Acknowledgement

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Introduction: Christian "civilizing missions" of the past and present

Take up the White Man's Burden --
Send forth the best ye breed --
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild --
Your new-caught, sullen people, half devil and half child.
(Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" 1899)

This verse, written by the British poet Rudyard Kipling, was published at the time of the Philippine-American war (1899-1913). "The White Man's Burden" justified an imperialist project, and supported the position that the United States should join forces with British imperialism and share the "white man's burden" of "extending civilization to peoples considered incapable of governing themselves" (Zwick 1992: xviii). In other words, the United States should join in the "civilizing mission." More than a century has passed since this poem was published, but it is still cited in many contemporary works to suggest the continuing relevance of the idea of the "civilizing mission" over time (Bowden 2004a; Foster, Magdoff, and McChesney 2004; Pyenson 1985, 1993; Sines 2002).

Edward Said (1994: 130) writes that the rhetoric of the civilizing mission is "what has been called 'a duty' to natives, the requirement in Africa and elsewhere to establish colonies for the 'benefit' of the natives, or for the 'prestige' of the mother country." What is evident from both Kipling and Said's description is that the idea of the "civilizing mission" has embedded within it two key presuppositions: an

asymmetrical image of the relationship between so-called "civilized" and "uncivilized" people; and a self-proclaimed sense of duty of the "civilized" to help the "uncivilized."

According to many historians, in the nineteenth century the "civilizing mission" was inextricably linked to imperialism through the work of (especially British and French) Christian missionaries (Wiest 1977, 1997; Dubois 2005; Fischer-Tiné and Mann 2004). For example, Jean-Paul Wiest (1997: 668) states that the French government and French missionaries "collaborated in combining the two notions of *Gesta Dei per Francos* ['The Deeds of Gods Through the French'] and *Mission Civilisatrice* ['Civilizing Mission']." From a nineteenth century French perspective, Christian missionaries saw themselves as undertaking a "civilizing mission" that aimed not only to evangelize but also to facilitate French colonial and economic expansion.

Even though the nineteenth-century style of imperialism no longer prevails, the theme of the "civilizing mission" is still commonly referred to in the field of contemporary international relations (Donnelly 1998; Gong 1984a, 1984b; Seabrooke and Bowden 2006; Wight 1991). A number of writings in the field of development studies has also suggested that a new form of "civilizing mission" is emerging through the activities of development agencies (Biccum 2005; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Manji and O'Coill 2002; Marglin 2003; Mosse 2004). These studies have heavily criticized international non-governmental organization (NGOs), many of which are religious, for their "civilizing" agenda.[1] Very often the idea of the "civilizing mission" is implicit in the emphasis on the asymmetrical relationship between the "developer" and local people. As champions of development, so the argument goes, NGOs tend to spread their values and beliefs, based on a view of their own superiority, juxtaposed with a view of the inferiority of those on the receiving end. What is implied in this view is that attempts by external agencies to impart their values and beliefs to local communities can be understood as essentially seeking to raise the "standard of civilization" of the "uncivilized" to that of the "civilized."

These bodies of literature inherently assume a unidirectional imposition of values and beliefs with less attention given to the actual interactions between the so-called "civilized" and "uncivilized." Such local interactions have been investigated in the literature on China studies, which deals particularly with Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from the perspective of historical anthropology (Bays 1996; Cheung 1995; Harrell 1995; Sweeten 2001; Dunch 2001). Some of these studies focus on ethnic communities as the targets of activity conducted by Christian missionaries (Cheung 1995; Harrell 1995). Few existing studies examine local interactions between international Christian NGOs and ethnic communities in China in the contemporary context, let alone undertake a comparative analysis of historical and contemporary encounters between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities.[2]

This book accordingly provides an historically informed analysis of the interactions between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities living in the southwestern periphery of China. In comparing the work of Christian missionaries in the early twentieth century with that of international Christian NGOs in the contemporary era, it seeks to critically assess the idea of the Christian "civilizing mission" over time. The lack of an historical comparative analysis hinders in-depth understanding of the relationship between the idea of the "civilizing mission" and religion in China. Although international Christian NGOs today and Christian missionaries in the historical period are in many ways very different, both groups have commonly believed in universal or absolute values, which they attempt to promote among communities with diverse traditions.

