

# ***Queen Mother of Zhangke: Marian Shrines of the Buyi People in Guizhou***

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*Editor's note: According to the author, this paper is the preliminary result of a National Social Science Foundation Youth project: "A study of Catholicism and social change of the modern Buyi people along the Guizhou-Guangxi-Yunnan borders (1844—1952)." This paper is dedicated to the old seminarian Lin Yu, in gratitude for his sharing of information, faith and his childlike innocence. He passed away on 28 December, 2015, aged 92. His passing reminded us not to tarry in salvaging this kind of "living history."*

**O**ur Lady's Church in Jingjiachong, under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Diocese of Anlong, is situated on the hillsides of Jingjiachong in the northwest of the rural areas of Anlong County, Guizhou Province. The Church is as well-known as the three other churches dedicated to Our Lady: Mother of Mercy Church on mount Jiguanshi in Nanan, belonging to the Catholic Diocese of Chongqing (重慶教區的南岸雞冠石山上的慈母堂); the Cause of Our Joy Church in Luchongguan, belonging to the Catholic Diocese of Guiyang (貴陽教區的鹿冲關吾樂之緣聖母堂); and Our Lady's Church in Xishan, belonging to the Catholic Diocese of Nanchong (南充教區的西山聖母堂). Since the time of the Republic of China, these churches have often been called "the four great pilgrimage destinations among southwestern churches" by numerous Catholics in the southwestern provinces.

Like the other three popular venues for pilgrimages, on 8th September each year—the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady—many Catholics come from various southwestern provinces to Jingjiachong in Anlong to venerate Our Holy Mother and pray for her protection. Believers climb the high staircases of Our Lady's

Mount, from the bottom to the top, passing by six pilgrimage spots, including the Marian shrine of Queen Mother of Zhangke (月弋 可弋 母 皇 聖 母 岩), the Marian grotto of “Infinite Motherly Graciousness,” a series of biographical wall paintings of St. Cao Guiying, Our Lady’s Church, Our Lady’s Tower and the cross on the top of Our Lady’s Mount.

### **1. The Marian Shrine of the Queen Mother of Zhangke: The Establishment of the Holy and Secular Worlds of the Buyi—The Diocese of Anlong and the Ancient Kingdom of Zhangke**

The whole Marian monument is eight metres tall, and five metres wide. At the top is an image of the Madonna and child. Our Lady is seated on a circular cloud relief sculpture in the Chinese style, her arms holding the child Jesus. The date “1917” was inscribed below the image. Under the circular relief sculpture and from right to left, the big words “Queen Mother of Zhangke” were inscribed horizontally, each of them surrounded by a diamond-shaped box. Below this horizontal inscription and in the middle, two more rows of words can be seen. The upper row shows the words “Dioi ND”, and the lower row the words “Mel Rao”. On the left are four small characters which mean “pray for us”. The words “established by NP ELS in the sixth year of the Republic” are inscribed on the right.

The number “1917” and the inscription “established by NP ELS in the sixth year of the Republic” show that the monument was erected in 1917, the sixth year after the inauguration of the Republic of China. The Holy Mother Mary appeared in that year in Fatima, Portugal. She exhorted all Catholics to say the rosary and to pray for world peace. Indeed, China joined the Entente (which included Britain and France) soon afterwards, and declared war on Germany and the Allied Powers. The First World War was about to end, and the dawn of peace about to appear. Because of this, a number of French missionaries, including Father Louis André, the pastor of Anlong Parish, Father Joseph Henri, the talented missionary of the Buyi, and Father Gustave Williatte, the rector of St. Michael’s Seminary, financed the construction of a Marian

monument in the mountainside of Jingjiachong. They employed a team of workers to level off the hilltops and chisel the rocks. During the Cultural Revolution, the monument was lucky enough to escape destruction, and was preserved, due to the extraordinary effort of the local Catholics who protected it.

On the monument, the two words 𦍋 𦍋 are variations of 𦍋 (Zhangke). According to *Preface to the Commemorative Monument of Our Lady's Shrine*, provided by Lin Yu, an old seminarian in Anlong, "It stands far across the Wenjiabomo 'Ancient Zhangke' Monument, which is located in the western countryside of Anlong county." The missionaries "looked into the origin of the two words 'zhang' 𦍋 and 'ke' 𦍋. Inspired by the Catholic missionary spirit, they decided to replace 𦍋 with 𦍋 and came up with a variation of the two words. Combined with the expression 'Queen Mother,' they came up with 母皇, which created a fusion of Chinese and western cultures, and harmony between the French and the Han Chinese. The monument was built along a cliff."

