

Walter Sommerfeld (Hrsg.)

Dealing with Antiquity: Past, Present & Future
RAI Marburg

Alter Orient und Altes Testament

Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients
und des Alten Testaments

Band 460

Herausgeber

Angelika Berlejung • Manfred Dietrich •
Holger Gzella • Enrique Jiménez



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2020
Ugarit-Verlag
Münster

Thoroughly refereed

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www.ugarit-verlag.com

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Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-86835-285-6

ISSN 0931-4296

Printed on acid-free paper

Vorwort

Die 63. *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* fand vom 24.-28. Juli 2017 an der Philipps-Universität Marburg statt. Es war das zehnte Mal, dass die *Rencontre* seit ihrer Gründung 1949 in Deutschland veranstaltet wurde, nach Heidelberg 1959, 1992, München 1970, Göttingen 1975, Berlin 1978, 1994, Münster 1985, 2006, und Würzburg 2008.

Es fügte sich gut, dass in diesem Jahr die Altorientalistik in Marburg, die durch P. Jensen (1892-1928) begründet und seine Nachfolger B. Landsberger (1928-29) und A. Götze (1930-33) weiter etabliert wurde, auf ihr 125jähriges Bestehen zurückblicken konnte. In diesem langen Zeitraum haben die reichen und einzigartigen Wissensbestände des Alten Orients traditionsgemäß das Forschungsinteresse von Nachbardisziplinen gefunden, von denen sich die Fachgebiete Altes Testament, Hethitologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie mit interdisziplinären Workshops am Kongressprogramm beteiligt haben. So konnte ein breites Fächerspektrum eingebunden und ein kreativer Austausch über die Fachgrenzen hinaus geführt werden.

Die *Rencontre* stand unter dem Leitthema *Dealing with Antiquity – Past, Present, and Future*. Diese drei thematischen Kernbereiche waren wie folgt ausgerichtet:

Past – die Rolle der Vergangenheit für die Kulturen des Alten Orients,

Present – das Erbe des Alten Orients, die Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte und sein Beitrag zur Weltkultur,

Future – zukünftige Aufgaben der Altorientalistik insbesondere in den Bereichen Kulturgüterschutz und Digital Humanities.

Dieses breite Themenspektrum stand zum ersten Mal im Fokus einer *Rencontre*. Es wurden folgende Workshops abgehalten, die die Vielfalt der beteiligten Disziplinen widerspiegeln:

1. Heritage in Conflict: A Review of the Situation in Syria and Iraq
2. Modern Approaches of Interpretation in Visual Arts
3. Relations between Judeans in Babylonia and Jehud in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Time
4. Sumerian and Akkadian Elements in Hittite Cuneiform
5. New Archaeological and Epigraphic Research in Iraq
6. Old Assyrian News – Papers Dedicated to the Memory of Karl Hecker
7. Prayers in the Ancient Near East: Form, Extra-linguistic Context and Intercultural Adaptation
8. BabMed – Texts and Studies in Babylonian Medicine
9. Coping with and Preventing Collective Fear in the Ancient Near East: Perspectives from Texts and Material Culture

10. Oracc [The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus] Session
11. How to Tell a Story – Theoretical Approaches to Mesopotamian Literature
12. Workshop on the Hittian Language: Problems, Trends and Perspectives for Future Research.

Hinzu kamen zahlreiche freie Vorträge, die sich in der Regel mit den drei thematischen Kernbereichen befassten; insgesamt belief sich die Gesamtzahl der wissenschaftlichen Beiträge auf 204, die durch neun Poster-Präsentationen ergänzt wurden. Die Anzahl der Teilnehmer an dieser *Rencontre* betrug ca. 450.

Ein besonderes Ereignis war die Anwesenheit von zahlreichen Fachvertreter/-innen aus dem Irak und Syrien. Dadurch war die Möglichkeit gegeben, dass in dem Workshop „Heritage in Conflict: A Review of the Situation in Syria and Iraq“ unmittelbar involvierte Akteure über die Situation im Bereich des Kulturgutschutzes berichten und wirksame Maßnahmen erörtern konnten. Eine derartige aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme von Kulturgütern aus Krisen- und Kriegsgebieten ist für die Forschungsausrichtung des Faches, aktuelle Publikationen und zukünftige Strategien essentiell.

