China in Maryknoll: The Sinologically-Related Holdings of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America

Murray A. Rubinstein

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol1992/iss95/3
ARTICLES

CHINA IN MARYKNOLL: THE SINOLOGICALLY-RELATED HOLDINGS
OF THE CATHOLIC FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Murray A. Rubinstein
City University of New York

Introduction

The founding of the Catholic Mission Society of America in the second decade of the
twenty-first century marked the beginning of a new stage in the evolution of Catholic life in
the United States. For American Catholics, the permission given by those who coordinated
Third World mission work in the Vatican to form a mission-coordinating body was viewed
as a coming of age. No longer did Rome perceive the American Catholic community as
immature. Americans could now join other older national communities and international
Catholic mission bodies in the task of spreading Catholic faith and doctrine among the
people of the heathen lands.¹ Even today, almost seven decades after their establishment,
the Maryknoll-based societies continue to hold unique positions within both the larger
Catholic community and within that United States-based Christian mission community that
continues to direct a far-flung American Christian mission enterprise.

The center of that Catholic enterprise is a vast "T"-shaped building that dominates the
grounds of the society's home base in Ossining, New York. It is a structure that combines
architectural elements found in a medieval European castle with those to be seen in an East
Asian temple. Here, at mission headquarters, are housed the society's open-stack library,
its Maryknoll Overseas Extension Service (MOES) collection, and its mission archives. It
is here on this site, less than a forty-five minute train ride from New York City's Grand
Central Station, that a researcher will come for materials on American China mission history
and on the history of Maryknoll in China. This essay examines each of these three
collections housed with the Maryknoll complex.

¹Presented at the panel, "Rare and Unique Archival and Library Resources on China
and Korea in the New York Metropolitan Area," of the Mid-Atlantic Region/Association
for Asian Studies twentieth annual meeting at Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA on
November 2, 1991.
I. The Open-Stack Library

The first collection in which the researcher might work would be the group of books and periodicals that constitutes the society's library. Housed on two floors in the rear right wing of the I-shaped headquarters building, this collection is organized according to the Library of Congress (LC) classification system. On the second floor are the first sections of the LC classification; on the first floor are the later sections. The card catalog is located on the second floor, just outside the entrance to the main library's reading room.

Upon entering the first floor of the library one sees a desk for charging out books—the only such facility in the building. Beyond the desk and to its left are reading tables and to their right are the stacks for the social science sections of the collection. Behind them is the Maryknoll library's periodical collection. The focus of the periodical collection is theological and missiological. Within it one finds such journals as the Evangelical Mission Quarterly, Missiology, and the International Bulletin of Mission Research—periodicals that enable the student at Maryknoll, the missioner, or the outside researcher to have access to the current work being done in the field.

The International Bulletin of Missionary Research, published under the auspices of the Overseas Ministries Center in New Haven, Connecticut, has a long history. It began over forty years ago as the Occasional Bulletin of the Missionary Research Library, and since 1981 has had its present name. Interdenominational in character, it contains articles on missiology, mission history, mission biography, and current trends in Christian mission. Its contributors include both distinguished scholars of mission and church history and activists in contemporary mission. This periodical was important to Maryknoll, for its editors gave the directors of the Maryknoll History Project, Donald MacInnis and Jean Paul Wiest, the opportunity to describe their project at length in a seminal article. Since the appearance of that piece both men have been called upon to help organize similar mission-centered historical projects.

The second floor reading room is a long chamber with reading tables down the middle and book shelves along each side. During the day the room is lit by the sun, for skylights run the length of the room's vaulted and steep ceiling. This large and arching space has more the feel of a chapel that a library and the large crucifix on the outer wall adds to this effect. It is always a delight to read or do research in this space, for the spirit of what Maryknoll is as an institution envelops the room.

Because the collection has been built up to suit the needs of missioners, Maryknoll Fathers, Maryknoll Sisters, and students for the priesthood, its holdings emphasize theology, church history, missiology, and missionary history. The librarians in charge have not been narrow or parochial in their choice of books. While volumes on Catholicism clearly predominate, there are also works on Protestant theology, missiology, and history and works on Protestant as well as Catholic missions are abundant throughout the library. To the missioner or to the scholar of missions, this section of the collection serves as a starting point for study and
for research. What makes this section all the more important is that James Halloran, the head of the library, has kept abreast of the major trends in missiology and has purchased the latest books in the field, something to be expected of a librarian at a seminary that trains missionaries.

