

The Ultra Ganges Mission Activities and Impact on the Press in Pre-Modern China

Chen Changyu¹ and Wang Hai²

¹Postgraduate Student, School of Interpreting and Translation Studies, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, CHINA.

²Professor, School of Interpreting and Translation Studies, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, CHINA.

¹Corresponding Author: erinchen_02@163.com

ORCID

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5923-6657>



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ABSTRACT

Before the Opium War, Protestant missionaries to China took the Ultra Ganges Mission as a link, and carried out a series of literal missionary activities, and set up missionary stations and printing presses, church schools, and Chinese and foreign-language newspapers and magazines in the South Seas and in China's Canton and Macao, etc. The newspapers founded under the guidance and support of the Ultra Ganges Mission introduced the Western newspaper concepts and newspaper editing and printing techniques into China, cultivated the early Chinese newspaper group, and laid the material and human resource foundation for the Chinese to imitate foreign newspapers and run their own newspapers after the Opium War. By analyzing the historical facts about the establishment of modern Chinese and foreign newspapers and magazines by the Ultra Ganges Mission, this essay demonstrates how the foreign newspapers in China in the first half of the 19th century promoted and influenced the emergence and development of the modern newspaper industry in China.

Keywords- the Ultra Ganges Mission, missionary periodical activities, the press in pre-modern China.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the process of civilization of the world, the ancient Chinese press and communication activities had their earliest beginnings, while the pre-modern Chinese press has its roots in the West. Pre-modern Chinese newspapers have two root paths: first, the Official Gazette (Di Bao) which originated in the Han and Tang dynasties, and the tabloid (Xiao Bao) of the Song Dynasty, and second, the pre-modern periodicals founded by western missionaries in China. The Official Gazette with its evolution to the Peking Gazette in the Qing dynasty and the tabloid in the Southern Song dynasty did not interpret into a modern newspaper like the original newsprint "Krant/Corante" in European countries, and there was a break in the Chinese

newspaper industry from ancient times to modern times [1]. In the first half of the 19th century, missionary periodical activities in China became the beginning of the pre-modern Chinese press. Between the early 19th century and the Opium War, the newspapers founded by The Ultra Ganges Mission provided a template for the pre-modern Chinese press, trained a group of local newspaper men and translators, and objectively facilitated the emergence of the pre-modern Chinese press and cultural exchanges between the East and the West.

The initial purpose of the Ultra Ganges Mission was to train missionaries and spread the religion, and its written missionary activities constituted the source of the religious press in China. Under the guidance of the Ultra Ganges Mission, the Protestant missionaries, represented

by Robert Morrison (1782-1834), William Milne (1785-1822), Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857) and Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861), drew lessons from the “Chinese Rites Controversy” and its series of cases of Jesuits in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and started from the bottom of the society, publicizing Christian doctrines to the public through periodicals, hospitals, and schools, as well as carrying out educational and textual auxiliary teaching activities. From its founding in 1817 to its dissolution in 1841, the Ultra Ganges Mission introduced Western knowledge through its periodical activities, provided a model for the rise and development of local Chinese newspapers and modern newspaper concepts, trained early local Chinese newspaper men such as Liang Gongfa, Yung Sam-tak, and Cai Gao, and served as a bridge for the eastward spread of Western learning and cultural exchanges between China and the West, with far-reaching impacts on the social changes in China.

Up to now, studies on the press activities of the Ultra Ganges Mission have been classified into three categories: firstly, treatises on the subject of the Ganges Foreign Mission, mainly focusing on the process of its founding and its influence on cultural exchanges between the East and the West; secondly, the compendium of the missionary activities of the missionaries in China represented by Morrison, in which the history of the Ultra Ganges Mission is mentioned; and thirdly, studies focusing on modern missionary periodical activities and their social impact, including the relevant periodicals published by the missions. On the whole, the academic community has done less research on the newspaper activities of the Ultra Ganges Mission and its impact on the local press and Chinese society, and has not yet regarded the missionary activities of the mission members in South China and their Chinese and English periodicals as part of the Ultra Ganges Mission project. From the perspective of the periodical activities of the Ultra Ganges Missions, this paper explores the role that the members of the missions, such as Morrison, Milne, and Medhurst, and their periodicals, played in the emergence of other foreign newspapers and local newspapers in China.

