

# Cultural encounters between Ulster & China



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## INTRODUCTION

Ulster has many tangible links with China. Since 2003 Belfast has been twinned with Hefei, the provincial capital of Anhwei. Ulster has been home to a sizeable Chinese community for many years. The Queen's University of Belfast attracts a great many Chinese students. The Northern Ireland Assembly is the first legislature in Europe to have an elected representative with an ethnic Chinese background.

Here we explore four historic encounters or cultural interactions between China and Ulster. George Macartney, the first British ambassador to China, was an Ulsterman. However, his mission was not a stunning success. The reasons for this are straightforward. In the words of Professor Thomas Bartlett: 'There was simply no common ground between the Chinese and the British: one sought tribute from an inferior, the other sought trade concessions from an equal'. Furthermore, as the Emperor Qianlong explained in a letter to George III: 'We have perused the text of your state message and the wording expressed your earnestness. From it your sincere humility and obedience can clearly be seen. It is admirable and we fully approve ... Now you, O King, have presented various objects to the throne ... We have never valued ingenious articles nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures'. The Chinese believed their empire was self-sufficient and had simply no interest in a commercial treaty with 'western barbarians'.

Sir Henry Pottinger, the first governor of Hong Kong, was also an Ulsterman. A crude exponent of gunboat diplomacy,





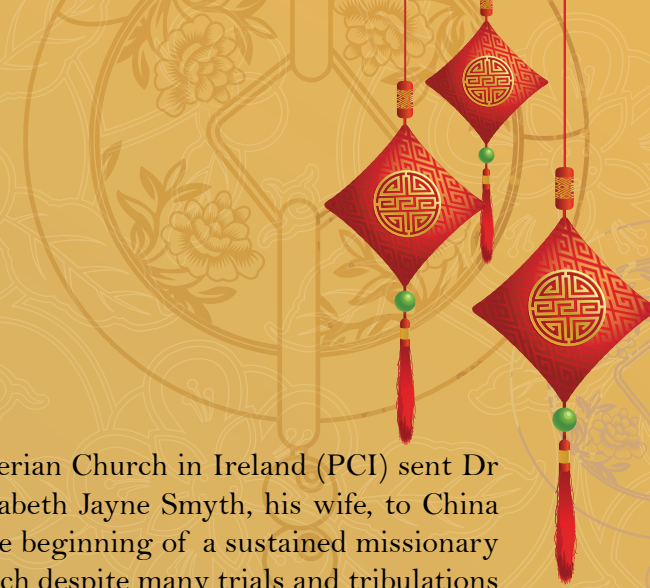
the Chinese had no reason to welcome him to their shores. They found him a tough negotiator. An intercepted letter from his Chinese counterpart reported: 'To all my representations the barbarian Pottinger only knit his brow and said "No"'. However, when Pottinger seized Hong Kong the island was almost completely uninhabited but it is now one of the most densely populated areas on the planet. Between the 1840s and the present Hong Kong was transformed into a port of immense strategic importance, one of the greatest free entrepôts in the world and an international financial centre with a currency – the Hong Kong dollar – which in 2007 was the ninth most traded in the world.

Sir Robert Hart, often described as 'the father of China's modernization', was Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs. Three modern Chinese historians have recently paid generous tribute to Hart: he 'maintained an efficient and incorruptible customs service employing hundreds of international and Chinese civil servants to collect tariffs from foreign traders. He served the Chinese government loyally, spoke Chinese fluently and functioned as an important intermediary between the Western diplomatic community and high Chinese officials'. They also recognise his long experience of China and acknowledge his 'unquestioned integrity', an attribute not to be found in every European active in nineteenth-century China.

The Christian Church is growing faster in China than anywhere else in the world today. China may have as many as 150 million

Christians. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) sent Dr Joseph Hunter and Elizabeth Jayne Smyth, his wife, to China in 1869. This marked the beginning of a sustained missionary effort in Manchuria, which despite many trials and tribulations continues to bear fruit to this day. Many of the congregations started by PCI missionaries are now flourishing with, in some cases, membership numbering several thousands.

The Chinese regarded their encounter with George Macartney with deep suspicion and possibly rightly so. They could scarcely regard their encounter with Sir Henry Pottinger as other than malign. In November 2010 David Cameron, the Prime Minister, led a high-powered delegation to China. The delegation's poppies were a source of great consternation to their Chinese hosts because they imagined the poppies were an allusion to the Opium Wars which the Chinese still regard as a national humiliation. On the other hand, their encounter with Sir Robert Hart was benign. So too was their encounter with PCI missionaries. In response to Christ's 'Great Commission' (in Matthew 28: 18-20), these men and women abandoned their homes and their families to bring the message of the Gospel to the people of China that salvation is available to men, women and children everywhere, regardless of nationality, social status or background.





## GEORGE MACARTNEY

The First British Ambassador to China

China is now the world's second largest economy after the USA. China also has the world's fastest-growing economy with an average growth rate of 10% over the last 30 years. China is the second largest trading nation in the world and the largest exporter and second largest importer of goods. China is well on the way to becoming the world's second superpower. Some commentators even believe that China's economic performance will outstrip that of the USA by the 2040s.



