

Carl Henrik Tjäder (1866–1959) Swedish Missionary in Central-China: Educator and Ethnographer. A Pictorial Biography

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Abstract

Carl Henrik Tjäder (1866–1959) was a Swedish Protestant missionary dedicated to evangelical and educational service in Shanxi, Shaanxi and Henan provinces under the Swedish Mission in China, an affiliate of the China Inland Mission. Arriving in 1889 alongside pioneers such as Erik Folke, Tjäder focused on literacy and evangelization at the Chiechow Boarding School (est. 1895), using modern pedagogical tools such as Wang Hengtong's *Illustrated Chinese Primer*. Following their relocation to Shanghai during the Boxer Rebellion (1900), Tjäder and his family operated from strategic hubs across in three provinces. His work encompassed setting up chapels, distributing literature, managing educational programs, introducing Swedish athletic curricula, and conducting ethnographic research. In 1910, Tjäder served as a delegate at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, contributing to discussions on ecumenism, social work, education, and missiology. After four decades of service, he returned to Sweden in the early 1930s via the United States, passing away in Malmö in 1959. By contextualizing Tjäder's career, this study explores the broader evolution of indigenous leadership and identity within the early Chinese church, offering a specialized perspective on the historical encounter between China and Christianity.

Keywords: Protestant Evangelism; Sweden; China; 1800-1950; Henrik Tjäder; Ethnography; Ecumenism

Introduction

Within Christian history, the 'Awakening' refers to a series of revivalist movements across Western Europe and North America [1]. These movements emerged as a counterreaction to systemic religious decline, which contemporary observers linked to rapid secularization, industrialization, the rise of competing ideologies like communism and atheism, and the philosophical shifts following Darwinian evolutionary theory. In response, churches initiated public campaigns aimed at spiritual renewal rooted in biblical, Lutheran [2] and Anglican, orthodoxy, with a strong social engagement (Gr. *diakonia*). Concurrently, western missionary fervour was driven by a commitment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19)

[3], positioning non-Western populations as primary targets for conversion. This paper examines the Evangelical movement in Sweden, focusing specifically on its missionary efforts in China through the career of Carl Henrik Tjäder (Figure 1). In this context, 'Evangelical' denotes a theology centered on a personal conversion experience, biblical authority, and a commitment to global missions. China presented a historically distinct mission field; unlike territories subject to direct Western colonization, this ancient dynastic empire had maintained political autonomy, experiencing foreign governance only during the Mongol Yuan (1271–1368) and Manchu Qing (1644–1912) dynasties.



Figure 1: The young Carl Henrik Tjäder. Source: Sinims-Land (Qín di, 秦地) (1896-March, p. 23.)

Note: To ensure linguistic clarity, place names and institutional terms in this study are cross-referenced using Swedish, English, Simplified Chinese (since 1950s), Pinyin (1958) and Wade-Giles (ca. 1950) orthographies (e.g., Chefoo School / 芝罘学校 / Zhīfú Xuéxiào / Chih-fu Hsüeh-hsiao).

Beginnings in Sweden

Henrik's parents were Karl Jacob Tjäder [4] (Karlskrona, Blekinge province, 1834-1881) and Thekla Maria Slöör (Ullasjö,

Västergötland, 1846-1917). They married in 1864 in Karlskrona, and in this naval city father was an army captain. After the birth of Henrik, the family left for Stockholm. They had six children: Carl Henrik Tjäder (1866-1939), Charles Richard Tjäder (1869-1916, Figure 2), Alma Maria Tjäder (1871-1929), Isabel Maria Tjäder (1873-1953), Carl Axel Tjäder (1875-1876, early death), and Axel Tjäder (1877-1957). Henrik, the protagonist of this essay, was their eldest son, born in Karlskrona October 3, 1866.



Figure 2: Richard Tjäder (1869 Malmö-1916 New York), Henrik's eldest brother.

Several familial and cultural factors significantly influenced Henrik Tjäder's developmental and intellectual trajectory. Crucial among these was his brother, Richard Tjäder, an evangelical figure who, following local ministry in Stockholm and itinerant missionary work in Russia and Sweden, moved to the United States. Through his marriage to Margaret Thorne, the daughter of a prominent bank manager, Richard secured the substantial financial backing necessary to fund his extensive travels and high-profile expeditions. Together, they established the International Union Mission (1901) and collaborated with Albert Benjamin Simpson of the Christian

and Missionary Alliance to expand global humanitarian and missionary initiatives. The fourth principle of the C.I.M., also known as the "faith principle" stated: "Missionaries receive no salary, but expect that God will supply their every need through the hands of his children, "faith"/xin 信 [5]. This access to private wealth contrasted sharply with Henrik's reliance on traditional institutional mission structures, based on gifts. Crucially for Henrik's later intellectual pursuits, Richard conducted three expeditions in British East Africa on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History, donating over two hundred ethnological specimens in 1907 [6].

Additionally, their mother, Thekla Tjäder, showed a lifelong commitment to social welfare, serving as secretary for the International Alliance Mission between 1903 and 1910.

Beyond these familial influences, Henrik's worldview was shaped by Sweden's cultural landscape and archaeological heritage. During his youth, he often encountered regional antiquities, including Bronze Age petroglyphs in Tanum and Iron Age runestones in Uppland, which illustrated the historical transition from pagan iconography to Christian symbolism. This early exposure to Sweden's material culture and traditional folklore fostered an appreciation for heritage conservation that later characterised Henrik's approach to Chinese culture.

The link to China Inland Mission

The London office of the China Inland Mission (C.I.M. Zhōnghuá Jīdūjiào Nèidì Huì, 中华基督教内地会), founded in 1865, was situated at 6 Pyrland Road in North London, serving as the residence and headquarters of its director, James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905; Figure 3) [7], between 1872 and 1895. As the mission expanded, the premises grew to encompass the adjacent properties at numbers 2 and 4. The C.I.M. rapidly established strategic co-operation with various international bodies, including the International Union Mission and several Scandinavian and Swedish missionary societies [8].



Figure 3: James Hudson Taylor MD, Missionary and Director of C.I.M.

Within the C.I.M. headquarters (H.Q. Figure 4), the intellectual and spiritual legacy of Robert Morrison (1782–1834)—widely regarded as the pioneer of Protestant missions in China—remained highly influential [9]. Coming from a Presbyterian background, Morrison experienced a spiritual conversion at fifteen and subsequently trained at Hoxton College and the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.). Arriving in Canton in 1807 during the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), a period when China remained largely closed to Westerners, Morrison adopted an inculturation approach reminiscent of the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). Morrison's

pioneering scholarship was preserved in the C.I.M. library, which held what was considered a landmark Chinese translation of the Bible (1823), completed alongside William Milne (1785–1822), as well as his Chinese grammar and English Chinese dictionary. Whilst Morrison funded his twenty-five-year mission through employment with the East India Company (E.I.C.), his foundational linguistic work laid the groundwork for subsequent generations of translators, culminating in the publication of the definitive Chinese Union Version (Héhé Běn, 和合本) in 1919.