Given Maryknoll's long association with China, China mission history is particularly well covered in the mission history section. The major works in this evolving subfield are found here, as are valuable older works of mission biography and accounts of specific China missions or mission societies.

For the student of East Asia, the periodicals and collections of primary source material beginning with the call numbers DS501 and 503 are the most valuable. The more general works are found there. These include early twentieth-century works such as F. A. McKenzie's The Unveiled East, B. L. Simpson's The Coming Struggle in Eastern Asia and his Indiscreet Chronicle from the Pacific.

For those interested in China, and most particularly in Qing and Republican history, this section of the Maryknoll collections is of most use. Here one has easy and immediate access to rare and useful volumes such as traveller's accounts and diplomatic narratives. There are accounts of specific areas within China and of patterns of Chinese social and religious behavior. Such works—Arthur Smith's Chinese Characteristics—served as precursors to the anthropological field reports that were composed in the 1910s and 1920s as the discipline took shape.

Maryknollers in the field were inveterate readers and book buyers and purchased works that often found themselves on the shelves of chapter house libraries in the mission stations in Fujian and Guangdong where the Maryknoll Fathers and Sisters did their work. A modern library of this type is located at the society's chapter house on San Min Road in Tai-chung, Taiwan. The library is a center for study and contemplation and, sometimes, a meeting room as well. Such libraries were important sites within the larger Maryknoll complexes. When missionaries returned to the United States, especially during the late 1940s when the end of Republican China was in sight, they sometimes brought the books back and, in time, gave them to the library at Maryknoll.

My own recent research and writing have been concerned with the roots of the Anglo-American mission in China. The collection contains within it books that have allowed me to develop the larger context of this historical topic. The collection also contains books by members of the first Protestant mission stations in South China—individuals such as Walter Medhurst and Charles Gutzlaff—and these have also been of great value in constructing my new study, "Protestant Canton." There are, for example, books on the MacCartney embassy of the 1790s including Aeneas Anderson's A Narrative of the British Embassy to China in the Years 1792, 1793, 1794. This book provides the reader with a detailed eyewitness account of the first attempt of the British to redefine the western diplomatic relationship with China.
A related volume—*An Historical Account of the Embassy to the Emperor of China*¹¹—was written by another member of the embassy, Sir George Staunton. Staunton, a young man at the time who became in the next decade a major figure in the East India Company's factory in Canton, served as Chinese Secretary for the MacCartney Mission and utilized his own notes and journal entries as well as official accounts when putting this account together. The book led to his widespread recognition as a major China watcher in his day. Twenty years later he was to serve as a member of the Amherst Mission of 1816. This time his friend, the missionary Robert Morrison, served as translator and Chinese Secretary while Staunton acted as advisor and protected the interests of the East India Company. Staunton did not write an account of this embassy, but Morrison and Henry Ellis, an aide to Lord Amherst, did. The Ellis account, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China*,¹² is in the Maryknoll collection. It is a detailed account of events and gives insight into the disputes within the British camp and into the role played by Robert Morrison.

The events surrounding the Opium War (1840-1842) are also covered in contemporary books found in the Maryknoll collection. One such volume is W. D. Bernard's *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis from 1840 to 1843*.¹³ A second such work is D. MacPherson's *Two Years in China: the Narrative of the Chinese Expedition from Its Formation in April of 1840 to the Treaty of Peace in August of 1842*.¹⁴ In addition, the library has books on the Lorcha Arrow War (the Second Opium War) of the late 1850s; among them George Wingrove Cooke's *China: Being the "Times" Special Correspondence from China in the Years 1857-58*.¹⁵ These are valuable works for those involved in the study of China's relationship with the West. There is another set of works that cast light upon China's domestic affairs during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and deal with the Empress Dowager. Included in the collection are biographies and memoirs by Westerners and Chinese who knew Cixi (Tz'u-hsi). The library has a copy of the famous Backhouse and Bland collaboration, *China Under the Empress Dowager*, that Trevor Roper discussed in his fascinating biography, *The Hermit of Peking*. Such books as these give different portraits of this important Chinese figure. The Maryknoll collection of books on China includes many rare and unusual volumes. Thus it is a library that scholars of Asian studies should become familiar with.

