

The Spread of Christian Gospel and Social Influence through Medical Mission: A Case Study of Ningbo Huamei Hospital

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Abstract

This paper explores the development of Christian missionary medical undertakings in modern China, focusing on the establishment and contributions of Ningbo Huamei Hospital. Christianity experienced ups and downs since the introduction of Nestorianism in the Tang Dynasty, but its spread was significantly promoted under foreign pressure following the Opium Wars and the Qing Dynasty's decline. Huamei Hospital, originally founded by the missionary D.J. Macgowan in 1843, evolved from a small clinic into a systematic Western medical institution and played a positive role in historic events in modern China. Particularly during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the hospital provided medical aid to the wounded and made significant contributions to the timely diagnosis and prevention of the plague caused by biological warfare. The approach of "medicine as a means, gospel as the end" not only facilitated the mission of spreading the Christian gospel but also profoundly influenced the modernization process of China's medical and social practices.

Keywords

Christianity; Huamei Hospital; Medical Mission; Missionaries; Ningbo

1. Introduction

The earliest written record of Christianity's entry into China can be traced back to the "Stele of the Propagation of the Luminous Religion in China." According to the stele, in the ninth year of the Zhenguan reign of the Tang Dynasty (635 AD), the missionary Alopen of the "Luminous Religion" (Nestorianism) arrived in China and was received by Emperor Taizong. From then on, Nestorianism began to spread. However, about two hundred years later, Emperor Wuzong of Tang launched a suppression of Buddhism, and Nestorianism was also suppressed and gradually disappeared. In the Yuan Dynasty, the Catholic Church sent envoys to preach, and the number of

believers increased, though they were mainly concentrated among ethnic minorities. Missionary activities were interrupted again after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty.

In the early Qing Dynasty, the efforts of Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci improved the situation of Catholicism in China. Ricci mastered Chinese, adopted an upper-class strategy, and preached by teaching scientific knowledge, allowing Catholicism to gain a foothold. However, during the Kangxi reign, due to the "Rites Controversy," the Qing government banned the spread of Catholicism again. As noted by historians, "Missionaries were uniformly expelled, and those who had mistakenly entered the religion had to return to the correct path" [1]. This ban continued until the eve of the Opium War.

1.1. The Opium War and Unequal Treaties

In 1840, the Opium War broke out, and the Qing government suffered successive defeats in conflicts with Britain. Western countries used their military strength to open the way for missionaries to spread the gospel in China.

In 1844, Article 17 of the Treaty of Wanghia signed between China and the United States stipulated: "Citizens of the United States residing or sojourning at any of the ports open to foreign commerce shall be permitted to rent houses... or hire sites... for the construction of hospitals, churches, and cemeteries" [2]. This clause granted American missionaries the right to preach freely in the treaty ports, marking the first time missionary rights were involved in modern unequal treaties. In the same year, when France signed the Treaty of Whampoa, it not only secured the right to preach freely but also explicitly stipulated official protection for church activities and property: "French subjects may build churches, hospitals, hospices, schools, and cemeteries... If any Chinese subject shall destroy or disturb the churches or cemeteries, the local authorities shall punish them severely according to the law" [2].

The signing of the Treaty of Wanghia and the Treaty of Whampoa marked a major adjustment in the Qing government's policy toward Christianity under foreign pressure. Particularly after the signing of the Treaty of Whampoa, France negotiated with the Qing government multiple times, finally forcing the Qing government to issue an edict in 1846 lifting the ban on Catholicism. This decision not only restored the Catholic churches confiscated during the Kangxi era but also allowed French missionaries to preach freely in the treaty ports. This historic move ended the ban on religion that had lasted for a century in the Qing Dynasty, allowing Catholicism to regain legal status in China.

