

Near Eastern Studies in Transition

A Collection of Essays

By

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Abbreviations

AEA	Albert Einstein Archive, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
AUB	American University of Beirut
AUC	American University in Cairo
BBAW	Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften
BHAD	<i>Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes, 1871–1945</i> , 5 vols., Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000–2014
BJHS	<i>British Journal for the History of Science</i>
BL	British Library, London
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem
Cambridge UL	Cambridge University Library
CJH	Center for Jewish History, Leo Baeck Institute, New York
CRL	Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham
DGI	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde
DMG	Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft
EP ¹	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 1st ed., edited by Martijn Theodoor Houtsma et al., 9 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1913–1936
EP ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd ed., edited by Clifford E. Bosworth et al., 12 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005
EP ³	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 3rd ed., edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Devin J. Stewart, Leiden: Brill, 2007–
EJIW	<i>Encyclopaedia of Jews in the Islamic World</i> , edited by Norman A. Stillman, 5 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2010
ELAB	Landeskirchenarchiv Berlin, Kirchenbuchstelle Berlin-Brandenburg
EncIran	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> , edited by Ehsan Yarshater et al., London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–
FBG	Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt
GAL ¹ I	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , 1st ed., vol. 1, Weimar: E. Felber, 1898
GAL ¹ II	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , 1st ed., vol. 2, Weimar: E. Felber, 1902
GAL ² I	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , 2nd ed., vol. 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943

<i>GAL</i> ² II	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , 2nd ed., vol. 2, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949
<i>GAL</i> SI	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , suppl. vol. 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937
<i>GAL</i> SII	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , suppl. vol. 2, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938
<i>GAL</i> SIII/i	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , suppl. vol. 3, pt. 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1942
<i>GAL</i> SIII/ii	Brockelmann, Carl, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , suppl. vol. 3, pt. 2, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1942
GStA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
HWJ	Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums
HStAM	Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg
HU	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JIM</i>	<i>Journal of Islamic Manuscripts</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i>
LHAS	Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Oriental Collection, Budapest
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>MSOS</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin</i>
<i>MSOS</i> /2	<i>Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin</i> , zweite Abteilung: Westasiatische Studien
<i>MSOS</i> /3	<i>Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin</i> , dritte Abteilung: Afrikanische Studien
<i>NDB</i>	<i>Neue Deutsche Biographie</i> , Munich: Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1953–
NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities
NL	Nachlass
NLI	National Library of Israel, Jerusalem
NYPL	New York Public Library
<i>OLZ</i>	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
PUL	Princeton University Library
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
SBB	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz
SOS	Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen, Universität Berlin

StAHH	Staatsarchiv Hamburg
SUB Bremen	Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen
SUB Göttingen	Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen
SUB Hamburg	Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg
SWLLAC	Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ
UA	Universitätsarchiv
UAF	Universität Freiburg, Universitätsarchiv
UAG	Universität Göttingen, Universitätsarchiv
UAHW	Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Universitätsarchiv
UAK	Universität Köln, Universitätsarchiv
UAM	Universität München, Universitätsarchiv
UAT	Universität Tübingen, Universitätsarchiv
UAW	Universität Würzburg, Universitätsarchiv
UBH	Universitätsbibliothek, Hauptbibliothek, Basel
UBL	Leiden University Libraries
UniTo	Università degli Studi di Torino, Biblioteca di Orientalistica
WdJ	Wissenschaft des Judentums
WI	<i>Die Welt des Islams</i>
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZMO	Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin

Introduction

The majority of the studies brought together in this book focus on scholars of Oriental studies writ large whose careers unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century and for most of whom Germany was, at least temporarily, an academic home.

Chapter 1 is devoted to Friedrich Kern (1874–1921), the least known among the protagonists of this book, as he never held an academic position and his published scholarly output is slim. However, the sheer quantity of the around eight hundred manuscripts he is known to have consulted at the Berlin State Library between June 1898 and April 1921 suggests that Kern was an exceptional and deeply knowledgeable scholar, whose interests ranged from Islamic law, dogma, history, and biography to dialectology, popular culture, Egyptian shadow theater, poetry, and *adab*. The more than forty surviving letters that Kern wrote to Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) between 1899 and 1912 allow deeper insights into Kern's scholarship and, most importantly, his engagement with the dogmatic history of Ḥanafism and Māturīdism. This was a largely neglected field at the time and, in view of the problematic status of the sources and especially the uncertain authenticity of writings attributed to the two schools' eponymous founders, Abū Ḥanīfa and Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, a highly challenging one. Although he is mostly forgotten today, Kern was extremely well connected within and beyond Berlin, where he spent most of his time from 1898 onward, and he was famous for his exceptionally rich library.

