

## The Catholic Missionary Enterprise in Late 19<sup>th</sup>/ Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang as Perceived by Chinese and Western Travellers

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This paper analyzes the perceptions of the Catholic missionary enterprise by visitors to missionary stations run by the *Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae* [CICM] 圣母圣心会, also called “Fathers of Scheut”, and the *Societas Verbi Divini* [SVD] 圣言会, also called “Missionaries of Steyl”, in Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang between 1879 and 1950. Altogether about 80 western and Chinese travelogues on northwest China are available for this period and many contain short references to the local Catholic missionaries.<sup>[2]</sup>

At the outset of this study, my initial assumption was that these travelogues might present a welcome addition to our sources for the local mission history of northwest China, since, as a literary genre, travel writing is defined as bringing news of the wider world and as disseminating information about strange lands and unfamiliar peoples. Furthermore, most of the travelogues studied in this paper were written by explorers who usually adhere to the more scientific forms of travel writing that emphasize the presentation of quantitative data.<sup>[3]</sup> However, it turned out that, with regard to the missionary enterprise, very few of the travelogues actually contain historiographic material. Instead, many only provide anecdotal accounts of encounters with Catholic missionaries. After having taken into account that the examples extracted from the travelogues differ from the general definition of travel writing insofar as western travellers described familiar institutions, i.e., the Catholic Church, in unfamiliar surroundings, and Chinese travellers wrote about foreign institutions in their homeland, I now argue that most of the studied travelogues which often claim a certain degree of objectivity, reflect, first of all, the personal views of the travellers with regard to the missionary enterprise in China. While some travellers obviously shared the missionaries' values, others were critical of the missionary goals and methods.<sup>[4]</sup> I also suggest that, apart from expressing personal views of individual travellers, the travelogues also reflect the general perceptions of the missionary enterprise prevalent in China and in the West at specific times.

### The Catholic Congregations in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang

The CICM was founded by the Belgian Fr. Théophile Verbist in 1862 in Scheut, near Brussels, and started work in China, i.e., in Inner Mongolia, in 1865. In 1878, the Vatican officially commissioned the newly established ‘Vicariate Apostolic of Kansu’ to the CICM, which comprised modern Gansu Province and portions of modern Qinghai Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. In 1879, departing from mission stations in Inner Mongolia, Bishop Hamer and three other *patres* arrived in Gansu in order to build up the new vicariate. Between 1880 and 1884, a small village called Xixiang 西乡 (variant: Songshuzhuang 松树庄) near Liangzhou 凉州 (modern Wuwei 武威) was chosen as the location for the main mission station. The Liangzhou area and other places along the Gansu Corridor were home to so-called “Old Christians” whose forefathers had been converted by the Jesuit Father Etienne Faber and his successors, or who had come as Christian refugees from Central China during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>[5]</sup> In Xixiang the CICM missionaries built a church, the bishop's residence and living quarters for themselves and their Chinese staff, and eventually

erected an Orphanage of the Holy Childhood as well as a seminary. Later on, a dispensary was added and even a small centre for the treatment of opium addicts. After opening the first stations in Lanzhou and Liangzhou in 1879, the number of stations and missionaries increased considerably over the years. By 1922, when the vicariate was transferred to the SVD, about 85 CICM missionaries had served on about 40 mission stations including a few stations in Xinjiang.<sup>[6]</sup> The main focus of the missionary activities of the Scheut Fathers was placed on the Han Chinese, but was later also extended to the multi-ethnic population of the Ili area in northern Xinjiang, as well as on the Monguor/ Turen and the Tibetans of Gansu and Qinghai.

The *Societas Verbi Divini*, SVD, was founded by the German Father Arnold Janssen in 1875 with its motherhouse, St. Michael, located in Steyl, the Netherlands.<sup>[7]</sup> The congregation established its first China mission in Shandong Province in 1882 and from there spread to northwest China in 1922 and to Henan in 1923. The missionaries of Scheut suffered from a lack of priests and funds for their China missions after World War I, which led the CICM superiors in Belgium to refocus on missionary work in Ningxia and Mongolia and to give up the Vicariate of Gansu. Meanwhile, German missionaries were looking for new mission fields after the loss of former German colonies in Africa. Thus, in 1922 the Vatican divided the old Vicariate of Gansu into a 'Vicariate Apostolic of Kansu Occidentale' which was conferred onto the SVD, and one of 'Kansu Orientale' of which the German Capuchins [OFMCap] took responsibility.

In the beginning, the Steyl missionaries also used Xixiang near Liangzhou as their central mission station. In 1927, however, Bishop Theodor Buddenbrock SVD (1878–1959) moved his residence to the provincial capital of Lanzhou because of its greater political and economic importance and its proximity to the provincial government. Altogether about 100 missionaries (including Brothers) of Steyl served over the years on about 30 main stations plus about 100 out-stations in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang until the last missionaries were expelled from China in 1953.<sup>[8]</sup> Like the CICM, the SVD Fathers mainly concentrated their missionary efforts on the Han population, but later made serious efforts to reach out to the Monguor/ Turen and the Tibetans in Gansu and Qinghai, and to the Mongols and Kirghiz in Xinjiang.<sup>[9]</sup> The Steyl Fathers were also able to add to the number of schools, dispensaries and orphanages that they had taken over from the Scheut Fathers. Furthermore, they established a hospital in Lanzhou as well as two seminaries for the education of future Chinese priests.<sup>[10]</sup>

The missionary work of the SVD Fathers in Gansu and Qinghai was supported by the Brothers of Mercy of Trier/ *Fratres Misericordiae Mariae Auxiliatricis* 慈爱会 [FMMA] who ran a hospital in Lanzhou in cooperation with the SVD, by the Missionary Sisters of Steyl/ *Servae Spiritus Sancti* 圣神婢女传教会 [SSpS] and the Missionary Sisters Oblates of the Holy Family/ *Congregatio missionalis Oblatorum Sanctae Familiae* 圣家会 [OHF]. Apart from taking care of the household chores in the mission stations of the SVD, the Sisters conducted their own missionary work such as teaching school children, training female catechists, providing medical care, as well as running dispensaries, orphanages and homes for the elderly. However, the FMMA Brothers as well as the SSpS and OHF Sisters are rarely mentioned in western and Chinese travel accounts on Gansu and Qinghai. This apparently also applies to the German Rhenish-Westphalian and the Spanish Navarra Capuchins/ *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* [OFMCap] 圣芳济各嘉布会 who worked in northeast Gansu from 1922 to 1953.<sup>[11]</sup> The OFMCap sent about 80 missionaries (including Brothers) to eastern Gansu who worked at about 30 mission stations plus some 50 out-stations.<sup>[12]</sup>

### Accounts by Western Travellers

Starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, northwest China became an increasingly attractive destination for foreign

travellers and explorers for a variety of reasons. There was often the desire to reach the 'Closed Land of Tibet' from the north. Apart from a few state-funded expeditions, numerous self-funded adventurers and researchers travelled extensively in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang. Altogether, we have more than 50 western travel accounts at our disposal that are of both article- and book-length. Many of them mention the local Christian mission stations,[\[13\]](#) but very few travellers offered detailed information on missionary stations or activities. The descriptions are typically restricted to very general remarks on educational and charitable issues. Theological aspects are hardly ever discussed and observations about Chinese Christians encountered at the mission stations are almost non-existent. In some travelogues the missionaries are even reduced to being, first of all, convenient travel service providers.

