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British Empire, Chinese Nationalism, and Protestant Mission Schools: Navigating Loyalties in the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College (1925-1930)

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Abstract. Focusing on the dynamics of appointing a "suitable" Chinese principal, this article examines the multiple interests and loyalties that were implicated and manifested in a British mission school of prestige situated in the treaty port of Tianjin during a series of anti-imperialist and anti-Christian campaigns in the 1920s. The case study of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College (TACC) illustrates the intricate and ambiguous nature of the interplay between the British settlers, Christian missions, the Chinese government, and the local community, set against the backdrop of heightened nationalism in Republican China. The article argues that the issue of loyalties in a mission school setting – as exemplified by the TACC – can be far more complex and should not be simplistically reduced to a binary opposition between loyalty to the British and loyalty to the Chinese, even at a time of intensifying Sino-British tensions. Local social networks and pragmatic interests in politics, religion, international relations, trade, and educational administration were inextricably intertwined, exerting a profound impact on the dynamics of Sino-British relations in Tianjin.

Keywords. Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, Protestant mission schools, nationalism, loyalties, China.

Introduction

> At last on Monday the 8th of June, we had to recognise that our time had come. The Students refused to attend classes, and sent in a Deputation that demanded from us a Statement on the lines of the Yenching Manifesto. It was impossible for us to agree to anything of the kind. … It was not so much that there was difference of opinion between us and the students, but that suddenly they behaved as if we were their enemies, … They had counted on having the College as a base for their propaganda work during the Summer, and being prevented from doing so, they determined to ruin the T.A.C.C. False news was published, processions of our students went

> through the City shouting that they would never return to us, steps were taken to found a new opposition College, in Peking[1] …
> The month of May is an anxious one in educational circles for it contains several "Humiliation Days" when real or supposed wrongs, inflicted by foreign nations upon China, are to be remembered. On the first of these days a large number of "Anti-foreign" posters was placarded on the walls of the College, many of them from upper windows, and there was reluctance on the part of a number of students to attend the regular morning assembly. They yielded to persuasion however, Mr. Hwang was not present early that morning but came along at noon and called the students together in the Hall; by a very tactful presentation of the matter he encouraged well disposed students to take down the posters and many of them were removed during the midday interval. By Mr. Hwang's instruction the remainder were removed by the College servants during the afternoon session. In such matters Mr. Hwang's help has been invaluable, for they can lead to quite unpleasant situations if not wisely handled, and these are matters in which it is awkward for any "foreigner" to take part[2].

The above accounts of two British missionaries evince the challenging circumstances faced by a British college in 1920s China. In particular, they illustrate the tension between the college authorities and Chinese students, a tension shaped in part by heightened nationalism. In June 1925, following the May Thirtieth Incident[3], students of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College (TACC) initiated a series of strikes, appealing to the college authorities to issue a manifesto in support of the Chinese. Deeply influenced by the nationwide patriotic and anti-foreign, particularly anti-British, sentiments, they confronted the college authorities, primarily the principal, Samuel Lavington Hart, and missionary teachers, such as C.H.B. Longman. According to the students, Longman's attitude towards the incident did not meet their expectations. Nearly 300 students terminated their affiliation with the college and joined a newly established rival institution in Beijing. The event was widely reported in a number of local newspapers in Tianjin (CHEN 1925: 14, 15; MIN KUO JIH PAO 1925: 3-4). It resulted in a notable decline in the stu-

[1] School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library, Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, Report for the Year 1925, S. Lavington Hart, 1-3.

[2] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 2.

[3] This refers to a confrontation between Chinese demonstrators and British police in Shanghai's international settlement on 30 May 1925. It resulted in the death of thirteen Chinese under fire from British policemen and accelerated the ongoing anti-Christian campaigns across China to its climax.

dent population at the TACC, marking "the most anxious of all the years" in the institution's history[4].

Five years later, similar tension arose once again in May 1930, which had consistently been regarded as an "anxious" month within Chinese educational circles, particularly in relation to mission schools. This was attributed mainly to the "National Humiliation Day" on 9 May, which marked the Beiyang Government's acceptance of part of Japan's "Twenty-One Demands". Nevertheless, as the second quotation illustrates, the students' hostility was soon alleviated on the same day by Huang Rongliang (Y.L. Huang), the honorary principal and the first Chinese head of the college, following a meeting he convened with the student body.

While direct comparisons are not entirely valid without taking into account the specific socio-political contexts and the nature and extent of the two conflicts, it is nevertheless evident that Huang played a significant role in the second negotiation as a Chinese principal. As missionaries themselves noted, his contribution was "invaluable". Since 1925, the appointment of a Chinese leadership has been a prerequisite for the registration of all mission schools with the Ministry of Education in the Republic of China[5]. Revolving around the event of the appointment of a Chinese principal to a British mission school in a treaty port, Tianjin, during a series of anti-imperialist and anti-Christian campaigns in the 1920s, this article examines the multiple interests and loyalties involved and manifested in the selection process. The case of the TACC illustrates the complex and ambiguous interplay between the British settlers, Christian missions, the Chinese government, and the local community, set against the backdrop of heightened nationalism. Local social networks and pragmatic interests in politics, religion, international relations, trade, and educational administration were inextricably intertwined, exerting a profound impact on the dynamics of Sino-British relations in Tianjin.

