

JOHN BRAY

## CHRISTIANITY IN LADAKH: THE MORAVIAN CHURCH FROM 1920 TO 1956

121, Tanjong Rhu Road ; # 16-38 ; Tanjong Ria condominium, SINGAPORE 436974  
JNBray@aol.com

The first Moravian missionaries came to Ladakh in 1855 en route, as they thought, from Germany to Mongolia. Finding it impossible to travel north of the Tibetan frontier, they decided to concentrate on the Indo-Tibetan borderlands and founded mission stations at Kyelang (Ke-long) in Lahul (1856) and at Poo (Pu) in Kinnaur (1865). The pioneers regularly visited Ladakh from Kyelang but it was only in 1885 that they established a permanent station at Leh, followed in 1899 by a fourth station at Khalatse. In the first six decades of their work in the Himalayas, the missionaries established schools, hospitals, farms and small-scale wool industries. They translated the New Testament and part of the Old into classical Tibetan and, between them, wrote an impressive array of dictionaries, books and scholarly articles on the history and culture of the region. But they gathered few converts. The first indigenous Christians, two men from Stok (Tog) village in Ladakh, were baptised in Kyelang in 1865 but few of their countrymen followed them. By 1914 there were only 162 indigenous Christians in all four mission stations. This paper reviews the development of the Moravian Church in the Himalayas during the second period of its history, starting just after the first world war, when the London mission board took over supervision of the work, and closing in 1956, the year the last European missionaries left. Before the first world war the missionaries had sought to bind their converts to themselves in an essentially paternalist relationship, partly in order to enforce their own high standards of spiritual discipline and partly to protect the new congregations from social pressure to renounce their new religion. An important turning point came in 1920 when Bishop Arthur Ward came from London to ordain the first two Ladakhi ministers. From then on the emphasis, at least in theory, was on hastening the self-dependence of the indigenous church as well as gathering new converts. In practice progress was slow on both counts. In order to suggest reasons for the apparent lack of response to the mission's efforts, this paper discusses four main themes: the mission's humanitarian work, its literary activity, its evangelism, and the internal development of the Christian congregations.

### HUMANITARIAN WORK

Like missionaries elsewhere the Moravians played an important role in education, both academic and practical, and in medicine. They considered these to be valuable areas of service for their own sake and also valued them as a means of getting to know people with whom they would otherwise have had little or no contact. In Kyelang and Poo another important activity was farming which had an educational function and also provided a means of livelihood to converts who risked being ostracised or pressurised by their neighbours. In the 1920s and 1930s the mission sought to continue all these activities but it was handicapped by a shortage of expatriate manpower. In 1914, on the eve of the First World War there had been 21 foreign missionaries, but by 1925 there were

only eight and by 1933 only seven (Periodical Accounts, 1914, 1925, 1933).

The mission superintendents in Leh constantly appealed for new recruits but with little success: there were no new arrivals between 1933 and 1950. Those who remained were under greater pressure and, since they had different skills and favourite projects, there was a lack of continuity in their enterprises. The British government partially subsidised the Leh mission hospital because it wanted to provide a service for travellers on the trade route from Kashmir to Tibet and Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). In 1920 the hospital boasted two doctors, both Dr A.R. Heber and his wife Kathleen being medically qualified. Apart from their work in Leh, the missionaries also made medical tours to the outlying areas such as the Skiu-Markha and Nubra valleys to perform cataract operations. Nevertheless, Heber complained that he had too little to do because the Ladakhis were too healthy and he wrote that he did not think his workload was sufficient to justify a full time mission doctor. In 1921 he estimated that he had only 1,500 to 2,000 new cases a year, 60 to 70 hospital in-patients and 50 to 60 operations (MCH 1921). The lack of work was the principal reason for his resignation in 1925.

After the Hebers left, Colonel Berry, a former Indian Army doctor, helped in the hospital during the summer months until the arrival in 1930 of Dr Mary Shawe, the daughter of Dr F.E. Shawe, a Moravian who had died in Leh in 1907. She worked in Ladakh until 1952 but after her marriage with Norman Driver, who came to Ladakh in 1933, spent much of her time in Khalatse, and made only occasional visits to Leh to hold clinics. Her assessment of the mission's medical work was similar to Heber's: it was a valuable means of getting to know people and there was always a significant number of patients who preferred the mission hospital but the existence of a state hospital made the mission less important as a medical centre (MCH 1931b).