II. HISTORY OF THE PERIODICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ULTRA GANGES MISSION

The Evangelical Revival, which swept through Europe and America in the late 17th century, contributed to the emergence of the Protestant missionary movement, and on September 7, 1807, Morrison accepted the dispatch of the London Missionary Society (London Society for short) [2] and became a Protestant missionary as the “pioneer missionary to China”. With the ban on religion in China and the difficulty of entering the interior for missionary work, Morrison intended to choose to establish a missionary base in the

neighboring regions of China. In 1812, the London Society appointed Dr. Milne to assist in missionary work in China, and in November 1813, Morrison asked Milne to visit Chinese settlements in the Malay Archipelago, distributing translated New Testaments and missionary books, with the main objective of finding a local headquarters for the Sino-Chinese missionary enterprise [3]. At the same time, they proposed to the London Society the “Ultra Ganges Missionary Union” and suggested that the church would create a modern English and Chinese periodicals as a medium for missionary work in China. Subsequently, the two men, together with the Chinese engravers Cai Gao and Liang Gongfa, founded the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca, set up a Chinese printing office [4] and decided to found Chinese and English magazines, “that a small Chinese work in the form of a magazine, be published at Malacca monthly, ... in order to combine the diffusion of general knowledge with that of Christianity”. “That a small Periodical Publication in the English language, ... and it be attempted at Malacca with all convenient speed” [3]. The implementation of the Ultra Ganges Mission project (Table 1) and its missionary work was preceded by the Jesuits’ upper-class route and eventual banning, and followed by China’s harsh proscription policy. Morrison adopted a different missionary strategy from that of the Catholic Church, starting from the lower levels of society and reaching out to the common people of China. According to Morrison, books were the most important medium of communication in China. The various dialects of the Chinese language were extremely numerous and difficult to communicate with each other, but the Chinese people generally understood books [3]. As long as publications were issued, there was no need to risk face-to-face evangelism, and the Chinese people, who loved to read, would read spontaneously and convert to Christianity. Newspaper activities thus became an important part of the Ultra Ganges Mission plan. Through the establishment of missionary stations in Malacca, Batavia, Singapore, and Penang in the neighboring areas of China, the Ultra Ganges Mission printed and published periodicals and books, gradually forming a working model centered on written evangelism.

Table 1: Activities of the Ultra Ganges Mission

Stages	Main Activities
Mission Formation (1815-1819)	establishing the Malacca Printing House; formalizing the Ultra Ganges Mission; opening of the Anglo-Chinese College
Pioneering and development (1819-1834)	internal strife; new mission station; death of Milne
the Opium Wars period (1834-1843)	ending of the Ultra Ganges Mission; mission stations

	abandoned except Singapore,
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Newspapers printed at the various mission stations of the Ultra Ganges Mission include (Table 2): Malacca: 1815 *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, 1817 *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, 1828 *Universal Gazette*, 1826 *Malacca Observer and Chinese Chronicle*, 1836 *The Periodical Miscellany and Juvenile Instructor*. Batavia: 1823 *A Monthly Record of Important Selections*. Singapore: 1824 *Singapore Chronicle*. The Ultra Ganges Mission occasionally sent missionaries to South China, in addition to sending missionaries to the neighboring regions of China. These missionaries acquired the status of members of the Ganges Foreign Mission as soon as they arrived in China. Between 1815 and 1843, the number of missionary members working in South China was small, and for the most part it was only one man, Morrison, and developed slowly. In 1828, after severing his ties with the Dutch Missionary Society, Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (1803-1851) became an independent missionary, and although he never became a full member of the London Society, he was closely associated with it, and for some time assisted in the activities of the Ultra Ganges Foreign Mission in Singapore and Malacca [5] and can therefore be counted as a member of the mission. In 1831, he traveled by ship to China, distributing Chinese books printed in the Malacca and Batavia preaching stations along the way, and scouting the coast, before finally arriving in Canton, where in 1833, Gützlaff established the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*. In the same year, Morrison founded two newspapers in Macao, *Serial Miscellany* and *The Evangelist; and Miscellanea Sinica*, a weekly Chinese-English publication. What deserves to be mentioned is that in October 1838, with the assistance of a young Englishman, Charles Batten Hillier, it was believed that Medhurst founded the Chinese monthly magazine, *News of All Nation*, in Canton. This statement is, however, a misinformation. Despite the fact that Britton in his publication *The Chinese Periodical Press, 1800-1912* first mentioned Medhurst as the founder, succeeded by treaties on China's press history, exploring from Medhurst's itinerary at that time, the description and analysis of the sinologist Alexander Wylie, who was very familiar with Medhurst, and the Chinese newspaper historian Ge Gongzhen, and compared with the contents of periodicals run by missionaries in China during the same period, the founder was not Medhurst. It remains to be further explored which one founded this magazine [6].

