

LADAKHI KNOWLEDGE AND WESTERN LEARNING: A. H. FRANCKE'S TEACHERS, GUIDES AND FRIENDS IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYA¹

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The Moravian missionary scholar August Hermann Francke (1870-1930) left a rich legacy of research on Ladakh and the neighbouring regions of the Western Himalaya. Arguably, his greatest single contribution was his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, published in two volumes by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1914 and 1926, which contains translations of the Ladakhi royal chronicle, the *La dvags rgyal rabs*, as well as other key historical texts. Other important contributions



Fig. 1. Francke exploring the ruins of a Buddhist temple in Gompa village, near Leh, Ladakh, 1909. Photo: Pindi Lal. Courtesy of Kern Institute, University of Leiden

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include *A Lower Ladakhi Version of the Kesar Saga* (1905-1941) and dozens of shorter publications on topics ranging from rock inscriptions to music and folk songs.²

In February 1930 Francke died tragically young at Berlin's Charité hospital, still aged only 59. Among the works that still lay incomplete at the time of his death was a collection of Ladakhi wedding songs that he planned to publish with the ASI. As Elena De Rossi Filibeck (2009, 2016) has explained, the ASI still hoped to bring out the text after Francke's death. It first sought expert advice from the Dutch scholar Jan van Manen (1877-1943) in Calcutta, and then approached Professor Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) in Rome. Tucci duly received the manuscript, but he never took up the challenge of preparing it for publication.

For several decades, Francke's text therefore lay unnoticed in a library cupboard in the Italian Institute for Africa and the East of Rome (IsIAO) until it came to Elena's attention in 2000. In her 2009 paper, she transcribed, translated and published one of the sets of songs, which came from Hanle (Wam le) in eastern Ladakh, and in 2016 she reviewed the songs from Rupshu (Ri shod, Rub chu). In future, she plans to publish transcriptions of all the songs, also including a further set from Lower Ladakh. In this way, she will be able to ensure that they are available to a new generation of scholars, thus bringing one of Francke's unfulfilled aspirations to fruition more than 80 years after his death.

Francke of course did not work alone. By the nature of his research interests he drew on indigenous sources of knowledge, both written and oral. He therefore needed the assistance of Ladakhi colleagues to locate, transcribe and interpret the texts that he required. The wedding texts are a case in point. The Hanle and Rupshu songs were collected by Francke's friend and colleague Joseph Gergan (1878-1946), who also found further songs in Kharnak (mKhar nag). Francke had himself assembled the other sets of songs in his projected collection with the help of the villagers of Khalatse (Kha la rtse) and Tagmachig (rTag ma cig) in Lower Ladakh in the early 1900s. In this essay, I place Francke's researches in a wider social context, thus complementing Elena's work on the wedding songs. The essay is arranged chronologically, with sections on the different phases of Francke's activity, beginning with his apprentice years in Leh, the capital of Ladakh. The objective is to show how his interactions with local colleagues informed and enriched Francke's development as a scholar, and to celebrate their contributions.

² For a near-comprehensive bibliography of his published works and unpublished archival material, see Walravens & Taube 1992. For other biographical material on Francke, see in particular Bray 2008; Bray 2015. See also Francke's handwritten *Lebenslauf* (curriculum vitae) as of 1922 in the archive of the Humboldt University, Berlin: A. H. Francke *Lebenslauf*. Phil. Fak., Nr. 1238, Mikrofiche Nr. 2.

Apprentice Years in Leh, 1896-1899

Francke joined the Moravian mission in Leh in June 1896. The mission had recently gone through a difficult period. Francke was one of a new generation of missionaries who, it was hoped, would revive its fortunes.

The two pioneer missionaries, Wilhelm Heyde (1825-1907) and Eduard Pagell (1820-1883), had first travelled from Germany to India in 1853-1854. In 1855 they passed through Leh, hoping to travel from there to Mongolia. Finding that they were barred from crossing the Tibetan frontier, they instead founded a mission station at Kyelang (Kye lang/Kye glang) in Lahul in 1856. They were soon joined by the brilliant linguist Heinrich August Jäschke (1817-1881), who embarked on his study of Tibetan during a three-month stay in Ladakh in the summer of 1857. Heyde likewise made regular evangelistic journeys to the region, travelling as far north as the Nubra valley.

However, it was not until 1885 that the Moravians opened a mission station in Leh under the leadership of Friedrich Adolf Redslob (1838-1891). Leh's status as a trading centre meant that it was much more strategically placed than Kyelang. However, the new mission received a severe setback in 1891 when both Redslob and the medical missionary Dr Karl Marx died of typhus. By the mid-1890s, when Francke arrived, it was only just beginning to recover.



Fig. 2. Wilhelm and Maria Heyde in Kyelang, 1896. Samuel Joldan, who was later to work with Francke in Leh, is standing, second to the right, in the back row.

3 On the early history of the mission, see Bray 1983; Bray 1985; Beszterda 2013.

Francke's aptitude for languages was one of the main reasons why he received the call to Ladakh: the hope was that he would pick up and pursue his predecessors' linguistic research and Bible translation. Born in Gnadenfrei (Silesia) in 1870, Francke had originally been trained as a primary school teacher (*Volkschullehrer*) at the Moravian training college in Niesky. While teaching at a Moravian boy's school in Kleinwelka, near Bautzen, he had on his own initiative embarked on the comparative study of Indo-German languages, including Greek and Sanskrit. From Easter to Christmas 1895, he studied at the Moravian Theological College, near Manchester, where he began the study of Hebrew. However, he never completed a formal university education before leaving for Ladakh, and this makes his subsequent academic achievements all the more remarkable.

Early Work in Leh

As soon as he arrived in Leh, Francke embarked upon a study of the spoken and written languages. By September 1896 was able to write that he had got far enough to read the Litany twice and to hold hymn-singing sessions (*Singstunde*) and prayers.⁴

By the following year, he had had to take on extra responsibilities because his more senior colleague Rev Samuel Ribbach (1863-1943) was sick, apparently with typhus.⁵ Francke therefore had to prepare weekly sermons in the local language. He was also responsible for supervising the mission school and himself conducted lessons in English and arithmetic. Three days a week he undertook house visits, hoping thereby to get to know local people, and to spread the Christian message. His administrative duties included supervising the meteorological readings that the mission undertook on behalf of the Indian government, as well as managing the mission's purchases of wood (a vital fuel for the winter). Meanwhile, he was translating Bible stories into the Ladakhi dialect, making a collection of Ladakhi folkstories, and working on a Ladakhi grammar. Besides all this he was studying the Hindustani language and Buddhism for private interest.

In March 1897, Francke set out from Leh to meet his fiancée Anna Theodora Weiz ('Dora', 1875-1945), the daughter of a Moravian missionary who had served in South Africa. The couple were married in Amritsar in late March, and then set out on the return journey to Leh. Dora herself became an accomplished linguist in Ladakhi and Tibetan although, as will be seen, her poor state of health became a major source of concern.

