

## Biographical and scientific notes about Mark Lidzbarski (1868-1928):

A translation from Ludmila Hanisch, *Aufzeichnungen von Mark Lidzbarski (1868-1928)*, edited by Pierre Motylewicz and Ute Pietruschka. Halle-Wittenberg: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, 2015

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In 2015 Ludmilla Hanisch published a study featuring the outcomes of a survey she had conducted in the legacy of Mark Lidzbarski. This legacy is housed in the archive of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* in Halle/Saale (Germany) and includes documents and evidence related to both the personal life and academic research of the renowned Semitist. In a terse and fluent style, the author provides an overview of the contents of the legacy interweaved with the life of Lidzbarski. The present translation aims at making this important contribution accessible to a wider audience and represents a tribute to the author, who passed away before it was published.

*Es ist nicht genug, zu wissen,  
man muß auch anwenden;  
es ist nicht genug, zu wollen,  
man muß auch tun.*  
J.W. von Goethe

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Preface by the author<sup>1</sup>

The legacies of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* [henceforth DMG] in Halle include preparatory work and print templates of publications by Mark Lidzbarski, which the internationally renowned

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<sup>1</sup> The original German version is published under Creative Commons Licence 3.0 in: <http://menadoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/urn:urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:5-89711>. Square parentheses show the original numeration of pages and footnotes. The present translation covers pages 6-28 of the German original. Images of pages 8, 10, 14, 19, 28 in the German original are not reprinted here. Some corrections and integrations to page numerations in original references were provided by the translator. This work was conceived and could be completed thanks to the research fundings allocated by the Università di Catania by means of the *Progetto Prometeo 2019-20, Linea 3*: “Transnational Intellectual Networks between the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and the End of the Cold War (1989)” - Principal Investigator: Prof. Dr. Stefano Rapisarda. The author wishes to thank Dr. Ute Pietruschka (Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen) for kind advice on the German version of the book, Prof. Dr. Walter Slaje (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg; Erster Vorsitzender, *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft*) and Laila

Semitist and epigraphist bequeathed to the DMG. Like the scholarly correspondence that Lidzbarski exchanged with his colleagues, they reflect his broad-ranging interests. Copies and word-indexes of manuscripts from today's Staatsbibliothek in Berlin formed the basis for his two-volume work *Die neu-aramäischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, published in 1896.<sup>2</sup>

Reproductions and photos of inscriptions and prints of seals in various Semitic languages formed the basis for Lidzbarski's *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik*,<sup>3</sup> a seminal work which did service to generations of Semitists. In his *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*,<sup>4</sup> which he founded, Lidzbarski presented new finds of inscriptions and discussed previously published texts. The correspondence he exchanged with scholars such as Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), Arthur Ungnad (1879-1945) or Enno Littmann (1875-1958) – to name but a few – provides an excellent insight into Lidzbarski's work processes. The correspondence kept in the library of the DMG is not yet accessible; hopefully, the plans to digitize this legacy will be realized in the near future to make these interesting documents available to a wider public.

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Another focus of Lidzbarski's research were the language and literature of the Mandaean. Here, too, copies and photos of manuscripts can be found in the legacy, which formed the basis for the scientific disclosure and publication of important texts of Mandaic literature and thanks to which Lidzbarski was able to give a great impulse to Mandaic studies.<sup>5</sup> A card index for a dictionary of the Mandaic language is also kept in the DMG library. At the request of Rudolf Macuch (1919-1993), professor Johann W. Fück (1894-1974) from Halle had it copied and made it available to the authors of the *Mandaic Dictionary*.<sup>6</sup>

In this publication, Lidzbarski's autobiography – the print template of which can be found among the bequeathed papers – is dealt with first. From the correspondence, a letter from Theodor Nöldeke

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Guhlmann (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg; Fachreferentin Bibliothek der *Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*) for kind assistance and willingness. Prof. Dr. Alessandro Mengozzi and Prof. Dr. Mauro Tosco (University of Turin; Kervan) deserve a thankful thought for precious suggestions and support. The translation was duly and promptly revised by CSE 92 (Rome). Any misreading is the solely responsibility of the author.

<sup>2</sup>[4] Lidzbarski (1896).

