CULTURE & PROTESTANT MISSION SCHOOLS IN 19th CENTURY CHINA.

Ian Welch
Pacific and Asian History
School of Culture, History and Language
College of Asia and the Pacific
Australian National University
Canberra.

WORKING PAPER
© Ian Welch 2014

Comments on this working paper are welcome
Opinions vary about the presence of foreigners in 19th century China with most scholars agreeing that China was a victim of economic imperialism led by Great Britain and other foreign powers. Among the criticisms is that of “cultural imperialism”—a program of imposing foreign cultural values upon China. There is no doubt that “Western” culture has transferred to China and many other countries but the use of ‘imperialism” suggests that foreign culture was imposed on the Chinese as a direct product of military force coupled with economic and social pressures. Hilary Carey has remarked perceptively that:

The forces of religion and Imperialism remain enmeshed in the modern world and international popular culture.¹

Applying “cultural imperialism” to Christian evangelism in China reflects the assessment of some scholars about the work of foreign missionaries in the 19th century China and is now part of prevailing modes of thought in the academy.² Hung wrote a condemnation of the underlying principles of “cultural imperialism” seeing it as an example of the unquestioning acceptance of ideas without critical analysis.

An intellectual field is an arena of knowledge production constituted by chains of ritual interactions among intellectuals… In an intellectual field, individual intellectuals coalesce to form intellectual networks, or schools of thought. These networks can be based on either real relationships, such as mentor-student relations, or imagined, symbolic ones, such as interscholar connections established through citations of or allusions to others’ ideas.³

Elman provided another insight into intellectual-field conformity by referring to the Chinese examination system as an example of an “educational gyroscope” relying on “intense, self-centered” learning to maintain “proper balance and direction vis-à-vis society at large.”⁴

The mention of intellectual networks cannot ignore the tight connection between Protestant missionaries in China and their networks at home supporting them with staff, money, and a publishing apparatus designed to enthuse the churchgoing population and if possible, the wider community, to support foreign missionary enterprises. One small illustration of the impact of the missionary network in the United States was the publication, under US Government auspices, of a report on Education in China, prepared by the American missionary-educator, the Rev. W. A. P. Martin with a foreword by the American missionary-surgeon, the Rev. Dr. Peter Parker.  

“Cultural imperialism” offers a convenient explanation for the apparent ease with which foreign countries, most notably Great Britain, humiliated China by imposing more than 200 “unequal treaties” requiring access, including freedom for Christian missions. Although China was never colonized there is a “gyroscopic” pattern of collating China with imposed colonialism elsewhere. The American satirical journal “Puck” gave this version of missionary enthusiasm in China.

According to the ideas of our missionary maniacs, the Chinaman must be converted, even if it takes the whole military and naval forces of the two greatest nations of the world to do it.  

---


6 *Puck*, Vol 38 No 968, 25 September 1895. LoC summary: “A British missionary with a bag labelled "£ for Foreign Missions" at his feet and an American missionary with a bag labelled "$" at her feet, preaching to a Chinese man; at the far left are soldiers of the "English Army" and battleships of the "R.N." with guns labelled "Good Samaritan" and "Revivalist", and on the far right are soldiers of the "U.S.A." and battleships of the "U.S.N." with guns labeled "Psalm-Singer", "Sermonizer", and "Deacon". Online at Library of Congress— [http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print/](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print/)
The contradiction between missionary access to China and the military means by which foreign powers “opened” China “at the barrel of a gun” had to be rationalized by Protestant apologists. One American missionary stated:

19th century Protestant Christians, mostly British, American and Northern European evangelicals, saw the ‘opening’ of China to Protestant Christian missions as, ‘an inevitable issue not of the will of man altogether, but ... of the Providence of God.’\(^7\)

Varg raised the question of motives—why did people decide to devote their lives to missions? It is a topic that eludes those with no interest in religion or the deeper recesses of the subconscious mind.\(^8\) It is all too easy to ignore, as “Star Trek” fans will appreciate, that the early Protestant missionaries to China had a religious vision calling some people to go “where no-one had gone before.” It was a shock to many Protestants that Catholics had been working in China for centuries before Protestants came on the scene. Shenk writes of the “intellectual field” of the 19th century Protestant missionary era that:

No one asked whether mission and modernity might be irreconcilable,” nor questioned that Euro-American civilization was superior or appropriate to all other cultures.\(^9\)

Chin suggests that:

Most missionaries had “little information about the objects of their ministrations or genuine comprehension of the conditions ... and set sail ... with a kind of blind faith.”\(^10\)

Any attempt to answer the question of the motives of foreign missionaries must confront not just personal religious outlooks but wider social issues such as status and authority, adventure, idealism, and the frustrations and injustice of gender prejudices, a challenge within which the whole Christian community remains entangled.

For young people, such as the Saunders twins of Melbourne, both under 21 years of age, missionary service offered the excitement of usefulness and autonomy.\(^11\)

Missionary candidates were not moved … wholly by religious motives. The young men and women who volunteered …reflected the normal excitement over an unusual career in an unusual corner of the world, free from the more prosaic patterns ... at home.\(^12\)

---

11  Welch, Ian, Nellie, Topsy and Annie: Australian Anglican Martyrs, Fujian Province, China, 1 August 1895, Paper presented to the First TransTasman Conference on Australian and New Zealand Missionaries, At Home and Abroad, Australian National University, Canberra, 8-10 October 2004. Online at: http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/china/
What is often missing from the analysis of the Euro-American overseas expansion of the 19th century and early 20th century world is the novelty of the Protestant missionary movement that offered people an opening to the world beyond their generally localized environment. One view of the ignorance of Euro-Americans was illustrated in this American cartoon from the beginning of the 20th century, after more than five decades of foreign contact.

**In the Chinese Labyrinth.**

Critics saw the foreign missionary movement as one of the great aberrations of the time. Infrequent martyrdoms of Christian missionaries, such as the Saunders sisters mentioned above, produced concern at the motives of those who sent inexperienced young people into, to use a cliché of our times, “Harm’s way.” An anti-religious Australian weekly published this drawing a month after the deaths of Nellie and Topsy Saunders in the worst Protestant missionary massacre in 19th century China.14

---

13 *Puck*, Vol 48 No 1248, 6 February 1901. LoC summary: Illustration shows Uncle Sam holding a lantern labeled "Prudence" in one hand and onto John Bull with the other, leading Austria, Japan, France, and Germany through a field of traps labeled "Casus Belli" in China during the Boxer Rebellion.