Rivalry from state institutions led to a similar decline in the mission's educational activities. In 1899 the Kashmiri governor had issued an official edict that all families with more than one child should send a pupil to the mission school because of the lack of state-sponsored education (BRAY 1983). By the 1920s a state school was well established. The mission could no longer compete with it because it offered instruction in Urdu, the official language of Jammu and Kashmir, and its classes went to a higher standard (MCH 1928b). The mission did contribute to otherwise neglected areas such as girls' education in Leh during the 1920s and the evangelists kept village schools during the 1930s but, valuable though these may have been, they were nevertheless of relatively marginal importance. The Leh mission school lingered on until 1960, but with only a handful of pupils.

In 1939 Walter Asboe started a new educational venture — the Leh Industrial School which gave training in handicrafts, notably weaving on new, broader looms and Tibetan carpet-



Walter Asboe (wearing the solar tibi) at the Leh Industrial School which he founded in 1939 (Moravian Church Library, London).



Yoseb Gergan the Bible translator. He was ordained in 1920, one of the first two Ladakhi ministers. (Moravian Church Library, London).

weaving (previously the only carpet weaver in Ladakh had been a craftsman from Khalatse). The school closed on Asboe's departure in 1947 but many of its former pupils continued to practise their skills and themselves became instructors at the present government Handicrafts Centre.

Waiter Asboe was also the principal organiser of the 'Gospel Inn' which opened in 1939 and catered for the many travellers who passed through Leh on account of the Central Asian Trade. In its first year there were 4,000 guests (Periodical Accounts 1940) and subsequent visitors included a *skushog* from Sera monastery (near Lhasa) and all his retinue. However in the course of the 1940s the Central Asian Trade slowed to a trickle because of fighting in China and the inn was closed in the winter of 1948-49.

In Kyelang, Lahul, the mission set up a large model farm using land granted by the British government. This farm was at its best in the nineteenth century when it was supervised by A.W. Heyde, but by the 1920s and 1930s it had become something of a liability. The land had been rented out to Christian tenants, who did not prove to be efficient farmers, and this led to a conflict between the missionaries' position as landlords and their role as spiritual advisers. Both the last missionaries in Kyelang, Walter Asboe and F.A. Peter, thought that the farm had been counterproductive from a mission point of view because it led to a confusion between the spiritual and the material aims of Christianity; the tenants tended to regard the land as a reward for their Christian allegiance (MCH 1939, 1940). This exacerbated tensions between the congregation and the missionary and contributed to the Kyelang station's closure in 1940.

The mission's horticultural activities in Leh were very minor compared with Kyelang because the Kashmir government placed restrictions on land-ownership by foreigners. However, in 1945 F.A. Peter, who had spent the war years working on rural development projects at a Canadian mission in Punjab, came up with a set of proposals to reclaim new land near Spituk using water channelled from the Indus (MCH 1945). This project was never implemented because Peter was called elsewhere.

### LITERARY WORK

In order to preach the new religion, it was important to translate the Bible into a local language — but which language? The early missionaries chose classical Tibetan because it would be understood over a wide area whereas none of the local dialects had then been reduced to writing. Heinrich August Jaeschke began work on the translation in Kyelang in the 1850s and the British and Foreign Bible Society published his New Testament in 1885 and a revised version in 1902. In the 1880s F.A. Redslob began work on the Old Testament and he was succeeded by a committee of translators in Leh in the early 1900s. However, their efforts were interrupted by the First World War. Thus the most important literary project of the mission during the 1920s and 1930s was the completion of the Tibetan Bible.

In 1919 Joseph Gergan (dGe-rgan) took up the task of translating the remaining books of the Old Testament. Gergan had been baptised in adolescence but subsequently, according to his own account, decided to investigate Islam and Buddhism to make sure that Christianity was indeed the best option

(Gergan, circa 1925a). He learnt classical Tibetan and studied a wide range of Buddhist treatises, thus acquiring a reputation for scholarship in the Buddhist as well as the Christian communities. He worked first as the mission school master in Leh and after 1920 as a Moravian minister initially in Kyelang and then in Leh, where he died in 1946.

