



HINZ, (A.) WALTHER

HINZ, (A.) WALTHER German scholar of Persian and Elamite studies (b. 19 November 1906 in Stuttgart, d. 12 April 1992 in Göttingen; [Figure 1](#)). Hinz was born into a merchant's family. From 1926, he pursued studies in Journalism, Eastern European, Slavonic, and Oriental Studies at the universities of Leipzig, Munich, and Paris. In 1930, he was awarded his doctorate at the University of Leipzig for a thesis on the cultural history of Russia under Tsar Peter the Great (1933). It was while completing this thesis that Hinz's attention was drawn increasingly to Persia, motivating him to change his field of research to Persian studies (see Hinz, 1938b, p. 7). His main teacher in this new field of research that he had chosen was Hans-Heinrich Schaeder, who in 1931 moved from Leipzig to Berlin. After completing his studies, Hinz became a government official in the Ministry of Education, also in Berlin, and in 1934 he received accreditation as a qualified university lecturer in Islamic studies (again under the mentorship of Schaeder). Eventually in 1937, Hinz was appointed super-numerary professor (from 1941, full professor) in the history and culture of the Near East at the University of Göttingen.

Hinz served as a counter-intelligence officer during World War II and suffered a period of internment afterwards. Due to his suspension from his teaching post by the British military government, he was forced to earn his living by another profession, partly as a translator, and, from 1950, as the political editor of a newspaper in Göttingen. He eventually returned to his chair of Oriental philology in Göttingen in 1957 and continued to teach there until his retirement in 1975, the year before he received an honorary doctorate from



Tehran University.

Hinz made repeated research visits to Iran, first of all in 1936 and then in 1939 and 1958, followed by frequent visits in the sixties and seventies. He wrote the book *Iranische Reise. Eine Forschungsfahrt durch das heutige Persien* (Berlin, 1938), about his first visit in the summer and autumn of 1936; and a later work, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (Berlin, 1969), is based on the research he completed during two subsequent visits. Hinz, an excellent amateur photographer, took thousands of photographs of Persia (the country, its people, archeological and epigraphic documents, etc.) during his travels, enabling him to rely mostly on his own work to illustrate his books, from the aforementioned *Iranische Reise* to *Darius und die Perser* (Baden-Baden, 1976-79), which was his cultural history of Achaemenid Iran.

Works. Under Schaeder's influence Hinz concentrated first primarily on the history of Persia in the Islamic period, especially under the Timurids and Safavids. After a study of the Safavid Shah Esmā'il II (1933) he completed a book, his *Habilitationsschrift*, entitled *Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1936), which focused on cultural history and the history of ideas. It describes the origins of the Safavid dynasty as a 14th-century Sufi order and highlights the symbiosis of Persian and Turkish elements in the formation of the Persian national identity and the Persian nation-state. The main focus of this work is the history of the "religious state" in Ardabil under the shaikhs Jonayd, Ḥaydar, and Solṭān-'Alī, and their relations with the Āq Qoyunlu Turkomans.

The expression of national identity in Persian culture throughout history (from the Achaemenids to the time of its publication) is the subject of Hinz's introductory sketch *Iran: Politik und Kultur von Kyros bis Rezâ Schah* (Leipzig, 1938), the dominant theme of which is the culture's remarkable capacity for renewal, even during lengthy periods of foreign rule. In connection with these studies on the cultural history of Persia in the Islamic period, Hinz turned his attention increasingly to the administrative, economic, and social history of the period. He published a number of key articles on accountancy, administration, food prices, and so on, as well as the following two important reference tools for the economic and social historian: first, a survey of the weights and measures used in all Islamic countries (*Islamische Maße und Gewichte umgerechnet ins metrische System*, Leiden, 1955) and second, as its counterpart, a summary of Islamic currencies and their value in gold (*Islamische Währungen des 11. bis 19. Jahrhunderts umgerechnet in Gold. Ein*



Beitrag zur islamischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Wiesbaden, 1991). This latter booklet, which was published shortly before Hinz's death, shows that he continued to examine these issues even in his old age. Hinz's edition of a 14th-century Persian treatise on public accountancy, known only from a single manuscript in Istanbul (Aya Sofya 2756), is also worth mentioning, for this work (1952) distinguished him for the first time as a successful decipherer, by his breaking the code of the cryptography (*siāq*) used by the scribes of that text. Although Hinz was first and foremost a historian, he also compiled an easily comprehensible introduction to modern colloquial Persian (*Persisch. I: Leitfaden der Umgangssprache*, Berlin, 1942), which fulfilled his aim to remedy shortcomings in knowledge of the spoken language; this book went through five editions before it was last published in 1971.

