

“Pulverized Historiography” – a Book Review of: Huang Guangyu 黄光域 (ed.), *Jidujiao chuanxing Zhongguo jinian* 《基督教传行中国纪年》 (*Chronicle of Protestant Missions Development in China 1807–1949*), Guangxi Normal University Press 2017

Leopold Leeb

This monumental work of 1,186 pages in A4 format, costs 460 RMB (i.e. around 70 Euro, an astronomical price for the average consumer) and reminds one of the collection of biographies of the Catholic missionaries that came out eight years ago, also in Guangxi: Geng Sheng 耿升 (editor and translator), *16–20 Shiji ru Hua tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi liezhuan* 《16–20世纪入华天主教传教士列传》 (Biographies of Catholic Missionaries from the 16th to the 20th century), Guangxi Normal University Press 2010. That work contains biographies of Catholic missionaries in China from the 16th to the 20th century, but only biographies of the Jesuits before 1773, the Lazarists (Vincentians) and the MEP (Paris Foreign Mission Society). The collection of biographies of the Catholic missionaries is also an enormous and expensive volume (1,068 pages, large format, price: 398 RMB), a sound reference book that unfortunately, however, does not include the biographies of the other missionary orders: Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and the new mission societies (CICM Missionaries, Divine Word Missionaries, etc.); all orders of Sisters were also simply omitted.

The collection of biographies that appeared in 2010 was simply the translation of western works by Dehergne (Jesuits), Moussay (MEP), van den Brandt 1936 (Lazarists). The present study of the Protestant missionaries from 1807–1949, however, is the independent work of the historian Huang Guangyu, who gathered the names and dates of the individual China missionaries in decades of detailed work. The book is organized as follows: 1) Chronicle with data on each individual year from 1807 (arrival of Robert Morrison) until 1949 (pages 3 to 890). 2) Bibliography (pages 891 to 899). 3) Index of the Chinese names of missionaries and mission societies (pages 901 to 1,043) and 4) Index of the western names (pages 1,045 to 1,186).

This is probably the first book in China that endeavours to list all the names of Protestant China missionaries and, going by the long index, there were around 13,000 persons (up to the year 1949). Since it often does not even mention the spouses and children of the missionaries, the number of Protestant China missionaries could be somewhat higher. Naturally, many of them only came to work in China for a short period of time, whereas for many Catholic missionaries to take up mission activity in China was a decision for life. The task that was embarked on here is truly admirable and praiseworthy. The enormous

flood of data (brief biographies of 13,000 persons had to be written!) is difficult to manage and the chronicle demonstrates major defects. Only the arrival in China and departure dates of the missionaries are given, and sometimes the date of death. The majority of the missionaries are mentioned only once (according to the index, and mainly their arrival date). Not even the date of birth of the great pioneer Robert Morrison (1782–1834) is given anywhere, although his “western” name appears in parenthesis after his Chinese name. The practice of giving the western name after the Chinese name is unfortunately not kept up in the chronicle; the “ABC name” is only added in parenthesis after the first mention. The two indexes (Chinese and western name indexes) are not together, consequently in that respect the work is cumbersome and impractical, since, e.g., the Chinese name of a westerner (or the western original of a Chinese name) can only be found by referring to the text and not to the index.

The practice of adding the western name only to the first mention in the text has consequences for the index: the western index has only a single page reference, namely where the person concerned is mentioned for the first time. The Chinese index on the other hand lists all the pages where that person appears. As mentioned, for the majority of missionaries there is only one date, e.g. the only entry for “Elsie R. Anderson” is: “Sun Lizhen (Elsie R. Anderson), a YWCA activist comes to China to preach. She resides in Canton” (p. 496, 1918). Probably Ms Anderson was American, but the text does not indicate that. How long she was in China, when she was born or when she died is not clear and to research those data would take quite a time ... as already stated, it actually concerns the biographies of more than 13,000 persons, the majority from English-speaking countries which makes the matter easier. On the Catholic side one would have to write biographies of Portuguese, Italians, Belgians and Poles, among others!

One example: the entry “Ding Weiliang” (Chinese name of W.A.P. Martin, 1827–1916) in the Chinese index gives the pages: 17, 26, 33, 37, 39, 45, 50, 61, 63, 99, 162, 200, 312, 331 and 468. On page 17 (for the year 1850) we read: “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang (William Alexander Parsons Martin) arrives in China, Ningbo.” Page 26 (1858) mentions Martin’s translation work for the American Ambassador to China. Page 33 states: “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang and his wife are sent to Peking to set up a church in Zongbu Hutong and to teach” (1863). Then again for the year 1865 (p. 37), “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang replaces Fu Lanya as teacher of English at the Tongwen Guan in Peking” (“Fu Lanya” is the English missionary John Fryer). Two pages later (for the year 1866): “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang begins to organize the ‘Chongshi Guan,’ a school that later evolved into ‘Chongshi Middle School’ (Truth Hall Academy) and was located in Anding Mennei Dasantiao Hutong.” Then in 1869 (p. 45), Martin began to teach international law and when *The Peking Magazine* was founded in 1872, Martin was one of the editors (p. 50). He was also a member of the “School and Text Book Series Committee”, founded in 1877 (p. 61) and a co-founder of the “Chinese Religious Tract Society” (1878, p. 63) as well as a founder of the “Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge” (founded in 1888, p. 99). For the year 1894 (p. 162) we read: “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang retires from the work in Tongwen Guan.” Then it states on p. 200: “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang, previously

professor at the Tongwen Guan, is called as Director of Western Studies at Peking Imperial University, and is made a mandarin second class (1898).” The next entry is from 1907 (p. 312): “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang participates in the Centenary Jubilee Conference of the Protestants in Shanghai and demands that the Christian countries station military detachments in China to protect the missionaries in China.” On p. 331 we read: “The American Presbyterian Ding Weiliang returns to Peking to preach and to write” (1908). The final entry on Martin is on p. 468: “The American Presbyterian missionary Ding Weiliang, who came to China in 1850 and formerly taught at the Tongwen Guan, dies in Beijing at the age of 89.”

