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# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

**Our Lady of China**

*Marian Devotion and the Jesuits*

**Jeremy Clarke, S.J.**

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It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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# OUR LADY OF CHINA

*Marian Devotion and the Jesuits*

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Jeremy Clarke, S.J.

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

41/3 • AUTUMN 2009

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THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY  
NATHANIEL BENTLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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*the first word . . .*

When does a Jesuit reach a point in life when he can no longer deny that he has become an old fuddy-duddy? The question holds both epistemological and metaphysical implications. What are the criteria for knowledge, and what is the essence of fuddy-duddy-ness? Several years ago an older colleague suggested what seemed at the time a few helpful points of reference for a shifting horizon of being. He argued that once cops and baseball players begin to look like kids, you know you've arrived. At the time, his thesis seemed objectively verifiable through the test of experience.

Now that I have firmly established my own F. D. credentials, I find his analysis less convincing. Even in our most grandfatherly moments, I can't imagine many Jesuits addressing a state trooper as "Sonny," especially after he's just stopped us for doing seventy in a fifty-five-mile zone with an expired license. Baseball players have no age anymore, thanks to a creative use of chemicals. In the old days several seasons of outfield sun would weather their faces to the color and texture of a catcher's mitt, and the ever-present mandatory wad of chewing tobacco would create heads hung with jowls that sweep away the morning dew. Those heroes on our baseball cards did in fact look like old-timers to us ten-year-olds. To a sixty-year-old, they must have looked like kids, and thus my friend's thesis. Q.E.D. Nowadays, teenagers arrive in the majors muscled like veteran weight-lifters, and graybeards wring one more season out of their knuckle-ball or designated-hitter slot, giving a new meaning to the term "baseball immortal."

But if the old F. D. criteria haven't stood the proverbial test of time, what others can be invoked? Here's one that came to me late one evening in midsummer, as I lay sleepless in my Spartan cell while returning alumni danced away the hours in a plastic tent pitched under my window. No, I wasn't particularly grumpy about the situation, since the music was slated to end at 11:30, certainly a reasonable hour for ending dances any place in the real world. So with relative tranquility, I had no choice but to listen to the music provided by a rented deejay and his two-million-amp sound system. The thought struck me that all the music sounded the same: a heavy beat on the drums, a lot of twanging of guitars, and singers shrieking repetitious monosyllables with something approximating a southern accent. (I'm told this is

the influence of country music, which similarly all sounds the same to my urbanized ear.) My thesis: When all pop music sounds alike, you've crossed the F. D. divide.

Yes, of course I realize that musical taste is culturally conditioned. Here's a good example. During my one brief experience of retreat giving in Nigeria, I suggested that instead of playing those clunky 1970s guitar hymns during meals, the retreatants might find classical music more relaxing. Intercultural gaffe #873. My hostess told me politely but forcefully that they can't stand Western classical music. Fair enough. Forcing me to listen to African, Indian, Chinese, or Arabic classical music would probably be an effective tool of what we now call "enhanced interrogation." After ten minutes, I'd tell them anything they want to know, even where the minister hides the keys to the "extra" house car or how much I really spent on my credit card last month.

Tossing from one side to the other during the alumni reunion concert, I appreciated for the first time that the temporal dimension is every bit as important as the spatial in intercultural dynamics. Yes, I knew that popular music appeals to "our" generation while those a few years younger or a few years older find it an abomination, but I didn't really appreciate the fact in all its brutal truth until that night. Dopey me. For the past twenty years or more, producers of those endless fund raisers on public television have been pioneering a whole new science of "age appropriate" music. The theory is simple: the audience that has the means to contribute can be presumed to have reached their F. D. years. (Their children are paying off the mortgage, and their grandchildren are still paying off college loans. No money there.) Recycling songs from their old collection of forty-five r.p.m. records gives them a sense that the PBS affiliate is "their" station, and they have an obligation to support it.

Still there is something strange seeing performers well into their seventies strutting their stuff in sequins. The pop music of the fifties and sixties seems more suited to a museum than contemporary television, but it lives on every time PBS needs a few dollars. So do its vintage-age performers, with the aid of cosmetic surgery and properly constructed costumes. Several months ago there was a news story about the Rolling Stones having to cancel a concert because one of its members fell out of a tree and was injured. Do the arithmetic. The band was big in the 1960s. How did this old geezer get into a tree in the first place? Men his age would normally need a derrick. The musicians go on, and so do their fans, many of whom still pay exorbitant prices for tickets to see these old guys do the routines they have been doing for over forty years. What we call the "golden oldies" the younger generation refers to as "geriatric rock."

Of course, it's all in the ear of the beholder. For a while I had the illusion that some popular music was exempt from the aging process: Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, and maybe even Rogers and Hart. I've often



suspected that I've been such a Woody Allen fan over the years simply because he uses these old standards as background music for his sound tracks. (We are both Brooklyn boys of the same age.) It came as a shock when I realized that not everybody held these old standards in awe. Several years ago, during a tour of duty in a scholasticate, I sat alone in the community's sole television room. After channel surfing for a few minutes, I settled on a PBS concert—possibly a fund-raiser—of vintage American songs performed in what appeared to be a cocktail-lounge setting. (Cole Porter and champagne always belong in the same sentence.) One of my pre-ordained brethren thumped his way to a chair the back of the room, and since he voiced no preference for a different channel, I let the program continue. After a few minutes, he got up and left with the parting shot: "How can you listen to this stuff?" So much for the universal appeal of the timeless classics.

Music may be one of the more obvious examples of the way we define cultural norms on the basis of our own experience and find the norms of people from other places or age brackets difficult to appreciate. Religion, of course, fits into this pattern. We Jesuits of the Vatican II generation remember the style of the old days, with nostalgia, perhaps, but just as much with embarrassment and perhaps even with a twinge of anger. We've made a literary genre of reminiscences of litanies, birettas, fiddle-back vestments, and soupy hymns from the *St. Gregory Hymnal*. The theme boils down to a line from "Amazing Grace": "I was lost, but now I'm found." Our younger companions have been patient with us, but if the truth be told, they find the topic exceedingly tedious by this time. One can imagine a day when we Vatican II commandoes have retired to the province infirmaries. In all probability we will find equally mixed emotions about our scented candles, paisley vestments, and the tattered copy of *The Velveteen Rabbit* sharing the ambo with the *Lectioary*. Our religious practice today seems perfectly natural and balanced, but wait until the next generation of memoirs begins to appear in, say, forty years.

Geography has also played a part in our cultural expression of Catholicism. Few would question that the American church has been transformed over the past several decades by the rapid growth of the Latino population. My decidedly unscientific recollections indicate that being an American Catholic is a very different experience today than it was forty years ago. Not too long ago, we were a beachhead community, seeking a place in the American dream. We—the Irish, Italian, German, and Polish churches—took care of our own with our schools and labor unions. When the wave of Hispanics came ashore, we met them with denial and perhaps even hostility, then with condescension, and finally with acceptance. We've come a long way from allowing a Spanish-language Mass in the church basement once a month. And just who has profited more by this meeting of Catholic cultures? Isn't it fair to say the infusion of new blood has transformed and revitalized the American churches more than any

set of new documents and directives? The Latino presence has sensitized us to the needs of recent immigrants struggling in the cities and farms, to harsh legal restrictions, to the struggle for justice in other parts of our hemisphere. We've become more aware of the needs of God's people, not only in Latin America but throughout the world. Being a Catholic today means keeping the door open to the outside world that exists beyond the church vestibule or the parish boundaries. Not too long ago, concern for social justice issues for "minorities" would be suspect in some quarters; now it is at the core of our religious identity as Catholics. It's a remarkable development.

How generations and cultures interact and enrich one another over time holds the key to our Catholic understanding of Christianity. In this issue Jeremy Clarke has provided a laboratory case history of one such development. Most of us would have no trouble explaining the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Catholic tradition. Yet it is clear that her role has evolved over the centuries and in different cultures. Jeremy takes us to China to show how the image of Mary developed through the meeting of European influences in a missionary church and the cultural sensibilities of Chinese artists. He spells out the inevitable tensions between a host society and the images brought to it from the outside. The story is fascinating in itself, but as we reflect on it, we can see the ways our own religious beliefs and practices have changed according to time and place. We Catholics have become more catholic, and that's all to the good.

### *A few second words . . .*

The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, like every other social organization, participates in the relentless march of generations. The fall issue of *STUDIES* traditionally includes a mention of transitions, and this issue is no exception.

On behalf of the Seminar, and with a bit of presumption on my part, on behalf of the entire U. S. Assistancy, I want to express our gratitude for the four members who have ended their three-year membership in the Seminar. Jim Bretzke will take up a new assignment as professor at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. There he will join his fellow retired Seminar member, Tom Massaro, now a veteran of the faculty there. As rector of the Jesuit Community at Seattle University, Pat Howell will have enough to occupy his time and energies without the activities of the Seminar. After a year at Boston College, Mark Massa will return to Fordham as director of the American Catholic Studies program. Thanks for your conversation and companionship. We'll miss your presence at our meetings.

Some of our old hands will be with us for a few more months, but with a change of portfolio. Tom Scirghi has moved his theological library from Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley to Fordham. Bentley Andersen remains on



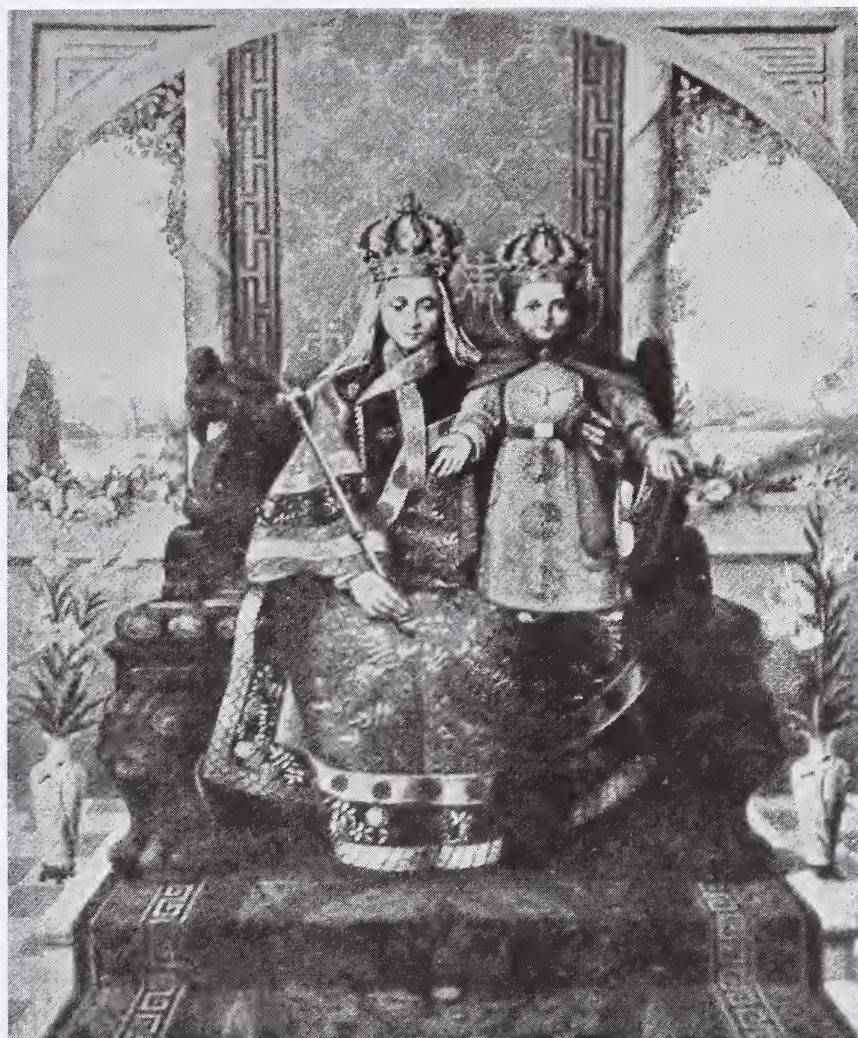
the faculty of St. Louis University, but will take a year as a visiting professor at Fordham.

Now for the new generation: Mark Bosco, of the Missouri Province, holds a joint position in English and Theology at Loyola University Chicago, where he directs the Catholic Studies Program. He specializes in theological aesthetics and the Catholic literary tradition. His written works include *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (2005) and a volume of essays he edited entitled *Finding God in All Things: Celebrating Bernard Lonergan, John Courtney Murray and Karl Rahner* (2007). Terry Dempsey, also of the Missouri Province, is the May O'Rourke Jay Professor of Art History and Religion at St. Louis University. He also serves as director of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, where he has curated thirty-five exhibits over the last twenty years. Frank McAloon, of the Maryland Province, teaches spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union. With a special interest in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, he works in the areas of religious aesthetics, hermeneutics, and Ignatian spirituality. His most recent book is *40-Day Journey with Gerard Manley Hopkins* (2009). It's a remarkable roster. Many thanks to each of them for their generosity in accepting the invitation to join us for the next three years.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor





This is a cropped version of the ordination card for Charles D. Simons, S.J., ordained on June 10, 1933, at St. Ignatius Church, Zikawei, Shanghai. The caption read Our Lady of China, in English and Chinese characters. (From the archives of the California Province of the Society of Jesus; gratefully used with permission.)

