MISSIONARIES AND SECRET SOCIETIES DURING THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

—FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES IN ENSHI IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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SUMMARY

In the late-nineteenth century China, an anti-Christian movement swiped the entire country. Previous scholars have explained the causes of the movement from the perspective of cultural conflict, Western imperialism, China’s anti-foreign tradition, and so on. However, these explanations are not equally applicable to different regions of China during the anti-Christian movement. This thesis tries to provide a new perspective of the causes of the anti-Christian movement by studying the relationship between Belgium Franciscan missionaries and the secret society Gelaohui in Enshi in the late nineteenth century. This thesis argues that Franciscan missionaries in Enshi were quite experienced at dealing with the local society in the nineteenth century. They generally had peaceful working relationships with different groups of people in the local society such as Chinese officials, Chinese Christians and non-Christians. However, the secret society Gelaohui frequently had trouble with Franciscan missionaries. They not only confronted those missionaries indirectly, but also directly organized the anti-Christian movement that took place in Enshi and the entire Yangtze River Valley.
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INTRODUCTION

Christianity reached China long time ago, yet it was The Opium War which facilitated its spread in China. After The Opium War many missionaries from different countries started coming to China with enthusiasm for Christ. The number of Chinese converts also started to increase, although not as rapidly as what missionaries had expected. In the mission history of China, the anti-Christian movement was the most influential event in the nineteenth century. The decade from 1890 to 1900 was important as it saw the movement reach its zenith. Organized and unorganized harassment and persecution toward foreign missionaries and Chinese converts was widespread in China. Many Western missionaries and Chinese converts became victims of this movement. Since then, numerous researches on the motives behind this movement have been carried out. Through the analysis of the motives behind China’s anti-Christian movement, the missionaries’ role in Chinese society also becomes clear from various perspectives.

There have been several explanations among scholars about the motives behind this anti-Christian movement. Some Western scholars have ascribed this movement to missionaries’ imperialistic behavior. Joseph W. Esherick claimed that although there was growing conflict between missionaries and Western mercantilistic enterprises in the late nineteenth century China, trade and Christianity were still closely connected with each other in the process of
opening China and spreading Western civilization.\textsuperscript{1} Paul W. Harris maintained that “even as functional ties between missionaries and other Westerners were severed, missionaries’ behavior remained at least as imperialistic in a structural sense as it had been previously”, as missionaries were not independent from other Western enterprises and they had to collaborate with other Western enterprises in their work.\textsuperscript{2} Taking American protestant missionaries as example, he maintained that although missionaries and merchants did not like each other in their contact with China, they needed each other in order to facilitate their work. Merchants needed missionaries to be their propagandists and interpreters, and missionaries needed merchants to open China for their mission work and also required their protection.\textsuperscript{3} For these scholars, China’s anti-Christian movement was the Chinese people’s reaction to foreign imperialism.

Chinese nationalist scholars have widely accepted and supported the view that China’s anti-Christian movement was the Chinese reaction to Western imperialism. They agree that missionaries in China supported western economic and political control of China. Before the year 2000 the prevailing view among Chinese scholars about the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century China was in agreement with this. In the third national conference on modern Chinese anti-Christian incidents held in Guiyang on 20 to 25 November 1989, 

\textsuperscript{1} Joseph W. Esherick, \textit{The origins of the Boxer Uprising} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp.75-76.  
\textsuperscript{2} Paul W. Harris, “Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries: Collaboration and Dependency in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China”, \textit{The Pacific Historical Review} 60, 3(August 1991), pp.315-316.  
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 316-318.
most presenters believed that anti-Christian cases were the outcome of Western imperialism. Religious invasion was accompanied with military invasion, and Western imperialist powers spread their religion with the help of military and political threat after opening China by gunboat. Whatever the presenters’ perspective of the anti-Christian cases, they held the same Marxist view that the anti-Christian movement was the Chinese people’s patriotic anti-imperialist movement. In China’s elementary schools' history text books, phrases like “cultural invasion” and “spiritual control” are used to describe Western missionaries’ activities in Chinese history. When referring to imperialism, the United States has a more important role in modern Chinese history than Japan. Chairman Mao once commented that: “For a very long period, U.S. imperialism laid greater stress than other imperialist countries on activities in the sphere of spiritual aggression, extending from religious to ‘philanthropic’ and cultural undertakings.”

Chinese scholar Gu Changsheng argued that the anti-Christian movements of the late nineteenth century in China were caused by Western imperialism. He claimed that missionaries were closely connected with Western imperialism at the very beginning of their work in China. In order to serve their countries’ imperialist interests, they maintained

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6 Gu Changsheng, Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai zhongguo [Missionaries and modern China]
indifference toward the opium trade, supported gunboat diplomacy and even interfered in Chinese politics. He continued to argue that two decades before the Opium War, missionaries from Britain and America mainly had two tasks, one was gathering various kinds of information about China for their own countries, thus supporting and encouraging the policy of opening China by force; another was preparing for their work of spreading the gospel in China. After the Opium War, missionaries entered the interior of China, and they committed many notorious deeds like purchasing peasants’ property by force and interfering in lawsuits between Chinese converts and non-converts. Gu concluded that missionaries themselves were the original cause of this anti-Christian movement. Although Gu did not deny missionaries’ role as cultural transmitters between China and the West, he considered this role was limited when compared with what missionaries had done for Western imperialism. It is reasonable to argue that missionaries could not escape the social context within which there was Western imperialism toward China, and some missionaries’ conduct was harmful to Chinese interests even if they never meant to or were not aware of it. Yet it is extreme to ascribe the cause of the anti-Christian movement solely to the missionaries.

Another explanation of the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century China is that Anti-foreignism was the original cause. Paul A. Cohen argued that there was a long anti-foreign tradition in China. As a result, Christianity posed a big threat to people of all social

(Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2004), p.10.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 29.
9 Ibid., pp. 121-148.
10 Ibid., Chapter 17.
classes instead of attracting more converts. The resistance to Christianity was popular.\textsuperscript{11} What is more, Christianity had been considered heterodoxy for a long time in Chinese history because of “its foreign origin, its fundamental non-adherence to Confucianism, the miraculous content of some of its doctrines, and its suspected motives of political subversion”.\textsuperscript{12} For these scholars, missionaries were victims of China’s anti-Christian movement and their behavior were not related to the cause of the movement. Like the previous statement that missionaries’ imperialistic behavior was the cause of the anti-Christian movement, this statement is also extreme.

Kenneth Scott Latourette, one of the most prestigious religious scholars in twentieth century agreed that the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century China was a kind of anti-foreign movement.\textsuperscript{13} Missionaries and their converts suffered most in this movement simply because missionaries scattered more widely in China than other Westerners.\textsuperscript{14} Yet for him the anti-foreignism was not a Chinese tradition because people had welcomed foreign objects like Buddhism and Jews in Chinese history. Before nineteenth century there was also persecution toward missionaries in China, but it was caused not by anti-foreignism, but by

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
officials who were afraid that Christianity was a rebellious sect, or by Chinese commoners’ misunderstanding of mission activities.\textsuperscript{15}

Some scholars attributed the anti-Christian movement to the conflict of different cultures between the West which was represented by missionaries and China which was represented by gentry. Gentry in Chinese society was the traditional elite class and protectors of Confucianism, and they considered Confucianism as the foundation of Chinese civilization. Gentry’s respected social status in Chinese society was also based on Confucianism. With their privileged right obtained from treaties between Western powers and the Qing government, the presence of missionaries posed direct threat to this traditional culture system especially to the gentry, thus the conflict between missionaries and the gentry was unavoidable.\textsuperscript{16} Many anti-Christian incidents were organized and supported directly or indirectly by members of the gentry class.\textsuperscript{17} Cohen argued that passively the gentry class was indifferent toward Christianity, and actively members of the gentry class wrote anti-Christian placards to instigate Chinese commoners’ dislike of Christianity.\textsuperscript{18} In his work \textit{the reasons of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.242.
\item\textsuperscript{17} Lü, \textit{Zhongguo guanshen fanjiao de yuanyin}, p.4.
\item\textsuperscript{18} Cohen, “The Anti-Christian Tradition in China”, p.169.
\end{itemize}
Chinese gentry’s anti-Christianism (Zhongguo guanshen fanjiao de yuanyin), Lü Shiqiang analyzed the Confucian tradition in Chinese culture, and argued that the anti-Christian tradition started from the Ming dynasty.\(^{19}\) According to Confucianism, from the start of Chinese civilization there had been a Tao\(^{20}\) which guided the development of Chinese society and personal lives. This Tao would be destroyed if China was controlled or conquered by barbarism, so to guard China was to guard this Tao. That is why the gentry worked so hard to protect the Tao from being poisoned by Christianity.\(^{21}\)

According to the memoirs of the Qing officials and archival records, the statement that the gentry organized the anti-Christian movement seems unconvincing because the stated authorship of many placards was unconvincing. In the early months of 1876, there was a popular anti-Christian placard in Chongqing named *Memorial to the Emperor from Zhang Zhidong* (Zhang Zhidong zougao). This placard described the harmful activities that the Western countries had done to China after The Opium War. It said that Western countries had planned to instigate unrest in China by spreading Christianity, and it encouraged all Qing officials to take action against Western imperialism.\(^{22}\) This placard was very popular during that time because it was written with the name of Zhang Zhidong, the education officer of

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\(^{19}\) Lü, *Zhongguo guanshen fanjiao de yuanyin*, p.12.

\(^{20}\) Tao refers to Dao in Chinese language. People have used Taoism to refer to the doctrine of Dao in Chinese history. Thsonee word Tao is the same as in Taoism. Here Tao means way, or method.

\(^{21}\) Lü, *Zhongguo guanshen fanjiao de yuanyin*, p.15.

Sichuan province. This placard, however, was not related to Zhang Zhidong at all.\textsuperscript{23} After the court investigation ordered by Zhang Zhidong himself, they found that all the anti-Christian placards circulating in Chongqing were written by a man named Zhou Han\textsuperscript{24}, and it was Zhou who put other influential persons’ name as authors.\textsuperscript{25} From this fact, it is reasonable to say that some members of the gentry class maybe anti-Christian, but it is unconvincing to argue that the whole of the gentry class were leaders of anti-Christian movement. Thus it seems unconvincing to conclude that the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth China was caused by the cultural conflict between the West and China.

Actually more and more scholars have realized that it is necessary to “get beyond the polarized praise and blame tendencies of earlier scholarship when analyzing missionary role, recognizing the tendency of both on the twin teleologies of developmentalism and nationalism”\textsuperscript{26}. Many scholars acknowledged that missionaries had an important role in global modernity as they belonged to the only group of people who had the opportunity and capacity to interact with indigenous people of another society at close quarters.\textsuperscript{27} They laid the foundation of modern global order in those societies through their work such as teaching, preaching and publications activities; such work paved the way for modernity in those societies not only physically, but also ideologically.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} Liu, \textit{Zhang Zhidong Zhuan}, p.155.
\textsuperscript{24} Zhou Han at that time was a low level official in Chongqing.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp.280-285.
\textsuperscript{26} Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism”, p.318.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p.320.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp.321-322.
The above arguments may serve as the main or one of the most important factors of China’s anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century as a whole, but given the regional varieties of China’s vast land, these factors can not be generalized to anti-Christian incidents that took place in every province and region. Once we analyze the stories behind such events in detail, we may find that sometimes none of the above-mentioned explanations are convincing. In her study of Chongqing, Judith Wyman opposed traditional view of anti-foreignism which was based on race and ethnicity, because Chongqing itself had been a place where people of different ethnicities living together, and foreign missionaries for Sichuan were only another group of outsiders. She argued that the anti-Christian movement in Chongqing was caused by the social and economic context in the late nineteenth century, within which increasing population, social redefinition, and the uncertainty of the future facilitated people’s hatred of the foreign threat. Through the study of Catholics in rural Jiangxi province, Sweeten demonstrated that in rural Jiangxi province Chinese Catholics were not separated from the community because of their religion. Catholics in this region survived the anti-Christian movement in late nineteenth century China because they lived together with non-Catholics. There might have been arguments between Chinese converts and non-converts, but such arguments never resulted in a big conflict. What caused big

30 Ibid., p.122.
32 Ibid., pp.177-195.
disputes among villagers were those related to personal properties like land and debts, not religion. In his research about Christianity in Fuzhou, Ryan Dunch also argues that becoming Christian did not separate one from Chinese culture, as much Christian knowledge could be understood within Chinese culture. Strikingly in some places, Western missionaries and Chinese converts had far more serious conflicts because of the unequal treatment between Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, especially as regards racial discrimination. These findings of those researchers proved that none of anti-foreignism, anti-imperialism, and culture conflicts could be applied to explain anti-Christian events in rural Jiangxi province and Fuzhou.

The conflicting argumentation between general studies and case studies shows that there is a need for scholars to do more local research to see how religions developed at the local level and the interaction between different groups of people. While writing about expected new perspectives on Chinese religious studies, Vincent Goossaert pointed out that local study is mostly needed in future mission studies. Because through this kind of study it is better to understand how local religious sects and leaders adapted themselves to state religious policies in order to continue religious activities. It is also beneficial to conduct comparative studies between different regions.

33 Ibid., p.68.
During the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century China, what kind of stories were there behind what we saw? What kind of life did Western missionaries have in China? What brought up the movement against missionaries? Despite numerous previous researches on Christianity in China, further study is still necessary in order to find the truth about the anti-Christian movement.

Geographically, North China especially Shandong has been a popular research area for scholars for several decades. Numerous researches have been carried out about the Boxer movement that took place in late nineteenth century on North China plain. In contrast, South China has not been researched adequately, and most studies have been centered on Sichuan province. In South China, the most striking event about missionaries was the anti-Christian riot of the Yangtze River Valley in the decade of 1890. Some researchers considered it just another important event resulting either from Chinese anti-imperialism, anti-foreignism or cultural conflict between the Occident and the Orient. Yet when one looks closely at those anti-Christian cases that took place in south China, there were some striking differences


38 If one searches Worldcat or google scholar, one may find some works on Hunan and Sichuan, but compared with those on the Boxer Uprising, researches on South China seems pretty inadequate both in quantity and quality in general.
compared with what happened in the north, one of which is the role of secret societies in the anti-Christian movement.

South China was the home of secret societies (organizations made up of people from the lower society in order to obtain mutual help and self-protection. Being anti-social, they were deemed by the government as heretic religion and bandits), and the Gelaohui (a secret society whose purpose was brotherhood and mutual help; please refer to chapter 1.5 for details) was the most popular one in the Yangtze River Valley in the nineteenth century.39 Most ordinary people did not have a clear notion of what was heretic religion and what was bandit, most members who belonged to those societies were called bandit (fei40), so without special reference, the term bandit in the following part of this thesis refers to secret society and Gelaohui in particular. The Yangtze River was the water transportation center of south China. Thousands of people like boat pullers and peddlers lived by the river. After Western powers obtained navigation rights of the Yangtze River and “most favored countries” status according to treaties signed with the Qing government, Western steam engine ships entered interior land and gradually replaced old-styled Chinese ships. Thousands of boat pullers thus became unemployed. Due to its mutual help doctrine, Gelohui attracted many unemployed people in the Yangtze River Valley and its members included toilers, boatmen, boat trackers, salt and opium peddlers and disbanded soldiers from Sichuan province.41 In 1891, many anti-

40 For example, member of secret society was called huifei; member of brigand was called tufei.
Christian cases happened in the middle and lower Yangtze River Valley, mainly in Yangzhou, Wuhu, Danyang, Nanjing, Wuxi, Jiujiang, Wuxue and Yichang.\(^\text{42}\)

Since the year of 2000 more Chinese scholars had started to pay more attention on the relationship between the anti-Christian movement and secret societies in the Yangtze River Valley. By looking into the real story behind the Yangtze anti-Christian incident of 1891, Wu argued that most anti-Christian events in the Yangtze River Valley were organized by Gelaohui, and Gelaohui not only pointed their target toward foreign missionaries, but also toward the Qing government. This is greatly different from other anti-Christian movements because the others were only against missionaries.\(^\text{43}\) In her study of an anti-Christian case that happened in the City of Gu in north Hubei province, Li Xia reached the same conclusion that secret society organized anti-Christian movement in Hubei by spreading rumors and robbing amidst the chaos. While analyzing why secret society attacked foreign missionaries, she argued that the presence of missionaries threatened secret societies’ social status in local society.\(^\text{44}\) Although these scholars have studied the relationship between the anti-Christian movement and missionaries from different perspectives, their analyses only scratch the surface, and it is necessary to look into the social context within which such stories happened.

\(^{42}\) Wu Shanzhong, “Gelaohui yu guangxu shiqi nian changjiang jiao’an” [The Society of Brothers and the ‘Yangtze River Missionary Case’ in 1891], *Journal of Yangzhou University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* 10, 6 (November 2006), p.82.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p.84.

\(^{44}\) Li Xia, “Wanqing shehui zhong de mimi shehui:yi 1892 nian Gucheng jiao’an wei li” [Secret society in the Christian cases in late Qing dynasty: a research on the Gucheng Christian Case in 1892], *Journal of Huainan Normal University* 8, 1(2006), pp. 82-83.
In conclusion, the general studies about the motives of anti-Christian movement in modern China can only be regarded convincing under some conditions. Case studies have been proved more useful and applicable. Scholars have studied the imperialistic aspect of missionaries and the cultural aspect in the confrontation of missionaries and the Chinese; it is time to look into other important factors affecting this movement. The most striking one was the relationship between missionaries and secret societies, although some Chinese scholars have studied secret societies’ role in south China anti-Christian movement, no one has studied this thoroughly.

My Research on Franciscans in Enshi

This thesis will fill this gap by studying Belgian Franciscans in Enshi of Hubei province from 1890 to 1930. By looking into the social context of Enshi and Franciscans’ mission history in this region, the relationship between different groups of people, especially the relationship between Franciscan missionaries and secret society Gelaohui in Enshi will be analyzed in this thesis. In this way this thesis will provide a full picture of the anti-Christian movement in Enshi.

The research on this thesis focuses exclusively on Belgian Franciscans in Enshi. There are some reasons to choose Enshi as the research region. Firstly, it was an area situated in the Yangtze River Valley and shares borders with Hunan and Sichuan provinces. Culturally, it had many similarities with Sichuan province, yet Enshi had its own distinctive characteristics.
For example, it was an interior mountainous area and Western influence was not so strong as well as a minority area whose ethnic cultures may demand special mission techniques from Western missionaries. Politically Enshi was a peripheral region in the Qing dynasty, thus central government’s control was not strong at this region. Orders from the central government and messages from the outside needed more time to reach Enshi, and local leaders sometimes did not follow the central government at all. Family and community mediation had the most important role in people’s daily life. These characteristics make it a good location to study how events that took place in Sichuan, the Yangtze River Valley and other parts of China affected a common Chinese interior region.

