

BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN WOMEN IN 19TH CENTURY CHINA.



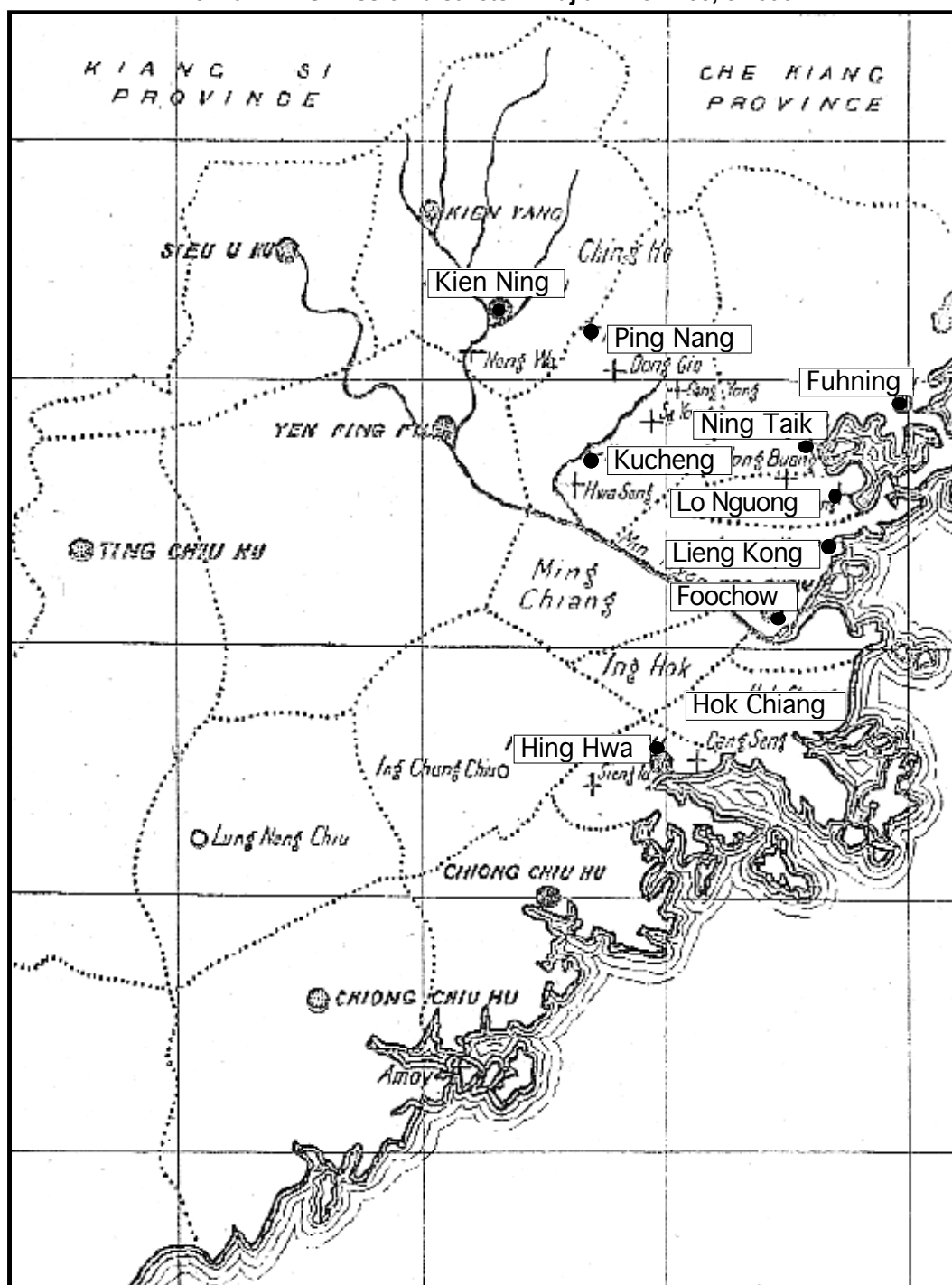
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The main CMS mission districts in Fujian Province, c 1895



Barnes, Irene H, (c1896), *Behind the Great Wall: The Story of the C E Z M S Work and Workers in China*, London, Marshall Bros.

Louisa and Robert Stewart with Mrs. Ahok of Fuzhou.



The Rev. Robert Stewart was educated at Marlborough College, a private school in England, and took his Master of Arts (MA) degree at Trinity College, Dublin, after which he began a law course. Following a deep spiritual experience in London, he decided to offer to the Church Missionary Society for missionary service in China.¹ There is no information about the early education of Louisa Smyly.² Robert and Louisa had known each other since childhood.³ Robert's proposal to Louisa was prosaic, telling her of his CMS appointment to China; and then asking, "Would you like to be a missionary" followed by "Would you go to China?" to which she replied, "Yes, I should"; and finally the question, "Will you go with me?"⁴ The Stewarts, with the Rev. Llewellyn Lloyd, arrived in Fuzhou in September 1876, not long after their marriage and became central figures in the history of the CMS, CEZMS and the Dublin University Fukien Mission in Fujian Province.

Gutian (Kucheng) District in the Province of Fujian is set a densely populated valley surrounded by steep mountains about ninety miles northwest of Fuzhou and about thirty miles north from the junction of the Gutian River with the Min River (Mingjiang)⁵. In the 1890s the journey up the



Mingjiang to the river port of Shuikou and then overland in single-file along narrow unpaved mountain paths (see [left](#)), to Gutian (Kucheng-Kut'ien) City, the site of the Church Missionary Society/Church of England Zenana Missionary Society mission, usually took about three days but could take more than a week in difficult weather.⁶ Today the district is linked to Fuzhou by a

- 1 Rev. Robert Warren Stewart was born in March 1850. He was the seventh son of James R Stewart of Kingstown and Leinster Street, Dublin. His mother was Eleanor Martha, eldest daughter of Richard Benson Warren, Sergeant-at-Law (today barrister is the usual title). His paternal grandfather was Henry Stewart of Tyreallen, Donegal, who married the Hon. Elizabeth Pakenham, eldest daughter of the first Earl of Longford. Robert Stewart was ordained for missionary service by the Bishop of London in 1876. *The Dublin University Missionary Magazine*, 17 October 1895, Memorial Number, 'Massacre of Rev. Robert Stewart and family and companions in China', pp 11-12.
- 2 Louisa's mother was Ellen Franks, b 14 November 1815. Married Dublin surgeon Josiah Smyly 1834. Died 16 May 1901, aged 86years. Online 1 November 2011 — http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Smyly
- 3 Smyly-Stewart Family.
6 July 1834; Smyly, Josiah m Franks, Ellen. Couple had 10 children. 9 November 1852, Louisa Catherine was the 9th child: Baptised privately by Rev. H Yorsdoyle. 2 March 1844, Mary Elizabeth (lizzie) m John G Watson (d 21 Sept 1901) at Merrion Dublin on 18 March 1874. 7 September 1876: Stewart, Rev Robert m Smyly, Louisa Catherine. Robert was son of James Stewart of Leinster St, Dublin. 7 September 1876. Stewart, Rev Robert m Smyly, Louisa Catherine. Robert, was son of James Stewart of Leinster St, Dublin. Louisa Smyly born 9 November 1852, was the daughter of Mrs. Eliza Smyly of Dublin, one of Ireland's foremost philanthropists. Her homes for children still operate today. Louisa had seven children by Robert Stewart. 8 October 1877, Arthur Dudley; 27 March 1879, Philip Smyly; 7 January 1881, James Robert – (Educated University of Sydney and Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia). Later missionary in China, killed in France, World War I; 4 September 1882, Mildred Eleanor, wounded at Huasang, later returned to China as a missionary; 29 April 1884, Kathleen Louisa, injured at Huasang. Married Rev. E Martin, missionary in China, died in Japanese POW camp, Hong Kong; 1 August 1889, Herbert Norman, died 2 August 1895 at Sui Kau, from wounds received at Huasang; 27 March 1892, Evan George, survived Huasang; 24 June 1894, Hilda Sylvia, injured Huasang, died of trauma, Foochow, 10 August 1895.
- 4 Eugene Stock, Reports Memorial Service, Kucheng Martyrs, Exeter Hall, 13 August 1895 *Church Missionary Gleaner*, London September 1895. Reports Memorial Service, Kucheng Martyrs, Exeter Hall, 13 August 1895.
- 5 'The 1895 site is now beneath the water of a large hydroelectric lake, shown on satellite mapping sites.
- 6 Gutian County is a short drive by highway from Fuzhou.
http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/thurst23/chap3_23.html

modern highway, with travelling time not more than two hours.

