

**Indrek Jürjo and Sergej Stadnikov (eds.):
Briefe aus dem Morgenland – Otto Friedrich von Richters Forschungsreise in den Jahren 1814-1816
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Briefe aus dem Morgenland – Otto Friedrich von Richters Forschungsreise in den Jahren 1814-1816, by historian Indrek Jürjo and Egyptologist Sergej Stadnikov, is written in very good German. All its chapters (*Biographische Einleitung, Briefe aus den Jahren 1814-1816, Abbildungen, Quellen- und Literaturverzeichnis, Register*), comprising 313 pages altogether, follow a logical structure and clear chronological order. It lies well within the scope of Oriental Studies (see below, *Some additional remarks*), containing a detailed introduction as well as exhaustive commentaries and notes which provide a historical overview of the life, research and travels across the Middle East (including Egypt and Sudan) of the famous Baltic-German Orientalist Otto Friedrich von Richter (1791-1816)¹. Despite his short life (he sadly

* Senior Researcher. This review was written with the financial support of grants ETF8993, ETF8669 and PUT500.

¹ See also Stadnikov, S. 1991. "Otto Friedrich von Richter und Ägypten". *Altorientalische Forschungen* 18: 195-203; Jürjo, I., Stadnikov, S. 2007. "Briefe aus Ägypten. Otto Friedrich von Richters wissenschaftliche Reise in Ägypten und Unterubien im Jahre 1815" in *Propylaeum DOK Publikations Plattform Altertumswissenschaften*. Heidelberg: 1-75.
http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/86/1/Stadnikow_Juerjo_Propylaeum_Richter_Text.pdf;
Stadnikov, S. 2003. "Otto Friedrich von Richters Forschungsreise in Unterubien im Jahre 1815: Auszüge aus dem Tagebuch". *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte* 14: 125-161.

died at the age of 24) von Richter can be considered to have been an important researcher in Oriental studies, especially in Egyptology and Nubian studies. His analyses of Ancient Nubian civilization, history and culture were very important².

Although this book mainly consists of von Richter's published letters that he composed during his voyage through the Levant between 1814 and 1816, plus accompanying commentaries by S. Stadnikov and I. Jürjo, it can also be classified as a monograph because the authors' joint commentaries and analytical remarks provide a very good synopsis of von Richter's biography, his voyages in the Middle East and his scientific research.

Firstly, in the *Biographische Einleitung* ("Biographic Introduction"), the authors cover the origins and childhood of von Richter in the town of Waimel, Livonia³. Moving on to his studies in several European universities, such as Moscow or Heidelberg, and his private studies in Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Stadnikov and Jürjo estimate that von Richter's learning in the field of Oriental Studies was very successful⁴. Richter learned ancient and modern Middle Eastern languages, cultures, history and religion, and became an expert in his field.

While attending Moscow University (summer 1808 – spring 1809) von Richter already showed extraordinary interest in the Middle East and in Ancient History and Oriental Languages (Latin, Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Persian, etc.)⁵

After spending one academic year in Moscow, von Richter decided to continue his studies in Europe at a prominent German university.

² Von Richter, O. F. 1822. *Wallfahrten im Morgenlande: Aus seinen Tagebüchern und Briefen dargestellt von Johann Philipp Gustav Ewers*. Berlin.

³ Modern Väimela in South-Estonia (Võru county).

⁴ Stadnikov and Jürjo write: «Auf das Studium Otto von Richters zurückblickend, sehen wir den Bildungsweg eines begabten, fleißigen und zielbewußten jungen Orientalisten und auch romantischen Orientschwärmers. Zurück in die Heimat came er schon als Gelehrter, der die für seine späteren Forschungsreisen nötigen Kenntnisse der orientalischen Sprachen und Kultur besaß und die einschlägige europäische Fachliteratur gut kannte» (p. 56).

⁵ «Zur Zeit seines Studiums in Moskau war Ottos Interesse für die Antike und den Orient schon klar geprägt» (p. 16).

It was for this reason that he chose Heidelberg, where he studied from autumn 1809 onwards. At the University of Heidelberg von Richter continued his research in Middle Eastern studies. Among other disciplines he learned Arabic⁶ and successfully continued to study other languages such as Persian, Turkish and Latin (p. 26).

After Heidelberg, Richter moved to Vienna and studied there for two years (1811-1813). This period was very difficult for Europe due to the impact of the Napoleonic wars (1799-1815) which exhausted and partially depopulated the Western European countries.

