

Francis Xavier Wang  
Missionary, Translator and Poet:  
A Life Experience in Naples (1861–1891)

Michele FATICA

translated by François Barriquand

王佐才神父：  
一位傳教士、翻譯家兼詩人  
在納坡里的經歷

樊米凱  
包智光 譯

[ABSTRACT] Francis-Xavier Wang (王佐才) is one of China's wisest intellectual 19<sup>th</sup> century representatives in Europe. This study presents a precise account of the most painful episodes of his biography and helps the reader to get a measure of the ecclesial, academic and political context within which Wang had to live during his long sojourn in Naples from 1862 to 1891, as well as to appreciate the depth of his pedagogical, intellectual and missionary commitment.

# 1. THE PROBLEM OF RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG CHINESE FOR THE COLLEGE OF NAPLES: THE ATTEMPT MADE WITH FOUNDLINGS FROM HONG KONG

The recruitment of young Chinese for the *Collegium Sinicum* of Naples always involved difficult and risky choices. The challenge was to receive in Italy young fellows originating from one of the most distant countries from Italy, both geographically and culturally, to require them to learn Latin and to study the entire curriculum taught in religious seminaries. Once they would have been ordained as priests and approved by a committee of *Propaganda Fide* as being fit for the Missions, they would be sent back to China with the task of evangelizing their compatriots. The selection procedure involved various criteria: age, social status, religious tradition of the family, vocation. Even Matteo Ripa (1682–1746), known in China under the name Ma Guoxian 馬國賢, had not always been perceptive in his selection of pupils destined to Naples: his last years were embittered by the transgressions and escapades of Lucio Wu (Wu Lujue 吳露爵), who never returned to China and spent a large part of his life in the prison of Castel San Angelo in Rome.<sup>1</sup> Yet Wu's social status and the religious tradition of his family seemed *a priori* quite encouraging: he was the son of Thomas Wu (Wu Duomo 吳多默), catechist of Matteo Ripa for whom he had transcribed imperial edicts and the diaries of court officials. Thomas Wu possessed a higher level of education, and the

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<sup>1</sup> DI FIORE, G. 1985, pp. 219–286.

reason why he had not become a mandarin was only due to his poor financial wealth.<sup>2</sup> Lucio lacked only one thing to become a good priest: vocation. He was born in 1713 and was only 11 years old when he arrived at Naples during the month of November 1724, at an age too young to allow one to make choices for the rest of one's life.

The problems of the recruitment and of the good success of the Chinese students enrolled in the institute founded by Matteo Ripa surfaced again in a dramatic way after the Italian unification. The suppression of religious congregations, imposed by the Act of 7 July 1866, did not directly affect the Chinese College since the new liberal elite wished to maintain the section devoted to the training of Chinese clergy, and to set up besides it a school open to young lay people eager to learn Asian languages as well as the Indo-European languages most commonly used for diplomatic purposes in East Asia (Russian, French and English).<sup>3</sup>

The reformed Chinese College was inaugurated, with the new title of *Royal Asian College*, on November 25, 1868,<sup>4</sup> following an agreement between the minister of Education, Michele Coppino, and the priests of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Jesus Christ,<sup>5</sup> which had been founded by Matteo Ripa for the purpose of providing a good education to

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<sup>2</sup> RIPA, M. 1996, pp. 267, 291, 302, 332, 340.

<sup>3</sup> FIORENTINO, C.M. 1977, pp. 113–153. Cf. also NARDI, G. 1976, pp. 495–500. The most relevant reference is the Italian text and the French translation provided by LA CECILIA, N. 1868.

<sup>4</sup> GALIANO [GAGLIANO], G. 1868.

<sup>5</sup> COPPINO, M. 1867 (however, the commission for the reform of the Chinese College had been convened by Coppino's predecessor, Cesare Correnti: cf. FIORENTINO, C.M. 1977, p. 116).

the Chinese seminarians admitted to their Neapolitan institution. Two decrees were signed by the new minister of Education, Angelo Bargoni, and published in the *Official Gazette* of 17 October 1869: the first concerned the upgrading of the *Chinese College* into a “moral institution of public education” named *Royal Asian College of Naples*, which would be supervised by the Ministry of Education. The second decree dealt with the disciplines and the programs of studies of the College, and ratified a situation that was already established *de facto*. However, neither the archbishop of Naples, Sixtus Riario Sforza (1810–1877), nor the *Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide*,<sup>6</sup> who hardly concealed their resentment, adhered to the project. The priests of the Holy Family thus found themselves in an isolated position and feared that convergent decisions originating from either the Holy See or the Italian State would suppress the missionary section of the College due to the lack of Chinese pupils. Thanks to their good relations with the *Institute for Foreign Missions of Milan*,<sup>7</sup> also called *Saint Calocero*, and with a missionary belonging to this Institute, Giovanni Timoleone Raimondi, who had been appointed by the *Propaganda Fide* as prefect apostolic of Hong Kong,<sup>8</sup> the *Westpoint Reformatory*

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<sup>6</sup> The relationship between the priests of the Ripa Foundation and the *Propaganda Fide* was already difficult before the unification of Italy, as can be seen from *Propaganda*'s appointment of the archbishop of Naples Sisto Riario Sforza as «apostolic visitor» of the Chinese College on 18 February 1856: DE MARTINIS, R. 1894, pp. 248–249; v. NARDI, G. 1976, pp. 486–487.

<sup>7</sup> These reports are examined in more detail by TRAGELLA, G.B., 1959, II, pp. 161–162; NARDI, G. 1976, pp. 502–505; FIORENTINO, C.M. 1977, pp. 127 and 136.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. METZLER, J. 1985, pp. 102–103: born in Milan on 5 May 1827, he was first appointed pro-prefect (27 November 1867), then (30 December 1868) prefect of Hong Kong and procurator of the Missions of *Propaganda Fide* in China. He died in Hong Kong on September 27, 1894, after having been

that Raimondi had founded in the British colony sent five orphans to Naples who were expected to prepare themselves to consecrate their lives for the Mission in China. These five orphans were named Louis Zhang (Zhang Dingyang 張定養), Richard Deng (Deng Guotai 鄧國太), Peter Pan (Pan Shangdeng 潘上登), Louis Luo (Luo Xizai 羅禧仔) and Andrew Lu (Lu Chengdai 盧成帶). They arrived in Naples on June 18, 1871, and received their religious costumes on the following 27th of August.<sup>9</sup> They were poor teenagers, with little aptitude for study. They had converted themselves to Christianity only in the hope of finding a shelter and food, but they lacked any religious vocation. The slow pace of their progress in Naples would spark off a debate in the Italian Parliament, during which anticlerical forces would publicly and vehemently demand the transformation of the religious section of the College into a Language Institute freed from any ecclesiastic interference.

