“No branch of missionary work has proved more successful and profitable in China than medical missions”, claimed Rev. Ralph Wardlaw Thompson, the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society after he had conducted an inspection of the Society’s missionary stations in China in 1883.¹ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, medical missionaries played a significant role in the evangelic enterprise in China. In a conservative country with strong anti-Christian sentiments, many western missionaries regarded the healing art as one of the few effective means of overcoming native resistance to their proselytizing efforts. The missionaries claimed that their medical endeavors were not only charitable but also of profound religious significance because they were imitating Jesus Christ, the “Great Healer”. In his introduction to John Lawe’s Medical Missions, William Muir described the medical missionaries as “following the example of our Saviour, who Himself, and through his disciples, healed the sick simultaneously with the blessed proclamation that the kingdom of heave was at hand.” Lawe also attributed “the Christ-like nature” to medical missionary work.² Hence medical missions were not only
practical measures of healing the sick but also highly symbolic acts with the connotation
of salvation. However, in a different cultural and religious context, the symbolically
loaded missionary medicine was highly susceptible to alternative interpretations. The
Chinese often had very different perceptions and understandings of the medical
missionaries’ actions. This paper analyzes the way the missionaries used medicine in their
evangelic efforts and the backlash against it.

The Ideal and Practice of Missionary Medicine

The missionary movement in nineteenth century China was inextricably connected
with Western powers’ imperialist activities in China.³ After the Sino-British Opium War,
the Treaty of Nanking was signed in 1843, opening five ports in China for commerce and
the residence of foreigners. Since the 1724 imperial edict banning missionary activities in
China, this was the first time that western missionaries could again extend their activities
beyond Canton, the only trading port between China and Europe before the War. The
Tientsin Treaty and the Sino-French Convention of Pecking signed in 1860 which
concluded the Anglo-French joint expedition, led to the opening of more treaty ports,
granted Chinese subjects the freedom to practise Christian forms of worship, and
permitted European missionaries to travel to the interior of China.⁴ However, the
missionaries soon found themselves run into many difficulties. For many Chinese, the
demands of the missionaries such as forsaking ancestor worship and “idolatry” were
among to insisting on a radical overhaul of Chinese culture and social order. As a result,
many Chinese reacted to Christian missions with indifference or outright hostility.⁵
In the 1830s, the pioneering medical missionaries in China such as Thomas Colledge and Peter Parker already argued that “medical practice among the Chinese” could “bring about a more social and friendly intercourse between them and foreigners.” After 1850 most of the Protestant missionary organizations were convinced by such argument. They came to accept medicine as a powerful aid to their evangelical enterprise. Several missionary societies held that medical missions should be sent to areas where ordinary missionaries could not secure access to local people. “Medical missionaries”, the American medical missionary Robert Coltman Jr. claimed, “are treated more considerately by the Chinese than the clerical, and frequently a medical man obtains valuable concessions for his missions that would not be granted to the clergy men.” Missionary medicine was deployed to placate native opposition and to promote amicable contacts between the missionaries and the natives. China was considered by the missionary societies as the country most resistant to their proselytizing efforts. As a result, the number and activities of medical missionaries in China increased significantly. In 1874 there were only ten missionary doctors in China. In 1905 the estimated numbers of fully qualified medical missionaries rose sharply to around three hundred.

The medical missionaries often preferred surgical operations that could instantly produce spectacular effect with the hope of quickly attracting the natives, convincing them of the superiority of western medicine and establishing the credibility of the mission. They were interested in patients suffering from huge tumors which they rarely saw in their home countries. The removal of large tumors often impressed the Chinese. The effect of such display of surgical feat was observed by some secular western medical practitioners as well. The medical missionaries were also keen on performing surgical
treatment of bladder stones that could relieve the patients’ pain dramatically. John G. Kerr in Canton was reputed to have operated on more cases of stone in the bladder than any living man at the time.\textsuperscript{12}