The meaning of the term "civilizing mission" is not fixed nor does it conform to a single interpretation. The term's connotations have fluctuated over time. In relation to the Christian missionaries of nineteenth century imperialism, the notion of a "civilizing mission" often had a positive connotation, implicit in the image of Christian missionaries as "a special breed of heroic persons bringing Christ to foreign lands" (Wiest 1997: 656). By contrast, at least from the perspective of international Christian

NGOs today, the suggestion that they might be undertaking a "civilizing mission" is considered to be very offensive and overly deterministic. This is because the "civilizing mission" has been linked to the discredited concept of imperialism. Indeed, as will be explained later in this book, the extent to which international Christian NGOs today perceive their work in China as part of a "civilizing mission" varies from organization to organization. By critically assessing the idea of the Christian "civilizing mission" over time, this book aims to offer an explanation of how the relationship between the idea of the "civilizing mission" and religion has transformed.

The central research question is "how have the interactions between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities in China transformed from the nineteenth century to date?" By exploring this question, this book seeks to address the implications of the Chinese example for our broader understanding of the changing nature of the Christian "civilizing mission." In order to render the central question more capable of empirical investigation, the book will focus on the following sub-research questions.

1. How have international Christian agencies put their values and beliefs into practice in the process of interacting with local ethnic communities on China's periphery?
2. How have ethnic communities responded to those externally generated values and beliefs?
3. What has been the impact on any pre-existing notions of community identity?

This book speaks to the broad theme of China's civilizational encounter with the West. It does so by paying particular attention to the role of international non-state actors and the importance of interactions taking place at the local level. Christian missionaries, for example, were significant actors in the age of European imperialism, and had a major impact on relations between China and several European countries. Throughout history and into the present, the influences of international agencies have been felt at multiple levels of Chinese society. Here, some leading studies on China's international relations

provide useful approaches. In particular, Katherine Morton's study (2005) of international aid and China's environment is especially valuable. It takes the important step of incorporating local dimensions into the study of China's international relations. My book, benefiting from this approach, examines the local dimension with an emphasis on the role of non-state actors interacting in a religious context.

Examining the local dimension allows one to provide an important perspective to one of the major debates among scholars studying civilizational encounters between China and the West; that is, whether China's such encounters have led to either Chinese resistance or adaptation of Western values. For example, in the contemporary era, normative tensions between China and the West remain an important focus of scholarly concern (Bell 1996, 2000; Foot 2000; Kent 1999; Nathan 2003; Shambaugh 2000; Zhang 1998). The essence of the debate over the so-called "international socialization" of China lies in how China resists or adapts to externally originated values. For example, the issue of human rights clearly raises the subject of civilizational clash or adaptation. Some scholars focus on China's disagreement with the so-called "standard of human rights" set by the West (Bell 1996, 2000). Others emphasize China's adaptation of an international human rights regime (Foot 2000; Kent 1999).[3] This book contributes to this very important debate by identifying a fine line by which externally originated values lead to conflict or adaptation in China's local communities.

I also seek to escape from the conventional, dichotomized paradigm that associates the West with "modernity" and China with "tradition." The literature on China's international relations in the nineteenth century often portrays the misconceived paradigm (Fairbank 1968; Cohen 1984; Hsü 1960; Pye 1966). The work of Lucian Pye (1966) is particularly illustrative in this regard. He argues that China's coastal areas, which have experienced greater foreign influence, have always been identified with "modernity" by Chinese, while China's inland remains "traditional." However, the Western forces that tried to inculcate "civilization" in China actually had a great deal to do with Christianity; and religion is usually associated

with “tradition,” as opposed to “modernity.” Dismissing these religious forces in order to more comfortably equate Western civilization with “modernity” is highly problematic.

The idea of modifying this dichotomy is of particular relevance to an exploration of the idea of the “civilizing mission” in the Chinese context. In focusing on the domestic realm, it is evident that neither the West nor some international regime is the sole entity from which a “civilizing mission” has emanated. In fact, “civilizing missions” have also originated in China. As Stevan Harrell (1995) reminds us, two types of “civilizing mission” have occurred at the same time in China: one emanated from the West directed towards China; the other originated from the Chinese state directed towards its periphery.[4] By addressing this interesting duality, this book moves beyond the conventional paradigm of the West as a transmitter of “civilization” and China as a passive recipient of “civilization.”

“Civilizing missions,” Christianity and ethnic identity

This book has four main objectives. The first is to bring a religious dimension into the literature on international relations in general; and on China’s international relations in particular. The discipline of international relations has neglected the important issue of religion. Instead, conventional international relations scholarship has focused on state actors in the context of the Westphalian system, within which religion is understood as a domestic and private matter; one that a sovereign should deal with within his or her domestic realm. A lack of focus on non-state actors and a neglect of the importance of religion are also the case in the study of China’s encounter with the West. Since the 1970s, however, the importance of non-state actors in international relations has emerged in the literature (e.g., Keohane and Nye 1977; Keck and Sikkink 1998), but the religious dimension of some non-state actors has yet to be explored in detail. Some leading studies have raised the profile of the relationship between religion and international relations (Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003; Fox and Sandler 2004; Pettman 2004; Thomas 2005). My book

attempts to further extend them by exploring an idea often interwoven with religion -- the "civilizing mission."

