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**GEORG FRIEDRICH WEISE — AN INVISIBLE AGENT  
OF PIETISM IN RUSSIA:  
HIS TRAVELS AND HANDWRITTEN NOTES  
IN THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF PIETISTS, 1730–1743\***

**ABSTRACT.** During the eighteenth century, Halle Pietists gathered knowledge from all over the world to make it a better place by promoting piety, education, and science. One of the most important regions in which they worked was the Russian Empire, where three generations of Halle Pietists were active between the 1690s and the 1740s. This article deals with Georg Friedrich Weise (1696–1781) who, despite having held several positions in Russia between 1730 and 1742, has received little attention in the literature. After an outline of Weise's life, the manner in which he acquired knowledge in Russia and transferred it to Halle will be analysed, with a special focus on his stay in Astrakhan. The basis for this analysis are his handwritten notes kept in the archives of the Francke Foundations and the Berlin State Library. In addition, the fields in which Weise made observations will be summarized and his social position will be discussed. Finally, an attempt will be made to position Weise and his views of God and the world within the global network of Halle Pietists. In conclusion, Weise will be presented as an *invisible agent* of knowledge accumulation in the eighteenth century — a group of actors who have thus far received insufficient attention in historical research.

**KEYWORDS:** Halle Orphanage, Astrakhan, Caspian Sea, India, knowledge accumulation, contact zones, global networks, proto-ethnography

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Fig. 1. The Francke Foundations (“school town”), general view from the south at around 1740 (Johann Georg Mauritius, *Das Hällische Waisenhaus*, 1740, copperplate engraving, 26,5 × 41 cm, Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, AFS/B Sd 0091)

From the 1690s on, August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) laboured in Halle to reform and improve the world. He regarded his work as a contribution to building the Kingdom of God on earth. His goal was a renewal of the living together of human beings in a Protestant-Pietist sense, applied not only in Germany and Europe but in the world as a whole. His work was based on two premises: individuals should find true devotion to God independent of official church institutions (“piety of the heart”); they should strive to change and improve life on earth in concrete ways by means of a comprehensive education and the advancement of talents (“ingenia”). These were the basic tenets of Halle Pietism. From 1695 on Francke founded an orphanage in Halle as well as schools for pupils from all estates of early modern society — both orphans and children from noble families, both boys and girls — in which theology students from the University of Halle worked as teachers (Fig. 1).

To this purpose, a school town was built in Glaucha, south of the Prussian city of Halle, whose architecture were crafted to express the aesthetic and symbolic nature of these premises. The graduates of the schools and the teachers trained in the Francke Foundations were sent out into the world as pastors, teachers and missionaries. Through them a transfer of knowledge and culture was set in motion. They became active in East Central Europe, Scandinavia, South India and North America (Gleixner 2010; Zaunstöck et al. 2013; Schröder-Kahnt and Veltmann 2018). One of the earliest of these fields was the Russian Empire. From the 1690s until the 1740s, three generations of students from Halle contributed to the development and exploration of Russia, either as members of the Academy of Sciences and of expeditions, or as teachers and preachers in the households of civil, political and military leaders, or as



Fig. 2. The library (built 1726–1728) of the Francke Foundations. Photo Uwe Gaasch

founders of schools: from Justus Samuel Scharschmid and Georg Wilhelm Steller to Tobias Plaschnig (Winter 1953; Fundaminski 1998; Utermöhlen 1998; Hintzsche und Habeck 2012; Scharschmid 2019).

In this system of Halle Pietism the sciences played an important role. In Halle, foreign languages were taught, experiments were carried out, botany was practised, a natural history collection was set up, etc. (Müller-Bahlke 1999; Whitmer 2015; Häberlein and Zaunstöck 2017) (Fig. 2). Knowledge was systematically collected in a library that was publicly accessible and in an archive of manuscripts that was not open to the public (Klosterberg 2016). The usefulness and applicability of knowledge, for instance when traveling, was important in this educational cosmos. This was the world from which Georg Friedrich Weise traveled to Russia in order to work there as a Pietist. As Weise's work has thus far been only marginally presented in historical research (Winter 1953), the following will approach Weise and his time in Russia in five steps: (1) Weise himself, his travels and stations in Russia and his handwritten documents; (2) the Pietist approach to gather knowledge about the world and Weise's records of his Russian years; (3) the global network of Pietists in which Weise participated; and (4) his position within this network, whereby he will be presented as an invisible agent of knowledge accumulation in the early eighteenth century — a group of actors who have thus far received little attention in historical research; and (5) a conclusion.

## 1. GEORG FRIEDRICH WEISE IN AND ON RUSSIA

Born in Beuchlitz near Halle in 1696, Weise attended the municipal grammar school and studied theology at the University of Halle from 1718 on. During his student days, Weise became a secretary of August Hermann Francke and, for example, accompanied him on a journey to the Imperial Count Heinrich XXIV von Reuss-Köstritz in 1725. Two years later he composed a funeral poem to commemorate Francke. Weise served as an *informator* (teacher) at the Halle Orphanage until 1730. In these early years, Weise was also involved in affairs of the Danish-English-Halle mission in Tranquebar, south India, and personally

came in touch with numerous later missionaries in Halle. From 1730 to 1742 he went out into the world himself, namely to Russia, where he worked in various positions. After his return to Halle in 1742, Weise was appointed director of the “German schools” of the Orphanage, i.e., schools for poor children and orphans in which talented pupils were selected to be trained for university studies (Jacobi 2009; Spaans 2016; Osterwalder 2016). In addition, he was charged with overseeing missionary work in the decades to follow. Weise died of old age at Halle in 1781.<sup>1</sup>