At this time the Austrian Empire was in a rather complicated financial situation aggravated by the political and military crisis brought by war with France, which cost Vienna a lot of money. Moreover, the Austrian Empire was defeated several times by Napoleon's army and Vienna was even occupied by French troops in 1805 and 1809 (p. 33)⁷.

While Europe was engaged in war and destruction, von Richter began to study in Vienna where he met the famous Orientalist and diplomat Joseph Freiherr⁸ von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) (p. 34). Hammer-Purgstall became von Richter's teacher and mentor during his private studies in Vienna which lasted approximately two years (1811-1813). It is notable that, according to Jürjo and Stadnikov, Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall was probably the leading and most prominent scholar in Oriental Studies in the German cultural space (*Deutsche Orientalistik*) (p. 34) at the beginning of the 19th century. Additionally, Richter participated in various lectures and seminars at the University of Vienna. He learned Oriental languages and other disciplines, attending lectures on ancient numismatics by the famous Austrian numismatist Franz Neumann (1744-1816) in the *Wiener Münzkabinett* ("Coin Cabinet at Vienna") (p. 45).

⁶ O. F. von Richter wrote to his father in one of his letters (14th March 1810) that Arabic was especially interesting and fun for him. Unfortunately, however, books and other studying materials were very expensive (p. 26).

⁷ On Napoleon Bonaparte and his wars see, for example, McLynn, F. 1997. *Napoleon. A Biography*. New York: Arcade Publishing.

⁸ *Freiherr* was a title of the nobility in German-speaking countries such as Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and also in the Baltic region (Livonia and Estonia). *Freiherr* would be equivalent to the word "baron".

Upon his return from Germany and Austria back to Livonia (*Zurück nach Livland*, pp. 56-58) von Richter cut a fine figure as a very well educated and erudite Orientalist, having learned the Arab language, history and culture, as well as local Middle Eastern customs (see p. 56). For one whole year, from the summer of 1813 to the summer of 1814, von Richter remained in his home town of Waimel. Unfortunately, this interregnum could be described as an “obscure period” in von Richter’s life because we have almost no information on his activities at that time⁹. Fortunately, we do possess a modicum of information on this period in the form of two letters addressed to Hammer-Purgstall: one sent from Dorpat, dated 25th September (7th October)¹⁰, and the other from Waimel, dated 3rd June (25th June) 1814 (p. 56).

In 1814 von Richter began his famous voyage to the Middle East (*Die große Levante-Reise*) which turned out quite successful, especially in the field of Egyptology and Nubian studies. Richter gathered quite the impressive collection of oriental manuscripts, hieroglyphic texts and artefacts, including some Egyptian mummies, statuettes and scarabs. He also kept writing his notes and diary (*Reisetagebuch*). Together with another traveller, Sven Fredrik Lidman¹¹, von Richter hoped to present the results of their joint research to the public in Europe and Russia upon their return, and then to continue this research afterwards.

Unfortunately, events then took an unexpected turn for the worse. On 31st August 1816 von Richter fell victim to a serious disease, most likely dysentery or cholera. He died in Izmir (modern Turkey) while making his return journey to Europe from his travels in the Middle East.

⁹ Stadnikov and Jürjo write: «Über das Jahr vom Sommer 1813 bis zum Sommer 1814, das Otto von Richter in der Heimat verbrachte, ist fast nichts bekannt» (p. 56).

¹⁰ In 1918 Estonia underwent calendar reform, replacing the Julian calendar with the Gregorian, with the effect that 31st January 1918 was followed by 14th February 1918.

¹¹ Sven Erik Lidman (1784-1845) was a Swedish Orientalist, traveller and diplomat. He was Associate Professor of Arabic Languages at the University of Uppsala, becoming a preacher in Istanbul in 1811. Regarding Lidman, see pp. 81-82 in this book. See also Peterson, B. 1974. “Über Altertümer in Nubien. Sven Frederik Lidmans Reise im Jahre 1815”. *Orientalia Sueciana* 23: 45-47.

In this introductory chapter, Stadnikov and Jürjo also provide readers with a clear and detailed review of von Richter's scientific legacy. After his death in 1816 the Russian embassy sent his personal effects from Istanbul to Richter's father in Livonia. Richter's father, Otto Magnus von Richter (1755-1826), decided to donate his son's collections to Tartu University Library (*die Bibliothek der Dorpater Universität*) and Art Museum (*das Kunstmuseum der Dorpater Universität*). These included not only his coin collections, personal library, notes, manuscripts, diaries and annotations, but also Egyptian mummies – including mummies of children, a dog and an ibis – and other artefacts such as statuettes, scarabs (*scarabaeus*) and hieroglyphic texts (p. 66). At the end of this chapter the authors scrupulously present their written commentaries and analyses.

