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WESTERN  
MISSIONARIES IN  
MODERN CHINA: FROM  
MINISTERS OF FOREIGN  
TEACHINGS TO AGENTS  
OF IMPERIALISM?

MISSIONARIES—FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES OF ALIEN CREEDS?

In the historiography that was created in the aftermath of Mao Zedong's victory in 1949, Christian missionaries from the West occupied a precarious position. While they were gradually being replaced by clerics drawn from local converts, many of whom excelled as missionaries of their newly found creed, the Western imprint on most Christian congregations in Republican China remained strong, and the perception propagated by China's print media very much dwelled on this lasting impression. As can be seen from the other contributions to this issue, what it meant to be a "cleric" could differ significantly from one location to another and also depended greatly on the concrete political events that provided the historical background.

The "gossip press" of the late Qing and Republican eras generated formidable caricatures of missionaries as dubitable clerics, and Western faces, mores, and attire made for perfect targets (see Appendix). The vision perpetuated by the followers of the May Fourth activists viewed the Europeans and Americans residing in China as profiteers taking advantage of the Unequal Treaties drawn up as an act of "national humiliation" (*guochi* 國恥) after the Opium War of 1841, a term that arguably did not exist prior to the nationalist campaigns by late Qing intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> A different ideological angle positioned the Western sojourners as culturally incompatible intruders, to be rightfully

<sup>1</sup> Wang Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 50 *passim*.

rejected by China's intellectual elite and the common people alike. This "culturalist" approach was deeply rooted both in China and in the very countries where the missionaries originated from. It was also diametrically opposed to the universal value systems of both Christianity and Confucianism and was usually reinforced by the nationalistic interpretation of the May Fourth school.

Both of these views contain elements of truth, given the aggressive comportment of the British and French military in the nineteenth century and not least because of the Confucian-educated elite's tendency to regard themselves as the pinnacle of civilization. However, "history" always being local history, the safest method of avoiding a teleological interpretation of the missionary involvement in modern China is to interrogate the relevant sources that reveal the conditions and perceptions of the local population. And these frequently differ significantly from the generalizing picture presented by the nationalisms of the twentieth century. The argument the present article wishes to pursue is that in most cases where the Qing authorities or local scholar officials objected to the presence of Christian missionaries from the West, it was because of the perceived menace posed by the religious practices of Christianity—allegedly they endangered public morality, infringed upon anti-heresy legislation, and aided potential anti-Qing rebels. The accusations leveled against the Christian missionaries were concrete in nature and often in response to perceived infringements of (Confucian) orthopraxy.

World religions, as inherent in their very name, are predominantly practiced outside the region where they were originally conceived. Yet in the daily experience of the devotee—though perhaps to a lesser extent in the eyes of the nonbelieving outsider—the religious message is alive and direct, unencumbered by the cultural origins of the belief system. China had been absorbing religious traditions ever since its first empires—some proving transient, others leaving a deep imprint on the cultural matrix of the host country. Buddhism is certainly the most remarkable example of successful religious implantation, to the extent that Buddhist teachings did not merely come to characterize almost every locality in China but that inculturated, "Sinified Buddhism" helped spread Chinese civilization throughout eastern Asia. Reliant on Indian missionaries and translators proficient in the languages of the Buddhist scriptures, the early convert was aware of Buddhism's origins. However, this did not in the least prevent local populations from adapting the external phenotype of Buddhism to the Chinese cultural tradition, while imposing the esthetical logic of Chinese art and architecture onto the temples, sculptures, paintings, and material art of Chinese Buddhism. In simple terminology, "Buddhism became Chinese."

The same could be said about early Chinese Christianity, introduced in its Syriac orthodox (Nestorian) expression during the Tang period (618–907). In language and architectural form, the same phenomenon of inculturation

could be perceived as during the simultaneous Sinification of Buddhism. However, the Christian communities weathered the political storms of the subsequent centuries less successfully than the Buddhists, so that by the arrival of the first Catholics in the late Ming period (ca. 1600) the remaining Christians had but a feeble grasp of the original Nestorian teachings. The message of the first Jesuits proselytizing to scholar-officials and to the imperial court, and of the mendicant monks converting fishers and farmers, was thus clearly perceived as “foreign” and referred to as the “Teaching from the Western Oceans” (*xiyangjiao* 西洋教). Late Ming scholars used the term “alien” (*yi* 夷) frequently, with pejorative undertones.<sup>2</sup> Missionaries were thus regarded with a fair deal of suspicion, fearing that new religious impulses could lead to outright sedition.<sup>3</sup> While the Christian missions of the seventeenth century escaped the brunt of the warfare during the Ming to Qing transition, earlier discriminatory actions did leave their marks. In particular, the persecutions in the Lower Yangtse Valley during the 1630s marked a turning point in the otherwise strong growth experienced by the Christian community in China. The persistent sense of insecurity led the Kangxi 康熙 emperor (Manchu: Elhe Taifin/玄燁 Hiowan Yei, 1662–1723) to the edict of toleration, which was intended to indicate the Qing dynasty’s support of Christianity in China. At a local level, however, misgivings against the Europeans and their church failed to abate. Furthermore, the increasing hostility that the Jesuits at the Qing court were subjected to by other missionary orders did not go unnoticed. In other words, the early Qing missions bore a strong “foreign” imprint, often to the detriment of the local congregations.

The edict of 1724, by the newly ascended Yongzheng 雍正 emperor (Manchu: Hwwaliyasun Tob/胤禛 In Jen, 1723–35), prohibiting any unauthorized proselytization by Christians (and any other religious group), could well have led to the extirpation of China’s Christian tradition. However, a very different scenario ensued. Rather than becoming extinct, Christianity’s center of gravity in China shifted from the metropolises to the rural periphery. The combination of restrictive legislation, prohibiting missionary activity beyond Beijing and Macau by European and Chinese clerics alike, as well as the inherent ill will that many of the local magistrates held against the Christians, led to the gradual dislocation of urban believers and relocation into the relative safety of the countryside. And there, in remote locations, many of which in mountains or marshes, and often in the border zones between Han Chinese and other ethnic territories, China’s Christian communities quietly thrived and multiplied. During the long reign of the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (Manchu: Abkai Wehiyehe/弘曆

<sup>2</sup> On terms referring to “aliens,” see Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London: Hurst, 1992), 8–10.

<sup>3</sup> On external involvement in Taitian 抬天和 Sansheng 三乘 areas, see the entry “Heaven” (天) in *Shiliao xunkan* 史料旬刊, 40 vols. (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1930–31), 12:373–76.

