



The North, the Desert, and the Near East: Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß and the Racial Cartography of the Near East

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Abstract

The term ‘anti-Semitism’ indicates how far the anti-Jewish literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was charged with themes, figures, and stereotypes from contemporary discourses on the Orient. An increasing tendency to ‘orientalise’ the European Jews had raised questions about the supposed origin of the Jewish people in the Near East and its relationship to other – current or historical – peoples. Focusing on the Nazi racial scientist Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, the article draws attention to the impact of Near Eastern anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology in the Age of Empire on modern anti-Semitism and sheds light on structural convergences and differences between colonial or ‘Orientalist’ discourses and anti-Semitism in general. With reference to the scholarly literature of the time, Clauß made a sharp distinction between ‘Oriental’ or ‘Semitic’ Arabs and ‘Near Eastern’ Jews. Thereby, the romanticised Arab Orient served as an antipole to a ‘Nordic’ Europe, and as such was finally able to advance to a positive alternative. The Jewish Orient, on the other hand, embodied a threatening ambivalence and contrariety, which from the very beginning precluded romanticisation and identification.

Introduction¹

There can be no doubt that associating the Jews with ‘the Orient’ in order to prove their supposedly foreign origin belongs to the oldest and most durable stereotypes of European anti-Semitism. Thus, ‘classical’ late nineteenth-century anti-Jewish

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literature in Germany was full of defamations of the Jews as ‘German-speaking Orientals’ (Treitschke 1879:576), ‘Oriental aliens’ (Marr 1879:12), and speculations about their supposed origins in the Arabian Desert and their resulting ‘nomadic character’ (Sombart 1911:VII). As such, the place of the Jewish people inside the wider ethnic and historical context of the Near East and its relationship to other – current or historical – peoples were mostly left unspecified. According to the traditional philological classification of the nineteenth century, the Jews were grouped with the so-called Semitic peoples – a category that includes the Arabs as well as several historical peoples such as the Babylonians and Assyrians. However, at the turn of the twentieth century this classification became increasingly disputed and contested: anthropologists and historians delineated new ethno-historical cartographies of the Near East, which encompassed many additional subjects, peoples, and ‘races’ and thus complicated the interpretation of the region. Given the fact that the (ancient) Near East had always played a vital role in anti-Semitic constructions of history, these scholarly debates were far from being unimportant for anti-Semitic ideologues. Furthermore, in the first half of the twentieth century, political motifs for avoiding the general term ‘Semites’ (as well as anti-‘Semitism’) became increasingly important: in the course of the emerging conflict in Palestine and the pro-Arab attitudes of radical anti-Semites, the racial identification of Arabs and Jews seemed to be no longer acceptable (Zimmermann 2005).

These discussions in the anti-Semitic literature of the time shed light on the general relationship between anti-Semitism and those ‘Western conceptions of the Orient’ for which Edward Said coined the famous term ‘Orientalism’ (Said 2003). Already, Said himself regarded his approach as a contribution to the historiography of anti-Semitism and presented a more or less homogenous European ‘Orientalism’ as a ‘strange secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism’ (ibid.:27). However, he did not enlarge this argument and, in fact, excluded the history of anti-Semitism from his analysis. Said’s basic consideration was later picked up by other scholars who have delineated the relationship between anti-Semitism and ‘Orientalism’ in a much more complex way. Most of these works are focused on European representations of Judaism as an ‘Oriental’ religion and its relationship to Islam (see Kalmar and Penslar 2005; Pasto 1998; Peleg 2005; Rohde 2009; Turner 1991). There can be no doubt about the importance of these ideas for the religious-motivated hatred towards Jews and Judaism; however, the impact of Orientalist discourses on *racial* anti-Semitism has been widely disregarded in historical research.

In this regard, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß – a famous *völkisch*² and National Socialist racial scientist who had himself spent several years in the Near East – deserves the most attention. Even though his approach was highly idiosyncratic and cannot be considered as representative, Clauß was definitely the most distinguished *völkisch* author on the anthropology of the Near East, as he, at least, confused the academic and *völkisch* discourses most consequently. As I will describe, Clauß established an influential racial cartography of the Near East, focused on the sharp distinction between Arabs and Jews. Moreover, it can be demonstrated to what extent his ideas rested upon concepts which had been

developed by anthropologists, ethnologists, and archaeologists since the turn of the twentieth century and which Clauß translated and integrated into his approach. Hence, his race theory draws attention to the confluence of scholarly and radical-nationalist thinking in early twentieth-century Germany, in general, and to the impact of Near Eastern anthropology and archaeology on modern anti-Semitism, in particular. In the following I intend to examine the development of Clauß's approach against the background of its wider intellectual and political context. Since his unusual life is vital to the understanding of the formation and turns of his ideology, it is thereby necessary to take his biographical background into account and to combine an intellectual and a biographical approach.

Race and Soul

Despite Clauß's prominence in the 1920s and 1930s – he is believed to have been the most popular author on race behind his long-time friend, the infamous race ideologue Hans F. K. Günther – he has been mostly disregarded in historical research (for exceptions, see Harten, Neirich, and Schwerendt 2006; Hutton 2005:56–60; Schwerendt 2009:146–53). There are two main reasons for this underestimation: firstly, the specific character of his race concept, which owed much more to the humanities than to the natural sciences; and secondly, the ambivalence of his biography.