Secondly, Franciscan missionaries in Enshi had a long history. On 2 September 1870 the Roman Catholic Church officially divided Hubei province into three Dioceses: East Hubei, North-West Hubei and South-West Hubei diocese. South-West Hubei diocese included three regions: Yichangfu, Jingzhoufu and Shinnafu. From then on, Belgian Franciscans started to spread Christianity in this region. For the Chinese in this region, Christianity was completely alien to them at that time, and it was very different from Chinese traditional beliefs and customs, thus difficult to seek Chinese converts at the beginning. Nonetheless, Belgian Franciscans continued their work in Enshi, and built churches in most counties. What brought trouble to missionaries were secret societies. Enshi was the home to various kinds of secret societies. From 1888 to 1930, Enshi experienced some important movements or policy changes like the Gaituguiliu (Replacement of hereditary local chieftains with nonhereditary
appointees from the central government), development of the secret society Gelaohui, the Boxer Uprising in Shandong province, the Shenbing (A group of rebellions who called themselves soldiers of the God), and the 1911 Revolution. Despite many hardships, Franciscan missionaries continued to stay in Enshi and did their best to spread the gospel.

Although many missionaries became victims of those movements, Franciscans survived in Enshi. During the anti-Christian movement two Catholic Bishops and more than ten Western priests were killed. The anti-Christian movement had great effect on the mission history in Enshi, because it not only brought great destruction to their previous work, but also changed the mentality about Christianity both in the West and in China. By 1948, the Belgian Franciscan in Enshi had prospered. It had five churches spread among eight counties, sixteen missionaries, fourteen seminaries, twenty-seven Sisters, seven thousand and eight hundred Chinese converts, and one hundred and fifty catechumens.  

45 From the Yuan dynasty, the central government started to rely on local chiefs to govern ethnic minority people in China. Because there had been many rebellions by local chiefs, in 1726 the Jiaqing emperor of the Qing dynasty began to apply this new policy in ethnic minority regions. For more information, please refer to Enshi zhou minzu zongjiao shiwu weiyuanhui [Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture ethnic and religious affairs committee] ed, Enshi Tujiazu Miaozu Zizhiminzu zhi [Enshi Tujia and Miao autonomous Prefecture ethnic Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2003), p.133.

46 It originated in South-West Hubei province in the early twentieth century, and became popular during the warlord period. For more information, please refer to Liu Xuexiong, “Xiang E chuan qian ‘shenbin’ tanmi” [Study on the “Divine Army” of Hunan, Hubei and Sichuan], Hubei Archives (April 2002); Xiao Hong’en, “Ershi shiji shang banye Exinan shenbing yundong de xiandai zhuanxing” [Modern Change of Supernatural Soldiers Campaign in the First Half of the 20th century in Southwest Hubei Province], Journal of Hubei Institute for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences) 24, 6 (2006).

Besides the perfect location of Enshi and the long history of mission work at this region, another reason to choose Enshi as the research area for this research is the availability of sources. On the missionaries’ side, the most precious and important documents are stored in archives in Belgium. One is Franciscan central Church located in Sint-Truiden, another one is KADOC mission archive center in Catholic University of Leuven. It includes official and personal documents. The official documents include correspondences between French foreign affairs office and the Qing government regarding Western Catholic missionaries in China, which constitutes detailed reports and negotiations about anti-Christian cases. The personal correspondences of missionaries with their friends, relatives and superiors are of great value. Hundreds of old photos can provide a vivid picture of Chinese life in the late Qing dynasty and the mission activity in China.

In China there are various kinds of documents in provincial and local archives. Although many Chinese documents were produced during religious investigation by Chinese government in the 1950s and sometimes there is obvious bias against Christianity and missionaries in the documents, they are still quite valuable because of the detailed information about mission history in that region. In mission studies specifically about anti-Christian cases in the late nineteenth century China, the Archives on mission work and anti-Christian cases (jiaowu jiao’an dang) is the most important archive document. As pointed out by scholar Sweeten, jiaowu jiao’an dang was not designed to preserve history, but the
official correspondence regarding problems or conflicts related to Christians. The conflicting opinions of Western missionaries and Chinese sometimes can help us to identify the problems.

My study about secret societies is based on archive sources from Hubei provincial archives and some secondary sources. Archival sources about secret societies are quite rare in county records, and they were more available in provincial ones. Researches from Qin Baoqi, Cai Shaoqin, and Lu Yao are regarded as the best on Chinese secret societies. Personal memoirs and foreigners’ travel logs also provided important sources about these secret societies.

The cases presented in this thesis are mainly from Jiaowu Jiao’an dang and other Chinese archive documents. It indicates that missionaries normally had peaceful working relationships with different groups of people in the local society. The anti-Christian incidents were results of the social context during that period. Many factors together facilitated their occurrences. In Enshi, secret societies provided organized manpower to the anti-Christian movement. Anti-Christian pamphlet and placards provided psychological and ideological preparation and instigated popular hatred toward foreign missionaries and Christianity. Natural disasters facilitated people’s unrest. Those factors together made anti-Christian movement possible and helped its spread.

48 For detailed description about Jiaowu Jiao’an dang [Archives on mission work and anti-Christian cases], please see Sweeten, Christianity in Rural China, pp.10-12.
In the following parts of this thesis, Chapter one introduces the local society of Enshi in the late Qing dynasty. It demonstrates how the natural and social environment of Enshi affected people’s life and the development of the anti-Christian movement. Chapter two examines the mission history in Enshi from the earliest time to 1930. It shows that Belgian Franciscans in Enshi were quite experienced at dealing with local people in nineteenth century. Chapter three analyzes Western missionaries’ interaction with different groups of people in the local society of Enshi. It shows that Western missionaries generally went on well with local officials and Chinese commoners, but they frequently had conflict with secret society Gelaohui. The last chapter analyzes all the important anti-Christian cases that took place in the Yangtze River Valley and Enshi between 1870 and 1930. It demonstrates that Gelaohui was the main organizer during the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century south China.
CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND: LOCAL SOCIETY OF ENSHI

The social, geographical, economical and political factors of a region have great influence on the historical events that took place there. This chapter will examine these factors and offer a better view of the milieu within which the anti-Christian movement took place. It will also analyze how, and to what extent, these factors affect the development of the anti-Christian movement. It is important to study factors such as the natural environment and the ethnic cultures of the region because they influenced mission work directly or indirectly. One significant feature of Enshi was the presence of secret societies. Secret societies had a great influence on the mission work. Therefore, the secret societies and the conditions that favored their growth and influence in the region are also discussed.

1.1 ABOUT ENSHI

Today, Enshi’s full name is Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture (Enshi Tujiazu Maozu zizhizhou). It shares a border with Sichuan province in the west, with Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Western Hunan (Xiangxi Tujiazu Miaozu zizhizhou) in the south and with Yichang (a city of Hubei Province) in the east. The political division of Enshi didn’t become stable until 1936 under the Republic of China.49 Early Qing rulers had followed the system of the Ming dynasty in this region until 1735 when they replaced hereditary local

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chieftains with nonhereditary appointees from the central government \(\text{\textit{gaituguiliu}}\)\(^{50}\) at minority areas. That year, they founded Shinanfu which included today’s Enshi, Lichuan, Xuan’en, Laifeng and Xianfeng. In the next year they gave Jianshi county to Shinanfu, but Badong county and Hefeng county still belonged to Yichangfu.\(^{51}\) This division continued through the Qing dynasty. In 1926 and 1932 respectively, the government of Republic of China gave Hefeng and Badong to this region. Since then the political division of Enshi has not changed.\(^{52}\) In this thesis, Enshi refers to this region, which includes eight counties: Enshi, Xuan’en, Laifeng, Xianfeng, Lichuan, Jianshi, Badong and Hefeng.

Map 1. The location of Enshi in China.

\(^{50}\) Replacement of hereditary local chieftains with nonhereditary appointees from the central government. Since the Yuan dynasty, the central government had relied on local chiefs to govern the minority people in China. As there had been many rebellions by local chiefs, the Jiaqing emperor of Qing dynasty began to apply the new policy of \textit{gaituguiliu} in minority regions in 1726. Enshi tujiazu miaozu zizhizhou minzu zongjiao shiwu weiyuanhui [Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture ethnic and religious affairs committee] ed, \textit{Enshi tujiazu miaozu zizhizhou minzuzhi} [Enshi Tujia and Miao autonomous Prefecture ethnic Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe, 2003), p.133.


1.2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT- TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The most obvious terrain feature of Enshi is mountain. The territory is situated between the Mount Ba (Ba shan) and the eastern ridge of Mount Wuling (Wuling shan). The local gazetteer described Enshi that: “it is situated among thousands of mountains, and it could be reached neither by road nor by water”.\(^53\) Priest Theotime Verhaeghen noted that “while traveling in Enshi one can only see high mountains which were cut into many directions by deep rivers”.\(^54\) In some regions of Enshi, people from one village could hear voices from the neighboring village, but they would never be able to meet face to face because the mountain between them was too steep to build roads.\(^55\)

Although both road and water vehicles were used in the late Qing dynasty, the transportation system of Enshi was underdeveloped largely due to mountains. In the Qing dynasty, there were three kinds of roads, which were built by the government: the Salt road (Guanyan dadao), the Imperial post road (Yi dao) and the Pedestrian road (Renxing dadao). The Salt roads were designated for transporting salt from Sichuan to Enshi, and they were the main

\(^{54}\) Sint-Truiden, Les derniers jours d’un martyr, by Mgr Theotime Verhaeghen.  
connection between Enshi and the outside. The Imperial post roads were built throughout the whole country for the purpose of communication between the local government and the Emperor. Pedestrian roads were built within the prefecture to connect the entire region.\(^5^6\) Despite the existence of those roads, they could not provide efficient transportation there. Even in twenty-first century, the trip from the capital city Wuhan to Enshi takes only half an hour by plane, but it needs around fourteen hours by bus.

Water transportation was accessible, but its contribution was limited. Two tributaries of the Yangtze River cross Enshi: the Clear River (Qingjiang) and the stream of the Divine Dragon (Shenlongxi). However, these rivers are dangerous for navigation due to steep canyons at the region. At many parts of the river, boat pullers were needed in order to make ships pass through. Some big ships needed hundreds of boat pullers at one time.

The backward transportation system retarded the communication between Enshi and outside regions. In people’s daily life, the slowness of the communication system did not always show up because they invented their own way of communication. When they wanted to send a message, they either went by themselves or asked someone else to do at their convenience when they passed through the place. They had good notions about distance and time. But when people in Enshi needed to communicate with outside regions emergently, the slowness of communication showed up very clearly. This could be well exemplified during priest

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Victorin Delbrouck’s murder in 1898. He sent a letter to Yichang to ask for help on the day that he was captured by the Gelaohui. The Chinese government in Yichang started to communicate with Chinese officials in Badong County who replied that Victorin was still alive. However, before the arrival of the Yichang officials’ second letter (in this letter, the officials in Badong were ordered to secure the priest’s release), the priest was already dead. This fact would have been different if the communication system was more efficient. This was just one instance during the anti-Christian movement which showed the impact of a bad communication system on people’s lives and the development of events.

Besides a backward transportation and communication system, Enshi also suffered from frequent natural disasters, which provided opportunity for missionaries to contact local people closely and convert them into Christians (this will be further explained in chapter three). The most frequent one was floods. Others like droughts, hails, and gales are also frequent. Between 1821 and 1865, there were twelve natural disasters in Enshi County, including floods, droughts, landslides, locust plagues and leopard attacks. This means on an average there was one serious natural disaster every three years. Most of the lowland at the lower end of the region would be covered by water during floods. A Franciscan mission magazine described the floods in the summer of 1924 thus:

The big water flow rushed to the region, there were furniture, houses, men, women, children and farm tools in the water. The entire region was nothing but a giant river. Tiles and remains of

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their houses collapsed under the violence of overflowed water. Many sold their houses and mortgaged their land. The discouraged families dispersed themselves and led a life like vagabonds; their face was pale and eyes livid. They traveled on the main road, stopped at the crossroad, asking those passersby for food and money. They slept on a bale of straw in the open air. Many of them died quickly from hunger or disease.⁵⁹

Due to frequent natural disasters and bad medical conditions, contagious diseases like cholera, malaria, black smallpox and all types of typhus were common in the Qing dynasty.⁶⁰

The following chapter will elaborate on how such natural disasters enabled missionaries to convert Chinese into Christians.

The lack of an adequate transportation system and the frequent natural disasters in Enshi affected the work of Western missionaries in different ways. Inadequate transportation not only affected people’s daily lives, by compelling them to be self-sufficient, but also affected the central government’s control of this region. It was difficult for the directives from the central government to reach the locals on time, and the local officials sometimes followed their own rules instead of orders from the central government. Within such an environment, Western missionaries had to find their own way to work with the local government, and instituted their own methods of communication.

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⁵⁹ Sint-Truiden, Le Messager de Saint-Francois d’Assise, unknown date.
⁶⁰ Sint-Truiden, De Franciskaansche Missie China: Zuid-West Hoepé.
1.3 AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCER

Enshi was an agricultural society, but most farmers were heavily burdened due to high taxes and lack of land. Except small parcels of fertile land near the river banks, most other land was barren, and not sizable enough for the dwellers either. Most people could only cultivate the poor land near the mountains. Furthermore, most of the land was owned by landlords. Although the system of hereditary local chieftains was abolished by the Qing government in 1735, the previous chiefs and their family members still occupied large amount of land. Also, after the opening of the borders, many immigrants entered Enshi from other provinces and regions. They had to share the natural resources from the native dwellers.61 In the late Qing dynasty, land was further concentrated to few landlords. In an investigation of three villages at this region conducted in early Republican China, it was found that among one hundred and sixty adult villagers, sixty-five percent of them had no land. Among these one hundred and four villagers who owned no land, eighty-eight were tenant peasants and sixteen were employed peasants.62 High taxes were another burden to people. Farmers in the Qing dynasty had various types of taxes to pay. There were fifty-one kinds of taxes in Hubei province, among which the most common ones were the land tax and the salt tax.63

The lack of sufficient resources and the high living pressures in the late Qing dynasty provoked disputes among people, which further shaped the power system of the local society.

61 Ibid., p.128.
63 Ibid.
Any small dispute could easily evolve into a big conflict, sometimes between people from different lineages or different geographical units. As Chinese commoners often had the intention to avoid contact with the court and find amicable resolutions to disputes, mediation had an important role in people’s daily lives.\textsuperscript{64} Due to the weak government control, the role of mediators was normally served by those highly respected in the community. According to Huang, these individuals “were generally endogenous to the community and possessed no formal official connections”\textsuperscript{65}, thus they could be gentry, official, ordinary individual, or anyone else, as long as they were influential. This not only further weakened central government’s control of this region, but also facilitated the development of subgovernmental organizations including secret societies.

Similar with the agriculture, the commerce of Enshi was also underdeveloped. Enshi produced some products which were famous in the country, like tong oil, tea, herbal medicine and lacquer. Enshi lacquer could be found even in Japan.\textsuperscript{66} However, the appearance of Enshi’s products in those places does not mean that Enshi enjoyed rapid commercial development. Those businesses were mostly conducted by people went to Enshi from outside. The strong guild organization in Enshi also indicated how insecure it was to do business in this place. In a place with different ethnic cultures and secret societies, it was difficult for an outsider to get involved in local business. Merchants from the same place formed one or

\textsuperscript{64} Philip C.C.Huang, “Court Mediation in China, Past and Present”, \textit{Modern China} 32, 3(2006), p.282.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 281.
\textsuperscript{66} Hubei Sheng Enshi Tuiazu Miaozu Zizhizhou difangzhui bianzuan weiyuanhui, \textit{Enshi Zhou zhi} [Gazetteer of Enshi Prefecture], p.563.
several guilds in order to protect themselves. The guild system controlled almost everything about business. Anyone who did business in those cities had to deal with such guilds and no one could afford to oppose them. If any dispute among merchants came up, the guilds would decide the issue.\textsuperscript{67} These guilds were so strong that some Westerners considered them as another kind of secret society.\textsuperscript{68} In fact, such guilds did have close connection with secret societies. According to Chinese scholar Qu Yanbin, secret societies in pre-modern China were formed on the basis of such business guilds. Those business guilds were formed with specific aims and regulations, and some guilds were later developed into secret societies.\textsuperscript{69} Guilds in Enshi differed from those in big cities in the types of guilds. Most guilds in Enshi were made of people from the same place, with the purpose of mutual help and brotherhood. This is another result of the weak government control, which made the guild necessary for security reasons.

1.4 ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND BELIEFS

Chinese expression of ethnic minority (\textit{Shaoshu minzu}) is an invention by the government of People’s Republic of China in 1950s. Ethnic categories were not only invented but also were


\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., Balfour in this article considered guild as another kind of secret society.

\textsuperscript{69} Qu Yanbin, \textit{Hanghui shi} [history of the guild] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi Chubanshe, 1999), pp.162-163.
institutionalized by the government through a series of national census from 1950s to 1980s.⁷⁰ For convenience, those ethnic categories are adopted in this thesis.

Enshi was an ethnic minority region with its special cultures and customs. During the evolution of Enshi’s ethnic culture, the Qing government’s policy of replacing hereditary chieftains with nonhereditary appointees in 1735 had profound effect on it. Before 1735, most people who lived in Enshi belonged to ethnic minorities Tujia or Miao. This region was administrated by local hereditary chiefs. From the Tang dynasty to 1735, the tributary system was the only tie that connected Enshi with the central government. Every year the local chief brought various kinds of gifts to display loyalty to the Emperor, and the Emperor in turn gave gifts to show his majesty’s mercy. During this period the central government’s minority policy was “using the barbarians to control the barbarians”. One ethnic group’s army was often dispatched to suppress another ethnic group’s rebellion.⁷¹ The dominating culture was also Tujia and miao’s. Tujia people worshiped nature, totems (especially white tiger) and ancestors.⁷² The Miao people’s believe were mainly nature worship and spirits of ghosts.