Aus dem Irak waren Vertreter/-innen von der Universität Bagdad und Repräsentant/-innen des Antikendienstes aus Bagdad, Dohuk und Diwaniyah anwesend, mit elf Personen (darunter drei Frauen) die größte jemals auf einem Fachkongress im westlichen Ausland präsente Gruppe. Direkter Austausch zwischen Forscher/-innen aus der internationalen *Scientific Community* mit denjenigen aus der betroffenen Region ist in diesem Ausmaße einzigartig gewesen und hat zu vielfältigen Kooperationsvorhaben geführt. Ein Höhepunkt der *Rencontre* war das „Meeting with the Iraqi Delegation“, das nach einem Lagebericht die Kooperationsmöglichkeiten und Vernetzungen zum Schwerpunkt hatte. Diese Zusammenkunft war sehr frequentiert und wurde ebenfalls von Vertreter/-innen anderer universitärer Disziplinen genutzt.

Dem Organisationskomitee gehörten folgende Wissenschaftler/-innen der Universität Marburg an:

Alexandra Grund-Wittenberg (Altes Testament)

Markus Hilgert (Altorientalistik; Vorderasiatisches Museum zu Berlin; Honorarprofessor an der Universität Marburg)

Guido Kryszat (Altorientalistik)

Christl M. Maier (Altes Testament)

Andreas Müller-Karpe (Archäologie)

Elisabeth von der Osten-Sacken (Vorderasiatische Archäologie)

Elisabeth Rieken (Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft)

Walter Sommerfeld (Altorientalistik).

Dieses Komitee traf auch die Entscheidungen über die Auswahl der Vorträge und übernahm ggf. die Aufgabe des *Peer Review* bei den Veröffentlichungen.

Mit den Organisatoren der Workshops war vereinbart worden, dass sie selbstständig über die Publikationen bestimmen sollten. In folgenden Fällen liegen diese bereits vor oder sind vorbereitet bzw. geplant:

- Workshop on the Hattian Language: Problems, Trends and Perspectives for Future Research.
Organisatoren: Zsolt Simon und Charles W. Steitler.
Drei Aufsätze von P. Schrijver, Ch. W. Steitler, Z. Simon sind erschienen in *Altorientalische Forschungen* 45 (2018) 213-268.
- How to tell a story – Theoretical approaches to Mesopotamian Literature.
Organisatorinnen: Frauke Weiershäuser, Dahlia Shehata und Karen Sonik.
Erscheint in der Reihe *Cuneiform Monographs* bei Brill mit dem Titel: “How to tell a Story – Theoretical Approaches to Mesopotamian Literature: Proceedings of a Workshop held at the 63rd RAI in Marburg 2017, July 27–28”.

Drei Workshops sind für die Veröffentlichung in mehreren Bänden der Zeitschrift *Die Welt des Orients* vorgesehen.

- Coping with and Preventing Collective Fear in the Ancient Near East: Perspectives from Texts and Material Culture.
Organisatorinnen Sara Kipfer und Elisabeth Wagner-Durand.
- Prayers in the Ancient Near East: Form, Extra-linguistic Context and Intercultural Adaptation
Alexandra Grund-Wittenberg und Elisabeth Rieken.
Erscheint unter dem Titel „Altorientalische Gebetsliteratur: Form, außersprachlicher Kontext und interkulturelle Adaptionsprozesse“.
- Relations between Judeans in Babylonia and Jehud in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Time.
Organisatorin: Christl M. Maier.

Vorliegender Sammelband vereinigt die zum Druck eingereichten Beiträge aus dem breiten Themenspektrum der freien Vorträge.

Für die erfolgreiche Organisation der *Rencontre* haben sich mehrere Institutionen und zahlreiche Personen engagiert, von denen in dieser Danksagung nur einige erwähnt werden können.

Das Präsidium und die Verwaltung der Philipps-Universität haben vielfältige Unterstützung bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung gewährt. Hervorheben möchte ich die Vizepräsidentin, Frau Prof. Dr. Evelyn Korn, die auch die *Rencontre* mit einer Ansprache eröffnet hat, sowie Frau Maria Wietzorek, Leiterin des Service-Center Geisteswissenschaften, die Mitarbeiterinnen Katharina Kauz, Monika Moog und Denise Peter aus dem Dezernat IV – Gebäudemanagement und Technik, die Hausmeister, insbesondere Herr Jens Peter; sie alle haben die Realisierung sämtlicher Anliegen, auch zahlreicher Sonderwünsche, ermöglicht.

