One Goal, two Methods

Belgian and Dutch CICM missionaries in Mongolia and Gansu during the late nineteenth century

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Preface and acknowledgements

Throughout studies during my bachelor and research-master, I developed a peculiar fascination for the history of Europa within the Chinese empire, especially during the reign of the Qing dynasty (大清). Most of the tales I have encountered throughout my time at the University of Nijmegen and Leiden concerned the political and military perspectives, such as the British interference in the Taiping Rebellion or the Sino-Dutch conflict over Taiwan. Yet, to my surprise, I had never considered the European mission enterprise as a viable or relevant field of study until it was suggested by my supervisor Prof. Dr. Jos Gommans. As a student in a somewhat secular environment, the mission appeared a boring, bleak and neglectable part of the nineteenth century global history. When a thesis in this field was therefore suggested by my supervisor, I was hesitant in considering it as a viable option. However, I was severely mistaken as the European mission in China proofed, after some preliminary research, to be a most interesting field. In this preface, I therefore want to first express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Jos Gommans, for opening my eyes to a direction that I would otherwise not have seen.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr. Harry Knipschild, who was willing to spend his valuable time guiding me through the complex interconnected history of the Scheut mission within their Chinese vicariates. Without his help, researching and writing this thesis would have been a lot more difficult. Though circumstances prevented him to guide me until the final version, his help has been greatly appreciated and wholeheartedly wish him well. Alongside, I also want to express gratitude to the many other scholars who have aided me during the various stages of this research. Jean-Paul Wiest for instance awakened my curiosity in the mission history, while Joseph-Tse Lee guided me through the research conducted in China itself. Though parts of this undertaking were unsuccessful, they were still a valuable experience for any further academic opportunities. Several of my friends were also of great help by providing feedback on my ideas and lending an ear when I believed myself lost in the research. Though the progress has, at times, been a difficult and tough ordeal, their continued support has bolstered my resolve at the crucial moments.

Concerning the thesis, much of the material used consisted of various languages and, at times, requires a certain understanding of Chinese history and geography. I have attempted to guide the reader through these difficulties and provide a paper that is clear, insightful and hopefully a contribution to the often-overlooked field of mission history. Any errors or faults in this thesis are entirely my responsibility. With the submission of this thesis, I will finish the final step of my educative period at the University. But, as history teaches us, there is always more to learn and additional challenge to overcome, to which I look forwards.

Thidrek (Rik) Vossen, 2020-2-8, Shanghai

Introduction

The nineteenth century was in many ways a century in which the world witnessed profound changes as revolutions, both in political as technological sense, increasingly connected local environments with the wider global world. The emergence of Belgian and Dutch missionaries, who were part of a newly established Belgian mission order, in the frontier regions of the Chinese Qing Empire serves as a good example of these changes. Founded in the 1862, this order, called the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or the congregation of Scheut in short, had travelled towards the East to conduct a mission in the largely mysterious Chinese Qing empire. However, instead of going to the coastal regions, where many other missions such as the French Lazarist operated, they went even further and established themselves along China's northern frontier, in the provinces of present day inner-Mongolia and Gansu.[1] From their arrival in 1864 until their expulsion in 1949 by the Chinese communist government, the congregation had conducted the mission within those regions and through their role as cultural mediators, became a distinct part of those societies.

During the period in which the congregation of Scheut operated in China, it experienced some of the most influential events in recent Chinese history, such as the Boxer rebellion, fall of the Qing empire and the victory of the Communist party. Within these events, the Boxer rebellion holds a unique place in the congregation's history. When a German missionary was murdered in the coastal province of Shandong in 1900, the mission demanded a new Cathedral as reparation, at the expense of the local government.[2] The seemingly minor incident, called the Juye incident, however sparked a revolt which unexpectedly exploded into a nation-wide popular uprising. Unlike previous revolts, it was not directed against the Chinese Qing government, but uniquely against the increasing Western presence that had emerged in China following the Opium War treaties in the 1850s. Eventually supported by the Qing government, as the Empress-dowager Cixi ordered the Imperial forces to join the revolt, the rebellion became such a threat that it required an international coalition to defeat them, which occupied Beijing in the process.

For the congregation of Scheut, the uprising proofed disastrous, as the primary focus of these Boxer rebels were the thousands of missionaries that had travelled to China following the nineteenth century 'foreign' expansion. The ordinary Chinese who participated in the revolt specifically targeted the missionaries and their Chinese converts, initially in only Shandong. However, when the ripple of rebellion reached China's frontier regions, the missions of Scheut fell victim to the onslaught, losing countless missionaries and converts. The historian Tiedemann even stated that the mission within inner-Mongolia witnessed some of the worst during the rebellion.[3] However, oddly enough, the Scheut missionaries in the neighbouring province of Gansu, experienced something completely different, as the missionary Lieven van Ostade indicated at the time; 'Post Scriptum: Here everything is relatively quiet.'[4] Such a contrast appears highly unusual as the Scheut mission had a

[1] See appendix 2 and 3 for geographical reference.

[2] For geographical reference, see appendix 1; Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys; The Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth* (New York, 1997), p. 21.

[3] Rolf Gerhard Tiedemann, 'Catholic Mission Stations in Northern China: centers of stability and protection in troubled times', In: Lars Peter Laamann, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee (ed.), *The Church as Safe Haven; Christian Governance in China* (Leiden, 2018), p. 269-274.

[4] Lieven van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke kronieken van Noord-Kan-Sou van 1877 tot 1912* (manuscript), Leuven, KADOC collection Scheut, 17.2.2.7.6420, p. 224-225.

considerable presence in both regions but when the Boxer ripple arrived, only in Mongolia it resulted into a figurative tidal wave.

For a rebellion that focused so heavily on the foreign presence, the different experiences seem unusual. In studies concerning the Boxer rebellion and the Christian mission in nineteenth century China, the missionary is generally perceived as provoking aggression. Cohen for instance states; 'what is fascinating about the relationship between the consequences of a historical event like the Juye incident and its origins is the degree to which the former extend beyond the latter'.[5] Yet, few inquiries are provided for the question why or how missionaries stimulated such resentment. Studies involving China and the mission enterprise also barely elaborate on this question, as they often consider the perspective from the mission and regard it as a singular event. The congregation of Scheut in connection to the Boxer rebellion, presents two interesting perspectives through which the influence of the mission and its missionaries on both the growth of the mission and the aversion towards the west, called antiforeignism, can be traced. *Why* these two different scenarios thus emerged in the two regions of the congregation is the central question, by focussing on *what* influence the missionaries had on the development of the mission and *how* they operated within Mongolia and Gansu from 1890 to 1900.

Previous research

Yet, before considering this question, the existing research concerning China and the Christian mission enterprise in the late nineteenth century must be addressed. The earliest publications are, for the majority, written by missionaries themselves.[6] Their works, however, inspired the first scholars to uncover the relationship between European missionaries and the Chinese state and society. In the 1963's book *China and Christianity,,* the influential sinologist Paul A. Cohen examines the general mission-enterprise from an imperialistic perspective, arguing in favour of a strong established Confucian orthodoxy that from 1860 on became increasingly hostile to Western missionaries.[7] Taking several perspectives into account, such as the gentry, officials and the various missionaries themselves, he concludes that the growing tide of anti-foreignism, especially after the infamous Taiping rebellion and the consequent deterioration of the Chinese government's power, stimulated Chinese resistance to the missionaries, who through their actions in China's interior popularized and activated this hostile force.[8] In his later contributions to *The Cambridge history of China* (1978) he upholds the view that the rising hostility to the missions remained and became institutionalised in the later Republican period (1912-1949).[9]

Similar to Cohen, Fairbank argues, despite lacking scholarly attention to the missionary story, that missionaries posed an 'irreducible cultural threat because they were rivals of China's elites.'[10] By being subversive elements to the traditional Chinese world order,

[5] Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 3.

[6] In the case of Scheut, fellow missionaries for instance wrote the first publications, these were generally descriptive or commemorative accounts of the mission's efforts. Most of these have been preserved in either libraries or archives. See: V. Rondelez, *Scheut; Zo Begon Het: het Leven en Werk van Provicaris T. Verbist, Stichter van de Missiecongregatie van Scheut 1823-1868* (Scheut, 1960); Jozef van Hecken, *Mgr. de Vos in de Steppen van Mongolië* (Leuven, 1931).

[7] Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870*. (London, 1963), P. 3.

[8] Cohen. *China and Christianity*, P. 270.

[9] John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10 (Cambridge, 1978), p. 590.

[10] John K. Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Massachusetts, 1974), p. 10.

(protestant) missions apparently contributed to China's revolutionary process.[11] Both Fairbank and Cohen emphasise the contradictions in the relationship between Christianity in China and erosive elements of Christianity in an increasingly hostile environment in the heyday of the Qing dynasty. Their focus, however, solely concerns the latter half of the nineteenth century and is aimed at the hostile environment leading up to the Boxer rebellion. Furthermore, it poses a negative and pessimistic conclusion concerning the entire mission enterprise. Their initial hypothesis regarded the whole mission enterprise as an imperialistic tool that only attracted and increased hostility among the Chinese population. Their works uncovered the complicated relationship between China and Christianity by examining a wide and accessible array of sources from both a European and Chinese perspective and with their efforts, drew the history of the Chinese mission into the historical discipline.

The American historian Jean Paul Wiest followed and rejected the general approach towards the mission enterprise by focussing on a single order, the American Catholic mission order of Maryknoll.[12] Abandoning Cohen's imperialistic framework, Wiest rather regards that; 'this study, however, is not just a history of how structures, hierarchy and official theology were established; it is also a history of encounters between to people of different cultures.'[13] He examines the creation, arrival and growth of the order in China, including different mission methods and their educational, medical and social activities, and concludes that Maryknoll's growth coincided with the modernization of rural areas through their chartable work, balancing the forceful westernisation by integrating the best of both worlds.[14] By elaborating on the creation of an indigenous church in the context of the Chinese turbulent nineteenth and twentieth century, by emphasising the desire to give the Chinese converts their own church while acknowledging the difficulties Maryknoll faced in this process, Wiest finally argued that missionaries were not mere imperialistic figures but rather bridge builders and agents of dialogue.[15] With his conclusion and approach, Wiest provided an new method for historical research in which a distinct mission order stood central.

This new approach was well received and the Belgian historian Carine Dujardin employed it in her study of the Augustinian mission in China, by also considering the missionary as an agent of cultural contact.[16] She first explores the specific characteristics and tactics of the Catholic mission in the background of the larger political and societal developments. Focussing primarily on the missionary sources, she admits being unable to consider documents outside this material due to the inaccessibility of Chinese sources. Her research follows the long line of missionary studies, beginning with the interbellum's research and drafting the developments until the emergence of sinology under Fairbank. Following an outline of the missionary revival in the course of the nineteenth century with the Opium War treaties as the background, she closely examines the missionary activities throughout their period. After a researched consideration on the professionalization of the mission within a changing context, she outlines the early twentieth century's development of the indigenous church. The main goal of the project was to clarify the Belgium mission in China and allowed

[11] Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America,* p. 10.
[12] The study included both the Maryknoll fathers as well as the Maryknoll sister, the female counterpart. See; Jean Paul Wiest, *Maryknoll in China; a History: 1918-1955* (New York, 1988), p. 5-6.
[13] Wiest, *Maryknoll in China*, p. 6.
[14] Ibidem, p. 200-201.
[15] Ibidem, p. 258.
[16] For clarification, the Belgian 'Minderbroeders' are a Dutch term for the Franciscan order. The English title of her book is 'Mission and modernity, The Belgian Franciscans in China'. See: Carine Dujardin. *Missionering En Moderniteit: De Belgische Minderbroeders in China 1872-1940* (Leuven, 1996), p. 94.

her to conclude that the missionaries shifted in their attitude, from the 'old style' of conversion aimed at individual salvation, to a 'new style', focused on the establishment of the native church.[17]

The new method, aimed at the history of a single mission order, resonated in the research projects from the Verbiest Institute in Leuven. The historians Koen de Ridder and Patrick Taveirne used similar approaches but aimed at a more local level, being the mission in a specific region. In his dissertation from 2000, De Ridder offers a historical account of the Congregation of the Immaculate heart of Mary (CICM) in the Chinese province of Gansu from 1878 to 1922.[18] By employing both missionary and Chinese sources, he aims to provide 'the inside story as well as the outside story' by distinguishing three layers of context, the Belgium-European, Chinese and Chinese-European.[19] Through his study, De Ridder continues to outline the larger perspective of the mission while still acknowledging the individual elements, especially in an area as extensive as Gansu, by alternating between mentioned layers and therefore providing an overall image of the CICM mission in Gansu. De Ridder essentially provides an extensive account of the mission, but gives few definitive answers, as he himself argues for the necessity of further research concerning the CICM missionaries in the late nineteenth century.[20]

Patrick Taveirne provides perhaps the most ambitious attempt as he examined the whole CICM effort in the Mongolian Ordos region within 'the geopolitical, socioeconomic and ethno-cultural context of the Mongol-Han borderlands during the heyday of European colonialism and the collapse of the Qing dynasty.' [21] Taveirne opens with an extensive examination of the area in question, its people, geography and its connection with China through extensive use of Chinese sources. Following, Taveirne traces the early Christian mission efforts in China and follows by integrating the CICM into the larger narrative of the nineteenth-century mission efforts and their experiences within their local communities. His narrative ends shortly after the Boxer rebellion, in which he outlines the impact and new course of the CICM mission. Similar to De Ridder, Taveirne unfortunately only outlines a complicated interconnected history of local missionary perspectives and larger overarching cultural and political perspectives, while providing few answers. In the footsteps of Wiest and Dujardin, this Leuven school of thought promoted a perspective of examining the mission within the local circumstances.

Following a similar narrowing perspective, the Dutch historian Harry Knipschild wrote an academic biography about the crucial figure Ferdinand Hamer, in which he described the life and martyrdom of the Bishop Hamer by putting the figure rather than the region central. Moreover, Knipschild also provides additional context, explaining earlier missions and the reorganisation under the French leadership before outlining the background and development of Hamer within the CICM. Chronologically, he describes the arrival, efforts in the Chinese mission, return to The Netherlands and eventual death of Ferdinand Hamer during the Boxer rebellion. Unique to this study is the emphasis on a detailed account of a missionary's life above larger mission narratives that had previously been employed. Through

[17] These two approaches consist of an older style and a newer style, in which latter considered a more inclusive conversion with the convert more than just a soul in need of saving. Dujardin. *Missionering En Moderniteit,* p. 451.

[18] Koen de Ridder, *A Pear Tree Legacy; the Belgium CICM Mission in Gansu 1878-1922* (Leuven, 2000), p. 1.

[19] De Ridder, *A Pear Tree Legacy,* p. 24.

[20] Ibidem, p. 289.

[21] Patrick Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors, a History of Scheut in Ordos 1874-1911* (Leuven 2004), p. 19.

Hamer, Knipschild clarifies the practices of mission, consisting of the religious, military and economic dimensions. Furthermore, through an intriguing and personal image of the bishop, Knipschild also shortly addresses Hamer's methods for conducting the mission, to which we will return further on.

The increasing turn towards local or smaller perspectives adheres to the change in general academic focus as recent studies transcended mere descriptions or clarifications of the missionaries and started analysing the local perspectives from the missionaries and the Chinese people. The English historian Daniel H. Bays edited a volume of articles, dedicated to the mission history in China in which it is argued that the interpretive scheme provided by Cohen does not cover changes in the nineteenth century Christian presence in China. Though these articles, Bays attempts to provide an alternative explanatory model, alongside the approach brought forward by Wiest and Dujardin.[22] For instance, by describing the integration of Catholicism in the context of the North Chinese rural village organisation, Charles A. Litzinger observes the missionary enterprise in its local context. Other essays in Bays' volume concern Christianity and identity or continuation of Christianity in the early-Republican era. Bays subsequently concludes that 'the 1840s appear much more complicated than previously thought', as Christianity constituted more than just an outside influence.[23]

The latest research has therefore shifted its focus the interactive perspective of the mission within the local dimension. The English historian Alan Richard Sweeten, in an article in Bays edited volume, for instance examines the mission and its Chinese converts in their local society in the Jiangxi province.[24] Sweeten specifically asks how the mission functioned and operated in the local space by examining the Jiao'an (教案), legal cases concerning religious (Christian) conflicts. He concludes that conflicts between converts, missionaries and Chinese functioned not as specific religious conflict or persecution but rather that they belong to ordinary community conflicts.[25] Sweeten elaborates this argument later in a book, where he again concludes that 'Christians were, in the main, an accepted part of the rural landscape.'[26] In his conclusion, he nuances his argument by making a distinction between the rural countryside and cities, in which conflict existed more frequent.[27] Following Bays proposed method, Sweeten observes that the local layer of Christians coexisted within the local economic and political sphere, thus refuting the claim of Christianity as solely a foreign religion.[28]

In a similar fashion, the Historian Joseph Tse-Hei Lee's, explores the expansion of Christianity in the southern Chaozhou prefecture between 1860 and 1900, observed from the wider context of local resource conflict.[29] He portrays early Christianity as a grassroots movement, part of the intensely competitive religious dimension and not as an isolated community. 'Religious cases were not the major source of tension and conflict between the two sides', but were part of a sophisticated network of already existing lineages and rivalries

[22] Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, 1996), p. 4-5.
[23] Bays, *Christianity in China*, p. 3.
[24] Alan Sweeten, 'Catholic Converts in Jiangxi Province: Conflict and Accommodation, 1860-1900' in: Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, 1996), p. 24-40, here p. 24.
[25] Sweeten, 'Catholic Converts in Jiangxi Province', p. 39.
[26] Alan Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China; Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi 1860-1900* (Michigan, 2001), p. 3.
[27] Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China*, p. 195.
[28] Ibidem, p. 196.
[29] Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, *The Bible and the Gun, Christianity in South-China 1860-1900* (London, 2003), p. XV-XVI.

of which the Church merely consisted as one element.[30] Despite Lee's focus on Protestantism, his approach to examine grassroots Christianity transcends a historical or sociological perspective as Lee integrates the local dynamics into an overarching model encompassing the regional context.[31] He similarly rejects the notion that Christianity was an alien religion being forced upon the Chinese communities. His second book confirms this argument, as he examines Chaozhou in a collaborative effort to emphasise the symbiotic relationship between the local practices and the global Church.[32] Lee concludes by stating that Christianity was far more indigenous than has yet been acknowledged, at least in several coastal provinces of China.[33]

Finally, this bottom-up approach is also used by Eugenio Menegon in his study on Catholicism in Fu'an County (福安) in Fujian (福建). Rejecting older narratives of 'foreign Christianity' or 'Confucian Christianity', he argues in favour of the transformation of Christianity from a foreign and global religion into a localised Chinese religion.[34] He states, 'local society and county officials went from an attitude of open confrontation to a *de facto* toleration of Christian activities, as Christian beliefs and practices found a space in the field of local religious tolerance.'[35] Therefore, Christianity was, according to Menegon, integrated into the plurality of local religion landscape.[36] Furthermore, he argues that due to increasing bureaucratic control, institutional repression did occur and it was precisely the local population that defied such suppression by retaining their religion. Much in line with the arguments of Lee, Christianity in Fu'an had become a grassroots and local religion, maintained and protected by the people themselves without the security of a foreign imperial power. This indicates that Christianity, at least in some places, did not require an 'imperialistic character' as the communities were able to sustain themselves without outside interference, thus becoming truly localised.

Method, sources and language

The puzzle concerning China and its relation to Christianity and the European missions is still far from being solved but the work already achieved is telling. The older narratives, dominated by Cohen's view of Christianity as a foreign Imperialistic 'mission impossible', has over time been replaced with an increasing local perspective, in which the focus shifted from asking how the mission existed in the local environment to an in-depth examination of how the mission functioned within a local context. For research concerning the congregation of Scheut, such a shift in focus has remained somewhat absent. Considering the difference in experience of its missionaries within Mongolia and Gansu during the Boxer rebellion, an ideal opportunity is provided to draw Scheut into the interactive dimension by comparing the way in which the

[30] Lee, *The Bible and the Gun*, p.166.

[31] Lee does acknowledge that the focus on Protestantism arose from the language constraints related with Catholic sources, which were often written in French, Dutch, Flemish or Latin compared to the English protestant sources.

[32] Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, ed., *Christianizing South China, Mission, Development and Identity in Modern Chaoshan* (New York, 2018), p. 2.

[33] Lee, *The Bible and the Gun*', p. 170.

[34] The Confucian Christianity argument states that (Jesuit) missionaries had to accommodate Christianity to Confucian standard in order to spread it. The main focus of this argument consisted of the pre-opium war Jesuit expansion and often does not relate to other missionary activities. Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins and Friars; the Localization of Christianity in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 7.

[35] Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins and Friars,* p. 370.

[36] Ibidem, p. 372.

congregation operated and grew within the local environment. Besides examining how the missionaries functioned, it also allows an observation on the influence of their actions in relation to the local society between 1890 and 1900 and in turn explain why two different missionary experiences emerged during the Boxer Rebellion.

The latest research prefers an examination of a single missionary order within a specific geographical space, but such an approach is often limiting. The comparative method employed in this thesis, forms a new addition in the approaches towards the history of the mission. An observation of a single region or area proofs often insufficient, as it provides a singular perspective based on a distinct set of circumstances and negates larger insights. The connection between the Scheut mission, its missionaries and the environment, through an in-depth comparison between the activities in the regions of Mongolia and Gansu have the potential to provide additional insight about both the efforts of Scheut as well as the mission enterprise in general. This comparison will be employed in several stages, first, by examining the different circumstances of the regions involved. Second, by observing the different approaches of the Scheut missionaries in conducting the mission. Third, by analysing the difference in instances of local conflict between Mongolia and Gansu.