4 Francke to La Trobe, Leh, 23 September 1896, Archiv der Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut (hereafter ABU).

5 Francke to La Trobe, Leh, 24 November 1896, ABU.

Samuel Joldan, the Teacher

In Francke's early years in Ladakh, one of his main guides was Samuel Joldan (Shamu el byor ldan). Joldan was originally from the village of Stok on the opposite side of the Indus valley from Leh. In the 1860s he had travelled to Lahul, together with his father Sonam Stobgyas (bSod nams stob rgyas), and in 1865 the two men became the first Ladakhi converts to be baptised by the missionaries. After returning to Ladakh in the late 1880s he had served as the postmaster of Leh, and was now working as the mission schoolmaster. In addition to being a native speaker of Ladakhi, Joldan could write literary Tibetan. He also had a good knowledge of Urdu, and could speak English and even some German.

Francke refers to Joldan in several of his writings, sometimes mentioning him by name, and sometimes referring to him as "his friend the schoolmaster". For example, he says that in his early years in Ladakh, Joldan accompanied him on his visits to Ladakhi homes. According to Francke (1899f: 234), they made a good pair because neither were very brave on their own but, working together, could lend each other courage. Similarly, Joldan accompanied Francke on pastoral visits to the hospital, which was then being run by a British government doctor in the absence of a medical missionary. Most importantly, he helped Francke in his linguistic researches.

First Acquaintance with Joseph Gergan

A second key figure was Joseph Gergan, who at this point was still a junior member of the congregation. This was the period when Gergan was finishing his education with the missionaries and embarking on his career as a mission worker in his own right.⁶ He does not seem to have played a major role in Francke's researches at this stage but, as will be seen, he eventually became the closest of all Francke's Ladakhi colleagues.

Gergan had been born in 1878 at Hundar in the Nubra valley to the north of Leh on the far side of the 18,000 feet Khardong pass. His father was Gergan Sonam Wangyal (dGe rgan bSod rnam dbang rgyal), a well-educated Lhasa Tibetan who had come to Nubra in the company of a senior lama in about 1860, and married into a local family.⁷ He was attracted to Christian teachings, and moved to Leh in 1888 in order to help the missionaries with the translation of the Old Testament into Tibetan, starting with the Psalms, as well as teaching in the mission school. However, he died suddenly in late 1889.

⁶ His original name was Sonam Tsetan (bSod rnam thse brtan). After his baptism in 1890 he was generally known as 'Joseph Tsetan' until 1921 when he took on the name 'Gergan' (dGe rgan) as a 'surname' following his ordination as a Moravian minister. In English writing, he always wrote his name 'Joseph', and 'Yoseb' (Yo seb) in Tibetan. For the sake of clarity, I shall refer to him as 'Gergan' throughout this essay, regardless of the period to which I refer. On Gergan's biography, see Bray 1994.

⁷ R 15 U a 2 Nr 14, Reisebericht 1875, pp. 21-22. ABU.



Fig. 3. The Moravian missionaries' knitting school in Leh, c. 1900. Joseph Gergan is standing at the top left. Source: ABU, Herrnhut.

Although Gergan Sonam Wangyal was himself never baptised, he had expressed the hope that his son would be brought up as a Christian. With the consent of his mother and older brother, Joseph was duly baptised in August 1890.⁸ The missionaries subsequently sent him to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) school in Srinagar, run by Rev Cecil Tyndale Biscoe, for two years.

In 1897, now aged 19, Joseph returned to Leh. Francke and his fellow missionary Samuel Ribbach (1863-1943) were given the task of continuing his education in Bible Studies, Church History, Theology and English.⁹ Later, Dr F. E. Shawe, who was in charge of the mission hospital, instructed him in anatomy and the care of the sick. At the same time, Joseph helped out with the mission and by the early 1900s, he had taken over from Samuel Joldan as the main teacher of the school.

The 'Language Question' in the Himalayan Mission

The 'language question', to adapt the title of one of Francke's articles (1910), was one of his major preoccupations from the outset. There were several aspects to the question. At the most basic level, the missionaries had little prospect of sharing the Christian message unless they could communicate in local languages. However, the

⁸ Jahresbericht der Missionsstation Leh 1890. ABU.

⁹ Jahresbericht der Missionsstation Leh 1897. ABU.

choice of language — or languages — was not entirely straightforward. Jäschke translated the New Testament into a simple form of the classical Tibetan used for religious texts (*chos skad*). This was a considered decision, based on the understanding that this style of language would be understood by educated people across the Tibetan cultural world. However, literary Tibetan differs markedly from the colloquial, much as Latin differs from Italian or French. Spoken Ladakhi in effect qualifies as a separate language, distinct from either *chos skad* or Lhasa colloquial.

Within a year of his arrival in Ladakh, Francke wrote an article for the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (1897b) supporting Jäschke's translation policy, and expressing admiration for his skill in applying it. He stuck to the same view in his own later participation in the Tibetan translation of the Old Testament, which became a major part of his life's work. However, from the outset, he became interested in the distinctive features of spoken Ladakhi.

There were several reasons for this interest. The first concerned the communication of Christian teachings. While Jäschke had focussed on the classical language, he had also prepared Ladakhi colloquial translations of a selection of Bible readings used in the Moravian church's Passion Week liturgy: it seems that these had a much greater impact on the Ladakhi congregation than the classical Tibetan version. The second reason was educational. As noted above, Francke was responsible for supervising the mission school, and he saw the difficulties that both students and adults had in writing letters:

“If one looks at a letter by our Christians, one sees at the beginning and the end rather beautiful phrases in the classical language. In the middle, however, in the actual letter, all grammar and spelling is abandoned. The writer, because of his poor knowledge of the classical language, writes as he speaks. As he has to make up his own spelling, one can imagine that letters in this part of the world are amazing works of literature” (Francke 2005 [1898]: 290).

He therefore concluded that:

“[...] we must do our best to raise the Ladakhi dialect to be the written language and to teach reading and writing in it. Once it has been mastered reasonably well by the pupils, they can be introduced to reading in the classical language” (Francke 2005 [1898]: 290).

This would be no small undertaking:

“One can see that such a transformation of the curriculum of the reading school would be a life's work for one missionary. One would need an orthographic dictionary of the dialect, a grammar to establish the difference between dialect and classical language, and finally to write a series of readers” (Francke 2005: 291).

Francke's own life's work took him in several different directions but, amidst his many academic preoccupations, he never lost sight of this basic question: how best to communicate Christian teaching, as well as other aspects of modern life, so that they would be accessible to ordinary people in Ladakh?