After the Second Opium War in 1858, the Anglo-French forces compelled the Qing government to sign the Treaty of Tientsin. The treaty stipulated: "The Christian religion and the Roman Catholic Church being strictly similar... having for their essential object to lead men to virtue, the members of the various communions shall enjoy full security for their persons and property... and those who, being provided with passports... go into the interior of the country to propagate their doctrines, shall be protected by the local authorities. The Chinese government... shall not punish those who

practice the faith quietly. All previous official documents, whether written or printed, prohibiting the Christian religion, shall be completely null and void" [3]. This clause formally abolished all previous official documents opposing foreign religions and incorporated the right to preach freely into bilateral treaties, ensuring that missionary activities throughout China were unrestricted.

2. Missionaries and the Establishment of Church Hospitals

In the mid-to-late 19th century, with the opening of treaty ports, the number of missionaries in China increased significantly. At that time, Western medicine had made great progress, with disciplines such as anatomy, physiology, and pathology maturing day by day. The combination of science and technology also led to significant progress in medical practice in terms of diagnosis and treatment. However, China at that time was suffering from poverty and weakness, with a severe shortage of medicine and poor medical and sanitary conditions. In this context, "medical mission" became the first choice. A large number of missionaries came to China to open clinics, and the transmission of Western medicine into China became active [4].

2.1. D.J. Macgowan and the "North Gate Clinic"

The prototype of Huamei Hospital was a clinic opened by an American Christian missionary. It appeared after the defeat of the Qing Dynasty in the First Opium War and the designated opening of Ningbo as one of the five treaty ports.

On November 11, 1843, the year Ningbo officially opened as a port, American Baptist missionary and doctor D.J. Macgowan arrived in Ningbo. According to Macgowan's notes, after arriving in Ningbo alone, his first feeling was one of being cold-shouldered. There was no one he knew, and the language barrier was absolute. For a time, he could not find a suitable place to live or preach, and Macgowan appeared somewhat lonely and embarrassed. Fortunately, at this time, Macgowan met a sympathetic merchant who was willing to provide his private house for him to live and practice medicine. In this way, Macgowan used his medical skills to treat people in the merchant's home. Soon, the people around got to know him and gradually developed trust in him.

Subsequently, Macgowan rented several rooms at the You Sheng Guan (Taoist Temple) near the North Gate of Ningbo city (now Northwest Street, Ningbo) to open a clinic. He sold Western medicine to local residents and conducted missionary activities, achieving good results. "Within three months of opening, a total of 650 people accepted surgical treatment" [5]. Although the clinic's equipment was simple, Macgowan's medical activities undoubtedly laid a solid foundation for the future Huamei Hospital. Additionally, during epidemics, the clinic frequently distributed medicine to citizens and conducted simple treatments. Macgowan also frequently taught anatomy to local doctors and students at the Moon Lake Academy. Under his leadership, the clinic became an important venue for the Baptist Church's missionary activities in Ningbo.

2.2. The Establishment and Development of Huamei Hospital

In 1847, to strengthen the power of medical mission, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society sent Dr. S.P. Barchet and his wife to Ningbo to take over medical duties. The clinic was renamed the "Great American Baptist Hospital," and a new ward building was constructed by the river at the North Gate, with 20 beds. In 1880, with sponsorship from Ningbo gentry, a women's ward was added, increasing the number of beds by 10. At this time, Barchet's medical mission vision was no longer limited to Ningbo city but expanded to Fenghua, Xikou, and Shenjiamen in Dinghai.

However, the period that truly ushered in the golden development of the hospital was during the tenure of Dr. J.S. Grant. In 1889, Barchet left Ningbo due to illness, and the American Baptist Mission appointed Grant as his successor. During his tenure, the hospital gradually developed from a small clinic where missionaries practiced medicine independently into an institutionalized, professional Western hospital. In 1915, new wards and operating rooms were built, a medical school was attached, and the hospital was renamed "Huamei Hospital" (Hwa Mei Hospital), symbolizing "China-America Cooperation." By 1920, the hospital had a total of 29 medical staff and workers, including 5 doctors (3 Chinese, 1 British, 1 American), 2 head nurses, 1 treasurer, 4 male nurses, 7 female nurses, as well as 4 missionary staff and 6 student nurses. In 1921, the hospital established departments such as Internal Medicine, Surgery, Operating Room, and Ophthalmology, and the number of employees increased to 34. At this time, after years of service and work by the entire staff, the hospital's reputation had gradually expanded to rural areas and even regions outside Ningbo. The population of the Ningbo area at that time was estimated at two to three million. Because people from Ningbo traveled and lived all over the country, the hospital often received patients from all over the country seeking medical advice from Dr. Grant [6].