Even two centuries ago the huge economic potential of China was appreciated. In 1803 Napoleon described China as 'a sleeping giant' which 'when it awakens the world will tremble'. Napoleon thought the best policy was not to disturb China's slumber. The British had recognized China's huge potential a decade earlier in the 1790s. The British approach was also different: William Pitt the Younger, the British Prime Minister, sought to engage with the Chinese and establish diplomatic and commercial relations with the great empire.

The man chosen to head this important diplomatic mission was George Macartney. He was descended from an old Scottish family, the Macartneys of Auchinleck, which had settled in Ulster in 1649. The family acquired Lisanoure (6,146 acres)

near Loughguile in North Antrim in 1733. In 1741 the family made the additional acquisition of Dervock (2,189 acres).

Macartney was extremely bright, formidably well connected and enjoyed a long, distinguished and varied career in politics, diplomacy and colonial administration. He had entered Trinity College, Dublin, on 16 July 1750, giving his age as 15, whereas he was actually only 13. On the Grand Tour of Europe he had met and befriended Stephen Fox, son of Lord Holland, one of the most influential politicians of the mid-eighteenth century, and the elder brother of Charles James Fox, the future leader of the Whigs. In 1768 Macartney made a politically advantageous marriage by marrying Lady Jane Stuart, the second daughter of the 3rd Earl of Bute, who had served as Prime Minister between 1762 and 1763.

Although his strengths emphatically lay in diplomacy and colonial administration, Macartney was an MP in both the Irish and British Parliaments, serving as MP for Armagh Borough in the Irish House of Commons between 1768 and 1776. Between 1769 and 1772 he was Chief Secretary for Ireland. Macartney and Lord Castlereagh were the only two Irish-born Chief Secretaries of George III's reign, both were men of outstanding ability, albeit in different ways, and both held the post at critical junctures in Anglo-Irish relations. Like Castlereagh some 30 years later, Macartney firmly believed that a legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland was the only solution to Anglo-Irish relations. In the British House of Commons



Macartney represented a variety of different constituencies: Cockermouth (1768-9), Ayr Burghs (1774-76) and Bere Alston (1780-01). His career in British politics can be only described as lacklustre.

However, as a colonial administrator, Macartney shone, enjoying a succession of plum postings: Captain General of the Southern Carribean (1775), Governor of Grenada (1775-9), President of Madras (1781-5) and Governor of the Cape of Good Hope (1796-8). He even declined the Governorship-General of Bengal because Pitt and Henry Dundas refused to accompany it with a British peerage. It was Macartney who first described the British Empire as 'this vast empire on which the sun never sets and whose bounds nature has not yet ascertained'. Admittedly, the Emperor Charles V had employed a similar formula to refer to the sixteenth-century Spanish Empire over which he ruled: 'El imperio en el que nunca se pone el sol'.

In 1764, through the influence of Lord Holland, Macartney had been appointed envoy extraordinary to Russia and successfully negotiated with Catherine the Great a commercial treaty between Britain and Russia. The mission might have



Portrait of Qianlong Emperor in Court Dress

been even more successful if Macartney had not seduced two of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting: Mlle Keyshoff and Mlle Khitrov (who was found to be pregnant). Nevertheless, it was the comparative success of this diplomatic mission which made Macartney the obvious person to lead the British embassy to China in the early 1790s.

In September 1792 three ships (HMS Lion, the *Hindoostan* and the *Jackall*), with almost 800 diplomats, soldiers, scientists, artists and sailors aboard, set sail for China from Spithead. The little armada sailed via Maderia, Tristan da Cunha, and Rio de Janeiro to Cochin China (now modern Cambodia). In June 1793 Macartney had his first sight of China. The journey overland to Beijing took many months, travelling by canal, horseback and palanquin (a covered litter, usually some eight feet long by four feet in width and depth, fitted with movable blinds or shutters, and slung on poles carried by four bearers).

In September 1793 Macartney met the octogenarian Emperor Qianlong, surrounded by mandarins and seated in a yellow silk tent, in the gardens of Jehol, just outside Beijing. A greatly impressed Macartney noted in his journal that he had seen 'Solomon in all his glory'.

The Chinese had no conception whatsoever of conducting diplomatic relations on the basis of both parties being on an equal footing. The Chinese believed that China was 'the Central Kingdom of the World' (or, as we might say, the centre of the universe) and that the Emperor was 'the Son of Heaven'.



Chinese court protocol required visitors to *Kòu tóu* to the Emperor. In other words, they were expected, as an act of deep respect, to kneel and bow so low as to touch their head to the ground, the homage exacted by a Chinese emperor from his vassals and subjects. The 'full *Kòu tóu*' consisted of 'three kneelings and nine knockings of the head on the ground'. As the representative of King George III, Macartney felt that this was demeaning and wholly inappropriate and instead bowed to the Emperor in the European manner. The Chinese court regarded this as an appalling breach of etiquette. *Kòu tóu*, as kowtow, has since been absorbed into English to describe abject submission or grovelling.