Table 2: Periodicals by the Ultra Ganges Mission

Periodicals	Attributes	Founder	Station
<i>Chinese Monthly Magazine</i> (1815-	monthly in Chinese; the first Chinese-	Milne	Malacca

1821)	language periodical in pre-modern China, compatible with religious and secular knowledge		
<i>The Indo-Chinese Gleaner</i> (1817-1822)	quarterly in English; predominantly non-religious content	Robert Morrison, William Milne	Malacca
<i>A Monthly Record of Important Selections</i> (1823-1826)	monthly in Chinese; in the same vein as the <i>Chinese Monthly Magazine</i>	Walter Henry Medhurst	Batavia
<i>Singapore Chronicle</i> (1824-1837)	bi-weekly in English; providing practical information	Francis James Bernard	Singapore
<i>Universal Gazette</i> (1828-1829)	monthly magazine in Chinese; news from China and Britain, including missions, light science, history and current affairs	Samuel Kidd	Malacca
<i>Malacca Observer and Chinese Chronicle</i> (1826-1829)	biweekly in English; focusing on education and press freedom in China	J. H. Moor	Malacca
<i>Serial Miscellany</i> (1833)	irregular in Chinese; the first Chinese newspaper published by foreigners in China; modern newspaper style, preaching Christian doctrine	Robert Morrison	Macau
<i>The</i>	weekly in	Robert	Macau

<i>Evangelist; and Miscellanea Sinica</i> (1833)	Chinese-English; predominantly religious, with a small amount of political and business content	Morrison	
<i>Eastern Western Monthly Magazine</i> (1833-1835, 1837-1838)	monthly in Chinese; Western studies dominant, religious content taking a back seat	Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff	Canton
<i>The Periodical Miscellany and Juvenile Instructor</i> (1836-1837)	weekly in English; successor of the <i>Indo-Chinese Gleaner</i>	John Evans	Malacca

The Ultra Ganges Mission gradually opened the door to China through the founding of periodicals and books, centering on literal evangelism. This missionary strategy was not only adapted to the actual situation of Chinese society at that time, but also reflected the missionaries' deep understanding of cultural exchange. These periodicals and books not only conveyed Christian doctrines and values, but also introduced Western scientific knowledge, culture, art, and social systems, promoting the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures.

III. IMPACT ON THE REST OF THE CHINESE PRESS

Under the influence of the Ganges Foreign Mission, the rise and development of other Chinese and foreign-language periodicals and newspapers in China showed a unique intertwined relationship. These newspapers were not only influenced by the Mission in terms of their content, but were also inextricably linked to it in terms of their philosophy, format, and contributors.

