value, cotton yarn represented 40 percent of the goods sent inland under transit passes, and piece goods another 22 percent—the total dwarfing all other items on the list: sugar (16 percent), kerosene (8 percent), matches (2 percent), and so on.[4]

This increase in textile imports is important because the western Shandong areas from which both the Big Sword Society and the Boxers emerged were important cotton-growing areas with associated handicraft industries. In 1866, the Commissioner of Customs at Yantai had noted that native Shandong textiles were "very good and durable, and are largely used in this province."[5] Yet twenty years later, this same port reported that "the increase in its [cotton yarn's] import is said to be seriously interfering with the local industry of spinning, which affords a means of support to many poor women." And one year after that, in 1887, the same commissioner reported that "I gather that the reeling of Native Cotton Yarn in this province is almost at a standstill."[6]

The impact of foreign imports on Chinese handicraft industries has long been a subject of hot debate. Disputing "the oft-held assertion that the traditional or indigenous sector of the Chinese economy (handicrafts, small mines, junks etc.) suffered a severe decline as a result of foreign economic intrusion," Hou Chi-ming has argued that "the traditional sector existed quite well alongside the modern sector of the Chinese economy."[7] With somewhat more restraint, and considerably greater sophistication, Albert Feuerwerker has argued that while cotton spinning certainly suffered at the hands of machine-spun yarn—both imported and produced in Chinese and foreign mills in the treaty ports—handicraft weaving very much held its own, and in some places even made gains.[8]

Feuerwerker's aggregate figures are certainly very convincing, but they do not allow us to isolate the impact of machine-spun yarn on particular localities. The growth of proto-industrial weaving of machine-spun yarn in Gaoyang, Zhili—soon to become one of the most important weaving centers in North China—did little to compensate for the income lost by peasants in the cotton-growing regions of west Shandong. The detailed testimony of the American missionary Arthur H. Smith, whose post in Pangzhuang, En county, was right in the heart of the northwest Shandong Boxer area, indicates that the impact could be very great indeed. Smith's account, though lengthy, deserves citation in full:

> One reads in the reports to the directors of steamship companies of the improved trade with China in cotton goods, and the bright outlook all along the coast from Canton to Tientsin and Newchwang in this line of commerce, but no one reads of the effect of this trade of expansion upon innumerable millions of Chinese on the great cotton-growing plains of China. These have hitherto been just able to make a scanty living by weaving cloth fifteen inches wide, one bolt of which requires two days of hard work, realizing at the market only enough to enable the family to purchase the barest necessities to life, and to provide more cotton for the unintermittent weaving, which sometimes goes on by relays all day and most of the night. But now, through the "bright outlook" for foreign cotton goods, there is no market for the native product, as there has always been hitherto. The factors for the wholesale dealers no longer make their appearance as they have always done from time immemorial, and there is no profit in the laborious work of weaving, and no productive industry which can take its place. In some villages every family has one or more looms, and much of the work is done in underground cellars where the click of the shuttle is heard month in and month out from the middle of the first moon till the closing days of the twelfth. But now the looms are idle and the weaving-cellars are falling into ruin.
>
> Multitudes who own no loom are able to spin cotton thread, and thus earn a bare support—a most important auxiliary protection against the wolf always near to the Chinese door. But lately the phenomenal activity of the mills in Bombay, in Japan, and even in Shanghai itself, has inundated the cotton districts of China with yarns so much more even, stronger, and withal cheaper than the home-made kind, that the spinning-wheels no longer revolve, and the tiny rill of income for the young, the old, the feeble, and the helpless is permanently dried up. Many of the innumerable sufferers from this steady advance of "civilization" into the interior of China have no more appreciation of the causes of their calamity than have the Japanese peasants who find themselves engulfed by a tidal wave caused by an earthquake or by the sudden or gradual subsidence of the coast. Yet there are many others who know perfectly well that before foreign trade came in to disturb the ancient order of things, there was in ordinary years enough to eat and wear, whereas now there is a scarcity in every direction, with a prospect of worse to come. With an experience like this, in many different lines of activity, the Chinese are not to be blamed for feeling a profound dissatisfaction with the new order of things.[9]

The location of Smith's Pangzhuang mission, and the contemporaneity of his detailed account, make it impossible to ignore this critical testimony. Foreign imports were certainly having a major impact in the Boxer areas of northwest Shandong. But Smith may not have perceived the precise nature of the economic changes which were taking place. When I visited the Boxer villages of Pingyuan (border-

ing En to the east) in 1980, I was particularly anxious to ask older peasants about the impact of machine-spun yarn on the local handicraft industry. Somewhat to my surprise, the uniform response was that none had even seen the "foreign yarn" (*yang-sha*) before about 1920. In other areas I visited along the Shandong–Zhili border, the peasants, to this day, often wear clothes of hand-woven "native cloth" (*tu-bu*). Such distant recollections and contemporary observations should, of course, be used with great care; but it is significant that they are consistent with some of the specific aspects of Smith's analysis. In particular, Smith attributes the decline of handicraft weaving to the fact that "the factors for the wholesale dealers no longer make their appearance." I strongly suspect that what we are witnessing is not so much the importation of machine-spun yarn and cloth into the cotton-growing regions themselves, as the fact that these regions were losing their external markets—most of them to the north and west—which were now served directly by imports through Tianjin. The gazetteer of Nangong, just across the border in Zhili, supports this impression. After describing the widespread cultivation of cotton, the spinning by rich and poor alike, and the extensive exports to Shanxi and Inner Mongolia in particular, the gazetteer continues: "Since foreign cloth became popular, this industry has declined. Foreigners buy our cotton and make yarn and cloth, denying us any profit. Our yarn and cloth now does not leave the county. Only a little bit is sold at periodic markets."[10]

I have already described how the silting of the Grand Canal and the Yellow River's changed course and repeated flooding had left the area along the Shandong–Zhili border extremely depressed in the last years of the nineteenth century. No doubt the same lack of efficient transport which contributed to that depression also helped protect the region from the direct impact of imperialism. It is difficult, therefore, to argue that the Boxer Uprising broke out where it did because the impact of imperialism was particularly intense. Quite the contrary: almost any locale along the coast of China or in the Yangzi Valley was more directly affected by foreign economic penetration than the Boxer areas of west Shandong. But that does not mean that Western and Japanese imperialism had no economic impact on this area. Rather it seems that these regions lost crucial markets to foreign imports of cotton yarn and cloth, yet were just too isolated and too lacking in alternative resources to enjoy any of the stimulative effects that the treaty port economies sometimes generated in their more immediate hinterlands. Around Yantai, for example, some peasants were able to shift from spinning cotton to plaiting straw braid for export;[11] but in the cotton-growing plains, as Smith noted, there was "no productive industry to take [weaving's] place." As a result, these latter regions suffered the blows of foreign economic penetration without enjoying any of its benefits.

THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR

The 1890s not only brought intensified foreign economic penetration, they also saw China's humiliating military defeat at the hands of the once disdained "Eastern dwarves" of Japan. Though most of the fighting took place in Korea and the Northeast (Manchuria), the Shandong peninsula was also affected when Japan captured the port of Weihaiwei and sunk or disabled most of the Chinese fleet there. Troops were rushed northward and to the coast from the interior parts of the province. Graffiti in some inns, and the inevitable rumors of a widening conflict, indicated that some Chinese believed that the Western powers were also involved in attacking China; but there were no reports of any general anti-foreignism directly attributable to the war.[12]

The main impact of the war was indirect, but no less important. As we shall see in the next chapter, when we turn to the Big Sword Society incidents of 1896, the war's primary effect on the interior of Shandong was to strip the area of its garrison forces as more and more men were sent to the front. This left a power vacuum into which both bandits and such self-defense forces as the Big Sword Society quickly moved.[13] When the Qing troops returned in defeat, their battle tales may well have inspired hopes for invulnerability rituals such as those which the Big Sword Society and the Boxers practiced. According to the missionaries in Pangzhuang: "After the terrible fight at Ping Yang [Pyong-yang], the deserting soldiers brought detailed accounts of the terrible destructive forces of the foreign weapons, killing from unknown distances and striking terror into the souls of once brave men."[14]

Above all the war provided dramatic evidence of the Qing government's impotence and incompetence. The Great Powers were immediately emboldened to plan for "The Break-up of China"—to borrow the title of an influential book of this era.[15] In the words of the *North China Herald*—voice of the foreign business community in

Shanghai—the war put an end to "the fiction that China was a great Power whose territory could not be infringed with impunity."[16] Robert Hart worried that the Powers would "welcome a smash-up" which left them "sharing the dead intestate's estate."[17] It was such attitudes that inspired the Scramble for Concessions of 1897–98, for which the Sino-Japanese War had planted the seeds. Japan's fruits of victory included her seizure of Taiwan (the first major violation of China's territorial integrity), her successful claim to an enormous indemnity, and acquisition of the right (soon shared by all the Powers) to build factories in the treaty ports. With these, imperialism entered a new and far more dangerous phase in China, and the sense of crisis which this enhanced threat engendered formed a critical backdrop to the rise of the Boxer movement.

CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN EXPANSIONISM

In contemporary America, where the separation of church and state is viewed as the normal (if often threatened) state of affairs, we are apt to forget that this separation is rather new in the Western world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the history of European expansionism. From the beginning, trade and Christianity formed the inextricably linked engines of Western empire-building. When Henry the Navigator initiated the great Portuguese voyages of discovery, he did so not only in search of gold and spices, but also as Grand Master of the Order of Christ. In return for the good works of the Portuguese crown, the Pope in 1514 granted to the King of Portugal the right of patronage for all of Asia. For a century, that country jealously guarded its control over all missionary activity in the East.[18] The Portuguese overseas expansion was in part an extension of the battles which finally expelled the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula. Added to the desire to circumvent the Arab stranglehold on the spice trade with the Indies, there was the hope of finding the lost Christian flock of Prester John, and thus surrounding the infidels of the Middle East. As Vasco da Gama is said to have remarked when he arrived at Calicut, he was looking for "Christians and spices."[19]

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the emergent French nation began to assert itself in Catholic missionary affairs, as Louis XIV gave support to the movement which was to result in the formation, in 1663, of the precursor to the Société des Missions Etrangères. In the nineteenth century, as the then leading Catholic power, France would

assume the protectorate of all Catholic missionaries in China—often asserting herself in religious affairs when she could not challenge the British supremacy in trade.

When the Protestant powers—especially Great Britain and the United States—arrived in China in force in the nineteenth century, their interests were overwhelmingly commercial. But that did not keep missionaries from intimate involvement in the process of "opening" China to the West. Missionaries served as translators in all the treaty negotiations following the Opium War of 1839–42 and the "Arrow" War of 1856–60, and they invariably used their positions to press for the inclusion of clauses protecting their right to proselytize.[20] Yet when the missionaries proved as unsuccessful as the merchants in turning Chinese concessions into a wider market for their spiritual wares, the frustrations turned them into leading advocates of Western firepower as a means to open China still further. In 1871, the American minister Frederick Low discussed what he called the "popular course" for opening China: force. "This is regarded by most of the foreign residents here as the only sure and speedy agent for 'opening up' China. The merchants look upon the use of force as necessary to open up new resources and avenues of industry, and a large proportion of the missionaries favor it because their task will, by this means, be rendered less difficult, probably, than by the slow and laborious process of moral suasion."[21] In one of his most memorable if least enlightened judgments, the eminent American missionary and sinologue S. Wells Williams would use a briefly held diplomatic post to argue that the Chinese "would grant nothing unless fear stimulated their sense of justice for they are among the most craven of people, cruel and selfish as heathenism can make men, so we must be backed by force, if we wish them to listen."[22]

Whenever war came, the missionaries were quick to see it as an act of Providence—and if such wars appeared to be unjust attempts to open China to an illegal and immoral opium trade, that was only because God's ways are "dark and incomprehensible to our finite minds."[23] The American medical missionary Peter Parker, who would later gain notoriety as a diplomat by arguing for American colonization of Taiwan, apologized for the first Opium War in these terms: "I am constrained to look back upon the present state of things not so much as an opium or an English affair, as the great design of Providence to make the wickedness of man subserve His purposes of mercy toward China in breaking through her wall of exclusion."[24]