Illustration of Lord Macartney's Embassy to China

Gifts were exchanged. The British presented Qianlong with telescopes, globes, barometers, lens, clocks, guns, swords, Wedgwood pottery and three carriages. Qianlong treated the gifts as tribute from George III. In return the Chinese presented Macartney with jade. The Chinese prized jade as the most precious of all stones, an evaluation Macartney failed to share. There was a sumptuous banquet and Macartney had an audience with Qianlong which lasted five hours. Other meetings took place as well. Macartney sought the relaxation of the restrictions on trade between Britain and China, the acquisition by Britain of 'a small unfortified island near Chusan for the residence of British traders, storage of goods, and outfitting of ships' and the establishment of a permanent British embassy in Beijing. On these three objectives, Macartney made no discernable progress.

On 3 October 1793 Macartney was summoned to the Forbidden City. On a yellow chair there was a letter from Emperor Qianlong to George III dismissing the embassy: 'We have perused the text of your state message and the wording expressed your earnestness. From it your sincere humility and obedience can clearly be seen. It is admirable and we fully approve ... Now you, O King, have presented various objects to the throne ... We have never valued ingenious articles nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures'. The failure of the mission owed nothing to Macartney's failure to *Kòu tóu* to the Emperor. The mission never enjoyed even the slightest



prospect of success because the Chinese believed their empire was self-sufficient. They simply had no interest in a commercial treaty with ‘western barbarians’.

The mission’s failure had no obvious adverse effect on Macartney’s career. He was appointed unofficial envoy to the court of Louis XVIII in exile in Verona between 1795 and 1796. And, as we have seen, he was appointed Governor of the Cape of Good Hope in 1796. Nor did the mission to Beijing prevent his steady advance in the peerage. Before the mission to Beijing, Macartney had been a Baron in the Irish peerage, and was subsequently advanced to a Viscounty in the Irish peerage. After the mission to Beijing he was awarded an Earldom in the Irish peerage and a long coveted Barony in the more prestigious British peerage.



The ‘full Kòu tóu’

When not on official business, Macartney often resided at Lisanoore, developing and expanding his estate and rebuilding the nearby village of Dervock.

Macartney died, as a result of an attack of ‘gout in the stomach’ (probably stomach cancer), in London on 31 March 1806 and was buried at Chiswick on 9 April. Like Lord Castlereagh in August 1822,

Macartney died without leaving a direct heir.

Lord Macartney’s mission to Beijing was recorded in meticulous detail by George Leonard Staunton, the Principal Secretary to the embassy, in *An authentic account of an embassy from the king of Great Britain to the emperor of China ...taken chiefly from the papers of his Excellency Earl Macartney*. This book was published in 1797 and was preceded by a wonderful volume of illustrations which was published in 1796.

Staunton’s book was translated into several European languages and largely shaped educated Europeans’ understanding of China for many years to come, a significant legacy of the mission. George Thomas Staunton, George Leonard Staunton’s son, was also a member of the mission to China, and became a distinguished traveller and Orientalist in his own right.



## HENRY POTTINGER

The First Governor of Hong Kong

In July 1992 Chris Patten, the former Conservative politician, became the 28th and the last Governor of Hong Kong. On 30 June 1997 Patten handed the former Crown colony over to the People's Republic of China. Many will remember Patten's emotional speech at the handover but few, however, recall that the first Governor of Hong Kong was an Ulsterman: Sir Henry Pottinger.



Born on 3 October 1789, Henry Pottinger was the fifth son of Eldred Curwen Pottinger of Mount Pottinger, Ballymacarrett, which in those days was in rural County Down. The Pottingers were a prominent and long-established Belfast family. According to some accounts the family had its origins in Berkshire. Others state that the family's origins were in Orkney. In 1688 Thomas Pottinger, a shipper, was Sovereign (the equivalent of Mayor) of Belfast. Protected only by a rampart, Belfast was in no position to resist militarily the advancing Jacobite army after 'the break of Dromore' on 14 March 1689 when the Williamite forces commanded by the Earl of Mount Alexander were ignominiously routed by Richard Hamilton, so Pottinger opened the town's gates in order to prevent wholesale pillage. In securing this outcome, Pottinger was wholly successful. By the end of the eighteenth century the Pottinger's fortunes had

declined somewhat and the family sold Ballymacarrett to Barry Yelverton, Lord Chief Baron.

The mother of the future Governor of Hong Kong was Anne, daughter of Robert Gordon of Florida Manor, also in County Down. The young Henry Pottinger was educated at Belfast Royal Academy but left at the age of 12 and went to sea. In 1803 he travelled to India with a view to entering the marine service but in 1804 (or 1806 according to some accounts) he became a cadet in the army of the East India Company. In 1809 he served as a Lieutenant in the Mahratta war.

A gifted linguist, he studied Indian languages and in 1810 volunteered, with Captain Christie, to explore the land between India and Persia. They travelled disguised as Mohammedan merchants, an incognito which required a lot of tact and very considerable linguistic ability to sustain. After travelling in



Opium Ships at Lintin



districts which had not been visited by Europeans since the time of Alexander the Great, they returned to Bombay in February 1811. Pottinger later gave an account of their experiences in *Travels in Beloochistan and Sind*.

He became Resident Administrator of Sind in 1820; later he held the same post in Hyderabad. More significantly, he negotiated the Treaty of Nanking, which brought the First Opium War to a conclusion.

