Before the Term: „Religion“ as China‘s Cultural Other

Ya-pei Kuo

RESÜMEE

Nachdem es von Frankreich und Großbritannien besiegt worden war, unterzeichnete China 1858 die Verträge von Tianjin und stimmte der Aufhebung des Christentumsverbots zu. Die darauf folgenden diplomatischen Verhandlungen über den gesellschaftlichen, rechtlichen und steuerlichen Status von Christen machte die herrschende Schicht mit der Doktrin und den Praktiken dieser Religion bekannt und formte ihre allgemeine Wahrnehmung des Christentums. Auf der Grundlage einer Analyse von Schriften aus der Feder nicht-christlicher Angehöriger der Elite argumentiert der vorliegende Beitrag, dass das Auftreten der westlichen Nationen als Hüter der Rechte von Christen weltweit die Identität des Christentums von „der Religion aus dem Westen“ zu „der Religion des Westens“ veränderte. Auch Bemühungen, einige der Vertragsrechte auch auf chinesische Christen auszuweiten, trugen zur Schaffung einer separaten Verwaltungskategorie für Anhänger des Christentums bei und verstärkten die kulturelle Andersartigkeit, die mit dem Christentum assoziiert wurde. Diese Andersartigkeit wurde später in den chinesischen Begriff von Religion eingeschrieben, der, wie zahlreiche Forscher bemerkt haben, größtenteils auf dem Bild des Christentums beruhte.

In understanding the conceptual history of “religion” in modern China, much of the discussion has focused on “the term question.” As many have pointed out, the Chinese language did not possess an equivalent to the Western term “religion” until the beginning of the twentieth century. While the phrase *zongjiao*, which is the standard word for “religion” in modern Chinese, can be found in Chinese texts since the medieval period, it

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had different meanings and never functioned as the signifier of a category.[1] *Zongjiao* in its modern incarnation and as the designated equivalent of "religion" originated in a loanword from the Japanese.[2] As part of the linguistic circulation in East Asia, the Chinese graphs were gleaned from pre-modern texts to form a new vocabulary and to facilitate the importation of the Western-originated concept in Meiji-era Japan (1868–1912).[3] The Chinese scripts of the Japanese word then traveled back to China as a neologism.

Ever since its inception in China, *zongjiao* carried a conspicuous tone of cultural otherness. Liang Qichao, a participant in the 1898 reform movement and a journalist whose post-1900 writings significantly popularized the use of the term, claimed in a 1902 essay that China had never had religion.[4] Hu Shi, a self-proclaimed follower of Western liberalism and one of the most influential historians in the Republican era, upheld a similar though qualified position: Before the advent of Buddhism, the mainstay of intellectual orientation in China had been rationalist and thus non-religious.[5]

Hu and Liang both use the phrase *zongjiao* in a particular sense. More than religion per se, it denoted the specific form of religion pervasive in the West. Censuring the early Republican campaign to institute a national religion, Wing-tsit Chan, a Chinese-born American scholar, pointed to the lack of any organized church and questioned whether Confucianism would fit the definition.[6] Chan's position is not atypical. Throughout the twentieth century, opponents and critics of such campaigns often held Christianity to be the primary referent of *zongjiao* and played up the connotation of cultural foreignness in their arguments. The century-long debate on whether Confucianism is a religion has been as much about the meaning of *zongjiao* as the (re)definition of Confucianism.

This article traces the construction of *zongjiao*'s cultural foreignness back to its "prehistory." It argues that, before the term was coined, direct social contact with Christian missionaries and political dealings with Western states had spawned a new conception of "religion" based on the image of Christianity. After its arrival in China, the loanword over time incorporated layers of meaning that had emerged during the previous half

1 For a discussion of the usage before the nineteenth century, see A.C. Yu, State and Religion in China: Historical and Textual Perspectives, Chicago 2005, p. 12–14; Chen H., "Zongjiao" – yige Zhongguo jindai wenhuashi shang de guanjianci ("Zongjiao": A Key Term in the Cultural History of Modern China), in: Xin shixue 13/4 (2002), pp. 37–66, here: pp. 46–49.

2 Chen H., "Zongjiao" (as in note 1); M. Bastid-Bruguière (Ba Sidi), Liang Qichao yu zhongjiao wenti (Liang Qichao and the Religion Question), in: Hazama N. (ed.), Liang Qichao, Mingzhi Riben, Xifang: Riben Jingdu daxue renwen kexue yanjiusuo gongtong yanjiu baogao (Liang Qichao, Meiji Japan, and the West: Reports of the Joint Research Conducted at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, Kyoto University, Japan), Beijing 2001, pp. 400–57.

3 L.H. Liu, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China 1900–1937, Stanford 1995; F. Masini, The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898, Berkeley 1993.

4 Liang Q., Lun Zhongguo xueshu zhi bianqian dashi (On the Major Trend of Changes in China's Scholarship), in: Wu S. et al. (eds), Yinbing shi wenjidianjiao (Writings from the Studio of Ice Drinking, with Annotations), Kunming 2001, vol. 1, pp. 215–84, here: pp. 216, 218.

5 Hu S., The Chinese Renaissance: The Haskell Lectures, 1933, Chicago 1934, pp. 78–93.

6 W. Chan, Religious Trends in Modern China, New York 1953, p. 16.

century. The borrowing of the Japanese word was only one episode in the conceptual history of *zongjiao*.