1. Tianjin, treaty port, and the British "informal empire"

Tianjin is situated in northeast China, approximately 120 kilometres southeast of Beijing. Politically, during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Tianjin was under the authority of the Viceroy of Zhili (Chihli province), a name which translates as "directly ruled" and denotes regions that were under the

[4] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, Report for the Year 1925, S. Lavington Hart, 1-3; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, 1925, 3-4.

[5] SOAS, CBMS 348, National Christian Council Annual Report 1925-26, 196-211.

direct control of the imperial court. Given its proximity to Beijing, Tianjin served as a vital gateway for international access to the political centre of China. Geographically, Tianjin's location at the confluence of the Haihe River and the Bohai Sea renders it a crucial port city. The Haihe River connects Tianjin to the Grand Canal, facilitating inland connectivity. Tianjin's advantageous geographical position and extensive waterways system have enhanced the city's role as a major transportation hub, enabling the mobility of people and the circulation of goods and information between China's coastline, its political centre, and the interior. All these factors prompted foreign powers to seek the opening of the port as a means of extending their trade interests in China and establishing direct diplomatic relations with Beijing.

Tianjin's status as a treaty port was established in accordance with the terms of the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin, which was signed between the Qing government and several Western powers, including Britain, France, Russia, and the United States, following the end of the first stage of the Second Opium War. One of the consequences of the opening of Tianjin was that foreign nationals were permitted to establish concessions in the city in accordance with the treaties. These were areas designated to foreign powers, who were granted extraterritorial rights, enabling them to operate under their own laws with their own administrations, police forces, and commercial enterprises (see BICKERS, JACKSON 2016).

The British concession in Tianjin developed steadily since 1860, with the aim of strengthening Britain's position in North China. In 1862, the British Municipal Council (BMC), which was modelled on the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC), was established with the purpose of administering the concession. Nevertheless, scholars have pointed out that the BMC did not possess the same degree of autonomy from British diplomatic and consular oversight as the SMC. The British consul-general exerted greater control over the BMC in order to align the BMC's actions with the British government's foreign policy and to avoid tensions with the Chinese. This resulted in the British community in Tianjin behaving "more moderately towards the Chinese" (MANSOR 2009: 61-62; JONES 1940: 121). On the other hand, as in Shanghai, the foreign appearance of the concession gradually fostered an increasing degree of what has been termed the "diehard attitude" among the British community in Tianjin, defending British interests and privileges and being concerned with protecting the British image and imperial power in China (MANSOR 2009: 66-84). Notably, the British presence in China has been described by scholars of British imperial history as an "informal empire", based on the understanding that Britain had no territorial ambitions in China

and Chinese sovereignty "never came near to being extinguished" (FEUERWERKER 1976: 1; CAIN, HOPKINS 1993: 380; OSTERHAMMEL 1999: 150-151; BICKERS 1999: 8; MANSOR 2009: 25-26). British concessions, including that in Tianjin, functioned as a site of interaction and negotiation between the British "informal empire" and Chinese society.

At the same time, the coexistence of multiple foreign concessions (British, French, American, Japanese, German, Russian, Italian, Belgian, and Austrian-Hungarian) rendered Tianjin a microcosm of the broader colonial competition in China. The jostling for influence by foreign powers served as a constant reminder to the Chinese of the forcible foreign presence in China. As early as the 1920s, the term "semi-colonial" had already appeared in literature to describe China's undermined sovereignty (LONG 1926: 1726). It became a significant source of anti-foreign sentiment throughout the country, particularly during the nationalist movements of the early twentieth century.

The treaties and Britain's gunboat policy had a significant impact on the Chinese perception of the British as an imperialist power. Following a review of the existing scholarship on Sino-British relations, Suffian Mansor comes to the conclusion that Sino-British relations prior to 1920 were "dominated by crises". This situation peaked in the 1920s. The May Thirtieth Incident of 1925, mentioned at the beginning of this article, sparked off a large-scale nationalist movement characterised by a pronounced anti-British sentiment. The unrest spread rapidly across China, resulting in the boycott of British goods in Hong Kong and demonstrations in Hankou (central China), Chongqing (western China), Beijing, and Tianjin (northern China). The British encountered significant challenges in maintaining their position in China, as unrest increasingly focused on British property and interests. The period under discussion was also marked by a shift in British diplomatic strategy, with the Foreign Office in London being compelled to adopt a more liberal policy[6] towards the Chinese Nationalist Party in the context of these challenging circumstances (MANSOR 2009: 3-24).

As Mansor notes, there has been an absence of discussion on Tianjin within the existing literature on treaty ports and Sino-British relations, which is dominated by studies of the Shanghailanders (MANSOR 2009: 30-46). Despite its status as the second most important port city in terms of British trade, Tianjin was overshadowed by the British interests in Shanghai, Hankou and Guangzhou (Canton). In the meantime, the city had never been at the focal point of any of the anti-British campaigns of the early twentieth century.

[6] This entailed the return of several British concessions to the Chinese government, including the one in Tianjin.

