

# The “Franck Letter Collection”: Documents of a Luxembourg Migration Experience

A socio-historical case study of an individual migration trajectory inside a European textile route

This paper was first published in *AEMI Journal*, Volume 3, 2005.

## Overture

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Luxembourg rural town of Wiltz was dominated by the professional communities of the tanners and the weavers to which the Franck family had belonged for generations<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the eighteen-eighties, two young men of the Franck family as well as a member of the Brück family left their small hometown in the Ardennes to emigrate to Northern Europe. Mathgen Franck ended his migration itinerary in the Finnish town of Åbo/Turku, where he was to become a leading manager of a textile plant; meanwhile Constant Brück had probably emigrated to Sweden<sup>2</sup>.

Mathgen’s cousin Jean-Pierre Franck finished his European migration trajectory in Sweden, where he succeeded in building up a successful career as a director in the textile industry<sup>3</sup>. His professional tour led him first to the Belgium textile centre of Verviers, from where it continued to the West German town of Hückeswagen near Cologne. From 1890 on, Jean-Pierre Franck settled down in Sweden, where he was going to undertake his entrepreneurial challenge<sup>4</sup>. Some documents of the “Franck Archives” notify that Jean-Pierre Franck co-directed the “Erikson & Franck Klädesfabrik” in Norrköping and that later on he became the “direktör” of the “Borås Yllefabriksaktiebolag”<sup>5</sup>.

Beyond the professional trajectory of Jean-Pierre Franck, the utilized documents reveal quite a few interesting details about the private life of Jean-Pierre Franck and his family in Sweden. In the eighteen-nineties Jean-Pierre - who continued to call himself by his Luxembourgish surname “Jemmy” - married Octavie Ziegelé. Octavie and Jean-Pierre had two children, Vivi and Wilhelm<sup>6</sup>.

Like his father, Wilhelm decided to make a professional career in the textile industry<sup>7</sup>. Wilhelm married Märta Magnusson in 1935. Wilhelm and Märtha had three children, Björn, Margareta and Elisabeth-Monica<sup>8</sup>. Wilhelm Franck’s older sister Vivi, the daughter of Jemmy Franck and Octavie Ziegelé, took in marriage Bengt Simmingsköld, who died prematurely in 1924<sup>9</sup>. Vivi and her son, Bo Simmingsköld later lived in Växjö, where Bo became the director of the “Glasforskningsinstitutet”<sup>10</sup>.

Our present case study mainly describes and analyses the biographic pathway of Jean-Pierre Franck. Especially based upon a private collection of some 30 documents and of 30 letters which were sent by Jean-Pierre Franck and his family to their relatives in Wiltz in the Luxembourg Ardennes, our contribution will undertake to document and to analyse how the study of private correspondence can contribute to our understanding of individual migration and integration processes on the European scene at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the

20<sup>th</sup> century. Our paper will also show letter writing as a key tool of migration strategies, especially during the European socio-political and economic crisis of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides this aspect, it will attempt to raise some methodological issues about the interpretation of private letters and the social construction of the emigrant experience.

Formally our article is organized in three parts:

1. The first part is centred on the description and analysis of the documents which we used for our socio-historical project.
2. The second part focuses on the main topics of Jemmy Franck letters, which partly reveal his migration trajectory as well as his biographic pathway.
3. The third part will be more of an analytical one. It will mainly try to evaluate the present micro-historical research.

### **1. The "Franck Letter Collection": a descriptive, quantitative and analytical statement**

Our "Franck Archives" are based upon several archival unities, such as the documents of the "City archives of Borås" which were collected by our AEMI colleague Annikki Nikula-Benito or the private documents collected by Mrs Margareta Thorin, the granddaughter of Jean-Pierre Franck. But - as we mentioned earlier - the main unity of documents which we utilised for our research is constituted by some 60 documents which are actually the property of the Luxembourg Schiltges family. Some 30 documents out of 60 are letters which were sent by Jean-Pierre Franck and his descendants to his relatives in Luxembourg. They represent the analytical centre of the present case study. In our "Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines" in Luxembourg we have classified these letters under the following title: "The Franck Letter Collection" (FLC).

a) The letters count a total of 80 pages and are dated from 1887 to 1993. Handwriting is used in 29 letters out of 30, and 8 letters out of 24 signed by Jemmy Franck are written in German characters called "Sütterlin-Schrift". In the remaining letters, the alphabetic characters of the standard European handwriting are used. So, to summarize and characterize the quantitatively modest "Franck Letter Collection" on a purely archival level, we have to underline some of its particularities. Besides four letters written in English and signed by Jemmy Franck or by Bo Simmingsköld - the grandson of Jean-Pierre Franck - the remaining documents and letters of the "Franck Archives" are written in German and switch occasionally to French or to Luxembourgish.

