

extremely great; even serious we might say. This is then the golden opportunity for the Benedictines."⁶²

Political developments prevented the Benedictines from taking advantage of this opportunity. Like many other missionaries who were forced to leave China, they made their way to Taiwan, where they acquired property in Jiayi (Chiayi) and then founded a monastery in 1967. "With the dedication of the buildings, a new phase will begin for our priory on Formosa [Taiwan]. The work of retreats, conferences and other spiritual exercises will have to be organized and developed. Native vocations must be promoted to perpetuate the work and to establish Benedictine monasticism on a firm basis in the Far East. . . . From our humble and small monastic seed on Formosa, Benedictine monasticism may some day be spread throughout the mainland of China."⁶³

That day still lies in the future. In the meantime the Benedictines have continued their life in Taiwan in the small Wimmer priory, dependent on St. Vincent's Archabbey, and at the Furen Catholic University of Taipei, where, as teachers, they continue to be involved in higher education, for which mission Benedictines had come to China several decades earlier.

The Belgian Benedictines: Prophets of a Chinese Monasticism

The Chinese Dream of Jehan Joliet

Had it not been for Jehan Joliet (1870-1937), no one would have conceived, awaited, and finally realized an authentic, at least as proposed, Chinese Benedictine monastery, which, even though founded by foreigners, would be "with its prominent Chinese character . . . in every aspect a Chinese house."⁶⁴ When the founder of the

⁶² Sylvester Healy, "China Letter. No Need for 'Setting Up' Exercises—Grain Mill Does It," BO 6 (1948): 1.

⁶³ BO 10-11 (1967): 1.

⁶⁴ Jehan joliet, "A Project for a Chinese Monastery (1922)." See app. 2, p. 325. On the person of Jehan joliet, see esp. the biography of Henri-Philippe Delcourt, *Dom Jehan joliet (1870-1937). Un projet de monachisme bénédictin chinois* (Paris: Cerf, 1988). See also Un moine de Saint-André, "Dom Jehan Joliet," CSA 1 (1938): 30-52 (also republished as a pamphlet); Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Dom jehan joliet et son

monastery of Xishan died, its prior, Raphaël Vinciarelli, summed up the essential character of this man and his work. "Dom Joliet's personality was full of energy, entirely at the service of an idea that had matured over thirty years and that he was able to bring to life. To introduce in China a monastic life whose roots would seek the original currents of Chinese civilization: this was his aim, this is Si-Shan [Xishan]."⁶⁵

While it is true that "China gave him his monastic vocation,"⁶⁶ it is important to trace, however briefly, the dual path that led Jehan Joliet, through China, to the monastery and that through his continuous interest in the Chinese world led China to the monastery.

This young French naval officer was born in Dijon in 1870. It seems that his first contact with the Chinese Empire dated back to 1892, the year of his second stay in the Far East. He began to study Chinese in Shanghai and to admire Chinese culture and thought. In a letter to his sister Ida there is an almost clairvoyant hint of the two basic guidelines regarding a monastic presence in China that Joliet would hold on to and develop over time, namely, the need to "become Chinese" and to break the despicable alliance between evangelization and colonization: "I would be very happy to see monks in China, and it would be well for Solesmes to come there one day. At least, the monks will not arouse jealousy, because, once planted in China, they will become Chinese, so to say, and they will not be the ones to summon vice-ridden armies and odious functionaries to avenge Christ's cause. . . . When Solesmes will have sent monks and nuns to China, it will perhaps be so much the worse for the West, but so much the better for the church and for the world."⁶⁷

oeuvre monastique en Chine," CA 10 (1938): 6*-11 *; "Dom Jehan Joliet," *Bulletin M.E.P. (1934- 245-47*; Henri-Philippe Delcourt, "Dom Jehan Joliet (1870-1937). Un projet de monachisme bénédictin chinois," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 43, no. 1 (1986): 3-19; Henri-Philippe Delcourt, "The Grain Dies in China," *AIM Bulletin* 40 (1986): 44-55.

⁶⁵ Vinciarelli, "Dom Jehan Joliet et son oeuvre monastique en Chine," 6*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Letter of J. Joliet to I. Joliet, 14 October 1892, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 32-33.

In a passage in his *Note on the Origins of Xishan*, written in 1937, Joliet testified that while he was in China in May 1892, he suddenly experienced what he described as "a strange and powerful attraction to China, along with an obscure sense that I belonged there. Almost at the same time, the thought that China would be converted by monasteries took possession of me, even before I dreamt that I might be part of this apostolate. Immediately the main lines, which would remain substantially the same, fixed themselves in my mind."

The monastic vocation of young Jehan was meanwhile becoming clearer. The choice of the place for his future Benedictine life was not difficult to make, since his older brother was already a monk of Solesmes and his sister a nun at the Abbey of Sainte-Cécile. At the end of 1895 Joliet decided to enter the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes. As he recalls in his *Note*, it was not long before he spoke to Abbot Paul Delatte about his idea for monastic life in China: "In December 1895 I entered Solesmes. Dom Delatte knew my thoughts, neither disapproving nor encouraging me, not asking me to give them up but to confide everything to God, to my present monastic life. This is what I did for thirty years, seeking to remain ready, taking advantage of the rare occasions to prepare myself more positively. No detailed plan, no conditions or requests *sine qua non*, but always the Chinese monastery. . . . And more and more I saw this dwelling Chinese in character and in 'sap,' not French or European or even Latin, but developing along the lines and with the resources of the national culture."⁶⁹

Joliet made his monastic profession in June 1897 and was ordained priest three years later, never giving up his dream of a mission to China. While leading his "ordinary" monastic life, he continued to prepare for this possibility by studying the language, history, religion, and philosophy of China. As he wrote in 1935, "Then as now I dreamt of myself as both monk and Chinese. At Solesmes I became the first, and I handed myself over to God so that the second might come true as well."⁷⁰ The intellectual and spiritual will to make him-

"Cited in Vinciarelli, "Dom Jehan Joliet et son oeuvre monastique en Chine," 6'.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7*.

⁷⁰ Letter of J. Joliet to C. Rey, 4 July 1935, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 39.

self Chinese in order to bring about a Chinese monasticism shines through in what he wrote in 1907: "If God leads me [to China], with what joy I'd become Chinese, not just in dress or language, that's just the beginning, but in the depths of my soul, in order to make [the Chinese] monks. "⁷¹

The years from 1917 to 1926 were a period of slow incubation. During that time what was happening in Joliet's personal life and in the church brought about a maturation of his China project, but his vision remained basically the same: "[My project] is the foundation of a monastery in China with the same orientation of life as at Solesmes, that is, first of all the Divine Office and prayer, normally without a ministry or travels, and intellectual work as the principal work. But there is no monastery without monks, and naturally what will be necessary in the end will be Chinese monks, and to have true Chinese monks, it is necessary that the foundation, made entirely by Europeans, adopt resolutely and clearly everything from China except sin. "⁷²

A leading figure at this stage was the commanding officer Charles Rey, a fellow student at the naval academy of Brest and a faithful friend of Joliet, who kept in touch with him over the years. Rey shared Joliet's idea of founding a monastery in China, and thanks to him and to his work behind the scenes, Joliet could make contacts outside the monastery and build relations with some key figures for the development of the project.

The church atmosphere at that time had become receptive to a missionary project in accordance with the "new" ideas of Vincent Lebbe and Antoine Cotta, which Joliet shared. Missionaries in China were becoming increasingly sensitive to and eager for a monastic presence on Chinese soil. The encyclical of Benedict XV on missionary activity, *Maximum Illud*, made Rome's position on mission reform explicit and official.

⁷¹Letter of J. Joliet to C. Rey, 1 November 1907, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 42. In a letter written in 1926, Joliet wrote to Fr. É. Licent: "If I go to China . . . it will be for the sole purpose of learning the language and the customs. I will have to work hard to make myself Chinese, since I am getting such a late start," in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 93.

⁷²Letter of J. Joliet to C. Rey, 30 August 1917, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 69.

In Cherbourg in 1917, Commander in Chief Rey had met Gabriel Maujay, a Jesuit who had been a missionary in China, and presented Joliet's ideas to him. This first contact led to a series of negotiations with Jesuits in France and in China in order to identify an appropriate place for a foundation and a bishop who would support missionary monks. Already in 1921 the Jesuit vicar apostolic of Xianxian (Hebei), Henri Lécroart, having been informed of the intentions of Joliet, contacted Solesmes, asking it to send monks, and also the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to seek its support. Even though the pope himself, when informed of the proposal, wrote to Abbot Germain Cozien of Solesmes to express his enthusiasm about the Chinese character of the proposed monastery, the abbot replied that he was not in a position to undertake such a project. The reason, he said, was not only lack of resources and personnel. The kind of missionary monasticism promoted by Saint-André was far removed from the monasticism observed by the monks at Solesmes, who were formed according to the spirit of Prosper Guéranger. A few months later, however, when he was in Rome, he assured the cardinal prefect he would at least consider Jehan Joliet to be at his disposal. In 1922 the abbot of the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of Consolation in Yangjiaping, Louis Brun, visited Solesmes in the course of his travels in Europe to convince the abbot of the usefulness of a Benedictine foundation in China and to assure him that it would be successful.

Efforts to form a group of Benedictines to leave for China proceeded at a leisurely but steady pace over the following years. Repeated applications were submitted to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and efforts were made to find a community willing to be involved and an abbot who would assume responsibility for the foundation.

In the light of subsequent developments, mention should be made of the contact Charles Rey and a Chinese student had with Abbot Nève of the Belgian Abbey of Saint-André at the beginning of 1924. Since it was not possible for Saint-André to take charge of the foundation at that time, Pope Pius XI advised Rey to get in touch with the abbot primate of the Benedictines, Fidelis von Stotzingen, who "played a decisive but always discreet role in the realization of the foundation in China,"⁷³ since he never ceased looking for a Benedic-

⁷³ Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 85.

tine abbot who would be willing to take on the China project. To the abbot primate's search for an abbot and a community Joliet gave his full collaboration, stipulating only that the monastery to be founded be Chinese. There should be no predetermined form. Rather, once the monks arrived, they should adapt to the local setting.

I see that the primate is still not discouraged after a lack of success once or twice. . . . It is encouraging that he tries to profit from every occasion. . . . As for the character more or less of Solesmes of the foundation, you are beginning to know well the different Benedictines, and I told you enough three weeks ago of the breadth of my ideas (at least in intention). For the rest, I have never thought that I would have a green light for a foundation made according to my ideas. Except for two points: *monastery*, that is, a stable life in a group, with abundant space for prayer, and *Chinese monastery*; my dream would be to go there with the fewest possible precise projects for or against a form or a work. . . . What I hope is that there be no haste, that decisions aren't made before living there. . . . In short, if *a Chinese monastery* is faithfully admitted, I believe I can get along with any congregation.⁷⁴

Regarding the formation of the first group, Joliet's idea was to start out with at least two other monks, but he did not give up the idea of setting out alone if this was the only way he could accomplish what he wanted to do: "My firm intention is to start from the beginning with two or three. . . . Only in view of the impossibility of finding someone for the beginning, and rather than putting it off indefinitely, would I leave alone, if I am permitted to do so."⁷⁵

In another missionary encyclical, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, promulgated on 28 February 1926, Pope Pius XI urged the monastic orders to create foundations in mission lands. The encyclical offered further encouragement to Joliet for the fulfillment of his dream. A decisive step was his visit to Théodore Nève in August 1926. Abbot Nève assured him that Saint-André was still open to cooperation, thus making the Belgian abbey the focus of further attempts.

⁷⁴Letter of J. Joliet to C. Rey, 3 August 1924, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 88.

⁷⁵Letter of J. Joliet to É. Licent, 27 April 1926, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 98.

Saint-André and the Foundation of Xishan

Joliet's dream about China would not have come true if he had not found a monastic community willing to carry out his plan on Chinese soil and to provide the necessary personnel and means. In Belgium the Abbey of Saint-André was the monastery most naturally suited to the monastic missionary project that Joliet had cultivated and refined over the years. Canonically established in Bruges in 1901, it was marked from the very beginning by the apostolic spirit of its founder, Gérard Van Caloen (1853-1912), a spirit that continued to be fostered by Théodore Nève (1879-1963), who was abbot from 1912 to 1958.

The abbey's interest in China was enkindled by its contacts with the most famous and creative missionary in China at the time, Vincent Lebbe. His initial visit to Saint-André was in August 1913, when, on his first home visit, he spent two days at the abbey with his brother Bède, a monk of Maredsous. From their first meeting, the contacts between Abbot Nève and Fr. Lebbe "were particularly warm and cordial: both had something in common and understood each other."⁷⁶ The relationship between the abbey and the Chinese mission grew over the years through various kinds of collaboration. In addition to a stimulating conference on the missions in the Far East that Lebbe gave at Saint-André in 1921 and an inspiring retreat that he preached in August 1923 to the monks and students of the abbey, there was the significant presence of Chinese students whom Fr. Lebbe sent to Europe from the early 1920s on and who were welcomed at Saint-André and offered support by the "Foyer catholique chinois," an association founded in 1927 that had Abbot Nève as its president and Édouard Neut, a monk of Saint-André, as its secretary. For several years Fr. Neut was an important link between the abbey and the "Lebbe-style" Chinese mission because, as editor of the missionary magazine of Saint-André, the *Bulletin des Missions*, he supported and always gave ample space to the appeals of Lebbe

⁷⁶ Christian Papeians de Morchoven, "The China Mission of the Benedictine Abbey of Sint-Andries (Bruges)," in *Historiography of the Chinese Catholic Church: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Jeroom Heyndrickx (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, K. U. Leuven, 1994), 306.

for a church detached from European nationalism and governed by a native clergy."

The decisive event that led to the realization of Joliet's dream was Abbot Nève's invitation to Joliet to spend Christmas 1926 in Bruges. Visiting Saint-André were two of the first six Chinese bishops, who had been consecrated in Rome on 28 October: Joseph Hu Ruoshan, bishop of Taizhou (Zhejiang), and Melchior Sun Dezhen, bishop of Anguo (Hebei). This was the second meeting between Joliet and Abbot Nève. The first had taken place during the visit of Joliet to Saint-André in late August 1926, during which the abbot had indicated the possibility of making a foundation in China in the future. The opportunity to reconsider the project came only four months later, but these positive signs had been nurtured by a climate of openness to China in previous years. "The *Bulletin des Missions*, a great defender of Fr. Lebbe; papal encyclicals that staked much on China; the numerous and always eagerly awaited visits of Fr. Lebbe; and the longer or shorter stays of Chinese students at the monastery—all these had created a climate favorable to an opening toward China."⁷⁸

In preparation for the visit of Chinese bishops and in response to the continued urging of Charles Rey and Vincent Lebbe, Abbot Nève decided to assume Joliet's project after the first visit of Joliet to Saint-André at the end of August 1926. Toward Christmas that year Nève wrote a letter to the abbot of Solesmes, wondering "what is the will of God concerning the participation of the Abbey of Saint-André in the foundation" and asking that Joliet be given permission to spend a few months at Saint-André so he, Nève, could determine "the form of patronage and support" prior to Joliet's spending some time in China. With regard to the canonical responsibilities for the project, Nève spoke plainly: "I am for an immediate solution. Saint-André would take responsibility for Dom Joliet's activity in China. Solesmes would keep Dom Joliet among its members canonically until the

"Cf. Louis Wei Tsing-sing, "Le Père Lebbe et l'Abbaye de Saint-André-lez-Bruges (1877-1940)," *Rythmes du monde* 34 (1960): 218-24.

⁷⁸ Christian Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2 vols. (Tielt: Lannoo, 1998-2002, 2:192.

day when Providence will have confirmed by its blessings the work undertaken; then Dom Joliet and his collaborators, whom we will have given him, would be in the same stability under the jurisdiction of Saint-André."⁷⁹

Although the Abbey of Saint-André had made a sizable contribution to the revival of Brazilian monasteries, which was the first aim of its foundation, and had sent monks for apostolic activity in the Katanga prefecture in Congo, the foundation of the priory of Xishan would be the first monastery the abbey itself founded in mission lands.⁸⁰ If the abbey and its abbot were enthusiastic about this foundation, the monks who had been sent to Katanga some years before were not favorable toward the idea. For them, this new venture would come at the expense of their work in Africa. But Théodore Nève, a few months after the decision to begin the adventure of China, responded firmly to this grumbling in September 1927: "We are founding in China, so that the Chinese can have the benefits of monastic life. All missionaries, even those in Katanga, should have a wide enough spirit and heart to understand the timeliness of a work of this kind."⁸¹

With the consent of the abbot of Solesmes, Joliet's dream became a reality. Since joining the monastery he had spent almost thirty years silently waiting and praying for this day, and now events followed one another very rapidly. Théodore Nève first informed Celso Costantini, the apostolic delegate in China, of the decision with a letter that is worth citing, since it shows that in this first phase Nève and Joliet had a substantially similar vision. It also demonstrates consonance with the missionary ideal of Costantini. "We would like to bring Benedictine monastic life to the Chinese and to found a monastery in a native vicariate. . . . We would like this monastery to adapt itself as well as possible to Chinese customs. The Rule of St. Benedict is sufficiently broad to permit this adaptation naturally. . . . The Lord will indicate the time when we can send Fr. Joliet the help that he will need . . . so as to allow him to form quickly a local community

⁷⁹ Letter of T. Nève to G. Cozien, 18 December 1926, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 103.