In addition to the CMS/CEZMS mission, Gutian had an American Methodist Episcopal Mission station with a resident doctor. The British and American missions worked closely together and the American doctor and the Wiley Memorial Hospital provided medical services for foreigners through a fee-paying scheme.⁷ The distribution of various preaching places for the two missions show that an effort was made, not always successfully, to divide the work and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The village of Huashan, where the massacre of August 1895 occurred, is about twelve miles to the southeast of the old town of Gutian on the side of a steep mountain, about 1000 feet above Gutian. It was cooler in the summer months of July-August and the CMS and CEZMS built two houses about two hundred yards from the village for rest and recreation during the hot weather. The two mission houses were destroyed during the murders and the site is now covered by a wild bamboo grove. Huashan village still exists and locals take foreign visitors to what they state is the site of the missionary houses.⁸

Huashan Village c 1895.



7 Welch, Ian, (2006), *Dr. James J Gregory: Letters from China*: (Dr Gregory of the American Methodist Episcopal Church Mission in Fujian Province, China, was medical doctor to Nellie, Topsy & Annie and provided the medical report on the condition of the British and American missionaries attacked at Huashan, Fujian Province, China on 1 August 1895. <http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/china/>

8 See URL <http://www.han-yuan.com/shudian/near/near41.htm>

Huashan Village 2010



CMS Houses at Huashan before the attack.



CMS and CEZMS Houses at Huashan after the attack.



Site of the CMS/CEZMS Mission Houses, Huashan, 2010.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Willa McDonald, Macquarie University, Sydney.

The Rev. Robert Stewart was responsible for an area about half the size of the Australian State of New South Wales including the Districts of Gutian and Ping Nang (see map p.2).⁹ He was the only male Anglican missionary, and most of the mission's work was carried out by single women of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS). Robert was the CEZMS Corresponding Secretary for Fujian Province from 1893 and was described by the leading lay CMS missionary, Dr. Birdwood Van Sommeren Taylor, as the "one man in whom they [CEZMS ladies] have confidence."¹⁰ Stewart was appointed by the Dublin University Fuh-Kien mission as the leader of the strong Irish Anglican contingent in the CMS/CEZMS mission in Fujian.¹¹

The CMS and CEZMS were closely linked administratively but the two organizations maintained their distinct autonomy. Gutian was the administrative centre for hundreds of smaller towns and villages. Elsie Marshall wrote:

Mr. Stewart was reckoning the other day that Gutian and Ping Nang districts — only just one district of Fujian — is nine miles from east to west, and twenty-three miles from north to south. That is as big as half Wales! ... My little district is about 300 miles square.¹²

Fujian Province was a demanding environment culturally as well as geographically and



missionary work involved heavy physical, cultural and emotional demands. As the only married woman in the British mission, Louisa Stewart took precedence over all single women, irrespective of their age or experience. She was the role model for all the single women who were under her oversight as a married woman and the wife of the senior missionary. **Topsy (left) and Nellie (right) Saunders**, two very young Australian women, just 21 and 22 years old at the time of massacre, were recent additions to the Gutian staff. They lived in the Stewart home as elder sisters of the young Stewart children. They showed the strength of this relationship when they gave their lives trying to protect the

children from the rebels.¹³

Gutian District was a tea-growing area and normally self-sufficient in food and basic necessities. Imports were relatively small and did not markedly disturb the traditional economic balance of the

9 *The Age*, Melbourne, 7 August 1895.

10 Dr B Van Sommeren Taylor to Baring Gould, CMS London, CMS East Asia Archives.

11 The Dublin University Fuh-Kien Mission. The Dublin University name is synonymous with Trinity College, Dublin.

12 Marshall, Elsie, 'For His Sake', A Record of a Life consecrated to God and devoted to China, (London, The Religious Tract Society, 1903), p 162.

13 For an account of the Saunders sisters and Annie Gordon see Welch, Ian, (2004), 'Nellie, Topsy and Annie: Australian Anglican Martyrs, Fujian Province, China, 1 August 1895,' Paper presented to the First TransTasman Conference on Australian and New Zealand Missionaries, At Home and Abroad, Australian National University, Canberra, 8-10 October 2004. URL-rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTasman/papers/Welch_Ian.pdf A useful introduction to the missionary movement in the Colony of Victoria, Australia, is Paproth, Darrell, (2004), 'Hugh Bussey Macartney Jr: Mission Enthusiast,' Paper presented to the First TransTasman Conference on Australian and New Zealand Missionaries, At Home and Abroad, Australian National University, Canberra, 8-10 October 2004. URL-rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTasman/papers/Paproth_Darrell.pdf

Province. Nellie and Topsy Saunders mentioned that foreigners imported items otherwise unavailable. Amy Oxley, another young Australian who arrived in Fuzhou a few months after the Huashan Massacre said that foreign groceries were the major import item for missionaries. She particularly highlighted sweets, candy, or “lollies” in accepted Australian usage, as items of deep emotional value to the expatriate community.¹⁴ On the issue of cereal foods for example, Topsy told her mother:

Oatmeal you can get, but don't want; at least I don't. Do you know this, that China is a funny place, and the things that it has are far better than the imported things. Now every morning, instead of porridge, we have a great plateful of plain boiled rice, with buffalo milk and sugar, and it is just tipping! I could not possibly do without my rice in the morning now! It is not a quarter as heating as porridge, and it tastes much nicer. Now, the wheaten meals touches a point on which I feel deeply. You can get heaps of wheat here as cheap as anything. On the other hand, if you buy flour in Fuzhou it is very expensive — first, its own cost, and then the cost of carting it up, and it is such heavy stuff. But Mr. Bannister¹⁵ is a wonderful man; I do admire him very much. He got a grinding machine out from England, and bought his wheat for next to nothing, and made one of the men grind it up. So there he has his own little mill on the place; and I propose to adopt the same plan when we are settled at Ning Taik.¹⁶

Translate the comments above into the lifestyle of an upper middle-class Anglo-Irish family with a husband and several young children including a baby less than a year old, add two young middle-class Australian boarders and a young Irish nurse coupled with an active missionary lifestyle and Louisa Stewart's life was full. The Saunders sisters said from time to time that Mrs. Stewart “had taken to her bed” although they do not suggest any specific reason.

The vast majority of the population of Fujian Province and virtually all the women and children had never seen foreigners before the missionaries began their itinerations.¹⁷ Nellie Saunders told the Rev E B Barnett, the Secretary of the Church Missionary Association of Victoria:

The men, who travel about a good deal, had seen foreigners before, and had heard the Jesus doctrine, but the women had not, so were very shy at first.¹⁸

The Fujian Anglican Mission was managed by a “Fujian Sub-Conference” that was an all-male governing body for CMS missionaries in the Province with a subordinate Women's Committee,

14 Amy Oxley, CMS, New South Wales, wrote to relatives in Victoria that she intended, like other missionaries, to import groceries from Australia. Amy Oxley, *The Godown*, Foo Chow, February 19th 1896. See Welch, Ian and Ellen Hope, (2004), *Letters from China: Amy Oxley, Australian Missionary Nurse, 1895-1903*, Canberra, Missionary Archives Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, (forthcoming).