Apart from this linguistic aspect, a few other characteristics of the "Franck Letter Collection" should be noted. Basically written in quite an awkward German style, strongly influenced by the Luxembourg idiom, including Luxembourgish as well as French sentences, practising the "Sütterlin" handwriting and the European standardized handwriting, showing an appreciable facility to use the English language, especially Jean-Pierre Franck's letters represent an interesting and representative example of the cultural and linguistic situation of a Luxembourger belonging to the lower middle class whose transnational acculturation process took part during the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

b) From the chronological point of view, the 30 letters can be grouped into five periods:

Between 1887 and 1890, Jean-Pierre Franck sent at least 8 letters home. His first letter was written in the Belgian town of Verviers and the 4 following letters were sent from the German textile centre of Hückeswagen near Cologne. The last three messages of this first letter group were posted by Jemmy from the Swedish town of Norrköping.

Some 15 years later - in 1906 - , Jemmy sent 3 more letters from Norrköping to his relatives in Luxembourg.

From 1915 to 1926, 13 letters were sent from Borås to the Ardennes town of Wiltz. During this third epistolary period, 11 letters were signed by Jemmy and two messages were written by his son Wilhelm.

In 1931 and in 1932 the Luxembourg relatives of 70-year-old Jean-Pierre Franck received two letters: the first one from Göteborg and the last one from Borås.

The “Franck Letter Collection” counts only four epistolary documents posterior to the 1930s. The messages - dating from 1944 to the beginning of the 1990s - were written by Bo Simmingsköld, the grandson of Jemmy Franck.

Consequently, the “Franck Letter Collection” is extending over a chronological segment, which covers a major part of the first and the whole of the second industrial revolution. We can say that the “Franck Letter Collection” constitutes a modest example of trans-border family correspondence and relationship of the outgoing 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and lasts a century.

c) As far as the social field of the correspondence is concerned, Jean-Pierre Franck as well as his son Wilhelm and his grandson Bo Simmingsköld addressed their letters to their closest Luxembourg relatives. 6 out of 24 letters were sent by Jemmy to his parents and 7 to his brothers. The other messages were addressed by Jemmy to his closest Luxembourg relatives. They are referred to as “Meine Lieben”, as “Liebe Angehörige”, as “Liebste Leonie”, “Liebe Schwester und Schwager” or as “Lieber Alphonse” and so on. On the other hand, we don’t have any letters sent to the Francks in Sweden by the Luxembourg relatives. In other words, the “Franck Letter Collection” constitutes a one way correspondence which represents just one part of an inter-family trans-border relationship.

d) Four messages were sent by Jemmy and by his son Wilhelm to Alphonse Schiltges, who was a nephew of the former and a cousin of the latter. Alphonse Schiltges, who was to become mayor of his home town and a member of the Luxembourg Parliament, succeeded in conserving the family archives throughout the second world war period, which was particularly traumatic for the inhabitants of the Luxembourg Ardennes. At present the family archives of the Schiltges apparently represent one of the rare private collections of migration letters of the Luxembourg Ardennes which have survived the Nazi occupation. They belong to Alphonse Schiltges’s daughters Marie-Madeleine, Béatrice and Odile Schiltges, who have kept in touch with the Swedish descendants and relatives of Jean-Pierre Franck.

These archival statements lead us to the following socio-cultural conclusion: conserving family archives as well as maintaining family relations through epistolary correspondence at times of political hardship such as the two world wars, should be interpreted as the persistence of a model of family culture as well as a paradigm of inter-family relationship which are typical of European middle class families. In other word, the “Franck Letter Collection” represents a modest example of cultural practices cultivated by the European middle class and lower middle class involved in migration processes before the generalized use of international phone calls on a continental level.

e) With the exception of the first five letters which Jemmy wrote from the Walloon town of Verviers and from the Rhineland textile city of Hückeswagen, Jean-Pierre Franck sent the other epistolary documents from Sweden; 12 of these letters were posted from Borås, 6 from Norrköping and one from Göteborg. In other words, Jemmy Franck’s letters originate mainly from two European regions. The first geographic unity could be defined as a trans-border region close to the Luxembourgish Ardennes and including the Walloon industrial region of Liège-Verviers as well as the dynamic economic hub of the German Rhineland where the textile industry played an outstanding economic part, during the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second geographic unity centres round an axis of Norrköping - Borås: that is Swedish hubs of the Scandinavian textile industry.