There were voices asserting that there were plenty of “heathen at home” for the religious enthusiasts to deal with while others engaged in a quaint form of dismissing the “heathen abroad” to enjoy their lives without interference. One view of any overseas ventures, either positive or negative, was that of the “White Man’s Burden” in a poem by the English writer Rudyard Kipling to mark the American colonization of the Philippines. The first verse reads:

*Take up the White Man's burden,*  
*Send forth the best ye breed*  
*Go bind your sons to exile,*  
*To serve your captives' need,*  
*To wait in heavy harness,*  
*On fluttered folk and wild--*  
*Your new-caught, sullen peoples,*  
*Half-devil and half-child.*

---

15 McClure’s Magazine, Vol XII No 4, February 1899,
An American artist represented Kipling visually with the British and Americans climbing over the rocks of ignorance towards civilization with representations of various colonized peoples:

The White Man’s Burden, (Apologies to Kipling).

Overseas missionary enterprise was surrounded by attacks, real and implied, ignoring the historic nature of what was occurring, at least as far as evangelically minded Protestants were concerned. There was no precedent to guide Protestants in their drive to evangelize the world.

It must be acknowledged … that during the first century of modern missions … there were no precedents for carrying on foreign missionary work in any country. It was inevitable that mistakes should occur.16

A former missionary, writing after the expulsion of foreign missionaries in the early 1950s, reflected the enduring confusion about cause and effect of Protestant missions in China:

We can think of the end of missions in China … as the will of God, as the work of the Devil, as the result of political factors, as a tragedy, as a painful but necessary medicine, as a judgment; and in some or all of these ways taken together.17

General disinterest in missionary history misses the cultural links contributed by 19th and 20th century Protestant missionaries to the chain between China and Euro-America for most of the 19th century. Protestant missionaries numbered nearly half of the total foreign population of 19th century China. Their cultural contribution outstripped that of foreign businessmen, soldiers and diplomats. One of the most cited and comprehensive early journals, The Chinese Repository, was published by the first American Protestant missionary, the Rev. Elijah Bridgman. It was succeeded by another missionary inspired publication, The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal.

Missionary understanding of spoken and written Chinese, their conversations with Chinese religious leaders and their visits to and written accounts of Chinese religious institutions made missionaries the leading social and cultural analysts and reporters among the foreign residents of 19th century China. To this, in the case of the Americans, must be added the number of missionaries who occupied various levels of the American consular and diplomatic system in China.

The letters and reports of American Protestant missionaries display active participation in United States relationships in East Asia. Missionaries were among the first writers in English to give detailed accounts of Japan and were ship-board guests of the British and American navies during the ‘opening’ of Japan, and the 2nd Opium War. One distinguished American naval officer, Francis Dupont, was a member of the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church and a friend and correspondent of the Rev. Edward Syle, an English-born Episcopal missionary in Shanghai and one of the most active missionary correspondents. The first Protestant missionary to the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) was supported by the Loo-Choo Naval Mission initiated by officers of the Royal Navy.

The British missions, including people from the overseas colonies of settlement such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, were generally cautious in their relationships with British
officials in China. The British Church Missionary Society was firm in the view that its missionaries should not assist in enquiries involving British officials. Frank Burden, an Anglo-Australian who was in the first Australian party to join the China Inland Mission, a conservative evangelical body, expressed a very negative view of non-missionary foreigners.

Shanghai and Hankow and their open ports are places where … our fellow countrymen … do not exhibit a very Christian like spirit. Most of the foreigners in the open ports are a most ungodly lot.

A British diplomat had a negative view of missionaries but, like many other foreign officials, he thought that pursuing foreign religious concerns took up far too much official time.

I hope I may be left to pursue my own line in respect of missionaries, and to say to my colleagues: as I did yesterday, that tho’ I have no prejudices against the missionaries, I regard the insertion in the Tientsin treaty of clauses about mission work as the most impolitic thing ever done in China.

Acknowledging the small size of the overall missionary input in 19th century China is a necessary safeguard against exaggerating the influence of foreigners and underplaying Chinese efforts in educational and other social, cultural and economic reforms.

With millions of villages and the thousands of Chinese administrative towns or “fu” cities the statistics above emphasize the limited contribution of foreign missions to Chinese education and the impossibility, irrespective of aspirations, of bringing about major shifts in Chinese culture.

Missionary Numbers in China, 1840-1928

Missionary statistics for the coastal province of Fujian, with a total Chinese population of c20 million in 1895, indicate the small number of the missionary population.

25 Burden, Frank to Burden Mary (sister), 19 October 1891.
The 19th century foreign missionary movement laid the foundation of the modern world-wide foreign aid movement characterized by the transfer of capital, human and material, for altruistic reasons from one society to another. In the case of China, foreign missions, with other influences including returnees of the Chinese 19th century diaspora, introduced educational forms and processes essential to a modern industrialized economy. Protestant missionaries introduced, through translation and publication, new concepts in mathematics, science, engineering and other areas of modern science to Chinese higher education.28 To the intellectual skills of the old Chinese civil service examination foreign missionary education added open enquiry in higher education, advanced social and government studies, schools for the blind and the closely related model of industrial schools.29

There was a very small number of classically educated Chinese holding stipendiary office at any one time in 19th century China, i.e., about 5 per cent of the total. The “unemployed” in the sense of not holding a declared office, enjoyed state incomes, had privileged status and led their communities in ensuring social stability, managing legal disputes, ensuring the maintenance of local law and order, conducting official ceremonies, overseeing the collection of taxes and in general, providing leadership in millions of local villages and towns across China. The Rev. Cleveland Keith of the Episcopal Mission in Shanghai described one of many examples of literati conduct of a ceremony in honor of Confucius.

