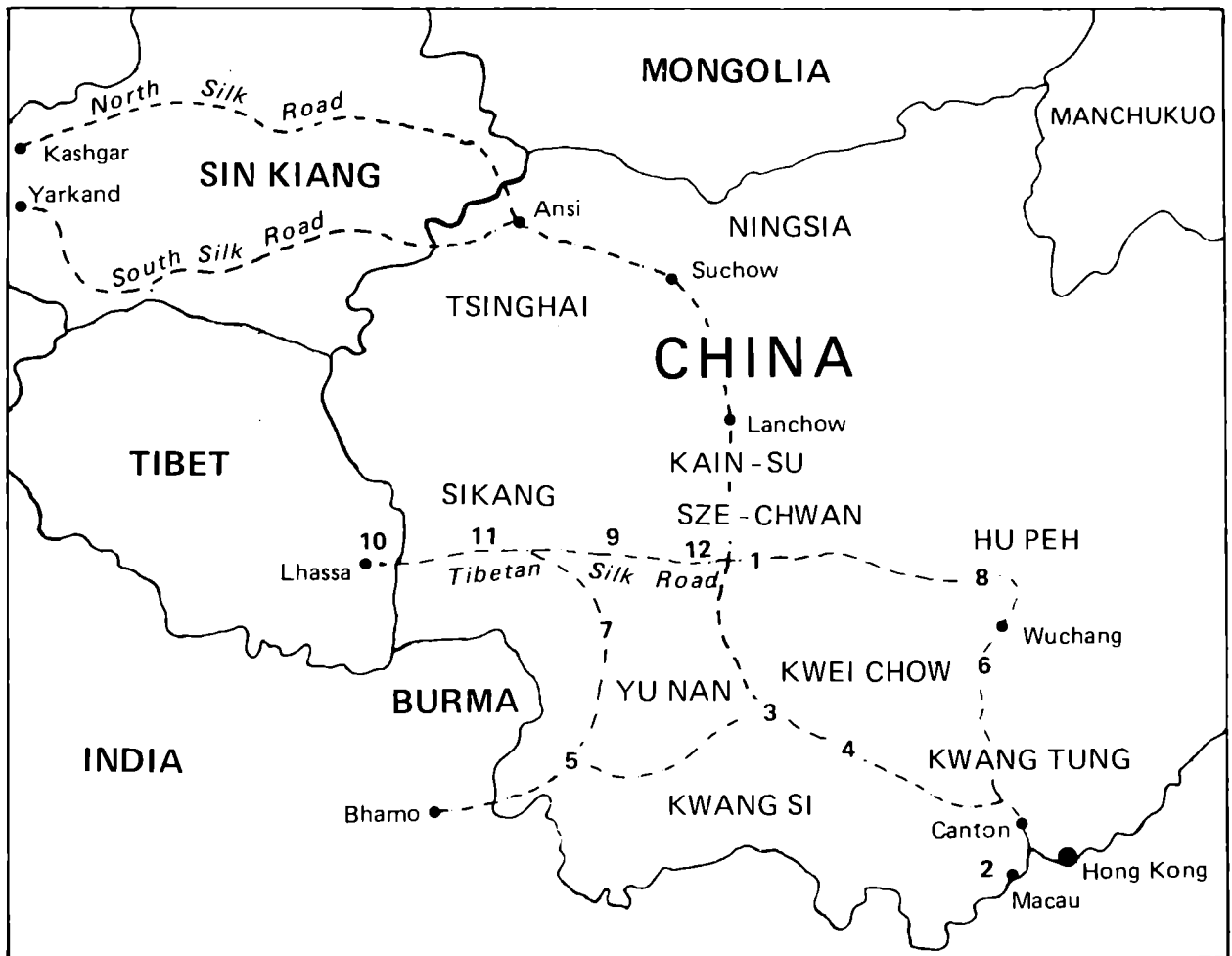


From China and Tibet

A commentary on letters written by
missionaries working in the interior.
1844-1865



BY ROBSON LOWE

A Dedication

The men who wrote the letters described in this monograph were of varied character and, judged by present-day standards, were in some cases misguided in the purpose of their mission. All shared one cardinal virtue, they were heroes. So in saluting the memory of these brave men I would couple the name of an old friend, whose adventures in Sze-chang, Sinkiang, Tibet and Tashkent, were the subject of many an evening between 1942 and his death in 1967.

FREDERICK MARSHAM BAILEY

Commissioned in the Bengal Lancers in 1903, he led the mounted escort with the Tibet Frontier Mission to Khamba Jong. The next year he reached Lhasa with Younghusband's Expedition. He then led an expedition to Gartok in Western Tibet. Trade agent in Gyantse 1905-09 he served with the Abor Expedition 1911-1912 and in 1913 he traced the course of the Brahmaputra.

After serving in Flanders, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia and Persia he led the mission to Tashkent from 1918-1920. He returned to Tibet from 1921-28 and then served as Resident in Kashmir and Minister in Nepal until his retirement in 1938, only to become a King's Messenger in 1942. His family kept every letter and the envelope.

Browning had such a character in mind when he wrote

Once more on my adventure brave and new.

R.L. July 1981

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PRICE £2

“FROM CHINA AND TIBET”

By ROBSON LOWE

Twelve letters written by French and Italian missionaries in Tibet and China between 1844 and 1865 are the reason for this commentary. All the letters are addressed to the director of *“l'oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance”* (the work of the Holy Children).

Six of the letters show evidence of being carried by the postal service over some part of their journey to France but it would appear certain that there were Headquarters at Macao, Canton and Hong Kong where letters from missionaries could be sent for safekeeping until they could be sent home by someone returning to Paris or sent in bulk by the forwarding agent.

EARLY MISSIONS

The reader may be as amazed as I was to learn that the Jews reached **China** in 1163 and in the following year opened a synagogue in K'ai fêng Fu in 1164. Marco Polo is said to have introduced missionaries into China in 1275. One must mention the great Franciscan missionary, Giovanni di Monte Corvino, who wrote letters* from Peking (8 Jan. 1305 and 13 Feb. 1306). In 1307 he was created Archbishop of Peking and seven Bishops were sent from Rome to support him but only three arrived. Corvino died in 1328. Three hundred years later Jesuit missionaries were sent from Rome but they were expelled in 1724 to 1732. China issued an edict against Christianity in 1812.