The most exciting time of his life were the years spent in Russia, lasting from 1730 to 1742.<sup>2</sup> His journeys and employment led him, as he wrote, to three corners of the Christian world: Siberia, Astrakhan and the Ukraine. Initially, from 1730 to 1733, Weise served as a house preacher to the German General Burchard Christoph von Münnich who was employed by the Russians in St. Petersburg, thus moving into the highest political circles. In 1730 he traveled with Münnich to the Ladoga Canal that was under construction. Nevertheless, Weise felt uncomfortable in this environment, on this political stage, as he wrote that the house was “too big” for him and that he longed to leave it. From 1733 to 1735 he was appointed as a house preacher and a teacher to General Wilhelm Ivanovic von Hennin in Ekaterinburg (Katharinenburg). Laconically, Weise commented on this move that he went to bed in St. Petersburg on February 21 at six o’clock in the evening and woke up in Ekaterinburg in Siberia in April. In addition, he became pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Ekaterinburg. His responsibilities included overseeing the Lutherans in Tobolsk, whom he visited in late 1733. Life in Tobolsk had been influenced by the Pietism of the former Swedish prisoners of war who, among others, founded a school based on the model of the ones in Halle (Winter 1953: 303–312).<sup>3</sup> By 1733, however, their influence had waned. Weise reported that little Pietism was left among the local Russians, although a great deal could still be found among the Tartars. In 1734 he traveled via Kungur to Solikamsk in order to visit two families from his community. On the one hand, he emphasized the wide geographic radius of his community; on the other, that he on his way across the Urals had crossed the border between Asia and Europe.

During a trip to Kazan, where Weise taught children in a small community,<sup>4</sup> he received a call to the post of Lutheran preacher in Astrakhan, in late 1734. Apparently, it had been difficult to find someone for this position, as his predecessors had “not been treated the best”. Thus, after Pentecost 1735, Weise traveled to Astrakhan where he also served as the house preacher of Brigadier General Jonger. One of his main impressions was the indescribable effort of people irrigating the land (including the watermelons), which induced him to compare the land around Astrakhan with Egypt. In the context of his employment as a Lutheran preacher he undertook several trips across the Caspian Sea and in the countryside via Terki and Tolobna to Kizlyar on the Terek River in 1737, 1739 and 1740. From February 1741 on, he served as a preacher at the estates of Count von Münnich in Raschky in the Ukraine. When Münnich, in the beginning of 1742, fell into disfavour with the Empress Elizaveta and was banished from Russia, Weise too was expelled. On his departure he was financially supported in Moscow.<sup>5</sup> However, he still had to sell his library to raise enough funds for the return journey to Halle, which was a big loss for him. In Moscow and Livonia he sold “the rest of my best books”.

<sup>1</sup> On Weise’s life, see for example, *Frankens Stiftungen. Eine Zeitschrift zum Besten vaterloser Kinder*. Ersten Bandes Drittes Stück. Halle 1792, S. 322f. (BFSt: S/FS.3: 320).

<sup>2</sup> The following is based on his report “Bericht über Weises Reisen nach Sibirien, Astrachan und in die Ukraine und seinen Aufenthalt in Rußland von 1730 bis 1741 [1742]”, dated January 7, 1743 (ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29).

<sup>3</sup> See also: “Regelungen betreffend den Inhalt und Ablauf des Unterrichts sowie das Verhalten der Schüler und Lehrer an der in Tobolsk gegründeten Schule” (AFSt/H C 491: 41).

<sup>4</sup> See: “Bericht über das Jahr 1735 von Gotthilf August Francke” (AFSt/M 3 M 1: 3).

<sup>5</sup> On this return trip to Halle, Weise wrote: «From the Duke of Holstein... [I] received 30 rubles and from a second patron another 20 rubles. But what was that against so much [I had to pay]. For hiring a coach from Moscow to Riga alone I needed 20 rubles» (ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29).



Fig. 3. Examples of Weise's handwritings. Photo Doris Zosel

During his time in Russia, Weise has written detailed accounts of his work and his travels<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 3). He penned a variety of documents that have been preserved to the present day. These records can be divided into two groups:

(1) about 70 letters, especially numerous from Astrakhan, and (2) approximately 10 diaries or travel diaries, in some cases very extensive.

This way of reporting complied with the procedures of Pietist actors in general: in letters, the latest news and important pieces of knowledge were communicated, while printed works of others were sent along or summarized. The Pietists were also required to keep a diary in order to document their actions before God — and the directors of the orphanage — as well as the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth. At the same time, these writings contained religious, ethnological and natural historical observations as well as recordings of everyday life in the places they visited.<sup>7</sup> Some of the letters contain elaborate reports in which previous, longer versions of the experiences, observations and descriptions recorded in the diaries have been written out in a structured manner. Thus, the letters, diaries and reports are fluid and cannot always be distinguished (see: Liebau 2017: 135–139). Texts of all these genres have been preserved in Weise's handwriting.

In this regard, Weise was a diligent Pietist. He saw the practice of recording and reporting also as a means to express his gratitude to the headquarters in Halle and its director, Gotthilf August Francke.

<sup>6</sup> (Winter 1953: 472–488) published some extracts of these writings.

<sup>7</sup> See the current projects at the “Francke Foundations Research Centre August Hermann Francke” on “Development and digitization of early modern self-testimonies from the archive of the Francke Foundations” (<https://www.francke-halle.de/einrichtungen-a-11806.html>) and “Halle pastors, German settlers and Lutheran parishes in North America: Critical Edition and Scientific Research of Letters and Official Diaries, 1740–1820” (<https://www.francke-halle.de/einrichtungen-a-2299.html>).



Fig. 4. The Cabinet of Artefacts and Natural Curiosities at the Historic Orphanage in Halle.

Photo Thomas Meinicke

He wanted to delight the director with uplifting news but did not have many, as he wrote in January 1737. Instead, he began to “record miscellaneous events *secundum temporis seriem*” in order to send these “from time to time” to the Halle he esteemed so much.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a lack of pious success reports about progress in building the Kingdom of God did not lead to a cessation of recording and reporting; instead, viewing and documenting the world’s diversity moved more strongly into the center of his attention.

