

This Extensive, Potent Empire: Overland to Peking

On August 27 in 1689, in the Siberian trading town of Nerchinsk, a treaty was signed by Fyodor Golovin, later Chancellor of Russia, on behalf of the joint Tsars Peter I and Ivan V, and Songgotu, a leading Qing minister, on behalf of the Kangxi Emperor. It was written in Latin. This first treaty between Russia and the Qing rulers, establishing defined borders, was translated into Russian and Manchu, but not into Chinese until a couple of hundred years later. The use of Latin may have been a diplomatic ploy to circumvent the practice of using language to assert Chinese superiority, and perhaps also for the Manchu Emperor to circumvent his Han Chinese bureaucracy. But it was also something of a common language between individuals with European education. The Chinese translators, and Latin speakers, were the Jesuit fathers Jean-Francois Gerbillon and Thomas Pereira.

While the major European powers were confined to Macao and Canton in their trading interests, this extending through to the 19th Century, the Russians had long been active in trading through Siberia, across Mongolia to Peking, across Grand Tartary, as the Europeans knew it. This activity gained greater Russian Government interest and control with the expansion of settlements, people and trade across Siberia under Peter the Great¹. Language could be a problem, but as with the Treaty, there was always a way; European travellers recall being able to use Latin with the Jesuit fathers in China, using them and their extraordinary language skills for translation to the Manchu and Chinese written and spoken languages.

With the Treaty came further Russian missions and embassies, and few failed to result in published accounts of the travels involved and descriptions of the country, court and people, that enlivened European imagination, thought, and trade and missionary prospects. Publication was usually in French or English or more secondary European languages, since many of the major travellers and writers, were adventurers, physicians, naturalists and diplomats brought into Russia from Europe, alongside the westernisation impulses of Tsar Peter and Catherine the Great, the dominant Russian leaders of the later 17th and 18th centuries.

Central to the various official missions were those associated with the Russian Orthodox missionaries and their establishment in Peking. This has been summarised comprehensively². Briefly, they involved agreements between the Chinese and Russian courts and the church hierarchy to maintain and continually refresh the manning and activities of an Orthodox mission in Peking, with the regular exchange of an Archimandrite and priests, usually associated with merchant trading expeditions that forged recognised routes from Moscow through Siberia, Mongolia, across the Great Wall and into Peking,



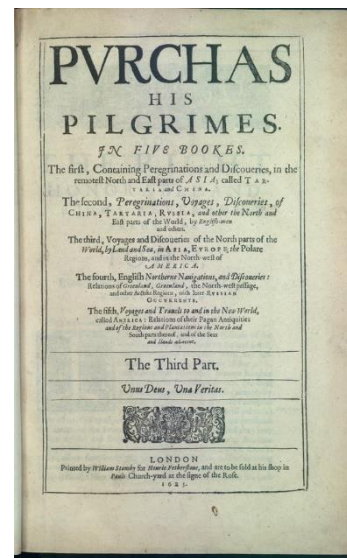
Russian Ambassadors in China in the 17th Century. An illustration from the late 19th C Russian magazine Niva

¹ Peter was born in 1672, ruling from 1682, initially under the regency of his half-sister Sophia, and jointly with his half-brother Ivan, until the latter's death in 1696.

² **Widmer, E.**, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking during the Eighteenth Century*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

Through to the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, there were several official Russian missions, with envoys carrying varying levels of status and authority³. The first to reach Peking was that led by Ivan Petlin in 1618-1619. He failed to have an audience with the Qing Wanli Emperor, apparently because he did not provide the required tribute. Language difficulties appear quickly; Petlin returned to Russia with a letter from the Chinese suggesting trade, but it seems that it was not able to be read until 1675. The next mission was in 1654, with the Ming Dynasty now established, and Fedor Baikov the envoy. Baikov also failed to meet the emperor and the mission got bogged down, in what is becoming a recurring theme, in the issues of gifts and tribute and protocol. However, his advance guard, led by Setkul Ablin, a Bukhara-based trader was more successful in having an audience. It's notable that the British Macartney embassy, 150 years later, struggled to deal with the same issues of gifts and tribute, and protocol. In 1675, Nicolai Milesco was appointed Russian ambassador to Peking. He sent forward Ignatiy Milovanov who reached Peking, his role to inform the Kangxi Emperor of the forthcoming Milesco embassy (and incidentally meeting the prominent Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest, when they would have conversed in Latin). Both envoys in the end failed to achieve their aims of audience and establishing trading agreements. In 1689, the close associate of Peter, Fyodor Govolin, negotiated the Treaty of Nerchinsk, but never travelled into China.

Accounts of these missions, largely in the form of reports and letters, were not generally accessible to the West; however, an account by Ivan Petlin, was published by Samuel Purchas in 1625⁴. It was not until the first Russian mission after the Treaty took place, that accounts of it were published by European publishers and made widely available to European readers, and perhaps more importantly, members of the governments and courts.



³ **Baddeley, J.F.**, Russia, Mongolia, China. Being some record of the relations between them from the beginning of the XVIIth century to the death of the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, A.D. 1602-1676, rendered mainly in the form of narratives dictated or written by the envoys sent by the Russian tsars, or their vovodas in Siberia to the Kalmuk and Mongol khans & princes, and to the emperors of China. London, MacMillan, 1919. 2 vols.

⁴ **Samuel Purchas**, Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes; Contayning a History of the World, in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and Others. London, William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1625, 4 vol. The accounts of Tartary, China and Asia in general are largely in the 3rd volume (the Third Part).

Thro' great Ustiga: Ides and Brand

In 1692, a few short years after the Treaty of Nerchinsk, with the Jesuits close to the Kangxi Emperor and European powers still struggling to gain entry for trading and missions along the Chinese coast, Peter the Great sent an embassy along the long-tested route through Siberia and the Gobi Desert to Peking. It was led by Eberhard Isbrand Ides (1657-1708; in various spellings). Ides was born in Glückstadt in Holstein (and variously claimed as Danish), established himself as a merchant in Hamburg and turned up in Archangel as a merchant in 1677⁵. He moved to Moscow in 1687, becoming well-known in business and political circles, such that he was chosen by Peter as Ambassador to lead a mission to Peking with the objective of establishing trade agreements. The mission took place in 1692-95, comprising some 250 noblemen, traders, soldiers and auxiliaries, taking 18 months to reach Peking. Ides was in Peking over the period 3 November 1693 until 19 February 1694. There were both trading and political objectives, one of the latter to confirm the agreement of the Emperor to abide by the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which he duly did, the Chinese court not having confirmed this up to that time. Ides failed to meet other requests from the Emperor, such as returning Chinese defectors who had crossed the Mongolian border, or removing Cossacks from the Orthodox Church in Peking. He was however, instrumental in establishing steady trade across the border, and the trip was a financial success. Ides later returned to Moscow setting up an armaments factory at Archangel where he had a successful shipbuilding and trading business.

There are two accounts of the mission; both Ides and the secretary to the embassy, Adam Brand (1650-1746), wrote accounts, published in various languages. Brand published his initially in German in 1698, going through four editions before translations into both Dutch and English (1698) and French (1699)⁶. It continued to be published through the early part of the 18th Century. Brand was a Lübeck-born trader who eventually returned to Prussia, holding state councillor positions. He also sent his account to Leibniz who included it in his influential *Novissima Sinica*⁷.

Brand, Adam. *Beschreibung der Chinesischen Reise Welche vermittelt einer Zaaris. Gesandtschaft durch Dero Ambassadeur Herrn Isbrand. Ao. 1693, 94 und 1695. Von Moscau uber Grosz-Ustiga Siberien Dauren und durch die Mongolische Tartaray verichtet worden: und was sich dabey begeben aus selbst erfahrner Nachricht mitgetheilet. Von Adam Brand. Hamburg. Bey Benjamin Schillern Buch-handlern im Dohm 1698. Cordier 2468-9.*

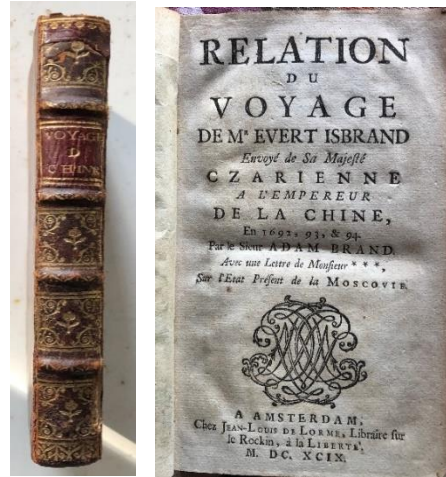
Brand Adam. *Journal of the Embassy from their Majesties John and Peter Alexievitz, Emperors of Muscovy, etc. Over Land into China, Through the Provinces of Ustiugha, Siberia, Dauri, and the Great Tartary, to Peking, the Capital City of the Chinese Empire... Translated from the Original in High-Dutch, Printed at Hamburgh, 1698. Title, 134pp. Engraved frontispiece portrait of Czar Peter the Great and two engraved plates. 12mo. London, D. Brown & T. Goodwin, (1698.) Cordier 2468; Not in Lust;*

⁵ Nolte, Hans-Heinrich, "Ides, Eberhard Isbrand" in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 10, 1974, pp. 119-120. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd12495877X.html#ndbcontent>

⁶ Eun Kyung Min, *China and the writing of English literary modernity, 1690-1777*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018. p.18.

⁷ Leibniz, G. H., *Novissima Sinica historiam nostri temporis illustratura*. 1699. Cordier 834, Lust 92, Lowendahl 234. This is the enlarged second edition, first published in 1697.

Brand Adam *Relation du voyage de Mr. Evert Isbrand, Envoyé de Sa Majesté Czarienne a l'Empereur de la Chine, en 1692, 93 & 94. Par le Sieur Adam Brand. Avec une lettre de Monsieur ***, sur l'Etat Présent de la Moscovie.* A Amsterdam, chez Jean-Louis de Lorme, M. DC. XCIX. [1699] pp. [4] 249 [1], engraved frontispiece, folding map. 12mo. Book plate on inner front cover. Full contemporary calf, spine gilt. Cordier 2469; Lust 506, Lowendahl 230.



The French edition has a frontispiece showing European travellers bowing to the Emperor, a preface and then pages 1-182 comprise the account of the mission. This is followed by a folding map showing the route of the journey with the number of days noted at various stops (up to 100 at the Great Wall and ending with 110 with the arrival in Peking). The map is headed '*Tabula haec Consensu Amplissimi Consulius d. Nicolai Witsen es ejus authenticus tabulis extracta est*' It is followed by a Table which relates the dates indicated on the map with places. In his Preface, Brand pays tribute to Nicolai Witsen, remarking that his map was sufficient, and far better than preceding ones, to allow their route to be drawn on it.

The account comprises 15 chapters, covering the background to the mission, and then the details of the journey, in the latter chapters in the form of a journal or diary. He kisses the hands of both Csars, and departs Moscow on March 13 1692 with an entourage of 21, including 12 Germans, wine, baggage, wagons, and all necessities. It is a lively and detailed account, of the geography, the journey and the people. On July 1 they reach Tobolsko (Tobolsk), capital of Siberia and 3000 miles from Moscow. On 10 March 1693 they reach Lake Baikal, and on the 6th of April, with 250 men, hundreds of camels, horses and wagons, enter the Gobi desert. It is September before they reach the first outposts of China, and sight the Wall on 27 October, their passage through it memorably illustrated in Ides' great fold-out plate. They enter Peking on the 3rd of November. There follows pages of extraordinary observations of protocols, meetings and audiences, gifts and presentations and meeting the Emperor. It is vivid and must have been unbelievably exotic for European readers. Brand gives more general details of China and its capital, and then records that on 19 February 1694, they leave.



