H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ursula Woköck. *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945.* Culture and Civilization in the Middle East. London: Routledge, 2009. xiv + 333 pp. $150.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-46490-1.

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Published on H-German (February, 2010)

Commissioned by Susan R. Boettcher

Middle East Studies: Its Disciplines and Its Scholars

The history of *Orientalistik* in Germany and more generally Germany's interactions with the so-called Orient have been the topic of numerous studies and journal articles, particularly over the past two decades. This work was initiated by Edward Said's famous disregard for German Orientalism during the age of empire and thereafter.[1] Scholars working in this area have opened up a remarkable and germane field of inquiry to help us better understand Germany's perceptions of and interaction with cultural Others, to which the expansive literature on Germany's intellectual quest of the Orient certainly attests. With mixed results, Ursula Wokoeck's recent book proposes a different approach to *Disziplinsgeschichte* by framing an analysis that focuses on the researchers themselves, as opposed to the ideas that these scholars produced and debated.

In Wokoeck's words, "the present study suggests shifting the focus from the research tradition to the researchers as professional scholars pursuing an academic career at the university" (p. 18), or more generally, "to investigate the history of Middle East studies within the discipline of Oriental studies as a minor discipline at faculties of philosophy within the modern German university system" (p. 33). To pursue this goal, Wokoeck originally intended to conduct a prosopographic study, a quantitative-statistical approach that proved impossible, as the author elaborates in the introduction. Such an approach depends on defining groups clearly, chairs of departments for example, which proved difficult due to the "shifting boundaries of the discipline of Oriental studies and the position of Middle East studies within it" (pp. 30-31). In lieu of this aborted investigative avenue, Wokoeck proposes first to study the biographies of scholars in the field of Middle East studies in comparison with the career paths of other scholars in the humanities, which reflected, for instance, the emergence of Sanskrit studies. Secondly, the author examines the appearance of the specialization in Assyriology, before turning to the development of Islamic studies. In a final chapter, she explores Middle East studies under the Nazis. By shifting the focus away from ideas and by exploring research in its institutional context, Wokoeck hopes to inaugurate an innova-

tive methodological approach that can shed new light on the nuances of Middle East studies throughout the nineteenth century until the National Socialist period.

To justify this shift in the history of a discipline away from the ideas of that field to an emphasis on the institutional framework and how scholars conceived their discipline, Wokoeck chooses to examine existing scholarship on the subject. The author provides more than just a literary review; she incorporates into each of her chapters the major works on Oriental studies from Johannes FÃ¼ck's older text to more recent works by Suzanne Marchand, Ludmila Hanisch, and Sabine Mangold, among others.[2] Hanisch and Ekkehard Ellinger's recent book receives significant attention in the chapter on the National Socialist period.[3] The intense engagement with the secondary literature is an important dimension of the book, because its analytical success depends primarily on Wokoeck's ability to uncover purported flaws in this secondary literature, from which she can draw different or more nuanced conclusions. That is, Wokoeck seeks to construct a narrative of the field "by contextualizing the stories of individual scholars in Middle East studies in terms of the development of the profession at the university" (p. 79). To create such a narrative, Wokoeck relies primarily on secondary literature rather than analyzing primary sources; indeed, at times she squares one secondary source against another to draw her conclusions and support her claims.