II. The Maryknoll Overseas Extension Service Collection

A second valuable collection of materials for researchers both inside and outside of Maryknoll is the one gathered by those who supervise the Maryknoll Overseas Extension Service. The MOES collection is now found on shelves in the rear of the first floor of the open stack library. The directors of the collection and the extension service have offices directly behind the rear of the library stacks in the right end of the "I" that forms the Maryknoll headquarters building.

For the student of modern China there is much of value here. In the China section of the
MOES collection are mission reports and periodicals difficult to find elsewhere. There are reports of the state of Christianity on Taiwan such as that prepared by the Presbyterian missionary, Grichtung, in the 1960s. There are survey reports prepared by Maryknollers. Finally, there are runs of useful but not widely circulated magazines such as *Yüan*. A student of modern Taiwan and its political development will find the MOES run of the privately and inexpensively printed typescript magazine, *Yüan*, of greatest value. Now in existence for about five years, this is a publication put together by Catholic missionaries based in Hong Kong who either worked in or studied Taiwan. Through their informants in the Republic of China, they gather valuable bits of information and present these, with editorial comment, in the pages of their magazine. Political development is one concern; the problems of human rights on the Guomindang-dominated island is another.

Such materials as these make the small collection useful. The MOES collection is readily accessible and, because of the unusual materials it contains, is of value to one studying modern Taiwanese life.

III. The Maryknoll Archives

Maryknoll has had a rich and fruitful history, as Jean Paul Wiest shows us in his masterly and clear-eyed study of the society’s enterprise in Republican China. Now the means of obtaining access to the details of that history are available to the Maryknoller and to the outside scholar. The reason for this increased access lies with the decision of the society’s leaders, made in 1990, to hire a professional archivist to organize the holdings found at the Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, to catalog them, and to determine carefully defined policies of accessibility.

The new director of the Maryknoll Archives is Elizabeth Yaekel. Trained as an archivist, she has eleven years’ experience working in various Catholic mission archives and in organizing the archives of the Detroit (Michigan) Archdiocese. Ms. Yaekel feels that her work at Maryknoll presents her with her greatest challenge. She must not only organize the archives but also make its holdings known to members of the larger scholarly community.

The restructuring of the archives constitutes a unique problem; Ms. Yaekel must organize not one collection of materials but two. The first belongs to the Maryknoll Fathers, but it contains within it data on the related monastic order, the Maryknoll Brothers. The second belongs to the Maryknoll Sisters. Another and equally difficult problem is that each of these archives is at a different stage in the long and tedious process of constructing archival inventories and catalogs. The Sisters began cataloging and creating detailed inventories of the various holdings in their collection several years ago. The Maryknoll Fathers have not progressed as far in providing the researcher with the type of detailed inventories of the holdings that are needed. Ms. Yaekel has made it clear that this process of constructing such inventories is a very high first priority. At the same time, the absence of a complete set of such inventories does not mean that a scholar cannot use the archives. It simply means that the individual will have to do more digging and searching on his or her own.
The basic structuring of the archives' two collections has been completed.

In each of the collections, there are two large categories of material. One consists of letters, reports, and other documents that deal with the origins, development, and present nature of the two societies; central governing bodies and their general councils. There are, for example, rich data on the men and women who founded both the Catholic Missionary Society—the Maryknoll Fathers—and its related body, the Maryknoll Sisters, in the early twentieth century. There is also information about the men and women who led the societies through the succeeding decades.\textsuperscript{18}

The second, and larger, category consists of material on the actual mission fields in which members of the three societies worked. These are first organized by nation/field. Then, the materials for each area are organized along a time line. The given set of materials is sometimes broken down further by regional chapter house. The material in each of the national and field areas is varied. There are chapter reports, correspondence, journals, and diaries.