The Qing government later strengthened its control of minority areas, and the most important policy was replacing hereditary chieftains with nonhereditary appointees. After the

application of this policy, the previous restrictions on ethnic minorities were abolished, and people were allowed to immigrate to other places. Han governors were also sent to ethnic minority areas by the central government to replace the local chiefs. By nineteenth century, besides Tujia and Miao people, other ethnic groups including Han, Dong and Mongolian also immigrated into this region. Except few villages kept strong single minority culture, most regions of Enshi had intermingled culture with different ethnic minorities, and Tujia and Miao were the two biggest ethnic groups. One result of this policy was that the local culture of Enshi mixed with new comers especially the Han. The Tujia and Miao people adopted the Han people’s belief in ghosts and gods, as well as Han people’s ancestor worship. Although the number of other ethnic groups increased greatly, the main body of the population in this region was still Tujia and Miao from 1735 to early twentieth century. After a long time of assimilation and evolution, there was obvious mark of multi-God worship among people there.

During late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the research period of this thesis, what the missionaries saw was a society of dominating Tujia and Miao culture with elements of Han beliefs. Belgian missionaries sent report to their homeland about their mission in southwest Hubei, including geography, people and culture, but not much about their culture. In practice, it seems that the minority culture in Enshi did not leave much impression on Western

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missionaries and affect their methods of spreading the gospel. There was no evidence of conflict between different ethnic groups either in mission documents or in Chinese records. In the Western missionaries’ early records of their mission in Enshi, there was hardly any mention of their working methods according to local culture. The mission documents indicate that Belgian Franciscans in Enshi during late nineteenth and early twentieth century worked quite smoothly. This does not mean that there was no “culture shock”, maybe they just did not write down. Nonetheless, one can predict that culture was not a main factor that affects missionaries life. If the local culture’s influence on Western missionaries was weak in a mountainous region like Enshi, it can be predicted that the local culture’s influence on missionaries would be weaker in more open areas in the lower Yangtze River Valley. Therefore, it might be reasonable to say that in the nineteenth century, Chinese culture’s influence on Western missionaries’ work was not strong. This would further suggest that culture conflict was not a major cause during the anti-Christian movement in nineteenth century.

1.5 SECRET SOCIETIES

According to Chinese scholars Qin Baoqi and Meng Chao, secret societies in China were organizations made up of people from the lower society in order to obtain mutual help and self-protection. The government deemed them as religious heretics and bandits, and always tried to ban them. Under government persecution, their activities were always carried out in
secret, hence attaining the name “secret societies”. The impassable mountains and its remoteness from the central government made Enshi a shelter to secret societies. Secret societies had been seen in Enshi a long time ago. During the White Lotus (bailianjiao) Rebellion in the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820), Enshi was one of the oldest and most important bases of the White Lotus Society. In the nineteenth century, the most powerful secret society in Enshi was the Gelaohui (a secret society whose purpose was brotherhood and mutual help). According to Chinese scholar Cai Shaoqing, during the Qing dynasty, Gelaohui’s activity was not limited to Enshi, but in all the provinces at the Yangtze River Valley. The development of the Gelaohui in Enshi was closely related to its development in other provinces at the Yangtze River Valley.

About the origin of the Gelaohui, there is general agreement that it originated from the Guluhui (an armed organization in Sichuan province made up of immigrants from other provinces and local brigands during the Qianlong reign (1736-1795)). During the Jiaqing and the Daoguang reigns (1820-1850) it absorbed some religious elements of the White Lotus Teaching (bailianjiao), and gradually formed. However, the exact details of the Gelaohui’s origin remain unknown due to the lack of sources. What can be sure is that the name of Gelaohui started to appear in the early Xianfeng period (1850-1861). The earliest

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75 Qin Baoqi, Meng Chao, *Mimi jieshe yu qingdai shehui* [Secret societies and Qing society], (Tianjin: Tianjin guji Chubanshe, 2008), p.1.
76 Cai, *Zhongguo mimi shehui*, p.11.
78 Ibid., p.151.
79 Ibid., p.159.
record was found in the ninth year of the Xianfeng reign in Zeng Guofan’s regulations of the Hunan army: “Forming alliances in the army is inhibited: Those who joined Gelaohui will be executed!” The main difference between the Gelaohui and the Guluhui was that the former was more organized and its institutions were more complicated.

The Gelaohui was originally quite active in Sichuan province, and later spread to Hubei, Hunan and many other places in the Yangtze River valley. Its core region was part of Eastern Sichuan which was located at the upper Yangtze River. Its headquarters were based in the border region between Sichuan, Hubei and Shanxi. The most important reason for this was due to the weak government control in border regions. In the sixth year of the Tongzhi reign (1862-1874), many documents recorded that “the Gelaohui originated from Sichuan and Guizhou, and was spread to Huguang. Recently it becomes popular in all the provinces in southeast China”; and that the “Gelaohui is also called Gedihui. It originated from Sichuan, and first spread to Guizhou, later to Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan, Hubei and other places.”

After the Tongzhi reign, the Gelaohui began to expand to Hubei, Hunan and other places in the Yangtze River valley. During the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), the Gelaohui expanded from the Yangtze River valley to the north like Shanxi, Gansu and the north plain.

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81 Tan, Zhongguo mimi shehui, p.156.
What made the Gelaohui stronger was the dissolution of the Hunan Army (*Xiangjun*), which was a temporary army organized by Zeng Guofan on the bases of local militias in Hunan province in order to fight the Taiping army. There were already many Gelaohui members in the Hunan Army before its dissolution. Some people belonged to the Gelaohui before they were recruited to the army. After they were recruited, they spread it to other soldiers and the organization soon became stronger. After the dissolution of the Hunan army, many soldiers had no land to farm on and they did not want to return to become farmers, neither could they find jobs and most of them became vagabonds. Many joined the Gelaohui due to its propaganda of mutual aid.\(^8^4\) From Liu Zhongcheng (salt official in Yangzhou, later became Qing ambassador to Europe)’s explanation to the Emperor, how Gelaohui spread to the Hunan Army can be found clearly:

> During the recent two decades, Hunan always did its best to stabilize east and southeast China. By hiring soldiers and raising fund for the army, we were able to maintain prosperity in this province. Recently there was a flood here and many counties in the upper part are suffering from hunger and drought. However hundreds thousands of soldiers were dismissed after the suppression of Jiangnan rebellion, and they were unable to return to their farms. Previously after the suppression of religion bandits in Sichuan and Shaanxi province, it took us decades to make dismissed soldiers return to stable professions. This time the number of soldiers is about ten times more than that, and we are not as rich as that time. Many soldiers are not well attended this time. Due to this reason, the Gelaohui become popular.\(^8^5\)

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The second expansion of Gelaohui took place following the treaties signed between Western countries and the Qing government after the Second Opium War. After the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 and the Treaty of Beijing in 1860, Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Jiujiang and Hankou were opened to the Western powers. The Treaty of Yantai between Britain and China in 1876 opened Yichang and Wuhu to foreign powers. The entrance of Western steam ships to those port cities in the Yangtze River Valley facilitated the development of the Gelaohui.

In the competition with steam ships, traditional Chinese wooden ships were gradually replaced by steam ships, and thousands of boat men became unemployed. The Gelaohui had great attraction to those unemployed people as it guaranteed basic sustenance and mutual help to its members.

During this transformation, port cities Chongqing and Yichang were affected greatly, resulting in increased Gelaohui followers at these regions. Enshi is situated between Chongqing and Yichang, and it is right in the area of what is called the Three Gorges today. The Three Gorges was known as the worst part for a ship in the Yangtze River. A former captain sailing on the Yangtze River described the Three Gorges:

It has many high, steep mountain gorges and is full of twists and turns, some of them are so abrupt that you almost have to turn the ship ninety degrees. The river is very narrow, with the narrowest point being no more than forty meters in width. Also, there are about 2,000 rocks and reefs in the section.

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86 Wu Shanzhong, *Wanqing Gelaohui yanjiu* [Study on Gelaohui in Late Imperial period], pp.113-116.
Because of the bad conditions, ships heavily relied on boat pullers in order to pass through this region. What is more, from Sichuan to Hubei and Hunan, the boats could go with the water current, but from Hunan, or Hubei to Sichuan, the boat could only go with the help of boat pullers. When boats reached Sichuan, the boat pullers’ work was done and they were dismissed immediately. In this way many boat pullers congregated in Sichuan province.\textsuperscript{88} Those people were able to find some work when they were young or strong, but they were not able to make a living when they became old or weak. The weakest had to become beggars, and those who still had some strength joined the Gelaohui.\textsuperscript{89} Situated near the river, but difficult to access water transportation due to large maintains, Enshi became a shelter of the Gelaohui in this region.

The membership of the Gelaohui also changed accordingly with the evolving social environment during different periods. During the early period, the majority of the members were immigrants to Sichuan province. During the end of the Ming dynasty and the early Qing dynasty, there were decades of peasants’ rebellion coupled with brutal suppression by the Qing government in Sichuan, resulting in a rapid population decrease in Sichuan. After that the Qing government encouraged and organized immigration to Sichuan province. This movement started in the middle of the Kangxi reign; by the middle of the Qianlong period,

\textsuperscript{88} Qin Baoqi, \textit{Qingmo minchu mimi shehui de tuibian} [The evolution of Secret Societies during late Qing and early Republic China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 2004), pp.35-36.

\textsuperscript{89} Tan, \textit{Zhongguo mimi shehui}, p.154.
most of the land had been occupied. Thus late comers were not able to find enough land and had to become tenants or vagabonds. In order to make a living, they stayed in groups. Those groups were the earliest phase of the Gelaohui.  

After the Gelaohui’s penetration into the Hunan army, the majority of Gelaohui members were soldiers. Those who joined the Gelaohui not only included ordinary soldiers but also some low and middle level army officers. One announcement given by the Qing government said that “Recently the Gelaohui has penetrated into the army, and even army officers ranked in the second and third tiers joined.” Liu Kunyi (a leader of the Hunan Army, who later became imperial inspector) also pointed out that among the Gelaohui of the Yangtze river valley “more than half are disbanded soldiers”.  

The membership of the Gelaohui gained more varieties in the 1890s. There were people from the lower class, but also members from the upper class like landlords, merchants and others, even some foreigners joined the Gelaohui. Its members consisted of two kinds of people, the employed and the vagabonds. Numerically the employed like farmers, workers and

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landlords were more than the vagabonds. About their motives of joining Gelaohui, the Sichuan official newspaper (Sichuan guanbao) wrote that: “Members of rich families also joined Gelaohui in order to expand their personal network and expand their business.”

Although the Gelaohui’s membership gained more variety, there was clear division among different types of groups and people from different groups normally did not work together. For example, those outlaws stayed together, and those who were business-oriented stayed together.

Although some members of the Gelaohui in late nineteenth century were not anti-social, most unemployed members of the Gelaohui moved away from regular lifestyles, and stayed away from their original communities. There was a high unemployment rate among the Gelaohui members. In Cheng-yun Liu’s study, forty-four out of sixty-nine identified men among a group of one hundred and sixty-five members were either bankrupt or unemployed. In order to make a living, they “did everything including robbing, raping, gambling and excessive drinking,” or “ignited conflict by firing and robbing.” In the late Qing dynasty, the Gelaohui’s illicit behavior included opium smuggling, salt smuggling, opening casinos, selling people, kidnapping, robbing etc. Balfour wrote that, for the Gelaohui, “all strangers, of whatever nationality or sect, be they Tartars, Southerners, or Western Chinamen, alike are

94 Tan, Zhongguo mimi shenhui, p.182.
96 Ibid.
99 Liang Shangguo, “Lun chunchu jiaofei shiyi shu” [On bandits in Sichuan and Hubei], in Huang Chao Jing Shi Wen Bian, ed. He Changling (Taipei: Wenhui Chubnshe, 1972), vol.89.
the objects of their hate.”¹⁰⁰ The Hunan Gelaohui “stayed with groups of hundreds of people, robbed with foreign weapons. Those who suffered did not dare to inform officials, fearing that the Gelaohui would take revenge.”¹⁰¹

As such, the existence of the Gelaohui had a great effect on the society around it. As an organized group, the Gelaohui had an important role in the local society, and it was likely that sometimes it was more powerful than the local government. As a group of new comers with privileges, it is understandable that Western missionaries had to deal with the Gelaohui. Being clear on what was the Gelaohui, it will be easier to understand the relationship between the Gelaohui and Western missionaries, which will be discussed in later chapters.

CONCLUSION

Enshi was a mountainous region and seriously lacked transportation and communication facilities. This made Enshi a peripheral region with weak government control. The lack of productive resources and heavy burden of people facilitated disputes among them, which required mediation from the community. Weak government control and the need of mediation enabled the society of Enshi to develop its own rules and regulations.

¹⁰¹ “Lufu zouzhe”, No. 2728, Nongmin yundong lei mimi jieshe xiang [The category of Peasant Movement].
Although Enshi contained special minority cultures, it seems that the culture did not affect Western missionaries’ work much. After a long period of evolution, especially after the Qing government’s new minority administration policy of replacing hereditary local chiefs with non-hereditary appointees in 1735, indigenous minority cultures of Enshi became more polytheistic. Although people who lived in mountainous regions were reluctant to accept new things, the polytheistic beliefs of local people enabled people in Enshi to tolerate external religion and did not threaten the spread of Christianity. No evidence indicated that Western missionaries adopted special methods in accordance with the local customs among the ethnic minorities in Enshi to spread Christianity. The local culture’s influence on Western missionaries’ work in Enshi was helpful to understand the role that Chinese culture played during Western missionaries’ work in China. From Belgian Franciscans’ experience in Enshi, it seems that local culture was not a big obstacle to their work.

Although Western missionaries did not meet much resistance from local culture, the popularity of secret societies in Enshi greatly influenced their work. The Gelaohui was so strong in the nineteenth century that in some regions it was able to change the power structure of local society. The nature of the Gelaohui’s origin determined that its members were inclined to deviance. The confrontation of Western missionaries and the Gelaohui was inevitable. In the following parts of this thesis, the Gelaohui’s relationship with Western missionaries and their role in the anti-Christian movement will be analyzed in detail.
CHAPTER 2. MISSION HISTORY IN ENSHI

A Study of mission history in Enshi is important to understand the anti-Christian activities which occurred there. Since missionaries were active in other parts of Hubei province prior to entering Enshi, it is crucial to study mission activities in Hubei in general before down to Enshi in particular. This chapter surveys the mission history in Hubei. It begins by looking at two significant time: before 1724, and from 1724 to 1870. This is followed by studying mission history in Enshi between 1870 and 1930, and examining their activities in great detail.

Both Chinese and Western sources indicated that similar to many places in China, Franciscans in Enshi worked with much familiarity with local customs. They had worked in many other places of the province before they reached Enshi. Systematic mission institutions were set up, and mission work generally went on smoothly. They even showed their strong adaptability to the socio-political changes in China. It seems unlikely that the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenths century Enshi was due to missionaries’ lack of experience or their wrong working methods.

2.1 MISSIONARIES IN HUBEI BEFORE 1870

Before the establishment of South-West Hubei vicariate in 1870, Western missionaries had worked in many places in Hubei province. They arrived in the province during the Ming
dynasty, and went through the Imperial persecution between 1724 and 1844. Although in the mission history in China, their work during this period was just beginning and with many setbacks, their work was very important in a long run. Based on experiences provided by those earlier generations of Western missionaries, new generations of missionaries were able to work without much difficulty when they arrived in Enshi.

Western missionaries reached Hubei province during the Ming dynasty. By the sixteenth century, as Western countries began to explore Asia, the Vatican also started to send missionaries to the East. In 1557, the Portuguese established a permanent settlement in Macao and the Portuguese King Sebastian I (reigned 1557-1578) became the patron of the Church in the Far East.\(^\text{102}\) Macao became the earliest base of Westerners in China. As the Chinese mainland was not open to foreigners then, Western missionaries could only work in Macao. However, some missionaries made their way to mainland China and started to spread Christianity over there.

As Ming Emperors forbade Christianity, early Western missionaries could only enter mainland and work secretly. Some missionaries were helped by Chinese converts; some were assisted by Chinese officials who were most probably bribed. The first Western missionary who entered Hubei province was an Italian missionary Michael Ruggerius from the Society

\(^{102}\) HPA, *Hubei tianzhu jiao jiaoshi jilue* [Catholic History of Hubei], p.1.
of Jesus. In 1587, he entered mainland with the help of a Ming official in Canton, and established a base in Xiangyangfu, which located in the north of Hubei province. There was no detailed record of his activity in Hubei due to lack of sources. After 1636, another three missionaries Pierre de Spira, Rodericus de Figneredo and Antonius de Gouvea S.J entered Hubei province. Only Figneredo and Gouvea were known to work in Wuchangfu of Hubei province.

The spread of Christianity in places like Hubei was greatly affected by those missionaries who worked for the Emperor in Beijing. When they were favoured by the Emperor, they could help other missionaries’ work in China. Conversely, when they were disfavoured, they could bring persecution to all the missionaries in China. When Priest Johnnes Adam Schall von Bell was trusted by the Shunzhi Emperor (reigned 1638-1661) and became an official in the court, missionaries began to spread Christianity all over the country with his support. During this period Jacques Motel entered Wuchangfu in 1661 and built a mission centre in Jingzhoufu. However, in 1664, Chinese official Yang Guangxian was jealous of Joannes Adam Schall von Bell’s position as calendar officer, so he accused Von Bell and other Western missionaries of plotting a rebellion against the Qing Emperor. As a result, Von Bell was sentenced to death and the other twenty-five Western missionaries were arrested and

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103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Sint-Truiden, Praenotanda Historica Et Statistica.
sent to Canton. Those who were not arrested hid themselves in mainland. In 1665, Jacques Motel was also arrested and the mission work in Hubei met setback. In 1669, priest Ferdinand Verbiest won the favour of the Kangxi Emperor (reigned 1661-1722), so all the missionaries in detention in Canton were released. Motel went back to Hubei, and he started to make rapid progress in his mission work. In 1702 missionaries entered Yichang and built their residence there, which became the center of South-West Hubei vicariate later. Such progress in Hubei province continued until 1724 when the Yongzheng Emperor persecuted Christianity.

With the development of Christianity in China, the number of mission societies to Hubei also increased. Besides Portuguese Jesuits, Italian Franciscans and French Jesuits also arrived. Most earlier missionaries belonged to the Portuguese Jesuits and they worked under the patronage of Portugal. In order not to let the mission work fall completely in control of Portugal, the Vatican started to send Italian Franciscans to China in 1648 directly representing the Vatican. Among the Franciscans to China, three went to Huguang province (Hubei and Hunan), and were later joined by another two Franciscans. Those five missionaries worked in Hubei until 1724. Besides sending Franciscans to China, the Vatican also cooperated with France, hoping that the expansion of French power in the East could balance that of the Portugal. Because of this the French Jesuits began their mission activities

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107 Ibid.
108 Sint-Truiden, *Praenotanda Historica Et Statistica*.
in China. Six French Jesuits were sent to China in 1688. Three of them went to Huguang province.

