

INTRODUCTION

Otto Honigmann (1879–1959) was from a renowned Aachen family of mine-owners. He was born the third son of Moritz and Marie Honigmann on 7 September 1879 in Grevenberg, now known as Würselen. Moritz Honigmann (1844–1918) was a chemist and industrialist who improved sodium carbonate production and developed the ammonia soda process named after him. He first put the process into practice at his father's mine in Grevenberg, near Aachen, and in 1876 built the first German ammonia soda plant which, under his leadership, grew to become a large business concern. Correspondence shows that he sold the plant in 1912, probably to Solvay, a company with its own soda process which had, by then, replaced others. Solvay is thought to have run the plant until 1928. In later life he devoted his time to the »Nordstern« hard coal mine, under family ownership since 1848, and trialled a number of technical improvements there.¹ Although Otto Honigmann had studied chemistry, he did not want to go into his father's business in 1912. He fought in the First World War 1914–1918 and afterwards settled down in the Bavarian town of Bad Tölz where the family probably initially only spent their summer holidays. After the sale of the soda plant in 1912, Moritz Honigmann bought several properties there and made them over to his children. Otto Honigmann married in 1920, but his first wife, Gerda Schulte, died in childbirth just one year later. The remaining family coal mines seem to have been sold during the economic crises of the 1920s and 1930s. It is likely that the inflation brought about by the financial crisis may well have led Otto Honigmann to take over the »Alpenhotel Kogel«, a Bad Tölz hotel owned by his family since 1913 but

initially leased out to tenants. He ran this hotel with the help of his second wife, Gina Franz, my grandmother, until his death on 28 January 1959.

Otto Honigmann's comfortable background enabled him to undertake three major overseas expeditions in the years preceding the First World War. The first took place in 1907 in the company of his friend, August Ferber, to Ceylon, Singapore, Siam and Burma. In 1910 he travelled alone to British Colombia and Alberta, Canada. The third and longest expedition, which had been planned as a hunting trip, like the one to Canada, took him in May 1911 to Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan with his younger brother, Friedrich, and Rudolf Haniel. The three travellers went their separate ways in October 1911, and Otto Honigmann decided to spend the winter of 1911/1912 alone in Ladakh und Baltistan, not returning to Europe until May 1912. He may have been inspired to make this journey by his friend, August Ferber, a cloth manufacturer and mountaineer from Aachen, and his cousin Eduard Honigmann.² These two had climbed the Mustagh Pass in Karakoram together in 1903.³ Alongside the hunting trophies, a number of acquisitions made on these trips have remained in the family, as well as about 200 photographs from Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan. Otto Honigmann had most of these photographs mounted in a bound album and the captions have been preserved in their original state for this book. Otto Honigmann and his companions must have used several cameras, such as a wooden camera and tripod, with 24x30 format glass plates, some of which still exist, a Gaumont brand stereo camera which



Fig. 1:
»Promenade deck on board
the ›Salsette‹ between
Aden and Bombay.«

The Salsette – named after the island of Salsette off Bombay – had the reputation of being the most beautiful and fastest ship owned by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. It was the express mail and passenger shuttle between Bombay and Aden (Allen 2005: 4). (MA)

can be seen in its bag on Plate 42 as well as a roll film camera.

It is hard for us to grasp the logistical complexity of transporting sensitive photography equipment, never letting it get wet, not to mention carrying hundreds of heavy glass plates across these mountains in winter.⁴

Otto Honigmann followed in the tracks of a number of famous European travellers and researchers. The first of these was Frenchman, François Bernier, who, as personal physician to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb during 1664 and 1665, travelled in his entourage throughout Kashmir. British explorers Alexander Cunningham, Henry Strachey and Thomas Thomson were commissioned in 1847 to research Ladakh, and the Schlagintweit brothers from Munich were commissioned from 1854 to 1857 by the British East India Company to investigate India and Central Asia, including Kashmir and Ladakh. Traveller and writer Edward Frederick Knight toured Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan in 1891, and Moravian Church missionary, August Hermann Francke, arrived in 1896. Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria visited Kashmir in 1898 and in 1906 Sven Hedin started his trip to Kashmir and Ladakh. Arthur Neves' 1899 publication entitled »Tourist's Guide to Kashmir, Ladakh and Skardo« went into its eighth edition in 1911.

