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**BMCR 2019.02.31 Beckman on Deglau, Der Althistoriker Franz Hampl zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Demokratie**

1 message

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**Claudia Deglau, *Der Althistoriker Franz Hampl zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Demokratie. Kontinuität und Wandel im Fach Alte Geschichte. Philippika 115.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017. Pp. xv, 696. ISBN 9783447109055. €115.00. ISBN 9783447196994. ebook.**

**Reviewed by Gary Beckman, University of Michigan  
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[Table of Contents](#)

In this latest publication from the “Marburg school” established by the late Karl Christ to study the modern historiography of the Classical world, Claudia Deglau considers the life and career of Franz Hampl (1910–2000), professor of *Alte Geschichte* at several German and Austrian universities.<sup>1</sup> Her approach is what she calls the “biographical triad,” investigating her subject’s social and professional environment, in addition to his life experiences and his scholarly works (p. 9).

Accordingly, much attention is paid here to the circumstances under which Hampl pursued his researches—first on the nature of the Macedonian monarchy, on the place of the *perioikoi* in Spartan society, and on fourth-



century Greek diplomacy, and then in his mature years on the towering figures of Augustus and Alexander the Great.<sup>2</sup> These attendant circumstances were, of course, the rise to power of the National Socialists in Germany, the annexation of Hampl's Austrian homeland, the Second World War, and post-war reconstruction in the Bundesrepublik Deutschland and the Second Austrian Republic. Interesting times!

Deglau examines in great detail the academic politics—which in this instance were intimately tied up with national and later with international politics—surrounding her subject's career, from his student days under his *Doktorvater*, the enthusiastic Nazi Helmut Berve (p. 325), through the various competitions for university posts in ancient history under the Third Reich and in its successor states following defeat in 1945, to encounters with leftist scholars and students in Innsbruck during the 1960s (pp. 542–53). She draws upon—and quotes at great length from—several extraordinary sources: from a tape-recorded interview that Hampl gave to his former student Stefan Dietrich in 1986<sup>3</sup> and from the surprisingly extensive preserved records of the position searches for jobs in Greek and Roman history during the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. These latter materials include the candid letters that senior authorities in the field wrote assessing the available candidates, providing a view not only of their maneuvers on behalf of their own students and protégés, but a snapshot of informed opinion concerning the future of ancient studies in German-speaking Europe during the *Nazizeit* and in its immediate aftermath.

It is interesting to observe that in these evaluations, Germany's leading lights in the history of the Classical world, many of them enthusiastic supporters of the national revolution<sup>4</sup>, took little notice of the degree to which younger colleagues adhered to National Socialist research agendas, as set forth in the advisory opinions submitted by Party authorities (p. 225). Rather, in addition to engaging in the usual academic politics, these senior scholars applied the profession's traditional standards—carefulness, imagination, and productivity. Indeed, Hampl's patron Helmut Berve loyally supported all his own students, no matter how lukewarm their embrace of Nazi doctrine (p. 127).

That is not to suggest, however, that an academic could maintain his distance from the Party and its various subsidiary organizations and still pursue a successful career in 1930s Germany. Franz Hampl, who was not taken seriously as an *NS Althistoriker* by his contemporaries (p. 206), nevertheless became a member of several Nazi auxiliary organizations (p. 76) and in February 1939 applied to join the Nazi Party, most likely in order to secure his position as a *Dozent* (assistant professor) (p. 79). Fortunately for his post-war prospects, because of a technicality—he was never presented with his



membership card before he was called up for military service and thereby remained an *Anwärter* (candidate) (p. 80)—Hampl was later able to claim somewhat truthfully that he had never been a Party member (pp. 233, 431).

But how great was the impact of Nazi ideology on Hampl's early scholarship? On the one hand, in his youthful writings he stresses the importance of the individual leader, for instance expressing admiration for Philip II of Macedon's *Wille zur Macht* (p. 110), but on the other he rejects his teacher's clearly fascistic interpretation of Spartan society (p. 151) and seems never to have exhibited the crude racism propagated by Berve and Fritz Schachermeyr. Deglau concludes that while Hampl's work was influenced by the *Zeitgeist*, it was not particularly National Socialist in character (p. 180). In any event, Hampl was able to devote little time to his research from 1939 through 1945, being heavily engaged in military duties (see p. 177).<sup>5</sup>

Soon after the German surrender, Hampl was appointed to a position at the Universität Gießen, but by 1947 had departed for the Universität Innsbruck, where he would serve until his retirement in 1981. Repaying his debt to Berve, he supported his teacher through his *Entnazifizierungsprozess*, downplaying the latter's fervent support of the Nazi regime (pp. 406–16). Declau observes that such loyalty to one's superiors was an aspect of the "Ordinarius University," still operative in Germany and Austria in the postwar years (p. 416). The intensity of this system's patron-client relationships ensured that no genuine reckoning with the crimes of the Third Reich would take place in German academia until the late 1960s (p. 368).

As for Hampl's post-war research, one immediately notes a continuity with his previous work in the emphasis he places on the role of great men—now Augustus and Alexander—in history (p. 452). Indeed, this interest seems to have only been intensified by the scholar's personal experiences under the Nazi dictatorship, for who can miss the allusion to Hitler in the *dämonische Kraft* Hampl attributes to Alexander (p. 518; cf. p. 494)? An echo of the previous era is also to be found in Hampl's emphasis on the importance of *Blut* as a determinant in inter-group affairs (pp. 516, 534), by which, however, he seems to mean ethnicity rather than the mystical/biological factor so dear to the National Socialists (p. 531). Still, one cringes when reading in a late essay the claim that his identification of the mingling of cultures as the cause of civilizational decay is "*natürlich im Prinzip etwas ganz anders*" than blaming the decline on the mixing of races (p. 533).

Late in his career Hampl anticipated somewhat the current vogue for World History—calling his own personal variety *Universalgeschichte*, engaging particularly with the writings of Arnold Toynbee (pp. 520–41). In this endeavor he was seeking to establish a Western counter-narrative to the



Marxist historiography of the Soviet bloc (p. 526), but his efforts in this project achieved scant lasting influence because of his continued embrace of the obsolete principles previously mentioned. In sum, Deglau judges Hampl to have been “*ein eher konservativer Modernisierer*” (p. 562) as well as a “*Kulturhistoriker par excellence*” (p. 3).

This volume closes with a bibliography, a useful index of personal names, and several plates of photographs of Franz Hampl at various ages. With its extensive quotation of documents and short but informative biographical sketches of almost anyone who was anyone in the field from 1920 to 1950, it will be a continuing resource for all students of German Classical historiography.

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### Notes:

1. She defended it as her doctoral dissertation at the Philipps-Universität Marburg in May 2016.
2. His scholarly publications are listed on pp. 582–85, and the record of the courses he offered throughout his career on pp. 675–96.
3. Transcribed in full on pp. 619–74.
4. In addition to Berve, these included Wilhelm Weber, Hans Oppermann, Joseph Vogt, and Fritz Schachermeyr, who all introduced elements of Nazi ideology (racism, struggle, etc.) into their own work (p. 89).
5. His time on the *Ostfront* may have included some questionable anti-partisan activity (pp. 162–67), but he felt that he had always just followed orders (p. 558).

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