The *Chinese Serial* (1853-1856) was the first Chinese periodical in Hong Kong and the second in China. It was a regular publication printed and distributed by the Morrison Educational Society in Hong Kong in the Anglo-Chinese College, which had a good printing house, in order to carry on Morrison's legacy [7], and the aim of the publication was "to achieve a wide range of views, and to provide benefits to both Chinese and foreigners". In 1853, the Anglo-Chinese

College, which had moved to Hong Kong, organized missionaries and Chinese people to compile the publication, *Chinese Serial*, which was successively edited by Medhurst, Hillier, and James Legge (1815-1897), with the assistance of the Chinese, Huang Sheng and Wang Tao. The first half of the journal consisted of long articles on Western social and natural sciences, while the second half was a news column, *Miscellaneous News*, which was mainly about Hong Kong, China and Britain. Together with the *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, *A Monthly Record of Important Selections*, and *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*, which were founded by the Ultra Ganges Mission, the *Chinese Serial*, served the important function of introducing advanced Western scientific knowledge into China in Chinese [8]. This periodical categorized news, published readers' voices, and used advertising revenue to run the newspaper as a characteristic feature, breaking the practice of previous church publications [9] and showing its tendency to develop in the direction of a pre-modernized newspaper. Inheriting the model of the *Chinese Serial*, the *Shanghai Serial* (1857-1858) was founded by a church group centered in London Society. Its editor, Alexander Wylie (1815-1887), was originally a printer, starting from the supervision of the missionary press, and later became a famous sinologist. Joseph Edkins (1823-1905), William Muirhead (1822-1900), and Alexander Williamson (1829-1905) were the main contributors. The purpose of the publication of *Shanghai Serial* was, like that of the *东西洋* and the *Chinese Serial*, to eliminate Chinese prejudices by inculcating them with knowledge of Western learning [10]. A lineage of the two periodicals, influenced by the mission's advocacy of the dissemination of Western knowledge, with the founding purpose and content positioning closely related to the aim of the newspaper activities and publication of the location of the Ultra Ganges Mission, making a breakthrough in the organizational structure and form of content, developed in the direction of modernized newspapers, laying the foundation for the process of China's pre-modern press.

On November 8, 1827, the first English language foreign newspaper in Canton, the *Canton Register*, was published by W. W. Wood (1805-1855), later taken over by James Matheson (1796-1878), with the participation of Morrison, Jahn Slade, etc. The publication not only published a great deal of commercial information such as cargo prices and shipping schedules, but also provided data on the Chinese and foreign opium trade before and after the Opium War. The publication not only published a lot of commercial information such as cargo prices and ship schedules, but also provided data on the Chinese and foreign opium trade before and after the Opium War. The periodical's record of Sino-foreign relations has become an important reference for scholars exploring China and oversea relations before and after the Opium War. The characteristics of the Chinese community have

been much talked about and discussed in the periodical. The founding of the *Canton Register* marked the beginning of the transition to modernization of China's English-language press and provided positive reference for the development of the press in many countries and regions around the world. In May 1832, the *Chinese Repository*, the first English-language monthly magazine founded by Western missionaries in China, was published in Canton, with American missionary E. C. Bridgman as editor-in-chief, and Morrison, S. W. Williams (1812-1884), and Gützlaff as contributors. The *Chinese Repository* was initially founded to introduce Chinese history, culture, and current events to Western missionaries in Asian countries, and later became a newspaper and magazine that introduced Chinese history, culture, historical classics, and social conditions to Western readers. Most of the main contributors to these two newspapers came from the Ultra Ganges Mission, and they applied the newspaper concepts and writing experience they had accumulated during their previous missionary activities to the editing and writing of the later newspapers, and their accuracy in understanding and describing Chinese culture, history, and society, and their attitudes toward conveying the information and views of the articles were closely related to the credibility and popularity of these newspapers, and thus affected the role of the press in Chinese society at the time.

Most of the missionaries who had worked in the Ultra Ganges Mission remained in China to engage in newspaper or publishing activities after the end of the Mission plan, thus influencing subsequent missionaries or publishing workers. These people inherited and carried forward the concepts and methods of newspaper operation that they had learned from the members of the original mission. Joseph Edkins (1823-1905), a missionary of the London Society who had assisted Medhurst in founding China's first pre-modern printing house, the London Missionary Society Press, succeeded Medhurst as supervisor after his departure, presided over the editing and publishing work, and co-founded the *Peking Magazine* in Beijing in 1872 with the American missionary William A. P. Martin (1827-1916), which mainly introduced scientific and technological knowledge, craftsmanship, and techniques, and have a certain role in promoting the dissemination of modern Western science and technology in China, as well as the emergence of Chinese scientific concepts in China [11]. Wang Tao (1828-1897), a Chinese who worked at the London Missionary Society Press, not only assisted Medhurst and Alexander Wylie in editing and publicizing western science, but also participated in the editing of the *Chinese Serial* and the *Shanghai Serial*, accumulating a great deal of experience in running a newspaper in the thirteen years that he worked there. The *Universal Circulating Herald* (1874), under the leadership of Wang Tao, was the first Chinese language newspaper in Hong Kong to be financed and organized

