A MISSION TROPHY FROM CHINA

The impact of the past on the present

2026 Paul Voogt / Missiemuseum Steyl



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Orcid profile: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4280-9529
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Cover photo: The honorary tapestry is illuminated with raking light to make the faded characters visible
(photo by author)

Paul Voogt is curator at Missiemuseum Steyl, the Netherlands
https://www.missiemuseum.nl/en

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Report on the provenance research regarding a honorary tapestry from China in the Missiemuseum Steyl (collection Mission House Steyl)

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Introduction

Missionary collections in Europe represent a unique phenomenon. Serving as instruments of propaganda, their primary purpose was to educate people about missionary activities in non-Western regions, thus creating support for future missions of their own congregations.[1] The Missiemuseum in Steyl (The Netherlands) is a mission museum established by the Catholic missionary congregation the Society of the Divine Word (Societas Verbi Divini or SVD). The museum, founded at its current location in 1931, had been serving as a repository of objects gathered by SVD missionaries soon after the establishment of the mission order in 1875. Chinese objects hold a prominent position in the museum's collection: they were the earliest SVD acquisitions, as China was the first country to which the congregation started to send missionaries. The first SVD missionaries arrived in China in 1879, the start of the collection in Steyl is dated 1883. Like other missionary collections, this collection is an eclectic combination of objects ranging from ritual items and daily utilities to materials with certain aesthetic qualities. Many of them were collected as 'mission trophies' and symbols of paganism or brutality of the source communities.[2]

The China collection includes a so-called honorary tapestry, a wall hanging made in honour of the administrator and army commander Zhou Tianjue (Dsou-tien-ziau) 周天爵 (1772-1853), according to the SVD missionary P. Anton Volpert, who sent it to Steyl in 1901.

This report describes the background against which this object was collected: the SVD mission in Shandong (Shantung) 山东 Province as part of the German colonial expansion in this part of China. It was acquired shortly after the Boxer Rebellion was suppressed, a historical event in which the SVD played an important role. It then explains why this object was collected and argues that it is a mission trophy. Finally, it discusses the impact of history: how mission museums helped shape the image of the "Other" in Europe and how the historical events of that period still influence China's nationalist discourse and foreign policy of today.

We chose to do provenance research on this object for two reasons: first because the time and place of acquisition suggests that it might have been looted, possibly from Zhou's grave and second because Zhou Tianjue remains an important historical figure in China to this day. How did this object come into the possession of P. Volpert? In this study, we are testing two hypotheses: either Volpert purchased the object whilst it was looted booty, or the object was a gift from local Christians. Both scenarios will be examined. And even if it were not looted art, does the tapestry have such art-historical value that it would be better to return it to China?

We first carried out research into the literature, archives and the tapestry itself in the Netherlands, and then (in April 2026) visited South Shandong. The findings from that trip shed new light on the matter.

[1] Leijten, 2015, p. 2

[2] Kreps, 2024, p. 184, 189. Loder-Neuhold, 2019, p.229

Historical context

The lead-up

In the second half of the 19th century, the Qing dynasty[3] was on its last legs, while at the same time the European colonial powers were imposing themselves more and more aggressively on China. Initially, it was mainly Great Britain that forced access to Chinese ports and opened up the country to foreign trade. But around 1900, the 'concessions' increasingly turned into colonial territories. This began with the German capture of the port city of Qingdao (Tsingtao) 青岛 and the hinterland of Shandong province in 1898. Russia and other powers quickly followed suit. They laid railway lines, mined and built up industry. Western colonial expansion led to resistance and erupted in the Boxer Rebellion, which was ultimately crushed by an alliance of foreign powers.

The SVD played an important role in the lead-up to these historic events. The decisive moment was the so-called Juye (Chü-yeh) 巨野 incident in 1897, in which SVD missionaries Richard Henle and Franz Xaver Nies were murdered. Esherick writes: *The Juye killings "set off a chain of events which radically altered the course of Chinese history".*[4]

The SVD in Shandong and the Juye incident

The SVD was founded in 1875 by Arnold Janssen. He initially sent his missionaries to the German colonial territories. At the end of the 19th century Germany was catching up to become a colonial power. China became the first destination for Janssen's missionaries, because Germany was very active in establishing its influence there. The SVD was assigned (by Rome) to the south of Shandong province. This was not the most popular place to carry out missionary work, as it is the birthplace of both Confucius and Mencius, but they were not the first missionaries in China and did not have a choice. The first SVD missionaries were Joseph Freinademetz and Johann Baptist von Anzer, two opposites in character[5]. Freinademetz devoted himself in every way to the local population and even remained at his post when everyone else fled from the Boxers. Anzer was a bishop and engaged in power politics. He made the SVD a major force in Shandong, but his missionary policy led to resistance and even to a reprimand from Rome:

Less than a year after it had established its mission in Shandong, Arnold Janssen received a letter from the Propaganda Fide[6], reprimanding the SVD for its aggressive proselytising. The Propaganda presented a list of complaints, including charges that the SVD was over-eager to baptise Catholics, created new stations too quickly, and intervened too aggressively in local legal affairs. [7]

Bishop Anzer of the SVD was determined to settle in Qufu (Ch'ü-fu) 曲阜, the birthplace of Confucius, which was sacred to the Chinese, and sent several missionaries to the city, including Henle. They were driven out by an angry mob. Henle wrote on a wall, 'wir gehen, aber wir kommen wieder' [8]. (*we're leaving, but we'll be back*). Anzer's policies caused a great deal of ill will in Shandong, and there were regular violent incidents against the missionaries and local converts.

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[3] The imperial dynasty of China at that time

[4] Joseph Esherick, 1987, p. 123

[5] History has judged the two SVD pioneers very differently. Freinademetz was eventually canonised, while Anzer is still written about in very critical terms, also in publications by the SVD itself.

[6] The central body for the worldwide Catholic mission in Rome

[7] Albert Wu, 2013, p.185

[8] P. Georg Stenz SVD, 1924, p. 85

On 1 November 1897 (All Saints' Day), Henle and Nies stayed with their fellow brother Georg Stenz in the mission station of Zhangzhuang (Chang-chuang) 张庄, a village near Juye. They were there, because, as Anzer wrote: *Tsjangkiatsjuang (Zhangzhuang, PV), the seat of the rector of the Tjuje (Juye, PV) mission district, has a neat little church and a vicarage with several rooms. The congregation numbers nearly 300 souls, who have long been distinguished by their zeal and, in many cases, by their exceptional piety. The priest is everything to them. That is why the missionaries were keen to celebrate the feasts here, all the more so because Tsjangkiatsjuang lies at the centre of several small congregations.* [9]

Stenz had made many enemies. Esherick wrote the following about Stenz:

That Stenz was bound to offend many people is absolutely certain. The oral history of the incident (…) accuses Stenz of more than ten rapes of local women. (SDJDSZL, 3:29 30). True or not, such accusations tell something of what people thought of the man.[10] [11]

Stenz gave up his bedroom to his guests and went to sleep in the staff quarters. That night, armed men broke into Stenz's bedroom and murdered those present: Henle and Nies. Their bloodstained clothes, the murder weapon and Henle's cut-off braid have been given a place in the 'martyrs' display case' of the Mission Museum in Steyl. There are two text panels, one in Dutch and German and one in Chinese. The Chinese text states, amongst other things, *While lodging at the Zhangjiazhuang (Zhangzhuang, PV) church, they were attacked at night by bandits, who stabbed the two priests to death. Pray silently for the dead. May all the faithful pray for them, that they may soon enter the Kingdom of Heaven.* [12]

[9] 'Nieuwjaarsgroet' van Mgr. J.B. von Anzer. In: Zuid-Willemsvaart (Dutch regional newspaper) of January 22 1898

[10] Joseph Esherick, 1988, pp. 125/126

[11] Opponents of the mission's meddling seized on every rumour to discredit the missionaries, but the following shows that abuses did indeed take place. P. Josef Freinademetz SVD himself indicated that nothing had damaged the reputation of the mission as much as sexual transgressions. "Since the beginning, there has been far too much freedom in the episcopal residence with regard to young women. Paedophilia is also not an isolated phenomenon." (P. Richard Hartwich SVD, 1983, 463/464)

[12] For the full text and translation of the panels, see Appendix 1



Historical photo of the Henle and Nies vitrine (undated) and recent photo (by Bart Beurskens, Missiemuseum)

Bishop Anzer uses the (mistaken) murder of Henle and Nies to convince the German Emperor Wilhelm to invade China. Thauren writes: *Bishop Anzer, who was attending the General Chapter in Steyl, travelled to Berlin immediately after receiving the terrible news and asked for protection for the missionaries and their flock. Berlin's response was the occupation of Jiaozhou (Kiaochow) 胶州, which had been decided long before.*[13] [14] The Emperor needed little encouragement; he had been looking for an occasion for some time. Schilling writes: *The Kaiser himself declared the murder of the two missionaries in China in 1897 'a blessing of the Lord' (Gnade des Herrn) for his Weltpolitik.*[15]

The incident led to the German occupation of the port of Tsingtao and the hinterland in Shandong province. The SVD was given free rein once again. Eventually, *a Church of Atonement* (Sühnekirche) for the murdered Fr. Henle and Fr. Nies[16] was established in Qufu as part of the draconian reparations imposed on China in retaliation for the murder.