The final part of the book is an account of the current state of China, addressed to Monsieur (the King's brother).

It's worth dwelling a little on Witsen (1641-1717), who looms fairly large in these and contemporary publications. He was what would be the equivalent of mayor of Amsterdam, ambassador to the English Court, and a noted cartographer, also travelling to Russia to advise Peter the Great on his shipbuilding. He published the first map of Siberia in 1690 and later compiled a large work on Siberia in 1692 *'Noord en Oost Tartarye'*. This was further enlarged from a wide range of sources, and republished in 1705, providing accumulated information on Northern and Eastern Europe and Asia. It is the 1690 map, covering Western Russian, Siberia and China, that Brand used to mark their route and is included in the book. Witsen was also the translator of an account by the Portuguese Jesuit Father Pereira, of his travels accompanying the Kangxi Emperor into Tartary, along with Verbiest. This has been published, along with Verbiest's account, by Pierre d'Orleans and translated into English for the Hakluyt Society.⁸ Witsen's translation was included in his 1692 compendium.

The bookplate in the copy described is that of the Marchese Carlo Gerolamo Falletti di Barolo (1731-1800). He was husband of Maria Giuseppina de Villacardet de Fleury. His son Ottavio Alessandro (1753-1828), was a senator of the Empire and member of the Turin Academy of Sciences. Ottavio's son Carlo Tancredi married Julia Colbert (Giula, Marchesa di Barolo, born Colbert, who hosted Silvio Pellico, after his return from prison in Austria. Carlo Tancredi and his wife founded the Sisters of St Anne and for a time was a member of Napoleon's court.



Brand, 1699. p.182. *Tabula haec Consensu Amplissimi Consulis d. Nicolai Witsen ex ejus authenticis tabulis extracta est*, which says that the map is the authentic map of Witsen, published with his consent.

The English translation of 1698 also includes, from p. 119, a Supplement *'Some curious observations concerning the products of Russia'*, translated from the original in Latin

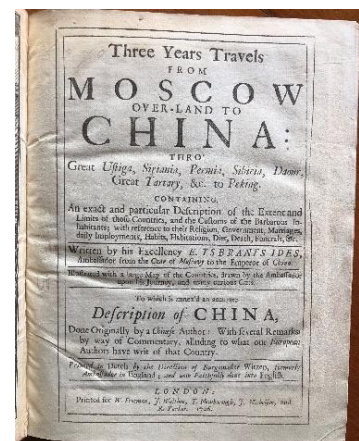
⁸ **Orléans, Pierre Joseph d'**, History of the two Tartar conquerors of China, including the two journeys into Tartary of Father Verbiest, in the suite of the Emperor Kang-Hi; from the French of Pere Pierre Joseph d'Orleans, of the Company of Jesus. To which is added Father Perreira's journey into Tartary in the suite of the same Emperor, from the Dutch of Nicolaas Witsen. Translated and edited by the Earl of Ellesmere. With an Introduction by R.H.Major, Esq., of the British Museum, Honorary Secretary of the Hakluyt Society. London: Hakluyt Society. MDCCCLIV [1854].

by Henry William Ludolf, not in the French edition. Ludolf (1655-1712)⁹ was Secretary to Prince George of Denmark, Queen Anne's consort, until 1691. He travelled in Russia in 1692-1694, was a renowned linguist and religious writer, and wrote the first Russian Grammar to be published in English, by Oxford University, a grammar acknowledged by Leibniz in his linguistic studies.

Ides' own account was first published in Dutch, in Amsterdam in 1704, in English in 1706, and in German in 1707.

Ides, E Ysbrands *Three Years Travels from Moscow over-land to China: thro' Great Ustiga, Siriania, Permia, Sibiria, Daour, Great Tartary, &c. to Peking. Containing an exact and particular Description of the Extent and Limits of those Countries, and the Customs of the Barbarous Inhabitants; with reference to their Religion, Government, Marriages, daily Employments, Habits, Habitations, Diet, Deaths, Funerals, etc. To which is annex'd an accurate Description of China, done originally by a Chinese author; with several remarks by way of commentary alluding to what our European authors have writ of that country.* W. Freeman, J Walthoe, T Newborough, J Nicholson, and R Parker. London. 1706. 4to pp. [14] 210 [2]. Folding map, 30 plates. Full contemporary embossed calf, rebaked with original spine, gilt, laid down. Cordier, 2468. Lust 519. Löwendahl, 294.

Ides' account is more comprehensive than that of Brand, and is illustrated, including a large fold-out map. Nicolas Witsen was also the translator, contributing 30 engraved plates, with an engraved title page and seven double page folding plates, and one larger folding plate of 'The Ambassador's entry thro' the famous wall'. The map was considered 'the best of all foreign maps which were based on the



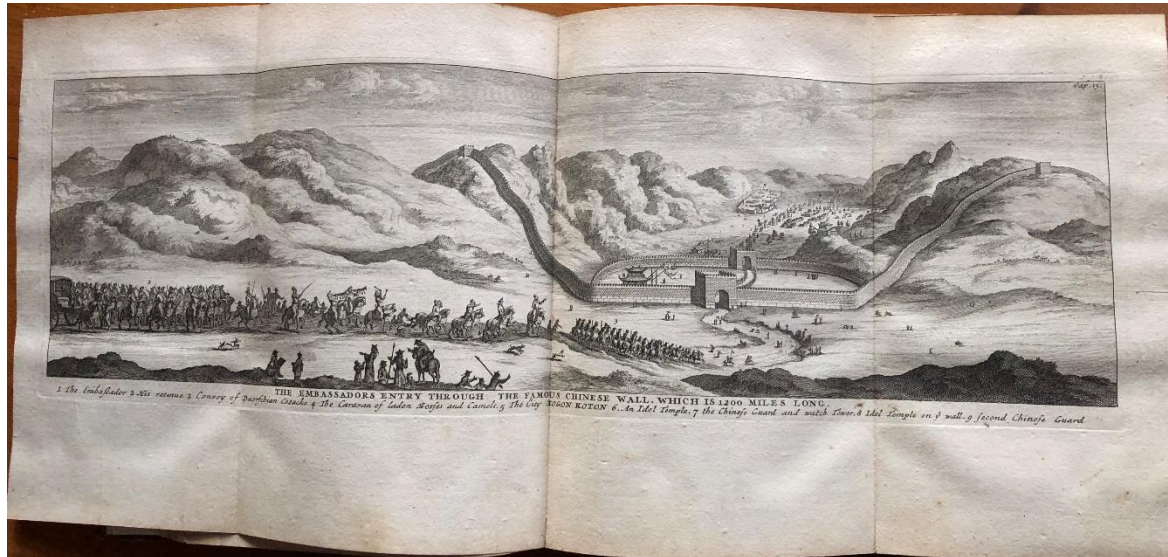
Russian original sources and which have exercised a great influence on the development of Russian cartography¹⁰. There is a dedication to Peter on the map, inset at upper left, 'Pierre Alexewitz, Empereur de Russie', and a title inset at lower left 'Nouvelle Carte de L'Empire de Russie. Dressée sur les meilleurs Plans qui aient paru jusq'a present, et particulierement sur celui de M. Le Bourgue = maitre Witsen. Leve sur les lieux et rectifié par Everard Isbrands Ides.' That is, the map was drawn from the best available by Witsen, with Ides' additions and corrections from his first-hand observations. The engraved title page is dated 'London, printed in ye Year 1705.'

⁹ Stupperich, Robert, "Ludolf, Heinrich Wilhelm" in: Neue Deutsche Biographie 15 (1987), pp. 304-305 <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd115754571.html#ndbcontent>

¹⁰ Breitfuss, L., Early maps of North-Eastern Asia and of the lands around the North Pacific. Imago Mundi, 87-99, Published online: 29 Jul 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085693908591864>



The book has 20 chapters, the first ten covering the journey across Siberia to their arrival at the Great Wall. Their passage through that is illustrated in the magnificent fold out engraving of the great procession, covered also by Brand.



Again, as with Brand, Ides covers the details of the Chinese court, the protocol, their audience, the Emperor's elephants, dogs and apes, and their return home. Three of the double plates show details of the Ambassador's audience with the Emperor. The first two (pp. 68-69) show 'The Ambassadors Introduction into the Audience Hall' with elephants and carriages lined up and the embassy's procession towards the gates of the court, and 'The Ambassador entertained by the Emperor in the best audience chamber', with a key to people, including the Kangxi Emperor, the Jesuit priests Thomas Pereira and Jean Gerbillon, Ides,

Ministers and interpreters. The third *'The Ambassadors Audience of leave of the Emperor'* shows the court lined up for the processional of the leave-taking. The embassy was a part success, in that they achieved their audience and diplomatic exchanges, but a failure in not achieving the sort-for trading agreements.

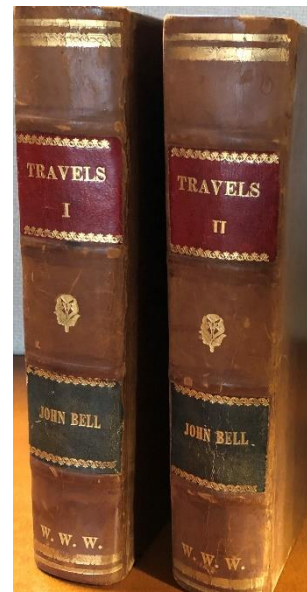


Following Ide's account, there is a *'Short description of the vast Empire of China, by Dionysius Kao, a native of that Country'* [pp. 111-208] This was written originally by Dionysius Kao, a Chinese Catholic convert. The details and origin of this tract are given in a translator's 2-page note at the end of the book. It is unclear whether this was Witsen or perhaps Henry William Ludolf, whomever which has also heavily annotated the work in many footnotes, which are of considerable independent interest. The translator (*'Learned Pen'*, as on the title page) says that the original in his hands was in Latin *'But how the author came into Latin, (if I may that barbarous stuff in which I found him), and also in High-Dutch, I can give no other account than what is hinted in the first page...'*, and that the author Kao was Chinese, born in Canton, was a surgeon, and converted and travelled through Siam and India. He handed the manuscript himself to the Muscovite Ambassador, Ides. The document provides a comprehensive and concise description of the empire, the court and the integrated provinces and kingdoms, then chapters on the inhabitants and Christians, the structures including the Great Wall, geography, ships and bridges, trees and fruit, religion and morality, ending in something on the *'Original Descent of the last Race of Chinese Emperors'*.

Together, the accounts of Brand and Ides provided Europe with something special, the first illustrated and detailed, eye-witness account of the great journey across Russia, Siberia, Mongolia and into China and the Imperial Court. It set the scene for both the travels, and the narratives of the 18th century.