Hvng Li, 1735–96), Zhili province, surrounding the capital, absorbed particularly many Christian refugees.<sup>4</sup> However, the whole of the North China Plain, from Shaanxi in the West to Shandong by the Yellow Sea, provided shelter for Christians looking for less state interference. During this long century of inoculturation, theologically experienced, yet nonordained, clerics became the mainstay of the religion's manifestation in China. Only every now and then during the latter eighteenth century did European missionaries visit these Christian shelters, though these were exceptional occasions for these otherwise priestless, self-administering communities.<sup>5</sup> For example, there was the clandestine missionary work by four Portuguese clerics, having secretly entered the Nanjing region from Macau along canals and country lanes, where they were caught distributing Christian tracts (*sanzhaidan* 散齋單) and “converting people by means of magical tricks” (*yi huanshu you ren rujiao* 以幻術誘人入教).<sup>6</sup> Such “alien magic” frequently allowed missionary Christianity to adapt its ritual practice and also to develop localized theological interpretations.

The name assumed by these inculturated Christians was the same as the term conceived by the Jesuit missionaries three generations earlier on, namely, the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven (*tianzhujiao* 天主教). In the official documents, the term *xiyangjiao* 西洋教 would not become common currency before the early 1800s, when Westerners began to arrive more regularly.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, local officials were frequently confused by the similarity between Chinese Christianity and popular Buddhism (and occasionally Daoism)—the so-called heretical teachings (*xiejiao* 邪教).<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of Christianity in anti-heresy state action during the Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign (Manchu: Saicunga Fengšen/永琰 Yong Yan, 1796–1820) was substantially different from the practice of the Qianlong decades, when anti-Christian action was an unintended result

<sup>4</sup> Communities such as Daxing 大興 and Wanping 宛平, both located in Shuntian-fu 順天府 (Zhili), are typical. See two memorials by Cao Wenzhi 曹文埴, Yu Mingqiu 虞鳴球, and Liu E 劉峨, QL 49/11/24 (January 4, 1785) and 49/11/28 (January 8, 1785), in the First Historical Archives 中國第一歷史檔案館 (henceforth: FHA), Beijing, scroll 9258, document 493, numbers 35 and 36.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, as recorded in a memorial by the chief magistrate for the capital area (*shunyin* 順尹) Jiang Bing 蔣炳, dated Qianlong year 11 / 1746. “Acknowledged testimony concerning Fu Zuolin” 咨查閱傳作霖口供, in FHA, Beijing, scroll 9258, document 493, number 26. See also Wang Zhichun 王之春, *Qingchao rouyuan ji* 清朝柔遠記 [An account of the Qing dynasty welcoming strangers] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 134.

<sup>6</sup> The hostile assessment by Jiangsu circuit officer Zhuang Yougong 莊有恭, QL 19/5/29 (July 18, 1754), is typical of the hardening attitude in the latter Qianlong period toward Christian communities. Collaboration with foreign subjects would become an increasingly familiar allegation. See FHA, document 492, scroll 9258, number 9. This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, the edict of JQ 19/11 (December 1814), citing the discovery of Staunton (司當東) in Guangdong, in Wang Zhichun, *Qingchao rouyuan ji*, 164.

<sup>8</sup> FHA, scroll 9258, document 408, number 12. Albeit that foreign influence during the nineteenth century may have been overstated. See Daniel Bays, “Christianity and the Chinese Secular Tradition,” *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i* 清史問題 4, no. 7 (June 1982): 33–55, esp. 33.

of the war against heretical movements throughout China.<sup>9</sup> In retribution for pertaining to the “foreign religion,” the symbols of their belief were to be destroyed, their leaders arrested, and the names of affiliated families investigated.<sup>10</sup> However, any major “seditious activities” by foreign clerics proved elusive, since the overwhelming majority of Christian missionaries during the early nineteenth century were Qing subjects. In a few cases this included Chinese converts<sup>11</sup> who had undergone missionary training in the Philippines, Macau, or Malacca, or in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Most references to “foreigners” (*wairen* 外人), however, referred to itinerant Christians from other provinces.<sup>13</sup>

Christian China’s “long nineteenth century” began with the one-man mission of Robert Morrison (1782–1834), whose sojourn in Macau and Guangzhou ushered in a period of Protestant proselytization and Bible translation.<sup>14</sup> Also the Catholic mission increased its pace, with the voyages of the French Lazarists Richenet and Dumazel in June 1805 between Shandong and Beijing serving as a case in point. Encouraged by the strengthening commercial ties between China and Europe, and by rumors of communities of clandestine Christians in the provinces, the pair traveled to Shandong, only to be intercepted upon return at the provincial border with Zhili. The state officials remarked laconically that there were “already enough mathematicians in Beijing” and refused to let the clerics proceed.<sup>15</sup> Against this background, the prohibition

<sup>9</sup> Archivum Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide (henceforth: APF), *Scrittura Originale della Congregazione Particolare* (SOCP), *Indie Orientali*, 1817, fols. 9–16, on the war against “perverted sects” (*sette perverse*).

<sup>10</sup> Memorial by Fang Fucheng 方祿承, dated QL 19/5/23 (July 12, 1754), in FHA, scroll 9258, document 493, number 30, frames 380–81.

<sup>11</sup> Such as the indefatigable Andreas Li, active in Sichuan until his death in 1774. See Léonide Guiot, *La mission du Su-tchuen au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Vie et apostolat de Mgr Pottier* (Paris: Téqui, 1892), 225; François Bontinck, *La lutte autour de la liturgie chinoise aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Louvain: Université Lovanium de Léopoldville, 1962), 366 n. 73.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Josephus Ly (alias Petrus Zai), described in Adolfo Tamburello, “Partenze ed arrivi degli alunni del Collegio de’ Cinesi di Napoli nell’anno 1785,” in *La Missione Cattolica in Cina tra i secoli XVII–XVIII*, ed. F. D’Arelli and A. Tamburello (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, 1995), 273–81.

<sup>13</sup> See Ma Zhao 馬釗, “Shilun Qianlong shiqi (1736–1796) chajin tianzhujiao shijian” 試論乾隆時期 (1736–1796) 查禁天主教事件 [A preliminary study of events relating to the prohibition of Christianity during the Qianlong Period, 1736–1796] (MA thesis, Renmin University, Beijing, 1999), 46.