⁸⁰ For the history of the Abbey of Saint-André/Sint-Andries in Bruges, see Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*.

⁸¹ Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:193.

in which the European fathers will have no other desire but to be Chinese with the Chinese.⁸²

The response of the apostolic delegate was immediate and positive. He recommended that Joliet first go to Peking, where he could continue to study Chinese. As for the location of the future foundation, Costantini recommended one of the three vicariates of the Sichuan region that would soon be created and entrusted to the care of the local clergy. This suggestion corresponded with what Joliet was thinking. He believed that the "temperate climate and charm of the landscape" of the central provinces of Zhejiang and Sichuan favored "a stable monastery with fixed intellectual pursuits." These areas were also sufficiently far removed from the "large concentrations of Europeans" and "ministers and general consuls," thus facilitating a "sincere and gradually complete adaptation to the life and culture of China."⁸³ Costantini also advised him to embark with one or more companions.⁸⁴

Joliet unsuccessfully tried to have Emile Butruille of the Abbey of Oosterout, who had shown interest in the project, join him. Abbot Nève appointed a monk of Saint-André and former missionary in Africa, Pie de Cocquéau (1882-1961), to be a pioneer along with Jehan Joliet on his expedition to China. Setting sail from Marseille on 20 May 1927, they arrived in China about a month later. At the age of fifty-seven, Jehan Joliet once again set foot on Chinese soil, thirty-five years after his last visit.

Their preparatory stay in Peking lasted about a year, from July 1927 to April 1928. Hosted by the American Benedictines who had recently arrived to found and administer a university, they devoted themselves to the study of Chinese. They also made contacts with missionaries who were present there, but they kept their distance from diplomatic circles. Jehan Joliet was asked to teach French at the university. Even though there were some disagreements between the

⁸²Letter of T. Nève to C. Costantini, 15 February 1927, in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:192.

⁸³Letter of J. Joliet to É. Licent, 27 April 1926, in Delcourt, *Dorn Jehan Joliet*, 98-99.

⁸⁴Cf. letter of J. Joliet to A. Joliet, March 1927, in Delcourt, *Dorn Jehan Joliet*, 112-13.

two pioneers of the Benedictine mission in China, in February 1928 Abbot Nève formally appointed Jehan Joliet superior. In addition to the poor health of Dom Pie, the different temperaments and the different levels of enthusiasm of the two contributed to their *malentendu*. Joliet pushed ahead, was always in a hurry, burned bridges, all of which gave de Cocquéau the impression that he wanted to pursue his own interests rather than make a foundation of Saint-André.

At the end of their stay in Peking, the abbot of the monastery of Our Lady of Consolation in Yangjiaping invited Joliet and his confrere to spend some time at the Trappist monastery, kindly offering to share with the two the experience that Trappist monks had gained during their fifty years in China. "Since we have been in China for fifty years already, having done what you wish to do, how many things could you not learn from us! Even our faults or lack of prudence could be useful for you. . . . You and your fellow monk will be most welcome here. And you will remain with us not one or two weeks, but several weeks or several months. We will share our experience with you, and you will leave better prepared for the great mission that awaits you in Sze-Chwan [Sichuan]." ⁸⁵

Probably because he had a different idea about the kind of monastic presence there should be in China, Joliet did not respond to the Trappist abbot's invitation and therefore the visit to Yangjiaping was never made.

The invitation extended by the vicar apostolic of Chongqing, Louis-Gabriel-Xavier Jantzen, to make a foundation in his diocese, which was located in the northern region of Sichuan and would have a Chinese bishop as ordinary, convinced Fr. Jehan and Fr. Pie "to continue the journey they had begun toward the unknown monastery."⁸⁶ In April 1928 Fr. Jehan and Fr. Pie began traveling once again, much of the time on inland waterways, arriving six weeks later in Chongqing. Bishop Jantzen's welcome was not as warm as was expected, and they left the city a few days after arriving. In the

⁸⁵ Letter of L. Brun to J. Joliet, 5 February 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 131.

⁸⁶ J. Joliet, *Ala recherche d'un monastère*, cited in T. Nève, "Le Prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," *BM 10* (1930), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier Monastique Chinois*, 2*.

nearby city of Chengdu, on the contrary, the vicar apostolic, Jacques Rouchouse, who "has long wanted a monastic colony"⁸⁷ and was "still feeling disappointed that he had not been able to get a Trappist foundation in his diocese,"⁸⁸ "not only welcomed the monks from the moment they arrived in Szechwan [Sichuan], but thanks to his advice, his dedication, and his generosity Si-Shan [Xishan] became a monastic land."⁸⁹

The two monks' exploration soon led them to a site that seemed suitable for the installation of a first group of monks. Xishan was in the part of the diocese that would become the new Apostolic Vicariate of Shunqing (Shunking) in 1930. It was just five kilometers west of the city.⁹⁰ Its pastor, Paul Wang Wencheng, the future bishop of Shunqing (1930-1961), "offered the newcomers the most amiable hospitality and, from day one, his enlightened solicitude and his faithful friendship meant for the monks a continual collaboration."⁹¹ Already on 22 July 1928 Fr. Jehan informed Abbot Théodore of his and Fr. Pie's decision to buy the six hectares of gently sloping land that belonged to the church. In early September the abbot of Saint-André approved the choice by telegram.

As fate would have it, Joliet lost his first companion, Fr. Pie, who had to return to Belgium because of ill health. The abbot, however, was already preparing to send Hildebrand Marga (1888—1971) and Émile Butruille (1888—1965), a monk of Oosterhout, to the fledgling foundation. Fr. Émile "for several years, in the quiet of his cell, [had] poured over Chinese characters, teasing out their secrets and penetrating their meaning and beauty."⁹² His abbot had accepted the wish of the abbot of Saint-André to assign him to Xishan and gave Fr. Émile permission to leave for China. On 4 November 1928 Abbot

"Nève, "Le Prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," 7*.

⁸⁸ "Notice sur la fondation du prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Sischan, Shunking," *Bulletin M.E.P.* (1929): 486.

⁸⁹ Théodore Nève, "Le monastère des SS. Pierre et André de Si-Shan," BM 15 (1936), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier de l'Apostolat Monastique*, 11*.

⁹⁰ Cf. "Sichuan jiang jian benduhui xiuyuan zhi didian" [The place where a Benedictine monastery will be constructed in Sichuan], YZB 32 (1928): 8.

⁹¹ Un moine de Saint-André, "Dom Jehan Joliet," 10-11.

⁹² Théodore Nève, "Le Monastère des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," BM 9 (1928-1929): 291.

Théodore presided at a liturgical service to bless the foundation cross of the new monastery to be built in China. "We have chosen for the foundation cross to be given to those leaving a crucifix that is particularly dear to us: that which from the beginnings of the abbey has been offered to the veneration of the community during the Good Friday_ ceremony, solemnly unveiled, adored and kissed by all. May it be in the first Chinese monastery a witness to the profound faith and love with which we wish to give to the church of China the best of what, without meriting it, we ourselves have received."⁹³

Following monastic tradition, the abbot also gave those who were departing the Rule and the Psalter. On 1 November they embarked from Marseille, arriving in China three months later. The abbot exhorted them to "become Chinese with the Chinese. Try to adapt yourselves to the uses and customs of the country, doing so to the extent that you judge appropriate and prudent."⁹⁴

Rome gave canonical approval for the development of the foundation, first by means of a rescript from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide that authorized the foundation (8 November 1928), then by a decree of the Congregation for Religious that erected the foundation as a simple priory with a canonical novitiate (3 January 1929), but kept it dependent on the Abbey of Saint-André, "until the day that its growth will allow it to become autonomous in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict and the constitutions that interpret it."⁹⁵

A Chinese Monastery in a European Cage

When Frs. Émile and Hildebrand arrived in Xishan on 24 February 1929, they found that work on the construction of the new monastery had already begun.⁹⁶ Fr. Jehan had already entrusted the

⁹³ Ibid., 291–92.

⁹⁴ Cited in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:203–4.

⁹⁵ Nève, "Le Prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," 1*.

⁹⁶ Valuable details about the first years of the foundation of Xishan (1927–1941 are provided by Hildebrand Marga in a typewritten manuscript, "Début de la fondation de Si Shan, Chine" (ASA, Chine 9), which I have drawn on for the account given here. Soon after the new foundation was made (1929?), an account of it was also put out in Chinese. It was published as a brochure and also as an article that appeared in two different Catholic magazines in China: *Xishan sheng bendu xiuyuan chuangli*

project to Dom Paul Wang as foreman. The building was intended to be modest and basic but sufficient for what was needed for monastic life. "[The monastery], the stone foundation of which supports a wooden building, includes, in a reduced measure, all the usual places: chapel, chapter room, library refectory, novitiate, cells, rooms for guests, and so on. It can house about twenty religious, about a dozen guests, and some servants."⁹⁷

So "nothing great, but in very good taste and completely in local style."⁹⁸ Photos show what was done at that time in Xishan.⁹⁹ The building, whose architecture was inspired by the layout of traditional Chinese houses, consisted of two rectangular buildings that were twenty meters long and had black tiled roofs. The first building was primarily for hospitality, with a reception hall, visiting rooms, and guest rooms. In the back was the chapel, with altars decorated in Chinese style, and the sacristy, where there was a reliquary of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the design of which was also Chinese. The second building contained the various monastic areas: chapter hall, refectory, recreation room, and monastic cells. The surrounding land, enclosed by a wall, included a garden, a grove of fruit trees (oranges, tangerines, and peaches), and a vineyard.¹⁰⁰

The three monks inaugurated monastic life at the monastery of Sts. Peter and Andrew in Xishan by singing the Mass of St. Benedict on his feast day, 21 March 1929, together with Bishop Wang and some local Christians. The decision to dedicate the monastery of

jī [Information on the foundation of a Benedictine monastery in Xishan] (Shanghai: Tushanwan yinshuguan, n.d. [; Zhang Weibing, "Ji Zhonghua diyizuo sheng benduhui xiuyuan zhi yuanqi ji chengli" [Information on the origin of the foundation of the first Benedictine monastery in China], SZ 10 (1929): 419–24; "Sichuan Xishan sheng benduhui xiuyuan chuangli ji" [Information on the foundation of the Benedictine monastery in Xishan, Sichuan], YZB 6 (1935): 9–11; 7 (1935): 6–8.

⁹⁷ Nève, "Le Prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," 11*. Cf. also letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 7 September 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 155–57.

⁹⁸ Un moine de Saint-André, "Dom Jehan Joliet," 11.

⁹⁹ See the images *infra*, pp. 253–55.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ma Wan Sang, "Le Monastère de Si chan en Chine," BM 13 (1934), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier de l'Apostolat Monastique*, 4*–14* (with photograph); Nève, "Le monastère des SS. Pierre et André de Si-Shan."

Xishan to Sts. Peter and Andrew is explained in a note included in an article by Abbot Nève:

The choice of Saints Peter and Andrew as patrons of the monastery of Si Chan [Xishan] was inspired, first of all, by the devotion of the entire Abbey of Saint-André for Peter's See and also in remembrance of the monastery of St. Andrew on the Caelian Hill, whose abbot, St. Gregory the Great, once he had ascended to the Roman See, opened the field of the apostolate to the Benedictines and sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to England to erect there the first monastic cloister in a mission land. The names of Sts. Peter and Andrew recall as well the two patrons of the abbatial church of Saint-André, and that of St. Peter expresses our acknowledgment of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre of Solesmes, which freely gave to the priory of Si Chan the first stone of this foundation.¹⁰¹

Work proceeded quickly, and toward the end of November most of the construction was completed, allowing the monks to hold the solemn blessing of the chapel. The ceremony took place on 15 December, presided over by Paul Wang, who had been appointed the new bishop of the vicariate of Shunqing a few days earlier. Jehan Joliet, who had been appointed prior on 10 June by Abbot Nève, blessed the monastic areas. The day before, the prior had also clothed the first postulant with the habit, in the presence of three other aspirants from the region of Yunnan.¹⁰² Among the guests was the bonze of the Taoist temple in Xishan, who "seemed to be one of the most satisfied: he told us quietly that he worships God like we do, in his own way."¹⁰³ The next day one of the monks wrote: "Now that we are officially

¹⁰¹ Nève, "Le Monastère des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," p. 292, n. 1. The "first stone" of the foundation is Jehan Joliet, a monk of Solesmes. The same motive, with some variations, for choosing the two patrons is given in a photograph caption accompanying an article, Nève, "Le Prieuré des SS. Pierre et André de Si Chan," 3'. The article notes that the Abbey of Solesmes gave "the first but not only stone" to the priory of Xishan. In 1930 Solesmes also sent Gabriel Roux to China.

¹⁰² Cf. "Chengtu. Inauguration et Bénédiction de l'Oratoire du Monastère bénédictin de Sischan," *Bulletin M.E.P.* (1930): 161-63.

¹⁰³ [Jehan Joliet], "Bénédiction de l'oratoire et installation officielle du nouveau monastère des ss. Pierre et André de Sichan" (ASA, Chine, Joliet 4 [Personalia], manuscript dated 17 December 1929).

installed and resume monastic life, we feel very inadequate, three poor monks, with only one official postulant and three on trial, who came after a walk of twenty-one days, to take up all the observances of a monastery. We have one joy: the Chinese already form a majority among-us!"¹⁰⁴

On 10 January 1930 the novitiate was opened with Fr. Émile as novice master. The formation of postulants and novices was the key to achieving the kind of "Chinese-style" monasticism envisioned by Jehan Joliet.¹⁰⁵ From the time of his arrival in China, his main concern had been that the "door be wide open, from day one, to all those who *vere quaerunt Deum*."¹⁰⁶ "If you want a Chinese monastery, . . . a Chinese novitiate is essential."¹⁰⁷ At the end of 1927 Joliet wrote to Abbot Nève, dwelling at length on the issue:

How are [the postulants] to be received? Sending them to Saint-André, it seems to me, is impracticable under the present circumstances. . . . If I were to suggest to these postulants that they, or at least some of them, could go to make their novitiate in Belgium, I can see their profound dismay: "You too, you are like the others, you want to westernize us, you will not treat us as equals unless you form us in isolation outside China." . . . Suppose that this is ignored and that some will certainly come to Belgium . . . and that they return to China as excellent monks. Since the best were chosen to be sent and since they had a good formation, it is inevitable that they will be given positions of authority and will have influence, and this will confirm the others and the laypeople in their preconceptions, without calculating the division in the monastery itself. . . . To accept postulants *a novitiate is needed here*, and only with the assurance of having a novitiate open can we deal seriously with these budding vocations. . . . In sum, what we urgently demand is [for you]

¹⁰⁴ Hildebrand Marga, "Inauguration du monastère chinois," BM 10 (1930), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier Monastique Chinois*, 29*.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. also *infra*, app. 2, pp. 328-33.

¹⁰⁶ Letter of J. Joliet to G. Aubourg, 3 July 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 15-1 Joliet refers to the passage of the Rule of St. Benedict that asks that the candidate for monastic life be examined to determine if *revera Deum quaerit* ("he truly seeks God": RB 58.7).

¹⁰⁷ Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 26 September 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 158.

to press Rome for the opening of a novitiate as soon as we are established in Sze-Chwan [Sichuan], this very year."

