

Chapter 3

“GO IN, NOT OUT, FORWARD, NOT BACK”

James and Minnie Ogden

James Clarence and Minnie Florence Asbury Ogden were peculiarly suited to be pioneers and to make an enormous contribution to a far-out mission such as Batang, just at the western edge of the area China was trying to maintain sovereignty over from Thibet. The Ogdens made it their own, more than any other of the missionaries, partly because they were there from the beginning and after Jim's death, Minnie returned twice, once even beyond the dosing of the Mission. It was not only her presence all those years but that she was a vital part of it, loving those people, making them in a true way a part of her family. Jim, moreover, was the second steadying force within the Mission, even in his weakest moments; with Dr. Shelton being first.

When Dr. Shelton asked the FCMS Board to send someone who could produce a plan of language study and work on translations to provide a curriculum the Ogdens were the best. Both Jim and Minnie had taught school so knew well how teaching such a subject should be done.

Jim, born 11-28-1877, in Bracken Co., Ky., with his family moved to Nicholas Co., where Minnie (dob 10-7-1880) lived with her family. They attended the same country school, Bald Hill, through the eighth grade - one teacher, one room. Minnie persuaded her father to let her board for the week in Carlisle, so that she could attend high school there with Jim. Jim went on to Kentucky University, which was later renamed Transylvania College. He took a degree in agriculture and architecture. Minnie went to Teachers' Normal School, Lebanon, Oh. She was far from home, but determined. Jim and Minnie were married 6-23-03. Another love story, this beginning when they were children.

Minnie transferred to Kentucky University and they graduated together. Minnie wrote in her autobiography¹⁸, “We started out to do mission work during summer time in the mountains of Ky. Then I had my real hard experience in life I thought. The lights in the church were

¹⁸ Minnie Asbury Ogden, Autobiography of Minnie Asbury Ogden, Her Diary. Unpublished.

shot out and men sold or exchanged their wives for mules. I suppose it was good for me in preparation for the mission field of Tibet.” These courageous, determined young people were already missionaries when they were approached to go to Tibet as educational missionaries. So they were well-qualified, but their greatest contribution was in their wise and compassionate understanding.

Minnie: “As a small child living in Kentucky and going to a country school, trudging through the rain and snow, climbing over high fences, wearing wooley linsey dresses, all bundled in coat, cap and mittens, wearing heavy woolen stockings and stout little shoes because of the great cold. I trotted along the roads, and dreamed the dreams as a child will, and thought other people had done great and wise things, even got to be missionaries! Of course, I’d never be big or wise enough to do that, but the time came and I was a volunteer for the mission field. Now, I had to face my great desire (and my) life’s ambition was to come true.” They were commissioned by the FCMS on 5-10-05.

These good people met Dr. Shelton in Shanghai 9-26-05 and proceeded upriver to pick up Mrs. Shelton and Dorris in Chengtu and on to Tachienlu 2-3-06.

Minnie and Jim went immediately to language study of both Chinese and Tibetan. There had already begun to be a change in the English spelling of Chinese places and peoples names and certainly Jim and Minnie would insist on the more up-to-date spelling. Sometimes this meant a more phonetic spelling: Lassa, became Lhasa; Thibet became Tibet. These new spellings lasted until well after WWII when the Chinese themselves began demanding more accurate phonetic spelling and the use of more correct word titles from their own language in spellings.

June, 1906 there were now 19 in the school. Dr. Susie baptized the first converts, two women and a man. Later, seven boys, including Lee Gway-gwang, were baptized. Meanwhile Dr. Shelton and Jim Ogden went on a trip to Batang to determine if that small town and the valley would be suitable for opening a mission. The missionaries had determined that if they were to have a mission to Tibetans then they must be in a Tibetan town. Minnie was pregnant so the husbands only stayed away 9-3-06 to 10-11-06. Sorrowfully, though, Minnie’s baby daughter was born only to live two days and Minnie was so ill she never even saw Bertha Marie before they laid her to rest in the back of the CIM compound.