In the comparative approach, this research project combines the existing research concerning the congregation of Scheut with additional primary material. Previous studies generally describe the missionary perspective and the inclusion of additional primary sources as historical annals, missionary studies, chronicles, mission periodicals and personal correspondence allow a wider perspective. For instance, the personal correspondence of Hubertus Otto to his family provide a more personal and less confessional perspective. At the same time, the early studies conducted by missionaries themselves concerning the mission will be included as primary material. The mission also produced monthly periodicals called 'Missiën in Congo and China', in which they published accounts and letters from the missionaries with the purpose of gaining revenue. Most of these sources are strongly confessional and therefore must be read with caution as it often has a one-sided perspective from the missionary. However, the value of the content within these often-overlooked sources must not be underestimated, as the missionaries were in many regards the first sinologist.[37]

As Koen de Ridder notes, Chinese sources regarding the Scheut mission are varied and include various publications and governmental sources.[38] However, accessing such sources proofs a difficult ordeal as archives in China are still hard to access. An online article by Charles Kraus perfectly encapsulates the difficulty of accessing and researching in Chinese archives: he elaborates on law, development and difficulties encountered by many scholars within this field.[39] Despite my attempts to access the provincial archive of Gansu located in Lanzhou, it remained closed and its sources can therefore, sadly not be used. Another potable Chinese source consist of the local gazetteers or Difangzi (地方志) which are generally easily accessible, but such sources rarely mention the Christian presence, and are therefore not useable. Most of the Chinese material used in this project concerns secondary material and includes local

[37] Many authors including the mentioned Jean-Paul Wiest and D.E. Mungello emphasise the value of missionary sources: See: D.E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit accommodation and* the *origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, 1989); invullen

[38] De Ridder, '*A Pear Tree Legacy',* p. 16.

[39] Charles Kraus, 'Researching the History of the People's Republic of China', April 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/researching-the-history-the-peoples-republic-china> [accessed on 2019/4/12].

works on Christianity, such as the provincial chronical (Gansu Shengzhi 甘肃省志) and other later publications. Yet, due to the strong 'Imperialist narrative' and the different historical traditions, they can regrettably only provide limited contribution ins this project.

A final note consists of the use of language in this thesis. The used source material from historical figures consists generally out of various language such as Dutch, French, German, Mandarin and Latin. For the sake of clarity, all included passages and references from both literature and source material have been translated into English. For most language such a translation poses few problems, besides for Mandarin. Its translation proves to be difficult as the missionary sources use different manners of phonetic writing in the names of places, people or sayings which diverge from the present-day pinyin system. A short example is for instance the missionaries' description of the Boxer slur 'pao ts'ing mie iang', which in present day pinyin is translated as 'bao Qing, mie yang, 报请灭洋' (preserve the Qing, exterminate the west). Throughout this thesis, when such phonetical descriptions are used, they have been translated into present-day pinyin. However, for the names of some settlements, this might not be possible. Therefore, they are presented in the manner written in the sources.

Structure

In accordance with the legendary Hollywood move '55 days in Peking', in which the siege of the Beijing foreign quarter during the Boxer rebellion stands central, this thesis follows a somewhat similar theatrical structure. In line with the comparative approach, the first part consists with the introductory aspects of the story, in which both the 'stage' and the 'actors', if you will, are outlined. Using a combination of secondary literature and primary sources, the first chapter elaborates on the historical and spatial conditions in which the mission emerged. It places the congregation of Scheut within the global and local circumstances, that not only allowed Scheut to emerge but also posed difficult challenges it had to overcome. Following the setting of the 'stage', the 'actors' will subsequently be introduced in the second chapter. It provides an overview of the initial creation and growth of Scheut within its nineteenth century European context, followed by its initial entry into the Chinese region of Mongolia and its expansion into the region of Gansu.

Following the introduction of the 'stage' and the 'actors', the second part focusses closely on the events during the Scheut expansion into China by first considering the 'script', if you will, of the play. It observes the approaches or methods of the missionaries within the congregation of Scheut, towards goal to convert the Chinese people and develop the mission. The approaches of two crucial figures, the Bishops Ferdinand Hamer and Hubertus Otto, are examined as they 'invented' two different 'scripts' through which the Scheut mission conducted the mission, the Ordos method for Mongolia and the Gansu method for Gansu. With the 'stage', 'actors' and 'scripts' defined, the final chapter focusses on the 'plays', referring to the many local conflicts between the mission, the societies of Mongolia and Gansu and the political authorities. These 'plays', allows an observation of not only how such methods, or 'scripts', resulted in different reception towards the mission but also stimulated the creation of different circumstances, that eventually culminated in two different experiences when the Boxer ripple emerged in 1900.

Ch. 1: The Historical and Spatial context of Scheut

Before the central question of this thesis can be approached, first, the 'stage' needs to be set, by asking a very basic question; what were the historical and spatial circumstances in which the congregation of Scheut emerged in both Europe and the North-Western frontier of China during the nineteenth century? Understanding the larger context is crucial in understanding how and why the mission developed the way it did. This has also been the argument of many other scholars, such as Jean-Paul Wiest, Carine Dujardin and most of the Leuven school of thought, who emphasised the global and local context in understanding the growth of distinct missions as well as the emergence of the indigenous Christian movement. In this chapter, the 'stage' is provided by considering the global changes that occurred in the nineteenth century concerning China's relationship with the European mission enterprise, which eventually allowed for both the creation of the congregation of Scheut and its expansion into China. Following, the spatial environment in which the congregation conducted their mission is outlined to understand not only the global but also the local circumstances.

The Nineteenth Century Global Changes

The relationship between China and the Christian missions already existed centuries before the turn of the nineteenth century. Nestorian missionaries already emerged during the Tang dynasty (618-907) and were later succeeded by Jesuit missionaries.[40] The nineteenth century, however, introduced profound changes compared to these first mission. Initially, the Portuguese Jesuit mission dominated Christian proselytism in China but lost their monopoly with the arrival of new mission orders, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans. As these orders broke the Jesuits information monopoly, the Jesuit approach of accommodating the Christian message to the Chinese worldview came under increasing scrutiny. It pushed the papal authorities to claim sovereignty and control over de mission enterprise by appealing the Qing Kangxi emperor (康熙皇帝). However, the Papal legates were woefully unprepared to conduct such a sensitive discussion in both political and cultural sense.[41] This affair became known as the rites controversy and resulted in the Chinese control of the mission activity, through a system of examination. The deterioration continued under Emperor Yongzheng (雍正皇帝), the Kangxi emperor's successor, and Christianity was completely outlawed in 1724 as a xiejiao (邪教), meaning sect or cult.[42]

The Chinese suspicion of Christianity as a dangerous sect of cult was eventually confirmed during the nineteenth century's traumatic Taiping rebellion (太平运动) which lasted from 1850 untill 1864. Inspired by the Christian doctrine, the failed Hakka scholar Hong Xiuguan (洪秀全) mobilized the dissatisfied Hakka minority and entered in an open revolt against the Qing dynasty. Joined by many other Chinese peasants, Hong managed to capture

[40] The dissertation written by Li Tang discusses not only the Nestorian tablets but also additional Chinese and -non-Chinese sources to reconstruct the history of Early Christianity and its enduring presence in China. See: Li Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and its Literature in Chinese: Together with a New English translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), p. 77-82; A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the years 1550* (London, 1930) p. 52-53.

[41] Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, p. 23.

[42] Even though Christianity was officially outlawed, it did not completely stop the expansion of local Christianity, as it adapted itself to the traditional Chinese culture. At times, missionaries were even tolerated within China by local authorities. This is remarkably well outlined in: Lars Laaman, *Christian Heretics in Late Imperial China: Christian Inculturation and State Control, 1720-1850* (London, 2006).

the old imperial capital of Nanjing in 1853 and founded the Heavenly kingdom with Christianity as its religion. In the eyes of the Western observer, the rebellion seen as an opportunity to Christianise China but when the syncretic version of Hong's Christianity became known, opinion quickly reversed arguing that it surely could not be defined as Christian.[43] For the Chinese observer, it confirmed the status of Christianity as a sectarian movement, part of the constellation of religious sects which given the right conditions, could swiftly enter in open rebellion.[44] Christianity in nineteenth century China must therefore not be considered in the European fashion, but rather in concert with the Chinese perspective, a foreign-related sectarian movement with strong ties to the traumatic Taiping experience.

Where in China the status and position of the Christian missions had only been deteriorating, it experienced a stunning revival in Europe. Following a period of decline in missionary zeal, it re-emerged with the arrival of the Romantic movement in the aftermath of the French revolution. Within the intellectual and ecclesiastical circles, figures such as Francois-Rene Chateaubriand started commenting on the status and position of Christianity, comparing for instance the orientalist picture of a glorious Christianity in China against its endangered status in Europe. Meanwhile, local religious orders emerged across Europe, such as the French Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in 1805.[45] Alongside, new redemptive notions regarding the missionary spirit were introduced, changing the popular perception towards the mission. The new movement envisioned a heroic almost militant missionary who would conquer the East and by doing so redeem it. The papal authorities meanwhile acknowledged the revival by organising the Eastern mission, through the Propaganda Fide and the *Ius commissions*, the right of entrustment, in which an order received papal permission to conduct the mission in one or more ecclesiastical provinces.

At the same time, revolutions in transportation and communication brought East closer to West. The steamboats, railroads and electric telegraphs facilitated new ways to quickly travel towards Asia. When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, the journey to the Far East was for instance greatly reduced.[46] The revolution in communication resulted in the increased transmission of stories, such as the state of Christianity in China, towards Europe. As Knipschild describes, 'the horrible stories from China that reached Catholic Europe during this time […] claimed that the loveless Chinese killed their own children.'[47] Simultaneously, gruesome stories of Christian martyrs, who fell victim to the Qing persecutions also found their way to Europe, where they reinforced the religious and missionary spirits. Though it must be remembered that such stories modified their content to suit the dominant narrative, their influence is still noteworthy. In France, it pushed the Bishops of Nancy and Toul in 1843 to found the Sainte-Enfance (Holy Childhood), which aimed to baptise, liberate and raise the

[43] A considerable objection against the Taiping version of Christianity was for instance the act of polygamy. Such policies were, however, only discovered after European missionaries had visited the Taiping occupied regions, see: Stephan Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom* (London, 2012), p. 355-358; Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son : The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York, 1996).

[44] The Qing held a strong suspicion against sectarian movements as the experienced multiple destructive revolts throughout their reign. See: P. Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure 1796-1864* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 6-7. The White Lotus rebellion was one such sects that arose in open rebellion, see Chapter 2 of Kuhn's study; P. Crossley, *The Wobbling Pivot, China since 1800: an interpretive History* (Chichester 2010), p. 51-53.

[45] Patrick Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors,* p. 159-160.

[46] Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (München, 2009) p. 712-724.

[47] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 53.

Chinese children following Christian standards.[48] Safe to say, that before 1842, the stage had been set for a grand performance of the renewed missionary enterprise.

However, the amount of religious fervour, missionary orders or preparation mattered little for China if it was not for the European powers who forcefully paved the way for them. Before 1839, few would have believed that a European power, in this case the British Empire, could defeat the hegemonic Qing Empire, but, on 29th of august 1842, the first Opium War was concluded with the treaty of Nanjing. In the treaty, American and French diplomats ensured the immunity of missionaries as well as the return of their confiscated property. Though missionaries were allowed to return, they still could not openly preach to show a distinction between the Chinese and the 'Barbarians' (东夷), another word for Westerners.[49] Eight year later however, the Chinese seizure of a British ship carrying Opium sparked a second conflict, called 'the Arrow War' (1856-1860)[50] Despite fierce Qing opposition, a combined Anglo-French force managed to conquer the Imperial capital of Beijing (北京), where they destroyed the Imperial summer palace, forcing the Qing government to capitulate. Their victory resulted in the treaty of Tianjin, in which the French further enforced the position and authority of the religious enterprise in China, invigorating the missionary fervour that was already stirring among the European mission orders.

Where the British authorities were mainly concerned with obtaining trade and territorial privileges, the French carved out a different path by claiming jurisdiction of the Catholic church in China. As Taveirne states, 'although not provided for in any treaty, France, with tacit approval of the secretariat of state and Propaganda fide in Rome, assumed the right to protect all Catholic missionaries and missions in China, regardless of nationality'. [51] Exploiting the 'unequal treaties'. To this purpose, several French institutions were created such as the Propagation de la Foi in 1822 which provided financial aid to several mission orders. The Qing officials rejected such claims, arguing that foreign missionaries belonged under the jurisdiction of the Zongli Yamen (总理衙门), the Qing bureau of foreign affairs. They also disputed the exact territory over which France had claimed such authority, but their objection could hardly be enforced due to the content of the treaties as well as the unstable and weak domestic situation. [52] The latter half of the nineteenth century saw France dominating and stimulating the Catholic mission enterprise in China.[53]

The French expansive efforts culminated into roughly two thousand active mission orders in 1900.[54] This sudden expansion combined with China's political humiliation sparked a renewed popular hostility in the form of anti-foreignism. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, this elusive concept stood central within Chinese society and because the missions experienced this cultural and political phenomenon first-hand, it is worthwhile to shortly explore. Though it can be interpreted as an aversion towards foreign influence, Judith Wyman poses an alternative perspective in her observation of anti-foreignism in the city of

[48] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 54-55.

[49] Ibidem, p. 175.

[50] The British ship captured by the Qing officials was named the 'Arrow', hence the second opium war is often labelled as the Arrow war.

[51] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 178.

[52] Even though the creation of the French ecclesiastical colony was of extended importance for many religious orders in China, for Scheut the French were only relevant when an appeal to the Qing bureaucracy fell on deaf ears. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p.176-178.

[53] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 168

[54] Though it must be remarked that these included both Catholic and Protestant missions. Regardless, the surge left a profound impact in China. See: Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World,* p. 890.

Chongqing (重庆) during the latter half of the century. She argues that antiforeignism consisted as a combined reaction towards foreign encroachment and local socio-economic problems, while rejecting that anti-foreignism was determined by religious or physical characteristics. Instead, the increasing foreign threat towards the ordinary Chinese influenced the ongoing process of self- and community-creation along the lines of in- and outsiders. In this sense, the anti-foreignism was a result from uncertain local conditions only further pressured by an expanding western sphere of influence.

Following the development of Christianity in China along the emerged changes during the nineteenth century, it became clear that Qing government had lost control over the Christian proselytism within China. When the religious circles in Europe received the news that China once again allowed Christian missionaries within China, numerous mission orders started their journey towards the middle kingdom. Directed by the Papal Propaganda Fide through the right of entrustment and supported by the French resources, the development of the Catholic orders in China surged.[55] Older mission orders, such as the Lazarist and Jesuits returned in China, while they were reinforced with new often national-focussed religious orders. As a child of its time, the Belgian congregation of Scheut was a direct product of these global nineteenth century developments and joined the mission enterprise. However, contrary to the usual custom of conducting the mission within the easily accessible and protected coastal regions, Scheut emerged within the Chinese frontier regions of Mongolia and Gansu. Largely separated from the ecclesiastical network in China's coastal region, the Scheut missionaries faced a largely, unknown and distinctly different environment compared to their fellow mission order.

The Chinese North-West: A Spatial consideration

To understand the entirety of the 'stage', or in other words the context, the global developments alone is not sufficient. A short spatial consideration of the Mongolian and Gansu regions therefore consist as another key aspect of the 'stage', necessary to understand the missionary approaches. To start, both the areas of Mongolia and Gansu belonged to a similar geographical environment, possessing fertile lands along the rivers with a generally inhospitable inland. In Mongolia, this geographical contrast existed in the Ordos Plateau and the Yellow River bend (黄河后). Following Taveirne's, the 'plateau and its periphery are more adapted to pastoral than agricultural activities', due to its location and transitional climate.[56] It was generally dominated by the Mongol pastoral nomads, who survived using limited rudimentary agricultural along extensive husbandry of five distinct animals: sheep, goats, cattle, horses and camels.[57] In contrast, the backbend of the Yellow River had been subjected to limited temporary sedentary exploitation by Han Chinese farmers. As the Scheut missionaries observed, the agricultural settlements appeared similar to 'their rural hometown in the Low Countries'.[58]

In Gansu, the contrast existed between the Yellow River valleys and its mountainous inlands. A fine example is the Hexi corridor, which had fertile lands throughout the corridor but was surrounded with unhospitable inlands. On the north side, the Gobi Desert obstructed easy passage while mountain ranges in the south separate Gansu from the Tibetan highlands.

[55] Ernest P. Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony; China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate* (Oxford, 2013), p. 23.
[56] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 43.
[57] Ibidem, p. 44.
[58] Ibidem, p. 50.

Fertile regions were centred along the Yellow River but, its inland agricultural production demanded increasingly more effort.[59] Because the area formed a transitional zone between the Mongolian steppes, arable lowlands and mountainous plateaus, Jonathan Lippman described Gansu's climate as 'dry and severe, its topographical contrast[s] are sharp and sudden.'[60] Around Jiayuguan (嘉峪关) in central Gansu, a diverse economy existed based on a variety of agricultural activities and livestock farming. As indicated by Mgr. Melckebecke, the loess soil present in most of Gansu was ideal for growing opium poppy, which was increasingly in demand in the nineteenth century.[61] Geographically, both provinces held a form of division between agriculture, generally carried out by Han Chinese, and pastoral activities by local tribal people, each with their own geographical area. The agricultural hotspots were dominated by sedentary settlements while the inlands housed the nomadic tribes.

A short Frontier History

From these ecological and geographical circumstances arose a distinct historic nomadic-sedentary duality between the regions of Mongolia and Gansu, as Gansu was regarded as part of the Chinese sedentary empire and Mongolia, initially, was not. This contrast shifted during the Qing expansive period, in which the southern parts of Mongolia were conquered in 1636, followed by the northern parts in 1691. Subsequently, the Qing integrated Mongolia into the Chinese Imperial sphere by both aligning themselves with the Mongol elite, while fragmenting the Mongol tribes through an imposed administrative division. It divided the Mongols into different sections, each with an allocated territory under a noble family to prevent internal conflict and preserve the Mongols military potential.[62] Simultaneously, the Qing empire gradually allowed Han Chinese farmers to exploit fertile regions within inner-Mongolia, partly as a way to mediate the growing population of China. Their presence was largely seasonal or temporary and only became permanent due to the increased domestic pressure in the nineteenth century, resulting a surge of migrants and refugees towards the fertile areas of inner-Mongolia.[63] Regardless, the Qing policy of segregated divisions dominated the historical development of Mongolia.

Meanwhile, Gansu possessed a strong historic sedentary tradition as it had been part of the Chinese empire due to its strategic position as the gateway towards central Asia. When the Qing replaced the Ming dynasty, Gansu was for the first time instituted as a separate province with a frontier status. However, due to the Qing conquest of Mongolia, Qinghai and Xinjiang in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Gansu lost this military status. The region therefore became increasingly pacified, replacing many of the military administrative units as civilian ones.[64] This, in turn, started efforts to control the region's turbulent food production through the establishment of grain reserves and general agricultural development.[65] Such policies challenged the difficult ecological and geographical environment of Gansu, which could quickly result into region-wide famine. From a historical perspective, the sedentary-

[59]Jonathan N. Lippman, *Familiar Strangers: a History of Muslims in Northwest China* (London, 1997), p, 8-11.
[60] Lippman, *Familiar Strangers,* p. 8.
[61] Mgr. C. van Melckebeke*, Zegenende handen: Monseigneur Hubert Otto 1850-1938* (Leuven, 1948), p. 71.
[62] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors,* p. 118.
[63] The Qing cleverly used the frontier region as a release valve to either mediate a population explosion or provide relief during periods of starvation and famine. See: Ibidem, p. 104-105.
[64] Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 319.
[65] The famine of 1756, for instance, can serve as a prime example of the Qing efforts, in which governor Huang Tinggui (黄廷珪 1690-1759) managed to preserve order and avert famine by implementing fierce bureaucratic efforts, nearly exhausting all instituted grain reserves Perdue, *China Marches West*, p. 376

nomadic boundary had therefore shifted, from the border of Mongolia and Gansu towards the inlands of Mongolia. Resulting, Gansu showed a strong sedentary culture with only a minor nomadic presence, contrary to Mongolia in which the latter through the administrative structure dominated the former.

The societies of Mongolia and Gansu

The geographical and historical development of both regions resulted into two different societal structures. Mongolia was dominated by the Mongol tribes, who lived as partial farmers and livestock keepers. Their tribal 'kingdoms', after the Qing subjugation, were organized in six banners, each one belonging to a specific tribe.[66] As the Qing increased state control over these banners, the distinctive elements of their identity were solidified by a hierarchical status of nobility, contrasted by the 'lower' position of Han migrants. Their territories were determined by the Qing government, who actively prevented and reserved Mongol military potential for future conflicts. The segregated policy introduced black boundary lands (黑接地), to separate the tribes from the agrarian Han population. It consisted of 50 li (around 25 km) in width and stretched all the way into Shaanxi and Gansu. Using a divide in order to rule tactic, the Qing skilfully bound the banners to the Qing administration, while reserving a military force for quick deployment and simultaneously prevented open conflict between the fellow tribes and the Han migrants.[67]

The subservient Han migrants initially migrated in limited numbers towards Mongolia but due to famine, floods and general administrative decline within the Chinese government, such seasonal or temporary migration turned into permanent settlement. Migrants from the provinces of Shanxi (山西) and Shaanxi (陕西) gradually increased and had established themselves prominently in the fertile areas. Their seasonal hamlets were thus transformed into 'walled hamlets or fortified villages (Bao 保)'.[68] The residents generally lacked strong family connections or social ties, but they were subjected to a modified form of the Baojia (保甲), the Qing social system. However, it could not properly be enforced due to administrative decline and geographical difficulties.[69] This in turn resulted in the focus of the Scheut missionaries on these migrants, as the lack of social safety systems, families ties and strong governmental authority allowed them to be more receptive to conversion. The encroaching presence of these farmers sparked increasing conflict and tension with the Mongol Banner kingdoms, but it never escalated into open conflict, as the Mongol kings used their authority to press their claims.

