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**EASTERN ORTHODOX MARTYRS OF CHINA:
ACCOUNTS & IMAGES (BOXER UPRISING & BEYOND)**
Presentation by Anthony E. Clark, Ph.D., *Whitworth University*

DATE: 16 February 2014

LECTURE OUTLINE:

[SLIDE 1: Title Slide]

1. The Orthodox presence in China began in the 1680s, with Siberian Cossacks set up a settlement at Albazin, which was in Chinese territory.
 - a. Among the Cossacks were Orthodox clergy.
 - b. Kangxi attacked the settlement and all but 30 left; the 30 joined the Manchus. (The Albazinians kept their Orthodoxy alive....)
2. 1690s: Peter the Great sent a priest to China hoping to establish better ties with China.
 - a. 1700: he sent a priest & two monks to Beijing to learn Chinese.
 - b. Scholars all agree, however, that the early era of Orthodoxy in China had little interest in converting the Chinese to Christianity.

[SLIDE 2: Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, ca. 1800s]

3. In 1860 the ecclesiastical mission was no longer under the Russian state.
 - a. After that it was only under the authority of the Holy Synod.
 - i. Then the mission began to more actively to evangelize....
4. By 1900 the Orthodox Church in China had around 450 Chinese Orthodox in Beijing & Tianjin.
 - a. 220 were killed during the Boxer Uprising in 1900.

[SLIDE 3: Boxer Martyrs – Icon of St. Ia Wen]

5. Massacre Accounts:

- a. On the night of June 10-11, 1900, Boxers attacked the Orthodox Chinese Christians.
 - i. St. Paul Wang was praying as he was killed and St. Ia Wen was mutilated at the mission school where she taught, and then she was thrown into the ground.
 - 1. She recovered, but the Boxers tortured her again until she finally died.
 - ii. “John,” the son of a priest (witnesses said John was the son of Fr. Mitrophan Yang) was also tortured.
 - 1. A witness reported that while the Boxers tormented him, John said, “It’s not hard to suffer this way for Christ.” (John was only 8).

[SLIDE 4: Icon of St. Mitrophan Yang Ji]

- 6. The most famous martyr from the Boxer Uprising was perhaps the priest, Fr. Mitrophan Yang Ji.
 - a. Born in 1855.

[SLIDE 4-A: Close-Up]

- b. Ordained a priest in Japan by Nikolai, the Bishop at Tokyo on June 29, 1882.
- c. Fr. Yang was the first native Chinese priest in the Orthodox Church in China.
 - i. Ordained at the “All Japan Council of 1882.”
 - 1. Bishop Nikolai ordained Yang Ji in the Tokyo Cross church, on the Second floor of the bishop’s residence.

[SLIDE 6: Sample of St. Mitrophan Yang Ji's Translation Work]

- d. After his ordination, Fr. Mitrophan Yang Ji helped to translate Russian liturgical works into Chinese.
 - i. And he continued to serve as a priest ...until 1900.
- e. On the evening of June 10, Qing soldiers & Boxers surrounded Fr. Mitrophan Yang's home, where there were around 70 other Christians.
 - i. Many fled, but Mitrophan remained with the women & children who could not escape.
 - ii. They were all tortured.
- f. Fr. Mitrophan's chest was repeatedly stabbed in the courtyard of his residence until he finally collapsed.
 - i. He died under the date tree, where a cross monument was later erected for sacred processions.

[SLIDE 7: Boxer Martyrs Monument, Beijing]

- 1. The monument was erected in 1935 by Bishop Victor of Beijing.
- 7. Here I would like to consider what happened to the Orthodox Church in China after the Boxer Uprising in 1900.

[SLIDE 8: Tertullian Quote]

- a. Tertullian said: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity."
 - i. So, in theory, the Church should flourish once nourished by the blood of martyrs.
- b. Two things happened after 1900:
 - i. Anti-Christianity continued in China.

[SLIDE 9: Anti-Christian Chinese Quote]

1. [Common saying was: “One more Christian is one less Chinese.”]
 - ii. Orthodoxy flourished in spite of continued anti-Christianism in China.
8. The first decades of the 20th century were, as Daniel Bays has described it, a “Golden Age” for Orthodoxy in China (Bays, *New History*, 212).

[SIDE 10: Exterior – Church of All Holy Martyrs, Beijing]

9. In 1903, the two-story cathedral with five domes was built on the site where many of the Orthodox martyrs were slain.
- a. At the grounds of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing.

[SLIDE 11: Crypt – Church of All Holy Martyrs, Beijing]

- b. The church was dedicated to the “Holy Martyrs of the Yihetuan Uprising,” and the holy relics of the martyrs were kept in the church crypt.
- c. 1957, the Soviets destroyed the church and desecrated the holy relics of the martyrs.
- d. The monument I just discussed was erected next to this church by Bishop Victor on the site of the well in which the bodies of the Chinese martyrs were dropped in 1900.