Of tragedy, Minnie and Jim were to know their share. Death from disease or violence were a part of their lives, as well as other tragedies. Yet Minnie and Jim were stalwart people and missionaries became family to each other, tight knit and more supportive than most

communities. The Sheltons and Dr. Susie, as well as the CIM missionaries, drew close to the Ogdens to share their sorrow and Jim and Minnie picked up their lives and went on.

The FCMS sent to ask the Sheltons and Ogdens if they will give up the Tibetan Mission and go out to East China. A telegram goes back: "We'll go in, not out; forward, not back."¹⁹ When the FCMS received this reply they confessed that they had hoped this would be the answer. Jim began writing his report on Batang.

Dr. Susie resigned from the FCMS 12-6-06. By this time she knew she had contracted tuberculosis from her patients. Perhaps hoping that leaving the cold of the mountain country would help her, they went to the plains of China to work with the Bible Society. Obviously it did not work, so they went home to Canada where she died 2-7-08. Brave, valiant soul and a hard worker she is still remembered today in Ontario.

When Jim Ogden's report was finished it would take until the spring of 1908 before the Board received it, studied it, and returned a reply.

²⁰*Dear Friends of the Board,*

We are now returned from Batang and we feel that we can speak more intelligently in regard to the best location for the proposed building.

Batang is 460 miles west of Dachienlu and practically located on the line dividing China proper from Tibet. It is the nearest point on the border from here and is on the road leading directly to Lassa. Going to Batang we traveled 17 days, using horses to ride and yak to carry provisions and bedding. We carefully took notes of the country between here and there, and gathered all the information possible regarding Batang and the surrounding country.

There are 12 mountain passes between here and Batang, and of course the road is difficult in the summer time. It cannot be traveled in the winter at all, on account of the deep snow on the passes. As a whole the country is very thinly populated. We may divide the journey into three divisions- Dachienlu to Hoco (Nachu-ka) five days; Hoco to Leetang, five days; Lee tang to Batang, seven days.

Leaving Dachienlu, we find after an hour's ride that we are going into Tibetan country, and though the people are very few they are

¹⁹ Cable to FCMS, St. Louis, Missouri from the Sheltons and Ogdens, Fall 1906.

²⁰ Report: Mr. Ogden to FCMS Executive Board, November 1906. Unpublished. 10 pages.

Tibetans. The first two days journey we pass the homes of about 20 families. The third day we travel 35 miles along a wide valley. In this valley we find several small Tibetan villages.

At the close of this day's journey, we stop for the night at Dongola, the largest village in this valley, with about 30 families. From Dongola to Hoco there are only about 10 families in all. Hoco is on a small river by the same name; one half on the east side and one half on the west. The east side is Chinese in government. It has 40-50 families, Chinese men who married Tibetan wives and are raising families there. The west side has 20 or 30 families all Tibetan. From Hoco to Leetang we find very few people, only 3 or 4 families in a place. Just enough to afford us a place to stop at night.

Leetang is a large plateau, about 30 miles long and 20 miles wide. In this place there are families, all Tibetan except a few Chinese officials and their soldiers, and a few business men who are Chinese. Here is an immense Lamasery with 3700 Lamas.

From Leetang to Batang, there are in all about 100 homes. At Batang we find 350 families. The larger half Tibetan. The officials are Chinese and there are Chinese business men who have taken Tibetan wives and 3 or 400 Chinese soldiers. At present the houses are all built Tibetan except one Chinese Temple, and the language of the place is Tibetan. The large Lamasery, which was nearly as large as the rest of Batang and had over 2000 Lamas, has been destroyed by the Chinese, and all the Lamas driven out except about 200.

Batang is about as high as Dachienlu, but very much warmer (because the peaks completely surround the valley to shelter it). It is in a good sized valley, and most anything can be raised there. The large bottom in which they raise their provisions is about one mile wide and 12 miles long. It is about enough to support Batang and the villages in it, and keep prices very high. We inquired carefully into the prices of things in Batang. We find rent, land and building material cheaper than Dachienlu. But provisions raised on the ground are on the whole 50% higher than Dachienlu. Such as clothing, canned goods, coal oil, candles, matting, stoves, etc., cannot be purchased at all. We have thought as a mission for some time that what we get here at Dachienlu is not enough to defray our expenses, everything is so enormously dear, but should we go to Batang we could not possibly live on less than \$1500 to the family at the present prices, But, as above, rent purchase of land and building material would be cheaper.