The Charming Narrative: John Bell

Little more than 20 years after Ides' embassy, Tsar Peter used another European import to be part of a second Russian embassy to Peking. The Scottish physician John Bell (1691-1780) travelled to St Petersburg in 1714 and must have been sufficiently connected, and recognised by Peter the Great, that he was chosen to accompany a Russian embassy to Persia in 1715 led by Artemy Petrovich Volynsky¹¹. His account of this occupies the first part of his 2 volume *Travels*; they returned to St Petersburg in 1717. He caught his breath, then accompanied Lev Ismailov¹², the leader of a Russian embassy to China, on their mission to the Kangxi Emperor in the years 1718 to 1721. The Emperor was nearing the end of his epic 61 years of ruling China at large (he died in 1722); in looking back, he was a third part of a virtuous triangle of the world's greatest leaders which included Louis XIV (d. 1715), and Peter the Great (d. 1725). The three knew of each other rather well, Louis having been involved in the sending of Jesuit missionaries to the Chinese Court in the 1690s and Peter having needing to develop a border and trading policy with China throughout the length of his reign. The Kangxi Emperor even, quite momentarily, sent a mission in the opposite direction in 1712.



Bell's book became foundational. A hundred and fifty years later, Alexander Michie, another Scot, opens his account of a journey from Shanghai to St Petersburg via Peking¹³, with an acknowledgement of Bell's '*charming narrative*'. George Thomas Staunton, in 1821, translating the Chinese envoy Tulisen's account of his Mission to the Tourgouth Khan on the Caspian Sea, the mission sent by the Kangxi Emperor referred to above¹⁴, writes with Bell open beside him, informing his copious footnotes and tracing the routes that Bell and Tulisen used, contrasting and comparing, one providing veracity for the other. A rather negative review of Ellis's 1817 account of the Amherst Embassy points to '*...that excellent book 'The Travels of John Bell of Antermony' the best model perhaps for travel-writing in the English language*'.¹⁵ Bell's account had real charm in both senses of the word.

¹¹ Artemy Petrovich Volynsky (1689-1740) was a Russian diplomat and Minister. Tsar Peter sent him on the mission to Iran and appointed him Governor of Astrakhan in 1718. He governed Kazan under Catherine I, but came to grief as a Minister under the Tsarina Anna when charged with conspiracy and misconduct. He was beheaded.

¹² Lev Vasilievich Ismailov [Izmaylov] (1685-1738), a Russian General from one of the most notable of Russian noble families.

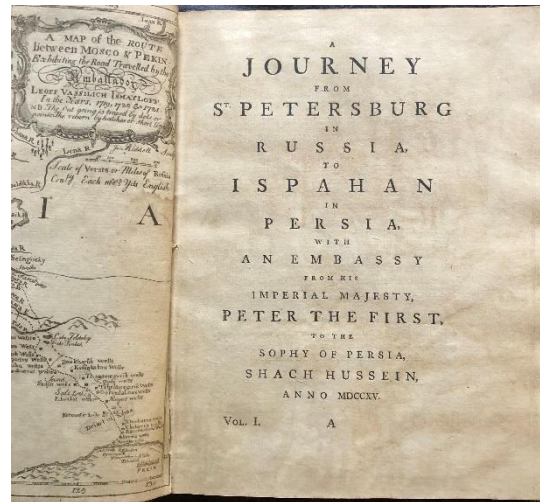
¹³ **Michie, Alexander** *The Siberian Overland Route From Peking to Petersburg, through the Deserts and Steppes of Mongolia, Tartary, &c.* London, John Murray, 1864.

¹⁴ **Staunton, Sir George Thomas** *Narrative of the Chinese Embassy to the Khan of the Tourgouth Tartars, in the Years 1712, 13, 14, & 15; by the Chinese Ambassador, and Published, by the Emperor's Authority, at Peking. Translated from the Chinese, and accompanied by an appendix of miscellaneous translations.* London, John Murray, 1821.

¹⁵ Quarterly review, vol 17, p 464, 1817.

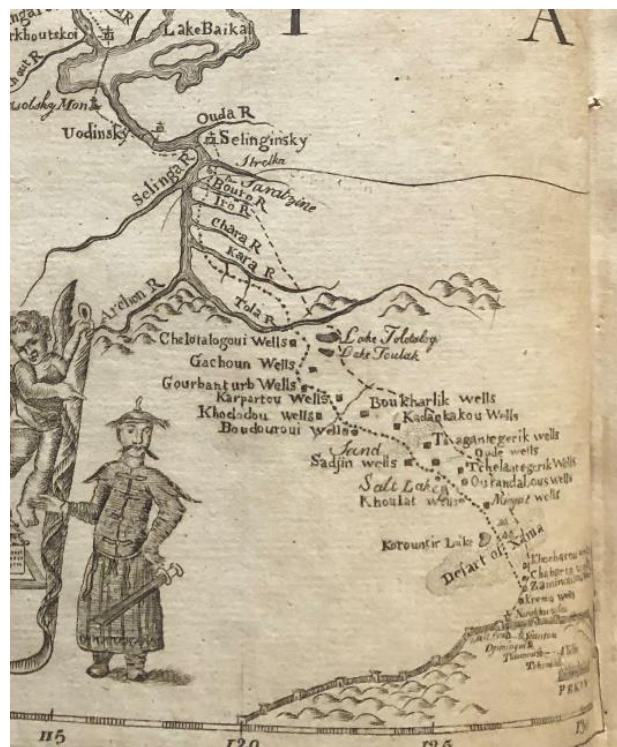
Bell, John, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia*. Glasgow: for the Author by Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1763. 2 volumes, 4to. Vol. I: [xvii] - including list of subscribers, (2), fold-out map, 357 pp. (2 pp. Publisher's Advertisements); Vol. II: (1), 426pp. (1pp.) Alterations by the Author for Volumes I & II. Cordier 2093; Lust 314; Lowendahl 528.

The book was reissued in London and Dublin in 1764, with a second edition published in 1788 in Edinburgh eight years after his death, with an additional map. The first edition map shows Bell's journey, dots and dashes showing the journey out and that back, and includes an inset of the 'North Front of Peking'. It was drawn by Joseph Riddell, and on the right-hand side, where the journey tracks down through the Gobi desert and the Chinese border on to Peking, the script gets smaller and smaller as though the engraver was running out of room.



Volume I includes the book plate of Thomas Dundas, 1st Baron Dundas (1741–1820), known as Sir Thomas Dundas, 2nd Baronet from 1781 to 1794, a Scottish politician who sat in the House of Commons from 1763 to 1794, after which he was raised to the peerage as Baron Dundas. He was responsible for commissioning the *Charlotte Dundas*, the world's "first practical steamboat". Since his book plate was affixed to the volume after binding the work was probably rebound sometime in the late 18th C, perhaps for Dundas himself.

Bell's clear and immediate narrative includes detailed descriptions of the geography and scenery in the countries visited, he describes the towns and villages, the people and their leaders, the shooting and fishing (of which there was a lot), and includes valuable, and unique at that time, descriptions of the leading Mongol high priests, including the Kutuchtu, whom he met and he mentions two other senior lamas of the Mongols, the Bogdupantzin and the Delay-lama, both who were in the wider vicinity in Mongolia but whom he never met.



He would have been a good travelling companion. He says that while filling in time at Selinginsky near the Chinese border, waiting for permission to proceed on to Peking, he observed a strangely dressed man standing with some boys who were fishing. When they caught fish, the man took them and gently returned them into the river. It turns out that the man was an Indian brahmin who thus could see no harm to animal life. Bell invited him to his accommodation and 'offered him a dram', but this was refused since the man didn't eat or

drink with strangers. After all this time, Bell the Scotsman had the means of a dram with him.

Through these narratives, there are connections and threads. This small, adventurous, curious and often eloquent group of individuals in their various times, sometimes met, or reached across the years. Bell meets the ageing Father Bouvet¹⁶, and just as Staunton uses Bell to accompany him in translating the mission of Tulisen, so Bell and Tulisen actually met. Bell and the Ismailov party were kicking their heels in Selinginsky, waiting to hear from the Emperor about their proceeding on to Peking. Selinginsky was a small town of about 200 houses and 2 churches, all wooden, on the banks of the river Selinga, and notable for hosting travellers, missions and no doubt more furtive parties, crossing from Siberia into the Empire. On the 24th June 1720:

..’arrived an officer from the court of Peking, sent on purpose to discover the number and quality of the embassy. This gentleman, whose name was Tulishin, was a Manchu Tartar by birth, and a member of the tribunal for western affairs, with which he was very well acquainted. These officers are called Surgutsky by the Mongalls and by the Europeans Mandarin, a Portuguese word, derived from Mando. He had formerly been in this country, and had learned the Russian language. He pretended to have been employed on some business by the Tush-du-Chan at Urga; and hearing of the ambassador’s arrival had come to pay respects to him. It was however, well known that he was sent to enquire whether the ambassador came on a friendly errand. He was received very kindly; and after he had stayed three days, and made his observations, he returned very satisfied.’

Tulisen informed the party that they would have to wait until he had reported back to the Emperor, and the Emperor’s decision (ultimately favourable) was sent back across the border. On November 2nd, after a long crossing of the Mongolian desert, ... *’about noon we could perceive the famous wall, running along the tops of the mountains towards the north-east. One of our people cried out LAND, as if we had been all this while at sea.’* On the 18th of November, *...’we mounted and proceeded towards the city, in the following order:*

*An officer with his sword drawn.
Three soldiers.
One kettle drummer.
Twenty-four soldiers, three in rank.
The steward.
Twelve footmen.
Two pages.
Three interpreters.
The Ambassador, and a mandarin of distinction.
Two secretaries.
Six gentlemen, two and two.
Servants and attendants.’*

They travelled 2 hours across the city to their lodging near the Emperor’s palace, an indication of the size of the city, and probably its pressing population. On the 28th November, the embassy met the Emperor. The audience is wonderfully described; it is grand, protracted, formal, but has an air of simplicity in relation to the Emperor himself. *’The Emperor sat cross-legged on his throne. He was dressed in a short, loose coat of sable, having the fur outward, lined with lambskin; under which he wore a long tunic of yellow silk, interwoven with figures of golden dragons with five claws; which device no person is allowed to bear except the imperial family. On his head was a little round cap, faced with black fox skin; on the top of which I observed a large beautiful pearl in the shape of a pear, which, together with a tassel of red silk tied*

¹⁶ Louis Bouvet was one of the six Jesuit fathers sent by Louis XIV to China in 1687. He wrote an account of his time there. <https://ianferg.nz/an-universal-genius-louis-xivs-jesuit-fathers-in-pekings/>

bellow the pearl, was all the ornament I saw about this mighty monarch. The throne was also very simple, being made of wood; but of neat workmanship. It is raised five easy steps from the floor, is open towards the company; but has a large japanned screen on each side to defend it from the wind.'

Bell continues to provide a vivid account of their stay in Peking, negotiations with the very welcoming and benevolent Emperor, descriptions of the city and the Wall. The Mandarin Tulishen returns again, arriving on the 29th of November to make a list of all the gifts that the embassy was going to give the Emperor on behalf of the Tsar, yet again evidence of the importance of gifts, what they were, how they were given, the reciprocity. Eventually they make the long return journey to St Petersburg, Bell writing that he didn't want to bother the reader with details of the return journey where they only copied in return the outward journey. They left Lorenz Lange, a member of the mission and agent of the Tsar, behind in Peking until 1722 to continue to negotiate for the Tsar on trade, not particularly successfully.