## 2. THE ARRIVAL AT NAPLES OF YOUNG CHINESE ENDOWED WITH AN AUTHENTIC VOCATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

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appointed apostolic vicar of Hong Kong and titular bishop of Acyntus on October 4, 1874. According to DE MARTINIS, R. 1895, pp. 252–253, the appointment of Raimondi as vicar apostolic on November 17, 1874 resulted from the transformation of Hong Kong's prefecture into a vicariate. Concerning the general missionary activity of Raimondi, cf. BRAMBILLA, G. 1926, pp. 103–116 and 187–206. His Chinese name was Gao Tianjiao 高天教 cf. CRIVELLER, G. p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> KUO, J. M. (郭棟臣) 1917, p. 6, nn. 90–94.

The story of the five orphans is particularly revealing because it intertwines with the story of Francis Xavier Wang (Wang Zuocai 王佐才), one of China's most educated and more enlightened representatives in Naples. He was born on 1 December 1842 in Hubei (湖北) province, Yincheng (應城) district, among the small village community of Wangjiazha<sup>10</sup> (王家榨) whose Christian history was not recent. In February 1857, at age 14, he entered the seminary of Saint Xavier's College managed by Franciscan fathers. The decision to send him to Naples was taken by the Franciscan Luigi Celestino Spelta,<sup>11</sup> who had been appointed at the head of the Hubei vicariate from the time of its creation (1858). Spelta, who was also appointed apostolic visitor of the Empire of China and of neighbouring kingdoms on January 24, 1860, was anxious about the fate of promising young Christians due to the civil war known in the West under the name *Taiping Rebellion* (太平革命). Spelta thus decided that five young seminarians should complete their studies in the Chinese College of Naples. Francis Xavier Wang, who was then 18 years old, was

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<sup>10</sup> On 21 April 1857 and 19 November 1858, GUO DONGCHEN (郭棟臣, *Diario, 1844-1922*) mentions this village in his diary, which he defines as a "residence" in the second occurrence. The *Atlas of the Qing Dynasty* mentions a toponym in the district of Yingcheng whose characters 王家廟 mean «Temple of the family Wang»; one cannot exclude that both villages coincide. Cf. 中國歷史地圖集 (The Historical Atlas of China), 清時期 (Qing Dynasty Period), 1996, 100 頁 (p. 100).

<sup>11</sup> Born in Montebello di Voghera near Tortona on April 9, 1818, he entered the Franciscan family and was sent to China in 1845, where he was consecrated in 1848 bishop *in partibus* of Tespi by the Neapolitan missionary Francesco Saverio Maresca. Maresca had been educated by the congregation of the Holy Family of Jesus Christ. He was titular of Sola *in partibus* and coadjutor of Ludovico De Besi, bishop of Nanjing. Spelta died in the city of Wuchang (武昌) on 12 September 1862. In China, he was given the name of Xu Leisi 徐類思, cf. SARTORI, C. 1926, pp. 52-53. The biographic information relative to Francis Xavier Wang is deduced from SARTORI, C. 1926, pp. 88-89

accompanied by 15 years old Joseph Mary Guo (Guo Dongchen 郭棟臣), 12 years old Paul Wu (Wu Chenglie 吳承烈), and by Andrew Zhang (Zhang Maogong 張懋功) and Thomas Fan (Fan Zuda 範祖大), whose age is unknown. The group of young adolescents started its trip on March 19, 1861, leaving the river port of Tianmen (天門) located along the tributary of the Yangtze River (長江) also called Tianmen. They manoeuvred between Taiping rebels and British gunboats until they arrived on May 16 in Hong Kong. The small group had then to wait until the 5<sup>th</sup> of August before embarking on the French steamboat named *Marne*, which made a first call in Manila, and led them to the city of Saigon. In Saigon, they boarded the boat named *Shanghai*, which carried them to Naples where they arrived on December 31, 1861.<sup>12</sup>

Among these five young Chinese, not all were successful, since Thomas Fan died in Naples as soon as February 1867.<sup>13</sup> Fortunately, Francis Xavier Wang, Joseph Mary Guo and Paul Wu soon gave comforting signs of their good progress. Their great capacities even freed them from the rule imposing that their ordination should take place after their thirtieth birthday.<sup>14</sup> Francis Xavier Wang and Joseph Mary Guo became the only authentic sinologists that Italy could boast off during the second half of the nineteenth century. They were

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<sup>12</sup> The itinerary of the travel has been deduced mainly from the diary of Guo Dongchen (郭棟臣 GUO DONGCHEN, *Diario, 1844–1922*).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 郭棟臣 GUO DONGCHEN, *Diario, 1844–1922*, March 1867. Cf. also KUO, J. M. 郭棟臣, 1917, p. 7, n. 88. This last reference mentions that he died in Naples, where he was buried on 22 February 1867.

<sup>14</sup> They were ordained as priests on September 22, 1872: [KUO, J. M. 郭棟臣] 1917, p. 7, nn. 84, 85, 86; concerning the exemption, cf. LD, APF, 1872, ff. 1153v–1154, under the date of 10 September 1872.

perfectly well versed in Chinese, both spoken and written, as well as in Italian and Latin. Before his ordination (September 1872), Joseph Mary Guo published in 1869, when he was just over twenty years old (he was born in 1846), in Naples, lithographs written by his own hand, as well as a handbook entitled *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Language* (華學進境) and a Latin translation of the famous *Three Character Classic* entitled *Sanzi Jing* (三字經), through which Chinese students had been educated during nearly a millennium, accompanied with a commentary. Meanwhile, Francis Xavier Wang acquired such a mastery of the Italian language that he was called by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 1870 to act as interpreter during the visit to Florence of the first official Chinese delegation to Italy.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The delegation, which left China in 1868, lost its leader, the American Anson Burlingame, in Russia. It was directed thereafter by the Manchu Zhigang (志綱) and the Chinese Sun Jiagu (孫家穀). It was received by the king of Italy in Florence on June 9, 1870. Another former student of the Chinese College of Naples was also invited with Francis Xavier Wang to serve as an interpreter: Thomas Zhang (Zhang Tianyi 張天義), who, from 1851 to 1865, had been working in California to evangelize migrant Chinese communities. Cf. his biographical notice in [KUO, J. M. ] 1917, pp. 4 and 9. The delegation visited Naples and the Chinese College on the following 15 June: BERTUCCIOLI, G. 1973, pp. 2–11; NARDI, G. 1976, pp. 505–507; BERTUCCIOLI, G., MASINI, F. 1996, pp. 264–266. In CORRISPONDENZA DI VARI, CO-G, ASMAE, a curious letter has been conserved, written by Cesare Correnti, minister of Public Instruction, to the minister of Foreign Affairs Giulio Visconti Venosta, the date being simply noted as “1870”. In this letter, Correnti writes about the two interpreters from Naples: “Allow me to tell you that the poor Chinese fellow of Naples, who came here at your request, intervenes during the discussions in the same way as an unwelcome and unsolicited person would do if she wanted to interfere in the negotiation.”