<sup>14</sup> The Scotsman William Milne (1785–1822), whose journey mirrored that of Morrison, would in due course open the first Chinese printing press in Malacca. See Lars Peter Laamann, “Memories of Faith: The Christian Sutras of Eighteenth-Century China,” in *The Church and the Book*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History, vol. 38 (Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society and Boydell), 279–302, esp. 288–89; John Kenneth Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937–45), 6:104–8; as well as Murray A. Rubinstein, *The Origins of the Anglo-American Missionary Enterprise in China, 1807–1840* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 75–164.

<sup>15</sup> “. . . parce qu’ on a reconnu qu’ il y avoit déjà trop de mathematiciens à Pékin.” Letter by Denis Chaumont (London) to Boiret, October 26, 1806, in APF: SC, series III, *Cina e Regni Adiacenti*, 1806–11, fol. 167 R.

of missionary activity gradually transformed itself into a policy against foreign intrusion. Having occupied the twilight zone between condoned heterodoxy and heretical creed, the renewed links of China's indigenized Christians had an aggravating effect on their legal status.<sup>16</sup> As the Jiaqing emperor proclaimed on August 21, 1805, the Cantonese authorities were to take adequate measures to effectively control all foreigners, which may lead to the extermination of the (Christian) evil.<sup>17</sup> This threat could well be commuted into reality, with standard punishments for Christian activity becoming increasingly merciless. When Franciscan Giovanni Lantrua was arrested in the winter of 1812, the judge recommended death though strangulation—a penalty executed in January 1816. The same fate awaited French Franciscan Jean de Triora, who was garroted shortly after Lantrua on February 19, 1816.<sup>18</sup> The severity of such punishments stressed the importance Qing officials attached to preventing foreigners from freely moving within the empire.<sup>19</sup> Around the same year, an Indian (“of European appearance”) was apprehended for crossing the boundary into Tibet, for unclear but potentially missionary purposes.<sup>20</sup> All arrivals from “outside” were now included in one broad category of foreign missionary activity. The preoccupation with a perceived foreign threat would only increase in the run-up to the confrontations with the British and the French commercial and military incursions from the Opium War onward. From the middle of the nineteenth century, however, an increasing number of missionaries were scientifically trained and well-equipped medics, who enjoyed the combined appeal of being men of learning as well as of healing powers.

#### BENEDICTIONS, CURSES, AND PHYSICAL HEALING

Medical practice in China is deeply rooted in the experimental alchemy of Daoism, which from its earliest written sources provided evidence of a perceived

<sup>16</sup> Amendments to the *Daqing lüli* 大清律例 around 1800 reclassified all new non-Confucian movements as “heretical.” Whether Christianity was included is unclear, since it was hardly “new” to China, in APF: SOCP, *Indie Orientali*, 1817, fols. 12–13.

<sup>17</sup> “At the same time the people shall be informed by public proclamation that the laws forbidding the European heretical religion are extremely severe. . . . The Viceroy and the Governor (in Canton) shall take adequate measures to effectively control [all foreigners], which may lead to the extermination of evil, root and stem; thus they shall keep the path straight, which, moreover, is the most important part of their task in correcting and ruling the manners and customs” 並當曉諭民人等以西洋邪教例禁甚嚴. . . 該督撫等惟當善為經理實力稽查. 絕其根株. 正其趨向. 亦整飭風俗之要務也. Cited from Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution: A Page in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1901), 398.

<sup>18</sup> See de Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution*, 480.

<sup>19</sup> Wang Zhichun, *Qingchao rouyuanji*, 167.

<sup>20</sup> See the memorial by Yang Chun 陽春 on the arrest of the Calcuttan “Malin” 馬吝, in De Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution*, 401.

union of the cosmic and the human, of harmony and health.<sup>21</sup> Passed on from teacher to disciple, insight into the causes and treatment of illnesses, and thus into the art of preserving life, became one of the most prized categories of knowledge in a prescientific environment. In due course, the first manuals and pharmacopeia appeared, and were reprinted and amended at regular intervals. As in the Western traditions documented in Arabic or Latin, and not least in analogy to the Ayurvedic writings of the Indian subcontinent, the preservation and teaching of what the Chinese “medical tradition” constituted depended on the interpretations of the individual practitioners.<sup>22</sup> Given the alchemical origins of China’s medical tradition, the focus of attention falls almost naturally on the relative significance of Daoist practitioners. However, within the sphere of popular medical practice, mendicant Buddhist monks played a definitive role. Mocked as lacking in intelligence and family values,<sup>23</sup> and at times the target of witchcraft allegations, monks became the whipping boys of late imperial China.<sup>24</sup> The accusations leveled against Christian missionaries during the nineteenth century manifested themselves in rumors of immoral acts with children, and the harvesting of foundlings—specifically their eyes—for alchemical purposes.<sup>25</sup> The creation of magical potions based on human ingredients became a popular explanation for the wondrous efficacy of some of the Western drugs used, and at times formed the basis for forceful propaganda by anti-Christian literati circles against the presence of foreign missionaries in their districts after this had become legally possible, following the Treaty

<sup>21</sup> The “Nourishing Life” tradition is the subject of Stephan Stein’s monograph, *Zwischen Heil und Heilung: Zur frühen Tradition des Yangsheng* [養生] in China (Uelzen: ML Verlag, 1999). See also the doctoral thesis by Vivien Lo, “The Influence of ‘Yangsheng’ Culture on Early Chinese Medicine” (PhD diss., University of London, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> The concept of a greater “Chinese” tradition in medicine is of course a rather recent phenomenon. For much of the premodern period, time was measured in terms of dynastic reign periods and any tradition was attached to the name of the specific dynasty. Asaf Goldschmidt, *The Evolution of Chinese Medicine: Northern Song Dynasty, 960–1127* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), makes this case for pre-Mongol China. A mid-Qing view is presented in Paul Ulrich Unschuld, trans., *Forgotten Traditions of Ancient Chinese Medicine: A Chinese View from the Eighteenth Century: The I-hsüeh Yüan Liu Lun* [醫學源流論] of 1757 by Hsü Ta-Ch’un [徐大椿] (Brooklyn, NY: Paradigm, 1998). See also the early People’s Republican collection *Zhongyi gejia xueshuo ji yian xuanjiangyi* 中醫各家學說及醫案選講義 [Lectures on the theories and cases by traditional Chinese physicians of the Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties] (Beijing: Renmin Weisheng Chubanshe, 1962).

<sup>23</sup> See Meir Shahar, *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 37ff.