French missionary efforts really started in 1822 when the Société des Missions Evangéliques was formed. Much of the French influence was centred in the province of Yunnan, later to border on French Indo-China (now Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia). A missionary, Schoffler, was publicly executed at San-Tay on 4 May 1852 for preaching Christianity.

The French Missionaries were the only ones who entered the interior of China, particularly in the Western Provinces dealt with in this commentary. Because their presence was illegal under Chinese law, up to 1850 most of the missionaries were disguised as Chinese. In the fifties their presence was accepted but it was not until 1861 that they obtained the government passports authorising their position. The policy of the French government was to support the missionaries, as much to balance the influence of the British and American missionaries in the Treaty Ports.

* The manuscripts are in the Laurentian Library, Florence.

On the British side, the government wanted a stable Chinese government to stimulate British trade. The policy was to refer any complaint to the appropriate minister in Peking and thereby avoid embarrassing local officials. Neither the British government nor the British people were in favour of missionaries who they thought stirred up trouble with the Chinese authorities and were a handicap to British trade. The British missionaries were more or less confined to the Treaty Ports.

Some early missions to Tibet lack confirmation but several travellers visited **Tibet** in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Two Jesuits, I. Polito Desideri and P. Freyre reached Lhasa from Kashmir in 1716, the former remaining for five years; a letter from him written on 10 April 1716 after his arrival in Lhasa was printed and the original may still exist. The Capuchin mission at Lhasa was founded in 1708 and, after a shaky start, operated successfully from 1715 to 1733; it was revived in 1741 but finally collapsed in 1745. In 1844, two French missionaries Abbe Evariste Régis Huc and Joseph Gabet travelled from China via the province of Kansu to Tibet and arrived at Lhasa on 29 January 1846 but were expelled by order of a Chinese diplomat, Ke-shen, and left under escort on 29th March by the Szechwan route. Huc's book is a lively record of the visit but he made it clear that it was the jealousy of the Chinese that caused them to leave.

These remarks have omitted reference to travellers other than missionaries.

THE SILK ROADS

This title (or Silk Route) has been given to several routes between China and the West. Three roads started in the province of Kansu and followed the Wei Valley through Lanchow to Tunhwang where the way divided into two ancient caravan routes. The Middle Road ran through Kuria, Kucha and Aqsu to Kashgar. Subsequently this was replaced by the North Road via Ansi, Qomul (Hami), Turfan, Qara Shahr and Kuria to Kashgar, and from there to Western Turkestan.

The South Road travelled from Tunhwang via Khotan to Yarkand and then down the valley of the Oxus into India. All these routes were used by the early missionaries.

However the Silk Road, more correctly called the "China Road" or high road (Tibetan: Gya-lam) left Ta Tsien Lu (Gatsien lu) in Szechwan, Batang (Bahnfu) in Sikang and travelled to Lhasa via Ghaya, Chamdo (now Changlu, 1859 Chang Tchouan Lan), Enta, Lho Dzong, Pienpe, Tantatang, Kali and Gyandie (Taichi, 1859 Tcha Hou Tong) to Lhasa. It then continued via Gyantse and Shigatse to Katmandu.

There were four other roads to China, the Northern Road (Tibetan Chang-lan) which left Sining Fu in Kan-su province and passed the Tsaidam Lake, crossed the Tang-la Pass and passed through Nagchuka and Tashi-Doche to Lhasa. This road became closed owing to the Mohammedans rebellions in Kan-su which started in 1856 and were not suppressed until 1872.

The third road joined the Gya-lam at Chamdo (in some references Chiambo) having travelled much of the way by river from Sung-pan in N.W. Sze-chuen.

The fourth road left Ta Tsien Lu by the valley of the Yatung and the Dze-chu travelling northwest to Yekundo and then south to Chambo. Here it turned north-west to Riwoche and then west to Nagchuka where it joined the Chang-lam.

The Yun-nan road left Likiang Fu and went via Chung-tien to Batang where it joined the Gya-lam.

BOUNDARY CHANGES

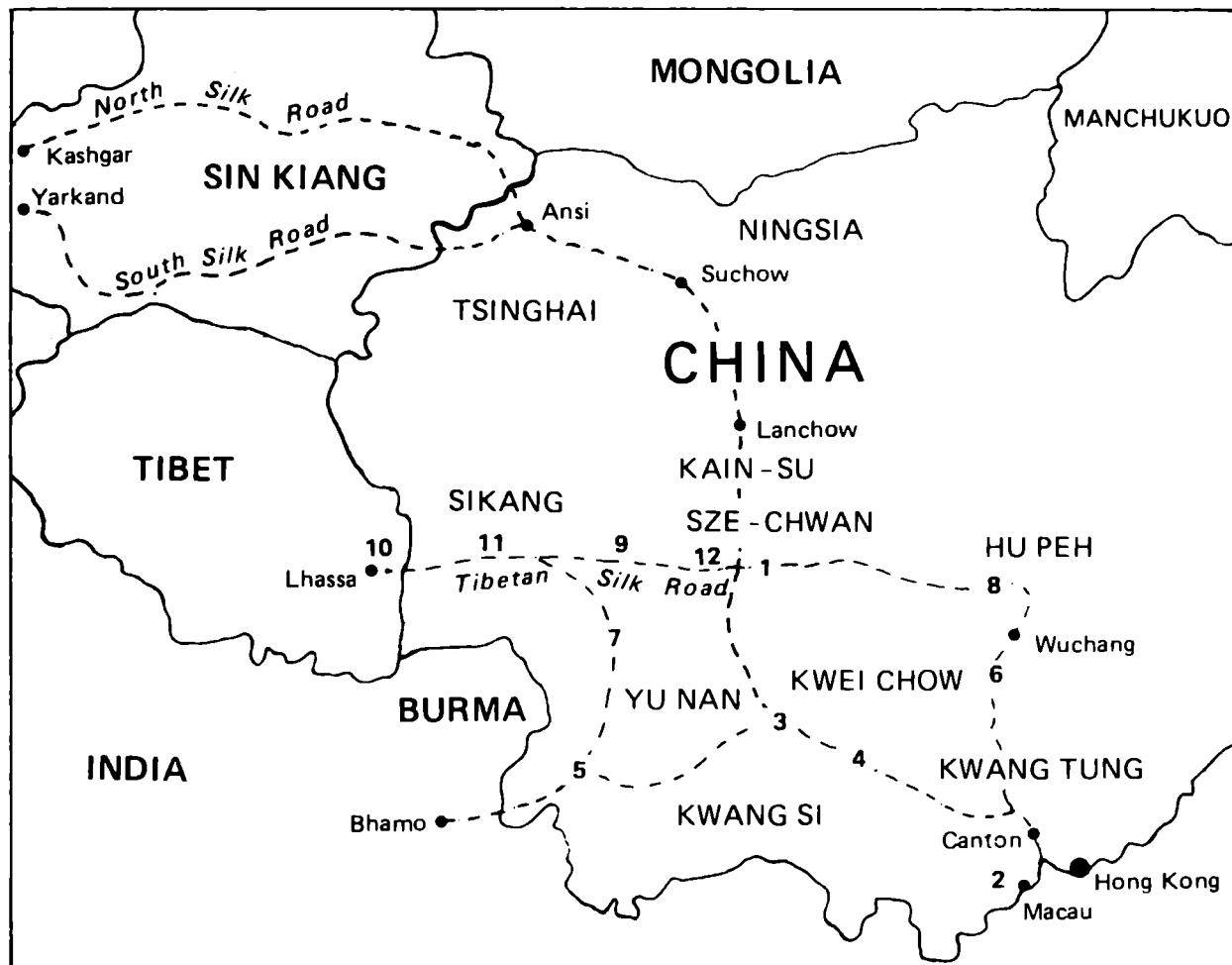
There are six provinces of China whose history affects this commentary.