The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in London coordinated the translation work. Joseph Gergan produced the first draft and then sent it for correction to Dr A.H. Francke, a Moravian missionary who had served in the Himalayas from 1896 to 1908 and subsequently became professor of Tibetan at Berlin University. To make sure the translation was acceptable to speakers of eastern Tibetan dialects, Francke then sent the corrected version to David Macdonald, a British official of half-Scottish, half-Sikkimese descent who in the 1920s worked as British trade agent in Yatung Ya-drung, Tibet (Driver 1951). After Francke's death in 1930 Bishop Peter then took over the task of reviewing Gergan's draft and the Old Testament was completed, in manuscript, in 1934. However the Bible Society delayed publication because so few copies of the earlier Tibetan New Testament had been sold, and it was only in 1948, after further revision, that the full, one-volume Tibetan Bible was published by the Bible Society auxiliary in Lahore.

Gergan's achievement was widely praised in Ladakh but was less popular among Tibetan-speaking Christians in the Darjeeling area because it occasionally lapsed into Ladakhi colloquial. Furthermore the style was often unnecessarily clumsy, partly because he had translated from English and Urdu versions rather than the original Greek and Hebrew. In the 1950s and early 1960s Eliyah Tshetan Phuntsok (Tshebrtan Phun-tshogs) and Pierre Vittoz produced a revised version of the New Testament. Phuntsok, who was Gergan's son-in-law, had spent two years as a monk in Rizong monastery while Vittoz was the last European missionary to serve in Ladakh; between them they knew both Greek and classical Tibetan. Their version has been praised for its accuracy and for the beauty of its Tibetan style but many contemporary Ladakhi Christians, having been educated in the Indian school system, find it easier to use English or Urdu Bibles.

Apart from his Bible translation, Gergan wrote a number of other works of Christian literature in Tibetan. These included a complicated acrostic poem, in which each line begins and ends with a letter from the Tibetan alphabet in sequence (Francke 1925), and two booklets, *The Spectacle of the Human Soul* and *Understandable Expressions of Moral Thoughts* (Gergan c. 1925a, 1925b). The latter is in the form of a dialogue between master and disciple and discusses such topics as the meaning of religion, virtue and sin, rebirth and merit. It then reviews Islam and, in rather more detail, Buddhism before deciding, not unexpectedly, that Christianity offers the best hope of salvation.

Until 1926 Gergan occasionally worked part-time for the Archaeological Survey of India and his own historical researches were eventually edited and published by his son, S.S. Gergan (Gergan 1976). His other scholarly works included a pamphlet, *An Abridged Form of Mahayanism*, a paper on Ladakhi funeral ceremonies and a collection of Tibetan proverbs translated into English by Walter Asboe (Gergan 1940, 1942).

Walter Asboe made a hobby of writing in his spare time. He published a series of vignettes on life in Ladakh in the Moravian Missions magazine as well as more academic papers in scholarly journals (Asboe 1932, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1945, 1947). His unpublished typescripts in Moravian Church House, London, also include, somewhat incongruously for an author writing in the Himalayas, a short romance featuring a girl living off the Cromwell Road in London's west end.

While in Kyelang, Asboe revived the Moravian newspaper in Tibetan which A.H. Francke had started in Leh in 1904. The *Kyelang ki Akhbar* (Kyelang News) had a circulation of around 40. Its subscribers included Professor Giuseppe Tucci, the Italian Tibetologist, and the Berlin State Library. A typical edition consisted of four sections: a story from Aesop's fables, local news, an article on health care and a section on world news (MCH, 1931a). Asboe moved to Leh in 1936 and edited the paper, now called the Ladakh Messenger, from there.

In the 1950s Eliyah Thsetan Phuntsog again revived the paper — among his many other literary activities. As *tehsildar* (a senior local government post) he tried to promote a new means of writing Ladakhi phonetically instead of using the complicated classical Tibetan spelling. However, this proposal proved unpopular; devout Buddhists regarded any attempt to downgrade the language of the Buddhist scriptures as a form of blasphemy (Vittoz n.d.). Moreover the government authorities feared that his reforms could stir up a new Ladakhi linguistic nationalism. Partly because of his proposed spelling reforms, and partly because people did not wish to be administered by a Christian, there were public demonstrations against him. These protests helped confirm his decision to resign in 1951 and enter full-time mission service.