As has been mentioned, Rome gave permission to have a canonical novitiate on site. However, the kind of formation that would be given in this novitiate was a further source of misunderstanding between Joliet and Abbot Nève. According to canon law, it was not possible to begin studies for priestly ordination without being *inferioribus disciplinis rite instructi*,¹⁰ that is, without having a basic knowledge of Latin. It was Joliet's firm conviction, gained over the years, that it was "difficult and disastrous to impose on the Chinese a European training as an essential preparation for the priesthood."¹¹ Even before the arrival of the first Chinese postulants, he proposed that monastic profession be separated from priestly ordination, and that those who demonstrated an aptitude for the monastic life, but were not suited for language studies and philosophy, be allowed to enter the novitiate and make monastic profession. Joliet was against the division of the community into two categories of monks, so he made a bold proposal: "My wish always has been to have only one category of monks, period. This is completely Chinese and it avoids the danger of two castes, those of the choir (Europeans with some rare Chinese) and the other, the mass of Chinese lay-brothers. . . . I am decided . . . in this sense. . . . From the beginning of their postulancy they would come to the choir with us, learning the psalms by heart or reading them transcribed phonetically in Chinese."¹²

The correspondence between Joliet and Nève shows how important this issue was. The attitude of the abbot of Saint-André was defensive, invoking canon law and church discipline rather than demonstrating an understanding of the real situation: "Your difficulties arise from a misunderstanding. It is not a matter of working for

¹⁰ Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 6 December 1927, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 126-27.

¹¹ *Codex fons Canonice Pii X Pontificis Maximi (n.p.: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1932)*, c. 589, p. 176.

¹² Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 9 April 1930, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 191.

¹³ Letter of J. Joliet to G. Aubourg, 8 October 1929, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 184.

the glory of Saint-André or of Saint-Pierre of Solesmes rather than following your own will. Rome has made me responsible for the foundation of Si-Shan [Xishan] and not for its prior. The foundation charter foresees this. Si-Shan is a simple priory dependent in everything on its mother abbey. As a result, it has to develop according to the spirit and the letter of the constitutions of Saint-André unless it has special privileges." ¹²

His rigid position reflected that of Roman church authorities. Approached several times for an answer to these questions, their only response was silence. Joliet therefore decided to go his own way, no longer consulting the abbot regarding the acceptance of applications for entry into the novitiate and admission to first monastic profession. However, since he was unable to find persons able to ensure the formation of postulants and novices, all of them eventually left the monastery. ¹¹³ Then there was the question of learning French. Joliet asked that only the most talented be required to learn it. On this point Abbot Nève finally gave his consent.

The questions raised by Joliet were related to other issues regarding monastic life in the Chinese context. "The problem of adaptation remained unsolved, and the arrival of Chinese interested in the monastic life from the very beginning posed serious questions. . . . What clothes should one wear?" ¹¹⁴ In the course of studies for the postulants

¹² Letter of T. Nève to J. Joliet, 21 February 1931, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 204.

¹¹³ One of them, Vincent Chen, made his first profession in 1931 and received the tonsure in 1932 and minor orders in 1935. He then went to Saint-André. When he was told by Abbot Nève that his solemn profession would be postponed, he left the monastery.

¹¹⁴ Joliet wrote about this matter: "With regard to the monastic habit, I never thought about making the least modification without getting your consent. We have adopted the Chinese form of dress (nothing special; it's what Chinese priests and missionaries wear) since it is used by everyone in the country, without exception. At the present time I do not have any suggestion to make about what might be possible in the future. It is my firm opinion that this is a matter (as is also true for points of discipline and observance) that should not be decided in advance. Once we have become established in the monastery, we will again use the traditional habit, just as, insofar as possible, we will follow the customs of Saint-André." Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 26 September 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 159. However, in 1930 Joliet's ideas had changed. "Everyone thinks that our monastic habit is Western, and

what place should be given to Latin and the European languages? Is it necessary to distinguish the choir monks from the lay brothers by two different habits? Is it also necessary to distinguish them . . . when distributing charges? Will it be admitted that one can be a full monk, hence choir monk, without demanding the priesthood?"¹¹⁵

In-order to deal with all of these challenges, Jehan Joliet asked Abbot Nève to be flexible. "If you want a Chinese monastery . . . you have to be ready to experiment, try things out, innovate provisionally on site. It is only by putting something into practice that you will see what changes have a future."¹¹⁶ He also shared the same conviction with his confrere Hildebrand Marga, who wrote: 'A foundation in the Far East poses new problems, for the solution of which beneficial experience gives us possible answers only by analogy. . . . These conditions imposed on our foundation in China were to be first of all a way of approach, a work of discernment and of study. It was in fact a work requiring us to feel our way, which as yet does not let us see more than the general lines of the future construction. . . . It is futile to try to see what will be the physiognomy of Chinese monasteries.'"¹¹⁷

The issues faced by Joliet obviously went far beyond the specific inculturation of Christian monasticism in China. They had to do with the essence of monastic life, the way it was lived at that time in the West, and the European cultural forms that were imposed on nascent Christian monasticism in other cultural settings. It was not just a matter of an "institutional" abbot and a "prophetic" founder not agreeing on certain details. Rather, the problems they were dealing with brought to the surface deep differences in the way they understood monastic life. Christian Papeians de Morchoven, an historian and the archivist at Saint-André, sums up the situation: "Today, we

our Chinese postulants do not like it. . . . Thus I have come to the conclusion that the true Chinese monastic habit ought to draw inspiration from ordinary Chinese clothes, which are very decent and modest, and which they wear so well." Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 30 January 1930, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 185.

¹¹⁵Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 188.

¹¹⁶Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 9 October 1928, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 175.

¹¹⁷Ma Wan Sang, "Le Monastère de Si shan en Chine," 5*, 12*.

have to admit that the ideas of Dom Joliet were somewhat prophetic; being Chinese with the Chinese, adapting the Benedictine Rule to the Chinese mentality, accepting the Chinese ways and customs, preparing monk-priests to be ordained without any knowledge of Latin, all this was real 'inculturation,' long before the word began to be used. Neither Dom Nève nor Rome could be expected to acquiesce in this new understanding of the mission of the church; such ideas were quite unknown before Vatican II.¹¹⁸

To this we must add the strong, independent, and intransigent character of Jehan Joliet, who often gave the impression to those near him of following his own project and of not fitting into accepted limits diplomatically, at the same time being distant from concrete problems that were ever more complex and at times different from how they were seen at Saint-André.¹¹⁹ "Dom Joliet has erred in wanting to do violence to an institution: he has imagined that Si-Shan [Xishan], which is part of the Belgian Benedictine congregation with its fixed rules for its foundations in mission lands, could take another direction and enter into the mind-set of his own vision."¹²⁰

On 24 October 1930 two new members joined the community of Xishan: Gabriel Roux (1900-1936), a monk of Solesmes, who assumed the positions of subprior and librarian, and Dominique Van Rollegem (1904-1995),¹²¹ a monk of Saint-André, who would leave China just four years later for health reasons. With their arrival, a more structured common life was possible. Thanks to the support of many persons in China and abroad, the library was well stocked

¹¹⁸ Papeians de Morchoven, "The China Mission of the Benedictine Abbey of Sint-Andries (Bruges)," 309.

¹¹⁹ Cf. letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 10 February 1929, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 167-68.

¹²⁰ Letter of É. Butruille, 9 November 1933, in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye -4e Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:205.

¹²¹ Dominique Van Rollegem, after spending a brief "hard but good time" in China, had to return to Belgium because of poor health. After he recovered, he went to the Congo, where he worked from 1934 to 1949. From 1950 to 1995 he was in India, where he had close contact with Henri Le Saux. For a detailed account of Van Rollegem, see Benoit Standaert, "P. Dominique Van Rollegem (1904-1995. Un des pionniers sur la voie de la rencontre avec l'hindouisme?," *Dilatato Corde* 1 (2011): 117-31.

and various works were begun: a bookbindery, a laundry room, a chicken coop, and an apiary. All the European monks continued to take Chinese lessons. For the present and future welfare of the community the conflict between the prior of Xishan and the abbot of Saint-André would have to be dealt with and a decision taken. In mid-1931, after the happiness that accompanied the first months of the new foundation, things came to an impasse. Differences were too great to be resolved and positions too incompatible to prevent a breakdown. Joliet was an "idealist" with big dreams but with little common sense; Nève was a "realist" with a greater sense for the practical management of things but unable to be flexible because of his official position. However, their differences, deep as they were, were expressed without rancor or bitterness.

Given Joliet's rapidly deteriorating health and the "impossibility of working with such divergent visions,"¹²² as he wrote to the abbot in September 1932, he left Xishan on 23 May 1933 to rest in a small hermitage not far from the village of Hebachang (Hopachang, Hopatch'ang) in the mountains north of Chengdu. Here, two months later, he received a letter from the abbot of Saint-André who ordered him to return to Belgium for "consultations" and assigned Gabriel Roux to take his place as prior.

The removal of Joliet as prior had wide repercussions for the community, particularly among the young Chinese monks in formation. With his departure they lost a European monk who was open to their way of life and who eagerly sought to convey the monastic tradition of the Rule of St. Benedict to them while respecting their cultural identity as Chinese. In his letter to Abbot Nève, Gabriel Roux made this point: "In August-September [1933] the tempest arrived that risked demolishing the monastery. Your Paternity's decision to recall Dom Joliet to Europe . . . provoked a rebellion, and I assure you that the word is not too strong, of our Chinese brothers. In the measure. taken, which circumstances rendered more odious, they saw clear proof of what Dom Joliet had told them again and again:

¹²² Letter of J. Joliet to T. Nève, 20 September 1932, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 218.

the incapacity of European superiors to govern a Chinese monastery from a distance."¹²³

Given Joliet's poor health, which prevented him from making the long journey back to Belgium, the abbot of Saint-André authorized him to stay in China and lead the life of a hermit in the vicinity of Chengdu. He asked him to make a formal promise to live alone, not to interfere in the life of the Xishan community, and not to accept candidates to the cenobitic or eremitic monastic life, since to do so would give his confreres at Xishan the impression that he was founding a new monastery with other monks.¹²⁴ Having received authorization from the abbot of Solesmes, Joliet's monastery of origin, and from Rome, Fr. Jehan retreated to the hermitage of Hebachang, which consisted of five small rooms (oratory, refectory and library, cell, room for a possible domestic, kitchen), where he led a solitary life of prayer, study, reflection, and work in the garden until his death.

The new prior, Gabriel Roux, was able to guide the community through the difficult years following the departure of Jehan Joliet. He was, in fact, "the principal artisan of the development [of Xishan], as Dom Joliet had been of its foundation."¹²⁵ He too had been a monk of Solesmes, but he knew the Abbey of Saint-André better than Joliet. In fact, he had changed his stability to Saint-André and was therefore more willing to reconcile the broad directives bequeathed by the founder of Xishan with the missionary monastic style of Saint-André.

Continuing the line of inculturation tirelessly promoted by his predecessor, Roux was assiduously devoted to studying the Chinese language. His deep love of the culture of the country deepened his desire for a monastery that would look and feel Chinese. He made every effort to add interior decorations and furnishings that complemented the Chinese architectural style of the monastic buildings. To this end he commissioned a young sculptor to carve crosses and candelabra for the chapel in the best Chinese style from the stone of the surrounding

¹²³ Letter of G. Roux to T. Nève, 18 April 1934, in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:210.

¹²⁴ Cf. letter of T. Nève to J. Joliet, 4 August 1934, in Delcourt, Dom *Jehan Joliet*, 226-27.

¹²⁵ "In Memoriam Dom Gabriel Roux," BM 15 (1936, supp. no. 1: *Le Courier de l'Apostolat Monastique*, 1*.

mountains. Jehan Joliet's insistence on giving monastic life in Xishan as much of a Chinese character as possible was now fully assimilated by the community. "The buildings are entirely Chinese—inside and outside. At Sishan [Xishan] even the church is decorated in the Chinese-style, and the Gothic vestments, designed by one of the fathers, are made in Chinese embroidery. The monks wear Chinese dress, eat Chinese meals (with chopsticks), and, with the exception of the Holy Mass and the Divine Office, chant the prayers in Chinese." ²⁶

Fr. Gabriel followed the directions given by Saint-André regarding the monastic education of candidates. Between fall 1934 and spring 1935 Abbot Nève made proposals to the community of Xishan during his six-month-long visit to China. He was accompanied by two other monks assigned to the Xishan community, Raphael Vinciarelli (1897–1972) and Thaddée Yang Anran (1905–1982). ¹²⁷

The chronicler of the bulletin *Contemplation et Apostolat* provides a snapshot of Abbot Nève's impressions of his visit to the community of Xishan: "The most reverend father was happily surprised by the look of the cloister constructions. They are simple and modest, but complete and perfectly proportioned. According to him, 'the chapel is a small masterpiece of good taste, the common rooms and the cells are arranged very well. Everything is Chinese, but practical Chinese and Chinese in the best taste.' The most reverend father's joy was even greater at seeing monastic life led there according to the rule. In spite of the small number, up till now the entire Office and the rigor of observances have been faithfully kept. As for monastic work, it has consisted principally in organizing the house, in forming the first postulants, in receiving guests, and in studies." ¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. Thaddeus Yang*, cited in David J. Endres, "The Legacy of Thaddeus Yang," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010), :24.

¹²⁷ Abbot Nève had a gift for narrative, and his accounts of this trip are filled with detail and commentary about Chinese culture and society, as well as about the situation of the church in China. See Théodore Nève, "A travers le Szechwan," *BM* 14 (1935), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier de l'Apostolat Monastique*, 1 *-9*; Théodore Nève, "En remontant le Yangtze-kiang," *BM* 15 (1936): 31–46; Théodore Nève, "Vicariats européens et vicariats chinois au Szechwan," *BM* 16 (1937): 1–16.

¹²⁸ "Saints Pierre et André de Si-Shan, Shunking (Szechwan)," *CA* 5 (1935): 202.

During his visit to Xishan, Abbot Nève confirmed what had already been decided some months before with the bishop of Shunqing, Paul Wang, on the occasion of his visit to Belgium. A school for oblates dedicated to St. Placid was to be opened to provide a basic "education to future monks and also to seminarians of the vicariate."²⁹ The monastic formation imparted in Xishan was now clearly formulated so as to be in line with the directions given by Saint-André. All the proposals made in previous years by Joliet were abandoned. The school, the foundation stone of which was blessed on 12 March 1937, would now offer a contribution to the local church, of which the Xishan monastery was part. In this regard it is worth citing the reflection that appeared in the *Cahiers de Saint-André* (the continuation, since 1938, of the *Bulletin des Missions*), which gives unequivocal support to the way candidates to the monastic life would be trained.

The birth of monasticism in a church is a long and delicate work; it is often the fruit of its plenary development and presupposes before this long generations of elite Christians. If Szechwen [Sichuan] has been chosen for the introduction of Benedictine monasticism, it is just because Christianity has existed there for several centuries and Christian communities there are numerous. There is no doubt that the pure and simple religious life as it was practiced by the first monks will find in the generous souls of these Christians a terrain favorable for growth. It is not necessary therefore to seek elsewhere the causes that render recruitment difficult. Over the centuries Benedictine monasticism has undergone an evolution in the direction, so characteristic of the Christian West, of direct and sacerdotal action. It has become a clerical order, which requires, hence, of its recruits the intellectual qualities necessary for the acquisition of a theological culture and of the necessary judgment for governing souls. Transported to the Far East, these requirements have only become greater. The use of Latin in the Roman liturgy and in theological formation—requires from the candidate to the Benedictine life the capacity

¹²⁹ In the years 1935 and 1936 Bishop Paul Wang often expressed the desire that the Benedictine mission sisters of Lophem (Sisters of Bethany found a monastery for women near the men's monastery at Xishan. Cf. Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2: p. 320, n. 161.

to assimilate a culture completely different from his own. In fact, there young people capable of priestly functions are to be found only in the population of minor seminaries. Very few pupils of Chinese schools would find a means of adding to their national formation a real Latin formation that could allow them to undertake a productive priestly life, whether secular or religious. To remove this difficulty, the creation of a school of oblates at Si Shan [Xishan] has always been envisaged, where from an early age the children showing signs of a monastic vocation would receive a formation that responds to the requirements¹³⁰ of clerical studies and to the needs of their natural milieu.

During Abbot Nève's visit to China, another undertaking was slowly maturing in his mind, namely, a second foundation in China. The opportunity for such a venture presented itself before he left for China, when the notable Lu Baihong (Lo Pa Hong, 1875—1937) of Shanghai, president of Chinese Catholic Action, proposed to his friend Lu Zhengxiang, who had become a monk at Saint-André, his idea of purchasing land in Shanghai or Nanjing for a monastic foundation. During his time in China the abbot became convinced that it would be good to have a monastery closer to the coast, since it would be more accessible and thus facilitate relations between Saint-André and China. A monastery located there would also be able to "attract" more vocations, since the conditions for contacts would be better. In China everyone encouraged Abbot Nève to embark on this new adventure. The community of Saint-André was less enthusiastic, but finally it too was convinced. In May 1936 Lu Baihong announced the purchase of land in Nanjing and the intention to begin construction of a monastery the following year.