Meanwhile, Gansu's status as a border province had resulted in a diverse population and included a wide variety of different ethnicities, such Mongol and Turkic tribes.[70] However,

[66] The six banners system consisted of the Qanggin, Uusin, Dalad, Otoy, Wang and Jegunyar. For a deep consideration of the Qing efforts in integrating Mongolia into the empire, see: Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 74-99

[67] Taveirne states three main tactics of the Qing, conquer by kindness (恩威并施), divide in order to rule (分而治之) and rule according to Custom (因素而治). See: Ibidem, p. 76-78.

[68] Ibidem, p. 103.

[69] Jean-Paul Wiest outlines the relationship between conversion and lineage bonds in a study to the conversion in Guangdong. In his paper, he argues that lineage constituted a hurdle for the conversion effort, as family ties often prevented individuals from converting. However, such ties could also increase conversion through the connection: an entire family could be converted swiftly. Jean-Paul Wiest, 'Lineage and Patterns of Conversion in Guangdong', in: *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, Vol. 4, nr. 7 (June, 1982), p. 1-32, here p. 2.

[70] Most of these minorities are still present with North-West China and presently are classified as minority nationalities.

these groups largely conformed to the cultural norm of the province, being the Chinese Han culture.[71] Gansu was therefore dominated by two main ethnic groups, the Han(-like) Chinese (韩) and the Muslim Hui (回). Starting with the former, there was a well-established Han community within the province during Qing rule, structured in a way that resembles lineage bonds and family ties in Guangdong.[72] These ties were considered as a hinder in the conversion efforts by the missionaries to convert the locals, in contrast with the discussed migrants in Mongolia whose lack of such connections.[73] For Gansu, the Baojia system strongly enforced social ties, by dividing the local Han population into units consisting of ten households led by jiazhang (家长)and a baozhang (保长).[74] The Qing used this system to organise defence and taxation and to this end, it was subordinate to the administration of mandarins, led by the governor-general, the *zongdu* (总督) with lower district mandarins, such as the *xunfu* (巡抚) and *daotai* (道台).[75]

The second important ethnic group are the Hui, the Muslim Chinese, who either came from Turkic tribes that had settled in the region or from religious conversion in the Silk Road exchange. Similarly, Lippman notes; 'In Gansu, A non-Muslim Chinese male might convert to Islam to improve his chances in business' thus indicating a fluid, rather than a rigid, religious identity.[76] In general, Islamic communities were generally centred on a mosque and could be found throughout most of the province, often within other communities that outnumbered the Hui-population. Yet, some areas did largely consist of Islamic communities, such as Hezhou (Linxia, 临夏). Yet, the diversity in the identities, social orders and perceptions between the communities must not be underestimated. The nineteenth century Islamic revolts, for instance, did not solely target Qing-dynasty forces but also other Islamic communities, especially since conflict amongst the various Islamic groups was not uncommon.[77] Despite often living in peace with their non-Muslim neighbours, the Hui were, in the wake of Scheut's arrival in the late nineteenth century, gripped in a cycle of official repressive measures and reacting Muslim resistance and rebellion.[78]

A special mention must be made to the destructive Muslim revolt of 1862-1873 led by Ma Hualong (马化龙), as it had a profound impact on both Gansu and Mongolia just before Scheut started their mission. In accordance with the nineteenth century's global religious

[71] As Lippman noticed, the individual and collective identity of the population of Gansu was created in contact with the 'other', given way for a fluid or syncretic identity. Though the identity of the population of Gansu is of little relevance, the strong dominance of the Han identity is relevant for the later expansion of Scheut in Gansu. See; Lippman*, Familiar Strangers*, p. 18.

[72] Wiest, 'Lineage and Patterns of Conversion in Guangdong', p. 2.

[73] The argument that conversion generally occurred along lineage lines posing both an opportunity and hinder for conversion, is this disputed. While Wiest argued based on a study of Guangdong Converts that lineage posed a crucial factor, Charles Litzinger argued the contrary in a study on Zhili converts. Both however do seem to agree that the absence of social safety, in the form of such lineages, allowed for easier conversion. See: Wiest, 'Lineage and Patterns of Conversion in Guangdong', p. 1-32; Charles Litzinger, *Temple Community and Village Cultural integration in North China: evidence from 'Sectarian Cases (Chiao-an) in Chihli, 1860-1895* (Davis, 1983), p. 8-10.

[74] Peter Ho, *Rangeland policy, Pastoralism and Poverty in China's Northwest: Ningxia Province in the Twentieth Century* (Leiden, 1999), p. 30.

[75] The implementation of such systems was unique when compared with the Ordos. As will be later addressed, such systems required a different approach to the mission. See: Koen De Ridder, *A Pear-Tree Legacy of Love*, p. 85.

[76] Lippman, *Familiar Strangers*, p. 18.

[77] Ibidem, p. 107-108.

[78] Ibidem, p. p. 21.

revival, Islam in the North-West of China also experienced a similar revival which culminated into a revolt.[79] It emerged as an escalation of existing tension between Islamic groups and the Qing government as resulted in the destruction of many small communities throughout the North-West, including other Muslim settlements. Being the third in a series of destructive revolts, the Qing authorities crushed the rebellion with brutal force under the command of the Qing general Zuo Zongtong (左宗棠) around 1873.[80] The event proved vital in the relation between the Qing and the Hui. Having lost all their significant positions, the Hui were exposed to heavy suppression aimed at quelling every rebellious impulse. For the congregation of Scheut, it ensured that much cheap but devastated land became available for purchase.

Especially in Mongolia, the revolt had an increased impact as it lacked the increased development and urbanisation compared to Gansu. As already mentioned, the Chinese farmers in Mongolia, who had settled there following the waves of emigration, lived in small hamlets of villages, only sometimes outfitted with walls. However, such settlements were generally newer, less developed villages and therefore less able to defend against armed insurgents. In Gansu, the urban tradition was far more developed. De Ridder, in his research distinguished three distinct forms: (1) farm villages, usually controlled by a family or clan, (2) market towns, formed around commercially crucial places, and (3) various cities generally existing as political-military centres.[81] These settlements were usually fortified and tightly controlled by a mandarin. Gansu's historical legacy as a border province provided it with an established tradition of defending against nomadic raiding parties from northern tribes, which only ended under the Qing pacification. It was therefore better prepared to deal with the frequent uprising and thus less impacted. Mongolia, contrary, largely lacked such a tradition and was subsequently impacted more significantly.

The lack of an established urban culture in Mongolia also influenced another prominent feature in the societal development of both regions, the myriad of sects and cults. As De Ridder outlined, The Chinese peasants and labourers of Gansu tended to band together in temporary secret societies (heishihui, 黑社会) or local associations (shituan, 社团). Such a practice was not unusual as such organisations existed throughout China. Outside their religious functions, they also functioned as a social safety net in times of crisis, much alike the Scheut enterprise at later stages. However, such sects often attracted institutional suspicion as the Qing government always struggled with the experiences of a cult militancy, such as the White lotus sect or the Taiping movement. In Gansu, the government focussed predominantly on Islamic secret societies as they were held responsible for the insurrection in the years before.[82] When Scheut arrived in Gansu, it also encounter much opposition by such

[79] The argument of the nineteenth century as one of global religious revival was posed by Christopher Bayly, but others such Melanie Jones -Leaning and Douglas Pratt have showed the argument to be relevant for the Chinese Muslims of North-West China. See: Melanie Jones, Douglas Pratt, 'Islam in China: Silk Road to Separatism', in: *The Muslim World*, Vol. 102 (April, 2012), p. 308-334, here p. 314-317.

[80] The other two rebellion in the Chinese north-west during the nineteenth century were the Nian rebellion, a grown out of hand bandit group, and the White Lotus rebellion, a secret sect organized revolt in response to the Qing repression. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900, p.*, 47-48; Lipman, *Familiar Strangers,* p. 127-128.

[81] An evaluation and description of each of these settlements can be found in: De Ridder, '*A Pear-Tree Legacy of Love',* p. 107-124.

[82] Lieven van Ostade goes into considerable detail concerning the revolts of the 'Mohammodanen' in which he clearly indicates that the authorities were much more focussed on the Islamic threat than those of the network of sects. This did not however mean that they did not carefully watched societies such as Scheut. See: Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 188-190.

societies.[83] Contrary, Mongolia had only experienced a limited social development and most likely did not possess an extensive myriad of cult and sects. Though, several clearly did exist, such as the Tsai-li-ti to which we will return later. Most likely, such organisation were not as developed compared to those in Gansu.

On the eve of Scheut's arrival

Observing the congregation of Scheut's historical and spatial context, or the 'stage', introduces several key issues, crucial for both understanding the origin of Scheut and the environment in which it had to perform, to achieve the goal of converting China. The nineteenth century shows the global perspective for the European religious expansion of Catholic mission orders in China. The deterioration, religious revival and technological revolutions culminated in a renewed missionary spirit. When the news of the Opium war treaties reached Europe, the preparations resulted in the rapid expansion of the Christian efforts in China, resulting in the Chinese aversion labelled anti-foreignism. It was within this global environment of European religious fervour and Chinese popular hostility that Scheut emerged and joined the effort in China by focussing on the difficult frontier regions, making it not only a child of its time but also a pioneer.

Alongside the global 'stage', the local or spatial 'stage' influenced the Scheut enterprise even more. Mongolia, where the congregation first emerged, was barely developed and home to a problematic geographical and ecological environment in which a strong segregated tradition divided the Mongolian tribes and Han Chinese. Gansu, meanwhile, had a similar geographical and ecological environment but it was largely sedentarily developed with an established urban tradition. Instead of a dominant class of nomadic tribes, the Han-like population was the dominant social group, followed by the Islamic Hui, both structured according to the Baojia system. Such changes culminated into two different local situations, a somewhat tense and less-controlled society in Mongolia against a shaken but well-established society in Gansu. Within the combination of the global and local contexts, the congregation of Scheut developed their mission, dealing with the myriad of issues that the environment burdened them with.

[83] See: Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 81; De Ridder, '*A Pear-tree Legacy of Love'*, p. 126.

Ch2. The history of the congregation of Scheut

The 'stage' that the nineteenth century had set, consisting of a global and local dimension, introduced the congregation to an unknown, dangerous and hostile local environment. The next step in understanding the story, is to introduce the 'actor' which will perform the eventual 'play', being the missionaries of the congregation of Scheut. This chapter will therefore consider the institutional creation and development of the congregation in Europe and China and outline Scheut's difficult development which burdened it with several unique characteristics compared to its fellow mission orders. These elements are again crucial to consider along the global and local context as to not only understand how Scheut developed their approach but also why. Therefore, its origin, as a mere idea in the mind of the founder Theophile Verbist, will first be outlined, followed by how it was actually created. Second, the institutional and religious growth within Mongolia are considered, followed by its later expansion into the region of Gansu.

From an orphanage into mission

The founder of the congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Theophile Verbist, was born in the Belgium city of Antwerp. As a quick-tempered but clever child, he was noticed by the re-established Jesuit order, who provided his education and training.[84] After his installation as priest, he became sub-regent of a seminar in the town of Mechelen, where he encountered Alois van Segvelt (1826-1867), a lifelong friend and with whom he started the missionary endeavour. Several years later, in 1853, Verbist joined the army as an almoner, which he held alongside several other professions. Following his promotion to director of the Sainte-Enfance, he encountered the desperate stories about the Chinese children. Inspired by the rising missionary zeal, Verbist formulated the idea to create an orphanage in China, as to become 'apostles of the Holy Childhood.'[85] When the content of the treaty of Tianjin reached Belgium in the 1860's, his idea gained momentum. For this 'humble plan', as scholar Daniel Verhelst calls it, Verbist spent the next four years trying to realize his vision and after considerable effort, it seemed that he would be successful, yet not in the way he had initially imagined.

On November 28, 1862, cardinal Engelbertus Stercks (1792-1867) canonically founded the new Congregation of the Immaculate heart of Mary, shortly known as the Congregation of Scheut. Verbist's initial ideas had drastically changed from a mere orphanage into the creation of his own congregation. As Verhelst explains, his apparent refusal to join an existing religious order required a change of plans, as it otherwise would not fit within the Papal administrative religious administration of China. A plea of Verbist and Segvelt to retain a 'Belgium way of life' eventually led to the creation of a new mission order.[86] Yet, such an endeavour posed new requirements, such as a residence in Belgium, a financial guarantee and a proficient number of members. To meet these requirements, Verbist purchased an old

[84] The Jesuit order had been disbanded by the Papal authorities after the Rites Controversy had ended. The order however remerged nearly a hundred years later. V. Rondelez, *Scheut Zo Begon Het*, p. 15.
[85] 'Wij willen de apostelen van de Sainte-Enfance worden'. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer*, p. 81.
[86] It has to be shortly noted here that 'A Belgium way of life' also meant that the order was practically only for Dutch and Belgium priest. Such was not unusual as the mentioned missionary spirit coincided with a nationalist sentiment. See: Daniël Verhelst, Hyacint Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu 1862-1987: Geschiedenis van de Congregatie van het Onbevlekte Hart van Marie C.I.C.M*. (Leuven, 1991), p. 25.

church in the parochial of Anderlecht, nicknamed 'Scheut'.[87] To meet the financial requirement, he appealed to the charity of the Belgian people. For new members, he campaigned within the Belgian and Dutch religious institutions, finding for instance the Dutch priest Ferdinand Hamer. With all requirements fulfilled, he only had to be assigned to a vicariate.

Verbist originally intended to integrate his orphanage into an existing vicariate without specifying a certain area of China.[88] Most likely, China existed in the mind of Verbist in a limited oriental fashion, shaped by the stories that had been transmitted from China to Europe. Through confessional connections, Verbist was able to talk with the apostolic vicar of Beijing Joseph Martial Mouly (1807-1868), who was temporarily staying in Paris. In October 1861, they discussed the prospects of Verbist's new enterprise. After which, Mouly offered that his order could work under his Lazarist banner, within the pro-vicariate of Mongolia, where Scheut missionaries could be trained. However, such was disapproved by the prefect of the Propaganda Fide, Cardinal A. Barnado (1801-1874). He insisted that a new 'Belgium' mission order required its own organisation to fit within the existing religious administrative system of China.[89] As a result, the Lazarist order conceded the entirety of Mongolia to Scheut, largely due to their manpower shortage. With all the requirements met, the extensive region of Mongolia was officially assigned to Scheut, by right of entrustment, on the first of September 1864.

It is important to note that the religious expansion in China was related to the European imperial expansion, since through it, China was reopened to the missionaries in the first place. As already mentioned, the papal Propaganda Fide was responsible for the administration of the vicarates in China but strongly depended on French military presence for protection. For Scheut, this culminated into the dilemma labelled the 'passport affaire'. After Verbist and his missionaries obtained the confessional status of missionary order from the Papal authorities, along with a dedicated area, they still required French authorisation. Since Belgium did not have an embassy in China, Verbist was, much to his dislike, dependant on French authorities. However, his initial attempt to obtain French passports was denied and only after intervention by the Papal authorities, were they granted. Though Scheut was a new order with limited attachment to the French ecclesiastical network, it had to conform to the circumstances. Verbist stubbornly considered himself as Belgian and not French, regardless of the passports.

After four years Verbist had developed his initiative, from a mere orphanage into a full religious missionary order. Although unintended, Verbist pursued and eventually met all the requirements and could travel with the first wave towards the Chinese Empire. To interpret this, Verbist and his congregation were indeed products of their time, as changes in the nineteenth century inspired Verbist to start his endeavour. The first wave of missionaries, under the leadership of Verbist, strongly believed in the missionary spirit, that they were soldiers of god, following the words of Knipschild.[90] The way Verbist reached this point was however unconventional, as the order experienced an unstructured development, rather than along a predetermined plan, causing an improvised and at times a chaotic enterprise, with the

[87] The name, according to Knipschild, is derived from a cannon position to shoot at the wall of Brussels, see: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer*, p. 83.
[88] Verhelst, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 26.
[89] Ibidem, p. 31.
[90] Harry Knipschild, *Soldaten van God: Nederlandse en Belgische missionarissen op Missie in China in de Negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2008) p. 158, p. 305.

conversion of the Chinese as the central goal. Verbist had, with the help of people like Van Segvelt, provided a foundation upon which they could develop the endeavour further. Yet, due to the unstructured nature, Verbist had paid little attention to the actual preparation of the mission, something that later came to haunt him, as Knipschild elaborates: 'when Ferdinand Hamer and his fellow priests journeyed towards Mongolia, they barely had an idea about their future mission area.'[91]

The Scheut mission in the Chinese frontier

The emergence of Scheut, as an inept undertaking rather than a vision-driven, streamlined process became increasingly visible during their first years in Mongolia. In 1866, Verbist and his party entered the Lazarist centre of proselytism called Xiwanzi (西湾子), where the main seminar was established. At this point, Daniel Verhelst refers to a Lazarist account detailing the state of the vicariate, consisting of six districts with 8666 Christians among a non-Christian or Islamic population with the presence of six Chinese priest and one Mongolian priest.[92] This report was also new to Scheut as they had little to no knowledge about their mission area, as admitted by Father J. Bax; 'how often I told myself, if I had known the condition here, I would have moved earth and heaven to have double or triple the amount of fathers we have now.'[93] Verbist expected such difficulties and desired a year of training, in which the fathers could adapt to their new environment, understand the region and learn the language. Yet, as the common trend in the creation of the congregation tells us, their plans rarely went as expected.

Verbist was quickly installed as the apostolic vicar, as ordered by the Papal authorities, which went against his expectations; 'I haven't been able to carry out my plan […] I had hoped that the Lazarists would agree to a one year period as to devote ourselves to studying the Chinese language.' [94] However, the vicariate was almost immediately transferred to the congregation of Scheut, with the exception of Eastern Mongolia which would be remain under the Lazarist control until 1866. An order without much experience or knowledge was suddenly in charge of an enormous vicariate, including the problems left behind by the Lazarist. Knipschild explains: 'it became soon clear that the pro-vicariate was heavily indebted […] when the balance sheet was made up, Mongolia turned out to have almost a 40.000 franc deficit.'[95] The limited funds forced the missionaries to live in similar poverty as their converts, while it also made it impossible to properly conduct their mission, as travel funds for instance were limited. Meanwhile, it also became clear that that there were too few missionaries for the entire vicariate, as just four missionaries assisted by the local priests could not fulfil the requirement of the vicariate.

In the following years, Verbist managed to put most affairs in order and began to divide his missionaries over the assigned area. Van Segveldt, along with Ferdinand Hamer and a Chinese priest called Petrus Lin, were assigned to the Eastern-Mongolia. Meanwhile, Verbist assigned himself with the Chinese priest Paulus Cheng to central-Mongolia, which included the seminar in Xiwanzi. It must be noted here that the early Scheut mission depended heavily on these indigenous priests as they formed the crucial bridge between the missionaries and

[91] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 103.
[92] Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu*, p. 42.
[93] Though the quote presented by Verhelst has a strong confessional character, it becomes clear that the fathers lacked in-depth knowledge of the region, making them either brave or foolish, depending from the perspective. Ibidem, 43.
[94] Ibidem, p. 44.
[95] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 111.

the Chinese Christians. As Knipschild for instance indicates, the Chinese priest Lin spoke Mandarin and Latin more fluently than either Van Segvelt or Hamer.[96] After division of the Mongolian vicariate, the missionaries had to adjust themselves to the Chinese way of life.[97] Some, like the youthful Ferdinand Hamer, adjusted well, while others, like the older Van Segvelt, struggled. Meanwhile, local diseases began to spread amongst the missionaries of which some started to become ill and eventually die, the first amongst them being Van Segvelt.[98]

Typhoid fever posed a serious problem for the first missionaries as many succumbed to the disease including Theophile Verbist, who died on 23 of February 1868 after spending twenty-seven months in Mongolia. The succession by the Lazarist Antoon Smorenburg, uncovered a troubling flaw in the internal administration of Scheut, an Apostolic Vicar alongside as Superior General.[99] Verbist had occupied both positions, but this was not the case for his successor. These two administrative posts were created to divide the spiritual and material aspects, in which the Apostolic Vicar directed the missionaries and the Superior General managed the holdings of the congregation, but their jurisdictions often overlapped or conflicted. After Smorenburg resigned a few years later, the next successor, Jaak Bax, still experienced the same problem. It resulted in confusing and conflicting situations in which much effort was spend on the internal struggle over jurisdiction instead of directing and aiding the missionaries in the field. Only in 1889, was this problem solved by creating an experimental constitution which enforced the religious and material divide.[100] The internal conflict had cause neglect, primarily in the support of the local missionary.

These troubles, however, started to fade and the successes became noticeable, even in Europe. In 1877, Rome ordered the expansion into Gansu, to which Scheut agreed by sending the last surviving member of the first wave, Ferdinand Hamer.[101] Despite having just one Catholic village, great potential was apparently observed. Gansu at this stage was unruly due the mentioned Hui rebellion, led by Ma hualong, and the expansion was therefore not without risk. Nevertheless, after receiving the necessary passports, Hamer left with two other Scheut fathers named Lieven Van Ostade and Albert Gueley. Traveling through the battered province, the group first went to the province capital of Lanzhou (兰州) where they resided with the prominent Catholic Zhang Wang (张望??), a Chinese priest related to the Franciscans. Hamer learned that over a thousand Christians had survived the revolts and were scattered around the northern parts of the province. He therefore decided to settle at the northern city of Liangzhou (凉州), the previous mission post of the Jesuits. This relocation was greatly disliked by the Zhang family, but from Liangzhou, Hamer create the foundation of the Gansu mission in similar fashion as he had done in the Mongolia mission.[102]

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[96] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 114.
[97] Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 49.
[98] Ibidem, p. 52.
[99] To summarize shortly, the vicariate had two figures of authority, the apostolic vicar and the general prior. Besides dual jurisdiction on administrative matters, the two offices often disagreed on certain affairs and since it was not clear who had the central authority, tension emerged. See: Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 54-55.
[100] In the new constitution, the Vicar Apostolic held the authority over the missionaries but these owed responsibility to the superior general of the congregation. The matter dragged on for a prolonged time until the 1900s. See: De Ridder, *'a Pear Tree Legacy of Love',* p. 99; Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 77-84.
[101] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 153.
[102] The extended story of Hamer's experiences in Gansu can be found in Knipschild 'Ferdinand Hamer'.