Das Hessische Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst (HMWK), vertreten durch Dr. Ulrich Adolphs, hat die bildungs- und gesellschaftspolitische Funktion der *Rencontre* durch Mitwirkung bei der Eröffnungsveranstaltung gewürdigt.

Frau Theresa Birk, Marburg Stadt und Land Tourismus GmbH, hat die oft komplizierte Logistik der Unterkünfte für die Teilnehmer organisiert.

Das Centrum für Nah- und Mittelost-Studien trug die Verantwortung für die Durchführung der *Rencontre* und konnte sich dabei auf die Mitwirkung seiner Angehörigen verlassen. Ausdrücklich erwähnen möchte ich die Mitarbeiter Frau Elisabeth Korinth M.A. und Herrn Stefan Schulte M.A. sowie stellvertretend für die vielen studentischen Helfer, die mit ihrem stetigen Einsatz für den effizienten Ablauf des Programms und das angenehme Ambiente gesorgt haben, Herrn Miguel Sánchez, der die Büchertische betreut hat. An erster Stelle steht allerdings Frau Denise Schaffrinski M.A., die in allen Phasen – von der Anfangsplanung bis zur Abwicklung der Abschlussaufgaben – als verantwortliche Kongressmanagerin fungierte; mit ihrer Erfahrung, ihrem Talent und unermüdlichen Engagement hat sie für die erfolgreiche organisatorische Durchführung der *Rencontre* eine entscheidende Rolle gespielt.

Die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, der Ursula-Kuhlmann-Fonds und das Centrum für Nah- und Mittelost-Studien haben mit ihrer finanziellen Unterstützung die Durchführung der *Rencontre* ermöglicht.

Schließlich danke ich dem Ugarit-Verlag für die umsichtige redaktionelle Bearbeitung und den Herausgebern Frau Prof. Dr. Angelika Berlejung, Herrn Prof. Dr. Dr. Manfred Dietrich, Herrn Prof. Dr. Enrique Jiménez und Herrn Prof. Dr. Holger Gzella für die Aufnahme der Kongressakten in die Reihe *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*.

Ihnen allen sei für ihre Mitarbeit und Unterstützung nachdrücklich gedankt.

Marburg/Leipzig, im März 2019

Walter Sommerfeld

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Ancient Near Eastern “Aryans” and the Third Reich

Gary Beckman, Ann Arbor

Although France and England led the way in the physical recovery of the records of ancient Mesopotamia,¹ Germany is generally recognized as the cradle of cuneiform studies.² Granted, following Georg Friedrich Grotefend’s early breakthrough (1815 [1802]), the decipherment of the cuneiform script was primarily the achievement of Englishmen and Irishmen,³ but recovery of the grammar of Sumerian and particularly of Akkadian, as well as significant progress in the lexicography of the earliest attested Semitic idiom were largely due to the efforts of Friedrich Delitzsch,⁴ Benno Landsberger, Bruno Meissner, and Wolfram von Soden. The very existence of Assyriology as an academic field goes back to Delitzsch’s Leipzig University seminar, graduates of which, Paul Haupt (1878) and Hermann Hilprecht (1883), introduced the discipline to my country.

So much for the good news. On the other hand, Germany also gave rise to the racist National Socialist ideology, whose horrid real-world consequences need not be rehearsed here. Ironically, Germany owes many of the constituents of this *Weltanschauung* to thinkers from other nations: In his *Germania*, the Roman Tacitus praised the alleged simple virtues of the ancient tribes of the Germans.⁵ In *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (1853–1855) the anti-Enlightenment Frenchman Arthur de Gobineau predicted the ultimate and inevitable disappearance of the racially superior Aryans through miscegenation.⁶ Charles Darwin, via his continuator Ernst Haeckel in Germany⁷ and his vulgarizer Herbert Spencer in Britain and the United States,⁸ contributed the notion that human events – like those of nature – both reflect and are determined by the principle of the survival of the fittest. We may refer to this development as biological reductionism.⁹ In Germany these and other strands were combined with Herderian nationalism, traditional Christian anti-Semitism, and cultural pessimism in the face of a rapidly industrializing society to create *völkisch* thought,¹⁰ which stressed not only the

¹ The story of this adventurous work is well described by Larsen 1996.