The second chapter is entitled *Briefe aus den Jahren 1814-1816* ("Letters from the years 1814-1816") and mainly consists of letters written by von Richter in German to his abovementioned father and his mother Anna Auguste Charlotte von Richter (née von Engelhardt, 1770-1823). In these letters Richter conveyed his impressions and reported his adventures and the results of his research on his trip to the Orient from 1814 to 1816. This section also contains profound commentaries and analyses from Stadnikov and Jürjo, forming the core of the book – a capacious chapter comprising of 175 of some of its strongest and most compelling pages.

This particular chapter consists of 33 of von Richter's letters to his parents regarding his travels in Russia, Ukraine and the Middle East (Smolensk, Kiev, Odessa, Nikolajef, Simferopol, Pera, Rhodes, Alexandria, Damascus, etc.), accompanied by very profound and detailed analytical commentaries by Jürjo and Stadnikov (see *Anmerkungen*, pp. 221-262). In these detailed commentaries (pp. 221-262) Jürjo and Stadnikov explain definitions, toponyms and describe geographical locations (in the Middle East, Russia, Estonia, Germany, Austria), historical events which took place during von Richter's lifetime and other events mentioned in his letters. They also give an informative and profound overview of various figures such as diplomats, scholars,

Orientalists, friends, colleagues, relatives and teachers of Otto von Richter, etc.

For instance, on the subject of ancient Edfu¹² (also well-known as *Idfu*) in Egypt, Stadnikov and Jürjo provide quite a lengthy commentary and historical introduction (pp. 242-244). The same goes for the Valley of the Kings (Arab. *Wādī al Mulūk*), visited by Richter in June 1815 (see pp. 250-251).

However, there are some small shortcomings regarding this book. For example, it lacks some cartographic material representing the Middle Eastern region at the beginning of the 19th century, which could provide readers with an overall picture of the physical, cultural and political geography of the times and places where von Richter travelled. Furthermore, a map could also have been included showing the relevant areas of Egypt and Nubia, elaborated with a short overview of Ancient Egypt and Nubian chronology, history and rulers. Additionally, the book has no proper summary or conclusion. It would also be very helpful to have it available in both German and English.

Unfortunately, Dr. Indrek Jürjo (1956-2009), one of the authors and compilers, died some years before the monograph was published. Hopefully Sergej Stadnikov, his colleague, will continue this research on the Baltic Egyptologists and Orientalists since he would be able to publish another monograph in the future which might ideally include materials concerning the history of the discipline.

In summary, we can consider this book on the life and activities of O. F. von Richter to be a significant accomplishment because he was a pioneer of Oriental Studies in Estonia. His collection became an important subject of research for many years. In my opinion, it is a great resource not only for Egyptologists who deal with Ancient Nubia and Egypt, and historians of Antiquity in general, but also for all scholars of the history of Orientalism, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, it also provides a better understanding of the scientific and

¹² Re. Edfu, see Kurth, D. 1994. *Edfu: ein ägyptischer Tempel, gesehen mit den Augen der alten Ägypter*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. See also Kurth, D. (ed.) 1999. *Edfu: Bericht über drei Surveys, Materialien und Studien*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

cultural contributions of the Baltic-German people in the Baltic region during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Some Additional remarks: short Review of Oriental Studies in Estonia in the 17th-20th centuries

Although Estonia is a small European country with a population of only 1.3 million, there is a long tradition of Oriental Studies at the University of Tartu. In 1632 the first Estonian university was established in Dorpat¹³ in the Swedish province of Livonia. It was called *Academia Gustaviana* (in German, *Universität Dorpat*, today's University of Tartu). Its founder was the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf¹⁴. Hebrew was initially taught there, followed by Arabic, Aramaic, Sanskrit and other Oriental languages.

In Tartu, the research and study of Persian language and literature only became possible in the 1800s, however by the end of the 19th century Tartu University's Faculty of Theology had added the Akkadian language to its repertoire. The Sumerian language was also on offer by the time the 20th century began.

The foundations for Estonian Oriental Studies were established by Baltic Germans such as Otto Friedrich von Richter, Samuel Gottlieb Rudolph Henzi¹⁵ (1794-1829), Alexander von Bulmerincq (1868-1938)¹⁶, Otto Emil Seesemann (1866-1945)¹⁷ and many others.