To focus on the prehistory of the term is to confront the nineteenth-century mode of knowledge formation in China. In comparison with cases in other colonial and semi-colonial regions, such as India and Japan, China's acquisition of Western knowledge during this period relied more heavily on native nomenclature. With very few exceptions, the Chinese elite, trained in the Confucian classics, had neither skill in foreign languages nor travel experience outside of China. Even those who openly advocated Western learning (*Xixue*) lacked direct access to Western sources. New knowledge had to reach them through the mediation of the existing Chinese lexicon and conceptual framework. Leafing though Nishi Amane's *Hyakugaku renkan* (One Hundred Disciplines Connected, 1871), a Japanese encyclopedia, one would inevitably notice not only the adoption of the Western disciplinary structure as its classificatory framework, but also the extensive insertions of English terms in the texts. Each insert flags the foreign origin of the concept behind the Japanese word and marks out neologisms by highlighting the novelty of their intended meanings. Such a practice of translingual referencing did not appear in China until much later. Probably due to a recognition of the population's overall unfamiliarity with foreign languages, knowledge transmitters in nineteenth-century China tended to draw analogies between the imported and the native system of meanings and to gloss over the shifts in nuance and emphasis when old vocabulary was used for new concepts. In Kang Youwei's comparative study of sociopolitical norms and practices worldwide, *Shili gongfa quanshu* (Compendium of Pragmatic Principles and Universal Laws), which was also initiated in the 1870s, one thus finds a large number of foreign referents, now denoted by Chinese characters, being registered under the traditional conceptual structure. The translingual trafficking of meaning remained an opaque process, and the semantic shifting was anything but systematic and unequivocal.

The continuous reliance on the existent system of nomenclature certainly did not mean that the underlying concepts remained unchanged. As wars and unequal treaties with France and England forced China to lift its ban on Christianity in the middle of the nineteenth century, social contacts with Western religious personnel and church operations became possible for the first time in more than a century. The ensuing diplomatic and domestic controversies over Christians' civil and treaty rights not only shaped how Christianity was perceived in China, but also placed it at the center of the legal and political discourse on religion. By the end of the century, Christianity had become the primary model for new conceptions of religion. This history constitutes an interesting case for studying linguistic practices in the context of religious encounters, because the epistemological shift occurred without an overhaul in lexicon, making the process difficult to trace. Without the methodically demarcated neologisms seen in Japan, changes in religious concepts in China only revealed themselves through new patterns of word usage. However, they significantly determined how *zongjiao* would be construed and deployed in the following century.

I.

The rise of the imperialist West in the nineteenth century ushered in a new era in global history. Empire-building connected different parts of the world in one power network, and the process was by no means peaceful. The encroachment on China started with the infamous First Opium War in 1839. By the end of the century, no less than fifteen international treaties had been signed between the Middle Kingdom and various Western nations, almost all in the wake of armed confrontations. Similarly, the "opening of Japan" in the middle of the nineteenth century occurred after a U.S. naval incursion, and was formalized through a series of imposed and unequal treaties. These treaties not only inflicted financial liability for war costs on the defeated, but also chipped away these Asian countries' sovereign autonomy by stipulating the principle of extraterritoriality, accessibility of trade ports, and tariff rates. Documenting as well as formalizing the power inequality between regions, the treaty system forced China and Japan to come to terms with Western customs and concepts of diplomacy, international relations, and jurisprudence.

Treaty negotiations were also some of the earliest occasions in which China and Japan encountered the word "religion." In 1858, both the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Japan and the U.S. and the Treaties of Tianjin attempted to address religion-related issues – the former specified American citizens' religious rights in Japan and the latter Christian missionaries' freedom to preach in China. In both cases, finding an indigenous term for "religion" proved difficult. In the end, Japanese leaders settled on the Buddhist term *shūhō* (lit. "sect law") when translating the clause "Americans in Japan shall be allowed the free exercise of their religion."[7] The Chinese opted for a different solution. For sentences such as: "The Christian religion, as professed by Protestants or Roman Catholics, inculcates the practice of virtue, and teaches man to do as he would be done by,"[8] the decision was made to avoid a word-for-word translation. Instead, the Chinese version of the treaty listed Protestantism (*Yesujidu shengjiao*) and Catholicism (*Tianzhujiao*) side by side as two beneficiaries of the stipulation. In the following years, *shūkyō* arose in Japan to become the standard corresponding word for "religion." Many who participated in the public debate on religious freedom (*shūkyō jiyū*) in the middle of the 1870s used this neologism in their contributions. By the end of the decade, it had become the accepted correlating word in Japan for the Western concept of religion. In China, both the government and the public continued to rely on older vocabulary for

7 Kajima M., Bakumatsu gaikō: kaikoku to ishin (Diplomacy at the End of the Tokugawa Period: Opening the Nation and Reforms), Tokyo 1970, p. 33; Kaijō gijutsu anzenkyoku, Treaty between the United States of America and the Japanese Empire, Signed at Yedo, July 29th, 1858, in: Treaties and Conventions Concluded between Japan and Foreign Nations, Together with Notifications and Regulations Made from Time to Time, 1854–1870, Yokohama 1871, pp. 31-39, here: p. 34. Shūhō had formerly been a term used only in Buddhism, denoting "a type of teaching or ethical restraint attached to a specific sect." See J.Ā. Josephson, When Buddhism Became a "Religion," in: Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 33/1 (2006), pp. 143-68, esp. p. 144.

8 These were words from the Sino-British Treaty of Tianjin.

understanding the foreign concept until the turn of the twentieth century. This delay in adopting a new term meant that the formation of the new concept largely occurred within the semantic boundaries of the word *jiao*, and did not appear as a conceptual rupture.

Before the twentieth century, most systems that we nowadays label as religions were grouped together under the rubric of *jiao*. Major creeds therefore all contained the graph in their appellations, such as Fojiao (*jiao* of Buddha) for Buddhism, Daojiao (*jiao* of the Dao) for Daoism, and Rujiao (*jiao* of the scholars) for Confucianism. Nevertheless, the category functions differently from "religion" on two levels. First, structurally, it inhabits another universe of meaning. Unlike *zongjiao*, which, as part of modern nomenclature, defines itself in contradistinction to non-religion (i.e., the secular), *jiao* does not invoke such a binary construct and does not represent an either/or demarcation. A more generic and thus inclusive label, *jiao* in itself does not suggest any differentiation of the legitimate from the illegitimate. Even the most acrimonious polemics between religious groups were rarely about denying the title of *jiao* to the opponents. This again is in contrast to *zongjiao*'s constant struggle to distinguish itself from its evil twin, *mixin*, or "superstition." Second, on the semantic level, with the word's root meaning in "doctrine," *jiao* stresses the system of tenets around which a social group or movement revolves, regardless of whether the focus of these tenets is this-worldly or otherwise. With its meaning of "to teach and educate," *jiao* also denotes an ability to enlighten and thereby initiate inner change in individuals. Underscoring the top-down effect, the word's use creates a relatively passive role for followers. Robert F. Campany thus argues that the use of *jiao* stressed "the source of the teaching, the one who taught it."[9] His remark is further developed by Anthony C. Yu, who has pointed out that, since antiquity, the vertical relationship of "above" vs. "below" has been central to the semantics of *jiao*.[10]