² See Friedrich 1944; a decidedly different view is presented by Budge 1925: 265–96.

³ See Daniels 1995: 85–87 and 1996: 145–47.

⁴ For a recent biographical sketch see Lehmann 1994: 59–79.

⁵ See Krebs 2011.

⁶ On this thinker, see Biddiss 1970, esp. part two.

⁷ See Gasman 1971 and Richards 2008: esp. 489–512.

⁸ For the influence of Spencer see Hofstadter 1992: 31–50 and Hawkins 1997: 82–103.

⁹ On this, see Hawkins 1997: esp. 272–91.

¹⁰ See the pioneering synthesis by Mosse 1964 and for a thorough consideration of this intellectual movement Puschner 2001.

innate superiority of the German people, but the world-historical struggle with their “Other,” in the form of Jews, bizarrely conceived of as an alien *race*.

None of this illogical thinking would probably have amounted to much in world-historical terms, were it not for the catastrophic defeat of the Reich in the First World War. It will be remembered that the German public was as far as possible kept in the dark about their nation’s precarious economic and manpower situation by late 1917. The collapse of Russia sealed by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, with its great expansion of German dominion in the East, instead conveyed the impression that all was going swimmingly. But after the failure of Ludendorff’s offensive in the West in the summer of 1918 and the flood of fresh American troops into this theater, the high command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff cowardly shifted responsibility onto the newly-constituted civilian government, demanding that the latter seek an immediate armistice. The republican politicians who assumed power following the abdication of the Kaiser ultimately had little choice but to accept the punitive Treaty of Versailles, which foolishly compounded Germany’s humiliation by assigning her all blame for the outbreak of the war.

Furthermore, rather than admit their own miscalculations and strategic failings, the German military establishment promulgated the myth of the *Dolchstoß*, or “stab in the back,” to explain just how what had seemed like certain victory had suddenly become defeat. And who had held the knife? Why left-wing peace advocates, weak-kneed civilians, and particularly “the Jews.” Through the vicissitudes of the terrific post-war inflation and the coming to terms with the disappearance of the monarchy and the diminishment of the military, both institutions that they had been taught to revere,¹¹ patriotic noble and bourgeois Germans – including most students and many university professors¹² – increasingly gave credence to this self-exculpatory fable, which became a central tenet of *völkisch* ideology. This frame of mind contributed to the political developments that culminated in Hitler’s *Machtergreifung* of January 30, 1933.

Here I will consider the role that the “Aryans” of three thousand or more years earlier – or rather, largely ill-founded speculation about them – played in this *Weltanschauung*. As is well known, the term “Aryan,” which basically means something like ‘respectable (person), comrade’, is used in Vedic Sanskrit to refer to members of the community speaking that language. Early Western students of India, recognizing that Sanskrit was related to Greek and Latin, postulated that the ancient Indian tongue was the ancestor from which most contemporary European languages had descended. It was but a short – but illogical – step to extend the scope of “Aryan” from the designation of a language family to that of its speakers.¹³ Then these users of the language were speciously held to constitute a *biological* sub-set of humanity, a “race.” Finally, this race was equated with the Caucasian group of humans recognized by anthropologists.¹⁴

¹¹ On the pernicious effects of militarism on Wilhelmine culture, see Hull 2005.

¹² See the precocious investigation by Weinreich 1946. For the experience of the dissident Albrecht Götze, see Maier-Metz 2016.

¹³ For this development, see Trautmann 1997: esp. 1–18.

¹⁴ See the classic discussion by Poliakov 1974 and also Olender 1992.

Since the expansion of the vast area across which the tongues that we now call Indo-European or *Indogermanisch* are attested took place in prehistoric times, the geographic location of the original speakers, the *Urheimat*, has been a matter of dispute. Most historical linguists today place this *Urheimat* in the plains north of the Black Sea,¹⁵ but many pre-war German authorities posited rather northern Germany and Scandinavia as the homeland.¹⁶ Hence the employment of “*nordisch*, Nordic” as a synonym for “Aryan.” It also seemed obvious that those contemporary Aryans still inhabiting the ancestral homeland were the purest representatives of the group and possessed its alleged characteristics in fullest measure, since they had had the least contaminating contact with foreign races.¹⁷

In fully developed *völkisch* thought, the Aryans or Nordics were thought to have played a decisive part in *all* of world history. For a concise statement of this role, I turn to the greatest popularizer of National Socialism, Adolf Hitler. In *Mein Kampf* he writes (or better, dictates):

If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture (*Kulturbegründer*), the bearers of culture, and the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be considered as the representative of the first group. From him originate the foundations and walls of all human creation, and only the outward form and color are determined by the changing traits of character of the various peoples....

