

Faith, Identity, and Nationalism: The Impact of the May Thirtieth Incident on China's Christian Colleges

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The Christian colleges founded in China by Protestant missionaries in the early twentieth century constituted a major nexus of cultural exchange between East and West, but also raised complex issues of identity and power both for the missionaries and their students. The tragic killing of eleven student protesters in Shanghai by British troops in May of 1925, an event that came to be known as the May Thirtieth Incident, brought many of these tensions to the surface. This paper examines the impact of this event on three of the Christian colleges—Yenching University in Beijing, St. John's University in Shanghai, and Lingnan University in Canton. The reaction of each school was different, reflecting not only the influence of geography and political factors, but the vision of mission education embraced by their respective leaders. In the end, however, none of the institutions were left untouched by the incident, which triggered a shift in lines of identity and power that favoured Chinese interests. The resulting changes at the colleges can be seen as a harbinger of a coming era in which Western imperial domination would meet a similar fate.

Introduction

The establishment of Christian colleges by Protestant missionaries was one of the most significant aspects of the Sino-Western cultural engagement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These schools were first started as a way of training leaders for the churches and winning converts in a society resistant to direct forms of proselytism. By the time they began to reach organizational maturity in the 1920s, there were sixteen major Christian universities in China, with more than one thousand faculty and six thousand students.¹ However, as Chinese resentment of Western imperialist aggression grew dramatically in the 1920s, the position of these Christian colleges became increasingly precarious. Though they contributed in some significant ways to the development of Chinese society in fields as diverse as journalism and agriculture,

¹ Thirteen of these schools were Protestant and three Catholic. See Peter Tze Ming Ng, *Changing Paradigms of Christian Higher Education in China, 1888-1950* (Lewiston: The Edward Mellen Press, 2002), 5.

they were also perceived by many Chinese as a threat to native culture and as tangible symbols of Western hegemony.² This paper will focus on how the Christian colleges were affected by the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925, an infamous massacre in which British troops killed eleven Chinese student protesters in Shanghai. In particular, it will consider how this event shifted the boundaries of identity and power between missionaries and Chinese at three of the Christian colleges—Yenching University in Beijing, St. John's University in Shanghai, and Lingnan University in Guangzhou. Exactly how far this process of renegotiation went at each school depended on a whole range of variables, particularly the willingness of individual missionary leaders to identify with the aspirations of the Chinese they claimed to serve. Yet regardless of the specific outcomes, the fact that renegotiation was necessary in the first place indicated that Chinese nationalism was becoming a force to be reckoned with, and one that was capable of radically altering the relations of power between China and the West.

Missionaries, Students, and Identity

Missionaries in China faced a number of challenges in their effort to forge a sense of identity compatible with their Chinese environment. Among these were the unequal treaties which the Western powers had forced China to sign following military defeats in the nineteenth century. These treaties brought a number of benefits to Westerners including the opening of certain ports to Western trade and residence, permission for those with passports to travel in China, and the right of those accused of committing crimes to be tried under Western laws and by Western officials. When the Christian colleges were first founded in the late 1800s, the unequal treaties were resented by the Chinese, but not yet a source of open protest or organized opposition. The instructors at these institutions, the majority of them American, accepted the fact of their privileged status without much unease. Lutz reports that prior to 30 May 1925, there were very few missionary voices speaking out against the unequal treaties.³ Rather, what the missionaries were focused on was education, and there were two main approaches that they adopted. As one educator at the time observed, "According to one theory education is simply an adjunct to evangelization.... According to the other theory the work of Christian missions consists not only in evangelization, but also in giving an example of the true nature of Christian civilization."⁴ In other words, one approach put the emphasis on religious

² Jessie Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 4.

³ Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 232.