We believe that should we be asked to stay in Dachienlu, that we cannot live on the present salary, things are so dear here. We have war prices here all the time. Our checks on Shanghai have to be sold on the street in Chungking at a discount of 6%, then we pay 1% to have

the silver carried to Dachienlu, and besides where 10 taels buy 14000 cash below at Ichang, Hancow, Nanking, we can only get 10800 in Dachienlu. The purchasing power of 1000 cash here is less than it is below. Comparing \$1000 gold is only about \$725 here.

In Dachienlu we have the following prices in gold: American-lb. flour \$5 per hundred; corn meal \$2.25; barley meal \$3.75; rice \$3.50; coal oil \$.60 per gal.; lard \$.20 per lb.; wood \$11.00 per cord. Other things accordingly. In Bating all flours are \$7 per hundred lbs.; lard \$.35 gold per lb.; coal oil \$.80 per gallon; and wood \$10 per cord. We don't desire to lay up money. We just simply want to live. Should prices get better we shall be just as ready to say so, but under the present conditions we feel that it will take \$1200 to keep a family in Dachienlu and \$1500 in Baking.

In regard to Batang as a location for work, we, as a mission, since seeing for ourselves, believe that Batang is much better than Dachienlu. It has not as many people as here, but it is in the main Tibetan, the language Tibetan, and it is located on the main road leading into Tibet, and is on the border. Batang district has for a radius of 3 days around Batang about 2500 families, numbering 12,000 to 15,000 people. This population is nearly all Tibetan, and this district is as populous as any portion of Tibet except a district in the southern part where missionaries are not allowed to go. It is different in Dachienlu, for the population is mostly Chinese, the language Chinese and experience shows the work to be principally Chinese. We believe we must get among Tibetans to do Tibetan work, and to learn the language we must get where it is spoken. In Dachienlu we hear nothing but Chinese. The Tibetans themselves speak Chinese in Dachienlu.

There are two roads leading from Dachienlu into Tibet. The one we traveled is the southern road going through Batang, and the other the northern road going through Daoh, and meeting the southern road at Chamdo 17 days beyond Batang. The C.I.M. have chosen Dachienlu for headquarters, and are building a large compound here, and have first choices of the northern road. In fact this is another reason why we should choose another place for our work and building.

Should we go to Batang, or any place else, we are going to find Tibetan work very difficult. The Lamas have such a hold on the people that it almost means starvation to any one of their people who wants to embrace another faith. And then just beyond Batang Tibetan soldiers are standing on the road, carefully guarding it from the entrance of foreigners. Our work must be slow, difficult, and discouraging. We must gain a listener now and then through our kindness, medicine and love. Tibetans will not assemble in a hall to hear the gospel, as the Chinese, Japanese, Indians, or Africans. This is

a different work and must be done in a different way.”

(Note: “Dr. Shelton I shall come over in an hour or so, and advise with you about what we shall say about the buildings. Yours, Ogden.”)

There were anxious months of waiting for that reply but the valiant band waited. Did Dr. Susie know before she died that consent had been given? Hers and Petrus’ vision would have known that no other answer could be given. At the unqualified “yes” what joy there was! Preparations to fulfill their dreams immediately went forward.