Added to this was an interest in collecting objects, the material culture of knowledge. The missionaries in India, for example, sent extensive natural materials and specimens for the Halle Orphanage’s Cabinet of Artefacts and Natural Curiosities (designed 1736–1741), the so-called *Wunderkammer* (see: Vishnus Weltentraum 2007) (Fig. 4). Weise also participated in this way of collecting by sending items from Russia. Several times he reported about shipments to Halle, either intended for the *Wunderkammer*, such as a Chinese idol, Mongolian and Chinese manuscripts (Link 2003: 33–35), pieces of fur and Chinese linen, or valuable Russian coins (for his family), or for the directors of the Orphanage (a box of tea).<sup>9</sup> Another example shows the close connection of one’s own lifeworld, empirical observations and attention to the material culture of knowledge (specimens), in this case in the field of botany. In early 1737 he reported to Halle that he out of “naivety” had regarded a saffron flower as a rarity, as he had not seen such a flower in Germany. Weise had previously applied the same “naivety” when referring to specific objects, which probably expressed his view that the real collection experts resided in Halle.<sup>10</sup> He attached a specimen to his report, which had flowered in front of his room in early October the previous year.<sup>11</sup> He had received the saffron bulb from Baku and included a detailed account of his experiences with growing the plant.

<sup>8</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 32.

<sup>9</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 4 (1731), 28/40: 15 (1732), 28/40: 24 (1734), 28/40: 33 (1737); AFSI/M 3 H 20: 114 (1742).

<sup>10</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 15 (August 4, 1732).

<sup>11</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 32 (February 27, 1737).

This form of generating knowledge about God and the world (see: Juterzenka 2008), structured both textually and in terms of objects, was part of a European as well as a transcontinental network between Halle, India and Russia. It provided the foundation for an archive of knowledge arising in Halle, knowledge that the Pietists had gathered and written down on the basis of their personal experience and observations, and thus to them was reliable (*Aus Gottes Wort und eigener Erfahrung gezeigt*, 2012). The underlying documents were collected in Halle, edited, partially published and archived. Georg Friedrich Weise was part of this system. Weise's subjective knowledge, written down on the basis of his own experience and observations, is of great interest for research into the ethnology, natural history and religious history of Russia, as well as into everyday life in Russia during the first half of the eighteenth century. In the following section, we shall focus on his sojourn in Astrakhan and the travels he made to the town of Kizlyar in Dagestan.

## 2. WEISE'S VIEWS ON GOD AND THE WORLD

Weise's travels were occasioned by the care he had to provide to Lutherans in a wide field: Christian holidays, baptisms, pastoral services, and conflict resolution. Thus, traveling was an integral part of his life, as it was for the missionaries in India (Liebau 2018) (Fig. 5). Weise was an attentive observer from the beginning of his travels on. His factual and observational descriptions of nature and culture as well as of everyday life take up a large space in his notes. In diary-like recordings, the topics were apparently continuously integrated depending on the specific observation or situation and thus not ordered in a systematic-typological manner. Weise reported on various topics in a descriptive manner.

He often wrote about meteorology and climate. Apparently, the weather conditions fascinated him (as they also did to the missionaries in South India). For example, Weise described a phenomenon at the Caspian Sea in the summer of 1737: at eleven o'clock in the evening the sky had become fire-red without any rays, as was the case with the *aurora borealis*, yet the redness was transformed into a bright lustre that remained visible for half an hour. Four days later, he reported that in the evening the sun had turned completely black because of the fog on the horizon.<sup>12</sup> He also repeatedly addressed the topic of snow and its effects. In February 1739, he wrote in his diary that winter would continue with a severe coldness and that so much snow had fallen in Astrakhan that "people cannot remember it", thus, that no one in the city recalled such amounts of snow.<sup>13</sup>

Other topics that interested Weise were geography and navigation, on which concrete information and observations were presented in large numbers (Fig. 6). One example of this from June 1739: this time "our journey to Kizlyar was not made to Terki but to Tolobna, located 15–20 versts southwest of Terki and about 6 versts from the Sina, which on the map of Strahlenberg presents a corner into the country next to Terki".<sup>14</sup> The 1730 map of the former Swedish prisoner of war Philipp Johann Tabbert von Strahlenberg,<sup>15</sup> who had co-founded the Pietist school in Tobolsk (Winter 1953: passim; Link 2003: 26–28; Vermeulen 2015: 110–113), served as geographical orientation by means of which Weise fixed local positions that actors in Halle and perhaps India could understand. Thus, in 1741, he described his place of work in the Ukraine in a detailed way: Raschky lies approximately at 51 degrees latitude and 55 degrees longitude in

<sup>12</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 2a, August 9 and 13, 1737.

<sup>13</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3b, February 12, 1739.

<sup>14</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3, June 19, 1739.

<sup>15</sup> Philipp Johann Strahlenberg: *Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia <...> Sonderlich aber Einer grossen richtigen Land-Charte von den benannten Ländern <...> Bey Gelegenheit der Schwedischen Kriegs-Gefangenschafft in Rußland, aus eigener sorgfältigen Erkundigung, auf denen verstateten weiten Reisen zusammen gebracht und ausgefertiget*, Stockholm 1730.