To conclude our analysis of the descriptive, quantitative significance of the “Franck Letter Collection” we have to underline the modest dimension of our historic material. Its unique particularity consists in contributing substantially to a study of an individual migration experience seized in the economic context of the European textile industry and in the geographical context of the Luxembourg Ardennes, the Walloon-Rhineland trans-border region and Sweden at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This turns it into a very precious archival source. In other words, the “Franck Letter Collection” can be used especially for a social historic case study focusing on the biographic pathway of a Luxembourg-born weaver technician with a multilingual education - Jemmy Franck - who belongs to the pre-world-war-two middle class and whose migratory destiny is closely related to an inner European textile industry route.

## **2. The main biographic topics of Jemmy Franck’s Migration Letters**

Despite the modest quantitative dimensions of our archival source, I’ll propose to undertake a partial reconstruction of Jean-Pierre Franck’s migration experience by describing the main topics of his letters and by referring to some documents of the City Archives of Borås. Jemmy Franck’s letters reveal quite a few interesting themes which could be grouped under the following headings:

- private themes including personal as well as family related remarks ;
- professional and financial information ;
- statements and reflections about his migration experience as well as about his professional journeys and voyages.

The latter topic represents a significant part in Jemmy’s letters. As we noted in the previous section of our paper, the indication of the respective residences - Verviers, Hückeswagen, Norrköping, Borås - in all the messages written by Jean-Pierre Franck allows us to get quite a reliable impression of his migration experience. Beyond these indications

Jemmy Franck's letters quite often provide a detailed description of his migration experience and his professional journeys and voyages throughout Europe.

We are well informed about his migration route which led him to Sweden. In a letter written on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1889 in Hückeswagen, Jean-Pierre Franck tells his family about his decision to quit his well-paid job in the Rhineland to try his professional luck as a weaver engineer in Norrköping<sup>11</sup>. In an undated message sent from Norrköping - which might have been written during the period of November 1889 and February 1890 - Jean-Pierre relates his migration trip from Hückeswagen through Northern Germany and Denmark to Copenhagen and then to Malmö<sup>12</sup> :

*„Von Kopenhagen nahm ich wieder das Schiff bis Malmö, diese Reise dauerte c. 2 Stunden & hatten wir guten Wind so daß das Schiff ruhig ging & es eine wahre Freude war. Dem Schiff folgten immer so ein dutzend Vögel etwas größer wie eine Taube, welche so über die Wellen flogen. In Malmö angekommen wurde Gepäck verzollt & ich nahm eine Droschke zum Bahnhof (...) hier nahm ich direct billets bis Norrköping.“*

(translation) *“From Copenhagen I again took the boat to Malmö, the journey lasted about 2 hours and the wind was good, so that the ship moved on smoothly and I really enjoyed it. The ship was being followed by a dozen or so birds which were a little bit taller than pigeons and flew just above the waves. In Malmö I cleared my luggage through customs and took a hackney coach to the railway station where I bought tickets to Norrköpping.”*

From Malmö, he took the night train to Norrköping :

*„ nun wurde ausgestiegen & am Bahnhof gegessen - da standen um einen großen Tisch das hier benannt Smöerkabader d.h. alle möglichen Sorten Fleisch, Käse, campot, Brod & Kartoffeln nun nahm sich jeder einen Teller & nahm von was & so viel er wollte & aß, ich machte natürlich wie die Andern, nahm 1/2 Flasche guter Wein hierzu & bezahlte 5 Kronen, dann wurde wieder eingestiegen & langten genau 3 Uhr Morgens hier an. Ich wurde am Bahnhof sehr schön empfangen & wurde ich zu dem größten hiesigen Hotel gebracht, wo ein champagner (da schon) breit stand - Um 5 Uhr ging ich schlafen & schlief bis Mittag. Nach dem dîner holte man mich ab & ging zur Fabrik - ich glaube ich muß 2 Monate hier sein ehe ich mich drin zurückfinde so groß sie ist.“*