Figure 4A & B: Pyrland Road no. 6, London; C.I.M. Memory board.

The Tjäder-Blomberg marriage

In 1894, Henrik married Hilma Blomberg, who was then 31 years old. This beloved partner in life and ministry was born on 1 November 1863 in Ytter Ekeby, Fellingsbro, Västmanland, Sweden, to Karl Magnus Blomberg—the local schoolteacher (Figure 5)—and Ingeborg Olsdotter (1836-1872). Hilma grew up in the village schoolhouse alongside her three sisters (Figure 6) and a brother named Josef (1841-1947), eventually becoming a qualified primary

school teacher there herself. After the early death of Ingeborg, Karl Magnus remarried with Anna Wiberg (1844-1902) and they had more children. Ytter Ekeby is situated about a two-hour drive west of Stockholm. Her earthly journey, a testament to God's goodness, concluded in 1952 in Malmö, Skåne. Together, as a couple whose lives were a gift dedicated to the Lord, they laboured as missionaries in China for 44 years, between 1889 and 1933. Henrik later adopted the Chinese name Chá Míngdào (查明道), meaning 'to discover and ascertain the road', that is, the Way of God.



Figure 5: In front of the schoolhouse in Ytter Ekeby, Fellingsbro, 1913 before returning to China, Hilma with her father Karl Magnus Blomberg. He died in 1917.



Figure 6: Hilma and her sisters. Left to right: Hilma (b. 1863), Jenny (b.1865) and Alma (b.1868). The woman sitting down could be their half-sister Ester (b. 1875).

The start of the Swedish China Mission

Anna Gran, a dear friend of the Tjäder-Blomberg couple who later married Erik Folke, a leader in the Swedish Mission, recalled the beginnings of this divine calling. 'On May 10, 1888, Ascension Day, the Svenska Missionen i Kina (Swedish Mission in China, S.M.K.) held its first annual meeting in the 'Flora Church' in Flora Street to support Erik Folke [10]. At that time, missionary workers for Shansi (now Shanxi, a province in North-Eastern China) [11] were separated for the first time, namely Henrik Tjäder travelled with Anna, who later became Mrs. Folke. Their wedding took place in Shanghai on September 6, 1889, and at the end of November of the same year they arrived in Yuncheng, in South-West Shanxi, near the Salt Lake. Mrs. Folke-Gran was the first foreign woman in the S.M.K [12].

Henrik was set apart for his missionary service during the mission's first anniversary on May 10, 1888. The preacher, J. Holmgren, delivered a flaming missionary appeal, urging the congregation to look upon the harvest field with Christ-like compassion: 'Let us now think especially about the situation in China. Think of this vast kingdom with 400 million people, of whom perhaps thirty thousand are Christians. Think of these countless multitudes of ignorant people yearning for light. Think of these multitudes of women, who are despised as slaves, who will never receive any consolation through the Gospel.'

The reality confronting the missionaries upon their arrival was, if anything, even more terrifying than described. Yet, where human suffering was immense, God's grace called for extraordinary efforts. The area was plagued by natural catastrophes, subsequent famines, civil war, floods of the Yangtze River, epidemics, and a devastatingly widespread abuse of opium. Driven by love, the missionaries' social and spiritual commitment became extensive. They established schools, clinics, vocational training, and disaster relief initiatives. Notably, through the founding of opium asylums, many addicts were helped and brought into a new, transformed life.

Preparation in London

'On July 9, 1888, Henrik travelled to London to undertake language studies. During his stay of several months, he already began mastering the foundational elements of the written Chinese language, specifically the first 214 characters. It was during this period that his well-known evangelistic gift became evident; locals noted that he faithfully testified to his faith even whilst travelling on buses and trains, viewing every moment as a gift to serve. In a letter to Erik Folke, the 22-year-old Henrik recounted his experiences in

the countryside outside London, showcasing his reliance on God's goodness: 'A comrade and I had decided not to buy anything, either food or drink, because "the worker is worth his wages". The Lord provided us with what we needed to give as His faithful followers above all things. Thus, we visited sixteen villages and in nine of them we held open-air meetings in the evening.'

From January 1, 1889 until August 25, 1889, Henrik continued his preparation at the Highbury Missionary Training Home. Located at 10 Drayton Park, London, this interdenominational Christian training school was established by Michael and Mary Baxter to prepare young men and women for international evangelism and missionary work. The home accommodated between 20 and 30 male and female students at any given time. Maintaining a strictly non-sectarian focus, the curriculum comprised Bible knowledge, music, public speaking, arithmetic, and practical geography, whilst further language studies were postponed until arrival in China. The training did not include general healthcare, childcare, or institutional management. Any medical assistance was accomplished by trained workers.

Most importantly, any involvement in political affairs was strictly forbidden. Around this time, Folke's S.M.K. established a formal association with the China Inland Mission (C.I.M.).

Trip to China and getting started

Under the guiding hand of the Lord, Henrik departed England on the steamship Neckar on August 25, 1889 from Southampton U.K. (Figure 7), sent forth by the newly formed Swedish Alliance Mission in China (S.W.A.M.). Three years later, his family—his beloved wife Hilma and their son Carl—would join him in this vast harvest field (Figure 8). The S.M.K. Annual Report (A.R.) of May 1892–May 1893 records the departure of the women: 'Sisters Hilma Blomberg, Anna Eriksson, and Augusta Hulander departed from London on September 16, 1892. They arrived in Shanghai on October 28. After a stay of a few days in Shanghai, the sisters set out for the language school in Kiai-hsin/Jiexiu in Shanxi (the new brothers traveled separately for Ganking or Anking, now Ānqīng, 安庆) [13]. 'Early institutional records from S.A.M./S.W.A.M. note Tjäder's foundational presence [14]. Furthermore, the bound volumes of China's Millions provide an impressive account of the young Henrik's arrival: 'after a journey of one and a half months, he arrived safely in Shanghai on October 7, 1889, where he was warmly welcomed by the superintendents of the C.I.M. mission home [15]. This location served as the Chinese H.Q. of the C.I.M. and a vital transit hub for missionaries arriving in South-East Asia. Reflecting his complete devotion to the people he was called to serve, Henrik put on a Chinese dress.'



Figure 7: Steamship Neckar 1874, shipyard Caird & Co. Ltd., Greenock, exploited by the Northern German Lloyd Company. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norddeutscher_Lloyd



Figure 8: Hilma Blomberg, son Carl (1898-1986), and Henrik Tjäder, ca. 1900.