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# Our Lady of China

## *Marian Devotion and the Jesuits*

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*Marian devotion rests at the heart of Chinese Catholicism and developed from an adaptation of Western practice to local cultures. By sponsoring Marian sodalities and pilgrimages, Jesuits contributed significantly to the Chinese church. Jesuit artists helped shape representations of Mary prevalent in China today.*

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### I. Introduction

**A** well-educated Shanghainese friend of mine—a graduate from Harvard’s Business School, no less—once asked me whether or not it was true that “Christians believe in Jesus, whereas Catholics believe in Mary.” Leaving aside the false dichotomy between Christianity and Catholicism—one that has been made often in China since the beginning of the nineteenth century, resulting in both traditions being recognized as distinct legal religions in the People’s Republic of China—my friend does in fact have a point. Or at least, when one surveys the daily life and faith practices of the Catholic church in China, it is easy to see why she thinks this is the case.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the country almost every church will have a Marian statue or shrine on its property, oftentimes built in the form of an elaborate grotto. There are, or have been, pilgrimages to churches or shrines dedicated to all manner of Marian devotions including, among

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<sup>1</sup>Full-color reproductions of images mentioned in this essay can be accessed at [www2.bc.edu/~frclarke](http://www2.bc.edu/~frclarke)

others, Our Lady Help of Christians, Our Lady of Liesse (from the small town of Aisne, north of Paris), and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Recitations of the rosary occur both before and after Mass, during the Stations of the Cross, in open fields, and in private homes. Church calendars often bear a Marian image on their front page, and church devotional shops sell everything from prayer cards bearing the image of Our Lady of Medjugorje to rosary beads made out of cloisonné. Various Marian images are found on convent walls, in church porches, and in people's bedrooms. My friend, therefore, was partly right: in China Mary is indeed central to Catholic belief.

In this paper I explore how such a situation evolved. In the process of showing how Marian devotion came to be a key feature of the Chinese Catholic church, I also outline the Jesuit involvement in the process. Thus, at one level the essay is about the development of a particular aspect of Chinese Catholic piety, and because of the Society of Jesus' sustained engagement with China, I hope that this of itself will be of interest to a general reader. More importantly, however, given the way that this strong Marian identity not only enabled Chinese Catholics to define themselves within Chinese society at large but also created one means by which they survived periods of external pressure and control, the history of a piety becomes, metonymously, the story of a community.

The early Catholics not only sought to portray themselves as belonging within Chinese society but also as being separate from other elements of the society. That is, they endeavored to create a legitimate space for themselves within the Chinese body politic and yet distinguish themselves from, for instance, Buddhist and Daoist communities. The utilization of Marian devotions was one tactic employed by the early Chinese converts and Catholic missionaries in their pursuit of this goal. In the early sections of the essay, I explore the way in which this took place. In the latter parts I discuss the implications of the identity that had been formed by these devotions.

## II. Historical Background

**T**he Society's engagement with China, ever since the arrival of Michele Ruggieri and Francesco Pasio in Zhaoqing in southern China in the late-sixteenth century, has already been studied ex-



tensively.<sup>2</sup> Articles, books, and conferences have analyzed subjects as distinct as the Jesuits' controversial use of Chinese terms for Christian concepts to their position as cross-cultural conduits of everything from "Jesuit bark" (quinine) to Confucianism. This trend will presumably continue, especially given that the year 2010 marks the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci in Beijing. Thus I will not repeat that story here, except by way of providing background. Rather, I explore the sometimes neglected development of the Chinese Catholic identity in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and the Jesuits' role in that development.

It would be historically inaccurate, as well as an act of hubris, to suggest that the role of the Jesuits in the modern period was as significant or pervasive as it was in the period prior to our Suppression (1772). This is especially so, given the role of not only other foreign congregations, such as the Vincentians (Lazarists), the Paris Foreign Mission Society (La Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris), and the Helpers of the Holy Souls (Les Auxiliatrices des Ames du Purgatoire), among others, but also given the lived experiences of the Chinese Catholic communities themselves.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, neither can the Jesuit contribution to the development of a Chinese Marian spirituality be ignored altogether. The following example suffices to illustrate this.

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*This paper seeks to chart a course between overstatement and historical amnesia by recording the role of the Jesuits in assisting in the development of the Chinese Catholic identity, especially as regards Marian devotion.*

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Liam Brockey's prize-winning book *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Nicholas Standaert, ed., *A Handbook of Christianity in China, 635–1800* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001); Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1999); and David Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> The crucial role of the Chinese Catholics themselves is a point well made by David Mungello in his article "The Return of the Jesuits to China in 1841 and the Chinese Christian backlash," *The Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 27 (2005): 9–46. Peter Ward Fay's article "The French Catholic Mission in China during the Opium War" (*Modern Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 [1970]: 115–28) also recounts the understandably essential role of the Chinese Christians.

One of the most significant public acts of worship for the Chinese Catholic church is the Marian pilgrimage to Sheshan, on the outskirts of Shanghai. A French Jesuit, Father Desjacques, initiated this pilgrimage in 1868. Two years later, in 1870, there was a widespread Christian persecution in China. The then superior of the mission of Jiangnan (the area south of the Yangtze River, the Chang Jiang), an Italian Jesuit Father, Angelo della Corte by name, promised to build a large church dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians if Mary protected her people in their time of need. The dangers were averted, the church was built, and the tradi-

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*Not only did [sodalities] increase the popularity of a particular devotion, but they also provided an organizational structure within church communities, which were often chronically short of priests or brothers to serve them.*

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tion of making a pilgrimage to Sheshan, especially on May 24 (the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians), was begun.

The Chinese Catholics believe that at numerous times throughout their history they have been saved by just such a beneficent intervention by Mary. Not only is this a sense of having been saved from immediate danger (be this marauding Taiping or Boxer troops, militant atheists, or rampant Red Guards) but also a sense of being brought into the salvific presence of Jesus through the intercession of Mary. They consider that the aversion of calamity, or at least being given the graces to endure whatever wave of hardship breaks upon them, is a foretaste of their eternal salvation.

Through times of war and periods of persecution, this pilgrimage has continued, even until today. On rare occasions, however, formal pilgrimages have been banned and actively prevented, as happened during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>4</sup> The success of the Sheshan pilgrimage, and the central place it played in the life of the Chinese Catholics, was recognized in 1924 at the conclusion of a plenary council that took place in Shanghai. The Chinese Catholic Church was entrusted to Mary's protection, and the council fathers formally recognized the devotion to Our Heavenly Queen of China (also known as Our Lady of China).<sup>5</sup> A Chinese Jesuit brother working in Shanghai at the famous art work-

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<sup>4</sup> A recent example of this was during the lead-up to the 2008 Olympics, when visitors reported official harassment. See, for instance, AsiaNews, 05/28/2008, <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=12371&size=A>

<sup>5</sup> Pius XI gave official recognition to this devotion in 1928.



shop at the Jesuit-run orphanage at Tushanwan (also known as Tou-se-we) painted the image for this new devotion. A French Jesuit wrote the prayer of dedication, in Latin and Chinese.

This paper seeks to chart a course between overstatement and historical amnesia by recording the role of the Jesuits in assisting in the development of the Chinese Catholic identity, especially as regards Marian devotion. Although the Church in China continues to face challenges from within and without, a greater understanding of how it came to possess the unique characteristics that it does will, I hope, go some way to assist in the alleviation of such difficulties. At the very least, Jesuits and those who are enlivened by Ignatian spirituality may be emboldened to take up Benedict XVI's call during Pentecost 2007 to join with the Chinese Catholic church and, on the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, stand in prayerful solidarity with them.<sup>6</sup>

## The Pre-Suppression Period

Two factors came together to promote Marian devotions in China during the pre-Suppression period. There was the rich vein of Marian spirituality that permeated the work of the early Society, and then there was the already well-developed tradition of Marian piety and cross-cultural exchange that had taken place in China since the late-thirteenth century, especially in the field of visual culture. Both of these factors have been discussed elsewhere, so it is enough to summarize the essential elements.<sup>7</sup>

As is well known, Mary has held a central place in Ignatian spirituality from the earliest days of the Society. Among other things, this is revealed by famous incidents in Ignatius's own life journey—from his all-night vigil before Our Lady of Montserrat to his desire to defend the good name of Mary when a fellow traveller, a Moor, refers to her disparagingly along the road (*Autobiography*, 13, 15). The *Spiritual Exercises* encourage the frequent use of Marian intercessory prayers, and numer-

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<sup>6</sup>See Benedict XVI's "Letter to the Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China" (May 27, 2007), no. 19 ([http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/letters/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20070527\\_china\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20070527_china_en.html)).

<sup>7</sup>See for instance, Nicholas Standaert, *An Illustrated Life of Christ Presented to the Chinese Emperor: The History of Jincheng Shuxiang* (Sankt Augustin: Institute Monumenta Serica, 2007).

ous meditations have distinctly Marian themes (as, for instance, the first contemplation of the Second Week, where the particular subject of the composition of place is to imagine Mary in her rooms in Nazareth as she is visited by the angel Gabriel).

Visually too, as shown by Thomas Lucas, S.J., in an earlier edition of *STUDIES*, images of Mary were used for evangelizing purposes on the far-flung missions of the early Society, including notably in China.<sup>8</sup> Marian feast days played a symbolic and practical role in the liturgical life of our communities and the significant role of sodalities, Marian ones in particular (what came to be known in some provinces as “Teams of Our Lady”), has been remarked upon elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

### Sodalities Become the Cornerstones

The sodalities played an especially important role in China. Not only did they increase the popularity of a particular devotion, but they also provided an organizational structure within church communities, which were often chronically short of priests or brothers to serve them. In this way they promoted a vibrant prayer life among the lay faithful, while at the same time offering sound catechetical education. Matteo Ricci seems to have started the earliest Marian sodality in Beijing in 1609.<sup>10</sup> Other missionaries around the country soon did likewise. In 1610 João da Rocha began a congregation in Nanjing, Lazzaro Cattaneo established one in Shanghai in the same year, and other missionaries followed suit at different stages throughout the empire.<sup>11</sup> Written documents were also produced to assist in the ongoing formation of the members of the sodalities. Some of these were specifically Marian in focus, for instance, João da Rocha’s illustrated work *Method for Praying the Rosary*, which was published in 1619.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., “Virtual Vessels, Mystical Signs: Contemplating Mary’s Images in the Jesuit Tradition,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 35, no. 5 (November 2003).

<sup>9</sup>See, especially, Brockey, *Journey to the East*, and Standaert, *Handbook*.

<sup>10</sup>See Albert Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue, Japonica-Sinica I-IV* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 459; Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 331, argues, *contra* Chan, that a group had been encouraged to form in Zhaoqing much earlier than this.

<sup>11</sup>See Chan, *Chinese Books*, 460, and Standaert, *Handbook*, 456–60.

<sup>12</sup>Also known by its Chinese title, *Songnianshu Guicheng*, this work is particularly important in any study of the way that religious themes are



By 1664, at the time of the anti-Christian persecution led by Yang Guangxian, "the congregations numbered about 400 and the number of members in each congregation about 100."<sup>13</sup> In this year in Shanghai alone, for instance, there were six different types of sodalities or lay congregations. The largest of these, one exclusively for women, reportedly had 144 smaller confraternities or groups and was dedicated to our Lady.<sup>14</sup>

## Early Images of Mary

The success of the Marian sodalities can also be linked to the popularity of Marian images in general.<sup>15</sup> Extensive academic research on various aspects of visual culture in the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing dynasties (1644–1911) has revealed that there existed strong links between images of the Madonna and Guanyin, the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion.<sup>16</sup> At the risk of retelling a well-known story, it is acknowledged that during their work in China during the Yuan

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transmitted through the use of visual imagery, because the illustrations contained within it are noticeably Chinese in style. Albert Chan and Gianni Criveller argue that da Rocha's work was published in 1619; see Chan, *Chinese Books*, 70–71, concerning the difficulty of dating this work, and Gianni Criveller, *Preaching Christ in Late Ming China: The Jesuits' Presentation of Christ from Matteo Ricci to Giulio Aleni* (Taipei: Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 1997), 237. On the other hand, Bailey puts the date at 1608 (*Art on the Jesuit Missions*, 102).

<sup>13</sup>Chan, *Chinese Books*, 460.

<sup>14</sup>Henri Havret, *La Mission du Kiang-nan: Son histoire, ses œuvres* (Paris: J. Mersch Imprimeur, 1900), 12.

<sup>15</sup>As shown by Lucas, "Virtual Vessels," and Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions*.

<sup>16</sup>Scholars like Derek Gillman, Timothy Brook, and Yü Chun-Fang, as well as Sepp Schüller before them, have shown the process of mutual borrowing that occurred between the producers of these different images. Sepp Schüller, in his *La Vierge Marie à Travers les Missions* (Paris: Braun and Cie, 1936), makes arguments similar to those of the later scholars mentioned here; but it seems his work was unknown to at least Gillman and Yü. Derek Gillman's work, however, "Ming and Qing Ivories: Figure Carving," in *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, ed. W. Watson (London: British Museum Publications Ltd, 1984), 35–52, is cited by Yü, *Kuan-yin*. Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 121–29, also mentions these connections. Other scholars have drawn on the latter work by Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), such that the earlier works have largely faded from the public arena. See, for instance, "Guadalupe and Guanyin: Images

dynasty (1271–1368), Franciscan missionaries utilized Marian images, prominent among which were paintings or drawings of the type that came to be known as the Madonna of Humility, where Mary is painted holding Jesus on her lap.<sup>17</sup> These images were then appropriated by Chinese artisans and painters and not only Sinicized but also, in certain contexts, incorporated within Buddhist iconography. The result of this incorporation was the development of a unique Chinese Buddhist image, Child-Giving Guanyin.<sup>18</sup>

The oldest image of Mary in a Chinese context is found on the tombstone of Catherine Ilioni (not Viglione, as it is sometimes written), which bears the date 1342. She was buried in the city of Yangzhou, along the Grand Canal in eastern China just north of the Yangtze River. As Francis Rouleau, S.J., a California Jesuit and Chinese church historian, first noted in 1954, Mary is shown seated on a Chinese-style seat, holding Jesus, and angels fly around them, again represented with Chinese motifs.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, contemporaneous Guanyin images be-

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of the Madonna in Mexico and China," a public lecture by Lauren Arnold at the Ricci Institute, University of San Francisco, 2005, which cites Yü frequently.

