The religious world in late Ming China as seen through the 勵修一鑑 *Lixiu yijian*: how was Christianity integrated into the local society of Fujian?

Yang Valentina Lin Yang

University of Oxford

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Abbreviations

CCT ARSI: Yesuhui luoma dang'anguan Ming Qing tianzhujiao wenxian 耶穌会罗马档案馆明清天主教文献 (Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus), 12 volumes, edited by Nicolas Standaert and Adrian Dudink. Taibei: Ricci Institute, 2002.

CCT BnF: Faguo guojia tushuguan tianzhujiao wenxian 法國國家圖書館明清天主教文獻 (Chinese Christian Texts from the National Library of France Textes Chrétiens Chinois de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France), edited by Nicolas Standaert, Adrian Dudink, and Nathalie Monnet. Taibei: Ricci Institute, 2009.

FR: Matteo, Ricci. *Fonti Ricciane: Documenti Originali Concernenti Matteo Ricci E La Storia Delle Prime Relazioni Tra L'Europa E La Cina, 1579-1615*. vol. 2, edited by Pasquale D'Elia. Roma: La Libreria dello Stato, 1942-1949.

HE: Ricci, Matthieu, and Nicolas Trigault. *Histoire de l'Expédition Chrétienne au Royaume de la Chine, 1582-1610*. Paris: Desclée De Brouwe, 1978.

HC: Standaert, Nicolas. *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume 1*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

KDRC: Zürcher, Erik (transl. and ed.) *Kouduo richao: Li Jiubiao's Diary of Oral Admonitions: A Late Ming Christian Journal,* vol. I and II. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series LVI/1, Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2007.

LXYJ: Lixiu yijian 勵修一鑑, edited by Li Jiugong 李九功. In *CCT BnF,* vol. 7, pp. 67-179 (upper *juan*) and pp. 181-326 (lower *juan*).

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1. Introduction

Past studies on expeditions by missionaries to Ming China have mainly focused on the doctrinal transmission of Christianity and examined how Chinese elite received and interpreted the Christian ideas. However, the aim of this paper is to shift the focus to the local sphere in order to explore how Christianity was "done" on the local level. In this respect, this study takes two arguments as a point of entry – both pioneering but very different in perspective. On the one hand, the French sinologist Jacques Gernet proposed a theory of "cultural incommunicability", in that differences in philosophical framework and cultural history prevented local Chinese people from grasping the essence of the doctrine. As a consequence, Christianity "failed" to be transmitted to China.[1] On the other hand, Erik Zürcher has asserted that Christianity integrated into the local community by becoming accommodated by both missionaries and local people, and localised to the pre-existing religious and social world. Following Zürcher's argument, scholars such as Nicolas Standaert, Adrian Dudink, Eugenio Menegon, and Henrietta Harrison have produced important scholarship examining the different dimensions of local Christianity from Ming China onwards. In this paper, I will follow Zürcher's argument of localisation and further discuss how Christianity integrated and

[1] Gernet (1990)

transformed into a local religious practice, through looking at stories in the *Lixiu yijian* 勵修一鑑. In dealing with the notion of "religion", I will be using Barend J. ter Haar and Adam Chau's conception of religion as something that people "do" and "practise". Chau has proposed "to look at the Chinese religious landscape through the lenses of 'modalities of doing religion' and 'ritual polytropy'." In brief, he argues that religions in China should not be studied as coherent conceptual aggregates, such as "Buddhism" or "Daoism". Rather, we should look at how people "do" religion on the ground. Chau observes that China was characterised by ritual-based and polytrophic religiosity—people made use of different coexisting and competing ritual providers and liturgical programmes in order to acquire efficacious ritual services.[2] In his studies on the Non-Action Sect, ter Haar argues that the sect initially emerged from a group reflection on the practices. Nevertheless, through closer analysis, he demonstrates that for people of the sect, the reading and reciting of the scriptures was the core religious activity. The religious experience was achieved not through a mere reflection on the texts, but, as the title of his book *Practicing Scriptures* suggests, through practice of the scriptures.[3]

This dissertation will be divided into three sections. The first two sections provide an insight into the local religious environment of the Fujian region in the late Ming. I will analyse the religious context with which Christianity was confronted and what type of relationship it

[2] Chau (2011)

[3] Ter Haar (2014)

engaged in with the existing practices. The third section of the paper examines the practice of Christianity in itself. I will place a particular focus on the abundant repertory of liturgical practices and holy objects that the anecdotes reveal and explore the functions and roles that they played across the stories. We will eventually observe that Christianity constructed a niche within the local environment through engaging in two main practices. First is the rejection of all local religious cults. Christian people adopted different forms of rejection according to the context. Indeed, general religious cultures were criticised on the basis of their practical inefficaciousness. The stories reflect the rivalry that existed between Christian and local ritual practitioners to affirm their superiority in providing welfare. Differently, Buddhism was represented as an extremely dangerous presence that could not coexist with Christianity. To a certain extent, this reflects the sense of threat and a will towards de-identification of Christian communities from Buddhism. Second is the practice of localisation. Christian practices and holy objects were used in people's daily life. They came to be specifically presented and adopted as efficacious and powerful tools to perform healings and exorcisms. As a result, Christianity was integrated into the local environment by the means of practice; much like other pre-existing religious practices, Christianity became a "technique" effectively working within the local world of the supernatural.

2. The *Lixiu yijian*

2.1. Christian missions in late Ming China

Nicolas Standaert divides the historical development of Christianity in late Ming China into ten periods, taking Matteo Ricci's missions as the starting point. After that, each period corresponds to a new development of the expansion of the Christian community. The first two periods 1580-1595 and 1585-1610 see the arrival of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Michele Ruggeri (1543-1607) in China and their initial establishment of Christianity in Guangzhou and later in the capital. The third period consists of a time of further development in the lower Yangzi area by missionaries such as Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) and Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560-1640), and important local converts such Li Zhizao 李之藻 (*zi* 我存 Wocun, *zi* 振之 Zhenzhi, 1565-1630). The fourth and the fifth periods, 1621-1630 and 1631-1640, present waves of expansion in regions such as Fujian, where Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) was established, and the arrival of the Dominican and Franciscan communities. The sixth and seventh periods, from 1641 to 1692, were characterised by political turmoil and the expulsion of Christian missionaries. The scarcity of Christian personnel became a problem for the regular functioning of local Christian communities. Finally, the last three periods are considered overall to be a time of wide growth of the Christian community, with a significant increase in the number of

missionaries reaching China.[4] This study shall specifically deal with materials from the fifth period of Christian development (1631-1640).

During a conference in honour of Erik Zürcher that took place in Brescia in 2007, Zürcher argued that Christian transmission in late Ming China followed two different "lines": one being Ricci's line and the other Aleni's line.[5] Ricci's strategy of transmission mainly addressed the centre. From Zhaoqing (in Guangdong) to Nanjing and, finally, to Beijing, Ricci sought to bring the message of the Gospel to the hands of the Emperor. Making use of his intellectual knowledge and an outstanding personal charisma, he was successful in constructing a network of strong friendships with high ranking officials and persons in the imperial court with whom he engaged in sophisticated philosophical and scientific discussions. For Ricci, science and knowledge become tools to pave the way of Christianity to the centre, in other words they were forms of indirect propaganda with the emperor as the main target.[6] Aleni's line of transmission was very different. One main difference regards the target audience he addressed. Aleni's attention was directed neither at the centre nor the high spheres of Chinese society. On the contrary, he travelled around villages in Fujian and worked with people from the local gentry and lower social classes. He was able to construct a totally local community of Christian converts consisting of local intellectuals, schoolmasters, and other minor professionals, who did not

[4] *HC,* vol. 1, pp. 543-575.

[5] Zürcher's speech in Brescia in September 2007, reported Standaert (2008), p. 491.

[6] Catherine Jami (2005) uses the same discourse to talk about the Christian Missions during Kangxi's reign. Both Fouquet and Verbiest were conscious that the rehabilitation of the western astronomy in China indirectly meant the rehabilitation of their religion.

appreciate Christianity for the scientific or philosophical sophistication of missionaries' resources, but rather were persuaded towards it by the actual work of the missionaries and by the miraculous powers of Christianity.

Ricci and Aleni's methods of transmission also differed to some extent. Certainly, Aleni was greatly indebted to Ricci's technique for accommodating Christianity to the local cultural context. Aleni also conformed to the literati lifestyle and presented himself as scholar from the West. As Ricci was, Aleni was also accepted into the local literati community and established friendships with important officials such as Ye Xianggao 葉向高 (*zi* Jinqin 进卿, *hao* Taishan 台山 1559-1627) and Cao Xuequan 曹學佺 (*zi* Nengshi 能始, *hao* Yanze 雁泽, 1574-1654).[7] While these men did not convert to Christianity, they provided pivotal support for Aleni's activities in Fujian. However, whereas Ricci tended to demonstrate high levels of tolerance and acceptance with regard to Chinese traditional aspects, especially of Confucian teachings which he also widely quoted in his writings, and of reductionism of Christian elements[8], Aleni took a much more conservative approach. He was more cautious in turning to Confucian doctrine and its textual materials to explain Christianity and in propagating the argument of complementarity between Christianity and Confucianism, as Ricci attempted. Rather, he preferred to rely on Western textual authorities and to maintain in his

[7] These men demonstrated great respect and admiration towards the missionary, as shown by their poems composed in honour of him, e.g. Lin (2005).

[8] Further research about Ricci and initial Christian accommodation may be found in Young (1980); Spence (1985); Rule (1986); Mungello (1999); Mungello (1985), especially chapter 2.

teaching a "puristic" religious focus with less attention to Chinese themes.[9] Although he cautiously refrained from rejecting Confucian culture and local sacrificial rites, he displayed a more definite and sharp attitude towards them. For instance, he totally rejects local deities, practices of geomancy, and Buddhism, and encourages people to alter their ancestral rituals. Nevertheless, he accepted state-recognised cults, such as City Gods or river and mountain deities, through reinterpreting them in Christian terms.[10] Thus, as Zürcher argued, Aleni's approach to accommodation was practical rather than theoretical, and, compared to Ricci's, less concessive.[11]

As a result, the transmission of Christianity was not a uniform process. By looking at Ricci and Aleni's approaches, we can see that even within the Jesuit mission, different mechanisms of accommodation were simultaneously in force and the Christian message could vary according to the local context, the missionary's own ambitions, as well as his degree of dependence on local communities for livelihood and protection.[12] Depending on whether it was Jesuit or Dominican, transmitted by Ricci or Aleni, by Francisco A. Caballero (1678-1738)[13] or Charles Maigrot (1652-1730)[14] and so on, the Christian message was under constant change. Thus, from the very beginning, Christianity

[9] Dudink (1997)

[10] *KDRC*, vol. 1, p. 280-281.

[11] Zürcher (1997), p. 606.

[12] Harrison suggests that as missions became independent from local support and fully financed by the Western authorities in late nineteenth-century, missionaries imposed tougher religious control on their converts (2013, p. 6).

[13] Menegon (2009)

[14] Von Collani (1994)

presented itself in multiple forms. In receiving these forms, local converts constructed their own localised Christian experience. The following study will look at one possible picture of local Christianity, specifically set in Fujian with the local convert community that formed around Aleni as the central focus.

2.2. The work: *Lixiu yijian*

The *Lixiu yijian* 勵修一鑑 is a collection of anecdotes and stories regarding Christianity, compiled by the late Ming convert Li Jiugong 李九功 (*zi* Qixu 其敘). For this Chinese convert, these stories represented important sources of spiritual support which could be used to fight against sin and to overcome solitude in a moment in which other religious guides, such as missionaries and fellow converts, were absent or far from him. In this moment of fragility, he was enlightened by God's pity and was conducted to read Christian stories:

> In the year of 1635, I was reading books by the sea. Enlightened teachers and wise companions were distant from me, while thinking that for men living in this dangerous world was like treading on a snowy ground and running in a dangerous slope. Due to my stupid nature, if I stand alone and without help, how could I avoid the peril of falling [into sin]? The lord had pity of me, and guided me to discover the books inside the small suitcase, to burn the incense many times and read them. From that moment, I felt that my confusion was clarified, my weaknesses were strengthened. I ate a lot and could differentiate the flavours, I approached the fire and could feel the warmth.[15]

[15] *LXYJ,* Preface, p. 2a, 83.

In later years, owing to the encouragement of friends, he decided to gather these stories and publish them under the single title of *Lixiu yijian.* Its time of composition can be roughly estimated to have been between 1635 and 1645, the date in which the preface by Chen Zhongdan 陳衷丹 (*zi* Ruowang 若望) was written. The anthology is divided into two volumes, one marked as "upper *juan*" 上卷 (*shang juan*) and the other as "lower *juan*" 下卷 (*xia juan*). From now on, we will refer them as Volume One and Volume Two. According to Courant's observation, the first Volume focuses on exploring the relationship of the individual "with God, with him-self, with others," whilst the second Volume principally deals with "miracles, rewards, and punishment."[16] Both parts offer a variety of accounts about exemplary persona and sinners, mostly adapted from existing Western biblical and hagiographic traditions or based on the experiences of contemporary missionaries and local converts. As its title 勵修一鑑 *Lixiu yijian,* translated by Zürcher as *A mirror of self-cultivation*, may suggest, these accounts aimed to provide a mirror in which readers could view their own reflection and a model with which to assess the correctness of their actions. By reading these stories and contemplating the conduct of their protagonists and the divine rewards or punishments that are consequences of such conduct, the reader was able to learn correct behaviours and improve themselves.[17]

[16] Courant (1900), p. 29.

[17] Zürcher (1985), p. 361.

2.2.1. Editions

Courant reported three extant items under the name of *Lixiu yijian*: these are two printed editions of the Volume One (Cour. 6876 and 6877) and one manuscript copy of the Volume Two (Cour. 6878). The two editions of the Volume One contain prefaces by Zhang Geng 張賡 (*zi* Xiazhan, ca. 1570-1646),[18] Chen Zhongdan,[19] and Li Sixuan 李嗣玄 (*zi* Youxuan)[20] and differ minimally with regard to the arrangement of these opening contents. This bibliographical information is presented in the following table:

Item	Content	Format	Prefaces[21]
Cour. 6876	Volume One	Xylographic print	1. Chen Zhongdan 2. Zhang Geng
Cour. 6877	Volume One	Xylographic print	1. Zhang Geng 2. Li Sixuan 3. Chen Zhongdan
Cour. 6878	Volume Two	Manuscript	n/a

Table 1 Editions of the Lixiu yijian

However, due to the scarcity of bibliographical information and materials, it is difficult to define how the work and its typography have changed over time. We could argue that the two volumes might have been distributed in different formats and time. Taking into consideration the fact that the author wrote his preface in 1639, the first versions of the

[18] For further biographical about Zhang Geng, please refer to information in Qiu (2012); Dudink (1993); Lin (1994).

[19] Chen Zhongdan: licentiate from Xianyou. In the *Kouduo richao,* he is addressed as Instructor Chen 陳廣文 (*chen guanwen*) to indicate his identity as teacher in an official academic institution. Further biographical information, please refer to *Xianyou xianzhi* (1873), *j.* 30, p. 7a, 370. He was praised for his work of filial piety: *Xianyou xianzhi* (1873) *j.* 24, p. 6a, 295 and *j.* 40, p. 7a, 466.

[20] Xiao, Qinghe (2009), pp. 109-110.

[21] Prefaces are not in printed format.

work were probably completed and published around that date. If so, it is very likely that Volume One contained these former versions. Volume Two, which contains stories from after that date, might have been distributed separately. Whether this part was published or not remains unclear. According to Courant, the extant manuscript of the Volume Two was copied from a printed text,[22] however the lack of materials means this cannot be confirmed.

2.2.2. Structures and topics

The work has a clear structure of three larger sections and many subsections in which stories are thematically assembled. Volume One contains the sections "Respect for the Lord" 敬主類 (*jingzhu lei*), "Cultivation of the Self" 修己類 (*xiuji lei*), and "Love One Another" 愛人類 (*airen lei*); Volume Two is divided into "Miracles" 異蹟類 (*yiji lei*), "Manifestations of Reward" 顯賞類 (*xianshang lei*), and "Manifestations of Punishment" 顯罰類 (*xianfa lei*). Within these sections, anecdotes are further grouped into smaller sections according to their themes and features. For example, the first chapter of the section "Miracles" is entitled "Holy Image" and gathers together stories that specifically illustrate the miraculous power of the holy image. If we turn our attention from the structure to the text itself and look at the layout of each page, we notice that the main body is generally accompanied by additional elements such as comments at the top of the text and signs of

[22] Courant, 29.

punctuation inside the text. Comments are written in a smaller size and are used to express the author's views or provide further clarification. For example, in one story, the protagonist saw a strange light coming out from the holy cross every night. In the top margin, Li Jiugong explains: "When the cross was there, the light was there too. When the cross was moved, the light followed it."[23] In a story about Zhang Geng, he again explains: "Master Zhang venerated Christianity. He is among the scholars of Min [i.e. Fujian] the most respectful and sincere, yet he was also the earliest one."[24] In addition to the signs of punctuation, the text is also marked by emphasis dots, which appear on the right side of the characters to highlight the importance of the information.

The first volume gathers around seventy-five stories, four of which are set in China. As for these four local stories, three of them take concubinage as their topic, and the other, Buddhism.[25] In the remaining parts of the volume, the author collects adaptations of catechismal teachings and biblical stories. The second volume is formed of one hundred and one stories, of which thirty-five are set in the Chinese context. Differently from the first volume, this volume not only contains biblical and doctrinal content, but additionally covers a range of themes that are typically Chinese. For instance, there are stories that touch upon situations such as local practices, filial piety or official examinations, and demonstrate the experience of Christianity from the perspective of local

[23] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 8b, 202.

[24] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, p. 31b, 246.

[25] *LXYJ,* vol. 1: For Yang Tingyun's stories, see pp. 10a-10b, 113-114 and 26a-27a, 145-147; for Xu Guangqi's story, see pp. 11a-11b, 115-116; for Chen Zheng's story, see pp. 11b-12a, 116-117.

people. An attempt to classify these local stories reveals that there are four main themes: exorcism, healing, miraculous salvation, and divine manifestations. These anecdotes star a wide range of people of very different social status, varying from renowned Christian converts of late Ming times, such as Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (*zi* 子先 Zixian, *hao* 玄扈 Xuanhu, 1562-1633), Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (*zi* 仲堅 Zhongjian, *hao* 其園 Qiyuan, 1557-1627), or Li Zhizao, to people from unknown or lower origins, who remain anonymous or are introduced in the story as "a man called" or "a woman called". However, in most cases, characters are generally local elites of the Christian community in Fujian and friends or acquaintances of Li Jiugong, such as Chen Zhongdan, Zhang Geng, and Yan Sican 嚴思參. Depending on the situation, the local character could play different roles: he could be a victim who is rescued by Christianity as well as the rescuer who saves people through his Christian faith.

In addition to local converts, the stories often involve two other types of character: a ritual specialist and a missionary. The figure of the missionary can be found in eleven stories: seven of these depict Aleni giving religious consultation or conducting baptisms for new converts; two recount Ricci's exorcist activities in Guangdong and in Nanjing; and two mention healing practices carried by Pietro Canevari (1596-1675) and Ignacio Lobo (1603- n.d.). Ritual specialists appear in ten anecdotes and are uniformly depicted as weak and incompetent figures. As this study aims to investigate how Christianity was integrated into the local environment, I shall mainly focus on the second volume, specifically on

the stories it contains which deal with local religious practices, exorcism, and healing.