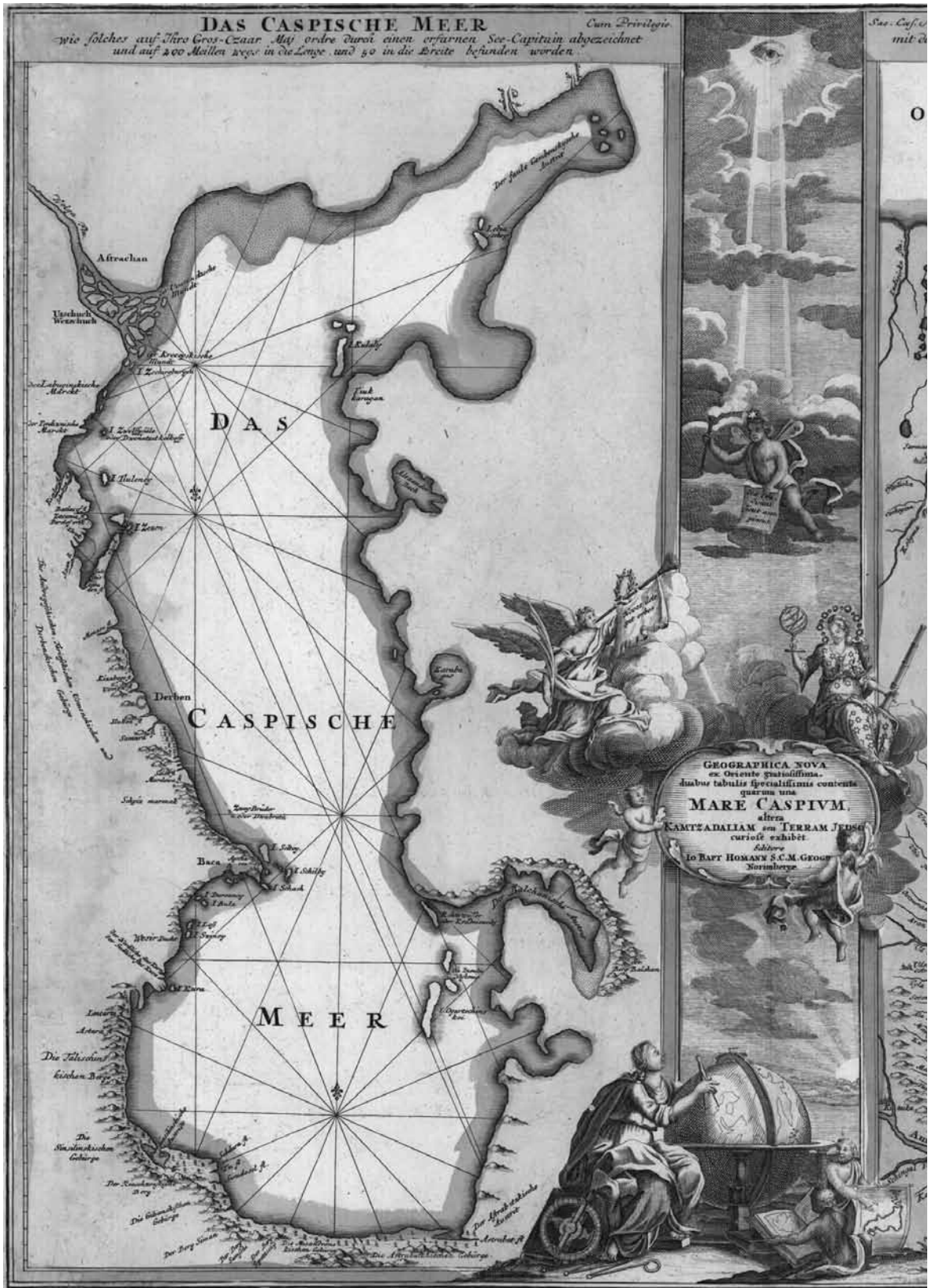


Fig. 5. The Caspian Sea, detail of: Johann Baptist Homann, *Geographica Nova ex Oriente gratiosissima, duabus tabulis specialissimis contenta, quarum una Mare Caspium [...]*, 18<sup>th</sup> c., BFSt: Kt: 245





Fig. 6. The Caspian Sea, detail of: Philipp Johann Strahlenberg: Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia, [...] Sonderlich aber Einer grossen richtigen Land-Charte von den benannten Ländern [...], Stockholm 1730, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen: (<http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN353674192>)

the area where Strahlenberg's map shows Prziluka and Itznia, the former twenty versts southward, the latter twenty versts westward.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, questions of nutrition, health and illness, and medicine regularly play a role in his recordings. In a letter from the summer of 1739 to missionaries in India, Weise reported about the food situation in Astrakhan, which was made up of a mix of regional products and supraregional trade products that reached as far as Persia. According to him, very sweet water-melons and melons as well as some millet were cultivated by the Tartars, while ground grain (wheat, rye) was delivered from the north across the Volga. Apples, pears and cherries were grown locally, but they did not have the same quality as in Germany, while oranges and pomegranates were imported from Persia.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, Weise again and again presented ethnological observations and, to a lesser extent, observations pertaining to natural history. For example, he described the transportable Kalmyk dwellings on May 26, 1739, as follows: a group of Kalmyks loaded the contents of their huts partly on horses and partly on cows. Such a hut "consists of (1) some pieces of *Gütter-Werck* [grid or struts], of which the bars are a bit thicker than a thumb, held together with fish guts, and made in such a way that they can be pulled apart and put back together again. This lattice work was one and a half to two cubits high. Then (2), when it is set on the ground, they place some reed-plaited blankets around it. At the top of the lattice work (3) are fastened some rods, which go up pointed together. Over this they put (4) coarse felt (*Woilocken*). In these [huts] the Kalmyks live in summer and winter".<sup>18</sup>

Often, observations of different fields of knowledge are interwoven. Thus, several times Weise reported on issues of problematic nutrition or shortage situations aboard ships, such as on August 10, 1737. Respect and hospitality were shown to him, and his traveling wife, by offering them the remaining fresh water to drink. Weise was ashamed of this, emphasizing that he did not demand this, and worried about the health of their fellow travelers. Yet he did not attribute the event to the cultural and moral values of the merchants accompanying them, but to the Providence of God.<sup>19</sup>

This ductus can also be found in view of his travels over land. On the one hand, his relatively high social status and, on the other, his Christian compassion become clear. Both are combined in a culturally and religiously superior self-perception, even if the description and treatment of others remains distanced. Only the mercy of God would be able to help the suffering, in this case the Kalmyks. About a trip to Kizlyar in April 1740, on which Weise accompanied officers from the city and 70 Cossacks, he reported that the travelers had stopped at a lake to make lunch and that he, because of the lack of fresh water, had asked to not cook tea for him but kvass with coarse zwieback. After drinking the kvass he passed the bowl to his servant, who poured the soft-boiled zwieback on the ground. Kalmyks observing the scene hurried by and picked up the now-dirty soft bread and ate it. Weise's heart was crying about this. The Cossacks, in turn, had boiled a large kettle of groats in water from the lake, assuming it to be fresh, but could not eat it as the lake contained no fresh water. They, too, poured the groats away. Again the Kalmyks hurried up, some had the groats poured into their furs to eat them with their hands instead of spoons; others held their hands together to have the groats pour onto them. Weise commented on this by wishing God to have mercy on "this nation".<sup>20</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the topic of religion and faith plays a central role in Weise's recordings. In addition to portrayals of the life of his congregations, we find observations of other religious practices, denominations,

<sup>16</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke 28/40: 44, early 1741.