<sup>17</sup>Jesuits can often start the history of Christianity in China at the end of the sixteenth century, thereby forgetting the earlier work of the Franciscans. One way to read about this history is through the letters of these missionaries themselves; see, for instance, Henry Yule, trans. and ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1866).

<sup>18</sup>Strictly speaking, the Chinese title, *Songzi Guanyin*, means "son-giving Guanyin" but a more inclusive translation is also possible.

<sup>19</sup>Francis Rouleau, "The Yangchow Tombstone as a Landmark of Medieval Christianity in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17, nos. 3–4 (1954): 346–65. Later works, like Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to Genghis Khan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) and Richard C. Rudolph, "A Second Fourteenth-Century Italian Tombstone in Yangzhou," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 13, no. 2 (1975), also write about this stone, and a companion stone for Anthony Ilioni, who died in 1344. There has been considerable debate about whether the name was Viglione, or variations on this, or Ilioni, with the definitive argument for Ilioni being put in 1977 by Robert S. Lopez in his "Nouveaux documents sur les marchands italiens en Chine à l'époque mongole," as cited in *Speaking of Yangzhou, a Chinese City, 1550–1850*, by Antonia Finnane (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center; distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004), 341 n.8. Some other works, like Lauren Arnold's *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and Its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250–1350* (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999), rely on Rouleau and thus continue to use, incorrectly, Viglione. Chinese works sidestep this issue by not translating the surname; see,



gin to show the female bodhisattva cradling a child, in a posture similar to that of the Madonna of Humility.

The vibrant Latin Rite communities established by the Franciscans almost certainly seem to have died out at the end of the Yuan dynasty, and all that remains of this history are funerary monuments, architectural remnants, paintings, and parts of letters. Even so, the tradition of making statues of Guanyin cradling an infant child was maintained within Chinese towns along the eastern seaboard. There was a rise in trade in the middle decades of the sixteenth century between Chinese artisans living in these littoral ports, their compatriots living throughout south-east Asia (especially in Manila), Portuguese traders from Macao, and Spanish merchants from the Philippines. This caused the resumption of production of Christian images, including Marian ones, often with Chinese motifs and features.

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*Although the Catholic missionaries who were already in China came from many of the countries that made up Catholic Europe, a large number of the newly sent Catholic religious were French. The members of this national group brought with them more than just "the universal faith" and memories of home.*

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Derek Gillman cites contemporary merchant accounts to illustrate the sheer diversity of the items for trade, as, for instance, the record made by Fernando Riguel, the Philippine governor's notary, of objects brought by Chinese merchants in 1574.

A year ago there came to the port of this city three ships from China, and to the neighboring islands five more. Those which came here brought merchandise such as is used by the Chinese, and such as they bring here ordinarily. The distance from the mainland is not great, the voyage lasts about eight days. . . . They brought specimens of many kinds of goods peculiar to their country, in order to arrange the price at which they can be sold—such as quicksilver, powder, pepper, fine cinnamon, cloves, sugar, iron, copper, tin, brass, silks in textiles of many kinds and in skeins, realgar, camphor, various kinds of crockery, luscious and sweet oranges, and a thousand other goods and trifles quite as many as the Flem-

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for instance, Gu Weimin, *Zhongguo Tianzhujiào Biannianshi* [The annals of the Catholic Church in China] (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chubanshe, 2003), 44.



ish bring. Moreover they brought images of crucifixes and very curious seals made like ours.<sup>20</sup>

This account, which was written when Ricci was still studying rhetoric at the Roman College, reveals that Chinese merchants clearly considered the production and sale of Christian imagery to be a profitable part of their business. Three decades later, in 1604, a letter written by a Jesuit in the Philippines reveals that by that time Marian imagery also featured strongly in this trade: "Almost all of the churches in the island were adorned with images, nearly all of which were of the Mother of God."<sup>21</sup> By the time of the establishment of the first Jesuit residence in China in 1582, and therefore even before the beginning of the third period of Christian history in China, there was already a strong culture of Chinese Marian imagery, or at least of Marian imagery produced in China. The rich strand of Marian devotion brought by the Jesuits was thus not as foreign as the missionaries may have first presumed or feared.

This did not prevent moments of confusion and misunderstanding, as, for instance, when Chinese visitors to the house in Zhaoqing, upon viewing a painting of the Madonna, exclaimed that the Jesuits worshiped a woman, perhaps thinking this was a representation of Guanyin.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, this did not stop the Jesuits from utilizing the various elements of Marian spirituality that were at their disposal and led indeed to a further enriching of both the images produced in China and the devotions practiced by the Chinese Christians over the next centuries.

The various expressions and acts of religious devotion made by Chinese Catholics during these centuries have been discussed at length in the often acrimonious conversation about the Chinese Rites Controversy, and it is not my intention to consider that issue here yet again. It is important to note, nevertheless, that one consequence of this dispute was that the Qing emperors Kangxi and Yongzheng proscribed the practice of Christianity in China in 1717 and 1724 respectively. Understandably, these edicts noticeably affected the Catholic communities. Kenneth Latourette wrote that "after what looked like a promising

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<sup>20</sup>Cited in Gillman, "Ming and Qing Ivories," 37.

<sup>21</sup>Cited *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>22</sup>See, among others, Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York, N.Y.: Elizabeth Sifton Books, Penguin books, 1985), 242–46.

growth in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century brought adverse conditions which for a time seemed to presage a third extinction of the faith."<sup>23</sup>

The proscriptions did not mean, however, that all foreign Catholic missionaries left China. Nor did it result in the total cessation of missionaries crossing the borders; also, the established Chinese Catholic communities did not in fact wither away. In many general histories about Christianity in China, one of the enduring simplifications about this period of history has been "that by the time the [opium] war broke out the Catholic Mission to China had shrunk almost to nothing."<sup>24</sup> This was clearly not the case. It was true, nevertheless, that the increase in the number of Christians during this time was remarkably slow. Peter Ward Fay estimates that by the beginning of the 1830s there were around 200,000 converts throughout all of China and David Mungello adds to this figure, maintaining that by the time of the Jesuits' return in the mid-nineteenth century there were almost 250,000 Catholics.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the exact numbers (which are of course hard to determine), whenever they were able these Catholic communities continued to receive the sacraments from their priests, both Chinese and foreign. In between times the lay leaders continued to guide the communities.

Since the number of lay leaders vastly outnumbered that of priests, devotions that the lay leaders were allowed to lead became the ones used more often. Naturally enough, the lay catechists and virgins

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*Three statues that exist in churches that were barely two kilometers distant from one another show at once marked similarities yet also significant differences, illustrating the rich diversity of the Marian devotions in Paris, and indeed beyond.*

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<sup>23</sup>Kenneth Latourette, *The Nineteenth Century outside Europe: The Americas, the Pacific, Asia, and Africa*, vol. 3 of *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1961), 444.

<sup>24</sup>Fay, "French Catholic Mission," 117.

<sup>25</sup>David Mungello, "The Return of the Jesuits," 16, and Fay, "French Catholic Mission," 118. Fay's research also indicates that there were around twenty-nine French missionaries spread throughout all of China at this time.



(women who consecrated themselves to a form of religious life without being formally part of a congregation) were assisted in their work by the prayer habits inculcated by the sodalities, especially the ones dedicated to our Lady. It is no surprise, then, that by the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Chinese Christian communities were able to function legally again, Marian pieties had come to be key elements of their faith life. I now focus on the interactions between the newly arrived missionaries and the local communities, especially regarding these devotions.

## The Nineteenth Century

Church activities ceased to be illegal after the victories of the foreign powers in the Opium Wars of 1839–42 and 1856–60. Attendant upon these victories and the numerous treaties that followed them was the opening up of a number of ports along the Chinese coast and the right of foreign powers (especially the French) to protect their Christian subjects, Chinese or otherwise. Foreign missionaries, including Jesuits, were once again able to enter China legally and they did so in large numbers. Missionaries were also now allowed to travel throughout the country.

The treaties encouraged the arrival of a new generation of foreign missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. Although the Catholic missionaries who were already in China came from many of the countries that made up Catholic Europe, a large number of the newly sent Catholic religious were French. The members of this national group brought with them more than just “the universal faith” and memories of home. These missionaries also had many popular French devotional images in their possession. Such objects were instrumental in the missionaries’ catechetical program and at the same time served to remind the religious of their loved ones far across the globe. These faith objects were subsequently displayed more frequently than the existing images, some of which, as discussed, had Chinese features.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>It is important not to overstate the French influence on the Chinese church, given the role played by Belgian, German, Irish, and North American missionaries, for instance, in the period after the Opium Wars. Even so, the French influence was significant, not only because of the effects of the French protectorate but also because of the number of French missionaries (especially in leadership positions), the places the French congregations worked, and the role of their printeries, seminaries, and communication networks. At the First Vatican Council (1869) ten of the fifteen bishops sent from China were French; in 1885, seventeen of the thirty-five Catholic missions in China were entrusted to



Many of these new images were Marian in nature, and consequently the images of Mary from the French churches soon overwhelmed images of the Madonna that had been produced in China. The French churchmen and churchwomen (for, as distinct from the previous waves of missionaries, there were also groups of missionary sisters among these new generations) certainly had a large variety of images to choose from.<sup>27</sup> This was but one consequence of the popularity of Marian devotion within France at this time.

In Paris alone, for instance, there were several major Marian shrines within a kilometer from the heart of the city, the Ile de la Cité. Each of these shrines had a distinct devotional focus and a different iconographic representation of Mary, if not indeed several representations. Even so, in each of these churches there exists one particular Marian image, the image from which the church has derived its name. This key image is also the only one recognized as the image of the particular devotion associated with the church. This becomes important later when we consider the image used for Our Lady Queen of China.

Three of these shrines included Our Lady of Paris (Notre Dame de Paris), on the island itself, Our Lady of Good Deliverance (Notre Dame de Sainte Espérance) on the left bank of the river Seine, and Our Lady of Victories (Notre Dame des Victoires), on the right bank. These three

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*The French missionaries entering China in the years after the Opium Wars were thus increasingly likely to bring with them statues, paintings, pictures, and holy medals featuring Our Lady of Lourdes.*

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French congregations, and even by 1914, of the 1,500 missionaries in the country, 850 were French. See Claude Soetens, *L'Eglise Catholique en Chine au XXe siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), 79; Louis Wei Tsing-sing, *La Politique missionnaire de la France en Chine, 1842–1856* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1960), 95; and Louis Wei Tsing-sing, *Le Saint-Siège, la France et la Chine sous le pontificat de Léon XIII: Le projet de l'établissement d'une Nonciature à Pékin et l'affaire du Pei-t'ang, 1880–1886* (Schöneck/Beckenreid: Administration de la Nouvelle Revue de science Missionnaire, 1966), 12. Although missionaries from the other nationalities likewise had their own devotions, because the French devotions were both particular—and thus especially used by French missionaries—and universal (used by all), they were present throughout the whole country.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul arrived in China in 1847, followed later by the Society of Helpers in 1867, and a group of Carmelite Sisters (from Laval) arrived in 1869.

shrines, and others besides, were popular as pilgrimage destinations for French (and other European) Catholics in the nineteenth century, and indeed even earlier. Although the French Marian images shared many common details, such as the frequent use of the mother and child, among these various representations there were notable differences, such as the physical position of Jesus in relation to Mary. Thus three statues that exist in churches that were barely two kilometers distant from one another show at once marked similarities yet also significant differences, illustrating the rich diversity of the Marian devotions in Paris, and indeed beyond.

One of the most famous Marian images of modern times, Our Lady of Lourdes, is a case in point. This image, which originated in the French Pyrenees, dates back to the late 1850s, but traces its origins to other earlier images. It reflects the fact that the devotion associated with the southwestern town of Lourdes emphasizes the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as a result of its central place in the apparition accounts of a local shepherd girl, Bernadette Soubirous.

Given that devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes became popular throughout the Catholic communities all over France during the latter part of the nineteenth century, this statue was readily found in many French Catholic churches. It could also be seen in individual homes, more usually as small replicas but sometimes in larger versions as well. Simply, this image was ubiquitous in the French Catholic world in the late-nineteenth century. The French missionaries entering China in the years after the Opium Wars were thus increasingly likely to bring with them statues, paintings, pictures, and holy medals featuring Our Lady of Lourdes. This image played an important role in the lives of all the missionaries, regardless of where they came from in France. The establishment of numerous Lourdes-type shrines throughout China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries points to the importance that this image already had in the devotional lives of the missionaries who traveled to China.

The missionaries' own place of origin also exerted an influence. Two popular devotions usually associated with missionaries who came from the northern parts of France, namely, Our Lady of Treille (which originated in the city of Lille) and Our Lady of Liesse, could be found in China in towns and villages where there were missionaries who came from these areas in France. A church built in the province of Guizhou in 1876 by Foreign Missions priests, for instance, was named the Church of Our Lady of Liesse, suggesting the northern origins of the mission-



aries stationed there. This was the case even though the seminary and motherhouse of the Society for the Foreign Missions was in Paris, at rue du Bac, and therefore a Marian devotion that originated in Paris would have been more likely. Another example is the seminary at Xianxian in Hebei province. Jesuits from the northern French Jesuit Province of Champagne had founded this work, and they entrusted their endeavors to Our Lady of Treille.

Until the appointment of a diocesan priest, Gong Pinmei, as bishop of Shanghai in 1950, Jesuits from the Province of Paris administered the church in Shanghai. It is understandable, therefore, that in addition to the French Marian devotions that enjoyed a national and even an international following, like the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, devotions that were more representative of the Parisian Catholic communities also became popular in Shanghai. It is for these reasons that the devotion to Our Lady of Victories was particularly popular among missionaries who either came from, or had a special attachment to, the City of Lights. Likewise the Marian pilgrimage in Shanghai was significantly influenced by these French Jesuits, and so it is not surprising that the first image used for this pilgrimage was a copy of the statue of Our Lady of Victories from the famous church of this name in their capital city.<sup>28</sup>

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*A newsletter of 1936 proudly reported the construction in Shanghai of a Lourdes-style grotto on the grounds of the parish of Christ the King, entrusted to the California Jesuits.*

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Interestingly, the prevalence of these European images, however, came at the expense of the Chinese images, insofar as the French images were displayed in greater numbers and were reproduced more often. The innovative evocations of local imagery that were popular in the late-Ming and early-Qing periods (1583–1724), ones that had been the product of centuries of cultural interaction and negotiation, were now supplanted by scenes wholly imported from afar.

