

Abstracts

AMAR ANNUS. **The Hebrew Bible and Ancient Mesopotamia**

The paper gives an overview about the history of comparative studies in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Mesopotamia since the Pan-Babylonian school to the present. The constant recovery of new corpora of evidence from the Ancient Near East during the 20th and at the beginning of 21st century have created an array of new specialized fields of study which are often of relevance to scholars of the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ugaritology). For the most part of the 20th century, comparativism was not much pursued by scholars, but the end of the century has brought a new revival of the studies in the field. There is a growing corpus of evidence which indicates that the study of the Hebrew Bible can much benefit from the study of Ancient Mesopotamia, thus rendering comparativism a fruitful discipline in tomorrow's humanities.

PEETER ESPAK. **A Sumerian mythological fragment from the period of Ur III (NBC 11108): An early predecessor of the creation stories of Genesis**

The paper presents a translation and commentary of a Sumerian creation myth fragment dating from the Neo-Sumerian period. The text describes the world in its initial situation before the start of the actual creation process or before the emergence of the “present world”. It describes how the light came to be and probably tries to explain the hypothetical relation between the concepts of “light” and “darkness”. The missing of water from the world also indicates that the world is in its primordial and precreational state.

The paper presents several similarities of the Sumerian text to the much later Old Testament Genesis 1 creation stories. This is done keeping in mind that there is no evidence that points to a direct textual link. This analysis also treats the similarities and differences between the opening lines of the Babylonian myth *Enuma eliš* and the Sumerian and Old Testament texts.

VLADIMIR SAZONOV. **The first Column of the Behistun Inscription**

The article presents the translation of the first column of the most famous and important Old Persian text — the Behistun inscription with commentaries and analysis.

The Behistun inscription was composed at the end of the 6th century BC by the order of the Old Persian king Dareios I (522–486). In spite of the fact that he belonged to the royal family of Achaemenids who ruled over the whole Near East

(Persian Empire) since Cyrus the Great (558–530) who conquered Media, Lydia, Mesopotamia etc, Dareios was a usurper who came to power in an illegitimate way. As soon as he became the king, regions and provinces of the Persian Empire revolted against him and he was forced to conquer these territories again and again — Babylonia revolted twice. To reinforce his power and position in the Empire, and not only among the Persians but also among all the conquered tribes and nations, he commissioned a big bas-relief for Behistun — a very important crossing point of the routes of the Empire. On this bas-relief, he was depicted as a powerful and mighty king, a big and physically strong man who conquered all his enemies and destroyed them. He also ordered to write long inscriptions in three important languages of his Empire — in Old Persian cuneiform, in the Elamite language and in the Neo-Babylonian dialect of the Akkadian language.

All the three texts are almost identical and glorify King Dareios as a great conqueror, a good king who was chosen by the main god of the Persians, Ahuramazda, and to whom Ahuramazda gave kingship and power over all the countries and peoples. The texts also show his royal genealogy and list his royal titles where he calls himself a “king of kings”, etc. The Behistun inscription consists of five columns. The first column, the translation of which is presented in this article, mentions the events that took place before the reign of Dareios and during the first year of his reign when the “evil” magician Gaumata revolted against the Persian King Cambyses (530–522) who died very soon after that. Gaumata usurped the throne in Persia in spring 522 and committed a great number of crimes, and Dareios killed him and restored “the good old traditions”. This column also describes the dangerous revolts in Elam and Babylonia and their rapid suppression by Dareios. The first column of the Behistun inscription ends with December 522 and with the war between the army of Dareios I and Nidintu-Bēl, the King of Babylon. Thus, this very propagandistic text had the aim to show Dareios as a legitimate and good king, chosen and supported by the god Ahuramazda and other gods.

MARTTI KALDA. Hāthīgumphā Inscription (of Khāravēla): text and context

The article concentrates on little-researched epigraphic materials from the East Indian state of Orissa from the 3rd–1st centuries BC and their contextual analysis.

It encompasses newly made translations of three Aśoka’s royal edicts (XIII Rock Edict, Kalinga Rock Edicts I and II) and Khāravēla’s Hāthīgumphā Inscription into Estonian.