The second objective of my book is to gain a more nuanced understanding of Christian "civilizing missions" in China from a local non-state perspective.[5] This perspective is downplayed in the international relations literature mentioned above. Focusing on local non-state actors -- actual *people* rather than institutions -- affords us deeper insights into the major debate over the extent to which "Western values" or so-called "universal values" have been rejected or adapted by various levels of Chinese society. In order to provide an in-depth account of the relationship between external agencies and the communities they affect, it is essential to bring in a corresponding sense of the relationship held by local communities. Local people are often less vocal than national elites, but almost always they *are* so-called direct "recipients" of externally derived values and beliefs. They respond differently to various "universal values" and the differences in response must be properly understood if one is to gain a fuller understanding of the relevance of the "civilizing mission."

The third objective is to explore historical change and continuity in the Christian "civilizing mission aimed towards the Chinese periphery. Change and continuity in the transformation of China since its encounter with the West in the nineteenth century have been among the more important themes in this literature. However, research into such a broad theme is extremely difficult and very complex. By examining the interaction between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities in both the historical and contemporary periods, this book is able to identify the broader changes and continuities in the context of the Christian "civilizing mission" in China. Although the book is primarily concerned with understanding the changing nature of the Christian "civilizing mission" in China, it will also provide a contextual overview of the Chinese state's "civilizing mission" from the nineteenth century onwards. In so doing, it will explain the way in which China's encounter with the West affected the Chinese understanding of "civilization."

The fourth objective is to assess the impact of international Christian agencies on ethnic community identity. By "ethnic community identity," as Chapter One will discuss in further detail, I mean the social boundary of a community at which its people distinguish "us" from "them." Such boundaries can be observed in forms of social hierarchy and social practices. In many ethnic communities, community members feel a sense of belonging to the community based on social hierarchies embedded in religious affiliation and traditional social relations (Madsen 1998; Harrell 1995; Gladney 1991). The impact of both Western "civilizing" activities and those of the Chinese state during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in relation to the ethnic identity of non-Han communities on the Chinese periphery, has been discussed in anthropological studies such as Harrell (1995), Siu-Woo Cheung (1995) and Norma Diamond (1995). These scholars argue that "civilizing projects" undertaken by both Christian missionaries and the Chinese state contributed to developing "ethnic consciousness" among ethnic communities (Harrell 1995: 27-9). This book heavily draws on these insights, and brings into the discussion the impact of international Christian NGOs in the contemporary period.

In pursuit of these four objectives, this book is inevitably inter-disciplinary. As the references that have already been touched upon in this book suggest, it brings together four main areas of scholarship: anthropological and sociological studies on the transformation of state-ethnic minority relations from the late nineteenth century to date; the studies relating to religion in China; development studies; and the study on NGOs and civil society in China. These areas of scholarship will provide great insight to gain a more nuanced understanding of Christian "civilizing missions" in China from a local non-state perspective.

International Christian agencies in China

Dual comparative approach: historical and contemporary

This study adopts a dual comparative approach to understanding the nature of the Christian "civilizing mission" in China. It will compare today's international Christian NGOs with their historical counterparts the Christian missionaries of the early twentieth century. The purpose of this historical comparison is to gain insights into changes and continuities in the interactions between international Christian agencies and China's ethnic communities over time. Exploring such interactions over time will yield a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the "civilizing mission" than has hitherto appeared in the literature.

In the chapters that follow these interactions in both the historical and contemporary eras are analyzed through three frames -- conflict, adaptation, and new consciousness. These frames represent the different kinds of responses by ethnic communities to the values, beliefs, and activities of international Christian agencies, and the different kinds of impact such values, beliefs, and activities have on ethnic communities. The conflict frame refers to an interaction in which members of an ethnic community consciously disagree with the values, beliefs, and activities of an international Christian agency (Scott 1990), and the adaptation frame refers to an interaction in which the two parties reach a consensus that leads to the adaptation of external values, beliefs, and activity by the ethnic community. The new consciousness frame does *not* refer to something between the conflict and adaptation frames. Rather, it refers to an interaction which results in new consciousness, which unexpectedly occurs between both parties (White 1991). Such interaction often leads to a strengthening of ethnic community identity (Harrell 1995; Cheung 1995; Diamond 1995; Tapp 1989). These three frames are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Instead, as will become clear throughout the book, each frame is complex, and the borders between the frames are porous rather than clear-cut. These frames will be used to distinguish three kinds of interaction, and to eventually analyze similarity in interactions that commonly reflect the

features of a particular frame. Such similarity will help us to explore the conditions under which a particular frame of interaction occurs.