Many western medical men in China recognized that, with its dramatic and immediate results, surgery was one of the few aspects of western medicine that could persuade Chinese of its efficacy. Patrick Manson, the founder of the London School of Tropical Medicine, had articulated this belief clearly. Manson spent his early career in China serving as a medical officer to the Chinese Maritime Customs which was administered by British officers after 1860. At the treaty port Amoy, Manson worked at a hospital supported by Baptist missionaries and European merchants. He said that the hospital was

\begin{quote}
attended by three classes of patients only viz.: people of any rank suffering from surgical disease, who really believe in our superiority; people in the last stage of incurable disease who apply to us thinking though their own doctors have failed to cure them there may be a chance from the foreigner; and the poor who cannot pay and are in a measure forced to apply to us.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Surgery, according to Manson, was the only branch of western medicine that could convince Chinese people of all ranks of its effectiveness. The popularity of surgical practice among the Chinese was reported by many western medical practitioners. James H. McCartney claimed that the Chinese showed “a surprising readiness to submit to surgical treatment.”\textsuperscript{14} R. G. White remarked that “[p]ractice amongst the Chinese in the majority of serious cases, was of a surgical nature.”\textsuperscript{15}
The medical missionaries claimed that Chinese people were good surgical subjects. In 1846 the American medical missionary Peter Parker praised Chinese patients' endurance of pain and their ability to withstand shock.\textsuperscript{16} Another American medical missionary Robert Coltman also stated that “[t]he Chinese bear surgical operations exceedingly well, and it is rare for high inflammation to follow operative interference.”\textsuperscript{17} Many European medics in China repeated such claim. John Dudgeon, a medical missionary from the London Missionary Society to Beijing, argued that the Chinese were less prone to inflammation because they ate little meat. “Excess of the nitrogenous,” claimed Dudgeon, tends to induce diseases of an inflammatory and gouty nature…” “This was the prevailing type of well-fed Europeans.” On the other hand, Chinese food consisted in less animal food.

For the most part Chinese food has been vegetable and farinaceous, and now and then mixed or alternated with a very small amount of animal food. This is owing partly, no doubt, to the excessive heat of the climate, it being considered unwholesome to eat much meat…

As a result, the Chinese suffered much less inflammation than the Europeans.\textsuperscript{18} John Francis Molyneaux said that the Chinese people in Ningpo not only supported surgical intervention, they were also 'highly satisfactory subjects' once the surgeon had secured their confidence. He believed that the Chinese “are less prone to inflammatory reaction than foreigners, and they are unquestionably more patient and endure pain with at least equal courage.” The rapidity of the natives' healing processes surprised western medical men such as Molyneaux.\textsuperscript{19}
Besides the removal of tumor and bladder stone, the medical missionaries also favored the practice of ophthalmic surgery because it could produce the dramatic effect of restoring the vision, and hence facilitate the process of conversion. It also had the religious connotations of making the blind see, of enlightening people. William Lockhart also argued that “[d]isease of the eyes presents a fine field for the exertion of a Medical Missionary” because “[h]e is able to afford so much relief, and the benefit is so plain and self-evident…”. Many medical missionaries considered ophthalmic diseases as the most common ailment among the Chinese. Lockhart blamed it on the Chinese climates: “The great and sudden changes of the climates, or of the weather in all parts of China, and especially in the Northern region, certainly cause much inflammation of the eyes.”

The Medical Missionary Society in China proudly told its supporters that to many hundred of human beings, suffering from blindness, perhaps the severest affliction with which it as please Providence to visit our imperfect nature, the blessed light of heaven had been restored, the darkness of a long gloomy night dispelled, and the road to happiness and useful industry once more before re-opened eyes. It is the same result as that of the miracle in Scripture, without the inspiration; the triumph of human science over affliction and disease.

