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PIERRE PETIT & VANESSA FRANGVILLE *

CATHOLIC MEDALS WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS: FROM MISSIONARY PROPAGANDA TO OUR LADY OF CHINA ^[1]

Abstract – For over half a century, Catholic devotional medals inscribed with Chinese characters have attracted the attention of numismatists. Their common argument is that such medals were commissioned in France by missionaries working in China to distribute to the new converts. Recontextualizing these objects characterized by a mixture of sinograms with iconographies of the 19th century is indeed challenging. Based on an extensive corpus of 340 medals from various collections, research in missionary archives in Paris and Rome, and a careful examination of the epigraphy, we argue that most of these medals were not intended for Chinese converts, but to sustain the propaganda of the Holy Childhood Association, a 19th-century French society promoting the missionary cause among children of the Catholic world, reaching eventually millions of members. The society ceased producing these medals at the turn of the 20th century, but other institutions have taken over the minting of Chinese Catholic medals up to the present.

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[1] The arguments of this article were presented at the Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium (19/11/2022) and also at the Société Française de Numismatique (7/11/2022) – a summary of the latter has already been published in the *Bulletin de la SFN* (Petit & Frangville 2022). The present article owes much to all those who answered our requests from various institutions or private collections, some of whom spent hours or even days helping us. Our research was received with enthusiasm by many, and their positive reception was instrumental in refining our corpus and our ideas, and in supporting our involvement in this unusual topic. We warmly thank all of them: Cécile Arnould (National Museum of History and Art, Luxembourg), Virginie Bergeret-Maes (Municipal Library of Versailles), Hélène Cambier (Diocesan Museum of Namur), Philippe Charnotet (Carnavalet Museum, Paris), Julien Cougnard (SFN), Béatrice Coullare (Paris Mint), Joe Cribb (University of Oxford/British Museum), Rebecca Duffeix (Gadagne Museum, Lyon), Marie-Alpais Dumoulin (France-Asia Research Institute IRFA, Paris), Eleonora Giampiccolo (Vatican Library), Vincent Haegele (Municipal Library of Versailles), Lyce Jankowski (Mariemont Museum), Aurélie Lemaire (Museum of Walloon Life, Liège), Jan Moens (Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium), Laurent Simon, Fran Stroobants (Royal Library of Belgium), Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven), Sun Jin (Université libre de Bruxelles), François Thierry (National Library of France), David Thisquen, Sr. Roberta Tremarelli (Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood, Vatican), Giulia Valli (Museum of Castello Sforzesco, Milan), David Vassy, Helen Wang (British Museum), Yuan Wei (Xiamen University).

PART I: THE 'SINO-CHRISTIAN MEDALS' AS A NUMISMATIC ISSUE

Charles Lefebure's 'medal of the little Chinese'

ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1920, the Brussels Coin Cabinet of the Royal Library of Belgium received a donation from Charles Lefebure, former employee of the Cabinet and renowned numismatist of the Great War.^[2] His gift, however, was unrelated to patriotic medals, as indicated in the Cabinet's inventory:

'Inventory nr. II 9821. Gift by Ch. Lefebure. Religious medal. Medal of the 'little Chinese' (*Médaille des 'petits Chinois'*) (1864), silver, 14 × 17 mm, in a medallion.'



Fig. 1 – KBR II 9821 (EE138 1/2). ©: P. Petit (scale 200%)

This small silver devotional medal is sealed in a glass-like paste and encased in a gold-plated locket with a suspension loop. On the obverse,^[3] the Virgin Mary wears a robe and holds the Infant Jesus in her arms; the latter points his right arm in the direction of the radiant heart of his mother. On the reverse, St Joseph holds a lily in his right hand and holds his robe with his left one. His head is topped with a halo, and the letters FJ appear in the exergue. Legends in Chinese on both sides are written vertically from top to bottom and ordered right-to-left: 'Great Patron of China' (right), 'Pray for us' (left).

^[2] Lefebure's monograph on patriotic medals produced in Belgium during the First World War (Lefebure 1923) remains a point of reference until the present. See Vanden Bosch (n.d.) for Lefebure's biography.

^[3] As a convention in this article, we define the obverse as the side featuring either Christ or the most important religious figure. When Christ appears alone on one side and as a child with his mother Mary on the other, the latter side is considered as the obverse.

Left (2)	←	Right (1)
為 我 等 祈	↓	中 國 大 主 保

This layout, without punctuation, is typical of imperial China, before left-to-right and horizontally-orientated writing became more widely spread from the early 20th century on. While pairing vertical lines in couplets is a central feature of Chinese classical poetry and literature, each line usually includes an identical number of characters to create an aesthetic and semantic parallelism, a convention requirement that is not met on the reverse of this medal (the observe will be discussed later in this article).

The medal was dated 1864, according to Lefebure's comment. Precisely one year earlier, in 1863, on the other side of the world, Chinese numismatist Wang Xiqi 王錫榮 (1833-1870) completed his catalogue, the *Quan huo hui kao* 泉貨匯考 (*A general study of coins*), which includes rubbings of three Catholic devotional medals with Chinese writing.^[4] Each rubbing comes with a handwritten notice by Wang, who briefly indicates their shapes and sizes, transcribes the Chinese characters surrounding what he vaguely depicts as 'standing figures', and compares them to Chinese amulets. Wang does not seem to connect these medals to Christianity, nor does he give any indication of their provenance. One of them, though, might catch our attention (*Fig. 2*).

This medal is identical to Lefebure's – except for the presence of dots after the letters F and J, and also the absence of a locket in Wang's specimen. The comparison is even more striking considering that the rubbing in Wang's collection dates from the late 1850s and early 1860s while Lefebure mentions 1864 as the date of his specimen – and Lefebure being a scrupulous numismatist, we have every reason to trust him.

[4] In Chinese, the family name always comes before the given name, meaning that here, Wang is the family name and Xiqi the given name. Wang's catalogue, established between 1858 and 1863, was not originally intended for publication but rather as a personal directory (Jankowski 2018: 77, 368). The copy we refer to here is the 1924 Shanghai print version of this unpublished manuscript, available at the National Library of France – BnF, inventory number 'Chinois 11309'. Christian medals with Chinese writing are found on the penultimate page of leaflet 11.



Fig. 2 – Wang 1863. ©: BnF (scale 200%)

The ‘social life’ of these two medals, in the hands of two numismatists living on opposite ends of the Eurasian continent, would surely be fascinating, but we can only speculate in the absence of more detailed information. Similarly puzzling is the unusual mixture of Chinese characters and Christian figures on these medals. It is not surprising that these enigmatic medals aroused curiosity among numismatists, who attempted to contextualize these hybrid objects, as highlighted below.

State of the art

Catholic medals inscribed with Chinese characters have attracted the attention for a long time. In 1896, Dutch numismatist Jacobus Anne van der Chijs wrote a catalogue describing the coin and medal collection of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, a learned society established in the capital of the Dutch East Indies, Batavia, now Jakarta. The last item in the section about Chinese amulets is described this way:

Small oval medal with a bail at the top. Obverse: The Virgin Mary with Child Jesus and around them: ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the children of the heathens.’ Reverse: St Joseph with the inscription: ‘St Joseph, great protector of China, pray for us.’ – The Chinese characters are not always clear; hence the translation is not certain (van der Chijs 1896, p. 59).^[5]

Unfortunately, the catalogue is not illustrated, and we are left to speculate about the exact appearance of the medal described by van der Chijs.^[6]

^[5] *Kleine, ovale penning met een oogje aan den bovenkant. Voorzijde: de maagd Maria met het kind Jezus en daaromheen in het Chineesch: Heilige moeder Maria, bid voor ons en voor de kinderen der heidenen. Keerzijde: de H. Joseph met het omschrift: Heilige Joseph, groote beschermheer van China, bid voor ons. – De Chineesche teekens zijn niet alle duidelijk, waardoor de vertaling niet geheel zeker is.*

^[6] Based on the description and translation by van der Chijs, the medal could be Type 2.15, 2.16, 2.17 or 2.19 of our typology. As Latin letters in the exergue, if any, would probably have been mentioned by van der Chijs, we assume that the medal should be of Type 2.16 or 2.19.

Seven decades later, a British collector of East Asian amulets, Frank A. Turk,^[7] published a series of articles on Chinese amulets in *Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin* (Turk 1967-1968; 1968; 1969a; 1969b). He discusses two types of medals that he thinks are Christian. The first type is a medal from the Glover collection published by Lockhart (1895, p. 190, no 1899); however, based on the medal's Confucian legend and its heraldic imagery, it seems very doubtful that this was intended as a Christian medal.^[8] The second type mentioned by Turk is substantiated by a picture of a medal from the National Gallery of Adelaide, the very first one to be published after Wang's rubbings (Turk 1969a, p. 348 and pl. 74). It corresponds to Type 2.19 of our typology. Turk duly links this medal to the Batavia specimen described by van der Chijs. He also provides the first hypothesis about the origin of these 'Sino-Christian' medals: he asserts that, based on the iconography of the crowned Madonna and Joseph holding a lily, such medals were issued by the 'Nuns of the Order of Carmelite'; and more precisely by the 'Carmel of St Joseph at Tu-tzu-wei' (in Shanghai)^[9] sometime between 1869 and 1895 (Turk 1969a, p. 349). Turk's arguments were criticized by another specialist of Asian talismans, Alfred Theodore Arber-Cooke, in the columns of *Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin*. Arber-Cooke instead suggested that these medals should be considered 'as a relic of the Jesuit mission' that 'could belong to almost any date between 1583 and 1949', although probably not in the early years of the Jesuits' presence in China (Arber-Cooke 1969, p. 385; 1970, p. 53).

Joe Cribb took the discussion a step further when he published two papers, one in Italian (1978), one in English (1981), about the 'Christian medals used in China'. The Italian paper covers not only medals but also crucifixes, which are not included in the British version. The corpus covered by Cribb includes both medals written in Chinese alongside Christian medals written in Latin characters and described by Chinese numismatists like Wang. Cribb's research is the first state of the art on the topic. He discusses twelve specimens belonging to six relevant types of Catholic devotional medals. His corpus is mostly based on the collections of the British Museum and of the Municipal Library of Versailles, on Wang's rubbings, and on the specimens mentioned by Turk. One of the strengths of Cribb's article is to provide precise and accurate Chinese transcriptions and translations.

[7] About Frank A. Turk, see the *Newsletter of the Oriental Numismatic Society*, 1999, 161, p. 2, and the British Museum website (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/B10G_150858).

[8] In two short comment articles, Arber-Cooke (1969, 1970) criticizes Turk's over-interpretation of this medal as a Christian one. We too are not convinced by Cribb's identification of the bird on the reverse as the dove of the London Missionary Society (Cribb 1981, p. 9-10).

[9] Tu-tzu-wei (Shanghainese pronunciation) or Tushan wan in mandarin (土山灣) is located in the city of Shanghai, in the area also known as Zikawei (see next footnote), close to the St Ignatius Cathedral of Shanghai. It is famous for its orphanage and vocational school of the same name directed by Jesuits from 1864 to 1949. The buildings are now home to a museum on the history of the school.

Cribb formulates a hypothesis akin to those of Turk and Arber-Cooke: he argues that Catholic medals using Chinese characters were ‘made in France, in the mid-nineteenth century ... for the Chinese missions of the Vincentians ... for bestowal on native Christian converted by the missionaries’ (1981, p. 9; see also Cribb 1978, p. 16). This attribution is explained by the fact that after 1815, the Jesuits lost their leadership among Catholic missions in China to the benefit of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, a French missionary order founded by St Vincent de Paul, also called the Vincentians or ‘Lazaristes’. As for the function of the medals – a bestowal to the Chinese converts – Cribb deduced it from the legend of one medal (Type 2.4 in our corpus) that refers to the Virgin as ‘the protector of converts’ (1981, p. 8-9).

The last contribution on the topic is by François Thierry. In line with the work of van der Chijs and Turk, Thierry lists Catholic medals in his publications dedicated to Chinese amulets (Thierry 1987, 2008 and 2021). His comments are mostly based on two specimens from the French National Library and on the rubbings from Wang. In his early reference to such a medal, Thierry argues that ‘it was probably produced in Zikawei by the Jesuits’ (1987, p. 53)^[10], while his latest assumption is that such Catholic medals ‘appeared with the missionaries of the 19th century [...] They were nearly all produced in the workshops of Lyon around the middle of the 19th century [...] They are simply Saint-Sulpician medals on which French or Latin legends have been translated into Chinese’ (2021, p. 236-237). Here again, the main argument is that the medals were produced in France for the use of the Chinese converts.^[11]

The remaining references are more disparate: six medals of the same kind are registered in the numismatic Cabinet of the Castello Sforzesco, in Milan, and described by Rodolfo Martini (2009, vol. 2.1, p. 352-353, vol. 2.3, plates 119-120); another one is recorded in a Capuchin collection in Reggio Emilia (Garuti 1996, p. 99 n. 79); and a medal was found in an archaeological context in a Maryland (USA) Jesuit plantation, which allows archaeologist Masur (2021, p. 403) to argue that it was probably ‘intended for the Jesuits’ Chinese missions’.

The generic argument is that these medals were produced in France in the 19th century and sent to missionary orders operating in China (possibly the Vincentians or the Jesuits) who likely bestowed them on the new converts. Indeed, it seems common sense that the medals are French, given that their pattern is similar to that of French devotional medals in the 19th century and

^[10] Zikawei is the Shanghainese pronunciation of Xu jia hui 徐家匯, an area of Shanghai that belonged to a Chinese convert and scholar named Xu and where many Jesuits settled after the 1840s.

^[11] The mention of the city of Lyon owes to Cribb’s hypothesis that the letters ‘P.D.’ that appear on the medals of Type 2.19 are the initials of Philippe Durand, an engraver who worked in Lyon, a city that played a major role in the production of devotional medals during that period (Cribb 1981, p. 9).

that Latin letters appear on some of them, in a period when French missionaries were predominant in China. In addition, scholars have taken it for granted that the medals were devoted to the new converts, given their Chinese inscriptions.

However, this argument can be questioned for several reasons. Oddly enough, these medals are conserved in numismatic cabinets of different European countries, but they never belong to collections originating from China. Further, how can we explain the recurring appearance of such medals on online sales sites like eBay or Etsy, and on detectorists' websites in France and Italy? Why have they also reached the USA, where one specimen was found in the archaeological context referred to above? And, in contrast, except for those mentioned by Wang (1863), why don't the medals appear in Chinese numismatic publications? We have not been able to find any specimen in the catalogues of the major auction houses operating in the Far East.