(translation) *“now we got off and had a meal at the station – there was a large table loaded with what they call here Smöerkabader, that is to say all sorts of meat, cheese, compote, bread and potatoes. Everybody took a plate and helped himself with what he liked and with as much as he liked and started to eat. I did of course the same, added half a bottle of good wine and paid 5 crowns. Then we got on the train again and arrived here at exactly 3 o'clock in the morning. I was very warmly welcomed at the station and brought to the biggest hotel of the place, where a glass of champagne was already waiting for me – At 5 o'clock I went to bed and slept till noon. After lunch I was fetched from the hotel and brought to the plant – I think I will need two months here before I'll find my way through, because it is so big.”*

Despite the rapidity of his migration journey, Jemmy noted down his views and his impressions about Denmark and Southern Sweden, insisting that his new homeland seems to be far wealthier and more urbanized than the Danish regions he has crossed before :

*„Auf meiner ganzen Reise habe nicht viel besonderes gesehen, so daß ich zum Endresultat die ganze Welt auf einer Seite wie auf der anderen als ganz egal betrachten muß. Ganz Dänemark, wenigstens so viel wie ich davon zu sehen bekam ist ohne Berge (tunels habe ab Hanover keine gesehen) & viele Tannenwälder auch wenig bevölkert dann mal alle 2 Stunden bekam ich mal so ein Bauernnest mit Strohdächern 1 Stock hoch zu sehen. In Schweden dagegen ist es besser, viele Städte habe ich passirt & sehen diese eben auch reicher aus.“*

(translation) *„During the whole journey, I didn't see anything special, so that as a final result, I must consider the whole world as being exactly the same, on this side as well as on the other. Denmark, at least what I could see of it, has no mountains (since Hannover, I didn't see any tunnel) ; there are many fir forests and the country is poorly inhabited, only every two hours or so did I see a village of peasants, with thatched cottages about one storey high. In Sweden, on the contrary, the situation seems to be better, I came through many towns, which actually looked richer.“*

In the following two letters written in Norrköping during the first half of 1890, Jean-Pierre Franck continued to relate his new personal experiences by exposing the sunny side of his social and professional life in Sweden, which he already calls his “*neue Heimat*”, a formula which could be translated by “*new fatherland*”:

*„Mir gefällt es ausgezeichnet hier, die gestrige Nacht haben wir auf dem Meere zugebracht in einem Dampfschiff wo wir nach Bråvikshälsan fuhren & einen Ball hatten - herrlich sag ich Ihnen. Heute abend bin ich bei dem Vice Consul der Niederlande eingeladen, das geht immer großartig hier & kommt mir, weil ein so großartiges Leben nicht gewohnt bin, herrlich vor. Wenn man viel verdient muß man viel verzehren, werde jedoch nach meinen jetzigen Berechnungen jährlich 3000 frs. sparen können & gebe Ihnen die Versicherung daß ich ein gemachter Mann bin. Sie können sich keinen Begriff machen wie das Leben hier angenehm ist<sup>13</sup>.“*

(translation) *“I like being here very much, we spent last night on the sea, on a steamship that brought us to Bråvikshälsan where we attended a ball – I tell you it was marvellous. Tonight I am invited by the vice-consul of the Netherlands, everything is always gorgeous here and for me, who am not used to a gorgeous life, it seems fantastic. If you earn much money, you have to spend a lot, but according to my present calculations, I shall be able to put aside 3000 francs a year and I assure you that I am a really successful man. You cannot nearly imagine how pleasant life is here.”*

Jemmy also noted in the following message<sup>14</sup> :

*„Ich bestätige Ihnen meine Postkarte von Katherineholm wohin ich eingeladen war zu einer Lustparthie auf dem Meere; wir sind die ganze Nacht auf dem Meere gewesen ach wie schön wie reizend wie prächtig wie nett !! Gestern war ich eingeladen bei dem Consul Swartling zu seiner silbernen Hochzeit, wo Champagner & cherry wie Wasser floß; (...) - Alles ich auch natürlich im Schnepfel & Cylinder & sonst alles weiß - Handschuhe, Schlips etz & die dann alle in weiß Seide, Atlas & decolletirt wie am Hofe.“*

(translation) *“I confirm the postcard I sent from Katherineholm where I had been invited to a party on the sea ; we stayed out on the sea for the whole night, oh how beautiful, how ravishing, how wonderful, how nice !! Yesterday I was invited by Consul Swartling to the*

