Exporting Flemish Gothic architecture to China: meaning and context of the churches of Shebiya (Inner Mongolia) and Xuanhua (Hebei) built by missionary-architect Alphonse De Moerloose in 1903-1906

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Introduction

The Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1901 against foreign Western imperialism and Christianity is a pivotal moment in China’s history1. The uprising culminated in the famous siege of the Legation quarter and the Beitang Cathedral in Beijing, and ended with the victory of the Eight-Nations Alliance in August 1900. The Boxer Protocol of 7 September 1901 brought peace to the country, but was a severe punishment for the Chinese state and accelerated the decline of the Qing dynasty. Outside Beijing, the rebellion had been particularly violent in the provinces of Shanxi and Inner Mongolia, where missionaries and native Christians were massacred as well as many churches burned. From then on, the Mission in China not only boasted more martyrs, but could also rebuild churches with indemnity money and make its power visible in the public space.

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The introduction of the architectural work of Alphonse De Moerloose C.I.C.M., a Flemish Scheutist missionary who developed considerable building activity in northern China in the post-Boxer era. Two relatively unknown historical studies from 1968 and 1994 have sketched De Moerloose’s biography, and concluded that only a few of his Gothic Revival churches had survived the Chinese Civil War of 1947-1949 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Fieldwork carried out in March 2010 and May 2011 allowed us to develop a specific architectural approach to his two best-preserved buildings. The churches of Xuanhua (Hebei Province) and Shebiya (Inner Mongolia) were built simultaneously between 1903 and 1906, for French Lazarist and Belgian Scheutist missionaries respectively (figs 1-2). At first sight, they look like Flemish Gothic Revival churches from the second half of the 19th century: the Shebiya church is a simple and effective village church, while the Xuanhua church is a more elaborate and prestigious urban affair. Combining the analysis of the material sources with archival images and letters from the recently better valorised archives of the Scheutists in Leuven, sheds new light on De Moerloose’s work. Thanks to the literature from the two last decades about missions in China and Gothic Revival architecture in Belgium, the remarkable career of this exceptional missionary-architect will be better contextualized, and the meaning of the style he developed beyond the Great Wall of China will be unravelled.

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2 The education of a Belgian middle-class Catholic architect

Alphonse Frédéric De Moerloose was born in Gentbrugge, a commune on the outskirts of Ghent, on 12 January 1858. He was the tenth and last child of Jean-Baptiste De Moerloose and Marie-Thérèse De Jaeger, a Catholic, French-speaking middle-class family. His father was a mason who became a contractor and even rose to alderman responsible for public works in Gentbrugge. The De Moerlooses were intimately bound up with the building sector in the industrial city of Ghent and the province of East Flanders: two of Alphonse’s brothers, Gustave and Théodore, were also contractors, as was his brother-in-law Edouard Van Herrewege. Alphonse’s elder sister Camille married architect Ferdinand de Noyette, after whose death she married his brother Modeste de Noyette. The latter was a prominent Gothic Revival architect who designed civic and religious buildings in Flanders, and who undoubtedly influenced the young Alphonse. The family was also devoutly Catholic: Alphonse became a Scheutist missionary, his sister Coralie belonged to the Third Order of St Francis, and three of their nephews also became clerics.

8 Jean-Baptiste De Moerloose (1812-1886); Marie-Thérèse De Jaeger (1813-1889).

9 Ferdinand de Noyette (1838-1870) built amongst other the Neo-Gothic churches of St. Simon and Judas at Gentbrugge (1868-1872), and the St. Goriks at Haaltert (1870-1872).

10 Modeste de Noyette (1847-1923) built amongst other the Neo-Gothic churches of St. Vincent at Eeklo (1878-1883), St. Simon and Judas at Gentbrugge (1868-1872), St. Joseph at Aalst (1868-1908), St. Martin at Ronse (1891-1896), St. Anthony of Padua at Eeklo (1903-1906), and St. Martin at Arlon (1907-1914); see: Van Loo (ed.) 2003, 257.

11 Another sister of Alphonse, Cécile De Moerloose, had married Edmond Meuleman who was the brother of Brice Meuleman S.J. (1862-1924), Archbishop of Calcutta from 1902 to 1924.
When Alphonse joined the Scheutists in October 1881, he was a mere 23 years old yet had already made several architectural designs. Two month before, on 7 August 1881, he had obtained the first prize in the fifth year of his architectural studies at St Luke’s School in Ghent\textsuperscript{12}. At that time, the architecture course at St Luke’s consisted of seven years of evening or weekend lessons. During the day, Alphonse almost certainly worked in his father’s company. After four years, St Luke’s students had learnt drawing, analysing elements of architecture and furniture, studying existing model buildings, and some theory (geometry, perspective, materials, etc.). During the next three years, the students who specialised in architecture learned design in the studio. The most gifted students were allowed to progress to the eighth year, which culminated in the ‘Great Prize’. The school also offered painting, sculpture and decorative arts, always based on medieval and national models. Alphonse De Moerloose completed the basic training as well as the first year of design. The programme for that year comprised: “Projects after detailed programme: houses and rural churches, villas, farms, schools, small railway stations, detailed estimate, various orders. Rendering with wash drawing, pencil and ink. Theory: history of our national monuments, schedule of conditions, various contracts, stone carving”\textsuperscript{13}. In 1881 Alphonse had reached this level and had obtained the first prize of his year with a design for a farmstead\textsuperscript{14}. In the following years he would learn to design more elaborate buildings (castles, large churches, hospitals, covered markets, etc.), develop technical knowledge (using metal in construction, foundations, etc.), delve into comparative styles, and integrate monumental painting, sculpture and ornament in architecture.

Besides learning professional skills, Alphonse De Moerloose had been immersed in the spirit of the St Luke’s School, which was ‘ultramontane’\textsuperscript{15}, meaning that it promoted the world view of a Catholic society against the dominating secularisation and Liberalism in Belgium. Around 1880, three main issues marked the political and social debates in highly industrialised Belgium. Firstly, the tensions between Catholics and anticlerical Liberals about the role of Church and State in education culminated in the Schoolstrijd, a major school funding controversy (1878-1884). From 1884, the Catholics would rule Belgium with an absolute

\textbf{FIG. 2} Church of Shebiya, built by Alphonse De Moerloose in 1904-1905 (© THOC, May 2011).

\textsuperscript{12} KADOC, Archives St. Lucas School of Ghent, prijsboek, p. 42: “7 Augustus 1881. Uitdeling der prijzen aan de leerlingen der Tekenschool van St. Lucas (…) 5de jaar – 1e jaar van Compositie – Het programma van den kampstrijd was een ontwerp voor het bouwen eener hofstede. De 1ste prijs is behaald geworden door Mr. Alphonse De Moerloose [sic]. Twee 2de prijzen zijn ook toegewezen aan Mm Edouard Dubois en Prosper Van Caillie. 1ste Accessit Mr Van Wassenhove en Gustaaf Vanderlinden”.

\textsuperscript{13} From the programme by Brother Marès-Joseph, presented at the London Exhibition of 1884, reproduced in Wouters 1988, 208; Dujardin 2007, 276.

\textsuperscript{14} Six of his plans were exhibited in Brussels. Catalogue 1882, 15, no 13: “J. De Moerloose” [sic].

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Ultramontanism’ is a Roman Catholic trend asserting the superiority of the Pope’s authority over all other hierarchies.
majority until 1914. Secondly, the issue of the rights and status of the working classes would lead to the foundation of the Belgian Socialist Party (1885) and later to the Catholic answer, the papal encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). Thirdly, at the outset of the Flemish Movement, a new Flemish intelligentsia increasingly contested the monopoly of the French-speaking elite in cultural and political matters.

St Luke’s School had been founded in Ghent in 1862, but only gained a level of notability from the mid 1870s thanks to the combined efforts of the ultramontane capitalist Count Joseph de Hemptinne, the Catholic artist Baron Jean-Baptiste Bethune, and the art pedagogue Brother Marés-Joseph De Pauw of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (F.S.C.)16. They developed an educational model that went radically against the classic model of the Beaux-Arts academies, and promoted medieval art based on archaeological knowledge, especially the national variants of Gothic art, as the sole paradigm for a modern Christian society17. Like medieval knights, the St Luke students were trained to ‘become soldiers of Christ and to make a sacred war for the triumph of the Realm of Christ with pencil, chisel and brush’. This rather radical ideology was based on the art and moral theory of Pugin, which was widely known in Belgium thanks to a French translation published in Bruges in 185018.

At the time when Alphonse De Moerloose studied at St Luke’s (1876-1881), the school was still entirely under the artistic

18 Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852); Pugin 1841a; Pugin 1841b; King 1850. See also: Brooks 1999, 233-246; Hill 2006.
and ultramontane ideological control of Baron Bethune and Brother Marès-Joseph. The St Luke’s movement was expanding and new schools were being founded in Tournai (1877), Lille (1878), Liège (1880) and Brussels (1882). In Ghent, Auguste Van Assche had directed the architectural design studio since 1867. This prolific Neo-Gothic and very Puginesque architect influenced Alphonse De Moerloose, and it is possible that the latter did an internship at Van Assche’s agency, like most students who were in the design phase of their studies. Van Assche also published monographs on the churches he restored and was responsible for the illustration of the journal published by the St Luke’s movement. The students certainly visited the great works of their masters in the area of Ghent, such as the Beguinage of Sint-Amandsberg (1873-1875) (fig. 3), the Poortakker Beguinage in Ghent (1873-1874), the town hall of Sint-Niklaas (1876-1878), the pilgrimage basilica of Oostakker (1876-1877), and the St Joseph church in Ghent (1880-1883). Visits to the St Vincent church at Eeklo (1878-1883), built by Alphonse’s brother-in-law Modeste de Noyette, the remarkable works of Bethune at the abbey of Maredsous (1872-1890) (fig. 33) and the St Joseph church in Roubaix (1876-1878) (fig. 4) were also on the programme. Four other Ghent-born St Luke’s architects who were contemporaneous with Alphonse De Moerloose were Stephan Mortier, Jules Goethals, Pierre Langerock and Henri Geirnaert. They became renowned and contributed to diffusing St Luke Gothic Revival architecture across Belgium, as De Moerloose would do in China.

As a young man in the industrialised city of Ghent around 1880, Alphonse De Moerloose grew up in one of the most complex and exciting social, political and religious contexts of his time. His talent, combined with the excellent education and networks provided by St Luke’s School, promised him a brilliant architectural career. So why did he suddenly interrupt his studies, left his family and friends, and embraced the religious vocation of a missionary in Mongolia, one of the most remote places in the world?

### 3 The Scheutist missions in China

In October 1881, Alphonse De Moerloose entered the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He had developed a missionary vocation thanks to his friend Jeroom François, a young priest from Gentbrugge, who left for China in 1882 and died there in 1884. During his novitiate at the seminary, Alphonse received religious and theological training before being ordained priest on 7 June 1884. He made his religious vows in the chapel of Scheut on 6 February 1885, and nine days later he embarked on a ship for China from the port of Marseille.