### 3. F.- X. WANG, PROFESSOR OF CHINESE. THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY HONG KONG ORPHANS AND BY THE NEW ARAB STUDENTS

Francis Xavier Wang and Joseph Mary Guo stayed together at the *Chinese College* from the end of 1861 to the beginning of 1873. Their destinies parted when, on March 15, 1873, Guo, together with Thomas Zhang (Zhang Tianyi 張天義) and Paul Wu embarked on the French steamer *Tage* which carried them back to China *via* Marseilles, Toulon, Suez, Aden, Ceylon, Singapore and Saigon.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Xavier Wang was chosen by Giacomo Lignana, one of the promoters of the *Royal Asian College* along with the ministers of education Cesare Correnti (1815–1888) and Michele Coppino (1822–1901), to teach spoken Chinese right from the opening of the public *School of Living Oriental Languages*, which - as mentioned above - took place on November 25, 1868. In that institution, Wang got along with lay colleagues such as Lignana himself, who taught Mongolian and modern Asian history, belonged to the Freemasons and was a friend of Cavour, and with Napoleone La Cecilia,<sup>17</sup> who would soon abandon her teaching of geography to go to Paris and fight for the Paris Commune. Endowed with a mild temperament, open to dialogue and penetrated by the spirit of politeness and ceremonial deference to which his study of Chinese literature had accustomed him, Wang earned immediately the

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. 郭棟臣 GUO, DONGCHEN, *Diario, 1844–1922*, from 15 March to 26 March 1873.

<sup>17</sup> Born in Turin in September 1835, deceases in Cairo on 25 November 1878: ERCOLE, F., 1941, p. 205.

sympathy and esteem of his lay colleagues, even as they remained highly suspicious of the priests of the Holy Family of Jesus Christ, if not hostile to them. It was precisely the existence of this courteous relationship between scholars, who esteemed each other, that would trigger the disturbances of the last ten years of his Italian sojourn. But before dealing with this aspect of his Neapolitan experience, we must reconstruct his difficult relationship with the Chinese orphans who arrived in Naples from Hong Kong during the month of June 1871. The personal stories of these young adolescents contain heartbreaking episodes that often mar the lives of unprotected children who find themselves deprived of human and moral references precisely at the moment when they would most need them. In 1877–78, Wang became involved in an investigation ordered by the minister of Education about the alleged mistreatment of these children. Since four of them were questioned about their past and their plans for the future, we can know many details about their existence. Records based on their interrogations were kept for each of them (twice in the case of Andrew Lu and Richard Deng), of which we transcribe the more significant passages:

Andrew Lu:

“From Canton, 21 years old. He says that he had parents, but that he received no news from them since the time he has become a Catholic. His father was a craftsman who made the sails of sailboats. After his entry in the College [the Reformatory of Hong Kong], he was first taught the profession of tailor, and then that of cobbler. He received no instruction apart from catechism. During the four years that he remained in the

school run by the *Propaganda*, he learned the rudiments of the art of shoemaking. The vice-director of the college once said to the students that, if they went to Italy, they would receive a better instruction and would come back with an employment. This is why he came to Italy with four others. [...] He says that they have always protested that they did not want to dress as priests. When the Arab students came, they wrote together to the Ministry a request for being allowed to wear civil clothes, which was granted to them. He confirms that, since they belong to the ecclesiastic section, they have made no other studies than Latin and Chinese. The remaining time has been spent in prayer.” A second record indicates that he “affirms to know only little Chinese and does not know how to write it. He says that they only study Chinese grammar and do not read any book, nor write. He says that he could only serve as an interpreter from Italian to Chinese. As a matter of fact, he really speaks and understands Italian well enough.” He is also unclear about his future: “He wants to return home, but would like to get a job position.”

Richard Deng:

“From Hong Kong, 22 years old, without parents. He was a bookbinder. He wishes to return to China as soon as possible. He cannot read Chinese. He can read and write a few words. He does not consider himself to be qualified in anything. He too hopes to be recruited by the government. He suffers somewhat from his eyes and does not seem to be in a very good health.”

Peter Pan:

“From the province of Cantoni [*sic*], 23 years old. He wishes to return home, although his family does not want to recognize him, because he has embraced the Christian religion. He has no father and mother but only his grandparents. He affirms that he cannot write Chinese, because this language is difficult to write, but that he can speak it in an understandable way. He himself does not know what kind of competence he has, and he is confident that the Ministry will find a way for him to be able to live in his own country.”

Louis Zhang:

“From Canton, 18 years old, Catholic, fatherless. His mother has remarried. He wishes to return to his family. He admits that he knows very little Chinese. He does not know what kind of work he could do at home. He has studied English for three years but has not learned more than what corresponds to the content of approximately sixty exercises. Every year they start again from the beginning. In other disciplines, he says that his progresses are satisfying. He understands Italian well, and can speak it clearly enough.”<sup>18</sup>

On the basis of these records, let us try to reconstruct the first seven years of Neapolitan life of these five orphans. When they arrived in Naples, they could speak only

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<sup>18</sup> COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 89.

Cantonese, a southern dialect of China. To be more precise, they were completely illiterate, although they were already not so young, since Louis Zhang and Peter Pan were 16, Richard Deng 15, Andrew Lu and Louis Luo 14. They had faced the challenges of a long journey and of a life in a city whose customs and language were quite remote from theirs, just for the sake of a mirage: a professional position (*posto*), which they had imagined as an “employment” providing them social advancement and liberating them from the job or the manual activity that they had learned in the Reformatory. They had not understood that a very different kind of destiny was awaiting them in Naples. They started to realize their situation more clearly when, during a solemn ceremony held in front of a packed audience inside the *chiesa dei Cinesi*, they received the uniform of the ecclesiastic section of the College: a black cassock trimmed in red. The red colour symbolized the sacrifice of their blood which they should be ready to make for the sake of the evangelization of China.<sup>19</sup> Since the language of the Church was Latin, and since manuals of dogmatic theology, moral theology and scholastic theology were all written in Latin, these five students started to study Latin. Meanwhile, since the purpose of their education was to ordain them and to send them back to China as evangelists, they had to practise obedience to their superiors and to learn Chinese, both oral and written. At this point, a process of

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<sup>19</sup> In order to enhance the solemn and official character of the ceremony, the Administrative Council of the *Royal Asian College* sent to all the personalities of the city the following invitation: «The administrative Council of the *Royal Asian College* invites your highness to assist to the solemn clothing ceremony of several young Chinese in the Church of the Royal College on August 27, 1871 at 11 a.m.» (COLLEGIO ASIATICO, VESTIZIONE 1871, BGNa).

