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117 years ago the first volume of the *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* (I: Einleitende Disziplinen und Hilfsdisziplinen, by L. von Urlichs, 1892²) was published. Embracing a total of 211¹ books counting all single volumes and revised editions, this project is without doubt one of the greatest achievements of German scholarship, or even the Humanities, not only in terms of number of volumes, but also of conception. While most projects of this kind are begun by scholars, in this case a publisher, Oscar Beck, took the initiative. To quote Beck, the *Handbuch* aimed at

representing the state of the art of a large field of scholarship in an encyclopaedic way according to a precise plan, so that on the one hand the accounts of the individual disciplines by the most distinguished experts would make an organically coherent whole, and on the other hand the freedom of the individual accounts, being essential for a proper treatment of every discipline, was maintained.²

In other words, Beck wanted to collect the results of the individual disciplines of Classical Philology, Ancient History and Antiquities (“Privat- and Staatsaltertüemer”) in a clear form, taking into account the most recent developments in scholarship. For the conception of the *Handbuch*, he co-operated with three philologists from Munich who had already rendered outstanding

¹ Cf. Mahlke 2002.

² Quoted in translation from Bengtson 1988, XXIII-XXIV.

services to the world of scholarship: Karl von Halm had edited a couple of Latin authors, Konrad Bursian was the author of *Geographie von Griechenland*, and Eckard Wölfflin had written *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie und Grammatik* (1884), out of which the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* developed, starting in 1894. The first editor of the *Handbuch* was Iwan von Müller (1830-1917), who at that time held a chair of Classics and Education at the University of Erlangen, moving later at the University of Munich.

At the core of the *Handbuch*, there were initially the *History of Greek Literature* by the hellenist Wilhelm von Christ (1889), the *History of Roman Literature* by the latinist Martin Schanz (1890 ff.), the *Greek History* by Robert Pöhlmann (1896²) and the *Roman History* by Benedict Niese (1897²). Other important volumes that appeared were Müller's *Griechische Privat- und Kiessaltertümer* (1893²) and Hugo Blümner's *Römische Privataltertümer* (1911³).³

In 1913 Robert Pöhlmann followed Iwan von Müller as editor. However, Pöhlmann died the following year, and work could not be resumed until the end of World War I. The new editor, Walter Otto (1878-1941) seriously changed the conception of the project. Inspired by the works of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Eduard Norden, Eduard Meyer and his own mentor Ulrich Wilcken, he replaced the antiquarian approach by a historical one. In addition, he expanded the focus of the project by including the ancient Orient and Byzantium and a *Handbuch der Archäologie*. Later the *Handbuch der Archäologie* that had been included shortly before Otto's death was to be separated from the *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* and become an independent project.

From 1941-1953 there was no editor, but in 1953 Hermann Bengtson (1909-1989), Professor of Ancient History first in Würzburg and later in Munich, was appointed to the vacant position. The publisher and Bengtson were convinced that the *Handbuch* needed new inspiration after the decay of scholarship under

³ It would be a most interesting work for the history of scholarship focusing on ideologies to analyse the individual volumes as documents of their time. The only short history of the *Handbuch* is that by Bengtson (1988).

the Nazis. Bengtson himself contributed a very influential Greek (1950) and Roman History (1967 ff.). He promoted in particular the volumes on Byzantium.

The histories of Roman and Greek literatures caused some worry after World War II. Already in 1956 Bengtson had contacted Eduard Fraenkel in Pisa to develop a new conception for the History of Roman literature. However, Fraenkel was sceptical, being convinced that the glorious age of Latin scholarship in Germany was irrevocably over. In his view there were no scholars left with the charisma of Eduard Norden in Berlin, Friedrich Leo in Göttingen and Richard Heinze in Leipzig, who had founded new scholarly traditions. It was nearly thirty years after this first attempt at the end of Bengtson's directorship that a new *History of Roman Literature* was started, when the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) sponsored the new *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, edited by Peter L. Schmidt and Reinhart Herzog. The change of title from Schanz-Hosius' *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* is significant: the classicist approach, which had focused on Rome and neglected Late Antiquity, was abandoned to embrace the whole of Latin literature. This clearly shows in the emphasis on Late Antiquity in the new outline and the wide temporal focus in volume 8, which is supposed to deal with the years from 568-735 AD. The new title and conception were the result of the fierce debate over the traditional Canon among German latinists in the 1970s. It is no secret that this project has been a cause of concern to the publishers and the DFG for a variety of reasons, including the early death of R. Herzog (1993), the large number of authors involved, and the fact that it is planned as a German-French collaboration. To date, only three volumes have been published: vol. VIII 1 *Die archaische Literatur*, edited by W. Suerbaum in cooperation with J. Blänsdorf (2002), vol. VIII 4 *Die Literatur des Umbruchs: Von der römischen zur christlichen Literatur: 117-287 AD*, edited by K. Sallmann in cooperation with J. Doignon (1997), and vol. VIII 5 *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284-374 AD*, edited by R. Herzog (1989). The slow publication is symptomatic of present-day scholarship,

which has taken a very different path from scholarship in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, there are only a small number of scholars who would dare to write a handbook in more than one volume. The great number of publications, the ideal of multiple approaches and the theoretical requirements deter scholars from the individual enterprises that were common in the past. As a consequence, responsibilities are shouldered by a group of scholars, which leads to postponements. An extraordinary exception is *the Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters*, edited from 1996-2002 by Peter Stotz.

After Bengtson's death in 1989, the publishers at Beck discussed intensively the question of whether there was still a point to monumental projects like the *Handbuch*. However, resisting the trend to edit only short lexica in one volume, the director Wolfgang Beck and his lector, Dr. Stefan von der Lahr, decided to choose new editors and continue the *Handbuch*. In 2000 Hans-Joachim Gehrke became the editor for the historical volumes and I became the editor for the philological disciplines. A new *History of Greek and Roman History* and a new *History of Greek Literature* are already in production. To avoid the difficulties of the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur*, the new *History of Greek Literature*, edited by B. Zimmermann, will appear in 3 volumes (2007-). Moreover, it has been decided to edit an introductory volume focusing on methods and auxiliary disciplines, and including theoretical issues. Further volumes on social history and the history of science are being planned.

References

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Appendix

The sections of the *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*

I. Introductory and Subsidiary Disciplines

II. Greek and Latin Grammar - Rhetoric

III. Ancient Orient – Greek and Roman History

IV. Antiquities (“Privat-, Staats- und Kriegsaltertümer”)

V. History of Ancient Philosophy, Mathematics, Science and Religion

VI. *Handbuch der Archäologie* (now an independent Handbuch)

VII. History of Greek Literature

VIII. History of Roman/Latin Literature

IX. History of the Latin Literature of the Middle Ages

X. History of Ancient Law

(XI. to be defined)

XII. Byzantine *Handbuch*