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List of abbreviations

Archives

AAV	The Vatican Apostolic Archives
ACR	The Canossian Archives of Rome
AMB	The Bethlehem Missionary Society Archive, Lucerne State Archives
APF	The Propaganda Fide Historical Archives
BOD	Bodleian Libraries
GenArchivSCSC	The Institute Archive Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross Archives
PIME	Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions

Abbreviations used in the text

ABMAC	American Bureau for Medical Aid to China
EMSTS	Emergency Medical Service Training School
MRC	Medical Relief Corps
NAC	Nurses' Association of China
NLM	New Life Movement
PUMC	Peking Union Medical College
RSCS	Red Cross Society of China
SMB	Bethlehem Missionary Society
WAC	Women's Advisory Council
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Note on phonetic transcription

Chinese words and names are phonetically transcribed following the official system adopted in the People's Republic of China, known as *pinyin*. However, exceptions are made for certain personal names, such as Chiang Kai-shek, which retain their most commonly used transcriptions. In citations sourced from archival documents or texts using different Latinization systems, Chinese terms remain unchanged, with the *pinyin* transcription also provided in brackets for clarity. The most frequently recurring names with different transcriptions are Heilongjiang (Heilungkiang), Qiqihar (Tsitsikar), Hankou (Hankow), Guluba (Kulupa), Hanzhong (Hanchungfu), Zhaozhou (Laochengji). Furthermore, some names and/or nicknames have been preserved in their original form as found in the original documents, e.g. Li-té-té. In the case of proper personal names, especially for Catholic women with both a non-Western and a Western name, the Western name is prefixed to the surname, (Giuseppina Kwok Kuo), or the Western name is only indicated with the Chinese surname (Teresa Yip, Agnes Ly, Maria Chang).

Introduction

With only a few exceptions who have become humanitarian icons during the twentieth century, women in the relief work have been partially written out of Chinese history.[1] This is true of the volumes published about China and the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War (1937-1945).[2] Yet it is possible to uncover and understand more deeply life stories from this hidden history. Scholars have investigated women's activism in humanitarian or voluntary organizations in the United States, Europe, India, and Saudi Arabia, observing, among other things, how crucial were women's contributions to the humanitarian

[1] One famous case is Zhou Meiyu 周美玉 (1910–2001), renowned to be one of the most important nurses, and director of the nursing unit of the Chinese Red Cross Society Medical Relief Corps (MRC). Through her medical professional training, competency, and networks, she established nursing training programs within the Chinese army. See Pengyuan Zhang and Jiurong Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1993); Nicole Elizabeth Barnes, *Protecting the National Body: Gender and Public Health in Southwest China during the War with Japan, 1937-1945* (Irvine: University of California, 2012); Dewen Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945' (Stony Brook University, 2015).

[2] The war that impacted China during the period between 1937 and 1945 has been presented with numerous designations. On the Chinese mainland as well as in Taiwan, the armed hostilities of 1937-1945 are referred to as the *Kangri zhanzheng* 抗日战争, which translates to the War of Resistance to Japan, abbreviated as *Kangzhan* 抗战, meaning Resistance War. In Japan and the Western world, this conflict is frequently identified by the appellation of the Second Sino-Japanese War. On a broader scale, the conflict that spanned from 1937 to 1945 is frequently intertwined with the global turmoil of the Second World War (1937-1945). As applied by Diana Lary, Rana Mitter, and other many historians, I will use this term in reference to the Resistance War against the Japanese aggression. See Diana Lary, *China's Civil War: A Social History, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6; Rana Mitter, *A bitter revolution: China's struggle with the modern world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* (US: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014); David S. G. Goodman, *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000); Danke Li, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (US: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Nicole Elizabeth Barnes, *Intimate Communities: Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937-1945* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

area.[3] Furthermore, as one of the most accessible forms of public activity for women, charity and philanthropy played a significant role in helping women adjust to public life. However, very little has been said about women's contribution to charitable/philanthropic activities in China, even if charity has been an authorized field for women throughout Chinese history. Perhaps, it will be impossible to find out the nurses' names or the happy, smiling faces of the women who worked in China. Still, their presence aims to offer a representation of how many of them successfully integrated into relief work in wartime.

This dissertation focuses on the role of women in relief activities during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945) from a transnational and transcultural perspective. It investigates the complex ways in which Western and Chinese women together repositioned themselves in the public sphere through charitable, humanitarian, and religious activities in a crucial historical period that witnessed significant global changes. The intimacy that Chinese and foreign women developed in their relief work and with war victims can help us answer an enduring question in modern Chinese history: how did relief work in a transnational context offer a public agency space for Chinese and foreign women during wartime China?

The research argues that relief practices in China deserve scholarly consideration as a significant area of inquiry in women and relief work in transnational history, by attempting to contribute to the larger contemporary debate about gender in transnational and global history.[4] Several factors have contributed to bringing attention to this as-yet-unexplored topic. First, there was significant female participation during the war in China, but it has not been studied,

[3] See the volume on gender in humanitarian history edited by Esther Möller, Johannes Paulmann, and Katharina Stornig, *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century: Practice, Politics and the Power of Representation*. Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (The Netherlands: Springer Nature, 2020).

[4] The issue of women in transnational history is debated among many historians. See Peter N. Stearns, *Gender in World History*, Fourth Edition, Themes in World History (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022); Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'Crossing Borders in Transnational Gender History', *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 3 (November 2011): 357–79, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022811000374; Mary Louise Roberts, 'The Transnationalization of Gender History', *History and Theory* 44, no. 3 (October 2005): 456–68, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2005.00336.x; Clare Midgley, Alison Twells, and Julie Carlier, eds., *Women in Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016). Liat Kozma, 'Going Transnational: On Mainstreaming Middle East Gender Studies', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 3 (August 2016): 574–77, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743816000532.

except to a small extent.[5] There is, therefore, a valid reason to shed light on something that needs to be sufficiently investigated. Second, these years were crucial and transformative in the process of women's emancipation, both in China and in war-torn nations in the West. Nonetheless, it is a relatively unexamined issue for a phase that was a moment of profound and decisive change on a global scale for the condition of women, strictly connected to the war.[6] The Second World War was not just battles and revolutions, it was a modern war and the first truly great modern war in China that involved the civilian population on a mass scale.[7] Therefore, these are crucial years in which to analyze the issue of women's activism. In China, this topic has been expressed in nationalist and feminist narratives, but a deeper understanding of how relief work activities smoothed women moving into civil society through care work is still necessary. During the twentieth century, the assumption of a gender-

[5] For a discussion on women's activism and resistance femininity during the War of Resistance against Japan, see Han Hanan 韩贺南, Wang Xiangmei 王向梅, and Li Huibo 李慧波, *Zhongguo Funü Yu Kangri Zhanzheng* 中国妇女与抗日战争 *[Chinese Women and the War of Resistance Against Japan]* (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2015); Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945'; Nicole Elizabeth Barnes, *Intimate Communities: Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937-1945* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); David S. G. Goodman, 'Revolutionary Women and Women in the Revolution: The Chinese Communist Party and Women in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937–1945', *The China Quarterly* 164 (December 2000): 915–42, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000019238; Danke Li, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Pan Yihong, 'Feminism and Nationalism in China's War of Resistance against Japan', *The International History Review* 19, no. 1 (March 1997): 115–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.1997.9640778.

[6] For a discussion on women's activism during the Second World War, see D'Ann Campbell, 'Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union', *The Journal of Military History* 57, no. 2 (April 1993): 301, https://doi.org/10.2307/2944060; Julia Brock et al., eds., *Beyond Rosie: A Documentary History of Women and World War II* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2015); Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II*, 1. (New York, NY London Toronto Sydney: Free Press, 2005).

[7] For a discussion on the social history of the Second World War in China and wartime mobilization, see Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*, New Approaches to Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Hans J Van De Ven, *War and Nationalism in China: 1925-1945* (London: Routledge, 2003); Rana Mitter, 'Classifying Citizens in Nationalist China during World War II, 1937–1941', *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (March 2011): 243–75, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X1100014X; Stephen R. MacKinnon and Robert Capa, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

neutral division of scientific labor was not widely accepted. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable within the Catholic realm. The field of medicine serves as a prominent example, where mission hospitals reflected a dual system of dominance based on both work and gender. Male missionaries held the positions of doctors, while females were assigned the role of nurses. The transition towards employing non-religious staff in these institutions caused changes in the gender hierarchy of the workforce. Furthermore, women played a significant role in the work sector of care, primarily rooted in the family system and intended as a polysemic concept defined by Buch as:

> Alternately referring to everyday practices, engagements with biomedicine, biopolitics, affective states, forms of moral experience and obligation, structures of exploitation, and the relationships between these various things.[8]

It highlights these diverse facets of care, illustrating its multidimensional and dynamic nature, and encompasses personal assistance and charitable organizations involved in humanitarian actions and healthcare.[9] Third, this issue has yet to be investigated as far as relief work is concerned. Indeed, if on the one hand, the war was destruction, poverty, and suffering, on the other it boosted the development of numerous relief activities and rescue operations, framed within the humanitarian dimension as a significant phenomenon since the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[10] In particular, within a gendering humanitarianism dimension, my research explores how much space women had, what they accomplished, and what it may

[8] Elana D. Buch, 'Anthropology of Aging and Care', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (2015): 277–93, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-014254, 279.

[9] Séverine Gabry-Thienpont and Norig Neveu, 'Missions and the Construction of Gender in the Middle East: Introduction', *Social Sciences and Missions* 34, no. 1–2 (11 May 2021): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1163/18748945-03401005.

[10] For a discussion on the birth of modern humanitarianism and humanitarian practices, see Abigail Green, 'Humanitarianism in Nineteenth-Century Context: Religious, Gendered, National', *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 1157–75; Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); for a discussion on gendered humanitarianism during the twentieth century, see Möller, Paulmann, and Stornig, *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century*.

have implied in terms of social hierarchies, reproduction, or nonreproduction of certain gender stereotypes.

Research on the relationship between women and care is significant for the study of relief work in the specific condition of war.[11] This brings us to the other field of gendered dimensions of military conflicts. Recently, scholars have thoroughly presented women in the study of war and conflicts, focusing mostly on how girls and women were involved.[12] It is a significant issue since it crosses national borders to examine the nature of the gender regimes discussed in relief efforts during the war in a highly international and transcultural context. Women's engagement in relief work served as a window into which gender shaped the meanings of war and nation-building in modern China. At the same time, it offered an opportunity to re-discuss women's social values and traditional roles.

The narrative of this dissertation meets the findings of Xia Shi who analyzes a group of non-married women without professional careers, adopting a special perspective to study how they repositioned themselves in the public field through participating in charitable and philanthropic activities during the late Qing and Republican years.[13] Jane Hunter also narrates the American missionary experience in China at the turn of the century, and how they express their desire for self-liberation in the language of self-sacrifice.[14] However, both studies focus on the prewar period, although they mention important issues regarding charitable and missionary work in China. Consequently, my research allows us to gain a better understanding of social and cultural change in China during the turbulent years of the war from a transnational perspective. Indeed, my study examines the critical role the War of

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[11] See Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (United States: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Elspeth Cameron Ritchie and Anne L. Naclerio, eds., *Women at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Elizabeth Norman, *Women at War: The Story of Fifty Military Nurses Who Served in Vietnam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[12] Joyce P Kaufman and Kristen P Williams, *Women and War: Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict*, 2014. Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict. Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), http://www.journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1743923X14000300. Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War: ICRC Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women* (Geneva: ICRC, 2001).

[13] Xia Shi, *At Home in the World: Women and Charity in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[14] Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

Resistance against Japan played in China's humanitarian projects and the building of a modern state. The wartime and its aftermath affected humanitarian work in China, leading to significant changes in humanitarian projects and emphasizing the importance of networks and of individual agents in providing aid for the suffering of both, the Nationalist government and the Japanese occupation regime.[15] Liu Lu's work on governmental investment in a centralized welfare service for refugees indicates that even if operative organizations such as the National Government's Development and Relief Commission, which transferred nine million refugees to Western provinces, the demands of those who were displaced back to the Eastern provinces at the end of the war in September 1945 surpassed the resource capacity of the central government once more.[16] During the war, volunteers from different national and international relief organizations offered aid to civilians and soldiers in difficult war situations. Robert Mamlok focuses on the international medical relief corps revealing how many doctors began as physicians without national borders in their struggle against Japan, yet quickly became men and women without countries and ultimately enemy aliens of all of the combatants in World War II.[17] Particularly, as Nicole Barnes illustrates, women who operated as nurses, doctors, and midwives used their therapeutic work to establish emotional connections with soldiers and civilians in China, beyond social class, gender, and language.[18]

The dissertation increases the field of foreign and Chinese women's history, enabling a deeper comprehension of the contributions women made in relief work, particularly within the realm of the Red Cross and the Catholic female orders, as I will illustrate in the next pages. I examine what global connections provided opportunities for women working in relief activities, and how these efforts tapped into the so-called feminine virtue and merged the virtuous women—self-sacrificing, frugal, generous, caring and helpful—with that of a nurse and a nun. In this research, indeed, the connection between religion and humanitarianism is very close and it is analyzed through the aspect of gender, as revealed in detail in the following chapters. A deeper understanding of the reasons and outcomes of the aid provided

[15] Tohmatsu Haruo, 'The Strategic Correlation between the Sino-Japanese and Pacific Wars', in *The Battle for China. Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 441.

[16] Lu Liu, 'A Whole Nation Walking. The "Great Retreat" in the War of Resistance, 1937-1945' (Ph.D. Dissertation, San Diego, University of California, 2002), 235.

[17] Robert Mamlok, *The International Medical Relief Corps in Wartime China, 1937-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2018).

[18] Barnes, *Intimate Communities*.

by the Red Cross and Catholic missions can be gained by analyzing the strategies used by these organizations and individuals within the specific national and local contexts in China. Thus, how does the comprehension of religion fit into the gendered humanitarian scenery?

Drafting the intersection between humanitarianism, religion and China's relief work projects

This study employs Barnett and Weiss' definition of humanitarianism, intended as a fundamentally modern phenomenon, as a fluid concept, with the main focus on assisting people, humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, and doing noble actions.[19] The suffix "ism" expresses a whole arrangement of principles, practices, and discourses that are identifiable as "humanitarian", though variable and able to change rapidly. In China humanitarianism is grafted onto two phenomena: one is local charities and the other is the intersection with the religious element.[20] The context in which this takes place is marked by colonialism, imperialism and nationalism and, in this dissertation, it is analyzed within the issue of relief work.

The modern humanitarian organization has its origins in the Christian evangelical tradition of the mid-1800s, when zealous supporters were at the vanguard of a significant transformation movement, pursuing to abolish slavery, improve prisons, and found humane structures for the cure of the mentally ill. Henri Dunant, Florence Nightingale, and many other philanthropists appeared in public during this transformation period. In the same era, Western mission societies, regularly operating in close contact with colonial governments, began to set out to Christianize the world. The missionary inheritance has been strongly condemned for its position in justifying colonialism, imposing Western beliefs, and belittling local practices. Concurrently, it is unquestionable that missionaries were a globalizing power:

[19] Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, 'Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present', in *Humanitarianism in Question*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 10-11.

[20] Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光 and Zeng Guilin 曾桂林, *Zhongguo Cishan Jianshi* 中国慈善. 简史 *[Charity in China: A Brief History]* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006); André Laliberté, David A. Palmer, and Wu Keping, 'Religious Philanthropy and Chinese Civil Society', in *Chinese Religious Life*, ed. David A. Palmer, Glenn Shive, and Philip L. Wickeri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139–50, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199731398.003.0009.

missionaries returning to Western countries from East Asia and Africa brought with them reports of different and singular worlds, leading several church members to an international committee that would then not have been imaginable. It is partially this missionary heritage that produces a sense of uneasiness in relations between Christian organizations and secular ones, between Christian organizations and other faith-based organizations, and occasionally between Christian organizations themselves.[21]

In China, the concept of modern humanitarianism was a belief system in its own terms, connected to the birth of modern China in the early twentieth century. The notion of humanitarianism (*rendao zhuyi* 人道主义) has passed through several interpretations, affected by the structural characteristics of the Chinese political organization.[22] This dissertation engages with the discourses among several scholars who have illuminated the role humanitarianism played in China throughout history. From the late Ming era and throughout the Qing Dynasty, many imperial officials, literati, and philanthropic merchants attempted to institutionalize and routinize concern for the poor and the people during emergencies by raising awareness of fundraising and donations. For instance, institutions aimed at distributing relief over the long time were promoted, such as government-sponsored homes for the poor (*Yangjiyuan* 仰给园), state orphanages (*Yuyingtang* 育婴堂), hospitals and dispensaries

[21] Elizabeth Ferris, 'Faith and Humanitarianism: It's Complicated', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (1 September 2011): 606–25, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer028, 609.

[22] The term was born as a combination of Chinese and Western thoughts. According to Zhang Ke, during the late 1920s, the debate on *Rendaozhuyi* which predominated during the May Fourth era, diminished in public opinion. In the 1930s, it was not even included in the plan of "Chinese modernization". The use of term *Rendaozhuyi* in public debates dramatically reduced. Ke Zhang, 'The Concept of "Rendaozhuyi" in Late Qing and Early Republican China', *Cultura* 16, no. 2 (1 January 2019): 105–17, https://doi.org/10.3726/CUL022019.0007, 115. In the West, various proposals of distinct periods of humanitarianism were provided, drawing either on geopolitical or socioeconomic issues that regulated humanitarian engagement. Michael Barnett suggested to classify ages of "imperial humanitarianism" (up to 1945), "neo-humanitarianism" (1945–1989), and "liberal humanitarianism." See Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*. Norbert Götz, Georgina Brewis, and Steffen Werther advocated of the socioeconomic and cultural methodology, claiming that there were ages of "ad hoc humanitarianism" (up to c. 1900), "organized humanitarianism" (c. 1900–1970), and "expressive humanitarianism" (since 1970). They proposed we could currently be coming into "a novel kind of defensive humanitarianism with roots in the expressive age, with automated interfaces, and with thick 'firewalls' between donors and recipients." See Norbert Götz, Georgina Brewis, and Steffen Werther, *Humanitarianism in the Modern World: The Moral Economy of Famine Relief* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 307.

(*Huimin yaoju* 惠民药局) and the construction of public housing and schools.[23] In the late Ming era, the conception of philanthropy (*gonggong liyi* 公共利益) and charity (*cishan* 慈善) in Chinese society went beyond individual and family boundaries, and various forms of social aggregation whose main objective was the welfare of the extended community were established. The first organizations were the Benevolent Societies, whose main tasks were to provide financial aid to disadvantaged widows, bury or cremate unclaimed bodies, set up temporary soup kitchens for the poor, and grant capital to doctors who could be useful to the community.[24]

Scholars argued that China had a long history of benevolent activities. Joanna Handlin Smith revealed how a great desire for saving lives in late Ming society gave rise to charitable institutions that surpassed family, class, and religious limitations. In particular, the newly emerged organizations were "locally sponsored, voluntary, widespread, and enduring", not to be mistaken with the "state-sponsored, sporadic, and temporary" relief institutions of the Song dynasty.[25] According to her, the new societies were born thanks to several factors, including "the growing importance of merchant wealth, the acquiescence on the part of scholars to the rhetoric of commerce, and the tightening of bonds between merchants and gentry."[26] The terms used to define these organizations were different; they were often mentioned as *tongshanhui* 同善会, which literally means benevolence sharing society, *tongrenhui* 同仁会, shared humanity society, or *guangrenhui* 广仁会, which is translated into humanity spreading society. Despite the use of different names, the activities carried out by these societies remain almost unchanged. Caroline Reeves uses the Chinese term *shantang* 善堂 to identify these organizations.[27] In the nineteenth century, foreign missionaries who first studied their history and philosophy labeled them with the English term Benevolent Societies.[28] Historian

[23] Joanna Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 418.

[24] Joanna F. Handlin Smith, 'Benevolent Societies: The Reshaping of Charity During the Late Ming and Early Ch'ing', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (May 1987): 309–37, https://doi.org/10.2307/2056017.

[25] Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, 310.

[26] Smith, 330.

[27] Intended as nurseries, nursing homes or other charities.

[28] Caroline Beth Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937' (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University, 1998), 7.

Vivienne Shue also demonstrated the persistence of certain Confucian values and practices in the establishment of *shantang* in Tianjin during the early twentieth century, characterized by a surge of modernity and consequent social and economic changes.[29] They presented many similarities with the Red Cross. Firstly, both organizations were voluntary, private, and long-lasting. The Societies of Benevolence were the first form of relief organized by the people for the people whose membership was voluntary and whose purpose was not for profit.[30] The continuity aimed at by the Benevolence Societies differentiated them from the previous charitable institutions China had experienced over the years, through which the need for the creation of relief organizations was defined by the emergency and fulfilled after the crisis was over.

According to Caroline Reeves, since the beginning of Chinese investment in the Red Cross in 1904, the society allowed social elites to put forth their modernizing ideas of the country. She considers the relationship between social power and medical philanthropy: she reveals that twentieth-century philanthropy projected local elites into national visibility as they performed the traditionally sanctioned yet appealingly modern activity of medical relief in the Red Cross model. While private influence over Red Cross affairs failed in favor of the expansion of state power during the Nanjing Decade, she argues that this effect mirrored the nature of the country's civil society, which developed as an intermediate realm linked to the state.[31] The peculiarity of the Red Cross develops from the investment of private philanthropists, of reform-oriented officials, as Chi Zihua analyzes, and also from the devoted encouragement of the population for its various activities.[32] He reveals a narrative of the Red Cross as a special humanitarian group in Chinese history and proposes that its unicity outcomes from the investment of private philanthropists, reform-oriented officials, and the loyal support of the population for its various activities. One key aspect that differentiated the Chinese Red Cross from other Red Cross agencies was its forced involvement in the

[29] Vivienne Shue, 'The Quality of Mercy: Confucian Charity and the Mixed Metaphors of Modernity in Tianjin', *Modern China* 32, no. 4 (October 2006): 411–52, https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700406291788.

[30] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会 [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross]', *Shi Lin* 史林 2 (2005): 76–81.

[31] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 169.

[32] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]* (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 2003), 115.

development of military medical services. Diana Lary explains that during the Republican era soldiers were a disadvantaged social group and their lives were occupied with drills by superiors, malnourishment, inadequate clothing and accommodation, opium smoking, and prostitution. Assistance for wounded soldiers on the battlefield was not considered a primary objective of military reforms.[33] Thus, unlike in other countries, the Chinese Red Cross remained separated from military affairs.

My dissertation considers the secular and religious character of humanitarian work. Indeed, over time, the secularization of humanitarianism was reflected in the religious dimension. The introduction of the Red Cross features into the agenda of a faith-based humanitarian agency, for instance, endorses Alastair and Joey Agar's idea, according to which humanitarianism is functionally secular but pervaded by religious principles. The narrative of modern humanitarian aid as "secular humanitarianism" supported by an ideology that declares its roots in Christianity, but which describes modern humanitarian activities as separate from religion, is not well appropriate to calculate faith-based humanitarian relief and its involvement in the development of international humanitarianism.[34] Therefore, the investigation of the approach of a faith-based group toward the Red Cross is important in order to consider how the Red Cross prototype facilitated the development of relief works beyond the secularist representation.

Given the situation that was inherited during the early years of the twentieth century in the realms of faith-based humanitarianism and relief organizations in China, Christians, including Catholic missionaries were protagonists. Christianity in China has been surviving since the seventh century.[35] As Giovagnoli and Giunipero argue, China has always represented a significant challenge for Christians, remaining elusive to profound evangelization efforts. Catholicism, in particular, has been perceived by the Chinese not merely as a foreign religion but, especially from the Opium Wars onwards, and with the colonial penetration of Western powers, as the religion of the dominators who had humiliated

[33] Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937*, Contemporary China Institute Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 57.

[34] Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, 'Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 456–72, 457-458.

[35] Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, Blackwell Guides to Global Christianity (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

the nation.[36] With the onset of the Republican era, a notable surge in missionary activities was observed, marked by the arrival of numerous new religious orders and the initiation of various charitable and educational endeavors. Despite facing strong opposition from local elites who were devoted to Confucianism and regarded the missionaries as representatives of Western imperialism, these missionaries were successful in establishing educational institutions, hospitals, and dispensaries. Their efforts played a crucial role in the process of Westernization that occurred in China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An illustrative example is the abolition of the imperial examination system in the early twentieth century, which was carried out by reformers who were fascinated by Western models of modernization. [37] Christian missionaries in China primarily focused on establishing clinics and hospitals, as well as providing nurse training. They also laid the foundation for educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities, many of which eventually became renowned Chinese universities. Furthermore, as Varg explains, they actively campaigned against practices such as foot binding and the mistreatment of maidservants. In addition, they engaged in charitable endeavors, including the provision of treatment for opium addicts and the distribution of food to the poor.[38]

The era spanning from the Boxer Rebellion to the War of Resistance in China is widely regarded by scholars as a period of substantial advancement for Christianity. During this time, the number of converts witnessed a rapid surge, and churches were constructed across different regions of the country. Notably, American missionaries played a pivotal role in facilitating this expansion. Between 1890 and 1914, the number of missionaries increased from 513 to over 2.000, and by 1920, it reached 8.325. Additionally, American institutions, including universities, colleges, professional schools, theology schools, and medical schools, were established, signifying an investment of $19 million. By 1920, there were 265 Christian middle schools with a student enrollment of 15.213, along with numerous elementary

[36] Agostino Giovagnoli and Elisa Giunipero (edited by), *Chiesa cattolica e mondo cinese tra colonialismo ed evangelizzazione (1840-1911)* (Roma: Urbaniana University Press, 2005).

[37] Paul A. Varg, 'Missionaries and Relations Between the United States and China in the Late Nineteenth Century', *World Affairs Quarterly*, July 1956, 115-158.

[38] For detailed history of Christian mission in the late Qing years, see Alvyn Austin, *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832-1905*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2007).

schools.[39] Christian missionaries played a significant role in medical work and healthcare services in China. Starting from the late 1800s, Western medical missionaries were instrumental in introducing modern clinics, hospitals, and nursing training programs, thus establishing the foundation for the advancement of modern medicine in the country.[40] By 1901, China had become a highly desirable destination for medical missionaries, with 150 foreign physicians overseeing 128 hospitals and 245 dispensaries. These institutions provided medical care to approximately 1.7 million patients. During the early twentieth century, international missionary organizations took the lead in introducing modern medical education in China, primarily through hospitals under their administration.[41] Although nurse training schools were established by these organizations in mainland China as early as the late 1880s, the practice of nursing by female nurses faced initial resistance due to local cultural traditions. Consequently, the number of Chinese students in nursing programs remained low until the 1930s, when the nursing profession began to gain wider acceptance among young girls and women.[42]

In addition, the transformations within Chinese society and the demands of local Christians positioned China as the inspirational focal point for a novel missionary strategy advocated through the apostolic letter *Maximum illud* in 1919 by Pope Benedict XV.[43] Emphasis was placed on the significance of establishing local Churches and congregations, alongside the reiterated necessity for a rigorous cultural preparation of missionaries. In the twenties, Monsignor Celso Costantini was sent to China as Apostolic Delegate to administer the implementation of the missionary approach involving the inculturation of Catholicism.[44] In 1924, the Shanghai Council was convened, and in 1926 the local episcopate was

[39] Varg, 'Missionaries and Relations Between the United States and China in the Late Nineteenth Century', 115-158.

[40] G. H. Choa, *'Heal the Sick' Was Their Motto: The Protestant Medical Missionaries in China* (Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990).

[41] Henry Otis Dwight, Edwin Munsell Bliss, and H. Allen Tupper, *The Encyclopedia of Missions* (New York, London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1904), https://archive.org/details/cu31924029338187/page/200/mode/1up., 446.

[42] Kaiyi Chen, 'Missionaries and the Early Development of Nursing in China', *Nursing History Review* 4, no. 1 (January 1996): 129–49, https://doi.org/10.1891/1062-8061.4.1.129.

[43] See Andrea Riccardi and Agostino Giovagnoli, *Roma e Pechino. La svolta extraeuropea di Benedetto XV* (Roma: Studium, 1999).

[44] Ruggero Simonato, *Celso Costantini tra rinnovamento cattolico in Italia e le nuove missioni in Cina* (Pordenone: Concordia Sette, 1987).

established with the consecration of the first six Chinese bishops in Rome by Pius XI (Achille Ratti, 1857-1939). A proliferation of male and female religious orders, designed for local members, began their establishment during this period of missionary activity and ecclesiastical development in China. These orders represented an organized response to the evolving religious landscape and the burgeoning interest in Catholicism within the indigenous population. The formation and nurturing of such orders were deeply embedded in the strategy of enculturating the Catholic faith, aiming to resonate with the cultural, social, and spiritual sensibilities of the local populace. This proactive approach played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of ownership and involvement among the Chinese faithful, thus contributing to the growth and sustainability of the Catholic Church within the Chinese context.

The interplay between gender, nationalism and colonialism in women's emancipation

In line with the editors of the volume *Gendering global humanitarianism in the twentieth century*, it is necessary in this research to consider gender as an analytical category that intersects with ethnicity, class, age, and religion in order to produce, strengthen and challenge global inequalities.[45] Thus, the analysis addresses another question: looking at the interaction between Chinese and Western women within the relief work, how did gender, nationalism, and colonialism influence the conception of care and relief work in China? Was there an implicit colonialist, paternalistic dimension perceived through the female question? The study is placed with regard to the previous discourses on gender and colonialism within the humanitarian field. According to Abigail Green, historical studies of humanitarianism since the nineteenth century are mostly about the analysis of compassionate people in action by "their identification with the suffering of distant others" in certain situations and circumstances.[46] Many of those people were women, nevertheless, their involvement has often remained overlooked by scholars who did not take into consideration gender-biased structures and power relations in humanitarian discourses and practices. Particularly, several women who were not at the forefront of the humanitarian reform movements of their time remained

[45] Möller, Paulmann, and Stornig, *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century*, 10.

[46] Abigail Green, 'Humanitarianism in Nineteenth-Century Context: Religious, Gendered, National', *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 1157–75, 1160.

ignored. Meanwhile, famous women such as Josephine Butler (1828–1906), Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) or Eglantyne Jebb (1876–1828) became humanitarian icons well-known all over the world.[47] Florence Nightingale, for instance, proposed improvements in the profession of nursing, which were adopted by Western humanitarian and medical organizations and which the Chinese Red Cross took up.[48] Considering recent research that sheds light on often-neglected experiences, women's efforts were crucial to modern humanitarianism, supporting notable voluntary work and preparing basic conditions for the emergence of humanitarian associations. Thus, Green and other scholars appealed for a more detailed analysis focusing on women in humanitarianism with the purpose of better comprehending female activism in a period when structures and dogmas of gender mostly discriminated against them in the political field.[49]

The partial study of Chinese women's humanitarian activities is unexpected, considering the predominant belief that women are natural channels of care and compassion worldwide. The Confucian notion of benevolence, *ren* 仁, highlights that woman by nature is more compassionate and therefore better suited to humanitarian activities. Nadine Amsler's book addresses a previously unaddressed topic in history by examining how seventeenth-

[47] Florence Nightingale, a renowned British nurse, is considered the founder of modern nursing, as she was the first to apply the scientific method through the use of statistics. She intuited that to improve the outcomes of British health care it was necessary to start working on some fundamental concepts, such as hygiene of environments and lifestyles, organization of social welfare services, and the helping relationship with the sick. She also proposed an organization of field hospitals. Josephine Elizabeth Butler was a British activist, feminist and social reformer of the Victorian age. She supported the campaign for women's suffrage, the right to a better education for women, and the abolition of child prostitution. Eglantyne Jebb, after her studies at Oxford, became a Red Cross lady during the First World War. During her service, she was greatly affected by the suffering inflicted by the war on children and had therefore thought it necessary to affirm some basic rights proper to children. On May 19, 1919, in London, Eglantyne Jebb together with her sister Dorothy Frances founded the Save the Children Fund organization to defend and promote the rights of children. See Mark Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and Her Legend* (London: Penguin Books, 2009); Nancy Boyd, *Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, Florence Nightingale: Three Victorian Women Who Changed Their World* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Clare Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010).

[48] Victor Skretkowicz, ed., *Florence Nightingale's notes on nursing: what it is and what it is not & Notes on nursing for the labouring classes: commemorative edition with historical commentary* (New York: Springer, 2010).

[49] Green, 'Humanitarianism in Nineteenth-Century Context: Religious, Gendered, National', 1169.

century Jesuits adapted to Confucian masculinity in China, their beliefs and actions regarding interactions with Chinese women, and the important role Chinese Catholic women played in shaping a form of Christianity that was practiced within the household. Her research also highlights the significance of the domestic sphere as a place of religious practice, specifically focusing on the gendered roles and responsibilities that women had in fulfilling religious rituals within Chinese culture.[50] Around the late nineteenth century, while women started to appear in public, China had great participation in social charity and relief, increased by the incoming natural disasters and military conflicts with Western powers and Japan. For example, Jin Shi 金氏, a female Chinese doctor, after graduating in medicine in the United States, returned to China and collaborated with foreign volunteers to treat wounded soldiers and establish a temporary emergency hospital.[51] According to Chi Zihua's research, Jinshi seems to coincide with the figure of Jin Yunmei 金韵梅 (1864-1934), the first Chinese woman trained abroad who, once returned to China at the time of the Sino-Japanese war, tried to establish the Red Cross in Tianjin together with the merchant Sun Gan. However, there is insufficient evidence to attribute the creation of the Red Cross in China to her and her foreign collaborators. No further evidence has been obtained on the true identity of this figure, however, if Jin Yunmei had managed to get her organization approved by allowing China to enter the Geneva Convention, she could have been considered the pioneer of the movement in China.[52]

Following the models of Western medicine, the Chinese Red Cross encouraged the development of nursing. The society supported Chinese women's education in the medical professions and cooperated with Western hospitals. During the Republican period, the Chinese Red Cross remained faithful to the goal of improving health conditions through the propagation of Western medicine and the consolidation of national defense, despite the absence of proper medical infrastructure. Even if they were not totally new to the Chinese due to the presence of medical missionaries from the mid-nineteenth century, the Western medical

[50] Nadine Amsler, *Jesuits and Matriarchs: Domestic Worship in Early Modern China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 4.

[51] Min Jie 闵杰, *Jindai Zhongguo Shehui Wenhua Shi* 近代中国社会文化史 *[The History of Social and Culture in Modern China]*, vol. 2 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1998), 182-183.

[52] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会 [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross]'.

cure was unfamiliar to most Chinese.[53] In general, Western medicine was frequently used as a supplement to long-established practices. For instance, as Michelle Renshaw highlights, Western-style hospitals and their medical facilities introduced new principles in realms such as the organization of patients, gender partitions, and interaction between patients and doctors. Nevertheless, she summed up that the Western conception was "sinicized" and regulated according to local environments.[54] In order to educate the Chinese population, Western organizations engaged social workers such as the Peking Union Medical College (PUMC), founded by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1915. It was the first modern hospital in China and also a notable training institute for nurses, midwives, and doctors many of whom worked for the Chinese Red Cross.[55] As my thesis reveals, Chinese women were represented as heroines in the field of nursing during the war, carrying out considerable activities behind the fighting lines.[56] Through the media and the local press, the Chinese government aimed to promote a sense of national unity, inspire patriotism, and encourage more women to participate in relief efforts. It effectively conveyed the message that women were indispensable in the war effort, specifically in their roles as caregivers, nurses, volunteers, and providers of humanitarian aid.[57] Particularly, some women from the elite class played a significant role in promoting a

[53] Joseph Needham, Gwei-Djen Lu, and Nathan Sivin, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 54.

[54] Michelle Renshaw, *Accommodating the Chinese: The American Hospital in China, 1880-1920*, 1. issued in paperback, East Asia: History, Politics, Sociology, Culture (London: Routledge, 2013), 61.

[55] Stefani Pfeiffer, 'Still Arguing Over Cost: Bargaining, Etiquette and the Modern Patient in Republican Beijing', *Asian Medicine* 1, no. 2 (16 July 2005): 355–86, https://doi.org/10.1163/157342105777996601.

[56] A. Sharpe, 'Chinese Nurses Perform Heroic Deeds', *The China Weekly Review (1923-1950)*, 25 December 1937, 135.

[57] To gain a comprehensive understanding of Chinese war propaganda, see Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). On specific topics see also Louise Edwards, 'Drawing Sexual Violence in Wartime China: Anti-Japanese Propaganda Cartoons', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 3 (August 2013): 563–86, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911813000521; Parks M. Coble, 'Writing About Atrocity: Wartime Accounts and Their Contemporary Uses', *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (2011): 379–98; Laura De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan Ertong" (The Resistance Child)"', *Oriens Extremus* 53 (2014): 61–84; Laura Pozzi, '"Chinese Children Rise Up!": Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War"', *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture* 1, no. 4 (2015): 333–63.

particular model of female commitment to philanthropic activities during wartime China, one of them was Song Meiling.

The status of women was also deeply influenced by Catholicism since missionary orders arrived in China. Indeed, in the twentieth century, Catholicism went through significant changes in response to various social, cultural, and political developments. As the ancient literati class waned, a new wave of young intellectuals, educated in Western nations, emerged onto the scene. This shift significantly heightened the permeation and influence of Western ideas and philosophical perspectives. The discussions surrounding these changes also acknowledged the importance of women's emancipation, which became intertwined with the broader objective of spreading Catholicism. [58] As Sue Bradshaw illustrates, around 1900 there were more than 500 local sisters in Catholic congregations. In the following years, between 1900 and 1914, Chinese Catholics reached 1.519.000. New groups of Chinese religious women rose nearly every year. By the mid-1930s there were forty-two Chinese congregations with 2.403 followers, and among fifty foreign orders, twenty-two included 1.016 Chinese Sisters and 1.693 foreigners. In addition, 6.211 virgins operated as catechists and teachers for the Church. They not only worked in the sacristies, catechumenates, schools, hospitals, and orphanages but also helped to assist industrial schools and to create printing newspapers for the people at the missions.[59]

Western female members of religious orders made efforts to promote the idea that Catholicism could serve as a means of emancipation for Chinese women. In contrast to Protestant women missionaries who often accompanied their husbands as wives, Catholic nuns, as noted by Anthony Clark, participated in the mission as part of religious orders and had distinct responsibilities such as teaching, healthcare, and other social service-related

[58] For a historical overview of the main developments in the theory and practice of Christian mission in the twentieth century, see Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gabry-Thienpont and Neveu, 'Missions and the Construction of Gender in the Middle East'; Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*, Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Women (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993); David E. Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Ernest P. Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[59] Sue Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization', *The Catholic Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (1982): 28–45, 36.

work.[60] The significant involvement of women in religious institutions during the war, which provided opportunities for involvement in missions, charity, education, and medical relief within a relatively egalitarian setting, was one way in which women could transcend the restrictive confines of domestic life, despite the emergence of other limitations. To a certain degree, this led to the formation of a distinct women's sphere in which women held significant authority. At the same time, historians have observed the particularity of the Chinese women's movement. Christina Gilmartin criticizes the application of Western principles to verify whether social movements in the third world have a feminist spirit. Instead, she suggests writing her history with a certain focus on time and areas. She debates that "modern feminist movements in the third world have been compelled by the realities of Western hegemony to broaden their agendas by connecting their effort to end gender oppression with struggles for national liberation."[61] In order to investigate Chinese women, it is important to take into consideration the reality of colonialism and how Chinese women's movements tapped into the precedence of nationalism.[62] Applying gender as an analytical group, historians have shown the traps of the male-controlled discourse of nationalism. Studying Chinese feminism means studying the patriarchal heritage of China's anti-colonial and revolutionary nationalism. Dorothy Ko condemns the May Fourth legacy that considered Chinese women victims of traditional culture and society,[63] while Susan Glosser argues that Chinese men deliberately created a consistent image of Chinese women's difficulty and national misery.[64] This practice also often made use of women as a cultural representation in order to allocate them to an appropriate place.

[60] Anthony E. Clark, '"Saving the Children": Catholic Sisters and Social Reform in Republican China', in *Christianity and the Modern Woman in East Asia*, ed. Garrett L. (Washington: Brill, 2018), 62–82, 66.

[61] Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6-7.

[62] Yihong, 'Feminism and Nationalism in China's War of Resistance against Japan'.

[63] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1-5.

[64] Jacques Gernet, *Il Mondo Cinese* (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 609-616. Susan L. Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 77-78.

A feminine work: feminizing relief efforts

Since the 1970s, experts in sociology, anthropology, and history have engaged in discussions about a concept known as the feminization of religion. It refers to the growing presence and dominance of women involved in religious roles, both as clergy members and in secular positions. The measure of feminization in religious personnel considers the significant achievements of female congregations and communities, as well as their expansion into areas such as hospitals, youth centers, and maternity care.[65] Various scholars participating in this debate have highlighted the growing prominence of femininity and women within the discourse and rituals of Christianity, particularly Catholicism. They have also linked the feminization of religion to significant discussions such as the secularization process and the connection between religion and modernity.[66] Nonetheless, certain recent publications have raised doubts about the feminization thesis, shedding light on the male representation in certain aspects of religious life beyond the local church and the profound religious dedication displayed by notable groups of men.[67]

The concept of feminization is applied by the authors of *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe: Beyond the Feminization Thesis* to Christianity and interpreted not only in reference to the majority of women in charitable work but also in a metaphorical sense.[68] The prominence of the Virgin Mary played a crucial role in the process of feminizing devotion.[69] The Virgin Mary is often associated with qualities such as compassion, nurturing, and maternal love. By emphasizing her role in Christian theology, the Church promoted these

[65] Tine van Osselaer and Thomas Buerman, 'Feminization Thesis: A Survey of International Historiography and a Probing of Belgian Grounds', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 103, no. 2 (June 2008): 497–544, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.RHE.3.180.

[66] For recent studies on the feminization discourses, see van Osselaer and Buerman; Raúl Mínguez Blasco, 'Between Virgins and Priests: The Feminisation of Catholicism and Priestly Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain', *Gender & History* 33, no. 1 (March 2021): 94–110.

[67] See Yvonne Maria Werner, ed., *Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011); Patrick Pasture, Jan Art, and Thomas Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe: Beyond the Feminization Thesis*, ed. Jan De Maeyer et al., 1st ed. (Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2012), https://doi.org/10. 2307/j.ctt9qdx6z.

[68] Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 10.

[69] Roberto Di Stefano and Francisco Javier Ramn Solans, eds., *Marian Devotions, Political Mobilization, and Nationalism in Europe and America* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

traditionally feminine virtues as central to the faith. Another aspect supporting the feminization argument pertains to the very structure of the Church. This led to a decrease in male church personnel due to the partial elimination of enclosed orders in various Catholic countries. Furthermore, there was a significant increase in the number of religious women, primarily driven by the growth of non-enclosed religious congregations. While this type of religious organization had existed before in the history of the Church, its hierarchical and centralized structure, coupled with its dedication to educational and charitable tasks that were neglected by young liberal states, allowed them to be more adaptable to the changing circumstances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries compared to the traditional enclosed orders.[70]

In the nineteenth century Catholicism underwent a process of feminization similar to empires, as Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée argues. This involved changes in the personnel and missionary work associated with Catholicism. Nuns played a significant role in this transformation through their provision of charitable services, healthcare, and education. Their participation in these fields allowed them access to the private sphere of families and was seen as a way to prepare the ground for male missionaries and the spread of Western civilization, thus shaping moral empires. The historical intersection of gender and religion highlights that the medical practices of Catholic sisters received less attention compared to their educational endeavors. Similarly, the role of women religious in relief work was often overlooked. However, as the twentieth century began, relief efforts took on a transnational dimension, presenting new opportunities and expectations for female religious orders.[71]

Wartime China provides an insightful context to explore the professional and political challenges faced by religious women. During the Republican years, both foreign and Chinese Catholic nuns revealed a collective dedication to engendering transformation, bringing a "feminist force" to Chinese society going through substantial changes.[72] As Chapters 4 and 5 explore, in this crucial period, especially during the turbulent years of the war, Chinese and Western women together were called to rethink their mission and the very formation of

[70] Mínguez Blasco, 'Between Virgins and Priests: The Feminisation of Catholicism and Priestly Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain,' 96.

[71] Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, 'Female Religious Empires. A Transnational Network of Nursing Nuns in the Atlantic World (Late 19th-Early 20th Centuries)', in *Congrégations Féminines Missionnaires: Éducation, Santé et Humanitaire: Une Histoire Transnationale (XIXe-XXe Siècles)*, Viella (Roma, 2022), 217–42, 218-219.

[72] Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*, 77.

religious educators to be vigilant and open to the new calls of history. The Catholic sisters discussed in this dissertation belong to multinational religious congregations and orders, comprising mainly members from Europe and Asia. Catholic women's religious organizations engaged in transnational collaborative practices with diverse groups of women and men while establishing relief systems in China. Although this can be seen as a part of national development, the nuns' work surpassed traditional boundaries of nation and state, as they were primarily connected by gender and religion, even as they challenged prevailing gender norms. The charitable work of the missionaries filled out those missing points in terms of social welfare. For instance, in some country areas, the only healthcare inhabitants could access was thanks to the negotiation of Catholic nuns.[73] They were not limited to working for families and churches; instead, their efforts were focused on areas of social reform such as arranged marriage, foot binding, health care, child abandonment, and education.[74] They cooperated to actively model the institutionalization of the Catholic Church in China, adapting the local values and practices to the Catholic ones and providing fundamental support for evangelism. According to Spees, missionary women went to China to preach the Gospel and helped transform Chinese culture and society, especially for Chinese women. The missionaries influenced China's education and medical services as well as initiated changes that the Chinese reformers completed. Interestingly, most women missionaries had more freedom and power in China than they did in the West. When they arrived in China, they decided to advocate for Chinese women's rights in addition to converting them. Many women missionaries believed China needed Western culture and did not hesitate to introduce Western norms. However, the changes initiated by the missionaries often contradicted Confucian values, which were deeply embedded in Chinese culture. During the process of cultural exchange, however, on one hand, missionaries affected the Chinese, on the other hand, Chinese people and culture influenced the lives of women missionaries too.[75] Female missionaries were arguably more influential in bringing their Chinese experiences to Western audiences than were male missionaries, despite the fact that they were numerically fewer.

[73] Beatrice Leung, 'Chinese Catholic Sisters in the Modernization Era: Problems and Contributions', *China Information* 18, no. 1 (March 2004): 67–106, https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X04040363, 79.

[74] Yu Zhang, 'Women in the Chinese Catholic Church: Local and Foreign Sisters and Gender Relations', in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Catholic Church in East Asia*, ed. Cindy Yik-yi Chu and Beatrice Leung (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 1–37, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9365-9_7-1.

[75] Lisa P. Spees, 'Missionary Women in China: Changing China, Changing Themselves', *Emory Endeavors in History* 2 (2008), http://history.emory.edu/home/documents/endeavors/volume2/LisaSpees.pdf, 1.

Shulman's thesis on three heroic Canadian women missionaries reveals that they were effectively windows on China whose writings extend our understanding of China and its people. Furthermore, as missionaries, they were more highly integrated into China than many other Westerners; as missionary women, they were uniquely able to have direct and sustained contact with Chinese women; and as Canadians, they were treated differently from other Westerners, occasionally serving as power brokers at the local level.[76]

This thesis suggests that the massive participation of women in relief activities, not only in Catholic religious orders but also within humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross, became associated with femininity in many ways: first, the relief work attracted women more than men, second, it also became almost a women's affair, since they dominated in this field. These activities allowed them to gain important decision-making powers within organizations or congregations with a certain independence. For instance, women within the Chinese Red Cross through the Medical Relief Corps, as Chapter 3 analyzes in more detail, had a significant role. The story of Zhou Meiyu represented a significant achievement among the women who contributed to humanitarian relief efforts during the war in China. She employed practices that bore a striking resemblance to those used by Song Meiling in her efforts to persuade upper-class women to engage in charitable activities. As a patriotic and experienced nurse, Zhou was able to advance socially by challenging deeply rooted biases concerning the role of women in the public sphere, and her work in administration and nursing education showed an attempt to establish real military nursing assistance. [77] Also, the contribution of a large number of women participating in charitable fundraising initiatives and collecting donations was supported by photographs published in journals and newspapers. During the wartime period, a meticulously planned indoctrination discourse was instituted, which was grounded in the ideological premises of anti-Japanese nationalism and the fostering of a contemporary Chinese national identity. By positioning Red Cross women as nurturing and caring figures, the organization was able to cultivate a sense of trust and support among the people, which was critical for its humanitarian work.

Investigating women's activities in the relief work during the war in China, while adopting transnational and transcultural perspectives, the research provides innovative ways

[76] Deborah Shulman, 'Prisms of China: Canadian Women Missionaries in China, 1904-1945' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Concordia University, 2008), 4.

[77] Zhang and Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]*, 11.

of rethinking newer and older theoretical concerns and debates in the academic study of relief efforts analyzed through the issue of gender. It also may offer a suitable terminology to capture the complexity and dynamics of both secular and religious humanitarianism, in wartime China. To fully understand this narrative, it is important to connect it with global studies: this correlation enables a discussion of how transnationalization affected female communities and how their humanitarian and moral projects were either supported or hindered by the expanding forces of imperialism.

Methodology

The case-studies

The present research investigates women's relief work during the years of the War of Resistance and the Second World War in China (1937-1945) by considering some significant case studies: the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of China; the Swiss sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl Sisters); and the Italian Canossian Daughters of Charity (Canossian Sisters). The Red Cross and the Catholic religious orders shed light on different aspects through which women played particularly significant roles within the realm of relief work.

Following up on the three points mentioned at the beginning of this introductory part, I have chosen these case studies first because despite the meaningful role women had in relief activities during the wartime period they have long been ignored in the academic field on this issue. I noticed that women humanitarians faced a dual form of invisibility, as they were frequently marginalized by both historians specializing in colonialism, including those focused on missions, and historians studying women's history.[78] Nevertheless, colonial historians have traditionally overlooked the role of religious missions and individuals, while historians of women have undervalued the impact of women's humanitarian and religious, both within and outside of China. Most research has mainly focused on well-known missionaries and elite male Chinese converts, for instance, neglecting those women who worked in the missions. Indeed, as several research revealed, women were protagonists in this

[78] Sarah A. Curtis, 'The Double Invisibility of Missionary Sisters', *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 4 (2016): 134–43, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2016.0037.

circumstance.[79] I chose to analyze Catholic women specifically for several reasons. Following Carsten T. Sala, I also observed the less scholarly attention given to them as compared to the Protestants in China.[80] Research and publications still remain rather limited, considering their massive presence and importance in China, particularly during the war period. Specifically, the missionary presence varied in China, increasing from none at all for centuries to over 10.000 in the 1920s.[81] By the mid-1930s there were forty-two Chinese congregations with 2.403 followers, and among fifty foreign orders, twenty-two included 1.016 Chinese Sisters and 1.693 foreigners. In addition, 6.211 virgins operated as catechists and teachers for the Church. They not only worked in the sacristies, catechumenates, schools, hospitals and orphanages but also helped to assist industrial schools and to create printing newspapers for the people at the missions.[82] By 1940 every apostolic vicariate in China had a congregation of native sisters. There were also 3 to 4.000 lay missionaries active in evangelization works among the rural population. Most of them were consecrated virgins.[83] Both groups, the new diocesan women's congregations and the Christian virgins, continued their lives and grew in numbers: in 1928 there were 2.641 Chinese and 1.327 foreign sisters. By 1948 there were 5.112 Chinese and 2.351 foreign sisters and about 3.000 consecrated Chinese virgins.[84]

Catholicism tended to work in a very local dimension, allowing me to look at local feminine interaction even at a grassroots level more closely. The already mentioned concept of feminization is a recurring issue that runs through the three case study chapters. As Patrick

[79] Previous studies concerning the history of Catholic women during twentieth-century China are Zhang, 'Women in the Chinese Catholic Church'; Gianni Criveller, 'The Canossian Sisters in Hong Kong and Beyond: Protection, Education, and Emancipation of Women', in *The Catholic Church, The Bible, and Evangelization in China*, ed. Cindy Yik-yi Chu (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2022), 21–30; Clark, '"Saving the Children"'; Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization'; Sue Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women', *Historical Reflections* 8, no. 3 (1981): 201–13; Rolf G. Tiedemann, 'Catholic Religious Communities of Chinese Women', in *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume Two: 1800-Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 587–99.

[80] Carsten T. Vala, 'Negotiations and Diversifications of China's Christianities', *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 6, no. 1 (1 April 2019): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-00601001, 1-4.

[81] Xiaoxin Wu, ed., *Christianity in China: A Scholars' Guide to Resources in the Libraries and Archives of the United States*, 2nd ed (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), xxxi.

[82] Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization', 36.

[83] Beatrice Leung and Patricia Wittberg, 'Catholic Religious Orders of Women in China: Adaptation and Power', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1, no. 43 (2004): 67–82, 70.

[84] Leung and Wittberg, 70.

Pasture claims, while the feminization thesis was originally created in an American Protestant framework, it has also often been used in relation to Catholicism.[85] Relief activities, as well as charity, social work, and education, became associated with femininity in many ways: not only did the relief work attract women more than men, but it also became almost a women's affair, since they dominated in this field as the retrieved documents reveal. Additionally, gaining access to the private archives of these congregations has at times proven challenging. However, I was not deterred by issues of archival access, even amidst a global pandemic: I utilized a diverse range of sources from both public and private archives. More importantly, I do not perceive the missionary sisters as mere supplements to the "real" work carried out by male clergy or lay people. Instead, each of the two case studies presented in this collection highlights the dedication of missionary sisters, who often outnumbered male clergy in mission territories and maintained closer connections with local communities. With the transition from enclosed orders to active congregations during the twentieth century, particularly during wartime, religious women underwent a transformation, enabling them to work openly in society. [86] Second, the case studies are excellent examples in which the issues of modernization and imperialism intertwine, and both the Red Cross and the missionary orders were transplanted to China. Third, they were characterized by a prominent transnational dimension on two levels: local, since they had a not negligible interaction between foreign and native women; and organizational, because they were non-local organizations that referred to an international dimension.

The use of these case studies allows a more nuanced vision of the several roles such groups have played in the history of women and relief work into transnational history —or more largely, in the development of modern Chinese history. Still, they helped me answer the primary research question based on how the relief work in a transnational context offered a public space for Chinese and foreign women during wartime China. The experience of women in China during the War of Resistance and the Second World War, in fact, cannot be understood only from a national dimension. Instead, it should be included in a more global and transnational one since the war involved many global and international factors. This approach successfully emphasizes the meaning of religious and humanitarian activities as

[85] Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 10.

[86] Sarah A. Curtis, 'Invisible No More!', in *Les Congrégations Féminines Missionnaires Éducation, Santé et Humanitaire: Une Histoire Transnationale (XIXe-XXe Siècles)* (Roma: Viella, 2022), 9–11.

forms of social, civic, and political engagement, socializing, and interacting for many women and showing the accomplishments and the challenges they faced in relief efforts.

The first case study is significant in reflecting on women, gender, and humanitarianism in one of the essential European-style international organizations in China and investigating the dynamics through which Chinese women successfully integrate into the Red Cross humanitarian work; it is also important since it deals with issues about what role gender played in the receivers of humanitarian aid strategies and in particular allows a close look at the activism and mobilisation of Chinese women through a top-down process facilitated by the elite. The second case study is relevant in highlighting how the Swiss Catholic nuns actively operated in the public charitable sphere, taking charge of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, and opium patients. The exigencies of war expanded the scope of action for these women within the mission, navigating a complex yet relatively stable wartime environment. Their nationality was significant since during the Second Worls War Switzerland took a more active part in international issues through humanitarian programs, but it was resolutely neutral concerning military activities.[87] Particularly, I selected Manchuria since if there is one place where the significant transcultural and transnational dimension emerges it is the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning during the turbulent years of the war, due to the relationship between the male and female Chinese Catholics and the Church and, at the same time, the Japanese occupier. The third and last case is particularly meaningful not only because of the political relationship between the Vatican, Japan, and China but also because the nuns found themselves working in a context where the gender element entered modernity proposed by Japan through a certain model of Chinese nationalism. Additionally, what is relevant to highlight is the position of Italy during the war years since it also impacted the charitable practices and activities of the missionary sisters in China. My dissertation reveals that when Italy joined the war on June 10, 1940, it had significant consequences for both the clergy and the Canossian missions in Hong Kong. This new condition created problems for missionaries working in British colonies, and correspondence with Europe was also interrupted.[88] The situation for the sisters became even more dramatic

[87]Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte Der Schweizerischen Neutralität. Vier Jahrhunderte Eidgenössischer Aussenpolitik*, vol. 1 (Basel: Helbing, 1965), 215.

[88] Pietro Badoglio, *L'Italia Nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale* (Milano: Mondadori, 1946), 37; Ida Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, vol. III 1910-2000 (Italian edition by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, A.C.R., 2003), 57-58.

with the signing of the Armistice with the Allies on September 8, 1943, when the Japanese authorities began to look at them with suspicion.[89] This case intricately examines the nexus between the concept of care and women's empowerment, delving into their strategic political negotiations as a means to engage with authorities in a highly complex international context.

Archives: narratives and textual analysis

The mentioned case studies allow me to take a close look at a transnational framework investigating how the already sorrowful wartime situation impacted women's agency in the process of aid and care in the local Chinese context. I decided to analyze them through documentation from national and international archives and also using visual materials. I employ a meticulous methodology by examining the self-representation of these women and conducting a critical analysis of the documents retrieved from archives. Specifically, I sought to explore how these women, through the use of letters, official reports, auto-documentation and personal writings, construct their subjectivity as active participants in relief and rescue activities during the war. The documents I have at my disposal consist of both the women's personal texts and their documents influenced by the religious order to which they belong. This duality presents both a collective and individual dimension, necessitating a careful reading strategy and an analytical approach to my methodology.

One reason women's relief work activities in wartime China (1937-1945) have been mainly ignored is the limitation of the sources. The trend to regard women's aptitude to express themselves through the written word as a mark of their agency further clarifies why their activism was often overlooked.[90] A comprehensive and well-documented history of women's religious communities in China, for instance, has not yet been written, partly because of the destruction or dispersal of archives when foreign nuns had to leave China from

[89] Giorgio Vitali, *Una Città Nel Bufera: Milano. 25 Luglio 1943 - 25 Aprile 1945* (Milano: Mursia, 1980), 97; Marco Picone Chiodo, *In Nome Della Resa. L'Italia Nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale (1940-1945)* (Milano: Mursia, 1990), 283; Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 100.

[90] Similar to the women's activism in Japanese historiography, the historiography on Chinese women presented similar problems in what the author calls "literary agency": proof of literary ability has been the determining factor in evaluating women's activism. Marnie S. Anderson, 'Women's Agency and the Historical Record: Reflections on Female Activists in Nineteenth-Century Japan', *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 1 (2011): 38–55, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2011.0010.

1949 to 1955. In addition, as already mentioned above, the barriers to getting into Chinese primary sources during this challenging period of the pandemic prevent me from enlarging the extent of my narrative. Here I will provide, therefore, only some essential data that has been able to be recovered related to the various foundations, in the hope that future more in-depth research will bring out more of the particular histories of the various women's orders. As result, yhis dissertation is the outcome of extensive field research in Europe; it represents an addition to the study of women's involvement in relief efforts and gender representation in humanitarian and religious activities during wartime in China more broadly.

Gaining access to the International Red Cross archives in Geneva proved relatively accessible. However, the majority of the available information consisted of official reports and inter-branch correspondence. Conversely, there was a notable lack of information detailing the specific experiences of Chinese women. These narratives were instead reconstructed using diverse sources through online databases and digitized documents made available by archives, but also texts and accounts retrieved from local and international press. The subject and language of the humanitarians and also missionaries' writings about their involvements in China were studied to investigate their experiences of and discourse about China and its inhabitants as well as their understanding of the relief efforts they supported. Furthermore, the inquiry was implemented by utilizing theoretical and empirical understandings from recent research on the intersection between missionaries, humanitarians, and imperialism, the relationships between organizations, missions and medicine, the role of gender as a meeting point, as well as on the making of Chinese historical narratives. Due to the difficult communication with the rest of the world following the outbreak of the Second World War, correspondence between nuns and the several missions often only resumed in 1945. Thus, the documents retrieved within religious archives are sometimes written years after the events. Moreover, since these topics are still considered rather sensitive, access to some primary documents was not possible. As well as it has been impossible to access Chinese archives. These restrictions forced me to use sources mainly in Italian, English, Latin, French, German, and Chinese more cleverly.

From one perspective, this research took a long time for a comprehensive dissertation to be created that specifically examines the intersection of humanitarian history, women's and gender history, and global history. The extensive migrations of humanitarians and Catholic sisters across continents and oceans until China during the twentieth century present a topic that perfectly aligns with the current focus on global perspectives in the field of history. While no single book can fully encompass the breadth and scope of this phenomenon across

different times and places, the selected materials included in this dissertation highlight the significant and diverse impacts of women in China, particularly in the areas of relief and humanitarian assistance. They aim to demonstrate the effectiveness of humanitarian universal principles in mobilizing people, particularly women, to spread its principles and experiences to people worldwide.

On the other hand, it is not surprising that the approach presented in this research is still relatively uncommon. There are several structural reasons for this. Firstly, accessing the archives of religious women is often more challenging compared to their male counterparts. This is due to limited resources, both human and financial, available to female congregations for preserving and organizing archives. These challenges largely stem from the subordinate status of women within the institutional church. Secondly, the fragmented historical records result from the fact that Catholic missionary work was carried out by numerous small congregations. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on case studies of individual congregations in specific locations because that is how the archives are typically organized. Lastly, the scarcity of comparable works is also influenced by the uneasy position of Catholicism in the broader history of the modern era. [91] While Catholicism has been extensively studied in the context of the early modern world, particularly in relation to colonization, trade, and cultural exchange in the West, its integration into scholarship on twentieth-century imperial expansion, colonial rule, and decolonization in China has been limited.

Visualizing women's activism in relief activities

In considering how women engaged and were represented in relief efforts during the war, I use photography, print culture, newspapers and magazine images produced in China and abroad so that it will be possible to examine the efficiency of thoughts and methodologies that have rarely been used in the Chinese context before. According to Bredekamp, who

[91] Bruno Dumons, ed., *Les congrégations féminines missionnaires: éducation, santé et humanitaire: une histoire transnationale (XIXe-XXe siècles) [Women's missionary congregations: education, health and humanitarian aid: a transnational history (19th-20th centuries)]* (Roma: Viella, 2022), 13-16.

developed the notion of *Bildwissenschaft* (science of the image), it is important that historians reflect on how images themselves are conceived and have the power to influence events.[92]

Gerhard Paul defined "visual history" as a central and transdisciplinary key to the necessity to consider "the visual" seriously when analyzing the past.[93] Recently scholars who started to put visual texts at the center of historical analysis and to "engage in critical analysis of image-making as a force in shaping historical dynamics" have become more frequent.[94] Particularly, historians of China agree that, as Sumathi Ramaswamy identifies, "pictures, too, have stories to tell and arguments to manifest" and that "images are not just illustrative and reflective but also constitutive and worldmaking rather than world-mirroring."[95] Consequently, it is recurrent that historians of China "probe further into the relationship between the visual, the spoken, and the textual."[96] When analyzing wartime China, however, it is important to be conscious of the issue of "what or who can be seen."[97] Indeed, successive Chinese governments have long tried to obscure or make invisible the visual cultures of women's stories and their work. However, as Taylor argues, if the study of iconographies includes drawing the path of specific pictures through media and time, in his case during the War of Resistance in Occupied China under the regime of Wang Jingwei, it also tries to recognize the impact of these images in their unique historical context.[98]

In adopting such an approach in three main chapters, my aim is therefore not simply to document images produced during the war in China. Instead, I wish to offer a broader understanding of how women sought to visualize China and relief efforts in those years. A focus on the iconographies of women from Switzerland and Italy together with their Chinese

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[92] Horst Bredekamp, *Image Acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, trans. Elizabeth Clegg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), esp. 160.

[93] Paul Gerhard, 'Visual History', 11 July 2011, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, https://docupedia.de/zg/Visual_History_(english_version).

[94] See James A. Cook, ed., *Visualizing Modern China: Image, History, and Memory, 1750-Present*, Asiaworld (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), 3; Jeremy E. Taylor, *Iconographies of Occupation: Visual Cultures in Wang Jingwei's China, 1939–1945* (University of Hawaii Press, 2021).

[95] Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

[96] Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh, *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Life/Still Images in Historical Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), xv.

[97] Taylor, *Iconographies of Occupation*, 13.

[98] Taylor, 15.

companions might also highlight how much these women dedicated themselves to China and the Chinese, bringing relief and care to people in need. For instance, by considering the Western visualization of relief work in China, it is possible to start to discern issues about this period that earlier studies have overlooked. If I look at what relief activists photographed or painted during the war, I can test some of the assumptions that have shaped debates on Western colonialist powers in recent years. Do the iconographies endorse or challenge the largely accepted notion of relief work volunteers as colonialist powers, for instance? Does the representation of those women confirm or disrupt the image that they were angelic salvific figures when the visual record is examined?

Cody and Terpak suggest that war images were instrumental in a nationalist campaign that allowed China to be viewed and depicted through a "nationalist gaze," which provided solid and direct evidence of foreign invasion and most efficiently stimulated nationalist sentiment.[99] The media played a pivotal role in shaping narratives surrounding various aspects of the war, including the involvement of women in relief work. As Chapter 3 shows, by highlighting the contributions and sacrifices of women in these narratives, the government and propaganda machinery aimed to promote a sense of national unity, inspire patriotism, and encourage more women to participate in relief efforts. These sources served as key elements in the construction of these narratives. They provided firsthand information, visual evidence, and personal testimonials that were carefully curated and presented to the public. Through this top-down nationalization process, the government effectively conveyed the message that women were indispensable in the war effort, specifically in their roles as caregivers, nurses, volunteers, and providers of humanitarian aid.[100]

The act of being represented in a certain way in the Catholic religious order carries inherent significance: these memoirs serve as a medium through which sisters can represent themselves to their interlocutors, primarily their superiors, and offer the possibility to gain insights into their self-representation, as these internal documents are inherently reflective of

[99] Jeffrey W. Cody, Frances Terpak, and J. Paul Getty Museum, eds., *Brush & Shutter: Early Photography in China* (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 15.

[100] To gain a comprehensive understanding of Chinese war propaganda, see Hung, *War and Popular Culture*. On specific topics see also Edwards, 'Drawing Sexual Violence in Wartime China'; Coble, 'Writing About Atrocity: Wartime Accounts and Their Contemporary Uses'; De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan Ertong" (The Resistance Child)"'; Pozzi, '"Chinese Children Rise Up!": Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War."'

the organization's perspectives and viewpoints. Within a number of these memoirs, the experiences of these people are framed in Chapters 4 and 5, shedding light on how their sense of relief played a defining role in establishing their identities as publicly engaged religious women in a foreign country. An analysis of how these images of China are related to each other can thus provide a more inclusive depiction of Chinese women's broader wartime experience in humanitarian and religious efforts. By studying the visual realm, then, I can bring into much clearer focus issues concerning the agency of their relief work.