Comparison of contemporary NGOs

To ground the study in concrete experience, the book compares three contemporary NGOs as contrasting case studies. It highlights the differences and similarities among these NGOs with respect to three broad themes: (1) the origins and nature of their values and beliefs; (2) the reformulation of their identity in mainland China; and (3) their interaction with ethnic communities.[6]

A central varying feature between the three NGOs is the degree to which they are committed to evangelism. James Hunter (1987: 7**)** explains that "evangelicals are typically characterized by an individuated and experiential orientation toward spiritual salvation and religiosity in general and by the conviction of the necessity of actively attempting to proselytize all non-believers to the tenets of the evangelical belief system." In practical terms, the latter part of this explanation seems problematic as far as China is concerned because the preaching of the gospel is prohibited in that country. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to measure the degree to which NGOs are committed to evangelism, and to do so requires in-depth investigation.[7] The degree to which NGOs are committed to evangelism is assessed on the basis of *the beliefs of individual personnel working for the NGOs*. I choose "individual" belief, rather than an "organizational" one. Individual values and organizational values, the latter presented particularly in the form of the organizational constitution for example, are sometimes different. Looking at organizational values can possibly cause misrepresentation of the essence of an organization. Some organizations, for example the Jian Hua Foundation (JHF), secularize their constitution so that the organization is more acceptable in the current Chinese communist system. In short, individual personnel in these NGOs have their own particular views on the importance of evangelism to their work, and these subjective interpretations are a critical aspect of any assessment of the nature of religious commitment.

On the basis of the above key variance, the JHF has been selected here as an example of an NGO working on the basis of a strong degree of evangelism. In contrast, The Salvation Army (the Army) is posited as an example of a mid-range degree. All of the board members and "associates" of the JHF, except those employed locally, strongly emphasize Christian evangelism. In contrast, individual personnel of the Army tend to take a more liberal view of cross-religious issues. Oxfam Hong Kong, as a secular organization, provides an example of an NGO without explicit evangelical goals.[8] Oxfam Hong Kong undertakes development activity based on a clear statement of the secular values, which it seeks to promote in China. This case study, therefore, provides a benchmark against which to gauge the extent to which religious NGOs secularize their values and beliefs within politically sensitive contexts such as China. The fact that Oxfam Hong Kong is committed to undertaking advocacy as well as developmental work is also highly relevant to this book, because advocacy is intricately linked to an NGO's values and beliefs. The inclusion of a secular NGO provides an opportunity to highlight differences or similarities in the way in which religious and secular NGOs put their values and beliefs into practice, while avoiding the pitfall of making too sharp a distinction between the development work of religious and secular NGOs. Moreover, Oxfam Hong Kong has a strong international reputation as an NGO that has accumulated local experience in China over the last two decades.

As well as providing a productive contrast on the basis of their levels of evangelism, these particular NGOs had to meet three additional criteria that ensured their utility in this study. The first is that they had to have been involved in community development projects that had been ongoing for two to three years -- a standard project period. When assessing the villagers' perception of the projects, a snapshot point in time somewhere in the entire period of the project needed to be selected consistently throughout the case studies. Therefore, the second criterion was that the NGOs had to have just completed a community development project at the time of my fieldwork investigation, as detailed below. The third criterion is that NGO projects had to have been conducted in villages containing ethnic minority

populations. This is essential, not only because this book focuses on ethnic communities, but also because these communities often have their own pre-existing religions. Exploring the interaction between international Christian and secular NGOs, and ethnic communities that have their own religions, will enable this book to address the following questions: does intervention by international Christian NGOs have a persistent effect over time on the religious beliefs of ethnic communities? How do the religious aspects (both that of the international NGOs and that of the community) affect the implementation of the project?