<sup>24</sup> Examples in Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> See Cheng Xiao 程歡 and Zhang Ming 程歡, “Wanqing xiangshehui de yangjiaoguan” 晚清鄉村社會的洋教觀 [The perception of Christianity by village society: A psycho-cultural explanation of religious persecution], *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, ser. 237, no. 5 (1995): 108–16. On wild rumors concerning the viaticum and extreme unction around 1732, see Fortunato Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738* [Catholicism in Shanxi, from the origins until 1738] (Rome: Edizioni Sinica Franciscana, 1958), 366.

of Tianjin in 1857.<sup>26</sup> The sheer number of foundlings baptized—and adopted into Christian orphanages if they survived—was sufficient ammunition for such rumors. For the year 1806 alone, the missionaries in the province of Sichuan reported nearly 7,000 baptisms of foundlings, as opposed to 1,371 adult christenings and 1,760 christenings of infants.<sup>27</sup> Descriptions of the countryside surrounding Beijing, from the eve of the Boxer unrest, attest to the regular nature of these orphan collections, with carriages filled with little bundles of abandoned life rumbling through the country lanes.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the nineteenth century was a period of intensifying competition between local religious movements vying for popular appeal. Branded as “heretical” by the imperial administration, one of the most effective ways of attracting the attention of the rural population was for these religious associations to advertise their own healing practices, usually decried as “sorcery” (*xieshu* 邪術) in official documents.<sup>29</sup> Healing, and all the aspirations for a happier and longer life that went along with the notion of health, constituted a common marker of popular religiosity in late imperial China, whether officially recognized or not.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Fears of “hairy demons” rapaciously devouring children had deep roots in certain localities, where self-defense groups against “hairy men” existed. Hirsute Westerners thus formed a natural target. For examples, see Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London: Hurst, 1992), 14–15, 44–47, and 138–42. See also his “Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations,” in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. F. Dikötter and B. Sautman (London: Hurst, 1997), 12–33, esp. 16.

<sup>27</sup> According to Vicar Apostolic Dufresse, after visiting fifty-three communities in Sichuan. Most of the foundlings died within days, in APF: SC, series III, *Cina e Regni Adiacenti*, 1806–1811, fols. 207–8. See also Pierre Heude SJ, *La compagnie de Jésus en Chine—Le Kiang-nan en 1869* (Paris: E. de Soye, 1870), 11: “Car la plus grande accusation qui pèse sur nous, c’est que nous mangeons les enfants, et qu’avec les yeux et leur coeur nous faisons des pillules au moyen desquelles nous ensorcellons le public, spécialement les femmes.” [The greatest accusation which weighs heavily on us is that we eat children, and that by means of their eyes and heart we produce pills, which we use in order to bewitch the public, in particular the women.]

<sup>28</sup> Illustrated in “Voiture parcourant la ville pour recueillir les enfants abandonnés” [Cart crisscrossing the city in search for abandoned children] in Henri-Joseph Leroy, *En Chine: Au Tché-Ly S.-E.; Une mission d’après les missionnaires* (Bruges: Desclée, Brouwer & Cie, 1900), 357.

<sup>29</sup> The “trinitarian” leader Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩 (1517–98), for instance, attained widespread support also through his miracle healings. See Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 106–7, 129; and Richard Hon-Chun Shek, “Religion and Society in Late Ming: Sectarianism and Popular Thought in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century China” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1980), 67–69.

<sup>30</sup> The fundamental differences between “orthodox” and “heterodox” religious practice are spelled out in Pieter Hendrick Vrijhof and Jacques Waardenburg, *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979). See also Robert P. Welton, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); as well as Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 163–67.



Christianity proved no exception to this observation. From its very beginnings, theological redemption was frequently administered by believers of particular charisma (“Holy Men”) who also claimed concretely physical healing powers.<sup>31</sup> The first propagators of Christianity were therefore often experts in pharmaceutical substances, competing directly with soteriological traditions of Judaism but also within the pagan universe.<sup>32</sup> In China, from the earliest recorded beginnings, the union of the spiritual with the mortal world was accomplished by the court shaman. During the gradual transition to a Confucian value system, the “historian’s” transcendental office was assumed by the ruler himself. He, the *tianzi* 天子 or Son of Heaven, thus became the ultimate guarantor of Universal Harmony (*datong* 大同). Since the emperor represented the apex of both the sociopolitical and the religious hierarchies, any perceived challenge was met with determination.<sup>33</sup> This naturally included millenarian movements that were being propelled by the idea that the reinstatement of a future utopia necessitated the destruction of the present world. Even itinerant quacks potentially menaced the emperor’s role as the supreme unifier and healer, in particular in alleged cases of wizardry.<sup>34</sup> Soteriological sects cultivated an image of being capable of dispelling disease and curing infertility, which attracted both disciples and financial support. Mystical scriptures and amulets, magical pictures, and idols enhanced their image as universal healers. One memorial of 1805 accused Sun Dan’gan 孫膽敢, leader of the Qiaoqiao 悄悄 sect, of distributing medical herbs in order to lure honorable women into sexual promiscuity.<sup>35</sup> The Hongyangjiao 紅陽教,<sup>36</sup> or “Red Yang,” was another religious group known for its medical proficiency, and the fusion of the spiritual with the medical would in due course also attract querents to the Christian missionaries.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” in *Christentum und antike Gesellschaft*, ed. Jochen Martin and Barbara Quint (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), 391–439, here 417 and 429.

<sup>32</sup> See Alois Kehl, “Antike Volksfrömmigkeit und das Christentum,” in Martin and Quint, *Christentum und antike Gesellschaft*, 103–42, here 108–19.

<sup>33</sup> On the role of the “shaman-historian” (*shi* 史), see Zhao Zhongming 趙仲明, *Wushi, wushu, mijing: Zhongguo wushu wenhua zhuzong* 巫術、巫師、秘境—中國巫術文化追蹤 [Shamans, sorcery, forbidden spaces: Traces of China’s culture of sorcery] (Kunming: Yunnan Daxue Chubanshe, 1993), i, 1, 28–30.

<sup>34</sup> An early example would be “seditious door scrolls” discovered in Beijing, 1730. See *Shiliao xunkan*, 5:142–46.

<sup>35</sup> Memorial by Fang Weidian 方維甸, in de Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution*, 406, after *Shengxun*, vol. 99.

<sup>36</sup> Jiaqing officials often subsumed the Hongyang into the “Eight Trigrams” (Baguajiao 八卦教) or “White Lotus” (Bailianjiao 白蓮教). See Qin Baoqi 秦寶琦, *Zhongguo dixia shehui: Qingqianqi mimishehui juan* 中國地下社會：清前期秘密社會卷 [China’s underground societies: The secret societies of the Early Qing Period] (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1993), 479–95; and Shek, “Religion and Society,” 276–87.

