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# **Be Pious and Patriotic: A Comparison of Chinese Christian and Muslim Teaching on Just War in the Early Stage of the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1941**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, I will reconstruct how Chinese Christians and Muslims as civilians sought a sense of justice in the midst of war through their religious discourses in their magazines, *The True Light Review* and *Yue Hua*. I will firstly analyse the peculiar situation that Christianity and Islam in China faced in 1930's. I will compare their characteristics in terms of hermeneutics of their sacred text and the strategy of linking up social circumstance and religious thought. For *Yue Hua*, I will study how it understood the Japanese aggression with the lens of Islamic revival movement. Especially, I will focus on how it argued that Japanese pan-Asianism is not an option for Islamic revival movement in China. For *The True Light Review*, I will analyze how the Baptist Pacifist position had been changed during the war. And, how the writers in the semi-occupied Shanghai International Settlement interpreted their religious teaching for the war of resistance as just war. I will argue that literary creativity with deep spiritual piety and solidarity for the compatriots is the key to differentiate using religious discourse as mere political tool from religious political discourse.

## **Keywords:**

1. Chinese Muslims; 2. Chinese Christians; 3. War; 4. Justice; 5. Theological Hermeneutics

## Introduction

In the 1930s, Japan's aggression against China had become obvious to the world. The 'Mukden Incident' of 18 September 1931 resulted in the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in northeast China and Inner Mongolia. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937, marked the beginning of an all-out Japanese invasion of China. This article will reconstruct how Chinese Christians and Muslims, as civilians, sought a sense of justice in the midst of war through their religious discourses in their magazines, *The True Light Review* 《真光雜誌》 and *Yue Hua* 《月華》. It first analyses the particular situation that Christianity and Islam in China faced in the 1930s and then give a brief introduction to *The True Light Review* and *Yue Hua*. It will state the traditional war theories of both religions and point out the limitations of the traditional theories in the context of *The True Light Review* and *Yue Hua*. After analysing the doctrinal ambivalence, the article investigates how the contributors to both magazines articulated their religious discourses on the justice of war with respect to the Sino–Japanese conflict, and then finally compares their characteristics by considering the hermeneutics of their sacred texts and the strategy of linking social circumstance with religious thought.

Scholars in mainland China have carried out extensive research on Muslim and Christian responses to the Second Sino–Japanese War, but most of them have concentrated on the religious policy of the Communist Party or the patriotic actions of Christians and Muslims, rather than on religious thought (for an overview, see R. Zhou 2006; Miao Wang 2012). Outside the mainland, there are scholars who are examining the importance of theological doctrine in shaping the response to the war by Chinese Christians and Hui Muslims. For example, Matsumoto Masumi (2003; 2006) has studied *Yue Hua* and suggested that the theological thought of Islamic reformism in Egypt helped *Hui* Muslim scholars develop a

patriotic discourse. This article does not focus on the theological roots of *Yue Hua* but discusses the writers' hermeneutical arguments for supporting the National government in the war. Yao Xiyi (2008) has studied the development and demise of Christian pacifism in China. The present article analyses the hermeneutical strategy adopted by the contributors to *The True Light Review* to reconcile pacifist theology with fighting a war of resistance.

### **Japan's aggression and the situation of Christianity and Islam in China in the 1930s**

Although the war was undertaken by the armed forces, religions were involved in belligerent actions both directly and indirectly. Religious believers supported or opposed the war directly through their deeds and words and governments or political powers were usually the motivators of such involvement, even if indirectly. On the one hand, Islam and Christianity in 1930's China faced difficulties in the relationship between religion and the state which meant that the religious discourses of Chinese Muslims and Christians on war could not be straightforward. On the other hand, research on the development of Japanese imperialism and pan-Asianism has shown that Japanese activists and the Japanese government deliberately used religions as tools to further their political ambition (Bodde 1946b, 311; Ion 2003, 89–92).

For Muslims, as early as 1912, Sun Yat Sen 孫中山 set out 'five races under one union' as one of the founding principles of the Republic of China (Sun 1912, 1–2). The 'five races' are the *Han* 漢, *Man* 滿 (Manchurian), *Meng* 蒙 (Mongolian), *Zhang* 藏 (Tibetan) and *Hui* 回 (which include all the Muslims in China, such as the Huis, Kazakhs and Uyghurs). Sun was aware that the political inequality that existed in China was a result of racial inequality. He affirmed that the Republic was founded on the basis of the equality of five races (Sun 1981, 439). However, in 1936, that is 25 years after the founding of the Republic, a Hui student leader complained:

Though, since the founding of the Republic, five races under one union and equality of races have been emphasized, they are not implemented by the government in reality. The rights cannot be exercised. Hui people feel discontent, utmost discontent. They are so pessimistic to become apathetic to the nation and the society (Yue Hua 1936, 16).

In the same year, proposals for the composition of the National Representative Assembly were announced. Hui leaders were surprised that there were Mongol, Tibetan and Manchurian representatives in the Assembly but none for the Hui people, and said that the government's proposal had alienated the Hui people (J. T. Jin 1936, 1; Ke Xing 1936, 2). At that time, in the 1930s, Hui warlords, Ma Fuxiang 馬福祥, Ma Hongkui 馬鴻逵, Ma Bufang 馬步芳, Ma Buqing 馬步青 and Ma Zhongying 馬仲英 were the *de facto* rulers of Ningxia, Gansu and Qinghai, three provinces in northwest China. They were semi-independent from the central government (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 65). Two large-scale Muslim armed rebellions broke out in northwest China in the 1930s, the first in 1931 at Hami (Ge 2002, 277–278). This upheaval spread unrest throughout Xinjiang. In 1933, more rebellions erupted in West Xinjiang and rebels established an Islamic government in Hotan and an East Turkestan Islamic Republic at Kashgar. The *de facto ruler* of Xinjiang, Sheng Shicai 盛世才, was supported by the Soviet Union and ran his government semi-independently manner (Yu 1996, 374–380). Between January 1939 and 1941, three Hui Muslim armed insurrections broke out in the Haiyuan and Guyuan regions (in present-day southern Ningxia province) (Dillon 1999, 89). In short, the political situation was unstable in northwest China, where Muslims constitute the majority of the population. Rephael Israeli has even claimed that Islam and the Chinese order are incompatible (Israeli 1977).