Given the hardships of travelling long distances in northwest China in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is no surprise that the hospitality of mission stations en route was usually gladly accepted by western travellers. However, most travellers who stayed only for a night or two as guests of mission stations, provided little more than the missionaries' names and maybe a note of thanks for their hospitality and good advice. This applies also to travellers who met Catholic missionaries only at such social functions as dinner parties given by Chinese officials. Among this sort of very general comments we find the following examples:

Rockhill, a staff member of the American Embassy in Beijing, who travelled to Gansu and Qinghai in 1888/89 and again in 1891/92, remarked:

... [I] finally drew up in front of the house of my old friend, the Curé of Lan-chou, Monsieur de Meester with whom I had stayed when on my first journey to Tibet. The reception from the good father was the cordial, whole souled one I have always felt sure of receiving from a Catholic missionary in China...[\[14\]](#)

Obrutchev, a Russian explorer, who arrived in Gansu in 1894, also acknowledged the support received by the CICM mission station in Lanzhou:

I don't know what I would have done in those days of financial misery, if the mission had not offered its hospitality again. The Belgium missionary Demeester was a true helper in times of need; under his roof I spent many pleasant hours in which the body could recover from the hardships of a long journey and the spirit could be refreshed through interaction with spiritual men. Yes, may they be blessed a thousand times, these Christian mission stations in China. These abodes of quiet peace and true humanity in the midst of a selfish, noisy and restless world; these modest houses with their doors always open for the traveller, emanating the spirit of home. (My translation)[\[15\]](#)

Apart from the hospitality and good advice offered by the missionaries, many western travellers also mentioned the high standard of education among the Catholic missionaries and often lauded the mission's libraries which were stacked with valuable literature about their mission fields. For example, Mannerheim, a Finnish officer and explorer working in the service of the Russian government who arrived in Gansu in 1907/08, observed:

The Roman-Catholic missionary station [in Suzhou] is close to the temples in a modest little clay building. A young missionary, Jos. Essens, a Dutchman by birth, has been at its head for scarcely a year. Tchyng, a Chinaman from Lianchow [i.e., Liangzhou], acts as his assistant. It gave me great

pleasure to meet a European again after three months of solitude. He was a good horseman and shot and seemed a lively young man in spite of the serious calling he had embraced with apparent enthusiasm. My thanks are due to him for much information and good advice.[\[16\]](#)

The missionary Kerkhof, who was stationed here, kindly acted as my guide. ... My companion had spent 3 or 4 years in China and had studied the Tibetan language lately. He seemed to hope that he would be transferred to work among the Tanguts and intended to occupy himself, too, with ethnography, anthropology, mapping etc. ... Bishop Otto was a man of 50 of medium height who did not look his age and was as lively, active and brisk as a man of 30... He took a great interest in scientific research, especially geography, and had himself done some mapping or drawn maps in accordance with the work of other missionaries, principally of the communications of Kan su. ... I spent a couple of pleasant hours with him and his two missionaries here, Leon van Dijk and F. Jadoul. Both of them made an excellent impression on me, intelligent, well educated, taking an interest in many things and as free from prejudice as anyone of their calling could be.[\[17\]](#)

The Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, who visited the CICM mission in Xixiang near Liangzhou in 1896 or 1897, wrote:

The library, which was a large and handsome apartment, was adorned with the portraits of a host of missionaries...[\[18\]](#)

Even two out-spoken critics of the Christian missionaries in China, i.e. Eric Teichman, a British consular officer who travelled in northwest China in 1915/16, and the British botanist Reginald Farrer who travelled in Gansu and Qinghai in 1914/1915, commented:

But on the whole there is a remarkable variety in the standard of education and intellect amongst the Protestant missionaries in China; and the Catholic priests would appear to be well ahead of them in this respect.[\[19\]](#)

... you will find that the Catholic priest is at leisure to be well-educated, polished, interested in life and humanity, not being taken up all the time with the need for flaunting a position which in his case is axiomatic and impregnable. ... it must be said, if you want information on any point of Chinese or Tibetan natural history, geography, and so forth, it is to the Catholics you must go if you want a sound, sensible, and workmanlike answer.[\[20\]](#)

Similar accounts are also found for the SVD who replaced the CICM Fathers in 1922. The French explorer Migot reported in 1947:

The carter took me round to the Catholic Mission. ... The Fathers at the Sining [i.e., Xining] Mission almost all came from Central Europe; there were Germans, Austrians, Dutch, Hungarians and a few Poles, and in this cosmopolitan society we talked French, English and German in turn. The talk was a welcome relaxation, and so were the hours I spent browsing their library.[\[21\]](#)

Leonard Clark, an American adventurer, who travelled in Qinghai and Gansu in early 1949 shortly before the Communist take-over, stayed at the SVD mission in Lanzhou:

We began studying the Tibetan situation, and the German Fathers helped us in every way they possibly could, offering advice and supplying us with much material to study... These records were old books published in Europe many years ago, being well-thumbed curly corners volumes. Stacks of dusty papers were also brought to us by the Fathers, these written in every European language, but mostly in Chinese characters by the older priests... After nearly 300 years off and on at Lanchow, none of their priests had themselves been fortunate enough to break very far through the savage tribes and pierce the wild interior. Evidently many of these good missionaries—all of whom spoke Chinese and many of them Tibetan and Mongolian—had tried over the years, and all had failed.[22]

In contrast to the above accounts, services provided by missionaries as translators, guides or intermediaries for making contact with Chinese officials are rarely acknowledged in publications by explorers. The latter probably feared that their deeds looked less impressive if achieved with the help of missionaries. Therefore, such support, if mentioned at all, is more often alluded to in letters and diaries.[23] For example, in most publications by the German explorer Wilhelm Filchner who went on three expeditions to northwest China, i.e., in 1903-1905, 1925-1928 and 1935/36, his many stays at different CICM and SVD mission stations are only mentioned *en passant*. Furthermore, Filchner remained more or less silent about the multifarious support received from the Catholic missionaries and their missionary work. He is thus one of the travellers who convey the impression that mission stations were primarily convenient service providers.[24] Edmund Fürholzer, a German journalist, serves as another example of this attitude. Although, to some extent, he acknowledged assistance from the missionaries: “In the following days, under the guidance of the head of the mission [i.e., Bishop Buddenbrock SVD], I paid visits to the Chinese officials who were in charge of deciding if my journey could be realized” (my translation), Fürholzer also implied that he travelled from Lanzhou to the famous Tibetan monastery of Labrang with only a Tibetan interpreter and a Chinese servant while, in fact, he was accompanied throughout by the SVD missionary and Tibet expert Matthias Hermanns.[25]

A topic that is frequently mentioned in travelogues, is that of the hardships of missionary life, i.e., the very simple, if not to say frugal life style of the missionaries.