According to Rogaski, "Tianjin fostered no simple binary division between 'coloniser' and 'colonised', but instead gave rise to an unstable and contested hierarchy among many nations" (ROGASKI 2004: 194). This makes Tianjin an intriguing case study for advancing our understanding of the spatial variations of the British imperial influence in China's treaty ports. By focusing on Tianjin, a less extreme context in terms of Sino-British relations, we can gain insight into the complex entanglement and interplay between the British Empire, Christian missions, and Chinese society.

2. TACC, "the representative of British education in the North of China"

Originally established as a theological institute, the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College was founded in 1863 by the London Missionary Society (LMS) within the French concession of Tianjin, shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860). This period saw the advent of Christian missions in central and northern China, facilitated by the granting of treaty protection over missionaries' rights of residence and travel, land leasing, church-building, evangelism, as well as the personal safety of both missionaries and Chinese converts. Christian missions and churches, from the outset, became enmeshed with the colonial powers and treaties, at least in the minds of Chinese nationalists.

In the wake of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, an increasing number of college graduates and young professionals set forth on missionary journeys to China. They "contributed to a changing emphasis in mission theory and methods" (LUTZ 1971: 99). In the context of these developments, Christian education and mission schools in China underwent a transformation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the TACC (WANG 2017). By 1902, the former theological institute had developed into a modern college open to both Christians and non-Christians in China, under the leadership of Samuel Lavington Hart (1858-1951).

Prior to embarking for China in 1892 as an LMS missionary, Hart was a fellow and lecturer in physics at St John's College, University of Cambridge. As an advocate of disseminating "the highest ideals of Western Education" to the Chinese (ACDC), Hart envisioned a transformation of the theological institute into a college providing "liberal education, based on Christian principles" in order to "meet the desire for Western Learning" across China at the

turn of the twentieth century[7]. This was to be achieved by integrating a substantial number of Western scientific subjects into the curriculum and equipping the college with a variety of museum objects and scientific instruments (HART 1898: 212; TU 2002: 479-481). Furthermore, it was said that Hart expanded the college with the purpose of improving Sino-British relations in the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising of 1900-1901 (MANSOR 2009: 72).

By the early 1920s, the TACC had reached an enrolment of 555 students, ten times the number registered on the (re)opening day in 1902[8]. This placed it as the second largest college in Tianjin, after Nankai University (which had 1,200 students of all grades), a private institution founded by Chinese educators. There were a number of other institutions in Tianjin offering similar levels of education at that time, including the Technological College (with 300 students), Peiyang University (with 150 students at college grade), the Law School (with 150 students) and the Naval Medical College (with 60 students)[9].

As previously noted, Tianjin, consisting of nine foreign concessions, can be seen as a microcosm of colonial competition in China. This was also the case in terms of education. Hart reported the existence of several additional mission schools in the neighbourhood, including a high school operated by the American Episcopal Methodist Mission and a college established by the English Methodist Mission. Moreover, a number of Catholic schools and colleges were founded within the French concession, along with many other educational establishments across each concession, whether religious or secular. In order to enhance the college's competitiveness in attracting students, in addition to the aforementioned transformation of the college with advanced scientific subjects and equipment, Hart sought to emulate the features of his alma mater, St John's College, in designing the new college building. He wanted to create a prestigious front for the college facing one of Tianjin's busiest roads, thereby making the college visually outstanding in competition with other mission colleges and public schools:

> … our hope being that not a few of the crowds of Chinese who pass along this Taku Road may in time be drawn into this Institute, which they cannot help noticing as they pass, and may learn to look upon it as a centre

[7] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 8, 1915-21, The Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, 1902-1921.

[8] The number of students enrolled during the theological institute period was even lower, with an average of four or five. See SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 1, 1866-86, No. 4161, Arrival No. 7217, Jonathan Lees, Tientsin, 16 February 1877.

[9] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, Newsletter from Dr. & Mrs. E. J. Stuckey, Tientsin, 1923, 12.

> of enlightenment, but, above all, as a real spiritual blessing. It is with this hope that the College has been built (HART 1898: 210).

Meanwhile, competing with other institutions gave symbolic importance to maintaining the college's identity: the TACC was singled out as "representative of British education"[10].

It is important to note that the TACC was self-financed, although its operation was under the auspices of the LMS. Apart from the salaries of five missionary staff of the college, which were financed by the LMS, the remainder of the funds were sourced externally to the LMS mission board. This was largely due to the dispute between Hart and the LMS in 1902-1903 regarding the future of the college. Hart was opposed to the LMS's decision to merge the college into the planned Theological and Arts College in Beijing, which was to be conducted in conjunction with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission (North). He insisted on realising his vision of a "general college for higher education" "without appealing to the society for any financial help"[11]. This may also explain the college's close connection with the Chinese community in Tianjin. Besides foreign (especially British) diplomats, the British consul-general, merchants, bank managers, and other settlers, a good number of prominent Chinese politicians and businessmen served as the college's sponsors or members of its court of governors. Among them were Yuan Shikai, Viceroy of Zhili at that time and later President of the Republic of China (1912-1916); Yan Huiqing (W.W. Yen), Premier and Acting President of the Republic (1922-1926); Liang Ruhao (M.T. Liang), a prominent politician and diplomat who held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1912; Zhou Xuexi, an influential financier and industrialist in North China, who served as Minister of Finance of the Republic (1912-1913); Bian Baimei, manager of the Tianjin branch of the Bank of China; and Liang Yanqing, comprador of Jardines Matheson Holdings Limited in Tianjin. Being acquainted with Hart, Yuan not only was one of the major sponsors of the TACC, donating 6,000 taels to the college's reconstruction work at the turn of the century, but also sent his sons (and later, his grandsons) to study in the college. As recounted by a number of TACC alumni, the college named its assembly hall "Gongbao tang" after Yuan in honour of his sponsorship, with his portrait hanging on the wall at the stage (TU 2002: 478-479; WENG 2002: 474-475).