An accurate and meticulous historical analysis of primary sources from archives, together with wartime magazines and female newspapers, a rich repertoire of photos of the time, and a cross-reference with secondary literature helped me better analyze the mobilization of women's relief activities, the role of working female experts, religious and missionary women in establishing aid plans on the mainland, and Hong Kong.

Outline

The first chapter is an important tour d'horizon as it presents humanitarianism in the modern years of the twentieth century as a global phenomenon, looking at how it originated, how it was created in China, what the relationship was with the local charity, and how they have transformed. There are three main elements, the secular, the religious and the local, which differ and intersect at the same time with each other. The modern humanitarian organization has its origins in the Christian evangelical tradition of the mid-1800s, when zealous supporters were at the vanguard of a significant transformation movement, pursuing to abolish slavery, improve prisons, and find humane structures for the cure of the mentally ill. Indeed, the history of humanitarianism is inevitably interconnected with Christianity, although humanitarian commitment is actually a practice of the public field. Thus, the chapter delves into Chinese charitable history, from the Ming/Qing era when various forms of social aggregation whose main objective was the welfare of the community were founded, until the establishment of the Red Cross, throughout the Republican period when these humanitarian institutions overlapped and intertwined with the work of Catholic missionaries in China. The changing Chinese society and the needs of native Christian communities have sparked debates on missionary strategies. The apostolic letter emanated by Pope Benedict XV in 1919, *Maximum Illud*, marked a significant shift, emphasizing indigenous clergy education, cultural training for missionaries, and opposing nationalism. Monsignor Celso Costantini's

1922 appointment as Apostolic Delegate reinforced these changes, focusing on inculturation of Catholicism. The missionary presence varied in China, increasing to forty-two Chinese congregations with 2.403 followers by the mid-1930s.[101] While humanitarian resolution mainly focused energies on the "physical" space, Catholicism drew their attention to the "spiritual" real. Hence the energy bonding between Catholics and humanitarian fellows took place on many issues of social intervention, as in the case of the Second World War.

The second chapter is dedicated to the issue of gender in humanitarian activities, secular and religious, in Europe and China with a historical slant. I particularly deal with the discourse on women and humanitarian aid and Catholic women and charity work in China during the war and how it means embodying nurturing femininity in relief efforts in times of war. Being part of the public sphere was the cardinal principle of those women who began their journey into relief efforts during the war. Women within different philanthropic associations had a significant role, as nurses in public health stations, medical schools, and affiliated missionary hospitals contributing to the treatment doctor of wounded soldiers and civilians. At the same time, many catholic sisters arrived in China providing religious education, medical assistance and evangelization activities to Chinese people. They started to teach in catechumenates and managed dispensaries and orphanages. Chinese women's communities continued to develop the Catholic tradition of consecrated life as they had received it from foreign nuns. In this way, they collaborated substantially in the adaptation of the Catholic religion to Chinese culture and provided effective relief organizations to accommodate the war wounded. The apostolic missionary activity of both virgins and locals and foreign nuns also cooperated in changing the role of women in Chinese society.

The third chapter utilizes materials gathered from the International Committee of the Red Cross Archives in Geneva, the *Foreign Office Files for China, 1938-1948* of the National Archives, UK, and the national and international press, to analyze the presence and role of women in relief organizations during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China. Particularly, it focuses on how Chinese and Western women integrated into the Red Cross, highlighting the complex and diverse nature of gender dynamics at local, regional, national, and global scales. As a prominent Western humanitarian organization, the Red Cross provided structured channels and programs for a significant number of women to engage in cross-border philanthropic efforts. It is important to study this organization as it represents efforts to incorporate Western approaches to recruiting women for civic service

[101] Wu, *Christianity in China*, xxxi.

and presents a novel approach to involving women in public affairs. Firstly, it investigates the active participation of Chinese and foreign women from privileged backgrounds in leadership roles and specific responsibilities within various committees and relief organizations. Secondly, it emphasizes the significant role of women in the relief narrative, as depicted through media coverage, local press, and official reports. The work of these women and their relationships with Western counterparts offer insights into how gender influenced the understanding of humanitarianism, war, and nation-building in modern China. This analysis also provides an opportunity to reassess social values and traditional roles assigned to women. The war mobilized the entire population, resulting in the establishment of medical institutions that offered employment prospects for women from lower social strata. Notable elite female leaders, such as Song Meiling, advocated for women's involvement in the war through traditionally feminine caregiving work and served as models for the establishment of charitable organizations. While upper-class wives were involved in philanthropy prior to the war, the nationalist movement created spaces for women to become more politically and socially engaged, challenging traditional norms and advocating for change. The case of nurse Zhou Meiyu and her contributions to military nursing within the Red Cross Medical Relief Corps highlights the significance of overcoming gender barriers by actively participating in specific humanitarian relief initiatives to support the Chinese nationalist movement through the establishment of public health programs. In addition, the chapter explores the intersection of media and narrative, examining how narratives surrounding the role of women in the Red Cross were constructed through the press, media, and visual and written representations. The media's focus on the female presence in relief work, particularly in nursing, caring for the wounded, and fundraising campaigns, indicates that public perception associated women's public image during the war with relief activities. The chapter reveals that many women operated as volunteer workers, as retrieved in the documents of the *Foreign Office Files for China, 1938-1948". Red Cross activities in China. FO_371_22113. League of Nations epidemic unit's work in China 1938.*[102] Also newspapers and monthly press, as *The China Critic (1939-1946), The North China Daily News (1864- 1951), The China Press (1925-1938), The China Weekly Review (1923- 1950), Liangyou* 良友, documented and advertised women's caring activities, facilitating circulations of topics related to charity, assistance, and

[102] 'League of Nations Epidemic Unit's Work in China 1938', 1938, Foreign Office Files for China, 1938-1948, F.O. 371. 22113, The National Archives, UK, 225.

blood donations.[103] Another important aspect of women's experiences in the Red Cross during the War of Resistance againt Japanwas their transnational collaboration and networking, both within their communities and across national borders. Women's networks played a crucial role in maintaining medical facilities, providing ongoing care to the sick and wounded, and organizing charitable fundraising campaigns. The cases of Li Xiaqing and Ada Lum exemplify the intersection of personal agency, transnational and international relations, and national service. Their upbringing and access to resources provided them with a unique platform to make a significant impact on the China Resistance cause. Another significant aspect of the Red Cross was that the humanitarian efforts of the organization enabled a flow of people who could enter China and narrate their personal experiences to the international community in a specific manner. Foreign journalists, for instance, reported on the wartime situation from various perspectives, which generated sympathy and support for China's anti-fascist war among people around the world. It was the case of the American journalist and writer Agnes Smedley (1892-1950), whose work helped to shape perceptions of the conflict and its impact on Chinese society. In China, she shared the hardships of the war and quickly joined the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps as a publicity worker after encountering in Hangzhou Dr. Lin Kesheng. These women's work and relationships served as a window through which gender shaped the meanings of humanitarianism, war, and nation-building in modern China while offering the opportunity to re-discuss the social values and traditional roles of women.

The fourth chapter delves into the connection between war and religious women's activism in Manchuria, specifically focusing on the experiences of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl) (SCSC) and local virgins involved in relief efforts. It highlighted the significance of addressing humanitarian assistance from a female perspective. The research primarily relied on letters, official reports, and documents from the State Archive of Lucerne and the local archive of the sisters in Ingenbohl, Switzerland, to investigate the exceptional period of war for women, considering the specific transnational and international context of Manchuria. These wartime writings, archival resources, and photographs of the time, together with news dispatched to journals like *Betlemme 1930-1945, Bethlehem Kalender, Der Steppenreiter*, map the movement of missionary women's activism and are used to analyze

[103] "A group of 450 Chinese girls who, dressed as Red Cross nurses, have been coaxing Shanghai's citizens during the last ten days to contribute generously to the goal of £100,000 in aid of local war refugees", *The China Press*, 12 December 1937.

their presence in a period of profound transformation for the condition of women. The War of Resistance against Japan presented both challenges and transformative opportunities for women in this context. While it exhibited some similarities to previous conflicts, what set it apart was its vast scale and increased participation. As a result, the larger number of participants in this mass war led to heightened visibility for women, largely influenced by the influential role of propaganda in shaping public perception and awareness. In Manchuria, the Ingenbohl Sisters were dedicated to serving their community by providing religious teachings, education, healthcare, and social services. They adopted a strategic approach to recruit local women as catechists into their congregations, aiming to connect with the local population and promote conversion to Catholicism. As committed representatives of the Church, they played a pivotal role in conversion efforts and the growth of Catholicism in the region. Moreover, joining the religious community offered women an opportunity to enter the public sphere and establish their presence. At the same time, the native sisters of the Oblates of St. Therese of the Child Jesus assisted with evangelism, medical aid, and education. While the native congregation developed its own identity, the presence of foreign nuns remained always very significant. However, the necessities created by the war provided these women with unique opportunities to participate in charitable and medical relief activities. It offered an escape from the constraints of family life, albeit with its own limitations. In some cases, this led to the establishment of a distinct realm for women, where they held authority, particularly in relief and wounded care activities during wartime China, falling within their sphere of influence. The sisters dedicated themselves to medical relief activities to survive and support their community. While the nuns in Qiqihar cared for the wounded and dying, the ones in Zhaozhou took charge of treating chronic opium addicts. Some of them acquired specialized expertise in areas such as surgery, anesthesia, and nursing. By fulfilling their professional duties as nurses alongside local women, the sisters were able to access the public sphere and provide specific and professional aid to the wounded based on the needs of the wartime context.

Chapter five is based on the Canossian Daughters of Charity (FDCC), drawing from documents retrieved in the Apostolic Vatican Archive, the “Propaganda Fide” Historical Archives and their local archive in the Generalate of Rome. Eight years after their arrival on Hong Kong Island (1860), they began working in the towns and villages of Hubei, Shaanxi, South Henan, and Western Henan provinces for emancipation, protection, and promotion of

men, women, children, and anyone in need until their expulsion.[104] It is a significant chapter since their establishment played a central role in introducing and representing the Western Christian model of organizational charity and social service. Indeed, between 1868 and 1952, 275 Sisters worked in mainland China, most of whom were Italian, together with some Chinese. [105] Internal reports show that during the war, the Canossian Sisters served wherever there was a need: in the schools, in the hospitals, to war orphans, to newborn babies, and on trains to the wounded on their way to hospitals in the inland areas.[106] The Catholic Church became even more known in China, and while the preaching of the Gospel was suspended because of the war, at the same time, it was replaced by the preaching of charity. The Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood in Hong Kong were precious helpers of the sisters. [107] A significant novelty is the power of political negotiation in local context, recognizing that empowering women extends beyond relief work to encompass their ability to engage in medical-missionary activities within a complicated international framework. This introduces a political aspect to their roles. The chapter investigates caregiving as a field that allows women to have an independent sphere for negotiation and strategic interaction, necessitating engagement with authorities. Indeed, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1940 and Italy's subsequent involvement in the conflict, coupled with the political landscape at the time, had noteworthy effects on the Italian community residing in China. These shifts had significant impacts, particularly on the clergy and Canossian missions. During this tumultuous period, however, the sisters, alongside native Chinese nuns, played a pivotal role in relief endeavors and actively engaged with the public sphere. They offered assistance to the local community while interacting with authorities and having a certain degree of independence. The nursing efforts of the Canossians were closely linked to their aim of administering baptisms to critically ill patients. However, the field progressively evolved into a more professionalized discipline. For the sisters, Hong Kong and mainland China provided the opportunity to establish their religious medical program, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to nursing deeply intertwined with their religious beliefs and practices.

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[104] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 7.

[105] Criveller, 'The Canossian Sisters in Hong Kong and Beyond', 25.

[106] M.General Delegate, Circulars letters (Hong Kong, 30 June 1938), A.C.R., 1.

[107] Ida Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, vol. II 1868-1952 (Italian edition edited by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, A.C.R., 2003), 305.

The final historical chapter sums up what has been elaborated in the thesis. It provides concrete answers to the questions posed in the introduction and outlines a clear direction as a starting point for future research. Women in China played a crucial role in providing aid and care to those affected by the conflict. Despite facing significant challenges and difficulties, they were able to make significant contributions to the war effort through their involvement in various forms of relief work. In view of the transformations of different, but analogous associations that operated in this field during the Republican era, it revealed that the Western and Chinese Red Cross volunteers and Christian missionaries worked in war-torn territories, often together, to bring relief and assistance to people in need, opening a new space within the public field. Considering the organization together with the Catholic missions in a long-term perspective, and against the backdrop of China's social and political changes, the chapter increases a so far only slightly analyzed case study to current research on global humanitarian and religious aid.

Chapter 1
Humanitarianism in China: Historical Perspectives

Introduction

The chapter examines the origin and development of humanitarianism as well as of humanitarian organizations in China with a description of the Christian and especially Catholic faith-based humanitarian efforts in China during the early decades of the Twentieth Century. The first part reveals that in Europe the birth of modern humanitarianism corresponded to the birth of the Red Cross as a sign of modernity and connected to nationalism. I introduce the concept of modern humanitarianism within the Chinese context, analyzing China's thinking and practice before and after the arrival of Western humanitarianism. In the second part, the chapter considers religious charitable/philanthropic associations during the Republic years, focusing on the role of Christian missions, particularly the impact of Catholicism in the process of inculturation and Chinese church building in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Intertwining secular and religious features within the humanitarian realm

Appeals to relief efforts in order to alleviate the suffering of people in need have always been broadly illustrated in many secular and religious humanitarian practices. Following the definition provided by Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, humanitarianism is intended as a fluid idea, with frequent references to helping people, humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, and doing good.[108] Over the years, humanitarianism has gone beyond national borders and has expanded its reputation to become an international institution of action. Following the definition of Huntington, according to whom institutions are "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior" characterized by a social purpose, going beyond persons and

[108] Barnett and Weiss, '1. Humanitarianism', 10-11,

intents through the arbitration of the regulations, humanitarianism could also be considered an institution.[109] A typical definition of "social institution" as humanitarianism might be is offered by Jonathan Turner, according to whom

> a complex of positions, roles, norms, and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.[110]

Again, Anthony Giddens claims: "Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life."[111] Indeed, humanitarianism is an ideal movement founded on a profound conviction of the equal dignity of all human beings, of the universal obligation to alleviate suffering and to ensure that everyone respects their fundamental rights and answers their essential needs.[112] From this perspective, the institution is seen as a system of widespread symbols, meanings shared by the generality of the members of society, universally recognized values and norms of practices, set of discourses that form a basis for communication processes. It regulates not only the reciprocal relationships in the group but also those relationships and behaviors that a set of third parties have towards that group. In this sense, an institution such as humanitarianism defines on the one hand the relations between its members, and on the other hand, the relations that other external subjects hold towards this institution every time they have to do with it.

In the aftermath of the victory of the French-Piedmontese forces over the Austrian army on June 24, 1895, this battle became the symbol of the origins of international

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[109] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 9.

[110] Jonathan H. Turner, *The Institutional Order: Economy, Kinship, Religion, Polity, Law, and Education in Evolutionary and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Longman, 1997), 6.

[111] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 24.

[112] Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 9.

humanitarianism.[113] It was here that Jean-Henri Dunant (1828-1910), after witnessing the heart-rending pain of the wounded abandoned in the field, thought about the establishment of an organization dedicated to the relief of the wounded, and followed up on his project immediately afterward. He drafted the first code of principles of the Red Cross. Hence, he is considered the founder of international humanitarianism (1864, *the First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field*), intended as a sharing of values within the community composed of the organizations, people, and institutions that act in the several fields of humanitarian aid.[114]

The birth of international humanitarianism was considered a significant marker of modernity since it represented a shift in values and perspective that was unique to the modern era. With the emergence of the modern nation-state and the growth of the middle class, there was a greater awareness of the plight of those who were marginalized or suffering, and a growing sense of moral responsibility to help them. Founded in 1863 in the philanthropic circles of Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross' aim was to reduce the cruelty of war by providing aid to soldiers affected by enemy weapons or disease, and the success of its program was confirmed by the broad and rapid accreditation that the new organization managed to obtain from European governments.[115]

The complex reasons that actually led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have ended up being obscured by the emphasis placed on the figure of Dunant, who was often cloaked in a sort of heroic spirit that would have guided his deeds. When he started to spread the Red Cross values, they were welcomed by the European statesmen as a proper way to safeguard the conduct of war. Thus, humanitarian interventions were perceived as an act of compassion and not an act of politics. This classical model of neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarianism succeeded well enough, to the extent that humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC were able to persuade a wide variety

[113] Silvia Salvatici, *Nel Nome Degli Altri: Storia Dell'umanitarismo Internazionale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), 76.

[114] 'Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1864' (Geneva, Switzerland: International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC, 1864).

[115] For a complete history on the birth of the International Committee of the Red Cross, see Pierre Boissier, *From Solferino to Tsushima: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1985); André Durand and Pierre Boissier, *From Sarajevo to Hiroshima: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984).

of actors.[116] The common trend to overlap the foundation of the Red Cross and the birth of humanitarianism is questionable. Firstly, the elements that historically led to the emergence of international humanitarian action can be traced well beyond the events connected to the battle of Solferino and Dunant's initiative; secondly, both the Geneva Committee and the national organizations of the Red Cross played an important role in laying the foundations of some relief activities and in shaping the modern humanitarian regime, but their work can only be seen as the result of intense interaction with other actors, such as the governments of individual states, religious associations, media and representatives of the scientific world. The birth of the Red Cross has undoubtedly marked a turning point, bringing to fruition processes already underway, catalyzing the several forces in the field, and intercepting shared opinions and sentiments. In the first place, the new organization directed its relief activities toward the victims of the war, delimiting a field of action that was destined to maintain a strong centrality for a long time. It was also the initiatives in favor of soldiers hit by enemy fire or disease, promoted by the Geneva Committee already in the early 1860s, that fostered the process of interpenetration between humanitarianism and warfare that would take a step forward first with the Franco-Prussian War and then with the First World War. At the same time, Europe became the privileged theater of humanitarian operations. This mainly Eurocentric perspective would last for about a century, intertwining with the redefinition of the geopolitical map of the old continent and international balances.

The analysis of the journey made by the Red Cross in the first decades of its life highlights some elements that have constituted the cornerstones of the history of humanitarianism. Dunant's efforts not only initiated the development of services for soldiers but also led to the creation of a legal framework for humanitarian activities during armed conflicts. [117] His mission was implemented in collaboration with private individuals, significantly linked to the world of philanthropy, lawyers, and doctors such as lawyer Gustave Moynier, with whom Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva in 1863. It quickly conquered the public role to which it aspired by taking on

[116] Kurt Mills, 'Neo-Humanitarianism: The Role of International Humanitarian Norms and Organizations in Contemporary Conflict', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 11, no. 2 (3 August 2005): 161–83, https://doi.org/10.1163/1942672001102004, 164.

[117] Maresca and Lavoyer, 'The Role of the ICRC in the Development of International Humanitarian Law', *International Negotiation* 4, no. 3 (1999): 503–27, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069920848598, 504.

European governments and in particular the Swiss government as its interlocutors. Officially recognized, the Committee achieved international recognition.[118]

Allusions to religious discourses and organizations used by Dunant in the mainly Christian framework of the late nineteenth century seemed to strengthen the values he was trying to create concerning humanitarian commitment. Nevertheless, this kind of communication turned out to be more challenging in situations of more plurality. Thus, the negotiation of a language without religious allusions and with collective attractiveness laid down a standard for secular communication gradually embracing the representation of humanitarian values, policies, and practices during the twentieth century. Developments of secularization within Western cultures strengthened this implementation of a secular structure for humanitarian commitment. Several organizations renovated themselves considering these transformations. For instance, the Christian Children's Fund was founded to aid children evacuated and expatriated during the War of Resistance in the 1930s as an international humanitarian organization in 1951 and established a solid funding center, particularly among church associations in the southern states of the USA. Many voluntary organizations can draw this path from religious foundations through developments of professionalization and secularization during the twentieth century so that many clearly "faith-based organizations (FBOs)" are considered a key role within the humanitarian sphere. Nevertheless, some studies pointed out that they have gradually adopted a communication tool and assignment mostly interchangeable from secular humanitarian groups.[119]

The dichotomy between secular and religious actors within the realm of humanitarianism was characterized by both the emergence of distinctions and the construction of barriers, as well as the simultaneous efforts to bridge divides and challenge established norms. If religion has historically exerted a significant influence on humanitarianism, however, the powers of globalization, professionalization, and secularization created a secular framework for global humanitarian activism throughout the twentieth century. As Johannes Paulmann claimed, "the evolution of modern humanitarianism overlapped with the transformation of philanthropy, which turned toward 'strangers' at home and abroad and

[118] Jost Dülffer, *Regeln Gegen Den Krieg? Die Haager Friedenskonferenzen von 1899 Und 1907 in Der Internationalen Politik* (Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Wien: Ullstein, 1981), 12.

[119] Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities* (New York: Palgrave Pivot, 2015), 5.

became increasingly concerned with efficiency and professionalism."[120] Charles Taylor categorizes three major procedures required for completing secularization in any society: decreasing belief in God, reducing the importance of religion and religious associations, and increasing altered situations of belief.[121] The first procedure reveals an individual choice, in which persons appreciate the autonomy of privatizing their religious faith. The other two are socially structured, as being received from historical traditions and incorporated into regular routines. Therefore, the presence of new social communities with different principles and needs might re-examine fixed inheritances and measures. The increasing multicultural immigration mix has presented European societies with several legacies of the situations of belief. Multiculturalism has opened the way to a fearful revitalization of the belief in God, hence religious organizations have improved their social incidence and impact. This fact gradually improves numerous socially constructed accounts of secularization and scarification in Western cultures.[122] Scholars Barnett and Stein, about the secularization of humanitarianism, define it as "the process by which elements of every day and the profane insinuate themselves and become integrated into humanitarianism, thus challenging its sacred standings".[123] It necessitates a rising function of the state and the market, indicates the supremacy of the fund, and supposes a real and proficient performance from humanitarian relief organizations.

Over time, the secularization of humanitarianism was reflected in the religious dimension. The introduction of the Red Cross features into the agenda of a faith-based humanitarian agency, for instance, endorses Alastair and Joey Agar's idea, according to which humanitarianism is functionally secular but pervaded by religious principles. The narrative of modern humanitarian aid as "secular humanitarianism" supported by an ideology that declares its roots in Christianity, but which describes modern humanitarian activities as separate from religion, is not well appropriate to calculate faith-based humanitarian relief and

[120] Johannes Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid during the Twentieth Century', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4, no. 2 (2013): 215–38, https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2013.0016, 215-217.

[121] Tobias Harding, 'Faith-Based Organizations and the Secular State: The Establishment of a Muslim Study Association in Sweden', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no. 3 (September 2013): 341–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.863077, 342.

[122] Michael Barnett and Janice Stein, *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10

[123] Barnett and Stein, 8.

its involvement in the development of international humanitarianism.[124] Therefore, the investigation of the approach of a faith-based group toward the Red Cross is important in order to consider how the Red Cross prototype facilitated the development of relief works beyond the secularist representation.

In the path followed by the Geneva Committee, some elements characterized the development of the international aid system in the following decades, leading to the establishment of new international humanitarian organizations driven by the idea that it was the responsibility of society to alleviate suffering and promote human rights. First, the emergence of new subjects with a specific humanitarian vocation, and more precisely dedicated to the care of war victims. These new subjects often drew their impulse from religious philanthropy but were also linked to the various expressions of growing international activism. A significant example was the Save the Children Fund (SCF), which in the early post-war period took its origin from the British philanthropic tradition, from the internationalist spirit that condemned punitive peace, and from the network of supranational collaboration woven by feminist associations.[125] These new organizations expressed private commitment in an area that was increasing in the public interest and developed in close connection with the growing attention of institutions to humanitarian issues. The process of institutionalization has been one of the cornerstones of the definition of the modern humanitarian regime, as national governments and supranational organizations have acquired over time greater responsibility for aid to suffering humanity. However, it is important not to consider the increasingly significant role assumed by institutions as an expression of a path that would, on the one hand, express the inevitable process of modernization of humanitarianism and, on the other hand, remain distinct from what marked the development of non-governmental organizations.[126]

Yet since the first modern humanitarian theories were proposed, the framework of humanitarian activity transformed radically in twentieth-century Europe. With the First World War and its dramatic impact on European societies, the experience gained in the previous decades was forced to surpass the relief of the wounded and to confront a scenario marked by the impoverishment and hunger of populations exhausted by long years of war, the explosion of epidemics, the forced displacement of men and women following the events of the war, but

[124] Ager and Ager, 'Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism', 457-458.

[125] Salvatici, *Nel Nome Degli Altri*, 76-77.

[126] Salvatici, 78.

also the redefinition of state borders established by the peace treaties. Developing within the fragile European order, programs with an international scope played a fundamental role in identifying the specific subjects to which aid could be directed. In line with the debate and the work of the philanthropic tradition, children, for example, were confirmed as privileged referents of humanitarian assistance, a position that was now reinforced by the figure of the child as the innocent victim par excellence of war. Significant was the emergence of the refugee population as the target of aid policies and the consequent introduction of criteria and procedures aimed at establishing which fleeing civilians could become part of the category of beneficiaries that the international community was willing to take on. Immediate response to basic needs and health care remained the two main areas of intervention, while the world of humanitarianism began to be populated by professionals. There were also important changes at the international humanitarian level in the government of war prisoners: the treatment of inspection of prisoners was controlled by states through a procedure of defensive powers. International humanitarian organizations also participated in leisure activities in some POW camps.[127] The burden of violence and destruction brought by the Second World War confronted humanitarianism with an unthinkable degree of suffering. As in the Great War, World War II proved once again that civilians were at war and exposed to the same threats as soldiers. At the same time, for the victorious powers, and in particular for the United States, the manifestation of empathy towards the war's victims was equivalent to proof of civilization against the barbarity demonstrated by the enemies. Aid to the people who were subjected to Nazi-fascist aggression was an integral part of the reconstruction project and became the symbol of a new beginning in the history of humanity. The preferred activities of international programs remained feeding and clothing civilians, providing basic medical care, and halting the possible spread of epidemics. Their aims were reformulated in light of the new aspirations of humanitarianism. For instance, particular emphasis was given to the conviction, already widespread in the philanthropic tradition that relief and care should go beyond immediate relief and lead to a true physical and moral "rehabilitation" of the beneficiaries. In part, they referred to the welfare policies launched by the New Deal, and it is also for this reason that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was funded to "plan, coordinate, administer or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims

[127] Heather Jones, 'International or Transnational? Humanitarian Action during the First World War', *European Review of History: Revue Europeenne d'histoire* 16, no. 5 (October 2009): 697–713, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480903262702, 700.

of war in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services."[128] At the same time, the implementation of aid programs was inspired by previous experiences of post-war assistance, thanks also to personnel who had acquired their skills in the early post-war period within the League of Nations or non-governmental organizations. [129]

The effects of war had a global impact, and the idea of a connection between missionary work and humanitarian activism was not new. Indeed, the focus of Christian missions shifted towards humanitarian efforts, particularly in China during the years of the War of Resistance and the Second World War when humanitarian work was locally embedded and practiced for soldiers, civilians, and suffering people. China, which had been a missionary territory for centuries, was considered a prime location for relief work due to its history of receiving assistance from European and American humanitarian organizations.[130]

The Chinese charitable tradition and the Western humanitarian enterprises

In Chinese society, even before the arrival of "Western humanitarianism's enterprises", the concepts of Confucian benevolence of Confucian *ren'ai* 仁爱 underlying humanitarian organizations were deeply rooted in Chinese society and developed throughout history.[131] The Chinese term *rendao zhuyi* 人道主义, translated as "humanitarianism" or "humanism" by different scholars, is a familiar concept in the academic history of modern China. It was not created within China's local environment, nor was it transplanted from the Western

[128] 'Agreement for UNRRA', Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Pillars of Peace, 9 November 1943, Ibiblio.org, Published by the Book Department, Army Information School, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., May 1946.

[129] Salvatici, *Nel Nome Degli Altri*, 80.

[130]For a detailed history of Christian missions and missionaries in China, see Wang Zhixin 王治心, *Zhongguo Jidujiao Shi Gang* 中国基督教史纲 *[History of Christianity in China]* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1940); Rolf G. Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, An East Gate Book (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009); Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*.

[131] Tao Cui and Qiyong Guo, 'The Values of Confucian Benevolence and the Universality of the Confucian Way of Extending Love', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 7, no. 1 (2012): 20–54, https://doi.org/10.3868/s030-001-012-0002-5, 20; Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, 60.

Enlightenment, but it was born as a combination of Chinese and Western thoughts together.[132] It has passed through several interpretations, affected by the structural characteristics of its political organization. [133] Nevertheless, the early supporters of the Red Cross in China believed that Confucian values were crucial to the group's foundation. As Alexandra Pfeiff claimed, they believed that Western ideas of philanthropy, such as voluntarism and altruism, had roots in the Confucian tradition. A member of the Red Cross, Zhu Ruiwu 朱瑞五 (1905-1948), wrote a definition of humanitarianism in 1914 that included Confucian ideas of social responsibility as important for philanthropy and the Red Cross. He proposed that Chinese humanitarianism should be modeled on the Red Cross but based on Confucian concepts such as egalitarianism (*pingdengzhuyi* 平等主义), fraternity (*boaizhuyi* 博爱主义), and the idea of Great Unity (*datongzhuyi* 大同主义) which envisioned worldwide peace.[134] The meaning of humanitarianism is perhaps one of the most multifaceted concepts since it has differed significantly in several situations. What is more, the effect of its Chinese versions has become increasingly confusing due to various uses by philosophical intellectuals in the twentieth century.[135] However, it is broadly recognized that *Rendaozhuyi* is translated into the English term "humanitarianism", as its meaning is more focused on "universal love" and "promotion of human welfare." In this dissertation, the term "humanitarianism" will be applied in relation to secular international organizations (particularly the Chinese Red Cross and the ICRC) and the relief activities correlated.

The concept concerning a humanitarian association that complies with international standards with the purpose of assisting during conflicts and war was not a completely new issue. Joanna Handlin Smith observed that from the late Ming era and throughout the Qing Dynasty, many imperial officials, literati, and philanthropic merchants attempted to institutionalize and routinize concern for the poor and the people during emergencies by raising awareness of fundraising and donations. For instance, institutions aimed at distributing

[132] Zhang, 'The Concept of "Rendaozhuyi" in Late Qing and Early Republican China', 105.

[133] The term was born as a combination of Chinese and Western thoughts. According to Zhang Ke, during the late 1920s, the debate on *Rendaozhuyi* which predominated during the May Fourth era, diminished in public opinion. In the 1930s, it was not even included in the plan of "Chinese modernization". The use of term *Rendaozhuyi* in public debates dramatically reduced. Zhang, 115.

[134] Alexandra Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross: The Chinese Red Cross and the Red Swastika Society from 1904 to 1949' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Florence, European University Institute, 2018), 12.

[135] Tony Davies, *Humanism*, The New Critical Idioma (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 130.

relief in the long time were promoted, such as government-sponsored homes for the poor (*Yangjiyuan* 仰给园), state orphanages (*Yuyingtang* 育婴堂), hospitals and dispensaries (*Huimin yaoju* 惠民药局) and the construction of public housing and schools.[136]

In the late Ming era, the conception of charity (*cishan* 慈善, or abbrev. 善 *shan*) and philanthropy (*gongyi* 公益, or *gonggong liyi* 公共利益) in Chinese society went beyond individual and family boundaries. The term *cishan* literally means "mercy" or "benevolence." In Western countries, it is widely translated into the word "charity", intended both as a voluntary granting of assistance to people in need and as a Christian idea of sincere love and goodwill. The Chinese term *cishan,* instead, indicates aid for people in need but mostly in a cultural background related to religious traditions, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Since charity is usually related to religious faith, here this term is used in the proper Western meaning, in association with the Christian and Catholic religious practices of missionary activities. Furthermore, the Chinese term *gongyi* or *gonggong liyi* intended as a collective interest or public good is translated into the expression "philanthropy." It is widely described as "voluntary action for the public good."[137] Though the two different terms *cishan* and *gongyi* are often considered roughly similar, there are nuances between them. American historian Robert Gross claims that charity is deeply rooted in Christianity and it refers to the relief of suffering with specific and personal acts. Instead, philanthropy as a word was invented in England in the late seventeenth century. It was related to the Enlightenment, as an abstract and institutional solution to transform society. [138] If on one hand charity is characterized by religious implications, on the other philanthropy is mostly related to the secular sphere. Some historians further argue that charity pursues alleviating suffering, while philanthropy seeks to engage with the roots of suffering. [139] In the Chinese texts, there are no particular differences between the two terms *cishan* and *gongyi*, often applied mutually and

[136] Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, 418.

[137] Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 30.

[138] Robert A.Gross, "Giving in America. From Charity to Philanthropy", in Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History, ed. Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark Douglas MacGarvie, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 31.

[139] Peter Frumkin, *Strategic Giving: The Art and Science of Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 6-7; Helmut K. Anheier and Diana Leat, *From Charity to Creativity: Philanthropic Foundations in the 21st Century; Perspectives from Britain and Beyond* (Near Stroud: Comedia, 2002), 39-43.

reciprocally. Thus, the word "charity" is used in the largest possible sense, while "philanthropy" where the text denotes particularly the benevolent provision of the modern public good.

In the period from the late Ming and throughout the Qing Dynasty, various forms of social aggregation whose main objective was the welfare of the extended community were established. The first organizations were the Benevolent Societies, whose main tasks were to provide financial aid to disadvantaged widows, bury or cremate unclaimed bodies, set up temporary soup kitchens for the poor, and grant capital to doctors who could be useful to the community.[140] Scholars argued that China had a long history of benevolent activities. Joanna Handlin Smith revealed how a great desire for saving lives in late Ming society gave rise to charitable institutions that surpassed family, class, and religious limitations. In particular, the newly emerged organizations were "locally sponsored, voluntary, widespread, and enduring", not to be mistaken with the "state-sponsored, sporadic, and temporary" relief institutions of the Song dynasty.[141] According to her, the new societies were born thanks to several factors, including "the growing importance of merchant wealth, the acquiescence on the part of scholars to the rhetoric of commerce, and the tightening of bonds between merchants and gentry."[142] The terms used to define these organizations were different: they were often mentioned as *tongshanhui* 同善会, which literally means benevolence sharing society, *tongrenhui* 同仁会, shared humanity society, or *guangrenhui* 广仁会, which is translated into humanity spreading society. Despite the use of different names, the activities carried out by these societies remain almost unchanged. Caroline Reeves uses the Chinese term *shantang* 善堂 to identify these organizations.[143] In the nineteenth century, foreign missionaries who first studied their history and philosophy labeled them with the English term Benevolent Societies.[144] Historian Vivienne Shue also demonstrated the persistence of certain Confucian values and practices in the establishment of *shantang* in Tianjin during the early twentieth century, characterized by a surge of modernity and consequent social and economic

[140] Smith, 'Benevolent Societies'.

[141] Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, 310.

[142] Smith, 330.

[143] Intended as nurseries, nursing homes or other charities.

[144] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 7.

changes.[145] According to Chi Zihua, they presented many similarities with the Red Cross. Firstly, both organizations were voluntary, private, and long-lasting. The Benevolent Societies were the first form of relief organized by the people for the people whose membership was voluntary and whose purpose was not for profit. The continuity aimed for by the Benevolent Societies distinguished them from the previous Chinese charitable institutions, in which the need for the creation of relief organizations was defined by the emergency and fulfilled after the crisis was over. Secondly, the organizational system with which the Benevolent Societies were structured constitutes another analogy with Swiss society: the regulation and the system of collecting donations through the payment of membership fees were present in both institutions.[146]

The changing political, social and cultural context at the end of nineteenth-century China affected the conception of traditional benevolent societies, which were reconceptualized to be aligned and consistent with the international organization as the Red Cross. As Chi Zihua points out, the China Relief Benevolent Society was like "new wine in an old barrel" (*jiu ping zhuang xin jiu* 旧瓶装新酒), while maintaining its traditional character and elevating its principles to those of the Red Cross.[147] The propagation of charity in early twentieth-century China expanded movements already noticed in the late Qing. As Zhou Qiuguang and Zeng Guilin claimed, during the Qing period philanthropic endeavors were systematically established and advanced, with the government allocating resources to private charitable organizations to undertake an increasing number of benevolent initiatives.[148]

As a marker of modernity and strictly connected to nationalism, the concept of humanitarianism in China was mostly associated with the birth of the Red Cross. One report argues that the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) was independently founded due to the Russo-Japanese war on February 6, 1904, in the Three Northeast Provinces of China as Puji

[145] Shue, 'The Quality of Mercy'.

[146] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会, [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross Society]'.

[147] Chi Zihua 池子华, 77.

[148] Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光 and Zeng Guilin 曾桂林, *Zhongguo Cishan Jianshi* 中国慈善. 简史 *[Charity in China: A Brief History]*, 177-213.

Good Will (*dongbei sansheng puji shanhui* 东北三省普济善会).[149] Another version, as reported by Chi Zihua, claims that the Charities Association of China, as the precursor of the RCSC, responded to the necessities of the war wounded.[150] The other version, according to one of the most prominent newspapers of the time, the *Shenbao* 申报, states that the RCSC was founded by the British merchant Ernest Major on April 30, 1872, when the diplomat Liang Chen gathered with delegates from the UK, the US, France, and Germany and founded the Shanghai International Red Cross Society (*Shanghai wanguo hong shizi hui* 上海万国红十字会) on March 10, 1904.[151]

When on August 22, 1864, in Geneva twelve member states officially signed the "Geneva Red Cross Convention," the Chinese society was really not aware of the Red Cross. *Shantang* and *Shanhui* were still in charge of relief efforts during complex emergencies. During the first Sino-Japanese war (*Zhongri Jiawu zhanzheng* 中日甲午战争), in May 1894, the North China Daily News（*Zilin Xibao* 字林西报）claimed that the Red Cross Society was the main neutral organization for treating the wounded soldiers simultaneously. Consequently, while only the Japanese Red Cross (*Riben Chishizishe* 日本赤十字社) helped the injured from both sides on Chinese soil, Western missionaries from Europe and US started to establish Red Cross hospitals.[152] For instance, Atterbury reveals about foreigners in Tianjin who supported the foundation of the "Independent Red Cross Society" and sent a professional medical team to Yingkou to facilitate other hospitals non-affiliated with the Red Cross in the field. As result, hospitals run by the Red Cross in Yingkou, Yantai and Tianjin, were set up independently by members of the Chinese civil

[149] Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光, 'Wanqing Shiqi de Zhongguo Hongshizihui Lunshu 晚清时期的中国红十字会论述,' [On the Red Cross Society of China during the Late Qing Dynasty Period]', *Jindai Shi Yanjiu* 近代史研究 3 (2000): 135.

[150] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会 [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross]' , 76.

[151] Yang Zhifang 杨智芳 and Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光, 'Lun Zhongguo Hongshizihui de Qiyuan 论中国红十字会的起源 [The Origin of Red Cross Society of China]', *Hunan Shifan Daxue Kexue Xuebao* 湖南师范大学社会科学学报 35, no. 4 (2006), 116-118.

[152] Dugald Christie, *Thirty Years in Moukden, 1883-1913: Being the Experiences and Recollections of Dugald Christie, C.M.G.* (Forgotten Books, 2019), 99-108.

society. Additionally, many individuals participated in Red Cross initiatives driven by humanitarian reasons.[153]

Following Chinese scholars' reports, after the War of Resistance, the establishment of the Red Cross started to be a significant issue in terms of representing modernity and in connection with nationalism. Sun Gan 孙淦, a Chinese businessman who lived in Japan for many years, was the first to understand the importance of the international organization and support the Red Cross establishment in China, based on the Japanese experience.[154] According to Bingling Wei, he was interested in the Japanese Red Cross, and how the organization assisted injured soldiers and victims according to its values, functions, and characteristics. He translated into Chinese the main principles of the Red Cross and send the petition for the establishment of the Red Cross first to the China Foreign Minister, Zongli Yamen 总理衙门, then, to the ambassador to Japan, Yu Geng 裕庚.[155] The latter encouraged the reformist Wang Kangnian 汪康年 (1860-1911) to propagate the Red Cross principles and values in the province of Hunan. According to Sun, the humanitarian association would have increased the European powers' esteem for the empire, dismantling their idea of a China that was not fully civilized and regarded only as a colony to be divided into areas of influence. On the other hand, Japan had long since surpassed China, becoming the most economically powerful and influential country in Asia, as well as the first in the East to sign the Geneva Convention. Several national activists and foreigners also participated in spreading knowledge about the Chinese Red Cross. Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866-1925) was one of them, who contributed to translating the British First Aid Manual of the Red Cross (*Chishizihui jiushang diyifa* 赤十字会救伤第一法) into Chinese.[156] In April 1899, the first Peace Conference in Hague conceived three new conventions: the Convention on the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflicts, the Convention Respecting the Laws of War of a State in the Event of Conflict in its Territory, and the extension of the regulations of the Geneva Convention of 1864 to maritime wars. China did not sign any of the three conventions. In

[153] B.C. Atterbury, 'Red Cross Work in Tientsin', *The China Medical Missionary Journal* XI, no. 4 (1895), 12.

[154] Yannan Li, 'Red Cross Society in Imperial China, 1904–1912: A Historical Analysis', *Voluntas* 27, no. 5 (October 2016): 2274–91, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9660-5, 5.

[155] Bingling Wei, 'Problematising the Public Sphere in China: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Adelaide, 2020), https://hdl.handle.net/2440/123505, 95.

[156] Wei, 96.

return, the Chinese government's representative delegate, Yang Ru 杨儒, drafted a memorandum of the meeting, addressing them to the imperial house and explaining the various benefits China would experience by signing.[157] Even greater attention was paid to the creation of a Chinese National Red Cross Committee. Yang argued that the presence in China of such an organization would contribute to the elevation of the national image, however, in contrast to the idea of Sun Gan, he considered the Chinese Red Cross a government organization run by the State. [158]

Similar observations were also carried forward by the philosopher Tan Sitong 谭嗣同 (1865-1898), who, together with top exponent Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858-1927), implemented a series of institutional reforms based on the Japanese model.[159] Toward the end of 1894, Tan published in his "Letter to Bei Yuan Zheng" (*bao Bei Yuan Zheng shu* 报贝元征书) an article exalting the universal love carried out by the Japanese Red Cross Society and urging China to follow suit.[160] His attempts were in vain; the defeat China suffered from Japan itself in Korea decreed the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement (*Ziqiang yundong* 自強運動**,** 1861-1895) by ending the short reformist period called the "Hundred Days' Reforms" (*Wuxu Bianfa* 戊戌变法).[161] Empress Cixi 慈禧太后 (1835-1908), who initially maintained a position of neutrality, sided with the conservatives and even went so far as to support the Boxer Rebellion, entering into full combat with the occupying powers. Tan, along with six other reformists, was executed, while Kang Youwei

[157] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 80-81.

[158] Wei, 'Problematising the Public Sphere in China: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China', 100.

[159] Sabattini and Santangelo, *Storia della Cina*, 555.

[160] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会 [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross]', 76.

[161]It was an unsuccessful attempt to modernize the political, social, cultural, military and educational apparatus that began on June 11, 1898, by Emperor Guangxu and reformists led by Kang Youwei, and was interrupted on September 21 by a coup led by Empress Mother Cixi and conservatives, including the Pei-yang Army. See Lane J. Harris, 'The Hundred Days' Reforms, 1898', in *The Peking Gazette: A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 280–98, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004361003; Chang-chien Huang, 'On the Hundred Days Reform', in *Reform in Nineteenth-Century China*, Harvard University Asia Center (Cambridge, Mass, 1976), 306–9.

escaped conviction by retreating to Japan.[162] Without the support of the imperial house, the Red Cross in China could not have had a future. It was only through Yang Ru's efforts that also Empress Cixi began to reconsider her ideas on the Organization. If the Red Cross did indeed represent the new trend in international philanthropy, China would have to establish one of its own, demonstrating that it was a civilized country up to world standards.[163] The brutal repression of the Boxers by the eight European powers in Beijing on September 7, 1901, provided the Chinese Empire with the ultimate test of the military supremacy of the Western states and Japan. The humanitarian organization also seemed the right way to begin laying the foundations of peaceful international relations with foreign guests.

The process leading to the formation of a National Red Cross Committee in China began in the late 1800s and was accelerated with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 in the three Chinese north-eastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning. In order to address the crisis, a group of Shanghai merchants prepared relief for wounded soldiers and victims on the battlefield. Among them, Shen Dunhe 沈敦和 (1866-1920), Ren Xifen 任锡汾, Shi Zejing 施则敬, and other merchants founded the Northeast Three Provinces Puji Good Will (*dong san sheng puji shanhui* 东三省普济善会) organization in order to rescue injured. His strong exposure to Western thought and the relationships he had established with foreign missionaries during the relief operations of the Sino-Japanese War of 1884-1885 led Shen to increasingly understand the Red Cross organization.[164] In creating a Benevolent Society that, while maintaining a strong connotation with China's centuries-old philanthropic associations, embodied the Swiss organization's principles of neutrality and impartiality, Shen aimed to lay a concrete foundation for the ultimate establishment of a nationwide relief system. His ideas were fervently welcomed by many philanthropist merchants in Shanghai, who, living in close contact with foreign occupiers, had, in turn, the opportunity to learn the importance of the relief organization.

The gentry in China played a key role in the philanthropic and humanitarian realms, as happened in Europe. Around the late Ming period, China's elite, consisting of scholars, government officials, and wealthy landowners, championed humanitarian ideals establishing Benevolent Societies and other philanthropic associations. During the Qing dynasty, the

[162] Sabattini and Santangelo, *Storia della Cina*, 555.

[163] Yannan Li, 'Red Cross Society in Imperial China, 1904–1912: A Historical Analysis', *Voluntas* 27, no. 5 (October 2016): 2274–91, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9660-5, 9.

[164] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 99.

improvement of economic conditions and the development of trade contributed to the formation of a new ruling class with the progressive appearance of merchants in humanitarian and philanthropic matters. It was during this time that the merchant class began to gain prestige. The word merchant (*shang* 商) was joined by the character of the gentry (*shen* 绅) to form a single word (*shen shang* 绅商), literally gentleman merchant. They gradually replaced the role of literati and officials in the main activities of relief, representing the new people of Chinese philanthropy.[165] Elizabeth Sinn highlighted that rich Chinese merchants in Hong Kong were the primary agents behind the establishment of the Tung Wah Hospital (*donghua yiyuan* 东华医院) and the charitable Po Leung Kuk (*bao liang ju* 保良局), demonstrating admirable relationship between merchants and charity.[166] Following Angela Leung, in late Qing and early Republican Canton local merchants with national, or international relations mostly substituted the gentry as the administrators of the Nine Charitable Halls (*jiu da shantang* 九大善堂).[167] Also, Li Guolin and Wang Hua claimed that the major sponsors of private charities in Republican Shanghai were wealthy merchants,[168] while Nara Dillon in her study notes that the pillar of Shanghai's charity sphere from 1932 to 1949 was a group of mostly merchants.[169]

On March 3, 1904, Shen Dunhe, together with about twenty of the wealthiest and most influential people in Shanghai, gathered to discuss the formation of the Manchurian Red

[165] Joanna Handlin Smith, 'Social Hierarchy and Merchant Philanthropy as Perceived in Several Late-Ming and Early-Qing Texts', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 3 (1998): 417–51, https://doi.org/10.1163/156852098323213156.

[166] Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity: A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong*, Echoes (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 18.

[167] Angela Ki Che Leung, 'Charity, Medicine, and Religion: The Quest for Modernity in Canton (ca. 1870-1937)', *Modern Chinese Religion II:1850-2015 (2 Vols)* 2 (Leiden: Brill 2015): 579–612.

[168] Li Guolin 李国林, 'Minguo Shiqi Shanghai Cishan Zuzhi Yanjiu 1912-1937 民国时期上海慈善组织研究 1912-1937 [A Study of Charitable Organisations in Republican Shanghai]' (Ph.D. Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2003), 120-128; Wang Hua 汪华, *Cihui Yu Guikong: Jindai Shanghai de Shehui Baozhang Yu Guanmin Hudong 1927-1937* 词汇与鬼空: 近代上海的社会保障与官民互动 *1927-1937 [Charity and Control: Social Welfare in Modern Shanghai and State-Society Interactions]* (Shanghai: Shiji chuban jituan, 2013), 219-229.

[169] Nara Dillon, 'The Politics of Philanthropy: Social Networks and Refugee Relief in Shanghai, 1932–1949', in *At the Crossroads of Empires*, ed. Nara Dillon and Jean C. Oi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 179–205, 203-205.

Cross Benevolent Society. During the meeting, Shen made the keynote speech introducing the origin of the Red Cross (*Zhongguo Hongshizihui* 中国红十字会), expounding its principles and regulations, and taking the organization as the benchmark for the establishment of the new institution. At the end of the conference, the formation of the new Society was approved, and the purpose and regulations were drafted in a list of thirty nine items.[170] Although the new organization was still using the name "Benevolent Society", just like the pioneering Relief Benevolent Society, it went further, accepting the basic principles of the Red Cross and attempting to internationalize its membership by including foreign components to increase its neutrality. A further point was the Society's propaganda, urging philanthropists and members of other Benevolent Societies to participate in the humanitarian mission, even covering travel expenses for the less well-off. By adopting this approach, the Society motivated Chinese benefactors and philanthropists to converge into a unified entity, transcending social class boundaries and empowering all to contribute positively to humanity. Moreover, just like the Japanese Red Cross, taken as an example by many Chinese humanitarians, the new organization aimed to gain the support and trust of the government, a mandatory step for the formation of a national committee.

While the war continued to reap casualties among Chinese civilians, those who survived the armed clashes often died of starvation or disease. Shen Dunhe, in order to expedite the recovery of his compatriots, then turned to English missionary Timothy Richard.[171] In 1870 he went to China on behalf of the London Baptist Church Missionary Society and, in the last thirty years of the 1800s, served as a missionary in Shandong, Dongbei and Shanxi provinces. In 1890 he briefly served as editor of the English newspaper *Times* in the city of Tianjin and played a key role in the modernist reforms carried out by Kang Youwei. In 1895 Richard was elected personal consul to Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (1871-1908). Fully convinced of the supremacy of Western states, as expressed in the new scientific discoveries also applied to the medical and relief fields, he took charge of relief operations in the face of the famines of the late nineteenth century.[172] Shen discussed with Timothy Richard to establish the Red Cross in China based on the European standard. The

[170] Chi Zihua 池子华, 'Cong Zhongguo Jiuji Shan Hui Dao Shanghai Wanguo Hong Shizi Hui 从中国救济善会到上海万国红十字会 [From Chinese Charities Association to Shanghai International Red Cross]', 78.

[171] Chi Zihua 池子华, 80.

[172] Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, 1-2.

Red Cross worked mainly in the three Northeast provinces, also assisting refugees from other places. An article called "China needs to set up a Red Cross" （*Zhongguo yiru hongshizihui shuo* 中国宜入红十字会说）was published in the *Shen Bao* on March 5, 1904, discussing that "the Puji Good Will was a harbinger of the Chinese Red Cross". However, the Northeast Three Provinces Puji Good Will used the traditional term *shanhui* 善会. Even if the Russo-Japanese War was over, it continued to operate in Chinese society and was recognized by the International Red Cross Committee.[173]

Fascinated by the interest from the group of Chinese philanthropists in Shanghai for the Red Cross, Timothy Richards decided to help Shen in his rescue operation. If the ICRC could not recognize the Manchurian Red Cross Society as part of the Movement, the only move to attempt was to bring in members to the organization from international members, so as to increase its neutrality and obtain the requirements to enter the "red zone." On March 10, 1904, a general assembly of foreign representatives was convened in the British concession in Shanghai. The conference ended with the formation of a new humanitarian organization, the Shanghai International Red Cross (*Shanghai Wanguo Hongshizihui*, 上海万国红十字会). There were thirty-five Western directors led by Timothy Richard and ten Chinese directors led by Shen Dunhe. Nine directors were elected from forty-five directors, who were in charge of managing the affairs of the Red Cross in China.[174] The leaders of the Western Red Cross, including Timothy Lee as the general director and Shen Dunhe 沈敦和, Shi Zejing 施则敬, and Ren Xifen 任锡汾 as directors, established financial records and set up bank accounts for the organization. They also created books for donation, sent thank-you letters, distributed grants for relief, formed *niuzhuang* 牛庄 clubs, supported agents promoting their work, and managed other matters in Beijing and Tianjin. Additionally, a group including officials and merchants such as Lü Haihuan, Sheng Xuanhuai, Wu Chongxi, Shen Dunhe, Ren Xifen, and Shi Zejing, issued a document called "Enlisting Fundraising and Rescue to Protect Northeastern Refugees" (*quanmu choukuan jiuhu dongbei nanmin tongdian* 劝募筹款救护东北难民通电) which was distributed to all provinces across the country. They also used telegrams to inform the people of the country that the Shanghai International Red Cross had

[173] Bingling Wei, 'Problematising the Public Sphere in China: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Adelaide, 2020), https://hdl.handle.net/2440/123505, 103.

[174] Wei, 105.

been recognized by the government and urged all sectors of society to actively support and carry out rescue and relief work.[175]

The new name, the composition of the committee and the official language suggest that the Shanghai International Red Cross was strongly intended by the cross-fertilized efforts of Chinese and foreign humanitarians. These factors helped to increase the level of neutrality of the society, which, by abandoning the traditional nomenclature of "Benevolent Society" and gaining the support of foreign powers, was able to carry out the relief operation. The dream of Shen Dunhe and the Shanghai merchants to establish a Chinese-style Red Cross had finally been realized and found legitimacy on June 29, 1904, with China's entry into the Geneva Convention, although official recognition of the Chinese National Red Cross Committee by the ICRC dates to 1912.[176]

As explored by Caroline Reeves, since the beginning of Chinese investment in the Red Cross in 1904, the society allowed social elites to put forth their modernizing ideas of the country. While private influence over Red Cross affairs failed in favor of the expansion of state power during the Nanjing Decade, she argues that this effect mirrored the nature of the country's civil society, which developed as an intermediate realm linked to the state.[177] The peculiarity of the Red Cross develops from the investment of private philanthropists, of reform-oriented officials, according to Chi Zihua, and also from the devoted encouragement of the population for its various activities.[178] One key aspect that differentiated the Chinese Red Cross from other Red Cross agencies was its forced involvement in the development of military medical services. Pfeiff' research proposes that the Red Cross only partly merged with China's armies. Its branches and medical institutions mainly included civilians, although its leaders struggled to have the services of the Red Cross by military leaders. Nevertheless, the care for soldiers depended on the choice and interest of local military leaders. While some of them like Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1959-1916) had supported the Red Cross during the First Sino-Japanese War, assistance for soldiers was not well-developed. The Ministry of Land Armies issued official regulations for incorporating the Red Cross Relief Corps into armies in 1913. However, the level of care for soldiers was dependent on the decisions and priorities of

[175] Wei, 106-107.

[176] Li, 'Red Cross Society in Imperial China, 1904–1912', 10-12.

[177] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 169.

[178] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 115.

local military leaders, and during the Warlord Era (*Junfa shidai* 军阀时代 , 1916-1928), most of them did not make it a priority to enhance medical services for soldiers.[179] Diana Lary explains that during the Republican era soldiers were a disadvantaged social group and their lives were occupied with drills by superiors, malnourishment, inadequate clothing and accommodation, opium smoking, and prostitution. Assistance for wounded soldiers on the battlefield was not considered a primary objective of military reforms.[180] Thus, in contrast to other nations, where the Red Cross became closely linked with military operations, the Chinese Red Cross remained separated from military affairs and was only able to provide limited assistance to wounded soldiers at the front.

During the Northern Expedition (*Guomin geming jun beifa* 国民革命军北伐) from 1926 to 1928, led by the Nationalist Revolutionary Army under Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (1887-1975), some significant humanitarian projects were incorporated into military campaigns. For instance, the Red Cross organized 200 volunteers who set up two hospitals in Hankou and forty-seven refugee camps for 50.000 refugees. They also created medical units to assist wounded soldiers in the National Revolutionary Army.[181] The Red Cross became increasingly integrated into official plans for national defense, particularly after Japan's aggression in 1931. The expansion of services to the military and the improvement of a legal framework for Red Cross services under military law after the Japanese attacks in 1932 marked a significant change in the history of the organization. Despite primarily assisting civilians during the attacks on Shanghai in February 1932, the Red Cross established units whose activities improved the conditions of wounded soldiers, leading to the professionalization of military services. In total, the Red Cross arranged twenty emergency units with 471 volunteers, which set up forty-three emergency hospitals for wounded soldiers, five refugee camps for 53.100 refugees, and camps for 8.600 soldiers, spending also 283.000 *yuan* on materials and medicine.[182]

After the Japanese attacks on Shanghai in 1932, Red Cross activism demonstrated patriotism and opposition to Japan and highlighted the importance of medical experts in

[179] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 14.

[180] Lary, *Warlord Soldiers*, 57.

[181] Donald A. Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926-1928* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 255.

[182] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 274.

improving military medical services. For instance, Pfeiff claims that after the establishment of Manzhouguo in 1933, the Red Cross became part of the patriotic Manchurian Relief Association. The same year, when Japanese armies attempted to invade the province of Rehe, the Red Cross founded the North China Relief Committee in partnership with other local organizations such as the Rehe United Relief Society and the Chinese Medical Association. With support from the PUMC, the Red Cross medical corps played a leading role in the effort.[183] In 1933, through the new program of radical reorganization (*Chedi gaizu* 彻底改组), launched by the nationalists, the Red Cross changed its institutional structure and name to *Zhonghua renmin hongshizihu* 中华人民红十字会, i.e. Red Cross of the Chinese people.[184] The changes in the administration of the new Chinese Red Cross were immediately made visible during the first General Assembly in 1934, where most of the society's offices were given to members of the Nationalist Party. Wang Zhengtin 王正廷 (1882-1961) was elected President, while Chiang Kai-shek was assigned the title of Honorary President.[185]

While the Red Cross took on the responsibility of military relief and trained its personnel, other groups handled less specialized tasks. However, specialized military medical work was costly and was provided by the American Peking Union Medical College. The continuous dependence on American financial support during the war also allowed the Red Cross to adopt a subversive role by using the funding for pro-Communist activities.[186] Although the Red Cross was not officially included in army services before the Sino-Japanese War, it created specialized emergency units under the government's direction. On June 1, 1936, the Red Cross Temporary North China Committee was established and was chaired by leading members of the Red Cross from the National Health Administration.[187] Its goal was to mobilize volunteers among medical professionals and students of medical institutions and train them for specialized duties on the frontlines. Doctor Lin Kesheng 林可勝 (1897-1969) officially became responsible for training the Red Cross Medical Corps, and until the

[183] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 130-132.

[184] Wang Lizhong 王立忠, Jiang Yiman 江亦曼, and Sun Longchun 孙隆椿, *Zhongguo Hongshizihui Bainian* 中国红十字会百年 *[100-Year Chronicle of Red Cross Society of China]*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2004).

[185] Wang Lizhong 王立忠, Jiang Yiman 江亦曼, and Sun Longchun 孙隆椿, 52-53.

[186] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 133.

[187] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 294.

outbreak of the war in 1937, as chapter 3 will analyze, the program trained 547 students from various universities and thirty branches.[188] The Red Cross Regulations for the Management of the Red Cross, a new government-approved law passed in July 1936, outlined the mission to train medical corps as preparation for wartime services. The law also established a Youth Red Cross to include more social groups in Red Cross activities than previously. From that time on, thanks to persons like Lin Kesheng who utilized their professional expertise in establishing a long-term Red Cross medical service for the military, the organization began organizing for the outbreak of the war.

Chinese religions and philanthropic associations in Republican China

Among new humanitarian projects established by Chinese philanthropists during the nineteenth-twentieth century, some introduced foreign paradigms of humanitarian aid, while others were religious associations that maintained traditional religious philanthropy combined with external influences. During the Republican period, many "redemptive societies" were established.[189] They were religious/philanthropic organizations that involved millions of followers by grounding calls for philanthropic social commitment in a syncretic religious

[188] Zhang Jianqiu 张建俅, *Zhongguo Hong Shizi Hui Chuqi Fazhan Zhi Yanjiu* 中国红十字会初期发展之研究 *[Research on the Early Development of the Chinese Red Cross]* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 162.

[189] The designation employed to refer to such groups in mainland China is not clear. The name *huidaomen*, created in the 1940s indicates popular religious groups labeled by communists as reactionary. Terms such as *minjian zongjiao, minjian jiaomen,* or *minjian jiaopai* are translated as "popular religious sects" linked to the history of Chinese sectarianism, millennialism, and heterodoxy. It was the case of Daode xueshe (Moral Studies Society), Dejiao (Morality Teachings), Guiyi daoyuan (Court of the Way of Initiation), Jiugongdao (Way of Nine Palaces), Jiushi xinjiaohui (New Religion to Save the World), Kongjiaohui (Society of the Confucian Religion), Puhua jiushi fojiaohui (Buddhist Association for Universal Salvation and Transformation), Tiande shengjiao (Sagely Teachings of Heavenly Virtue), Tongshanshe (Fellowship of Goodness), Wanguo daodehui (Universal Morality Society), Wushanshe (Society of Awakening to Goodness), Xiantiandao (Way of Anterior Heaven), Yiguandao (Way of Pervasive Unity), Yixin tiandao longhua shengjiaohui (One Heart Heavenly Way Dragon-Flower Assembly of the Sagely Teachings), Zailijiao (Teaching of the Abiding Principle), Zhenkongjiao (Teachings of True Emptiness). David Ownby, 'Recent Chinese Scholarship on the History of "Redemptive Societies": Guest Editor's Introduction', *Chinese Studies in History* 44, no. 1–2 (December 2010): 3–9, https://doi.org/10.2753/CSH0009-4633440100.

concept that merged universalism and neotraditional ethical fundamentalism. [190] Some of them were temporarily registered as religions, but usually, this term was used for the "big five" of Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism in modern Chinese history. Most if not all forms of popular Chinese religion were considered suspicious by many Chinese intellectuals who have mostly modernized discourses concerning the split between "proper" religions (coming from the West or with foreign influences) and "superstitious cults." Numerous traditional popular values and practices were not suitable to be considered a real religion, instead, scholar Prasenjit Duara identified them as "redemptive societies," since their shared idea was to save people and the world. [191] Most of them established their own sacred scripture, philosophical organizations, rituals, congregational participation, and hierarchical national administrations.[192] Moreover, their public reputation as charitable associations played a crucial role in their future existence. Leaders of redemptive societies placed social charity at their core, including the anti-superstitious discourse and religious reform targets of the state. Thomas DuBois claims that "although many of the traditional sectarian religions had devoted resources for public acts of benevolence, the new era changed charity from sideline to central focus."[193] Chinese scholars were particularly sensitive to Western Christian-inspired thoughts of Chinese religions. Accordingly, liturgies and practices offered by Buddhism and Daoism were considered extravagant and superstitious, and thus banned as a non-modern religious organization. [194]

While the Red Cross became increasingly integrated into official plans for national defense, other significant relief organizations of this period, such as the Daoyuan and the Red

[190] Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 89–129, https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2001.0009.

[191] Duara Prasenjit, 'Of Authenticity and Woman: Personal Narratives of Middle-Class Women in Modern China', in *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 343.

[192] Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 91.

[193] Thomas Dubois, 'The Salvation of Religion? Public Charity and New Religions of the Early Chinese Republic', in *Charities in the Non-Western World: The Development and Regulation of Indigenous and Islamic Charities*, Routledge Charities Studies Series 1 (London: Routledge, 2011), 91.

[194] Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 322 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009), 191-226.

Swastika Society, had a more complicated relationship with the Nationalist government, due to their religious and philosophical beliefs. When new religions and schools of thought combining traditions with foreign beliefs began to spread in the Republican years, the cultural movements that developed among the Chinese community did not merely condemn Confucianism, but rather freed it from its old constraints, giving many intellectuals the chance to reinterpret it. Instead of retreating into tradition, these literati made Confucian ethics the center of a new universal civilization that transcended universal and religious boundaries.[195] This was indeed the case with Daoyuan 道院, established in 1916 in the Pin County of Shandong province by Wu Fusen 吳福森 and Garrison Captain Liu Shaoji 劉紹基.[196] As David A. Palmer's research shows, the emergence of the Daoyuan society in 1916 can be considered a continuation of a century-old tradition of "salvationist groups (*jiu du tuanti* 救度团体 or *jiushi tuanti* 救世团体)." The group had its roots in North China regions where it educated the population in morals and beliefs and managed philanthropic institutions. These new religious movements in early Republican China, like the Daoyuan, were based on the traditional religious focus on philanthropy but were also influenced by international political changes.[197] During the early 1920s, the Daoyuan began to establish itself as a religion throughout China, particularly in the provinces of Shandong, Zhili and Jiangsu. The first Daoyuan was established in the city of Jinan and, following registration with the Beiyang government as an official organization, new branches were formed in Beijing, Tianjin, and Jining. The influx of new members from the commercial bourgeoisie class helped to increase the social capital of the organization, which was progressively abandoning esotericism in favor of more socially useful activities.[198] The Daoyuan's investment in philanthropy was very different from the Red Cross since it projected a faith-based duty while sustaining cultural amalgamation based on their traditions. Its attention was on joining Chinese spiritual traditions with foreign effects based on the foundation of different religious writings that chose characteristics of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Islam and incorporated them into one new religious doctrine.

[195] Dubois, 'The Salvation of Religion? Public Charity and New Religions of the Early Chinese Republic', 86.

[196] Dubois, 79.

[197] David A. Palmer, 'Chinese Redemptive Societies and Salvationist Religion: Historical Phenomenon or Sociological Category?', *Minsu Quyi* 6, no. 172 (1 June 2011): 21–72, https://doi.org/10.30157/JCRTF.201106.0003, 43.

[198] Dubois, 'The Salvation of Religion? Public Charity and New Religions of the Early Chinese Republic', 79-82.