Historical literature

In order to study Ladakhi and Tibetan vocabulary and — above all — grammar, Francke needed written and spoken samples of the language. The search for appropriate texts led him directly to his wider researches into Ladakhi history and culture.

When he arrived in Leh, the written text that was most readily available to him was the *La dvags rgyal rabs*, the Ladakhi royal chronicle. The chronicle had been known to Western scholars since the mid-19th century. Francke's predecessor, Dr Karl Marx had embarked on a revised translation of the text with the help of two local scholars, Tashi Stanpel (bKra shis bstan 'phel), the head lama of Stagna (Stag sna) monastery,¹⁰ and Munshi Tsering Palgias (Tshe ring dpal rgyas). Before he died in 1891, Marx had got as far as sending the first of three sections of the text, together with a translation, to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.

Together with Dora, Francke followed up on Marx's original research. The second part of Marx's translation of the *La dvags rgyal rabs* had been published in the journal without the original text in 1894. Francke now managed to find the text, and the third part of the chronicle was published in 1902 with a translation by Dora Francke. As will be seen, the *La dvags rgyal rabs* remained central to Francke's research interests.

Ladakhi Proverbs, Songs and the Kesar saga

At the same time, Francke also began to gather Ladakhi proverbs and folksongs. He regarded these as important sources for the local language, history, and — perhaps most importantly — ways of thinking. These researches led to a series of publications in English and German.

An encounter at the hospital led Francke to his study of the Kesar (Ke sar/Ge sar) epic, which tells of the adventures of a magical hero, and is known in different versions across the Tibet and Mongolia. An old man from the nearby village of Shey was lying sick. He was unable to sleep and he summoned a 16 year-old girl called Zara (Zar ra) to talk to him at night (see Francke 1922: 321). She talked and sang day and night with such energy that she caught Francke's attention. He asked her to recite her story to Joldan, who wrote it down word by word, and by this means he acquired the text of his first Ladakhi version of the Kesar saga.

Francke was excited about the Kesar text in several respects. First, he noted that while the style was different from normal speech, it nevertheless contained the 'purest Ladakhi'.¹¹ Secondly, "as a wonderful by-product" (*als schöner Nebenertrag*), it gave a deep insight into what he regarded as the otherwise unknown 'pre-Buddhist' religion of Ladakhi. An understanding of this religion would be helpful to the missionaries in their attempts to engage with the Ladakhis

¹⁰ See Marx 1891: 130, n. 14.

¹¹ Francke to La Trobe, Leh, 17 May 1899, ABU.

on matters of faith. In his early analysis of the saga, Francke (1899b) pointed to analogies with European epics, including the Edda poems from Norse mythology.

During the same period, Francke began to gather folksongs, noting down their words and in some cases the tunes. The first texts that he found were 'court songs' in praise of ancient Ladakhi monarchs. An early collection published in 1899 contains Francke's personal favourite, "The Beautiful Thseringskyid (sic)" (*Tshe ring skyid*), in praise of a girl of this name. The collection also contains references to wedding songs and, as will be seen, Francke pursued his interest in this genre in subsequent years.¹² The wedding songs relate to the Kesar saga in that they include frequent references to the same set of mythology.

Khalatse and Kyelang, 1899-1908

In 1899 Francke and Dora moved to new mission station in the village of Khalatse, some 50 miles downstream the river Indus from Leh on the historic trade route between Ladakh and Kashmir.¹³ Francke was based there until 1906, before moving to Kyelang for two years.

In Khalatse Francke continued his mainstream mission work, notably including his Bible translation activities. At the same time he was able to extend and deepen his historical, cultural and linguistic research. However, the couple's personal life was overshadowed by Dora's illness: she suffered from periodic epilepsy-like attacks, and in 1904 they were obliged to return to Germany. Dora remained there while her husband returned first to Khalatse and then, from 1906, to Kyelang. In 1907, Dora rejoined him. Unfortunately, the experiment proved unsuccessful: the following year, they again returned to Germany, thus bringing a premature conclusion to Francke's service as a full-time missionary resident in India.

During this period, Francke produced a Ladakhi translation of the Gospel of St Mark, which was later revised by Joseph Gergan (see Bible 1908; Bible 1918). He also published his *History of Western Tibet* (1907a) which, though long superseded, is still widely quoted. At the same time he published a series of articles in specialist periodicals such as *Indian Antiquary*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*. These helped establish his academic reputation by describing his scientific observations on missionary

12 The first Western scholar to make a study of Ladakhi songs was the Roman Catholic missionary Rev Henry Hanlon, who served in Leh in the early 1890s. Francke knew of a short note published by Hanlon in 1895, but does not appear to have been aware of a more detailed account of Ladakhi wedding rituals published in *Illustrated Catholic Missions* 9 (1895: 68-70, 86-88, 102-04). This includes translations of a selection of wedding songs, but not the original Ladakhi texts.

13 On Francke's activities in Khalatse, see Bray 1999; Bray 2009; Zeisler 1998. See also Ribbach 1940 and Ribbach 1985 for a detailed account of the village which draws on much of Francke's research.



Fig. 4. Hermann Francke and his wife Dora, possibly taken in Kyelang, c.1908.
Photo: Courtesy of Elihud George, Sabu (Ladakh).

journeys, as well as rock inscriptions, and the texts and translations of Ladakhi songs and the Kesar saga.

During this period, he also issued a number of publications on the Leh mission's lithographic press including three pamphlets on rock inscriptions, published in limited editions of 40 copies each in 1906, 1907 and 1908. These included Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions that Francke had discovered near Khalatse, as well as inscriptions associated with the Namgyal (rNam rgyal) dynasty of the Ladakhi monarchy from the 17th century onwards. In the introduction to the first of these pamphlets, Francke noted that many of the Tibetan language inscriptions had been copied down by his local assistants, and indeed the Tibetan scripts of the lithographic text show the handwriting of many different contributors.

Tharnyed Chomphel, the Tibetan Evangelist

From Francke's perspective, the most important of his Khalatse colleagues was Tharnyed Chomphel (Thar nyed chos 'phel), more commonly known simply as 'Chomphel'.

Chomphel was from Central Tibet, and had been a monk at the famous dGe lugs monastery of bKra shis lhun po. In the 1890s he had fallen ill while on a pilgrimage to Triloknath, a shrine in Lahul that is sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus, and had been left behind by his companions (see Anon. 1903). Ga Phuntsog, a Moravian evangelist, helped nurse him back to health, and Chomphel became a Christian through his influence. Soon after Francke's own arrival in Khalatse, Chomphel joined him with a view to serving as a local evangelist. Francke came to regard Chomphel, together with Gergan, as one of his closest personal associates in Ladakh: he was impressed by the strong Christian faith of both men, and saw this as a validation of his own missionary vocation.¹⁴

Chomphel's expertise as a former Buddhist monk proved to be particularly valuable when Francke was asked to decipher and comment on a set of Tibetan texts and inscriptions collected by the Hungarian scholar Marc Aurel Stein at Endere in the Southern Taklaman Desert. Endere had been abandoned in the 9th century. However, as Francke read through one of the scripts with Chomphel, he was caught by surprise when the latter interrupted him and recited the rest of the text from memory, having learnt it by heart in bKra shis lhun po (see Barnett & Francke 1907: 565). The passage in question was a religious poem that was later included in the *Theg mchog mdzod* compiled by Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364).