<sup>3</sup> [5] Lidzbarski (1898).

<sup>4</sup> [6] Three volumes, published at Gießen: Töpelmann: 1900-1915 (Lidzbarski 1902-1915). In the same printing house Lidzbarski's memories were also published.

<sup>5</sup> [7] Reference may be made to the following publications: Lidzbarski (1905/1915); Lidzbarski (1920); Lidzbarski (1925).

<sup>6</sup> [8] Drower-Macuch (1963: V).

was selected, with whom Lidzbarski engaged in an intense correspondence.<sup>7</sup> The letter vividly illustrates the research topic to which Lidzbarski devoted himself, particularly towards the end of his life.

[p. 8] = Image

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#### Childhood memories

Mark Lidzbarski, who has contributed significantly to research on the Mandeans and whose epigraphic works have set standards that are still considered valid today, travelled an unusual route in his life, which led him from his small home town of Płock, in what was then Russian Poland, to an important professorship at a renowned Prussian university. The title of his memoirs, which he published over eight decades ago, indicates how strenuous this path must have seemed to him.<sup>8</sup> Both his difficult material situation and the circumstances of his life form an important *topos* in the obituaries published for him.<sup>9</sup>

In his memoirs, he provides a detailed description of his deeply religious upbringing and the one-sided cognitive stimuli of his childhood and adolescence. To this day, they make for a striking example of how the introduction to religious literature and the value system of a religion can develop an adolescent's capabilities.

[p. 10] = Image

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In this case and in these historical circumstances, family expectations and early childhood education seem to have been a positive contribution to his intellectual development. Moreover, the author, through his descriptions, created a memorial for a milieu that did not undergo gradual change, but

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<sup>7</sup> [9] The legacy of Lidzbarski in Halle contains several letters from Nöldeke; together with the legacy of Nöldeke in Tübingen, which comprises 24 letters by Lidzbarski from the years 1900-1928, a large share of the correspondence might doubtless be restored (<http://kalliope-verbund.info/de/ead?ead.id=DE-611-HS-557696>).

<sup>8</sup> [10] The memories were published anonymously with the title *Auf rauhem Wege* (Lidzbarski 1927). An Italian translation was published in 1988 (Lidzbarski 1988). This edition includes a preface by Giorgio Pasquali and an epilogue by Marino Raicich.

<sup>9</sup> [11] See Littmann (1928) and Baumgartner (1968). Only A. Kronthal (1928), a follower of liberal Judaism, put the description of Lidzbarski's materially difficult situation into perspective.

suddenly disappeared when the Jewish inhabitants of the town were violently expelled, or even murdered, by the German occupiers during the Second World War.

Lidzbarski has left a vivid account of the customs and conventions in the Jewish community of the town of Płock during his childhood and adolescence. This community is considered one of the oldest in Poland. His family belonged to the Hasidic movement, itself a minority group within the Jewish community of Płock. In around 1890, Jewish residents accounted for about 25% of the population, while only 3-10% of the Jews were Hasidic.<sup>10</sup> They were a minority in the whole of Eastern Europe, even though they were considered as *pars pro toto* of “Ostjudentum” or East Jewry.<sup>11</sup> This mystical tradition placed the Kabbalah, not the Torah, at the core of its doctrine. Their rivalry with the Mitnaggedim declined in importance from the middle of the 19th century, with the advance of the Haskala in Poland.<sup>12</sup> The author already mentions some of the differences; more recent evidence-backed representations facilitate the understanding of the connections against the background of historical developments taking place in Poland.<sup>13</sup>

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The differences were clear to everyone in clothing. For the faithful Hasidim, clothing played a central role in their approach to God, in addition to everyday actions. External symbols were so important to them that they even paid a clothing tax to the state at times to show themselves dressed on the street in accordance with their regulations.<sup>14</sup> His family's opposition to letting him to carry a satchel to school, as recounted by Lidzbarski, should be understood against this background.<sup>15</sup> He did not omit the strict rituals and superstitious tendencies of his surroundings in his memoirs, but described them with retrospective distance and without condescending undertones. Since he was destined for a spiritual profession, during his childhood he received a primarily religious instruction. Already at the age of three, he attended private classes and showed great talent.