*celebration of his silver wedding, and champagne and cherry flowed like water. – Everybody was wearing a dinner jacket and a top hat and then everything white – gloves, bow tie etc., and the ladies in white silk, atlas and low cut dresses like at Court.”*

And Jemmy continued :

*„Ich kann mich schon sehr gut in diesem Prunck schicken, denn das ist kein preußischer Wind, nein wir haben auch Geld.“*

(translation) *“I am already behaving very well in this splendour, because it is no fake, no, we do have the money.”*

A reading of these letters as well as of the remaining letters written by Jemmy Franck between 1906 and 1932 gives the observer the impression that Jemmy Franck is to stay in Sweden definitively from 1890 to his death, where he succeeds in building up a successful professional career as a technician and later on as a director of textile plants. Nevertheless the lack of letters for the period from 1890 to 1906 forces us to a certain analytic caution concerning the biographic pathway of Jemmy Franck. Indeed, the absence of epistolary documents for about 15 consecutive years should not be interpreted as a sign of Jean-Pierre Franck’s unproblematic socio-professional adaptation in Sweden.

Looking at the short biography of the “direktören” Jean-Pierre Franck which was published after his death in December 1936 as a part of an obituary in the “Borås Tidning”<sup>15</sup>, we note that the first two decades of Jemmy Franck’s professional and social life can be defined as an eventful and probably quite troubled period of building up his career. Jemmy left Sweden in 1898 and he worked for the next two years as a director for “Hörsholms Yllefabrik” in Denmark. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jemmy came back to Sweden, where he continued his professional career as a leading manager of “Stockholms Yllefabriks Aktiebolag” before he founded the “Erikson & Franck Klädesfabrik” in Norrköping with an associate in 1905.

The obituary seems to imply that Jemmy backed out from the company two years later. The reasons of the early departure are quite unknown, because the obituary text of the “Borås Tidning” of 14<sup>th</sup> December 1936<sup>16</sup> noted that the recently founded company

*“vilken han dock överlät på sin kompanjon år 1907.”*

Nevertheless, the three letters sent by Jean-Pierre Franck from Norrköping between 15<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> October 1906 to his brother living in Wiltz provide a few hints of some financial transactions and of possible financial problems which Jean-Pierre Franck might have had to face at this time. It seems that Jemmy Franck expected a financial transaction from Luxembourg and begged his brother in a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1906 that their mother should not be told<sup>17</sup>. Jemmy insisted that

*“dieses ist ein reines Unglück, was mir passirt ist, es wird mich (...) viel Geld kosten, doch hoffe einen Theil zu retten.“*

(translation) *“this is a real calamity I am enduring now, it will cost me a lot of money, but I hope to be able to save part of it.”*

In the following letter of 8<sup>th</sup> October, Jemmy again implored his brother <sup>18</sup>

*“dass meine Mutter nur nichts hiervon hört sonst glaubt sie, daß ich ein armer Mann bin, werde Sie jedoch in Kürze von dem Gegentheil überzeugen.“*

(translation) *“be careful not to let my mother know about it, otherwise she will think that I am a poor man, but I will shortly convince you of the contrary.”*

And Jemmy repeated the same request in the following letter<sup>19</sup> which he sent eleven days later, but this time he added at the end of his short letter that

*“Ich bin im Gange Aktien Gesellschaft zu bilden.“*

(translation) *“I am presently building up a joint-stock company.”*

However confusing or revealing these epistolary hints might be, it seems that their negative influence on Jemmy Franck’s professional trajectory were probably quite limited. Jemmy continued his professional trajectory as a director at “Ljungafors Klädesfabriks Aktiebolag” in Svenljunga, before he became a director of the “Borås Yllefabriks Aktiebolag” from 1913 until his professional retirement in 1926<sup>20</sup>.

Eleven letters written by Jemmy marked the period when he directed the textile plant of Borås. Covering some ten years - the first letter is dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 1915; the last one was sent to Luxembourg on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1926 - this group of messages probably testifies to the climax of Jean-Pierre Franck’s professional career. Jemmy Franck – whose strong point was obviously not modesty - was generally pleased during this period to show off his professional success and to parade as a “man with savoir-faire”. In his letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> August 1920 which he sent from Borås to his brother who kept a butchery in the Luxembourg Ardennes, he wrote<sup>21</sup>:

*“ich reise jährlich c. 3 Monate und habe 800 Arbeiter und du hast 3 oder 4.“*

(translation) *“I travel around for about three months a year and I have 800 men working for me and you have 3 or 4.”*

Indeed, the professional career of the Luxembourger Jemmy Franck represents a perfect example of a personal migration success. Jemmy’s adaptation process in his new “fatherland Sweden” permits his socio-cultural acceptance by the Swedish industrial notabilities, which is truly remarkable for a descendant of a modest handicraft family of the Luxembourg Ardennes. Living the social life of the Swedish upper-middle class, cultivating its ideological and cultural values, Jean-Pierre Franck relates the events of a successful Luxembourgish emigration in his messages<sup>22</sup>.