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<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Palatre, *Le Pèlerinage de Notre-Dame-Auxiliatrice à Zô-sè, dans le vicariat apostolique de Nan-kin* (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1875), 30.



### III. Pilgrimages, Shrines, and Paintings

Even though these images were not now truly representative of a Chinese Catholic sensibility, they were nevertheless readily accommodated within Chinese Catholic spirituality. These pieties were but more Marian practices that could be added to the already rich set of devotions. Thus, the foreign missionaries may have been bringing their local devotions with them, but the local church made them their own quickly and fervently.

This could be observed throughout the Chinese Catholic world in the way in which Mary was now depicted in statues and paintings as she had appeared at Lourdes. That is, she was dressed in white with a blue belt around her waist and with a rosary in her hands. She is situated in a grotto, with or without Bernadette kneeling before her, a clear reference to the apparitions in southwestern France. The replicas were not only two-dimensional paintings and drawings, but also took the form of shrines, grottoes, and pavilions. Where there was no cave or rocky overhang that could play the part of a grotto, one was constructed from whatever stones or materials were available and a statue of Mary was placed inside.<sup>29</sup> These grottoes were established at first by the French missionaries, but within a short period of time, Chinese Catholics also began building and maintaining such structures. Chinese Catholics were delighted to have a place of their own where they could give honor to Mary, and it did not matter where such grottoes were built or who erected them.

The popularity of such Marian devotion, both before shrines and in other pious practices, is reported in much missionary literature of the period, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. A memoir written in 1855 by the Jesuit missionary Father Broullion, for instance, listed the various devotions that were popular among the Jiangnan Catholics and noted the importance of Marian piety.

I must add that properly speaking devotion is not unknown to our Christians: the Sacred Heart of Jesus receives the most fervent homage, and the feast is celebrated with enthusiasm; Saint Joseph, patron of China; Saint Ignatius, patriarch of the missionaries of Jiangnan; and Saint Fran-

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<sup>29</sup>Such places were called *shengmu shan*, literally "holy mother mountain," and structures of this type are still known by this name today.

cis Xavier, patron of the diocese of Nanjing, are all honored with solemn novenas. But above all it is the trust in Mary that is the source of the most abundant graces for our Christians.<sup>30</sup>

In an article written in 1916, French Vincentian missionary Father Clerc-Reynaud describes his visit to a Catholic minor seminary in the town of Citou in Jiangxi province:

I visited the grotto of Lourdes, which [Vincentian] Fathers Henri Crapez and Pierre Estamp had built at the foot of a little colline on the seminary's property. . . . The work resembled the countryside of the Pyrenees; all that was lacking was the river Gave and the liveliness which is provided by the pilgrims who visit there. The little mountain where the grotto is situated is very agreeable. There the students, some sixty of them, vividly chant a canticle before the statue of the Virgin at the end of recreation every evening. . . . [This] little grotto is the first of its kind elevated in the vicariate of east Jiangxi in honor of the Virgin of Lourdes.<sup>31</sup>

These grottoes maintained their popularity as the century progressed. A newsletter of 1936 proudly reported the construction in Shanghai of a Lourdes-style grotto on the grounds of the parish of Christ the King, entrusted to the California Jesuits.

Our Lady of Lourdes grotto was recently completed by Messrs Le Sage and Deward. It is built of brown stone that rises to a height of about fourteen feet and has a niche about six feet in height. Rose arbors and concrete benches will provide shade and a resting place for those performing devotions there. Two parishioners, Mrs I Min Hsu and Miss K. Clement, have just presented for the grotto a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. It stands about five feet six inches high and will be blessed in the near future.<sup>32</sup>

These types of Lourdes grottoes continue to be built in China today. While they were important in the promotion of European-style rep-

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<sup>30</sup>Father Broullion, S.J., *Missions de Chine: Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la Mission de Kiang-nan, 1842-1855* (Paris: Julien, Lanier and Cie, 1855), 77 (author's translation).

<sup>31</sup>Father Clerc-Reynaud, *Les Missions Catholiques*, no. 2441 (March 17, 1916), 130 (author's translation).

<sup>32</sup>*The China Letter* 21 (September 1936): 2. *The China Letter: The American Jesuits on the Mission of Shanghai*, also known as *China: Letter of the American Jesuits in China to the Friends in the States*, was printed by the California Province of the Society of Jesus, San Francisco, California.



resentations of Mary, it must be noted that devotions like the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, or the popular Marian paintings, holy cards, and medals that were also brought over by the foreign missionaries were also very popular and maybe even more so. This is because grottoes took some effort to build (and thus were beyond the capacity of many communities) and, therefore, while present throughout the country, were still not as ubiquitous as the card-size images.

Furthermore, pilgrimages to such grottoes, or ones like them, were established only after some years. While two of the most famous, Sheshan and Donglu (in Hebei province), were begun in 1868 and 1908 respectively, others were undertaken much later. The grottoes were nevertheless a significant influence on the development of both the identity and the devotional life of Chinese Catholic communities.

### The Origins of the Sheshan Pilgrimage

While the grottoes were popular because they were places for tranquil prayer and the physical practicing of devotional rituals, they were also much esteemed because the Chinese Catholics believed graces and blessings could be gained from visiting them. Thus, those places where miracles were said to have occurred became all the more important. The popularity of the Marian devotions increased because the Catholics believed Mary had answered the prayers of her people. The two Marian shrines already mentioned, Baoding and Sheshan, are especially important in this regard. As we have seen, the devotion at Sheshan became part of the faith life of the Jiangnan Catholics in 1870 after the danger of violent attack was averted. These Catholics, believing that Mary intervened in response to prayers made by the Jesuit in charge of the mission, made a special point of offering their thanks for their preservation in the face of this anti-Christian persecution. The Christians' commonly held belief in Mary's saving help and the manner in which they expressed their gratitude became known throughout the nation. As a result of the spread of missionary literature, this was also reported abroad.

Father Royers, a nineteenth-century English Jesuit working in the Jiangnan mission, described the enthusiasm with which the pilgrimage was celebrated in 1874, only a few years after its inauguration. The sheer number of pilgrims is also striking.

On the day of the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, more than twenty thousand Christians reached the place. . . . with them came twenty-five missionaries and fifteen scholastics from *Zikawer* [*sic*; Zikawei/Xu-



juahui]. His Lordship the bishop being absent on account of sickness, it fell to our revered Father Superior, Father Foucault, to hold the chief place in the procession, sing high Mass, and give the Benediction of the Sacred Heart. The statue of our Lady, adorned with flowers, was borne by four deacons and subdeacons. Behind it walked twenty Fathers in copes, and more than two hundred magnificent banners, supported by six hundred Christians in surplices. The twenty thousand Christians were drawn up on the mountain—and this in the midst of a land wholly given over to paganism! [*sic*]. But I must be short. A Father, shortly arrived in the country, said, “Never did I see anything more beautiful, even in France”; and one of our scholastics, who had previously served among the Papal Zouaves, added, “I have seen magnificent festivals in Rome, but never did I witness anything so moving as the sight of the Feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, at *Zo-chan* [Zose / Sheshan].<sup>33</sup>

For all the hyperbole, it is clear that, after only a few short years, the Chinese Catholic celebration of this feast rivaled in beauty and fervor the celebrations held by the communities whence this devotion had come. This zeal was not a momentary occurrence. From 1870 to the present, reports similar in tone and content can be found throughout Sheshan’s history. For the moment, however, let us move further north and consider the origins of the other primary place of Marian pilgrimage in China, the town of Donglu. Even though devotions at Sheshan began earlier than those at Donglu, the distinctive origins of this latter pilgrimage and the pictorial image that was especially created for this devotion had a greater influence on the development of Chinese Catholicism during the first decades of the twentieth century.

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*In the years immediately prior to the eventual uprising there had been periods of drought, resulting in widespread unemployment and famine.*

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## Marian Devotion at Donglu

The town of Donglu grew in fame during the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the survival of the local Catholic community during the violent times of the Boxer Uprising (1898–1900). The Donglu Catholics attributed their deliverance to the salvific intervention of Mary. The faith stories associated with this village became sus-

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<sup>33</sup>Father Royer, “A Pilgrimage in China,” *Letters and Notices* (Roehampton: Ex Typographia Sancti Josephi) 10 (1875): 101.

taining narratives within other Catholic communities in China; and, in fact, Our Lady of Donglu has become talismanic for the Chinese Catholic church. Given the origins of this devotion in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it is not surprising that the image associated with it is largely European in style.

The market town of Donglu is in the prefecture of Baoding in the province of Hebei, southwest of Beijing. This province contains one of the highest concentrations of Catholics in China, and the church traces its origins to the missionary work of the late-Ming and early-Qing imperial periods (1583–1724). The Catholics were most often found

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*Those Chinese who were deemed to have sold their birthright by becoming Christians were convenient scapegoats for people's ills; as conditions got worse, bands of Boxers scoured the countryside looking for victims.*

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grouped together in country villages as a result of the missionary strategy to seek to convert large numbers of families within one village, if not in fact the whole village, rather than just one or two individuals and their families. The strategy was based on the pastoral insight that it was easier to maintain one's faith in a communal

setting rather than as an individual, particularly if the surrounding village or culture was opposed to the expression of the Christian faith. As seen above, participation in the sodalities was one way of strengthening the sense of Christian community among these villagers.

One consequence of this evangelical strategy, however, was that when waves of anti-foreign or anti-religious hostility swept the countryside, it was easy to attack the Catholics because they were readily identifiable by where they lived. This was especially true of Donglu, where almost all the inhabitants were Catholic. According to missionary accounts from the early-twentieth century, the Catholic population numbered over 2,500 people.<sup>34</sup>

Work by Joseph Esherick and others has also shown that the opposition to Catholics and Christians that erupted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not caused just by anti-foreign sen-

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<sup>34</sup>*Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin* 141 (1925): 172. Some figures today state that the Catholic population of Donglu is seven thousand out of around nine thousand people. See, for instance (although with great reservation because no source is provided) <http://www.encyclopediefrancaise.com/Donglu.html>



timent, although this certainly did play a role.<sup>35</sup> These scholars have argued that the rise in the number of Catholics in certain areas also threatened the local economies, especially where the Catholics were grouped en masse. This is because the Catholics refused to participate in village festivals that revolved around the local temple cults. These festivals were major events in the life of a rural community and also included a type of village tax, which was used for such things as infra-structural repair (like roads) as well as for the funding of charitable works and prayer services, either in honor of the ancestors or in thanksgiving for good harvests.

Catholics refused to pay this tax because of its link to non-Catholic rituals. Consequently, other village inhabitants thought they were not only paying more than their fair share but were also subsidizing those who paid nothing at all. The Catholic practice of marrying other Catholics, even if this meant pursuing spouses in other villages, likewise threatened local community harmony because this custom destabilized well-established local relationships among families and clans. Such divisions among rural communities fostered dangerous tensions.

There was a great deal of hostility and violence throughout the late-nineteenth century in China, especially in the rural plains around Beijing and Tianjin. The reasons for this were complex, but one common consequence was that the Christian communities of all traditions usually bore the brunt of the widespread dissatisfaction and outrage. Donglu was no exception, and this predominantly Catholic village was attacked both during the time of the Taiping rebellion in the middle of the century and then later in 1900 during the rise of the Boxer movement.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See the essays by Alan Richard Sweeten, "Catholic Converts in Jiangxi Province: Conflict and Accommodation, 1860–1900"; Charles A. Litzinger, "Rural Religion and Village Organization in North China: The Catholic Challenge in the Late Nineteenth Century"; and Roger R. Thompson, "Twilight of the Gods in the Chinese Countryside: Christians, Confucians, and the Modernizing State, 1861–1911," in *Christianity in China from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup>The Taiping rebellion occurred between 1851 and 1864. See Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996).



After these attacks, the Catholics of Donglu believed that on both occasions Mary had saved them from destruction.

The Chinese Catholics were accustomed to turning to Mary in times of peace, so it was all the more understandable that they would then seek her intercessory prayers in their potential hour of death. After each wave of persecution, the Catholics drew solace from their sur-

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*The momentous act of delivery from harm was recorded in prayers and in images. The Donglu Catholics produced just such a portrait embodying their devotion to Mary, one that has been among the most famous of the Chinese Marian images ever since.*

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vival and, as at Shanghai, they attributed their deliverance to the fact that Mary had heard and answered their prayers.

In this regard, the events of the years 1899 and 1900 proved to be critical to the continued development of the identity of the Catholics of Donglu. These events also positioned Marian devotions

even more at the center of the faith life of the community. After their ultimate survival, the Chinese Catholic communities experienced Mary's traditional titles of Our Lady Help of Christians and Our Lady of Victories as being true in deed as well as in word. The experience of the Catholic community of Donglu show how this situation arose.

Although the origins of the Boxer Uprising are complex and beyond the scope of this essay, it is clear that one of the proximate causes of the movement was the role of the church in local affairs. Certainly, things like the refusal of Catholics to contribute financially to certain village celebrations and the missionaries' overly zealous involvement in local judicial matters had prompted much antagonistic feeling toward the Catholic Church.<sup>37</sup> Rather than focus on the Boxer Uprising as a whole, I will examine the response of the Catholics of Donglu to the violent Boxer attacks and thereby show the manner in which Marian de-

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<sup>37</sup>See, for instance, in addition to the works of Joseph Esherick and others already mentioned, Albert François Ilephonse D'Anthouard, *Les Boxeurs: La Chine contre L'Étranger* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et cie, 1902); Mark Elvin, "Mandarins and Millenarians: Reflections on the Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900," in *Another History: Essays on China from a European Perspective* (Sydney: Wild Peony Pay Ltd, 1996), chap. 7; and Dianne Preston, *Besieged in Peking: The Story of the 1900 Boxer Rising* (London: Constable and Company, 1999).

votion became even more entrenched in the life of the Catholic communities as a result.