Phuntsog believed that the main reason Christian preaching had been unsuccessful in Ladakh was the fact that the new religion was too strongly associated with the West (Vittoz n.d.). One of his principal preoccupations was the need to express the Christian message in a language and style more appropriate to the Ladakhi cultural background. To do so, he composed Ladakhi hymns using Eastern rather than Western tunes and wrote a lengthy poem in Tibetan literary style, *Phyag tshal brgyad cu ma zhes bya ba skyams mgon Ye-shu-ma-shi ka'i mdzad rgya mdo tsam bzhugs do* (Eighty stanzas of adoration depicting the life of Christ). Perhaps because of his training in a Buddhist monastery, he also thought that there should be more emphasis on the contemplative side of Christianity and prepared a Tibetan translation of *When Ye Pray* by Dom Bernard Clements, a Benedictine monk.

## EVANGELISM

As in earlier years the missionaries made lengthy tours to distribute tracts and Bible extracts in outlying areas such as Nubra, Zaskar and Changthang but increasingly they delegated this kind of work to indigenous evangelists. Some of these evangelists were based in villages far from the principal mission stations. Standzin Razu (bStan-'dzin Ra-zu), for instance, spent much of the 1930s in Nubra where, in addition to his preaching duties, he kept a village school. Meanwhile his wife organised knitting classes, thus continuing a Moravian tradition which had

been started by missionary wives in Lahul during the 1850s. In the summer months the evangelists went further afield: in

1928 Bishop F.E. Peter recorded that each of his men had spent 90 days on the road the previous year (MCH 1928a). Some of them travelled in disguise as traders as far as Rudok in Great Tibet and even to Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). As visual aids they sometimes used a 'magic lantern' (an early form of slide projector). They also used painted scrolls, partly modelled on Buddhist thangkas and, again following Buddhist precedent, carved scriptural texts on rocks by the wayside.

Outwardly at least, none of this preaching had much effect. Partly this may have been because of sheer incomprehension. In 1931 a well-educated monk from Lhasa spent several weeks studying Christianity in Leh and reported, 'I have learnt that a sinner, however great, can be saved if he puts his trust in the cross of Jesus. But I cannot understand what God is' (Periodical Accounts 1931). Other listeners, in common with many Asians, questioned the uniqueness of Christianity and even suggested that Jesus was an incarnation of the Buddhist saint Padmasambhava (MCH 1943a). In 1950 Norman Driver, who served in Ladakh from 1933 to 1952, wrote, 'Up to the present time no one can say that he has found a really reliable method of approaching the Buddhist mentality and presenting to that mentality the real meaning and joy of the Christian Gospel' (MCH 1950).

Between 1950 and 1956 Pierre Vittoz and Eliyah Thsetan Phuntsok experimented with new methods: 'minstrel trips' using pictures and specially composed Christian songs to Ladakhi tunes. The 'minstrels' were to carry the minimum of luggage to show that 'Christianity does not mean wealth and European habits but joyful service'. Their technique was certainly more imaginative but was not long sustained and again had little lasting impact.

In any case, however effective the presentation of Christianity, the social pressures against conversion remained as strong as ever; religion was as much a sign of communal identity as a matter for individual choice and to renounce that identity could be seen as an act of betrayal. The experience of Eliyah Thsetan Phuntsok illustrates the kind of hazards a convert might have to face. Born into the Ladakh nobility, he was attracted to Christianity through Joseph Gergan in the 1930s but hesitated to change religion openly for six years. When he did so there were attempts to poison him and there was a lengthy court case to disinherit him on the ground that under Kashmiri law a Christian could not inherit property from a Buddhist (Vittoz n.d., Kundan 1983). Phuntsog was strong-minded enough to resist such pressures. Others were not.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS

From the beginning the missionaries understood that it was not sufficient merely to gather converts. If Christianity were to survive, it was also necessary to build up strong Christian communities that would eventually be independent of expatriate support. In two out of the three areas in which they operated they were completely unsuccessful.

