

## *The Mongol Ethnic Minority in the Eyes of the CICM Missionaries*

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Beginning in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century small, scattered Christian communities (*chrétientés*) of migrants and refugees from the north China plain developed just north of the Great Wall (*saiwai*), which is today the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR). These migrations took place following the Chinese Rites Controversy and the Qing proscription of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> In 1835, the French Lazarist Fr. Joseph-Martial Mouly (1807-1868) traveled from Macao to Xiwanzi (present-day Chongli county in Hebei province), a village north of the Great Wall, which had become a haven for a small community of mainly Chinese Catholics and clergy. The latter had fled from the French mission in Beijing (Beitang) in 1829. Propaganda Fide (SCPF), the Vatican congregation concerned with the Church's mission activity, entrusted the new vicariate apostolic of Mongolia to the French Lazarists (*Congregatio Missionis*, CM) in 1840. The following year, the same congregation appointed Mouly vicar apostolic.

Following the Opium Wars and Unequal Treaties, the French Lazarists returned to their former Beijing diocese (Beitang) and reluctantly ceded the Inner Mongol Chinese *chrétientés* to newcomers. When in 1864 the SCPF entrusted the Vicariate

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<sup>1</sup> On the creation of Christian communities in Qing China see N. Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume One: 635-1800*, Leiden, 2001, pp. 534-575, Lars Peter Laamann, *Christian Heretics in Late Imperial China: Christian Inculturation and State Control, 1720-1850*, London and New York, 2006, and, Xiaojuan Huang, "Christian Communities and Alternative Devotions in China, 1780-1860," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2006.

Apostolic of Mongolia to the newly established Belgian missionary congregation (*Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae*, CICM), neither Belgium nor the Netherlands had any official representative in Beijing. This missionary society got its start in 1862 with a motherhouse at Scheutveld in Anderlecht, one of the suburbs of Brussels. The initial difficulties the Belgian and Dutch Scheut missionaries met in obtaining French passports for China were not due to a veto by French authorities, but to objections of Qing officials. In the latter's eyes, the Qing dependencies of Manchuria, Mongolia and Tibet were not included in the Treaties. Thus the French legation in Beijing was not able to "legitimize" Scheut missionary presence in the Mongol autonomously administered geographical banners of Inner Mongolia. Missionaries were only allowed to evangelize among the Chinese settlers in Inner Mongolia. It was not until 1895 that both the Qing Court of Colonial Affairs (Lifan Yuan) and the Office of Foreign Affairs (Zongli Yamen) informed Inner Mongol local authorities about the treaty rights of the foreign missionaries already present in their territories.

On the eve of the 1900 Boxer Uprising, there were 256 Mongol Christians (*nomt'on*) and 115 catechumens in the Mongolian Vicariate.<sup>2</sup> In 1860, the Catholic population of the vicariate of Mongolia, then entrusted to the Lazarist missionaries, totaled about 6,000 Chinese Catholics and only a few Mongol Catholics. Five Chinese priests, one Mongol priest, and four Lazarist missionaries served them. By contrast, in 1900, the three vicariates of Inner Mongolia, now under the supervision of CICM, numbered about 29,000 Chinese Catholics and 10,000 catechumens. Twenty-three Chinese priests and 81 Scheut missionaries cared for them. The only Mongol priest followed the Lazarist missionaries to China proper. The great majority of missionaries worked only

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph L. Van Hecken, "Les noms de chrétiens Mongols et quelques tableaux généalogiques de familles mongoles chrétiennes" in *Verbist Study Notes* 15 (July 2003) 86-103.

among the Chinese immigrants, and did not develop any special interest in Mongolian language and culture.