Addressing this multifaceted issue requires a multidisciplinary approach. The two authors collaborated along the following work divide. Pierre Petit constituted the numismatic corpus of medals based on various sources, including visits to or contacts with different coin and medal cabinets. He also conducted archival research in missionary institutions in France and in the Vatican City. Vanessa Frangville oversaw the study of sources written in Chinese, the epigraphic and philologic research relating to the legends on the medals, and the contextualization of missions and Christianity in China.

Building the corpus

The active production of the corpus started in 2021, and involved research in coin cabinets, on online sales sites and detectorist websites (including Chinese-language websites), contacts with collectors, and a literature review.

The boundaries of the corpus have been strictly defined. All medals in the corpus: display text written in Chinese (although they sometimes also include a few letters or a word in the Latin alphabet); relate to the Catholic Church; and have a devotional nature – in the sense that they are designed to be a support to religious practice, not to commemorate Christian personalities or institutions.^[12] A bail, or suspension loop, that allows the medal to be carried on a chain or a cord, or to tie it to clothes, is a useful indication of its devotional use: all specimens in the corpus have (or had) such a loop. We have not included objects that shared only some of these features, like award medals of Christian institutions (notably schools); touristic and commemorative medals; Protestant religious tokens; or Christian medals made in China but with no Chinese characters. We only included medals for which we have a picture or a drawing, except for those that we were able to access in person in the trays

^[12] We adhere here to the restrictive definition of religious medals given by Dancoisne in his early monograph on the topic (1880, p. 5-6).

of the Department of Coins and Medals of the Royal Library of Belgium. All information about the corpus was collected on an Access file, which proved useful to integrate written and visual information on all relevant specimens.

Our corpus eventually extended to include 340 specimens. This figure is of course far higher than the Catholic devotional medals with Chinese characters featured in literature previously, such as the three medals of Wang, the two medals of Turk or the twelve medals of Cribb. The reasons for this major difference will be discussed in our conclusion, but one factor is the development of online sales sites and of detectorist websites which has greatly impacted the visibility of some artefacts that were previously under the radar of scholars as they did not fit with the usual fields of numismatics and have not been systematically collected until now.

The specimens in our corpus are all related to a specific collection or source of information, as illustrated in the next figure:

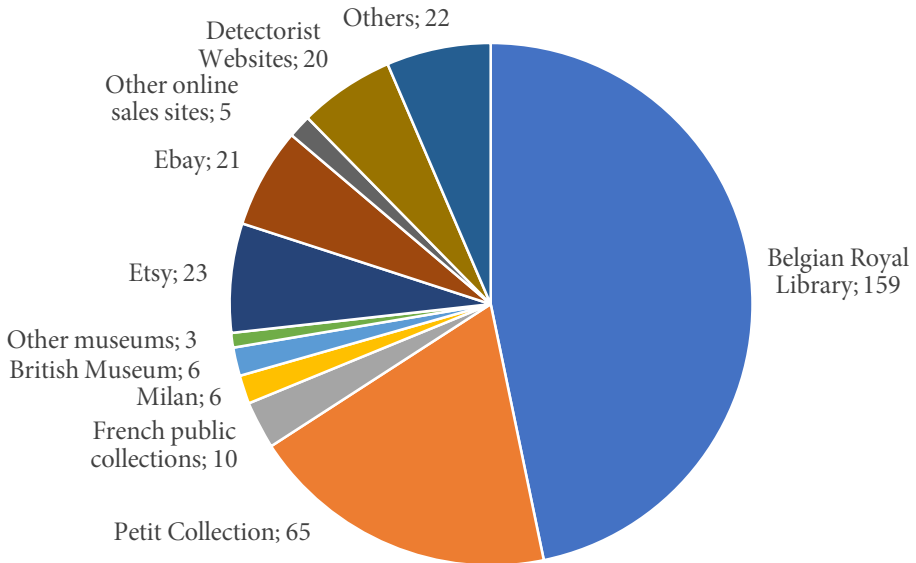


Fig. 3 – Corpus according to the location/source of the medals

The Department of Coins and Medals of the Royal Library of Belgium holds 159 items, nearly half of the total amount of the corpus (340). This came as a surprise, especially when this figure is compared to the low number of such medals from other institutions: 5 in the Municipal Library of Versailles, 2 in the French National Library, 2 in the Mint of Paris coin cabinet, 1 in the Carnavalet Museum in Paris, 6 in the numismatic cabinet of Castello Sforzesco (Milan), 6 in the British Museum, 1 in the Capuchin collection of Reggio Emilia,

1 in the Museum of Walloon Life (Liège), and 1 in the National Gallery of Adelaide.^[13]

Pierre Petit's personal collection was assembled over recent years from online sales websites or numismatic fairs (43 specimens), and from exchanges with, or gifts from Laurent Simon, an enthusiastic and friendly collector of religious medals (21 specimens), and from Julien Cougnard (1 specimen).

Navigating sites such as Etsy, eBay, Delcampe and TodoColeccion was instrumental in the research. Pictures of relevant specimens were downloaded from these sales websites and added to the corpus. Some specimens were bought and included in the collection of P. Petit (and are hence included in this category above); while others (49 specimens) are still online or were bought by other collectors and are no longer visible.

Detectorist websites turned out to be a valuable source of information as well. Twenty relevant medals are reported on them, one in Italy and nineteen in France. Among the latter is a 'hoard' of ten similar medals, and a medal of Type 2.8 seen only in this one unique specimen.

A residual group includes 22 specimens: 3 published by Wang (1863), 1 published by Masur (2021), 8 presently and 2 formerly in private collections, 4 appearing on a Chinese Website (Catholic Decoration and Art Studio), 3 on blogs and social networks, and 1 appearing on the oriental numismatic Website Zeno.ru.

A further interesting fact is the last known provenance (by country) of the medals. This information is available for 320 medals in our corpus.^[14]

Country	Number of specimens	Country	Number of specimens
Belgium	186	Spain	6
France	68	Romania	3
USA	20	Ireland	2
China	10	Australia	1
Italy	8	Austria	1
UK	7	Japan	1
Netherlands	6	Russia	1

Table 1 – Corpus sorted according to the last known provenance of the medals

^[13] Other coin cabinets and museums were contacted but reported having no relevant medal. These included: the coin cabinet of the Vatican; the coin cabinet of the Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon; the Gadagne Museum in Lyon; the Diocesan Museum of Namur; the Grande Ardenne Museum in Bastogne; the Archaeological Society of Namur; the National Museum of History and Art in Luxembourg.

^[14] The information has been lost for 20 medals, mostly of the Petit Collection, due to a software error. The great majority of these medals came from Belgium and France.

In fact, this table largely duplicates the former one, and the 186 medals from Belgium are mostly accounted for by the 159 specimens of the Royal Library of Belgium. But the table also provides new information: France appears much more important than might be predicted from its very limited public collections listed above. The USA also gains visibility in the above table, mostly due to one specific type of medals (Type 1.2) reported in that country only. The great majority of countries in the table belong to the old Catholic world. By comparison, China is not a highly significant provenance in the list, with three medals published by Wang and seven 21st-century medals.

Typology

The 340 medals are classified into nine groups subdivided into thirty-three types. These groups are based on iconography, defined as a recurring set of symbols and images associated with a devotional representation (like the well-known Miraculous Medal, or the *Salvator Mundi*) – a prototype, in fact. Such iconographic groups include one or several medal type(s), that is, a set of physical medals – or specimens – that are similar in their engraving and their legend, regardless of metal, size, and strike. Minor differences – like the presence or absence of dots between letters; misplaced letters; or details of design due to the degenerative reproduction of matrixes – are considered as variants within a single type. Each type is labelled with two figures separated by a dot: the first number indicates the group; the second one indicates the type inside this group. Thus ‘Type 2.6’ refers to the sixth medal type within the second iconographic group.

	Number of types	Number of specimens
Group 1: Miraculous Medal	2	16
Group 2: Virgin & Child / St Joseph	19	306
Group 3: St Joseph & Infant Christ / Immaculate Conception	3	6
Group 4: Our Lady of China	4	7
Group 5: <i>Salvator Mundi</i>	1	1
Group 6: Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary	1	1
Group 7: Mary Help of Christians	1	1
Group 8: Our Lady of Fatima	1	1
Group 9: First communion	1	1
Total	33	340

Table 2 – Corpus sorted according to groups and types

Group 1 includes two types of the Miraculous Medal, the most famous Catholic devotional medal, designed after the reported apparition of the Holy Virgin to Catherine Labouré in 1830. The obverse of these medals shows the Immaculate Conception, while the reverse shows the Virgin's monogram above her and her son's hearts. The great success of this French medal since its first mintage in 1832 explains why it was translated into different languages, including Chinese. The first type of this medal in our corpus dates to the late 1830s, and is signed by the engraver Vachette. The second type was made in the USA in the second half of the 20th century.

Group 2 is by far the most extensive in terms of the number of types and specimens of medal. This group includes the medals of Lefebure and Wang that we presented in our introductory vignette. On these medals, the obverse features the Holy Virgin holding the Infant Jesus in her arms. On the reverse, St Joseph stands holding a lily in his right hand as a symbol of his purity. The great majority of these medals are rather small format, about 21 mm high and 14 mm wide. A variety of legends praising the Virgin and Joseph are written on their respective sides. Made in silver, copper and brass but never in aluminium, these medals were probably all minted during the 19th century. Due to its importance, this group of medals will be discussed in detail in Part II of the present article.

Group 3 presents a variation on the theme of the Holy Family depicted on the medals of Group 2: the Infant Jesus appears now with St Joseph, who still holds a lily. On the reverse is a representation of the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal. These medals are scarcer and larger than those in the preceding group but share more or less the same design, and also date to the 19th century. One of them is signed by the French engraver Pierre Roquelay and was minted by the Paris Mint between 1845 and 1860.

Group 4 comprises medals showing the iconic representation of 'Our Lady of China', a painting that gained much success in the early 20th century, after the Boxers uprising (1899-1901 – see Part III for more details). Two types of medal, probably produced between the 1920s and the 1950s, are made in aluminium, while two others are more recent creations of Chinese workshops, which demonstrates that Chinese Catholics are still using such devotional objects.

Groups 5 to 9 each include only one type: Jesus as *Salvator Mundi* (saviour of the world) on the obverse and his mother on the reverse; the Holy Virgin and the Christ with their Sacred Hearts; Mary Help of Christians; the Virgin of Fatima; and the sacrament of the First Communion. The first two medals probably date to the first half of the 20th century, while the latter three are recent creations by the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio of Shanghai.

Due to its length, and for the readers' convenience, our corpus is presented in detail in Part III of this article, which describes the 33 types that we have classified, including tentative information on provenance and iconography. Part II will first explore issues of more general and analytical relevance.

PART II: THE MEDALS OF GROUP 2 AND THE HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

Rather than aiming at an in-depth description of all types and subtypes, the present article seeks to provide an overall argument about the origins, production, recipients and chronology of these medals, and to suggest a methodology for further research. More than forty years after Joe Cribb's state of the art, a wide-ranging reconsideration is needed. To do so, this section, Part II – which develops the main argument of this article – will focus on the medals of Group 2 as they represent the very large majority (around 90%) of our corpus. Their role is therefore central in any discussion on Christian medals with Chinese characters.

Missionary propaganda

Group 2 contains medals representing the Virgin and the Infant Jesus on the obverse, and St Joseph holding a lily on the reverse. Although Chinese inscriptions may slightly vary, they all call on St Joseph's protection, as the Great Patron of China (see the example provided above in the introduction). Indeed, after St Joseph was declared Patron of the Chinese missions in 1678, several churches, seminars, institutions, and congregations in China were dedicated to him (Filas 1946, p. 178).

The obverse of medals from Group 2 shows the Holy Virgin and the Infant Jesus, surrounded by Chinese characters on each side (to be read from right to left and top to bottom).



Fig. 4 – BnF (©), MMA.2004-393, 21 × 14 mm (scale 200%)

Contrary to Chinese writing conventions, these ten characters do not form two distinct parallel sentences of five characters each, but together make up one sentence cut in two. Breaking up the text in this way is rather awkward and non-conventional as it separates 異 (bottom right) and 民 (top left) that together should form a single word. The whole statement, 為我等及異民的嬰孩祈, can be translated as 'Pray for us and for the small children of the infidels/the pagans'. While the formulation 'pray for us' is quite common, two words here deserve our attention, as they are specific to the medals in Group 2: 異民 *yimin* or pagan, and 嬰孩 *yinghai* or toddler/small children.

Yimin is composed of two characters: the first, *yi* (異), means 'different, strange, unusual or foreign', while the second *min* (民) means 'people'. *Yi* often denotes an anomaly and has a negative connotation. 異族 *yizu*, for instance, can be translated as 'barbarians' or refer to those who are outside the Chinese cultural sphere (including Westerners). Based on this character *yi*, Christian missionaries created a neologism for those outside of the Christian civilizational sphere or those who do not share the Christian faith, combining *yi* as 'aliens' with *min* as 'people', to refer to 'pagans' or 'infidels'.^[15] It is therefore fair to assume that, outside of the (marginal and often illiterate) Christian community in China, no Chinese reader would understand the meaning of *yimin*, and that this word was even likely to be associated with Westerners rather than non-converted (Chinese) people.

Yinghai, on the other hand, literally means infants and newborns. It does not refer to children in general, but to small children under three years old. The word for Infant Jesus, for instance, is often translated as *Yinghai Yesu*. In the context of the Chinese missions in the 19th century, one may wonder why the Holy Virgin is called on to pray for infants specifically.

This semantic clarification is more significant than it may seem and put us on a different track from that of our predecessors. Indeed, our argument is that the reference to 'children/infants/toddlers of the unfaithful' or 'pagan/infidel children' deserves more consideration than it has received up to now. The scholarly literature on the topic, so far, has assumed that these medals were produced for missionaries in China and handed to the faithful after their conversion. Such an assumption makes sense, considering the Chinese inscriptions: for who other than Chinese converts could they be intended for? However, this suggests that the 'us' in 'pray for us and for the pagan children' refers to the new converts. Yet one may also wonder why the fate of pagan children should be of concern to the Chinese converts, as the focus of early missionaries was rather on strengthening and stabilizing conversions to the new faith.