painful reactions was inaugurated, and the patience of Francis Xavier Wang - whose task was to teach them Italian, Latin and Chinese - was severely tested. These young boys not only lacked the mental flexibility necessary to learn a wide panel of highly different languages, they were also reluctant to submit themselves to the harsh discipline that they would have needed to overcome the temptations of the flesh and to be able to tame their adolescent rebelliousness. Punishments consisted in meals restricted to bread and water for a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 50 days, in the recitation a prayers for a certain number of hours in a kneeling position, in having one's mouth filled with strong Lecce tobacco, or in the diminution of some nutrients such as meat, fish or fruit. In addition, they had to mortify themselves with a discipline every Friday, i.e., to undress their backs and scourge them with a rope or a belt fitted with nails. Throughout the forty days of Lent, they were required to observe abstinence, hardly eating any meat. Every Friday of Lent, they were also required to take their meals on the floor. In general, respect towards hierarchical superiors is ingrained at a very young age among Chinese people. However, insubordination began when, between 1872 and 1873, Giuseppe Juvakim, Gioffredo Dahdah and Giovanni Desiderio Tabib arrived from Beirut and entered in the Ecclesiastic Section. Two more students joined them in 1873: Pietro Lahhud, native from Alexandria in Egypt, and Elia Calis, from Jaffa.<sup>20</sup> These young boys, who

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<sup>20</sup> KUO, J. M. (郭棟臣) 1917, p. 4, nn. 62, 63, 64, 65, 66. The arrival of the first three of them sparked off a stark reaction of *Propaganda Fide*: «I have received a letter from superior Gagliano in which he informs me that three Maronites from Lebanon have been received in the College. I inform your Excellency about this in my turn. I guard myself from responding to the aforesaid superior about his proposal, but I pray your Excellency to have the kindness to explain me clearly the meaning of this new incident» (LD, APF,

spoke Arabic dialects, had been sent by the “conservatore”<sup>21</sup> Francesco Miniscalchi Erizzo, a famous Arabist who wanted to promote the teaching of classical Arabic in the College. This teaching was first entrusted to Antonio Ghanduz Cubbie, a Catholic Syro-Maronite Lebanese, then to Lupo Buonazia. With these Arab students, to maintain a strict discipline became impossible, among other reasons because they immediately convinced their Chinese peers to send a joint petition to the Ministry of Public Education, asking for the permission to wear civil clothes, which was granted to them. Thereafter, the Arab students, who were animated by a certain degree of prejudice against the Chinese, which was well reciprocated by their Chinese peers,<sup>22</sup> played tricks on Francis Xavier Wang on several occasions, until he would lose patience and react badly against one of them.<sup>23</sup>

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1872, ff. 217–217v, under the date of 16 February 1872 (letter to Sisto Riario Sforza, archbishop of Naples).

<sup>21</sup> This new charge was introduced by the royal decree of the minister of education, Cesare Correnti, dated from 2 June 1870, published in the *Official Gazette* of 4 July 1870. Its purpose was to “maintain the full agreement between the direction of the boarding school, the Executive Council of the patrimony and the Council of Studies”.

<sup>22</sup> According to a ministerial inspector, student Pietro Lahhud «was mistreated, beaten and wounded by a bad young boy named Louis with the help of Chinese students, who used to set themselves against the Arab students, just as these did against them» (*Inquest on maltreatments and on the misuse of corporal punishments in the discipline of the royal Asian College*, anonymous, dated from 1878, in COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 89).

<sup>23</sup> According to Michele Kerbaker, who was appointed by the minister of Public Education as supervisor of the examinations of the non-ecclesiastical section during the year 1876–77: «The Arab student Pietro Lahhud was grabbed by the neck by Father D. Francis Wam (professor of Chinese) and scratched in such a way as to bear bloody scars that I have been able to see myself one year afterwards, the director of studies being present.» (*Relation on the final examination held in the Royal Asian College during the month of June of the student year 1876–77*, in COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 89).

The decree of the new education minister Francesco De Sanctis (1817–1883), entitled *Reorganization of the Royal Asian College in Naples*, signed by Umberto I in Monza on October 28, 1878, and published by the *Official Gazette* of the following 14 December, resolved the case of the five Chinese orphans and the remaining four Arab students in a speedily fashion: according to the new regulations, the *Asian College* could not provide boarding for students who had studied there for more than three years. Since all of these young adolescents had already sojourned in the College for 5 to 7 years, the Arab students were sent to Lebanon to teach Italian at an elementary school supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beirut. Among the five Chinese, two of them, Peter Pan and Louis Luo, were admitted as “extra staff” (*straordinari*) at the Ministry of Education in Rome with the remuneration of one hundred *lire* per month.<sup>24</sup> Two others, Andrew Lu and Louis Zhang, found a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the rank of “clerks” (*scrivani*),<sup>25</sup> while Richard Deng was sent to the Italian Legation in Shanghai with the task of interpreter.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Minister of Public Education to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rome, 12 February 1880, in COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 193.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the minister of Public Instruction, Rome, 27 March 1880.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Deng would cause the Legation some worries, as appears from the *First Estimates of the Expenditure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Year 1883*, wherein it is written: “Concerning the interpreter working in China, is to be observed that a strong need has been felt, even before the Consulate in Shanghai was elevated to the rank of Legation, to dispose of an interpreter who knows both spoken and written Chinese, and who is not a native from the Celestial Empire. A student from the Asian College of Naples now performs the functions of dragoman, but he does not know the literary language well enough, so that he is not able to translate diplomatic documents”: API, CD 1886, doc. 12–A, p. 9. Commenting on the note, the honourable Cavalletto said: “In the report, it is said that great difficulties are encountered to find interpreters in China and India. The Asian College of



#### 4. THE TRIP OF F.-X. WANG TO HUBEI, THE INTRODUCTION AT THE ASIAN COLLEGE OF NAPLES OF YOUNG CHINESE DEEMED APT FOR THE PRIESTHOOD, AND THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THEIR SUCCESS

The grievances of the Chinese orphans and of the Arab pupils had compelled the priests of the Holy Family, as soon as 1873, to transfer the young men lacking a vocation, and who had benefited little from their studies, to the non-ecclesiastic section of the Asian College. Francis Xavier Wang, who shared the concern of his congregation about a potential closure of the missionary section due to a lack of students, took a courageous decision during the 1875 summer. At that time, steamship navigation allowed one to reach the Celestial Empire within little more than a month. Wang decided to visit China during the school holidays, and to recruit young people of solid Catholic faith belonging to educated families. This would enable him to keep alive the missionary section that was now deprived of students and therefore of any reason to exist.