The period from 1724 to 1844 witnessed many imperial persecutions of Christianity throughout China. Despite this, missionaries continued their work in China. This section discusses the imperial persecutions, continuation of mission work and how missionaries worked in the midst of religious persecution. These will help to understand the adaptability of the missionaries and factors which favoured them.

During the Kangxi reign, the Rites Controversy, which involved Jesuits on one side, and the Dominicans and Franciscans on the other, aggravated to become the controversy between the Vatican and the Qing Emperor. Consequently, this led to the Qing Emperors’ persecution of Christianity. In September 1720, the Kangxi Emperor declared that Chinese citizens should not obey orders from Rome due to the condemnation of the Chinese Rites promulgated by Pope Clement XI. All the missionaries in China with the exception of the Jesuit scholars working in the imperial court were also ordered to leave China. The


\[111\] The Rites Controversy was a dispute between different catholic orders from the 1630s to the early 18th century. The core argument was about whether Chinese folk religion rites and offerings to the emperor constituted idolatry.

propagation of the Christian faith was strictly forbidden.\textsuperscript{113} While the Kangxi Emperor’s order was never carried out in practice, the missionaries’ work became more difficult and they were intermittently persecuted by the Chinese authorities.\textsuperscript{114}

Both the Kangxi Emperor (reigned 1661-1722) and the Yongzheng Emperor (reigned 1722-1735) restricted mission activities in China. However, only the Yongzheng Emperor ordered formal national persecution against Christianity. The Yongzheng Emperor disliked the missionaries mainly because some of them had questioned his claim to the throne and even took the side of his brothers. In February 1724, a year after he ascended the throne, he announced that all mission activities were illegal.\textsuperscript{115} Throughout China, Chinese Christians were ordered to renounce their faith and Church properties were confiscated. Shortly after that all the missionaries were first departed to Canton then to Macao, and were ordered that they should never return.\textsuperscript{116} Following the Yongzheng Emperor’s Imperial order, persecution against missionaries began to spread all over the country. After the formal decree of persecution from the Yongzheng Emperor, his successor, the Qianlong Emperor (reigned 1736-1795), also ordered the national search for Western missionaries and Chinese

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{113} “Kangxi yu luoma shichen guanxi wenshu” [Documents on the relationship between the Kangxi Emperor and Roman envoy], in Wenxian zong bian (Beijing, 1932), 14:15 a-15b.
\textsuperscript{115} Wiest, \textit{Catholic activities in Kwangtung Province and Chinese Reponses, 1848-1885}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{116} (Qing) Jueluoledehong et al. \textit{Qingshizong shilu} [Veritable records of Qing shizong], vol.14 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986).
\end{flushleft}
Christians. Nevertheless, the Qianlong Emperor’s persecution against Christianity was ineffective.\textsuperscript{117}

Despite the religious persecution, Western missionaries still stayed in China. At the same time France, Vatican and Portugal continued their competition of their influence in Asia. Although the persecution against missionaries during these periods was intense, many missionaries still stayed inland even though the situation was very dangerous to them. Some of them remained active in Hubei province. Not only those in the interiors did not retreat, some new comers entered the inland secretly.\textsuperscript{118} For example, Portuguese missionary Louis de Sequeira came to Wuchangfu in 1726 and stayed there for six years. Later he moved to the south and continued to stay in China for twenty years.\textsuperscript{119}

Not only missionaries continued to work in China, the Vatican also adjusted some of its mission policies in China. At this time, the Vatican’s mission policies in Asia was closely affected by the power struggles in Europe. One of the policies was sending the French Lazarists to China to replace the Society of Jesus, which was a result of the competition between France and Portugal.\textsuperscript{120} The first two Lazarists in Hubei were M. Raymond Aubin and Louis Pesné, both arrived Hubei in 1791 and worked mainly in Chayuangou in the north

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{117} Bouvet, \textit{Qing kang qian liang di yu tianzhujiao chuanjiao shi}, p.129.  \\
\textsuperscript{118} Noel Gubbels, \textit{Trois Siecles d’Apostolat}, p.119.  \\
\textsuperscript{119} HPA, \textit{Hubei tianzhujiao jiaoshi jilue}, p.9.  \\
\textsuperscript{120} Latourette, \textit{A history of Christian Missions in China}, p.168.  
\end{flushright}
of Hubei province. The last three Lazarists who worked in Hubei province were Francois Alexis Rameaux, Jean Henri Baldus and Jean Gabriel Perboyre. Among them Baldus reached Hubei in 1834 and left to Hunan in 1844, Perboyre reached Hubei in 1835 and died in 1840. Another adjustment of mission policy was the division of China into twelve dioceses in 1696, so missionaries’ work in China became more focused and organized. Hubei and Hunan provinces together became Huguang diocese.

One important result of the Vatican’s adjustment of policies was that Hubei province got its own Bishop. From 1696 to 1856 Hubei and Hunan province shared one Bishop. In 1856 the Vatican divided Huguang into Hubei and Hunan dioceses, and appointed Franciscan Aloysius C. Spelta as the Bishop of Hubei province. He worked there until 1862 when he died in Hubei. After Spelta, Eustachius Zanoli became the second Bishop of Hubei province and he arrived there in 1862. In 1867 and 1869 when Zanoli visited Rome he suggested twice to the Pope that Hubei be divided into three vicariates, which would be more convenient for their mission work there. This suggestion became reality in 1870 when Pope Pius IX divided Hubei into East Hubei, North-West Hubei and South-West Hubei vicariates.

121 Cheng Hede, *Hubei xiangyunshu jiaoshi jilue* [Catholic history of North-West Hubei] (Shanghai: Shishan wan Chubanshe, 192, p.6.
123 Ibid., pp.19-20.
124 Ibid., p.24.
Despite the intense persecution, missionaries were able to stay in China and make progress. This was mainly due to three reasons. Firstly, during persecution, some Chinese officials assisted Western missionaries’ work directly or indirectly. Directly, some of them helped missionaries to enter China and provided protection to them. Indirectly some Chinese officials did not follow central government’s policy of banning Christianity. Portuguese missionary Godefroid recorded in his diary about how a Chinese official helped him in Huguang province during persecution.\textsuperscript{125} From 1736 to 1749 the viceroy of Huguang province was De Pei from Qing royal family. He not only supported missionaries, but also hired missionaries as his consultant. After 1749 De Pei returned to Beijing, and the new viceroy of Huguang province was extremely hostile to missionaries. Many Western missionaries had to escape to countryside.\textsuperscript{126} In many places especially the countryside where were remote from the central government, missionaries could safely stay without being arrested. In such places missionaries could work easily if they gave bribes to local officials and built good relationship with them.\textsuperscript{127}

Secondly, missionaries changed their working methods. Most of them worked during night instead of daytime. Some lived at the home of Chinese Christians and some lived on a boat in order to reduce their time of exposing to others. For example, when Francois Jean Noëlas worked in Hubei in 1706, he always went around by boat. Besides Jingzhou which was the center of his work, Noëlas was also very active in Xiangyang, Anlu, and Yichang. Francois

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p.15.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
called his work sphere as “Holland vicariate” because there were many rivers and lakes.\textsuperscript{128} Priest Godefroid stayed about eight months on the boat every year. He started to work at 11pm, and went back to his boat at 4am.\textsuperscript{129}

Thirdly, protection from mission scholars who worked for the Emperor helped the spread of Christianity. Although missionaries were forbidden to work in other provinces during this period, Beijing itself was still open to them as some of them still worked for the Emperor. These missionaries lived in their Churches, and spread their religion whenever possible.\textsuperscript{130} While missionaries in other provinces were persecuted, those in Beijing were well protected by the Emperor.\textsuperscript{131} Those priests who worked for the Emperor provided much support for those who worked in other provinces. For example, the Catholic community in Mopanshan of north Hubei province was built with money sent from Beijing by Dominique Parrenin.\textsuperscript{132}

\section*{2.2 MISSION HISTORY IN ENSHI FROM 1870 TO 1900}

The establishment of South-West Hubei vicariate was a crucial event in the mission history of Enshi. Belgian Franciscans were assigned to Enshi in 1870. They soon spread Christianity to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p.6.
\item Ibid., p.14.
\item Jiang, Mingqing jian zai hua de tianzhujiao yesu huishi, p.84.
\item Kang Zhijie, “Guanyu Hubei Mopanshan Shenquan shehui de kaocha” [An Investigation of a Divine Power Community in Mopanshan Mountain in Hubei Province], \textit{Shijie Zongjiao yanjiu} [Study on world religion], 3 (2004), p.84.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
most parts of this area. This was the direct result of the experience they had gained from their
previous mission work in other parts of China. It was also the result of French government’s
negotiations with the Qing government. 133 This section discusses these factors further.

With the development of missions in China, the division among different mission societies
became clearer in 1870. For a long time missionaries of various religious orders shared one
region. In each region there were different societies of the same religious order. 134 In practice,
however, each mission society only possessed a small part of land in one region. The
Franciscans worked in five provinces: Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong, Hunan and Hubei. Pope
Pius IX accepted Bishop Zanoli’s suggestion and divided Hubei province into three parts in
1870: North-West Hubei, East Hubei and South-West Hubei. 135 The division among different
Franciscan societies also became clearer after that. For instance, Shanxi was the territory of
the Dutch Franciscans while South-West Hubei belonged to the Belgian Franciscans. The
majority of the East Hubei Vicariate was under control of Franciscans from the Venice
province of Italy. Those who worked in North-West Hubei vicariate were mainly from
Florence province of Toscana. 136

133 In the 1960s, French government conducted a series of negotiations with the Qing
government regarding missionaries’ legal right to purchase properties in China and Chinese
people’s freedom to convert to Christianity. Those negotiation documents could be found in
Convention Berthemy: Régant L’acquisition de terrains et de maisons par les missions
Catholiques dans l’intérieur de la Chine, KADOC archive center in Catholic University of
Leuven.
134 Sint-Truiden, Missions Franciscans de Chine.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
The mission history in Enshi was greatly affected by the mission work in Jingzhoufu and Yichangfu, which were the two oldest mission centres in the South-West Hubei vicariate, and it was from these two vicariates that Christianity spread to Enshi. Jacques Motel built a small Church in Jingzhou in 1663. In order to suppress Wu Sangui’s rebellion, the Kangxi Emperor sent a royal troop to Jingzhoufu in 1683. In the troop there were some Chinese Christians and some Western missionaries who worked for the Emperor (mainly producing weapons); Christianity spread in Jingzhoufu rapidly after that. At the end of the Kangxi reign, there were many Chinese Christians in most places of Hubei province except Shinanfu. In Yichang, Julien Placide Herieu built a Church in 1703. When Francois Jean Noëlas worked

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137 Sint-Truiden, this map was hand-drawn by early Belgium priests. Now it hangs up on the wall in the archive room where priest Victorin Delbrouck’s coffin is kept.
on a boat, he also took care of Yichang. Churches were built in many counties such as Danzishan, Fengshangang and Xiaofengya in 1725.  

From 1587 to 1870, the only region in today’s Enshi that had Western missionaries was Badong. In Badong, which at that time did not belong to Shinanfu, missionaries had worked there before 1870. It is not clear which year Christianity reached Badong, but there is a record that the first Church in Badong was built in 1730 at Xishahe.  

From a Church gazetteer of Danzishan, it is clear that a Chinese priest Cai Ruoxiang worked many years in Xishahe of Badong, and left during the persecution of 1784. Another Chinese priest named Zhao worked there between 1751 and 1778, and was buried in Xishahe. Considering that normally missionaries built a Church whenever possible after they arrived in a new place, it can be assumed that, missionaries reached Badong around 1730 and continued their work since then. Missionaries' official records also showed that it was during the persecution period that missionaries spread their work to Changyang, Badong, Danzishan, Shekoushan, Xishahe, Xiaofengya, and Xiaomaitian.

The religion of Christianity in Shinanfu started only in 1837 from Lichuan County. In that year Christianity was introduced to Zhiluo of Lichuan county by two merchants named Shang.

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139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Changyang Archive, *Danzishan tangkou zhi* [Church gazetteer of Danzishan], p.22.
142 Changyang Archive, *Danzishan tangkou zhi*, p.22.
143 Sint-Truiden, *Praenotanda Historica Et Statistica*. 
and He. They lived in a local family. The hosts were curious when they saw those merchants praying. These merchants introduced Christianity to their hosts and encouraged them to be converted. One of the hosts Xiang Yingrong was converted. The Xiang lineage was the strongest lineage in that village. Many of its members followed Xiang Yingrong and got converted. Starting from this family, Christianity spread to their relatives and neighbours. Seeing the prosperity of Christianity there, these merchants reported the situation to Bishop Theotimus Verhaeghen of South-West Hubei Vicariate when they returned to Yichang. As a result, Bishop Theotimus sent a priest to Zhiluo to take charge of the converts. This priest first lived at home of Xiang Yingrong. Later he purchased some land from the Xiang lineage. He built a Church and an orphanage, and converted more people in that region. As the mission work expanded to other places, Theotimus sent another two priests there.  

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144 CCE, *Lichuan tianzhujiao dashiji* [Major events in Catholic history of Lichuan].
Starting from Badong in the east and Lichuan in the west, Franciscans spread Christianity to most parts of Enshi. In 1888 two Belgium priests and one Chinese priest went to Yaqueshui County of Enshi, and built a Church there later. In 1889 priests Theotimus Verhaeghen and Fredericus Verhaeghen reached Shazidi. In 1907 the Dutch priest Angelus Timmers arrived in the capital city of Shinan, and also built a Church there. Since then missionaries had entered the interior of Shinanfu. In 1893, missionaries came to Jianshi County from Badong. The main Churches in Jianshi included: Chengguan Church, Jingyanghe Church, Guandian Church, Mazhaping Church and Wangping.

2.3 MISSION HISTORY IN ENSHI FROM 1900 TO 1930

In the 1890s there were two major anti-Christian movements in China: the Gelaohui-led anti-Christian movement in south China and the Boxers-led anti-Christian movement in Shandong at the end of the decade. South China’s anti-Christian movement was centered in the Yangtze River Valley. There were some anti-Christian incidents in different provinces before 1891, but the Yangtze anti-Christian movement in 1891 was a highly organized, cross provincial movement against Christianity. In both the Gelaohui’s and Boxers’ anti-Christian movement,

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145 Sint-Truiden, *De Bloedige Missie Van Ichang In China*.
missionaries and Chinese Christians were massacred. Churches, mission buildings, Christians’ houses were burned. Yet the Boxers in Shandong were much more associated with the Qing government, largely due to the foreign occupation of Beijing. The Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities in southern China will be discussed and analyzed in chapter four.

Although Christianity in China suffered great destruction during the anti-Christian movement, the persecution did not bring missionaries’ work in Hubei to an end. Conversely the death of missionaries, especially Victorin Delbrouck, became the motive for them, and they gained more Chinese converts. This was probably because Chinese began to realize that Christianity might have merit when they saw Western missionaries die for it. This phenomenon was common all over China. In 1907 priest Quirin Henfling wrote to his superior that since 1900 there had been some changes in the mission centre in Jingzhou because of the death of young priests and other martyrs. New churches, chapels, residences and orphanages were built, although he was not sure how many. Neophytes, catechumens, aspirants also increased to large numbers. South-West Hubei had become the most prosperous vicariate for Franciscans. There was huge enthusiasm among these missionaries. Priest Hubertus described his working schedule on a Christmas as following:

On 24 December I was in confessional from 7 to 12:30. I was in confessional again from 2 to 11pm. I went to bed at 2am. At 6am next morning I started to work again until 10 am. I also went from Danzishan to Chechoudi, the residence of priest Augustinians, which took 12 to 13 hours.  

148 Sint-Truiden, letter from Father Quirin Hengling to Provincial Bishop, 18 December 1907.
149 Sint-Truiden, Brieven van Pater Hubertus to Marinus, 27 December 1903.
Along with growing enthusiasm toward Christianity, some new methods were adopted. Firstly, security measures were enhanced to protect the mission residence. In Danzishan their residence was built on a high, rocky place, which made missionaries feel that there was nowhere safer than their residence. Besides choosing good locations to build their church and mission residence, more weapons were prepared and were always ready for use. Military trainings were offered to Chinese Christians by missionaries and regular small troops were kept in each major church. Secondly, investigations were carried out to find the causes of the persecution. Vicar Apostolic also visited their converts frequently.

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150 Sint-Truiden, *Brieven van Pater Hubertus*, 23 February 1900 from Danzishan.
151 Changyang Archive, *danzishan tangkou zhi* [Church gazetteer of Danzishan], p.55.
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<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>33,881</td>
<td>3,470</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>34,158</td>
<td>2,795</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>34,194</td>
<td>1,327</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>30,411</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Mission statistics of South-West Hubei vicariate between 1901 and 1930

The table above shows that the number of Chinese converts increased quite steadily, with the biggest jump after 1911. This was partially because the Western missionaries adjusted their working methods after the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century. They restricted their interference in Chinese lawsuits and politics, and tried to improve their images.

among Chinese people, which helped them win over more Chinese converts. More importantly, the government of the Republic of China advocated religious freedom in the entire country. This greatly favoured the spread of Christianity.\textsuperscript{153} Such rapid increases continued until 1920. The rapid rise of the Chinese Communist Party since 1920 and its dislike of Christianity slowed down the progress made by Western missionaries, especially during the period of 1922 to 1926.\textsuperscript{154} Although the increasing pace slowed down, the increments did not stop until 1930.

The new situation for Christianity in China was not only shown in the figures. Christian missionaries also took part in the modernization and the social movements in early twentieth century China. In order to work more conveniently, many missionaries kept queues like Chinese men during the Qing period. After the 1911 Revolution, many of them cut their queues as requested by the new Republic government. In addition, many missionaries also took part in the modernization projects such as building the railroads connecting Beijing and Yichang.\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{153} Wang Jingping, “Xinhai geming shiqi jidujiaohui zai zhongguo de fazhan yu Sun Zhongshan de zongjiao zhengce” [The development of Christianity in China during the 1911 Revolution and Sun Zhongshan’s religious policy], \textit{Journal of Jiaozuo Institute of Technology (Social Sciences)} 2, 3(September 2001), p.11.


\textsuperscript{155} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Brieven van Pater Hubertus}, 24th October 1910.
\end{flushright}
In 1924, thirty-three years after South-West Hubei became an Apostolic Vicariate, this region became Yichang Vicariate. In 1933 American Julius Edward Dillon brought a group of missionaries to South-West Hubei and established their base there. Later Vatican transferred some counties in West Hubei to American Franciscans.\textsuperscript{156} In 1938 the Vatican announced that Enshi was entrusted to Chinese priests.