	East Mongolia	Central Mongolia	Southwest Mongolia
Catholics	9,000	14,493	5,680
Catechumens	2,500	4,784	3,200
Priests	8	14	1
Missionaries	27	29	25

By 1912, there were already 1.5 million Chinese settlers, almost twice the population of the Mongols, who numbered just over 800,000, in Inner Mongolia.<sup>3</sup>

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century multi-focused Muslim uprisings in China's Northwest (present-day Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai provinces) created great turmoil in the Chinese-speaking Muslim communities (Huihui), and spilled over into the Han Chinese and Mongol communities of the Alashan and Ordos region. The pacification of the Muslim uprisings revived the late-Qing northwestward Han Chinese migration, and the spread of Inner Mongol Catholic chrétientés during the 1870s. Local authorities in Guihua city protested against Scheut attempts to acquire real estate and engage in trade. The Scheut missionaries refuted the arguments of local authorities, who were ever apprehensive of Western

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<sup>3</sup> Song Naigong, ed., *Zhongguo Renkou. Nei Menggu fence*, Beijing, 1987, pp. 44-54, Yang Haiying, "Catholicism in Ordos Today," in Klaus Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, Leuven, 1999, vol. 1, p. 213, A. Hurelbaatar, "A Survey of the Mongols in Present-Day China," pp. 191-194, in Stephen Kotkin & Bruce A. Elleman, eds., *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1999, and Uradyn E. Bulag, *The Mongols at China's edge*, Lanham-Oxford, 2002, pp. 108 and 137.

encroachment and trade in the interior. In the eyes of local officials, Guihua city was not an open treaty port. Under French and German diplomatic pressure, they reluctantly tolerated the foreign missionary presence in Guihua and its surroundings.

The pacification of the Muslim uprisings, followed by the Great Famine in 1876, offered the Scheut missionaries an opportunity to distribute famine relief. They acquired abandoned manors, and cultivated land and developed new Chinese chrétientés along the Yellow River and the Great Wall. The first Scheut missionaries were surprised to find a network of scattered Chinese settlements in Ordos Mongol territory and even a Christian community in Ningtiaoliang with connections up to Ili in Xinjiang Province. The great distances between these Christian communities made any type of close-knit ecclesiastical organization impractical. From 1874 until 1883, Scheut missionaries developed three ecclesiastical districts around fixed mission stations on the fringes of the Ordos. Their initial plan of connecting these districts with intermediate missionary residences never materialized. They also envisaged the establishment of a Trappist monastery, similar to the numerous Mongol lamaseries, in the plain of Boro-Bal[a]yasun “Brown Fort” (in Chinese Chengchuan “Walled City Plain”).<sup>4</sup>

As it passes Ningxia (today’s Yinchuan) the Yellow River swings north and makes a huge bend enclosing a high plateau called in Mongolian the Ordos and in Chinese the Hetao. Famous for its shrine to the great Mongolian conqueror Genghis Khan (Chinggis Qan, 1162?-1227) at Ejen-qoroo, Ordos is a dry, barren plateau, with patches of shifting sand dunes, and scored by canyons cut by years of flash floods.

Since 1874, the Scheut Fathers Alfons Devos (1840-1888),

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Taveirne, “Han-Mongol Christian Communities and CICM in the Low Countries,” in Agostino Giovagnoli & Elisa Giunipero, *The Catholic Church and the Chinese World: Between Colonialism and Evangelization (1840-1911)*, Urbaniana University Press, Rome, 2005, pp. 253-264.

Remi Verlinden (1830-1892), and their Mongol guide bSam-gtan-'dzin-ba (1816-1900) had chosen this barren territory as their base for the conversion of the Ordos Mongols to the Roman Catholic faith. The turn of the century witnessed beatings, plundering, and even martyrdom among the missionaries, as many Buddhist Mongols of the Ordos heeded the call of the Chinese Boxers to destroy the foreign religion and defend the Qing.<sup>5</sup> With the support of the French and Belgian legations, and their own unyielding confidence, the missionaries had persevered in their mission, and earned the respect and fear, if not love, of the local rulers and high lamas.

Boro-Balyasun, a town of mud-brick walls lay on the very southern frontier of Ordos, just beyond the humped remnants of the Great Wall. It also lay on land disputed between two banners or counties of Ordos (Inner Mongolia had 49 of these banners, each with its own prince or duke as ruler). The title to the mission land was received from the grand duke of the banner of Otoγ, but the neighboring Üüsin banner also claimed this land in a dispute that had festered for decades.