KAN-SU was once part of the Kingdom of Wei. It formerly incorporated **NINGSIA**. Even today, the majority of the population is not Chinese but Moslem and many aboriginal tribes. From ancient days, Kan-su was the corridor for the caravan routes from China to Turkestan, India and Persia.

SIKANG was formed in 1908 from Eastern Tibet and Western Szechwan and made a province c. 1928. Its chief towns Kangting (Tat Sien Lu) and Paan (Batang) were both in Tibet in the nineteenth century.

SZE-CHWAN was non-Chinese until conquered by the Chin dynasty c. 300. Long isolated by its mountain barriers (See Sikiang). The French had a post office in Chungking (Pahslen) from 1902 to 1943. It has a city Kweichow (now Feng Kieh), the same name as the province on the southern border.

TSINGHAI was formerly an outer dependency but is now a province. The boundaries were altered in 1944 to take in a large part of North Eastern Tibet. Most of their population are Moslems and Tibetan nomad tribes (Buddhist).



YUN-NAN (Yu Nan) was an independent kingdom but was conquered by the Chinese in 1382 although it did not become a province until the 17th century. Much under the influence of the French during the 19th century who had post offices in Mong-tseu (Mengtse) and Yunnan Fu (Kunming) from 1903 to 1922. From the evidence of the one 1856 letter, there were postal arrangements by the French at that time.

Also, the writer stated that two members were sent to Tibet where they reached the village of Che Kou with ten days walk. Today, the border has been changed by the formation of Sikkang, although it would appear that there is still a short frontier at the north of Yunnan adjoining Tibet and Burma.

Yunnan contained the main length of the Burma Road, starting at Chungking and passing through Kweiyang, Kunming, Yungchang (Paoshan) and Lungling to Bhamo (Burma). Although this road was not opened until late 1938 it had been a route for overland mail from Burma from 1905 and for trade and foot travellers, for centuries. A large part of the population is not Chinese and includes Lolos, Miaos and Shans.

Missionary Letters to "Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance" Paris

with the exception of the first which was addressed to Nancy

The first name is that used by the writer, who was either French or Italian given a phonetic interpretation of the Chinese or Tibetan pronunciation. Names in brackets are those found on 20th Century maps.

FROM CHINA IN FRENCH

- 1 1844 Sutchuen (Sze-chan), Sze-chan Province.
- 2 1849 Macao
- 3 1852 Kwei Tsen (Kwei Ting), Kwei-chow Province.
- 4 1852 Kwei Tcheou (Kaichow), Kwei-chow Province.
- 5 1856 Ta ly Fou (Tali), Yun-nan.

FROM CHINA IN ITALIAN

- 6 1858 Tam-kia-ho (Kiayu, Chia-yu), Hu-peh Province.
- 7 1858 Chang Tong (Chung Tien) Yun-nan.
- 8 1861 Tien-Men, Hu-peh Province.

FROM TIBET IN ITALIAN

- 9 1857 Xan-Si (Kantsu).

FROM TIBET IN FRENCH

- 10 1859 Tcha-mon-Tong (Taichi-Gyandie).
- 11 1859 Chang Tchouan lan (Ch'ingto/Chambo).
- 12 1865 Ta-tsieu-lou (Kangting), now Sikkang Province.

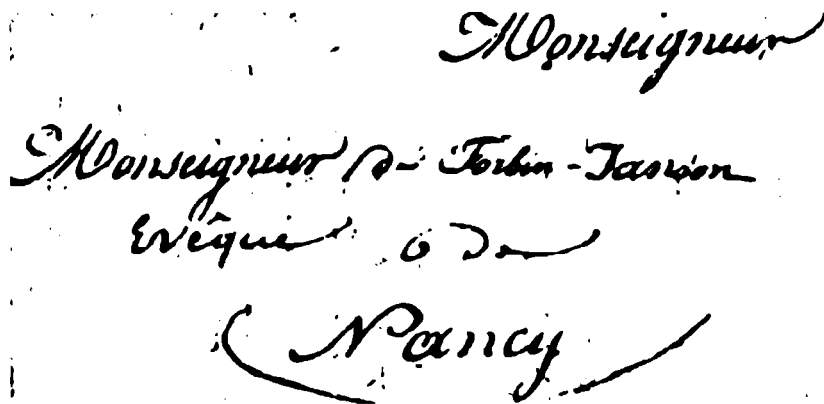
Nine of the twelve letters started at a town or travelled on one of the Silk Roads from China to the West. Two were from Hu-Peh Province and travelled south via Canton to Hong Kong. With the exception of the 1856 letter from Ta ly Fou, it is virtually certain that the other eleven letters left China via Hong Kong, even when they travelled outside the mails.

LETTERS FROM CHINA IN FRENCH

1844 Sutchuen

This is the phonetic pronunciation of the province Sze-chan, the western part of which was merged with Eastern Tibet in 1908 to form Sikang province. The writer states "*le population de la Vicariat qui compris le Sutchuen et le Kouy-Tcheou*", the last being the city of that name in Sze-chan and not the province. The location of the town of Sze-chan is almost certainly its ancient capital Cheng-tu. Kweichow is a city in the east of the same province.