1852, March 26th.—On this day Mr. Points and myself went to witness the sacrifice, which is annually made to Confucius. We arrived at the temple a little before 5 A.M., and found some of the Mandarins in an antechamber smoking their pipes very composedly. It was some time before the missing dignitaries arrived, and the others were so far impatient as to get themselves ready before their comrades arrived, by putting on their state caps and capes. These being civil decorations, are worn in the worship of the state god, Confucius. About half-past five every thing was in readiness, and the

---

27 Chinese Recorder, November 1896, p. 530.
29 Note the caution in denigrating the Chinese examination system in Elman, op cit, p. 8; pp 10-11; pp 12-13.
procession moved into the court of the temple. (This temple is remarkable for having no image.) Here the officers arranged themselves in a row, and kneeling, made three prostrations towards the tablet to Confucius. The officiating priest then called out “choose one,” and they accordingly chose one of their number, who ascended the steps and entered the temple; we followed, and saw on the right side of the altar an ox flayed and placed on a bench, and on the other side a sheep and a hog placed in the same way; these are offerings to Confucius. On the sides of the room were tablets to the four most honoured disciples of Confucius, and before these, on the right side, a kid was laid, and on the left, a pig. The chosen Mandarin made three kneelings and nine prostrations before the great tablet to Confucius at the head of the room, and before each of the side tablets to his disciples. They thus gave them one more kneeling, with its three bows, than they had given on New Year’s day to their GOD. After this, the man knelt before the Emperor’s edict, allowing the service to be performed while an attendant read it aloud, and then while an attendant read it aloud, and then paid the same worship to that. During the ceremony another Mandarin, apparently the youngest of the body, was called up, and went through a part of the same ceremonies.  

Mrs. Caroline Tenney-Keith of the Episcopal mission remarked that the Chinese approach to reading was quite different to that of Europeans.

The Chinese have no exercise at all equivalent to what we term reading. Their classics are sung, so are their lighter works; the colloquial tone in reading any book they never use.  

The complexities surrounding the employment of single women missionaries, most notably the perplexity aroused among the Chinese male elite, heralded change in the status of women in China. The Episcopal Mission was the first to systematically recruit single women missionaries. Five American single women were appointed to the Episcopal Mission in 1845-1850 but by 1890 nearly two-thirds of all Protestant missionaries in China were single women. The British Church Missionary Society declared in 1898, fifty years after the Episcopal initiative, that:

The Committee have recently in many ways demonstrated their view of the immense importance of women’s work in the Mission Field. They hold that no mission is completely worked until the equal evangelism of the sexes is possible.  

It is important, especially in the context of “cultural imperialism,” not to exaggerate missionary education. American Protestant missions were enthusiastic proponents of higher education but there were just 13 American colleges in China although their influence was pervasive in shaping Chinese higher education.  

Triumphalist comments by missions on their educational achievements in China formed part of mission board marketing to the folks at home.

It was reported in 1877 that there were 30 boys and 38 girls’ boarding schools, enrolling c600 boys and c800 girls (c1400 pupils in all in a population of 400 million) with 177 day-schools for

---

30 Protestant Episcopal Church, Board of Missions, *Spirit of Missions*, Vol 17 No 8, August 1852, pp 261-262. (Hereafter cited as *Spirit of Missions*).
32 Note from Instructions to Missionaries Committee, 5 July 1898. CMS East Asia Archives Microfilm 1915, National Library of Australia, Reel 235. This reflected the contribution of Mrs. Louisa Smyly Stewart of Dublin who, through her husband, the Rev. Robert Stewart, was instrumental in the creation of a Women’s Committee as an advisory body to the Fujian Sub-Conference in 1894. In October 1898 a Circular on Women’s Work was sent by the Women’s Department of CMS to all CMS women missionaries.
boys and 82 for girls. This limited program was far from “cultural imperialism.” The number of schools increased after a major expansion of Protestant missions in the three decades following the 1890s but the number of Christian elementary schools and missionaries overall was never great enough to endorse the concept of “cultural imperialism.”

In 1905 about 630 central stations with mission residences, chapel, school, and perhaps a medical dispensary, were located in treaty ports or cities and under the guidance of a Western minister. Some 4,500 substations, usually manned by Chinese, were the actual arena for much of the evangelistic work.

The first girls’ school in Shanghai was opened by Mrs. Elijah Gillett-Bridgman who was initially a single woman teacher with the Episcopal Mission who, within weeks of her arrival in China, married the Rev. Elijah Bridgman of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Mrs. Bridgman described her school as an experiment testing the attitude of poor Chinese towards a school exclusively for girls.

To prepare the way for the long-desired work, Mrs. B. accompanied by her two little Canton pupils, commenced visiting the neighboring families, going from house to house, making known to them the project designed for the benefit of their children, and inviting all who pleased to send their daughters. Sometimes, on entering a house the children would be frightened, and run away and hide themselves; but in most families a kind reception was given. … In this way some fifty or more families were visited, and the object of the school made known.

Mrs. Bridgman’s School for Girls, Wongka Modur, Old Shanghai.

Bridgman, Eliza J. Gillett, Daughters of China; Or, Sketches of Domestic Life in the The Celestial Empire, (New York, Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), p. 180

The staffing of missions was always inadequate and missions adopted a radical educational policy of training Chinese women as “biblewomen” or catechists. The idea was devised by the American Methodist Episcopal Mission and adopted by other Protestant missions, including the British Anglican missions in Fujian Province.

Best hope for reaching the vast numbers filling the numerous towns and villages throughout our province, and accordingly some eight years ago we commenced a small Training Home in the city of Foo-chow ... Our first object in the Home is to teach the Christian women themselves the truth ‘more perfectly,’ and then to train them to teach others, and to express their thoughts clearly. Practical training they also get by visiting in the heathen villages round about.37

The curriculum provided for Chinese students in Protestant missionary schools further questions the accusation of any form of widespread “cultural imperialism.” This paper draws on missionary writings including those in the archives of two Anglican tradition missions—the Anglo-Irish Church Missionary Society in Fujian Province and the American Protestant Episcopal Church Mission in Shanghai.38

In all Protestant schools half the school week was given to Christian religious instruction, usually in local dialects, and the other half to Chinese learning. Missionaries produced many publications, often in Romanized local dialects that were incomprehensible to any Chinese with a classical examination, i.e., virtually the entire literate population—hardly a way of influencing the Chinese nation.39 The Rev. Edward Syle expressed the view of many Protestant missionaries on the use of local dialects when he declared:

Experience has proved to us that we must preach in the way our hearers talk, and that we must pray as we preach; and that, as we preach and pray, so must we translate and teach. Thus, the conclusion of the whole matter is, that for us, who feel it to be our calling to preach the Gospel to the poor, the use of the local dialect in all departments is a matter of primary importance.40

Mrs. Caroline Tenney-Keith also endorsed the use of Romanized Chinese and linked it to the advantage that it gave in access to English.