The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901)

It was the spark that ignited the powder keg. A large-scale nationalist uprising broke out, directed against the influence of the Western powers. It began in Shandong and spread northwards towards Beijing (Pei-ching) 北京. It was the culmination of many factors: floods, famine, but also the imperialist policies of the European powers and social pressure from the Catholic church. China was forced to open its markets to Western imports, which resulted in the crowding out of local production. The Westerners had claimed extraterritorial rights for themselves, meaning they were no longer subject to Chinese law. The missionaries also secured an exceptional position for their converts, which caused a great deal of ill feeling in the event of conflicts.

[13] Kiaochow is the bay where the port city of Tsingtao is located; the province is called Shandong.

[14] Johannes Thauren SVD, 1931, p. 44

[15] Britta Schilling, 2024, p.32

[16] P. Georg Stenz SVD, 1924, p.85

The social consequences of conversion to Christianity were also felt: the sacred Chinese family ties were no longer always respected, and contributions to local temples and festivals ceased. In addition, the church appropriated tasks that had previously been the exclusive domain of the elite, such as education and care for the poor and orphans.[17] [18]

Many watched with sadness as the court in Beijing allowed this to happen, unable to cope. They joined militias that practised ancient fighting techniques, using their bare fists (hence Boxers), but also spears and long knives. They believed themselves to be invulnerable to bullets. The movement quickly gained many supporters among the impoverished peasants and turned against the local elite, but especially against Westerners and their innovations. The missionaries and their churches and chapels were targeted, but it was the local converts who suffered the most violence.[19] Initially, the Manchu court and the Boxers were opposed to each other, but Empress-Dowager Cixi 慈禧 (1835-1908) soon saw the advantages of a united front against the Westerners.

In 1900, an international force of eight countries invaded China to crush the Boxer Rebellion and rescue Western diplomats besieged in Beijing. They defeated the Boxers and imperial troops, occupied Beijing in August 1900, and forced China to accept humiliating peace terms in 1901, with sky-high reparations, further weakening the position of the court. The victory was followed by 'punitive expeditions', during which foreign troops committed murder, rape and looting, incited by the racist discourse of the time, in which Kaiser Wilhelm played a notable role. He coined the term 'The Yellow Peril' and gave the infamous 'Hunnenrede' speech when German troops embarked in 1900. Quote: ‚Pardon wird nicht gegeben. Gefangene werden nicht gemacht. Führt eure Waffen so, daß auf tausend Jahre hinaus kein Chinese mehr es wagt, einen Deutschen scheel anzusehen' *(No mercy will be shown. No prisoners will be taken. Wield your weapons so that for a thousand years to come, no Chinese will dare to look askance at a German)*. Wilhelm was obsessed with China. As early as 1895, he made a sketch of an allegorical representation in which the European powers defend themselves against the 'yellow peril'. He had the sketch worked out by the artist Hermann Knackfuss.



Reports appeared about the 'punitive expeditions', but also personal letters from soldiers, which made no secret of the atrocities. In Germany, these texts were collected and published by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in their party newspaper Vorwärts. They became known as the Hun letters and supported the SPD's anti-war stance. [20]

[17] Fairbank and Reischauer, 1979, pp. 377–383

[18] Kuepers, J.J.A.M., 1974, p. 197

[19] Together with 20,000 or 30,000 Chinese Christians, about 200 foreign missionaries lost their lives in the months of the Boxer Uprising (Leopold Leeb, 2025, p. ix)

[20] Thoralf Klein, 2008, p. 9

P. Anton Volpert



SVD missionaries assembled in Liangzhou at the occasion of P. Volpert's (second from left, first row) 80th birthday, Dec. 12, 1943[21]

The Boxer Rebellion began in Shandong and raged violently throughout the region. Most missionaries fled. In 1901, the missionaries returned to their parishes, including P. Anton Volpert, who returned to Yanggu (Yang-ku) 阳谷. On 8 March 1901, he set off for Yanggu and joined a Chinese military force. On the way, they stopped in the town of Zhaocheng (Ch'ao-ch'eng) 朝城. Volpert was armed and, as an exercise, shot a raven off the roof with a single shot. Later, he heard that a gang of Boxers who had stayed behind had planned to attack him, but that they had decided against it when they saw his marksmanship.[22] In Yanggu, he finds all chapels and prayer rooms destroyed. Volpert negotiates with the local mandarin for compensation[23] . To rebuild the chapels, he has an old Chinese temple demolished[24] . On 5 July 1901, he acquires the honorary tapestry of the general Zhou Tianjue in Yanggu; he writes that it was offered to him.[25]

Volpert had a keen interest in local history and archaeology. He collected rubbings of ancient gravestones and archaeological objects, and founded the first and, at that time, only museum of antiquities in China[26] in Lanzhou (Lan-chou) 兰州. The acquisition and export of antique cultural artefacts was already prohibited in China at that time. Thanks to his good contacts with the government, he was able to continue collecting and even sold items to Prof. Adolf Fischer, the later founder of the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne.[27]

[21] Horlemann, Bianca. The Divine Word Missionaries in Gansu,Qinghai and Xinjiang, 1922–1953: A Bibliographic Note. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Volume 19 Issue 1

[22] Johann Kraus SVD, 1973, p. 42

[23] Richard Hartwig SVD, 1983, p. 445

[24] Johann Kraus SVD, 1973, p.45

[25] Letter from Volpert, Mission Museum archive

[26] Johann Kraus SVD, 1973, p. 91

[27] Johann Kraus SVD, p. 111

The honorary tapestry[28]

Volpert describes the tapestry as follows: *In China, it is customary for commendable mandarins to receive certain honours from the people or from friends; for example, large wooden tables of honour with a motto consisting of four gilded letters, called Biaen; or large silk umbrellas with the name of the giver on them, called Wuaen-min-saen; however, the most common are the tapestries of honour, which are called Tschan-ze. This gift is presented to the mandarin upon promotion or at a birth celebration.* He explains the figures, and ends with: D*espite the colourful splendour, the whole makes a dark, sad impression on us; it is therefore a representation of superstitious figures, at the top of which are the dragon and the old snake, which keep the poor Chinese people in such tight chains. (..) The letters have been removed from the tapestry; however, traces of them can still be seen, indicating that the tapestry of honour was presented by friends of the Grand Mandarin Dsou-tien-ziau (Zhou Tianjue – PV) on the occasion of the coronation*[29].

As we shall see when we examine the tapestry in detail in the chapter 'Historical Value of the Tapestry', the tapestry was jointly presented by nine merchant firms in Guangdong to congratulate "K'ungang the Second Brother on the occasion of being granted noble rank."

Volpert writes that the tapestry was offered to him. At that place and time, there was undoubtedly much for sale that had been looted and plundered during the violent years that preceded. This gives reason to assume that this tapestry has a dubious origin. On the other hand, it may also have been a gift. The Chinese Christians in the region had suffered greatly at the hands of the Boxers and were no doubt relieved to see their protectors return. But if that had been the case, one would expect that Volpert would have mentioned it.

[28] In a packing list of two chests sent to Steyl from Jentschaufu by P. Freinademetz, the tapestry is called: 'Lao shon sing Ehrenteppich mit Figuren und den 8 Basien'. (Archive Mission Museum)

[29] P. Anton Volpert SVD, letter dated 2 February 1902. For the full text in translation, see Appendix 3



Photo: Bart Beurskens, Missiemuseum

The tapestry features Baxian (The Eight Immortals) motifs. Such tapestries are usually gifts for promotions or birth celebrations. Volpert identifies the honoured as Zhou Tianjue, a local government official who led civil armies against the Taiping armies during the Taiping Rebellion[30], a large-scale uprising against the Qing dynasty that escalated into a civil war lasting several years and claiming millions of lives. Zhou was born and later buried in Yanggu in 1853, the same location where Volpert acquired the tapestry in 1901. Such a tapestry could very well have been buried with the person in his tomb.

Why did Volpert acquire the tapestry and then send it to the museum in Steyl? He explains this in a letter, which the museum has affixed to the window of the display case. *The artistic embroidery and, even more so, the origin of this object, made me decide to send the tapestry to the mission museum in Steyl. (..) This tapestry comes from the estate of the tyrant who tortured the blessed Father Perboyre. (...) The blessed Father Perboyre died a martyr's death at the hands of this man on 11 September 1840*. Jean-Gabriel Perboyre (1802-1840) was a French missionary of the Lazarists who became a martyr for the Catholic faith in China. He was canonised in 1966. This makes the tapestry a missionary trophy: Father Perboyre lost his life at the hands of Zhou Tianjue, and now Zhou Tianjue has lost his badge of honour to a missionary of a new generation.
In the end the true faith prevails, is the message we can read in the acquisition and display of this trophy.