The letter was written in September 1844 by Bishop Desfleches of Sinite, coadjutor to "*Monseigneur de Forbin-Tanson, Eveque de Nancy*" and was carried outside the mails. There are several comments in red ink written by the recipient but no date of arrival.



Monseigneur
Monseigneur de Forbin-Tanson
Eveque de
Nancy

The writer reminds the Bishop of Nancy of a meeting seven years ago (trs.) "we talked about means of helping the many children who die by the thousands, particularly in China where they are deprived of baptism and of any right to Heaven. You said there should be a new association devoted to this mission".

The writer went on to thank the Bishop for his foresight — the more who may be baptised the better. He mentioned the "*la Societe Angelique*" whose members travelled everywhere to baptise.

"The customs of this country favour the success of this mission which could expand if it had more help. Last year we baptised 22,292 children about to breathe their last (*articulos mortis*). This year the total is 24, 381."

The writer stated that to be a baptist cost 30 piastres every year which covers the cost of 300 baptisms. Yet the average annual deaths in the Vicariat was 700 Christians and 5000 unbelievers. His figures were confusing as he went on to say that out of the population of fifty million, 700,000 children died each year under the age of reason. He hoped to achieve 100,000 baptisms a year to ensure that one in seven open the doors of Heaven. He had been asked to enquire into infanticide and enclosed a list of 171.

A horrific picture.

Note: Bishop Eugène J. Desflèches (1814-87), known to the Chinese as "Fan-Jo-Se" wielded considerable political influence. For twenty years, from the late fifties, he led bands of armed Christians against the Chinese authorities. Finally, the Chinese Government requested his removal to which Paris agreed.

1849 Macao

This town, the capital of the Island of this name, was settled by the Portuguese in 1517. Its independence from China was declared in 1849 but was not recognised by China until 1887. It has been a haven for missionaries.

The letter was signed by Clo. Guillet and dated 26 September 1849 and arrived on 28 November 1849, being addressed to "*Monsieur l' Abbe Jammes, Vicaire de Paris, Directeur de l'Oeuvre de la Ste Enfance*", and on the reverse, the post office had written "*rue Chanoinesse 4*". There are three impressions of handstamps on the reverse, G12 in a circle (twice) and G29 in an oblong. On the front is a blue handstamp "Lev de 10^H/DON de Midi/15^C" and the black c.d.s. of Paris 28 Nov. 49.

The writer thanked Jammes for his letter of 23 July which (trs) "gave great pleasure to myself and the good sisters of La Ste Enfance de Macao. Monseigneur Viailler tells me that he is transferring to China the various allowances granted by your Council. He tells me that the bills of exchange drawn on London will not arrive until next month. At the same time he will send me the letters that you want me to forward. I will advise our members (that money and letters are on the way)." "I am happy to see how prosperous our Foundation has become, in spite of the obstacles. Great Missions are always persecuted. Our Order now protects many children in Heaven. We work hard. I am so happy as I baptise these poor little creatures when I see them breathe their last, once we have eased their pain. I wish you were in Macao to witness the scene".

The importance of this letter is the fact that letters in bulk arrived in Macao for distribution to the missionaries in China. Doubtless the replies went home in bulk, possibly to be distributed from the head post office in Paris.

The time of transit — 63 days, demonstrates the speed with which mail could be carried once it was at a port.

1852 Kwei Txen

This is a French phonetic spelling of Kwai Ting in the provinces of Kwei-Chow (Kwei-Yang). The letter was written by Albrand Stephan Raymond, Bishop of Jura, on 22 July 1852 and is addressed "*Monsieur James, Chanoine de la Cathedrale de Paris, Directeur de L'Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance, Rue Chanoinesse No 4, a Paris*". The letter was carried outside the mails and arrived on 24 February 1853.

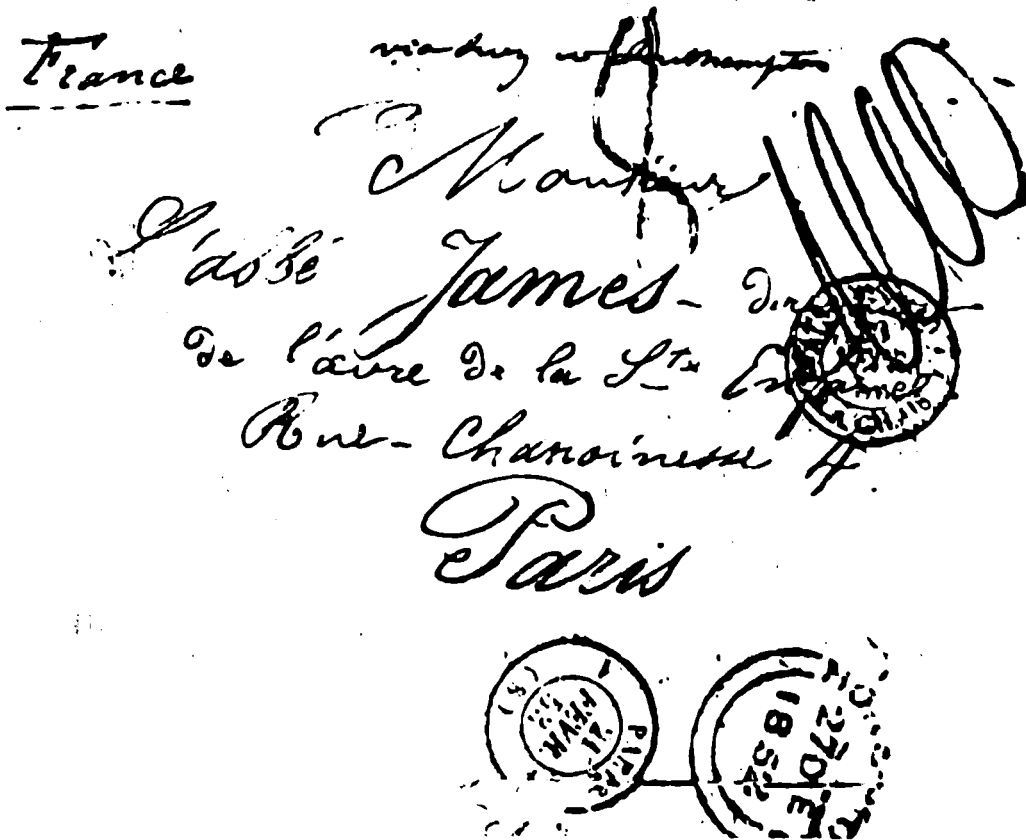
The writer mentioned the receipt of a letter in May 1852 from Monseigneur Parisis dated August 1851 asking that Jammes should be informed about Monseigneur's views on China. The funds of Ste Enfance were to be exclusively used for poor Pagan children who were converted and not for the children of Christian parents. However, there could be several exceptions — for children of parents before the latter were baptised, or children who would have been sold to Pagans, or children of Christian parentage who have been sold to Pagans. The writer bought (from the Pathan owner) a girl of 13 years of age whose Christian mother was prepared for her to marry a Pagan. The writer asked why the Council of Ste. Enfance would deprive these poor Christian children of help?