Japan was aware that Muslims were a major population group in northeast and northwest China and had been continuously collecting intelligence on Chinese Muslims since

the early twentieth century (Bodde 1946b). In addition, Japanese pan-Asianists argued that the Japanese Empire would help Muslims to frustrate the Soviet Union's ambitions and end colonial rule and presented pan-Asianism as a supporter of the Islamic revival movement (Esenbel 2004, 1141–1142, 1154; Koyagi 2013, 855). In 1923, Sukuma Teijiro 佐久間貞次郎, a Japanese Asianist in China, founded an Islamic association, 'The Light Society' (*Guang She* 光社) in Shanghai (Bodde 1946b, 312). Sukuma (1925, 11) claimed, in an article in the society's journal, that 'the Republic of China is doomed to be dismembered' and called on Muslims in China to stand up for 'self-determination' to liberate themselves from all forms of political oppression.

Whether the so-called five tribes of China can be in harmony with each other is a vital question of the hour ... Since the European War, a general out-cry for 'self-determination' has arisen among races. With the progress of mankind, the desideratum should be met by all means ... Prior to the foundation of a new state based on the new principles of the modern state, racial self-determination is the first consideration in the matter of realizing the truth of liberty, equality and humanity. (11)

Sukuma advocated that 'we Muslims in China ... have to seize the opportunity to take action' in view of 'the stirring up of Turkey, the independence of Egypt, the self-government movement of India and political awakening of Persia' for 'that is the very thing that is agreeable to the greatest spirit of the Prophet'(14).

From the mid-1930s on, a number of official organizations related to Islam were established in Japan (*Nihon Kaikyo Bunka Kyokai* – Japan Association of Islamic Culture in 1936; *Islam Bunka Kyokai* – Islamic Cultural Association in 1937; *Dai Nihon Kaikyo Kyokai* – Japan Islamic Association in 1938), and, most of the activities targeting Muslim people in China were placed under the Army's Special Service Agencies (Ando 2003, 29–30). The

Manchu Islamic Association was also founded in Manchukuo in 1934 and supported the plan to establishing an independent Muslim state in the northwest (R. Zhou 2006, 36–37).

The situation for Christians was no less complicated than that for the Hui Muslims. A report on Japanese churches written by a Western missionary in Japan, Paul S. Mayer, indicated that the Japanese government had directly mobilized Christianity for its war effort. Mayer (1939, 197–198) reported:

At the urgent suggestion of the authorities every denomination has appointed a committee to cooperate with the government committee on Spiritual Mobilization. Conferences arranged by the government have been held with the Christian pastors at which time government officials in high positions have sought to make clear the nature and the aims of the present conflict. From these conferences have gone suggestions to the denominations how they may do their share in the present crisis. ... Preaching also has shown the influence of the present crisis. On special days, sermons urging loyalty have been preached, but it may also be said that hardly a sermon is preached these days which does not in some way or other reflect the influence to a greater or lesser extent of the major crisis facing Japan. There has been, however, no such virulent denunciation of the enemy as was often heard from Western pulpits at the time of the World War.

At the same time, Christians in China were accused by Chinese non-Christian intellectuals and social leaders of being sympathizers with Western imperialism. *The Manifesto of the Anti-Christian Student Federation* of 9 March 1922, which is the first document of the anti-Christian movement, alleged that Christianity was a tool for Western economic invasion.

In this capitalistic social organization there is ... on the one hand a looting and oppressing class, and on the other a looted and oppressed class. Christianity and the Christian Church of the present time are devils who support and help the former,

and loot and oppress the latter ... Therefore, we recognize these devils who help tyrants – modern Christianity and the Christian church – to be our enemies with whom we must not avoid a decisive battle ... [C]apitalists of every country ... have flocked to China one after another, and carried out an economic invasion. Modern Christianity and the Christian Church are the vanguard of this economic invasion.

(C. S. Chang 1927, 187–188)

At some point, Japan, imperialism and Christianity were linked in anti-Christian and anti-foreign propaganda (Zhang 1925, 4–5; Xu 1925, 2–3). In 1928, one of such polemic even claimed that the danger presented by Christianity was more serious than the violent suppression that took place in the ‘May Thirtieth Incident’ of 1925 in Shanghai, which began as an industrial dispute between a Japanese factory and its workers (W. K. Chang 1929, 2). In the 1930s, the anti-foreign sentiment could be seen in the violence perpetrated on missionaries by Communist troops. For example, John and Betty Stam of the China Inland Mission had been beheaded in Anhui Province in 1934 (Taylor 1935, 136–137). In order to meet the challenge of the anti-Christian movement, many Christian leaders expressed their anti-imperialist opinions and clearly stated that Chinese Christians were patriotic. For instance, immediately after the Mukden Incident, various national Christian associations and the National Christian Council of China issued manifestoes denouncing the Japanese invasion. However, many Christians insisted on using pacifist action, although some opted for armed resistance (W. X. Chen, Cai, and Guan 1931, 25–34).

It was not only the Japanese government that attempted to mobilize Muslims and Christians for its imperialist expansion; the Chinese government followed a similar policy to gain support. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek 蔣介石 broadcasted a speech entitled ‘Why I believe in Jesus’ on the eve of Easter 1938. He stated:



We observe Easter this year at a time of grave national peril ... We should follow Jesus' way of sacrifice ... Let us march together toward the Cross, for the regeneration of our nation and for the realization of everlasting peace on earth.