There were theatrical aspects in missionary medicine. The medical missionaries often travelled around, and treated patients on the roadside. Coltman argued:

A sure way to build up a fine practice and reputation in any given city is to itinerate through all the surrounding village, visiting and prescribing for the sick, drawing teeth, and performing minor operations, at the same time telling where you may be found in the city.
Parker was proud that his successful performance of lithotomy “arrested the attention of the people most powerfully.” There were also ritual dimensions in missionary surgical performance. George Leslie Mackay, a Canadian missionary to Taiwan, was adept in attracting the natives by treating their dental problems. He gave a vivid description of his usual practice in his memoirs:

Our usual custom in touring through the country is to take our stand in an open space, often on the stone step of a temple, and, after signing a hymn or two, proceed to extract teeth, and then preach the message of the gospel. The sufferer usually stands while the operation is being performed, and the tooth, when removed is laid on his hand. To keep the tooth would be to awaken suspicions regarding us in the Chinese mind.

The missionaries regarded public surgical operation as an effective way to ingratiate themselves with the local Chinese. It was also a means to crush native opposition. Mackay claimed that

The priests [of native religions] and other enemies of the missions may persuade people that fever and other diseases have been cured, not by our medicine, but by the intervention of the gods; but the relief from toothache is too unmistakable, and because of this tooth-extracting has been more than anything else effective in breaking down prejudice and opposition.

Similar strategy was deployed by medical missionaries elsewhere. In early twentieth, the British Baptist medical mission to Congo often performed surgery that attracted a crowd
of Congolese people who were keen on seeing “the work of the knife.” The tenet “seeing is believing” was widely held by missionary and colonial medicine.  

The medical missionaries knew well that the Chinese often regarded their surgery as miraculous. “Though the practice of medicine and surgery among western nations is founded upon science, yet, to an uncivilized superstitious nation, it has much of the appearance of a superhuman power.” In Beijing John Dudgeon observed that some patients and their friends believed that the medical missionaries possessed “almost the power of working miracles.” Coltman stated that “[a] brilliant surgical operation is regarded by the Chinese as miraculous and is reported for miles away, increasing in the miraculous element with distance.”

Nineteenth-century scientific spectacles staged before the crowd often required well thought out designs and meticulous preparation to create dramatic effects the appearance of being achieved effortlessly. To maintain the appearance of wondrous efficacy so as to succeed in convincing the Chinese of the superiority of western medicine the missionaries had to act with discretion. As Coltman said, “Much care has to be exercised in the selection of cases for operation at first, as an unsuccessful or fatal operation in a new field would have a very detrimental effect on not only the medical work, but all branches of missions’ work at that point.” James Maxwell noticed that some of his colleagues seeing that “the spiritual results are the chief thing” and considering that there is no special call to lay yourself out for and to be ready to deal with difficult cases. Such cases will take up a lot of time, and will give the medical missionary a good deal of anxiety and trouble; therefore, it would be well to cultivate only those cases that can easily and quickly managed. Those who hold this view—and there are
not a few on mission boards and among the Christian public who do hold it—are perfectly satisfied that in this way the greater gain is to be reach.\textsuperscript{34}

At Amoy the missionaries noticed that some Chinese patients had “made false statements respecting the dates of the disease” because they knew that the missionary hospital “rejected as hopeless many long standing cases.” As a result, Cumming, the medical missionary in charge of the hospital, advised his colleagues to conduct more careful examination of the patients. “Cross-questioning is not more important in legal than in medical practice…”\textsuperscript{35} Dramatically successful operations required careful evaluation and selection of patients.

The medical missionaries also argued that their medical work could bring about other benefits. Parker held that missionary medicine could “promote between them [the Chinese] and Europeans an amicable and profitable system of commerce.” He claimed that the superintendent of British trade spoke highly of the Medical Missionary Society in Canton because “the surgeon's knife was better calculated to conciliate the Chinese than any weapons of war.” Surgery would render the Chinese receptive to other Western imports.\textsuperscript{36} Christopher Lawrence has observed that there were “similarities between language of the frontier and the language of surgery” in nineteenth-century American surgical discourse.\textsuperscript{37} The frontier mentality could be clear seen in Parker who nurtured the ambition of opening China to western influences by his surgical knife. For Parker, surgery was as useful as gunboat diplomacy for opening China to the penetration of trade, evangelical mission and political influence. Parker came to be deeply involved in the politics of Sino-American relations. He eventually gave up his medical mission, and
became a diplomat of the United States. In his diplomatic career Parker often advocated using military measures to coerce China to meet western demands, a goal he once claim to be achievable by western medicine.\textsuperscript{38}