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[10] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, S. Lavington Hart, Report for the Year 1922, 1-2.

[11] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 14, 1902, No. 1227, Arrival No. 1955, S. Lavington Hart, Tientsin, 24 January 1902; *Report of the London Missionary Society*, 1903, 100-101.

As previously mentioned, the college started to provide liberal education to both Christian and non-Christian students in 1902. In line with a growing societal desire for "Western Learning" and a significant practical demand for graduates in a range of sectors in Tianjin and its hinterland, the TACC attracted an increasing number of students from the more "wealthy and influential" classes of Chinese society[12]. As a major treaty port in China, Tianjin became a crucial hub for international trade and commerce. As trade expanded, Tianjin also experienced significant industrial growth, with the establishment of factories, shipyards, and other commercial enterprises. The city's economic and strategic importance attracted significant investment, with the flourishing of both foreign and Chinese banks, making the city the financial centre of northern China (SHEEHAN 2000: 47-53; MANSOR 2009: 90-94). The students were drawn to the college's Western-style education, delivered in English, as well as its reputation for equipping students with the skills required for success in the job market. Positions newly created alongside the development of the treaty port included those with the British Municipal Council, commercial associations, banks, customs, postal service, railways, and the Anglo-Chinese Kailan Mining Administration (TU 2002: 482). As the college sought to distinguish itself from other foreign-background institutions by emphasising its British educational heritage, it gradually evolved into an elite institution and gained the attention of Chinese society, particularly the elites, such as Yan Fu, an influential military officer, translator, writer, and educator[13]. Moreover, as the college became self-supporting, its high tuition fees constituted a significant portion of its finances. Over time, the college's relationship with the upper class of the Chinese community in Tianjin was strengthened. It can be argued that the TACC serves as an exemplar of the entanglement between empire, religion, and local social networks through education, a key domain for cultivating loyalty and identity.

3. Chinese principal in British Christian education

Nationalism, education, and identity

Twentieth-century Chinese history has witnessed how Christianity has been portrayed as an alien entity and rejected in a nationalistic and anti-imperialist discourse. The Christian religion and education faced a dual challenge from an evolving Chinese state. On the one hand, the dominant state

[12] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, A. P. Cullen, Report for 1927, 4.

[13] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 4, 1898-1903, S. Lavington Hart, Tientsin, 1902.

nationalism of the elite regarded Christianity as one of the major obstacles to China's entry into a "world of sovereign nation-states". Christian education was denounced as an encroachment on "national sovereignty" (LUTZ 1971: 232-233). The interconnection between education and identity formation has been widely acknowledged by contemporary scholars (GROSVENOR 1999; WANG 2012). Even a century ago, there was a growing consensus among a significant proportion of Chinese intellectuals and elites that education constituted a vital element of national sovereignty. It was regarded as a crucial means of instilling a sense of national identity and ideals (WANG 2019: 591). For many Chinese nationalists, Christian education constituted a potential "threat" to the Chinese nation, leading to the loss of national consciousness and identity among students (CHEN 1924: 8-9). It was therefore deemed necessary to exercise control over this institution in order to ensure its alignment with the state's interests (LUTZ 1971: 232). The reclaiming of educational rights from foreign educational establishments thus became a prominent feature of nationalist campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s.

On the other hand, the "modernising nationalism" of the May Fourth era, deriving from a Western discourse of modernity, which identified a "crucial element" as "the opposition of the religious to the secular", accused Christianity of being backward (VAN DER VEER 1994: x). This was a dramatic shift in attitudes and perceptions of Christian education compared to those of the late nineteenth century when mission schools were perceived as emblematic of Western civilisation and were widely believed to have contributed to China's modernisation process through disseminating "Western Learning" and equipping the graduates with "modern" thoughts and knowledge. Opposition to Christian education in Chinese history can be understood in terms of a dual discourse of nationalism and modernisation.

Ability or loyalty? TACC "in need of a real Head"

In response to the nationwide campaign for the restoration of educational rights, the Beijing Board of Education issued the "Regulations Governing the Recognition of Educational Institutions Established by Funds Contributed from Foreigners" on 16 November 1925, mandating registration for all mission schools. To be eligible for registration, mission schools were required to meet several criteria, including 1) appointing a Chinese principal or vice-principal; 2) ensuring that the curriculum conformed to Ministry of Education standards; 3) guaranteeing that students were not compelled to attend religious ceremonies; and 4) excluding any course in religion from the

compulsory subjects[14]. The price of non-registration was high: the school faced the fate of closure.