The turbulent political life of the Ordos gave no quarter to those unable to arm themselves in self-defense: banner fought banner, the people gathered in vigilante "circles" (*duyuyilang*, so-called because all the participants sat in a circle, and signed their petitions in the form of a circle, so that outsiders would not know who was the leader of the group), and fought the dukes and princes. Bandits fought the banner militia, and the strong-men commanding the militia fought the popular vigilantes, while all resented impotently the repeated incursions of the neighboring Chinese authorities upon Mongol rights and privileges. For example, the Qing high official, Yigu (d. 1926), intimidated, or bought off the

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<sup>5</sup> Harry Knipschild, "Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900: Missiepienier en martelaar in China, een nieuwe kijk op de missiemethode van de Scheutisten in het noorden van China, en de reactie daarop van de Chinezen," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Leiden University, 2005.

dukes and princes. However, the vigilante circles of commoners, lamas, and minor gentry agitated against the corrupt Mongol higher nobility, the powerful Chinese land-merchants and Yigu's opening-up of uncultivated pastures. But in the multiplicity of warring parties, the missionaries fully able and willing to defend their flock, found their opportunity. As a result of the Boxer indemnities, the Church acquired large tracts of uncultivated land. By the 1920s, they had become power-brokers in Otoγ, collecting pasture and soda lake leasing fees for the grand duke, mediating the periodic quarrels of the popular "circles" and the local strongmen, and enjoying both the admiration and resentment, which the successful exercise of power always brings.<sup>6</sup>

### 1928, A Year of Significance

By 1928, the golden age for Boro-Balyasun had come to an end; and for a few months Florent Claeys (1871-1950), the successor of Fr. Antoon Mostaert (*nom-un baysi Tiyen*, 1881-1971) as parish priest of the mission station, must have felt that the days of martyrdom had returned. Two years earlier an army of "Qaračins" moved into Üüsin and Otoγ banners. Strictly speaking, the Qaračins were one of the sub-ethnic groups in the far-eastern part of Inner Mongolia, and one of the most accomplished both in education and in monopolizing positions in the Chinese Republic's Mongol bureaucracy. The Ordos Mongols, however, used Qaračin in a broader sense to mean anyone from the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, where long intermixing with the Chinese had given the Mongols a strongly sinicized cast. This group of "Qaračins" came not in the name of Beijing or the Chinese Republic, but in the name of the Soviets in Outer Mongolia, where they had also enrolled a fugitive Buddhist monk and vigilante leader from the Ordos, Öljejirgal (1866-1929), and made him

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher P. Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes in Inner Mongolia's Interregnum Decades, 1911-1931*, Leiden, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 8-11.

commander of the Üüsin regiment of the Inner Mongolian Red Army.

Suddenly in the spring of 1928, the Qaračın propagandists again bullied the grand duke of Otoı into making threats against the small colony of Catholic Mongols. The mission station's chief catechist assisted the agitators from within. This catechist held a bitter grudge against the commander of Boro-Balyasun station's Christian militia, and the wily Qaračıns had promised him the command should they come to power. With the catechist as go-between, the new powers in the land demanded a personal interview with Fr. Claeys. The chronicler of the mission described the encounter:<sup>7</sup>

The Reds, convinced that the mission could not sustain a vigorous attack, directed all their guns on Poro Balgason; they personally visited the mission and even entered the quarters of the missionary. With an astounding and utterly shameless insolence, they insulted the priest and demanded the immediate return of the mission's lands and all its arms.

Fr. Claeys' categorical refusal shocked the invaders. With a fury like erupting volcanoes, they poured out in the face of the missionary all their hatred of the Church and of religion, and threatened the Mongol catechists with torture and prison, assuring them that they would soon return with a strong army and great cannons to pound the mission into powder.

At the same time, their ally, the lama Öljeijirgal, now holding full power as the military commander of the Üüsin banner, demanded that the mission station return to his control those Mongols within its walls who originally hailed from Üüsin. Faced again with refusal, he joined with the Qaračıns for a combined attack on the mission station.

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<sup>7</sup> J.L. Van Hecken, *Les Missions chez les Mongols aux temps modernes*, Peking, 1949, p. 182.

On June 15, 1928, the red armies of Üüsin and Otoy appeared near the sand dunes that lay just north of Boro-Balyasun. Fr. Claeys had called on all his Mongol converts, wandering on the plain looking after their herds, to rally to the mission's defense. That very day, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the native Üüsin Mongols, led by Öljejirgal, showing the fragility of their alliance, came to blows with the Qaračin strangers. After a brief encounter, the Üüsin troops decamped back to their home banner, while the Qaračins fled west, to Ningxia, never to return again.