Curing disease, according to the medical missionaries, was just one of the benefits brought about by western medicine. Missionary medicine was part of the grand project of enlightening China, which some missionaries described as a “partially civilized yet ‘mysterious’ and idolatrous empire”.\textsuperscript{39} The Medical Missionary Society in China argued that if “an army of philanthropic surgeons” was sent into the Chinese Empire, “the great barriers, ignorance, and prejudice” that existed “would be swept away” without leaving any trace.\textsuperscript{40} Medical missions could, Parker said, “enlighten the empire of China in the sciences of physic and surgery; and spread amongst the vast population of that country, the blessing of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{41} According to the medical missionaries, the diseases prevalent in China, especially the huge tumors rarely seen in Europe, represented not only individual pathological conditions but also the sickness of Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{42} Missionaries blamed the prevalence of disease on the backwardness of Chinese medicine.\textsuperscript{43} The comments of Benjamin Hobson, who held contemptuous view on traditional Chinese medicine, were typical. He stated that in China, “[a]ll study of animated nature is neglected; error is preferred to truth….\textsuperscript{44}” The erroneous Chinese medicine was only part of the faults of Chinese culture to which Hobson gave the following description. “Dark superstition and spiritual ignorance at present rest upon the people; the free exercise of thought and intellect is suspended, and all moral improvement prevented by the withering, benumbing influence of a base idolatry.” If the Chinese patients refused surgical treatment, the missionaries often attribute it to the superstition and ignorance that they
perceived to permeate traditional Chinese culture. From the evangelic point of view, surgery could cure the Chinese of their ills just as Christianity could redeem them from the sins of paganism and superstition.

**Native Backlash against Missionary Medicine**

The medical missionaries endowed their medical practice with various positive meanings and claimed that it had brought about numerous progressive effects on China. However, in a country where foreign presence was usually greeted with suspicions, the miraculous dimension of missionary medicine often caused unexpected backlash. In Hankow the medical missionary complained that

> all sorts of opposition, known and unknown, have been brought to bear upon our work. Pasquinades have been affixed to the hospital-gates, vile and infamous libels upon the fair fame of our institution have been uttered, and every other means which could be devised to traduce us in the presence of the people, whose highest good we had come, openly and honestly to seek.  

James L. Maxwell, a Presbyterian medical missionary work in south Taiwan, reported that there was “active hostility on the part of priests, street doctors, and the anti-foreign aristocracy, who are sure to be found every where, a hostility taking form in the shape of the vilest accusations, in insinuations of secret poisoning, murder, and other crimes…”

In the summer of 1867 the natives incited by the rumours attacked Maxwell’s chapel and dispensary. Subsequently a Chinese catechist of his chapel was murdered by an angry mob. In 1871 at Amoy, there was a rumour accusing the missionaries of dispensing
magic, poisonous pills to the Chinese. Those who swallowed the pill could only be cured by the missionary hospital. Many similar incidents were reported by the medical missionaries.

The missionaries seldom revealed the details of the accusations which they deemed too vile to dwell on. But from other sources we are able to find out what accusations were about. The content of an anti-missionary poster found in the city Damingfu in 1870 was typical. In the poster the missionaries were accused of taking the eyes and the hearts of the Chinese as their alchemical materials. It even claimed that the missionaries sucked young men’s semen and virgins’ vaginal secretion and then used the body fluids to concoct aphrodisiacs. It denounced the missionaries for drugging and raping Chinese women, and claimed that the missions induced Chinese Christians to take part in orgies.