The freedom of aggregation in private societies that the Republic had brought with it also resulted in the formation of new philanthropic organizations, built to deal with the countless natural disasters of the 1920s and 1930s.[199] Moreover, the increasing interest in benevolence towards one's neighbor also affected Chinese religion and, consequently, the new religions that were formed in those years. This process affected the Daoyuan, which during the 1920s began to incorporate their beliefs into the relief operations carried out by the Red Swastika Society (RSS) (*shejie hong wanzi hui* 世界红卍字会). The foundation of the RSS in 1922 and the social activism of the time blended perfectly with the Daoyuan concept of the "salvation of the world" (*jiushi* 救世) which was at the heart of the beliefs of the five religions.[200] According to Andrea Janku, the organization was a significant contributor to aid and assistance in war zones since Western agents were without protection and refused to enter the dangerous zones.[201] The Red Swastika Society quickly developed and established a well-organized system for providing aid, undertaking large-scale relief efforts since there was a significant need for their services. Its members operated within the field of relief efforts with a heightened level of competence compared to prior charitable initiatives. They not only raised funds for food and clothing but also organized teams of volunteers to provide specific assistance to disaster victims; they also established hospitals, shelters, and soup kitchens for soldiers, women, children, and refugees affected by war and famine. In Beijing, they served over a million free meals per day in two soup kitchens. One of the most notable activities was organizing teams of volunteers to bury thousands of corpses in war and famine-stricken areas. By the mid-1930s, their efforts had grown to include over a hundred volunteers, providing daily meals and medical care to the city's poor.[202]

In the years from 1928 until 1933, the government introduced new regulations to closely monitor the organization and funding of charities, including well-known international

[199] During the Republic years, from 1911 to 1949, China experienced continuous wars and frequent natural disasters. An estimated 16.698 counties were damaged by natural disasters, including floods, droughts, hurricanes, and earthquakes. In terms of the concentration proportion, Hunan was the most affected province, followed by Henan, Shandong, Yunnan, Jiangsu, Hubei, and Hebei. See Yi Liu, Yu Yang, and Li Li, 'Major Natural Disasters and Their Spatio-Temporal Variation in the History of China', *Journal of Geographical Sciences* 22, no. 6 (December 2012): 963–76, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11442-012-0976-4.

[200] Dubois, 'The Salvation of Religion? Public Charity and New Religions of the Early Chinese Republic', 91.

[201] Andrea Janku, 'The Internationalisation of Disaster Relief in Early Twentieth-century China', *Berliner Chinahefte*, no. 43 (2013): 6–28, 22.

[202] Dubois, 'The Salvation of Religion? Public Charity and New Religions of the Early Chinese Republic', 94-95.

organizations like the Red Cross. As follows, the government aimed to exert more control over disaster relief arranged by private charitable organizations.[203] After the Yellow River flood in 1933, the government allocated a large sum of money for refugee aid. This move was seen as an attempt to take control of charity away from Christian missions and groups like the Red Swastika Society. As a result, many religious and charitable organizations, including the Red Swastika Society, lost their legal status and had to reapply for government recognition. Even if the Red Swastika Society was able to register again, it faced continued suspicion due to its association with "spirit writing" and being viewed as a "secret society."[204]

The religious movements that emerged during the early twentieth century represented a period of innovation, although they were not entirely new. Their basic beliefs and practices, as well as their ethical and charitable impulses, had deep roots in the ideas and institutions of the late imperial era. However, the Republican setting was fundamentally different as allowed religious and charitable societies to rise to national prominence and strive for a place in the public sphere that would have previously been improbable. The shift to charity modified the course of religious movements such as Daoyuan. The charitable sector was primed for rapid expansion as the number and ambition of public charities had been rising since the late nineteenth century and exploded as the collapse of the Beiyang government left millions in desperate need of relief. The eclipse of Daoyuan by the Red Swastika Society shows how quickly charity could change from sideline to primary focus. In the same way as the Buddhism-pervaded social activism of political individuals such as Wang Yiting 王一亭 (1867-1938),[205] or the policy objectives of reformers such as the Buddhist monk Taixu 太虚 (1890-1947)[206], the complex combination of reasons and interests that drove the work of the Red Swastika Society challenged minimal categorization as religious, charitable or political.

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[203] Dubois, 96.

[204] Shue, 'The Quality of Mercy', 441.

[205] Wang Yiting was a philanthropist and chairman of the board of the Renji Benevolent Hall, one of Shanghai's largest traditional charities. See Kuiyi Shen, 'Wang Yiting in the Social Networks of 1910s–1930s Shanghai', in *At the Crossroads of Empires*, ed. Nara Dillon and Jean C. Oi (Stanford University Press, 2008), 45–64; Dillon, 'The Politics of Philanthropy: Social Networks and Refugee Relief in Shanghai, 1932–1949', 184.

[206] Taixu was a Chinese Buddhist monk, activist and philosopher who advocated the reform and renewal of Chinese Buddhism. See Don Alvin Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Xue Yu, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism: Chinese Monks in the Struggle against Japanese Aggressions, 1931-1945*, East Asia, History, Politics, Sociology, Culture (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Christian faith-based humanitarian efforts in China during the early decades of the twentieth century

Given the situation that was inherited during the early years of the twentieth century in the realms of faith-based humanitarianism and relief organizations, Christians, including Catholic missionaries were protagonists. Christianity in China has been surviving since the seventh century.[207] As the authors of the volume *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia* argue, the narratives of mission history have been shaped by the Catholic Church's claims to universality and have been connected to the history of European expansion since the sixteenth century. At that time, the Latin term "mission" gained its dual meaning of spreading the faith among non-Christians and reinforcing faith among Christians. Missions became a central issue in the self-representation of the papacy, religious orders, and secular Catholic rulers as it allowed them to differentiate themselves from the churches that emerged from the Protestant Reformation, which were less active in this field. Members of religious orders wrote the histories of the missions of their communities in order to legitimize their claims to a respected position within the Church and society. The Jesuits were particularly successful in this regard, but less well-known orders such as the Discalced Carmelites also attempted to follow their example. [208]

In the 1840s, Protestant and Catholic missionaries from Europe and the United States began to travel to China in large numbers.[209] Kathleen Lodwick estimates that around 50.000 foreigners, both Protestants and Catholics, worked in Chinese missions between 1809 and 1949.[210] In imperial China, there were already existing charitable organizations for social services such as the burial of the dead and the care of orphans. Wealthy individuals in the community were expected to provide food, medicine, clothing, and cash to those in need. By 1865, when the China Inland Mission started, there were already thirty different Protestant

[207] Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*.

[208] Nadine Amsler et al., eds., *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 1.

[209] Paul A. Cohen, 'Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900', in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 1*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 545-590.

[210] Kathleen L. Lodwick, *How Christianity Came to China: A Brief History*, Understanding World Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), xv.

groups working in China.[211] Catholic missions in China had a distinct foreign presence and were granted extraterritorial privileges. In the late nineteenth century, they relied heavily on diplomatic and sometimes military support from Western powers as a result of unequal treaties between the late Qing government and Western countries. The French Missions Étrangères de Paris, a French mission society, was a key player in this new wave of overseas missionary work. Under the French protectorate, the society was able to expand its reach in China from the Southwest to the Southeast and Northeast. The society established new missions in Manchuria, Tibet, and the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan. From 1822 to 1921, the society sent a total of 2.932 missionaries to the Far East, compared to only 287 between 1658 and 1822. They made significant gains by building churches and training native clergy under the jurisdiction of the bishops.[212]

Despite facing significant opposition from local elites who were committed to Confucianism and considered the missionaries as representatives of Western imperialism, the missionaries were able to establish schools, hospitals, and dispensaries and played a significant role in the Westernization of China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, the imperial examination system was abolished in the early twentieth century by reformers who were captivated by Western models of modernization.[213] Christian missionaries in China mainly worked to establish clinics, and hospitals, and provide training for nurses. They also founded educational institutions from primary schools to universities, with many prominent Chinese universities starting as religious-founded institutions. Moreover, they worked to abolish practices such as foot binding and unfair treatment of maidservants, and also engaged in charitable work, providing treatment to opium addicts and distributing food to the poor.[214] Paul Varg suggests that the resistance towards Western Christianity in China was rooted in the unfamiliarity and complexity of the religion, as well as the perception that its spread would result in a loss of power for the literati. The hostility towards missionaries was so severe that many deemed the effort to convert them as futile.[215] This hostility led to the

[211] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1991), 206.

[212] Ji Li, 'Catholic Communities and Local Governance in Northeast China', *China Review*, Special Issue: Chinese Religions on the Edge: Shifting Religion-State Dynamics, 18, no. 4 (November 2018): 107–30, 111.

[213] Varg, 'Missionaries and Relations Between the United States and China in the Late Nineteenth Century', 115-158.

[214] For detailed history of Christian mission in the late Qing years, see Austin, *China's Millions*.

[215] Varg, 'Missionaries and Relations Between the United States and China in the Late Nineteenth Century', 155.

Boxer Rebellion (*Yihetuan Yundong* 义和团运动, 1899-1901), driven by anti-Christian sentiment in China and resulting in the harassment and murder of both missionaries and converts. This hostility towards Christianity was exemplified by the actions of the Big Swords Society (*Dadao hui* 大刀会), a traditional peasant group who, while practicing heterodox practices, were not considered bandits by Chinese authorities and were recruited by the Manchu Yuxian, a local magistrate, to combat banditry. The Big Swords were successful in suppressing bandits, but many of them converted to Catholicism in order to gain legal immunity under the protection of foreigners. As a result, the Big Swords turned their attention to attacking and burning Catholic churches. Despite the execution of several of the society's leaders by Yuxian, no further repercussions were made against the group. This event served as a catalyst for the emergence of other secret societies in China. [216]

Many scholars view the period between the Boxer Rebellion and the War of Resistance against Japan as a time of significant growth for Christianity in China, as the number of converts rapidly increased and churches were built in various regions of the country. Paul Varg still noted that American missionaries played a significant role in this expansion, with the number of missionaries increasing from 513 in 1890 to over 2.000 in 1914, and 8.325 by 1920. American institutions such as universities, colleges, professional schools, theology schools and medical schools were established, representing an investment of $19 million. By 1920, there were 265 Christian middle schools with an enrollment of 15.213 and thousands of elementary schools.[217] After the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Glasgow, Protestant missionaries promoted the idea of "indigenization" which was transferring the leadership of churches to local Christian principles. Chinese National YMCA was the first and in the 1920s, a group of church leaders established the National Christian Council to coordinate ecumenical activities. [218] However, the rise of the May Fourth Movement (*Wusi yundong* 五四运动), which emerged in China in 1919, rejected all forms of religion, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, as superstition and associated with foreign control in the eyes of many young Chinese. This led to the 1923 Anti-Christian Movement (*Fei jidujiao yundong* 非基督教运动), influenced by both nationalist and socialist

[216] Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 114.

[217] Varg, 'Missionaries and Relations Between the United States and China in the Late Nineteenth Century', 115-158.

[218] Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 171-180.

ideologies, as well as the long-standing anti-Christian sentiment that was rooted in past Western invasions of China. The Chinese Nationalists pursued unity and modernization within their country, which they perceived as heavily relying on Western thought and ideals. They criticized Western religion and accused Christian missionaries of actively participating in its spread as a means of eliminating native culture, similar to other foreign imperialists. [219] The movement ended when many political leaders of the Republican period claimed their Christian Protestant faith, including Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Feng Yuxiang, and Wang Zhengting, and also writers as Lin Yutang.[220]

The presence of Christian missionaries was particularly notable in the medical work and healthcare service. Since the late nineteenth century, Western medical missionaries had inaugurated the first modern clinics and hospitals, offered training for nurses, and established the first medical institutions in China, laying the foundation for the improvement of modern medicine in the country. [221] By the year 1901, China had become a highly sought-after destination for medical missionaries, with a total of 150 foreign physicians managing 128 hospitals and 245 dispensaries. These institutions were responsible for providing care to approximately 1.7 million patients. The early twentieth century saw the introduction of modern medical education in China, primarily at hospitals that were administered by international missionary organizations.[222] Although these organizations had established nurse training schools in mainland China as early as the late 1880s, the practice of nursing by female nurses was initially discouraged due to local cultural traditions. As a result, the number of Chinese students in nursing programs remained low until the 1930s, when the profession began to gain widespread acceptance. [223] Furthermore, traditional evangelical missionaries held a degree of skepticism towards hospitals, as they believed that these institutions diverted resources away from the paramount objective of converting individuals

[219] Tatsuro Yamamoto and Sumiko Yamamoto, 'The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927', *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (February 1953): 133–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/2941975.

[220] Audrey Wells, 'The Influence of Christianity on Sun Yat-Sen', in *The Political Thought of Sun Yat-Sen*, by Audrey Wells (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001), 102–12, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403919755_9. Yang Rain Liu, 'Lin Yutang: Astride the Cultures of East and West', in *Salt and Light, Volume 3: More Lives of Faith That Shaped Modern China*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin and Stacey Bieler, Studies in Chinese Christianity (Eugene, Or: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 164.

[221] Choa, *'Heal the Sick' Was Their Motto*.

[222] Dwight, Bliss, and Tupper, *The Encyclopedia of Missions*, 446.

[223] Chen, 'Missionaries and the Early Development of Nursing in China'.

to Christianity.[224] According to Choa, as of the year 1931, there were 235 hospitals administered by Protestant missions and ten by Catholics. These mission hospitals gave a significant proportion to Western-trained medical professions, with sixty-one percent of doctors, thirty-two percent of nurses, and fifty percent of medical schools being graduates from these institutions. By 1923, China already had half of the world's missionary hospital beds and half of the world's missionary doctors.[225] The establishment of Western medicine institutions was a crucial aspect of the medical mission in China, particularly given the near absence of Chinese doctors trained in Western medicine in the country at the time. The importance of these institutions in training medical doctors and nurses was further emphasized during the war years, as the need for skilled medical professionals increased.

Catholicism in China and the establishment of a Chinese Church

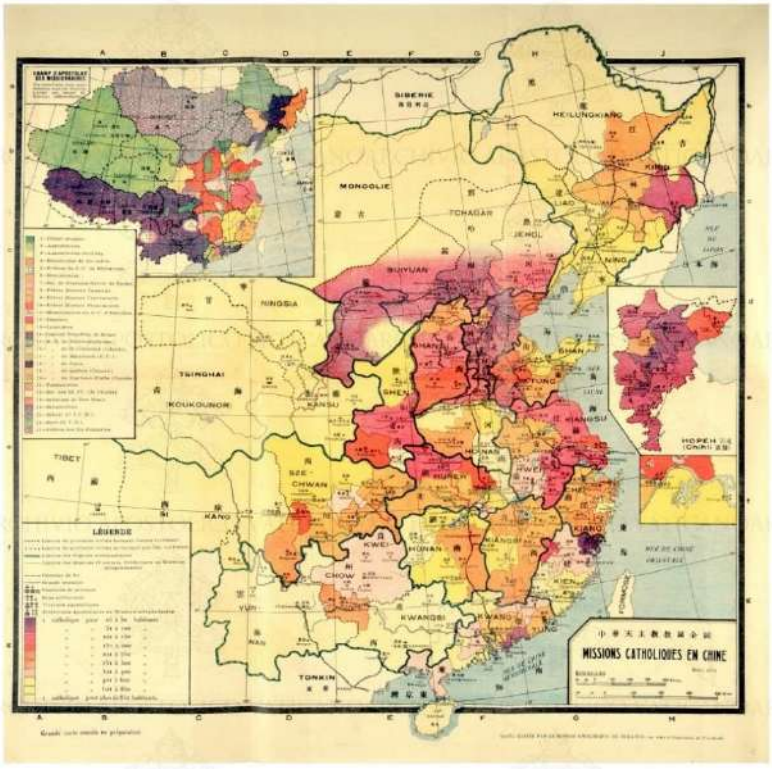

Figure 1-Catholic Missions in China, 1930 [226]

[224] Theron Kue-Hing Young, 'A Conflict of Professions: The Medical Missionary in China, 1835-1890', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 3, no. 47 (1973): 250–72.

[225] Choa, *'Heal the Sick' Was Their Motto*, 112.

[226] Map "Missions Catholiques En China", Marz 1930. A.A.V., Arch.Nunz. Cina 152, fasc. 292, ff.2.

During the transitional phase at the turn of the twentieth century, the landscape of Catholic missions in China displayed significant diversity, as illustrated by cartographic representation (Fig.1). The multifaceted nature of these missions was characterized by a diverse array of operational dynamics, regional disparities, and variances in missionary penetration across the vast expanse of China. This heterogeneity was palpable in the disparate degrees of success, cultural assimilation, and socio-religious impacts witnessed among different missionary initiatives, each shaped by local conditions, political situation, and the receptivity of indigenous populations. During the initial decades, while the number of Catholic followers increased, alongside a notable influx of foreign missionaries, at the same time a substantive intellectual endeavor unfolded, characterized by meticulous critical examination and condemnation of inadequacies in the evangelization process. Since the nineteenth century, France held a position of great privilege with regard to the missions. It was indeed considered the "Protector of Catholic Missions," and since the Unequal Treaties were still in effect, the protection of missionaries of any nationality, including Italian, was entrusted to the French Consul. Discerning members within the Catholic community, including reformist clergy like Vincent Lebbe (1877-1940) and influential Catholic lay figures such as Ma Xiangbo 马相伯 (1840-1939) and Ying Lianzhi 英敛之 (1867-1926), voiced their criticisms to Pope Benedict XV.[227] They condemned the French, constituting a significant seventy percent of the clergy in China, for their ethnocentric inclinations and dismissive stance toward Chinese cultural mores. Chinese clergy faced discrimination, compelling many to relinquish their clerical roles.

The evolving landscape of Chinese society and the changing needs of native Christian communities, in tandem with ongoing debates on traditional and modern evangelization

[227] Vincent Lebbe, a Roman Catholic missionary to China, actively supported the development of an indigenous Chinese church with the backing of local clergy. His prominent advocacy influenced Pope Pius XI to designate the initial native Chinese bishops. Ying Lingzhi belonged held a significant position as a Catholic lay figure advocating for church reform. Moreover, he founded the renowned newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* and played a vital role in the establishment of The Catholic University of Peking. Ma Xiangbo, an eminent figure in late-Qing and early-Republican China, was a Chinese Jesuit priest, an academic, and an educator who played a foundational role in the institutions of Aurora University, Fu Jen Catholic University, and Fudan University. See Jacques Leclercq, *Thunder in the Distance. The Life of Père Lebbe*. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958); Vincent Thoreau, *Le tonnerre qui chante au loin. Vie et mort du Père Lebbe, apôtre des Chinois (1877-1940)* (Bruxelles: Hatier, 1990); Ruth Hayhoe and Yongling Lu. *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China 1840-1939*. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); Howard L. Boorman, ed. "Ying Hua". Biographical Dictionary of Republican China. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

approaches, thus, positioned China as an important center for rethinking missionary strategies. This shift gained formal recognition on November 30, 1919, through Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud*.[228] Significant amendments included a new perspective emphasizing the vital role of cultivating and properly educating indigenous clergy, a heightened focus on cultural and linguistic training for missionaries, and a clear stance against nationalism, aiming to disassociate missionary endeavors from political colonialism. Furthermore, in 1922 Monsignor Celso Costantini (1976-1958) was nominated Apostolic Delegate to China to supervise the implementation of the missionary approach that involved the inculturation of Catholicism.[229] The moment of the arrival of the first Apostolic Delegate in China fell historically in the period immediately following the May Fourth Movement and in the midst of a nationalist challenge. At the beginning of the decade between 1920 and 1930, a revolutionary government was established in Canton, led by Sun Yat-Sen (1923), at the peak of the nationalist momentum that would witness its decline in the late Thirties. In such circumstances, the conviction became increasingly insistent within the missionary Catholic environment operating in China that it was urgent to establish an authentically Chinese Church, led by local clergy. The first and most important contribution offered by Costantini to China was undoubtedly the organization of the first Chinese National Council, which took place in the city of Shanghai at Xujiahui Cathedral from May 14 to June 12, 1924. During the council, the Delegate also acted as the papal envoy. Forty-four ordinaries from all parts of the country participated in the council. On specific directive from Cardinal Willem Marinus Van Rossum (1854-1932), Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith since 1918, political matters were to be carefully avoided during the course of the council. Among the 861 canons approved during the council, many of them were in line with the directives entrusted to Costantini by the Holy See. The main approved themes related to the formation of a local Church managed by indigenous clergy, the hope to soon select Chinese priests for the role of bishops, the recognition of missionaries as "men in transit," the importance of missionaries learning the Chinese language, the development of Chinese Christian art, and respect for Chinese traditional figures such as Confucius and Mencius. Although this council did not

[228] See Andrea Riccardi and Agostino Giovagnoli, *Roma e Pechino. La svolta extraeuropea di Benedetto XV* (Roma: Studium, 1999).

[229] Ruggero Simonato, *Celso Costantini tra rinnovamento cattolico in Italia e le nuove missioni in Cina* (Pordenone: Concordia Sette, 1987).

garner significant attention in the press of the time, it represented a fundamental turning point for the Chinese Church.[230]

Additionally, in February 1926, Pius XI promulgated the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, within which the concepts expressed in *Maximum Illud* were reaffirmed. On June 15, he addressed a letter, *Ab ipsis*, to the Chinese Church, emphasizing that missionaries did not serve the interests of foreign powers, announcing that local bishops would soon be proclaimed, tasked with cooperating with the apostolic vicars for the prosperity of China. The definitive step towards the proclamation of Chinese bishops was imminent as was the establishment of official relations between the Holy See and China. Cardinal Van Rossum and Costantini, after lengthy consultations, selected six Chinese bishops from a list of candidates. The consecration ceremony took place in Rome with solemn tones, and this event had an unprecedented historical significance.[231] Also a proliferation of male and female religious orders, designed for local members, began their establishment during this period of missionary activity and ecclesiastical development in China.

The changes that occurred during those years within the Roman Curia, as well as among Costantini's interlocutors, contributed to further exacerbating the predicament of the Apostolic Delegate. In February 1939, Eugenio Pacelli (Pope Pius XII, 1876-1958) succeeded Cardinal Gasparri as the Secretary of State, and Van Rossum passed away in 1932. Their successors displayed less inclination towards granting autonomy to the Chinese Church, while this period coincided with the rise of Fascism in Italy and a severe economic downturn in Europe. The new Secretary of State, Pacelli, deemed it a priority to focus on internal relations within Europe. It was precisely for this reason that Costantini's strained relations with France could have posed an obstacle to the Holy See's relations with the French government. Both oppositional factors and alterations in the Vatican's personnel undeniably influenced the resignation of the Apostolic Delegate in China. In early 1933, Costantini permanently departed from China, yielding the floor to the incoming delegate, Mario Zanin (1890-1958), who assumed responsibility for navigating the tumultuous events of the war, as will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4. In short order after assuming papal office, Pope Pius XII implemented substantive policy alterations in relation to Chinese Rites. This matter was indeed one of the major debates that involved Chinese society and culture since the times of

[230] Bruno Fabio Pighin, *Chiesa e Stato in Cina: dalle imprese di Costantini alle svolte attuali* (Venezia: Marcianum Press, 2010).

[231] Celso Costantini, *Con i missionari in Cina Voll. I e II* (Roma: Unione missionaria del clero in Italia, 1946), 33.

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). On 8 December 1939, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, through the decree *Plane Compertum*, rescinded the proscription on revisiting matters pertaining to inculturation and endorsed the translation of liturgical texts into the Chinese language. This directive signified a substantive departure, reclassifying Chinese customs from the pejorative categorization as superstitious to a dignified recognition as a means of venerating one's ancestors, consequently granting them ecclesiastical endorsement within the Catholic Church. The intricate issue of harmonizing Confucian rituals with Christian doctrine was effectively addressed, accompanied by a nuanced differentiation between civil and religious rites. This resolution epitomized a broad-minded missionary consciousness and also bore the mark of the prevailing spirit of secularization in China. [232]

[232] Joseph Metzler, *La soluzione della questione dei riti*, in Agostino Giovagnoli ed., *Roma e Pechino. La svolta extraeuropea di Benedetto XV*, 243-260.

Chapter 2
Women in humanitarian discourse and practices in twentieth-century China

Introduction

The chapter analyzes how humanitarianism- intended as a marker of modernity, a sign of the emergence of a public sphere, and a feature of the modern State's relief activities- represented a space for the rise of a new form of women's public activity, looking at the continuity and discontinuities with the previous Chinese tradition. It explores the role of Chinese and foreign women in humanitarian enterprises (secular and faith-based), such as the Red Cross and the Christian especially Catholic organizations which opened new spaces and offered new public roles for women during the early decades of twentieth-century China.

Women in twentieth-century China: toward the public arena

Humanitarianism, as a marker of modernity, as well as an indicator of the formation of a public sphere and an aspect of the contemporary State's relief operations, provided a space for the emergence of a novel form of women's public participation during twentieth-century China. Women's activism in the public sphere and humanitarianism were both conceived as expressions of modernity and nationalism. From the perspective of the history of women's activism in China, the Republican period was a significant turning point. Under the influence of foreign cultures, new ideas of gender equality and the women's liberation movement began to emerge, leading to a new understanding of the status of women in China. [233]

The cultural and political elite of China perceived the condition of women as a reflection of the nation's status.[234] They strongly repudiated the Confucian gender hierarchy

[233] Alison R. Drucker, 'The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911', *Historical Reflections* 8, no. 3 (1981): 179–99; Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women'.

[234] Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 80.

that kept women confined to domestic roles, subjected them to patriarchal authority, and mandated the practice of female virtues of chastity. The renowned turn-of-the-century reformist Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) explicitly associated China's "backwardness" with the inferior status of "traditional Chinese women," who were deemed "unproductive" and "ignorant."[235] In 1923, Mei Sheng's research "Discussions on Chinese Women's Problems" categorized women's problems as "education, life, political participation, birth system, social problems, gender problems, and family problems", [236] while Feng Cheng analyzed the disadvantageous position of women in terms of politics, economics and marriage.[237] Tan Sheying divides the Chinese women's movement during the Republican period into three periods: the Xinhai Revolution, the May Fourth Movement, and the period under Nationalist leadership, claiming that "every time the women's movement rose and declined with the revolutionary movement." [238] To the elite, the "traditional woman" was seen as a symbol of Chinese civilization's backwardness.[239] In order to build a strong modern nation-state, they encouraged female education, freedom of love and marriage, and the pursuit of careers outside the home. The newly introduced Western concepts of sex, hygiene, and gynecology emphasized women's reproductive duties in order to strengthen the nation and enhance the Chinese identity. In contrast to the "traditional woman," the modernist elite established the "new woman" as a new twentieth-century gender category. She was to be an independent and rational thinker who does not conform to religious doctrine and customs. However, she was

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[235] Paul Bailey, *Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century*, First issues in paperback, Routledge Contemporary China Series 15 (London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 17.

[236] Mei Sheng 梅生, *Zhongguo Funü Wenti Taolun Ji* 中国妇女问题讨论集 *[A Collection of Discussions on Women in China]* (Shanghai: Xin wenhua shushe, 1923).

[237] Mei Sheng 梅生, 55.

[238] Tan Sheying 谈社英, *Zhongguo Funü Yundong Tongshi* 中国妇女运动通史 *[General History of Chinese Women's Movement]* (Nanjing: Funü gongmingshe, 1936), 2.

[239] Susan Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*, New Approaches to Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 27-47, 85-92; Paul John Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century China*, Gender and History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-23. For a detailed history on the woman question in the twentieth century, see Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*; Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century China*; Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, Next Wave (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Jan Kiely, Vincent Goossaert, and John Lagerwey, *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850 - 2015 (2 Vols.)* (Brill, 2016), 502-3.

also expected to fulfill the roles of "good wife and wise mother," making her an ideal partner for the modern man.[240]

The female figure was well-represented as the embodiment of the concept of "tradition in modernity" or as an embodiment of what politician Wang Jingwei 汪精卫 (1883-1944) referred to as "inheriting the past to enlighten posterity" in Chinese nationalism discourse. According to Prasenjit Duara, the long tradition of women's sacrifice, which was traditionally for the sake of the family, now shifted to serving the nation, but remained confined within domestic sphere, considered the "microcosm" of the state. He claims that, similar to many other patriarchal nationalisms of the twentieth century, it was not women who shaped the nation according to their own image but rather the nation influencing them. Although dependent on the male figure, the woman was still considered in many parts of Chinese society key to maintaining family stability, the foundation of Confucian society.[241] Louise Edward also noted that in the past, a woman's confinement to the domestic realm was seen as a sign of her high moral character.

During the early twentieth century, the perception of a "good" woman began to change, and she was increasingly viewed as an individual who was politically aware and active. This shift in societal attitudes had a significant impact on both family and national politics, as well as on societal norms and expectations for women's personal virtues.[242] The reformists and radicals asserted that in order to become a patriotic citizen and raise one's status, women should first acquire economic independence. However, there was a significant discrepancy between this theory and reality, as there was considerable resistance to creating the conditions for women's economic autonomy, as it would also pave the way for their political independence.[243]

The exacerbation of China's national crisis in the late Qing years led to a heightened public interest in politics and social welfare, as well as a renewed sense of urgency among

[240] Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008); Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 79-88.

[241] Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, State and Society in East Asia Series (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

[242] Louise P. Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy: Women's Suffrage in China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 8.

[243] Joan Judge, 'Citizens or Mothers of Citizens? Gender and the Meaning of Modern Chinese Citizenship', in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry (Harvard University Press, 2002), 21–43, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674037762-003, 39-42.

various social groups. As Xia Shi's research demonstrates, whereas previously, virtues such as chastity, modesty, and filial piety were associated with the domestic sphere, now, public-mindedness, patriotism, and self-sacrificing spirit for the public good became the new standard for virtuous women. As a result, charity and philanthropy, which were formerly seen as mere demonstrations of women's personal virtue of benevolence, gained added significance, symbolizing women's commitment to a greater cause.[244]

By the early twentieth century, elite women who were engaged in charitable activities began to establish more permanent organizations and participate in public fundraising efforts. A peculiarity of the early years of the century was the appearance of numerous women's organizations. This outcome was unprecedented since traditional social norms had always hindered extrafamilial relationships among wealthier women, and the Qing court itself frowned upon any kind of popular organization for fear of anti-monarchical elements. In her analysis of the activities conducted by various women's organizations in the first years of twentieth-century China, Charlotte Beahan identifies three main types: women's rights groups, philanthropic groups, and nationalist organizations.[245] The women's rights groups were primarily concerned with improving the status of women. Philanthropic organizations, while discussing women's rights, focused more on charitable activities, actively mobilizing to support less well-off or struggling social strata. One of the most prominent and enduring philanthropic organizations for upper-class women was the Chinese Women's Association (*Zhongguo furenhui* 中国妇人会), founded in 1906 by Mme. Liao in Beijing. Inspired by the Red Cross Society, the Chinese Women's Association aimed to aid in disaster relief and philanthropic endeavors, promote women's enlightenment through education and public lectures, and teach practical skills to empower women to be less financially reliant on men.[246]

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[244] Shi, *At Home in the World*, 35.

[245] Charlotte Beahan, 'In the Public Eye: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China', *Réflexions Historiques* 8, no. 3 (1981): 215–38, 215.

[246] Shi, *At Home in the World*, 44. The importance of women's education had already been recognized among the literati who participated in the 1898 reforms, and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the establishment of girls' schools modeled on the missionary example, but with a different curriculum and emphasis on patriotism. In the first girls' school, Zhongguo Nüxue Tang, founded in Shanghai in 1897 by the wife of revolutionary martyr Tan Sitong, female students were expected to participate in debates on assigned topics during the monthly assembly. Teaching the art of public speaking to women was a revolutionary innovation. Two other similar schools had been opened in 1898 and 1899 but were closed in 1900 by imperial decree. See

Both types of organizations shared a devotion to the welfare of the country and its salvation, therefore discourses regarding women's rights were part of the framework of China's survival in the international context. Eventually, the nationalist organizations were devoted specifically to supporting the country during times of crisis, proving that women were not indifferent to the sense of national crisis that pervaded various circles of society and the discourses of intellectuals after 1900. Most of the women involved in these organizations were those who had had the opportunity to study abroad or in Shanghai, where they could enjoy greater freedom and actively participate in student movements. One of the techniques employed by nationalist women's organizations to support their cause was the boycott, such as the 1905 boycott against American imports or the 1908 boycott against Japan. The boycott was an ideal vehicle for women's participation, as it allowed even the most isolated women to personally contribute to the cause through the non-consumption of foreign products. Another method employed was encouraging the consumption of domestic products; during the last years of the Qing dynasty, women in numerous cities organized the Chinese Association to Support National Goods.[247] Shanghai was the main location for these activities. When the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance was founded in Tokyo in 1905, a number of women, including Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907), were among the first to join. From 1906 to 1912, China witnessed waves of nationwide donation movements that were actively participated in by women of different social classes. These included the Women Citizens donation Movements in 1906, which aimed to repay the onerous Boxer Indemnity through popular donations; the Women's Fundraising to Repay Other National Debts, around late 1909 and early 1910; and another round of Citizens' Donation Movements in April 1912. These movements further indicate that the symbolic meaning of women's charitable actions had transcended the conventional virtue of individual benevolence. Chinese women's fervor for public and political endeavors was exemplified through their well-known slogan: “fulfilling one’s obligations as female citizens (*jin nüzi guomin zhi yiwu* 尽女子国民之义务).”[248]

Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai’s News Media, 1872-1912*, 226 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004).

[247] Beahan, ‘In the Public Eye: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China’, 224.

[248] Shi, *At Home in the World*, 58-59.

Chinese women at war between nationalism and feminism

Since the end of the Qing dynasty, the pursuit of a new national policy and the desire to create a modern nation-state gave women the opportunity to take up public office. In her May Fourth research on feminism and women, Wang Zheng notes that the debate on "*nüquan zhuyi* 女权主义 (women's rights) included not only the right to be in the public sphere, but also the right to work for the country."[249]

In a semi-colonial society like China during the early twentieth century, the principles of nationalism and feminism were often perceived as discordant. Pan Yihong claims that, as a result, feminist objectives were often deemed as secondary within the context of the nationalist and anti-imperialist movement, despite the significant role played by the women's activism in the revolution of 1911.[250] The rise of pro-republic nationalism in these years fostered further opportunities for women to act in the public space. Numerous female associations were formed in support of the nascent Republic of China, such as the Women's Society to Assist the Republic or the Association of Patriotic Women. Some of these groups supported the Republican government, while others put forward demands, the best known of which was for women's suffrage.[251] In order to study Chinese women one must recognize the reality of colonialism and how feminist movements in China have often been overshadowed by nationalism. Furthermore, by treating gender as an analytic category, historians have pointed out some pitfalls in the male discourse on nationalism. Indeed, when studying Chinese feminism, it is necessary to carefully examine the patriarchal legacies of anti-colonial nationalism and Chinese revolutionary nationalism. Dorothy Ko warns against some pitfalls left by the May Fourth Movement, which viewed women as victims of traditional culture and society.[252] In her research on women in the Yangzi region in the seventeenth century, Ko reveals a female world of great dissemination and cultural creativity. At the same time, however, Susan Glosser discovers the ways in which Chinese men intentionally constructed a related image of the plight of Chinese women and national suffering. By accusing the traditional extended family system as the cause of female subordination, men tried to free

[249] Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 212.

[250] Yihong, 'Feminism and Nationalism in China's War of Resistance against Japan', 115.

[251] Beahan, 'In the Public Eye: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China', 230.

[252] Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*.

themselves from the bond of paternal authority.[253] In this sense, therefore, they often exploited the cultural symbol of women to earn their proper place within society. Using a transcultural and narrative approach, Edwards attempts to prove that the women's suffrage movement in China employed different biological, national, and ethical arguments at different points of the movement to serve their pragmatic needs, rather than attempting to uphold any "theoretical purity."[254] She suggests that the new class awareness contributed to the women's movement by helping women to define themselves with a collective identity analogous to workers. She properly highlights the global dimensions of the Chinese movement, as Chinese women followed international events. One of the suffragettes' most powerful arguments was that the vote was a symbol of Chinese modernity. The political gains of women during the war years helped to establish women's presence in political circles in post-war Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, even if their request for civil and political rights remained secondary to the national cause.

Discourses on the representation of women and gender construction were often contradictory and ambiguous, revealing that the activism of Chinese women was woven by an anti-colonial nationalism from the beginning. This was particularly evident during the War of Resistance against Japan: the presence of Chinese women in the policy of national resistance dates to 1931, when the Japanese armed forces took Manchuria during the Mukden Incident. Since that time, women started numerous campaigns to get confident answers from the Nanjing government and gain collective determination from the general public to fight Japanese colonialism. They organized various student protests, mobilized women's rescue associations and promoted a real culture of Resistance through the press.[255]

As the conflict progressed, women residing in border regions emerged as prominent figures in the national liberation war. On the frontlines, they exhibited patriotism and national unity while engaging in combat against the enemy. Additionally, they played crucial roles in various other aspects of the war effort, including production, stretcher-bearing, transportation, mine-planting, sabotage, sewing and laundry, care for the wounded, providing cover for soldiers, standing guard, preventing sexual assault, intelligence gathering, and safeguarding

[253] Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953*, 77-78.

[254] Edwards, *Gender, Politics and Democracy. Women's suffrage in China*, 3.

[255] Jeffery Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: the View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997).

the children of the revolution through their participation in production labor, among other activities.[256]

In September 1937, the Nationalist Party (GMD, *Zhongguo Guomindang* 中国国民党) and Communist Party (CCP, *Zhongguo Gongchandang* 中国共产党) formed a second alliance and the women's movement also joined forces. Deng Yingchao 邓颖超 (1904-1992), representing the CCP, visited Wuhan, the temporary capital of the GMD government, and met with leaders of patriotic associations from various major cities in December. In March 1938, they established the Association for Care and Education of Wartime Orphans, which was sponsored by the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, Song Meiling 宋美龄 (1897-2003). She subsequently invited forty-eight women from across the nation, including CCP members, socialites, women educators, and leaders of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) to a five-day meeting at Lushan in May to discuss the mobilization of women for the war effort. They decided to create a coordinating agency for all women's organizations called the Women's Advisory Council of the New Life Movement, which included both CCP members and non-partisan women activists, and launched the Work Programme to Mobilize Women in Participating in the War of Resistance and National Construction.[257] The program suggested methods to organize and train women from all backgrounds, including peasants, workers, professionals, students, housewives, refugees, and soldiers' relatives, with the primary goal of mobilizing women to support the front line. Women were tasked with providing first-aid to the wounded, relief work for war victims, mobilization of soldiers and maintaining morale, catching spies, raising money, caring for children, and working in war industries. As a result of this program, increasing numbers of Chinese women began working in factories or production for the war. Although feminist interests were addressed as a prerequisite for mobilizing the enthusiasm and vigor of women, the program advocated for a dual approach. It encompassed specific enhancements for women, including the promotion of literacy and skill development, expanded employment prospects in both industry and

[256] Han Hanan 韩贺南, Wang Xiangmei 王向梅, and Li Huibo 李慧波, *Zhongguo Funü Yu Kangri Zhanzheng* 中国妇女与抗日战争 *[Chinese Women and the War of Resistance Against Japan]*, 5.

[257] Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhe hui 中华全国妇女联合会 [All-China Women Federation], ed., *Zhongguo Funü Yundong Shi* 中国妇女运动史 *[A History of the Chinese Women's Movement]* (Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1989), 131-134; Elizabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 177-179.

government, and enhancements to working conditions. Concurrently, it emphasized broader societal reforms and shifts in attitudes to ameliorate the lives of women, such as the cessation of practices like polygamy, physical abuse, foot-binding, child marriage, and the trafficking of women into domestic servitude and concubinage.[258]

Nationalist women used their networks and resources to establish social and military relief institutions at the provincial and national levels. They proved particularly effective in the two main areas maintained by the government: caring for war orphans and helping soldiers. Communist women, on the other hand, worked mainly in rural areas, where they institutionalized the instruments of national mobilization and established political links with peasant women. As an integral part of the Resistance policy during the war, both communist and nationalist women affirmed their subjectivity in reflecting on anti-Japanese nationalism and in the creation of a modern China. However, the categories of their jobs always fell into the traditional sectors of caring for and feeding the weak (such as children, women and wounded soldiers). Since wartime male regimes had not fully opened up to Chinese women, the political and military work of the war also served to confirm and restore existing gender norms. These war relief activists included housewives, career women, students and political organizers from both the nationalist and communist ranks. Their participation was very autonomous at the beginning of the war when they worked for the Second United Front against the Japanese invaders. Eventually, however, the deep mistrust between nationalists and communists led both sides to reject women, causing the tragedy of the New Forth Movement Incident (*Xinsijun shijian* 新四軍事件) in 1941.[259] The two political regimes, therefore, intensified centralized control over the political and social life of the Party members, making it even more difficult for women to conduct their Resistance work independently. An important role during the war was played by female students, who were able to leave their homes and take on roles in the public sector, reviving their political spirit. Li Danke tells the story lived by Zhu Shuqin in the school of Chongqing, where teachers from Shanghai arrived to instill in the children this patriotic feeling necessary to reject the Japanese through songs, newspapers and various news.[260] Zhu, along with other students, was instead instructed to go

[258] *Zhongguo Funü Shi Ziliao* 中国妇女史资料，*1937-1945 [Materials on Chinese Women's History, 1937-1945]* (Beijing: Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhe hui lishi yanjiu shi, 1991)，58-65.

[259] Sherman Xiaogang Lai, "A War Within a War: The Road to the New Fourth Army Incident in January 1941", in *Journal of Chinese Military History* 2.1, 2013, 1-27.

[260] Danke Li, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2008, 39-51.

to the countryside to teach some simple words related to the war and to make people understand the importance of supporting Chinese soldiers. The heated reaction of Chinese women to the national crisis and their efforts to contribute to the war strongly impressed their male counterpart. The editor of the "War of Resistance and Chinese Women" series acknowledged that "women broke the most important social norms to regulate their mobility in the last ten years. They committed themselves to the search for independence and freedom of this country with their hard work, even sacrificing their lives."[261] The reaction of the supporters showed that the Resistance movement was not just about being patriotic, but that a new path to be taken by women and for women was possible.

The narrative surrounding the Resistance War often focuses on the revolution, particularly the success of the CCP revolution, intertwining the history of women's mobilization in support of the war within this broader perspective. Within this context, figures like Bao Lianzi and Wang Haicheng emerged as revolutionary role models in Wuxiang, while Liu Ailian in Liaoxian exemplified similar traits, as detailed in David Goodman's research on the Party's revolutionary women during that period. [262] However, beyond these accounts, there exist lesser-known stories of women who galvanized communities and assets in response to the evolving societal dynamics. The CCP played a significant role in this transformation, notably by championing gender equality and advocating for women's empowerment, contributing to the broader social changes of the era. Most of these energetic women were young people from privileged backgrounds, with the growing awareness that women should never have accepted the conditions their mothers or grandmothers lived in in society and in the family itself. The opportunities for participation that women had from the beginning of the war onwards varied according to the social class and the locality to which they belonged. Women from more privileged backgrounds often received education in cities like Changzhi, Taiyuan, Beiping, or Tianjin. Upon returning to their hometowns, they encountered a sense of frustration unique to their circumstances. Engaging in political activities became a viable avenue to achieve certain objectives, as seen in the alliance between women in Licheng and the CCP to counter opposition. However, attributing the role of women in warfare solely to

[261] Bai Di 百蒂, Kangzhan yu funü 抗战与妇女 [Chinese Women and the War of Resistance[, Wartime Comprehensive Book series, book number 3, 1-2.

[262] David S. G. Goodman. "Revolutionary Women and Women in the Revolution: The Chinese Communist Party and Women in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945." *The China Quarterly*, no. 164 (2000): 915–42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/655920.

their social class is inadequate. Notably, the most renowned instances of women mobilizing to support the war efforts orchestrated by the CCP stemmed from less affluent backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that opposition to the Party, whether moderate as in Wuxiang or intense as in Licheng, also involved young women from privileged backgrounds. However, the case of Liaoxian presents a different narrative, showcasing that even women from higher socio-economic backgrounds could wield influence and collaborate within the CCP. Local conditions played a pivotal role in shaping women's involvement in public spheres. Specifically, the circumstances surrounding the emergence of anti-Japanese Resistance activities and the establishment of the local CCP organization held significant sway. In Wuxiang, where the local CCP organization originated from a predominantly peasant background, women found themselves largely excluded from political engagement but were actively encouraged to mobilize in support of their men and the war endeavors. Conversely, in Licheng, women seemed to distance themselves from the CCP, leading to a loss of momentum for widespread mobilization, as the local CCP turned away from substantial segments of the community and its initial organizational strengths. In Liaoxian, the organized women's movement, particularly through the Patriotic Women's Association, played a pivotal role in shaping the local CCP's development. This involvement ensured a high level of female political participation and fostered a deeper understanding of the necessity for continuous reform. Generally, women persisted within traditional female labor domains but managed to transcend certain societal norms, redefining their public roles and reshaping their significance within society and the state. During the initial years of the war, social relief efforts proved indispensable. These initiatives filled crucial service gaps overlooked by the government, wholly dedicated to repelling the Japanese advancement. By providing vital assistance to others, these efforts simultaneously helped these women ensure their own survival amid overwhelming suffering.

While the CCP primarily concentrated on rural areas, party members also worked to organize women in urban areas. For instance, in Shanghai, they conducted mass education in the refugee camps, which they transformed into “liberated zones.” The party attempted to connect with workers through sisterhood organizations and Christian schools, both of which had an influence on factory workers. The organizers were often women who had been students at YWCA night schools and had joined the CCP after the war began.[263] A national

[263] Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919-1949* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1986), 224-226.

organization, the Association of Chinese Women for Comforting Self-Defence Officers and Soldiers of Resistance, was founded by Song Meiling in August 1937 for the GMD. It grew to have over sixty sub-divisions headed by the wives of local GMD officials in more than twenty provinces and cities. In total, 570 different women's organizations were established during the war.[264]

Women and humanitarian aid: between religion and secularism

The commitment of women to humanitarian relief work for wounded soldiers, civilians, and vulnerable people was a crucial aspect of the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War. The tumultuous social and political situation in early twentieth-century China resulted in the ephemeral existence of many of the aforementioned societies.[265] Whereas long-lasting women's organizations were frequently international organizations supported by Western powers, such as the Red Cross (the focus of Chapter 3), or of a religious nature (Chapters 4 and 5). This was partly due to the ability of religious organizations to engender a strong sense of dedication and devotion among their members. Along with the Red Cross Society of China, the Christian Catholic orders associations provided institutional avenues and systematic programs for a significant number of women to participate in social relief efforts over several decades. The Red Cross and the Catholic female orders are worthy of examination as they represented attempts to introduce Western models of mobilizing women for social service and exemplified efforts to carry out social relief in the modern era through reconfiguring local Chinese gender and religious traditions. These two forms of humanitarian organizations, secular and faith-based, also exemplified two different ways of involving women in public life. The former, at least theoretically, adopted a Western paradigm for involving women, in which they were defined as individuals interconnected in a transnational network of relations. The latter, by contrast, encouraged women's participation as members of

[264] Liang Huijin 梁惠锦, 'Kangzhan Shiqi de Funü Zuzhi 抗战时期的妇女组织 [Women's Organizations in the War of Resistance]', in *Bao Jialin* 鲍家麟: *《Zhongguo Funü Shi Lun Ji Xuji* 中国妇女史论集续集》 *A Continuous Collection of Articles on Chinese Women's History* (Taipei: Daoxiang renmin chubanshe, 1991), 380.

[265] The Chinese Women's Association for instance lasted only about three years. See Shi, *At Home in the World,* 98.

their family unit and willing to do everything in the name of the faith that guided them, which, as this study will explain, had a mixed effect on their agency.

Humanitarianism, like the Red Cross, was assigned the meaning of a modernity sign and connected to nationalism, and it was strictly related to the significance of women's participation as a marker of modernity. Being part of the public sphere was also the cardinal principle of those women who began their journey into humanitarian relief efforts during the wartime period. By 1931, as a consequence of the penetration of Japanese military forces into Manchuria, the Japanese Empire aimed to expand its borders and become in effect the major Asian power. This theory found confirmation in January 1932, when due to the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods, Tokyo warships bombed the Zhabei district of Shanghai.[266] In terms of humanitarian aid, in order to face the new danger a new unit was created within the Red Cross organization: the Red Cross Medical Relief Corps (MRC) (*Jiuhu zonghui* 救护总会). As analyzed in more detail in Chapter 3, these new apparatuses operated independently of the central committee, and formed spontaneously, sometimes with the subsidy of local branches, in the areas most affected by the armed clashes.[267] Women within the Chinese Red Cross through the Medical Relief Corps had a significant role. The nationalist government started to implement a conscription policy for medical personnel. Graduates of medical schools and nursing schools had to join the army or civilian medical service, except for fifteen percent of these students who continued to work in their schools. The remaining eighty-five percent of medical graduates were distributed as follows: forty percent went to the army's medical administration; thirty percent were sent to the National Health Administration and fifteen percent to the Red Cross Commission. Half of the midwifery school graduates were forced to work in the National Healthcare Administration.[268] Nurses in public health stations, medical schools, and affiliated missionary hospitals contributed to the treatment doctor of wounded soldiers and civilians. The Nanjing Health Demonstration Station, despite suffering severe damage from air raids while the city was attacked from July to December 1937, nevertheless took on a huge responsibility to offer medical aid. Only the outpatient clinic received 1.335 cases in July, 2.851 in August, and 644 in September. During these three months, then, they received seventy-one special calls, many of which were for those people

[266] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia della Cina* (Bari: Laterza, 1986), 600.

[267] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 15.

[268] K. Tong Hollington, *China Handbook 1937-1943: A Comprehensive Survey of Major Developments in China in Six Years of War* (The Chinese Ministry of Information, 1943), 680.

seriously injured by the explosion of Japanese bombs. Nurses in other parts of the country offered assistance to war victims and refugees, such as Shanghai, Changsha, Wuhan, and Guangzhou who carried out similar medical assignments while cities were attacked in the years 1937 and 1938. Although various documents report that a large number of parts of the medical staff remained in the occupied areas, however, there were cases of women who fled to join the service of the nationalist army and very often acted alone.[269]

Humanitarian work within the Red Cross offered a space for foreign female agency in China as well. It was the case of the American girl, Miss Betty Graham, of Seattle, Washington, who drove International Red Cross trucks between major cities in southwest China, despite the war dangers.[270] Historical materials of the time documented and advertised women's caring activities, facilitating circulations of topics related to charity, assistance, and blood donations.[271] Particularly evident is the presence of foreign women within the medical field, working as doctors and nurses, like Miss Kathleen Hall, a missionary nurse working with the Chinese Red Cross in South Shanxi.[272] Further international relief efforts came from the Spanish women doctors who were working following the Spanish Civil War (1936). Two women, the German Edith Markus and the Polish Miriam Kamieniecka, brought medical innovations and practices from Spain to China. They worked with the China Office of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which was established in Shanghai at the end of 1944. They escorted ships transporting relief and medical supplies and medicines to needed locations and provided medical treatments.[273] Through their humanitarian efforts, they revealed the meaning of a fervent philosophical, spiritual, or political belief in

[269] Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945', 24.

[270] 'American Girl Drives Chinese Red Cross Truck', *The China Weekly Review (1923-1950)*, 13 January 1940, 239.

[271] 'A Group of 450 Chinese Girls Who, Dressed as Red Cross Nurses, Have Been Coaxing Shanghai's Citizens during the Last Ten Days to Contribute Generously to the Goal of £100,000 in Aid of Local War Refugees', *The China Press (1925-1938)*, 12 December 1937.

[272] 'Red Cross Activities in China', 1941, Foreign Office Files for China, 1938-1948, FO/676/301. The National Archives, UK.

[273] Hwei-Ru Tsou and Len Tsou, 'Doctors who served in two anti-fascist wars Spain (1936-1939) and China (1937-1945)', in *Hasta pronto, amigos de España: las Brigadas Internacionales en el 80 aniversario de su despedida de la Guerra Civil española (1938-2018)*, ed. Francisco Alía Miranda, Antonio Selva Iniesta, and Eduardo Higueras Castañeda (Albacete: Instituto de Estudios Albacetenses, 2019), 416–31.

human equality and advocated for mutual support with people in need, regardless of nation, religion, and gender differences.

The connections established among the numerous female participants in the resistance movement were a relevant aspect of the successful humanitarian efforts. Many foreign women worked during the Nanjing Massacre (*Nanjing Da Tusha* 南京大屠杀) within the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone, established by the Red Cross in 1937. With most medical personnel retreating to Wuhan, the city was in total disorder. Towards the end of December 1937, the few rescuers of the local branch of Nanjing tried in every way to meet the great demand for humanitarian aid.[274] There was a smaller group of journalists who left after the Japanese occupation and another group who remained. The latter was the first to inform the world of the conditions in occupied Nanjing and those who stayed behind to aid the Chinese people. Most of this second group were members of the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone. The foreigners who chose to remain in Nanjing formed a contingent in the city to coordinate the humanitarian aid effort, requesting that China and Japan both grant neutrality to the refugee zone. Among the Western women who chose to stay in Nanjing in December 1937, despite calls from their respective governments to leave, were two nurses Grace Bauer and Iva Hynds, and the American protestant missionaries Wilhelmina "Minnie" Vautrin and Mary Twinem Fine. Their relief work was significant in helping to prevent Japanese soldiers from molesting women and providing care for the refugees.[275]

The situation for women who served within several humanitarian organizations was different. As the National Red Cross was subordinate to the Nationalist government, its development differed from the experience of the Red Swastika. The implementation of the emergency project coordinated by the society, initiated in 1935, during the Battle of Shanghai at the end of 1937, demonstrated that members of the Society mobilized their resources to help the population. These activities originated with the creation of anti-Japanese resistance and its director Xiong was affiliated with the Chinese government. The Red Swastika also established new units to coordinate activities among relief societies. For example, Mao

[274] Gao Xiang Yu 高翔宇, 'Rendao Zhuyi de Zange- Nanjing Da Tusha Qijian de Zhongguo Hong Shizi Hui Nanjing Fenhui de Rendao Jiuyuan 人道主义的赞歌—南京大屠杀期间的 中国红十字会南京分会的人道救援 [Anthem of Humanitarianism-Humanitarian Relief by the Nanjing Branch of the Red Cross Society of China during the Nanjing Massacre]', *China Academic Journal*, 2011, https://oversea.cnki.net/kns?dbcode=CJFQ.

[275] David Askew, 'The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone: An Introduction' (Monash University, Sino-Japanese Studies, April 2002), 14-17.

Yanwen 毛彦文 (1898-1999), the third wife of Xiong Xiling 熊希齡 (1870-1937), founded a women-led emergency service unit as part of the Shanghai Red Swastika to improve the situation of refugees and the management of camps. The service unit was chaired by an executive board of twenty-six women. Mao Yenwen was one of the May Fourth generation women who had studied abroad. After her graduation from Michigan University in sociology, she married Xiong and contributed to his philanthropic work, for example in the Fragrant Hills Orphanage. In 1947, she was elected to the Peking Municipal Council. She left China after the war and initially went to Taiwan and then to America where she worked as an editor for Chinese newspapers. [276] The service unit defined its mission as providing services for soldiers, civilians, adults, and children. For instance, the women conducted surveys among wounded soldiers, which listed name, origin, age, address, family, education, military unit, family status, profession, contact person, wounds or disability, a medical certificate from the hospital, transportation, goals for life after the hospital, as well as their thoughts on the condition of the soldier. The survey form for refugees listed the profession and plans for life after the refugee camp. These instruments served to establish contact with family members and to detect professional skills to provide the person with employment. Higher-skilled refugees were given service work. In addition, the unit was established to offer women the possibility of participating in assistance and acquiring skills like learning how to drive a car as well as creating networks between the local agencies.[277]

Another training unit offered the additional possibility of practicing relief management. This training unit taught a class of fifty-eight volunteers in practical and theoretical aspects of management. The trainees assisted camp managers or aided at hospitals. They were also taught about issues like the situation of refugees. One crucial aspect of the work of both male and female volunteers was to help the distressed. These services responded to the overall strained situation in the camps. The Shanghai International Red Cross reported on March 18 about cases of serious nervous and mental disorders among refugees and the need to handle them. Society offered psychological assistance called “comfort work.” During the War of Resistance against Japan, this term became a euphemism for the enforced prostitution of Chinese and Korean women during the war, who were also called comfort women. In the

[276] Lily Xiao Hong Lee, Yubing Chen, and Clara Wing-chung Ho, *Zhongguo funü zhuanji cidian* 中国妇女传记辞典 *[Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women]* (Sidney: Sidney University Press, 2010), 400.

[277] Pfeiff, ‘Two Adoptions of the Red Cross’, 166.

context of the Red Swastika, however, the expression "comfort work and spiritual guidance" (*anwei xuan dao* 安慰宣导) was used to overcome the wartime trauma.[278]

In Chongqing, the new capital and center of political power, additional institutions were established with the help of the Society. For example, Zhou Zhilian 周之廉 (1902-1956) founded the Red Swastika North Spring Orphanage in Chongqing (*Hong wan zi hui beiquan ci you yuan* 红卍字会北泉慈幼院) in 1939. Zhou was born in 1902 in Henan, in the Gongcheng Village. She studied education at the Beijing Women's Institute and began her work as an educator at Xiong Xiling's Fragrant Hills Charitable Home in 1917.[279] During the May Fourth Movement in 1919, she was a leader of a women's student group and in contact with Deng Yichao, who later became the wife of Zhou Enlai. Zhou Zhilian studied at Columbia University in 1933. When the war broke out, she returned to her home country to support the anti-Japanese resistance. The Red Swastika North Spring Orphanage was established as part of the Chongqing Red Swastika branch. The institution was officially recognized by the municipal government and the Committee for Military Affairs from which it received regular donations. The orphanage accommodated orphans who were channeled through the Wartime Association for Child Welfare, which was established by the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, Song Meiling, in Wuhan. Therefore, Zhou's efforts show that in Chongqing, Society was integrated into the government's welfare system.[280] Zhou's educational approach which valued psychological assistance through religion needed to be amended to accommodate the demands of the central government. Overall, the institution which depended on subsidies from the municipal welfare agency was strictly controlled. For example, Zhou complained that municipal authorities imposed political training on orphans instead of caring for their wellbeing. Indeed, Communist historiography points to the fact that Zhou and the institution supported the Communist movement. Qiu Yuekang argues that members of the Communist Party had recourse to the orphanage during anti-Communist campaigns. Zhou was a member of the Nationalist Party, left China in 1946, and returned to America where she died in 1956. Worthy of notice is that Zhou's care for refugees is honored today as an

[278] Pfeiff, 167.

[279] Qiu Yuekang 邱月抗, 'Zhengjiu Zhanqu Nan Tong de Nü Jiaoyu Jia Zhouzhilian 拯救战区难通的女教育家周之廉 [The Educator Zhou Zhilian]' (Shenzhou, 2008), 18.

[280] Qiu Yuekang 邱月抗, 20.

important contribution to wartime aid.[281] Although women were the minority, the efforts of Mao and Zhou are evidence that Society encouraged women's participation in philanthropy. Even though it is true that compared to the number of men involved in the management of camps, burials, and relocation of refugees, the presence of women was low, in wartime, the Red Swastika offered educated women the opportunity to leave traditional gender roles and embrace new professional positions.

Christian Catholic female missions in China: addressing both foreign and local needs in social relief work

In accordance with the basic development history of the social work profession, the earliest social and relief work services for Chinese women were closely tied to the missionary activities and social services of Christian churches. As Lü Hongping argues, religious orders made significant contributions to women's social work in Republican China in at least two ways: first, they provided direct or indirect social assistance and services to women, including relief, education, family support, and employment, which served as a source of inspiration and guidance for the development of women's social work in China. Second, they played a key role in promoting the emergence and growth of civil women's organizations, laying an important foundation for the widespread development of women's social work. [282]

The social service activities of Christian-led churches were primarily focused on four areas: first, charitable work, including relief activities, and the establishment of welfare institutions; second, education and social reform, particularly the establishment of civilian education and the transformation of customs; third, the establishment of social service institutions, including specialized institutions serving women, children, and families; and fourth, women's social work. Following the introduction of Christianity in China, a large number of branches were quickly established, and organizations specializing in helping and supporting women and children gradually emerged to safeguard the equal rights and interests

[281] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 177.

[282] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 'Minguo Shiqi de Funü Shehui Gongzuo 民国时期的妇女社会工作 [On Women's Social Work in the Republic of China Era]', *Hebei Daxue Xuebao: Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban* 河北大学学报*:* 哲学社会科学版 3, no. 38 (October 2013): 29–33, https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:HBDS.0.2013-03-007.

of women. The work of church organizations in this area mainly included: the establishment of a social service department and the construction of a women and children's foster home to shelter and educate homeless women and children. Christian missions also demonstrated their commitment to gender equality and the education of women. In terms of education, the Christian Church invested heavily in China, primarily at two levels: one was the construction of institutional schools, and from 1831 to 1920, 7.382 elementary schools, secondary schools, universities, and colleges at all levels were built, enrolling nearly 300.000 students, including the first women's university in China, the North China Union Women's University.[283] The second level was the establishment of various forms of community education, including adult literacy classes, adult night schools, various short-term technical training courses, and thematic education classes. In addition to formal schools for girls, various short-term literacy classes and skills training for girls were also conducted in urban and rural areas. Furthermore, after the Christian Church began its missionary work in China, it carried out many corrective and service activities in the field of gambling and opium addiction, as Chapter 4 will illustrate. Among the many negative social habits of women, foot-binding was one of the most important elements that the Church opposed and incorporated into the social reform movement. The anti-footbinding rhetoric published in Christian church publications of the time and the church-initiated anti-footbinding movement played a crucial role in breaking the consolidated gender norms. The social improvement activities within the scope of changing customs also include support and social support activities for special groups of women, such as maidservants and prostitutes.[284]

Christian institutions of higher education were instrumental in the formation of the first urban women who received a modern education and embarked on professional careers. Many female reformers, revolutionaries, students, writers, and professionals also embraced the values of the May Fourth Movement. However, they did not simply adopt a masculine conception of modernity, but rather creatively employed religion to promote their own understanding of new womanhood. In doing so, they altered the national discourse from its predominant male formulation and the "Christian secular-normative model" of religion. For instance, the pioneering Chinese feminist He-Yin Zhen 何殷震 (1884-1920?), wife of Liu

[283] Zuo Furong 左芙蓉, *Jidujiao Yu Jin Xiandai Beijing Shehui* 基督教与近现代北京社会 *[Christianity and Modern Beijing Society]* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2009), 132.

[284] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 'Minguo Shiqi de Funü Shehui Gongzuo 民国时期的妇女社会工作 [On Women's Social Work in the Republic of China Era]'.

Shipei 劉師培 (1884–1919), rejected Western models of modernization and utilized traditional religious resources to advocate for gender equality.[285] The asexual ideals of Buddhahood influenced He-Yin Zhen's feminist perspective of complete equality among men and women, regardless of class, race, and nation. Her vision of women's liberation and "economic independence" drew heavily from Neo-Confucian teachings of self-improvement and the interdependence of individual responsibility and social change.[286]

Christian orders fluctuated between their religious objectives and their social service agenda, in response to the necessities of different times. At the same time, as Kang demonstrates, utilizing religion as a means of empowerment, women embarked on the pursuit of the ideals of the "new woman," gender parity, and Chinese modernity and national cohesion on their own terms.[287] Women of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) (*Jidujiao nü qingnian hui* 基督教女青年会), as a Protestant philanthropic organization, played a burgeoning role in extensive transnational missionary endeavors and came to constitute the majority of foreign missionary operatives, particularly in regions where the status of women was reputed to be most diminished.[288] China was considered to be one of the most backward territories in need of transformation. A significant number of women participated in the organization's programs, initiatives, and classes without formally joining as members. Many Chinese feared that if they converted to Christianity, they would be perceived by other residents as collaborators with foreign imperialists.[289] The concept of social service (*shehui fuwu* 社会服务) and the organizational structure of the YWCA and its male counterpart, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) (*Jidujiao qingnian hui* 基督教青年会), exerted a significant influence in early twentieth-century China. The YMCA emerged as the largest institution in China practicing "social reconstruction theology" during the Nanjing Decade (1928-1938). This concept advocated that the advancement of Chinese

[285] Lydia He Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, eds., *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 1-26.

[286] Peter Zarrow, 'He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (November 1988): 796–813, https://doi.org/10.2307/2057853, 810.

[287] Xiaofei Kang, 'Women, Gender and Religion in Modern China, 1900s-1950s: An Introduction', *Nan Nü* 19, no. 1 (4 August 2017): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685268-00191p01, 26.

[288] Alison R. Drucker, 'The Role of the YWCA in the Development of the Chinese Women's Movement, 1890-1927', *Social Service Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1979): 421–40, https://doi.org/10.1086/643755, 424.

[289] Shi, *At Home in the World*, 103.

modernization relied on reshaping society by integrating progressive Christian principles, achieved through the refinement of individual character.[290] Its organizational model inspired the formation of other associations, such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) (*Fojiao qingnian hui* 佛教青年会), a prominent national organization of young lay and ordained Buddhists active in the 1920s. Whalen Lai argues that Christian social work was a great achievement and many Chinese were impressed by these modern forms of Christian charity. [291] The YWCA, although distinct from the YMCA, shared many of its programs, beliefs, and ideals, and the two organizations regularly collaborated in philanthropic efforts during their presence in China. The governing body of the association was composed of a number of married women who had received Western education but had elected to be civic volunteers rather than pursue professional careers. Due to the open membership policy, a significant number of individuals of foreign origin also joined. Some of the most renowned Chinese women of the Republican era, such as Song Meiling (Madame Chiang Kai-shek), Song Qingling 宋庆龄 (1893-1981，the widow of Sun Yatsen), and Li Dequan 李德全 1896–1972, the wife of the "Christian General" Feng Yuxiang), participated in the YWCA during their early years but left after marriage. Although membership was open to individuals of both Christian and non-Christian faiths, non-Christians were typically excluded from decision-making circles.[292]

In addition to traditional forms of philanthropy, temporary disaster relief became a crucial aspect of social service. Despite the association's emphasis on character development and societal reconstruction rather than on relief and charity, in practice disaster relief often consumed a significant amount of the YWCA's resources. For example, the emergency relief program of the Wuchang YWCA in response to the central China flood in November 1931 was the most frequently cited instance of this. The impetus for the establishment of a temporary home for widows and orphans who were refugees was provided by Buddhist friends with whom the YWCA Relief Staff had been collaborating. During the refugees' stay at the camp, the staff took advantage of the opportunity to provide literacy classes and to

[290] Charles Keller, 'Making Model Citizens: The Chinese YMCA, Social Activism, and Internationalism in Republican China (1919-1937)' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1996), 8.

[291] Whalen Lai, 'Chinese Buddhist and Christian Charities: A Comparative History', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 12 (1992): 5, https://doi.org/10.2307/1389952, 5.