2.2.3. Sources

The majority of the stories of the *Lixiu yijian* are based on existing religious materials, Western hagiographies in particular. They quote from a variety of different Christian sources written in Chinese, such as the *Qi Ke* 七克, a collection of biblical narratives composed by Diego de Pantoja on the theme of the seven sins and virtues,[26] and the *Aijin xingquan* 哀矜行詮, compiled by Giacomo Rho 羅雅谷 (*Luo Yagu*) which provides examples of piety and benevolence. [27] Other sources of inspiration were Li Jiugong's *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄, the *Shengren xingshi* 聖人行實, and the *Zhaike* 齋克. On the other hand, local anecdotes are mainly quoted from the *Zhu'en xianshi* 主恩顯實 and a source named *Dekai* 德楷 of which the nature is unclear;[28] one story is

[26] Courant, 89.

[27] Courant, 27.

[28] *Dekai* 德楷 could be associated with the local convert Yan Ande 顏安德 , the second most frequently mentioned character in the *Lixiu yijian* after Zhang Geng. It is interesting to note that the given names of members of the Yan family seem to have contained the distinctive "de" 德 character, e.g. Yan Ande 顏安德 and his daughter Yan Aide 顏愛德. It is very likely that this character "de" 德 was a family particle assigned to all members' names or *zi*. Coincidental or otherwise, this same character appears in the name 德楷 *Dekai* as well. It is therefore possible to hypothesise that this source might have been directly related to this family. Moreover, the title *Dekai* in itself is difficult to interpret and gives one the impression of being a person's name rather than the title of a work. A closer look at the work reveals that all the anecdotes provided by *Dekai* are set in Fujian and depict characters with specific names and background details. This means that the author was likely in close contact with the characters or the social networks surrounding these characters. Following this, *Dekai* may have been a fellow convert who told Li Jiugong about these miraculous events by word of mouth. If so is the case, this fellow convert was very possibly a family member of Yan Ande.

from the *Minzhong qinzhong fan* 閩中欽崇範 and one from the *Deqing shengjiji* 德清聖蹟記. These sources are no longer extant.

2.2.4. Geographic distribution of the stories

The local stories mainly take place in the coastal areas and are distributed as follows:

Location	No. of accounts	Location	No. of accounts
Fujian		Zhejiang	
福清 Fuqing	6	武林 Wulin	5
晉江 Jinjiang	3	德清 Deqing	1
永春 Yongchun	3	Jiangsu	
泉州 Quanzhou	3	南京 Nanjing	1
仙遊 Xianyou	2	海州 Haizhou	1
惠安 Huian	2	Jiangxi	
建州 Jianzhou	1	建昌 Jianchang	1
閩侯 Minhou	1	Guangdong	
漳浦 Zhangpu	1	清溪 Qingxi	1
		Eastern area	1

Table 2 Geographical distribution of local stories

Stories from the same geographical area often feature similar elements. For instance, among the five stories with the setting of Quanzhou, four deal with or make reference to Zhang Geng; the three stories that happen in Yongchun all concern Yan Ande 顏安德; the three stories which take place in Jinjiang are characterised by the presence of Aleni. Characters are by no means bound to specific geographical areas. In fact, they frequently traverse across different prefectures within the Fujian region and even beyond. Their social interactions also the local boundaries,

(Thanks to Prof. Barend ter Haar for suggesting a connection between Yan Ande and *Dekai*).

something that is clearly reflected by Li Jiugong's own social network, which included converts from Quanzhou, Jianning, and Zhangzhou, and so on. Missionaries also travelled widely in order to disseminate their teachings. For instance, in most of the accounts, Aleni is depicted as "passing by" the story location while the episode was taking place and following this would depart to a further destination.

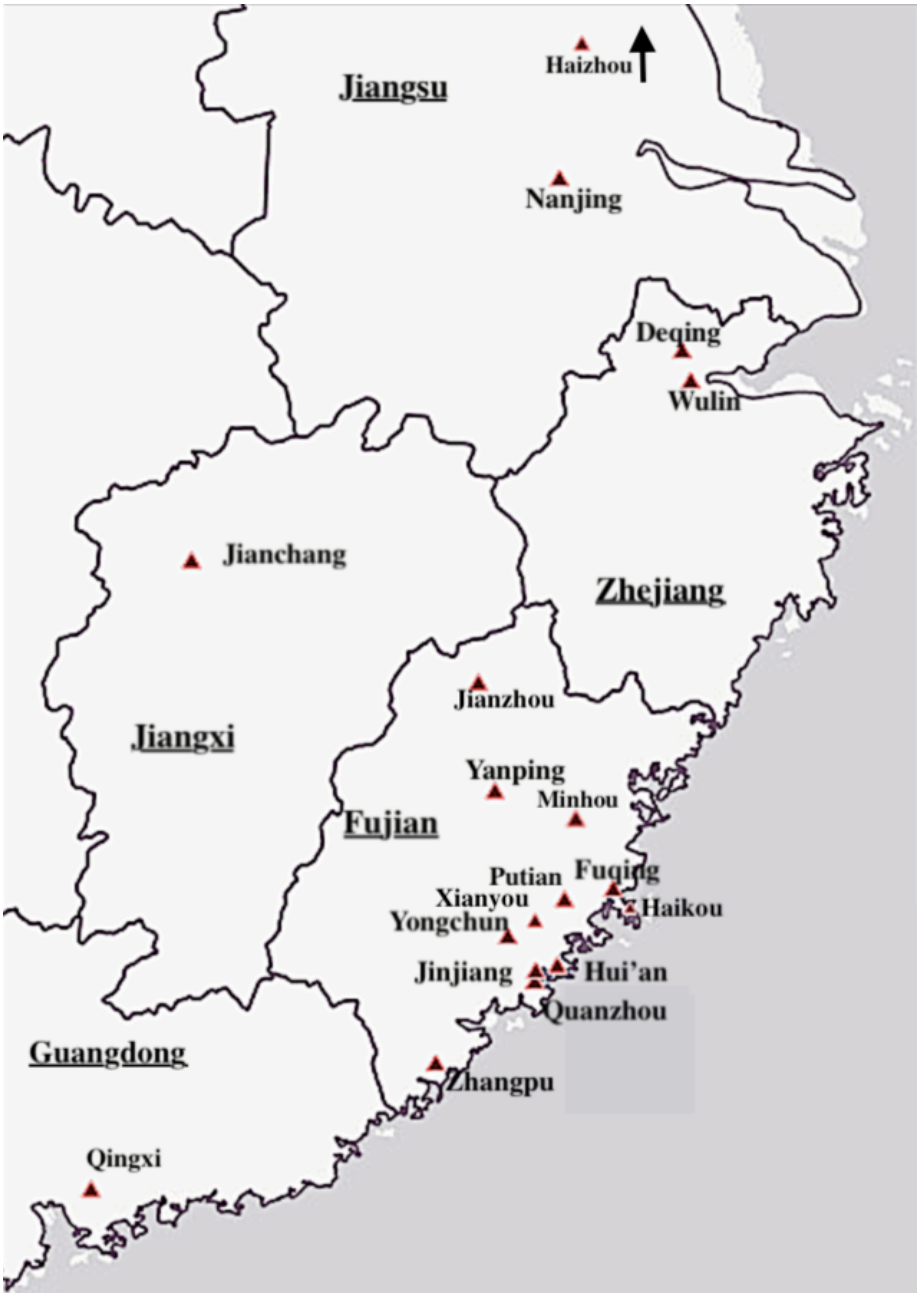

Figure 1 Geographical distribution of local stories

2.3. The author: Li Jiugong

Li Jiugong was native to Haikou 海口 and was the younger brother of Li Jiubiao 李九標 (*zi* Qixiang 其香), compiler of the *Kouduo richao*.[29] In 1628, while they were in Sanshan 三山(another name for Fuqing) to take the provincial examinations, they made the acquaintance of Aleni and were thereby introduced to the Christian doctrine:

> In the winter of the *shu* chen year (1628), I heard about the Way from Mr. Aleni when I went to attend the examination in Sanshan together with my bother Qixiang.[30]

The Li brothers took on the names of Stephanus and Thomas after their baptism. Following their conversion to Christianity, Li Jiubiao stayed in the Sanshan church to study the doctrine for one year.[31] The Qing scholar Fang Hao 方豪 notes that Li Jiubiao was one of few Christian scholars who gave up preparing for the imperial examinations at such an early age.[32] On the other hand, since our sources regarding Li Jiugong are scarcer, we cannot be sure whether Li Jiugong followed his elder brother's example or not. It seems that he remained a "licentiate" 秀才 (*xiucai*) for the remainder of his life and made his living as a private teacher. His teaching profession is further confirmed by the mention of

[29] This is a compilation of dialogues between local converts and Giulio Aleni during his stay and trips in Fujian. It also records conversations with Andreas Rudamina (1594-1632), Bentos Mattos (1600-1651), and Simon de Cunha (1590-1660). The themes it covers range from body and soul, human nature, miracles, astronomy, and so on. The dialogues are mostly between Aleni and Li Jiubiao or Yan Erxuan 顏爾宣. For further information, see Zürcher (2007) and Luo (2012).

[30] *LXYJ,* Preface, p. 1b, 82.

[31] *KDRC*, vol. 1, p. 182.

[32] Fang (1988), p. 261.

various disciples “門徒” *mentu* throughout his works. For example, the *Lixiu yijian* introduces a student called Matthew Chen who goes on to also convert to Christianity following a miraculous event. In the preface to the *Shensi lu* 慎思錄, the names of its two proof-readers 李昭璠 (*zi* Shengwang 聖望) and Guo Hongye 郭鴻業 (*zi* Junye 君業) are preceded by the attribute of “門人” *menren*, confirming their identity as disciples of Li Jiugong.[33] After returning from Sanshan, Li Jiugong seems to have permanently resided in Haikou or in the area of Fuqing at least from 1632 to the end of the decade. His six entries in the *Kouduo richao*, which take place in 1632, 1634, and 1638, are all set in Haikou. Only once in 1631 did he make a visit to Sanshan to join Li Jiubiao for an unspecified period of time. In the *Lixiu yijian,* he is located twice in Futang 福堂 (the contemporaneous name for Fuqing). Whilst in Haikou, he continued to preach Christianity. Thanks to positive responses from fellow countrymen, a church was even built:

> I received cooperative responses in my native town. Gradually, there were more people joining their forces to build a church for worshipping [the Lord of Heaven].[34]

2.3.1. Family background

Information concerning Li Jiugong and Li Jiubiao’s family is relatively scarce. Their grandfather Li Zai 李栽 was an "instructor" 司训 *sixun* in Chongyang 崇阳 in 1616; he was a highly erudite and

[33] *Shensi lu,* collection 1 (第一集 *diyiji*), p. 1a, 147

[34] *LXYJ,* Preface, p. 1b, 82.

prestigious Classicist. Within their same lineage group, there were two *jinshi* degree holders, Li Yunren 李允任 and Li Yunzuo 李允佐, regarding whom there only remain poor records about their official careers.[35] Li Jiugong also had a son called Li Yifen 李奕番, who became an accomplished scholar and passed the provincial examinations with great honours.[36] Following his father, Li Yifen 李奕番 was also a very fervent Christian and assisted in the compilation of the *Shensi lu* during his father's old age. Li Jiugong's family background, which seems prevalently Classicist, and educational background eventually played an important role in the building of his ideology and attitude towards Christianity. In most of his works, there is a strong focus on Classicist topics, such as filial piety or traditional ritual practices, as well as a persistent interest in demonstrating the compatibility between Confucianism and Christianity. For instance, in the *Lisu mingbian* 禮俗明辨, he attempts to render Confucian rituals more legitimate to the Christian eye, by explaining such rituals as a mere expression of gratitude from a disciple to his teacher:[37]

> A Chinese scholar must read the books of Confucius in order to enter the school and attend examinations. Then, on the day in which they enter the school to attend the examination, all those who go to the temple to express gratitude, they merely want to thank the master for the teaching, how could it have any other purposes? [38]

[35] Please refer to *Fuqing xianzhi*: for Li Yunzuo, see *j.* 9, p. 29b, 199; for Li Yunren, see *j.* 9, p. 48b, 208; for Li Zai, *j.* 14, p. 41b, 358.

[36] Chan (2002), p. 30.

[37] Chan (2002), pp. 68-69.

[38] *Lisu Mingbian,* p. 28.

Outside the family sphere, he was highly involved with the Christian community in Fujian, as we can see from his collaborations with other local converts such as Yan Zanhua of Zhangzhou, Zhang Geng of Quanzhou, Chen Zhongdan of Xianyou 仙遊, and Li Sixuan from Jianning.

The little information at hand regarding the personality of Li Jiugong comes from the writings or the prefaces produced by other fellow converts, including those just mentioned. In the preface to the *Wenxing cuichao* 文行粹抄, Zhang Geng commented that he was a passionate reader and a diligent practitioner of both the Christian and the Classicist teachings.[39] In the preface to the *Lixiu yijian,* Chen Zhongdan again attests that Li Jiugong had attained a very perceptive and deep knowledge of the Christian religion.[40] However, his profound religious enlightenment eventually led him to have a sentiment of loneliness, especially in the periods of turmoil in 1638 and 1639 when the Christian community was dispersed and the activities of missionaries were temporarily interrupted. Due to the absence of a religious community, collecting Christian stories become Li Jiugong's sole means with which to fight loneliness and achieve religious relief.[41] These stories were then compiled together to become the object of the present study, the *Lixiu yijian*. Even in old age, when he started to be afflicted by chronic

[39] Dudink (1997), p. 169, footnote 127.

[40] *LXYJ*, Preface by Chen, p. 2a, 73.

[41] *LXYJ,* Preface, p. 2a, 83.

insomnia, he never ceased to reflect on Christianity, the Way, and human life. As his son Li Yifen notes in the preface to *Shensi lu*:

> When my father was about to reach the age of eighty, he could not fall asleep for many nights. On his bed, he would often reflect on what had occurred or seen in the day while studying the Dao, and would pray for a clarification of the meaning.[42]

2.3.2. Literary contributions

During his lifetime, Li Jiugong was principally committed to the editing and classification of existing Christian works. For instance, both *Lixiu yijian* and the *Wenxing cuichao* are compilations of anecdotes and excerpts taken from different Christian sources, written either by converts or missionaries. Another genre he made use of, especially in his old age, was the question-answer format, like in the case of the *Wenda huichao* 問答彙抄, the *Lisu mingbian*, and the *Shensi lu*. All three publications aimed to provide a more accessible explanation of Christianity and to convince people of the heresy of Buddhism.

[42] *Shensi Lu*, Introduction, p. 1a, 141.

3. The *Lixiu yijian* and local religious practices

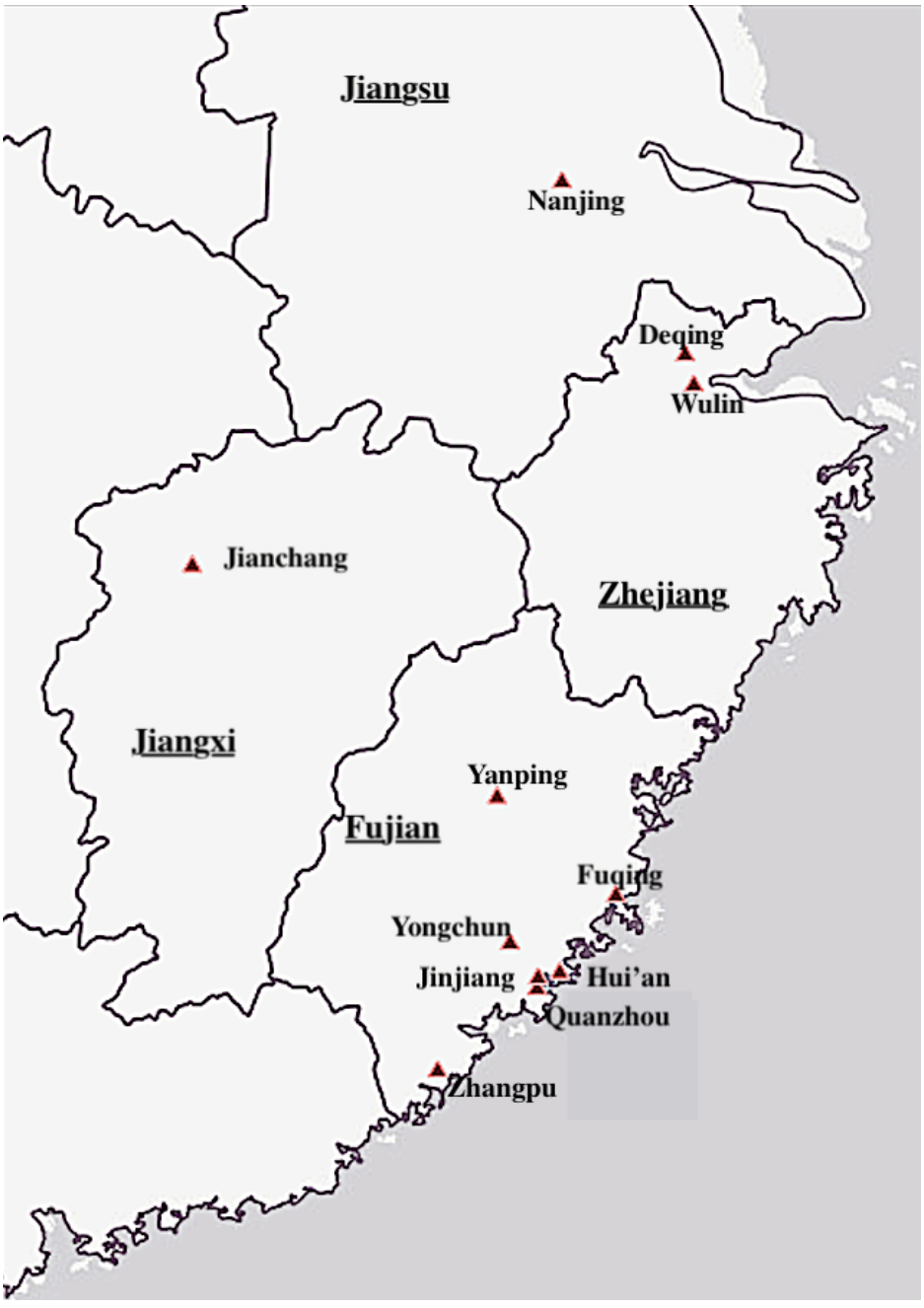

Figure 2 Map of the stories

In studying the transmission of Christianity into China, local religions are a theme of central importance. The definition offered for "local religion" by Rostislav Berezkin is: "the religion of Chinese while avoiding the traditional division between the main institutionalised

spiritual systems—Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and the so-called 'sectarian movements.' In this usage this term has the meaning of 'Chinese religion,' in which the elements of the main traditions mentioned above co-exist in constant interplay."[43] Missionaries often classified local religions as idolatrous activities. Thus, practices related to local religious cultures and their deities were all labelled as demonic or heretical. Such negative connotations are also evident in the *Lixiu yijian*. As the narrator does not offer any specifics or background information on these practices, I shall use the term "local religions" according to Berezkin's notion, as a catch-all term for all the religious activities mentioned in the anecdotes. In the stories, local religions are manifested in the form of ritual activities by religious specialists or apparitions of the local divinity. The protagonists of the stories do not appeal to local deities or ritual specialists because they are driven by theological belief, but by their demand for efficacious rituals and for achieving material objectives and well-being; there is no mention of the conceptual or ideological aspect of the cults. According to Chau's classification, it is an "immediate-practical modality" of doing religion.[44] Only when the local ritual was unsuccessful do characters make their appeal to Christianity. The text generally refers to ritual specialists using the generic term of 師巫 (*shi wu*); local deities using "demon" 魔 (*mo*) or "evil" 邪 (*xie*). The frequent appearance of these terms demonstrates the important role of religious practices in the life of people. In the following analyses, the

[43] Berezkin (2013), p. 5.