⁴ James B. Webster, *Christian Education and the National Consciousness of China* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1923), 43.

instruction and the other on academic training. It was the former approach that predominated up until the 1920s, and thus in many of the mission schools, religious courses were a required part of the curriculum. But as Peter Ng notes in his book *Changing Paradigms of Christian Education in China*, religion did not play as central a role in Chinese society as in the West, and this affected the attitude of many Chinese to the religious requirements. Whereas Christianity had long been a respected and integral part of Western education, in China religion occupied a lower position in society and was not connected with institutions of learning. As a result, most Chinese officials and intellectuals opposed the idea of religious instruction in the schools, and the common people seemed to have little interest in such an approach either.⁵

There were other barriers that could also make it difficult for missionaries and students to relate. A Chinese faculty member at a Christian university in Beijing urged missionaries to "pay more attention to the study and understanding of Chinese ideas and institutions...." which implied that many of them had only minimal familiarity with Chinese culture.⁶ Meanwhile, a Chinese Y. M. C. A. leader reported, "Students say many missionaries are just vendors of religion—outside of professional reasons, the missionary is not interested in individuals."⁷ But it would be inaccurate to suggest that all missionary educators were distant or self-interested. Lutz states that "the personal interest of teachers in individual students [was] among the distinctive characteristics of the Christian institutions,"⁸ while another scholar familiar with the missionary community in China at the time has noted "the persistent effort of missionaries to understand Chinese life and sentiment, to meet the Chinese helpfully and work with them for good ends."⁹ Thus, it seems that many missionaries, while they found it difficult to enter deeply into Chinese culture and thinking, nevertheless made sincere efforts to bridge the divide.

It was not only the missionaries who dealt with issues of identity while living and teaching in China: the Chinese students who attended the mission institutions did so as well. For one thing, in most of the Christian colleges, English was the language of instruction. The reasons for this were several, including the lack of textbooks in Chinese and the language limitations of missionary teachers, not to mention that many students saw English as a path to

⁵ Peter Ng, *Changing Paradigms*, 23 and 24.

⁶ Francis C. M. Wei, "Synthesis of Cultures of East and West," in *China Today Through Chinese Eyes* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1926), 84.

⁷ T. Z. Koo, "The Spiritual Life of Students in Christian Colleges," in *China Today Through Chinese Eyes* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1926), 109.

⁸ Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 73.

⁹ Miner Searle Bates, "The Theology of American Missionaries," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 139.

career advancement. Such a policy had its dangers, though. T. C. Chou, a noted Christian thinker of the time, warned emphatically, "Unless [the students] are steeped in Chinese ideas through and through and are able to appreciate Chinese ideals and to understand Chinese difficulties, they are not in a position to lead the Chinese or even to hold their respect, but, instead, they will be reckoned in that group which has been contemptuously labeled as being 'foreignised.'"¹⁰

This reputation for being denationalized had another source as well. During the May Fourth Movement of 1919, when Chinese intellectuals led protests against the Western powers for giving Germany's colonial holdings in China to the Japanese at the Versailles Peace Conference, many students from the Christian colleges participated with the blessing of school authorities. However, as the movement grew and disruption of academic work continued, "Christian college administrators lost their enthusiasm and exerted pressure to keep the students in the classrooms."¹¹ This underscored the special status of mission institutions in China, and led some Chinese to believe that those who attended them did not strongly identify with the nation. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to imagine that students in the Christian colleges were necessarily less nationalistic. One student at St. John's University in Shanghai, writing an article on "anti-foreignism" in the school's journal just prior to the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925, clearly took a positive view of nationalism as promoting China's progress. He wrote, "Despite the indifference on the part of the Chinese merchants and farmers, anti-foreign articles written by students—especially by students of non-missionary schools, have appeared too frequently in newspapers to need my further comment at present. How great and magnificent would China become were this overwhelming spirit a purely nationalistic and patriotic one!"¹² And in concluding, he offered the following sentiment: "Until China takes her rightful position in the family of nations to which her area, resources, population, history, and civilization entitle her, we must have what is now called anti-foreignism."¹³ Thus, students faced difficult choices in constructing their identities, between the benefits bestowed by an imperialistic West and a China to which they felt they belonged ethnically but not necessarily culturally.

