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THE CHINESE RECORDER AND THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARY COMMUNITY IN CHINA, 1867-1941



Knowledge was valuable to the Christian missionaries who went to China in the nineteenth century. They wanted to spread the knowledge of Western Christianity and technology to the Chinese, but also they wished to exchange information among themselves about the work they were doing. The need to keep informed about the activities of their counterparts in other locations in the country was evident very soon after they arrived in China. Although the first Protestant missionary reached China in 1807, missionaries were not legally permitted to live in the interior of the country until after the signing of the 1860 treaties between China and Britain and France.

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Detailed Description:

In 1867, in an effort to keep their colleagues informed about their activities, the Protestant missionaries began the *Missionary Recorder* at the Methodist Press in Foochow. The *Missionary Recorder* lasted only a year, but the work had begun; in May 1868 the *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* was started, also at the Methodist Press in Foochow, by the Rev. S. L. Baldwin (American Methodist Episcopal Mission). The Rev. Justus Doolittle (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) joined Baldwin as coeditor in June 1869, and the publication continued through the end of May 1872 when it ceased.

The missionaries missed the *Chinese Recorder*, and in January 1874 it resumed publication as a bimonthly, published at the Presbyterian Press in Shanghai. It would be issued continually for the next sixty-seven years, changing its publisher to Thomas Chu & Sons in January 1932. In 1886 it became a monthly publication. During its long run, somewhat remarkable for any publication begun in the nineteenth century-not to mention one published in English in China-the *Chinese Recorder* covered such diverse topics as the beginnings of mission schools; the Boxer Rebellion; the crusade against opium; the ecumenical missionary

conferences of 1877, 1890, and 1907; the 1911 Revolution; the growth of the Chinese church; and the rise of communism in China.

The periodical changed its name several times, dropping *Missionary Journal* in 1924 when it added the subheading *Journal of the Christian Movement in China*. By 1938 it was *The Chinese Recorder: A China Christian Journal*. Then in 1939 it merged with *The Educational Review*, which had been published separately since 1907, to become *The Chinese Recorder and Educational Review*. An editorial board was first listed on the periodical in January 1908 (Vol. 39). Its membership changed frequently, but in later years included women missionaries and Chinese men and women.

Although it was intended primarily for the missionaries in China, the *Chinese Recorder* also circulated to mission supporters and theological schools in the home countries. At its height its circulation was only 3,000 copies, but its readership certainly far surpassed that number; it seems likely that one person at each mission station subscribed, but everyone at the station read it. From its earliest issues, it is evident that it had correspondents at all the major mission locations. The history of the publication is unclear, except from the *Chinese Recorder* itself, since it ceased publication in December 1941 following the entrance of the United States into the Second World War.

Publisher's Note: This collection comprises, in its entirety, the Primary Source Media microfilm collection entitled *The Chinese Recorder, 1867-1941*.