[44] Chau (2011), p. 551.

main focus will be on how local people made use of local religions. In particular, we will consider two main points: 1) the relationship between characters and local religious practices; 2) the interaction between local religious practices and Christianity.

3.1. Local religions and Christianity

3.1.1. Context

The late Ming period was in general a time of religious revival for both monastic institutions and lay movements. The decline of State control over monasteries and the increase of private support by local elites spelled a good climate for religious practitioners. New movements flourished and, subsequently, split into other movements. This resulted in the proliferation of a large number of religious groups that were both autonomous and yet mutually interrelated. Within the local community, religious associations and cults played an important social role. Such role was performed in different manners. First, through providing spaces of interaction, such as festivals or ceremonies, local religions enabled the flourishing of solidarity and social ties. Second, local religions provided people with protection from supernatural forces by offering divination services and exorcism rituals. Third, religious institutions could provide relief through offering medical support as well as psychological comfort. For instance, in the region of Zhejiang, the cult of the Marshal Wen could indeed give people religious protection and a hope for miraculous

help.[45] Those hardship and relief solutions issued by the government often failed to reach the lower strata due to problems like corruption or negligence by officials, which created a situation whereby people could not but rely on Marshal Wen.[46] Ritual specialists were commonly used as a source of medical advice. Through looking at the passages related to healing treatments in the *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅, Laurence G. Thompson showed that the characters consulted a variety of different practitioners, including professional doctors and ritual specialists, to diagnose and cure illnesses. Nevertheless, in the end it often happened that characters took the official physician to be a quack and preferred to further verify their diagnoses with a local religious specialist.[47] The popularity of religious healing is also reflected in many manuals written by itinerant physicians which record techniques of healing.[48]

The ritual specialists' power to provide relief solutions helped to enhance their role in the local community and further constructed an aura of prestige and reverence around themselves and the group to which they belonged. Eventually, the efficacy of their medical and social assistance became a pivotal factor measuring the reputation of the practitioner and of local religions.

[45] Katz (1995), p. 75.

[46] Katz (1995), p. 48.

[47] Thompson (2013), pp. 45-59.

[48] Unschuld and Zheng (2012), especially vol.1, pp. 106-175.

3.1.2. Interactions

The relationship between Christian missionaries and local religious practitioners was generally characterised by strong tension and rivalry. This tension led to an attitude of mutual rejection which is clearly mirrored in the textual literature. Menegon reports that during a festival in Fu'an in 1644, local performers publically attacked the Dominican priests through staging sarcastic sketches about them. In the performance, the Western priests were represented as grotesque figures that persuaded female converts to engaging in lascivious relationships under the pretext of religious exigence. The hostility towards missionaries in this area came partially from powerful gentry families and religious groups who might have perceived Christianity as a disruption to local religious stability. Indeed, the humiliating performance was promoted by a local elite family with very prestigious Daoist background, who would probably have found the Spanish presence disadvantageous to the ritual prestige of the family.[49]

On the other hand, missionaries have generally uniformly rejected local religions as idolatrous and demonic. For instance, missionaries often employed pejorative and sarcastic language to depreciate religious practices and beliefs. Local religions were always addressed as "false religion", "false deities", or "sects of idols". The Dominican, Francesco Serrano, called the members of the "Venerable Officials' Teaching of Fasting" 老官齋教 (*Laoguan zhaijiao*), a branch of the Luo sect, as "Assistants of the Devil" (*Ayutantes del diable*) and referred to the

[49] Reported in Menegon (2010), pp. 59-60, Menegon (2003), pp. 349-350.

followers of the sect with abundant variations of the word "poor men" (*pobre*), such as *pobrecitos*, *pobretes*, *pobres*.[50] In addition, local deities were depicted as malignant entities, which were harmful to people. The deity of the *Laoguan zhaijiao,* Moey-ly,[51] was portrayed as indifferent and unbenevolent god who did not concern about people's sufferance. However, textual sources by missionaries reveal relatively limited knowledge of local cults and sectarian movements. To introduce the Chinese religious panorama, Ricci explained two aspects. First, on the general level, Chinese people worshipped two sets of deities: the supreme entity and the body of deities and spirits that guarded "mountains, rivers, and the four parts of the world."[52] Second, upon closer observation, Ricci argues that the religious panorama could be subdivided into three sects: Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist. Although the three doctrines are positioned as the principal religions of China, Ricci could not avoid perceiving the more complex process at work beneath that religious tripartition: "It seems that underneath these three names we still could well number three hundred sects all different from one another."[53] Thus, it is clear that missionaries were well aware of the variety of sects and local religious communities among the Chinese. Yet, they perceived such variety to be a part of the mainstream doctrines and uniformly classified it under the general term "false religion". Hence, we may argue that missionaries possibly failed to mark the distinct

[50] González (1952), vol.2, pp. 250-251.

[51] Probably referred to Maitreya, discussed briefly in ter Haar (2014), pp. 80-83.

[52] *HE,* l. 1, ch. 10, pp. 161.

[53] *HE,* l. 1, ch. 10, p. 172.

separation between the different religious systems. As a matter of fact, when we put our modern artificial classifications to one side, such religious experiences may have appeared very alike in the eyes of the priests. On top of that, they did not express any interest in exploring the complexity of the Chinese religious world. Rather, it seems that they were more intent on rejecting the efficiency of the single religious experience and its real function in people's lives.

3.1.2.1. Competition

The missionaries' attack on local religious practices was prompted by different causes, ranging from discordance in religious beliefs to more concrete rivalries over winning people's reliance. This section will provide a rapid treatment of these factors. To begin with, the principal reason for hostility resulted from the very fundamental question of divine authority. As Ricci pointed out, local Chinese people worshipped an interminable variety of deities and spirits, which governed the natural and the human world. A power was conferred upon them that in Christianity was exclusive to God. Zhang Xianqing 張先清 argued that Aleni was particularly hostile towards geomancy not only because it provided people with unrealistic and negative consolation, but also because it challenged the unique authority of God. Indeed, to consider mountains and rivers as the arbiters of man's fortunes and misfortunes is to refute the absolute hegemony of the Creator.[54] Beyond this preoccupation with maintaining religious authority, the important social role of local religions also prevented people from fully adopting

[54] Zhang (2003), pp. 46-47.

Christianity. As previously mentioned, local religious organisations and cults supported local people through providing medical and social welfare. The more fruitful their services, the more people acknowledged the validity of the religious doctrine behind them. Due to their great impact within the local environment and strong support from the local gentry,[55] Christianity, a newly established contender, was often perceived as subordinate and inferior. For this reason, in order to win over people's total recognition and trust, missionaries engaged in demonstrations of the superiority of God and the efficaciousness of their rituals; while at the same time, they attacked local rituals and denounced their inefficacy. Such intentions are prominently displayed in the miraculous narratives. Finally, the rejection of local cults and almanac could help missionaries to establish a Christian conception of time and to introduce a new sense of liturgical time, in which local people would be able to follow a life pattern in complete accordance with Christianity.[56]

3.1.2.2. Similarities

Whilst competing and integrating into Chinese society, it was inevitable that both sides, the Christian and the local, to accommodate to forms and symbols belonging to the other. For example, missionaries began to replace the function of local ritual specialists when it came to certain activities, such as exorcism and healing; Christian practices and iconography also absorbed traits that were typically local. While these methods helped missionaries to attract people and to integrate more

[55] Menegon (2010), p. 80.

[56] Menegon (2005)

rapidly within the local community, these similarities also led the local authorities and external observers to associate the Christian church with local sects. For example, during the persecutions against the Non-Action sect in the mid-eighteenth century, the Christian church become a target of repression due to its being regarded as an affiliated branch. One particular aspect shared by both institutions was their rather unconventional attitude of equality with respect to women, who were not only permitted to engage in religious meditation and practices, but also to carry out certain administrative and leading roles. These similarities prompted local authorities to identify Christianity as being connected to the sects. As a consequence, in times of persecution, this affiliation caused Christianity itself to become a target of suppression.[57] Thus, the rejection of local heterodox cults might have represented an astute tactic for self-protection as well.

3.1.3. Conclusion

The aim of this brief introduction has been to provide the reader with a level of general insight into the religious context of the late Ming period, especially regarding the environment with which missionaries were confronted upon arrival. We have seen that Christians viewed local practices as a strong competitor and obstacle to Christianity. Local religions were already deeply rooted into local people's routine and

[57] Menegon (2010), p. 75; about Christianity and Non-Action Teachings: ter Haar (2014), pp. 80-83, 166-168; about Christianity and White Lotus Teachings: ter Haar (1992), pp. 219-225.

perceived as important source of welfare relief. In order to fight such a strong presence, missionaries questioned the social and ritual legitimacy of local religious groups. Missionaries attempted to offer an even stronger and efficacious form of support and successfully became part of the local world by providing people with their own version of religious experience and protection. Within this process, Christianity continuously absorbed new elements and adapted old ones. As we shall see in the following stories, Christian practices first integrated into the social milieu as an alternative solution to replace traditional religious experiences and to expand people's ready-to-use toolkit against calamities. As Christian practices became an integral part of the local heterodox system, usurping the social role that had belonged to local religions, people's consciousness of the Christian doctrine also strengthened. The miraculousness of Christianity was further spread through word of mouth by converts and narrative form.

3.2. Analysis of stories

This section gathers together the stories of the *Lixiu yijian* in which characters appeal to local religious practices. In most cases, these local religions are mentioned only briefly in the narratives and lack background information. They do not appear as cults or object of veneration, but as a source to fight against calamities or as the cause of the calamity itself. The stories can only provide a short glimpse of the characters' experience of local rituals. It is clear that it was not the intention of the writer to consider the practice itself. What was of

primary importance was, instead, to reveal how such religious experiences impacted on or were perceived by the human characters in the account. The stories confirm the focus on the social and practical function of local religion. Generally, the stories share very similar topics and narrative structures. The narration can be divided into three main stages: 1) introduction to the scene and the calamity; 2) characters appeal to one or more ritual specialists, without achieving positive results; 3) characters get to know about Christianity and ask help from church members; 4) patient finally recovers and characters convert into Christianity. The following sections divide the stories thematically into three groups: stories that concern demonic calamities, illnesses, and divine punishment. A fourth group of anecdotes deals with the theme of the power of Christianity *versus* local religions. We shall examine each story closely and investigate two main aspects: what the role of the local practice is; and how the Christian element is integrated into the account. These anecdotes will show that Christian practices gradually became an efficient alternative solution to daily emergencies.

3.2.1. Demons and exorcism

Local religions greatly feature in the stories about demonic and supernatural calamities. In the majority of cases, the story does not make much of the theological value and meaning of the local religion. Rather, the focus lingers on the efficacy of its deities and its ritual specialists in providing services of exorcism and relief. Indeed, characters do invite a local ritual specialist to solve serious problems like illness or possession.

However, when the ritual fails, the specialist is obliged to leave the house, ashamed. The family next invites other specialists until the eventual intervention of a Christian member. This pattern is repeated throughout the stories that deal with demons. One instance of this is found in the story of Lin Hengzhen 林衡鎮, in which Lin's wife is being harassed by a demon. To get rid of the demon, the family calls upon local deities and two different ritual specialists:

> In the first month of the year x*in wei* (1631), the demon secretly told the woman: "Today, I will marry you in the underworld." The wife heard the words and panicked. She secretly led her young sister-in-law to peep at them. The young aunt saw a demon coming and going in constant fluctuation and following the woman around. Terrorised, she told this to his father. They prayed to all the gods but it was not efficacious. There was a master that practiced divination with the planchette. They went to ask for his help. He agreed to arrive to their house at midnight to expel [the demon]. When the planchette diviner arrived, the demon also arrived with a companion. The sage burnt tens of charms. The demon did not make a movement. The sage then drew out a charm and gave it to the wife to burn. As the wife just extended her arm, the demon pulled her arm and took it by force. Unexpectedly, nothing happened. They heard that there was a shaman that could call the divine soldiers. The father immediately invited him. When he arrived, he wore a crown made of mulberry-tree paper. He lifted his knife and blew the bugle. The demon imitated his actions. At first, there was only one demon, then a group of demons appeared. With a metal rudder, they hit the wife. The wife fainted and fell down. The family members cried and told the shaman: "We invited you to eliminate the demon, but you, on the contrary, have accelerated my wife's death." The shaman left ashamed. Among the neighbours, there was a person who was Christian that took pity on them. […] He sincerely requested to receive a Holy sign to worship at home. Then all the family members prostrated [to it]. The wife saw that the demon also made the kowtow. The demon did not dare to enter the room again. He could only wipe away his tears in front of the room.[58]

[58] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 7a-8b, 199-202.

This story presents an interesting clash between different kinds of ritual specialists and the demon. In the text, the references to local practices are brief and furnish little information on the performance itself. In contrast, we have a lively depiction of the demon, represented as a playful and tricky being. As a result, his mocking attitude heaps further ridicule onto the two ritual specialists who are powerless in spite of their efforts. Only when confronted with Christianity does the demon suddenly become respectful and humble.

In another story, a demon randomly harasses a man called Cao 曹 in Sanshan.[59] The demon creates panic by dirtying his house, so Cao invites a ritual specialist to solve the problem:

> Cao invited a ritual specialist to carry out the exorcism. He spent a lot of money. The ritual specialist absurdly relied on the magic ritual and shouted at the demon to make him show up. The demon was not moved by it. Shortly, the demon was on the altar and broke the jar placed on it. When the ritual ended, the boy servant collected the food offerings and entered inside. Suddenly, the demon pulled his arm and caused him pain. The boy servant screamed out of shock and as for the pig head that was on the plate, they did not know where it went. The ritual specialist finished his techniques. He left surprised and ashamed. Cao was increasingly afraid. Occasionally, he heard a neighbour who worshipped the Lord of Heaven saying that the Lord of Heaven could make miracles. Then, very early in the morning, he arrived at the church and prostrated to implore for the benediction of the Lord. […The church member] ordered his family members to pray earnestly and to vow to serve the Lord of Heaven devotedly. Without spending any money and consuming any energy, the demon readily escaped without leaving any traces.[60]

[59] Cao 曹 is introduced in the story as "A man called Cao of Sanshan who was the nephew of Mr. Inspector." According to Lin Jinshui, this Mr. Inspector refers to Cao Xue Quan 曹學佺. For information regarding him, see Lin (1992), p. 59.

[60] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 2b-4a, 190-193.

Once again, the ritual specialist fails to accomplish the exorcism. The demon is not afraid of him and cannot be harmed by his ritual. On the contrary, he continues to harass people. At the end, the specialist leaves the house ashamed. This is also one of the very few stories where the financial aspect of local ritual is mentioned. It stresses the fact that Christian practices are free of any cost and yet efficacious, while local ritual specialists are expensive but inefficacious. Beyond their lack of practical functionality, local religious practices are also depicted as harmful, with the potential consequence of further worsening the patient's health or the situation, as in the case of a cursed man in Guangdong:

> Since Master Ricci (Xitai 西泰) first established himself in the capital town of the prefecture of Dongyue (probably Eastern Guangdong), people gradually became aware of the great benevolence of the Lord of Heaven. Among the people of the prefectural capital there was one that passed by a deserted grave while walking alone at night. His heart was frightened. When he returned home, he suddenly fell ill. It happened that the demon made a curse. His father was worried and scared. Hurriedly he invited a ritual specialist to perform a prayer to avoid calamities. The more the heretic techniques were applied, the more chronic the illness became. […] Immediately, the father together went to the church to pay a visit to Master Ricci. He explained him the reason for becoming ill. Ricci told him to put his trust in God and to commit to following the teachings. […] Only then did [the man] immediately recover from the illness. From then on, the members of the family were all moved by God's grace and entered the church. Alas! Life and death, fortune and misfortune, it is naturally the true God that oversees them. To pray the heretic God, not only is not beneficial, but simultaneously increases one's sin. Can we not guard against it?[61]

[61] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, pp. 13a-14a, 211-213.

This story presents a conventional case of a demonic curse. According to J.J.M. De Groot, graves are key locations where "pathogenic breaths" 邪氣 (*xieqi*) could rise and flow into living beings, causing disease and calamities.[62] The cursed patient is then visited by a ritual specialist who performs prayers. However, not only is the practitioner unable to cure the person, but he even manages to worsen the situation by transforming the illness into a chronic one. The case reaches its resolution with the intervention of Ricci. The missionary recites a prayer and gives the patient a holy casket.

Besides stories of ritual specialists, the *Lixiu yijian* also reports cases in which a local deity itself turns into a source of demonic threat. This sort of episode reinforces the missionaries' opinion that local religions were demonic. For instance, in the following story, the demon was indeed a deity that the characters venerated in their house:

> Zhang Qixun 張奇勳 was a man from Xunjiang in the Quanzhou. He worked as a sailor. His wife, Fu, was the daughter of distinguished family of Wurong 武榮 (e.i. Nan'an 南安, near Quanzhou). When she was young, she had lost her father. Even before receiving the hair-pinning ceremony (coming-of-age ceremony), she was given in marriage to Xun. Often, she did not feel happy and satisfied. She thought: "Zhang is not my husband." In the marital house, in the sacrificial place there was a heretical image. It was only approximately one *chi* long. He was the one people conventionally called Minister Zhang. Whenever it became night, he moved close to Fu's chamber. Fu's spirit often went following the demon. In the golden and decorated imperial palace where he lived, there were all kind of treasures. The demon said that he wanted to take Fu as his wife. This went on in such a way for three years. Fu's appearance was getting yellowish day by day, as if affected by jaundice. Her sister-in-law thought it to be strange. She investigated to find out the

[62] Pregadio (2012), pp. 458-460.

> reason for it. Since she got married, she hoped to escape from the demon. At the beginning, in the first month he came once and a second time. Then, there was not a night in which he did not come. While Fu was lying together with his husband, the demon was also sharing her pillow mat. The husband could not bear with his anger. Secretly he nailed the belly of the demon's statue with a spike. Fu did not know about it. That night, [the demon] came again and showed his intestines to Fu, with his blood dripping uninhibitedly. Fu's illness got more critical day by day. She did not eat for more than two or three months. She was already close to death. The husband, worried by the demon, invited into his house a ritual specialist to perform a ritual of exorcism and expulsion. All the methods were inefficacious. The husband's father suddenly heard about the holy doctrine of the Lord of Heaven. Therefore, he went to the church and earnestly kowtowed. He asked church members to come to his house to sprinkle the holy water and to attach the holy sign in his bedroom. That day, when it had just become dusk, the evil demon came again. He did not dare to enter the inner chamber. He could only approach the central hall asking to meet. The day after, members of the church came again to his house to present the holy sign. Then, the demon totally vanished. Fu gradually recovered from the illness completely. She began to drink and eat as before. The whole family was grateful. It is said that all converted to the holy doctrine and received the baptism. This matter occurred in the springtime of the *kui you* year during the reign of Chongzhen (1633).[63]

Minister Zhang, the demon in question in this story, was initially a spirit worshipped by the marital family, which then appeared in bodily form. The demon is injured after character damages its image with a nail, indicating a supernatural connection between the object with spiritual power and the spirit itself. To eliminate the local deity, the characters appeal to a ritual specialist. When the local specialist's attempt fails, they turn to Christianity and succeed in curing the woman.

[63] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, 9b-10a, pp. 204-205.

