

Introduction

Franz-Karl Ehrhard was born on 15 August 1953 in the historic city of Heidelberg, the former centre of Romanticism in south-west Germany. His mother worked as a nurse, his father was a civil servant employed by the German Railways. After completing school, in lieu of military service, he worked at a local hospital. After civilian service, together with a friend, he undertook a trip to Asia which was to shape his academic future: the two travelled widely, visiting also Nepal and India, and it was in Bodhgaya that Franz-Karl Ehrhard was deeply impressed by Tibetans and their culture. The love for Nepal and its rich tradition was also ignited, and would lead him to return to the country regularly throughout his subsequent career.¹

The decision was made and, after his return from Asia, Franz-Karl Ehrhard moved to the northern part of Germany, to the “Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg,” where he enrolled at the university and began to study Indology, Tibetology, and Social Anthropology. His teachers at the local “Seminar für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens” were distinguished scholars such as the venerable Geshe Gendün Lodrö, Prof. Albrecht Wezler and Prof. Lambert Schmithausen—the former a luminary of traditional Tibetan learning who left a lasting imprint on his Western students, the latter two exceptional *mahāpaṇḍitas* who inherited the imposing academic tradition of German Indology and Buddhology.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard continued his postgraduate studies at the same institution, completing his doctoral dissertation in 1987 under the supervision of Prof. Lambert Schmithausen: this work, published in 1990 with the title *Flügelschläge des Garuḍa* is devoted to a topic that will run like a thread (among many others) through Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s Tibetological career, namely the doctrinal system and the history of the rNying ma school. In particular, it consists of an edition and German translation of the spiritual songs (*mgur*) of Zhabs dkar Thogs drug rang grol (1781–1851): it has to be noted that at the time only the songs of Mi la ras pa had been translated and studied, together with the *dohās* and *caryāgītis*, but the English translation of the *Ocean of Kagyu Songs* and other poetical collections were yet to come. The volume is opened by an introduction to rDzogs

¹ We wish to thank Christoph Cüppers for his help in piecing together the information on the early years of Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s career. We are also grateful to Oliver von Criegern for realising the lay-out of this book. The printing of the volume was generously sponsored by the Tara Foundation.

chen—especially the sNying thig tradition—with a discussion of Khregs chod and Thod rgal.

In 1988 Franz-Karl Ehrhard, now in his mid-thirties, succeeded Christoph Cüppers in the Nepal Research Centre in Kathmandu, coordinating the activities of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP). He held this position in Nepal for five years (1988–1993), during which he took part in the expeditions aimed at microfilming the textual heritage preserved in private and monastic libraries across the Himalayas: for this purpose, he travelled to Jumla, Jomoson, Junbesi, Helambu, Kutang, Nubri, and Dolpo. This experience awoke his keen interest in regional history and sacred geography, as well as his sensibility for archival research and book history. The wealth of documents filmed during the expeditions were partly of local origin, partly originating in south-western Tibet and precipitously carried across the border after 1959, via ancient trade routes and reactivating long-lasting institutional and personal networks. To the latter typology of books belong the Collected Works (*gSung 'bum*) of Brag dkar ba Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837) and of dKar brgyud bstan 'dzin nor bu (1899–1959), as well as 16th century printed books from Mang yul Gung thang, that constituted part of the library of Brag dkar rta so hermitage in sKyid grong, and that had been brought to safety to Lobpon Gyurmed in Nubri. These findings, shared with friends and colleagues, were the source material of Franz-Karl Ehrhard's subsequent major publications.

He also contributed to the publication of the recovered literature, in typeset reproduction or facsimile. The earliest was the publication in Tibetan script of *Snowlight of Everest: A History of the Sherpas of Nepal*, a series of texts compiled by Bla ma Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin (1923–1990) from Junbesi. Earlier writings by the same author—including the *Sher pa'i chos 'byung*—had already been published in 1971 in Paris by Alexander Macdonald; the supplement was edited together with this scholar in 1987, and then published shortly after the death of the Sherpa Bla ma (Stuttgart, 1992). It remained a fundamental source for the study of the region, and was translated into Nepali two years later (Kathmandu, 1994). The works of dKar brgyud bstan 'dzin nor bu, filmed in Nubri in 1992, were published in 1996 with a short introduction by their “treasure discoverer.”