Poo in Kinnaur had once been one of the more encouraging stations: by 1908 the congregation had as many as 64 members. However they were all from the poorer section of the community and the mission decided to assist them by providing employment and cheap grain for fear that their richer employers would put pressure on them to return to Buddhism.

In practice, despite the mission's efforts to exclude 'rice Christians' (people who converted for the sake of material benefits), it became clear that many members of the Poo congregation fell into precisely this category. In these circumstances pastoral care proved exceedingly difficult and the prospects of further expansion looked slim. In 1920 two indigenous Christians, Paulu and Benjamin, gave their assessments: they pointed out that potential converts were deterred by family pressures and the fact that all the Christians were *Phepas*, members of the low-caste smith fraternity (MCH 1920). In the event, the expense of supporting such a distant and unproductive station proved prohibitive: the Poo mission closed down in 1924 and almost all the indigenous Christians lapsed back into Buddhism.

In Kyelang, as has been noted above, the land issue exacerbated tensions between members of the congregation and the missionaries. In addition the mission had to face opposition, sometimes quite overt, from the *thakurs* (landlords) who even helped organise a boycott against the Christians in 1938 (MCH 1938). Thus in 1940 a combination of internal weaknesses and external pressures led to its closure. Three Christian families moved to Leh and the handful remaining returned to Buddhism.

Three congregations survived in Ladakh. Of these Shey and Kalatse had only three families each. The Shey community stressed its independence from the Leh congregation, only eight miles away but was nevertheless able to draw some strength from it. The Khalatse Christians were rather more vulnerable and in 1944, like the Kyelang congregation eight years previously, suffered a boycott from the local villagers because of a dispute over the siting of the new church there (MCH 1944).

The congregation in Leh had important advantages over all the others: being the capital of Ladakh it provided a more cosmopolitan environment and the town's Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu inhabitants were more willing to tolerate members of yet another religion. Moreover, there were more opportunities for employment independent of the mission; the converts came from a range of social backgrounds, and the congregation was sufficiently large and talented to produce indigenous Christian leaders of some stature.

Yet even in Leh the congregation suffered from social weaknesses. A constant theme was the difficulty of finding Christian spouses for the younger members. In practice many married or eloped with Buddhists or Muslims and, while the more strong-minded were able to bring up their children as Christians, many others were lost to the church.

Others were lost through emigration. Here one of the strengths of the Christian community — its superior education — proved to be a liability because it encouraged young men to seek prestigious posts outside Ladakh, typically in government service. Both of Joseph Gergan's sons joined the Kashmir forestry service, for instance. Dechen (bDe-chen, originally from Kyelang) entered the civil service — and returned to Leh as Deputy Commissioner in 1952. It was to the credit of the Christian community that it produced men of talent and initiative but the price that it paid was a heavy one: it was deprived of younger potential leaders in Ladakh. In the 1920s the mission had plans to start a Bible College in Ladakh to train future church leaders but this never came to anything.

Internal quarrels were another persistent problem. Parochial disputes are a hazard of all small communities. They are made worse when, as in Leh, everyone is inter-related: a row between any two individuals rapidly involved their families and effectively split the whole congregation. Moreover, as F.A. Peter pointed out, the missionaries themselves did not always live in harmony (MCH 1945).

Another factor, perhaps the most important one, was the question of authority. By the end of the First World War, the missionaries no longer commanded sufficient respect, or fear, to be able to enforce their own standards of discipline. Dr Heber's comments in 1917 are significant: "At one time they (the Ladakhi Christians) feared the *sahib* and for this reason tried to run straight owing chiefly to the fact that we employed them and could use their salary as a screw. It has, I think rightly, been the aim of our missionaries to get them into independent employment, but with this they have lost their fear of us and we have got no substitute..." (MCH 1917). Evidently there was a need for a new style of leadership.