These outrageous accusations were not uncommon. They, alone with the allegation that the missionaries took out foetus from Chinese women to produce medicine, appeared in numerous anti-missionary pamphlets. These posters and pamphlets were printed massively and distributed widely in several provinces. Many anti-missionary riots were provoked by the pamphlets.

These wild accusations might sound too fantastic to be believable. But obviously they were fairly convincing for many nineteenth-century Chinese. Between 1860 and 1900 there were several hundred serious anti-missionary incidents that needed to be dealt with by top diplomatic officials of the Chinese government while thousands of minor cases were handled by local authorities. The torrents of anti-missionary riots finally reach the tragic climax of the Boxer War of 1900. As late as in the early twentieth century such anti-missionary rumours still persisted. The American medical missionary Paul
Adolph reported that when he went to north China in 1929, many of the Chinese he encountered “were distinctively skeptical of what we could do and had heard all sorts of tales about us, such as that we were foreign devils who had come to China to scoop out the eyes of Chinese children so as to grind them up for medicine to send abroad.”

There were several factors that contributed to the Chinese distrust of Christian missions and enhanced the credibility of these wild accusations. First, in China there was a long anti-heterodox tradition supported and cultivated by the regimes. Several Chinese dynasties were toppled or undermined by rebellious religious sects. As a result, Chinese government not only viewed religious sects with suspicion but also often persecuted them severely. With many of its creeds and rituals completely alien to traditional Chinese culture, it was not surprising that Christianity was regarded by many Chinese as a form of heterodox cult. In the sixteenth-century, some courtiers and government officials had already tried to label the Jesuits in China as a heterodox sect. In the nineteenth century the fact that missionaries were from and supported by those western powers that had repeatedly humiliated China only enhanced Chinese hostility and fear.

Second, since the late eighteenth-century several mass panics over rumors of sorcery had broken out in China. People reported of “soul-stealing” perpetrated by queue-clipping sorcerers and of being attacked by flying objects. In the nineteenth-century, these incidents often further complicated the situation. For example, during the 1876 mass panic a group of Chinese Christians were mistaken as a gang of soul-stealing sorcerers by local people. The confusion, however, was not accidental. The majority of those who were accused of “soul-stealing” and other forms of sorcery were wandering Buddhist monks and Taoist priests. Because they were strangers from outside and they were
considered as being in touch with the supernatural, the travelling Buddhist monks and Taoist priests easily fell victims of local suspicion. The itinerant medical missionaries who traveled to the countryside to preach and tried to attract the villagers by dispensing their wonderful medicine also possessed these two qualities. Moreover, medical missions often attracted those who were too poor to seek treatment from conventional Chinese doctors. These patients were so desperate that they were willing to take the risk of submitting themselves to foreigners’ unknown medicine. Most of them were from the lower classes and were marginal to the Chinese society. Their background was exactly the same as the followers of heterodox sects. The compositions of their native followers made the missionaries look all the more suspicious in the eyes of Chinese gentry and local officials.

The Taiping rebellion in the mid-nineteenth-century further strengthened the idea that Christianity was a dangerous heterodox cult. The leader of the Taiping was influenced by the Protestant missionaries and their religious tracts. He had the vision that he was God’s second son, the younger brother of Jesus Christ and his mission was to establish a Heavenly Kingdom in China. He launched a violent campaign with the goal of overthrowing Qing Dynasty along with the traditional order of Chinese society. The Taiping movement was eventually defeated by the Government with equally violent measures. It is estimated that at least twenty million people died of the Taipings’ fourteen-year campaign (1851-64). The incident certainly reinforced the impression that Christianity was a subversive, dangerous heterodox sect.