Having received the approval of Sisto Riario Sforza, Archbishop of Naples and apostolic visitor of what was still in

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Naples cannot provide apprentices for our legations in those countries, although it possesses a College of education in the language and the literature of China. According to the report, we have an interpreter from that College in Shanghai, who does not know literary Chinese, and who cannot translate diplomatic documents. I remember that the honourable minister of Public Education showed us last year a report of the investigation made by Professor Lignana on the *Asian College of Naples*. If the facts mentioned in the report are true, I believe that we should not tolerate even a day the continuation of that College". (API CD, 1883, pp. 1993–1994).

the eyes of *Propaganda Fide* the *Chinese College*, Wang left Naples in August 1875,<sup>27</sup> expecting to come back at the beginning of November during the same year. He visited Hankou (漢口) in Hubei (湖北) province, where the problem of finding suitable individuals for his project appeared more difficult than expected, since the apostolic vicars refused to entrust him with the young promising talents that he needed. Thanks to the help of father Giuseppe Maria Guo, he eventually received the care of four young children from families almost noble and fervent in their Catholic faith, who consented to the transfer of their sons to Naples under the understanding that they would receive a good education preparing them for the priesthood and for the missionary apostolate.<sup>28</sup> Because of the difficulties he had encountered, Wang, instead of returning to Naples in November 1875, arrived by train on February 12, 1876, after having reached Brindisi by steamship on the previous day. He was accompanied by the pupils Stefano Deng (Deng Wenshuang 鄧文爽), Giovanni Battista Zhang (Zhang Liansan 張連三), Giovanni Evangelista Lu (Lu Bingren 陸秉仁), and Simone Wang (Wang Yongzhen 王永振) who was his nephew. Wang thought that he had solved the most serious and urgent problem of the ecclesiastic section of the *Asian College*, and he nourished great hopes for the four boys he had brought to Naples. He wrote to Bartholomew Lu (Lu Lemo 陸樂默), a missionary born in Jiangsu (江蘇) who had been educated in Naples, was working in Eastern Hubei and had collaborated

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<sup>27</sup> CV, APF, b. 13, ff. 380–381, Giovanni Maria Falanga to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, dated from 4 August 1875.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 427–428, letter of Francis Xavier Wang to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, dated from 12 August 1878.

with Joseph Maria Guo for the recruitment of the four boys sent in Naples:

“Concerning the four young men, please read the letter addressed to Don Giuseppe Maria Kuo; here I only add that their recruitment and their safe arrival to our beloved College has entirely resulted from the good providence of God, who has been at the initiative of the project and has protected it continually. To Him belong praise, glory and honour as well as to the Holy Family, to which we have the honour to belong”.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the affectionate relationship that he would always maintain with the four young Chinese, Francis Xavier Wang soon felt new motives for bitterness and disappointment. How old were they exactly at the time of their arrival in Naples is not known. We can only trace back the geographical locations of their origins: Giovanni Battista Zhang and Giovanni Evangelista Lu were both from Jiangsu province. The former was born in Huating (華亭) and the latter in Jiangning (江寧). Stefano Deng came from Hubei province and was born in Mianyang (沔陽), and Simon Wang was born in Wanping (宛平) in the province of Zhili (直隸).<sup>30</sup> Michele Kerbaker, who supervised the examinations of students belonging to the non-ecclesiastic section during the year 1876–77, noted the following observations on July 19, 1877, when he was drafting his final report:

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<sup>29</sup> 王佐才 Wang, Zuocai, *Lettere*, 433.243, to Bartolomeo Lu, from Naples, dated from 18 February 1876. Concerning Bartolomeo Lu (陸樂默 Lu Lemo) see KUO, J. M. (郭棟臣) 1917, p. 4, n. 76.

<sup>30</sup> KUO, J. M. (郭棟臣) 1917, p. 6, nn. 95, 96, 97, 98.

“Presently, the ecclesiastic section consists of four pupils from China: Stefano Ten, aged 15; Giovanni Cian, aged 10; Simone Wam, aged 9, and Giovanni Lu, aged 9. I have not seen them at the exams, nor been able to consult any report concerning the nature of their studies and the pace of their progress, since they belong to the ecclesiastic section. On the last day of the exams, they have been presented to me by their professor of Chinese (father Wam of the boarding school), from whom they learn the basic notions of their native language. On this occasion, two of them have been interviewed by the director of studies Di Murro who addressed them a few sentences in Italian which they barely understood”.<sup>31</sup>

If the information provided by Kerbaker is correct, at least three of the Chinese had been brought to Naples at an age too young to allow anyone to be confident about the solidity of their vocation. Matteo Ripa himself had already made the same mistake before, when he brought in Europe the young Lucio Wu. Facts would soon demonstrate the lack of maturity of part of the students. Two letters of Stefano Deng and Giovanni Battista Zhang have been conserved, undated, which have certainly been written before the summer of 1877. The first is addressed to “Dearest Prefect”, and the second to “Most illustrious (*ornatissimo*) Director”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Relazione sugli esami finali dati nel R. Collegio Asiatico nel mese di luglio dell'anno scolastico 1876-77*, in COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 89.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, in the *Relazione*, cit. *supra*, Kerbaker quotes passages from the second letter, which indicates that both letters are anterior to July 19, 1877.

In the former, both students complain, in the broken Italian that they had learned during little more than a year's time:

“D. Francesco says I do not you two professors. There are two other professor. Francesco to teach other two to study Italian grammar all know. All us both none”.<sup>33</sup>

In the second they repeat:

“This College do not have a professor to teach us both Italian<sup>34</sup>, which is why do not understand anything about [Italian].<sup>35</sup> They add: We do not want to wear the long gown because we do not want to become fathers.<sup>36</sup> They conclude: We above want to study, we do not want [to become] father”.<sup>37</sup>

This latter sentence could mean that they wished to switch to the non-ecclesiastic section, which was located “above”, on the upper floor of the Asian College, and that they absolutely did not want to become priests. Maybe they also did not want to have anything to do with Wang, who taught them Chinese and Italian. According to the most probable conjecture, Wang — who was capable of teaching Italian to Chinese students and Chinese to Italian students

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<sup>33</sup> *D. Francesco dice io non voi due professori. Sono altro due professore. Francesco insegnare altro due studiare grammatica italiano tutti sapere. Noi due tutti niente.*

<sup>34</sup> *Questo Collegio non avere professore insegnare noi due studiare italiano.*

<sup>35</sup> *non capisce niente parlare [italiano].*

<sup>36</sup> *Non voliamo vestire abito lungo perché non fare padre noi.*

<sup>37</sup> *Noi voliamo sopra studiare non voliamo padre.*

quite well, as his booklet of Italian-Chinese conversations entitled *Vocaboli Usuali e Domestici con Frasi Semplici e Dialoghi Facili e Brevi*, published in Naples in 1874,<sup>38</sup> can attest — realized that Stefano Deng and Giovanni Battista Zhang had no desire whatsoever to become priests. He therefore focused his attention on the formation of Simone Wang and Giovanni Evangelista Lu, leaving the other two students to their destiny. The lack of success of all four was notified to *Propaganda Fide*, which ordered Wang during the summer of 1878 to send them back to China. Wang managed to avoid this outcome, invoking the situation of “extreme hardships” in which the Celestial Empire found itself “due to persecutions and hunger, which have led to, and still continue to cause the death of millions and millions of people.”<sup>39</sup>

## 5. THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN F.-X. WANG AND R. DE MARTINIS C.M.

The troubles of Francis Xavier Wang had just begun. *Propaganda Fide* had become wary against two members of the Holy Family, Giovanni Maria and Luigi Maria Falanga, who were perceived, not without reason, as pro-liberal and as *de facto* leaders of the *Chinese College*. In reaction, *Propaganda Fide* had appointed since 1856 a supervisor of the Congregation of the Holy Family, in other words an “apostolic visitor”, who was initially the archbishop of Naples Sisto Riario Sforza.