China's Christian Colleges before the May Thirtieth Incident

To show how these dynamics of Christian identity and nationalism played out in the tangible matrix of the Christian colleges, the latter half of the

¹⁰ Wei, "Synthesis of Cultures of East and West," 79.

¹¹ Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 212.

¹² O. Z. Ng, "Anti-foreignism in China: Its Nature, Growth, and Probable Results," *The St. John's Echo* 36, n:4 (1925), 119.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

paper will investigate three of these schools both before and after the May Thirtieth Incident. The first of these, Yenching University in Beijing, was the leading Christian college in China at the time. Formed in 1918 from the merger of Peking University and the North China Union schools, it sat on two hundred beautifully landscaped acres in the northwest part of the city with buildings that were modern in construction but maintained the graceful Chinese style of architecture. Yenching sought deliberately to integrate Chinese and Western culture, which helped to make it an accepted part of the larger society. It was an approach articulated by its influential and long-serving first president, John Leighton Stuart. Stuart wrote in his autobiography, "Among the theories which I took with me to Peking, the most clearly defined was that the new University should establish itself in Chinese life independent of treaties with western countries or any other extraneous factors, with only such protection as the Chinese people themselves possessed and wanted to share with us."¹⁴ It was also his conviction that the Christian colleges should "redirect their concern from mere preaching of Christianity to the direct search for Christian answers to the most pressing problems of modern China."¹⁵ Besides making the school's academic programs very competitive, Stuart made religious instruction voluntary, but integrated religion into the school curriculum by encouraging a more scholarly approach to the study of religion. Perhaps most significantly, though, he built strong and enduring relationships with the Chinese, whether with the faculty and students, or with those outside the school who supported its work. During this time, Yenching had seventy-four Western teachers, thirty Chinese faculty, and 542 students.¹⁶ Research indicates that sixty percent of the students came from middle class families (almost none were of worker or peasant background), forty percent came from Christian homes, and sixty percent had made a public profession of Christian faith.¹⁷ Living in the idyllic splendor of the Yenching campus surrounded by a society in constant turmoil, they were indeed a privileged group.

St. John's University in Shanghai was the most westernized of the Christian colleges in China. Formed by Americans as an Episcopal school in 1879, it initially provided a Christian education for lower-class church families. However, its aim from early on was to become a major center of learning by offering education in the sciences and liberal arts and using English as the language of instruction. Its most influential president was F. L. Hawks Pott, who took up the post in 1888 and served until after the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925.

¹⁴ John Leighton Stuart, *Fifty Years in China: The Memoirs of John Leighton Stewart, Missionary and Ambassador* (New York: Random House, 1954), 71.

¹⁵ Peter Ng, *Changing Paradigms*, 176.

¹⁶ Earl Herbert Cressy, *Christian Higher Education in China: A Study for the Year 1925-26* (Shanghai: China Christian Educational Association, 1928), 160, 162, and 168.

¹⁷ Peter Ng, *Changing Paradigms*, 182.

Pott's conception of mission education was more cultural in nature. He believed that the teaching of Western knowledge and traditions would broaden students' minds and bring practical benefits to society, thereby advancing the cause of Christianity.¹⁸ The school's aim was to produce graduates who would attain positions of influence in society and could use that influence to build a better China. Thus, St. John's did not put pressure on its graduates to enter Christian work, nor did many of them choose to do so. However, this did not mean that religion was neglected. On the contrary, classes in religion were mandatory, as was attendance at daily chapel and Sunday worship.¹⁹ Through its Western curriculum and environment, St. John's trained students to be at home in a Western social context.²⁰ This approach appealed to the rapidly expanding ranks of Shanghai's bourgeoisie, who saw St. John's as a ticket for their children into the city's prosperous expatriate community. Enrolment in the school peaked in 1925, with a total of 449 students.²¹ Less than twenty-five percent of St. John's students came from Christian homes, and a 1926 survey showed that only forty-three percent were reported to have made public professions of Christian faith. Both of these figures were much lower than the other Christian colleges in China and reflected the cultural rather than religious focus of the school. Students at St. John's lived an elite lifestyle, and their extra-curricular activities were classic Americana—performances of Western music, a football team, a debate society, and a Shakespeare club.²²