While all major religious traditions in China used the word to construct their identities, *jiao* occupied a particularly conspicuous place in Confucianism. Not without a religious connotation, the Confucian discourse of *jiao* was nevertheless emphatically this-worldly. Since the classical period, *jiao* has often been invoked in its associated meaning of "education" as a marker of civilization, that which distinguishes humans from animals. This focus on *jiao*'s social and political bearing becomes more pronounced when it is combined in the compound phrase *jiaohua* (literately "to teach and transform"). The added character *hua*, "to effect change in a piecemeal manner," brings out the supposed transformative aspiration in the Confucian notion of *jiao*. In the nineteenth century, when the Chinese first encountered the English word "civilization," *jiaohua* was immediately invoked as the closest analogous term in Chinese.[11]

9 R.F. Campany, On the Very Idea of Religions (In the Modern West and in Early Medieval China), in: History of Religions 42/4 (2003), pp. 287–319, here: p. 307.

10 A.C. Yu, State (as in note 1), p. 16.

11 Huang X., Wan-Qing Min-chu xiandai "wenming" he "wenhua" gainian de xingcheng ji qi lishi shijian (The Formation of Modern Concepts of "Civilization" and "Culture" and Their Historical Practice in Late Qing and Early Republican China), in: Jindaishi yanjiu 6 (2006), pp. 1–34, here: pp. 7–8.

Those who were educated in this tradition, i.e., the majority of the ruling class, also tended to view education and governance as closely intertwined. Ideally, true political leadership governs through teaching and teaches through governing; it sets moral examples and cultural guidance, and thereby creates order by inspiring behavioral changes in the people. To the Confucian, such an individual and social transformation constitutes the highest objective of politics, and the sole criterion for judging a regime's success, or even legitimacy. In reality, this outlook vested much cultural and moral authority in the powers that be, allowing the state to position itself as the guardian of correct teaching and to enjoy an exclusive prerogative to regulate religious affairs. Throughout imperial history, the state exercised this prerogative to buttress the stature of Confucianism.

From the perspective of the educated, a hierarchy thus existed within the category of *jiao*. Confucianism, the designated orthodoxy, resided at the pinnacle and constituted the "prototype" of the category.[12] The legitimacy of any given *jiao* could only be determined by mapping it against the orthodox doctrine. Despite their crucial importance to Chinese society, Buddhism and Daoism were legitimate only to the extent that they complemented the basic moral tenets of Confucianism. In the official ideology, their teachings and practices helped pacify the social order, but offered nothing of consequence for the task of perfecting the empire's moral fabric. On an even lower rung were various sectarian groups, with appellations such as *Bailianjiao* (teachings of the white lotus) and *Taipingjiao* (teachings of great peace). Placed within the sub-category of *xiejiao,* literally, "straying teachings," or heresy, they were often viewed as social deviants that posed potential threats to the current order.[13]

How to insert Christianity into the Chinese landscape of *jiao* was the most fundamental question that Catholic missionaries faced when they arrived in the sixteenth century. Adopting the name *Tianzhujiao* ("teachings of the heavenly lord"), the Jesuits quickly switched from donning Buddhist vestments to wearing the Confucian robes and thereby aligned themselves with the official ideology of religious hierarchy. To present Christianity as something much like Confucianism, the Jesuits realized, was crucial to establishing legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese elite.[14] So the great Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–

12 For analyzing category construction through the "prototype effect," see J.Ā. Josephson, Buddhism, (as in note 7), esp. pp. 145–8. Jonathan Z. Smith explains the working of a "prototype" most concisely: "A prototype functions in classification by providing an image of a commonplace example that then serves as an ideal or typical exemplar of a category with decisions as to whether another object is a member of the same category being based on matching it against features of the prototype …" See J.Z. Smith, God Save This Honourable Court: Religion and Civic Discourse, in: ibid., Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion, Chicago 2004, pp. 375–90, here: p. 377.

13 For a detailed analysis of this hierarchical order within the category of jiao, see Chen H., Confucianism Encounters Religion: The Formation of Religious Discourse and the Confucian Movement in Modern China, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge (Mass.) 1999, pp. 21–53. According to Barend J. ter Haar, the appellation Bailianjiao that one finds in most historical sources is a label used by the anti-sectarian elite of late imperial times, rather than the autonym of a particular socio-religious organization. His argument helps illustrate my earlier point on the lack of value judgment in the use of jiao – even the ultimate symbol of religious illegitimacy counted as a jiao. See B.J. ter Haar, The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History, Leiden 1992.