It provides a relatively detailed biography of the great American, even though there is no mention of his experiences during the Boxer years, nor of his Chinese and English books that were quite influential at the time. It does take some effort, though, to look up the individual data to be able to form a complete picture of Mr “Ding Weiliang” (Martin). Martin was also in Peking in the Boxer year 1900 and wrote a book on the Boxer uprising (*The Siege of Beijing*).

The Boxer year is probably one of the sensitive chapters in the history of Christianity, bringing to light the xenophobia of certain circles in China. Mao Zedong rated the Boxer uprising positively as a “patriotic movement,” and for that reason one may not write even today too negatively about the Boxers and the many (Chinese and non-Chinese) victims of the Boxers are seldom mentioned. On this the work of Huang deserves praise, because on pages 217-221 he lists by name around 130 victims of the Boxers, that is, missionaries who were murdered. Admittedly the system is somewhat strange: he arranges them according to the year of arrival in China; thus at the beginning of the list is the American “Bei Geru” (probably a man, original name not given but after some tedious searching one finds that it is Benjamin Bagnall), because he arrived in China already in 1873; he is then followed by a missionary (male or female?) who came to China in 1876. The last four victims are consequently missionaries who only arrived in China in spring 1900 and were murdered in June or August 1900. This approach means that people who really belong together are separated. For example Pastor George Frederick Ward (Wang Daoming) is found on p. 219, line 14: “The missionary of the China Inland Mission Wang Daoming, who came to China in 1893, was murdered on 22 July in Juzhou, Zhejiang, at the age of 40.” His wife, née Fuller, however, is only entered on line 40 of the same page, because she only came to China in 1895: “The missionary of the China Inland Mission and wife of Pastor Wang Daoming, also known as Fu Lanying, came to China in 1895. On 22 July she was murdered in Juzhou, Zhejiang, together with her son Herbert Calvin, who was only six months old. She was 33 years old when she died.” A geographical arrangement would have been advisable here, because the total of eleven victims of the “Juzhou incident” died together, and should therefore be dealt with together in the writing of the history.

It is really a pity that not all the western names are consistently given in each case. But this is probably the most complete list of Protestant victims of the Boxers that was ever published in a public reference work in China, since the detailed “Book of Martyrs” by Sik P. Wong, *Huishou Bainian Xundaoxue* 回首百年殉道血 (In Remembrance of Martyrs a

Century Ago) published in 2010 in Hong Kong is unobtainable in China because book imports from Hong Kong are strictly controlled.

In this respect, the publication of this collection of data, which portrays the history of the Protestant missions in China “piecemeal” and “pulverized,” may be considered a breakthrough. One may trust that the portrayal is correct and reliable in the essentials, even if much that is important is missing, as can be seen in the example of W.A.P. Martin. At least the foreign names are correctly written, even including the umlaut ü for “Gützlaff.” This book could become an important reference for church historians in China.

By comparison here a brief mention of *Zhongguo tianzhujiao biannian shi* 中国天主教编年史 (Annalistic History of the Catholic Church of China) of 2003 by Professor Gu Weimin, a work of 530 pages that admittedly begins with the year 635, when the first (verifiable) missionaries of the East Syrian Church (“Nestorians”) arrived in Xi’an. Whereas Gu Weimin’s chronicle is fairly readable and also cites important texts or includes photos, Huang’s new work is virtually “unreadable” and is only suitable as a reference; it is an endless accumulation of names and year dates, without any evaluation of or distinction between significant and less significant persons.

What is lacking, unfortunately, is the continuation of the history after 1949. Even the years up until 1955 would be sufficient, because the great majority of the missionaries were obliged to leave China before that date. The history of the “Exodus” is of course not a glorious chapter for the Regime and is therefore taboo. The entries for 1949 (pages 846-889, thus 40 pages!) are simply long lists of the individual Protestant mission societies and their missionaries in the following manner: “Mr/Ms XY, Presbyterian, came to China in 19XY and resides in XY.” These lists of names were simply copied from the registers and annuals of the separate mission societies.

In any case, the patience and meticulousness of historian Huang Guangyu (born 1938), who has been dealing with the history of modern China since the 1980s, are to be admired; in 1981 he already compiled a very useful *Name Lexicon of Foreigners in Modern China* (*Jindai lai Hua waiguo renming cidian* 近代来华外国人名辞典), the only one of its kind. His reference book of 1981 had more than 2,000 entries of persons, including probably 1,000 missionaries. With his gigantic late work, that has now been published, he increased the number of missionaries included to around 13,000, and they now at least in a rudimentary manner have become part of official Chinese history. One could wish for a similar book also for the Catholic side: a data collection of the approx. 9,000 priests and religious brothers and the approx. 5,000 missionary sisters who worked in China from the 13th century on, mainly however since the 19th century.