Volpert describes the life of Zhou Tianjue and admires him for his career (from a child of poor parents to viceroy of two provinces), but at the same time condemns his alleged cruelty. *As the martyr's history mentions, he was very harsh. He even became so cruel that he fell out of favour with the emperor. Dsou-tien-ziau (Zhou Tianjue, PV) was deposed and exiled, but later the emperor used his services again. (...) It is strange that the best statesmen of China are precisely the greatest enemies of foreigners. These extraordinary people embody Chinese patriotism and with it hatred of foreigners.*

Zhou Tianjue, courtesy name Jingxiu, was from Dong'e (Tung-o) 东阿, Shandong. He became a Jinshi[31] in the 16th year of The reign of Emperor Jiaqing 嘉庆 (1796-1820). He served as Governor-General of the Grain Transport System, Governor-General of Huguang, Governor of Anhui (An-hui) 安徽, etc., and was posthumously named Wen Zhong 文忠.[32] He eventually rose to the position of Vice Minister of War. Throughout his career, he was repeatedly promoted, demoted and then reinstated by the emperor[33]. He played a key role in the resistance against the British invasion of Guangdong (Canton) 广东 and in the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion.

Zhou Tianjue remains a well-known historical figure in China. In 2019, a letter he wrote to the emperor was auctioned at Sotheby's. In 2025, a 'Collection of Research Materials on Zhou Tianjue' was published, to mark the 250th anniversary of Zhou's birth[34].

[30] Currently referred to in China as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement (1850-1864)

[31] Jinshi was the highest rank in the examination system of the Chinese Empire

[32] https://www.sothebys.com/zh/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/fine-classical-chinese-paintings-hk0890/lot.2538.html

[33] https://baike.baidu.com/en/item/Zhou%20Tianjue/91895 (Baidu Wiki is China's answer to Wikipedia. It relies heavily on AI to create and edit articles, according to Wikipedia).

[34] Meng Chuanke, 2025

Trophy

The Mission Museum was an important public relations tool for the SVD. The SVD periodical *Steyler Chronik* reported on the opening of the museum in its December 1931 issue: "Its main goal, however, was not to make money, but to inspire a love for missionary work[35]." Another goal of the museum was the education of missionaries in training: "Here, missionaries should already be casting their eyes on their future field of activity. But, most importantly: here, too, believers gain insight into foreign cultures, including the many difficulties that missionaries have to deal with and struggle against".[36] The entire staging of the presentation is designed to impress upon visitors the dangers faced by missionaries[37].

This also applies to the honorary tapestry. The story of Perboyre once again underlines the dangers to which missionaries are exposed. But by bringing the tapestry made in honour of his nemesis Zhou Tianjue to Steyl and exhibiting it there, it also becomes a trophy. The Mission Museum is full of trophies. A trophy is originally a sign of victory, an indication of captured weapons or a memento of a victory[38]. But it has since come into use in many other contexts, such as hunting. The natural history collection of the Mission Museum includes various hunting trophies, some of whose exciting hunting histories have been recorded by Brother Berchmans, the first curator of the Mission Museum. For example, he describes how Brother Mansuetus of the Kansu mission in China managed to acquire a snow leopard during a deer hunt, after a bloody incident[39].

Wingfield describes the trophies of the London Missionary Society (LMS) as *accounts of glorious victories (that allow us to) revel in past glories, or to eulogise heroes of the past to inspire a new generation.*[40] He describes the different types of trophies in the (early nineteenth-century) museum of the LMS. The many 'idols' underline the success of the mission: *Steven Hooper has even suggested that abandoned 'idols' might be understood as 'performance indicators' through which missionaries demonstrated their success in conversion.*[41] *The museum contained a large number of 'trophies of Christianity'; non-Christian religious objects secured from converts to Christianity and sent to London*[42]. We also find these kinds of trophies in the Mission Museum in Steyl. A good example is a Chinese house altar.

[35] p. 333

[36] Steyler Chronik December 1931, p. 246

[37] Paul Voogt 2025, p. 24

[38] Wikipedia

[39] Br. Berchmans SVD, 1933/34, p. 8

[40] Chris Wingfield, 2017, p. 125

[41] Chris Wingfield, 2017, p.109

[42] Ibid., p. 125



On the left a recent photo of the house altar (Bart Beurskens, Missiemuseum), on the right the same altar on a historical photo (archive SVD)

Around 1913, it came into the possession of P. Carl Weig SVD, also in Yanggu, just like the honorary tapestry. Weig sent it to Steyl, accompanied by an explanatory letter. It is a beautifully decorated wood carving that belonged to a wealthy family who had fallen into poverty and subsequently converted to Christianity. This happened more often; they were called rice-Christians: as a member of the church, they were at least guaranteed food. The names of the ancestors are inscribed on small panels in the house altar. In this way, the descendants could honour their ancestors with offerings. *For a small alms, as she is now destitute, I purchased this item, writes Weig. According to pagan beliefs, selling such sacred sites for money is considered sacrilegious and simonistic in the highest degree*. Custom in China dictates that when a house temple is no longer in use, the panels bearing the names of the ancestors are burned on the graves of the persons concerned. Through burning, the soul returns to the realm of the dead. The altar is also burned, otherwise the soul will have no home in the hereafter. But, writes Weig:
Because the woman is now Catholic, she no longer practises such devil worship.[43] Weig puts it to use as a tabernacle for Catholic worship, in which the Holy Sacrament (the consecrated hosts) is kept. This is a good example of a mission trophy: an object of 'pagan' worship is given a new function as a tabernacle in the Catholic Mass and is later exhibited in the Mission Museum. As Binter puts it: *"The appropriation of religious objects/subjects was seen by missionaries as a 'sign of victory for Christianity'."* [44]

[43] P. Carl Weig SVD, 1913

[44] Julia Binter et al., 2025, p. 404

The impact of the past on the present

Mission museums in general may not have conveyed much knowledge, but they did convey a feeling, a sense of the victory of light (Europe) over dark (non-Europe). They were spread across small towns in rural Europe and for a long time they were the only window on the world for most people, along with the missionary magazines[45]. Wingfield cites Jeffrey Cox, *who has suggested that 'for most British children in the nineteenth century, the single largest source of information about what foreign peoples were like came from the foreign missionary societies of their respective denominations'*.[46] Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels draw attention to the fact that these images have their influence to this day. *Missionary museums and exhibitions long operated as mediators of the world beyond Europe, shaping the imaginaries of their Christian audiences through stubbornly resilient templates regarding non-Western others*.[47]

The way the China collections are presented in the Missiemuseum clearly reflects the Orientalist views on China of late 19th, early 20th Century. On the one hand, Europe at that time was fascinated by the sophistication of Chinese culture and imitated it in countless 'chinoiseries': Chinese-style objects and buildings. China was considered the most advanced non-European culture. The first display cases upon entering the main hall of the Mission Museum contain the China collections. These are followed by other parts of the world, in descending order of 'civilization', according to the views of the time and the theories of SVD anthropologists of the time[48]. We see beautiful Chinese tableware, enameled vases, folding screens, and embroidery. Highlights of refinement are the Shu-y lucky symbols carved from Tje wood like lace. And a "marvel of 13 bullets fitted together, carved from a single piece".[49]

On the other hand, people were obsessed with the despotism and cruelty that they attributed to China. We see that reflected in other objects: shoes for bound 'Lotus' feet, executioner's swords and a series of miniatures depicting scenes from everyday life that include images of instruments of torture[50]. Although the Mission Museum only opened in the 1930s, it still fully reflected the Orientalist view of China that had prevailed in previous decades. For people from the rural area around Steyl, this was their image of China. And the museum continues to contribute to this image to this day.

In China, this period also continues to influence perceptions, but in a completely different way. As mentioned earlier, after the campaign of the allied foreign powers in 1900, the Chinese government was forced to accept humiliating peace terms, there was widespread looting, and the 'punitive expeditions' that followed resulted in murder and rape. China's humiliation was complete, an episode that is still not forgotten. The Chinese term for this low point in history is guochi 国耻, coined in the 1920s and revived in the 1990s as part of the Chinese government's nationalist discourse[51]. To this day, it contributes to shaping the Chinese view of the world and its foreign policy.

[45] Paul Voogt, 2025, p.27

[46] Wingfield, 2017, p.125

[47] Birgit Meyer en Peter Pels, 2025, p. 240

[48] Like Wilhem Schmidt, the founder of the SVD anthropological school

[49] Text panel in the showcase

[50] Including a zhanlong" 站笼, a standing cage, where the head was fixed by a plank, the body hanging down.