14 As Erik Zürcher has pointed out, all "marginal religions" in Chinese history carried the burden of proving their congruity with Confucianism. The Jesuits were only following a long-established pattern. See E. Zürcher, Jesuit

1610) opened *Tianzhu shiyi* (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1603) with an acknowledgement of the "five relationships," the foundation of Confucian ethics.[15] The influential catechism set out by Ricci explicitly argues that the Christian God (*Tianzhu*) is the same deity that the authors of the great Chinese classics called *Shangdi,* or "Sovereign-on-High."[16] Ricci argued that knowledge of God had existed in ancient times and was not foreign to the Chinese. He painstakingly extrapolated proofs from *Shijing* (The Book of Poetry) of an indigenous notion of Heaven and Hell. If legendary sage kings such as the founding rulers of the Shang Dynasty, King Wen, and the Duke of Zhou ascended to Heaven after death, he reasoned, then notorious tyrants such as Jie, Zhou, and Daoduo must have gone to Hell. "Since they behaved differently, the consequences would be different. This principle doubtlessly is universal."[17] The Jesuits also campaigned to discredit Buddhism and Daoism, relentlessly attacking what they called idolatry.[18] They particularly ridiculed the growing trend to synthesize Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism into one system of *sanjiao* (lit. "the three teachings"). The divergence between Confucianism and the other two teachings, to them, was too large for such a project to make sense.[19] Christianity was the only appropriate and faithful complement to Confucianism. Critics of the Jesuits, at the same time, decried Christianity as *xiejiao*.[20] In the mid-seventeenth century, lay Buddhists were particularly active in sponsoring anti-Christian writings under the title of "smashing heresy" (*po xie* or *pi xie*).[21]

Officially banned in 1724, the teaching of Christianity became licit once more after 1858, when the Treaties of Tianjin obliged the Chinese government to openly acknowledge the unobjectionable nature of Catholicism and Protestantism. When Christian missionaries came back to China in mid-century, those who aspired to spread the Gospel among the elite, or to enter into meaningful interlocution with the Confucians, drew on the example set by Ricci. In spite of their conscious censure of Catholic ritualism and papism, Protestant missionaries, now outnumbering their Catholic counterparts in China, inherited the cultural strategy and much of the vocabulary that the Jesuits had

Accommodation and the Chinese Cultural Imperative, in: D.E. Mungello (ed.), The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning, Nettetal 1994, pp. 31–64. For the Jesuits' approach, see also E. Zürcher, A Complement to Confucianism: Christianity and Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China, in: C. Huang/E. Zürcher (eds), Norms and the State in China, Leiden 1993, pp. 71–92; J. Gernet, China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures, Trans. J. Lloyd, Cambridge, UK 1985, pp. 15–57; J.D. Young, Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter, Hong Kong 1983, pp. 9–39.

15 M. Ricci (Li Madou), Tianzhu shiyi (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven), Xianxian 1922, p. 1.

16 M. Ricci, Tianzhu (as in note 15), pp. 32–34. Ricci's use of shangdi to refer to the Christian God was controversial even among the Jesuits. It opened up a debate that lasted for centuries. For the history of the controversy among the Jesuits, see L.M. Brockey, Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724, Cambridge (Mass.) 2007, pp. 85–89; for the nineteenth-century debate among the Protestant missionaries, see T.H. Reilly, The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire, Seattle 2004, pp. 80–91.

17 M. Ricci, Tianzhu (as in note 15), p. 148.

18 Ibid., pp. 185–7.

19 Ibid., pp. 187–9.

20 Wang X., Christianity and Imperial Culture: Chinese Christian Apologetics in the Seventeenth Century and Their Latin Patristic Equivalent, Leiden 1998, pp. 144–53.

21 N. Standaert (ed.), Handbook of Christianity in China: vol. 1, 635–1800, Leiden 2001, pp. 511–3.

first invented. W.A.P. Martin, an influential American Presbyterian, for example, was not only familiar with Ricci's works but also aspired to be a Protestant Ricci.[22] His most famous catechism, *Tiandao suyuan* (Evidence for Christianity, 1854), emphasized the alleged parallels between Christianity and Confucianism and denounced Buddhism and Daoism.[23] This continuity suggests that the Protestant missionaries, like their Catholic predecessors, recognized the "cultural imperative" in the mission field and were ready to work within the parameters it set.[24]

This continuity in strategy helps explain the Confucian lexicon in Protestant writings in China. The Protestants, whose deep indebtedness to Catholic terminology has recently been demonstrated in Jost O. Zetzsche's study of the translations of the Bible in China,[25] largely inherited the narrative pattern and lexicon of the Jesuits, who, in order to emphasize the parallels between their religion and Confucianism, had adopted into their presentation of the Christian West many cultural tropes and idioms familiar to their target audience. Ricci, for example, gave the pope a new Chinese title: *Jiaohuawang*, literally crowning the Bishop of Rome "the King of *jiaohua*."[26] The discourse of *jiaohua* continued to figure prominently in Christian missionaries' self-narratives in the nineteenth century. For their part, the Protestants, however, inscribed new standards of civilization into the familiar discourse. In their writings, the list of *jiaohua*'s markers expanded beyond the conventional scope of social prosperity and political stability, and included everything that the West stood for, from national wealth and power, to scientific and technological capacity, to the global network of trade and communication. Drawing on the Confucian assumption of interconnectedness between inner spiritual strength and outer material power, an assumption that the discourse of *jiaohua* encapsulated, missionaries now cited China's material backwardness as evidence of Confucianism's insufficiency, and argued that Christianization was China's only chance of national strengthening and modernization.[27] The change in historical context between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries allowed the Protestant missionaries to put a different spin on the Confucian vocabulary.

22 For Martin's career in China, see L.H. Liu, The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making, Cambridge (Mass.) 2004, pp. 108–39; R.R. Covell, W.A.P. Martin: Pioneer of Progress in China, Washington (D.C.) 1978, pp. 89–96, 144–6.

23 W.A.P. Martin (Ding Weiliang), Tiandao suyuan (Evidence for Christianity), Taibei 1967, pp. 5a, 35a–b, 38b–39b, 62a–b, 74a–b.

24 E. Zürcher, A Complement (as in note 14), pp. 75–76.

25 J.O. Zetzsche, The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China, Nettetal 1999, p. 37.

26 E. Zürcher, China and the West: The Image of Europe and its Impact, in: S. Uhalley, Jr./X. Wu (eds), China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future, Armonk, New York 2000, pp. 43–61.

27 E. Faber (Hua Zhi'an), Zixu (preface), in: Zi xi cu dong (From West to East: The Spread of Christianity), Shanghai 2002, pp. 1–4, here: p. 3.

II.