Oriental Studies in Tartu developed various disciplines: Old Testament Studies, Sinology, Iranian Studies, Buddhology, Indology and, of course, Assyriology and Egyptology. Oriental Studies in Estonia

¹³ Modern Tartu.

¹⁴ King of Sweden, between 1611 and 1632.

¹⁵ See Hallik, M.; Klaassen, O.-M. 1999. "Unustatud orientalist professor Samuel Gottlieb Rudolf Henzi". *Ajalooline Ajakiri (The Estonian Historical Journal)* 2: 31-36; see also Hallik, M.; Klaassen, O.-M. 2002. *Keiserlik Tartu Ülikool (1802-1918) ja Orient. Eesti-Oriendi kultuurisuhete üldisel taustal*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

¹⁶ Bulmerincq was a very significant Orientalist in Tartu at the beginning of 20th century, as professor of Old Testament Studies and Semitic languages, including Akkadian.

¹⁷ A very important theologian and Orientalist.

were for a long time closely connected to theology and Old Testament studies. This is the reason why Oriental Studies in Tartu maintains strong ties with its Faculty of Theology. The most prominent Orientalists in Estonia in the 20th century were mostly theologians such as Professor Arthur Võõbus (1909-1988) and Professor Uku Masing¹⁸ (1909-1985). The latter taught Ancient Near Eastern History, Religion, Akkadian, Hebrew, Sumerian and other Middle Eastern languages in Tartu. Moreover, he published many articles and translated the Sumerian *Lugalbanda* epic into the Estonian language¹⁹.

The Estonian Syrologist (specialist in Syriac language) and orientalist Arthur Võõbus was a student of von Bulmering at the Theological Faculty of the University of Tartu. Võõbus's doctoral thesis (defended there in 1943) focused on monasticism in Persia, Syria and Mesopotamia before the 10th century. The spectres of the Second World War and the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Army in 1944 convinced Võõbus to flee from Estonia to Europe, and then finally to the U.S.A. From 1946 to 1948 he was active as professor at the Baltic University in Penneberg (near Hamburg) in Germany. Thereafter, Võõbus had the opportunity to work at the British Museum in London. In 1948-1977 he worked at the University of Chicago as Professor of New Testament Studies, publishing many books, reviews and articles²⁰.

¹⁸ Uku Masing was a significant Orientalist and Estonian theologian, linguist and polyglot who knew many languages (among them oriental languages such as Akkadian, Sumerian, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Syriac, Aramaic, Arabic, etc.). Masing published his research results not only in Estonian scientific journals, but also in prominent European scientific journals in German and English – although in the Soviet period it was very difficult to get permission to publish outside of the Soviet system – see, for example, Masing, U. 1936. “The Word of Yahweh”. *Acta et commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis (Dorpatensis)*. B. Humaniora XXXIX, Tartu: 1-60; Levin, I., Masing, U. (eds.) 1982. *Armenische Märchen*. Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs Verlag; Masing, U. 1974. “Akkadisches mīksu in Osteuropa”. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Alten Vorderasien*, J. Harmatta and G. Komoróczy (eds.), *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22, 1974/1976: 521–526; Masing, U. 1976. “Some Remarks on the Mythology of the People of Catal Hüyük”. *Acta et commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis* 392 (Oriental Studies 3), Tartu 1976: 75-92.

¹⁹ Annus, A.; Heltzer, M.; Kasemaa, K.; Masing, U.; Puhvel, J.; Sazonov, V.; Soosaar, S.-E.; Stadnikov, S.; Veede, R. 2005. *Muinasaja kirjanduse antoloogia*, Tartu: Varrak: 32-47.

²⁰ See about Võõbus, Kasemaa, K. 2007. “Arthur Vööbus – ein Forscher des christlichen Orients” in T. R. Kämmerer (ed.), *Studien zu Ritual und Sozialgeschichte im Alten Orient/Studies on Ritual and Society in the Ancient Near East. Tartuer Symposien 1998-2004*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter: 147-151.

Another very important Estonian Orientalist of international renown in the late 20th and early 21st centuries was the Indologist and Buddhologist Linnart Mäll (1938-2010). Firstly, Linnart Mäll studied history at the University of Tartu and, later, also in Moscow between 1964 and 1966 at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences at the USSR Academy of Sciences. Mäll also studied in Tartu with the Orientalist U. Masing and the Linguist and Orientalist Pent Nurmekund²¹, who established the Cabinet for Oriental Studies at the University of Tartu in 1955.