15 The Rev. William Banister CMS, an Englishman who was a close friend and colleague of Robert Stewart and succeeded him as Corresponding Secretary for the CEZMS in Fujian. He later became the Archdeacon of Hong Kong. In 1909 Banister was consecrated first Anglican Bishop of Hunan. Banister was the British Secretary of the joint British-American Commission of Enquiry. See Welch, Ian 2011, *The Flower Mountain murders: a "Missionary Case" data-base*. Online 1 November 2011 at <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/7273> Part 6, Letters and Reports of the Rev. William Banister and the Huashan Commission of Enquiry.

16 Topsy Saunders, April or May 1894, Berry, p 96.

17 There are good accounts of the kind of cultural challenges that arose in when missionaries first arrived in a new location in a pamphlet published by the Rev. Robert Stewart to his friends in the United Kingdom seeking funds for his network of day schools. Robert W Stewart, 28 August 1893, Dublin attached to letter to Wigram, CMS London, 31 May 1894. CMS East Asia Archives.

18 Nellie Saunders to Rev. E J Barnett, from Hwa Sang, 24 June 1895, in *The Weekly Times*, Melbourne, 10 August 1895.

chaired by a CMS male and comprising all women missionaries, CMS and CEZMS. The two committees usually met at the same time, with major issues being finally decided by the Sub-Conference, which also controlled funding from outside, mainly from the CMS and CEZMS in London.



The four younger Stewart children had travelled to Fuzhou direct from England with their young nurse, **Helena Yellop**. Their three older brothers remained at school in England. Before the Saunders Sisters arrived in Fuzhou the Sub-Conference delegated the Rev. J Martin to discuss their future location in the province while waiting for Robert and Louisa Stewart to arrive in Fuzhou from a deputational tour of Canada.¹⁹

Louisa Stewart came from a wealthy evangelical Anglo-Irish family whose philanthropic efforts are still in place today.²⁰ Louisa took an active role in the family's good works but her life was transformed by a Keswick "holiness" convention held at Brighton, England, in 1875.²¹ The "deepening of life" she experienced was as dramatic an influence on her as her original conversion, and resulted in a deep sense of duty arising from her sense of God's presence in her everyday life.²² She was as active missionary in her own right.²³ Nellie wrote:

One or two of the people here are unusually clever and gifted. Mrs. Stewart, of course, heads this list — no one here can hold a candle to her in any way — and she is by far the best Chinese speaker we have.²⁴

Louisa Stewart's important pastoral role with all the young single women who came to Fujian Province and especially to Gutian was mentioned above. In the CEZMS the older women cared for younger, and single women shared rooms when travelling together.²⁵ Semple remarks that the "parenting" of younger, single, missionaries was a characteristic feature of missions, resulting from

19 The Church Missionary Society of England East Asian Mission was locally governed by a Conference of all accepted CMS foreign missionaries. It included Fujian, Guangdong and Hong Kong and any other CMS activities in South China. There was a 'sub-conference in Hong Kong as well as in Fujian.

20 Rev. Hugh Stowell Phillips, In Memoriam, *The Chinese Recorder*, November 1895, p 527.

21 A sympathetic account of the Keswick Movement is given in Pollock, John, *The Keswick Story: The Authorised History of the Keswick Convention*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1964). Also Barabas, Steven. *So Great Salvation; The history and message of the Keswick Convention*, (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1957). The Keswick movement was brought to Melbourne, Australia, by the Rev. Norman Grubb and had a profound influence.

22 The importance of conversion among women evangelicals, as well as the impact of Keswick and the 'holiness' movement among Anglican evangelicals is discussed in Mathers, Helen, 'The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler, 1828-1906,' pp 282-312 in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 32 No 2, April 2001.

23 It is symbolic of her leadership role among the British CMS, CEZMS and London Missionary Society (LMS) women in Fujian that she was elected Chair of the Fuhkien Ladies Conference held in Fuzhou, 7 November 1894. CMS East Asia Archives.

24 Nellie Saunders in Berry op cit, p 194.

25 Today this might raise discussion of possible homosexuality. The issue of female propinquity in the 19th century is discussed in Hunter, Jane, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in turn-of-the-century China*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984),.

traditional age and gender related roles in British society.²⁶

Eugene Stock said that Louisa was a more effective public speaker than Robert and her addresses were responsible for many of the women who went to China with the CEZMS. The Stewarts proposed the entry of the CEZMS into Fujian Province and their advocacy infuriated the senior CMS missionary in Fujian, Archdeacon John Richard Wolfe of Fuzhou.²⁷

In 1882 the Stewarts returned to England because of Robert's continuing ill health after he contracted amoebic dysentery. They returned to Fuzhou in 1887 and Robert briefly began work at Gutian with the Rev. William Banister until his sickness required a period of ineffective recuperation at the "hill-station" of Kuliang. Continuing illness forced them to return to England after just three months in China.²⁸

In 1892 Stewart accompanied Eugene Stock, the Editorial Secretary of the CMS, on a deputation to Australasia. Stewart had less than a week's notice. His first sermon in Melbourne, on the first Sunday of the visit, captured the imagination of the Saunders Sisters who immediately offered, with their mother, for service with the CMS mission in Fujian Province.²⁹ Their offer was accepted by the Church Missionary Association of Victoria (CMAV) formed as direct outcome of the arrival of the two CMS delegates. The two young women became the first missionaries to be sent to China by the Australian Anglican churches.³⁰

Stewart was a complex man, intellectually able, physically energetic when in good health and passionately committed to the evangelisation of the Chinese.³¹ His single-minded judgement in his early days as a missionary contributed to an anti-missionary riot in Fuzhou in 1878 although the matter was not directly his fault.³² The episode is mentioned in CMS literature.³³ After a riot in

26 Semple, Rhonda Anne, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Missions*, (Rochester, NY, Boydell Press, 2003), p 205.

27 Wolfe resented the Stewarts on several grounds. They were financially independent; they were able to fund their extensive school system with money sent directly to them from friends in Ireland; Stewart was a graduate clergyman trained at Trinity College Dublin, a background that Wolfe, although Irish by birth, did not have a university education. The Stewarts encouraged women missionaries to wear Chinese costume, a practice that Wolfe not only condemned out of hand but sought to have overturned. The conflict will be discussed in a forthcoming monograph.

28 Watson, op cit, p 27. Mrs. Watson was Mrs. Stewart's sister and does not mention either the 1878 event, or Stewart's expulsion from Fuzhou in 1887. See the description of Stewart's illness by his friend, Rev. J S Collins, 'Reminiscences of Rev. R W Stewart', pp 57-59 in *The Dublin University Missionary Magazine*, 17 October 1895, Memorial Number, 'Massacre of Rev. Robert Stewart and family and companions in China.'

29 Stock, Eugene, (1896), Foreword to Watson, op cit. Stock wrote: "In less than seven months we took more than three hundred meetings and services; and Stewart took quite half the speaking...He went long and untiring journeys by slow trains, or on rough roads, to address small gatherings in remote towns..." Watson, op cit, p 6.

30 Church Missionary Association of Victoria (CMAV) formed 1892. Not to be confused with the Church Missionary Society of Victoria (CMSV) formed 1849. The CMSV had no connection with the CMS. It was originally a diocesan board of mission, founded in 1851 and adopted the CMS name because many of its founders had links to the CMSE. See Welch, Ian (1980), *Pariahs and Outcasts, Christian Missions to the Chinese in Australia*, MA (unpublished, Monash University and Welch, Ian, (2003), *Alien Son: The Life and Times of Cheok Hong CHEONG, 1851-1928*, PhD unpublished, Australian National University. Online 1 November 2011 at — <https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/49261/31/01front.pdf>

31 Stewart's health was always a matter of conjecture. The Rev. William Banister, whom Stewart replaced at Gutian in late 1893, told the CMS in London that 'neither Mr. Stewart nor Mr. Eyton-Jones can be looked upon as very strong physically and the strain of the work might be too much to them at any time.' Banister, Fuzhou, to CMS London, 6 March 1894, CMS East Asia Archives Microfilm 1915, National Library of Australia, Reel 244..