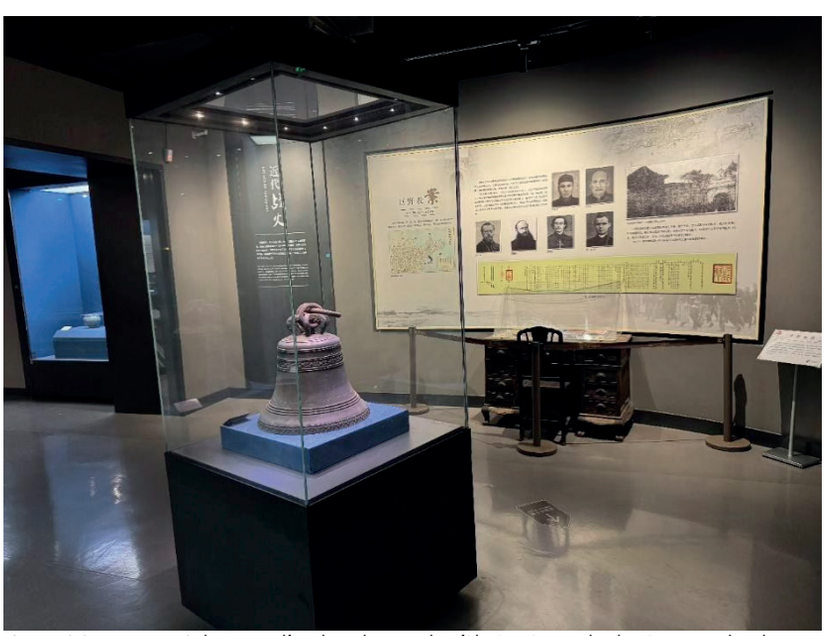
[51] Thoralf Klein, 2008, pp. 11/12

The Juye Incident, in which the missionaries Henle and Nies were killed, took place at the mission station in the village of Zhangzhuang (also called Mopan Zhangzhuang 磨盘张庄), just outside Juye. The buildings of the mission station have been demolished in the 1960's, but there is a memorial stone at the site, commemorating the Incident from the Chinese perspective[52].



Memorial Stone Zhangzhuang (photo Sijia Qu 屈思嘉)

In the Juye Museum, a whole room is dedicated to the Juye Incident[53].



Juye Museum. A large display board with text and photographs hangs above Stenz's desk. On the desk his 1902 book: In der Heimat des Konfuzius (photo by author)

[52] See Appendix 4 for the full text and translation of the memorial stone

[53] See Appendix 5 for the full display texts and translation



Juye Museum. In the display case at the end are remains from the mission station in Zhangzhuang. In the centre is a display case containing a church bell[54] *(photo by author)*



Juye Museum. One wall features a multimedia presentation of the Incident, in a diorama with video projection, using Pepper's Ghost technology[55] *(photo by author)*

This room is themed around the anti-colonial struggle in the region; the next room focuses on the struggle against the Japanese and the Nationalists, featuring a life-size statue of Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904-1997), who served as a general in this region.

[54] According to Prof. Leeb, the tombstones of Henle and Nies are in the Juye museum's storage (personal conversation)

[55] In which film images are reflected into the miniature via a cleverly positioned mirror or glass plate. This creates the illusion that 'real', semi-transparent miniature people are walking through the space.

In the exhibition of the Juye Incident, we also see the pictures of the two leaders of the gang that killed Henle and Nies: Liu Derun 刘德润 and Xi Laowu 奚老五.



From the accompanying texts: *The German missionary Georg Maria Stenz, who took up residence here in 1893, instigated his followers to oppress the local people. His numerous misdeeds aroused widespread public anger. On the night of November 1, 1897, more than ten Juye righteous people, led by Liu Derun, broke into the Zhangzhuang Church to kill Georg Maria Stenz. The Juye Incident was an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal righteous act by the people of Juye, shocking China and the world. It triggered a series of chain reactions: Germany's occupation of Jiaozhou Bay; other imperialist powers followed suit, launching a new wave of partitioning China; later, the failure of China's negotiations to reclaim Shandong's sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference sparked the May Fourth Movement, bringing a ray of hope to the dark old China...*

The May Fourth Movement was a patriotic movement by the Chinese people against imperialist cultural aggression in modern Chinese history, fully demonstrating the Chinese people's strong patriotic spirit and their fighting spirit of defying power and daring to resist. General Secretary Xi Jinping 习近平 emphasized in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China:"We must strengthen the resolve, backbone, and confidence of the whole Party and the people of all ethnic groups in China, fear no evil forces, fear no ghosts, and fear no pressure, and press forward in the face of difficulties and challenges."

Historical value of the tapestry

In Yanggu, we spoke to two leading historians who are very knowledgeable about Zhou Tianjue. However, they prefer their names not to be disclosed because they have no mandate to comment on the issue at hand[56].

Zhou's tomb is located within Yanggu County and is now a county-level protected cultural heritage site. It was once of considerable scale but suffered damage during the Cultural Revolution; today, only a small courtyard remains. It was not destroyed or looted during the Boxer Rebellion. The two scholars do not think the tapestry was looted. They consider it historically more likely that the object was given voluntarily to a foreign missionary.



Entrance to Zhou's tomb in Meng Hai 孟海 village, also known as Meng Jia Hai (孟家海) village (photo by author)

Was the tapestry made for Zhou? The two scholars find no evidence of this. They analyze it as follows[57].

The tapestry records that it was jointly presented by six merchant firms in Guangdong to congratulate "K'ungang the Second Brother on the occasion of being granted noble rank." Although Zhou went to Guangdong in the 21st year of the Daoguang reign (1841) to assist Aisin-Gioro Yishan in handling military affairs, he held no formal title and was never granted any "rank" (爵秩). At that time, Zhou merely served in an auxiliary capacity and was not eligible for promotion; therefore, he could not have been the recipient.

"K'ungang" refers to Aisin-Gioro Kungang 爱新觉罗·昆冈 (1836–1907), a Manchu nobleman and the seventh-generation descendant of Prince Dodo of the Yu lineage. He obtained the jinshi 进士 degree[58] in the first year of the Tongzhi 同治 reign (1862) and later rose to the position of Grand Secretary of the Hall of Literary Profundity, one of the highest-ranking civil offices in the Qing court. He died in the 33rd year of the Guangxu reign and was posthumously honored with the title "Wenda" 文达.

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[56] They prefer that references be attributed generally, such as: "According to research by local scholars in Yanggu, Shandong"

[57] The following is a compound of written and oral testimony by the two scholars

[58] Advanced scholar

Between 1841 and 1842, Zhou was reinstated and assisted Aisin-Gioro Yishan in Guangdong; his son Zhou Guangbi and others also held official positions. Meanwhile, Aisin-Gioro Yishan and Aisin-Gioro Kungang were both members of the imperial clan, and Kungang may have briefly served as Governor of Guangdong[59]. These connections suggest a possible indirect link, making it plausible that the tapestry was transferred from Kungang to the Zhou family. The Volpert letter records "Doujiaying Village[60] 窦营村 (Meijiaying Village)" located at the border of Dong'e and Yanggu counties, which is indeed where the branch of Zhou Guangbi 周光碧, Zhou's eldest son, resided after relocating from Mengjiahai Village 孟家海村. It is therefore reasonable that, after Zhou's death, the tapestry was passed on by Zhou Guangbi's descendants to the missionary. The transfer by Zhou Guangbi's descendants may have involved intermediaries. Considering the time (around 1901) and geographical proximity, Doujiaying Village and the village of Thomas Tien Ken-sin[61] were neighboring communities with frequent interactions.

In summary, the tapestry received by the missionary in Yanggu on July 5, 1901, can be tentatively identified as originating from the Zhou family. However, since it was neither originally presented to Zhou nor directly transferred by him, it is more appropriate to refer to it as: "Tapestry Collected by the Descendants of Zhou Tianjue" or "Tapestry from the Zhou Tianjue Family".

By the late Qing period, the local Poli (P'o-li) 坡里 parish covered thirty-three counties, and local believers held missionaries in great reverence. Given the strong influence of the Church, there was no need to obtain objects through coercive means. Although there is no record that Zhou's descendants were Christians, they maintained kinship ties with key church figures (such as the Tien family). The transfer of the tapestry was likely a voluntary gift, consistent with local customs of exchange.

From a national perspective, the object may not have significant heritage value, but it does possess a certain degree of local cultural significance. If the tapestry had been directly presented to Zhou himself, its value would be greater. However, since it was not given to him personally, its value is relatively limited.

[59] This cannot be substantiated with sources

[60] Also called Douying

[61] Thomas Tien SVD (1890 – 1967) was the first cardinal from China and from 1946 Archbishop of Beijing

Art-historical value

If the tapestry was not created in honour of Zhou Tianjue and was not looted, might it have art-historical value that would justify its return to China? To ascertain this, a visit was made to the Shandong Museum in Jinan (Chi-nan) 济南. A visit to the textiles on display quickly makes the frame of reference clear. The collection includes the oldest surviving Ming prince "dragon robe" (c. 1389) and several other robes, all of which are still in excellent condition. They are part of a permanent exhibition dedicated to the treasures of Zhu Tan 朱檀(1370–1390), who was the tenth son of the Hongwu Emperor, the founder of the Ming Dynasty. At the museum, the following became clear to us. The tapestry was produced in the late Qing period and therefore belongs to a relatively recent historical period rather than the category of "ancient artifacts." Such congratulatory hangings were circulating gift items and can be considered as modern folk artifacts. Antique markets already existed in the late Qing period, and such objects could be acquired through shops, meaning they were not particularly rare. In terms of craftsmanship and materials, the tapestry is neither uncommon nor especially valuable, and its overall material worth is relatively limited. A large number of similar embroidered works exist on the market today. Many Chinese silk embroidery pieces that had previously circulated abroad have returned to China and are now openly traded. As a result, similar objects are relatively abundant both in China and internationally. In short, the object appears not to be of great art-historical value.