The finances of the East India Company were heavily dependent on the export of Indian opium to China. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, as Niall Ferguson, the Glasgow-born Professor of International History at Harvard, has amply demonstrated, the amount which the East India Company earned from its monopoly on the export of opium was approximately equal to the amount it had to pay London in interest on its huge debt.

In 1821 the Chinese had prohibited the importation of opium. The conflict between Britain and China erupted when the Chinese authorities confiscated the East India Company's opium warehouses in Canton. The British responded by sending warships to the city in February 1840 and a preliminary treaty was drawn up between the British and Chinese governments. However, this was subsequently repudiated by both governments.

Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, instructed Pottinger

to negotiate a new treaty which would open up China to British trade but before Pottinger arrived at Macao on 9 August hostilities had resumed.

A crude exponent of gunboat diplomacy, Pottinger was strongly of the view that a further display of force was necessary to soften up the Chinese to secure his diplomatic objectives. Accordingly, Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Gough, Commander-in-Chief of Madras and British land forces in China, acting in conjunction with Admiral Sir William Parker, captured Amoy (Xiamen), Chushan, Chintu (Chengdu) and Ningpi (Ningbo).

The Chinese rapidly sued for peace. The Treaty of Nanking was signed on board HMS Cornwallis on 29 August. It made



Destroying Chinese War Junks by E. Duncan (1843)



no explicit reference to opium but China was forced to pay an indemnity of \$21 million to Britain, to cede Hong Kong to Britain, to open five treaty ports – Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai – to British trade. These ports were also to receive British consuls.

The acquisition of Hong Kong was overwhelmingly ascribable to economic factors. British merchants wanted unhampered access to the China market and saw in the gaining of Hong Kong the opportunity to best regulate their own affairs and engage in the highly lucrative sale of Indian-grown opium.

In the supplementary Treaty of the Bogue, the Qing empire also recognized Britain as an equal to China and gave British subjects extraterritorial privileges in the treaty ports.

At the time W. E. Gladstone, the future Liberal Prime Minister but then still a High Tory, attacked the First Opium War in the House of Commons:

*A war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know and have not read of. The Rt. Hon. gentleman opposite spoke of the British flag waving in glory at Canton. That flag is hoisted to protect an infamous contraband traffic; and if it were never hoisted except as it is now hoisted on the coast of China, we should recoil from its sight with horror.*

Niall Ferguson, the Professor of International History at Harvard, more recently has observed:



A view of Canton factories

*The only real benefit of acquiring Hong Kong ... was that it provided firms like Jardine Matheson with a base for their opium smuggling operation. It is indeed one of the richer ironies of the Victorian value-system that the same navy that was deployed to abolish the slave trade was also active in expanding the narcotics trade.*

Pottinger became the second administrator of Hong Kong (1841–1843) and the first Governor of Hong Kong (1843–1844). When he forwarded the treaty to London, Pottinger remarked, ‘the retention of Hong Kong is the only point in which I have intentionally exceeded my modified instructions,



but every single hour I have passed in this superb country has convinced me of the necessity and desirability of our possessing such a settlement as an emporium for our trade and a place from which Her Majesty's subjects in China may be alike protected and controlled'.

During his brief tenure, Pottinger established executive and legislative chambers, with the former discussing political affairs and the latter designing legal codes. However, the chambers did not convene often, and this gave Pottinger wide-ranging powers to decide on policy.

Towards the end of his tenure, Pottinger lost the support of the local British merchants and was isolated. He left Hong Kong on 7 May 1844 but during his governorship, Hong Kong became the major opium-trading port in China.

In May 1844 he was appointed to membership of the Privy Council, and in October he arrived back in England, where the House of Commons voted him a pension of £1,500 for life. In September 1846 he became Governor of the Cape Colony and in November 1847 Governor of Madras. Neither appointment proved to be conspicuously successful. According to G. M Theal, the historian of South Africa, Pottinger left the Cape 'without the esteem of a single colonist'. In Madras he was resistant to change and dilatory in the discharge of public business. Nevertheless, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general in 1851 and retired on account of ill-health (gout).

On his return to England he found the English climate disagreeable and retired to the more congenial climate of Malta. He died aged 66 at Valetta on 18 March 1856. His brother Colonel William Pottinger, erected a marble memorial tablet to him in St George's Church, High Street, Belfast, in 1861. The text of memorial makes an extraordinary claim:

*On Concluding his Successful Treaty with China in the Year 1842 he was Destined for the Peerage by Her Gracious Majesty Victoria the First, but Lost this High Distinction through the Same Hostile Influence which was Exerted in Vain to Prevent Parliament Rewarding his Eminent Services to the State...*

George Pottinger in his biography published in 1997, found no evidence to substantiate this assertion, but makes the very fair point that Sir Henry's honours were not commensurate with the scale of his achievements in China.





## ROBERT HART

‘The Father of China’s Modernization’

Sir Robert Hart has been described as ‘the father of China’s modernization’. Before Mao’s Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s there were streets, such as Hart Boulevard, in both Shanghai and Beijing named after him. In 1910 a life-size bronze statue of Hart was erected close to the mouth of the Yangtze River to commemorate the life and achievement of this remarkable but largely forgotten Ulsterman. It stood there for 27 years until its destruction by victorious Japanese invaders in 1937.