Within about a week, he travelled to Ganking in the eastern province of Anhui, on the north bank of the Yangtze River, where the C.I.M. had established its language school. The A.R. of May 1892–May 1893 highlights a season of spiritual harvest, noting that: ‘Baptisms were held on the 17th of last July, when a total of eleven people were baptized, six men and five women, of whom six were from the city and five from the villages. The English missionary Kay from Kuh-u performed the baptism, since Bro(ther) Tjäder, who was supposed to have done it, did not arrive in time due to the flooding of the Yangtze River. It was a real day of jubilation.’

The same report provides details regarding the station at ‘Tongcheo-fu’, where Brother Tjäder began working after relocating there in early 1892. During the spring months, major civil examinations took place, drawing students from the ten administrative districts under the jurisdiction of the local high-ranking Mandarin. This influx provided Henrik with excellent, God-given opportunities to bear witness to the living God and distribute religious tracts. In May, he welcomed two [Scandinavian] brothers from America, Söderström and Hagqvist, who stayed with him until September [16].

On 15 July, 1892 he embarked on a three-month journey to Shanxi, where he attended the mission conference in Ping-yang-fu. To facilitate his public ministry, Tjäder used a square, flat-roofed tent, which he erected in the town square on market days to preach the Gospel to the crowds (cf. the differently shaped tent in Figure 25). Inside the tent, a table was kept filled with religious tracts. At times, he addressed vast multitudes, whilst also holding regular gatherings in the prayer hall.

When Henrik returned from his travels in October, 1892 he confronted a period of opposition. A teacher whom he had been forced to dismiss had spread vile rumours throughout the town, and his landlord—seeking higher rent—had given him notice to vacate. Through the helpful mediation of Ohang, he managed to secure another house, yet it was then that a severe storm of persecution broke out. Three men led a disgruntled faction, posting public placards to prevent Henrik from moving into the rented property. In this difficult predicament, our brother turned to the Lord in prayer.

Following consultation with a believing friend, he decided to report the matter to the Mandarin, who received him with great kindness. A formal hearing was held on December 7; his persecutors were warned under penalty of punishment against harming him or hindering his work, and a proclamation was officially issued in his favour.

The official text stated: ‘Regarding the missionaries and their right to reside in the country, our superiors have repeatedly issued orders—based on strict directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—stipulating that they must unconditionally enjoy protection throughout the country. Considering these orders, I yesterday received the following account from the Swedish missionary C. H. Tjäder: He arrived in this city during the 16th year of Emperor Guangxu’s reign (光绪 1875–1908) [17] and has resided ever since in a rented house on Ren-beoli Street without objection from anyone. However, after renting a house from the Kong family—located on North Street—he was prevented from moving in by Hsi-hang-si and several associates; this action was taken without any legal justification and in direct violation of the law. As soon as the matter came to my attention, I issued orders to the police and am now dispatching official notices, expecting the populace and the village headmen to take careful note of this. ‘By this time, native Christian teachers had also begun working in the local schools.’

A notable example was Wáng Hēngtǒng (王亨统, 1868–1928), a native of Yuyao in Zhejiang Province and an 1888 graduate of the Presbyterian College of Hangchow [18]. By the early twentieth century, Wang had established himself as a highly successful Christian educator and a prolific textbook author, publishing works such as the *Illustrated Chinese Primer* (Huìtú měngxué Jiéjīng, 绘图蒙学捷径) and the *Illustrated Chinese Reader* Huìtú Méngxué Kèběn, 绘图蒙学课本) [19]. In 1895, Wang established the Chiechow/Jiezhow (Hǎizhōu 海州) Boarding School (Figure 9), which modernized the original school founded in 1881 by Hudson Taylor under C.I.M. This institution aimed to beautifully blend traditional Chinese education with Western scientific and academic curricula, representing a significant break from the traditional kējǔ (科举) imperial examination system that had existed from 770 BC and would end 1911 AD.



Figure 9: C.I.M. boys' school at Chefoo (Yantai), Shandong province.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chefoo_School#/media/File:CIMboysschool1903.jpg

Henrik soon found a fulfilling place serving as a teacher within this school. The location of the Haizhou Boarding School is today known as Yantai, Shandong Province, and was built to provide a British-style education for the children of foreign missionaries, diplomats, and business communities operating across China.

Learning from books and nature

In his introduction to the fourth volume of Wang's *Illustrated Chinese Primer*, Carl Henrik Tjäder informs the reader that he utilised Wang's textbooks within the Haizhou Boarding School. This concise introduction reveals vital historical and pedagogical infor-

mation regarding Wang's methods [20]. Today, newer overviews are being planned to bring the personal letters, reports, and visions from this early period of pioneer mission work closer to a modern Chinese audience [21]. The intense language preparation and their stay at the school were only sustainable through a disciplined, daily routine. The strict schedule is vividly detailed in a quote from the S.M.K.'s Annual Report spanning May 1, 1889 to April 31, 1890 [22]: 'Here, work is now done daily to the best of our ability. I study eight hours a day. Notwithstanding a busy program, however, he enjoyed doing sports with the students and swimming in a natural lake (Figure 10,11).



Figure 10: Photo of Tjäder (right) and his free gym class after the Swedish Pehr Henrik Ling (1776-1839) for 'mind and body in harmony'. <https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/4315873>



Figure 11: Tjäder in a pool of water in a mountainous region. BM 002831.
<https://carlotta.malmo.se/carlotta-mmus/web/object/3295097>

The agenda is as follows. 'Breakfast at 7.30, before that individual Bible reading and prayer. From 8–8.30 English Bible class, a very precious moment. 9–12 Chinese language; 12–12.30 a walk and then dinner. At 13 prayer meeting for the workers in three of China's 18 provinces. In this way, we pray for one week for each of the mission's missionaries. Between half past two and half past two or three, a walk is usually undertaken either on the city wall or outside the city. From the height of the first-mentioned, one has an extensive view both over the surrounding valley and the great river Huánghé, 黄河 here a quarter-mile wide. The following three hours until 6 more are brought back by 'eating characters' as the Chinese express themselves. For many of us, this is a rather hard-boiled 'food'; however, the Chinese language does not seem to be as difficult as I imagined (Sic!). At 6 [p.m.] the last meal of the day is taken, an evening meal with tea. For a while after this we have individual [mental] edification, prayer and Bible reading, after which another hour or two is used for studies. This language school was started about three years ago and has proved to be a great blessing.'

