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# Building Bridges for Communication and Understanding: Remarks on the International Conference on the Boxer Movement and Christianity in China*

PETER T. M. NG

The International Conference on the Boxer Movement and Christianity in China was successfully held in June 2004. It was jointly organized by the Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society of Chung Chi College of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, and the Research Centre of Catholic History, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan. The conference consists of two sessions: the first was held in Taipei on 10–11 June and the second was held in Hong Kong on 14 June. I am most honoured to be one of the organizers attending both sessions of the conference and am delighted to report on and give some remarks on them.

There were altogether twenty-four quality academic papers presented at the conference, with sixteen presented in Taipei and eight in Hong Kong. Papers presented in the Taipei session are mostly focused on the themes related to the Catholic responses to the Boxer Movement. Only

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two dealt with Protestant viewpoints and one dealt with the Orthodox Church. Most presenters were Christian scholars. All papers of the conference were of high scholarly standard. They have used many important primary documents located at archives of different churches, orders, and missionaries, some of which were written in French, German, Italian, and Russian. Some authors have moreover found not a few valuable documents that had rarely been used or cited previously. Thus, the conference constituted a major breakthrough in the study of the Boxer Movement.

Topics of the Taipei session include: "Christian missions and the Boxer Movement," "the nature of the Boxer Movement," "the Boxer Movement and popular religions," "the conflict between Christians and Chinese during the Boxer Movement," "the Boxer Movement and the development of Christian education in China," and "the Boxer Movement and the Qing government." Luciano Morra, SJ's "Santa Sede e Cina e storia della Chiesa cattolica in Cina soprattatto nel XIX sec." investigates the impact the Boxer Movement had on the spread of Christianity in China from the angles of the Vatican and European missionaries. Elisa Giunipero's "The Boxer Movement through the Eyes of European Missionaries," on the basis of archival materials of European missions and other primary sources, interprets the hostility of the Boxers toward Christians from the viewpoint of European missionaries, the behaviours of the missionaries during the years of the Boxer Movement, and their attitude to the Boxer indemnity. The nature of the Boxer Movement has been a controversial topic for many years. Gasper Han, OFM's 韓承良 "Yihetuan yu tianzhujiaohui" 義和團與天主教會 (The Boxers and the Catholic Church) attempts to further analyse the nature and origin of the Boxer Movement, and explains why the Boxers persecuted the Catholics.

Many papers at the Taipei session result from research on the influences of the Boxer Movement in particular regions. Patrick Taveirne's "The Boxer Movement and the Catholic Church in Southern Mongolia and Northwest China as Seen from the Western and Chinese Sources" discusses the Boxer Movement and its repercussions concerning the apostolic vicariates of Inner Mongolia and Gansu Provinces, which were entrusted to the Scheut Missions (CICM-Missionaries) by the Holy See. "Presence of the Boxer Rebellion in the Dominican Missions in Fujian" of Miguel Angel San Roman concludes that the Boxer Uprising in Northern China did not affect the daily life of Chinese Christians in the province of Fujian directly. The origins of the Boxer Movement were located in Hebei and Shandong, which then spread to nearby northern provinces. Anthony S. K. Lam's 林瑞琪 "Yihetuan shijian zhong Taiyuan shi zhiming zhe te duo de beijing yuanyin" 義和團事件中太原市致命者特多的背景原因 (Why were there so many dead in Taiyuan City during the Boxer

Movement: background and reasons) points out that there were strangely more people killed in the city of Taiyuan than elsewhere during the Boxer havoc. Lam analyses the reason for that fact based on local documents and interviews with some victims' relatives. Luo Yu's 羅漁 "Hongqianghui dui He'nan tianzhujiaohui de pohai" 紅槍會對河南天主教會的迫害 (Red Spear Society's prosecution against the Catholic church in He'nan) investigates the crimes Red Spear Society, a popular organization in He'nan, committed to Catholics in the province. Luo uses a rare primary source, viz. the memoirs of Fr. Lorenzo M. Balconi (1878–1969), to support his research. Cha Shih-chie's 查時傑 "Yihetuan yu Beitang" 義和團與北堂 (The Boxers and the Northern Church) investigates the history of the Northern Church in Beijing during the Boxer Movement.