According to Atwood, in early twentieth-century China, the form that revolution took in state-building was obviously related to the paradoxical weakness and growing strength of the state. The late Qing state had been historically a very weak one, compared to those of Japan or Europe, at least if measured in terms of the government's expropriation of the total national income.<sup>8</sup> The late Qing New Policies (*xinzheng* or *šine jasay*, 1901-1908) had given local and provincial governments all over China a new task of more effectively policing and culturally transforming their residents, at the same time as it allowed, and even encouraged, the increased involvement of local private interests in designing the plan of these new reforms.<sup>9</sup> The result, as Prasenjit Duara has shown, was a government afflicted with an ultimately toxic combination of growing intrusiveness, cultural illegitimacy, corruption, and dysfunctional decentralization.<sup>10</sup> These trends, together with the warlord conflicts and the spectacular rise in banditry, drove the more responsible gentry out of local government and encouraged armed "local bullies," or entrepreneurs of government, who took on, for a hefty commission, the unpopular task of transmitting to the

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<sup>8</sup> C.P. Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes, 1911-1931*, Leiden, 2002, vol. 2, p. 971.

<sup>9</sup> Mei-hua Lan, "China's 'New Administration' in Mongolia," in Stephen Kotkin & Bruce A. Elleman, eds. *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan*, London, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, Stanford, 1988.



villagers the increasingly heavy demands of local and provincial government.

The Roman Catholic Church became a haven for many landless farmers and destitute herdsmen. The research outline of Suiyuan-Hetao (*Suiyuan Hetao zhiyao*) published in 1924 stated:

In the Hetao area the Church under the undeserved name of evangelization fully carries out the forceful occupation of cultivated land. It links up with local bandits, coerces the government, engages in deception of every sort, and oppresses the non-Christian people.

All the troops on garrison duty are only interested in protecting the Church and its institutions. Hence, most people flock to the Church's land to escape the burden of taxes and the fear of banditry. The Church profits from it; and in a variety of ways takes advantage of the people's weaknesses to enforce obedience. She not only most ardently seeks to offer remedies but also turns the Hetao into a foreign concession.<sup>11</sup>

From this point of view, as well as that expressed in the 1925 manifesto of the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (IMPRP), the Catholic missionaries were lumped together with the imperialists (including the Chinese money-lenders, officials, and warlords) as "foreign reactionaries," that is social figures and forces, who through their own selfish ambition stood in the way of social progress. The "domestic reactionaries" were the Mongol dukes and princes.

Atwood comments that the party's ideology did not answer all the questions. Many Mongols in Ordos opposed the missionaries not because they were against imperialism, but because as Mongols

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<sup>11</sup> Tuimür, *Jianguo qian Nei Menggu fangzhi kaoshu* [A critical review of Inner Mongol Gazetteers before the founding of the People's Republic of China], with an introduction by Zhou Qingshu, p. 14, Höhhot, 1998.

they supported the established Buddhist religion. In his unpublished dissertation he notes, “The alliance with the devout Buddhists of Ordos, such as the incarnate lama Bandida Gegen Wangdanima (1872-1926), meant that anti-clericalism had to be downplayed. Indeed manifestos often announced the aim of the party to support Gelugpa [Yellow hat] Buddhism. Two treaties signed by the Central Committee with local party activists of the governments of Üüsin and Otoy banners both proclaim the goal of the IMPRP as ‘make our Mongolian race (*ugsaatan* “ethnos”) great, spread its religion and Buddha (*šasin Burqan*), protect our land, and let the people live peacefully and in freedom.’”<sup>12</sup> In 1930-32, the influential lama Jamyangšarab (Zhang Wenxian, 1887-1946) from Otoy banner (Aral-yin sume) forced all Mongol Catholics to establish the wind-horse prayer-flags (*k’i-mori* or *kei mori*) and participate in the annual cairn (*oboŷa*) ritual. In 1935, he was able to unite the vigilante circles in Otoy banner. He also redeemed most of the Church indemnity land in Otoy banner and the Catholic mission agreed to pay the banner an annual tax of 1,000 ounces of silver.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Cultural Knot: “The Conversion of the Missionaries”**