"Zhangke was an ancient state in the Spring and Autumn period. It was situated in the south of the Nan Mountains and north of Panjiang, covering the territories of southwest Guizhou and northern Guangxi."<sup>1</sup> The core territories of jurisdiction of the ancient Zhangke were mainly the mountainous areas between South Panjiang and North Panjiang. It is equivalent to the modern Guizhou Qianxinan Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture and the districts west of Baise City in Guangxi and east of Qujing City in Yunnan. The dominant ethnic group who had been living in this area for many generations was the Buyi.

Obviously, the two words "Queen Mother" refer to Mary, the Mother of God. The expression "pray for us" on the left of the monument is often used in the prayers of the Church. On 16th February, 1922, the Holy See gave permission for the establishment of a new diocese independent from the Guizhou and Guangxi dioceses—the Diocese of Anlong. The territory runs from 22° to

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<sup>1</sup> Lin, Yu, *Preface to the Commemorative Monument of Our Lady's Shrine*, hand-written manuscript, 1980, pp. 1-2. Courtesy of Mr Wang Zhongkun of Anlong. 林郁：《聖母岩朔源碑序》，第 1-2 頁，手寫本，1980 年，感謝安龍王仲坤先生饋贈。

26°15'N and from 104°20' to 107°E. The total area is 45000 km<sup>2</sup>. Lying between North and South Panjiang, its location is roughly the same as the juridical territory of ancient Zhangke. Therefore, both the Diocese of Anlong and the ancient state of Zhangke are situated along the South and North Panjiang and the mountainous areas between Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan (黔桂滇邊山區). The peoples being governed were from the Buyi group, who had been living in the same territory for many generations.

After some historical research, the words “Dioi ND” on the monument were discovered to be the French translation of “Queen Mother of Zhangke”. “Dioi” is the French word for Buyi. In the Buyi-French Bilingual Dictionary, Missionaries also wrote “Dioi” for Buyi<sup>2</sup>, and in “A History of the Diocese of Anlong,” the word “Dioy” is also used referring to the Buyi.<sup>3</sup> The word can also be transliterated as “Tchong-kia-tse”, “Yi-jen” or “Yi”. “ND” is the abbreviation of “Our Lady” in French. The meaning of “Mel Rao” is still being examined. On the monument, the expression “Queen Mother of Zhangke, pray for us” and its French version “Dioi” show clearly the prayer of the Church in Anlong for early and numerous conversions of the Buyi, the descendants of ancient Zhangke, through the intercession of Mary, their patron. They had hoped to build up a world of local Buyi that would be at once holy and secular—the Diocese of Anlong and the ancient state of Zhangke.

For this reason, in 1927 the missionaries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the evangelization of the Buyi in Anlong by emphasising in an article in the “Missions Etrangères de Paris” newsletter: “Following the example of the ancient state of Zhangke, the ‘secular’ world set up by the ancestors of Buyi, we hope to work together with the people to develop their ‘sacred’ world—the Diocese of Anlong—right in the land of ancient Zhangke. We hope to revive the glory of the past.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Esquirol et Williatte, *Dictionnaire Dioi-Français et Français-Dioi*. Hong Kong: imprimerie de Nazareth, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Doutreligne, Denis. “La mission de Lanlong: l’évangélisation.” *Le pays dioy*. Hong Kong: imprimerie de la Société des Missions Etrangères, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> “Lanlong: un cinquantenaire,” dans *Bulletin M.E.P.*, 1927.7, pp.745-747.

## 2. The Marian Grotto of “Infinite Motherly Graciousness”

The grotto is located on the right of the Marian monument. It is approximately two metres tall and four meters wide. In the middle of the top of the cave, there are four Chinese words, 母恩浩蕩 (literally translated as “infinite motherly graciousness”), each in a diamond-shaped box. The time of inscription and the people who made it were basically the same as that of the Marian monument. There is a couplet at the entrance of the grotto. The first line reads, “The Queen Mother surpasses the Sun and the Moon in her protection for all mankind.” The second line reads, “The ancient state of Zhangke, together with Heaven and Earth, protects and blesses all peoples.” A horizontal banner reads, “Infinite Motherly Graciousness.”