The lack of the inventories makes the use of these materials time-consuming. Ms. Yaekel’s strategy will be first to complete ‘global’ inventories and then to prepare inventories for the national and regional materials, as was done for the archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABC), the major Congregationalist body. The first inventories contain material dealing with the board’s central headquarters and letters from the central board to its missions. The later ones contain data about the national and then the regional work of the ABC missionaries. These are found in mission reports and letters.

Because the two Maryknoll societies are twentieth-century organizations, their collection contains a variety of media including films and photographs from the various chapter houses and from the headquarters. There are also the taped interviews of the Maryknollers who worked in China that were prepared by Donald E. MacInnis and Jean Paul Wiest and their team when they were gathering data for the "Maryknoll in China" project.

An outside scholar does not, however, have total and unlimited access to the archives. Much of the material is of very recent origin and other material concerns men and women who are still living. There is much that is sensitive in nature and some of it, if made public, might affect either the work of the mission society itself or the lives of the individual missionaries and their families. Just what these limits should be and what use can be made of certain materials are questions that Ms. Yaekel and the directors of the societies are now addressing. The screening of researchers is a first step and interviews with these researchers by Ms. Yaekel is the next logical step. Such policies are similar to those carried out at other mission board and institutional archives such as those of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia and the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri.\textsuperscript{19}

But where is China in all this? Why would a student of Chinese history and society find the Maryknoll archives a valuable place to work in? The answer is that the leaders of
Maryknoll saw China as a major target of their enterprise. Missionaries representing the society were sent there within a few years of the founding of the society. The society established chapter houses in Guangdong and in parts of southern Fujian. Only a fraction of this material was actually used by Jean Paul Wiest when he wrote his history of the society’s efforts in China, for his is a broad-based study that covers many years and many issues. Micro histories have yet to be done and the material for them is there at the Maryknoll Archives for such studies. There is also value in this material for fields other than mission studies. As scholars working in the American Board and the Southern Presbyterian archives have shown, materials such as those found in mission archives can cast light as well upon our understanding of problems in Chinese political, social, cultural, religious, and intellectual history. Elizabeth Yaekel hopes that China scholars will use the Maryknoll archives in the same way.

IV. Conclusion

The three collections are each valuable in its own way. When taken together they make Maryknoll in Ossining, New York, a place that China scholars should become familiar with as they pursue their explorations of China and its civilization and of those Westerners who travelled to the Middle Kingdom with the purpose of transforming it.

The Maryknoll Mission Archives is open to researchers Monday through Friday, 9:00-12:00, 1:00-4:30. Permission to use the Archives for scholarly research is obtained from the archivist, Elizabeth Yaekel. Most of the archival materials can be reproduced by the Archives’ staff members.

NOTES


2. For an introduction to works in the subfield of China mission history see Murray A. Rubinstein, "Christianity in China," in *Chin tai Chung-kuo shih yen chiu t'ung hsūn* (Newsletter for Modern Chinese History), no. 4 (1987), 111-143.


7. I have become familiar with the Tai-chung library over the course of the past decade. The Fathers are kind enough to permit me to reside at the chapter house that contains the library when I come to the city to do my research on Christian missions on Taiwan.


9. Ibid.


15. George Wingrove Cooke, China: Being the "Times" Special Correspondence from China in the Years 1857-58 (London: Routledge, 1858).


18. The relationship between the two bodies is a complex one and has changed over time. In the formative period, the Maryknoll Sisters were seen as an auxiliary body to provide domestic and secretarial services for the Fathers. As was the case in the Protestant societies, however, the women were not content simply to play such conventional roles. They defined areas of "women's work" and served as teachers and directors of benevolent institutions. The evolution of the Sisters followed this general pattern. On the Protestant effort see Jane Hunter, The Gospel of Gentility (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
Professor Kathleen Lodwick of Pennsylvania State University is now working on a biography of Margaret Moniger of the American Presbyterian Mission on Hainan. This book, when completed, will cast much light on the work of a key woman in this little-known but important mission community.

19. I have worked in each of these archives in gathering data for essays I have written and for my study of the Protestant community on Taiwan. The experience was quite different in each case.