Clauß was born in 1892 in the southwest German town of Offenburg and grew up in nearby Freiburg (Breisgau), where he also began his philological studies. In view of his later career as a prominent race ideologue, his membership in the inner circle of the famous Jewish philosopher Edmund Husserl seems astonishing. Husserl was his doctoral supervisor and, like Heidegger, Clauß became one of his academic assistants and planned to qualify as a professor. However, it did not turn out that way: in the meantime, Clauß had chosen a different path and intended to establish a kind of phenomenological race-psychology – an approach that was definitely inconsistent with Husserl's philosophy and consequently provoked a breach with his teacher. But even if this idea put an end to his academic ambitions, it comported all the more with his *völkisch* engagement at the University of Freiburg. Most important at this time was his encounter with the previously mentioned Günther. In the early 1920s, both Günther and Clauß became prominent authors on race and were key figures in the extreme racist 'Nordic Movement', which was working towards an extension of the 'Nordic race' among the Germans (Breuer 2009). Günther was appointed professor for social anthropology at the University of Jena in the Nazi-ruled state of Thuringia as early as 1930. The National Socialist seizure of power in 1933 also had a positive impact on Clauß's career, and he became honorary professor for race psychology at the University of Berlin (Mehring, Rindert, and Gerhard 1999:272–75). However, even more important was his influence on racial education through various schoolbooks and advanced training programmes for teachers (Harten, Neirich, and Schwerendt 2006).

Nonetheless, among Nazi race scientists he also had fierce competitors – above all Walter Groß, the chief of the Race Policy Office (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*). Groß

knew that Clauß had a close relationship with his Jewish research assistant, Margarete Landé, and successfully initiated a legal proceeding in order to exclude him from the NSDAP. However, Clauß was able to protect Landé from deportation by hiding her in his Brandenburg country house. For this reason, he was honoured in 1981 as ‘Righteous among the Nations’ by the Israeli Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem.³ However, this status was revoked only fifteen years later. The reason seems to be obvious: due to his close contacts with the SS, Clauß remained active in racial research even after his exclusion from the Nazi Party.⁴ He worked as an adviser on Arab and Islamic policy for the *Sicherheitsdienst* of the SS (SD) and was involved in the racial research projects of the *Ahnenerbe*. Most important in this context was a special order, entitled *Rassen im Kampf* (roughly translated: races in action), which he carried out with his former student and close friend Bruno Beger – an anthropologist who was at the same time involved in one of the most horrific scientific crimes in Nazi Germany, the so-called collection of Jewish skulls and skeletons for the anthropological institute of the University of Straßburg (Wojak 1999).

Apart from the ambivalence of Clauß’s biography, there can be no doubt about the racist and anti-Semitic character of his writings. In his main work, *Rasse und Seele* (Race and Soul), which appeared in eighteen editions between 1926 and 1943, he developed a distinct approach to racial theory: the so-called *Rassenseelenkunde* (roughly translated: theory of race-soul). The crucial point here was the strict rejection of anthropological definitions of race, based on external, physical features. In contrast, *Rassenseelenkunde* focused on seemingly internal, psychological traits to construct racial difference: accordingly, ‘race’ was something invisible and not subordinated to the body. Clauß was neither isolated by embracing these ideas nor were they really new. Psychological or mental ascriptions had always played a vital role in theories of race since the late eighteenth century, and terms like *Rassenseele* (race-soul) had been previously established in the racist and *völkisch* literature. What separated Clauß from other race scientists and from his *völkisch* comrades was the way in which he expressed his ideas – the language and the terms he used or coined and the currents of thought or ideological traditions to which he referred. Educated and trained in academic philosophy and philology, and full of the traditional resentments of German *Bildungsbürgertum* against the ‘materialistic’ natural sciences, Clauß attempted to render *völkisch* racism into the language and terminology of philosophy and the contemporary humanities. Accordingly, he referred to Platonism and declared ‘race’ to be an ‘idea in the Platonic sense of the word’ (Clauß 1926:109). But most important was his adaptation of aesthetic terms like *Stil* (style), *Ausdruck* (expression), and – above all – *Gestalt*. This latter term certainly belonged to the key words of the German intellectual landscape of the 1920s; however, it was hardly ever explained or defined. Generally spoken, *Gestalt* was used to express contemporary calls for an overcoming of the gap between the external and the internal, body and soul, and the natural sciences and the humanities; thus, it indicated the same intellectual current that today is usually called *ganzheitlich* (holistic).