<sup>37</sup> See Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi*, 459–60.

In fact, the Catholic missionaries were so successful in their medical arts that they were prohibited from selling medications by both the Holy See and the Qing state. An edict of the year 1805 forbade “diabolical medicines” to be distributed among the people.<sup>38</sup> The missionaries were caught between the desire to “save” the local heathens from bodily and metaphysical harm and the fact that they competed with the traditional providers of medication and authority: doctors, healers, and the local literati. Christian missionaries were thus, wittingly or not, perpetuating rumors of magical healing being used as a ruse for attracting commoners to sectarian movements. One particular aspect of supernatural healing nevertheless pertained to Christianity in its original practice: the expulsion of demons from possessed individuals. Descriptions of exorcisms are relatively rare but nevertheless illustrate how powerful a conversion tool they could be.<sup>39</sup> Imperial officials would seize on the distribution of medical drugs as examples of nefarious activity, relying on the general public to act as informers. Such information was frequently nothing more than mere rumors, such as in the case of the Franciscan Gioacchino Salvetti (1769–1843), who was arrested in Guangzhou in 1806. Having been accosted by a man pretending to be in desperate need of medicine, Salvetti arranged to see the patient and potential convert. With the help of a local prostitute, the priest was reported to the yamen police, who arrested him for illegal proselytizing and for selling medical preparations. When refusing to apostatize by walking over a crucifix, Salvetti was kept in solitary confinement, albeit without undue force.<sup>40</sup>

Fully aware of the dubious nature of such pharmaceutical commerce, the state reiterated its prohibition on the sale of medicines on repeated occasions. For missionaries keen to be regarded as morally superior and adverse to worldly riches, the pursuit of commercial gain was hardly a good advertisement.<sup>41</sup> When the Chinese priest Peter Ly was arrested in 1805 for selling medicine in a public square in Beijing, for instance, tensions between state officials and missionaries were rekindled, and the public standing of the church suffered. In the autumn of the same year, another missionary was caught selling a concoction alleged of debilitating willpower—which gave rise to the specter

<sup>38</sup> Edict of Jiaqing 10/5/15 (June 12, 1805), in APF (SOCP, *Indie Orientali*) 1817, fol. 33 R.

<sup>39</sup> See Guiot, *La mission du Su-tchuen au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 235–42, for the account of a tormented young girl, liberated from her demons by Mgr. Pottier’s exorcism. Examples from the turn of the twentieth century can be found in Leroy, *En Chine: Au Tchê-Ly S.-E.*, 158–86. See also Roman Malek, ed., *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ*, 6 vols. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2003), 2:844 n. 2.

<sup>40</sup> APF: SC, *Indie Orientali/Cina*, 1806–1811, fols. 241–42.

<sup>41</sup> Nathanaël Burger, Vicar Apostolic of Taiyuan, wrote in August 1779 about the “scandalous” commercial involvement of a Chinese priest. APF: SC, *Indie Orientali/Cina*, 1779–1781, fols. 127–30.

of innocent consumers being drugged into conversion to Christianity.<sup>42</sup> As part of a widespread crackdown against heretical movements in the year 1811, Qing officials confiscated medications as well as medical instruments imported during the Kangxi years, which had facilitated the medical work of the missionaries for almost one hundred years. This seizure of medical equipment thus symbolized the end of the court missionaries' role as healers of both body and soul.<sup>43</sup> However, merely two generations later, the missionaries' dispensaries were re-equipped. And this time, a powerful incentive for approaching missionary stations had been added: clinically pure heroin distributed with the required injection kits, provided free of charge by medical missionaries keen to stamp out the opium-smoking habit in their Chinese missions.<sup>44</sup> Again, the desire to leave a positive imprint on the minds and bodies of the communities surrounding missionary stations was clearly visible.<sup>45</sup>

The above examples allow us to distill the ideological essence of the vehement opposition of the scholar-official elite to popular religious movements. They also show how the Qing state attempted to control the distribution of medical substances and professional healing in general. Whereas the Qing state emphasized control, both religious leaders and medical healers were highly mobile, crossing administrative boundaries at will, thus making any effective imperial control nigh impossible.<sup>46</sup> The Confucian state regarded the Christian attempts to heal the rift between the Master of Heaven and the sinful earthlings, as well as the clergy's dealings in surgery and pharmaceuticals, as equally harmful methods of winning the hearts of simple-minded villagers. In ideological terms, it was the Western missionaries' resemblance to the leaders of China's indigenous "heretical" movements that caused the state to act against them rather than any sense of collusion between the former and the governments of the states where they had originated from. "Wizardry" rather

<sup>42</sup> "Mi hung tang, a liquid which makes people . . . run amok (cioè acqua, che fa . . . impazzare)." Luigi da Signa (Shanxi), 1806; APF: SC, series III, *Cina e Regni Adiacenti*, 1806–1811, fol. 107 R.

<sup>43</sup> Letter of 1806 in APF: SOCP, *Indie Orientali*, 1806–11, fol. 23.

<sup>44</sup> See Léon Rousset, *A travers la Chine* (Paris: Hachette, 1886), 251–52. And in a concrete setting: Margo Gewurtz, "The 'Jesus Sect' and 'Jesus Opium': Creating a Christian Community in Rural North Honan, 1890–1912," in Malek, *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ*, 2:729–31.

<sup>45</sup> Rolf Gerhard Tiedemann, "Catholic Mission Stations in Northern China: Centers of Stability and Protection in Troubled Times," in *The Church as Safe Haven: Christianity and Community Governance in Modern China*, ed. Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Lars Peter Laamann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 483–537, contains an interesting "people's history" of the impact of missionary work in rural China. For medical missionary work in Republican China, see 509ff.

<sup>46</sup> See the memorial by Wu Shaoshi 吳紹詩, circuit official for Jiangxi, on QL 32/9/7 (October 29, 1767) in FHA, scroll 9258, document 492, number 17. The memorial illuminates the importance of itinerant preachers for the continued existence of Christian rural communities, as well as their collaboration with traveling medics. See also Stephan Feuchtwang, "School-Temple and City God," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 581–608, esp. 585–87.

than “imperialism” was at the core of the Qing state’s condemnation—at least right until the end of the nineteenth century.