Though the late nineteenth century would reveal growing tensions

between missionary and mercantile interests in China, the prevailing view was certainly that trade and Christianity marched together to mark the spread of Western civilization. The missionaries supported the opium wars because they were convinced that as China was opened to trade, so would she be opened to Christ. Much later, following the Yangzi Valley riots of 1891, which were spurred in part by anti-Christian propaganda from Hunan, a leading missionary was to argue that such attacks would stop only when Hunan was "humbled, and two or three of her great marts opened to foreign trade."[25] And occasionally the defenders of commerce, such as the American minister Charles Denby, would repay the compliment by casting missionaries as the servants of trade: "Missionaries," said Denby, "are the pioneers of trade and commerce. . . . The missionary, inspired by holy zeal, goes everywhere, and by degrees foreign commerce and trade follow."[26]

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN SHANDONG

To appreciate the consequences of this alliance of Christian proselytizing and Western imperialism, we must return to the area of our central concern—Shandong and its border regions, the seedbed of the Boxer movement. Though there are reports of a Nestorian bishop in Jinan under the Mongols, and of proselytizing by Odoric de Pardonne when he passed up the Grand Canal in the 1320s, active missionary work in Shandong did not begin until the 1630s, during the era of Jesuit ascendancy. At first Jesuits made periodic visits to the province from their base in Beijing. Then in 1650 the Jesuit astronomer and missionary Adam Schall introduced an Italian Franciscan to an official in Jinan; in the following year, the Italian was able to establish a permanent church in the provincial capital. At one point late in the seventeenth century, the Catholic bishop of Beijing (in whose see Shandong was now included) was compelled to operate from a base in the Grand Canal city of Linqing, and throughout this early period, Catholic conversions—said to number 1,500 in 1659—were concentrated in the northwest Shandong area.[27]

By the end of the century, according to one report, 6,638 Chinese had been baptized in Shandong, but soon the Rites Controversy soured Chinese relations with the Papacy, and in 1724 the Yong-zheng Emperor proscribed the Christian religion—while permitting missionary practitioners of such useful arts as astronomy to remain in

Beijing. Driven underground, the Church was certainly hampered in its efforts to gain new converts, but foreign priests continued to make their way secretly into the interior, and in 1765, the Church still claimed 2,471 Shandong converts.[28] Then in 1784–85, the arrest in Hubei of four Franciscans on their way to Shaanxi, which was then in the throes of a Muslim rebellion, aroused great suspicion and led to a nationwide dragnet for Catholic missionaries in the interior. The last three Italian Franciscans in Shandong were seized, leaving only two Spaniards whose field was mostly confined to the peninsular areas of the province—and the last of these died, without replacement, in 1801.[29]

It was 1844 before the French secured, from the Dao-guang Emperor, an edict of toleration for Christianity. In 1860, they gained treaty rights to travel and (via a clause surreptitiously inserted into the Chinese text of the French treaty by its missionary translator) to own land in the interior. But the Catholics did not wait for these legal niceties to return to Shandong. The province was given its own vicariate in 1839, and soon an Italian bishop had arrived to find, it was claimed, 4,000 extremely poor, widely separated faithful to whom he ministered in secret nighttime meetings. By 1849, their numbers are said to have doubled, though the figure (in another source) of 5,736 in 1850 would appear more reliable.[30] Then came the sustained growth of the late nineteenth century, to 16,850 converts in 1887, and—following the dramatic growth of the 1890s to which we shall turn presently—47,221 converts by the end of the century.[31]

In the areas bordering on Shandong, the most significant Catholic population was in the Jesuit missionary field of southeast Zhili. When this field was transferred to the revived Jesuit order in 1854, there were only about 350 Christians remaining from the earlier era of Catholic proselytizing. By 1870, that figure had grown to 20,000; and by 1896 it had doubled again to 43,736. With a bishop, seminary, and college in Xian county, this was one of the most important centers of French missionary activity on the north China plain.[32]

While the Catholics remained concentrated in the plains areas of western Shandong and Zhili, the Protestants moved slowly out of their east Shandong treaty port base of Yantai and the nearby prefectural capital of Dengzhou. By the mid-1860s, American Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, and Episcopalians, English Baptists, French Protestants, and Scottish United Presbyterians had each established missions in the area.[33] Missionary mortality was high in these early

Figure 4. Baptizing Two Shandong Villagers. From Harry A. Frank, *Wandering in Northern China* (New York, 1923).

years, and conversions few. Of the 98 Protestant missionaries who came during the first twenty years of proselytizing, 15 died, and 43 abandoned the field—usually for reasons of health. Such progress as was made was substantially attributable to famine relief work in 1877: two-thirds of the 2,843 converts from the 1860–80 period came after the famine.[34] It was through such good works that the Protestants slowly spread their influence westward, to the Jingzhou area and to the northwest, including the En county Pangzhuang base of Arthur Smith's ministry.[35] Sometimes, the missionary correspondence leaves a grisly reminder of the Christian hopes that sprang from Chinese misery:

> Parents will sell their children and even kill them for food. The famishing dispute with the dogs over the bodies of the dead for something to sustain life. Every possible article even to the roof of the houses is sold to buy food. The bark of trees is in demand and no one can tell when the end will be. No rain has fallen here and the dust lies thick on the roads portending only continued famine. It seems to me the grandest opportunity in all the history of China to demonstrate the spirit of our religion. We can show that Christianity teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to recognize all men as brethren.[36]

But even with the gains of famine relief work, Protestant progress was slow—especially in the west Shandong area which most concerns

us. It was not until 1886 that the American Congregationalists established their base in Linqing, and 1890 before the Presbyterians established permanent bases in Yizhou and Jining.[37] The Protestants seemed rather more selective than the Catholics in admitting converts. As a result, their congregations grew slowly and suffered periodic purges. After ten years at Linqing, the American Congregationalists with a hospital, two doctors, and four other foreign missionaries could claim only 34 Chinese members of their congregation.[38] In Jinan in 1886, where the American Presbyterians suffered losses to the Catholics (who were more ready to take their converts' cases to court) 113 new members were baptized and 128 excommunicated.[39] The net effect of all this is that the same figures which yielded 47,221 Catholic converts (and 85 missionaries) just after the Boxer Uprising showed only 14,776 converts and 180 missionaries for the Protestants.[40] We should also remember that most of these Protestant converts were out on the Shandong peninsula, far from the areas of Boxer activity. In 1896, for example, the Presbyterians reported only 578 members in their Western Mission (which extended as far east as Jingzhou on the north slope of the mountains), as against 4,095 in their Eastern Mission.[41]

GERMAN CATHOLICS OF THE S.V.D.

