

The Pennsylvania Folklife Society Collection @ Ursinus College

Finding Aid

The Ahnenerbe Collection: Documents from Nazi Germany, 1936-1945

1 box; 15 folders; 195 documents

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Introduction to the Collection:

The following finding aid details the present organization of a peculiar collection of 195 documents discovered at Ursinus College in 2009. The organization, interpretation, and current research on the materials have so far been undertaken by three undergraduates at the college over the course of three years. What follows below is designed to serve as a guide to the collection, both in terms of its content as well as the organizing logic behind its still-evolving cataloguing.

Organizationally, the collection is arranged in 15 folders, with Folder I being the smallest (2 documents), and Folder 12 (44 documents) being the largest. The papers span the years 1936-1945, and contain many names and topics both well-known and less well-known in the Nazi German narrative. The collection is perhaps best described in brief as “eclectic,” containing elements and hints of wider projects of which these papers say only a little.

Where the documents came from remains unknown. As they were discovered with the Pennsylvania German Folk-life Collection at Ursinus College, it is believed that the Nazi papers came from one of the collection's primary collectors, Alfred L. Shoemaker. Drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942, Shoemaker served as an ethnographer and linguist for five years, before returning to academic life and folk-life studies. While Shoemaker's military record has not been examined in any great detail, it is believed he might have picked up the Nazi papers while serving in Germany.

The papers themselves have similarly foggy origins. Much of the collection comes from a small research branch of the SS known as *das Ahnenerbe*. Founded in 1935 by Heinrich Himmler, Herman Wirth, and Walter Darré, the *Ahnenerbe* sought to “re-discover” the lost origins of the Aryan Race. The organization funded several expeditions around the world in search of Aryan civilization, and sponsored research domestically toward similar ends. The papers in the collection bear the marks of the *Ahnenerbe*'s two primary administrators as of 1937; Wolfram Sievers and Walter Wüst. It is believed that the collection likely came from Wolfram Sievers' papers, as many of the memos are addressed to him, and most of the other documents bear considerable notation in his hand throughout. The largest known discovery of Sievers' papers occurred in 1945 outside the town of Waischenfeld in Bavaria. There, in a cave, Sievers had hidden much of his paperwork. The U.S. Army discovered them in 1945, and later used the papers as evidence in Sievers' war-crimes trial. He was convicted and sentenced to death the following year. While only speculation, it is possible that the materials at Ursinus were also lifted from the cave at Waischenfeld.

Some research has been done utilizing the materials. In 2011, I used documents from Folders IV, XI, and XII in a thesis on the Nazi project of building the Aryan Race. The thesis can be found at Ursinus College.

The difficulties of using the collection became readily apparent during this project. Perhaps the most difficult proved identifying how the documents at Ursinus compared to documents in other repositories of *Ahnenerbe* material, both in Germany and elsewhere. While some projects of note in the Ursinus material (such as the Atlas of German Ethnography) were readily documented elsewhere, others (such as *Sprachpolitik*) could be found nowhere else. This suggests that either the references to more obscure topics in the Ursinus collection are buried deeper than I have yet investigated, or that the Ursinus papers constitute one of the few remaining references to such work. It remains unclear which is the case. More work is required on the collection. One will note that the format of the finding aid changes around Folder X, and continues in the new format to the end of the document. This was brought about because of time constraints and difficulty summarizing texts. Future archivists may yet improve the system.

In short, a historian conducting research on the *Ahnenerbe* would be well-served to include the Ursinus Collection in his or her examination of primary sources, but also to include relevant searches in the more well-established collections in archives in Germany and the United States. The *Ahnenerbe* Collection at Ursinus College is but one small part of a much wider body of sources, and should be understood as such. It has been my hope to provide some coherence to the collection, and make this new part of Nazi-German source material available for historians.

Folders

Folder I: Bibliographies (likely related to materials in Folder XII)

- 2 documents
 - *Liste der astrologischen Bücher.*(List of Astrological Books)
 - 62 pages of English and German sources on Astrology.
 - Occasional notations and corrections.
 - Precise date of production unknown, though a review of the listed sources suggest at earliest 1939.
 - *Forschungsdienst: herausgegeben von den Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft der Landbauwissenschaft Band 5 heft 11 1938*
 - An excerpt from a journal by **G. Franz-Jena** on...
 - Volume 5, Issue 11 of *Forschungsdienst* (Research Service).