In 1881, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (C.I.C.M.) was a new religious institute that had been founded less than twenty years earlier. The Flemish priest Théophile Verbit founded the congregation in 1862 – that is to say just after China opened up to religions and missionaries according to the ‘Unequal treaty’ of 1861 – with the aim of evangelising remote parts across China. De Moerloose was already familiar with China through his friend Jeroom François. Verbit’s intentions were not only to spread the faith but also to engage in missionary work, particularly in remote areas where the presence of foreign missionaries was limited.

As a missionary in China, De Moerloose faced many challenges, from the cultural and religious differences to the political and social conditions. However, he remained committed to his vocation and worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel. His contributions to the architecture of China, particularly in the design of churches, have left a lasting legacy and are a testament to his dedication and skill.
of China. In 1865 the Sacred Congregation (*Propaganda Fide*), charged with the spread of Catholicism in non-Catholic countries, assigned Mongolia to the Scheut Fathers: in December of that year Verbist and four companions reached China\(^{28}\). Because of the weather conditions, difficulties with integration and typhus epidemics, the initial stages were very tough for the missionaries. Verbist died in 1868, aged 44. Although virtually nothing was known in Belgium about the real conditions of the Mongolian mission, the heroism and the zeal of the pioneers, ‘with the help of the Divine Providence’, motivated new vocations, especially among the Flemish and southern Dutch middle classes.

The Scheutist missionaries spread the Christian gospel in Mongolia for ninety years, a period which historians divide into several phases\(^{29}\). The early period, from 1865 to 1887, was pioneering in a territory measuring five million square kilometres − ca 170 times the size of Belgium. In 1883, the initial apostolic vicariate – i.e. a diocese in mission countries – of Mongolia\(^{30}\) was divided into the three apostolic vicariates of Central Mongolia, South-West Mongolia (including Ordos) and Eastern Mongolia. In 1878, the Scheutists had already been given the responsibility for the newly created apostolic vicariate of Gansu (Kan-su). During the same years, the Congregation organised its houses in Belgium: a motherhouse and novices’ building in Scheut, and a seminary in Leuven. In 1888 the Congregation adopted definitive constitutions and from then on, Scheutist missionaries were also sent to the Congo. At that time the Congregation counted 79 Scheut Fathers – of which 67 were in China – and 48 novices. In February 1889, the monthly journal *Missions en Chine et au Congo*, later *Missions de Scheut*, appeared, which would continue to be published until 1939\(^{31}\). It is worth noting that the cover of the first issue (fig. 5) was designed in pure St Luke style\(^{32}\).

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\(^{30}\) Created in 1840 and ruled by French Lazarists from 1840 to 1865.

\(^{31}\) The journal evolved: MCC 1889-1907; MCCP 1908-1913; MS 1914-1939.

\(^{32}\) Dujardin 2007.
As we have seen, Central and South-West Mongolia suffered greatly as a result of the Boxers: thousands of Chinese Christians were massacred, one Scheutist bishop and seven fathers died as martyrs in 1900 and two others in 1901. Many churches were sacked. Evidently, this was a turning point in Scheutist history in China. Propaganda focusing on the martyrs aroused new vocations and helped rebuild the mission. The First World War created severe difficulties for the Scheutists and other missions in China and throughout the world. One of the consequences was the redistribution of the church provinces in 1920 (fig. 6): Gansu was left to other religions and the three former Mongolian apostolic vicariates were reorganised into five apostolic vicariates (Xiwanzi/Chongli, Jehol, Datong, Sui-Yuan and Ningxia). Scheutists also had houses in Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin. In 1922, there were 120 Scheutist missionaries in China, helped by 46 Chinese priests. Another major post-war change was the new dynamic implemented by the mission policy from Rome. The mission encyclicals *Maximium illud* and *Rerum Ecclesiae*, issued in 1919 and 1926 respectively, stressed the need for local clergy and had consequences for religious art and architecture. As we will see in the last part of this article, Archbishop Celso Costantini, Apostolic Delegate to China from 1922 to 1933, and the Belgian (later Chinese) priest Vincent Lebbe were major players in the development of a Chinese Roman Catholic Church.

In the meantime, China had turned a decisive page of its history. The educational reforms of 1905, the fall of the Empire and the birth of the Republic of China in 1911-1912, as well as the birth of new political parties – Kuomintang in 1912, Communist Party in 1921 – led to instability. From 1927, the Nationalists ruled the country and steered China further on the path to modernity. War against Japan divided China from 1937 to 1945. The Japanese army occupied part of the country, among other areas most of the provinces where the Scheutists lived. In this troubled context, missionary activities were more and more restricted and ended dramatically during the Civil War, when the Communists founded the People’s Republic of China. From 1946 to 1955, churches were closed and Western missionaries gradually expelled from China. The presence of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in China lasted ninety years.

4 De Moerloose’s architectural work in China

In 1885, Alphonse De Moerloose debarked in China as a missionary, not as an architect. Like most arriving Scheut Fathers of his generation, his knowledge of China was basic and largely based on stories of heroic missionaries who brought the Good News of Christ to the steppes of Mongolia, saved and baptised many orphans, and died at an early age. Alphonse chose the Chinese name He Geng Bo. At that time, nobody would have believed that he would stay in China for 44 years, achieve impor-

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**Fig. 6** General map of China in the 1920’s with the territories allocated to the Scheutists (after *Missions de Scheut* 1925, 172).
tant architectural work, and only come back to Belgium in 1929, aged 71 (fig. 7). For four decades, Alphonse De Moerloose was an eyewitness to the evolution of China and the Church in China. As we can deduce from his partially preserved correspondence,38 he tried to adapt his personal life to the evolving circumstances and find a balance between his religious vocation and his architectural skills, his engagement as an active missionary and his desire for a contemplative life, and, above all, between his Western Catholic identity and the impenetrable Chinese society, culture and people.

In 1885 De Moerloose was sent to the apostolic vicariate of Gansu, created by Rome in 1878 and entrusted to the Scheutists 39. After having spent a year at the residence of Xixiang and having learnt the basics of the Chinese language, he worked in several rural and urban parishes40. Although he did not have any major architectural involvement during his first years in Gansu, there is evidence that he observed Chinese architecture and also complained about the poor quality of the churches he visited 41. In 1893, he was confronted with the need of a new church for his parish of Sanshilipu, and had the occasion to design a building in St Luke’s style 42. His artistic activity in Gansu, however, seems to have been limited to designing secondary buildings and church furniture 43.

The appointment of Jerome Van Aertselaer at the head of the apostolic vicariate of Central Mongolia in 1898 would reorient De Moerloose’s missionary career. Van Aertselaer, who had been Superior General of the Scheutists from 1888 to 1898, is considered the “second founder of Scheut” 44. He returned to Central Mongolia with great ambitions that included building works. Therefore Alphonse De Moerloose left Gansu in February 1899 and moved to Xiwanzi,45 the headquarters of Central Mongolia’s apostolic vicariate, and began work on a great seminary with a chapel and a new residence for the vicar apostolic. By a combination of circumstances, the Boxer Rebellion that destroyed many churches took place during the same years (1899-1900). Xiwanzi escaped to the Boxers thanks to the protection of Western militaries and became a symbol of the Scheutist mission in China. Because of Van Aertselaer’s Eurocentric views and his predilection for medieval styles, De Moerloose had the opportunity to develop an unexpected architectural activity. From the correspondence between the two men, 46 it is possible to follow part of the architect’s life and work: travels through an immense

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38 So far 110 letters of Alphonse De Moerloose dating from 1885 to 1929 have been found; 100 are held at KADOC, C.I.C.M., the rest is in the family. See note 46.
39 The vicar apostolic was Ferdinand Hamer C.I.C.M. (1840-1900), one of the first companions of Verbist in 1865. Hamer died as a martyr of the Boxers. Van Overmeire 2008, 244.
40 According to Van Hecken 1968, 163: Liang-tch’ou (October 1886), Sin-tch’eng (September 1889), K’ing-iang-fou, Ma-lin and San-che-li-p’ou (from March 1888). See also De Moerloose 1896.
41 Sanshilipu (San-che-li-p’ou): De Moerloose 1891; De Moerloose 1891; Aubin 1893.
43 Van Hecken 1968, 164-165. As for example in a letter with sketches, dated 20 April 1892 (KADOC, C.I.C.M. archives, F.Bis.I.De Moerloose).
44 Jerome Van Aertselaer C.I.C.M. (1845-1924), had been director of the seminary at Xiwanzi in Mongolia (1873-1885), visited Congo with the first Scheut mission in Africa (1892-1894), and had rebuilt the motherhouse of Scheut. Van Overmeire 2008, 504. “De tweede stichter van Scheut”: Knipschild 2008, 196-199.
45 Xiwanzi (Si wan tze), presently Hebei province. See: Rondelez 1938; Dieu 1944, 65.
46 Held at KADOC, C.I.C.M. archives, P.I.1.1.2.3.1.4.14: 1901 (5 letters), 1902 (8 letters), 1903 (26 letters), 1904 (12 letters), 1905 (2 letters), 1906 (5 letters), 1907 (1 letter), 1908 (9 letters), 1909 (5 letters), 1910 (6 letters).
country, sojourns in Beijing and Tianjin to buy building materials, visits to building works, requests from Scheutists and other missionaries for plans, the permanent financial difficulties, and the caprices of the climate.

Creating a complete catalogue of De Moerloose’s oeuvre is a challenge. The first main reason for this is the difficulty of checking whether the buildings are still extant. Travelling in deep mainland China, especially in some parts of Hebei province and in the autonomous province of Inner Mongolia, is not always easy. Identifying places can be an insurmountable issue, because the Chinese spelling system has changed. The second main reason is the lack of archival sources: except for the aforementioned letters and some photos, the archives of the Scheutist Congregation at Leuven do not conserve plans and specific building archives. An important part of the archives of the Scheutist Congregation in China was lost or destroyed when the missionaries left China in 1947–1954. Archives of other missionary congregations are currently less accessible. The third main reason is specific to the furniture De Moerloose designed, which is an important part of his work. Furniture is less well documented in the photographic archive and during fieldwork it was noted that in all cases the original church furniture has been lost. Therefore, the list of works in the appendix of this article must be considered a work in progress.