All the information required by the Council had been forwarded by Fauries (see letter from Kouei Tcheou).

"We find it difficult to name children whom we baptise in large numbers with the names you indicate. We do not name a child about to die (and in the case of the living) many of these names are unknown and cannot be pronounced by the Chinese".

1852 Kouie - Tcheou

This Chinese province has Szechwan to the north and Yunnan on the west so would be a natural corridor for missionaries travelling from Macao or Canton. The modern spelling of the town is Kaichow and the province Kwei-chow.



The letter was written by Fauries on 6th September 1852 and had the same address as that written in 1849 except that "Jammes" is spelt "James". The letter was endorsed "via Suez et Southampton" and passed through Hong Kong on 27 October, curiously receiving the ETATS-UNIS PAQ. A.M. B.A. CALAIS c.d.s. on 20 Fevr. 53 before arriving in Paris on the next day. Apparently 10 francs for the overseas postage and 8 decimes for local delivery being charged.

The writer described a list of presents which were being sent for the children looked after by the Order in Paris by the agent, Mounicou of Hong Kong. He went on to say (trs.).

"Kouie - Tcheou is a province recently conquered by the Miaotse (the population is still mostly the Miao and aboriginal tribes) last week, a father was walking with his three sons, the eldest eight, and on the head of each boy was a notice that he was for sale. The news reached us too late, and they are now probably owned by peasants; Monseigneur (? the governor) has given the Christians an order to buy for us any children offered for sale. The Mandarin at the Pagan hospital for lost children has asked our doctor to take care of the establishment which houses eighty".

Note: Louis S. Fauries, Bishop of Kweichow (1824-1871), known to the Chinese as "Hu-fu-ti", in May 1861, organised a celebration when the missionaries presented their newly-won passports to the Chinese authorities. In consequence the Chinese rebuffed Fauries. Again, in 1865, his accommodation by Lao Ch'ung-Kuang, the Governor-General of Yun-nan and Kweichow, aroused considerable opposition from other Chinese authorities.

1856 "Ta ly fou" Yun.nan

This is an important letter for every reason. It was written on 18 February 1856 on locally printed note-paper "Mission du YUN. NAN" by Joseph Marie Ev. de Sebastopolis, coadjutor, and is countersigned by the Bishop (of Yunnan?) Chauveau. The letter was over 2000 words long but the Bishop apologised for its brevity.

The letter was addressed "*Monsieur l'Abbe Jammes Directeur de l'oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance, rue Chanoinesse A Paris*". A letter had arrived from Jammes dated 22 August 1854 saying that he had not heard from the Bishop for three years. The latter explained that he had written three letters in 1854 and sent them via* Canton (850 miles from Tali) but they had probably been lost owing to the troublesome times in the Tibetan provinces (which apparently included Yunnan). Translated the letter continued:

"The troubled times have stopped all development of our Mission. The Yun.nan Mandarins have become oppressive and suspicious, which is often the case with a weak government. Our priests find it very difficult to move around in this part of the province."

"If our priests are too timid their cause will inevitably fail, and if they show too much self-confidence, the Governing Tribunal will be alarmed and the military will make arrests which, although against the law, are both dangerous and offensive for the victims, especially at this time when agitation and rebellion seem to justify unfair arrests by all representatives of the Governing Tribunal".

"The two baptist missionaries who I sent to the borders of Tibet at the end of July 1855 failed to establish safe contacts which are desperately needed to prove the work of la Sainte Enfance is essential to the welfare of our confrères in Tibet and to support the work of the Propagation of the Gospel. Having travelled for ten days, the two missionaries, who were disguised as foreign merchants and had with them 80 francs worth of goods that I had supplied, reached the small village Che Kou.

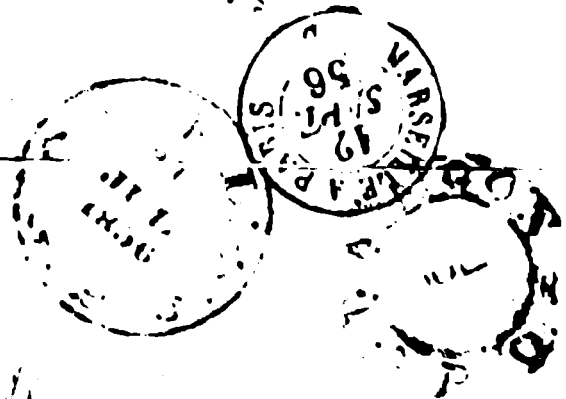
They decided to stay at the village inn which was run by a retired policeman who was eighty years of age and proud of the service he gave to his distinguished visitors. Trouble started when one of the missionaries became involved in a religious discussion with the old man, who was offended at being made to look foolish and he locked up the missionary while the help of a Mandarin was found. Fortunately the missionary escaped so was saved torture by the Chinese".

*Note: the ancient trade road from Yun-nan Fu ran to Pai-sê Fu in Kwang-si province, a journey of some twenty days. From here one could travel all the way to Canton on the West River passing Nan-Ning and Sin-chow Fu.

France

Monsieur
M. Abbé Jaminet, Directeur
de la Haute-Indochine

Paris
PAID



Recu à Ta Li
19 Avril 1896

M. Jaminet du

D. S.

1896

YUN-NAN. Ca' ly f'oi, LE 18 Février, 1896

The 1856 letter described -- address panel, the back of the letter with the red "Recue à Ta Li". The lower strip is the note-heading

On the back of the letter is a red handstamp "*Reçue a Ta li/la*" with "29 April 1856" added in pen, so between writing and despatch seventy-one days had elapsed. The next evidence is a poor strike of the Rangoon datestamp in July so in the meantime the letter had been carried from Tali west, either by the route of the Burma Road (described above) to Bhamo or else by the less used route through Tungtung to Myitkyina, travelling down the river Irrawaddy via Bhamo to Rangoon. Here the letter was stamped INDIA PAID, "10 as" was written in black and "1/-" in red. Alas the stamps have been removed but presumably they were the Indian 2 as. and two 4 as. The letter received the red dated stamp of CAL (cutta) on 21 July, the red c.d.s. "INDES D'OR AMB. MARSEILLE" on 12 September, the black c.d.s. of "MARSEILLE A PARIS" on the same day, and was delivered on the following day, 10 decimes being charged the recipient, 138 days after despatch, 209 days after writing.

