

Preface

Joseph Francis Rock (1884-1962) has become well-known by his many publications in the fields of botany, Southwest China, and especially, the Naxi. He can justly be called the father of Naxi studies even if single researchers preceded him with individual articles. The fact that he collected about 10,000 ritual pictographic Naxi manuscripts and translated and explained many of these with the help of *dto-mbas*, that he prepared a two volume Naxi dictionary¹ which is a kind of encyclopedia, and provided a comprehensive history and geography of the Naxi may justify this statement.²

Also on the botanical side, Rock's achievements are considerable. He became – after William Hillebrand³ – the second father of Hawaiian botany, which is easily proved by his publications.⁴ From the ten thousands of plants specimens that he collected especially in Southwest and Northwest China, botanical gardens all over the world profited. The herbaria at Harvard University, the U.S. National Museum (Smithsonian Institution) and the Arnold Arboretum hold most of the original collections while the Museum of Comparative Zoology acquired almost two thousand bird skins through Rock.⁵

Rock was a great book collector, and while he boasted an excellent collection in his chosen fields of study he also provided American institutions with rare items that he found. A large part of his Chinese library went to the University of Washington.

Last not least, Rock was an excellent photographer. Major collections of pictures (prints) are found at the National Geographic Society, the Library of Congress (ex CIA?), Harvard University, Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh and Berlin State Library.⁶

It may be useful here to briefly mention some of the major publications on Rock:

¹ *A¹Na-²khi-English encyclopedic dictionary*. By J. F. Rock, Honorary Research Associate, Far Eastern Institute, University of Washington. Part 1-2. Roma: Is.M.E.O. 1963, 1972. XLII, 512, 589 pp. 57 pl. (Serie Orientale Roma 28.)

² Rock's publications are recorded in Joseph Franz Rock (1884-1962): *Berichte* 2002 (see below).

³ Wilhelm F. Hillebrand, 1821-1886: *Flora of the Hawaiian Islands*. A description of the phanerogams and vascular cryptogams. London: Williams & Norgate; New York: Westermann 1888. Reprint: New York, London: Hafner 1965. XCVI, 673 pp. – Hillebrand lived in Hawaii from 1851 to 1871.

⁴ It may suffice to mention here *The indigenous trees of the Hawaiian Islands*. By Joseph Rock, Botanist of the College of Hawaii, Consulting Botanist, Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry, Territory of Hawaii. With two-hundred and fifteen photo-engravings. Published under patronage. Honolulu 1913. 518 pp. incl. 218 pl. – *List of Hawaiian names of plants*. By Joseph Rock, Consulting Botanist, Board of Agriculture and Forestry. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette 1913. 20 pp. (Territory of Hawaii, Board of Agriculture and Forestry. Botanical Bulletin 2.)

⁵ Outram Bangs and James L. Peters: Birds collected by Dr. Joseph Rock in Western Kansu and Eastern Tibet. *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College* 68.1928, 311-381.

⁶ A number of excellent reproductions are given in Rock's books, and especially also in his contributions to the *National Geographic Magazine*. There is one exhibition catalogue: Michael Aris: *Lamas, princes, and brigands: Joseph Rock's photographs of the Tibetan borderlands of China*. With the assistance of Patrick Booz, and contributions by S. B. Sutton and Jeffrey Wagner. New York: China House Gallery 1992. 141 pp.

Stephanne B. Sutton: *In China's border provinces. The turbulent career of Joseph Rock*. Illustrated with photographs. New York: Hastings House 1974. 334 pp.

H. Walravens: Joseph Franz Rock (1884-1962). *Sammler und Forscher. Eine Übersicht. Oriens Extremus* 38.1995, 209-237

Joseph Franz Rock (1884-1962): *Berichte, Briefe und Dokumente des Botanikers, Sinologen und Nakhi-Forschers*. Mit einem Schriftenverzeichnis. Herausgegeben von H. Walravens. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2002. 452 pp. (VOHD Supplement. 36.)

Joseph Franz Rock: *Expedition zum Amnye Machhen in Südwest-China im Jahre 1926*. Im Spiegel von Briefen und Tagebüchern. Herausgegeben von H. Walravens. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2003. 237 pp. (Orientalistik Bibliographien und Dokumentationen 19.)