Bishop Arthur Ward emphasised that the Ladakh church should be responsible for its own affairs within a generation and in 1920 ordained Joseph Gergan and Dewazung Dana as the first Ladakhi ministers. Nevertheless, even after this, progress towards self-dependence was slow. One reason why the missionaries were reluctant to devolve power more rapidly was a low regard for the Ladakhis' administrative skills, especially in accountancy. Secondly there seems to have been a fear that Ladakhi leaders might not maintain the missionaries' high standards of religious discipline. Underlying such anxieties was a wide social gap and even distrust, an inevitable and probably unconscious absorption of colonial attitudes which all too often divided missionaries and Ladakhi Christians. The result was an increasing Ladakhi resentment of authoritarian foreign leaders combined with a sense of dependency on them.

This combination of dependency and resentment became particularly apparent in the early 1940s when Walter Asboe and Norman Driver made a concerted effort to persuade the Leh congregation to become financially independent. At first the elders angrily resisted this proposal, arguing that the foreign missionaries failed to understand the problems of the local church and that the congregation was poor and likely to fall apart, like the Kyelang and Poo congregations, without external support (MCH 1943b). It was only with considerable difficulty that the Leh congregation was persuaded to accept full financial responsibility for its own affairs.

The events of 1947 and 1948 served to underscore the uncertainty of the expatriate missionary presence in Ladakh. After independence and partition in 1947, both India and Pakistan claimed the state of Jammu and Kashmir, including Ladakh. The Maharajah of Kashmir acceded to India but Pakistani troops invaded his territory and by May 1948 had come as close as Phyang, only twelve miles from Leh. Airborne Indian reinforcements landed on Leh's first, hastily prepared airstrip at the end of May and managed to force the Pakistanis back, but fighting continued for several months and the last remaining European missionaries, the Drivers, still feared that they might be expelled on suspicion of spying for Pakistan. However, in September 1948 their fortunes changed dramatically when a new Indian commander arrived with full powers as Governor of Ladakh (MCH 1948). He appointed an emer-

gency Council of Ministers with three members each from the Buddhist, Muslim and Christian communities. Norman Driver became Prime Minister, Mary Driver was Health Minister and Eliezer Joldan, a newly graduated Christian B.Ed., was appointed Education Minister. Their powers were not as great as their exalted titles suggested, and the premier resigned within two months.

By 1949 Ladakh slowly returned to something approaching normality but the long-term future of foreign missionaries in independent India remained a matter of some doubt; it was clearly all the more important to prepare Ladakhi leaders to assume full control of the church. Relations with Ladakhi leaders were at their best in the last years of the expatriate missionary presence. Both by nature and by deliberate policy, Norman Driver was less authoritarian than his predecessors and sat on the council of elders as an elected member and not *ex officio*. The final European missionaries, Pierre and Catherine Vittoz, stayed from 1950 to 1956. Pierre Vittoz recorded with satisfaction that he was no longer addressed as sahib' but as 'little brother' and it was a significant symptom of the changes now taking place that E.T. Phuntsog joined the mission staff in 1951 as a full member of equal status with the expatriates. Meanwhile the Leh congregation were sponsoring a younger Ladakhi, Yonathan Paljor, in his studies at a theological college in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Thus in 1956, when Vittoz could no longer renew his permit to stay in Ladakh, Bishop Connor was able to make a special visit from England to ordain two new Ladakhi ministers, Yonathan Paljor (dPal-'byor) and E.T. Phuntsog. The Ladakhi leadership was ready and able to assume control.

#### EPILOGUE: TOWARDS A LADAKHI CHRISTIANITY

With the departure of the last missionaries, the Ladakhi church had outwardly achieved its aim of independence from expatriate support. Yet the issue of authority in church government has remained unresolved. No Ladakhi or group of Ladakhis, such as a council of elders, has been able to command undisputed authority within the church. Projected links with the protestant Church of North India (CNI) have failed to develop, and the Moravian mission board in London therefore remains the court of appeal for local disputes. Moreover, although the Ladakhi Christian community is prosperous by Indian standards, it still expects aid from abroad. Thus, despite its Indian leadership, the church still retains a degree of financial and administrative dependency on Europe.

