



China and the West

PART 3: THE BOXER REBELLION

This is a view copy. It shows the cover, table of contents and a few representative pages. For the complete publication, see www.historypicturesanddocuments.com

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Illustrations

de.wikipedia.org; en.wikipedia.org; commons.wikimedia.org; historypicturesanddocuments.com; ub.uni-heidelberg; robinsonlibrary.com; zeno.org

Published by

www.historypicturesanddocuments.com
ISBN/EAN 978-90-73021-30-3

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This cartoon was published on August 15, 1900, in an edition of the literary magazine *Puck* (USA).

Introduction

About the history of China a countless number of historical surveys is written by western scholars, all secondary sources. Books with primary sources are rare. On the internet there are many primary sources about the history of China. Everyone who has enough time and knowledge can find them.

Our series is intended for those who do have not enough time for extensive research, but are interested to read about the stories and documents behind the historical surveys.

The primary sources in our series about China and the West are mostly of Chinese origin. We limit ourselves to the most important, most mentioned, subjects. To the primary sources we add short historical introductions, to help the reader to place the sources in their time.

The volumes in this series can be used together with a historical survey. You can use the primary sources also as a start for your own research.

This series is a tribute to Professor Dr. Erik Zürcher (1928-2008). He focused his work at Leiden University not solely at his students. He and his staff also gave high priority to informing the public about the history of China. And they were always a great help for developers of teaching materials.

Already published in this series *China and the West*:

- Part 1: Opium War –Taiping rebellion – Self-strengthening Movement
- Part 2: The Hundred Days
- Part 3: The Boxer Rebellion

To be published in the course of 2015:

- Part 4: Women in imperial China
- Part 5: The Revolution of 1911
- Part 6: From Sun Yat-sen tot Mao Zedong

Growing disunity in China



This popular Chinese woodcut, made in the early 1890's, shows Jesus as a pig and foreigners with goat heads. The text of this image reads: 'The depraved religion of the Hog [Jesus] is propagated from foreign lands. Its followers insult heaven and exterminate ancestors; ten thousand arrows and a thousand swords [the severest punishments] would not expiate their crimes ... Their magical books stink like dung; they slander the holy men and sages; all the Nine Provinces and the Four Seas hate them most intensely.'

The blow the empress dowager and the conservatives dealt to the Reform Movement during the Hundred Days in 1898 (see part 2 in this series) did not work out as the empress and the conservatives had expected.

More and more Chinese realized the necessity of reforms, because they wanted to end the growing foreign control of their country. Conservative Chinese also wanted to end the foreign control, but they relied on old Chinese values.

The conservative officials were supported by the Boxers. The Boxers were a kind of fraternal order called the 'Harmonious Brotherhood', later called the 'Righteous and Harmonious Militia'. This semi-official military force originally seems to have been a society teaching methods of boxing. The Boxers were inspired by superstition and hatred against foreigners.

The conservative Chinese officials thought of the Boxers as their loyal and patriotic supporters. Encouraged by conservative officials Boxers started an uprising in different areas of China, June 1900. They burned churches, destroyed telegraph lines and railways, and killed many Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries.

1 Three Boxer documents

1 A BOXER CIRCULAR

This Boxer Circular looks like circulars that had appeared from time to time in China's history. Such warnings were put out sometimes as a prank, but also at times by serious plotters of disorder as a way to cause unrest among the ignorant and superstitious. During the Boxer Rebellion it appeared in many places.

Statement by the Saintly Emperor Kuan-kung during his visitation at our divining altar: This year seventy per cent of the population will die. Lives can be saved by praying to Bodhisattva Kuan-yin for her mercy and kindness.

Circulate this statement and disaster can be avoided – one sheet for yourself, three for your whole family. To refuse to circulate it and to tell lies about it, will cause condemnation by the gods and an increase in the disaster.

Those who do good will be safe, those who do evil can hardly escape. If you do not believe, you will see that in the seventh and eighth months of this year countless people will die. These gods and saints have always been watching for the good and evil deeds among you mortals. Heaven now fears ten disasters. The first is about how the world is going to be in a turmoil. The second is about everything in Shantung being wiped out. The third is that flood will cover Hupei and Hunan. The fourth is that wars will come to Szechwan. The fifth is that Kiangnan is to suffer from a big famine and uprising. The sixth is about the deaths of more than half of the population. The seventh is that members of the Righteous and Harmonious Boxing Order

[I-ho-ch'üan] are too weak. The eighth is about the foreigners disturbing Chihli [northern province in China]. The ninth is that there will be clothes but no one to wear them. The tenth is that there will be rice but no one to eat it.