... [I] got a warm reception from Father van Belle [in Xincheng] and a Friday's meal—cold tea, dry bread and lard, used in place of butter. This is the usual style of living among Catholic missionaries.[26]

The dinner that the bishop ordered in my honour was as simple as possible. There were close on a dozen Roman Catholic missionaries in the refectory, some from other parishes. ... I only had time for a cursory glance at the missionary buildings. The church was pretty, a mixture of Gothic and Chinese styles. ... Everything was very tidy and kept in good condition, but extremely simple and Spartan. Bishop Otto told me that for the maintenance of his see, consisting of over 20 parishes with their churches, schools etc., he was not allowed more than 21,000 francs a year. Such a small budget demanded a great deal of self-sacrifice on the part of the Roman Catholic fathers, nor can anyone who has seen the conditions of life among them at close quarters, full of privations, speak of them with anything but profound respect.[27] ... I cannot resist saying a few words about the life that a Roman Catholic missionary leads. Whether they are by themselves or working in a group, their daily routine is strictly mapped out... All superfluity is prohibited. For the requirements of the church they prepare quite good light, red wine, but it is not served at table except on great occasions. ... This institution is held together and guided by iron discipline. Their mode of life is so simple that many of them do not spend more than 100 taels a year and live almost exclusively on cereals. The only luxury they allow themselves are their buildings, which are often excellent, according to Chinese standards. Scientific books are easily allowed by the bishop.[28] Tiffin was of black bread and tea; there was no butter, no sugar and cream.[29]

In fact, starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the ascetic aspect of missionary life and the possibility of acquiring martyrdom were recurrent themes in western publications on missionaries and often even stimulated the desire of young men to follow in the martyrs' footsteps.<sup>[30]</sup> Remarkably, observations with regard to the missionary enterprise as such and to its progress are rarely found in publications of western travellers. An exception is Sven Hedin who observed:

My Belgian cicerones told me that there were families in the place who had been Christians from father to son through seven generations, and that the community then reckoned about 300 members. The people I saw entered the church of their own free will, as they were going past, making the sign of the cross and taking off their caps, and they appeared to repeat their prayers with absolute sincerity of conviction.<sup>[31]</sup>

A typical colonial view of the missionary enterprise was expressed by the British officer General George Pereira, who travelled in Khams and Amdo in 1921/22:

“The Catholic Church ... seems to manage natives better than others. Native priests are ordained, but a watchful eye is kept on them. The native priest is an excellent man, but he is a child in modern ways and requires supervision. When he can take the place of the foreign priest and run the Mission on his own, then will be the time when the Chinese have got up-to-date. And then the foreigner living in the interior will be able to welcome the abolition of extra-territoriality and be able to resign himself with confidence to Chinese jurisdiction.”<sup>[32]</sup>

It is interesting to note here that the Catholic Church ordained the first Chinese bishops in 1926, i.e., only a few years after Pereira's condescending remarks.

When western travellers mentioned missionary activities in more detail, they usually stressed educational and charitable work. While Catholic missionaries had initially attempted to convert the Chinese mainly through preaching and by offering certain privileges to converts, the missionary methods changed significantly after the so-called “Unequal Treaties” of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century which facilitated the establishment of Christian orphanages, hospitals, dispensaries, asylums and schools also in inland China.<sup>[33]</sup> Most of the missionary congregations took advantage of these new opportunities to reach out to new places and to different strata of Chinese society. Especially after the abolition of the old Chinese examination system in 1904, missionary education received a new impetus.<sup>[34]</sup> This development was usually praised by outside observers:

The Belgian Brothers also carry on schools for boys and girls. I peeped into one of the rooms, and saw a score of boys sitting at their desks, poring over the Bible and the writings of the sage Confucius.<sup>[35]</sup>

The mission premises [of Xixiang] represent a Chinese village of the local type, with the addition of two churches—one quite new—the schools, and the quarters for the priests. In these schools the children are first taught French and grounded in the elements of their new faith. After some years and if of promise both in character and intelligence, they are brought on to learn Latin. Eventually, but not until after fifteen years' close study and training, the pick of the scholars may be ordained native priests, though very few are so chosen.<sup>[36]</sup>

It is impossible for me to form a judgment of their [i.e., the Catholic missionaries'] work, but as



instances of their practical and philanthropic work I can quote a school at Sisia, where tuition is free of charge, irrespective of the trade or profession the pupil intends to take up, and two children's homes at Kanchow and Sisia, where orphans and children abandoned or surrendered by their parents are brought up. The girls are married to Christian Chinese, while the boys are taught various trades. – It would be hard to analyse their moral influence on the Chinese. It is remarkable, however, that Chinese who have adopted Christianity, take a broader view of things, and can follow our trains of thought and understand European culture more easily. Suspicion of and aversion from everything that is European disappear and often, it seems, at any rate, as though they were less given to lying.[37]

About 15 years later Teichman, however, surmised that missionary schools were not in great demand among the local Chinese.[38]

I am not in a position to give any opinion as to the standard of the work done in these middle schools [i.e., Chinese government schools] in Kansu but it is evident that they are more popular than the missionary schools, which is perhaps hardly to be wondered at. Immensely beneficial as the educational work of the missionaries is to the Chinese, it has the disadvantage, from the Chinese point of view, of being adulterated with evangelistic effort; so that the student athirst for western knowledge has to swallow the Christian powder skilfully hidden between layers of scientific jam. Then there is always the underlying feeling against the alien institution, and also the fact that all the missionaries who engage in educational work in China, are not always well qualified to lead their pupils very far. In Kansu missionary schools exist in only a very small way; but in some provinces, notably Szechuan, large institutions have been established, including a university. These remain, however, like the Christian Church in China, purely foreign institutions for the Chinese under foreign management, and for that reason are not always appreciated by the Chinese as they doubtless deserve to be; the latter would probably prefer that the foreign teachers should offer their services in the government schools.[39]

The vast sums of money expended by European Churches on missionary work in China have been productive of an enormous amount of good in improving the material lot of the Chinese, but the religious results have been small in comparison to the efforts put forth.[40]

Medical services constituted another major area of Catholic missionary activity, but are only occasionally mentioned by travellers, as was the treatment of opium addicts:

Père Lauwaert, the missionary of Hui-tsien [i.e., Huixian], complained bitterly that the consumption of opium has risen dramatically in China during the last 20 years. ... It is unspeakable what a human being, who honestly seeks conversion, has to suffer when he abstains from this poison. By using strong black coffee we are often successful to soothe the terrible spasmodic pain of the stomach and thereby to alleviate the anti-drug treatment...[41] (My translation)

Of the secondary benefits the presence of such missionaries affords, not the least is the medical knowledge they diffuse in a land where treatment is still in vogue such as people in Europe would scarcely credit.[42]

Open criticism of the Christian missionary enterprise was voiced by very few western travellers. Most comments were restricted to the range of topics presented above and criticism, if voiced at all, was usually politely veiled:

Mr. Brooke's impression of missions was that both the Protestants and Roman Catholics were doing good work in China, and he wrote: "To criticise the missionary work in China as a whole would be unfair and ungrateful of any traveller, for he receives endless help everywhere from these good people. The traveller from his short stay in the country may be unable always to see eye to eye with them, but what they do they believe to be for the best interests of the cause they represent."[\[43\]](#)

An exception to the rule are the critical, even polemic comments of the British botanist Farrer which fill several pages of his travelogue. He wrote, for example:

But by now the first concern of the Chinese Government is to cherish the life and property of every missionary as the apples of its eye, for the spirit of turning "martyrdom" to profit still persists. The Catholic church, especially, sidelong and surreptitious, acts up to all her old traditions in never failing to make the most of any advantage to wring a concession or a sum of disproportionate money every time a priest gets hustled down a bank, or the camera, broken with which he was insulting the sanctity of a Living Buddha in the holiest moment of his rites. At least, this is what the Protestants say; no doubt the Catholics say as much, or worse, in different ways about the Protestants, for the orthodox and the heretic Churches continue hating each other out here in the face of the common foe with characteristically Christian thoroughness, and there is never any intercourse between their missions, wherever I have passed. And the policy of the Catholic Church is not so unknown to the heretics as they pretend. The Catholic missionaries do, indeed, live in a characteristic atmosphere of seclusion and diplomatic intrigue, moving a hundred obscure threads to the greater glory and profit of the Roman Church, till they are justly regarded as the most dangerous of political agents by the Governors, and cordially detested alike by Governors and people on account of their exactions, and the way in which they form a ramifying society within society and manipulate justice in the interests of their converts, while nobody dares resist a power that is backed by the thunders of European guns. They are fallen, indeed, from their former state, when they successfully claimed Mandarin rank, and exacted first-class feasts from all the Governors of the cities through which they passed—an honour subsequently offered to the Protestants also, and by them prudently refused (and afterwards rescinded for all).[\[44\]](#)