From this point, both mission-areas begin to show a distinction in their development up to 1890. Hamer struggled to gain a foothold in Gansu as both the local population and local mandarins, under the authority of the chief-magistrate (总督) Zuo Gongbao (左工包), hindered any expansive efforts. Though they did not openly prosecute the missionaries, they did pose considerable resistance in various forms.[103] Such opposition was possible due to the explained difference in societal structure of Gansu. Its strong Chinese social and administrative system provided the mandarins with the power to supress the Scheut effort. At the same time, the social system hindered conversions and expansion. An attempt to build a church in the mission post at Zhangye (张掖) for instance, led to attacks from an anti-foreign mob.[104] Despite such hostilities, Hamer persisted and with the help of newly arrived missionaries and some of the converts, he managed to construct a foundation on which the mission after 1890 could further the effort.[105]

Meanwhile in Mongolia, the situation was different as Scheut faced a much less repressive situation. Until 1889, the mission in Mongolia was primarily concerned with extending the missionary network and establishing an administrative order within the vicariates.[106] When Jaak Bax succeeded to the post of apostolic vicar, he stimulated the creation of new Christian communities, supported the construction of new churches and sought opportunities by exploring new areas within Mongolia. A party under by fathers Remi Verlinden (1830-1892) and Alfons Devos (180-1888) was for instance sent toward present day Hohhot (归化城), were they started a prospering mission.[107] The native priests, who initially formed a bridge between the missionaries and the converts, slowly became local assistance or deputies, to integrate and conform new or existing communities into the Scheut administration. Around 1883, the mission had grown significantly and an official division into three vicariates was made, one in East-Mongolia, one in central-Mongolia (the Ordos) and one in North-Western Mongolia.[108] Such measure ensured that just before Hamer's promotion towards Apostolic Vicar the mission was well on its way with over ten thousand Christians throughout the area.[109]

Scheut in nineteenth century China

The 'stage', being the global and local context, strongly resonated in the manner of development found in the 'actor', being the congregation of Scheut. These two chapters serve as an introduction, through which the second part, the 'scripts' or the actual approach of the missionaries, must be observed. Essentially, Scheut is an example of the transformation that

[103] For the specifics, I would like to refer to Knipschild, who has documented the extensive resistance in detail. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 175-180.
[104] De Ridder, *'a Pear Tree Legacy of Love',* p. 78.
[105] Hamer at this point had become a celebrity amongst the missionaries, a status that aided him greatly during his time in Gansu. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, 186.
[106] Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 56.
[107] Ibidem, p. 60.
[108] Discussing these adjustments is hardly relevant though a few affairs do need to be discussed. On the hand they solved the duality in authority, in which a method was constructed so that both the apostolic vicar and general could work together, while on the other hand, Mongolia was divided into three vicariates (Southern Mongolia, Middle Mongolia (Ordos) and West-Mongolia. See: Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 71-76.
[109] The situation concerning Hamer's ascension to apostolic vicar is long and complicated and limited space restricts me from going into more detail. I would therefore like to refer to several standard works regarding the development of Scheut for the exact details. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 220-222; Taveirne, *Han Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 312-315, Verhelst, Daniëls, *Scheut Vroeger en Nu,* p. 102-105.

occurred in the nineteenth century, in which the world changed dramatically, as changes across the globe motivated a local Belgium Priest to start, what can best be described as, a far-reaching undertaking. Within his enterprise, a few crucial points are important to outline. First, it must be realised that Scheut was, unlike many of its contemporaries, initially not a strictly organized mission order, but rather a somewhat chaotically founded order during both their creation in Europe and expansion in China. After a mere four years, the first wave left Europe for China, while none of the original members had any extended knowledge about the enterprise, China or Mongolia in general. Subjects like Christianity's sect-like status or problematic ties with the Imperial interest were not considered, nor the increasingly anti-foreign volatile situation in China. Their sole consideration appeared to be the romanticised spirit of the mission, in which they would go as soldiers of Christ to the land of the devil to save the souls of the inhabitants.[110]

A second important point subsequently emerged out of the chaotic and improvised way the mission had developed, being the presence of what best can be described as a 'free space'. It refers to the unique element for the Scheut missionaries provided by the characteristics of the congregation. Contrary to other Catholic orders, Scheut had actively sought the boundaries of the mission enterprise by its expansion into the distant and difficult regions of Mongolia and Gansu without constructing a clear doctrine or method for their enterprise. The result was that in both spiritual and material matters the missionary individually had to adapt their Romantic ideas of the mission into practical reality. Combined with the geographical difficulties of the frontier regions, loose connection towards the larger ecclesiastical network and administrative problems within Scheut, a metaphorical space emerged through which the missionary could move to tackle both material and religious affairs. [111] During the expansion into Gansu, Ferdinand Hamer for instance exploited such 'free space', in order to combat the repressive conditions. Especially in considering the 'scripts' in the following chapter, this 'free space' serves a crucial role.

[110] In Knipschild adaption of his thesis, Soldiers of God, this mindset has been well described. See: Harry Knipschild, *Soldaten Van God: Nederlandse en Belgische Missionarissen Op Missie in China in De Negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2008).

[111] A similar story which underlines my 'free space' argument consist of a French bishop named Desfleches in the remote and secluded province of Sichuan. As the 'free space' could be used an abused, he came under scrutiny when word was received about his action. He had not only used his position to create a haram for himself within the mission, he also attempted to construct his own army and kingdom. Though Desfleches disputed these claims, Young's research does appear of confirm much of these claims. See: Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony*, p. 48-53.

Ch. 3 Scheut's Method of Conversion

Following the clarification of the involved 'stage' and 'actor', the next step in order to approach the central question, is to determine which 'scripts' were developed by Scheut, being the approach or method towards the conversion and development of the mission. The first wave of missionaries had only limited knowledge and needed to find a method through which the Chinese could be converted, and the mission expanded. These methods, or 'scripts' as I have labelled them, will stand central in this chapter, by first focussing on the theoretical idea behind the mission and its practical implementation. Following, the approach of Ferdinand Hamer will be outlined as he successfully developed an approach during his time in Eastern-Mongolia. When his method failed to operate in Gansu, his successor, Hubertus Otto, developed another approach based on the diverging regional circumstances.[112] Focussing on the 'inventors' of these 'scripts', how they were developed and adapted to suit the environment will be outlined.

The common 'Ordos' method of the congregation

Based on the ideas cultivated in Europe, the first wave of missionaries developed a practical implication of a theorical model. To shortly summarise, the dominant conception of the mission during the religious revival consisted of the afore mentioned French nobleman Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand. In his work *Genie du Christianisme*, he reacted on the chaos surrounding the French revolution and reflected on the role and meaning of Christianity both within Europe and its colonies. Chateaubriand introduced a romanticised picture of the mission based on Jesuit 'reduction' enterprise in Paraguay. In this method of conducting the mission, the Jesuits had created independent agricultural communities led in both secular and spiritual sense by a handful of missionaries. Besides conducting religious services and ceremonies, they controlled the political, social and economic life of the native inhabitants, being able to determine practical matters such as land and labour division or determining punishments and rewards. As 'the Indians are naturally sluggish and improvident', such control was deemed necessary to transform them into righteous believers.[113] At the same time, the missionaries possessed political authority to represent their converts and even arms them to fend off Spanish or Portuguese slavers.[114] Resulting, Chateaubriand wrote, 'under a government so paternal and so analogous to the simple and pompous nature of the savage, […] the new Christians were the purest and happiest of man'.[115]

Chateaubriand merely wrote about a theoretical model of conducting the mission while the first wave of Scheut missionaries had to struggle to adapt it into a practical reality. Among the first missionaries, the Dutch Ferdinand Hamer appeared most successful and

[112] The different regional difference were known among the missionaries as the fellow missionary and biographer of Hubertus Otto stated: 'settling himself in cities meant for him indeed a curiosity, a system that widely diverged from the method he had seen and known in Mongolia, where missionaries almost exclusively dedicated themselves to the conversion of the outside population.' See: Melckebeke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 77.

[113] Chateaubriand, *Genie de Christianisme*, vol I, p. 154.

[114] As the missionaries had established their communities inland, colonial raiding parties would often attempt to capture and enslave the converts to which the Jesuits obtained a permit to arm their flock from the court in Madrid, see: Ibidem, p. 155.

[115] It has to be noted that concerning the inhabitants of the Americas, a certain judgemental rhetoric common during the eighteenth and nineteenth century also dominated Chateaubriand's work. He for instance neglected to mention that the inhabitants of the reduction had surrenders most of their autonomy. See: Ibidem, p. 156.

during his time in Eastern Mongolia, from 1866 to 1871, he managed to create an approach in which the Paraguayan reduction could be implemented, labelled in this thesis as the Ordos method.[116] With the central aim of converting, or 'saving', the Chinese people and expanding the mission enterprise, this approach proved viable for Scheut to establish itself within the Mongol borderlands of the Qing empire. Based on Hamer's experiences, the method shortly entailed that a missionary travelled in a certain area, claiming the social, economic and political authority from his converts and employed that position to stimulate the creation of segregated settlements, akin the Paraguayan reductions, and through those increase the local power and position of the mission.[117] Using the discussed 'free space', Hamer developed the Ordos method into the dominant CICM approach to the mission and the exact details of his method, therefore, require additional clarification.

Contrary to Chateaubriand reductions, the Scheut missionaries did not reside in each of the Christian settlements as too few were available. Travelling therefore became a central aspect of the Ordos method as can be clearly seen in Hamer period in Eastern Mongolia. When he started the mission in an area called, Heishui (黑水), He encountered nine different settlements, each housing a Christian community, which he named 'chrétiéntes'.[118] He wrote:

> *At four o'clock […] we passed through Tsek'ien, a neat city. However, we continued and around six o'clock, [we] arrived at Louoait'ong. [...] at nine [we] arrived in Lomingsin where we conducted the holy sermon.*[119]

Such communities are often in both source material and other studies considers as purely Christian communities with little or no Chinese inhabitants.[120] However, the Lazarists who conducted the mission prior to Scheut, neglected much of these places so this assumption is unlikely. By employing the Ordos method, as will also be seen further on, such Christian communities would be reshaped to match the 'reduction model' in which the non-converted Chinese were systematically excluded. Nevertheless, frequent travelling remained a necessity.

Due to the few missionaries and their continuous travelling, the Scheut enterprise relied heavily on native priest, initially trained by the Lazarist and later by themselves. Hamer, for instance, relied on native priests as he could not speak the local language, while such intermediaries also formed a bridge between the alienated missionary and the local people. For instance, at an inn at Ngotungpatse, 'the whole village came that night to the inn, young and old […] pater Lin used this to preach about the faith and argued with the son of the house, a graduate [bachelor of arts], about Confucian teachings.'[121] Especially in the early period of the mission, such priests provided a vital lifeline as the missionaries hardly spoke any Mandarin and had little clues on how to integrate into the environment, let alone spread their

[116] The term 'Ordos method' has not been a creation by my hand. It emerged during my discussion with my supervisor H. Knipschild. As the method in question was most present in the Ordos region within present-day Inner Mongolia, it is only suiting that the method it named after it.

[117] Present day Chengde. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 114; see: Daniël Verhelst, Hyacint Daniëls, ed., *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut); Édition Critique Des Sources. Vol. Tome IIa: La Correspondance De Théophile Verbist Et Ses Compagnons, 1865-1866*, (Leuven, 2003).*)*, p. 241.

[118] Verhelst, Daniëls, *la congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut),* p. 551.

[119] Ibidem, p. 326.

[120] Knipschild for instance considers these chrétiéntes to be in line with Chateaubriand reductions. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900,* p. 116.

[121] Verhelst, Daniëls, *la congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut*), p. 328.

message.[122] At later stages, the missionaries had learned the language and the native intermediaries became less important and as a result increasingly marginalised. Regardless, the Ordos model of conversion depended on native priest, though their position did change over time.

Their role as intermediaries, however, did leave an enduring influence, as can for instance be observed in their enduring impact of the missionary's use of appearance. In the case of Hamer in Eastern-Mongolia, his increasing ability to speak did not result in understanding the cultural facets of the region.[123] A local priest named Fan instructed him on his public appearances, stating that is was necessary to pompously impress both the converts and the other Chinese attending the ceremonies, which Hamer reluctantly accepted. Such actions observed from the conversion perspective, served to match the missionaries' social standing in line with the Chinese expectation.[124] This can be observed when Hamer arrived in Changkiangfang and nobody came to welcome his party outside the village. When Hamer desired to enter the village on their own, the native priest Lin protested by arguing that this would compromise the authority of the missionary.[125] Though this cultural standard was quite opposite to Hamer's own ideas, as Knipschild indicates, but this influence was cemented when such use of their appearance became a prominent part in the Ordos way to convert and expand.[126]

Besides the use of appearance and performance, the physical and material benefits, such as education, music and healthcare, also proofed as a key element of the method. In an extensive report to Verbist, Hamer addressed such matters: 'there are two boys who want to study, two lads with a quick physique. […] a school is most required here.'[127] Hamer urged Verbist to admit them into the seminary at Xiwanzi, while also drawing attention to several women ('*virgines*') who desired the same. In other letters, Hamer also refers to the foundation of new schools, in places such as Makiatse.[128] Hamer also underlined the importance of healthcare for both his converts and the Chinese in places such as the orphanages; 'under the eighteen children who are nursed, one third is from catholic parents.'[129] The care of orphans naturally formed a central part as it fulfilled the original goal while also increasing the conversions. Similarly, the Chinese priest Fan arranged the aspect of music via a music association which was especially favoured among the Chinese who came from far to admire

[122] It was also that priest Lin that first introduced him to the Chinese customs, see: Verhelst, Daniëls, *la congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut*), p. 243.

[123] 'At the moment I can understand around half, I can speak little with the exception of general phrases that are half understood, and half laughed about.' See: Ibidem, p. 469.

[124] Ibidem, p. 329; Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 115.

[125] The Father [the Chinese priest Fan] rejected this upright and said that you [Father Hamer] must not do so, because the first time you go, other Christians from other places, will also not welcome you and say the father will come on his own. ('Zijn eerwaarde keurde dit volstrekt af en zeide vooral moet gij zulks niet doen, omdat het de eerste maal is dat gij komt, zoo zouden zij en ook de christenen van andere plaatsen, u later niet meer komen afhalen en zeggen de heeren komen uit den zelven.') See: Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut),* p. 386.

[126] Whether Hamer truly was 'humble' can hardly be determined. Yet, it does show the cultural alienation the missionaries experienced as most had little to no knowledge of the Chinese North-West culture. Their position within this cultural sphere thus also had to be taught. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 115.

[127] Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur IImmacule de Marie (Scheut),* p. 332-333.

[128] Ibidem, p. 466.

[129] Though the report makes no mention of the role medicine played in the mission effort, Knipschild elaborates and clarifies how the missionaries used these for conversion purposes. See: Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut),* p. 743; Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 119-120.

its 'disfigured music'.[130] In the less developed Mongolia, Scheut appeared to be the sole provider of such services. Unsurprisingly, such material benefits became part of the method as it was a powerful way to stimulate conversion, especially among a population of migrants and refugees with few social and economic safeties.[131]

Following Chateaubriand 'reduction' model, the strong protection in terms of representation and physical protection which conversion provided also became cemented in the Ordos method.[132] As the missionaries existed formally under French jurisdiction, they were not fully subjected to Chinese law meaning that Mandarin authorities could exert little control, especially in an area such as Mongolia, where Chinese institutions were generally less powerful. The Ordos method therefore provided protection in various forms to its converts, who would virtually exist outside the regular local society. Hamer himself was initially not keen on such representative protection, arguing that 'he did not come to China to be a lawyer, but to be a missionary'.[133] Others however, such as the founder Verbist, employed their position regularly to protect the converts.[134] Through their protection, the mission placed itself outside the legal jurisdiction and as a side result was the mission attracted large numbers of refugees, widows and criminals, who required the immunity from local percussion inherent in conversion.[135]

Though initially a minor part of the Ordos method, the mission also brought physical protection in the forms of weapons and arms. Both Hamer and Otto wrote little about the military aspect of the mission, but the letters and reports from their fellow missionaries clearly showed the vital role of this aspect. To start, the missionaries who conducted the missions generally possessed small arms such as revolvers or small rifles. Often these where used for hunting, as for instance the area around Liangzhou was swarming with pheasants.[136] However, such weapons were also used to protect the mission, during for instance an 1891 revolt when a militia of Christians hunters was formed.[137] Other instances, such as recorded by Alfons Bermijn, show that in times of outside threat, some Christians even took it upon themselves to form militias.[138] Eventually during the Boxer revolt, this military aspect saved several communities who were able to hold off the insurgents.[139] The ability to defend themselves not only provided increased autonomy but also increased the mission position towards the outside, negating dependency on the existing structures for protections.

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[130] This was not without difficulty, as Hamer writes. See: Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut),* p. 333.
[131] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors,* p. 117-119.
[132] Ibidem, p. 324.
[133] Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut)*, p. 329.
[134] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 119.
[135] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors*, p. 359.
[136] In an article, as an elaboration on his dissertation, Knipschild specifically mentions the use of weapons and firearms. H. Knipschild, 'European men on mission in China (1860-1900)', 5 October 2012: <http://harryknipschild.nl/harryknipschild.nl/missieverhalen/84-verhalen-over-de-missie/115-15-european-men-on-mission-in-the-north-of-china-1860-1900> [accessed on 24-10-2019]
[137] L. van Dyck, 'De Martelaar van Oost-Mongolië', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 37 1892, P. 13-16.
[138] E.H. Steenackers, 'Het apostolisch vicariaat van Zuidwest-Mongolië (Ortos)', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 52 April 1897, p. 418-421.
[139] E.P. Voncke, 'Midden-Mongolië', in: *Missiën van China en Congo*, Nr. 96 December 1900, p. 547; P. Verwilghen, 'Zuidwest Mongolië', in: *Missiën van China en Congo,* Nr. 96 December 1900, p. 554-555; L. van Dyck, 'Oost-Mongolië: verontrustende tijding over en toestand in de missie', in: *Missiën van China en Congo,* Nr. 94 October 1900, p. 514-515.

What thus occurred was the practical implementation of a theoretical idea, culminating in the Ordos method of conversion 'invented' by the Dutch missionary Ferdinand Hamer. This dominant method thus entail a series of crucial characteristics; 1) a missionary was dedicated to a large area in which he would frequently travel between the many Christian communities and conduct religious ceremonies; 2) either instructed or assisted by a native priest who functioned as intermediaries, the missionary established himself among the converts and determined his prominent place; 3) from this position, he would provide material benefits in various forms to attract converts establishing control and dependency; 4) employing their preferential status provided by the treaty of Tianjin and combined with the missionary's prominent social position, they protected their community from outside interference. Through these four aspect, the missionary within the Ordos method was able to integrate an a unique fashion, by using their foreign presence and limited assimilation to become the prominent figure in their communities and by the use of these traits, increase conversions and develop the mission, while also expanding local communities to eventually resemble the Paraguayan reductions.[140]

Teaching the new missionaries

When both Van Segvelt and Verbist died around 1869, Hamer was recalled and began to serve a new role, as the acting apostolic vicar and later procurator of the entirety of Mongolia. It was during this period that Hamer spread the Ordos method to the missionaries of later waves. As Knipschild argues, Hamer established himself throughout this period as a father figure for newly arriving missionaries.[141] It must be remembered that the Ordos method was not by default the dominant conversion method, but was turned so by both Hamer's prominent position within the Scheut administration combined with the obvious successes it brought.[142] By the time Hamer transferred his authority to the new apostolic vicar, the Belgian Jaak Bax, the amount of convert had grown from a few thousand into roughly eleven thousand.[143] Under Bax, Hamer continued to serve as second in command by administrating the increasing number of orphanages which through their success resulted in 'great profit of immortal souls and human lives.' [144] Through the experiences of Hubertus Otto, the continuation of the Ordos method as the dominant mission approach, is clearly visible.