3.2.1.1. General reflections

Through analysing the stories, we can deduce few points about the views of Christian converts towards local religions: 1) local religious practices are inefficient; 2) ritual specialists are inferior to demons; 3) local religions can be demonic. First, in all these stories, the main characters initially rely on local practitioners to deal with demonic mischief. However, the local rituals are not efficient. On the contrary, they turn out to be counter-effective and worsen the patient's condition. Second, religious specialists fail in controlling and asserting their superiority over the demons. On the contrary, some demons seem not to feel any fear towards local practitioners, rather showing an attitude of scorn and disrespect. Third, local religions can be a potential source of threat as their deities have been the actors in cases of harassment. In these episodes, it is difficult to distinguish the figure of the local god from that of a common demon. As with for the demon, people would have to invite a local practitioner to exorcise the local deity. The texts do not provide further detail about the ritual specialist and use the general term of "prayer to avoid calamities" 祈禳 (*qirang*) to indicate most of the rituals. Descriptions of the ritual are rare and brief. It is common to find sentences that barely mention the local religious practitioner and its failed attempt of exorcism, for example: "The husband, worried by the demon, invited into his house a ritual specialist to perform a ritual of exorcism and expulsion. All the methods were inefficacious."[64] From the simplicity with which local religious elements are presented, we can

[64] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, 9b-10a, pp. 204-205.

deduce that the author is not interested in the local rituals, but in communicating the inefficacy of local religion.

Christianity comes onto the scene after the failure of local practices. Only then does the desperate character get in touch with the Christian church and decide to rely on the converts. The Christian cure invariably brings immediate relief. The only condition for achieving such an efficient result is the character's absolute reliance in God. Thus, all possible objects or images linked to local practices have to be removed. In stark contrast to their attitude towards local practitioners, demons show high levels of reverence and submission towards Christianity and converts. Due to their fear, they do not dare to harass any person or space that is under the protection of a Christian object. Rather, they prostrate in front of the holy object and obediently free the characters even as they begrudge doing so: "The wife saw that the demon also made the kowtow. The demon did not dare to enter the room again. He could only wipe away his tears in front of the room."

Finally, in most of the cases, characters perceive local religious practices as occasional solutions to achieve certain objectives; whenever the ritual is not efficient, the character can promptly reject it and turn to an alternative practitioner or deity. Such strong pragmatic connotations are also reflected in Christian people's tactics when it comes to interacting with local religions. We have seen that the conflict between local specialists and converts did not concern doctrinal or theological understandings of the world. Rather, it is preoccupied with the ritualistic dimension. The clash emerged from a contest for demonstrating how the

practice of one was more efficient than the other, how one was more successful in providing for people's wellbeing. Thus, the interaction between Christianity and local religions is not conflictual but competitive. However, this pattern does not follow for all local religious cultures. For instance, in the following chapter, we shall see that Buddhist practices had a different connotation and role within people's lives. Differently from the previous cases, followers' dedication to Buddhism did not emerge from occasional needs, but rather was deeply rooted in their daily life.

3.2.2. Healing and welfare

A second type of story where local religious elements appear regards healing. The structure of the stories is very similar to the previous exorcism cases. Here, the character is not possessed by a demon, but becomes affected by illness that it seems the local practitioners are unable to cure. The situation is solved only by the intervention of a Christian member. Ritual specialists, as a representative of the local religious world, are revealed to be inefficient and powerless against the problem. For example, the daughter of the convert Yan Ande 顏安德 from Yongchun, reported the following experience:

> One day, she was afflicted by an illness. She hiccupped and choked for several days. She also felt cold. Suddenly her stomach hurt so much that she could not bear it. Her breath was discontinuous. Her husband immediately called the woman medium to come. According to the popular saying, it was a *sha* (煞).[65] It was not possible to heal her.

[65] The *sha* 煞, or soul-bird, was a bird-like creature that collected the souls of deceased people. On the day of the *huisha* 回煞, around one week after the death, the soul-bird

> Therefore, he asked Yan Ande. Yan arrived rapidly late at night. He removed everything [heretic]. But he hung the holy casket that he was carrying on her chest. Then he bowed his head and prayed to the Holy Mother for her. Immediately, her upper chest vomited the food from the day before. Very quickly she recovered. She was thankful and was moved to become Christian. Then, her husband also received the baptism.[66]

In the story, the local shaman could merely identify the *sha* but was powerless against it; in contrast, the convert Yan Ande hanging the holy casket onto the patient alone was sufficient to make her immediately recover. This proved that the power of the Lord of Heaven was invincible against all types of misfortune, while local religious specialists had very limited capacities. A similar situation can be found in the following story about a difficult delivery:

> Chen 陳氏, wife of Guo Chun 郭春 from Hui'an, was at the end of her pregnancy. For days, she could not give birth. Many times, she almost died. The whole family was scared. The woman medium prayed to the gods but it was inefficacious. The family wanted to invite Mai Zhaomei 麥肇羌 (or Mai Zhaogao) to play the Lord of Heaven and the Holy Mother for them. Usually, they did not believe [in the Lord of Heaven], they were afraid of being laughed at. Yet, the situation was dangerous and urgent, so they had no choice but to ask sincerely for help. […] As they prayed, the demon immediately responded. Both the mother and the son were safe. Guo Chun was touched by the Lord's miraculous grace. Thereupon, the whole family converted to the doctrine.[67]

The story presents a situation of disease provoked by difficult delivery. Again, the family first invites the ritual specialist, a female medium, to

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and the soul would return together to visit the corpse. Typically, people would summon specialists of Daoist orientation to deal with these visitations. Another type of *sha* attack could be caused by them bumping into malign stars, such as the Killer-demon Deities 煞神 (*shashen*), which could also afflict people with misfortune. For further details, please refer to ter Haar (2006), pp. 204-216.

[66] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, p. 15b, 216.

[67] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p.16a, 217.

treat the patient. However, her prayers seem to be futile. At that point, the protagonist asks for the help of local converts. The story, moreover, reveals that the family had had little interest in the new doctrine during their daily life; their decision to appeal the converts was also due to the great urgency of the matter. Eventually, Guo might have been very little touched by the Christian doctrine in itself, yet the miraculous effect of the liturgy immediately persuaded him. The Christian liturgy must be conducted in an uncontaminated space; even the smallest demonic presence or object could obstruct the efficiency of the practice.

3.2.2.1. General Reflections

In the stories under observation, it is clear that both Guo Chun and Yan's husband have invoke a women medium 女巫 (*nü wu*) to carry out healing practices. Historically, shamans and mediums were perceived to be very closely connected with the figure of the physician; it was common for people to consult *wu* practitioners in situation of disease or with a female specialist when it came to a female issue such as pregnancy. Textual evidence has even shown that people often preferred medical treatment from shamans to that by official physicians.[68]

As has been previously argued, successful healing practices could have a positive impact on the reputation of the clerical community and boost the religious value of the doctrine. The anecdotes in the *Lixiu yijian* demonstrate the efficacy and power of the Christian cure whilst proving the inefficacy of local religious practices. The Christian treatment is instantaneous and efficient, with patients recovering immediately after

[68] Chao (2009), pp. 147-148.

submitting to the Lord of Heaven. The performance is not conducted by one specific person – all converts are able to do so; what is essential is not the competence of the ritual performer, but the divine power embodied by the ritual and the religious faith of that person. Therefore, convert and patients had to maintain absolute honesty and dedication to the Lord of Heaven and reject all local religious elements, which were not only inefficient in solving the problem but could also become an impediment to healing. As with in the cases of demonic calamities, people perceived Christianity as a secondary solution and characters appeal to converts when the attempts of the ritual specialists fail. After reaching that point, people are willing to convert to Christianity in order to accede to their support regardless of their religious inclinations. People became increasingly aware of missionaries' role in providing medicine and treatments. Zhang Xianqing argues that medical activity was important factor in facilitating the spread of Christianity and that it favoured the construction of a positive and philanthropic impression of the missionaries among the local community.[69] Nonetheless, this factor also led to cases in which people converted merely to obtain medical resources, as Lars P. Laamann has reported.[70]

3.2.3. The power of the Lord of Heaven

While the previous groups of stories emphasised the efficacy of Christian practices over local practices, the next couple of stories provide

[69] Zhang (2009), pp. 579-603.

[70] Laamann (2006), p. 30.

support for the supremacy of Christianity over the demonic and religious worlds. Here, the demon, who is in fact the local deity and not just any demon harming individual people personally admits its inferiority to and fear of the Lord of Heaven. For instance, in the following story, a man called Yang used to worship the Three Saints 三聖公 (*san sheng gong)* and constructed a temple in honour of the deities. When he converted to the Lord of Heaven, he destroyed the temple and returned the land. To seek revenge, one of the Three Saints attacked a neighbouring family:

> In Jianchang there was a man with surname Yang 楊. His ancestor donated a piece of land to support the temple of the San Sheng Gong. When he converted to Christianity, he deeply understood the wrongness of worshipping the demons. Therefore, he destroyed the statues and demolished the temple. He returned the original piece of land. Suddenly a demon possessed a man, and entered in a neighbouring house. He loudly said: "I am the San Sheng Gong. My big brother and my second brother are all outside patrolling. They left me as guard. Unexpectedly, the temple was abandoned by someone. You should all quickly save me, otherwise I will bring disaster upon you, I will burn you house." The members of the family moved forward and asked: "This is Yang family's business, what does it have to do with us? If you have the spiritual power, why are you not bringing disaster upon Yang instead of unwarrantedly harming us?" The demon replied: "In Yang's house, there is a statue of the Lord of Heaven. How would I dare to enter into his house? Otherwise, would I still need to wait for you to tell?" Then he began to incessantly dance in a furious and wild manner. There happened to be in front of the central hall there was a big porcelain vase used to store water. As he breathed into the vase, the water was immediately drained. Then he ate several *sheng* of rice. The family was extremely scared and hastened to tell Yang. He then referred the account to Mister Fei 費先生.[71] Mister Fei ordered that possessed man to be tied up and brought over. The dispatched person had not yet left, when the demon again said with anger: "You did not save me, but why did you even tell the

[71] Mister Fei: referred probably to the Portuguese missionary Gaspar Ferreira who lived in Jianchang in 1630 and between 1634-1635. In 1630, he constructed a church in the city. In Pfister (1976), pp. 78-79; Dehergne (1973), p. 91.

> church of the Lord of Heaven and order to block me? After few moments, the dispatched person arrived. The demon immediately escaped and did not possess people anymore. That person suddenly stood up. When they asked him, he was not aware of anything that had happened. From then on, the demon finally lost its spiritual power. In the nearby neighbourhoods, there was not one person who did not believe it. Looking at this, we can see that the demon is afraid of the supreme authority of the Lord of Heaven. But if a man fears the demon, but does not fear the Lord of Heaven, how could it be that people are even less clever than demons?[72]

In this story, the Saint is portrayed as a resentful and violent spirit. His manifestation in the human world was prompted by a sentiment of vengeance and anger against people. For him, if the cult stopped, he and his brothers would no longer be fed. On the basis of the description provided by the text, it is difficult to establish a definite separation between a deity and a regular demon. Indeed, just like a demon, the Saint performs wild acts, such as dancing crazily or devouring people's food. The Saint does not take revenge on the Yang family, who confiscated the land, instead preferring to attack a neighbour because Yang worships the Lord of Heaven in his house. The deity is well conscious of the supremacy of the Lord of Heaven and escapes in the hurry when the Christian member arrives. Finally, the story closes with a brief doctrinal verdict that underscores the superiority of the Lord of Heaven.

Secondly, the superiority of the Lord of Heaven is additionally reflected in his authority over the spiritual world; he controls and pre-decides each creature's fate. Thus, the demon is not considered to be an independent being, but as a performer of the divine will; even his

[72] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 2a-2b, 189-190.

harmful conduct is pre-determined by the Lord of Heaven. We can see in the following story:

> In the past, at the time when Master Ricci, Xitai, went to the southern capital, he was planning to construct his house. At that time, Mister Liu 劉公, Douxu 斗墟 , of the Ministry of Revenue had an old residence in Hong Wu Gang that was haunted by a demon. People did not dare to enter. He sent a warrior to live there and guard it. He revealed his form even in daytime. [The warrior] wielded his sword to hit it unsuccessfully. The Buddhists and Daoists treated it but they were inefficacious. It [the residence] was abandoned for many years. There was not a buyer. Mister Liu told Master Ricci: "You have always taken pride in your virtuousness. If you are not afraid of the evil, I would be very happy to sell it to you." Master Ricci said: "When I worship the statue of the Lord of Heaven, the demon will immediately run away." Mister Liu was greatly happy and sold it to him. That day, Master Ricci immediately built a platform in the central hall to worship the statue of the Lord of Heaven. Then, he sprinkled his room with holy water. From then, of the demon there were neither a sound nor a shadow. Mister Liu and the many of the gentry all found it miraculous. Then he said to Ricci: "In the past, when I constructed this hall according to the arts of fixing, selecting, eliminating, and avoiding arts of hemerology.[73] Everything was carefully examined. But why could people not live here while demons could? Only today did I get to know that the evil cannot win over the right and that hemerology and date selection are all false." Was it not only because this house was to be lived in by a completely perfect person, therefore the Lord of Heaven ordered the demon to guard it and not let other people live there? From that time on, all the missionaries coming from the West have one after another lived there. The evil demon disappeared. The people of Jinling (Nanjing) still speak of it now.[74]

The story reports an episode of demonic manifestation that occurred in Nanjing at the time when Ricci arrived. As in the previous cases, the owner of this haunted house invites local ritual practitioners to perform exorcisms, which all ended unsuccessfully. The house is sold to Ricci,

[73] 堪輿 (*kan yu*) according to Pregadio (2012), p. 117.

[74] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, pp.1a-2a, 187-189; *HE*, l. 4ème, ch. VIII, pp. 429-431.

who immediately succeeds in liberating it from the demon. According to the anecdote, the demonic presence in the residence was not a fortuity. Rather, it was a pre-arrangement by the Lord of Heaven to support the missionaries.

3.2.3.1. General Reflections

This section has argued above that the relationship between local religions and Christianity was generally competitive. Such competition finds itself reflected in the stories, where Christian members and ritual specialists compete to demonstrate the supremacy of their rituals. In this section, we have further seen that demons were aware of their inferiority to the Lord of Heaven beforehand and thus never dared to challenge his power. In regards to local deities, although missionaries generally classified them as within the demonic sphere, Aleni attempted to propose a more tolerant suggestion for deities such as the City God, namely identifying them as guardian angels dispatched by God.[75] In either case, both local deities and demons were perceived to be under the control of the Lord of Heaven, their actions and fate had been pre-established by him.

3.2.4. Divine punishment

We have observed that local religions were depicted as inefficient and demonic and their practices as deceptive with potential to even bring further misfortune to their worshippers or clientele. Because of this

[75] *KDRC* vol. 1, p. 280-281.

demonic nature, local ritual objects impede the successful performance of the Christian liturgy. Rather, they could cause even greater calamity; which is indeed the case for those local converts who fail to maintain an honest and constant faith in the Lord of Heaven, but get attracted to fallacious practices. Here, the convert is considered to be an ingrate betrayer, and may be punished with painful retribution, as we shall see in the following story:

> In Wulin, there was someone called Sun. In the spring of the year *yi wei* (1619) his wife was about to give birth. For more than two days and nights she was not able to give birth. The witch-doctor was helpless, personally thinking that they would certainly die. Among the close neighbours, there was someone who worshipped the doctrine. Zhang Shaoshi 張少室 felt pity and went to see them. He instructed them to pray for the grace and the pardon of the Lord of Heaven and told him about the miraculous deeds and benefits of the Christian Saint Ignatio. Before converting to Christianity, Shaoshi's wife had also been afflicted by difficulties in giving birth. Because she held the statue of St. Ignatio, she was able to give birth. Therefore, Sun listened to his words and did as ordered. Shaoshi also instructed that the woman in labour should firmly maintain faith. Thereupon, they quickly asked for the statue of St. Ignatio and gave it to her. After few moments, the woman was about to give birth but she did not. They did not know the cause of it. They become aware that at the side there still were some charms for hastening birth. They urgently ordered to burn them. When everything was burnt, the wife succeeded in giving birth. After three days, the wife was even more healthy and energetic. Later, unexpectedly because she followed the general customs and participated in the *zhaijiao* 齋醮 rituals, she betrayed the grace. She forgot her origins. In the middle of the fifth month, his son fell ill and unexpectedly died. Alas! God of supreme benevolence would not deprive a son's life because of parents' fault. But if you receive the grace of Lord but do not repay his gratitude, then you will be disgraced and recorded as an ingrate for admonishment.[76]

[76] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, 57a-57b, pp. 299-300.

The first part of the story recounts a miraculous episode of difficult delivery by the wife of a man called Sun. Through relying on the miraculous effects of Christianity, the woman is able to successfully deliver the baby. The second part is set in the aftermath of their conversion. It happened that Sun's wife participated again to a local religious practice. The *zhai jiao* 齋醮 was a communal ritual of purification, generally associated to Daoist groups, through which people could express their gratitude to the Heaven and seek for absolution for their mistakes.[77] Her fallacious participation to this ceremony caused the death of the new-born. The punishment is harsh. From this we can see how the practice of local religions was regarded as a crime of extreme gravity and sinfulness. A similar episode can be also found in the story of Yan Ande,[78] who is punished for consulting a divination specialist:

> The imperial examination candidate Yan Ande from Yongchun has always had a foot illness. Since becoming

[77] Pregadio (2012), pp. 539-544. The term "*zhai jiao*" can also refer to a lay Buddhist sect *zhai jiao* 齋教. The two terms share the same pronounciation, but have their second character written differently, one is 教 and one 醮. Thus, since the text writes 齋醮, it is almost certain that it refers to the latter. For further details about the *zhai jiao* 齋教 group, please refer to ter Haar (2014).

[78] Yan Ande was a tribute student 明經 (*ming jing*), native to Yongchun. Yan Ande can be identified with the figure of Yan Zhifu 顏之復. First, both Yan Zhifu and Yan Ande were tribute students from Yongchun. According to the *Yongchun xianzhi,* Yan Zhifu came from a highly prestigious family from Yongchun, which boosted different *jinshi* degree holders. Second, by taking into account that Li Jiugong began compiling the *Lixiu yijian* after 1638, it is very likely that Yan Ande was active in that time as well. Indeed, this timespan coincides with the period when Yan Zhifu was awarded his official title in 1628. Third, in the view of his contribution as proof-reader to the *Kouduo richao*, we can suppose that Yan Zhifu also had a fairly close relationship with Li Jiubiao. It is very plausible that he was acquainted with Li Jiugong or that Li Jiugong had easy access to stories about him. Finally, "Ande" could have been Yan Zhifu's baptismal name, adopted by fellow converts to address to him. Standaert inserted "Andreas" followed by a question mark as Yan Zhifu's name of baptism. *HC*, p. 400. For information regarding Yan Zhifu, please refer to *Yongchun Zhouzhi* (1787), *j.* 21, p. 13b, 417; *Yongchun xianzhi* (1920), *j.* 14, p. 19a, 621. For details about other members from the Yongchun Yan family or families, please look at *Yongchun Zhouzhi* (1787), *j.* 21, pp. 9b-14a, 415-417.