Following the completion of his language studies, Henrik travelled north to the city of Yuncheng in Shanxi Province to start his ministry alongside Erik Folke. The arduous route took them through Henan Province—a terrain widely regarded as both adventurous and perilous. Due to the distance of ca. 200 kilometers, rugged mountain ranges with significant elevation changes, and the necessity of crossing the treacherous Yangtze River by ferry, the journey lasted 56 days. In a letter reflecting his deep reliance on God's Grace, Henrik recounted their arrival and the warm reception by the missionary community: 'We arrived there on June 11, at 9 o'clock in the evening. My companion Chan soon found a man,

who showed us where we foreigners lived: Luòyáng, 洛阳, capital of Zhou and Tang dynasties, and an important city of the mission [23]. At that time, I sat on the load [of a cart] and prayed to God fervently that I might become a real help and blessing to our siblings. So, we arrived at the big [city] gate, and my heart pounded loudly, Bro. People came out and took me to hug me whole-heartedly according to the Chinese way. Then I greeted Mrs Janson and they brought us together for dinner. Immediately after the meal, we had a special Thanksgiving meeting before the Lord. The Lord had blessed me during the journey and now he blessed me on arrival. Glory be his name.'

Edinburgh 1910, the Missionaries' Meeting

In the meantime, the Great Awakenings had exerted an impressive effect on churches of numerous denominations across the Western world. This widespread spiritual renewal aroused a general interest in meeting with other missionary groups, focusing on co-operation, sharing resources, and dismantling denominational dissimilarities—marking the true dawn of ecumenical thinking (from Gr. *Oikoumene*, Rénlèi jūzhùqū 人类居住区). These developments ultimately culminated in the landmark World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 (Figure 12, 13) [24]. Complementing these global shifts, local initiatives were established continuously [25]. Recently, the histories of these momentous events and the major characters involved have been comprehensively summarized in several modern volumes [26]. For geographical precision, the names of the Chinese missions, workers, and regional details utilized within this study are anchored in the 1917 Directory [27].



Figure 12: Erik Folke (left) and Henrik Tjäder at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910. Photo Marianne Johnsson, Sweden.

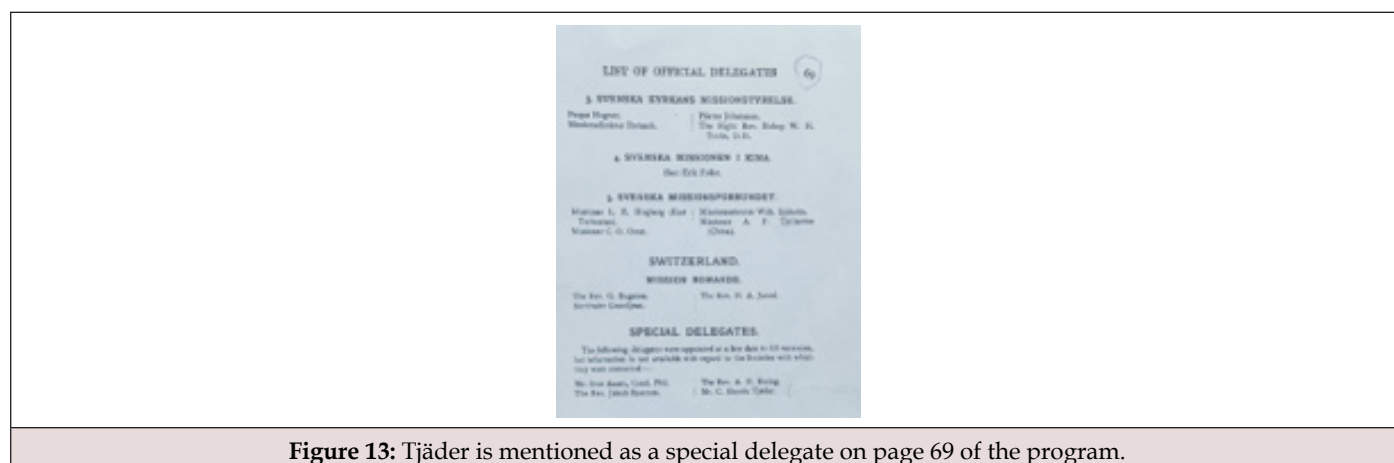


Figure 13: Tjäder is mentioned as a special delegate on page 69 of the program.

From October 1910 until October 1914, Mrs Hilma Blomberg-Tjäder, Henrik and their son Carl remained in Yùnnchéng, 运城 for approximately six months. Situated in the south-west corner of Shanxi Province, near the Salt Lake, the town served as a vital base. Henrik undertook several missionary journeys alongside Erik Folke, yet by January of the following year, his assignment led him into the neighbouring province of Shaanxi, on the west side of the mighty Yangtze River [28]. The strategic objective was to gain a strong foothold in the major city of Chao-tong-fu/Zhāotōng Fǔ, 昭通府, an early Qing Dynasty administrative, military, and commercial outpost located along the ancient Tea Horse Road.

Yuncheng

The city Yuncheng is now known for its nearby neolithic sites [29] of the Qujialing-Shijiahe cultures 3400-2000 BC on the slopes of the Dabie mountains, Dàbié Shān 大别山 and mid-Yangtze region [30]. Discoveries began in the mid-1950s as a collateral find of a water-energy project. When De Chardin studied Pleistocene formations in the 1920-30s on that location he was unaware of these subterranean treasures. Yuncheng was also famous for its Huangmei opera, originating in folk tunes of the 'Tea Picking Women [31]

Regularly, the C.I.M. assembled many missionaries and co-workers to enhance activities. The Missionary Conference of 1896 was a strategic two-day gathering of the Swedish Mission in China (S.M.C.) (Figure 14) [32].



Figure 14: Field Conference 1896. Left top Henrik Tjäder, left top woman Hilma Blomberg.

'This is the introduction to the successful work the mission relied on, roughly, it is the wife of Henrik called Hilma. She appeared humble, God-oriented and wise, she had been a 'mother' to many Chinese. One understood from her speeches and prayers how the

life of service had set her up. Missionary Tjäder, his head taller than many others, with his long full beard as a sign of aging, wanted to stay in China for a long time, but was not allowed [due to the political troubles]'. (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Hilma and Henrik in a Chinese dress. Mind the long sleeves, and the felt soles of Henrik's shoes in typical Manchu style, but here is no queue.

'Today, when we visit the congregations that Hilma and Henrik founded or worked in, we have met devoted Christians. For many of them, following Christ has meant difficulties and persecution. But still: the number of members has doubled. The churches are overcrowded and new ones are being built all the time. When J. Holmgren gave his flaming appeal at our mission's first annual meeting in 1888, he estimated the number of Christians in China at 30,000. Today, many individuals meeting in our congregations are more than 30,000. For this we thank God or as Henrik Tjäder wrote in a letter in 1891 to the home front: My soul is filled with joy today, because God is on our side.'