Part of De Moerloose’s work has contributed to building the image of the Scheutist mission in China. Small and medium-sized parish churches (fig. 8), schools and orphanages, residences for the missionaries, houses for catechumens etc., answered the growing needs of the average Scheutist settlement. The parish church of Shebiya, discussed later in this article, is the best-preserved example of such a church. It was built after the same plans as the church of Gaojiayingzi, the village where De Moerloose lived from 1903 to 1905 (fig. 14). Perhaps his most important works for the Scheutists were the great seminaries of Xiwanzi and Datong, both demolished, and the college of Nanhaoqian, partially preserved. The two seminary building complexes consisted of a main chapel and several wings of at least three storeys. The typical St Luke style, the brick construction with stepped gables, and the decoration system with ‘Bruges bays’ gave these buildings a ‘familiar resemblance’, as if they had been directly imported from Flanders (fig. 9). The main seminary of the Congregation at Scheut near Brussels – where all the missionaries were educated – had been built in the same style, in phases from 1890 to 1896. In China, the seminaries were education and training centres for native candidate priests and the teachers were European missionaries. Therefore, seminaries were important places of cultural exchange but as both the buildings and the education programmes show, until the early 1920s the model was predominantly Western.

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47 Current research by the authors goes beyond the works of Van Hecken 1968, Van Hecken 1970, and Ulenaers 1994, by developing a specific architectural approach, doing fieldwork, exploiting new archives, and benefiting from recent literature.


49 Trappists, held at the abbey of Sept-Fons (France), the motherhouse of Yangjiaping; Lazarists, held in Paris; Jesuits, held in Vaures (France).

50 ‘Scheut country’ (het Land van Scheut), an expression used by Raskin 1994, passim (a.o. 242).

51 Dieu 1944, 45: “La plupart de ces bourgs avaient de belles églises bâties par le P. Demoerloose [sic]. La vie de piété était profonde; partout les écoles de garçons et de filles étaient bien organisées et régulièrement fréquentées”.

52 The Bruges bay is typical of Flemish late medieval brick architecture: the façade is marked with a system of vertical pilasters including the windows of several floors of the same bay and ending with an arch, which is sometimes elaborate.

53 MCC 1901, 284-289.

54 From the early 1920s, Rome launched the inculturation programmes: Soetens 1997, 68–71 and 85–87. Datong (1921) was the first regional seminary opened in China.
The reputation of Alphonse De Moerloose rapidly exceeded the boundaries of the Scheut mission, and other religious congregations from neighbouring vicariates asked him to design churches. During the same years, between 1903 and 1906, he designed the great church of Xuanhua for the Lazarist missionaries (Congregation of the Mission) and the abbey church of Yangjiaping for Trappist monks (Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance) (fig. 10). The former is the best-preserved example of a monumental church and will be discussed later in this article; the latter has been virtually completely demolished. De Moerloose’s architecture, in a pure Western medieval style, corresponded with the image the missions in China wanted to affirm at the time following the Boxer Rebellion.

Because De Moerloose was first and foremost a religious person and a missionary, he had more and more difficulty combining his architectural work, pastoral tasks and personal spiritual life. In Yangjiaping, he discovered the quality of contemplative monastic life and felt attracted by the abbey in a remote valley. Some Scheutists, opting for contemplation after having been active missionaries, entered the Trappist abbey of Yangjiaping. De Moerloose never wanted to become a monk, but wished to have his studio within the abbey precinct. From his letters there is evidence of growing tension between him and his Scheutist superiors, who assigned more pastoral work to him in the remote mission of Huangyangtan. Nevertheless, he succeeded in building the cathedral of Yongpingfu for the Lazarists in 1908-1910. After long discussions and deep disappointment, Alphonse De Moerloose left the Scheutist Congregation and Inner Mongolia in December 1909. He became incardinated in the apostolic vicariate of Beijing, which meant he was dependent on the Lazarist bishop, and lived with the Trappists at Yangjiaping. He was by then 51 years old and his physical and mental health were in decline.
During the following years, he found a new balance between working in his studio at Yangjiaping during the winter months and travelling to building works during the more clement seasons. His abode house was like the cell of an eremite, containing a studio and a workshop for making models. Between 1910 and the early 1920’s De Moerloose built several great Gothic brick churches, in particular for the Lazarists in the apostolic vicariate of Beijing. In a letter to his brother dated 1914 he says: “I am the architect of the missions and always have plans to design. Now the building works have started, I must travel to all the sites and check on the works. This is not an easy task because all the workers are Chinese, but in the end it works.”65. The churches of Nihewan in 191266 and Shuangshu in 191767 were considered his best works68. Shortly before Archbishop Costantini implemented the policy of integrating Chinese culture into the Catholic Church in China, De Moerloose designed some of his major Gothic churches. In a letter to a friend dated 28 August 1914, he mentions that he is building the cathedrals of Zhengdingfu69 and Fuzhou70, a great Gothic cathedral and two churches in Shanghai, as well as a new wing for the Trappist abbey of Yangjiaping.71 About the Yangtzee-poo church in Shanghai,72 he specifies that it is like a “real Flemish parish church” (parochiekerk, echt Vlaamsch).73 Quite impressive for a 66-year old missionary who had recovered from serious health problems.

The last church Alphonse De Moerloose designed should have been the pinnacle of his career.74 In 1924, he was asked to design a new pilgrimage basilica of Our Lady Help of the Christians, on top of Sheshan, on the outskirts of Shanghai. The first church, built by the Jesuits in 1868, became a Marian pilgrimage destination. The bishops attending the Shanghai Synod of 1924 decided to dedicate China to Our Lady and therefore revived the pilgrimage with a new construction project. De Moerloose’s first design, in pure St Luke’s Gothic style, was rejected. He adapted the style to a kind of medieval eclecticism, mixing elements from the early Romanesque to the late Gothic styles (figs. 11 and 18). This project was accepted and built from 1925 to 1935, using reinforced concrete for the vaults and the roof structures. Father Dinitz, a Portuguese Jesuit, led the works. De Moerloose never saw the Sheshan completed, however, as he left China in 1929.

In 1928 Alphonse De Moerloose received the cross ‘For Church and Pope’ (Pro Ecclesia et Pontificio), a prestigious papal award, from the hands of Archbishop Costantini75. In a way this was ironic, because the Apostolic Delegate to China clearly promoted an art and architecture that was different from the St Luke’s Gothic style that had underpinned all of De Moerloose’s work. As we shall see in the last part of this article, De Moerloose’s radical opinion in the debate about Christian art in China attracted more and more criticism.

5 The rural parish church of Shebiya (Chabernoor)

Shebiya, the former Chabernoor,73 is a village located ca 70 km south of Hohhot (Huhehaote – the Blue City), the present capital city of the autonomous province of Inner Mongolia. Shebiya is located in the plain of Toumet, a flat and open landscape favorable to agriculture. The parish church of Shebiya designed by Alphonse De Moerloose was built in 1904-1905 and escaped the waves of destruction of churches that raged from 1947 to 1949 and from 1966 to 1976 (fig. 12). It was closed from 1966 to 1980.75 The village is a typical rural mission settlement, of which the Scheutists founded and developed many in the region. The strategy of the Scheutists consisted of buying land, building water management works, and distributing plots to the converted families.76 Thanks to educational advantages and matrimonial policy encouraged by the missionaries, Catholic families soon formed separate communities within existing villages or moved to new places where Catholic villages were founded. No less than 95 villages depended on the mission of Chabernoor, from where the missionaries thus controlled a vast territory.77

Churches were the most important buildings of such settlements: their crosses expressed the religious identity of the inhabitants and above all the success of the mission.78 Near the church of a mission village like Chabernoor there was always a house for...
Fig. 11 Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan at Shanghai, designed by Alphonse De Moerloose in 1924 (© THOC, June 2011).

Fig. 12 Church of Shebiya, built by Alphonse De Moerloose in 1904-1905, viewed from the west (© THOC, May 2011).
the priest (the ‘residence’), a Lourdes grotto, a small school, and an orphanage of the Holy Childhood (Sainte-Enfance). The latter was an important part of the Scheutists’ apostolate. Because of the grinding poverty of the people, babies, especially girls, were often abandoned at birth. These were saved, baptised and educated by native Catholic semi-religious auxiliaries known as ‘virgins’ and, once grown into adulthood, would marry Catholic men and found Catholic families in the Catholic villages. It is precisely those villages that the Boxers attacked around 1900 because they were considered expressions of Western imperialism, but also because they were prosperous. Scheutist church fathers organised the defence: they built earth walls around the villages, and bought good rifles and pistols. Such was a typical missionary way of life. From 1899 onwards, the church of Chabernoor and Erchejiazi (the former Eulchekiatze) was an orphanage for about 60 children. In a letter to his superior dated 6 October 1903, Father Alphonse De Moerloose complains he is overworked and envied among the missionaries.

In 1900, the Toumet region was completely ravaged. In Chabernoor, 310 Christians were massacred and while about 1500 escaped death, the church and all the houses of Christians were demolished. The Scheutist mission journal published pictures of the ruined church and residence (fig. 13) that attest to the violence of the destruction. Missionaries Jozef Arckens and Henri Van Damme rekindled life in the devastated village and region, but conditions were very harsh as everything was lacking: tools, seeds, clothes and housing. Rebuilding the church, therefore, was not a priority. On 9 November 1903, two monuments commemorating the martyrs were erected between the villages of Chabernoor and Erchejiazi (the former Eulchekiatze). Over the following decades, Chabernoor developed its missionary activities with a school that counted about 100 boys in 1937 and an orphanage for about 60 children.

In a letter to his superior dated 6 October 1903, Father Alphonse De Moerloose complains he is overworked and enumerates all the churches he is asked plans for. Among other
things he mentions that Father Hustin asked him for plans for a new church in Chabernoor44. Father Arthur Hustin, the new parish priest of Chabernoor, had fought courageously against the Boxers and acquired the status of a hero45. In February 1904, he was still waiting for the plans and became nervous because he had to organise the works. Interestingly, the expected plans were in fact copies of the plans of the church of Gaojiayingzi which De Moerloose was building at that moment46. Chabernoor is again mentioned in a to-do list of the overworked architect in March 190447. Two months later, Father Hustin had run out of patience and a long letter outlines the moves he made to obtain the plans48. This letter gives us precious information about the organisation of the building works. Around a hundred workers arrived in the village to build the church: brick makers, masons and stone carvers. The first group built a kiln and began to make bricks, but the latter two needed plans and clearly defined tasks to be able to start work. The key person at the site seems to have been the foreman, named Master Yao (Yao shi fu). Trained by the architect, he had already built the church of Gaojiayingzi; he knew the measurements and was able to give instructions to the stone carvers49. Yao thus had a crucial role as the ‘translator’ of the architect’s project into a real building, made by native workers and craftsmen. We could consider him an agent of cultural transfer, which certainly was a challenge in a country where the building traditions were completely different. From a letter dated 22 May 1904 we may deduce that the missionary-architect eventually produced the plans and that work could commence50. He specifies that “it will be a convenient church, if the instructions are followed”, which means that Father De Moerloose would not come to Shebiya and entrusted the coordination to his foreman Yao (fig. 14). At that time the architect lived in Gaojiayingzi, was designing the college of Nanhaqoqian, and regularly had to visit the sites of the large urban church of Xuanhua and of the Trappist abbey church of Yangjiaping, both located in Hebei province.