32 An alternative explanation of the riot is given in Stock, Eugene, (1899), *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, London, Church Missionary Society (4 vols), Vol III, pp 227-229. See also Church Missionary Society,

which mission buildings were destroyed, Sir Thomas Wade, the British Minister to China, advised London that Stewart was a man “to whose good pleasure everything is to give way” and that if Stewart remained in China, “he would cause trouble”.³⁴ Another of the Dublin missionaries, the Rev. J S Collins, referred to the events at Fuzhou in a note published after Stewart’s death:

He had adopted a distant and rather overbearing manner during the first few years of his residence in China which he told me he greatly regretted.³⁵

Stewart was intensely “low-church” in his outlook. When invited to preach during his deputational visit in New Zealand in 1892, he was asked to wear a white silk stole rather than the black preaching scarf he preferred. He had never previously worn a stole and it was a small sign of his growing maturity and improved flexibility that he agreed.³⁶ After his return to Gutian in 1893 Stewart carefully avoided disagreements with officials and the local literati.³⁷ Mr. Ding, the best-qualified literary man in Gutian, saw no difficulty in being the language teacher for Robert Stewart and Nellie Saunders.

When Stewart and his family, with the two Saunders Sisters, arrived in Gutian they found a mission essentially conducted by single women of the CMS and CEZMS. The importance of single women missionaries in Fujian Province is shown in the accompanying table.

Table 1
Protestant Mission Statistics, Fujian, 1895

MISSION	MISSIONARIES			CHINESE MEMBERS
	MALE	WIVES	SINGLE	
American Board	16	8	2	1102
American Reformed	7	8	7	1187
English Presbyterian	10	6	7	1251
UK CMS/CEZMS	13	7	39	6540
UK London Missy Soc	4	3	6	2034
US Meth Episcopal	9	6	13	4898

(Source: *The Chinese Recorder*, November 1896, p 530)

(1904), *For Christ in Fujian, The Story of the Fuh Kien Mission of the Church Missionary Society*, London, Church Missionary Society. (Fourth Edition of original by Stock), pp 23-25.

33 Stevens, Emile, (1895), ‘Four Years in Fuzhou: Miss Emilie Stevens’ Narrative,’ in *The Missionary, At Home and Abroad*, Vol XXII, No 21, October 1895, pp 369-371.

34 Sir Thomas Wade to the Marquis of Salisbury, 23 May, 1879, Great Britain, Foreign Office, Confidential Correspondence, XXIII, p 170, cited in Kirby, James E, (1966), ‘The Fuzhou Anti-Missionary Riot — August 30, 1878,’ pp 665-679 in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 25, No 4, August 1966.

35 The Dublin University Missionary Magazine, 17 October 1895, Memorial Number, ‘Massacre of Rev. Robert Stewart and family and companions in China’. P 58.

36 Watson, op cit, p. 9.

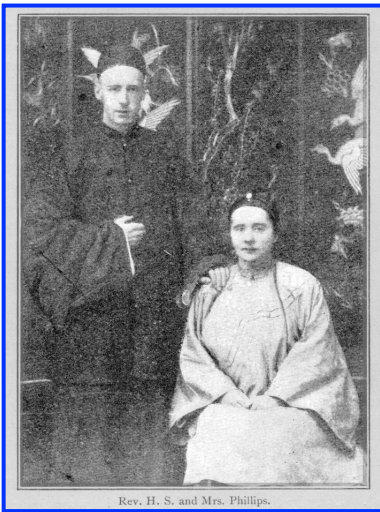
37 Rankin, Mary Backus, (1961), ‘The Ku-T’ien Incident (1895): Christians versus the Ts’ai-hui,’ p 33 in *Papers on China*, Vol 15, December 1961, Harvard University.



The Anglican mission methodology was to arrive at a village and either make contact with a known Christian or simply wait to be invited into a house by someone attracted by their foreignness — and that was inevitable. Robert Stewart described Topsy's work at Sek Chek Du (Seventeenth Bridge), under the friendly supervision of her close English friend, **Elsie Marshall**:

She has women's classes, girls' and boys' schools, a little dispensary and any amount of visiting; people coming to her and she going to them.³⁸

In 1897, the CMS/CEZMS had 42 single women missionaries in Fujian Province, an increase of



twenty-five percent over the previous year.³⁹ More than half were recruited through the influence of Robert and Louisa Stewart.⁴⁰ The **Rev. Hugh Stowell Phillips**, who narrowly avoided being among those killed at Huashan, described Louisa as having:

A peculiarly sympathetic nature, which made her a real mother in Ku-cheng; she seemed so essentially to make her own the troubles of another.⁴¹

Nellie Saunders had a very high opinion of Louisa Stewart whom she saw daily while Topsy preferred field work with Elsie Marshall. Nellie said that Mrs. Stewart was: "one of the very sweetest women you ever saw."⁴² She wrote:

You would be lost in wonder and admiration to see how well and systematically the work is carried on. One or two of the people here are unusually clever and gifted. Mrs. Stewart, of course, heads this list — no one here can hold a candle to her in any way — and she is by far the best Chinese speaker we have.⁴³

Elsie Marshall wrote to her father:

Mrs. Stewart is indefatigable; she teaches her own children and the third class in the boys' school every day, and now the women's school is being built up so fast; it is just close to us in the compound, and Mrs. Stewart will have the charge of that too.⁴⁴

The CMS archives and publications about the mission collectively point to Louisa's contribution being as important as that of her husband. Money sent directly to the Stewarts from the Smyly family and friends in Dublin financed the expansion of primary schools in the Gutian district.⁴⁵ The

38 Rev. Robert Stewart to Rev. E J Barnett, Melbourne, *The Age*, Melbourne, 7 August 1895.

39 Statistical table in *The Chinese Recorder*, August 1897, p 365.

40 Barnes, Irene H, (c1896), *Behind the Great Wall: The Story of the C E Z M S Work and Workers in China*, London, Marshall Bros, p 167.

41 Rev. Hugh Stowell Phillips, op cit, November 1895, p 528.

42 Nellie Saunders, Berry op cit, p 98.

43 Nellie Saunders, Berry op cit, p 195.

44 Marshall, Elsie, op cit, p 121.

45 Smyly, Vivienne, *The Early History of Mrs. Smyly's Homes and Schools*, (Dublin, Smyly Homes, 1976). A list of Irish subscribers to Stewart's Day Schools in Fujian Province is given in the attachments to a pamphlet published by the Rev. Robert Stewart to his friends in the United Kingdom seeking funds for his network of day schools. Robert W Stewart, 28 August 1893, Dublin attached to letter to Wigram, CMS London, 31 May 1894. CMS East Asia Archives The money raised for the schools was remitted to Louisa's sister in Dublin and forwarded direct to the Stewarts in Gutian. Robert gave an audited statement to the Fujian 'sub-conference' of the CMS each year. The schools also attracted some funding from the CMSE.

Rev. William Banister, whom Stewart succeeded at Gutian, said that Stewart could not “be looked upon as very strong physically and the strain of the work might be too much...at any time.”⁴⁶ Nellie Saunders wrote to her mother:

The work will be very heavy for Mr. Stewart. The Ku Cheng and Penang districts are simply enormous. They want a chief each; but as they can't have that, one man has to do the work that could be easily divided among six.⁴⁷

After observing Stewart and his workload Nellie remarked that: “I don't see how one man can continue at what he has to do without breaking down.”⁴⁸ Robert Stewart undertook innumerable lengthy supervisory visits to schools and Anglican congregations across his district.⁴⁹ Louisa was left with the children with oversight of the CMS and CEZMS staff in Gutian.