The article analyses in detail the geographical (spatial), historical (timely), textual (literary) and religious (ideological) context of the Hāthīgumphā Inscription.

The analysis explains the choice of historical locations of the inscriptions in Kalinga (Orissa), their textual standing in Indian epigraphy and their ideological leanings in the multi-religious space of India.

The article discloses the historical value of the texts and the historical context that surrounds them, reviving one of the forgotten chapters in Ancient Indian (and Ancient East Indian) history.

The article shows that, in addition to defining the inscriptions as historical sources, it is important to analyse the context surrounding the texts in order to formulate a complete picture.

ESTER EGGERT. **Krishna Vāsudeva in the Early Hindu Tradition**

In this article I attempt to uncover the position held by Krishna Vāsudeva in the early Hindu tradition. This is done through analysing the earliest layer of Hindu literature as well as relevant inscriptions from around the 3rd century BC. As a result, it must be concluded that Krishna Vāsudeva did not exist in the earliest layer of Hindu literature (i.e. in the *Vedas*, *Brāhmaṇas*), nor was the word *kṛṣṇa* used as an epithet for any of the Vedic gods. There is a Krishna Devakīputra in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, but it remains uncertain whether this figure can be considered the same as Krishna Vāsudeva.

More certain traces of the later epic hero and popular god begin to emerge from the 5th or 4th century BC onwards. Krishna Vāsudeva is mentioned by Pāṇini in his grammar, and Patañjali follows suit in his commentary. However, it seems that Krishna is more of an epic hero than a worshipped god. Krishna is referred to as *devadeva* on the so-called Heliodorus pillar inscription dating from the 2nd century BC. Therefore, it must be concluded that Krishna had risen to the divine ranks by that time. This is also supported by other inscriptions from the same area and from the Mathurā region. However, based on the inscriptions, it can only be said that Krishna was gaining popularity, but he was still an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and not an independent god. Unfortunately, these sources only paint a picture of the higher levels of society, and thus there is a possibility that around the 3rd century BC Krishna was already a revered godhead in the folk religion. Considering the earliest dates assigned to the *Mahābhārata*, it is certainly not just a remote possibility. This is also supported by Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador who visited India and the court of Chandragupta Maurya in the 4th century BC. Megasthenes mentions an “Indian Heracles” who is curiously similar to the Krishna Vāsudeva of epic literature.

Thus, it can be concluded that Krishna did not have a place in the proper Vedic religion but emerged during the earlier part of the epic period possibly with the help and support from foreign invaders like the Indo-Greeks and the Scythians.

TEET TOOME. Identifying the bodhisattva in the *Lotus Sūtra*

The paper takes a close look mainly at three different chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra* to investigate the concept of bodhisattva. The three chapters are from different textual layers of the sūtra.

First the paper gives a general description of the bodhisattva which is compared with two other types of Buddhist lysiology — *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*; we can see that the bodhisattva differs from the others by working for the benefit of sentient beings and aspiring for Buddha-knowledge; the higher grade of bodhisattva is also expressed in his view of this world, which he sees as perfect.

Then the description of the Buddha is given which is similar to that of the bodhisattva. The Buddha will always come back to this world to help sentient beings; Buddha’s mind is characterized by not relying on oppositions and at the same time seeing this world as perfect.

Finally, one of the many mythological bodhisattvas in *Lotus Sūtra*, Avalokiteśvara is analysed. His description and deeds are similar to the Buddha, his compassion is directed to everyone without exception and he can take whatever manifestation needed to help and guide sentient beings.

LEHO RUBIS. On the connections between the development of Mahayana and the formation of the Buddhist iconic canon of art

In the 4th–5th centuries CE when the first centres clearly identifying themselves as Mahayana monasteries were founded, the iconic Buddhist art in Northern and Central India established an art canon based on uniform and repetitive stylistics.

One of the central questions of the article is whether such development was caused by the processes involving the art in the whole of Northern and Central India as a centralised great power (the Gupta Empire), or there are possible connections and parallels with the internal development of Buddhism, more precisely, with the formation of Mahayana as a separate branch of Buddhism.