Over the next decade, Lidzbarski concentrated intensely on mastering the spiritual works, with the help of various teachers. The reverse side of these inflexible

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<sup>10</sup> [12] According to an estimate by Wodziński (2005: 104-7).

<sup>11</sup> [13] See the elucidation of the situation in Lidzbarski's memories (Lidzbarski 1927: 82).

<sup>12</sup> [14] Guesnet (1998: 263).

<sup>13</sup> [15] Wein (1989). See also n.a. (2007).

<sup>14</sup> [16] Somogyi (1982: 44-45).

<sup>15</sup> [17] Lidzbarski (1927: 9).

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learning goals were the missed opportunities to play with his peers, which he was later to regret. His sisters went to a public school and, in addition to a general education, also learnt modern foreign languages. Unlike their brother, they were allowed to spend their free time playing games.

The son received Russian lessons for a short time, which can be explained by the forced integration of the country into the Tsarist Empire. The increasing use of Russian in schools and the judicial system, from 1866, is documented by the birth certificates of the children of Moszek and Cwetla Lidzbarski, Mark Lidzbarski's parents.<sup>16</sup> While his birth was still registered in Polish, under the name Abraham Motel Lidzbarski, the birth certificates of his later-born sisters were already issued in Russian.<sup>17</sup> The double date of birth for the boy, born in late 1867 and/or early in 1868, reflects the discrepancy between the Julian calendar, which was still followed in the Russian Empire, and the Gregorian calendar, which had long since been adopted in Poland. Alignment with Russian legislation did not necessarily mean an improvement in the legal status of or educational opportunities for the country's residents.

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Access to Russian universities continued to be problematic for Jewish students from all parts of the empire. Even if they did manage to qualify for admission, in 1887 a *numerus clausus* was introduced for these "martyrs of education."<sup>18</sup> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Berlin University saw a significant rise in the number of students from Russia in the last decade of the 19th century.

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Year after year, the enrolment register for each semester features about a hundred students from Russia, with numbers increasing significantly after the turn of the century. However, since religious affiliation was not recorded at enrolment, it can only be surmised that many Jewish students took

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<sup>16</sup> [18] Lidzbarski had three sisters: Fala (\*1869), Ruchla Łaja (\*1871), Chaja (\*1873).

<sup>17</sup> [19] The birth of the sisters was registered in Russian. See *Archiwum Państwowe in Płock. Unikat Akta stanu cywilnego gminy wyznaniowej*, Nr. 65, 1866 od No 808 do No 1092 za 1867-1868-1869-1870-1871; 1872 od No 1 do No 63.

<sup>18</sup> [20] Dubnow called young men, who wanted to bypass the barriers through private lessons and studying abroad, "martyrs of learning." Dubnow (1918: 351).

advantage of this opportunity to attend various German and other European universities.<sup>19</sup> In view of the requirements of a high school diploma in a foreign language, this path would probably have been taken only in special circumstances. For obvious reasons, Jewish students from West and East Prussia and Silesia enrolled primarily at German universities; they did not have to overcome such great obstacles, since they more often than not had a German school education or even a high school diploma from a German Gymnasium.<sup>20</sup>

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In the case of the young Lidzbarski, contact with adherents of and admiration for the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement apparently played an important role, in order to strive for training in Prussia, regardless of the difficulties. The so-called “free spirits” appeared to him as those to whom the gate to the world had opened. The representatives of the Enlightened trend of Judaism had gained influence in the Jewish communities under Prussian administration. They received state support both there and beyond the Prussian border because they had a reputation not to refrain from assimilating to their context. Despite the fact that it was initially considered a reform movement from the West, the Haskalah was able to gain an increasing foothold in the eastern regions.

After crossing the border with Germany at the age of fourteen, in April 1882, and turning his back to the Tsarist empire, Lidzbarski observed the intense process of Germanization taking place in the Prussian-administered areas, during his school years in Poznan; the Polish language being pushed more and more into the background in high schools.<sup>21</sup>

In Poznan, the adolescent Lidzbarski attended the Protestant Friedrich-Wilhelms-Gymnasium, the high school from which he graduated. In the meantime, he also attended the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, in Berlin, for two years, to find what he lacked at high school.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <sup>[21]</sup> *Amtliches Verzeichnis des Personals und der Studirenden der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*. Lidzbarski is registered there from first semester 1889 as Russian citizen. In the second semester 1889 there were 116 students from Russia. See Ivanov (2001: 43); Wertheimer (1987: 63-71).