(Chiang 1946b, 62)

On 29 July 1939, Chiang similarly addressed Chinese Muslim leaders: 'Mohammedanism is a great religion and a religion of salvation. To carry out their mission, Mohammedans should try to save not only themselves but also non-Mohammedans. I sincerely hope that Chinese Mohammedans will reaffirm their solidarity with Chinese people' (Chiang 1946a, 306). In short, Muslims and Christians in China were caught in the middle between Japanese and Chinese political struggles.

### **The stance of *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review***

*Yue Hua* was founded by *ahongs* (阿訇 from Persian *akoond*, equivalent to Arabic *imām*), Hui literati and local Hui leaders in October 1929 at Peiping (Yue Hua 2010, 1). It has been praised as a long-standing Muslim periodical with a circulation of about 10,000 (Z. Bai 1939; Z. Wang 1939). *The True Light Review*, first published as *The True Light Monthly* in 1902, was a long-standing Chinese-language Christian periodical in the early twentieth century in China. It has been considered as the 'ancestor' of Chinese Christian periodicals and one of the six most important Christian periodicals from 1914 to 1937 (Y. Tang 1938a, 5; 1938b, 6).

On the tenth anniversary of *Yue Hua*, one of the former editors, Wang Mengyang 王夢揚, stated that the magazine had faced a lot of political pressure after the Mukden Incident. According to Wang, *Yue Hua* 'did not want either to openly irritate the dominant power, or to violate its own position'. Thus, *Yue Hua* could not explicitly call for a full-scale resistance against Japan (M. Wang 1939, 21). In 1938, *Yue Hua* moved to Guilin and resumed publication. It was supported by Bai Chongxi 白崇禧, a powerful Hui general in the national

government. In its ‘Fu kan ci (復刊辭 Address on reissuing)’ (Yue Hua 1938a), the editor indicated that the first responsibility of *Yue Hua* was to articulate the teaching of resistance and nation building through Islamic doctrines. Before 1938, *Yue Hua* had published a few articles on resisting Japan, but from 1938 onwards, each issue of the journal included several articles on the subject.

As far as *The True Light Review* was concerned, its editor and contributors presented their Christian faith and experience in a particular time-space between the outbreaks of the Second Sino–Japanese War in 1937 and the Pacific War in 1941. Because the magazine was edited and published in the isolated Shanghai International Settlement, they were protected to a certain extent by foreign governments and enjoyed freedom of speech (Bergère 1981). However, it was an unstable safety and freedom. The political situation within the *Gudao* (孤島 lone islet) of Shanghai made it difficult for the inhabitants to set out a clear-cut moral and political position on the war (Yeh 1998, 3–5).

In the light of the circumstances in which these two periodicals found themselves, an analysis of how they articulated the religious teaching of resisting the aggression of Japan needs to be approached from different angles. For *Yue Hua*, this article will study how it understood the Japanese aggression through the lens of Islamic revival movement, focusing in particular on how it argued that Japanese pan-Asianism was not an option for the Islamic revival movement in China. Then, how it interpreted the war with Japan as an Islamic just war will be investigated. For *The True Light Review*, the analysis will consider how the Baptist pacifist position changed during the war, and how the writers in the semi-occupied Shanghai International Settlement interpreted their religious teaching in relation to the war of resistance.

### ***Yue Hua* and just war against Japan**

In Islamic tradition, the mission of Muslims is signified by the name of the religion, *al-islām*, that is, full submission to the will of God in the peace of one's heart. As the Qur'an teaches, 'Truly it is in the remembrance of God that hearts find peace' (Q 13.28).<sup>1</sup> Social justice is derived from the belief of the Unity of God (*tawhīd*). Muslims should follow God and submit themselves to God's will. Muslims are committed to realizing an Islamic world of peace (*dār al-islām*), whose core concern is social justice. Muslims' religious practices, such as *zakāt* (tithing), *ṣadaqa* (alms-giving), and even *jihād* (struggle/war), aim to build up the *umma* (Islamic community) and promote the Islamic world/house of peace (*dār al-islām*) (Kelsey 1993, 46). Following this logic, we can understand why Sukuma used the examples of the Prophet and other Islamic countries to encourage Chinese Muslims to fight for self-determination. To put it plainly, joining the Japanese war effort for the liberation of the Hui people was a just cause. In fact, Zhong Guo Hui Jiao Zong Lian He Hui (中國回教總聯合會 the All China Muslim League), a Muslim organization established and supported by the Japanese Army, spread propaganda encouraging fighting against non-Muslim Chinese for the benefit of Muslims (Bodde 1946a, 331–332).

If we return to the discussion in *Yue Hua*, we find that, from its very beginning, as early as 1930, *Yue Hua* did not regard the Republic of China as a realm of unbelievers or a world of war (*dār al-ḥarb*). Though China could not be considered as part of the *umma*, the Muslim intellectuals who contributed to the magazine intelligently articulated another understanding of the Chinese Muslim situation. For example, Wang Jiangzai 王靜齋, in an article titled 'Keep Islamic Faith and Love the Country' 謹守回教與愛護國家, translated various passages that he had come across in Arabic. He told his readers that Islamic jurisprudence teaches that that people have duty to their country (Arabic *waṭan* (homeland/country), from which their freedom and rights are derived. In other words, one cannot ask for freedom without carrying out one's duty. Wang further pointed out that there