Because of their smaller numbers, their relative isolation in the distant peninsular areas of the province, and their less aggressive policy in protecting converts' interests before the local authorities, the Protestants were on the whole a good deal less disruptive than the Catholics in Shandong. And of the Catholics, none were more disruptive than the new order which entered the field in the 1880s—the German missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word (S.V.D.). In 1875, Arnold Janssen had founded the S.V.D. with its home mission at Steyl, in Holland. Ironically, the Kulkurkampf in Germany prevented these staunch promoters of German national interests from basing themselves in their homeland. Undaunted, the S.V.D., whose primary purpose was missionary activity, sought to remove its missionaries from French protection and attach them to imperial Germany. The German minister in China, Max von Brandt, also favored this course, but it was not until 1886 that changes in German domestic politics increased government interest in securing the support of the Catholic Center—at which point the protection of Catholic missionary activity

became politically desirable. Both the German and Italian ministers in Beijing secured the Chinese government's consent to this change in 1888, but it took another two years, and a trip to Rome by the head of the S.V.D. in China, to secure the assent of the Holy See. Even then, the Pope only gave the missionaries the choice of their own protector. While the Germans moved with alacrity to attach themselves to imperial Germany, the Italians decided that they were better off sticking with the French.[42]

The head of the S.V.D. in China from its inception until his death in 1903 was Johann Baptist von Anzer. Even in the S.V.D.'s own literature, he does not emerge as a very attractive figure. He is described as "blunt and impetuous," and even the S.V.D. Superior-General Janssen saw him as a "firebrand."[43] Arriving in China in 1879, Anzer soon made his way to Shandong. By 1882 he had secured the Franciscans' permission to assume responsibility for the bandit-ridden southern portion of the province. Three years later, a separate vicariate apostolic was established comprising the three prefectures of Caozhou, Yanzhou, and Yizhou, and the subprefecture of Jining. In the summer of 1886, upon his return from one of many trips to Europe, Anzer was installed as its first bishop. His militant nationalism set the tone for the entire mission, as in a ceremony arranged to welcome a visiting German consul, shortly after the establishment of the German protectorate:

> [T]he apostolic residence was richly decorated and there were innumerable banners, including a huge German flag, hanging from the church steeple and the buildings. The bells rang their salvo. Over the door of the house richly ornamented lettering read, "A hearty Welcome," and over the veranda, "Vivat, crescat, floreat Germania [May Germany live, flourish and grow]." The "Kaiser-Hymne" and other German songs were sung enthusiastically.[44]

But Anzer and the S.V.D. were not only aggressive nationalists, they were also aggressive proselytizers. Their methods were not such as to endear them to most Chinese. No sooner had he gained his mission field than Anzer set his sights on the city of Yanzhou—a particularly sensitive site because of its proximity to the Confucian and Mencian temples in nearby Qufu and Zou counties, and an area in which the French had apparently once agreed to refrain from active missionary work.[45] As one S.V.D. missionary later wrote,

> From the very first, Bishop von Anzer had concentrated his attention on the cities.... Tsining [Jining] was of special importance in the Bishop's eyes since it was the commercial capital of the province of Shantung, and it might also be regarded as an advance post for capturing the "holy city" of Yen-fu [Yanzhou-fu].[46]

Jining was indeed successfully entered in 1891, and not long thereafter the bishop's residence was moved to that city from the small village of Poli, in Yanggu county, to which it had hitherto been confined. But the deliberately provocative struggle to establish a permanent presence in Yanzhou dragged on for ten years, from 1886 to 1896, with bitter recriminations on all sides. It was partly in order to gain a more aggressive sponsor for his efforts to enter Yanzhou that Anzer traveled to Europe in 1890 and had his mission shifted to German protection. An aggressive sponsor he certainly found. Once the German protectorate was arranged, the German consul in Tianjin embarked on a trip to Shandong. Upon arrival in Jinan, he rode directly into the courtyard of the governor's yamen to force a meeting previously denied, and then went on to Yanzhou with a guard provided by the governor, forcing his entry into the city. This provoked a near riot among the city's inhabitants, during which the consul promised to empty his revolver into the first six Chinese to advance, and to die if necessary. Fortunately, the more cool-headed local prefect succeeded in dispersing the crowd without further incident. Even this degree of German blustering did not succeed in securing a Yanzhou mission. That would not come until five years later, when the Chinese state's capacity to resist had been critically weakened by defeat in the Sino-Japanese War.[47]

The S.V.D.'s aggressive assault on Yanzhou certainly gave the order a distinctly negative reputation in southern Shandong. But the missionaries' opponents in this case were largely the gentry and those most concerned with the beliefs and rituals of the Confucian cult of the "holy city." For the villagers soon to rise up as members of the Big Sword Society, it was the missionaries' attitudes and behavior toward the Chinese people which mattered. Here too the S.V.D.'s own literature is remarkably revealing of the cultural gap which separated its members from the Chinese they had come to convert. Augustine Henninghaus, who succeeded Anzer as Bishop in 1904, arrived in Shandong in 1886. "The crudities of Chinese life," says one S.V.D. pamphlet, "revolted him." He would make "disparaging observations about the Chinese people in general."[48] When other missionaries defended the Chinese, he would counter that such ideas denied "the corruptness of paganism." Later Henninghaus himself would write

that "In the central [mission] station, at Puoli [Poli] and elsewhere, a subject heatedly debated among the missionaries was that concerning the relative goodness and wickedness of the Chinese people, taken by and large." He admitted finding some missionaries' words "often betraying something akin to contempt and hatred" for the Chinese.[49]

Such contempt for the Chinese, and conviction of the corruptness of "pagan" society, led naturally to the belief that both abstract "justice" and Christian duty required foreign missionaries to intervene to defend their converts in all manner of disputes. Thus Father Henle, one of the victims of the Juye incident of 1897, was praised by another S.V.D. missionary in the following terms:

> There is no justice in China, as long as gold and silver are the chief and only arguments, and often enough the poor, innocent Christians were stretched on the rack or even condemned to death. Father Henle, therefore, tried to be on good terms with the officers and the rich and learned men, and often contrived to induce these 'friends' to pronounce a just sentence.... He became known throughout the entire mission for his prudence.[50]

Perhaps some Christians knew him for his prudence. More likely the rest of the population knew him as a phenomenal busybody. In fact the image one gets of men like Henle leaves one wondering how much time they devoted to spreading the Gospel. This same biography of Henle reports that sometimes twenty messengers would come to his office in a single day, seeking settlement of all sorts of disputes.[51]