Lingnan University, originally called the Christian College in China, was founded in 1888 by a Presbyterian missionary named Dr. A. P. Happer in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou. His aim for the school was "to raise up educated men to be Christian ministers, teachers and physicians, as well as for every other calling in life, by teaching western science, medicine and religion."²³ As with Yenching and St. John's, English was the language used in the classroom. The school lacked a dominant leader for much of its history, and as a result its educational philosophy was not as clearly defined as some of the other schools. Its approach appeared to lie somewhere between the integrationist model of Yenching and the Western paradigm of St. John's. In 1919, Dr. B. C. Henry was appointed president of Lingnan. He was comparatively young, spoke

¹⁸ Wen-Hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 62.

¹⁹ John Otto Mason, *Missionary Educators and the Chinese Nationalist Revolution, 1925-1928* (unpublished thesis: University of Washington, 1970), 71.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹ Yeh, *Alienated Academy*, 65.

²² *Ibid.*, 70-73.

²³ Charles Hodge Corbett, *Lingnan University: a Short History Based Primarily on the Records of the University's American Trustees* (New York: Trustees of Lingnan University, 1963), 11.

fluent Cantonese, and related well to the Chinese. Henry emphasized academics over evangelism, but his vice president, Alexander Baxter, subscribed to the traditional emphasis on religious instruction. The school had a significant number of required religious courses, and Sunday worship was compulsory. One unique aspect of the college was its inter-denominational character, which made it more difficult to raise funds and retain faculty, since there was no particular denomination (with the resources that such organizations could muster) committed to providing support. One of the unexpected benefits of this state of affairs was that from early on in its history the school turned to the Chinese community for financial support, and as a result enjoyed closer ties with the local society than other Christian colleges. This could be seen in Lingnan's reliance on the local warlord General Li Fulin for protection against bandits and other hostile locals.²⁴ In 1926, Lingnan had twenty-three foreign teachers, ten Chinese instructors, and a student body of 226, most of them the children of well-to-do families in Guangzhou. Of this number, sixty-eight percent had made a public profession of faith.²⁵ Athletics played an important part in school life, but the school lacked the upper class atmosphere of Yenching and St. John's, probably because it was not as stable or well-funded.

The Tragic May Thirtieth Incident

The May Thirtieth incident started with a strike in May 1925 by Chinese workers at a Japanese-owned factory in Shanghai. After being locked out, workers broke into the factory on 15 May to destroy equipment, and one of them, Gu Zhenghong, was shot and killed by a Japanese guard. In order to provide a forum for protest, a large memorial service was held in Gu's honor on 24 May, and was attended by several thousand people. A number of student radicals who were leading groups to the memorial service that day were arrested by the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) and scheduled to be tried on 30 May. As a result, students planned a daring protest in the central district of the International Settlement, where demonstrations were officially prohibited. The protest was set for 30 May to show both their support for the arrested students and their opposition to imperialism. When the day arrived, hundreds of students carrying banners and shouting slogans of protest converged from different directions on the police station on Nanjing Road in the heart of the International Settlement.²⁶ As the number of protesters outside the station rapidly increased, a British inspector, with Chinese and Sikh constables under his command, began to fear

²⁴ Mason, *Missionary Educators*, 42.

²⁵ Cressy, *Christian Higher Education*, 166.

²⁶ Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View From Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 105-6.

the situation was getting out of control. He shouted at the crowd to disperse, and then, only seconds later, ordered his men to open fire. A lethal volley of forty-four shots rang out, killing eleven students and wounding twenty others.²⁷ The tragic massacre led to a general strike in Shanghai and protests all over China, which students from the Christian colleges eagerly joined. Nationalism and popular anger at the injustices of imperialism began to reach new heights of intensity.