On a purely familial level, Jemmy Franck’s letters relate the main events which have determined the inter-generational trajectory of family life to the Luxembourgish relatives. Of course, Jemmy is pleased to announce the career of his son Wilhelm, who studied weaver engineering in the German textile hub of Aachen<sup>23</sup>, before spending his professional life at “Kilsunds Aktiebolag”. Jemmy notes his professional travels throughout Europe as well as those of his son with great personal satisfaction<sup>24</sup>. Jemmy also occasionally visits his mother



country. On the other hand, he promises his nephew - young Alphonse Schiltges - to invite him to Sweden as his letter of 7<sup>th</sup> June 1920 shows<sup>25</sup>:

*My dear Alphonse !*

*I have only received your letter and postcard but could not answer you earlier because I have been so little at home lately.*

*Your dear mother is quite right to be angry with me because I did not go to see her during my last journey to Luxemburg, but tell her that I had so little time! I had so long a journey before me that I could not spare any time for her, but the next time I am going to your country again (I think it won't last so long) I shall not fail to see her and your father!*

*I see you should like to come and see us here in Sweden this year, but I think it would be better to wait a little longer, everything is so uneasy now, and just travelling in these times very difficult. Your aunt Octavie is not at home during the summer months, she and Wilhelm are going to Warberg, a watering place here in Sweden in order to recover her health, and as to me, it is impossible to know whether I am here or in Russia or at another place in the wide world. That fact alone explains you how difficult and uncertain it would be for you to come here this year, but I hope these funny times are going over soon, and then, we should be very happy to see you here and show you our dear Sweden "a meng Hunger".*

*Your uncle Jemmy*

*Your aunt and Wilhelm send you their best compliments, and we all beg you to remember us to your dear parents."*

Jean-Pierre Franck wrote : "*we should be very happy to see you here and show you our dear Sweden "a meng Hunger"*". In the last part of the sentence Jean-Pierre Franck switched from English to Luxembourgish. "*A meng Hunger*" could be translated by "*and my chickens*".

From the mid-1920s on, the epistolary messages sent to Luxembourg cease to describe an everlasting success story of a Luxembourgish emigrant in Scandinavia. The premature death of his son-in-law Bengt Simmingsköld in 1924 and the death of his wife Octavie in 1929, as well as his personal health problems<sup>26</sup> lead him to his professional retirement in 1926. All these tragic events represent the irreversible signs of his own life cycle coming to an end after 74 years - in 1936 - .

As we know, the death of Jean-Pierre Franck didn't stop the relations and the correspondence between his descendants and their relatives in Luxembourg. As we know, Jemmy's daughter Vivi Simmingsköld and her son Bo Simmingsköld visited the Luxembourgish branch of their family just before the outbreak of World War II.

But even the dark period of the Second World War couldn't break the relationship between the Simmingsköld family and their Luxembourg relatives. The probably most moving document of the "Franck Letter Collection" testifies to this statement. Bo Simmingsköld sent in 1944 a message to the "Luxembourg Consulate" in London<sup>27</sup> in order to transmit<sup>28</sup> news to his Luxembourg relatives news from the members of the Schiltges family who were victims of the deportation from Luxembourg to Germany. These repressive measures of deportation

against Luxembourg antifascists were organized by the Nazis during the German occupation of Luxembourg during World War Two.

Bo wrote the following sorrowful message:

*“If it is possible I ask you respectfully to bring the message to Mr. Schiltges Senior, Wilts Luxembourg, that we have got the news from his son and his family who were taken away to Germany by the Germans, that they are still alright. We got a letter from them 20.10.44. Please send also the kindest regards from their relatives in Sweden.”*

And so the Simmingsköld family continued to keep in touch with the Schiltges branch of Wiltz again from 1944 on, to the 1990s<sup>29</sup>, a time when Bo welcomed the Schiltges’ sisters in the town of Växjö.