[292] Shi, *At Home in the World*, 108-109.

educate them on health and character as well.[293] The case of the Wuchang YWCA working in partnership with a Buddhist monastery and Hubei's official relief organization suggests that the YWCA's emphasis on social service without a mandatory religious component facilitated cooperation with non-Christian groups and attracted their participation and support.

Following the Japanese invasion in 1931, a significant number of Chinese Christians advocated for a stance of passive resistance, non-cooperation, and requesting international intervention. However, the majority of Chinese Christians advocated for armed resistance. They argued that discussing about patriotism without taking action was hypocritical and that prayer alone would not deter the Japanese army. Some argued that Chinese Christians should not only fight for narrow-minded patriotism but that resistance against Japanese aggression was the responsibility of all Christians, including those in Japan. Following the confrontation between Japanese and Chinese troops in Shanghai on January 28, 1932, both the YMCA and YWCA issued declarations of resistance against Japan and organized patriotic demonstrations.[294]

Under the influence of Western Christian organizations, in addition to church organizations, a number of non-Christian local organizations also started to carry out social works, whose main focus was on women's and children's relief and rehabilitation work, such as the Chang Lu Nursery Church (*zhang lu yuying tang* 长芦育婴堂) and Guangren Church (*guang ren tang* 广仁堂) in Tianjin.[295] These organizations ranged from branches of international organizations in China to local civic organizations run by business leaders and social activists. The local popular organizations consisted of charitable or mutual aid organizations such as the Puji Temple (*Puji yuan* 普济院), Village Association (*Tongxiang*

[293] Shi, 119.

[294] Zhang Zuyi, 'Jidu Tu Dui Dong Sheng Shijian Taidu de Pao Jie 基督徒对东省事件态度的炮姐 [Christians' Attitudes towards the Events in Eastern Province]', *Nü Qingnian Yuekan* 女青年月刊 1, no. xi (1932): 1–11; Chen Xiangping 陈秀萍, *Chenfu Lu: Zhongguo Qing Yun Yu Jidujiao Nannü Fu Qingnian Hui* 沉浮录: 中国青运与基督教男女青年会*[A Record of Ups and Downs: The Chinese Youth Movement and the YMCA and the YWCA]* (Shanghai: Tongji daxue chuban she, 1989), 86-89.

[295] Ren Yunlan 任云兰, 'Jindai Huabei Ziran Zaihai Qijian Jing Jin Cishan Jigou Dui Funü Ertong de Shehui Jiuzhu 近代华北自然灾害期间京津慈善机构对妇女儿童的 社会救助 [Social Assistance to Women and Children by Charitable Organisations in Beijing and Tianjin during the Natural Disasters of Modern North China]', *Tianjin Shehui Kexue* 天津社会科学, no. 5 (2006): 141–44.

hui 同乡会), and Freemasonry (*Gongji hui* 共济会), which were inherited from traditional societies and whose main objective was to help and save the poor, fellow workers, or fellow villagers, and women's organizations such as the Orthodox Church (*Bao jie tang* 保节堂), Chastity Hall (*Zhen jie tang* 贞节堂), and Memorial Hall (*Chong jie tang* 崇节堂), whose main function was to provide relief to chaste and martyred women.[296] These women's organizations were introduced from the West with modern management and service concepts, and their main objective was to provide relief and education to women and children, including temporary wartime relief organizations. Furthermore, the second category was relief organizations introduced from the West with modern management and service concepts, such as the International Relief Society (*Guoji jiuji hui* 国际救济会), the Chinese and Western Relief Society (*Hua yang yi zheng hui* 华洋义赈会), and the Rescue Relief Society (*Jiuqi hui* 救乞会). [297]

The organizations had already begun to change from a purely relief-oriented to a more educational approach. For instance, Lü Hongping notes that the report from the Beiping Family Welfare Association in 1932 highlighted a shift in the provision of assistance from traditional forms of relief to a more professional approach focused on empowering individuals to help themselves. This shift is exemplified by the establishment of a women's factory, where people selected from the Association's caseload were trained in occupational therapy of the Union Hospital over to the office of Ms. Bu and eventually placed in leadership roles to manage and instruct other women workers.[298] This change demonstrates the evolution of the Association's work towards the characteristics of contemporary non-governmental organization (NGO) social work practices.

In the same period, the Ministry of the Interior issued regulations for the administration of relief homes, intending to consolidate institutions such as the Chastity Hall and the Ji Liang Institute (*Ji Liang suo* 济良所) with other relief facilities to establish a new regulatory agency for relief. Following this, various localities began to reorganize their own

[296] Cai Qinyu 蔡勤禹, *Guojia Shehui Yu Ruoshi Qunti- Minguo Shiqi de Shehui Jiuji* 国家社会与弱势群体- 民国时期的社会救济*：1927-1929 [State, Society and the Disadvantaged - Social Assistance in the Republican Period: 1927-1929]* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2003), 190.

[297] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 'Minguo Shiqi de Funü Shehui Gongzuo 民国时期的妇女社会工作 [On Women's Social Work in the Republic of China Era]', 31.

[298] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 32.

institutions. For example, in Changsha, the former Sanatorium and the Orthodox Church were merged into the Hunan Provincial Relief Institute (*Hunan sheng li jiuji yuan* 湖南省立救济院). Additionally, forty-five counties and cities in Hunan consolidated their existing relief facilities and established new ones. Nationally, the restructured relief institutions developed rapidly, with the number of institutions growing to 466 in various categories, some of which were specifically dedicated to the relief of disadvantaged women, such as women's relief homes and charity homes. According to statistics from 1930, a total of 52.464 disadvantaged women were admitted and educated. Despite being based on traditional institutionalization methods, there were indications of a shift toward a modern welfare system. The government began to incorporate social welfare affairs into the administrative system, in response to the demands of modern social management. Efforts were also made to introduce professional social work methods and integrate them into the social welfare system. This shift towards a modern welfare system was summarized by Yang Guanghui in his 1949 article, "The Proper Understanding of Experimental Relief" in Social Construction, in which he stated that "Social relief will tend to change from social relief to social welfare, from social insurance to social security, and from conscious charity to social casework." [299] Hongping's research observed that during this period concerns for women's equality and the protection of their rights began to be incorporated into legislation, specifically with regard to women and children in vulnerable situations. In particular, the social work system for those people was integrated into the social administration and social welfare system. A notable example was the experimental almshouses in Chongqing. These institutions included facilities for the elderly, childcare, help in case of disabilities, medical treatment, and assistance in childbirth, and demonstrated that a government-led social work system was beginning to emerge, both from systemic and professional perspectives. [300]

Within the Christian realm, in particular, Catholicism had a significant impact on the status of women since female missionary orders arrived in China. The considerable participation of women in relief efforts, as well as charity, social work, and education, became closely associated with femininity in various ways. The concept of feminization, as frequently

[299] Yang Guanghui 杨光辉, 'Shiyan Jiuji Ying You Zhi Renshi 实验救济应有之认识 [Understanding of Experimental Relief]', *Shehui Jianshe* 社会建设 1, no. 9 (1949): 23–27.

[300] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 'Minguo Shiqi de Funü Shehui Gongzuo 民国时期的妇女社会工作 [On Women's Social Work in the Republic of China Era]'.

used in this context, refers not only to the prevalence of women in charitable work but carries a metaphorical significance too. This is due to the fact that relief work tended to attract more women than men and also because women came to dominate this field. Through their engagement in these activities, women were able to attain significant decision-making power within organizations or congregations, thus obtaining a certain degree of independence. As Patrick Pasture argues, while the feminization thesis was initially developed within an American Protestant context, it was also applied to Catholicism.[301] From a Protestant perspective, Catholicism, with its sensory atmosphere characterized by candles and representations of saints and Madonnas, was often perceived as more "feminine" compared to the more austere and "rational" forms of Protestant theology and worship. As a result, Protestantism has been portrayed as being more "masculine" on multiple occasions. Relief efforts, as well as charity, social work, and education, became closely associated with femininity in various ways. Not only were women disproportionately represented in these activities, but they also dominate this field, as evidenced in the following chapters.

As in the case of the YWCA, since the early 1900s, many foreign Catholic Sisters arrived in China providing religious education, medical assistance and evangelization activities to Chinese people. For instance, from North America, there were the Sisters of Providence from St. Mary of the Woods, Indiana (*Zhugu xiunü hui* 主顾修女会), and the Maryknoll Sisters (*Malinuo nüxiu hui* 玛利诺女修会) from New York. Around 1900 there were more than 500 indigenous sisters in local congregations and European missionary congregations. In the following years, between 1900 and 1914, Chinese Catholics reached 1.519.000. New groups of Chinese religious women rose nearly every year. By the mid-1930s there were forty-two Chinese congregations with 2.403 followers, and among fifty foreign orders, twenty-two included 1.016 Chinese Sisters and 1.693 foreigners. In addition, 6.211 virgins operated as catechists and teachers for the Church. They not only worked in the sacristies, catechumenates, schools, hospitals and orphanages but also helped to assist industrial schools and to create printing newspapers for the people at the missions.[302]

With the outbreak of the Second World War in China, all efforts were concentrated on providing relief and assistance. The Swiss Sisters of Ingenbohl carried out prominent work within the education and medical fields. They undertook the responsibility of providing education as part of their missionary project in Heilongjiang. They also founded schools in

[301] Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 10.

[302] Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization', 36.

the several missions where they worked, offering education and training courses for girls.[303] Their mission was to educate young girls in line with the traditional purpose of education for girls in China limited to nurturing social ethics and family traditions and teaching them to become righteous wives and good mothers through respect and obedience. The future place of a good and virtuous woman, indeed, was in the domestic sphere. While the idea of educating girls was gaining acceptance by the early twentieth century in China, with the establishment of schools for girls, the original concepts regarding women's role in society still remained deep-rooted.[304] By following this pattern, the missionary schools for girls prepared them to become good mothers and wives who would introduce Catholicism into their families. Missionaries' activities were not limited to teaching: as Chapter 4 will show, medical dispensaries and clinics were established and run by the Ingenbohl Sisters, offering Chinese sisters and laywomen the possibility to use their professional education to work in these places and to care for refugees and wounded.[305] The significant involvement of women in religious institutions during the war which provided opportunities for involvement in missions, charity, education and relief within a relatively egalitarian setting, was one way in which women could transcend the restrictive confines of domestic life, despite the emergence of other limitations. To a certain degree, this led to the formation of a distinct women's sphere in which women held significant authority.

Relief work involved many religious associations, not only Christian ones. Among them, there were Buddhist monasteries and monastics involved in the War Resistance movement. For instance, during the Japanese invasion of Wuhan in 1938, some nuns joined the Buddhist Monastic Emergency Medical Service Team led by monk Haijing and fought alongside the Communist army against Japanese troops throughout China until the end of the war. Elise DeVido's paper analyzes other examples of their involvement including the Nationalist government's military training for nuns, nuns donating funds to war efforts, performing rituals for national salvation and patriotism, making soldiers' uniforms, offering temples as makeshift clinics for the war-injured, aiding refugees, burying the dead, and

[303] Johannes Beckmann, 'Scuole Nella Prefettura Apostolica Di Tsitsikar', *Betlemme*, no. 6 (1939): 170–73.

[304] Wong Lee, 'Women's Education in Traditional and Modern China', *Women's History Review* 4, no. 3 (1 September 1995): 345–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092.

[305] Eduard Blatter, 'Tsitsikar (Heilungkiang) – Die Erste Mission Der SMB. Tatsachen Und Erinnerungen', in *Vermittlung Zwischenkirchlicher Gemeinschaft*, ed. Jakob Baumgartner, 1971.

running schools for orphans.[306] As noted by historian Xue Yu, the patriotic actions of monks and nuns during the war served to enhance their social standing and enhance their relationship with the Nationalist government. She revealed that during the Anti-Japanese War, Buddhist activities in areas controlled by the Nationalists and Communists entailed ceremonial services in supplicating for the nation, fundraising campaigns for Chinese soldiers, rescue operations, emergency medical assistance, and other non-traditional activities, such as participation in guerrilla warfare. Monks considered fulfilling their civic duties as a priority, forsaking their monasteries and participating in rescue operations on the frontlines or engaging in guerrilla warfare in areas under Japanese control. However, during the Civil War, the Nationalist government conscripted a large number of monks and nuns into the military, and similar to other conscripts, they found themselves caught in the crossfire, both literally and figuratively, between the Nationalists and the Communists.[307]

From the historical documents retrieved, Catholic women's orders do not seem to have ever been involved in guerrilla actions, but rather in those of relief and assistance in which they were occupied night and day. As the case of the Canossian Daughters of Charity (FDCC) highlights in Chapter 5, they played a central role in introducing and representing the Western Catholic model of organizational charity and social service. Most of them were Italian, together with a few Chinese, the Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood, valuable helpers of the sisters.[308] The relations with the Japanese occupation government that the nuns often had to manage gave them an unprecedented status of female autonomy and independence. Their status as nuns made them "protected" in the eyes of the Japanese enemies and therefore able to dialogue with them and open up assistance and relief activities without encountering any significant resistance or opposition. They served wherever there was a need: in the schools, in the hospitals, to war orphans, to newborn babies, and on trains to the wounded on their way to hospitals in the inland areas. All these charitable works were accomplished on a large scale despite the difficulties, thanks to numerous benefactors, providing for the sustenance of more than 400 people (sisters, orphans, blind, children, and wounded) without any stable resources, but only with intensive work. If on the one hand, the

[306] Elise A. DeVido, 'Networks and Bridges: Nuns in the Making of Modern Chinese Buddhism', *The Chinese Historical Review* 22, no. 1 (30 May 2015): 72–93, https://doi.org/10.1179/1547402X15Z.00000000041, 82.

[307] For a detailed history of Buddhist activities and nuns involvement in the War of Resistance against Japan, see Yu, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism*.

[308] Criveller, 'The Canossian Sisters in Hong Kong and Beyond', 25.

war suspended and almost stopped the work of propagating the faith, on the other hand, it made the charity of the Catholic religion develop significantly, producing an important movement of appreciation and adherence in China. [309] The relationship between the Canossian Sisters and Song Meiling was also undoubtedly a significant testimony to how women served China in several public humanitarian roles.[310] As the war progressed, even more families were homeless and the number of orphans grew relentlessly. In 1938, Madame Chang Kai-shek sent 137 orphans from the attacked cities to the sisters. The children were offered a place to sleep and a bowl of rice. This welcome was somehow proof that certain Chinese prejudices against the Catholic Church and missionaries were slowly disappearing. Particularly, the need to cooperate and save as many lives as possible was the priority.

Not only Europe but also the American Church sent consistent numbers of missionaries to China. During the years between the two World Wars, American Catholic missionaries, both men and women, increased to 2.896 by the middle of the Second World War.[311] The largest group of American sisters directed to China were the Foreign Mission Sisters of Saint Dominic, known as the Maryknoll Sisters. They arrived in Yangjiang in the southern part of Guangdong Province in November 1921, assisting the Maryknoll priests who had been there since 1918. The sisters started to teach in catechumenates and manage dispensaries and orphanages. Local Theresian sisters were formally recognized as a religious congregation in 1920. [312] Since the 1930s, the strong nationalistic ambitions under the new government of Chiang Kai-shek provided modifications in terms of rules for the schools. Even if the teaching of religion was prohibited, the sisters continued to teach catechism in their communities after school and secular topics within the classrooms. Meantime, since the emergent community of the Catechists needed extra space for their preparation, in 1933 Bishop Noè Giuseppe Tacconi (1873-1942) provided a large piece of property outside Kaifeng, Henan, where a two-story novitiate building was established. The Sisters of Providence and the Catechists continued their vocation until December 1941, when the Japanese soldiers arrested the American sisters with other foreign religious and priests; the

[309] Ida Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-200*, vol. III 1910-2000 (Italian edition by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, A.C.R., 2003).

[310] 'Dalla Cina. Lettere Missionarie', *Vita*, no. 7, Year XII (July 1938): 7.

[311] Joseph P. Ryan, 'American Contributions to the Catholic Missionary Effort in China in the Twentieth Century', *The Catholic Historical Review* 31, no. 2 (1945): 171–80, 174.

[312] Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization', 38.

Chinese sisters could continue their work. Another American order that entered China in the 1920s was the Sisters of Loretto, Nerinx, Kentucky. Six of them arrived in Hanyang, Hubei, in 1923, with the aim of starting catechetical and elementary schools for girls and boys. However, once arrived they had to assume responsibility for the catechumenate and embroidery school already started by the Catechist Virgins. [313] In various places, the missionary nuns, also taken prisoner, had to abandon the building in which the school and oratory were prosperous. Thus, they committed their lives to effective charity: hospitals, prisons, concentration camps, and assistance to refugees. The buildings also became reception points for refugees, first aid, and a blessed place of salvation. At the same time, missionary women shared the gospel and contributed to the development of education, culture, and health in China. Those changes introduced by the missionaries were often in contradiction with Confucian values, deeply rooted in Chinese culture. According to Spees, missionary women went to China to preach the Gospel and helped transform Chinese culture and society, especially for Chinese women. The missionaries influenced China's education and medical services as well as initiated changes that the Chinese reformers completed. Interestingly, most women missionaries had more freedom and decision-making power in China than they did in the West. When they arrived in China, they decided to advocate for Chinese women's rights in addition to converting them. Many women missionaries believed China needed Western culture and did not hesitate to introduce Western norms. However, the changes initiated by the missionaries often contradicted Confucian values, which were deeply embedded in Chinese culture. During the process of cultural exchange, however, on one hand missionaries affected the Chinese, on the other hand, Chinese people and culture influenced the lives of women missionaries too. Shulman's research on three heroic Canadian women missionaries reveals that they were effectively windows on China whose writings extend our understanding of China and its people. Furthermore, as missionaries were more highly integrated into China than many other Westerners; as missionary women, they were uniquely able to have direct and sustained contact with Chinese women; and as Canadians, they were treated differently from other Westerners, occasionally serving as power brokers at the local level.[314]

By 1940 every apostolic vicariate in China had a congregation of local sisters. There were also 3 to 4.000 lay missionaries active in evangelization works among the rural population; most of them were consecrated virgins. Both groups, the new diocesan women's

[313] Bradshaw, 41.

[314] Shulman, 'Prisms of China: Canadian Women Missionaries in China, 1904-1945', 4.

congregations and the Christian virgins, grew in numbers: in 1928 there were 2.641 Chinese and 1.327 foreign sisters. By 1948 there were 5.112 Chinese and 2.351 foreign sisters and about 3.000 consecrated Chinese virgins. [315] In the Chinese tradition, four virtues were expected of a woman: morality, convenient speech, proper behavior and diligence. As a result, they were kept away from all major positions in the Church. In Chinese women, traditionally held to obedience, such a theology reinforced the pattern of obedience even more. Chinese women Christians thus carried a double burden: that of their traditional culture and that of traditional Christian theology. With this reality in mind, the institution of Chinese virgins constituted something innovative and even emancipatory. The Chinese world required great adaptability and sensitivity from the missionaries. The establishment of Chinese virgins was therefore a necessity in order to reach the Chinese people and accomplish the relief work needed in wartime years.

[315] Leung and Wittberg, 'Catholic Religious Orders of Women in China: Adaptation and Power', 70.

Chapter 3

Inter arma caritas:

Women's humanitarian activities in the Red Cross

Introduction

This first case study is significant in reflecting on women, gender, and humanitarianism in within a transnational and international context of one of the central European-style international organizations during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China. It analyses the dynamics through which Chinese and Western women effectively integrate into the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) humanitarian work, with a particularly emphasis on the activism of Chinese women. Though the first shot of the War of Resistance was fired on July 7, 1937, the hostilities took a serious aspect with the transfer of fighting to Central China.[316] In an effort to improve the welfare of both soldiers and civilians, the Red Cross played an instrumental role in promoting social renovation in China. This can be observed through two main macro thematical aspects that deserve deeper examination: the involvement of Chinese and foreign elite women in leadership roles and specific duties within different committees and relief organizations; and the female centrality in the relief narrative through media representation, local press, and official reports. While it may be easier to reconstruct the experiences of prominent women as key figures in charitable initiatives, it can be more challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of the discourse surrounding

[316] For a detailed discussion on the events of the War of Resistance against Japan, see Guo Rugui 郭汝瑰 and Huang Yuzhang 黄玉章, eds., *Zhongguo Kangri Zhanzheng Zhengmian Zhanchang Zuozhan Ji* 中国抗日战争正面战场作战记 *[An Account of the Combat Operations of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japan]* (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2005); Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2014); Hans J. Van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China 1937-1952* (London: Harvard University Press, 2017); Stephen R. MacKinnon, Diana Lary, and Ezra F. Vogel, eds., *China at War: Regions of China, 1937-1945* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007); Diana Lary and Stephen R. MacKinnon, eds., *The Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China*, Contemporary Chinese Studies (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001); James Chieh Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

ordinary women's roles in relief efforts within the Red Cross. The necessity to examine printed narratives, photographs, testimonies, and accounts derived from wartime journals and newspapers, as employed in the present chapter, is grounded in the recognition of the pivotal role that these primary sources serve in exposing the complex and multifaceted aspects of women's activism in the Red Cross in wartime.

The War of Resistance against Japan offers a fitting subject for examining the correlation between the legitimacy of power, national identity, and visual representations due to the war's social and political upheaval, the emergence of a new Chinese national identity, and the growing significance of photography for informational and political reasons. To investigate how the relief narrative helped create women's empowerment, this study focuses on them and explores the ideological constructs they employed. Cody and Terpak suggest that war images were instrumental in a nationalist campaign that allowed China to be viewed and depicted through a "nationalist gaze," which provided solid and direct evidence of foreign invasion and most efficiently stimulated nationalist sentiment.[317] The media played a pivotal role in shaping narratives surrounding various aspects of the war, including the involvement of women in relief work. By highlighting the contributions of women in these narratives, the government and propaganda machinery aimed to promote a sense of national unity, inspire patriotism, and encourage more women to participate in relief efforts. The sources served as key elements in the construction of these narratives. They provided firsthand information, visual evidence, and personal testimonials that were carefully curated and presented to the public. Through these channels, the government effectively conveyed the message that women were indispensable in the war effort, specifically in their roles as caregivers, nurses, volunteers, and providers of humanitarian aid.[318]

[317] Cody, Terpak, and J. Paul Getty Museum, *Brush & Shutter*, 15.

[318] To gain a comprehensive understanding of Chinese war propaganda, see Hung, *War and Popular Culture*. On specific topics see also Edwards, 'Drawing Sexual Violence in Wartime China'; Coble, 'Writing About Atrocity: Wartime Accounts and Their Contemporary Uses'; De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan Ertong" (The Resistance Child)"'; Pozzi, '"Chinese Children Rise Up!": Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War."'

The Red Cross in war-torn China

After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, several humanitarian projects and relief associations were founded by Chinese philanthropists to bring assistance and services to their country. As an affiliate of the International Committee's network, the Chinese Red Cross in connection with other national societies was the central organization around which the army's medical work was built, adhering to international patterns of aid in armed conflicts.[319] As Caroline Reeves pointed out, the Red Cross mark transmitted with it the character of modernity, representing nationalism, sovereignty, and internationalism. It was linked with modern medical science, in opening hospitals, delivering vaccinations, and supporting medical aid for the victims of conflicts and natural disasters. It created an efficient network of branches and members on the national level, providing a group identity and the opportunity for social and political connections on all those expanded levels.[320]

The Red Cross operated within a highly complex political and social framework. The impact of war and political changes had a significant effect on the Red Cross organization in China, resulting in a decline in the number of branches from 469 to 254 by 1943.[321] Although the decrease varied regionally, most Red Cross members fled to Western regions, and many branches in the East were destroyed. However, in some cases, the branches continued to exist but were cut off from the Chongqing-based network and incorporated into the collaborative state-building efforts of the Japanese forces. New branches were even established, such as in the province of Shandong, where thirty-two branches existed in the almost completely occupied province by 1940.[322] The Red Cross continued in its humanitarian efforts in certain occupied regions, such as Tianjin. Despite being assimilated into the Japanese-controlled welfare structure, it offered crucial emergency aid and managed a hospital for a year and a half following the Japanese occupation. The resistance to occupation mainly organized by Communists, but also by Nationalists and guerrilla troops, continued in less urban regions of the province.[323]

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[319] David P. Forsythe and Barbara Ann J. Rieffer-Flanagan, *The International Committee of the Red Cross. A Neutral Humanitarian Actor*, Routledge Global Institutions (New York: Routledge, 2007), 11.

[320] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 210-211.

[321] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 384.

[322] Chi Zihua 池子华, 189.

[323] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 139.

Despite the lack of documentation of the Red Cross work in occupied territories due to charges of collaboration and treason, communication was feasible in certain areas such as Shanghai, under foreign governance of Concessions.[324] When the war began to affect the Red Cross branches, after the Battle of Shanghai on August 13, 1937, the Central Committee in Shanghai organized considerable relief activities. The Red Cross played a significant role in the collective philanthropic endeavors of various local groups, city officials, and numerous people in Shanghai. Thousands of refugees moved to the city center, Shanghai came under Japanese occupation and the former Chinese municipal government was substituted by the Great Way Government (*dadao zhengfu* 大道政府), a short-lived puppet government established to administer Japanese-occupied.[325] The International Settlement and the French Concession were surrounded by the occupied areas and faced the constant peril of invasion in the following years. In order to cope with this emergency, the Red Cross Society of China, working in conjunction with the Red Swastika Society, the Buddhist Relief Committee and other Chinese Philanthropic Associations, joined forces and centralized all available resources.[326] It had a prominent role in the collective charitable works of individuals, local initiatives, and municipal authorities. Indeed, private contributions and the organization of committees for assistance to the refugees were much higher than the donations from the government. Only in 1939, when the central government moved to Chongqing, it began to finance in the Shanghai office.[327]

The Shanghai International Committee of the Red Cross Society of China was established on September 18, 1937, with Yan Huiqing 颜惠庆 (1877-1950), former President

[324] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 385.

[325] See Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China*, First Harvard University Press paperback edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 157; Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh, eds., *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, Cambridge Modern China Series (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Frederic Wakeman jr., *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[326] 'Shanghai Handles Nearly 20,000 Casualties', *The China Weekly Review (1923-1950)*, 1937.

[327] Nara Dillon, 'Middlemen in the Chinese Welfare State: The Role of Philanthropists in Refugee Relief in Wartime Shanghai', *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46, no. 1 (March 2011): 22–45, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-010-9079-3, 30.

of the Red Cross Society of China as chairman.[328] He informed the meeting that many foreign and Chinese friends had expressed the desire to form an international Red Cross committee. A subsequent meeting of the Executive Committee on September 24, a charter that the Red Cross Society of China proposed to grant to this Shanghai International Committee was accepted in principle. At the same time, it was proposed to apply immediately, a representative of the International Red Cross at Geneva who was visiting Shanghai at the time, for an independent charter from that Committee. Five sub-committees were appointed at the same meeting, namely, Organization and Drafting under Dr. Yan Huiqing; Refugee Problems under French Jesuit Father Jacquinot; Epidemic under Dr. R. C. Robertson, the Commissioner of the League of Nations Health Organization Anti-Epidemic Unit; Wounded Soldiers under Dr. Yen Fuqing 颜福庆 (1882-1970), the Director of the National Health Administration; and Medical Supplies under diplomat Dr. Szeming Sze 施思明 (1908-1998).[329] The only woman was Mary Malcom (1910-2005), wife of Cornelius Vander Starr (1892-1968). Her temporary position in Shanghai Red Cross Sub-committee as Office Manager was later filled by another paid secretary who went on to become the Executive Secretary. [330] Despite the opportunity to

[328] Yan Huiqing, a Chinese statesman and diplomat, dedicated his services to multiple Chinese administrations including the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. Within the imperial bureaucracy, he attained the prestigious rank of *jinshi*, the highest and ultimate degree attainable through the imperial examination system in Imperial China. He briefly held the positions of Premier and later President of the Republic of China during the 1920s. Shortly before his demise, he also assumed membership in the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. After the President and Vice President's term of office ended, the General Assembly gathered on March 23, 1924, and chose Yan Huiqing as the new President. Yan Huiqing was re-elected in 1928 and remained in office until 1934, when the Head office underwent a restructuring process. Even though the organization went through changes during Yan Huiqing's tenure, the General Assembly, consisting mainly of wealthy merchants and gentry from Shanghai, remained the primary authority of the RCSC. See 'Hong Shizih Ui Gaixuan Zhengfu Hui Zhang 红十字会改选正副会长 [Reelection of the President and Vice Presidents of the Red Cross Society]', *Shen Bao* 申报, 17 April 1924; Che Jixin 车吉心, *Shijie zhuming waijiao jia chuan* 世界著名外交家传 *[Biographies of world-famous diplomats]*, ed. Wu Chunguo 吴春国 (Jinan: Shandong youyi chubanshe, 2000), 914-920.

[329] 'Report of the Shanghai International Red Cross (October, 1937-March 31, 1939)' (Geneva, 1937-1939), CR00/14, I.C.R.C. Archives, 1.

[330] He was an American entrepreneur and the founder of C.V. Starr & Co. in Shanghai. This company was later rebranded as Starr Companies and eventually became the well-known American International Group (AIG), a global insurance and investment organization. The information available on the wife of Cornelius Vander Starr is limited. He did not tie the knot until he was 44 years old, considered a late age for marriage during his time. In

join the organization as a secretary, therefore, she never held leadership roles. While Mary Malcom had the opportunity to join the organization as a secretary, she did not hold any leadership roles within the organization. Her role as Office Manager likely involved administrative tasks and supporting the overall functioning of the committee. It appears that her position was temporary and did not lead to a long-term career or advancement within the organization.

On October 2, 1937, Du Yuesheng 杜月笙 (1888-1951) was vice president of the Red Cross and was among the initial members to lead municipal agencies that organized city-wide activities.[331] He played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Chinese Red Cross Shanghai Relief Committee (*Zhongguo hong shizi hui weiyuanhui* 中国红十字会委员会) although he eventually fled to Hong Kong after the fall of Shanghai. Along with the Shanghai Relief Committee, the initiative collaborated with other charitable organizations, such as the Shanghai Federation of Charities (*Shanghai cishan tuanti lianhejiuzai hui* 上海慈善团体联合救灾会).[332] Yan Fuqing 颜福庆 (1882-1970),[333] who served as former president of the Red Cross and director of the Shanghai Red Cross Hospital, was appointed as the chairman of the Committee for Wounded Soldiers of the Shanghai International Red Cross. This organization

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1937, he married Mary Malcolm, the daughter of a Canadian missionary in China. This marriage appeared to enhance and broaden Starr's diverse interests and his never-ending wanderlust. However, their union only lasted for just over fifteen years. See 'Cornelius Vander Starr 1892-1968' (The Starr Foundation, New York, 1970), https://web.archive.org/web/20160417223423/http://www.starrfoundation.org/cv_starr_book.pdf.

[331] As the leader of the Green Gang in the 1930s, Du controlled Shanghai's opium and heroin trade. He had ties to Chiang Kai-shek and was appointed as president of the Shanghai Board of Opium Suppression Bureau, gaining official control over the opium trade. The Green Gang supported the Nationalist Government and received privileges in return. Du even established a temple that was later transformed into a major heroin factory. During the Second World War, the Green Gang collaborated with Chiang's intelligence chief to smuggle weapons, and Du served on the Chinese Red Cross board. Brian G. Martin, 'The Green Gang and the Guomindang State: Du Yuesheng and the Politics of Shanghai, 1927—37', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 (February 1995): 64–92, https://doi.org/10.2307/2058951; Edward R. Slack, *Opium, State, and Society: China's Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

[332] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 303.

[333] He was a medical doctor from China who received his education at Yale University's School of Medicine, currently serving as the vice president of PUMC (Peking Union Medical College) and holding the position of director at the School of Medicine in National Central University. See Qian Yimin, *Fuching Yen: Pioneer of Chinese Modern Medicine*, trans. Zhang Qiang (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2011).

was created to synchronize the measures taken by local societies and philanthropists. The organization existed until 1939 and regarded its mandate as a temporary substitute for the Chinese Red Cross in Shanghai.[334] Yan successfully organized a group of twenty-two units that were dedicated to transporting wounded soldiers to medical facilities during the onset of armed conflict. The group, consisting mainly of medical students, contributed to the safe transfer of 19.539 injured soldiers to hospitals and medical offices from the beginning of the conflict until April 30, 1938. Furthermore, Yan played a key role in establishing twenty-four emergency hospitals that provided treatment to wounded soldiers and assisted in their evacuation from the city to prevent capture by Japanese forces. The Red Cross medical institutions also set up registration stations that facilitated the transportation of soldiers who were capable of traveling. Foreign ship companies were often utilized to transport these soldiers from Shanghai to Ningbo and the central provinces. The distribution station located at the Foreign Affairs building registered 17.940 soldiers who were safely transferred by ship from Shanghai. In addition to Shanghai, distribution stations were established in other locations such as Kunshan. For example, the Kunshan distribution station operated for twenty days from October 26 to November 13, 1938, and was able to transfer 3.200 soldiers to safety.[335]

At the same time, the Red Cross personnel in Shanghai were actively engaged in efforts to assist refugees, collaborating with the Shanghai International Red Cross and other privately initiated programs, including the Jacquinot Safe Zone.[336] This initiative, initiated by the French Jesuit Robert Jacquinot de Besange (1887-1946, in China known as Rao Jia-ju 饶家驹), was modeled on the Lieux de Genève, a European prototype for civilian shelters during armed conflicts. It entailed the establishment of a massive camp, situated in the Chinese quarter of Shanghai, capable of accommodating up to a quarter of a million refugees. The Jacquinot Safe Zone adhered to the principles enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and espoused political neutrality, aiming to protect civilians from the hazards of military operations.

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[334] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 140.

[335] Chi Zihua 池子华, *Hong Shizi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* 红十字与近代中国 *[Red Cross and Modern China]*, 304-309.

[336] Marcia R. Ristaino, *The Jacquinot Safe Zone: Wartime Refugees in Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 148.

The turbulence of wartime facilitated the exploitation of Red Cross services to access Communist bases. Communist agents infiltrated Red Cross branches in Shanghai and Zhejiang, leading to their involvement in pro-Communist endeavors. During the Battle of Shanghai in 1937 the ambulance corps of the Coal Trade Industry, which was associated with Communists, collaborated with the Red Cross to provide relief. In the midst of wartime chaos, Red Cross badges were utilized to enable ambulances to pass through road controls and transport New Fourth Army recruits from Shanghai to the base. Ambulances also transported recruits from Ningbo and were aided by the Wenzhou branch.[337] The confusion of war facilitated these activities, which persisted until 1941 and contributed to the consolidation of governmental control over all Red Cross activities at that time.

The Red Cross became an essential part of the state-building process during the war.[338] After moving to Chongqing, the administrative center began to redefine its mission by emphasizing the Red Cross's close relationship with the government. The government integrated the Red Cross into its state-building initiatives, and its primary focus was on reorganizing its branches. In 1939, ninety branches, including thirty-two hospitals and twenty-nine examination offices, were registered in the unoccupied territory of "Free China."[339] Despite the declining number of branches during the war, the centralization of the Red Cross was part of the state-building process.

On December 8, 1941, Hong Kong was attacked by the Japanese army and occupied, resulting in the cessation of operations at the Red Cross Head office. The main functions of the Head office were then centralized in Chongqing.[340] With the General State Mobilization Law promulgated in 1942, the Nationalist Party's increased influence on the Red Cross. It effectively subjected social groups with diverse objectives to government oversight, including those with professional, cultural, educational, and religious pursuits. These groups were further categorized into subgroups, such as those for women, workers, soldiers, minorities, and overseas Chinese, among others. The law obligated these groups to advocate for anti-Japanese resistance as well as to demonstrate loyalty to the central government. Against this

[337] Allison Rottmann, 'Resistance, Urban Style: The New Fourth Army and Shanghai, 1937-1945' (Berkeley, University of California, 2007), 127.

[338] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 143-144.

[339] Zhang Jianqiu 张建俅, *Zhongguo Hong Shizi Hui Chuqi Fazhan Zhi Yanjiu* 中国红十字会初期发展之研究 *[Research on the Early Development of the Chinese Red Cross]*, 191.

[340] Wei, 'Problematising the Public Sphere in China: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China', 177.

backdrop, the increased state interest in the Red Cross reflected a larger effort to regulate and mobilize social groups in support of the war effort.[341] In 1943, a new version of the Red Cross Regulations required all members of the executive office to be replaced with members of the Nationalist Party. The president, Wang Zhengting 王正廷 (1882-1961)[342], was re-elected, and Du Yuesheng remained vice president.[343]

In summary, born on the initiative of local elites, the Chinese Red Cross emerged as a humanitarian organization with the mission of providing relief to people in need. Over the years, the organization underwent significant changes in its structure and governance, ultimately falling under the control of the Chinese nationalist state. These processes had profound implications for the role of women within the Red Cross and how they were perceived in the context of relief work. The government and propaganda machinery strategically influenced the narratives surrounding various aspects of the war, including the participation of women in humanitarian work. Their objective was to promote national unity, inspire patriotism, mobilize the entire population, and motivate more women to engage in caring and nurturing relief efforts. This was achieved by spotlighting the significant contributions and sacrifices made by women in these narratives.

The power of privilege: elite women and the charitable humanitarian associations

The Second World War was the first modern mass war, triggering rapid social change on multiple fronts, particularly breaking traditional gender roles and promoting women's public mobilization. [344] One of the significant aspects of the War of Resistance against Japan and the

[341] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 144.

[342] He was a Christian and from 1928 to 1931 served as the foreign minister of the Nationalist government, while from 1934 to 1949 acted as the president of the Red Cross Society of China. See Howard L. Boorman, Richard C. Howard, and Joseph K. H. Cheng, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 364.

[343] Zhang Jianqiu 张建俅, *Zhongguo Hong Shizi Hui Chuqi Fazhan Zhi Yanjiu* 中国红十字会初期发展之研究 *[Research on the Early Development of the Chinese Red Cross]*, 247.

[344] For a discussion on women's activism during the Second World War see Campbell, 'Women in Combat'; Brock et al., *Beyond Rosie*; Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*.

Second World War in China was the extensive mobilization of civilian populations. This mass recruitment extended beyond military personnel to include civilians, both men and women, who were actively engaged in various war-related activities and supported the war effort.[345] As already happened in extraordinary circumstances in the past, the War of Resistance against Japan involved women in the field of relief organizations, distribution of food and medical supplies, provision of shelter and care to refugees and wounded, and collection of funds through fundraising campaigns.[346] However, a notable transformation that occurred throughout the war years was the marked increase in mass involvement in philanthropic endeavors by numerous women integrated within women's organizations and associations. Numerous religious associations participated in relief work during the period of the War Resistance movement, including Buddhist monasteries and monastics, as already mentioned in Chapter 2. In Wuhan in 1938, during the Japanese invasion, some nuns were part of the Buddhist Monastic Emergency Medical Service Team and fought alongside Communist forces against Japanese troops throughout China until the end of the war. Elise DeVido's research highlights other instances of Buddhist monastics' involvement, such as nuns receiving military training from the Nationalist government, contributing funds to the war effort, performing rituals for national salvation and patriotism, making soldiers' uniforms, transforming temples into makeshift clinics for the wounded, aiding refugees, burying the dead, and operating schools for orphans. The historian Xue Yu has observed that the patriotic deeds of monks and nuns during the Second World War not only improved their social status but also strengthened their relationship with the Nationalist government. The Buddhist activities in areas controlled by both the Nationalists and Communists during the Anti-Japanese War included ceremonial services, fundraising campaigns for Chinese soldiers,

[345] For a discussion on the social history of the Second World War in China and wartime mobilization, see Lary, *The Chinese People at War*; Van De Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*; Mitter, 'Classifying Citizens in Nationalist China during World War II, 1937–1941'; MacKinnon and Capa, *Wuhan, 1938*.

[346] For example, on the participation of women in the 1911 Revolution, see Louise Edwards, 'Narratives of Race and Nation in China: Women's Suffrage in the Early Twentieth Century', *Women's Studies International Forum* 25, no. 6 (November 2002): 619–30, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00340-0; on the 1927 Northern Expedition and the engagement of women, see Bingying Xie, Lily Chia Brissman, and Barry Brissman, *A Woman Soldier's Own Story: The Autobiography of Xie Bingying* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

rescue operations, emergency medical aid, and unconventional actions such as participating in guerrilla warfare.[347]

The situation for women who served in various humanitarian organizations was different. While the National Red Cross was a subordinate body under the Nationalist government's jurisdiction, the Red Swastika established new units to coordinate activities among relief societies. This collaboration marked a pivotal moment among humanitarian aid organizations, attracting numerous women who actively contributed to extending assistance and support to those impacted by the conflict. The World Red Swastika Society Southeast United Emergency Management Office, founded in 1935, had already organized an Emergency Relief Training Class (*Jiuji dui xunlian* 救济队训练). During the war, the director of the project Xiong Xiling 熊希龄 (1870-1937)[348], his wife Mao Yanwen 毛彦文 (1898-1999), and the Southeast United Emergency Management Office gathered volunteers for relief efforts. The Red Swastika established eight camps coordinated by the Shanghai International Red Cross, which in total controlled more than one hundred and fifty refugee camps.[349] In 1937, Mao founded the Women's Relief Service Unit (*Funü linshi jiuji fuwu bu* 妇女临时救济服务部), which became significant during the Battle of Shanghai in assisting

[347] For a detailed history of Buddhist activities and nuns involvement in the War of Resistance against Japan, see Yu, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism*.

[348] Xiong Xiling, a Chinese benefactor and statesman, held positions as the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance under the appointment of Yuan Shikai. Nonetheless, their alliance grew strained over time due to their divergent perspectives on governing. In February 1914, Xiong stepped down from his governmental role. Following his departure from the political field, Xiong engaged in various educational and philanthropic organizations to assist poor people in Beijing and Shanghai. In 1937, Xiong found himself in Shanghai, providing aid to refugees amidst the Battle of Shanghai. See 'Xiong Xiling Yu Cishan Jiaoyu Shiye 熊希龄等发起组织街童教育会 [Xiong Xiling and Others Initiate the Organization of a Street Children's Education Association]', *Shen Bao* 申报 7, no. 23178 (14 November 1937). Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光, *Xiong Xiling Chuan* 熊希龄传 *[Biography of Xiong Xiling]* (Changsha: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 2006); Zhou Qiuguang 周秋光, *Xiong Xiling Yu Cishan Jiaoyu Shiye* 熊希龄与慈善教育事业 *[Xiong Xiling and Philanthropic Education]* (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991); Xiong Zhiwen 熊之文, 'Xiong Xiling 熊希龄 [Xiong Xiling]', in *Minguo Renwu Chuan* 民国人物传 *[Biography of the People's Republic of China]*, vol. 12 (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 2005); Xu Youchun 徐友春, ed., *Minguo Renwu Da Cidian Zeng Ding Ban* 民国人物大辞典增订版 *[The Dictionary of Republican Figures: An Expanded Edition]* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2007).

[349] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 164.

soldiers and civilians and managing the several refugee camps. Among the twenty-six women who chaired the Unit, there was Nie Qichun 聂其纯 (1891-?), wife of the governor of Jiangsu and chairwoman of the Chinese Women's Red Cross. The service unit's mission was to provide aid to soldiers, civilians, adults, and children. The women in the unit undertook comprehensive surveys on injured soldiers, recording their personal information such as name, origin, age, address, family status, education, military unit, profession, contact person, wounds or disabilities, a medical certificate from the hospital, transportation, future goals after leaving the hospital, and their thoughts on the soldier's condition. Likewise, for refugees, the survey form inquired about their profession and future plans after leaving the refugee camp. These investigations were intended to establish communication with family members and identify the professional skills of the person to provide employment opportunities. Those with higher skills were offered service work. Moreover, the service unit provided women with the opportunity to participate in aid activities and acquire skills such as driving a car, as well as creating networks with local agencies. One other unit for training provided volunteers with the opportunity to learn about relief management. The course, which was attended by fifty-eight volunteers, covered practical and theoretical aspects of management. The trainees were tasked with assisting camp managers, providing aid at hospitals, and learning about issues affecting refugees. The primary goal of both male and female volunteers was to provide assistance to those in distress, which was greatly needed in the overcrowded camps. To address the mental and emotional trauma experienced by refugees, the Shanghai International Red Cross offered a form of psychological support called "comfort work." While this term became associated with the forced prostitution of Chinese and Korean women during the war, the Red Swastika used it in a more positive context, providing comfort and spiritual guidance to help people overcome wartime trauma. [350]

The Chinese Red Cross and the Shanghai Red Swastika had a close association with political authorities and had to adhere to official regulations and requirements regarding charitable and religious activities. However, their collaboration gave women a platform to participate in social and political affairs. Particularly, their position and influence were not solely a result of their personal efforts but were also shaped by the patriarchal norms and societal expectations of the time, which privileged the voices and actions of women connected to politicians or members of the upper class. Their status likely granted them access to more

[350] Pfeiff, 166-167.

resources and opportunities, and perhaps even more legitimacy in their activism and philanthropy, as represented by the figure of Song Meiling.

Humanitarian icons: Song Meiling and women's relief efforts

An elite woman who played a significant role in promoting a particular model of female commitment to relief activities during wartime China was Song Meiling 宋美齡 (1897-2003). She was the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist government, and her image was strategically utilized to enhance the visibility and credibility of relief activities during this period. Her status as the First Lady of the Nationalist government and her international connections through her marriage to Chiang Kai-shek made her an influential figure in both domestic and international contexts. While Chiang projected an image of military discipline by frequently appearing in public wearing a full military uniform to deliver patriotic speeches or inspect his troops. This style of military governance was influenced by his Japanese and German adversaries, which he admired throughout the war. On the other hand, Song Meiling dedicated herself to supporting refugees, orphans, and wounded soldiers, thereby inspiring countless other women to follow her lead. Her role in promoting and supporting the work of the Red Cross during the war brought attention to the organization and helped to increase its profile both domestically and internationally. Her image and reputation were leveraged to mobilize support for relief efforts and to attract attention from the global community. As an active patroness of the international organization of the Red Cross in China, Song Meiling became a symbol of compassion, care, and dedication to humanitarian causes. Her public appearances, speeches, and involvement in relief activities were extensively documented and widely disseminated through various media channels.[351]

[351] For recent studies on the figure of Song Meiling, see Hannah Pakula, *The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and the Birth of Modern China* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010); Laura Tyson Li, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek: China's Eternal First Lady* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006); Samuel C. Chu and Thomas L. Kennedy, eds., *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and Her China*, 1st ed, Signature Books (Norwalk, Conn: EastBridge, 2005); Sandra Donovan, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek: Face of Modern China*, Signature Lives (Minneapolis, Minn: Compass Point Books, 2007); Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); Zhang Zige 张紫葛, *Zai Song Meiling Shen Bian de Ri Zi* 在宋美齡身边的日子 *[Working at the Side of Song Meiling]* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2013).

Shortly after the war began, she declared that women constitute half of the citizenry and, therefore, must fulfill their natural responsibilities of raising funds, nursing the wounded, and comforting the afflicted. Beyond her words, as Barnes illustrates, Song Meiling actively participated in the activities she deemed as natural duties of her gender. For example, she frequently traveled to the United States to collect donations from Christian churches and other social organizations to raise funds. On February 18, 1943, she became the first Asian and second woman to address both houses of the US Congress, where she passionately appealed for increased aid to China.[352]

Scholars have proposed that an Asian response to Western imperialism is apparent in gendered Asian nationalisms. They suggest that male anticolonial nationalists, engaged in a power struggle with imperialist states, endeavored to establish a domain they could govern. Across various Asian countries, male nationalists claimed the home and women's place within it as their "domain of sovereignty." They depicted women as bodily embodiments and custodians of cultural and spiritual traditions that they asserted to be superior to Western material power. They countered Western claims of superiority by proclaiming indigenous cultural purity. However, in constructing this idea, they assumed intellectual and discursive, if not actual or complete, control over women's bodies and societal roles.[353] Male Chinese nationalists employed these concepts to construct an archetype of the "self-sacrificing woman" as an embodiment of national identity, elevating the goal of state-building. They emphasized that authentic emancipation for women could only be realized within a powerful nation.[354] This social construct imposed restrictions on women who sought to assert their agency. However, the notion that women were the progenitors of the race and, by extension, the nation, endowed them with the authority to regulate the nation's body. In order for women to undertake the crucial relief labor that was responsible for saving lives and fostering communal solidarity, they needed to establish the public presence of women, particularly from the elite and middle class, as a normal occurrence. This necessitated the flouting of recognized social norms to occupy public spaces, interact with local people, and assume authoritative positions. One of the factors which contributed to the possibility of this novelty was First Lady Song Meiling. She exhorted women to participate in public work as part of the war effort and was frequently presented in the media as a model for such activities.

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[352] Barnes, *Intimate Communities*, 15.

[353] On China, see Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 131-169.

[354] Duara, 133; Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, 8.

Figure 2- Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the Loving Mother of Homeless Children [355]

Figure 3- Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the Loving Mother of Homeless Children [356]

Figures 2 and 3 represent Song Meiling as a compassionate and dedicated leader who devoted her life to the welfare of the nation's most vulnerable population. Her selfless and tireless efforts to support and care for homeless children were celebrated as emblematic of the spirit of Chinese motherhood. Particularly, the topic of children as victims was frequently linked to the narratives of mothers who had made the ultimate sacrifice in order to protect their offspring. This analogy between China, depicted as the violated motherland, and the Chinese

[355] 'Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the Loving Mother of Homeless Children', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 159 (October 1940).

[356] 'Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the Loving Mother of Homeless Children'.

people, portrayed as its children who had the obligation to avenge their mother and battle the enemy, was commonly established. The emotional potency of images depicting injured or deceased children stemmed from the fact that children were conventionally viewed as innocent and vulnerable. During wartime, such images also aimed to motivate viewers to take action and utilize their abilities to contribute to the anti-Japanese struggle, whether through fighting, working in the fields, or sewing clothing, and thereby securing the future of China.[357]

Song Meiling's advocacy for the welfare of women and children aimed to earn the admiration and gratitude of the people in China and overseas. Indeed, she was a more prominent figure in international media than her husband, and acted as a representative of China to foreign audiences. However, in her fundraising speeches in the United States, she portrayed China as a helpless country facing the Japanese invasion and in need of the protection of international powers, such as the United States, employing Orientalist ideas (see Figure 4). She embarked on tours of the United States during the war, strategically presenting a progressive and feminine China to an international audience.[358] This depiction of modern China was well-received both in China and worldwide, but the response varied between Chinese and non-Chinese audiences. While overseas Chinese preferred a cosmopolitan portrayal of Chinese identity, rather than one that relied on Orientalist stereotypes, in the mainland, she represented the feminine aspect of the male-dominated state, acting as a nurturing mother figure who cared for her people while also instructing them to follow the correct path. [359]

[357] For more discussion on how, in the context of the Anti-Japanese War, children and childhood were visually constructed in relation to the war efforts, modern Chinese nationalism and propaganda needs of political parties of the time, see De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan Ertong" (The Resistance Child)"'; Pozzi, '"Chinese Children Rise Up!": Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War"'; M.Colette Plum, 'Lost Childhoods in a New China: Child-Citizen-Workers at War, 1937—1945', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 237–58.

[358] For a discussion on China as "feminine" in Western discourse, see Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 72.

[359] For a discussion on Madame's tours and the depiction of a fierce yet feminine China that was exhibited during those tours, see Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2005).

Figure 4-Madame Chiang Kai-shek broad-casting to the people of the US on April 28, setting forth the true meaning of China's present resistance against Japanese aggression.[360]

Song Meiling targeted her speeches primarily to women who were not employed and were married to government officials and businessmen. These women shared a belief in the superiority of middle-class values and behaviors and used their activism to gain political power. By participating in civilian relief projects that promoted loyalty to the Nationalist Party and contributing to national defense, these women could demonstrate their value to the Chinese state.[361]

Song Meiling wielded political influence not only due to her status as the First Lady but also as the Honorary Chairwoman of the Women's Advisory Council (WAC) of the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong cujin zonghui funü zhidao weiyuanhui* 新生活运动促进总会妇女指导委员会). The WAC was established in Wuhan in March 1938 and functioned as a hub for women's mobilization and relief efforts during the war. The members of the WAC played a critical role in maintaining social order and control during the war, which ensured the relevance of the Nationalist state to the war-torn society. The Association for the Promotion of the NLM, which was primarily located in Chongqing, spearheaded

[360] 'Activities of the People in the Rear during the Present Emergency', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 137 (May 1938).

[361] Helen M. Schneider, 'Mobilising Women: The Women's Advisory Council, Resistance and Reconstruction during China's War with Japan', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 213–36, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700615-20121105.

civilian relief projects such as soup kitchens, orphanages, refugee homes, war bond drives, and fundraising events.[362]

Upper- and middle-class women's activism thrived in both Wuhan and Chongqing, with over forty women's organizations registering with the government in the latter by 1941. For instance, the feminist lawyer and activist of the Republican China Shi Liang 史良 (1900-1985), Li Dequan 李德全 (1896–1972) founder and chairman of the Chinese Women's Association (*Zhongguo funü lianyihui* 中国妇女联谊会) and vice-chair of the National Refugee Children's Association (*Zhanshi ertong bayou hui* 战时儿童把优惠, see Figures 5 and 6), and communist activist Deng Yingchao 邓颖超 (1904-1992)[363], all served on the People's Political Council (*Guomin canzhenghui* 国民参政会) and played a crucial role in founding and managing the most significant female-led civilian relief organizations.[364]

Figure 5- Madame Chiang comforting an injured child refugee recuperating in the medical services department of the institute.[365]

[362] Federica Ferlanti, 'The New Life Movement at War: Wartime Mobilisation and State Control in Chongqing and Chengdu, 1938–1942', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 187–212, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700615-20121104, 192. On the role of women in the New Life Movement see also Xiaoping Sun, 'New Life Meets Real Life: Chinese Women in Nation Building and State Making, 1934–1949', *Frontiers of History in China* 12, no. 4 (2017): 538–65, https://doi.org/10.3868/s020-006-017-0026-0.

[363] See Lily Xiao Hong Lee, *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women. Volume 2, Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2016), 131-135, 302-303, 450-455.

[364] MacKinnon and Capa, *Wuhan, 1938*, 55-58; Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*, 20-21.

[365] 'The First Home for War Child-Refugees', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 138 (June 1938).

Figure 6-Madame Feng Yuxiang, Li Dequan, another founder of the Home, addressing the youngsters.[366]

The activism of upper- and middle-class women during the Nationalist period in China yielded indirect political power in the masculinist state, but this work was crucial in sustaining the state's power. Women's relief organizations like the WAC, heavily reliant on donations and volunteer labor primarily comprised of women and girls, served to promote an image of the Nationalist state as caring and benevolent, supporting its aim to maintain a healthy populace. While the People's Political Council had a strictly advisory role and its recommendations were frequently ignored by state officials, women active within it served as the soft arm of the masculinist state. Through their medical and relief work running soup kitchens, orphanages, services for wounded soldiers, and clothing drives for refugees, women both obscured men's disciplinary power and furthered its practice. Their work compelled people into compliance through gentle persuasion and by providing desired services. Although women's leadership did not confer direct political power, their regular interactions with the recipients of their services rendered them indispensable servants of the state.

Throughout the war, Meiling played the role of a national maternal figure and exemplified the type of contributions that women were expected to make to the war effort. She was highly visible to both domestic and foreign audiences and occupied leadership positions in numerous local philanthropic organizations. Her open collaboration with known leftists further encouraged the remarkable impartiality in women's wartime organizations,

[366] 'The First Home for War Child-Refugees'.

even as their husbands served political parties that remained bitterly divided. Song Meiling frequently appeared in the news, inspecting donations of medical equipment, visiting wounded soldiers, sewing clothing for refugees, caring for children in orphanages (see Figure 7), and delivering stirring speeches to women's volunteer organizations occasionally accompanied by her two sisters, Song Ailing 宋蔼龄 (1889-1973) and Song Qingling 宋庆龄 (1893-1981), as during their visit to Chongqing (see Figures 7 and 8).[367]

Figure 7- Escorted by Song Meiling, Song Ailing and Song Qingling visited the orphanage conducted by their "little sisters."[368]

Figure 8- The three Song sisters in Chongqing inspecting the ruins caused by Japanese air bombs.[369]

[367] Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*.

[368] 'Three Great Women', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 154 (May 1940).

As the pictures show, Song Meiling was often seen wearing a fashionable *qipao* 旗袍, which distinguished her as a modern *taitai* 太太, a financially privileged married woman who did not engage in laborious work and instead could devote her time and resources to philanthropic pursuits.[370] While many upper-class wives were involved in philanthropic work before the war, Meiling motivated them to intensify their efforts during the crisis and serve the Chinese Resistance cause. The nationalist movement created spaces for women to become more politically and socially engaged, challenging traditional norms and advocating for change, as in the case of nurse Zhou Meiyu and her contribution to the field of military nursing education.

Serving the nation through military nursing education: the case of Zhou Meiyu within the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps

As the war penetrated further West into the interior provinces after the loss of Shanghai and Nanjing, the Chinese Red Cross decided to organize mobile units to take special charge of relief to the wounded and sick and meet the needs of existing warfare. The Medical Relief Corps of the National Red Cross Society of China (MRC) (*Zhongguo hong shizi hui jiuhu zong hui* 中国红十字会救护总会) was the most significant organization in sustaining military medical personnel preparation and in terms of medical assistance to Chinese troops.[371] More considerably, the Medical Relief Corps was of utmost prominence to the women who participated as members and were actively engaged in the care and nursing of war-inflicted casualties: they derived a significant sense of purpose and fulfillment from their affiliation with this organization. MRC was organized with Dr. Lin Kesheng (Robert K.S. Lim 林可勝, 1897-1969) as its first Director-General in Wuhan in the winter of 1937. He was a Singaporean medical doctor who coordinated the work of professional volunteer doctors and nurses who perceived an opportunity to dedicate themselves to the Chinese Resistance's cause

[369] 'Three Great Women'.

[370] Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 5-6.

[371] John Watt, 'Breaking into Public Service: The Development of Nursing in Modern China, 1870-1949', *Nursing History Review*, 1, 12 (2004): 67–96, 78.

through their medical expertise.[372] Under the stipulation of the first Geneva Convention in 1864, which provided for the protection and more humane treatment of the sick and wounded in war, the motto adopted by the International Red Cross Committee was "Inter Arma Caritas" (Humanity in War).[373] It embodied the concept of preserving humanity during times of war and served as a reminder that in times of conflict, it was essential to maintain humanity and act with compassion towards others, regardless of cultural, political, or ideological differences. Therefore, the Medical Relief Corps of the Chinese Red Cross undertook to fulfill the obligations incumbent upon a National Red Cross Society in times of war.

At this time, the Medical Relief Corps Headquarters was organized into four Departments, namely, Medical Service, Supplies, Transportation and General Administration. For service in the field, thirty-seven Units of six types i.e., Curative, Nursing, Preventive, Ambulance, Laboratory and X-ray were organized. One Central Supply Depot was established, and sixteen motor vehicles evacuated from Shanghai and Nanjing were available for transportation purposes.[374] Publicity on a worldwide scale was also adopted, and the response both from affiliated societies and overseas Chinese was immediate and unprecedented. Contribution in the form of surgical supplies, medicine, clothing, and ambulances was gratefully received by the Chinese people. As soon as the mobile units were organized, thirty-seven were sent to the health authorities and the army medical corps to take part as auxiliaries. The volunteer workers were then absorbed into the regular staff as it was impossible to expect volunteer service then. Numerous women were publicly acknowledged for their contributions:

> H.E. Dr. T.V. Soong and Madame Soong, Madame Sun Fo, the late Cara Ho-Tung, H.W. General and Madame Wu Te-Chen, Dr. Irene Ho, Miss Hu Mu-Lan, Mrs. Katherine Kan and other members of the National Women's Relief Association. Hong Kong Branch was also highly appreciated for the

[372] Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945', 65.

[373] 'Outline of History, Development and Activities of the Medical Relief Corps of the National Red Cross Society of China (1937-1943)' (Guiyang, Guizhou, 1937 1943), CR00/14, I.C.R.C. Archives, 2.

[374] 'Outline of History, Development and Activities of the Medical Relief Corps of the National Red Cross Society of China (1937-1943)', 2.

> considerable assistance in the task of transhipping supplies, while Mrs. Rose Tan and other ladies of the Hong Kong Chinese Women's Soldiers Relief Association, Chairman Dr. Arthur W. Woo, and the secretary of the Hong Kong Medical Relief Committee Miss Z.D.M. Carter were warmly valued for their advice and help.[375]

As the number of teams increased, their organization and functions were also adapted from time to time to changing requirements. They rendered health services such as nutrition, scabies treatment, epidemic control, and environmental hygiene to the fighting forces. Whenever possible and needed, they attended to the civilians in or near their respective areas in which they served.[376] As Wei reported, in early 1938, these medical teams converted into the General Ambulance Corps. The meeting of Executive Directors and Supervisors held in Hong Kong on March 3, 1938, with Vice President Du Yuesheng and Executive Directors Lin Kanghou 林康侯, Wang Zhen 王震, and Wang Xiaolai 王晓籁 recognized the founding of the Wuhan Office and approved the Red Cross branches in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Wuhan.[377] When the Japanese army occupied Jiangxi in the summer of 1938 and Wuhan was exposed to wartime risks, the Red Cross Rescue Committee maintained two medical teams around Wuhan.[378] Meanwhile, the war situation made necessary the removal of the Headquarters of the Medical Relief Corps from Wuhan to Changsha, thence to Jiaoshanping, Qiyang, and finally to Guiyang, Guizhou, in February 1939.[379]

Within the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, the story of Major General Zhou Meiyu 周美玉 (1910-2001) represented a significant achievement among the women who contributed to humanitarian relief efforts during the war in China. She employed methodologies that bore a striking resemblance to those used by Song Meiling in her efforts to persuade upper-class women to engage in charitable activities. Furthermore, she exhibited a

[375] 'League of Nations Epidemic Unit's Work in China', 1938, FO/371/22113. The National Archives, UK, 225.

[376] 'Brief Review of the Chinese Red Cross Activities with Illustration (1937-1948)' (Geneva, June 1948), I.C.R.C. Archives, 5.

[377] Wei, 'Problematising the Public Sphere in China: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China', 172.

[378] Wei, 174.

[379] 'Outline of History, Development and Activities of the Medical Relief Corps of the National Red Cross Society of China (1937-1943)', 2.

consistent display of moral integrity in her actions, carefully employing titles and clothing as symbols of authority. As a patriotic and experienced nurse, Zhou was able to advance socially by challenging deeply rooted biases concerning the role of women in the public sphere. Her work in administration and nursing education showed the attempt to establish real military nursing assistance, even if it turned out to be a process full of challenges and obstacles due to the social prejudices and poverty faced by China in times of war. Born in 1910 in Beijing, she received her education from different Christian missionary schools in the same city, namely Peiyuan Primary School, Bridgeman Girls High School, and Yanjing University. She pursued her higher education at Yanjing University, where she enrolled in a joint medical training program with the Nursing School of Peking Union Medical College (PUMC) in 1926. In 1930, she earned her Registered Nurse License and a degree from PUMC and went on to serve as the head nurse at Central Clinic in Beijing.[380] In September 1937, Zhou and other members of the Mass Education Movement (MEM), including trainee nurses, were forced to flee from Dingxian as Japanese forces attacked the city. They relocated to Changsha, where MEM's services, including nursing, shifted their focus to support national defense efforts. In 1938, she joined the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps (MRC) as the head of the supply base for the mobile MRC units, playing a vital role in providing medical aid to those in need during the Second World War.[381]

She was notable for her lifelong dedication to public health and military assistance. As for her choice to become involved in public welfare, she explained that she was encouraged by the speech of Yan Yangchu 晏陽初 (1893-1990) on the role rural people should play in strengthening China. [382] Yan believed that China's progress depended primarily on the

[380] Bridie Andrews and Mary Brown Bullock, eds., *Medical Transitions in Twentieth-Century China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Lily Xiao Hong Lee et al., eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 114-116.

[381] Li Shenglan, 'Refashioning Care: Nursing, Intimacy, and Citizenship in Wartime China, 1931-1949' (Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2017).

[382] Also known as James Yan, he was an educator and social activist famous for his programs on mass education and rural reconstruction work in China and other numerous nations. In 1923, Yen and other prominent intellectuals established the National Association of Mass Education Movements (MEM). Through nationwide campaigns, the MEM organized volunteer teachers, local leaders, and available spaces to accommodate students who could not afford high tuition fees. Mao Zedong was among the volunteer teachers. These campaigns attracted over five million students and became a model for expanding schools. At the heart of these communities, there existed a novel form of teacher-student relationship that deviated significantly from the hierarchical master-disciple structure prevalent in traditional neo-Confucian schools. Yen advocated for this

improvement of rural society. Zhou "was deeply moved by Yan's ideals" and recognized the significant value of using her nursing training to work in the service of society through the establishment of public health programs in rural China.[383]

In wartime years, malaria ranked first in the incidence of major infectious diseases among the troops.[384] Red Cross could under the circumstances only promote the program by the free distribution of large quantities of quinine to the soldiers to ensure adequate treatment, although many hospitals were screened as well. Among the water-borne diseases, dysenteries were the most important. The Red Cross launched timely anti-cholera and anti-typhoid

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teacher-student concept and embraced the notion of the "guiding student," aspiring to foster a conducive learning environment among peers. In 1926, the MEM initiated a village campaign in Dingxian, a county located about 200 miles south of Beijing. Known as the Ting Hsien Experiment, this initiative employed People's Schools to implement various innovations, including hybrid pig breeding, economic cooperatives, village drama, and Village Health Workers. Yen collaborated with Liang Shuming and other independent reformers to establish the National Rural Reconstruction Movement, which comprised numerous local and national organizations. The movement aimed to transform rural areas to lay the foundation for a new China. The work carried out in Dingxian gained nationwide attention and introduced innovative techniques for rural development that did not rely on central government control, violent revolution, or significant foreign funding. In 1937, due to the Japanese invasion, MEM operations were relocated first to Hunan and then to Sichuan. See Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); Charles Wishart Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China*, The U.S. and Pacific Asia--Studies in Social, Economic, and Political Interaction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Yu Zhang, 'Visual and Theatrical Constructs of a Modern Life in the Countryside: James Yen, Xiong Foxi, and the Rural Reconstruction Movement in Ding County (1920s-1930s)', *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 25, no. 1 (2013): 47–95.

[383] Zhang and Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]*, 11.