China's Christian Colleges after the May Thirtieth Incident

At Yenching University, upon receiving news of the massacre, students organized large-scale demonstrations against imperialism and the unequal treaties. President Stuart, who was in the United States at the time, wrote letters on two occasions in support of the students. He recognized that "whatever future there is for the Christian movement in this country will depend upon the extent to which it ceases to conflict with a genuine and well-informed nationalistic spirit."²⁸ With these and other student movements on campus, Stuart worked hard "to get fairly well acquainted with their leaders," and so was able to preserve harmony in the college community.²⁹ The faculty at Yenching also played an important role in diffusing potential conflict with the students and the wider community by publishing a statement expressing identification with the students' goals. Part of the statement put primary responsibility for healing the breach in Sino-Western relations on the shoulders of the Western powers, challenging them to work toward this end by showing a "readiness to revise the treaties which have long been out of date; and by actively working to put Chinese-foreign relations on a basis of mutual good will rather than on the forcible retention of resented privilege."³⁰ In this way, Yenching's standing in the Chinese community, far from being damaged by the May Thirtieth Incident, was actually enhanced by it.

Other significant changes followed in the wake of the tragedy. The following year, the school decided to register with the Ministry of Education. This had long been a demand of Chinese nationalists, who resented the independent status of the Christian colleges as an affront to Chinese sovereignty. Indeed, the registration issue was a popular weapon in attacks leveled at the Christian institutions during the so-called Anti-Christian Movement that flared throughout the 1920s. One stipulation insisted on by the government in order to

²⁷ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 340.

²⁸ Peter Ng, *Changing Paradigms*, 177.

²⁹ Stuart, *Fifty Years in China*, 80.

³⁰ Dwight W. Edwards, *Yenching University* (New York: United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 1959), 147.

register—that schools not require any religious courses or activities—Yenching had already satisfied. Others, such as choosing a predominantly Chinese Board of Managers and appointing a Chinese vice-president, were soon adopted. In this way, the school came under Chinese government authority. Finally, Yenching dramatically strengthened its Chinese programs through a successful partnership with Harvard University, eventually becoming one of China's leading centers for research on Chinese culture.

The impact of the May Thirtieth Incident on St. John's was markedly different, and characterized by conflict. When students requested permission to join in protests following the massacre, President Pott and the foreign faculty insisted that the school maintain strict neutrality, and thus if students joined the demonstrations, they would not be allowed to reside on campus. The Chinese teachers, though, strongly favoured granting the students permission to participate in the protests, and as the majority of the faculty, their position won. In response, however, Pott dismissed classes for a week. The school also made a public declaration which carefully avoided any expression of support for the nationalist sentiments of the protestors, and instead simply deplored the students' deaths and called for an immediate and impartial investigation. Shortly thereafter, the students asked to fly the school's Chinese flag at half-mast on 3 June, which Pott agreed to do. However, when the Episcopal bishop of Shanghai, Robert Graves, heard the news, he was afraid that the Chinese flag flying at half mast would be interpreted as indicating sympathy for the actions of the student protesters who were killed, and he therefore ordered Pott to take down both the American and Chinese flags. Predictably, this deeply offended the Chinese students, and when they tried to raise their own Chinese flag, Pott decided to close the school for the summer. Incensed, 265 students signed a statement declaring that they would never return to St. John's, and seventeen Chinese instructors resigned their positions at the school.

Bishop Graves called a meeting on 16 June to determine St. John's policy regarding student protests and the following five resolutions were adopted: 1) those presently in charge must administer the schools; 2) student interference would not be tolerated; 3) the schools were Christian institutions; 4) religious instruction was compulsory, and no compromise would be allowed; and 5) the school would close if students went on strike. The only concession St. John's was willing to make was to give students the choice of attending Christian worship on Sunday or a non-religious moral lecture. When the school reopened in the fall of 1925, it had only 218 students, barely half the previous year's total; in 1926 it climbed to 313. Not surprisingly, Pott and Graves were unwilling to register the school with the Chinese government, and it continued to be run as it always had been, under Western control and along largely Western lines.³¹

³¹ Mason, *Missionary Educators*, 30-36 and 67-76.