Apart from the place of origin, the historic interest lies in the fact that the revolt of the Yunnanese Mohammedans against the Chinese started in 1855 and lasted for over twenty years, the postal interest is in the French Tali handstamp (which was hitherto unknown to me) and the evidence of a comparative early use of the Yunnan — Burma route.

Note: Joseph-Marie Chaveau (1816-1877), known to the Chinese as "Ting" later became the Vicar Apostolic of Tibet.

LETTERS FROM CHINA IN ITALIAN

1858 Tam-Kia-ho (Hou pé)

The second of the letters written in Italian on 15th and 20th February 1858 by Father Luigi Celestino Spelta to "*Monsieur Jammes Vice-president Directeur d l'Oeuvre de la Ste Enfance Paris*" and carried outside the mails. There is no endorsement indicating when the letter arrived. For the first letter in Italian — see Tibet.



The letter of the 15th has a fine handstamp in blue VICARIATUS HU-PE and on the attached accounts is another impression in red. The letter of the 20th is on notepaper with similar wording printed and this communication is marked for publication. One immediately sees the business approach of the writer who obviously handled the affairs of the mission most efficiently.

The letter of the 15th reads (trs.)

"I have not sufficient words to thank you enough for the allocation of 10,000 francs for last year, i.e., 1857. This was advised to me by Monsieur Legrecoif and Monsieur Libois, therefore I am sending another messenger to Hong Kong to collect the money which is of absolute and extreme necessity as you will understand from the enclosed statement. I should inform you that the messenger I sent to Hong Kong last September is at this moment in the area of Ou-tchang returning from his journey, bringing with him the money from the Ste. Enfance which may be the former allocation for 1856 sent a long time ago to Monseigneur Pizzolati . ."

The 1857 accounts are beautifully presented, showing details of expenditure (612½ taels=5,250 francs or 1 tael=8.57 francs), all of which was for medical treatment to which was added the 1856 deficiency of 1050 taels. The figures quoted are amazing, baptisms included 372 adults and 5,012 heathen children, 18,696 communicants, 19,111 confessions, 200 extreme unctions, 136 marriages. The population comprised 16,204 Christians, 22,000,000 heathens, 8 European and 12 native missionaries — a fascinating picture.

In the letter of the 20th, the writer described the harrowing scenes resulting from the 1857 drought, the grinding poverty, suffering and deaths from starvation.

Most of the 5,012 children baptised were on the point of death. He emphasised the urgent need of funds to continue the life-saving tasks of the missions.

1858 Chang Tong

The third letter in Italian, dated 3rd May 1858 by Luigi da Castellaggo, Bishop of Zenapoli and Apostolic Vicariate of Chang Tong addressed to "*Il Sig. Presidente della San. Infanzia Parigi*", the letter passed through Hong Kong 21st July 1858 and again no charge was made, and arrived at l'Havre on 13th September receiving the red PAYS ETR. V. SUEZ, the black l'Havre à Paris c.d.s. where it was delivered on the same day. Here it was redirected to M. Levasseur in Rouen where it arrived on the 18th. At first stamped INCONNU EN APPEL in blue the letter was finally delivered on the 29th.

The writer asked instructions for the disposal of the funds and asked if he should send an account. Were the funds for missionaries and alms, for mission building, or the maintenance of missionary works?

France

Amico

A Sua Eccellenza Monsignore
 Il Signor Presidente della Sacra Congregazione
 per il Propagandam Romano
 in Roma via Morand

~~Amico~~

1861

PARIS

1861

1861

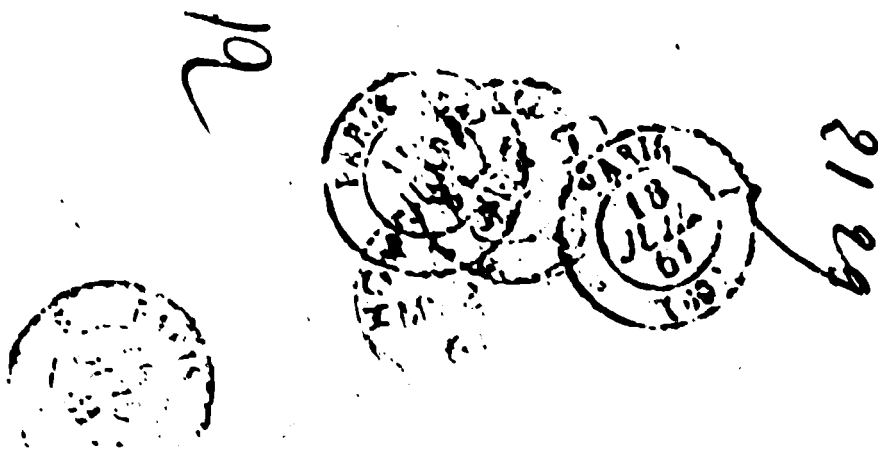
à Monsieur Major en Mission
 via Morand / Sine 12/12

1861 Tien-Men (Hou pé)

The fourth letter in Italian, this from Eustachio Zanoli, "Min - Rit. Vic. Genl del Vic. Aplic di Hou pé" on 20th March 1861 to "Monsieur le Directeur De l'Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance, Passage Sainte-Marie 2, rue du Bac, 6, Paris".

The letter went via Hong Kong on 27th May 1861 without charge, arriving in Marseille on 15th July and in Paris on the following day. 18 decimes was charged for delivery and apparently 12 francs for overseas postage.

The writer described in vivid detail the trials and persecution of Christians and the continued imprisonment of priests.



This touching letter reads (trs.)