The Boxer movement has often been regarded as "as a 'religious uprising' with anti-foreign aims . . . [or as] . . . an anti-foreign (or anti-imperialist) movement that expressed itself in religious terms."<sup>38</sup> Mark Elvin states, however, that it "appears that the link between Boxerism and the religious and foreign irritant usually supposed to have caused it is nothing like as strong as it should be to serve as a convincingly sufficient explanation."<sup>39</sup> Paul Cohen argues that, in addition to the undoubted anti-foreign aspects, the backlash to the concessions of the unequal treaties, and the cultural chauvinism of many of the foreign missionaries, the economic and ecological conditions of the final years of the millennium were also contributory causes to the Boxer movement.

In the years immediately prior to the eventual uprising there had been periods of drought, resulting in widespread unemployment and famine. These in turn had led to great anxiety among the population, especially among the rural poor. These harsh conditions made it attractive to the peasantry to join groups like the Boxers. An observation in 1900 by the United States Minister to China, Edwin H. Conger, about the situation in Zhili (modern Hebei) reflects the complex mixture of factors.

The present conditions in this province are most favorable to such a movement [that is, the Boxers]. The people are very poor; until yesterday [May 7] practically no rain has fallen for nearly a year, plowing has not been and can not be done, crops have not been planted, the ground is too dry and hard to work in any way, and consequently the whole country is swarming with hungry, discontented, hopeless idlers, and they . . . are ready to join any organization offered.<sup>40</sup>

The foreigners and those Chinese who were deemed to have sold their birthright by becoming Christians were convenient scapegoats for people's ills; as conditions got worse, bands of Boxers scoured the countryside looking for victims. In Hebei province, the Catholics of Dong-

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<sup>38</sup>Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 98.

<sup>39</sup>Elvin, "Mandarins and Millenarians," 208.

<sup>40</sup>From a letter written by Edwin Conger dated May 8, 1900, as cited in Escherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 281.



lu were a definite focus of the Boxer forces and they suffered a number of attacks. Contemporary missionary bulletins and reports stated that the Donglu Catholics maintained that Mary appeared to them several times during the siege of their church, and that these apparitions over the church were "instrumental in protecting them from a series of Boxer assaults between December 1899 and July 1900."<sup>41</sup>

A remarkably similar story was told by the survivors of the siege of the North Church in Beijing, which lasted from June 16 to August 16, 1900. This siege resulted in the deaths of more than 400 people, including more than 160 children.<sup>42</sup> During the course of this siege, over three thousand Chinese Christians huddled behind the walls of the church compound. Alongside them were thirty French marines, led by the 23-year-old Lieutenant Paul Henry (who died in the siege), eleven Italian soldiers led by their even younger twenty-two-year-old soldier, Lieutenant Olivieri, and numerous French and Chinese priests and sisters. Overseeing everything was the elderly French Lazarist bishop of Beijing, Bishop Pierre-Marie-Alphonse Favier.

Over a two-month period they endured bombardments from the latest cannon and bullets from modern repeating rifles. The Boxers had been able to fire down on the Catholics from ladders and scaffolds that were secured behind the Imperial City walls. The beleaguered Catholics also survived mine attacks, flaming rockets, and starvation through lack of food. Their survival was attributed to the appearance of a woman in white, the Virgin Mary, over the walls of the church.<sup>43</sup>

In 1901 Bishop Favier described this experience during a visit to his fellow Lazarists in Paris:

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<sup>41</sup> Cited in Paul A. Cohen, "Boxers, Christians and the Gods: The Boxer Conflict of 1900 as a Religious War," in *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 118.

<sup>42</sup> Preston, *Besieged in Peking*, 208.

<sup>43</sup> Like the similarity between images of Guanyin and Mary discussed earlier, so too was there a similarity between Guanyin apparition stories and Marian apparitions. Given the complexity of that discussion, see, among others, Yü, *Kuan-yin*, chap. 3, and p. 192, and Maria Reis-Habito, "The Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Virgin Mary," in *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 65–66. For the more general story of appearances of Guanyin, see, among others, Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miao-shan* (London: Ithaca Press, 1978).



Every night during those two months, the Chinese directed heavy gunfire at the roofs of the cathedral and the balustrade surrounding it. Why? wondered Paul Henry and the missionaries. There was no one there to defend the cathedral. After the liberation, the pagans [*sic*] provided the key to this mystery: "How is it," they said, "that you did not see anything? Every night, a white Lady walked along the roof, and the balustrade was lined with white soldiers with wings." The Chinese, as they themselves affirm, were firing at the apparitions.<sup>44</sup>

Such stories of divine intercession spread throughout the Catholic communities. They believed that Mary had again helped her people in their time of need. Mary had provided assistance at Shanghai in 1870; so too did she now appear at Donglu and Beijing in 1899 and 1900. In the minds of the Chinese Catholics, they could only attribute their survival to Mary's providential aid.<sup>45</sup> The defeat of the uprising meant that the already complex story of faith was now overlaid with another stratum of meaning.<sup>46</sup> Accounts of miraculous delivery in times of genuine hardship and danger now accompanied the powerful community-building pious acts—for example, the participation in sodalities, the carrying-out of devotions like the chanting of rosaries and the making of pilgrimages.

This dramatic overlaying of meaning had at least two significant consequences. First, the overlaying resulted in a strengthening of the archetypal story of faith: that is, that Mary the blessed one would intercede with God on behalf of those who prayed to her. As a result, the acts of piety that embodied this belief became more popular. Second, the new story strengthened the Catholics' sense of identity. In a cyclical

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<sup>44</sup>Cited by the Webpage <http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/peking.htm>. This is reputedly sourced from *Annales de la Mission*; I have been unable, as of yet, to find the relevant article containing this quotation. Given the widespread repetition of this story in Chinese Catholic circles, I repeat it here, albeit with that caveat.

<sup>45</sup>Regarding apparition accounts at a time of societal upheaval, see Robert A. Ventresca, "The Virgin and the Bear: Religion, Society and the Cold War in Italy," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003); and, more generally, E. Ann Matter, "Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Late Twentieth Century: Apocalyptic, Representation, Politics," *Religion* 31 (2001).

<sup>46</sup>Praesenjit Duara describes this concept of overlaying as superscription in his "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (1988): 778–95. I have been greatly helped by Duara's conceptualization.

fashion, the bolstered identity encouraged greater practicing of the religious devotions, which in turn then led to a deepening of the original sense of identity. Each reinforced the other.

### The Donglu Portrait of Mary

The Marian dimensions of the communities had thus become a major force that would continue to animate the believers. The momentous act of delivery from harm was recorded in prayers and in images. The Donglu Catholics produced just such a portrait embodying their devotion to Mary, one that has been among the most famous of the Chinese Marian images ever since.

The image was simply called Our Lady of Donglu, rather than a more traditional title like Our Lady of Victories or Our Lady Help of Christians, and it was commissioned in 1908, only eight years after the end of the uprising. At the time the commission was carried out, the loss of life among the Catholic families throughout China was still sorely felt. It was perceived that there was a need among the communities to commemorate both Mary's assistance and the memory of their martyred townsfolk.

The painting also owed its origins in no small part to the rise in popularity throughout China of representational imagery (both portraiture and photography) during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. In particular, the Empress Dowager's utilization of these forms of imagery exerted a surprising influence on the Donglu Catholic painting. In fact, an oil portrait of Cixi was used as one of the main models for the Catholic Donglu painting.

Katherine Carl, a foreign artist, had painted this work in 1903 at the suggestion of the wife of the then U.S. Consul General in China, Mrs. Sarah Pike Conger.<sup>47</sup> Cixi was very careful as to how she was portrayed in this portrait and throughout the process issued numerous directions and correctives. Several photographs of Cixi, which deliberately portrayed her as Guanyin, were also noticeable influences. These links are explained below. In order to trace the history of this seminal image, however, we must move south again, back to Shanghai, since

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<sup>47</sup> See Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China* (London and New York: Hodder and Staughton, 1909), 246–48.



the Donglu Catholics' longed-for painting was produced there at the art workshop of the Society of Jesus, based at Tushanwan.

## The Tushanwan Orphanage

This workshop was one of the many works of the Jesuits in Shanghai situated at their complex at Xujiahui (Zikawei). Tushanwan was in fact an orphanage, and the work produced at its various workshops had become famous throughout the country since its foundation.

Tushanwan had taken over and expanded upon the operations of another orphanage, which had begun in 1848 at a village on the outskirts of Shanghai known as Tsa-ka-wei (Caijiawan, in Mandarin).<sup>48</sup> These orphanages were a response of the Catholic missionaries to the plight of the large number of infants whose parents had died or become homeless in that year, principally as a result of severe flooding. The orphanages also housed and educated the many foundlings who had either been left to the care of the Jesuits or had been saved from roadsides and other places where they had been abandoned. Two Franciscans, Father Pellicia and Father Schettino, had initially run the Tsa-ka-wei Orphanage and had then handed over its administration to Father François Giaquinto, S.J., in 1851. He ran this for six years before he was sent to a new mission elsewhere and was replaced at the orphanage by Father Luigi Massa, S.J. Massa was at Tsa-ka-wei until 1860, at which time Taiping soldiers killed him, along with several Chinese Christians and a number of the orphans.

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*The goods produced at Tushanwan became well known outside the country. Several pieces of furniture and four large scroll paintings, for instance, were sent to San Francisco for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915.*

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After this, Father Giaquinto returned to Shanghai in 1861 to resume the position of director of the orphanage, which had moved into downtown Shanghai after the Taipings' attacks; he held this post until his death at the age of forty-six in 1864.<sup>49</sup> He had contracted typhoid fever in the confined conditions of the new site. Those orphans who had

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<sup>48</sup>See Joseph Servièrre, *L'orphelinat de T'ou-sè-wè: Son histoire, son état présent* (Zikawei, Shanghai: Imprimerie de l'orphelinat de T'ou-sè-wè, 1914), 3.

<sup>49</sup>See *Catalogus* of 1863 and *Catalogus* of 1865.



survived violence from their fellow Chinese and had resisted the illnesses that abounded in such an unhealthy environment were then moved to Tushanwan in November of the same year, 1864. Father Emil Chevreuil, S.J., became director of the Tushanwan orphanage in 1865 and held this position until at least 1868. Construction of spacious new premises began at Tushanwan in 1864 and these were completed, in several stages, by 1875. On July 11 of that year, the superior of the mission, the French Jesuit Father Foucault (who led the prayers at Sheshan that so impressed Father Royer) blessed Tushanwan's new buildings and workshops during a solemn opening Mass. At this time there were two hundred orphans at Tushanwan and around one hundred adults were employed in the various workshops.<sup>50</sup>

At Tushanwan the Jesuit priests and brothers worked as the master craftsmen and taught the boys in their care various trades, including woodworking, metalworking, printing, and painting. In the course of learning these skills, which would then provide the orphans with a livelihood once they were old enough to leave the orphanage, the young students produced a variety of religious and secular goods. The sale of these goods helped offset the operating expenses of the orphanage. Some of the orphans also chose to remain working in the various departments of Tushanwan once they had reached adulthood.<sup>51</sup>

The art workshop began operations at Tushanwan in 1867, although Spanish Jesuit Brother Jean de Dieu Ferrer, S.J., had been teaching art to students at Xujiahui since 1852, and from 1865 Brother Peter Lu (Lu Bodu), S.J., had been in charge of teaching the orphans to paint.<sup>52</sup> Lu had himself been one of Ferrer's earliest pupils and contin-

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<sup>50</sup>See *Relations de la Mission de Nan-king, II, 1874-75* (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Missions Catholique, 1876), 70. Chinese female religious, the Presentandines, and French female religious, the Helpers of the Holy Souls, cared for the many female orphans. For more on orphanages and the work of the French Holy Childhood Association, see Henrietta Harrison, "A Penny for the Little Chinese: The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843-1951," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 1 (February 2008): 72-92.

<sup>51</sup>For instance, according to the article "Un Vieil Orphelinat," *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin*, no. 269 (January 1936), 183-84, each day there were 650 people to feed at the orphanage.

<sup>52</sup>One of the earliest histories of Tushanwan is in *Relations de la Mission de Nan-king, II, 1874-75*. Although there are a number of academic references to Tushanwan, as for instance, in several of Michael Sullivan's works, there is yet to be a full-length study devoted to it. References are also contained in the recent

ued Ferrer's work after his death in 1855. Lu joined the Jesuits in 1862. In addition to supplying works for the local and regional churches and attracting curious day-trippers from among the Europeans resident in Shanghai, this workshop also began to attract interest from among local Chinese artists as well.<sup>53</sup>

The goods produced at Tushanwan became well known outside the country. Several pieces of furniture and four large scroll paintings, for instance, were sent to San Francisco for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915.<sup>54</sup> The extent of the activities at Tushanwan was revealed in an advertisement in the 1937 publication *A Guide to Catholic Shanghai*. This proclaimed that the orphanage would "fill personal orders at moderate prices and could supply stained glass, fancy lamp shades, hand-carved furniture, silver plating, steel work, artistic book-binding, sacred vessels, statuary and paintings and printing services."<sup>55</sup> In fact, the vast majority of Catholic publications produced in Shanghai,

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work on Shanghai artist Ren Bonian: *New Wine in Old Bottles: The Art of Ren Bonian in Nineteenth-Century Shanghai*, by Yang Chialing (London: Saffron Books, 2007). For information on Tushanwan, Yang relies on several early-twentieth-century Chinese-language publications, including Lin Zou, *Xuhui Jilüe* (Shanghai: Tushanwan yinshuguan, 1933), chap. 13. Details in these works differ from the earlier and more contemporaneous accounts in both *Relations* and Joseph Servièrè's history of 1914, *L'orphelinat de T'ou-sè-wè*. Consequently, the weight of evidence seems not to be with Lin Zou et al. One example of this is that the buildings were finally finished in 1875, not 1867.