<sup>20</sup> <sup>[22]</sup> One example is the Semitist Eugen Mittwoch (1876-1942) from Schrimm, near Posen. Hartwig Hirschfeld can also be included. For the significance of the multilingualism of students of Jewish faith, including Lidzbarski, see: Trautmann-Waller (2002: 81-92).

<sup>21</sup> <sup>[23]</sup> Bilingualism was legally recognized in the Prussian province of Poznan until 1850, after which, and especially from 1871, the school system was gradually Germanized. In 1887, there were only 3-5 hours of Polish per week in the curriculum. Balzer (1990: 152-153).

<sup>22</sup> <sup>[24]</sup> See above Kronthal (1928). Thanks are due to Marek Dzekian (Warsaw) for his information on the history of the Poznan Gymnasium, which also saved me from incorrect spelling of the Polish sources.

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During his stay in Poznan, the orientalist Hartwig Hirschfeld introduced him to Arabic, in addition to school lessons.<sup>23</sup> Besides an interest in the inscription of Mesa [of Moab], which he emphasized in his memories, the conversations with his teacher certainly influenced his later choice of studies.<sup>24</sup> After all, the Jewish elements in the Koran formed a focus of interest for Hirschfeld, who later taught in England.<sup>25</sup>

Lidzbarski would later enter into a scholarly correspondence with Hirschfeld's mentor, Theodor Nöldeke, testimonies of which can be found in the archives of DMG [see below]. After graduating from the Gymnasium he returned to his hometown for a short time. His youthful memories end when he leaves once again for Berlin, to begin his studies of Oriental philology.

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#### Scientific career

Mordechai Lidzbarski, as he still called himself that year, enrolled on December 3rd, 1889, at the Philosophischen Facultät of the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin.<sup>26</sup> After having completed his work on the Arabic prophetic legends (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), the doctoral examination was held in February 1893, under the tuition of the Orientalists Eberhard Schrader (1836-1908) and Eduard Sachau (1845-1930).<sup>27</sup>

This work was published in Leipzig, in 1893, under the title *De propheticis, quae dicuntur, legendis Arabicis*. On May 17th that same year, Lidzbarski, who had meanwhile converted to Protestantism, left

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<sup>23</sup> <sup>[25]</sup> Lidzbarski did not mention the name in his memoirs. It is mentioned in the letter from the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Kiel of February 24th, 1896 to the Prussian Ministry of Culture. GSTA-I HA, Rep. 76, Va, Sekt. 9, Tit. 4, No. 2, Bl. 139.

<sup>24</sup> <sup>[26]</sup> Graetz (1902).

<sup>25</sup> <sup>[27]</sup> Hartwig Hirschfeld (1854, Thorn-1934, London). Hirschfeld was a student of Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930) and completed his doctorate in Strasbourg, in 1878, on Jewish elements in the Koran. In 1889 he emigrated to England and worked as a Professor of Hebrew at Montefiori College in Ramsgate and London.

<sup>26</sup> <sup>[28]</sup> He received the immatriculation number 2159. He declared that his father's profession was "landlord". See *Archiv der Humboldt-Universität Berlin*, Rektoratsakten 2159/80.

<sup>27</sup> <sup>[29]</sup> Eduard Zeller (1814-1908) tested him in philosophy. The examination protocol can be found in doctoral file no. 315, *Archiv der Humboldt-Universität Berlin*. He dedicated the dissertation to Sigismund Lissner, (†November 5, 1892). Lissner was the owner of a tobacco factory in Poznan and Lidzbarski was a friend of his son, Julius Lissner.

his Alma Mater as a Doctor in Oriental Philology. Then, through the intermediation of Eduard Sachau, he was commissioned to catalog the new Aramaic manuscripts of the Königlichen Bibliothek in Berlin.<sup>28</sup>

[p. 19] = Image

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Three years later, Lidzbarski earned his Habilitation at the University of Kiel. His inaugural lecture was on “das Himjarenreich in der arabischen Literatur.” The Sanskritist Hermann Oldenberg (1854-1920), a member of the examination board, emphasized that the factual interest of the newly qualified professor was in “oriental fairy tales and narrative literature and the derivation of their materials and motifs.”<sup>29</sup> Thanks to the financial support of the Neuschassischen Stiftung (Kiel), he was able to travel to other European countries and study manuscripts and inscriptions in Paris, Oxford and London, in 1899 and 1905. One result of his trip to Paris appeared under the title “Eine Nachprüfung der Mesainschrift.”<sup>30</sup> This review was carried out with René Dussaud (1868-1958).