Several examples should suffice to illustrate Wokoeck's pursuit of this strategy and the explanatory value of her conclusions. In chapter 4, "The Establishment of Modern Oriental Studies," for example, Wokoeck traces the purported shift in the location of study of Oriental languages away from faculties of theology to faculties of philosophy. Citing work by Rudolf Pfeiffer, she describes a shift in training for high-school teachers that led to the increasing importance of philology.[4] That is, as Wokoeck concludes, the development of a possibility of studying languages outside of theology grew as an institutional tendency, but (as she rightly points out) it did not necessarily apply to Oriental languages, which were not taught in schools. Wokoeck then turns to Reinhart Koselleck's various entries in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972-97) and Marchand to illustrate the growth of a standard of historical critical scholarship in biblical studies. Given these various transformations, which she has traced from important secondary work, Wokoeck concludes: "From the perspective of philology, the combined effects of the transition from Latin to German as a language for academic publication, the rise of neo-humanism, the emergence of a historical perspective, and the transformation of the *Lateinschule* to the *Gymnasium* entailed that a very coherent system transformed into a multi-focal one" (p. 99). In other words, education became less bounded by its traditional curricular focus and embraced a broader "range of subjects." With the gradual demise of Latin and the expanded relevance of various fields of inquiry, classical philology found itself challenged by other new disciplines. Thus the emergence of Sanskrit seems, according Wokoeck's reading, to have provided classical philology with a rejuvenated coherence: "Sanskrit in conjunction with classical philology and comparative linguistics became the rising star in the academic sky, and this combination was clearly visible in the biographies of most, though not all, prominent scholars in the field" (p. 102). Moreover, Wokoeck cites the importance of Sanskrit as justification for one of her critical assessments in this section of the book: the conclusion that the development of Oriental philology did not necessarily represent a break with theology. Rather, the historical-literary approach to biblical studies supported by theologians such as Heinrich Ewald indicates that at least some of them were quite supportive of the study of Oriental languages.

Wokoeck begins the chapter "The Beginning of Differentiation: Sanskrit and Semitic Languages" with a discussion of the spreading practice of establishing separate chairs for Sanskrit and Semitic languages in the development of Oriental studies during the period from 1850 to 1870, and in more general terms the gradual differentiation of these departments. Relying heavily on the work of Mangold and Marchand, Wokoeck traces the career of Indologist Theodor Benfey to illustrate why scholars might have taken up Sanskrit and comparative linguistics, a practice that, as Wokoeck points out, "was bound to have negative implications for the concept of Oriental studies and its legitimization" (p. 122). Citing the tardiness of Benfey's promotion to *Ordinarius* in 1862 at GÃ¶ttingen, Wokoeck argues that the well-established status of Oriental languages at the university suggests that Benfey's promotion happened extremely late. As Wokoeck tells us, Mangold assumes that this delay was due to Benfey's Jewishness. Wokoeck then references Benfey's book on the history of Oriental languages and comparative linguistics, which "can be read as stating the claim that preference should be given to Sanskrit and comparative linguistics over the study of Semitic languages in the appointments to university positions in the discipline of Oriental studies" (p. 123).[5] Because this book was published after Benfey's promotion, Wokoeck

argues, the episode indicates "not a local, personal story, but a history of the field; and it was also received as such" (p. 123).

Both of the examples above show precisely where primary materials could corroborate such claims. Yet the reader is left to take the author at her word, based on circumstantial evidence and her reading of the secondary literature. In the first case, primary sources from Ewald and others could contribute to a deeper understanding of the stresses between philology and theology. In the second example, no material from Benfey is cited other than the title of a book, nor does Wokoeck provide primary sources to justify his book's reception. Despite the stated task of drawing conclusions from the biographies of the scholars in Oriental studies, the work would have benefited substantially from greater consultation of primary material, thereby strengthening its arguments. Focusing only on the accounts of Germany's Orientalists in the secondary literature leaves subtle yet persistent holes in this story. Moreover, separation of debates about what constitutes knowledge in the field from the matter of the institutional framework and scholarly biographies creates an artificial barrier that leaves open the final word on Middle East studies in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A more integrative approach to these three areas might prove more fruitful to our understanding of the politics and culture of Germany's academic engagement with the Middle East.

On a final note, the book is unfortunately fraught with syntactical errors and other odd sentences. This oversight diminishes the reader's trust in the care with which the book was prepared and thus renders one suspicious of its conclusions.

Notes

[1]. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[2]. Johannes FÃ¼ck, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1955); Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ludmila Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten: Deutschsprachige Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten HÃ¤lfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003); and Sabine Mangold, *Eine 'weltbÃ¼rgerliche Wissenschaft': Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004). A recent addition to this literature is Suzanne L. Marchand's *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), which was published in August 2009, after Wokoeck's monograph.

[3]. Ekkehard Ellinger, *Deutsche Orientalistik zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1945* (Edingen-Neckarhausen: Deux Mondes, 2006).

[4]. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[5]. Theodor Benfey, *Geschichet der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland seit dem Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts mit einem RÃ¼ckblick auf die frÃ¼heren Zeiten* (Munich: Cotta, 1869).