Archives and mission stations

The comprehensive analysis of the extensive archival reports on the S.M.K. is still ongoing. The primary source materials used within this study include the following: The records of the Svenska Missionen i Kina (S.M.K.) covering the pioneer years of 1889–1890 are currently preserved and managed by its successor organization, the Evangeliska Östasienmissionen (EÖM, Ruidiǎn Dōngyà Fúyīnhuì 瑞典東亞福音會). During these foundational years (1888–1895), the

S.M.K. did not yet have an independent periodical; its official journal, *Sinims Land*, was not set up until 1896. Consequently, the annual reports, letters, and operational updates from 1889–1890 were compiled and published in specific Swedish sources, notably the Official Swedish Annual Reports & Jubilee Books within the EÖM Archive, and the Årsberättelser [Annual Reports]. A key retrospective document is titled *Hvad Gud har gjort* [What God has done] [33], a jubilee report that systematically presents the chronology and empirical data of these early years, including the first baptisms and the establishment of opium refuges between 1889 and 1890. Reflecting the enduring historical value of this work, a new research initiative documenting the century-long Swedish missionary contribution to China has recently started, supported by the Riksbankens Jubileumfunds [34].

An additional foundational source is the chronological record compiled by the mission's founder, Erik Folke, which delineates specific historical events and mission stations [35]. As illustrated in contemporary field reports and historical maps (Svenska Missionens i Kina Arbetsfält), the S.M.K. operational field spanned three distinct provinces (Figure 16 MAP):



Figure 16: MAP of Swedish Mission posts in China's work field (Svenska Missionens i Kina Arbetsfält).

Henan (Henan Province): Luòyáng (洛阳), Xinan (Sinan), Mianchi, and Sanmianxi. Shanxi (Shanxi Province): Yùnrchéng (运城, the main post), Linyi (Yishi), Xièzhōu (Hàizhōu), Yongji (Puchow), and

Ruicheng. Shaanxi (Shaanxi Province): Tongguan, Huaxian, Dali (Tali, Tungchowfu, Figure 17), Pucheng, Chengcheng, Heyang, and Hancheng [36].



Figure 17: City gate of Dali around 1918. Open access Google docs.

The Boxer uprising

The summer of 1900 brought a time of profound testing and martyrdom to Northern China. Bands of peasant youths from local villages streamed into Beijing to besiege the foreign legations, capturing global attention. Historian Joseph Esherick reconstructs the early history of these Boxers, challenging the traditional view that they originated from anti-dynastic secret societies, and highlighting instead the structural impact of social ecology and popular culture—including local temple networks, theatrical traditions, and martial arts studios. This period saw severe friction, as Christian missionary expansion and foreign imperialism intersected with severe environmental pressures, including devastating floods, famines, and widespread banditry, which ultimately galvanized the peasant youth against foreign presence. Amidst this terrifying storm, archival records show that Henrik Tjäder, alongside his beloved wife Hilma Blomberg and their young son Johan, were under God's protective hand and managed to safely retreat via Shanghai. Others, however, were called to make the ultimate sacrifice. Christian missionary expansion and foreign imperialism created local friction, and the local peasant youth, with extreme pressure from

drought, military betrayal, and lack of ways out caused a flammable mixture [37].

On June 29, 1900, in the village of Soping/Zuoyun, Shuòzhōu (朔州), Shanxi, near the Great Wall, the Swedish Holiness Union was holding its Annual Conference. The gathering included ten resident missionaries, alongside two visiting missionaries from other stations, all accompanied by their partners and children. The Boxers aggressively assaulted the compound and set it on fire, and the entire group was burnt to death [38].

Following these tragic events, the response of the C.I.M. to the question of financial indemnity was one of remarkable grace. Whilst the mission actively engaged with authorities, it steadfastly resolved to make no financial claims for lost property or lives. In June 1901, at the official invitation of the Governor of Shanxi, Cén Chūnxuān (岑春煊 Figure 18), a delegation of eight representatives from various missionary societies journeyed into the province to negotiate a settlement. Led by Dixon Edward Hoste (1861–1946 Figure 19), who served as Hudson Taylor's successor as General Director of the C.I.M. from 1900 to 1935, the historic party included:



Figure 18: the Governor of Shanxi, Cen Chunxuan.



Figure 19: D.E. Hoste with a Chinese assistant.

E. H. Edwards (1856–1916): A medical missionary representing the Shouyang Mission [39],

Moir Duncan (1861–1906): Principal of the Chinese Government University of Shanxi, Creasy Smith (1873–1929): Representing the British Missionary Society,

Irenaeus Atwood (1850–1913): Representing the American Board,

Archibald Orr-Ewing (1857–1930),

Marshal Broomhall (1866–1937) [40],

Carl Henrik Tjäder (1866–1959), and

Ernest Taylor (1875–1948) [41].

Although property settlement and indemnities dominated the Governor's agenda, the mission's refusal to claim material losses stood as a powerful evangelical testimony. This historic delegation, recorded on page 126 of *Fire and Sword in Shansi*, marked the peaceful conclusion of the crisis, allowing the vital work of structural repair and spiritual rebuilding to begin [42].

Historical overview of Christianity in China

'Once upon a time, the history of modern Western Christian missions seemed to be left largely to retired missionaries. Those trained within the secular academy all too often made do with whatever caricature of mission work best suited their analysis of Western imperial history: missionaries were effectively viewed as collaborators, cast either as educating, medicating humanitarians, or as the portly, philistine defamers of non-Western cultures beloved of nineteenth-century newspaper cartoonists. Since the 1990s, however, a renewed interest in religion and inter-religious encounter—a consequence of its unexpected cultural longevity, its role in recent acts of war, terrorism, and criminality (whether as a motivating force or rhetorical cover), and the steady rise of Christianity in parts of Africa and Asia—has tempted increasing numbers of scholars into mission archives across Europe, North America, and beyond [43].'

Historically, China witnessed four major waves of Christianization: The First Wave (635–845 AD): The Nestorians, who travelled north from Persia into the heart of the empire [44]. The Second Wave (1271–1368 AD): Franciscan and Roman Catholic believers who entered the Central Asian zone during the Yuan Dynasty. The Third Wave (16th–18th centuries): European Jesuits and Dominicans whose encounters ultimately triggered theological disputes on indigenous rites. The formal Jesuit period in China intensified following the broader Catholic Counter-Reformation. Pope Clement XI gave the new order the mandate over China. An intelligent program started to explore China in every possible direction as we know from the letters which the workers sent to secretary-historian Du Halde. This period has been described in my paper *Linguet's Lettre du Mandarin, a Forgotten Apology for the Jesuits* [45]. Spreading the gospel had priority, and economic or military influence were no targets per se. Seeking to engage China's hierarchy from the top down, the famous Jesuit Matteo Ricci (Li Mǎdòu, 利玛窦, 1552–1610) pioneered a highly successful missionary methodology that favoured deep accommodation to Chinese culture. To please the Chinese elite and demonstrate his command of classical Chinese, Ricci authored his famous *Essay on Friends* (Yǒulùn, 友论) [46]. His successors permitted newly converted Chinese Christians to continue honouring Confucius and practicing ancestor veneration, framing these rituals as civil and cultural traditions rather than religious practices [47].