> Christian three years earlier, he had succeeded in getting rid of it and recovering. One day, a surprising issue regarding which he was doubtful and uncertain unexpectedly occurred. A pretty efficient specialist in divination calculated it through divination. That day his foot illness acted up violently, even more strongly than in the past. For three days and nights, he could not get out of bed. He suspected that he had surely committed a transgression and that the Lord was reprimanding him for it. Then, one silent night he knelt before the *ta* (couch), praying to the Lord of Heaven to explain why he was being punished. One night, when he was half-asleep and half-awake, there was a person standing before him and saying to him: 'In the battle of Changping 長平, four hundred thousand [people] were buried alive. In the battle of Xin'an 新安, two hundred thousand were buried alive. How could it be that they were all afflicted by the Three Penalties and the Six Harms?' The state sends out its troops; how could it be that there are none who practise divination with tortoise shell and yarrow stalks? The state of Zhao 趙 had 400 thousand [of his soldiers] buried alive and did he not lose the state? Xiang Yu 項羽 buried 200 thousand [soldiers] alive and lost All Under Heaven. After hearing these words, he suddenly woke up. Panicked, he understood the reason why he had received the Lord's reprimand. It was because of he made recourse to divination. Therefore, he greatly hated himself and, grateful, he prostrated himself and kowtowed in thanks to the Lord of Heaven. The pain [of the foot illness] immediately stopped. After two days, he went to the church to tell the story to his fellow Christians and friends. There were none who did not sigh in shock and become enlightened. It increased their understanding that not even the slightest violation of the Lord's admonishments can be permitted.[79]

Yan Ande enjoyed the reputation of being a very committed and devout convert. His devoutness is further reflected in the fact that his daughters also become Christian. In this account, Yan is rebuked for consulting divination specialists and is punished by an aggravation of his foot illness, which had been formerly cured through Christianity. Compared to the previous case, in which implicated the loss of the child, Yan's

[79] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, pp. 55a-56a, 295-297.

punishment may seem less harsh in our eyes. Although we may still question how much might have infant mortality be impactful to people in late Ming China, we may possibly argue that Yan Ande's prior commitment and loyalty to the Lord of Heaven helped him to reduce the scale of his crime and, hence, the intensity of the punishment. His own strong belief also allowed him to immediately sense his crime and correct it.

3.2.4.1. General reflections

The theme of divine punishment features greatly in writings by Christian authors of the late Ming period. In this section, we have seen that the practice of local religions on the part of the converts was punished as a major crime. It was not merely a sinful fault, but represented a betrayal of the Lord of Heaven, an act of extreme ingratitude. An important factor in this assigned severity must have been the very intense competition that existed between Christianity and local religious groups. Turning to other practices could cause a depreciation of the value of Christianity, as well as a refutation of its supremacy over local practices. These stories aimed to persuade people to remain faithful to the doctrine and the punishments further promoted the absolute arbitrary power of the Lord of Heaven over the life and death of people.

Religious punishment was not a novelty for the Chinese readership, who were accustomed to all sorts of spiritual affliction and heavenly punishment. Textual sources from the early period assumed the existence of "a heaven or a group of spirits fully conscious of human

actions and vigorously active in their punishment or reward."[80] This idea further perpetuated itself through different religious systems that emerged in later times and became an element of continuity in the Chinese religious repertory. A typical form of punishment was affliction by diseases or epidemics. For example, plague spirits *wen* 瘟神 (*wen shen*) were deities sent down by the Jade Emperor expressly to punish wrongdoers and sinful communities by afflicting them with illness.[81] As a result, people believed that fortune was a reward for the compliance of the person, while calamities and misfortune were retributions for non-compliance. Used to track one's faults, a personal moral "diary", called "Ledgers of Merit and Demerit" 功過格 (*gongguo ge*), was widespread in the late imperial period. These practices represented important sources for self-discipline and self-moral imposition and permitted people to gain control over their punishments or rewards.[82]

In the case of Christianity, we can find a very similar idea of punishment. As we can see from the stories, divine punishment is applied for immoral conduct and betrayal of the Christian faith. The people guilty of these crimes are tormented by illness and/or extreme pain, either physical or spiritual. The main judge and executor of punishment is embodied as the figure of the Lord of Heaven, who is here represented as a very resolute and severe entity. Unlike the human-centric ideology behind the "Ledgers of Merit and Demerit", the doctrine introduced by

[80] Brokaw (2014), p. 29.

[81] Katz (1995), p. 49.

[82] Zürcher (2015), p. 96.

the missionaries does not suggest that men have free will since the Lord of Heaven alone can rule over the functioning of the world. Nevertheless, moral development and spiritual purification could still contribute to lighten the burden of original sin present in every man. According to local belief systems, people could escape from punishment through accomplishing meritorious actions, such as sacrifices or offerings to the deities to pray for forgiveness. People could also reduce the severity of their mistakes by participating to ceremonies of repentance and purification. Christianity also offered penitential practices; however, this practice focuses on the individual's recognition of the sin and full involvement in the confessional act. It was a process centred around the intimate communication between the sinner and God. The outcome of retribution could not be changed through the mere accumulation of spiritual and material commitment. Rather, it was determined by the intensity of the person's sentiment of contrition as well as his eagerness to correct the faults.[83] In these liturgies, the Christian priest, under the guise of the divine messenger, played a role in guiding and supporting the sinner toward the rectification of his sins. He did not hold any decisive power and the Lord of Heaven retained the final authority in judging each person's retribution.

[83] Zürcher (2007), pp. 148-152.

3.3. Concluding remarks

Local religions make their appearance in the stories in the form of rituals, ritual specialists, and deities. People make recourse to them to solve specific problems or to improve their daily welfare, especially in the cases of illness and demonic harassment. However, as we have observed, their efficacy was limited; local deities could often be demonic and could even bring further misfortune to their worshippers. Because of this demonic nature, people had to eliminate all traces to enable the successful performance of the Christian liturgy, and local converts also had to cut all connections to them in order to avoid divine punishment.

The main purpose of the stories in the *Lixiu yijian* is to demonstrate the superiority and the efficacy of Christian liturgies and their dominion over the realm of the supernatural. This objective is achieved through presenting a confrontation between local religions and Christianity in terms of their capacity to provide social welfare. The Christian liturgies are depicted as an immediately efficacious solution to problems, and the local practices as inefficacious and harmful. Nevertheless, in respect to local practices, Christian practices were often considered to be a secondary and alternative solution. Generally, people adopted them only when local practitioners failed to achieve a positive result. Even those who had habitually shown indifference towards the new doctrine were willing to appeal to Christianity in such cases. In term of form and structure, the Christian religious experience shared an affinity with local rituals. Both consisted of material support, such as talismans or holy caskets, along with an oral passage, an incantation or a

prayer, carried out by the religious representative. These characteristics will be further analysed in later chapters. What principally differentiated Christianity from the local practices was in fact the role of the person within the ritual. In the local practice, the decisive agent is the ritual specialist and his ability to conduct the performance and communicate to deities. However, in the case of Christian practices, all solutions are the fruit of people's sincere faith and belief in God. Furthermore, the power of these holy objects could be effective only in cases of absolute reliance. People who can achieve so will be able to receive divine grace. On the contrary, those who give in to the temptation of local practices, despite having been instructed of their demonic nature, are condemned to the heaviest punishments. People were not only required to believe in the Lord of Heaven, but also to totally and uniquely rely on him in order to benefit from the promise of well-being.

4. *Lixiu yijian* and Buddhism

4.1. Buddhism and Christianity

In the *Lixiu yijian,* Buddhism is only mentioned in few stories. These stories treat it as a central topic and offer a representation of it that is sharply different from that of local religions. This difference is reflected in two main aspects. First, in the stories, Buddhism and Buddhist practices are distinguished from other religious cultures by specific terms such as "*fo"* 佛 or "*foshi"* 佛事. Second, the role that Buddhist practices play in the characters' lives is different from that played by local religious practices. As a consequence, the interaction between Buddhism and Christianity is different as well. Because of this peculiar arrangement, I have decided to analyse Buddhism in a separate section, and not as a local religion. We shall observe that Buddhism was depicted in the stories as an extremely powerful and threatening force and that its relationship with Christianity was not merely competitive, but conflictual and mutually exclusive.

4.1.1. Context

The imperial attitude towards local religious practices was characterised by alternating periods of hostility and tolerance. In the case of Buddhism, its institutions had never been totally subject to the state's control. Rather, depending on the political milieu, it was a relatively independent authority. In late Ming times, the Buddhist institution

underwent a drastic process of change and revival. One impactful change was the absorption of religious spaces by the local gentry class, who became important sponsors and patrons of monasteries and of communal activities. This phenomenon had multiple consequences, and one of these was the rise of political hostility towards Buddhism. Timothy Brook has argued that the Buddhist monastery and religion offered a space of autonomy to the local gentry that enabled them to enlarge their "realm of *si* (private)" in respect to "realm of the *gong* (public)*."* Here, the "realm of the private" can be interpreted in terms of spiritual space. The practice of Buddhism was a quest for a connection between the self and something of far greater. It was an exclusively private space, in which each individual liberated himself from the public world.[84] This "realm of private" can be also understood in terms of political spaces. Lagerwey has argued that religious institutions bore important social significance, thus patronage over such spaces could offer a special identity to local gentry and permit the acquisition of social and political impact on the local level.[85] As a consequence, attempts to enlarge the "realm of private" by the local gentry raised the suspicions of the political class, as well as the hostility of the Confucian scholars, who perceived the inclination towards Buddhism as a challenge to the authority of Confucianism and to the traditional conception of public morality.[86] On the other hand, this argument has been refuted by Jennifer Eichman.

[84] Brook (1993), p. 34.

[85] Lagerwey (2004), introduction.

[86] Brook (2001), p. 97.

Eichman provides a picture that is much more dynamic and argues that such hostility towards Buddhism was relative. Indeed, Buddhism often existed in the form of a fellowship network among the elite spheres. This fellowship system was dispersed among multiple other networks that were tied cohesively by two aspects: members' relationship to prominent monks and the common quest for spiritual cultivation. Elites could engage in Buddhist practices with varied levels of commitment and move between the Confucian and the Buddhist identity at their own discretion. For them, the Buddhist practice did not conflict with the Confucian *habitus* but endowed it with an alternative possibility in their search for the right path of self-cultivation.[87] In this case, Buddhist practice did not represent a threat to Confucianism. Rather, it was accepted by many scholars who were genuinely attracted by the intellectual and religious rewards it offered.

As a result, the picture of Buddhism in the late imperial period is not uniform. Instead it was dynamic and multi-faceted, and constantly re-evaluated according to the political, social, and spiritual exigencies of local elites. In such a context, the arrival of Christianity evoked had different forms of impact on and evoked different responses from the local elites. For those who perceived Buddhism as a threat to the Confucian authority, Christianity become a tool with which to fight Buddhist influence and strengthen Confucian moral canons. For those who could not achieve enlightenment through Buddhist practice, it could offer an alternative space for spiritual search and self-cultivation.

[87] Eichman (2016), Chapter 1.

4.1.2. Interactions

The writings of missionaries and converts have shown that Buddhist practices were widespread among the local communities and constituted an important part of the local religious panorama of the late Ming period.[88] As just mentioned, elites sought in Buddhism an alternative technique for self-cultivation and spiritual fulfilment. Similarly, it played the role of religious relief provider within the local community, where its presence was further intensified due to the continuous flourishing of sects and associations that were to different extents connected to Buddhism. This widespread presence was perceived as a major obstacle to the implantation of Christianity in China. On the one hand, divergences in doctrinal and theological matters became the centre of continuous debate between missionaries and Buddhist monks. On the other hand, the multitude of resemblances shared by both religions often caused people to perceive Christianity as a sect of Buddhism.

4.1.2.1. Similarities

Christianity was initially received by local people as a sect of Buddhism and the missionaries as a "monk from India" 天竺國僧 (*tianzhuguo seng*).[89] Such an approach was later rejected by Ricci as he realised the urgency of establishing an independent Christian identity. The choice of Buddhism was not a casual choice. Rather, they had found

[88] Zürcher (2006), p. 107.

[89] *Xinbian Xizhuguo Tianzhu Shilu* 新編西竺國天主實錄; Description in Chan (2015), pp. 90-96.

in it elements that greatly reflected their own religious practice;[90] these elements were not related to the ontological or theological construction of the religion but concerned areas of greater exposure, such as the external appearance, lifestyle, and practice of celibacy by their monastic representatives, due to which "it was not difficult to think that [they] belonged to the same sect."[91] For instance, Christian and Buddhist communities shared common ideas such as that religious devotion implicates daily spiritual exercises, as well as similar liturgical forms such as practices of repentance and of confession.[92]

A second type of similarity derives from the artificial creation, whether conscious or unconscious, of people. This was induced by the constant phenomenon of interaction and cultural exchange between Christianity and local cultures during the transmitting process, and resulted in the formation of hybridised cultural forms. The phenomenon is particularly evident in literature and art. For instance, in his study on Christian tales about visits to the underworld, Standaert argued that Christian stories had greatly absorbed elements that belonged to the Buddhist literary tradition, eventually ending up with a very strong Buddhist nuance.[93] This nuance was further intensified by the adoption of terminology, including the concepts of heaven 天堂 (*tiantang*), hell 地獄 (*diyu*), and demon 魔 (*mo*), that had previously been expressly

[90] Zago (1985), p. 127.

[91] *Opere Storiche* vol. 2, pp. 199-200.

[92] Similarities between Christian confession and the ritual of repentance studied in Menegon (2006), p. 86 and Zürcher (2015), pp. 91-112.

[93] Standaert (1993)

Buddhist.[94] Bailey studies the same issue from an iconographic perspective and argues that Christian images increasingly integrated Buddhist and local artistic patterns and techniques.[95] As a result, both these tales and images represent paradoxical situations in the eyes of the missionary. On the one hand, localisation and absorption of Buddhist traits helped missionaries to spread theological images among the local community. On the other hand, such processes were constantly intensifying the Buddhist connotation attributed to these elements, preventing a radical separation between the two religious systems. In order to eliminate this association, it was essential for the missionary to draw a strict line of division between Christianity and Buddhism, and we find this goal deeply reflected in the stories of the *Lixiu yijian.*

4.1.2.2. Confucian recognition

Although Buddhist and Christian practices could appear very similar to the eye of the general observer, they bore very different theological and metaphysical views. These differences laid the basis for a heated debate between missionaries and monks, which further triggered the emergence of anti-Christian and anti-Buddhist factions. A more detailed account of this debate is provided in the works by Jacques Gernet,[96] Adrian Dudink,[97] John D. Young,[98] and Kim Sangkeun.[99]

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[94] Edkins (2015), p. 357.

[95] Bailey (2012), pp. 103-104.

[96] Gernet (1982)

[97] Dudink (1993), pp. 94-140.

[98] Young (1980)

[99] Kim (2004)

Here, I will just briefly call the attention to the role played by Confucianism within it. It is interesting to observe that both sides made constant recourse to Confucian traditions in order to strengthen their own position. For instance, in a 1609 letter, Ricci explicitly manifested his appreciation of the Confucian culture, which he defines as form of philosophy fulfilling the natural law.[100] He argued that early Confucian doctrines were in harmony with the Jesuit religion and provide a source of mutual enrichment. Buddhism, instead, had caused the deterioration of the Confucian culture and morality: "the Father was the real man of letters who has never gotten involved with this sect of idols, as a majority of today's intellectuals do."[101] Passages such as these aimed to establish a connection, if not an identification, between Confucianism and Christianity, whilst denouncing Buddhism. Ricci's critiques instigated numerous forceful attacks from Buddhist monks, such as Zhuhong 袾宏 and Fei Yin 費隱, on doctrinal issues such as reincarnation, the existence of God, and Creation. In their critical treaties, both monks made express use of tales and narratives that were extant in the Confucian tradition, whilst absent in Christianity.[102] In doing so, they did not only reject Christian doctrines, while, in the same way as Ricci had, promoting a special relationship between the Buddhism and Confucianism. As a result, within this confrontation, Confucian recognition became an object of competition between the two religious systems. For both sides, the

[100] Tang, (1991), pp. 147-148.

[101] *FR,* vol. 2., ch. VII, nn. 555-556, pp. 72-72. For further details about the critique on Buddhism, see Young (1980), p. 29.

[102] Lancashire (1969), pp. 218-241.

demonstration of the legitimacy and compatibility of their own teachings within the Confucian world therefore became an essential condition for asserting religious superiority.

4.1.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Buddhism represents one major theme of discussion. This attitude of hostility was sparked by different factors, which included: 1) changing political attitudes; 2) the quest for Confucian recognition; 3) the need for a Christian identity. In particular, the last point will feature strongly in the following stories. Indeed, affinities did exist between Buddhist and Christian practices in terms of their meditative, iconographical, and liturgical traditions, which often became the causes of confusion and misunderstandings. To an external observer, the two doctrines might have appeared similar at first sight. Although this resemblance initially helped missionaries to introduce Christianity into China under Buddhist forms, it soon become an obstacle for the spreading of their messages. Christianity was perceived as a Buddhist sect, despite the huge doctrinal differences between the two. In order to establish the Christian community, a total separation was perceived as urgent. According to Vernon Ruland's theory of "inflated difference," a minority group can better consolidate its own group identity through dis-identifying from and accentuating the slightest

differences with another cult.[103] For the Christian missionaries, that cult was Buddhism.

4.2. Analysis of stories

In the *Lixiu yijian,* the representations of Buddhism are characterised by specific patterns which repeat throughout the narratives. By observing these elements, we can construct a preliminary understanding of the role of Buddhism within local spaces as well as gaining new insights into how the Christian community handled its presence. We shall see that Buddhism in the *Lixiu yijian* is presented as a powerful doctrine, whose religious authority and influence often exceeds other local practices by far. Its prominent position among the local customs is further enhanced by the intensity with which it is refuted within the texts. In the following section, I will analyse how the Buddhist element is presented in each story.

4.2.1. Story one

> In Jingzhao, there was a person called Mister Yang Qiyuan 楊其園.[104] His father had always been greatly knowledgeable and moral. He heard Mister Yang had converted into Christianity, hence he was very happy and personally encouraged him to correct [his mistakes] and to

[103] Ruland (1994) referred in Uhalley (2001), p. 114.

[104] The character of the story is Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (*zi* 其園). It is interesting to notice that before turning to Christianity, Yang was a lay Buddhist. The reasons for his conversion to Christianity are not clear. As Standaert argues, he was not attracted to Western sciences nor he experienced any miraculous events. Rather, it is possible that he approached the new religion for a mere interest in learning or, even, for a natural propensity to Christianity. For a more detailed biography of Yang Tingyun, please refer to Standaert (1988)

> obtain the holy grace. His mother was old and muddle-headed. Every day, she would maintain a vegetarian diet and worship the Buddha. She recited the sūtras and stayed in meditation. When they talked with her about the Christian admonishments and explained the right Way, it was like trying to burn cold ashes that cannot be burnt, or like trying to combine a mortise and a tenon that are not compatible. For long time, Yang was at a loss and did not have any solution for it. He only could appeal the Lord of Heaven with his laments, asking him to guide her through. He admonished his family to strictly observe the holy abstentions, hoping that God could grant enlightenment. Yang was already in his sixties. He was so busy that he did not have time to take off his clothes and to eat a warm meal. It had been like this for many years. This led his body to become exhausted. His mother asked for the reason. Yang, then, blamed himself for not having other alternatives. His mother asked him again. Then, he fell into tears, and said: "Your son is not moral, I was not able to serve my mother. But I let her be tempted by evil and betray the right doctrine. This is your son's fault." In the coming days, the mother fell into strong pain. The son was even willing to die hundreds of times in her place. But it could not be expiated [the pain]. Only then, in the pain, did the mother understand and become increasingly sad. Sighing, she said: "Now I believe, but why in the past did not I believe and made myself suffer like this? I will follow my son and will not have uncertainties ever again." Then, she hurriedly asked to receive the baptism. In the middle of the hall, she persuaded [people] and soothed them by saying that [through Christianity] she had found the path from her ignorance, and had made her way out from the darkness to see the light. It was the universal love and the great grace. The whole family fasted for ten days and more in order to thank the grace of the Lord.[105]

The story can be divided into three sections. First, the story introduces the heretical element, Buddhism, that needs to be expiated. Second, the Christian element, Yang, struggles with the heretical element; in this case, the struggle is embodied by his self-imposed suffering. Finally, the victory of Christianity over the evil happens through conversion. Thus, the structure is very similar to that of the

[105] *LXYJ,* vol. 1, pp. 26a-26b, 145-146.

miracle stories that have been analysed previously, but with the crucial difference that the conflict, here, does not occur on the ritualistic level, rather on the theoretical level. The story focuses mainly on arguing for the moral goodness of Christianity over the immorality of Buddhism. We can see, for instance, that the father, who accepted Christianity, is described as "greatly knowledgeable and moral" whilst the Buddhist mother is "old and muddle-headed". By practicing Buddhism, the old mother is driven to a state of confusion and loss of the way, and ends up going against the Confucian canons of morality. Her fallacy not only affects herself, but further implicates her son through his failure to protect her from the demonic temptation, thereby fulfilling filial piety. In the end, the conversion to Christianity is not achieved through religious persuasion. Rather, the mother is touched and convinced by Yang's strong devotion and filial piety. Thus, the Confucian element here becomes an element that supports Christianity.

