



SPIEGEL, FRIEDRICH (VON)

SPIEGEL, FRIEDRICH (von) (b. 11 July 1820 in Kitzingen am Main, d. 15 December 1905 in Munich), German orientalist and scholar of Iranian studies. Devoting most of his life to Old Iranian and Zoroastrian studies, he became one of the most prolific authors of his time and, as a pioneer, put Iranian studies in German-speaking countries on a solid foundation.

Life; general survey and first publications. Having reached the matriculation level in Ansbach and having already taught himself some Hebrew and Arabic, in 1839 Spiegel enrolled in the University of Erlangen to study theology. Soon he transferred to Oriental studies with the poet and orientalist Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866), who awakened his interest in New Persian literature and in Iran in general. For some time he continued his studies in Leipzig with Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer and Hermann Brockhaus, and in Bonn with Johannes Gildemeister and Christian Lassen (1800–1876), who induced him to deal with Pali. Based on Lassen's copy of a Paris manuscript, Spiegel edited part of the Buddhist rules for the ordination of monks now known as *Kammavācā* under the title *Kammavâkyam* (Spiegel, ed. and tr., 1841). With this first edition and Latin translation of chs. 1–5 of that Pali text he graduated from Jena University in November 1842. In the same year he went to Copenhagen in order to continue the studies in Pali he had begun in Bonn, and to study the Pali manuscripts brought to the Royal Library by Rasmus Rask (1787–1832). This research at the Royal Danish Library resulted in the *Anecdota Palica* (Spiegel, 1845), wherein parts of the *Rasavāhini* stories and of the *Uragasuttanta* (with Buddhaghosa's commentary) are edited, translated



and annotated. With those studies on Pali, the language of the sacred books of the Buddhists, Spiegel, became one of the pioneers in that field in Germany.

While working in the Copenhagen Library, Spiegel became acquainted with the theologian and Oriental scholar Justus Olshausen (1800–82), who was at that time professor of Oriental studies at the University of Kiel. Olshausen had been officially commissioned in 1841 to examine critically the Arabic and Persian manuscripts of the Royal Library in order to catalogue them completely and to publish any important pieces. Closer acquaintance with Olshausen was to prove crucial for Spiegel, since in 1829 Olshausen had published for the first time a section of the Avestan *Vidēvdād* and was also one of the pioneers in Pahlavi studies. Apparently it was Olshausen, who in Copenhagen prompted Spiegel to deal with the Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts there, as well as the famous “[Codices Hafnienses](#)” Rask had acquired in India.

Spiegel immersed himself more and more in those codices and was directed by this to the field of Old Iranian studies, and in particular to the study of the sacred books of the Zoroastrians, to which he devoted himself until his old age. Tirelessly he copied the manuscripts he considered worthy of the attention of scholars, and Olshausen let him have his own copies of the Avestan codices kept in Paris, thereby helping him considerably.

Afterwards Spiegel continued studying and copying Avestan and Middle Persian manuscripts in London and Oxford for some time. In 1852, he went to Paris to study the *Pahlavi Rivāyats*, from which he hoped for an insight into the liturgy of the Parsis.

After returning from his manuscript studies in 1847, Spiegel lived for some time in Munich, where he associated regularly with the orientalist Marcus Joseph Müller (1809–74), one of the pioneers in Pahlavi studies, and the theologian and Indo-Iranian scholar Friedrich Windischmann (1811–61). The latter’s *Zoroastrische Studien: Abhandlungen zur Mythologie und Sagensgeschichte des Alten Iran* (Berlin, 1863) was edited posthumously by Spiegel. This was after Spiegel in 1849 had been appointed extraordinary professor of Oriental languages at the University of Erlangen, where he taught (from 1852 as full professor) not only Indo-Iranian, but also Semitic languages. He retired at the end of the winter term 1890/91 and returned to Munich.