Folder II: Journals

- 4 documents
 - *Die Kultore Der Indogermanen*, by **Otto Huth**
 - A general internet search yields few results for the term *Kultore* aside from references in a few works to Herr Huth's piece.
 - Document is a reprint from the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft XXXIV. Heft 3/4*.
 - *Die Kultore Der Indogermanen*, by **Otto Huth** (w/ note from Sievers)

- Same document as before with a brief note by **Wolfram Sievers**, director of the *Ahnenerbe*, at top, dated 14 January 1938.
- *Neues aus den Sieben un Dreizehn Gemeinden*, by **Bruno Schweitzer**
 - Published in Fraktur script.
 - Unclear what journal excerpt is drawn from, or when it was written.
 - 15 pages in length.
- *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* Volume 7 Issue 3
 - Entries by **Otto Lauffer** and **Fritz Boehm**. Reference made to an H. Wirth, who could be **Hermann Wirth**, the first president of the *Ahnenerbe*.

Folder III: As yet unsorted

- 6 Documents
 - *Ahnenerbe* memo from **Rudolf Siemsen** to **Wolfram Sievers**.
 - Speaks of a report on the state of German *Volkskunde*.
 - Extensive handwritten notes by **Sievers** and **Walter Wüst**
 - Dated 9 June 1939
 - Copy of a policies and proposals by the Central Office of Design in celebration of the Association of German Folk-life.
 - Document signed off by **Sievers**.
 - 24 pages in length
 - Page one of a memo from the President of the Reich Office for *Bodenforschung*, **W. Keppler** to **Sievers**
 - Dated 30 December, 1944
 - Sent to **Waischenfeld** office, the final location of *Das Ahnenerbe*.
 - A folder of materials concerning **Dr. Bruno Schweitzer**.
 - A lot of copies of a brief biography of Dr. Schweitzer.
 - Includes a handwritten note by Dr. Schweitzer.
 - References to the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*
 - Memo from the *Blut und Boden* organization.
 - Written in a script
 - Signature illegible to my eyes.
 - Dated 11 September 1936.
 - Document of many languages
 - Not sure what to make of this one.

Folder IV: Breton Separatism

- 5 documents
 - A proposal for German-Breton Cooperation
 - Begins with a brief description of **M. Olier Mordrel**, a prominent member of the Breton intelligentsia through the 20's, 30's and 40's.
 - Makes mention of his periodical "**Stur**".
 - *Bretonische Bibliographie*
 - Assembled by **Dr. Gerhard von Trevenar**

- Lists sources concerning important themes in Breton history, geography, economics, folk-studies, language, and national character.
 - Published in 1940.
- A report on the cultural situation in Brittany
 - Authored presumably by **M. Olier Mordrel**
 - Traces the history of Breton culture in France.
 - Makes proposals concerning Breton-German cooperation.
 - 1 March 1941.
- Carbon-copy version of the cultural situation of Brittany (with edits)
 - Edits made by **M. Olier Mordrel**
 - Substantial corrections and some changes.
 - Dated as 14 March 1941.
- List of French propositions, related to **M. Olier Mordrel**

Folder V: Related to Norwegian Projects

- 16 Documents
 - A note about a meeting with *Ministerialrat* **Dr. Huhnhäuser** by Professor **Hans Schwalm**
 - **Dr. Schwalm** was the leader on *das Ahnenerbe*'s research activities in Norway.
 - Notated by **Sievers**.
 - Dated 15 September, 1942
 - The note discusses the topics raised at the meeting
 - These include:
 - The goals of the Department of “*Wissenschaft un Schule*”
 - The plans for the formation of a Research Institute (*Forschungsgemeinschaft*) in Norway.
 - The activities of **Dr. Huhnhäuser** regarding propaganda literature
 - Attached is a carbon copy of **Dr. Huhnhäuser's** proposal for the establishment of a research institute in Norway
 - A note regarding the establishment of a German Research institute in Norway.
 - Notated by **Sievers**
 - Signed by **Schwalm**, dated 17 September 1942.
 - A note about a meeting with **Hans S. Jacobsen** in Moss on 17 September, 1942.
 - A note about a meeting with **Minister Riisnaes** (Justice Minister) on 21 October, 1942.
 - A short report about travel information through Norway and Denmark
 - By **Bruno Schweitzer**, dated 15 May, 1944
 - His trip lasted from 23 April to 13 May, 1944.
 - Note about a meeting with **Dr. Huhnhäuser** on 16 September, 1942 by **Schwalm**
 - Plastic sleeved documents
 - 2 documents, both marked **Geheim!** (Handle delicately, paper is frail)