[384] On sanitary conditions in wartime China see John R. Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems amid War and Epidemics, 1928-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Mary Augusta Brazelton, *Mass Vaccination: Citizens' Bodies and State Power in Modern China*, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Barnes, *Intimate Communities*; Angela Ki Che Leung and Charlotte Furth, eds., *Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia: Policies and Publics in the Long Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Milton Lewis, ed., *Public Health in Asia and the Pacific: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Yang Shanyao 杨善尧, *Kangzhan Shiqi de Zhongguo Junyi* 抗战时期的中国军医 *[Chinese Military Medicine during the War of Resistance]* (Taipei: Academia Historica, 2015); Ka-che Yip, *Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China: The Development of Modern Health Services, 1928-1937* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

inoculations among the troops. The sanity program for the control of the diseases consisted of health instruction to the troops in the use of safe water for drinking by boiling or disinfecting with bleaching powder and in the sanitary disposal of refuse and human excreta. In addition, in view of the inadequacy of the normal hospital diet for all except the light wounded and the need for a special diet for the prevailing types of medical cases, the Red Cross undertook the organization of Special Diet Kitchens as part of the nursing service of military hospitals since December 1939. The diet served consisted of soft rice cooked with spinach soup, hot cow's or soya-bean milk with biscuits, one egg and sugar, noodles cooked with liver and meat soup or blood and meat soup, and soft rice cooked with meat and spinach soup.[385] Zhou, therefore, established a program in which nurses taught how to maintain hygiene and prepare food properly to prevent these diseases. During her long stay in the various army divisions, she was shocked at how incompetent and inadequate the medical service and the personnel in it were:

> Patients were lying on the ground in the Qianjiang camp hospital in Guangxi. We were told that more than a hundred patients died daily from dysentery and malaria [...] The patients did not receive proper attention or proper cleaning, some of them were lying on the excrement [...] [386]

Advancing through the ranks, Zhou became the primary nursing consultant to the MRC and the head of the nursing department at the Emergency Medical Service Training School (EMSTS) in Guiyang.[387] The institution provided comprehensive medical training for health students who were entering the MRC and army to serve in emergency care roles, such as surgeons, nurses, ambulance workers, and hospital orderlies. Zhou Meiyu founded a branch of the Nursing Association of China at the EMSTS and implemented a rigorous training program for nursing officers that included 194 hours of instruction covering a broad range of topics such as military hygiene, pharmacology, clinical nursing, surgical procedures, military tactics,

[385] 'Outline of History, Development and Activities of the Medical Relief Corps of the National Red Cross Society of China (1937-1943)', 4.

[386] Zhang and Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]*, 54-59.

[387] Lee et al., *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women*, 114-116.

and the functions of the army medical corps and the Red Cross. Graduates of this program were equipped for leadership roles within the National Health Service, serving as nursing supervisors and hospital head nurses, and contributing to nursing, therapeutic, or preventive programs through the Red Cross.[388]

The EMSTS program curriculum was highly regarded for its focus on practical skills to meet wartime demands. The program emphasized hands-on training, and Zhou Meiyu and other nursing leaders provided lectures on various topics, including infection control, sterilization practices, curative patient care, ethical considerations in nursing, surgical room preparation, and personal cleanliness. After completing the instructional program, students were sent to hospital wards and outpatient clinics for supervised practical training.[389]

Figure 9- Zhou Meiyu 周美玉[390]

[388] Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945', 70.

[389] Zhang and Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]*, 70-74.

[390] 'Mrs Zhou Meiyu: [Photograph]', *Jia* 家, no. 5 (1946): 1.

Zhou was known for her determination and strong commitment to nursing education. She refused to accept the fact that it was considered merely an affiliated field of medicine; instead, she sought to promote it as a fundamental unit of modern medicine. Much of her efforts were devoted to improving the conditions of wartime nursing. She believed that nursing should not be considered a minor profession only for the female majority working in it. Zhou's pivotal contributions were foundational in shaping a novel identity for women within the field, as well as in establishing professional standards for the Nursing Association of China. After the war, in 1946, Zhou traveled with the help of the British United Aid to China to Britain and America and worked among the Chinese migrants to donate to the Red Cross Society of China. In 1947, she returned to Shanghai and became the commandant at the Army Nursing School in Shanghai. She moved with the Nationalist Party to Taiwan in 1949, where she became the director of the National Military Nursing Academy.[391] Her contribution revealed the significance of breaking those gender barriers by participating in specific humanitarian actions in the cause of the Chinese Resistance. Her experience proved how a Chinese woman could also become a member of the coordinating committee of the nursing department, which was subsidized by the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC), and become a valid medical expert in the new education programs.

Treating wounded and mobilizing population: Red Cross female educators, modern nursing and local relief

The participation of women in the Red Cross during wartime was not an unprecedented occurrence, but rather an evolutionary process whereby women's involvement assumed a central role due to the mobilization of the entire Chinese society. The task of reconstructing the experiences of powerful and influential women, already illustrated in the previous subchapters, was comparatively straightforward. In contrast, obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the discourse surrounding the roles of ordinary women in relief efforts within the Red Cross proves to be a more intricate endeavor. As a result, the visibility of these women in relief efforts can be comprehended through an analysis of the narratives presented in major English and Chinese-language media. The visibility given by the media to the presence of women in relief is a fact that suggests how in the common perception the

[391] Pfeiff, 'Two Adoptions of the Red Cross', 158.

construction of the public figure of women during the war found a privileged terrain in relief activities of the Red Cross.

In the field of nursing, the establishment of nursing education standards in China was significantly influenced by the presence of foreign missionaries. By the turn of the twentieth century, medical missionaries had effectively founded twelve women's hospitals out of the 107 hospitals that existed in the country. During the 1920s, these missionaries celebrated their accomplishment of attracting female nursing students to serve in these hospitals, which allowed them to propagate their religious beliefs and promote the notion that nursing was an inherently feminine profession. The significance of female nurses dressed in pristine white uniforms as a crucial component of modern hospital wards was consistently underscored. By 1934, female nurses were providing care to male patients in approximately sixty-five percent of hospitals in China, signifying a notable departure from traditional cultural attitudes towards gender roles.[392] Coming from a missionary school, the Nantai Baofushan Girls' College, Chinese nurse Wu Zheying 伍哲英 (1884-1960) was appointed as the first principal of the Shanghai Red Cross Nursing School in 1921, and some years later, in 1928, she made history as the first Chinese President of the National Association of Nurses.[393] In 1935, the association had a predominantly Chinese membership and its 167 associated nursing schools, which were mostly run by missionaries, had produced almost five thousand nurses.[394] However, when the War of Resistance against Japan broke out, the nursing school had to close down. Despite this setback, Wu Zheying took a group of homeless nursing students and led them to assist in first aid efforts at the "Eighth Field Hospital (*Di ba shangyuan yiyuan* 第八伤兵医院)", where she personally tended to severely injured patients. Then, she established the Shanghai Jimin Hospital and the Nanyang Hospital Senior Nursing School, assuming the role of principal for both institutions as well as the chief nurse for the hospitals.[395]

The advancement of education and healthcare training in wartime was facilitated by the commitment of numerous women who administered medical care in a range of

[392] Barnes, *Intimate Communities*, 56.

[393] Jiang Yuhong, 'Shaping Modern Nursing Development in China before 1949', *International Journal of Nursing Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January 2017): 19–23, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2016.12.009.

[394] Zhang and Luo, *Zhou Meiyu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu* 周美玉先生访问记录 *[Reminiscences of Zhou Meiyu]*, 21-29.

[395] 'Wang Zheying 伍哲英', Shanghai shi difangzhi bangongshi 上海市地方志办公室, 2003, http://www.shtong.gov.cn.

environments, encompassing makeshift clinics, military field hospitals, and atypical locations such as air raid shelters.[396] Women who served as physicians, nurses, midwives, and school administrators defied societal expectations and norms by assuming positions of authority in public spaces, attending to the medical needs of both male and female patients, and administering treatments that required physical contact.[397] They utilized their extensive knowledge of the nursing profession and their understanding of the link between nursing and China's social and military health to create a foundation for the wartime and post-war planning of military nursing. In addition to Zhou, a group of women from the PUMC School of Nursing held important leadership positions in the field. Their comprehensive nursing education and leadership training from PUMC made them sought-after for wartime roles. For example, Pan Jingzhi 潘景芝 became the first Chinese female President of the NAC (Nurses' Association of China, *Zhonghua hushi hui* 中华护士会) in 1936.[398] Under her guidance, the NAC remained a vital organization for nursing students during the war by hosting certification exams, promoting nursing education through publication and translation of materials, and creating a professional community for nurses. The dedication of PUMC alumnae to modern health education played a significant role in the continued support from the Rockefeller Foundation despite the war diverting resources. The RF provided financial aid

[396] For a recent scholarship on medical networks and governmental legitimacy in twentieth-century China see Brazelton, *Mass Vaccination*; Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China*; Barnes, *Intimate Communities*; Wayne Soon, *Global Medicine in China: A Diasporic History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Bridie Andrews, *The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine, 1850-1960*, Contemporary Chinese Studies (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Jia-Chen Fu, 'Scientising Relief: Nutritional Activism from Shanghai to the Southwest, 1937–1945', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 2012): 259–82; Ki Che Leung and Furth, *Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia*; Lewis, *Public Health in Asia and the Pacific*; Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, eds., 'Hygienic Bodies and Public Mothers: The Rhetoric of Reproduction, Fetal Education, and Childhood in Republican China', in *Mapping Meanings* (Brill, 2004), 659–83, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047405641_029; Yang Shanyao 杨善尧, *Kangzhan Shiqi de Zhongguo Junyi* 抗战时期的中国军医 *[Chinese Military Medicine during the War of Resistance]*; Yip, *Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China*.

[397] Barnes, *Intimate Communities*, 52.

[398] She graduated from Tianjin Maternity Hospital Nursing School in 1920 and served as the Deputy Director of Nursing. From 1930 to 1933, she held the position of Director of Nursing at the Central Hospital and served as the Principal of the Central Nursing School. She was elected as the President of the Chinese Nurses Association for three consecutive terms. 'Pan Jingzhi 潘景芝', Zhonghua huli xuehui 中华护理学会, 13 August 2010, http://www.cna-cast.org.cn/cnaWebcn/article/178.

for medical needs, including personnel training, through government-sponsored programs like the Sichuan Provincial Health Department and the China Red Cross Society, facilitated by Dr. Liu Ruiheng 刘瑞恒 (1890-1961), the president of PUMC during the war. The funding aimed to promote medical education and develop future leaders in medicine.[399]

The emergence of women in medical and nursing roles during wartime was facilitated by the transformation of societal norms and the integration of women into public spaces. Nurses who carried out relief work and provided care after air raids challenged traditional gender roles by occupying spaces traditionally associated with male sociality. They viewed their presence in these areas not as a violation of norms but as a transformation of them. While the number of women in other medical professions remained stable, nursing experienced a significant increase in personnel, with registered nurses rising from 250 in 1936 to over 5.500 by 1941. This abundance of female nurses allowed women to not only contribute to the healing process but also to shape the national community through their role in the medical field.[400]

The *8th report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps* claims that the activities of the Red Cross were performed by a volunteer force, with women constituting the majority in the nursing profession and providing care to those who were injured. In 1938, the organization employed over 1.400 Chinese physicians and nurses, mainly serving the needs of soldiers.[401] At the same time, many overseas Chinese volunteered their services in the capacity of mechanics and drivers. Particularly women took prominent roles in creating facilities to care for the victims of the War of Resistance against Japan and more generally in the war relief work.

> Chinese women have come into prominence as modern trained nurses during the present hostilities. They are rendering gallant service to their country with no thought of themselves. Some have made the supreme sacrifice while rendering aid to their country's defenders. They have slipped away from this

[399] Zhang, 'The Making of National Women: Gender, Nationalism and Social Mobilization in China's Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945', 78-79.

[400] Barnes, *Intimate Communities*, 55.

[401] '8th Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, January-June 1941' (Geneva, 1941), CN 4, I.C.R.C. Archives, 29.

> world quietly, but the memory remains to inspire the girls of today, and help them realize more clearly the true function of a nurse.[402]

With these words, Miss A. Sharpe, Superintendent of Nurses at Lester Chinese Hospital, opened her article on December 25, 1937, a few months after the beginning of the conflict. Red Cross nursing as understood in other countries was unknown until that time. By highlighting the bravery and selflessness of these nurses, the press sought to inspire patriotism and encourage support for the war effort among the local population. The use of words such as "gallant service" and "supreme sacrifice" underscores the heroic nature of the nurses' work and suggests that their efforts were worthy of admiration and emulation. Messages such as these were designed to foster a sense of pride in Chinese women and their contributions to the war effort, while also encouraging the local population to act their part in supporting the war. The intention behind these textual words was to mobilize the population, particularly women and young girls to take part in the humanitarian relief efforts, promoting a positive view of their contributions to the war effort, and accurately portraying the exigencies of the conflict.

The role of trained nurses has been well documented throughout history, with several examples of their contributions to this field. The images retrieved from *Liangyou* 良友 magazine provide a glimpse into the relief activities that Red Cross nurses played in nurturing and caring for patients. This analysis of propaganda photographs during wartime adheres to the definition of photography put forth by Ariella Azoulay. She considers photography not just as a camera, photographer, and subject, but as a complex system of power that encompasses the creation, dissemination, exchange, and consumption of images. The concept of the apparatus of power is essential to understanding the significance of wartime photographs, as they were created within an intricate ideological system that aimed to promote the political goals of the Chinese state. The photographer's relationship with the subject, the symbolic nature of the objects depicted, and the connections between the state and the viewers were all central to humanitarian wartime photography, as described by Azoulay. Therefore, each image must be examined as a tool of power in order to comprehend its socio-political message.

[402] Sharpe, 'Chinese Nurses Perform Heroic Deeds'.

Figure 10- The nursery of refugee babies.[403]

Figure 11- Health department of the giving treatments.[404]

[403] 'Relief Work in Shanghai', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 151 (February 1940).

[404] 'Relief Work in Shanghai'.

Figure 12- Nurses taking the body heat of the wounded.[405]

Photographs and images (as Figures 10, 11 and 12) were generally accompanied by slogans and succinct explanatory notes. This predilection for utilizing visual media with a reduced emphasis on the text was informed by the emotional potency that such images conveyed and by the need to make these publications accessible to individuals who lacked literacy skills. In this case, illustrating the dedication, skill, and compassion of nurses, was an important contribution to transmitting the value of women in promoting health and well-being in their communities and in the whole Chinese nation-state. The focus on women and medical care highlighted the significance of women's role in a more professional and practical aspect of nursing care. The war created opportunities for female nurses to assume leadership positions through strategic planning to meet the demands of the war effort. However, the entry of women into public spaces during the war was fraught with numerous dangers, including the ubiquitous threat of sexual violence and the potential for social stigma and familial repercussions.[406]

[405] 'Women's Day Observed in China', *Liangyou* 良友, no. 154 (April 1940).

[406] Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*, 170; Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946), 201; Zhao Ma, *Runaway Wives, Urban Crimes, and Survival Tactics in Wartime Beijing, 1937-1949*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 384 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 40, 58.

At the same time, it was important that women and girls participated voluntarily in preparatory work (Figures 13 and 14). Their active involvement symbolized a unified front and a nationwide mobilization of women in China, dedicated to preventing the spread of infectious diseases and advocating for public health. Despite facing challenging and hazardous conditions, their collective efforts were directed towards advancing the success of the nation's cause.

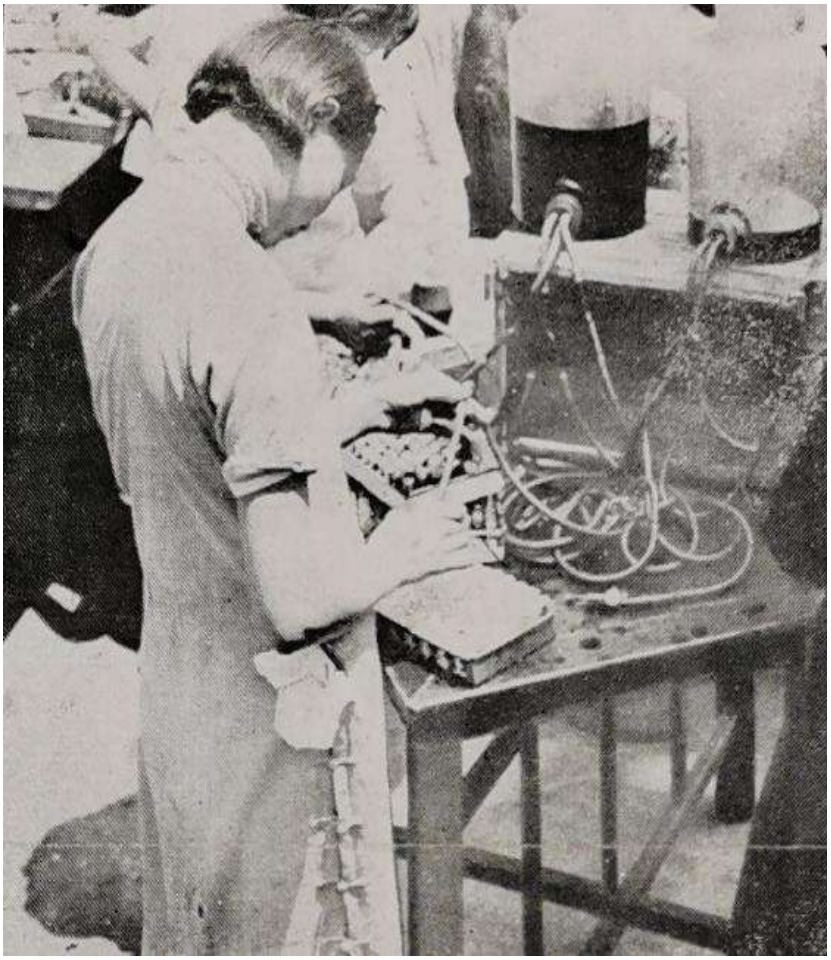

Figure 13- Bottling Chinese cholera drops[407]

[407] 'Glimpses of Refugee Industrial Work', *Shanghai International Red Cross News Bulletin* 1, no. 5 (1 October 1938), 1.

Figure 14- Counting cholera bottles[408]

Despite the various challenges and dangers associated with occupying public spaces during the time of warfare, women still emerged as distinguished individuals in the realm of public health. A substantial number of young women participated in the administration of vaccines through teams that operated in highly populated areas. They were actively engaged in campaigns aimed at providing smallpox and typhoid-cholera inoculations that began on April 18, 1939. Three inoculation teams were organized, each team consisting of one doctor, two nurses, and one attendant. Vaccines were also supplied to a number of hospitals and other medical organizations for free inoculation of refugee and destitute patients.[409] These women utilized medical authority to challenge traditional societal norms that constrained women's visibility and mobility in public spaces. Through their regular performance of professional duties in public, they defied the gender-based classification of public areas as male-dominated.

The appearance of female medical practitioners in the public sphere marked a significant turning point in both local society and the medical profession. Endorsed by the state and dressed in distinctive attire, these women utilized their medical authority to subvert the patriarchal norms that restricted women's presence and mobility in public spaces. Their presence in the streets challenged the gendered dichotomy of public spaces as exclusively

[408] 'Glimpses of Refugee Industrial Work', 1.

[409] 'Report of the Shanghai International Red Cross (October, 1937-March 31, 1939)', 10.

masculine, as well as the domestication of public spaces that had taken place during the early Republican era. This domestication, as perceived by male Republican officials, aimed to provide a safe and segregated zone for women to participate in public activities while limiting physical contact with men. [410] However, the provision of medical services necessitated physical proximity and direct contact with male patients, challenging the cultural norms of the time that sought to protect women by limiting physical interaction between the sexes.

In essence, the emergence of female medical practitioners in the public sphere epitomized a pivotal moment that transcended societal barriers and reshaped the contours of both public spaces and the medical profession. Their presence, characterized by distinctive attire and state endorsement, disrupted entrenched patriarchal norms, challenging the prevailing gendered dichotomy of public domains as exclusively male and the constrained role of women within them. By utilizing their medical expertise, these women not only provided essential healthcare but also subverted societal constraints that restricted women's mobility and participation in public life. Their professional duties necessitated direct interaction with male patients, defying prevailing norms aimed at safeguarding women by limiting contact with men. This courageous departure from established gendered boundaries underscored the crucial role these female practitioners played in reshaping perceptions of gender, public spaces, and professional responsibilities. The impact of their presence extended beyond the realms of medicine, symbolizing a broader societal shift toward challenging the entrenched gender norms that had long confined women to domestic spheres. Their actions exemplified a paradigm shift, not only in healthcare but also in the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the reclamation of public spaces as equitable domains for women.

A call to action: Ada Lum and Li Xiaqing's advocacy in humanitarian fundraising campaigns

As the war progressed, the Red Cross had already developed a very well-organized network and set of activities in which numerous women were leading actors. Charitable fundraising campaigns combined with the increase of new members who joined the organization were successful factors. Indeed, even if the organizational construction of the society was

[410] Ma, *Runaway Wives, Urban Crimes, and Survival Tactics in Wartime Beijing, 1937-1949*, 280-281.

permanent, it took a significant amount of civic initiative to be a Red Cross supporter, promoting the creation of transnational networks to collect funds, provide goods, and attract new members. This participation also empowered members with a certain social independence. As Rankin and Rowe claimed, this kind of participation was not totally new in the twentieth century, as Chapter 1 already mentioned.[411] What was prominent, nonetheless, was the national and sustained character of civic involvement with the outbreak of the war as well as the international participation by Chinese overseas and foreigners supporting the Chinese cause. One of them was Miss Li Xiaqing 李霞卿 (1912-1998), a Chinese film actress, aviator, and humanitarian assistant. Coming from a wealthy, patriotic family, one crucial aspect of Li Xiaqing's story is how she employed her transnational background and expertise to serve her country. When Japan invaded China in 1937, Li considered the war as the perfect opportunity to use her aviation skills in favour of China. Although she expressed a willingness to assist in any capacity, the Chinese Air Force rejected her due to the ban on civilian flying during the war.[412] From 1938 to 1944, Li Xiaqing undertook extensive tours throughout North and South America to mobilize support for the Chinese war effort and present a new image of China to an international audience. Her tours involved a variety of activities, including public speaking engagements, postcard sales, factory visits, tea parties, and lottery events. Li strategically utilized gender and aviation to appeal to different audiences, with the primary focus being on winning the support of the white American population and political elite, as this was crucial for China's war strategy. Li portrayed a modern yet traditional femininity, drawing on orientalist tropes of traditional Chinese womanhood and her status as a modern woman to appeal to white audiences. [413] While she downplayed her rejection of traditional gender roles, she also embraced a number of masculine attributes, portraying herself as a daring pilot and wartime patriot. In the American mainstream press, Li was often depicted as a woman who fit into existing orientalist tropes

[411] Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1986); William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City: 1796-1895* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[412] 'Nü Fei Hang Jia Lixia Qing 女飛行家李霞卿 [Li Xiaqing, a Female Aviator]', *Fujian Funü* 福建婦女, no. 1 (1943), 3.

[413] Alan Baumler, 'Masculinity, Femininity, Sacrifice, and Celebrity during China's War of Resistance: Telling the Lives of the Aviators Yan Haiwen (1916-37) and Lee Ya-Ching (1912-98)', *Nan Nü* 22, no. 1 (8 June 2020): 70–115, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685268-00221P03, 94-95.

but was also modern and technological due to her piloting abilities. This image aligned with China's desired presentation of its war effort, emphasizing its modernity and power while also highlighting its need for help. Gender played a significant role in China's presentation of the war, with war orphans and widows being portrayed as symbols of a China in need of assistance. At the same time, China's modernity and strength needed to be emphasized to underscore its potential as a valuable ally. Li's tours served multiple purposes, with gender and aviation being key components of her appeal to various audiences, particularly the American public and political elite. By allowing Overseas Chinese to associate themselves with a more modern, progressive China, Li Xiaqing sought to redefine Chinese identity and position. She enabled Overseas Chinese to associate themselves with a contemporary society that differed from the outdated depiction of China in Western literature. In the course of the war, numerous young Chinese females participated in charitable fundraising activities in China. Li's tours were not aimed at establishing a transnational Chinese identity, but rather at encouraging financial contributions, which local individuals utilized to construct their own modern identity within their respective communities. Li Xiaqing's case offers a representation of the intersection between personal agency, transnational and international relations, and national service. Her upbringing and access to resources provided her with a unique platform to make a significant impact on the China Resistance cause.

The connection between public activism and the national field created fertile ground for the successful development of the Chinese Red Cross Society. A series of publications, focusing on the themes of charity, blood donations, and the principles of the Red Cross, were printed by the major publishing houses of the time.[414] From the beginning of the war onwards, agencies started to use the media and advertising to leverage donors to expand their fundraising capacity. Women, in this context, became a means of mobilizing sympathy, thanks to which it was possible to increase the generosity of donors. It was the case of the numerous fundraising campaigns carried out by the Shanghai International Red Cross Girls and Girl Guides led by Miss Ada Lum. While Li Xiaqing's international figure encompasses her ability to navigate and operate across different cultures, utilizing her skills and international connections to serve her country, Ada Lum's endeavors focused on collecting donations within Shanghai, exemplifying a more localized approach. She was a Chinese woman born and raised in Australia, the sister of Gordon Lum, an Australian-Chinese tennis

[414] Wang Lizhong 王立忠, Jiang Yiman 江亦曼, and Sun Longchun 孙隆椿, *Zhongguo Hongshizihui Bainian* 中国红十字会百年 *[100-Year Chronicle of Red Cross Society of China]*, 39.

player who won the Far Eastern championship in 1928. During wartime years, she returned to China and became an enthusiastic and active supporter of the Chinese cause. She was well-known in Shanghai's social circle as a leader among the younger generation and a writer for local literary magazines. In the wartime press, she was represented as an admirer of the average Chinese woman's supporting the war effort, and also surprised by the generosity of the Chinese people, who were donating to the war effort despite the restrictions on their banks.[415]

According to her words reported in *The 'Inside Story' of the Red Cross Drive*, she exalted the heroic performance of these girls in attractive uniforms who have sold their last badge and solicited their last donation for this drive with excellent results.[416] Originally, it was planned to have some foreign and Chinese women soliciting donations at the theatres and in the big hotels. Schoolgirls were not considered, however, Mrs. W. Tornroth who worked in the American Red Cross drive during the Great War enthused the committee with her idea of publicizing the campaign through the girls in uniform. The only place where they could get 400 girls quickly would be the big schools and Girl Guides. They had to be young, energetic and well-mannered, besides being clever at languages. Using emotional language to appeal to the readers' sense of patriotism and national pride, it also highlighted the importance of the cause and the role of these schoolgirls in achieving the desired results.

> On Wednesday morning, before nine o'clock, the first squads of girls were in the Shanghai streets selling badges and receiving donations…I had told the girls that each squad must bring in $100 or they couldn't face me. There was no doubt about their ability. Most of the tins contained well over $100, and one of the Girl Guide's tins contained $387.41…The first day we were surprised to have $1581.40. The following day, when a larger number of girls were soliciting, we counted in $5414.94.[417]

[415] 'Girl Tells of War in China', *The Sun (1910-1954)*, 13 September 1937, 9.

[416] Ada Lum, 'The "Inside Story" of the Red Cross Drive', *The China Weekly Review (1923-1950)*, 25 December 1937.

[417] Lum.

The use of an authoritarian and commanding tone was a common tactic employed in texts aimed at motivating young women to actively participate in fundraising campaigns during the Resistance movement. Such texts were designed to appeal to the patriotic and nationalistic sentiments of the Chinese people, with the ultimate goal of rallying them to support the war effort. Ada Lum's invaluable contribution to the cause was often highlighted in these texts, serving as a symbol of the heroic efforts made by ordinary citizens to bolster the Resistance movement. The language used in these articles was deliberately emotive, aiming to inspire a sense of pride and solidarity among the populace, particularly women, and to encourage them to take part in the national cause. By calling upon women to participate in a variety of activities, including fundraising campaigns, nursing, caregiving, and other charitable endeavors, the Chinese narrative advocated for women's active involvement in the Resistance cause.

While Li Xiaqing's international figure allowed her to contribute on a broader scale, connecting with different cultures and countries, Ada Lum's focus on mainland China reflects a commitment to making a localized impact. Her efforts were concentrated within the specific city of Shanghai, which aimed to mobilize resources from the local population, potentially fostering a sense of community involvement and engagement in the community she served.

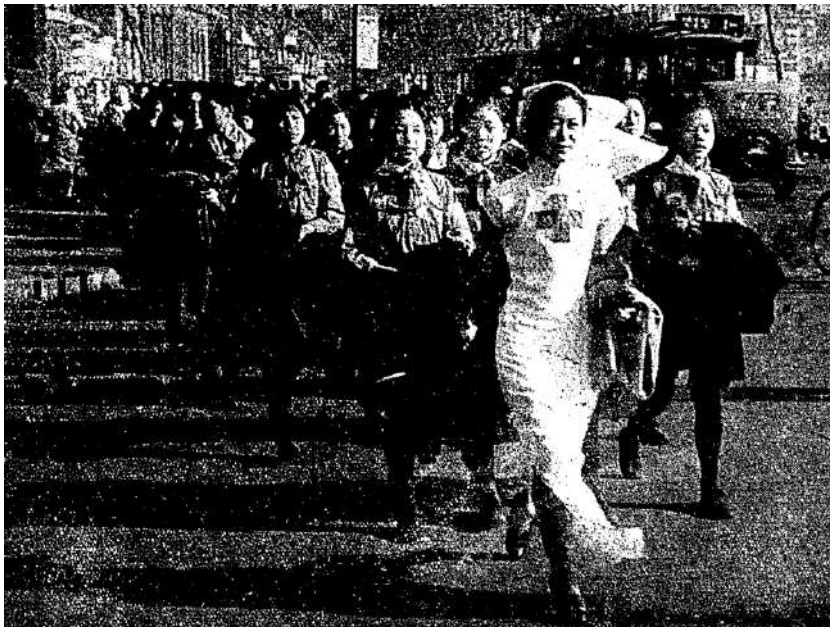

Figure 15- Girl Guides under the leadership of Miss Ada Lum in the collection of funds during the Red Cross drive.[418]

[418] Lum.

The contribution of a large number of women participating in charitable fundraising initiatives and collecting donations was supported by photographs preserved in journals and newspapers. During the wartime period, a meticulously planned indoctrination discourse was instituted, which was grounded in the ideological premises of Anti-Japanese nationalism and the fostering of a contemporary Chinese national identity. The diverse actions encompassing the production, distribution, and consumption of photographic images were systematically controlled and coordinated to ensure the desired ideological message was comprehended by the intended audience. The graphic and linguistic signs that were affixed to the images were integral to their accurate interpretation, consisting of not only ideological symbols embedded within the photograph but also external elements such as titles. In the milieu of political indoctrination, titles were of particular significance as they served to circumscribe the scope of potential interpretations or responses from the viewers.[419]

This manifestation implies that viewers were discouraged from interpreting such images in an unfettered manner. Furthermore, the narrative constructed around the images constituted a part of the apparatus that conferred meaning upon them.

Figure 16- The Shanghai International Committee of the Chinese Red Cross holds a fund-raising event at the opening ceremony on December 1st, 1937, at the American Women's Residence in Jing'an Temple Road.[420]

[419] Liz Wells, ed., *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, Fifth edition (London: Routledge, 2015), 164-165.

[420] *Guowen Zhoubao* 国闻周报, 14 (48). 1937. Retrieved on April 30, 2021.

Photograph 16 appearing on the *Guowen Zhoubao* 国闻周报 represents the Shanghai International Committee of the Chinese Red Cross while holding a fund-raising event at the opening ceremony on December 1st at the American Women's Residence in Jing'an Temple Road. The uniform consisted of a crisp white dress, the traditional Chinese dress *qipao,* as a symbol of the Chinese national identity, adorned with the recognizable red cross emblem on the chest.[421] The photo captures a group of Red Cross women holding a fundraising basket, emblazoned with the recognizable Red Cross symbol, with smiling faces. The photograph presented in this context serves as a poignant representation of the use of propaganda during a specific historical period to promote the notion of voluntary work. The central role of the organized woman in the image signifies the nationalist state's efforts to mobilize its population toward a unified goal. However, it is the organizational structure itself that holds prominence in the image, rather than the individuality of the women represented. The presence of women in uniform in the photograph further reinforces the notion of the state's control over the individual, as it symbolizes the subordination of individual identity to a hierarchical and regulated system. The uniformity of the representation of these women serves to emphasize the state's focus on the collective, as opposed to the recognition of individual autonomy. Furthermore, the image suggests that the women represented were absorbed into a state structure, rather than being recognized as individual agents. This highlights the instrumentalization of women as a means to an end in the pursuit of nationalistic goals by the nationalist state.

It was the same issue for Figure 17, representing the act of soliciting donations. The slogan accompanying the image served as a prime example of wartime propaganda used by the Chinese government to mobilize the population to join the wartime efforts. It appealed to the patriotism and national pride of the Chinese people, emphasized the role of female volunteers in the relief efforts, and used specific numbers to create a sense of urgency and motivation among the population to contribute towards the national cause.

[421] Han Qingxuan, 'Qipao and Female Fashion in Republican China and Shanghai (1912-1937): The Discovery and Expression of Individuality' (Bard College, 1 January 2019), Senior Projects Fall 2019, https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=senproj_f2019.

Figure 17- A group of the 450 Chinese girls who, dressed as Red Cross nurses, have been coaxing Shanghai's citizens during the past ten days to contribute generously to the goal of $100,000 in aid of local war refugees.[422]

Fundraising campaigns did not solely focus on portraying cheerful women and young girls willing to endorse the national cause. The use of victimization as a propaganda tactic was also particularly successful in mobilizing the Chinese people to support the country's cause against the Japanese aggressor. The analysis of Figure 18 provides valuable insights into this issue. The important focus here is on the presence of a Red Cross woman, identified as Miss Dolly Chang, the three children and another woman. The press often exploited images of children as victims, orphans, or refugees due to their powerful emotional impact. This was particularly evident during the Anti-Japanese War, a time when numerous families were torn apart and the number of orphaned or displaced children significantly increased. The primary intention behind portraying children as victims was to expose the devastation that Japan had inflicted on China.[423]

This portrayal of Red Cross women as maternal figures was not only a reflection of the prevailing gender norms and expectations of the time but also a deliberate strategy to

[422] *The China Press (1925-1938),* 12 December 1937.

[423] Maria Caterina Bellinetti, 'Building a Nation: The Construction of Modern China through CCP's Propaganda Images' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2018), 135-136.

appeal to the emotions and values of the population. By positioning Red Cross women as nurturing and caring figures, the organization was able to cultivate a sense of trust and support among the people, which was critical for its humanitarian work. In this context, the photograph takes on added significance, as the presence of the Red Cross woman, Miss Dolly Chang, can be interpreted as a representation of this maternal role. Her position in the image, alongside the children and another woman, reinforces the idea that the Red Cross's humanitarian work was grounded in the values of compassion and care, which were seen as central to the concept of motherhood. This, in turn, helped to generate support for the organization's activities, particularly during fundraising campaigns and other initiatives aimed at providing aid and relief to those affected by the war.

Figure 18-The Shanghai International Red Cross opened its local funds for countless Chinese rendered homeless and destitute as a result of the hostilities. Everybody was urged to contribute.[424]

[424] 'Red Cross Work in Shanghai: How Refugees and Wounded Are Taken Care of Workers at Cosmopolitan Club', *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870-1941)*, 8 December 1937, 374.

A foreigner serving China: the case of Agnes Smedley

Such images were designed to be distributed not solely in the local press, but primarily to capture the interest of the international media through the words of foreigners. Indeed, a significant feature of the Red Cross is that the humanitarian efforts of the organization enabled a flow of people who could enter China and narrate their personal experiences to the international community in a specific manner. Foreign journalists, for instance, reported on the wartime situation from various perspectives, which generated sympathy and support for China's anti-fascist war among people around the world, and also made positive contributions to the world's understanding of China.[425] It was the case of the American journalist and writer Agnes Smedley (1892-1950), whose work helped to shape perceptions of the conflict and its impact on Chinese society. In China, she shared the hardships of the war and quickly joined the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps as a publicity worker after encountering in Hangzhou Dr. Lin Kesheng, the founder and director of the corps. Given that the majority of China's 10.000 physicians were in private practice in coastal cities or in areas controlled by Japan, Agnes was initially assigned the critical responsibility of rallying the involvement of foreign medical volunteers and providing essential first aid to the injured: one of the volunteers she recruited was Dr. Norman Bethune.[426] Agnes worked as a journalist for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Manchester Guardian*. She reported on various subjects, including the Anti-Japanese War as a lead war reporter. During the Xi'an Incident in 1936, she was present in Xi'an and provided English broadcasts for the rebels. Additionally, she covered the War of Resistance against Japan as part of the Second United Front. She traveled with the 8th Route

[425] Han Hanan 韩贺南, Wang Xiangmei 王向梅, and Li Huibo 李慧波, *Zhongguo Funü Yu Kangri Zhanzheng* 中国妇女与抗日战争 *[Chinese Women and the War of Resistance Against Japan]*, 7.

[426] Normane Bethune was a Canadian physician, also known by his Chinese name Bai Qiu'en 白求恩, who was active during the Spanish Civil War and the War of Resistance against Japan. He joined the Canadian Communist Party in 1935 and went as a surgeon to Spain (1936-1937) during the Civil War and to China (1938-1939), in Yan'an, where he worked in the field of war wound surgery and trained doctors, nurses and orderlies. He died of sepsis caused by a stab wound during the war while in the 8th Army of the People's Liberation Army, made up of veterans of the Long March. See Roderick Stewart and Sharon Stewart, *Phoenix: The Life of Norman Bethune* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); 'Agnes Smedley 1892-1950', n.d., https://sacu.org/smedley/; Agnes Smedley, *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution*, 1st ed (Old Westbury, N.Y: Feminist Press, 1976).

Army in 1937 and later joined the New Fourth Army from 1938 to 1939. She also visited some units of the non-Communist Chinese army.[427]

As a member of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Commission, she not only covered the work of the organization but also contributed to raising awareness and support for its mission. Through her reporting, they brought the struggles and needs of those affected by the war to a global audience and helped to shape the international perception of the conflict and its aftermath. In one of her historical accounts, Smedley's report serves as a valuable testimony of the condition of war refugees in Jingxian, Nanling, and Xuancheng in Anhui province during the war.[428] Her investigation, which was carried out in collaboration with Dr. C. C. Sheng, Medical Director of the New Fourth Army, highlights the challenges faced by the refugees and the various efforts made to alleviate their suffering. The report details the various sources of relief funds, including contributions from the Central Government committee, local contributions, and special campaigns. Additionally, Smedley narrated the resilience of the refugees, particularly women, who despite their dire circumstances, made efforts to maintain their dignity and cleanliness. The lack of medical aid for the refugees and the prevalence of disease among them were particularly concerning, as was the negative impact on the mental and physical well-being of the children growing up in these conditions. The report highlighted the important role of women in the relief efforts for war refugees; despite the difficult circumstances faced by these women, many of them made efforts to maintain their dignity and cleanliness, and some even found work to support their families. Moreover, Smedley remarked on the absence of criminal children, which suggests that the women were successfully protecting their children from harm and providing for their well-being, at the same time highlighting the need for educational and medical aid for the children and young people affected by the war, including young schoolteachers who were refugees themselves.[429] She claimed that many children were growing up to manhood and womanhood during the war in mental darkness, without any plans, any disciplined study or work, almost all of them sick and diseased. Thus, relief funds had to be used to organize and maintain schools for refugee children, who had to be fed and given a change of clothing, while medical

[427] Janice R. MacKinnon, Stephen R. MacKinnon, and Agnes Smedley, *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[428] Agnes Smedley, 'Sad Plight of China's War Refugees Told Prominent American Writer', *The China Weekly Review (1923-1950)*, 9 September 1939, 55.

[429] Smedley.

aid had to be organized by many of the young schoolteachers who were refugees from other regions occupied by the Japanese.

Her reporting and writing served as a useful means by raising awareness about the plight of the Chinese people and their struggle against Japanese aggression. By highlighting the urgent need for humanitarian aid and support for the Chinese people, particularly women and children, Smedley's reporting encouraged readers to support Chinese resistance by donating money and resources to relief efforts. In addition, her emphasis on the resilience and courage of the Chinese people helped to mobilize public opinion in support of their cause, both domestically and internationally. Also in this case, the image of refugee children as victims of the war's disasters but at the same time "well cared and happy" (see Figure 19) as described in the Smedley's article, are represented with "smiling faces, relatively happy […] cared for by the Catholic Mission in Zhejiang (Kinhua)." The detail about the collaboration between the Red Cross and the catholic organizations is useful in introducing the following two chapters, focusing on the relief initiatives and the involvement of women within the Catholic missions in China.

One has only to observe the pleasant, smiling faces of the Chinese war refugees pictured here to realize that they are being well cared for and relatively happy—by contrast with the unhappy victims of Japan's war machine whose woes are depicted in the accompanying report by Miss Agnes Smedley. This picture, taken in Kinhua, present capital of Chekiang province, is of war refugees who are beign cared for by the Catholic Mission in that city.

Figure 19- "Refugees who are well cared and happy"[430]

[430] Smedley.

Conclusion

The chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the presence and role of women in national and international relief organizations during the years of the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China. Particularly focusing on the examination of the dynamics through which Chinese and Western women integrated into the Red Cross, this study highlights the complex and multi-faceted nature of gendered dimensions on local, regional, national, and global scales within a very transnational and international context.

As a preeminent Western humanitarian organization, it provided structured channels and organized programs for a substantial number of women to engage in transnational philanthropic endeavors. It is worthy of examination as it represented attempts to incorporate Western models of recruiting women for civic service and exemplified a novel approach to incorporating women in public affairs. This is analyzed through two key overarching themes explored in the chapter. Firstly, it investigated how Chinese and foreign women from privileged backgrounds actively participated in leadership positions and had specific responsibilities within various committees and relief organizations. Secondly, it emphasized the significant role of women in the relief narrative, as represented through media coverage, local press, and official reports.

These women's work and relationships with Western women served as a window through which gender shaped the meanings of humanitarianism, war, and nation-building in modern China while offering the opportunity to re-discuss the social values and traditional roles of women. Indeed, the war involved the mobilization of the entire population which led to the establishment of medical institutions that provided employment prospects for women from lower social strata. Moreover, women predominantly occupied subordinate positions within these establishments, assuming roles that thrust them into the forefront of medical response efforts and exposed them to public scrutiny.

Distinguished female leaders, such as Song Meiling, advocated for women's involvement in the war endeavors through traditionally feminine caregiving work, serving as models and spearheading the establishment of charitable organizations that served as the framework for such endeavors. While many upper-class wives were involved in philanthropic work prior to the war, the nationalist movement created spaces for women to become more politically and socially engaged, challenging traditional norms and advocating for change.

The case of nurse Zhou Meiyu and her contribution to the field of military nursing within the Red Cross Medical Relief Corps education revealed the profound significance of

overcoming gender barriers by actively engaging in specific humanitarian relief initiatives in support of the Chinese nationalist movement.

Parallel to this discussion, the chapter also intersected the media and narrative phase, which explored the construction of narratives around the role of women in the Red Cross through the press, media, and other visual and written representations. The visibility given by the media to the female presence in relief, particularly in the field of nursing, caring for wounded and fundraising campaigns, suggests how in common perception the construction of the public figure of women during the war found a privileged terrain in relief activities.

One key aspect of the women's experiences in the Red Cross during the War of Resistance against Japan was their collaboration and networking, both within their own communities and across national borders. The work of these women networks was particularly important given the challenging conditions of the war and was instrumental in maintaining medical facilities and providing ongoing care to the sick and wounded, as well as collecting donations through charitable fundraising campaigns. The cases of Li Xiaqing and Ada Lum offer a representation on the intersection between personal agency, transnational and international relations, and national service. Their upbringing and access to resources provided her with a unique platform to make a significant impact on the Chinese Resistance cause.

Moreover, visual representations were strategically produced to engage international media by leveraging foreign observers' narratives. A relevant characteristic of the Red Cross's endeavors was the facilitation of the entry of people into China who could articulate their experiences to the global audience. Foreign correspondents provided diverse viewpoints, arousing empathy and support for China's anti-fascist struggle worldwide. The American journalist Agnes Smedley exemplified this phenomenon, contributing significantly to shaping perceptions of the war to the international audience and its impact on Chinese society, particularly on women and children.

The connection between public activism and the national field created fertile ground for the successful development of the Chinese Red Cross Society. However, except for a few cases such as Zhou Meiyu, women’s contributions to the Red Cross did not translate into decision-making power. Rather, women's roles were confined to crucial administrative and public relations functions, which were indispensable to the organization's operations.

In summary, the chapter unveils a top-down mobilization process, in which images as Song Meiling were meticulously crafted to serve as a paradigm that was propagated among the middle classes. The Red Cross women's experience thus represented a profoundly

institutionalized journey intricately connected to top-down mechanisms. This process emanated from the state effectively nationalized the elite, reconciling the global and transnational elite within the framework of war, realigning them with the objectives of the nation-state and engaging them in this particular perspective.

Chapter 4
Missionary charity at war: The Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl Sisters)

Introduction

Despite women's significant role in Catholicism during the wartime period, they have long been ignored in the academic field on this issue. Most research has mainly focused on well-known missionaries and elite male Chinese converts, neglecting those women who worked in the missions. How much does relief serve to give a certain representation of religious women in the public sphere? How did the war create new opportunities for Catholic nuns and local virgins to expand their social roles and exercise greater agency? And how did the transcultural and transnational dimension of the Manchurian context shape the experiences of sisters and lay women during the war? This second case study introduces the discourse on the feminization of Catholicism by analyzing the missionary presence of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl Sisters) (*Sheng shizijia ci'ai xiunü hui* 圣十字架赐爱修女会) (CSC) [431] who cooperated with the Bethlehem Missionary Society (*Baileng waifang chuanjiao hui* 白冷外方传教会) (SMB) [432] during the vortex of twentieth-century history in Manchuria.[433] Assisted by the local sisters, Oblate of St.Therese, the chapter highlights the active participation of Swiss Catholic nuns, in the public charitable sphere during the Second World War, with a particular focus on their involvement in hospitals, dispensaries, schools,

[431] This is the official Chinese translation of their congregation's name. See Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*, 79.

[432] Tiedemann, 5.

[433] Founded in Bihar, India, in 1894, the congregation's initial foreign mission flourished, progressively expanding its presence to include Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The nuns lent their support to the establishment of two diocesan congregations, in addition to founding their own novitiate in India. Then, the second location for missionary work was in Manchuria, and in 1912, in response to Bp. Vincent Wehrle's invitation, the community arrived in the United States. See 'Phasen Der Weiterentwicklung 1870 Bis Zur Gegenwart', n.d., https://www.scsc-ingenbohl.org/wp-content/uploads/04_-Weiterentwicklungen.pdf.

and opium patient care.[434] During this turbulent period, Qiqihar, as the headquarters of the missionaries from Switzerland, gradually became a center for the Christian message, the youth and adult education, ministry to the sick, catechetical instruction. The selection of Manchuria as a site of investigation further emphasizes the transnational and transcultural dimension of the nuns' work during this period. This region, comprising the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning, witnessed complex relationships between Chinese Catholics, the Church, and the Japanese occupier, rendering it a fertile ground for examining the intersection of women, Catholicism, and charitable relief activities in the war years.

The chapter primarily relies on internal official reports, letters and documents retrieved from the State Archive of Lucerne and the local archive of the Ingenbohl Sisters in Switzerland, and is complemented by a screening of relevant information propagated through the press. By engaging with letters, official reports, and media coverage, it aims to offer a representation on the significance of a particular activity in the construction of a distinct female identity and the various forms of empowerment it engendered within the religious organization. The act of writing and producing documents carries inherent significance: these memoirs serve as a medium through which sisters can represent themselves to their interlocutors, primarily their superiors, and offer the possibility to gain insights into their self-representation, as these internal documents are inherently reflective of the organization's perspectives and viewpoints. Unfortunately, as I well observe in the next pages, there is a scarcity of information regarding the specific involvement and experiences of local sisters during the war. The primary sources at my disposal, such as letters and official reports from Ingenbohl's internal archive, predominantly shed light on the relief work carried out by Swiss nuns. Although these records offer valuable insights into the activities of the nuns, the knowledge of the role played by local virgins remains limited. Within a number of these memoirs, the experiences of these individuals are framed, shedding light on how their sense of relief played a defining role in establishing their identities as publicly engaged religious women in a foreign country.

[434] *Bethlehem Kalender*, Vol.25, 1945. Archiv Missionsgesellschaft Bethlehem, Staatsarchiv Luzern.

Evangelizing the faith: the Ingenbohl Sisters

Since the early 1900s, many foreign sisters arrived in China providing religious education, medical assistance and evangelization activities to Chinese people, contributing significantly to the growth and transformation of Chinese society.[435] According to Bradshaw, by mid-1942,

[435] From North America, there were the Sisters of Providence from St. Mary of the Woods, Indiana. A select group of six sisters was chosen to journey to Kaifeng, located in the Henan Province. They were summoned by Bishop Tacconi to aid in the religious education of a population that consisted of merely eighty Catholics out of 300.000 people. It was not until after a few months of rigorous study that they were able to establish a residential elementary and junior high school in 1921. Beyond the teaching of catechism, the sisters made a point of including secular subjects in their curriculum, catering primarily to young female students. The second American group was the Maryknoll Sisters, the "most prominent group of American sisters who served in China."[435] In November of 1922, the initial set of six Maryknoll Sisters arrived at Yangjiang, located in the southern region of Guangdong Province. They swiftly got involved in teaching at catechumenates, and operating dispensaries and orphanages. They received training in direct ministry, which included working with women and children. The formation program was not only limited to the cloister, instead, it involved practical field experience in missions. They worked in a range of places such as hospitals, leprosariums, dispensaries, and orphanages, and visited the ill, elderly and female prisoners. They also introduced modern concepts of health and sanitation and uplifted the economic status of women by teaching them simple handicrafts. Only between 1910 and 1937 several foreign female religious orders from Europe entered Manchuria. It was the case of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Egypt from Italy, who arrived in Jinan in late 1932 and established a convent and a sizable orphanage, St. Joseph's Orphanage, close to the Hongjialou Cathedral. In the Prefecture Apostolic of Lintsing, Shandong, the Franciscan mission endeavors were mainly directed toward assisting women and children. They sought to foster the development of young girls' talents and encourage their autonomy in decision-making, especially regarding the selection of their marriage partners. Within the Vicariate Apostolic of Jilin, the Italian Franciscan Missionaries of Mary also focused on a variety of activities such as primary and secondary education, orphanage care, hospice services, and dispensary work. As of 1940, a total of eleven foreign and three Chinese sisters were stationed at the Rencitang in Xinjing (Changchun). Furthermore, a Russian orphanage was managed by ten mothers and five sisters, accommodating 180 Russian children in Ha'erbin during the same year. The Jilin dispensary was under the supervision of the Daughters of the Holy Ghost in China. In 1940, it was managed by a group of seven religious members, with Sr. Marie Céline Pape serving as the superior. Furthermore, in 1928, the Polish Union of Ursulines from Poland made their arrival in Harbin. Two communities were established in 1930, one of which was designed to educate Russian children whose families had fled in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. This community, practicing the Eastern or Byzantine-Slavonic Rite, was responsible for managing a secondary school primarily intended for Russian girls. By 1940, five mothers and twelve sisters had established a girls' school accommodating 144 pupils, with Mtr. Loyola Śliwowska serving as the prioress of the Russian house. This mission endured in Harbin until 1949. In contrast, the sisters belonging to the second community, adhering to the Latin Rite, were engaged in working with the Polish children residing in Harbin, along with the Chinese populace. This mission ceased its operations in 1937. Also, the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters from

the number of American sisters serving in China had grown to a significant degree, with representation from twenty-five different congregations. Of these, 160 were working in missions under the purview of American priests, while the remainder were situated in European-controlled missions.[436] Among these groups of Catholic sisters, from Switzerland there were the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Ingenbohl Sisters). They were distinguished assistants of the Bethlehem Missionary Society (SMB) in Qiqihar from 1929, in charge of hospitals, dispensaries, and schools. The first missionaries of the SMB left for China on September 28, 1924: Paul Hugentobler, Dr. Eugen Imhof, and Dr. Gustav Schnetzler.[437] For the newly founded Society, this was the first experience of overseas settlement. The Ingenbohl Sisters arrived in Qiqihar in 1929 to assist the Bethlehem Missionary Society in evangelization works. Inspired by their shared vision, the sisters aimed to bring the message of their faith to the local eclectic population, fostering a sense of spiritual enlightenment and nurturing a deeper understanding of religious teachings, which considered the multifaceted intercultural and international relations at play in the region of Heilongjiang in the twentieth century.[438]

Switzerland arrived in Manchuria in 1931, establishing houses in Yanji, Hunchun, Longjing, Badaogou, and Mingyuegou. Moreover, the Sisters of the Child Jesus from France took on the responsibility of educational work in Manchuria. In 1941, a total of eight religious members were stationed in Shenyang, with the Reverend Mother St. Aidan Fitzgerald serving as the superior. See Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women'; Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*.

[436] Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women', 211.

[437] Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*, 5. Paul Hugentobler (Oberbüren, St. Gallen 07/01/1893-Menznau 27/06/1972). Member of SMB since 1923, he was nominated Apostolic Pro-Prefect of Qiqihar in 1933 and then Apostolic Prefect in 1934. Eugen Imhof (Aargau, Basel 09/02/1899-Heilongjiang 17/01/1934) entered as SMB Father in 1924. He was appointed Superior of Qiqihar in 1931 and Apostolic Prefect in 1931. See Blatter, 'Tsitsikar (Heilungkiang) – Die Erste Mission Der SMB. Tatsachen Und Erinnerungen', 37-54; J.M. Camenzind, 'Wie Mgr. Dr. E. Imhof Ums Leben Kam [How Mgr Dr E. Imhof Came to Life]', *Bethlehem Kalender* 14 (1935), 36-38; 'Mgr. Dr. E. Imhof S.M.B., Apostolischer Präfekt von Tsitsikar', *Schweizerische Kirchen-Zeitung*, 1934, 29.

[438] See Thomas R. Gottschang and Diana Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria*, v. 87 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2000), 66-67. For an analysis of the development of Manchuria, see also Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-Lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 48.

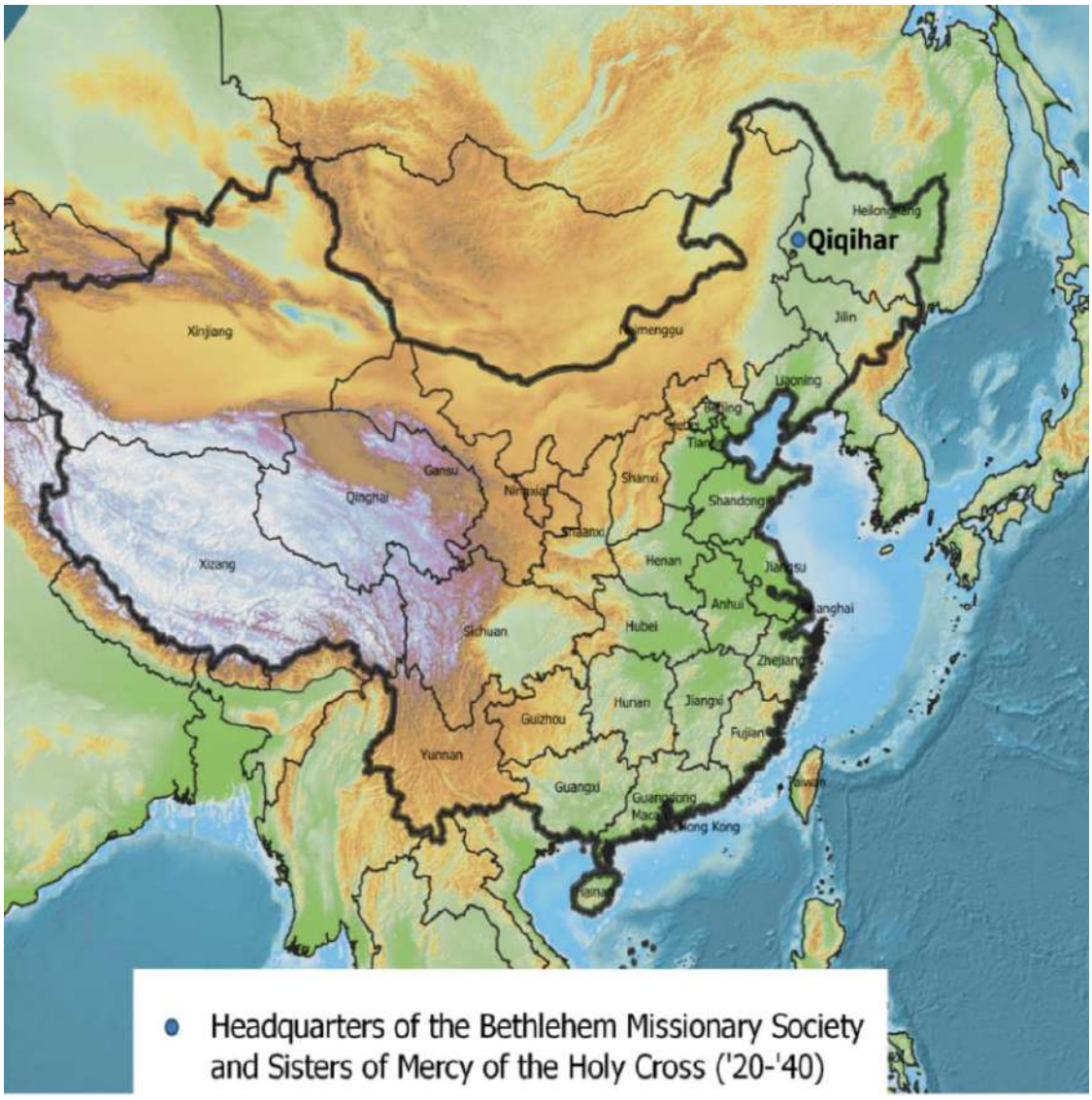

Figure 20- Headquarters of the Bethlehem Missionary Society and Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross [439]

[439] The map was obtained from the Harvard China GIS public domain map dataset, https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/E1FHML. March 2022.

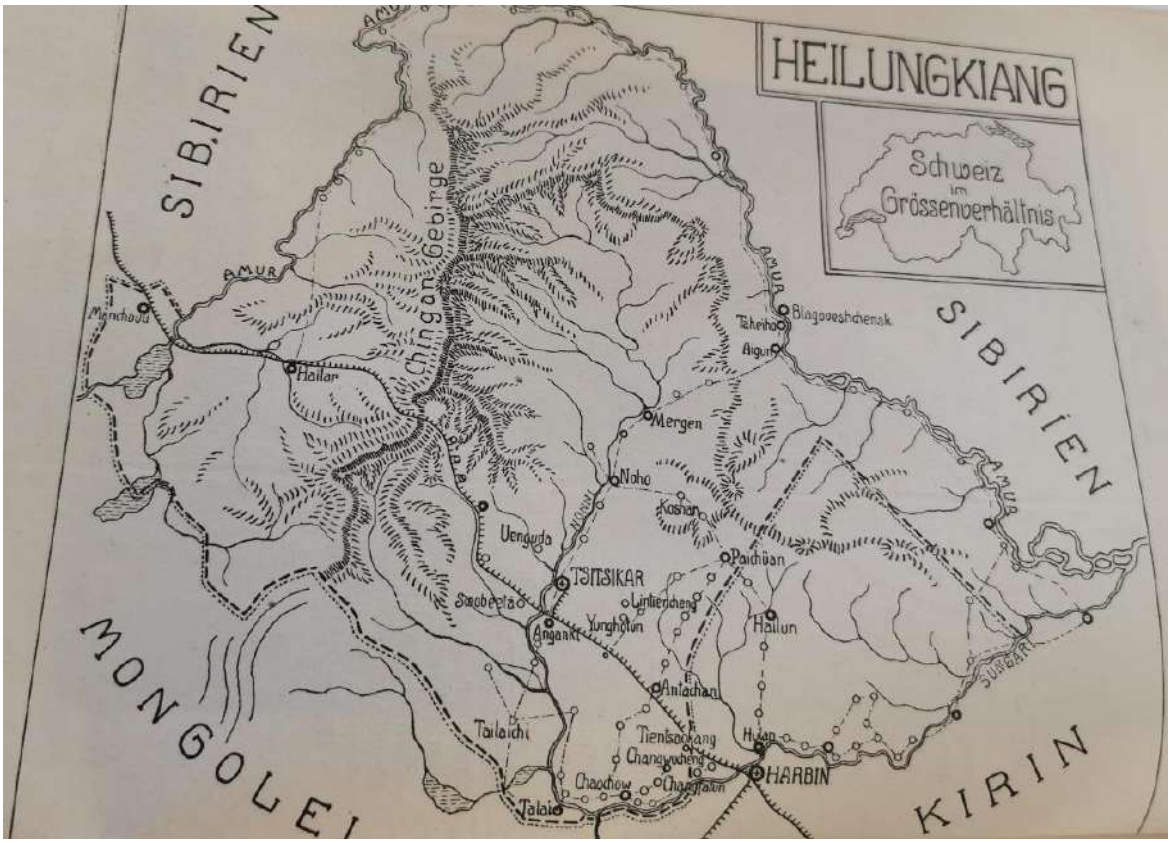

Figure 21- Heilongjiang, 1935 [440]

As Sr. Liguoria Binkert narrates in her memories, after six Immensee Fathers had left for China from 1924 to 1926, the General Administration of Ingenbohl chose the following missionaries nuns for the mission in China: Sr. Theobalda Brühl, born in 1874, professed in 1900, born in Dresden/Germany; Sr. Alana Fiechter, born 1895, professed 1916, from Böckten, Baselland/Switzerland; Sr. Moderata Zwicker, born 1896, professed 1919, from Waldkirch, St. Gallen/Switzerland; Sr. Dafrosa Imhof, born 1901, professed 1926, from Muotathal, Schwyz/Switzerland.[441] During the initial phase of their arrival in China, Father Hugentobler seized the opportunity to provide the four missionaries with a foundation in the Chinese language. A strict language study program lasting one-and-a-half years was required for sisters, with follow-up courses recommended to ensure that language proficiency was maintained. It was suggested that a senior sister with linguistic expertise be appointed to supervise language learning and provide practical assistance to learners and aspirants while

[440] 'Map- Heilungkiang', 1935, A.M.B., Staatsarchiv Luzern.

[441] M.Liguoria Binkert, 'China Chronik. Note: 1981 - 1983 Compiled from Written and Oral Reports', 1983, 06-536, GenArchivSCSC-06-536, 2.

maintaining scientific standards.[442] This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the local population and facilitated a more effective approach to mission work. Once established, the sisters started their work in the mission: Sr. Alana and Sr. Moderata began their service in Baiquan, Bei'an. They set up a dispensary, visited the sick, and cared for those seeking help in the specially prepared outpatient clinic. A few years later, Sr. Dafrosa also established the social service in Baiquan. Sr. Theobalda operated as house mother, Sr. Alana as a cook, Sr. Moderata as a nurse, and Sr. Dafrosa set up the pharmacy. The one-story houses were built in the Chinese style: an annex served as a chapel, and next to it a priest's residence, a catechist's school, and the sisters' house.[443] According to Sister Liguoria Binkert, the sisters welcomed the needy from the very beginning and soon became known and respected by the locals, despite the difficulties of the early times:

> In the beginning, we were particularly troubled by the hustle and bustle of the working day on Sundays. No Sunday rest, no ringing of the church bells, no time for a quiet hour of reflection. I wonder if this will get better with time when Christianity has spread. We hoped so and prayed for it. One morning, a ship's employee knocked at the pharmacy and begged that a nurse come to his sick father. That was our first visit to the suffering in the city. Since then, people came for treatment or had us called to the house. One day, men, women, and children from villages in the area came and wanted to talk to us. However, we did not understand a word. Then one of the men held out a piece of paper, a note from the missionary superior: "Eye sick." The examination indicated conjunctivitis. The patient was treated. The companions now also knew where they could go in the future.[444]

Their memories offer a representation of how they also considered their classes as a chance to convert people and guide Catholics who had strayed back to their faith. This is to say that the sisters had certainly a genuine desire to preserve people's lives, but that was not their sole

[442] 'On the Question of Sisters in Mission', n.d., GenArchivSCSC-06-1446, 3-4.

[443] Binkert, 'China Chronik. Note: 1981 - 1983 Compiled from Written and Oral Reports', 3.

[444] Binkert, 4.

objective. The self-representation conveyed through such memoirs functions as a means for sisters to portray themselves to their interlocutors, mainly their superiors. As will be also illustrated in the following pages, a number of memoirs frame the experiences of these people and reveal how their sense of relief served to define them as publicly active religious women in a foreign country. In this case, Sr. Binkert detailed the sisters' initial difficulties in navigating the working culture of their surroundings, as well as their introduction to providing medical care to the local populace. Indeed, during the early years of their mission in China, the four initial sisters gained valuable experience in their intended line of work. However, they soon realized that the scope of their responsibilities was rapidly expanding and that additional support from fellow sisters was necessary. This need was further reinforced by the urgent request made by Fr. Imhof for two more sisters to be sent to his mission area in Baiquan. In response, more sisters were dispatched to China, including Sr. Franziska M. Jung, Sr. Arilda Hess, Sr. Archangela Lecka, and Sr. Ancilla Marichel. They joined the mission in China and focused their efforts on domestic chores, caring for the sick, and language study. In subsequent years, additional groups of sisters were sent to China to further expand the mission's reach. In 1931, four more sisters joined the mission, including Sr. Sophie Kral, Sr. Aquilana Limacher, Sr. Blandina Zwicker, and Sr. Sekundia Treier. This was followed by another group of five sisters in 1933, including Sr. Ida Survanji, Sr. Elfrieda Mareš Pohoř, Sr. Benigna Fässler, Sr. Georgina Dittler, and Sr. Lima Sulzbacher. Finally, in 1935, the last group of sisters, including Sr. Seraphina Pfleger, Sr. M. Benilda Unger, and Sr. Celsiana Stocker, were sent to China. By the year 1937, a total of thirty-six Bethlehem missionaries and twenty-four sisters were sent to China.[445]

The selection of young women missionaries (see Figure 22) for the China mission by the General Administration of Ingenbohl reflected a deliberate and well-thought-out decision-making process. Strategic considerations and a meticulous evaluation were undertaken to ensure the suitability of the chosen candidates for this endeavor. The selection process involved a comprehensive assessment of the qualifications, experience, and suitability of the missionary nuns. Factors such as place of birth, year of birth, and year of profession were carefully considered, identifying nuns who possessed the necessary skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required for the mission's success. The General Administration of

[445] 'Nach Tsitsihar Ausgesandte Schwestern Vom Hl.Kreuz, Ingenbohl', Tsitsikar-Archive: Das Wichtigste, 1951 1927, A.M.B., Staatsarchiv Luzern; 'Reports and Statistics 1937', 30 September 1937, Vol.1264B Rub.24/6-24/9 Prot.5095/1937, A.P.F., 612-616b.