was an Arabic saying, which he indicated might come from Hadith, that ‘loving your country is part of faith’ (*hubb al-watan min al-īmān*). From this, he argued that Hui Muslims should ‘obey Islamic doctrine and love the country’. Finally, Wang stated that his teacher at Al-Azhar University had encouraged him to fight for his country, citing Q 2.246 as authority (J. Wang 1930). We can see that the *ahong* cleverly reinterpreted the position of Chinese Hui Muslims, saying they were members of the country with a patriotic duty, for this is the teaching of the Sharia, Hadith and Qu’ran. Patriotism is a religious cause. His teaching did not even need to mention the complicated and alienated situation of the Hui people in China, for Muslims should submit to God’s will, and thus patriotism became a duty for pious Muslims. With regard to self-determination and setting up an Islamic state, writers in *Yue Hua* reinterpreted them by looking at Hui Muslims’ endeavour from a particular geo-political perspective, rather making a general demand of an Islamic state. For example, Xue Wenbo 薛文波 argued that Hui Muslims should recognize that they were Muslims of China, and not Muslims of Turkey, Iran nor any other Islamic state. From this specific geo-political position, Xue argued that the main aim of Hui Muslims’ self-determination was to build a free and united Republic of China (Xue 1932, 19–20). Similarly, Ma Xueren 馬學仁, in an article on Islamic national movements worldwide, urges Chinese Hui Muslims not to be impetuous in promoting a national movement. According to his analysis, the problem of Muslim national groups was a problem arising from imperialism. Thus, only a movement that targets imperialist countries constitutes a meaningful effort. In order to struggle against imperialists, Muslims should unite with other national groups under imperialist oppression. Also, Chinese Muslims should develop China’s economic strength before opposing imperialist powers. Otherwise, they would sacrifice themselves meaninglessly under imperialist suppression (Ma 1932). In short, *Yue Hua* attempted to offer an alternative geo-political vision, though one that was familiar to Hui Muslims, in order to gain their support to the Republic.

After 1938, we see similar strategies adopted to present the case for a just war against Japan. To providing a religious discourse, Tang Kesan 唐柯三, in his speech at a ceremony for the reopening of Chengda Normal School, restated the teaching that ‘loving your country is part of faith’ (*ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān*). He promised that the school would train students be patriotic and a powerful resource for resisting the enemy and national salvation (K. Tang 1938, 17). In the second issue of its new series, in the article ‘Gu Lan Yu Zhan Shi Min Zhong Xin Li Jian She’ (古蘭與戰時民眾心理建設 Quran and the Psychological Building for the Masses in Wartime), Jin Debao 金德寶 quoted Q 8.65 to argue that fighting against Japan was in the same cause as the Prophet’s fight against oppressors: ‘O Prophet, urge the believers to battle. If there are among you twenty [who are] steadfast, they will overcome two hundred. And if there are among you one hundred [who are] steadfast, they will overcome a thousand.’ Then, he quoted the Qur’an to argue that the Muslims have a spirit of fighting to the end, of sacrifice, believing in predestination (so that they are not afraid of death), and of final victory. For example, ‘And fight them until there is no fitnah’ (Q 8.39, on the spirit of fighting to the end); ‘And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision’ (Q 3.169, on the spirit of sacrifice); ‘O you who have believed, do not be like those who disbelieved and said about their brothers when they travelled through the land or went out to fight, “If they had been with us, they would not have died or have been killed,” so Allah makes that [misconception] a regret within their hearts. And it is Allah who gives life and causes death, and Allah is seeing of what you do. And if you are killed in the cause of Allah or die – then forgiveness from Allah and mercy are better than whatever they accumulate [in this world]’ (Q 3.156–157, on the spirit of predestination); ‘if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet’ (Q 47.7, on the spirit of final victory) (D. Jin 1938a). This article was

followed by an article translated from an Egyptian newspaper about the Prophet's experience of engaging in defensive war (Y. Chen 1938).

In 1939, Zheng Daoming 鄭道明 wrote an article to set out the Islamic teaching on war. He quoted the Qur'an and stated that Islam only allows Muslims to fight a war if it is for justice, peace and truth and in defence, and he asserted that the war of resistance in China fulfilled these criteria. He even claimed that the war of resistance was a holy war (Zheng 1939, 9). In order to rouse the fighting spirit, a song containing deep religious metaphors and referring to the collective memory of the Hui people, titled 'Zhong Guo Hui Zu Kang Zhan Ge' (中國回族抗戰歌 Song of war of resistance of Chinese Hui people), was published in *Yue Hua*. It is a very good example of how the Hui Muslim intellectuals interwove their collective ethnic memory, religious teaching, and contemporary circumstances for their action.

Enemies water their horses at the Yellow River/

The holy war of the resistance bursts out in waves of anguish!

Muslims have true bravery/

Ashamed of a craven life and honoured for fighting!

Mosques now being burned to ashes/

Innocent women and children stained with blood!

What a sadness! Fifty million Muslims/

Are now in shame!

Du Wenxiu's exemplary life [of fighting] still influences us/

Bai Yanhu's gallantry is still there!

Kill! Kill! Killing stops killing/

Seeking justice by the sword!

Religion reveals to me the virtue of martyrdom/

No reluctance to bleed and die!

On the happy day of the defeat of Japan/

Hui Muslim men will disarm! (Xue 1938)

The lines in the song, ‘Muslims have true bravery/Ashamed of a craven life and honoured for fighting’; ‘Kill! Kill! Killing stops killing’; ‘Religion reveals to me the virtue of martyrdom’, appealed for a fighting spirit through Islamic teaching. Du Wenxiu 杜文秀 and Bai Yanhu 白彦虎 were well-known among the Hui people as examples of bravery and resistance.

‘Enemies water their horses at the Yellow River’, ‘Mosques now being burned to ashes’, and ‘Innocent women and children stained with blood’ are examples of the undoubted suffering the Hui people experienced in war.

This attempt at interweaving ideas eventually made the collective religious understanding simultaneously a political slogan. Bai Chongxi, in 1940, quoted the Qur’an to justify his support for fighting against Japan’s aggression:

So fight, [O Muhammad], in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself. And encourage the believers [to join you] that perhaps Allah will restrain the [military] might of those who disbelieve. And Allah is greater in might and stronger in [exemplary] punishment.’ (Q 4.84)

He believed that this verse showed the Prophet’s example of an uncompromising spirit in defensive war. Then, he interpreted the Prophet’s example as ‘spiritual mobilization’, which was Chiang Kai-Shek’s slogan for mobilizing Chinese to join the war of resistance (C. Bai 1940, 4). With this interpretation, the Islamic understanding of just war became for Muslims identified with the national government’s war effort.