It is therefore critical to resituate our research object in the European missionary discourses of the 19th century. Specifically, the reference to 'pagan children' should be familiar here. 'Pagan children' were the central concern of a very important Catholic association whose agenda appears explicitly in its name: the 'Charitable institution of the Holy Childhood, or the association of Christian children for redemption of the children of infidels in China, and in other pagan countries' – in French: 'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance ou Association des enfants chrétiens pour le rachat des enfants infidèles en Chine et dans les autres pays idolâtres' (Anon. 1843a & 1843b).

^[15] François Thierry notes that *yimin* is connected to the concepts of *yiduan* 異端 (superstition) and *yijiaoren* 異教人 (member of heterodox religions), and suggests 'heterodox peoples' (*populations hérétiques*) as a literal translation for *yimin*, which also denotes non-conformity (Thierry 2021, p. 237).



Figs. 5 & 6 – Membership cards of the Holy Childhood Association. Petit Col. (©). The card on the left is an early copy from the 1840s. It shows Forbin-Janson rescuing pagan children from pigs and dogs, with the help of young members of the association. On the card on the right, two nuns rescue Chinese children abandoned on the riverside while a monk walks hand in hand with two of them. In a cloud above an exotic Chinese landscape, the Infant Jesus welcomes the soul of a dead Chinese child, flanked on each side by the souls of White and Chinese children.

This Catholic association, whose outreach was fully globalized (Harrison 2008; Kaell 2020), was founded in 1843 by the bishop of Nancy, Mgr Forbin-Janson (1785-1844) (Rossignol 1993, Anon. 1940, *Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1846, p. 1-32). This forceful personality was deeply influenced by the missionary momentum that took place in France from the 1820s on, after the Napoleonic wars that had severed the country from its overseas expansions. The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris) was at that time the main actor of this process, and China was the focus of a missionary emulation edified by the stories of martyrs who perished while on missions. Forbin-Janson himself travelled as a preacher to the USA and to Canada, but he was, however, denied the right to go to China by his hierarchy. The creation of the association of the Holy Childhood is partly related to the resulting frustration.

The aim and the operating system of the Holy Childhood Association were inspired by another missionary support institution, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (*Société pour la propagation de la foi*), established in 1822 in Lyon by Pauline Jaricot (Masson 2019; *Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1846, p. 24-28). Associate members organized in teams of ten provided monthly alms to support the missionaries working in China and elsewhere. The benefits were gathered in a bottom-up fashion, along successive levels, until they reached the central office which redistributed the funds to missionary orders.

Forbin-Janson implemented a similar system, targeted at children who had not yet had their First Communion (to avoid competition with the Propagation of the Faith) (Anon. 1843, p. 25). Teams of twelve French children were supposed to contribute 5 centimes (*'un sou'*) every month, a sum that was handed on along the successive platforms of the institution as described for the Propagation of the Faith. This fund was used for 'poor little Chinese children', to save them from death and to baptize them. In sum, the Holy Childhood was a charity institution designed for Catholic children (and of course, their parents) to help and 'save' Chinese children. Thanks to effective use of religious propaganda – images, medals, literature, public lotteries, liturgic celebrations – the Holy Childhood Association became very successful, numbering millions of members across the world (mostly in Europe, but also in America and elsewhere) within a decade, as we will see later.

We argue that the medals in Group 2 – that is, around 90% of our corpus, and more than 95% of the specimens dated to the 19th century – were produced for the Holy Childhood Association and were used as rewards for the commitment of the young associates.

Our argument was initially based on a propaganda leaflet of the Holy Childhood published by Forbin-Janson in 1843. The text reveals that, a few months after the creation of the Association, medals were sold to the members, to provide funding for the missions:

“One can also find [in the central office of the association] nice medals in copper, silver and vermeil, portraying on one side the Blessed Virgin holding the Infant Jesus in her arms, with this exergue: 'Virgin Mary! Pray for us and for the poor little pagan children'; on the other, Saint Joseph, a lily branch in his right hand, with this exergue: 'Saint Joseph! Great protector of China, pray for us'. To prevent any attempt at forgery, a despicable act that would be particularly harmful for victims whose salvation is the object of our association, each illustration and medal will include the initials F.J. These various objects are sold for the benefit of the Association at the price of 10 centimes for a silvered copper medal; 15 centimes for a gilded copper one; 1 franc for a silver one; 1 franc 25 centimes for the vermeil one.’^[16]

^[16] In the original French version: 'On y trouve aussi [...] de jolies médailles en cuivre, argent et vermeil, présentant, d'un côté, l'effigie de la Sainte-Vierge, tenant en ses bras l'enfant Jésus,

This description refers clearly to the medals of Group 2, heralded by the medal of the ‘little Chinese’ of Lefebure discussed in our introduction. The letters ‘F.J.’ – the initials of Forbin-Janson – appear on three types in this group, but only medals of Type 2.1 are widely distributed (with 19 specimens in our corpus). They are most likely to be the original production of the Association described in the 1843 leaflet.

Another piece of evidence appears fifteen years later in the bimonthly journal of the Holy Childhood Association. In 1859, the journal describes the medals as follows: ‘Each of these medals represents, on one side, the Holy Virgin holding the Infant Jesus, and, on the other, Saint Joseph. The two sides are surrounded by Chinese legends.’^[17]

Worldwide distribution

The medals described here were distributed internationally through the Association’s networks, mostly in the Catholic countries of Europe and, to a lesser extent, of North America. This is very clear from the annual reports that the Holy Childhood Association published in its *Annals* to publicize its benefits (from the various local/national extensions) and its expenses (operating costs in Paris and credits awarded to the overseas missions). Table 3 below is based on the data available from 1852 to 1857. The operating costs during that period were described in detail, including the number of medals sent to different countries or areas.

It is very clear that during that period, the medals were mostly supplied to European Catholic countries – with France in the lead, followed by Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. As for non-European destinations, North America comes first, due to the strong presence of the Holy Childhood Association in the United States and in Canada. The rest of the world received a very limited number of medals in comparison. The 34,166 medals supplied to Asian destinations represent only 1% of the total number of medals. Most of these were probably sent not to China, but to the Asian Catholic communities that contributed to the funding of the Association, either in the Ottoman empire (notably Smyrna, Beirut, Aintoura) or in India (notably Pondicherry).^[18] We have

avec cet exergue : Vierge Marie ! Priez pour nous et pour les pauvres petits enfants infidèles ; de l’autre, saint Joseph, une branche de lys dans sa main droite, avec cet exergue : Saint Joseph ! grand protecteur de la Chine, priez pour nous. Pour prévenir toute tentative d’une contrefaçon d’autant plus odieuse qu’elle porterait préjudice à tant de pauvres victimes dont le salut est l’objet spécifique de l’Œuvre, on est averti que chaque carte et chaque médaille est marquée des initiales F.J. Ces divers objets se vendent au profit de l’Œuvre et au prix de 10 cent. la médaille en cuivre argenté ; 15 cent. celle en cuivre doré ; 1 fr. celle en argent ; 1 fr. 25 cent. celle en vermeil’ (Anon. 1843a, p.31).

^[17] In the original French version: ‘Chacune de ces Médailles représente, d’un côté, la Sainte Vierge tenant l’enfant Jésus, et, de l’autre, saint Joseph. Les deux côtés sont entourés d’inscriptions chinoises’ (*Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1859, p. 360).

^[18] As can be read in the yearly accounts published by the *Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* (for example: 1855, p. 271; 1883, p. 171).

not found any mention of these medals being sent to China, even if some of them did reach this destination, as attested by the rubbings of Wang (1863).

Supplied to	Year						Total 1852-57
	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	
Paris	32,233	54,042	45,456	53,973	37,803	48,425	271,932
Other French dioceses	234,290	287,088	297,576	316,515	268,299	308,118	1,711,886
Italy	2,014	26,734	60,200	63,504	135,086	248,878	536,416
Belgium	54,187	33,987	13,644	43,800	49,585	62,825	258,028
Spain and Portugal	500	180,374	6,700	5,100		304	192,978
Switzerland			4,300	18,575	18,900	19,850	61,625
Austria, Prussia, Germany	200	2,364	4,160	10,000	6		16,730
British Isles	1,678					14,500	16,178
Netherlands					625		625
Other European countries	20,874	13,879	14,723	22,335	200	1,244	73,255
America	5,938	11,050	60,235	16,417	55,100	44,120	192,860
Africa	1,350		400	39,270	9,450		50,470
Asia	1,061	7,325	17,005		4,400	4,375	34,166
Total	354,325	616,843	524,399	589,489	579,454	752,639	3,417,149

Table 3 – Number of medals supplied by the Holy Childhood Association, by country/area and by year, 1852-1857.

Source: yearly reports, Annales de la Sainte-Enfance.

An extensive typology

The occurrence of no less than 19 different types of medal in Group 2 is surprising and deserves some explanation. The 19 types differ greatly in terms of the number of specimens, and four types stand out among others that otherwise include only one, two or three specimen(s).

Type 2.1: 19 specimens. With the letters ‘F.J.’ in the exergue, this type is probably the original 1843 issue.

Type 2.15: 123 specimens. This type includes the letters ‘S.E.’ in the exergue, almost certainly in reference to the Sainte-Enfance.

Type 2.16: 16 specimens. This type is very similar to type 2.15 but includes an exergue of two small figures that look like closed hands.

Type 2.19: 125 specimens. This type has a distinctive neo-gothic style.

These four widespread types must have been the conventional medals that the Association sold or distributed^[19] to its members by hundreds of thousands,

^[19] The 1843 text mentioned that associates had to pay for the medals. However, the medal was soon given for free to the associates, and warnings against the sale of ‘common’ medals of

or even millions. But how can we explain the presence of many other types that had a much more limited distribution?

First, some of these uncommon types may simply be variations of others. For instance, the first five types in Group 2 are very similar in their design and strike, but, on the reverse they include different phrasing, such as: 'Saint Joseph the Protector' (聖若瑟主保, Types 2.3, 2.4), or 'Great Patron of China' (中國大主保, Types 2.1, 2.2, 2.5). On the obverse, the Chinese sentences vary, from 'Help of Christians, pray for us' (奉教之祐 為我等祈, Type 2.4) to 'Pray for us and for the pagan children' (為我等及異民的嬰孩祈, Types 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5). These diverse inscriptions in Chinese may be the result of attempts to translate or arrange the writing on the medals. They might be early strikes minted soon after the launch of the Holy Childhood Association and distributed together with, or before, Type 2.1, which eventually became the first large-scale conventional type of the Association.

Second, medals of Group 2 were produced over four or perhaps even five decades. An 1885 document explains that the medals provided to the associates 'remind them of their consecration to the Infant Jesus, the Holy Virgin, and Saint Joseph', and are 'a token of their protection in exchange for their commitment' (Anon. 1885, p. 84). Since the only medals of the Holy Childhood Association portraying the three members of the Holy Family are those inscribed with Chinese characters,^[20] we can assume that until 1885 at least, medals of Group 2 remained the most widespread among Holy Childhood affiliates. During this long period, different engravers, workshops and wholesalers were involved in the production and distribution processes. Based on the archives of the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood at the Vatican,^[21] at least five French actors were involved:

- 1) Desaide Roquelay, a workshop resulting from the association of Pierre Roquelay with his son-in-law Louis Desaide (Florange 1904, p. 219). This workshop, located in Paris, was the initial producer of medals for the Holy Childhood, but it lost its privilege to the profit of the Paris Mint first, and of Bouasse-Lebel second. It attempted to regain this privilege after 1868, but we do not know whether it was successful. In 1884, the Association strongly requested that the workshop stop minting medals for it. The medals of Type 3.1 (see Part III) are signed by Pierre Roquelay and were pro-

the Association (to differentiate from 'luxury' medals in silver, etc.) were published in the *Annals of the Association* (*Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1860, p. 145).

^[20] The frontispiece of the *Annals of the Holy Childhood* changed in the 1884 edition: Jesus is standing between two (apparently European) children, while a Chinese and an African child kneel in front of them. This printed medallion eventually became the obverse of a very common medal, with a Virgin of the Miraculous Medal on the reverse. In our view, this type followed the medals of Group 2 as the ordinary membership medal for the Association, probably during the second half of the 1880s, or somewhere in the 1890s.

^[21] The following paragraph is based on the letters kept in Folder 12 of the archives, 'Note relatives aux impressions, et à des médailles et images à bon marché'.

duced by the Paris Mint between 1845 and 1860: this is a very strong argument that, like the medals of Group 2, the medals of Group 3 were also intended for the Holy Childhood Association.

- 2) The Paris Mint (Monnaie de Paris), for a short period in the early years (1840s or 1850s), as substantiated by the large-format medals of Type 3.1 engraved by Roquelay and struck by the Paris Mint. In the middle of the 19th century, the Mint of Paris had a monopoly on producing not only coins, but also medals of medium to large format (Béatrice Coullare, personal communication). This apparently did not concern medals of small format.
- 3) Bouasse-Lebel, wholesaler in religious articles established on Saint-Sulpice street (Paris), who outsourced the activity of medal production. Bouasse-Lebel was the only acknowledged provider of medals (and other propaganda material) for the Holy Childhood from 1858 to 1868.
- 4) Jean-Stanislas Coltat's workshop (Paris), specialized in religious artifacts (Griener 2021). It produced these medals from 1862 until at least 1868, under contract with Bouasse-Lebel. Coltat tried to gain the monopoly for their production in 1868 – the outcome of his demand is uncertain.
- 5) The Alfred Conin – Eugène Marckert workshop in Paris also produced medals for the Holy Childhood Association, as attested by a letter of 1883. Part of its production was done in Lyon.

Unfortunately, these correspondences have many gaps and do not provide any clear indication of the specific medals they mention, which impedes the identification of the issuers of the different types we have exposed.

Third, the diversity of types may result from the production of local copies, some with the consent of the Association, others without consent. For example, an 1888 correspondence refers to the possible production of medals in Italy: 'If the new trade treaty between France and Italy does not quickly change the situation, it is advisable to mint the medals in Italy – the authorization has been given to Mr [unreadable]'.^[22] The beneficiary of this decision was apparently the workshop of Stefano Johnson, in Milan, that produced the medals of Type 2.17, probably only for Italian distribution. At the same time, forgeries were also produced for illicit gains. Indeed, the cover page of the journal of the Association in 1871 gives a warning about Swiss forgeries: 'they are sold for very expensive prices, which is highly detrimental to the Association because those who buy them withdraw this cost from the associates' alms to cover their buying' (*Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1871, p. 146).