In response to our request for more information, we received the following statement from Yu Qin 于芹, director of the Embroidery Research Centre at Shandong Museum[62].

'In terms of craftsmanship and materials, the fabric used for this tapestry is a relatively typical silk textile, while its embroidery technique shows clear characteristics of Lu embroidery, with fine workmanship. As a folk artifact, the theme of "Tianguan Cifu" ('The Heavenly Official Bestows Blessings') represented on the tapestry was relatively common at the time. From the perspective of historical value, it contains embroidered inscriptions and refers to specific historical figures. Compared with its material and craftsmanship value, the information it carries about the figures involved, the context of social exchange, and the related historical background is of greater cultural significance. In the late Qing period, such folk objects had a certain degree of circulation and could be obtained through gift-giving, trade, or market purchase'.

[62] By email through Qu Sijia (translation)

Alternative interpretation[63]

Since Volpert writes that the tapestry was made in honour of Zhou Tianjue, there might be an alternative explanation for the name "Kungang the Second Brother" on the tapestry. Aisin-Gioro Kungang was not the "second brother" in his family, he was actually the oldest son out of five children. It could very well be a metaphor referring to Zhou. In Chinese literary conventions, "Kungang the Second Brother" often indicates "Lu Yun" 陆云 (202-303 AD), the younger one of the two brothers from the Lu family, who was known as an upright government official, while the older brother "Lu Ji" 陆机 (261-303 AD) was more known for his poetry. The two brothers were often mentioned together as "Kungang"[64]. The use of "Kungang" as a metaphor for good virtues is an expression that is deeply rooted in vernacular Chinese cultural memory and literary traditions (even nowadays the expression still appears in Chinese school textbooks). "The second brother" (so only one younger brother, not the two of them) Lu Yun, was not so good at writing poetry (compared to his brother) but excelled in governing. It therefore makes sense that the local people would compare Zhou Tianjue to Lu Yun.

Also, the congratulation for "noble rank" does not indicate a specific rank but was used as a flattering phrase to congratulate a government official's raise. And in Zhou Tianjue's case, his subsequent appointment in 1842 after his time in Guangdong could indeed be considered as a raise. In 1842, he was awarded the fourth rank official and was transferred to Jiangsu (Chiang-su) 江苏 for the defense of the Qing River (Qingjiang) 清江. Zhou's former colleague Lin Zexu's 林则徐 involvement with local Cantonese merchants in dealing with opium and Zhou's close relation with Lin made it possible that the Cantonese merchants knew Zhou as well, and they wanted to maintain a good relationship with Zhou. It is less likely that these merchants needed to flatter/befriend with Kungang, whose position might be too high up to be dealing directly with local merchants.

One of the merchant brands "Wanyi Hao" 万益号/萬益號 was at the centre of an opium scandal in 1838, as it secretly purchased opium from foreign merchant ships in Guangdong then supplied to local Chinese shops[65]. The main instigators of Wanyi Hao -- Li and Mo, were recorded by Lin Zexu[66], an extremely famous Qing scholar-official who was also a close colleague of Zhou Tianjue in Hubei. Lin Zexu was involved in further interrogating the Wanyi Hao case. Since Zhou Tianjue only arrived in Guangdong in 1841, it was unlikely that he was directly involved in the opium case of Wanyi Hao, yet it makes sense that these local merchants wanted to stay in good terms with the Qing officials like Zhou, especially at the occasion that Zhou was promoted as the Director-General of Grain Transport in Jiangsu in 1842.

[63] By Hu Yang

[64] See: Jun Yin, 2011 and Tian Xiaofei, 2015

[65] The opium scandal is mentioned here: https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=454634&searchu=%E8%90%AC%E7%9B%8A%E8%99%9F (the English translation is likely AI generated so Wanyi Hao is not translated correctly)

[66] (https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=655065&searchu=%E6%9D%8E%E5%9B%9B)

Conclusion

The Missiemuseum in Steyl, the Netherlands, holds a collection of Chinese artefacts gathered in southern Shandong in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the objects lack proper documentation, but a letter has been preserved regarding a tapestry acquired by the missionary who collected it: P. Anton Volpert. Given the time and place of acquisition, there was reason to suspect that the tapestry might have been looted. This prompted a provenance research. The investigation comprised archival and literature research, material analysis (a close examination of the tapestry) and fieldwork in southern Shandong.

This report begins by outlining the historical context: German colonial aggression in Shandong, the Boxer War, and the significant role played by the SVD in the sequence of events. The figure of P. Volpert and his perspective on the tapestry are outlined. Volpert writes that the carpet was made in honour of Zhou Tianjue, an important historical figure. As this Zhou was responsible for the martyrdom of a French missionary, the exhibition of the carpet in the Missiemuseum can be regarded as the display of a missionary trophy. This article discusses how mission museums dealt with such artefacts and how they have profoundly shaped perceptions of the countries concerned, right up to the present day. It also explores how this historical period continues to have an impact today from a Chinese perspective.

In southern Shandong, at our request, two local historians with in-depth knowledge of Zhou Tianjue's life and work have examined the matter. They have reached the surprising conclusion that it is unlikely the carpet was actually made for Zhou. They also consider it highly unlikely that the carpet was stolen. This contrasts with Hu Yang's analysis, which makes a plausible case that the carpet was indeed made for Zhou. Opinions therefore differ on the historical significance of the tapestry. And the object's art-historical significance is limited, according to Yu Qin of the Embroidery Research Centre at the Shandong Museum in Jinan. All this leads to the provisional conclusion that there is no reason to initiate a restitution process at this stage.

However, the research has yielded a great deal of valuable information for the Missiemuseum, both about the object itself and about the historical context in which the SVD played such an important role. The Chinese perspective on this history will be included in the permanent exhibition in Steyl. In addition, the research has yielded a valuable network in southern Shandong, which the Missiemuseum will endeavour to maintain for any future issues concerning the collection. And last but not least, we have gained a clear – and worrying – picture of the condition of the tapestry. Although it may have little historical or art-historical value from a Chinese perspective, it is certainly important to the story told by the Missiemuseum. The next step will be to seek funding to conserve the tapestry and protect it from further deterioration.

Appendix 1 – Text panels at Martyr's vitrine at Missiemuseum

Dutch / German Text Panel

Fr. Franz Nies, born 11 June 1859 in Recklinghausen, Westphalia. Ordained a priest on 7 June 1884. Left for the mission on 1 January 1885.

Fr Richard Henle, born on 21 July 1865 in Stetten, Hohenzollern. Ordained a priest on 16 May 1889. Left for the mission on 15 September 1889.

Both were murdered on 1 November 1897 in Tschang-tja-tschuang, South Shandong, China

Caption beneath the photograph of Franz Nies:

Fr Franz Nies, murdered by Boxers in China on 1 November 1897

Caption beneath the photograph of Richard Henle:

Fr Richard Henle, murdered by Boxers in China on 1 November 1897

Chinese Text Panel Tonggong Dan (通功單)

The section on the right reads from right to left as: "能司鐸、韓司鐸，均係德國人氏，自幼發願進傳教會。能司鐸於光緒九年入中國，在山東南界沂州府、鄆城、兗（州）府、汶上縣等處傳教十有四年。韓司鐸於光緒十五年入中國，在山東南界曹府、菏澤、鄆城等縣傳教九年，均於光緒二十三年被戕，承遠願，印於是年十月初八日間，社鄰野縣等處查閱。(Fathers Nies and Henle were both Germans who, from childhood, had resolved to join the missions. Father Nies came to China in the ninth year of Guangxu and spent fourteen years preaching in southern Shandong, including Yizhou, Yuncheng, Yanzhou, Wenshang, and other places. Father Henle came to China in the fifteenth year of Guangxu and spent nine years preaching in Caozhou, Heze, Yuncheng, and other counties in southern Shandong. Both were killed in the twenty-third year of Guangxu. In accordance with their long-held wish, this was printed around the eighth day of the tenth lunar month that same year, for use in nearby counties and local communities.)" The middle section reads as "名聖 方濟各 理⊠⊠ (Saints Franz and Richard)". The left section from right to left reads as: "教裕宿蓋張家莊教堂，夜遭賊匪，將二司鐸扎殞。默命祈。眾信友為彼祈禱，早登天國。(While lodging at the Zhangjiazhuang church, they were attacked at night by bandits, who stabbed the two priests to death. Pray silently for the dead. May all the faithful pray for them, that they may soon enter the Kingdom of Heaven)." The inscription on the left corner reads as "福總鐸拜懇" (Saint Joseph Freinademetz humbly petitions).

