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EGYPTIAN AND
SEMITO-HAMITIC
(AFRO-ASIATIC) STUDIES
IN MEMORIAM W. VYCICHL

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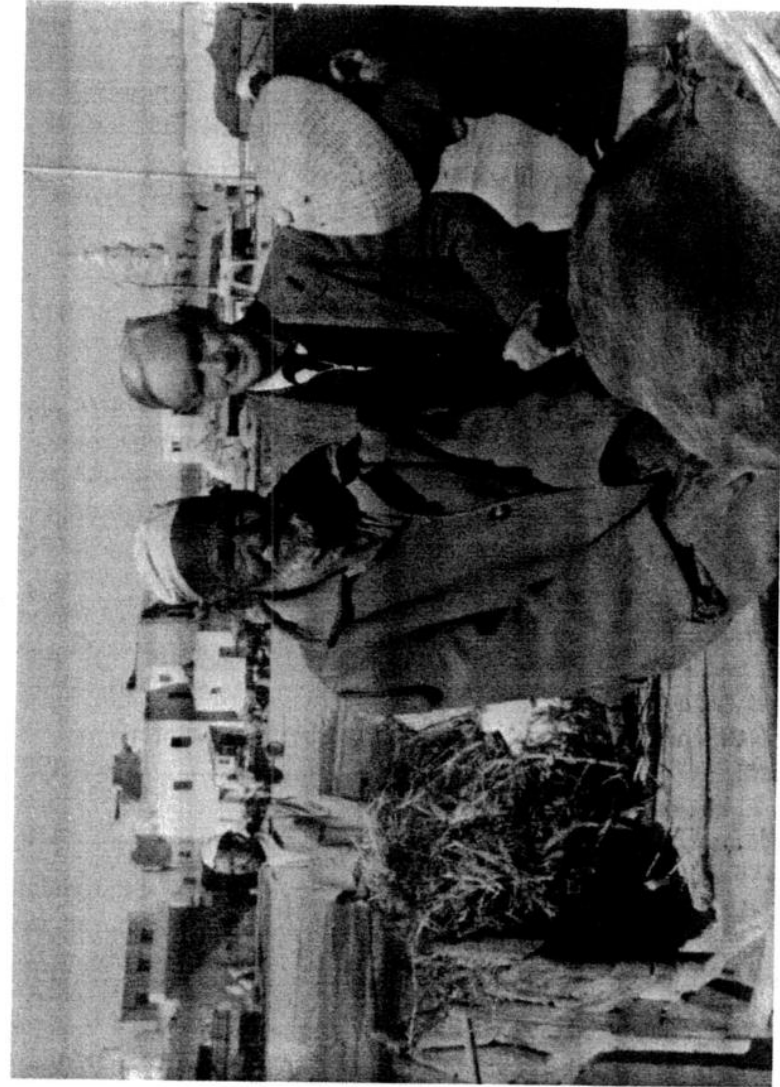
GÁBOR TAKÁCS



Werner Vycichl (1909–1999)



BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON



Werner Vycichl in 1987 with the oldest member of the Siwa Berbers

WERNER VYICHL (1909–1999)

The last great representative of the old generation of Egypto-Semitic and Afro-Asiatic (Semito-Hamitic)¹ comparative linguistics is gone. Together with W.A. Ward and C.T. Hodge, both of whom passed away recently (in 1996 and in 1998, respectively), he belonged to what can be described as the “old school” of Egypto-Semitic (and Egypto-Afro-Asiatic) studies, a rather neglected field of research, which was “kept alive” on the behalf of Egyptology up to the 1990s practically only by these three long surviving scholars.

The range of W. Vycichl’s scholarly activities was enormously wide, going far beyond the limits of Afro-Asiatic: Egyptian language history, vocalisation of Old Egyptian, Coptic language and culture, Arabic (esp. its Egyptian and Sudanese dialects), Amharic, Berberology, Beja (Bed’awye), and Hausa (Chadic) linguistics, Armenian, and even Finno-Ugric languages (including Hungarian).

In remembrance of W. Vycichl, already two memorial volumes have recently appeared in two different areas of his activities: Egyptian philology² and Berberology.³ The present volume is paying homage to his memory and scholarly heritage with a collection of articles contributing to the huge domain to which W. Vycichl devoted his research most intensively and extensively: Afro-Asiatic languages (excepting Berber)⁴ and comparative Afro-Asiatic linguistics.

¹ W. Vycichl used the traditional term “Semito-Hamitic” (kept in the title of this volume and in certain further cases out of respect for him), which, however, has been recently replaced by J.H. Greenberg’s scientifically more correct and commonly accepted “Afro-Asiatic” (and I.M. Diakonoff’s “Afrasian” used in the Russian works).

² *Bulletin de la Société d’Égyptologie, Genève* 23 (1999).

³ Naït-Zerrad, K. (ed.): *Articles de linguistique berbère. Méorial Werner Vycichl*. Paris, 2002, L’Harmattan.

⁴ Originally, still in late 1999 and early 2000, when I put forward the idea of an Afro-Asiatic *Gedenkschrift* for W. Vycichl, K. Naït-Zerrad and I were thinking of one common volume for all Afro-Asiatic contributions, but—due to the quantity of the incoming papers—we soon realized the need for two separate and fully independent volumes: one purely Berberological (undertaken by K. Naït-Zerrad) and a further one comprising all the rest of the Afro-Asiatic language family (initiated by G. Takács).