It was from this cabinet that Linnart Mäll established the Center for Oriental Studies in Tartu in 1994, and in 1988 he re-established the Estonian Oriental Society²² which had been disbanded and forbidden during the Soviet Period. Mäll's sphere of research was quite wide and included Semiotics, Philosophy, Languages, the History and Cultures of India, Tibet, China (especially Buddhist Mahāyāna texts), Classical literature, the languages and culture of India, Buddhist mythology, classical Chinese texts and, finally, Tibetan Buddhist texts. He also researched the history and culture of small nations. Dr. Mäll translated many important Buddhist and other oriental texts from Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Pali and other oriental languages. He translated *Confucius*, *Bhagavadgita*, *Dhammapada* and other important Oriental classic texts²³ into Estonian.

Of course, only a few prominent Estonian Orientalists are mentioned here but there are others worthy of note including Arabist and Iranist Haljand Udam (1936-2005)²⁴, the significant Estonian-

²¹ Dr. Pent Nurmekund (1906-1996), was an Estonian Orientalist, Linguist and polyglot who knew approximately 80 languages (among them Ancient Egyptian, Persian, Arabic, etc.).

²² <http://www.eao.ee>, last visited 25-10-2014.

²³ See for example some of the latest publications of Linnart Mäll: 2008. "Terms Denoting Living Body and Body in General in Buddhist Texts" in M. L. G. Dietrich and T. Kulmar (eds.). *Body and Soul in the Conceptions of the Religions/Leib und Seele in der Konzeption der Religionen*. Münster: Ugarit Verlag, pp. 155-156; 2006. "Thus Began New Dharma". *Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte* 40, pp. 181-185; 2005. *Studies in the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita and the other Essays*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.

²⁴ H. Udam defended his doctoral thesis "On the Special Semantic Aspects of the Persian Sufi Terminology" (1971) in Moscow. He was the first translator of the Qur'an into the Estonian language (published in 2007, after Udam's death). He also translated several books and works from the Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, Urdu and Tajik languages.

American Hittitologist and Indo-Europeanist *professor emeritus* Jaan Puhvel (b. 1932 etc)²⁵ who was a student of Georges Dumézil.

Because the author of this current review is an Assyriologist, he will add some words about Assyriology in Estonia. Although Akkadian and Sumerian have been taught here for over 100 years, the systematic study of Assyriology was only relatively recently established by professor Thomas Richard Kämmerer who has been at the University of Tartu since 1997 and has held the position of professor of Assyriology since 2003²⁶. The first Estonian to defend his doctoral thesis in Assyriological studies was Dr. Amar Annus, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Theology²⁷. Amar Annus has published many other works²⁸. Here it would be remiss not to mention Dr. Peeter Espak's doctoral thesis "The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology"²⁹, written in English, belonging to the field of Sumeriological studies and containing 284 pages, soon to be published in 2015 as a monograph in Germany by Harrassowitz Publishing House. This monograph contains a very thorough analysis of the ancient Sumerian and Akkadian god Enki (*Akk.* Ea) in the Sumerian religion and royal ideology. Espak's research deals with a great number of hypotheses and tackles some complex questions concerning the cult of Enki, his role in royal ideology and position in the pantheon, mythological and other texts dedicated to Enki (e.g., royal inscriptions) or in which he is mentioned.

²⁵ See for example one of his main works – Puhvel, J. 1984– *Hittite Etymological Dictionary*. Berlin, New York, Amsterdam; Walter de Gruyter.

²⁶ See for example Kämmerer, Th. R. 1998. *Šimā milka. Induktion und Reception der mittelbabylonischen Dichtung von Ugarit, Emar und Tell el-Amarna* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, Bd. 251). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag; Kämmerer, Th. R.; Metzler, K. 2012. *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos Enūma eliš* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, Bd. 375). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

²⁷ Amar Annus's doctoral thesis is "The God Ninurta in the Mythology of Ancient Mesopotamia" (2002) and was published in the *State Archives of Assyria Studies XIV*, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project of University of Helsinki, Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki. Dr. Amar Annus was supervised by the Finnish Prof. Dr. Simo Parpola and defended his thesis at the University of Helsinki, not in Tartu.

²⁸ See for example Annus, A. and Lenzi, A. 2010. *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi: The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

²⁹ Espak, P. 2010. *The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology* (Dissertationes Theologiae Universitatis Tartuensis 19). Tartu: Tartu University Press.

In summary, it can be said that although O. F. von Richter was not as prominent or famous an Orientalist as, for example, Artrur Võõbus, he remains one of the pioneers of Oriental Studies in Estonia which, in my opinion, show much promise because, along with their long tradition, they have been developed with great success across many different disciplines.