CHANGING PARAMETERS: UPRISINGS, SCIENCE, AND REVOLUTION

The advent of the twentieth century would see significant changes in the public perception of Western missionaries. The reasons can be summarized by the following terms: political destabilization, urbanization, and the encounter with modernity. The momentous events of the year 1900, the culmination of Boxer or Yihetuan 義和團 unrest, would come as a reminder that Qing China was all but built on stable foundations. On the contrary, the Self-Strengthening (*zhiqiang* 自強) movement of the preceding three decades had produced very uneven economic growth, with large segments of the rural population living in conditions of poverty. But perhaps more corrosive than the late Qing empire’s economic fragility were the degree of official corruption exhibited and the inability of the local defense forces to ward off attacking bandits and pirates. Moreover, the flow of rural migrants into the nascent industrial centers and treaty ports reduced the reliance on traditional networks of social authority, but also affected financial security and thus the provision of health care. The “urban experience” thus opened new avenues of thought and social experimentation to entire communities. This, in turn, reduced any inhibition of welcoming cultural newcomers, such as European missionaries. Rather than focusing on (or objecting to) the presence of Western missionaries, the “huddled masses” took advantage of the health care provided by missionaries in hospitals and rural clinics, such as the Methodist General Hospital (Puai Yiyuan 普愛醫院) in Hankou.<sup>47</sup>

At the other end of the social spectrum, “modernity” arrived as a concomitant to the presence of Western elites, providing the same degree of access to technological and medical innovations as in the foremost cities of the West. The missionary impact in these circles was mainly felt in the educational sector, with a majority of affluent families deciding to send their boys (later also girls) to a school maintained by a missionary society rather than to a traditional school with a Confucian curriculum. The missionaries’ presence in the treaty ports thus equaled the notion of a privileged lifestyle and better prospects for one’s offspring.

The opportunities created by Western missionaries in China’s centers of modernity also led to unrealistic expectations of wealth and success rather than any genuine immiseration. However, the class divides that became visible at missionary schools led to social frictions, calls for political change,

<sup>47</sup> Howard Barrett, *Our Medical Missions* (London: Wesleyan Mission House, 1913), is a good example of the Christian altruism which the Christian orders, and in particular the Methodists, sought to portray to the outside world.

and, eventually, calls for a withdrawal of the Western missionary presence in China. And this despite the concrete benefits that the latter brought along for rich and poor alike. Just as treaty port workers made no distinction between local, Chinese employers and foreign paymasters, the early twentieth-century public would turn toward the most effective schooling and health care—often provided by missionary centers. The same can be said about the attitude toward Westerners in official roles, which can be easily gleaned from the popular press.<sup>48</sup> The exclusive focus of researchers investigating the anti-Western and indeed anti-missionary events during the 1920s tends to be selective, focusing on the publications of “progressive” intellectuals and ignoring the mainstream press, which tended to be clearly on the culturally conservative side.<sup>49</sup>

While mission schools and colleges increasingly played host to anti-Western demonstrations, they remained highly sought-after as places of international learning and modern scientific progress. Only a small minority of intellectuals in the 1920s were actually Christians, but the popularity of missionary educational institutions continued unabated. While the very first Republican administration had attempted in vain to force mission schools to register as early as in 1913, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) imposed the commitment to the secular Republic as the sole criterion for operating higher educational facilities. Anglo-American and French colleges reacted by switching their focus onto scientific subjects and their medium to Chinese.<sup>50</sup> For the transformation of the May Fourth period, the emphasis on science in most missionary schools would have profound implications, as the following paragraphs demonstrate.

#### TRANSFORMATIONS: SCIENCE AS GOD

Christians during the Qing period frequently advertised their religion by extolling the curative powers of ritual paraphernalia, such as rosaries, crucifixes, blessed water, or oil. This aspect of the Christian missions resulted in a dialogue

<sup>48</sup> Ren Yunxian 任雲仙, *Qingmo baokan pinglun yu Zhongguo waijiao guannian jindaihua* 清末報刊評論與中國外交觀念近代化 [The late-Qing media discourse and the modernization of China's concept of foreign relations] (Beijing: People's Press, 2010), 160–75 (relating to the Nanchang incident [*Nanchang jiaoran* 南昌教案] of February 1906, which resulted in missionary deaths and the destruction of Christian churches, schools and hospitals).

<sup>49</sup> Yip Ka-che, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922–27* (Bellingham: Western Washington University Press, 1980), 33, 80–81.

<sup>50</sup> Zhang Qinshi 張欽士, *Guonei jishinianlai zhi zongjiao sichao* 國內幾十年來之宗教思潮 [Religious trends in China in recent decades] (Beijing: Yenching School of Chinese Studies, 1927), 200; Milton Theobald Stauffer, *The Christian Occupation of China* (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922), 406–7; Earl Herbert Cressey, *Christian Higher Education in China: A Study for the Year 1925–26* (Shanghai: China Christian Educational Association), 44, 58.

between Christians, Daoists, and Buddhists, precisely because of the crucial relevance of medical knowledge in society at large.<sup>51</sup> The spiritual aspect of healing was only too self-evident, since also “secular” medical practitioners resorted to presenting sacrifices to the gods, by burning paper effigies and using the ashes as part of their medicinal concoctions. An account by Arthur Segers, tinged with prejudice against the local beliefs that the missionary encountered, contains the following observations:

Since medics tend to be men of elevated age, the families in need of these usually have them fetched by horse, cart, or donkey. Once the doctor arrives, the sons receive him, followed by polite chatter about the weather, the state of the roads or similar and in the same gossiping mode he is being taken into the patient’s room. Having seated himself next to the patient, the examination begins with the questions as to whether he or she was feeling ill, how this state of ill health was entered, terminated by the measuring of the pulse, which nine times out of ten results in the verdict that “The upper part of the body is full of fire, whereas the lower one is full of concealed transpiration, and if the two did not mingle, the consequences could be grave.”<sup>52</sup>

As to the general care of the sick individual, nurses and family members were advised to avoid any commotion or noise, since even the slightest cough or rustle of one’s clothes could disturb the healing process. Grave words or any mention of the seriousness of the patient’s illness are also to be avoided.<sup>53</sup> Visiting doctors spent a considerable amount of their consultation by talking to the patients and their families and by feeling the pulse in a studied ritual. Full physical contact was to be avoided, and in the case of a female patient being examined by a male doctor, public morality dictated that his eyes be averted, lest indecencies arise.<sup>54</sup> The reason for the desire not to disturb harmony can be summarized by the term “filial piety,” the absence of which could only be tempting fate. A rather Confucian variant of superstition!