Henle was by no means unique. In fact, he seems to have acted in accordance with explicit mission policy. According to the S.V.D. history of its work in Shandong: "The mission believed it necessary to assume the protection of the Christians. 'Wherever there are Christians, there are lawsuits,' wrote Father Anzer in his first annual report. They present delicate, dangerous, and thankless problems.... In order not to jeopardize his work, the missionary must on occasion intervene on behalf of his people. One can readily understand that occasionally dishonest persons will try to misuse the kindness of the missionary, and that sometimes the priest becomes the victim of hypocrisy."[52] Still, Anzer made it a point not to worry too much about self-styled Christians abusing the protection of the Church. "Each time the missionaries were called, they answered, and opposition served only as a stimulus to Father Anzer to make him determined to establish a station." Later, a more prudent S.V.D. missionary would note the dangers of such an indiscriminate quest for converts, which

often produced congregations which were "stations of sorrow which by their bad example work much evil."[53]

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS *IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO*

Although Anzer and the S.V.D. missionaries seem to have been unusually aggressive in their intervention in secular disputes, their behavior was not atypical. In fact it fit perfectly the classic criticism of the Catholic Church by both Chinese officials and Protestant observers. Following the "Tianjin Massacre" of 1870, the Zongli Yamen—which functioned as China's foreign ministry—attempted to regulate those missionary activities most likely to incite opposition. The American minister in Beijing, noting that "there is foundation for some of their charges," aptly summarized the lengthy Chinese document in the following terms:

> Roman Catholic missionaries, when residing away from the open ports, claim to occupy a semi-official position, which places them on an equality with the provincial officer: that they would deny the authority of the Chinese officials over native Christians, which practically removes this class from the jurisdiction of their own rulers; that their action in this regard shields the native Christians from the penalties of the law, and thus holds out inducements for the lawless to join the Catholic Church, which is largely taken advantage of.[54]

This was not simply a complaint of the Chinese officials who saw their authority slipping away. In the Shandong University surveys of older peasants from the Boxer areas, no complaint is more common than the unfair advantage Christians gained from their foreign connection—especially in lawsuits before the local magistrate. The Chiping peasants had a colloquial expression for this sort of behavior: *cheng yang-jir* (relying on foreign strength).[55] It is clear that the practice was common not only in the S.V.D. areas, but also among the Italian Franciscans of northwest Shandong and the French Jesuits across the border in Zhili. To cite just one of many reports from Protestant sources, an American missionary in Linqing wrote in 1894 that

> The Roman Catholics have for many years interested themselves not a little to speak a good word for their church members at the yamens, and as a consequence many lawsuits have been decided as they dictated. Hence it has happened that they have an unenviable reputation among

> Chinese generally, and also have gained adherents who wished solely for aid in the courts.[56]

This is not to suggest that all Protestant missionaries were above such intervention in lawsuits, but all the evidence I have seen—including such complaints against the Catholics as that just cited—indicates that the Protestants were rather more sensitive than their Catholic colleagues to the dangers of this sort of behavior.[57]

Far from shunning any exercise of temporal authority, many Catholic missionaries were inclined to display the power of their religion in all sorts of mundane affairs. The structure of the Church was easily adapted to the efficient performance of its political role. If some dispute arose, the offended Christian would take the matter to the head of his parish or local priest, who would try to resolve the issue within the village or town. If that proved impossible, the priest would appeal to the foreign missionary, who had easy access to the county magistrate. If satisfaction still was not forthcoming, the missionary could take the matter to his bishop who would appeal to the prefect or governor. And if that proved unavailing, the bishop could ask his ambassador to bring the matter to the attention of the Zongli Yamen and ultimately to the emperor himself. This pattern shows itself again and again in the archives of the Zongli Yamen published in the *Jiao-wu jiao-an dang*. What strikes one repeatedly in these documents is the fact that the Catholic hierarchy was invariably faster than the Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy, as a result of which the Zongli Yamen was always on the defensive, having to respond to a version of the case first presented through the eyes of the missionary.

As the Catholic Church intervened ever more frequently in China's domestic politics and justice, it came to adopt more and more of the trappings of the Chinese bureaucratic state in the effort to legitimize its own authority.

> Thus the bishops, the spiritual rulers of the whole of a broad province, adopt the rank of a Chinese Governor, and wear a button on their caps indicative of that fact, traveling in a chair with the number of bearers appropriate to that rank, with outriders and attendants on foot, an umbrella of honour borne in front, and a cannon discharged upon their arrival and departure.[58]

Anzer seems to have been particularly taken with ceremonies which would enhance his prestige. One fellow missionary describes how, on approaching a mission station together with Anzer, "the Christians came out with banners, tomtoms, and music to escort the Bishop."[59] The German minister cooperated fully in this effort to raise the bishop's official status in the terms of the Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy, petitioning successfully first for the granting of a button of the third rank, and later of the second rank, to honor Anzer's alleged good works in Shandong.[60]

The result of all this was to constitute the Catholic Church in China as an *imperium in imperio*.[61] The missionaries themselves were protected by the extraterritoriality provisions of the treaties. Their converts' rights to practice Christianity were also written into the treaties, and it was easy for converts to claim and missionaries to believe that the oppression of a Christian was in fact a persecution of Christianity. The Church was accordingly quick to intervene in almost any sort of temporal dispute, bringing all of its power and authority to the defense of Catholic converts. The power of the Church could be quite considerable—for it combined the freedom and flexibility which came from its structural independence of the Chinese bureaucracy with the status and authority it gained by either arrogating or acquiring by petition the symbols of legitimate power hitherto monopolized by gentry and officials. Traditional Chinese politics had no real place for pluralism. Yet here were Christian missionaries introducing a divisive pluralism to the Chinese state, and creating a structure which could stand over and against the Chinese polity, as an alternative authority system and indeed a rival for political power.