Appendix 2 - Description and analysis of the tapestry

Collection: Mission House St. Michael, Steyl (SVD), donated by P. Anton Volpert SVD
Object number: 03488
Material: silk with embroidery Dimensions: H. 317 cm, W. 180 cm
Colour: red (faded) with multicoloured embroidery
Condition: various tears, some of which have been mended with patches on the reverse. A bright red patch on the front, where the explanatory label was attached for many years. The rest has faded to pink.
Probable year of manufacture: around 1841 Year of acquisition: 1901

Explanation of the figures (by P. Anton Volpert)

In the centre of the tapestry, a mandarin is depicted in ancient dress. In his right hand, he holds a sceptre, a sign of his dignity; his left hand curls the tip of his three-part transparent beard. (It is not a portrait of the person celebrating). Above this main figure, three figures can be seen: on the left, a mandarin, symbolising his official dignity; on the right, a man with a child, symbolising wealth and family happiness; in the centre, a spiritualised old man with a peach, symbolising long life. According to Chinese legend, these three figures are three stars that have been transformed into divine beings. They embody the main wishes of the Chinese people: Fu, Lu, Shou, which are happiness, official dignity and old age.

At the top, you can see a dragon with a sign in its mouth, on which four characters are depicted, indicating that, by special favour of the emperor and the empress mother, the veneration of the celebrant followed. On both sides of the dragon are colourful birds. This bird is the legendary Fung-chuang (Fenghuang / Fung-hwang) 凤凰, which, according to legend, was always visible during the golden age, then disappeared from the earth and only reappeared when the people lived in happiness and peace under a perfect ruler. It is therefore represented as a symbol of peaceful popular happiness.

Beneath the dragon, you can see the sun; the sun of happiness shines briefly above the honoured. Surrounding the main figures in the frame, you will find eight figures depicted with various distinctions; these are the well-known Ba-sien, eight people who, through their pursuit of perfection, obtained the gift of immortality and still appear today to provide mortal beings with miraculous help. According to pagan legend, each figure has a special meaning. Below them, one sees the palace of Fung-chuang and bats (the latter being the symbol of imperishable old age). Below that are three lions. Despite the colourful splendour, the whole makes a dark, sad impression on us; it is therefore a representation of superstitious figures, at the top of which are the dragon and the old snake, which keep the poor Chinese people in such tight chains.
The letters have been removed from the tapestry; however, traces of them can still be seen, indicating that the tapestry of honour was presented by friends of the Grand Mandarin Dsou-tien-ziau on the occasion of the elevation to the throne.

Other observations

In the margin surrounding the central figure we see a manifold repeated pattern, which is a variation of the Chinese character 壽 (shòu), meaning longevity. This, combined with the auspicious colour red, indicates that it was a celebratory textile. There are also Lingzhi (Ling-chih) 灵芝／靈芝 fungus symbols, that symbolize longevity. And the egret, which symbolizes purity, patience, grace, and good fortune. During the Qing dynasty, the egret was used as a badge of honor, corresponding to the sixth civil rank, demonstrating its association with high status[67]. At the top left and right are phoenixes holding a string in their beaks, with a small scroll attached. This is a letter containing good news.



Text on the left of the tapestry:

English translation:

	廣東			Canton	
興隆昌	晉孚號	安隆昌	Xinglong Firm	Jinfu House	Anlong Firm
萬益號	廣榮號	祥信號	Wanyi House	Guangrong House	Xiangxin House
大順祥	裕和號	萬祥生	Dashunxiang	Yuhe House	Wanxiangsheng
	仝拜			Paying tribute	

[67] See e.g. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/68892



Text on the right of the tapestry:

恭贺

昆冈二兄大人荣膺爵秩之喜

English translation:

Heartfelt congratulations
To the esteemed “Kungang the Second Brother”
on the joyous occasion of his elevation.

The text on the left side of the tapestry contains the shop names of the businessmen who commissioned it, which was not uncommon.[68] Zhou was friends with Cantonese merchants such as Pan Shicheng 潘仕成 (1804-1873), as recorded in Pan’s own writing “Chi Su Yi Fen” (Lingering Fragrance of a Letter) 尺素遗芬[69].

If it was presented to Zhou by businessmen in Canton, then this would date the tapestry to 1841, since Zhou was stationed in Canton for just one year during his career: 1841 [70]. That must therefore be the year in which the tapestry was presented. It was also the year that hostilities with the British reached their peak in The First Opium War (1839 -1842) and the English forced their way into the trade. Cantonese militias fought the English and regarded it as a victory.[71]

If the carpet was Kungang’s, it should be made after 1860s. It would be fruitful to find out if all the merchants’ shops on the tapestry were still active by then.

[68] See for instance Wilson, 2005, p.71

[69] Personal contact of Yang Hu with Guangzhou Museum

[70] https://baike.baidu.com/en/item/Zhou%20Tianjue/91895

[71] Fairbanks and Reischauer 1979, p. 291

Appendix 3 – Full text of P. Anton Volpert's letter[72]

The Tschan-ze or tapestry of honour

In China, it is customary for commendable mandarins to receive certain honours from the people or from friends; for example, large wooden tables of honour with a motto consisting of four gilded letters, called Biaen; or large silk umbrellas with the name of the giver on them, called Wuaen-min-saen; however, the most common are the tapestries of honour, which are called Tschan-ze. This gift is presented to the mandarin upon promotion or at a birth celebration.

The tapestry of honour sent here was presented to me on 5 July 1901 in the city of Jangkoe (Jangku).

The artistic embroidery and, even more so, the origin of this object led me to decide to send the tapestry to the mission museum in Steyl. First, a few historical notes.

This tapestry comes from the estate of the tyrant who tortured the blessed Father Perboyre. His name was Dsou-tien-ziau and he was viceroy in Hoepé. He was born in the vicinity of what is now South Shandong (Südschantung), where he is also buried and where part of his family still lives, now very impoverished. Another branch of his family lives in Sü-tschou-foe, is still very wealthy and has several members who serve as mandarins.

His birthplace was Dou-tja-jae. He was the child of poor parents; his father was a shepherd. He had to earn his own living as a servant for strangers. When he was 18, he began to study. During the day he studied hard; and at night he practised for military service. He possessed extraordinary talent and became very learned. He was appointed viceroy over two provinces and served the state well. As the history of the martyr recounts, he was very harsh. He even became so cruel that he fell out of favour with the emperor. Dsou-tien-ziau was deposed and exiled, but later the emperor called on his services again. He must have fallen as a general in the war against the rebels. The state still honours him as a hero and meritorious statesman and has granted his family the privilege that one of its members may always bear the scholarly title of Djü-gen. It is curious that China's best statesmen are precisely the greatest enemies of foreigners. These extraordinary people embody Chinese patriotism and, with it, hatred of foreigners.

Explanation of the figures

In the centre of the tapestry, a mandarin is depicted in ancient dress. In his right hand, he holds a sceptre, a sign of his dignity; his left hand curls the tip of his three-part transparent beard. (It is not a portrait of the person celebrating). Above this main figure, three figures can be seen: on the left, a mandarin, symbolising his official dignity; on the right, a man with a child, symbolising wealth and family happiness; in the centre, a spiritualised old man with a peach, symbolising long life. According to Chinese legend, these three figures are three stars that have been transformed into divine beings. They embody the main wishes of the Chinese people: Fu, Lu, Shou, which are happiness, official dignity and old age.

At the top, you can see a dragon with a sign in its mouth, on which four characters are depicted, indicating that, by special favour of the emperor and the empress mother, the veneration of the celebrant followed. On both sides of the dragon are colourful birds. This bird is the legendary Fung-chuang, which, according to legend, was always visible during the golden age, then disappeared from the earth and only reappeared when the people lived in happiness and peace under a perfect ruler. It is therefore represented as a symbol of peaceful popular happiness.

[72] Translated from the German original

Beneath the dragon, you can see the sun; the sun of happiness shines briefly above the honoured. Surrounding the main figures in the frame, you will find eight figures depicted with various distinctions; these are the well-known Ba-sien, eight people who, through their pursuit of perfection, obtained the gift of immortality and still appear today to provide mortal beings with miraculous help. According to pagan legend, each figure has a special meaning. Below them, one sees the palace of Fung-chuang and bats (the latter being the symbol of imperishable old age). Below that are three lions. Despite the colourful splendour, the whole makes a dark, sad impression on us; it is therefore a representation of superstitious figures, at the top of which are the dragon and the old snake, which keep the poor Chinese people in such tight chains.

The letters have been removed from the tapestry; however, traces of them can still be seen, indicating that the tapestry of honour was presented by friends of the Grand Mandarin Dsou-tien-ziau on the occasion of the elevation to the throne.

The blessed P. Perboyre died a martyr's death at the hands of this man on 11 September 1840.