This was exactly the reason why Clauß adopted the term: in his writings, *Gestalt* signified a kind of internal structure or constitutive idea that he believed connected

body and soul, the external and the internal. What mattered for Clauß was 'harmony' between both spheres. Thus, he claimed, a soul of a special type could only express itself adequately in an appropriate, corresponding body (Clauß 1938a:143). Consequently, he defined race simply as 'hereditary *Gestalt*' (Clauß 1940b:451). In so doing, the whole theory was directed against conventional definitions of race as a simple 'combination of physical and psychological features' (Günther 1925:8), as well as against attempts to put all human races in a clear hierarchical order. Accordingly, the other important point of *Rassenseelenkunde* was *Wertfreiheit*, the assumed abstention from value judgements. Since Clauß regarded everything as totally determined by race, taking up a neutral perspective to assess different races appeared impossible to him (Clauß 1926:109). However, this kind of racial relativism has always been a part of the race discourse, and one can easily find similar assertions even by other Nazi race scientists, including Clauß's most important adversary, Groß (1933:187). The crux of such positions has always been the question of mixture: Clauß was quite radical on this point and rejected any kind of mixture – be it mentally or physically – and insisted on racial purity.

This becomes clear in view of his description of the so-called Nordic race, which assumed the dominant role in his early writings. Here, as within *völkisch* ideology in general, references to Nordic mythology were essential. Already by 1921, Clauß had published a new translation of the Icelandic *Edda*, which became highly influential among *völkisch* nationalists. Of course, his portrayal of the *Nordische Seele* (The Northern Soul, 1923) largely followed ideological patterns and was far from being unbiased: the attributes he ascribed to this race were those of power, dominance, and self-control, such that he coined the general term *Leistungsmensch* (roughly translated: man of achievement) for the Nordic type (Clauß 1938a:13–30). With obvious reference to Oswald Spengler's (2000 [1923]:234–41), characterisation of the 'Faustian soul' (*Faustische Seele*), Clauß especially emphasised the Nordic longing for distance, infinity, and spatial expansion, and thereby coined the term Nordic *Raumwillen* (will for space) – a psychological feature that appeared increasingly ambivalent in his later writings (Clauß 1926:37). Since he believed in the original and actual Nordic character of the German people, his main concern was with the supposed decline of the authentic Nordic *Gestalt* of the Germans. Accordingly, he called for a radical 'overcoming' and 'exclusion' of all alien elements and influences – both inside the whole nation and inside every individual (Clauß 1923:155–56). In this sense, he regarded research into alien races as part of a racial exorcism: 'We purify ourselves if we identify the foreign as foreign' (Clauß 1937:5).

However, the Nordic race was not the only one which fascinated him. In the late 1920s, his personal preference for the North became increasingly challenged by the Orient.

The Decomposed Orient

The actual motives of Clauß's interest in the Near East remain unclear, but in a general sense it was consistent with the widespread German fascination with the

history and culture of this region at the turn of the twentieth century. I only wish to mention here the archaeological excavations in Babylonia and the intense public debates about the meaning and importance of the ancient Near East for the religious and cultural life of the present (Marchand 2009).⁵ Clauß had already expressed his own religious interest in the region prior to his first trip. A highly ambivalent paragraph in the first edition of *Rasse und Seele* was devoted to the *magische Seele* ('magian' or 'magical' soul⁶) of the Orient (Clauß 1926:105–07) – a concept which was again clearly borrowed from Spengler's (2000 [1923]:840–80) *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. Last but not least, it may be assumed that he had grown up with the same kind of Oriental fantasies to which a whole generation of young Germans were accustomed through the novels of Karl May (Polaschegg 2007).

In any case, Clauß wanted to be confronted with a world 'absolutely strange to ours' (Clauß 1937:5) and to make his own Oriental experience. After obtaining financial support from one of his closest *völkisch* allies – Prinz Wilhelm von zur Lippe – he set out for the Levantine coast in the spring of 1927 and moved on to Jerusalem. However, given his romantic fantasies, the situation in the British Mandate of Palestine appeared highly confusing and disappointing to him. Instead of a seemingly authentic Oriental world, he found himself in a country that was about to change rapidly as a consequence of urbanisation and industrialisation. Because – in his eyes – the British were a genuine Nordic people, he described the modernisation policy of the mandatory power (El-Eini 2006) as a fateful consequence of Nordic *Raumwillen*, and criticised the British presence as an 'irruption of the Nordic world of achievements into the Oriental world of revelation and redemption' (Clauß 1928a:10). This criticism was the result of a special kind of anti-colonialism: Clauß generally rejected colonialism and imperialism as a 'heinous violation and confusion' of the racial order of the world (Clauß 1938a:10). Based on radical anti-universalism and relativism, this attitude should not be confounded with a general criticism of colonial rule on ethical grounds. Moreover, the anti-universalistic rejection of Western imperialism was anything but new, and one can find similar examples of what might be called romantic anti-colonialism in the writings of European travellers to the Orient since the early nineteenth century (Wiedemann 2009b). This kind of criticism had always been highly ambivalent, selective, and aimed especially at the policy of imperial rivals – which means, in the German context, the British. However, there were two things that clearly distinguished Clauß from these forerunners and characterised his distinctive *völkisch* approach: firstly, the concept of race; and secondly, the amalgamation of anti-colonialism and anti-Semitism. Against the backdrop of British rule in Palestine and Jewish immigration, it seemed to be easy for him to combine Anglophobia with anti-Zionism. Accordingly, he accused the Zionist movement of having decomposed the 'racially determined value system' (Clauß 1938a:51) of the Orient in coalition with British stooges, and he hoped that both groups of foreigners would be thrown out of the Near East as soon as possible (Clauß 1940a:383).