Having conducted extensive interviews with a dozen international NGOs in China, I selected community development projects undertaken by the aforementioned three NGOs as case studies. By way of a brief overview, JHF (Chapter Four) was involved in training villagers in the areas of healthcare, and adult literacy in the Mandarin Chinese language, in a Tibetan village in the Xibusha Township in Qinghai Province. This was a pilot project, but JHF considered this project to be of importance because it would have a bearing on future JHF projects in the village. The Salvation Army (Chapter Five) undertook a community development project in a co-resident village of the Han and Miao, in Zhaotong City in Yunnan Province. It was an integral community development project, combining a variety of components such as agriculture, animal husbandry, training, school rebuilding, health care, and the introduction of a satellite television receiver. Oxfam Hong Kong (Chapter Six) undertook a project in two Lahu minority villages in Lancang County in Yunnan Province. This project aimed to establish a community management committee, which is directly elected by villagers, which enabled the community to engage in participatory decision-making on how to put to good use the community development fund it received as a loan from Oxfam Hong Kong. Notwithstanding that the projects of all three NGOs contained different contexts, and occurred on different scales of magnitude, I was nevertheless able to analyze with a degree of consistency just how each NGO perceived “community” and how the local people perceived the NGOs and their project.

Research amidst political sensitivity

The process of selecting these case studies was not altogether straightforward. I spent an eight-month period between September 2003 and December 2005 in Beijing, Yunnan, Qinghai, Hong Kong, and Tokyo, conducting interviews and archival research. Having conducted extensive interviews with over a dozen international NGOs in China, I identified five Christian NGOs that met the three selection criteria above. I contacted all of them but three NGOs declined to allow me to carry out research into their projects because they were concerned about the ramifications of possible adverse publicity. Also, during my fieldwork visits to China and Hong Kong, just how sensitive some of the issues raised in the course of researching material for the book were increasingly evident. Largely, the sensitivity derived from anxiety over the precarious nature of the status of particular NGOs in China. This sensitivity hindered to some extent my research on church-based community development projects undertaken by international Christian NGOs in that country.

My interviews with some local government officials at the provincial level also revealed the sensitivity of the subject of the work of NGOs. The Chinese term "NGO," *fei zhengfu zuzhi*, is still new to the Chinese language, having first appeared in the 1990s.[9] In Chinese, as Qiusha Ma notes, "the word 'fei means 'not', but also 'wrong' or even 'anti'" (2003). Therefore, the term NGO can be interpreted to mean "anti-government organization" (Ma 2003; Saich 2000: 124). Some provincial government officials indeed raised their eyebrows when I told them about my research topic. They were highly suspicious of NGOs, believing that they supported the separatist movements of ethnic minority groups, particularly in Yunnan Province, where many ethnic minority groups exist. Furthermore, the degree to which government officials perceive each NGO as being more or less Christian significantly added to the degree of political sensitivity surrounding the status of each in China.[10] As will be detailed later, this arises firstly from the Chinese government's policy that foreigners cannot conduct religious activities in China unless

they have specific permission from the government, and secondly from the belief that the activity undertaken by these foreigners seems to resemble that undertaken by Christian missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This in turn reminds the Chinese of the negative legacy of semi-colonization under Western imperialism. If the Communist government were to decide that a NGO was conducting "illegal activity" in the sense of a religious connotation, the organization and the foreign individuals it employs are likely to be either detained or expelled from the country.

I must make a special note that, amongst such serious political sensitivity, JHF and the Army consistently had an open attitude towards an outside researcher. They welcomed my research and showed me their internal documents. They did so for a number of reasons. Firstly they kindly adopted a cooperative approach to help my research. Secondly they acknowledged that Christian NGOs tend to be regarded suspiciously by a number of critics -- the Chinese government, the Chinese people, and some in the international community, who hold a "culture of disbelief" (Thomas 2005: 221). As some of their own staff indicated, these NGOs recognized the importance of working towards giving their critics on the whole a better understanding of the roles and activities of religious NGOs in China by those critics, as some of their NGO staff indicated. In addition, as will be detailed in the empirical chapters, it is important to note that these two NGOs have developed strong connections to the Chinese government, which has assured their security in China. In other words, they were to some degree confident that my research would not affect their activity adversely.

JHF and the Army are representative of the international Christian NGOs that conduct their development activity in China on the basis of an *overt* Christian identity. This book is not concerned with organizations and individuals who *covertly* proselytize in China. Researching such organizations and people may not only have devastating consequences for the local people who have anything to do with the organizations, but also will not add much value to this book. Rather, my focus is on the relevance of the "civilizing mission" to contemporary NGOs. NGOs with a covertly proselytizing agenda may be

considered to act on the basis of a very high degree of evangelism, but the case-studies selected for this book nevertheless represent a wide range of NGOs, chosen as they have been from three different degrees of evangelism.