This understanding of the *political* role of the Church is essential if we are to understand the patterns of Christian conversion in China. To date, most discussion of this problem has focused on the question "Why were converts so few?" because it is a striking fact that in the century of missionary activity up to 1949, less than one percent of the Chinese population ever adopted the foreign faith. The basic reasons for this widespread Chinese rejection of Christianity are well known, and need no detailed repetition here. Christianity was not only foreign, and thus suspect for xenophobic reasons; it was also clearly heterodox—containing beliefs in miracles and salvation, and rituals of congregational worship which mixed men and women in the same church—which had led earlier emperors to link it with such proscribed sects as the White Lotus. Furthermore, most nineteenth-century missionaries—though Protestants more rigorously than Catholics—presented Christianity as an either/or alternative to Chi-

nese popular culture. As one such missionary put it, he intended "not to engraft Christianity upon heathenism, but to uproot the one and plant the other in its place."[62] Thus conversion not only meant casting out the household's Kitchen God and ending all visits to local temples, it also meant abandoning the customary ancestor worship and participation in local religious festivals, and usually forsaking traditional wedding and funeral practices as well. Needless to say, this meant a break with both the culture of the past and the community of the present: few Chinese were willing to make it. But our point here is that some *did* make it—and probably many more either pretended (for the missionaries' benefit) to have made it, or sincerely tried (but achieved less than total success) to make the radical break. Our task now is to understand what sort of people opted to convert to Christianity.

In addressing this problem, the work of Samuel Popkin on Vietnam is instructive. Just as I have stressed the political role of the Catholic Church in China, so does Popkin stress this function in the admittedly much more powerful and successful French missionary effort in Indochina. The Catholic priest, he argues, was a "quintessential political entrepreneur," with an organization to attract adherents, administer justice, and manipulate power struggles.[63] He also argues that in order to understand the success of these and similar "entrepreneurs," the "metaphor of penetration [which] has emphasized outside initiative and the need for force to overcome collective resistance" is not entirely adequate, for it "neglects the divergence between collective and individual interests and the fact that the initiators were frequently villagers seeking outside allies in local power struggles."[64]

That Popkin's insight, with some amendment, has applicability to our Christians in Shandong is best illustrated by several Catholic congregations in the hilly regions of Yizhou in southern Shandong. The S.V.D. literature records that the process which led to the founding of these congregations began when "a large number of well-to-do farmers ... had foolishly joined one of the proscribed superstitious sects which had flourished in that mountainous district from time immemorial." The sect obviously included a well-developed invulnerability ritual for "these fanatic sectarians believed that by repeating certain charmed formulas, while burning incense and kowtowing before their tutelary idols, they could make themselves impervious to wounds of any kind, would be mysteriously preserved from the sword or spear thrusts, and even against bullets."[65] Then in 1882, a

rather minor White Lotus uprising, which included only a few dozen people and was immediately put down, broke out in Chiping.[66] This provoked a wave of suppression which swept through the entire province, setting off "a reign of stark terror throughout the mountain villages" of the south.

At this point, a "man of letters" recalled the clause in the treaties guaranteeing protection of Christians. The S.V.D. account continues:

> This knowledge suggested to him the idea of becoming a Christian in order to escape persecution as a member of a proscribed sect. When he communicated this idea to others who were also in danger, the good news spread like wildfire and before long thousands of those who had belonged to the sects began requesting reception into the Catholic Church for themselves and their entire families.

Soon a representative was sent to contact the Catholic bishop in Jinan, and when the bishop referred the matter to the newly arrived S.V.D. missionaries, they saw it as "too good an opportunity to miss." Anzer hastened to the scene and before long had a wealth of new converts eager to join his church. To lead the new congregation, "an influential man who had formerly been the leader of one of the forbidden sects was formally appointed by Pro-Vicar Anzer to serve as lay leader of the new Christian community in his locality. This proved to be an excellent and fruitful arrangement."[67]

In this example, as in Popkin's scenario, the initiative clearly came from the villagers, not the missionaries; and it came for fundamentally political reasons: they needed protection. Where Popkin's model does not seem to fit is his suggestion that the political conflict is likely to involve a "divergence between collective and individual interest." Clearly the conflict here was between the state and the sectarian communities, and the new converts acted not as *individuals* but as members of an oppressed *group*. In northwest Shandong, where as I have noted earlier (chapter 1) community structures were considerably weaker, individual conversions, or conversions of only a few individuals or families in a village, were much more common.[68] Such a pattern also appears in the counties surrounding Jining.[69] But in the hills of the south, and in the border regions of the southwest, a more collective conversion pattern of whole villages seems to have prevailed. An S.V.D. source notes that "every family and every individual in the mountain village of Niusinchwang [Niuxinzhuang] accepted the Faith."[70] In Shan county, village conversions seem to

have been common; and in Heze, as later informants put it, "villages with Christians or a church were almost entirely Christian, and in other villages, everybody was a non-Christian."[71]

The question then becomes, what kind of groups or communities were attracted to the Christian faith. In the example from Yizhou, the common denominator obviously was sectarian background. This is an extremely important example. As we have seen, Shandong had a long history of sectarian activity. But those sects have usually been linked to the Boxers themselves—not to their Christian antagonists. Now it appears that a substantial number of sectarians also became Christians—for the Yizhou example is far from unique. Very frequently the motive for such conversion was simply to obtain protection, and Protestants were approached as well as Catholics: "More than once in my experience, members of one of these ascetic communities, the Wu-wei keaou [Wu-wei jiao], have made proposals to be received by us as converts; their motive appearing, upon enquiry, to be simply the wish to obtain foreign protection from mandarin extortion under which they were suffering."[72] Commonly, they would seek to enter the Church "in a body with their leaders."[73] Sometimes their numbers could be very considerable indeed. A French Jesuit in southeastern Zhili wrote in the 1870s that the previous decade had seen five to six thousand White Lotus sectarians convert to Christianity.[74] In addition to its Yizhou converts, the S.V.D. reported substantial sectarian conversions in Shan county, Jiaxiang, Juye, and Wenshang.[75]

There seems little doubt that the most common motive for sectarian conversion to Christianity was the desire to escape government persecution. But we should not ignore the religious dimension of the experience. The regimen of the White Lotus sects was certainly much stricter than that required by ordinary folk religion, and it tended to orient people toward a concern for the afterlife and a quest for salvation. Some missionaries found their orientation toward a "true god" (*zhen-zhu* or *zhen tian-ye*) to be monotheistic. This—in addition to the sects' concern for the spiritual in man, for sin and a future life—helped explain why "the Christian doctrines have been very attractive to these sectaries."[76] Others noted that many of these sectarians were simply "doctrine-lovers" in search of some satisfying faith. After trying a variety of sects, they finally ended up in the Christian church.[77] Finally, in some cases, prophecies of the sect itself—as one

injunction to follow "a strange man wearing white vestments"—led sectarians to the missionaries.[78]

Even in many of these more religious conversions, one suspects that state persecution and the privileged protection enjoyed by the Christians played a role. For example, Leboucq's account of the White Lotus sect whose members converted in such numbers to his southeast Zhili church leaves one with the impression of a popular cult in an advanced state of decay. Government persecution appears to have destroyed the religiously dedicated leadership, leaving the sectarians prey to a great variety of scheming charlatans. Many of the conversions to Christianity seem to have followed the exposure of particularly blatant fraud.[79] In effect, for a "doctrine-lover," Christianity was becoming a better and better deal. The old sects were degenerating under periodic government persecution, while Christianity could offer many of the same spiritual rewards, and at much lower cost in terms of official persecution.