The statue’s inscription, drafted by C. W. Eliot, the long-serving President of Harvard University, provides an excellent summary of Hart’s role in the history of China and conveys a flavour of his personality:

*Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs, Founder of the Chinese Lighthouse Service, Organizer and Administrator of the National Post Office, Trusted Counsellor of the Chinese People, Modest, Patient, Sagacious and Resolute, he overcame formidable Obstacles, and Accomplished a work of Great Beneficence for China and the World.*

This summary dovetails neatly with the assessment of Lillian M. Li, Alison Dray-Novey and Hali Kong, the authors of a

recently published history of Beijing. They record that Hart:

*...maintained an efficient and incorruptible customs service employing hundreds of international and Chinese civil servants to collect tariffs from foreign traders. He served the Chinese government loyally, spoke Chinese fluently and functioned as an important intermediary between the Western diplomatic community and high Chinese officials.*

They also recognise his long experience of China and acknowledge his ‘unquestioned integrity’, an attribute not to be found in every European active in nineteenth-century China.

In 1874 Hart offered the following personal assessment: ‘I’m a safe sort of hardworking, modestly-gifted, many sided, equal-tempered, and inwardly God-fearing & heaven-seeking’.

Robert Hart was born at 42 Woodhouse Street, Portadown, on 20 February 1835. Henry Hart, Robert’s father, was a spirit grocer who abandoned the drink trade in favour of the linen trade on his conversion to Methodism. His mother’s maiden name was Edgar. Despite a rather fanciful claim that Hart was descended from a Dutch-Jewish member of William of Orange’s entourage, it would seem that his ancestry was Scottish on both sides of the family, his father being of Plantation stock and his mother being descended from Scots who had settled in Ulster several centuries prior to the Plantation.

Hart was educated at Methodist foundations at Taunton and Dublin and the newly established Queen’s College, Belfast, from which he graduated in 1853.



In 1854 Hart arrived in Hong Kong as a member of the British consular service in China. It marked the beginning of virtually a lifetime's residence in China which, apart from two short periods of leave, would last 54 years. His first appointment was as supernumerary interpreter to the British vice-consulate in Ningpo. For several months he had total responsibility for managing the consulate. While he was in Ningbo he proposed to Maria Jane Dyer who shortly afterwards married James Hudson Taylor, the celebrated missionary. Hart's skill and efficiency earned him the admiration of his superiors and resulted in his nomination as secretary to the allied commissioners governing the Canton in March 1858.

In 1859 Hart resigned to take up the post of local inspector of customs. Between 1859 and 1861 he totally immersed himself in the management of customs in China. In 1861 he was promoted to acting Inspector-General, and appointed Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs (CMC) in 1863, a position he held until his retirement in 1908.

When he became Inspector-General in 1863 the CMC was operating in seven open ports; by 1907 it was operating in 76 native customs stations under his administration. He also presided over the servicing of 182 lights, various navigational aids, and 2,800 post offices. His staff consisted of 11,970 people, of whom 1,345 were foreigners. Hart was responsible for generating one third of China's revenue.

Ravernet House, near Lisburn.  
The Hart family home.



Hart's other achievements include building a great many lighthouses, making improvements to harbours and waterways, initiating a statistical service, collecting medical and scientific data, promoting China and her interests at various international exhibitions and establishing a customs postal service which eventually became the basis for the Chinese national postal service.

In 1866 he married Hester Jane Bredon, eldest daughter of Dr Edward Bredon of Portadown. They had three children. On the first anniversary of his marriage he observed that he 'could not have a better wife ... at the same time, matrimony does interfere with a man's work'. Hart's less than romantic attitude to marriage suggests that he was a workaholic. Nevertheless, he found relaxation in music and the classics, especially Cicero and Lucretius. An amateur violinist, cellist and composer, he formed a customs' band, 'the mother of bands', in north China.

In 1887 Hart declined the Emperor's invitation to become 'Commander-in-Chief of China's Army' because he believed that there might be a 'conflict of interest' because he was British. He also felt that he could best serve China by staying the Inspector-General of CMC. He wished to stay 'behind the scenes' and to teach China to be a 'better fisherman' instead of handing her 'fish'. Saying 'no' to the Emperor's offer made Hart a great moral hero because his high-minded conduct was beyond the comprehension of the corrupt imperial royals.

As well as his work in the CMC, Hart also assisted the Chinese



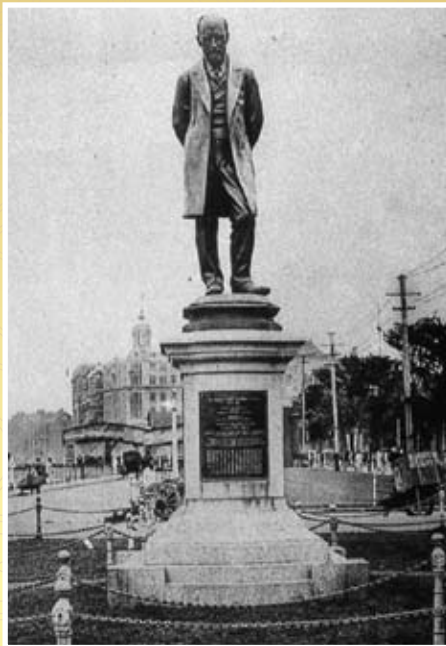


government in the conduct of its relations with foreign powers. He became supreme advisor to Zongli Yamen (effectively the Chinese foreign office). On behalf of the Chinese government he negotiated with the Portuguese over Macao, the British administration in India with respect to Sikkim and with the British Government over the navigation of the Yangtze River.