<sup>53</sup>Some of the Chinese artists who were assisted or influenced by the Jesuit teachers at Tushanwan include Ren Bonian, Xu Beihong, and Zhang Chongren. The Jesuits also produced a number of books that helped Chinese students acquire Western techniques. Liu Dezhai, S.J., was responsible for some of these, as was another Jesuit priest, Adolphe Vasseur, S.J., who briefly taught art at Tushanwan.

<sup>54</sup>The four scrolls mentioned here may be seen at the Lone Mountain Campus of the University of San Francisco, and several items of furniture are also in Jesuit houses of the California Province. Moreover, elaborate pieces of embroidery, needlework, and bound photographic albums produced at the girls' workshops were delivered to Rome for the Mission Exposition of 1924 and 1925, held at the Vatican.

<sup>55</sup>Anonymous, *A Guide to Catholic Shanghai* (Shanghai: T'ou-Sè-Wè Press, 1937), 56. In fact, according to Paul Mariani, S.J., although their names were not recorded in this work, the book was produced by a number of California Jesuits for the use of visitors to Shanghai who made their way there after the Thirty-third Eucharistic Congress in Manila in February 1937.



including this guidebook itself, were produced by Tushanwan's printing house, which began in 1870.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, when the Donglu-based missionary wished to procure a new and especially beautiful image of Mary, it was no surprise that he turned to the Jesuit workshop in Shanghai. This work was indeed commissioned from the painters at Tushanwan in 1908. Some years later, in 1925, an extensive account of the origins of this painting was published.<sup>57</sup> This account was written at a time when there was an ongoing debate among the church communities about the appropriateness of utilizing Chinese clothing, symbols, and stylistic devices in Christian paintings and statuary. The apostolic nuncio to China, Archbishop Celso Costantini, had initiated this debate, in no small part because of the currents of nationalism sweeping the country, and especially Shanghai, at this time.<sup>58</sup> The account of the painting's origins is the earliest and most comprehensive description in existence, although the author was anonymous.

Parts of the report are quoted here because the origins of the Donglu painting have been largely forgotten, or inaccurately remembered. This is even though the painting quickly became iconic, metamorphosed later into Our Lady of China and, since its execution, was accepted by Chinese and foreign Catholics alike as a Chinese religious painting.

#### IV. From Donglu to Our Lady of China

**T**he Donglu missionary "dreamed of equipping his church with a beautiful painting of the Holy Virgin, who was much honored by the Christians."<sup>59</sup> The missionary in question was a Lazarist priest named René Flament, who was encouraged to pursue his dream by "the words and gifts of Monsignor Jarlin, the vicar apostolic, and

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<sup>56</sup> According to the article "Un vieil orphelinat," 183–84, each year on average the printery published fifty works in European languages, producing between 25,000 and 75,000 copies, and sixty Chinese-language works, numbering between 250,000 and 350,000 copies.

<sup>57</sup> An anonymous article entitled "Notre Dame de Chine," in *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin*, 141, (May 1925), 71–73.

<sup>58</sup> In May 1919 there was a large protest in Beijing (the May 4 protest), and in May 1925 there was a large strike in Shanghai. These are beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>59</sup> "Notre Dame de Chine," 172 (author's translation).



Monsignor Fabrègues, who was director of the district of Baoding."<sup>60</sup> When Father Flament placed his order, he also mailed a photograph of the Katherine Carl portrait of the Empress Cixi to the director of the orphanage's art workshop, rather than simply leaving the design solely to the whim of the painters at Tushanwan.<sup>61</sup>

The director of the painting studio at the time was the Chinese Jesuit brother and artist, Liu Dezhai or Siméon Liu, who took personal responsibility for fulfilling Flament's request.<sup>62</sup> When Liu was a child, his father had been taken away in a boat by the Taiping rebels on the outskirts of Shanghai and was never seen again.<sup>63</sup> Liu's family was Christian, and he was allowed to enter the college of Saint Ignatius at Xujiahui when he was quite young. It was then that he began his artistic education with those Jesuits based at Xujiahui, especially with Jean de Dieu

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*The imperial court had an Empress Dowager; the Chinese Catholics had their own heavenly mother and child.*

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Ferrer, S.J. Although Brother Ferrer was a sculptor by profession, having completed his own artistic studies in Rome prior to joining the Society, he was also a competent painter and draughtsman. He was assisted by an Italian Jesuit priest, Nicholas Massa, S.J., who was one of four Jesuit brothers of Luigi Massa, who had died at the Tsa-ka-wei Orphanage.<sup>64</sup> As

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 172 (author's translation). Flament would later become the president of the inaugural synodal commission.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Joseph de Lapparent, "Notre Dame de Chine-Regina Sinarum: Historique," *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin* (1941): 359-60. His name was also written in missionary literature as Liu, Lieu and Liou. De Lapparent wrote this concise history of the image so that there would be no further debate about its origins. His article drew on the earlier article of 1925. Liu Dezhai was born on February 2, 1843, and died July 31, 1912. Some articles say his name was Liu Bizhen; yet a recent Chinese work, *20 shiji Zhongguo yishu shi de ruogan keti yanjiu* (1900-1949) [Research on a number of problems in twentieth-century Chinese art history between 1900 and 1949], ed. Wu Wuhua (Sichuan: Sichuan Meishu chubanshe, 2006), 182, records his name as Liu Dezhai.

<sup>63</sup>See *Cent ans sur le Fleuve Bleu: Une mission des Jésuites* (Zikawei, Shanghai: Imprimerie de T'ou-se-wei, 1942), 218.

<sup>64</sup>Ellen Johnstone Laing, in *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii

a younger man, Nicholas Massa had received training in the art of painting in Europe. Ferrer and his assistant Massa not only trained genera-



Plate 2: This is a cropped reproduction of the ordination card for John J. Brennan, S.J., ordained at Shanghai on June 8, 1946. The image bears the title "Heavenly Queen of China, pray for me." It is referred to in the text as Plate 2. (From the archives of the California Province of the Society of Jesus, gratefully used with permission.)

Liu was still head of the department in 1908, at sixty-five years of age, and died in 1912.<sup>66</sup> The efficient administration of the workshop and the popular work first of Ferrer and Massa, and then of Lu and Liu, as well

tions of artists and artisans after their arrival in Shanghai (Ferrer arrived in October 1847) but also produced a great deal of religious art for the various chapels and churches of the Jiangnan mission, as did his many students after him. Ferrer also drafted the plans for the first church at Xujiahui.

Liu must have learned more than art from Ferrer because, like Lu before him, he subsequently entered the Society on September 7, 1867. He began working in the painting department in 1870 after completing his two-year novitiate. He was admitted to final vows on the feast of Saint Ignatius, July 31, 1878.<sup>65</sup> For many years Brother Liu was the director of the painting workshop at Tushanwan, a position he took over from Brother Peter Lu, upon Lu's death in 1880.

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Press, 2004), 62, calls Nicholas Massa a brother, rather than a priest. The confusion exists because Nicholas Massa began his religious life as a brother but later undertook theology studies and became a priest. See G. B. Rossi, *Cenni storici dei cinque fratelli Massa della Compagnia di Gesù morti nelle missioni della Cina tra gli anni 1850–1876* (Naples: Pe'tipi di Salvatore Marchese, 1879).

<sup>65</sup>Index to *Catalogus Provinciæ Franciæ*, 1900.

<sup>66</sup>He is listed as director in the 1908 catalogue of the French Jesuits, "*Missio Sinensis in Provincia Nankinensi*," 53. Showing the ideally ever-present religious aspect of the Jesuit vocation, Liu was also responsible for ensuring that the charges in his care were saying their prayers (*visit. orat. et exam.*, as described in the Jesuit Latin shorthand used in province catalogues).



as the many students who had learned from them, had ensured that the painters of Tushanwan had a national reputation. Between them, the two Chinese Jesuit brothers directed the painting workshop for almost sixty years.

Liu Dezhai used the photograph of the Katherine Carl portrait as a model for his oil portrait, incorporating additional suggestions made by others, including the client who offered the commission, the Lazarist Father Flament. As in the painting of Cixi, Mary was seated on a throne and was dressed in a sumptuous blue and yellow Manchu court garment.<sup>67</sup> Although there was only one subject in the Carl painting, namely Cixi, here the child Jesus appears with Mary. He stood on the throne, beside Mary's leg, and was likewise clad in rich vestments. Although Liu had any number of models for this depiction, ranging from *Our Lady of Paris* to *Our Lady of Treille*, it is not known why Jesus was shown in this fashion, rather than in some other way.

It is also unknown if the original image painted by Liu Dezhai stills exists in Donglu. It is certain, however, that many copies of this image were produced in the subsequent years, especially after the Shanghai Plenary Council of 1924, when Celso Costantini ensured a greater circulation of the image, as discussed below. Some of these reproductions were themselves replicated from other copies and a number of changes occurred in the process of transmission. Given that it was painted at a time when other regal images, such as the photographs of Cixi as Guanyin and the photographs of the Empress Dowager portrait, were also being circulated, one can easily understand how it could attract the reverence of Catholics beyond Donglu. The connection between the images was as much the result of the shared historical context as of the visual similarities, or even more so. The imperial court had an Empress Dowager; the Chinese Catholics had their own heavenly mother and child.

The initial portrait brought much joy to Liu Dezhai and his fellow Jesuits, so much so that they were apparently tempted to keep the paint-

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<sup>67</sup>De Lapparent, "Notre Dame de Chine," 359. The photographs of Cixi as Guanyin show her either standing or sitting, and accompanied by court attendants dressed as Buddhist figures. She is also photographed among a field of lotuses, a Buddhist symbol of purity. There are no attendants in the Donglu painting or lotuses. It thus seems reasonable to accept both the anonymous article and de Lapparent's account that the painting, and not the photographs, provided the model for Liu's work. See Lin Jing, *The Photographs of Cixi in the Collection of the Palace Museum* (Beijing: Forbidden City Press, 2002).



ing at Xujiahui. They honored their contract, however, and the painting was transported to Donglu by train, where it arrived on March 17, 1909. Father Flament subsequently displayed it behind the main altar in the church, replacing another image of Mary that had been painted by a local Chinese virgin.<sup>68</sup> This apparently had “a certain grace,” although

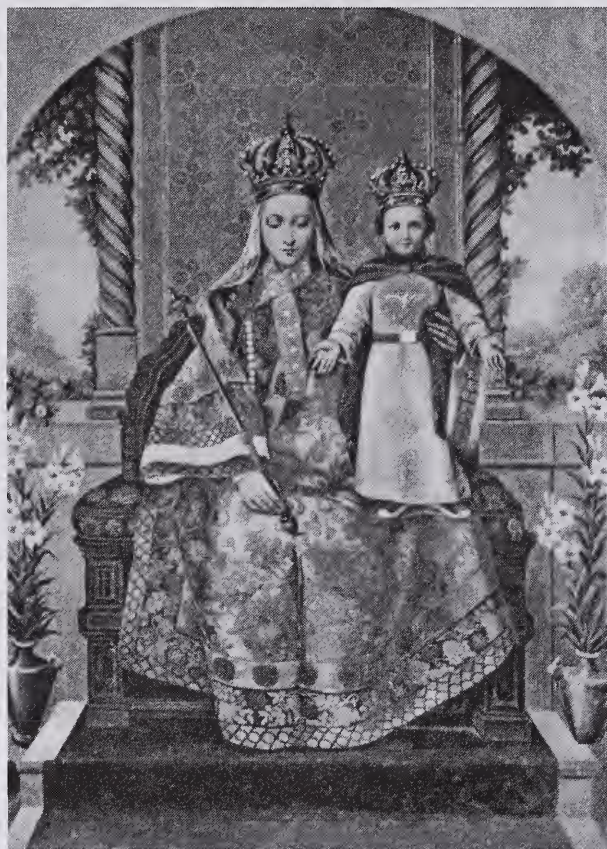


Plate 3: A cropped reproduction of a prayer card produced by the Paris Foreign Mission Society, some time in the 1940s, which bore the title *Notre Dame de Chine*.

it was not as attractive as the new work.<sup>69</sup> The earlier image had already helped the popularization of the cult of the Virgin Mary within this Catholic village. Father Flament hoped that this much-longed-for new painting would likewise be a successful means of strengthening the already significant devotion to Mary.

Liu Dezhai's image subsequently became famous throughout China. The church at Donglu had already been a place of pilgrimage for Catholics from nearby villages (as a result of the apparition stories recounted earlier). It now became well known throughout all the Chinese Catholic communities. This increase in fame likewise saw a rise in the number of visitors. The Donglu Catholics were

justifiably proud of their Christianity and of their pious devotion to the Holy Virgin, and this impressed all those who made the pilgrimage to their church. “[There was] nothing as touching as listening to the endlessly repeated invocation, chanted with an engrossing and moving insistence, ‘Heavenly Holy Mother, Queen of Donglu, pray for me.’”<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup>See J. M. Trémorin, “Les Pèlerinages à Notre Dame de Tonglu,” *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin*, no. 229 (September 1932): 174–75.

<sup>69</sup>See de Lapparent, “Notre Dame de Chine,” 172.

<sup>70</sup>De Lapparent, “Notre Dame de Chine,” 172 (author's translation).