[SLIDE 12: Growth of Orthodox Mission – Beijing Orthodox School]

10. The Russian Orthodox Mission in China grew at a meteoric pace!
- a. Between 1900 & 1913, 1,340 Chinese were baptized.
 - b. In 1916, 706 Chinese were baptized.
 - c. By 1916, the Orthodox Church in China had grown from around 200 after the Boxer Uprising in 1900 to more than 6,200 Chinese Orthodox Christians.

[SLIDE 13: Orthodox Mission Expansion - Stats]

- d. The Orthodox Mission in 1916 had grown to:
 - i. 32 mission stations.
 - ii. 19 churches.
 - iii. 20 schools.
 - iv. A convent for nuns.
 - v. A monastery near Beijing.

11. Despite the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Chinese Orthodox mission survived and grew.

- a. I would like now to show some images of how dramatically the Orthodox mission grew on the “blood of the martyrs” after 1900.

[SLIDE 14: Map of China – Sample of 4 Orthodox Sites]

- i. [4 examples: Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai, and Xinjiang]

12. The Beijing Orthodox mission expanded to include new schools, churches, and residences.

[SLIDE 15: Interior – Holy Dormition, Beijing]

- a. Among the more attractive churches at the Beijing mission was the church of the Holy Dormition.

[SLIDE 16: Bishop Victor]

- b. From 1933 until the Orthodox mission was closed in 1956, Bishop Victor Svyatin led the Beijing mission.

[SLIDE 17: Bishop Victor & Chinese Clergy]

- c. Bishop Victor encouraged the growth of native Chinese clergy & hierarchy, which made him more popular among the local Chinese Orthodox Christians.
- d. He left China in 1956, which marked the decline & closure of the Orthodox mission in China.

- i. Since then, Orthodoxy has survived largely as an “underground community.”

[SLIDE 18: Harbin – Dormition Cathedral]

13. By far the largest Orthodox mission in Chinese territory was located at Harbin.

- a. It was also the most Russian; Russians greatly outnumbered the Chinese Orthodox Christians there.

[SLIDE 19: Harbin Ice Festival]

- b. One of the most famous aspects of Harbin history is its Ice Sculpture festival, which the Orthodox made an important part of their own culture.

[SLIDE 20: St. Nicholas Cathedral, Harbin]

- c. One of the most famous sites in Harbin was St. Nicholas Cathedral.

[SLIDE 21: Red Guards Attack St. Nicholas Cathedral, Harbin]

- i. Sadly, in 1966, Red Guards attacked the cathedral & destroyed much of its architecture and sacred art.

1. *[Explain who the Red Guards were]*

[SLIDE 22: Shanghai – Russian Orthodox Church]

14. The Eparchy of Shanghai was another Orthodox center where Russian refugees fled to during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

[SLIDE 23: Theophany Church School, Shanghai]

- a. Churches & schools were established in Shanghai to accommodate the rising number of Chinese Orthodox Christians and the tide of refugees from Russia.
 - i. Theophany church had one of the most popular schools.

[SLIDE 24: Bishop Simeon Du Runchen with Russian Congregation, Shanghai]

- b. The Shanghai Orthodox mission remained mostly Russian, however, even though Chinese clergy sometimes pastored Russian congregations.

[SLIDE 25: Xinjiang Mission – with Famous Icon]

15. Finally, the mission in Xinjiang province provides a good example of Orthodox expansion in China.

- a. In Xinjiang, the mission served three groups:
 - i. The local Uyghur minority.
 - ii. A number of Russian refugees.
 - iii. And native Chinese.

[SLIDE 26: St. Nicholas of Ghulja, Xinjiang]

- b. One of the largest Orthodox communities was a St. Nicholas Church of Ghulja.

[SLIDE 27: Ghulja Church Outdoor Liturgy, Xinjiang]

- c. This church had a very large congregation – often celebrated outdoor Liturgies.
- d. The Xinjiang churches, like many Orthodox churches, were destroyed by Maoist Red Guards in 1966.

16. So, what's left of the Orthodox mission in China today?

- a. It is diminished, but still alive.
 - i. Its churches are mostly secularized.
 - ii. It is hopeful and active in prayer and presence.
 - 1. Two examples:

[SLIDE 28: St. John the Wonderworker & Shanghai Cathedral]

- a. Shanghai Cathedral was once the home of St. John the Wonderworker.

[SLIDE 29: Shanghai Cathedral as an Art Gallery]

- i. Now it is an art gallery (still has icons).

[SLIDE 30: Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

- b. Beijing's mission churches flourished from 1900-1950s, before the Soviet reassignment of church buildings.

[SLIDE 31: Holy Dormition as a Car Garage, 2007]

- i. The church of the Dormition was converted into a car garage for the Soviet embassy, and recently was reclaimed as an Orthodox church.

[SLIDE 32: 2012 – My Visit to Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

17. In 2012 I visited Fr. Serguy Veronin at the Holy Dormition church—newly remodeled and with beautiful onion domes towering above the Russian embassy walls.

[SLIDE 33: Closing Slide – Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

- a. He showed me the icon of the martyrs of 1900, and we discussed how the seeds they planted were again growing in China.