In consequence, the TACC, along with all other mission schools, was compelled to take steps to prepare for registration (WANG 2019), amidst rumours and concerns of terrors and wars in Tianjin resulting from the Northern Expedition, a military campaign launched by the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) of the Guomindang (the Chinese Nationalist Party) in South China against the Beiyang government in the North and other regional warlords from 1926 to 1928. Meanwhile, the mandate to appoint a Chinese principal or vice-principal was in line with the prevailing appeal and trend of the church indigenisation movement in the early twentieth century. This entailed a transfer of administrative control from the missions to the Chinese churches, as well as the election of Chinese leaders in a range of Christian institutions. However, as was the case with many other mission-related establishments, the TACC authorities were not prepared to accept the Chinese leadership in its entirety. While certain responsibilities had been transferred to the Chinese staff, such as "the ordinary handling of the finances" and those related to registration[15], it was not until 1929, when its principal Samuel Lavington Hart's retirement was approaching, that the selection of principalship was put on the agenda. Hart's retirement obliged the college to secure a qualified successor, a Chinese principal who could simultaneously fulfil the registration requirements:

> One thing is clear: there is to be no Foreign Principal to succeed me. We are all agreed about that. …
> He ought to be British-trained, for an American-trained returned student would probably revolutionise so much that the work would become disorganised and the traditions of the Institution, such as they are, might soon be lost. … there is no one of whom we know who could well be invited to take on this Principalship.
> Another side of this matter must not be lost sight of: if there were such a Principal to be found, his salary would have to be provided by the Society, and it is doubtful whether the salary which has been given to me would prove enough for a man of sufficient note to be chosen for this position. These well known men are looking for things on a distinctly higher scale than has been hitherto thought of[16].

[14] National Christian Council Annual Report 1925-26, 196-211.

[15] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 17-18.

[16] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, S. Lavington Hart, Report for 1928, 4.

In the view of Hart and TACC missionaries, the ideal candidate would be someone who possessed and exhibited a certain degree of British identity. A "British-trained" Christian was preferable in order to ensure the continued preservation of the college's British traditions and spirit. Notwithstanding the ascendance of Chinese nationalism, TACC authorities maintained a solid commitment to the heritage of British education[17]. Moreover, there appeared to be a distinct sense of "loyalty" and appreciation for Hart's leadership among the TACC staff, particularly the missionaries:

> We are pledged to a Chinese Principal; but for various reasons it has hitherto proved impossible to find a suitable Chinese with the necessary qualifications who could take on the ordinary duties, scholastic and administrative, that the position of Principal entails. … it does not need to be said that no one could replace Dr. Hart[18].

The high esteem in which the college community held Hart made the anticipation of the new principal an even more demanding task and the selection process a more intricate undertaking. The appointment of a Chinese head of the college thus became a matter of some strategic importance, with the intention of satisfying the expectations of the Chinese in order to achieve registration:

> There is however another way of finding a solution to this pressing problem. To satisfy Chinese feelings we must have a Chinese at the head. He might be an Honorary Principal or President, whose duties in the College would be slight, but whose presence as the Head on public occasions and advice in the matters brought before him by the College Council might be of great advantage to the whole work. If a well known and highly respected man could be found, willing to accept the responsibilities of such an office, he might do a great deal to maintain the prestige of the Institution, and to steer the College through the difficult days that may be lying ahead. His knowledge of Chinese affairs, and the recognition which we hope would be granted to him by the Chinese Authorities, would be most valuable assets. The more we have been thinking about the future the more we feel that it must be along these lines that lies the best solution to our difficult problem[19].

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[17] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, Dr. and Mrs. Lavington Hart's Farewell, September 1929.

[18] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, Report of A. P. Cullen, Tientsin, N. China, 1928, 5.

[19] S. Lavington Hart, Report for 1928, 4-5.

They, therefore, opted for an alternative to appointing an eminent Chinese as honorary principal, who would be held in high esteem by the wider society and meanwhile "keep in close touch" with and represent the college publicly but "have no share in the ordinary internal work" of the college[20].

The appointment of Huang Rongliang as honorary principal in 1929, who is referenced at the beginning of the article, was regarded by missionaries as a success for a number of reasons. Firstly, Huang's scholarship, "distinguished career", and social status all well qualified him for this position. In addition to his higher education in China (Nanking) and the USA (Baker, Drew Theological Seminary, and Columbia), he had undertaken a series of "outstanding" diplomatic roles in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Austria since 1906. From 1920 to 1927, he served as Chinese Minister (equivalent to Ambassador) to Austria. Furthermore, from 1916 to 1920, Huang held the position of Special Commissioner for Foreign Affairs for the metropolitan province of Zhili, where he played a crucial role in negotiating the handover of several concessions in Tianjin back to the Chinese government[21]. This "magnificent record" was likely to have satisfied the criteria set by TACC missionaries, given that it was a college that involved complex parties, donors and interests. Secondly, and more practically, Huang's extensive social influence and prestige, his ability and instruction, as well as the fact that he himself was a Chinese national in a position of authority at the college, were demonstrated to be "undoubtedly of great value" in facilitating positive outcomes for the college in its negotiation with the Board of Education and eventually in securing registration in April 1930[22]. Thirdly, as evidenced at the outset of the article, his pivotal role in mediating between the college authorities and Chinese students proved irreplaceable when tensions arose.