Spiegel was not only astonishingly productive, but he published many



pioneering works. Having found in Old Iranian studies the field he felt destined for, he devoted his lifetime to putting all his energy into studying the languages, literatures, history and culture of Ancient Iran, and especially the sacred books of the Zoroastrians. As one of the leading Iranologists of the 19th century he had a worldwide reputation: He was a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (from 1848), of the Prussian and the Imperial Russian Academies, and of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (from 1867). He was given several Bavarian decorations by his sovereign prince and even a title of nobility for his person. The high standing he enjoyed among the Parsis in India is apparent from the memorial volume published in Bombay in 1908, which contains some three dozen contributions to the field of Iranian studies. This reputation is no surprise, since Spiegel became the founder of modern Iranian studies as pursued by the Parsis. Evidence for this is the fact that [Kharshedji Rustamji Cama](#) in 1859 pursued Avestan and Pahlavi studies with Spiegel in Erlangen (where conversely he himself instructed Spiegel in elementary Gujarati). But also several German scholars famous for their work in Iranian studies were among Spiegel's disciples; the latter included, for a brief while [Friedrich Carl Andreas](#) and [Christian Bartholomae](#), and for a more substantial period, [Wilhelm Geiger](#), who succeeded him in the University of Erlangen professorship, and Philipp Keiper (1855–1927).

Avestan and Middle Persian studies. When Spiegel began his Avestan studies in Copenhagen with the *Vidēvdād*, he followed to a great extent the model and the standard set by [Eugène Burnouf](#). He began to read the manuscripts, to compare and analyze the texts and to understand them little by little. In 1846, before those studies bore fruit and Spiegel concentrated entirely on Zoroastrian texts, he published an anthology of New Persian texts (*Chrestomathia Persica*) testifying to the knowledge of this language and literature he had acquired from Rückert's teaching. This book is a well-chosen selection of extracts from works of Persian authors such as Ferdowsi, Neẓāmi, Sa'di, and Jāmi. With its helpful glossary it was well-suited at its time as a reader in Persian literature. It was about this time that Spiegel's book on the Oriental Alexander legends appeared (see Spiegel, 1851a), which he described mainly according to Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* and Persian or other literary works dependant on it, particularly Neẓāmi's *Eskandar-nāma*, from which large parts are quoted. It is connected with studies of the sources of the *Šāh-nāma* and with a critical view of the use Ferdowsi made of them. It was Spiegel's work which showed that the Oriental adaptations of that legend depend on the European tradition of the Greek Alexander Romance by Pseudo-Callisthenes,



but are transposed to another milieu with its own color.

During his manuscript studies in Copenhagen, Spiegel began to read Avestan texts and the relevant traditional writings with much enthusiasm, and tried to understand the structure of the Avestan language (see esp. Spiegel, 1864–68, I, pp. V ff.). He now abandoned once and for all his Pāli studies in favor of the study of the languages and the cultural history of ancient Iran. When turning to the *Vidēvdād* (which at that time usually was called “Vendidad”), he had to modify the methodology of Eugène Burnouf used chiefly in his epoch-making *Commentaire sur le Yaçna* I (Paris, 1833). For Burnouf was the first to begin analyzing the Paris manuscripts brought back from India by Anquetil-Duperron in a systematic scholarly way, comparing the texts of those codices and deducing their language. The principal aid Burnouf could make use of in doing this was the Sanskrit version of the *Yasna* by Neryosangh, which seemed to be the oldest form he could find of the indigenous interpretation of the texts by the Parsis themselves. Although Spiegel was able to draw not only upon the Paris codices, but also upon the London and Copenhagen manuscripts, he was in an awkward situation, with regard to the *Vidēvdād*, for he had no Sanskrit version at his disposal and had to work with the Middle Persian translation alone. Consequently, in order to interpret the Avestan texts, Spiegel had to study and understand the then practically unknown language of the Middle Persian translation.

Spiegel had two different kinds of Middle Persian translations at his disposal: on the one hand there were the Pahlavi texts of the ordinary type with a great number of Aramaic forms, and on the other hand were the Pāzand texts in purely phonetic spelling without those foreign Aramaic elements (or “heterograms”). Spiegel was the first to recognize that those two sorts of texts were practically identical, and that the Pāzand texts were more or less mechanically transcribed from Pahlavi. They are nearer to New Persian as regards phonology and morphology and therefore are of great significance for understanding the Middle Persian language of the whole of Zoroastrian literature. From 1850 onwards, he began to reap systematically the harvest of his studies. Believing that the study of the Avesta should always be connected with that of the indigenous commentaries, it is natural that the first book resulting from his studies of Zoroastrian writings should have been his *Grammatik der Pārsi-Sprache* (Spiegel, 1851b), a grammar of that form of late Middle Persian which is now called “Pāzand.” In this book the language in which the commentaries on the Avestan texts were written is described for the



first time in all its aspects (phonology, word-formation and inflexion), and accompanied by specimens of texts, esp. several extracts from the Pāzand *Mēnōg ī xrad* with its Sanskrit version, a German translation and annotations, but unfortunately without a glossary.