Building a church was a challenge for the parish priest because the local community had to provide or buy the building materials, pay the salaries and feed the professional workers (masons, carpenters and carpenters). Finding bricks in a region where all the buildings were in adobe required firstly brick makers who would make the bricks on the spot, and secondly enough wood to fuel the kilns51. The metal sheets for the roofs had to be acquired in Shanghai or Tianjin and were transported by train52. If stone was used, like in Shebiya, good blocks had to be found in quarries and brought to the building site where they were carved. Missionaries gradually developed great experience, allowing them to build Western architecture with the raw materials available in China53.

The church stands in the middle of the village of Shebiya; in accordance with Chinese tradition, its main entrance is south-facing. A brick wall surrounds the church, the residence of the priest and a small field. Today, the only entrance gate is on the northern side of the enclosed area, in the axis of the choir, opening to the village’s dung heap (fig. 15). In other words, the visitor first encounters the sanctuary of the church, which is a straight chevet with a large round arched window, now blocked. Old photos however show that the church was built on a fenced terrace.

86 KADOC, C.I.C.M, F.I.A. 2.5.1, f.154-156. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aertselaer, 6 October 1903: “(…) si le P. R. Lemmens (procureur) est chargé de la reconstruction de l’église d’XXIV tsing ti (Ershishiquing) et me demande des plans. De même le T. R. Père Provincial pour Hang, baoou, ti; les R. P. Vonke pour Tsi. soumou et Hustin pour Sabernooor (…).”
91 Schmetz 1905, 155: “(…) cette année j’ai dû concentrer tous mes efforts à la reconstitution de Sapeul, (…). La besogne en perspective est effrayante, par manque d’argent d’abord, et puis parce que ces constructions en briques – on les veut ainsi pour la construction de deux nouvelles maisons et à l’achèvement de la Ste Enfance (église provisoire).”
92 KADOC, C.I.C.M, F.I.A. 2.5.1, f.154-156. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aertselaer, 13 April 1905, about the church of Gaojiayingzi: “(…) Il n’y a pas à craindre que le manque de tôles qui doivent arriver de Shanghai, retarder qui occasionnerait une interruption dans les travaux et exposeraient la charpente à la pluie et au soleil.”
93 Le missionnaire constructeur, 1896.
Fig. 14 The 'twin churches' of Gaojiayingzi (above) and Shebiya (under) just after completion, 1903-1905 (© KADOC, Archives C.I.C.M.).
and that the main entrance to the compound was on the southern side, in accordance with Chinese tradition. The images also show eastern and western entrances to the walled court around the church.

The design of the church is very simple. The plan consists of a nave of seven bays flanked with aisles and ending in a straight-ended sanctuary (fig. 16). At the southern end, the façade of the nave is not aligned with the aisles; there is no transept and no tower. The total interior length of the church measures 26 m and the width 11 m; the width off the nave is 5.5 m. The 4 m deep sanctuary is as wide as the nave but a little less high; a round chancel arch separates the sanctuary from the nave. Two rows of six square piers wearing round arches separate the nave and the aisles (fig. 17). Above the arches, the side walls of the nave consist of a reduced clerestory supporting a simple wooden hammer beam structure. The upper part of the saddle roof above the tie beam is closed with a ceiling. The aisles are covered with simple lean-to roofs of which the tie beams are visible. The aisles are 5.5 m high, the ceiling of the nave 8.45 m, and the arches of the nave 4.7 m. The walls are 47 cm thick and are supported with buttresses of the same width. Tie rods fixed with anchors reinforce each truss of the nave and of the aisles. On the top of the roof of the southern bay, a little open spire is surmounted with a cross. There is no longer a bell.

The main entrance to the church is in the centre of the southern façade and two side doors are located in the fourth bay of the aisles. A square sacristy is annexed to the eastern side of the sanctuary and traces of a symmetrical annex are visible on the western side. All the windows are round-arched but of different sizes: the chevet of the sanctuary has a large and high window, now blocked, and is lightened from the sides by two couples of small windows. The southern façade of the nave is pierced by three windows, the central being a little larger and higher. Each bay of the aisles has a narrow window, except for the fourth bay where two small windows are located above the lintels of the lateral doors. Fourteen tiny rectangular windows pierce the clerestory on each side. The brown painted framework of the windows and the doors appears to be original.
Fig. 17 Church of Shebiya, interior view from the south (© THOC, May 2011).

Fig. 18 Church of Shebiya, detail of the brickwork of the western façade (© THOC, May 2011).
This modular church is built with bricks measuring 29.5/30 cm x 14.2/14.5 cm x 6.4/6.5 cm, assembled in English bond. Inside, the walls are plastered and white-washed; outside, the visible brickwork is meticulously assembled. Following an economy of material, the thickness of the walls varies according to the function of the structural position: 1 brick around the windows, 1.5 brick for the plinth and pilasters on the outer side, and 3 bricks for the buttresses (fig. 18). At the top of the walls, a simple corbelled cornice gives the wall a continuous thickness of 1.5 brick, which is necessary to fix the wall plate of the timber structure. The only profile is a simple 45° chamfer. The use of stone is limited to the piers of the nave, having a square section with chamfered angles, and supporting rectangular capitals with simple astragal (fig. 19). The piers are painted, but the rough texture of the blocks suggests that the stone is a kind of hard sandstone. Blocks of the same dark brown stone are used as bases of the jambs of the main door and for the profiled corbels of the three doors. The lintels are of light yellow limestone. The pavement of the church has been renewed with rectangular tiles in various colours.

Like in most churches in China, the original furniture was lost during the Cultural Revolution and the new furniture is of poor quality. One old interior view gives us important indications about the furniture and the spatial division of the church (fig. 20). The walls are white-washed and the wooden furniture is in Gothic style. Originally, there were three altars in the church: the main altar with the tabernacle in the sanctuary, and two side altars, in the first bay of the aisles, dedicated to the Holy Heart of Jesus and to the Holy Virgin of Lourdes. A first communion rail was located between the first and the second bay of the nave, where the two steps of the sanctuary can still be seen. A second communion rail was located between the fourth and the fifth bay. The Gothic tracery decoration of the first communion rail was more elaborate than that of the second one. In accordance with gender separation in Chinese churches at the time of the Scheutists, men entered the church from the side doors and occupied the three northern bays of the nave close to the sanctuary, while women used the southern entrance and occupied the three southern bays of the nave and the wooden tribune of the first bay. A staircase located...
in the last bay of the western aisle leads to the tribune of which the wooden fence has been renewed. No baptistery has survived.

The honest, economical and well-built church of Shebiya reflects a basic type of Puginesque or St Luke parish church\(^98\). As has been said, Alphonse De Moerloose had first designed the plans for the church of Gaojiayingzi, a village in the mountains of Hebei province. This church has been demolished, but there are some surviving photographs and letters by the architect giving details of the building works in 1902 and 1903. Shebiya and Gaojiayingzi were identical in all respects except that the arches of the former are round and those of the latter were pointed (fig. 14).

6 The cathedral of Xuanhua (Suen hua fou)

In 1903, the Lazarists asked Alphonse De Moerloose to design plans for a great church in Xuanhua\(^99\) (fig. 21). This town is located in the province of Hebei, some 170 km north-west of Beijing, only 30 km from Zhangjiakou (Kalgan). Xuanhua initially belonged to the apostolic vicariate of Beijing that was ruled by the French Lazarists of the Congrégation des Missions\(^100\). The correspondence between Alphonse De Moerloose and his superior Jerome Van Aertselaer allows us to follow the chronology and learn about building practices\(^101\).

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98 The distribution of such a basic Puginesque type is fascinating. For example, the church of the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary at Ballyhooly (Cork), Ireland, built in 1867-1870 by architects George C. Ashlin and Edward Welby Pugin, is a twin of the churches of Shebiya and Gaojiayingzi (Irish Builder, 9, 1867, 110). More general: Hill 2006.

99 Numerous spellings: Suan hua (fou) / Suen hua (fou) / Suan hoa fou (fou) / Siuen hoa (fou) / Siouen-hao-fou / Suien hoa (fou) / Hsiuan-Hua-Fu / Sianhwa / Suanhwa (fou) / Suahnkwauf (Latin).

100 Planchet 1927. The two vicars apostolic of Northern Chi-Li (Beijing) involved in the building works at Xuanhua were: Pierre-Marie-Alphonse Favier C.M. (1837-1905), vicar apostolic from 1899 to 1905, and Stanislas-François Jarlin C.M. (1846-1933), vicar apostolic from 1905 to 1933.

101 Additional sources are held in the mission archives of the Lazarists in Paris, but these archives are not currently accessible.
The Salesian missioner Gustave Vanherseck, 103 parish priest of Xuanhua, made the first contact with the architect. On 5 February 1903, De Moerloose asked Monseigneur Van Aerselaer permission to work for another congregation in another province. 104 By the end of March the design was completed and submitted to the bishop of Beijing. 105 In all likelihood there was great enthusiasm and on the 7th of April the order was given to start work as soon as possible. 106 Because of the importance of the building, the architect often needed to visit the site and therefore required new authorisations from his superiors. Due to the climate, it was not possible to work during the long winter months, which meant maximum availability was required from the architect during the summer months in order to stimulate the workers. In letters dated 14th May and 17th June, De Moerloose is planning visits to Xuanhua to inspect the foundations. 107 This inspection was necessary because the Chinese foreman had pretended to have built a solid foundation with a few stones and a lot of mud. 108 At the same time the architect was designing the elevation. 109 The Lazarists were very pleased with his work, officially thanked his Schieutist superior for making him available, and also pleading to allow De Moerloose to design an abbey church for the Trappists of Yangjiaping. 110 He would go on to do. After several more visits, 111 the architect noted before the beginning of the winter that the work progressed well: the columns of the nave were already erected with stones that had been carved at Gaojiayingzi and transported to Xuanhua. 112 Over the winter the architect drew up further plans and prepared the work for the next season. 113 In a letter dated 9 March 1904, he says that work will start on the first day of the second Chinese moon, that designing the details of the stones is hard work, and that some building materials and tools are lacking and have to be bought in Beijing or Tianjin. 114 The beginning of the war between the Russians and the Japanese in February 1904 was a new cause for concern. 115 At the end of June, the architect mentions a long journey to all his building works in progress. 116 The letters do not contain information about Xuanhua from June 1904 until June 1906. At that time the architect writes that soon the work at Xuanhua would no longer require his presence: the great window of the main façade was nearly completed and he could leave instructions for the interior painting. 117 The architect was

102 Gustave Alphonse Jérôme Vanherseck C.M. [sometimes Van Herseck], born at Esquelbecq (Wormhout) in 1867, entered the Lazarists in 1888, was ordained priest in 1894 and arrived in China in September 1894. According to the correspondence, he became a friend of A. De Moerloose and the key contact with the Lazarist Congregation. From 1912 Vanherseck would be at Beiting in Beijing. Van den Brandt 1936, 113, n° 360.