The chants, the pilgrimages, and the rosaries in particular, ensured that devotion to Mary (especially as it was associated with Donglu) became widespread and even more deeply held. The complex cultural interactions that took place within the Chinese Catholic communities are well illustrated by the people involved in bringing this iconic Chinese Catholic image into being. A French priest commissioned the work from a Chinese Jesuit painter, who in turn had learned the art of painting from Spanish and Italian missionaries. The painter used Chinese stylistic devices to depict a Catholic devotion from a rural market town in the north of China. The original model for this work, furthermore, was a photographic reproduction of an oil portrait of the Chinese Empress that had been painted by a United States citizen.

This portrait would also play a part in the deliberate and conscious program of indigenization that was taking place throughout the international Church during the early part of the twentieth century, and which had China as a particular focus. Rome led this program in many ways, even in the face of marked opposition from numerous European missionaries working in China. The *Our Lady of Donglu* painting was a famous harbinger of the plan to strengthen the local church. Its adoption by Bishop Celso Costantini at the Plenary Council in 1924 is the final part of our story, and we return once more to Shanghai.

### **The Shanghai Plenary Council of 1924**

As apostolic delegate, Costantini called for, planned, and then chaired the first plenary council of the Catholic Church in China, held in Shanghai between May 15 and June 11, 1924. It began with a Mass of the Holy Spirit and concluded with another solemn Mass on June 12. At the opening Mass a relic of Blessed (now Saint) Robert Bellarmine was placed on the altar in Saint Ignatius Church, Xujiahui. Those of the assembled faithful who did not know that Bellarmine had had personal correspondence with the famous seventeenth-century Shanghai Catholic, Paul Xu Guangqi, certainly knew of this by the end of the service, as much was made of the relationship between these two great minds living on opposite sides of the globe. There were many such symbols of the longevity of the Chinese church evident throughout the course of the gathering.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>For more about the daily events of the council, see Louis Wei Tsing-sing, *Le Saint Siège et La Chine: De Pie XI à nos jours* (Sotteville-lès-Rouen: Allais, 1971), 108–16. Bellarmine was not canonized until 1930.



The council was a momentous event in the life of the Chinese Catholic community, and it marked yet another major step in the movement toward the creation of a locally led church. Various activities of the council also reinforced the distinctive Marian identity of the Chinese Catholic church. They did this administratively as well as through simple means. As the Chinese Catholic church grew in stature and maturity, so too did its Marian identity become more pronounced.

The Marian pieties and devotions practiced within the Chinese Catholic communities traditionally reflected the strong French influence that had been exerted on the Catholics throughout the time of the French protectorate.<sup>72</sup> As the Chinese church grew in independence, one could expect that there would be a visible change in the ways in which these pieties would be expressed. Events which took place at the council seemed to suggest that such change would continue to occur throughout the twentieth century.

Once the council had been called, Pope Pius XI sent a letter to his delegate, Costantini, discussing the importance of the synod. He said that this council would be

one of the grandest of the lights shining among the splendors of the church and that it would be engraved on the memories of future generations. In bringing this project to realization, it seems to us that one can see the very ashes trembling of those who, in centuries past, spent their lives working and, courageously and generously, even pouring out their blood to bring the people of China to Jesus Christ.<sup>73</sup>

The council called together all the leadership of the Catholic Church in China. This obviously meant that the council was a gathering of male clerics, and thereby excluded not only the local superiors of the numerous female congregations present in China at this time but also representatives of the non-priestly male orders in China, like the Marist Brothers. Those invited to attend consisted of all the vicars and prefects apostolic of the missions in China, the superiors of the priestly orders,

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<sup>72</sup>That is, the period initiated by the Opium Wars treaties. As this essay focuses on the church communities in China, it does not discuss the broader effects of the French influence. See, among others, Guy Brossollet, *Les Français de Shanghai, 1849–1949* (Paris: Belin, 1999), and John K. Fairbank, ed., *Late Ching, 1800–1911*, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>73</sup>*Les Missions de Chine*, no. 129 (May 1924): 162 (author's translation).



the abbot of the Cistercian monastery at Yangjiaping (Our Lady of Consolation), and the bishop of Macau.<sup>74</sup>

It was an amazing feat to bring together all these clerics from the far-flung corners of the country. At the preliminary session, which was held the day before the official opening, the proceedings began with a formal prayer. Afterward, Costantini proposed sending a telegram to the Holy Father and to Cardinal van Rossum in Rome, informing them of the successful gathering of most of those invited. Those who had not arrived had been prevented from doing so because of sickness, encounters with robbers on the journey, or rivers in flood that had become impassable.<sup>75</sup>

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*One other possibility is that the new image of Our Lady of China was carried in front of the procession in the form of a portrait and the invocations were repeated in front of it.*

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The journeys of the bishops of Yunnan and Sichuan, for instance, is illustrative of the difficulties involved:

They were twenty days on horseback, until they came to the nearest tributary of the Yangtze; then by raft, sampan, sailboat, and a succession of steamers [they traveled] another period of thirty-one days [and eventually] arrived at Shanghai. They traveled downstream all the way, made unusually quick connections, and had no mishaps; yet the trip took fifty-one days. Going back upstream they expect to make it in slightly over two months.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>The Cistercian monastery became famous later because of the death march forced upon the monks by the troops of the Communist Party's Fifth Route Army in the late 1930s, and the total destruction of the abbey. See James T. Myers, *Enemies without Guns: The Catholic Church in China* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 1–13.

<sup>75</sup>See "Le Concile Plénier de Shanghai," *Les Missions de Chine*, no. 130 (June 1924): 202.

<sup>76</sup>Francis X. Ford, "Report on the General Council at Shanghai, June 1924," in *Maryknoll Mission Letter, China, II: Extracts from the Letters and Diaries of the Pioneer Missioners of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America* (New York: MacMillan, 1927), 344. Ford, who later became a bishop, was arrested as a spy in April 1951 and died in 1952 in prison in Guangzhou. See Jean-Paul Wiest, *Maryknoll in China: A History, 1918–1955* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1988), 395–401.

Although the council was able to inform Rome almost immediately of its commencement, traveling within China could still take more than seven weeks. Plane travel over the Atlantic Ocean may have made the world appear smaller by the early decades of the twentieth century, but in China these journeys were still dauntingly long. The fact that the council members were even able to come together was a remarkable achievement, and a testimony to the participants' genuine sense of mission, whatever lack of willingness some of them had hitherto shown in adopting new ways to carry out this mission.

The Chinese church leadership that did manage to ford rivers, survive brigandage, and remain healthy enough to reach Shanghai was obviously overwhelmingly foreign at this time, the recent appointment of two Chinese as prefects apostolic notwithstanding.<sup>77</sup> The very presence of these two Chinese priests, nevertheless, was a sign of the changes that were being wrought by the leadership of Celso Costantini and Pius XI. Costantini had increased the number of Chinese representatives in other ways, as is evident in the list of those who were present.

In addition to the fifty-nine vicars and prefects apostolic, there were a number of others present at the council in their capacity as religious superiors, theologians, or consultants. Given that Costantini appointed these specialists, it is no surprise to find the names of at least seven other Chinese priests.<sup>78</sup> He had also requested that the Chinese clergy send some representatives of their own choosing.

## Consecrating China to Mary

One of the council's simplest acts brought about one of the most significant results. This act also gave rise to the profoundest of long-term effects. Simply, the council unanimously adopted a proposal put forward by Costantini that they consecrate China to the Most Holy Virgin Mary.<sup>79</sup> The consecration meant that the church leaders were plac-

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<sup>77</sup>The first Chinese bishops since the seventeenth century were ordained two years later, in 1926, at St. Peter's in Rome. See Pasquale D'Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China* (Shanghai: Tou-se-we Printing Press, 1927).

<sup>78</sup>Jean-Paul Wiest states that there were thirteen Chinese present, Sun and Cheng and eleven others. See "Introduction," *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* (Bethesda, Maryland: CIS Academic Editions, 1988), x; but the memorial of the council lists only seven, in addition to the prefects apostolic.

<sup>79</sup>See de Lapparent, "Notre Dame de Chine," 359.



ing the needs, the hopes, and the prayers of their communities (and the whole of the Chinese people) at the feet of Mary in a special way, seeking her intercession and help.

There were two main impulses for this: the strong Marian pieties that had spread out from France in the late-nineteenth century and that had taken root in China, and the belief held by the Chinese Catholic communities that Mary had been a consistent and salvific presence in their midst. These impulses are most clearly evident in the story of the Donglu painting and in the Sheshan and Donglu pilgrimages. Through this act of consecration, the council was articulating, and indeed recognizing in the deepest symbolic way possible, these strong devotions and the prevailing belief of the Chinese Catholics.

The dedication occurred at the end of the council, on June 11, 1924.<sup>80</sup> After each bishop prayed for his own diocese or vicariate, all the participants read out a common formula of consecration. A French Jesuit, Henri Lécroart, S.J., vicar apostolic of Xianxian (Hebei province) had composed this formula in French and in Latin. According to the common ritual form of such prayers, the consecration concluded with a threefold invocation, taking the form of three statements, each of which consisted of an invitation and a response. The first two invocations were traditional and universally applicable—"Help of Christians, pray for us," and "Mary, mother of grace, pray for us"—but the final invocation was entirely new and was specific to the Chinese people. This invitation was "Heavenly Queen of China." With one voice the bishops and priests then responded in Latin, "Pray for us."

Fittingly, the council finished on the day of Pentecost, which according to Christian belief celebrates the moment that the Holy Spirit descended on the first Christians, giving them gifts and graces, empowering them to go to all nations and spread the good news in all languages (Acts 1:22—2:6). In 1924 Pentecost fell on June 12, and the celebration took place at Saint Ignatius Church, Xujiahui. Two days later, Costantini climbed Sheshan. He was accompanied by a significant number of the council fathers, even though some of the bishops had already begun their journey back to their vicariates. They renewed the consecration, this time before the statue of Our Lady at Sheshan.

The actual image used at Sheshan was not identified in the journals of the time. If the prayers of consecration were said in front of the

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<sup>80</sup>See Ford, "Report on the General Council at Shanghai," 344.



shrine halfway up the hill at Sheshan, then the image would have been the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, as this was in the pavilion at this spot. If, however, the prayers of consecration were said in the church on the

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*At first glance it is tempting to say that the Our Lady of Donglu painting is thus more European in style than it is Chinese. For instance, Mary and Jesus both wear jewel-encrusted crowns, traditional symbols of European royalty, and Mary also holds a scepter in her hand.*

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summit of the hill, then it was intoned in front of one of two images, a statue or portrait of Our Lady of Victories or a statue or portrait based on the Our Lady Help of Christians image. This latter image was reproduced often in the pre-1949 period and was clearly associated with Sheshan.<sup>81</sup> One other possibility is that the new image of Our Lady of China was

carried in front of the procession in the form of a portrait and the invocations were repeated in front of it. Certainly, the famous modern image of Our Lady of Sheshan, where she is holding Jesus above her head, had not yet come into being, and thus could not have been used.<sup>82</sup>

Given the descriptions of public worship recorded above, it is more than likely that Costantini led the gathered faithful behind a banner or portrait of the newly designated Our Lady of China image, whether or not they had other images in their possession (see plate 1 on p. x). Based on modern-day practice, which does not differ greatly from what was usual before 1949, the entourage would have paused in front of the Marian pavilion half way up the hill, where the new prayers would have been pronounced; they then would have made their way up past the Stations of the Cross intoning the rosary, and upon entering the church they would have placed the banner or portrait at the front of the church, perhaps to one side in the Marian chapel. There it would have been alongside the other Marian image (or images) in use and further prayers would have been recited. Thus the new devotion was not displacing the previous ones, even physically, but was being placed alongside them.

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<sup>81</sup>As described above. It was associated with Sheshan because the traditional feast day for this devotion, May 24, was one of the main pilgrimage days for the Catholics. Each year thousands visited Sheshan on this day.

<sup>82</sup>It was designed when the new basilica at Sheshan was opened in 1935. Construction of a new church had only just begun in the year prior to the consecration, in 1923.

Whereas in China there had already been the beginnings of local Marian devotions, such as Our Lady of Peñha and Our Lady of Donglu,<sup>83</sup> as we've seen, there were still many shrines that represented foreign devotions, like Our Lady of Treille and so on. The newer, localized pieties had arisen out of the experiences of the people. The bestowal of additional titles upon Mary was the result of the way people sought to overlay words onto these experiences. This new invocation, Our Lady Queen of China, was the way in which Costantini and the council fathers were recognizing the special Marian identity of the Chinese Catholic communities. In so doing they were enunciating on a national scale the prayers and hopes of these different communities.

By creating both a new invocation and a new title, the council also reinforced the Marian identity and popularized Marian devotions even further. These Marian characteristics, given formal approval at the council, became in turn an even more readily identifiable feature of the Chinese Catholic church. This particularly strong local devotion was to bind the Catholics together into the future and sustain them in difficult times. For all the optimism of the council, its members were well aware that their communities lived constantly with the threat of persecution. A specifically Chinese devotion, which had grown out of Chinese Catholic experiences, was therefore all the more attractive to the faithful.

## A New Image for a New Title

New titles demand new images. Costantini, as thoughtful in this as he was in other regards, visited the Tushanwan orphanage workshops on May 22, 1924, when the council had already begun its meeting. This shows that the consecration of the church to Mary several weeks later (on June 11) was already in his plans. At Tushanwan Costantini asked to see their collection of Marian images and from the many presented to him, he was attracted to the image that Brother Liu Dezhai had painted in 1908, namely the Donglu portrait.<sup>84</sup> "We must popularize this image," he declared.<sup>85</sup> Father René Flament willingly

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<sup>83</sup>There is a shrine of this name in Macau. This shrine was the first site of Marian pilgrimage in China, dating back to 1622. See Joseph de la Largère, "Les pèlerinages a La S. Vierge en Chine, *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin*, no. 261 (May 1935).