For much of his long career Hart had a fairly low opinion of the Chinese government: The regime's conception of its mission 'seems to be to keep records of past occurrences, legalise faits

accomplis, and strangle whatever comes before it in embryo'. 'The policy of the central Government of China is not to guide, but to follow events'. By contrast, Hart held the Chinese people in very high regard. They were:

*well-behaved, law-abiding, intelligent, economical and industrious – they can learn anything and do anything – they are punctiliously polite, they worship talent, and they believe in right so firmly that they scorn to think it requires*



Statue of Sir Robert Hart in Shanghai

*to be supported or enforced by might – they delight in literature ... they possess and practise an admirable system of ethics, and they are generous, charitable and fond of good works – they never forget a favour, they make rich return for any kindness.*

With respect to the Boxer rebellion (November 1899 – September 1901), Hart refused to believe early reports of the Boxers depredations. He viewed telegrams from missionaries in the provinces as unduly alarmist and newspaper stories as wilfully exaggerated. However, at the end of June 1900 Hart sent a frantic message to Tientsin, calling for urgent assistance: 'Foreign community besieged in Legations. Situation desperate. MAKE HASTE!!' On at least two occasions the Boxers could have easily overwhelmed the Legations but, for whatever reason, failed to do so. Hart supposed, possibly correctly, that 'somebody (had) intervened for our semi-protection'.

The Boxer rebellion was rather brutally suppressed by an International Relief Force, the German component of which had been instructed by Kaiser Wilhelm II to model their conduct and behaviour on that of Attila the Hun so that the name of Germany should become known 'in such a manner in China that no Chinese [would] ever dare to look askance at a German'.

Hart viewed the future with concern. He anticipated that the Boxers of the future would be 'armed, drilled and disciplined, and animated by patriotic – if mistaken motives'; they would



Inscription on Hart Memorial  
in English and Mandarin

make residence in China impossible for foreigners'; they would 'take back from foreigners everything

foreigners have taken from them and pay off old grudges with interest'. 'They will carry', he prophesied, 'the Chinese flag and Chinese armies into many places that even fancy will not suggest today, thus preparing for future upheavals and disasters never dreamt of'. Three weeks after Hart's death in September 1911 the Manchu dynasty was convulsed by revolution.

Hart retired in April 1908. From the Chinese he received the highest decoration bestowed on a foreigner: Ancestral rank of the First Class of the Order for three generations. He had a number of other Chinese honorific titles bestowed upon him. He was honored by a variety of countries including Italy, Portugal, Norway, and Holland. However, an anticipated peerage failed to materialise.

On his retirement, he became Pro-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast. He had always retained a strong interest in his old College and had responded generously to financial appeals in the 1890s and 1900s.

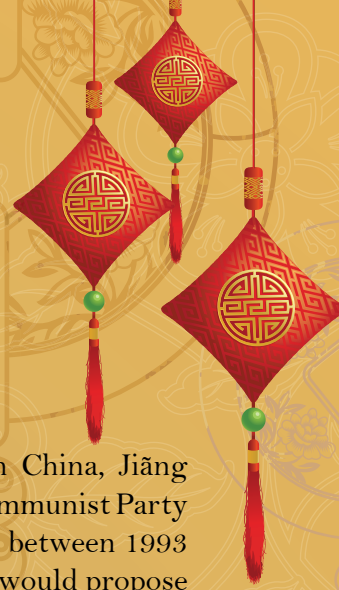
In 1971 Hart's family presented the University with a set of elaborate table silverware, the 'Empress of China's Silver'. The silver had been presented to Hart to mark his 43 years of service as Inspector-General of the Maritime Customs in China.

## PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR IN CHINA

Asked in 2002 what legacy he might bequeath China, Jiāng Zémín, then General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and President of the People's Republic of China between 1993 and March 2003, was reported as saying that he would propose Christianity as China's official religion. The precise significance of this tantalizing remark remains difficult to ascertain. In his *History of Christianity* (London, 2009) Diarmaid MacCulloch wondered whether it was 'one of those world historical jokes of which senior Chinese officials have occasionally been familiar'.

Although Christianity has only assumed serious significance in Chinese society over the last 200 years, China has had at least periodic, if not necessarily continuous, exposure to Christianity since at least the seventh century. A stone tablet found near Xi'an, one of China's oldest cities, the eastern terminus of the Silk Road and home of the Terracotta Army, records how Assyrian Christians brought the gospel to China in 635. Monastic remains also near Xi'an suggest a Christian community existed there in the eighth century, while Christians served in the court of Kublai Khan when he conquered China in 1287.

The seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries to China, pinning their hopes on a top-down conversion of the Chinese empire, concentrated their efforts on converting the Court and officialdom. The Jesuits' secular knowledge (especially in mathematics and astronomy) greatly impressed the Court but they gained very few converts.