103 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 17 February 1903: “Monseigneur Faurier [vicar apostolic of Beijing] étant malade, l'on me demande de planifier une église pour Sten.hou.fou, [stref] [Gianandrea] approuve t'il que je le fasse?”

104 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 24 March 1903: “Je vais envoyer le projet d'église à Suan.hou.fou; Monseigneur Van Herseck est enthousiaste et envoie un homme à Pékin pour demander de commencer de suite.”

105 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 7 April 1903: “Hier soir je reçois la visite de Monseigneur Van Herseck qui désire commencer son église le plus tôt possible; il est resté un jour ici pour nous entendre concernant les moyens à prendre pour faciliter l'exécution. Mr Van Herseck m'attend chez lui le mercredi après Pâques pour faire commencer les travaux; je prêtre Votre Grandeur de bien vouloir m'accorder cette permission, par après il sera encore nécessaire d'y passer de temps en temps”.

106 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 14 May 1903: “Il serait nécessaire que j'aille à Suan.hou.fo dans le courant de la semaine prochaine pour examiner les fondements qu'on pose en ce moment. Monseigneur Jardin me demande de vouloir examiner l'église construite à Chang.tchouang qui est sur la route de Suien.hou.fo.”

107 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 7 June 1903: “Messieurs Van Herseck et Ligny sont arrivés ici hier; les travaux de l'église avancent vite et il faut que j'y aille pour ne pas arrêter les ouvriers.”

108 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 10 June 1903: “Quant aux fondements j'avais dit et répété au Père Chinois comment il fallait faire et l'ait bien compris; seulement il avait voulu faire mieux. Les chrétiens avaient déjà averti Mr Van Herseck que ce n'était pas fait comme on l'avait dit; là dessus ce Monsieur vient me voir et je me rends en ville avec lui et Mr Lignier. Arrivé là-bas je trouve tous les fondements achevés et cela après 15 jours; je fis creuser et je trouve que c'est simplement de la boue avec l'une ou l'autre pierre. Il a donc fallu recommencer tout et le Père Chinois a été révoqué de ses fonctions d'inspecteur de travaux et remplacé par Mr Lignier. Depuis j'ai envoyé d'ici mon contre-maître et trois bons maçons.”

109 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 9 June 1903: “bien qu'il fera le tracé de l'élevation à Suan.hou.fo.”

110 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. (copy p.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14). Letter by G. Van Herseck to J. Van Aerselaer, 21 June 1903: “J'envoie ce jour d'août cette occasion de vous renouveler, Monseigneur, l'expression de mon entière reconnaissance pour le service que votre Grandeur nous rend, en permettant au P. De Moerloose de se charger des constructions de Suan.hou.fo. Ah! Que ne peut-il viser selon sa place à l'exécution de son magnifique plan! L'œuvre aurait tout à gagner et ma tranquillité aussi. Mais je n'ai pas le droit d'abuser.”

111 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 19 September 1903: “je compte partir demain mercredi pour Suan.hou.fo.”

112 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 30 September 1903: “Messieurs Van Herseck et les Pères Trappistes me demandent de faire le voyage à leur frais et d'acheter tout ce qui est nécessaire pour assurer la bonne marche des travaux. Une quinzaine de tailleurs de pierre m'arriveront ces jours-là; le tracé des pierres est une besogne assez compliquée qui demande du temps. (...) je me mettrai en route après Pâques pour Suan.hou.fo, Pêkin, La Trappe. Je pourrais ainsi faire en sorte que rien ne manque à ces travaux.”

113 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 25 April 1904: “En revenant j'irai à Pe.hou.ka, Suan.hou.fo, et La Trappe, de tous côtés on est à construire, plus à Dieu que nous puissions continuer en paix surtout durant la guerre Russo-Japonaise. Une victoire du Japon pourrait nous être nuisible.”

114 KADOC, C.I.C.M., P.I.A.1.2.5.1.5.14. Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aerselaer, 9 March 1904: "Les travaux de construction de l'église de Suan.hou.fou seront repris le 23 de la 2ème lune chinoise. Une construction de cette importance avec des ouvriers chinois demandera des soins et des visites assez rapprochées. Les Pères Trappistes commenceront vers la même date. Pour ces deux ouvrages, il manque certains matériaux, instruments et autres accessoires à acheter soit à Pékin soit à Tien tsing. Monsieur Van Herseck et les Pères Trappistes me demandent de faire le voyage à leur frais et d'acheter tout ce qui est nécessaire pour assurer la bonne marche des travaux."
overworked and urgently needed rest. By mid-July 1906 he left Xuanhua, but returned in October. By the end of the year he was able to distribute photos of the completed churches of Xuanhua and Yangjiaping.

As was usual in China, the church is oriented north-south, i.e. with its main entrance south-facing (fig. 22). The huge central window with refined tracery flanked by two smaller windows and two round bell towers affirm the Gothic character of the main façade. The church is traditional in plan, with a nave of five bays flanked with aisles, a large transept with square arms on both sides of a square crossing, and a deep choir of two aisled bays followed by two simple bays ending in a five-sided polygonal apse (fig. 23). The aisles of the choir serve as side chapels dedicated to the Virgin Mary to the west and to St Joseph to the east.

The modular composition is based on a square of $3.5 \times 3.5$ module for a bay of an aisle, 2 modules for a bay of the nave, and 4 modules for the crossing. The design of the elevation is based on the same proportions: 2 modules-high aisles and a 4 modules-high nave. The stone columns with polygonal bases and crocket capitals support ogee arches. The level between the arcade and the clerestory is a blind wall that is only animated with stone engaged shafts rising until the foot of the tie beams. Beautiful dark varnished wooden barrel vaults cover the entire church: the high

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**FIG. 22 Church of Xuanhua, south façade (© THOC, May 2011).**
Fig. 23 Church of Xuanhua, plan (measurement, © authors 2011).
vaults have an ogee section, the vaults of the aisles a depressed arched section, and both have visible tie beams and king posts. The four composite piers of the crossing rise from the bases to the top of the clerestory, where capitals wear great stone arches framing the wooden groin vault of the crossing. The transept is as high as the nave and the two first aisled bays of the sanctuary (fig. 24). The next two bays of the sanctuary and the apse are lower and separated from the first bays of the sanctuary by a chancel arch. The total interior length of the church is 34 m, the width of the aisled nave is 16 m, the width of the transept is 24 m, and the height of the nave is 15 m. The arcade and the lateral walls of the nave are 1 m thick, while the walls of the aisles and the choir as well as the buttresses are 65 cm thick.

Both towers of the façade are bell towers. The section of the towers changes from square at the base to half-octagonal and circular at mid-height, to octagonal at the upper or bell level. The latter rests on corbels, is opened by abat-sous and is covered by an octagonal pyramidal roof. Inside, the towers have no floors and look like chimneys, open from top to bottom. A third tower is located against the north side of the eastern transept arm. It is a stair tower leading to the roof structure above the vaults. In the first bay of the church, there is an iron tribune, accessible from two side stairs, which looks original. Sacristies with cross-windows are located on both sides of the sanctuary.

The quality of the interior space results from the harmonious proportions and the superb wooden vaults, as well as from the numerous windows of different types, which provide abundant light (fig. 25). The windows of the main façade and of the two ends of the transept arms are large Gothic tracery windows with quatrefoils, lancets and transoms. The nine ogee windows of the sanctuary and the side windows of the transept are divided into two lancets and decorated with a quatrefoil rose. The windows of the clerestory are double lancets while the windows of the aisles are triple lancet windows. On the outside, relieving arches surmount the windows. The church has three doorways, all of which are south-facing. The main entrance is the south portal, which has well carved jambs with crocket capitals, and an archivolt decorated with flos. Both transept arms have several doorways: the two east-facing and two west-facing portals are no longer in use and are blocked with masonry; smaller side entrances facing the south side of each arm are now the common entrances to the church. Above these simple doors a metal roof forms a kind of pediment. The three doors are painted red and are fitted with medieval looking iron hinges.

The principal building material of the masonry is grey brick measuring 30 cm x 15 cm x 6 cm, assembled in English bond. There are no profiled bricks because all the mouldings and decorations are in stone (fig. 26). The abundant use of carved grey limestone makes this church exceptional and shows the skills of the stone carvers. Stone is not only used for the interior arches, columns, bases, capitals and corbels, but also for the traceries, thresholds and lintels, dripstones, slopes, and all covering stones. The sculpted motifs are very limited and only vegetal: crockets on the main capitals of the nave, small capitals on the tie beams, capitals and leaves at the main entrance, and one leaf corbel in

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121 Double doorways, now blocked, are situated in the centre of the eastern and western façades of the transept.
122 See note 96.
the eastern side chapel (fig. 27). A carved trilobed niche for the piscina is located at the eastern end of the choir. The skills of the carpenters were also of a high level, as shown by the complexity of the wooden polygonal vault of the apse and the perfect assembling of the trusses of the vaulting (fig. 28). The floor is of granite laid in red, grey and black squares.

None of the original furniture has survived, except for the tombs of the first two vicars apostolic\(^{123}\). In a large church with transept arms, according to the Chinese rules of gender separation, the men occupied the transept arms, the crossing and the first bay of the nave, while the women sat in the nave and the aisles\(^ {124}\). This explains why the entrances in the transept arms, now blocked, were so important. Nothing remains of the separation fence between men and women in the nave. The main altar and the two side altars, the pews and the confessional all post-date the Cultural Revolution. The stained-glass windows are uniformly light blue and white in a kaleidoscopic pattern. The most impressive feature is the rich and colourful polychrome decoration on the walls (fig. 29): stone imitation with false joints, various geometric patterns framing the windows, flower motifs of the initials of Mary in the western chapel and of Joseph in the eastern one, and particularly joyful colours in the choir, including a Latin inscription\(^ {125}\). Stencilled motifs are also painted on the vaults, along the ribs and on the tie beams. All these were repainted during the recent restoration. Without analysis it is impossible to establish whether the present colours reproduce the original ones. However, this polychrome decoration is an important contribution to the general St Luke’s Gothic style of the church\(^ {126}\).