Later, Spiegel explained (cf. Spiegel, 1864–68, II, p. 178) that he regarded as the only safe road the one from the well-known to the less known or the unknown: “Von diesem Gesichtspunkte aus habe ich meine Studien über das Avesta mit dem dem Neupersischen so nahe stehenden Pārsi begonnen, habe mit Hilfe dieses Dialektes dann zuerst das Huzvāresch, dann mit Hilfe des Huzvāresch das Altbaktrische zu erforschen versucht” (From this point of view I began my study of the Avesta with that of the Pāzand which is so close to New Persian, then tried by means of that dialect first to penetrate into Pahlavi and then by means of Pahlavi into the Avestan language). For that time, this grammar may well have been commendable as a first tentative attempt, but later it was judged as premature, just as Spiegel’s Pahlavi grammar was.

After some minor articles and a study on *Vd.* 19 (see Spiegel, 1850–54), in 1851 Spiegel began to publish in instalments his two-volume critical edition of the Avestan texts together with their Middle Persian translation (Spiegel, 1853–58) and the three-volume German translation of those sacred books (Spiegel, 1852–63). Both series began with the *Vidēvdād* (edition, vol. I, 1853), to which followed the books *Visprad* and *Yasna* (edition, vol. II, 1858) and, in the translation alone, the *Ḳorda Avesta*. Originally Spiegel had aimed at a complete edition of all the Avestan texts based on all manuscripts available, together with their Pahlavi versions, but after the publication of Westergaard’s *Zendavesta* (see below) he changed his plans. At Spiegel’s instigation Avestan type fonts were created for that edition. In the introduction to the first volume he described the various collections of manuscripts and the single codices. He also outlined the value of each individual manuscript and above all made it quite clear that they must be subdivided into two classes, one with the Pahlavi version added to the Avestan text and the other without this version, the so-called *Vendidād sādes*. On the whole, Spiegel followed the readings of the manuscripts, strictly listed the variants he found, and generally refrained from emendations. By separating the Pahlavi version from the Avestan text he made those two texts independent from each other, in contrast to the manuscripts themselves, which contain the Avestan and the Middle Persian texts combined in such a way that short Avestan sections are followed by their literal Pahlavi



translation. (Eventually, however, they are expanded by explanatory glosses. There are also passages that are disrupted by longer commentaries in which the translator sometimes presented additional pieces of Avestan texts quoted from some other book, occasionally from one otherwise lost.)

At about the same time as Spiegel, Niels Ludvig Westergaard (1815–78) also began to publish his edition of the Avesta (*Zendavesta* I, Copenhagen, 1852–54), which up to the present is the most complete edition of that corpus, more so even than Geldner's *opus magnum*. Therefore Spiegel was able to take Westergaard's edition into account for the Avestan texts of *Visprad* and *Yasna* in Volume II, and it was this fact that induced him not to continue editing the remaining parts of the work. So Spiegel's edition remained incomplete, but this does not diminish its merit in including, in contrast to Westergaard's work, the Middle Persian rendering of the Avestan texts, which are often important for understanding them. In this respect Spiegel's edition remained authoritative for a long time. In the introduction to the second volume Spiegel presumed (p. 22) that the Avestan text was first written in another script similar to, if not identical with, the Pahlavi script. He also noticed the particular characters of the Avestan script occurring in some of the *Yasna* manuscripts.

Spiegel himself acknowledged that Westergaard's edition was better than his, especially with regard to textual criticism, because it was based on a greater number of manuscripts and, in particular, on one Iranian codex (Geldner's "Mf 2") differing from the tradition of the Indian manuscripts. Spiegel also admitted that Westergaard recognized several grammatical details important for constituting the text, which he himself did not discern, e.g., the difference between the active and the middle endings of verbal forms.