Ingenbohl recognized the importance of selecting capable and dedicated sisters who would be able to navigate the cultural, linguistic, and logistical complexities inherent in operating in a foreign country. The success of the China mission relied heavily on the devotion and commitment of the selected sisters. Thus, by entrusting them with this significant task, the organization could verify that these young women possessed the essential qualities to fulfill their responsibilities and accomplish the mission's objectives.[446]

Figure 22- Qiqihar, sisters at the Convent: Sr. Elfrieda Mareš Pohoř, Sr. Moderata Zwicker, Sr. Nepomucena Heidová, Sr. Benilda Unger, Sr. Sekundia Treier, Sr. Arilda Hess, Sr. Ida Survanji Zenta, Sr.Ancilla Marichel, Sr. Theobalda Brühl, Sr. Blandina Zwicker, Sr. Sophie Kral, Sr.Archangela Lecka, Sr. Aquilina Limacher, Sr. Xaveria Krivá, Sr.Georgina Dittler, Sr.

[446] The young age at which missionaries of both genders embark on their missions is extensively referenced in many academic studies. See Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: A.D. 600 to 2000* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007); Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*; Kenneth Scott Latourette, 'Missionaries Abroad', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (1966): 21–36; Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women'; Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization'.

Franziska M. Jung, Sr. Mechtild Mettler, Sr. Seraphina Pfleger, Sr. Celsina Stocker, Sr. Benigna Fässler, Sr. Lima Sulzbacher, Sr. Ubalda Hirtenfelder. [447]

Recruiting local women: catechists and virgins

Throughout the twentieth century, Catholicism experienced significant changes in response to various social, cultural, and political developments. As already discussed in the second chapter, the discourse surrounding these transformations involved the recognition of women's emancipation which became intertwined with the broader goals of spreading Catholicism.[448] Based on the memoirs by Sr. Franziska Jung, foreign female religious practitioners who traveled to China revealed a great deal of zeal as agents of cultural and social evolution, whereas their Chinese counterparts were motivated to pursue such transformations within their domestic boundaries. The Chinese sisters, therefore, collaborated with their foreign counterparts and established their own collectives.[449] This testimony is particularly significant as it illustrates that Western sisters endeavored to promote a discourse that presented Catholicism as a means of emancipation for Chinese women. Upon their arrival, the newly dispatched sisters received language lessons and assisted with different duties until they were fully prepared for their designated roles. While Protestant women missionaries often arrived in China as wives accompanying their husbands, as Anthony Clark claimed, Catholic nuns joined the mission as part of religious orders with distinctive duties, such as teaching, health care, and other works related to social service.[450]

The participation of Catholic nuns in foreign mission work represented a means through which to challenge the traditionally held perception of "cloistered nuns" as being passive and secluded from worldly matters.[451] The same was for the Ingenbohl Sisters: by actively engaging in mission work abroad, they were able to demonstrate the depth of their

[447] 'Tsitsihar, Schwester Convent', n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

[448] For a historical overview of the main developments in the theory and practice of Christian mission in the twentieth century, see Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*; Gabry-Thienpont and Neveu, 'Missions and the Construction of Gender in the Middle East'; Bowie, Kirkwood, and Ardener, *Women and Missions*; Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*; Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony*.

[449] Binkert, 'China Chronik. Note: 1981 - 1983 Compiled from Written and Oral Reports', 7.

[450] Clark, "Saving the Children", 66.

[451] Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*, 86.

commitment to the Catholic Church and the broader global community, while at the same time adhering to the expectations and prescribed behavioral standards associated with the role of nuns. Providing education was one of them. The SMB missionaries together with the Ingenbohl Sisters undertook the responsibility of education as part of their missionary project in Heilongjiang. They founded schools in the several missions where they worked, offering education and training courses. The primary focus of the sisters revolved around providing foreign Catholic children with education and guidance in their religious beliefs. Their main goal was to instruct young girls in the fundamental principles of the Catholic faith, preparing them to go back to their villages and fulfill the roles of virtuous Christian wives and mothers. Additionally, they offered women a foundational education and taught them practical skills, such as handicrafts, to enhance their ability to earn a livelihood.[452]

Catholic sisters tended to evaluate the Chinese populace based on their cultural background rather than their authority or occasionally even their nationality. They regarded their Chinese followers primarily as Christians and secondarily as Chinese; thus, by acquiring certain cultural traits like a Western Christian education, Chinese people could embrace the trappings of a "modern" civilization. Consequently, the missionaries emphasized the education of Chinese women and girls, resulting in Chinese Christians who possessed a

[452] There were different types of mission schools. The primary purpose of the Catechism or prayer schools, as the name denotes, was to teach catechism and the prominent Christian prayers to the catechumens, who, at the same time, also learned to read and write as at elementary schools. The Girls' School of Baiquan enjoyed a good reputation. The Chinese families who enrolled their daughters in mission schools mostly did so in order to preserve the integrity of their girls. Thus, they were driven more by the traditional Chinese ideas of girls' education, rather than because they really desired their daughters to convert into good Christians. Another school, the "Saint Mary's Institute" had up to 146 students in 1938. The beneficial influence exerted by this Institute on the souls of the young Manchurians women was particularly evident in the "Association of the Sisters of the Mother of God," which brought together young Christians and non-Christians to cultivate and implement what was called "feminine and Christian ideal." On the impact of missionary enterprise on education in China, see also Jean-Paul Wiest, 'Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools and China's Drive toward a Modern Educational System (1850-1950)', *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, no. 33 (1 November 2011): 92–114, https://doi.org/10.4000/extremeorient.187; John L. Childs, 'The Purpose of Missionary Education in China', *Religious Education* 20, no. 6 (December 1925): 429–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408250200605. On the impact of Catholic Communities of women, see Ji Li, 'Becoming Faithful: Christianity, Literacy, and Female Consciousness in Northeast China, 1830–1900' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 184-190; Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', *The Chinese Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (May 2013): 16–32, https://doi.org/10.1179/1547402X13Z.00000000014; Leung and Wittberg, 'Catholic Religious Orders of Women in China: Adaptation and Power'.

blended cultural identity. Catholic women perceived the social standing of women as a significant indicator of a society's level of civilization, and they believed that enhancing the status of Chinese women was one of the most crucial contributions they could make to China.[453]

The Western sisters sought to challenge existing cultural and social norms that may have oppressed or marginalized Chinese women. During the Republican years, both foreign and Chinese nuns revealed a collective dedication to engendering transformation, bringing a "feminist force" to Chinese society going through substantial changes.[454] The charitable work of the missionaries filled out those missing points in terms of social welfare. For instance, in some country areas, the only healthcare inhabitants could access was thanks to the negotiation of Catholic nuns.[455] They were not limited to working for families and churches; instead, they focused their efforts on areas of social reform such as arranged marriage, foot binding, health care, child abandonment, and education.[456] This discourse likely involved promoting Catholic teachings and values that emphasized the dignity, equality, and empowerment of women within the context of their faith. According to Spees, missionary women went to China to preach the Gospel and helped transform Chinese culture and society, especially for Chinese women. The missionaries influenced China's education and medical services as well as initiated changes that the Chinese reformers completed. When they arrived in China, they decided to advocate for Chinese women's rights in addition to converting them. Many women missionaries believed China needed Western culture and did not hesitate to introduce Western norms. However, the changes initiated by the missionaries often contradicted Confucian values, which were deeply embedded in Chinese culture.[457]

The strategy employed by the Ingenbohl nuns aimed at recruiting local women into their congregations in order to engage with citizens and facilitate their conversion.[458] The

[453] Carol C. Chin, 'Beneficient Imperialists: American Women Missionaries in China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 3 (June 2003): 327–52.

[454] Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*, 77.

[455] Leung, 'Chinese Catholic Sisters in the Modernization Era', 79.

[456] Zhang, 'Women in the Chinese Catholic Church'.

[457] Spees, 'Missionary Women in China: Changing China, Changing Themselves', 1.

[458] On the role of catechists and their importance in the building of the Catholic Church in foreign missions, see Amsler et al., *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia*; Amsler, *Jesuits and Matriarchs;* David Strong, *A Call to Mission: The Jesuits in China, 1842-1954. Volume I: The French Romance* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2018); Ji Li, *God's Little Daughters: Catholic Women in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria* (Seattle: University of

extensive participation of women in charity, education, and social work became closely associated with femininity in various ways. The concept of feminization of religion went beyond the numerical predominance of women in these activities and delved into the transformative nature of their roles. It referred not solely to the growing presence and dominance of women involved in religious roles as clergy members and in lay positions (see Figure 23), it also carried a metaphorical connotation.[459] The prominence of women in specific activities is attributed first to the fact that it tended to attract more women than men, and second because women eventually came to dominate this field. Some women were involved in training and employing local women as evangelists: they were Chinese women who had taken a vow of virginity and dedicated themselves entirely to the service of the Church without forming a formal community.[460] The available data reveals that in 1935 women serving as catechists were sixty-three, while the number of women in the teaching profession amounted to eighty-eight.[461] For the catechists, who were considered "the right arm of the missionary," special eight-month courses were meticulously organized every year from April to December. Admission to these courses was granted to aspirants who had either attended boarding school or completed high school, ensuring that they possessed the necessary qualities. The comprehensive curriculum for both male and female catechists encompassed lessons in catechism, sacred history, catechesis, homiletics, liturgy, and liturgical singing. As of 1938, the Apostolic Prefecture of Qiqihar had a total of 106 catechists of both genders.[462]

Washington Press, 2017); Charbonnier, *Christians in China*; Garrett Washington, ed., *Christianity and the Modern Woman in East Asia*, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, & Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 69 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009); Jessie Gregory Lutz, ed., *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility*, Studies in Missionaries and Christianity in China (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010); Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century China*; R. G. Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume 2, 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[459] van Osselaer and Buerman, 'Feminization Thesis'; Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 10.

[460] 'The Chinese Virgins and and the Oblates of St. Teresa', *Betlemme*, July 1939, 196–201.

[461] 'Reports and Statistics 1935', 6 September 1935, Vol.1264B Rub.24/6-24/9 Prot.4033/1935, A.P.F., 493-497.

[462] 'The Catechists', *Betlemme*, July 1939, 196–201.

Figure 23- Diocesan Catechists[463]

The Chinese women who assumed the role of catechists were significant in the development of the Church, particularly in Heilongjiang. Driven by a charitable spirit, they exemplified a specific image of femininity that was promoted through the circulation of images depicting them (see Figure 24). These pictures helped to reinforce the desired qualities of poverty, zealousness, and selfless devotion to the Church. By recruiting and empowering Chinese women as catechists, the Ingenbohl Sisters were able to establish a presence within the local Catholic community and effectively spread their religious teachings. The Chinese women, serving as dedicated representatives of the Church, played a crucial role in the conversion efforts and the growth of the Catholic Church in the region. At the same time, for many women who made the decision to join the religious community, it served as a means to enter the public field and assert their presence.

[463] 'Diözesan Katechistinnen', n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

Figure 24- The oldest catechist in the mission, Li té-té [464]

The photograph represents a 65-year-old widow, known affectionately as "Li-té-té," who despite being illiterate, was highly respected as a mother figure among the local population. Her example represents a specific approach to shaping the local female public role within the Church:

> She moved from village to village, spreading the Gospel and awakening the sympathy of those who were not religious to Catholicism. Through her maternal affability, Li-té-té touched many hearts in various places, thereby paving the way for the missionary to follow. The effectiveness of figures like Li-té-té was underscored by Fr. G. Küttel, who believed that with a dozen similar women, the conversion of his vast district, which encompassed an area of 6,700 km2 with 136,000 inhabitants, would soon be completed. [465]

[464] 'La Più Vecchia Catechista Della Nostra Missione', *Betlemme*, no. 3 (1936): 76–77.

[465] 'La Più Vecchia Catechista Della Nostra Missione'.

These images and narratives were instrumental in shaping the perception of female missionaries as capable, compassionate, and successful agents of conversion, while at the same time challenging gendered expectations and stereotypes about women's roles in missionary work. Indeed, the narrative of women as Li-té-té can be construed as a means of accessing the public sphere in order to enact a mode of agency through interpersonal engagement. First, despite being a poor and illiterate woman, she took it upon herself to spread the Gospel and share her faith with others. This shows a level of agency in her decision to become a catechist and evangelist. Additionally, Li-té-té's role as a respected "mother" figure in her community allowed her to connect with and influence people. Her representation aims to illustrate how even those who may not have formal education or social status could still have a significant impact and exercise agency in their communities. Nonetheless, she serves as just one illustrative example, while the numbers arising during that period serve as a true reflection of this impact. In the January 1939 edition of *Betlemme*, it is documented that the missionaries received significant assistance from different groups, among them one consisted of 2.769 catechists, teachers, and Chinese virgins. This collective played a pivotal role in facilitating the conversion of non-believers and in bolstering the overall impact of the Catholic mission. Notably, this support was most prominently manifested within the realm of education through a network of diverse schools. The educational infrastructure encompassed 213 primary schools, seven high schools, and 734 catechism schools, and served as a breeding ground for the cultivation of new Christian generations.[466]

The interconnection between religion and femininity played a crucial role in driving significant changes within Catholicism in twentieth-century China. Firstly, it conferred

[466] 'The First Centenary of the Catholic Missions in Manchuria', *Betlemme*, January 1939, 14–18. The primary objective of these schools was to educate catechumens in the fundamentals of Christianity, including catechism and the essential Christian prayers, while also providing them with basic literacy skills. These educational institutions were established in nearly all secondary locations where a permanent missionary presence was absent. Initially, there were forty-three such schools in the Mission, accommodating a total of 966 students during the period of 1930-31. However, these numbers grew significantly over time, with 185 schools and 4.936 students (2.206 boys and 1.730 girls) recorded in 1934-35. By 1936-37, the count stood at 140 schools with 3.688 students. In these prayer schools, the instruction was administered by a teacher or catechist for the boys, while the girls were taught by either a teacher or a Chinese virgin. By imparting a robust religious footing to the younger generation, missionaries held the conviction that the mission's future and advancement were assured and secure. The majority of students enrolled in these prayer schools hailed from families that were already practicing Christians. However, non-Christian children were also accepted, particularly if they displayed goodwill towards the mission. See Beckmann, 'Scuole Nella Prefettura Apostolica Di Tsitsikar'.

legitimacy to the increased involvement of Catholic women in defending the Church. This participation predominantly occurred in the private domain but held connections to the public sphere. Secondly, the discourse surrounding the feminization of Catholicism elucidates the gradual acceptance, by certain segments of the Church hierarchy, of a specific form of religious life—namely, female congregations. This aspect played a vital role in shaping a society that was constantly evolving.[467] The idea of feminization thesis promotes a gender-focused approach to examining Christianity, presenting a chance to move away from a male-centered viewpoint that has largely prevailed throughout religious history.

Local sisters: the Oblate of St. Therese of the Child Jesus

The involvement of committed Chinese women in mission work became a strategic imperative for the success of the mission. However, the scarcity of local religious communities of Chinese Catholic women in Manchuria until the early twentieth century was challenging for female missionaries in recruiting and training Chinese women to join these communities and stressed the need for more nuanced and culturally sensitive approaches to mission work that could navigate the complex socio-cultural ground of Chinese society.[468] Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Vatican had fostered the foundation of more local churches under the supervision of missionaries. In November of 1919, Pope Benedict XV promulgated an apostolic letter, known as *Maximum Illud*, which advocated for the indigenization of churches in foreign missions. The impetus for this call to action stemmed from the efforts of Vincent Lebbe and Antoine Cotta (1872-1957), who had been instrumental in leading the Tianjin Movement against the French Consul's seizure of Chinese land in 1916. They had recognized the need for strong church leadership in China and subsequently raised their concerns with the Holy See. It was in response to their advocacy that the Pope recognized the importance of indigenization and subsequently issued the apostolic letter. This

[467] Mínguez Blasco, 'Between Virgins and Priests: The Feminisation of Catholicism and Priestly Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain.'

[468] These communities included the Virgins of the Sacred Heart of Mary (1858, Xiaobajiazi), Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (1913, Jilin and Liaoning), Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary (1930, Jilin), Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Shenyang (1932, Liaoning), Sisters of the Holy Family (1934, Jilin), and Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Fushun (1939, Liaoning). See Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', 28.

move represented a progressive and enlightened decision on the part of the Pontiff and had the effect of encouraging foreign missionaries and Chinese converts to focus their efforts on supporting local church leadership and trusting in the capabilities of the Chinese people.[469] In addition, the apostolic letter underscored the importance of the contribution of nuns to missionary work: they were instrumental in establishing institutions such as schools, orphanages, and hospitals, and their commitment was essential in developing charitable activities and spreading the faith. Pope Benedict XV acclaimed sisters for their diligence and devotion, recognizing their significant role in the mission field.[470]

In the early 1800s, Catholic women's communities were established in Manchuria after the formation of the Manchuria Mission. Bishop Emmanuel Verrolles (1805-1878), the first vicar apostolic of Manchuria, made his first visit to Xiaobajiazi in 1840 and later set up a convent to train local unmarried women. The mission's primary strategy was to encourage Catholic women to live together in communal settings and receive training as missionaries or teachers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, only a small number of native Chinese Catholic women communities had been established in Manchuria. These communities included the Virgins of the Sacred Heart of Mary (1858, Xiaobajiazi), Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (1913, Jilin and Liaoning), Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary (1930, Jilin), Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Shenyang (1932, Liaoning), Sisters of the Holy Family (1934, Jilin), and Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Fushun (1939, Liaoning). However, the establishment and growth of these local communities relied heavily on the support of foreign missionaries or religious orders of women.[471]

In the late 1920s, the first Apostolic Prefect of Qiqihar Msgr. Eugen Imhof (1899-1934) assisted by Sr. Theobalda and Sr. Franziska opened the Novitiate for the native sisters of Oblates of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Laha, Heilongjiang, a larger village north of Qiqihar. It was dedicated to training Chinese Catholic Virgins to assist with evangelism, medical assistance and education:

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[469] Cindy Yik-yi Chu, ed., *Catholicism in China, 1900-Present: The Development of the Chinese Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 97-98; 129-130.

[470] Robert A. Hunt, *The Gospel among the Nations: A Documentary History of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 108; 110.

[471] Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', 27-28; Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*.

> We had a house of our own. Our occupation was to give religious instruction, learn the language, keep the house in order with the girls, get clothes and laundry, work in the garden, get chickens, etc. The priests who had their parishes outside the city of Qiqihar always brought girls who should and wanted to study with us… Msgr. Imhof once said to me: 'You don't have to think that all girls have to become monastics. If there are only good housewives, I am more than satisfied.[472]

The representation of women through the sister's memoirs is reflective of a broader cultural and historical context, in which traditional gender roles were often narrowly defined, and women's opportunities for education, employment, and social participation were limited. The statement made by Msgr. Imhof, expressing satisfaction with the prospect of girls becoming good housewives, suggests a particular attitude toward the role of women in the community. Indeed, the missionaries undertook the task of training Chinese women to assume roles as educators and medical practitioners, while also instilling in them the ideals of becoming devoted Christian spouses and mothers.[473] They provided these women with opportunities to embrace new professional and societal positions, albeit with cautionary measures to prevent them from straying beyond traditional gender boundaries. Furthermore, as representatives of Christianity and European culture, the missionaries embarked on their mission with the intention of effecting change rather than undergoing personal transformation. Within the mission schools, they facilitated the emergence of cultural amalgamations but remained steadfast in preserving their own European and Christian identities, assured of the superiority

[472] 'Erinnerungen von Schwester Franziska-Maria Jung, in China 1928-51', GenArchivSCSC-06-1442, 1-3.

[473] The schools established by the nuns with the help of the Theresian Community were a significant contribution to the building up of the mission. They were trained for many years by foreign sisters, especially Sr. Blandina and Franziska, assisted by Fr.M. Baumann, who profoundly influenced their education. Missionary nuns, thus, placed models of academic accomplishment for Chinese sisters. Under Christian guidance, girls were educated to respect Catholic teachings and assumed to return to the family as good wives and mothers with strong Christian values. Women's moralities, particularly obedience to their husbands, were also emphasized by teachers. However, the sisters' professional efforts in education contributed to modeling a new idea of womanhood in China. See Binkert, 'China Chronik. Note: 1981 - 1983 Compiled from Written and Oral Reports', 7; Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', 28; "Schwestern von Ingenbohl Vom Heil Kreuz u Theresien-Schwestern Tsitsihar, 1927-52", Tsitsikar-Archive: Das Wichtigste, n.d., Provisional Signature F028, 01.1.1-01.1.14, A.M.B., Staatsarchiv Luzern.

of European heritage and the benevolence of their faith. As proponents of beneficence, missionaries perceived it as their duty to help and reconstruct the lives of Chinese girls, firmly convinced of the righteousness of their mission. According to their auto-narrative, the collaborative relationship between foreign and native sisters in Manchuria in founding independent native congregations was successful:

> […] They devote themselves to education in the schools, direct various works of charity and take particular care of the formation of the native sisters. The first four made their religious profession this year, and ten others are preparing for it. In all respects, the native sisters follow the lifestyle of the European sisters, except for food and housing, which for obvious reasons have retained their Korean character.[474]

The inclusion of Korean sisters in the context of Heilongjiang sheds light on the rich tapestry of intercultural and international relations, religious dynamics, and historical developments in the region during this period. During the early twentieth century, Manchuria was not exclusively settled by migrant workers from northern China. The region's alluring economic prospects, coupled with political rivalries between China, Russia, and Japan, facilitated a significant inflow of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Russians, Japanese, and Koreans, to migrate to Manchuria. Koreans constituted the largest non-Chinese immigrant population in Manchuria. [475] The migration to Manchuria involved a deliberate

[474] *Betlemme*, no. 6 (1937): 186–88.

[475] See Gottschang and Lary, *Swallows and Settlers*, 66-67. Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, the vast and underdeveloped northern lands of Manchuria began to attract interest from Russia and Japan. In response to the growing threat of Russian expansionism, the Qing government made the decision to open up Manchuria for settlement, initially in 1860 for the northern territories and in 1887 for the entire region. Between 1936 and 1940, there was a sudden surge in emigration, both to Japan and Manchuria. During this time, the Japanese government implemented distinct policies concerning the movement of Koreans between these regions. The purpose was to manage the potential conflicts that might arise with Japanese laborers due to the significant employment of low-cost Korean workers in Japanese industries. Consequently, they aimed to restrict Koreans' migration to Japan. Conversely, the movement of Koreans to Manchuria was not only encouraged but also organized on a massive scale. This was primarily to develop Manchuria, which had been newly invaded by Japan, into an agricultural base for Japan's benefit. However, in 1939, Japan's engagement in war with China, and subsequently the rest of

effort to introduce agricultural practices to previously undeveloped lands. The Korean immigrants constituted the dominant ethnic group in the settled areas, leading to the formation of separate Korean communities with minimal integration into the local Manchurian and Chinese populations. In this sense, they can be seen as pioneering settlers in their new destination. Contrasting their experience with the life of Koreans in Japan, characterized by complete subordination to Japanese society, those in Manchuria faced a series of challenges, including adapting to the demanding natural environment, resisting the Japanese invasion, and combating the exploitation by absentee Chinese landlords. These arduous circumstances likely contributed to the development of strong community solidarity among the Korean settlers in Manchuria.[476] The insights provided by the text have important implications for a more complex and nuanced understanding of the historical significance of the Catholic Church's work in China and its impact on transnational relations in the region. It highlights the need to move beyond a narrow nationalistic frame and instead consider the multifaceted intercultural and international relations at play in the region of Heilongjiang in the twentieth century. Internal letters, indeed, represent these virgins as valuable help to the missionary: they knew the local people's customs and traditions much better than the foreign missionary, and they had the most accessible access to people and families:

> Suppose, for instance, an invalid marriage is taking place or conflicts have arisen among the Christians. Alternatively, if a Christian is causing public trouble by smoking, selling opium, or leading a questionable lifestyle, the missionary is often unaware of such situations. However, the native sister, with her watchful eye and keen ear, is knowledgeable about everything that goes on. As a result, by informing the missionary, many grievances can be identified and resolved in a timely manner. [477]

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the world, led to a halt in migration to China. Instead, Japan resorted to shipping a considerable number of labor draftees from Korea to Japan to address the labor shortage resulting from the military draft of Japanese youth during the war. For an analysis of the development of Manchuria, see also McCormack, *Chang Tso-Lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928*, 48; Tai-Hwan Kwon, 'International Migration of Koreans and the Korean Community in China', *Korea Journal of Population and Development* 26, no. 1 (July 1997): 1–18, 5-6.

[476] Kwon, 'International Migration of Koreans and the Korean Community in China', 6.

[477] 'Unsere Chinesischen Schwestern', Tsitsikar-Archive: Das Wichtigste, 1948, Provisional Signature F028, 01.1.1-01.1.14, GenArchivSCSC-06-1442, 59.

Theresian sisters heard and saw many things that the minister missed or was not told. Furthermore, and provided service in schools, churches, houses, and yard works. They sowed and planted, washed and cooked, sewed and mended, studied and learned. They taught the children and prepared children and adults for the reception of the holy sacraments; they visited the parents of the children and gave them reports about mistakes and difficulties, diligence, and progress; they visited the sick and sometimes brought them some medicine when the missionary still had it. [478]

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of whether the involvement of women within the religious community represents a manifestation of female empowerment and its implications for Chinese society, it is important to recognize the considerable number of women actively involved. The native Congregation of St. Therese, in 1940, numbered thirty-five Candidates, and among them three Postulants. At Laha, fourteen Aspirants worked and studied separately from the other Candidates. They were entrusted to Sr Blandina, while the others continued their formation under the leadership of Sr Francisca.[479]

In October 1944, a total of nine newly selected women were granted admission into the Theresian Congregation residence as Candidates, while an additional nine senior Candidates were appointed to various positions for a specified period of evaluation. Furthermore, three Candidates were admitted as Postulants, while six Postulants commenced their Novitiate. During this time, three Novices solemnized their initial vows, whereas two Professed members chose to reaffirm their commitment.[480] The first Superior of the Theresian Congregation was Elizabeth Liu (in Figure 25, the fourth from the left in the first row), wearing the typical dress of local sisters.[481]

> The Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. The dress of the novices shall consist of a black Chinese tunic with a white turned-down collar and a black veil for the head with a white band around the forehead. The dress and veil shall be made of woven linen. They shall wear a

[478] 'Unsere Chinesischen Schwestern', 58-59.

[479] 'Il Noviziato Delle Suore Indigene a Laha', *Betlemme*, no. 9 (1940): 261–64.

[480] 'Manciuria-Prefettura Apostolica Di Tsitsikar', *Betlemme*, no. 10 (1944): 259.

[481] 'Isabel (Elizabeth)', n.d., GenArchivSCSC-06-1445, 1.

> medal of Saint Therese (of the Child Jesus) on the chest, suspended from a black band.[482]

The clothing reflects the distinctive sartorial traditions and symbols embraced by the Congregation (see Figure 25). The incorporation of elements such as the black tunic, white collar, and black veil with a white forehead band aligns with the traditional attire often associated with Catholic religious sisters. The adoption of these Western-inspired elements suggests a cross-cultural exchange and the influence of broader Catholic traditions within the Congregation. The inclusion of the medal of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus as a distinguishing accessory demonstrates a merging of the Congregation's devotion to Saint Therese and the broader Catholic tradition. This amalgamation of influences served to strengthen the spiritual identity of the Congregation and create a sense of continuity with the wider Catholic Church. Also, the predominance of young sisters within the Theresian Congregation, as visible in the photograph, could be attributed to various factors and considerations that shaped the composition of the religious order. Firstly, it was not uncommon for religious congregations to attract and admit individuals at a younger age in order to ensure longer service and dedication to their chosen vocation. [483] Younger individuals were generally seen as having a greater potential for sustained commitment to religious life, allowing them to actively contribute and serve the congregation for an extended period. Furthermore, the selection process for candidates within religious orders often involved assessing the physical and mental suitability of applicants. Younger women were typically considered to possess higher levels of energy and adaptability, which were valued qualities in the demanding and disciplined environment of religious life. Moreover, younger candidates were also seen as having a greater capacity for spiritual growth, intellectual development, and the acquisition of the necessary skills and knowledge required to fulfill their religious duties. By attracting and nurturing young women who were willing to commit themselves to the

[482] (Qiqihar, 4 April 1940), Vol.1399 Rub.24/7-24/14 Prot.1339/1940, A.P.F.

[483] The young age at which missionaries of both genders embark on their missions is extensively referenced in many academic studies. See Charbonnier, *Christians in China*; Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*; Latourette, 'Missionaries Abroad'; Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women'; Bradshaw, 'Religious Women in China: An Understanding of Indigenization'.

Theresian congregation, it became possible to maintain a consistent influx of members who could carry forward the mission, values, and traditions of the congregation.

Figure 25- "Our Chinese sisters." From top left to right, it can be recognized: Wang Philomena, Wang Malia, Dschau Perpetua, Jän Magdalena, Ha Malia, Dschau Agnes, Liu Barbara, Wang ?, Dschang Rosa, Wang djing sien Theres, Guän Klara, Hsui Malia, Tsi Luzia, Du Maria, Li Rosa, Dschau Anna, Dschang Malia, Pän Theres, Jän Theres, Li Rosa, Franzisca Jung, Dscang Maria, Li Malia, Wang Rosa, Laiu Agnes, Hiüe Malia, Bee Magdalena, Tsi Magdalena, Tsi Rosa, Guän Katharina, Dschang Agnes, Hsia Maria, Liu Elizabeth, Wang Theres.[484]

[484] 'Unsere Chinesischen Schwestern', 59.

Adhering to virtue: rules and hierarchy for the Theresian Virgins

As local Catholic virgins began to take a more active role in mission work, their interaction with foreign male missionaries intensified. Despite the sensitivity of the relationship between foreign male missionaries and local virgins, the Church of Manchuria actively promoted the participation of Christian virgins in mission work. On the one hand, the nuns emphasize the valuable contributions of the young women to the missionary effort, highlighting their knowledge of local culture and customs and their accessibility to local people and families. Furthermore, the nuns describe the diverse range of tasks performed by the young women, from domestic chores to teaching and ministering, indicating a broadening of traditional gender roles for women within the context of the missionary enterprise. Hence, contact between the missionaries and the virgins was encouraged as a means to expand the mission.[485] At the same time, however, the discourse also reveals a certain idealization of Catholic femininity and a rigid hierarchical organization, expressed through the *Rules* the virgins had to follow. [486]

The text titled *Regeln Für Die H.H. Missionare Und Ehrw. Schwestern in Bezug Auf Die Theresien-Jungfrauen* (*The Rules for the Missionaries and Sisters Regarding the Theresian Virgins)* provides a description of the hierarchical power structure in which the Church priest holds authority over the virgins. The priest assumes the responsibility of determining their tasks and ensuring their adherence to the rules. The rules outlined specific conventions that virgins were required to adhere to and emphasized obedience toward their superiors, in this case, the priest.[487] They suggest that the role envisioned for the virgins was primarily religious in nature, as the main purpose of the congregation was to spread the glory of God through the members observing the three vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity. The second purpose was to spread and deepen the Kingdom of God in the mission. The text indicates that the priest of the Church had unlimited rights and was given the responsibility to set the agenda for the virgins and ensure that they observed the rules. The *Rules* specified particular duties: they were not allowed to be called upon for long periods or too often for domestic work in the missionary's kitchen and living room or nursing a priest. They were

[485] Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', 26.

[486] 'Regeln Für Die H.H. Missionare Und Ehrw. Schwestern in Bezug Auf Die Theresien-Jungfrauen', *Der Steppenreiter*, 1940, Provisional Signature F028, 01.1.1-01.1.14, A.M.B., Staatsarchiv Luzern.

[487] 'Regeln Für Die H.H. Missionare Und Ehrw. Schwestern in Bezug Auf Die Theresien-Jungfrauen'.

entitled to an hour of rest at noon during summers. The virgins had one or two meals and one meal of meat or fish with some fresh or salted vegetables to add. Strict adherence to discipline was required: the rules stated that the virgins had to keep separate, clean, and conscientious accounts of all expenditures, whether for the church and school or themselves personally. They were not allowed to write letters to each other, nor were they allowed to write to priests, sisters, and other acquaintances without the permission of the priest. Accepting gifts without the knowledge of the priest was also not allowed. They had to observe silence among themselves from 8 p.m. in winter and from 9 p.m. in summer until 11 o'clock. Regarding the relationship between the sisters and the virgins, they were both autonomous and independent of each other. Sisters and virgins should have maintained friendly relations with each other. They had to visit each other now and then, preferably on Sundays, in such a way that once the virgins go to the sisters and the additional time the sisters go to the virgins.[488] The duties of the virgins were deemed critical since any neglect on their part could result in mistakes: were they exposed to danger recklessly and without protection, or were these rules grossly violated by the missionaries, the virgins would have been irrevocably withdrawn.[489]

The rules outlined in the text offer a representation of the hierarchical power dynamic in which the priest of the Church exercises authority over the virgins. The priest was responsible for setting the agenda for them, ensuring their compliance with the rules, and assigning each virgin her bent. The text suggests that the virgins were subject to strict control and supervision by the priest, who had the power to regulate their actions, such as limiting their domestic work or letter-writing privileges. Moreover, the rules specified certain qualities: the virgins were expected to maintain strict behavioral codes, including observing the three vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, and were required to keep separate and conscientious accounts of expenditures. The rules of local virgins illustrated that the virgins were expected to embody a highly disciplined and regulated lifestyle, emphasizing their religious purpose and strict adherence to behavioral codes. They were also a common feature in other religious orders, as will be analyzed in the next chapter with the Canossian Sisters and the local Tertiaries.[490]

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[488] 'Zu Den Regeln Für Die Missionare', n.d., GenArchivSCSC-06-1444, 1.

[489] 'Regeln Für Die H.H. Missionare Und Ehrw. Schwestern in Bezug Auf Die Theresien-Jungfrauen'.

[490] Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *The Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Evolution of the Catholic Church*, Christianity in Modern China (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1853-4, 15-20.

The Virgins underwent a reorganization with a focus on dedicating themselves to teaching and spreading the Christian faith. Within this context, the primary duty of the Christian Virgins was to educate people about the Catholic catechism. This emphasis on teaching was also a prominent evangelical strategy employed by the SMB in Manchuria. The objective was to train teachers for catechism classes and Catholic schools. Christian Virgins were expected to possess advanced literacy skills and a profound religious understanding. Essentially, the considerable number of Christian Virgins present in the Manchuria Mission led to the formation of a group of educated women with religious knowledge, albeit unrecognized, within rural Chinese society. The active involvement of Christian Virgins in education and their high level of literacy represented a significant advancement in the SMB's approach toward Christian women.[491]

Nonetheless, as in this case, the Catholic Church served to perpetuate and legitimize societal and gender disparities, primarily by relegating virgins to inferior positions. According to the perspective of several scholars, the process of feminization within Catholicism cannot be dissociated from the concurrent development of a conservative and reactionary Church, characterized by the predominance of a clerical hierarchy, with the pope serving as the supreme leader.[492] Under this framework, local virgins were constrained to roles that confined them to domestic duties. Within these enclosed spaces, they remained subject to the control of men, specifically the clergy, either through direct authority or indirect influence exerted through stringent regulations and guidelines. Consequently, the feminization of Catholicism became intricately intertwined with the construction and preservation of a gendered order that systematically subordinated local virgins and reinforced patriarchal power dynamics within the Church.

Also, as scholars delved into the feminization thesis and adopted more sophisticated gender perspectives, they uncovered additional findings and interpretations. One such revelation was the extensive involvement of women in religious institutions which offered women opportunities to participate in missions, charitable endeavors, education, and

[491] Just as it happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the purpose behind the establishment of virgin communities remained unchanged; Ji Li, 'Chinese Christian Virgins and Catholic Communities of Women in Northeast China', 25-26.

[492] Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 15-16.

healthcare within a relatively egalitarian setting. [493] It served as an escape from the constricting confines of family life, even if it came with its own set of limitations. In some cases, it led to the creation of a distinct realm for women, where they held authority. It was the case of the relief and wounded care during wartime China, which were primarily associated with women and fell under their sphere of authority. Unfortunately, as illustrated in the next subchapter, there is a scarcity of information regarding the specific involvement and experiences of local sisters during the war. The primary sources, such as letters and official reports from Ingenbohl's internal archive, predominantly shed light on the relief work carried out by Swiss nuns, offering valuable insights into their activities.

Catholic mission at war: The Apostolic Delegation of Mario Zanin between religious inculturation and *plantatio Ecclesiae*

Following the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, the Mission entered a turbulent period. How did relief efforts transform during the war, and what implications did these changes hold for the role of Catholic women in providing relief? On the one hand, there was a distinct upsurge of interest in Christianity amongst the Chinese inhabitants, on the other hand, the Japanese increasingly placed restrictions on missionary work. The conflict presented the Vatican with a diplomatic challenge regarding whether or not to acknowledge the existence of Manzhouguo, the puppet state created by Japan in Manchuria. The Vatican's primary concern was safeguarding the religious rights of Catholics in the region, while also attempting to avoid further straining relations with Japan. However, Chinese Catholics, foreign missionaries in China, and the Nanjing Government vehemently opposed any overtures from the Church towards Manzhouguo, which had only been acknowledged by Japan and El Salvador. Chinese bishops submitted a "Joint Letter to the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations" in 1932, which sought to counter the perception that China was under Bolshevik control and argued that the Chinese populace had the right to boycott Japanese goods in response to the invasion of Manchuria.[494]

[493] See for example Sarah Ann Curtis, *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

[494] See Shin'ichi Yamamuro, *Manchuria under Japanese Dominion*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Philip S. Jowett, *Rays of the Rising Sun: Armed Forces of Japan's*

The Vatican appointed Auguste Gaspais (1884-1952) from the Paris Foreign Missions Society as a representative to the Manzhouguo government, while also instructing churches to display the Manzhouguo flag alongside the Vatican flag.[495] Although this gesture was interpreted by missionaries and Japanese authorities as a de facto recognition of the state, the Vatican deliberately abstained from establishing any formal concordat or treaty to establish diplomatic relations with Manzhouguo, in light of international opposition to Japan's aggression. Consequently, postwar apologists for the Church maintained that the Vatican never officially recognized Manzhouguo, while critics accused the Church of being the only international actor, aside from El Salvador, to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new state. It is worth noting, however, that other governments such as France and the Soviet Union also extended varying degrees of recognition to Manzhouguo.[496]

The Papal delegate to China, Mario Zanin, arrived in China in 1934 and assumed the position of Apostolic Delegate, previously held by Costantini, in Beijing.[497] With the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan, the gradual occupation of central and eastern China began. This resulted in the fall of Beijing on August 8, 1937, and the subsequent occupation

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Asian Allies, 1931-45 (Solihull, England: Helion, 2004); Robert H. Ferrell, 'The Mukden Incident: September 18-19, 1931', *The Journal of Modern History* 27, no. 1 (March 1955): 66–72, https://doi.org/10.1086/237763; Long-hsuen Hsu Hsu and Ming-kai Chang, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)*, 2nd ed. (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971).

[495] On the relationships between the Catholic Church and the Manzhouguo see also John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 329; Thomas Dubois, *Empire and the Meaning of Religion in Northeast Asia: Manchuria 1900–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[496] Steven Pieragastini, 'Colonialism, Imperialism, and Relations with Local Powers: China', in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Catholic Church in East Asia*, ed. Cindy Yik-yi Chu and Beatrice Leung (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2021), 1–30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9365-9_13-1, 18

[497] His Chinese name was *Cai Ning* 蔡寧. He was Apostolic Delegate from 1933 to 1946, particularly responsible for the growth (1934-1937) and the tenacious survival (1937-1945) of the Chinese religious community during twelve of the most difficult years in the history of China, which was simultaneously hit by natural disasters, civil wars, foreign occupation, and a world war. He paid more attention to works than to diplomatic relations, continuing in the extremely difficult situation what his predecessor Celso Costantini started between 1922 and 1933 in the field of religious decolonization, *plantatio Ecclesiae,* and Christian inculturation. See Olivier Sibre, *Le Saint-Siège et l'Extrême-Orient: Chine, Corée, Japon: De León XIII à Pie XII (1880-1952)*, Collection de l'Ecole Française de Rome 459 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2012); Christian Gabrieli, 'La Delegazione Apostolica a Pechino, Preludio Delle Relazioni Diplomatiche Tra Santa Sede e Repubblica Cinese (1922-1936)', in *Chiesa e Stato in Cina. Dalle Imprese Di Costantini Alle Svolte Attuali*, ed. Bruno Fabio Pighin (Venice: Marcianum Press, 2010), 43–83.

of Nanjing in early 1938, thereby establishing new puppet governments under Japanese control. In response, Chiang Kai-shek opted to disassemble and transfer industrial machinery to Chongqing, which was designated as the new temporary capital in Sichuan. Despite these developments, Zanin elected to remain in occupied Beijing, while assigning the responsibility of managing Catholic interests in the free areas still under the Nationalist government to Luis-Gabriel Xavier Jantzen (1885-1953), who took over the apostolic vicariate of Chongqing.[498]

The expansion of the Japanese empire posed a dire threat to the Catholic Church in China. In addition to grappling with an overwhelming refugee and economic crisis, the Japanese victories of the late 1930s resulted in the significant destruction or damage of numerous churches, as well as the deaths of several Catholic civilians and priests. This prompted a flurry of diplomatic correspondence, with the French Legation in China and other countries' legations, including the USA, Germany, and Italy, lodging complaints with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Despite extended negotiations, only limited compensation was provided, which proved to be inadequate to cover the damages incurred. The Japanese occupation also raised concerns about collaboration, as they sought to establish a collaborationist regime by enlisting the support of local elites, including some prominent Chinese Catholics. Following the cessation of hostilities in Shanghai in late 1937, Japan set up a transitional administration known as the "Great Way" government and reached out to potential leaders of a more permanent collaborationist regime. One of the local elites approached by the Japanese was Lu Bohong 陆伯鸿 (1875-1937), a prominent Catholic businessman and philanthropist from the Jiangnan Catholic community, who had strong familial, business, and personal ties to other Catholic lineages in the region. [499] Along with

[498] Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony*, 249.

[499] Lu Bohong came from a devout Catholic family in Shanghai, prominent for their collaborations with foreign entrepreneurs in various fields such as trade, industry, and banking. Despite being perceived as a successful businessman leveraging his connections with mission procurators, Lu strategically utilized his abilities and wealth for altruistic causes. Renowned for his adept organizational skills and philanthropy, he received numerous appeals to support Catholic charitable ventures. Notably, he funded the Franciscan Sisters' clinic for the impoverished in Yangshupu in 1914, followed by contributions to several Catholic medical facilities in Shanghai. His significant involvement in establishing the "Central Hospital" in Beijing in 1918 marked a milestone as the first hospital of modern, Chinese-founded origin, though reliant on the French Vincentian Sisters due to the scarcity of trained Chinese nurses. Throughout his life, Lu Bohong was likened to a modern-day Vincent de Paul, instrumental in co-founding the Catholic Action in Shanghai in 1913 and serving as its president. Regarded as a global citizen and honored with the prestigious title of "Papal Chamberlain of the Sword and Cape" in 1936, he represented China at the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila in February

other Catholic businessmen in Shanghai, Lu had also cultivated a close relationship with the French Municipal Council, which governed the French Concession. During the late 1930s, the Japanese government and military sought to improve their relationship with Catholics in China, especially foreign missionaries. They enlisted the help of Paul Taguchi Yoshigorō (1902-1978), who would become the Bishop of Osaka and a Cardinal, and Major Yokohama Hikomasa. Additionally, they attempted to establish connections between Chinese and Japanese Catholics and promote Japan's war claims by following a successful model used with Buddhist communities. As part of these efforts, an "Executive Commission for Peace and Prosperity in the Far East" was established by the Shimeikai Catholic organization. The Commission included both Catholics and non-Catholics, such as Takami Yukimichi (1880-1962), a member of the Japanese Diet. The Commission's inaugural letter urged peace and reconciliation between Japan and China, while also blaming the Soviet Comintern for orchestrating the war. However, despite this statement, it seems that the Shimeikai Commission did not achieve much and did not succeed in building extensive ties with a broader imperial network of Catholics. [500]

Furthermore, the wartime period between 1937 and 1945 was devastating: Catholic churches, schools, and hospitals were under bomb attacks and Chinese Catholics were among

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1937. Starting in September 1937, Chinese neighborhoods faced relentless Japanese bombardment, while the Foreign Concessions remained untouched. Fleeing the city became a common choice for many of the upper class during this tumultuous time. Lu Bohong contemplated leaving for Hong Kong amidst the chaos but received advice from Bishop Auguste Haouissée, SJ (1877–1948), suggesting staying in the city. The complexity heightened following the city's occupation as the Japanese sought to establish a cooperative city government, involving respected Chinese figures. However, the Kuomintang (KMT) government, expelled from Nanjing after the tragic Nanjing Massacre in December 1937, strictly forbade any collaboration with the occupying forces. This political deadlock persisted until December 30, 1937, when Lu Bohong left their refuge in the French Concession and was killed. He was considered an accomplice to the Japanese regime, prompting the actions of KMT patriots to remove him from the scene. He was posthumously stigmatized as a *hanjian* 汉奸 (collaborator with Japan), despite an absence of substantiated evidence of his involvement with the Japanese occupiers. Nevertheless, within the Chinese context, citiziens branded with this term were vehemently condemned, resulting in the revered "Saint of Shanghai" becoming a non-appreciated person following his death. See Leopold Leed, *Shanghai's Forgotten Apostle of Charity Joseph Lu Bohong (1875-1937)* (Bochum; Freiburg: Projekt Verlag, 2022); Anthony E. Clark, *China's Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church*. (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Paul Schulz, "Lopahong, Apostel der Karitas in China," in: *Steyler Missionsbote* 65 (April 1938) 7, 187-190.

[500] Pieragastini, 'Colonialism, Imperialism, and Relations with Local Powers', 19-20.

the many interned or victims of wartime brutalities. Superiors of the several vicariates lost contact with their missionaries, financial support from abroad was interrupted, and the Church tried to arrange relief assistance to masses of refugees due to the progressively critical inflation and supply distribution. Nevertheless, the provision of relief work and aid services by Catholic-affiliated organizations and missionaries during the war garnered considerable support and sympathy for Catholics from the Chinese populace, thus mitigating the historical associations between the Church and imperialistic practices.[501]

The turbulent years of the Second World War, marked by the collapse of national and international relations, exerted considerable pressure from Rome and eventually paved the way for the indigenization of Church governance in China. Mario Zanin encouraged Catholics to ignore political views and nationalism and concentrate their efforts on assisting the wounded and victims of the war. During the second phase of his tenure, Zanin's focus shifted towards Christian charity and spiritual support, prioritizing "prayer and charity." [502] The growth trend of the Church in China during his initial term was disrupted by the onset of war, which led to widespread destruction, an influx of refugees, and the internment or killing of numerous missionaries. Consequently, Zanin's primary attention was on addressing practical concerns related to the war, such as providing aid to victims, facilitating evacuations, fundraising for displaced persons and damaged structures, and managing the daily expenses of missions. In areas occupied by Japan, most Catholics sought to coexist with the occupiers, while some collaborated with them, and others actively resisted, often resulting in their demise. In a circular letter dated March 4, 1939, Zanin urged the Catholic clergy to maintain strict neutrality and avoid taking sides in the conflict. He advised caution and warned against actions that could provoke retaliation, in order to protect the entire community from the consequences of individual actions, thus, prohibiting any political involvement.[503] However, his stance encountered opposition from the nationalist government and those who advocated for active or passive resistance to the invading forces. Consequently, Zanin largely remained

[501] Pieragastini, 17. This is an important aspect that concerned not only Manchuria, but also the other parts where missionaries worked in China and around the world, for instance see Antonio Camnahas, 'The Catholic Mission in the Lesser Sunda Islands–Indonesia under the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). From One Apostolic Prefecture to Two Apostolic Vicariates (1913-1942)' (Apud Collegium Verbi Divini, 2020). For a deeper understanding on the role of Catholic Church during the Second Worl War, see Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[502] Sibre, *Le Saint-Siège et l'Extrême-Orient*, 619.

[503] Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony*, 249.

silent on this issue, focusing instead on addressing the immediate consequences of the war and fulfilling his pastoral duties. The protracted conflict in China not only caused widespread devastation on the ground but also triggered a high-level diplomatic competition in Rome, particularly within the Church hierarchy, among factions that were either pro-Chinese or pro-Japanese. Significant were the missionary orders active in both countries and the influential Japan advocacy coalition, led by Paolo Marella (1895-1984), the Apostolic Delegate to Japan, and Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi (1872-1960), Prefect of Propaganda Fide and a former Apostolic Delegate to Japan. Their efforts aimed to promote the Japanese stance, while Propaganda Fide as a whole leaned towards a pro-China stance due to the size and potential growth of the Catholic community in China. Despite attempts by the pro-Japan faction to have Zanin replaced as Apostolic Delegate to China by someone more favorable towards Japan, such as Jeanne de Vienne (1877-1957), the Lazarist Vicar Apostolic of Tianjin, such efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful.[504]

Despite the Church's strong anti-Communist stance, which may have inclined it towards a pro-Japanese position, the Japanese atrocities and bombings of churches during the war tarnished the image of the Japanese in Rome and across the Catholic world. Additionally, the war contributed to the localization of the Church in both China and Japan. In order to maintain the appearance of impartiality in the conflict, the Vatican paid attention to ensuring consistency in the localization process in both countries. For instance, after Japanese Catholics were permitted to participate in State Shinto ceremonies honoring the emperor, the long-standing Chinese Rites Controversy was resolved through Propaganda Fide's Instruction *Plane Compertum*, which classified ancestor veneration as a "civil" ceremony. [505] Furthermore, in 1942, both Japan and China (represented by the Chongqing government) established de facto diplomatic relations with the Vatican in close succession. [506]

[504] Régis Ladous and Pierre Blanchard, *Le Vatican et Le Japon Dans La Guerre de La Grande Asie Orientale: La Mission Marella*, Pages d'histoire (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2010), 303-321.

[505] See 'Plane Compertum', in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 32 (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1940), https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-32-1940-ocr.pdf; George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginning to Modern Times*, A Campion Book (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 195-203.

[506] Pieragastini, 'Colonialism, Imperialism, and Relations with Local Powers', 21.

Sisters of mercy: rescue and relief

Against the backdrop of this tumultuous war, relief efforts took on a transnational dimension, presenting new opportunities and expectations for female religious orders.[507] Ingenbohl Sisters, together with the local virgins, organized in small groups and operated in the field of medical relief activities to provide assistance and primary aid to their community. Some of them had acquired specialized expertise in different relief areas such as operation, anesthesia, and departmental nursing prior to embarking on their mission work. They engaged in extensive preparatory activities for several months, aimed at augmenting their efficacy, which included pursuing additional knowledge through immersion in French and English, participating in internships with dental professionals, shadowing ophthalmologists in eye clinics, and furthering their pharmaceutical knowledge through apprenticeships in hospital pharmacies. [508]

The measure of feminization in religious personnel considered the significant achievements of female congregations and communities, as well as their expansion into different work areas beyond the evangelization and religious activities such as hospitals, youth centers, and maternity care.[509] They established medical dispensaries and clinics to care for the wounded, sick, poor, and refugees: the nurse sisters stationed in Zhaozhou were Sr. Moderata Zwicker and Sr. Dafrosa Imhof worked at St. Rafael's Pharmacy; at Fenglezhen, St. Archangela Lecky and Sr. Ancilla Marichel were in charge of St. Clare's Pharmacy; in Dalai, Sr. Aquilana, Sr. Ubalda Hirtenfelder, Sr. Sekundia Treier, and Sr. Elfrieda Mareš Pohoř managed the Hospital of Merciful Love and Pharmacy for the Poor; at Baiquan, Sr. Georgina Dittler, Sr. Lima Sulzbacher, and Sr. Arilda Hess ran St. Joseph Hospital and Pharmacy for the Poor. [510] The study of medicinal herbology was featured as a vital component of their preparations, given that it was likely to be the sole remedy available during their mission work. The local population, in particular, manifested a marked preference for medicinal teas, and the missionaries prioritized honing their knowledge of local remedies to better serve their

[507] Brejon de Lavergnée, 'Female Religious Empires. A Transnational Network of Nursing Nuns in the Atlantic World (Late 19th-Early 20th Centuries)', 218-219.

[508] 'The Activity of the Sisters of Ingenbohl in the Mission Stations in Tsitzichar & Paichuan (Heilungkiang, China)', n.d., GenArchivSCSC-06-1443, 2.

[509] van Osselaer and Buerman, 'Feminization Thesis'.

[510] 'Manschukuo', 1940, GenArchivSCSC-06-1443.

patients.[511] The motherhouse in Ingenbohl supported the nuns, ensuring they had access to the requisite resources needed to conduct their work, including portable pharmacies for outpatient nursing, surgical instruments, medicines, and bandages. They were also provided with a diverse assortment of medicinal tea to assist them in treating their patients. [512]

Sisters believed that the dispensaries were an effective way to gain the trust of the community. As a result, they organized clinics to share knowledge about maternal health and illnesses. The community members initially exhibited suspicion and shyness towards the sisters, hindering the diagnostic process. The examination of the patient's pulse, a traditional diagnostic method, was used to assess the patient's health status. Initially, patients only divulged minor health concerns, but as trust developed, they gradually disclosed more severe illnesses, including festering wounds that caused significant bodily damage. The process of developing trust between patients and healthcare practitioners was critical in facilitating effective communication and improving healthcare outcomes, as they narrated in their reports:

> […] The sick person's relatives would inundate the nurse with questions such as "Will they recover?", "Can you heal them?", "Do they have to die?", and "When?" The nurse's ability to assess the curability of the disease during the initial visit was crucial. If the Chinese person believed that they could not be cured, they would refuse treatment […] [513]

The patient's belief about their chances of being cured could affect their willingness to accept treatment. Thus, the ability to provide an accurate response to questions posed by relatives was significant, as it could impact the patient's decision to undergo treatment. Therefore, they needed to be sensitive to the cultural beliefs of their patients and adapt their approach to healthcare accordingly. The account provided by the Ingenbohl Sisters sheds light on the difficulties they had to face while providing healthcare systems in Manchuria including the

[511] 'The Activity of the Sisters of Ingenbohl in the Mission Stations in Tsitzichar & Paichuan (Heilungkiang, China)', 2.

[512] 'On the Question of Sisters in Mission', 3-4.

[513] 'The Activity of the Sisters of Ingenbohl in the Mission Stations in Tsitzichar & Paichuan (Heilungkiang, China)', 4.

fact that contagious diseases were often permitted to coexist with families. It posed challenges for the nurses in persuading the relatives to adopt hygienic practices. While some of their lessons, such as the importance of not sharing living spaces with infected people were reasonable, their diaries suggest that they also used their expertise as a chance to convert people to Catholicism.[514] In order to highlight their expertise, the text also describes the perseverance of the missionary sisters in fulfilling their duties, attracting a large number of people who required their assistance. It provides an example of their expertise in healthcare by describing how one of the sisters, who was a teacher of the deaf, was able to assist a deaf boy in regaining his voice after conducting a thorough examination of his auditory and vocal organs. Other difficulties included patients at the poor people's pharmacy with aggressive behavior, which posed a potential threat to the supply of medication. The place became overcrowded, as patients refused to remain in bed and were constantly on the move, creating significant challenges for the nursing staff. As a result, it was decided that only seriously ill patients would be admitted to the pharmacy. When necessary, they also involved surgeons in cases requiring surgical intervention.[515] Therefore, a collaborative approach that involves different healthcare providers was critical in ensuring that patients receive timely and appropriate care.

In the healthcare profession, the specialized education of nurses was recognized as an important factor. While there were competent and dedicated nurses who achieved success, it was important to acknowledge that their professional education may have been limited in scope and did not extend to a physician's level. Moreover, legal restrictions often prohibited nurses from engaging in activities that fell under the purview of a doctor. The need for female doctors became increasingly pressing, as nurses could feel powerless when faced with complex medical situations. It was crucial for caregivers to possess a high degree of professional training to ensure that patients receive optimal care. Although it may not have been feasible to send female doctors to every place, it was recommended that at least one female doctor be available to provide moral support and assistance to nurses in challenging

[514] 'The Activity of the Sisters of Ingenbohl in the Mission Stations in Tsitzichar & Paichuan (Heilungkiang, China)', 5.

[515] 'The Activity of the Sisters of Ingenbohl in the Mission Stations in Tsitzichar & Paichuan (Heilungkiang, China)', 6.

cases. In addition to medical training, possessing nursing skills was important for pharmacy Superiors to ensure that mission life ran smoothly. [516]

The complete nursing preparatory course was extremely significant for the sisters who served amidst the turmoil of war, undertaking the critical tasks of rescuing the injured, aiding the poor, and offering assistance to refugees. Sr. Arilda and Sr. Alana worked in the south of Heilongjiang. The village of Zhaozhou was in urgent need of help in the nursing and social service sectors:

> As in Baiquan, we had to look for ways and means to provide food in Laochengji (Zhaozhou). From May to September, the soil allowed vegetables and grains to flourish. But then the lean period began. Those who had not taken precautions had to pay bitterly for this. Having learned from such experiences, we built a cellar with local men, where provisions for the cold seven months were stored. Cooks were trained who could also handle the petroleum gasifier. All possible heating techniques were tried to have some warmth in the house. Cotton clothes and fur coats also protected against freezing. The lowest temperature was -40°.[517]

Sr. Aquilana, who worked as a surgical nurse before leaving for China, performed amputations several times due to a shortage of doctors. The St. Raphael Ambulatory in Zhaozhou, Binjiang, became a refuge for the poor and the injured. In the southwest of the mission area, in Dalai, Longjiang, the SMB missionaries also requested two sisters, Seraphina and Aquilana, for the dispensary for the poor and nursing (see Figure 26).[518] In 1940 they were in charge of four hospitals and five pharmacies. The sisters continued to visit and treat wounded and sick, even in the face of wartime difficult conditions, remaining committed to providing relief and medical care to their patients. [519]

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[516] 'On the Question of Sisters in Mission', 4.

[517] Binkert, 'China Chronik. Note: 1981 - 1983 Compiled from Written and Oral Reports', 6.

[518] Binkert, 8.

[519] Blatter, 'Tsitsikar (Heilungkiang) – Die Erste Mission Der SMB. Tatsachen Und Erinnerungen', 47.

Figure 26- Medical outpatient clinic. Sr.Seraphina in the centre, Qiqihar[520]

Figure 27- Surgical intervention in prison. Sr. Aquilana and Sr.Dafrosa.

An illustrative photograph captures Aquilana and Dafrosa diligently working as surgical nurses within prisons (see Figure 27). Be represented in a certain favorable way, while writing to their superiors, they aimed to portray themselves in a positive light by highlighting their dedication and willingness to enter any environment, regardless of the risks involved, thus going beyond the requirements of their tasks:

[520] 'Krankenamulanz. Sr. Seraphina, Qiqihar', n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

> Pagans have nothing to compare with our nursing sisters' generous and sometimes heroic dedication. They courageously cross the threshold of the most miserable hut and that of the most sumptuous palace without the slightest concern for dirt or the dangers of contagion. The example and dedication of the sisters are a real conquering force.[521]

Visual representations were a crucial tool in exemplifying the sisters' expertise as medical professionals, not only in the guise of women religious, thereby conferring upon them a degree of authority in the public field. Through photographs (see Figures 28, 29 and 30), the sisters were able to establish themselves as competent and proficient in the field of healthcare, consolidating their capacity to exert control over the physical health of those who sought medical assistance. By regularly conducting their professional duties as nurses, the sisters, accompanied by local women, were able to access the public sphere by proving aid to wounded with specific needs that the wartime required.

In Figure 28, the nuns are represented while standing by the patient's side, carefully monitoring the procedure as a dentist performs the operation. Despite the challenging conditions and limited resources available, they are represented as focused on providing the patient with the best possible care. The same happens in Figure 29, where other two Catholic nuns administer medical aid to a wounded Chinese patient. One of the nuns cleans and dresses the wound, while others provide assistance and help. Another group of two nurses is operating a surgical operation in Figure 30: one is sewing stitches after surgery, while the other is carefully monitoring the operation, ready to provide assistance as needed. The prominence and visibility of women experienced a discernible increase, owing to the pivotal role played by photographs in shaping societal perceptions and narratives. The visual representation of these women aimed to offer a representation that by conducting dental procedures or medical surgery, the nuns defied social expectations that women should only occupy domestic spaces and proved that they were capable of engaging in professional practices. The women who regularly conducted their professional duties in public spaces contravened the prevalent gendered concept of such areas being exclusively male-dominated. In doing so, they contested

[521] 'L'assistenza Medico-Missionaria Nella Prefettura Apostolica Di Tsitsikar', *Betlemme*, no. 12 (1939): 359.

the domestication of public spaces that transpired during the early Republican era in response to the growing presence of middle-class women in public life, marked, for instance, by the establishment of girls' schools and civic associations. Through their work, the sisters could have shown that they possessed valuable skills and knowledge that were not limited to religious teachings or domestic duties. By gaining recognition for their medical expertise, they could be able to elevate their status within the church and gain greater influence and authority.

Figure 28- Sisters during a dental intervention [522]

[522] 'Tätigkeitsbereich', China Mission, n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

Figure 29- Sister healing a wound [523]

Figure 30- Sisters during a surgical operation [524]

[523] 'Tätigkeitsbereich', China Mission, n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

[524] 'Tätigkeitsbereich', China Mission, n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

The topic of injured children was also very recurrent in the visual history of the Catholic sisters.[525] Photograph 31 depicts two Ingenbohl nuns standing with two local women while holding two wounded children. One child has just been bandaged over one eye, while the other injured child stands in the nun's arms. Both children's faces are marked with expressions of sadness and fear, highlighting the trauma and pain they experienced. As already observed in Chapter 3, the main purpose behind portraying children as victims was to reveal the destruction caused by Japan in China.[526] Presenting Catholic sisters as maternal figures not only reflected the prevailing gender norms and expectations of that time but also served as a deliberate tactic to appeal to the emotions and values of their superiors. By presenting Catholic women as nurturing and caring maternal figures, the organization aimed to build trust and garner appreciation from their superiors, which was crucial for their religious relief work. In this particular context, the photograph becomes even more significant as the presence of the sisters can be seen as symbolizing a maternal role. Their positioning in the image reinforces the notion that the Catholic relief efforts were rooted in the values of compassion and care. Consequently, this portrayal helped generate endorsement for the organization's activities from the superiors, especially during initiatives focused on providing aid and assistance in wartime years.

[525] For a discussion on the practice of Catholic nuns and children in other cultures, see Annelies van Heijst, *Models of Charitable Care: Catholic Nuns and Children in Their Care in Amsterdam, 1852-2002* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Ethel E. Young, *African American Children and Missionary Nuns and Priests in Mississippi. Achievement against Jim Crow Odds* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2010).

[526] For more discussion on how, in the context of the Anti-Japanese War, children and childhood were visually constructed in relation to the war efforts, modern Chinese nationalism and propaganda needs of political parties of the time, see De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan Ertong" (The Resistance Child)"'; Pozzi, '"Chinese Children Rise Up!": Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War"'; Plum, 'Lost Childhoods in a New China: Child-Citizen-Workers at War, 1937—1945'.

Figure 31- Sisters Ancilla and Arcangela with wounded children [527]

Caring and converting: the treatment of opium addicts

While in the Apostolic Prefecture of Qiqihar the Ingenbohl Sisters were caring for the wounded and dying, the sisters in Zhaozhou were also in charge of the chronic opium addicts (see Figures 32 and 33). Before the War of Resistance against Japan, poppy culture was suppressed in many northern and central regions, and opium consumption declined significantly, although its price had fallen considerably, given the large supply surplus over demand. The disorganization brought about by the events of the war and their inevitable impact on the people's morality also increased demand for opium, seen as a sedative, and heroin, as a stimulant. [528] Gregory Blue argues that missionary opposition to the opium trade

[527] 'Tätigkeitsbereich', China Mission, n.d., GenArchivSCSC Ikonothek_120.

[528] For a detailed study on the history and usage of opium in China, see Alan Baumler, ed., *Modern China and Opium: A Reader* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs,*

and the British government's involvement in it was the most consistent and influential source of resistance, particularly from the 1830s onward. Missionaries were among the first to recognize the issue of opium smoking in China and actively sought a solution for it.[529]

The devastating impact of narcotics inflicted widespread devastation and suffering in Manchuria, impeding missionary efforts across various districts. In response, Fr. Ernest Manhart established the "Sanatorium for Opium Addicts" in Zhaozhou, dedicated to combating opium addiction and persistently engaged in its charitable mission. According to records from *Bethlehem*, between April 1, 1939, and March 31, 1940, a total of 141 individuals seeking healing were accommodated, the majority of whom did not adhere to the Catholic faith. Among these, there were eighteen admissions to the small pavilion specifically designated for women, as they were perceived to be "more inclined towards consuming the drug or using injections."[530]

The patients were utterly isolated from the world for about ten days, and appropriate medication was used to rid them of the poison they had absorbed and assimilated. The treatment required great physical effort from the sisters and the nursing staff since the patients were subjected to rigorous monitoring day and night. From January 1 to April 30, 1940, ninety-eight patients dared to submit to severe treatment, and among these, eighty-six were released completely treated. Only ten healers were accepted at any time, but the applications were so numerous that many of them waited weeks in the city before being admitted to the cure. The patients came partly from the wealthy class of civil servants and paid a fee of thirty-five francs. The stay in this "weaning clinic" was far from pleasant, yet once cured, the patients gave free rein to their gratitude, saying all good things about the sisters and the

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Dreams and the Making of China (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2014); Peter Lee, *Opium Culture: The Art and Ritual of the Chinese Tradition* (Rochester, Vt: Park Street Press, 2006); Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, eds., *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[529] Brook and Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes*, 38. Protestant missionaries in China disseminated pamphlets and literature condemning opium to educate the Chinese population about its perils. They also circulated various articles to rally support for the anti-opium cause, specifically targeting their fellow missionaries and Chinese Christians. However, their efforts extended beyond research and publications. Recognizing the challenges faced by female opium addicts in overcoming their addiction independently, the missionaries established refugees for Chinese women. See Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874 - 1917* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

[530] 'Tsitsikar-Missione e Oppiomania', *Betlemme*, no. 5 (1941): 136.