Such were the advantages expected from the use of the Romanized Colloquial; and if the experience of three months partial use of it be of any value, I may add, that my pupils have seemed to be more interested in the use of English by translation from the "Romanized" Primer, than I have ever previously known them in learning our words from our reading books. It seemed far more desirable to

38 Welch, Ian, (2011), The Flower Mountain murders: a "Missionary Case" data-base centred on items relating to the Anglican (Church Missionary Society and Church of England Zenana Missionary Society) mission at Gutian (Kutien), Fujian Province, China. Working paper online at http://hdl.handle.net/1885/7273/
Welch, Ian, (2013), The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, in China and Japan, 1835-1870, With references to Anglican and Protestant Missions, Working paper online at http://hdl.handle.net/1885/11074/
39 Publications included: The Two Friends, written by one of the first Chinese Christians, Leang A Fa and in very wide circulation, with more than 2 million copies circulated. Pilgrim’s Progress was also published in Chinese.
40 Spirit of Missions, Vol 18 No 6, June 1853, pp 201-206
them to learn how they should say in English any given Chinese sentence, than to take any given sentence of English and find out how it should be expressed accurately in Chinese.41

The Anglican Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong, the Rt. Rev. George Smith, a pioneer English missionary in China, took the opposite view, advocating classical Chinese script and use of the official Chinese “Mandarin” language. During a visit to Shanghai, he told his clergy, as part of a two-hour address, of:

The great advantage of learning Mandarin, and writing books in the literary or book style of the country, in contrast to the use of the dialect, and particularly the publication of books and tracts in it, which, in his opinion, was likely to bring contempt upon the doctrines of the Gospel in the eyes of the learned.42

While Romanization and the use of the local dialect was admirable in principle as a means of promoting literacy among poor people and access to Christian literature43, the long-term effect of Romanized local dialects was to isolate Christian converts by inhibiting access to a national spoken language, a divisive situation that persisted until universal education using Mandarin Chinese became the official language of the whole country after 1949. This is another reason for caution in accepting a major missionary involvement in ‘cultural imperialism.”

One of the earliest accounts of curriculum in the Episcopal Mission in Shanghai was provided by Mr. (later Rev.) John T. Points who was appointed, without any teaching experience, as superintendent (head teacher) of the mission schools. Points was accompanied by his mother who acted as his housekeeper. In December 1852 he reported, without referring to Chinese language studies:

At the Chinese New-Year, when I began to take my share of the work of daily instruction, the boys were 50 in number … I next shall speak of the progress of the boys in their studies, so far as I have had the opportunity of marking that progress. I commence with my own class, which, as it now exists, may be considered as composed of four sections. The first consisting of four boys, and the second of three boys … have both, however, gone through a small work on Natural Philosophy, one on Geography, and one on English Grammar, and are now well advanced in one on Astronomy: besides which, they have gone through the principal chapters of Arithmetic, four or five books of Geometry, and made very good progress in Algebra.44

Points did not last very long and returned to America where he became a parish minister. Part of his difficulty in China was that his appointment infuriated Miss Lydia Mary Fay who was an outstanding intellectual leader and infinitely more experienced and competent. Her problem was the prejudice of Bishop Boone and his clerical colleagues for a male head teacher. Add to that was her

---

42 North China Herald, 3 December 1853, p. 70 reported that the Bishop of Victoria remained in Shanghai for a period of six months. The Church Journal, 16 February 1854 for a full report of the Bishop’s address to his clergy in Shanghai. The Rev. Robert Nelson of the Episcopal mission gave a critique of Bishop Smith’s views in The Church Journal, 17 April 1854.
44 Spirit of Missions, Vol 18 No 5, May 1853, pp 157-158.
irritation at the status of Mrs. Points, as a married woman with a male connection, over her in the ranks of Protestant missionaries.

Lydia Mary Fay, widely respected for her expertise in Chinese, gave a broader view of the curriculum in the second half of 1855, including her work in Chinese studies.

August 29th—The Bishop opened the school by morning prayers, and conducted the semi-annual examination of the pupils. The first and second divisions of the first department in English, which has been for several years under the efficient care of Mrs. Keith, were examined in the following studies: the first division, in geography, astronomy, grammar, and exercises in composition, with readings from Henry and his Bearer in Shanghai, Romanized Colloquial, and translating it into English; the second division, in reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, and writing. … The first and second divisions of the second department in English were examined in reading, spelling, writing, composition, geography and Gallaudet’s Natural Theology, with reading St. Matthew’s Gospel in the Chinese character, and translating into English—in all of which they showed as much progress, and as good understanding of, as one could reasonably expect from boys of their age, in studying in a language so different from their own as is the English from the Chinese.

Sept. 6.—After the usual morning duties were over and the pupils at their English lessons, went to my Chinese studies, commenced the "Shoo-King," or "Historical Classic," a book which Dr. Medhurst (who has translated it into English) says is far from being familiar and intelligible to the generality of Chinese teachers. Yet, as it is included in the course of studies pursued in our school, I am anxious to read it before the larger boys commence studying it, that I may better judge of their progress, and compare the explanations of their teachers with the translation of Dr. M., and also of M. de Guignes, who has made a translation in French, both of which the Bishop gave me from his library the other day, as he has decided the "Shoo-King" is the next book in order, which the pupils study in Chinese. The book commences with the Canon of "Yaou," which I finished to-day.

In February 1856 Miss Caroline Jones gave this account of the curriculum in the new Episcopal Girls’ School:

The first book put into their hands was an elementary primer, called the Yeur Yak, or book of Juvenile Instructions, prepared by the Bishop. It contained the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the “Duty towards God”, and “Duty towards my Neighbor,” from the Church Catechism. … Having carried them successfully through the Yeur Yak, the Gospel of St. Matthew was put into their hands as a reading book, and a Catechism on the Creed, to commit to memory. … I have never met with a more admirable form of instruction than these Catechisms. … They have quite a fame out here. When at Hong Kong, I was enquiring about their school books, and they spoke in very high terms of Bishop Boone's Catechisms as about the best books that had been put out in Chinese, for school use.