Eugen Mittwoch (1876–1942), whose scholarly trajectory and fate are discussed in Chapters 2 through 4, was a close friend of Kern's and, like Kern, corresponded actively with Goldziher, the doyen of *Islamwissenschaft* in this period. Mittwoch was also an exceptional scholar in his own right. Hailing from a Jewish Orthodox background, he pursued Arabic and Islamic studies in Berlin at Berlin University and in parallel enrolled in the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminar, possibly with the initial intention of being ordained as a rabbi. But thanks to the encouragement of Eduard Sachau (1845–1930), his principal teacher in Berlin, Mittwoch embarked on an academic career. From 1905 onward he also had the opportunity to gain proficiency in Amharic, and he became an accomplished Africanist alongside his competence in Arabic and cognate Semitic languages. However, his career as ordinarius at Berlin University and as director of the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen ended abruptly in 1935, when he was ousted from his positions because of his Jewish background. Chapter 2 outlines Mittwoch's academic path, focusing on his contributions to the evolving discipline of *Islamwissenschaft*. Chapter 3 offers

an edition of Mittwoch's lecture on his first trip to Egypt and the Near East in 1899, and Chapter 4 brings together what is known about Mittwoch's final years after 1935 and about the fate of his library.

The subject of Chapter 5 is the Hamburg-based geographer Carl Rathjens (1887–1966), the only non-Orientalist discussed in this book. He was an avid traveler, and his travels in 1927/28, 1931, 1934, and 1937 brought him to Yemen, specifically Ṣanʿā, where he established close relations with the ruling Imām Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1904–1948). From his various trips, he brought back to Germany large collections of material, including Arabic and Judeo-Arabic manuscripts and inscriptions, which he gave to scholars such as Mittwoch for the purpose of scholarly editions. Rathjens was also an exceptional networker. He was in regular contact with most European Orientalists both within and beyond Germany, as is evident from his correspondence with the Dutch scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), which is presented in an annotated edition in this chapter.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the Jerusalem-born cosmopolitan Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951), best known as one of the most important dealers of Samaritan and Islamic manuscripts to Western collectors and libraries. After completing his doctoral dissertation in Strasbourg under the tutelage of Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) in 1904, Yahuda was appointed to the Berlin-based Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, where he spent the years 1905 through 1913. Perhaps inspired by the example of his friend and colleague Mittwoch, Yahuda strove to write a *Habilitationsschrift* and obtain a *venia legendi*, the qualification to teach at the university. Unlike Mittwoch, however, Yahuda did not enjoy Sachau's support. Sachau ensured that Yahuda's attempt to receive a *venia legendi* failed, and Yahuda eventually left Berlin in 1913 for Madrid. In the 1920s, he returned to Germany and lived in Heidelberg for several years before relocating to London in 1930. He remained in close contact with his colleagues in Germany, at least until the Nazis came to power, and once in London, he hired a number of German assistants to help him in the preparation of a catalog of the Alfred Chester Beatty collection of manuscripts.

Chapter 8 discusses another Berlin-based scholar, Walter Gottschalk (1891–1974). Gottschalk was, like Mittwoch, a student of Sachau, and he prepared his 1913 doctoral dissertation on oaths among the Semites under Sachau's supervision. During his studies, Gottschalk corresponded intensively with Goldziher, who supported his work by sharing with him a copy of the *K. al-Aymān* by the fourth/tenth-century author Abū Ishāq al-Najīramī. World War I interrupted Gottschalk's scholarship, and after the war, he decided to pursue a different career. From 1919 until his dismissal on 31 December 1935, he worked as

a librarian in the Oriental department of the Berlin State Library. Moreover, in 1920, Gottschalk became involved in the preparation of indexes for the edition of Ibn Saʿd's *K. al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, initiated and directed by Gottschalk's former teacher Sachau and carried out under the auspices of the Prussian Academy of Sciences between 1897 and 1929. Parallel to his dismissal from his library position, Gottschalk was also ousted from this project for being Jewish. Together with his wife, Gottschalk managed to escape to Turkey.