Before becoming a Christian, Chomphel had served as a Buddhist monk in the Da Hanu region on the river Indus, two or three days' journey downstream from Khalatse. In Ladakh, the local inhabitants are known as 'Brog pa, while Western observers refer to them as 'Dards'. They speak their own Indo-Aryan language, and have their own distinctive traditions as expressed in — for example — their folksongs. Chomphel used his knowledge of the region to record some of these songs for Francke (1905: 93), and to begin work on a translation of St Mark's Gospel into their language.



Fig. 5. Sketch of Chomphel by A.H. Francke. Source: Völkerkunde Museum Herrnhut. Reproduced in Francke (1921: 128).

¹⁴ Personal communication from Martin Klingner, Francke's grandson, Neuwied, December 2015.

Ishe Rigzin, the Khalatse ‘Munshi’

The second key personality in Khalatse was Ishe Rigzin (Ye shes rig ‘dzin), who was the most literate man in the village and served as the local writer or ‘munshi’. He had already been of assistance to the missionaries in 1898, helping prevent frictions with the villagers who had helped build the mission house (see Francke 1899c: 397). Together with the village headman, he came to greet Francke on his arrival in Khalatse on 1 July 1899.

Francke correctly predicted that Ishe Rigzin would play an important role in the future life of the mission. He later noted that Ishe Rigzin was interested in Jesus’s teaching and had been reading in the Bible almost daily (Francke 1902c: 66). However, from a human perspective, it could scarcely be anticipated that he would make a formal profession of faith because of the risk of opposition from his family, particularly his wife. He never did become a Christian. Nevertheless, the two men built up a close working relationship.

Soon after his arrival, Francke appointed Ishe Rigzin to the post of mission schoolmaster because of his literacy in Tibetan. At first, the benefits of the mission’s educational syllabus were not obvious to the Khalatse villagers, and Francke had some difficulty assembling a relatively small quota of 14 students (see Francke 1902c: 63). As an incentive, he arranged a football match which — like other local sports — was accompanied by tunes played by one of the local musicians. The football was much appreciated but offered no enjoyment to the missionary who was left gasping for breath because of the high altitude.

Francke and Ishe Rigzin shared responsibility for teaching what turned out to be a motley collection of pupils, with an age range from six to sixty (see Francke 1902c: 64). These included two pairs of father and son, and one uncle and nephew sitting together. The village headman was among them. He started later than some of the other pupils, and therefore was not so skilled in foreign languages, but came top of the class in arithmetic.

Ishe Rigzin’s writing skills meant that he was able to be of particular service to Francke in his literary work. For example, he assisted Francke in the preparation of the *La dvags kyi ag bar*. This was a monthly newspaper, the first to be published in Ladakh. It included sections on international news, local news, Ladakhi history, and a Ladakhi proverb with a Christian commentary (see Bray 1988). Francke used it to



Fig. 6. Sketch of Ishe Rigzin by Francke. Courtesy of Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut. Reproduced in Francke (1921: 129).

publish extracts from the *La dvags rgyal rabs*, thus sharing a hitherto obscure text with a wider Ladakhi audience. Ishe Rigzin was responsible for writing out the text of successive editions of the paper so that they could be reproduced on the Leh mission's lithographic press (see Rigzin Chodon 2012: 17), and he almost certainly drafted some of the articles.



Fig. 7. May 1907 edition of the *La dvags kyi ag bar*.
Courtesy of Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut.

Similarly, he supported Francke's historical and cultural researchers by transcribing the songs, stories and reminiscences of fellow Khalatse villagers.

Konchok Tashi, the Story-teller

The most important of these was Konchok Tashi (dKon mchog bkra shis), the village story-teller. Originally from the village of Lerdo (La'i rdo), he had married into the Gyatsopa (rGya mtsho pa) family in Khalatse. He was well known for his broad repertoire, and villagers still remembered him in the 1990s, when Bettina Zeisler (1998) conducted research in Khalatse.

Konchok Tashi was renowned as a skilled narrator of the Kesar saga. Francke (1905-1941: xxviii) persuaded him to recite the epic to Ishe Rigzin, who acted as transcriber, over a period of several weeks. He then narrated a series of related stories



Fig. 8. Two portraits of Konchok Tashi by Francke. The first comes from Francke (1925:32). The second is a watercolour in the Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut.

about other heroes in the epic. The Asiatic Society of Bengal published the texts in sections in its *Bibliotheca Indica* series from 1905 onwards, and eventually combined these into a single volume, but not until 1941, 11 years after Francke's death.

Konchok Tashi also appears as a character in *Drogpa Namgyal*, a semi-fictional biography of a typical Khalatse villager published by Francke's colleague Samuel Ribbach in 1940. As a child, the 'hero' of the book receives much of his informal education from Konchok Tashi in the form of folkstories. These included a Ladakhi version of "Reynard the fox", a trickster who repeatedly managed to outwit the other animals (see Francke 1902b; Ribbach 1940: 40-48). Earlier, Francke (1903d) had published a collection of the same stories on the Leh mission press so that they could be used as school text books.

Research into Wedding Songs

While he was in Khalatse, Francke witnessed the rituals that accompanied local wedding ceremonies. The most intriguing stages of the marriage include the scene where the *nyo pa*, the companions of the groom, go to collect the bride from her parental home. The *nyo pa* carry ceremonial white scarves, and are gorgeously dressed in ceremonial robes, including pointed golden hats. At the entrance to the house, there is a ritual exchange of songs that comes in the form of a series of riddles.

Finding that he did not understand the words, Francke asked the leader of the *nyo pa* to dictate the songs to Ishe Rigzin. The full meaning was still not entirely intelligible to Francke, and he therefore sent the text to Samuel Joldan in Leh asking him to help decipher them, and correct the spellings according to the rules of literary Tibetan. Francke subsequently published a Roman transliteration and

English translation of the first nine of these songs in *Indian Antiquary* (1901d), together with a drawing by an anonymous local artist.



Fig. 9. Indigenous drawing of a Ladakhi wedding, *Indian Antiquary* (Francke 1901d).

Francke's enquiries prompted the Khalatse villagers to share a further set of songs, the 'drinking songs' that accompany the negotiations between the families of the bride and the groom before the marriage is agreed. Again, Ishe Rigzin wrote down the words of the song as they were dictated to him. Samuel Joldan then corrected them, and they were published in a small edition on the Leh lithographic press (Francke 1903b).