2.4 MISSION ACTIVITY IN ENSHI

With their long work experience in other parts of China, Belgian Franciscans established a good infrastructure in Enshi since they were assigned there. Infrastructure and congregations were set up. Financially their work was supported by both Western countries and Chinese converts. Through these organizations and facilities, Western missionaries were able to contact with different groups of people in the local society closely. This provided opportunity for them to be involved in the society. A study of missionaries’ involvement in the local community is useful to understand the anti-Christian movement.

The church organization in Enshi was similar to the Roman Catholics’ church organization in all China. It included one central cathedral in Yichang city which was built in 1863. The central cathedral’s entire property included one central cathedral, the residence of missionaries, one major seminary, and one mission school. The residence of the Bishop of

\textsuperscript{156} HPA, \textit{Hubei Tianzhujiao jiaoshi jilue}, p.43.
South-West Hubei vicariate was also situated there.\textsuperscript{157} Besides the Bishop, other members in the main residence included Vicar General, secretary of the Bishop, principle of the seminary, one priest who took charge of the finance of the entire vicariate, and other assistants.\textsuperscript{158} Below the vicariate centre, there was one central church in each district. In the central church there was one priest who took charge of the mission work of the entire district. There were also one chapel and necessary accommodation for the priest in charge at each Christian community. This community was not necessarily be one county. Sometimes there was more than one minor church at one Christian community. Under each Christian community there were one or more congregation centres.\textsuperscript{159} There were priests in all central and minor churches, but in congregation centres there was no priest but only congregation leaders chosen from lay Chinese Catholics. Most religious activities in each Christian community were conducted in the local chapel.

\textsuperscript{157} Enshi Archive, \textit{Lichuan zongjiao diaocha baogao}, 1951.
\textsuperscript{158} CCE, \textit{Yichang jiaoqu jianbiao} [Simple timetable of Yichang Vicariate], p.9.
\textsuperscript{159} Enshi Archive, \textit{Lichuan zongjiao diaocha baogao}, 1951.
Figure 1. Church organization in Lichuan County. The Churches at the third level from the top were all the minor Churches under Hualiling central Church. The places at the last level were congregation centres.

Mission schools were established to impart Christian knowledge and to protect the children of Christian communities from the non-Christians. The first school in the Hualiling Church of Lichuan county was established in 1885. The teachers were selected among the local Christians, catechists and missionaries, and sometimes from the local scholars. They taught Latin language, philosophy and theology. Most of those schools only offered primary education, and there were only a few colleges. There was almost no attempt to introduce Western secular learning. Although these schools were originally not designed for non-Christians, they were the basis of modern schools in Enshi. Many mission schools were later transformed into secular schools. For example, in 1911, based on the Church school in Hualiling, a Church primary school was established, whose term was four years and both Catholic and non-Catholic students were recruited. They taught classes regulated by the Republic government to all the students. Catholic children were required to learn Christian knowledge and Latin language during the mornings, evenings and Sundays. Many facilities such as tables, instruments and lights in this school were donated by Western missionaries.

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160 Ibid.
162 Enshi Archive, Lichuan zongjiao diaocha baogao,1951.
163 CCE, Lichuan tianzhujiao dashiji.
165 Enshi Archive, Lichuan zongjiao diaocha baogao,1951.
Besides such schools, there were also major and minor seminaries. The major seminary was founded in 1876 in Danizishan and was later moved to Yichang. This major seminary trained many Chinese priests. The course was limited to Latin language, theology and Chinese language at the beginning; history, geography, music, painting and other modules were gradually added. Students in all Church schools were eligible to enter seminary after they completed their primary education.

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166 Sint-Truiden, photo album of Franciscans in South-West Hubei Vicariate.
167 CCE, Lichuan tianzhujiao dashiji.
Orphanages were also important to missionaries’ work. However, they only accepted girls. This was because during the Qing dynasty, many baby girls were abandoned by their parents together with a handful of disabled boys. Another reason was that baby girls could help to gain more converts. Once these girls grew up, the men who wanted to marry them had to become Catholics. Orphanages were taken care of by nuns of the Franciscan missionaries of Mary. All the children were baptized soon after they entered the Church and were given Christian names. When they were about four or five years old, they were taught to read and do simple mathematics. They were taught Christian knowledge when they reached six or seven. Besides those courses, they also learnt to sing (mainly Christian songs) and dance. When they reached ten years old, they started to perform basic chores such as cleaning the floor, washing clothes and chopping firewood. Children older than fifteen were assigned more complex work including tailoring, embroidering and weaving. They produced products such as children clothes, embroidered pillows, table cloths and religious clothing. Those products were sold abroad by nuns and priests.  

This provided a means through which the orphanages were able to self-sustain. When those orphans became adults, some chose to become nun and serve the church for their entire life, others will get married. Marriages were arranged by the church. They could only marry either Christians or men who were willing to be converted. In this way, the missionaries were able to gain more Chinese converts. Some girls became nuns and served the church for their entire life.

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168 CCE, Yichang jiaoqu jianbiao, p.19.
169 CCE, Yichang jiaoqu jianbiao, p.19.
Most of the time, the living condition of Church orphanages was not good. The most serious problem was epidemics. During the late Qing period, the outbreak of various epidemic diseases caused many deaths in the orphanages due to lack of. Such deaths brought more problems to churches because there was much misunderstanding between Christians and non-Christians. Many Chinese believed the rumour that the missionaries killed Chinese orphans because they needed their livers and eyes to make medicine. These rumours ignited many anti-Christian incidents in the South-West Hubei vicariate. For example, in September 1891, when one Chinese Christian carried four children on the street of Wuxue city of Hubei.

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170 Sint-Truiden, photo album of Franciscans in South-West Hubei Vicariate.
province, some people rumoured that those kids would be cooked when they reached the Church. This rumour triggered much anger among local people. They rushed into the local Catholic Church, burned one level of the Church and killed two foreign missionaries.\(^{172}\)

One of the major contributions by the foreign missionaries in Enshi was the introduction of Western medicine. Before their arrival there was only Chinese traditional medicine in Enshi, and many diseases could not be cured. The missionaries brought along Western medicine with them and opened several hospitals and clinics. The clinics not only provided medical treatment to Chinese converts but also to non-converts.\(^{173}\) This was another way for missionaries to evangelize to the non-Christians. Like the Church schools, most of the Church hospitals and clinics later became the main healthcare centres in the region. In fact, they were the pioneers of modern hospitals in many places.

In South-West Hubei vicariate, there were three kinds of mission congregations, Franciscan missionaries of St. Francis of Assisi, Franciscan missionaries of Mary and the Holy Child Association. After 1870, all the missionaries in the South-West Hubei vicariate belonged to Franciscan missionaries of St. Francis of Assisi. This vicariate was officially entrusted to the Belgian Franciscans in 1891, and it was converted into an apostolic vicariate.\(^{174}\) This order of Franciscans was considered by Pope Leo XIII (reigned 1878-1903) as the most efficient order

\(^{172}\) Ibid., vol 5, No.2, pp.1115-1117.
in gaining converts.\textsuperscript{175} The Franciscan missionaries of Mary arrived in Yichang in 1889 to assist the missionaries. Their work included governing Church schools, hospitals, clinics and orphanages; teaching Christian knowledge to catechumens; and regulating new converts. The Holy Child Association was founded in 1907 in Jingzhou by Bishop Modestus Everaerts. The purpose of this mission was to train Chinese nuns and help missionaries’ work in orphanages, clinics and teaching new converts.\textsuperscript{176}

In each region, there were also different organizations among Chinese Catholics. For example, in Jianshi County there were nine societies including Society of Our Lady at Getangba of Jingyang, Society of S. Joseph at Zaoshuxiang of Jingyang, and Society of Teresa at Shuijingwan of Yaqueshui.\textsuperscript{177} Those societies were organized according to the geographical divisions, and each society included all Catholics who lived at the same region. Other kinds of organizations also appeared after 1920.\textsuperscript{178}

According to the church financial records between 1881 and 1927, most financial support for the mission work in Enshi came directly from the Vatican and from donations collected in Belgium, the Netherlands and sometimes France.\textsuperscript{179} There was no detailed record on how much money the missionaries received from abroad. However, it is likely that they could

\textsuperscript{175} Sint-Truiden, “Deuxième Congrès ou Tiers Ordre Franciscain qui se tiendra à Bruxelles les 6, 7 et 8 Aout 1899”, from Messager de Saint-François D’Assise, pp.370-371.
\textsuperscript{176} CCE, Yichang jiaoqu jianbiao, pp.12-14.
\textsuperscript{177} Enshi Archive, Jianshixian tianzhu jiao de jiben qingkuang, 1955.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} CCE, Yichang jiaoqu jianbiao, p.20.
occasionally receive a huge sum of money. A record in Danzishan noted that a priest once brought a large sum of money from Europe to build a church in the area. This earned him the title of "Father Millionaire". In China, the financial incomes included Chinese government’s compensation for anti-Christian incidents as well as the monetary donations from Chinese Christians.

Compensation from the Chinese government was a great help to missionaries’ work. After each persecution, missionaries would ask for compensation for the damage. After the Second Opium War, Chinese government was demanded to return all Church properties. After the Boxer uprising, Chinese government gave compensation to missionaries. The Qing government almost always met their demand in order to maintain peaceful relationships with foreign powers and reduce troubles with missionaries. What the Qing government compensated to missionaries was normally more than the real loss. For instance, with the compensation received from the 1891 anti-Christian incident of Yichang, Bishop Benjamin Christiaens Franciscus was able to purchase a large piece of land and built orphanages, hospitals and clinics.

Missionaries also started to seek donations from Chinese Christians. In the earlier period, whenever missionaries went to visit Chinese converts, they lived in house of Chinese

180 Changyang Archive, danzishan tangkou zhi.
183 HPA. Hubei Tianzhujiao jiaoshi jilue, p.33.
converts. After they built Churches, they lived in the Churches. As missionaries were not supposed to work on the farm, their source of food became a problem. During Christian festivals Chinese converts would go to Church and would consume something there. This gradually became a burden to the priests, so they created a new policy of “life insurance” for priests. According to this policy, each Catholic family should provide some amount of corn to the local Church every year.\footnote{This policy was first created at Danzishan, where the main crop of local peasants was corn. It is possible that in other regions where the main crop was different, the crop they provided was also different.} Money for firewood and candles (\textit{chai la qian}) was a policy firstly created by Bishop Alexius M. Filippi in 1854, and later revised by Father Basilius Papin and Father Theotimus Verhaeghen. According to this policy, each Chinese catholic family should contribute eighty wen\footnote{Wen was one kind of base units of Chinese currencies during the Qing dynasty.} copper money to the Church each year. Besides those two policies, there were also school fund, ceremonial fund, refugee relief fund, seminary fund, orphanage fund and so on. Most policies were made between 1858 and 1889. As soon as they were created, all the Chinese Catholics had to pay every year. All those “contributions” together was a big burden to Chinese peasants. Bishop Alexius M. Filippi in his letter to superior in 1860 suggested that they should not give so much financial pressure to their Chinese Catholics.\footnote{Changyang Archive, \textit{danzishan tangkou zhi}, p.34; Changyang Archive, Tianzhujiao zai shiguntang de chuanjiao shi [Catholic history of Shiguntang].} Later the seminary fund and orphanage fund were cancelled.\footnote{HPA. \textit{Hubei tianzhujiao jiaoshi jilue}, p.34.
CONCLUSION

Before the missionaries reached Enshi, they already worked in many places in Hubei province. Since their arrival in Enshi during the eighteenth century, they had gained much experience by the nineteenth century. The establishment of the South-West Hubei vicariate in 1870 was a crucial event in the mission history of Enshi because Franciscans were allocated to Enshi, and after that their work became more focused than before. They soon spread Christianity to most parts of Enshi and built a systematic mission organization there.

Belgian Franciscans’ history in Enshi showed their adaptability to the culture and the changing environment. Western missionaries’ long history in Hubei province provided enough experience for their later work. Having come through persecutions and changes of political environment in China, they had gained experience in adjusting mission policies according to different situations. Although they reached Enshi a bit late compared with many other places in the province, they were able to establish systematic infrastructure in the region once they arrived, which enabled them to contact the local society closely and to work in the local way. This was possibly one of the most important reasons for the fact that there was hardly any record about conflict caused by culture differences. When analyzing the anti-Christian movement in the region in the late nineteenth century, it seems unconvincing to attribute the cause of the movement to Western missionaries’ lack of work experience or their offence to local culture, which made it necessary to think of this issue from other
perspectives. The following chapters will discuss other important topics related to the anti-Christian movement, on the basis of the conclusions from this chapter.
CHAPTER 3. MISSIONARIES AND LOCAL SOCIETY

BETWEEN 1890 AND 1930

The last chapter shows that Western missionaries were experienced at dealing with the local culture due to their long history in the province. Although this would be helpful to missionaries’ work in the region, this could not guarantee a smooth life. What was more, even in the same society there was obvious social stratification. Examining the relationship between missionaries and different groups of people in the local society is helpful to understand missionaries’ position in the society and possible sources of conflict between Western missionaries and Chinese.

In most part of South-West Hubei province, the influence of the West was not profound in the late nineteenth century. For most of the time Western missionaries were the only group of foreigners there. Foreign missionaries had different meaning to different groups of people. For Chinese officials, although missionaries were seen as a group of people who brought troubles to them, they still had to protect them due to the unequal treaties in favour of Western missionaries. However, for Chinese Christians, missionaries were their patron and mentors. As for the secret societies, missionaries were regarded as their competitors and occasionally, their collaborators. In general, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, missionaries in Enshi were able to maintain peaceful working relationships with the different groups of people with exception of secret society the Gelaohui.
3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSIONARIES AND CHINESE CONVERTS

Missionaries in Enshi generally had peaceful relationship with Chinese Christians. The methods missionaries used to convert Chinese in Enshi were similar to their methods in other places of the country. Missionaries’ methods of gaining Chinese converts and Chinese commoners’ motives for joining Christianity determined that most Chinese converts were from the lower class of Chinese society. Despite occasional disputes between Western missionaries and Chinese Christians, in general there was no big problem between them.

Belgian Franciscans in Enshi worked mainly in the countryside and their main attraction to Chinese to convert to Christianity were material benefits and missionaries’ extra territorial privileges. Missionaries’ reports showed these motivations. Theotime recorded that in Shazidi, bandits (mainly the Gelaohui) were very strong, and many people wanted to join Christianity in order to get rid of bandits’ harassment. Indeed, the missionaries’ privileges were great attractions to the local Chinese commoners. For instance, a man named Zhao Zhongxian was involved in a lawsuit in Wuhan; Zhao won the case with help of priest Theotime Verhaeghen, who then worked in Yichang Catholic Church. After Zhao returned to his home in Jianshi county of Shisanfu, he assisted priest Verhaeghen to build a church in

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that district and brought Christianity over there.\textsuperscript{189} A research conducted by the Chinese government in the 1950s also suggested that many Chinese converted to Christianity in order to gain some benefit from Western priests, either from material relief or from privileges derived from the extra-territorial rights possessed by the missionaries.\textsuperscript{190} These motivations indirectly revealed that most Chinese converts were from the lower class of Chinese society.

The missionaries sometimes saw unexpected opportunities, such as during natural disasters and internal war, as a golden opportunity to gain Chinese converts. During such times, missionaries used their privileges to help those needy non-Christians. In return, Chinese converted to Christianity. In South-West Hubei vicariate where many places are situated along the Yangtze River valley, drought and flood frequently hit people.\textsuperscript{191} Each time after a disaster, thousands of people would become refugees. The missionaries noticed that “traditionally Chinese women were busy with house work and they were considered inferior to men, thus they were prevented from receiving education”.\textsuperscript{192} However, natural disasters made something difficult during normal times possible for the missionaries. With the outbreak of disasters, missionaries would choose one or two women from each family, and let them stay in the catechumen with their children for two to four months. During the stay, they received food, shelter and religious instructions at the same time. Their husbands, fathers and

\textsuperscript{189} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Le Messager de Satint-Francois d’Assise}, 1st February, 1899, pp.224-225.
\textsuperscript{190} Enshi Archive, \textit{Enshi xian jiaohui qingkuang diaocha baogao} [Report of the religion of Catholicism in Enshi], 1955.
\textsuperscript{191} It could be seen in Dashiji [Record of significant events], in Hubei Sheng Enshi Tujia zu Miao zu Zizhizhou difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, \textit{Enshi Zhou Zhi} [Gazetteer of Enshi prefecture] (Wuhan : Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, 1998).
\textsuperscript{192} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Le Messager de Saint-Francois d’Assise}, unknown date.
sons would reunite with them after a certain period of time. Missionaries proudly claimed that the males in the family found the women more educated when the family reunited, and that Christianity conquered the family even though they did not understand it.

The missionaries gained many Manchu converts after helping them in the 1911 Revolution which led to the end of the Manchu dynasty. During the revolution, the Nationalists occupied Wuhan and other cities in the Yangtze River Valley. Only Jingzhou managed to continue the resistance with about 27,000 Manchu soldiers dispatched from the capital. The nationalist soldiers set fire to the city of Jingzhou and attacked them with cannon. The Manchu soldiers were badly defeated and many even committed suicide. The Catholic missionaries had worked for a long time trying to establish good relationships with the Manchu elite, and now they found the perfect time. They decided to negotiate between these two parties even though they were aware that it was not an easy task. The general of the Manchu army hoped that the intervention of the Western missionaries would favour them. After many times of negotiation, the revolutionaries agreed on the following conditions: I) The Manchu soldiers to surrender their arms and ammunitions to the Catholic Church and open the gate of the city; the revolutionaries would pay the owners of the rifles ten dollars each; II) The revolutionaries would respect the lives of the Manchu soldiers and their private property; and III) The revolutionaries would pay the Manchu soldiers a six-months salary. Both parties agreed and signed the treaties. Later the revolutionaries entered the city peacefully and both parties were

193 Ibid.
194 Sint-Truiden, Le Messager de Saint-Francois d’Assise, unknown date.
satisfied with the resolution. After the peaceful resolution the Manchu leaders went to the church to thank missionaries for their help and approximately 1,000 people were converted to Christianity.195 After the fall of the Qing dynasty, those Manchu soldiers settled down in Jingzhou, and St. Joseph mission center in Jingzhou city became the protector of the Manchus.