Miss Jeannette Conover mentioned that the girls were also taught to read classical Chinese and English books in Chinese translations.

Their studies are confined to the Chinese, so that my teaching them, involves a great change in the method of spending my time. There are three classes reading St. Matthew’s Gospel, in the literary style; two classes studying Geography, and several other classes reading native books. Mr. Tong has translated the first part of "Peep of Day;" and many of the girls are now reading it, and, I trust, with much profit. In this instance, we see one of the advantages to be derived from the study of English;

47 Spirit of Missions, Vol 21 No 6, June 1856, pp 326-331. Published in Romanized Shanghai dialect. The girls were not expected to follow the Chinese classical texts studied by the Boys’ School.
The Rev. Edward Syle provided the most detailed overview of the boys curriculum in his journal for the 28th July 1856.

Monday, 28th.—The examination held at the boys' school to-day, proved very interesting and satisfactory—to myself, especially so; for, after a three years' absence, I was quite anxious to know what progress had been made, and what new methods adopted. In both respects I was much gratified, for it was evident the children had been trained to think; this, to my mind, is the great desideratum in Chinese education, at the present stage. Formerly, following their own time-immemorial method, the Chinese had been allowed to learn their own classics, just by rote—word after word, page after page, book after book—no attention at all being given to the meaning of what was thus recited, until four or five years had been spent in this mere memorizing process. Now it is otherwise. Altogether a new style of study has been introduced, and with the happiest effect. The scholars are now taught to treat a Chinese classical book, just as our school-boys deal with a Latin or Greek author; and thus they are obliged to exercise their thoughts as well as their memories. I will not stop to show how much harder a task this is to the Chinese school-boy than to the European or American; neither will I allow myself to refer more explicitly to the successful assiduity of the teacher (one of the ladies in charge of the school), by whose skill and efforts this admirable result has chiefly been reached. The course of the examination was,

1. Translations of Matthew x. from the Van le (book style) into English.
2. Translation of Genesis ii. from the local dialect (Mr. Keith's version) into English.
3. Translation of Mang-ts’r (Mencius), one of the "Four Books," into English.
4. Translation of Acts from the Van le into the local dialect. Here again a dialect version made chiefly by Mr. Keith, was useful.
5. Reading of Compositions written in the dialect. Very interesting, as evidencing an attempt to think.
6. Translation of the Lun Yu [sayings of Confucius] into the dialect. At this the Chinese teacher assisted.

I think I can answer for others as well as myself, when I say that we left the examination-room with the feeling that we could have spent another hour there without weariness.

Tuesday, 29th.—Examination of the boys' school continued. To-day the exercises were in the English department.

1. Bible Class, in which the English was read with very commendable distinctness; a difficult result to reach—the whole air of Chinese pronunciation being so different from that of our language.
2. Reading and answering questions. The class of an average standing of four months.
3. Geography. Recitation good generally, but especially on the maps.
4. Another reading class.
5. Reading class in "Henry and his Bearer," a version of which has been made in the alphabetical colloquial, by Mrs. Keith.
6. Spelling and reading; quite good.
8. Spelling and defining.
11. Grammar; a very severe ordeal to the Chinese mind. From my own experience, I knew well how to sympathize with the hard, heavy, dragging work which this department imposes on

---

48 Conover, Miss Jeannette R., 6 March 1856, Spirit of Missions, Vol 21 No 19, October 1856, pp 518-520.
Vermont Chronicle, 17 March 1857. Peep of the Day is online at:
https://archive.org/details/peepofthedayorserie00mort


50 Sherwood, Mary M. B., (Mrs. Henry Sherwood), Little Henry and His Bearer Boosy, first published in c England 1814. Chinese version published c1853. The full English language text can be read online at:
http://www.wholesomewords.org/children/classics/henry.html
the teacher; and to-day's examination showed abundantly that pains and labor had not been spared.

Thursday, 31st. — Another examination — that of the day-school under Mrs. Keith's immediate charge. Twenty-four bright-looking scholars, with an energetic female teacher at their head. Classes in the Scriptures, in Geography, in the Catechisms, and in "Henry and his Bearer," — all gone into, and gone through, with so much alacrity and precision, that I wondered at the advances which have been made since the day when I made my first venture in the way of a school, at the grave-mound outside the south gate. 51

Almost every village in 19th century China had the equivalent of an elementary or primary school—almost always for boys but the poorer the local community the less likely it was to be able to maintain a traditional village school. This provided an opening for foreign mission schools for boys and girls although the latter were few and far between as poor Chinese parents showed little enthusiasm to educate their daughters. Rawski cites an old adage that parents who paid for the education of a girl were “weeding the field of some other man” acknowledging that Chinese convention transferred a daughter totally to her future husband and his family. 52 Like traditional village schools the mission schools were ungraded small groups of around twenty or so boys.

The teacher gathers his own pupils, and derives his support from tuition fees paid by the scholars. … The loft of a story and a half house, a room in a common dwelling, an apartment in the village or a neighborhood temple, is obtained by the teacher. 53

Chinese village schools taught by memorisation (rote learning) and the initial key text was the Sanzi Jing: the “Three Character Classic.” 54

In the primary school, the master has about twenty scholars, seated on bamboo stools, at wooden tables, furnished with the Sangche-king, the Three-Character-Classic, a Chinese "hornbook," containing about a "thousand words, and about half that number of separate characters." The first great object is to learn the characters, by repeating them, line by line, after the teacher, as he pronounces them to the class. Both teacher and scholar use a sing-song tone and a high key. Every one of the twenty scholars studies and recites at the top of his voice. A Chinese school-room is a bawling Babel, and at all hours of the day parents have audible evidence that the children are studying their lessons. 55

After mastering the Sanzi Jing, students moved on to the Qianzi Wen: “Thousand Character Classic” learning, by rote, a further 1000 characters. 56 In a letter from Shanghai describes the earliest days of the Episcopal Boys’ School.