Francke then had a further piece of good fortune in that he learnt that the villagers of Tagmachig (rTag ma cig), some ten miles away, possessed a manuscript set of wedding songs in the *dbu med* script. Apparently, these had been written down 50-100 years earlier in case the words were forgotten.¹⁵ For a small fee, he managed to borrow the text for a month and had it copied, again most likely by Ishe Rigzin. The transcript followed the original spelling except in the cases where the songs were the same as those already recorded from Khalatse. Francke printed out a small edition of 28 copies on the Leh mission press (Francke 1904).

15 See Walravens & Taube 1992: 51 for the text of Francke's German-language introduction.

Francke was particularly interested in the riddles posed to the *nyo pa* when they reach the bride's house. These refer to a wide range of local deities. For example, as Francke records, the people inside the house ask:

That blue smoke,
Rising upwards, what does it mean?
The blue smoke
Hanging over the ground, what does it mean?

The people inside the house reply:

The blue smoke
Rising upwards,
I think that the Lord of Heaven, dBang po rgya bzhin's anger may not be provoked,
It is an offering to him.
The blue smoke,
Is hanging over the earth,
I think that the Earth-mother,
Skyabs bdun's anger may not be provoked,
It is an offering to her.¹⁶

As with the Kesar saga, Francke argued that these songs gave vital insights into what he called the 'pre-Buddhist religion' of the region.

Meme Tsetan, the Dogra War Veteran

Meanwhile, Francke also continued his researches into more recent history. Among the oldest of the Khalatse villagers was *me me* (grandfather) Tsetan (Tshe brtan), who had served as a soldier during the Dogra invasions of Ladakh led by Zorawar Singh of Jammu between 1834 and 1842. Francke asked Tsetan to dictate his reminiscences, and Ishe Rigzin again served as his transcriber.

Previously, the only available accounts of the war had been a narrative by Basti Ram, one of Zorawar Singh's lieutenants, which was published in English translation by Alexander Cunningham (1854: 331-53); and the account prepared by Munshi Palgyas for Karl Marx. Tsetan offered a 'subaltern' view from Khalatse, differing in important points of chronology from the two earlier versions, and presenting a harsher perspective of the Dogra conquerors.¹⁷ Among other local details, he told how the Dogras had cut off the hand of man called Sukamir for trying to stir up the local population against them (see Francke 1926: 252). The amputated hand was nailed to a pole on Khalatse bridge as a warning to others, but then stolen by a cat. The villagers feared that they would be punished for the cat's misdemeanours. However, just then, an aged monk passed away: his hand was detached from the corpse, and nailed to the bridge as a substitute.

¹⁶ Francke 1901d: 134-35.

¹⁷ For an attempt to reconcile the details of the three accounts as regards the military campaigns, see Howard 1995.



Fig. 10. Two versions of a portrait of Meme Tsetan by Francke. The drawing is in Francke (1925:16). The watercolour is in the Völkerkundemuseum, Herrnhut.

Tsetan's memoirs went through a similar editing process to the first set of wedding songs. As Francke (1926: 255) explains, Tsetan spoke colloquial Ladakhi when he told his tale. However, Ishe Rigzin "contrived to embellish it with as many classical Tibetan words and grammatical forms as he thought necessary, to make the account acceptable to educated men". Francke added, "The natives themselves would never write as they speak. It is only the missionaries who pursue that aim." In Leh, Samuel Joldan corrected the spelling mistakes of Ishe Rigzin's draft, and printed an edition of 50 copies on the mission's lithographic press. Subsequently, Dora Francke prepared a German translation, also published on the mission press (Francke 1903c). Finally, Francke included the text (as revised by Ishe Rigzin and Samuel Joldan) in a collection of 'minor chronicles' published in the second volume of his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (1926).

Tsetan passed away in 1905 (see Francke 1926: 246). Like Ishe Rigzin, he was never baptised. However, according to Francke (1921a: 142), he was convinced of the truth of Christian teachings, and expressed the wish to be reborn in Europe so that he could receive instruction from his childhood onwards.

Zodpa Dechen, the Mission Assistant in Lahul

After Francke's transfer to Kyelang in 1906, he again focused on Bible translation, producing translations of St Mark's Gospel in the local languages of Bunan, Tinan and Manchad, which had not previously been reduced to writing.

During this period, Zodpa Dechen (bZod pa bde chen) played a similar role to Ishe Rigzin in Khalatse, assisting Francke with his linguistic enquiries, and

transcribing oral accounts. Zodpa was brought up in Lahul but — like most of the small Christian community in Kyelang — came from a Ladakhi family. During the First World War, Ernst Reinhold Schnabel, the missionary in charge of Kyelang, was obliged to leave Kyelang: Zodpa took over responsibility for leading church services and administering the mission property during the missionaries' absence (see Anon. 1916).



Fig. 11. Zodpa Dechen. The caption on the back of the photograph says that it was taken just after he had preached a sermon in Kyelang. Source: Moravian Church House, London.

Like Ishe Rigzin, Zodpa helped record oral historical accounts on Francke's behalf. Francke valued such accounts both for the information that they contained, and because they contributed to his linguistic researches. One example is the "Account of the Trade between the Kings of Ladakh and Kulū" which had continued until the 1840s. Zodpa recorded the text from a 77 year-old man in Kyor village. Francke first published it in a lithographed pamphlet with the title *Die historischen und mythologischen Erinnerungen der Lahouler* ("The Historical and Mythological Memories of the Lahulis"), which was published on the mission press in 1907. Like Tsetan's reminiscences, the text subsequently found its way into the second volume of Francke's *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (1926: 221-24). Ishe Rigzin contributed a note on the trade from the Ladakhi perspective, and this was published in the same volume.

Engagement with the Archaeological Survey of India

Dora's continuing ill-health forced Francke to return to Germany in 1908, and this marked the end of his service as a full-time missionary resident in the Himalayas. He never lost his missionary vocation but from now on the balance of his activities shifted towards a greater emphasis on historical and archaeological research.

Despite his relocation, Francke remained in contact with his friends and former colleagues in Ladakh. In 1909 he had an opportunity to return to India under the auspices of the Archaeological Survey of India and, as will be seen, this made it possible for him to renew and strengthen his association with Joseph Gergan.



Fig. 12. Hermann and Dora Francke with their family. From left to right, the children are Hilde Deskyid, Walter Siegfried Dondrub, August Hermann. The two younger children had both Ladakhi and German names. The picture may have been taken soon after Francke's return from the mission field in 1908. Photo: Courtesy of Martin Klingner, Francke's grandson.