Meanwhile, Prior Gabriel Roux died of typhus on 9 April 1936. He was succeeded by Raphaël Vinciarelli, who remained at the helm of the community until his expulsion from China in 1952. Originally intended for the projected Benedictine foundation in Nanjing, he was appointed prior of Xishan by Abbot Nève, who was forced to set aside the Nanjing proposal, which never materialized. Although urged by Joliet to pursue his ideal of "monastic life alone," Vinciarelli continued to implement the Saint-André vision of "apostolic ministry"

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"L'année 1937 à Si Shan," CSA 1 (1938: 98-99).

by opening an elementary school, which was dedicated to St. Maur, and a dispensary for the inhabitants of the surrounding area, in a process of gradual adaptation to Chinese ways. "If an adaptation is to be made, let it be made slowly, naturally, in the course of experience. But let us not say: let us change, let us adapt. The Chinese are themselves occupied in adapting to European life. They are changing many things. Let them go on and let us wait. There is one adaptation necessary, to love them and to make them feel this."¹³¹

Putting aside Joliet's overly "contemplative" approach and adopting Saint-André's "apostolic" model demanded, among other things, an increase of personnel to carry out the various activities. Three new monks came to Xishan in November 1936: Eleuthère Winance (1909-2009), Wilfrid Weitz (1912-1991), and Vincent Martin (1912-1999). They immediately enrolled in an intensive Chinese language course in the city of Suining. Their arrival brought to ten the number of members in the small community, which now included six European monks, two Chinese monks, and two Chinese lay brothers, plus some postulants.¹³²

With the death of Jehan Joliet on 23 December 1937, "a period in the history of Si-Shan [Xishan] closes."¹³³ A few months before his death Joliet shared with his confrere Raphaël Vinciarelli and his friend Charles Rey a summary of his Chinese experience and his confidence about the future of Xishan and monasticism in China: "For thirty years I desired China and the foundation of a monastery. Thanks to God, who has granted me to see the realization of my desires and to know that the monastery continues to live and to develop. The future is for us. Monasteries have their assured raison

¹³¹ Letter of R. Vinciarelli, 19 April 1935, in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:220.

¹³² Cf. "Les Bénédictins de Si-Shan," CA 7-8 (1936): 286.

¹³³ Letter of R. Vinciarelli to C. Rey, 6 February 1938, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 241. Cf. also "Sichuan Shunqing Xishan benduhui xiudaoyuan yuanzhang shishi" [The prior of the Benedictine monastery of Xishan, Shunqing, Sichuan has died], SZ 7 (1936): 441; "Shunqing Xishan benduhui chuangbanzhe ji diyi ren yuanzhang Yu siduo shishi" [The founder and first prior of the Benedictine monastery of Xishan, Shunqing, has died], SZ 3 (1938): 166.

d'être in the christianization of China. Let us give the time that is necessary. Neither monks nor Chinese are in a hurry."¹³⁴

What is extraordinary and consoling is to see [in the Xishan monks] sympathy for and understanding of my difficulties and approval of my conduct and the almost complete similarity . . . in our ideas and desires for Si-Shan [Xishan]. . . . Will [the monks] succeed?—I don't know, but it is great and rather curious that in the measure of what is possible there is much more future in the long run for Si-Shan and even for the prevalence of the ideas that guided me than when I was prior or Fr. Gabriel Roux after me. I inevitably appeared as a stranger, while the present prior is a child of the house (he was an oblate there); he will perhaps be able to obtain and carry out quietly quite a few things that from me provoked suspicion and resistance. It's not a question of being carried away or of triumphing, but of thanking God for the present results that have something of the marvelous. I wasn't sad, but this brings a note of joy to my hermitage.¹³⁵

In his *Note on the Origins of Xishan* written the same year, he went into more detail regarding his thoughts on this subject: "This long-term work is not made with programs and rules or sanctions: it is made by carrying it out and living it, by bits and pieces, without the mirage of statistics, without praise; it is a work for which there is no gratitude or support. But whatever many may think and say, it is not an illusion of illuminated mystics. No! I am resolutely optimistic about the possibility and the reality of results."¹³⁶

The years immediately following the death of Joliet saw the progressive loss of half of the European monks because of requests made to the community for assistance and the difficult political situation in China at that time. Thaddée Yang moved to Chongqing to assist Bishop Jantzen and to help edit the Catholic French-language weekly *Le correspondant chinois*. Published by the daily newspaper

¹³⁴ Cited in Vinciarelli, "Dom Jehan Joliet et son oeuvre monastique en Chine," 9*-10'.

¹³⁵ Letter of J. Joliet to C. Rey, 17 October 1937, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 235.

¹³⁶ Cited in Vinciarelli, "Dom Jehan Joliet et son oeuvre monastique en Chine," 10*.

Yishibao (*I-shih pao* 4 c), founded in 1915 by Vincent Lebbe, it later became the monthly English-language *China Correspondent*. Vincent Martin received the prior's permission to work with the Little Brothers of Fr. Vincent Lebbe on an ambulance team in northern China during the Sino-Japanese War. He was interned in 1941 and remained a prisoner of war until the end of the hostilities. Wilfrid Weitz was the French-language tutor of General Chiang Kai-shek's bride from 1939 to 1941. The absence of these brothers, wrote the prior, "is a very heavy sacrifice for Si Shan [Xishan], but a sacrifice we agreed to with joy," since it constituted "a participation in the joys and sufferings of the people" of China.¹³⁷

The difficulties caused by the Second World War added to those brought about by the Sino-Japanese War. Despite this, two new monks arrived in Xishan, Werner Papeians de Morchoven (1914–2008) and Albéric de Crombrughe de Loringhe (1911–1981). The community was able to live together, but 1941 brought a new exodus of some of its members, who moved elsewhere to find work and earn a living. Even Prior Raphael left Xishan at the end of 1942 and moved to Chengdu in the service of Bishop Rouchouse. Vinciarelli was invited to teach at the university in the old capital of Sichuan, which had become a refuge for many intellectuals who fled from the eastern parts of China. It was in this setting that he began to think about the possibility of creating an institution that could offer students a way to learn about Chinese culture and Western Christianity, thus dispelling prejudices and providing a place for dialogue between Western and Chinese cultures. He reflected on the years the monks had spent in Xishan: "In the course of their long stay at Sishan [Xishan] the monks had the time to devote themselves to the study of the Chinese language and to have their first missionary experiences. There they learned to know the old China of the countryside, to open their minds and their hearts to it. This stay, hence, was extremely

¹³ Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Au monastère de Si Shan," CSA 5 (1939): 158. In the official local chronicle, the few lines dedicated to the Benedictine community of Xishan are almost totally about the service of some of the monks to the cause of the liberation of China during the war against the Japanese aggressor. See *Nanchong shi zhi* [Chronicles of the city of Nanchong] (Chengdu: Sichuan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1994), 610.

useful for us; it imprinted on our monastery a Chinese orientation, which will remain as its characteristic note and will only become more accentuated in the coming years."³⁸

Transfer to Chengdu and Expulsion

&cause of the extreme difficulty in obtaining the means of subsistence, life in Xishan was no longer possible. Moving to Chengdu and offering the Benedictines teaching posts that would provide them with the possibility of exercising an influence in the Chinese intellectual world appeared as the best way to regroup them. Bishop Jacques Rouchouse encouraged the community to take this step by providing them with a large estate not far from his official residence.

In 1944 the prior, along with Frs. Werner, Albéric, and Eleuthère, moved into the house made available by the bishop. They were soon joined by Fr. Thaddée. Frs. Hildebrand, Émile, and Paul Wu (Ou K'i-in), who had made profession in 1939, remained at Xishan.

The Chinese and Western Cultural Research Institute soon began to operate. Recognized by the government, its purpose was to bring the two civilizations closer together by means of comparative studies and to prepare the groundwork for a future Catholic university in the provincial capital. The results of the research conducted at the institute, which focused mainly on the fields of religion, history, literature, and the arts, were published by the institute itself. A Catholic bookstore adjoining the institute was opened in 1948.³⁹

One of the monks, Thaddée Yang, spoke of the high expectations, somewhat excessive, he thought, in view of the paucity of resources, that the church in Sichuan had of the new institution.

Everybody was counting on us, Benedictine monks, to instill a new spirit, more dynamic, into the church of Szechwan [Sichuan], which a long, drawn-out war had more or less paralyzed. . . . I did not share their optimism. Our program was over-ambitious, and none among us had the necessary Chinese

³⁸ Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Témoignage du Christ en Chine communiste. Le Prieuré de Saint-Benoît de Chengtu," *BM* 26 (1952): 192-93.

³⁹ With regard to the nature, range, and organization of the institute, see Vinciarelli, "Témoignage du Christ en Chine communiste," 191-219.

intellectual training. . . . By experience I dare to say that it is impossible to prepare and teach college-level courses and study the Chinese language and culture at the same time. The Chinese language and culture are by far more difficult to learn. All the more so in our case, because as foreigners and Catholic priests, our fathers were not accepted by the better non-Christian society, guardians of the authentic Chinese tradition."

The correspondence between Prior Vinciarelli and Abbot Nève reveals another basic question that such an institution posed to the larger Benedictine community. How could monastic life, with its requirements of community life and prayer, be reconciled with an academic institution created outside the monastic framework? Even if it was true, as Prior Vinciarelli put it, that "circumstances have given a new direction to the activities of the Benedictines in Sze-Chwan [Sichuan],"¹⁴¹ Abbot Nève still urged his sons in China to integrate their new work into the framework of their monastic life, which continued to be the main purpose of the Benedictine presence in China.

For a long time I have thought that Si-Shan [Xishan] was not a good place for a monastery of great amplitude. I was convinced that one day we would transport our penates [*sic*] to Chung-king [Chongqing] or to Chengtu [Chengdu]. . . . Although you have found a solution to the financial situation by adding to the idea of a monastic foundation that of an institution of higher studies, you have given to the monastic foundation such a new orientation that I am somewhat disconcerted. . . . The danger was to see our monastic foundation commuted into a scientific enterprise or at least a monastic foundation only as a support to a scientific enterprise; this would end by eclipsing totally the former.... We are very happy about your fine initiative and we congratulate you for the results achieved so far, but . . . we would like to see assured the constitution of a true monastery such as it was intended at the beginning of our activity in China.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Thaddée Yang, "The Chinese Adventure of an Indonesian Monk," <http://www.yalyermo.com/monks/yang2.html>, accessed 21 August 2013.

¹⁴¹ Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Lettre du Szechwan," CSA 12 (1947): 54.

¹⁴² Letter of T. Nève to R. Vinciarelli, 20 April 1945, in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken, 2:275-76*.

Since Abbot Nève was assured that "the monastery was the foundation of the institute and ensured its continuity over time and in the way it was run"¹⁴³ and that the school and the monastery would move forward together, the foundation stone of the school was laid on 29 June 1948, and a year later, on 11 July 1949, the community took possession of the new building, which was acclaimed for its "architectural and artistic beauty" and to which were transferred more than ten thousand volumes from the library of Xishan.¹⁴⁴ A new monk from Saint-André, the last to be sent, arrived that year. He was Gaëtan Loriers (1915-1996, who before leaving for China had studied sinology in Paris for two years and now continued to deepen his knowledge of Chinese.

This educational project began to produce good results in terms of the number of students enrolled in courses offered by the institution, the quality of exchanges, and the number of baptisms in the student body. However, everything was sharply reduced and eventually brought to a halt when Communist troops invaded Chengdu on 25 December 1949. For nearly a year the courses at the institute were allowed to continue in the form of study circles, but the Communist pressure gradually intensified with the imposition of heavy taxes, rigid control of the activities and movements of the Benedictines, searches, and exhausting interrogations. Describing the situation of the community in those days, Pierre Zhou wrote: "Seeing confusion and division growing among the clergy and laity of Chengdu, Father Prior Raphaël Vinciarelli frequently explained to the community the real current situation of the local church and the monastery, asking us to prepare at any time for all eventualities. We tried to keep the usual schedule of our daily life in celebrating Masses, reciting collectively Vespers and Compline, teaching, studying and doing all the other works, in spite of living in a near panic under the tense atmosphere."¹⁴⁵

⁴³ Vinciarelli, "Témoins du Christ en Chine communiste," 195.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Thaddée Yang, "L'inauguration du Prieuré de Saint-Benoît A Chengtu," CSA 21 (1949): 127-30; Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Une réalisation," CSA 21 (1949): 131-37. Cf. also "Benduhui she Chengdu fenyuan" [The Benedictines establish the dependent monastery of Chengdu], YZ 23 (1947): 378.

¹⁴⁵ Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East: One Spiritual Warrior's Thirty-Three-Year Struggle in Defense of the Church* (Upland, CA: Serenity, 1992), 11.

Nevertheless, in October 1950 it appeared that everything was over. The Office for Foreign Affairs informed the Benedictines that they would have to leave Chengdu in two weeks. As a result of a counterorder, however, departure was changed to house arrest. Prior Vinciarelli was subjected to repeated interrogations in order to wring confession out of him that he was an imperialist enemy of China and to obtain his support for reforming the church according to the principles of the "Three Selves." In response to his firm refusal, Fr. Raphaël was imprisoned in November 1951 and three months later was brought before a people's court and together with Fr. Eleuthère Winance was sentenced to immediate expulsion from the People's Republic of China.¹⁴⁶

In the month following, all the foreign monks were likewise sentenced to forced repatriation. The last monk to depart from China was the one who had most recently arrived in China, Gaëtan Loriers, who left on 12 March 1952. The only Benedictine seedlings left on Chinese soil were Fr. Paul Wu and the young Br. Pierre Zhou, who described their life in the early months of 1952 until the forced evacuation of everyone from the priory, its expropriation, and its occupation by the Communists in April. "During this period, all the foreign members of the community either left the country 'voluntarily' or were expelled. The monastic family was dispersed. Only two Chinese members, myself and Father Paul Wu, were left to take care of the solitary building. We were clearly aware that we would have to move out sooner or later. . . . We had no daily duties. After attending Father Paul Wu's early morning Mass . . . we stayed in our respective cells reciting the Divine Office and reading holy books or went out visiting some of the faithful laymen and sisters."¹⁴⁷

More will be said of Br. Pierre Zhou below. All we know of Fr. Paul Wu is that he was ordained a priest in 1950 and that when his foreign confreres were expelled, he returned to his family, where he

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Jubilé du prieuré Saint-Benoît de Chengtu," CSA 31 (1952): 119–34; Eleuthère Winance, "Une séance de police," CSA 35 (1953): 82–89; Eleuthère Winance, *The Communist Persuasion: A Personal Experience of Brainwashing* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1959).

¹⁴⁷ Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East*, 23.

continued for some time to exercise priestly ministry, until he was prevented from leaving his home. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison and died tragically in 1960 at the age of forty-five in the same labor camp on the outskirts of Chengdu where his confrere Pierre Zhou was also held.¹⁴⁸

As they waited for an opportune moment to return to their adopted country, the members of the Benedictine China mission quickly reconstituted their community in Valyermo, California, where the new priory of St. Andrew was canonically erected in 1955, became a conventual priory in 1965, and finally an abbey in 1992. They did not simply look backward nostalgically but were eager to bring their past experience in China to the work they would do in their new home, as Prior Raphaël put it in one of his reports: "Besides the entirely monastic context where the liturgy is given a prime place, it was necessary to preserve the missionary spirit, oriented above all toward China. It was not a question, however, of a monastery that lived only in the hope of returning to China: it had to have, on the contrary, an immediate usefulness where it was, as well as a concrete and immediate work for the Chinese."¹⁴⁹

Among the monks of Valyermo who came from China, Vincent Martin was the one who in the last years of his life once again became directly and deeply interested in that country and its culture, returning to China for study and visits.¹⁵⁰

As for the monastic complex at Xishan after its abandonment in the 1940s, the site was used for secular activities until 1985, when it was returned to the Diocese of Nanchong (Shunqing). Of the two buildings that were once the monastery, one was initially used as a hostel for tourists.¹⁵¹ More recently the monastery was renovated and transformed into a retreat house and diocesan conference center. The building has a permanent exhibition on Catholic culture and

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 47, where the author tells of the death of Paul Wu, who was asphyxiated by as during the transport of a diesel engine. Cf. also Hildebrand Marga, "Historique de chaque moine de Chine" (ASA, Chine 9), typewritten source.