Research into the case study NGOs and their projects was largely interview-based. I conducted a number of interviews with NGO directors and staff members, local government officials, and villagers. In addition to the interviews, I used official and non-official documentary materials and project histories, as well as engaging in participant observation.

Of NGO directors and staff members, I asked a number of questions related to their organization's view of a "better world," to the importance of Christianity in achieving such a world, to the best possible way to spread the word of Jesus Christ in a Chinese context, to the process of establishing an NGO in mainland China, to the relationship of NGOs to the Chinese government, to how each NGO funds its work, and to the nature and extent of each NGO's international networks. From local government officials at project sites, I primarily sought perceptions (specifically their own) of international NGOs, and whether or not they, as government officials, had learnt anything from the approaches the NGOs were taking to alleviate poverty among ethnic communities. Of villagers, I sought perceptions (specifically their own) of the projects undertaken by the international NGOs, of the values and beliefs espoused through the medium of project activity, and of their perceptions of their own community identity. Typical questions addressed how they learnt about the projects; why they participated (or did not participate) in the projects; what they learnt from the projects' training sessions; how they understood the nature of social relationships in their village; how they perceived other minorities living in the same village; and how they perceived the religious and traditional leaders in their communities. To gain an understanding of these I resorted to observation of the participants, in addition to interviewing many. I spent up to four days with NGO staff members at each project site, observing their interaction with the villagers. Specifically, their informal interaction while chatting in the villagers' houses and sharing meals with the

villagers was very insightful. Villagers often do not wish to speak to, or in front of, an outsider such as the author in a formal setting. Observing informal interaction afforded me opportunities to observe typical activity on a day to day basis.

The fine line of "universal values"

By comparing the interactions at the turn of the twentieth century with those of the twenty-first century, this book reveals that international secular and religious agencies commonly believe in so-called "universal values," which are supposed to improve the lives of the recipients of their projects. This view resonates with the idea of the "civilizing mission" presented by Kipling and Said at the beginning of this introduction -- an asymmetrical relationship between outsiders and ethnic communities. However, this does not necessarily mean that they impose their values devoid of any engagement. This book argues that a belief in universal values and a respect for difference through the process of dialogue are not mutually exclusive.

When consideration is given to the response of ethnic communities to externally generated values, beliefs, and activity, it becomes clear that the mode of interaction is critically important. As a means of assessing the "civilizing" tendency, the extent to which international Christian agencies are committed to evangelism through imposition of values and beliefs on ethnic communities is not sufficient. Rather, much depends on the extent to which both parties have engaged in an in-depth dialogue over values. Without such dialogue, the interaction between the two tends to fall into the conflict frame. It is in this frame that the idea of the "civilizing mission" becomes a problem.

The bottom-up analysis to the "civilizing mission" shows that the line between conflict and adaptation in the interactions between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities during both periods is a fine one. As will be explained later in this book, much has depended on the way in

which international Christian agencies have selectively engaged with particular local communities while downplaying other local communities within the same village.

As the chapters reveal, among the three contemporary NGOs it was, perhaps paradoxically, Oxfam Hong Kong, a secular NGO, that made more of an effort to engage with religiously-oriented ethnic communities, even though such engagement was inconsistent with their secular values and beliefs. By contrast, a relative lack of engagement often existed between religious NGOs and religiously-oriented ethnic communities. There are two main reasons for this: firstly there is a high degree of political sensitivity associated with international religious NGOs' working with religiously-oriented ethnic communities in China, and secondly there are degrees of conflict between the different religious beliefs involved.

A major change between the historical and contemporary periods lies in the weakening of the religious impact on ethnic communities in China. This relates to the way in which today's international Christian agencies present their religious values and beliefs. In the past, Christian missionaries espoused their particular religious values and beliefs in a more direct fashion, whereas today's Christian NGOs do so in more subtle ways. For example, they depend increasingly on the use of religious symbolism, on demonstration of the "love of God" by way of helping ethnic communities, and on modeling themselves on the practices and philosophy of Jesus Christ, without necessarily saying others should do so as well. Christian missionaries did these things as well, but the dependence on such tactics as a means of promoting religious values and beliefs has increased over time. This finding is not particularly surprising given the strict control by China's secular Communist government over the conduct of international religious NGOs. It is, however, important to acknowledge that these organizations still attempt to promote their religious values and beliefs among ethnic communities; but they do so in such a way that their activity conforms closely to Chinese government regulations.