<sup>17</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3a, July 27, 1739.

<sup>18</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3, May 26, 1739.

<sup>19</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 2a, August 10, 1737.

<sup>20</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke 28/40: 44, April 13, 1740.

and churches. As a contact zone of various cultures, Astrakhan again and again presented him with an experiential space and field of observation. In April 1739, for example, Weise wrote about trans-denominational encounters and the problem of multilingualism in Astrakhan. In the afternoon, an “Armenian pope” and his escort had come to see him in order to visit the Lutheran church. The visitors also took a look at the map of the Holy Land and Weise informed them about the time when Armenia had adopted the Christian faith. He was then asked when the Germans had become Christians. After informing them that this had happened later, “they genuinely seemed to enjoy that”. Weise noted that those wishing to approach the altar had taken off their shoes. They would have asked him a great deal more, but since he could hardly speak Russian and the schoolmaster had not been at home, he had been able to answer just a bit.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Weise here and in other places professes to not sufficiently master Russian, even after several years of living in Russia, is astonishing. In Halle Pietism, learning the languages of the people with whom Pietists came together in multi-ethnic and multi-confessional spaces was actually regarded as central to gaining access to them (Häberlein and Zaunstöck 2017). It may be that learning and practicing Russian had been too high a hurdle for Weise. It can also have been that, because of his social status, he could be assured of servants and employees who would translate for him. For these reasons, the records again and again show that Weise regularly landed in situations in which he was unable to establish direct access to his communication partners.

These few examples should suffice to illustrate the variety of records and to suggest their potential. There are other thematic areas on which Weise expressed himself, such as the history of the Lutheran congregation in Astrakhan, issues of trade and economy (also across national borders), handicraft practices, his experience with being a traveler on land and aboard a ship, and in general something that can be described as an interested look outside the box, for example to Persia and China. Often Weise combined his experience and knowledge gathering with the utility for other travelers. Such practical knowledge for the improvement of travel as such was highly interesting for the Halle Pietists and therefore collected deliberately (Schröder-Kahnt 2018: 23–25). For example, in the summer of 1739, Weise wrote that two years previously, during a boat trip to Kizlyar, in a tremendous storm, he had been spared “nausea” (seasickness) by eating pickled garlic from Persia (available in Astrakhan). He had taken a piece of this garlic in his mouth a few times during the day, and in the morning also a “Nägelein” (probably: clove), and thus was spared from complaints during the whole trip back and forth. Nevertheless, if he did feel nauseous, he had to go out on the ship’s deck. However, Weise was unsure whether this apparently useful cure on the Caspian Sea would be of use to India travelers because of the difference in route and the waves. It should be taken into consideration, he wrote, that on the way to Kizlyar one always steered close to the beach and thus the water was never deeper than four to seven fathom. This situation was different with ships sailing across the Caspian Sea to Gilan, which often would not find land or be able to anchor.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Weise recorded his experiences in a differentiated way and critically examined their applicability to other sea and travel conditions.

Finally, as with many of his traveling contemporaries, Weise in many passages regarded the sea voyage as a divine test. Interestingly, he combined his fear and hope for divine support with a precise description of the rhythm of the waves and the behaviour of various types of ships at sea as well as techniques for sealing the vessel. Thus, Weise combined transcendental experience and providential hope with factual documentation and a rational-technical interest. On August 11, 1737, he first described a storm and the waves: these were not high but came at short intervals, which is why the ship had been all

<sup>21</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3b, April 3, 1738.

<sup>22</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 3a, July 27, 1739.

the more “shaken”. Therefore, one could hardly sleep. Then he described the effect of the waves on the ships: large ships would move from the front to the rear, while smaller ships rolled from the right to the left side. The mutually reinforcing waves would undermine the ship, which in turn would be amplified by the third, fourth or fifth wave and lead to the swaying of the ship. This resulted in such a movement that everything “cracks”. This would last a few minutes, then there would be silence for half a minute, and the process would start all over again.<sup>23</sup>

In this way, Weise explained the dangerous situation triggered by wind and water in a rational and sober way. At the same time, with God’s help he hoped to overcome these physical processes. Once this had been achieved, practically useful records again followed, for instance about the techniques of sealing the ship (apparently as a result of damages caused by the storm), or about recovering semi-potable salt water by filtering it with sand. Thus, he prayed and sang against the storm with his wife on August 12, before reporting on August 13 that God had given in to praise after nearly eight days of storm, albeit the waves continued even further. Sailors then sailed to the reeds in a small boat and had brought shells and sand from the shallow water in order to lubricate the ship by adding talc (animal fat) to it. He went on to say that if they had brought more sand, he would have tried to filter seawater and, as he wrote, “improve it”. Finally, he added to this eventful day the impressive observation that the sun had been blackened by fog in the evening mentioned above.<sup>24</sup>

All in all, Weise’s observations and notes are presented in a sober, almost empirical, rational style. Not having any scientific or academic aspirations, Weise was interested in a variety of topics, almost all manifestations and peculiarities of nature and human life. The rational appropriation of the world and a divine belief in Providence form a unity — to him the gathering of knowledge and pietistic devoutness were inseparably connected. This view of God and the world was documented in his daily records and dutifully transmitted to the Orphanage in Halle. There, under the leadership of Gotthilf August Francke, it was decided what was to be done with this kind of knowledge; whether it was to be excerpted, archived, copied, printed or distributed as a handwritten manuscript.