Franz-Karl Ehrhard thus acquired a direct knowledge of the land, the people, and the history of south-western Tibet and the Himalayas, which led him to participate in the DFG-funded project “Nation Building and Processes of Human Settlements in the Tibetan Himalayas” (“Staatenbildung und Siedlungsprozesse im tibetischen Himalaya”), developed between 1993 and 1998 by the German Archaeological Institute (Bonn) and the Department of Archaeology in Nepal. His individual research project, titled “Religious Geography as Space-structuring Element”

(“Religiöse Geographie als raumstrukturierendes Element”), focused on the sacred sites and pilgrimage routes in the region of Mang yul Gung thang in south-western Tibet, which he could visit for fieldwork in 1997. The research project was hosted by the Institute of Indology of the University of Münster and was overseen by Prof. Adelheid Mette. The main results of this enquiry were presented in the dissertation for his Habilitation, which he submitted at Hamburg University in 1998. The manuscript was published in 2004 as *Die Statue und der Tempel des Ārya Va-ti bzang-po: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Geographie des Tibetischen Buddhismus*, which, as pointed out in the title, is a work devoted to local history and religious geography. Indeed, it is dedicated to the narratives relating to the temple of Ārya wa ti bzang po in sKyid grong: centred on a composition by Brag dkar ba Chos kyid dbang phyug—edited and translated—it presents in detail the life and works of this master and it explores a wealth of related materials on the self-arising image of Avalokiteśvara hosted in the temple, its “brothers,” and the sacred sites of sKyid grong. Another work by the same Tibetan master that had also been filmed by the NGMPP is the genealogy (*gdung rabs*) of the Gur family, which for centuries headed the mDo chen bKa’ brgyud tradition in the region: it is edited, translated, and studied in Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s 2008 monograph *A Rosary of Rubies*. These publications represent breakthroughs into the history and the narrative lore of the south-western Tibetan borderlands and are now essential reference works for scholars furthering these studies.

This project was the inception of Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s rich research output tracing the diffusion of Buddhist lineages and teachings (especially rNying ma treasure traditions) and the foundation of temples and monasteries throughout the Himalayas. He investigated the history of the regions that he had journeyed in Nepal on the basis of hagiographies (*rnam thar*), lists of teachings received (*gsan yig*), genealogies (*gdung rabs*), guidebooks (*dkar chag*), and travel accounts (*gnas yig*) that for the great part had been filmed by NGMPP expeditions.² During this period, Franz-Karl Ehrhard begun to compose a picture of the religious history of the Tibetan-Himalayan borderlands, piecing together biographical information, travel accounts, and his own observations in the field. This *opus* is still ongoing, and may be followed up and expanded upon by others thanks to the extensive and

² These contributions include, *inter alia*, a follow up to Snellgrove’s classical study on the “Lamas of Dolpo” (“Two Further Lamas of Dolpo,” 1996), “Tibetan Sources on Muktiñāth: Individual Reports and Normative Guides” (1993), “Sa-’dul dgon-pa: A Temple at the Crossroads of Jumla, Dolpo and Mustang” (1998), “Religious Geography and Literary Traditions: The Foundation of the Monastery Brag-dkar bsam-gling” (2001), “The Enlightenment Stūpa in Junbesi” (2004), and “Concepts of Religious Space in Southern Mustān: The Foundation of the Monastery sKu-tshab gter-lnga” (2001). “The Lands are like a Wiped Golden Basin” (1997) provides an overview of the Sixth Zhwa dmar pa’s travelogue of the 1629/30 journey to Nepal, a rare source that was later the topic of a PhD Dissertation supervised by Franz-Karl Ehrhard at the University of Munich (Navina Lamminger 2012/13).