¹⁴⁹ Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:284.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Francis Benedict, "Valyermo and China," *AIM Bulletin* 70 (2000): 105-6.
¹⁵¹ Cf. "Rinascita di un vecchio monastero," *Asia News* 8 (1999): 31.

opens onto a large square dominated by imposing statues of the twelve apostles.¹⁵²

Three Chinese Benedictines: Thaddée Yang, Pierre-Célestin Lu, and Pierre Zhou

As has been noted, the visit of the Chinese bishops to Saint-André at the end of 1926 was propitious in many ways. It caused the abbot and the community to think about China and sped up the process that led to the departure of the first two missionary monks to that country in the following year. One of the indirect consequences of the bishops' visit was the arrival at Saint-André in 1927, within the space of a few months, of two Chinese candidates for the monastic life. What follows is a brief account of these two, whose monastic life began with the abbey's initial steps toward founding a monastery in China. There will then follow an account of a third Chinese monk, whose story begins when Saint-André's Chinese monastic venture was almost over, since he entered the novitiate in Xishan only a few years before its forced dissolution.

The first Chinese postulant to take the Benedictine habit was, Thaddée Yang Anran (Yang An Yuen, Yong Ann Juen, 1905-1982.¹⁵³ Born to a family of Chinese immigrants on the island of Java in Indonesia, he was brought up as a Buddhist by his father, who led an austere, ascetic, quasi-monastic life. Following the advice of his mother and with a view to a future diplomatic career, he studied first in Hong Kong, then in England and in Germany, and finally

¹⁵² Cf. Jean Charbonnier, "La vie de l'Église dans la province de Sichuan," *Églises d'Asie* 4 (2008): 62; Wang Huaimao and Yang Jun, "Xinian qingcong jin Cheng qiaomu. Tianzhujiao Nanchong Xishan benduyuan" [The shrubs of the past have now become trees. The Catholic Benedictine monastery of Xishan, Nanchong], *Zhongguo zongjiao (China Religion)* 7 (2007): 51-53.

¹⁵³ The most documented biographical profile was recently given by Endres, "The Legacy of Thaddeus Yang," 23-27. Useful autobiographical sources are Thaddée Yang, "From Buddha to Benedict," <http://www.valyermo.com/monks/yanagl.html>, accessed 21 August 2013; Thaddée Yang, "The Chinese Adventure of an Indonesian Monk." Unfortunately, I was not able to consult the sources in the archives of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, OH, which include the autobiography *Chinese Bonzes and Catholic Priests* (4 January 1943), the transcript of an interview, *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. Thaddeus Yang* (15 May 1945), and a diary, *Across the Pacific* (March-April 1946).

in Belgium, where he studied French in preparation for university. There he met Vincent Lebbe, who offered him hospitality at the family of a sister and gave him a scholarship that allowed him to take courses in Thomistic philosophy and social and political sciences at the Catholic University of Louvain. Moved by the fervor of Fr- Lebbe and by the example of the faith life of the family with whom he was staying, he asked to become a Catholic and was baptized on 26 December 1923. Shortly thereafter, as he himself writes, he heard the call to monastic life: "Not long after my baptism, I made up my mind to become a monk. But my confessor and spiritual director, regarding my yearning for monastic and contemplative life as nothing but the fleeting enthusiasm of a new convert, advised me to wait a few more years until I had attained Christian maturity."¹⁵⁴

His subsequent research led him to familiarize himself with the Belgian monastic world, as he himself tells us. It is interesting to note that as he became familiar with Christian monastic life, what came to the surface was the model of Buddhist monastic life with which he was familiar and which continued in some way to attract him.

In my quest for "Christian maturity," I began to attend the Office of Vespers at the Benedictine Abbey of Mont-César, at the outskirts of the city. The spectacle of the blacked-robed monks singing in unison and by turns bowing, genuflecting, and kneeling together around the altar brought back to memory my early Buddhist ascetic-contemplative life, thus making my resolve to be a monk all the stronger. I talked several times with the guest master. He gave me Saint Benedict's Rule to read. The Benedictine Rule appealed to me very much. But written in the sixth century, could it still be followed to the letter in the twentieth century? According to the guest master, his abbey was composed mainly of scholars, writers and teachers. My conception of monasticism was still my Buddhist father's—that a monk is a pure contemplative. In the light of this conception, I could not figure out how a monk could be anything but a monk, that is to say, a man devoted exclusively to prayer and meditation.⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Yang, "From Buddha to Benedict."

iss Ibid.

At the same time the young Albert (his Christian name) heard people talking about Saint-André's plans for a monastic foundation in China and about Lu Zhengxiang, a Chinese diplomat who was considering becoming a monk at Saint-André. He interpreted this as a sign that the abbey in Bruges might be the place to begin his monastic life as a Chinese monk and therefore made a visit to Saint-André. He was warmly welcomed by the guest master and the abbot, who invited him to take part in the abbey's plans for China and also expressed the hope that he would agree to "take an active part in the new venture."¹⁵⁶

Attracted by the project and receiving the permission of his parents,¹⁵⁷ Albert went to Saint-André and received the monastic habit from Abbot Nève on 22 April 1927. A few months later, on 4 October together with Lu Zhengxiang, the second Chinese postulant, he received the habit, beginning his novitiate with the monastic name of Thaddée. The reason for choosing this name is curious. It was selected in remembrance of and gratitude to Fr. Lebbe. The Hebrew name that seems to have been given to the apostle Thaddeus was Lebbeus, which recalled the last name of the Belgian missionary who had led the young novice to the Christian faith.¹⁵⁸ When he finished his novitiate, during which time he "did not have any trouble observing the rule and customary," thanks, in his own words, to his "early Buddhist ascetic training and the moral and spiritual support of the novice master,"¹⁵⁹ Br. Thaddée professed his first vows on 5 October 1928. After completing his studies in philosophy at Maredsous and in theology at Mont-César, he was ordained priest on 31 July 1932.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ The reaction of the Buddhist father to the news that his son was determined to become a Christian monk is noteworthy. According to his son, he said, "If your conscience tells you that you should become a Christian monk, then go ahead, follow the voice of your conscience. But go into it seriously and courageously. One needs courage to be a good monk." Yang, "From Buddha to Benedict."

¹⁵⁸ Cf. "Le premier bénédictin chinois," *BM* 9 (1928—1929): 239. In the same news story, on the same page, there is a photo of the clothing ceremony of Br. Thaddée. Abbot Nève is giving him the habit, assisted by Jehan Joliet and Pie de Cocquéau, who would leave for China a little later, on 20 May 1927.

¹⁵⁹ Yang, "From Buddha to Benedict."

¹⁶⁰ Cf. "Zhongguo diyiwei benduhui yinxiushi Yang Anran siduo xiaozhuan" [A brief biography of Dom Yang Anran, first Chinese Benedictine monk], *SZ* 2 [1933]: 117—18.

The monastic education of Fr. Thaddée took place entirely in Belgium, but the time to make a contribution to the Chinese mission of Saint-André, the hope Abbot Nève had expressed some years earlier, was not long in coming. Two years after his ordination Fr. Thaddée saw himself in the role of a missionary in his ancestral "hdmeland." In 1934 Thaddée Yang and Raphaël Vinciarelli, accompanied by Abbot Nève, who was making a canonical visitation to the priory of Xishan, arrived in China and remained there as members of the Benedictine community of Xishan. They entered that community just as it was implementing its decision to make a considerable commitment to teaching monastic candidates, seminarians, and Christians of the Diocese of Nanchong. Fr. Thaddée immediately plunged into the study of classical Chinese, as well as the literary, philosophical, and religious culture of China.

Subsequent political and ecclesiastical developments meant that Fr. Thaddée had to become involved in a number of different occupations. At first, in 1936 and 1937, he took part, on behalf of Abbot Nève, in negotiations with the tycoon Lu Baihong and with Archbishop Paul Yu Bin (Yu Pin) regarding a second Benedictine foundation in China, in Nanjing, which was never made because of the Sino-Japanese War. Subsequently, after a year in Kunming, Fr. Yang moved to Chongqing in 1939 to contribute to the publication of the French-language weekly *Le correspondant chinois*, a periodical published in close collaboration with the Ministry of Information to inform mainly French-speaking missionaries of the war policies of the government, which had taken refuge in Chongqing. From December 1943 until it discontinued publication in September 1944 this newsletter became an English-language monthly that published articles of cultural, social, and religious interest, mainly for the benefit of the US military stationed in China. In addition to being its director,¹⁶¹ Thaddée Yang also wrote some articles.

Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Benedictines were thinking of transferring their priory from its isolated location in Xishan to the city center of Chengdu, where it could invigorate a university-level cultural institute. Thaddée Yang was involved not only in negotia-

¹⁶¹ Cf. Endres, "The Legacy of Thaddeus Yang," p. 26, n. 19.

tions with the bishop and with the government regarding this project, but also in raising funds for it. For ten months in 1945-1946 he traveled around the United States on a "loathsome begging expedition."¹⁶²

Back in Chengdu, he simultaneously held the posts of subprior of the Benedictine community and vice president of the institute. Absolutely convinced that an effective intellectual mission among the Chinese cultural elite would require a deep immersion in Chinese culture, he took up his studies with a teacher once again. "I resumed as best I could my oft-interrupted study of Chinese literature and philosophy. . . . Two hours of lessons in the morning, and two hours of exercise in calligraphy in the afternoon."¹⁶³ The worsening of his health along with the final deterioration of the political situation in China forced him to leave the country. Later, along with many refugees from China, he took up residence in the new community of Valyermo in the United States, where he continued his Benedictine life until his death.

Regarding the particular contribution of Thaddée Yang Anran to the "Chinese Mission," David J. Endres observed that it "was twofold: to foster greater understanding of China by Westerners, and to interest the Chinese in Christianity and the Benedictine monastic life."¹⁶⁴ In order to break down the walls of misunderstanding and distrust between Chinese culture and Christian faith and to show the compatibility of the two and the possibility of a fruitful mutual enrichment, Thaddée Yang wrote numerous articles in various English-language and French-language periodicals in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁶⁵ During his years in China in his role as intermediary between Chinese culture, his hereditary identity, and the Christian message, on which was grafted his new way of life as a Benedictine monk, Thaddée Yang also often tried to meet with influential Buddhist and Taoist masters—a practice certainly not common in

¹⁶² Yang, "The Chinese Adventure of an Indonesian Monk."

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Endres, "The Legacy of Thaddeus Yang," 25.

¹⁶⁵ Some of them were *America*, *American Ecclesiastical Review*, *Catholic Mind*, *Catholic World*, *Shield*, *Les Cahiers de Saint-André*. For a list—not exhaustive but still representative—of the articles of Thaddée Yang, cf. Endres, "The Legacy of Thaddeus Yang," p. 26, nn. 27 and 28.

those days—engaging them in a discussion of doctrinal and spiritual matters.¹⁶⁶

The entrance of the first Chinese postulant at Saint-André in the spring of 1927 caused people in the Belgian monastic world to take notice, but the arrival of the second Chinese postulant produced an even greater reaction both inside and outside the Catholic world, and also gained wide press coverage. The person who asked to be clothed with the Benedictine habit was Lu Zhengxiang (Lou Tseng Tsiang, 1871-1949), a political figure and a high-ranking Chinese diplomat. He had been a prime minister and a minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of China and its representative to several foreign institutions.

Many studies have focused on his political and diplomatic activities, as well as his contribution to relations between the Catholic Church and the Chinese government. Future research on the abundant material kept in the archives of Saint-André and elsewhere will surely bring to light further aspects of the political, diplomatic, and spiritual life of this exceptional "Christian Confucian."¹⁶⁷ Here

¹⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Thaddée Yang, "T'ai-K'oung Fa-Che. L'opinion d'un abbé bouddhiste," CSA 10 (1946): 213-16; Thaddée Yang, "Le thé chez les taoïstes," CSA 20 (1949): 67-73; Thaddée Yang, "Le paradis de l'abbé T'ai-K'ung," CSA 22 (1950): 191-95.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Alphonse Monestier, "The Monk Lu Cheng-Hsiang: An Ex-Prime Minister of China Enters the Benedictine Order," BCUP 5 (1928): 11-21; Vincent Artus, "Hommage au révérendissime père dom Lou Tseng-tsiang," CSA 19 (1949): 24-36; Luo Guang, *Lu Zhengxiang zhuan* [A biography of Lu Zhengxiang] (Hong Kong: Zhenli xuehui, 1949); John Wu Ching-hiung, *Dom Lou. Sa vie spirituelle* (n.p.: DDB, 1949); Geneviève Duhamel, *Dom Lou. Homme d'État, homme de Dieu* (Brussels: Foyer Notre-Dame, [1954]); Édouard Neut, *Jean-Jacques Lou, Dom Lou. Quelques ébauches d'un portrait, quelques aspects d'un monde* (Brussels: Synthèses, 1962); Fang Hao, "Lu Zhengxiang," in *Zhongguo tianzhujiao shi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of important figures in the history of Chinese Christianity], vol. 3 (Taizhong: Guangqi chubanshe, 1973), 326-29; Luke Dysinger, "Abbot Peter Celestine Lou Tseng-tsiang, O.S.B.: Chinese Diplomat and Benedictine Monk," *Valyermo Benedictine* 1, no. 4 (1990): 4-12; Anne Vansteelandt, "Lou Tseng-tsiang: zijn contactenen en zijn invloed als monnik in de Sint-Andriesabdij (1927-1949)," *Zevenkerken* 176 (1991): 5-23; Anne Vansteelandt, "Lu Zhengxiang (Lou Tseng Tsiang), a Benedictine Monk of the Abbey of Sint-Andries," in *Historiography of the Chinese Catholic Church*, 223-30; Claire Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus: The Destiny of a Chinese Politician, Lou Tseng-tsiang (1871-1949)" (MA thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1994); Shi Jianguo, *Lu Zhengxiang zhuan* [A biography of Lu

consideration will be given primarily to his spiritual and monastic life, paying special attention to those of his writings that treat of the synthesis between Christian spirituality and Chinese culture and contain his reflections on the contribution of monasticism to the -evangelization of China.¹⁶⁸

Born in Shanghai in 1871, Lu Zhengxiang was baptized in the Protestant Church linked to the London Missionary Society, in which his father was a catechist. "Protestantism," he wrote, "has been for me a stage without which I think I should not have been able to reach Catholicism."¹⁶⁹ He studied foreign languages in Shanghai and Peking, where he excelled in the study of French language and literature. He was soon sent to be an interpreter for the Chinese legation in St. Petersburg, where he remained for fourteen years (1893-1906). There his diplomatic, but also human and spiritual, education was marked above all by the diplomat Xu Jingcheng (Hsü Ching-ch'eng, King Shu-shen, 1845-1900), of whom Lu Zhengxiang said: "This statesman, upright and clear-sighted, honored me with his confidence and his devotion. . . . Without him I would never have become a diplomat, and, ultimately, I would have not become

Zhengxiang] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1999); Zhang Shujin (Claire Chang Shu-chin), "Tianzhu jiaohui de zai sikao. Cong Lu Zhengxiang de jiaohui yinxiang tanqi" [A new reflection on the Catholic Church. The repercussions (of the ideas) of Lu Zhengxiang on the church], in *Zhong Fan waijiao guanxi shi guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* [Proceedings of the international scholarly meeting on the history of the diplomatic relations between China and the Vatican] (Taipei: Furen daxue lishi xueji, 2002), 267-80; *Lou Tseng-Tsiang and His Contribution to China = Tripod 152* (2009); Chen Fang-chung, "Lou Tseng-Tsiang, A Lover of His Church and of His Country," *7lipod 153* (2009): 45-66.

¹⁶⁸ Among his writings, see esp. Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ* (London: Burns Oates, 1948), a collection of the conferences given to confreres of the Abbey of Saint-André; Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *-La rencontre entre humanités et la découverte de l'évangile* ([Bruges]: DDB, 1949); Association Relais France-Chine, ed., *Dom Pierre Célestin Lu. Une vie toute droite* (Mesnil-Saint-Loup: Le Livre ouvert, 1993), an anthology of writings. In Chinese: Lu Zhengxiang, *Benduhui shilüe* [Brief history of the Benedictine Order] (Shanghai: Shengjiao zazhi she, 1935); Lu Zhengxiang, *Benduhui xiushi Lu Zhengxiang zuijin yanlunji* [Collection of the most recent conferences of the Benedictine monk Lu Zhengxiang] (Shanghai: Guangqi xuehui, 1936).

¹⁶⁹ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 3.

either a monk or a priest."¹⁷⁰ One day, as Lu recounts in his memoirs, this man spoke to him of Christianity, its spiritual force, and the role it would play in the life of the young diplomat. His words, Lu said, were "prophetic."