The evangelical efforts of missionaries placed Christianity in the semantic field of *jiao*. After China's reinstatement as a mission field, the unprecedented political attention dedicated to the religion gave rise to a Chinese discourse on Christianity. Drawing on the missionaries' narrative pattern, this discourse nevertheless accentuated the religion's alienness to Chinese society. A sense of foreignness was thus inscribed into the Chinese conception of "religion" based on the image of Christianity.

The Treaties of Tianjin in 1858, together with the Beijing Convention in 1860, wrenched more from the Chinese government than a simple public acknowledgement of Christianity's goodness. The statement was followed by specific provisions that allowed Chinese subjects to practice the religion, and warranted Christian missionaries rights to travel, own property, and preach freely in China. Furthermore, the Chinese government's earlier decision to return all property confiscated during the Christian proscription to the original Catholic owners was also reiterated.[28] The treaties at the end of the 1850s thus opened up China's interior and thereby ushered in a new era of social contact with foreigners. Missionaries became the first group of Western nationals to travel legally beyond the treaty ports and to interact freely with local communities and authorities. In the mid and late decades of the century, numerous Christian-related legal disputes broke out all over China. Most of them were controversies over confiscated church property and civil conflicts between Christians and non-Christians. They also included large numbers of official complaints about treaty rights violations lodged by missionaries. In addition to revealing rising social tensions in the wake of the change in status for Christianity and its missionaries, these cases attested to the difficulties in implementing the treaty stipulations.[29]

The publicity that Christian missionaries gained from these political, social, and legal developments probably contributed to the general consumption of their writings. Many felt the need to seek out missionary publications, not for spiritual guidance, but to educate themselves on the subject. The missionary writings, however, were not the only sources on Christianity. As the number of Christian missionaries in China grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, members of the gentry elite, mostly through their capacities as officials or bureaucrats, started to accumulate knowledge about them and their religion. Providing some kind of quick guide not only to the religion, but also to the related regulations and legal precedents, introductory essays by Chinese authors as well as selections of important rulings on Christian cases appeared. Often printed together, they gave basic information about the religion's origin, history, major branches, and tenets, along with a synopsis of the political and legal debates revolving around its existence in China.

28 The decision was made in 1846. See Wen Q. et al., Chouban yiwu shimo (A Complete Account of the Management of Barbarian Affairs), Taibei 1965, 2.2478: 1555b–1556b.

29 P.A. Cohen, China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870, Cambridge (Mass.) 1963.

This second kind of sources provided a different type of information about Christianity from that found in missionaries' self-narratives, not least because they spoke from an outsider's perspective. The authors were exclusively non-Christian Chinese and often quite overt about their Confucian identity. Following the time-honored tradition, they treated Christian-related issues as a subject within the politics of *jiao,* and explained Christianity in light of its role in current political events. Based on observations of social and political behaviors, and biased in their own way, these summations of the ruling class's perceptions and opinions formed an distinct genre of literature on Christianity.

Some elements of the images presented in these writings had a long-lasting impact on later history. One of them was the reinforcement of Christianity's foreignness. That Christianity came from a place called "the West" (*Xifang*) had long been known, since the Jesuits presented themselves as "the scholars from the West" (*Xiru*). The religion's Western origin was also repeatedly used to justify the suspicion and apprehension expressed by the Late Ming and Early Qing anti-Christian movements. However, as recent research has pointedly revealed, at the time when China was reopened as a mission field, some form of Christianity had been continuously practiced there for almost two centuries.[30] Moreover, the Qing government was not unaware of this. Its announcement in 1844 of a more tolerant attitude towards Catholicism was clearly intended for the faith's domestic followers.[31] Nevertheless, this fact did not stop late nineteenth-century commentators from speaking of Christianity as "the Western religion" (*Xijiao*).

Christianity's Western identity was arguably more entrenched after foreigners reappeared in China. That Western states would push for the inclusion of Christian missionaries' special rights in the international treaties was for the Chinese observers the first indication of the religion's being part of the West's imagined interest. In the subsequent conflicts, Catholic missionaries' behavioral pattern of invoking the treaty rights without discretion and defying the local officials' judicial authority and appealing instead for their national envoy's interference further encouraged the Chinese to see the Western church and state as coalesced forces. The fact that every foreigner travelling in the interior was on a religious mission and that every Western government was ready to give missionaries political support also intensified this stereotype. The West began to be imagined as the ultimate land of Christianity: all Westerners were Christian, and all Western nations Christian nations. The phrase *xijiao* was thus no longer a simple reference to a religion's place of origin. Its meaning morphed from "the religion from the West" to "the religion *of* the West." Christianity became the West's intellectual property and defining feature.[32]

30 R.P. Madsen, Beyond Orthodoxy: Catholicism as Chinese Folk Religion, in: S. Uhalley, Jr./X. Wu (eds), China (as in note 26), pp. 233–49; R.E. Entenmann, Catholics and Society in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan, in: D.H. Bays (ed.), Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present, Stanford 1996, pp. 8–23.

31 Wen Q., Chouban (as in note 28), 2.2435: 1530b.

32 This perception of Christianity's foreignness continued to pervade in the twentieth century. During the Republic era (1911–1949), for example, Christian organizations were handled by the Nationalist government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas those of all other religions were registered with the Ministry of the Interior. See R. Nedostup, Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity, Cambridge (Mass.) 2010, p. 36.

Still, the most convincing evidence of the West's ownership of Christianity was Westerners' self-representation as the guardians of Christians' "religious rights" around the globe. In China, most of the foreigners who positioned themselves as promoters of religious rights grounded their argument in the treaty system. The Treaties of Tianjin explicitly stipulated that "[p]ersons teaching it [the Christian religion] or professing it, … shall alike be entitled to the protection of the Chinese authorities, nor shall any of such, peaceably pursuing their calling, and not offending against the laws, be persecuted or interfered with."[33] Some diplomatic envoys and missionaries thereby deemed it rightful for China's treaty partners to vigilantly ensure the stipulation's implementation. This position, however, was not unproblematic. The relevant provisions had never designated the method of enforcement or the power of interpretation. Whether the clause was applicable to Chinese subjects was another sticky matter. As some mission societies started to train their Chinese followers and send them out to undertake evangelical preaching, questions arose: Were Chinese preachers entitled to the protection of the treaties? Or should they be treated according to Chinese laws, and in the same manner as adherents of other religions?[34] Among all the treaty powers, the French government took the most interventionist approach and insisted that the treaty provisions were meant for the Chinese as well as the foreign nationals. This position made French missionaries protective of their congregations against harassment by non-Christians, the local gentry, and officials. When conflicts of any kind arose, the French were the least hesitant to invoke treaty rights to protect the Christian communities.