The Saunders sisters benefitted from the advice of Louisa Stewart that they behave in a: “most quiet manner and take studious care not to offend any class of the natives.”⁵⁰ Louisa was rarely able to do the kind of pioneering work enjoyed by the single women.

Two baskets are taken, one being a large round one, into which the cotton wool quilt, pillows, sheets, blandets, wash-hand basin, and jug are packed, together with as many garments and odds and ends as possible. The second basket will generally contain food — bread, tinned meats, jam or marmalade, butter, condensed milk, bovril, etc. If we are fortunate enough to have good digestions, and also to have acquired a taste for native food, we can dispense with English food and take instead; a basket of tracts, Gospels, and other books, as well as a few simple drugs and surgical dressings ... The coolies are ordered (one for each load, and generally three for a chair) for daybreak the next morning.⁵¹

It took time to adjust to the kind of food often served up in Chinese inns and homes when travelling.⁵² Given the importance of the hospitality freely offered to them by people with little to spare, the missionaries were well aware of causing offence by refusing food. After a year at Gutian, Topsy Saunders often had problems with some of the things she was offered:

Mr. Stewart says that the best way to eat, when you have something nasty, is to count ‘thirteen times on, etc, etc and you get so interested that you forget the taste of the stuff you are eating.’ The recipe for eating slugs is to put the slug into your mouth and say ‘Amen.’⁵³

46 Rev. W. Banister to Rev. C Fenn, CMS London, 6 March 1894. CMS East Asia Archives.

47 Nellie Saunders, Berry op cit, p 49.

48 Nellie Saunders, Berry op cit, p 210.

49 Nellie Saunders, Berry op cit, p 166.

50 *The Weekly Times*, Melbourne, 10 August 1895.

51 Hook, Marion, ‘Save Some’: *C.E.Z.M.S. Work in Fuh-Kien*, (London, Church of England Zenana Missionary Society/Marshall Bros, c1900), p 21.

52 This was universal among missionaries in China. Frank Burden of Adelaide, in the first Australian party of the China Inland Mission, wrote home: ‘The Chinese food which that gave us . . . was anything but tempting to anyone not educated up to it.’ Frank Burden to ‘Lou’, (sister) 6 February 1891. (Courtesy Mr Frank Burden, grandson)

53 Topsy Saunders, Berry op cit, p 32.



The employment of women missionaries was a controversial issue in both religious and secular discussions. One of the earliest reports in the Australian press of the Gutian massacre mentioned that the Vegetarians “subjected the female victims to revolting cruelties”—a euphemism for sexual assaults that did not occur.⁵⁴

Robert and Louisa were stabbed to death in their bedroom, still in their night-clothes, and incinerated as the house was burned to the ground. That was bad enough but it was the killing of the single women that really got the religious and secular press excited. Eugene Stock was critical of grossly exaggerated British and Australian reports about the manner in which the women died.⁵⁵ In a mass protest meeting of foreign residents of Shanghai, a speaker referred to the deaths of “refined and delicate ladies” and the “beautiful children.”⁵⁶

European fears of the “heathen” illustrated by such comments were more than matched by Chinese fear of foreigners. The traditional fear of strangers kidnapping children was reinforced by the enthusiasm of missionaries for “rescuing” children and placing them in orphanages.⁵⁷ The traditional fear extended, in the case of foreigners, to a belief that simply patting a child on the head might involve sorcery and place the child under the evil control of the head-patter. A journalist in Shanghai, R S Gundry, a critic of missionaries, described Chinese prejudices in an article that appeared in 1893:

The eyes, ears, brain, viscera, etc., of all children possess valuable medicinal properties; and though the crime of procuring them is punishable by the severest methods known to Chinese law, kidnappers and even midwives are said to find gain in supplying bodies for the unholy purpose.⁵⁸

Elsie Marshall reported:

⁵⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 7 August 1895

⁵⁵ Some examples of the hyperbole include: ‘Men and women, young ladies belonging to the Zenana and other missions, were butchered in the most atrocious fashion, and in some cases with most savage cruelty.’ ‘The eyes of the children who did not share their parents’ fate were gouged out by the murderers.’ *The Age*, Melbourne, 6 August 1895. ‘Miss Harriet and Miss Elizabeth Saunders, two ladies of the Zenana Society Mission, who were from Melbourne, were literally hacked to pieces with spears and swords while trying to escape.’ *The Age*, Melbourne, 7 August 1895. ‘The four children of the Rev. Dr. Stewart were impaled on the spears of the murderers.’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1895.

⁵⁶ Hykes, Rev. J, p 111 in ‘The Gutian Massacre, *Supplement to the North China Herald and S C & C Gazette*, Shanghai, 9 August 1895.

⁵⁷ Cohen, Paul A, (1961), ‘The Anti-Christian Tradition in China’, pp 169-180 in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 20 No 2, (February 1961). See his more comprehensive classic: Cohen, Paul A, (1963), *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Anti-Foreignism, 1860-1870*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

⁵⁸ Gundry, R S, (1893), ‘Missionaries in China. The maltreatment of missionaries and converts, both Protestant and Catholic, in various parts of the country. *Fortnightly Review* 1893, pp 241-242.

This afternoon I paid a visit to a village ... as I walked up the little path to the village, a woman who was standing out with her babies turned and ran away, calling all her children after her, she and all the children were frightened of me.⁵⁹

Child abandonment, infanticide and abortion are long standing practices in many countries, often



for similar reasons.⁶⁰ One account about China draws on official and other papers to illustrate the attempts of officials and others to prevent such practices.⁶¹ The CMS mission in Fuzhou operated a foundling's home for many years, with **Miss Ada Nisbet**, a CEZMS missionary from Tasmania, Australia, managing it for several years. In 1902 alone, it received fifty babies.⁶² Louisa Stewart instituted the home in 1889 with financial support from her family and friends in Dublin where her mother, Mrs. Smyly, sponsored children's homes

for many years.⁶³



The Stewart children's nurse, **Helena Yellop**,⁶⁴ was a foundling child from Elliott House, a Smyly home for children in Dublin that continues today. Elsie Marshall gave this account of two little girls who were brought to the Gutian Foundling Home by a Biblewoman.

Two little girls are twins, and were rescued from being buried alive. A Biblewoman met a man carrying them in a basket, and asked him what he was going to do with them. He said, 'Bury them,' She asked him to give them to her, and he was quite willing, and so they were brought to the Home. All the children are girls, whom their parents did not want, and would have got rid of in some way.⁶⁵

59 Marshall, Elsie, op cit, p 153.

60 For a contemporary account of child welfare issues in today's China see Johnson, Kay Ann, Amy Klatzhim (editor), (2004), *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son: Abandonment, Adoption, and Orphanage Care in China*, St Paul Minn, Yeong and Yeong,

61 De Harlez, C, (1892), 'Infanticide in China, According to Chinese Documents,' *Dublin Review*, 1892, pp 117-143. Australian infanticide is discussed in Kocimbas, Jan, (2001), 'Azaria's Antecedents: Stereotyping Infanticide in late nineteenth-Century Australia,' pp 138-160 in *Gender & History*, Vol 13, No 1, April 2001. See also Johnson, Kay, (1993), 'Chinese Orphanages: Saving China's Abandoned girls, pp 61-78 in *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No 30, July 1993.

62 Ada (Adeline) Nesbit and Emilie Stevens, both Tasmanians, came to China with the CEZMS in 1891. Macgillivray, Donald, (1907), *A Century of Protestant Missions in China, (1807-1907)*, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, p 59. Miss E P Kingsmill, another Tasmanian, joined arrived in 1895. Barnes, op cit, p 175. Barnes added: 'the sums sent in to the Foreign Missionary Branch of the of the YWCA in Tasmania since July 1887, amounted to £66.16s.3d, so that the Association hopes to undertake the support of one missionary in China.' The Tasmanian Branch owed much of its vitality under God to its energetic Chairman and Treasurer, Mr. and Mrs. George Fagg. (Barnes p 163). Before her marriage Mrs. Fagg, as Miss Margaret Cooper, served with the Female Education Society and was a close friend of Mrs. Louisa Stewart. The two friends were responsible for the entry of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society into Fujian Province. The archives of the Tasmanian YWCA were destroyed many years ago and no record of its Foreign Missionary Branch now exist. Barnes also refers to the support of the Irish YWCA for CEZMS (p 167).