When the Belgian Hubertus Otto arrived in Xiwanzi on the sixteenth of April 1876, he was part of later waves and therefore had a much less troublesome start. He learned the language, customs and was first send on a 'trail' in the minor Christian settlement of Kaokiaingtze.[145] There, he already started showing his ability in employing the Ordos method, by using intermediaries such as a Chinese boy he named Jan, by founding of a school and by

[140] Hamer for instance states: 'the Chinese there rarely see priests; all have awe for him'. Verhelst, Daniëls, *la Congregation de Coeur Immacule de Marie (Scheut)*, p. 472.
[141] Ibidem, p. 146.
[142] The mission periodical had published several letters, which were reaction to questions received by several missionaries about the way to conduct a mission in China. These responses followed the model as is being outlined and at least lightly prepared the new arrivals. It would be overgenerous however to state that a few letters, though extensive, were enough preparation and the education in Xiwanzi still influenced them enormously. See: Hubertus Otto, 'Midden-Mongolië, brief van den E.H. Otto aan eenen leerling van Scheutveld', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 16 May 1890, p. 244-251.
[143] The initial number of Christians numbered just around several thousands. See; Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 146.
[144] Ibidem, p. 148-149.
[145] Melckebecke, Z*egenende Handen,* p. 23-24.

conducting various religious affairs.[146] Due to his success, he was sent on further assignments such as those in Koeihoatch'eng (Hohhot) and in Taihai. Especially in Taihai, he conformed to the Ordos characterises as he travelled, exploited his pompous and theatrical appearance, conducted religious services, brought material benefits and stimulated the creation of segregated communities.[147] He also used his dominant social position to protect his converts, such as in a case of a village's cultivation of the opium drug. Upon encountering this practice, he employed his position and forced the abandonment of the crop, during which he even entered in a brawl with a local Chinese family in order to enforce his decision. Plenty more examples exist and besides indicating Otto's mastery of the Ordos method, it also highlights his unusual missionary fervour. [148]

Meanwhile, Otto's experiences also testify to gradual changes in the Ordos method, in for instance the position of the native priests. In Hamer's experiences, native priests had occupied the crucial role of the intermediary through which the missionaries and their environment were connected. However, later waves apparently negated this position as can be seen in Otto personal approach towards both converts and Chinese alike. The periodical states: 'the remainder of the time is spent by useful conversation; for example, when the women come to recite the catechism [the teachings] together'.[149] This personal contact also included the Chinese outside the mission, as they were invited to 'the last days of the mission […] to listen to the evening teachings.'[150] Since the missionaries of later waves received more education and preparation, the native priests as intermediaries appeared to be negated. Instead, they were utilized, and to some degree marginalized, as servants, rather than colleagues and were often used to control several chrétiéntes' in the absence of a Scheut missionary. At the same time, such a personal approach also appeared to be a distinct facet of Otto's toolbox.[151]

In observing the experiences of both Hamer and Otto, the emergence of the Ordos method as the dominant way in among the Scheut missionaries conducted their mission is clearly shown. The characteristics of the method remained largely constant even during its transition towards new waves of missionaries in the 1880s, though some slight changes can be observed in for instance the utilisation of the native priests. Regardless, the missionary due to the characteristics of the Ordos method increasingly became the *de facto* 'ruler' of the communities in Mongolia, with the native priest as their local deputies. This position stimulated another key but somewhat hidden component of the Ordos method, being the stimulation of a separate pillar within the local society. The push to expand the mission, in

[146] Melckebecke, Z*egenende Handen,* p. 29.

[147] In his letters he wrote; 'our missionaries are taking care of a considerable numerous amounts of Christians spread over a distance of 150 hours', as well as additional aspects of the Ordos method, such as two women who gave him an a foundling to be taking in by the orphanage. See: Hubertus Otto, 'Midden-Mongolië: Hoe men de missie geeft aan de Chinese Christenen', in: *Missiën in China en Congo,* Nr. 1, March 1889, p. 6.

[148] A humorous note during the encounter, Otto relied on the mentioned agreement. However, as he himself mentioned, he had forgotten to write such an agreement. See: Hubertus Otto, 'Midden-Mongolië, Wat men missie geven heet in China', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 4 May 1889, p. 51.

[149] Hubertus Otto, 'Midden-Mongolië: Hoe men de missie geeft aan de Chinese Christenen', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 2, April 1889, P. 34.

[150] Such policies apparently had an effect as Otto followed with a story of a man who converted despite social pressure and attended Church in secret. Moreover he stated it provided him with abundant comfort. See: Otto, 'Midden-Mongolië', p. 34-36

[151] Melckebecke dedicated considerable space in his biography to show how Otto interacted personally with the population and though most likely exaggerated, it does indicate it as a unique trait of his approach. See: Melckebecke, Z*egenende Handen,* p. 62-65.

terms of settlements and converts, provided the mission with an increasing base of power, conform the Paraguayan reductions. The missionaries functioned as protectors, in which the characteristics functioned as a barrier to separate the mission from the rest of the local society. As the mission progressed, this hidden factor became more obvious as Otto noted: 'we are pleasantly surprised when we see Sandaohe (三道河) where a 1000 Christians are grouped in seven farms as the reductions of Paraguay, with the episcopal residence in the centre.'[152]

The limits of the approach, Scheut in Gansu

The enormous expansion in Gansu during the 1880s was directed by the inventor of the common Ordos approach, Ferdinand Hamer, who travelled along with Lieven van Ostade and Albert Gueley to implement the Ordos method in the new regions. After receiving new passports, a remainder of the French religious protectorate, they began the Scheut mission, at first in Lanzhou (兰州) but later in Liangzhou (凉州). However, already from the start, difficulties arose in extending the Ordos method towards this new region. Following a territorial division among the missionaries, their efforts sparked social resistance reinforced by governmental authorities, having Hamer to comment, 'this comes from above'.[153] In all aspects, implementing the Ordos method experienced resistance. For instance, missionaries were not able travel around without 'mandarin wardens', their intermediaries (the few converts) faced institutional repression, such as a ban from holding public offices and creating charitable enterprises were blocked by governmental or popular intervention.[154]

It strongly appeared that the Scheut mission, through the Ordos method, had a hard time obtaining a foothold in this new environment. Even though Hamer send Gueley to the Imperial court to complain about the situation and Pope Leo XVIII (pope from 1878-1903) allocated more resources, the situation barely improved.[155] The shift of focus towards Liangzhou, a less urbanised area, was therefore a move to escape the hostile and difficult environment and even had an indirect effect, as in the nearby Ganzhou, two orphanages and a church could be created.[156] Though it appeared likely that institutional hostility might have been less there, the social resistance still very much remained.[157] Despite the efforts of Hamer and his colleagues, only minor success had been achieved as the region of Gansu simply appeared unsuitable for the Ordos method. 'Twelve missionaries, a dozen mission posts, 2800

[152] Family Otto correspondence Books, vol. III, Hubertus Otto to his family, 17 Februari, 1891. Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheutisten 15.1.3.2.5349-5350

[153] He wrote this concerning the resistance against their presence, noting that it was not purely popular resistance but also reinforced by governmental opposition. See: Hamer, Ferdinand, *notice sur l'origine l'erection, et les progres spirituels et temporels du Vicariat Apostolique du Kansou, Koukounoior et Tatarie occidentale à continuer pour les archives du Vicariat (manuscript)*, Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheutisten 14.14.1.4729, p. 58.

[154] It must also be noticed that the lack of money also exacerbated these problems. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 175-176.

[155] These included both the ecclesiastical authorities in China and Europe as well as the Chinese authorities in Lanzhou and Beijing. As explained in chapter one, the matter of jurisdiction between the French and Qing authorities plays a crucial part, as eventually the Qing authorities influence Hamer situation more than the French.

[156] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 189.

[157] Though the Scheut mission might have escaped the political repression in Lanzhou, the provincial capital, the local social resistance remained through for instance the yangguizi insult (洋鬼子 meaning 'foreign devils' –), following Wymen and Ter Haar, was also widespread amongst the Chinese commoners in the more rural areas of Gansu. See: Wymen, *Popular Resistance*, p. 116; Ter Haar, *Telling Stories*, p. 257.

Baptists, some hundred catechumens spread around an area as large as France, among ten million heathens. Almost no conversion', as Van Ostade summarized it.[158] In Melckebecke's biography of Hamer, similarities are drawn with the first centuries of the church during the Roman times, when the first Christians also found themselves in such a difficult position. Hubertus Otto likely was aware of this and when he was appointed as Hamer successor, he noted in a letter to his family 'I do not know how to bear this burden.'[159]

The Deviation; the Gansu Method

Already during Hamer's time as Bishop of Gansu, debates existed on ways to deviate from the Ordos method and negate popular hostility, in order to carry the mission forth. The debate concerning the adoption of the Manchu hairstyle for instance strongly differed from the Ordos method use of appearance.[160] When Otto as Bishop directed the mission, his proposal to continue the Ordos method therefore fell on deaf ears, as his fellow missionaries understood that it would not work. So instead, Otto improvised and provided even more 'free space' to his missionaries to conduct the mission in the manner they saw fit: 'no specific method of missionary work is forced upon them [the fellow missionaries], but all know that the Bishop is willing to happily provide support'.[161] It is unclear whether Otto deliberately knew what he was doing by abandoning the lessons learned in Mongolia, but whether intended or not, he did so anyways. It meant that he returned to the original goal of the congregation of merely converting the Chinese people without expanding their own base of power. As Melckebecke describes: 'all honest means are good, every favourable opportunity we have to eagerly use.'[162] Perhaps unknowingly, Otto had started to 'invent' a new way of conducting the mission.

Contrary to frequent travelling in the Ordos method, the missionaries in Gansu operated largely in an urban environment as their converts lived predominantly in walled cities and among a largely unconverted population. Despite the focus on the less urbanised northern part, the missionaries could not escape the supremacy of urban settlements over rural villages. For the missionary effort, it meant social control – as outlined in the previous chapter – was strongly present. At the same time, the presence of few native intermediaries resulted in a situation in which the missionaries resided close to their urban communities and travelled far less frequent. In Melckebecke's biography an encounter indicating this alternative approach is provided. In the city of Ganzhou (贛州), every convert immediately faced a trial as conversion had consequences for the existing social and economic ties. As the missionaries was required to protect his converts, he could not be absent for prolonged periods of time. It even forced Otto to consider a mission post outside the city, 'where the catechumen felt stronger and the heathens were less likely to emerge.'[163]

The material benefits featuring prominently in Mongolia, were they attracted large numbers of converts, also did not function similarly in Gansu as they were utilized to improve

[158] Melckebecke dedicated these words to Lieven Van Ostade, see: Melckebecke, *Zegenende handen*, p. 73.
[159], Family Otto correspondence Books, vol. III, Hubertus Otto to his family, 26 January 1891, Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheutisten 15.1.3.2.5349-5350.
[160] In the Ordos method, the foreign appearance worked in their advantage, but this clearly was not the case in Gansu. See: Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou,* p. 56.
[161] Though recorded in an intentional fashion, it most likely was a desperate measure to abandon the goals learned in the Ordos and solely focus on increasing conversion. See: Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 80.
[162] Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 80.
[163] The social and economic dimensions of conversion were plentiful as converts for instance stopped contributing to the local cultural festivities. See: Ibidem, p. 79.

popular favour with the mere hope for conversions. When for instance a failed harvest left the local farmers without seed grain, Otto recognized the opportunity and handed out sowing grain with the condition that they would learn and follow the Christian doctrine. Most agreed and for several months they attended church but when their aid was no longer necessary, they simply left.[164] Again in a place called T'oumenze in 1893, the missionaries handed out provisions after a failed harvest and hoped to attract converts. But after some time, all returned to their pagoda's.[165] In both cases, the missionaries could do little but sigh and accept it. Their existence alongside a network of different local societies negates any form of monopoly. By means such as alms, medical care, loaning money or seed grain and so forth, the missionaries could only hope to convert the people, but the result, contrary to the Ordos method, was just around 'thirty to forty baptism for the entire vicariate.'[166]

The institutions as schools or orphanages which functioned so well in Mongolia where also far from a success. 'It is evident that they [Chinese governmental school] are more popular than missionary school', according a German traveller named E. Teichmen, who travelled through Gansu in the 1890s.[167] Otto himself also acknowledges this by stating that the reason for failure consisted of not providing adequate education that would be able to match the Chinese education.[168] Again, the educational aspect of the mission was no monopoly and with the lack of capable teachers, funds and schools, matching the already present educational system proved untenable.[169] Meanwhile, orphanages were also received differently. Their reputation in Gansu was mostly negative, as most of the Chinese population observed these institutions which suspicion. Circulating Rumours, as argued by Ter Haar, concerning the murder and use of babies by the missionaries did not contribute favourably to their reputation.[170] The resulting lack of success was also not lost to Otto, who emphasised the minor successes of the inadequate schools instead of the orphanages in his reports to the Saint Enfance.[171]

Besides the unsuccessful institutions of the mission, the appearance and representation emerged as a fundamental difference. In the Ordos method of conversion, the missionary was often the sole figure of authority, possessing extensive control his converts. For Gansu, their authority was largely limited as they needed to protect their converts from both inside and outside threats.[172] first, the missionary in Gansu often employed their appearance to claim a social place within a community, by for instance organizing religious

[164] Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 184.
[165] Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 92.
[166] Ibidem, p. 84.
[167] It must be noted that Teichmen himself did not favour the mission enterprise. However similar indications are given by Hubertus Otto himself in his reports to the Saint Enfance. See: Bianca Horlemann, 'The Catholic Missionary Enterprise in Late 19th/Early 20th Century Qinghai, Gansu, Xinjiang as Perceived by Chinese and Western Travellers', in: Jeroom Heyndrickx, *History of the Catholic Church in China: from its beginnings to the Scheut fathers and 20th century. Unveiling some less known sources, sounds and pictures* (Leuven 2015), p. 363-392, here p. 377.
[168] Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen,* p. 92.
[169] The necessary aid lacked, no teachers, no travelling missionaries and no female catechists. ('De nodige hulp ontbrak: geen onderwijzers, geen rondreizende predikanten, geen vrouwelijke catechisten'). See: Ibidem, p. 96
[170] B.J. Ter Haar, *Telling stories : Witchcraft and Scapegoating in Chinese History* (Leiden, 2006), p. 288.
[171] A report from Hubertus Otto to the La Sainte Enfance, Ouvre de La Sainte Enfance, 1 September 1895, Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheutisten 8.3.3.2989
[172] To further clarify, as mentioned, the Gansu Christians were generally immigrants or refugees. Joining such societies can be seen as a way to counter the social instability. In order to keep loyal followers, Otto had to force conformity. Simultaneously the hostile environment required him to combat outside threats.

festivities or by representing Christian converts during legal cases. By defying popular and institutional hostilities they showed that the Christians were there to stay.[173] Second, Otto had to enforce conformity, such as his ban on joining other sects, such as the Gelaohui (哥老会), with severe penalties.[174] As the Gansu mission had few local intermediaries, enforcing conformity amongst the converts required harsh punishments. In other cases of disobedience towards church directives, the missionary could withdraw from a village, leaving them vulnerable to repression and therefore enforcing conformity. Such indicates that the missionary occupied a largely different position in the new Gansu method than it did in the Ordos method, where their social position had been obvious and undisputed.[175]

Their weak social position also influenced their representative ability, posing again a crucial difference in the approach. The missionary in Mongolia employed their strong position to protect the Christians against those outside the pillar, while under Otto's directive, the missionaries used their representative capabilities in a much wider sense. On the one hand, the missionary used its position to protect and defend the converts from repression, such as in Tch'engpeik'iu near Ganzhou (贛州) where several catechumens were imprisoned, and after a subsequent intervention led by one of the missionaries, they were promptly released.[176] On the other hand, Otto recognized the influence this representation had on the local environment. When they asked Chinese converts for instance to their motives for conversion, they recognized they often did so for the benefits of representation. Therefore, missionaries begun representing a wider audience in legal affairs; 'the heathens come to us because of a trail or marriage, or other aid. […] we will do everything we can'.[177] This inclusive position eventually resulted into an informal set of rules determining the relationship with the authorities; 'The missionaries will exhort the faithful to remain in the duty and in the civil cases they will not interfere, but the mandarins will decide justice.'[178]

What thus arose from Otto's decision to abandon the Ordos method was a whole new approach in conducting the mission and achieving the central goal. In the Gansu method, the missionary; 1) resided in the urban environment where they conducted their mission within a largely unconverted population without frequent travelling; 2) due to the absence of native priests and presence of a local hostile attitude, the missionary had a far less prominent social position; 3) the material benefits of the mission were employed to primarily attract popular favour, instead of converts, as the missionaries were unable to impose strict conformity; 4) due to their weak social position, the missionaries focussed on social acceptance, to become accepted in the plural social and religious sphere, by mediating their actions to combat the hostile environment and win the popular favour. 'A small persecution […] can usually pass as a good sign. […] it serves as a warning', Melckebecke states.[179] The Gansu method underlining

[173] De Ridder, *A Pear-Tree Legacy of Love*, p. 180-186.

[174] Otto believed this secret society to be responsible for the abduction of among others the wives of Christian refugees from Sichuan. He also indicated that addressing the matters to the mandarin will result in little as 'with money this Pilatus is bribed'. Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 81.

[175] It is unclear whether he left or fled but it is clear that the missionary in question, Van Ostade, preferred avoiding conflict rather than causing it. See: Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 182.

[176] Melckebecke, *Zegenende Handen*, p. 93.

[177] Ibidem, p. 83.

[178] Part of a bundle of rules written by the bishop Favier of the vicariate of Zhili, the way in which it is recorded in the annals strongly suggests it was also implemented in Gansu. See:, Hubertus Otto, *Annals of the Vicariate* (1889-1923), Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheutisten 14.1.4.2.4732, p. 23.

[179] Though it is not completely clear how the intermediaries functioned within Gansu, it is clear that under Otto Chinese Christians or catechumens were used to expand the mission by for instance buying land and

goal was not pillarization but rather integration into the existing socio-political spheres by mediating their presence and ability with local hostility to win popular favour instead of conversion. Such a new approach had an effect; 'the final years [1898-1900] the relations between the mandarins and the mission became softer and more hospitable.'[180]

Segregation versus integration

As the congregation expanded to encompass nearly all the Chinese North-West, Scheut had developed two different 'scripts' along which it performed, the common Ordos method and the deviated Gansu method. The former approach largely conformed to the original inspiration of the 'reductions' while retaining some difference. In the model, a missionary travelled around the vicariate where scattered rural Christian communities were subjected to their authority. While visiting, the missionary conducted religious ceremonies while also providing material benefit, such as school, hospitals and orphanages. At the same time, they also defended their settlements from outside interference, often by ignoring or defying existing political and social systems. In exchange, the converts handed over most of their autonomy, providing the mission with an ever increasing political, social and economic position. This in turn translated into the crucial element of the Ordos mission, the strong push to segregate themselves into a separate 'pillar' within the environment. Their communities would therefore no longer be part of the political and social system implemented by the Qing but rather consist outside of them.

When the mission expanded into Gansu, the 'script', or method, could not be replicated. Instead of a socio-political void, the first pioneers encountered a shaken, but well-established urban society whose social systems had endured the Islamic insurrections. The new 'script', being the Gansu method, was a continued work in progress, in which the Christian communities existed mostly in unconverted cities, where religious services where often repressed by popular and institutional resistance and their charitable institutions unable to match existing facilities. For the Gansu mission, acceptance into the local provincial sphere was a primary concern which coincided with their objective to expand the mission enterprise in this area. Otto's main objective, to conform the existing Chinese converts and expand the number of converts, thus also coincided with efforts win over the favour of the population and authorities. Though the missionaries had a significant position amongst their converts, they did not amongst the general population. By handing out grain or offering legal mediation, the approach aimed to change this and, in the process, establish Christianity not a separated entity, but as an included factor.

The main difference inherent in both 'scripts' consists of a duality of theme, segregation against integration. This contrast did not emerge out of thin air and shows a strikingly interesting relation between the missionary, its method or approach and the environment in which they operated. In both methods of conversion, the environment influenced which form the employed method would take based on a pre-existing notion. Considering Mongolia, the lack of social ties and governmental authority amongst the vulnerable Han farmers in a segregated system might have stimulated the segregation notion of the Ordos method. For Gansu, the region witnessed a strong social and political system in which the segregated notion could not be implemented. Instead, under Otto, a new method was developed in which integration became the prime focus, with conversions as a secondary

properties. Apparently, this provoked less of a hostile response compared with the attempt by the missionary. See: Melckebecke*, Zegenende Handen*, p. 85.

[180] Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 207.

result. The debate concerning the adoption of the Manchu hair style serves as an example, as in the Ordos method the missionary could retain their foreign appearance while he had to conform to a more Chinese standard in the Gansu method. The difference in the 'scripts' based on two different 'stages' logically has enduring consequences for the 'play', as the next chapter will show.

Ch. 4 Conversion and Conflict 1890-1900

Following the establishment of a 'stage', an 'actor' and two different 'scripts', it is finally time to watch them unfold in the 'play', or in other words, to analyse the many local conflicts that emerged within both Mongolia and Gansu in between 1890 and 1900. This final chapter therefore combines all the elements or insights from the previous chapters, by considering what influence the 'scripts', meaning methods of conversion, had on the resulting conflicts in both Mongolia and Gansu. These instances of conflict, reported in 'Missiën in China en Congo', proof to be a form of reference points, through which the general reception of the Scheut congregation within the local environment can be traced. It will subsequently indicate how two diverging experience during the Boxer rebellion emerged. Most of these conflicts occurred through the practice of lawsuits or trails in a Mandarin court, since this was the ordinary way to settle conflicts. Yet, the conflicts outlined can be divided into 1) lawsuits concerning the expansion of the mission, 2) local interactions both within and outside court and 3) the occurrence of rebellion within China's north-western frontier.

The expansion of the mission

The first 'plays' or conflicts that will be discussed involve the territorial of institutional expansion of the mission, which was generally always settled through the Mandarin court. The subsequent trial decided, through various means, a verdict upon which the matter would be settled. Based on the 'stage', being the local circumstances, and the 'script', the employed method, these trails or lawsuits influenced different developments.

Conflicts in Small Brugge

Perhaps the best performance of continued conflict in Mongolia throughout the period, emerged in Xiaoqiaopan (小乔盘), also known as Small Bruges.[181] It was founded by father Steenacker around 1879 and its land originally belonged to the Mongol Uusin. Its founding immediately sparked conflict as it was built on Mongol lands where agriculture settlements like Small Bruges, were not allowed.[182] Defying the segregating Qing policy, Scheut developed Xiaoqiaopan as a centre of proselytism and institutional expansion. This was met with both Mongol and Qing governmental resistance as both believed the Scheut mission to encroach on their jurisdiction. Scheut, however, excepted itself to this rule, claiming that the treaty of Tianjin provided them with permission. Already during the 1880s, attempts were made by the Mandarin to exhert his authority by for instance punishing converts for unclear reasons, according to the mission periodical. Father Verlinden, however, pushed back using his own position and humiliated the Mandarin by defying proper customs, patronizing the Mandarin and threatening to appeal in Beijing.[183] In another lawsuits, concerning the theft of horses, Verlinden again humiliated the Mandarin, started a brawl within the courtroom and again appealed to Beijing. [184] In both cases, the mission eventually emerged victorious.