^[22] Folder 12, 'Images et médailles de la S. Enfance (demandes) 1868–1950', archives of the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood at the Vatican.

Epigraphy as a clue for chronology

The dates of issue of these medals are largely undocumented. The few letters available in the Association's archives do not refer to specific types, and no medal is presently conserved in the Association's repository. Despite extensive research in the publications of the Association, we have not been able to find pictorial representations of any medal with Chinese characters. The authors we referred to in the state of the art were not able to find any representation for the 19th century either, except for the rubbings of Wang (1863). The issue of chronology is complicated by the fact that, apart from Types 2.17 and 2.19, the medals of Group 2 are not signed – a feature they share with most devotional medals of the 19th century. The five names of French producers/traders that appear in the correspondence to which we had access are all potential starting points for archival research to elucidate the issue of chronology: we intend to explore this in the future. For now, we will instead follow a different methodology and highlight the benefits of epigraphy as a means of comprehending the chronology of production of medals, still limited to the case of Group 2.

The medals of Type 2.1, supposedly the 'first generation' initiated by Forbin-Janson, include accurate Chinese characters; however, most other types contain a significant number of mistakes. It is very likely that engravers had no knowledge of sinograms at all, and that most of them did not work from printed versions of the Chinese texts but rather from the currently available types. As time passed by, errors thus accumulated, as one mistake may be constantly reproduced, and new mistakes may be added. The progressive deterioration of Chinese characters therefore provides interesting clues to establish a chronology.

Inaccuracies

In medals made by non-Sinophone engravers, inaccuracies in Chinese writing are rather common. Taken out of context, some characters may even be difficult to decipher and are sometimes completely illegible.



Fig. 7 – *Petit Col.* (©) 2.16.8

The caption on the medal of Fig. 7 above, for example, reads 聖母瑪利亞為我 (sixth from the top right) and 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (first on the top left); which all together means 'Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children.' Two characters are inexact, as highlighted in red circles: 為 sixth from the top right, and 等 first on the top left. They were obviously inexpertly replicated.

Punch misplacement

Even bigger issues appear on several medals. A common mistake is characters that are misplaced, often upside down (Thierry 2021, p. 237), as on this other specimen of Type 2.16:



Fig. 8 – Municipal Library of Versailles (©)

The caption here is the same as seen in the previous medal, and the problem again lies in the character on the top left, 等. However, this time it appears upside down, as shown in the image above. The punch for the letter was obviously misplaced on the die, as the engravers clearly could not identify Chinese characters.

By comparing medals side by side, and analysing mistakes that are not only systematically reproduced but also accumulate over time, we can even establish a plausible chronology in the production of some types and subtypes:



Fig. 9 – Municipal Library of Versailles (©); Petit Col. 2.16.1; KBR Fl. 3816 (AA142 8/6); Petit Col. 2.19.7 (© P. Petit for the last three). Types 2.16 (2 ×), 2.15 and 2.19 (scale 200%)

Comparing these medals from left to right, the first medal (one punch misplacement) was probably minted before the second (two misplacements), which was likely produced before the third and the fourth (both featuring three similar misplacements).

Substitutions

Another recurring, though less common mistake, is the substitution of one sinogram by another, as illustrated here in green with a medal of Type 2.19:



Fig. 10 – Petit Col. (©) 2.19.6

The medal not only includes two characters that have been reproduced upside down (on the top left and bottom right, here indicated with red circles). The engraver also mixed up the sinogram for mother 母 with the second character of 若瑟 or *Ruose*, the Chinese transcript of *Joseph* used on the reverse (green circle).

The medals of Type 2.19, as shown in the two figures above, cumulate more punch errors than Types 2.15 and 2.16: this suggests their production must have begun later, as they reproduced the errors of the first two types and even added new ones.

Degeneration

The progressive degeneration of the reproduction of Chinese characters also gives clear indication on the medals' chronology. Compare the two following medals of Types 2.2 and 2.12:



Fig. 11 – RLB, no inventory nr. [EE138 4/3], © P. Petit; Former Vassy Col. (©) (scale 150%)

On both medals, the Chinese inscription reads: 'Pray for us and for the pagan children'. The medal on the left includes the correct character for infant or 嬰 *ying* (third character in the left column); however, the medal on the right, with exactly the same Chinese sentence, displays a very degraded version of each character. This degradation culminates in the character 嬰 which now looks nothing like the original Chinese character, but rather like a drawing of a cat or a turtle (see below).



Fig 12

Once again, when we examine several medals together, a progressive degradation of the character 嬰 clearly appears. Here below, from left to right, we can see this in specimens of Types 2.2, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, and 2.12. The progression is constant, from the most accurate to the most inaccurate:



Fig. 13 – RLB, no inventory nr. [EE138 4/3]; Petit Col. 2.9.1; Petit Col. 2.10.1; RLB, II 24671 [EE142 6/2]; Former Vassy Col. (©). © P. Petit for the first four pictures.

Exactly the same order can be established among these five medals with other Chinese characters that gradually become unrecognizable to a Sinophone reader. Compare for example, in Types 2.2 and 2.12, the fifth character in the right-hand column and the second on the left-hand column:



Fig. 14 – Fifth character on the right, Types 2.2 (l.) and 2.12 (r.)



Fig. 15 – Second character on the left, Types 2.2 (l.) and 2.12 (r.)



Hence, we have a strong basis for ordering Types 2.2, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12 as a chronological suite. Reversing any segment of this sequence seems implausible, as the degeneration from the first to the last type is constant and progressive.

The process of coinage degeneration, from a prototype to copies, and then copies of copies that eventually seem unrelated to the original model, has long been documented in various fields of numismatics, like the Celtic copies of Macedonian coins, the Indian imitations of Sassanid drahms, or the evolution

of Parthian drachms (Evans 1849–1850, Nieto-Pelletier 2020, Druart 2020). The extensive series of medals of Group 2 is another illustration of this phenomenon, but in a very modern context. The various inaccuracies in the Chinese characters that we have listed are clues for a relative chronology of the medallic types and subtypes, and this is very helpful in a context where written documentation is lacking. The cumulative property of such mistakes is a key for ordering the medals along a chronological sequence. Such clues, however are not always conclusive by themselves, as the engravers can have access to different types for their inspiration. But taken together, and crossed with other evidence, they enhance an evidential base that stabilizes over time during research.

Conclusion

Before presenting the catalogue of our corpus in Part III, it is relevant here to provide a conclusion to the analytical section of our article that we have developed in Parts I and II.

Based on an extensive corpus and stimulated by a cross-disciplinary approach, we challenged the hypothesis that Catholic medals with Chinese characters were mainly coined to supply missionaries in China with objects of devotion for the new converts. Even if some types in our corpus may have fulfilled this function, we have argued that medals in Group 2, which form the bulk of medals from the 19th century, were artefacts of propaganda distributed among children affiliated to the Holy Childhood Association in France and other countries of the European and American Catholic world. The medals in Group 3 had probably the same function.

Nonetheless, many questions remain. Further research is needed on the missionary sources – notably to understand how Chinese script was produced –, and in the archives of engravers and workshops involved in the creation of these medals. Attribution to workshops could be facilitated by comparison with other Catholic medals, and using specific techniques like metal analysis. Research in China would also be very beneficial, especially for the 20th- and 21st-century medals. From an anthropological perspective, there is much to say on how medals played a role in the missionary propaganda of the Holy Childhood Association, together with images and narratives. The *Annals* of the Association contain material about the ceremonies in which new associates received their medals, as well as edifying stories about their moral value or their miraculous power. The fact that they were replaced by medals with Latin characters at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries is another challenge for scholars, as we have not been able to identify any sources in the Association's documents explaining this important change. With the rise of missionary activities in various regions – especially in Africa – in the last decades of the 19th century, China lost its relevance as a symbol of the evangelization across the world.

We end this section with two epistemic reflections on possible reasons why other committed numismatists who studied these medals did not reach our conclusions on the medals' origins and functions.

First, most researchers who investigated the topic were based in the United Kingdom – this is true for Turk, Arber-Cooke, and Cribb. Even if the Holy Childhood was implanted in this country, its importance there was low in comparison to the Catholic countries of mainland Europe. The corpus of these scholars was hence limited to a few specimens, meaning they did not see France and its neighbouring Catholic countries as the epicentre not only of the production, but also of the spread and use of these medals. The discovery of Wang's rubbings in Cribb's study was a great achievement, however it indirectly pointed in what we think is the wrong direction, towards the assumption that these medals were designed to be used in China. That was certainly the case for some medals, but not for the vast majority. On the other hand, French numismatists have generally shown little interest in religious medals, as we have noticed repeatedly during our research. For example, we were told that the archives of Pénin-Poncet in Lyon, the most prominent religious medal workshop during the 19th century in France, have been recently destroyed (François Planet, personal communication). The fact that only two Catholic medals with Chinese characters are presently reported as being in the coin cabinet of the National Library in Paris is also very telling (François Thierry, personal communication). It is plausible that more are conserved in such institutions, but they are probably left uncatalogued in numismatic trays – the common fate of small devotional medals in most coin cabinets we visited.

There is a second reason why other have not reached our conclusion, namely that our argument is counter-intuitive. Many colleagues expressed their perplexity when we contended that medals written in Chinese were intended for French or other European-based children and did not reach China in large numbers. Their argument was that religious propaganda is usually very explicit and should address the children in their own language. This may be true, yet such reasoning fails to consider that medals were only part of a larger 'package' of propaganda in France and other Catholic countries, including the *Annals* of the Association, print images, and medals. This triptych of propaganda tools was established in the early years of the Association – more precisely in 1846, when the first issue of the *Annals* was released – and remained active throughout the whole period under consideration (Anon. 1885, p. 83–84). The print images and the *Annals* provided explicit messages of propaganda, while medals, with their perplexing Chinese lettering, had a more evocative and imaginative power related to the far-away Christianization on the other side of the world;^[23] they produced a sense of adherence to the universal and

^[23] The counter-intuitive argument developed here is akin to the one relating to a neo-gothic devotional statue, 'Our Lady of Congo', created during the early colonization of Congo with the intent to trigger the conversion of the local population. But due to its complete mis-

globalized Catholic world (Kaell 2020). As reported by a contributor to the *Annales de la Sainte-Enfance*, 'Seeing Chinese inscriptions on both sides of the medal, one cannot help but think that God has his elects in any tribe and in any language: *Ex omni tribu et omni lingua*.'^[24] This quotation perfectly captures the intent of those who designed these unprecedented and thought-provoking medals.

appropriation to the local context, its imagery, which also included medals, was eventually more influential in the Belgian metropole for promoting the missionary cause than in the colony itself (Petit 2020). Adorning Christian themes with exotic attires, artefacts such as Our Lady of the Congo and the 'medal of the little Chinese' were compelling reminders of the Catholic duty to foster the faith across the world.

^[24] In the original French version: 'en voyant les inscriptions chinoises qu'elles portent sur chaque face, on ne peut s'empêcher de penser que Dieu a des élus de toute tribu et de toute langue: *Ex omni tribu et omni lingua*.' (*Annales de la Sainte-Enfance* 1847, p. 263).

Part III: The corpus

As our corpus is extensive, it is presented separately from the main analytical section of our article (Parts I and II). We sorted the medals into nine different iconographic groups, subdivided into numismatic types, following the guidelines that are explained in Part I. We have attempted to order the groups (and their types) by presumed chronology, but in the absence of clear evidence, our order should not be mistaken for a contended timeline.

The first paragraph for each type reports basic information: the presumed country of origin and the engraver or company (where available); the presumed period of production; the height (including the suspension loop) and the width, in millimetres; the weight (based on the weighing of one or several specimens of the Royal Library of Belgium (RLB) or of the Petit Collection; we mention the possible presence of a ring on the bail, which increases the total weight); the corresponding type in Cribb (1981)'s typology; and the number of specimens in our corpus. We have not mentioned the metal composition, except when it is obviously silver or aluminium: most of the early medals are in copper or brass alloys, but further research is needed for clarification. It is also beyond the scope of this article to consider all variants and discuss in detail their plausible chronology.

We provide the picture (obverse and reverse) of one specimen by category, sometimes with an extra picture to display a variant, notably when specimens of smaller size are reported. The choice of specific pictures was guided by their availability, as well as the quality of the photograph and of the specimen. The size of the medal follows information on its provenance, including inventory numbers where available.^[25] The institutions of provenance of the medal are credited for the photographs, except for the RLB (©: Pierre Petit); and for Wang 1863 (©: French National Library, BnF).

The transcription and translation of each Chinese legend comes next after the picture, followed by a description of each medal and elements of analysis.

As the number of specimens is very extensive for some types, we have listed provenances and locations in a 'Table of identification of the corpus specimens', in the annex after the section of references.

Group 1

The Miraculous Medal is the most popular Catholic devotional medal across the world. It was designed according to the instructions provided by Catherine Labouré, a nun to whom the Holy Virgin reportedly appeared in 1830 in Paris. Its early history is well-documented by Jean-Marie Aladel, the priest who over-

^[25] For references to the Royal Library of Belgium, the first series number refers to the directory of acquisitions, and the second number (between square brackets) refers to the location in the storage trays.

saw the spiritual life of Catherine Labouré and who was the great propagator of the medal (Aladel 1835, 1837, 1842). He ordered the making of the first medals during the 1832 cholera outbreak in Paris, and they were an immediate success. Afterwards, the medal was struck in various languages, including non-European languages like Arabic, Ganda (Bennett 2021), and Chinese.



Fig. 16 – *Petit Col.* (©), 25 × 18 mm (scale 300%)

On the obverse of the early specimen illustrated above, the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception appears with rays emanating from her fingers, representing her blessings addressed to the faithful; she tramples a snake symbolising the devil, with the date of the apparition (1830) in exergue. The original French legend is ‘*Ô Marie conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous*’, which has been translated into English as ‘*O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee*’. On the reverse is a monogram (the **M** of Mary supporting the cross of her son) above the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and his mother, surrounded by twelve stars. Under the two hearts appears the name of Vachette, the Parisian engraver who produced the very first series of the Miraculous Medal (Laurentin & Roche 1976, p. 184-185, Philippen 1983).