Ire the course of your diplomatic career you will have occasion to study the Christian religion. It comprehends various branches and societies. Take the most ancient branch of that religion, that which goes back most nearly to its origin. Enter into it. Study its doctrine, practise its commandments, observe its government, closely follow all its works. And later on, when you have ended your career, perhaps you will have the opportunity to go still farther. In this most ancient branch, choose the most ancient society. If you can do this, enter into it also. Make yourself its follower, and study the interior life which must be the secret of it. When you have understood and won the secret of that life, when you have grasped the heart and the strength of the religion of Christ, bring them and give them to China."

What Xu felt and desired for Lu Zhengxiang was, in fact, the trajectory of his life in the following decades. He moved to different countries: the Netherlands, back to Russia, and China, where he became the director of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the new republic from 1911 to 1920, and he served for two terms as prime minister. He then moved to Switzerland and finally to Belgium. He married a Belgian Catholic in 1899 and was conditionally baptized in the Catholic Church twelve years later, in 1911, taking the name René.

"Baptized a Protestant, . . . he became a Catholic, but he was and remained a Confucian."¹⁷² The spiritual journey of Lu Zhengxiang can rightly be seen as a harmonious synthesis of the moral and ritual dimensions of Confucianism with the Christian faith. He lived with the conviction that his peculiar vocation was to be a Christian who had been formed in the school of Confucianism and whose life was focused on the fundamental dimension of "filial piety" (*xiao* 孝). As his friend Wu Jingxiong- put it, "It was just in view of his vocation

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷¹ Cited *ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷² Duhamel, *Dom Lou*, 7.

that God wanted for him a long formation at the school of Confucius, which indirectly predisposed him to accept and assimilate Christianity. . . . In the light of the Gospel and of the lives of saints, Dom Lou [Lu] truly made supernatural the natural doctrine of filial piety that Confucianism gives us." ¹⁷³

'Some passages from the writings of Lu Zhengxiang are clear evidence of this journey.

I am a Confucianist. . . . Confucianism, whose standards of moral life are so profound and so beneficial, finds in the Christian revelation and in the existence and life of the Catholic Church the most illustrious justification of all, human and immortal, that it possesses, and it finds there at the same time the fulfilment of moral light and moral strength, which solves the problems before which our sages have had the humility to draw back, understanding that it does not belong to man to penetrate the mystery of Heaven, and that it is necessary, in venerating the Providence of Heaven, to wait until, if he deigns to do so, the Creator himself reveals himself. ¹⁷⁴

The Confucian tradition has determined the prescription of the law [of filial piety] and the duties derived from it toward our parents, our country, those close to us, and the entire human race and, in the first place, toward God, the Supreme, our Creator. These same duties Jesus Christ has divinely prescribed in revealing to us authentically the way of "our Father who is in heaven"; he has sent us the "Spirit of the Father," which is his own Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Son of the eternal Father. ¹⁷⁵

The Confucian spirit led me to see the evident superiority of Christianity, as three centuries ago it led the minister of state Paul Siu [Xu].'⁷⁶

In Paul Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), a Confucian scholar of the late Ming period converted to Christianity by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), Lu Zhengxiang saw a prototype of his own life. "A Mandarin

¹³ Wu Ching-hiung, *Dom Lou*, 29-30, 41.

¹⁴ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 51, 54.

¹⁷⁵ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *La rencontre entre humanités*, 136-37. On the relationship between Chinese filial piety and Christian faith as interpreted by Lu Zhengxiang, cf. also Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 299-311.

¹⁶ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 52.

Christian like his illustrious predecessor, the diplomat Paul Siu-Koang k'i [Xu Guangqi], he created the ideal of the wise man in all its humility and in all its grandeur."¹⁷⁸ Writing about Xu Guangqi, Lu Zhengxiang referred to him as this "great figure of a statesman and a Christian" for whom he harbored a "fervent admiration, . . . tried to follow in his footsteps,"¹⁸ proposing him as an example of a successful encounter between Confucianism and Christianity.

The same Confucian spirit that had led him to accept the Christian message led him, after the untimely death of his wife in 1926, to embrace the next phase of his Christian-Confucian journey, "withdrawal from the world" to a monastery, there to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict, which was full of implicit references to Confucian ethics. "To summarize in one stroke [Dom Lu's] physiognomy, I would simply say that he was 'Benedictine' even before knowing the Rule of St. Benedict. The good God had formed Dom Lou [Lu] at the school of Confucius in the domain of the natural life and of culture, preparing him to embrace and to live fully the monastic life on the plane of grace and of the spirit. In his political career as in his family life he was inspired, as if naturally, by the principles of discretion and of strength that characterize the spirit of St. Benedict. In his monastic life he lived this spirit fully."¹⁷⁹

If his wife's death was the immediate cause of his entrance into the monastery, as many biographers claim, the deeper reasons behind his decision were related to his spiritual persona, shaped by the multifaceted spirituality of China, and his political persona, formed by Confucian ethics. Lu's sense of "transcendent consciousness" drew him to pursue a spiritual life beyond the world's secularity and to withdraw from the political scene at a time when the conditions for proper and effective political action were no longer certain.¹⁸⁰

Lu first thought of entering Maredsous, but then, having read the missionary magazine of Saint-André, the *Bulletin des Missions*, and having heard of the abbey's interest in China, he contacted Abbot

"Artus, "Homage au révérendissime père dom Lou Tseng-tsiang," 25.

¹⁷⁸ Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *La vie et les œuvres du grand chrétien chinois Paul Siu Koang-k'i* [Lophem-lez-Bruges: Abbaye de Saint-André, [1934]], 7, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Vu Ching-hiung, *Dom Lou*, 61-62.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 261-80.

Nève and made his first visit to Bruges in May 1927, with the intention of becoming a Benedictine oblate."¹⁸² The abbot, however, made an alternate proposal, and a few months later, on 4 October 1927, at the age of fifty-six, René Lu Zhengxiang received the monastic habit. That simple but well-attended ceremony was the beginning of the monastic life of a man who immediately became "a glory of the abbey."¹⁸² On 14 January 1928 he began his novitiate, receiving the monastic name of Pierre-Célestin. Like the pope in the Middle Ages who "made the great refusal," resigning the papacy to retire to a monastery, this Chinese diplomat was now leaving the political world for a secluded life in a monastery. In his wish to be an authentic follower of the way traced by Benedict, the years of his monastic formation were indeed characterized by withdrawal and humility, the monastic virtue par excellence. Two of his brother monks at Saint-André testified to this.

The presence of Dom Lou [Lu] in the Saint-André cloister was a presence of humility and effacement. His perfect submission to the will of his superiors revealed how profound was his virtue of humility. All who knew him know to what an extent this virtue was incarnated in his person.¹⁸³

He was of an extraordinary docility for his age and experience. He accepted the monastic life as a whole, without voicing the least remark or criticism of an institution, the venerable character of which commanded his respect. . . . He was present with the other novices at the talks, where he enjoyed especially the commentaries on the holy Rule. He wanted to continue to be present at the instructions for novices even when his novitiate time was already ended.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² When he was ordained to the priesthood in 1935, he said: "Eight years ago the only reason I came to Saint-André was to seek the silence and peace I needed. I aspired to nothing other than monastic life as a claustral oblate." Cited in Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:200.

¹⁸³ Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:199. A description of the ceremony, along with a photo of the group of postulants and novices, can be found in Monestier, "The Monk Lu Cheng-Hsiang," 11-13.

¹⁸⁴ Papeians de Morchoven, *L'abbaye de Saint-André Zevenkerken*, 2:199.
¹ "Artus, "Hommage au révérendissime père dom Lou Tseng-tsiang," 29.

Despite this, and primarily thanks to Édouard Neut, the editor of the mission magazine of the abbey and also Lu's secretary at the time, from the day of his entrance into the monastery newspapers and magazines did not cease to draw attention to each of the stages of his monastic life. On 15 January 1929 Br. Pierre-Célestin made his firstvows, then, on 15 January 1932 his solemn monastic profession, having received the tonsure a few days before. The most important and magnificent ceremony was his priestly ordination on 29 June 1935. It was presided over by Archbishop Celso Costantini, former apostolic delegate in China, and attended by numerous distinguished guests from the ecclesiastical, monastic, political, and diplomatic worlds.¹⁸⁵ The solemnity of the ceremony was repeated again a decade later, when Fr. Pierre-Célestin was blessed as the titular abbot of Saint-Pierre in Ghent.¹⁸⁶

After his priestly ordination Fr. Pierre-Célestin accepted several invitations to lecture on his human and spiritual journey, on the church in China, and on the role of Christianity in its encounter with other civilizations. He sought various ways to strengthen relations between China and the Vatican and he continued to take an interest in the political, social, and moral situation of his homeland and of his new country, Belgium.¹⁸⁷ This is not surprising, given the prominence of the person who had entered the monastery and the resonance that his word could have in cultural, political, and diplomatic circles. What seems to be behind these public interventions, however, are the requests made by his superiors and his secretary more than his personal desire. That is the opinion of scholars who have carefully studied the written materials pertaining to Lu Zhengxiang. "When Lou [Lu] entered the monastery, he intended to lead a quiet life of prayer and meditation, but his social prestige and position had been so important and public that it would be difficult to expect people to respect his monastic seclusion. Even his superiors wanted him

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Les solennités de l'ordination sacerdotale du r. p. dom Pierre-Célestin Lou ISeng-Tsiang O.S.B. Abbaye de Saint-André, le 29 juin 1935 (n.p.: n.p., 11935)]*.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *La bénédiction abbatiale du révérendissime père dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Teng-Tsiang, abbé titulaire de Saint-Pierre de Gand. Abbaye de Saint-André, le samedi 10 août 1946, fête de Saint Laurent (n.p.: n.p., [1946])*.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 321-37.

to maintain contact with all his former international acquaintances in political, diplomatic and cultural circles. In particular Lou's secretary Dom Édouard Neut stimulated Lou to maintain contact with his friends and resume his role in public life by giving lectures and speeches."¹⁸⁸

All this activity, however, was not at the expense of his monastic life, to which he devoted himself faithfully for exactly two decades, until his death on 15 January 1949, the twentieth anniversary of his monastic profession.

The testimony of his Chinese confrere, Thaddée Yang, is especially significant. Immediately after his profession, Br. Pierre-Célestin opened his heart to Thaddée about the meaning of his monastic vocation.

After his profession of vows, he confided to me that his sole ambition was to follow a centuries-old Chinese tradition. "You see, Brother Thaddée," he said, "In the past, when a public servant felt that he had fulfilled his obligations toward the state, he would retire to his native village or to some remote place to spend the rest of his life in contemplation or in communion with nature." . . . "Why then," I asked him, "Do you study Latin and scholastic philosophy and theology? At your venerable age, it must be hard on you." "Between you and me," he answered, "it is only because father abbot and Father Édouard, my spiritual counselor, have talked me into it. You see, Brother Thaddée," he went on after a short pause, "my Confucianist training has taught me never to disappoint people knowingly. I cannot shake off my Confucianist training any more than you can shake off your Buddhist training completely."¹⁸⁹

Liturgy, specifically the *opus Dei* that is at the heart of the monastic life, must have played an important role in the monastic vocation of Lu Zhengxiang. That form of prayer would have been consonant with the ritual dimension of his Confucian education. "Dom Lu found true happiness in Catholic worship, centered on the self-offering of the Son to the Father and celebrated with all the beauty of the Benedictine liturgy. There he discovered the fulfillment of the

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 321.

¹⁸⁹ Yang, "From Buddha to Benedict."

mystery of man's relation to God, a mystery that is foreshadowed in the Confucian ritual of sacrifice to Heaven. Ceremonies that carry such a depth of meaning do not become merely formal ritualism. Liturgical prayer is essentially an opening to God and to humanity."¹⁹⁰

On this key issue of prayer, it is interesting to note that Dom Lu, in addition to *lectio divina* and liturgical prayer, practiced two forms of "meditation" that were typically Chinese. The first is known in Chinese as *jingzuo* "quiet sitting," a practice of Taoist origin but later also used by Buddhists and Confucians. It is oriented to interiority and the purification of mind and heart, and its goal is the fulfillment of one's true nature. That is what Lu Zhengxiang wrote in a notebook that is kept at the Abbey of Saint-André: "Doing *ching-tso* [*jingzuo*] can get rid of the factors that do not belong to God. Practicing *ching-tso* makes my mind pure. The man with a pure mind can keep in close contact with God. This is also said in Christianity. Christ insists on purity of heart, which means a capacity for seeing things in depth. 'Happy the pure of heart, they shall see God' (Matt 5:8). Thus the brightness of human nature can be indeed manifested. After we recognize our human nature clearly, we can gradually come closer to God and understand God. Man's first duty is to know Heaven, the root of our life."¹⁹¹

The second typically Chinese form of meditation that Dom Lu practiced is the daily discipline of introspection and discernment and involves a written record of one's good and bad deeds, called in Chinese *gongguo ge zhi* *Aft*, "record of merits and demerits." This practice of Taoist origin spread throughout China from late imperial times in various syncretic forms and became especially popular among the literati who were attracted by Buddhism. In the archives at Saint-André there is a Chinese paper notebook that belonged to Lu Zhengxiang in which he noted the times when he failed to acquire certain virtues.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: A.D. 600 to 2000* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2007), 413. Cf. also the reflections of Lu Zhengxiang on the Catholic liturgy in Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 52ff.

¹⁹¹ Cited in Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 314.

¹⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 318, esp. n. 100.

Apart from his numerous letters, which are yet to be studied, it is especially in his work about the history and characteristics of Benedictine monasticism, *A Brief History of the Benedictine Order*, written in Chinese, and in some pages of his *Souvenirs et pensées*, that we find reflections on monasticism's role in renewing the moral and spiritual life of the church and of European society. He had no hesitation in proposing the "monastic model" of the Rule of St. Benedict, which he never tired of sending to his many friends in China, and the spirituality of Benedictine monastic life as sources for the renewal of ancient Chinese culture: "I should like to invite my compatriots to make a brief stay in the guesthouse of the Abbey of Saint-André, and I should like to say to them: 'Read the Rule of St. Benedict, observe the family life which we lead, see how we conceive and organize prayer and work, and study how we Chinese might be able to adopt that Rule, which is a synthesis of Christianity, and to introduce it and to apply it among our people.' . . . The Rule of St. Benedict will not fail, in the hour chosen by Providence, to be understood by the East, to be admired and loved among our people and to be practised by them."¹⁹³

In Lu Zhengxiang's mind, however, the biggest contribution that Benedictine monasticism could make to China was spreading Christianity in the land of his birth.

What are the vocation and the function of Benedictine monasticism in developing the foundation of the church in China? . . . The Benedictine monastery is not a tomb. It is not even a hermitage. It is a family, a "*familia*," and one of the most ancient and most characteristic institutions of the great family of God which is called the Catholic Church. For this reason it is particularly well qualified to give the hierarchy and diocesan clergy of China, and at the same time Chinese society, an active, *familiar* and religious assistance, a fraternal support, which will

¹⁹³ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 92, 94. Regarding this similarity between life in a Benedictine monastery and life in a Chinese family guided by the principle of "filial piety," and regarding "Confucian" elements in the Rule of St. Benedict (such as modesty, honesty, self-discipline and ritual), see the first pages of Lu Zhengxiang, *Benduhui shilüe*, and Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 284-87.

only be complete when Benedictine monasticism has gained within my country sufficient suitable recruits for the spirit of Saint Benedict to take root among the élite of our best minds and our greatest hearts.¹⁹⁴

Fr. Lu takes his reflection a step further by comparing the respective- spiritual paths of Buddhist and Christian monasticism, doing so with a bold reference to his own spiritual journey.