Aryan races – often absurdly small numerically – subjugated foreign peoples, and then, stimulated by the special living conditions of the new territory (fertility, climatic conditions, etc.) and assisted by the multitude of lower-type beings (*Menschen niederer Art*) standing at their disposal as helpers, develop the intellectual and organizational capacities dormant within them. Often in a few millennia, or even centuries, they create cultures that originally bear all the inner characteristics of their nature, adapted to the above-indicated special qualities of the soil and subjugated beings (*unterworfenen Menschen*). In the end, however, the conquerors transgress against the principle of blood purity to which they had first adhered; they begin to mix with the subjugated inhabitants and thus end their own existence; for the fall of man (*Sündenfall*) in paradise has always been followed by his expulsion.¹⁸

¹⁵ So Mallory 1989: 143–85 and Anthony 2007: 83–101.

¹⁶ For examples, see Schachermeyr 1933 and Strzygowski 1936. Hirt 1892 presents an early sketch of the problem, while the review article of Schneider 1937 defends the party line, insisting on a Nordic homeland.

¹⁷ See Puschner 2001: 100–02.

¹⁸ Hitler 2016: 755–59, tr. Ralph Manheim in Rabinbach and Gilman 2013: 110, slightly adapted and glossed. In this view, the magpie Hitler was anticipated by Gobineau, who in the introduction to his *Essai sur l'inégalité* states in regard to the Aryans: “Having recognized that there are strong races and weak ones, I have preferred to examine the former in order to discern their aptitudes, and in particular to follow the links in their genealogies. Pursuing this method, in the end I became convinced that whatever is great, noble, or fruitful in the creations of humans in this world – science, art, and civilization – goes back to a single starting-point, is the fruit of but one seed, is the result of but a single thought, and belongs to but a single family [viz., the Aryans], whose various branches have reigned in all civilized countries of the universe (1884: vii; my translation).”

In addition to the virtues attributed to them by *der Führer* in this passage, exemplary Aryans were held to be fine physical specimens, heroic warriors, true comrades, and loyal followers of charismatic leaders (thereby illustrating the operation of the *Führerprinzip*),¹⁹ and master epic poets – in short, to display the ideal qualities of Classical Greeks.²⁰ *Völkisch* writers not only celebrated the early Aryan cultures of ancient Greece, Rome, and to a lesser extent Persia,²¹ but also strongly suspected the presence of at least an “absurdly small numerically” group of Nordics at the helm of any civilization worthy of the name. For instance, that of ancient Egypt was thought by many scholars – and not just Germans²² – to have arisen under the stimulus of supposedly Indo-European Libyans, whom some held to have reached the Nile Valley via the Canary Islands.²³ Other writers postulated that at least some Sumerians had been Aryans.²⁴ This kind of reasoning, invoking primarily ceramics and skull measurements for support, was considered relevant in the absence of any significant textual evidence.²⁵

Given this *völkische Weltanschauung*, the firmly documented presence of speakers of Indo-European tongues within the ancient cultures utilizing the cuneiform script naturally held a special fascination for scholars of the ancient Near East sharing National Socialist convictions. In the discussion that follows I will consider only Nazi-period intellectual arguments about Aryans and their history. I am not concerned here with such biographical details as who joined the *Partei* and when, or in passing moral judgment²⁶ on students of our disciplines who lived and worked under the *Drittes Reich*.²⁷ I do not possess sufficient personal information about most of these men, or indeed the standing to criticize the life choices of others working under such extraordinarily difficult circumstances. And after all, the scholars in question could not have known that the “Thousand-Year Reich” would endure only a little more than a dozen years.

¹⁹ See esp. Chapoutot 2016: 262–68.

²⁰ See Tallgren 1981 and Demandt 2002.

²¹ See Chapoutot 2016.

²² For an extreme case, consider the Scotsman Lieut.-Col. Laurence Austine Waddell, who saw Aryans almost everywhere in the ancient world. On his strange career, see Preston 2009.

²³ See Voss 2016: 112–29, esp. 127.