The suspicion and fear of Christian missions had an effective agent of propagation. The Chinese gentry held strong anti-Christian sentiments. As an educated class, the
gentry were deeply immersed in Confucianism and considered themselves as the
defenders of Chinese orthodoxy. The missionaries who preached against ancestral
worship and other Chinese customs were considered by Chinese gentry as a threat to their
tradition. The social status of the Chinese gentry was regarded as equal to that of local
officials and they often acted as mediators between the local governments and the
commoners. In fact both government officials and local literati came from this class. The
foreign missionaries, who enjoyed extraterritoriality and other privileges, often behaved as
equals to the local officials. They often intervened on behalf of the Chinese converts in
lawsuits and other disputes. The missionaries’ education efforts also undermined Chinese
literati’s monopoly of the status of teachers. Hence the missionaries became competitors
to the Chinese gentry who threatened the latter's prestige. As a result, many Chinese
gentry vehemently resented the missionaries. The hostility of the gentry caused serious
problems for the missionaries. Many anti-missionary incidents were incited by the gentry.
With their status and local influences, the gentry was able to mount formidable opposition
to the Christian missions.\(^6^0\) In such atmosphere of suspicion and fear, the Chinese
could easily identify the medical missionaries as witch doctors. Unfortunate for the
missionaries, some of their teachings and practices fitted well with traditional descriptions
of heterodox sects’ sorcery and magic. In the anti-heterodox campaigns one characteristic
accusation against the heterodox sects such as the White Lotus Teachings and the Non-
Action Movement (\textit{wuwei jiao}) was that they rejected ancestor worship.\(^6^1\) Rejection of
ancestor worship was precisely what the Christian missionaries told their Chinese
followers to do.\(^6^2\)

The spectacular effect of western surgery could easily be mistaken by the Chinese as
a form of magic. Traditional Chinese medicine did not perform anatomical dissection. Dissection of corpses was regarded by the Chinese as mutilation of the dead body and violated a great Chinese taboo. Western medical men’s attempts of performing post-mortem examination on their deceased Chinese patients often aroused great fear and anger among local populace. Some of the missionaries were consequently attacked by angry mobs.\textsuperscript{63} “The superstitious ideas regarding the dead body”, the medical missionaries complained, “made the practice of dissection an impossibility.”\textsuperscript{64} In Chinese pharmacopoeia, human flesh was considered as a cure to certain diseases, and there were numerous folkloric accounts of pious sons and daughters fed their flesh to their ailing parents to cure the latter of serious disease.\textsuperscript{65} Hence the rumors that the missionaries gouged out the eyes of the Chinese for use in alchemical experiments, and took away the organs of the natives to produce magic pills and opium were not totally unconvincing.

On the other hand, not all the western medical men in China were happy with the medical missions. Some of the secular medical practitioners were well aware of the problems brought about by missionary medicine, and they criticized it poignantly. Manson, for example, complained that the theatrical aspects of missionary medicine only impressed the ignorant but failed to convince the educated Chinese. Manson stated: "We heal by working with nature. What is wanted for rapid and general conversion is a miracle. Something theatrical as the removal of a bladder stone from the bladder, the excision of a tumour and such like proceedings impress the ignorant more than something infinitely more difficult and wonderful, such as the elaborate diagnosis of some internal disease."\textsuperscript{66}

Moreover, Manson was dissatisfied with the types of patients attracted by missionary medicine. In his hospital report in 1874, Manson lamented that although nearly 10,000
patients had received advice and medicine at the Hospital during the last five years, it still failed to convince the Chinese community of the superiority of western medicine. He blamed this on the practice of dispensing medicine for free. Manson argued that gratuitous medicine only attracted the native poor while making European medicine disreputable in the eyes of the Chinese gentry. He complained that "coolies, opium smokers, soldiers, peddlars, farm labourers, prostitutes, sailors, beggars, waifs and strays form the staple of our practice". 67 For secular medical men such as Manson their goal was the establishment of the practices of European scientific medicine in China, and they modeled their professional identity upon that of their metropolitan counterparts. Winning the trust of Chinese gentry was essential for establishing the credibility of western medicine. Manson also argued that to render the Chinese appreciative of the value of their medical service, a fee-paying system was indispensable. For Manson, the medical missionaries’ practices of dispensing medicine for free and attracting poor and credulous people by exploiting the marvelous appearance of western surgery was harming the western medical enterprise in China.