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<sup>38</sup> FATICA, M., 2005, pp. 215–255.

<sup>39</sup> CV, APF, b. 13, ff. 427–428, letter of Francis Xavier Wang to Giovanni Simeoni, dated from 12 August 1878, quot. *supra*.

After his death, which occurred in 1877, the same task was assigned to the bishop of Sora, Ignazio Persico (1823–1895). Since Persico did not reside in Naples, he appointed father Raffaele De Martinis, who belonged to the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and was an expert in missionary law, “pro-visitor” in July 1880, and asked him to follow the affairs of the *Asian College* more closely. De Martinis lived in Naples *via Salvator Rosa*, not far from the main house of the *Asian College* located at the top of the slope named *Salita dei Cinesi* leading to the church *Santa Maria della Sanità*. Although he never lived within the Institute, he began to deal with its internal affairs, particularly with those of the missionary section made up of the four Chinese brought in Naples by Francis Xavier Wang in 1876. After the first difficult years of acclimatization, Wang’s relationship with the most recalcitrant elements of the group had become much more relaxed. Michele Pacifico, from the Holy Family congregation, took care of them as spiritual director. Father Antonio Tagliabue, from the *Institute for Foreign Missions of Milan*, a former missionary in Hyderabad who had been invited in 1878 to teach Urdu and Hindi at the *Asian College*, was their teacher of Italian. Francis Xavier Wang himself was their teacher of Latin, as well as of spoken and written Mandarin Chinese. After a few months, De Martinis took the decision to sack Michele Pacifico, “because he instilled in Dr. Francis Wam and in the boys ideas of revolt”, acknowledging that he (*i.e.* De Martinis) had needed to “overcome considerable resistance from them [the boys] due to the insinuations of Pacifico and Wam”.<sup>40</sup> The same De Martinis took care of the

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*, ff. 513–514, letter of Raffaele De Martinis to Antonio Agliardi, s.d., but presumably written in May 1881.

four Chinese students from May to December 1881. At this stage, taking advantage of “a moment during which father Wam was absent”, he delegated his task to Nicolangelo Magno, belonging to the Holy Family. This decision sparked off a strong protest from Chinese students, who were so traumatized that they felt as if they had been “struck by lightning”. They wrote to *Propaganda Fide*, accusing both Magno and De Martinis. About the former, they wrote:

“... he has always been for us a subject of scandal. On every occasion, he drinks wine in front of us, and then utters meaningless speeches. He smokes continuously at home and produces an indescribable stench that can even be felt by passers-by [...]; he has mistreated, abused and offended our father Wam ...”.

They did not provide a better assessment about the latter either:

“Of all these evils [...] the real cause is father De Martinis. We can certify to Your Eminence, without exaggeration, that he has shocked us every time we have met him, first by repeatedly lying, and secondly, by uttering bad things about our superiors...”<sup>41</sup>

This letter was written in an Italian too correct to let one dismiss the suspicion that it had been dictated by Wang. It was considered as a true declaration of hostilities by De

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 510–511, letter of Stefano Deng, Giovanni Battista Zhang, Simone Wang and Giovanni Evangelista Lu, to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, dated from 31 December 1881.



Martinis, who resorted to all means to paint Wang in bad light before *Propaganda Fide* and to obtain his dismissal from Naples.

Between 1881 and 1882, De Martinis used his relationships to finalize the transfer of the *Asian College* under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He trumpeted the advantages that Italy - which lacked the means to pursue a policy of aggression similar to that of Britain and France - could gain in China by the means of missionaries and Chinese language experts trained in Naples. The group of Orientalists resisted, wishing to maintain the moral and juridical status of the College under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, whose minister, Guido Baccelli (1832-1916), signalled the “need for a new evaluation, especially of the educational part” of the Neapolitan institution, before giving his approval to the transfer. Baccelli entrusted the task of the evaluation to the already mentioned James Lignana, whom he considered as a “highly competent person”.<sup>42</sup> The report of Lignana, published in early 1882, was strongly worded, as could have been expected from the character of its author. It dismissed the idea of transferring the *Asian College* under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and harshly attacked members of the Holy Family as well as the new curator of the Institute, Giacinto Bagatta, who was also supervisor of the classical college *Antonio Genovesi*. His report accused all the parties involved, but spared Francesco Xavier Wang, professor of Chinese, Gherardo De

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<sup>42</sup> API, CD, 1882, pp. 8932–8933.

Vincentiis, professor of Persian, and Lupo Buonazia, professor of Arabic:

“The teaching of Chinese, Persian and Arabic is provided by teachers highly competent in their field. This teaching is a clear fruit of the energy spent in preparing their textbooks and other publications. Their educational orientation, which does not depart from scientific principles, is mainly experimental and practical, as is appropriate for masters teaching in a school of this kind. Hindu is taught by a veteran missionary from India”.<sup>43</sup>

Lignana added a special praise in favour of Francis Xavier Wang:

“... among all these priests, Wam alone is a living example of the primitive tradition and an effective instrument of the civil and scientific transformation for which we strive; his merits are attributable to his piety, to his efforts for teaching Chinese in the non-ecclesiastic section as well as in the boarding section, to his singular modesty and to his commitment to the civil and religious purposes of the institution...”.<sup>44</sup>

Raffaele De Martinis carefully read Lignana’s report and drew from it the conviction that Wang, being the only priest

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<sup>43</sup> LIGNANA, G. 1882, p. 13. Because of the attack directed against the brothers Farina, who rented some premises of the *Asian College* in Eboli, the report became the subject of a question raised at the Legislative Assembly, which gave rise to heated debates: API, CD, 1882, pp. 8930–8933.