Joseph Franz Rock: *Briefwechsel mit E. H. Walker, 1938-1961*. Herausgegeben von H. Walravens. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2006. 328 pp. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 738.)

Joseph Franz Rock (1884-1962): *Tagebuch der Reise von Chieng Mai nach Yünnan, 1921-1922*. Briefwechsel mit C. S. Sargent, University of Washington, Johannes Schubert und Robert Koc. Herausgegeben von H. Walravens.

Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007. 580 pp. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 757.)

An edition of the correspondence between Rock and his Leipzig colleague Johannes Schubert is in press and will be published soon by the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

The present publication reproduces an original work by J. F. Rock that was written for the Royal Horticultural Society by agreement with Lord Aberconway, the president of the Society. Unfortunately, after the president's death in 1953⁷ the Society changed its publication policy, and Rock's book remained unpublished among his papers.

It was not designed as a scholarly catalogue of plants but as a mix between a travelogue and a description of the flora of the areas that Rock himself explored. This seemed to be the best presentation for plant lovers, not necessarily scholars, like the constituency of the Royal Horticultural Society. The work should be well illustrated, too, as a feast for the eye, or as we might say today, a bit colloquially, as a coffee-table book.

The book is extant as a typescript, with Chinese and Tibetan script written into the text by Rock himself. This is of great importance as many of the geographical names of the areas that Rock explored were not found on maps, and other explorers had too little knowledge of the respective languages to provide accurate spellings.

While thanks to Unicode the insertion of Chinese characters into English text is no problem, Microsoft Word is still (2008) not compatible with Tibetan. So the names had to be written in TextEdit but could not be imported into MS Word text. For this reason, Tibetan script is only given in the indices. There is an advantage to it: orthographic variants by the author can easily be detected. The geographic index was sorted by hand and according to the specifics of the Chinese and Tibetan languages – as there are only a limited number of syllables they were made the filing criteria, instead of sorting letter

⁷ Lord Aberconway, 1879-1953.

by letter. Also, commercial sorting programmes cannot handle Tibetan superscript letters, and thus words that belong together (and are found in dictionaries in the same place) would show up at different places (e.g. Do and rDo).

Rock used the Wade/Giles transcription for Chinese (with a few variants) and a kind of Wylie transcription for Tibetan, for the sake of the English reader. It did not seem necessary to change these applications even if Hanyu Pinyin has become the standard system for Chinese.

More of a challenge is the fact that Rock used both spoken and written forms of Tibetan names; when mentioned for the first time the different spellings are often given, including the Chinese transcriptions. Most of the time the colloquial form is quoted, and not always consistently. As Rock refers to local pronunciations, it seemed inappropriate to standardize his spellings. As a reference tool, the geographical index gives the *written form* of the names in order to facilitate retrieval in historical and geographical sources.

A challenge were also the illustrations. While the book was designed to have a number of plates which were kept in an envelope with the typescript, it turned out on closer inspection by the archivist in Edinburgh that only part of the material carried the stamped page numbers of the typescript. Others had «page numbers» but it is unclear to what kind of pages they refer. Some had only negative numbers. At any rate, many of the plates filed with the typescript did not match the plate references in the typescript. The editor tried as well as he could to correlate the plates with the text.

It is certainly possible that Rock never made the final plate selection for the book because the project never reached the definitive stage of printing. On the other hand, Rock may have re-arranged the illustrations and refiled or used some for other purposes. At any rate, the captions to the plates were written by Rock himself and are reproduced faithfully, including references to negatives and the field notes (diaries). Quite a number of the originally selected plates could not be identified.

A word may be added regarding Rock's photographs. There are several thousand of them extant, with negatives mostly in the possession of the National Geographic Society, perhaps also Harvard University. So far no census, or inventory, has been made. Many of the prints in the Dept. of Prints of the Library of Congress have captions, while most of the prints in Berlin and Edinburgh do not have any. The reason is simple: Rock knew his pictures very well, and so he did not need them. For researchers the situation is rather unsatisfactory, and it would be useful to have all the Rock photographs scanned and identified.

Thanks are due above all to the Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh that own the original typescript and the plates, for kindly making these available for publication. Especially the archivist, Leonie Paterson, worked hard to assemble and scan the available plates. The Oriental Department of the Berlin State Library, custodian of half of Rock's papers, acquired a xerox copy of the Edinburgh typescript and kindly furnished it for printing.