Besides the British and the Zionists, he also mentioned the widespread orientation towards Europe among the Arab elites, and he criticised these tendencies as

self-induced alienation and an expression of a ‘cultural disease’ (Clauß 1928b:75) – a development that he ascribed to the ongoing process of racial decomposition and confusion in the Near East. Following other authors, he presented the whole region as an ethnically heterogeneous space, populated by strange peoples of known and unknown descent. Since the late nineteenth century, several scholars, anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists have tried to unravel the ‘seemingly inextricable chaos’ (Luschan 1922:58) of the Near East by grouping different peoples into different families or races and by detecting their origins and routes of migration. However, Clauß was convinced that there existed one special race – like the Northerners in Europe – which had always dominated the chaos and played the leading role in the history of the Near East up until the contemporary crisis. This was the ‘Oriental’ or ‘desert race’ (*wüstenländische Rasse*).

The Desert Race

After spending his first weeks in Jerusalem, Clauß moved to the nearby village of Silwan on the offshoot of the Judaic Desert. It is significant that he imagined this – in fact very short⁷ – step as a significant move out into the desert. Actually, he was not interested in the entire region but only in the desert and the pastoral life of the Bedouin. Far from being isolated by these fantasies, he was certainly influenced by the classic European travelogues of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Due to the then contemporary power relations, most of these romantic desert-travellers had been British (Ben Amara 2006; Tidrick 1981), but over the course of the strengthening of German-Ottoman ties increasing numbers of Germans entered the arena (Katzner 2008). Unlike these forerunners, Clauß intended not just to study the nomadic life as an external observer (e.g., as an ethnologist), but to live this life personally; in other words, he wanted to become a Bedouin himself. As such, he sought contact with the nomads on the other side of the River Jordan. According to his own account, he was soon accepted by the Jordanian tribe of the Beni-Sachr as ‘Muhamad al-Feri, Sheikh of the German Bedouins’ (Clauß 1937:68), and lived the following four years as a ‘Bedouin among Bedouin’, as the title of his travelogue indicates (Clauß 1933).

However, his romance with the nomads cannot be isolated from his race concept. Following a traditional myth that had long been established in the Arab world as well as among European scholars, the Bedouin were believed to be the original and most authentic Arabs. Accordingly, in the course of the dissemination of philological classifications, they appeared as the cadre and purest form of the ‘Semites’. However, in physical anthropology the idea of a distinctive ‘Semitic race’ (based upon a confusion of philological and anthropological categories) had already become outdated by the late nineteenth century and, in avoidance of the misleading term ‘Semitic’, most anthropologists referred to the Arabs as the ‘Oriental race’.⁸ There was a great deal of speculation about the relationship of this race with the European ‘white races’, but there was a fundamental agreement on the central physical features: the ‘pure’ Orientals appeared as a small but noble race with ‘dolichocephalic’ (long and thin) heads (Fischer 1923:171; Reche 1926). Clauß followed these approaches but since he always preferred to coin his own

terms he called this type *wüstenländische Rasse* (desert race) in order to express the relationship between race and landscape. Furthermore, he clearly focused more on psychological features. For this purpose, he drew heavily upon the romantic image of the Bedouin in the European travelogues and described the seemingly authentic Arabs according to the traditional myth of the ‘Noble Savage’. However, there was a crucial difference: unlike the latter topos, the attractiveness of the ‘Noble Bedouin’⁹ (Toral-Niehoff 2002) rested not upon an apparent harmony with nature in a land of milk and honey, but on the extreme challenges and hardships of a very special landscape – the desert. Accordingly, the interest of the romantic travellers had always been focused on the Bedouin man, whose life was depicted as heroic and genuinely virile (Wiedemann 2009b). Even though Clauß’s description of the desert race remained ambivalent, he clearly referred to this myth and praised the ‘patriarchal-heroic way of life’¹⁰ of the Bedouin. In this regard, he drew strong parallels between the Bedouin warriors of the desert and the Nordic heroes of the sea as delineated in the *Edda*: braving all the perils and hardships of a barren landscape (the North Atlantic and the Arabian Desert), they represented different but compatible habits of virility and heroism (Clauß 1939). For this reason, both the Nordic heroes as well as the Bedouin warriors served as antipoles of the decadent and civilised Western world.

Last but not least, Clauß was deeply fascinated by Islam. Like other European travellers in the Near East before, he had initially converted to Islam because otherwise it would have been very difficult to live among the Bedouin for such a long period. However, after his return he delineated the faith and rituals of what he believed to be the authentic Islamic society in a highly romantic manner. In this context, he referred to the popular (but in the scholarly discourse already at that time outdated) thesis that there must be a connection between the desert landscape and religious monotheism, and called the members of this race ‘men of revelation’ (*Offenbarungsmenschen*). Furthermore, in his reports for the *Ahnenerbe* in 1944, he proposed an alliance with the Islamic world against their supposedly common enemies: the Western colonisers and the atheist Soviet Union. He thereby believed he had found deep-rooted ‘similarities between Germanness and Islam’ and stressed the allegedly ‘common *Weltanschauung* of National Socialism and the Koran’.¹¹ However, with regard to the existing Nazi propaganda for the Arab world (Herf 2009) and quite similar ideas among German diplomats for initiating an Islamic *jihad* against the Western powers during the First World War (Lüdke 2006; Marchand 2009:438–46), Clauß’s suggestions were anything but new.