However, this dialogue with rival orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans triggered a complex ecclesiastical crisis known as the 'Chinese Rites Controversy'. Consequently, Pope Benedict XIV banned the practice of cultural accommodation through the papal bull *Ex quo singulari* in 1742. This was followed by massive persecutions of Christians, making mission work illegal until 1840. In the political sphere, the Great Ming Dynasty had collapsed in 1644, and China fell under the domination of the Northern Manchu, whose Qing administration remained in power over the Han population and a multitude of minorities until 1911 [48]. Laamann's study suggested that between 1724 and 1840 in China the Christian centres moved from the cities into the countryside, called inculturation. C.I.M. continued this policy, as explained in this paper [49].

The Fourth Wave (Modern Era): The Protestants, who awakened to their global evangelical mission [50]. It breathed new energy into the churches across all denominations, lit by a deeply evangelical fervour. Among their special agents was Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851), a Prussian polyglot, author, and multitasking evangelist. His publication *China Opened* offered detailed topography, history, commerce, and religion to generate vital missionary support [51]. Gützlaff translated Luther's *Small Catechism*, the Anglican *Liturgy*, and numerous books for language and Bible education, alongside millions of gospel tracts. Apart from these texts in vernacular Chinese, William Milne's *Two Friends* also appeared [52]. These early translation projects drew inspiration from the historical works of Matteo Ricci, the Reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546), and pioneering British evangelists such as Robert Morrison (1782–1834) and Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857). Like Henrik Tjäder later on, these pioneers struggled deeply with finding the correct vernacular Chinese terminology for sacred concepts: whether to use 'Lord of Heaven' (Tiān Zhǔ, 天主), anchored in historical worship, or

'Heavenly Ruler' (Shàng-dì, 上帝), alongside precise renderings for 'Holy Spirit, Original Sin, Redemption, Apocalypse, and Judgment.' All these terms were taught in connection with a deeply personal faith of repentance, the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, forgiveness, and enduring gratitude.

Like a tsunami, a vast multitude of books was produced to show this evangelistic way of life. A notable example from this era is the classic 19th-century children's book *Christie's Old Organ* (subtitled 'Home, Sweet Home') [53]. Whilst not explicitly a 'China missionary' book, it became a staple of missionary and Sunday school reading worldwide; its beautiful, universal themes of giving, salvation, and reaching the poor were widely utilized by mission groups. In a touching bridge between past and present, I had the privilege of reading this very book in a library in China, turning its historic pages whilst wearing white cotton gloves. Over these foundational years, C.I.M.'s work in China expanded continuously under God's blessing (Figure 20, 21) [54].



Figure 20: School class led by Henrik Tjäder.



Figure 21: Schoolmaster Tjäder.

<https://carlotta.malmo.se/carlotta-mmus/web/image/zoom/3303892/BM%20002815.jpg>

The Opium problem

During the era of Western colonialism, India supplied vast quantities of tea to England; however, it was Chinese tea that remained highly coveted by the British upper class. Because the Qing merchants strictly demanded payment in silver reals, Britain eventually sought an alternative economic balance. In place of bullion, England began exporting opium cultivated in India to the Chinese mainland, a trade that tragically led to an enormous number of addicted souls across the empire. Driven by Christ-like compassion to soothe this profound human suffering, Christian missions actively intervened by founding specialized refuges and providing dedicated care for opium addicts. The eventual movement to abolish the use and trade of opium in China stands as a remarkable testament to inter-cultural cooperation between Chinese and British Christians, bridging two continents and two vastly different societies. Whilst the political and social history of this movement is complex, it is still clear that indigenous Chinese Christianity—represented by both devout individuals and grassroots organizations—played a pivotal role in confronting this great evil [55].

This domestic effort included rigorous self-criticism within the indigenous churches [56], alongside the passionate mobilization of Chinese-founded pressure groups and local community activism. Ultimately, the devastating cycle was punctuated by the two Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860). Although these conflicts altered the course of the drug trade, China suffered deep systemic losses, most notably through the forced opening of a range of ‘Treaty Ports’. Yet, even though these painful historical fractures, Providence opened new pathways, giving way to Western-style commu-

nication and expanding the horizon for global mission initiatives.

The mission field

Already in January of the following year (1891), we find Henrik in the neighbouring province of Shaanxi on the west side of the Yangtze River. The strategic aim was to gain a firm foothold in the large city of Tong-chou/cheo fu (Dali). This period marked the introduction to a successful chapter of ministry, documented reliably and principally through the reports of Henrik’s beloved partner, Hilma. Having arrived in China in 1892, she stood faithfully by her husband’s side throughout the decades. She appeared humble, godly, and wise, proving to be a true ‘mother’ to many Chinese believers; her public speeches and prayers vividly reflected how a lifetime of service had beautifully shaped her soul. Missionary Tjäder, standing a head taller than most and bearing a long, greying beard as a sign of his advanced years, formed a remarkable and complementary couple with Hilma.’

‘During his extensive ministry across Shanxi and Shaanxi, Henrik was stationed in Puchow (Puzhou/Pujiazhen) [57] and later laboured in Hénán (河南) within the central loess plains, traditionally known as the ‘Middenland’ (Zhōngzhōu, 中州) (Figure 22, 23). For much of their later career, Tjäder and his wife operated out of these strategic regional mission hubs, expanding their work across the border. Educational projects and the advancement of literacy were Henrik’s special focus, whilst Hilma meticulously supervised the women’s Bible school and handled the extensive correspondence with supporters in Sweden.



Figure 22: Tjäder studying Chinese in his grotto.
<https://carlotta.malmo.se/carlotta-mmus/web/object/3295063>



Figure 23: The couple in the grotto. On the loess plateau with its mousson rain and severe erosion, deep canyons can be found. With simple tools into the ground cave houses (yáodòng 窑洞) can be created. From the photos it is evident that Tjäder and his wife Hilma lived here.

Henrik's central circle of trusted co-labourers included the founder Erik Folke, G.W. Wester and his wife, and August Berg, who managed the administration. Alongside Hoste, Henrik also conducted the vital work of structural and spiritual reconstruction following the crisis of 1900. Demonstrating his adaptability, sense for modernity, and zeal, Henrik moved swiftly around his vast mis-

sion field on a motorcycle [58]. The financial support by his wealthy brother Richard, alongside American friends who together funded this machine, stands as a plausible and touching act of loving care. This motorcycle proved invaluable for his active tent campaigns (Figure 24, 25).