It was a massive job - not only did each household need to pack all they had into boxes that would fit on a yak and cover them with fresh rawhide which hardened like iron and was quite waterproof for any dunking into rivers. They must also purchase supplies that would not be available in the Batang Valley. They must prepare for emergencies that would be entirely in their own hands. Dr. Shelton and Jim made a trip to Chungking to buy provisions for two years, materials for the building they were going to do, to pick up supplies for medical and educational work and to arrange for skilled lumbermen and carpenters. Yaks were needed, sedan chairs and an escort

These two families, both pioneers, set out for Batang. Sheltons went by the northern route, the same route for part of the way that Petrus and Dr. Susie took so many years ago to Kumbum and Lushan; then they turned off for Batang. The Sheltons must have wanted the feeling of kinship with the Rijnharts as they set out. The Ogdens had to delay for a little as Minnie was again pregnant, but they went by the middle route via Litang. Dr. had asked only for \$200 for “a caravan of 12 animals and a man to care for the same, to carry silver, mail, medical and other supplies.”²¹ The Ogdens arrived 10-21-08; school was opened 10-31-08.

The Batang area was a part of the region in which China was trying to maintain her sovereignty, but there were constant uprisings. Tibetans are a proud and independent people, actually having resisted dominance for centuries. Her borders had been closed since 1708 except to China, but this was an arrangement made with Lhasa, not with the nomad tribes.

A weakness of the Manchus was their suspicions of any officials so that there was a constant change of command officers on the Tibetan frontier. Also, soldiers were considered the lowest order of society so they were the least able of men and least cared for - traditionally pressed into service, under-paid and, on the frontier, often

²¹ Dr. Osgood, Chronological Data of Batang Mission, as corrected by Mr. Duncan. Unpublished, 1926.

not paid for months at a time. They readily turned to brigandry just to survive.

Pong Chuan became Tao-tai (Chinese official) in Batang, being sent there early in 1904. His duties were to govern and curtail the power of the lamaseries and the Tibetan princes. In April 1905 the Tibetans revolted killing Pong Chuan and a Catholic priest. That summer Ma Wei-chi quelled the uprising and destroyed the monastery. In the summer of 1906, Chao Erh-feng, Tao-tai, made his headquarters in Batang. He followed the revolting lamas south to Hsiang-chuang and destroyed a monastery there. He began the erection of a large yamen in Batang but in November he was called to Chengtu. He was made Frontier Commissioner there with complete control over Chuan-pien, now consolidating his position as an official. Later, in 1907 Chao Erh-feng is made temporary viceroy of Szechuan province and Chao Erh-feng is appointed Imperial Commissioner of Tibet. Therefore, you may see that there was a constant change and turmoil which led to instability during the time that the Batang Mission was being planned and begun. It is not surprising that Dr. Shelton early learned, not just from Dr. Susie's account, but from his own observations and experiences that one must deal carefully with officials and that scrupulous honesty was the best part of valor.

It is also not surprising that in his first official act with setting their Mission up that Dr. Shelton was most scrupulous to send Gezong On Du, teacher and friend, ahead to arrange the necessary permissions from the officials. Years later Dorris Shelton still remembers that Dr. Shelton never went anywhere without proper permission. The cook was sent ahead to repair the houses rented for living places. Sheltons had taken a house by the main South Gate. Ogdens rented rooms from Gezong On Du. Dr. Shelton immediately opened a dispensary. To add to the joy of all, Clara Ruth Ogden was born, a healthy child and the first white baby in Batang - a distinction she bore proudly all her life (dob 3-28-09).

Some of the CIM, China Inland Mission, missionaries, the Muirs and J.H. Edgars, came to Batang for a while. Although they did not stay long term, that Mission was always of invaluable help and friendship to the Batang Mission. First, through always providing shelter and assistance to any missionaries coming through Tachienlu, next through acting as agents to forward freight, mail, and cash whenever possible. The CIM was a more independent group; their USA mission organization acting more as a clearinghouse for funds and supplies rather than as a supervisory board. Their work, therefore, was more flexible but less stable and more dependent on the individual strength of each missionary. This meant that their work may have been

less permanent. So some of their members came to Batang for awhile to see what it would be like, but they did not stay. Our missionaries probably left Tachienlu partly because the CIM was strongly entrenched there, but also because there is a loose agreement that certain areas are to be ‘assigned’ to certain church groups.