“The process of religious conversion,” according to Lewis Rambo, “is a product of the interactions among the convert’s aspirations, needs, and orientations, the nature of the group to which he or she is being converted, and the particular social matrix in which these processes are taking place.”<sup>14</sup> As far as Western missionaries are concerned, recent missionary historiography has emphasized the “reverse” mission and depicted the lives of

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<sup>12</sup> C.P. Atwood, *Revolutionary Nationalist Mobilization in Inner Mongolia, 1925-1929*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation Indiana University, Bloomington, 1994, vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> J.L. Van Hecken, *Les Missions chez les Mongols aux temps modernes*, Peking, 1949, pp. 181-190 and *Etuoŷe qianqi zhi* [Gazetteer of Otoy Front banner], Höhhot, 1995, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993.

“converted” missionaries, mainly among Protestants, such as Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877-1952), Timothy Richard (1845-1919), Gilbert Reid (1857-1927), and several others.<sup>15</sup> Some Catholic missionaries like the Belgian Vincent Lebbe (1877-1940) and others may eventually deserve a similar label.

Still, not everyone is convinced about this concept of “conversion of missionaries.” Scholars like Nicolas Standaert, Li Tiangang, and Peter Tze Ming Ng based upon studies of Chinese Christian converts and Christian education in China tend to emphasize more the idea of glocalization, a concept which emphasizes the relationship between “globalization” and “localization,” the interplay and mutual influences between Western and Chinese cultures, between Christian and Chinese education. It is no coincidence that this new “glocal” awareness belonged to the generation of missionaries, who came to China around and after 1900 and was exposed to the sometimes violent confrontation of divergent world views. It was much more manifest in Protestant than in Catholic missionary circles.

One of the characteristics of nineteenth-century Catholic and Protestant evangelization is its so-called Christian religious exclusiveness and Western civilizing effect. It is sometimes called a cultural imperative, or knot (*wenhua zhi jie*). Missionaries were confronted by the “other-ness of Chinese/Mongol cultures and peoples” (Scheut missionaries called it “de verkeerde wereld” [the wrong world] in Flemish) and were shocked to find that in China/Mongolia Western/European norms did not apply.” One example is the unique worship of the “wind-horse” (*k'ī-mori* or *kei mori*) prayer-flags by the Ordos Mongols. Similar to the prayer wheel, the wind-horse prayer-flag is also a Tibetan Buddhist symbol.

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<sup>15</sup> See Notto R. Thelle, “Changed by the East: Notes on Missionary Communication and Transformation,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30-3 (July 2003) and Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932*, Pennsylvania, 1997.

Lamas used to bless the *k'ī-mori* prayer-flags, print the horses with Tibetan sacred or magical formulas on the flags and participate in its worship.<sup>16</sup> The first Scheut missionaries considered these to be “superstitious flags” and demanded that local Catholics remove them. Catholic converts also had to destroy the Buddhist shrine (idols) in their dwellings, and were not allowed to participate in the seasonal Buddhist festivals, such as the annual sacrificial oboya (ritual cairn) festival. The Mongol Catholics also gave up the offerings of sacrifice to the fire deity and the ancestors, on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> moon respectively.<sup>17</sup> Both Antoon Mostaert and Jan Braam (1869-1952) in their ethnographic notes do not mention these Catholic prohibitions. As Yang Haiying points out, the non-Christian neighbors considered the Mongol Catholics without *k'ī-mori* as heretics.<sup>18</sup> The attitude of the Scheut missionaries towards these *k'ī-mori* prayer-flags changed over the years. One of the last Scheut missionaries in Ordos, Fr. Frans Maertens (1916-1987) was inclined to accept the *k'ī-mori* prayer-flags.<sup>19</sup>

Tibetan-rite Buddhism was able to cut across Mongol administrative boundaries, thus creating a single dominant culture. Lamas came from all walks of life. As they did to the 19<sup>th</sup> century European missionaries, Communists later criticized the Buddhist lamas for poisoning the minds of the people and exploiting them relentlessly.<sup>20</sup> Rustam Sabirov notes that the historical contacts between Christianity and Buddhism in Mongolia's past “are absolutely different from what we have at present. There is a strong

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<sup>16</sup> J. Braam, “Folklore Ortos, Chapter IV: The Mongol Dwelling,” pp. 11-16 and A. Mostaert, “Matériaux ethnographiques,” pp. 289-290.