Tsining, 2 February 1902 P. Antoon (Anton) Volpert SVD. Missionary

Appendix 4 – Zhangzhuang Memorial Stone[73]



山东省文物保护单位
Provincial-Level Cultural Heritage Protection Unit of Shandong Province
巨野教案遗址
Site of the Juye Incident

山东省人民政府一九七七年十月十三日 公布
Announced by the People's Government of Shandong Province on October 13, 1977
巨野县人民政府二〇一二年四月十二日 立石
Stele erected by the People's Government of Juye County on April 12, 2012

[73] Photos and translations by Qu Sijia 屈思嘉



简介 Introduction

1887年，巨野县第一座教堂在磨盘张庄建立。1897年11月1日夜，有村民闯进教堂，杀死了两个德国神甫。德国以此为借口，强占我国领土胶州湾，并逼迫清政府签订了丧权辱国的《胶澳租借条约》，把山东作为德国的势力范围。这就是震惊中外的“巨野教案”事件。由于年深日久，原有教堂早已损毁拆除，唯当年教堂所用一眼水井留存。

In 1887, the first church in Juye County was established in Mopanzhangzhuang. On the night of November 1, 1897, villagers broke into the church and killed two German priests. Taking this as a pretext, Germany forcibly occupied China's Jiaozhou Bay and compelled the Qing government to sign the humiliating Convention for the Lease of Kiaochow Bay, turning Shandong into Germany's sphere of influence. This was the "Juye Incident" that shocked China and the world. Due to the passage of time, the original church has long since been destroyed and demolished, and only a well once used by the church remains.

巨野教案的发生，表现了中国人民饱满爱国热情和不甘屈服于邪恶势力的顽强斗争精神，显示了中华民族的无限蓬勃生机。

The occurrence of the Juye Incident demonstrated the Chinese people's ardent patriotism and their tenacious fighting spirit of refusing to submit to evil forces, reflecting the boundless vitality of the Chinese nation.

保护范围：以水井为基点（35°25′ 58.3″N，116°10′ 59.0″E），向东51米，向西59米，向南58米，向北41米。

Protected Area：With the well as the reference point (35°25′58.3″N, 116°10′59.0″E), extending 51 meters to the east, 59 meters to the west, 58 meters to the south, and 41 meters to the north.

建设控制地带：由保护范围向四边各延伸120米。
Construction Control Zone：Extending 120 meters outward from the boundary of the protected area in all directions.

在保护范围与建设控制地带内，未经批准不得进行任何形式施工和作业。
Within the protected area and the construction control zone, no construction or operational activities of any kind may be carried out without approval.

Appendix 5 – Juye Incident Exhibition Texts, Juye Museum[74]

巨野教案示意图 Schematic Diagram of the Juye Incident

鸦片战争以后，德、法、美、日等列强相继侵入中国，其大批传教士也随之涌来。不少洋教士凌驾于官府之上，横行不法，开启诸多纷争的祸端。

After the Opium War, imperialist powers including Germany, France, the United States, and Japan successively invaded China, and a large number of missionaries came along with them. Many foreign missionaries placed themselves above local authorities, acted lawlessly, and became the source of many disputes and troubles.



建于1887年的巨野县磨盘张庄（今麒麟镇北张庄）教堂是鲁西南最早的天主教堂之一，下辖传教点21处。1893年到此坐堂的德籍传教士薛田资，唆使教徒欺压人民，多种劣迹，激起公愤。

Built in 1887, the church at Mopanzhangzhuang (now Beizhangzhuang, Qilin Town) in Juye County was one of the earliest Catholic churches in southwestern Shandong, with 21 mission stations under its jurisdiction. The German missionary Georg Maria Stenz, who took up residence here in 1893, instigated his followers to oppress the local people. His numerous misdeeds aroused widespread public anger.

1897年11月1日夜，巨野义民刘德润等十余人，入张庄教堂杀薛田资，于黑暗中却杀死留宿薛田资卧室的德籍神甫能方济和韩·理迦略。觊觎中国胶州湾已久的德皇终于找到侵占该地的借口，遣兵于11月13日强占胶州湾，迫使清政府签订《胶澳租借条约》，在山东窃取诸多特权。并将山东巡抚李秉衡等官员革职。因教案被蒙冤屈杀及死在狱中的达15人之多。

[74] Photos and translations by Qu Sijia 屈思嘉

On the night of November 1, 1897, more than ten Juye righteous people, led by Liu Derun, broke into the Zhangzhuang Church to kill Georg Maria Stenz. But in the darkness, they killed the German priests Franz Nies and Richard Henle, who were staying in Stenz's bedroom. Having long coveted China's Jiaozhou Bay, the German Emperor finally found an excuse to occupy the area. He sent troops to seize Jiaozhou Bay by force on November 13, forcing the Qing government to sign the Convention for the Lease of Kiaochow Bay, through which Germany seized numerous privileges in Shandong. The Governor of Shandong Li Bingheng and other officials were dismissed from office. As many as 15 people were wrongfully executed or died in prison as a result of the case.

刘德润
Liu Derun

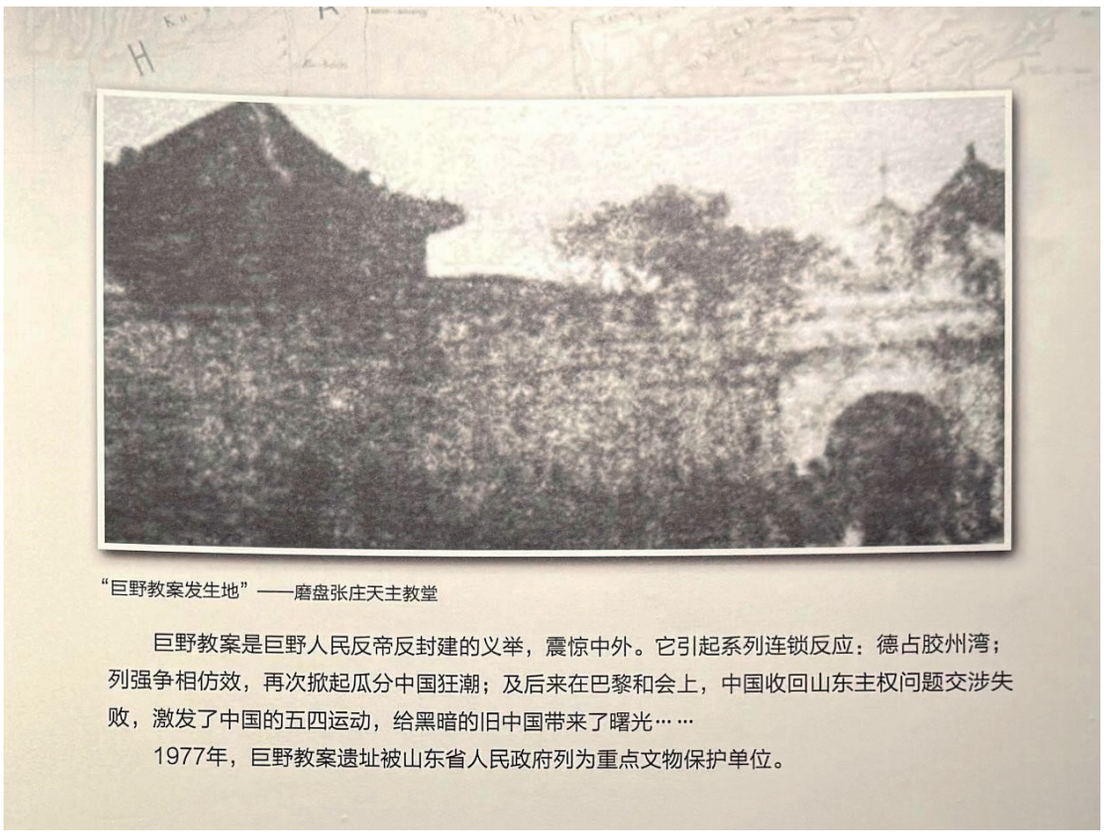
奚 老五
Xi Laowu

安治泰
Johann Baptist von Anzer

薛田资
Georg Maria Stenz

能方济
Franz Nies

韩·理迦略
Richard Henle

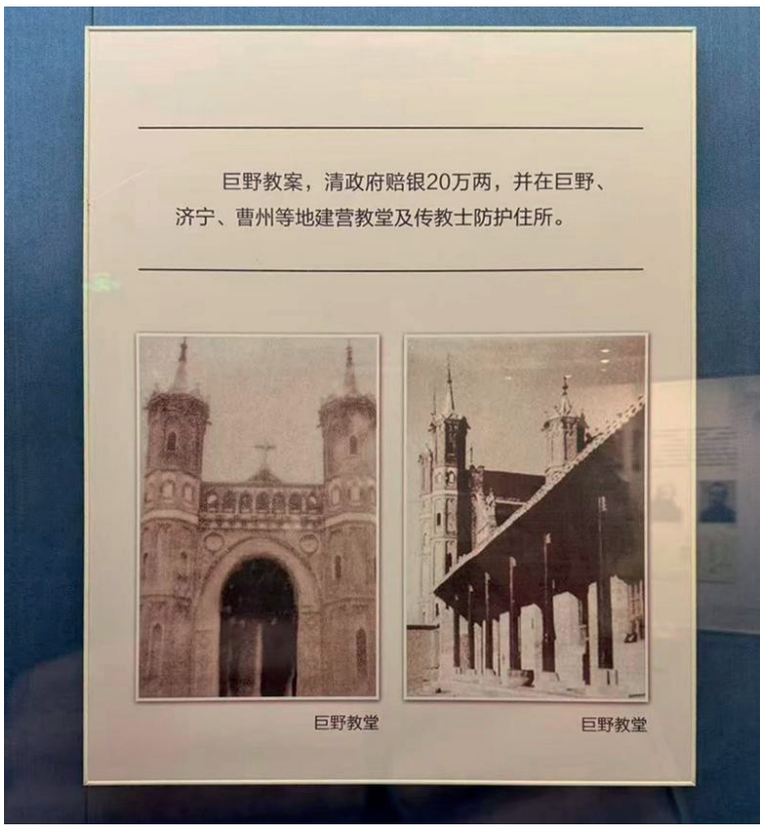


“巨野教案发生地”—— 磨盘张庄天主教堂
The Site of the Juye Incident: Mopanzhangzhuang Catholic Church