The first Protestant missionary to China was Robert Morrison (1782-1834), a Scottish Presbyterian and a translator with the East India Company. Arriving in Canton in 1807, he translated the Bible into Chinese and compiled a Chinese dictionary (in six volumes) for the use of westerners. The former took twelve years to produce and the latter sixteen years. However, his efforts brought only ten Chinese people to faith.

After the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 the Qing Government signed treaties with various nations (including the United States and France) which permitted missionary activity. Christianity laboured under the serious disadvantage that the Chinese understandably viewed the faith as a phenomenon which had only gained access to their homeland at the point of a gun. Nevertheless, the number of Christian missionaries grew rapidly.

The most famous nineteenth-century Protestant missionary to China was James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905). Although he had a Yorkshire Methodist background, Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) on non-denominational lines and spent 51 years in China. He broke with tradition by adopting Chinese dress. Under Hudson Taylor's leadership, CIM recruited missionaries from every Protestant denomination,

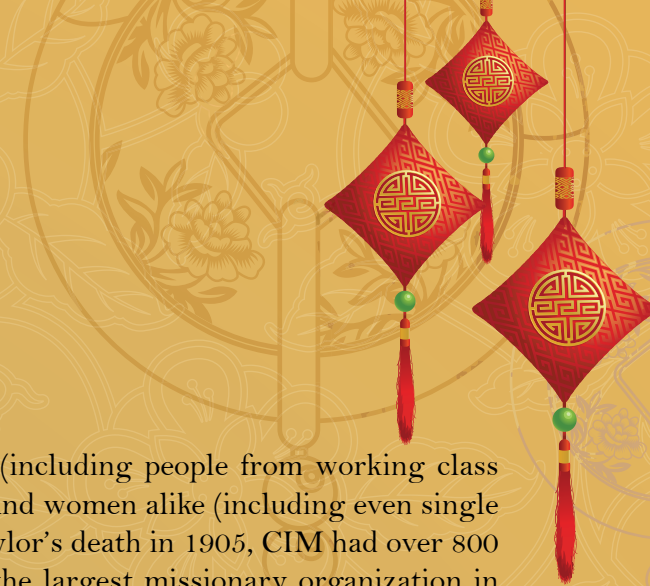
from every social class (including people from working class backgrounds) and men and women alike (including even single women). By Hudson Taylor's death in 1905, CIM had over 800 workers, was probably the largest missionary organization in the world and was responsible for 125,000 converts.

Unlike the Jesuits, Protestant missionaries did not seek a doctrinal accommodation with Confucian tradition nor did they focus on the Chinese ruling elite. Instead they tended to operate at a much lower level in the social scale, seeking to save individual souls. They sought to win China for Christ through the Word of God, carefully translated, widely disseminated and selflessly advertised by their example.

The first missionaries from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) to China were Dr Joseph Hunter (from the York Street congregation in Belfast) and Revd Hugh Waddell (from the Glenarm congregation in County Antrim).

Dr Hunter, a graduate of the Edinburgh College of Physicians, was born in Belfast in 1843. On 18 January 1869 Dr Hunter married Elizabeth Jayne Smyth in Linenhall Street Church and the following evening he was ordained as a missionary elder in May Street. The couple arrived in Newchwang (now Yingkou) in Manchuria on 29 April 1869. In April 1870 he opened his dispensary and treated five patients. By the end of the month he had treated 667 patients.

Revd Hugh Waddell was born into a clerical family in October





1840. Both his father and paternal grandfather were Presbyterian ministers. Like Dr Hunter, he was ordained on 19 January 1869 and arrived with Dr Hunter in Newchwang in April 1869.

From the very outset PCI missionaries had to contend with an inhospitable climate of extreme temperatures, a difficult language (although not as difficult as Hugh Waddell had anticipated because he possessed serious linguistic skills), arduous travel (long journeys in simple canvass-covered carts on fairly primitive roads) and working against a backdrop of war, conflict, lawlessness and political instability. The level of lawlessness is evidenced by the execution of 700 robbers in the town of Kirin alone in 1892.

In 1871 the PCI mission in Manchuria suffered a double blow. In February Mrs Hunter died of tuberculosis and in the early summer Hugh Waddell was obliged to return home on account of ill-health. He took home Dr Hunter's infant son so that the child's aunts might raise him. Dr Hunter never saw his son again. Hugh Waddell never returned to China but served as a missionary in Japan and became a lecturer in the Imperial University, Tokyo. His youngest daughter was Helen Waddell, the celebrated scholar, poet, and translator. The playwright Samuel Waddell (whose pseudonym was Rutherford Mayne) was her brother. Both Samuel and Helen were born in Japan.

In 1873 the Foreign Mission Report of the PCI noted with regret:

*Dr Hunter still continues alone, the solitary representative of our Church in China. We write these words with shame and sorrow. For eighteen months our Church has known that he was alone; that the Mission was in its infancy, and specially needed help; that without help it was crippled and not one solitary voice has been heard from all the land saying: 'Here am I; send me', and not one soldier of Christ from our population of half a million has volunteered to stand beside that brave lonely man.*

Nevertheless, Dr Hunter persevered. For fifteen years he ran his dispensary, he preached, he taught and he distributed tracts throughout Manchuria. He resolutely refused to travel home on furlough but was eventually prevailed upon to go home in 1884. He died, aged 51, on the voyage home on 8 May 1884 and was buried at sea.