Spiegel, who published some studies significant for the interpretation of Middle Persian inscriptions and coin or seal legends and even edited and translated one chapter of the *Indian Bundahišn* (*ZDMG* 11, 1857, pp. 98–110) after Westergaard's facsimile edition of this text (of 1851) always fought against underestimating the Pahlavi version of the Avestan texts. He explained his view on the Parsi tradition in an article in 1847 (*ZDMG* 1, pp. 243 ff.), where he expressed his conviction that this tradition is not in a poor state and should not be easily ignored.

This principal perspective held by Spiegel is expressed most clearly in his German translation of the Avesta (Spiegel, 1852–63), published in parallel with



the text-edition itself (I: *Vendidad*, 1852; II: *Visprad* and *Yasna*, 1859; III: *Korda Avesta*, 1863) and characterized on the title-page as always taking “the tradition” into consideration. This work was the first (nearly) complete translation of the Zoroastrian sacred books into any European language since Anquetil-Duperron. It represented a tremendous step ahead in comparison with Anquetil-Duperron’s translation and was of special importance because of its valuable introductions to the individual texts and its detailed annotations. We can see most clearly how important this work was for Spiegel’s contemporaries if we consider the fact that it was translated into English in 1864 by Arthur Henry Bleeck. It was mainly this English translation which made Friedrich Spiegel’s name widely known among the Parsis, who appreciated it for taking into consideration their own traditional interpretation of their sacred writings.

Although Spiegel’s interpretation of the Avestan texts is characterized by taking into consideration the indigenous tradition (as mirrored in the Pahlavi books) and not dismissing it from the outset, this does not mean that he adopted it completely and did nothing but translate “the tradition.” By this general attitude, Spiegel became the leader of what then was often called derogatorily the “traditionalist school” of Avestan studies, in contrast to the “antitraditionalist” or “Vedologist school” of Rudolf von Roth (1821–95) and his followers. The latter, when coming upon some problematic word or passage, instead of consulting the Parsi tradition preferred to rely on a comparison with the Vedas, and thus in Spiegel’s view interpreted Avestan texts on the basis of, and often as copies of, Vedic data. As a result it was inevitable that Spiegel’s translation was criticized as following neither the philological methods of textual criticism and exegesis nor the needs of historical-comparative linguistics. On several occasions Spiegel discussed these general methodological problems (e.g., Spiegel, 1853) and then expounded his principle of understanding an Avestan text firstly on its own basis, and then by using the indigenous Parsi tradition, he did not mean that this should be done blindly and uncritically, but rather only if it would stand up to a critical review.

In this regard Spiegel’s two-volume commentary on the Avesta (Spiegel, 1864–68, I on *Vendidad*, II on *Visprad*, *Yasna*, and *Korda Avesta*) is particularly important. In the introduction to vol. II (pp. IX ff.) the methodological conflict and the long dispute are reviewed thoroughly. Overall, this work aimed at giving the reasons for his understanding of the text (e.g., for vindicating the



variant reading preferred in the edition) and justifying it philologically in a prudent and detailed manner (including many exegetical remarks), while at the same time correcting the text as it had been constituted by him, and his own translation, wherever necessary. On the basis of all the particular problems discussed, it emerges that the decisive ingredients for Spiegel are, as in principle already for Burnouf: (1) the tradition, particularly in the form of Neryosangh's Sanskrit version, and (2) the analysis of the Avestan texts as they stand. To this extent the commentary is a supplement to Spiegel's translation. In volume II (pp. 178–92) the relation of the Gathic dialect to "Avestan proper" is discussed thoroughly with regard to grammar, lexicon, and contents. We can sum up this discussion as saying that for the Gāthās, the Middle Persian translation and the tradition in general cannot be regarded as reliable guides. Spiegel's final conclusion (p. 188), however, has lost only little of its relevance to present studies on the Gāthās: We can only attempt, he says, to bring about another translation [scil.: other than that of the tradition] by comparing the individual passages and applying comparative philology. Those devices are sufficient for forming a subjective view; but only rarely can the results lay claim to objective validity.