Besides his sympathy for Islam, his writings remained full of allusions to Nordic mythology and clearly indicated his strong affinities for *völkisch* neo-Paganism. Since the desire to overcome the deep confessional gaps and rivalries, and to find a unified national faith for all Germans, had always adhered to the key issues of nationalist thinking, *völkisch* ideologues tried to construct a religious tradition suited to the national heritage – a kind of ethnic or racial religion, for which they coined the term *arteigene Religion*. Even if the vast majority of the *völkisch* movement did not intend to substitute Christianity, a radical branch abolished the Christian religion completely as an alien (*artfremd*) import and tried to ‘revitalise’ or to ‘resurrect’ the faith of the ancient Germanic people who were believed to

have been the direct ancestors of the present-day Germans (Puschner 2001:222–63). Clauß's strongest supporters had always been the neo-Pagans, and in 1934 he himself became a leading member of the neo-Pagan *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* (German Faith Movement) (Nanko 1993). But even though neo-Paganism and monotheism are actually incompatible, his deep fascination with Islam remained unaffected by this engagement. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that Clauß's admiration only referred to the very early Islamic era and, like other Western scholars, he delineated an ongoing process of the degeneration of Islam since Muhammad and the early caliphs. Furthermore, he gave a clear explanation for this decline: the fateful influence of the other main race of the Orient, the 'Near Easterners' (*Vorderasiaten*).

The Near Eastern Race

Even though many anthropologists speculated about the supposed roots of certain races in certain areas, at the turn of the twentieth century it became clear that racially homogenous spaces no longer existed. Europe, for instance, appeared as a highly heterogeneous continent, populated by different 'white races', which earlier anthropologists had subsumed under the category of the 'Caucasian race' (Baum 2006:118–61). However, the situation in the Near East seemed to be much more complicated, and the 'Oriental mixture of peoples' was already proverbial by the nineteenth century. Accordingly, with a look at the myth of the Noble Bedouin, it becomes clear that romanticising a particular group or people should be by no means confused with romanticising the Orient in general. European representations of the Orient had always been much more heterogeneous (Marchand 2009; Varisco 2007) than postcolonial critics of the late twentieth century have acknowledged (Said 2003). Thus, rather than presenting all 'Orientals' in the same way, German writers in particular were more engaged in playing different – current as well as historical – peoples off each other and in initiating cultural proxy wars (Polaschegg 2005:203). In this way, the Noble Bedouin had always had its 'Other' within the Orient. In the romantic travelogues of the nineteenth century, this role was mostly assigned to the Turks; especially in the British tradition, anti-Turkish attitudes remained dominant until the First World War (most prominently represented by T. E. Lawrence). However, later authors focused more on the Arab city-dwellers. As such, the Levantine cities in particular were depicted as central places for fraud, corruption, and degeneration, and thus could be sharply contrasted with the desert and the Bedouin (Wiedemann 2011:71–73).

The difference between city-dwellers, on the one hand, and nomads, on the other, was also stressed in contemporary anthropology. Since the late nineteenth century, anthropologists and archaeologists had inserted a new classification of the region, based upon the distinction of two main races: the above-mentioned 'Oriental race' (meaning the 'pure' Arabs) and the 'Near Eastern race' (*vorderasiatische Rasse*). This category had been introduced by the famous anthropologist and archaeologist Felix von Luschan during his investigations in southern Turkey and northern Syria in the 1880s and 1890s. Von Luschan classified a seemingly aboriginal Near Eastern race with dark complexion and dark eyes, but first and

foremost with extraordinary ‘brachycephalic’ (short and broad) heads and very prominent ‘tower’ or ‘hook noses’ (Luschan 1922:143). Because of the supposed similarities between this type and representations of the ancient Hittites – as well as the current Armenian population – Luschan initially referred to this type as the ‘Hittite’ or ‘Armenoid race’ (Luschan 1894; 1911; 1922). He also included the majority of the Turks and Greeks in this group, but most important was the connection to the European Jews. In order to refute the emerging racial anti-Semitism, Luschan stated that the Jews had never been a distinctive, homogeneous group but – like all other peoples – a composition or mixture of very different races.¹² In this context, his ‘discovery’ of the Near Eastern or Hittite race was absolutely essential because he identified its physical characteristics again among the contemporary Jews. Thus, he concluded that ‘the modern Jews’ were composed of three different elements: ‘firstly, the Aryan Amorites;¹³ secondly, the real Semites; and thirdly, *and mainly*, the descendants of the ancient Hittites’ (Luschan 1892:99, emphasis added). Luschan’s theory played a crucial role in the contemporary scholarly debate on the ‘anthropology of the Jews’ – an international and highly ambivalent discussion in which not least Jewish anthropologists and archaeologists were involved (Kiefer 1991; Lipphardt 2008).