63 Mrs. Ellen Smyly 'became one of the most public Protestant female figures in nineteenth century Irish philanthropy. She opened her first Bible school in Dublin in 1850 and by the 1870s was instrumental in establishing at least six day schools and residential homes for poor and destitute children. Smyly and her daughters sat on all the committees, raised funds for their projects, and oversaw the management of the various institutions they founded. Luddy, Maria (nd) 'Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth century Ireland', *Voluntas* Vol 7 No 4, (revised and extended) p 19.

64 Helena Yellop holding Herbert Stewart, the youngest child of Robert and Louisa Stewart. Herbert was badly injured during the Huashan attack and died a day later enroute to Fuzhou.

65 Marshall, Elsie, op cit, p 114. See general discussion in Hook, Marion, (c1900) *op cit*.

Although it is common to remark that missionaries tended to highlight social negatives among those they were seeking to evangelise, a famous Chinese poet highlighted the lowly status of women:

How sad it is to be a woman! Nothing on earth is held so cheap.
Boys stand leaning at the door, Like Gods fallen out of Heaven.
Their hearts brave the Four Oceans, The wind and dust of a thousand miles.
No one is glad when a girl is born: By her the family sets no store.
Then she grows up, she hides in her room. Afraid to look a man in the face.
No one cries when she leaves her home--Sudden as clouds when the rain stops.
She bows her head and composes her face, Her teeth are pressed on her red lips:
She bows and kneels countless times. She must humble herself even to the servants.
His love is distant as the stars in Heaven, Yet the sunflower bends toward the sun.
Their hearts more sundered than water and fire-- A hundred evils are heaped upon her.
Her face will follow the years' changes: Her lord will find new pleasures.
Fu Hsuan 3rd Century AD

Males were able to travel freely but the women, rich or poor, were generally ignorant of anything outside their own village.⁶⁶ There was little difference, overall, between the attitudes of Chinese Christians and their fellow-countrymen as far as women were concerned. Nellie Saunders wrote of the wife of a CMS Chinese catechist:

There are no Christian women: even the man's wife knows very little, for I am afraid, her husband does not teach her much. He ought to, of course, but it is hard to get a Chinaman to think that women (of his own country) are capable of the reception of any ideas beyond what are necessary to enable them to cook rice and mind babies.⁶⁷

Nellie, probably reflecting the view of Louisa Stewart, was in no doubt about who was responsible for the ignorance of women:

Chinese men think women can't do anything; their own women are so helpless and incapable that I don't wonder, but it is the men who make them so.⁶⁸

Nellie Saunders had very definite feminist views about the decline in the numbers of men offering for missionary service. Eugene Stock quoted a letter from her shortly before her death:

I do think the men ought to be ashamed of themselves. I'm going a tour on women's rights soon. I think men will have to resign their honours soon if they don't carry their responsibilities better.⁶⁹

Nellie spent most of her time studying Chinese, helping Mrs. Stewart educate and care for the children. She itinerated from time to time in the villages closest to Kutien. She wrote of one visit:

Calling at a village the other day, we met some women who asked us what we had come for; and I told them — 'To preach the Jesus doctrine, to tell them about God.' They said they had not heard anything about it, or at least, only the name; so when I asked if they would like to hear they said, 'Yes, very much.' Here a man who had been walking about the tiang-dong (guest hall or reception room) behind them, carrying a baby, interposed and not very politely said, 'You are very stupid, why don't you ask them in; they can't preach to you standing out in the street.' They then hastened to invite us in and gave us chairs to sit on. We sat down, the Biblewoman and I, and were shortly surrounded by women

66 See discussion of the status of women in China, past and present, online 1 October 2011 at — <http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=105>

67 Nellie Saunders, 26 November 1894, Gutian, Church Missionary Society, London, *Extracts from Annual Letters*, pp 323-324.

68 Nellie Saunders, Berry (London Edition), p 272.

69 Letter from Miss E M Saunders, April 15th 1895, cited in Stock, Eugene, Reports Memorial Service, Kucheng Martyrs, Exeter Hall, 13 August 1895, in *Church Missionary Gleaner*, London, September 1895

and children . . .⁷⁰

Visiting new villages could sometimes be difficult not because the people were hostile but often because the Chinese women were confused about the protocol of entertaining foreigners. Topsy Saunders described one encounter:

Yesterday we went to a village five miles away, and, judging from our reception, I should think we were the first foreigners they had seen. For some time it was quite impossible to say anything to them of the Gospel; the noise was so great that I could not make out whether the baby with its face all screwed up, quite close to me, was crying or not; and Elsie and I had to scream at the top of our voices when we wanted to say anything to one another. After a bit they quieted down, and then we talked to them.⁷¹

Girls' education was secondary to direct evangelism that was facilitated by caring for abandoned children, establishing homes for the blind, arranging suitable marriages for young women and various arrangements for the education of adult women such as station classes and Biblewomen's training aimed at the evangelisation of village women.⁷²

Some information can be gleaned from the books published by the missionaries, and from the reports sent to the CMS in London. The cultural pattern of rural China in which women were promised in marriage as babies or children denied most any hope of education. The missionaries said that they tried to arrange suitable marriages for girls in their care but were obliged to fit in with the very definite views of the girls' relatives.⁷³

There is very little information available about how the Chinese assessed the contribution of European women missionaries. In 1892 one letter in traditional Chinese style arrived in London. It was from Li Sie Mi, the Chinese catechist in the Ping Nang district. He declared:

Since I was appointed to the office of superintendent I have seen how all the Christians in every place have increased in knowledge of the truth and edification. There are many women who are Christians, both old and young, who beg the English Church to appoint lady teachers to reside in the Ping Nang district, who will direct and conduct the work amongst the women, and visit all the congregations, and instruct them (the women) in the Word of God and teach them to pray.⁷⁴

70 Berry (London Edition), p 246. Single women did not walk around Chinese villages unaccompanied, whether Chinese or European. A married Chinese Christian female worker, or Biblewoman always accompanied the missionaries. For a short account of the work of the CEZMS with abandoned babies see Macgillivray, Donald, (1907), *A Century of Protestant Missions in China, (1807-1907)*, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, p 57.

71 Berry (London Edition), p 262.

72 Amy Oxley was awarded one of the highest honours of the Chinese Republic when, about 1915 or so, she was awarded the Order of the Golden Grain. See Welch, Ian and Ellen Hope, (2004), *Letters from China: Amy Oxley, Australian Missionary Nurse, 1895-1903*. Online http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/china/welch_oxley.pdf

73 The importance of traditional family expectations was impressed upon foreign-born Chinese returning to family villages in China. This is apparent in Yue, Henry Jackson, *My Reminiscences: A Life in Taishan County of the 1890s*, cited with other examples in Bagnall, Kate, *Golden shadows on a white land: An exploration of the lives of white women who partnered Chinese men and their children in southern Australia, 1855-1915*, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006. Accessible online at <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/1412>.