Secondment to the ASI

Already in 1907, Francke's publications on rock inscriptions had come to the attention of John Marshall (1878-1958), the Director General of the ASI, as well as two of his senior colleagues, Sten Konow (1867-1948) from Norway, and J. Ph. Vogel (1871-1958) from the Netherlands.¹⁸ They had asked him to undertake a number of research tasks on behalf of the ASI. In a letter to Bishop Benjamin La

¹⁸ Francke to La Trobe, Kyelang, 26 June 1907. ABU.

Trobe, the Director of the Moravian Mission Board in Germany, Francke expressed the fear that the ASI's demands on his time would conflict with his mission duties. He suggested that the Mission Board might let him go on secondment to the ASI, adding that he might still have time to continue his Bible translation activity, and that in the summer there would still be opportunities for evangelising.

Francke's withdrawal from full-time missionary service meant that he had both an opportunity, and perhaps a financial need to put this proposal into practice. Towards the end of April 1909 he received a telegram from the ASI at his home in Germany (see Francke 1914: 1). It contained an offer of a secondment of 18 months from the beginning of June. Leaving his family behind in Germany, Francke set out almost at once, and arrived in Simla on 20 May.

Francke joined the ASI at the beginning of something of a golden age in the institution's history. In 1902 the British Viceroy Lord Curzon had appointed Marshall to the newly revived post of ASI Director-General.¹⁹ Still only 26 at the time of his appointment, Marshall held this office for 28 years. A distinguished scholar in his own right, Marshall was also an outstanding administrator who supported and facilitated the work of others. Although the ASI was a British government department, it employed several leading scholars from other countries. In addition to Konow and Vogel, these included Aurel Stein (1862-1943), originally from Hungary, who is best known for his researches in Central Asia. Francke now joined their number.

The 1909 Research Expedition to 'Indian Tibet'

Marshall spent the first two weeks of June helping Francke draw up a plan for an extended archaeological field trip in the Indo-Tibetan border regions. Francke duly set out on 14 June accompanied by a small team. The expedition reached Poo in Kinnaur on 2 July. From there, they made a short excursion across the Tibetan border to Shipke. This was the only time that Francke entered Tibet 'proper' and of course he would have liked to go further, but he had made a promise to the British government not to do so. Instead, after returning to Poo, the expedition set out for Ladakh, via Tabo (ITa bo, ITa pho) and Ki (dKyil, sKyid) in Spiti. In late August, they reached Leh where Francke conducted an archaeological excavation of an old burial site, as well as chasing historical documents. They finally reached Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley on 16 October.²⁰

By far the most important member of the team was Babu Pindi Lal, the expedition photographer, who had been specially selected by Marshall. In his introduction to the published account of his journey, Francke (1914: 1) singles out Pindi Lal for special praise, noting that he had proved to be "a man ready to endure

19 On Marshall's life and career, see Wheeler 2004.

20 For a recent review of the same regions, inspired by Francke's journey, see Van Ham 2015.

hardship, and one who was prepared to carry on his work under adverse circumstances”.

Francke also benefited from the assistance of Lobzang, a former pupil of the Moravian mission school in Poo. Since he had been unable to travel further into Tibet than Shipke, he sent Lobzang, as far as Tholing (mTho lding) and Tsaparang (rTsa brang) asking him to look out for historical inscriptions on his behalf. Lobzang reported that he had found no inscriptions of any antiquity, but he did manage to copy a treaty between Bashahr and Tibet from 1679, which he had obtained from the *rdzong dpon* of Tsaparang.²¹

In Leh, Francke was able to renew his acquaintance with Joseph Gergan, and enlisted his help in tracking down and copying important historical texts. These included a chapter of the *La dvags rgyal rabs* concerning the history of the last independent kings of Ladakh. Gergan was able to confirm that this was in the possession of a Ladakhi nobleman named Tsandan Munshi, and he duly made a copy for Francke and the ASI (see Francke 1914: 118-19; Francke 1926: 3). Similarly, he copied another version of the same chapter owned by Munshi Palgyas, a leading Ladakhi scholar who — as noted above — had worked with Francke’s predecessor, Karl Marx.²² This was the beginning of Gergan’s own relationship with the ASI and, working in association with Francke, he continued to collect and copy historical documents for the survey, an activity which also provided a source of supplementary income.

The eventual outcome of Francke’s project with the ASI was the publication of two substantial volumes entitled *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*. The first, which contains a narrative of Francke’s field research, appeared in 1914. The book includes 45 pages of high-quality photographs by Pindi Lal: these represent a triumph of logistics as well as technical skill given that he would have had to use heavy glass-plate negatives, which in turn had to be carried over a series of high mountain passes.²³ The publication of the second volume was delayed by the outbreak of the First World War, and it did not finally appear until 1926. The second volume contains a revised translation of the *La dvags rgyal rabs*, drawing on all the different versions that Francke had been able to track down as well as other historical documents, including — as noted above — Meme Tsetan’s account of the Dogra war.

21 Francke wrongly dated the treaty to 1650. For a more recent analysis, which draws on Francke’s text, see Halkias 2009.

22 On Munshi Palgyas, see Sheikh 2015; Bray 2016.

23 Pindi Lal’s photographs, including a number that were not published in the book, are available on the Leiden University website, www.library.leiden.edu. See under ‘Digital Special Collections’ and then ‘Kern Institute’.

Francke's Last Visit to India, 1914-1916

Francke returned to Germany in 1910 and for the next three and a half years worked mainly from his home in Niesky in south-east Germany. He had three main tasks. The first was preparing the publication of the *Antiquities* on behalf of the ASI. Secondly, he was preparing a catalogue of Tibetan documents collected by Sir Aurel Stein in the Taklamakan desert, and thirdly he worked on the translation of the Old Testament into Tibetan.²⁴ In 1911 he was given formal academic recognition when the University of Breslau (now Wrocław) awarded him an honorary doctorate.

During this period, Francke remained in correspondence with Gergan with regard to the Bible translation, and there were plans for Gergan to travel to Germany. In late 1911 he got as far as Srinagar in Kashmir on what was to be the first stage of a journey to Europe.²⁵ However, Rev F E. Peter, the Superintendent of the Mission, recalled him to Leh. On the basis of the information available to me, it is not entirely clear why this happened, but it might have been because by this time Francke was beginning to plan another journey to Ladakh on his own account.