The study of the Avestan language was also furthered by Spiegel's detailed grammar of the "Old Bactrian," language (Spiegel, 1867a). Instead of the name *Zend* which had been used until then, Spiegel called the Avestan language "Old Bactrian" because he shared the opinion that the Avestan texts were composed in Bactria. After the short grammatical sketch added by [Ferdinand Justi](#) to his *Handbuch der Zendsprache* (Leipzig, 1864), Spiegel's work was the first comprehensive Avestan grammar. Unfortunately it lacked transcription and used the original script. The dialect of the Gāthās is described separately in an appendix (pp. 339–94). It was Spiegel's explicit intention to expound in this book the general structure of the language as clearly and completely as possible, without going into every detail. Therefore not all problems are touched on, let alone resolved; on the contrary Spiegel often refrained from a thorough examination of complex data and instead put forward mere suppositions. Overall, however, the linguistic facts of script, phonology, word formation, inflection, and even syntax (at least concerning the use of the nominal and verbal forms) are determined, collected, and described in full, compared at best, with Old Persian. By this Spiegel wanted to lay a philologically solid foundation and to open up the possibility of studying Avestan like any other language.



In 1868 the comprehensive Avestan studies of Spiegel were brought to an end; edition, translation, and commentary were completed, and the grammar was published. The year before, his treatise on Zarathushtra had appeared (Spiegel, 1867b), which dealt with the scanty Greek and Oriental sources about the prophet, his name, date and homeland, his descent and all of his life and activity. The main conclusions Spiegel reached were that Zarathushtra, notwithstanding his great success in Bactria, was also at home in western Iran, while in the rest of the world (and elsewhere in Iran) he appears to be a legendary person. Part of this Zoroastrian complex of Spiegel's publications is also the two-volume work introducing the exegetical writings of the Parsi tradition (cf. Spiegel, 1856; Spiegel, 1860). The first volume of this study is practically the first grammar of the so-called Book Pahlavi ("Huzvâresch") ever published. From the point of view of the historian of Iranian studies, the most significant point is that it was just this *Grammatik der Huzvâresch-Sprache* that laid the foundation for a deeper and more systematic study of that language. It is based primarily on the Pahlavi renderings of *Vidēvdād* and *Yasna*, always making use of the Avestan text itself (and possibly of the Sanskrit version). The second volume (Spiegel, 1860) is largely a survey and a critical estimation of the traditional writings themselves, drawn from the original sources (the translation of the Avesta, *Bundahišn*, *Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag*, etc.). As a valuable addition to the grammatical survey, some longer extracts from those texts are quoted in transcription and rendered accessible by a glossary.

This volume about the Pahlavi writings was continued with edition of Neryosangh's Sanskrit translation of the *Yasna* (cf. Spiegel, 1861), which Spiegel had made use of when editing the Avestan text (in Spiegel, 1853–58, II). Although Neryosangh's Sanskrit seems to be rather barbaric, this translation was regarded by Spiegel as both suitable and helpful in approaching Middle Persian and understanding Middle Persian texts; because it is based, not on the Avestan original, but on its Middle Persian rendering. Spiegel's attitude therefore differs from that of Burnouf, whose *Commentaire sur le Yaçna* was based on Neryosangh, in that Spiegel regarded the Sanskrit version only as a key for understanding its Middle Persian model, not for approaching the Avestan texts. After the publication of smaller pieces by Burnouf and by Martin Haug it was Spiegel who for the first time presented a complete edition of the Sanskrit version of *Yasna*, based on one manuscript each from the Paris and Copenhagen collections. In summary, Spiegel was among the first scholars to deal with the Avestan texts and the indigenous commentaries in a scholarly



manner. Thus, his great pioneering works retained some value, even if scholars of subsequent generations such as Geldner, Bartholomae, and others had much more material at their disposal and tried to understand those ancient texts with more exact and refined methods.

Other fields of Old Iranian studies. In addition to his major Avestan and Middle Persian studies, Spiegel published a large number of minor articles on the most varied topics of exegesis and textual criticism (even metrics) of Avestan texts. Then he engaged in other fields of research, too. In 1862, he described the goal of all his scholarly endeavors to be the allocation to the Iranian branch of peoples and languages, its proper position in linguistics and history (Spiegel, 1862, p. V). This way of thinking is most plainly seen in an article that was significant for Iranian linguistics at that time, which gave an overall view of the history of the Iranian languages (*Beiträge zur Vergleichenden Sprachforschung*, 1861, pp. 1–37 and 217–35). His numerous and varied publications concerning other fields of Iranian studies are characterized in the following paragraphs.