In any case, the theory that the Jews were a Near Eastern-dominated ‘racial mixture’ became widely accepted in racial anthropology (e.g., Fischer 1923; Günther 1930) and was also adopted by radical anti-Semites. Although, of course, this was done with a very different bias: whereas Luschan insisted on the ‘racial mixture’ of the Jews in order to *refute* anti-Semitic race theories, *völkisch* forerunners like Houston Stewart Chamberlain countered this conclusion by claiming that the dangerousness of the Jews would lie in the particular character of this ‘mixture’ (Chamberlain 1932 [1899]:379–546). Other key anti-Semitic authors used this theory in the same way. For instance, Theodor Fritsch, the ‘grand old man’ of the *völkisch* movement, stressed in his infamous *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (Handbook of the Jewish Question) the racial difference between the Jews (as a Near Eastern mixture) and all ‘other peoples of Semitic language’, who ‘stood in sharp contrast to the Jews’ (Fritsch 1931:15).

Following this tradition, Clauß emphasised the seemingly dominant impact of the Near Eastern race-soul on the ‘Jewish character’ (Clauß 1929:27). Hence, his description was imbued with anti-Jewish stereotypes: he ranked the ‘ruthless greed’ for material goods and power among the dominating psychological features of this race as well as a brutal insistence on dogmas and pure legalism. Furthermore, he claimed that the greedy businessman and the nit-picking advocate were the typical professions of the members of this race (Clauß 1938a:82–83, 98). With these attributes, the Near Easterners represented exactly the opposite of the heroic and masculine character of the Northern as well as of the desert men: ‘When men of other races take up their arms, they [the Near Eastern men] take their books and fixed rules’ (Clauß 1934:174). Accordingly, he accused the Near Easterners of having distorted the original Islam and transformed it into a lifeless religion of rules and dogmas. Already the medieval Islamic civilisation of Andalusia had been not essentially Arab because it embodied an urban (and no longer desert) culture, which Clauß regarded as principally incompatible with the nomadic spirit of Islam.

In contrast, the Near Easterner represented the supposed dirtiness, chaos, and the 'sizzling mixture of races' in cities like Jerusalem (Clauß 1937:149). The anti-Semitic background of his approach became obvious when he described the ghetto as the most appropriate way of life of this race: 'Ghetto is a culture [*Kulturform*] of the Near Eastern race' (Clauß 1940b:69).¹⁴

Furthermore, as with the desert race (the 'man of revelation'), Clauß searched for a religious concept for the Near Easterner and coined the term 'man of redemption' (*Erlösungsmensch*) (Clauß 1938a:76–98). Thus, he referred to an allegedly eternal conflict between spirit and flesh, immanence and transcendence, from which the members of this race wanted to be redeemed. Accordingly, Clauß considered the traditional split between body and soul, which he intended to overcome with his holistic concept of *Gestalt* as a racial specific. The dualistic worldview and the desire for redemption, he went on, had later been fatefully disseminated through Christianisation because – in accordance with his affinity to *völkisch* neo-Paganism – he regarded the Christian religion (like Judaism but in contrast with Islam) as predominantly Near Eastern (ibid.:85–86).

Beyond the spiritual sphere, the Near Eastern 'man of dichotomy' (*Zwiespaltmensch*) (Clauß 1938a:84) embodied a fundamental ambivalence and ambiguity that appeared totally uncanny to Clauß. Thus, in *Rassenseelenkunde* this type represented a fundamental threat to all other races. This was the reason why he declared 'the Jew' the most 'dangerous enemy' (Clauß 1938b:27). Accordingly, in his articles during the Second World War, he continued to insist on the dangerousness of the Jews and the necessity to warn the public against the perils for the German race-soul – precisely because, as he cynically noted, the Jews were no longer present in everyday life. Given his close contacts to the inner circle of the SS and to criminal scientists like Beger who were deeply involved in the murder of the European Jews, his prophecy sounds particularly ghoulish and macabre: 'A generation is coming which will have to receive all the knowledge about the Jews from books' (Clauß 1940b:449).

Aftermath

In the postwar years, Clauß never managed to regain a foothold. His request for the recovery of his lectureship remained unsuccessful (Weingart 1995:183–238). Accordingly, he lived the life of a private scholar and published several books and articles, mostly on Islamic or Arab affairs, including some novels. But he did not change any of his basic concepts and – undoubtedly – he remained a convinced racist – even though the word 'race' itself disappeared from the titles of his publications. Nevertheless, he clearly changed his preferences. Like other former *völkisch* and National Socialist ideologues in the 1950s, he converted to radical conservatism and anti-modernism. Thus, the Nordic *Leistungsmensch* and his insatiable *Raumwillen* appeared now as a fateful aberration, which had led to the subjugation of nature and to the destruction of other cultures. Clauß was quite radical in his criticism of what today is called globalisation and thereby used an almost apocalyptic style of language. Referring to a popular phrase of the postwar conservation movement, he criticised the 'European' or 'Occidental' (for obvious

reasons he now tried to avoid using the term ‘Nordic’) striving for achievement and progress as sawing off the branch upon which the human race sits (Clauß 1958:81–85). However, given his above-mentioned radical *völkisch* anti-modernism and anti-colonialism, this attitude was anything but new.