Across Central Asia

This journey, which eventually took place in 1914, had two objectives. The first was to collect historical and ethnographic artefacts for the Königliches Ethnographisches Museum (now the Museum Fünf Kontinente) in Munich. The second was to advance the Bible translation project by getting into direct contact with local scholars in Ladakh and Darjeeling.²⁶

Before Francke set out from Germany, he obtained a series of drawings from Ladakh and sent these to the museum. The first set of drawings was prepared by an unidentified local artist in Khalatse: they included religious as well as household objects, and the artist may therefore have been Chomphel, drawing on his experience as a former monk.²⁷ They may have been intended to serve as a kind of 'catalogue' of the objects that Francke might be able to collect in Ladakh. Francke also sent the museum two drawings of local scenes by an artist in Leh, which he had acquired through his colleague Rev. F E. Peter. One shows the interior of a typical Ladakhi kitchen. The other (see illustration) shows a Ladakhi wedding scene of the

24 Francke, *Lebenslauf*, p. 3. Phil. Fak., Nr. 1238, Mikrofiche Nr. 2. Humboldt University, Berlin.

25 23 Joseph Gergan to Benjamin La Trobe, 13 January 1912. Briefwechsel mit verschiedenen 1906-1915. MD 1588. ABU.

26 See Francke 1921a. I discuss the 1914 expedition in some detail in Bray 2015. The Bible Society correspondence concerning the expedition is in Editorial Correspondence – Tibetan. BSA/E3/3/566/1, Bible Society Archive, Cambridge University Library.

27 The drawings have the following title in Francke's handwriting "Tibetische Geräte. Zeichnungen eines Eingeborenen von Khalatse." Museum Fünf Kontinente, Francke-Körper collection, catalogue no. FK 1175. I am grateful to Isrun Engelhardt for bringing these drawings to my attention and to Michaela Appel for her subsequent assistance.

kind that Francke had been describing in his own writing. The figures in the pointed hats in the lower part of the picture are the *nyo pa*, the friends of the groom, who — as described above — were required to answer a series of riddles before entering the brides's house.



Fig. 13. Ladakhi wedding scene. Courtesy of Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich Francke-Körber collection, catalogue no. FK 1176a.

Francke did not name the artist but says that he would be willing to paint a series of pictures showing the life of a Ladakhi from the cradle to the grave. He noted that he had been influenced by Western imagery, and therefore did not paint in a purely 'Tibetan' style. In any case, Ladakhi painters previously would not have thought of depicting local scenes.

28 Francke to Lucian Scherman, Niesky, 29 April 1913. Museum Fünf Kontinente, Francke-Körber Collection, FK 1760b.

29 The Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut has another painting of a wedding scene in similar style, almost certainly by the same artist (see Icke-Schalbe 1990: 45): this was originally collected by one of Francke's missionary colleagues in the same period.

Wartime Internment

Together with a younger colleague named Hans Körber, Francke set out from Germany in May 1914. After travelling across Russia and Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang), he arrived in Leh in early September. Before crossing the Karakoram, he had heard vague news of the outbreak of war in Europe. However, it was only on his arrival in Leh that he discovered that Germany and Britain were on opposite sides and that he was now regarded as an enemy alien. Francke was allowed to stay in Leh for three weeks on condition that he did not travel further than a day's walking distance from the town. He took the opportunity to continue his historical researches in Gergan's company. However, this happy interlude came to an end in October 1914 when Francke was ordered to travel first to Srinagar in Kashmir, and eventually to an internment camp for German and Austrian nationals in Ahmednagar. He was to remain there from November 1914 until March 1916.

Despite his incarceration, Francke was able to continue to do freelance work for the ASI. Gergan had made copies of a series of Ladakhi royal charters and other historical documents on behalf of the ASI, and Francke provided draft translations for Marshall.³⁰ Among others, these included a text outlining corvée labour obligations in the village of Sabu, near Leh, and an account of the events leading to the abdication of King Tsewang Namgyal (Tshe dbang rnam rgyal) in 1782.

In a draft letter written in 1915, Francke also refers to Gergan's discovery of a 107-page text concerning the 1753 Treaty of Hanle (Wam le) between Ladakh and the Purig, which was a separate kingdom from 1734 to 1758.³¹ The text includes a vivid description of the role played by Kaḥ thog Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), a rNying ma lama from eastern Tibet who had served as mediator. Francke suggested that Gergan should be paid a fee of one rupee for each page that he had copied, plus a bonus of Rs 10 for discovering the text, making a total of Rs 117. Francke added that he himself was in dire financial straits, possibly because it seems that the British authorities did not cover all the living expenses of the Ahmednagar detainees. Since he had just completed 20 days' work for the ASI, he requested a fee of Rs10 per day, making a total of Rs200.

Gergan continued to collect material for the ASI and in 1916 his discoveries included the text of the Hanle wedding songs that were later translated by Elena De Rossi Filibeck (2009). However, Francke presumably did not learn of this discovery until some years later. In March 1916, together with a large group of missionary internees, he left India on board the SS Golconda.³² By the following June he was

30 Notebook by Francke, 1915. Nachlass A. H. Francke. 'Bonds and Contracts.' NL 256/91. University of Leipzig.

31 Notebook by Francke, 1915. Nachlass A. H. Francke. 'Bonds and Contracts.' NL 256/91. University of Leipzig. Schwieger (1999) has provided a critical edition of the text, including a German translation and a detailed commentary.

32 For Francke's subsequent wartime adventures, see Bray 2015.

able to return home via Holland, which was neutral in the First World War. Soon afterwards he was recruited to serve as an interpreter for Indian prisoners of war captured by the Germans. At the end of the war, he was himself interned a second time, this time in Serbia. He did not finally return home until July 1919.

Researches from Germany, 1919-1930

Francke never returned to India and, since he at first had no regular source of income, life in post-war Germany must have been particularly difficult. However, in 1922 he was appointed to a part-time lectureship at the University of Berlin, and from 1925 he was awarded a special professorship there.

In the last ten years of his life, he produced a series of scholarly publications, reinforcing his status as one of the leading Western specialists on Ladakh and Tibet.³³ His research interests ranged from Ladakhi folk culture to the deciphering of ancient Tibetan texts collected in Central Asia; and the deciphering of a draft translation of the Bon po text, the *gZer mig*. Throughout this period, Francke continued to correspond regularly with Gergan who in 1921 had been ordained as one of the first two Ladakhi ministers of the Moravian church. In the same year he moved to Kyelang to serve as the pastor of the Moravian congregation in Kyelang, and made frequent evangelistic journeys in the surrounding regions, before returning to Leh in 1926.

Francke had two reasons for corresponding with Gergan. The first is that they continued to collaborate on the translation of the Old Testament into Tibetan.³⁴ The system was that Gergan prepared the first drafts and sent them to Francke for review. Francke then sent the corrected draft to David Macdonald, a British official of part-Scottish, part-Sikkimese descent, who was then serving in Yatung, Tibet. Gergan finished his initial drafts in 1928 but the work of revision was still incomplete at the time of Francke's death in 1930, and the full Tibetan Bible was not published until 1948.

Meanwhile, as his publications show, Francke also corresponded with Gergan on scholarly matters. For example, in an article published in the *Zeitschrift der*



Fig. 14. Joseph Gergan in the 1920s or 1930s. Courtesy of Moravian Church House, London.

³³ See Walravens & Taube 1992.