detailed bibliographical references to the primary sources that constitute the backbone of his studies. His contributions allow identifying the individual trajectories of influential Buddhist teachers, dating the foundation of specific sites, and tracing the origins of lama lineages in the Himalayan valleys. For example, two articles shed light on the origins of the main temples and lama lineages of Yol mo (Helambu), supplementing and offering substantial correctives to earlier contributions by Graham Clarke: “The Story of How *bla-ma* Karma Chos-bzang Came to Yol-mo’: A Family Document from Nepal” (2004), and “A Forgotten Incarnation Lineage: The Yol-mo-ba Sprul-skus (16th to 18th Centuries)” (2007). The latter follows for five generations the reincarnation lineage of sNgags ’chang Shākya bzang po (16th c.), the “discoverer,” renovator, and first caretaker of the Bodhnāth *stūpa* in Kathmandu: Franz-Karl Ehrhard returns thus to one of his favourite early topics of study, namely the history of the two main sacred Buddhist monuments in the Kathmandu valley: the *stūpa* of Bodhnāth and the Svayambhūcaitya. His articles on the Tibetan sources for investigating the successive renovations of the sites (1989, 1990, 1991) were supplemented in 2007 by another survey of “Old and New Tibetan Sources Concerning Svayambhūnāth.” He also published a study of the register (*dkar chag*) of the small reliquary of the *yogin* Rang rig ras pa (17th c.) that flanks to the East the main *stūpa* of Bodhnāth (2002). Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s love for the Kathmandu valley, where he has lived for so long and regularly returns to with joy, transpires from a booklet collecting images of Bodhnāth and verse compositions dedicated to the site, published in Kathmandu in 1991 with the title *Views of the Bodhnāth-stūpa*, and a contribution to *The Changing Town-scapes of the Kathmandu Valley* (1995).

Remaining in the field of sacred geography, we may emphasise Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s important contribution to the study of “hidden lands” (*sbas yul*), a phenomenon that brings together his interest in the masters and teachings of the rNying ma tradition and his work on local Himalayan history. Alongside his well-known articles on “The Role of ‘Treasure Discoverers’ and their Writings in the Search for Himalayan Sacred Lands” (1994) and “Political and Ritual Aspects of the Search for Himalayan Sacred Lands” (1996), which discuss the tradition and its ideology, he published case-studies of specific sites such as “A ‘Hidden Land’ in the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands” (1997), and “A ‘Hidden Land’ at the Border of ’Ol-kha and Dvags-po” (2009–2010). He also wrote about the “opening” of hidden lands in Bhutan (“Addressing Tibetan Rulers from the South” 2008), and Sikkim (“The mNga’ bdag family and the tradition of Rig ’dzin Zhig po gling pa [1524–1583] in Sikkim” 2005), two other Himalayan regions that attracted his scholarly attention.

In 1998 Franz-Karl Ehrhard became Research Fellow at the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI), where in the following years he pursued his own project, inspired, once more, by textual materials filmed by the NGMPP. In particular, it was the inception of a twenty-year-long fascination with the beautifully produced, and richly illustrated, 16th century printed editions from Mang yul Gung thang. His *Early Buddhist Block Prints from Mang-yul Gung-thang* (2000) is a contribution to the study of Tibetan xylographic printing: in describing the life and works of Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484–1549) and Nam mkha' rdo rje (1486–1553) it brings together for the first time accounts of book production from biographical sources and exemplars of the mentioned editions. The transcriptions of the full printing colophons of the books, and the study of the artisans that worked in various capacities (scribes, carvers, illustrators, etc.) at their production, complete the monograph, which remains a reference work, in both method and contents, for the study of xylography in Tibet. This study was accompanied by the facsimile reproduction from NGMPP microfilms of two volumes printed in Mang yul Gung thang in the early 16th century, namely the 1533 *editio princeps* of Klong chen pa's *Theg mchog mdzod*, and a collection of works on the Great Seal by the influential master of the Bo dong pa school bTsun pa chos legs (1437–1521). Franz-Karl Ehrhard continued to pursue this avenue of research in a series of articles devoted to early Tibetan printing projects;³ in particular, he investigated the transmission history and the editorial history of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, and he also recently co-edited a volume on *Tibetan Printing: Comparisons, Continuities and Change* (2016). This substantial output has greatly advanced our knowledge of early Tibetan xylographic printing, and has confirmed him as the leading expert in this field of enquiry.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard's interest in history and cultural history led him to study narratives, teaching lineages, cloth paintings (*thang kas*), law and administration, and donation inscriptions. In particular, he has investigated the relationship between secular and religious authority, and patterns of patronage, in 15th and 16th century Tibet, focusing on the individual trajectories of influential masters such as Kaḥ tog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1466–1540), Vanaratna (1384–1468), mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531), dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po (1458–1532), or Chos