Three papers at the Taipei session deal with the Boxer Movement in Shandong Province, which was the provenance of the movement. They include Karl Josef Rivinius's "Mission and the Boxer Movement in Shandong Province with Particular Reference to the Society of 'Divine Word,'" Chen Te-han's 陳德漢 "Quanhui yu jiaohui de chongtu: Shandong yihetuan xingqi chutan" 拳會與教會的衝突：山東義和團興起初探 (Conflicts between the Boxers and the Church: a preliminary study on the emergence of the Boxer Movement in Shandong Province), and Lin T'ungfa's 林桶法 "Shandong xunfu Li Bingheng dui quanjiao yijian de tantao" 山東巡撫李秉衡對拳教意見的探討 (The attitude of Li Bingheng, governor of Shandong, to the Boxers). Rivinius points out in his paper that insufficient respect of missionaries for Chinese history and tradition, unequal treaties and other aspects of imperialism in China all contributed to the outbreak of the Boxer Movement. Economic crisis, however, precipitated its outbreak. Chen investigates the rise of Christianity in view of the origins of three popular martial societies, namely, the Boxers, Dadaohui 大刀會, and Shenquan 神拳. Li Bingheng was the governor of Shandong before the outbreak of the Boxer Movement (1895–1897). Lin's research on Li's harsh treatment of the Boxers and his fair handling of their conflict with Christians provided a new perspective on the early period of the Boxer Movement.

Apart from this biographical study of Li Bingheng, Angelo S. Lazzarotto and Ku Wei-ying 古偉瀛 have respectively worked on two more figures related to the Boxer Movement. Lazzarotto's "Alberico Crescitelli (Guo Xide): A Profile" studies the history of Father Crescitelli, who was martyred during the Boxer Movement in 1900 at the age of thirty-seven; the paper praises his virtue and devotion to the Catholic faith. Ku's "Yihetuan yu Taiwanren: yi Li Chunsheng wei zhongxin" 義和團與台灣人：以李春生為中心 (The Boxer Movement and Taiwanese: focusing on Li Chunsheng) investigates the influence of the movement on Taiwan dur-

ing Japanese occupation, the negative attitude of Li Chunsheng, a Christian elder at Taiwan, to the Boxer Movement, and its significance. The paper "Yihetuan yanjiu zhong de shiliao fajue yu shishi jian'gou: yi koushu ziliao wei li" 義和團研究中的史料發掘與史實建構：以口述資料為例 (Unearthing historical evidence and reconstructing historical reality in the research of the Boxer Movement: the use of oral data) by Wu Huifang 吳蕙芳 points out the strengths and weaknesses of reconstructing the Boxer Movement through oral history. Despite their bias, omission, or unintentional distortion, oral records are objective sources that can help us investigate the Boxer Movement from the perspective of lower class Christians, peasants, and survivors. In order to overcome the limitations of oral data, it is essential to rigorously scrutinize the oral records with the help of written or archival evidence.

Wang Chien-ch'uan's 王見川 paper, "'Yihetuan yundong' zhong de zongjiao yu xinyang: Puji, Zhang tianshi, Kong shengren ji qita"「義和團運動」中的宗教與信仰：普濟、張天師、孔聖人及其他 (Religions in the Boxer Movement: Puji, Heavenly Master Zhang, Confucius, etc.," studies the impact popular religions had on the Boxer Movement. My paper, "Some Scenarios of the Impact of Boxer Movement on the Work of Christian Education in China," focuses on the changes of Christian education before and after the movement. It is found out that the movement did have significant influences on Christian education in China. The founding of Shanxi University by Timothy Richard, the establishment of Yale-China Association, and the amalgamation movement among Protestant denominational universities, were just tiny parts of the Christian scene in China. Yet they have all demonstrated that the Boxer Movement of 1900 did have significant impact on the development of Christian education in early 20th-century China.