Farrer's harsh comments do, nevertheless, conform to general criticism often voiced in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with regard to the missionary enterprise, namely Catholic missions as landlords of large estates, interference in or adjudication on law cases which involved Chinese Christians, taking advantage of certain privileges of the Church such as Mandarin rank for priests and the forced payment of indemnities. These measures were, of course, common throughout China.[\[45\]](#)

In comparison, the views of Teichman who devoted a whole chapter of his travelogue to the discussion of both Catholic and Protestant missionary work in China, seem more balanced:

The missionary problem has been entirely altered of recent years by the changes which have taken place in awakening China, especially since the Revolution of 1911. The difficulty used to be, how to overcome the antipathy of the Chinese for everything foreign, and to induce the people to consent to listen to the foreign preacher; today the problem is, how best to utilize in the cause of Christianity the interest and admiration displayed by the Chinese for the foreigner and his works, including everything foreign from missions to machine guns. In the distant interior this enthusiasm for foreign things is sometimes mistaken for a rush to enter the Christian Church, because the missionary and his Western home are often the only foreign objects available locally.[\[46\]](#) Only, to be fair to the Chinese, the missionaries should surely propagate an up-to-date form of



Christianity, as modified by modern scientific research, instead of teaching, as seems usually to be the case, old literal beliefs which have ceased to hold good in Europe. Also Christianity, a westernized oriental religion, is being taught back to Orientals, and for that reason should in China be stripped as far as possible of its Western exterior. It is difficult to imagine anything more utterly absurd than the construction of a foreign style church, with steeple, etc., in the interior of China as a place of worship for Christian Chinese; and there are many other respects in which the missionary often endeavours to impose purely European methods of worship, which have nothing to do with original Christianity, on the Chinese. All this emphasizes the foreign nature of the Christian Church in China, which is one of the greatest obstacles to its real establishment.[\[47\]](#)

Viewed from a missionary point of view, it therefore seems a doubtful policy to waste so much money and energy in attempting the impossible on the sparsely populated Tibetan borderland, when there are still many great centres, at any rate in the north-west, of the more receptive and friendly Chinese untouched.[\[48\]](#)

Practically speaking, there are not now, and never have been, any active Mahomedan missionaries at work amongst the Chinese. And yet today there are perhaps a million and a half nominal Chinese Catholic Christians, a third or a quarter as many Protestants, and at least ten times as many Moslems. It is difficult at first sight to account for this state of things. The explanation lies perhaps partly in the fact that Islam has become, so to speak, naturalized amongst the Chinese and is firmly rooted as a native faith, without retaining, as far as its believers are concerned, any alien character; while Protestant Christianity remains in most cases a foreign institution supported by foreign energy, brains, and money. Many missionaries appear to the unprejudiced observer to aim at Europeanising the Chinese in the course of converting them, which may be an excellent object, but is fatal to the establishment of a native Christian Church. ... Even the hierarchy of the Western Church is imposed upon the Chinese by the appointment of foreign bishops. It is submitted therefore that if Christianity is ever to take root in China as a native Church it must be divested of all its European trappings; and if it is to reach the educated classes it must be taught in a modern and liberal spirit, dropping the belief in miracles and a material hell, and compromising with ancestor worship and the ethics of Laocius and Confucius.[\[49\]](#)

Apart from the quotes presented here, Teichman's chapter touches on many other aspects of missionary work.

Also Major C. D. Bruce from Britain, who travelled in Gansu in 1905/06, wrote extensively about the missionaries. He commented:

The subject of missions in China is, as every one acquainted with that country knows, a somewhat thorny question to handle. Volumes might be, and in some cases have been, written for and against these institutions... From a diplomatic point of view, no doubt, considerable trouble is caused by the presence and behaviour of a certain class of missionaries in China; but the lesson the writer would derive from this fact is not that the missionary is not wanted, but that most strict and searching care should be exercised in the selection of those who are chosen.[\[50\]](#)

Although Teichman and Bruce certainly did not share the strong critiques with regard to the missionaries' role in the construction of European and American colonialism as voiced by later historians such as Arthur Schlesinger and William Hutchinson,[\[51\]](#) they were still very critical of certain aspects of the missionary enterprise and were surprisingly direct in addressing them in their publications. Their comments, however, also conform to a view of the missionary enterprise that became popular among western intellectuals especially in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This view often criticized the lack of indigenisation of the Christian Church[\[52\]](#) and favoured a "*Kulturmission*" or indirect methods of evangelization that stressed the spreading of modern (scientific) education, professional

medical work and the introduction of modern western technologies.

### Accounts by Chinese Travellers

Apparently, sources that reflect the local Chinese perception of the former missionary enterprise, are scarce, although the number of Catholic converts in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang added up to at least 18,000 in the late 1940s, according to statistics provided by SVD missionaries.[53] Therefore, the thirty or more Chinese travelogues that are still available today, present a valuable addition to reports by western explorers and travellers. Most of these accounts were written by Republican Chinese officials and semi-officials—predominantly in the 1920s and 1930s—during or after investigation tours in China’s northwest, often conducted in the context of modernisation efforts propagated by the Guomindang government or in the context of anthropological and geographical studies. Many of these Chinese travellers probably also came into direct contact with the missionaries, but very few of them actually mentioned the Christian mission stations in their reports.[54]

In contrast to the western travelogues, the Chinese accounts predominantly focus on statistical and educational aspects of the missionary enterprise or deal with issues of litigation and alleged espionage.[55] For example, the Chinese travelogue *Xibei suiyaoji* 西北随轺记 by Gao Liangzuo 高良佐 reports that the number of Catholics in Qinghai reached 3.203 in 1935 while the number of Protestants only reached about 200.[56] The same figures are used in Ma Hetian’s 马鹤天 *Gan Qing Zang bianqu kaochaji* 甘青藏边区考察记.[57] According to statistics for the year 1935 indicated on a map provided by the historical geographer Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤, the number of Catholics in the greater Xining area of Qinghai was 3.193 while the number of Protestants in the same area was only 193.[58] Apparently, Gao and Ma copied their figures from Zhou’s map. Under the heading *Jidujiao* 基督教 Zhou writes:

基督教有耶稣教天主教之分。耶稣教之搏如甘肃青海一带，盖始于清光绪四年，。。。天主教堂则各县皆优。[59] The Christian belief is divided into Yesujiao/ Protestantism and Tianzhujiao/ Catholicism. Protestantism first entered Gansu and Qinghai in the fourth year of Guangxu ... Catholic churches are present in all the districts. (My translation)

Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, a pioneer of China’s historical geography and folklore studies, visited Qinghai and Gansu in 1937/38. He noted the names of Protestant and Catholic missionaries whom he met in Lanzhou, Xining, Zhuoni and Lintao. Although Gu did not mention the content of their conversations, they probably discussed educational issues since this was one of the main topics investigated by Gu during his trip.