In 1928, Dr. Grant passed away. The American Baptist Mission entrusted Dr. Thomas to preside over the work of Huamei Hospital. In August 1930, the American Baptist Mission commissioned the American pastor Rev. E.H. Cressy to sign an agreement transferring the property of Huamei Hospital to the China Baptist Convention (Zhejiang-Shanghai Baptist Convention). The hospital was managed by a Board of Directors, and Dr. Thomas left Ningbo. Ren Xingeng was appointed as the director; he was also the first Chinese director in the history of Huamei Hospital. The American Baptist Mission hired Dr. William to serve as the hospital supervisor. In 1932, Ren Xingeng resigned as hospital director, and Ding Licheng took over the duties as acting director. Three years later, Ding Licheng formally assumed the office of director, while Dr. Thomas served as the American director of the hospital.

3. Contributions of Huamei Hospital during the War of Resistance

On July 7, 1937, the Japanese military created the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which shocked China and the world. This event marked the beginning of Japan's full-scale

fascist invasion of China, and the Chinese nation began an arduous eight-year war of resistance. Following the fall of Shanghai and Hangzhou, because foreign concessions still existed in Shanghai, the Shanghai-Ningbo shipping line remained navigable. Ningbo became a major transit port for materials in the inland provinces and a main channel connecting China with the overseas world [4]. Therefore, Japan also eyed Ningbo covetously, successively imposing a naval blockade on Ningbo, conducting comprehensive bombings, and launching germ warfare. During this period, Huamei Hospital was also in a difficult situation.

The hospital's finances, medical staff, and patient safety were severely threatened. The hospital fell into a predicament of extreme shortages of food and medicine. Although Huamei Hospital was shrouded in the threat of drug shortages and famine, it still adhered to the hospital tenet of "saving the poor and spreading the Holy Way" [7]. It invested a large amount of manpower in the treatment of the wounded and made huge sacrifices and contributions. According to incomplete statistics, from August 19, 1937, to the fall of Ningbo in April 1941, Ningbo was bombed by the Japanese military as many as 632 times, resulting in 3,217 casualties [8].

In addition, Huamei Hospital's contribution also lay in being the first to confirm the Japanese military's plague warfare.

On October 27, 1940, a shocking event occurred in Ningbo. Under the command of Ishii Shiro, the invading Japanese army carried out plague warfare in Ningbo. At around 2 p.m. on the 27th, a Japanese plane invaded Ningbo and air-dropped a large amount of plague-infected fleas, wheat grains, flour, and other items over the city center. On the second day, an epidemic broke out in the area south of Zhongshan East Road, north of Kaiming Lane, east of Kaiming Street, and west of Taiping Lane. More than 100 citizens died of the disease one after another. Wherever the eye could see, lives were devastated, and corpses lay everywhere. The whole city immediately fell into deep panic. How to deal with the increasingly severe epidemic situation, confirm the disease, and carry out follow-up treatment and epidemic prevention work became a difficult problem that needed to be solved urgently.

The discovery of the plague was recorded as follows: "...On the same day (November 1), two more patients went to Huamei Hospital in the county for medical treatment. It was reported that they fell ill on October 29 and October 31. Their clinical diagnosis was plague. Ding Licheng, the director of the hospital, obtained puncture fluid from the lymph node swelling of the first patient (Yu Yuande, male, 16 years old), conducted animal tests and bacterial cultures, and obtained positive results on November 8, confirming the diagnosis of plague. Subsequently, Wu Changfeng, a technician from the Zhejiang Health Department, performed an agglutination reaction on the bacilli obtained from the culture, which also yielded a positive result. Thus, the diagnosis of plague was further confirmed..." [9].