4.2.2. Story two

> Mister Yang devotedly served Christianity. All the people of his family considered it to be important. When his father was aged eighty-four, and his mother was aged eighty-three, they successively passed away. During the mourning period, Mister Yang conducted himself with his utmost will and sincerity. In Wulin (Hangzhou), there were still Buddhist practices. In the past, there were monks who received meals and gave impure teachings. Widely, they promoted the recitation of sūtras and the making of penitential offerings. They played the bells throughout the night, and they burnt paper money as way to end the day. Seeing that Mister Yang was quiet and did not hear their voices, they went to question him. They personally approached his place. Arriving there, they were tactfully rejected by the Mister and persuaded with

> sincerity. Mister Yang ordered the Family Rituals be brought to show them, saying: "Is this not what we are observing? The scholars of the Song collected writings about the mourning rituals of antiquity and handed them down over the reigns. Nothing more than this. How then could it be that people can receive merit just from today's recitation of the Buddha's name?" Everyone remained in silence but were still thinking secretly that Mr. Yang was too trivial in his treatment of the mourning for his parents. Thereupon, according to the old tradition, Buddhist practices were performed on every seventh day after death. Mr. Yang calculated the cost of the Buddhist practices and gave double that amount in charity to the old, the disabled, the prisoners and to the orphans. Only then, did people understand that Yang had acted in such a way as he had the right vision. After clearing up the straw and extending the house to construct the grave, he observed strictly and prepared [the ritual] according to the solemn rituals of the Holy doctrine, without having commonalities with the vulgar practices. For the place, he took an elevated and clean [space] and did not observe the sayings of geomancy.[106]

The second story denounces the activities of Buddhist monks and Buddhist rituals as having a deceitful and materialistic character. Monks would ring the bells and burn paper cash "for the long nights" and "as way to end the day," revealing a certain inclination towards excessiveness. Due to its strong monetary and economic dimension, the "service to the Buddha" 佛事 (*foshi*) gradually transformed into a money-centred activity aimed for public consumption.[107] In addition, Buddhist rituals also bore a social and utilitarian function, often stronger than the spiritual impetus; local elites would, for instance, commission funerary services by a large group of monks to enhance their status and

[106] *LXYJ,* pp. 26b-27a, 146-147.

[107] Stevenson, Daniel (2015), p. 429. It is interesting to notice that a similar discourse was also in process in late sixteenth century Europe, when the Protestant Church advanced similar critiques against the Catholic Church. Protestant priests have also accused Catholics and Jesuits of being excessively reliant on their exorcist powers as way to exercise their authority. For further details, see Young (2016)

to achieve "an external manifestation of filial piety."[108] In this story, the convert is resolute in refusing this form of funeral and, despite great external pressure, he is determined to follow his Christian faith. Yang shows that it is not just that these practices contradict the teachings in Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* 家禮 (*jia li*), but moreover that their simplistic solution and approach to mourning was greatly disrespectful of the Confucian tradition. Through his action of donating the money, which would have otherwise been spent on Buddhist services, Yang demonstrates that his refusal of the Buddhist funeral is neither an act of stinginess nor of disrespect towards his elders. Rather, it derives from his awareness of the purity of Christianity and the superiority of its Lord.

4.2.3. Story three

> There was a person called Lin Hengzhen from the village of Xianta 僊塔 in Sanshan. Before becoming Christian, in the twelfth month of the year yi si during the reign of Chongzhen (1629), his son married a daughter of the Zhang family. When the girl arrived, she secretly met a demon and shared her pillow mat [with the demon]. Her husband was not aware of it. The wife was also too ashamed and did not dare speak of it. This happened for more than one year. The wife could not bear it anymore. Once, she secretly told her sister-in-law about it, saying: "Since the year of the marriage, my mind become confused and in anger. Every day I am controlled by the demon." The aunt reproached her angrily, saying: "Our family worships the Buddha and is in peace. Did you really see the demon? Was it a dream?" The wife did not dare reply. Then, the demon become even more aggressive. […] Among the neighbours, there was a person that was Christian who had pity on them. He told the father: "The devil is heretical. The shaman is heretical too. If you fight the evil with evil, how will it be stopped? Only if you sincerely pray the Lord of Heaven, will the

[108] Standaert (2011). p. 19.

> evil flee away distantly." Afterwards, the father sincerely went to church where he was able to listen to the explanation of the Christian friends. Only then, did he understand the absurdity of praying to the spirits. He also understood that the statues of the Buddha that had been worshipped in the house were all demonic. He burnt all of them. He sincerely asked to receive a Holy sign to worship at home. Then, all the family members prostrated [to it]. The wife saw that the demon also made the kowtow. The demon did not dare enter the room again. He could only wipe away his tears in front of the audience room.109

In contrast to the former two cases, this story does not focus on Buddhism. Rather, it narrates an account of demonic harassment, which we have already encountered in the previous chapter. Here, we will look only at those insights it provides concerning Buddhism. First, in addition to its immoral and confusing connotations, as noted in the previous two stories, the tale confers to Buddhism a demonic character. Such demonism goes beyond the abstract connotation of "bad," by embracing a relatively more physical dimension: the harm of worshipping Buddhism is physical and concrete. Secondly, the story also reflects the great popularity enjoyed by Buddhism among local communities. Indeed, people were devout believers and engaged in their worship of the Buddha with constant diligence. For instance, the Lin family guarded several Buddhist statues 佛像 (*fo xiang*) placed in different areas of the house for the purpose of worship.

4.2.4. Story four

> In Zhangpu, there was a woman called Su 蘇 who was a sister of Yan Sican's mother. She would worship the Buddha and followed the vegetarian diet. Each morning

[109] *LXYJ,* vol.2, pp. 7a-8b, 199-202.

> and evening she would recite the sūtras. She heard that Yan worshipped the Lord of Heaven. So, she specially sent a person to ask for the scriptures. At that moment, Yan went out. His wife, Jiang, gave her the *Lauds.* Su manually copied one version and put it into the Buddha's shrine. She prayed to the Buddha, saying: "If the Lord of Heaven can be worshipped, show it in my dreams tonight. If it cannot be worshipped, also show it in my dreams tonight." In the middle of the night, she suddenly woke up and said: "I dreamt that the statue of the Buddha in the shrine fell on the ground." The following morning, she quickly removed the copy of the scripture and returned it. Yan asked the reason. She said: "These scriptures can provoke strange events. It cannot coexist with the Buddha. Therefore, I do not dare to keep it." Alas! The Lord and the demon cannot be served together. Su's dream was a true dream. However, if you consider that what people respect and serve is the Buddha. But the Buddha, in the first place, is afraid of the Lord of Heaven. In this case, not serving the Lord of Heaven that was feared by the Buddha, while serving the Buddha that fears the Lord of Heaven, is this not a great mistake? After this, Sican made her aunt to open up attentively to the instructions. As a result, one morning, she was enlightened. She abandoned the heretic doctrine and followed Christianity.[110]

In the previous stories, the inferiority of the Buddhist element is established through its direct relation to the human world. In this tale, however, there are no concrete consequences to the life of the characters. Rather, via the frame of the dream, and the confrontation between Christianity and Buddhism fully become a conflict of supernatural forces, within which humans are not direct participants. The revelation occurs symbolically through objects, such as scriptures or statues. The impactful supernatural power of Christianity, lastly, leads to conversion. The story delivers a strong message of incommunicability between the Buddhism and Christianity, which was much less prominent in the relationship between Christianity and other forms of local religions. The stories in the

[110] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 11b-12a, 208-209.

previous chapter generally warned people against employing local rituals, since these are inefficacious and demonic, and demonstrated the power of Christianity. On the other hand, in the Buddhist tale, the authors push for a total refusal of Buddhism.

4.2.5. General reflections

First, the four stories present Buddhism in three main contexts: the physical, the intellectual, and the metaphysical. Lin Hengzhen's account deals with the physical damage caused by Buddhism, and warns of the harm it may cause to the most basic well-being of a person; Yang's tales alert the reader to the moral corruptness of Buddhism, which impedes people from achieving intellectual and moral self-cultivation; Yan Sican's story reveals the religious superiority of Christianity over Buddhism. Each tale attacks a specific sphere in which Buddhism worked and invalidated its authority within such domain.

Second, Buddhist practices are evidently distinguished from the previous forms of local religion. In the previous chapter, shamanistic and ritual practices functioned as fast and ambulatory care services, appealed according to the exigency of the protagonist. They can be dispensed with or even defamed when they do not achieve the expected result or fulfil the requested task. These practices are limited to a practical and first aid use, while people do not necessarily feel a religious attachment to the theoretical framework behind these customs. On the other hand, the Buddhist element is always presented as a static presence within the narration; in all the four stories, protagonists do not make recourse to

Buddhism to solve sudden emergencies; the practice of Buddhism is well-established in characters' daily lives, all meditative works and alimentary abstentions that are distinctive of the Buddhist lifestyle are incorporated into and shaped their routine.[111]

Third, the rejection of shamanism or Daoist-related cultures is generally reflected in the depiction of their rituals as inefficacious and harmful. From the Christian perspective, characters can self-consciously apprehend this reality as soon as they undergo the experience. However, this does not happen in the case of Buddhism. The immorality of Buddhism is not self-evident and difficult to perceive; without external enlightenment, characters do not realize the connection between their practice of Buddhism and the demonic episode. Rather, it is only through the intervention of the local convert that they become aware of it.

Fourth, Buddhism is also portrayed as being in opposition to the traditional moral values and as an impediment to pursuing the right path. Characters that worship the Buddha are mostly depicted as ignorant and fatuous. By making reference to Confucian teachings, local converts remind people about their pursuit of self-cultivation and suggest Christianity as a means through which to accomplish it. Thus, in this context, Confucianism is used not only to deny Buddhism, but also to support Christianity.

[111] This separation between Buddhism and local religious practices is also proposed by John Lagerwey and explained in terms of different ritual categorisation. Lagerwey argued that Buddhist-oriented traditions and Confucianism shared a common soteriological ritual culture whilst Daoist cultures and local religious practices shared an exorcist ritual repertory. Lagerwey (2014), pp. 86-87.

To sum up, the picture of Buddhism presented by the *Lixiu yijian* reflects the strong aversion of missionaries towards the religion and provides potential responses to those preoccupations that we have previously listed.

4.3. Concluding remarks

The widespread practice of Buddhism within the local community represented one of the greatest enemies for the establishment of Christianity in China. The rivalry between Buddhism and Christianity was further prompted by the apparent similarities concerning their practices, images, and liturgies. For the external observer, such a resemblance was often the cause of confusing one group with the other. In order for the Christian missionaries to root their own doctrine into the local community, they did not only need to reject Buddhism, but also to dis-identify themselves from it. This objective is greatly reflected in the miracle stories of the *Lixiu yijian*, where the anecdotes portray Buddhism as immoral, demonic, and harmful to people. With respect to local religions, we have observed that Buddhist practices are depicted as a more powerful and dangerous form of heresy. Characters cannot self-consciously recognise its immorality, instead needing to be enlightened by a fellow convert or through divine revelation. Some stories also show that Buddhist practices did not conform to Confucian moral values. In particular, they argue that the simplistic and corrupt Buddhist practices obstructed people from pursuing the correct Way and fulfilling moral

principles. Only through reliance on Christianity could people fully achieve cultivation.

5. *Lixiu yijian* and Holy objects

In the previous chapters, we have observed the dynamics through which Christianity interacted with existing religious cultures and integrated, or sought to integrate, within the local community. This integration occurred through a rejection of and a differentiation from local religions, which were presented as inferior to Christianity. As local practices were denounced, the stories have normally offered corresponding Christian solutions, meaning the reader comes across a wide repertory of Christian liturgies and objects that were performed by local converts at this point in time. Limited though the data may be, it still yields numerous new insights into the modalities in and the roles for which Christian practices were conducted and, eventually, explore how Christianity become incorporated into the local environment. In this chapter, I will provide a brief survey of the main holy objects that appear in the local stories of the *Lixiu yijian*, namely: the holy casket 聖匱 (*shengdu*), holy water 聖水 (*shengshui*), and the holy sign 聖號 (*shenghao*).[112] By paying particular attention to their functions and

[112] The survey will not include the holy image of the Lord 天主像 (*tianzhu xiang*) as this was mostly used an object of worship; although it also had protective powers, converts kept it in their houses and in their rooms as an object of veneration and not as a tool to use for practical purposes, as will become evident was the case for the other holy objects.

methods of implementation, we shall see that Christian objects and rituals were well-integrated into the local world of the supernatural. Possibly because of their similarities with local religious practices, they were adopted as an alternative solution when local rituals failed and substitutes for local practices in people's daily fight against evil forces.

5.1. Holy Casket

The "holy casket" 聖匱(*sheng du*) was described as a weapon for "spiritual protection" that was distributed to every neophyte at the time of baptism.[113] On the basis of its functions and form, scholars such as Dudink previously identified it with the *agnus dei*.[114] In the same way as the *agnus dei*, the holy casket served to assist people in dealing with critical situations, such as demonic attacks, fires, storms, and difficult deliveries.[115] In addition, the choice of the Chinese character 匱 (*du*), which was used to refer to a wooden casket (櫝, *du*) or a piece of wood from which the interior had been removed (窾木, *kuan mu*), to name it could imply a counterpart to the European custom of preserving the *agnus dei* in a wooden box or container. Hence, the *sheng du* was very likely a designation assigned to the object as a whole rather than a translation for *agnus dei.* In the *Lixiu yijian,* the holy casket appeared in

[113] *HE,* l. 4ème, ch. XVII, p. 493.

[114] Dudink (1993), p. 118 note 73.

[115] For more details, please refer to: Moroni (1840), vol. 1, pp. 127-132; Mangenot (1923), vol.1, cols. 605–13. About the functions of the *agnus dei:* Bonardo (1586), p. 29.

eight stories. It is used by a range of different characters, including old women, young girls, important church members, who make recourse to it in order to deal with three types of calamity: 1) to support a difficult delivery 2) to save them from wreck and fire 3) to fight against supernatural attacks.

5.1.1. Difficult birth

In the story of Guo Chun, which has been analysed above, when wife is facing difficulties in labour and her life is in serious danger, Guo Chun asks for help from Christian members:

> Yet, the situation was dangerous and urgent, so they had no choice but to ask sincerely for help. Then, Mei came with his brother and nephew. Together they implored for the Lord's blessing. He also ordered his sister-in-law to personally go to the delivery room and to decorate her [Chen's wife] with the holy casket that she was wearing. As they prayed, the efficacy was immediate. Both the mother and the son were safe. Guo Chun was touched by the Lord' s miraculous grace. The whole family thereupon converted to the doctrine.[116]

The same narrative motif is repeated in a second story that occurred in Fuqing:

> The wife of Lin Shibing 林士秉 from Fuqing was giving birth. For two days and nights, she could not give birth. There were only gasps for breath. They could do nothing about it. There was an old woman who worshipped the holy doctrine and persuaded them to believe in the Lord of Heaven. He is reliable and will not deceive you. Thereupon, she gave her the holy casket that she was wearing. After few moments, the baby was successfully born. The wife also regained consciousness as normal.[117]

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[116] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 16a, 217.

[117] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 15b-16a, 216-217.

In both accounts, the two families are redirected to Christianity upon the intervention of church members. After that he or she takes hold of the holy casket and makes the prayer, the women are immediately able to give birth. In the first story, the character is touched by the miracle and, together with the whole family, converts to Christianity. What is interesting to observe is the identity of the Christian member. Any ordinary Christian person could perform this practice, be they a renowned local convert or an anonymous old woman. Thus, the identity of the liturgy performer has no impact on the result of the liturgy. During the liturgy, the holy casket is put on the chest of the woman in labour and the local convert might have to recite a prayer, as it is explicitly mentioned in the first story.

5.1.1.1. General reflections

In the story of Guo Chun, the character made recourse to a local practitioner before turning to Christianity. In the local practice, difficult labour was perceived by people as consequences to cosmological obstacles. For instance, malevolent spirits who had been offended could block childbirth.[118] To resolve a difficult birth, the most common practice was to use *fu* charms (符). These *fu* charms bore esoteric writings with elaborate ideograms inscribed with red cinnabar ink. The ideograms they bore were normally compounds of the ideographic elements of characters that signify “child”, “ghost”, “horse”, “archer’s bow”, and “go out”. The charms were pasted in the chamber or swallowed by the woman with

[118] Furth (1999), pp. 94-133.

water. [119] In Justus Doolittle's description of the ritual for hastening birth, a local priest recites a formula and produces three yellow paper charms. One charm was pasted on the door and one was put on the head of the woman. A third charm was burnt and given to the woman to drink, after mixing the ashes with hot water.[120] A second type of practice, often found in medical manuscripts, instead prescribed the woman to hold inscribed objects or swallow their ashes. Objects that have been widely employed were shovels and chopsticks, which were burnt, their ashes mixed with water, and the resulting decoction given to the woman to drink. The characters of shovel (鏟子 *chanzi,* alternatively called 得子 *dezi*) and chopstick (筷子, *kuaizi*) were homophonous with the words "to get a son" and to "to get a son rapidly." [121]

By comparing local practices with the Christian anecdotes, we may notice a few aspects of similarity. First, the patient is asked to hold a ritual object in both practices – the Christian convert provided the patient with the holy casket whilst the local ritual specialist provided a charm or an object with symbolic inscriptions. Second, both performances were accompanied by oral recitations. Lastly, the role of objects is limited to that of a medium, with the holy casket a mere container for divine grace in the same way that the *fu* charm's magical powers were conferred to it by esoteric inscriptions and the prior recitation of formulas. As a consequence, these similarities allowed local people to interpret Christian

[119] Lee (2005), pp. 249-250.

[120] Doolittle (1866), pp. 118-120.

[121] Unschuld and Zheng (2012) Vol. 2, p. 1029.

practices in their own cultural language and to practice them as if they were the traditional rituals.