又到福音堂访牟牧师。是岁戴先生遂宿福音堂中。[60] I went again to the Protestant gospel hall to visit Pastor Mou [probably Thomas Moseley of the Christian & Missionary Alliance whose Chinese name was Moh Ta-lu/ Mou Dalu]. This year, Mr. Dai still lived on the Protestant compound. (My translation)

晚，德，胡，两牧师来谈。[61] In the evening, De and Hu, the two Pastors, came for a talk. (My translation)

到天主堂，参观培英小学，并晤德籍海国春神父 (P. Matthias Hermanns S[V]D)。

[62] I went to the Catholic compound to visit the Peiying primary school and to meet the German Father, Hai Guochun (P. Matthias Hermanns S[V]D). (My translation)

初，到福音堂访孙牧师 (C. E. Carlson)。[63] First, I went to the Protestant gospel hall to visit Pastor Sun (C. E. Carlson). (My translation)

The accusation that foreign missionaries were acting as spies for their imperialistic homelands was a common theme in China's post-1950 publications,[64] but this suspicion was also already voiced in the late 1920s and 1930s:

基督教本自海禁大开后，始在中国东南各地活动。近来西北各省，亦渐布满，陕甘宁青新各省，无处不有。今者随帝国主义文化侵略势力之发展而分布于西北各省，并目深入藏蒙回番各族间，以传教为名而扩展特种政治工作，调查我边地各种情形也。[65] Christianity originally came from overseas when [China] had to endure the Great Opening. In the beginning it was active in China's southeastern regions. Recently it also extended to the northwestern provinces, to Shaan[xi], Gan[su], Ning[xia], Qing[hai] and Xin[jiang]. There is no place where it is not present. Currently, along with the growth of the aggressive force of imperialistic culture, it [i.e., Christianity] expands to every province in the northwest and now penetrates into the midst of Tibetan, Mongol and Hui people. Under the pretence of missionizing, a particular political agenda is spread and the overall situation in our border regions is investigated. (My translation)

Another report on Qinghai which was prepared by an investigation group from the *Xinya chouya xuehui* 新亚绸亚学会 and published in 1943, raises the problems of litigation exercised by Catholic missionaries:

青海各县天主教徒甚多，其神父包揽诉讼，偏袒教民，教民又借神父之势力，以欺侮乡民，甚至干涉地方行政。年来地方主政者已洞悉其奸，禁止神父干涉案件，教徒借教欺民，以阻遏其势力之蔓延，闻近来已稍杀矣。[66] In all the districts of Qinghai, Catholic believers are very numerous. Their Fathers have seized hold of litigation, being partial and siding with their followers, so that the believers take advantage of the power of the Fathers and bully the country folk, going so far as to interfere with local administration. In recent years, local officials have clearly understood their vice and have prohibited the interference of the Fathers in lawsuits as well as the bullying of the people by the [Catholic] believers. [This has been achieved] by checking the spread of their power. Lately, the news is that this [problem] has been somewhat reduced! (My translation)

Some Chinese anti-Christian attitudes and incidents are also referred to in western reports. Kreitner, an Austrian officer who accompanied the Hungarian Earl Szechenyi on his Amdo expedition in 1879, recounted an audience with Gansu governor Zuo Zongtang in Suzhou on which occasion Kreitner also met Bishop Hamer, CICM. The bishop had just arrived in Gansu from Mongolia a few months earlier and had travelled to Suzhou on official business.

At this moment a mandarin came in to present the visiting card of Bishop Humer [sic] who, without our knowing, had chosen this unfortunate hour to request from the viceroy the return or restitution of the former estates of the Catholics in Kan-su. Zo [i.e. Zuo Zongtang] became annoyed: "I don't want to see such people who estrange my people from me. I don't receive missionaries." ... "In the courtyard we formed a short acquaintance with Bishop Humer who was immediately admitted for an audience and, as we learned later on, struggled hard with the unkind viceroy. Based on the articles of the Tschifu Convention, he did, however, receive permission from Zo-zung-tang to

establish three mission stations, namely Kan-tschou, Liang-tschou and Lan-tschou.[67] (My translation)

Rockhill, the American Embassy staff member in Beijing, provided the following account when on his second journey to Gansu and Qinghai in 1891/92:

The famous Ho-nan anti-Christian and anti-foreign placards and pamphlets have been scattered broadcast over Kan-su, brought here, it is rumored, by the nephew of the Governor General Yang ... Liu's now famous book *Kuei chiao kai sha*, "The devil's doctrine must be destroyed," has been brought here by the cart load. The pictures in which Jesus is represented as a "wild hog" ... or a "heavenly hog" ... were torn down from off the high street by quiet little Mons. De Meester and taken by him to the Tsung-tu who was obliged to take action in the matter, and so an anti-Christian riot in Lan-chou was averted.[68]

In 1926 Rock observed:

And so one has to be thankful that one is still alive in this part of the world, with all the anti-foreign or more anti-Christian feeling. The Kansu people are enraged against Christianity which they identify with the present Red regime, Feng [i.e., Feng Yuxiang, the so-called Christian general] and Co. in Kansu. In Titao after murdering the officials here they were on the point of murdering the missionaries [,] mostly Americans, whom they looked upon as part and parcel of Feng's confessed religion. I think that there is, however, a heavenwide difference between Feng's Christianity and real Christianity.[69]

The above-mentioned points of criticism by Chinese and western travellers were, of course, not unknown to the missionaries. However, due to lack of space, the missionaries' responses—as can be found in missionary sources—are not studied in this short paper.

## Final Remarks

Most of the above-mentioned western travelogues provide favourable descriptions of the Catholic missionary enterprise. Very few are openly critical. In contrast, the few Chinese reports at our disposal are either neutral or negative. At first glance, it seems obvious that foreign travellers usually appreciated Christian mission stations as familiar institutions in an alien surrounding. By contrast, Chinese observers stressed the intrusive character of mission stations that propagated a foreign religion in their homeland. At second glance, however, the picture becomes more complex and suggests that the travelogues not only provide personal views of the Catholic missionary enterprise in northwest China but—to a certain degree—also reflect general trends in the perception of Christian missionaries at the time the travelogues were written. With regard to changing images of the missionaries in the West, these included, for example, the general appraisal of the ascetic and heroic Catholic missionary of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century followed by a more critical assessment of missionary activities and privileges—such as litigation, indemnities etc.—in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the idea of a modern "*Kulturmission*" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These trends correlate with political changes and events in China and with the evolution of missionary methods.

While, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic missionaries initially mainly applied direct missionary methods such as preaching and the training of Chinese staff, this approach was increasingly supplemented by indirect missionary methods during the late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries subsequent to the so-called “Unequal Treaties”. By intensifying indirect missionary methods, such as providing medical care and westernized school education, missionary work quickly expanded.[70] Furthermore, after violent anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment had peaked in the so-called “Boxer Revolt” of 1900, the Chinese perception of things foreign seems to have changed from rejection to admiration, especially in the more educated Chinese circles.[71] Consequently, the SVD missionaries, for example, eventually ceased to lease out farmland and sold their mission estate in Henanba near Liangzhou. Involvement in litigation was discontinued and the SVD also began professionalizing medical care by establishing a hospital in Lanzhou. Education was dealt with similarly by adjusting the school curricula to the requirements of the new Republican education system.[72] However, starting from the 1920s, rising Chinese nationalism was accompanied by new anti-foreign sentiment, which also targeted Christian institutions in China.[73] Because of its isolated location and its strong conservatism, northwest China lagged somewhat behind the coastal areas and progressive ideas only trickled in slowly. Thus, the new peak of anti-foreign sentiment in Central China following the so-called Shanghai incident in 1925, apparently only reached Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang in the 1930s. For example, after 1930, the Lanzhou mission was repeatedly attacked verbally and, in 1934, the Qinzhou mission of the Capuchins was actually attacked and looted by pro-Communist and/ or pro-Guomindang youth. Furthermore, the Catholic schools in Qinzhou had to close, apparently due to pressure from the local government. In 1939, the Xinjiang missionaries were first imprisoned and later expelled by the local government. In 1943, the Catholic schools in Qinghai were also closed by the local government, while some Catholic schools in Gansu apparently continued to teach.[74] Therefore, the often critical approach of the Chinese authors quoted above and their suspicion and even accusation that missionaries in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang worked as spies for their homelands, have to be evaluated in this political and historical context.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned events many of which were crucial for missionary work in northwest China, are rarely mentioned in the travelogues. More research is needed to establish if these omissions, as well as the scarcity of quantitative data on the Catholic missions, are due to a lack of interest in the missionary enterprise or rather relate to narrational concepts of the genre of travel writing. It is, however, obvious that the selective information on the Catholic mission stations provided in the travelogues primarily reflect the views and prejudices of the individual travel writer rather than providing an accurate or comprehensive picture of the state of affairs of the missionary enterprise in northwest China between 1879 and 1950.[75]

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[1] Associate Researcher, Central Asia Seminar, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany.