A second issue concerns the church's cultural and intellectual character. To what extent is it possible to develop a distinctively Ladakhi expression of Christianity? It was inevitable that in the early years the church closely followed the European model: the words may have been translated but the forms and, indeed, the theology remained European. Did this matter? Eliyah Thsetan Phuntsog argued, as noted above, that it did matter to the extent that the church's Western character was among the chief obstacles to its advancement. Phuntsog had both the theological acumen and the literary skill to express a faith which was both Ladakhi and true to mainstream Christian tradition. However, he left Ladakh for Dehra Dun in the late 1950s and the issues he raised have not been pursued by his successors. The church's current theological leanings are not so much Central Asian as mid-Atlantic.

The Moravians do still make an important contribution in the field of education. In 1963 Eliyah Thsetan Phuntsog founded a school for Tibetan refugees in Rajpur, Uttar Pradesh. The Moravian Institute, as it is now called, continues to flourish. In 1980, after a twenty-year gap, the Moravian school in Leh reopened; within a year the school roll rose to over a hundred and by 1985 had some four hundred pupils. Its new popularity is partly explained by the demand for English-medium education, which is regarded as a passport to prestigious employment, and partly by the decline in the reputation of the state schools.

The Moravian church is still small in numbers: there are now 140 communicants and a total membership of 400 (MORAVIAN ALMANAC 1984). It continues to suffer the problems of its small size, some of which are self-inflicted, and there is little prospect of further expansion. But it is not in danger of dying out. The great-great-grandchildren of the original converts are now at school, and the Leh congregation celebrates its centenary in 1985. The church has not blossomed as its founders hoped, but it has at least survived in an unfavourable environment and, for all its weaknesses, made a creative contribution to the wider Ladakhi community.

#### KEYWORDS

Christianity, Moravian Church, missionaries, history, education, medicine, literature, language, Bible, evangelism.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ASBOE, W. 1932. "Disposal of the Dead in Tibet". *Man*, 32: 66.
- ASBOE, W. 1936. "The Lahoulis of Western Tibet", *Man*, 36: 59.
- ASBOE, W. 1937. "Agricultural Methods in Lahoul, Western Tibet". *Man*, 37:74
- ASBOE, W. 1945. "Pottery in Ladakh, Western Tibet". *Man* 45: 9-10.
- ASBOE, W. 1947. "Farmers and farming in Ladakh". *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 34: 186-192.
- ASBOE, W.1938. "Social Festivals in Ladakh, Kashmir". *Folklore* 49: 376-389.
- BRAY, John. 1983. "The Moravian Church in Ladakh: The First Forty Years" 1885-1925. In KANTOWSKY, D. and SANDER, R. (Eds.) Recent Research on Ladakh. Weltforum Verlag, Munich.
- BRAY, John. 1985. *The Himalayan Mission*. Leh: Moravian Church.
- DRIVER, Norman. 1951. "The Story of the Tibetan Bible". *International Review of Missions*, April, 197-203.
- FRANCKE, A.H. 1925. *Geistesleben in Tibet*. C. Bertelsman, Gutersloh.
- GERGAN, J. 1940. Über die Weise der Totenbestattung und die Totenriten der Buddhistischen Ladaker. In RIBBACH, S.H. Drogpa Namgyal, Otto-Wilhelm-Barth-Verlag, München-Planegg.
- GERGAN, J. 1942 "A Thousand Tibetan Proverbs and Wise Sayings". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. 8.
- GERGAN, J. 1976. *Bla dvags rgyal rabs chi med gter*. Srinagar.

