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**EASTERN ORTHODOX MARTYRS OF CHINA:
ACCOUNTS & IMAGES (BOXER UPRISING & BEYOND)**
Presentation by Anthony E. Clark, Ph.D., *Whitworth University*

DATE: 16 February 2014

LECTURE OUTLINE:

[SLIDE 1: Title Slide]

1. The Orthodox presence in China began in the 1680s, with Siberian Cossacks set up a settlement at Albazin, which was in Chinese territory.
 - a. Among the Cossacks were Orthodox clergy.
 - b. Kangxi attacked the settlement and all but 30 left; the 30 joined the Manchus. (The Albazinians kept their Orthodoxy alive....)
2. 1690s: Peter the Great sent a priest to China hoping to establish better ties with China.
 - a. 1700: he sent a priest & two monks to Beijing to learn Chinese.
 - b. Scholars all agree, however, that the early era of Orthodoxy in China had little interest in converting the Chinese to Christianity.

[SLIDE 2: Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, ca. 1800s]

3. In 1860 the ecclesiastical mission was no longer under the Russian state.
 - a. After that it was only under the authority of the Holy Synod.
 - i. Then the mission began to more actively to evangelize....
4. By 1900 the Orthodox Church in China had around 450 Chinese Orthodox in Beijing & Tianjin.
 - a. 220 were killed during the Boxer Uprising in 1900.

[SLIDE 3: Boxer Martyrs – Icon of St. Ia Wen]

5. Massacre Accounts:

- a. On the night of June 10-11, 1900, Boxers attacked the Orthodox Chinese Christians.
 - i. St. Paul Wang was praying as he was killed and St. Ia Wen was mutilated at the mission school where she taught, and then she was thrown into the ground.
 1. She recovered, but the Boxers tortured her again until she finally died.
 - ii. “John,” the son of a priest (witnesses said John was the son of Fr. Mitrophan Yang) was also tortured.
 1. A witness reported that while the Boxers tormented him, John said, “It’s not hard to suffer this way for Christ.” (John was only 8).

[SLIDE 4: Icon of St. Mitrophan Yang Ji]

6. The most famous martyr from the Boxer Uprising was perhaps the priest, Fr. Mitrophan Yang Ji.
 - a. Born in 1855.

[SLIDE 4-A: Close-Up]

- b. Ordained a priest in Japan by Nikolai, the Bishop at Tokyo on June 29, 1882.
- c. Fr. Yang was the first native Chinese priest in the Orthodox Church in China.
 - i. Ordained at the “All Japan Council of 1882.”
 1. Bishop Nikolai ordained Yang Ji in the Tokyo Cross church, on the Second floor of the bishop’s residence.

[SLIDE 6: Sample of St. Mitrophan Yang Ji's Translation Work]

- d. After his ordination, Fr. Mitrophan Yang Ji helped to translate Russian liturgical works into Chinese.
 - i. And he continued to serve as a priest ...until 1900.
- e. On the evening of June 10, Qing soldiers & Boxers surrounded Fr. Mitrophan Yang's home, where there were around 70 other Christians.
 - i. Many fled, but Mitrophan remained with the women & children who could not escape.
 - ii. They were all tortured.
- f. Fr. Mitrophan's chest was repeatedly stabbed in the courtyard of his residence until he finally collapsed.
 - i. He died under the date tree, where a cross monument was later erected for sacred processions.

[SLIDE 7: Boxer Martyrs Monument, Beijing]

- 1. The monument was erected in 1935 by Bishop Victor of Beijing.
- 7. Here I would like to consider what happened to the Orthodox Church in China after the Boxer Uprising in 1900.

[SLIDE 8: Tertullian Quote]

- a. Tertullian said: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity."
 - i. So, in theory, the Church should flourish once nourished by the blood of martyrs.
- b. Two things happened after 1900:
 - i. Anti-Christianity continued in China.

[SLIDE 9: Anti-Christian Chinese Quote]

1. [Common saying was: “One more Christian is one less Chinese.”]
 - ii. Orthodoxy flourished in spite of continued anti-Christianism in China.
8. The first decades of the 20th century were, as Daniel Bays has described it, a “Golden Age” for Orthodoxy in China (Bays, *New History*, 212).

[SIDE 10: Exterior – Church of All Holy Martyrs, Beijing]

9. In 1903, the two-story cathedral with five domes was built on the site where many of the Orthodox martyrs were slain.
- a. At the grounds of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing.

[SLIDE 11: Crypt – Church of All Holy Martyrs, Beijing]

- b. The church was dedicated to the “Holy Martyrs of the Yihetuan Uprising,” and the holy relics of the martyrs were kept in the church crypt.
- c. 1957, the Soviets destroyed the church and desecrated the holy relics of the martyrs.
- d. The monument I just discussed was erected next to this church by Bishop Victor on the site of the well in which the bodies of the Chinese martyrs were dropped in 1900.