![Image of Belgian missionaries with the leaders of the revolutionaries and the Manchus after the successful mediation.](image)

Figure 4. Belgian missionaries with the leaders of the revolutionaries and the Manchus after the successful mediation. From left to right: Priest Marcel, General Song (Chief of the General Staff of the Revolutionaries), Marshal Lien (Manchu commander of Jingzhoufu), Mgr Everaerts, and Priest Natalis.196

Although the Chinese converts had various motives for converting to Christianity, missionaries took them seriously and made sure that all Christians were well-behaved. Missionaries were strict about baptism. Only after two to three years’ study, would a

195 Sint-Truiden, Action des missionnaires Belges dans la pacification de Kinchow.
196 Stint-Truiden. Photo album on South-West Hubei Vicariate.
catechumen be baptized. Chinese Christians were asked to stay away from opium, and to end their involvement in all superstitious activities and illegal activities. In this way, they tried to ensure that Chinese Christians really understood their religion and became good Christians.  

Having seen the motives of Chinese being converted to Christianity and the Western missionaries’ effort to maintain high quality of Chinese Christians, it was understandable that sometimes there were minor troubles between Western missionaries and Chinese Christians. For instances, Bishop Verhaeghen did not like some Chinese Christians because they were opium dealers. Priest Bai was disliked by Chinese Christians due to his bad temper. However, just like family problems, such disputes were not serious at all from the perspective of the anti-Christian movement.

Considering the anti-Christian movement, it is reasonable to argue that in general Western missionaries and Chinese Christians were able to maintain a harmonious relationship in Enshi. There was no record of major conflicts between priests and Chinese Christians either in Chinese official records or in missionaries' reports. This may not be convincing enough to prove that big conflict between Western missionaries and Chinese Christians did not exist. Yet compared with the anti-Christian movement created by the Gelaohui, it is correct to

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198 Such record could be found in Changyang Archive, *danzishan tangkou zhi* (Church gazetteer of Danzishan), pp.50-55.
199 This can be seen in Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, *Jiaowu jiao’an dang* [Archives on Christian affairs and on Case and Disputes Involving Missionaries and Christians] (Taipei: Zhongyan yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1974-1981).
argue that Western missionaries and Chinese Christians generally had peaceful relationship in Enshi.

3.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSIONARIES AND CHINESE OFFICIALS

As a result of a series of treaties signed between the Chinese government and Western powers after the Second Opium War, which guaranteed religious freedom to Christians in China, Chinese officials generally had to tolerate and protect the Western missionaries. Although some Chinese officials were famous for their anti-Christian attitude, few were willing to take action under the political environment after the Second Opium War. Western priests also tried to maintain a friendly relationship with the Chinese officials in order to facilitate their mission activities in China. Despite occasional minor conflicts between the two groups, they were generally able to maintain a peaceful working relationship.

The relationship between the Western missionaries and Chinese officials was based on the treaties between the Western powers and the Chinese government. The treaties guaranteed the missionaries’ activities in China and stipulated that the Chinese officials should grant religious liberty to missionaries and Chinese Christians. Some of the important agreement included the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 and the Treaty of Beijing in 1860. Both treaties were
signed between France and China. The Treaty of Tianjin had stated that: “All Chinese who joined Christianity and obeyed the law should not be punished. All the written articles or scriptures that encouraged Christian persecution should be invalidated”. The Treaty of Beijing promulgated that: “All the people had right to practice or spread Christianity, and build churches. Anyone who obstructed should be punished severely”. Christians were also exempted from taxes to support community festivals and celebrations. All Chinese officials were ordered to tolerate Christianity. These treaties became the protector of the Western missionaries and Chinese Christians.

These treaties also put Western missionaries and Chinese converts under the patronage of France. This was due to the effort of French diplomat Théodore-Marie de Lagrené Lagrené, realizing that French could not obtain much material privileges in China, Lagrené decided to concentrate on moral and religious issues. He expressed his opinion in his letter to the French minister of Foreign Affairs:

“From the point of view of trade, the British and the American had left me nothing more to ask. Therefore it appeared to me that France and her government to maintain their dignity should take some epoch-making actions from a moral and civilizing point of view.”

200 Sint-Truiden, *Missions Franciscans de Chine.*
201 Elia, Zhongguo tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi, p. 79.
This claim by Lagrené showed that France seemed was not really for their religious faith, but because “the chief basis for insisting that France be heard by the authorities was the claim to the guardianship over Roman Catholic missionaries”.\textsuperscript{204} Although their main purpose might not be for religion, the French government’s patronage of Christianity in China did stimulate the spreading of the religion. Much of the “Christian toleration edicts” since 1844 were the results of the discussion between the French government and the Qing government. Chinese provincial officials and viceroyes received orders from the Qing central authority regarding the toleration of Christianity. Missionaries described their work after the Opium War as seeing “the bright sky again from the darkness”.\textsuperscript{205}

While the priests caused several problems in China, many Chinese officials tried to tolerate Christianity and provided protection to the missionaries, and even maintained a peaceful relationship with them. In 1898, when the Gelaohui started to burn the residence of missionaries in Yichang, Chinese officials offered to protect the children from the church orphanages.\textsuperscript{206} Priest Theotime Verhaeghen recorded that when he looked for houses to build a church in Shinanfu in 1898, the local officials kindly helped him.\textsuperscript{207} In November 1898, about a month before priest Delbrouck was captured by the Gelaohui, the police leader and several notable people in the region visited him at his church and tried to protect him.\textsuperscript{208} After

\textsuperscript{204} Latourette, \textit{A history of Christian Missions in China}, p.306.
\textsuperscript{205} Elia, \textit{Zhongguo tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi}, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{206} Sint-Truiden, letter from unknown person and unknown date.
\textsuperscript{207} Sint-Truiden, \textit{letter from Father Theotime Verhaeghen to his superior}, July 2d 1898 from Ma-cha-ping.
\textsuperscript{208} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Le Messager de Saint-Francois d’Assise}, 1st March, 1899 ; Sint-Truiden, \textit{Les derniers jours d’un martyr}, unknown date.
the Boxer uprising, Chinese officials treated Western missionaries better because of the new treaties signed after the uprising. In 1903, two Chinese Christians were sentenced to death by Chinese officials. Priest Theotime Verhaeghen at first wrote to the lower-ranked officials, and his request was rejected. He then went to meet the higher official of Shinanfu, who warmly welcomed him. The Chinese official released the accused converts, and told priest Theotime Verhaeghen that there was no need for him to visit them in person— one letter from him would be sufficient. The high ranking Chinese official even fired his subordinate who did not accept Theotime Verhaeghen’s request. Priest Theotime was very grateful to the Chinese officials and gave them each a bottle of wine.  

The missionaries also tried their best to maintain a good relationship with the Chinese officials. However, their relationship remained rather distanced. Many priests often built their churches and residences near the Chinese officials’ bureaus in order to communicate more frequently and effectively with the Chinese officials. Nonetheless, their effort hardly achieved any success. Priest Verhaeghen noted that “whenever there was hope that we might have good relationship with one Chinese official, this official would soon be replaced by someone else whom we do not know at all”.

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209 Sint-truiden, *letter from Father Theotime Verhaeghen to his superior*, 9 May 1903 from Yichang.
210 Sint-Truiden, *letter from Father Theotime Verhaeghen to his superior*, July 2 1898 from Ma-cha-ping.
211 Ibid.
While it was possible that those Chinese officials who tolerated Christianity did so just to be polite, given the fact that secret societies often put up the flag of “destroy the Qing”, it seems unlikely that Chinese officials cooperated with secret societies to persecute Christianity together. Under the national political environment after the Second Opium War, it would be irrational for Chinese officials to conduct anti-Christian activities. There was no serious open antagonism between these two enterprises, at least on the surface. Thus it was unlikely that those anti-Christian activities were instigated by Chinese officials.

3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSIONARIES AND SECRET SOCIETIES

Previous sections in this chapter illustrated that Belgian Franciscan missionaries in Enshi generally were able to maintain peaceful working relationships with the local officials and Chinese converts. However, they were persistently persecuted by another group of people: the Gelaohui. To a large extent, the Gelaohui was the only group that constantly harassed the Christians in the South-West Hubei vicariate. The Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities started around the 1870s, became intense after 1890, and reached its peak in 1898.

The Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities started around 1870 and reached its peak after 1890. Most of the anti-Christian incidents that took place in Hubei province before the 1870s were
not directly related to secret society. In the Qing government’s records, anti-Christian incidents involving secret societies could only be found after the 1870s.\textsuperscript{212} The situation gradually changed after 1870. In 1874, French officials started to complain that there were anonymous anti-Christian placards in Shianfu.\textsuperscript{213} In 1875, the French consul requested the Chinese authority in Wuhan to investigate the popular rumour that Catholics were queue clippers.\textsuperscript{214} After the investigations, Qing officials found that such anti-Christian placards and rumours were created by the Gelaohui.\textsuperscript{215} Besides placards and rumours, anti-Christian incidents also started to emerge frequently. After October 1898, the Gelaohui began to attack Christians in all parts of the South-West Hubei vicariate. The persecution started in Sichuan province and later spread to Hunan and Hubei.\textsuperscript{216} In these three provinces anti-Christian incidents took place one after another.\textsuperscript{217} According to the church records, the Gelaohui divided themselves into many groups to attack the churches in different places. Each group had as many as one thousand well-equipped soldiers.\textsuperscript{218}

The drastic increase in the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activity in Enshi occurred after 1890. This was possibly due to two main reasons: the increase in natural disasters, and the development of revolutionary parties. This was related to the broader social context at that

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., Vol.3. No.2, p.850.  
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., p.884.  
\textsuperscript{215} Report from Liu Bingzhang, on the 23th day of the eighth month of the second year of Guangxu, from \textit{Jun Lu}.  
\textsuperscript{216} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Annales des Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie}, 1898, p.23.  
\textsuperscript{217} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Les derniers jours d’un martyr}.  
\textsuperscript{218} Sint-Truiden, \textit{Annales des Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie}, 1898, p. 23.
time. During the spring and summer of 1890, the heavy rainfalls caused famine in South-West Hubei. Many starving people had to eat leaves, barks, and tree roots. Some became homeless and had to live on the road.\textsuperscript{219} The extremely unstable social environment resulted in the rise of secret societies. Anti-Christian incidents caused by secret societies also increased. Bishop Benjamin Christianens, in his 1892 report to his superior, wrote that “many Western missionaries and Chinese converts have been killed recently, and there is increasing violence toward us”.\textsuperscript{220} Although there were gun boats to protect the mission residences and churches, the priests felt insecure and were worried about the potential threats.

The development of the revolutionary parties was another reason that intensified the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities. Since the foundation of the Xingzhonghui (Revive China Society), the revolutionaries tried to seek help from various secret societies to conduct anti-Qing activities. The Gelaohui was one of the major secret societies that collaborated with the revolutionaries. After that, the Gelaohui led many major anti-Qing and anti-foreign uprisings. In Jiangxi province, for instance, the two biggest events were the Pingxiang revolt led by Sun Haishan in 1892 and the Pingliuli revolt in 1906. To suppress the first revolt, the Qing government had to dispatch three camps of soldiers from two provinces as well as mobilizing the local militias and navy.\textsuperscript{221} The collaboration with the revolutionaries not only made

\textsuperscript{219} CCE. \textit{Lichuan tianzhujiao dashiji}.
\textsuperscript{220} Cheng, \textit{Hubei xiangyunshu jiaoshi jilue}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{221} Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jindaishi ziliao bianzibu, ed, \textit{Jindaishi ziliao} [Sources of modern history] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue Chubanshe, 1988-), Issues 55, p.77.
Gelaohui much stronger, but also gave them a legitimate reason to organize anti-Christian activities.

CONCLUSION

Western priests were able to maintain peaceful working relationships with most people in Enshi except the secret society Gelaohui. Despite occasional disputes between the Western priests and Chinese Christians, the priests were welcomed and respected by Chinese Christians as well as the majority of non-Christians. As a result of the unequal treaties signed between China and the Western powers, Chinese officials were made to tolerate and protect the missionaries. However, the secret society Gelaohui brought a lot of troubles to the missionaries. Their anti-Christian activity started around the 1870s and reached its peak in the 1890s. Gelaohui’ anti-Christian activities will be discussed and analyzed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Some may doubt why this thesis divided people in the local society of Enshi into four categories: Chinese Christians, non-Christians, Chinese officials and secret societies. While the local social hierarchy could be understood in different ways according to personal criterions, this division of the local society of Enshi was rather based on common ideology. This division was helpful to understand the anti-Christian movement because normally when people discuss the anti-Christian movement, they think about the roles played by Chinese
officials, Chinese Christians and non-Christians. The three categories of people here belong to the normal community. Thus non-Christians did not include secret society members. While some people may overlap into more than one group, this division is still helpful from the perspective of collective power.

While reading through the mission archive sources left by those Belgian Franciscan missionaries, one could feel that they worked quite smoothly in Enshi in the nineteenth century. Occasionally there were minor disputes between the missionaries and different kinds of people, but such disputes never evolved into big conflict like what happened during the anti-Christian movement created by the Gelaohui. Since 1890, the Gelaohui appeared more and more frequently in their records. The missionaries’ fear and hatred of the Gelaohui also became more and more intense. Such evolution could also be found in Chinese archival documents. While these sources may not be adequate enough to find the real story behind the surface, the fact that Western missionaries in Enshi generally had peaceful working relationships with different groups of people except the secret society Gelaohui seems to be true. In fact, many articles from newspapers published during the late nineteenth century also suggested that the secret societies were the main source of the anti-Christian movement. Thus it would be unconvincing to ascribe the anti-Christian movement to Western missionaries’ imperialism or Cultural conflict between missionaries and Chinese people. Given the regional varieties of China, Western missionaries’ relationship with the local

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society may not be generalized to other places of China or the entire country. In next chapter, the secret society Gelaohui’s role in the anti-Christian movement will be analyzed in detail.
CHAPTER 4. ANTI-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT BETWEEN 1890 AND 1911

Since 1890, anti-Christian movement had intensified in China. Anti-Christian placards were found almost everywhere in the country.\(^{223}\) The French consul and Western missionaries frequently sent such placards to Chinese officials, demanding them to investigate and stop such behavior. Investigations were carried out but the effort to stop the spread of anti-Christian placards was not successful. Along with the placards, anti-Christian incidents also took place one after another.\(^ {224}\)

A glance of the anti-Christian movement may give us false impression that it was the conflict between missionaries and Chinese mass commoners. However, who was the real leader of such incidents? This is a question that needs to be further investigated. There is evidence that in the Yangtze River Valley the anti-Christian movement was organized by the secret society Gelaohui. In order to obtain detailed information of the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century south China, it will be helpful to look at some of the most prominent anti-Christian incidents first.

\(^{223}\) Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., *Jiaowu jiao’an dang*, vol.6, p.258.

\(^ {224}\) Ibid., vol.6.
4.1 ANTI-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT IN THE YANGTZE RIVER VALLEY

In the entire Yangtze River Valley, most anti-Christian incidents that took place in the late nineteenth century were directed and organized by the Gelaohui. Despite the inner connections between these anti-Christian incidents, many Chinese scholars chose to list them separately instead of as one story. Given the independent development of each incident, this paper adopts those scholars’ methods and explains them separately. The most influential anti-Christian incidents directed by the Gelaohui in the Yangtze River Valley in the nineteenth century were: the Wannan anti-Christian incident, the Li Hong incident, the Yangtze anti-Christian movement and the Yu Dongchen revolt. Among these four anti-Christian incidents, the latter three were connected with each other in such a way that the Li Hong incident was preparation for the Yangtze anti-Christian movement, and the Yu Dongchen revolt was the peak during the Yangtze movement. From the description of the detailed incidents, the Gelaohui’s position in those events, their methods and purposes can be observed.

4.1.1 Wannan Anti-Christian Incident (1876)

The Wannan anti-Christian incident was the first big scale anti-Christian incident in nineteenth century south China, and it showed the Gelaohui’s leadership during the incident. Although there was no clear evidence to prove that different Gelaohui branches cooperated

\[\text{For example, Qin Baoqi, } Zhongguo dixia shehui \ [\text{Secret societies in China}, \text{ vol.2 (Beijing: Xueyuan Chubanshe, 2005); Wu, Wanzing gelao hui yanjiu.}\]

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with each other, it exhibited the tendency of cooperation between different Gelaohui branches.

In the spring of 1876, a queue clipping\(^{226}\) rumour started from Nanjing and quickly spread to other provinces of the Yangtze River Valley. It said that “There were monks clipping men’s queues, and those whose queues were clipped will live no more than one hundred days”\(^{227}\), “those whose queues were clipped were non-Christians, and Christians will not be clipped”\(^{228}\). The rumour soon spread from Jiangsu to Zhejiang and Anhui. In May, queue clippers were arrested in many counties of Anhui province including Luzhou, Chizhou and so on.\(^ {229}\)

This rumour reached Jianping county of Anhui province on 7 July 1876 and ignited the conflict between Christians and non-Christians. On 16 May 1876 after Ruan Guangfu’s queue was clipped, Yi Jinghuai and others tried to chase and catch the clipper, but was stopped by priest Bai Huiqing. Yi was very angry and sent Bai to the local government. However, Bai was redeemed by priest Huang Zhishen. Four days after Bai’s release, nine farmers talked about the incident when they worked on the farm. Some said that the queue


\(^{228}\) Shen Baozhen, “Yan xun wannan jiaotang zishi queqing fenbie shi cheng zhe” [Suggestion on punishment of Wannan anti-Christian case], in *Shen Wensu gong zhen shu*, vol.6. (Wumen jie shu, 1880).

\(^{229}\) Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., *Jiaowu jiao’an dang*, vol.3, p.80.
clippers were arranged by the church. This was heard by priest Yang Qinxi who happenly passed by. They started to fight and scold each other. Soon priest Huang arrived with about twenty persons and took two farmers to the church by force. The employers of those two arrested farmers sought help from local gentry Yu Yinglong. Yu was famous for his antagonism against Christianity. Under Yu’s lead, the angry villagers burned the church, and killed priests Huang Zhishen and Yang Qinxi.\(^2\) From 20 May to 30 June, similar incidents took places in other counties and the anti-Christian movement spread to the lower Yangtze River Valley.\(^3\)

After investigation conducted by the Qing government, it seemed that during this incident, the Gelaohui and other secret societies coordinated with each other with a political purpose of reversing the Qing dynasty. Based on confessions from four key members of the queue clipping incident, Qing officials reported to the Emperor that this incident was collaborated by the Society of Brothers (Gelaohui), the Yao Men Sect (Yaomenjiao) and the Tian Shui Sect (Tianshuijiao). They planned this queue clipping incident and spread it, trying to “instigate popular panic and obtain political power during the chaos”.\(^4\) Their political purpose could be seen clearly from Fang Puzhi’s confession:

> My mentor is planning revolt against the Emperor, and he already made many wooden men. We need human queues to make the wooden men come to life and to be our soldiers. Those

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\(^2\) Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, Fujian shifan daxue lishi xi, eds., *Qingmo jiao’an* [Christian cases in late Qing period], vol.2, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp139-140.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Report from Liu Bingzhang, on the 23th day of the eighth month of the second year of the Guangxu reign, from *Jun Lu*. 