- Document 1, memo to **SS-Gruppenführer Berger** regarding the proposal for the establishment for a German research institute in Norway, signed by **Rudolf Brandt**, Himmler's personal secretary.
 - Dated 28 September, 1942
 - Document 2, memo from the office of **Der Reichsführer SS** from presumably **SS-Gruppenführer Berger** (signature hard to read) to **Sievers**.
 - Dated 22 September, 1942
- A note about a meeting with **Dr. Kern** of the *Sprachschule Kern Oslo*, 14 October, 1942
 - Meeting with **Dr. Kern**, leader of the Foreign Organization in Oslo for 20 years.
 - An important person in intellectual circles in Norway
 - **Dr. Kern** complains in 4 hour meeting that **Dr. Huhnhäuser's** German Academy is trying to shut his language school down.
 - Includes a discussion of Norwegian intellectuals, and their willingness to support German ideology.
 - Also discussed the possibility of creating an intellectual organization independent of parties or governments.
- A note about a meeting with **Herrn Ivar Saeter**, 13 October, 1942
- A note about a meeting with **Dr. Huhnhäuser**, 13 October, 1942
- A note about a meeting with **SS-Hauptsturmführer Falk** of the SD, 19 October, 1942
- A note about a meeting with **SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Ritz** of the SD, 12 October, 1942
- A note on a management report, 16 October, 1942
- A note about "Norwegian History" by **Martin Gerlach** 17 October, 1942
- A note about a meeting with **SS-Sturmbannführer Noot** of the SD, 28 October, 1942

Folder VI: Relating to Richard Wolfram—correspondence with Sievers

- 9 documents
 - Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 7 December, 1938
 - Subject: *Bericht über Einfluss K.v. Spiess*
 - Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 10 December, 1938
 - Subject: *Spiess Richtlunien für Julfeiern und Much-Manuskript*
 - "*Brauchtum in der Ostmark*"
 - **Wolfram Sievers** to **Heinrich Himmler**
 - Related to the archiving of material collected by **Richard Wolfram** in Ebensee, St. Johann, and Maxglaner Wettschnalzen from 12 February 1939.
 - Dated 11 March, 1939.
 - Carbon-copy

- Memo from **Richard Wolfram**? to **Wolfram Sievers** w/attached report on the current situation in Salzburg
 - Dated 1 February, 1939
- Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 1 February, 1939
 - Speaks of seizing materials in Vienna.
 - Mentions materials from St. Johann and Ebensee.
- Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 22 March, 1939
 - Notations present on document, possibly of Dr. Wolfram's hand.
- Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 10 November, 1939
 - Subject: "*Erhebungen und Massnahmen wegen Auflösung von Trachtenvereinen in Salzburg, Brauchtumgefährdung*"
- Carbon-copy of above document
- Memo from **Richard Wolfram** to **Wolfram Sievers**, 10 November, 1939
 - Subject: *Angelegenheit Spiess*

Folder VII: Reports B

- 7 documents (6 in first sleeve, 1 in second)
 - Report 1A-*Menschwerdung und Sprache*.
 - Report 2- *Volk und Sprache*
 - Report 3- *Der stille Sprachenkampf im Völkerleben*
 - Report 4- *Der plangelenkte Sprachenkampf der anderen*
 - Report 5-*Die geistige Mobilmachung für den Selbsterhaltungskampf der deutschen Sprache*.
 - Report 6- *Mundart und Hochsprache*.
 - Report entitled : *Die Kulturpolitische Lage der schwedischen Hochschulen*

Folder VIII: Reports A

- 9 Documents
 - Report - *Grundsätzliches zur süddeutschen Germanenforschung. Eine Richtigsstellung und Antwort an Herrn W. Hülle*
 - By **Dr. Walter Veeck**, *Direktor der Württ. Landeskunstsammlungen*.
 - Memorandum- *Über die Begründung und den wissenschaftlichen Kriegseinsatz eines Institutes für Eurasiatische Raum-und Kulturforschung*.
 - By **Dr. Hans Findeisen**, Berlin
 - October, 1942
 - Includes 2 maps of eastern Europe
 - Report-*Das Nachwuchsproblem and Sachstand und Lage in der deutschen Volkskunde*
 - Second report dated 22 July, 1938.
 - Report discussing the book, "*Deutsche Volkskunde im Schrifttum*."
 - Discussion of **Adolf Spamer's** "*Sitte und Brauch*" in *Handbuch der deutschen Volkskunde*.
 - Signed by illegible signature.