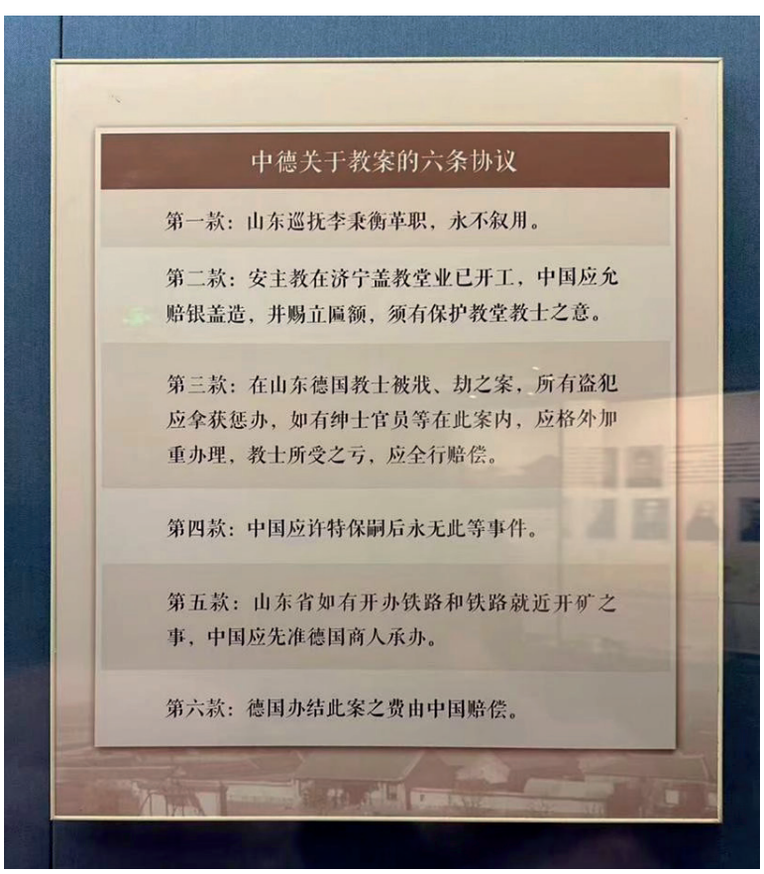
巨野教案是巨野人民反帝反封建的义举，震惊中外。它引起系列连锁反应：德占胶州湾；列强争相仿效，再次掀起瓜分中国狂潮；及后来在巴黎和会上，中国收回山东主权问题交涉失败，激发了中国的五四运动，给黑暗的旧中国带来了曙光……

The Juye Incident was an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal righteous act by the people of Juye, shocking China and the world. It triggered a series of chain reactions: Germany’s occupation of Jiaozhou Bay; other imperialist powers followed suit, launching a new wave of partitioning China; later, the failure of China’s negotiations to reclaim Shandong’s sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference sparked the May Fourth Movement, bringing a ray of hope to the dark old China…

1977 年，巨野教案遗址被山东省人民政府列为重点文物保护单位。
In 1977, the site of the Juye Incident was listed as a Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the Provincial Level by the People’s Government of Shandong Province.



巨野教案，清政府赔银20万两，并在巨野、济宁、曹州等地建营教堂及传教士防护住所
In the Juye Incident, the Qing government paid an indemnity of 200,000 taels of silver, and built churches and protected residences for missionaries in Juye, Jining, Caozhou, and other places.



中德关于教案的六条协议

Six Agreements on the Juye Incident Between China and Germany

第一款：山东巡抚李秉衡革职，永不叙用。
Article 1: Li Bingheng, Governor of Shandong, shall be dismissed from office and never reappointed.

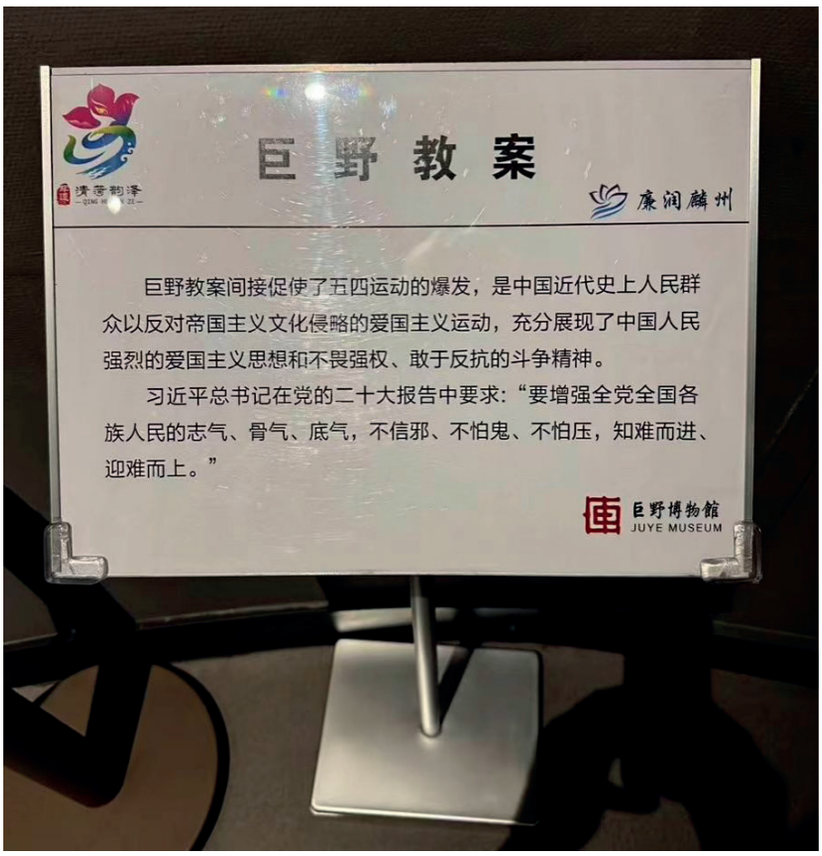
第二款：安主教在济宁盖教堂业已开工，中国应允赔银盖造，并赐立匾额，须有保护教堂教士之意。
Article 2: Since the construction of the church by Johann Baptist von Anzer in Jining has already begun, China agrees to provide silver for its construction and to grant a plaque bearing an inscription indicating the protection of the church and missionaries.

第三款：在山东德国教士被戕、劫之案，所有盗犯应拿获惩办，如有绅士官员等在此案内，应格外加重办理，教士所受之亏，应全行赔偿。
Article 3: In cases where German missionaries in Shandong have been killed or robbed, all perpetrators shall be arrested and punished. If any gentry or officials are involved, they shall be punished with exceptional severity. All losses suffered by the missionaries shall be fully compensated.

第四款：中国应许特保嗣后永无此等事件。
Article 4: China shall guarantee that such incidents will never occur again.

第五款：山东省如有开办铁路和铁路就近开矿之事，中国应先准德国商人承办。
Article 5: If there are projects to build railways or open mines along the railways in Shandong Province, China shall first allow German merchants to undertake them.

第六款：德国办结此案之费由中国赔偿。
Article 6: The expenses incurred by Germany in handling this case shall be compensated by China.



巨野教案间接促使了五四运动的爆发，是中国近代史上人民群众以反对帝国主义文化侵略的爱国主义运动，充分展现了中国人民强烈的爱国主义思想和不畏强权、敢于反抗的斗争精神。
习近平总书记在党的二十大报告中要求：“要增强全党全国各族人民的志气、骨气、底气，不信邪、不怕鬼、不怕压，知难而进、迎难而上。”

The Juye Incident indirectly contributed to the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement. The May Fourth Movement was a patriotic movement by the Chinese people against imperialist cultural aggression in modern Chinese history, fully demonstrating the Chinese people's strong patriotic spirit and their fighting spirit of defying power and daring to resist.

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China:

"We must strengthen the resolve, backbone, and confidence of the whole Party and the people of all ethnic groups in China, fear no evil forces, fear no ghosts, and fear no pressure, and press forward in the face of difficulties and challenges."

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Fr Sun, Daizhuang Catholic Church 戴庄天主堂, Jining, Shandong

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