All of these points converge to lead to the central argument of this book: the extent to which an international Christian agency engages with ethnic communities is the key to gaining a more nuanced understanding of the idea of the "civilizing mission" over time. Contrary to an underlying assumption in the literature, which argues for an understanding of the imposition of values as a way of assessing the nature of the "civilizing mission," this book argues that one needs to look at the other side of the coin. In other words, we need to assess the "civilizing mission" from the perspective of "engagement." Two issues are particularly important in this regard. First, even in the case where an international Christian agency has "imposed" its values and activities, these can be well received by ethnic communities. Second, and interrelated, a positive response from ethnic communities generated through a process of engagement can lead, in turn, to positive unintended consequences such as new consciousness of the ethnic community. It is important to stress that the encounter with religion does not necessarily lead to a weakening of ethnic identity.

A note on terms: "international Christian agency" and "ethnic community"

There is no consensus on the definition of a religious NGO in the development and civil society literatures. Carol Hamrin (2003) distinguishes a "religious" NGO from one that is "faith-based." According to Hamrin, a religious organization is defined as a group that promote[s] the traditional activities of worship and prayer, religious sacraments, the teaching of the laity and training of clergy, proselytizing and the publication of sacred texts and other religious materials," whereas a faith-based organization is defined as a "nonprofit [association] that [has] faith-based motivations, hiring policies, and funding sources, but that [does] not do "religious work" narrowly defined, but [offers] social services in other sectors such as education, health, or charitable work" (Hamrin 2003).

This distinction between a religious NGO and a faith-based NGO is ambiguous because it is difficult to know exactly what constitutes "religious work narrowly defined." This is particularly so in the

context of China. For example, evangelism, such as spreading the message of the gospels, can be understood as "religious work narrowly defined." However, as will become clear in the empirical chapters of this book, in actual practice, evangelism in China usually is undertaken in educational or health work. In fact, the key to discerning whether an organization is religious, faith-based or even secular is "self-identity rather than an independent measure" (Berger 2003: 21). Even though a religious NGO has at its heart religious values and beliefs, the services it provides may vary from secular education to evangelization. How a religious NGO raises funds, and how it structures its relationship with church organizations and/or secular governments, varies from organization to organization. In short, it is extremely difficult to actually define "religious work narrowly defined;" therefore, this book does not distinguish between "faith-based" NGOs and "religious" NGOs. Rather, it simply uses the term "Christian NGO."

NGO is itself also a highly contested concept. Scholars concentrate on exploring the extent to which an NGO is, and should be, a *non*-governmental organization -- an entity totally independent of a government or governments. In particular, the relationship between an authoritarian state and an NGO is a difficult one (Cleary 1997; Hawthorn 2001). In the Chinese context, Ma suggests that rather than analyzing Chinese NGOs on the basis of Western concepts such as civil society and autonomy, we should take the more positive view of "how much progress they have made so far in becoming a dynamic force outside of the state system" (2002a: 128).[11] Even though it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the term NGO, this book employs the term based on the fact that many international organizations on mainland China describe themselves as "international NGOs."[12]

In this study, the term "international Christian agency" refers both to Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to international Christian NGOs today. I define an international Christian agency as *being primarily associated with Christian values and beliefs, operating on a non-profit basis to seek to bring about a better world by promoting its religious and secular values*

and beliefs across international borders.[13] This definition is intentionally broad, reflecting the wide range of both religious and secular values, beliefs, and activities that Christian organizations provide. Consequently, religious values and beliefs need to be understood in relative rather than absolute terms.[14] Furthermore, the term "international Christian agency" also includes both an organization and an individual working for the organization. In an analysis of how an international agency interacts with an ethnic community, the individual values of the agency's representatives working at the village level are just as important as, if not more so than, the values of the organization to which they belong.

Meanwhile, "ethnic community" in this book refers to a community that *includes* so-called "minority nationality" populations, rather than to the minority populations alone. In many cases, "minority nationalities" and Han Chinese coexist at project sites. Ethnically distinct communities may coexist in distinct relationship to one another, rather than becoming hybrid communities. In other words, communities usually exist in the plural, in multi-layered, overlapping ways, as will be explained in Chapter One. The term "ethnic community" is used throughout all the case-studies of this book, even though I deal with different historical periods and the notion of ethnicity in China has changed significantly over time.[15] This is simply to avoid confusion by changing terms based on different periods.

The chapter that follows will explore the two central concepts of this study, namely the "civilizing mission" and ethnic community, and proposes an analytical framework for understanding the complex interaction between international religious agencies and ethnic communities in both the historical and contemporary periods.