The situation at Lingnan following May Thirtieth was the most complex. One of the factors contributing to this was the politically charged atmosphere in Guangzhou. In the fall of 1923, Sun Yat-sen had moved the headquarters of his Nationalist Party from Shanghai to Guangzhou, remodeled the organization into a centralized political machine with the help of Soviet Comintern advisors, and formed a political alliance with the Chinese Communist Party. By the time of the May Thirtieth Incident, Guangzhou had become a major center of anti-imperialism and revolutionary ferment in China.³² When the bloodshed in Shanghai occurred, President Henry was away, and Vice-President Baxter was temporarily filling in. Unfortunately, Baxter was not popular with the students or faculty because of his strict enforcement of a policy of political neutrality. Immediately following the massacre, a committee of Chinese professors, workmen, and students met and asked permission to raise funds on campus in support of the Shanghai strikers. Initially Baxter and some of the teachers opposed the request, but seeing the strength of Chinese support for it, they relented. The foreign staff also issued a public statement on the massacre in which they reserved judgment on the question of responsibility but openly called for a revision of the unequal treaties. It was at this point, in the middle of June, that President Henry arrived back at the school, just before the situation in Guangzhou turned tragically violent.³³

On 23 June, there were strikes and a large demonstration held in the city to protest against imperialism and the May Thirtieth massacre. Some three hundred teachers, students, and workers from Lingnan joined the parade, marching towards the end of the parade line, with some armed Chinese military units about one hundred yards behind them. As the marchers neared the foreign settlement on Shamian Island, where British and French troops were stationed, gunfire suddenly erupted between the two sides, with each side later claiming the other fired first. The Chinese, fully exposed to the Western guns, had by far the worst of it. All told, fifty-two Chinese were killed in the ensuing carnage, including a teacher and student from Lingnan, in what came to be known as the Shamian Massacre.³⁴ The school was plunged into a crisis. That same evening, Henry signed a statement deploring the "wanton killing of unarmed students," and the next day, the school's American faculty issued a declaration categorically denouncing the killings and supporting the Chinese position that the Western troops fired first.³⁵ The effect of the two statements was to win the favour of the Chinese community, while drawing the ire of many Westerners, including a large

³² Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity in China: Canton, 1900-1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 82.

³³ Kwang-Ching Liu, *American Missionaries in China: Papers from Harvard Seminars* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 194.

³⁴ Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity*, 151-153.

³⁵ Mason, *Missionary Educators*, 52-54.

number of missionaries. Henry later issued a clarification of his statement, noting that he did not explicitly say who fired the first shot, but insisting that the statement was justified given the extreme reaction of the Western troops. In this way, Henry tried to keep the school's position neutral while riding out the storm of nationalist outrage that the massacre engendered. That same summer, Henry oversaw the selection of a predominantly Chinese Board of Trustees. In the fall, Lingnan not only made all religious instruction voluntary, but was the first among the Christian colleges to register with the Ministry of Education. Most significant of all, Henry resigned his position in 1927 to make way for Chung Wing-kwong, the first Chinese president of a Christian college.³⁶

Drawing Boundaries, Shifting Boundaries

The May Thirtieth Incident stirred powerful currents of nationalistic sentiment in the hearts and minds of many Chinese people, especially young intellectuals. Such patriotic fervor profoundly altered the cultural and political landscape of the nation, particularly in the sphere of relations with the West. Situated on the front lines of Sino-Western cultural exchange, the Christian colleges were directly buffeted by these forces. However, for a variety of reasons, the response of each school was different. One important factor was the geographical location of the institution. Yenching was in the least ideological environment of the three schools. Not only was its location in Beijing far from the epicenter of the massacre in Shanghai, but on the political front it only had to contend with limited pressure from a local warlord government, both factors which mitigated against an extreme response. Neither St. John's nor Lingnan were so fortunate. In the heart of Shanghai, the largest of the treaty ports, missionaries at St. John's naturally felt greater pressure not to take a position critical of the West. Quite likely they were not inclined to do so anyway, given the strong Western orientation of the school. And with significant Western military protection close at hand, St. John's was able to successfully resist the onslaught of Chinese nationalism and maintain its Western identity. In Guangzhou, meanwhile, Lingnan faced what was perhaps the most challenging situation of all, particularly in the wake of the Shamian massacre. Not only was the college at the center of the Nationalist Party's sphere of influence, it was dependent on the local Chinese community for finances and protection. Due to this vulnerability, Lingnan proved more willing as an institution to support Chinese nationalist aspirations and to accept greater Chinese control over administration of the school.