[181] The Chinese name translated means, the small bridge town.

[182] Taveirne, *Han-Mongol encounters and Missionary endeavors*, p. 352.

[183] Beside conflict with the Mongol banners or kingdoms and Qing officials, they also quarrelled with the locals exemplified in a story of an old 'witch' who maintained a bridge and made a living of it. After Scheut built their own bridge and abused her after she complained, it showed the environment that Scheut was claiming an undisputed social and political position. See: A. CL. 'Het apostolische vicariaat van Zuidwest Mongolië', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 8 August 1893, P. 150.

[184] Most cases belonged to the existing constellation of local conflicts and were not purely religious ones. Yet, in the periodical, as is usual, it is framed as a purely religious matter. Such a dichotomy is often constructed by

These many conflicts which the missionaries of Xiaoqiaopan encountered, resulted in a letter written specifically for the Scheut students in Europe, with the title; 'In which pranks the Chinese judges deal and how men has to appeal in order to win his case'.[185] Written by father De Beule, it opens with a land dispute case in 1893 between a wealthy man called Ma and a poor catechist named Li-wang. When the rich Ma allegedly stated that he was only satisfied with the death of all Christians and their missionary, De Beule legitimised his involvement in the affair. After sending his name card and request for an audience, he found himself in the Mandarin's living chamber where he was received with most politeness. De Beule wrote that such an attitude already signalled that the Mandarin was afraid.[186] After a conversation, in which De Beule appealed in favour of his converts, he also added that if the converts were found guilty, de Beule would be forced to appeal to a higher court. 'a half word tells the smart Chinese often more than a long sermon'.[187] The next day, all converts were released. Even more than Verlinden's encounter, it indicates the power of the mission had nearly reached a point in which they, in the political sense, could outmatch not only the Mongol kings but also the Mandarin officials, simply by the threat of appealing to Beijing.[188]

Another indicative case of the relation between the Ordos methods and local conflicts, consists of a case in which a Chinese man who had destroyed church property, recorded by father Alfons Bermijn. In 1895, rumours of an Islamic uprising from Gansu resulted in the sudden pillaging of a church in Xiaoqiaopan by an undisclosed man. He was put before Mongol and Chinese mandarins to let justice commence. However, both argued that the case was outside their jurisdiction, stating for instance that the ground upon which Xiaoqiaopan stood was leased Mongol grassland and therefore Mongol jurisdiction.[189] This indicates that the two most prominent political powers in Mongolia both did not want to dispute the mission and conceded political power. The case was eventually solved through conceding Mongol land to the mission; 'we just required the cultivation of a piece of land from the shung-ti-t'an […] which belonged to the king of the Otok [Mongolian kingdom].'[190] If the Mongol lord would not agree to their demands, the case would be further pressed, leaving little other choice than to accept their demands. It strongly suggests that in 1895, the Scheut mission had become the strongest political force in Mongolia, largely based on their conversion method of segregation and the subsequent use or abuse of the treaty rights.

The mandarin of Tshung-Hiin

A strong contrast is observed in the vicariate of Gansu, when considering the case of father De Peuter's expansion into a small city named Tshung-Hiin in 1890. 'A city, which lies nine hours away from me residence at Hwi-hiin. In the course of last year, I send my preacher-

the missionaries themselves. See: 'De Martelaars van Oost-Mongolië', ed., in *Missiën in China en Congo,* nr. 37 Februari 1892, p. 13-16.

[185] In some ways, it consists of a handbook on how to win a court case involving the Chinese people and a Mandarin. See: E.H. De Beule, 'Oost-Mongolië, Met welke streken de Chinese rechters omgaan; en hoe men het moet aanleggen om zijn pleit te winnen', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo,* nr. 37 January 1896, p. 182.

[186] De Beule, 'Oost-Mongolië', p. 183.

[187] Ibidem, p. 183.

[188] This tactic, which was the main tool De Beule emphasised in his letter was subsequently often used. In a letter from father De Groef, he also in a case that they might lose, threatened to go to Beijing. The case was subsequently won in favour of the mission. See: E.H. De Groef, 'Oost-Mongolië', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 84 December 1899, p. 359.

[189] Z. E. P. Bermyn, 'Zuidwest-Mongolië, schoone plannen; plagerijen; de hand Gods', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo,* Nr. 85 Januari 1900, p. 371.

[190] Bermyn, 'Zuidwest-Mongolië', P. 371.

baptist there […]. Around new year we counted over forty converts and convinced we could do much good we searched for a suitable place to reside in the city.'[191] Convinced that in this city, the Gansu mission could flourish, De Peuter planned to find a house in the middle of the city from which he could conduct his mission as long as conversions followed. After the number of converts reached almost a hundred, De Peuter organized his journey towards the city in suitable fashion. In order to impress the locals, he decided to use a traditional sedan chair in which prominent figures generally travelled, instead of the usual horse for his journey. Though he clearly did not favour such a means of transportation, since he stated his discomfort, it did have the expected result as he was received with none of the usual resistance which the Gansu mission generally met at that point in their development. Yet, after he arrived at the house rented in the middle of the city, the situation quickly reversed.

Even though De Peuter attempted to introduce himself to the local mandarin to avoid unpleasantness, it did not take long before 'several servants of the court, and some rogues, which proliferate in every Chinese city, […] convinced of full impunity came […] to make a hellish life'.[192] It started with shouting and cursing but quickly grew out of hand as they began to assault the residence by banging on the door and throwing stones. As the action did not stop, the Christians within the house began fighting back and dispersed the attackers. Complaints to the local Mandarin did little and after several days, De Peuter believed it best to retreat to his residence in Hwi-hiin to not further aggravate the situation. Shortly after, he received the news that under the Mandarin, the house he had rented was sacked, and his converts had been harassed. De Peuter had little choice in his action but to appeal to the viceroy in Lanzhou so he could complain about the affair. Even though the Mandarin of Hwi-hiin attempted to mediate between the missionary and the Mandarin of Tshung-Hiin, it did not resolve the conflict. After the Mandarin of Tshung-Hiin demanded a period of two months before the matter could be resolved, De Peuter suspected a ruse as they could prepare further hinder to the mission. He was left with no choice but to go to higher authorities in Lanzhou.

His stay in Lanzhou did not go as he expected as well. Though being received by his fellow Scheutist, father de Meester, and outfitted with all the necessary requirements needed to request an audience with the viceroy in Chinese fashion, he was not granted an audience but instead referred to a lower Mandarin which would hear his complaints.[193] To his surprise, he was received cordially and his complains were heard and an examination would follow. Despite De Peuter's judgement towards 'the Chinese fashion' of the examination, meaning swift, sloppy and inconclusive, the deputy viceroy judged that the Mandarin of Tshung-Hiin needed to protect the missionary from further harm, but no restitution of the damaged wares would be made. Shortly after this verdict became known, a Christian shop in the city was assaulted again, leaving De Peuter to merely state that he hoped he could send better news next time. In the annals of Gansu, written by Hubertus Otto, the end of this affair is stated.[194] De Peuter could return, rent a new residence and conduct his affairs, while the Mandarin in question was promoted to another city. Instead of overruling the political system, as had been done in Xiaqiaopan for instance by appealing to higher authorities or even the Zongli Yamen in Beijing, De Peuter decided to accept the verdict and not further aggravate the situation. Yet, the consequences of that decision were that any prospects of conversion had disappeared.

[191] E. H. De Peuter, 'Kan-soe', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 25 Februari 1891, p. 385.
[192] De Peuter, 'Kan-soe', p. 386.
[193] 'Still I had won something, my complaint was in the hands of the viceroy': Ibidem, p. 390.
[194] Hubertus Otto, *Annals of the Vicariate* (1889-1923), p. 21.

New settlements in Mongolia

Meanwhile, the expansion in the Mongolia showed a rather different development as older established places thrived, such as Xiaoqiaopan, while new communities were created, as can be observed in an 1897s case in the vicariate of Middle Mongolia. Missionary Koenraad Eyck wrote about the difficulties of obtaining new land to found more chrétiéntes, in this case in the district called Ts'i-choe-moe. There, local Chinese continued to hinder the mission, by for instance purchasing land leases at higher prices, even though the missionaries had already built settlements there. In Ts'i-choe-moe, Eyck wrote; 'it is done: we have won and won for good'.[195] The missionaries, under Mgr. Van Aertselaer, had appealed to Beijing and the French minister for a final verdict. The final decision from Beijing was in favour of the mission which included that the mission received and no longer leased the land, the Chinese had to acknowledge the mission's ownership and further disputes concerning the affair were punishable by severe penalties. As a result, the mission in Ordos received around 30 square miles with plenty of room for over twenty villages, over which Eyck victoriously wrote. During this encounter, the Mongol landowners lost their lease revenue and the Chinese people their claims, while the mission only gained.

'it was more than time that this affair was settled', Eyck wrote.[196] The matter had dragged on far too long and the Chinese were hopeful that they would win the case. Apparently, rumours had even started circulating among the people that the Mandarin had received orders to exterminate all the Christians. 'A general extermination was determined', Eyck stated, 'on the first day of the sixth month'.[197] Though few details about the conflict are further provided, it immediately becomes clear that this conflict had put the situation on edge. It is no wonder that Eyck wrote in such a relieved and victorious fashion as the situation by outside intervention had been decided in their favour. The talkative enemies were forever stopped by the verdict, Eyck stated.[198] Observed from the Ordos method, it may again conclude that the missionary, facing local resistance against their actions, appealed and exploited their position as formulated in the treaty of Tianjin to enforce their claims. The fact that outside intervention, partial influenced by the French authority, determined the verdict, combined with an increasing burden, such as the 'overheavy taxes' from which the mission was exempted, will most surely have fuelled mounting dissatisfaction at the privileged encroaching foreigners.[199]

A similar story is found in the creation of the chrétiénte, named Palakai, under father Meuleman. In 1894, he had founded this new settlement in the South-West of Mongolia, in honour of the holy Joseph. However, its founding was preceded by a long struggle. Four years long, he apparently had to endure a nearly unceasing conflict to uphold his claim [our right] and to be acknowledged by the other Chinese.[200] It started with the disputes regarding the lands Scheut claimed which the local population had attempted to block. Only intervention by the local magistrate, the land was given to the congregation of Scheut. Thereafter this intervention, Meuleman wrote that the settlement started to grow, starting with small dirt houses and later with a church, walls and thriving farms. The Chinese population, however,

[195] E. H. Koenraad Eyck, 'Midden-Mongolië: gelukkige uitslag van een oud pleit: plaats genoeg om twintig christen dorpen te stichten', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 29 September 1898, p. 114.
[196] Eyck, 'Midden-Mongolië', p. 115.
[197] *Ibidem*, p. 115.
[198] Ibidem, p. 115.
[199] Ibidem, p. 116.
[200] E.H. Leopold Meuleman, 'Zuidwest-Mongolië', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 74 februari 1899.

did not sit back and when harvest season came, they stopped the oxen ploughing the field, raided the mission grain carts and stole what they could steal. However, their fortune turned quickly as the Christians under the missionary appealed to the Mandarin, reclaimed their stolen harvest and obtained a guarantee that further hinder was forbidden. Just as in many other cases in which the mission founded of expanded chrétiéntes, the missionaries used all means at their possession to achieve their goal.

Afterwards, the mission continued to thrive as the settlement had become a booming village with over five hundred inhabitants, all of whom were either Christian or people preparing for conversion to the Christian faith. Though surrounded by larger villages, Meuleman wrote favourably over the prospects and that ever since the surrounding Chinese accepted their permanent presence, they had become less hostile.[201] Meuleman therefore already aimed for to expansion as he stated that Palakai could support about a hundred families, by purchasing new lands, improving irrigation and digging canals in and around Palakai. The fact that such canals were going to have to be built on the land of the Chinese people, appeared of little concern, 'we might find some hinder, but with god's help we can overcome these'.[202] Just as the previous cases, the creation of settlements in Mongolia was only achieved after some initial local resistance. However, as the passage also shows, it was not solely the local population who disturbed the mission as the missionaries themselves sought out conflict when they were sure of success. Their position, international and national legal status and increasing physical powerbase provided them with the means to do so, of which they were most likely well aware.

Father Kissels' church

Returning to the vicariate of Gansu, a case recorded by father Ostade almost perfectly indicates the contrast in expansion between Mongolia and Gansu. In 1897, father Kissels had bought a residence, from which he hoped to conduct the mission within the city of Ganzhou (贛州). Yet, this purchase was blocked by several learned men (Schriftgeleerden), forcing Kissels to appeal to the Daotai (道台), the local Mandarin.[203] Kissels argued that the treaty of Tianjin allowed him to purchase a residence in the city. The refusal of the learned men was therefore in direct violation of the Qing Emperor's will. The Mandarin aiming to settle the affair attempted a compromise, by offering him a section of land outside the city. 'I declare again that we want a terrain on the high and dry part within the city: and never outside!', Kissels fervently stated.[204] Such a quote is most unusual, as the mission in Mongolia, viewing from the Ordos method, would have desired and pressed for a separate outside terrain. However, Kissels refused to be segregated in such a manner and instead used the 'free space' the Gansu model provided to press for a residence inside the city. By following the usual legal customs of Ganzhou, he was eventually allowed to reside in the mentioned residence from which he could conduct the mission, while living amongst and with the local people.

Instances of social interaction

These first conflicts already indicate several interesting elements in the relation between the used 'script', or method of conversion, and the various 'plays', or the conflicts itself. On the one hand, the Ordos Method stimulate the politically powerful position of the Scheut mission

[201] Meuleman, 'Zuidwest-Mongolië', p. 207.
[202] Ibidem, p. 207.
[203] Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 203.
[204] Ibidem, p. 204.

in Mongolia, while it shows on the other hand the more conciliating attitude of the Gansu missionary. Though such instances undoubtably had an effect on the local reception, the more indicative and influential conflict between the mission and the environment did not concern trails concerning the expansion of the mission. The direct or indirect interaction with the local population, which often existed outside the courts, likely left a more influential image in the mind of the population. The second part of the 'plays', or conflicts, thus focus on the instances in which the mission interacted with the local population and what kind of reception these conflicts transmitted to the environment.

Revenge by suicide

Returning to the ever turbulent Xiaoqiaopan, father Steenacker recorded an unusual moment of conflict concerning a wedding and the subsequent results. He explained beforehand that suicide and vengeance often went hand in hand in China, as it would bring wide attention to a particular affair.[205] A man called Ning-Tchoe-eul and his family had joined the Christian community in Xiaoqiaopan as converts. However, it became known that his wife had previously been engaged to another Chinese man, but the dowry which enforced the engagement, according to Chinese customs, had never been delivered. At some undisclosed day, the Chinese man to whom she was promised entered Xiaoqiaopan with his mother in order to 'steal the wife of Ning-tchoe-eul but to conceal his purpose, he first vowed to become Christian'.[206] After being admitted, they were given the opportunity and abducted the woman, about which Steenackers was promptly informed. Being offended by both the ruse and the offense, he immediately went into action. After forcing both perpetrators to release Ning-tchoe-eul's wife, a struggle ensued, which ended in the mother wounded herself with a fork. Regardless, Steenackers returned the woman to her husband in Xiaoqiaopan. This encounter was not particularly unusual as the missionary, following to the Ordos method, was required to protect the converts from outside interference. Yet, what happened afterwards proves most interesting.

Steenackers wrote; 'on the same day we released the young woman, around three o'clock in the afternoon, I was working in my room in Loe-fang-k'iu […] suddenly my attention is drawn to a faint moan […] what do I see? The mother of the thief hanged at the knob of the door'.[207] Apparently, the mother hoped to avenge herself by committing suicide in front of the church. Such an act is often used to involve the authorities and through them gain some retribution. However, this 'old Chinese witch', as she was labelled, did not die. He had to act quickly, as he wrote himself, but considered the intended effect, as helping her would show that the mission was viable for 'such tricks'.[208] Instead, he decided to grab a club and assist her in her suicide by beating her feet and legs. Meanwhile, the Chinese converts who had gathered around the spectacle, started yelling insults and the moment the woman was distracted, the missionary quickly cut the rope around her neck and ordered her capture. Since this encounter occurred on his ground, he attempted to prevent her death as to avoid intervention by the Mandarin. Following a scolding session after her capture, in which the missionary accused her of performing a 'farce', he set her free only if she left this region

[205] E.H. Steenackers, 'Het apostolisch vicariaat van Zuidwest-Mongolië (Ortos)', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 41 mei 1896, p. 242

[206] Steenackers, 'Het apostolisch vicariaat van Zuidwest-Mongolië (Ortos)', p. 243.

[207] Ibidem, p. 243.

[208] Ibidem, p. 244.

forever. After this encounter, Steenackers stated: 'nobody dared to disturb us with such fallacies.'[209]

To read such abusive account in an ecclesiastical periodical appears somewhat disturbing but it does tell a significant story concerning the local reception of the mission and their conversion method. As previously discussed, the Ordos method provided the missionary with a considerable political, social and economic power as they formed a segregated and almost independent pillar next to the regular society. In this encounter the result of such a method are clearly shown. An engagement, whether void or not, is pressed upon and the missionary using his position to exhort his own decision, outside the official channels, pushed the 'old Chinese witch' to seek vengeance by suicide. However, the missionary's authority was such that he could further harm this woman and set her free without experiencing any repercussion for the inflicted abuse from either the other existing political or social sphere. Just as the previous category indicated, the encounter shows that around the mid-1890s, the mission through applying the Ordos method had already achieved a political and social hegemony in which it was, to some extent, untouchable. Most likely much to the dissatisfaction of the surrounding Chinese in Mongolia.

Father Deleuse versus the militia

Meanwhile in Gansu, the situation was extensively different. For over fifteen years, father Deleuse had been conducting the mission in the city of Liangzhou (凉州).[210] On the twenty-sixth of 1896, he described an encounter he had with some local militia, who had been formed to repress a nearby Islamic rebellion. He rode past them one of them and was greeted with a well-known insult, yangguizi (foreign devil 洋鬼子). Employing the Gansu method, aiming to defy such excluding statements, Deleuse and his assistant followed him in order to keep him accountable for his remark. Surprised by this, the soldier fled into a makeshift barracks, where the militia was stationed. When the Deleuse entered, he and his assistance were surrounded by thirty of his comrades and both Deleuse and his assistance received a heavy beating. Only when he managed to escape the barracks and was aided by a passer-by, the soldiers shrunk back. His assistant, however, was beaten half to death. Deleuse, upon returning home, immediately sent somebody to complain about the matter to the Mandarin. After immediate action from the Mandarin, the commander of the soldiers came to personally apologize in the evening.

The matter did not end there. The commander promised seventy beatings by stick for the offenders, but the missionary did not agree and pushed for the usual punishment for such crimes, public penance by either shame board or a Chinese form of punishment in which the ears were pierced.[211] The commander agreed and the next day, Deleuse was informed that two hundred beating had been given, followed by a request from the commander asking if the public penance could be negated, as it would bring shame on the entire regiment. Deleuse refused and with the help of a friendly Chinese scholar he wrote a formal complaint to the Mandarin, after which the commander was scrutinized for the lack of discipline. At noon, the

[209] Steenackers, 'Het apostolisch vicariaat van Zuidwest-Mongolië (Ortos)', p. 244.

[210] Only interrupted in 1893-1894 when he was shortly replaced by Father De Smedt. See: Hubertus Otto, *Status Missionis Kansu*, Leuven, KADOC Archieven Scheut, 15.1.3.12.5360, p. 4.