by the Chinese themselves. It introduced and clarified to readers the functions and impact of newspapers and the newspaper's editorial and editorial policies, and answered readers' questions about newspapers [7]. It also pioneered the first political newspaper in which the literati discussed politics, and its sophistication in terms of layout and content marked a new milestone in the modern Chinese newspaper industry. The contributions of these newspaper men, who had been influenced by the members of the Ultra Ganges Mission, in their later newspaper or publishing activities in China not only promoted the development of the Chinese newspaper industry, but also provided valuable experiences and insights for the later journalists, facilitating the process of Sino-Western cultural exchanges and dissemination.

IV. IMPACT ON CHINESE SOCIETY AND THE LOCAL PRESS

From its founding in 1817 to its dissolution in 1841, the Ultra Ganges Mission made a contribution to the cultural exchange between China and the West that deserves full recognition. In the literal missionary activities of the missionaries, their main contribution was the transmission of knowledge and enlightenment, and the opening of schools, the translation and printing of books, and the founding of periodicals and newspapers were the most important tools and means. While missionary periodical publishing activities ostensibly utilized cultural and technological means to promote the "gospel", they were in fact a form of cultural construction, which objectively had an obvious enlightening and promotional effect on China.

4.1 Nurturing local Chinese journalists

The Anglo-Chinese College established by the Ultra Ganges Mission in Malacca was initially intended to spread Christian doctrine and train missionary personnel, but it has played a very important historical role in the modern cultural exchanges between China and the West, the construction of relations between China and the West, and the eastward advancement of Western education. Anglo-Chinese College trained a number of excellent translators and enlightened a number of local Chinese newspaper men. The College admits both Western and Chinese students, with special emphasis on the need for Chinese students to master English. Relying on its pioneering teaching philosophy and excellent teaching staff, Anglo-Chinese College successfully trained the first batch of Western-educated intellectual elites in pre-modern China who had the ability to speak English and run a newspaper. Upon completion of their studies, they returned to China and introduced new ideas, cultures and concepts to the Chinese people around them, enabling the locals to understand the world through them, narrowing the distance between China and the West, and promoting the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures.

The opening of an autonomous newspaper in modern China required not only appropriate newspaper concepts, but also talented people with the technical means to do so, but the fact is that China, which was constrained by a feudal society, could not provide such support on its own. Initially, some Chinese gained the necessary practical experience and skills by working on missionary newspapers and became the main force behind China's self-run newspapers, including early newspaper talents such as Huang Sheng and Wang Tao. Wong Shing was one of the three boys who went to the United States in 1847 to study at the Morrison Education Society. He returned to China for medical reasons and became the superintendent of the printing office of the London Missionary Society, where he gained experience in printing and newspaper operation through his work on the China Mail and the printing office of the Anglo-Chinese College. Wong Shing assisted Legge in proofreading and printing Chinese books, participated in the printing of the Chinese and Foreign Gazette, the Chinese Mail and the Chinese Repository, and helped Wang Tao to transfer the printing equipment from the London Missionary Society and to publish the Universal Circulating Herald, making him one of the media figures cultivated in Hong Kong in the early days who possessed knowledge of the East and the West and the ability to bridge the gap between the East and the West[12]. Wang Tao also succeeded in creating a winning style of editorials in newspapers, which promoted the development of Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong at that time.