Because the sectarians' conversion to Christianity is in such marked contrast to the linkage usually drawn between the Boxers and the White Lotus or Eight Trigrams sects, the examples we have just seen are extremely important. But the sectarians were just one of several types who were easily attracted to Christianity by the protection which it afforded. Especially in southwestern Shandong, an area noted for endemic lawlessness, it was not at all unusual for bandits to seek the protection of the Church. The oral history surveys make this charge repeatedly, one peasant stating bluntly: "At that time most of the converted Christians were bandits."[80] Often officials required to solve bandit cases within strict time limits sent out yamen runners who made indiscriminate arrests. When the priests would promise protection from such official harassment, whole villages would join the Church.[81] Occasionally the missionaries' own accounts will reveal the same pattern:

> "The town [of Zhangqiao] has the reputation of being a nest of ruthless and incorrigible robbers. Many widows residing there with orphaned children mourn the loss of their husbands, caught red-handed while taking part in raids on the homes of wealthy families, and executed after undergoing terrible tortures. After the depredations of the Changkiao bandits had taxed the patience of county officials beyond the breaking point, preparations were made to raze the village to the ground and banish all of its inhabitants. When all but one of the families residing there decided to embrace the Catholic religion, the missionary pleaded effec-

> tively with the Mandarin for clemency on their behalf. Thus Changkiao escaped destruction. Tamed by their Christian faith these former brigands became law-abiding farmers and exemplary Catholics—another conquest of Divine Grace.[82]

One wonders whether the bandits' conversion was as total as this inspirational tale would have us believe.

Finally there were undoubtedly many suffering economically, who turned to the Church for financial support. That most Christians were poor goes without saying. In the words of the Chinese official: "The Catholics' clothes cannot cover their bodies. Their eating quarters are not separated from their sleeping places. They store their beds and stoves in one corner—that is how poor they are."[83] The Shandong University surveys repeatedly mention Christians who joined in order to get food that the Church would distribute.[84] This was also a common Protestant complaint against the Catholics,[85] though we have already seen what famine relief did to increase Protestant converts.

But occasionally the missionary would intervene to protect converts from economic suffering of human origin. George Stenz, whose accounts I have cited so often, tells of a group of tenants on the hereditary estate of the descendants of the Confucian disciple Zeng-zi who were much oppressed by the owner's underlings. They came to Stenz for support. When he talked to the landlord and accepted the tenants as converts, the depredations of the underlings ceased. News of this example was so compelling that soon ten nearby communities joined the church.[86] The Shandong University surveys also show how the Church could enhance a tenant's power in relation to his landlord: "In those days, if a villager had been abused by someone, he would just convert. After becoming a Christian he would not be abused. Some converted and even in years of a good harvest they would give less rent and insist that their crops had been flooded and the harvest was poor."[87]

There can be little doubt, then, that the considerable temporal powers of the Christian church had enormous impact on the type of converts that it attracted. This is certainly not to say that none converted for purely religious reasons. Far less is it to say that sectarians, bandits, and the poor could not become sincere Christians. There can be no doubt that both Catholic and Protestant congregations included substantial numbers of law-abiding and morally upright peasants. But it is also true that conversion to Christianity and especially to Catholicism was most attractive to those in need of

protection—be it from the police powers of the state, the economic exactions of the landlord, or the threat of poverty and potential starvation in a hostile environment. That being the case, the converts to Christianity unquestionably included a disproportionate number of sectarians, bandits, and the poor. To the extent that this was the *imperium in imperio* which the Church was seeking to protect, it was not likely to gain a very happy reputation with the rest of the population.

THE 1890s: CHRISTIANS IN THE HIGH TIDE OF IMPERIALISM

I have argued in this chapter that an intimate link existed between imperialism and Christian missionary activity: both were part of the same process whereby Westerners sought to impose their ways on the rest of the world. I have also argued that the Catholic Church in particular acted in China as an autonomous political institution, which attracted converts by virtue of its power to offer protection and support. To the extent that these two propositions are correct, it follows that missionary success would be greatest, and conversions would come most rapidly, at such times as the imperialist forces were most aggressive in displaying their powers. For this reason, we should expect to see unprecedented growth of Christian congregations in the 1890s. We will not be disappointed.

The 1890s were of course the classic decade of imperialism throughout the world. The industrialization of France and a newly unified Germany made those two nations genuine threats to England's domination of world trade. As the free trade theories of Manchester gave way to the quest for colonial dominion, the European powers completed the partition of Africa. On the home front, the "yellow press" fanned the flames of jingoist sentiment; Rudyard Kipling was the favorite author, with his tales of imperialist conquest by tough young Englishmen bearing the "White Man's Burden." In Asia, Japan joined the colonial powers when it seized Taiwan in the Sino-Japanese War; and the U.S. soon followed suit, taking the Philippines as its prize of the Spanish-American War. In between, China was the focus of world attention as the Great Powers competed for spheres of influence in the Scramble for Concessions, and the pundits of the press debated whether or not China would continue to exist as a unified empire. Few doubted that in this context, the Powers would be

treating China a good deal more roughly. In 1896, when Claude McDonald was named British Minister to China after a decade of service to the Empire in Africa, Sir Robert Hart wrote that "those of us who have succeeded so badly by treating Chinese as educated and civilized ought now to be ready to yield the ground to a man versed in negro methods and ignorant of the East."[88]

China was as much a focus of missionary energy in the 1890s as she was a focus of world politics. The two were obviously related. The missionaries easily borrowed the militant language of imperialism as they sought to "conquer the heathen" on behalf of Christ. When the Protestant missionaries in China met together in Shanghai in 1890, A. J. H. Moule asked rhetorically in one address:

> Is Christ's Church militant indeed on earth? Are we all bound to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world and the devil? Has the Son of God indeed gone forth to war? And is our lot cast, whether missionaries or foreign residents, in this advanced post in an enemy's country, where a special assault is being delivered, not on men and political systems, but on the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the spiritual wickedness of the great, the real spiritual world?[89]

Needless to say, Moule answered all of his rhetorical questions in the affirmative. Missionaries were vital partners in the effort to remake the world to Western specifications. "Christian missions and commerce," Moule went on, "are often spoken of as the great forces which must enlighten and regenerate the world; and it is of the utmost importance that these forces should work in harmony."[90] In the United States and Great Britain, the late nineteenth century saw an alliance of progressivism and imperialism which, in the words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "no doubt confirmed missionary faith in political, even in military, intervention as a means of both individual and social salvation. . . . 'From the muscular Christianity of the last generation to the imperial Christianity of the present day,' wrote J. A. Hobson, 'is but a single step.'"[91]

China was to be a primary target of this new imperial Christianity. By the 1880s and 1890s East Asia surpassed the Near East and South Asia as a Protestant missionary field.[92] And in East Asia, China was certainly the most important field. Sherwood Eddy of the Student Volunteers for Foreign Missions, whose slogan—"The Evangelization of the World in this Generation"—so typified the aggressive optimism of the age, would later write that "China was the goal, the lodestar, the great magnet that drew us all in those days."[93] And many indeed were drawn. The number of Protestant missionaries in China more than doubled, from a count of 1,296 in 1889 to 2,818 by 1900.[94] In the critical province of Shandong, the increase in Catholic missionaries was even more dramatic. Between 1887 and 1901 their numbers increased more than five-fold, from sixteen to eighty-five. Much of this increase came from the S.V.D.—surely the most visible Catholic example of Hobson's "imperial Christianity." Their numbers increased from just four in 1887 to forty-three in the year after the Boxers.[95]

Many of the effects of this higher stage of imperialism, and of the missionary onslaught which accompanied it, would only be seen in the latter half of the decade, after the Sino-Japanese War and the Scramble for Concessions. For these, the reader will have to await our discussion in chapters 5–7. But since the Scramble began with the German seizure of Jiaozhou Bay (Qingdao) in retaliation for the murder of two German missionaries, one may rest assured that we will find there further support for our argument that missionary activity, imperialism, and Christian conversion were all linked in a complex, interconnected dynamic. But the theme can also be illustrated in the first part of the decade when missionary incidents in the Yangzi Valley spurred the Great Powers to make ever more stringent demands on the Chinese state. As Edmund S. Wehrle says in his study of Sino-British relations during this decade: "At that moment in history world politics and missionary politics became almost completely intermixed."[96]

The trouble began in the spring of 1891, when a series of anti-missionary riots swept through the lower Yangzi Valley. Then in 1895, there were anti-Christian riots in Chengdu, Sichuan, in May and June, followed by the Gutian (Fujian) massacre of eleven men, women, and children in August. Following these incidents, the British minister in Beijing threatened to use the Royal Navy against Chinese ports in an aggressive display of gunboat diplomacy which succeeded in bringing about the degradation of the former governor-general of Sichuan and six other officials, the execution of thirty-one perpetrators of the violence, and the imprisonment or banishment of thirty-eight more.[97]

Because the incidents of 1895 followed immediately upon the Sino-Japanese War, it is extremely difficult to separate the effects of those two events. But aside from the Yangzi riots, 1891 was a pretty quiet year in China, and their effect as far away as Shandong was readily

discernible. On June 13, the imperial court issued a clear edict blaming the attacks on outlaws, stressing the noble motives of missionaries and the need to protect churches, and ordering the immediate resolution of all outstanding missionary cases. In July, Li Hong-zhang, then governor-general of Zhili, reported the printing and distribution of the edict for posting throughout Zhili and Shandong. On September 13, a second edict was issued complaining of the lack of action in solving outstanding missionary cases, and threatening local officials with full responsibility for any future incidents which should occur in their jurisdictions. The edicts were thoroughly one-sided, placing all blame on the opponents of Christianity, and the foreigners welcomed them as the best ever issued.[98]

The American Presbyterians soon found that with this new turn of events, long-standing property disputes in Jinan and Jining were quickly settled. They wrote that the Yangzi riots had "worked only good for us."[99] But as usual, it was the Catholics who reaped the greatest rewards. The American missionary Henry Porter in Pangzhuang reported in 1893 that "there has been for some time past a sort of irruption of the Roman Catholics in many of the villages about us." He linked it to better official protection, and the pressure to settle disputes which had resulted from the earlier edicts. "The Roman Catholic leaders," he felt, "have been inclined to presume on the new position." The process was a typical one, and critical too was the fact that now, more than ever, the temporal power of the Church was a magnet for those seeking protection: "In the majority of cases, the movement has been under the direction of some leading man in the village who had no conception of Christian truth and no purpose but to get a little advantage over the local official and the shielding power of the Catholic Priest."[100] It may be that Porter's interpretation was overly cynical (and perhaps a bit jealous of Catholic successes), but there is no reason to doubt the basic pattern that he perceived. It fits perfectly with the dynamic of Christian penetration which we have seen throughout this chapter.

Thus, step by step, the stage was set for the outbreak of violent popular action against the Christians. China had been defeated before in war with the West, but never had she been so humbled as in the 1890s—defeated by Japan, hounded by the Western powers demanding the dismissal of officials for anti-missionary incidents, and soon to be carved up into "spheres of influence." Trade grew rapidly; the Treaty of Shimonoseki permitted foreign factories in the treaty ports;

telegraph lines criss-crossed the empire; and plans were laid for a railway system. But to the ordinary villager of north China, the unequal treaties, the gunboat diplomacy, the concessions along the coast were of little consequence. If such folk ever saw a foreigner it was certainly a missionary—and the foreign presence meant the "foreign religion." But that "foreign religion" was inextricably linked to all the other faces of Western imperialism in China. The more China was humbled, the greater the relative power of the Church. And the stronger the Church became, the more likely it was to flex its muscles—for every demonstration of Christian power attracted more converts, and served the greater goal of winning the Chinese to Christ.

But clearly there was a limit to all this. If the Chinese state was incapable of resisting the ceaseless demands of the Christians and their foreign supporters, sooner or later the "heathen" would form an organization of their own to fight back. And they did. They called it the Da-dao hui: the Big Sword Society.