Miss Morse and Miss Jones have already commenced the school for boys, under the Bishop's supervision, and have seventeen or eighteen very promising boys under their care; indeed, they might have a much larger number, if they had accommodations for them. These boys are taught by the

55 Rawski, op cit, Ch. 1.
ladies, altogether, in English, and they already know a good many words and phrases. In the afternoon they read Chinese, with a Chinese teacher; and it is really surprising to see the little fellows turn their backs to the teacher and recite column after column of these crabbed characters. … They seem to have most excellent natural abilities, and, as they are to remain ten years under our care, we may well hope, that, with the help of God's grace, they will, when they leave us, be great blessings to their countrymen.57

The traditional Chinese approach of learning text through memorization was a constant barrier for the missionaries who made considerable efforts to change the learning process. Miss Caroline Jones wrote that:

The mode of teaching in Chinese schools, as doubtless you are aware, is to exercise the memory at the expense of every other faculty, and often-times a child who would be able to repeat to you a whole book full of words, would stare stupidly at you if you endeavored to induce him to draw one rational idea from such a mass. To remedy this, we proposed to make reading and committing to memory entirely distinct processes, as in foreign schools. I found at first considerable difficulty in carrying out this plan, but persevered, and after a little while they gradually and easily fell into my way. When the children found themselves reading with some facility; they thought it so much easier than to "ba," as the call committing to memory, that they were disposed, if I would have suffered it, not to "ba" anything.58

While most Chinese children received some schooling there are passing indications, such as that below, that suggest that educational outcomes, even at the elementary level, were low with the majority of males not completing basic village schooling. A 19th century missionary report from the Colony of Victoria, Australia, gave the following information about the schooling of 19th century Chinese immigrants from Guangdong Province.59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age at baptism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul Wan Yuk Chau</td>
<td>Eight years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>33 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Tam Hsi Man</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>54 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Lee Man Ching</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>30 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Ham Yeng Tang</td>
<td>Seven years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hun Bak Tsing</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>25 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thos Leong Yek Foong</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>47 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Ye Ling Pong</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>30 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lum Khen Yang</td>
<td>Eleven yrs</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Ham Yan Toi</td>
<td>Five years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>39 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwaan Tship Hing</td>
<td>Five years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>43 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Kwaan Choi Yau</td>
<td>Five years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>43 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Chung Ah Shaw</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>36 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Quon Hoe Gee</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>31 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Chung Kat</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>30 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah Lee Yim Sung</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>36 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign missionaries modelled their curriculum on long-standing indigenous patterns while incorporating material and methods from their own background. Day-schools were taught by Chinese teachers while in boarding schools foreign clergy and lay teachers added knowledge of

58 Ibid.
Christianity and other Western concepts for children including mathematical, geographical and other content absent from Chinese elementary curriculum.60

The Rev. Channing Williams (later Bishop Williams) recorded his first impression of the Episcopal boys’ school a month after his arrival in Shanghai, via Sydney, Australia.

July 3d.—Visited the boys' school this morning. Heard them recite in English, spelling, reading, geography and grammar. The exercise which interested me most, was the translation of the Scriptures. They would render into the dialect of the province, the Gospel of St. Matthew, written in the "book style." And then they would translate into English. It was very pleasant to hear so many of them reading the Scriptures in an intelligible manner. May not some of these boys, if they become Christians, be very useful in assisting in translating the Bible, and other Christian books, into their own language?61

Foreigners were banned from religious activities in China itself before 1840 and foreign Protestant missionary work began among the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia (Malaya, Singapore and Java) with restricted efforts in trading posts at Macao and Guangzhou (Canton). The first Episcopalian missionaries to the Chinese in Java were the Revs. Francis Hanson and Henry Lockwood who arrived in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1836. In 1837 they established a small school that had difficulty in attracting and retaining pupils.62 Both men were defeated by the cultural enormity of the task, especially learning Chinese, and returned to the United States.63 Lockwood’s enthusiasm was conquered by the death of his young wife, the daughter of the English LMS missionary, Rev. Walter Medhurst.

An important step in enrolling a boy in a village school was the making of a contract between the teacher and the parents.64

Now so that our sons and nephews (will) expound books, we cordially invite ___________(hao, surname) in __________year to take the teacher’s seat on a lucky day, to guide the students, taking care that they seek the good, leading them throughout to achievement and to be grateful for beneficence, to respect virtue without limit. Respectfully, with our names and the salary all stated below.9

64 Rawski, op cit, Ch. 1.
The first activity of any new missionary to China was to learn the local spoken dialect (Hokkien) and the Chinese written language. The arrival of the Rev. William Jones Boone in Java in 1837 (later the first Anglican/Episcopal bishop in China, 1845) was marked by his frenetic commitment of language study which, in later life, was viewed as having severely weakened his health. Two of Bishop Boone’s early Episcopalian appointments to Shanghai returned within eighteen months of their arrival complaining, privately, that they could not accommodate Boone’s insistence on attaining Chinese language skills.

In 1846, the wife of one of the newly arrived Episcopal missionaries in Shanghai wrote:

Our time is wholly taken up in the study of the language, both the colloquial and written, and it seems quite sufficient to keep us employed for a very long time to come. Of course, you have seen in books all and more than I could tell you about it. I will only say, that it is quite as difficult as I ever saw it described to be; and, though, if my health is spared, I trust in two or three years I shall know enough to render me useful, anything like a thorough acquaintance is far beyond my expectations. I am anxious to be able to read the New Testament in Chinese to these poor ignorant women, and explain it to them in the “Too-Pah,” or spoken language. When I can do this, I shall indeed feel as if I were living to some purpose.65

A decade later the Rev. Channing Williams of the Episcopal mission recorded his daily routine, centred on language learning and providing a clear image of the demands made by Bishop Boone.