Regarding the case diagnosis: "In this plague outbreak in Yin County, there were a total of ninety-nine cases, of which sixty-one were treated in the isolation hospital,

and the rest mostly fled the epidemic area and were outside. They died one or two days after the onset of the disease, so they did not undergo Western bacterial examination. Among the sixty-one cases, three cases were confirmed by laboratory methods in addition to clinical diagnosis. (1) Director Ding of Huamei Hospital in Yin County took the lymph node puncture fluid from patient Wang Renlin to make a smear specimen. Under the microscope with methylene blue staining, 'plague bacilli' that were deeply stained at both ends, large and short, were found. (2) Director Zhang of the Yin County Health Center took a blood smear specimen from patient Wu Chunyuan and stained it with Giemsa stain. Microscopy revealed 'typical plague bacilli.' (3) Director Ding of Huamei Hospital inoculated the lymph node puncture fluid of patient Yu Yuande under the abdominal skin of a guinea pig. The day after inoculation, the inoculation site showed edema and hemorrhagic inflammation, and the nearby lymph nodes were enlarged. The surrounding tissue showed hemorrhagic infiltration. On the third day after inoculation, the guinea pig died. Post-mortem examination revealed an enlarged spleen with raw sago-like nodules, congestion of other mucous membranes and internal organs, and hemorrhagic spots. Smear specimens made from its lymph node puncture fluid and blood revealed countless plague bacilli. Bacterial culture was performed again and was also successful. In addition, Technician Wu Changfeng of the Zhejiang Health Department performed an agglutination reaction test and obtained a positive result" [9].

In order to understand the truth of the disease, reporters visited health agencies and public and private hospitals. According to Ding Licheng, Director of Huamei Hospital: "There were eight patients who came to our hospital for diagnosis of this epidemic disease, but we have not yet been able to determine whether it is true plague. However, observing that death from this disease is extremely rapid, I think most are incurable. It has been determined to be an extremely severe epidemic disease. Except for plague, nothing is so fierce. This morning (referring to yesterday), blood was drawn from the lymph node of a patient suffering from the epidemic and injected into a guinea pig to observe its reaction. However, it had not died by late evening, and the toxic bacteria it contained have not yet been detected. However, this disease is indeed similar to plague." He also stated: "For the treatment of plague, there is no specific medicine invented in countries East or West. Injection of Plague Vaccine is nothing more than reducing infection..." [9].

At that time, Ding Licheng, Director of Huamei Hospital, carefully diagnosed the patients who came to the hospital for treatment. On November 1, he made a smear of the lymph node puncture fluid from a patient named Wang. After Gram staining and microscopic examination, Gram-negative bacilli were found. This type of bacillus is the typical form of plague bacilli. On the 3rd, Ding Licheng boldly issued a statement to the outside world that the epidemic outbreak in Ningbo city was the number one infectious disease: Plague. To further confirm the plague, on the same day, Ding Licheng drew blood and swollen lymph node puncture fluid from a suspected patient

named Yu and injected it under the abdominal skin of two guinea pigs. These two guinea pigs died successively on the third day. Immediate dissection was performed. Smear samples of the examined bodies were stained with methylene blue and examined under a microscope, revealing countless bipolar-stained plague bacilli forms. Bacterial cultures were made from the guinea pig lymph node puncture fluid and blood, which again yielded positive results. Thus, the plague diagnosis was confirmed beyond doubt.

Huamei Hospital's timely diagnosis of the plague was of great realistic significance, whether for taking various effective epidemic prevention measures and treating a large number of plague patients, or for timely exposing the inhumane bacterial warfare massacres by the Japanese invaders. In addition, Huamei Hospital also actively participated in the follow-up diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the plague. Ding Licheng served as the deputy leader of the epidemic prevention department, actively surveying sites, setting up isolation hospitals, and raising epidemic prevention funds. At the same time, Huamei Hospital also made every effort to purchase a large amount of sulfur (yellow) required for disinfection. After the epidemic, they assisted in holding an exhibition on plague prevention and treatment, providing various charts, plague bacteria specimens, epidemic prevention medicines, and models of buried plague corpses, to eliminate the public's superstition about ghosts and gods and establish concepts of hygiene and science [7].