In 1862, Spiegel published a practical edition of the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions (Spiegel, 1862). This valuable work was published in a second edition in 1881, and remained for some time the authoritative handbook. Nearly all the texts known at that time are presented in transcription and German translation (2nd ed., pp. 1–71), and are commented upon as far as necessary. The linguistic analysis based upon these texts is found in a substantial glossary and primarily in a comprehensive grammar (2nd ed., pp. 131–97). This includes the writing system and its decipherment, syntax, and comparisons, where appropriate, with the relevant data from Avestan and Old Indo-Aryan. The new edition was based on all previous editions of the texts and on other relevant studies, and it also took into consideration what could be learned from the Elamite (and Babylonian) versions. One must note, however, that Spiegel often fell back on secondary sources, so that the text is not always reliable.

An overall view of Iranian life and culture, though somewhat preliminary, is provided in his book *Érân, das Land zwischen dem Indus und Tigris* (Spiegel, 1863), which is directed to a broader public. A number of articles on geography and cultural and religious history are reprinted and brought up to date there; previously they had appeared in several journals, especially in *Das Ausland*. The various regions of (greater) Iran are described vividly with regard to their geographical features, climate, ethnography, and history.



Cultural history is outlined on the basis of literary and other sources in many different respects, providing informative observations on words and things. A particular object of attention is the relation between the Iranians and their neighbors to the East and West, the Indo-Aryan and Semitic peoples respectively.

Semitic influences on the Avesta are discussed also in the first volume of the *Arische Studien* (Spiegel, 1874, pp. 45–61). Moreover there are various contributions about Avestan and Middle Persian grammar in that same volume, mainly containing additions or corrections (e.g., concerning phonology) to explanations given in Spiegel's own Avestan grammar (Spiegel, 1867a). Aside from religious themes, such as the history of dualism, we find philological studies, such as a treatment of the Pahlavi version of *Y. 30* including a more general discussion of this particular form of language, of its transcription, and its name "Huzvâresch." The subject of the relations and correspondences between the Avesta and the *Šāh-nāma* concerning the legendary history of Iran, first touched on in this book (pp. 110–28), is taken up anew by Spiegel several years later in a separate article (*ZDMG* 45, 1891, pp. 187–203), which conversely took a closer look at the most striking differences between them.

Spiegel turned his attention to Avestan grammar in his comparative grammar of the Old Iranian languages (Spiegel, 1882). This placed a special emphasis on the comparison of the two variants of Avestan with cuneiform Old Persian, the earliest evidence of which language (under Darius), was in Spiegel's opinion older than the Gāthic dialect. Emphasis here on the Middle and New Iranian continuants, and also on the Old Indo-Aryan cognates, recedes into the background. As was typical for Spiegel, his main goal in this book was to ascertain the actual linguistic facts as they are attested in the manuscripts and inscriptions, whereas linguistic comparison remains secondary. All the linguistic phenomena from phonology to syntax are discussed in the customary manner with several sections being extended to include greater detail than usual from him. This applies to the sections on inner-Avestan sound change (i.e. the effect of internal sandhi), word formation by primary versus secondary derivational suffixes, and syntax; in addition to the use of case forms and the like on the rules of agreement, questions of sentence construction are also treated (e.g., word-order, interrogative and subordinate clauses). For the most part, however, Spiegel's grammar was soon superseded by Bartholomae's discussion of the same material in his two contributions to



the *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*.

The relations between Iranians and Indians in prehistoric times are dealt with in Spiegel's last monograph (Spiegel, 1887). This examines the conclusions to be drawn from the linguistic evidence of Old Iranian and Old Indo-Aryan for their prehistoric development in the common "Arische Periode." It is certain that the Iranian and the Indo-Aryan languages derive from a common proto-language called Proto-Aryan (or Proto-Indo-Iranian), spoken by a people who for a certain period shared a common development and a common civilization. This was seemingly the first time that a scholar had attempted to characterize this Proto-Aryan civilization more closely. In fact, he tried to describe as exactly as possible the cultural situation as it must have been before the Proto-Aryans split up into Proto-Iranians and Proto-Indo-Aryans. For this purpose a great deal of material relevant to cultural history is discussed in detail, from the terms for geographical concepts, the seasons, fauna, flora, metals, and minerals to social conditions, the way of life, and all matters concerning the world of the gods and demons. The essential point of such an investigation was to discover which words, objects, beliefs, and institutions are not restricted to Iran or India, but are inherited from that common Indo-Iranian period. Those common features typical of Proto-Aryan become evident most clearly in religious ideas and in everything concerning cult and theology; but that the same is also found with geographical names (chiefly with hydronyms) is of particular consequence.