The second volume includes the translated diary of Lange. This was originally published in French in 1726 in Leyden¹⁷. Lorenz or Lorent Lange (c.1690-1752) was possibly Swedish and entered the Tsar's service in 1715-17 when he was sent as Peter's special envoy to China, accompanied by the British surgeon Thomas Garvine (one of nearly 100 physicians and surgeons called to Russia by Peter the Great), his mission being to promote Russian commercial interests. The Kangxi Emperor had actually requested that Russia send out a doctor, along with priests to administer to the Albazinians, the remnant of whom still resided in Peking and followed the Orthodox faith, and Garvine and Lange were accordingly part of that mission, which left for Peking before Tulishen and his convoy had returned. Lange was, incidentally, tasked with bringing back a porcelain stove for Peter¹⁸. Lange published an account of this first journey from St Petersburg to Peking 1721, as part of a larger, multi-author two volume work in German edited by Friedrich Weber,¹⁹ with an English translation published in 1723.



There are no images of Bell or Lange, but here is Thomas Garvine, the Glasgow physician who accompanied Lange. It gives some flavour of the times. Painted by William Mosman who was active e between 1731 and 1772.

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/w7zcsq3h>

Weber, Friedrich Christian (ed), *The Present State of Russia in Two Volumes: Being an account of the Government of that Country*. London, W. Taylor, 1723. Cordier 4, 2471; Lust 178, 521; Lowendahl 342.

¹⁷ Lange, Lorenz, *Journal de la residence du sieur Lange, agent de sa majesté imperiale de la Grande Russie à la cour de la Chine; dans les Année 1721 & 1722*. Leyde, Abraham Kallewier, 1726.

¹⁸ Widmer, E., op. cit. pp 38-39.

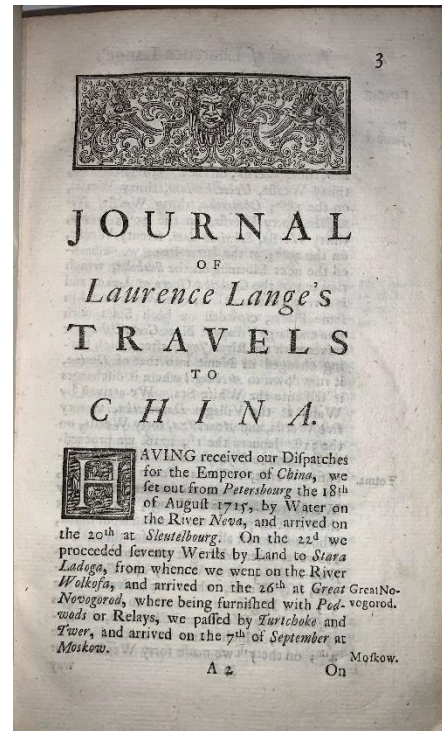
¹⁹ Weber, Friedrich Christian (ed). *Das veränderte Russland, in welchem die jetzige Vervassung des Geist- und Weltlichen Regiments;in einem bis 1720. gehenden Journal vorgestellt warden*. Frankfurth, Nicolaus Förster, 1721. (Cordier 4, 2471; Lowendahl 339).

The first half of Lange's account reads more like an itinerary, as he travels across Russia and Siberia to Tomsk and Irkutsk, where they send their passports over the border to the Chinese Viceroy in Western Tartary, or Mongolia. On October 7, 1716, a Chinese mandarin travels to meet them in Seleginsk, to accompany them to Peking, and they pass through the Wall a month later. A few days later they are in the presence of the Emperor, and have no problem performing the kowtow, nine times touching the floor with their heads. Garvine, the physician attracted particular interest, the Emperor requesting that he test his pulse and declare on his health, which he did, and all was in order. Lange describes the court, their courteous treatment, the food, and though stating that the Emperor wanted Lange to conduct an embassy back to Peter, we hear no more, after the general observations, nor when Lange departs, or any further comment on the visit.

Lange appears regularly in accounts of the time. He was later involved in Russian trade and treaty negotiations, which eventually led to the Treaty of Kyakhta in 1727, and took part in further missions to Peking through to 1736, later becoming Vice Governor of Irkutsk from 1739 to 1749. There is another account of the Ismailov mission by Georg Johann Unverzagt, an artist who was a member of the mission²⁰. Lange's accounts are also published in Peter Simon Pallas' *'Neue Nordische Beyträge'* (1781).

Bell took part in two further official journeys, one with Peter and the Russian Army to Derbent in Persia in 1722, and the other in 1737-8 accompanying Count Osterman, the Russian Chancellor, and Mr. Rondeau the British Minister at the Russian Court. Both journeys are described at the end of Volume 2. He spent a few years in Constantinople as a merchant trader, marrying a Russian woman with an un-Russian name, Mary Peters, retiring to Scotland in 1746. It took him a further 20 years to write his narrative, using his diaries; the story of this process, which Bell seemed initially not to have envisaged, is provided in a foot note to the review of Ellis's account of the Amherst embassy in the Quarterly review mentioned above. *'The history of this book is somewhat curious and not generally known. For many years after Mr. Bell returned from his travels, he used to amuse his friends with what he had seen, refreshing his recollections from a simple diary of occurrences and observations. The Earl Granville, then President of the Council, on hearing some of his adventures, prevailed on him to throw his notes together into the form of a narrative, which when done, pleased him so much that he sent the manuscript to Doctor Robertson, with a particular request that he would revise and put it into a fit state for the press. The literary avocations of the Scottish historian at that time not allowing him to undertake the task, he recommended Mr. Barron, a professor in the University of Aberdeen; and on this gentleman consulting Doctor Robertson, as to the style and the book of travels which he would recommend him to adopt for his guide, the historian replied "Take Gulliver's Travels for your model, and you cannot go wrong." He did so, and Bell's Travels has all the simplicity of Gulliver, with the advantage which truth always carries over fiction.'* Bell's narrative is very readable, and

²⁰ **Unverzagt, Georg Johann**, Die Gesandtschaft Ihro Käyserl. Majest. von Groß-Rußland an den Sinesischen Käyser, wie solche anno 1719 aus St. Petersburg nach der Sinesischen Haupt- und Residentz-Stadt Peking abgefertiget. Lübeck, J. C. Schmidt, 1725. Lowendahl 1608.

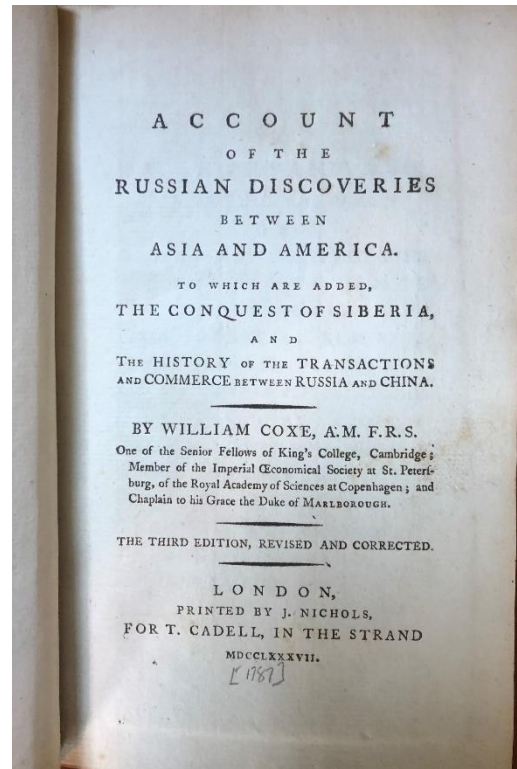


indeed has that Gulliverian simplicity, but also the sense of a mature man, such that the reader forgets that he was only about 30.

The Ismailov mission appears again in a collation of Russian expeditions put together by William Coxe in 1787.

Coxe, William, *Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America. To Which Are Added, the Conquest of Siberia, and the History of the Transactions and Commerce between Russia and China. The Third Edition, Revised and Corrected.* London: printed by J. Nichols, for T. Cadell, MDCCLXXXVII [1787].m xxvii, 454 pp. 8vo, four folding maps, and folding plate. Cordier2447 (1 ed); Lust 170 (3rd ed); Lowendahl 723 (4th ed).

This third edition (the first was in 1780) is the first to contain the supplement 'A Comparative View of the Russian Discoveries with those made by Captains Cook and Clerke.' William Coxe (1748-1828) was an English historian who compiled a history of Russian expeditions into Siberia by sea and land, from previously published accounts, many of them published in German. He took the trouble to travel to Russia to verify accounts with Gerhard Müller, Peter Pallas and other Russian experts, sourcing maps and narratives. It includes a translation of Johann Ludwig Schult's *Neue Nachrichten* (Hamburg and Leipzig 1776). Part III of the book concerns 'The Conquest of Siberia; and the History of the Transactions and Commerce between Russia and China.' Chapter II of this part provides a succinct history of early Russian missions into China, and the culture and properties of rhubarb which the Chinese at various times, thought was one of the principal reasons for European interest in their empire.



Chinese Embassy to the Khan

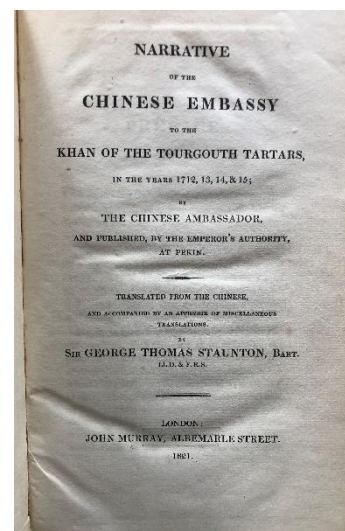
By 1821, George Staunton (1781-1859), still only 40 years old, had lived a lifetime, and was now settled back in England, an MP, and a recognised China expert. He had two English embassies under his belt, the first at 13 years old as Macartney's valet with the Macartney mission, accompanying his father, where he stood out for his knowledge of the language. In the second, which was a greater failure, he was Amherst's deputy in the mission of 1817-17. In between he had returned to England then travelled back to China, becoming director of the East India Company in Canton. He used his language skills to translate, and perhaps most notably, in translating the account of the 1712 mission that the Kangxi Emperor's sent to A-yu-ke (Ayuka), the Khan of the Tourgouths (or Torguts, or Volga Kalmyks), currently on the northern side of the Caspian Sea in the Volga basin, within the Russian Empire of Peter the Great. This was probably the first such mission sent north and west by a Chinese emperor.

[Staunton, George Thoma,s tr.] *Narrative of the Chinese Embassy to the Khan of the Tourgouth Tartars, in the Years 1712, 13, 14, &15; by the Chinese Ambassador, and Published, by the Emperor's Authority, at Peking. Translated from the Chinese, and accompanied by an appendix of miscellaneous translations.* London, John Murray, 1821. pp. xl, 330. Large folding coloured map. 8vo. Original full calf, neatly rebacked with original spine. Cordier 637; Lust 495; Löwendahl 826.



The mission was led by the Ambassador Tulisen, and the Chinese account was first published as Yiyu-lu [Report of Strange Regions] in Chinese in 1723 and deposited in the Imperial Court library. A French version appeared in 1726, and the first English version much later in 1821. According to Lowendahl (826), only 150 copies were printed. The engraved map 'Map of the countries between Peking and St. Petersburg' was drawn by John Walker²¹ and shows the route of the embassy.