The most essential signifier of the possible parallel development is the connection between the formation of the art canon and the maturation of a certain cultural model. As the canon as the literary metatext of art supports an essentially established type of culture, it presupposes the existence of certain maturity and clear self-awareness, which shows that the traditional culture has reached the canonical stage when information about the information on art began to be recorded. In most canonical cultures of art, the canon describes the stylised form that has evolved as a result of long-time development. The Indian Buddhist iconic art developed from the relatively realist way of depiction in the first centuries of the CE to its mature stylised form just by the end of the Gupta era.

The parallels between the formation of stylisation in Buddhist iconic art and the development of Mahayana Buddhism in India may be accidental, but they exist. In the light of the studies of Schopen, Silk, Harrison and others, the view current in the previous century that the dominant form of Buddhism in India from the 1st to the 5th century CE was Mahayana Buddhism becomes doubtful. Nonetheless, it existed, but in a different form than we have believed until now, rather as a part of the traditional trend both in- and outside monasteries. Indirectly, the appearance of the mature style of Buddhist canonic art namely by the end of the 5th century CE supports the idea that Mahayana Buddhism developed into a self-aware and separate school within the Buddhist tradition namely at that time.

TARMO KULMAR. Haljand Udam: Works and thoughts of the scholar

The article provides an overview of the main stages of life, world of ideas and translation history of the Estonian Arabist, Turkologist and philosopher Haljand Udam (8 May 1936 Rakvere, Estonia – 17 December 2005 Viterbo, Italy). The article is based on an interview made with Haljand Udam by Valle-Sten Maiste and an analytical article by Jan Kaus about Udam’s translation process (both published in 2000).

As an Orientalist, Udam was primarily interested in the medieval florescence of Arabian-Persian culture; in his philosophical views he was a traditionalist (an admirer of Julius Evola and René Guenón); in his attitude to life he was a fatalist rather than a believer in the omnipotence of humankind; as a person he was religious and considered the role of churches in the world important; as a natural scientist, however, he was a universalist in whose opinion the world functions as a whole.

As a translator of Tajik-Persian poetry, Haljand Udam penetrated deep into the cultural and historical background of the text at hand; he was meticulous in interpreting the text of the source language; as a masterful user of his mother tongue, he was able to create beautiful texts.

The author concludes Haljand Udam speaks to us most directly through his timeless translations and other writings.

ARTUR LAAST. Haljand Udam’s development into an Orientalist and his book on Turkey

The article describes the life and versatile activities of the renowned Estonian Orientalist Haljand Udam (1936–2006) in mediating Oriental cultures and literature. How the young man with an education in geology developed an interest in distant languages and cultures has been described by Udam himself in his book *The Oriental Journey* (2001). The interest was of philosophical nature and concerned the

main issues of *condition humaine*. The book reveals his view on each human's life as an itinerary from one's external ego to one's real essence.

In his nature, H. Udam was a philosopher who always penetrated to the core of things. Although he delved into history and ancient wisdom, he also retained a lively interest in the present-day world. This is revealed in his essay collections *Read and Written* (1998) and *Magicians, Philosophers, Politicians* (2003). He was particularly interested in René Guénon and translated his book *The Crisis of the Modern World* (2008) from French.

The author recalls getting acquainted with H. Udam in Moscow in 1969 when both of them were post-graduate students at the USSR Academy of Sciences. A. Laast had graduated from the University of Moscow as a historian and Turkologist; H. Udam was completing his dissertation on Persian philology — the translation and interpretation of two allegorical texts by Suhrawardi, Salah ad-Din's court philosopher. Several of his later works also deal with Sufism.

H. Udam's greatly contributed to Estonian culture by his the translations of Persian-Tajik poetry. The poems of Umar Hajjam, Rudaki, Nizami, Rumi, Saadi, Hafiz, Dzhami and Navoi have been published as separate books and in journals.

His absorption into the Arabic language, literature and philosophy resulted in the translation from Arabic of the book *The Life of Hayy bin Yaqzan* (1992) by the Moorish-Spanish philosopher Ibn Tufayl and his major achievement — the translation of the Koran into Estonian (2007).