- Booklet by **Bruno Schweitzer**
- Extensive memo to **Himmler** and the *Reichsgeschäftsführer des "Ahnenerbe"*
 - Subject: The craft traditions of the present
 - By: **Rudolf Siemen**
 - 9 June, 1939
- 2nd booklet by **Bruno Schweitzer**
- Report-*Um die Katholische Universität in Salzburg*
 - 4 February, 1938

Folder IX: Related to *Sprachpolitik*, East-Prussian Peasant Rugs, and the War Deployment of Humanities Research

- 5 Documents
 - Proposal for the establishment of a secret State department for *Sprachpolitik*
 - Signed by **Sievers** 26 December, 1944.
 - Noted in following document that proposal is made by **Dr. Georg Schmidt-Rohr**.
 - Note-on the secret state department of *Sprachpolitik*
 - Marked **Geheim!**
 - Dated 19 February, 1945
 - Proposal by **Dr. Georg Schmidt-Rohr**
 - Signed by **Sievers**
 - Note-East Prussian Peasant rugs
 - Dated 4 March, 1938
 - Signed by illegible
 - Mentions **Dr. Konrad Hahm**
 - Opinion by **Dr. Plassmann** regarding **Dr. Hahm's** East Prussian Peasant rugs
 - Report-*Veröffentlichungsplan der Kriegseinsatzarbeiten der Geisteswissenschaften*
 - Rich with names and topics.
 - Possible plan to reinterpret history racially.

Folder X: Miscellaneous notes, memos and other

- 32 documents + some assorted papers
 - Memo from **Sievers** to **Der Reichsführer SS, Chef des Sicherheitshauptamtes**, and **Dr. Six**: Subject: *Verbreitung kabbalistischer Bücher*, 4 March, 1939.
 - Carbon copy
 - Marked by **Sievers**
 - Same as above, another carbon copy
 - Opinion paper by **SS-Sturmann Mai**
 - Signed by **Sievers** and **Walter Wüst**
 - Mention of **Dr. Six**
 - Memo from **Pohl** to Professor **Teudt** regarding **Dr. Schweitzer's** teaching
 - 3 December, 1937
 - Memo from **Sievers** to **Dr. Six**, 26 May, 1938

- Mentions **Harmjanz** in reference to an “Index” of ethnographic literature.
 - Memo from **Sievers** to **Dr. Erich Rohr**, 26 May, 1938
 - Brief memo regarding an interesting report **Dr. Rohr** provided for **Sievers**.
 - Carbon copy
 - French letter from **Olier Mordrel** to **Sievers**, 14 March 1941.
 - Memo from **Röhr** to **Sievers**, 25 May, 1938
 - Concerning a report with 4 photos.
 - Mentions **Walter Wüst** and **Heinrich Harmjanz**
 - Very brief
 - Brief hand written note by **Sievers**
 - Usual Sievers handwriting, can’t read it personally
 - Brief memo from **Dr. W. Spengler** to **Sievers**, 4 Muli (probably means July), 1938
 - Regarding confidential files
 - Invitation to **Sievers** to **Bruno Schweitzer’s** engagement, Christmas, 1937
 - Includes a note by Sievers.
- The remaining 21 documents could not be properly assessed given time constraints. Please see Folder for more details.

Folder XI: Related to “The Atlas of German *Volkskunde*” and **Eduard Wildhagen**

- 18 Documents
 - Date range: 1938-1939
 - Names:
 - **Eduard Wildhagen**
 - **Heinrich Harmjanz**
 - **Rudolf Mentzel**
 - **Walter Wüst**

Folder XII: Dowsing rod research, **Joseph Wimmer**, **Paul Beyer**

- 44 documents
 - Date range- 1937-1941
 - Names:
 - **Walter Wüst**
 - **Wolfram Sievers**
 - **Dr. Paul Beyer**
 - **Dr. Joesph Wimmer**
 - **Reinhard Heydrich**
 - **Heinrich Himmler**
 - **Dr. Karl Brandt**

Folder XIII: Related to **Walter Wüst** and **Otto Huth**

- 15 Documents
 - 1937-1940
 - Includes memo regard **Matthes Ziegler**

Folder XIV: *Völkischer Beobachter* clippings

- 7 documents
 - Date range: 1937-1938
 - Article clippings, some concerning German *Volkskunde*
 - One clipping on dowsing

Folder XV: Related to the *Deutsches Forschungsgemeinschaft* and **Heinrich Harmjanz**

- 16 documents
 - Prominent names and organizations:
 - **Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft**
 - **Zentralarchiv der deutschen Volkserzählung**
 - **Dr. Gottfried Henßen**
 - **Dr. Misch Orend-Hermannstadt**
 - **Bruno Schweitzer**
 - **Wolfram Sievers**
 - **Rudolf Mentzel**
 - Date Range: 1938-1939