Subsequent to his appointment in Göttingen, Hinz devoted more and more of his time to research in the history and languages of ancient Persia. His first contribution to this field was an article on the first year of the rule of King Darius I and the Bisotun (q.v.) inscription (1938c, pp. 136-73). The study of this major Achaemenid king gave Hinz the challenge of working with texts in the Old Persian language. Hinz took the study of the languages of Persia seriously, and even published lexicographical articles despite the fact that he was an historian, for he was committed to making accessible the original source materials themselves for historical analysis.

Hinz participated in the academic debate about the introduction of Old Persian cuneiform writing, first of all with an article in 1952 on the statement of King Darius himself in his Bisotun inscription (DB par. 70); he stood at the very forefront of those who held the view that it was Darius I who, in the DB text, started using that particular writing system. The fruit of his research in Achaemenid studies is his two-volume work, *Darius und die Perser. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Achämeniden* (Baden-Baden, 1976-79), where he tries to present a general view of the subject for the benefit of a broad readership of non-specialists who are interested in cultural history.

Hinz also devoted much time to studies of Elam and the Elamite language. His book, *Das Reich Elam* (Stuttgart, 1964) was the first general account of this subject ever written in German and was regarded as a pioneer-ing work especially for its chapter on cultural history, since this aspect had never been treated before. Hinz dealt not only with the historical facts and their chronology (most of which he had to discover for himself), but also with script(s), language, religion, legal system, art, and civilization, etc. Hinz's



achievements in the study of ancient Persia include his contribution of two chapters on Persia, ca. 2400-1800 B.C.E. and ca. 1800-1550 B.C.E. respectively, to the revised 3rd edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* (CAH3 I, pt. 2, 1971, pp. 644-80; II, pt. 1, 1973, pp. 256-88).

After Richard T. Hallock had at last published the *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* in 1969, Hinz immediately set about the historical evaluation of that mass of new Elamite-language source material which had been excavated in Persepolis back in the thirties. Since one could expect far-reaching discoveries on many questions of Achaemenid history, and particularly on the administration and economy of the Achaemenid Empire, Hinz familiarized himself better than anyone else with the then still scarcely accessible Elamite language, for Elamite texts had the distinct advantage of originating from the very heart of the empire, unlike most of the other historical sources available, which were from far beyond its borders. Whereas most scholars treated these documents as additional linguistic and onomastic material, Hinz used them to shed light on the structure of the Achaemenid court administration, which was a continuation of the Elamite tradition and was therefore managed by Elamite scribes. For the purposes of this research (see Hinz, 1971, pp. 260-311) he benefited from his knowledge of the later conditions in Sasanian and, especially, Safavid times.

These 2,000 Elamite texts contain much vocabulary and nomenclature that was not attested before and was not known from Old Persian sources either, forcing the historian to carry out in-depth linguistic and onomastic research (i.e., to extract the original Old Persian from their Elamite renderings). To address these issues, Hinz wrote his book *Neue Wege im Altpersischen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), which also involved research in the Aramaic inscriptions on the newly published Persepolitan stone mortars, pestles, and bowls as well. Moreover, his *Altiranisches Sprachgut der Nebenüberlieferungen* (Wiesbaden, 1975), in which he tried to collect in a more systematic fashion the complete set of ancient linguistic materials which are attested in the so-called collateral sources in Assyrian, Babylonian, Elamite, Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, etc., is a continuation of that basic study.

An even more ambitious project, the two-volume *Elamisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, 1987), which he prepared in collaboration with his pupil Heidemarie Koch, developed from his interest in Elamite linguistics. This pioneering work of about 1,400 pages (ca. 16,000 lemmata) brings together the entire lexical stock attested in Old, Middle, New, and Achaemenid Elamite texts, making it



the first Elamite dictionary which is not limited to a single group of texts. The *Wörterbuch* provides a complete listing of all Elamite vocabulary and nomenclature, taking into account more than 2,500 still unpublished Fortification tablets, and it defines the meaning of all words and names (including those of Iranian origin) attested in Elamite script, so far as this is possible. In 1961, Hinz successfully achieved a breakthrough in the decipherment of the Linear Elamite of the 23rd century B.C.E. (see Hinz, 1962, pp. 1-21). A silver vase found later with another such inscription has confirmed the basic principles of his thesis, as Hinz was able to demonstrate when he resumed the discussion of all the documents in his *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (Berlin, 1969, pp. 11-44).

Studies in the Sasanian period and Middle Persian texts account for only a small portion of Hinz's oeuvre. The same applies for the Avesta and the Avestan language, even though, as a deeply religious man, Hinz turned his attention often to the religions of ancient Iran, and particularly to the biography of Zarathushtra, about whom he produced a book-length study with many novel ideas (Hinz, 1961), which contained also a completely new translation of the *Gathas* into German. However, he has never been considered one of the foremost authorities in this particular area.

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