Notes

[1] Such studies are critical of the commonly held assumption that a high degree of "participation" by local people inevitably leads to their "empowerment" (Chambers 1983, 1994; Arnstein 1969; Pretty 1995; Cornwall 1996).

[2] A note on these terms, “international Christian agencies” and “ethnic communities”, is provided later in this introduction. One of the reasons for the lack of historical comparison is the apparently significant changes in the way the Chinese government has dealt with Christianity over time. In particular, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) expelled Christian missionaries from the country in 1953. Since this time, foreign religious activity has been strictly controlled. However, despite these controls, since the late 1980s, international aid and development NGOs have been working in China, and many of them are either explicitly Christian in their orientation or affiliated with Christianity in some way.

[3] In this regard, Rosemary Foot (2000) and Ann Kent (1999) provide representative studies from an international relations perspective. Foot (2000) explores the process of the diffusion of the international human rights norm in China and the importance of the notion of “global community” to China. Kent (1999) investigates China’s gradual socialization into the international human rights regime.

[4] Also see Oakes’ (1995) discussion of “internal colonialism” and Schein’s (1997) discussion of “internal orientalism” in a Chinese context.

[5] The main focus is on the interaction between international Christian agencies and ethnic communities in China, although the study also takes into account the importance of the Chinese central and local governments when and where appropriate. During the Maoist era, the Chinese central and local governments were deeply enmeshed in ethnic communities, a fact that has left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the communities. In addition, the activities of NGOs are controlled and have to be approved by both the central and local governments.

[6] The introduction to Part Two will explain each of these three broad themes, but it is important to briefly touch on the second theme here. The author does not assume that the case study NGOs reformulate their identity in mainland China. Rather, the main enquiry in relation to this theme is whether, and if so how, they reformulate their identity in mainland China.

[7] Julia Berger (2003) also suggests that characteristics of religious NGOs can be determined by a complex set of analyses of such things as its self-identity, structure, financing, and output, among others.

[8] Oxfam has Quaker origins and, as explored later, Quakerism and secularism are intricately connected. From this point of view, evangelism and secularism should not be completely dichotomized. Rather, they should be understood as lying at two ends of an evangelism-secularism spectrum.

[9] In recent years, there has existed an official taxonomy of social organizations in China. *Fei zhengfu zuzhi* is not used by Chinese organizations; instead they use *minjian zuzhi*. Ma (2003) mentions that the term NGO started to become more widely known after the 1995 Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing. "To prepare Chinese women's organizations to understand the meaning and practice of *fei zhengfu zuzhi*, the All-China Women's Federation launched a campaign to train women leaders at all levels." As a result of the campaign, most of the 1,910,000 women leaders and activists learnt the term *fei zhengfu zuzhi* for the first time.

[10] The problem in attaching a religious label to an NGO is by no means unique to China. Irrespective of whether it is in China or other parts of the world, from a practical point of view, many NGOs are reluctant "to use the term 'religion' in describing themselves and their activities" because of "the potentially negative connotations associated with

religious references as well as legal obstacles that arise when applying for public funding" (Berger 2003: 17). Also, see Scott Thomas's discussion of the tendency that a "culture of disbelief" separates religion from development (2005: 220-1).

[11] China has a number of mass organizations (for example, the All-China Women's Federation), and so-called GONGOs (government-organized NGOs) (for example, the China Family Planning Association). Some studies argue about the extent to which GONGOs can play an important role in China's civil society (Ma 2002b; Wu 2003; Jackson, Chin and Huang 2005). For example, Fengshi Wu (2003) argues that gradually GONGOs have become independent of the state from a funding point of view. Other scholars argue that NGOs in general are at risk of becoming mere service-utility providers; namely, sub-organizations of the government, because they lack sufficient autonomy to advocate for Chinese society, and to challenge the Chinese state (Unger and Chan 1995).

[12] One of the case studies of this book, The Salvation Army, actually claims to be an "international movement" in the context outside mainland China. An "international movement" is quite distinct from NGOs in discussions within transnational civil society literature (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002). However, within mainland China, The Salvation Army identifies itself as an "international NGO."

[13] This definition draws on Julia Berger's (2003) definition of religious NGOs and Patrick Kilby's (2006) focus on NGOs as value-based entities that desire a "better world."

[14] The mixture of the religious and secular values is pointed out in some literature dealing with Christian missionaries. See, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) and Comaroff (1993).

[15] Some anthropological and historical studies use “peripheral people” for the study of the period before the Communist era (Harrell 1995). The term “ethnic minority” or “minority nationality” has been used since the Communist state created the category in the 1950s (Gladney 1991; Kaup 2000).