<sup>84</sup>Anonymous, "Correspondence et Renseignements," *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin* (1941): 359-60.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 360 (author's translation).



consented to the image of Our Lady of Donglu being circulated more widely around China under the title Our Lady of China. Costantini demanded that a large number of these images be printed for distribution, and they were to be ready by June 12, the anticipated final day of the council. They were to carry the Chinese title, Zhonghua Shengmu (Our Lady [Holy Mother] of China).<sup>86</sup>

We have seen earlier how the thirteenth-century images of Child-giving Guanyin seemingly resembled European images of Mary as a result of a mixture of superscription and copying. This episode from the twentieth century likewise shows that Europeans also engaged in such

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*Several other key Chinese features have also been lost over the years. Perhaps the most significant is that the distant mountains visible through the windows in the earliest reproductions are reminiscent of the scenery in much Chinese landscape painting.*

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copying. This new Marian image became well known within China, through its dissemination as holy cards and as mementos of ordinations and through reproductions in various church magazines and journals. It also inspired countless other versions of Chinese-style Marian images. This was especially so following the advent

of the Christian art school at Furen University in Beijing in the next decade.<sup>87</sup> Some of these other images have threatened to supplant the Donglu image as the one most usually referred to as Our Lady of China. This situation has caused much debate in some Chinese Catholic circles.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Later reproductions also carried the title in Italian, Nostra Signora della Cina, or in English, Our Lady of China.

<sup>87</sup>See Chen Shijie John, *The Rise and Fall of Fu Ren University, Beijing* (New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004). Technically, this city was called Beiping between the years 1928 and 1949, but for reasons of convenience I will use Beijing when referring to the national capital.

<sup>88</sup>One critic of other images is the Chinese Catholic Church advocacy agency, the Cardinal Kung Foundation. The nephew of Cardinal Gong, Joseph Kung, founded this group after his arrival in the United States. They present themselves as the defender of the "persecuted" Chinese church, and as opponents to any recognition of the officially registered communities, even after recent papal attempts to bring about reconciliation within the Chinese Catholic communities. They also reject attempts to apply the title Our Lady of China to any other Marian images.

The adoption and use of this Donglu image by the council, at the prompting of the Apostolic Delegate, guaranteed its official status. It was given even greater recognition in 1928 when Pius XI accepted it as the image to accompany the devotion to Our Lady of China. This obviously does not prevent other images also using this title, but strictly speaking, just as there is an accepted iconographic form for Our Lady of Lourdes or of Our Lady of Czestochowa, for instance, so too is the Donglu-derived Our Lady of China the model to which others either allude or from which they depart.

There are many features of this image suggesting that Liu drew on European paintings for his inspiration. Therefore at first glance it is tempting to say that the Our Lady of Donglu painting is thus more European in style than it is Chinese. For instance, Mary and Jesus both wear jewel-encrusted crowns, traditional symbols of European royalty, and Mary also holds a scepter in her hand. Whereas Katherine Carl used traditional Chinese symbols of authority in her painting, items like phoenixes and dragons, Liu used relatively Western symbols to indicate the high status of the Madonna and Child. Furthermore, Mary's visage was not especially Chinese and the face of Jesus was likewise decidedly European. The floor of the room in which the throne is situated also features black and white square tiles in a checkerboard design, reminiscent of numerous Renaissance paintings.<sup>89</sup> While it is possible to glimpse background scenery through the windows on either side of the backing wall, in later prints the terrain and the flora are too indistinct for one to be able to say definitely whether the scene has been set in Europe or in China.<sup>90</sup>

Yet a close examination of the two oldest images—ordination cards from 1933 and 1946 (see plates 1 and 2 on pp. x and 32)—show that Liu did in fact fill his painting with many Chinese references.<sup>91</sup> While the European influences are undoubtedly evident, so too are Chinese ones.

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<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Giovanni Bellini's painting of the Madonna and Child, produced in 1505, which is in the church of San Zaccaria, Venice.

<sup>90</sup> I am hesitant to agree with Professor Paul Rule, who in private correspondence about this image, says that the scenery "seems distinctly Italian."

<sup>91</sup> These two cards are the oldest color images I have been able to find. One is the ordination card for Charles Simons, S.J., and the other for John J. Brennan, S.J. There is an image on the Cardinal Kung foundation Website that purports to be the original image, but for many reasons this is doubtful. I am preparing another article that deals with all these different reproductions from an art-historical perspective. A more common-



Once one looks for these influences, it is possible to see that Liu has very successfully taken a relatively traditional Western religious representation—Mary and Jesus on a throne—and, influenced by Carl's use of Chinese symbolism, has created something new: Our Lady of China, Our Lady of Donglu.

These Chinese features, which have been lost in transmission in later reproductions, include the manner in which the throne is depicted, the design featured on the rear wall, the pillars that buttress the back wall, and the foliage and scenery visible through the rear windows. There are again subtle differences between the images on these two ordination cards that suggest that Liu's painting had become a prototype that was copied over and over by the artists at Tushanwan.<sup>92</sup>

While the portrayal of Mary seated on a throne was a common motif in European religious paintings, Liu Dezhai translated this motif into a distinctively Chinese context. For instance, just as the unknown artist at Yangzhou had done centuries before him, Liu Dezhai used a Chinese-style seat to acculturate this image.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, in all the images, the throne-seat cushion is covered in red Chinese silk, with decorations imprinted on it.

The ornamentation of the throne is likewise significant. The earliest extant image, Simons's ordination card, shows an elaborately carved dragon on the seat back, which appears to be riding the rail of the seat with a pearl clasped in one of its claws. These Chinese figurative motifs both possess imperial symbolism. The pearl also represents femi-

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ly known image was produced by the Paris Foreign Mission Society, after the original print. See plate 3, p. 34.

<sup>92</sup>It is known that one way students at Tushanwan were instructed in painting techniques was by the process of continuously copying old paintings. An undated photograph from the archives of the California Jesuit Province shows that the Donglu Mary (which by the time of the photograph could already have become Our Lady of China) had indeed become one of the images to be replicated by the students.

<sup>93</sup>Why this is a Chinese-style seat, as opposed to something that could be found in any culture, is evident in a technical sense for those with the knowledge of what to look for. Such detail seems extraneous to the present work, so I refer interested readers to C. P. Fitzgerald's *Barbarian Beds: The Origin of the Chair in China* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965).

nine beauty and purity, which from a Christian perspective was an apt choice for a painting of Mary.<sup>94</sup>

Although the seat legs on the earliest images were also noticeably Chinese in style, by the time of the latter images they had lost this distinctiveness in the process of transmission. The curved throne leg on the Simons card seems to feature an elaborately carved lion, while the second card shows a simpler, yet arguably more elegant design, with the beading on the leg twirling into a *ruyi* mushroom cloud shape at the inside top and bottom, which in the language of Chinese symbolism is a symbol often associated with prosperity and good fortune. The thrones on other cards (see plates 2 and 3 on pp. 32 and 34), however, reveal straight legs with rather geometrical design features. It is ironic therefore, that, by the time the image had become generally accepted as showing a Chinese Mary and Child Jesus, several of the distinctive Chinese designs had been lost in the process of duplication. It is thus easy to see how, if one relies on later reproductions, one could think the image is more European in style even as it was universally regarded as a Chinese picture.

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*When we pray with contemporary Chinese Catholics for the future of their communities, therefore, not only do we give thanks for the many manifestations of God's grandeur, but we can thus also recognize the contributions of our forebears and the richness of our own past.*

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Several other key Chinese features have also been lost over the years. Perhaps the most significant is that the distant mountains visible through the windows in the earliest reproductions are reminiscent of the scenery in much Chinese landscape painting. Other noticeably Chinese features in these prints are the Buddhist pagoda (a *ta*), visible in the middle distance on the left-hand side of both images, the scholar stone in the left-hand foreground in the Simons image (which is replaced by a tree in the latter images), and the Chinese buildings in the middle distance, visible in both reproductions. Jesus and Mary are enthroned on a Chinese seat, surrounded by motifs representing good fortune, purity,

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<sup>94</sup> See C. A. S. Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs: A Comprehensive Handbook on Symbolism in Chinese Art through the Ages* (North Clarendon, Va.: Tuttle Publishing, 2006). This is a later edition.



and beneficence, and through the windows of their house can be seen the typical countryside of China.

## V. Conclusion

**T**he development of Marian spirituality within the Chinese church was thus something that both nurtured a unique Catholic identity and helped bolster that emergent identity. Throughout this long process artists created innovative and beautiful images that expressed the manner in which the Chinese Catholic communities had evolved. Thus, in the beginning these images drew their inspiration from works imported from afar, while later they reflected the influence of local traditions or events that had taken place in China. In the tumultuous early decades of the twentieth century, this process culminated in a picture of our Lady at home in China, accepted and honored by the local Catholics as their patron. Bearing the title Our Heavenly Queen of China, the officially approved and domestically produced image encapsulated all their stories of deliverance, their places of pilgrimage, and their prayers of entreaty and praise.

This essay has attempted to show that, at the very least, the Society was actively involved with the initial shaping of such an identity, the subsequent establishment of methods to nurture it, and the encouragement of culturally appropriate ways of expressing this central feature of Chinese Catholicism through artistic forms. While there were obviously many individuals and missionary societies involved in this process—and thus it is important not to overstate the case—the Jesuit involvement was nevertheless important, if only as one impetus among several.

Such Jesuit involvement occurred in part because of the Society's vibrant tradition of Marian piety, including its strong encouragement of pilgrimages, but also because of missiological tactics pursued by Jesuit missionaries and the local Catholic converts in both the pre-Suppression and post-Opium War periods. These decisions were part of an apostolic program that valued the sponsorship of artistic endeavor not only for the practical purpose of providing devotional images for local faith communities (and imparting practical skills to often needy individuals in the process) but also because such activities in the realm of

visual culture produced objects of beauty that delighted the senses and lifted the soul.

In doing so, the church in China articulated its identity, and the international Church received beautiful expressions of faith. Although these images (and the influences that led to their production) may seem far away and long ago, they are nevertheless reminders of the vibrant ways that the Christian life and the Christian message can be incarnated in all cultures, and especially in China. When we pray with contemporary Chinese Catholics for the future of their communities, therefore, not only do we give thanks for the many manifestations of God's grandeur, but we can thus also recognize the contributions of our forebears and the richness of our own past.





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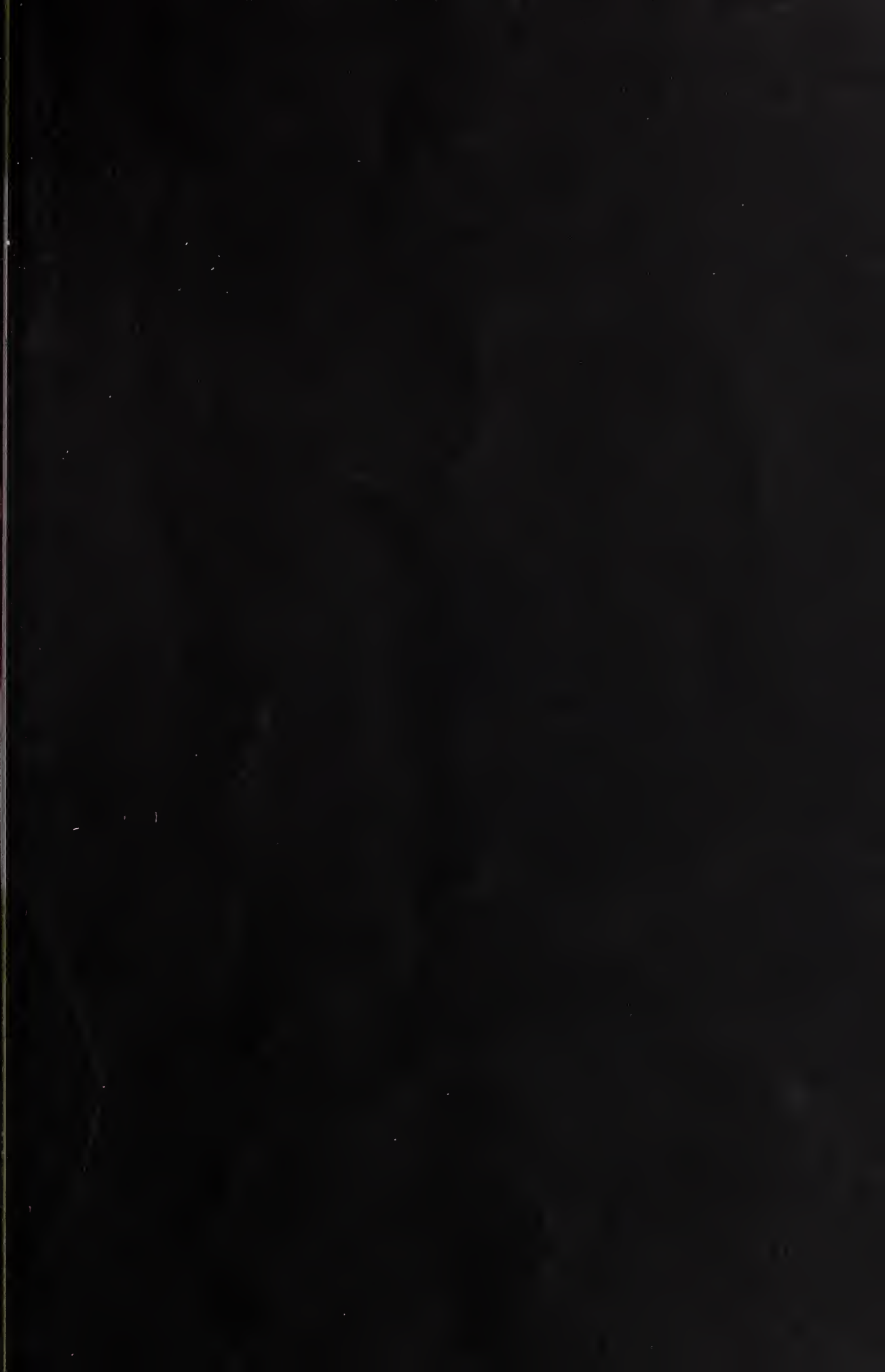
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