³ See “The Transmission of the *dMar-khrid Tshem-bu lugs* and the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*” (2000), “The Royal Print of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*” (2013), “Editing and Publishing the Master's Writings” (2010), “Gnas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581) and His Contribution to Buddhist Block Printing in Tibet” (2012), “Buddhist Hagiographies from the Borderlands” (2016), “Collected Writings as Xylographs” (2016), “Printing a Treasure Text” (2018), and “Apropos a Recent Contribution of Tibetan Xylographs from the 15th to the 17th Centuries” (in press).

dpal bzang po (1371–1439);⁴ *The Life and Travels of Lo-chen bSod-nams rgya-mtsho* (1424–1482) is introduced by a synopsis of the life of the 4th Zhwa dmar pa Chos kyi grags pa (1453–1524), and is accompanied by the facsimile publication of the Great Translator’s “Buddhist Correspondence” (2002). As may be seen, Franz-Karl Ehrhard’s contributions to Tibetan and Himalayan studies are highly significant in different fields of research, reflecting the impressive range and depth of his expertise.

In 2003 Franz-Karl Ehrhard became Professor for Tibetology and Buddhist Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. In the years leading up to this appointment he had been visiting Professor at the University of Vienna (2000), and at Harvard University (2001). In Munich, he has been a passionate and inspiring teacher, and has greatly worked to foster the discipline: he acted as Faculty Students’ Dean for many years, he oversaw about twenty Magister, Master and Bachelor theses, and he supervised eight PhD Dissertations and four Habilitation Dissertations.⁵ Between 2009 and 2015, he supported and directed five

⁴ See “Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1466–1540) and his Activities in Sikkim and Bhutan” (2003), and “Kaḥ thog pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1466–1540) and the Foundation of O rgyan rtse mo in Spa gro” (2007), “Spiritual Relationships between Rulers and Preceptors: The Three Journeys of Vanaratna (1384–1468) to Tibet” (2004), “Addressing Tibetan Rulers from the South: mChog-ldan mgon-po (1497–1531) in the Hidden Valleys of Bhutan” (2008), “The Holy Madman of dBus and His Relationships with Tibetan Rulers in the 15th and 16th Centuries” (2010), “Chos dpal bzang po (1371–1439): The ‘Great Teacher’ (*bla chen*) of rDzong dkar and his Biography” (2017).