The contributors to *Yue Hua* did not only draw direct support for the war from the Qur'an and Hadith. They also interpreted the religious efforts of Muslims to promote Islam and festivals to commemorate the Prophet through the lens of the war of resistance. Hai Guangqiang 海光前 asserted that the Prophet promoted Islam through a series of wars, and the war of resistance was as just as the war fought by the Prophet; Muslims, by joining the war of resistance, were promoting Islam as well (Hai 1938). Fu Yimo 傅貽謨 suggested that the proper way to remember the Prophet at the festivals was to follow his example of fighting and solidarity with people (Fu 1938).

Besides using religious texts, works and festivals to support the war of resistance, the contributors to *Yue Hua* also offered a reinterpretation of the contemporary geo-political and religious landscape and how Hui Muslims should relate to the Islamic world, arguing especially that Japan's pan-Asianism was deceitful and doomed to failure. We find in *Yue Hua* the following arguments reinterpreting the geo-political and religious landscape insofar as it concerned the Hui people: 1. Asserting that, according to Islamic teaching, the Japanese aggression is an unjust war; 2. Putting forward China as the right partner for the endeavour of liberating Asian countries from colonialism and Communism, and Hui Muslims can help to promote diplomatic relations with Near East countries; 3. Pointing out the internal differences within the pan-Islamic movement and selecting the ideas that are in line with the claims of the Hui intelligentsia; 4. Appealing to Chinese history to support the idea of building a Chinese nation rather than a Hui Hui state such as the Japanese had suggested (D. Jin 1938b; Yue Hua 1938b, 1938c, 1939; Tian Ying 1940a, 1940b; S. Xie 1940; Yang 1940).

For some concrete examples, in the first issue of *Yue Hua* in 1938, the article on the second page was titled 'Kang Zhan Sheng Zhong de Hui Min Zhuang Tai' (抗戰聲中回民的動態 The situation of Hui people in the midst of War of Resistance). The writer stated that Chinese Muslims (Hui people) were very active in the war of resistance. Interestingly, the



first point that the writer gave as an example of Muslim involvement was to put Japanese aggression in Asia on the stage rather than just limiting it to China. The writer pointed out that the delegation of Chinese Hui Muslims sent to the Near East constituted a strong measure against Japan's pan-Asianism, because their Muslim identity would attract support from Muslims of those countries (Yue Hua 1938d, 2). They reinterpreted the Chinese war of resistance as a joint struggle of Asian Muslims. *Yue Hua* also reported that the Chinese delegates at the World Islamic Annual Conference in Mecca in 1938 presented the aggression of Japan and the suffering of Chinese Muslims to the conference participants. They called for a boycott of the forthcoming opening ceremony of a mosque in Tokyo and met the king of Saudi Arabia to set out the situation of the Chinese war of resistance. *Yue Hua* also reported that they visited Egypt and received very positive support from Egyptian Muslims (Yue Hua 1938e). Later, *Yue Hua* reported that Japan's invitations were declined by world Muslims. The reports regarded this as a success in the struggle against Japan (Yue Hua 1938f; D. Jin 1938b) and also pointed out that Japan's harsh colonial rule in Korea and Taiwan showed that Japanese military action was a means not of liberation but of domination (Yue Hua 1938c, 16). In response to propaganda that Japan honoured Islam and denying the Hui–Han relationship, Hui Muslims reported that the Japanese had bombarded mosques in China and persecuted Muslims in occupied areas and that the Han people were fighting together with Hui people against Japanese aggression (Ting Sheng 1939; Yi Bu La Xin 1939).

In summary, all the examples show that calls of the contributors to *Yue Hua* to join the resistance were deeply embedded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, and in shared Muslim experience (historical, religious, geo-political and suffering in war). We should note that, in the articles, the primary reason given for joining the war of resistance is religious. This resonated with the collective experience of the Hui people and created a spirit of fighting for China. Religion served as a nucleus and a key to the patriotic action of Hui

Muslims. Mainland Chinese scholars have proposed that there were three reasons for Hui Muslims' active participation in the war of resistance, which are mainly political in nature: 1. The outbreak of war made the conflict between Japan and China the most substantial conflict for Chinese society; 2. Hui Muslims have a long tradition of patriotism; 3. The Chinese Communist Party carried out a correct ethnic policy and had a united front policy for ethnic groups in the War of Resistance (R. Zhou 2006, 450–465). Having investigated in detail how the contributors to *Yue Hua* articulated their points, we have found that this mono-dimensional political interpretation is tenuous.

### ***The True Light Review and seeking justice in war*<sup>2</sup>**

*The True Light Review* found itself in a very different situation from *Yue Hua*. Geopolitically, it was published in a semi-occupied area, while *Yue Hua* was published in free China. Theologically, the editor of *The True Light Review*, S. M. Tsao (曹新銘 Cao Xinming), openly supported pacifism. Can a pacifist in a semi-occupied area call people to fight a just war? This is my question. In this section, I shall offer an analysis of the hermeneutical strategies of the contributors to *The True Light Review* as they sought a sense of justice in wartime.

After the outbreak of the Sino–Japanese war in July 1937, *The True Light Review* first mentioned the war in its September issue. In “*Juan Shou Yu* (卷首語 Forewords),” S. M. Tsao, the editor, described the war as a ‘Chinese war of resistance against Japan’ (Bian Zhe 1937c). He then equated Christian justice and good with patriotism and resistance.