Chapter 9, like Chapter 5, is devoted to a scholar from Hamburg—in this case the Semitist and Arabist Rudolf Strothmann (1877–1960), who was one of the leading scholars of Islamic and Semitic studies in Germany. He held appointments in Gießen from 1923 to 1927 and then in Hamburg from 1927 until his retirement in 1947. His work focused on the fringes of Islam beyond mainstream Sunnism, specifically on Shīʿism and Ibādism, and he visited Yemen during the winter of 1929/30, hoping to find new manuscript material pertinent to the study of Zaydism and Ismāʿīlism. Although he was largely unable to achieve his principal goal, his journey was nonetheless an extremely enriching experience, featuring encounters with numerous important figures in the places he visited. This chapter presents annotated editions of three extensive letters Strothmann wrote during the trip to Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933).

Moshe Perlmann (1905–2001), whose career is traced in Chapter 10, is the only scholar discussed in this book who never spent time in Germany. Born in Odessa, he received his education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and in London. After emigrating to the United States, he taught for some time in New York and Philadelphia and then was appointed to a professorial position at the University of California–Los Angeles, where he spent the remaining decades of his career. Perlmann's scholarly interests mirrored those of the Goldziher student Martin Schreiner (1863–1926), who had taught at the Berlin-based Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums between 1893 and 1902. Perlmann, like Schreiner, focused on the relations between Jews and Muslims in the medieval period, and his major achievements are critical editions of two important polemical tracts: *Iḥḥām al-yahūd* by Samaw'al al-Maghribī, a sixth/twelfth-century Jewish convert to Islam, and *Tanqīḥ al-abḥāth* by the seventh/thirteenth-century Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūna—both works that Schreiner had already discussed. Perlmann appears to have had access to some of Schreiner's personal papers, and in 1983 he published Schreiner's *Gesammelte Schriften*.

Chapters 11 and 12 revolve around Paul Kraus (1904–1944), another scholar who studied and worked in Berlin until he was ousted from his position in 1933; he then left for Paris and later continued on to Cairo. His life ended in tragedy when he committed suicide in 1944. Kraus was primarily interested in gnostic

and Shīʿī (especially Ismāʿīlī) thought, Islamic alchemy and the sciences, and the transmission of Greek philosophy and sciences to Islamic civilization, and especially in view of his short life, his publications in these areas were path-breaking. His correspondence with Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), one of the founders and pioneers of Ismāʿīlī studies, which is presented in an annotated edition in Chapter 11, provides glimpses into the early stages of Kraus's engagement with Ismāʿīlism. Chapter 12 contains an edition of Kraus's notes on the contributions of European Jewish scholars to the study of Islam, prepared at the request of his friend Muhammad Hamidullah (1908–2002); Hamidullah had likewise spent several years in Germany, in his case at the Oriental seminar at Bonn University, which was directed at the time by Paul Kahle (1875–1964). Kraus's notes offer another perspective on the scholarly personae discussed in this book: with the exception of Carl Rathjens and Rudolf Strothmann, they were all Jewish and had received (with the exception, perhaps, of Friedrich Kern, who was baptized at the age of twenty) a thorough Jewish education. Most of them occasionally touched on Jewish topics in their scholarly work and can thus be counted as representatives of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

The book concludes with Chapter 13, which traces the evolution of Near Eastern studies not in Germany but at a North American institution, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ. However, several of the protagonists of this chapter, too, underwent academic formation in Germany but were forced to leave Germany after the Nazi takeover. They include Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948), Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz (1895–1963), Otto Neugebauer (1899–1990), Shlomo Dov (Fritz) Goitein (1900–1985), Richard Walzer (1900–1975), Shlomo Pines (1908–1990), Richard Ettinghausen (1906–1979), and Walter B. Henning (1908–1967).

