CHINA AND THE EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS TO TIBET, 1860-1880

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A. FIRST ATTEMPTS: THE FRENCH MISSIONARIES

The treaties concluded by China with France, England, the United States and Russia in 1858 and 1860 provided for free travel within the Chinese empire for the subjects of those powers; this clause was later included in all the treaties of friendship and commerce signed with other European nations. An unexpected problem arose almost at once: the entry of Western travellers into Tibet, a region which the treaties did not distinguish from the territory of China proper.

As at first Western interests were almost exclusively limited to the coast, the question concerned essentially the missionaries only. The Roman Catholic church had not forgotten that a mission of the Capuchin order had existed in Lhasa between 1707 and 1745, with two interruptions. Pushed back to Nepal and thence (1768) to India, the Capuchins were hit hard by the events of the French revolution and of the Napoleonic wars, and they vanished from the scene 1). But in 1846 the Pope provided for the future by creating the Vicariate Apostolic of Tibet, for the moment a purely nominal one, entrusted to the Missions Étrangères (or Lazarists) of Paris.

Although the Sino-French treaty of 1844 forbade the missionaries to move outside the five treaty ports, the Lazarists lost no time in penetrating into Eastern Kāms. A first half-secret exploring journey was undertaken in 1847. Then in 1854 Charles Renou and Jean-Charles Fage founded a missionary station at Bonga, a remote village between the Salween and the Mekong, about 28° 20' N. 2) In 1859 it was attacked by hostile elements and the missionaries

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1) On the Catholic missions in Tibet till the middle of the 18th century see L. Petech, I missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal, I, Rome 1952, XXXIV-LXVII.

retired to sMar-k'ams (Chin. Chiang-k'a), a Tibetan district headquarters farther north 9), and then back to Szechwan.

As soon as the convention of Peking (1860), confirming the Tientsin treaty of 1858, expressly stipulated the right of the missionaries to penetrate and to preach in the interior of China, the Missions Étrangères launched an energetic drive to render the title of their Vicariate effective. In 1861 Renou and Fage received passports covering Tibet, signed by baron Gros, French representative in Peking, and by prince Kung, president of the newly-established tsung-li ya-men; and when on the 4th June of that year they arrived at sMar-k'ams, these documents were accepted and recognized by the local authorities 4).

It goes without saying that the sMar-k'ams governor at once informed the Tibetan government. The Lamaist clergy became alarmed; and indeed in that same year 1861 the court of the minor Pan-c'een at Tashilhunpo was informed that the English had beaten the imperial army and that, in accordance with an edict obtained from the emperor, the French "lords of the Catholic Church" (T'an-kru sbyar-bo = T'ien-chu chiao?) had arrived to sMar-k'ams, bent on travelling further and spreading their religion; not only the people of K'ams, a Buddhist country, but specially that of Central Tibet, where the sect of Tsöñ-k'a-pa was flourishing, requested that the missionaries should be prevented from entering Tibet. Some time later special rites were held for this purpose 5).

\[\text{\footnote{b)} C.-H. Desgodins, 119-120; A. Launay, I, 318-319, 322.}
\[\text{\footnote{c)} C.-H. Desgodins, 122; A. Launay, I, 329.}
\[\text{\footnote{d)} De'i shabs su gon ma bdag po c'een po dan rgyol nhan p'yi giin pa'i dmag skor gyis c'ab srid la 'jen c'a c'e tsam yod par ma zad | gnam bskos mc'og nas bka'i bles t'ob don bzin P'ie ren gi T'an kru sbyar bo'i dpon po a ma rje sogs mahn tsam rim bzin sa bsdkor dan k'o pa ra'i gi c'os lugs spel bar sron ma sMar k'ams su'byor ciin | k'o pa'i c'os lugs lla spyod sogs ni log pa'i lam du bkri ba 'ba' zig yod stabs | spyir Bod dan K'am Sog Rgya ron sogs sain rgyas kyi bstan pa dar ba'i gnas dan | lhag par rje rgyal ba giis pa'i bstan pa sin tu dar b'a'i gnas Bod yul dBus gTsang k'o'ins rnam kyi skye bo spyi mgrin gcig nas k'o pa rnam bdkag sdoms kyi las don ts'ugs rgyu'i skor la brag tu mdzad pa'i bka' lan stol ba dan de mts'uns mc'og gsum dam can rgya mts'or t'ugs smon p'rin r'ol yan dag mdzad. Life of the Fifth Pan-c'een, 129b.—And again: K'ya'ad par de'n shabs ga Yin c'i li rgyos da'n | T'an kru sbyar bo 'zes pa dpon bsgrol gyis gon ma c'en po'i c'ab srid la log bsgrol dan Bod yul sogs su c'os log spel rgyu'i grags nun c'e sga'in yin stabs | de dag rmg med du li nas | rgyal bstan spyi dan k'ya'ad par dGe 'idan rin lugs bza'n po ri'nd dar rgyas yun gnas yod pa'i skyabs 'jug gsal 'dubs 'zus par bka' bles dan p'ya'ag byin mdud bcas stsal. Op. cit., 131a.}