<sup>17</sup> *Etuoke qianqi zhi* [Gazetteer of Otoy Front banner], Höhhot, 1995, p. 160.

<sup>18</sup> Yang Haiying, “Catholicism in Ordos Today,” in Klaus Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, Leuven, 1999, vol. 1, p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> Yang Haiying, “art. cit.,” in Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, Leuven, 1999, vol. 1, p. 214.

<sup>20</sup> U.E. Bulag, *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia*, Oxford, 1998, p. 42.

belief in Buddhism among the Mongols because it is still their native religion deeply rooted in the history and culture of the country. During its history, Buddhism has often accommodated itself to the changeable conditions of different countries, and assimilated local religions and teachings. The Buddhist community demonstrated an exceptional ability to coexist in the long term with many cults and religions. Buddhism has never been a closed ideological system. On the contrary, it has always taken into consideration the theoretical viewpoint of the opponents and to a certain extent adopted their philosophical views.”<sup>21</sup> However, others have observed that neither Buddhists nor Christians could transcend their own religious perspective and give up their superiority complexes.

### **Scheut Missionaries as Amateur Ethnographers**

The early ethnographers in Mongolia were undoubtedly Chinese frontier scholar-officials like Xiao Daheng and Western diplomat-friars like William of Rubruck, explorers and members of expeditions who wrote their memoirs.<sup>22</sup> However, the most consistent in terms of achievement and continuity, although with a purpose other than science in mind, were the missionaries. This is shown in their dictionaries, grammars, their random observations in letters, reports of their apostolic work, their sermons and translations of catechisms, and Bible and apologetic works. At the same time, missionaries like Antoon Mostaert, Jan Braam and Jozef Van Oost (1877-1969), a prolific writer, painter, and musician, practiced something that their confreres did not: anthropology. They

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<sup>21</sup> Rustam Sabirov, “The Relationships between Buddhism and Christianity in the Contemporary Mongolia. Some Aspects of the Problem,” pp. 370-372, in B. Enkhtuvshin et al., *Dialogue among Civilizations: Interaction between Nomadic and Other Cultures of Central Asia*, Ulaanbaatar, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Antti Ruotsala, *Europeans and Mongols in the Middle of the Thirteenth Century: Encountering the Other*, Helsinki, 2001 (The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, vol. 314).

did anthropology in its broadest sense, by studying the human condition and producing studies of lives of people based on fieldwork. They were field anthropologists in the sense that they collected actual facts regarding physical structure or language or culture. They were not desk anthropologists, who classify, sort, compare, establish relationships, or trace origins, using the data collected by the missionaries in the field.

In 1956, Antoon Mostaert published his seminal article: "Matériaux ethnographiques relatifs aux Mongols Ordos" in the *Central Asiatic Journal*, while staying at Missionhurst in Arlington, Virginia.<sup>23</sup> For his article he borrowed some materials from Fr. Braam's unpublished manuscript "Folklore Ordos," which Braam had written with the assistance of Msgr. Alfons Bermyn (1853-1915), Fr. Mostaert and Fr. Van Oost in 1908-1909. A list of questions compiled by the editors of the ethnographic journal *Anthropos* (founded in Vienna by W. Schmidt in 1906) served as a guide in organizing these materials. The manuscript was sent to *Anthropos*, but it was not accepted for publication because it was considered unscientific! In 1911, Braam and Van Oost published parts of this ethnography in the French missionary journal *Missions Catholiques* (Lyons), under the title: "Au Pays des Ortos."<sup>24</sup> A similar study by Van Oost, *Au pays des Ortos (Mongolie)* was published in Paris in 1932. These ethnographic materials offer us a view of southern Ordos Mongol society through the lens of the CICM missionaries towards the end of the Qing period (1644-1912). Mostaert feared that many of these Mongol institutions and customs would die out in Southern Ordos, due to increasing Chinese moving into that area. Today's situation shows that his fears were not totally unfounded. Since the Scheut missionaries had not received any formal training in anthropology

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<sup>23</sup> Reprinted in Klaus Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, Leuven, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 435-492.