[2] Although this paper is restricted to the perception of the Catholic missionary activities, it should be noted that very similar accounts exist with regard to the Protestant missionaries in northwest China. For more information on the Protestant missionary societies active in northwest China see Bianca HORLEMANN, “Christian Missionary Sources from Qinghai and Gansu for Tibetan and Mongol Studies” (Leiden, Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2013), pp. 107-140.

[3] The genre of travel writing has generated interest in a number of academic disciplines, foremost in (post)colonial and literary studies, but also in geography, ethnography and sociology. For a general introduction see C. THOMPSON, *Travel Writing*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2011. For Chinese travel writing see TIAN Xiaofei, *Visionary Journeys. Travel Writings from early medieval and nineteenth-century China*, Cambridge, Harvard University Asian Center, 2011.

[4] For perceptions of the missionary enterprise in the post-1960 era and a similar division into two camps, i.e., the supporters of “missionary ideals” versus the critics of “missionary ideologies,” see Dana ROBERT, *Converting Colonialism. Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (Grand



Rapids, Eerdmans), pp. 1-20.

[5] During the early missionary activities in 18<sup>th</sup> century Gansu and Qinghai, an exiled Manchu prince presented an estate to the Franciscans in Liangzhou. When Bishop Hamer arrived in Liangzhou in 1879, the estate was still in the possession of a Chinese Christian family by the name of Li. Unfortunately for the CICM missionaries, the holder of the original documents of landownership of the Catholic Church, who was also a member of the Li clan, had renounced Christianity. Since he and his family were still living on a portion of this land, he neither agreed to hand over the documents nor to leave the occupied plot. After unsuccessful judicial efforts to regain recognition of official landownership, the Scheut missionaries moved their main station to nearby Xixiang. See A. VAN HECKE, *Partie Orientale du Vicariat Apostolique du Kan-sou*, unpubl. manuscript, Leuven, KADOC, Z.II.b.4.1., pp. 28-30.

[6] Among these stations were Qinzhou 秦州 / Tianshui 天水, Huixian 徽县, Lixian 礼县, Chengxian 成县, Gongchang 巩昌, Jiezhou 阶州, Guyuan 固原, Jingzhou 泾州, Pingliang 平凉, Lanzhou 兰州, Xining 西宁, Nianbo 碾伯 / Ledu 乐都, Xintianpu (unidentified), Liangzhou 凉州 / Wuwei 武威, Xixiang 西乡 / Songshuzhuang 松树庄, Shandan 山丹, Xujiashuang (unidentified), Henanba 河南坝, Suzhou 肃州, Ganzhou 甘州, Shahe 沙河, Suilai / Manass 玛纳斯, Dihua / Urumqi 乌鲁木齐, Kuldja / Yining 伊宁, Gaotai 高台, Suiding 绥定, Qingyangfu 庆阳府, Ma-lin (=Maling 马岭?), Sanshilipu 三十里铺, Hougchan-seu (unidentified), Chengbeiqu 城北渠, Jenhoutchai-tze (unidentified), T'cheng-koan-in (unidentified), Xincheng 新城, Tumenzi 土门子, Sanyangchuan 三阳川 and Fuqiang 伏羌. For a detailed account of the history of the CICM missionaries in Gansu, see K. DE RIDDER, *A Pear-Tree Legacy of Love. The Belgian CICM Mission in Gansu (1878-1922)*, unpublished PhD Diss. K.U. Leuven, 2000.

[7] In the 1870s, the foundation of a mission house in Germany was made impossible by the ongoing *Kulturkampf*, i.e., the conflict between the Catholic Church and the state of Prussia. Therefore, F. Janssen chose a location in the Netherlands near the German border.

[8] The stations were mainly the same as those of the CICM plus/ minus a few. They included Lanzhou 兰州, Xincheng 新城, Longxi 陇西 / Gongchang 巩昌, Minxian 岷县 (variant: Minzhou 岷州), Weitseba / Wei tzu pa (unidentified), Zhangxian 漳县, Xixiang 西乡 (variant: Songshuzhuang 松树庄), Liangzhou 凉州 (modern Wuwei 武威), Tumen(zi) 土门(子), Dongjiapu (unidentified), Henanba 河南坝, Chakow / Dsakow / Datsekou (unidentified), Ganzhou 甘州 (modern Zhangye 张掖), Sükiachwang / Sükiachong / Xujiashuang (unidentified), Gaotai 高台, Shahe 沙河, Jangfang / Chenfan (unidentified), Sehao (unidentified, = Xihe 西和?), Xining 西宁, Nianbai 碾伯 (modern Ledu 乐都), Heitzueitze / Heitsuitse (unidentified), Datong 大通, Huzhu 互助, Gulang 古浪, Suzhou 肃州, Dongxiang (unidentified), Chengbeiqu 城北渠, Taozhou 洮州 (modern Lintan 临潭), Shouyangzhen (unidentified), Weiyuanpu 渭源铺, Yuningpu (unidentified), Yongchang 永昌, Minluo (unidentified, = Minle 民乐?), Shandan 山丹, Chenkuanyin / Tscheng-guän-yin (unidentified), Ganjiapu (unidentified), Xintianpu (unidentified) and Luobagou (unidentified).

[9] F. Ledermann put much effort into converting Kalmyk and Kirghiz nomads of northeastern Xinjiang.

[10] For more general information on the SVD in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang see also Bianca HORLEMANN, "The Divine Word Missionaries in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang, 1922–1953. A Bibliographic Note", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19:1 (2009), pp. 59-82. (Chinese translation: "1922-1953 年间甘肃, 青海和新疆的声言会传教团: 书目研究," 中国边疆民族研究 *Zhongguo bianjiang minzu yanjiu* 3 (2010), pp. 381-404).

[11] This lack of references, however, might be due to my research focus and not necessarily to an



actual lack of sources. A work called 平凉岁月—27位嘉布遣的27年 (*Pingliang sui Yue—27 weijiabuqian de 27 nian*) edited by Fr. Mateo Goldaraz and published in Taipei in 2010, has just recently come to my attention.

[12] For more general information on the FMMA, SSpS, OHF and OFM Cap see B. HORLEMANN, *Christian Missionary Sources*.

[13] Whether the travellers met Catholic or Protestant missionaries often depended on their itineraries.

[14] W. W. ROCKHILL, *Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892* (Washington DC, Smithsonian Institution, 1894), pp. 55-56.

[15] W. OBRUTSCHEW, *Aus China. Reiseerlebnisse, Natur- und Völkerbilder*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, Duncker & Humblot, 1896), p. 125.