At present Chinese monasticism is Buddhist. What would our country be today if that monasticism had been Benedictine? . . . In the seventh century of the Christian era, a Chinese Buddhist monk, wishing to give true monasticism to his country, left for the West and lived for seventeen years in the monasteries of India, fully acquainting himself with their doctrines and traditions, their observances and the whole of their life. After that he returned to China, assisting powerfully in giving to Buddhist monasticism an impulse which, [having] become irresistible, was to bring about the spread of Buddhism into all the provinces of the whole country. This monk was called Hsüan Tsang [Xuanzang, 602—644]. You may be assured that I have meditated long on the vocation of Hsüan Tsang; and today I cannot refrain from telling you the question which many are asking themselves about us in my country: "Is Benedictine monasticism inferior or superior to Buddhist monasticism?" One thing is certain, and that is that Buddhist monasticism in China has been the great instrument of the spread of Buddhism through the entire country. Is Benedictine monasticism in a position to take part on the same scale in spreading and establishing Christianity through the whole of China—to take a part of which the apostolic result would be incalculable. . . . I am not worthy to be a Benedictine Hsüan Tsang, but perhaps, during my lifetime or after my death, the Lord will cause his glory to shine so much the more because, among so many millions of Chinese, to help in bringing the Rule of St. Benedict to China, he has been willing to recruit one weak old man.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and of Christ*, 91-92.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92, 95-96. In a letter Lu Zhengxiang wrote to Archbishop Stanislaus Luo Guang, he stated that becoming a "Christian Xuanzang" was not his idea, but that of his secretary Édouard Neut (cf. the letter of 17 January 1944, cited in Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 322-23). On his being identified as a

In one of his letters, Theodore Nève says that he asked Pierre-Célestin Lu if he thought Christian monasticism should undergo some modifications in China. The position of this "fundamentalist" Chinese monk seems to ignore, among other things, the fact that Buddhist monasticism took root in China and spread with surprising rapidity because of its willingness to change some of its forms. "I have consulted Br. Pierre-Célestin Lou about the possible modifications to be introduced into Benedictine life to adapt it to the needs of today's China. He told me not to introduce anything. He hopes that we will give monasticism to China as it exists in the West, except for some details. He says that China is trying much more to raise itself by adopting European customs than to remain fixed in ancestral ways."¹⁹⁶

With a highly symbolic gesture, the city of Ghent offered Fr. Pierre-Célestin, at the time of his blessing as titular abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre in 1946, a block of granite from the ancient cloister.

The city of Ghent offered me a stone extracted from the foundations of the ancient Belgian abbey, so that it may become the first stone of the foundations of a new abbey, dedicated also to the prince of the apostles and built in our homeland. Circumstances so far have not permitted me to transport this foundation stone to China, which is destined to be laid most probably near Peking, on some hill that the Lord himself will indicate to us when the moment for building will have arrived. At the time when God called me to the monastic life, the Abbey of Saint-André-les-Bruges was founding in China, in the province of Setchwan [Sichuan], the first Benedictine cloister, the starting point of Benedictine monasticism in our country. This monastic hearth will bring a very efficacious fraternal cooperation when the providential hour arrives in which the thirteen-centuries-old Abbey of Saint-Pierre in Ghent will be reborn in China, of which a Chinese has become the titular eighty-first abbot.¹⁹⁷

"Benedictine Xuanzang," cf. also a letter he wrote a month earlier to Pope Pius XI, 17 December 1943, cited in Chang Shu-chin, "When Confucius Meets Benedictus," 355.

⁹⁶ Letter of T. Nève to J. Joliet, 27 March 1931, in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 207.

⁹⁷ Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *La rencontre entre humanités*, 151-52.

The story of a third Chinese Benedictine is one of unwavering fidelity to Christ and to his church during the first three decades of the People's Republic of China, when Chinese Christians were subjected to persecution.¹⁹⁸

Br.- Pierre Zhou Bangjiu was born in 1926 in Suining, Sichuan province. In August 1938, when he was twelve years old, he was received as a postulant at the monastery of Xishan. After more than a decade of study and spiritual formation he was admitted to the novitiate on 15 October 1949 and a year later, on 15 October 1950, he made his first monastic profession.

When the Communist storm struck, and the Benedictine community of Xishan moved to Chengdu, BL Pierre proved his faithful adherence to the Catholic Church on more than one occasion, not hesitating to speak against and using whatever means he had to combat the "Three Selves" movement, which aimed to establish a Chinese church independent of the universal church and free of all ties to papal authority. Br. Pierre gave his most courageous verbal and public testimony on 4 November 1951, when he was called to clarify his position in front of the "Three Selves" committee and a popular assembly of a few hundred people. Accused of being a collaborator of the imperialists and, as a follower of the Christian religion, of possessing retrograde and reactionary thinking, this twenty-five-year-old man, with a "spirit completely serene" and a "soul imbued with the truth of Jesus and his inexhaustible goodness," testified to his absolute and unyielding faith in Jesus Christ and declared without hesitation his adherence to the Catholic Church.¹⁹⁹ The following is the essence of his impassioned profession:

¹⁹⁸ The main source for reconstructing the life of Br. Pierre Zhou is his autobiography: Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East*, which is also published in French and Chinese. Cf. also Zhou Bangjiu, "A Skiff Cuts through the Waves. A Discourse on October 15, 2000," <http://www.valyermo.com/monks/peter.html>, accessed 21 August 2013.

¹⁹⁹ The text of this declaration appears in a number of publications: cf. Raphaël Vinciarelli, "Profession de foi d'un jeune moine bénédictin chinois," CSA 31 (1952): 135-39; Vinciarelli, "Témoin du Christ en Chine communiste," 209-13; Pierre Zhou Bangjiu, *L'aube se lève à l'Est. Récit d'un moine bénédictin chinois emprisonné pendant 26 ans dans les camps de la Chine communiste au nom de la foi* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 2000), 271-78 (with some variations from the text of 1952).

If you say that I have too much veneration for the "foreigners" and that I place too much trust in them, to the point of allowing myself to be deceived by them, then learn that these "foreigners" that you speak of for me are none other than Jesus Christ, a Jew, founder of the Catholic religion. I not only believe in him, but moreover I adore him and desire nothing else but to live thanks to him and for him. If you say that I am drugged by the "imperialist" to the point of making myself his "pack hound," then learn that this "imperialist" is none other than him, the Jew Jesus Christ, whom no one can overcome. Now my only regret is that I have not yet reached a full likeness to Christ and have not yet known the complete transformation to become a true "pack hound" of Christ.²⁰⁰

In April 1952, after all the European monks had been forced to leave the community, Br. Pierre returned to live in his father's house in Suining, helping him in his optical shop. A year later, in 1953, he returned to Chengdu to resume contact with the forces that opposed the independence movement. "I lived a hard life; however, I did not become discouraged, nor did my will weaken."²⁰¹ During those months he was still able to make a retreat at the Trappist monastery in Nibatuo and to look for ways, all of which proved unworkable, to flee to Hong Kong.²⁰²

The situation worsened further when in November 1955 Br. Pierre was arrested for counterrevolutionary crimes and held in prison in the same city of Chengdu. During that difficult time he kept his faith alive and nourished his spiritual life by praying the liturgical and devotional prayers he had learned in the monastery, as he wrote: "I began to draw on the firm foundation of my prayer life established during the years of my life in the monastery to console and strengthen my inner resolve. Each day I recited the necessary prayers which I had chosen by myself in the beginning of the fifties and had memorized—Compline and the daily fixed parts of Holy Mass. At different times, I raised my soul to Our Savior to adore and receive him spiritually in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Whenever

²⁰⁰ Zhou Bangjiu, *L'aube se lève à l'Est*, 277.

²⁰¹ Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East*, 29.

²⁰² Cf. Zhou Bangjiu, "Chine: une lettre émouvante," CSA 43-44 (1955): 165.

possible, I recited all the fifteen mysteries of the rosary in place of the Divine Office. I used any opportunity or place to pray." ²⁰³

In 1958 he was sentenced to twenty years in prison and transferred to a re-education labor camp, known in Chinese as *a laogai*, on the outskirts of Chengdu and forced to work in the local steel factory. Two years later there was another transfer. From 1960 to 1971 he was interned in the Nanchong Provincial Prison number 1, a maximum security prison for young criminals. Interrogation, torture, and humiliation became more violent and more frequent, but the steadfast resistance of Br. Pierre continued to be nourished by his deep faith, fervent prayer, and the writing of poetry. The isolation of his prison cell became for him a new monastic cell, as he wrote: "With each day totally at my disposal in the peaceful and secluded surroundings, I was offered an excellent opportunity for prayer and meditation. Thus this prison cubicle became my monastic cell and I enjoyed both peace and happiness. I gave no thought to life or death, to good or bad fortune. I entrusted my destiny to the care of my heavenly Father." ²⁰⁴

In 1966, the beginning of the terrible "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," he was sentenced to an additional five years in prison and then transferred to the labor camp of Peng'an in 1971. Thanks to the political changes that began to be implemented at the end of 1978, the conditions of his life "began to change and improved considerably," ²⁰⁵ as he himself wrote. In this calmer climate he was also able to resume his study of English and French.

Finally released in July 1981 after twenty-six years of detention, Br. Pierre initially returned to live with his brother's family in Suining. However, the hostility he experienced, especially from those in the church who had joined the resurrected Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, ²⁰⁶ convinced him to seek a way to leave China as soon as possible. He was able to resume contact with the rest of the corn-

^{2,3} Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East*, 37.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁰⁶ The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, an organization created with the aim of supporting the "Three-Selfs" policy of the Chinese government (self-governance, self-support, self-propagation) and responsible for the management and

munity of Xishan-Chengdu who were exiled in the United States, and at the end of 1984 he was able to become part of the community of the priory of St. Andrew in Valyermo: "Thus the thirty-three-year struggle was ended. My long-cherished wish and fond dream of leaving China to rejoin my monastic community finally became a reality. I was beside myself with joy."²⁰⁷

The German Benedictines and the Mission of Yanji

In the same "axial age," if we may thus refer to the 1920s, that saw the beginning of the Benedictine presence on Chinese soil, German Benedictine missionaries also arrived in northern China. Their presence in that vast and promising field for the sowing of the Gospel that is China is not surprising.²⁰⁸ Founded as the Missionary Institute of St. Joseph in Reichenbach-am-Regen, Bavaria, in 1884 by Andreas Amrhein (1844-1927), a Benedictine monk of the Abbey of Beuron with high missionary ideals, the institute moved to Emming in 1887, where the monastery took the name of the local chapel dedicated to St. Ottilia (or Odilia of Alsace, 660-720, foundress and first abbess of the Monastery of Hohenburg). The community grew rapidly, and in the same year, 1887, the first group of missionaries was sent to southeastern Africa. The missionary Benedictines of Saint Ottilien were recognized as a congregation in 1896 and were affiliated with the Benedictine Confederation in 1904. From the very beginning

control of the Catholic Church, was founded on 2 August 1957. Dismantled in the years of the Cultural Revolution, it was officially restored in May 1980.

²⁰⁷ Zhou Bangjiu, *Dawn Breaks in the East*, 129.

²⁰⁸ The sources I consulted for this brief account of the history of this Benedictine family in China are Theodor Breher, *Erntegarben vom Acker der Yenki-Mission, Mandschurei, den Wohltättern u. Freunden gebunden* (Yenki: Bischöfliche Missionsdruckerei, 1937); *Tatsachenbericht aus dem Missionsgebiet Yenki (Mandschurei)* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1954); Adelhard Kaspar and Placidus Berger, eds., *Hwan gab. 60 Jahre Benediktinermission in Korea und in der Mandschurei* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1973), esp. chap. 3: "Yenki," 157-97; Johannes Mahr, *Aufgehobene Häuser. Missionsbenediktinerin Ostasien*, 3 vols. (Sankt Ottilien: EOS, 2009), esp. vol. 2: *Die Abteien Tokwon und Yenki*; Jeremias Schröder, "The Benedictines in China," 15-19. Occasional accounts of the Chinese mission can also be found in the congregation's periodical, *Missions-Blätter von St. Ottilien*.

Christian Monks on Chinese Soil

A History of Monastic Missions to China

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Appendix 2

"The Monastery Will Be a Chinese House": Three Texts of Jehan Joliet

"A Project for a Chinese Monastery" (1922)

[A.] *Guiding Ideas*

The intention is to found a monastery with the Divine Office and prayer and, for work, principally intellectual work.¹

Apart from the interest in public prayer prayed in China by Chinese, from this follow developments and fruits for the conversion and the christianization of China. Education is something laborious and long, all the more so that education which is the Christian life, and even more so when it is a matter of an entire people. Of course, God can do everything, but we see always and even at the beginning by the conversion of the Roman Empire that he works slowly, progressively, and as if submitting himself to the natural law of mankind. Christianity, substantially complete at the moment of conversion, grows strong and takes root so as to embrace the whole man and all of society. Then, by a truly divine condescension, God does not despise any man or race; he not only permits but wants the growth

¹ Translation of the manuscript *Projet de monastère chinois*, preserved in the archives of the Benedictine Abbey of Sint-Andries in Bruges (ASA, Chine, Joliet 4 [Personalia]). The third and final part of the manuscript ("Historique du projet") has been left out of the present translation. As stated in the first lines of the manuscript, this is a transcription of Jehan Joliet's original, dated 30 May 1922. The same text is repeated almost entirely in a letter of J. Joliet to the abbot primate, F. von Stotzingen, dated 30 May 1926, cited in Henri-Philippe Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet (1870-1937). Un projet de monachisme bénédictin chinois* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 265-67. The expressions in italics in the text are underlined in the manuscript.

of every Christian body to embrace its natural characteristics. For each person or each Christian people there is a harmonious coupling of the natural and the supernatural, and both profit from this.

Let us pass to concrete things: the conversion of *pagan Chinese* is to be made by *Christian Europeans*; the result to be obtained is the composite *Chinese Christian*. On both sides there has been a centuries-old association with interpenetration of the natural element with the religious. Because of this there is a great risk of imposing on the Chinese a European Christianity; and then the harmonious coupling will be missing. On the other hand, there is the opposite danger of pruning European Christianity too much out of excessive respect for the Chinese mentality.

The principal place where these elements can be harmoniously fused is the monastery. Because of its strong discipline and complete Christianity, and because of its solitude and retreat from the masses, Christianity can be grafted in peace and leisure on the old Chinese trunk. With Chinese and European monks living together in the fraternity of the cloister, Chinese culture will be sifted almost unnoticeably and imperceptibly from its pagan tares, while the seeds providentially deposited in it will come to bloom in Christianity. At the same time Chinese literature will be the object of a long historical and scientific scrutiny so as to bring it closer to Christianity and penetrate it with its influence. The periodical of the Kiangnan [Jiangnan] mission *L'École en Chine* noted with disappointment: Catholic Chinese literature is meager; moreover it is almost exclusively in a style very, indeed excessively, popular. This is an evil of the beginnings, which Greece and Rome have known, but the perfidious efforts of Julian and the resistance of Gregories and Basils show well how important it is that Christianity not remain at the margins of the national culture. In the monastery or under its influence writers will be formed who will not make simple translations or hasty adaptations, but will rethink

Chinese the immutable Christian truths and thus will make them penetrate more deeply among their compatriots.

This [monastery] will be a center of religious life where the best and the most highly educated local Christians will be able to come to strengthen and revive their faith. This will also be a hospitable center for all Chinese, who will find there sincere love and a knowledge of

all that makes for the glory and character of their civilization. Christians in China are for the most part déclassé or very insignificant people, but God has also the right, and we have the duty to realize this right, to the worship of the great and the cultured. The monastery will show them Christianity free of all European protection, acting and expanding in a Chinese atmosphere.

With resurgence of nationalism all over the world and in China, ancient difficulties will become exacerbated. The most reverend father general of the Jesuits, in two letters of 1918 and 1919, has shown very well the special danger for China. The great number of conversions, which has doubled the Christian population in less than twenty years, makes the problem even more urgent. A Chinese monastery will contribute slowly and surely to give legitimate satisfaction to the mounting aspirations of Christians to diminish the foreign portion in their religion before it is carried out by force. It will, at the same time, increase their faith and their union with Rome.

Certain pages of the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* of Benedict XV appear to regard China especially, and the foundation outlined here seems to respond to the aim of the Holy See.

There are peoples already illuminated maturely by the Gospel, who have reached such a degree of civilization that in the variety of arts and sciences they vaunt eminent men, yet after several centuries of the influence of the Gospel and of the church they still do not have bishops to govern them or priests who may guide efficaciously their fellow-citizens. . . . It is not enough that they have a native clergy of whatever kind, considered to be of an inferior order... .

It is not a case of spreading a human empire, but that of Christ, of procuring clients for the human fatherland, but citizens of the heavenly one. . . . Men, however barbarian and savage, understand well what it is that the missionary wants and demands from them, and have an extremely fine sense if he seeks something other than their spiritual good. If the missionary in some way works for terrestrial interests, if he is not exclusively an apostle, but seems to contribute also to the interests of his homeland, very soon all his zeal will give grave offense to the population and will disseminate the opinion that the Christian religion is limited to a certain foreign nation, so that in embracing it, one has the impression of passing under

the protection and dependence of a foreign country, losing thus one's own nationality. . . . One must not be content in any way with a smattering of knowledge of the language, but of knowing it so as to be able to speak it correctly and elegantly. Since the missionary is a debtor to all, to the illiterate as to the intellectuals, . . . by his perfect knowledge of the language he must - 'preserve his own dignity, even when he is asked to deal with high functionaries and is invited to the meetings of the learned.'²

B. *The Mode for Carrying This Out*

Successive indications of Providence will show the road to follow, but here I will make some basic comments on the stages that quite naturally present themselves.