<sup>24</sup> *Missions Catholiques* (XLIII, 1911), 8-11, 17-21, 29-34, 45-47, 52-53, 66-68, 78-81 with 26 pictures.

or ethnology, they were unable to develop these notes more systematically.

In the 1920s Jozef Van Oost wrote a chapter on Buddhism in his *Au pays des Ortos (Mongolie)*, in which he criticized lamas for their lack of education and moral degeneration. At the same time, he noted the religious similarities between Buddhism and Christianity and the pervasive influence of the lamas in Ordos Mongol society.<sup>25</sup> There was a manifest lack of mutual empathy let alone understanding between the lamas and the Scheut missionaries. Lamas were not allowed to interfere in the Catholic community of Boro-Balyasun. Mostaert did not really study Buddhism in great depth, since he wanted to focus on the study of the Mongolian language and not on the Tibetan or Sanskrit languages. In his article "Matériaux ethnographiques relatifs aux Mongols Ordos" he simply avoids the subject by saying that it is well known.

Mostaert, like his confreres, had no formal training either as an anthropologist or ethnologist, but his knowledge of the Mongolian spoken and written language and his long-term exposure to Mongol daily life made him into an ethnographer, historian and linguist. He wrote: "Since linguistics, history and folklore are closely related and complement each other, I had to pay attention to the history and folklore of the Ordos during my linguistic studies."<sup>26</sup> For Mostaert, the key to a better understanding of Mongolian culture remained the study of the local spoken and written language.

Another limitation of the observations by Scheut missionaries was the geographical one. In the Qing era in Mongolia the basic unit of both geography and political activity was the single banner. Most fundamentally, the banner was the unit of citizenship. In the late Qing period, the banner gradually became a unit of

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<sup>25</sup> J. Van Oost, *Au pays des Ortos (Mongolie)*, Paris, 1932, pp. 63-81.

<sup>26</sup> J.L. Van Hecken, "A Mostaert, Apostel van de Mongolen en deken van de Mongoolse Studies," p. 25, in *A. Mostaert, CICM (1881-1971) Apostel van de Mongolen en deken van de Mongoolse Studies*, Leuven, 1993.

political administration based on geography, rather than on relationships through noble lineage. The observations of the Scheut missionaries were limited to the exclusively Mongol pastoral area of the Otoy Front banner in Southern Ordos.

### **Towards a Local Mongol Catholic Church**

In the aftermath of the Boxer Movement, several reform-minded missionaries like the Belgian Vincent Lebbe and Joseph Rutten (1874-1950) started to question traditional conversion methods.<sup>27</sup> At the time, their criticisms were controversial among most foreign missionaries. Following the apostolic visit of Msgr. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Budes de Guébriant (1860-1935) in 1919, a new generation of missionaries, more open to Chinese nationalist and modern aspirations, gradually shifted the emphasis from the rural apostolate to the urban, professional and intellectual apostolate. The reorganization of the Scheut vicariates in Inner Mongolia and North China shows this shift clearly. In 1922, the Southwest Mongolia Vicariate was divided into the vicariates of Ningxia and Suiyuan. In 1929, the Central Mongolia Vicariate was divided into the vicariates of Xiwanzi and Jining. In 1932, the East Mongolia Vicariate was divided into the vicariate of Rehe (Jehol) and the prefecture apostolic of Chifeng.

CICM missionary activities became much more urban centered, since most Church land was confiscated by the Warlords and the Republican government (from 1927 onwards).<sup>28</sup> The first Roman Catholic Plenary Council of China in Shanghai (1924) prohibited missionary intervention in lawsuits, as well as recourse to the secular authorities. The Council recommended the professionalization of apostolic work, especially educational and

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<sup>27</sup> *A-SCPF*, Rome. Acta vol. 293, de Guébriant's report on his apostolic visit to China.