[16] C. G. MANNERHEIM, *Across Asia from West to East in 1906-1908*, Oosterhout, 1969, p. 430. Also Brooke, an English adventurer who travelled in Gansu and Qinghai at about the same time as Mannerheim, had a very similar impression: "On returning to his inn Brooke found that Father Assance [i.e., Essens] had just called, so he went over and spent a very pleasant evening with this priest, who was the only foreigner in the place; his sole companion a Chinese priest; yet priests like Father Assance are so wrapped up in their work that they never feel lonely and never look forward to seeing the land of their birth again, but live and die with their converts." See W. N. FERGUSSON, *Adventure, Sport and Travel on the Tibetan Steppes*, London, Constable, 1911, pp. 50-51.

[17] C. G. MANNERHEIM, *Across Asia*, pp. 511-513.

[18] S. HEDIN, *Through Asia*, London (Harpers, 1898), p. 1227.

[19] E. TEICHMAN, *Travels of a Consular Officer in North-West China* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1921), pp. 196-206.

[20] R. FARRER, *On the Eaves of the World*, Vol. 2 (London, E. Arnold & Company, 1926), pp. 87-94.

[21] A. MIGOT, *Tibetan Marches* (London, Readers Union, 1956), p. 267. See also the Russian explorer, painter and esoteric N. Roerich who met the Dutch SVD missionary Veldman at a Chinese dinner party in Urumqi in 1926 and noted in his diary: "The conversation with the missionary [i.e. Veldman] is interesting. He speaks of the new understanding of Buddhism, as well as the present need of understanding Nirvana. He speaks of the desire for an immediate coordination of Buddhism and Catholicism. He mentions his knowledge of occult miracles. He is conversant with the literature." N. ROERICH, *Altai-Himalaya. A Travel Diary*, New York, Stokes, 1929, pp. 304-305.

[22] L. CLARK, *The Marching Wind* (London, Hutchinson, 1955), pp. 28, 30.

[23] See, for example, *La mission du Commandant A. Wittamer en Chine (1898-1901)* by A. LEDERER which is based on Wittamer's diaries and which contains frequent references to the substantial support received from the CICM missionaries in Gansu.

[24] See W. FILCHNER, *Bismillah! Vom Huang-ho zum Indus* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1938), pp. 30, 32, 38-40, 57, 61-62, 68, 70 and *Ibid.*, *Om mani padme hum. Meine China- und Tibetexpedition 1925/28*, Leipzig, Brockhaus, pp. 30-32, 53-54, 60, 69, 71-73. More details can be found in the files of the SVD archives in Rome and in the Filchner material kept at the archives of the Academy of Science of Berlin and Brandenburg/ *Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin. Also the French Comte De Lesdain hardly mentioned the Belgian CICM missionaries although he probably received their assistance on several occasions; see J. BOULY DE LESDAIN, *Voyage au Thibet* (Paris, 1908), pp. 183-185. Similar attitudes of travellers towards their missionary hosts have also been described in L. DESHAYES, *Tibet (1846-1952). Les missionnaires de l'impossible*, (Paris, Indes Savantes, 2008), pp. 294-297, with regard to the Sichuan-Tibetan border.

- [25] See E. FÜRHOLZER, *Arro! Arro! So sah ich Tibet* (Berlin, Limpert, 1958), pp. 37, 39, 42 and M. HERMANN, *Die Nomaden von Tibet* (Wien, Verlag Herold, 1949), XIV. In fact, the descriptions of the encounters between missionaries and travellers sometimes differed markedly depending on whether they were written from the point of view of the missionaries or of the travellers. Also see C. THOMPSON, *Travel Writing*, p. 28, on the issue of “fact and fiction” in travel writing.
- [26] W. W. ROCKHILL, *Diary of a Journey*, p. 61.
- [27] C. G. MANNERHEIM, *Across Asia*, pp. 494-496.
- [28] *Ibid.*, pp. 511-513.
- [29] L. CLARK, *The Marching Wind*, p. 27.
- [30] See, for example, B. WOLFERSTAN, *The Catholic Church in China* (London, Sands and Company, 1909), pp. 302-317, and C. DUJARDIN, “Case-Study of the Belgian Franciscans in S.W.-Hubei”, in J. HEYNDRIKX (ed.) *History of the Chinese Catholic Church. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leuven, Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2004), pp. 86-87.
- [31] S. HEDIN, *Through Asia*, p. 1227.
- [32] F. YOUNGHUSBAND, *Peking to Lhasa* (London, Constable, 1925), pp. 71-72.
- [33] For a short summary of the contents of the “Unequal Treaties” see H. GUNDOLF, *China zwischen Kreuz und Drachen*, Mödling, St. Gabriël, 1969, pp. 180-182.
- [34] For a detailed study on the CICM schools in Gansu see K. DE RIDDER, “CICM Missionary Education in Gansu Province During the Late Qing and Early Republic”, in N. GOLVERS and S. LIEVENS (eds.), *A Lifelong Dedication to the China Mission* (Leuven, Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2007), pp. 145-166.
- [35] S. HEDIN, *Through Asia*, p. 1227.
- [36] C. D. BRUCE, *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo* (Edinburgh, 1907), p. 267.
- [37] C. G. MANNERHEIM, *Across Asia*, pp. 511-513.
- [38] J. RICHTER, *Das Werden der christlichen Kirche in China*, (Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1928), pp. 525-526, a contemporary of Teichman, even claimed that Catholic school education in China was considered rather poor in contrast to the schools run by the Protestants. See also the critical remarks by A. FREITAG, *Katholische Missionskunde im Grundriss*, (Münster, Aschendorf, 1926), p. 162.
- [39] E. TEICHMAN, *Travels of a Consular Officer*, p. 126
- [40] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- [41] W. OBRUTSCHEW, *Aus China*, pp. 83, 86.
- [42] C. D. BRUCE, *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo*, p. 265.
- [43] W. N. FERGUSSON, *Adventure, Sport and Travel*, p. 51.
- [44] R. FARRER, *On the Eaves of the World*, pp. 87-94.
- [45] See, for example, J. RICHTER, *Das Werden der christlichen Kirche in China*, pp. 155, 514-515, 522-523; A. FREITAG, *Katholische Missionskunde*, p. 161; B. WOLFERSTAN, *The Catholic Church in China*, pp. 357-381; P. VARG, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958, pp. 32-34; H. GUNDOLF, *China zwischen Kreuz und Drachen*, pp. 196-200. See also the study by DESHAYES, *Tibet*, which offers an interesting comparative view from the Sichuan-Tibetan border.
- [46] E. TEICHMAN, *Travels of a Consular Officer*, pp. 196-197.
- [47] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[48] Ibid., p. 136.

[49] Ibid., pp. 150-151.

[50] C. D. BRUCE, *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo*, pp. 264.

[51] See A. SCHLESINGER, “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism”, in J. FAIRBANK (ed.), *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, Cambridge, 1974, pp. 336-373 and W. HUTCHINSON, “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of ‘Christian Civilization’, 1880-1920”, in W. HUTCHINSON and T. CHRISTENSEN (eds.), *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, Aarhus, Aros, 1982, pp. 167-178.

[52] It is worth noting that certain topics with regard to indigenisation continue to be controversial as, for example, the question of the appropriate architectural style for Christian churches.