⁵ PhD Dissertations: Frank Müller-Witte, “Die Kategorien *bdag* und *gzhan* bei dPa’-ris sangs-rgyas und Dor-zhi gdong-drug und ihre Relevanz für das Verständnis tibetischer Texte” (ss 2009); Volker Caumanns, “Leben und Werk des Sa-skya-Gelehrten gSer-mdog Pan-chen Shākya-mchog-ldan (1428–1507)” (ss 2012); Navina Lamming, “Der Reisebericht des Sechsten Zhwa dmar pa nach Nepal. Textkritische Edition, Übersetzung und Studie” (ws 2012/13); Nikolai Solmsdorf, “Rig’dzin Gar-dbang rdo-rje snying-po (1640–1685). A Treasure-Discoverer of the rNying-ma-pa School from mNga’-ris Gung-thang” (ss 2013); Marlene Erschbamer, “Die Lehrtradition der ’Ba’-ra-ba bKa’-brgyud-pa. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und zur gegenwärtigen Verbreitung einer Schule des tibetischen Buddhismus” (ss 2016); Christoph Burghart, “Leben und Werk des 17. Thronhalters der ’Bri-gung bka’-brgyud-Tradition Rin-chen phun-tshogs (1509–1557) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Schatzzyklus *Dam chos dgongs pa yang zab*” (ss 2017); Marco Walter, “Leben und Lehren des Gling-ras-pa Padma rdo-rje (1128–1188), Gründer der ’Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud-pa” (ss 2017); Yüan Zhong, “Lives and Works of Karma nor-bu bzang-po (1906–1984) and Karma stobs-rgyal (1944–2014)” (ws 2017/18). Habilitation Dissertations: Petra Maurer, “Die Grundlagen der tibetischen Geomantie dargestellt anhand des 32. Kapitels des *Vaidūrya dkar po* von sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte Tibets zur Zeit des 5. Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682)” (ss 2006); Ulrike Roesler, “Der *dPe chos rin chen spungs pa* des Po-to-ba Rin-chen-gsal. Die Verschmelzung indischer und tibetischer Traditionen in einem frühen ‘Stufenweg zur Erleuchtung’ (*lam rim*)” (ws 2006/07); Brandon Dotson, “The Victory Banquet: The Old Tibetan Chronicle and the Rise of Tibetan Historical Narrative” (ss 2013); Marta Sernesi, “Early Tibetan Printed Books: History and Xylography in South-Western Tibet” (ws 2018/19).

externally-funded research projects spanning a wide range of topics, from bKa' brgyud contemplative traditions, to Sa skya hagiographical sources, to Old Tibetan lexicography, and ideals and practices of kingship during the Tibetan Empire.⁶ He served as series-editor of *Collectanea Himalayica: Studies on the History and Culture of the Himalayas and Tibet* (Indus Verlag, München), which published five volumes, and, since 2008, of *Contributions to Tibetan Studies* (Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden), which published seven volumes (nos. 6–12). All these endeavours ensured that the small Department of Indology and Tibetology of Munich University developed into a major centre of Tibetan studies, where students and young scholars could learn and work in a stimulating and supportive environment.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard is deeply passionate for his subject and generous with his sources and knowledge, sharing widely the many Tibetan texts of his library, together with his carefully handwritten summaries and notes. His knowledge of academic scholarship published in English, French, and German is impressive, as is his learning in history, anthropology, history of religions, cultural history, book history—just to name a few disciplines. He takes a real pleasure in studying, discussing, sharing, and exploring Tibetan and Himalayan history, culture, and literature. Because of this, alongside his institutional and didactic duties, he always continued to dedicate time and energy to research, producing a wealth of scholarly output throughout his career. Hence, this short sketch cannot make justice to the breadth of Franz-Karl Ehrhard's research interests and the impact of his contribution to the field of Tibetan and Himalayan studies. He is an inspiring role model for his mentees, and a knowledgeable and amiable colleague, and this volume wishes to be but a modest token of our appreciation.

Marta Sernesi

⁶ “Re-Enacting the Past. The Heritage of the Early bKa' brgyud pa in the Life and Works of gTsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507) and His Disciple rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol (1482–1559),” funded by the DAAD (2009–2010) and the Gerda Henkel Stiftung (2010–2012), realised by Marta Sernesi; “Die Hagiographie des tibetischen Gelehrten Shākya-mchog-ldan (1428–1507): Quellen und historischer Kontext,” funded by the DFG (2010–2012), realised by Volker Caumanns; “Kingship and Religion in Tibet,” funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (2010–2015), realised by Brandon Dotson; “Lexikologische Analyse des alttibetischen Wortschatzes unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Komposita,” funded by the DFG (2013–2015), realised by Joanna Bialek; “bKa' brgyud History and Xylography in South-Western Tibet. The Legacy of Yang dgon pa rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1213–1258),” funded by the DFG (2012–2018), realised by Marta Sernesi.