But no attempt at healing was complete without the ceremonial burning of characters written by brush onto red paper. Importantly, this was intended to appease the spirits that held the balance between well-being and ill health, life and death. The paper itself, in the subsequent shape of cinders, was to be consumed as medicine dissolved in potent spirits. Not infrequently, the healing powers of a skillful practitioner could reach beyond his own death. Graves of surgeons could become pilgrimage sites, frequented in particular by solitary

<sup>51</sup> William C. Hunter, *Bits of Old China* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co., 1885), 139.

<sup>52</sup> Arthur Segers, *La Chine: Le peuple, sa vie quotidienne et ses cérémonies* (Antwerp: Editions “De Sikkel,” 1932), 173.

<sup>53</sup> Léon Wieger, *Chine moderne*, Tome IX: *Moralisme* (Xianxian: L’Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1921), 219–20.

<sup>54</sup> Segers, *La Chine*, 174.

women. Again, the parallels with the status of “effective” gods are apparent.<sup>55</sup> The medical missionaries of the late nineteenth century were thus not merely harbingers of a new era in scientific medicine but also spiritual competitors.

The missionary landscape during the 1890s was dominated by an “old guard” of senior figures who had spent a considerable part of their lives in China, as well as newly arrived missionaries who had been brought up to believe in civilizational progress. These younger missionaries were furthermore often of a medical background, thus equipped with a strong sense of distrust in medical traditions based on herbs and “nonscientific” methods of healing. This applied to both their countries of origin (in Europe and North America) as well as to those visited in missionary function. Whereas attitudes to herbalism at home could be described as dismissive reactions against “the old” or “the countryside,” opinions expressed against the same phenomena in Africa and Asia had more cultural overtones. In the words of John Nevius, missionary in Zhejiang and Shandong between 1868 and his death in 1893: “On the other hand there are Protestant missionaries who have no doubt that numerous cases may be found in China of ‘demon possession,’ similar to those which were met with in the early history of the church. Missionaries who have personal and familiar intercourse with infant churches in the interior of China will I think agree in the statement that supposed cases of this kind are very numerous; and I believe also that it is the most newly-arrived missionaries who believe that demonism belongs to Apostolic times.”<sup>56</sup> Despite his conviction that spirit possession and exorcism were features inherent to Christianity, Nevius confessed that he had originally brought with him “a strong conviction that a belief in demons, and communications with spiritual beings, belongs to a barbarous and superstitious age, and at present can consist only with mental weakness and want of culture.”<sup>57</sup>

Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), younger brother of the cultural iconoclast Zhou Shuren 周樹人 (Lu Xun 魯迅, 1881–1936), mused in 1930 that the introduction of Western medicine to China by visiting missionaries and scientists had heralded a new civilizational epoch, namely the “era of Western medicine” (*xiyangyi shiqi* 西洋醫時期), and that the relatively advanced development of Japan could be explained by the country’s wholehearted embrace of the new scientific outlook from the West.<sup>58</sup> The perception of

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Michie, *Missionaries in China* (London: Edward Stanford, 1891), 51.

<sup>56</sup> John Livingstone Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes, Being an Inductive Study of Phenomena of Our Own Times* (London: George Redway, 1897), 135.

<sup>57</sup> Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (pen name: Qiming 豈明), “Ribei xinjiu yixuede xingfei” 日本新舊醫學的興廢 [Rise and fall of old and new medicine in Japan], *Yishibao Supplement* 益世報副刊 Tianjin, May 13, 1930, reproduced in “Zhou Zuoren-ji waiwen” *shulu* 《周作人集外文》輪錄 [“Zhou Zuoren’s foreign language writings,” various records], ed. Chen Zishan 陳子善 and Zhang Tierong 張鐵榮 (Haikou: Hainan Guoji Xinwen Chubanshe, 1995), vol. 2.

scientific medicine as omnipotent savior was of course not confined to China,<sup>59</sup> but the sheer pace at which material and scientific change was being transmitted via the Treaty Ports added to the sensation of universal awe that modern medicine brought along.<sup>60</sup> The prohibition of recreational opium smoking during first decades of the twentieth century, coupled with the simultaneous rise of clinical medicine, unleashed a similar belief in magic—modern, scientific magic, which could overcome all the weaknesses and ailments of the past.

Within the general population, the wide range of advertised self-medication substances, often equipped with self-application kits,<sup>61</sup> exemplifies the unquestioned belief in the superiority of modern medicine. While morphine injection had already been widespread in much of eastern China,<sup>62</sup> consumers gradually replaced the expensive opiates with narcotic pills. Rather ironically, it was the popularity of “addiction-breaking” (*duanyin* 斷癮) medications that turned the 1920s into a high tide of the semisynthetic drugs trade. Eager to underline the scientific credentials of the new pills, the Shanghai press revealed the chemical composition of the most popular brands. Besides opiates, such as morphine or heroin, the “anti-opium pills” could contain substantial amounts of caffeine, as well as a panoply of other fruit of the laboratory, including strychnine nitrate, quinine sulphate, lactose, and ordinary refined sugar.<sup>63</sup> Highly addictive and medically harmful, the new pills had clearly become more dangerous than the old smoking culture—although their panache of modernity outweighed any public health concerns.

#### CONCLUSION

The cultural iconoclasm of the 1920s provided results that went far beyond the lives of the political elites in Republican China. The intellectual assault against the spirits of imperial China thus bequeathed science with the ultimate authority over life and death, and the new medical elite became the high priesthood of the scientific age. The first part of this article attempted to outline the

<sup>59</sup> Interesting evidence as to how the advances in medicinal knowledge were perceived by ordinary citizens is recorded in the project Oral History of Community Pharmacy, accessible via Listening and Viewing Service of the British Library, catalog number C816/04/05–C816/31/02 (recorded on tapes, part of “Oral History of British Science” sound recordings). See also Xi Gao, “Foreign Models of Medicine in Twentieth-Century China,” in *Medical Transitions in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. Bridie Andrews and Mary Brown Bullock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 173–211.

<sup>60</sup> The importance of popular imagination in the treatment of disease (and not infrequently in its invention) is underlined in Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

<sup>61</sup> *Minguo ribao* 民國日報, December 27, 1926.

<sup>62</sup> *Judu yuekan* 拒毒月刊 22 (June 1928): 28.