[53] See B. HORLEMANN, “The Divine Word Missionaries”, p. 63, n. 20. This number excludes the converts of the OFMCap in Pingliang and Qinzhou who are stated to have reached 3,200 and 4,900, respectively, in 1933; see table in P. D’ELIA, *The Catholic Missions in China* (Shanghai, 1941), appendix II. According to statistics provided in 甘肃民族与宗教 *Gansu minzu yu zongjiao* (Lanzhou, 1998), p. 319, the number of Catholics in Gansu reached about 30,000 in 1946. WANG Ce 王册, “天主教在青海传播与发展 Tianzhujiao zai Qinghai chuanbo yu fazhan,” and MA Yu 马毓, “青海基督教简介 Qinghai jidujiao jianjie,” both in 青海文史资料选辑 *Qinghai wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 10, Xining, 1982, pp. 180, 190, mention 3,960 Catholics and about 400 Protestants in Qinghai in 1950.

[54] I have, however, not been able to browse all of the Chinese reports systematically. Apart from the mostly rather brief accounts in Chinese travelogues, some local gazetteers, encyclopaedic works and anthologies also contain short references to the Christian missionaries from a Chinese perspective.

[55] This also applies to post-1950 reports written in the context of *pidou* 批斗, i.e. “criticize and denounce”. See, for example, TIAN Shenglan 田生兰, “解放前帝国主义通过宗教, 间谍在青海的活动 Jiefang qian diguozhuyi tongguo zongjiao, jiandie zai Qinghai de huodong”, in 青海文史资料选辑 *Qinghai wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 9, Xining, 1982, p. 143; HE Dezhi 和得知, “我所知道的天主教兰州总修院 Wo suo zhidao de tianzhujiao Lanzhouqu zongxiuyuan”, in 甘肃文史资料选辑 *Gansu wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 31, Lanzhou, 1989, pp. 187-191; and WANG Ce, Tianzhujiao, pp. 180-181.

[56] GAO Liangzuo 高良佐, 西北随轺记 *Xibei suiyaoji* in 中国西北文献丛书 *Zhongguo xibei wenxian congshu*, vol. 129, Lanzhou, 1936, repr. 1990, p. 242.

[57] MA Hetian 马鹤天, 甘青藏边区考察记 *Gan Qing Zang bianqu kaochaji*, Lanzhou, 1947, repr. 2003, pp. 176-177.

[58] ZHOU Zhenhe 周振鹤, 青海 *Qinghai*, Taipei, 1935, repr. 1970, p. 186.

[59] ZHOU Zhenhe, *Qinghai*, pp. 186-187.

[60] GU Jiegang 顾颉刚, 西北考察日记 *Xibei kaocha riji*, Lanzhou, 1952, repr. 2002, pp. 183-184.

[61] Ibid., p. 186.

[62] Ibid., p. 189.

[63] Ibid., p. 225.

[64] See, for example, TIAN Shenglan 田生兰, Jiefang qian, pp. 143, 140: “帝国主义分子在青海的宗教活动, 多式多样, 其主要工具, 是以基督教的天主堂和福音堂为中心。The religious activities of the imperialists in Qinghai took many different forms. Being one of their important

tools, they focussed on the Christian Catholic and Protestant Churches.” ... “神父还披着宗教外衣，进行间谍工作。一九三四年（民国二十三年），德籍神父费僖拉，以国际调查团名义，住西宁天主堂，绘制青海，四川，新疆三省地图，历时一月多，经印度回国。The Fathers also donned religious clothes in order to spy. In 1934, the German Father Feixila [=Wilhelm Filchner] under the pretence of [leading] an international investigation group, stayed at the Catholic mission in Xining and drew up a map of Qinghai, Sichuan and Xinjiang. After one month, he returned home via India.” (My translation). See also Qinghai lishi genggai bianxiezu 青海历史梗概编写组, “宗教在青海的传播及影响 Zongjiao zai Qinghai de chuanbo ji yingxiang”, in 青海文史资料选辑 *Qinghai wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 14, Xining, 1985, pp. 159, 161-162 and WANG Ce 王册, *Tianzhujiao*, pp. 182-185.

In the context of alleged espionage, misinterpretations and misunderstandings apparently occurred. For example, the German explorer Wilhelm Filchner who—as mentioned above—was a frequent guest of the SVD missionaries, was certainly not a Catholic Father and, on account of his personality, it seems also unlikely that he was “disguised” as such. However, the German journalist, Fürholzer, who travelled to Qinghai in 1936, recalls that it was recommended that he wore a missionary gown for the following reason: “The missionaries of Steyl felt obliged to dissuade me from executing my plan [to travel to Labrang Monastery]. However, when everything failed, they persuaded me to put on missionary clothes in order to look less attractive to robbers possibly met on the way. I decided to take the long, grey gown off as soon as we had left Lanzhou. But I did not have to wait that long. When ... I mounted my horse, this spiritual garment was torn apart.” (My translation.) See E. FÜRHZOLZER, *Arto!*, p. 38.

[65] JUNSHI WEIYUANHUI XIBEI GANBU XUNLIANTUAN 军事委员会西北干部训练团, 西北情况 *Xibei qingkuang*, 1935 or 1946, Gansu Provincial Archive, 文卫 64, p. 18.

[66] XU Gongwu 许公武, 青海志略 *Qinghai zhilüe*, n.p., 1943, p. 111.

[67] G. KREITNER, *Im fernen Osten* (Wien, Hölder, 1881), pp. 619-621. Kreitner also reported the following incident (*ibid.*, p. 752): “Father Jansen, the amiable, good-humoured missionary who we had already met during our first stay in Lan-tschou-fu, was still living in the house of the mandarin of honour [Ehrenmandarin]. This circumstance had, however, caused adversity for the latter. Zozung-tang [i.e., Zuo Zongtang] had ordered his subordinate agencies to investigate why all of a sudden so many missionaries haunted Kan-su Province. One morning a judicial commission intruded into the house in which Jansen stayed, and arrested the master of the house without much fuss. As punishment, he was demoted for ‘having enticed foreign priests to enter the territory’, and was imprisoned for an unspecified period of time, i.e., forever. Since the court of justice was not in the position to expel the missionaries, it thought to have selected an effective means to force the despised priests into retreat.” (My translation)

[68] W. W. ROCKHILL, *Diary of a Journey*, p. 57.

[69] H. WALRAVENS, *Joseph Franz Rock Expedition zum Amnye Machhen in Südwest-China im Jahre 1926*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, p. 175.

[70] For illustrative studies of this development see J. RICHTER, *Das Werden der christlichen Kirche*, pp. 142-143, 522-529; P. VARG, *Missionaries*, 1958, pp. 86-146.

[71] See E. TEICHMAN, *Travels*, pp. 196-197, quoted above, and A. FREITAG, *Katholische Missionskunde*, pp. 153-156.

[72] In 1933 the SVD in Gansu and Qinghai ran 34 primary and higher primary schools (catechetical schools not included) with about 800 pupils, the OFMCap in Qinzhou ran 25 primary schools with about 800 pupils and the OFMCap in Pingliang ran 14 primary schools with about 300 pupils; see table in D’ELIA, *The Catholic Missions*, appendix II. Interestingly, other often criticized points such as the establishments of orphanages and the marrying off of orphan girls to Chinese Christians or

the alleged use of children's eyes and hearts for medical purposes (see J. RICHTER, *Das Werden der christlichen Kirche*, p. 517; H. GUNDOLF, *China zwischen Kreuz und Drachen*, pp. 152-155; B. WOLFERSTAN, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 332-356), were not commented on in the Chinese and Western travelogues which I have consulted.

[73] See P. VARG, *Missionaries*, pp.180-193.

[74] See "Chronological Table of Main Events with regard to the SVD Missions" in B. HORLEMANN, "The Divine Word Missionaries", pp. 68-75.

[75] For a general discussion of the autobiographical dimensions prevalent in travel writing see, for example, C. THOMPSON, *Travel Writing*, pp. 96-99.