"We suffered terrible persecution from the Government who hate us and, taking advantage of the imminence of war, jailed many missionaries. Let me tell you of the glorious death of the Chinese Christian Paolo Wang who is a religious teacher. The military Mandarins had been looking for him and when he was found wanted to teach him a lesson in front of his converts and the pagans. He stated he was a Christian so they asked him to spit on the Cross, throw it on the ground and stamp on it. He refused saying that he believed in God. His two nephews watched from the crowd. He kissed the Cross telling the Mandarin '*You can do what you like with my body but you cannot hurt my soul which will survive*'. The Mandarin saw that Wang's courage was arousing emotion in the crowd so ordered his execution. He was immediately beheaded and disembowelled, the soldiers eating his liver. His body was hung upside down and the soldiers mutilated it with their knives. Monseigneur, this was the fate of a great Christian who calmly faced his death".


"We still managed to baptise 5,774 children before they died -- I hope God helps us save many innocent children from a pagan death. Persecution continues but God will help us face these barbarians with courage -- Monseigneur, pray for us".

A LETTER FROM TIBET IN ITALIAN

1857 Xan-Si

The first of the four letters written in Italian - this dated 19th October 1857 written by Gabriele, Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Xan-Si to "*All' Illustr e Reverendo Signore Il Sig^r Don Jammes Direttore della Pia Opera della Santa Infanzia, Parigi*". The letter passed through Hong Kong on 14 March 1858 but no charge was made. The letter arrived in France on 27 April with the red PAYS ETR. V. SUEZ and black LYON A PARIS c.d.s. of that day, being delivered on 28th. "8" decimes was charged for local delivery and apparently 7f. 15 for the overseas postage.

France



All' Illustré e Reverendo Signore
 Al Sig. Don James Direttore della Pia
 Opera della Santa Infanzia.
 Au Bureau de la Ste Infance,
 rue Chanoinesse et. Ma. Paris. Parisi.

Xan-Si was the phonetic spelling for the town Kantsu, now in Sikang. It is situated on the Silk Road from Lhasa between Chang tchouan lan (Ch'ingto or Chambo) and Ta-sien-lou (Kangting). At Chengtu the route to Hong Kong turned South through Kwei Ting, Kaichow and Canton. The alternative route continued East through the city of Kweichow and turned South through Hu-peh.

The writer thanked the Director for the remittance received and gave details of the Chinese children baptised, in 1856 508 children were registered but actually many more were baptised. He mentioned the effect on the mission by two local homicides and bemoaned the non-arrival of three European missionaries and the ill-health of his sole assistant.

LETTERS FROM TIBET IN FRENCH

1859 Tcha-mon-tong (Tibet)

This is the old name for Taichi-Gyandie where the old Silk Road joins the modern motor road east of Lhasa. Dated 28 January 1859, there is a further inscription on the top left "*Ste Enfance en Tibet/Lassa*" and below that on the right "*et 7 Mai 1859 (trs.) with copies of the other letter received from Macao sent by Monseigneur Thoreau (?)*". The letter was addressed "*Monsieur Levasseur, Directeur de l'oeuvre de la Ste Enfance, rue Chanoinesse a Paris*" — there are no postal indications but the letter was received on 28 February 1860.

Monsieur,
Monsieur Levassent, Directeur
de l'œuvre de la St. Infance, rue
Chanoinesse à Paris.

The letter was written by C. Renou, the priest in charge of the mission and is a vivid account of the times (trs.)

"Having been away from Bongo for two months, I received on 24 January 1859 in Tcha-mon-tong, on the borders of Yun-nan and the Kingdom of Lassa, the letter which Monseigneur Jammes wrote me on the 8th September 1856. The time taken between sending and receiving explains why the Council hears so little from us. We were unable to communicate with other countries last year owing to the rebellions in China which makes travel difficult. These troubles prevented us from receiving any allowances subsequent to the 1500 (francs) sent in 1855. This sum was changed by . . . Libois for \$250 and arrived with us as a weight of 180 taels (i.e. 270 oz. of silver) . . . In 1857 we bought seven boys and four girls for 72 taels and spent 32 taels on their board and education — total 140 taels and nine tsien. In 1858 we bought two boys and two girls for 39 taels and 9 tsien and we spent 40 taels for keeping these fifteen children plus one master. Total 79 taels and 9 tsein which added to the 1857 sum totals 184 taels and 4 tsien. As we have only received 180 taels we are short of 4 taels and 4 tsein.

"Actually we bought 18 children — the four girls came from Tibet but only three of the boys were born in this country, the others came from the tribes living equi-distant from China, Lassa Kingdom, Assam province and the Empire of Burma. All now speak and pray in Tibetan . . . they speak Chinese among themselves and they may one day spread the Gospel".

The writer went on to describe the care taken of the children whereas those of their late Tibetan masters were untaught. The owner of Bongo brought his son and a slave who at the end of a few months knew more than the Lama's children. This annoyed the Lama, whose servants set fire to the mission but, by paying, the missionaries saved their lives and those of the children. Other Lamas are more co-operative and again parents were asking for their children to be educated. He hoped that the 1858 funds would arrive shortly. It was easier to work in Tibet than in the more populated areas of China. He mentioned the vicar of Lhasa but the name is indecipherable.

"Buying children and educating them is more expensive than in China for, unlike in China, infanticide is rare in Tibet. It is no disgrace for an unmarried girl to have children. This offence is only found in the convents of the Lamas when the father is of high rank. Less important ranks leave and seek a future elsewhere."

"This country, previously buried in the darkness of Buddhism, is now the cradle of Christianity. May God bless this Mission, and may the Council send us the means to continue."

This letter shows how funds reached the outlying missions. A "tael" was a weight (1½ oz.) and where in the form of money was normally silver of this weight. A tsein was one twelfth of a tael or one eighth of an ounce.

1859 Chang tchouan tan (Tibet)

This is an old name for Chengtu, now Chambo. It is the junction for four roads including the old Silk Road and the new motor road. It is the capital of the area.

The letter was written by Jacques Leon, Bishop of Dinopolis (?) on 30 August 1859 and was addressed to "Monsieur L'Abbé Levasseur, Directeur de l'oeuvre de la Ste. Enfance à Paris" and was carried outside the mails. It arrived on 28 September (?) 1860.