A disaster, however, may be turned to a blessing, for destiny is in charge. One who copies this out for somebody else will have his whole family exempted from suffering the calamity.

On the 19th day of the sixth month, and the 26th day of the seventh month, make sacrificial offerings towards the south and you will be exempted from suffering the calamity.

2 A BOXER NOTICE

This Notice appeared during the period from April to August 1900 in North China villages.

The Ma-lan Village in the Ch'i-chia police magistrate's precinct of the district of Wan-(p'ing) in the prefecture of Shun-t'ien, Peking, on the occasion of piously setting up the sacred I-ho Society, makes the following declaration of instructions and strict advice to our fellow villagers and neighbours!

The Catholics since the Hsien-feng period [1851-1861] have conspired with foreigners, have caused China trouble, wasted our national revenue, broken up our monasteries, destroyed Buddhist images, and seized our people's graveyards. All these myriad acts of evil should be bitterly resented. This has affected people's trees and plants so as

Boxers cooperate with Chinese conservative officials



This Chinese coloured woodblock print, made in August 1900, shows the cooperation between Boxers and conservative officials. After the battle of Yangcun Boxers bring European soldiers to Chinese officials. The text on the print (partly): 'The armies met with each other, there was a general battle ... The Boxer took European soldiers before officials and demanded a reward.'

to make them suffer from the catastrophes of locusts and drought almost every year. Our nation is deprived of peace and our people of security. This has angered the Court in Heaven. Now by the grace of the great deity in Heaven, all the spirits have descended to set up an altar in the wall in order to teach our young men their magic boxing so they can support the Ch'ing, extinguish the foreigners, and enforce right principles on behalf of Heaven. When we exert our energy for the nation in order to bring peace to the land, when we help the farmers and protect our villages, this is an omen that prosperity is coming after misfortune has reached its limit. Nevertheless, we are afraid that some ignorant people and vagabonds may rely upon the foreigners' power in acting contrary to reason, and cling to the strong in order to oppress the weak. They should be reported to the village head and the chief of the society, who will handle public affairs justly and sentence them according to law, and who are not allowed to be influenced by selfish purposes. If they indulge in private favoritism, the eyes of our spirits like lightning will pierce through them without discrimination, and will not let them get away with any deviation from the just punishment.

Because some persons use foreign religion and tricky techniques to deceive the people, Heaven above is angered and is sending many sages to descend to earth and come to the divining altar to initiate our youths into the I-ho Society. I means kindness, and ho means politeness; kindness and politeness will make town and countryside peaceful and harmonious. Our people should take right principles and virtue as their foundation and should devote themselves to agriculture as their profession. They should follow and obey Buddhism. They are not permitted to resort to public accusations for avenging a personal grievance, to use poverty as a pretext for oppressing other poor people, to rely on strength to maltreat the weak, or to regard the right as wrong.

Prepared by Group K'an (the second of the Eight Trigrams) of the I-ho Society, Ma-lan Village, Ch'i-chia police precinct, at Chai-t'ang.

3 ANOTHER BOXER NOTICE

This Notice appeared during the period from April to August 1900 in North China villages.

Attention: all people in markets and villages of all provinces in China now, owing to the fact that Catholics and Protestants have vilified our gods and sages, have deceived our emperors and ministers above, and oppressed the Chinese people below, both our gods and our people are angry at them, yet we have to keep silent. This forces us to practise the I-ho magic boxing so as to protect our country, expel the foreign bandits and kill Christian converts, in order to save our people from miserable suffering. After this notice is issued to instruct you villagers, no matter which village you are living in, if there are Christian converts, you ought to get rid of them quickly.

The churches which belong to them should be unreservedly burned down. Everyone who intends to spare someone, or to disobey our order by concealing Christian converts, will be punished according to the regulation when we come to his place, and he will be burned to death to prevent his impeding our program. We especially do not want to punish anyone by death without warning him first. We cannot bear to see you suffer innocently.

Don't disobey this special notice!

Prepared by the I-ho-ch'üan.