Figure 24: Henrik Tjäder on his motorcycle with the folded tent secured to the rear luggage carrier, and two extra leather bags on the front carrier for sustenance and provisions. On his head, he wears an Astrakhan fur hat. Tjäder wears so-called 'puttees' (derived from the Hindi term for leg wraps made of cotton straps) originally originating from India; these provided vital protection against thorns, insects, snakebites, mud, and water, whilst preventing venous blood stasis. Precise winding was essential, offering a more effective and economical alternative to traditional leather boots. Upon his departure from China in 1933, Henrik buried the machine in the earth, fully determined in his heart to return to his beloved field.



Figure 25: Missionaries and native staff captured during an evangelistic campaign. Henrik, dressed in a formal suit, is positioned on his motorcycle alongside members of the Evangelism Team from Jiezhou, Shanxi Province [Jiè zhōu shì, Shānxī shěng, 界州市, 山西省]. The sacred text inscribed upon the banner reads (John 1:29): "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." [Kàn nǎ, shén de gāoyáng, chùqú shìrén zuìniè de, 看, 看哪, 神的羔羊, 除去世人罪孽的]. This photograph was taken in 1933, the monumental year the Tjäders left China, shortly after Henrik had buried his motorcycle.

The Annual Report (A.R.) of S.M.K. concerning Chiehchow (Jiezhou) provides a vibrant snapshot of the steady spiritual and educational growth taking place under their care: The report notes encouragement from the Conference of 1906 (Figure 26), eight baptisms in 1908, active preaching at fairs and out-stations, 27 boys in school, and Mrs. Tjäder teaching three missionaries' children alongside her regular duties. Furthermore, the local church contributed 27 taels, though the station also mourned the loss of Mrs. Wester in October.

Hilma's diary and journeys

Hilma meticulously kept a personal diary detailing their extensive travels to America and Europe, offering a window into a life sustained by faith. On February 16, 1910, at 2 p.m., the family embarked upon the steamship 'Inaba Maru', setting their sights toward America (Figure 27). A fascinating entry from Thursday, February 24, notes that as they passed the 180-degree meridian, they experienced 'two Thursdays in one week'—a momentary marvel of God's creation. Following a safe crossing, they arrived in Seattle, Washing-

ton, on Friday, March 4, 1910, going ashore the following day. From there, they travelled by train, arriving in Missoula, Montana, on 10 March. Here, they spent a cherished week visiting the home of Henrik's wealthy brother, Uncle Richard, experiencing the warmth of family care (Figure 28). The journey continued into Minnesota, where they visited Hilma's elderly aunt Marit, within Cokato's vi-

brant Swedish immigrant community. Later that year, between June 3 and 14, 1910, their travels culminated in Europe, where they attended the historic World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh—a monumental gathering that would profoundly shape the future of global ecumenical mission work, as well as the persons who participated [59].



Figure 26: The missionary Conference in Yucheng September 1906. Staff and assistants. 1. Erik Folke, 2. Henrik, 3. Hilma.



Figure 27: Steamship 'Inaba Maru' built in Glasgow, operated by the company Nippon Yusen Kisen Kaisha, Tokyo during 1897-1934. Image courtesy of the Green Collection – State of Victoria Library. <https://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ref=9670#v>



Figure 28: This photo was taken on March 27, 1910, in La Grange, Illinois, when Hilma and Henrik Tjäder (with their son Carl) were visiting Hilma's brother Josef Blomberg. <https://carlotta.malmo.se/carlotta-mmus/web/object/3295060>

Henrik's interest in Ethnography and Anthropology

Reflecting a deep respect for the people and culture he was called to serve under God, Henrik developed a keen interest in ethnography (material culture, including photography) [60] and (proto) anthropology. Today, the extensive collection of ethnographic objects gathered by Henrik Tjäder—numbering 145 artefacts in total—is preserved within the Carlotta Museum database of the National Museums of World Culture (Statens Museer för Värld-

skultur) (Figure 29,30,31,32). Accompanied by comprehensive Swedish archival descriptions and contemporary photographs, a categorization of these objects reveals a fascinating cross-section of daily nineteenth-century Chinese life. The collection includes *inter alia* hair gear, children's hats, ear protection, boots, traditional shoes, embroidered shoes for bound feet, intricate sleeve embroidery, rings, buttons, a perfume flask case, combs, a razor, spectacles, hedge shears, spoons, an opium mask, boxes, lamps, amulets, money pouches, locks, and a spearhead [61].



Figure 29: MM 046467. Sculpture made of fruitwood, partially painted in red, green, and black. Depicting two men smoking opium. Collected by Henrik Tjäder. In 1912 C.M.I. Shanxi had 2,500 patients and 48 centers.

<https://carlotta.malmo.se/carlotta-mmus/web/object/48326>



Figure 30: Inventory number 1900.04.0101 Soapstone sculpture. The sculpture depicts Cao Guo-jiu, one of the Eight Taoist Immortals or Bāxiān, 八仙. His attribute is a pair of castanets. He is usually portrayed in court attire and—as his name implies—was the maternal uncle of an empress during the Song Dynasty in the 11th century. He is the patron saint of actors. (CR). A Deity statuette made of agalmatolite.



Figure 31: Inventory number 1900.04.0106 Soapstone sculpture. The sculpture depicting Bodai (also Pu-tai Bùdài 布袋) is sometimes referred to as the 'Happy Chinaman' or the 'Laughing Buddha.' He was a monk said to have lived during the Tang Dynasty. He is also sometimes regarded as an incarnation of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. China.



Figure 32: Object 1903.13.0001: A wooden food bowl belonging to a Chinese hermit, featuring an iron hook on one side designed for suspending from a belt. Measuring approximately 20 cm, this item was presented as a formal gift to the Etnografiska Museet by missionary Henrik Tjäder, who was then stationed in Hāizhōu (Jiezhou 海州) in Northern China. At the time, the gift was officially valued by the museum at 10 Swedish Kronas, as documented in the internal report of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences' Yearbook (Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens årsbok), Stockholm, 1904, p. 99.

The question may naturally be posed: did Tjäder also encounter or collect true archaeological artefacts during his long tenure across these historic plains (Figure 33,34)? Whilst this remains an intriguing historical possibility given his geographic proximity to major ancient sites; it lacks definitive scientific validation. During the 1910s and 1920s, the traditional paradigm of the collector-antiquarian—who gathered unprovenanced surface items or focused solely on epigraphy [62]—was being rapidly replaced at the end of the 19th century by systematic, scientific field excavations. The first official geological survey of China occurred in 1916, introducing rigorous scientific methodologies to the field. Notably, the Swedish geologist and archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson

(1874–1960 Figure 35) participated in the epochal 1921 discovery of the Neolithic Yangshao culture in Henan Province [63]. Following this breakthrough, the influential scholar Lǐ Jì (李济) conducted pioneering modern excavations at Xi Yin village in Shanxi Province in 1926 [64]. By 1928, the Academia Sinica commenced its famous excavations of oracle bones at Yinxu, conclusively establishing the historical authenticity of the Shang Dynasty. This scientific revolution caused a profound stir among Western and Eastern theologians, historians, and philosophers alike, as it challenged existing assumptions regarding the timeline and origins of early representatives of the genus *Homo* e.g. *H. erectus pekinensis* and *H. sapiens* in China [65].