Staunton writes a luminating Preface, informed by his experience in two British embassies: *'The Chinese... seem hardly, to this day, to entertain a distinct idea even of peace or war, in the sense in which we employ these terms. With them, there is no peace which does not mean in some way submission: there can be no war, which does not at the same time savour, in some degree, rebellion.'* The scars of the failed British missions that he took part in, with the tortuous controversies over submission and obeisance, live large. He makes another important point. The view of the Imperial Court of the empire as the centre of the world, and all other nations and cultures being subservient to it, means that the jobs of diplomacy and the taking part in missions to lands and leaders outside the borders were not always particularly attractive or conducive to advancing careers, and the comparative lack of interest of Chinese writers in foreign nations, means that



²¹ John Walker (1787-1873) was a prominent engraver, hydrographer, publisher and map seller, particularly noted as hydrographer for the East India Company and for his admiralty charts.

accounts such as this are rare. Staunton also provides many footnotes, and it is the voice of Staunton which remains on reading, as against the very formal, largely impersonal words of Tulisen.

Staunton writes with his pen in one hand and the narrative of John Bell in the other. He shows how Tulisen, and Bell and the Ismailov embassy, followed similar routes, and points out that the coincidence of the narratives adds veracity. The map he publishes, based by John Walker on a map from Pallas, shows both routes. He does point out that the 'original Chinese map of the countries travelled through, is remarkable only for its rudeness and inaccuracy.' But we wish we could see it. Grosier, Macartney, Barrow and Ides also sit with Bell on Staunton's table.

So who was Tulisen? He was a relatively minor Manchu official who had enough favour with the Kangxi Emperor for him to be appointed head the three year mission. On his return, he was still in enough favour to be sent by the Emperor to deal with the Ismailov (Bell) mission when they reached the Chinese border in 1720, and Tulisen and Bell met. In 1727 he headed the Chinese delegation to sign the Treaty of Kyakhta with the Russians. It was hazardous working for the Emperor and he subsequently was accused of misconduct during the negotiations and sentenced to death, though this was commuted by the Yongzhen Emperor. He continued to serve through into the reign of the Qianlong Emperor in 1735 before retiring.



Tulisen's narrative is very formal, describing the landscape and the people and leaders he meets; he tells us a little of himself at the beginning but rarely lets his personal thoughts or responses intrude. It is written with an obvious eye on the Emperor and Court. This is seen none more so than in the constant refrains to local chiefs he met on the reasons for his mission, and particularly in his responses to receiving gifts, a frequent, and potentially hazardous process. The process is often tortuous, any gifts must be given through the right channels and the response from Tulisen is inevitably: *'With us in China, no person who is employed by his sovereign's command in the execution of the public service, can presume, on any account, to accept the smallest present. You must therefore take back these fox skins to your Governor General, with my thanks to him for his politeness.'* He continually makes an effort to ensure his Emperor appears great and good, benevolent and supreme, and even Staunton in his many footnotes notes that the *'extravagant encomiums on the character of the Emperor Kam-hi or (Kang-hee) and happiness of his reign, are no doubt conveyed in the highest and most inflated style of oriental amplification but when divested of these figures of speech, and reduced to more sober language, they will be found substantially true:..'*. And again: *'The reader may naturally feel some impatience at the vain boasting and courtly style which the Chinese historian falls into on every occasion....they [the words] in fact constitute a kind of official declaration of the theory of the Chinese monarchy.'* On one occasion though, he thinks he catches Tulisen out. Tulisen eventually crosses the Volga and meets the Khan. He is kindly and graciously received and entertained (gifts and protests of course), and Tulisen delivers the Emperor's edict. He says: *'On arriving at A-yu-ke Khan's great tent of ceremony, we dismounted from our horses, and advancing with the Imperial Edict, delivered it in person. A-yu-ke received it kneeling; and then turning towards the north, reverently wished the great Emperor of the East every felicity. This ceremony being concluded, we then proceeded to explain to him his Imperial Majesty's pleasure.'* Staunton in his footnote says: *'Nothing certainly can be more improbable, than an independent prince, in the midst of his own court, should have voluntarily subjected himself to such a humiliation [how can he not be thinking again of Macartney and Amherst?]; but it seems that the assumed tribute of universal sovereignty, which occasions every communication from the Emperor of China to claim the authority of an edict, also requires that such an edict should be supposed to have been received in a position most expressive of submission and obedience.'* Three years pass and Tulisen returns. His father had attained his 69th year and he had *'the happiness of seeing him and all my family, flourishing and collected around me.'* The Emperor is grateful.

Published at the end of the work, are some smaller pieces including part of a Chinese novel, some notices of plays, an extract from herbal and some official documents from the Peking Gazette, all again translated by Staunton.

Exchanging the Archimandrites

The Russian interest in China was never primarily that of a Christian mission. However, Peter the Great could see the advantages in establishing an ecclesiastical base in Peking to support his trading interests. The Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, established the northern Manchurian border, and following the failure of the Ismailov mission (with John Bell and Lorenz Lange) to negotiate trade agreements, the Treaty of Kyakhta was signed in 1728, establishing borders verified with up-to-date maps (where again Tulisen from the Chinese side was an active participant), trading relationships, diplomatic modes, and the on-going presence of a Russian Orthodox establishment in Peking. Previously, negotiations with Peking in 1713 had resulted in the first Orthodox Archimandrite (Hilarion²²) being sent in 1715, with ensuing permission to live in the Russian quarters in Peking. The missions carried out over the next 150 years, usually comprised around 10 people, priests and laymen, the latter often students chosen to go to Peking to learn the language and culture. According to the Treaty of Kyakhta, the Russians were permitted to build a church accommodating 4 clergy and 6 students, with the Archimandrite exchanged about every 10 years, there being 13 identified in succession through to 1860.²³

Orthodox missions and their Archimandrites

First (1716-1728) Ilarion Lezhaisky
Second (1729-1735) Antony Platkovsky
Third (1736-1745) Illarion Trusov
Fourth (1745-1755) Gervasy Lintsevsky
Fifth (1755-1771) Amvrosy Yumatov
Sixth (1771-1781) Nikolai Tsvet
Seventh (1781-1794) Ioakim Shishkovsky
Eighth (1794-1807) Sofrony Gribovsky
Ninth (1807-1821) Iakinf Bichurin
Tenth (1821-1830) Peter Kamensky
Eleventh (1830-1840) Veniamin Morachevich
Twelfth (1840-1849) Policarp Tugarin
Thirteenth (1850-1858) Pallady Kafarov

And so, in 1819, the tenth Russian mission left St Petersburg, arriving in Irkutsk in February 1820, arriving at the border town of Kyakhta on the 1st of July where it waited permission to proceed to Peking. Egor Fedorovitch Timkowski (1790 – 1875; biographical details of Timkowski have proved elusive) was the Tsar's man on this latest mission, coming from the Foreign Affairs department of the Russian Government of Alexander I. The mission was headed by the Archimandrite Peter (Kamensky), and included other ecclesiastics and 4 young men, presumably students, in their mid-twenties. This included the intention of bringing back home the more controversial Archimandrite Hyacinth (Bichurin) who had been there since 1806. The Chinese 'conductors' did not arrive until the 27th of August, and the mission set off for Peking on the 31st. Timkowski had under him a baggage inspector, a Mongol and a Manchu interpreter, and a party of 30 Cossacks (without which hardly any Russian traveller moved across Siberia).



Egor Fedorovitch Timkowski c. 1840. Unknown artist. From Russian Writers 11800-1917, Great Russian Encyclopedia, 2019.

²² Note that Russian names transliterated into English have variable spellings.

²³ See Widmer, E., 1976, op. cit. for a comprehensive account of the 18th C missions.

Although from Ides onwards, European travellers including Bell and Lange, and then later in the 19th C, Dobell, the Atkinsons, Passietsky, Minchie, etc, wrote accounts in French and English, which were appropriately translated, there were few or no early Russian accounts of China from those travelling to or resident or in Peking. Indeed, H.E. Eliot, who provided the English account of Timkowski's narrative, notes in his preface that: '*....it is natural to enquire what advances literature and science have derived from the Russians having thus possessed, for a hundred years, an opportunity which no other Christian nation has enjoyed, and which, if allowed to natives of England, France, or Germany, would most probably have long since made us fully acquainted with every thing relative to the history, the institutions, the government, etc, of this great empire, and its extensive dependencies?*'

Timkowski's account was accordingly first published in Russian in 1824, and then translated into French by Jean Baptiste Benoit Eyries²⁴.

Timkowski, E G., *Voyage a Péking, a Travers la Mongolie en 1820 et 1821. Par M. G. Timkovski. Traduit du Russe par M. N*****, Revu par M. J-B Eyriès. Publié, avec des Corrections et des Notes, Par M. J. Klaproth; ouvrage accompagné d'un Atlas qui Contient Toutes les Planches de l'Originale, et plusieurs autres inédites. Paris, Libraire Orientale de Dondey-Dupré Pere et Fils. M DCCC XXVII. [1827] Vol. 1. Pp. xii, 480; vol. 2. Pp. 459; atlas pp. 32, fold out map, 10 plates including 2 double-page. Quarter green morocco, 1 French edition. Cordier 2473, Lust 551, Lowendahl 853.*



Habitans des Bords de L'Amour Inférieur. Timkowski Atlas, Plate VII. [Inhabitants of the borders of the lower Amor River]

²⁴ Jean Baptiste Benoit Eyries(1767-1846) was a notable French geographer and translator, admired by Humboldt, among others.

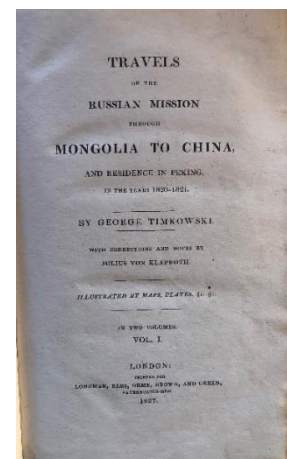
The atlas includes notes, statistics and corrections by Klaproth²⁵, plus ‘*explications*’ of each plate. Eyriès is listed as the translator, but from the title page appears perhaps to have perhaps reviewed, or re-translated a version that a M. N**** did from the Russian.



Chinois jouant à Pair ou Impair. Timkowski, Atlas. Plate VIII [Chinese playing odds and evens]

This French edition was used for an English translation by H.E. Lloyd²⁶ in 1827 (Lloyd also published a life of Alexander).

Timkowski, George, *Travels of the Russian Mission through Mongolia to China, and Residence in Peking, in the Years 1820-1821. With Corrections and Notes by Julius Klaproth.* London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827. 2 vol. pp. ix, 468; iv, 496. 1 lithographed plate, 1 folding map, & 1 folding plan of Peking, all bound in at end of vol. 2. 8vo. Contemporary half calf. Cordier 2474; Lust 550; Lowendahl 859.



²⁵ Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) was a noted linguist, historian, writer and explorer, and a founder of East Asian studies. He had accompanied Count Golovkin on his embassy to China in 1805. They reached Uрга (Ulan Bator) but refused to kowtow to a wooden tablet as a symbolic kowtow to the Emperor, and so failed to proceed and returned, the mission a failure. On his return, Klaproth travelled officially in the Caucasus, then settled in Berlin in 1812, and Paris in 1815, where he remained until he died.

²⁶ Hannibal Evans Lloyd (1771-1847) was an English linguist and translator, with an extensive portfolio of translation of travel and historical literature.

