

the attention of the Committee may be drawn, and that is that in Hindī ष standing alone is usually pronounced *kha*, and is indeed often actually written ख. Thus the Sanskrit षष्ठ is in Hindī pronounced *khashth*, and is frequently written खष्ठ *khashth*. The transliteration of ष under these circumstances deserves consideration.

One other point, and I shall conclude. The Gaudian languages have a series of what Dr. Hoernle and I call "imperfect vowels" These are vowels one half pronounced, like the final vowel in Brighton, pronounced *Bright'n*. The commonest is the imperfect *a*, in words like देखता *dēkhatā*, pronounced in prose *dēkh'tā*. Some European scholars treat the vowel as elided altogether, and write देखा, *dēkhtā*, but this is wrong. The vowel is distinctly audible, though very imperfectly pronounced. I would suggest that this imperfect *a* should be represented by an apostrophe, thus *dēkh'tā*. In the Dēvanāgarī character it is sometimes represented by the sign ँ, thus देखंता, which I have heard called *arddha-halanta*. The imperfect *i* and *u* are less common. They occur at the end of words as in *mati*, *madhu*, written in Dēvanāgarī मति or मत, मधु or मध. In either case the *i* or *u* is there, though very faintly pronounced. I would represent them in transliteration by *i* and *u*, thus *matī*, *madhū*.

Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

G. A. GRIERSON.

2.

Sept. 25, 1890.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,—I thank you for allowing me to see the proof of Mr. Grierson's letter on transliteration. As we have now a transliteration committee sitting—of which I am a member—I will not anticipate our report by any comment on Mr. Grierson's valuable suggestions. Permit me, however, to say that in my own paper on transliteration (p. 628

of the July number of our Journal, paragraph 8) it would make my meaning clearer if instead of the word *pronunciation* were substituted *local varieties of pronunciation*.

Yours faithfully,

MONIER MONIER-WILLIAMS.

The Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society.

3. HERODOTUS ON THE MAGIANS.

SIR,—It was some time ago the fashion to find fault with Herodotus and to accuse him of wilful misrepresentation; but the father of history was more often the victim of his dragoman. As noticed by Sir H. Rawlinson, the informant of Herodotus at Babylon was not a Persian, but he was probably a Median, hostile to the Persian rule, and we can often detect how the errors accepted by Herodotus sprung from the ignorance, spite, or fancy of his dragoman. On previous occasions I have shown how the names of Ninus and his wife Semiramis and the legendary hundred gates of Babylon were invented. Now I think I have found the key of the legend related by Herodotus about Smerdis the Magian.

We know from the Behistun inscription that the real name of the usurper was Gaumata, a Magian, not a priest as is generally understood, but a member of the Medic tribe of the *Magi*. Gaumata, to take possession of the throne, personified Bardia or Smerdis, brother of Cambyses. Everywhere the people, tired of the mad rule of the latter, accepted the new king with joy. But Gaumata betrayed himself when he favoured the Medians and their religion against the Persians; this would have been sufficient to raise the suspicion, and he was besides, says Herodotus, betrayed by Prexaspes. This was enough to reveal to the Persian that Gaumata was not Cambyses's brother, but an impostor, and to provoke the conspiracy of the seven Persian noblemen headed by Darius. Then how originated the legend about the usurper having no ears? This fable, like many others, is based on a play of words; *Magus*, the