When the author of the article lived and worked in Kyrgyzstan, Haljand Udam visited him in summer 1974. It was namely there that the scholar developed a deeper interest in the history of Turkic peoples; later this materialized in his book *Turkey: A Voyage through the history of Turkish civilization* (2011). An essential part of the article discusses the ideas contained in this book.

HALJAND UDAM. **Travel notes from geological expeditions, 1957–1958**

From 1957 to 1958, the Estonian orientalist Haljand Udam took part in the work of the survey and charting group of the Magian expedition of the Geological Department of Tajikistan (USSR). The work consisted in performing surveying work at field camps located in different regions of the Ranges of Zeravshan, Turkestan and Hissar and the Fann Mountains. The notes he took during these days contain not only beautiful descriptions of the soil, minerals, nature and climate of the country in general, but also express deep respect for the local people and traditions. At times he made shorter trips on his own initiative to different places, including Panj-rud near Stalinabad (Dushanbe), where he had the luck to eyewitness the opening ceremony of the Mausoleum erected in October 1958 in memory of the great Tajik-Persian poet Rudaki. These expeditions paved the way for his further activities as a translator of Tajik and Persian literature and poetry.

SIIM LILL. **René Guénon and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy**

The aim of the article is to show René Guénon’s and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy’s forms of thought as complementary to each other. The author takes, as homage to the best-known Estonian traditionalist Haljand Udam, the position of the traditionalists and sees the esoteric current called Traditionalism as an awakening from the delusions of the world to the real understanding or gnosis.

First, the article gives a short overview of both men’s lives. Then, starting from the uttermost elusive Absolute or the One, as the Neoplatonic thinkers may call it, it arrives at the so-called first principles that according to Guénon and Coomaraswamy were unchangeable laws that constitute the background of reality.

Then a short description of the modern society, which traditionalists saw drifting away from the first principles and the gnosis that is the start and end of all being, follows.

Finally, the article argues that Guénon’s and Coomaraswamy’s understandings are frequently seen as unsuitable for our modern secular society; on the other hand, traditionalists’ main criticism of modernity is that what was common in traditional society is not common anymore. Yet there is something profound in the writings of both men that should not be dismissed as a madman’s cry, but should be seen as an alternative way of viewing both contemporary processes and traditional ways of thought. As Haljand Udam puts it: “The essence of man is always religious, no matter what form it takes, because the meaning of life itself demands it.”

OTT KURS. **The biblical people: Reflections in Estonian print on migration of Jews and establishment of the Israeli state**

The article examines the earliest Estonian-language reading matter about the Holy Land and deals with the remigration of Jews to their old homeland and problems related to the establishment of the Israeli state before 1949.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was already other literature in Estonian about the Holy Land than the Bible. An essential translated book was J. A. Frey’s *The Land Where Jesus Lived* (1897, 1899), among the books by Estonian authors — E. Bornhöhe’s *On the Trails of the Pilgrims* (1898). In the first period of the Republic of Estonia (1918–1940), Jews and their old homeland were described in books of general knowledge and newspapers. The beginning of the current article mainly discusses the news published in the newspaper *Postimees* from 1936–1939 when Arabs rioted in the British Palestine mandate territory, as they opposed the return of Jews.

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The newspapers described the deterioration of the situation of Jews in Europe after the breakout of World War II. When Nazi Germany began its campaign in the East, Jews were even physically exterminated. The news published during the German occupation of Estonia (1941–1944) expressed slanderous and derogatory attitudes to Jews.

After World War II, when newspapers in Soviet-annexed Estonia wrote about the events in Palestine, they sympathized with Jews and denounced Brits and Arabs. When the UN passed a resolution in November 1947 to establish Jewish and Arab states on the Palestinian territory, two thirds of the member states voted for it, including the USSR and the US with their allies. During the Israeli War of Independence from 1948–1949, the USSR delegation in the UN condemned the Arab countries as aggressors and expressed indignation that their actions were not severely disapproved. It has remained a mystery why the USSR did so, as simultaneously Jews were sentenced to death or imprisoned in the USSR. Later, opinions have been expressed that the USSR wanted to make Israel its satellite state in the Middle East, as it did not have any allies in the region.

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