Huang's appointment seemed to guarantee a satisfactory and promising future for the TACC. As was widely recorded and lauded in TACC missionaries' reports, Huang's "tactful presentation of the matter", "masterly handling of the students", and "invaluable" help were instrumental in calming any unease among the Chinese community. TACC authorities considered "most

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[20] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, Report of A. P. Cullen, Tientsin, N. China, 1928, 5; Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 2.

[21] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 2; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 1.

[22] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 2; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 1. In 1930, the TACC was registered as a middle school. Its collegiate department merged into the newly established Yenching University in Beijing in 1918 (TU 2002: 482). See also SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 11, 1932-36, Memorandum on the Work, Policy and Future of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, 1936, 4. According to Weng Zhixi, a TACC alumnus (1918) and staff member, the transfer was also due to a decrease in funds following WWI (WENG 2002: 472).

fortunate" in having Huang's service[23]. However, in September 1930, five months after the college successfully registered with the Board of Education, Huang resigned. The precise rationale behind Huang's resignation remains uncertain, particularly in view of the absence of any direct account of this matter from Huang himself. Nevertheless, some potential causes can be discerned from the accounts of both missionaries and Chinese staff and alumni.

According to C. H. B. Longman, the college dean at that time, the position of honorary principal "demands more time and attention than Mr. Hwang (Huang) felt able to give, if he is to be well acquainted with the working of the College and have real authority"[24]. Meanwhile, A. P. Cullen's confidential report to the LMS on this matter in 1929 indicated that Huang was "not altogether satisfied" with the fact that he had limited authority over the majority of the college's ordinary routines but frequently found himself involved in complex matters beyond the scope of his position:

> There is reason to believe that he is not altogether satisfied with the arrangement. The fact that for the most part the ordinary routine of the College goes on almost independently of him, whilst it is the knotty points that are brought to him for adjustment, tends to involve him in responsibilities and even anxieties which he had not altogether anticipated. He feels that he is not sufficiently "Principal" to be in a position to cope with these things, and not sufficiently "Honorary" to be able to disregard them or delegate them to those more intimately acquainted with the ordinary methods of procedure. … At present, it can not be denied that Mr. Hwang's lack of any recent educational experience, his somewhat imperious temperament, and the difficulty of getting au fait with the rather oligarchical & necessarily-economical running of a Mission College with no endowment & with inadequate accommodation & equipment, do not tend to make things easier for one who has attended Buckingham Palace levées & is accustomed to bureaucratic methods of procedure[25].

As previously indicated, this position was, to a large extent, created to address the registration matter and satisfy the Chinese. Furthermore, the position was established in a state of emergency, as the government had imposed a deadline for all schools to be registered by June 1932 and had stipulated

[23] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 2; A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 5-6; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 2.

[24] Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 2.

[25] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 5.

that only those schools registered could send their graduates to universities[26]. Both missionaries and Huang regarded this honorary position to be "experimental" and "temporary", which resulted in its "anomalies"[27]. Longman also disclosed that Huang had numerous proposals for the college's advancement. Yet most of these ideas could not be implemented due to the financial crisis in China. Moreover, the position had yet to be defined in a way that would enable Huang to "make his own peculiar contribution effective"[28]. This may have been a significant source of Huang's discontent.

On the other hand, Tu Peiyuan, a former student and member of the faculty since the 1930s, describes Huang's resignation as a response to a dispute with Longman. According to Tu, Longman published the minutes of one of the college's board meetings in *The Times*, with Huang's address to the meeting removed. Huang subsequently engaged in a dispute with Longman after discovering the fact, and the two "fell out with each other" (TU 1997: 273; TU 2002: 484). It should be noted that Tu's narrative represents a single perspective on the matter. It was composed in December 1965, a period that coincided with the imminent advent of the Cultural Revolution and was consequently shaped by a pronounced ideological and anti-foreign/anti-imperialist stance. It is, therefore, subject to a certain degree of critical scrutiny. Nevertheless, the text does provide insight into the unstated message conveyed in Cullen's account of Huang's resignation, namely that "the anomalies of his position as Honorary Principal, combined with *certain other factors*, rendered the decision ultimately inevitable"[29].

Huang was said to be sympathetic to the goals and values of the college and had rendered the TACC considerable assistance through his willingness to take up the position of honorary principal at this critical juncture[30]. Meanwhile, he appeared to possess a strong personality (according to Cullen) and evidently held his own views on college administration and development, independent from those of missionaries, as Longman indicated. That is to say, Huang demanded the fullest extent of authority to fulfil his duties to the college. Given his esteemed position and distinguished career in international politics and diplomacy, the lack of sufficient power to effectively address college affairs and implement his ideas would undoubtedly be a source of

[26] S. Lavington Hart, Report for 1928, 1.