We, as Christians, are important members of society who stand at the forefront of moral good and the struggle with evil. We fully believe that we will have the final victory. We are compassionate and patriotic toward our nation, not only because we were born in this country, but also because we do this for justice, for

good and righteousness; and because we are a nation invaded, oppressed and humiliated. We are in the right, and self-confident enough to be patriotic. We can voice our patriotism forcefully and justly (Bian Zhe 1937a, 1).

It would appear from these words that Tsao supported military resistance, which is quite unusual for a Baptist magazine. However, in the paragraphs following this statement, the description of the practice of Christian patriotism is full of ambiguities and literary rhetoric. Tsao emphasised that many Christians had invested extensive effort into peaceful resistance and the anti-war movement, but he claimed that pacifism and military resistance are compatible with each other in the current context because the Chinese military action was a reaction of self-defence (Bian Zhe 1937a, 1). Then, however, the pacifist tone was enhanced in an opinion article titled, 'He ping de zhen guang' (和平的真光 The True Light of Peace) immediately after the foreword. The author urged Christians of different denominations, nations and ethnicities to unite for the purpose of promoting peace and rejecting war. Christians should become a powerful organization of peace and a light of peace (X. Xie 1937, 5–6).

Therefore, on the one hand, Christians might participate in the war against the Japanese to achieve a final victory while, on the other, Tsao the Baptist told us that he would stay a pacifist because 'his faith and conscience forbade him to kill' (Bian Zhe 1937a, 2). As a pacifist, Tsao suggested that Christians could serve the nation and be patriotic by nursing the wounded, entertaining the soldiers, making donations, or engaging in logistics services, evangelism and prayer. He cited the examples of the sacrifice of Jesus and Paul in love for Jews and the efforts of world Christians in the pacifist movement to support his claim (1–2).

Tsao also theologized his view in order to allow a Baptist pacifist to be an active resistor as well. He suggested that human life in itself is a battle of body and mind. Christians should stand up to resist and fight against both physical and spiritual evils. He compared

Japan to Satan. Just as Satan violently invaded the human spirit, Japan had violently invaded Chinese land. Satan damaged the human conscience, virtue, righteousness and courage; Japan damaged the Chinese people, their wealth and culture. Christians who resist and fight against Satan are like those resisting Japan. They are warriors of the heavenly kingdom. Their victory will ultimately bring peace, equality and wellbeing to the people. Thus, Christian pacifism is a form of resistance. He then explained that the spiritual resistance was not an individual effort. The gospel is good news of peace and equality, and spiritual resistance should aim at promoting the gospel – world peace and saving people (Tsao 1937). Tsao used scriptural examples, commonly accepted theological notions and renowned church practice to back up his suggestions for Christian life in wartime.

Tsao was clearly attempting to defend pacifism as a strategy for achieving both justice and peace. However, at the same time, he admitted that his conscience was troubled by his not fighting in the war: ‘Now, in northern China, a lot of compatriots have been sacrificed. Yet we have still survived. How can we not be ashamed?’ (Bian Zhe 1937a, 2).

In this early stage of the war, the concepts of just war and theological pacifism came into conflict. *The True Light Review*, as an official Baptist magazine, could not support war. No war can be justified theologically. However, it was hard for Christians to justify a pacifist position in the midst of the Sino–Japanese war, in which they believed Japan to be a clear aggressor. A missionary’s article in *Chinese Recorder* captured this painful dilemma clearly. The author complained that pacifism ‘is hopelessly individualistic, and all too often fails to distinguish between bearing the cross oneself ... and making other people bear the cross’ (Gray 1939, 119). However, as a Baptist, Tsao sought justice in war by reinterpreting religious activities and indirect supportive actions as ‘resistance’. His religious lens helped him to maintain his image of himself as both pious and patriotic at the same time.

The Battle of Shanghai was fought intensely from August to the end of October 1937. Nearly half of the articles in the November issue of the magazine were related to war. Resistance and national unity can easily be identified as themes in most of the articles. Fighting against the Japanese and supporting the war was portrayed as a clear and rightful Christian duty. Tsao the pacifist was constantly attracted to military resistance. As early as 15 October 1937, he confessed that:

Though I have been determined not to kill anybody, I see the fight intensifying in these days. I see the destruction of justice and humanity. I see the suffering and hardship of the nation. I wonder if, rather than staying in my editorial office and doing this ineffective paperwork, I should go to the battlefield to kill our enemies to achieve a concrete effect. (Bian Zhe 1937b, 61)

Tsao's inclination towards violent resistance came from a sense of Christian justice and obligation. In his diary, Tsao (1961, 1:53) wrote an entry dated 5 October 1937:

At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, some colleagues advised me not to write any comments on the war. 'Because no one can predict who will win the war,' they said, 'these comments may endanger [my] life.' However, if a person who takes note of public opinion does not discern right and wrong and exalt truth and justice, how can he guide the people and spread the gospel? If the nation perishes, it is not bad to die.

Tsao clearly recognized that Japan's aggression was unjust. However, he faced various moral dilemmas in figuring out and articulating his personal response to the war. Theologically, he wanted to be a pacifist; but the war situation moved him to support Chinese military action. In terms of personal safety, he had been warned to keep silent; but his aspiration to be a good journalist urged him to voice his resistance. Tsao believed that his message of military resistance could promote rightful Christian duty and justice, and this was valuable enough to

lead him to forsake personal safety. We can see that Tsao led his Christian readers to walk along a narrow path of moral discernment and dilemmas, continually prioritising patriotism over other legitimate concerns.

The retreat of the Chinese army in October 1937 marked the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and the emergence of *Gudao*. In his diary, Tsao worried that he would lose his freedom of speech after the fall of Shanghai (Tsao 1961, 1:61). In the January 1938 issue of *The True Light Review*, he stated that the rapidly changing situation made it difficult to express his views (Bian Zhe 1938a). However, Tsao did not allow himself and *The True Light Review* become collaborators. In early 1938, he accepted that Christians could join the army and fight in the war of resistance. In other words, he no longer held to his pacifist position (Tsao 1938c, 2–3). Also, in his diary entry for 12 January 1938, he commended the soldiers and nurses who sacrificed themselves on the battlefield out of patriotism. He believed that, if Christian workers did not have this spirit of sacrifice, their ministries were without life (Tsao 1961, 1:72). In other words, a new theological rationale – the spirit of sacrifice – provided him with grounds for giving up pacifism.