Dr. Shelton continued to be eager for itinerating work rather than a settled medical practice, particularly since he hoped that by widening his areas of itineration it would get him deeper into Inner Tibet and eventually to Lhasa. He continued to ask the FCMS to send another doctor; one that had the medical and surgical skills that he had. There was great relief and rejoicing when the news came that Dr. Zenas Stanford Loftis, member of P.Y. Pendleton’s Vine Street Church of Nashville, Tenn., had embarked for Batang.

Dr. Loftis kept a diary²² of his journey out and it is a well-written and interesting account of his travels through China. His interest in the people and the response to himself made it obvious that he was a man of great charm, and his account of the medical work on the way showed he was a skilled surgeon and practitioner. Dr. Shelton and Mr. Muir went out two days to meet Loftis and J.H. Edgar, who was escorting Dr. Loftis in from Tachienlu. He obviously was the person as well as the doctor everyone had hoped. Having arrived 6-17-09 by July 5th Dr. Shelton and Jim Ogden left for an itinerating trip to Hsiang-cheng (Hsiang Chen most ferocious of Eastern Tibetan tribes) feeling comfortable that Dr. Loftis could temporarily take charge of the dispensary.

Mr. Ogden must have returned with Dr. Shelton for the account says that a form of virulent smallpox broke out so bad that Mr. Ogden took his family up the mountain to escape it. Then Dr. Loftis, who was already suffering from dysentery and malaria, got typhus, and at the same time, smallpox. Dr. Shelton was called and he immediately put himself in quarantine with Dr. Loftis so that he could give him full-time nursing. It was no use, and barely two months after his arrival, Dr. Loftis died Aug. 12, 1909.

Word having been sent, Jim Ogden came down the mountain through the rain and the dark and walked in. His face wore a peculiarly hard expression. “Well,” he said, “there he is.” He added, “I didn’t believe the Lord would let him die. We’ve waited and waited for his coming. But there he is...” Such shock and sadness that into their midst death took that hope from them!

²² Zenas Stanford Loftis, M.D., *A Message from Batang, the Diary of Z.S. Loftis, M.D., Missionary to Tibetans*, NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1911. Prepared by Mrs. Flora Shelton.

Shelton was all broken up by his death. To have all their hopes smashed; particularly as Dr. Loftis had been so congenial, willing, and such a skilled surgeon - it was almost more than could be borne! In death he became larger than life. Decades later, my vision of him was as a leader and a long-term missionary, because he was spoken of with such reverence. Yet actuality cannot diminish who he really was, despite the shortness of his life as a missionary! In mourning a message was sent to America for someone to replace him in that vision of service. Dr. William Hardy answered that vision.

During 1909-10 Chao Erh-feng conducted a military campaign and occupied Derga, Gonshen, Chambdo, Draya, and Markham, all of Inner Tibet. He placed Chinese magistrates over the districts and opened 105 primary schools. This last was of great benefit to the people and also made it easier for the Mission to open their school since schooling had become a political goal.

An early part of the vision of the Mission was for industrial education; particularly for widows and orphans who needed a trade to survive. So a shoe factory was opened and classes in handiwork, sewing, and crafts were used to train children to use their fingers.

During these years Shelton and Ogden were burning brick, getting timber cut from the forested slopes of the high ranges and storing these to cure for future building. One can imagine the hard work this was with only hand tools and yak or men to carry the timber down.

Jim and Minnie now found a place to rent on the north side of town. The Sunday School and church meetings as well as the school were meeting in their former home. Lee Gway-yuin and four others were now baptized, the first in Batang (1910). Jim began making regular itinerating trips into the Batang Valley visiting the villages.

Dr. Shelton's name began to be widely known as a man of great dedication. His first surgical case was a man whose skull was crushed. He survived! Shelton was invited on his first trip into Free Tibet. He was never so happy as when he was on the road. He knew that in Batang they will be living 18 days beyond Tachienlu with "no post offices, no native carriers, no banks, no civilization except an attempt at a telegraph (at Litang). This is a long way off, you can't imagine how far it is, but we are as close at Batang to the Heavenly Father as you are. We don't ask for sympathy, but for your moral and financial support, and above all for your prayers."²³

June, 1910 James Clarence Ogden, Jr. was born into the Ogden family only to leave it 7 months later, with sadness and shock to Minnie and Jim.