²⁴ Unger 1935 concludes that while they were not themselves Aryans, the Sumerians belonged to “einer weißen Rasse” (154) and had mingled with the latter in Central Asia before migrating to Mesopotamia.

²⁵ This methodology is also employed by Ungnad 1936 in his efforts to identify Hurrians in the archaeological record.

²⁶ Losemann 2001 illustrates the ethical difficulties facing German historians of the Classical world in coming to terms with their conduct from 1933–1945 as well as those of their students in evaluating the choices and writings of their academic “fathers.”

²⁷ For a fuller discussion of the personalities active in the field of cuneiform studies in Germany in this period, see Renger 2008, and with a focus on archaeology, Hauser 2001. Ellinger 2006: 299–319 is also useful.

The existence of Aryans in ancient Western Asia²⁸ first came to the attention of the scholarly world in the 1880s with the recovery at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt of portions of the Akkadian-language diplomatic archive of the pharaohs Amenophis III and Amenophis IV/Akhenaten. Among the rulers of the powerful state of Mittani mentioned in the correspondence are Tušratta (EA 17, 19, etc.²⁹), Artatama (EA 24, 29), and Artašumara (EA 17); the latter two personal names were immediately recognized as Indic. Furthermore, a few of the names of the local Palestinian princelings subject to the pharaoh also belong to this language. On the other hand, the single tablet at Amarna composed in the native language of Mittani (EA 24) was clearly not in any Indo-European idiom.

The next major development concerning Near Eastern Aryans arose from the excavation of the archives of the Hittite capital of Boğazköy/Hattusa by an expedition under the direction of Hugo Winkler beginning in 1906. While the native language, which we now refer to as Hittite, had not yet been deciphered, the Hittites, like contemporary Egyptians, had employed Akkadian for many of their diplomatic dealings.³⁰ Consequently, immediately upon their discovery in 1907, the Assyriologist Winckler was able to read the two treaties concluded between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Šattiwaza (previously read Mattiwaza), son of the Tušratta, king of Mittani, mentioned earlier. Among the gods witnessing and guaranteeing the agreements were “the Mitra-gods, the Varuna-gods, Indra, and the Nasatya-gods,”³¹ deities familiar from the Vedic pantheon. Winkler announced this surprising fact in his report to the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft already in December 1907.³²

After Bedřich Hrozný in 1915 – again at a meeting of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft – demonstrated that Hittite is a member of the Indo-European family, rapid progress was made in the translation of the majority of Boğazköy documents written in that language. Among them was a multi-tablet regimen for training chariot horses, attributed to one “Kikkuli, horse-trainer of Mittani.”³³ This manual contains a number of technical terms pertaining to chariot warfare that had been borrowed from Indic, such as *terawartanna*, “three laps (of the training course).” In addition, cultic texts from the Hittite capital containing passages written in an idiom similar to the obscure language of Tušratta’s EA 24 were found to be introduced by the adverb *hurlili*, “in Hurrian.”

The picture thereby came into focus: The society of the previously mysterious state of Mittani was Hurrian in speech, but its ruling caste was apparently Indic, at least in origin.³⁴ Since the actual royal archives of Mittani have yet to be

²⁸ Mayrhofer 1966 and 1974 are exhaustive bibliographic essays covering earlier works on this topic. Raulwing 2012 contributes an appreciation of Mayrhofer’s work in this area. Hauschild 1962 also presents a good survey of the material.

²⁹ EA is the standard designation for letters from Amarna, translations of which are most conveniently presented in Moran 1992. The non-Akkadian EA 24 is translated there by Gernot Wilhelm.

³⁰ See Beckman 1983 for the use of Akkadian on the periphery of the cuneiform world.

³¹ These deities are discussed by Thieme 1960. For the context, see Beckman 1997: 47, 53.

³² Winckler 1907: 51; see also Winckler 1910.

³³ KUB 1.13 obv. 1–2, ed. Kammenhuber 1961: 54–55.