The French interference in religious politics entailed more than simply defending Catholic Chinese in trouble. Some of their actions had empire-wide consequences. In 1861, for example, the Franciscan missionaries in Shanxi sent forward a request for the official exemption of Chinese Catholics from paying the portion of community levy designated for local temple festivals. The request was grounded on a distinctively Christian outlook – a person could belong to one and only one religion, and the choice of faith was absolute and exclusive. To fully implement the treaty clause, according to these missionaries, the Chinese government should acknowledge not only the legitimacy of the faith but also its unique view of other (heathen) religions. They thus petitioned the government to excuse all Christians from any social obligations that benefited other religions. Having paid his due to the congregation, a Chinese Christian should therefore never be pressured into making further financial contributions to support local religious activities, especially since many of these activities were deemed heterodox practices (*yiduan*) by his church. The Franciscans' request, once taken up and endorsed by the French minister, led to an imperial edict in early 1862 and the exemption of thousands from their community dues for temple maintenance and construction, religious processions, and sacrificial offerings.

33 P.A. Cohen, China (as in note 29), p. 197.

34 For the ambiguity ingrained in the treaty provisions, see P.A. Cohen, China (as in note 29), pp. 196–9.

This exemption changed the fiscal structure of rural China, and, in 1881, was extended to Protestant Chinese.[35]

To those Chinese who followed Western missionaries' actions closely, such a case easily reinforced the impression that Christianity was the West's intellectual property. The French ministry and missionaries were willing to intervene in China's fiscal operation on behalf of some Chinese subjects, and even to extend the treaty rights to them, on the basis of the Christian connection. By taking Chinese Catholics under their custody, missionaries also displayed a condescending confidence in representing the true spirit of the Christian religion. Catholic communities had existed for centuries in China. Yet they needed Westerners' assistance to spell out the religious rights to which they were entitled.

Missionaries' and the treaty powers' negotiations with the Chinese authorities also emphatically introduced the notion of religious exclusivity. The absence of Christians from the religious components of community activities caused much social and political tension.[36] In 1863, for example, a Chinese missionary affiliated with a Catholic church in Beijing, when traveling through a nearby village, was beaten by an angry crowd when he declined to join their villagers' prayer for rain and worship of the legendary Dragon King (*Longwang*).[37] A similar reason underlay another incident in the same area in 1864. A group of lower-level examination candidates provoked the Christian famers of the same county into a group fight. Their argument: the Christians undeservingly benefited from the community's collective prayer for drought relief.[38] In 1866, the Zongli Yamen, the central bureau for international affairs, received a petition from the French minister for exempting Christian Chinese from all of the required rituals for degree holders and candidates. According to the minister, the requirements for candidates to bow to the image of Confucius before entering the premises of civil service examinations, and for provincial officials to pay homage to the city gods upon reporting to new posts, infringed upon Christians' conscience and deterred them from entering government positions.[39] Although this particular petition did not lead to any change in these ritual requirements, the Christian prohibition of participation in sacrificial offerings at the Confucius temples became well known before the 1880s. As a consequence, some educational officials at government schools started to use this as an excuse to reject Christians' candidacies altogether.[40]

35 Zhang G. (ed.), Jiaowu jiaoan dang (Zongli Yamen Archives on Christian Affairs and on Cases and Disputes Involving Missionaries and Converts), Taibei 1974–81, I/1/44, 13–14. See also R.R. Thompson, Twilight of the Gods in the Chinese Countryside: Christians, Confucians, and the Modernizing State, 1861–1911, in: D.H. Bays (ed.), Christianity (as in note 30), pp. 53-72, esp. pp. 57–60.

36 For an analysis of the rising social tensions in Shanxi, see R.R. Thompson, Twilight (as in note 35).

37 Zhang G. (ed.), Jiaowu (as in note 35), I/1/526–532, 382b–385a.

38 Id., I/1/504, 351a–358a.

39 Id., I/1/160, 98b–99a.

40 Id., IV/1/311, 331a. The Qing state regulations explicitly required all students on state stipend to participate in sacrificial offerings at Confucius temples.

Although most of these Christian cases were resolved quickly and without much complication, once reported to the Zongli Yamen by local magistrates or missionaries, they became part of the permanent records and could be circulated as precedents. The Yamen would, every now and then, instruct local bureaucrats to keep abreast of these *cheng'an*, "set cases," in order to stay up-to-date about how to handle Christian cases properly.[41] These cases thus afforded China's ruling class the most direct material on the Christian tenets and concept of religion. The emphasis on fixed boundaries between different faiths was in sharp contrast with the Confucian attitude toward religious others. Placing a premium on social and moral effects, a Confucian could generously extend endorsement to other *jiao* as long as they conformed to basic ethical and ritual norms and posed no threat to the existing order. In late imperial times, a wide range of sectarian practices, many with Daoist and Buddhist roots, were tolerated, or even incorporated into the state cult, because they "inculcate[d] the practice of virtue."[42] In 1858, the Chinese state resorted to the same justification for lifting the Christian ban, only to be confronted later with Christian disapproval of such practices of religious mingling. By the end of the century, an obstinate fixation with the community boundaries between believers and non-believers had become a recognized feature of the Christian faiths.[43]

As issues related to the management of Christians in Chinese society loomed large in international and domestic politics, subtle changes occurred in the discourse of *jiao*. Due to Western missionaries' significant roles in the creation of treaties, Chinese words forged or appropriated by missionaries for expressing particular Christian concepts were used in the multilingual documents that formed the paramount legal basis for Christian rights. After 1858, as foreign powers demanded greater protections for their citizens from the Chinese government, the contents of treaties were regularly announced throughout the empire.[44] Legal cases concerning missionaries and Chinese converts often entailed chains of communiqués sent back and forth between the Zongli Yamen, the foreign legations, and local governments.[45] The sheer volume of paperwork ensured that government officials at all levels grew familiar with Christian vocabulary.