74 Barnes, op cit, p 169.

Another Australian, Annie Gordon from Ipswich, Queensland, who began to visit Ping Nang in 1893 and by 1894 had established herself at Dong Gio. Topsy Saunders told her mother not to expect a letter from Nellie because:

Nellie went to Dong Gio on Wednesday, and has not turned up yet. The coolie was sent up for her on Monday, but he returned without her this morning, as she has decided to stay on with Annie Gordon, and go to a place called Dong Kau, the extreme station of the Church Missionary Society in this district. A house for the mission has just been bought there, and they have been visited by Mr. Banister and Mr. Stewart, but never before by the Kunions.⁷⁵ They are to stay there until Saturday next, and return to Dong Gio for Sunday, as there is a Hiong Hoi, that is, a meeting for all the Christians around the district. Mr. Stewart is to be there, too, to lead the meeting, preach, and have Communion service for the people.⁷⁶

Nellie gave a report of her visit, mentioning the catechist who had written the letter cited above:

Then we travelled all the afternoon, part of the time in very rain, and nearly all through the prettiest country, the little scenes of river and trees and native houses, with the green fields so neatly cultivated, being very charming. The catechist declared it would be after dark before we got to Dong Gio, but he was wrong for once, because we got there before six. The chapel at Dong Gio is a very nice one, and has a grand little belfry on the top of it; and the catechist's house, and rooms for the Bible-women, and also other rooms, are all in the same pile of buildings (so to speak) as the chapel. You enter through a short passage into the men's *tiang-dong*, and from that — on one side — you pass through a passage, off which the catechist's rooms open, into the women's part of the chapel — and on the other side there are stairs leading up to the women's *tiang-dong* (over the men's), and a little room on each side of it, in one of which Annie and I have taken up our abode. The catechist here is the head catechist of the Ping Nang district. His wife, the chief lady here, is a nice quiet soul, and they have five or six children, two being at school, and other two running about here, a boy and a girl, really nice little things, who chatter to you, and don't seem a bit shy. Li-Sie-Mi, the catechist, is away, having gone to meet Mr. Stewart at Dong Kau, the biggest city about here, and he won't be back till after I go, for which I am sorry, because he is a nice man.⁷⁷

The education of adult women began with the training of Biblewomen.⁷⁸ The main drive for the adoption of the Biblewoman model in Fujian Province was Louisa Stewart. She wrote in 1886:

This we felt to be the best hope for reaching the vast numbers filling the numerous towns and villages throughout our province, and accordingly some eight years ago we commenced a small Training Home in the city of Foo-chow. At first only three women could come, but after some years the effort was so successful that we had to build a house to hold twelve, and later on, to our great joy, we were obliged to put up for them a still larger house, to hold twenty-four, and it has since always been full. Our first object in the Home is to teach the Christian women themselves the truth 'more perfectly,' and then to train them to teach others, and to express their thoughts clearly. Practical training they also get by visiting in the heathen villages round about. This work originated with themselves.⁷⁹

The Fuzhou school, the first established by the CEZMS in Fujian Province c1877, was funded entirely by personal friends of the Stewarts and women remained in residence for up to two years.⁸⁰ The cost of maintaining a Biblewomen, and paying all expenses, totalled 6 Chinese dollars a year. The concept of Biblewomen first emerged in England, where working class women were trained to

75 *Kuniong* is a Chinese word for an unmarried women. It was applied to all single women missionaries.

76 Topsy Saunders, March 1894, Berry (London Edition), p 75.

77 Nellie Saunders, March 1894, Berry (London Edition), p 81.

78 See discussion of Chinese women and Christianity by Kwok Pui-lan, 'Chinese Women and Protestant Christianity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,' pp 194-208 in Bays, Daniel, (1996), *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, p 197.

79 Barnes, op cit, p 43.

80 Barnes, op cit, p 48. This report came from Miss Strong, who commented that this arrangement was 'not considered peculiar.'

visit poor families where middle class women were unwelcome.⁸¹ The Chinese trainee Biblewomen were taught to read and write in a romanised form of Chinese although in the early days some efforts were made to teach classical written Chinese.⁸² Nellie wrote to her mother:

Now, if you get the Romanised⁸³, which every one can have (only some of these people are dead set against it), you can see exactly how to pronounce the character, and then somebody can tell you the English, and there you are. You never forget that, but how can you remember a hieroglyphic of which you can't remember the sound, and never knew the meaning? My teacher waxes eloquent on the subject. He says it is not of the slightest use to read on and on till you nearly turn into an automaton.)He did not say exactly these words, Chinese teachers are a wee scrap like automatons themselves). He wants very much to learn Romanised. Topsy has taught him a little, and when we get on a bit we will teach him some more.⁸⁴

The 'Station Class' was an innovative evangelistic and training tool first developed in China by the American Methodist Episcopal mission. It was introduced in 1893 at Sa Yong by Flora Codrington of the CMS.⁸⁵ Codrington wrote:

What is a Station Class? A question often asked me. Well! We owe the idea to our American sisters, and the plan of getting women enquirers together for a period of three months to 'teach the outlines of Gospel truth and then send them back to their own homes to be voluntary workers among their own people' has been tried with marked success in Southern Fuh-kien and other parts of China by lady missionaries of various societies.⁸⁶

Nellie outlined the origins of the station-class concept at Gutian and how important the model had proved in reducing the fear of foreigners that was so widespread in China:

Miss Codrington had been having a station class, or rather a series of them. For a station class, you get from twelve to sixteen young women and feed them for three months, getting them either to live in the house with you or renting one next door. They make nothing by it, so as to offer as little outside attraction as possible, so that those that come, will come, as far as we can tell, solely for the purpose of being taught the doctrine. They may bring one baby — no more — and they just get their rice, and their chairs paid in and home again. Mrs. Stewart says it shows how god has worked here in opening thee way for missionaries to work, because a few years ago you could not get any women at all to come and live like that, or any way approaching to it, for love or money. The suspicion and dread of foreigners has decreased so much. It means a most unusual amount of trust, when the Chinese men will allow their young wives to come and live in the Kuniongs' house for three consecutive months; but the fact that they do it, shows God's power over the 'unruly wills of men,' does it not?⁸⁷

Topsy's description of a station-class at Sek Chek Du was published in Australia in the Rev. H. B. Macartney's influential missionary newsletter, *The Missionary, At Home and Abroad*:

81 Davins, Delia, (1992), 'British Women Missionaries in Nineteenth Century China,' in *Women's History Review*, Vol 1 No 2, 1992, p 260.

82 On Chinese characters see Watson, op cit, p. 19. Topsy and Nellie Saunders both mention using Romanised Chinese in teaching, as does Frank Burden of the China Inland Mission. This was the normal pattern in most training classes for Chinese women.

83 See discussion online 1 November 2011 at — http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foochow_Romanized#History_of_Foochow_Romanized

84 Nellie Saunders, Berry (London Edition), p 74.

85 The original concept was developed by missionaries of the American Methodist Episcopal Mission in Fujian, and probably had its origins in the teacher education of quite a number of American female missionaries.

86 Barnes, op cit, p 54.

87 Nellie Saunders to Mrs. Eliza Saunders, January 1895, Berry (London Edition), pp 183-184.

There is much need for a 'Station Class,' the people are simply longing for one. 8 is the number — there are reasons for the limit — but we could have quite 20. I must explain. A 'Station Class' only lasts three months; there is work to be done, and books to be read, with an examination at the end. We go round, look out suitable women, take their names, selected the few best fitted afterwards to lend a helping hand, and call them in when the time comes.⁸⁸

In an account of CEZMS work in Fujian Province Marion Hook (CEZMS) described how married women were released from their homes for three months to attend a station class. Family approval was the key to the attendance of women at the classes.

It is not so difficult as it would be in England, for many members of a Chinese family live together, often three and four generations under one roof, and in large houses even as many as one hundred persons. Thus there is always a relative who will undertake to care for the husband and children and cook and food, and so set the wife and mother free.⁸⁹

Topsy outlined the curriculum.