[211] Deleuse states that in such a punishment, in which the ears are vertically pierced from top to bottom, is more disgracing than painful. Yet seeing the severity of the crime, he believed that they should be punished according to their own laws. See: E.H. Deleuse, 'Kan-soe', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 51 1897, p. 412.

culprits were punished according to the usual laws and brought in front of the missionary, where they would receive another beating. Deleuse, following the law, told the commander that further punishment would not be necessary and argued that they should be chased from the city, as 'they were not worth to be part of your undefeatable warriors.'[212] The commander, apparently pleased that Deleuse acknowledged his problem of shame, obliged.[213]

In this manner, the encounter with a band of hostile militia ended. Deleuse added to this account that without his action, no missionary, converts or citizen of the town was safe anymore if such militia could beat up whomever they like.[214] Compared to the previous conflicts, where Steenacker did the beating, Deleuse became the victim in this encounter but he did not use his position to force a disproportioned punishment. Instead, he referred to China's own laws and after punishment ensued, he even rejected additional beatings. Instead he chose to restrict the shame brought upon the regiment by stating that these men did not belong in the regiment. At the same time, it must be noted that in this conflict Deleuse received aid for other Chinese outside the mission, who aided him in following proper channels to resolve the matter. In other words, Deleuse respected the local political and social structure by addressing it in a proper manner and submitting himself to it. As he explained himself through a Latin phrase; 'si Romae fueris, romano vivito more, enz. meaning if you are in Rome, live like a Roman'.[215]

An unexpected visit

As stated in the previous chapter, Van Ostade indicated that relations between the mission and the authorities of Gansu started to shift around 1897. In a letter from father De Meester, the missionary in Gansu's provincial capital of Lanzhou, this shift is clearly described. Before 1897, he conducted the mission in troublesome conditions as the Christian minority was particularly vulnerable to political repression in the provincial capital. Suddenly, however, he was visited by the viceroy himself. 'last month of May, we have received T'ao-moe, the viceroy, in our residence accompanied by two hundred soldiers and a large amount of Mandarins'.[216] De Meester stated how favourable the viceroy talked the Christian religion, even stating '[he] declared downright that it would pleasure him if the people would embrace our religion'.[217] Such an encounter had been unthinkable several years earlier. Some days later, De Meester even received the viceroy's son, who came 'bearing a beautiful English atlas with a gilded back' which was gifted to the missionary.[218] Such a reversal was a welcome sign according to De Meester but it did not come out of nowhere, as the viceroy also stated 'he absolutely did not want, he said, that the Chinese would follow the teaching of Mohammed.'[219]

It is thus clear that the successive Islamic revolts had been a blessing in disguise for the Scheut mission as it apparently clarified to the viceroy which religion could be trusted. However, it was not just the Islamic revolts that had sparked his attitude as an encounter,

[212] Deleuse, 'Kan-soe', p. 413.
[213] Though it lack academic research, the problem involving 'shame' or 'face' are very relevant when considering interaction with the Chinese. Presently, such notions still exist, to which my own experiences can testify.
[214] Deleuse, 'Kan-soe', p. 413.
[215] Ibidem, p. 413.
[216] E.H. De Meester, 'Kan-soe', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo,* Nr. 57 1897, P. 498.
[217] De Meester, 'Kan-soe', p. 499.
[218] De Meester, 'Kan-soe', p. 499.
[219] Ibidem, p. 499.

recorded by father Daems, concerned the abuse of several converts in the town of San-keoe, shows. Problems emerged there regarding the participation of a newly converted family in the temple rites of the village during the New year ceremony. Within the Gansu village structure, such ritual appeared as a form of social glue to enforce unity and social control. However, the Christian family was forbidden to participate in these rituals by the rules of the church, as such rites worshipped deities. To prevent trouble, father Daems had given a member of the family, Hoe-Toeo-Loe, an edict outlining the Imperial permission for Christian exemption of such practices.[220] However, after four days the family experienced trouble. They were arrested, forced to pay money to the temple and rites. The edict provided by the mission was discarded as a forgery. Later in the month, the other Chinese began forcing the Christian family to worship deities, stole their possessions and started to assault the families' members.[221] The village attempted to force conformity among its inhabitants who all were required to pay and uphold the traditions. As the Christian family needed to exempt themselves from these practices, due to the Church laws, this encounter has to be seen as a radical attempt to protect the village from outside interference.

Father Daems, after hearing of these abuses, was not going to allow such actions as it would ruin any future prospect for conversion. In accordance with Chinese law, he brought the matter to the Mandarin, but the first trail failed, which emboldened the accused Chinese involved.[222] They began blackmailing other Christians in the neighbourhood for money or food. 'This time is was enough', father Daems wrote and he appealed to Bishop Otto for assistance. Together with several friendly Chinese scholars, they wrote another complaint and brought a second lawsuit to the Mandarin. 'About what is your complaint regarding the Christians', the Mandarin asked during the trail. The first accused suspect, who belonged to the same family as the Christians, replied; 'He has become Christians and burned images of our ancestors'. By converting, he argued, shame had been brought to their family. 'what!', said the Mandarin, 'has the Emperor not allowed his subject to become Christians and you dare to oppose that. […] [your] family definitely has rascals, bandits maybe; are you treating them equally?'[223]

From this dialogue, the Mandarin obviously did not observe this matter as a religious matter, but rather as an ordinary dispute. The final verdict was thus also in accordance with that assumption, depending on the severity of their actions, they were sentenced from two hundred to four hundred beatings. The worst offenders were sentenced to wear the shame board and all stolen goods had to be returned. The missionaries copied the verdict and hung it on display, to show that unlawful action aiming to expel or conform the Christian, were out of the question. However, resistance remained as some of the inhabitants of San-teoe refused entry to the mission, which Daems on order of Hubertus Otto defied, so he could demand the return of the stolen goods. As he arrived in the village, he was welcomed with curiosity as none had seen a foreigner before and Daems by demanding the return of the stolen goods. In one such case, A Chinese man afraid of further punishment, immediately returned the money, but was not able to return the stolen grain. Instead of pressuring his demands, Daems had the

[220] This also included paying for the village temple. See: E.H. Daems 'China', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo,* Nr. 62 1898, p. 4.
[221] Daems, 'China', p. 6.
[222] The reason the trail failed was due to an error in the complaint, which stated the theft of the mentioned edict. However, this had simply been misplaced by one of the Christians. Therefore, the lawsuit was cancelled, providing the Chinese accusers with a victory and a reason to keep pressuring the mission.
[223] Daems, 'China', p. 8.

man stand up, as he had been shamed enough, and remit him the grain. He did not need to fear further repercussion.[224]

Just as the previous encounter, in which Deleuse received a beating, the missionaries followed the usual procedure in obtaining justice for themselves and their converts, and even extended a figurative olive branch to the offenders. The missionaries protected their converts by acknowledging the political framework and with the help of other non-converted Chinese scholars, follow the laws of China and not their own. At the same time, the missionaries also did not repay any offense with equal coin but rather acted with a form of compassion and mercy, to gain the favour of the community and not further aggravate them. Daems decision concerning the stolen goods are an excellent example of this practice. When he remitted several of the stolen goods, Daems wrote that the involved Chinese reacted most grateful as it prevented them from even more hardship. According to the account, he went even further; 'as the evening began to fall, I requested many of the former enemies, […] to reside in our residence. […] Soon they were convinced that the European devils were not as evil [boos] as they had believed.'[225]

The bandits of Mongolia

Meanwhile in Mongolia, the Ordos method had resulted in a few most unusual encounters signifying the political and social status which the mission had established over the many years. A reoccurring problem in the entirety of the North-West was the presence of armed groups of bandits. With the crumbling of central authority in China, such bands had generally enjoyed free reign to plunder the defenceless Chinese and Mongol villages. During the early years of the mission, they also hindered the mission effort as a missionary could be ransomed back for a heavy sum to either the mission or the Mandarin.[226] However, around 1899 the prospects had turned as a letter from the newly arrived Father Vervloessem indicated. When a certain Father Segers travelled to a small town to conduct the last sacraments for a dying Christian, he was abducted by a group of bandits. Instead of ransoming him, he was treated with most curtesy including tea and conversation. Afterwards he was sent on his way, without hinder. Vervloessem wrote that the bandits most likely made a mistake in capturing him as they knew that offences against the mission, led to an appeal towards Beijing. This would result in a witch-hunt, in which; 'The lives of these gentlemen in the mountains lose much of their attractiveness'.[227]

Such encounters appear to be rather common as Vervloessem continued with his own experience. During his journey to the Christian village of Piin-li and Siao-miao-eul-keoe, in Eastern-Mongolia, they had to cross a river on a 'very miserable bridge' located just a few hundred meter in front of Siao-miao-eul-keoe. Halfway on the bridge, a gunshot emerged from a nearby hill and hit the water in front of them. 'the bandits', an assistance shouted when more shots were being fired.[228] Vervloessem and his fellow missionaries hurried to the settlement and despite not taking any casualties. After entering the village, they learned that these bandits, led by T'oeng lao ka-ta (the copper man), had made a mistake when opening fire. The band had been pursued by soldiers and apparently had mistaken the column of

[224] He [One of the Chinese Culprits] had no need to fear further repercussions. ('Hij ook gene verdere vervolging meer te vrezen hadden'): Daems, 'China', p. 10.
[225] Ibidem, p. 10.
[226] Initially the bandits in such encounters approached the mission for ransom but as the Mandarin was responsible for the protection of the missionaries, the ransom amount could also be levied from them.
[227] E.H. Vervloessem, 'Oost-Mongolië',ed., in; *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 78 1899, p. 271.
[228] Vervloessem, 'Oost-Mongolië', p. 272.

missionaries for Imperial soldiers. Even though Vervloessem does not directly states that he heard this from the bandits themselves, the very fact that he so strongly indicates that they had made a mistake shows that such attacks around 1899 had become scarce and uncommon. Following the episode, Vervloessem did state that they 'could now and then laugh about it'.[229]

Vervloessem's assumption concerning the behaviour of bandits towards the mission is not just a single account. Father De Groef stated, in a letter to his niece, that he was undertaking a missionary tour to conduct religious ceremonies in the scattered Christian communities of Eastern-Mongolia. When they left the town called Hei-Tchoe-miao (the lama monastery of the black pearl), some farmers informed them that bandits were present in the area. De Groef had to pass through the area where they were spotted, but he and his party decided to risk it. After an hour on the road, his assistance yelled; 'father, father, bandits'.[230] Before de Groef could lean out of his cart, they were stopped by several heavily armed men who stood in front of them. Instead of being robbed however, the moment the bandits saw they were dealing with a European, dropped their weapons and pleaded for forgiveness. After a short confusion conversation, the bandits rode off in a hurry without bringing harm to the missionary or his party. Just as with Vervloessem were the bandits aware of the immense risk of robbing a Western missionary could bring them and were therefore in some regards scared, contrary to the local population to whom the bandits would not hold back.[231]

Such encounters directly indicated the social shift that had occurred in between 1890-1900, in which the mission had become a most feared political and in some regard military player. Earlier stories of the mission, during its first decade, were filled with stories of missionaries being kidnapped and ransomed as the bandits knew the value of such figures. However, as the mission developed, they were able to call upon protection from another political player, the Qing government, in cases of abduction. As De Groef also stated, the missionaries:

> *'were one-minded that justice should commence immediately […] you [the local mandarin] are responsible for the lives and safety of Europeans […] therefore you have to find the bandits and force them to return what is stolen; otherwise you will have to repay us the damage that we suffered […] if you are not capable to enforce justice, that I would against wish and desire be forced to go to your superiors, perhaps even to Beijing.'*[232]

This passage perfectly presents the political situation the mission had forged. In an area plagued with bandits, the mission could by sheer 'special' authority demand action or reparation from the Mandarin, who despite receiving a negative image from the missionary sources, most likely was not able to do much, as during the period, Qing power and authority had waned ever more. Thus, the Mandarin was left with little option but to repay the mission, putting the burden either on himself or his subjects, as an appeal to higher authorities would mean serious personal consequences.

These moments of conflict again indicate a substantial contrast between both regions when concerning social interaction. In Mongolia, the encounters indicate that the social position of the missionaries, established through the Ordos method, was nearly undisputed.

[229] Vervloessem, 'Oost-Mongolië', p. 272.
[230] E.H. De Groef, 'Oost-Mongolië', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 84 1899, p. 359.
[231] De Groef even wrote this directly; 'it is crawling with bandits; from all sides erupt constant revolts and the idiot [the Mandarin] does nothing but sleep and act lazy'. See: E.H. De Groef, 'Oost-Mongolië', p. 350.
[232] Ibidem, p. 351.

The encounter in Xiaoqiaopan shows that the missionary was able to mistreat those who crossed the mission's path without direct social or political consequences. The local population had most likely already experienced and recognized the power and authority of the mission through the political expansion prior to 1890 and therefore understood the dangers of disputing them. The shift in attitude from bandit groups strongly underlines this assumption. Contrary, the situation in Gansu was almost contrary as converts and missionaries were attacked and abused. Instead of repaying with equal or heavier coin, the missionaries decide to twist the situation, by for instance negating stolen goods or rejecting punishment to win the favour of the population. In these affairs, they were often aided by local friendly Chinese, showing that such tactics worked in obtaining local favour.

Radical reactions

The 'plays' in which the Scheut missionaries performed so far indicate increasing difference in which the local reception and interaction had been developing. Shortly put, in Mongolia Scheut had reached a powerful position, which it used to extend its territory and protects its converts. In Gansu, their position was more feeble, vulnerable and subjected to the turbulence within the local environment. To underline the previous cases of conflict, a final indicative form of conflict remains, the occurrence of revolts in the Chinese north-western region. The general decline of Qing authority has provided the climate in which certain groups within both regions could easily revolt. Uncovering the position and role of Scheut within such revolts can illuminate, not only their local reception but also further underline the development into two different situations based on the method of conversion employed.

The Tsia-li-ti revolt

The first prominent revolt which affected the Scheut mission occurred in Eastern-Mongolia, the vicariate where Ferdinand Hamer had created the Ordos method years before. As the periodical explained, a revolt occurred in the year 1891, led by a possibly Daoist secret and unknown society named the Tsai-li-ti, who apparently specifically attacked the Scheut mission in the region.[233] Father Van Dyck found himself amidst the revolt and stated: 'I only write that what I know for sure, that what I have seen or has been told to me by faithful eyewitnesses'.[234] As the revolt raged on, Dyck stated that he was promised protection from the local mandarin but received none; 'he let me know that his soldiers had other thing to do than protect Christians'.[235] Apparently, the Mandarin sanctioned violence to happen and when the houses of Christian were being looted and burned, the Mandarin invited the rebels into his residence for celebrations. Van Dyck and his converts thus had to fend for themselves for protection and began forming an armed militia consisting of around thirty well-armed Christian hunters. While the Christians fled, it eventually was the Qing Imperial army that suppressed the revolt but not after it had done considerable damage to the Scheut mission. Hundreds of Chinese converts, and catechists had been killed, including the former teacher of Ferdinand Hamer, priest Lin.

[233] It is unclear whether the revolt was solely aimed at the mission or also at other elements within Inner-Mongolia. The mission periodical however frames the revolt as being particularly focused on the missionaries, based on the received letters from the missionaries. See: L. van Dyck, ed., 'De Martelaar van Oost-Mongolië', in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 37 1892, p. 13.
[234] Van Dyck, De Martelaar van Oost-Mongolië', p. 14.
[235] Ibidem, p. 15.

Father Van Dyck and his converts survived and eventually returned to their mission area on the seventh of December. The encounter shows however an interesting element. The Tsai-li-ti revolt, which can almost be considered a precursor to the Boxer rebellion, apparently already considered the Scheut mission a hostile and encroaching element. From their alleged focus on the Scheut mission, it can be considered a radical societal reaction towards an increasingly threating enterprise that had started to put economic and social pressure on the local Chinese population. Such an assumption also underlines the Mandarin response, who apparently welcomed the revolt. It appears likely that the Scheut mission, through their approach, had already eroded parts of the Mandarin authority. While angering the government, it likely also strained the regional socio-economic sphere, creating an explosive reaction such as this. At the same time, the Scheut mission appeared to embrace their segregated approach as no other means to ensure the mission's safety existed. It can thus be concluded that this revolt was an early indication of an increasing troubled relationship between the Scheut mission and their surroundings.

The Mohammedans revolt

Though the mission in Gansu was spared the horrors of the Tsia-li-ti revolt, they would face their own ordeal in 1895 when another Islamic revolt occured, showing the different path the missionaries took. As Van Belle explains; 'last sunday, seventh July, all my Christians came for confession […] The fortified town of Sin-Tchung, that usually is only inhabited by a few families, is presently stuffed with people.'[236] Father Belle and his converts were also there among the other refugees. Just like the Chinese, Belle had led his converts to safety, abandoning their homes. Together, they were fortifying the town and arming the men to protect against a possible attack.[237] Even though no attack came, a pre-emptive plan for an attack was being made. Belle wrote: 'today our people [Chinese and Christians] plan a large battle […] as if to take Sebastopol by storm.[238] A nearby town, called Ma-kia-wan, was fully inhabited by Muslims and fearing they would aid the revolt, the people in Sin-Tchung decided to launch a preliminary assault. Before they could attack however, the Hui Muslims had already fled while carrying the banner 'Sao tsing miai Han: De Hans (Chinese who do not believe in Mohammed)'.[239]

The revolt eventually inflicted little damage on the Scheut mission in Gansu and after Qing forces had subdued the rebels, the people returned to their villages. The slight damage received during the rebellion was not without reason, as father Ostade noted: 'grainpiles of the heathens they [the rebels] burned, while they spared those of the Christians.'[240] Similarly, the houses of Christians were not plundered and their possessions respected. This would mean that the Christians would, in theory, have nothing to fear. However, the Christians still decided, likely out of fear, to join the other refugees. Father van Ostade for instance conducted the holy sermon in front of the many Christians and Chinese refugees, which many

[236] E.H. De Belle, 'Kan-soe, opstand der Mohammedanen', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 32 August 1895, p. 599.
[237] E. H. De Belle, ed. 'Kan-soe: Twee brieven van E.H. De Belle: De Mohammedaanse opstand', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 36 December 1895, p. 600-601.
[238] E. H. De Belle, ed. 'Kan-soe: Twee brieven van E.H. De Belle: De Mohammedaanse opstand', ed., in: *Missiën in China en Congo*, Nr. 37 Januari 1896, p. 189.
[239] Though recorded in the letter, the sentence 'pao tsing miai han' does not translate to 'Chinese who do not believe in Mohammed'. Instead, it could perhaps have meant 'bao Qing, Mai Han' meaning 'preserve the Qing, beautiful Han'. See: De Belle, 'Kan-soe', p. 191.
[240] Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 186.

apparently appreciated.[241] Despite a preferential position in the revolt, of which at least the missionaries were aware of, the actions of both the converts and the missionaries to unify themselves with the rest of the population must have left a strong image in the mind of all the people. Together they, for instance transported, grain for the Qing forces.[242] Instead of arranging their own defence, as the mission in Eastern-Mongolia was forced to do during the revolt in Eastern-Mongolia, the mission in Gansu chose to join the local population in their struggle to survive, even though the converts had likely less to lose.

Scheuts final trail: the boxer rebellion

The final moment of conflict that encompasses and underlines the central argument of this thesis is the Boxer Uprising in the Chinese Northern frontier regions. To shortly outline, the Boxer uprising emerged after the Juye incident occurred in the Chinese coastal province of Shandong.[243] Yet, this uprising was unusual in a crucial aspect, being that it did consisted as a fractured movement rather than a unified force. Cohen for instance does state that the original rebels were members of the Big sword society (dadaohui 大刀会), a religious martial arts-like group but that the unifying term 'Boxer' is a Western myth as a it refers to a myriad of movements participating in the uprising. In this sense, the Boxer were not a regular uprising, like the Islamic revolt or Tsai-li-ti, but rather a movement that swept throughout China, with an 'almost magical swiftness' in the Mongolian part of China.[244] A collection of Chinese studies concerning the Boxer uprising underlines this argument, by stating that the people involved were generally farmers or peasants, who followed the rising sentiment of anti-foreignism.[245] The Boxers can therefore not be considered a 'normal' revolt. Instead, they must be understood as an expression of the anti-foreign that had taken a militant form.

When this Boxer expression arrived in Mongolia, a whirlwind of violence emerged. Throughout Mongolia, the Scheut mission came under attack as both the dissatisfied peasants, Mandarin Bureaucrats and Mongol elite joined hands in destroying the many Chrétiéntes that the mission had built over the years. It resulted in the death of thousands of converts, tens of missionaries, including the 'inventor' of the original Ordos method, Ferdinand Hamer. Though the mission was able to survive, it suffered great devastation.[246] Observed in continuity with the previous conflicts, the experiences of the Scheut missionaries in Mongolia was not 'magical', but rather a somewhat logical outcome of an increasing violative situation. The previous conflicts indicate that the Scheut mission had become a powerful, nearly untouchable entity that could dominate and bully those outside the mission. The Boxers, therefore, also did not enter the region with an army, but rather introduced the spark which ignited the environment to enact violence on this foreign institution which had repressed and dominated them in the years prior. In a sense, it was the final radical response of the environment against the outsider, in the words of Judith Wymen.

The necessary requirement for the occurrence of violence during the Boxer rebellion was the support and aid of the local people. In Gansu, where the experience was completely contrary to Mongolia, the Boxers did not enjoy the same support that it had in Gansu. Initially, a similar situation appeared to unfold as pamphlets suddenly emerged calling for the death and destruction of

[241] Van Ostade, *Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 187.
[242] Ibidem, p. 188-189.
[243] See appendix I.
[244] Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 16-17.
[245] Jian Bozan 翦伯赞 (ed.), *yihetuan yundong shilun wenxuan 义和团运动试论文选* [selected papers on the Boxer movement] (Beijing 1984), p. 4-6.
[246] As described by Knipschild, Hamer would eventually become a religious symbol in the Dutch city of Nijmegen, where to this day a statue still stands in his honour. Besides indicating the influence of the missionaries back in Europe, it is also a memory to the global nature of the religious enterprise abroad. See: Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 352.

the mission enterprise. Yet, the people and government of Gansu saw little benefit in destroying the Christian presence. Missionary Van Ostade mentioned this when he stated the presence of several societies, who aimed to attack the mission but because they received no support, no further actions was taken.[247] Another example of Scheut's favourable standing came during the escalation phase of the revolt, in which the Imperial court began supporting the Boxer effort. The viceroy of Gansu ordered Bishop Otto to leave the province, but when Otto politely but firmly indicated that any route towards the coast posed more danger than remaining within the province, it was quietly accepted.[248] Where Scheut in Mongolia had segregated itself as the outsider, often at the expense of the outside world, the missionaries employing the Gansu method had worked hard to become insiders. It resulted in a different experience, in which the people and government of Gansu had every opportunity to destroy them, yet their 'insider' status, had kept them safe.

Conflicts, methods and the reception

The aim of this final chapter had been to combine the 'stage' with the 'actor' and the 'scripts' to observe the various 'plays', or in other words the environment, the missionaries of Scheut and the conversion methods in order to discover how Scheut operated and was eventually perceived in the local environment. The first two groups of conflicts, concerning the expansion of the mission and the instances of social interaction, signal an increasing divide in how Scheut was perceived based on the manner in which they operated. From 1890 to 1900, the encroaching Ordos method visibly aimed at expanding their own segregated political, social and economic position. In 1895, the mission was able to rival the established the political and social system, leaving the Chinese without such a system for their protection. Even though Scheut did not necessary chose to segregate itself, as it was for instance pushed in doing so during the Tsai-li-ti uprising, it did appear to be their aim. In doing so, they stimulated an ever-increasing resentment, as the people surrounding the mission and the original political powers surrounding the possessions of the mission were nearly powerless in opposing the encroaching 'foreign' Scheut mission.

