



BANG KAUP, JOHANN WILHELM MAX JULIUS

BANG KAUP, JOHANN WILHELM MAX JULIUS (known as Willy), German orientalist, b. 9 August 1869, d. 8 October 1934; son of Heinrich Bang, judge of the court martial of the fortress at Wesel and later mayor of the town, and his spouse Auguste née Kaup.

Having been persuaded through an exchange of letters with the orientalist H. L. Fleischer to choose a university course in Oriental Studies, Bang Kaup entered the field at an early age. He studied Old Persian, Avestan, Manchu, and Mongol with Charles de Harlez. As early as 1889 he wrote articles on the Avesta and the Old Persian inscriptions. Together with H. Weissbach he prepared a new edition of the inscriptions, bringing out the first fascicle in 1893 and the second in 1909. During this time both wrote detailed essays which greatly added to the understanding of the inscriptions.

Another of Bang Kaup's interests was English literature. Between 1896 and 1914 he published some important studies in this field and was responsible, as editor, for the collective work *Materialien zur Kunde des älteren englischen Dramas*.

From 1893 onward Bang Kaup also devoted time to research in the promising area of the Old Turkish stone inscriptions. The way had been opened by the success of the Danish linguist V. Thomsen in deciphering the runic script. Bang



Kaup applied himself to the interpretation of the contents of the inscriptions, keeping to the strictest criteria of comparative linguistics and using data from all Turkish dialects. He thus made a major contribution to the development of Turcology into an independent discipline. His work in this field, begun in 1893, increasingly absorbed him after 1917. Together with J. Markwart he succeeded in solving the chronological riddle of the Old Turkish inscriptions through the discovery that the juxtaposition of the numerals in Old Turkish is based on counting within the highest order of magnitude (e.g., *iki otuz* “two thirty” = 22). Between 1910 and 1914 he worked on the Codex Cumanicus and drew attention through his writings to the inadequacies of the previous work on the text; he himself published exemplary partial editions. He then turned to the Old Turkish manuscripts found in the Turfan oasis. After his appointment to the University of Berlin in 1918, he concentrated on the study of the Turfan texts. His profound analyses of the manuscript fragments edited by A. von Le Coq were published in articles which have provided guidelines for scholars ever since. This research, together with his very wide knowledge of Turkic languages and dialects, enabled him to achieve new insights, particularly into the Manichean-Turkish and Christian texts (e.g., in his articles “Manichäische Laienbeichtspiegel,” “Manichäische Hymnen,” “Bruchstücke einer nestorianischen Georgspassion,” all in *Le Muséon*). In collaboration with Annemarie von Gabain he elucidated further texts (*Türkische Turfan-Texte I-VI*, SPAW, 1929-34), and they brought out the first glossary (*Analytischer Index*, SPAW, 1931).

In several articles Bang Kaup discussed problems in the historical grammar of the Turkish languages (“Vom Köktürkischen zum Osmanischen,” “Monographien zur türkischen Sprachgeschichte”). His “Turkologische Briefe aus dem Berliner Ungarischen Institut” (in *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, 1925-34) attest not only his perspicacity and erudition but also his insistence on caution. His correspondence forms part of his scholarly legacy. He exerted a particularly strong and long-lasting influence on Turcology during the productive years of his service at the Ungarisches Institut in Berlin. He founded a school there and had many foreign students who subsequently carried on work with his methods in their own countries. To his students, as von Gabain has warmly testified, he gave unfailing help and encouragement to persevere in constructive effort for the development of Turcology. Friendship and mutual respect marked his relations with scholars in other Oriental disciplines, particularly Iranian studies. His writings are notable for their clarity and lively style as well as their content.



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