In July 1938, Tsao published an article, ‘Ji Du Tu Dui Yu Zhan Zheng De Tai Du’ (基督徒對於戰爭的態度 Christian attitude towards war), to explain his position. In fact, the article clearly shows that he had come to a position of accepting just war theory rather than pacifism. He emphasised that his view came from ‘the teaching of the New Testament, and the spirit of Jesus and apostles’. He stated that Christians should ‘be anti-war, develop the heavenly kingdom; not use swords [arms], but not be afraid of swords; use intelligence to protect the good people and sanction the bad’ (Tsao 1938b, 1). Based on this position, he argued that it was reasonable for Christians to take up arms and fight to protect good people and punish the bad. He further pointed out that the Scripture taught that Christians should submit themselves to the governing authorities. Because it is a duty of a national to serve in

the army, Christians should be allowed to join the war of resistance and fight. Since Chinese soldiers fight for the welfare of human beings, their sacrifice of life in fighting was the same as the sacrifice of life in love taught by the Scripture (Tsao 1938b, 2–3).

In October 1938, Tsao wrote another article on the Christian understanding of loving one's enemies and serving in the army. He explained in detail why those used Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5.38–42 to support a radical pacifist position of loving one's enemy was an incorrect biblical interpretation. Then, he explained how it was that serving in the army was biblical. He cited Luke 7.1–10, Acts 10, Ephesians 6.10–17, 1 Timothy 1.18, and 2 Timothy 2.3–4 in support. He pointed out that the teaching of Matthew 26.52, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword', is not a general principle but a teaching for particular circumstances. He gave Luke 22.36 as a counter example to argue that we cannot generalize Jesus's saying there as his unconditional support for using force (Tsao 1938a, 1–4). In the same vein as in *Yue Hua*, spiritual authority became key in the discourses, even when they were about secular issues.

However, the staff of *The True Life Review* were in a semi-occupied area. How could they maintain a spirit of sacrifice without actually being sacrificed to Japanese violence? First, indirect expression can be an effort of resistance. Chen Jinyong 陳金鏞, a renowned Christian intellectual who taught at Nanjing Theological Seminary and worked in the Christian Literature Society, published his diary entries in *The True Light Review* from October 1938 to January 1939 (the column ended abruptly because of Chen's asthma) (Bian Zhe 1939). Chen titled his column 'Diary of Evangelism'. However, when the readers read the content, they realised that Chen was not talking about evangelism. He was referring to resistance (J. Chen 1938, 17). Besides Chen's, there were other personal diaries, narratives and poems on the experience of war published in *The True Light Review*. For example, from July 1938 to November 1941, Yan Yutan, a pastor in a town south of Nanjing, wrote a long

poem, *Nan Zhong Yin* (難中吟 Lamentation) (Yan 1938; 1941b) and the serial, *Jie hou xie zhen* (A portrait of calamity) (Yan 1939; 1941a). In these two series of works, he lamented the great sufferings that the war had brought upon him, his family and other civilians. Tsao wrote an article on a heroine from the Old Testament, Jael, who assassinated Sisera, a Canaanite leader who had oppressed the Israelites for years (Judges 4.11–22, 5.24–31). Though Tsao emphasised that he did not encourage readers to kill people but rather to save them, he explicitly urged his readers to be chivalrous (*xiayi*). He interpreted the chivalrous spirit in the biblical story of Jael in terms of justice and national salvation (Tsao 1938d, 33). Tsao clearly said that he chose to publish these works because he wanted readers to understand the suffering of other Christians and be encouraged by their endeavours (Bian Zhe 1938a; 1938b; 1938c; 1939). In other words, it is a strategy of interpreting war through common experience and well known stories. Everything can be understood indirectly as a call for Christians to strive for justice in the national crisis.

More interestingly, contributors to *The True Light Review* interpreted the suffering people experienced in war through a theological lens, and this interpretation seems to ‘regress’ into a typical Western pacifist tone. They portrayed suffering as the result of sin and admitted, surprisingly, that not only did the Japanese sin deeply, but Chinese people did too. For example, Zhou Duanfu (1939, 12) described the Sino–Japanese war as a disaster that could make the Chinese repent and wake up. Lai Yixiu (1941, 14) claimed that Jesus taught us to save our nation through our repentance, so the Chinese should confess their sins and repent. If they were to repent, they would find that the suffering of war could not destroy them. The war would thus purify them to become just and good (Tsao 1938c, 3). This theological reinterpretation of justice represents a shift of focus; people’s internal quality and virtue are more important than the war in the outside world. Repenting, not fighting, is the way to justice.



Interpreting the evil of war as the sin of nations and individuals helps Christians to have a new perspective on understanding war. Tsao believed that the ultimate goal for Christians is to build up the heavenly kingdom where the problem of sin will be finally overcome rather than to win a war (Tsao 1938b, 1). He turned the problem of war into a Christian social project with Jesus's example and teaching. Besides fighting the Japanese for justice and peace, Tsao suggested that Christians could promote the heavenly kingdom, and thus achieve the final justice and peace they desired. By individual moral effort, not warfare, they would finally change the macro socio-political setting. However, this move in his discourse was also the result of the pressure of Japanese occupation. Tsao indicated that he had turned to theological discussion because the magazine needed to be very cautious in what it said (Bian Zhe 1941). The increase in political pressure led to a more indirect discourse of resistance. We should note that, by suggesting both resistance and a movement towards a peaceful heavenly kingdom, Tsao seems to combine two supposedly opposing Christian theologies of war – the just war theory and the pacifism – into one in the Chinese context. But we should also note his hermeneutical strategies for applying these theologies in his discourses are the same: the authority of the Scripture, the examples of Jesus and biblical models, and translating religious activity in terms of resistance.