### 3. RUSSIA — HALLE — INDIA: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT AND THE PIETIST VIEW OF THE WORLD

Weise was involved in a communication network between Russia, Halle, India and North America, which had existed for some time and in which knowledge was transferred and received (see: Rajan 2010: 102–104, discussing the case of Theophil Siegfried Bayer). From Russia, Weise corresponded with the Pietist missionaries at Tranquebar in south India both indirectly via Halle, and directly by postal mail through Persia. That is, he wrote letters to the missionaries in India and received letters from them, and he communicated with his fellow-believers in Halle, of which in some cases extracts were forwarded to his colleagues in India. For example, in November 1739, Gotthilf August Francke sent the missionaries in Tranquebar a letter from Weise as well as one of his diaries, so that they would “receive an uplifting acclamation from such distant lands [Russia]”.<sup>25</sup> The communication involved donations, personal and spiritual support, as well as the exchange of experiences and knowledge. Printed works circulated in the Pietist global network, in particular the periodically published “Hallesche Berichte” (Halle Reports)

<sup>23</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 2a, August 11, 1737.

<sup>24</sup> AFSu/H C 498: 2a, August 13, 1737.

<sup>25</sup> Brief von Gotthilf August Francke an Nikolaus Dal, Martin Bosse, Christoph Theodosius Walther, Gottfried Wilhelm Obuch, Johann Balthasar Kohlhoff und Johann Christian Wiedebrock, November 5, 1739 (ALMW/DHM 2/3a: 10).

in which representations of the missionaries in India on their activities and on the natural history and ethnology of the region had been published in Halle after editorial selection and editing (Rajan 2010; Liebau 2017; Liebau 2018).

Weise, too, received these “Halle Reports” as well as books that were sent to his stations in St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg and Astrakhan, whereby the distribution channels within Russia ran through St. Petersburg and Reval.<sup>26</sup> In retrospect of his time in Russia, he wrote that he had been “regaled” (*erquicket*) by the “edifying” mission reports sent to him in “distant” places.<sup>27</sup> He also lend them out to interested people in his own circles, as becomes clear from the diary entry in Astrakhan, dated March 12, 1739. On this day, he had been asked again by an officer for something good to read. Weise used the occasion to announce that some periodicals from his own library (even if the best of his books were still in Moscow), including the missionary reports from India, the “Hallesche Berichte” (or, as he wrote, “the Malabar New Continuations”), had been diligently going “in and out of some homes”,<sup>28</sup> thus, were borrowed often. The “Halle Reports” also reached widely scattered Pietist network nodes in non-central regions of the Russian Empire, beyond Reval and St. Petersburg. In this way, membership of the global network of the Kingdom of God was established; integration and identification were created and identities were strengthened. The “Halle Reports” served as a material vehicle for this aim. Weise knew and felt that he by divine Providence was part of a global Pietist network (Friedrich and Schunka 2017: 10).

The regular reading of the Halle Reports enabled Weise to compare his own experiences with the missionary successes and natural and ethnological insights described in the Reports. This led him to cultivate contact with India directly and he latched into the exchange. For example, in a detailed letter to the missionaries Gottfried Wilhelm Obuch, Johann Christian Wiedebrock and Johann Balthasar Kohlhoff in Tranquebar, Weise reported on his experiences in multi-religious Astrakhan. At the end of July 1739 he wrote that “various Christian nations, Russians, Evangelicals, Armenians, Grusinas, Catholic Armenians live in the city” as well as “various pagan nations, Tartars, Indians from the Great Mughal Empire, Persians, a few Bukharans and Kalmyks”. He went into detail about a local Indian he knew. Although the latter recognized the “nullity” of his “miserable idols”, imputed Weise, “the sinful life of Christians” prevented him from adopting Christianity. Then Weise let the Indian speak for himself: In what ways are you better than we are? The Indian accused the Christians of leading the Indians astray as they learned all sorts of deception from the Christians. Weise reproached the Indian for a “disgusting” idolatry at a fishing festival, whereupon the latter countered that it had been comedians performing there — and the Christians had also those who dance on ropes, stab nails and knives through their hands and feet, place heavy anvils on their bodies and have iron smashed on them. The Indian asked Weise: What do you want to blame us for? When Weise invited him to visit him more often, the Indian replied that he was unable to do so now, but if he had learned German, he would be more on Weise’s neck than the latter would appreciate. In other words, he would only enter into an exchange and a dispute with Weise if he was sufficiently sure of the language of the Lutheran German. Thus, the Indian in Astrakhan was willing to engage in interreligious dialogue with the means practiced by the Halle missionaries themselves. Weise, on the other hand, visited the religious “chapel” of the Indians in Astrakhan, presumably a shrine, located at a local inn, in which there was a “lofty throne”, as Weise wrote. His wife was also allowed to enter. During this visit, Weise

<sup>26</sup> This can be concluded from the distribution lists of the Halle Reports (AFSt/M 3L14, 17) and from Weise’s remarks (AFSt/H C 498: 3b, January 1, 1739 and May 16, 1739; Nachlass A. H. Francke 28/40: 39, July 15, 1739).

<sup>27</sup> ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29 (Halle, January 7, 1743).

<sup>28</sup> AFSt/H C 498: 3b, March 12, 1739.

mentioned that God was in heaven — the Brahmin approved of this and also pointed to heaven. But this way of claiming equality obviously posed a problem to Weise as he, in conclusion, expressed hope that the great God in heaven would have mercy on everything still held under the spell of darkness.<sup>29</sup>

In this report another aspect of knowledge production comes to the fore. Weise reported that the Indian, after buying coconuts for him (Weise even mentioned the market price: “30 kopeks or 10 g. a piece”) told him the story of the “Alus tree”. This could refer to the Oles tree, the species of palm from which the leaves of the palm leaf manuscripts were made. The way the Indian told the story was almost identical to the way it had been presented in the missionaries’s reports (“Nachrichten”). Knowledge collected and transmitted in culturally and religiously different and geographically remote locations was thus checked and mirrored in the network of correspondence.