- GERGAN, J. circa 1925a. *The Spectacle of the Human Soul*. (Typescript). Moravian Church House, London.
- GERGAN, J. circa 1925b. *Understandable Expressions of Moral Thoughts*. (typescript), Moravian Church House, London.
- KUNDAN T.Z. 1983. "A Christian from Ladakh Nobility". In THIRUNILATH Dominic (Ed). *Christianity in Jammu and Kashmir*. Vishinath Press, Kashmir.
- MORAVIAN CHURCH HOUSE, LONDON, TIBET REPORTS (hereafter cited as MCH) 11 June. 1917. Letter from Dr A.R. Heber.
- MCH. 1920. Letter and enclosures from HF Burroughs, 24 February.
- MCH. 1921. Letter from Dr A.R. Heber, 2 February.
- MCH. 1928a. Letter from F.E. Peter, 17 April.
- MCH. 1928b. Letter from F.E. Peter, 13 August.
- MCH. 1931a. Letter from W. Asboe, 31 March.
- MCH. 1931b. Letter from Dr Mary Shawe, 3 November.
- MCH. 1938 Letter from F.A. Peter, 31 July.
- MCH. 1939. Memorandum on the Kyelang Mission Farm by Waiter Asboe.
- MCH. 1940. Letter from F.A. Peter, 28 March.
- MCH. 1943a. Kalatse Monthly Report for March, Norman Driver.
- MCH. 1943b. Letter from the Leh elders, 23 March.
- MCH. 1944. Kalatse Monthly Report for March, Norman Driver.
- MCH. 1945. Memorandum on Mission Work in Tibet, F.A. Peter, December.
- MCH. 1948. Letter from Norman Driver, 18 September.
- MCH. 1950. Letter from Norman Driver, 11 October.
- MCH. 1953. Letter from Pierre Vittoz, 6 July.
- MORAVIAN ALMANAC 1984. Moravian Book Room, London.
- MORAVIAN MISSIONS 1920-1956. London.
- PERIODICAL ACCOUNTS RELATING TO MORAVIAN MISSIONS. 1914-1956 (Annual reports of the Moravian Church). London.
- VITTOZ, Pierre and Catherine. n.d. *Un autre Himalaya*. Editions du Sec, Lausanne.

**RESUMÉ :** Les missionnaires de l'église Morave arrivèrent d'Allemagne au Ladakh pour la première fois en 1855 et s'installèrent définitivement à Leh en 1885. Au début de la première guerre mondiale le conseil londonien de la mission prit en charge la région de l'Himalaya. Cet exposé est un compte-rendu du développement de l'église durant la seconde période de son histoire, c'est-à-dire de 1920 à 1956. En 1920 les deux premiers pasteurs ladakhi reçurent les ordres et, à partir de ce moment-là, la mission encouragea en priorité l'essor d'une église indigène qui pourrait se suffire à elle-même et aussi faire de nouveaux convertis. En réalité les progrès furent lents dans l'un et l'autre domaine. Afin de proposer des explications à ce manque apparent de réaction aux efforts de la mission, cet exposé étudie quatre thèmes principaux : le travail humanitaire de la mission, ses activités littéraires, son évangélisme et le développement interne des paroisses chrétiennes.

**SUMMARY:** Moravian missionaries first came to Ladakh from Germany in 1855 and established a permanent mission station in Leh in 1885. This paper reviews the church's development in the second period of its history, starting just after the first world war, when the London Mission Board took over responsibility for the Himalayan mission field, and closing in 1956 when the last European missionaries left. In 1920 the first two Ladakhi ministers were ordained and from then on the mission's emphasis, at least in theory, was on building up the self-dependence of the indigenous church as well as gathering new converts. In practice, progress was slow on both counts. In order to suggest reasons for the apparent lack of response to the mission's efforts, the paper discusses four main themes: the mission's humanitarian work, its literary activities, its evangelism and the internal development of the Christian congregations.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG:** Die ersten Missionare der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde (Moravian Church) besuchten Ladakh im Jahre 1855 und gründeten 1885 eine Missionsstation in Leh. Bis 1914 war die Mission unter deutscher Verwaltung. Nach dem Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs jedoch übernahm die Britische Brüdergemeinde die Himalaja-Mission. Dieser Bericht umreißt die Kirchengeschichte Ladakhs im Zeitraum von 1920 bis 1956 bis zu den letzten europäischen Missionaren. Seit 1920 strebte die Missionsleitung zunehmend nicht nur neue Bekehrungen, sondern auch die Selbständigkeit der örtlichen christlichen Gemeinden an. Sie war weder bei der Bekehrung noch bei der Selbständigkeit sehr erfolgreich. Dieser Bericht versucht die Gründe für die geringe Empfänglichkeit der Ladakher für das Streben der Mission aufzuzeigen. Hauptthemen sind die soziale Tätigkeit der Missionsarbeit, ihre literarische Tätigkeit, ihre Predigermethoden und die Entwicklung der örtlichen christlichen Gemeinden.