5.1.2. Fire calamities

A second function of the holy casket was to protect people from natural and artificial calamities. The following story, for instance, tells how the holy casket was able to pacify a strong fire that broke out in Hangzhou:

> At the beginning of summer, one night a great fire broke out in the house from a lamp in a bamboo cage**.** The fire reached as far as the interior of the rooms. The family members were frightened and helpless. In the boudoir there was a Christian believer called Paola. She had worshipped the doctrine for long time and with devotion. From a distance, she threw the holy casket that she was wearing into the fire and the fire immediately ceased. In that moment, all the people outside and inside prostrated before the image of the Lord of Heaven. They praised and thanked him again and again. This girl had previously heard about the great efficacy of the holy casket. Hence, it could be used to extinguish the fire. She felt sad for it and searched for the holy casket but could not find it. Then, she ordered the excavators to search for it everywhere among the remains of roof tiles. But it was still not found. Inside, she felt unhappy about it and sighed from morning to dusk. After ten days, it happened that an attendant of the Madam, called Anna, was leisurely leaning on the doorsill and admiring the flower vases. Suddenly, an object fell into the vase from the air. She carefully looked at it, and it was the holy casket. She urgently called the family members to look at it together. There was not one person who did not express his gratitude for such a divine miracle. The holy casket, which had already been worn for long time, still bore traces of sweat or handwritings. However, it appeared more splendid than the past. Therefore, they thanked the miraculous grace of the Lord.[122]

[122] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, pp. 14a- 14b, 213-214.

The accident recounted here occurred in Hangzhou in the year 1621. It was a small-scale fire that concerned specifically one private residence. The fire presumably broke out within the house, started by the lamps, and has no connection to the big fire, which we will treat later, that occurred in Hangzhou in the spring of the same year. The people in this residence were not Christian with the exception of a girl called Paola, who had become Christian a good earlier. Without hesitation, she threw the holy casket into the fire. Immediately, the fire stopped and the holy casket disappeared after its usage. No matter how Paola searched for it, it seemed to have just vanished. The holy casket then magically reappears, even more splendid, by falling down from the air. Finally, the whole family, amazed by this phenomenon, express their gratitude towards the Christian Lord.

Another similar miracle occurs in another story which takes place in Yanping 延平:

> On the eighth day of the first month of autumn in the *yi hai* year during the reign of Chongzhen (1635), a fire broke out in front of the prefectural palace of Yanping. All the *yamen* offices were burnt and calcined. In the middle, there was a storehouse. […] That day, the fire was very closing in. A relative of Yuan [Wang Yuan 王元, i.e. main protagonist], Zhang Baida 張百達 was also Christian. He brought two servants and they climbed on the roof and tried to extinguish it with all their forces. Suddenly, a person behind them screamed loudly: "Do not panic. I will use water to extinguish it for you." In that moment, he was too busy to question [who was talking]. He only appealed sincerely "my Lord Jesus, save me" and then threw the holy casket towards the fire. Thereupon, the fire disappeared.[123]

[123] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 21a-22a, 227-229.

The incident was destroying the whole area, including the protagonist's house. At the time of the incident, Yuan was not yet Christian, and the arrival of the Christian relative is the turning point of the story. First, while Zhang Baida was putting out the fire, an angel, as it would be revealed later in the story, descends to help him. Second, Zhang throws the holy casket into the fire. Just like in the previous case with Paola, the fire immediately stops. From the basis of these two stories, we can observe that the holy casket is employed when the situation becomes critical and people are left without any other solutions. At that point, the Christian member invokes the Lord of Heaven, as occurs in one of the account, and throws the holy casket into the fire. As the holy casket enters the fire, the flames are immediately blocked. Paola and Zhang were wearing the holy casket on their person, presumably all the time as an accessory. When thrown into the fire, the holy casket is not burnt by the flames, but rather remains intact.

5.1.2.1. General reflections

The perception of the holy casket as an object to protect from and extinguish fires strictly derives from Christian miraculous tradition, in which the *agnus dei* bore the holy power to save people from fire. The power of Christianity to protect from fire was not limited to the narrative tradition and to a few testimonies by local converts, but is given further validation by two "miraculous" episodes that occurred during the big fire in Hangzhou in 1621. According to the local gazetteers, on April 26th of the year 1621, a huge fire took over the city, spreading across ten *li*, and

only ended the following day.[124] The fire had had catastrophic consequences for the urban geography of the city. The same episode is mentioned in two sources, the *Lixiu yijian* and in the Litterae Annuae of 1621, respectively. The *Lixiu yijian* reports the episode from the perspective of Li Zhizao and explains how he was able to avoid the calamity:

> Mister Li Wocun of Wulin believed in the Lord of Heaven and served him with respect and extreme sincerity. Not even once had he disobeyed. In the third month of the spring of the *xin you* year during the Tianqi reign (1621), there was a fire in Wulin that spread and burnt tens of thousands of houses. The fire was not far away from Mr. Li's house. The family only sincerely prayed the Lord of Heaven, and unexpectedly all ended up safe.[125]

The Litterae Annuae of 1621 presents the same scene from the perspective of Ricci. At the moment when the fire occurs, Ricci was a guest in the house of the official Yang Tingyun. In the letter, he describes that the intensity of fire and the destructive consequences that it has had on boutiques, shops, and people's houses. Yang's residence remained safe, even though it was almost nearly reached by the fire.[126]

The peculiar side of this event does not lie with the fact that Yang and Li were saved from the fire. What renders these two Christian events – the fires in Yang and Li's houses – more special is rather the circumstances in which they occurred. Both houses were involved in the same fire with many other residences and were located very near to the site of the fire. However, despite the proximity, they were both

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[124] Standaert (1988), pp. 77 note 19.

[125] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p.14a, 213.

[126] Translated by Standaert (1988), pp. 78-79.

fortuitously able to escape the disaster. The question that arises is how it could be that these two Christian residences remained undamaged by such a disaster? As has been then greatly developed in the stories of the *Lixiu yijian*, such phenomena were not interpreted as mere luck, but rather as an evidence of the divine grace of Christianity. Mr. Li and Yang benefited from that grace because of their commitment and devoutness to Christianity. As a result, these incidents might have become further arguments for the miraculous power of Christianity.

In the Chinese context, this sort of miraculous narrative has been made great use of in the Buddhist literature. For instance, the story of Li Zhizao appears starkly similar to the tale *Zhu Changshu* 竺長舒, a devout Buddhist believer who is saved from a fierce fire that broke out in the neighbourhood. The fire was very near to his house. However, as he began to recite the sūtra, "suddenly the wind changed and the fire burned itself out right beside his house."[127] Although this story purportedly took place more than a thousand years before, still we can see that the Buddhist and Christian tales use almost an identical structure and narrative order. In both cases, the protagonist benefits from miraculous salvation thanks to his devotion and belief in the religion and the fires are extinguished through prayers to the deities. Therefore, to a certain extent, the stories of Li Zhizao, Paola, or Zhang Baida do not contrast with the local traditional imagery of religious powers, but rather further conforms to it.

[127] Translated in Gjertson (1989), p. 17.

5.1.3. Water calamities

A third function of the holy casket was to protect people from calamities related to water. This included storms, shipwrecks, and all sort of meteorological disaster. In the following account, we will see how the local convert saves himself and his companions from shipwrecking:

> Xu Shoujie 許受節[128] from Deqing was the nephew of Officer Xu.[129] He had a second son who in the spring of the *kui hai* year converted first to Christianity. All the family members followed his example. Soon, Shoujie went to the church of the Lord especially to visit Master Aleni. He received instructions and returned home. His heart was increasingly fervent. When the eighth month arrived, he asked sincerely to receive the baptism. Master Aleni liked his honesty and granted him a holy casket. At that time, Shoujie wanted to go to Pizhou to the magistrate Houjin 侯金. Hence, he departed wearing the holy casket. His route passed by the Yellow River and he encountered an unusual storm wind, and surging and sweeping waves. He almost disappeared into the bellies of fishes [was drowned]. Shoujie held the holy casket and silently prayed for the protection of the Lord of Heaven. The sea waves gradually calmed down. Suddenly he was anchored ashore. Thanks to that, he was safe. The six or seven people who were in the boat with him had all turned pale at first as [they thought that] there was certainly no hope. Then, together with the boatman they thanked the Lord of Heaven again and again but they could not explain the reason for it. Shoujie then exhaustively explained the efficacy of the holy casket. Everyone further praised it.[130]

In this story, the recently converted Xu Shoujie risks his life while travelling by boat on the Yellow river. He narrowly avoids death by

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[128] Xu Shoujie 許受節: his father was Xu Daoyuan 許道遠, Prefectural Official 州判 (*zhou pan*) of Chuzhou 滁州, in present-day Anhui from the eleventh year of the Wanli reign (1613). *Chuzhou zhi, j*. 4, p. 218.

[129] Officer Xu 許司馬(*Xu sima*) refers to Xu Fuyuan 許浮遠, in the role of imperial inspector. He was the father of Xu Dashou 許大受, a Confucian scholar who composed the *Shenchao Zuopi* 聖朝佐闢, a collection of anti-Christian texts. Xu Dashou rejected Christianity in order to defend his own traditions. The growing Christian inclinations of his family gave him further confirmation of the dangers of Christianity. For further details on Xu Dashou, please refer to Dudink (1993), pp. 94-140; Meynard (2017).

[130] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 15a, 215.

holding the holy casket and evocating the Lord of Heaven. As a result, the sea is placated and the boat arrives ashore. Unlike the episodes of fire calamity, here the holy casket is by no means tossed into the sea, but rather is only held in the hands of the convert. While holding it, the character prays to the Lord of Heaven. Although he has only recently turned to Christianity, Xu demonstrates that he knows well the "efficacy" of the holy object and instructs the other boat-mates about it.

5.1.3.1. General reflections

The stories have made it clear that Christianity was characterised by its miraculous power of saving people from disasters such as fire and flood. As we have already seen in the cases of fire anecdotes, these saving powers were not unique to Christianity nor they were a novelty to the Chinese readers. In fact, local people benefited from a wide repertory of deities and religious practices that offered identical functions. For instance, in the case of drowning and shipwreck, people often made recourse to the saviour deity Guanyin 觀音. According to the *Lotus Sūtra*, the only imploration of the deity could save drowning people.[131] Guanyin's rescuing power was well-known among the local community, and was further promoted through a large repertory of miraculous narratives, reproduced both iconographically[132] and textually, in which Guanyin appeared to and saved royal emissaries in danger in the open sea. For instance, one account tells that when in 1080 AD., the Chinese emissary Wang Shunfeng 王舜封 was travelling to the Three Kingdom

[131] Kern (1884), p. 406.

[132] Karetzky (2014), p. 298.

of Korea, he ran into a violent storm. The situation was very dangerous, and Wang could not find other solutions than kneeling and praying to Guanyin. All of sudden, the deity appeared and saved him. Another account involves two emissaries to Koryŏ, Liu Ta 劉逵 and Wu Shi 吳栻. As they neared the Puto (Putuo) islands, which have often been considered to have been founded by Guanyin, the sky remained overcast for four days whilst their boat continued to move without guidance. The people on the boat started to pray to the deity, kneeling in the direction of Putuo. In a while, everywhere become bright and they arrived safely in Ningbo.[133]

If we compare these episodes with the story of Xu Shoujie, we can see that the three stories follow a similar miraculous pattern; in this pattern, the deity is portrayed as a saviour and the miracle happens through a sincere invocation of his or her name by the believer. As there were many overlaps in the religious powers of the Lord of Heaven and Guanyin, the differentiation between the two cults was subtle among local people; in many circumstances, the cults were also seen to coincide with one another. In later periods, Guanyin become increasingly associated with the Holy Mother, since both were portrayed "as a compassionate figure whom the devout faithful invoke to avert calamity and rescue them from life-threatening peril."[134]

[133] Yü (1992), pp. 216-217.

[134] Von Glahn (2004), p. 147.

5.1.4. Demonic illness

A third function of the holy casket is illness healing. However, the illnesses in question are not physical. Rather, they are caused by external factors. For instance, in the account of Chen Sannan 陳三南 of Putian, her daughter is afflicted by *gu* (蠱) which might indicate either forms of witchcraft as well as poisoning, and is on the verge of death. The neighbour Lin Qifu 林啟甫 suggests that he place his trust in Christianity:

> He told him: "If you can sincerely repent and honestly pray for the blessing of the Lord of Heaven, the poison can be cured." Nan immediately went before the image of the Lord of Heaven. He wailed sorrowfully and implored for help. Lin Qifu took the holy water and ordered the daughter to drink it. Then, he hung the holy casket that he was wearing on her chest. Suddenly, more than hundred small snakes wriggled out with their heads raised. Then, the daughter was safe. Nan was moved and persuaded by it. The whole family converted to Christianity.[135]

A similar narrative pattern can be also found in the story of Yan Ande's daughter, which has been previously analysed. The *sha* 煞[136] that struck the daughter was cured through merely dressing the girl with the holy casket:

> According to the popular saying, it was a *sha*. It was not possible to heal her. Therefore, he asked Yan Ande. Yan arrived rapidly late at night. He removed everything [heretic]. But he hung the holy casket that he was carrying on her chest. Then he bowed his head and prayed to the Holy Mother for her. Immediately, her upper chest vomited the food from the day before. Very quickly she recovered. She was thankful and was moved to become Christian. Then, her husband also received the baptism.[137]

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[135] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 12b, 210.

[136] Please refer to note 65.

[137] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, p. 15b, 216.

In both stories, the supernatural presence does not manifest itself in real life, only leaving the haunted person with murderous pathologies or unbearable physical pains, such as bloating or hiccups, that are impossible or very hard to cure. The holy casket here serves to eradicate the demonic or witchery germ from the body of the patient. This eradication happens symbolically through the divine power of the holy object, and is further reflected in the physical action of vomiting of or expelling the noxious substance from the body of the character. The convert persuades the character to rely on Christianity with the incentive of successful healing. The healing process is again accomplished through the use of the holy casket accompanied by the invocation of the Lord of Heaven. In one story, the convert also makes recourse to the holy water, which he asks the patient to digest. In the end, the efficacy of the Christian practice is immediate. Such miraculous results convince the characters to convert to Christianity.

5.1.4.1. General reflections

In Christian miracle stories, people wore or held the holy casket to fight evil forces. This holy casket was a wooden box on which people could inscribe signs and that Christian members wore on their person all the time. The local tradition does not have specific counterpart, however the talisman 符 (*fu)* deserves a mention as an object which bears similar qualities. As we have previously observed, the *fu* talisman was generally a piece of material such as wood, paper, or stone upon which were usually inscribed signs or writings that were legible only to the deity. The object thus acquired magical power and was used “to mark sacred

space." It was seen as a concrete medium between the humans and deities during local rituals. As with the holy casket, by holding or wearing the talisman, the person metonymically acquires its magic and protective powers and immediately recovers from the disease. [138] In other exorcist rituals, the specialist would also burn talismans and with their incense produce a liquid for the ill person to consume.[139]

5.1.5. Concluding remarks

The holy casket 聖匱(*sheng du*) is an object that appears often in the *Lixiu yijian.* Christian members freely give their holy casket to patients in need of healing or people in need of rescuing. The practice had a standardised procedure that consisting of two main passages: the use of the object, either by holding it or by throwing it, and a sincere prayer to the Lord of Heaven. The miraculous efficacy was not that of the object itself, as might be misunderstood. Rather, the miracles occur through the power of the Lord of Heaven, of which it is only a carrier. Thus, people have to sincerely pray the Lord of Heaven in order to benefit from the qualities of the holy casket. This rescuing power of the Christian practice was also present within the wide local religious repertory. For example, we have seen that people saw Guanyin as being able to perform the same saviour role. Furthermore, both Christian and local religions provided powerful ritual toolkits that could save people

[138] Pregadio (2012), pp. 36-37.

[139] For a more detailed account of healing and exorcist rituals with talismans, refer to: Saso (1974), p. 331; Unschuld and Zheng (2012), vol. 2, p. 154.

from demonic attacks, calamities, and illness. There are cases in which Christian practices resembled local ritual performances. For instance, we have seen that whilst Christian people used holy caskets to conduct healings and exorcisms, local practices also made recourse to similar objects, such as talismans, to protect or to heal patients. In the performance of their rituals, Christian and local specialists both held magic objects and used special liquids.

5.2. Holy Water

A second liturgical object that appears with great frequency in the stories of local converts is "holy water" 聖水 (*sheng shui*), mentioned in six local accounts. Like the holy casket, holy water also bears miraculous powers that support the believer when confronted with situations of difficulty and danger. Charles Louis Richard categorised the functions of holy water in Christian tradition into seven types, namely: healing, exorcism, incitation to faith, incitation to contrition, achievement of spiritual calm, land fertilisation, and protection from natural disasters.[140] However, of all these functions, the stories in the *Lixiu yijian* particularly, or exclusively, focus on two of them: healing and exorcism.

[140] Richard (1830), p. 136. For a more precise account of the origins of the holy water, see Mangenot (1903), entry "Eau bénite"; Moroni (1840), pp.69-71; Gastoué (1980), pp. 24-61.

5.2.1. Healing

Holy water appears in the local accounts in two specific types of situation: illness and demonic attacks. Let us first look at the former. For instance, in the account of Yan Ande, the daughter of the convert becomes ill suddenly:

> There was a girl, called Yan Aide, who was the daughter of imperial examination candidate Yan Ande. When she became Christian, she was just twelve years old. One day, she suddenly was afflicted by an eye disease. Her cornea was affected with a *nebula*.[141] The family was greatly in pain for her. It stayed like this for three days and nights. The father guided her in front of the Holy image. He bowed and prayed sincerely. When he had finished praying, he drenched some rush piths in holy water and after dipping his finger on it, he dipped it into her eye. Then he told her to close her eyes and rest calmly. After some moments, his daughter said: 'It is no longer obstructed.' She opened her eyes and looked at it. The nebula had already melted.[142]

The story opens with the presentation of the illness and their social background. The Christian element is introduced straight afterwards and as the holy water is applied, their pain immediately disappears. Here, the convert who conducts the practice is not an external observer, but the father of the victim. An almost identical narrative structure can be also found in the following account:

> Xing Fulu 性福祿 was the sister of Mister Zhang Xiazhan 張夏詹, named also Geng 庚, from Jinjiang. Her age was old. Her head sometimes suffered from wind swellings, even up to the point that the pus liquid was about to drip down. Mister Zhang received her in his house to recuperate [from the illness]. She took medicines of different recipes, but they were inefficacious. Then, he persuaded her to sincerely rely on the Lord and honestly prayed for her. He took the holy water and sprinkled it [on

[141] 翳 (*yi*): refers to 目翳(mu yi) *nebula* or *cataract*. Li (2002).

[142] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 12a-12b, 209-210.

> her]. That evening, the wind swelling immediately melted away. The next day, the older sister was surprised and touched. She kowtowed to thank the Lord of Heaven and diligently practised the classic scriptures of the holy doctrine. Fortuitously, Master Aleni came and she received the baptism. From then, the wind disease was forever removed. Over the past years, even if she sat in the open late at night, [the illness] did not start up again. The graced efficacy of the holy water can be seen. Both soul and body receive its favour. Those who are observing, do not say that the water of the holy water has the same function as sprinkling pure water with the willow branch.[143]

Just as in the previous case, the Christian member is not an external person, but a close relative of the patient, Zhang Geng. With Zhang's help, Xing Fulu finally recovers from the disease. After the cure, Fu Xinglu's health conditions became even stronger than before. The miraculous efficacy of the holy water persuades her of the power of the Lord of Heaven, and she eventually converts to Christianity.

With respect to the liturgy itself, we can see that it was formed by two main parts: the oral prayer and the sprinkling of the holy water. After persuading the patient to rely to Christianity and making a sincere prayer, the converts take the holy water and apply it to the patient by dipping it or sprinkling it onto them. The holy water could be directly used or people could infuse it with other substances. For instance, as the first story shows, Yan drenched some rush piths (*medulla juncus effusus*) or 燈草 (*deng cao*) into the holy water. The *deng cao*, also called 燈心草 (*deng xin cao*) is used in Chinese medicine for clearing lung and heart heats as well as other types of heat pathologies.[144] This type of infusion

[143] *LXYJ*, vol. 2, p. 13a, 211.