Timkowski and the Archimandrite party entered Peking on December 2 1820 and moved into the Russian House (which was damp and smokey). He spent close to 6 months in Peking, leaving to return to Kyakhta on 24 May 1821. The book is full of valuable first-hand observations of the city, the missionaries, the Mandarins, temples and of the life of the Chinese. All through are footnotes by Julius Klaproth. His intrusion into Timkowski's account is extensive, correcting it, clarifying, and adding new information from his own travels and reading. It is that of an editor who might have been wanting to write his own account, which despite his large number of works, and his participation in the failed 1805 Golovkin embassy, he never wrote. His main opus was on Asiatic languages. At the end of Volume II, Klaproth contributes an Appendix providing statistical and geographic information on the Chinese provinces, and a commentary accompanying the map and the plan of Peking.

And lastly, the outgoing Archimandrite Hyacinth (1777-1853; Nikita Yakovlevich Burchin) was no ordinary priest. His time in Peking seems to have been more occupied with studying the Chinese language, culture and history, than carrying out ecclesiastical duties. He was part of the 9th Russian mission to Peking in 1805 led by Count Golovkin (and which included Klaproth), heading the Sretenskii monastery there, and subsequently he published his own account *Zapiski o Mongolii. Iakinf, [Nikita Bichurin], Karl Kray, St. Petersburg, 1828 (Notes on Mongolia. With a Map of Mongolia and Different Costumes)*²⁷.

This account does not seem to have been translated into English, although Klaproth wrote an article on Burchin for the Paris Société Asiatique in 1830, *Rapport sur les ouvrages du P. H. Bitchourinski relatifs à l'histoire des Mongols*. Lowendahl (supplement volume) has also published a translation of a manuscript on the failed Golovkin Mission and listed what Klaproth published from it. Bichurin's account covers his journey from Peking to Kyakhta and a comprehensive description of Mongolia, its people, customs etc. When he returned to Irkutsk with the Timkowski party, he was eventually seen there with a lover, Natalia Petrova, and he was consequently stripped of his archimandrite position and sent off, presumably lover-less, to the Valaam Monastery where he wrote on Chinese and Mongolian history and culture. He was pardoned in 1728, moved to St Petersburg where he became renowned within and outside Russia for his oriental scholarship. He got into trouble with the Church again and ended up opening a Chinese language school in Kyakhta in 1837.



Arachi Taidzi, an honest Mongol noble from Dourmy with whom Timkowski left some horses, which he collected on his return.

²⁷ Bichurin's original publications are available, particularly *Opisaniye chzhungarii i vostochnago turkistana, v'drevnem' i ninshem sostoyanii. Perevedeno s'kitayskago*. [Description of Djungaria and Eastern Turkestan ancient and modern. Translated from the Chinese.], St Petersburg, Karl Kray, 1829, and *Zapiski o Mongolii [Notes on Mongolia]*. St Petersburg, 1828.

Russian missions and embassies

1618-19	Ivan Petlin – not an official ambassador but sent by Tsar Ivan
1654-56	Fyodor Baykov – official embassy sent by Tsar Alexis to the Shunzhi Emperor
1655, 1658, 1668	Sekul Abluin - unofficial
1675–78	<u>Nicholae Milescu</u> – did not succeed in an audience
1689	Fyodor Golovin, Treaty of Nerchinsk
1692	Ides, Brand
1719	Ismailov, Bell, Lange
1729	Treaty of Kyakhta, Count <u>Sava Lukich Raguzinskii-Vladislavich</u>
1819	Timkowski, 10 th orthodox mission

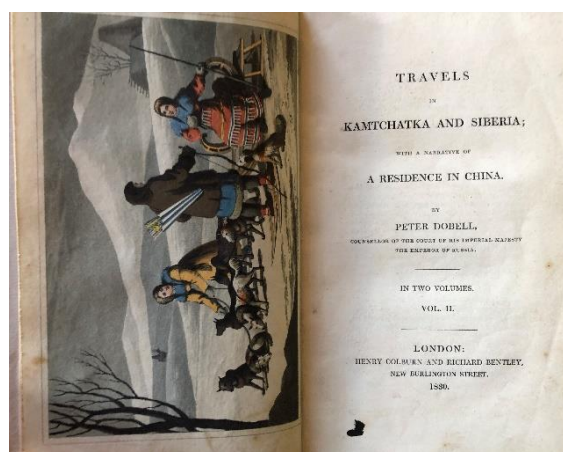
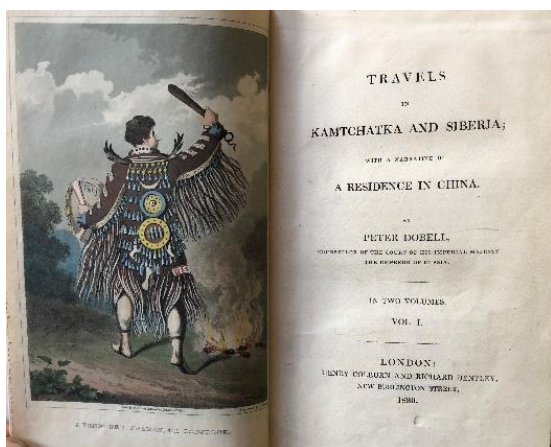
The naturalised Russian

A few years after Timkowski's ground-breaking account, English readers were able to get a further flavour of far eastern Russia and contemporary China in the account from the Irish-born American trader Peter Dobell.

Dobell (1772-1852) has been described as hobnobbing 'with the most unscrupulous vagabonds that ever plied the Pacific waters. He was both a United States Consul in France and Russian Commercial Consul to the Philippines; but, he also ran a tavern in Canton, and smuggled opium into China.....He was a hukster and a reactionary moralist, an opportunist and a sentimentalist.'²⁸ He first went to China in 1798 and is recorded also as being in China in 1803-1810 and again in 1820; in 1810 he occupied a building in the Danish factory in Canton where he kept a drinking saloon. He was notable in developing a plan, agreed to by Tsar Alexander I in 1813, which resulted in Dobell initiating the promotion of trade and relations with the Russian Far East, particularly the Kamchatka peninsula region. He joined the Russian service in doing this, living in China for about 7 years before moving to Manila where he became a naturalized Russian citizen, taking the name Petr Vasilievich Dobell. Here Russia established its first diplomatic mission in Southeast Asia in 1817, and Dobell was appointed Consul General in the Philippines. This was not recognized by Spain's colonial government, nevertheless Dobell was allowed to remain in Manila as an honorary Russian Consul. In 1830, he published his account of his travels and time living in China.



Dobell, P., *Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia; with a narrative of a residence in China.* London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley (back of title-page: J.B. Nichols and son), 1830. 2 volumes. small 8vo, pp. ix, [1], 351; x, 341, [3]. Two hand-coloured aquatint frontispieces by J. Clark. Recent half calf, red spine labels, 1 edition. Cordier 2109; Lust 268 (1838 Fr tr); not in Lowendahl.



²⁸ **Daubach, D.C.,** Peter Dobell, 1777-1852: An American opportunist in Russian service in early nineteenth century Siberia. University of Kansas, 1993.

The first edition in 2 volumes was published in London in 1830. The second of the volumes translated into Russian was expanded with his account of his travels in South East Asia and the Philippines, and published in St Petersburg in 1833. This was later translated into French by Prince Emmanuel Galitzin (1804-1853)²⁹.

The journal records his personal observations of the manners, customs, population, religion, and resources during his fifteen years of traveling in China and Siberia. Dobell indicates that his observations concentrate on the '*wonderful works of nature*' in order that the reader may learn '*how rich and interesting a region is Siberia, heretofore only represented to the imagination in the most gloomy and unattractive colors*'. But it is the account that is as colourful as the Siberian works of nature.

The second half of volume two describes his experiences and residence in China as a trader over 7 years, begun in 1798, and as he states, his first experience with Asia. The first chapters describe his arrival at Macao, with the obligatory nod to Camões and his grotto where he composed the *Lusiads*³⁰, then the Boca Tigris and Whampoa. He expands on Canton and trade, opium smuggling and all the details on how to conduct business. This is a trader whose eye is firstly on commerce. '*The reader must excuse this digression on the subject of Chinese foreign commerce, as many have asserted China to be a country wholly agricultural and manufacturing, while real experience proves the contrary. After giving this imperfect account of it....no one will, I think, believe that the Chinese are locked up at home...they are one of the most commercial nations of the globe.*'³¹ He covers everything, culture, government and laws, punishments, gardens and fruit, food, and ends with a detailed chapter on tea. Anyone who has read the accounts of the McCartney and Amherst embassies would find much that is familiar and little changed over the 30 years. Of course, his first landing in China was only a couple of years post-Macartney, and he lived and visited there pre and post-Amherst (1816). His value is in the more hard-nosed, commercial imperatives that lie behind his observations. As with the accounts of many traders in the 19th century imperial and colonising movements, there is less moralising, a more objective view of the people, than from those who came to govern, pursue their diplomacy, or run their missions.

²⁹ **Dobel, Pierre**, Sept années en Chine: nouvelles observations sur cet empire, l'archipel Indo-Chinois, les Philippines et les îles Sandwich, par Pierre Dobel, conseiller de Collège au service de Russie, ancien consul de cette puissance aux îles Philippines. Paris, Gide, 1838.

³⁰ See <https://ianferg.nz/camoes-and-the-lusiads/>

³¹ Dobell, vol. 2, p. 159.

The Atkinsons – Lucy, Thomas and the Boy

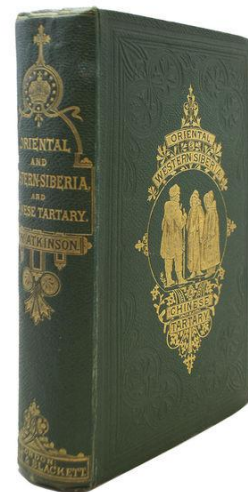
In 1849, Lucy Atkinson and her husband William commenced a journey which would occupy them for more than 3 years, across Russia, Siberia, to the Chinese border. It was clearly close enough to China to be catalogued amongst the Chinese literature by Cordier, although none of the bibliographers bothered to recognise Lucy's account, whilst recording the 1858 and 1860 accounts of her husband. The China connection also means that, with Lucy Atkinson, we keep in our sights one of the finest pieces of travel writing of the 19th Century. Lucy Atkinson (1817-1893) went to St Petersburg in the 1830s and was a governess to the daughter of General Mikhail Nikolaevich Muravyev-Vilensky for 8 years. During her time in Russia she met Thomas Witlam Atkinson and they married in Moscow in February 1848. Atkinson (1799-1861) had trained in architecture, and in the 1840s travelled extensively through India, Persia, Ethiopia and Europe. He ended up in St Petersburg in 1846, apparently inspired by Humboldt's account of Siberia. He made a first trip in 1846-7 across the Urals to the Altai Mountains in southern Siberia and the northern Kazakh Steppes. After his return, he married Lucy, and with a special passport from Czar Nicholas I, the pair travelled extensively through Russia, Central Asia and Siberia, between 1847 and 1853, crossing the Kirgiz steppes and travelling eastwards as far as Irkutsk and reaching the Chinese border. In November 1848, Lucy gave birth to a son at the Russian military outpost of Qapal in what is now eastern Kazakhstan. The boy thrived and later attended school in England, eventually becoming a leading administrator in Hawaii.

They returned to England in 1853 and in all, three books were published. Thomas was a fine draughtsman and produced something like 500 drawings and watercolours from his sketches, and they were used in their publications. Thomas published his two books in 1858 and 1860. Having a child in the midst of their travels was not the only remarkable personal aspect of the couple. Thomas's accounts fail to mention his wife and son. It appears that he had married her bigamously and his original wife, married in 1819, was still alive in London. He died in 1861 and two years later Lucy published her book, where her son 'the boy' becomes an integral, absorbing part of the travel account.