Epigraphic interests shaped the coming years of his scientific activity. He engaged in a lively exchange with his Strasbourg colleagues Julius Euting (1839-1913) and Theodor Nöldeke, in particular, on issues surrounding the deciphering of inscriptions.<sup>31</sup> The letters document the acknowledgement of their mutual achievements and, at the same time, show that Lidzbarski was more inclined to focus on factual issues rather than personal communications.

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His first appointment was in 1907, succeeding Wilhelm Ahlwardt (1828-1909) at the University of Greifswald. The faculty there was looking to recruit a scholar to continue the Arabist work of his predecessor and also take into account the needs of historians and theologians. In addition to his epigraphic publications, Lidzbarski's work-appointment proposals highlighted religious-historical

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<sup>28</sup> <sup>[30]</sup> See above notes 2-3 [4-5].

<sup>29</sup> <sup>[31]</sup> „Bericht Hermann Oldenbergs vom 24. März 1896.“ In *Auftrag des Dekans der Philosophischen Fakultät über die Habilitation Lidzbarskis in Kiel*, GSTA – I HA, Rep. 76, Va, Sekt. 9, Tit. 4, Nr.2, Bl. 139.

<sup>30</sup> <sup>[32]</sup> See Lidzbarski (1902: 1-9).

<sup>31</sup> <sup>[33]</sup> Lidzbarski dedicated the *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik* to Theodor Nöldeke and Julius Euting. The letters to Julius Euting are in the Julius Euting legacy, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire Strasbourg, Ms 3800. I would like to thank the staff of this library, and Daniel Bornemann in particular, for making the documents available to me.

works on the Mandaeans.<sup>32</sup> He had just published his two-volume work *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 1909, he set out from this city, in Western Pomerania, to embark on his first and only journey to the Orient, to study manuscripts in Constantinople and Beirut. Due to an outbreak of cholera, from Constantinople he was only able to travel as far as Ḥamā, in modern-day Syria.<sup>34</sup>

In 1917 he was called to the chair of Semitic Philology at Göttingen University, previously held by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) and then briefly by Enno Littmann (1875-1958). He had already had an academic exchange with some of the chair holders at the university there for many years. In addition to Julius Wellhausen, with whom he had already corresponded from Kiel, since 1900, he had also exchanged letters with the scholar in Iranian studies Friedrich Carl Andreas (1846-1930), who held the chair in West Asian languages from 1904.<sup>35</sup>

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His former colleague from Kiel, the Sanskritist Hermann Oldenberg, worked next to him in the city on the Leine river until 1920. At the Georg August University, where he was to remain until the end of his life, he found a “satisfactory sphere of work” in scientific terms, as remembered by the Göttingen theologian Walter Bauer (1877-1960).<sup>36</sup> After the First World War, he was able to rent a house in Herzberger Landstrasse 66, which belonged to the Göttinger Universitätsbund.<sup>37</sup> Lidzbarski had been a corresponding member of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences since 1912, and in 1918 he was accepted as a regular member.

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<sup>32</sup> <sup>[34]</sup> „Berufungsvorschläge der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Greifswald vom 8.7.1907,“ GSTA Berlin-Dahlem, I HA, Rep.76 Va, Sekt. 7, Tit 4, Nr. 22, Bd.17, Blatt 163.

<sup>33</sup> <sup>[35]</sup> See above note 5 <sup>[7]</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> <sup>[36]</sup> Postcard from Lidzbarski to Julius Euting, from Constantinople, of 29.11.1909 (Nachlass Julius Euting, MS 3800, no. 328).