The magnum opus on Iranian cultural history. From the preceding it should be clear that Friedrich Spiegel was not only engaged in the study of the Zoroastrian writings, but dealt in the same extent with the whole of Old Iranian culture. The sum of all his Old Iranian studies including those on the interpretation of the Avestan texts and their Middle Persian renderings, is contained in the three volumes of the *Érânische Alterthumskunde* (Spiegel, 1871–78), which form Spiegel's *magnum opus*. It is no exaggeration to say that this work represents the peak of Spiegel's scholarly studies and sums up his entire lifelong endeavor. Already Spiegel's numerous articles that were not devoted to purely linguistic or philological topics had revealed his broader interest in Iranian matters. The *Alterthumskunde* may be understood also as a first attempt to overcome the originally divergent development of Iranian studies, caused by the fact that Old Iranian studies followed more the philological model of Indo-Aryan and Indo-European studies, whereas research on Islamic Iran followed in the wake of Islamic and Semitic studies.



In some ways Spiegel tried to bring together those two traditions of scholarship for the benefit of Iranian studies in general, by explaining the data of later periods through those of antiquity and conversely by referring to modern data for both the linguistic and the factual interpretation of data for earlier periods.

Spiegel's *Érânische Alterthumskunde*, which on the whole follows the model of Christian Lassen's *Indische Alterthumskunde* (4 vols., Bonn, 1847–61; I–II, 2nd ed., 1867; repr. Osnabrück, 1968) and is dedicated to its author, is a substantial treasure-house of the knowledge about Iran available at that time. It is a rich account of both the country and its inhabitants and takes into consideration all aspects of the culture and history of the Iranian peoples and their ethnic groups. This large-scale survey drew a detailed picture of Iranian life and described it as completely as possible at that time – the geographical conditions, myths, legends, and religious conceptions, history as well as culture, the state system and politics, domestic life, arts and literature. In a word: all the information about Iran contained in the native Iranian sources is collected with assiduous diligence and analyzed carefully, so that the end result is a work of lasting value, which was a great advance and was replaced as the authoritative summary of the subject only by the second volume of the *Grundriss*.

This rich treasure of factual knowledge of Iran treated in detail the following items: Volume I (1871), book 1 (pp. 1–306): the physical geography of Iran and her provinces (including the climate and the products of the country), and the boundaries on the east, north and west; book 2 (pp. 307–422): ethnography, giving a survey of the modern tribes, to which lists of particular groups are added on pp. 738–60; and book 3 (pp. 423–737): the earliest period of Iranian history, starting with the Proto-Aryan period, to which Spiegel later returned in a separate book (Spiegel, 1887; see above), and the legendary prehistory of the Iranians with the relevant sources. The main topics of vol. II (1873) are in book 4 (pp. 1–235) the religion of the Iranians, where an account of the Zoroastrian system is followed by a chapter on the adherents of other “sects,” and in book 5 (pp. 236–632) the political history up to the time of Alexander the Great. At that time historians had to rely chiefly on non-Iranian sources, which were concerned largely with Iran's western frontier areas. Spiegel's chapter about the legend of Alexander among the Iranians (pp. 582–616), was in some ways a continuation of Spiegel's previous booklet on the same theme (cf. Spiegel, 1851a). Vol. III (1878) is a resumption of book 5 on “history and



politics,” presenting a historical account of the period from Alexander’s death until the end of the Sasanian Empire (pp. 1–542). Other aspects of cultural history are summarily described in the last two books: book 6 (pp. 543–733) deals with “the state and domestic life,” i. e. with the three estates of clergy, warriors, and the lower classes, and once more with the various foreign religions and sects found in Iran. Book 7 (pp. 734–833) is devoted to the field of “science and arts,” treating, in particular, languages and dialects, writing systems, Old Iranian literature (with emphasis on the Avesta and its translations), as well as ancient Iranian art. If this last chapter seems rather poor to today’s reader, it is because it was written before the first systematic archaeological excavations in Iran (see [ARCHAEOLOGY](#)).

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