



GRÜNWEDEL, ALBERT

GRÜNWEDEL, ALBERT, prominent German Indologist, Tibetologist, art scholar, and archeologist (b. Munich, 31 July 1856; d., Lenggries, 28 October 1935; [Figure 1](#)). An outstanding scholar, Grünwedel's importance for Iranian studies lies in his organization and administration of two of the four German expeditions to Turfan (see [EXCAVATIONS iv.](#)).

The son of a painter, Grünwedel was educated in the arts, which he combined with the study of Oriental languages such as Avestan under Ernst Kuhn and Ernst Trumpp. He graduated with a doctorate in 1883 (not 1879 or 1881, as is sometimes said) from the University of Munich, having edited the sixth book of the *Rūpasiddhi* of the Buddhappiya. Already in 1881 he had been employed as an assistant by the Ethnological Museum (Museum für Völkerkunde) in Berlin. In 1883 he was promoted to assistant director for the Museum's ethnological collection and the collection of Nordic antiquities. In 1891 he was honored by the University of Berlin with the title of professor in recognition of his numerous publications on Buddhist art, Central Asian archaeology, and the languages of the Himalayas. Grünwedel's *Buddhistische Kunst in Indien* (Berlin, 1893), which was translated into English and revised and reissued (*Buddhist Art in India*, tr. A. C. Gibson, rev. and enlarged by J. Burgess, London, 1901; repr. Delhi, 1974), as well as his *Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei: Führer durch die lamaistischen Sammlungen des Fürsten E. Uchtomskij* (Leipzig 1900), deserve mention. In these two significant works Grünwedel provided definite evidence for the Greek roots of Gandharan art and its continuation in Central Asia.



The second and most important part of Grünwedel's scientific work took place during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1899 he was invited by the Russian Orientalists Radloff and Salemann to participate in Russian archeological and research expeditions in northern Xinjiang, where archeological remains of the old civilization along the Silk Road had been discovered. Inspired by those two scholars, Grünwedel made a lasting contribution to scholarship by energetically organizing the first German expedition, which worked under his directorship from 1902-3 at İdīqut Şahrī. The expedition brought back to Germany such abundant material that the arrangement of a second expedition (led by Albert von Le Coq) was assured. The third German expedition, which worked from 1905-7 in Tumşuq, Qarā Şahr, and Turfan was also headed by Grünwedel (see [EXCAVATIONS iv](#)).

All researchers who worked in Central Asia during those years had to decide whether to document archeological finds scrupulously or simply to hoard as many valuable pieces as possible. Much more than his colleague Le Coq, Grünwedel tended to the first method. Like others he, too, had whole frescos cut from cave walls for shipment to Europe, but he only did so after having photographed the site and produced extensive drawings of the murals. Rather than taking pieces only, he attempted to remove the entire fresco. Grünwedel also stressed that manuscripts, though less spectacular artifacts, should be among the objectives of archeological excavations as well and ought not be left to local treasure hunters. It is not Grünwedel's fault that the texts retrieved by his first expedition are to this day less well documented and researched than the art works.

Grünwedel has described the results of his expeditions with great precision in two books: *Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten in Idikutschahri und Umgebung im Winter 1902-1903* (Munich, 1905) is the result of the first, and *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan* (Berlin, 1912) that of the second expedition. The interpretation of the excavated artifacts owes much to his knowledge of Buddhism, but Grünwedel did not participate in editing the textual documents. His achievements solicited wide recognition. In 1899 he was elected a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, in 1904 he was made departmental superintendent at the Ethnological Museum, and in 1916 he received the title of *Geheimrat* (privy councilor). But those years also brought many disputes, such as the rivalry with Le Coq, who together with Grünwedel advanced to the forefront of the German Turfan expeditions and did not agree in all cases with Grünwedel's views; confrontations with



Wilhelm von Bode, in which Le Coq again took a mediating role; and, not least, the unpleasant argument with F. W. K. Müller over the question of who was the first to recognize the character of Manichean writing and written documents. The verdict of his contemporaries, as well as posterity, has sided with Müller.

Grünwedel retired in 1921. He retreated to his native Bavaria in 1923, where he spent the last years of his life at Lenggries near Bad Tölz. There he wrote a substantial number of scholarly books, which show, however, that a progressive illness, while not depriving him of energy and memory, repeatedly robbed him of the ability to differentiate between delusion and reality. “Already in some sections of ‘Alt-Kutscha’ it is difficult to distinguish between things based on facts, speculation and invention,” commented Ernst Waldschmidt on Gründ-wald’s magnificently illustrated publication on Turfan, *Alt-Kutscha: archäologische und religionsgeschichtliche Forschungen an Temperagemälden aus buddhistischen Höhlen der ersten acht Jahrhunderte nach Christi Geburt* (Berlin, 1920). To an even greater extent this is true for such late works as *Die Teufel des Avesta und ihre Beziehungen zur Ikonographie des Buddhismus Zentral-Asiens* (Berlin, 1924); *Die Legende des Na Ro Pa, des Hauptvertreterers des Nekromanten- und Hexentums: Nach einer alten tibetischen Handschrift als Beweis für die Beeinflussung des nördlichen Buddhismus durch die Geheimlehre der Manichäer, übersetzt von A. Grünwedel* (Leipzig, 1933); or *Tusca* (Leipzig, 1922), in which Grünwedel claimed to have solved the Etruscan problem. Colleagues in the field have sharply criticized these works but nevertheless not simply ignored them. Grünwedel’s speculations about “Etruscan Satanism” have been adopted by Alfred Rosenberg in his *Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1934, pp. 62-63).

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(For valuable support in the preparation of this article, the author wishes to thank the Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin, especially Lore Sander; Hartmut Walravens of the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz; and Peter Zieme).