Against this backdrop, the desert and the ‘man of revelation’ finally advanced to the only positive alternative in a Western-dominated world. Accordingly, Clauß headed again for the Near East, and hiked through Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. By this, through his camping trips in a used Volkswagen bus and his Spartan way of life, he became increasingly similar to the European and American dropouts of the 1960s and 1970s who embarked on trips in search of a seemingly alternative life. Furthermore, Clauß decided to live openly as a Muslim now and increasingly regarded himself as a mediator between the East and the West – not as a representative of Islam in the West. Most interesting, however, was his crucial mixture of *völkisch* ideology and radical Islam, as expressed in his book *Die Weltstunde des Islams* (The Time of Islam) (Clauß 1963). Clauß was probably one of the first Germans who wrote about the rise of radical Islam in the 1950s and 1960s, and he sought contact with the Muslim Brotherhood (ibid.:99). He generally sympathised with this current, and, given his excellent Arabic language skills, it can be assumed that he had also read some of the key Islamist authors. At the very least he shared some central arguments with, for example, Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian chief ideologue of radical Islam (Damir-Geilsdorf 2003; Musallam 2005). This became obvious in Clauß’s criticism of the nationalist regimes of the 1950s and 1960s – especially of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt and the Kemalist Turkish Republic (Clauß 1963:95–105; Clauß 1968). Clauß not only regarded nationalism and the politics of modernisation as alien elements in the Islamic world; in his eyes, nationalism was generally an act of blasphemy and apostasy, and he openly propagated the seemingly authentic Islamic ‘will for theocracy’ (*Wille zum Gottesstaat*) (Clauß 1963:94).

Last but not least, the Near Eastern race remained prominent as a dangerous element in his postwar books. He continued to describe the population of the Levantine cities as salesmen and swindlers – even though he tried to avoid using the term ‘Near Eastern race’ or to connect this type directly with the Jews (Clauß 1958:168; Clauß 1963:145). However, anti-Jewish stereotypes were still present in his writings. Thus, for instance, he coined a specific Islamic variety of the traditional Christian defamation of the Jews as ‘God’s rejected people’ and accused them of having betrayed the original monotheistic revelation of the desert: ‘Israel, son of Isaac, had failed; the hour of Ismail was coming’ (Clauß 1963:145).

The Arab countries served as a safe harbour for wanted Nazi criminals after the Second World War, and in some cases former Nazis even worked as advisers or propagandists for the nationalist regimes of the region. However, with his idiosyncratic ideology, based on a devotion to what he believed to be the authentic Islam, and particularly with his radical rejection of Arab nationalism, Clauß was quite unique and cannot be compared with people like Johann von Leers, Alois Brunner, or Aribert Heim.¹⁵ Nevertheless, his later writings had an impact: his most important student was Sigrid Hunke, a popular German author on religion and the history of the Arab world, who was at the same time an important ideologue of the

European ‘New Right’ in the 1970s and 1980s (Junginger 2004; Wiedemann 2009c). In her highly influential books on Islam and the relationship between ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ (see Hunke 1990), she drew heavily upon the considerations of her academic teacher. This included the romanticisation of Islam as well as the sharp distinction between the Arabs and a destructive people who can be easily identified with the ‘Near Easterners’ of the racial discourse (respectively with the Jews). Hunke was a pioneer of a still existing pro-Arab or pro-Islamic branch of the extreme right (Michael 2006; Riebe 2006), and it is not least for this reason, that this kind of argumentation deserves attention.

Occident, Orient, and the Ambivalence of the Jewish Near East

Even though his biography and his ideology seem to feature some astonishing turns and transformations – from a devotee of ‘Nordic’ Paganism to a proponent of radical Islam – it becomes obvious that, in fact, Clauß never changed his basic concepts and ideas. These were largely borrowed from the scholarly literature on the Near East in the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, his ideology sheds light on the impact of Near Eastern anthropology and archaeology on anti-Semitism as well as on the differences between both discourses. This relationship was quite complex and ambivalent: far from constructing a binary opposition between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Orientals’, ‘Aryans’ and ‘Semites’ – as Said describes as a central mechanism of Western ‘Orientalism’ – anthropologists and archaeologists had delineated a complex racial cartography of the Near East from antiquity to modern times. In this context, the place of the ancient Hebrews had always been of vital interest, and the whole discussion was clearly shaped by the contemporary discourse on the ‘Jewish question’ and the rising anti-Semitism. But whereas the scholarly debate – not least because of the international character and the involvement of Jewish authors – remained ambivalent and complex, anti-Semitic and *völkisch* ideologues reduced the anthropological and archaeological theories to a sharp distinction between the supposedly two central races of the region: the Oriental or desert race, and the Near Eastern race – a distinction which had, ironically, initially been established by Luschan in order to *refute* anti-Semitic race theories.