³⁴ On the Tibetan Bible, see Bray 1990; Bray 1991.

Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (1921b), he translates and transcribes a text recorded by Ishe Rigzin, most likely from Konchok Tashi the Khalatse storyteller. In 1923, he reported that Gergan had been able to locate a written version of a related text at the house of a Lahuli aristocrat. Later, Francke (1927a, 1928) announced that Gergan had discovered a Tibetan text on the ‘Questions of Skhandhar Beg’ that had been prepared for the Hungarian scholar Alexander Csoma de Kőrös in Dzongkhul (rDzong khul) monastery (Zangskar).³⁵

Alongside his other activities, Francke continued to work on the wedding songs. There were two strands to the project. In 1923, he published a translation of the Tagmachig songs under the title *Tibetische Hochzeitslieder* (‘*Tibetan Wedding Songs*’) with Folkwang Verlag. Folkwang specialised in publishing material from different cultures for an educated but non-specialist audience. Francke wrote a lengthy introduction in which he outlined his theory that the songs represented the ‘pre-Buddhist’ culture of Ladakh and the German translations were rendered in an approximation of the original metre.³⁶ However, Folkwang did not wish to reproduce the original text, and Francke regarded this as a significant shortcoming.

Hoping to find a publisher for a scholarly edition of the songs, Francke wrote to his former ASI colleague J. Ph. Vogel, who was now Professor of Sanskrit at Leiden in the Netherlands.³⁷ Vogel was among the sponsors of a new journal, *Acta Orientalia*, and Francke suggested that it might publish the text together with a full translation and annotations. Sten Konow, the co-editor of the journal, had expressed interest in the project. However, it never came to fruition. Francke later published two separate German-language collections of Ladakhi songs (1927b, 1931). However, his proposed scholarly edition of the wedding songs — including the Hanle and Rupshu songs collected by Gergan — was still incomplete at the time of his death in 1930.

Francke’s Legacy

Francke’s scholarly achievements rested not on dry and distant library research but on first-hand observation and human relationships. It is pleasing to note that Francke wrote of his Ladakhi colleagues — Gergan in particular — as his “friends”, not simply informants.³⁸

35 On these texts, see Térjek 1976.

36 Anna Paalzow is credited with refining Francke’s draft to reproduce the metre. I have not been able to find out any further details about her.

37 Francke to Vogel, 24 October 1922. Vogel papers. Kern Institute, University of Leiden. In the same card, Francke refers to Chomphel who was still living in Khalatse, and short of funds. Francke wonders whether Chomphel might perhaps be able to earn some extra funds by collecting butterflies and beetles for the Leiden Museum or, better still, recording the Dard version of the Kesar saga and producing a Tibetan translation.

38 See for example the draft introduction to his unpublished collection of wedding songs. Gergan likewise referred to Francke as his “friend” in a letter to his widow in 1935. See: Gergan to Dora Francke, Leh 21st Sept 1935. Nachlass Paul Theile, ABU.

In a reflection on the work of a missionary written in 1913, Francke wrote about how he had tried to become “a Tibetan to the Tibetans”.³⁹ Learning the grammar of the language was a vital beginning but not sufficient: it was also essential to understand local ways of thinking. As he put it, “In language, proverbs, folksongs, folkstories, games, concepts of propriety and music are stored up the cultural treasures of millennia”.⁴⁰ This search for human understanding is what led Francke to the study of proverbs, folksongs and, step by step, all his other scholarly enquiries.

Francke’s early death of course ended his collaboration with both local and international scholars, and left a number of projects unfinished. From his own perspective, the most important would have been the Tibetan Bible translation. His colleague F. E. Peter, who was still in Leh, took over his role of revising Joseph Gergan’s original drafts, and the entire text was completed by 1934 but, as noted above, not published until 1948.

The wedding songs project was not the only scholarly undertaking that Francke had in mind for the ASI. Together with H. Lee Shuttleworth, a former Indian Civil Service officer, he was also planning two further volumes of the *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*. In effect these would have amounted to a set of gazetteers of places of archaeological interest in the Indo-Tibetan border regions. The contents would have drawn on the combined knowledge of the two editors but they had not been able to visit every possible site and — for instance — the section on Diskit (bDe skyid) monastery in Nubra is based on “Notes supplied by Joseph Thse brtan [Gergan], Leh”.⁴¹ Shuttleworth was unable to complete the project on his own, but drafts of parts of the proposed volumes survive in the British Library and in the Archiv der Brüder-Unität in Herrnhut (see Jahoda 2007).

The development of Tibetan studies in Germany was disrupted by the political turbulence of the 1930s, the Second World War, and the country’s post-war partition. From the 1950s to the mid-1970s Ladakh was closed to international scholars because of its status as a sensitive border region. However, since then, there has been a marked revival and expansion of Ladakh and Himalayan studies both in India and abroad.

Of particular relevance to this essay is the publication of Joseph Gergan’s *Bla dvags rgyal rabs ’chi med gter* in 1976. The book was edited by S. S. Gergan,

39 As indicated by the title of his books (1907a, 1914, 1923, 1925–1926), Francke regarded Ladakh as part of a wider region of “Western Tibet” with its own status and history, distinct from that of Lhasa and by no means subservient to Central Tibet. Hence his reference to Ladakhis as “Tibetans”.

40 “In Sprache, Sprichwort, Volkslied, Märchen, Spiel, Anstandssitte, Musik sind die Geistesätze von Jahrtausende aufgespeichert worden”. See Francke 1913: 93.

41 “Bde-skyid (Nubra)”. H. L. Shuttleworth papers. MSS Eur D722/25, British Library. Asian and African Studies.

Joseph's son, and represents the synthesis of the author's historical researches. Arguably, it was inspired by Francke's original historical enquiries. However, it goes beyond his pioneering work both in the range and depth of its historical sources. The book has never been translated into English and therefore has yet to achieve the acclaim that it deserves.

Also in the late 1970s, the Swiss anthropologist Martin Brauen returned to the study of wedding rituals in the context of a study of Ladakhi festivals (see Brauen 1980; Brauen 1983; Brauen 1985). Maria Phylactou provided further anthropological analysis of Ladakhi wedding rituals in an unpublished Ph.D thesis (1989). More recently two Ladakhi scholars, Tsering Chosphele & Tsewang Paljor, have published a selection of Ladakhi wedding songs under the auspices of the Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy. Brauen drew on Francke's collection of Tagmachig wedding songs, using a copy held by the Berlin State Library. However, the task that Francke identified — providing a consolidated analysis of wedding songs from Ladakh and the wider region — has yet to be accomplished.

Elena De Rossi Filibeck's planned publication of the wedding songs collected by Francke and Gergan will represent an important step in that direction. It is to be hoped that the volume will also serve as an inspiration for future collaboration and friendship between Ladakhi and international scholars.

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