Since a detailed biography and bibliography of W. Vycichl has been most recently published,⁵ this remembrance will be restricted to mentioning only the most important facts of his life.

He graduated from the famous *Institut für Ägyptologie und Afrikanistik der Universität Wien* (founded by Leo Reinisch, directed later by Wilhelm Czermak) in 1932 with a Ph.D. dissertation entitled *Untersuchungen über das Hausa-Dialekt von Kano* (which was partly published in his fundamental study on the comparison of Hausa and Egyptian).⁶ He spent 5 years (1934–38) in Luxor, thanks to which he possessed an excellent knowledge of Arabic and its Egyptian dialect. His joint research with William H. Worrell (University of Michigan), a highly esteemed specialist of the subject, on the survival of Coptic traditions in Upper Egypt started in 1936 in Luxor, which resulted in their joint work on the *Popular Traditions of the Coptic Language*.⁷ The Second World War interrupted his career for a while. In 1947, he married Armène Vycichl (stemming from the Armenian Barsamian family),⁸ a loving wife for his entire life.⁹ The period between 1948 and 1960 he spent in Paris. In 1960, he moved to Genève. His academic career restarted in fact only in 1968, when he was appointed *privat-docent* of the University of Fribourg (he became a *professeur titulaire* in 1973). He took part in the foundation of the *Société d'Égyptologie Genève* in 1978 accepting the position of the vice president. He retired from the university of Fribourg in 1980, and devoted all his time to completing his long awaited *magnum opus*, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Louvain, 1983, Peeters), which was fol-

⁵ A. Vycichl: "Werner Vycichl: éléments biographiques." = Naït-Zerrad, K. (ed.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 15–17. G. Takács: Publications de Werner Vycichl. = *Ibidem*, pp. 19–41. A further version of the biography and the bibliography was published by Mme Armène Vycichl in the 54/2002 issue of the journal "*Discussions in Egyptology*" (Oxford), pp. 5–33. A bibliography listing the works published by W. Vycichl in 1933–1980 appeared in *Bulletin de la Société d'Égyptologie, Genève* 4 (1980), 9–18. A third biography appeared in the journal *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 91 (2001), 9–14.

⁶ "Hausa und Ägyptisch. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Hamitistik." = *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin* 37 (1934), 36–116.

⁷ In: *Coptic Texts of the University of Michigan Collection*. Ann Arbor, 1942. The University of Michigan. Pp. 294–354.

⁸ The painful history of this family has been painted by Meguerditch Barsamian in his poetic "*Histoire du village qui meurt*" (Paris, 1990, V. et A. Barsamian).

⁹ I wish to express my best thanks to Mme Armène Vycichl (Genève) for her vivid attention, enthusiasm, and all the information with which she helped the preparation of this volume.

lowed by his fundamental *La vocalisation de la langue égyptienne. Tome Ier: La phonétique* (Le Caire, 1990, IFAO). He carried out field research several times on the Berber dialects of Djerba and Siwa (the last one was made in 1987), which greatly contributed to his gigantic monograph *Die Berbersprachen*, which, unfortunately, is up to now unpublished.¹⁰

The importance of the heritage left behind by Werner Vycichl for comparative Afro-Asiatic linguistics can be compared only to that of Igor M. Diakonoff (1915–1999),¹¹ while his extraordinary contribution (continuing the best traditions of the once flourishing "old school") to the prehistory of Egyptian phonology and lexicon has made him an outstanding authority of this field.

It is my pleasure to express my best thanks to Miss Ingrid Heijckers and Mrs. Trudy Kamperveen for their careful work on this volume as well as to Brill Academic Publishers for publishing it in its Semitic series.

G.T.

Székesfehérvár, April 2003

¹⁰ Mme A. Vycichl submitted the manuscript (counting some 2,500 pp.) to the *Institut für Afrikanistik* in Bayreuth. Most of the manuscripts, field research records (also those concerning Siwa Berber) of Werner Vycichl were deposited in the "Fonds Werner Vycichl" of the "Oswin-Köhler-Archiv" of the Institut für Afrikanische Sprachwissenschaften (Frankfurt a/M). Werner Vycichl's monumental monograph "Die Berbersprachen" is now in preparation (edited by Maarten Kossmann and Dymitr Ibrizimow), and will be published probably in Germany.

¹¹ There have appeared already two distinct memorial volumes paying homage to Prof. Diakonoff in different areas of his activity. One in the field of Oriental studies in general, cf. Livšic, V.A. & Medvedskaja, I.N. & Jakobson, V.A. (eds.): *Istorija i jazyki Drevnego Vostoka: Pamjati I.M. Džakonova* (Sankt-Peterburg, 2002., Sankt-Peterburgskij Filial IV RAN). Contributions from comparative Afro-Asiatic have been collected by Bender, M.L. (chief ed.) & Appleyard, D. & Takács, G. (eds.) in: *Selected Comparative-Historical Afrasian Linguistic Studies in Memory of Igor M. Diakonoff*