Catholic mission. In addition, this new branch of medical and missionary activity had the great advantage of bringing the mission into contact with a part of the population that had hitherto been difficult to reach. According to the missionary account, the Catholic opium detoxification center had remarkable success, leading the directors of multiple state clinics to request the sisters' assistance in organizing pedagogical-moral conferences. [531] Additionally, they were invited by the heads of state detoxification centers in various government districts to deliver moral and educational lectures as part of the treatment process.[532] However, not everything always run smoothly:

> We encountered some challenges with the police, and the curators added further complications to our situation. Troubles arose when certain individuals insisted on reclaiming their deposited funds, resorting to covertly smoking opium in an attempt to achieve their objectives. This discontent stemmed from an act of kindness or perceived vulnerability on the part of a sister who had returned money to a patient whose medication had affected his mental state. It acted as a catalyst, triggering a constant stream of dissatisfied individuals crowding the waiting area with their demands. We promptly notified the authorities, although, given the absence of any casualties or injuries, they were satisfied with a concise report.[533]

The text suggests that the Ingenbohl Sisters faced not few problems in a foreign country as China, ranging from strained relations with the police and conflicting expectations with the patients. Despite some inconveniences, however, the documents highlighted how their work proceeded efficiently. In total, the hospital of Qiqihar had sixty-six patients treated and 16.021 consultations; Baiquan had 145 patients treated and 12.065 talks; Dalai had forty-five patients treated and 7.069 consultations. The dispensaries in Zhaozhou and Fenglezhen had a total of 14.643 consultations. In the three small hospitals mentioned above, 4.144 sick days were

[531] 'Tra i Carcerati e Gli Oppiomani', *Betlemme*, no. 12 (1939): 360–61.

[532] Johannes Beckmann, 'Missionsärztliches Aus Der Apostol. Präfektur Tsitsikar', *Bethlehem Kalender*, 1940, A.M.B., Staatsarchiv Luzern, 72-73.

[533] 'Uno Sguardo Nel "Sanatorio" per Oppiomani', *Betlemme*, April 1940, 100–103.

recorded. The number of interventions by the sisters in urgent cases rose to 1.189, and 9.152 home visits were registered. The medical-missionary activity was done considering the exceptional circumstances, particularly the climatic conditions with Siberian cold in winter and tropical heat in summer. The missionaries made a fervent appeal to local Christian women, urging them to participate in their campaign against opium addiction. Despite potential limitations in their medical knowledge and skills, missionary records reveal that these women had distinct advantages over Western missionaries in their interactions with Chinese female addicts. Most notably, their presence effectively dismantled cultural and linguistic barriers, fostering an environment where female patients felt more at ease discussing their afflictions and challenges. Consequently, Chinese Christian women emerged as invaluable sources of support for the missionaries in their efforts to address the predicament of female opium addicts. Moreover, many missionaries took the initiative to train these women in managing the refugees established for this purpose, and a significant number of former Chinese female addicts actively engaged in supporting the missionaries' anti-opium campaign. The missionaries were not solely focused on providing medical aid to the destitute but also placed a significant emphasis on the spiritual needs of their patients. As such, they ensured the presence of a catechist in every dispensary and hospital waiting room, whose primary role was to address any queries related to the Catholic mission's objectives and significance. [534] Beyond leading their own families to embrace Christianity, they collaborated closely with the missionaries, lending their expertise and experiences to aid other women grappling with addiction. The unique perspective they offered, derived from personal encounters with addiction and subsequent recovery, enabled them to establish meaningful connections with addicts in a manner that the missionaries themselves were unable to achieve.

[534] Johannes Beckmann, 'Un Po' Di Statistica', *Betlemme*, no. 12 (1939): 361–62.

Figure 32- An opium smoker [535]

Figure 33- Zhaozhou, inspection of a resident's linen [536]

If on the one hand the war presented significant challenges to missionary activities, at the same time it also created opportunities for the sisters and their charitable works that led to many conversions. According to their data, the Qiqihar mission had a considerable Christian

[535] *Betlemme*, no. 12 (1939): 361.

[536] *Betlemme*, no. 5 (1941): 137.

population of 23.500 people, along with 2.500 catechumens.[537] The process of evangelization continued despite the challenging circumstances and limitations imposed by the war. The missionaries showed certain optimism, even during a period characterized by almost total isolation:

> The hurricane of war and the upheaval that ensues sow death, ruin, and misery everywhere, and our Catholic populations, especially where guerrilla warfare is continually raging, are sometimes targeted, victims of accusations and suspicions on both sides of the conflict; in this state of affairs it is impossible to know whether people are alive or dead, whether they have fled or are hiding: In this state of affairs it is impossible to know whether certain people are alive or dead, whether they have retired or are in hiding. It is to be hoped that the phenomenon of dispersion noted in the statistics of these years of war will not be so severe and that the post-war settling down will not only normalize the pace of increase in the Christian population due to demographic factors - which cannot be lacking in China - but that there will also be the discovery of Christians who are now lost. [538]

The ability of the Catholic sisters to navigate the challenges of the war and actively address issues such as opium addiction and relief activities, combined with their compassionate efforts, not only impacted individuals directly but also contributed to broader societal transformations. Engaging in relief activities offered by wartime context provided Catholic sisters with opportunities to step outside traditional gender roles and assert their agency in the public sphere, fostering a positive image of female agency and reinforcing the value of their contributions to the community. The nature of their work enabled Catholic sisters to redefine their female identity within the context of their religious calling. By actively participating in addressing the challenges of relief activities, the sisters reshaped perceptions of femininity in China within their religious communities and beyond.

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[537] 'Dalla Prefettura Apostolica Di Tsitsikar', *Betlemme*, no. 11 (1940): 332–33.

[538] 'I Continui Progressi Ed i Consolanti Frutti Dell'Apostolato Missionario in China', *Betlemme*, no. 2 (1942): 45.

Conclusion

The chapter explored the relationship between war and women's activism, with a particular focus on the experiences of Catholic nuns and local virgins in the relief efforts, revealing the important nature of addressing humanitarian assistance through a female lens. Drawing mainly on different letters, official reports, and documents retrieved within the congregation's internal archives, the research investigated the war as an exceptional period for women, considering the specific transnational and international context of Manchuria. The War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War represented both a challenging and transformative period for women in this context. If it exhibited a certain degree of continuity with previous conflicts, what set it apart was its vast scale and the increased involvement of people. Consequently, the increased magnitude of participants in this mass war brought about heightened visibility for women, largely attributed to the pivotal role propaganda plays in shaping public perception and awareness. Despite several challenges, if in 1928 China had 3.968 Catholic sisters (1.327 non-Chinese and 2.641 Chinese), [539] by 1940, "virtually every vicariate apostolic had established an indigenous Catholic sisterhood, or what in some cases might more appropriately be called an association of diocesan right."[540]

Focusing our attention to this specific religious order, it is possible to observe a notable feminization process prompted partly by the exigencies of war, where the demand for caregiving surges. Despite imposing considerable challenges on the mission's endeavors, at the same time the war extended opportunities for women within this feminization trajectory. Even if this evolution did not contest the existing patriarchal church hierarchy, it also offered a broader space for women's active engagement within both the order and the local society.

The Ingenbohl Sisters in Manchuria were committed to serving their community by providing spiritual training, education, health care, and social services. They developed a strategic approach to recruit local women into their congregations in order to connect with the local population and promote conversion to Catholicism. Acting as dedicated representatives of the Church, they played a pivotal role in the conversion efforts and the growth of the Catholic Church in the region. Additionally, for many women who joined the religious community, it provided an opportunity to enter the public sphere and establish their presence. The native sisters of the Oblates of St. Therese of the Child Jesus were dedicated to training

[539] Leung, 'Chinese Catholic Sisters in the Modernization Era', 68.

[540] Tiedemann, 'Catholic Religious Communities of Chinese Women', 596.

local Catholic Virgins to assist with evangelism, medical assistance, and education. While the native congregation developed its own identity, the presence of foreign nuns remained significant, with foreign nuns taking the leading role in the mission for an extended period. This presence highlights a hierarchical structure where foreign nuns held a privileged position compared to their Chinese counterparts. Despite acknowledging the agency and contributions of local women, the nuns also idealized certain patriarchal notions of femininity and operated within colonial power dynamics. Under strict rules and regulations, local virgins were limited to domestic duties. Within these confined spaces, they remained subject to the control of men, particularly the clergy, either directly or indirectly through stringent guidelines. However, this involvement provided women with opportunities to participate in missions, charitable endeavors, education, and healthcare, creating a relatively egalitarian setting. It offered an escape from the constraints of family life, despite having its own limitations. In certain cases, this led to the establishment of a distinctive realm for women, where they held authority. This was evident in relief and wounded care activities during wartime China, primarily associated with women and falling under their sphere of authority.

With the outbreak of the war, relief efforts took on a transnational dimension, presenting new opportunities and expectations for female religious orders. The Ingenbohl Sisters dedicated themselves to medical relief activities to survive and support their community. Some of them acquired specialized expertise in areas such as surgery, anesthesia, and nursing. Visual representations, such as photographs, played a crucial role in illustrating the sisters' medical expertise, thereby granting them authority over the bodies of those seeking medical assistance. While the Ingenbohl Sisters in Qiqihar cared for the wounded and dying, the sisters in Zhaozhou also took charge of treating chronic opium addicts. By fulfilling their professional duties as nurses, alongside local women, the sisters were able to go beyond their religious duties and access the public sphere by provide aid to the wartime wounded.

The act of writing and documenting their experiences played a crucial role in constructing the sisters' identities. These personal accounts served as a means for the sisters to present themselves to their audiences, particularly their superiors. Many of these memoirs detailed the sisters' involvement in relief work, such as nursing, operating pharmacies, managing opium sanatoriums, and administering anesthetics. They established a network of mission stations and schools in Manchuria until their definitive expulsion from China in 1954. During this critical period, especially amid the turmoil of war, Chinese and Western women were required to reassess their mission and adapt to new historical challenges. Engaging in relief activities allowed Catholic sisters to break free from traditional gender roles and assert

their agency in the public sphere, reshaping perceptions of femininity in both their religious communities and beyond. By actively addressing the challenges presented by relief work, the sisters redefined their female identity within the context of their religious calling, contributing valuable services to their community.

Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, marked a turning point in history. However, the presence of the SMB missionaries in Manchuria abruptly came to an end as a result of the Chinese Communist Party's persecution starting in 1946. Missionaries and Chinese Catholics residing in Heilongjiang became targets of persecution, as they were suspected of collaborating with capitalist and imperialist forces.[541] The consequences of this persecution were far-reaching. In November 1953, the missionaries were compelled to leave Heilongjiang, leaving behind a community of 25.000 baptized and numerous catechumens without any form of support or assistance.[542] The expulsion from Manchuria prompted the establishment of a new foundation in Hualien, Taiwan in 1955.[543]

[541] Ambrose S.M.B. Rust, *The Red Darkness: Swiss Missionaries Experience the Infiltration of Communism in China* (Immensee: Immensee Printing Office, 1961), 5-6.

[542] Blatter, 'Tsitsikar (Heilungkiang) – Die Erste Mission Der SMB. Tatsachen Und Erinnerungen', 49.

[543] Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*, 79.

Chapter 5
Responding to the call:
The Canossian Daughters of Charity (Canossian Sisters) during the war

Introduction

Set against the backdrop of a tumultuous period marked by the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945) and the Second World War (1939-1945), the fifth chapter focuses on the Canossian Daughters of Charity, commonly known as the Canossian Sisters (*Jia'nuosa ren'ai nü xiuhui* 嘉诺撒仁爱女修)[544], who emerged as a prominent Catholic religious congregation with a significant missionary history in China. The order was founded by St. Magdalene of Canossa (1774-1835) in Italy during the early nineteenth century and became deeply involved in missionary work in mainland China and Hong Kong. Eight years after their arrival on Hong Kong Island (1860), they began working in the towns and villages of Hubei, Shaanxi, South Henan, and Western Henan provinces, in the field of education, evangelization, charity and medical activities.

The chapter continues the discourse surrounding the feminization of the Church, but, unlike the previous one, which focused intensely on a more localized context in wartime Manchuria, this section paints a much more intricate international landscape. A notable shift here is the recognition that women's empowerment encompasses not only direct relief efforts but also the need to establish and conduct their own medical-missionary initiatives within a highly unstable environment. This adds a political dimension to their roles, compelling them to engage on a distinctly political and public platform.

The chapter explores caregiving as a realm that provides women with an autonomous space for negotiation and strategic interaction with the authorities. Indeed, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1940 and Italy's subsequent involvement in the conflict, along with the political decisions of the time, had significant repercussions on the Italian community residing in China. These changes had profound consequences, particularly for the clergy and Canossian missions. During this turbulent period, however, the Italian Sisters, along with the

[544] This is the official Chinese translation of their congregation's name. See Tiedemann, 49.

Chinese native nuns, played a crucial role in relief efforts and actively participated in the public sphere. They provided aid to the local community while interacting with authorities, and enjoying a certain level of autonomy. The nursing endeavors of the Canossians were closely intertwined with their intention to administer baptisms to dying patients. Nonetheless, the field gradually developed into a more professionalized discipline. In the case of the sisters, Hong Kong and mainland China provided the space where they could establish their religious medical program, which emphasized a holistic approach to nursing, closely intertwined with their religious beliefs and practices.

This study revolves around the examination of internal archive documents that have been unearthed. These documents primarily originate from local archives of the Canossian Sisters in Rome but also include materials from the Vatican Apostolic Archives and the Propaganda Fide Historical Archives. Within this analytical framework, the focus lies on the self-representation of the Canossian Sisters and their activities in China during the war that were originally intended for the informative purpose of their superiors. Furthermore, this investigation incorporates an extensive analysis of supplementary sources, including the local press and periodical publications. The inclusion of photographs of the time further underscores the significance of visibility and representation concerning the involvement of the sisters in relief work, while elucidating their engagement in the public field and their interactions with both Chinese and foreign authorities.

Figure 34- Map of the missions of Canossian Sisters in mainland China and Hong Kong [545]

Promotion, protection and emancipation: Canossian Sisters in China

The adventure of the Canossian Sisters overseas began in 1860 when, for the first time, some Italian Sisters left Pavia for Hong Kong.[546] Shortly after their arrival, they established several institutions including a boarding house for European girls, an orphanage for girls, a dispensary, a home for disabled people, and a catechumenate.[547] Responding to the request of

[545] March 2022.

[546] The catholic religious order of the Canossian Daughters of Charity was established in 1808 in Verona, Italy, by Magdalen of Canossa. The six pioneers who left for Hong Kong were the Superior Lucia Cupis, Maria Stella, Rachele Tronconi, Giuseppina Testera, Giovanna Scotti, and Claudia Compagnotti. See Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 7; Criveller, 'The Canossian Sisters in Hong Kong and Beyond', 22.

[547] Criveller, 'The Canossian Sisters in Hong Kong and Beyond', 24.

the Apostolic Vicar, Mgr. Luigi Piazzoli (1845-1904), a new orphanage was inaugurated in Nantou, Guangdong on April 5, 1905, just five years prior to their fiftieth anniversary. Furthermore, on October 4, 1907, another orphanage was established in Shanwei, which was approximately eight hours away from Hong Kong. Despite being situated in mainland China, these two foundations, along with the St. Joseph's Hospital, which was later established in 1926 in Huizhou, Waiyeung District, operated as satellite establishments of the Hong Kong mission.[548]

Fifty years after its foundation, seventy-two Eurasian orphans and 191 Chinese orphans were hosted in the Caine Road convent. The English students were 286, while the Chinese school (Pui Ching School) had eighty-nine students. Prior to the end of 1910, the English school in Hong Kong, for the first time, obtained approval from the government's Department of Education. The students who had previously taken the Oxford exams, starting from 1911 with the opening of the University of Hong Kong, began to take local exams. This was a favorable sign for Chinese families to also start sending their daughters to Catholic schools. Between 1909 and 1910, the second building of the Caine Road complex was also completed, which accommodated numerous children, boarding students, and orphans seeking shelter at the convent. Additionally, eighteen other girls were sent by the government itself to be hosted there. In addition to the already established ministries, during the second decade of the new century, the nuns started new activities, including hospital visits.[549]

The second mission of the Canossian Sisters, sent by the Franciscan Vicar Apostolic, Eustacchio Zanoli (1831-1883), was established in Hubei (Figure 34) in 1868 at the request of the Apostolic Vicar Mgr. Simeone Volonteri (1831-1904), a priest from the PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions).[550] The first Canossian mission on the Chinese continent was born in Hankou, Hubei, vital center for Chinese culture.[551] It was established in 1868 as the

[548] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 13. In the following years, the Canossian Sisters established other missions in the provinces of Hubei, Shaanxi, and Henan. Between 1868 and 1952, 275 Italian and Chinese sisters worked in mainland China, bringing evangelization and assistance to many in China in the face of epidemics, natural disasters, and war. The reputation of being "the sisters who never refuse anything to anyone" was earned in the first fifty years of ministry and remained a testament to their service, reaching its pinnacle during the Japanese occupation of the colony, 16.

[549] Sala, 13-16.

[550] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 9.

[551] Hankou was one of the trio of towns (alongside Wuchang and Hanyang) that merged to form the contemporary city of Wuhan, serving as the capital of Hubei province. For a historical account of the city, see

mission headquarters where the English school, the Chinese school, the hospital, the women's hospice, the catechumenate and the novitiate were founded. In 1912, the St. Joseph's House was opened, including a Chinese elementary school, a junior and senior secondary school, and a school for young students. During the period spanning 1920 to 1921, an examination of the Historical Propaganda Fide Archives reveals a notable range of activities undertaken by the Canossian Sisters, as evidenced by the various services provided. Firstly, the Canossian Sisters conducted a considerable number of baptisms during this time frame: they administered the sacrament of baptism to 1.491 girls, 101 adults, and 261 children in the hospital, thereby totaling 2.258 baptisms. Such figures highlight the sisters' commitment to spiritual guidance and their active involvement in nurturing people within the community. In addition to their baptismal responsibilities, the Canossian Sisters also undertook 783 confirmations: their efforts resulted in the confirmation of 646 girls and 137 adults. These ceremonies not only served as a means of strengthening people's faith but also represented the sisters' dedication to fostering a sense of religious identity among the members of their community and bringing to their conversion. Moreover, the Canossian Sisters were actively engaged in providing educational and welfare services. They tended to a significant number of people across various institutions. Specifically, they cared for 2.017 nursery girls, 810 girls and women in diverse departments, 102 elderly, blind, and invalid people, and thirty-two elderly residents in the retirement home. Furthermore, they managed St. Joseph's boarding school and school, accommodating 213 students, St. Mary's school, housing ninety-one students, and St. Anthony's School, catering to sixty-four people. These educational establishments served as vital centers for learning and personal growth, highlighting the sisters' commitment to fostering intellectual development and social well-being. Apart from their educational endeavors, the Canossian Sisters provided medical care to those in need. The dispensary recorded 12.790 people seeking medical relief, with an additional 20.415 returning for medication. The sisters also extended their services to specific demographic groups, treating 1.760 Chinese men and 675 Chinese women in the hospital, as well as attending to fifty-three Indian and Vietnamese patients. Furthermore, they administered medical care to 273 Europeans. The comprehensive range of medical services offered by the sisters included

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Rowe, *Hankow, 2*; Stephen R. MacKinnon, 'Wuhan's Search for Identity in the Republican Period', in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950,* ed. Joseph W. Esherick (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 161–73; MacKinnon and Capa, *Wuhan, 1938*.

657 operations conducted with chloroform and 4.730 minor operations. [552] Cardinal Van Rossum described the work of the Canossian Sisters:

> Some conscientious people from Hankow (Hankou), moved by compassion for the many miserable individuals who populate this great city, under the name of "Society of Benevolence," in addition to free schools, built a vast hospital equipped with all possible comforts [...] There are Catholic nurses raised in our hospital, and even among the leaders, some of our employees hold top positions in its management. They are paid by us but spend part of their day in this hospital, paying for the purpose of educating and baptizing when needed. And they know very well how to fulfill their duties while practicing the medical profession [...][553]

While the construction of a hospital and the provision of medical care are commendable, the mention of Catholic nurses and their involvement in proselytization raises concerns about the true motives behind their actions. Using a hospital as a platform for religious conversion undermined the supposed benevolence of society. It implied that the primary goal was not solely to provide healthcare to those in need but rather to push a particular religious agenda. Such tactics exploit the vulnerability of the patients and their desperation for medical assistance. Furthermore, Hankou was also an important communications hub, as Beijing and other Chinese ports could easily be reached from its port via the Yangtze and other canals. Here, an orphanage and dispensary were opened in 1888 and closed in 1927. Mother Natalia Piccioni (1887- 1967) replaced Mother Vincenzina Bellocchio as Regional Superior of Hubei in 1937, during the Japanese invasion of China. The Apostolic Delegate of China, Mgr. Zanin, alluding to her surname, described her as "a daring pigeon, who always flies where it is madness to hope."[554] She focused her attention on the demanding tasks necessitated by China's critical circumstances, which involved tending to the exponentially increasing population of orphaned children and providing them with religious instruction. In the face of

[552] 1922, Vol.761, Rub.130, Prot.129/1922, A.P.F.

[553] Cardinal G.M. Van Rossum (Hankou, 6 November 1921), Vol.761, Rub.130, Prot.129/1922, A.P.F.

[554] M.Teresa Sivio, 'Madre Natalia Piccioni', Circulars letters, n.d., A.C.R., 1.

relentless and devastating raids, numerous people suffering from injuries sought assistance and care. Mother Piccioni endeavored to aid in every way possible, establishing the catechumenate as a sanctuary for victims of the calamity, attending to the wounded, and gathering wandering children in search of their parents. In response to the latter group's plight, she inaugurated a dedicated orphanage equipped with an educational facility.[555]

Figure 35- Mothers Giovanna Cosma, Maria Ho, Margherita Venuti, Giuseppina Chiocca, Darina Gandolfi, Giulietta Preda, Lucia Tzeu, Agnese Ly, Agata Hau, Agnese Loù, Santina Assunta, Teresa Yang, Maria Barzaghi. Hubei, 1931.[556]

The third new mission was established in Shaanxi Province. Christian evangelization of the province was entrusted to the Priests of the Foreign Missions of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul founded in Rome in 1871 at the behest of Pope Pius IX. The seminary depended directly on the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide with Hanzhong as its center. In the new foundation, the Canossian Sisters were commissioned with the Holy Childhood, the catechumenate for women, schools and hospitals.[557] They left Hankou on February 20, 1891, and reached Guluba, Chenggu County, in May of the same year, where the first village was

[555] Sivio, 3-4.

[556] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.I', n.d., A.C.R.

[557] Ida Sala, *Storia delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000. Volume II 1868-1952.* Italian edition edited by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, 355-356.

ready at the beginning of 1897. St. Joseph's House in Guluba remained active until 1930, engaged in the work of the orphanage, hospice, schools, catechumenate, village visits, and dispensary. Moreover, opened in 1916 and closed in 1953, the regional house in Hanzhong, called Nazareth House, had an elementary and middle schools, orphanage, hospital, and dispensary. Lastly, the Sacred Heart House in Chenggu was founded from 1933 to 1944 and included schools of all grades, a women's school, a catechumenate, and an orphanage. [558]

In 1937 Mother Maria Mombelli (1892-1964) became Regional Superior of South Shaanxi after Mother Piccioni left for Hankou. [559] Msgr. Lorenzo Balconi (1878-1969), Superior General Foreign Missions of Milan, with the definitive text on the transaction and conversion of the Canossian Sisters in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hanzhong provides a comprehensive framework for the organization and responsibilities of the sisters in their missionary work. The script outlines the various areas of service entrusted to the Canossian Sisters, including the "Holy Childhood," "Young People," "Christian Women," "Catechumens," "Old and Invalids," and "Study Schools," as well as the dispensaries and hospitals. They were also responsible for the maintenance of the linen and sacred furnishings of the Churches. These duties were to be performed free of charge, without any monetary compensation, and the sisters started these activities as part of their missionary work. The hierarchical relationship between the sisters and the priests was evident in several provisions. The text specified that the spiritual assistance required by the sisters and the Christians they cared for, such as Mass and confessions, would be provided by the priests. Additionally, the progress of the works entrusted to the sisters was established by the Vicar Apostolic in agreement with the local Superiors. This suggested a supervisory role of the priests in guiding and overseeing the sisters' activities. Furthermore, the manuscript emphasized that the sisters could not be moved by their Superiors without a prior hearing of the Vicar Apostolic. This provision highlighted the authority of the Vicar Apostolic, who held decision-making power regarding the placement and reassignment of the sisters. The text also addressed financial matters, indicating that the material maintenance of the sisters would be supported by a yearly sum allocated by the Apostolic Vicar, in consultation with the sisters' local Superior. The administration of funds belonging exclusively to the sisters was carried out under the

[558] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 355-358.

[559] Sala, 421.

vigilance of the major Superiors. This reflected a hierarchical structure where financial matters were overseen by higher-ranking individuals within the organization.[560]

The province of Henan was evangelized by the Society of Jesus. In 1690 an apostolic prefect took up residence in Jinjiajiang and later in 1712 a Jesuit home was also founded in Nanyang.[561] Understanding the need for education and care for the orphans, Bishop Volonteri in 1875 sent two young Chinese women to Hankou to be instructed by the Canossian Sisters. Upon their return, he found them ready to run the orphanage. At the end of 1883, the Vicariate of Henan was divided into North and South. Bishop Volonteri remained Vicar Apostolic of South Henan, while Father Stefano Scarella (1842-1902) was transferred to Northern Henan. The missionaries increasingly felt the urgent need to be helped by the sisters and Volonteri immediately considered the Canossian Institute, which he appreciated during his first years in Hong Kong. The sisters reached Jinjiajiang on February 24, 1892, where they founded the Holy House of Our Lady of Sorrows, open until 1935, with the Holy Childhood and the orphanage. Father Antonio Lozza (1890-1980) from PIME, after decades of work in South Henan, confirmed that the mission was proceeding successfully. The works flourished under the direction of Mother Rachele Paleari Monza (1848-1922, see in Figure 36 at Zhumadian Hospital), and by 1896, even the local Tertiaries of Our Lady of Sorrows became precious assistants of the Canossian Sisters in South Henan.[562]

Figure 36- Zhumadian Hospital Community, opened in 1909 by M. Rachele Paleari [563]

[560] Lorenzo Balconi, 17 February 1937, Vol.1266 Rub.25/3-25/6 Prot.608/1937, A.P.F.

[561] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 443.

[562] Sala, 449.

[563] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II', n.d., A.C.R.

The last Canossian mission founded in China was that of Western Henan. [564] In June 1921, the Canossian Sisters arrived in Zhengxian, establishing their Regional House headquarters. They founded St. Joseph's Hospital, and expanded their presence by establishing the St. Therese of the Child Jesus School in both Zhengxian and Luoyang in 1932. These schools provided comprehensive educational services, including kindergarten and elementary education, as well as engaging in catechumenate activities and family outreach. Adding to their healthcare contributions, the Canossian Sisters opened the Sacred Heart Mission Hospital in Luoyang in 1932. Equipped with sixty beds and five pharmacies, the hospital annually dispensed medications to several tens of thousands of patients. Beyond healthcare, the sisters were also entrusted with the care of the Holy Childhood, an orphanage, primary schools, and a kindergarten in Luoyang. Their compassionate efforts extended to multiple areas of support and nurturing within the community. [565]

The Apostolic Prefect of Luoyang, Father Assuero Bassi (1887-1970), wrote: "I have entrusted the direction of these works to the Canossian Sisters who are already working on them with intelligent zeal."[566] The community consisted of six dedicated sisters who were committed to practicing and promoting their faith, as well as serving the people in their community. Similarly, the S. Joseph Sisters comprised seven nuns who had chosen a religious vocation centered on their faith and service to others. In addition to these religious communities, the territory included lay people who played significant roles. Within the community, there were twenty-four male catechists who actively engaged in teaching and guiding others in matters of faith. Their role involved sharing their knowledge to facilitate the spiritual growth of the community together with eight female catechists who contributed to spreading a sense of Catholic spirituality and understanding among the community members. Furthermore, the community benefited from the presence of fourteen male teachers and seven female teachers who worked to provide education. Their efforts aimed to impart knowledge

[564] In 1921 the vicariate was entrusted to the Fathers of Parma, also known as Xaverian Fathers. It was during the First World War that Bishop Luigi Calza (1879-1944) asked the Bishop of Pavia, Mgr. Francesco Ciceri (1848-1924) for some Canossian Sisters already aware of the needs of the mission and skilled in both the Chinese language and customs. The first four pioneers set sail from Venice on April 19, 1920. They were: Superior Maria Piazzini, Isolina Brugnoli, Giuseppina Ghioni, and Mattia Pisano. See Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 489-492.

[565] 'Report' (Chengchow, 1952 1945), 50-III-Folder 8, A.C.R., 32.

[566] Assuero Bassi, 21 August 1933, Vol.1142 Rub.27/7-27/13 Prot.3678/1933, A.P.F., 747.

and contribute to the intellectual development of the community. This diverse community consisted of religious sisters, catechists, and teachers, who shared the common objective of practicing and promoting their faith, as well as providing educational services. Their collective contributions fostered a strong spiritual and educational foundation within the community.[567] In 1937, Western Henan, also known as the region of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, became an independent region, and Mother Margherita Torri (1896-1978) became its Superior (see Figure 37). She arrived in China in 1925 when many of the administrative staff in the Chinese railways were French, thus Mother Torri was useful in teaching French to the children of Chinese who wished to continue their studies in France. She also taught music, and used her lessons to spread the Gospel.[568]

Figure 37-M. Margherita Torri [569]

In summary, the Canossian Sisters had already begun their evangelization work in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their mission was rooted in evangelical and

[567] Assuero Bassi, 'Relazione Annuale', 1934, Vol.1142 Rub.27/7-27/13 Prot.3992/1934, A.P.F., 779-786.

[568] M.Giuseppina Sala, 'Madre Margherita Torri', Obituary, n.d., A.C.R., 1-2.

[569] Sala.

charitable activities, but also caring the poor, the sick, and the marginalized, with a strong emphasis on education and social welfare. However, as the world entered the tumultuous era of the twentieth century, they found themselves in the whirlwind of the Second World War. As the following pages will illustrate, their selfless service became even more critical: in various war-torn regions, they set up humanitarian aid centers, orphanages, and medical facilities within a highly complicated international environment. This adds a political dimension to their roles, compelling them to engage on a distinctly political and public platform. They offered care and comfort to wounded soldiers, refugees, and civilians caught in the crossfire, while negotiation with the local authorities.

The Sisters of the Precious Blood in Hong Kong during the war

The threat of Imperial Japanese forces launching an attack on Hong Kong, British colony since 1842,[570] grew significantly in the years preceding the Second World War. With the expiration of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1923 and the progression of the War of Resistance against Japan, the colony found itself in an increasingly vulnerable position. When the war broke out in 1937, the Reverend Mother Vincenzina Bellocchio (1869-1959) was appointed General Delegate of the Missions in the Far East and moved to Kowloon, Hong Kong, where the new Delegation House was established.[571] The Japanese forces occupied Guangzhou in October 1938, initiating the encirclement of the British territory of Hong

[570] Following their victory over China in the First Opium War in 1842, the British took control of Hong Kong Island. The acquisition of a substantial part of Kowloon followed in 1860 through forceful means. In the final expansion of the British colony, the United Kingdom skillfully negotiated and secured a 99-year lease for the New Territories in 1898. See Steve Yui-Sang Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, Critical Issues in History (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

[571] Vincenzina Bellocchio was born in Pavia on April 30, 1869, and at the age of eighteen, she entered the Canossian Missionary Noviciate. Since then, she dedicated sixty-four years to her missionary work in China, beginning in Hankou, where she served as Mother Superior, Assistant, and Regional Mother Superior for thirty-six years. From 1938 to 1947, she resided at St. Mary's Convent in Kowloon, assuming the role of Delegate General for the Canossian Missions of the Far East. See *In Memoria Di Madre Vincenzina Bellocchio, Figlia Della Carità Canossiana Missionaria*, General House of the Canossian Daughters of Charity, 1963, 3-4.

Kong.[572] The occupation of Guangzhou represented a critical juncture in the escalating tensions between Japan and the British Empire, leading to a heightened sense of vulnerability surrounding Hong Kong's territorial integrity. The encompassed area included the island itself, the urban region of Kowloon, as well as the New Territories, both of which were situated on the mainland and separated from the island by a narrow stretch of sea. As the Japanese military swiftly progressed further into Chinese territory, the communities in the northern region of Hong Kong faced extremely difficult situations. In one of her Circulars, Mother Bellocchio wrote:

> […] While in crowds, those who could do, fled as quickly as possible from the horrors of war, the two humble Canossian Sisters returned happily among their sisters, exposed to all the dangers, and amid all the sacrifices that such a painful hour cannot fail to impose [...] [573]

During the war years, the religious order in Hong Kong comprised 108 Canossian Sisters.[574] An internal report described how each of the sisters had a precise assignment to perform the best job for the benefit of the mission. For instance, Sala reported that Mothers Eva, Cleofe, and Lisetta were responsible for protecting against theft, while M. Maria Biffi defended against air raids, bombs, and fire. M. Presentacion provided essential resources such as electricity and oil, while M. Clementina focused on replenishing supplies when depleted. The provision of water was entrusted to M. Cruz, while M. Mari ensured the availability of rice and other food. M. Fiorentina took charge of arranging coal and wood, and M. Agata oversaw the welfare of orphans. M. Francesca sought peacefulness from the Lord for all sisters, and M. Borgonovo cared for the poor people under their responsibility. M. Motta, Antonietta, and Stella were responsible for protecting the sisters from pestilence and contagious illnesses.[575] This allocation of tasks suggests a strategic approach to maximize the efficiency and

[572] Chi Ming Fung, *Reluctant Heroes: Rickshaw Pullers in Hong Kong and Canton, 1874-1954*, Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Studies Series (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 129.

[573] M.General Delegate, Circulars letters (Hong Kong, 4 March 1938), A.C.R., 2.

[574] Enrico Valtorta, 17 October 1938, Vol.1409 Rub.33/3-33/12 Prot.4459/1938, A.P.F., 99-106.

[575] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 104.

effectiveness of their collective efforts. They served wherever there was a need: in the schools, in the hospitals, to war orphans, to newborn babies, on trains to the wounded on their way to hospitals in the inland areas.[576] In February 1939, M.Vincenzina Bellocchio returned to Kowloon from Italy, bringing a large group of new missionaries, professed sisters, and novices, in order to reinforce the insufficient staff within the Canossian houses.[577]

The Catholic Church became even more known in China, and while the preaching of the Gospel was suspended because of the war, at the same time, it was replaced by the intense relief work for wounded, also helped by the forty-six local Chinese sisters of the Precious Blood (*Yesu baoxue nü xiuhui* 耶稣宝血女修会).[578] From the early 1930s and during the war years 1940s, they were invaluable assistants to the Italian sisters in Hong Kong.[579] They were

[576] 30 June 1938, 1.

[577] *In Memoria Di Madre Vincenzina Bellocchio, Figlia Della Carità Canossiana Missionaria*, 136.

[578] Valtorta, 99-106; This is the official Chinese translation of their congregation's name. See Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China*, 104.

[579] The origin of the Precious Blood Sisters dates back to August 1, 1861, when two biological sisters named Maddalena (30 years old) and Anna (16 years old) Tam, originally from Macau, relocated to the Canossian Sisters' convent on Caine Road, Hong Kong Island. During that time, the Italian sisters had received permission from Prefect Apostolic Fr. Luigi Ambrosi to accommodate Maddalena and Anna in their residence. Even prior to joining the convent, Maddalena and Anna had been assisting the Canossian Sisters in their work. The concept of establishing a new religious congregation or "third order" by the Tertiaries was a novel idea for the Canossian Sisters in Italy. The Canossian Sisters had never had a first or second order in their original foundation in Italy. The Tertiaries were considered a separate group within the larger Canossian Sisters family. The term "Canossian Tertiaries" was first used in 1831 at a house in Trent, located in northern Italy. During this time, the Canossian Sisters were already involved in evangelization efforts in cities but aimed to train women catechists specifically for rural areas where they were prohibited from going. This led to the establishment of Tertiaries who were affiliated with the Canossian Sisters. However, the Canossian Sisters in Italy acknowledged that the name "Tertiary" was not entirely accurate since their Institute did not have a second class of Sisters. The establishment of the Chinese sisters started shortly after the Canossian Sisters arrived, as the Italians required assistance in communicating with the indigenous people. Nonetheless, it was not until the early 1920s that these Chinese women achieved complete independence as a distinct religious group separate from the Canossian Sisters. They formed the Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood, which became the fourth congregation of sisters in Hong Kong. In 1922, during a period when Hong Kong was a Vicariate Apostolic encompassing the Bao'an, Huiyang, and Haifeng districts of Guangdong Province, the Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood gained autonomy as an independent congregation. The Vicariate Apostolic was overseen by Bishop Dominico Pozzoni, the third Vicar Apostolic, hailing from the Foreign Missions of Milan (Missioni Estere di Milano, MEM). Since then, the Precious Blood Sisters have remained the only congregation of Chinese sisters established locally in Hong Kong. The establishment of the order aligned with Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*, which called for

formerly an affiliate of the Italian Canossian Sisters, thus had to follow precise rules in terms of dress, conduct, and education:

> [...] They were given the same dress as the Canossian Sisters, which is not done in Italy with the Italians, but it was thought reasonable to do so with the Chinese, given their susceptibility in matters of equality with the European, or Eurasian, or the Philippines, numerous in the community of Macao. The only external difference between the Canossian Sisters and the Coadjutant Sisters was the tablecloth that we all wore around our necks, that of the Canossian Sisters being Our Lady of Sorrows and that of the Coadjutant Sisters being the crucifix [...] There was great enthusiasm among the Chinese and much admiration among the Precious Sisters of Hong Kong [...] [580]

As already observed in Chapter 4, also *The Rules* that were read by the local sisters consisted of explicit protocols and guidelines for them to adhere to. Cindy Yik-yi Chu illustrate that firstly, the authority figure of the Canossian Sisters had the influence to determine whether to accept a candidate into the Chinese Tertiaries, as well as the discretion to dismiss a woman with unsatisfactory behavior and request her return to her parents. Secondly, the Chinese sisters were expected to constantly bear in mind their vocation and wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to God. A Chinese sister was not permitted to reject a task on the basis of perceiving it as inferior in nature. Thirdly, the Chinese sisters were required to treat one another as if they were siblings by blood and collaborate closely. Fourthly, both the sisters and the novices were to be recognized by the Chinese populace as "unmarried ladies." This part of the Chinese translation of the *Rules* specifically catered to the mission of the Tertiary Sisters within Chinese society. Fifthly, the Chinese sisters were instructed to enrich their own spirituality through the worship of the Precious Blood of Jesus. They had already relinquished any aspirations for status and pride upon entering the convent, and they labored together with love and obedience towards a common objective. Sixthly, there should be no distinction

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the localization of the Catholic Church in China. See Chu, *The Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Evolution of the Catholic Church*, 2-3, 9-10.

[580] M.Vincenzina Bellocchio, 1 October 1941, Box 201, Folder 492, ff.150-152, A.A.V.

among the Tertiary Sisters, as all of them held equal status. They were encouraged to value one another and strengthen the bonds among themselves. Lastly, it was deemed unnecessary and futile to emphasize the ranking of the Tertiary Sisters within the community, as their ultimate purpose was the glorification of Christ. Furthermore, these rules encompassed various aspects of their lives, emphasizing obedience to their superiors, unity among the sisters, cautious speech, and adherence to a prescribed schedule. They were expected to dedicate themselves entirely to God, embrace humility in their tasks, and serve others selflessly. The rules also covered interactions with outsiders, such as visitors and healthcare professionals, requiring the presence of companions during such occasions. Additionally, they highlighted the superior's role in overseeing the spiritual well-being and behavior of the community members.[581]

The Chinese sisters had constantly borne in mind and adhered to the regulations while leading a life characterized by reciprocal esteem, compliance, order, and simplicity, abstaining from avarice, hubris, and trivial conversation. The regulations imposed high expectations on the Chinese sisters, who carried numerous responsibilities and focused on enhancing their spirituality and community. Concurrently, the superior of the Tertiaries served as the custodian of the regulations, entrusted with ensuring the progress of the community, the welfare of the Chinese sisters, the education of students, and the care of children in orphanages. Basically, the superior of the Tertiaries had to possess comprehensive awareness of all aspects of the community to guide the Chinese sisters on the correct path. In accordance with the regulations, this was how the superior of the Tertiaries held herself accountable to the divine. The obligations of the superior were deemed crucial as any negligence on her part could lead to mistakes. Despite having the authority to manage affairs within the community, she was also required to exhibit benevolence when correcting others' conduct. Most significantly, according to the Chinese translation of the regulations, the superior of the Tertiaries had to inform the Mother Superior of the Canossian Sisters about significant matters if necessary. It was of utmost importance that the superior of the Tertiaries received the approval of the Mother Superior and the blessings of the divine. Furthermore, the regulations specified two main sets of relationships: firstly, the interaction between the superior of the Tertiaries and the superior of the Canossian Sisters, and secondly, the relationship between the Tertiaries and the Canossian Sisters. The superior of the Tertiaries held the position for a term of two years, which could be extended. The decision to reappoint

[581] Chu, *The Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Evolution of the Catholic Church*, 16-17.

the superior of the Tertiaries rested with the Mother Superior of the Canossian Sisters. If the superior of the Tertiaries failed to demonstrate competence in shouldering her responsibilities or fell ill, she could be removed from her position at any time. The superior of the Tertiaries sought permission from the Italian Mother Superior to reassign tasks among the Chinese sisters and to grant exemptions to specific sisters. Without the consent of the Italian superior, the Tertiary Sisters were not allowed to change their confessors, doctors, surgeons, or even the catechists and workers they employed. [582]

In the early 1930s, the community was transforming into a more established and organized institution in its religious and charitable endeavors, thanks to its strong connection with the local population and its responsiveness to the Catholic Mission's agenda. The Catholic publication also mentioned that the growth of the Precious Blood Sisters necessitated the construction of a large Motherhouse in an area on the Kowloon Peninsula, where the Catholic Church had not yet established a presence. The Catholic Mission selected the perfect location to build a permanent convent for the Chinese sisters. Shamshuipo, a densely populated district in the Kowloon Peninsula, offered ample opportunities for pastoral work. The Church considered this as a chance to extend its influence in the region while providing the Precious Blood Sisters with a stable environment to settle down and plan for the future. From a broader perspective, the Catholic Mission had long desired to expand its pastoral work to larger parts of the Kowloon Peninsula, and the establishment of the Motherhouse aligned with the Church's goal of increasing the Catholic population in the area. The Catholic Mission was ready to entrust the new endeavor to the capable hands of the Precious Blood Sisters. The Church had high expectations for the mission there, recognizing the Chinese sisters' qualifications for the task and their important role within their own community in the colony. The Precious Blood Sisters continued their work, but with their own permanent establishment, among the targeted population. In June 1929, the sisters arrived at the new convent, and on July 1, Bishop of Hong Kong, Enrico Valtorta (1883-1951), presided over the ceremony that marked the inauguration of the Precious Blood Sisters' Motherhouse. Later in July, the Holy See approved the Precious Blood Sisters as a religious congregation through Mgr. Celso Costantini, the Apostolic Delegate to China, officially registering them canonically. This affirmation from the Holy See solidified the status of the Chinese sisters of the Precious Blood. The sisters evolved in parallel with the Roman Catholic Church, which displayed increasing enthusiasm for the China mission and prioritized the goal of local empowerment.

[582] Chu, 18.

The sisters focused on education, healthcare, charity, and evangelization, showcasing the successful integration of the Catholic Church within Chinese society.[583]

During the turbulent war years, the leadership of the Precious Blood Sisters consisted of three different superiors. Sister Teresa Tam held the position from 1929 to 1935, followed by Sister Joanna Tam from 1935 to 1938. Eventually, Sister Lucy Chan took over as Superior General from 1938 to 1957. At the age of fifty, Sister Lucy Chan assumed the role of superior general after being a member of the order for thirty-two years. In order to maintain discipline and devotion, Sister Lucy emphasized the importance of prayer and meditation to guide the sisters in their service and worship. This prompted her to urge the sisters to reconsider and reflect upon their daily work. In line with the Precious Blood Sisters' established tradition, she motivated the sisters to fulfill their responsibilities, even in the challenging war years, particularly in the areas of educating children and providing care for the wounded.[584]

In 1938, there were 173 male teachers and 151 female teachers, along with forty-four male catechists and thirty-nine female catechists. The religious order comprised 108 Canossian sisters and forty-six local sisters of the Precious Blood. [585] Mother Teresa Yip (1918-1946) was among the Chinese Sisters who provided assistance to the Canossian Sisters during the critical war period (see Figure 38). Despite encountering opposition from her family, who had already made plans for her future, she was convinced to enter the Novitiate. Mother Teresa Yip was specifically assigned to work in the educational domain, recognizing the crucial role of well-established schools in the process of soul conversion. Consequently, she coordinated educational endeavors that aimed at fostering religious transformation in China and deepening understanding of the Catechism, thus imparting this knowledge to students, orphans, and teachers under her care. Her efforts were geared towards leading them to embrace the ideals of Christian life. In her role, Mother Teresa Yip displayed a keen intuitive sense in addressing difficulties that arose, while effectively collaborating to maintain a unified approach despite the inevitable challenges posed by political movements and racial prejudices. Her diplomatic commitment to confidentiality proved invaluable in successfully resolving several issues. As such, she emerged as a valuable intermediary, employing her skills to navigate complex situations with caution.[586]

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[583] Chu, 70.

[584] Chu, 72; 84-86.

[585] Valtorta, 99-106.

[586] 'Madre Teresa Yip', Obituary, 2 November 1946, 10-VIII, A.C.R.

Figure 38- M. Teresa Yip [587]

During the 1930s, the Precious Blood Sisters established a new community in the Shamshuipo district, instituting their Motherhouse, and also church, schools, orphanage, and hospital. Their commitment to the Catholic Church's religious and charitable endeavors was comprehensive, leading to a notable transformation from a modest community of sisters into a confident and versatile congregation. The focus of their congregational efforts centered on aiding the poor, the working class, and the marginalized people of society. Despite the Catholic Mission's overarching plans for the colony, the sisters adhered to the bishop's directives, evolving in accordance with the broader developments within the Church. The Precious Blood congregation served as a representative instance of local religious congregations situated in the interior regions of China. At the same time, the Canossian Sisters experienced growth and development in tandem with the expansion of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong and inland China. Their advancement persisted during the 1930s, even in the face of significant adversities posed by wartime circumstances.

[587] 'Madre Teresa Yip'.

Sisters of charity at war: providing medical relief in mainland China

The onset of war in Hong Kong and prevailing poverty contributed to a substantial rise in the number of people in search of relief and assistance in the missions of mainland China too, i.e. Hubei, Shaanxi, and Henan. Nursing emerged as a significant area of female missionary work, garnering recognition from both religious and non-religious groups. Initially, the nuns' nursing endeavors were closely intertwined with their intention to administer baptisms to dying patients. However, over time, the field gradually evolved into a more professionalized discipline. For the sisters, Hong Kong and mainland China, as described in the following pages, served as the space where they could establish their religious medical program, which emphasized the integration of caring for both physical and spiritual well-being and strictly connected to the political negotiations.

At the convent in Hubei, the hospital gradually became occupied by injured soldiers. However, due to the availability of only one hundred beds, an additional 160 beds were promptly established to meet the growing demand.

> [...] The work at the hospital is always enormous. We still received soldiers and sailors, almost all of them seriously wounded. It is said that they have sent the most seriously wounded to our hospital because it is better equipped with surgical doctors and medical personnel... His Excellency Monsignor Massi has also offered to lend our work to the Catholic Committee of the Red Cross, for which Sisters and girls are being trained when danger is imminent. The number of refugees here in our house is also increasing day by day [...] [588]

Besides the hospital, other branches flourished in order to meet the needs of the people: Bishop Eugenio Massi (1875-1944) opened charity schools in different districts of the city, entrusting them to the Canossian Sisters, and a dispensary was also established near the school to deliver essential medicines whenever possible.[589] The mission had a significant presence of orphans, invalids, and blind women. A notable instance occurred when twelve

[588] M.Natalia Piccioni, 24 July 1938, A.A.V., Arch. Nunz. Cina 201, fasc. 492, ff.70-71.

[589] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 298.

girls, abandoned by their families, were brought to the convent within a single day. The sisters remained consistently occupied with various responsibilities, including Sunday schools, visiting poor districts, and teaching catechism. Furthermore, the demands of wartime relief led to the emergence of two new undertakings: the Work of Newborn Refugees and the Work of War Orphans. These initiatives were established in response to the urgent needs arising from the atrocities inflicted by the war and the ensuing chaos during mass migrations. Many parents fell victim to Japanese cruelty, while others lost their children in the disarray of fleeing crowds. Overall, a total of 761 boys and girls were entrusted to the care of the sisters: they were provided with nourishment, education, and assistance under their supervision. [590]

The hospital was also bustling, with twenty-four sisters and four doctors working there. There were 6.297 patients and 398 hospitalized. The sisters assisted 775 wounded soldiers, seventy of whom were baptized.[591] During the Japanese invasion, the hospital accommodated a large number of refugees seeking shelter: it provided lodging for the displaced people within its premises while existing patients were asked to share their limited food rations with the new arrivals. In an effort to meet the increasing demand, even a local bank hosted a group of sixty patients. During an air attack, the hospital received 400 wounded people which placed significant strain on the medical staff and resources. Throughout this period, the number of orphans and elderly invalids grew substantially, necessitating additional attention and care from the sisters who worked tirelessly to address their needs. Despite being located near the airport and enduring numerous bombings, the convent remained intact. [592] The head of the hospital was Mother Magdalena Teresa Pozzan (1882-1975, see Figure 39). During the war, she undertook a multitude of amputations and surgeries on the wounded, while also assuming the responsibility of guiding and overseeing the young sisters. She aimed to ensure that they would embody the roles of both sisters and mothers to the suffering people, who were distanced from their own families.[593]

[590] M.Natalia Piccioni, 'Natale 1939' (Hankou, 1939), A.A.V., Arch. Nunz. Cina 201, fasc. 492, ff.91-105.

[591] Report by M.Piccioni, Hankou, Christmas 1939, B.201, Fasc.492, ff. 91-105, AAV.

[592] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 304.

[593] 'Madre Maddalena Teresa Pozzan', Obituary, n.d., 20-IX-Folder 2 (iii), A.C.R.

Figure 39- M. Maddalena Teresa Pozzan[594]

Along with her, Mother Maria Barzaghi (1903-1971) was assigned as a nurse to the hospital (see Figure 40). In her necrology, Mother Vittoria Garrè reported that she assisted with great dedication to the suffering. During the bombings, she refused to leave those people unable to move alone; instead, she remained, encouraging them with her presence and prayers. An episode revealed that when bombs destroyed the hospital, she did not hesitate to bring two critically injured to seek refuge, carrying them on her shoulders.[595]

Figure 40- M. Maria Barzaghi[596]

[594] 'Madre Maddalena Teresa Pozzan'.

[595] 'Madre Maria Barzaghi', Obituary, n.d., 20-VIII-Folder 2 (iii), A.C.R.

[596] 'Madre Maria Barzaghi'.

Another experienced nurse was Mother Emilia Corno (1900–1947). She was at the disposal of the small community working in the hospital of the mission, and was called "the indefatigable" since she always took on the most demanding tasks without resting:

> She had the right medicine and the comfort words for all of them. Rich and poor, benefactors and beneficiaries, everybody had expressions of appreciation, and admiration for M. Emilia. A true missionary with a generous heart, she dedicated her entire life to people in need: sisters, sick, injured in the bombings, epidemic patients, and cholera patients.[597]

Cholera patients were brought with the help of the International Red Cross to a nearby lazaretto. A dispensary was opened and the reputation of the "Doctors" who did not receive any compensation spread quickly among the local people. The visits shortly rose to 500 so that in seven months there was a total of 53.408 visits to the dispensary and 3.197 at home.[598] Mother Corno spent one year among them, assisting with medical relief. During this period, the Japanese also began to intern Americans and English, and the missionaries of those nationalities had to abandon the field of their apostolic work. Thus, bishop Massi ordered some Canossian Sisters to move to Hankou and stay with the few remaining local sisters in order to save their homes and their belongings. M. Corno brought helped by transporting heavy suitcases with medicines and tools used in the hospital in Hankou. She ventured on these journeys, even fooling the officers, who always let her through without forcing open suitcases. By utilizing astute tactics and persuasive communication, she was able to preserve the secrecy of their cargo, protecting it from requisition by the authorities. [599] Her ability to maintain a low profile and avoid arousing suspicion allowed the sister to successfully transport the much-needed medicines and tools without interference.

Mother Lucia Menolfi (1880-1963) was also assigned to the hospital. She was described as friendly, patient, and very concerned for the benefit of others. Among the destitute, there was a young soldier who was admitted to the hospital with a head injury.

[597] 'Madre Emilia Corno', Obituary, 19 January 1947, 20-VIII-Folder 1 (iii), A.C.R.

[598] Report by M. Piccioni, Hankou, Christmas 1939, B.201, Fasc.492, ff. 91-105, A.A.V.

[599] Mother Emilia Corno, 19.01.1947, 2, 20-XI-Fasc. n.1 (iii), A.C.R.

Following his recovery, he experienced complete memory loss, rendering him oblivious to any recollection of his family or even his own name. Mother Lucia undertook the task of patiently instructing him and eventually bestowed upon him a new name, Joseph, through the sacrament of baptism. While the hospital increased the number of orphans and patients, there were also many abandoned, old, and disabled girls. As an assistant, Lucia was a significant support in helping the small community and suffering people. [600] Along with her, there was Mother Maria Cosma (1904-1961). When the bombardments began, she became the support of the Reverend Regional Mother in settling the community in three different centers in the country, since everything was destroyed in the city.[601]

Among the Chinese sisters who cooperated was Mother Giuseppina Kwok Kuo (1918-1975, see Figure 41). According to the internal official reports, it has been documented that she was born in Hanyang and first encountered Christianity while attending a Catholic hospital while her mother was undergoing treatment. She was described as an intelligent and honest young woman with a strong character, who endured a period of study, observation, and personal struggle before ultimately choosing to dedicate herself to the religious life. She faced the challenges of commencing her novitiate outside of the holy house, which had been destroyed by bombing. Despite her own fragile health, she exhibited a gentle and caring nature toward others, actively listening, understanding, and providing comfort to those around her. [602]

Figure 41- M. Giuseppina Kwok Kuo[603]

[600] M.Angelina Rivetta, 'Madre Lucia Menolfi', 1963, 20-XI-Folder 2 (iii), A.C.R.

[601] M.Angelina Rivetta, 'Madre Maria Cosma', Obituary (Hong Kong, 20 February 1962), 20-XI-Folder 2 (ii), A.C.R.

[602] 'Madre Giuseppina Kwok Kuo', Obituary, n.d., 20-VIII-Folder 2 (iii), A.C.R., 28-03-1947.

[603] 'Madre Giuseppina Kwok Kuo'.

Meanwhile, in 1937, in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province, the Canossian Sisters were a group of eighteen dedicated nuns who served the community and spread the teachings of the Catholic faith, together with three members belonging to the Canossian Sisters "Aggregatae", a subgroup with a common mission and purpose. In addition to them, there were lay people who played important roles in the territory: this included twenty-seven male catechists and twenty-three female catechists (see Figure 42). There were also thirty-nine male teachers and thirty-one female teachers, who contributed to the education and development of the community.[604]

Figure 42- Catechists [605]

Due to an urgent crisis, the central government made a request to establish a military school in a part of Guluba. Additionally, other institutions were founded in the region, including an orphanage, a catechumenate, a dispensary, and a primary school. Similarly, in the regional house of Hanzhong, a catechumenate, an orphanage, a boarding school, an aspirant school, and a dispensary were founded. By 1938, the school had enrolled 400 students, with forty residents, twelve of whom were non-Catholics. These girls were the first to be accepted and were allowed to participate in mass and other religious activities, providing them safety from external threats. On Sundays, the sisters visited prisoners in detention, resulting in some of them converting to Catholicism, and also a hospice in town once a week, where they received

[604] Balconi.

[605] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

assistance from one of the Catholic nurses. In the same year, the dispensary treated 13.000 patients, thanks to the efforts of two sisters, a lay brother, and four nurses involved.[606] The text sheds light on the challenging circumstances faced by the healthcare organization and the dedication of the sisters while emphasizing the importance of external support in sustaining their operations:

> […] other officers and generals have gained full confidence in being treated by our sisters, avoiding other free healthcare facilities. However, the healthcare organization remains modest and primitive in all missions, both in the city and beyond, with only the bare necessities…In the most central location or pavilion, the sisters are accompanied by a few doctors and a group of nurses who work from morning till evening, washing, disinfecting, dressing wounds, and performing surgeries as they come, dealing with the never-ending stream of patients who drag themselves through the courtyards, from their beds to the dressing station or to the rice kitchen for a meager meal, barely sufficient to restore strength to a wounded and malnourished young soldier… So far, the Red Cross has provided us with approximately 100,000 lire, in addition to medicines and clothing. The rest comes gradually from bishops and Catholics both inside and outside China, including the Apostolic Delegate of the neighboring Philippine islands […][607]

In Guluba, after the government took over the orphanage for girls, the sisters' residences were also reduced. Hanzhong was threatened by bombing, and in the hope of finding refuge, thousands of migrants poured into the town.[608] Here, a prominent figure in those years was Mother Anna Nicoluzzi (1914-2004). After taking her vows in 1936, she was assigned with other Canossian missionaries to the mission in Guluba, in 1940, and in 1942 to Hanzhong, where she worked in the school and orphanage. The sisters' memories aim to offer a

[606] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 424.

[607] Mario Zanin, 24 March 1938, Vol.1394 Rub.20/7-21/2 Prot.1162/1938, A.P.F., 531-532.

[608] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 425.

representation of her willingness and zeal in assisting poor, prisoners, children (see Figure 43), students, families, parishioners, and choir groups.[609]

Figure 43-M. Antonietta Nicoluzzi, 1938.[610]

In March 1939, Hanzhong suffered its first air raid, but since the bombs only fell outside the town, the sisters could pursue their charitable work, albeit in a climate of extreme uncertainty.

> [...] The last terrible trial unleashed on Mons. Civelli's Mission in Shensi and our sisters who had to leave their beloved convent of Hanchungfu (Hanzhong)... A few exceptions remained to guard the House, which was rendered almost uninhabitable [...] [611]

[609] 'Madre Anna Nicoluzzi', Obituary, 2004, A.C.R., 6-8.

[610] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

[611] M.Vincenzina Bellocchio, 10 December 1939, A.A.V., Arch. Nunz. Cina 201, fasc. 492.

As the bombing continued, however, it was no longer possible to keep the school in the city. Mgr. Mario Civelli made the old seminary in Gulupa available to the sisters, where they found a more peaceful atmosphere.

> The girls' secondary school, due to higher orders, I had to immediately take it out of the city and place it in the old Kulupa (Guluba) residence […] Since both Christian and pagan students are housed at Kulupa, more than 200, I have to provide food, lighting, etc., and each student costs me an average of four dollars or more per month, in addition to the small tuition paid.[612]

On October 25, the first major bombing of Hanzhong took place, hitting the cathedral, the boys' school, and the convent. There were hundreds of victims and destruction anywhere.[613] When Mother Mombelli (1892-1964), Regional Superior of South Shaanxi since 1937, arrived at the convent, she found only two sisters tending to the wounded transported to the clinic, so that she started to work, placing her nursing skills at the service of the community (see Figure 44).[614] The organization sought to establish trust and gain approval from their superiors for their religious relief efforts by portraying Catholic women as nurturing and caring maternal figures. The photograph takes on added importance in this context, as it symbolically represents the sisters in a maternal role. Their arrangement in the image reinforces the idea that the Catholic relief endeavors were grounded in compassion and care. Consequently, this portrayal played a crucial role in securing support from superiors for the organization's activities, particularly during wartime initiatives aimed at offering aid and assistance.

[612] 9 September 1939, Vol.1403 Rub.27/5-27/12 Prot.4537/1939, A.P.F., 527-527.

[613] Ida Sala, *Storia delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000. Volume II 1868-1952.* Italian edition edited by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, 426.

[614] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 421.

Figure 44- Outpatient clinic. M.Maria Mombelli as sister nurse, 1937.[615]

Mother Stefania Viganò (1895-1960) was among the sisters who were already helping and baptizing the wounded who crowded the convent, as Mother Mombelli recounted in a long description.[616] Mother Stefania was in the town of Chenggu since 1934, assisting in the care of the newly opened orphanage. In the bombing of October 1939, with other sisters and a group of orphans, they evacuated to Pamiao, a Christian village near Chenggu.[617]

In Western Henan, the congregation consisted of eight nuns during wartime. Additionally, there were twenty-three local nuns belonging to the group called "Parvae Sorores S. Theresiae a Jesus Infante," (Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, that counted four professed, eight novices and eleven probands), and nine indigenous nuns from the group "A.S. Joseph." In addition to the nuns, there were also men and women catechists associated with the Canossian Sisters. There were thirty-three male catechists and sixteen female catechists involved in teaching the Catholic faith. Furthermore, there were twenty-eight male teachers within the congregation.[618] This information suggests that the Canossian Sisters were able to attract and incorporate a diverse range of people who identified with their mission. They experienced growth not only in terms of their numerical strength but also in the expansion of their network of affiliated people and the diverse roles they played within the congregation.

[615] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

[616] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 426.

[617] M.Maria Cosma, 'Madre Carolina', Excerpts from the Obituary (Hong Kong, 20 June 1960).

[618] Assuero Bassi, 1937, Vol.1272 Rub.27/10-27/13 Prot.4324/1937, A.P.F.

At that time the region was composed of two primary houses: Zhengxian, founded in 1921, and Luoyang in 1933. Mother Giuseppina Grimoldi (1896-1993) was in Zhengxian since 1923, two years after taking her vows. From the beginning, she operated within the hospital as an ophthalmologist (see Figure 45). Mother Superior Dorothy Cheng recollects that she treated numerous people with a charitable spirit:

> [...] The fame of our eye dispensaries spread a little among these missions, and from Nanyangfu two indigenous 'Precious Sisters' arrived there, in order to become acquainted with eye care, and then to revive in their Mission in some way the miracles of Jesus in favor of the poor blind [...] [619]

During the war, from April 1944 to June 1945 she was interned with the other sisters in a concentration camp in Kia-ye, Shaanxi, where she worked in the dispensary. Back in Zhengxian, she returned to operate in the dispensary and in the eye clinic, which continued to host many people from nearby villages.[620]

Figure 45- M. Giuseppina Grimoldi in charge of the hospital [621]

[619] 'Madre Giuseppina Grimoldi', Obituary, n.d., A.C.R.

[620] 'Madre Giuseppina Grimoldi'.

[621] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

During the war emergency, the Canossa House was also opened in Neixiang in 1937, South Henan, and engaged in the work of the orphanage, school and evangelization with Mother Maria Sonzini as the Superior.[622] In Figure 46 she is represented together with the tertiary sisters in Nanyang, where Mother Angela Caden (1885-1963) had been sent in 1931 as local superior for fifteen years. During the widespread epidemics, Mother Angela helped the sisters by offering care and assistance. As bombing attacks started, many wounded sought shelters at the House. Along with two other mothers, she remained in the city to handle emergency cases, enabling them to assist nurses and assistants in extinguishing fires in the mission buildings (Figure 47).[623]

Figure 46- M. Maria Sonzini with the Tertiary Sisters in Nanyang.[624]

[622] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 471.

[623] M.Angelina Rivetta, 'Madre Angela Caden', Obituary, n.d., 40-III-Folder 9 (ii), A.C.R., 62.

[624] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

Figure 47- M. Angela Caden and M. Regina Luinetti at the Nanyang House Dispensary.[625]

As reported in *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, the Holy See granted approval on March 25, 1936, acknowledging the local congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Nanyang as a diocesan community. This congregation was established by Monsignor Flaminio Belotti (1874-1944) in 1920 during his tenure as the Apostolic Vicar of Nanyang. Until this juncture, the congregation had been under the guidance of the Canossian Sisters. Prospective members seeking admission to this religious order were required to successfully complete lower secondary education, while others pursued further specialization through a specialized medical course.[626] Among the Chinese sisters in Nanyang, there was also Mother Maria Chang (1917-1990). In 1935, she entered the Novitiate in Hankou as an Aggregate. Upon completing her Novitiate, she served at the Nanyang Orphanage. Sister Maria was renowned as a zealous sister who worked tirelessly among the numerous orphans at the house, and as Mother testified, Maria assimilated much of the Institute's spirit from the Canossians: her love for the community was manifest in her attentive care and her faithful behavior toward her superiors.[627] The local sisters proved to be indispensable through their diligent work in catechumenates, schools, orphanages, and dispensaries, and in maintaining contact with the Christian communities they visited, where the missionaries could not reside.

[625] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

[626] "Le Suore dell'Immacolata Concezione di Nanyang", in *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, 1940, 263.

[627] 'Madre Maria Chang', Obituary, 1990, A.C.R., 40-41.

While Nanyang continued to serve as the regional center, and nun Agnes Ly, the first Chinese Aggregate, made her profession there (see in Figure 48 together with the Italian Sisters), in 1937 another branch primarily focused on operating a dispensary for the poor was established in Neixiang.[628] When the house was opened, Mother Maria Galli (1888- 1940) was appointed as the Major in charge and operated during air raids when the small hospital became crowded with wounded people (see Figure 49). This situation compounded the existing distress caused by the devastating news of Nanyang city, reduced to a mere heap of rubble. In a letter from the Reverend Mother Vice Superior, they were notified that the city had been subjected to bombings, compelling them to seek refuge in Jinjiajiang. Only three nuns remained in Nanyang. Meanwhile, the relentless bombings persisted, further exacerbating the deteriorating health condition of Mother Maria Galli.[629]

Figure 48-Mothers Natalia Piccioni, Erminia Cattaneo, Virginia Fumagalli, Erminia Malinverni, Erminia Beretta, Regina Luinetti, Elena Ferracina, Carolina Zoia, Giuseppina Rezzonico, Agnes Ly. 1938. [630]

[628] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 477.

[629] M.Natalia Piccioni, 'Madre Maria Galli', Obituary, 6 April 1940, 20-XI-Folder 1 (vii), A.C.R.