Conclusion

Healing was, and still is, an act often rich in symbolic significance. However, symbols could be read in different ways, especially when they were transported to other cultures. For the missionaries the parallel between healing the body and saving the soul was a symbolic one. Although the medical missionaries compared their activities to that of Jesus Christ and the apostles, they knew well that they were not performing miracles.
“What he was pleased to do by his Divine power, and what they did by miraculous endowments, no one can in these days pretend to effect.” The missionaries claimed to be “commanded and encouraged to imitate them, by the use of such means as knowledge and the exercise of a genuine charity…”68 The missionaries regarded the effectiveness their medicine as a great achievement of Christian civilization, but they did not considered it as containing anything supernatural.69 However, the Chinese often failed to appreciate the fine distinctions. Many doctrines of Christianity was alien to the polytheist Chinese society. The missionaries’ attempts of exploiting the spectacular aspects of western surgery further added the confusion.

From the Chinese perspective the marvelous and spectacular elements of western surgery easily rendered it indistinguishable from magic. It was not surprising that there were rumors describing the supernatural efficacy of missionary medicine and accusing the maleficent intentions of the missionaries. As Luis White points out rumors, were often “drawn from a store of historical allusions that have been kept alive and given new and renewed meanings by the gossip and arguments of diverse social groups.”70 The anti-missionary Chinese gentry employed cultural resources such as folklore, literature and Chinese medical theories to stigmatize western medical practice as a form of sorcery. In a tense and hostile atmosphere the rumors and accusations frequently led to explosive results. To analyze and understand the tragic history, it is less useful to see the anti-missionary Chinese as merely being ignorant or even malevolent. In her study of vampire rumor in colonial Africa, White points out that rumor was “a more immediate way to talk about other things.” In early twentieth-century colonial East and Central Africa, there were widespread vampire rumors about European doctors, public health
officers, game rangers, mine managers and police kidnapping Africans and sucking their blood to produce medicine for the Europeans. White argues that Africans used these stories to talk about the intrusive public health measures, the anti-sleeping sickness campaigns disrupting local agricultural practice, the coercive colonial administration and the exploitation of colonial capitalism. The stories, according to White, were “confusions and misunderstanding of the best kind: they reveal the world of power and uncertainty in which Africans have lived in this century.”

The Chinese anti-missionary rumor can be read in a similar way. The missionary presence in China caused great destabilizing effects on the Qing government and the Chinese society. Paul Cohen points out that “the missionary was deeply — and unavoidably — committed to the proposition that the true interests of the Chinese people could be served by means of fundamental re-ordering of Chinese culture.” As a result, the missionaries “inspired the greatest fear and hatred.” On the one hand, missionary activities were vehemently resented by local gentry and government officials and caused numerous anti-missionary incidents; on the other hand, the Chinese central government often bowed to foreign pressure and acted on behalf of the missionaries. The ongoing tensions greatly weakened the Qing Government and contributed to its downfall.

Rumors describing graphically the missionaries’ outrageous and perverted behaviors, such as using human body parts to concoct medicine or indulging in orgy, allowed Chinese people to talk about the disruptions of their social stability, cultural order and mental universe that Christian missions brought about. Although the missionaries tried to impose religious and symbolical meaning on western medicine, the natives were able to provide alternative interpretations and subverted their efforts. Demarcation between
medicine, religion and magic could easily be blurred at cross-cultural encounters.


6 Thomas R. Colledge, Peter Parker and Elijah Bridgman, *Suggestions for the Foundation of a Medical Missionary Society, Offered to the Consideration of all Christian Nations, More Especially to the Kindred Nations of England and the United States of America* (Canton: [s.n.], 1836), p.3.