On 10 May 1926, when Rome redefined the boundaries of the apostolic vicariates of China, Xuanhua was chosen as the seat of the new apostolic vicariate of Xuanhuafu. So, the church became a cathedral and the vicar apostolic was Philippe Zhao Huaïyi\(^ {127}\), one of the six first native bishops in China. He died in 1927 and was succeeded by another Chinese bishop, Peter Cheng\(^ {128}\). Both are buried in the cathedral, and their Gothic mausoleums can still be seen. On 28 March 1928, Archbishop Celso Costantini, the Apostolic Delegate in China, consecrated Peter Cheng as second vicar apostolic of Xuanhua. Dom Ildephonse Brandstetter, a Benedictine monk who assisted at the ceremony and wrote an article about his journey to Xuanhua, admired the architecture of the new cathedral: “In the middle, at a fitting distance from the street entrance, stands the imposing Cathedral, a splendid memorial to the charity and self-sacrificing spirit of the native Christians. Themselves but moderately favoured in the possession of this world’s good, they have, nevertheless, with their own hands and money, reared this stately pile to the glory of God. It is Gothic in structure (of the school of St Luke, Bruges [sic]) and its architect is a priest, the Revd Alphonse De Moerloose.

\(^{123}\) See notes 127–128.

\(^{124}\) Nuyts 1938, 217.

\(^{125}\) In uncial script: *panis angelicum fit panis hominum / dat panis caelicius / figuris terminum // o vos miscabitis manducat dominum / panper sereru et humilia* [The angelic bread becomes the bread of men / The heavenly bread ends all prefigurations / What wonder? The Lord is eaten / by a poor and humble servant]. From the hymn *Panis Angelicus* written by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) for the Feast of Corpus Christi.

\(^{126}\) Bressers & Van Assche 1865.

\(^{127}\) Philippe Zhao Huaïyi (Chao) (1880–1927), vicar apostolic from 1926 to 1927.

\(^{128}\) Petrus Cheng (Tcheng) (1881–1935), vicar apostolic from 1928 to 1935.

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**FIG. 25** Church of Xuanhua, interior view to the north (© THOC, May 2011).
FIG. 26 Church of Xuanhua, articulation of brickwork and carved springer at the southern corner of the western aisle: a perfect St Luke design (© THOC, May 2011).

FIG. 27 Church of Xuanhua, columns, capitals and arcade of the nave in pure 13th-century ‘Scheldt Gothic style’ (© THOC, May 2011).
(who, for many years, resided in the Trappist monastery at Yang Chia P’ing [sic]). The latter has managed to preserve a pleasing and harmonious simplicity of line, and has worked true to material, the church being free of shoddiness and imitation. As for the interior, its proportions and decorative features combine to give the whole a character so conducive to recollection and devotion as to render it a fitting sanctuary for divine service.\textsuperscript{129} The renowned French natural historian and Jesuit Émile Licent, after having met De Moerloose in 1917 in Yangjiaping, visited the church of Xuanhua but does not describe the building\textsuperscript{130}. On 11 April 1946, Pope Pius XII elevated the apostolic vicariate of Xuanhuafu to diocese of Xuanhua.

Because of the presence of coalmines, Xuanhua grew as an industrial city and has lost most of its traditional architecture over the last decades. Modern high-rise buildings are filling the historic area defined by the ruined square earthen wall. The ‘drum and bell tower’ and the cathedral church are the most remarkable surviving landmarks. Both have been recently restored. To the east of the church, an important building complex around two inner courtyards remains as a part of the mission settlement, which was later expanded into an episcopal residence. De Moerloose designed the main building and two lateral wings. The building complex now houses the Museum of Xuanhua and belongs to the Xuanhua Administration of Cultural Heritage.
Interestingly, Xuanhua Cathedral formed the inspiration for the façade of the church in the village of Shenjing (Hebei province) (fig. 30). This kind of ‘reception’ of elements of a model expresses a precise meaning, in this case a reference to the local episcopal seat.

7 Exporting a style from medieval Flanders to modern China

The style of the church of Xuanhua reflects the medieval models loved by St Luke’s architects, that is to say the architecture that developed during the 13th century in part of present-day Belgium, from the episcopal city of Tournai through the valley of the river Scheldt to the towns of the southern and eastern parts of the County of Flanders (Oudenaarde, Deinze, Ghent) and to a lesser extent Bruges. Most of the churches were erected in Tournai limestone or combined limestone with brick, a new material that made its appearance in Flanders around 1200 and would rapidly conquer the building sector in the late Middle Ages. Other characteristics of the churches are the use of wooden barrel vaults, columns with crocket capitals, and triple lancet windows. The main façade is often flanked by two round towers; the arms of the transept and the choir could be as high as the nave or a little lower. The naves are aisled and from around 1300 aisles were made as high and wide as the nave, giving the church a hall church-like appearance. The tower is sometimes situated at the crossing, but could also be at the side of the choir or in front of the nave.

In late 19th-century historiography, the style of this group of buildings was considered a regional art school or style; known as the Tournai School or the Scheldt Gothic School, its influence stretched across part of Hainaut and much of Flanders. The scholar who developed the theory underlying this school was

131 Buyle, Coomans, Esther & Genicot 1997, 33-64.
Fig. 31 Ancient buildings in Flanders, a book of patterns by Pierre Langerock and Alphonse Van Houcke, issue from 1882, cover and measurement of the medieval timber structure of the church of Zingem (© Library of V1OE).

Fig. 32 Monographs on the Lady Church of Pamele at Oudenaarde and the St Nicholas church at Ghent, both by Auguste Van Assche, ca 1880 (© Library of V1OE).
Exporting Flemish Gothic architecture to China: missionary-architect Alphonse De Moerloose

engineer-architect Louis Cloquet, a prominent member of the St Luke movement. We will not discuss here the validity of his theory, but it exerted great influence during his time. Louis Cloquet and Auguste Van Assche, both major St Luke architects, restored the most important churches built in the Scheldt Gothic style (Scheldegotiek/Gothique scaldien), using both stone and brick to diffuse the early Gothic forms across Flanders and Belgium. From the 1860’s to 1914, Van Assche, Cloquet and other architects published archaeological and richly illustrated studies in St Luke’s publication series (fig. 31), which served as pattern books and made the ‘good examples of the true Gothic architecture’ available to the students. Thus a style from the past became a paradigm for modern Catholic society in Belgium.

During his architectural training years De Moerloose had been fed these models, of which elements are present in the church of Xuanhua. As a student he certainly visited and copied the plans of his master Auguste Van Assche who notably restored the Lady Church at Deinze, the Lady Church of Pamele at Oudenaarde, and the St Nicholas Church at Ghent, and published albums on these three restorations (fig. 32). Thanks to these publications and the well-documented archaeological knowledge they contained, these medieval churches became archetypes and legitimised the style of new buildings. Another example of that process is the church of Shuangshu built by De Moerloose in 1917 and unfortunately destroyed by fire in 2009. Shuangshu echoed St Christopher Church at Liège, a mid 13th-century building that Van Assche restored and published in 1877. Nevertheless, it is impossible to establish if it was a direct influence from the medieval models or an indirect influence via 19th-century buildings. Indeed, both the plan and the elevation of the church of Xuanhua show many similarities to St Joseph Church at Roubaix (fig. 4), and the design of its nave is very similar to that of the Maredsous abbey church – both works by Baron Bethune, which De Moerloose had visited. A comparison of the stone piers and the wooden crossing vaults of Maredsous and Xuanhua demonstrates more than a passing resemblance (fig. 33).

It is certain that De Moerloose possessed some St Luke publications in his studio in Gaojiayingzi and Yangjiaping, but we have not yet found written evidence of it. He still had links with St Luke, as appears in a letter dated 1907, where he mentions that the school asked him to send plans for an exhibition in Ghent.

132 Louis Cloquet (1849-1920) was a teacher at St Luke’s School at Tournai from 1880 to 1891, and later at the university of Ghent. Van Loo (ed.) 2003, 211-212.
133 Coomans 2007.
134 Bressers & Van Assche 1863; Van Assche & Helbig 1883; Langerock & Van Houcke 1881-1889; Cloquet 1898-1902.
135 Van Assche (s.d.1); Van Assche (s.d.2); Van Assche 1899.
136 See note 65.
137 Van Assche & Helbig 1877; Coomans 2006; Luo 2011.
138 All that is known is that he possessed a series of the Belgian architecture journal L’Émulation (years 1891-1899); Van Hecken 1968, 165.
139 KADOC, C. I. C. M. Archives, P.1.4.1.2.4.5.1.5.14, Letter by A. De Moerloose to J. Van Aertselaer, 10 May 1907: “Le comité d’architecture de Gand m’a envoyé une invitation pour prendre part à l’exposition d’architecture de Gand avec les travaux exécutés en Chine: seulement l’exposition avait lieu à Pâques et je n’ai reçu l’invitation qu’à l’Ascension”. About the exhibition: Cloquet 1908.
Modeste de Noyette, would not have stayed in touch with him and informed him about the evolution of Gothic Revival architecture in Belgium, but again there is no archival evidence. At the turn of the century, when De Moerloose was starting his architectural career in China, the St Luke’s movement resisted the attacks of Art Nouveau and new currents in the decorative arts by issuing important publications. It is hard to believe that De Moerloose did not possess the five volumes of the famous treatise on architecture published by Louis Cloquet in 1898-1901, or that he did not receive the Bulletin des métiers d’art, the new monthly journal issued by St Luke from 1901.

The church of Xuanhua is not an isolated building in De Moerloose’s œuvre. On the contrary, most of his monumental churches belonged to the same St Luke style harking back to the medieval architecture in Flanders and to the works of his masters Bethune and Van Assche. He introduced variations such as in the height and width of transept arms, the location of towers, the shape of the choir, etc. The comparison of the churches of Shebiya and Gaojiayingzi demonstrates that the form of the arches – pointed or round – is not a criterion of style but only a variation within the same architectural concept. The churches of Halagou, Pingdiquan, Shuangshu, Yongpingfu, Zhengding, among others, belong to the same group and could perfectly well have won a church architectural competition organised by St Luke.

De Moerloose never referred to the more complex Gothic style of the French cathedrals, as revived by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. France is a country of stone architecture and did not develop brick building types comparable with the churches in Flanders. In addition, churches with stone vaults and flying buttresses were nearly impossible to build in Mongolia, a country with neither a vaulting nor a stone carving tradition.

De Moerloose remained loyal to the principles of Pugin, the spirit of the St Luke’s School, and the idealised medieval style of Flanders, his mother country. The myth of ‘eternal Flanders’, based on the paradigm of a rational, Gothic, Christian and Flemish architecture, culminated in Xiwanzi, the centre of the Scheut mission in Mongolia. Xiwanzi’s heydays began with vicar apostolic Jeroom Van Aertselaer, and De Moerloose’s architecture – the seminary (fig. 9), the bishop’s residence, and the Benedict chapel – was an important contribution. The new cathedral (fig. 34), designed by Father Leo De Smedt, another Flemish Scheutist, was built from 1922 to 1926 according to the same paradigmatic style, but with more Romanesque elements. Xiwanzi had escaped the Boxers but was razed by the Communists in December 1946.