The treaty system's coming into force thus popularized the Christian discourse of *jiao* and added imperative to Christian terminology's integration into the general language stock. Compound words coined by missionaries, such as *chuanjiao* (to transmit *jiao*), *ch-*

41 Id., IV/1/307, 323b.

42 See note 8.

43 See, for example, Lao N., Xijiao yuanliu (Origin and History of the Western Religion), in: Geguo yuezhang zuanyao (Collection of Treaties with Various Nations), Taibei 1975, pp. 380–406, here: pp. 400–1. The collection was published in 1891. In addition the absolute demarcation of believers from non-believers, another characteristic of Christianity identified in Lao's piece was its strict "religious rules" (jiaogui).

44 An early example of such a request, by the French minister after the ratification of the Treaty of Nanjing, can be found in Wen Q., Chouban (as in note 28), 2/2476, 1554a; 2/2498, 1568b. Similar requests for publicizing treaty stipulations can be found in Zhang G. (ed.), Jiaowu (as in note 35), I/1/8, 3; I/1/9, 4; I/1/15, 5–6; I/1/21, 7.

45 In Daniel H. Bays's words, almost all Christian cases "involved the Zongli Yamen in haggling with foreign diplomatic representatives and the passing of documents back and forth between Beijing and local levels." See D.H. Bays, Christianity and the Dynamics of Qing Society, in: ibid., Christianity (as in note 30), pp. 3–7, here: p. 5.

uanjiao shi (the scholar who transmits *jiao*), *jiaohui* (the association of *jiao*), and *jiaotang* (the building of *jiao*), became commonplace in government communications and public discourse. Those who were concerned with political affairs in China learned to accept them as the designated expressions for "evangelism," "missionaries," "congregation," and "chapel" respectively, and grew accustomed to the particular usage of *jiao* as the shorthand for Christianity. Newly invented administrative phrases attested to this change of practice. *Jiao'an,* "cases concerning *jiao,*" referred exclusively to Christian cases.[46] *Jiaowu,* "affairs concerning *jiao,*" now meant Christian affairs, and *jiaomin*, "people of *jiao*," Chinese Christians. In all these instances, *jiao* lost its characteristic as a generic label and signified Christianity.

In its capacity as the shorthand for Christianity, *jiao* became the euphemistic maker of where the treaty privileges reigned. No matter how trivial, "Christian cases" had to be handled in compliance with diplomatic agreements and registered with the Zongli Yamen. *Jiaomin* referred not only a social group, but also a special tax category. *Jiao* in these cases signaled a discrete administrative area in which the Chinese subjects had to be treated according to the Western notion of religious rights. Catch phrases such as *min jiao xiangzheng,* "the people and the Christians feuding with each other," and *min jiao xiang'an,* "the people and the Christians getting along with each other," also drove a wedge between Christians and others, subtly removing the former from the category of *min,* i.e., of Chinese subjects.[47] *Jiao* not only referred to Christianity, but also demarcated a space beyond the reach of government authorities.

The massive injection of Christian elements into the semantic field of *jiao* occurred at a time when Western powers were at their most vigilant over China's political language. In the years leading to the First Opium War (1839–1841), official wording with regard to foreigners and foreign affairs had become a contentious issue in China's interactions with Great Britain. The Treaties of Tianjin resolved this issue by explicitly banning Chinese subjects from using the word *yi* ("foreigner, barbarian") to refer to Westerners. The provision gave rise to a form of self-censorship among Chinese writers and publishers and resulted in a systematic purge of such wording in all publications.[48] The paranoia over the possible application of derogatory words to Westerners continued after 1858 and impelled the treaty powers to keep an eye on the diction of all official announcements. Foreign ministries in China routinely reviewed drafts of the government's proclamations and intervened in the preparation of circulars concerning foreigners. When an official statement of Christian rights was drafted as part of the travel documents for missionaries in 1862, for example, the French minster not only demanded to proofread the draft be-

46 Although historians sometimes applied the term Jiao'an to anti-Christian incidents before the nineteenth century, the term was basically a late nineteenth-century invention. See N. Standaert (ed.), Handbook (as in note 21), p. 507.

47 For examples, see the imperial edicts of July 1891 and January 1898 in Cheng Z. (ed.), Jiaoan zouyi huibian (Collection of Memorials on Christian Cases), Shanghai 1901, shou/3a–3b, 4b.

48 L.H. Liu, Clash (as in note 22), pp. 31–34, 40–58, 70–71.

fore finalization, but also bluntly dictated the wording.[49] Under these circumstances, the Christianized discourse of *jiao* could not have prevailed without the tacit endorsement of these powers. It was part of the cultural and linguistic shift under semi-colonialism in China.

III.