[27] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 5; A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 5; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, 1929, 3.

[28] Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, 1929, 3.

[29] A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 5 (my emphasis).

[30] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 5; A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 5.

frustration, despite the honorary basis for his appointment. Huang's resignation sheds light on the underlying issue that had been prevalent in various mission-related institutions, including the TACC. That is, whether the missions or missionaries were willing to relinquish their control to the Chinese.

Once again, the TACC was obliged to seek a new principal: an "experienced" man, an "active" and "earnest" Christian, and, needless to say, a Chinese[31]. In light of these criteria, and should the virtue of "loyalty" have been a factor in selecting a suitable new principal to work under the missionaries' hands, Ma Shanggong (S.K. Ma), who was then the vice-principal and in 1922 the acting principal during Hart's furlough – one of the "the earliest occasions in the North of a Chinese occupying a position of that responsibility"[32] – would have been an ideal candidate for the position. Ma graduated from Tengchow College, a Christian college founded by the American Presbyterian Missions (North) in Shandong, North China, and was subsequently employed by the TACC in 1914. He had already held the position of vice-principal since the 1920s. His unwavering loyalty to the college was widely acknowledged by missionaries and noted by Chinese staff and alumni alike (TU 2002: 482-484)[33]. While Ma had gained substantial respect from TACC missionaries, he was not taken into consideration as a qualified candidate for the position of principal:

> It is quite clear that, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, what we need, and must have in the College is a resident Principal with full powers and authority – one able to keep in close touch with the students and to have full control over the staff. … the College is desperately in need of a real Head, … Meanwhile we are carrying on with the Vice-Principal, Mr. Ma, who has been with us for 26 years, as acting-Principal. He is a man of sterling Christian character and a pillar of the Chinese Church; but he lacks those qualities of leadership and scholarship which are the sine qua non of a Principal.
>
> … in any case he does not possess the qualities of initiative and decision that would make it possible for him (Ma) to exercise a controlling supervision. Whilst commanding a very great respect and affection from the "foreign" members of the Staff on account of his practical wisdom, his Christian character and his magnificent work for the Chinese Church, his

[31] Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 2.

[32] A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 18.

[33] Ibid., 6, 10; SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, Annual Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1933, 2.

> lack of scholarship and his inability to keep effective discipline preclude him from winning the respect from the students which is of course essential to one in a Principal's position[34].

According to Cullen, the ideal Chinese principal was expected to demonstrate robust leadership – as a "real Head" with the qualities of initiative and decision-making. Such "a strong Chinese Principal" would, "by virtue of his authority", be able to exercise controlling supervision over students and staff[35]. Nevertheless, possessing such "qualities of leadership" did not necessarily guarantee the principal's loyalty to the college and compliance with the demands of TACC missionaries. The college authorities were confronted with a challenging decision in selecting a new principal. On the one hand, the option was presented to them of appointing someone who would demonstrate unwavering loyalty and obedience to comply with missionary directives and college traditions. On the other hand, given the prevailing circumstances at the college, there was a pressing need to identify a capable leader who could effectively address the challenges facing the college. However, this also entailed the possibility of having to accept the potential consequences of a more assertive leadership style, which could ultimately result in greater control over the foreign staff of the college.

It is noteworthy that the college's urgent need for a robust principal was largely due to the students' and staff's allegiance to the leadership and authority of the former principal, S. L. Hart. Both Cullen and Longman reported "a spirit of laziness and lack of interest in their work, combined with a laxity of discipline" among the students. This "growing restlessness" had already manifested as a pervasive trend among students nationwide, driven by a series of nationalist and anti-foreign campaigns. Among the Chinese staff, there was in general "a distinct lack of any adequate sense of responsibility or conscience in their work". Cullen attributed these phenomena "without doubt due in the main to the absence of Dr. Hart"[36]. As a result, the TACC sought a Chinese principal who possessed a similar sense of control to that exercised by Hart in order to maintain effective discipline within the college. Cullen interpreted the aforementioned "internal difficulties" as the consequence of the dissolution of "the link of a common loyalty to Dr. Hart" following his retirement[37].

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[34] A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 6, 10.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1929, 5; A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 6.

[37] A. P. Cullen, Annual Report 1930, 18.

In the context of the TACC, Hart was evidently instrumental in maintaining the cohesion of all parties involved. His assertive leadership, characterised by authority and personal charisma, proved an effective means of maintaining the allegiance of the majority of the Chinese staff members and students at the college amidst the prevailing socio-political unrest, despite the college's British identity. On the Chinese side, the distinction between loyalty to Hart and loyalty to the college may not have been as clear-cut as it could have been when Hart was still the head of the college. Hart acknowledged their "abiding" and "magnificent" loyalty and willingness to stand by the college and missionary staff during the nationalist movements of the 1920s, for instance, the clash between students and the college mentioned at the beginning of this article[38]. Nevertheless, the college may have been left with a sense of void and uncertainty following Hart's retirement, particularly in light of the challenges it faced in the socio-political and financial domains. Many Chinese teachers were obliged to seek additional income sources outside of their academic duties to support their families[39]. The absence of Hart's authority, which had previously served to balance different interests within the college, led to an increase in disagreements, disputes, "mutual jealousies and recriminations" among missionaries and Chinese staff, which had previously been kept in check by Hart's influence[40]. With regard to the missionaries at TACC, as previously indicated, their loyalty to Hart had created certain obstacles to the appointment of the new principal. Moreover, this demonstrated a reluctance on the part of the college to relinquish its authority to the Chinese. As Cullen stated:

> The time, however, is yet far distant when complete responsibility can be handed over to the Chinese; our experience – a rather bitter one – in most things is that the foreigner must still continue to be the power behind the throne, or else things would not get done[41].