1) *Recognition*. Since the enterprise is new and difficult, following authoritative and pressing advice, some preliminary steps are indispensable. Before deciding anything, two or three monks would pass six months or more in China, beginning to study the language, making contact with the people and familiarizing themselves with the tasks, examining the conditions of life, the chances of recruitment, and the like. Only after this stage, and with full agreement of the episcopal authority, will it be decided where and in what conditions this foundation will be made.

2) *The first establishment*. This will be made with money and monks from Europe. The low prices in China will mean that it will be possible at once to build a kind of monastery for twelve to twenty monks, so as to be from the beginning in an environment appro-

² Here the author cites in French, and not always literally, some passages of the apostolic letter on missionary activity in the world *Maximum Illud*, promulgated by Pope Benedict XV on 30 November 1919. Cf. the original text in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 11 (1919): 440-55, especially 445-49 for the passages quoted here. In the letter addressed to F. von Stotzingen of 30 May 1926 (cf. *supra*, p. 321, n. 1) immediately after mentioning *Maximum Illud*, Joliet adds: "My joy became even greater and my gratitude to God more lively at reading about the recent encyclical of His Holiness Pius XI on the missions. The precision, insistence, and vigor of the apostolic recommendations fulfill all my desires. And it is not without profound emotion that after more than thirty years of waiting I heard the moving appeal made to the superiors of monastic institutes to establish houses in China, among these populations that God has predisposed as if naturally to the contemplative life." Cited in Delcourt, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 266.

appropriate to our life. The number of recruits from Europe will be what God wants, but in any case, they should be few. First of all, it is to be noted that few will want this kind of life, will want to embrace resolutely all of Chinese culture, except sin; then, it is desirable that the Chinese monks not feel they are in a milieu too full of foreigners. For recruitment, as for financial resources, after the original establishment, for which help from France and from Europe is counted upon, it will depend on China and especially on Providence.

3/ *The development.* This will be as God wants. Authoritative voices, however, lead us prudently to hope for vocations among many young Chinese who have a taste for studies. Missionaries in Cheli [Zhili], in Kiangnan [Jiangnan], in Sechuen [Sichuan] consider recruitment guaranteed. Msgr. de Guébriant, with his vast experience, foretells success.³ Chinese voices speak similarly. It is to be hoped that there will be gifts of books for the Chinese library, which will be the only luxury, but a necessary one for the monastery. Even as regards money, there are some very generous wealthy Chinese Christians. We hope that the monastery with its prominent Chinese character will especially attract their munificence. Probably there will also be some benefactors among the members of the European colony of the Far East. Thus the monastery, once founded thanks to foreigners, will be, in every aspect, a Chinese house.

"A Monastic Task" (1928)

. . . The monks who at present are attempting to plant monastic life in China do not come either to play a role or to justify a program.⁴ The monastery is a place where Christians come together for prayer, retreat, and work, and to develop in peace their natural and supernatural faculties. Their external flourishing will be regulated by Providence. It happens, however, that by its very existence and

³ Jean-Baptiste Budes de Guébriant (1860–1935) was vicar apostolic of Kientchang (Jianchang) from 1910 to 1916 and of Canton (Guangzhou) from 1916 to 1921. In 1919 he was apostolic visitator in China. In 1921 he became superior general of MEP

⁴ Partial translation of Jehan Joliet, "Un rayon d'espérance en Chine," *La vie intellectuelle* (December 1928): 5–23, republished with the title "Une tâche monastique," BM 10 (1930), supp. no. 1: *Le Courrier monastique chinois*, 15*–25*, also as a separate offprint.

in its fundamental constitution the monastery can make a real contribution to the immense effort for peace in China.

I have said that the success of every initiative of drawing closer or of union requires a precondition, treatment as equals. My thoughts are not to be misconstrued: this treatment as equals is not a tactic, a measure of prudence or of opportunity, an artifice to win goodwill. No, this is the outward manifestation of the human and Christian conviction that this equality really exists. Now, a monastery is an absurdity if it does not foster the radical equality of its members.

This is true, it will be said, of every religious house, and even of many other associations. Nevertheless, an integral element of monastic life peremptorily reinforces this equality: stability in the local context. When a monastery is fully constituted, it is autonomous, it recruits its members locally, and it chooses its own superior. A monastery in China is destined by fate to become a Chinese monastery or to disappear if the recruitment does not occur. It is not a European establishment with a limited addition of Chinese members or a play of rules that ensure the preponderance or the direction of foreign monks. Automatically, and the sooner the better, the house will become truly Chinese; even if there is a certain inequality and preference, it can be said that it will be in favor of the Chinese and not against them. . . . There is, thus, assurance of a favorable terrain, of an acceptable basis for collaboration. Neither for the monks themselves, nor for its guests, nor for the public is the monastery a fortress of foreign influence; it is autochthonous. It is not a question of creating a cyst on the Chinese body, but rather of living from the same sap and the same blood.

What is lacking for many works is time and tranquility. This double favor is assured by the monastic life. Since the monks do not exercise a regular ministry outside, but normally remain in the cloister all their life, where they have the resources of a library, they enjoy the conditions of long and profound study without having to hasten its stages. For linguistic, historical, philosophical, and religious studies, especially useful for a better understanding of the two civilizations, Western and Chinese, we can therefore hope for good results (naturally, this does not guarantee either intelligence or work). Another very necessary advantage in this kind of work is cordial

and daily collaboration. It is necessary that in such delicate matters the work of one be verified and sustained by that of others, without which there is the risk that instead of differences being attenuated and harmonized, they will be made more acute and rendered irrecóncilable. Such collaboration is found naturally in the cloister and will be aided also by contact with guests, whose assiduous presence is one of the traits of Benedictine monasticism. . . .

The monastery, [however], is not an academy or a meeting place of intellectuals; the vast majority of monks will have no part in this work. Only, in accordance with the tradition of the order, and, it seems, following the signs of present circumstances in China, it can be foreseen that in the future monastery fruitful intellectual activity will have a special place.

. . . The monastery appears as a place favorable to the exploration of the Chinese enigma. In fact, we will approach this mystery in its totality through fraternal life led in common. And if we should ever contribute to appreciating it, this will be much more the fruit of our simple monastic life than the result of our research and of our historical works.

. . . We Christians, who believe that Christ has received all nations as his inheritance, feel deeply that something is lacking in the fullness of the body of Jesus Christ as long as all peoples have not entered it. It is not only a question of numbers and because God wants the salvation of all people, but because each man and every people have their own beauty, which will make the beauty of others and the harmony of all shine the more. Then, when the divided West is faced by the enormous mass of Chinese, it seems impossible to those who believe in the unity of creation and the redemption of the entire human race, that such a multitude of such an ancient civilization has nothing to bring to the church except its numbers. If we are so proud of our quality as whites, are there not among the yellow race too natural virtues, which, made fertile by the blood of Christ, will bring new luster to the church of tomorrow? . . .

A young man of Canton, particularly brilliant, a zealous Catholic and convinced about Western advantages, methods, and sciences, one day said to me, in talking about missionaries: "But why do they want to westernize us? No, let the world continue to have its different kinds

of beauty. It is not a question of westernizing China, no more than that of orientalizing Europe." If relations with other peoples are well conducted, they should make us more human, more Catholic, I dare to say, while preserving and even strengthening our particular racial qualities, rendered by them finer, more gracious. The European monks present in a Chinese monastery from the beginning, hence, will know that they personally have things to gain and to learn from their Chinese brothers, and they will obtain this gain by the practice of common life. Then, apart from the solely spiritual benefit of the monastic life, which comes from God, there will no longer be benefactors and those who receive benefactions, but a full and true equality and liberty servants of the same Lord who does not know the barriers of nations. . . .

We are monks and we come to disseminate in the land of China the thousand-year-old Western monastic work. The times have changed and the peoples are different. Here there are no barbarians to civilize or nomads to settle. We come to a people of a high and ancient civilization, the most numerous and most compact that earth has known. Following our own vocation as monks we come to take root in its soil, to assimilate and incorporate ourselves into that [Chinese] race and there [in China] to lead our life, ancient and always the same, but supple, adapting ourselves to a new environment. That is the reason and the end of our monastic vocation, and not in erudite research or in lofty problems of the drawing together of civilizations. If now this dissemination and its consequences for Chinese monasticism are to be realized in some way, this would be a great honor and a serene joy for the sons of St. Benedict, of having contributed however little to bring not only to China, but to relations between China and the West a little of that *Pax* that is their motto.

"Monastic Formation in China" (1930)

Since the thirteenth century all the various religious orders and the new congregations have adopted as something natural a division [of the monks] into two categories and the institution of lay members.' This responds to their vocation. In fact, once there is specialization,

^sTranslation of Jehan Joliet, *Notes sur les études et la distinction des moines de chœur et convers dans le monastère chinois*, 3 September 1930, reproduced in Del-

be it preaching, education, care of the sick, or even special consecration to ritual prayer, it becomes useful and often necessary to have assistants vowed to the great and indispensable material services. In the enthusiasm of a beginning or of youth, under the personal influence and the stimulating example of the founder, there exists no doubt a heroic age, when each one gives himself to whatever work comes up, but neither the health of the members, nor good order, nor the institute's progress permit this to become the ordinary regime.

Up until the twelfth century it was different in the many monasteries of the Christian world. Primitive monastic rules make no provision for lay brothers. This is understandable: monks entered a new family, this time religious, to occupy themselves with God' under the direction of the abbot. Every monk can and should occupy himself with God. In the great communities, then, there inevitably arise certain specializations, the germ of a division of work. Thus, even the Rule of St. Benedict provides that the cellarer be exempted from kitchen work' and that the cooks for the guests remain one year at their task.⁶ Ten to twenty persons can live in common as if in an enlarged family under the immediate and living direction of the father [abbot]. Make it a hundred or more, and material and moral ruin comes quickly. It is necessary to use the members' abilities, not to waste them, to favor their development. It would have truly been too bad for the church of God and for the stomach of the religious if St. Bernard or St. Thomas had taken their turn in the kitchen. Similarly, a good cellarer in a large house is a rare bird. Would you send the soloist to run after the cows in muddy fields?

Nevertheless, if there was a division of work in the monastic order, while for many centuries it remained faithful to not having a special and exclusive vocation, this was done *tot bettet ox fot worse to answer* the needs of the day, but without instituting an organic dualism in

court, *Dom Jehan Joliet*, 197-201. The text was sent to Gaston Aubourg, librarian at Solesmes, with whom Joliet had been corresponding for several years.

⁶ The Latin phrase, quite common in monastic literature, is *vacare Deo*, literally, "be empty for God."

⁷ Cf. RB 35.5: "If the community is rather large, the cellarer should be excused from kitchen service."

⁸ Cf. RB 53.17: "Each year, two brothers who can do the work competently are to - be assigned to this kitchen [i.e., the kitchen for the abbot and guests]."

the community. The pressure of various converging circumstances was needed to impose everywhere the institution of lay members.

The prodigious expansion of monasticism, with its landed properties, often situated at a great distance from the monastery, was a factor in this evolution. In such places there were small groups of farmer monks dependent on the mother abbey. Not much was asked for the intellectual culture of the monks, still less of those engaged in agricultural work, isolated for many months or for their entire life from the vivifying atmosphere of the abbey.

During these same centuries in various countries the Romance languages came to be formed, with the progressive abandonment of Latin as the universal language for speaking. Doubtless, from the beginnings there were persons in the monastery who did not speak Latin and especially barbarians and country folk whose Latin was always mediocre and rudimentary. But thanks to the environment, to the daily psalmody, this could go on. Isolate a group of these illiterates in a community of farmer monks, a dead end looms, and the Latin Office becomes impossible. The disappearance of Latin rendered necessary more assiduous studies for those who wanted to speak and understand it. Thus was dug the ditch between clerks and the common folk. This language difficulty rendered the cycle of studies for the priesthood more arduous. The two categories became emphasized automatically: the Latinists more and more destined to the priesthood and the others to our modern lay members.

The final blow to the ancient equality of the monks was given by the example and the success of the new orders, which all had lay members, and rightly, as we have seen at the beginning.

This is not the place to examine in what measure this was a legitimate and desirable development or a deviation and danger for the full blossoming of monasticism without losing its family character and its repugnance at being a utilitarian organization.

At the present time, when it is a question of introducing monasticism in China, it is not superfluous to give thought to healthy conditions for its introduction.

Although China is a highly civilized country, the difference between town and country folk is much less than what it was in Greece and in the Roman Empire and also in many European lands up to

our own days. Like everywhere, of course, city dwellers like to make fun of country bumpkins, but there is a great similarity or uniformity in their clothing, for example. The form and the construction of the houses is similar; schools have always sprung up spontaneously in the most remote countryside. It is also necessary to note that there are no castes, not even a hereditary nobility, much less a plutocracy among us. There is, no doubt, a refinement of language and of manners surpassing ours to mark the multiple distinctions of the social body, but all the same, there is a proximity between all that would repel us, a spirit of equality, an admirably patient tolerance, an innate politeness with a horror of brutal and violent proceedings. Finally, compared to Europe, there is infinitely less arrogance, disdainful or wounding manners, discomfiture when one is not of the same social circle. This means that those [among the Chinese] who would be lay members in Europe possess much more self-composure, social grace, and ease of manner than their Western brothers, and even than many choir religious of our country! Would not then the rigid distinction between the two categories of monks appear especially out of place here?

In China the ancient and contemporary habit is to study patiently to an age where in our country one would be ashamed to be still at a school desk. Even in the lowest class it is not rare to come across a worker, once his work is finished, without shame laboriously deciphering out loud his book. The highly cultured, like everywhere, are there in small numbers, but assuredly it is not here that one would find a monk incapable of signing his name. On the other hand, they do not feel pressured, there is nothing of that feverish haste to gain a year in one's cycle of studies. In fact, if one wants to push them in the Western manner, too often their health suffers, and above all, they don't have the time to assimilate; it is force-feeding, sometimes successful, because of an excellent memory. I have expounded elsewhere the extreme difficulty and the dangers for them of a school education hasty in the European manner.

We monks, then, who by definition do not have for our goal a special concrete work, we who by a thousand-year-old tradition are not pressured, we who are formed slowly and progressively all through our life, why would we want to impose on them [i.e., the Chinese]

a method already out of harmony with our own vocation? Isn't it indicated in such a milieu [i.e., China] to return with confidence to the ancient monastic manner with its six centuries of incomparable splendor? Let us allow time and Providence to act. Let us allow specialization to come about naturally without methodically organizing it. What is wrong if one or another becomes a priest only at the age of fifty? Cases of conscience are not rare and will multiply if God, as one may think, favors religious life here [in China].

[Let us imagine that] a candidate of twenty years and more knocks at the door. In Sze-Chwan [Sichuan] ⁹ at least it is a very rare case that he might have already done European-style secondary studies; it is unheard of, unless he comes from a seminary, that he should know Latin; for the rest, I assume he is intelligent and open. If one holds rigidly to present Western monastic customs, one has three choices in answering him: (a) "Go find your fortune elsewhere; you are beginning too late"; (b) "We will receive you as a lay brother"; (c) "Before entering the novitiate you will have to go to school for three, four, ten years." It is useless to stress how harsh and insolent these answers are. St. Benedict opened the door to him. With daily psalmody and patient studies he learned gradually the Psalter and the usual prayers. At the same time and after, according to his zeal, his capacities, and circumstances, he [the candidate] slowly began to pursue the study of Latin and other subjects. In the case of complete success, this will lead to the priesthood; others will stop along the way; finally, many will pray their whole life long the official prayer [of the church] more with the intention of their heart rather than with their understanding, like many of our religious women in the West.

For all, however, there is a marked advantage, especially for the monastery and for the church in China. We should not be reduced to [the education of] young oblates, who are so slow and so difficult to train. The foundations will never be too deep or the cadres too brot e-for preparing for China the recruitment of monks and, among them, of an intellectual elite rooted in prayer and doctrine.

⁹The central region of China, where the Xishan monastery, of which Jehan Joliet was prior, was located.

Even if the division from the beginning of the novitiate between choir novices and lay novices has only advantages and ought to be put into practice in China, there is a general law that revolutions, abrupt revolutions even, toward the good are dangerous for the equilibrium and the health of a society. It is normal and good that the Chinese church should repeat in part our experiences in Europe, that it advance from stage to stage, that it not become immobilized within limits that perhaps only imperfectly suit it, but remain supple under the direction of holy church and the Holy Spirit so as to produce in the Christian garden its native flowers and fruits in all their beauty.