Clauß radicalised the distinction between Orientals and Near Easterners, Arabs and Jews, and used it for the construction of a triangular relationship between the North (the Occident), the Orient of the desert (the Islamic Orient), and the (Jewish) Near East. By this, his basic distinction between Occident and Orient can be described as a dichotomy – but a dichotomy in which every side represents different and ambivalent characteristics and is thus open for re-evaluation and changes of identification. In the 1920s and 1930s, the imagined Nordic past embodied an ideal heroic world that would help the Germans after the First World War to again become a powerful nation by strengthening their Nordic roots. But with its dominance and *Raumwillen*, the Nordic *Leistungsmensch* increasingly appeared as a threat to all other races and even to the existence of the whole planet. On the other hand, the Arab Orient served as an antipole to a Nordic Europe, but as such was finally able to advance to a positive alternative. However, it should be

mentioned that this applied only to a highly romanticised, ‘original’ Arab world, as represented by the desert and the Bedouin. But with regard to the relationship of this seemingly positive representation of ‘the Orient’ and *völkisch* anti-Semitism, it is most important that the structure of his approach is not simply dualistic but that it includes a third element: the (Jewish) Near East embodied a threatening ambivalence and contrariety, which from the very beginning precluded romanticisation and identification. This third element did not simply represent ambivalent characteristics; rather, it epitomised ambivalence and ambiguity and, as such, posed as a fundamental antithesis to the principle of racial difference.

It is exactly this structure, the representation of ‘the Jew’ as the embodiment of ambivalence, which historians of anti-Semitism have rightly identified as one of the key elements of anti-Semitism and which might distinguish anti-Semitic discourses from more or less negative representations of the Orient (see Holz 2000; Rohde 2009).

Notes

¹ Earlier results of my research on Clauß have been published in German (see Wiedemann 2009a). Further research was made possible by a fellowship of the CSG-V (‘Space and Collective Identities’) of the Berlin Excellence Cluster ‘TOPOI: The Formation and Transformation of Space in Ancient Civilizations’.

² The untranslatable (Hutton 2005:7–13) term *völkisch* refers to a distinctive branch of the extreme national right in early twentieth-century Germany: the so-called *völkisch* movement (Breuer 2008; Puschner 2001).

³ See Weingart (1995); but see also the justified criticism of his highly euphemistic account by Breitenfellner (1998) and Schwerendt (2009:147–48).

⁴ The deliberations of the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous are not generally accessible, but the Righteous Department of Yad Vashem confirmed to me that the decision was made due to the reasons mentioned above.

⁵ This romantic, backward-looking, and rather scholarly view of the Orient has often been identified as characteristic of ‘German orientalism’ – in contrast to the supposedly more negative attitudes in England and France which had been totally dominated by colonial interests (Said 2003:17–19). However, things were much more complicated – in Germany as well as in Western Europe (Marchand 2009:333–48).

⁶ The term ‘magian soul’ is used in English editions of *The Decline of the West*; however, ‘magical soul’ is a better translation.

⁷ Silwan is located in the Kidron Valley, just below the Old City. Today it is officially incorporated into Jerusalem, and the village has recently become one of the hotspots of the Arab-Israeli conflict because the so-called City of David is located within Silwan and radical settlers have sought to re-establish a Jewish presence in the midst of the village.

⁸ Thus, anthropologists as well as philologists were well aware of the pitfalls of the term ‘Semitic’ (e.g., Fischer 1923:171; Kiefer 1991:18–25). As Christopher Hutton (2005:94–109) rightly emphasises, there was also generally no confusion of anthropology and philology among Nazi race scientists as has often been claimed.

⁹ Toral-Niehoff (2002) mentions that the myth of the Noble Bedouin cannot be simply regarded as a European or ‘Orientalist’ fiction: it clearly rested upon Arab self-conceptions which later became influenced themselves by the European travelogues.

¹⁰ Undated [1944] draft for the special order ‘races in action’ for the *Ahnenerbe*. Bundesarchiv Berlin NS 21/39.

¹¹ First report on the special order ‘races in action’ for the *Ahnenerbe* (13 November 1944). Bundesarchiv Berlin NS 31/171, fol. 18–25.

¹² However, Luschan’s position in the contemporary discourse on race was ambivalent. He openly opposed racial anti-Semitism, but at the same time he was a proponent of eugenics and racial hygiene (Laukötter 2007:102–24).

¹³ There is no place here for delineating the scholarly debate about the presence of ‘Aryans’ in ancient Palestine among contemporary archaeologists and anthropologists, but it should be mentioned that these speculations played a vital role in *völkisch* fantasies about the ‘Aryan’ descent of Jesus (Chamberlain 1932 [1899]).

¹⁴ It should be emphasised, however, that these lines were published at the same time that the Germans were about to confine the Jews in ghettos in Eastern Europe.

¹⁵ Johann von Leers was one of the most important Nazi anti-Jewish writers and later served in the Egyptian Information Department under Gamal Abdal Nasser. Alois Brunner belonged to the staff of Adolf Eichmann and organised the deportation of the Jews from Saloniki, Slovakia, and France; after the war he found refuge in Syria. Aribert Heim, also known as ‘Dr Death’, was an infamous SS doctor in the Nazi concentration camp of Mauthausen; in the 1960s he escaped arrest and went to Egypt. However, in contrast to South America (see, most recently, Steinacher 2011), the Arab world as refuge for Nazi criminals is hardly explored. Moreover, this field is still dominated by what I consider speculations and sensationalist books (see, e.g., Schmidt-Eenboom 2007).

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