Thus, in his sober and rational description of the diversity of the world in matters of faith, Weise maintained his superior self-perception as a Lutheran Christian (see: Liebau 2008: 73–84; Renner 2018: 90–92). This is also clear in ambivalent passages, in which he expressed emphatic compassion, but also kept his civilizational distance. And at one point (when he was back in Halle) he also expressed civilizing devaluation towards the Kalmyks: “God have mercy on this spiritually and physically poor nation”.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, Weise’s recordings differ from the recordings of most Pietist preachers in North America. Their descriptions, by contrast, were much more influenced by religious images and language patterns, as Markus Berger and Mark Häberlein have recently shown (Berger and Häberlein 2019). On the other hand, Weise’s descriptions are very similar to those of the India missionaries. In India, as in the case of Weise in Russia, the daily contact zones with people who were culturally different provided spaces of social and religious interaction, spaces of learning and of gathering knowledge (Liebau 2018).

This leads us to another aspect of the records: the social status of missionaries and Lutheran preachers abroad. Due to his spiritual status in Russia, Weise, like the missionaries in India, held a socially superior position. This seems to be a recurring theme in his own remarks about his life in Russia. This aspect also becomes clear during his trips. Weise traveled together with persons of elevated social or military positions. He had servants and subordinates, whom he mentioned several times. For example, at the beginning of a trip to Kizlyar in May 1739 Weise reported that he was accompanied by a Tartar (“my Tartar”) as a local guide and an old soldier as a servant.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, there are indications that Weise, like Scharschmid (Scharschmid 2019), came into contact with young people in unfree relationships or with young slaves. He reported on March 2, 1737, that a baptized Kalmyk girl, of about ten or eleven years old, was “offered” to him by an officer (*offerirte to him by an officer*), who had been ordered to the front.<sup>32</sup> On March 16, the major’s wife brought the girl to Weise, who noted that she had already completely forgotten her own language but could understand a bit of German and was able to speak the Lord’s Prayer. Despite her baptism she seems to have been unfree (see: Mallinckrodt 2016: 111f., 122, 130f.). This girl was taught by him and seems to have lived in his household. Weise wrote that he — with her — first learned how to teach young children the alphabet. He set himself the goal of piously educating her in a Pietist spirit, a task that apparently spurred him on as something pleasing to God.<sup>33</sup> After all, he seems to have pursued this goal lastingly. In his brief account of his journeys in Russia written after his homecoming

<sup>29</sup> AFSt/H C 498: 3a, July 27, 1739.

<sup>30</sup> “Bericht über seine Reise nach Sibirien, Astrachan und in die Ukraine und seinen Aufenthalt in Rußland von 1730 bis 1741 [1742]” (ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29, January 7, 1743).

<sup>31</sup> AFSt/H C 498: 3 (May 24, 1739).

<sup>32</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 36.

<sup>33</sup> Nachlass A. H. Francke: 28/40: 36.

in January 1743, in a letter to missionaries in Tranquebar, he remarked: “I brought a girl of 12 to 14 years from Astrakhan with me”.<sup>34</sup> Finally Weise had brought the girl to Halle. Gotthilf August Francke confirmed this a few days later.<sup>35</sup>

More details about the girl’s circumstances in Astrakhan, her future life in Halle, or her legal status are unknown as far as can be seen so far. How Weise and the officials at the orphanage defined the girl’s status, whether he or they tried to liberate her from her unfree status, also remains open. We may assume that Weise saw an opportunity to realize an exemplary educational project, guided by divine Providence, the basic self-image of Halle Pietists (Koch 2015). Whether he succeeded, remains in the dark. Perhaps he also wished to position himself in the history of the Halle Orphanage and its global activities, following the example of his predecessor Justus Samuel Scharschmid who in 1703 had sent the Kalmyk boy “Gerson”, born in Astrakhan, from Moscow to the Halle Orphanage. Scharschmid had bought this boy from a Muscovite for 10 rubles (c. 12–13 Reichstaler) to have him educated in Halle and baptized a Christian. The boy should not go to university but learn a craft, which in Russia would be more valuable than a position in science, as a note on Gerson by the Halle Orphanage commented. He should return to Russia to live a self-determined life and be active for the Pietist ideas (Jacobi and Müller-Bahlke 1998: 277f.).<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. AN INVISIBLE AGENT IN THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF PIETISM

Georg Friedrich Weise traveled parallel to the Second Kamchatka Expedition<sup>37</sup> through Russia and gathered knowledge in Russia. He did not follow any scientific systematics and pursued no academic aims. Nevertheless, he was characterized by a comprehensive curiosity about everything he encountered. His daily practices were based on a thorough education in Halle, the same training the missionaries for India had experienced. This education can be described as a “school for observing the world” which extended the tradition of early modern travel accounts (see: Siebers 2002). Individual experiential knowledge and corroborating credibility through eyewitness accounts was a central component of this education (Friedrich and Schunka 2017: 11f.). On this basis, Weise recorded in Russia what he literally encountered along the way. This knowledge acquisition was predominantly rational, descriptive and, in modern terms, interdisciplinary. However, as far as we know now, Weise did not begin to analyze and interpret the material he had collected (on the missionaries in India; see: Liebau 2008: 77).

Weise’s recordings, unlike those of the missionaries in India, have, as far as we know at the moment, never been published. This is one of the reasons why his work remained invisible to contemporaries outside the Pietist community. Another reason for his relative obscurity was that Weise’s work could not be used to raise donations, because there was no organized “pagan mission” in Russia such as in India. Therefore, Halle Pietism never developed a missionary narrative for Russia as it did for India. Consideration for the political sensitivities in Russia may also have played a role. Nevertheless, Weise’s handwritten knowledge about Russia was clearly relevant to the global network of Pietism. In 1743, the director of the Francke Foundations, Gotthilf August Francke, informed the missionaries in India that an academic study of Russia and Tartary had been sent to them, so that they could update their knowledge of the region.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29.

<sup>35</sup> AFSSt/M 3 M 2: 4 (15.01.1743).

<sup>36</sup> Gerson was admitted to the orphanage in September 1703. Upon his admission, he only spoke a few words of German. However, he became seriously ill and died in April 1706, shortly before being baptized. According to the orphanage management, he had behaved quietly and obediently (Jacobi and Müller-Bahlke 1998: 46f.).

<sup>37</sup> Weise encountered members of this expedition in Ekaterinburg (Winter 1953: 326).