8 The significance of St Luke’s Gothic style in China, and criticism

On 27 March 1932, Alphonse De Moerloose died in the home for aged Scheutists in Schildt near Antwerp. Because of his failing health and the solitude of Yangjiaping he had decided to leave China in December 1929 and to reintegrate into the Congregation of Scheut. Returning to Belgium after 44 years must have been a shock for the old man. Not only he was the
sole survivor of his generation in his family,149 but society had also completely changed as a consequence of the First World War and was just entering the Great Depression. Perhaps the most important change for him was the evolution of church architecture and the definitive abandonment of the medieval models. During the inter-war period, a blend of modern concrete structures, central plans with Byzantine domes, Art Deco decoration and forms such as polygonal arches and the use of marble, generated a new church architecture and new debates, including in the St Luke Schools150. The traditional Gothic paradigm of Pugin and Bethune that had been De Moerloose’s artistic point of reference was definitively overtaken by more modern church architecture.

The earliest criticism of the churches of Alphonse De Moerloose came from the Scheutists themselves. Rather than the style, it addressed the comfort of the churches, which were absolutely not adapted to the climate of northern China. Father Jozef Nuyts wrote a rather explicit criticism in the mission propaganda journal of the Scheutists: “We note that the brilliant architect, completely full of the lessons of St Luke, was more sensitive to the beauty of the lines than to the practical aspects of his constructions. He did not pay enough attention to the particularities of our region and its excessive climate. These high chapels, with thin walls, many windows, and thin wooden ceilings, have pleasant forms, but the priest and the churchgoers are to be pitied when they are obliged to gather for praying in minus 30-35° C or oppressive heat. You are either freezing or suffocating; staying with arms spread during the canon of the mass is a torture, as is giving communion to crowds. Priests and Christians have all experienced this pity; however the vogue of this style, so beautiful but so unpractical, was slow to disappear. Master De Moerloose had generated disciples! Even several Chinese priests, as well as missionaries, were under his influence and imitated him in a more or less successful way. A certain reaction only appeared these last years. May God bless the architects of St Luke, but may He protect us from overly conservative artists who, because

149 De Moerloose family archives: Letter about the family tomb at the cemetery of Gentbrugge and his hope to come back to Belgium, from A. De Moerloose to his niece Elmire de Mill, Yangjiaping, 10 June 1929: ”Je lis dans les lettres que le caveau de la famille De [c] M. [oerloose] est plein et fermé pour toujours. On n’a donc pas eu la pensée de me laisser une place, [moi] qui suis le dernier survivant de la famille pour laquelle il a été fait, car ne n’ai pas perdu l’espoir de vous revoir”.

150 Van de Perre 2003, 35-125.
of their art principles, introduced pointless suffering in our missions of Mongolia”.

Despite the fact that Western Gothic churches seem not to have been adapted to the realities of Mongolia, the Scheut Congregation continued building medieval looking churches, because that was the style that expressed their identity. The cathedral of Hohhot, designed by Father Leo Vendelmans in 1922 (fig. 35), and the cathedral of Xiwanzi (fig. 34), built by Father Leo De Smedt in 1922-1926, are in the line of De Moerloose’s most prestigious buildings: tall aisled churches, with large transepts, high towers and brick geometrical decorations on the façades. Like the churches built by the Scheutists in the Congo and in the Philippines at the same time, the churches of the Scheut mission in Mongolia refer more or less explicitly to Flanders, the mother region of the missionaries.

One of the most amazing buildings the Scheutists ever built in China is the tower of Balagai (fig. 36), which unfortunately has been demolished. A missionary travelling through the Mongolian plain wrote with nostalgia: “In the distance, we recognise something that looks like the belfry of Bruges in miniature: it is the bell tower of Balagai!” The tower of the Christian village was visible from a great distance, just like an urban tower in the flat coastal landscape of Flanders. Indeed the octagonal upper part of the tower explicitly refers to the belfry of Bruges. The tower, ca 20 m high, had been built in 1918 as a thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart for having saved the village from a plague epidemic. The complexity of its elevation and decoration resulted from an elaborate design and a high level of craftsmanship. The name of the architect remains unknown and there is no indication allowing us to attribute the design to Alphonse De Moerloose. De Moerloose, the first meaning of the Gothic tower, as the Christian antithesis of the Chinese pagoda and a construction ‘exported’ from Flanders, was as a radiant symbol of a successful Scheutist mission. Missionary congregations from other European countries had different architectural references and developed their own visual identities in their apostolic vicariates.

In a sense, missionary congregations were building up their own ‘religious colonies’ instead of building the universal Church. Thus the Scheut Fathers were building a kind of Scheutist Church in Mongolia instead of working towards the development of a Chinese Church. This was one of the fundamental criticisms from the Belgian missionary, later Chinese naturalised priest, Vincent Lebbe, who fought all his life for an indigenised Chinese Church. Lebbe, born in Ghent in 1877 – the same place as De Moerloose, but one generation later –, arrived in Tianjin in 1901 just after the Boxer Rebellion. He understood the need to abandon as soon as possible the model of the expansionist mission and to adapt the Catholic religion to the Chinese culture. Lebbe had a determining influence on the encyclical Maximum illud, the Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith Throughout the World, issued by Pope Benedict XV on 30 November 1919. The encyclical condemns the colonial behaviour of imposing a Western model on any other

Fig. 36 The Flemish belfry-like tower of the church of Balagai (Les Missions Catholiques 56, 1924, 259).
The Catholic Church is not an intruder in any country), and insists among other things on the necessity to learn local languages, but never explicitly mentions art and architecture. Addressing the missionaries, the Pope wrote: "Assure yourselves that God was speaking to you, to each one of you, when He said: "Forget your people and your father’s house" (Psalm 44:11). Remember that your duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ’s; and remember too that your goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly-fatherland, and not for an earthly one". In the encyclical letter Rerum Ecclesiae, given 28 February 1926, Pope Pius XI would develop some aspects of Maximum illud.

In August 1922 Benedict XV appointed Archbishop Celso Costantini as first Apostolic Delegate to China. During his eleven years in China, the archbishop contributed to developing the indigenisation – that is to say the rooting and the integration of the Christian faith in a given culture – of the Church in China. On 15 May 1924, Costantini opened the first synod of the Chinese Catholic Church in Shanghai (fig. 37): 42 vicars apostolic in China, prominent Catholic churchmen, and representatives of the missionary congregations came together to discuss the implementation of Maximum illud in China, the issue of Chinese rituals, and to adapt canon law. During the synod, the archbishop consecrated China to Our Lady and decided on the building of the new Sheshan basilica mentioned earlier. A further important step in the indigenisation of the Church was the ordination of the six first native vicars apostolic in 1926, among others Zhao Huaiyi, on the newly created seat of Xuanhua.

Like De Moerloose, Costantini was the son of a contractor and had expertise in art and architecture. In Italy, his mother country, he had founded a Society of Friends of Christian Art in 1911 and had launched the periodical Arte Sacra in 1913. He was convinced of the importance of art and encouraged the development of a distinctive Chinese Christian art: "Western style art is unsuited to China; Western Christian art used in China gives the impression that Christianity is a western, not an universal religion; the Church throughout its history has adopted and adapted to local art forms; Chinese art and culture provide many opportunities for adoption and adaptation". In some articles the apostolic delegate roundly attacks the Gothic style: "Western art in China is an error of style. It is an error to import European styles, Romanesque and Gothic, in China". He promoted an indigenised architecture, without towers and vertical lines, with horizontal lines and Chinese roofs, and using concrete for the main structures. Some of the best examples of this style were designed by the Benedictine monk Adelbert Gresnigt: the Catholic University of Beijing, the seminary of the Disciples of the Lord in Xuanhua, the regional seminary of Aberdeen on Hong Kong Island, and the residence of the apostolic delegate in Beijing. This new style is not the subject of the present article and needs to be placed in the broader context of the quest of the Chinese Republic for a modern architecture that could express its new identity – the ‘Chinese renaissance’-, the development of new education system in China, and the competition between Catholic and Protestant missions in China.

Despite the great respect Archbishop Costantini had for the old architect, their divergence of opinion about art and architecture was total. In a letter to a friend dated 28 August 1924, Alphonse De Moerloose wrote with bitterness: "Monseigneur the Delegate especially dislikes Gothic; as all the Italians, his reference is St John of Lateran. All the right thinking bishops I have seen think that there is no question of building Chinese

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158 Benedict XV 1919, 8 and 18.
159 Celso Benigno Luigi Costantini (1876-1957), first Apostolic Delegate to China from 1922 to 1933, secretary of the Congregation for Propagation of Faith from 1935 to 1955, elevated to cardinal in 1953.
161 Lam 2008; Wang Jiyou 2010; Soetens 1997, 113-123.
162 See note 117.
163 Ticozzi 2008.
165 Costantini 1932, 413.
166 Coomans, in press.
167 Cody 1996. The Protestants began building schools and hospitals in modern Chinese style ten years earlier than the Catholics.
churches, this is not practical”. The architect travelled with the archbishop and they visited churches together. The Christians they met expressed their preference for European architecture rather than Chinese. De Moerloose admired the great culture of Costantini, but understood that Rome’s indigenisation policy would from then on promote a Chinese style. For that reason he declined writing an architectural handbook on missionary churches, which the Jesuits did in his place in 1926. Later, Costantini himself would publish an art manual for missionaries.

By the mid-1920s, St Luke’s medieval model definitely belonged to the past, not only in China but in Belgium too. In Brussels the project for the basilica of Koekelberg, first designed in 1905 as a Neo-Gothic national cathedral by Pierre Langerock, a fellow student of De Moerloose’s at St Luke’s, was replaced in 1920 by a more modern project, a kind of Art Deco interpretation of St Peter’s in Rome. Just like some St Luke’s architects evolved and adapted to other styles, some missionaries evolved to Chinese art and architecture. The most renowned Scheutist artist working in China was the Flemish painter Mon Van Genechten. He arrived in China in 1930, lived in Xiwanzi until 1937 and from then on in Beijing until he was expelled from China in 1946. He was a personal friend of the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and of Archbishop Costantini, who admired his work. Van Genechten was the most talented painter of Chinese religious art of his generation but, as he said himself, he remained Flemish above all: “Monseigneur Costantini was an art lover. He said: “Do not think you will convert Chinese people with Western art”. I answered: “That is true and I will paint in the Chinese style. That is an interesting experiment. I will go for it”! He said: “Fine, but therefore you must become a Chinese painter!” I remember I answered: “No, I do not believe that. I remain Flemish!” He did not understand it, but I answered: “I will study everything and follow these people, but I will never become a Chinese painter”.”

Alphonse De Moerloose belonged to the generation before indigenisation began and certainly never thought of becoming a Chinese architect. Like all missionaries of the long 19th century, he was convinced that his Western and Christian culture was superior to all other cultures; as an ultramontane, he was intimately convinced that St Luke’s Gothic was the only convenient style for the Christian society anywhere in the world (figs 37-38). Therefore we may view the churches he built in China as pure expansionist-missionary products. Alphonse De Moerloose remained faithful to his Flemish identity, his Catholic worldview, and the artistic certitudes he had learnt at St Luke’s. In a letter written in the twilight of his architectural career he still affirms the evidence of St Luke’s moral and artistic principles: “In the Middle Ages there was no question of ‘imitation’, everything was true, according to the Flemish proverb ‘Recht voor de vuist’.”