The radius of the grotto approaches two metres in length, about four metres in width. An image of the Holy Mother with a tender face and loving eyes is inscribed on the stone wall. An altar is set below the picture. A couplet is inscribed on its two sides. The first line reads “Her merits surpass the heavens, and believers from all over the world look upon her.” The second line reads, “Her virtues abide on the five continents, and disciples between heaven and earth adore her.” There is a semi-circular platform outside the grotto for performances, with a radius of approximately 10 metres. On the 8th of September each year, believers making their pilgrimage gather together at this place for various kinds of artistic performances. One thing worth mentioning is that a large number of Buyi believers, clothed in their ethnic batik attire, celebrate joyously the Nativity of Our Lady. They play a variety of ethnic musical instruments like the *maguhu* and they sing Buyi mountain songs, accompanied by dances characteristic of the Buyi people.

## 3. Wall paintings of St. Cao Guiying and Her Biography

On the right of the walls of the Marian grotto lie the wall painting and biographical monument of St. Cao Guiying. The painting of St. Cao Guiying is on the top of the wall, whereas the biographical monument is below it.

Local Catholics sponsored and inscribed the painting and monument in 2013; therefore they do not carry much archaeological value. However, St. Cao Guiying is a much loved saint among the local Catholics because she was from Anlong. According to *Testimonies of Qianjiang*,<sup>5</sup> Cao Guiying, named Agnes at her baptism, was born in Ou-kia-tchai of Guizhou Province in 1821. Her parents were old Catholics, who had moved from Sichuan to Xingyi, Guizhou. They owned a Chinese medicine business. When she was 18, she married into a Catholic family in Yao-keou-miao of Xingyi Prefecture. Two years later, her husband passed away, and she was expelled from the family by her husband's brother and his wife. She took up abode in the home of Tin Kin-pong, a female catechist. She was deeply influenced by Tin's example, so she made up her mind to lead a life of chastity, and devoted her heart to the service of God. She became a catechist herself. In the autumn and winter of 1855, she went from Anlong, Guizhou to Xilin, Guangxi to assist Auguste Chapdelaine in the development of ministries for the women and children there. On February 27, 1856, a persecution of Christians in Xilin broke out. Agnes Cao was martyred with Auguste Chapdelaine. She was beatified in 1900 and canonized in 2000.

#### 4. Our Lady's Church

Our Lady's Church is built on the mountainside of Our Lady's Mount. The building is of classic gothic style. A statue of Mary is placed in the front part of the church, as Mary is the patron of the church. Local Catholics sponsored and reconstructed the local church building in 2013. The old church was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, the current church building does not differ much in terms of the old church's location, architectural style and size.

The cross on the roof of the church is seven metres tall. The main church building is only one storey tall, fifteen by eight metres. The size is not very big, and therefore it is considered a small-sized

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<sup>5</sup> "Venerable Cao Guiying." *Testimonies of Qianjiang*, volume 43. 1899, pp. 32-35. 《黔疆諸証》，卷四十三，福女曹桂英，頁 32 上-頁 35 下，光緒二十五年，1899 年。

church. It was built mainly to meet the needs of the religious life of the hundred or so Catholics in Anlong County.

## **5. Cross Stand of Our Lady's Mount**

Walking pass Our Lady's Church, and climbing about 150 metres up to the top of the mount (1450 metres high), we come upon the Cross Stand. The stand supports a three-metre high cross made of stainless steel. It directly overlooks the whole of Anlong County. One can get a complete view of the county from the Cross Stand. The stand is a rectangular block of stone with inscriptions on its four sides. On the east side is written: "The Dao gives life and looks over beautiful Zhangke" (道化譽生 觀秀牂牁). On the left is inscribed: "Although there are different religious beliefs, God's grace has no boundaries" (信仰有別，主恩無界). On the right is written: "The Mount stands firm in adoration of the one and only Dao" (巍巍屹立，惟道為尊). To the south is written "A Song of Praise," and to the west, "A Song to the Cross." Finally, to the north is inscribed another "Song of Praise."

The Emperor Kangxi wrote the three poems with his own brush in praise of Jesus Christ, and they were collectively called "The True Origin of All Creatures." Since there are three poems, they were inscribed on the three sides of the stone block on the top of Our Lady's Mount.

## **6. The Natural Cross on the Top of Our Lady's Mount**

To the right of the cross tower stands a cross that is naturally formed. As local Catholics recalled, it was exactly because of this natural cross that the Church of Anlong was willing to pay a huge amount of money to purchase the hill. They then changed its name to Our Lady's Mount. This naturally-made cross is a "miracle" of God for the Church of Anlong. It is venerated by the Catholics living around it. Even non-Catholics climb up the mountain with deep devotion, lighting firecrackers, and burning candles and incense, in worship of the natural cross. The abundance of incense and fire is an indication of the impact of the cross upon the people there.