<sup>35</sup> <sup>[37]</sup> Letters to Julius Wellhausen of 31.01.1899 and 5.11.1899, Handschriftenabteilung der Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, 8 Cod. Ms. Hist. Ref. 41 g: 1: sheets 33-34 and sheets 35-38; Legacy of F. C. Andreas, *ibid.* I would like to thank Helmut Rohlfing (SUB Göttingen) for references to the materials.

<sup>36</sup> <sup>[38]</sup> So Walter Bauer in his detailed necrology (Bauer 1928/1929).

<sup>37</sup> <sup>[39]</sup> I would like to thank Christian Wagenknecht (Göttingen) for pointing out the involvement of the Göttinger Universitätsbund in the construction of the house in Herzberger Landstrasse.

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### Scientific interests

Lidzbarski had dealt with the legends of the prophets in his dissertation and continued to focus his interest as a young scholar on the transmission of religious texts in different religions and epochs. An illustrative example of this is his essay “Wer ist Chadir?” which appeared shortly after his doctorate.<sup>38</sup> In the preface to the catalog of Neo-Aramaic manuscripts, he emphasized how he had been obliged to forgo his project on “The Biblical History by the Arabs”, for the time being, in order to focus on the manuscripts, despite having already collected the literature.<sup>39</sup> The subject of the transfer of religious texts and legends accompanied him throughout his scientific life, although he was unable to devote more time to it, along with his other tasks. When he made arrangements for his library, at the end of his life, he mentioned this interest and drew attention to the books he had bought on this topic. He announced to his colleague, and later Prussian Minister of Culture, Carl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933) that the “Midrashic literature” from his library should be handed over separately.<sup>40</sup>

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The letters to C.H. Becker give the impression that he was unable to find sufficient time to dedicate to this area of interest. Whether inner motives also played a role in this abstinence can only be the subject of speculation, because of his sparse statements about his research.<sup>41</sup>

The reputation he gained in the academic world was based primarily on his epigraphic works.<sup>42</sup> Apparently, the Semitist had already impressed his colleagues with his knowledge of this field on his

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<sup>38</sup> [40] Lidzbarski (1892).

<sup>39</sup> [41] In the introduction of the manuscript catalog, Lidzbarski expressed a certain distance from Eduard Sachau. This impression is reinforced by the fact that he dedicated the catalog to his teacher Eberhard Schrader on his 60th birthday. See Lidzbarski (1896: XV-XVI).

<sup>40</sup> [42] Letter of 28.10.1928 to Carl Heinrich Becker, REM 4901/old, R 21, No. 11080, Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde. The University of Göttingen received the private library as it was in 1922, when the agreement was made. Later purchases went to other addressees. Memorandum of the University of Göttingen, dated November 27.11.1928, which occurred a few days after Lidzbarski's funeral.

<sup>41</sup> [43] See the obituary by Walter Bauer quoted above, who conjectured that his conversion to the Evangelical faith was the reason behind his abstinence from “rabbinical literature”.

<sup>42</sup> [44] His *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik* was indicated as a fundamental work by Wellhausen (1899: 603-608). Walter Baumgartner (1968) cited the manual for northern Semitic epigraphy as Lidzbarski's most important achievement.

trips to Paris and London.<sup>43</sup> Despite over more than a century having passed since the publication of the inscriptions, they are still not considered outdated.

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Many of his investigations into epigraphic issues appeared as reprints after the Second World War.<sup>44</sup> His strong interest in the Mandaean, which has largely passed into the hands of religious scholars today, was another area to which he made great contributions. The faculty emphasized this interest when it proposed Lidzbarski for the Greifswald chair. The colleagues there described his “actual life’s mission: shining a light into the darkness surrounding Mandaic literature, which is particularly important for the history of religion.”<sup>45</sup> His editions of Mandaic texts, on which he worked continuously throughout his scientific life, are considered exemplary by specialists in the field, ranking immediately after Nöldeke’s *Mandäische Grammatik*. He has the merit of having given a philologically secure basis to the branches of the late antique Gnosis. Lidzbarski’s most significant achievement for Mandaic literature is the translation of the *Ginza*.<sup>46</sup> Various colleagues who dealt with the literature and language of the Mandaeans drew from his collections of Mandaic words.