³⁴ For an early, non-German, reaction to the discovery of a “white race” in northern Mesopotamia, see Kennedy 1909.

discovered,³⁵ we cannot say much more about the socio-linguistic environment of Mittani, but most non-royal personal names associated with it are Hurrian. This domination of a larger group by a thin layer of warriors speaking an Indo-European language accorded well with the *völkisch* paradigm of the crucial function of Aryans in the rise of civilization.³⁶

The culture of the Hittite state, whose lineaments were gradually reconstructed from the Boğazköy texts, was an ethno-linguistic amalgam, with an Indo-European administrative language superimposed upon the – as far as we know – indigenous Hattic tongue, from which, however, many important political and cultural terms, as well as religious conceptions and deities, were borrowed. This situation was also interpreted as a further example of Aryan rule over “lower-type beings,” and the Hittite archives were thoroughly mined for data supporting this notion.

In his 1938 volume, *Die ersten Arier im Alten Orient*, Hartmut Schmökel cites several examples of what he considers to be Aryan characteristics of Hittite society that set it apart from the cultures of its oriental neighbors: 1) a piety that shunned syncretism, 2) a quasi-feudalism that accorded a strong role to the nobility, 3) an appreciation of individuality manifested in the attribution of literary works to their authors, and 4) the creation of a genuine, non-chronicle, historiography. He concludes his sketch with the observation that “... thus we note here in the Hittite culture of the second millennium a certain relationship to our own way of being and take away a feeling of intimacy, which in the final analysis must go back to racial community.”³⁷

This is not the place for detailed rebuttal of these claims, criticism which in all fairness rests upon an additional eighty years of research into a greatly expanded body of evidence, but suffice it to say that only Schmökel’s fourth point, that concerning historiography, would be accepted by many Hittitologists today.

Not surprisingly, Classical historian Fritz Schachermeyr, who aspired to create a synthesis of racist interpretations of ancient history,³⁸ in his *Indogermanen und Orient* (1944) largely agrees with Schmökel’s assessment of the Hittites, their politics, and their life-ways. But he also points out a distressing aspect of their civilization:

While in the political realm the Hittites brought a decidedly Nordic-Indogermanic ethos to the fore, the rest of their culture reveals itself as already thoroughly shot through with Anatolian and Mesopotamian influence. Signs of degeneration, furthered not least by the inherited Nordic vice of exaggerated appreciation for all foreign (*artfremd*) cultural elements, may be observed above all in Hittite religion.... In absolutely unbelievable ways genuine piety is overgrown with petty and strictly

³⁵ The capital Waššukanni is generally held to lie under Tell Fekheriye in the Habur triangle, but several short excavation seasons there over the years have turned up only scanty epigraphic material from the Middle Assyrian and later periods.

³⁶ For an enthusiastic expression of this interpretation of Mittani, see Feiler 1939.

³⁷ Schmökel 1938: 4–5; my translation.

³⁸ See the programmatic volume Schachermeyr 1940. On the career of this scholar, see Näf 1994, Pesditschek 2010, and for more apologetic views, Badian 1988 and Dobesch 1988.

formal obligations, a tumor of ritualisms springing solely from a fear of sin and anxiety about “pollution.” ... Thus the consequences of a degeneration of the blood and at the same time of a spiritual hybridization with indigenous racial elements and an Armenoid³⁹ mind-set become apparent everywhere.⁴⁰

As Schachermeyr observes at the outset of his section on the Hittites: “First bastardize and then seize dominance from the bastardized! Under this slogan (*Leitmotif*) plays out the counter-punch that the Orient directs against the Aryan.”⁴¹

As we have just seen, the deplorable degeneration of Aryans in a racially foreign (*artfremd*) environment is a constant theme in *völkisch* historiography. The eminent Assyriologist Wolfram von Soden⁴² makes use of this concept along with the notion of the “sparkplug” role of Aryans in mobilizing and directing a larger foreign population in order to make sense of a phenomenon otherwise inexplicable in *völkisch* terms – the creation of the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian empires. How could a group of Semites, held to be feckless, cowardly, and competent only in trade, establish such a polity held together by the military prowess so vividly on display in Assyrian royal annals and depicted on the walls of their royal palaces?