³⁶ Kwang-Ching Liu, *American Missionaries in China*, 204-5.

Possibly the most important factor in determining each school's reaction to the crisis was the philosophy of the individual missionary leaders. Stuart at Yenching was the broadest thinker in the group and the most effective in integrating Western learning and religion with Chinese culture and social concerns. He represented a new breed of missionary, one that emphasized the educational task of the school over direct evangelism and sought to be sensitive to the Chinese context. His commitment long before May Thirtieth to voluntary religious instruction and opposing the unequal treaties goes far in explaining why Yenching had no school protests in response to the incident. By contrast, Pott at St. John's could be said to belong to the old guard, and in fact, at the time of the incident had already been president of St. John's for more than thirty-five years. For him, it appeared to be a difficult thing to part with the idea of a Christian college where Western culture was dominant and Western control brooked no opposition, even a loyal Christian one. The inability to change this paradigm as China began to experience nationalist awakening inevitably led to conflict with the students, who were among the first to be affected by the new patriotism. At Lingnan, these two types of missionaries were both in evidence, as the traditional Baxter aroused conflict while the progressive Henry helped effectively to quell it. The ability of Stuart and Henry to identify more closely with Chinese culture can be explained in part by the fact that both had grown up in China as the children of missionary parents, but it also reflected the more contextualized thinking of a younger generation of missionary leaders who saw the need for Christianity in China to break free of its association with Western culture and imperialism and integrate more closely with Chinese society.

The May Thirtieth Incident forced both the missionaries and the Chinese students at the Christian colleges to make difficult decisions about how to draw lines of identity between self and the Other. For the missionaries, the surge in nationalist sentiment generated by the injustices of imperialism made it far more difficult to harmonize their personal attachment to the West with their sense of commitment to China and the interests of the Chinese people – they had to choose which would be primary. Some missionaries, such as Stuart and Henry, showed by their response to the crisis that they were willing to put Chinese concerns first, in this case by affirming legitimate nationalist aspirations; but others, like Pott and Baxter, found it far more difficult to do so. At the time, it seems that both camps were well represented among the missionaries at the Christian colleges. For the Chinese students, there were hard choices to be made as well. Was it possible to study at a Western school or convert to Christianity and still be considered a patriotic Chinese? Many struggled to resolve such questions. In the end, though, the majority chose to stay put; only at St. John's was there a mass exodus. Thus, it appears that the students were attracted by at least some elements of what the Christian schools had to offer, and relinquished these benefits only if the school was completely unwilling to accommodate their interests as Chinese. It also suggests that they believed there was no

irreconcilable conflict between being Chinese and accepting Western learning or even Christian faith. For both missionaries and students, the Christian ideal of human equality and fraternity existed in uneasy tension with powerful notions of nation and race. This ideal made it possible to renegotiate lines of identity and power, but the extent to which the lines were redrawn varied from one institution and individual to another. Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that the May Thirtieth Incident significantly shifted the dynamics of this tension in a direction favourable to the Chinese. This is most evident in the decisions made by both Yenching and Lingnan shortly after the tragedy to register their institutions with the government, which required that they first yield far greater administrative control to the Chinese. Moreover, there was a new effort to promote issues of concern to the Chinese, such as Yenching's development of a strong program in Chinese cultural studies. Even at St. John's, where no major concessions were made to Chinese demands, the fact that so many students and faculty left the school, and that its subsequent attendance never reached 1925 levels, was evidence of a dramatic change in Chinese attitudes. These shifts were seen first in the Christian colleges, but pointed to an approaching day when Western imperial hegemony in China would meet a similar fate.