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**Fig. 38** Our Lady of Sheshan Basilica on the top of a hill on the outskirts of Shanghai, built 1924-1935 (© THOC, June 2011).
Appendix – Works of Alphonse De Moerloose in China

**Inner Mongolia**
- Ershisiqingdi ca. 1904 residence, and chapel
- Halagou ca. 1916 church
- Liangcheng (Xianghuodi) 1904 church, residence and Holy Childhood
- Meiguilingzi 1904-1906 church
- Pingdiquan church
- Qisumu 1904 church
- Sanshenggong 1893 altar
- Shebiya 1904-1905 church
- Tiegedangou 1906 church

**Hebei Province**
- Baoding church
- Changyintchoang church
- Gaojiayingzi 1902-1903 church, residence, convent
- Huangtuliangzi 1906 church
- Nihewan 1912 chapel and residence
- Shangyi (Nanhaqian) 1905 chapel, college
- Shengjiayingzi church
- Shuangshu 1917 church and residence
- Xiwanzi (Chongli) 1898 residence
- Xiwanzi (Chongli) 1899-1901 seminary
- Xiwanzi (Chongli) after 1901 St. Michael and St. Benedict chapel
- Xuanhua 1903-1906 church (later cathedral)
- Yangjiaping 1903 Trappist Abbey church
- Yangjiaping 1906 St. Joseph chapel
- Yangjiaping 1922 Trappist Abbey wing
- Yongpingfu 1908 church
- Zhengdingfu 1924 church

**Gansu Province**
- Sanshilipu 1891 church
- Xixiang 1885 altar

**Shaanxi Province**
- Sanyuanjing church
- Xiaoqiaoapan 1890 altar

**Fujian Province**
- Fuzhou 1924 cathedral

**Shanxi Province**
- Datong 1922-1924 residence, seminary
- Datong 1928 chapel

**Beijing**
- Beijing 1909 Interior decoration of Beitang Cathedral (?)
- Beijing 1918 Memorial Chapel of the Sacred Heart, Zhalan

**Shanghai**
- Shanghai 1924-1935 basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan
- Shanghai 1924-1926 church of Yangtze-poo
- Shanghai 1927 church Christ the King
Summary

Exporting Flemish Gothic Architecture to China: Meaning and Context of the Churches of Shebiya (Inner Mongolia) and Xuanhua (Hebei) Built by Missionary-Architect Alphonse De Moerloose in 1903–1906

The Belgian Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, also known as the Scheut fathers or Scheutists (C.I.C.M.), was founded in Brussels by the Flemish priest Théophile Verbiest in 1862. The congregation received from Rome the mission to evangelise the vast spaces of China and gradually organised the territory into four Vicariates Apostolic: Central Mongolia, South-West Mongolia, East Mongolia, and Gansu. The Scheutists were active in the north of China for ninety years, from 1865 to 1955.

This article examines two churches built by Alphonse De Moerloose, a Flemish Scheutist missionary who also was an architect and who developed considerable building activity in China after the Boxer Rebellion of 1898–1900. Only a few of his churches survived the Chinese Civil War of 1947–1949 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976. Fieldwork by the authors in March 2010 and May 2011 traced several remains of De Moerloose’s work. The churches of Shebiya (Inner Mongolia) and Xuanhua (Hebei province), built simultaneously between 1903 and 1906, are the best-preserved of his buildings. Thanks to written and visual sources from the Scheutist Archives, which are held at KADOC in Leuven, the building process of both churches as well as their historical context could be reconstructed accurately.

Alphonse Frédéric De Moerloose – born in Gentbrugge in 1856, died in Schilde in 1932 – lived in China for 44 years, from 1885 to 1929. He belonged to a family of contractors and studied architecture at the St Luke’s School at Ghent for five years before entering the Scheutist Congregation in 1881. The artistic education he received was strongly Catholic, Gothic and nationalist: it was based on the true principles of Pugin that had been adapted to the Belgian context by Baron Jean-Baptiste Bethune and Auguste Van Assche. The churches De Moerloose built in China conform to the architectural canon and the ideology of the school. This explains why the brick churches of Shebiya and Xuanhua look like Flemish churches from the second half of the 19th century and hark back to 13th-century churches of the Scheldt area. Shebiya is a simple village church ministered by Scheutist missionaries. Xuanhua was a more elaborate and prestigious urban church built for the French Lazarist missionaries and became a cathedral in 1926. The presence of these two Neo-Gothic churches behind the Great Wall of China is a powerful expression of the worldview of the Scheutist and Lazarist missionaries after the Boxer Rebellion.

The article also gives an overview of father De Moerloose’s works in China, amongst which the most important buildings were the Trappist abbey of Yangjiaping (1903–1906 and 1922), the great monastery of Yangjiaping for the Lazarists (1908–1910), and the design for the pilgrimage basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan near Shanghai (1924).

The works of De Moerloose fitted perfectly in the Eurocentric missionary model that held sway before the First World War, but were gradually criticised from two different sides. The first criticism came from the missionaries themselves, who found the St Luke Gothic churches beautiful but not at all suitable for the extreme climate of Mongolia: because of the large windows and the high wooden vaults, people were freezing in winter and suffocating in summer. The second criticism came from Rome and was a consequence of the new missionary policy of the Catholic Church, as defined by the encyclical letter Maximum illud written by Pope Benedict XV in 1919. The encyclical condemned the colonial behaviour of imposing a Western model on any other culture and insisted among other things on integration into all aspects of local culture and the development of a local clergy. In 1922, Archbishop Celso Costantini was sent to China as the first Apostolic Delegate and he implemented the new Roman Catholic missionary policy at the first synod of the Chinese Catholic Church in Shanghai in 1924. Costantini was convinced of the importance of art and encouraged the development of a distinctive Chinese Christian art and architecture. As a proponent of acculturation he could not support Gothic Revival architecture. Like all missionaries during the long 19th century, Alphonse De Moerloose was convinced that his western and Christian culture was superior to all the other cultures; as an ultramontane, he was intimately convinced that St Luke’s Gothic was the only convenient style for church architecture anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, from the mid-1920s the mediaeval paradigm of Pugin and the St Luke’s schools would definitely belong to the past, in Belgium as well as in China.

摘要

弗拉芒哥特式建筑传入中国：传教士建筑师和羹柏设计的舍必崖和宣化教堂的含义及背景, 1903–1906

比利时时圣母圣心会，又称为司各特修会，或者司各特神父。1862年由弗拉芒神父和羹柏于比利时布鲁塞尔。罗马天主教会将蒙古这片广阔的土地交托给圣母圣心会传播福音，渐渐地他们发展成为四个宗座代牧区：中蒙古，西南蒙古，东蒙古和甘肃。圣母圣心会主要在中国北方地区传教，共90年，为华时间为1865至1955年。


和羹柏，1856年出生于根特布鲁日，1932年卒于比利时希尔德，1885–1899年在华生活，共44年。父亲是一位工程承包商，长大后他就读于根特市的圣路加学校，接受了5年建筑教育，之后于1881年成为圣母圣心会会士。他的艺术修养来自于非常强烈的大主教的，哥特式的，民族化的艺术教育，这些都基于普金关于建筑真实性的原则，并且由Jean-Baptiste Bethune男爵和Auguste Van Assche结合比利时的文化背景融入到教育当中。和羹柏在中国设计的教堂都是遵从这所学校教授的建筑原则和思想体系，这便解释了为什么中国北方的这些红砖教堂如同圣必崖，宣化教堂看上去像是19世纪下半叶并且由于追溯到13世纪比利时斯海尔德河地区的教堂风格。圣必崖是圣母圣心会的一处乡村小教堂，而宣化教堂则是一座位于城市的法国遣使会教堂，它更为华丽和尊贵，并于1926年升级为主教座
Samenvatting

Export van Vlaamse gotiek naar China: betekenis en context van de kerken van Shebiya (Binnen-Mongolië) en Xuanhua (Hebei) gebouwd door missionaris-architect Alphonse De Moerloose in 1903-1906


Résumé

Du gothique de Flandre exporté en Chine: la signification et le contexte des églises de Shebiya (Mongolie intérieure) et de Xuanhua (Hebei) bâties par le missionnaire-architecte Alphonse De Moerloose en 1903-1906

La Congrégation du Cœur Immaculé de Marie (C.I.C.M.), également appelée congrégation des pères de Scheut ou des Scheutistes, fut fondée à Bruxelles par le père Théophile Verbist en 1862. La congrégation reçut de Rome la mission d’évangéliser les vastes espaces de la Mongolie et organisa progressivement ce territoire en quatre vicariats apostoliques : la Mongolie centrale, la Mongolie du sud-ouest, la Mongolie orientale et le Gansu. Les Scheutistes furent actifs dans le nord de la Chine pendant 90 ans, soit de 1865 à 1955.


L’œuvre du père De Moerloose s’inscrivait parfaitement dans le modèle missionnaire eurocentrique antérieur à la Première Guerre mondiale, mais fit progressivement l’objet de critique venant de plusieurs parts. Si les missionnaires trouvaient l’esthétique néo-gothique très belle, ils estimaient toutefois qu’elle n’était pas adaptée aux rigueurs du climat de Mongolie : à cause des grandes fenêtres et des hautes voûtes en bois, on gelait dans les églises en hiver et on y suffoquait en été. De Rome vint une autre forme de critique suite à la nouvelle politique missionnaire de l’Église catholique, telle que définie en 1919 par le pape Benoît XV dans son encyclique Maximum illud. Condamnant le comportement colonial occidental, le pape insistait notamment sur la nécessité de l’intégration de tous les aspects de la culture locale ainsi que le développement d’un clergé local. En 1922, Rome envoya en Chine l’archevêque Celso Costantini qui y implémenta la nouvelle politique missionnaire à partir du Premier Synode chinois de Shanghai en 1924. Convaincu de l’importance de l’art, Costantini encouragea le développement d’un art et d’une architecture chrétiens chinois. Ce promoteur de l’inculturation ne pouvait pas être un adepte du néo-gothique. Inversement, le père De Moerloose, comme la plupart des missionnaires durant le long XIXe siècle, était convaincu de la supériorité de sa culture occidentale et chrétienne sur toutes les autres cultures. En tant qu’ultramontain, il était en outre convaincu que le gothique de Pugin et de Saint-Luc était le seul style architectural qui convenait à l’Église, partout dans le monde. Pourtant, à partir du milieu des années 1920, le paradigme médiéval des écoles Saint-Luc appartenait définitivement au passé, tant en Belgique qu’en Chine.
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