### **Hermeneutics and contextualized articulation of just war or justice in war**

Every religion has its logic of war. In the case of Chinese Christianity and Hui Islam, we can identify their teaching on just war or justice in war as the result of an ongoing process of interpretation of their religion tradition and lived context. However, fighting against Japan was not an automatic and unchallenged choice for Chinese Christians and Hui Muslims. The Japanese government and pan-Asianists utilized the pan-Arab sentiment that was growing within the Islamic revival movement in the early twentieth century to encourage Hui Muslims

to join Japan's pan-Asianism and fight against the national government of Kuomintang. The goal was to establish an Islamic state (*Hui Jiao Guo*), which can find full support in Islamic teaching (Ando 2003, 27–28; Koyagi 2013, 875–876). With regard to Christianity, its tradition of pacifism made fighting and war impossible. In other words, the hermeneutical process was not in fixed mode; it was dynamic and shifting. The question of how the contributors to these two journals arrived at their teaching and made an impact is interesting and important.

The contributors to *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review* supported the war of resistance and published a lot of articles in favour of the war effort. Interestingly, *Yue Hua* was a publication under the influence of the Islamic revival movement, while *The True Light Review* held a pacifist position. Archie Lee has suggested that, when authoritative religious and cultural claims come into conflict, religious believers will attempt to solve the tension by 'cross-textual reading strategy' (Lee 2003, 4). According to Lee, a cross-textual reading strategy is a complex process of interpretation and reinterpretation that

entails reading one text in terms of a second text and making 'crossings' from one over to the other with a view to grasping the broader meanings of the two texts. It is expected that through such an effort creative integration or enriched transformation of the two would be achieved. (5)

In our case, the contributors to *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review* clearly adopted a cross-textual reading strategy and did indeed achieve creative integration and an enriched transformation. Hui Muslim writers transformed the pan-Islamic revival effort into support for the war policy of the National government. S. M. Tsao of *The True Light Review* creatively integrated pacifist and just war positions and developed creative Christian discourses of resistance.

Lee suggests that the cross-textual reading of the late Ming and the early Qing Christians was achieved through a consciously creative integration of their dual identity and recognition of the distinction between canon and commentary (26–27). In our case, we can note that the identity problem is a conflict not between national and religious identities, but between different religious identities, which eventually affects the understanding of national identity. We also see that the writers utilized the current theological discussion that they were familiar with, rather than dismissing it as less authoritative than the religious canons.

We need to say something more to arrive at a deeper understanding of how cross-textual reading strategy worked in our case. My analysis has shown that the contributors to *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review* maximized the persuasiveness of their articles by citing religious canons, following rigorous religious hermeneutic principles, and suggesting a new vision (whether geo-political or purely religious) for religious endeavours. All these are hermeneutical tactics that connect religion with the everyday life-world of believers. The writers did not separate the commentary from the canon. Rather, they demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the canon and tradition. They recalled that both the Islamic and the Christian religion require faithful and comprehensive hermeneutics of the sacred texts in order to arrive at sound religious teaching. Therefore, whatever the writers wanted to put to their readers, they needed to demonstrate their faithfulness to the canon and tradition, and this then legitimized their discourses.

Another feature of our case is that Christian pacifism and the Japanese religious propaganda disseminated to Muslims had the potential to generate an irreconcilable mismatch between the life experiences of Chinese Christians and Hui Muslims. In contrast, the contributors to *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review* were able creatively and vividly to capture the war experience of their compatriots and fellow believers with different genres of religious discourses. They used stories, poems, songs and personal experience to articulate

the spirit of resistance. In their discourses, we find that a deep sense of solidarity and justice was in play. In the case of S. M. Tsao, he changed his pacifist stance precisely under the compulsion of justice. Hui Muslims did not opt for the Japanese version of pan-Islamism because of the injustice of Japanese aggression and colonialism. They discovered points in common between pan-Islamic endeavour and the national government's war effort. Tsao's case also shows that the inapplicability of a traditional theological view will drive believers to generate a new synthetic theological understanding to guide religious practice and provide the greatest potential for the achievement of justice.

Peculiarly, the national crisis functioned as a point at which the tension between the nation and 'foreign religion' that we can find in the anti-religion movement in China was transcended. Or, to put it differently, the national crisis shed light on a common just cause that believers and unbelievers could pursue together; unearthing the constitutive elements of the common understanding of justice in China and how Chinese religious believers deal with them is an important task. Furthermore, we can understand the clash between religion and the nation in terms of a discrepancy between understandings of the just and the good.

## **Conclusion**

This article has shown that Christianity and Islam in China faced a distinctive political situation in the 1930s. Political powers wanted to manipulate religious groups, while believers' support for a particular political cause was closely related to their interpretation of religious doctrines. A comparison has shown that articles in *Yue Hua* and *The True Light Review* were well-founded interpretations of religious texts and traditions that created a bridge between various religious ideas and the legitimacy of supporting the war of resistance. This is an important common factor in the success of these two prestigious religious publications. Furthermore, by showing solidarity with their compatriots and concern for their

welfare, and sharing in the crisis, Chinese Christians and Hui Muslims showed that the foreignness of their religions was a biased identity construct of the non-believing public rather than an unchangeable reality.

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<sup>1</sup> English translations of the Qur'an are taken from Sahih International. <https://archive.org/details/QuranSaheehInternationalTranslationWithMainArabicText/page/n279/mode/2up>.

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<sup>2</sup> The material in this section has appeared in my previous work (Kwok 2018). Since the present work is a comparative study, I needed to include this materials for discussion. The present work argues from a cross-cultural hermeneutical perspective. The previous work was a discussion of theological pacifism and just war.