²³ Letter: Dr. Shelton to FCMS, 1910.

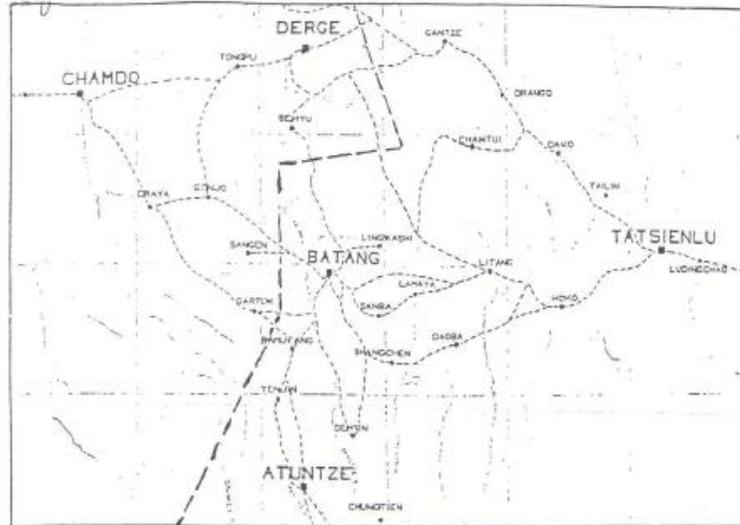
10-8-10 Sheltons go on furlough having had slightly more than seven years on the field - a long time to be away from your native country. Dr. Hardy had sailed 6-5-10 and met Sheltons in Tachienlu. Jim, being notified, made a fast trip to pick him up and return to Batang 11-29-10. It was urgent for Dr. Hardy to begin medical work immediately, perhaps because of the Ogdens' new son's medical problems. He didn't start language study at once and possibly never did make up this lack.

A typewriter in Tibetan script had been proposed and Dr. Shelton had received \$300 to start having it built. It was built and was successful, even with all the diacritical marks above and below the script - the only problem was the script was too small to read so it was never used.

Early in 1911 land on Japoding, which was a small plateau above and to the east of Batang, was deeded (leased) to the Mission in perpetual rental at 60 taels a year. This was arranged by Ogden and Hardy for the Mission - a nine acre plot. Soon, it was felt, they could build.

Meanwhile on furlough, Dr. Shelton had been given time to attend some refresher medical courses which were much needed in that time of the rapid growth in medical knowledge. According to his daughter, Dorris, he went to the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins - very prestigious schools.

He was also involved in the Million Dollar campaign under A.E. Corey. “Shelton's a good chap,” says Stephen J. Corey, Sec'y FCMS, in an undated letter to “My Dear Brother Hardy”, “He stirs the people greatly in the Rally campaigns. A modest, sturdy, two-fisted fellow that talks right from the shoulder and gets down to “brass tacks’.”



The heavy line zigzagging down though the center is the border between West China and Tibet. The country as far east as Tatsienlu once belonged to Tibet and its population is still dominantly Tibetan. The dotted lines are trails passable only on horseback. Distances on the Tibetan border are measured not by miles but by days journey on horseback. The following are the distances between various points measured in days: Batang to Chamdo via Gartok 17 days; Batang to Chamdo via Gonju 12; Batang to Tatsienlu via Sanba, Litang and Hoko, 17; Tatsienlu to Gantze, 12; Gantze to Behyu, 7; Behyu to Batang 7; Batang to Derge via Behyu 15; Hatange in Shangehen 7; Batang to Atuntze via Hamutang 10; Batang to Atuntze via Yenjin, 12; The route which the missionaries take into Tibet goes from southwest China up through Atuntze. In the early days they traveled through Tatsienlu from the Upper Yangise River but this latter route is now closed because of robbers. *World Call*, Volume V No. 5 page 27.