

Karl-Theodor Zauzich
(June 8, 1939–March 23, 2021)



On March 23, 2021 Karl-Theodor Zauzich passed away in Würzburg. A towering figure in Demotic, Zauzich was one of those scholars who, through his powerful intellect and dynamic personality, advanced an entire field. News of his death shook family, friends, and colleagues. He had an uncanny ability to decipher the most difficult of cursive scripts. However, combined with this innate talent was a tremendous drive and love for Demotic.

In the 1940s–1960s Demotic was, sadly, an Egyptological backwater; only a few talented specialists were drawn to the field. It was considered a stepchild of Egyptology, the preserve of scholars publishing mostly legal and economic texts, estimable but hardly exciting. Then, in the mid-1960s and 1970s, Demotic enjoyed a renaissance; several brilliant young scholars chose this path. They began to publish outstanding articles and books, demonstrating that Demotic was an important, indeed essential part of Egyptology. Zauzich was at the center of this rebirth. Not only did he edit many texts in virtually every genre, but he labored to create a “community of scholars” devoted to Demotic Studies. Zauzich began a series of international meetings on Demotic, the first being held in Berlin in 1977. He later established a tradition of Demotic summer schools to which all were invited to bring difficult texts to informally discuss their problems with colleagues. He was the moving spirit behind the founding of *Enchoria*, the journal dedicated to Demotic (and Coptic) Studies. He played a primary role in obtaining funding for large-scale Demotic projects. The most important of these was the International Committee for the Publication of the Carlsberg Papyri that was charged with facilitating the publication of the rich collection of literary and religious Demotic material in Copenhagen. In this endeavor he collaborated closely with Paul John Frandsen. The goal was not only to enable scholars, especially younger ones, to edit the Carlsberg texts, but particularly important for Zauzich, also to reestablish the great school of Danish Demotic studies. They were eminently successful in achieving that goal, with Kim Ryholt as Professor of Egyptology at the University of

Copenhagen. He made a point of maintaining good relationships with other centers of Demotic Studies. He was, for example, very close to the Chicago School. He much respected George Hughes and his students. He was always supportive of Jan Johnson's ambitious Demotic Dictionary Project. In Würzburg Zauzich welcomed all those desiring to learn Demotic. German, French, Danish, Egyptian, American, Argentinian, Chinese, Finnish, aspirants from all over the world came to study with him. He had high standards, of course, but was an encouraging and gifted teacher. In his Demotic classes, he was open to suggestions about a reading from all participants, whether advanced or beginners. As the chief editor of *Enchoria* for thirty-one years, he read critically and improved the text editions of many colleagues and students. He resembled in some ways his great German scholarly ancestor, Wilhelm Spiegelberg, a founding figure in Demotic. Zauzich felt indeed a bond with Spiegelberg; he continued the monograph series *Demotische Studien* begun by that influential pioneer.

Born in Leipzig, Zauzich was old enough to remember the devastation of World War II, in which he lost his father. In 1942, his mother and grandfather hid a Jewish family in Leipzig, helping them to escape from the Nazis. The family was eventually able to reach America. For this courageous deed, Zauzich's mother and grandfather were awarded the title of "Righteous Ones Among the Nations;" their names are inscribed on the Wall of Honor at Yad Vashem. Having received his *Abitur* in 1957 from the famous Thomasschule in Leipzig, Zauzich began his study with the distinguished Egyptologist Siegfried Morenz at the University of Leipzig (1957–1958). His family left Leipzig for West Berlin in 1958. He continued his Egyptological studies at the University of Mainz (1959–1964), where his professor was Erich Lüddeckens. Zauzich displayed early his aptitude for the cursive script, publishing his first article in 1963 in *JEA*. He received his doctorate from the University of Mainz in 1966. From 1973–1980 he was on the staff of the Ägyptischen Museum Berlin, Stiftung Preuss. Kulturbesitz. In 1980 he submitted his *Habilitationsschrift* to the Freie Universität Berlin. He worked on a wide range of objects at the museums in East and West Berlin. It was through this experience that he came to love Egyptian art. Naturally, of course, he used the opportunity in Berlin to immerse himself also in the Demotic papyri of those collections. He began his life-long study of the extraordinary Elephantine Papyri; the next fascicle is in the process of publication. In Berlin he was fortunate enough to reunite with Gisela, who had in fact been in the same class with him in the Thomasschule in Leipzig. They married in 1968; their son, Martin, was born in 1969. In Berlin he also wrote a very popular book on hieroglyphs: *Hieroglyphen ohne Geheimnis (Hieroglyphs without Mystery)*, which has been translated into numerous languages. His first professorship was at the University of Mainz (1980–1981), but in 1981 he became the Professor Ordinarius at the Universität Würzburg.

Zauzich was a vigorous and successful Director of the Institute of Egyptology at Würzburg. He was particularly proud that all of his *Assistenten* in Würzburg became professors, and, indeed, numerous students hold academic positions throughout the world. One of these, Friedhelm Hoffmann, is now Professor of Egyptology at the University of Munich, and has assumed the role of chief-editor of *Enchoria*. Zauzich's many colleagues and students expressed their appreciation of his accomplishments and mentorship by presenting him with not one, but two *Festschriften*. At Würzburg he acquired the Sammlung Kiselief for the University. The present Professor of Egyptology there, Martin Stadler, a student of Zauzich, is bringing out the catalogue of that collection in the near future. He worked also with two (former) students, Sandra Lippert (CNRS) and Maren Schentuleit (University of Oxford), on an impressive series of volumes of Dime papyri and ostraca. From 1960–2000 he was closely associated with the essential reference work, the *Demotisches Namenbuch*. Zauzich was also a long-term productive member of the project: *Katalogisierung der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (1965–2014).

As a Demoticist, he was exceptional in the breadth and depth of his knowledge. He read with equal enthusiasm literary, religious, scholarly, legal, and economic texts. Most of all, he liked Demotic puzzles; he published a series of articles entitled: "Palaeographical Challenges." His last email to the writer of these lines, sent a week before he passed, was about two Persian Period papyri that contained, as he happily wrote, "nuts to crack."

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"May your *ba* live for ever and ever"

Richard Jasnow
Baltimore