His research into the writings of the Mandaeans, which found a number of editors, especially in the first three decades of the 20th century, suggests that Lidzbarski, thanks to his thorough training in religious scriptures, was able to dedicate himself to this ancient religious movement with meticulousness and knowledge.

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In any case, his previous philological knowledge and experience will have made it easier for him to separate the wheat from the chaff, to search for important texts and to process them thoroughly. In this perspective, the memories may be read as a pointer to the genesis of his scientific meticulousness and his interest in knowledge. The differences and tensions among the followers of the Jewish religion,

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<sup>43</sup> <sup>[45]</sup> René Dussaud (1929) reports in his necrology about Lidzbarski's visit to Paris in 1898/1899 and the shared reading of the stela by Mesa. Stanley Arthur Cook (1929) also remembered him in an obituary.

<sup>44</sup> <sup>[46]</sup> Reproductions of the epigraphic works: *Mandäische Liturgien* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms: 1971); *Altaramäische Urkunden aus Assur*, (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller: 1970); *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms: 1962 and 1969); *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms: 1962).

<sup>45</sup> <sup>[47]</sup> *Berufungskommission der philosophischen Fakultät Greifswald*, GSTA: I HA, Rep. 76 Va, Sekt. 7, Tit. 4, No. 22, Vol. 17, sheet 163.

<sup>46</sup> <sup>[48]</sup> Rosenthal (1939: 237).

which he experienced first hand as an adolescent, shaped his sensitivity for variants and differences in the faiths. In addition to that, he learned the philological methods for this during his school years and his later studies. The break with his original religion, which is sometimes addressed in the obituaries, can possibly also be traced back to experiences from childhood and adolescence. Despite his failure to fulfil his family's expectations and pursue a religious vocation, which he later regarded as a burden for his personal development, he nevertheless succeeded in building on this experience to the advantage of his scientific work. This also includes the no longer pursued topic of the transmission of myths, as well as narrative and sagas, in various religions and epochs.

His death in 1928 saved him from being expelled from office, or worse, by the Third Reich, against which his conversion to Protestantism would have been of no avail.<sup>47</sup>

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Nothing is known about the fate of his younger sisters who remained in Poland.<sup>48</sup> When the Nazis came to power, they destroyed part of his life's work. However, neither his publications nor his material collections, which were kept in the archives of the DMG in Halle, were affected, unlike his Foundation for the promotion of Oriental studies, which was financed from his assets. The Foundation promoted Semitic research, particularly in the fields of religious studies and antiquity, excluding purely Assyriologic, Jewish and Islamic topics.<sup>49</sup> Outstanding orientalists are awarded a gold medal or prize money at international orientalist congresses. The founder's intention was to promote international cooperation and to make it easier for younger colleagues to take the "rough road" he himself had experienced.<sup>50</sup> Until the Nazis came to power, the Prussian Ministry of Culture had the role of trustee of the Foundation's capital. The Foundation's funds were eventually transferred from Switzerland to Berlin by the Reich Ministry of Education, founded in 1934, and finally embezzled.

A striking example is the prize awarded, in 1938, to the young orientalist Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003) who submitted a work on Aramaic research since Theodor Nöldeke's publications.

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<sup>47</sup> [49] Marino Raicich mentions this aspect in the epilogue to the Italian translation of the memories. Lidzbarski (1988: 241).

<sup>48</sup> [50] Memories of the Jewish inhabitants of Płock are included in Lapiere (1989).

<sup>49</sup> [51] The will, the copy of which is kept in the DMG archive, is quoted by Rosenthal (1998: 362-363).

<sup>50</sup> [52] Hanisch (2004: 333-344).

[p. 28]

However, since he was of Jewish origin, like Lidzbarski, he was denied the prize money.<sup>51</sup> Sixty years after this episode, Franz Rosenthal noted, in a contribution in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, that, based on the history of the Foundation, “a commentary on the entire history of our century” could be written.<sup>52</sup> The Lidzbarski Foundation has survived the Second World War and the gold medal is now awarded at the *Deutscher Orientalistentag* and financed by the DMG.

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<sup>51</sup> [53] About this process, see Hanisch (2003: 129).

<sup>52</sup> [54] Rosenthal (1998: 364).

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