<sup>44</sup> LIGNANA, G. 1882, p. 32.

of the Asian College praised by Lignana, who was a Freemason, had become a dangerous element rallied to anticlerical forces<sup>45</sup>. The need to have Wang moved away from Naples became for him an obsession. The destination that he planned for Wang has the bitter taste of a cruel punishment, which nobody could have conceived without being overwhelmed by deep feelings of resentment: under the title of “China's first apostolic missionary”, Francis Xavier Wang would need to go to Australia, more precisely to Sydney, together with his nephew Simon Wang, and to care for the spiritual needs of the Chinese communities that were growing in that distant country. *Propaganda Fide* did not try to play for time, which would only have provoked further solicitations from De Martinis. But *Propaganda* was also reluctant to let people understand that the task of evangelizing the Chinatowns of Australia had been imposed by De Martinis.<sup>46</sup> It would have wished to present Wang's mission as being his personal decision. The content of *Propaganda's* letter can be deduced from Wang's reply:

“With deep respect, I hasten to answer your venerated letter no. 4527 dated from the 30th of last month. I humbly stress that I have never

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<sup>45</sup> CV, APF, b. 13, ff. 515–516, letter of Raffaele De Martinis to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, dated from 28 January 1882.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 576, letter of Raffaele De Martinis to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, dated from 27 July 1886: “I take this opportunity to remind you that since last month, one has been expecting that father Francesco Wam and his companion would be notified the need to leave for the Mission in Australia, but until today I have received nothing. I pray Your Excellency to tell me whether this delay is due to the great number of matters that need to be treated, or whether it is due to the modifications that must be brought to the arrangement. I can no longer keep the catechist in Naples. The government has provided money for the repatriation and I do not know what I should do”.

decided myself to go to Australia's missions. In July of last year, Your Eminence has honoured me with a letter, which ordered me to leave for the mission of Sydney together with the Chinese student Simon Wam. This is why I have humbly answered you, assuring you that I would be ready to leave at once if my poor health allowed me to do it and if the College of Naples provided me with the necessary appropriate means. I humbly add now that my health has worsened, that the Chinese student whom Your Eminence had assigned for me as a companion has totally rejected this project, and that the gentlemen who administer the college have not responded to my solicitations asking for the means for the departure and for the journey".<sup>47</sup>

It was a refusal, albeit delivered with kindness, which was Wang's innate quality. *Propaganda Fide*, in order to satisfy De Martinis to some extent, ordered Wang to move to Rome. However, the presence of the Chinese priest in what had become the state capital of Italy tormented De Martinis. The thought that the minister of Public Education might appoint him professor of Chinese at the University of Naples did not leave him in peace:

“Don Francis Wam distresses me. His situation in Rome, unemployed for a long period of time, will make him fall in the hands of the Ministry, which, following the suggestion of the professors of oriental languages in Naples, who are his friends,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, f. 580, letter of Francis Xavier Wang to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, dated from 4 October 1886.

will appoint him professor of Chinese at the university. We must save him at any cost. Since he does not want to leave for Australia or China, you must provide for his subsistence. If Your Eminence does not think that it is appropriate for him to remain in Mastai Seminary,<sup>48</sup> you can send him elsewhere, for instance to Brignole College in Genoa where he could teach Chinese. I cannot receive him in Naples, especially now that, during his absence, I have learnt all the evil that he has done to the College<sup>49</sup>.

6. F.-X. WANG ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF  
CASTEL GANDOLFO.  
HIS MENTAL DISEASE AND HIS  
RETURN TO CHINA

Fundamentally, Xavier Wang was not the kind of person who would consider his career as a prime goal for his existence. He considered the priestly life as a free commitment, which involved duties, notably the obedience to superiors. Already in 1885, the minister of Education had made known his willingness to assign him to a teaching position of Chinese at the University of Naples. But Wang replied to such proposal with the following letter, which demonstrates the high level of his moral standards:

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<sup>48</sup> This Seminary is located in Rome.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 585–586, letter of Raffaele De Martinis to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, dated from 30 November 1886.

“I note with surprise from your highly esteemed mail dated from the 20th of the present month [February 1885] that Your Excellency, minister [of education], believes that I have not presented myself to the teaching of Chinese at the School of Oriental Languages whose classes are held within the precincts of the Royal University, because I was waiting for an official invitation. In reality, I could not have been waiting for an invitation that I did not solicit, since I am already occupied with my teaching of Chinese in the former school of father Ripa, reconstituted with the consent of Your Excellency, as you know. This school has already enrolled ten external students, to whom four resident students must be added. Due to my poor health, this occupation does not allow me to accept other charges. Being the guest of Mr. de Vincentiis and Mr. director Kerbaker, I have been forced to decline the honour you have bestowed on me due to the aforesaid reasons. What is more, I do not know for what reasons I should have considered your proposal, since my future hangs on pending judgments and conventions regulating the relationship between the institution to which I belong and the ministry. I have no idea of what the final arrangement will be, and I do not even know whether I shall remain in Naples or go elsewhere”.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 239, letter of Francis Xavier Wang to Giacinto Bagatta, “conservatore” of the *Asian College*, dated from 23 February 1885.

Pressed relentlessly by De Martinis,<sup>51</sup> *Propaganda Fide* was able to find a post for Wang as collaborator of the pastor of Castel Gandolfo. How could he have reacted to such treatment a highly educated Chinese, who had already protested for being remunerated with an annual salary equivalent to less than half the scholarship given to an alumnus<sup>52</sup> when he was teaching at the *Asian College*? What Wang wrote from Castel Gandolfo to the prefect of *Propaganda Fide* was irreproachable:

“... I accept to serve God, exercising the sacred ministry under the wise direction of this pious and zealous priest, without concern for my weak body and for the modifications of my environment and lodging conditions”.<sup>53</sup>

Wang was forced to put an end to the teaching of Chinese that he had provided for almost 20 years, to leave Naples, the

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<sup>51</sup> CV, APF, b. 13, f. 589, letter of Raffaele De Martinis to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Naples, s.d., within which he lamented the absence of Francis Xavier Wang from the missionary house of Montecitorio, where he wanted to send him.

<sup>52</sup> COLLEGIO ASIATICO, ACS, b. 193, *Memoriale di M. Kerbaker sulle condizioni morali e materiali fatte agli insegnanti della Scuola di Lingue Orientali del R. Collegio Asiatico*, dated from 7 September 1881: “It has happened once - and this remains a unique case in the annals of teaching - that a student was subsidized annually with 1000 pounds, while his own teacher of Chinese received an annual stipend of 480 pounds, under the specious and unsubstantiated pretext that, in quality of priest of the Congregation Ripa, he enjoyed free board and lodging, and that, as a kind of compensation for these advantages - inasmuch as he could provide for any compensation - he taught the four Chinese boarders who lived at the same place during the same period of time, keeping them also under his immediate supervision. As a result, the time and the efforts that he spent in the day school could not be considered as a distinct job, and his service in the boarding school was not remunerated less than those of any other professor.”