8 C. Peter Williams, “Healing and Evangelism: the Place of Medicine in Late Victorian Protestant Missionary Thinking,” in W. J. Sheils ed. *The Church and Healing: Papers Read at the Twentieth Summer Meeting and the Twenty-First Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History


13 Minutes of a meeting of the friends and supporters of the Amoy Chinese Hospital, 1874 (Amoy: A. A. Marcal, 1875), p.4


16 Peter Parker, Surgical Practice (n. 13), p.2.

17 Coltman, The Chinese (n. 7), p.153

18 John Dudgeon, “Diet, Dress, and Dwellings of the Chinese in Relation to Health”, in International Health Exhibition, 1884, China, etc. (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1885), pp.63-294, quotations on pp.120, 123. See also John Dudgeon, The Diseases of China: Their Causes, Conditions, and Prevalence, Contrasted with those of Europe (Glasgow: Dunn & Wright, 1877), p.63.


Peking from October 1st, 1861, to December 31st, 1862 (s. n.: s. d.), p. 14.

See, for example, James Gentle, *The Annual Report of the Chinese Dispensary at Chinkiang, from June 23rd, 1864 to June 30th, 1865* (Shanghai: 1865), p. 4.

Lockhart, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

The Medical Missionary Society in China with Minutes of Proceedings, Officers, &c. also an Appendix Containing a Brief Account of an Ophthalmic Institution at Macao for the Year 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832 (London: Royston & Brown, 1839), p. 58.


Mackay, *From Far Formosa*, p. 316. I thank Daiwei Fu for bringing my attention to this reference.


Faraday’s public demonstration of experiments is a good example. See David Gooding, “In Nature’s School: Farady as an Experimentalist,” in David Gooding and Frank A. J. L. James ed.,

33 Coltman, **The Chinese** (n. 7), p.174.


36 Parker, **Statements Respecting Hospitals** (n. 21), pp.15-16. Most of the cases reported by Parker in this propaganda pamphlet were surgical cases, *ibid.*, pp.23-6.


39 Colledge, Parker and Bridgman, **Suggestions for the Foundation of a Medical Missionary Society** p. 5.

40 The Medical Missionary Society in China (n. 20), p.63.

41 Parker, **Statements Respecting Hospitals** (n. 21), p.15.


43 Lawe, Medical Missions (n. 2), pp.153-6.


55 To discuss the cause of the panics is beyond the scope of this paper, but see the detailed study of the 1768 mass panic over “soul-stealing” in Philip A. Kuhn’s *Soulstealers: the Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1990). Kuhn’s book also contains a brief discussion of similar panics in 1810 and 1876. For a general survey and discussion of sorcery scares and religious persecutions in Qing period see ter Haar, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-288.

56 Kuhn, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-48, 105-118


See Cohen, “Christian Missions,” (n. 5); *idem, China and Christianity* (n. 41).


The missionaries often deliberately positioned themselves as the enemy of traditional Chinese culture. See, for example, Rev. John MacGowan, *Christ or Confucius, Which? The Story of the Amoy Mission* (London: London Missionary Society, 1889).

Patrick Manson and his brother David were attacked by a mob when they tried to conduct a post-mortem examination on the body of a Chinese Philip H. Manson-Bahr and A. Alcock, *The Life and Work of Sir Patrick Manson* (London: Cassell and Company, 1927) pp. 18-9.

Balm, *China and Modern Medicine*, p. 22.


*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4

T. R. Colledge, Peter Parker, and E. C. Bridgman, “Address”, in *The Medical Missionary Society in China with Minutes of Proceedings, Officers, &c. also an Appendix Containing a Brief Account of an Ophthalmic Institution at Macao for the years 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832* (London: Royston & Brown, 1839), p. 26

Maxwell, *Medical Mission* (n. 37), p. 6; Benjamin Hobson, *An Appeal to the Religious and Benevolent Public on Behalf of a Proposal to Establish a Medical School for the Natives of China, in Connection with the Chinese Medical Mission at Hong-Kong* ([s. l.]: [s. n.], 1846), pp. 3-4.

71 Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires*, on pp. 41, 43.

72 Cohen, “Christian Missions” on p.543. See also idem, *China and Christianity*. 