Type 1.1

France, Vachette (Paris), 1836-1837. 25 × 18 mm. French-legend Miraculous Medals of similar dimensions minted by Vachette weight 2.23-2.24 g. Type 4 according to Cribb (1981)’s typology. 1 specimen in the corpus.



Fig. 17 – Wang 1863, 25 × 18 mm. ©BnF

As transcribed by Wang in his catalogue (1863):

瑪利互始孕母胎無口原罪為我等求爾祐者祈

As transcribed by Cribb (1981):

瑪利亞始孕母胎無原罪為我等求爾祐者祈

Our suggested transcription:

瑪利亞始孕母胎無染原罪 (right) 為我等求爾祐者祈(left)^[26]

‘Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee’

Miraculous Medals with Chinese legends started to be produced in 1836 or 1837, based on a translation of the French legend by Bishop Rameaux, then known as Vicar Apostolic of the Provinces of Kiang-Si (Jiangxi) and Tché-Kiang (Zhejiang) (Aladel 1835, p. 19; 1837, p. 44; 1842, p. 1, 379; Laurentin & Roche 1976, p. 247, 277). We have only one rubbing of this medal, provided by Wang (1863).

Wang’s transcription (瑪利互始孕母胎無口原罪為我等求爾祐者祈) is, however, problematic, perhaps because he was puzzled by the language which he describes as gross or vulgar (粗) in his notes. First, he mixed up two characters, transcribing the third character from the top right as 互 (*hu*), while it should be 亞 (*ya*), as in *Ma-li-ya* (Chinese transcription for Mary). Cribb, whether he read Wang’s note or not, corrected Wang’s mistake and used the correct character 亞 (*ya*). Wang’s confusion is quite telling and reflects the lack of knowledge most Chinese scholars of his time had about Christianity.

^[26] As mentioned in the first part of the article, Chinese inscriptions on most medals are read from right to left, top to bottom.

Second, Wang uses a square □ (which is not a Chinese character here but the equivalent of a question mark) to signify that one Chinese character is illegible on the bottom right: 無□原罪 ('without ? sin'). Cribb seems to have ignored this sign and simply omits one character, transcribing only three characters 無原罪 ('without sin'). However, in Chinese, 'without sin' is also translated as 無染原罪 (literally: 'uncontaminated by sins'), as will appear on Type 3.3. It is thus likely that the missing character in Wang's transcription is 染 (rǎn), which means 'to catch a disease' or 'to contaminate'. The character 染 was probably unclear and unreadable on the specimen in Wang's collection, or the formulation was simply unintelligible to this learned numismatist who was not familiar with this foreign religion.

This is the first possible translation of the Miraculous Medal's legend, which we will refer to as 'translation A'. Two other translations ('B' and 'C') will appear in the next sections (see Types 1.2, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

Type 1.2

USA, second half of the 20th century. 50 × 27 mm. From 12.68 to 14.55 g. 14 specimens in the corpus.



Fig. 18 – Petit Col. (©), 1.2.1, 50 × 27 mm (scale 175%)

Obverse: 吁瑪利亞無原罪之始胎我等奔爾台前為我等祈 (from bottom right to bottom left) – 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee'

This large, oval-shaped Miraculous Medal was cast in the (second half of the) 20th century if we consider its manufacture. It is commonly found on online sales sites, always from sellers located in the USA. This strongly suggests that it has been produced in that country for the Catholic Sino-American diaspora, or for missionary purposes in Sinophone countries/communities.

Contrary to most medals with Chinese inscriptions written according to classical Chinese conventions as vertical parallel sentences read from top-to-bottom and right-to-left, on this medal the script is to be read as one full sentence, counter-clockwise from bottom right to bottom left following the contour of the image of the Virgin.

In addition, the Chinese writing is a different translation of ‘Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee’ than the one on the medal of type 1.1. First, the sentence starts with 吁 (xū or yù) for ‘O’. Then, 無原罪之始胎 is a more literal translation of ‘Immaculate Conception’ or ‘conceived without sin’. Finally, 我等奔爾台前為我等祈 is the translation of ‘pray for us who have recourse to thee’, and literally means ‘us who hasten to your altar, pray for us’. This second translation (‘Translation B’) is thus an attempt to produce a more literal translation. A third translation will be presented when we discuss the medals of Group 3.

We now identified two possible translations of ‘(O) Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee’:

- Translation A: 瑪利亞始孕母胎無染原罪, 為我等求爾祐者祈 as on medal 1.1
- Translation B: (吁)瑪利亞無原罪之始胎, 我等奔爾台前為我等祈 as on medal 1.2

Group 2

The second group is, by far, the largest in terms of number. It includes 306 specimens out of 340 in our corpus, that is, around 90% of them, and 19 types out of 33.

The medals presented in the introductory vignette of Part I belong to that group and illustrate its iconography very well. On the obverse, the Holy Virgin holds the Infant Jesus in her arms. On the reverse, in his right arm, Saint Joseph holds a lily, symbol of purity. The two characters, wearing tunics, are represented as standing figures on all medals of this group except for one type (2.19) where they appear at mid-height. The medals of this group are largely in a small format (21 × 14 mm), although some of them may be a bit larger or smaller, with some types appearing in two formats. Latin letters appear as initials in lower exergue of some medals, or close to the figures. They can be cast in copper, in brass, in silver, in silvered brass, but never in aluminium. As aluminium became a very common metal for devotional medals after 1900, we can guess that the medals of Group 2 were typically produced before that date, although there may be exceptions.

Type 2.1

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. From 0.98 to 1.11 g (based on 10 specimens without a ring around the bail). The Lefébure specimen (see introduction) of the RLB is encased and weighs 2.14 g. Type 2 according to Cribb (1981)'s typology. 19 specimens in the corpus.



Fig. 19 – Municipal Library of Versailles (©), 21 × 14 mm (scale 300%)



Fig. 20 – BnF (©), MMA.2004-393, 21 × 14 mm. Already published by Thierry (1987, p. 53 and pl. 73; 2008, nr. 55; 2021, p. 237) (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

Type 2.1 is in line with the generic presentation of group 2 given above. The Infant Jesus points his right hand to the radiating heart of his mother. Note the presence of a halo above Saint Joseph's head, and the two letters **FJ** under his feet. The letters may be followed by dots (Fig. 20), or not (Fig. 19). Minor variations are noticeable, notably the position of Chinese characters in relation to the figures.

Type 2.2

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. 1.25 g (specimen without extra ring on the bail) – 1.46 g (with an extra ring). 2 specimens in the corpus.



Fig. 21 – RLB, no inventory nr. [EE138 4/3], 21 × 14 mm. © P. Petit (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This type is similar to type 2.1, except for the letter **V** appearing in exergue under a line crossing the lower field of the medal. It is tempting to see this as the initial of Vachette or of Vincard (Laurentin & Roche 1976, p. 247), two engravers of the Miraculous Medal in the 1830s, but this is speculation.

Type 2.3

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. From 0.98 to 1.03 g. 3 specimens in the corpus.



Fig. 22 – RLB, Fl. 6373 [DD289 3/3], 21 × 14 mm. © P. Petit (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 聖若瑟主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Protector St Joseph, pray for us’

This type is similar to the previous one, except for the legend around Joseph. While the script on the obverse reads ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’, on the reverse it says: ‘Protector St Joseph, pray for us’: the name of St Joseph is thus clearly visible here.

Type 2.4

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. Weight unknown. Type 3 according to Cribb (1981)’s typology. 1 specimen.



Fig. 23 – Wang 1863, 21 × 14 mm. © BnF (scale 200%)

Obverse: 奉教之祐 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Help of Christians, pray for us’^[27]

Reverse: 聖若瑟主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Protector St Joseph, pray for us’

This medal is known only thanks to a rubbing by Wang (1863). The dimensions, similar to the previous types, are provided by Cribb (1981, p. 2), who had access to an original copy of Wang’s book. The medal is like the two previous types with a V. under Joseph (and not F.J. as supposed by Cribb based on a comparison with Type 2.1), but the Chinese legends are different. We will analyse the devotion to Mary Help of Christians in the sections on Types 6.1 and 7.1.

Type 2.5

France, 19th century. 17 × 14 mm (due to the absence of the bail; it was probably 21 × 14 mm at first). 0.87 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 24 – Petit Col. (©), 2.5.1, 17 × 14 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This medal is similar to Types 2.1 and 2.2, but the exergue has F.J. under a long line. This specimen has lost its bail and a suspension hole has been pierced.

Despite their small differences, the five types that we have described up to now are very similar to one another considering the Chinese characters and the representation of the figures. We can guess that they used similar dies, changing the Latin letters in exergue and the Chinese legends from type to type. The next types will progressively depart from this model.

^[27] Cribb’s translation of 奉教之祐 is ‘Protector of the converted’ (1981, p. 6).

Type 2.6

19th century. 22 × 15 mm. 1.50 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 25 – Petit Col. (©), 2.6.1, 22 × 15 mm. Formerly in Laurent Simon's collection (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

The three holy figures look like awkward copies of the former types (see especially the Infant Christ, or the head and hair of Joseph). This type shares the same Chinese script with Types 2.1, 2.2 and 2.5, but the writing is rather odd, and is obviously the result of a reproduction based on the observation of preceding medals that may have been difficult to decipher for the engraver.

Type 2.7

19th century. 21 × 14 mm. 0.96 g (without extra ring) to 1.14 g (with a ring). 2 specimens.



Fig. 26 – *Petit Col.* (©), 2.7.1, 21 × 14 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

The obverse of this medal is similar to Types 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.5, and was possibly cast with the same die as one of them. The reverse is different. The legend around Joseph is like those we have encountered up to now (except for Type 2.3 and 2.4), but the characters are drawn awkwardly. The posture of Joseph has changed: his left arm is hanging at his side, with his hand open, and his right hand is depicted at the level of his abdomen; Joseph’s head – with no halo – is turned to his left side. The line on which he stands is like those of Types 2.2 to 2.5 but does not fully extend to the rim of the medal. There is no letter in exergue.

The Chinese script on the reverse shows a clear degradation of the characters: these are copies that imitate characters, akin to drawings rather than a script. Some characters are even missing clear strokes, like 中 (reverse, first character top-right), as if it was casually copied, or copied from a low-quality medal.

Type 2.8

19th century. 12 × 10 mm. 0.35 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 27 – Detectorist website (© Caillot76), 12 × 10 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This is a puzzling medal for various reasons. The obverse depicts Mary in a very similar way to Type 2.14. The reverse is similar to Type 2.7, but the letters **F.J.** appear in exergue. The medal is poorly conserved. The image was discovered on a detectorist website, and it was impossible to establish contact with the Webmaster or the finder. On the website, the finder mentions that he discovered the medal while ploughing, somewhere in France, in May 2018 and provides dimensions and weight that suggest it is a miniature medal.

Type 2.9

19th century. 22 × 15 mm. 1.78 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 28 – Petit Col. (©), 2.9.1, 22 × 15 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This medal, known from one unique specimen, is like Type 2.1 and the following types for the engraving of the three holy figures, except for small details like the lower part of Mary’s figure. The letters *S.F.* appear in positive relief under Mary, in French cursive capitals, while the letters *F.J.* appear under the truncated line on which Joseph is standing, like on Type 2.1.

Here too, the Chinese inscriptions are odd and demonstrate an attempt to ‘draw’ characters. Some strokes are missing and some sinograms are so distorted that they might be undecipherable without context. For instance, on the obverse, the character on the bottom right 異 that means ‘alien’ or ‘different’ as in ‘pagan’, is too distorted to read.

Type 2.10

19th century. 17 × 11.5 mm. 0.63 g (with a ring). 2 specimens.



Fig. 29 – Petit Col. (©), 2.10.1, 17 × 11.5 mm. Formerly in Laurent Simon's collection (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This type is the first of a series of four that are closely associated by their figurative elements (the halos, the pedestal of the Virgin, the way Joseph carries the lily, the position of his left hand) and by the design of the Chinese characters. We argued in Part II that they form a sequence of degenerative copies, based on the constant degradation of the Chinese characters.

Type 2.10 is a small-format medal. The three holy figures all appear with halos. Mary stands on a broad pedestal, above a rosette flanked by two dots. Joseph holds the lily farther from his right side than on the previous types. He stands on a truncated line above a rosette flanked by two dots, like Mary.

Like the previous type, the sinograms are for the most part distorted and incorrect.

Type 2.11

19th century. 21 × 15 mm. 1.85 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 30 – RLB, II 24671 [EE142 6/2], 21 × 15 mm. © P. Petit (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children.’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This type is similar to the previous one, but it is more detailed, larger, and without rosettes.

Like on previous types, the Chinese characters are incorrect, and some are even too strange to be recognizable, such as the third character on the left around the Virgin and the Infant Jesus, which now looks like a cat, as described in the first part of the article.

Type 2.12

Engraved by Mayaud (Saumur, France). 19th century. 27 × 19 mm. 3.02 g. 2 specimens.



Fig. 31 – Former Vassy Col. (©), 27 × 19 mm (based on the comparison with the RLB specimen) (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This medal is larger and heavier than all the medals in Group 2. The figures of the holy family, all topped by a halo, are engraved with detail, notably in their faces, the folds of their tunics, and the detailed lily held by Joseph. The pedestals of Mary and Joseph are of the same size. Although the quality of the medal and its iconography are rather good, the sinograms here are the most problematic found in this group of four medals. Each character is distorted, incorrect or missing strokes.

By chance, we have been able to find the punch used to engrave Joseph on the die for the obverse. The size of Joseph on the medal (16 mm from the pedestal to the halo) is the same as on the punch. It comes from the company Mayaud, in Saumur, which produced devotional artefacts since the 18th century, and became a central producer of religious medals in the second half of

the 19th century (Maës 2016). The presence of this punch amongst the thousands of other punches and dies of the company leaves little doubt about the attribution of this medal (Pierre Bryer, personal communication).



Fig. 32 – Petit Col. (©), 2.11. Matrice 1, 33 × 28 mm, 166 g (scale 200%)

Type 2.13

19th century. 19.5 × 13.5 mm. 0.93–0.94 g. 2 specimens.



Fig. 33 – Petit Col. (©), 2.13.1, 19.5 × 13.5 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This medal is related to the series of four beginning with Type 2.10, but not directly connected to them regarding the degeneration of the Chinese script. The three holy figures are topped with a halo, but the one of Infant Jesus appears as rays of light rather than a circle. Mary stands on a broad pedestal and the lily held by Joseph is far from his body, while the stem with blossoms points towards his head. Below the two figures is a rosette flanked by dots. Note that there are minor differences between the two specimens of the corpus: the halo of Joseph is more rounded on the RLB specimen, and his pedestal is shorter.