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soldiers will be invulnerable. After the success of the revolt, we will control the country, and after that we will become saints.\textsuperscript{233}

While it was possible that these secret societies were just scapegoats, those evidences suggested that they were indeed the most important actors and organizers in the incident. After analyzing the identities of twenty six queue clippers who were arrested in the middle and lower Yangtze River Valley in 1876, Chinese scholar Wu Shanzhong found that “most of them were members of secret sect Zhai (Zhai jiao) and secret society Gelaohui, others were vagabonds and previous Taiping soldiers (Taipingjun)”.\textsuperscript{234} The sect Zhai (Zhai Jiao) was “a name created by the Qing officials to refer to all secret sects who advocated vegetarian life”.\textsuperscript{235} A foreign priest who worked in China during that period also commented on the queue clipping incident that: “Generally, people believed that this queue clippings incident was planned and led by secret societies because they wanted to instigate people’s revolt against the Qing government”.\textsuperscript{236} Even if these secret societies did not intentionally want to reverse the Qing dynasty, what they had done already posed serious threat to the Qing Emperors. Philip Kuhn described how the Qianlong Emperor worried about his throne during the sorcery scare of 1768.\textsuperscript{237}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{233} Confession from Fang Puzhi, “Xu shu nahuo yaofei” [On arresting the bandits], \textit{Shenbao}, 24 July of the second year of the Guangxu reign.

\textsuperscript{234} Wu Shanzhong, “Qing guangxu er nian “yaoshu” kong huang shulun”[On “sorcery scare” of the second year of Guangxu], \textit{Jiang hai xue kan} (February 2004), p.129.

\textsuperscript{235} Ma Xisha, Han Bingfang, Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi [History of folk religion in China] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp.382-383.


\textsuperscript{237} Kuhn, Soulstealers: the Chinese sorcery scare of 1768.
\end{footnotesize}
4.1.2 The Li Hong Incident (1891)

This incident was planned and led by Li Hong, son of Li Zhaoshou. Li Zhaoshou was previously the leader of the Nian army (Nianjun) and led one rebellion against the Qing government. After the rebellion he allied with Qing official He Guizhen in attacking the Taiping army. Later he killed He Guizhen and allied with the Taiping. In 1858 Li Zhaoshou surrendered to the Qing again, and was rewarded with an official title. Due to Li’s fickle loyalty, the Qing government was always suspicious of him. After the suppression of the Taiping rebellion, the Qing government fired him with a pretext of his bad behavior in the local government. After Li Zhaoshou kidnapped gentry Wu Tingjian, the Qing government finally executed Li Zhaoshou.  

Hearing that his father was executed by the Qing government, Li Hong was extremely angry and decided to “revenge for his father”. Li Hong made Zhenjiang as his base of activity. From here he got connected with many leaders of Gelaohui and other secret sects. Through the introduction of famous leaders such as Long Songnian, Chen Jinlong, Wang Jinlong, Gao Dehua and Kuang Shiming, Li Hong was attached to all secret societies in the middle and lower Yangtze River Valley. According to the confession of Gao Dehua, “all secret

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238 Qin, Zhongguo dixia shehui, pp.415-416.
240 Zhang Zhidong, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji (Complete works of Zhang Wenxiang), vol.3 (3) (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1990), pp.579-580.
societies in the Yangtze River Valley cooperated with each other, with Li Zhaoshou’s son Li Hong as our supreme leader.”

Besides unifying secret societies, Li Hong also contacted a British citizen Charles Welsh Mason, who worked in Zhenjiang customs. Mason was entrusted with 30,000 liang\(^{242}\) silver and was asked to purchase weapons for Li Hong from Hong Kong. Mason also joined the Gelaohui after being invited. Later Mason confessed that he joined the Gelaohui because he wanted to “obtain China’s political power with help of the Gelaohui”.\(^{243}\)

In May of 1889, Li Hong met Gao Dehua in Shanghai, informing him that Mason was purchasing weapons for them and it was time for them to prepare for the revolt. During that time, various kinds of anti-Christian placards were spread everywhere, and the hatred of Christianity was increasing.\(^{244}\) Li Hong saw this as a good opportunity to “put the Manchus into a whirlpool of wars with foreign powers”.\(^{245}\)

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\(^{241}\) Ibid.

\(^{242}\) A basic unit of weight in China.


\(^{244}\) Liu Yangyang, “Zou Han fan yangjiao’an shulun” [Summary on Zhou-han’s anti-Christian activities], in *Jindai zhongguo jiao’an yanjiu* [Study on anti-Christian incidents in modern China], eds. Sichuan sheng jindai jiao’an shi yanjiuhui & Sichuansheng zhexue shehuixuehui lianhehui (Sichuansheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1987).

\(^{245}\) (Britain) Mei Sheng, *Jiu Shi Chongti* [Dig up the past], quoted in Hong Shen, “An Qing hui de xingqi” [The origin of the An Qing hui], Wen Chao yuekan 2, 2.
With purchased weapons, Mason arrived in Shanghai on 12 September 1891. Because the customs had already obtained information about the weapons, Mason was arrested and his weapons were detained. This caused the Qing government’s wide search and suppression of the Gelaohui. Many Gelaohui leaders including Gao Dehua, Li Hong, Kuang Shiming were arrested. The revolt planned by Li Hong was also cancelled.\textsuperscript{246}

The story indicates that the Li Hong incident took place because Li Hong manipulated the Gelaohui to take revenge for his father against the Qing government. However, some scholars argued that it was actually the Gelaohui leaders such as Kuang Shiming and Gao Dehua who used Li Hong’s fame and money to organize a military revolt against the Qing.\textsuperscript{247} Whatever it was, the fact that the Gelaohui was the main actor and leader in the movement can not be denied. The Li Hong incident was a milestone in the history of the Gelaohui due to its close cooperation and intense organization with each other.

The Li Hong incident paved the way for the Yangtze anti-Christian incident in 1891 for two reasons. Firstly, most leaders in the Yangtze anti-Christian incident were Li Hong’s followers.\textsuperscript{248} Secondly, the Li Hong incident made all the Gelaohui branches in the Yangtze River Valley connected to each other, which made the Gelaohui stronger than ever as an organized power. Zhang Zhidong noted that in the entire Yangtze River Valley, the Gelaohui

\textsuperscript{246} Qin, Zhongguo dixia shehui, p.418.
\textsuperscript{247} Wu, “Gelaohui yu guangxu shiqi nian changjiang jiao’an”, P.85.
\textsuperscript{248} Qin, Zhongguo dixia shehui, p.418.
branches were all connected, and they even collaborated with the foreigners and other bandits to purchase weapons and prepare for revolt.249

4.1.3 The Yangtze Anti-Christian Movement (1891)
Benefiting from Li Hong’s failed plan, the Yangtze anti-Christian movement was the Gelaohui’s first organized revolt against Christianity. It affected most provinces in the Yangtze River Valley, and posed a serious threat to both Christianity in China and the Qing Empire. It was caused by an incident that took place in Yangzhou city and later spread to other provinces of south China.250

On 20 March 1891, a placard appeared in Yangzhou, claiming that foreign missionaries had killed two Chinese babies and it was time to rise up and take revenge for the babies. Soon there was another rumor that: “local officials received money from foreigners and will not interfere”.251 These rumors instigated people’s anger against the local church. On 23 March people surrounded the local church and started to attack. The next three days saw more and fiercer attacks. Walls of the church were torn down, houses were burned and priests were beaten or killed. On 27 March the Qing army entered the city and suppressed the revolt.252

249 Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, p.582.
251 “Da nao jiaotang” [Riot in the church], Shenbao, 1891 - 05 - 06.
The news about the incident which had taken place in Yangzhou quickly spread to other provinces in the middle and lower Yangtze River Valley. Similar incidents started to happen in other places. On 10 May thousands of people rushed into the church in Wuhu because two nuns were suspected of kidnapping two children. Shenbao reported that “since the anti-Christian incident of Yangzhou, other places including Wuhu, Anqing, Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Danyang all started anti-Christian incidents”. Zhang Zhidong also reported that “since the incident happened in Wuhu, there are all rumors everywhere in the Yangtze River Valley, everybody is flustered, and everywhere is dangerous”.

Many evidences showed that these series of anti-Christian incidents were planned and led by the Gelaohui. Xue Fucheng (Qing foreign affairs official) pointed out that “these cases of burning churches and killing priests were plotted by the Gelaohui”. The grand minister of the Qing government sent the message below to all the provincial officials in 1891:

“The Gelaohui was the worst in all the places. They come and go without leaving a sign. They collaborated with all kinds of outlaws, and committed collective violence. Recently there have been many incidents of burning churches and robbing the government office in Jiangsu, Anhui, Hubei and Jiangxi provinces, more than half of which were produced by the Gelaohui. After the incident, they run away in all directions and it is difficult to find the real criminal.”

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254 “Lun Baohu jiaotang jisuoyi baohu zhongguo renmin” [Protecting church is protecting Chinese people], Shenbao, 1891 - 06 - 11.
255 Zhang, Zhang Wenxiang gong quanji, p. 568.
256 Xue Fucheng, Yong’an quanji. Chushi zoushu [Complete works of Yong’an. Report on diplomatic issues], vol. 1 (Unknown publisher and time).
257 Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, Qingmo jiao’an, pp480-481.
According to the confession of Gelaohui leaders Cao Yixiang and Tang Yuting who took part in this movement, on 22 April 1891, Gelaohui leader Jiang Guifang and others went to Cao’s house, claiming “to attack catholic churches in port cities”. They made a complete plan: firstly, preparing anonymous anti-Christian placards, exposing churches’ bad behaviors such as killing babies; Secondly, pasting these placards everywhere, making it known by everyone from coolies to high officials; Thirdly, attacking churches in chaos; Lastly, burning churches and running away quickly. They agreed and informed the decision to others, and those steps were followed in all their anti-Christian activities after that. 258

4.1.4 Yu Dongchen Revolt in Dazu County of Sichuan (1890, 1898)

As one of the biggest incidents during the Yangtze anti-Christian movement, the Yu Dongchen revolt in Dazu county of Sichuan province brought south China’s anti-Christian movement to its peak. Three months after Yu’s second revolt, The Boxers in Shandong rose up and started the famous Boxer uprising.

Yu Dongchen’s first revolt took place in 1890. In August 1890, one of the biggest local festivals was under preparation. Because churches were attacked during the previous years’ festival, priest Peng dispatched a bunch of people to protect his church, and also asked the local government to inhibit this festival. Yet the festival went on as usual. During the festival, 258

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many people went to the church out of curiosity. Some asked Qing general Liu Liansheng who was responsible to protect the church: “Are you an official of the Chinese government or an official of foreigners?” Liu was extremely angry and ordered soldiers to arrest them. During the fighting that ensued, “a child threw a stone into a church window, and Christians threw out a bag full of lime, which was decried by non-Christians. Christians beat about ten persons, of whom Jiang Zancheng’s nephew was most seriously hurt”. Soon some members of the Jiang lineage came to rescue Jiang’s nephew and fought with Christians. Christians grabbed a gong from them, and wrote Jiang Zancheng’s name on it. Christians brought this gong to the local government and assumed Jiang Zancheng as the leader of the anti-Christian conflict. Jiang escaped to Yu Dongchen (also known as Yu Manzi) when the local government ordered him arrested.

Yu was the leader of the local Gelaohui and was very influential in local society. He was angry to know this and decided to avenge for Jiang. Soon Yu organized an army constituted of coal and paper factory workers. Yu’s army burned the church, killed Chinese Christians and occupied the cities for more than one month. The Qing government suppressed this revolt cruelly, and many Gelaohui leaders were killed; Yu escaped.

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259 Ibid., vol.5, p.1460.
260 Ibid., pp.1460-1463.
261 Ibid.
The second revolt took place in 1898. Yu was arrested in 1898 by the Qing government due to his first revolt, but was soon rescued by his followers. After getting out of the jail, Yu decided to revolt again. This revolt expanded to more than thirty counties. More than twenty churches and hospitals were burned. The number of his soldiers increased to more than ten thousand, mostly Gelaohui members. However, under the Qing army’s suppression, Yu and his army had to surrender.

Yu Dongchen’s revolt had great effect on its neighbor provinces. More than ten counties in eastern Sichuan province were affected by it directly, and more than thirty counties were affected by it indirectly. The anti-Christian movements that took place in Shinanfu and Yichangfu in 1898 were part of Yu’s movement. The group of Gelaohui who killed priest Victorin Delbrouck on 11 December 1898 in Shinanfu claimed to converge with Yu’s army in Sichuan once they finished their task in Shinan.

From the queue clipping incident in 1876 to the Yangtze anti-Christian movement in 1891, the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian methods changed greatly. Whereas previously they collaborated with other secret sects, during the Yangtze anti-Christian movement they acted

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262 Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, p.792.
265 Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, p.18-19.
266 Sint-Truiden, La derniere Lettre du P. Victorin: Massacre en Chine.
independently; during the queue clipping incident the Gelaohui mainly relied on rumors and took a low profile. In 1891 they revolted openly. In 1876 the Gelaohui was still a society made of separated branches with loose organization; in 1891 it became an organized and united power. After Yu Dongchen’s revolt, the Gelaohui had become the main organizer and actor of the anti-Christian movement in the Yangtze River Valley.\textsuperscript{267}

Despite its change of methods, the fact that the Gelaohui was the director and main actor in the anti-Christian movement of the Yangtze River Valley remain unaltered. Early nationalists pointed out that “most anti-Christian incidents that took place during the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns were directed by the Gelaohui”\textsuperscript{268}. Their activities made them an internal enemy of the Qing government and brought many troubles to the Emperor. The society of Gelaohui was considered by the Qing Emperor as “the worst of all”.\textsuperscript{269}

4.2 ANTI-CHRISTIAN INCIDENTS IN ENSHI

The above cross-provincial anti-Christian incidents were generally well known. However, there was rarely any study on how such big incidents affected small places. Under Yu Dongchen’s influence, the border region of Hubei-Sichuan-Hunan had a series of anti-

\textsuperscript{267} Cai Shaoqing, Tu Xuehua, “Lun Yu Dongchen qiyi yu Gelaohui de guanxi”[The relationship between Yu Dongchen’s revolt and the Boxer rebellion], in Jindai zhongguo jiao’an yanjiu (Chengdu : Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe), p.90.

\textsuperscript{268} Song Zhongkan, Tang Buqi, Liu Zonglie, “Sichuan Gelaohui Gaishan zhi shangduo” [Discussion on the improvement of Gelaohui in Sichuan], in AnQing shijian (Taibei : Guting shuwu, unknown year), P.3.

\textsuperscript{269} Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, Qingmo jiao’an, pp480-481.
Christian incidents. Enshi is situated right at this border region and took part in this movement actively. The two most serious anti-Christian incidents which occurred in Enshi were priest Victorin Delbrouck’s murder in December 1898 and the murder of Bishop Theotim Verhaeghen in 1904. There was evidence that both were committed by the Gelaohui.

4.2.1 Priest Victorin Delbrouck’s Assassination in December 1898

The assassination of priest Victorin Delbrouck in 1898 was due to the direct influence of Yu Dongchen’s revolt in Sichuan province in 1898. It was also the first anti-Christian incident in Enshi that brought serious diplomatic trouble to the Qing government.

In 1898, after Yu Dongchen’s revolt in Sichuan, the Gelaohui in Shinanfu also aggravated their attack on Christianity. They divided their troops into two parts. One was led by Xiang Ce’an, and would cross Badong and Jianshi to meet Yu Dongchen’s troops in Sichuan province. The second troop was led by Qin Peizhang in Changyang, and would cross the Yangtze River to attack Yichang city. It was the first troop who killed priest Victorin in Badong. The second troop was defeated by Qing army of Yichang in March 1899.