<sup>53</sup> CV, APF, b. 13, f. 630, letter of Francis Xavier Wang to Giovanni Simeoni, prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, from Castel Gandolfo, dated from 12 June 1887.

largest Italian city and his second home, to abandon his friends, connections, books and libraries, in order to rejoin a small town of the Alban Hills where he knew no one and where it would be difficult for him to discuss about cultural issues with the locals. However, the sufferings of this 44 years old man of poor health were not destined to end any soon.

Under the date of May 9, 1891, the secretary of *Propaganda Fide* notified, among others, De Martinis:

“I take this opportunity to bring to your attention a painful piece of news. I have been informed the other day that father Wam, who exercised the sacred ministry in Castel Gandolfo, has shown signs of insanity. I hope that this terrible misfortune will end soon. Unfortunately, the latest information that I have received indicate that the evil has progressed. For the moment, it has been arranged that father Wam would be temporarily kept in a hospice”.<sup>54</sup>

The mental crisis from which Wang suffered regressed after a couple of months. The Chinese priest recovered his normal health, and *Propaganda Fide* obtained for him, through the French Ambassador to the Holy See, a free ticket on a steamboat belonging to the *Messagerie* leaving Marseille on July 26, 1891 and heading for China.<sup>55</sup>

Before returning to his homeland, Wang emitted a modest desire: to be able to see Naples again, to greet his

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<sup>54</sup> LD, APF, 1891, f. 359.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 1891, f. 531, letter of the secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to the priest Ferdinando De Deo, dated from 17 July 1891.



friends, and to set foot in the Institute located on No 15, *via Salita dei Cinesi*, which in the meantime had become - since December 1888 - the *Oriental Institute*, whereas the former *Chinese College* had moved to *villa Petrilli a Capodimonte*, receiving the new title of *Chinese and Ethiopian College*.<sup>56</sup> But this too was refused to him. With a hatred that had not receded with time, De Martinis wrote to the prefect of *Propaganda Fide*:

“D. Francis Wam has written to his friends in Naples and to Don Joseph Kuo that on the 17th [June 1891] he will leave from Marseille to China, and that he wants to sojourn in the College of Naples before his departure. I beg your Eminence to prevent his arrival, which would be detrimental to the College. What is more, I do not want, and I cannot receive him. What he did in the past against the Institute with his friends is already enough [...]. Let him go directly to Marseille from Rome”.<sup>57</sup>

Arrived in Shanghai on August 29, 1891,<sup>58</sup> Francis Xavier Wang worked as *apostolic missionary* in the church of St. Matthew the Evangelist, in the city, already mentioned, of Tianmen, which belonged to the Eastern Vicariate of Hubei. About his activities in China, three documents have been conserved: one long report, undated, concerning the ten Christian communities living in the district of Tianmen;<sup>59</sup> a

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1891, f. 385.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 968, letter without date.

<sup>58</sup> 郭棟臣 GUO DONGCHEN, *Diario, 1844-1922*, 29 August 1891.

<sup>59</sup> 王佐才 Wang, Zuocai, *Varia*, 433.244.

request written in Hankou dated from April 4, 1910, to Cardinal Giovanni Vives (1854–1913), prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Religious, asking the incorporation of members of the College of the Holy Family into the Congregation of Clerics Regular, commonly called the Theatines<sup>60</sup>; an obituary printed in Hankou by Samuele Sommavilla (索副監牧<sup>61</sup>), provicar of Eastern Hubei, dated from 民國十年夏歷八月初四日<sup>62</sup>, which corresponds to 4 September 1921<sup>63</sup>.

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CV = FONDO COLLEGI VARI; LD = FONDO LETTERE E  
DECRETI DELLA S. CONGREGAZIONE E LETTERE DI MGR.  
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<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, 433.246.

<sup>61</sup> 索 [Suo] is the Chinese family name of Samuele Sommavilla [索尚德], born in Moena in the province of Trento on May 9, 1873. Sommavilla held in 1925 the office of pro-vicar [副監牧] of Eastern Hubei: SARTORI, C. 1926, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> 王佐才 Wang, Zuocai, *Necrologium*, 433.248.

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**[摘要]** 王佐才，字化南，在意大利以 Francesco Saverio Wang 著稱。王佐才畢業於納坡里中華書院，其後留校執教。該校是馬國賢在（1711-1723）康熙、雍正兩朝做油畫和銅板畫畫師期間，於 1715 年在北京創立的。1724 年 11 月馬國賢從中國返回納坡里時，隨行者中有四名年幼的學生和一位中文老師。從此，開始了馬國賢的“通過中國人來皈依中國人天主教”的宏偉計劃。首先，年輕人要為做神父而做準備，在晉昇神父後，要重返中國並在那裡傳教。中文老師的任務在於讓年幼的學生繼續學習母語，並不斷深造他們的本國文學知識。中華書院也稱“中華—印度書院”，而實際上，沒有一個印度人踏進過學校的校門。1732 年 4 月 7 日克雷蒙十二世教宗 Corsini 在 Nuper pro 詔書中承認該校為學院。1861 年 3 月 17 日都靈 (Torino) 議會宣佈意大利統一以後，中華書院幾乎瀕臨關閉，但是支持把中華書院改為亞洲學院的人占了大多數。因此，該校繼續為中國教會培養神職學生，同時也屬社會招生，教授東方語言和國際外交語言（英語和法語），學校終於得以生存了下來。1868 年 11 月 25 日改體後的學院舉行了慶祝典禮，1869 年 11 月 1

日得到了政府的承認。王佐才 1861 年 12 月 31 日剛剛抵達那布勒斯的時候，意大利王國已經成為現實。王佐才於 1842 年 12 月 1 日出生在湖北省王家榨的應城，年紀輕輕就掌握了意大利語，從 1868 年起他在亞洲學院擔任該校的中文口語老師。1870 年 6 月 9 日意大利國王維多利奧·艾馬諾二世在佛羅倫薩接見第一個中國代錶團時，由王佐才擔任翻譯。王佐才為人謙虛、禮貌，不但中文學識淵博，而且拉丁文和意大利語也造詣非淺，他受到了來自同事和學生們的敬佩和愛戴。王神父還編寫了中文語法課本（1873 年，1897 年）和一本中意會話簡明手冊。這一切無形中讓王佐才多了一個敵人：拉斐爾·德馬第尼斯（Raffaele de Martinis），1880 年被傳信部任命為亞洲學院的“監察員”。帶著這種敵視他下令把王佐才流放到澳大利亞，讓王神父到悉尼華人社團中去傳教（1886）。由於繁重的教學任務、撰寫教材，被迫到甘道爾夫城堡（Castel Gandolfo）去做當地的本堂助理神父，1891 年 5 月王神父精神失常了。情況稍有好轉後，又立即被送回了中國。他臨行前要求再看一眼那布勒斯的請求也斷遭拒絕。1891 年 9 月回到中國後，王神父在屬於湖北東境的天門地區的中國天主教社團中找到了一片安寧，直到 1920 年 9 月 1 日在那裡去世。