[SLIDE 12: Growth of Orthodox Mission – Beijing Orthodox School]

10. The Russian Orthodox Mission in China grew at a meteoric pace!
- a. Between 1900 & 1913, 1,340 Chinese were baptized.
 - b. In 1916, 706 Chinese were baptized.
 - c. By 1916, the Orthodox Church in China had grown from around 200 after the Boxer Uprising in 1900 to more than 6,200 Chinese Orthodox Christians.

[SLIDE 13: Orthodox Mission Expansion - Stats]

- d. The Orthodox Mission in 1916 had grown to:
 - i. 32 mission stations.
 - ii. 19 churches.
 - iii. 20 schools.
 - iv. A convent for nuns.
 - v. A monastery near Beijing.

11. Despite the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Chinese Orthodox mission survived and grew.

- a. I would like now to show some images of how dramatically the Orthodox mission grew on the “blood of the martyrs” after 1900.

[SLIDE 14: Map of China – Sample of 4 Orthodox Sites]

- i. [4 examples: Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai, and Xinjiang]

12. The Beijing Orthodox mission expanded to include new schools, churches, and residences.

[SLIDE 15: Interior – Holy Dormition, Beijing]

- a. Among the more attractive churches at the Beijing mission was the church of the Holy Dormition.

[SLIDE 16: Bishop Victor]

- b. From 1933 until the Orthodox mission was closed in 1956, Bishop Victor Svyatin led the Beijing mission.

[SLIDE 17: Bishop Victor & Chinese Clergy]

- c. Bishop Victor encouraged the growth of native Chinese clergy & hierarchy, which made him more popular among the local Chinese Orthodox Christians.
- d. He left China in 1956, which marked the decline & closure of the Orthodox mission in China.

- i. Since then, Orthodoxy has survived largely as an “underground community.”

[SLIDE 18: Harbin – Dormition Cathedral]

13. By far the largest Orthodox mission in Chinese territory was located at Harbin.

- a. It was also the most Russian; Russians greatly outnumbered the Chinese Orthodox Christians there.

[SLIDE 19: Harbin Ice Festival]

- b. One of the most famous aspects of Harbin history is its Ice Sculpture festival, which the Orthodox made an important part of their own culture.

[SLIDE 20: St. Nicholas Cathedral, Harbin]

- c. One of the most famous sites in Harbin was St. Nicholas Cathedral.

[SLIDE 21: Red Guards Attack St. Nicholas Cathedral, Harbin]

- i. Sadly, in 1966, Red Guards attacked the cathedral & destroyed much of its architecture and sacred art.

1. *[Explain who the Red Guards were]*

[SLIDE 22: Shanghai – Russian Orthodox Church]

14. The Eparchy of Shanghai was another Orthodox center where Russian refugees fled to during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

[SLIDE 23: Theophany Church School, Shanghai]

- a. Churches & schools were established in Shanghai to accommodate the rising number of Chinese Orthodox Christians and the tide of refugees from Russia.
 - i. Theophany church had one of the most popular schools.

[SLIDE 24: Bishop Simeon Du Runchen with Russian Congregation, Shanghai]

- b. The Shanghai Orthodox mission remained mostly Russian, however, even though Chinese clergy sometimes pastored Russian congregations.

[SLIDE 25: Xinjiang Mission – with Famous Icon]

15. Finally, the mission in Xinjiang province provides a good example of Orthodox expansion in China.

- a. In Xinjiang, the mission served three groups:
 - i. The local Uyghur minority.
 - ii. A number of Russian refugees.
 - iii. And native Chinese.

[SLIDE 26: St. Nicholas of Ghulja, Xinjiang]

- b. One of the largest Orthodox communities was a St. Nicholas Church of Ghulja.

[SLIDE 27: Ghulja Church Outdoor Liturgy, Xinjiang]

- c. This church had a very large congregation – often celebrated outdoor Liturgies.
- d. The Xinjiang churches, like many Orthodox churches, were destroyed by Maoist Red Guards in 1966.

16. So, what's left of the Orthodox mission in China today?

- a. It is diminished, but still alive.
 - i. Its churches are mostly secularized.
 - ii. It is hopeful and active in prayer and presence.
 - 1. Two examples:

[SLIDE 28: St. John the Wonderworker & Shanghai Cathedral]

- a. Shanghai Cathedral was once the home of St. John the Wonderworker.

[SLIDE 29: Shanghai Cathedral as an Art Gallery]

- i. Now it is an art gallery (still has icons).

[SLIDE 30: Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

- b. Beijing's mission churches flourished from 1900-1950s, before the Soviet reassignment of church buildings.

[SLIDE 31: Holy Dormition as a Car Garage, 2007]

- i. The church of the Dormition was converted into a car garage for the Soviet embassy, and recently was reclaimed as an Orthodox church.

[SLIDE 32: 2012 – My Visit to Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

17. In 2012 I visited Fr. Serguy Veronin at the Holy Dormition church—newly remodeled and with beautiful onion domes towering above the Russian embassy walls.

[SLIDE 33: Closing Slide – Holy Dormition Church, Beijing]

- a. He showed me the icon of the martyrs of 1900, and we discussed how the seeds they planted were again growing in China.