

This terrible Mongolia, with its harrowing deprivations, with its intolerable climate, what else? Everyone agreed to represent this mission as one of the most ungrateful on earth. I really don't know how such false notions could have been accredited in Europe. In the end, we found here a poor country, very poor even, but very interesting, where the animal life leaves nothing to be desired, and whose climate, thanks to the furs with which we are covered, is very bearable, even pleasant. The people are simple, and their resources give the best hope of finding many devote Christians. But what makes the missionary's life here really painful is the immense distances he has to travel to accomplish his holy ministry, without finding the basic commodities along the way, and having to endure while passing through the deserts of Mongolia, not only very intense cold but also whirlwinds of dust and snow which often expose his days.

Xiwanzi, January 14, 1866
Théophile Verbist to Cardinal E. Sterckx