for three years, doing linguistic fieldwork not only on Toda but ultimately also on Badaga, Kolami, and Kota.

With the death of the Berkeley Sanskritist Arthur Ryder, and after two final years at Yale, Emeneau was hired in the Department of Classics at Berkeley, where he arrived in 1940 as an assistant professor of Sanskrit and general linguistics. The war brought him to work on Vietnamese, on which he wrote three pedagogical books and a volume of grammatical studies. On the campus academic ladder he became an associate professor in 1943 and was promoted to the rank of full professor in 1946. Emeneau wrote some 21 books in all, over 100

articles, and nearly 100 reviews. He contributed to many areas of linguistics and allied disciplines, but it seems right to single out two fields he helped create: the study of the minority Dravidian languages of India and the study of what he called “language areas”.

When Emeneau first went to India, no linguistic fieldwork on the nonliterary Dravidian languages had ever been done. The literary languages of the family were well-known, but the field of Dravidian linguistics was a tabula rasa because the systematic comparative and historical study of these languages requires treating the minority languages as seriously as those with literary traditions. Emeneau created this field through work that includes grammars of Kolami and Toda, published in 1955 and 1984, respectively, and a Kota text collection published in three volumes from 1944 to 1946. While linguistically important — for example, his 1939 Language article on Badaga is still the clearest study of the only known vowel system with two degrees of vowel retroflexion — Emeneau’s work is by no means narrowly linguistic. Thus his 1971 masterpiece *Toda Songs* is as significant for ethnopoetics as his other work is in linguistics. But his greatest achievement in Dravidian studies is the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, written with Thomas Burrow and first published in 1961. Despite the characteristic reserve that eschewed reconstruction, this work, revised in a 1984 second edition, remains the indispensable guide, tool, and authority for every Dravidianist.

Emeneau is also generally seen as having initiated the modern study of areal linguistics, and by the way having introduced the term “linguistic area” to general linguists, in his 1956 article “India as a Linguistic Area”, published in the issue of *Language* honoring his Berkeley anthropology colleague A. L. Kroeber on his 80th birthday. Emeneau’s work in this field continued with a series of studies of mutual linguistic influences, including a 1962 book with Burrow on Dravidian borrowings from Indo-Aryan; in the history of linguistics at Berkeley he thus mediates between Kroeber’s interest in so-called “culture areas” and the larger-scale areal typology of Johanna Nichols. Emeneau’s perspective and contributions to the field were entirely original, though, and grounded in his own formation: among his first articles, published 72 years ago in the eleventh volume of *Language*, was a study of the English dialect of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. It is surely significant both for his career and for the subsequent history of the field that this piece was no mere dossier of structural elements but an inquiry into their origins in language contact. What for a thing is that? said the Lunenburger a century ago, Don’t fress; it tastes leppish.

Emeneau’s work as a Dravidianist was specialized enough that he did not attract many doctoral students of his own, but he was beloved by those he did have and he played a major role in the intellectual formation of most graduate students in the first decade and a half of the Department of Linguistics. They routinely describe him as their guru. In fact his first significant linguistics teaching experience came in 1938, when he attended the Linguistic Society of America’s seventh summer Linguistic Institute, at the University of Michigan. The great linguist Leonard Bloomfield had been scheduled to teach two courses and at the last minute turned over one of them, Sanskrit, to Emeneau, also giving him a set of notes. As Emeneau later recounted it, those notes “made a nice little pamphlet of ordered [phonological] rules”. Many years later a version of the same pamphlet was intimately known by all linguistics graduate students at Berkeley, where a year of Sanskrit was long a requirement; it finally saw publication in 1968 Emeneau’s gem-like *Sanskrit Sandhi and Exercises*. Apart from the general impact he had through teaching Sanskrit and on students interested in language contact, he was the advisor or chief mentor of several prominent South Asian linguists, among them Ram Karan Sharma (later vice chancellor of two important Sanskrit universities in India) and Bh. Krishnamurti (later vice chancellor of the University of Hyderabad). His first Berkeley student was William Bright (Ph.D. 1955), who together with the undersigned helped sort through Emeneau’s papers and books after he died. Bright stayed at Emeneau’s house late into the night preparing a full list of the scholarly books he owned, and afterwards called the day “an emotional time — an act of filial devotion.” Bright’s obituary of Emeneau in *Language* 82 (2006), including also a Sanskrit eulogy composed by Ram Sharma, was one of Bright’s last publications before his own untimely death in the fall of 2006.

Emeneau’s career had the trajectory of an enormously accomplished and influential scholar. In 1949 he served as the 25th president of the Linguistic Society of America, writing as his presidential address a paper, published in *Language* in 1950, on the mutually determining relationship between linguistic and social structures in the area of kinship; in 1954 he was then president of the American Oriental Society. In 1952, offered a position as his teacher Edgerton’s successor at Yale, he persuaded Berkeley to establish a Survey of California Indian Languages and a Department of Linguistics, which he chaired. Emeneau was named the Collitz Professor of the Linguistic Society of America in 1953, and at Berkeley he gave the Faculty Research Lecture in 1957; on his retirement in 1971 he was the 35th recipient of the Berkeley Citation. The recipient of four honorary degrees — from the University of Chicago (1968), Dalhousie University (1970), the University of Hyderabad (1987), and Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University (1999) — as well as the Wilbur

Lucius Cross Medal from Yale and the Medal of Merit of the American Oriental Society, Emeneau was also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Fellow of the British Academy, an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, an Honorary Member of the Linguistic Society of India and of the National Institute of Humanistic Sciences, Vietnam, and the sole Honorary Member of the Philological Society (the oldest professional linguistic society in the world).

Murray's wife Katharine Fitch Emeneau died in 1987, and Kitty and Murray are now buried side by side in Nova Scotia. He is survived by his beloved stepdaughter Phyllis Savage and her children and grandchildren.

Andrew Garrett
George Hart