Rise at half-past five; engage in devotion till seven, when the prayer-bell rings; go to my study at eight. Half an hour afterwards, my teacher comes, and I study Chinese till twelve. The next hour and a half, while my teacher goes to his dinner, is employed in reading or writing. When he returns, study Chinese till half-past two. Again, after dinner, learn Chinese till five; read or write till six, when I have exercise. The evening is spent in reading, writing and conversation. Such is the manner in which my days are passed; and such it will be, with very little variation, till I learn something of the language.66

In Java, William Boone had incorporated the traditional Chinese school contract into the missionary school in a determined effort to reduce absenteeism. Boone devised an arrangement in which the missionaries agreed to house, clothe and educate Chinese boys for a period of not less than five years and in return the parents agreed not to withdraw their boys from the school for that period.67 The Chinese parents saw an advantage in gaining a Western education and this counters the criticism that Western education was “cultural imperialism” as parents always had a choice about the mission school option. He was always sensitive to a common fear of Chinese parents that after placing their children in mission schools, the children would be kidnapped and taken away to a foreign country so the idea of real advantage weighed heavily in their minds.68 He insisted on a month’s trial of new students so that parents could adjust to the school’s demands and the mission could assess the child’s capacity for learning.

When the Episcopal Mission opened in Shanghai in 1845, Boone (now Bishop Boone) instituted a ten-year agreement for Chinese boys enrolled in the mission school. Boone’s experience in

67 When the Episcopal Mission opened in Shanghai in 1845, Boone (now Bishop Boone) instituted a ten year agreement for Chinese boys enrolled in the mission school.
negotiating schooling contracts during his time in Java resulted in a tough line with Shanghai parents.

Attached to our dwelling, there is a warehouse, where the Bishop has had a school-room, and an eating and two sleeping rooms fitted up. This place can accommodate about eighteen boys, and the Chinese New Year was the time appointed for receiving and examining scholars. Our (Chinese) teachers said—if we wanted day scholars, they thought we could obtain a number; but doubted whether the people would be willing to give up their children altogether. The Bishop told them, that all the boys who entered the school, must do so, to remain ten years if they lived so long; and that no parents need apply unless they were willing to sign a bond, giving them up for that time. When the time arrived for receiving the boys, we found there were as many applicants as we had accommodations for. And the Bishop told the parents and friends that he would not have the bond signed for a month, as the boys must be tried before we agreed to take them as permanent pupils. Misses Jones and Morse entered on their duties, and soon became very much interested in their little scholars, and with one or two exceptions wished to retain all of them. However, when the month was expired, and the parents were called to fulfill their engagement, there was a great commotion produced. One and all refused to come to terms, and we feared the school would be broken up. The Bishop just told the people they might do as they pleased—he expected to benefit them, and not they him—they might take away the boys, if they liked, but he would receive them on no other terms,—and this is just the way to treat the Chinese. It was really amusing to see the struggle that went on in the minds of these anxious parents—here were advantages offered them, which they could not bear to refuse, and then there was the lurking suspicion of what our real motives were, in wishing them to sign that paper, which gave us power over their children.  

There is clear evidence of the “advantage” that parents saw in mission schools. Most of the pupils came from poor families who could not afford the cost involved in entering the Chinese examination system but there was a specific reason for contracting with the foreign missions. A youth who had been in the school for 6½ years wrote:

The object which led me to come to this school, was to learn English, so that I might make money by dealing with the English, and I had no hope of becoming a scholar.

Mrs. Eliza Bridgman took the view that there was no particular need to teach English in a missionary school.

The labor of teaching English to a Chinese is very great, and exhausting to the strength and energies. There are terms in their own language abundant for imparting a knowledge of the simple truths of the gospel, and this is what they need and must have, or perish in their heathenism. The Chinese who have acquired the English language, when thrown upon their own resources, are strongly tempted to give their labors and their influence to the service of the government or to engage in mercantile life. Large salaries are offered for interpreters; they have families to support, perhaps friends to assist.

Boone’s schools policy reflected the vision of the Episcopal Board of Missions that the primary goal of Episcopal mission schools was to train ministers for the Chinese church. Within a year of its formal opening the Episcopal Boys’ School had 32 students and had space and teachers permitted, could have expanded further with Bishop Boone frequently asking the Foreign Committee in New York to provide funds for a married male lay missionary superintendent, two

---

69 Spirit of Missions, Vol 12 No 1, January 1847, pp 19-23.
70 Spirit of Missions, Vol 12 No 10, October 1847, pp 360-362.
71 Bridgman, Eliza J. Gillett, Daughters of China; Or, Sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire, (New York, Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), p. 131
72 The failure of Episcopal education in China to produce clergy or Christian converts is discussed by Xi Yuhua, “St John’s University, Shanghai as an Evangelising Agency,” Studies in World Christianity, Vol 12 No 1, 2006.
single lady teachers and fifty students. In addition to the Boarding Schools for boys and girls, the Episcopal mission shared with most Protestant missions the opening of day schools without the agreements used in the Boarding Schools.

The British Church Missionary Society in Fujian Province operated more than 100 village day-schools, Thirty were financed by the CMS Committee in London but the greater number were organized by the Rev. Robert Stewart and his wife, Louisa, with financial support provided by their friends in Ireland and England. By 1893 the Stewarts had 96 day-schools in Fujian Province mostly in the Kucheng and Ping Nang districts. The Anglican schools in Fujian Province were taught by Chinese scholars in Chinese—“a schoolmaster … is always acceptable.” The CMS preferred, as far as possible, to have Christians as teachers. This was rarely possible with the Episcopal day schools in Shanghai.

Stewart was emphatic that the chief purpose of the schools was evangelism with the schools opening the way for the acceptance of Christianity by pupils, parents and the wider community. Stewart stated that:

The good point about these country schools is that they are distinctly ‘Evangelistic ‘ in character. I have examined them once this year, and find that 6 or 7 out of every 10 (pupils) come from heathen homes, utterly heathen, the adult members of the house never going near church or chapel. The children, however, come, and every day read our Christian books. I examined them in nothing else, and I am sure that what they learn in that way, and learn thoroughly, will bring forth fruit one day. But it is bringing forth fruit already here and there. In more than one place, where there is now a native church, a few years ago there was only one of these schools, and the work began from that, so that friends at home who are making it possible to carry on these little schools are as really “Evangelizing China” as any of us out here.

Schools were opened when the villagers provided the names of potential pupils with a promise that the village would provide the balance of the Chinese teacher’s salary, with Stewart providing £4 a year for each school. In Shanghai, Bishop Boone calculated the annual cost of a day school at about £20.