<sup>38</sup> “Bericht über das Jahr 1742 an die Missionare in Tranquebar und Madras” (AFSt/M 3 M 2: 4a: January 15, 1743): “Hasens Sciagraphiam tractationis de Imperii Russico et Tataria universa”. The work in question was: Johann Matthias Haas, *Tabula synoptica pro mappa Russiae atque Tatariae universae praecipue majoris [...]*. Norimbergae 1738.

At the same time, Francke asked Weise to report to India about Russia. In January 1743, Weise, back in Halle, complied with this request by sending a short report on his travels in Russia between 1730 and 1742.<sup>39</sup>

In this way, academic scholarship and Pietist experience were joined. In the future, it will be a task to compare the observations gathered by Weise with the state of learned knowledge of the era (Dahlmann 2006; Schneider 2013: 129–145) — especially with regard to his proto-ethnographic descriptions (for more information, see Vermeulen 2015; furthermore Dharampal-Frick 2010, Posselt 1997). The variety and detailedness of Weise’s recordings could only have been hinted at here. This leads to the open research question: What kind of knowledge about Russia was collected in the Halle Orphanage? A history of the knowledge Pietists gathered in and about Russia remains to be written. Such a study would necessarily have to be positioned in a globalized context (see: Mulsow 2018).

This leads us back to the reasons why Weise has remained almost invisible. He embodied a type of theologically educated lay person with an interest in natural history and ethnology who, however, acted without any recognizable methodology in these fields. Likewise, he had no academic ambitions and did not produce scholarly or popular scientific publications. Therefore, he cannot be regarded a natural historian or physico-theologian (Trepp 2009). Likewise, he was not part of the so-called grassroots scholarship (Dietz 2010) as this movement, even without academic ambitions, still called for an “adequate methodology” (Mariss 2015: 82) or a “comprehensive mastery” of natural history practices (Ruhland 2018: 337). Neither can a “repeated, sensual experience in the sense of an attentive consideration”, which was the basis of physico-theological work (Trepp 2009: 332), be detected in Weise’s writings. Nevertheless, Weise was integrated into a system that corresponded to the functional structure of grassroots scholarship: “local knowledge in the form of specimens, data, and descriptions was transferred from below to above or, literally, from the grass roots to the centers, where the material was integrated into larger collections and brought together in more comprehensive publications” (Dietz 2010: 34). This corresponded to the Pietist communication structure in which global knowledge was collected. Actors such as Weise acted in a gray area that almost completely escaped visibility beyond the close-knit in-group. These actors — invisible agents of knowledge gathering — have hardly been explored thus far. Nevertheless, they played an important role in generating knowledge during the eighteenth century. Using the example of Weise in Russia, we can point to a perspective on the history of knowledge that, on the whole, is worthy of recognition.

In this perspective, Weise’s travels in Russia can be interpreted as expeditions. Of course, they were not strategically and well-prepared expeditions with a research agenda, such as were undertaken by members of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Yet for Weise himself, they were exploring trips into uncharted territory, always occasions to discover something new to be recorded and communicated. In this respect, they are a veritable part of the history of eighteenth-century knowledge production.

## CONCLUSION

Georg Friedrich Weise was a Pietist ambassador and clergyman in Russia as well as an observer, who recorded encounters and events. He was not a main protagonist of global Pietism and certainly not an explorer with a scientific agenda. The case of Weise is an example of how theologians trained in Halle oriented themselves in the world, perceived and recorded it. The documents from Weise’s pen provide

<sup>39</sup> ALMW/DHM 4/6b: 29 (January 7, 1743).



insights into the ways in which Pietist actors moved in *contact zones* within Russia, full of tensions between faith and curiosity, and characterized by cultural and religious diversity. Weise's descriptions of what he observed and experienced depict a subjective view of the world and thereby construct a reality. This view was determined by his Pietist education in Halle, which comprised intense devoutness, a religious sense of superiority combined with a relatively high social status, including the handling of servants and non-free people, a strong interest in ethnography, other people and natural history as well as practices of documenting techniques such as the keeping of a diary. An analysis comparing Weise's recordings — and those of other Halle Pietists traveling to and in Russia — with the available scholarly knowledge about Russia in the same era will provide insights into the process of appropriating the world in global Pietism and the self-location of its actors therein. Such a view makes it possible to discern hidden currents in the history of knowledge whose impact remains to be discussed.

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## **ГЕОРГ ФРИДРИХ ВАЙСЕ — НЕВИДИМЫЙ АГЕНТ ПИЕТИЗМА В РОССИИ: ЕГО ПУТЕШЕСТВИЯ И РУКОПИСНЫЕ ЗАМЕТКИ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОЙ СЕТИ ПИЕТИСТОВ (1730–1743)**

**АННОТАЦИЯ.** На протяжении XVIII в. пиетисты Галле накапливали знания со всего мира, чтобы сделать его лучшим местом для содействия распространению благочестия, образования и науки. Одним из важнейших регионов, в которых они работали, была Российская империя, где три поколения пиетистов из Галле вели свою деятельность между 1690-ми и 1740-ми годами. Статья посвящена Георгу Фридриху Вайсе (1696–1781), которому, несмотря на то что он занимал ряд постов в России между 1730 и 1742 г., достаточно мало внимания уделено в литературе. Очертив жизненный путь Вайсе, статья анализирует способы, которыми он добывал знания в России и переправлял их в Галле, уделяя особое внимание его пребыванию в Астрахани. Основой для этого анализа служат рукописные заметки Вайсе, хранящиеся в архивах Социальных учреждений Франке и в Берлинской государственной библиотеке. Также обобщаются области, в которых Вайсе делал свои наблюдения, и рассматривается его социальная позиция. Наконец, будет сделана попытка определить место Вайсе и его взглядов на Бога и мир в глобальной сети пиетистов Галле. В заключение Вайсе будет представлен как невидимый агент накопления знаний в XVIII в. и представитель группы деятелей, которым до сих пор уделялось недостаточно внимания в исторических исследованиях.

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** приют для сирот в Галле, Астрахань, Каспийское море, Индия, накопление знаний, контактные зоны, глобальные сети, протозтнография

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