The embarrassment of PCI was spared in June 1874 when Revd James Carson (of Third Portglenone) and Miss Hunter, Dr Hunter's sister, arrived in Newchwang to assist Dr Hunter in his work. Revd James Carson married Miss Hunter in Manchuria on 4 January 1876. Revd James Carson served in China for 46 years, a period of service only surpassed by that of Revd Thomas Fulton (of Carnmoney) who served in China for 57 years. Like Carson, Fulton met and married his wife, a Scottish Presbyterian missionary, in China. Miss Sarah Nicholson (Bangor) was the PCI's first female missionary to China where she served from 1889 to 1926.



Between 1869 and 1951 91 Irish Presbyterian missionaries worked in Manchuria. Thirty-one of these were ordained. Forty-nine were female. Twenty-five were medically qualified. They cooperated closely with missionaries from the United Free Church of Scotland and the Danish Lutheran Church.

The PCI missionaries concentrated their efforts in western Manchuria. They established nine strategic centres and a network of churches closely linked to hospitals and schools. Ministers, doctors and nurses and teachers collectively laid the foundation of a vibrant and dynamic church in Manchuria. Before the outbreak of the Great War there were 35 PCI missionaries in the province with a presence in 25 towns. There were seventeen local pastors and 79 local elders.



Manchuria Region

Many PCI missionaries died in the service of Christ in Manchuria. Revd James Fitzsimons (Castledawson) was only able to preach twice before he contracted typhus fever and died on 20 December 1890. Having served in China since 1905, Dr Isabel Mitchell (Crumlin Road, Belfast) died of diphtheria on 23 March 1917. Revd Andrew Weir (Claggan) died of typhoid on 10 October 1933. Miss Ruth Dickson (Eglish), a nurse, died on 24 December 1944 in a Japanese

internment camp. Dr Annie Gillespie (Sandys Street, Newry) went to China to assist her brother Revd William Gillespie in December 1896 but died of dysentery only eight months later.

Many of the children of missionaries died too. Dr Thomas Brander, a Scot, served in China between 1890 and 1905. His two-year old daughter Eliza died on 7 September 1895. On 31 January 1897 Dr Brander's five-year old son died of malaria and was buried beside his sister.

Chinese Christians too suffered for their faith: 322 were killed in Manchuria in the summer of 1900. At Fakumen Elder Shu and his son were bound, forced to kneel and beheaded by the Boxers for remaining faithful to Jesus Christ. About twenty Chinese Christians were killed at Moukden and pupils from the local PCI school were raped.

Twentieth-century Manchuria had a turbulent history of war, civil war, invasion and renewed civil war. Despite the expulsion of all foreign missionaries in the early 1950s, the theological college founded by PCI in Manchuria kept going throughout the Cultural Revolution. In the years since, the Church in China has continued to grow and, in Manchuria, many of the congregations started by PCI missionaries are now flourishing with, in some cases, membership numbering several thousands.

Today, China can claim to have the fastest growing Church in the world. The precise size of China's Christian population



remains controversial. Officially the People's Republic of China acknowledges the existence of four million Roman Catholics and ten million Protestants. Independent estimates have ranged between 40 million and 130 million Christians. However, if claims that there are as many as 15,000 Christian commitments in China every day are true, the real figure may be as high as 150 million Christians.



The road to Manchuria city.

## CHINESE CHRONOLOGY

- 1793:* British embassy under George Macartney to Chinese Court.
- 1839-42:* Opium War: China cedes Hong Kong to the British and opens Treaty Ports.
- 1850-64:* T'ai-ping rebellion: immense loss of life.
- 1858:* Treaty of Tientsin: further Treaty Ports opened up to foreign trade.
- 1860:* Treaty of Peking: confirms Russian control of Maritime Province.
- 1894-5:* Sino-Japanese War: Japan occupies Taiwan.
- 1898:* Abortive 'Hundred Days' reform.
- 1900:* The Boxer Rebellion.
- 1911:* Revolution: Sun Yat-sen proclaimed provisional president of Chinese Republic in 1914.
- 1919* '4th May Movement': an expression of Chinese nationalism.
- 1920:* Foundation of the Chinese Communist Party.
- 1926:* Chiang Kai-shek embarks upon the reunification of China.
- 1927:* Nationalists purge their Communist supporters.
- 1934:* 'Long March' of Chinese Communists begins.
- 1937:* Outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.



- 1945:* Defeat of Japan: China faced enormously difficult problems of reunification and reconstruction and the prospect of civil war.
- 1946-9:* Civil War in China.
- 1949:* Triumph of Communism.
- 1958-61:* 'Great Leap Forward'.
- 1966-72:* Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.
- 1972:* President Nixon of the United States visits China: China begins to open up to the West.
- 1976:* Death of Mao and the overthrow of 'The Gang of Four'.
- 1986:* Pro-democracy agitation in China.
- 1989:* Student unrest.
- 1992:* Further student unrest.
- 1997:* Death of Deng Xiaoping.
- 1997:* Hong Kong returned to China. Under the policy of 'one country, two systems', the island remains a centre of international finance and trade.
- 1999:* The Portuguese administered territory of Macao returned to China.







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