



CALMEYER, PETER

CALMEYER, Peter, German archaeologist and Iranologist (b. 5 September 1930 in Halle, d. 22 November 1995 in Berlin). His father, Hans Georg Calmeyer, an attorney-at-law, and his mother, Ruth, both came from Westphalia, and the family moved there to settle in Osnabrück in 1931. Peter attended Lienenschweg elementary school, but, due to the Second World War, he had to attend different high schools at Dresden, Blasewitz, The Hague and Goslar, and the country boarding school at Solling, Holzminden, eventually passing the pre-university qualifying exam in March 1950 in Osnabrück. This period of wandering and hardship deeply influenced Peter Calmeyer's life and works, and living among different people enhanced his scholarly talents and charismatic character. From the summer of 1950, he studied classical archaeology first in Münster (under Professor Max Wegner), then in Munich, and later in Berlin (under Professor Friedrich Wilhelm Goethert). A scholarship enabled him to spend the academic year 1954-55 in Copenhagen, and when he returned to attend the Free University of Berlin, he changed his field of study to Near Eastern Archaeology. He was heavily influenced by the ancient historian Franz Altheim, the linguist Johannes Friedrich, and in particular, by Anton Moortgat, the founder of Near Eastern archaeology in Germany. His love of the arts in general (early on he had even considered theatrical performance, and written several critical essays) combined with his profound grasp of classical and Near Eastern archaeology gave him a unique position to study eastern materials in an analytical and multifaceted approach, and his doctoral dissertation, defended on 19 July 1965, passed with the highest recognition "summa cum laude," and was published four years later. It



has since become a classic of Near Eastern, particularly pre-Median Iranian, archaeology and is now available in Persian translation.

He served as a tutorial assistant from 1960 to 1965 at the Anton Moortgat Institute in Berlin, and from 1965 at Munich University. Here he was entrusted with a lectureship in January 1967 and earned an additional professorship at the Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology. On 8 November 1968 he qualified as University Lecturer in Near Eastern Archaeology by submitting a well-received thesis which investigated the style of the Babylonianized reliefs of the vessels dating to around 1000 B.C.E. After spending some time as Visiting Professor at the Oriental Institute in Chicago, Calmeyer was nominated as Deputy Director of the Tehran Branch of the German Archaeological Institute (see [DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT](#)), commencing his work in 1973 (according to *ibid.*, p. 332, this was in 1971 – erroneously, I think).

In his six years of tenure Peter Calmeyer spent much time not only on scientific research but, with characteristic care and exactitude, in fulfilling his duties as representative of the head of the Tehran Branch, and demonstrated great personal commitment as editor of its series of publications. He built up the Institute's library, regularly visited museums and archaeological sites, discussed various aspects of Iranian art and archaeology with scholars and field experts, and helped in amassing (through the admirably skillful photographer Gruenwald) an excellent photographic archive of archaeological sites and objects. His visits to Persepolis and related sites, usually accompanied by his wife, Dr. Ursula Calmeyer-Seidl, an internationally recognized Near-Eastern archaeologist in her own right, were always fruitful not only for him—his publications show that he usually returned having discovered a new idea or solved an old problem—but also for those who worked at the site, as frequent approving references to his novel views in Shahbazi's recent book on Persepolis (pp. vi, 69, 102-103, 111, 145, 184, 234-38) bear witness. In addition, Calmeyer actively participated in local and international congresses related to his field and was a principal organizer of the very successful 1976 Munich Congress of Iranian art and archaeology, the proceedings of which were published three years later. Calmeyer's widely diverse interest, profound knowledge, admiration of books, and amicable manners turned the Tehran Institute into a remarkable center of scholarly activity, where all those working in Iranian antiquities found welcome and access to the most recent literature pertaining to his or her field. When changes resulting from Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 entailed the closing of the Tehran Institute, he and



Kleiss stayed behind and transferred the staff and the library to the central institute in Berlin. Nevertheless, Calmeyer continued research on Iran until 1994, though in a greatly restricted manner and hindered by many adversities. Especially important were his constructive editorial suggestions to various authors, which made *AMI* the richest journal of ancient Iranian studies for fifteen years. He also served as a co-editor of the *Reallexicon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie* (henceforth *RA*) from volumes III to VIII (1966-95) while contributing many valuable entries to it, particularly on Iranian sites and art.