<sup>28</sup> P. Taveirne, "Antoine Mostaert and the Issue of the Catholic Mission's Property in Ordos," in Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, Leuven, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 145-175.



medical works.<sup>29</sup> Following the confiscation of Church land by the local authorities in 1925, Fr. Antoon Mostaert left the Mongol mission to continue his Mongol studies in Beijing.<sup>30</sup> Mostaert published his most important works, such as *Textes oraux ordos* (1937) and *Dictionnaire Ordos* (1941-1944) at the newly established Catholic Furen University.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph Rutten, the new superior general of CICM, was one of the main architects of a new missionary approach. In 1905, he started a male and female teachers' training college with a mixed Chinese and Western curriculum at Nanhaoqian (today's Shangyi County) in the Central Mongolia Vicariate. In 1920, Fr. Rutten established a modern public hospital in Suiyuan. He hired professional medical doctors and nurses, at first some foreigners, but afterwards mostly Chinese, who had been his students at Nanhaoqian and had later studied medicine at the Aurora University in Shanghai.<sup>32</sup> In 1933, Msgr. Gaspar Schotte (1881-1944) introduced a school curriculum of secular subjects exclusively in

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<sup>29</sup> Carine Dujardin, *Missionering en Moderniteit: De Belgische Minderbroeders in China*, Leuven, 1996, pp. 190-338.

<sup>30</sup> K. Sagaster, ed. *Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971): CICM Missionary and Scholar*, 2 vols., Leuven, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> For Catholic higher education in China see: Leo Leeb, *Lun Jidu zhi da yu xiao: 1900-1950 nian huaren zhishifenzi yanzhong de jidujiao, De quantitate Christi: Christianity in the Eyes of Chinese Intellectuals 1900 to 1950*, Beijing, 2000, pp. 207-211, Jean-Paul Wiest, *Ma Xiangbo: Pioneer of Educational Reform in China*, CSRCS Occasional Paper No. 9 (March 2002), Hong Kong and P. Taveirne, "Catholic Higher Education in China," *Tripod* 26-142 (Autumn 2006), pp. 5-14.

<sup>32</sup> Dries Vanysacker, "The personal initiatives of CICM Father Joseph Rutten in the field of health care in North China (1901-1942)," in Lo Kuang, ed., *Jinian Tang. Ruowang sibai zhounian ji Tianzhu jiao chuan Hua shixue guoji yantaohui*, Taipei, 1992 and D. Vanysacker, "Body and Soul: Professional Health Care in the Catholic Missions in China between 1920 and 1940," in Koen De Ridder, ed., *Footsteps in Deserted Valleys: Missionary Cases, Strategies and Practice in Qing China*, Leuven, 2000, pp. 39-53.

Mongolian, a Mongol printing press and a dispensary in Ordos.<sup>33</sup>

The development of the local clergy and the establishment of a local hierarchy became an absolute priority. In 1919, Pope Benedict XV in his Apostolic Letter, *Maximum Illud*, stressed the need for well-trained native priests and missionaries. In 1922, following the recommendation of Apostolic Visitor de Guébriant to establish regional seminaries, as a way to improve the education of the Chinese and Mongol clergy, the Scheut Fathers established a regional seminary for their three Inner Mongol Vicariates at Datong in Shanxi Province. In the same year, Bishop Celso Costantini (1876-1958) became the first Apostolic Delegate to China. In 1926, at the request of Msgr. Costantini parts of the vicariates of Central Mongolia (Jining in 1929) and later East Mongolia (Chifeng in 1932) were entrusted to local Chinese bishops.<sup>34</sup> In the same year, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* and ordained six Chinese bishops in Rome. In 1937 Titular Archbishop Mario Zanin (1890-1958), in the presence of Fr. Antoon Mostaert, ordained the first Mongol priest Mǒngkejirgal (Ma Yuanmu) from Boro-Balyasun, who had been trained by the Scheut Fathers at the Datong regional seminary.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> J.L. Van Hecken, *Les Missions chez les Mongols aux temps modernes*, Peking, 1949, pp. 190-195.

<sup>34</sup> Françoise Aubin, "Quelques échos des prêtres chinois dans les missions de Scheut," pp. 161-184 in De Ridder, ed., *Footsteps in Deserted Valleys*, Leuven, 2000 and P. Taveirne, "Reorganization of the Chinese Vicariates, 1907-1945," pp. 158-188, in Verhelst & Pycke, eds, *C.I.C.M. Missionaries Past & Present, 1862-1987*, Leuven, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> J.L. Van Hecken, *Les Missions chez les Mongols aux temps modernes*, Peking, 1949, p. 218.