[630] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

Figure 49- Mothers at the hospital [631]

In 1938, Nanyang boasted a vibrant community of dedicated people committed to their religious and educational endeavors. There were twenty-three Italian priests working there, assisted by three lay brothers, twelve Italian nuns, and twenty-two Chinese nuns. There were one hundred and thirty-eight catechists, forty-six teachers, and twelve baptizers. The students in the minor seminary were sixty-five. There were nineteen major churches and ninety-seven minor churches, one hospital, three pharmacies, two orphanages, two homes for the elderly, and two homes for the disabled, and also thirty-three elementary schools, one middle school, two catechism schools, eighty prayer groups, three colleges with two hundred and fifteen male boarders and sixty female boarders.[632] Concerning the work of the eleven Canossian Sisters in the Nanyang mission in 1938, Mgr. Pietro Massa (1895-1978) from PIME, Apostolic Vicar of Nanyang, described:

> […] Our seminar, as well as our Catholic middle school, were able to continue their courses regularly until the end of the academic year, and the Congregation of Indigenous Sisters, with the addition of six new teachers, welcomed thirty-three more novices. Additionally, being in a period of war,

[631] 'Statistiche Illustrate. Il Lavoro Delle Sorelle' (Southern Henan, n.d.), 40-I-2, A.C.R.

[632] (Nanyang, March 1938), Vol.1403 Rub.27/5-27/12 Prot.1080/1938, A.P.F., 36.

> we focused a great deal of our activities on alleviating the suffering caused by the war. Therefore, under the direction of the sisters and our lay brothers, certified nurses, dispensaries were opened in various cities, providing free assistance, care, and medicine to wounded soldiers and sick refugees. Two regular courses of the Red Cross were also held for nurses of both sexes, granting fifty-eight diplomas, and a special course of catechetical instruction was given to a group of selected students among the graduates of our "Volonteri School". The Canossian Sisters, furthermore, continue to carry out their charitable work with a truly evangelical spirit and to the general satisfaction of the local authorities, in dispensaries, prisons, and at people's homes. We have also welcomed a significant number of refugees, providing them with food and clothing.[633]

The Canossian Sisters' work in the Nanyang mission encompassed education, healthcare, and charitable services. They played a crucial role in maintaining educational institutions, offering medical assistance to those in need, and providing support to the local community. Their efforts were described as highly regarded by the local authorities and reflected their commitment to living out their mission with an evangelical spirit.

In 1939 Mother Erminia Malinverni (1881-1958) was appointed new Superior of Henan, replacing Mother Sonzini until their expulsion.[634] Since the initial bombings in 1938, Mother Malinverni extended the hospital's services beyond its designated area to accommodate the injured. She personally assisted on the front lines, providing medical care and administering the sacrament of baptism to those approaching death. Throughout the numerous air raids of 1939, the convent experienced significant damage. As the bombings intensified, the bishop granted the sisters access to a department in Jinjiajiang, where Chinese Sisters received their former teachers. Mother Malinverni directed sisters in need to relocate there, while together with a small group of sisters they remained at the rear hospital. [635]

The year 1939 marked a period of profound adversity for the sisters of South Henan, heralding the onset of a more devastating tragedy. Mother Elena Ferracina provided a detailed

[633] Pietro Massa, 4 April 1938, Vol.1403 Rub.27/5-27/12 Prot.4211/1938, A.P.F., 71-72.

[634] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 479.

[635] M.Vittoria Garrè, 'Madre Erminia Malinverni', Obituary, n.d., 40-III-Folder 9 (ii), A.C.R., 18-19.

account of the bombing incident in Nanyang through an extensive letter. On October 18, a total of forty airplanes arrived in the city, resulting in distressing scenes witnessed by the sisters. In response to the dire circumstances, they promptly engaged in their duties within the clinic, attending to an influx of wounded people seeking urgent medical attention:

> [...] covered in blood, that the shrapnel or the bullets of the machine gun have opened caves on those miserable bodies, the flesh in tatters, the bones shattered in various parts, the interiors spilled out. We do not know how and where to begin but there is no time to lose and our hands get mixed up in that blood that we try to stop [...] One hears nothing but laments, one sees nothing but blood […] [636]

Mother Ferracina's account recounts a poignant incident involving a soldier who had undergone a right arm amputation, leading to his exemption from military duty. Subsequently, he was appointed as the doorman at the military school, where he resided with his wife and two children, including an affectionate eight-year-old nicknamed "little butterfly" and their one-year-old youngest child. On October 28, during an initial alarm, the soldier acted swiftly, taking his youngest son in his arms, seeking refuge in a quarry situated within the city walls. Tragically, the child was struck by a fatal fragment while in the shelter, resulting in a severe injury to his left arm. In the aftermath, the soldier's daughter assumed a crucial role, diligently caring for her father's needs, particularly during mealtimes, as represented in Figure 50. [637] This episode illustrated the adversities provoked by the war, together with hardships and resilience experienced by ordinary people during times of conflict in coping with such troubles. At the same time, it aimed to offer a representation of how it evokes feelings of empathy, sacrifice, and familial support, and generate endorsement within the domain of caregiving and assistance from the superiors.

[636] M.Elena Ferracina, 'Bombardamento Della Missione Di Nanyangfu', 15 February 1939, 40-III-Folder 11 (ii), A.C.R., 4.

[637] Ferracina, 5-6.

Figure 50- "Little Butterfly" helps her war-disabled and bombed-out father.[638]

Furthermore, the year 1939 marked a period of significant challenges and concerns for the missionaries, characterized by a multitude of dangers and anxieties. In particular, the Nanyang Hospital, managed by the Canossian Sisters, played a crucial role in providing shelter and assistance to soldiers and casualties affected by various air bombardments. The Vicariate established eight dispensaries in different cities, which served as essential healthcare centers, managing an average of fifty daily consultations. This collective effort resulted in a substantial total of 134.005 visits throughout the year. Moreover, the year witnessed a notable influx of refugees seeking refuge within the Mission. In order to address their needs, the mission took on the responsibility of providing food and lodging, accommodating 163 people. This additional undertaking placed a substantial burden on the mission's resources and operations: "All this activity required money, personnel, and quite a bit of disturbance, but it gained us the sympathy of the people and the authorities, dampening the slander of ill-intentioned individuals…"[639] The sisters' efforts were not solely focused on providing aid and resources but also on fostering long-term relationships with the people and the local

[638] Ferracina, 6.

[639] 9 September 1939, 90-91.

authorities. Their ability to gain sympathy and understanding from both sides was instrumental in establishing a strong network of support that enabled them to have a more significant and lasting impact on the community. This information was important to convey to their superiors in Rome, as it demonstrated the dedication and commitment of the sisters in their work in China. They aimed to showcase the significance of their work and the meaningful connections they had established in China. By overcoming obstacles and adapting to the challenges of the time, the sisters aimed to reveal the resilience and adaptability that defined their engagement in wartime China.

Humanitarian networks: Song Meiling and the Canossian Sisters

If, on the one hand, the war suspended and almost stopped the work of propagating the faith, on the other hand, it made the charity of the Catholic religion develop significantly, producing an important movement of appreciation and adherence in China. The letter of April 15, 1938, reported in *Vita*, narrated the unexpected visit of Song Meiling in Hankou. One evening, a dressed Chinese lady with two American gentlemen, introduced herself at the concierge's desk as a Red Cross officer willing to visit the charitable works of the Canossian Sisters.[640] She was welcomed by the Rev. Mother Vice, who accompanied her, not without being surprised by the particular interest that the visitors showed in wanting to know and see how the Chinese treated and educated the orphans. They visited the dormitories, the refectory, and entered the kitchen. They were particularly interested in the quantity of rice needed to feed all those girls they had seen gathered for prayer in the workroom. They observed the beds, the blankets and clothes of each one. Surprised, they asked how they could provide for so many people so well. Mother Vice replied that Providence never fails with God's help and the sisters' work. Towards the end of the visit, the lady revealed she was Madame Chiang Kai-shek. She said that she came incognito to surprise them in their daily occupations. The two gentlemen were her secretaries. The Canossians considered Meiling a woman of high intellectual ability who admirably assisted her husband in the government of China. About her, they said: "A woman of worth and from whom one might expect much if Protestant people did not surround her."[641] Indeed, both she and her husband were Protestant Christians. The

[640] 'Dalla Cina. Lettere Missionarie'.

[641] 'Dalla Cina. Lettere Missionarie'.

next day, the Apostolic Delegate went to the Convent at an unusual hour and delivered a letter from Song Meiling:

> [...] I made a little surprise visit to your Convent for the orphans of Poyang Road. It was a great pleasure for me to see how well-kept and happy the girls were under the kind supervision of your sisters. I want to offer them my congratulations for the order, cleanliness, and skill that one sees throughout the institution, although it is an orphanage, the atmosphere was that of a happy, well-adjusted family. I wonder if you would be pleased to accept a small donation from me as an expression of appreciation for the work that the sisters do in the institution [...] [642]

Song Meiling sent one thousand dollars as a personal contribution and expressed her gratitude for the image of Jesus she received as gift from the bishop. As already observed in Chapter 3, she was actively involved in various charitable and humanitarian causes, advocating for social welfare, education, and healthcare initiatives, as in the case of the Red Cross. Her visit to the Canossian Sisters exemplifies her commitment to philanthropy and her interest in witnessing firsthand the charitable works being carried out by different organizations. Furthermore, when the first Japanese bomb fell just a few feet from the residence in Zhengxian on March 8, 1938, Song Meiling sent 137 orphans to the sisters.[643] The provision of sleeping accommodations and a nourishing meal to the children served as tangible evidence that certain deep-seated biases against the Catholic Church and its missionaries in China were gradually diminishing. This gesture was represented as underscored the prevailing imperative of collaboration and the paramount objective of preserving as many lives as possible. By engaging directly with the Canossian Sisters and expressing her appreciation for their relief efforts, Song Meiling offered her support for the important work they were doing in China. At the same time, the episode alludes to the admiration and respect the Canossian Sisters held for her. They regarded her as a woman of significant intellectual ability and recognized her valuable contributions to her husband's governance of China. However, they also expressed a sense

[642] 'Dalla Cina. Lettere Missionarie'.

[643] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 506-507.

of limitation or hindrance due to her association with Protestant people. Meiling was the woman who paved the way for modernity in republican China, living through its profound transformation process and actively contributing to its realization. What was an innovative element in Song Meiling's life was the ability with which she almost legitimately managed to work alongside the country's leader. This encounter was undoubtedly a significant testimony to how Meiling served Chiang and China in several public roles within humanitarian and religious fields, combining traditional loyalty to her husband with self-styled feminism and determinism to be her person as a "New Woman" in New China.[644]

The profound significance of the alliance between the Canossian Sisters and the Red Cross, represented as in this case by an elite woman like Song Meiling, emerges as a significant issue. Their collaboration during this critical period bears testament to the impactful humanitarian efforts and institutional cooperation that shaped the landscape of assistance and support China. The government imposed additional responsibilities upon the sisters, necessitating the establishment of clinics across various sectors of the city to attend to the soldiers arriving from the frontlines and facilitate their transportation southwards via train networks. In order to meet the demanding requirements of round-the-clock service, the sisters were entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating with the Red Cross personnel, by taking care of 200 wounded:

> [...] One finds poor soldiers, in the interior of the carriages of the long freight trains, on top of the carriages in the open air, which easily changes to wind, exposed to rain, cold, heat, according to the season; others inside in a nauseating stench of stale air; lying on the putrid straw; dirty, ragged, in a truly compassionate state. Some have not been medicated for three, four, five days, their bandages soaked in blood, tingling with insects. At the nun's street they call her in a pitiful voice, begging to be medicated [...] [645]

[644] Tyson Li, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek*; Israel Epstein, *Woman in World History: Life and Times of Soong Ching Ling (Mme. Sun Yatsen)* (Beijing, China: New World Press: Distributed by China International Book Trading Corp., 1993).

[645] 'Nel Turbine Della Guerra', *Vita*, no. 10, Year XII (1938): 8–9.

The Canossian Sisters were called upon by the soldiers on the street, and they responded by providing medical care and medication to those who had not been treated for days. The soldiers are depicted as living in poor conditions, exposed to harsh elements, lacking proper medical attention, and suffering from various ailments, including injuries and infestations. Also, the text emphasizes the crucial and multifaceted role of the Red Cross and Canossian Sisters in engaging with authorities while providing medical assistance, training medical personnel, and offering humanitarian aid during wartime in China:

> In some missions, private and fast training courses for nurses continue and multiply, especially for young people and students. There is also talk of regular schools and courses, such as in Nanyang, where the Canossian Sisters have opened a house and a school for women and ladies who undergo an internal course for forty days to be recognized as Red Cross women. So, in addition to graduated doctors and surgeons, there are graduated nurses, others with qualifications, and others who are improvising (there are about 100 in Hankow). Then come the foreign and Chinese sisters, along with all the available staff on the mission, to practice dressing wounds, disinfection, or providing first aid. In the convents or orphanages, the sisters and girls hold real workshops for clothing, blankets, and beds for soldiers, wounded people, or refugees.[646]

The main theme of this discourse revolves around the significant political role undertaken by the Red Cross and Canossian Sisters in the wartime context of China. Their contributions encompassed various dimensions, including nurse training initiatives, educational programs, hands-on medical care, and resourceful workshops to produce essential supplies for soldiers, the wounded, and refugees. These tasks necessitated a specific blend of political and institutional expertise, qualities exemplified not only by elite women such as Song Meiling but also by religious figures like the Canossian Sisters. Both exemplified the crucial role that political and institutional skills played in effecting positive change and influencing societal development. Their abilities to navigate and leverage the difficulties of their respective

[646] Mario Zanin, February 1938, Vol.1394 Rub.20/7-21/2 Prot.1396/1938, A.P.F., 619.

contexts underscored the impact of such skills on shaping policies, building relationships, and fostering progress within their communities.

Navigating conflict: the power of political negotiation

As the war progressed, in light of Germany's successes between April and May 1940, the Prime Minister of Italy, Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), perceived the war's outcome to be decisively determined. Capitalizing on Germany's achievements as a means to secure immediate territorial advantages, he publicly declared Italy's declaration of war against Britain and France on June 10, 1940. [647] The Italian entry into the war engendered a difficult situation for the Italian community residing in Hong Kong. This shift had significant repercussions, particularly for missionaries operating within British colonies, and communication with Europe, which was also interrupted, further exacerbating the situation.[648]

According to the memoirs of Mother Ida Sala, recounted experiences on the same day indicate that the delegation situated on the Kowloon peninsula was subject to strict restrictions, confining its members to the premises of the convent and limiting their movements to a designated area. The police possessed a roster containing the names of the sisters and other pertinent documents instructing them to remain within the buildings. In response to these circumstances, some foreign sisters were relocated to residences within the designated area, while the Italian sisters were transferred to Caine Road, and those from the peninsula were housed in the delegation house. Concurrently, the Japanese forces successfully captured Nantou.[649]

The nuns enjoyed a certain level of freedom while facing the authorities due to their status as religious women. During routine visits by the police to the delegation, the sisters were subjected to inquiries concerning the duration of their stay in Hong Kong, their future plans, and their sentiments toward England. When Mother Martinoia responded to the initial query by stating, “fifty-four years!” a police officer, wearing a smile, rejoined, “And you are still so energetic?” Subsequently comprehending the sisters’ friendly intentions, he

[647] Badoglio, *L’Italia Nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, 37.

[648] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 57-58.

[649] Sala, 60.

departed.[650] Other similar episodes unfolded in the ensuing days, yet the English officers exhibited considerable tolerance toward the sisters, recognizing that their nationality posed no threat. Despite being subject to restrictions and surveillance by the police, the English officers displayed tolerance towards the sisters. This indulgence stemmed from a recognition that the nuns, by virtue of their religious calling, posed no threat or harm. Therefore, the sisters were granted a degree of autonomy and were not subjected to excessive scrutiny or control by the authorities. This allowed them the ability to carry out their religious duties and activities within the designated areas specified by the authorities with a certain independence.

The sisters of Hong Kong faced a similar situation. On September 25, 1941, they could not imagine that on the day that the foundress Magdalene of Canossa (1774-1835) was to be glorified in Rome, at the same time Japan, bombing Pearl Harbour without an official declaration of war, would draw the United States into the conflict and start a battle that would involve the British colonies for four long years in Asia, including Hong Kong:

> Who could have imagined that all hell would break loose in a short time and that we would not even have time to take the decorations off the walls? We were completely unaware of what was going to happen to us. We went to sleep and in our blissful ignorance rested peacefully through the night, the last night of a well-defined phase of our lives, the night during which a new era opened up in front of us.[651]

Studies carried out by the British Ministry of Defence concluded that it would be very difficult to defend the colony in the event of a Japanese attack, but in the mid-1930s it was nevertheless decided to build fortifications: in particular, the “Gin Drinkers' Line”, a fortified line of bunkers, trenches and artillery emplacements modeled on the French Maginot Line, was built from 1936 onwards. At the outbreak of the Second World War, given the need to concentrate its forces in Europe and North Africa, the decision was made to reduce the Hong Kong garrison to a purely symbolic presence. In September 1941, however, at the suggestion of Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, commander-in-chief of the British Far East

[650] Sala, 64.

[651] Sala, 76.

Command, it was decided that an increase in forces in Hong Kong would have the dual effect of acting as a military deterrent to the Japanese, while at the same time reassuring the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek of British intentions to maintain an anti-Japanese presence there.[652]

The Japanese attack began on December 8, 1941, just some hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor.[653] The Japanese immediately secured air superiority with a twelve-bomber raid on Kai Tak airfield, destroying four of the five military aircraft stationed there and almost all civilian aircraft on the ground. The British ground forces decided to withdraw from the Sham Chun River, marking the land border of the colony, to deploy the three battalions of the Kowloon Brigade along the heights of the Gin Drinkers Line. However, this defensive line was quickly broken through at the Shing Mun redoubt on the morning of December 10, and on the 11 the evacuation of Kowloon itself began, under continuous Japanese air and artillery bombardment.[654]

The situation was difficult. The Japanese army was allied with Italy, while Hong Kong was a British colony. The antagonist of Britain, the United States, and China who had sided with the Allied Powers, was the Italian sisters' community in war, which would have significant repercussions for them:

> [...] The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have been alerted to move to La Salle School, where they will work as nurses...More and more of our pupils are coming to us to seek shelter at St.Mary's in case of danger. Entire families are asking for the same favor. It is a continuous procession of refugees with their luggage... During the afternoon, bad news arrived: all the missionaries

[652] Oliver Lindsay and John R. Harris, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

[653] For a detailed history on the Battle of Hong Kong, see Benjamin Lai and Giuseppe Rava, *Hong Kong, 1941-45: First Strike in the Pacific War*, Campaign 263 (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014); Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defense of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China, and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Lindsay and Harris, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945*; Gao Tianqiang 高添強, *Xianggang Ri Zhan Shiqi* 香港日佔時期 *[Hong Kong during the Japanese Occupation]* (Hong Kong: Trinity Bookstore, 1995).

[654] Lai and Rava, *Hong Kong, 1941-45*, 37-38.

were arrested by the police, except the monsignor. No one knows where they have been taken [...] [655]

The Japanese offensive continued until December 25, when Japanese troops penetrated a British field hospital at St. Stephen's College in Stanley, torturing and murdering more than sixty wounded soldiers there. That same afternoon, with the situation reaching the limit of resistance, British officers and Governor Young signed the surrender deed at the Japanese Headquarters on the third floor of the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong.[656] The battle for Hong Kong lasted eighteen intense days. It was the first time the British crown colony surrendered to an invading force during the Second World War.[657] The capitulation of the British to Japanese authority on Christmas Day meant, at least for a short time, the end of the bombing.

During this period, the Precious Blood Sisters who had already moved to the villages for missionary work had no choice but to stay confined there until the war ended. After the Japanese invasion, the schools run by the Precious Blood Sisters were closed. In May 1942, the Tack Ching Girls' Middle School received permission from the Japanese to reopen within the Motherhouse premises. It was the only school allowed to resume operations by the Chinese sisters. Since they spent most of their time in the convent, they took on various teaching responsibilities, including those of the principal, academic affairs, ethics board, and home-room teachers. They also hired a few lay people to assist as teachers. Surprisingly, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise during the Japanese occupation, as the sisters were able to establish a strong foundation for the school. Over time, the number of enrolled students increased. Compared to the past, when only one or two sisters were present in each school, this was a rare opportunity for many sisters to teach and nurture the students' spiritual needs within such a confined environment. Providing education also fulfilled the missionary objective of spreading the Gospel during a period of devastation, misery, and despair. Tack Ching Girls' Middle School remained the only regular educational institution maintained by the sisters throughout the Japanese occupation. Nevertheless, the sisters continued to run the

[655] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000,* 2003, 79.

[656] Lai and Rava, *Hong Kong, 1941-45*, 79.

[657] Ko Tim Keung and Jason Wordie, *Ruins of War: A Guide to Hong Kong's Battlefields and Wartime Sites* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1996, 41.

school and the hospital, relying on their own earnings from their services to sustain their livelihood without any external assistance.[658]

This situation worsened significantly due to the lack of communication from both the Apostolic Delegation and the missions in China, except for Hanzhong.

> [...] I heard months ago…the three Italian bishops of Honan, Mons. Calza, Mons. Bassi and Mons. Massa with all their Clergy had been interned, and their conditions were simply frightful. Our sisters expected to follow the same fate. From Hankow also complete silence, except for a 25-words message received through the Red Cross…The Canossian family in Hong Kong and Kowloon -a total of 490 souls- between religious and orphans, invalids, blind, and babies of the Holy Infancy, are living for the time being on the savings we had in the Banks [...] [659]

When the Japanese tried again to take Zhengxian, the Chinese authorities informed the Italian missionaries that they would be transferred to a prison camp. In the meantime, the nuns continued to work in the hospital where more than a thousand wounded were treated day by day. In May 1942 it was also the turn of the priests who were taken to Neixiang. Once they arrived, they were placed in a decaying pagoda and abruptly informed by the local authorities that, since they were political internees, they would not receive food. [660]

During this period, the absence of regular communication between the Apostolic Delegation and the Missions delayed the dissemination of information and the coordination of activities. Mgr. Valtorta wrote to the Japanese authorities, explaining that bombs hit Honey Ville during the three-week siege, six houses of the Robinson Road institute were partially burnt down, and the hospital at Canossa was entirely destroyed. As a result, the sisters were forced to restrict their activities to the three centers on the island: Caine Road, Wanchai, and High Street, i.e., the Sacred Heart Children's Hospital. One of them was Mother Maria Mari (1868-1942) who had been transferred in 1937 from the Honey Ville home to assume the

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[658] Chu, *The Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Evolution of the Catholic Church*, 102-103.

[659] M.Vincenzina Bellocchio, 14 August 1942, A.A.V., Arch. Nunz. Cina 201, fasc. 492, ff.185.

[660] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 512.

position of local superior at the Shaukiwan Orphanage in the Eastern District of Hong Kong, where she managed a community of Chinese orphans. However, with the outbreak of war, Mother Mari found herself leading her small community, suddenly cut off from the Regional House and lacking any instructions or means of sustenance. She shouldered both the moral and material responsibility of caring for numerous young people entrusted to her. As the situation became increasingly perilous, the community was compelled to depart for an undisclosed destination. Sisters and orphans were loaded onto a truck, and while occasional checkpoints halted their progress, the officers permitted their passage upon recognizing the orphans and Italian sisters en route to Stanley. The fact that the group included orphans evoked sympathy and a sense of vulnerability among the authorities; furthermore, sisters influenced the authorities to treat them with less suspicion or hostility. Eventually, they arrived at the gates of the Carmelite monastery, where they encountered the Carmelite sisters. Even within the confines of the convent, threats from Japanese soldiers loomed. It is recounted that Mother Mari, with her hands raised and employing a mixture of languages, approached the soldiers, explaining that they were defenseless sisters caring for vulnerable orphans. She implored the soldiers not to harm them, emphasizing their status as allies. In the subsequent days, other soldiers entered the Carmel Monastery, further exacerbating the precarious situation. Nonetheless, it was Mother Mari who greeted them at the door and succeeded in persuading them to cease frightening the young girls and sisters.[661] The role of the sister in this episode is indeed significant in terms of protecting and saving the lives of orphans and children. By leveraging her status as a nun and emphasizing the vulnerable nature of the orphans under her care, she was able to navigate through checkpoints and gain the cooperation of the authorities. Along with Mother Maria Mari, there was also Mother Amalia Fumagalli (1899-1955). Her second phase of missionary life was in Hong Kong, where she remained for three years in the cloakroom of the boarding school. In 1938, she was sent as an assistant to Shaukiwan House, surrounded by about fifty orphans, and sometimes she accompanied sister nurses in visiting the sick. When Mother Mari's health started to deteriorate and was called back to the Regional House, two sisters remained at the Carmel Monastery with about fifteen orphans in order to protect the Convent from military occupation. Fumagalli continued her mission of taking care a group of girls. [662]

[661] 'Madre Maria Mari', 1946 1941, A.C.R., 23-24.

[662] M.Vittoria Garrè, 'Madre Amalia Fumagalli' (Hong Kong, 29 September 1955), A.C.R., 3.

In general, a complex and ambivalent relationship existed between the Japanese military authorities and both the Chinese and expatriate Christian communities in Hong Kong. Japanese soldiers and officers frequently meddled in religious worship and the functioning of churches, blurring the lines between spiritual autonomy and external intervention. However, it is noteworthy that the regime surprisingly allowed a significant degree of freedom. This leniency can be attributed to the enlightened views held by certain Japanese officials in Hong Kong, who were cautious about needlessly alienating a substantial portion of the local population. This concern was particularly pronounced due to the fact that some Christians in Hong Kong held citizenship in neutral or allied countries, such as Italy, or were affiliated with the economic elite.[663] The recognition and respect given to the sisters as representatives of a religious order, combined with the perception of orphans as deserving of protection, likely played a crucial role in their ability to ensure the safety of the children. By using their privileged position and thus engaging politically with the authorities, they were able to provide a protective shield for the vulnerable children, ensuring their well-being and ultimately saving their lives. For instance, Mother Justina Siachongko (1879-1962), born in the Philippines in a Catholic family, also found herself in the whirlwind of war in Hong Kong. When the plague of hunger set in, Mother Justina worked hard, taking care of the hen house and raising rabbits. In her obituary, it is written that she was able to get the grass she needed thanks to her Philippine nationality. Provided with the necessary permissions, she went out together with a trusted housewife, harvesting in the semi-deserted and grassy surroundings of the time. It is recorded that when she first met the Japanese, they asked her many questions. Upon not comprehending the language and not knowing how to make herself understood, she uttered: "Mussolini! Mussolini" to show the soldiers that she was their ally. One day an officer followed her to the convent in order to see what she was doing with that grass. The initial encounters between Mother Justina and the soldier were initially characterized by the presence of linguistic barriers and misunderstandings. However, through persistent efforts, Mother Justina succeeded in establishing a bond of trust and understanding, by presenting her active provision of valuable resources, such as eggs and rabbits. As a result, she gained a certain degree of freedom of movement and was even permitted to negotiate with the soldiers for the benefit of the university's medical laboratory.[664]

[663] Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, 'Church and State in Japanese-Occupied Hong Kong', *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 2018): 1–13, 5.

[664] 'Madre Giustina Siachongko', Obituary, n.d., A.C.R., 8-9.

These political negotiations were crucial in enabling the Canossian Sisters to effectively carry out their mission work during wartime China. They engaged in negotiations with local authorities to ensure the safety of their personnel and facilities, as well as the protection of vulnerable people. Negotiations also focused on securing essential resources, collaborating with local agencies, maintaining humanitarian neutrality, and encouraging reconciliation efforts. They stressed their commitment to humanitarian principles and sought recognition and respect for their impartiality, essential for delivering aid effectively amidst the conflict.

Bonds of sisterhood: enduring the final years of war

On September 3, 1943, Italy signed an unconditional surrender to the Allies. This act sanctioned Italy's disengagement from its alliance with Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany and the beginning of the Italian campaign and the Resistance in the Italian War of Liberation against Nazi-Fascism. The stipulation took place in Sicily in the Syracuse hamlet of Cassibile, in the Santa Teresa Longarini district, and remained secret for five days, in compliance with a clause in the pact that stipulated that it would come into force from the moment of its public announcement. At 7.42 p.m. Italian time, Prime Minister Badoglio's proclamation of September 8, 1943, was broadcast by EIAR microphones.[665] From that moment on, the situation for the sisters suddenly became dramatic and the Japanese authorities began to look at them with suspicion, until May 8, 1945, when the armistice in Europe was signed.[666] The *Report* retrieved in the Canossian Archive in Rome states that during the war period (25 December 1941-15 August 1945), Hong Kong's population was reduced to a quarter of its original size due to high mortality and the constant displacement of survivors to internal China. Amidst the turmoil and upheaval, numerous important institutions such as English Schools, the Canossa Hospital, and the boarding school were disrupted. However, the exigencies of the time called for the creation of other significant endeavors that demanded the complete dedication of the Canossian Sisters. Firstly, the sisters engaged in intensive and

[665] Vitali, *Una Città Nel Bufera: Milano. 25 Luglio 1943 - 25 Aprile 1945*, 97; Picone Chiodo, *In Nome Della Resa*, 283.

[666] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 100; Charles Hamilton, *Leaders & Personalities of the Third Reich: Their Biographies, Portraits, and Autographs* (San Jose, Calif: R.J. Bender Pub, 1996), 285-286.

continuous courses of catechetical instruction. These educational efforts were aimed at providing religious guidance and teachings to people of various social classes, emphasizing the importance of faith and spiritual sustenance during difficult wartimes. Additionally, the sisters established an orphanage for "war orphans" in 1940, which was subsequently expanded to accommodate up to 130 children in order to provide a safe place for those who had lost their families. Moreover, the Canossian Convent extended its shelter to the families of Hong Kong volunteers who chose to remain under their care until the official opening of a dedicated center established by the Red Cross. This gesture of hospitality ensured that the families had a temporary refuge amidst the chaos and uncertainty of war. The sisters also undertook the responsibility of administering baptisms "in articulo mortis" to people who were on the brink of death due to starvation or in public hospitals, often victims of air raids. Furthermore, the Canossian Sisters extended their assistance to the victims of air raids by providing medical aid at the Hospital of St. Francis. Sisters worked tirelessly to rescue many children, gathering them in the House of the Holy Childhood. Lastly, they extended their hospitality to the Sisters of St. Paul and their orphaned children, who were left displaced after their convent and houses were destroyed in a devastating bombing raid on April 5, when six sisters lost their lives in their pursuit of serving the needy and destitute.[667]

Due to complex communications with the rest of the world, following the outbreak of the Second World War, correspondence only resumed in 1945. In the tragic five years of war before, Hubei's mission was almost destroyed. The first air attack on Hankou took place on December 12, 1943, and four young Canossian Sisters died: Carolina Zoia, 39 years old, Hospital Director, Anna Trombini, 39 years old, Maddalena Zandonai, 36 years old, Maria Brambilla, 33 years old. Moreover, during the attack, the bishop was also present in the residence alongside an elderly Chinese priest named Father Liao, who was 80 years old. [668]

During the years 1941-1944, any regular circular was written by the sisters. In a letter to the Mother Delegate Mombelli, she gave a brief history of South Shaanxi from 1939, filling the gap left by the circulars.

> […] After the raid in May 1939 which forced us to move from Ming-tei Middle School to Kulupa (Guluba) and after the terrible events of October of

[667] Report, 2 November 1946, 10-VIII-Folder 2 (iv), A.C.R., 3-4.

[668] Sala, 315.

> the same year, when some 20 bombs hit the regional house,...the fury of the war was beginning to fade, creating fewer problems for us. This encouraged us to reopen the school in Hanchungfu (Hanzhong), but it was the beginning of an even more painful and serious difficulty [...] Towards the end of 1943, a defamatory campaign was launched against us through the press, and our students began to rebel, egged on by the enemy; real persecution began.

By the conclusion of 1943, teachers were selectively appointed by the communist regime within the educational institutions, fostering an environment in which schoolchildren and personnel were encouraged to engage in mutual insults. Furthermore, a defamatory campaign was initiated through the local newspaper, and missionaries were even subjected to threats involving weapons. In February 1944, a de facto state of imprisonment ensued: the church square became a makeshift court where Italian members of the community were brought to face judgment. The entire student body celebrated and voiced their approval as the verdict was pronounced against the accused. Consequently, the following day, they were forced to leave their homes under coercive circumstances.[669] The convoy of the bishop, sixteen missionary priests, and ten Canossian Sisters reached Luoyang, where the mission was transformed into a concentration camp. They established a little dispensary which proved to be instrumental in securing the necessary financial resources for their sustenance, garnering the endorsement of the local officers.[670] The second group of missionaries had a similar journey. On March 16, the four sisters of Guluba and the layman residing with them were dispatched to Chenggu. However, they were able to remain within the confines of Hanzhong, thanks to the intervention of several people who provided protection, such as the army doctor, a Catholic and a supporter of the mission.[671]

Due to the lack of news between 1939 and 1945 also in the mission of South Henan the first information dated to 1946, at the end of the war, when Mother Malinverni wrote to Mother Bellocchio describing everything that happened in those years: "[...] In July 1941 our imprisonment in Kinkiankan began: only three of us, Mother Luinetti, Sister Agnes Ly and I,

[669] Sala, 432-434.

[670] M.Vittoria Garrè, 'Madre Maria Mombelli', Obituary, 24 May 1964, A.C.R.

[671] Ida Sala, *Storia delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000. Volume II 1868-1952.* Italian edition edited by the Secretariat of the Canossian Daughters of Charity-Rome, 432-434.

were allowed to stay at home."[672] Sister Agnes was allowed to remain on the field to assist charitable works for to her Chinese nationality, while Mother Malinverni and Mother Luinetti since they worked at the hospital in the care of the wounded.

The sisters in South Henan sought refuge in Jinjiajiang, where they had been engaged in their work since 1892 and whose management had been transferred to the local congregation in 1935. They sought shelter alongside the Chinese sisters who had received their education in Nanyang. However, Jinjiajiang was not spared from the consequences of the conflict, as the residence experienced bombings with Mother Torri, Mother Colombo, and the sisters from Luoyang present on the day.[673] The mission of South Henan had its sad epilogue before the other Canossian foundations in China: by the end of 1948, all the sisters departed from the mission and did not make a return. On May 14, a group of nine sisters, including two Chinese members, Agnes Ly and Maria Chang, arrived in Hankou. It is worth noting that the Chinese members were only able to leave with official permission. Despite the circumstances, some of the sisters remained active in Hankou until 1951, when the Hubei mission was ultimately shut down.[674]

In the autumn of 1945, subsequent to the cessation of hostilities, a comprehensive missive was dispatched to Mother Bellocchio by Mother Torri, detailing the experiences of the sisters of Zhengxian from 1941 onwards. Following the downfall of the Fascist regime in July 1943 and Italy's withdrawal from the Axis powers, the relationship between the missionaries and the local authorities faced a partial amelioration. In 1944, missionaries established a dispensary in Sinchang, located approximately thirty Chinese miles away from Neixiang, in order to provide medical assistance to the local people mostly afflicted with ocular infections. This initiative was entrusted to three sisters and a priest, although the project's implementation was impeded due to the looming threat of a renewed Japanese offensive. In the interim, Zhengxian was captured in April 1943, resulting in the occupation of the hospital and the pillaging of the residence. It was only in 1945, after two and a half years, that the authorities in Luoyang let the Italian missionaries return to their respective foundations, where resumed activities with the poor, except for the school of St. Therese which was entrusted to a Chinese priest.[675]

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[672] Sala, *Storia Delle Missioni Canossiane in Cina. Hong Kong 1860-2000*, 2003, 483.

[673] Sala, 487.

[674] Sala, 488.

[675] Sala, 518, 523.

Figure 51- Mothers Adele Triulzio, Elena Ferracin, Maria Cosma, Erminia Cattaneo, Emilia Brambilla, Maria Chang, Regina Luinetta, Erminia Beretta, Giusepina Rezonico, Angela Caden, Virginia Fumagalli. 1946.[676]

Conclusion

Throughout their history, over 530 Canossian Sisters from various nationalities made their way to China, engaging in vital activities within the realms of education, evangelization, and the care of orphans and the injured. From the initial arrival in China during the late nineteenth century, the Canossian Sisters served as a central hub for educational, social, and evangelistic endeavors, continuously adapting to the evolving needs of local society. Their work began with the pioneering sisters and continued with their successors, providing aid and assistance in regions like Hong Kong, Hubei, Shaanxi, South Henan, and Western Henan, particularly during the turbulent years of the 1930s and 1940s, marked by the Second World War. Their compassionate and selfless response to the needs of the affected communities allowed them to play a prominent and visible role in providing aid and support. In Hong Kong, the local Chinese sisters of the Precious Blood played a crucial role as invaluable assistants to the

[676] '"Regina Martyrum" Province, China-Hong Kong-Macao, Vol.II'.

Italian sisters. However, information regarding local Canossian congregations in Mainland China remains relatively sparse. Nevertheless, the available records and documents bear witness to their dedicated efforts in providing aid and relief during the wartime years, as exemplified by the Aggregatae in Shaanxi Province and the Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Western Henan. Additionally, the collaboration between the Canossian Sisters and the Red Cross in China during this critical period stands as a testament to the impactful humanitarian efforts and institutional cooperation that significantly influenced the context of assistance and support in China. Noteworthy, in this regard, is the visit of Song Meiling to the regional Canossian house in Hankou.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1940 and Italy's entry into the war brought about a difficult situation for the Italian community residing in Hong Kong. This shift had significant repercussions, especially for the clergy and Canossian missions. Moreover, the begin of the war in Hong Kong in 1941 led to a complex and ambivalent relationship between the Japanese military authorities and both the Chinese and expatriate Christian communities. Japanese soldiers and officers often interfered in religious worship and church operations, blurring the lines between spiritual autonomy and external intervention. Despite this, the authorities allowed a notable degree of freedom. Amidst these challenging circumstances, the Canossian Sisters lived among ordinary citizens and relied on their faith to navigate through dramatic situations. Their roles as religious figures and caregivers positioned them as political intermediaries between the occupying forces and the local population, granting them a certain level of autonomy and further enhancing their public presence and influence. Many wounded, refugees, and orphans sought refuge in churches and convents, where Catholic sisters offered shelter, sustenance, and care. Additionally, the sisters organized rescue missions, often risking their own safety, to save people from perilous situations and provide them with secure protection. Within the Motherhouse, the sisters devoted themselves to teaching students and offering medical aid and assistance, along with emotional support. With the downfall of the Fascist regime in July 1943 and Italy's withdrawal from the Axis powers, the relationship between the missionaries and local authorities experienced partial improvement. During the years 1941-1944, any regular circular was written by the sisters. The first information sources were letters and documents written after those dramatic years, when many sisters expelled from China moved to Hong Kong and Macau, together with millions of refugees. This dark period in their history was instead a strong foundation for their educational endeavors and relief efforts served as a means for them to actively engage in public with the authorities and fulfill their mission of compassion, service, and support to those in need.

Chapter 6

Concepts and Portraits

Conclusions

This dissertation presented a comprehensive exploration into the multifaceted roles assumed by women engaged in humanitarian relief activities during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945). Employing a transnational and transcultural lens, this study has investigated the intricate dynamics that unfolded as both Western and Chinese women collaborated to redefine their positions within the public sphere through acts of charity, humanitarianism, and religious devotion. This pivotal epoch, marked by sweeping global and international transformations, bore witness to the convergence of women from different backgrounds, united by their shared commitment to alleviating the sufferings of conflict. The research underscored the profound intimacy that blossomed among Chinese and foreign women as they operated in relief work, establishing connections that transcended conventional boundaries. This intimacy not only fortified their collective resilience but also facilitated a unique avenue through which to address a persistent inquiry in the tapestry of modern Chinese history: the role of transnational relief work as a conduit for empowering both Chinese and foreign women within the wartime milieu of China. By participating in relief initiatives, these women harnessed a newfound agency that enabled them to cross traditional gender roles, imprinting an indelible mark on the historical narrative. Through a meticulous analysis of historical narratives, visual materials, organizational dynamics, and personal accounts, this study has enlightened the multifaceted ways in which the intricate interplay between humanitarianism and women's public participation in twentieth-century China converged to shape the evolving landscape of gender roles, societal engagement, and secular and faith-based contributions.

The overarching framework of this research emphasized the significance of humanitarianism as a marker of modernity and a conduit for expressing nationalistic fervor. As Chapter 1 analyzed, humanitarianism was mostly associated with the birth of the Red Cross: its establishment started to be a significant issue in terms of representing modernity and in connection with nationalism. In the early years of the twentieth century, within the realms of faith-based humanitarianism and relief organizations, Christians, including Catholic

missionaries, emerged as key figures, given the prevailing circumstances. Their notable presence was particularly prominent in the realm of medical work and healthcare services. Western medical missionaries pioneered the establishment of modern clinics and hospitals, facilitated nurse training, and founded the first medical institutions in China. This undertaking laid a solid groundwork for advancing modern medical practices in the country.[677]

When the war broke out, the intervention of volunteers from humanitarian and religious organizations was indispensable for providing aid to civilians and soldiers under exhausting wartime conditions. That these associations involved new and modernizing elements is illustrated specifically in my dissertation's analysis of women's participation. They were able to make significant contributions to the war effort through their involvement in various forms of humanitarian aid. Indeed, humanitarianism, emblematic of modernity and reflective of the growing public sphere, along with the concurrent functions of relief operations by the modern State, created an environment conducive to the emergence of an innovative form of women's public engagement in twentieth-century China. As Chapter 2 explored, the participation of women in the public domain and their pursuit of humanitarian causes were both conceptualized as manifestations of modernity and expressions of nationalist sentiment. In the context of China's women's activism historical narrative, the era of the Republic stands as a momentous inflection point. Under the influence of foreign cultural influences, emerging viewpoints on gender equality and the women's emancipation movement gave rise to a new, more nuanced understanding of women's roles and status in Chinese society. [678]

Consequently, the active engagement of women in humanitarian endeavors aimed at aiding wounded soldiers, civilians, and vulnerable populations emerged as a pivotal and focal aspect during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War, thereby positioning women as central protagonists in these historical contexts. The persistence of long duration's organizations in which women were involved, often exhibited affiliations with international groups supported by Western powers. Prominent examples include the Red Cross, as illustrated in Chapter 3, or involve religious orientations, as investigated in Chapters 4 and 5. This phenomenon finds its roots, in part, within the capacity of religious establishments to inculcate a profound sense of commitment and devotion among their

[677] Choa, *'Heal the Sick' Was Their Motto*.

[678] Drucker, 'The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911'; Bradshaw, 'Catholic Sisters in China: An Effort to Raise the Status of Women'.

followers. Chapters 4 and 5 were dedicated to an in-depth examination of Christian Catholic orders. These ecclesiastical organizations, alongside the Red Cross, served as institutional conduits and systematic frameworks through which a substantial cohort of women actively participated in protracted social welfare initiatives. This participatory trajectory spanned multiple decades. The intersectional scrutiny of the Red Cross and Catholic female orders offers a valuable vantage point, as these associations epitomized attempts to introduce Western paradigms for mobilizing women toward social service objectives. Notably, they underscored the contemporary approach to effecting social relief by reconfiguring local Chinese gender dynamics and religious customs. Furthermore, these humanitarian associations, categorized as secular and faith-centered, respectively, exemplified divergent methodologies for enlisting women in the public sphere. The former adopted a Western-centric paradigm that conceptualized women as interconnected agents within a transnational matrix of relationships, while the latter ethos encouraged women's involvement within the familial unit, premised upon an unwavering commitment to faith-driven actions. As discerned from this study, this inclination engendered variegated outcomes concerning women's agency.

The thesis encompasses three different elements: firstly, it analyzes the top-down mechanism within the secular humanitarian organization of the Red Cross, explaining how these processes nationalize the global and transnational elite within the framework of war and mobilize society at large, particularly women in the field of relief efforts. Secondly, the study delves into the domain of local women's orders, highlighting how the feminization of Catholicism has led to inclusive dynamics, as Ingenbohl Sisters reveal, that then had repercussions in terms of emancipation in certain field works, especially in the specific wartime context which offered them new opportunities. Lastly, the work of caregiving is inserted into international political dynamics, and by studying the Canossian Sisters, it is possible to observe different forms of empowerment by foreign women linked to relief in an international situation complicated by social, political and cultural actors.

In particular, Chapter 3 revealed that within the realm of humanitarian assistance, the Red Cross established organized avenues and systematic initiatives for a considerable cohort of women to participate in international philanthropic undertakings. This phenomenon merits attention due to its embodiment of efforts to assimilate Western paradigms for enlisting women in civil service, thereby showcasing an innovative approach to integrating women into public affairs. This phenomenon is dissected through a pair of predominant overarching issues analyzed within the chapter. Firstly, it delved into the proactive involvement of elite Chinese and foreign women in authoritative positions, delineating their distinct responsibilities across

diverse committees and aid establishments. Secondly, it underscored the noteworthy role of women within the discourse of relief efforts, as evidenced by media representations, journals, and official documentation. The exertions of these women and their interactions with Western counterparts served as a lens through which the construct of gender molded the interpretations of altruism, conflict, and nation-crafting in modern China. This perspective also furnished an occasion to reevaluate societal values and conventional gender roles. Indeed, the conflict triggered comprehensive mobilization, leading to the founding of medical institutions that offered employment avenues for women hailing from less privileged social backgrounds. Furthermore, women predominantly assumed subservient positions within these establishments, occupying roles that thrust them into the vanguard of medical responses and exposed them to public inquiry. Prominent female leaders like Song Meiling, through a top down mobilization process, advocated for women's engagement in wartime endeavors via conventionally feminine caregiving labor. They stood as models and spearheaded the establishment of benevolent organizations that laid the groundwork for such undertakings. While numerous upper-class wives were already involved in benevolent activities prior to the conflict, the nationalist movement generated opportunities for women to embrace heightened political and societal involvement, thereby challenging established norms and advocating for change. The case of nurse Zhou Meiyu and her contributions to the domain of military nursing within the Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, for instance, training uncovered the profound import of surmounting gender barriers by actively partaking in specific humanitarian relief ventures aligned with the Chinese nationalist cause. These emerging structures operated independently from the central committee, spontaneously emerging, at times with the backing of local branches, in the regions most impacted by the armed conflicts.[679] Parallel with this discourse, the chapter also addressed the convergence of the media and narrative phases. This combination delved into the crafting of narratives relating to the involvement of women within the Red Cross, clarifying how these narratives were propagated through various channels such as the press, media outlets, and diverse visual and textual depictions. The amplified presence of women within relief efforts, particularly in domains like nursing, tending to the wounded, and heading fundraising initiatives, is indicative of how, within the collective consciousness, the portrayal of women as public figures during times of conflict found a propitious platform in the sphere of humanitarian relief endeavors.

[679] Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy: The Chinese Red Cross Society 1900- 1937', 15.

Another pivotal facet of the female experiences within the Red Cross during the War of Resistance was the fostering of collaboration and network-building, both within their local communities and across international boundaries. The labor undertaken by these networks of women assumed paramount significance, particularly given the arduous circumstances of the wartime background. These efforts played a crucial role in the sustenance of medical facilities and the provision of continuous care to the wounded. Furthermore, these networks played a pivotal role in mobilizing charitable donations through fundraising campaigns. The instances of Li Xiaqing and Ada Lum serve as emblematic representations of the interplay between personal agency, cross-border and global relationships, and national duty. Their upbringing and access to resources endowed them with a distinctive platform to exert a substantial influence on the cause of Chinese Resistance.

Visual representations were strategically produced not only for local dissemination but with a primary intent to engage the attention of the international media, predominantly by leveraging the narratives of foreign observers. Notably, a relevant characteristic of the Red Cross's endeavors was the facilitation of the entry of people into China who could articulate their experiences to the global audience in a distinctive manner. Foreign correspondents, in particular, offered multifaceted viewpoints on the wartime situation, thereby eliciting empathy and garnering support for China's anti-fascist struggle on a global scale, while concurrently contributing positively to the international community's understanding of China. This phenomenon finds exemplification in the case of American journalist Agnes Smedley. She joined the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps as a publicity worker after encountering in Hangzhou Dr. Lin Kesheng and her contributions played a significant role in molding perceptions of the war and its ramifications for Chinese society.

The interconnection between public advocacy and the national domain provided fertile ground for the efficacious evolution of the Chinese Red Cross Society. Nonetheless, with the exception of isolated cases like that of Zhou Meiyu, the contributions of women to the Red Cross translated poorly into authoritative decision-making capacities. Instead, the roles of women were relegated to indispensable administrative and public relations functions, which proved vital to the operational efficacy of the organization.

In collaboration with the Red Cross, the provision of social and relief services for Chinese women became associated with the missionary activities and social welfare initiatives carried out by Christian churches. As posited by Lü Hongping, the religious institutions made substantial contributions to the realm of women's social work during the era of Republican China, and these impacts manifested through at least two distinct avenues.

Primarily, these institutions offered both direct and indirect forms of social assistance and services to women, encompassing realms such as relief efforts, educational provisions, familial support, and employment opportunities. These endeavors not only served as sources of inspiration and guidance for the evolution of women's social work within China but also played a fundamental role in sparking the emergence and advancement of civil organizations dedicated to women's causes. This multifaceted involvement consequently laid a crucial foundation for the widespread development of women's social work across the societal landscape. [680] Christian orders experienced fluctuations in their prioritization between religious objectives and their dedication to social service, responding to the evolving demands of different historical periods. Simultaneously, as Kang's research demonstrates, women strategically employed religious elements to empower themselves, leading to their active pursuit of the ideals associated with the "new woman," striving for gender equality and contributing to the advancement of Chinese modernity and national unity, all within the framework of their unique circumstances.[681] Upon their arrival in China, Catholic missionaries assumed the dedicated responsibility of serving their community through the provision of spiritual guidance, education, healthcare, and social support. This commitment is exemplified by the Ingenbohl Sisters in the twentieth-century Manchurian context, who formulated a strategic methodology to enlist local women into their congregations. This approach facilitated a connection with the local people and the advancement of Catholicism. As ardent envoys of the Church, these missionaries significantly contributed to the proselytization endeavors and the expansion of Catholicism within the region. Furthermore, for numerous women who embraced the religious community, this offered an avenue to engage in public life and establish their influence. Chapter 4 revealed that the local members of the Oblates of St. Therese of the Child Jesus were devoted to training local Catholic Virgins, imparting skills for evangelism, medical aid, and education. Despite the independent identity developed by the local congregation, the involvement of foreign nuns remained consequential, assuming a predominant role in the mission over an extended period. This presence underscored a hierarchical structure where foreign nuns enjoyed a privileged status in comparison to their Chinese counterparts. Alongside recognition of the agency and contributions of local women, the nuns also perpetuated specific patriarchal ideals of womanhood and functioned within the

[680] Lü Hongping 吕红平, 'Minguo Shiqi de Funü Shehui Gongzuo 民国时期的妇女社会工作 [On Women's Social Work in the Republic of China Era]'.

[681] Kang, 'Women, Gender and Religion in Modern China, 1900s-1950s', 26.

framework of colonial power dynamics. Within the confines of stringent regulations, local virgins were restricted to domestic duties and were subject to the authority of the clergy, either directly or indirectly through rigorous directives. Nevertheless, this engagement facilitated opportunities for women's involvement in missions, philanthropic undertakings, education, and healthcare, thus engendering a relatively egalitarian setting. Despite its limitations, it served as an escape from the constraints of familial obligations, creating a distinctive realm where women wielded authority. This was especially evident in relief and medical care efforts during wartime China, domains predominantly overseen by women. The outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan boosted relief efforts in a transnational arena, leading to novel prospects and anticipations for female religious orders. The Ingenbohl Sisters dedicated themselves to medical relief operations, ensuring not only survival but also the sustenance of their community. While the sisters in Qiqihar tended to the injured and the dying, their counterparts in Zhaozhou assumed responsibility for treating chronic opium addicts. They acquired specialized competencies in surgical procedures, anesthesia administration, and nursing. Also in this case, photographs and pictures of the time assumed a pivotal role in showcasing the sisters' medical adeptness, thus conferring upon them authority in matters of medical intervention. By dutifully discharging their roles as nurses, in collaboration with local women, these women entered the public sphere and extended assistance to the wounded, tailored to the exigencies of the wartime situation. Thus, even if the Church's hierarchical structure remained intact and rules for virgins, for instance, remained stringent, the war still offered them the opportunity to engage in the public field and demonstrate their proficiency not only in charitable and evangelistic endeavors but also as proficient healthcare professionals. Their expertise extended beyond religious activities and spirituality to encompass the medical realm, where they showed a keen ability to assess and coordinate essential treatments for the local population. The sisters' process of writing and recording their experiences also played a significant role in shaping their identities. These personal narratives acted as a way for the sisters to introduce themselves to their intended audiences, especially those in higher positions. Many of these personal accounts recounted the sisters' participation in various forms of aid work, such as nursing, administering anesthesia, and managing pharmacies and opium sanatoriums. They created a network of mission stations and educational institutions in Manchuria, a project that continued until they were definitively expelled from China in 1954.

Similarly, the feminization of religion also involves the Canossian Sisters who acted as a central focal point for educational, medical, and evangelistic initiatives. Chapter 5

revealed that their involvement commenced with the pioneering sisters and persisted with their successors, extending aid and help in areas like Hong Kong, Hubei, Shaanxi, South Henan, and Western Henan, particularly during the tumultuous years of the 1930s and 1940s marked by World War II. Their caring response to the needs of the affected communities allowed them to assume a significant and visible role in providing assistance. In Hong Kong, the local Chinese sisters from the Precious Blood order played a pivotal part as invaluable aids to their Italian counterparts. However, information regarding local congregations within mainland China remains somewhat limited. Nonetheless, the accessible records and documents attest to their resolute endeavors in supplying aid and relief during the war years, as seen through the local sisters in Shaanxi Province and the Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Western Henan. Furthermore, the cooperation between the Canossian Sisters and the Red Cross in China during this critical period serves as a confirmation of the influential humanitarian work and institutional collaboration that significantly impacted the landscape of aid and support in China. Particularly, Song Meiling's visit to the Canossian residence in Hankou underscored her significant role as a prominent elite woman committed to philanthropic and benevolent efforts, showcasing her ability to wield influence over both individuals and institutions.

In contrast to the fourth chapter focused on the examination of a stable Manchurian context, this section paints a more intricate international landscape. A significant shift here lies in recognizing that women's empowerment extends beyond the relief work. It encompasses the need to establish and conduct their own medical-missionary initiatives within a complicated international context, adding a necessary political dimension to their roles. The fifth chapter explored caregiving as a realm that provides women with an autonomous space for negotiation and strategic interaction, where the sisters must adeptly navigate and negotiate with the foreign authorities. The outbreak of World War II in 1940 and Italy's involvement in the conflict placed the Italian community in Hong Kong and mainland China in a difficult situation. Furthermore, the beginning of the war in Hong Kong in 1941 led to a complex and uncertain relationship between the Japanese military authorities and both the Chinese and expatriate Christian communities. Japanese soldiers and officers frequently intruded on religious practices and church operations, blurring the distinction between spiritual independence and external interference. Surprisingly, though, the regime allowed a noteworthy degree of freedom. In the midst of these difficult circumstances, the roles of the sisters as religious leaders and caregivers positioned them as intermediaries between the occupying forces and the local population. This positioning granted them a certain level of

independence, enhancing their public presence and influence: Churches and convents became shelters for the wounded, refugees, and orphans, where the Catholic sisters provided not only a safe haven but also nourishment and care. Additionally, the sisters arranged rescue missions to save people from dangerous predicaments and offer secure refuge, negotiating with the local authorities. Within the Motherhouse, the sisters dedicated themselves to educating students and providing medical assistance, as well as emotional support. With the downfall of the Fascist regime in July 1943 and Italy's withdrawal from the Axis powers, the relationship between the missionaries and authorities experienced partial improvement. Throughout the years 1941-1944, the sisters did not issue regular updates. The primary sources of information were letters and documents written after those tumultuous years when many sisters expelled from China relocated to Hong Kong and Macau alongside millions of refugees. This challenging period laid a robust foundation for their educational initiatives and relief efforts, enabling them to actively engage with the public and fulfill their mission of compassion, service, and assistance for those in need. With the end of the war and the progressive advancement of the communist forces, the situation underwent a radical transformation. According to Giunipero, after the Second World War, Pius XII took a significant step in 1946 by appointing the first cardinal of Chinese origin, Bishop Thomas Tian Gengxin 田耕莘 (1890-1967) of Qingdao, who later became the bishop of Beijing. Bishop Paul Yu Bin 于斌 (1901-1978), another Chinese prelate, was also entrusted with the diocese of Nanjing. This move signaled a shift in the Church's structure, transitioning from the "missionary regime" characterized by prefectures and apostolic vicariates to the "ordinary regime." This new arrangement divided the entire national territory of China into 144 ecclesiastical circumscriptions, comprising twenty archdioceses, eighty-five dioceses, and thirty-nine apostolic prefectures. However, following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Catholic Church remained a predominantly minority presence in the country, even if it had made significant contributions to charitable, educational and medical relief activities within Chinese society.[682]

Mungello described missionaries and nuns as "chauvinistic, exploitive, and condescending," but also genuinely "kind, charitable, and inspirational."[683] Indeed, the missions played a significant role in improving the societal status of women in China. Some

[682] Elisa Giunipero. *Chiesa cattolica e Cina comunista. Dalla rivoluzione del 1949 al Concilio Vaticano II* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007), 29.

[683] Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China*, 1.

women achieved self-reliance and autonomy either by choosing to remain dedicated celibates or by forming connections through various church involvements, as observed in Swiss and Italian congregations. Additionally, education and vocational training provided opportunities for women to advance both socially and economically. The church founded numerous girls' schools and created potential career paths, such as teaching, healthcare, and social services. In contrast to how the church portrayed Catholic women as "compliant, self-sacrificing individuals," many demonstrated themselves as self-sufficient women who "exert personal authority in their lives as nuns."[684]

Considering the transformations of different, but analogous associations that operated in the field of relief efforts during the Republican era, the thesis has revealed that the Western and Chinese Red Cross volunteers and Christian missionaries worked in war-torn territories, often together, to bring relief and assistance to people in need. Considering the organization together with the Catholic missions in a long-term perspective, and against the backdrop of China's social and political changes, my thesis increased a so far only slightly analyzed case study to current research on global humanitarian and religious aid. In this crucial era, marked by the upheaval of war, Chinese and Western women had to reevaluate their missions and adjust to new historical circumstances. Participating in relief activities offered by the war gave them the opportunity to challenge traditional gender norms and establish their authority in the public space, which in turn reshaped notions of femininity within their communities and society at large. The activism carried out by elite women during China's Nationalist era resulted in an indirect exercise of political influence within a predominantly male-dominated government. Nonetheless, their endeavors played a pivotal role in upholding the state's authority. Humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross, heavily dependent on donations and volunteer work, primarily staffed by women and young girls, aimed to cultivate an image of the Nationalist regime as compassionate and caring, aligning with its goal of maintaining the populace's well-being. Women active in these organizations acted as the compassionate side of the otherwise male-centric state apparatus. Through their medical and relief work, including operating soup kitchens, managing orphanages, providing services to wounded soldiers, and organizing clothing drives for refugees, women not only obscured men's disciplinary authority but also reinforced its implementation. Their activities coerced people into compliance through gentle persuasion and by offering much-needed assistance. Although

[684] Megan P Brock, 'Resisting the Catholic Church's Notion of the Nun as Self-Sacrificing Woman', *Feminism & Psychology* 20, no. 4 (November 2010): 473–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509359138, 478.

women's leadership roles did not confer direct political authority, their frequent interactions with the beneficiaries of their services made them indispensable contributors to the state. Throughout the war, figures like Meiling, for instance, assumed the role of a national motherly figure and exemplified the type of contributions expected of women in support of the war effort. She was highly visible both domestically and internationally and held leadership positions in numerous local charitable organizations. Her willingness to collaborate openly with known leftists further promoted the noteworthy impartiality of women's wartime groups, even as their spouses remained aligned with bitterly divided political parties. Song Meiling frequently made headlines by inspecting donations of medical equipment, visiting injured soldiers, sewing clothing for refugees, and caring for children in orphanages. While many elite wives were involved in charitable work before the war, Meiling inspired them to redouble their efforts during the crisis, dedicated to serving the Chinese Resistance cause. The nationalist movement carved out opportunities for women to engage more actively in politics and society, challenging established norms and advocating for change, as seen in the roles of women and girls in the field of relief work.

Similarly, the approach adopted by Catholic nuns, as observed in the last two case studies, aimed to enlist local women into their congregations with the goal of interacting with the populace and facilitating their conversion. The extensive involvement of women in charitable, educational, and social activities became closely linked with femininity in various ways. The concept of "feminization of religion" went beyond just the numerical predominance of women in these roles and delved into the transformative nature of their positions. It not only referred to the increasing presence and influence of women in religious roles as clergy members and in lay positions but also carried a symbolic meaning. [685] The prominence of women in specific activities can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, these activities tended to attract more women than men, and secondly, women eventually came to dominate these fields. Some women were engaged in training and employing local women as evangelists. The Chinese women who assumed the role of catechists, often referred to as "the right arm of the missionary," played a significant role in the Church's development. Motivated by a spirit of charity, they embodied a specific image of femininity that was promoted through the circulation of images depicting them, as shown in the research photographs. These pictures served to reinforce the desired qualities of poverty and selfless

[685] van Osselaer and Buerman, 'Feminization Thesis'; Pasture, Art, and Buerman, *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe*, 10.

dedication to the Church. By recruiting and empowering Chinese women as catechists, the Catholic Sisters were able to establish a presence within the local Catholic community and effectively spread their religious teachings. These Chinese women, as dedicated representatives of the Church, played a crucial role in conversion efforts and the expansion of the Catholic Church in the region. At the same time, for many women who chose to join the religious community, it provided a means to enter the public sphere and assert their presence.

In both the Red Cross and the religious congregations, women were part of a national process moving within certain boundaries regulated by the Chinese nationalist body-state. Thus, if on one hand the patriarchal hierarchy and power structure were reinforced, on the other the broad participation of women allowed them to create an all-female sphere in which they held authority and the environment in which they worked was quite egalitarian, albeit with certain limitations. In the three cases, women were pathbreakers in working alongside men in a military setting but were also to some extent restricted by the traditional doctrine of femininity based on essentialist ideas about women's caring roles. They seemed to embody the perfect model for joining humanitarian works since its members endorsed those feminine principles strictly related to maternity and conciliation. However, as this dissertation aimed to reveal, the impact of these women's efforts resonated beyond the immediate context. Their contributions helped shape evolving perceptions of femininity, expanding the realm of possibilities for women's engagement in public affairs. These stories also underscored the adaptability of women to changing historical circumstances, exemplified by their resilience during times of conflict and their commitment to the welfare of their communities.

Women's involvement in humanitarianism and public engagement in twentieth-century China was multifaceted, transformative, and situated within a complex web of gender dynamics, modernization processes, and global, transnational influences. The roles and contributions of women in this context deserve careful study and recognition as an essential part of China's history and the broader history of humanitarianism and public engagement. Through a careful examination of these narratives, scholars have gained valuable insights into the ways in which women navigated and reshaped societal norms and expectations while actively participating in humanitarian endeavors, often spanning across geographical and cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that our understanding of this multifaceted intersection remains incomplete, and there are several avenues for future academic inquiries. I already investigated the transnational experiences of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, nationalities, and regions within China. Such studies shed light on how factors such as class, nationality, and geographic location intersect with

gender in shaping women's roles in humanitarianism and public engagement. However, there still remains the opportunity to delve into a finer-grained level of analysis and introduce a comparative dimension as well, for example. In conclusion, while significant strides have been made through this dissertation in uncovering the narratives of women's participation in humanitarianism and public engagement in twentieth-century China, this field of study remains fertile ground for future research. By delving deeper into the nuances of these narratives, scholars can continue to unravel the intricate web of gender, humanitarianism, and modernity, offering valuable insights that resonate with both historical and modern-contemporary contexts.

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Estratto per riassunto della tesi di dottorato

L'estratto (max. 1000 battute) deve essere redatto sia in lingua italiana che in lingua inglese e nella lingua straniera eventualmente indicata dal Collegio dei docenti.

L'estratto va firmato e rilegato come ultimo foglio della tesi.

Studente: Federica Cicci

matricola: 849794

Dottorato: Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa

Ciclo: 35

Titolo della tesi[1]: Caring Women: Transnational Activism and Humanitarian Relief Efforts during Wartime China (1937-1945)

Abstract:

In che modo il lavoro di assistenza e soccorso all'interno di un contesto transnazionale ha fornito uno spazio di azione pubblico alle donne cinesi e straniere durante il periodo bellico in Cina? La presente tesi si concentra sulla partecipazione delle donne all'interno delle attività di soccorso durante la Guerra di Resistenza contro il Giappone e la Seconda Guerra Mondiale in Cina (1937-1945), adottando una prospettiva transnazionale e transculturale. La ricerca esamina le complesse modalità attraverso cui le donne occidentali e cinesi, congiuntamente, si sono riconfigurate all'interno della sfera pubblica mediante iniziative di carattere caritativo, umanitario e religioso, in un periodo storico di vitale importanza, caratterizzato da significative trasformazioni globali e internazionali. Attraverso l'analisi di importanti casi di studio, tra i quali figurano la Croce Rossa e gli ordini religiosi femminili delle suore svizzere di Ingenbohl e delle suore Canossiane italiane, la presente ricerca accresce la portata dell'indagine storica relativa alle donne straniere e cinesi, offrendo così una prospettiva più approfondita dei loro contributi nel settore delle attività di soccorso. Il quadro investigativo include l'esame delle connessioni di natura globale che hanno consentito alle donne coinvolte in queste attività di intravedere opportunità, nonché l'analisi del modo in cui tali sforzi hanno valorizzato le cosiddette "virtù femminili", coniugandole con gli aspetti propri delle infermiere e delle donne religiose.

How did relief work in a transnational context offer an agency space for Chinese and foreign women during wartime China? This dissertation focuses on the role of women in relief activities during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945) from transnational and transcultural perspectives. It investigates the complex ways in which Western and Chinese women together repositioned themselves in the public sphere through charitable, humanitarian, and religious activities in a crucial historical period that witnessed major global and international transformations. Through some significant case studies that involve the Red Cross and the Catholic missionary female orders of the Ingenbohl Sisters from Switzerland and the Italian Canossian Sisters, the research increases the field of foreign and Chinese women's history, enabling a deeper comprehension of the contributions they made in relief work. I examine what global connections provided opportunities for women working in relief activities, and how these efforts tapped into the so-called feminine virtue and merged the virtuous women—self-sacrificing, frugal, generous, caring and helpful—with that of a nurse and a nun.

Firma dello studente

Federica Cicci

[1] Il titolo deve essere quello definitivo, uguale a quello che risulta stampato sulla copertina dell'elaborato consegnato.