After Yu Dongchen’s revolt in Sichuan, anti-Christian rumors spread to all the counties in Shinafu. From these rumors priest Delbrouck came to know that “they (Gelaohui) burned the missions and killed many missionaries in Sichuan and Hunan provinces”. Accompanying those rumors was some real news that Gelaohui troops were coming to find him. On 10 November, Gelaohui troops were about five to six days’ walk from priest Delbrouck’s residence.\footnote{Sint-Truiden, “letter on 10th November 1898 ”, \textit{La derniere Lettre du P.Victorin: Massacre en Chine}.} Realizing that he was in danger, priest Delbrouck tried very hard to save his mission, but he did not succeed. He sent a letter to the local official in Badong, promising three hectoliters of corn if the mission was successfully protected.\footnote{Ibid.} Unfortunately the Chinese official did nothing to protect him.\footnote{Sint-Truiden, “letter on 28th November 1898 ”, \textit{La derniere Lettre du P.Victorin: Massacre en Chine}.} Although Chinese officials generally maintained a good working relationship with the Western missionaries, occasionally Chinese officials showed their dislike against the missionaries. At this occasion, when the central government was far away, and the Gelaohui was also anti-governmental, it was understandable that the Chinese official declined to help the priest. Yet, such an occasion was very rare. Although some local notable men joined together to protect the church\footnote{Sint-Truiden, “letter on 10th November 1898 ”, \textit{La derniere Lettre du P.Victorin: Massacre en Chine}.}, this seems inadequate because the Gelaohui troops came closer and closer. On 25 November priest Theotime who lived only three days’ walking distance from priest Delbrouck informed him that his residence was already burned. Delbrouck finally sent a letter to Yichang asking
for protection. The Yichang government sent a letter to the Badong official, but the letter arrived only after Delbrouck was killed.276

Chinese Christians thought that it would be safer if the priest stayed with them, so they came to meet him on 29 November. Together they went to Xiaomaitian, which was about 12 li277 from Shekoushan where the priest was. On the same day the Gelaohui robbed and burned houses of Chinese Christians 36 li away from Shekoushan. Hearing this, priest Delbrouck decided to flee immediately. He wrote the last letter to his mother and entrusted it to one of his Chinese Christians. After that he went out with two Chinese servants. Following the servants’ suggestion, they went to a cave in a nearby mountain. They thought it was a safe place, but unfortunately they were discovered after four days and they had to change place. They could only get away during the night. They wanted to go to Yichang but nobody knew the route. In order not to be discovered, they walked by the river. In the next morning, they found that there was no way to go any more. Delbrouck sent one of his servants to look for the route. Unfortunately this servant was captured and never returned. Soon the Gelaohui found the priest and brought him to Shekoushan. Besides being tortured by the Gelaohui, he also saw seven Chinese Christians killed in front of him. Priest Delbrouck was killed on 11 December. During this incident, Sixty eight Chinese Christians were also killed by the Gelaohui.278 The death of Delbrouck put much diplomatic pressure on the Qing government

277 Li is a Chinese unit for distance.
278 Sint-Truiden, La derniere Lettre du P.Victorin: Massacre en Chine.
and the Viceroy of Hubei Zhang Zhidong quickly sent troops to attack the Gelaohui and apprehend the criminals.\(^{279}\)

The news of priest Victorin Delbrouck’s Death shocked Belgium and France, and it also brought good opportunity for the Belgian and French governments to gain more interest in China. People in Europe published many articles in newspapers and magazines to express their shock. While many people denounced the cruelty of the Gelaohui, some thought that such sacrifice for God was great.\(^{280}\) Missionaries requested their governments to “make energetic representation with the government of China and adopt measurement so that similar crimes will not happen again”.\(^{281}\) Belgium and France demanded that the Qing government not only rebuild the church and pay indemnity, but also demote Chinese officials who were considered “irresponsible” by the Belgian government.\(^{282}\)

Similar to Yu Dongchen’s revolt in Sichuan, this anti-Christian incident was led by the Gelaohui with organized troops. The revolt was well organized, with Xiang Ce’an as principal marshal, and Li Shaobai as vice marshal. They also had a flag with the motto of “destroy the foreign”. Leaders Xiang Ce’an, Li Shaobai and Li Qingcheng were all leaders of the local Gelaohui.\(^{283}\) Shinanfu and Yichangfu were important bases for the Gelaohui for a

\(^{279}\) Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, pp.872-873.
\(^{280}\) Sint-Truiden, Almanach du Pellerin.
\(^{281}\) Sint-Truiden, newspaper clipping from “L’echo de Chine”, unknown date.
\(^{282}\) Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, Qingmo jiao’an, pp.28-30.
\(^{283}\) Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, pp.871.
long time because of the topography. It was not easy for the government troops to defeat the Gelaohui in these two regions.284

4.2.2 The Murder of Bishop Theotime Verhaeghen in 1904

The death of priest Delbrouck did not stop the Gelaohui’s persecution of the missionaries. Soon after the end of this case, more anti-Christian incidents took place in Lichuan, Badong and other counties. The murder of Bishop Theotime Verharghen in 1904 was one of the most serious incidents that took place in Enshi. This was partly under the influence of south China’s anti-Christian movement, but was also affected by the Boxer uprising in Shandong.

This incident took place in a market center called Shazidi of Enshi County. On 17 July 1904, Bishop Theotime Verharghen went to Shazidi on a pastor tour with priests Frederic Verhaeghen, Florent Robberecht and a Chinese Christian Jia Chengqing. When they rested by the main street of Shazidi, some curious farmers came to see the foreigners. One of the farmers named Xiang Yuanxin opened the curtain of the Bishop’s sedan chair, which was considered extremely impolite by Jia Chengqing, and Jia slapped Xiang’s face. Other farmers were angry to see this and they started to quarrel. Jia threatened to report to the local government. Xiang Yuanxin felt that it would be problematic for him if he was reported to the government. So Xiang asked help from the leader of the Xiang lineage whose name was Xiang Guangxi. After negotiating with the Bishop, Xiang Guangxi agreed to offer eight

tables of dishes and sixty thousand fire crackers at the home of Chinese Christian Li Jiabing in Shazidi. The next day everything was done according to their agreement. On 19 July, when the Bishop started leaving, Jia Chengqing said that the number of fire crackers was not enough, requesting Xiang Yuanxin to burn fire crackers on the way the Bishop would pass. Xiang Yuanxin was unhappy at this demand and they quarreled again. 285

The Gelaohui in Shazidi had already noticed those missionaries a long time ago, and this incident gave them good opportunity to interfere. On the pretext of revenge for Xiang Yuanxin, Gelaohui leader Xiang Xuetang decided to kill those missionaries. When the priests started to leave Shazidi, Xiang Xuetang ordered his men to chase and kill them. Bishop Theotime, priest Frederic and Jia Chengqing died soon under their attack. During the conflict another four Chinese Christians were also killed. 286 The Church and some Chinese Christians’ houses were burned. They quickly sent the news to Gelaohui troops in other counties and asked them to come to discuss a bigger plan. Xiang Xuetang and other criminals were soon captured by the Qing army. 287

Under pressure from the French legation in China, the Qing government executed Xiang Xuetang and other leaders of the incident, totally more than twelve. They also paid

285 Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, p.60.
286 Ibid.
compensation of one hundred forty five thousand Liang silver to the church and Chinese Christians. A piece of land in Jingzhou and Shinan was given to the church to build a hospital and a church. A stele was erected at the place where the Bishop was assassinated. All the Chinese officials involved were severely punished.\textsuperscript{288}

These two incidents showed that the main participants in both incidents were missionaries and the Gelaohui. Due to different reasons, the Gelaohui killed missionaries and some Chinese Christians. Although the beginning of the incident might be individual, these incidents later developed into collective violence: the conflict between missionaries and Gelaohui. Thus it is inappropriate to say that missionaries had conflict with Chinese commoners, and Christianity was unsuitable for Chinese society. We can conclude that the conflicts between missionaries and individuals were only the igniter of the incidents; the big anti-Christian incidents which resulted later were conflict between missionaries and Gelaohui.

4.3 WHY GELAOHUI'S ANTI-CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES COULD BE SUCCESSFUL

The Gelaohui’s anti-Christian movement in the nineteenth century south China was so successful mainly due to three reasons: firstly, the Gelaohui grasped a good weapon of

spreading anti-Christian rumors; secondly, Chinese mass commoners inclined to believe rumors and could be easily misled; lastly, the Qing bureaucracy system was not strong enough to control the outlaws and provide a peaceful social environment for her citizens.

Creating and spreading anti-Christian rumors was one of the most important weapons of the Gelaohui. This included oral rumors and anonymous placards. One of the most famous rumors was that foreigners killed Chinese babies and made medicine with their eyes.\footnote{Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., \textit{Jiaowu jiao'an dang}, vol.5, p.1140.} Zhang Zhidong reported to the Emperor that “the Gelaohui was the most vicious and they often created rumors to instigate people and ignite conflict”, and “in their rumors and placards they always found troubles with the foreigners”.\footnote{Zhang, \textit{Zhang wenxiang gong quanji}, p.571, 574.} Official Liu Kunyi had a similar report regarding the Yangtze anti-Christian incident that “after the incident happened in Wuhu, similar incidents took place in Jiangsu’s Danyang, Jinkui, Wuxi, Yanghu, Jiangyin, and so on. After serious inspection, we found that although these cases were of different degrees of seriousness, they were all caused by rootless rumors which were created by the Gelaohui, and rumors always arrived with placards”.\footnote{Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, \textit{Qingmo jiao’an}, vol.2, p.488.} As church orphanages were the main reasons for the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian rumors and placards, Zhang also suggested to the Emperor to establish orphanages run by the Qing government, so they can “extinguish the root of rumors”.\footnote{Zhang, \textit{Zhang wenxiang gong quanji}, p.628.}
Another significant factor which facilitated the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities was the fact that Chinese commoners inclined to believe rumors and could easily be misled, which made the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian rumors very effective. It already showed how effective the anti-Christian rumors could be during the Wannan and the Yangtze anti-Christian incidents. In July 1891, when the government tried to install electricity poles in Hunan province, the Gelaohui spread rumors that it was related to foreigners, and anyone who broke it would be executed by the government. Villagers believed this rumor to be true. Even after local officials explained to them, “they still believed that installing electricity poles and spreading Christianity was the same thing”. Villagers beat officials who conducted the installation and burned the poles.293 These made Governor General Zhang Zhidong suggest to the Emperor that “whenever they (Gelaohui) are found producing and spreading rumors, we should arrest and punish them immediately”.294 Regarding the rumor that foreign missionaries used Chinese babies’ eyes and hearts to make medicine, Chinese officials noted that people still believed it even after hundreds of times’ explanations. They believed that the Chinese government was afraid of the foreigners so they did not dare to stop such bad behaviors.295 It seems that there was a tradition of rumors in Chinese history, before the queue clipping rumors in 1876, there was a sorcery scare in 1768, resulting the Qianlong Emperor’s inspection of his bureaucracy system.296 The effects of such rumors were the best proof that most Chinese commoners during the Qing dynasty were inclined to believe rumors and be misled by them.

293 Zhang, Zhang wenxiang gong quanji, p.574-575.
294 Ibid., p.575.
Besides the previous two conditions, a weak local government also contributed to the success of the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities. Based on her research about rebellions in north China, Elizabeth Perry argued that a weak state power in local society was the main reason for secret societies’ revolt, whether such societies were protective or predatory. She found that “a key factor behind Nian attendance expansion was the tacit or active support of many government officials”, and “higher officials, generously bribed by their local Nian groups, sometimes provided regular refuges for Nian on the run”. In many parts of rural China till early phase of the Republic of China, bandits and secret societies were able to maintain autonomy under a favorable environment. Or a live-and-let-live relationship existed among the state, the local gentry and local bandits for the balance of power. As a group of powerful people in the local society, secret societies had to deal with Western missionaries inevitably. A weak local government not only facilitated secret societies’ development, but also made it necessary for Western missionaries to get along with secret societies.

Overall, the above three conditions together contributed to the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities. Without any of them, their activities may not have been successful. It may be reasonable to suggest that although the Gelaohui was the main leader and actor of the anti-

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297 Nian refers to The Nien Rebellion that took place in northern China from 1851 to 1868.
Christian movement in the late nineteenth century south China, the social environment during that period provided good conditions for them and facilitated their success.

CONCLUSION

It seems accurate to say that the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century China was a part of the history between missionaries and secret societies. What Belgian Franciscans experienced in Enshi was only a part of the larger story. In the entire Yangtze River Valley, the Gelaohui led a series of anti-Christian movements. Although the Gelaohui was the main organizer of the movement, the social environment at that time provided favorable conditions to their success.

Seeing this, it may be necessary to reconsider the essence of the anti-Christian movement which took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century China. To what extent did the anti-Christian movement represent the conflict between Christianity and Chinese culture? To what extent did it represent the hatred of Chinese people against Western missionaries as an imperialist enterprise? It may not be as much as some scholars have argued. If it was not national, it is very likely that at least in some places the anti-Christian movement was only a dynamic between missionaries and secret societies.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Anti-Christian movements of late nineteenth century China have been studied by several researchers. Previous researches mainly focused on the cultural conflict between the West and China, missionaries’ imperialistic behavior and China’s anti-foreign tradition. Realizing that general studies were not convincing enough to explain all the anti-Christian movement in every region of the country, this study tries to offer a new perspective by studying Belgian Franciscan missionaries in Enshi. This research is not trying to say that all previous researches were wrong, instead it tries to offer a new angle from which to interpret the anti-Christian movement in late nineteenth century China.

Based on the history of Belgian Franciscans in Enshi from 1890 to 1930, this thesis focuses on the relationship between Belgian Franciscans and the secret society Gelaohui during the anti-Christian movement. The first two chapters introduced the local society of Enshi and mission history in this region. The relationships between missionaries and different groups of people in local society were analyzed after that. The last chapter analyzed four major anti-Christian incidents that took place in the Yangtze River Valley and three most prominent anti-Christian cases that took place in Enshi between 1890 and 1930. The argument of this thesis is that the anti-Christian activities in the Yangtze River Valley were mainly organized by the secret society Gelaohui, and the anti-Christian incidents in Enshi were just part of the larger movement in the Yangtze River Valley.
The argument that the secret society Gelaohui was the main organizer of the anti-Christian movement that took place in late nineteenth century Enshi is based on three factors. Firstly, Belgian Franciscans were experienced in dealing with the local people, and cultural conflict between missionaries and Chinese people was unlikely to become a main source of conflict. Belgian Franciscans reached Enshi in the eighteenth century. Before they arrived, they had worked in many other places in Hubei province, and gained much experience about how to deal with the local people. Despite the ethnic minority cultures and customs of Enshi, those missionaries did not encounter tough cultural conflict. Like everywhere else in China, Belgian missionaries established systematic institutions and organizations soon after they arrived. Despite some anti-Christian incidents, they succeeded and made progress.

Secondly, Belgian Franciscans in Enshi generally established peaceful working relationships with different groups of people except the secret society Gelaohui. Due to a series of treaties signed between the Qing government and Western powers after the Opium War, Christianity was approved and was protected by Chinese government. Under such overall political environment in the country, Chinese officials had to tolerate missionaries and sometimes support them. Despite some individuals’ dislike of Christianity, it seems unlikely that they were able to conduct big scale anti-Christian activities. Missionaries were also able to maintain a harmonious relationship with Chinese Christians and non-Christians in general.
However, the secret society Gelaohui kept finding troubles with the missionaries in Enshi. Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities started around 1870 and intensified after 1890.

Thirdly, case analysis of anti-Christian incidents that took place in the Yangtze River Valley and Enshi indicated that the Gelaohui organized most anti-Christian incidents in the entire Yangtze River Valley. Those anti-Christian incidents that took place in Enshi were part of the larger movement in the Yangtze River Valley. There were four major anti-Christian incidents in the Yangtze River Valley: the Wannna anti-Christian incident in 1876, the Li Hong incident in 1891, the Yangtze anti-Christian incident in 1891 and the Yu Dongchen revolt in Dazu County of Sichuan province in 1890 and 1898. Although these incidents started from different locations and were conducted using different methods, they shared the same leader, the Gelaohui. In Enshi, there were two major anti-Christian incidents in the late nineteenth century. The first one was priest Victorin Delbrouck’s murder in December 1898, and the second incident was the murder of Bishop Theotime Verhaeghen in 1904. The Gelaohui also organized these two incidents.

The anti-Christian incidents that took place in the late nineteenth century Enshi were possibly due to two reasons. Firstly, there were severe natural disasters during that period. The local gazetteer shows that before almost each big anti-Christian incident there was severe natural disaster in the region. Compared with most Chinese people, missionaries were quite rich. This naturally made them a target of secret societies. The Second Opium War was another
reason. The Gelaohui expanded greatly after the war and it became stronger than ever. There were also sources indicating that there might be a political purpose among Gelaohui leaders. They wanted to put the Qing government into conflict with the Western powers and gain political power in chaos. Although it is not clear which motivation was true, the fact that the Gelaohui organized most anti-Christian incidents in the Yangtze River Valley remains unchanged.

The Gelaohui had special working methods that contributed to their success. Spreading and manipulating antichristian rumors were the Gelaohui’s main weapon. They spread rootless antichristian rumors orally and with anonymous placards. This weapon proved to be very effective because Chinese commoners at that time were inclined to believe rumors and be misled by them. Chinese commoners believed rumors to be true despite explanations that these were false and rootless. Weak local government further worked in favor of the Gelaohui. Local government could not control the Gelaohui and the spread of antichristian rumors.

This thesis does not state that the cultural conflict between Western missionaries and Chinese did not exist at all; neither does it argue that everything Western missionaries did in China was good. What it argues is that the anti-Christian movement in the late nineteenth century Enshi was a movement organized by the secret society Gelaohui. There might be elements like cultural conflict or anytiforeignism in this movement, but the main organizer is the
Gelaohui. In fact, in many places of the Yangtze River Valley such as Anhui, Zhejiang, the situation was similar to what happened in Enshi. Seeing that the secret society Gelaohui was the main organizer during the anti-Christian movement in the Yangtze River Valley in the late nineteenth century, it is necessary to reconsider the essence of the anti-Christian movement in late nineteenth century China. To which extent does the anti-Christian movement represent the conflict between Christianity and Chinese traditional culture? To which extent does it represent the hatred of Chinese people toward Western missionaries as an imperialist enterprise? If it was not national, it is likely that at least in some places the anti-Christian movement was only a movement between missionaries and secret societies. Western missionaries’ close connection with Chinese society has made it inappropriate to ascribe the anti-Christian movement to any generalized cause. The anti-Christian movement was rather an antagonism between missionaries and the Gelaohui. Thus it is unreasonable to argue that the anti-Christian movement was only due to culture conflicts between missionaries and Chinese, western imperialism, or China’s xenophobia tradition.

After the discussion of the Gelaohui’s anti-Christian activities in the Yangtze River Valley and Enshi, some people may think that the Gelaohui sounds like the Boxers in North China. In fact, there were some similarities between them, such as both were anti-Christian organizations with thousands of armed members. However, there were also some differences between them. Firstly, the Boxers had vast support from the commoners and they were part of the commoners. Nevertheless, most of the Gelaohui members were outsiders of Chinese normal community. Secondly, the Boxers were not well organized. There was hardly any
connection between different troops. The Gelaohui of the Yangtze River Valley had common leader and was highly organized in the late nineteenth century. Thus, although they were all anti-Christian, the real stories behind the surface were greatly different.

The future direction of this thesis is to conduct a systematic research on motives of Gelaohui for persecution of missionaries. An analysis has been given out here. However, further strong and undisputable sources are needed in order to find more convincing answers. In addition, the question of to which extent did the secret societies stand for a Chinese commoner needs further research. Having pointed out the fact that the Gelaohui was the main organizer of the anti-Christian movement took place in the late nineteenth century Enshi and many places of the Yangtze River Valley, the author leaves remaining questions to future researchers.
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Changyang Archive: Archive at Changyang county of Yichang

Enshi Archive: Archive at Enshi County

HPA: Hubei Provincial Archive

KADOC: archive center in Catholic University of Leuven.

Sint-Truiden: The Franciscan Archive at Sint-Truiden, Belgium


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Shuijingwan  水井湾
Shui-king  水坑
Shuikousi  水口寺
Sichuan guanbao  四川官报
Sichuan  四川
Taipingjun  太平军
Tang Yuting  唐玉亭
Tiandihui  天地会
Tianshuijiao  天水教
Tongzhi  同治
Tu-di miao  土地庙
Tudi shen  土地神
Tujia  土家
Wang Jinlong  王金龙
Wangping  望坪
Wangzu  望族
Wannan  皖南
Wanxian  万县
Wu Tingjian  吴廷坚
Wu wei jiao  无为教
Wuchang  武昌
Wuchangfu  武昌府
Wuhu  芜湖
Wuling shan  武陵山
Wuxue  武穴
Wuyaba  乌鸦坝
Xianfeng  咸丰
Xiang Ce’an  向策安
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Xiangjun  湘军
Xiangxi Tujiazu Miaozu zizhizhou  湘西土家族苗族自治