Atkinson, Thomas Witlam, _Oriental and Western Siberia; a Narrative of Seven Years' Exploration and Adventures in Siberia, Mongolia, the Kirghis Steppes, Chinese Tartary, and part of Central Asia. 1858. Hurst and Blackett, London. viii, [5], 611 pp. Large folding map, 20 colour and tinted lithographed plates, frontispiece, 32 wood engravings. 8vo. Publisher's green cloth, blind embossed, spine titled and decorated in gilt, front panel with title and vignette decoratively embossed in gilt, yellow coated endpapers. 1 edition. Cordier 2781.



Thomas Witlam
Atkinson 1799-1861



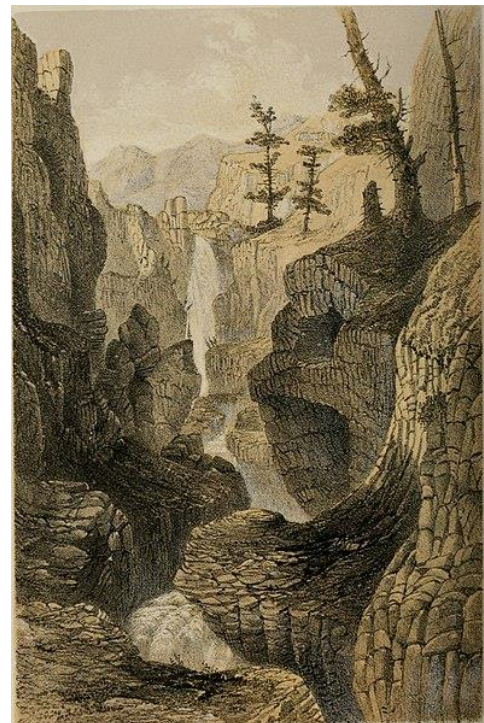
The book has an especially attractive binding, with gilt decorations on the cover and spine. The illustrations are two-toned lithographs, some 30 of them, with a hand-coloured frontispiece taken from a watercolour by Atkinson.



Sultan Souk and Family, Atkinson, 1858. Frontispiece.

The map is of 'Mr Atkinson's Travels in Siberia, Mongolia, Chinese Tartary, and part of Central Asia', with the author's route shown. They don't get into China, but reach into Mongolia, close enough for Cordier to list them in his China bibliography. The dedication is to Tsar Alexander II and the Preface is fulsome in Atkinson's thanks to his predecessor Nicholas I for his passport and general assistance. The book covers the great wandering through Siberia and particularly into what was then called Tartary and Mongolia, travelling with his Cossacks and meeting the Kirghis and Kalmucks, and the Sultans of the Steppes. It's not one of those expeditions of adventure more typical of the latter half of the 19th century, but one of curiosity, observation, drawing and writing, delving deep into the territory and the people.

Atkinson published his second book two years later. Here he extends his account across to the Amoor, and concentrates less on a narrative of the travel, but 'to provide information of a more elevated character, intended to satisfy, in some respects



Falls on the River Kopal, Chinese Tartary. Atkinson 1858, p. 575.

at least, the wishes of the Geologist, Botanist and Ethnologist, and other scientific scholars...'
Cordier still finds it Chinese enough.

Atkinson, Thomas Wiltam, *Travels in the Regions of the Upper and Lower Amoor and the Russian Acquisitions on the Confines of India and China. With adventures among the Mountain Kirghis; and the Manjours, Manyargs, Tougouz, Touzemtz, Goldi, and Gelyaks: the hunting and pastoral tribes. With a map and numerous illustrations. London. Hurst & Blackett. 1860. xiii, 570 pp. Tinted frontispiece lithograph, 83 illustrations, large folding map. 8vo Full calf prize binding, gilt emblem (Edinburgh Institution) on front cover, gilt spine, marbled edges. 1 edition. Cordier 2781; Lowendahl 1253 2 ed.*



A View of the Amoor, west of the Khingan Mountains. Atkinson 1860, frontispiece.

There is only the one plate, of the highly romantic Amoor as the frontispiece, though the book is liberally illustrated with over 80 engravings within the text, and a fold-out Arrowsmith map of 'Central Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the Pacific Ocean, including the regions between Cashmere and Peking, on the south, and Siberia, in the north, to accompany the Travels of T W Atkinson Esq.'

Atkinson died the year after in 1861. The Athenaeum describing him in their obituary as '*the type of an artistic traveller, thin, lithe, and sinewy, with a wrist like a rock and an eye like a poet's; manner singularly gentle, and air which mingled entreaty with command.*

It is Lucy, however, who wrote the finest work on their expedition. Vivid, personal yet widely embracing the men of the party, the 'boy', and the people she met and engaged with. She published her account after her husband died. No bibliographer of China literature recorded it, although it gives an account of the same travels as those of Thomas, her husband.



Atkinson, Lucy Sherrard *Recollections of Tartar Steppes and their Inhabitants*. By Mrs Atkinson. London. John Murray, 1863. xvi, 351 p, frontispiece wood engraving, and 4 plates. Contemporary half calf, marbled boards, gilt spine. 8vo. First edition. Not in Cordier, Lust nor Lowendahl

Lucy Atkinson tells us in the Preface how, as one of a large family, it was her duty to support herself, and straight away, there is that independence; she's off to St Petersburg and was eight years Governess of the daughter of General Mouravioff³². She met Thomas Atkinson in 1846 after he had returned from his first trip east, and they married before travelling east again. She says: *'The scientific and artistic results of those travels are contained in the two volumes which he [Thomas] published during his lifetime: but there is little allusion in them to the adventures we encountered during those journeys, and, especially, there is no mention of the strange incidents which befell myself, often left alone with an infant in arms, amongst a semi-savage people, to whom I was a stranger.'* So here she is telling us that she too was on this great journey and she was left out of the earlier accounts. However, there seems no resentment, and her depiction of Thomas is always loving and admiring.

There are five plates including the frontispiece, engraved from Thomas's drawings, and in one there is a small image of Lucy drinking tea in a Kirghis yurt, the only image or portrait that we have of her.

The book is in the form of a series of letters that she wrote describing the expedition. We don't know who they were addressed to, but the form and journalistic nature of them provides an unmatched immediacy and liveliness. She provides at the front, a couple of pages explaining Russian and Tartar terms, and a table of the dates of the expedition from February 13, 1848 to December 24, 1853, St Petersburg to St Petersburg.

The account covers the journey across Russia to Siberia, reaching Irkutsk in January, 1851. Early in the piece, in 1848, she writes *'I began this in October and it is now the 14th November; you will naturally wonder what has prevented my finishing it; I am going to tell you.Here I have a little family history to relate. You must understand that I was in expectation of a little stranger, whom I thought might arrive about the end of December or the beginning of January; expecting to return to civilisation I had not thought of preparing anything for him, when lo! and behold, on the 4th November, at twenty minutes past 4 pm, he made his appearance.'* There was a young doctor who apparently helped, though they thought little of him *'When my husband applied to him in my case, he declared he had not the slightest knowledge of anything of the kind'*.³³ They named him Alatau Tamchiboulac Atkinson, the boy being born at the foot of the Alatau Mountains with his second name Tamchiboulac derived from the near-by Tamshybulak Spring in Qapal, famous for its healing properties. Who wouldn't want such names? He was not expected to live, but did, and thrived over the next 5 years of constant travel.



Lucy Atkinson. Detail of a sketch of a Tea-party in a Kirghis tent. Artist Thomas Atkinson. Lucy Atkinson, 1863. p. 205.

³² General Mouravieff; Count Nikolay Nikolayevich Muravyov-Amursky (1809-1881). After retiring from the army, he was Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, from 1847 to 1863, then living in Paris from 1868 until his death. His Siberian role and knowledge would clearly have been useful to the Atkinsons, and this linkage would likely explain how Lucy and Thomas met in 1846, just before he took up the appointment.

³³ Lucy Atkinson, 1863. pp. 105-106.

The people she meets, from Governors and government officials to traders and society gentlefolk, and even exiled survivors of the 1825 Decembrist uprising, including M. I. Murav'ev-Apostol, I. D. Yakushkin, P. I. Falenberg, the Volkonsky and Trubetskoy families, the Borisov brothers, and the Betsuzhevs, all come alive and are memorably described. We get a picture of Siberia quite civilised, with postal systems linking Moscow and St Petersburg, active trade and supply routes providing good food and wine, and the latest fashions to appear amongst the society in Tomsk and Irkutsk. At the same time, the Atkinsons are keen to travel through the wilds without much fear of geography or deprivations, nor of the people who are constantly being engaged with, hosts and being hosted. They touch China by reaching Kiachta³⁴, meeting Chinese emissaries and having a Chinese meal.



The English travellers' interview with Chinese on the frontier of China. Artist Thomas Atkinson. Lucy Atkinson. p. 196.

Lucy Atkinson constantly amazed the local people with her riding, shooting and hunting skills, her penchant for bathing in lakes and rivers wherever she could, and above all, her independence, though giving birth on the road with little help would perhaps have been the least impressive act for a people for whom this might be quite familiar. The book has been described as one of the finest and most genuine travel books written by a woman. Why a woman? It stands as one of the finest by anyone.³⁵

³⁴ Kyakhta, the historic trading post at the border of Russia and the Qing Empire, and close to Selenginsk, where the Treaty of Kyakhta was signed in 1727.

³⁵ A modern account of the travels has been published: Fielding, N., *South to the Great Steppe: The Travels of Thomas and Lucy Atkinson in Eastern Kazakhstan, 1847–1852*. First Magazine, 2015.

The Prose and Poetry of a Journey on Sleighs

As trade between Russian and China increased over the 19th Century, and Russian enterprise continued its eastward expansion, new routes were sought. The second half of the century also saw heightened political activity around borders right across the Russian domain in Central Asia, India and China. In 1874, The Russian Government sent off another expedition, mainly targetted at finding additional trade routes into China, particularly into Sichuan from Siberia, but also to gather political information, particularly on the Dugan revolt in Western China. This complicating, but devastating uprising occurred in the Shangxii, Gansu, Ningxia and Xinjiang provinces between 1862 and 1877, resulting in huge loss of life, migration and population depletion. It impacted Russia in their border and trade relations, particularly with Muslim groups, cross the central Asian border regions, and in major migrations into Russian territory that resulted.

The expedition of nine principal people was led by Yulyan Sosnovsky (1842-97), a Captain (later Col.) of the Imperial General Staff and included a cartographer and topographer Captain Zinovy Matusosky (1843-?), a doctor and artist Pavel Yakovlevich Pyasetsky [Piassetsky] (1843-1919) who wrote the account, and photographer Adolf Boyarsky, together with translators and guards. It had scientific objectives as well, with Piassetsky's account littered with the corpses of hundreds of birds regularly shot and stuffed as they proceeded.

Piassetsky's account was first published in Russian in 1880-81.



Pavel Piassetsky, 1897. Artist Ivan Makarov, portrait painter 1822-1897. Hermitage Museum.