Missionaries had not yet been ready to accept a real Chinese leadership.

The college failed to find a suitable candidate and thus appointed Ma as acting principal on an interim basis[42]. From 1932 to 1937, the TACC appoin-

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[38] SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 9, 1922-27, Report for the Year 1925, S. Lavington Hart, 1; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, 1925, 5-6; Report for the Year 1927, S. Lavington Hart, 9.

[39] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1930, 11; Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 3-4.

[40] Report of A. P. Cullen for 1930, 18.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Report of C. H. B. Longman, Tientsin, for 1930, 2.

ted three honorary principals, most of whom only served for a short period of time[43]. It was not until the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War that the Chinese principal was able to take full charge of college affairs (TU 2002: 486).

Conclusion

Situated in Tianjin, where the tension between British settlers and Chinese society was less acute, the case of the TACC illustrates the entanglement and interplay between the British Empire, Christian missions, and Chinese society through the medium of education, a field that was instrumental in shaping the formation of identities and loyalties. The TACC was established following the arrival of the LMS missionaries in North China with the opening of Tianjin as a treaty port. Alongside various other British entities, institutions and assets, the missions and the college constituted an important component of Britain's "informal empire". TACC missionaries continued to regard the college as a symbol of British education, even during the anti-foreign and anti-Christian heyday. The college's foreign (British) and religious nature made it, along with all the other mission schools in the country, a target for nationalists. It was thus compelled to navigate the nuances of its identity, negotiating its Britishness and survival with the Chinese government and society. This was exemplified by the appointment of a Chinese principal.

On the other hand, the Britishness of the college was an attraction for many, particularly upper-class students. The college's advanced educational programmes, conducted in English and reinforced by subjects in science and business, met the growing desire for "Western Learning" in Chinese society. In addition, many of the newly established industries in the city, particularly those with a British connection, were in great demand for graduates from the college. Throughout its development, the college relied heavily on its local social network, existing not only as a British institution but also as a recognised elite school for the Chinese community in Tianjin. The college's strong connection with prominent local figures, such as politicians, diplomats, bankers, and merchants, coupled with the tangible advantages it offered for graduates' future careers, had a profound impact on its fortunes. During the anti-foreign and anti-Christian movements of the 1920s and 1930s, the TACC not only survived the nationalist campaigns but also evaded the fate of many institutions with Christian backgrounds, even within the same city, as evi-

[43] They were Fu Shanglin (D.S.L. Fu), a British-trained sociologist, Ma Shanggong, and Huang Zuolin, a British-trained film and theatre director, TACC alumnus.

denced by the case of Nankai University (THE SHANGHAI TIMES 1925: 8; THE SIN WAN PAO 1927: 12). Interestingly, the British merchants in Tianjin also employed a pragmatic approach towards their Chinese business counterparts, developing a mutually beneficial cooperative relationship with the Chinese to advance British interests. The BMC in Tianjin, dominated by these merchants in the 1920s and 1930s, exhibited a more moderate attitude towards Chinese politics than did the Shanghailanders (MANSOR 2009: 39, 105). Pragmatic interests were not necessarily erased from the nationalist-dominated socio-political landscape. Instead, various loyalties and trans-loyalties emerged and evolved in this context, contesting and intertwining with each other.

By examining the selection process of a Chinese principal at the TACC, this article argues that the issue of loyalties in a mission school setting can be far more complex than a simplistic binary opposition between loyalty to the British and loyalty to the Chinese, even in the context of intensifying Sino-British tensions. The question of loyalty to the TACC, whether to its British or Christian identity, to the former principal, or to the college as an institution, was not necessarily straightforward when considered alongside loyalty to China as a nation, to Chinese identity, or to Chinese leadership within the college. The intermingling of disparate interests and loyalties gave rise to a predicament for the college. The shared loyalty of the British and Chinese staff to the former principal of the TACC created obstacles to the appointment of a new one. The position demanded a candidate capable of providing strong leadership to the entire college. Nevertheless, this much sought-after strong leadership did not appear to ensure loyalty to the college, the missionary society, and its Britishness. The dilemma faced by the TACC remained unresolved until the end of the Second World War in the late 1940s and, ultimately, the nationalisation of all mission schools in mainland China in the early 1950s, when missionaries were forced to leave. As a crucial domain in the fostering of identity and loyalty, education became an area of prominence that the Chinese government and British missionaries struggled to control. How Britain's "informal empire" operated on Chinese soil, interacting with Chinese society and negotiating with Chinese nationalism, is to some extent illustrated by the case of the TACC's appointment of a Chinese principal.

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