Otto Honigmann's personal collection of books includes: »A Summer in High Asia« by F.E.S. Adair (1899), »Sport and Life in the Further Himalaya« by R.L. Kennion (1910), »A History of Western Tibet« by A.H. Francke (1907), A. Seidel's »Praktische Grammatik der Hindustani-Sprache«, a guide to the grammar of the Hindustani language (publication date unknown), and John Murray's »Guide to India,

Burma and Ceylon«, published in 1907. The latter was probably purchased early on by Honigmann for his first Asian journey. These and other publications supplement Otto Honigmann's own observations on the first part of the journey which can be found in two letters to his parents, written in May and June 1911, as well as in a four-page, undated document typed up later. The second part of the journey, when Otto Honigmann travelled alone, is verified by 21 letters to his mother, written between October 1911 and May 1912.

Otto Honigmann's photographs are now part of the collection of the Five Continents Museum. My thanks go to my colleagues Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, Bruno J. Richtsfeld and Wolfgang Stein for allowing me to work on Otto Honigmann's photographs and letters myself, and for being at my side with their knowledge, support and advice, all of which has helped inform the photograph captions. I would like also to thank Max Klimburg of Vienna for helping identify a number of photographs of Baltistan.

The first part of the journey



The P & O liner »Salsette«⁵ brought the three travellers from Aden to Bombay, where they visited the Elephanta Caves and then took the railway to Rawalpindi through Agra, Delhi and Lahore. They travelled from Rawalpindi to Srinigar, capital of Kashmir, in a two-wheeled horse-drawn cart. From Srinigar they had to use pack animals and porters to cross Zoji La to Ladakh, travelling through Kargil, Mulbekh, Lamayuru and Basgo to Leh. From there they went on through Hemis and Gya to the plateau of Rupshu and Hanlé.

A second expedition took them from Leh across the Khardung La and up the Nubra Valley, then towards Karakoram Pass, while the return journey led along the valley of the Shayok River and Baltistan, through Beghdan, Chorbat, Khapalu and Kiris to Skardu.

From there they took a detour into the north-west border area of Gilgit before making the return journey to Srinigar across the Deosai Plains, the Burzil Pass and Gurais.

Now under the control of Pakistan, the districts of Chorbat, Skardu and Gilgit are no longer accessible from India.

From Rawalpindi to Srinagar

At that time an extensive overseas trip was not to be taken lightly and, unlike today, was the preserve of only the very affluent. And yet in the brief travel report referred to earlier, a document Otto Honigmann must have written some time after the First World War, he observes:

»But how easy it was to go on a world trip in those years before the war. One barely needed a passport, only plenty



of time and a little money. The major railway lines speedily took travellers to all manner of steamer departure points, such as Marseille, Genoa, Brindisi etc., and from here the Indian ports were comfortably reached in 14 to 20 days.

And so we docked at Bombay one hot May morning and the most pleasant part of our planned hunting trip to Kashmir lay behind us. Interspersed with a few breaks, our journey took us via Agra, Delhi and Lahore to Rawalpindi railway station, which we reached after two and a half days, dusty and dehydrated. It was shortly before the rainy season and temperatures were around 40 degrees. In Rawalpindi we soon found two, two-wheeled horse-drawn carts, or *tonga*, which took us and our luggage into the heavenly Kashmir valley, after two overnight stops and constant changing of the horses. (Today this journey of around 300 kilometres can be done in a day on good roads)«.⁶

In John Murray's »Handbook of India, Burma and Ceylon«, published in 1907, the route from Rawalpindi via Muree and the Baramulla Pass is referred to as the best-loved. The journey usually took three days and at every stage there was a dak bungalow built by the government for travellers to use for rest (Plate 14). The advice was to take a full day for preparation in Rawalpindi itself. Three-seater *tongas* drawn by two horses could be hired there, as could two-seater *ekkas* with just one horse for servants and luggage.⁷ In Baramulla it was also possible to book a Kashmiri houseboat, or *doonga*, to live in and so make the journey to Srinagar by boat.«⁸

Fig. 2:
Postcard from the collection of Otto Honigmann: the main cave on the island of Elephanta near Bombay with Shiva figures from the 8th – 9th century (MA)

Fig. 3:
»Change of horses« on the way from Rawalpindi to Srinagar