Pyasetsky P.Y., *Puteshestvie po Kitayu v 1874-1875 gg. (cherez Sibir, Mongoliyu, Vostochny, Sredny i Severo-Zapadny Kitai): Iz dnevnika chlena ekspeditsii P.Y. Pyasetskogo [i.e. Travel across China in 1874-75 (via Siberia, Mongolia, Eastern, Central and Northwestern China): From the Diary of the Expedition Member P.Y. Pyasetsky]. [Pyasetsky/Piasetskii], P.Y. St. Petersburg: Typ. of M. Stasyulevich, 1880-1881. [With]: Pyasetsky, P.Y. Neudachnaya ekspeditsiya v Kitai 1874-1875 gg. V otvet na xashchitu g. Sosnovskogo po povodu knigi "Puteshestvie v Kitai" [i.e. Unsuccessful expedition to China. In Reply to the Defense of Mr. Sosnovsky about the book "Travel across China"]. Three volumes bound in two [2 – t.p.], 560; [2 – t.p.], iii, 561-1122, 4, xviii; [2 – t.p.], 298, ii pp. 24x16 cm. With twenty-four tinted lithographed plates and a folding lithographed map at rear.*

The book had notable artistic and photographic outcomes. Piassetsky was a fervent artist, recording numerous sketching expeditions, drawings of scenes, the Great Wall, buildings, and Chinese people, and the interactions that surrounded all this. His sketches are reproduced in the book, and form the basis of a 72 m water colour panorama 'From the Middle China to Western Siberia'. The photographic plates of Boyarsky (over 160 of the approximately 200 that he returned with) have recently been published in the UK in a

volume on China in *'Caught in time: Great photographic archives'*, one of an 8 volume series edited by Vitaly Naumkin.³⁶

Piassetsky's account is lively, and enlivened even further by his obvious differences with the head of the expedition. He criticises him several times, most strongly when Sosnovsky led them erroneously into the desert and put them in danger. But all through, there are niggles and complaints about the latter's decision-making, authority and abuse of expedition money, although Piassetsky seems to record this with some equanimity. A year later Sosnovsky published his own version of the events, (*Sosnovsky, Y. Ekspeditsiya v Kitai v 1874-75. St. Petersburg, 1882*). This was not the end of the controversy; Piassetsky published further evidence of Sosnovsky's misconduct, and some copies of the original Russian production have this bound in at the end of the second volume.

A French translation was published in 1883³⁷, and the English translation by Jane Eliza Gordon-Cumming, presumably from the French, was published in London in 1884.

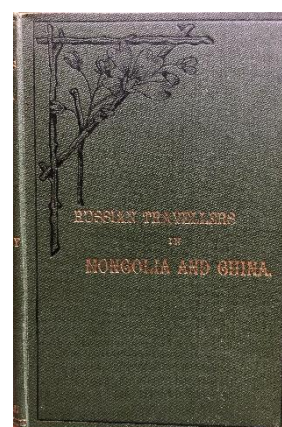


Le Docteur P Piassetsky. From the 1883 French translation 'Voyage a travers la Mongolie et la Chine'.

Piassetsky, P. Y., *Russian travellers in Mongolia and China.* London, Chapman & Hall, 1884 Two volumes, 8vo., 2 vols; vi, 321; vi, 315 pp., steel-engravings in the text, some full-page. Original green sand-grained cloth, title gilt to the spine and to the front board with panelling and decoration in black, brown surface-paper endpapers original green cloth gilt, First edition in English. 8vo. Gift inscriptions to the artist Henry Scott Tuke from his mother in both volumes. Cordier 2453.

The translator Jane Gordon-Cumming (d 1897) was the second wife of Sir William Gordon Cumming (1787-1854). A daughter from his previous marriage was the travel writer Constance Gordon-Cumming (1837-1924). Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929; to whom the copy was gifted by his mother) was an artist, notable for his paintings of naked boys and men. In 1894, when he received the book, he was at the height of his powers and fame, living in Falmouth.

Piassetsky and the expedition left St Petersburg on 14 March 1874, and he wastes no time in his account, reaching Kiachta (Kyuakhta) in July and they arrived in Peking on August 10, via Mongolia, the Gobi Desert and Kalgan (Zhangjiakou). We have, now late in the 19th century, moved well away from the more arduous, and adventurous, journeys of earlier times.



³⁶ **Naumkin, Vitaly** *Caught in Time: Great photographic Archives. China.* Garnet Publishing, Reading. 1993. 159 pp, 162 photographic images.

³⁷ **Piassetsky, P.** *Voyage a travers la Mongolie et la Chine.* Traduit du Russe par Aug. Kuscinski et contenant 90 gravures d'après les croquis de l'Auteur et une carte. Paris, Libraire Hachette et Cie. 1883.

However, the journey across Siberia still had its less modern delights *'In these days of railroads, I had almost forgotten the prose and poetry of a journey on sleighs.'*³⁸

They travelled out to the coast to Tianjin, and then took a steamer to Shanghai, and on up the Yangtze to Nanjing and Hankou. All the while, they photographed, sketched, shot and stuffed birds, and collected plants. *'I arrived at the village of Tie-Tehann, where my companions were already installed. The photographer was taking views, Matoussowsky was drawing his map, ; the chief had finished what he had to do, and was settling to sleep. After refreshing myself and drinking tea, I stuffed two birds I had killed during the day, and dried my plants between blotting paper.'*³⁹ Piassetsky was continually in demand for his medical skills. A woman in distress appeals to him. *'Her hand and arm were swollen up to the elbow, and her suffering must have been great. A few cuts from a lancet would have sufficed to give instant relief....I asked for a box of surgical instruments but the soldier who had charge of them had left ages ago. I ordered clean rags to be brought to me, oil-cloth and water, and with my penknife operated in the sight of an attentive audience.'*⁴⁰ The operation was a success, and the need for simple medical attention seemed overwhelming throughout the whole expedition.



Paper-making, Piassetsky, 1884, Vol.1 p. 288

The expedition continued, eventually reaching the Han River, one of the objects for their surveying work on possible new trading routes. They visited Hanzhong and Lanzhou, crossed the Yellow River, back to the Great Wall again and the Gobi desert, eventually reaching the Lake Zaysan Russian border post in October 1875. They were after all this, successful in establishing a new route to China, over some 2000 versts shorter than the long-established traditional routes. Whether this became used is unclear. However, their information on routes through Gansu were important 60 years later in WWII.⁴¹

Piassetsky, who had graduated from both the medical faculty of Moscow University and the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, was eventually best known as an artist, particularly of great panoramas, including one of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which was awarded a Gold Medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1900, along with the French Legion of Honour.⁴²

³⁸ Piassetsky, P., 1884, vol I. p. 1

³⁹ Ibid, vol. II, p.73

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 75-76.

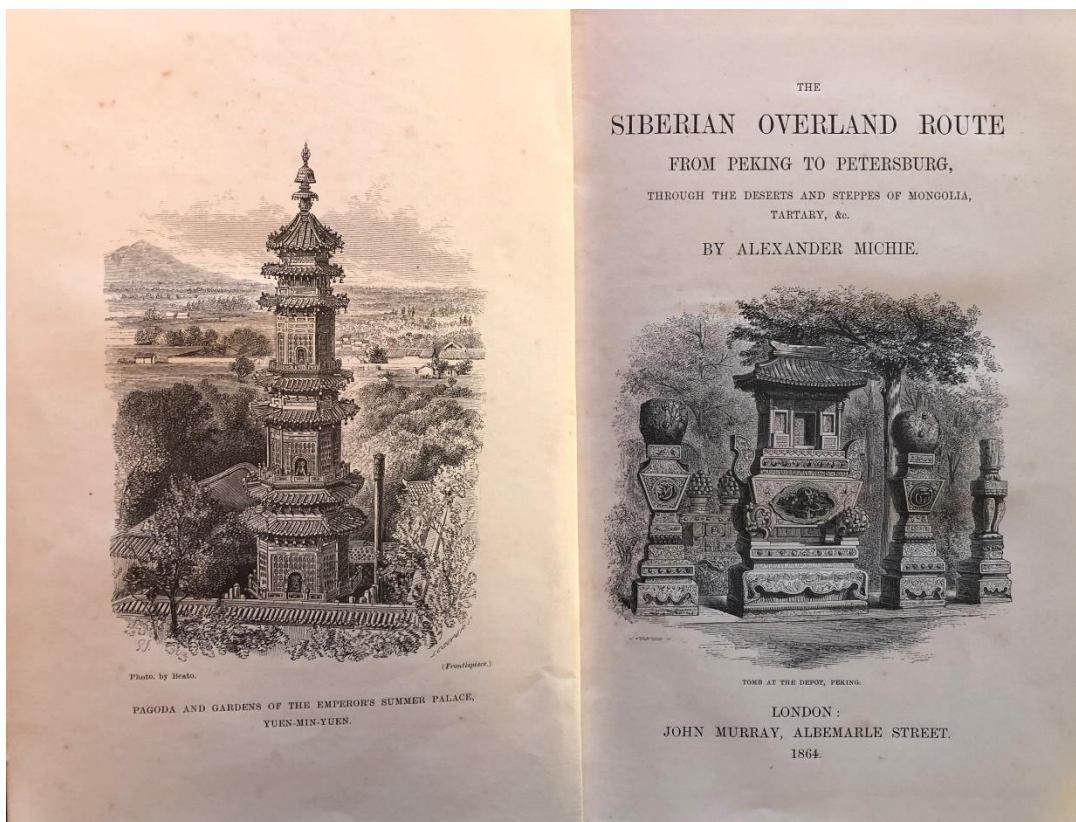
⁴¹ https://qinshuroads.org/Piassetsky_Visit/Captions_Piassetsky_gravures.htm Accessed 8 February 2023.

⁴² https://arthive.com/artists/2746~Pavel_Yakovlevich_Pyasetzky/biography Accessed 8 February 2023.

I preferred the prospect of being frozen in Siberia to being stewed in the red Sea.

There is another, much later account of the overland route, this time from Peking to St Petersburg. Going the other way somehow seemed logical for the Scottish-born trader Alexander Michie. He had arrived in Hong Kong in 1853 and after moving to Shanghai in 1857, eventually become head of Jardine, Matheson and Co. He returned to England in 1863, by the long route through Siberia, providing an account of his journey from Shanghai to Peking and ending in St Petersburg. He claimed that there was no equivalent account in English since Bell (whom he admired, as did many), forgetting or not knowing about the English translation of Timkowski, Staunton's translation of Tulisen, Dobell, and the Atkinsons, though to be precise, he was talking about accounts that linked the two capitals.

Michie, A., *The Siberian Overland Route From Peking to Petersburg, through the Deserts and Steppes of Mongolia, Tartary, &c.* London John Murray 1864 [i]-xii, [2], 402, [2] ads. pp. With 2 folding maps, illustrated frontispiece, vignette and nine engraved plates. 8vo. 1st edition. Original blue embossed cloth. Cordier 2126



Alexander Michie (1833-1902) during his time in China, was active in trying to open up new trading ventures along the Chinese coast, at one stage helping negotiations with the Taiping rebels. He later returned to China, travelling extensively, inland as far as Szechuan, then settling in Tientsin, editing the *China Times*, eventually returning to England. He

published a further 2 vols *The Englishman in China* (1900), and Cordier records many papers and reports from him.

In his book he records the journey starting from Shanghai and ending at St Petersburg, with a final chapter on China-Russia relationships. Many of the engraved plates are copies from photographs, particularly by the Italian photographer Felice Beato (1832-1909). Beato took some of the earliest photos of China, including during the second Opium War, and of the Summer Palace at about the time of its sacking by Elgin and his troops. Beato returned to England in 1861 and sold some 400 of his photos to Henry Hering, where presumably they were available for copying as in this publication.