### **3. Jean-Pierre Franck’s migration experience : an anecdotal phenomenon or a representative case study of the European migration history ?**

Instead of proceeding to a final conclusion, we suggest a short analytic evaluation of Jean-Pierre Franck’s biographic pathway as well as of the “Franck Letter Collection” for the scientific field of historic migration studies.

It should be quite unfair to reduce the off-the-path migration experience of a Luxembourg weaver technician to a mere anecdotal phenomenon apt to attract just the curiosity of local historians. In fact, Jemmy Franck’s migration experience is a significant example which helps to illustrate the structural diversity of migration processes in the Luxembourg Ardennes of the outgoing 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a certain way it provides historic evidence that Luxembourg migration processes should not be reduced to a few migration macro-trends such as the overwhelming transatlantic emigration to Northern America and the trans-regional migrations to Belgium, France or to the industrialised Southern part of the Grand-Duchy.

Indeed, Jemmy Franck’s migration experience constitutes a social historic example of an “off the main stream migration trajectory”. It also represents a micro-historic example of a quite unstudied socio-historic phenomenon: that of an individual experience inside a European secondary migration route which led him to Sweden, at a time when Sweden represented in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg much more a case of an emigration hub than of an immigration target. But it would be false to present Jemmy’s decision to emigrate to Scandinavia as an uncommon and outstanding decision of a Luxembourg individualist.

As we noted at the beginning of our paper, Jemmy Franck is one of three young men of the Wiltz weaver community who tried their professional luck in Scandinavia. The same destination had been chosen some 270 earlier by Walloons as well as by inhabitants of the Northwestern part of the Duchy of Luxembourg: they had emigrated to the Swedish province of Uppland to contribute to the “take off” of Swedish forgery<sup>30</sup>. We also know that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a member of a well-known tanner family of the Belgian as well of the Luxembourg Ardennes – the Servais - emigrated to Denmark.

Did this historical context really influence the migration process of young Jemmy? Apart from the fact that he was probably informed about these local historical data, he was probably more affected by a recent social background which was literally determined by migration

processes. In fact, young Jean-Pierre Franck - who had probably been educated in the textile centre of Sedan in the French Ardennes - lived in a geographic environment as well as in a social familial milieu where migration processes constituted a structural function. For instance members of the Franck family emigrated to Northern America as well as to Java (Indonesia), Jemmy's brother Nicolas Franck worked for a while in France before he went to the Belgian city of Liège where he joined his uncle and his aunt at a time when his brother Jemmy worked in the nearby textile town of Verviers. And at the same time their sister Lenie made personal projects which consisted in applying for a domestic job in Western Germany<sup>31</sup>.

Further on, at a time when he was working in the textile hub of Hückeswagen - after having transited through the textile town of Düren in Western Germany - Jemmy Franck was probably informed about the commercial connections which existed between the textile centres of the German Rhineland and the Northern European or Scandinavian textile hubs. As he had already learnt that two other young men - Constant Brück and Mathgen Franck - had moved from the Luxembourg town of Wiltz to Sweden and to Finland, young courageous Jemmy decided to realize his private and his professional dreams in Scandinavia. And so he did !

In a certain way, the migration experience of Jean-Pierre Franck represents a quite particular and individual and even anecdotal experience. But in a socio-historical context, our description and analysis of the private correspondence of a Luxembourg emigrant to Sweden seems to represent far more than an isolated socio-historic curiosity, but a quite representative example of an individual migration trajectory inside an inner-European industrial textile route. Seized in this context, Jean-Pierre Franck's migration experience represents a historical case study which illustrates the structural complexity and diversity of the migration phenomena in contemporary social history !

Claude Wey, CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Jean Ensch, "La population de Wiltz en 1864", in: *Harmonie Grand-Ducale Municipale Wiltz. Livre d'Or 1794-1994*, Luxembourg, 1994, 707-776, especially 746; see also "Descendants of Pierre Franck", in: <http://www.deltgen.com>

<sup>2</sup> See Will Schumacher, *Wéltzer Leggt a Wéltzer Geschichten*, Esch-sur-Alzette, 1993, 55-58.

<sup>3</sup> Will Schumacher, *op. cit.*, 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>5</sup> "Dir. J. P. Franck", in: *Borås Tidning*, 14 December 1936; see also "Bevölkerungsziffer und industrielle Tätigkeit", in: *Philharmonie de Wiltz 1794-1969*, 34-37, especially 35-36.