[144] Wang and Li (2002), p. 237.

may recall the widespread use of decoctions and herbal potions that were usually prescribed during and/or after the healing ritual particularly by local specialists of Daoist orientation.[145] Finally, the story terminates with a remark on the uniqueness of the Christian holy water and explicitly differentiates it from the practice of "sprinkling pure water with the willow branch" 楊枝灑水, performed by Guanyin, which also had healing functions.

In contrast to these two stories, where the holy water is sprinkled on the patient, in the anecdote of Chen Sannan 陳三南, previously analysed, the application of the holy water occurs by means of ingestion. Here, Chen's daughter caught by a *gu* poison, is healed immediately after drinking the holy water and wearing the holy casket: "Lin Qifu [i.e. the Christian member] took the holy water and ordered Chen's daughter to drink it. Then, he hung the holy casket that he was wearing on her chest."[146] As has been formerly mentioned, this practice of consuming decoctions for healing purposes was also performed in local religious rituals. Something that deserves particular mention here is *fushui* 符水, or according to ter Haar "amulet-water", the characteristics and functions of which greatly resemble those of holy water. The *fushui* was made from the ashes of burnt amulets. These ashes were then worn or consumed with water by the patient. The amulet bore a special exorcist

[145] Unschuld and Zheng (2012), vol. 1, pp. 150-160.

[146] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 12b, 210.

power, therefore in doing so the person could partake in divine power and be healed.[147]

5.2.2. Exorcism

There are three instances in which the stories depict local converts employing holy water as an exorcising weapon to fight demonic presences. Here, we will consider two of the cases. The first anecdote takes place when Ricci arrived in Nanjing and succeeded in liberating the house of Minister Liu from the demon by sprinkling the holy water:

> That day, Master Ricci immediately built a platform in the central hall to worship the statue of the Lord of Heaven. Then, he sprinkled his room with holy water. From then, of the demon there were neither a sound nor a shadow.[148]

The practice of sprinkling the holy water also played a purifying role. For this reason, local converts often used it to cleanse their house and spaces that had been haunted or touched by spirits. The second case of an exorcist usage of holy water occurs in the story of Zhang Qixu which we came across in the previous chapter. In that account, the female character fell ill due to her relationship with a local spirit. Almost at the point of death, Zhang invited Christian members to his house:

> Therefore, he went to the church and earnestly kowtowed. He asked church members to come to his house to sprinkle the holy water and to trace the holy sign in his bedroom. That day, just when it became dusk, the evil demon came again. It did not dare enter the inner chamber.[149]

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[147] Ter Haar (2000), p. 202; Sivin (2015), p. 151.

[148] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 1b, 188.

[149] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 9b-10a, 204-205.

In both two stories, the liturgy is delivered through the sprinkling of the water on parts of the house by the local Christian members or a missionary. The practice was probably preceded by a prayer to the Lord of Heaven, as Ricci does in the first story, or by the making of the holy sign, as in the second case. The water does not bring about a total elimination of the demon, merely expelling it from that specified space. By sprinkling the house, the demon no longer dares to enter that space, yet continues to exist outside that area.

Very similar narratives can be also found in the local literature, in particular in the "tales of the strange" 志怪小說 (*zhiguai xiaoshuo*) genre. For example, in a tale from the *Jiyi ji* 集異記 reported by Anthony C. Yu, a man becomes tempted by a demon that has transformed into a woman and begins to live with her. The demon stays at night time and departs in the morning. This situation continues until a Daoist priest informs him about the demonic nature of the woman and gives him some exorcist water. When the man sprinkles water on the woman, she disappears. The story presents three main structural elements: the demonic temptation, the appearance of the Daoist priest, and the removal of the demon through the magic element.[150] An almost identical structure can be found in the account of Zhang Qixu, or, indeed, in all accounts of demonic presence, the only difference being that the Daoist priest is replaced by a local convert and the exorcist water is called "holy water".

[150] Yu (2012), pp. 227-228.

The holy water was often associated with *shenshui* 神水, a form of consecrated water that was used to perform purifying and cleansing functions in Buddhist and Daoist traditions.[151] From a general perspective, we can observe that, like the practices of holy water, local practices of *shenshui* also involved acts of sprinkling, recitations of spells, or the creation of decoctions on the from it. The affinities between *shenshui* and holy water became a concern of missionaries. As local people had begun to employ the holy water to accomplish all sorts of healing and exorcisms, whether they have just mistaken the holy water for an exorcising tool became a central issue. Their preoccupation culminated in a publication of written rules in 1670 as part of *Shengjiao guicheng* 聖教規程, establishing that the holy water must be placed within the house and used for daily aspersion.[152] To what extent these rules were respected is unknown, but later accounts continued to primarily focus on the exorcising and healing functions of the holy water, prolonging the affinity with local practices.[153]

5.2.3. Conclusive remarks

By looking at the *Lixiu yijian,* we can see that the holy water was used for three main purposes: exorcism, purification, and healing. The procedures of performing such functions vary according to the type of problem. On certain occasions, the holy water could be used by itself. On

[151] Bentor and Shaḥar (2017), p. 61.

[152] *KDRC*, p. 441

[153] Please refer to Vissière and Vissière (1979)

others, it had to be accompanied by additional holy objects. The water could be sprinkled as well as given to a person to consume. The liturgy was delivered into two steps, specifically an oral invocation of the Lord of Heaven by the convert and the treatment with the holy water. The prayer is the decisive factor for the result of the miracle. Converts are alerted and warned not to mistake the divine grace for a mystic power of the object. The practice of the holy water for healing and exorcist purposes was not a novelty to the Chinese community. Rather, the idea of a magic water already existed in local religious traditions. As in the Christian case, local ritual specialists prescribed magic decoctions to heal patients or sprinkled exorcist waters to fight demonic presences. As a result, the Christian holy water become part of a pre-existing collection of healing and exorcist practices through mingling with other forms of purifying waters and adapting itself to the cultural environment and needs.

5.3. Holy Sign

Holy water and the holy casket are employed by local converts to deal with all sorts of daily calamities. The holy sign plays an analogous role. In the *Lixiu yijian,* people use the term *sheng hao* 聖號 to indicate both the iconic representation of the cross as well as the corresponding gesture. The term of *shi zi jia* 十字架 was employed to designate the crucifix. To avoid confusion, I will use the term “holy sign” to indicate the icon of the cross, and “sign of the cross” to indicate the gesture. In

the Christian tradition, the cross is perceived as a direct reflection of the divine entity as well as the symbol of the Christian victory over heresy. Thus, the holy sign and the sign of the cross possessed important functions, including consecration, healing, and exorcism.[154] However, the *Lixiu yijian*, as we will see in the following, only focused on its exorcising powers.

5.3.1. Holy Sign

In the following extracts of stories, we can see that the holy sign was used prevalently to fight demonic presences or possessions. For instance, when the wife of the boatman Zhang Qixu finds herself harassed by a demon, the local convert provided the family with a holy sign to eliminate the demonic presence:

> Therefore, he [i.e. Zhang Qixu] went to the church and earnestly kowtowed. He asked church members to come to his house to sprinkle the holy water and to affix the holy sign in his bedroom. That day, just when it became dusk, the evil demon came again. He did not dare enter the inner chamber. He only approached the central hall asking to meet. The day after, members of the church came again to his house to present the holy sign. Then the demon totally vanished.[155]

We observe here that the Christian intervention successfully expelled the demon from the house. The simultaneous use of holy water and the holy sign makes difficult to identify what function the two were respectively playing within the liturgical process. As has been shown earlier, both had

[154] For further details, please refer to: Moroni (1840), Vol. 18, p. 247; and to Mangenot (1908), vol. 4, pp. 2342-2345.

[155] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 9b-10a, 204-205.

important powers in driving away demons. The holy sign could also instil fear in the demon. A similar miraculous motif appears in the story of Lin Hengzhen. Again, Lin asks for the support of Christian members to eliminate a demon who is harassing his wife:

> He sincerely asked to receive a Holy sign to worship at home. Then all the family members prostrated [to it]. The wife saw that the demon also made the kowtow. The demon did not dare to enter the room again. He could only wipe away his tears in front of the room.[156]

Here, the use and the function of the holy sign are depicted with more transparency. The holy sign, as a direct symbol of the Lord of Heaven, could excite people's respect and faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when it is put before the demon, the creature could not restrain from making a kowtow to express respect towards it. No matter how powerful the demon, he is aware of his impotence against the Lord. Thus, he sorrowfully stands outside the room and wiping away his tears. By combing the few insights provided by these two stories, we can summarise a few points regarding local people's use of the holy sign. First, Christian converts used to place the cross in their house as an object of veneration. Second, the holy sign did not function as a ritual instrument. Differently to the holy casket, people did not "use" the cross to fight against calamities. Rather, they only worshipped and prayed to it. Third, the power of the holy sign is not offensive, but defensive. It does not fight or chase the demon away. On the contrary, it is the demon who self-consciously withdraws upon encountering it.

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[156] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 7a-8b, 199-202.

5.3.2. Sign of the cross

The sign of the cross (*crux usualis)* was also been practised by local converts to conduct exorcist acts. As in the case of the holy sign, the local accounts focus centrally on depicting the exorcising effects of the gesture. As a matter of fact, the narrator of the *Lixiu yijian* describes the holiness of the sign in the following way:

> All Christian people, when they go out, enter, eat, and rest, inevitably make the sign of the cross. With their hand, they touch from their head, their mouth, and their chest. Ignorant people will laugh at them. People who know it, they are aware that even if they are making a casual sign of the cross, the demon would already be scared by it.[157]

A concrete application of the gesture can be found, for example, in the story of Hong Qizhu 洪啟朱, who liberates a relative from demonic possession through simply making the sign of the cross:

> In Wenling, there was a Christian called Hong Qizhu[158]. His younger cousin who lived in their native village was guilty of being demonic (e.i. being a ritual specialist). One day, Hong went to his native village to pay his respects to the (ancestral) graves and visited him. However, he saw his younger cousin screaming wildly and dancing, self-claiming that he was possessed by the patriarch of ritual lineage. There was panic in the family. They invited a spirit medium to pray and make an exorcism for him. Hong only made the sign of the cross, and his younger cousin immediately called and prayed for help.[159]

Like the holy sign, the sign of the cross also has an exorcist function. A possible difference between the two lies on the manner in which their power manifests itself. Whereas the holy sign performs a protective, rather than an exorcist function, the sign of the cross achieves efficacy

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[157] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, p. 6b, 198.

[158] Hong Qizhu 洪啟朱: biographical information is lacking. The second part of the text revels that he is a friend of Zhang Geng.

[159] *LXYJ,* vol. 2, pp. 6b-7a, 198-199.

solely and directly through the accomplishment of the gesture. When the sign is traced, the demon is immediately expelled. In the same way as the holy water saves an ill person and the holy casket extinguishes the fire, the gesture of the holy sign also manifests itself as a weapon that can exert direct consequences on the demonic entity, to which people can make recourse to in cases of urgency. The two excerpts also tell us that the sign of the cross was commonly practiced by local converts.

5.3.3. General reflections

Although the narrator explains in the introductory part of story that the Christians' making of the sign of the cross often induced the derision of other people, it is nevertheless interesting to observe that both Buddhist and Daoist cultures also had similar gesture customs. Indeed, Buddhist practitioners performed hand gestures called *mudras* 手印 (*shouyin*) on different occasions; for example, early Tang period texts suggest that during the ritual process to pay homage to Dizang Bodhisattva as a patron deity, people had to make the deity's *mudras.*[160] In contrast to the sign of the cross, the *mudras* was not a fixed gesture but included multiple finger positions, each of which aimed to fulfil a specific purpose. For instance, when people wanted to force a ghost to manifest itself, they had to make the "all-embracing gesture" 都攝印 (*dushe yin*); when they want chase away a manifested ghost, they were supposed to make the "gesture for liberating and encompassing as one

[160] Zhiru (2007), p. 210.

wishes" 隨心救攝印 (*suixin jiushe yin*). More detailed descriptions of finger positions and types of mudras are listed in the Dizang dadao xinqu cefa 地藏大道心驅策法.[161] Lastly, *mudras* were also adopted by Daoist communities, which had a similar practice under the name of *shoujue* 手訣. This term was used for gestures or hand movements made with one or both hands during rituals or as protection against evil influences. Just like in the Buddhist case, the practices of *shoujue* were numerous and were viewed as magically efficacious in commanding spirits and demons.[162]

5.3.4. Conclusive remarks

To conclude, the holy sign and the sign of the cross serve in the stories to liberate people and their spaces from demonic threats. The act of tracing the sign of the cross functioned as an efficient weapon to exorcise, and resulted in the immediate expulsion of the demon. Its efficaciousness was greatly similar to that of the holy water and the holy casket. On the other hand, the holy sign was worshipped by local converts as a major symbol of the Lord of Heaven and as a protective measure from demonic entities. As a direct emblem of the crucifixion, the holy sign was characterised by omnipotent authority over the spiritual and material worlds. For instance, its mere presence could instil fear in the demon and his spontaneous submission to Christianity. Thus, once

[161] Translated in Zhiru (2007), p. 245.

[162] Pregadio (2012), pp. 899-902.

again, the stories drew attention to aspects such as ritual practicality and efficacy of the holy object, which were generally associated with local cults. With respect to the practice, both types of holy sign were successfully integrated into the daily lives of local converts. For a non-Christian person, meanwhile, the sign of the cross could have been understood in terms of the pre-existing local practices of *mudras* and the *shoujue,* with which it shared similar functions and modes of application.

5.4. Concluding remarks

The stories of the *Lixiu yijian* make frequent reference to holy objects. Indeed, people are shown to usually rely on the miraculousness of these resources to confront varying difficult situations. Their magic power attracts local people and urges them to convert to Christianity. By looking merely at the anecdotes, it is difficult to discern the presence of any rules underlying the use of the holy objects or determining their role within the ritual procedure. Instead, what the anecdotes have shown is that all Christian holy objects, when integrated into the local environment, were used for two main functions: healing and exorcising. This is widely reflected in the local anecdotes in the *Lixiu yijian,* where the most prominent themes are demons and illness, and the main scenario focuses on how local converts manage to solve all supernatural situations through Christianity. Thus, holy objects are inserted into the local world of the supernatural as efficacious weapons that save people from evil forces. From the stories, it is difficult to measure the extent to which local converts were attached to or conscious of the doctrinal ideologies of

the new religion. However, they must have been greatly attracted to the powers of the Christian liturgy and holy objects, and to the miraculous help they could bring to their own realities.

Furthermore, Christian holy objects and liturgies show different levels of similarity with pre-existing local religious elements, such as talismans, amulet-water, or hand gestures. These similarities encompassed their forms, their modalities of application, as well as the efficacy of their miracles. The stories of the *Lixiu yijian* themselves reflect structural and narrative paradigms that were, often purposely, adapted from the local literary repertory. Themes such as deities saving people from fire and shipwrecks or local priests liberating people from demons were widespread across Buddhist and Daoist literature,[163] and they very likely have served as sources of inspiration, or imitation, for Christian missionaries. To an unknown extent, people might have interpreted the Christian practices according to their own ritualistic knowledge; for this reason, missionaries were strongly preoccupied with this confusion between one and the others. In the first place, they felt the need to remove these elements of confusion. As a result, once again the solution entailed the practice of rejecting local religions.

[163] Zhang (2014)

6. Conclusion

This study has attempted to provide insight into the world of Christianity in Fujian during the late Ming period. I have specifically relied on the work *Lixiu yijian* and on its depictions of the local religious environment. The *Lixiu Yijian* is a collection of anecdotes edited by the Christian convert Li Jiugong. It consists of a main group of stories derived from biblical narratives or Western hagiographies and of a second minor group of accounts reproducing Chinese people's experience of Christianity in their daily life. The interest of my study was in this second type of stories, more specifically in how Christian practices integrated into the local religious environment. My analysis concentrated on two main issues: the interaction between Christianity and the local religious cultures, and the transformation of Christianity into a local practice.

First, the interaction between Christianity and the pre-existing local religions has been generally characterised as conflictual. As demonstrated by Christian textual evidences, missionaries adopted an attitude of rejection and criticism against local religious practices. This attitude is further reflected in the stories of the *Lixiu yijian* by the means of explicit and implicit attacks on ritual specialists and local cults. In the anecdotes, the local ritual specialists are not once able to provide efficacious solutions for the characters. On the contrary, the rituals themselves could be harmful threats; local deities are often represented as the cause of people's diseases, or even as the embodiment of the demon.

The Christian response to local religious cultures was not homogeneous. For example, the above has devoted particular attention to the case of Buddhism. Whilst in the previous cases, the rebuke mostly remains on the ritualistic and practical level, when it comes to Buddhist practices, the stories expand their attack to spheres such as the moral, the social, and the metaphysical. In the stories, Buddhism is not merely an inferior and demonic belief. Rather, it is shown to prevent people from pursuing the Way and Confucian morality. Within this depiction of the local religious world, Christianity is introduced and proposed as righteous and powerful alternative.

Second, Christianity integrated into the local religious environment through its practice by local converts, with practice especially consisting of doing liturgical activities or using Christian objects in the daily life. Upon their entry into the Chinese local environment, Christian practices were highly accommodated to the necessities of the local religious milieu and thus Christianity presented itself through the identity of a saviour rescuing people from a world perceived as surrounded by demonic dangers.[164] The Christian narrative greatly assimilated the traditional Chinese demon lore; stories in the *Lixiu yijian* also clearly prioritised the power of Christianity in delivering healing miracles and in dominance over the supernatural, a power that

[164] The transmission of Christianity should not be seen as a one-directional process, in which missionaries played the pivotal role in accommodating and spreading the religious message. Rather, it is best to understand it as a result of the constantly changing interaction between Western priests and local people. Standaert argued that it was impossible to deliver the Christian message intact. Transmission is defined by contexts, but such contexts themselves were in constant transformation. Standaert (1994) and Standaert (2003)

was traditionally associated with local practices. Thus, although Christian converts placed emphasis on denigrating local religious traditions and differentiating Christianity from them, this nevertheless became a very arduous mission. Christianity was a "new" religious culture that began to be applied to pre-existing problems of the local environment and possessed similar modalities and connotations to the traditional customs. These practices were "Christian", yet also "local"; they were new but at the same time they belonged to the local sphere.

According to Zürcher, the study of Christian mission in China does not concern, or at least does not only concern, religion. Rather, it concerns cultural mechanisms.[165] By examining the Chinese confrontation with Christianity, we can observe the reactions of the local culture to interactions and differences. One type of reaction that we have considered here is localisation. As it integrated into the Chinese society, this new religion acquired a role and a form that conformed to the norms and the needs of the local world. Localisation can also be of different types. In the *Lixiu yijian*, Christianity absorbed traits of the local religious sphere and became integral part of the supernatural environment of coastal Fujian. Yet, this form of Christianity must have been different from the form it took in Beijing or in Fu'an. The transmission of Christianity was not a simple implantation of the religious message into the local society but it was a process of continuous interaction between ideas and people. Passing through missionaries,

[165] Wang (1991), pp. 132–143; 135; 137.

supporters and enemies, local converts, and local people, the message was constantly shaped and reinterpreted. This study has attempted to offer one possible view of how this process could have worked. However, as it is constrained to the evidences supplied in the *Lixiu yijian*, the picture reproduced here is incomplete. Further study on mechanisms of localisation could be conducted through examining different local experiences of Christianity as offered by the huge pool of Chinese Christian writings from late Ming and Qing periods.

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