From the outset of its mission in China, beginning in Shanghai in 1845, the Episcopal Church pursued what proved an unobtainable vision of an autonomous indigenous church in which converted Christian-educated Chinese would be the primary evangelists. The Episcopal Church Foreign Committee instructed Boone that:

So small the number of Missionaries or teachers than we can send out from this country; and so heavy the expense at which they are to be maintained, that there is an evident and imperative necessity for taking immediate steps for rearing in the shortest space of time a band of Christian teachers for

---

75 Ibid, p. 128.
76 Spirit of Missions, Vol 18 No 11, November 1853, pp 504-507.
schools; a body of able translators; and above all, an efficient native ministry. The training of children will, therefore, form a very important part of your labors.\textsuperscript{77}

The Episcopal Mission in Shanghai, during the twenty years of Boone’s Episcopate, produced just one stipendiary priest, and two stipendiary deacons, i.e., just three stipendiary Chinese ministers. Only one of these was a product of the mission school for boys.

Most missions, including the British Church Missionary Society, the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, and the very small Female Education Society, together with the American Episcopal Church Mission and Methodist Episcopal Mission, justified their efforts in elementary education by arguing that the schools provided opportunities for personal evangelism. It was an uncertain and long-term process, by and large unsuccessful, in which the missionary aspiration for individual conversions through schooling conflicted with Chinese plans for family advancement.\textsuperscript{78}

For most of the 19th century missionary methods in China were “bottom-up” in focus, i.e., seeking to convert enough individuals to transform the indigenous culture into an undefined Chinese Christian style—an undefined adaptation of church life in Britain and America. The outright failure of this approach moved some American missions in China to pursue a “top-down” approach, i.e., providing appropriate skills to a Western-educated indigenous leadership group who would transform Chinese institutions and culture.\textsuperscript{79} Americans developed, initially at home and later applied abroad, a vision of the Christian Gospel as a culturally and socially reconstructive force for a whole society, irrespective of personal conversion—the “social gospel.”\textsuperscript{80} The debate over the exact content and form of Protestant Christianity remains active in modern China with the last Anglican bishop in China, Bishop K. K. Ting, for many years Principal of the Nanjing Seminary, playing a leading role.\textsuperscript{81}

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter K. K. Kwong, the first Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Hong Kong, had these remarks on Ting:

He (Bishop Ting) understands God in the context of Chinese culture without forgetting the universal and international dimensions of Christian faith. He has ... worked through all the


\textsuperscript{78} Stewart, Rev. Robert, 23 August 1893, \textit{Report of the Fuh-kien Day Schools, 1891-93}, included with letter to Church Missionary Society, London, from Dublin, 31 May 1894. CMS Archives GC10. The pamphlet outlines the curriculum and operations of a network of over 100 elementary schools in the Gutian District of Fujian Province. It was funded entirely by donations from supporters of the Stewarts in Ireland and England. The CMS supported a small group of elementary schools in other parts of Fujian province but not on the scale resourced personally by Robert and Louisa Stewart.


complications of the situation he has been presented with, and has come out with a clear vision, a good sense of direction, and an acceptable and agreeable course for the Church.  

For many American missionaries in China education became an end in itself. By the 1920s 8000 of the 20,000 English-speaking foreigners in China were Protestant missionaries. About 2000 were American teaching secular subjects in a missionary college. The notion of a civilizing and socially transforming mission to reconstruct 19th and early 20th century Chinese society was explicit in all Protestant missions including the American Episcopalian mission with St John’s University in Shanghai (founded 1879 and now incorporated in Fudan University) and Boone University in Wuchang (later part of Huachung University). The Rev. F. L. Hawks Pott, who came to China in 1886 and was President of St John’s University, Shanghai for fifty-two years, is an example of an American Episcopalian missionary who saw the primary role of a Christian college as reconstructive. Euro-American Christians have yet to resolve a long-held belief that Christianity is the dynamic sustaining Western civilization and that foreign missions are inseparable from the Western culture.

Studies of Chinese 19th century education generally focus on the national system of literary examinations that provided a cadre of educated people (literati or scholar-gentry) to administer government instrumentalities. Examinations were conducted at three levels—district, province and national. Some men failed at the lowest or district level and it was this cohort together with some successful at district level, numbering hundreds of thousands of men at any one time, who provided the village teachers, business clerks and minor administrative officials.

82 Ng, Peter Tze-Ming (Wu Ziming), Chinese Christinity, An Interplay between Global and Local Perspectives, (Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2012), p. 239. The best account of Bishop Ting’s life and work is Wickeri, Philip L., Reconstructing Christianity in China: K. H. Ting and the Chinese Church, (Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 2007). Ting’s influence was strongest in the officially sanctioned Three-Self Movement (China Christian Council). His ideas have far less influence among conservative evangelicals in China, many of whom worship in unregistered independent churches.

83 Xi Yuhua, op cit, p. 23.


86 Xi Yuhua, op cit, p. 25.


88 There are many detailed accounts of the examination system. One account is Parker, Edward P., “Chinese Literary Education,” China Review, Vol 9 No 1, 1880, outlining the local steps taken by an aspiring candidate to enter the lowest level of the traditional examination system. Traditional Chinese education had a form of matriculation at the district administrative center, followed by a three tier system of examinations sometimes compared to the bachelor, master and doctoral degrees of “Western’ universities. Parker provided a highly detailed account of the higher examination system in “The Educational Curriculum of the Chinese,” China Review, Vol 9 No 1, 1880

An important residual by-product of the old Chinese examination system and the status it granted to almost all who participated in it at any level is the pervading Chinese respect for learning and scholars.

Study in China is considered a vocation, the maxim being common among the people that "Study is the highest pursuit a man can follow." Once a scholar always a scholar; to engage in trade, to put his hand to manual laborer even to be "handy about the house" is not to be tolerated in a son of literature. The goal for every student is government office. The Government offers no employment to women, who cannot be office-holders, and therefore it is useless, if not harmful, to provide them with an education.90

Although Chinese classical learning eventually gave way to the educational conventions in the world beyond, the transformation of China since the 1990s illustrates the value that the Chinese themselves have placed on a technologically grounded education system that remains firmly grounded in popular respect for scholarship and learning. This is a choice made by the Chinese free from the pressures for change reflecting the experience of the 19th century.

---