To understand the following argument, we must keep in mind that during the heyday of Mittani, its kings – as we have seen, in some way Indic – had been the overlords of Assyria for some time. In the absence of relevant sources we can say very little concerning the duration or character of this domination. Be that as it may, in *Der Aufstieg des Assyrienreichs als geschichtliches Problem* von Soden writes:

A further sharp division between Babylonia and Assyria was brought about by the approximately four-century-long foreign domination (of the latter) by the Hurrians and Mittani, in the course of which the Assyrian people, already definitely strongly fused through events of war, underwent a decisive change in its racial stratification, as individuals of Near Eastern race penetrated the land in great numbers. Furthermore, less through their numbers than because of their political energy, fragments of a Nordic people of Aryan-Indic language attained a significant influence on the behavior of the ruling classes of the people. It was only due to this racial overlay that there was created the type of Assyrian who became the terror of the surrounding peoples but who was also able to bring to fruition unique achievements in political development and artistic achievement. Although it later gradually waned, the influx of individuals primarily of Nordic race manifested itself above all in the

³⁹ On the largely forgotten concept of the Armenoid race, see Hauschild 1920–1921. For quite some time a number of scholars sought to demonstrate a close connection between Armenians and Hittites, see for example, Jensen 1898.

⁴⁰ Schachermeyr 1944: 63–64; my translation.

⁴¹ Schachermeyr 1944: 58; my translation.

⁴² On “Nordic thinking” in von Soden’s writings of the 1930s, see also Flygare 2006.

conduct of war in the Middle Assyrian period and its reflection in poetry,⁴³ while we may see an ancient Semitic inheritance in the growing political strength of the concept of a stringently enforced divine law.... The failure of the peculiarly indecisive politics of Assyria in regard to Babylonia, combined with the policy of deportations, which with its intentional race-mixing (*Völkervermischung*) in the end destroyed the healthy stock of the Assyrian people along with foreign races, became the chief cause of the collapse of the empire under the assault of the Medes.⁴⁴

Although there is no evidence that Hitler had any interest in the ancient world beyond Classical Greece and the Roman Empire,⁴⁵ it is likely that *der Führer* would have approved of this bit of historical analysis, seeing that in many respects it echoes his general observations quoted earlier.

In conclusion, I'd like to show that not all German scholars who addressed the topic of ancient Aryans during the Nazi period fully accepted the hegemonic discourse we have encountered up to this point. Classical historian Alexander von Stauffenberg, brother of the leader of the July 20, 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler,⁴⁶ in 1941 – mark the date – published an essay on “Die grossen Völkerwanderungen und das Hethiterreich,” in which he compares Bronze Age migrations in Western Asia with the population movements that marked the disintegration of the western Roman Empire a millennium or two later. In the course of his argument, the details of which will not detain us here, although accepting the importance of race as a historical factor, he objects to its invocation as *the* decisive element in human events:

For this [human] life is too intricately complicated, colorful, and mysterious, is influenced by too many forces of reason, resistance of the passions, and the forces of Fortune and the demonic, that it might somehow be completely explained by the biological concept of race.⁴⁷

Thus even at the height of Nazi domination of Europe it was possible for a skeptic to challenge – even if guardedly and in a relatively obscure forum – a central element of *völkisch* and National Socialist thought. I would hold up this small act of resistance as a laudatory example to those who are appalled by the contemporary recrudescence of authoritarian and racist movements – the AfD and Pegida in Germany, the Front National in France, the Brexiters in Britain, and – closest to home for me – the alt-right with its “alternative facts” and “racial

⁴³ The reference here is to the “Tukulti-Ninurta Epic” (tr. Foster 1993: 209–29), which Nagel 1987: 186–89 strikingly still adduces as evidence of Indo-European cultural influence in Assyria.

⁴⁴ von Soden 1937: 40–41; my translation.

⁴⁵ There is no mention of Mesopotamia, Babylonia, or Assyria in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler 2016: indices), and the only appearance of Babylon in his “Table Talk” is the prediction that the future Berlin will rival that ancient capital (2000: 361).

⁴⁶ On the career of this scholar, see Christ 2008.

⁴⁷ von Stauffenberg 1941: 335; my translation.

realism”⁴⁸ in the United States. Not only in politics, but in historical discussions intended to justify current political measures, as scholars with direct access to primary sources and thus “genuine facts,” we must combat the invocation of racist assertions and arguments that are unfalsifiable because they are based on preconceptions, indeed prejudices, rather than data.

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⁴⁸ For an example of one of the more presentable of the representatives of this movement, see Taylor 2011. Fittingly, the cover illustration of this volume is Caspar David Friedrich’s “Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer.” This work of German Romanticism would seem to have little to do with race relations in contemporary America, but it is likely to appeal to whites who identify with a cartoonish vision of German nationality, whether or not justified by their own genealogy. For an anticipatory refutation of much of Taylor’s argumentation, see Gould 1981.

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