The sinograms are highly inaccurate in shape and number of strokes. On the reverse, around St Joseph, the first character on the top right, 中, is even rotated 90 degrees and appears horizontally rather than vertically.

Type 2.14

19th century. 18.5 × 12.5 mm. 0.88-0.99 g. 2 specimens.



Fig. 34 – RLB, Fl. 9813 [EE139 9/3], 18.5 × 12.5 mm. © P. Petit (scale 300%)

Obverse: 為我等及異 (right) 民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This small-format medal has a protruding bail and a larger rim than the other ones of Group 2. The Holy Virgin is stockier than on the former types (similar to Type 2.8). She stands on an inverted dome. The depiction of Joseph is sketchy, and in line with the figure of Types 2.10 to 2.13 (see notably the positions of the left hand and of the lily).

Like the previous medals, inaccuracies in the writing are obvious to Chinese language readers (such as missing strokes or distorted characters).

Type 2.15

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. From 0.85 to 1.25 g without ring; from 1.06 to 1.29 g with a ring. Exists also in micro-format: 14 × 10 mm, 0.28 g. 123 specimens (including one micro-format specimen).



Fig. 35 – Gabinetto Numismatico e Medagliere, Raccolte Artistiche Castello Sforzesco, Milano (©), Tam 2673, 21 × 14.8 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖母瑪利亞為我 (right) 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 聖若瑟中國大 (right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – ‘St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This type is the second most common of the whole corpus with 117 specimens listed. Strangely enough, it does not appear in Cribb (1981)’s article. There is a wide diversity of sources and areas of provenance, as shown in the Annex. The medal is cast in copper or brass, and is often silvered, as appears on specimens that have kept remains of the coating. The medal is like the previous types for the three figures of the Holy Family – although their depiction has slightly changed –, but the Chinese legends are different. The main difference from all other types is the presence of the letters S.E. (obviously standing for ‘Sainte-Enfance’) in exergue under Joseph. There is more diversity inside this type than in any other. Different dies have been also used for the figures – Mary and Jesus appear with globular eyes on some medals (Fig. 9, third from left, and Fig. 41). The letters of the exergue can be separated or not, by small or large dots.

Although the characters are relatively correct and well-written for the most part, some mistakes appear for several sinograms that have been turned upside down, due to the misplacement of the punches as argued in our discussion on epigraphy in Part II.

This type has also been produced in a miniature version known by one single specimen (Petit Col. 2.15.10). The design and lettering are slightly different from the main type.



Fig. 36 – Petit Col. (©), 2.15.10, 14 × 10 mm (scale 300%)

Type 2.16

France or Spain, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. From 1.23 to 1.38 g without ring; 1.41 g with ring. Exists also in micro-format: 18 × 12 mm, 0.50-0.55 g. 16 specimens (including two micro-format specimens).



Fig. 37 – Petit Col. (©), 2.16.5, 21 × 14 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖母瑪利亞為我 (right) 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 聖若瑟中國大 (right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – ‘St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This type is very similar to the previous one, including the upside-down engraving of some Chinese characters. What is different is the symbol that appears in exergue under Joseph. It looks like a pair of closed right hands, observed looking at the thumb (left) and at the palm (right). This is probably an engraver's mark.



Fig. 38 – Petit Col. (©), 2.16.5

Five of the sixteen specimens of this medal have been located in Spain, which cannot be due to sheer coincidence as Spain contributes to only six medals of our whole corpus. It means that either the production or the distribution of this type was concentrated in that country.

There are also miniature versions of this medal.



Fig. 39. Petit Col. (©), 2.16.2, 19 × 12 mm (scale 300%)

The Chinese characters on this miniature medal are mostly correct and diligently reproduced, probably from a clear previous copy. However, the punch for 等 (obverse, first top left) was turned upside down (while it is correctly placed on the reverse, fifth from top left).

Type 2.17

Engraved by Stabilimento Stefano Johnson, Milan, 19th century. 21.2 to 21.6 × 14.4 mm. 1.16-1.22 g. 2 specimens.



Fig. 40 – Gabinetto Numismatico e Medagliere, Raccolte Artistiche Castello Sforzesco, Milano (©), Col. Tam 2675, 18.3 × 14.4 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖母瑪利亞為我 (right) 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 聖若瑟中國大 (right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – ‘St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us’

In his catalogue of the medals of the Tam Collection, Rodolfo Martini presents these two medals that come from a former Italian collection, ‘MV’ (Martini 2009, vol 2.1, pp. 16, 352-353 & vol. 2.3, pll. 119-120). It looks like a low-quality copy of Type 2.15 or Type 2.16, with some Chinese characters upside-down. The letters S.J. in exergue under Joseph are a trademark of the company Stefano Johnson, of Milan, which was the main producer of devotional medals in Italy during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Several Chinese characters are punched upside down on the obverse: 母 (second top right), 我 (last bottom right) and probably 等 (first top left) although this one is not readable. In general, the sinograms on this medal are odd and very barely recognizable.

Type 2.18

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. 1.02 g. 1 specimen.



Fig. 41 – Petit Col. (©), 2.18.1, 21 × 14 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖母瑪利亞為我 (right) 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 中國大主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘Great Patron of China, pray for us’

This medal is surprising. Its obverse displays the ‘long’ legend around the Virgin (as in Types 2.15–2.17 and 2.19) while the reverse has the ‘short’ legend around Joseph (as in Types 2.1–2.2 and 2.5–2.14). It has been struck using two unrelated dies: the obverse has been made with a die of Type 2.15, more specifically the one used for the variant with Mary and Jesus appearing with globular eyes (already mentioned); the reverse has been made with the die of Type 2.7 (also used, with the letter FJ in exergue, for Type 2.8).

Type 2.19

France, 19th century. 21 × 14 mm. 0.79 to 1.04 g (without ring). 0.85 to 0.96 g. (with ring). Exists also in micro-format: 18 × 12 mm, 0.34–0.38 g. Type 1 according to Cribb (1981)’s typology. 125 specimens (including two micro-format specimens).



Fig. 42 – Petit Col. (©), 2.19.7, 21 × 14 mm. Formerly in Laurent Simon's collection (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖母瑪利亞為我 (right) 等及異民的嬰孩祈 (left) – ‘Holy Mother Mary, pray for us and for the pagan children’

Reverse: 聖若瑟中國大 (right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – ‘St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us’

Type 2.19 differs from all other medals in Group 2: Mary and Joseph are depicted at mid-height, not as standing figures. The style is also different, with a neo gothic influence that makes the engraving look like a medieval miniature. The three characters have halo above their heads, and their tunics are adorned with embroidered designs. Mary is crowned and holds the *globus cruciger* – the symbol of God's dominion over the world – in her left hand, while the Infant Jesus puts his left hand on it and blesses it with its right hand. Joseph contemplates the lily, to which he paid no attention in the preceding types. With his right hand that is facing the lily, he seems to bless it in a graceful movement. The letters **P.D.** appear on both sides, sometimes on one only, and sometimes with inverted letters (**D.P.**). Cribb (1981, p. 9) argues that these letters might be the initials of Philippe Durand, the only French engraver with such initials according to Forrer's dictionary of engravers, but it seems inconclusive^[28]. The metal is brass, very often silvered, as attested by the remains of the coating (see Fig. 42).

There are many die varieties for this type, as revealed by the varying positions of the Chinese characters in relation to the figures: they can be farther away, nearer, higher, or lower. There are also many punch misplacements, such

[28] Other engravers with the same initials include Paul Dubois (1859–1938), a prolific Belgian medallist (Buchet & Toussaint 2007: 197), or his homonym the French sculptor Paul Dubois (Papet & Chevillot 2012: 46, 98, 104).

as: 母 (second from top on the right), 我 (last bottom right) or 等 (first top left) – on the obverse.^[29]

Type 2.19 also includes medals in a miniature format (18 × 12 mm), known only by two specimens (Petit 2.19.14 and 2.19.22).



Fig. 43 – Petit Col. (©), 2.19.22, 18 × 12 mm (scale 300%)

This miniature medal includes several inaccuracies, as do other medals of Type 2.19; the first character on the top left of the obverse has even disappeared.

Group 3

This group has a limited extension: it consists of six specimens divided into 3 types. In continuity with Group 2, the medals of Group 3 represent the Holy Family, but sorted differently: the Infant Jesus appears with Joseph on the obverse, while Mary appears on the reverse, under the figure of the Immaculate Conception that was already described for the Miraculous Medals (Group 1). These medals are of a larger format than those of Group 2 – leaving more space for writing – and all are engraved with accurate workmanship. The Chinese script on medals in this group includes up to 19 sinograms and some legends are rather specific.

^[29] François Thierry made similar observations about a medal of Type 2.19 (Thierry 2008, p. 72, pl. 7; 2021, p. 237). One should additionally note that the same punch can be placed correctly on the reverse: 我 and 等 fourth and fifth from the top on the left are not upside-down although they are on the obverse.

Type 3.1

Engraved by Pierre Roquelay, Paris Mint, 1845-1860. 44 × 30 mm. 19.62 g. Copper. 3 specimens.



Fig. 44 – *Petit Col.* (©), 3.1.1, 44 × 30 mm (scale 200%)

Obverse: 聖若瑟主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – ‘St Joseph Great Protector, pray for us’

Reverse: 吁無染原罪聖母瑪利亞 (right) 我們仰望求為我等祈 (left) – ‘O Holy Mother Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee’^[30]

This medal is signed by the French engraver Pierre Roquelay (born in 1808). The edge is marked with the inscription *CUIVRE* preceded by a hand with a pointing finger, the official mark of the Paris Mint from 1845 to 1860 (Mazard 1965, p. 17). Two specimens are conserved in the Paris Mint collection, with the bails unpierced.

Joseph seems to be seated. He is holding the Infant Jesus tenderly on his lap with the stalk of a lily in his right hand. Jesus is depicted facing, with his left hand open and his right arm folded over his chest. On the reverse, Mary

^[30] Cribb suggests the following translation: ‘Oh Holy Mother Mary unstained by original sin pray for us who hopefully beseech you’ (Cribb 1981, p. 6). For the sake of consistency, in this article, we keep the alternative English translation of the original French legend of the Miraculous Medal (see Group 1).

appears in the same position as on the Miraculous Medal, but no date appears under the snake that she is trampling on the globe.

The Chinese characters are written quite carefully. The use of 我們 ('us', in vernacular language, rather than 我等 on other medals) is not common on the various medals in our corpus. In addition, 'Holy Mother' (聖母) is added, preceding the name Mary.

We can observe here the third Chinese translation of the original French legend of the Miraculous Medal, *Ô Marie conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous*, in our corpus of medals. Here is the list of their occurrences:

- Translation A: 瑪利亞始孕母胎無染原罪，為我等求爾祐者祈 (Types 1.1 and 3.3)
- Translation B: 吁瑪利亞無原罪之始胎，我等奔爾台前為我等祈 (Type 1.2)
- Translation C: 吁無染原罪聖母瑪利亞，我們仰望求為我等祈 (Type 3.1 and 3.2)

Type 3.2

19th century. Height: 32 mm. 8.52 g. Type 5 according to Cribb (1981)'s typology. 1 specimen.



Fig. 45 – British Museum, © The Trustees of the British Museum, 1977,0706.2, 32 mm (height) (scale 200%)

Obverse: 聖若瑟中國大(right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – 'St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us'

Reverse: 吁無染原罪聖母瑪利亞 (right) 我們仰望求為我等祈 (left) – 'O Holy Mother Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee'

Joseph holds a lily in his right hand, with the Infant Jesus on his left arm. Jesus is holding a *globus cruciger* on his lap with his left hand and placing a crown of flowers on Joseph's head with his right hand. A five-pointed star appears above Joseph's crown. On the reverse, the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal appears with very long hair and her head leaning to the right. She is trampling a snake, but the date of 1830 does not appear at her foot.

The text on the reverse uses translation C of the Miraculous Medal, as in Type 3.1. The translation on the obverse, showing Joseph and the Infant Jesus, differs slightly from the one on type 3.1, with three supplementary characters: 中國 ('China') and 大 ('great'). These additional characters consequently change the breakdown of the script: 主保 ('patron') has moved from the right side to the left side.

- Medal 3.1: 聖若瑟主保 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – 'St Joseph Great Protector, pray for us'
- Medal 3.2: 聖若瑟中國大(right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – 'St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us'

Type 3.3

19th century. 26 × 19 mm, 1.81 g (silver)-2.44 g (brass). 2 specimens.



Fig. 46 – Petit Col. (©), 3.3.1, 26 × 19 mm (scale 300%)

Obverse: 聖若瑟中國大(right) 主保為我等祈 (left) – 'St Joseph Great Patron of China, pray for us'

Reverse: 瑪利亞始孕母胎無染原罪 (right) 為我等求爾祐者祈 (left) – 'O Holy Mother Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee'

This type exists in silver (Petit Col. 3.3.1) and in brass (RLB Fl. 6013 [AA141 2/4]). The obverse is like the previous type, but the Infant Jesus is holding a very small orb and placing a halo – not a crown – above Joseph's head. A five-pointed star appears on the top of the medal, as on Type 3.2. A saw at Joseph's foot reminds us of his occupation as carpenter. On the reverse, the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal has her hair blowing in the wind. She is topped by a halo and is trampling the snake on the globe.

The Chinese phrasing on the obverse with Joseph is like the previous medal (Type 3.2). However, the script on the reverse with Mary is the translation A of the legend of the Miraculous Medal, that is, the one used on the Vachette medal annotated by Wang (Type 1.1). This is surprising because Type 3.3 is very similar to Types 3.1 and 3.2 for the depiction of the Holy Family, but it draws its Chinese legend for the reverse from an alternative source of inspiration.

The writing is diligent; however, it includes some typos (on mother or 母, for instance) that clearly show the engraver's lack of knowledge of sinograms.