4. Saving Lives and Healing the Wounded during the Liberation War Bombings

Ningbo was liberated on May 25, 1949, but the severe struggle was far from over. To strangle the new People's Government and prevent the People's Liberation Army from advancing to Zhoushan, the remnants of the Kuomintang who had fled to the Zhoushan Islands continuously dispatched US-made aircraft to bomb Ningbo city area from early June to early September. More than 100 bombing raids were carried out, destroying thousands of houses. Among them, the bombing on September 13 was the most tragic. From 9:50 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Chiang's aircraft, including B-25 and P-51 models, bombed Ningbo city area in rotation in batches of one or two planes. A total of 11 bombs and 4 incendiary bombs were dropped. Downtown areas such as Yaohang Street, Houtang Street, Zhongjie Street, Hucheng Alley, Dongdu Road, Youxin Street, Chejiao Lane, and the North Bank of the river were all directly hit. The bombing and strafing by Chiang's aircraft caused deep panic among the citizens in the urban area and caused the market, which had gradually revived, to trend toward depression again [10].

In this bombing, Huamei Hospital also suffered huge losses. On September 17, planes bombed the new house of the former Yongjiang Girls' Middle School and the chapel of Shengmo Primary School near Huamei Hospital. On October 18, Kuomintang aircraft appeared over the city, and after circling a few times, they dropped

several incendiary bombs on the hospital and the nursing school. The entire three-story building of the nursing school was bombed. The fourth floor of the hospital and the attic warehouse on the top floor were also hit by incendiary bombs, igniting a huge fire. A large amount of hospital materials were burned. This was the most unfortunate encounter since the hospital was founded in 1843 [11]. However, after the hospital was bombed, after some reorganization, it continued to open for consultation. They hid from enemy planes during the day and persisted in treating the wounded and patients at night. In this test of blood and fire, even though Huamei Hospital paid a huge price, it did not hesitate to help the young Ningbo People's regime overcome the unprecedented catastrophe.

However, the number of medical staff decreased significantly. Of the original 54 doctors, 32 left successively; of the nurses who graduated in December, the number also decreased from more than 30 to 4. The heavy bombing caused Huamei Hospital to suddenly enter a period of depression. In October 1951, the Ningbo Municipal People's Government took over Huamei Hospital, repaired the broken walls, built staff dormitories, and renamed it Ningbo No. 2 People's Hospital. The history of Huamei Hospital as a Christian church hospital ended there.

5. Conclusion

As a foreign culture, how Christianity could better adapt to the local traditional culture was a question that needed to be considered upon its entry into China. The medical relief work engaged in by Christian missionaries in China, in addition to compassion for the poor and sick, was also intended to establish a benevolent image of the missionaries and better carry out the spread of the Christian gospel. Just as the regulations of Huamei Hospital stipulated: "During the clinic hours of this hospital, after registering, patients must first enter the preaching place to listen to the Holy Word quietly, as an aid to cultivating morality and nourishing the heart" [12]. This practice of preaching and comforting patients while they were suffering from illness was more likely to gain their favor toward Christianity. After recovery, they were also more willing to choose conversion, thereby achieving the purpose of missionary work.

Although in medical mission, "medicine is the means, and religion is the end," the relevant medical activities "inadvertently" produced a profound impact on China's modern process. "The opening of Huamei Hospital allowed people from all walks of life in Ningbo to come into contact with Western culture, producing an important impact on improving the health level and medical and health undertakings of the people in the Ningbo area and changing people's traditional concepts and customs" [13]. Just as Sun Yat-sen said when inspecting Ningbo in August 1916: "Ningbo's opening as a port followed Guangdong, yet its atmosphere of openness is no less than that of Guangdong." It is believed that church hospitals represented by Huamei Hospital must have made huge contributions to this openness.

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