4.2 Dissemination of a new style of newspaper concept

Newspaper activities under the influence of the Ultra Ganges Mission, while preaching and serving the colonization, also brought advanced Western concepts of newspaper running to the local Chinese newspapers and journalists. These newspapers founded by the Ultra Ganges Mission actively advocated the coverage of domestic and foreign current news, science and technology, geography and history in terms of content selection. The first news in the history of modern Chinese newspapers, "Eclipse", appeared in Chinese Monthly Magazine, which demonstrated the concern and coverage of scientific knowledge, and was accompanied by "News" printed in type; Universal Gazette aimed at spreading the news of China and Britain, including missionary, science, history and current affairs. These reports not only enriched the horizons of Chinese readers, but also laid the foundation for the spread of Western journalistic concepts in the East. These newspapers also brought innovations in reporting methods and techniques. The Indo-Chinese Gleaner introduced Western journalistic concepts and techniques to China; in early September 1820, when Emperor Jiaqing died, the 14th issue of the Indo-Chinese Gleaner in October published Death of the Emperor of China [13], reflecting the focus on major news and its timeliness. These newspapers became the earliest

carriers of Western journalism concepts in the Chinese cultural circle, gradually spreading Western journalism concepts in the East through coverage of diverse contents and innovative reporting methods, laying the foundation for the development and modernization of journalism in China.

4.3 Introducing new techniques for newspapers

In addition to enlightening native newspaper men on journalistic thinking, the periodical activities of the Ultra Ganges Mission also brought with them newspaper-related techniques, such as artwork, framing, printing, and editorial work. The popularization of these techniques provided the basis for the subsequent distribution of newspapers, thus promoting the development of the newspaper industry as a whole. The textual missionary activities of the Ultra Ganges Mission objectively introduced advanced Western printing machines and technologies to China. In order to achieve better missionary results, they researched and created Chinese lead movable type, which contributed to the development of the printing industry in China. At first, in order to print the Chinese version of the Bible and the Chinese-English Dictionary, Morrison secretly hired engravers in Guangzhou and used them to make Chinese character molds, eventually creating a set of Chinese movable type. This was the first attempt at Chinese lead movable type, and was the source of lead movable type technology in China itself, driving a change in the historical trajectory of China's future writing culture. In the 19th century, no fewer than 60 printing establishments were founded by Christians in China. In addition, after the Opium War, with the increase of foreign missionaries, some European countries have come to China to invest in printing factories, and later the "Levin" printing press in Belgium, the "Falcao" printing press in France and the "Berlin" printing plant in Germany. These factories are of a certain scale and produce a large number of high-quality printed materials, promoting the rapid development of China's publishing industry.

V. CONCLUSION

The Ultra Ganges Mission created the strategy of newspaper evangelization, which was the inevitable result of the collision of Chinese and Western cultures under the specific conditions of time and space. This strategy inherited the Jesuit tradition of literal evangelization and combined it with the fact that printed works were an important medium of communication in Chinese society at that time, thus creating a new and effective mode of spreading Christianity to China. (Ge Gongzhen pointed out that "the method of Christian missionary work, the old religion from the top down, so the emphasis on writing books; Protestantism from the bottom up, so the emphasis on the newspaper" [14]. Ge regarded newspaper evangelism as the distinctive feature of Protestant evangelism which was different from

Catholicism, and newspaper evangelism was adopted and developed by a large number of succeeding Protestant missionaries.) In addition, the Ultra Ganges Mission drew on the advanced concepts of the Western bourgeois press of the 19th century and applied them to the mode of Christian propagation in China, achieving innovative results and injecting new vitality into the practice of Christian propagation abroad. At the same time, it left an important mark on the development of local Chinese press.

Members of the Ultra Ganges Mission, represented by Morrison and Milne, founded newspapers and conducted religious activities in China's neighboring regions such as Malacca, Java and Penang, as well as in Canton, Hong Kong and Macau. During the 23 years from the founding of the Mission in 1817 to its dissolution, the religious periodicals in China were able to develop and expand rapidly after the Opium War, promoting the advancement of Western learning and missionary endeavors. The missionary press thus became an important force for social change in modern China. With the continuous improvement of the written communication channels built by missionaries, the deepening of Sino-Western intellectual and cultural exchanges, and the narrowing of the differences between Eastern and Western civilizations, Chinese and Western scholars have been able to share and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, which in turn has promoted the mutual absorption, fusion, and innovation of Chinese and Western literature.

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