Group 4

This group includes four types of medals that can be dated to the 20th or 21st centuries. They celebrate Our Lady of China, whose history and iconography has been studied in detail by Jeremy Clarke (2009; 2013, p. 83-110). During the Boxer Uprising (1899-1901)^[31], the market town of Donglu (prefecture of Baoding, Hebei Province), home to many Christian converts, was reportedly protected by miraculous powers, leading to the creation of a local devotion for Mary. A missionary commissioned a devotional image from a Chinese Christian artist, Liu Bizhen, and the image of 'Our Lady of Donglu' was eventually produced in 1908. It was so successful that in the 1920s, it started to be called 'Our Lady of China' and was reproduced more and more using various supports. As can be seen in the following types, it has been reproduced on medals from the Republican period until the present.

Type 4.1

Engraved by Stabilimento Stefano Johnson, Milan, first half of the 20th century. 37.5 × 33 mm (diameter), 3.49 g. Aluminium. 2 specimens.

^[31] The Boxer rebellion (1899-1901) was led by a Chinese secret organization and supported by peasants, with the aim of driving all Westerners from China. This led to an international military intervention and an inter-state war starting from 1900.



Fig. 47 – *Petit Col.* (©), 4.1.1, 37.5 × 33 mm (scale 200%)

Obverse: 中華聖母為我等祈 (from bottom right to left bottom) – ‘China’s Holy Mother/Our Lady of China, pray for us’

Reverse: 耶穌聖心矜憐我等 (from bottom right to left bottom) – ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, have pity on us’

On the obverse, Our Lady of Donglu/Our Lady of China sits on a throne, holding in her right hand a sceptre of command. Her imposing appearance, heightened by her luxurious cloths, is reminiscent of the imperial portrait of Empress Cixi that inspired Liu Bizhen, according to Clarke (2013, p. 95–102). However, the crown topped by a cross is Western and Christian. Jesus is standing on the throne, on her left. He is sumptuously adorned, wears the same crown as his mother, and presents his hand, palms open, in a benevolent gesture. Two flowerpots adorn the floor on both sides of the throne, behind which two spiral columns rise from a wall at mid-height of the scene. The outer circle is inscribed with a Chinese legend, with a French inscription **CHINE-PAOTINGFU** in the exergue^[32]. The letters **S.J.** are written inside the inner circle of the medal; these are the initials of the Company Johnson (Stabilimento Stefano Johnson) already mentioned in relation to Type 2.17. The production of this medal by an Italian company might be related to Mgr Costantini, Apostolic Delegate to China since 1922, who advocated in the Holy See the adaptation of the church aesthetics to the lands of mission and was instrumental in the promotion of the image of Our Lady of China (Clarck 2013, Chapter 4; Petit 2020, p. 263).

[32] Baotingfu and Paotingfu are different transcriptions of the same characters: 保定府.

The reverse reproduces the famous artwork *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, painted by Pompeo Batoni in 1767 and conserved in Rome, in the Church of the Gesù. In his left hand, Jesus holds his flaming and radiating Sacred Heart, encircled by the crown of thorns and topped by a cross; he shows it with his right hand. He wears an ample tunic, and a halo is radiating out around his head. A Chinese inscription appears in the outer circle of the medal, at the bottom of which lie two crossed palms.

The Chinese script on this medal is interesting in many ways. First, rather than being based on two parallel lines, the texts read from bottom to top and from right to left, and the Chinese phrase is read as one full sentence following the contour of the image of the Virgin, from bottom right to bottom left, like the Miraculous Medal of Type 1.2 presented above. Although the sinograms are written diligently, a mistake appears in 矜 (reverse, fifth from bottom right): the right-hand side of the sinogram should be 今 but is incorrect on the medal.

On the obverse, China (as in 'Our Lady of China') is translated as Zhonghua (中華), which has a different connotation than Zhongguo (中國) used on all other medals presented in this corpus. While Zhongguo refers to China's territory or the sovereign state that is called China (國 indicating a country, 中 meaning the middle as in 'the Middle Kingdom'), Zhonghua has a broader meaning and refers to Chinese ethnicity or culture. Zhonghua in his current meaning is recent and dates to the end of the 19th century, when Chinese intellectuals attempted to rethink the definition of China and Chinese to include populations at the peripheries of China and the diaspora. The use of Zhonghua confirms that this medal was made after the early 20th century.

Type 4.2

First half of the 20th century. Dimensions and weight unknown. Aluminium. 1 specimen.



Fig. 48 – Online sales site Meshok (©), dimensions and weight unknown

Obverse: 中華聖母為我等祈 (from bottom right to left bottom) – ‘China’s Holy Mother / Our Lady of China, pray for us’

Reverse: 耶穌聖心矜憐我等 (from bottom right to left bottom) – ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, have pity on us’

This medal, known only from one poor-quality specimen, is similar to the preceding type (4.1), but the bail has a triangular form; on the obverse, the initials S.J. (for the company Johnson) under the Virgin have disappeared; the letters CR or LR appear at the rim of the inner circle, on the lower right-hand side. The reverse is even more different: Jesus’ left hand is resting on his chest and does not hold his heart as in the previous type. His right hand has not changed position and shows the flaming and radiating Sacred Heart. Types 4.1 and 4.2 are very similar and one of them must be derived from the other. As Type 4.1 is a faithful reproduction of Pompeo Bantoni’s painting, Type 4.2 must be the copy, and the changes appearing in it might be either a mistake or a reinterpretation of the original type.

The Chinese script on this medal shows the same characteristics as type 4.2, but the characters have slightly degenerated.

Type 4.3

Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (Shanghai, China), 21st century.
29 × 15 mm, 6.85 g. Silver 0.925. 2 specimens.



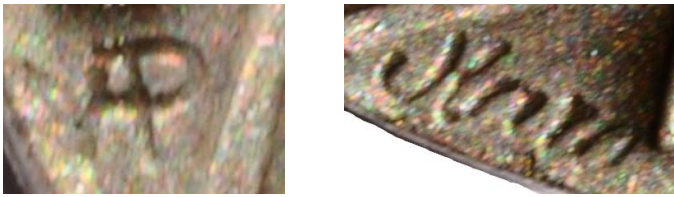
*Fig. 49 – Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (©), 29×15 mm
(scale 200%)*

Obverse: Caelestis Sinarum Regina O[ra] P[ro] N[obis] – ‘Heavenly Queen of China, pray for us’. 中華聖母 – ‘Our Lady of China’

Reverse: 爾國臨格 – ‘May your kingdom come’

This medal is a production of the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio, a contemporary manufacturer of Christian devotional objects located in Shanghai. This is true for Types 7.1, 8.1, and 9.1. Interestingly, these four medals display non-simplified (or traditional) Chinese, although they are produced in the People's Republic of China, where simplified Chinese characters are the official standard for writing (non-simplified sinograms are mostly used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and part of the older diaspora). Traditional characters like those featured here can drive nostalgic feelings toward a 'purer' traditional Chinese literacy (Vermeeren & de Kloet 2019); they can also display a more 'elitist' spirit, as not everyone in China can read or write traditional characters.

On the obverse, the portrait of the Holy Virgin and Child is like the previous types, but the impressive setting has disappeared and has been replaced by a sober arch with a phrase in Latin. The reverse depicts a haloed Christ pointing to his radiating holy heart with the left hand and making a gesture of blessing with his right hand. A monogram *AP* appears on the lower right-hand side of the field, and the name *Kato* is written vertically along the left side; this double marking appears on many French Catholic medals of the early 20th century (Fig. 50).



*Fig. 50 – The monogram *AP* and the name *Kato* as they appear on a French-language Miraculous Medal, Petit Col. (©)*

A medal with the monogram *AP* alone displays the same representation of the Sacred Heart as in the specimen from China (Fig. 51). This demonstrates that the Catholic Decoration and Art Designed Studio has used European medals as models, adding Chinese legends if needed (see also Types 8.1 and 9.1). In this specific case, the original was possibly from the workshop directed by Alfred Pichard in Saumur, as evidenced by the monogram *AP* appearing on a medallion from that workshop^[33].

^[33] See the interesting webpage <https://saumur-jadis.pagesperso-orange.fr/recit/ch34/r34d6ent.htm>.



Fig. 51 – Petit Col. (©), 20 × 11 mm. Medal of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the monogram AP (the obverse shows Our Lady of Mount Carmel)

The medal visible on the Website of the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (Fig. 49) has much sharper details than the one acquired from this workshop (Petit Col. 4.3.1). It seems that the latter is a copy cast from the original displayed on the Website, as all the other acquired from this studio.

Type 4.4

Holymalls (China), 21st century. 32 × 20 mm, 7.79 g. 2 specimens.



Fig. 52 – Petit Col. (©), 4.4.1 (scale 175%)

Reverse: 中華聖母 (top) 為我等祈 (bottom) – ‘Our Lady of China, pray for us’

This medal was spotted on Holymalls, a Chinese online sales site for religious artifacts. On the obverse is the usual depiction of Our Lady of China, on a reduced field limited by geometrical patterns. The reverse is made of a Chinese legend in two lines encapsulated in a square.

The Chinese Seal script (sigillary writing) used on this medal is rather unusual, as Seal script (篆書) is a very old style of writing Chinese characters that is generally used for seals and decorative engraving. However, seal script is not uncommon in contemporary China, as imitating old calligraphy is intended to bring out a 'spiritual essence' from past times, and calligraphy is often considered as the most valuable art in China (Wang & Rowlands 2017). Despite this artistic feature inspired from the past, the characters' layout is rather modern: they are written in two horizontal phrases (rather than vertical), to be read from right to left, horizontally from top to bottom.

Group 5

The last five groups of our corpus each include one single type of medal, based on our research so far. We will hence not discuss the groups, but the types.

Type 5.1

19th or 20th century. 45 × 33 mm. 13.56 g. Type 6 according to Cribb (1981)'s typology. 1 specimen.



Fig. 53 – Municipal Library of Versailles (©), 45 × 33 mm (scale 150%)

Obverse: 耶穌後世 (right) 之父者。 (left) – 'Jesus, father of succeeding generations.'

Reverse: 聖瑪利亞。 (right) 天主聖母。 (left) – 'Holy Mary. Holy Mother of God.'

This attractive large medal is a Chinese version of the *Salvator Mundi* ('Saviour of the world') medal, where the bust of Christ appears with this inscription on the obverse, while the bust of Mary appears on the reverse with an inscription referring to her status of '*Mater Christi*' (Mother of Christ), or '*Mater Salvatoris*' (Mother of the saviour), '*Mater Iesu*' (Mother of Jesus), '*Mater Divinae Gratiae*' (Mother of the divine grace), etc. As on most *Salvator Mundi* medals, their faces are turned in the opposite direction.

The presence of Chinese punctuation (。 for .) is rather uncommon on the medals in question. Punctuation is very rare, if not inexistant, in classical Chinese, and only came into common usage after the early 20th century.

On the reverse, the same character, 聖 or Holy/Saint, is included twice but while the first on the top right is correct, the second (third from the top left) lacks some strokes, perhaps due to a misstrike.

Group 6

Type 6.1

20th century. 41 × 28 mm. 4.45 g. Aluminium. 1 specimen.



Fig. 54 – Petit Col. (©), 6.1.1, 41 × 28 mm. Formerly in Laurent Simon's collection (scale 200%)

Obverse: 耶穌聖心 (right) 歸化中國 (left) – 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, convert China'

Reverse: 進教之佑 (right) 為我等祈 (left) – 'Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us'

This medal (with a bail unpierced and an off-centre strike) presents another common theme of Catholic medals: the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, as symbols of their interiority and love for mankind, a devotion that developed mostly during the 17th century (Forrest 2004, p. 17-23). The Sacred Hearts of Jesus or Mary have appeared on different medals of Group 2 and Group 4, but they are given full prominence on the present type.

On the obverse, Jesus touches his Sacred Heart with his left hand, and he raises the right one in a sign of blessing. A halo with a cross can be seen behind his head. His heart is topped by a radiating flame with a cross on top. On the reverse, Mary has a simple halo. She supports her flaming and radiating 'Immaculate Heart' with the left hand, while the right one touches gently her lower chest. A sword pierces her heart, as a symbol of the sufferings she had to endure during her life as '*Mater Dolorosa*' (Sorrowful Mother) (Forrest 2004, p. 4-5).

'Mary, Help of Christians' or 進教之佑 (also translated as 奉教之祐 on the medal from Type 2.4) is venerated in the Sheshan Basilica near Shanghai, also known as the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians or the Zosè Basilica. This had been a common destination of Marian pilgrimage since the late 19th century (Clarke 2013, pp. 191-194, 245). This prominent church uses the precise term 進教之佑 to translate Mary, Help of Christians, like the medals of Types 6.1 and 7.1: it is possible that both are related to the Sheshan Basilica and its pilgrimage. The fact that two recent medals mention this devotion is evidence of its importance in present-day China. In 2007, the Pope established the date of 24 May – the liturgical date for celebrating Mary Help of Christians – as the World Day of Prayer for China.^[34] Historically, Mary Help of Christians has been considered as the protector of Christians under threat.

All characters are diligently written; only the first character on the top left of the obverse is barely readable, probably due to a weak strike.

Group 7

Type 7.1

Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (Shanghai, China), 21st century. Diameter and weight unknown. Silver 0.925. 1 specimen.

^[34] See <https://www.cathobel.be/2022/05/24/>



Fig. 55 – Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (©) (scale unknown)

Obverse: 進教之佑 (left) 為我等祈 (right): ‘Mary Help of Christians, pray for us’
 Reverse: 耶穌聖心 (left) 爾國臨格 (right): ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, may your kingdom come’

The obverse is a faithful representation of *Mary Help of Christians*, a painting made around 1867 by Tommaso Andrea Lorenzone in the Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, in Turin, Italy (for more information about this devotion, see the preceding section on Type 6.1). The artwork, inspired by Saint Don Bosco, was granted a Canonical coronation in 1903, contributing to its diffusion across the world. Mary is crowned and haloed. She holds a sceptre of power in her right hand, and the Infant Jesus in her other arm. The Infant Jesus is also crowned and is opening his arms. On the reverse is a depiction of the Sacred heart of Jesus.

On both sides, figures are surrounded by eight Chinese characters to be read clockwise, from the bottom left to the bottom right, in a horizontal writing structure. Although horizontal reading highlights the recent manufacture of the medal, the characters are in non-simplified script, as in the other medals produced by the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio.

Group 8*Type 8.1*

Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (Shanghai, China), 21st century.
22 mm (diameter without the bail). Weight unknown. Silver 0.925. 1 specimen.