<sup>6</sup> See the genealogy *Jean-Pierre Franck and his family* elaborated by Margareta Thorin, granddaughter of Jean-Pierre Franck, 20 pages, archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg.

<sup>7</sup> "Dödsfall", in: *Borås Tidning*, 27 October 1952.

<sup>8</sup> See the genealogy *Jean-Pierre Franck ...op. cit.*.

<sup>9</sup> Letter 21, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Borås, 12th July 1924, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 21.

---

<sup>10</sup> See "Bevölkerungsziffer und industrielle Tätigkeit", in: *op. cit.*, 35-36.

<sup>11</sup> Letter 5, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Hückeswagen, 20th October 1889, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 5.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 6, Jean-Pierre Franck to his parents, Norrköping, undated, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 6.

<sup>13</sup> Letter 7, Jean-Pierre Franck to his parents, Norrköping, 22nd March 1890, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 7.

<sup>14</sup> Letter 8, Jean-Pierre Franck to his parents, Norrköping, 31st May 1890, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 8.

<sup>15</sup> "Dir. J. P. Franck", in: *Borås Tidning*, 14 December 1936.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>17</sup> Letter 9, Jean-Pierre Franck to his brother (Christian name not specified), Norrköping, 15th September 1906, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 9.

<sup>18</sup> Letter 10, Jean-Pierre Franck to his brother (Christian name not specified), Norrköping, 8th October 1906, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 10.

<sup>19</sup> Letter 11, Jean-Pierre Franck to his brother (Christian name not specified), Norrköping, 19th October 1906, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 11.

<sup>20</sup> Letter 24, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Borås, 7th July 1926, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 24 ; see also "Dir. J. P. Franck", in: *Borås Tidning*, 14 December 1936.

<sup>21</sup> Letter 15, Jean-Pierre Franck to his brother Nicolas Franck, Borås, 19th August 1920, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 15.

<sup>22</sup> See Letter 25, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Göteborg, 13th May 1931 and Letter 26, Jean-Pierre Franck to his sister and his brother-in-law, Borås, 18th October 1932, private archives of the Schiltges family, copies of the letters in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 25 and FLC L 26.

<sup>23</sup> Letter 22, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Borås, 15th June 1925, see Letter 23, Wilhelm Franck to Alphonse Schiltges, Borås, 2nd January 1926, private archives of the Schiltges family, copies of the letters in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 22 and FLC L 23 ; see also "Dödsfall", in: *Borås Tidning*, 27 October 1952.

<sup>24</sup> Letter 25, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Göteborg, 13th May 1931, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 25.

<sup>25</sup> Letter 14, Jean-Pierre Franck to his nephew Alphonse Schiltges, Borås, 7th June 1920, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 14.

---

<sup>26</sup> Letter 23, Wilhelm Franck to Alphonse Schiltges, Borås, 2nd January 1926 and Letter 24, Jean-Pierre Franck to his family, Borås, 7th July 1926, private archives of the Schiltges family, copies of the letters in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 23 and FLC L 24.

<sup>27</sup> Letter 27, Bo Simmingsköld to the Consulate of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in London, London, 26th October 1944, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 27.

<sup>28</sup> Letter 27; the message, dated 15th November, was transmitted by the Consulate of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in London to Alphonse Schiltges Senior, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 27.

<sup>29</sup> Letter 29, Bo Simmingsköld to Béatrice Richard-Schiltges, Växjö, 14th November 1989 and Letter 30, Bo Simmingsköld to Béatrice Richard-Schiltges, Växjö, 26th March 1993, private archives of the Schiltges family, copies of the letters in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 29 and FLC L 30.

<sup>30</sup> See Léon Le Febve de Vivy, *Documents d'histoire précoloniale belge (1861-1865)*, Bruxelles, 1955, 50-52 ; see Bernt Douhan, *Arbete, kapital och migration. Valloninvandringen till Sverige under 1600-talet*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia 140, Uppsala, 1985 ; see also E. M. Braekman, "L'émigration wallonne en Suède", in : *Belgia 2000*, mensuel, septembre 1984, 40-47.

<sup>31</sup> Letter 7, Jean-Pierre Franck to his parents, 22nd March 1890, private archives of the Schiltges family, copy of the letter in the archives of the CDMH/Dudelange/Luxembourg: FLC L 7.