Monsieur
Monsieur L'abbé Levasseur
Directeur de l'oeuvre de la Ste. Enfance
à Paris

Hkappa
le 6 28 par 1860
Monsieur Levasseur

J. H. J. Chang tchouan tan 30 août 1859

Arrivé à Paris le 28 septembre 1860
Monsieur Levasseur

Monsieur Levasseur

An interesting letter as it described financial details — 10,000 French francs sent by Ste. Enfance in 1858 arrived allowing Leon to buy Tibetan children and continue baptism among the Chinese. The 1858-59 account read

"Vicariat Apostolique da Llassa

Baptêmes d'enfants d'infidiles	14992
sur les quels on connait la mors de	3956
(trs.) 102 Baptisms 78 men 24 women	taels 506.43
Help to Christians who baptise	5.83
Help to female Baptist who became blind	2.11
5 Pharmacies + pills and medicine	282.80
2 Orphans recently accepted	17.21
4 Orphans accepted during the present mission	16.95
2 Tibetan Orphans	15.00

	846.33

"These expenses = 6897.59 French francs (i.e. one tael = 8.15 francs)"

"Much money has been lost owing to the fighting — the last remittance has reached MIn-nân (Minkiang near Chentu) — three of our couriers were horribly tortured in Li Kiang fou (80 miles N. of Tali Yun) — two of them escaped death by a miracle. Three others have been imprisoned, two more seriously wounded by the Mohomedans, some were robbed, others compelled to return, finally the companion of the missionary carrying the letter M. Renou is sending you was killed making his escape. Nine or ten letters I sent to Bongo have been lost. M. Renou (see letter of 28 January 1859) chose asylum on 14 May in the country of the Lo'uts, the orphanage remained peaceful under a Chinese Baptist and a Tibetan. The replacement of the sub-prefect responsible for the tortures of my missionaries, by a man who has shewn goodwill and promised protection to the Lama who rules the country of the Sarong, leads us to hope that M. Renou will return."

Jacques Leon went on to say that he would send money to Renou through a courier to La Tsien Lou and some Tibetan souvenirs for the foundation's museum in Paris.

There are interesting points about the letters written by Renou and Leon. The former stated he had been away from Bongo for two months and wrote from Tcha-mon-Tong. Leon stated that nine or ten letters to Bongo had been lost and that Renou had chosen asylum in the country of the* Lo'uts. Renou stated that Tcha-mon-Tong was "*on the borders of Yun-nan and the Kingdom of Lassa*".

It has not proved possible to locate Bongo but from this evidence one would expect it to be between Chambo (from which Leon wrote) and Ta-sien-lou, perhaps Bomba (now Pang-ta), Tso-Kung, Pa-tang, Li-tang (Li-hua) or Ya Chiang.

If Renou travelled south towards the borders of Yun-nan then Tcha-mon-Tong was not Taichi-Gyandic but one of the villages now known as Ta-yii-le-sui (Dayul Gompa), Tan-po-lung, Te-jung, Tao-ch'eng or another.

* The Lohit River is a branch of the Brahmaputra crossing the Tibetan frontier by Rima, 200 miles south of Chamdo. The Lohit Valley and Lohit Road were used by the Frontier Mission between 1911 and 1914.

1865 "Ta-tsien-lou" (Tibet)

This town, Tatsienlu (now Kangting) was in Tibet at the time the letter was written. Its province, Sikang, was not formed until 1908 when Eastern Tibet was merged with West in 1908 and it received recognition as a province twenty years later.

*A Monsieur le Directeur
de l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance.
Passage Sainte Marie. 2
(Rue du Bai).
Paris.*

Ta-tsien-lou 20 Mai 1865.

*J. B. Goutelle
mission du Thibet.*

The letter was dated 20 May 1865 was addressed "A Monsieur le Directeur d l'oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance, Passage Sainte Marie 2, (Rue du Bai), Paris", and was written by J. B. Goutelle, under whose signature was written "mission du Thibet". The writer mentioned that the letter from Paris written in May 1864 arrived in May 1865 and acknowledged the earlier receipt of a letter dated 11 July 1864, with profuse and repeated thanks of the Mission for the generosity to the orphans. Gave the reason for not writing (trs.).

"All the roads in Tibet, either towards Sutchouen or towards Yunnan, are closed. For over a year all funds have been stopped. Also the persecution by the lamas or idol-worshipping priests has made communication impossible. In Tibet the work of Ste Enfance is limited. The Pagans have devastated our villages and killed many neophytes. Our orphans from Bongo, in danger of being sold as slaves, managed to escape. They are now back in the Orphanage but are still in danger. The conditions under which orphans are sold to the Pagans is atrocious. Treated like dirt, orphans work continuously in fields and are beaten by their masters who hardly ever feed them. In order to increase their number, the owners pair them with either one or another just like animals. Their lives are miserable and their only salvation lies in our mission and the funds that the Ste Enfance can send".

“I hope these considerations will give you an idea of what your alms may achieve in Tibet, by saving a child from slavery.”

The letter was carried outside the mails, almost certainly via Chengtu and then south through Kwei Ting and Kaichow to Canton and Hong Kong. The letter was endorsed on arrival 12 December 1865 so it was only 208 days in transit.

Travelling Times

Ten of the twelve letters had the day of writing and the day of arrival marked. The day of writing did not mean that a messenger left that same day and in the case of the 1856 letter from Ta ly fou the endorsement shows that the letter was still there ten weeks after it was written.

The 1849 letter from Macau was the quickest taking 63 days. The other letters from China took 126 (1861 Hou pé), 133 (1858 Chang Tong), 167 (1852 Kwei Tcheou), 208 (1856 Ta ly fou) and 218 (1852 Kwei Txen).

Of course letters from Tibet took longer, 1857 191, 1859 298 and 395 days and 1865 206 days.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

In 1839 the Opium War broke out and in August 1842 the Treaty of Nanking was signed. In July 1850 the Triads of Canton rose in rebellion against the Emperor Hsien Feng who had come to the Dragon Throne in Peking in February.

In 1851 the Taiping standard was raised and in September the rebels captured Yung-nan. Two years later they captured Nanking.

In 1854 the Crimean War broke out and in 1857 the Indian Mutiny. In 1858 the allies took the Taku forts and advanced on Tientsin where the Treaty was signed in July. In 1860 the Taipings broke out of Nanking, taking Soo-chou and advancing towards Shanghai but were repulsed by the allies who again took the Taku forts and advanced on Peking where the Convention was signed in October.

In 1861 the American Civil War broke out and in August the Emperor of China died and a coup d'état put the Empress on the throne. In December the Taipings took Ning-po and Hang-chou. Next month they attacked Shanghai but were again defeated, losing Ning-po in May.

In 1863 Colonel Gordon took command and captured Soo-chou and in the following year Hang-chou and Nanking, the rebel Emperor Hung Hsiu-ch'uan committed suicide.

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