The situation that unfolded in Gansu, however, showed quite the contrast. When Hubertus Otto started his assignment as Bishop, he likely unknowingly created a new method through which to approach the mission in the new environment. Though the mission lacked expansion in terms of converts or settlements, they did over the ten-year period gain the acceptance of their local environment. The various conflict shows that the missionaries under Otto worked within the established political system, often aiding or appealing to it in a similar fashion that the ordinary Chinese people would do. They rarely pressed their claim to higher court, and certainly not to Beijing. At the same time, when they partially lost a case, the missionaries rarely pressed their claim but rather accepted the situation. When they did win, they regularly extended figurative olive branches to win the good will of the population. Instead of resentment, it stimulated acceptance and inclusion, even from the Chinese outside the mission. They managed to eventually convince the population to accept them as insiders, in the words of Judith Wymen, rather than outsiders.

[247] Van Ostade*, Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou*, p. 209-210.

[248] Again, in Van Ostade's chronical, the appeal and reaction of Hubertus Otto are noted, signalling that Otto acknowledged the severity of the situation. But as he argued, leaving would mean crossing through dangerous lands, while staying put would be safe, an indication that Otto believed and trusted the society to which they had pushed so hard to belong. See: Van Ostade*, Gedeeltelijke Kronijken van Noord-Kan-Sou,* p. 215-217.

In a certain sense can the final group of conflict, radical responses, be interpreted as exactly that. Before the Boxer rebellion occurred, each region had its own uprising. Eastern-Mongolia had the Tsai-li-ti and Gansu had their Islamic uprising. Concerning the former, the mandarin authorities had left the mission to its own devices and apparently seemed to sanction the violence against the mission. Observed from the perspective of the previous cases of conflict, it can already be concluded that the mission alienated the local population and the local authorities, otherwise such an encounter would have gone very differently. In Gansu, when the Islamic revolt broke out, the mission joined the authorities and the people in resisting, showing themselves not to as enemies, even though they had less to lose. Even when a missionary was assaulted, ordinary Chinese laws were followed, without relying on the treaty right. When the Boxer ripple eventually arrive, a similar initial development takes place, but the essential requirement of local support was only present in one region. Hence, the Scheut mission in Mongolia was ruined, while Scheut in Gansu noticed barely anything.

Conclusion

In many ways, the Boxer rebellion introduced profound change in the history of the Late Qing empire. The Chinese government had placed its bets with the Boxer, hoping to use them against the 'foreign devils' and preserve the Qing Empire. Yet an international coalition defeated both the Boxers and the Imperial forces, once again humiliating the Qing government. The revolt also did have deep impact of the Scheut mission, which had suffered severely by losing countless of their settlements, Chinese converts and missionaries to the Boxer onslaught. After rebellion, Scheut could renew their mission and with new funds, largely provided by the Qing as indemnity, it rebuilt and reconstructed much of their mission. In Mongolia, whatever central authority had still been able to resist, had now been silenced. Knipschild shortly mentioned how the Bishop succeeding Hamer, Alfons Bermijn, could humiliate a mandarin on his own town's central square.[249] Tiedemann argued that due to the reduction policy, some settlements could be defended, preventing annihilation, while preserving a base from which to rebuild. It indicates that Scheut, after the Boxer disaster, managed to re-establish itself as the renewed power in the region. Meanwhile in Gansu, where the Boxers found little support, the only difference was the increasing success of the mission following the years after 1900 as conversions steadily increased.

Returning to the central question of this thesis, on how the 'actors', being missionaries of the congregation of Scheut, utilized their 'scripts', being the methods of conversion, on a specific 'stage', being the global and local context, influenced the eventual development of two completely different experiences between 1890-1900 during the Boxer uprising. It must be concluded that the approaches, or methods, from the missionaries were largely determined by the environment in which they operated and subsequently influenced the local reception of the mission. In both the Ordos and Gansu method, the original inspiration was the same, Chateaubriand's Paraguayan reductions, but only in Mongolia could it be implemented in an adopted form. The specific conditions of the regions allowed this, as the region was largely undeveloped, geographically and ecologically difficult, subjected to an uncontrolled influx of migrants and home to a strong segregated administrative system. It allowed the missionaries to recreate the reductions and through it expand the mission in such a manner that it rivalled the existing political structures around 1895.

It is understandable why the missionaries wanted to implement this system, after all they believed they were going to the land of the devil and could only save the Chinese through conversion. The reductions of the Ordos method were a way to implement the conversion while retaining tight control and discipline over the converts while it also functioned as base of political economic and social power. It might have even been possible that the Ordos method filled a socio-economic void that emerged due to the uncontrolled migration into Mongolia. Though this thesis cannot provide certainty, I would explain the early success of the mission. However, As the Scheut mission developed, its power extended well beyond the initial gap, something of which the missionaries might not have been aware.[250] The Mongolian mission had practically started operating as a new socio-political entity in the region, one that existed outside the Mongol and Qing power structures. Both Qing Mandarin administration and Mongol elite saw their authority, lands and people disappear into the realm of the

[249] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. 1.

[250] It is difficult to determine if all missionaries understood the social and political impact their enterprise had on the local population but some prominent figures in the mission clearly did. Father Verlinden or Bermijn for instance show in their letters that they understand their power and therefore in several instances actually acted from that assumption. Other newer missionaries might however not realised their impact.

mission. Though it stimulated conversions, the people outside the mission, whether local mandarins, rebels, bandits or ordinary folks, became subjected to the wimps of this foreign institution.

In the vicariate of Gansu, a similar attempt had been made. Under Ferdinand Hamer, the pioneer of the Scheut mission, the implementation of the Ordos method had been attempted but failed to properly materialise. His successor, Hubertus Otto, whether knowingly or not, abandoned the Ordos method and began developing a new method. Most likely, Otto was overwhelmed and improvised by provided his missionaries with all the 'free space' they needed to fulfil the original goal, to increase conversions. What arose has been labelled the Gansu method, in which the missionaries used whatever means they had to attract converts and as a side result promoted social acceptance of their presence. When Otto started in 1890, the situation was very much still repressive, with few Christians and barely any conversions, only sporadic and opportunistic conversion when the Chinese for instance required the mission's resources. Instead of seeking conflict and expansion, as had been done in Mongolia, the missionaries' focus on conversion slowly turned to promoting a kind of local integration, in which the mission subjected itself to and joined the existing political, social and economic power structures.

The creation of this alternative method was not miracle as the conditions under which they operated were to some extent different. Gansu was urban, largely devastated by rebellion, but still well-structured in both the social and political sense as well as predominately Chinese oriented. However, little prevented the missionaries to appeal to Beijing to force their judgement in various conflict, a tactic often used by the Mongolian missionaries. They rarely used or abused their prefatory position as could at times be observed in the Ordos Method.[251] Instead, the missionaries provided benefits to the communities in Gansu without posing strict demands. It may not have increased conversions, but it did gain them local favour, especially in the manner of conflict resolution. The missionaries generally sought out the existing political structure for solutions. When court cases weren't in their favour, they reluctantly accepted the presented verdicts. When they won, they were often lenient in their retribution, allowing the people to not see them as foreign outsiders. By doing so it integrated in and became part of the social and political spheres and though it negated the creation of strong socio-political basis, which left them vulnerable and restricted conversions, it did ensure that when the opportunity to expel foreign elements arrived during the Boxer rebellion, no response to it emerged.

When comparing the two developments, from the perspective of the 'script', the strong push to segregate the mission into a near-independent 'pillar' from the existing political, social and economic spheres, created a highly successful mission in the eyes of the European observer. It possessed many Chrétiéntes which housed thousands of converts, making it the strongest authority in Mongolia. Contrasting, the push for integration and social acceptance had resulted in a nearly opposite situation. Barely any conversion, almost no Chrétiéntes and little to no local power base. Instead, the missionaries accepted the local social and political order. The two different developments, influenced by the conversion methods employed, appears to be a different approach to a common goal. In the Mongolia, an intrusive attempt was made to gain short term success by exploiting the specific circumstances of their surroundings. The attempt in Gansu meanwhile showed a long-term perspective in which the mission became a part of the society it aimed to convert. Though

[251] In the official record of the Zongli Yamen, who kept court cases of religious disputes, only a single entry can be found, when a French missionary under Hamer's reign was abducted. See: Jiao'an

difficult to obtain, there actions were not without merit, as despite communist repression, a Christian community still exists within Gansu.[252]

Following, another question still lingers; what does this conclusion tell us? Most research of the history of the Christian missions of general Christianity in China has often focussed either on the mission on or the Chinese Christians in a certain local space. Yet, remarkably few studies have approached the complicated in relation between the missionary and the local environment. The historian Sweeten does attempt to provide a general conclusion through his research on the Jiao'an but this conclusion contradicts his assumptions. What it shows the interactive scenario's that unfolds in which a missionary, from a theoretical idea, develops an approach based on the circumstances they encounter. Yet, the missionary is not a passive actor, much alike the environment, and within this matrix of local interaction, it is determined which how the approach is shaped and in turn defined the missionaries as either insiders or as outsiders.[253] In considering the mission during the crucial latter half of the nineteenth century, the focus cannot be either on missionary or the local environment but rather they have to be considered in relation to each other. Yet, as this thesis also indicates, the complex matrix of local interaction could, based on the decision of the actors involved, create widely diverging situation.

The history of the Christian missions, both Catholic and Protestant, in China hold an enormous interesting field of study which largely has been overlooked. This thesis is therefore only a minor contribution to a field that requires much more attention, to the exact actions of the missionaries, the reception of the local population as well as connecting the local sphere to its global surroundings. Currently such histories can generally only be accessed through western sources, such as the missionary journals, studies and letters. New opportunities will emerge when more Chinese archives open their doors, which will provide additional perspectives and insights. As academic studies concerning the congregation of Scheut, except for a few, have largely remained within their own school of thought, a drive to draw Scheut into the larger academic narrative, as this research attempts, will proof vital to further understanding. For the congregation of Scheut, the sources material is rich and barely in-depth examined. Let it be an invitation for all to use the many sources to not only examine the mission but also the local everyday situations which the missionaries recorded. The rich potential of the missionary sources cannot be understated, and I urge those interested to conduct further research.

[252] Though I did not have time to personally travel to the old mission settlements in present day Inner-Mongolia, I managed to conduct some research in Lanzhou, part of which was visiting the Catholic church there and by sheer luck interacted with some of the current members. Though their community was small, as they explained, it still stood strong.

[253] Her argument, in which she frames the increasing conflict as not religiously motivated but rather along the lines of in- and outsiders, largely follows the development of Scheut. One method increases the standing of outsiders while the other increases the standing of insiders in the local society.

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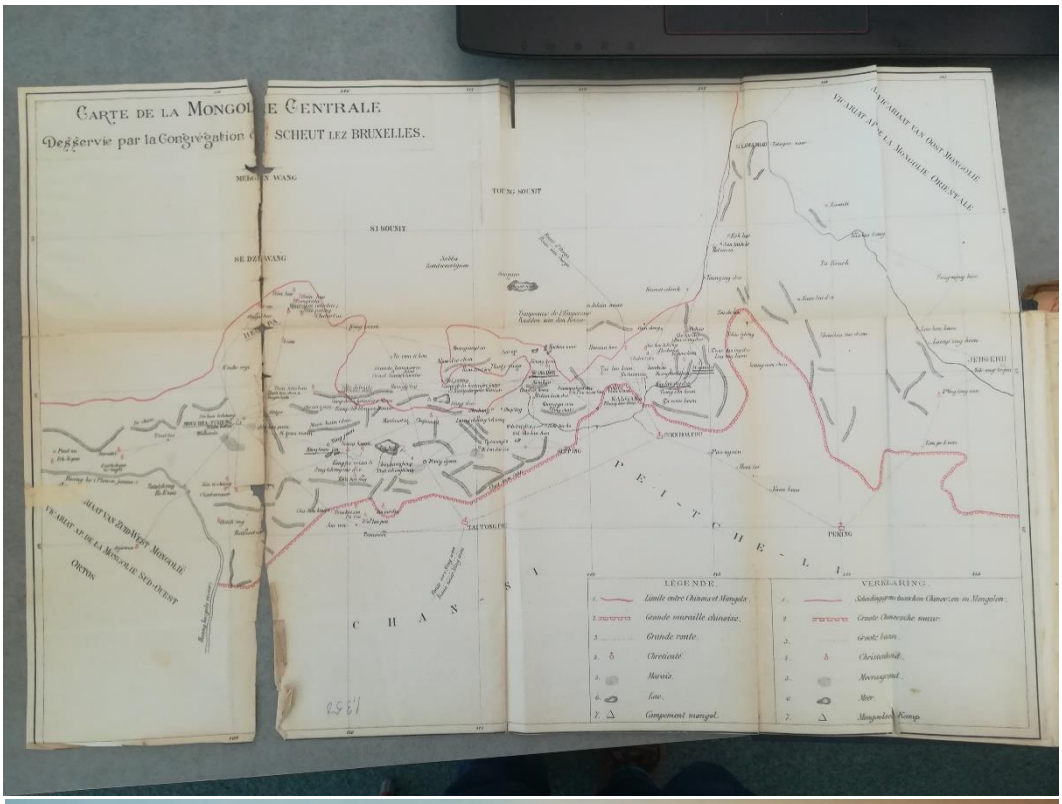
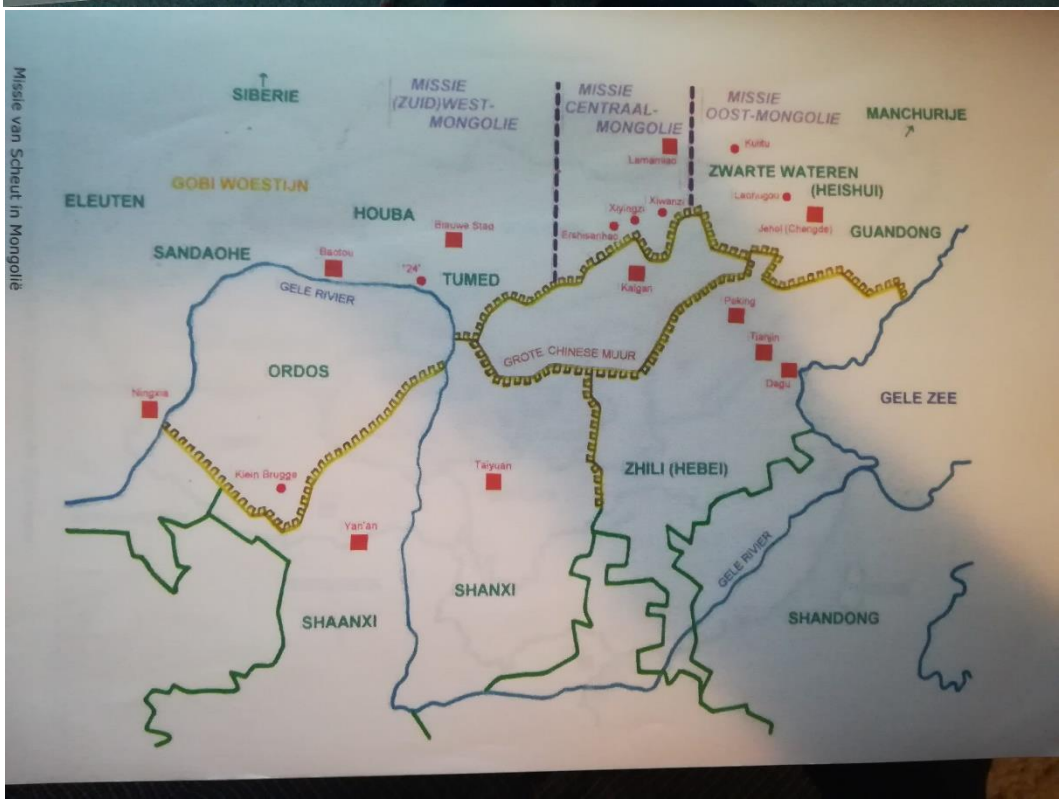
Appendix:

I. Throughout this thesis, there is frequently referred to Chinese provinces, regions or cities. In order to provide an accurate account, this illustrated map from 1820 has been included with the Qing provincial administration.[254]

[254] Jiaqing Emperor Qing dynasty map, <http://dragonsarmory.blogspot.com/2018/04/qing-qianlong-emperors-armor.html> [accessed 26-12-2019].

I. Two maps, made by the missionaries, to provide geographical clarity concerning the region. The first concerns a detailed map of the vicariate of central-Mongolia, published in 'Missiën in China en Congo'. The second map is derived from Knipschild book *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, due to the lack of a maps showing the general division of the Mongolian vicariates.[255]





[255] Knipschild, *Ferdinand Hamer 1840-1900*, p. V.

II. Below a present-day map of the Gansu province is shown. Unfortunately, I have not come across an accurate historical maps from the Gansu region. This map however serves as a geographical aid in understand where the missionaries operated. Present-day Wuwei (武威) used to bear the name Liangzhou (凉州), where the Scheut mission had its apostolic center. The Scheut missionaries during the 1890-1900 period were stretched throughout the province, residing in present-day Zhangye (张掖), Lanzhou (兰州), Linxia (临夏) etc.[256]

[256] Present day map of Gansu: <https://www.chinadiscovery.com/gansu-tours/maps.html> [accessed, 25/12/2019].

III. A rare picture found in ‘Missiën in China en Congo’ portraying the Scheut missionaries in Gansu. It was taken after the division of the Gansu vicariate into a Northern and Southern vicariate in 1908. The figures are, from left to right, sitting: Kamiel Coppieters, Frans Stappers, Mgr. Hubertus Otto, Lieven van Ostade, Ivo Lauwaert. Standing: Albert De Smedt, Eugene Pinel, Henri Verberne, Emiel Heiremans, Jozef Essens, Cyriel Costenoble, Karel Rooms, C. Florent Vereecke, Albert Selosse, Louis Schram, Norbert Depuydt, Alfons de Smedt.[257]

[257] Verhelst*, Scheut vroeger en nu*, p. 177.

IV. The image below, derived from ‘Scheut vroeger en nu 1862-1987’, shows the original members of the first group that went towards Mongolia, including the founder Theophile Verbist and Ferdinand Hamer.

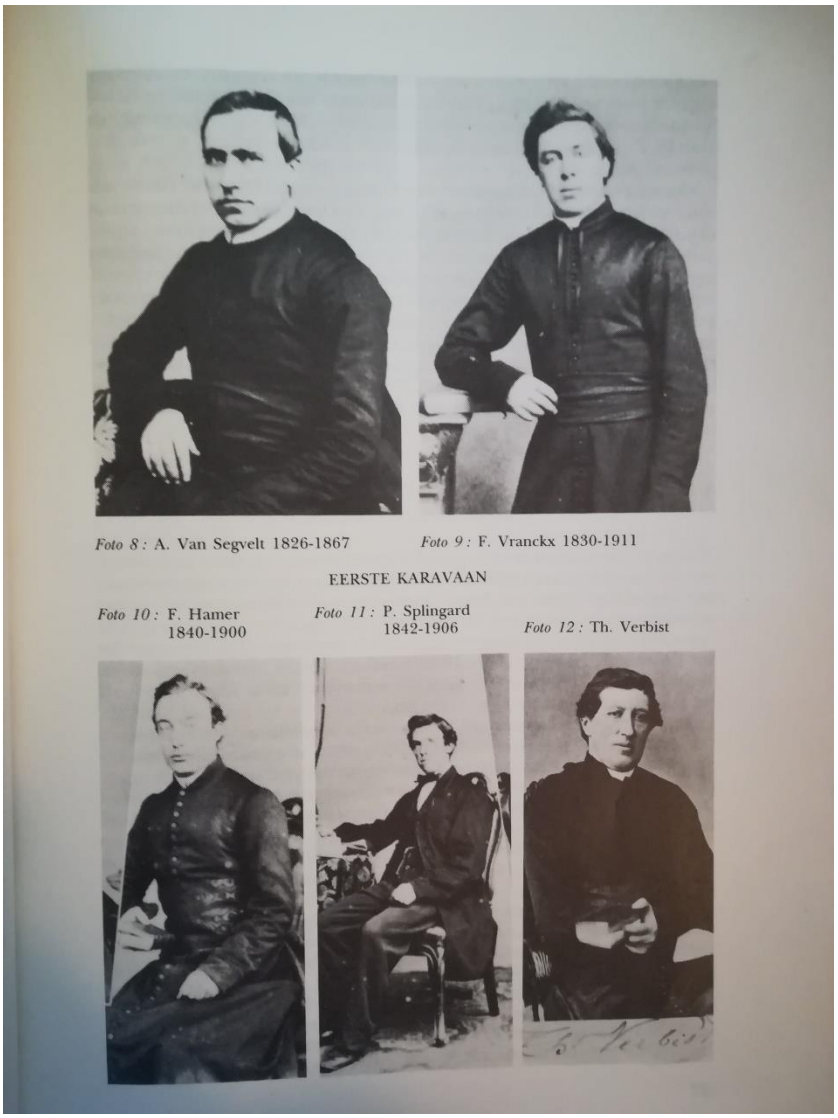


Foto 8 : A. Van Segvelt 1826-1867

Foto 9 : F. Vranckx 1830-1911

EERSTE KARAVAAN

Foto 10 : F. Hamer 1840-1900

Foto 11 : P. Splingard 1842-1906

Foto 12 : Th. Verbist

V. A sketch of one an apostolic residency established by the congregation of Scheut in central-Mongolia. It will provide an image through which the entire Scheut mission has to be observed. In many aspects, their mission did not resemble Europeans images. Rather, their possessions formed a syncretic mix of Christian elements in a Chinese environment.