The women came — nineteen or twenty in the morning and twenty-one in the afternoon. Some that are now beginning to profit by last term's teachings we got to help the other women. The women, whom for want of knowing her name, we always call the 'nice woman,' is getting on so well, and she can read fairly well, and knows the Lords' Prayer, and is reading the Picture Bible, and is so earnest. The next-door woman, that was so hard when we first came, is softening wonderfully, and there is a funny old one that that almost lives here, just like a rag bag. She looks like an old Irish washerwoman, and has such wicked black eyes and no teeth. She always shuts one eye when she talks to you. We didn't like her at all at first, but she is getting quite nice now.⁹⁰

The pen picture of an old lady looking like an "Irish washerwoman" is a small flashback to the earlier mention of the descriptive skills of both the Saunders shown in Berry's collection.

Marion Hook described another class and the circumstances of the women who attended:

Many of the women when they first come to us are deplorably ignorant. They have never had any education, and most of them have never left their own village. One who came knew absolutely nothing, except how to cook the rice and do a few things about the house. She had spent all her life away in the hills, and when we spoke of the Emperor, she had never heard of such a being, and equally ignorant was she of such a place as Peking! In the Bible lesson one day came the story of the boats by the sea of Galilee; but she had never seen one, and could not imagine what a boat was like.⁹¹

There were risks associated with the station classes in the Gutian District, especially in regard to the husbands of the women invited to attend. Nellie Saunders reported one unhappy experience in detail:

But a little while ago, a girl, who had only been married a few months, asked Miss Codrington if she might come into her station class, and seemed so earnest, and just longing to learn. Of course Flora was very anxious to have her, and made many inquiries about her, by which she found out she was not living in her husband's home, but with her parents, who seemed very nice and friendly, and said she might go. To make a long story short, at last the girl was installed at Sa Yong, and was very bright and eager to learn. But one fine day a man, who said he was her husband, came and claimed her; but as there had been no previous business with the husband, Flora did not like to give the girl up to anyone but the parents, who had given the girl to her. So she refused to let the girl go with this man. He was her husband all right, but Flora could not be sure that it would be right to give her up to him without the permission of the parents. So then there was a row. The man went off and joined the Vegetarians, and threatened to bring a crowd of them and storm the place, and carry the girl off. Flora did not know

88 *The Missionary, At Home and Abroad*, Vol XXII, No 23, September 1895, pp 353-354.

89 Hook, Marion, (c1900) *op cit*, p 30.

90 Topsy Saunders, Berry *op cit*, p 203.

91 Hook, Marion, (c1900) *op cit*, p 33.

what to do. Of course they committed it all to God, and they felt, after praying about it, that the best way would be to communicate with the parents if it could be done, as these Vegetarians were trying to prevent anything of the sort. For two or three days they were in a very uncertain state, not knowing what would happen next, and the husband proved his authority, got an agreement from her parents, and appeared in state at the Kuniong's house again, and demanded his wife. Of course, this time she had to be given up. She protested and cried, but the man was inexorable. They had brought a chair, and into this she was put bag and baggage, and taken away with her husband and an escort of Vegetarians. At a small village some way from the Kuniong's place they stopped, and she tried to escape, but they then got ropes and tied her into the chair by her wrists and ankles. A man we know met the procession after they had left that village, and saw her tied in as I have told you. She lived in her husband's house for some short time, and then the brute sold her to an opium shopkeeper, who is himself sunk in the vice of opium smoking. One could make a good story out of it. The pathetic part of it — the poor child's grief at leaving the Kuniong, almost the first person she had ever known who showed her any kindness; her keen disappointment at being now hindered from learning anything about the Saviour Christ, whom she was just beginning to learn to love — all this would touch anyone's heart; but when you think of that girl — a living soul — being sold into the hands of those brutal opium-smokers, it just makes one sick to think of it.⁹²

Nellie made a connection with the offense taken by the man and his apparent decision to resolve his anger with the mission by joining the Vegetarians. The trials of the murderers recorded by the Rev. William Banister indicated at least one man who fitted the remark by Nellie and one other who refused to join the attack because his wife was employed by Mrs. Stewart as a wet-nurse for the foundlings home.

The Saunders sisters were encouraged by Louisa Stewart to become involved in teaching boys. Nellie Saunders main task, for her first year in Gutian, as she undertook her language training, was teaching in the mission school:

During the last six months I have had two classes to teach; one of boys, about twelve or thirteen years old, from the school just outside the compound gates. They are such dear little fellows. Some of them so quick and bright. Some day they may be catechists or schoolmasters.⁹³

Robert Stewart was a strong advocate of direct evangelism through village schools to which he applied many of the ideas that had been developed for teaching the poor in schools run by the Irish Church Missions in Dublin with which the Smyly family was strongly identified.⁹⁴ He not only used some of the curriculum ideas, including a selection of one hundred Bible texts but he also actively sought financial support from Irish Protestants:

A special feature of his work was the interest and pains he took about day-schools; in England he collected funds to support a large number; there are nearly two hundred of these schools connected with the CMS in the Fuhkien Province.⁹⁵

Eugene Stock endorsed Stewart's enthusiasm for village day schools.

Another interesting agency was the 'little schools,' familiar afterwards in England and Ireland and the

92 Nellie Saunders to Mrs. Eliza Saunders, January 1895, Berry op cit, pp 184-186

93 Saunders, Nellie, 26 November 1894, Gutian, Church Missionary Society, London, *Extracts from Annual Letters*, pp 323-324.

94 *The Dublin University Missionary Magazine*, 17 October 1895, Memorial Number, 'Massacre of Rev. Robert Stewart and family and companions in China', p 15. The influence of the Irish Church Missions is central to much of the missionary efforts of Robert and Louisa Stewart. See Moffitt, Miriam, 'The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics: Philanthropy or Bribery?' pp 32-39 in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 30 No 1, January 2006. See also Moffitt, Miriam, *The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics, 1849-1950*, (Manchester, New York, Manchester University Press, 2010).

95 Rev. Hugh Stowell Phillips, In Memoriam, *The Chinese Recorder*, November 1895, p 528.

Colonies through Stewart's speeches — small village schools of no pretension, but teaching hundreds of boys to repeat Scripture passages and sing Christian hymns, by which means the Gospel message penetrated to many more homes than could be reached by the missionaries or even by the Native catechists.⁹⁶

Poverty in rural Fujian meant that many, perhaps most, villages could not afford a fee-paying school of the traditional kind usually found in China. This provided a natural gap that the CMS and other missions in the Province were able to fill with local men with some education who were happy to find paid work with a mission. One of the important supervisory tasks undertaken by Stewart, and his predecessor, the Rev. W Banister, was to visit schools in the same way as school inspectors did in European countries.

Given the large number of single women in the CMS missionary workforce, it is not surprising that although missions recognized the importance of educational provisions for girls local prejudices made it very difficult to help girls. Expenditure on girls' education did not advance the interests of her birth family, although it may have helped occasionally in making a better marriage, among Christians at least. Once a girl left her parent's home she became part of the husband's family and education gave nothing to her parents. Topsy told of one sad case:

Sometimes when the women talk about heaven, they say one of the happy things will be that there will be no more marriage there. Poor things, their lives are made so miserable by marriage that it's not much wonder they look forward to a time when there will be none. One of the girls in our school has just had the last arrangements finally settled, and the Kuniong in charge says she has quite altered, and become quiet and sad. If you only saw the homes! It is very little better than slavery, cooking rice and minding their babies — and there are such crowds of babies; that's one thing that makes it so hard to teach the women — they have always a baby to hold and just at the most important part it begins to scream. One has to be very patient and long-suffering, but one need never be discouraged, though the work is great and the workers are very few.⁹⁷

This is a brief introduction to the story of British and Australian women at Gutian. This story ends with the tragic events of 1 August 1895 in which eleven British and Australian missionaries were murdered.⁹⁸

96 Stock, Eugene, (1899), *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, London, Church Missionary Society (4 vols), Vol III, p 563.

97 Topsy Saunders, October 1894, Berry (London Edition), p 136.

98 Welch, Ian, (2006), *Missionaries, Murder and Diplomacy in Late 19th Century China: A Case Study*. Online at http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/china/welch_ANU2006.pdf