With the West's political force behind it, Christianity slowly moved into the semantic center of the discourse on religion and rose to be the most frequent referent of *jiao* by the end of the nineteenth century. Without completely revising the meaning of the word, Christianity challenged the elite's Confucianism-centered view of religious hierarchy and presented an alternative model for conceptualizing the whole category. Retaining the original meaning of civilizing through teaching, *jiao* now had two prototypical referents. While the traditional association with Confucianism remained significant, the word's occurrences in the public domain increasingly conjured up the image of Christianity. This ambiguity of *jiao*'s primary referent created semantic uncertainty. In the 1890s, when Kang Youwei introduced his reformulated version of Confucianism, many of his readers saw only the specter of Christianity and accused him of clandestine proselytism.[50] Their evidence was nothing other than the choice of words made by Kang and his followers. Ye Dehui, in his polemic against Kang's disciple Liang Qichao, specifically built part of his argument around the word *chuanjiao*. Ye argued that Liang's adoption of the word conveyed a wrong idea about the Confucian tradition of knowledge transmission by drawing an analogy to Christian evangelism, giving away the author's secret admiration of the Western religion.[51] Similarly, Kang Youwei's liberal embrace of terms such as *jiaohui* and *jiaolü* (religious laws) in his political writings helped incite the rumor that he meant to convert the emperor to Christianity.[52] While the reformers tried to re-appropriate these popular phrases for Confucian usage once again, their adversaries and critics adamantly clung to the words' Christian overtones.

The importation of *zongjiao* at the beginning of the twentieth century partially released the strain put on the semantic field by the struggle between the two models of *jiao*. With the graph *zong*, which since the times of *Shujing* (the Book of Documents) and *Zhuangzi* had had the meaning of "tracking something to its source, purpose, or first principle[,] or … elevating or exalting a person or a concept to its fundamental or ultimate signifi-

49 Zhang G. (ed.), Jiaowu (as in note 35), I/1/10–21, 5–9.

50 Kang referred to the accusation that he attempted to "smuggle Christianity into Confucianism" in a letter written in 1891. See Kang Y., Da Zhu Rongsheng shu (A Reply to Zhu Yixin), in: Jiang Y./Wu G. (eds), Kang Youwei quanji (Complete Works of Kang Youwei), Shanghai 1990, vol.1, pp. 1034–43, here: p. 1036.

51 Ye D., "Du xixu shu fa" shu hou (Afterword to "Methods of Reading Books of Western Learning"), in: Su Y. (ed.), Yijiao congbian (A Collection of Writings Defending the Teachings), Taibei 1971, pp. 301–16, here: p. 304.

52 V. Goossaert, 1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?, in: Journal of Asian Studies 65/2 (2006), pp. 307–36, here: pp. 313–4.

cance,"[53] the compound term distinguished itself from *jiao* by shifting emphasis to the followers' undivided devotion and esteem, a quality that had particularly been associated with the Christian religion. Two prominent cases in the early days of the term's circulation in China particularly attested to this semantic attribute. In 1904, the Qing government declared the Confucian classics to be China's *zongjiao*.[54] Two years later, upon the elevation of Confucius worship to the level of Grand Sacrifice, the imperial edict again referred to the Western practice of designating a national *zongjiao* to justify the alteration.[55] On both occasions, the term was enlisted to convey the nation's complete dedication to its shared culture.

Even in this early period of semantic imprecision, the otherness of *zongjiao* to Chinese culture had already been established. Liang Qichao, in his 1902 announcement of apostasy, famously rebutted Kang Youwei's endeavor to fit Confucianism into the Christian model of religion. The endeavor, according to Liang, was based on a misconception of *zongjiao*. According to him, things labeled *zongjiao* in the West all shared two unique qualities: first, the ability to inspire a leap of faith, that is, a suspension of commonsensical reasoning in its followers, and, second, acrimonious condemnation of other religions. Both of these qualities were absent in the teachings of Confucius. To call Confucius's moral guidance a religion was thus a distortion of its true nature.[56] One month later, Liang further expanded this position in another essay and declared that China had no "religion."[57] Liang Qichao's essays have been identified by modern scholars as a milestone in the history of *zongjiao*. They were some of the first writings in Chinese that fluently deployed the word in its modern sense. Incidentally, these essays also contained the earliest annunciations of a "secular China." The linguistic maneuvering and the intellectual stance, though concurring in the same group of texts, however, resulted from two distinct processes. While China's linguistic indebtedness to Japan was indisputable, to consider religion as the ultimate otherness of the nation's selfhood was never a mainstream

53 A.C. Yu, State (as in note 1), p. 10. Anthony C. Yu has based his summary of the graph's semantic functions on Dai Kan-Wa jiten (Comprehensive Chinese-Japanese Dictionary), and Hanyu da cidian (Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Lexica). See p. 153 (footnote 12) in Yu's book. I have also consulted *Ciyuan* (Origins of Lexica), which quoted *Shujing* (The Book of Documents) and *Shijing* (The Book of Poetry) as the earliest sources for this verbal meaning. See Ciyuan, Taibei 1988, p. 440. According to Yu, both the graph's principal meaning as "ancestor, ancestral linage, and ancestral temple" and its derived verbal meaning discussed here predated and funded the semantics of its Buddhist usage after the religion arrived in China. The medieval Buddhist appropriation of the graph continuously drew on, and thus preserved, this root meaning of "to revere something/someone as the ultimate and the highest." See A.C. Yu, State (as in note 1), pp. 9–14.

54 Zhang B. / Rong Q. / Zhang Z., Xuewu gangyao (Outline of Educational Principles), in: Taga A., comp., Kindai Chūgoku kyōikushi shiryō: Shinmatsu hen (Documents in the History of Education in Modern China: the Late Qing), Taibei 1976, pp. 209–25, here: p. 212. This early example of identifying the sacred texts as the religion of China exemplified the term's semantic elusiveness immediately after its importation.

55 Xuebu, Benbu zhang zou: Daizou Xingbu zhushi Yao Darong chengqing sheng Kongmiao wei dasi zhe (Memorials and Reports of the Board: on Behalf of Yao Darong, Major Clerk, Board of Punishment to Request the Elevation of Confucius Temple to Grand Sacrifice), in: Xuebu guanbao 11 (1906), pp. 228–29, 248, here: p. 229.

56 Liang Q., Bao jiao fei souyi zun Kong, in: Wu S. et al. (eds), Yinbing shi (as in note 4), vol. 3, pp. 1343–49, here: p. 1344.

57 See footnote 4 above.

attitude in the Meiji era. Instead, as suggested in this article, the roots of the religion's constructed foreignness had to be found in the specific manner in which Christianity re-entered China in the contentious world of the nineteenth century.