The majority of the studies collected in this book, therefore, serve as a reminder of the impact of the Holocaust on the production of knowledge about Islam. The Nazis' rise to power in 1933 marked a turning point in the development of Arabic and Islamic studies. It signaled the end of German scholars' leadership in the discipline and of German as the principal language of Orientalist scholarship, and it resulted in an internationalization that left the field very different from what it had been in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the months following Hitler's inauguration as chancellor on 30 January 1933, measures were taken to banish Jews from civil society, including institutions of higher education. These measures had an immediate effect on faculty in German universities. Jewish scholars were forced into retirement, and Jewish students were eventually no longer permitted to earn doctoral degrees. Over the next few years, many of them chose to leave Germany, but a large number of Jewish scholars and students of Oriental studies were

murdered during the Holocaust. Those who managed to avoid deportation and murder by leaving Germany were dispersed around the world. Some went to Mandatory Palestine, others to the United States, Belgium, England, France, and Turkey. Many continued to emigrate to other countries, and not all of them found ways to continue their scholarship. Several Jewish Orientalists who settled in British Mandatory Palestine, later Israel, successfully perpetuated aspects of the German scholarly tradition at the Hebrew University, founded in 1925, but this was generally not the case for those who pursued their careers elsewhere.

Although most of the chapters in this book were previously published as articles or blog posts, they have undergone significant revisions. The original publications are the following:

“*Er versinkt aber in einem Meer von Handschriften*”: Friedrich Kern (1874–1921) and His Studies on the Dogmatic History of Ḥanafism and Māturīdism,” *Sammler–Bibliothekare–Forscher: Zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Sammlungen an der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, edited by Sabine Mangold-Will, Christoph Rauch, and Siegfried Schmitt, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2022, 315–386 (revised in Chapter 1).

“From *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to *Wissenschaft des Islams*: Eugen Mittwoch between Jewish and Islamic Studies,” *Historical Interactions of Religious Cultures* 1 (2024), 103–145 (revised in Chapter 2).

“Eugen Mittwoch’s Trips to the East (1899, 1904, 1907),” *Collecting Knowledge in East and West: Studies in Honour of Arnoud Vrolijk*, edited by Kasper van Ommen and Maurits van den Boogert, Leiden: Brill, 2026, 189–214 (revised in Chapter 3).

“The Library of Eugen Mittwoch (1876–1942),” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 11 (2023), 267–301 (revised in Chapter 4).

“Yemen and Arabia during the Interwar Period: The Correspondence of Carl Rathjens and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 1927 through 1934,” *De la lettre à l’esprit: Travaux en hommage à Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi / From the Letter to the Spirit: Studies in Honor of Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi*, edited by Orkhan Mir-Kasimov and Mathieu Terrier, Turnhout: Brepols, 2025, vol. 2, 437–470 (revised in Chapter 5).

“Abraham Shalom Yahuda’s Failed Habilitation,” *Notes from the Archives* (blog), 2 October 2025, <https://nfta.hypotheses.org/244> (revised in Chapter 6).

“Abraham Shalom Yahuda’s German Assistants: The Cases of Hans Kindermann and Hans L. Gottschalk,” *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 48 (2025), 63–127 (revised in Chapter 7).

“Ignaz Goldziher, Walter Gottschalk, and the *Kitāb al-Aymān* by Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Najīramī,” *Building Bridges: Ignaz Goldziher and His Correspondents*;

Islamic and Jewish Studies around the Turn of the Twentieth Century, edited by Hans-Jürgen Becker, Kinga Dévényi, Sebastian Günther, and Sabine Schmidtke, Leiden: Brill, 2024, 260–294 (revised in Chapter 8).

“Rudolf Strothmann’s Trip to the Middle East (1929/30): I. Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Anatolia, the Levant, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, and Yemen,” “Papers Presented to Kinga Dévényi on Her Sixty-Fifth Birthday,” special issue, *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 44 (2022), 171–200, and “Rudolf Strothmann’s Trip to the Middle East (1929/30): II. Yemen,” *Religious and Intellectual Diversity in the Islamicate World and Beyond*, edited by Omer Michaelis and Sabine Schmidtke, Leiden: Brill, 2024, vol. 2, 1240–1254 (revised in Chapter 9).

“Moshe Perlmann (1905–2001): A Scholarly Biography,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009), 1–31 (revised in Chapter 10).

“An Early Stage of Ismāʿīlī Studies: The Correspondence between Paul Kraus and Wladimir Ivanow (1934–1939, 1943),” *Shii Studies Review* 8 (2024), 204–250 (revised in Chapter 11).

“Paul Kraus and Muhammad Hamidullah on the Contributions of European Jewish Scholars to the Study of Islam,” *Notes from the Archives* (blog), 2 October 2025, <https://nfta.hypotheses.org/604> (revised in Chapter 12).

“Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study: A Historical Sketch,” *Studying the Near and Middle East at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, 1935–2018*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018, xxxi–xcviii (revised in Chapter 13).

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