The Hong Kong session was held three days after the Taipei session. As for the Hong Kong session, we had invited seven presenters from Mainland China. However, four of them, namely, Professor Lu Yao 路遙 of Shandong University (Ji'nan), Professor Cheng Hao 程灝 of Renmin University of China (Beijing), Professor Qin Heping 秦和平 of the Southwest University for Nationalities (Chengdu), and Professor Li Tiangang 李天綱 of Fudan University (Shanghai), were unable to attend the conference. Nevertheless, we were pleased that Professor Tao Feiya 陶飛亞 of Shanghai University, Professor Guo Shiyou 郭世佑 of China University of Political Science and Law (Beijing), and Professor Tang Kaijian 湯開建 of Jinan University (Guangzhou) attended the session in Hong Kong and presented their papers. Professor Tao's presence was especially noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, he is undoubtedly one of the best persons to introduce to us Boxer Movement studies in Mainland

China over the past twenty years: for twenty years he had been teaching at Shandong University, which is an important centre of Boxer Movement research and where his teacher, Professor Lu Yao, emerged as a renowned specialist of the Boxer Movement. Secondly, the shift in Tao's research interest is a good example of a growing trend of Boxer Movement studies toward deepened understanding of issues that are related to Christianity in China. Having been researching the Boxers as an anti-Christian movement, he turned to studying the history of Christianity and took his PhD at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, specializing in the history of Christianity in China. Thus, because of the interconnection between Chinese Christianity and the Boxer Movement, advances in the studies of the latter have necessitated further historical research of the former. Hence our conference on the Boxer Movement and Christianity in China.

Eight papers were presented at the Hong Kong session. "The Representations of Boxers in the Christian Theatre" by Jean-Paul Wiest investigates how the riot in Xiaohancun 小韓村 during the Boxer Movement was made known in Europe through Vincent Lebbe, a Vincentian priest. A Catholic playwright then dramatized the historical incident, turning it into a popular story that strengthened the faith of believers and helped to convert unbelievers. Gianni Criveller's "China, the Holy See and France: The Giulianelli Mission to the Chinese Emperor and Its Aftermath (1885–1886)" further investigates the policy of the Holy See toward China some years before the Boxer Movement, in the light of four documents. The author demonstrates that Giulianelli's mission to the Chinese emperor in 1885 was an attempt of the Holy See to establish diplomatic relations with China. The attempt failed because it could not withstand stern opposition from the French government. Dionisy Pozdnyaev's "Church on Blood of Martyrs: To History of the Russian an Ecclesiastical Mission in China (1900–1917)" studies the history of the Orthodox Church during the Boxer Uprising, which was a topic neglected by most Boxer Movement scholars. Tang Kaijian and Ma Zhanjun's 馬占軍 "Wanqing Shengmushengxinhui Shaanxi Sanbian diqu chuanjiao shulun" 晚清聖母聖心會陝西三邊地區傳教述論 (The mission of CICM in Jingbian, Dingbian, and Anbian of Shaanxi Province in late Qing dynasty) gives a succinct account of CICM's evangelistic efforts at Jingbian, Dingbian, and Anbian of Shaanxi Province. It then analyses the impact the Boxer Uprising had on the evangelistic efforts of CICM in those regions, and discusses issues related to the Boxer indemnity. The paper argues that, rather than inhibiting Catholic missions, the Boxer Movement created favourable conditions for them. Guo Shiyou's "Yihetuan yundong qian hou de Wu Tingfang" 義和團運動前後的伍廷芳 (A study of Wu Tingfang:

before and after the Boxer Movement) studies the contribution of Wu Tingfang, the then Chinese ambassador to the United States, in defending the interest of Qing China and dignity of Chinese during the negotiations over the Boxer Protocol. Chen Fangzhong's 陳方中 "Minjian xinyang yu mimi zongjiao zhong de Yihetuan" 民間信仰與秘密宗教中的義和團 (The Boxer Movement among popular religions and secret cults) argues that the traits of both popular religions and secret cults are found in the Boxer Movement. The Boxers never saw themselves as heretics; they even claimed orthodox status and the religious mandate to fight "heretics," viz. foreigners and followers of their religion. "Cishan yu chouhen: shijiu shiji Zhongguo de yuyingtang" 慈善與仇恨：十九世紀中國的育嬰堂 (Charity and enmity: orphanages in 19th-century China) by Louis Ha Keloon 夏其龍 discusses how the orphan nurseries founded by missionaries in China contributed to accumulating misunderstanding and xenophobia culminating in the Boxer Uprising. In his paper, titled "Ling yi shijiao xia de Yihetuan yundong: yi jin ershi nian guoji yantaohui zhongwen lunwen wei yiju de xueshushi yanjiu" 另一視角下的義和團運動：以近20年國際研討會中文論文為依據的學術史研究 (Another perspective on the Boxer Movement: a research-historical study based on the Chinese-language papers from the international conferences on the Boxer Movement over the past two decades), Tao Feiya observes that, while Chinese scholars have made significant contribution to the studies of the Boxer Movement, western scholarship has also been an inspiring force in the field.

Many issues relating to the Boxer Movement's origins, causes, development, and relations to the Chinese government, local magistrates, western churches, missionaries, and Chinese Christians, still remain and await further studies. One may further query why Christian missionaries and Chinese believers became *the* targets of the Boxers' onslaught. At the Taipei session, Paul Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi 單國璽 aptly remarked: "Professor Lu Yao has indeed collected a great deal of oral data, but why didn't he also collect and work in oral data from missionaries and Chinese Christians?" Some scholars might respond that any oral data from Christians have been rightly left out, in that they must be subjective memories, most of which being prejudiced in favour of missionaries. Thus responding, however, they have overlooked the fact that all oral records are susceptible to subjective judgment—whether they are given by believers or unbelievers. Historical records from church archives that represent Christian viewpoints can complement non-Christian sources and viewpoints, and vice versa. That is especially essential in any objective, rigorous historical scholarship. At the conference held in the 100th anniversary of the Boxer Movement at Shandong University, Professor

Philip Y. S. Leung of The Chinese University of Hong Kong pointed out that the perspectives of the "victims," i.e., missionaries and Chinese Christians, should not be neglected in our studies of the Boxer Movement.[1] According to Professor Leung, moreover, Christian perspectives on the past can be taken up in constructing a distinctively Christian historiography vis-à-vis the dominant, secular historiography of the Boxer Movement in contemporary scholarship.[2] I believe that many participants of our conference have contributed to that emerging Christian historiography. It is my hope that all future conferences—whether held in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Mainland China—will likewise encompass both Christian and non-Christian viewpoints.

The outbreak of the Boxer Uprising was to a large extent due to, among many other causes, the lack of understanding and communication, or to the lack of effective means of communication. Such problems have unfortunately still persisted to date. However, it is my conviction that we should now be more capable than ever before of learning to communicate and to understand each other. And it is my hope that today's scholars will become more broad-minded and open-minded through this sort of international academic conferences, which afford them opportunities to learn to go beyond their religious and academic boundaries to hear each other's voices. I also hope that the Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong continues to serve as a bridge to academic exchanges between scholars in Mainland China, Taiwan, and elsewhere, and between Christian and non-Christian scholars as well.

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[1] Liang Yuansheng 梁元生 [Philip Y. S. Leung], "Cong 'canju' dao 'shenji': Yihetuan shixue yu Shandong jidujiao" 從「慘劇」到「神蹟」: 義和團史學與山東基督教 [From "tragedy" to "miracle": historiography of the Boxer Movement and Shandong Christianity], in Su Weizhi 蘇位智 and Liu Tianlu 劉天路, ed., *Yihetuan yundong yibai zhounian guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 義和團運動一百周年國際學際學術討論會論文集 [Symposium papers of the Centennial International Conference on the Boxer Movement] (2 vols.; Ji'nan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 2002), 1:533–53.

[2] Ibid., 536–44.