*Fig. 56 – Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (©), 22 mm
(diameter without the suspension loop) (scale 150%)*

Obverse: 耶穌聖心 (right) 我依恃爾 (left) – ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in thee’

Reverse: 法蒂瑪 (right) 玫瑰聖母 (left) – ‘Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Fátima’

This type of medal was also produced by the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio of Shanghai. On the obverse is another image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The reverse depicts the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to the three shepherd children of Fatima (Portugal) in 1917. They kneel among their sheep in the countryside, in front of the Holy Virgin. This reverse is copied from a common Portuguese devotional medal (Fig. 57).

Chinese script is read counter-clockwise, from bottom right to bottom left, surrounding the image of the Virgin.



*Fig. 57 – Petit Col. (©), 22 mm (diameter without the suspension loop).
The obverse shows Our Lady of Fatima crowned (scale 300%)*

Group 9

Type 9.1

Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (Shanghai, China), 21st century.
19 mm (diameter without the bail). Weight unknown. Silver 0.925. 1 specimen.



*Fig. 58 – Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio (©), 19 mm
(without the suspension loop) (scale 200%)*

Reverse: 初領 (right) 聖體 (left) 紀念 (centre) – ‘Commemoration of First Communion.’ Characters on the left and right are read horizontally from right to left, while the characters in the centre are read vertically from top to bottom.

Like the preceding types, this medal is a production of the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio of Shanghai. It relates to the First Communion, the occasion on which Catholic children participate for the first time in the sacrament of Eucharist. The First Communion and the sacrament of Eucharist are the central topic of many devotional medals (Forrest 2004, p. 24-27).

On the obverse, a priest in a cassock holds a chalice in his left hand and, with his right hand, is placing the host into the mouth of a kneeling child. Another child kneels next to the latter, probably waiting for his turn. On the left, another priest or an altar boy holds a long cross. The background of the scene shows the church’s altar and related liturgical objects.

The reverse is centred on a chalice, above which appears a host with the letters *IHS* (Jesus). Grapes and ears of wheat extend on both sides of the chalice, under which is a star and a folded ribbon with the Chinese legend. The commentary on the website of the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio explains that the star stands for the light, in relation to Jesus’ words: ‘I am the light of the world’ (John 8:12).

We have already noticed, for Types 4.3 and 8.1, that some medals of the Catholic Decoration and Art Design Studio are old European medals where Chinese characters have been added (by the Studio, or by a previous engraver copied by the Studio). The present type is another evidence: the obverse has been copied from an old Italian communion medal. As for the reverse, the symbols and the original legend *MEMORIA DELLA MIA PRIMA COMUNIONE* have been adapted in the Chinese medal.



Fig. 59 – Petit Col. (©), Ø 26 mm (scale 200%)

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Annex: Table of identification of the corpus specimens

For references to the Royal Library of Belgium, the first series number refers to the directory of acquisitions, and the second number (between square brackets) refers to the location in the storage trays. For instance, [DD286 3/3] means that the medal can be found in the 'DD' storage column for religious medals, tray number 286, 3rd line, 3rd column.

- Type 1.1 Wang 1863.
- Type 1.2 Petit Col. (1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3); eBay (bentleyestates, mullencoins, mestizotrading, larr_7548); Etsy (JetsamAndJuniper [3 specimens], DunhillLane, Glamaroni); Goantiques (Roxanne's Little Treasures); social network Reddit (https://www.reddit.com/r/ThriftStoreHauls/comments/c8wah3/couple_gw_finds_chinese_religious_medal_and_cross/).
- Type 2.1 Wang 1863; RLB (II 21055 [DD286 3/3], II 13608 [EE 138 5/1], Sin 135 [EE138 4/5], II 13432 [EE 138 2/1], II 9821 [EE138 1/2], without inventory nr. [AA162 2/2], Fl. 7682 [AA141 6/1], Fl. 8763 [AA141 3/5]); Municipal Library of Versailles (2 specimens, no inventory nr.); BnF (MMA.2004-393); Petit Col. (4 specimens, 2.1.1 to 2.1.4); Thisquen Col. « Les petits pédestres »; Zeno.ru (#239841); detectorist Website (<http://www.detectionpassion.fr/forum/topics/view/medaille-religieuse-20>).
- Type 2.2 RLB no inventory nr. [EE138 4/3]; Petit Col. (2.2.1).
- Type 2.3 RLB (Fl. 6373 [DD289 3/3], 2006-1567 [EE159 1/3]); Carnavalet (no inventory nr.).
- Type 2.4 Wang 1863.
- Type 2.5 Petit Col. 2.5.1.
- Type 2.6 Petit Col. 2.6.1.
- Type 2.7 RLB II 13423 [EE138 1/6]; Petit Col. 2.7.1.
- Type 2.8 Detectorist Website:
<http://www.lefouilleur.com/forum/post1791627.html#p1791627>. Posted by 'Caillot76'.
- Type 2.9 Petit Col. 2.9.1.
- Type 2.10 Petit Col. 2.10.1; eBay (archived on PicClick, a research engine related to eBay, which did not make it possible to access a sale when consulted).
- Type 2.11 RLB II 24671 [EE142 6/2].
- Type 2.12 RLB Fl. 4888 [EE139 3/6]; former Vassy Col.
- Type 2.13 RLB Fl. 8018 [EE139 2/5]; Petit Col. 2.13.1.
- Type 2.14 RLB (Fl. 9813 [EE139 9/3], II 13718 [EE138 4/2]).
- Type 2.15 RLB (66 specimens: Fl. 2698 [AA112 9/2], II 25356 [AA119 2/1], Fl. 1898 [AA133 2/7], Fl. 2880 [AA141 1/2], Fl. 2811 [AA141 3/4], Fl. 6904 [AA141 3/7], Fl. 5507 [AA141 4/1], Fl. 6511 [AA141 4/2], Fl. 3808 [AA141 4/6], Fl. 5929 [AA141 5/1], Fl. 3729 [AA141 5/4], Fl. 2472 [AA142 1/3], Fl. 2161

[AA142 1/4], Fl. 2191 [AA142 1/5], Fl. 2287 [AA142 1/7], Fl. 0500 [AA142 2/7], Fl. 1179 [AA142 3/1], Fl. 1774 [AA142 3/6], Fl. 2644 [AA142 5/3], Fl. 2743 [AA142 5/5], Fl. 1339 [AA142 7/2], Fl. 1532 [AA142 7/3], Fl. 1825 [AA142 7/5], Fl. 3952 [AA142 8/5], Fl. 3816 [AA142 8/6], Fl. 3282 [AA142 9/5], Fl. 3233 [AA142 9/6], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/4], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/6], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 2/3], 2006-1800 [BB375 7/5], 2006-1801 [BB375 7/7], II 22120 [DD287 6/2], Fl. 4330 [DD289 3/5], II 13434 [EE138 3/5], (no inventory nr.) [EE138 3/6], II 13539 [EE138 4/1], II 13587 [EE 138 4/6], Fl. 4785 [EE139 1/4], Fl. 4536 [EE139 1/5], Fl. 9096 [EE139 2/3], Fl. 8254 [EE139 2/4], Fl. 7890 [EE139 3/5], Fl. 6680 [EE139 3/7], Fl. 6964 [EE139 4/1], Fl. 7334 [EE139 4/4], Fl. 6231 [EE139 4/5], Fl. 7465 [EE139 4/6], Fl. 10320 [EE139 5/2], Fl. 10135 [EE139 5/3], Fl. 7544 [EE139 5/6], Fl. 4072 [EE139 6/1], Fl. 8960 [EE139 6/4], Fl. 4100 [EE139 6/2], Fl. 7684 [EE139 7/2], Fl. 10051 [EE139 7/3], Fl. 9718 [EE139 7/7], Fl. 9937 [EE139 8/4], Fl. 9805 [EE139 9/2], Fl. 9674 [EE139 9/4], Fl. 5572 [EE142 7/1], 2006-1562 [EE159 1/4], 2006-1563 [EE159 1/5], 2006-1566 [EE159 1/7], II 13419 [EE186 4/3], II 13428 [EE186 4/5]).

Municipal Library of Versailles (no inventory nr.) ; Milano Numismatic Cabinet (Tam 2673); Capuchin collection in Reggio Emilia (Garuti 1996: 99); Musée de la Vie Wallonne 5014680 ; Masur 2021: 404 ; Petit Col. (12 specimens: 2.15.1 to 2.15.12); Hull Col. (6 specimens); former Vassy Col.; eBay (winnumis_sa, monkscell, laviesbel, pucn2012-3, treasure.antique [2 specimens], necunoscutuleu, mtitine53, fr3bdx); Etsy (Pucn2012, Frenchconnection333 [3 specimens], Religious [2 specimens], Milletresors, BlessedCatholic, ChezJackieTreasures); Todocoleccion (Bagaudas); detectorist Website 1 (11 specimens : <https://www.identification-numismatique.com/t4012-12-medailles-asiatiques-trouvees-dans-un-herbage>); detectorist Website 2 (2 specimens: <https://www.detecteur.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=103744>); detectorist Website 3 (1 specimen <https://www.detecteur.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=107719>); detectorist Website 4 (1 specimen: <https://www.detecteur.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=69482>). Cross references between the detectorist websites have been checked and removed.

Type 2.16 RLB (Fl. 3854 [AA142 7/7], II 13730 [EE 138 4/4], 2006-1564 [EE159 1/6]), Municipal Library of Versailles (no inventory nr.) ; Petit Col. (6 specimens: 2.16.1 to 2.16.6); eBay (numisdena, Maravedindon [2 specimens]) ; Todocoleccion (Mallortiz); Detectorist Website (<https://detection-huyghe.blogspot.com/2012/10/les-medailles.html>); Blog (<https://ameblo.jp/eggplantblog/entry-12120348131.html>).

Type 2.17 Milano Numismatic Cabinet (Tam 2674, Tam 2675).

Type 2.18 Petit Col. 2.18.1

Type 2.19 RLB (72 specimens: Fl. 3173 [AA124 4/4], Fl. 2925 [AA141 1/7], Fl. 6723 [AA141 2/3], Fl. 6112 [AA141 3/3], Fl. 0829 [AA141 4/4], Fl. 0852 [AA141 4/5], Fl. 6377 [AA141 5/5], Fl. 1210 [AA142 4.6], Fl. 0753 [AA142 4/3], Fl. 1446 [AA142 4/4], Fl. 1260 [AA142 4/7], Fl. 1056 [AA142 5/1], Fl. 2715 [AA142 5/7], Fl. 0917 [AA142 6/2], Fl. 1290 [AA142 6/3], Fl. 2793 [AA142

6/4], Fl. 1354 [AA142 8/7], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/2], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/3], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/5], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 1/7], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 2/4], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 2/5], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 2/6], (no inventory nr.) [AA162 2/7], 2006-1799 [BB375 7/6], Fl. 0909 [DD286 5/5], Fl. 0693 [DD286 6/3], II 22229 [DD286 9/2], II 24958 [DD287 2/6], Fl. 6313 [DD289 3/2], II 25312 [DD289 4/3], (no inventory nr.) [EE138 1/3], (no inventory nr.) [EE138 1/4], (no inventory nr.) [EE138 2/4], II 13757 [EE138 3/2], II 3772 [EE138 3/4], Fl. 4420 [EE139 1/2], Fl. 4504 [EE139 1/3], Fl. 7514 [EE139 1/6], Fl. 7773 [EE139 1/7], Fl. 7810 [EE139 2/1], Fl. 8241 [EE139 2/2], Fl. 5959 [EE139 2/6], Fl. 8263 [EE139 2/7], Fl. 8109 [EE139 3/1], Fl. 7983 [EE139 3/2], Fl. 4819 [EE139 3/3], Fl. 4892 [EE139 3/4], Fl. 4712 [EE139 4/2], Fl. 5500 [EE139 4/3], Fl. 8839 [EE139 5/1], Fl. 7593 [EE139 5/4], Fl. 7274 [EE139 5/5], Fl. 8560 [EE139 6/3], Fl. 8544 [EE139 6/5], Fl. 9547 [EE139 6/7], Fl. 9710 [EE139 7/4], Fl. 10048 [EE139 7/5], Fl. 9800 [EE139 7/6], Fl. 9918 [EE139 8/3], Fl. 9922 [EE139 8/5], Fl. 9866 [EE139 8/6], Fl. 9819 [EE139 8/7], Fl. 9898 [EE139 9/1], II 24998 [EE142 6/3], Sin 149 [EE186 2/3], II 13540 [EE186 2/6], (no inventory nr.) [EE186 3/1], II 13618 [EE186 4/1], II 13373 [EE186 6/2], II 13456 [EE186 7/1]); BnF (MMA.1989-1); British Museum (1992,0113.5415; 1992,0113.5416; 1992,0113.5417; 1992,0113.5418; 1936,0107.5); Milano Numismatic Cabinet (Tam 2670, Tam 2671, Tam 2672); National Gallery of Adelaide (Turk 1969: 348 & pl. 74); Petit Col. (26 specimens: 2.19.1 to 2.19.26); eBay (winnumis_sa [2 specimens], monkscell, kupsomarcus2); Etsy (BlessedCatholic [4 specimens], Frenchconnection333, JetsamAndJuniper, Religious [3 specimens]), detectorist Website 1 (<https://www.detecteur.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=124101>); detectorist Website 2 (<https://metaldetector.forumfree.it/?t=61717708>); blog (<http://www.pourceuxde14.com/pages/pour-la-france/les-annamites.html>).

- Type 3.1 Monnaie de Paris (Med 030272, Med 108407) ; Petit Col. 3.1.1.
 Type 3.2 British Museum 1977,0706.2.
 Type 3.3 RLB Fl. 6013 [AA141 2/4] ; Petit Col. 3.3.1.
 Type 4.1 Petit Col. 4.2.1; blog (<http://jlcharvet.over-blog.com/article-chine-paotingfu-medaille-de-la-vierge-120664583.html>).
 Type 4.2 Online sales site Meshok (anonymous seller).
 Type 4.3 Petit Col. 4.3.1, Website Catholic Decoration and Art Studio (#140).
 Type 4.4 Petit Col. 4.4.1, online sales site Holymalls (<http://www.holymalls.com/goods.php?id=5455>).
 Type 5.1 Municipal Library of Versailles (no inventory nr.).
 Type 6.1 Petit Col. 4.4.1.
 Type 7.1 Catholic Decoration and Art Studio (email exchange).
 Type 8.1 Website Catholic Decoration and Art Studio (#141).
 Type 9.1 Website Catholic Decoration and Art Studio (#165).