<sup>63</sup> According to an unspecified article in the *North China Daily News* from 1925 cited in “The Mysterious Heroin Pills for Smoking,” in *Bulletin on Narcotics* 5, no. 2 (1953): 49–54, here 49, UNODC - Bulletin on Narcotics - 1953 Issue 2 - 003.



role of Christian missionaries from the West as challengers of old norms, scientific and philosophical, while they integrated themselves seamlessly into the preserve established for China's intellectual elite. Nevertheless, both Jesuits and their confrères from the mendicant orders would encounter opposition that was motivated partly by a refusal to contemplate radical change, partly by sheer envy. It was the efficacy of the Westerners' technical knowledge and their methods for healing diseases that made them into magnets of public admiration.

In analogy to the Ming to Qing transition, certain voices during the early twentieth century decried this opening toward new perceptions of the world as "alien," as violations of Chinese tradition. But as had already been the case throughout the late imperial period, in the final analysis it was the practical outcome that mattered. If the healers with the greatest powers were foreign clerics, then people would flock to these, forsaking traditional alternatives. If they were experts trained at medical colleges of international standard, then the popular choice was equally clear. To distinguish between "foreign" and "traditional" was a luxury that only the intellectual elite could afford. The Western missionaries who were active in modern China were trusted by a majority of the Chinese population, both in the countryside and in the cities, not least as the ultimate guarantors of access to the effective treatment of illnesses. And this even in times of anti-missionary violence and anti-imperialist demonstrations.

Any binding answer to the question contained in the title of this study thus needs to distinguish between differences in perception between the intellectual elite and the other layers of Chinese society—both during the Qing period and in the Republic. Where the Marxian Chinese nationalist would see the long arm of European imperialism at play, most commoners were more concerned with the practical advantages of having a mission station in the immediate vicinity. To conclude the answer, the latter were not really interested in the teachings of Christianity either, which in its complexity went well beyond the horizon of an uneducated contemporary. But it was this very aim that had brought the missionaries to China in the first place, thus creating a field of tension between the aspirations of the missionaries and the expectations of the average querent. The material impulses that had irritated, indeed shocked, the Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century were well and truly alive in the twentieth century. Only a tiny minority by the 1930s escaped this pattern, partaking in the objective advantages of the missionary presence. However, it was the opinion of the literary elite that would matter disproportionately, since it had always been the intellectuals' historical prerogative to publish on political views and to interpret the events of the past. The educated anti-imperialists thus also took it upon themselves to reinterpret the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and with it the role that the missionaries played in it.

## APPENDIX

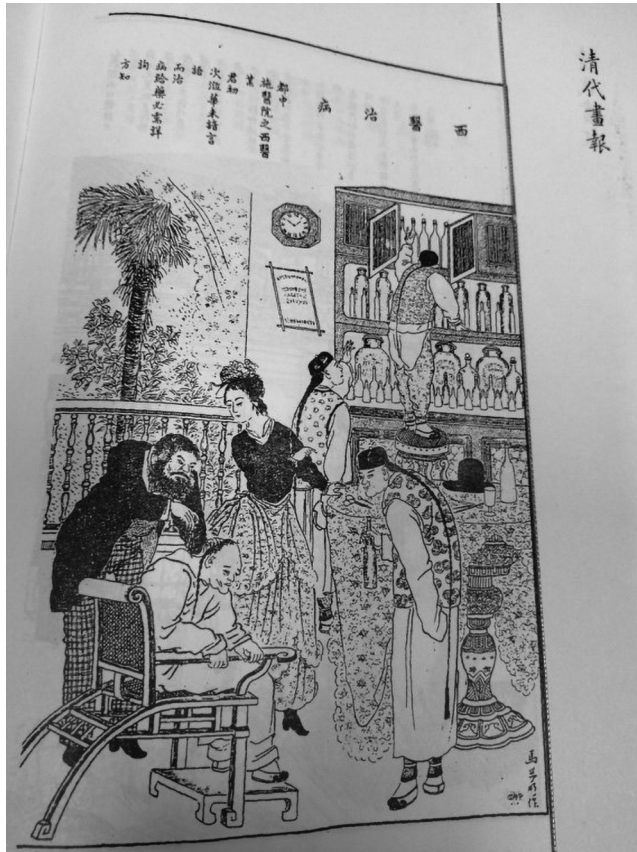


FIG. A1.—A British doctor is called in order to assist a patient with wounds. Note the affluent surroundings during this home visit. “Treating Illnesses by Means of Western Medicine (*xiyi zhibing* 西醫治病),” from *Qingdai huabao* 清代畫報. Reproduced in Jing Li 經莉, *Qingmo-minchu baokan tuhua ji chengxubian* 清末民初報刊圖畫集成續編 [Sequel to collection of illustrations from Late Qing and Early Republican periodicals], 20 vols. (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian weisuo fuzhi zhongxin, 2003), 1:8740. Color version available as an online enhancement.

Although Western missionaries had played a prominent role in the administration of pharmaceutical substances from the very beginnings, the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth saw a rapid proliferation of Western practitioners with a Christian calling. These “medical missionaries” were at the same time professors of their faith as well as of the latest advances in medical science. To the educated elites, they soon became a model of practical learning, often resulting in the pursuit of medical studies at a “new university” in China, which were frequently run by missionaries themselves, in Japan or—for relatively few—in the West. For the general population, the medical missionaries’ access to modern surgical equipment and the latest medical drugs meant overcoming rumor-inspired misgivings concerning the true intentions of the medics from the West. The ambivalence between the fear of the unknown and the hope for an effective end to physical suffering is expressed in this slightly bizarre depiction of a Western medic trying to bring relief to his Chinese patient.



Skepticism against clerics of any religious orientation in China can be found in the oldest texts known to us. From early Confucian admonitions against undue familiarity with the spirits to Tang-era polemics against excessive devotion to Buddhism, agnostic reservations concerning religious practice have been a staple feature of Chinese intellectual life. Literary action against Christianity during the late Ming period (early seventeenth century) thus fits well into this pattern—a phenomenon that would accompany Christian clerics through the entire late imperial period and also the twentieth century. The Western (Catholic?) priest who can be seen in this image has taken a leaf out of the biography of St. Francis, by preaching the Christian gospel to the animals, as representatives of God's creation. Whether this image is literally due to an observed attempt to "instruct the monkeys" or grounded in oral accounts of Franciscan benevolence is immaterial; the criticism against illogical religious doctrines goes back to the attacks by Confucian-educated scholar officials against "empty" (*xu* 虛) religious teachings, depicting Buddhist monks as well-meaning idiots at best and as devious maniacs at worst. The priest depicted in this late imperial pictorial newspaper probably counts among the former.