Peter Calmeyer was not a “born” excavator, but when he was young, he participated in the excavations on the Auerberg in Bavaria, and before the Islamic Revolution in those of Bastām in Iranian Azarbaijan. Here, he worked on particular finds of the Urartian period. His investigations in Iran, which won him the reputation of an internationally acknowledged scholar, increasingly focused on questions of the iconography of Ancient East, especially from perspective of the Achaemenid Persia, and benefited from his profound familiarity with the Neo-Assyrian, Greek and Latin texts. His command of classical archaeology proved greatly beneficial to his study and investigations, and later on he also used Pahlavi and New Persian texts (specially the *Šāh-nāma*) to illuminate Iranian iconographic traditions. All these studies, in which Persepolis always formed the center of gravity, led to a large number of scientific monographs, essays and issues, as well as published lectures, which considerably broadened our knowledge about Achaemenid cultural history and produced fruitful discussions. Most of his works appeared in the form of brilliantly conceived well-documented and lavishly illustrated articles in *AMI*, but he also contributed several to the proceedings of the Achaemenid workshops which published under the title *Achaemenid History* (henceforth *AchHist.*), and a large number of concise but informative entries to specialized encyclopaedias (e.g. in *RA*, *Enciclopedia archaeologica*, and *Enciclopedia dell’ arte antica*).

His contributions to the *EIr.* (particularly those on Median and Achaemenid art and architecture) and some of his art-historical reviews (see bibliography) easily rank among the finest pieces of scholarship.

As a university teacher, he successfully educated young Iranian colleagues together with German and other foreign students, thus leading them to their doctorate and greatly promoting international cooperation in the archaeological field, as far as this could be done on a collegial basis. Peter



Calmeyer carried out all his research in close cooperation with his wife, Ursula Calmeyer-Seidl, whose contributions to the study of Ziggurats, Urartan art, Elamite rock-reliefs and the [Bisotun](#) monuments were exemplary. From 1973 to 1993 Calmeyer enriched each *AMI* volume with a thorough and analytical bibliography of studies related to the history, art and antiquities of Iran and its cultural sphere. In these paragons of methodical exactitude, he took particular care to cross-reference various works, objects and locations, and not to leave out studies of his Turkish and Iranian colleagues. For students and colleagues alike these bibliographies were – and still are- indispensable indexes to the results of recent publications on Iranian topics. Calmeyer initiated the compilation of an index for *AMI* 1-27 (1978 to 1993), but untimely death left the plan unrealized.

Barely two months separated Calmeyer's retirement and his untimely death, whereupon John Curtis voiced the opinion of all by lamenting (p. 193) that "archaeology has been robbed of a man still in the prime of life who had so much still to offer." Other fields of Iranian studies also felt the poorer by this loss. Mary Boyce intimated this best when she described (p. 155 n. 1) her contribution to Calmeyer's memorial volume as a token of "respect and affection" offered "with gratitude for the unfailing kindness and helpfulness which he, a distinguished archaeologist, showed to one working in neighbouring fields." The tragic event in fact ushered the end of a remarkably fruitful phase in the history of the German Archaeological Institute. For almost immediately the Oriental section of the German Archaeological Institute was re-structured and the Tehran Branch merged into a newly founded Eurasian Department (hence the changing of the Institute's yearly publication to *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan*).

A gentleman through and through and a multilingual humanist of inexhaustible enthusiasm, Peter Calmeyer was at home among different peoples and appreciative of various disciplines and cultures. These qualities earned him a prominent and highly valued position in the scholarly world, unlikely to be matched by any one individual.



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