Figure 33: Dabie mountains in Anhui province. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dabie-Mountains>.



Figure 34: The Tjäders in a cart with mules near Dali, setting out for the mission field.



Figure 35: Johan Gunnar Andersson, on an archaeological site, with puttees on.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Gunnar_Andersson.

It was during his earlier furlough to America that Henrik first became acquainted with the work of the American Presbyterian missionary Frank H. Chalfant (1862–1914), who was then meticulously compiling a seminal study on the tortoise shell and oracle bone scripts that had been unearthed during the closing decades of the nineteenth century [66]. It meant a turn in the palaeontological discourse.

Comparative religion in the fieldwork

Two worldviews can be analysed in the mission field of Central China where western and Chinese people have met in the 1900s.

On one side, the Lutheran theology being a state religion had already demystified and got a rational image. The three Solo's of Luther still dominated Lutheran thinking: Sola Scriptura (the word of the Bible alone), Sola Gratia (grace alone) and Sola Fide (faith alone). The traditional services had music, the Lord's Supper, besides baptism, formal marriages and funerals. Modern technology opens the possibility to listen to over 100 hymns of the 1910 Missionaries' meeting in Edinburgh, such as Luther's "A mighty fortress is our God." Religious art, candles, and symbols softened the teachings and dogmatic traditions. Next to that was the influx of the American mission parties with a more social gospel.

On the other side, the main philosophical/ religious institutions of China manifested themselves: Buddhism, Taoism, folk religion and Confucianism. Some had a central dominant organisation with priests, temples, and traditions while others had a more easy-going folklore style with laymen. However, in general, the presentation was stimulation of all senses, colorful, or with odours and soothing incense. In all these presentations, ancestor worshipping, fortune-telling, spirits, ghosts, and an interactive afterlife with many dramatis personae, many holy men, eremites and immortal souls are always experienced in the surreal world. Not particularly in Hendrik's report, or C.I.M. books this world was explored and com-

mented on. The process of sinicization of religion started already with the translation of the Bible, however the ideas of the Communist Party proclaimed recently, trigger freedom ideology [67].

Between 1911 and 1933: A brief overview

The decades spanning 1911 to 1933 witnessed a cataclysmic transformation of the Chinese sociopolitical landscape [68]. Sun Yat-sen (Sūn Zhōngshān 孙中山, 1866–1925), physician, revolutionary, and philosopher, emerged as the founding father of Chinese-style democracy; decades later, his nationalist movement Kuomintang (Guómíndǎng, 国民党) would ultimately retreat to Taiwan. Concurrently, Mao Zedong (Máo Zédōng 毛泽东, 1893–1976) rose to prominence, eventually setting up the socialist People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in 1949. Together, these figures served as the contrasting steersmen guiding the masses toward a new China. During the subsequent revolutionary processes, millions of lives were tragically lost to poverty, systemic hunger, and catastrophic natural disasters. One of the prominent socialist authors who critically and satirically analysed these societal fractures was Lǚ Xùn (鲁迅 1881–1936) [69] (Figure 36). As the political tide turned in the mid-twentieth century, Christian believers were increasingly branded as *personae non gratae*. Facing severe persecution, many went underground or established informal House Churches, sustained by global networks of friends who risked illegality to smuggle Bibles and provided spiritual support.

Yet, amidst these sweeping structural shifts, a letter from Mrs Hilma Tjäder, missionary: 'Friends! I want to thank the Lord with all my heart; I want to tell of all your wonders. I want to be happy and rejoice in you. I want to sing praises to your name, you the Most High (Figure 37). [The local women] went with me to all possible corners and corners of the city where I had never been before. The Lord also wanted to use her gift: a strong memory—oh, how good he is to let the hidden hear the gospel. Our cook, who is always very

zealous and bold in testifying to the grace of God, happily went out, as soon as dinner was over, to some nearby, well-trafficked place, where, surrounded by a crowd, the women went in small groups through the city and the countryside with the message of salvation (Figure 38). The evangelists visited the mountain dwellers and

returned happy in the hope of a soon harvest. Five of our women traveled in a wagon to more distant villages and had many attentive listeners there [70].'



Figure 36: The artist Zhào Yànnián, 赵延年 (1978) produced woodblock prints for the book *The true story of Ah Q*. (note 58), source: British Museum nr 1993,0707,0.30.



Figure 37: Hilma Träder-Blomberg in front of a set of Chinese stone stairs, doing needlework in a local dress. Leader of the women's Bible group. In China, a stair or bridge means a passage between two worlds of spirits: East and West? This world and Heaven?

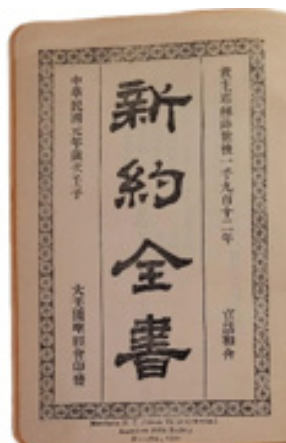


Figure 38: A Mandarin Chinese Bible translation, Shanghai, American Bible Society 1912.

The historical trajectory of this pivotal era is marked by several defining milestones: 1911: The Chinese Empire is formally overthrown, transforming the ancient realm into a republic; 1916: The scientific field of Chinese palaeo-archaeology officially begins; 1918: The first indigenous Chinese pastor is formally ordained, signalling a momentous shift as local Chinese congregations begin to assume greater self-governance and responsibility; 1926: Acute political unrest sweeps the nation, accompanied by sharply increased xenophobia; 1933: Recognizing the shifting tides, the Tjäders decide to permanently leave the Chinese mission field (Figure 39).

They embarked again and following emotional family visits in America (Figure 40), they returned home to Sweden. For China all this didn't end the troubles: 1937: Outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War including the brutal capture and atrocities in Nanking (Nánjīng 南京); 1945: Amidst the global political fallout of World War II, a massive exodus of foreign missionaries occurs; 1949: Following the communist victory, the remaining foreign missionaries are forced to evacuate the country entirely; and 1951 the last S.M.K. missionaries leave the P.R.C [71].



Figure 39: The Träders in the Inner Court at a farewell tea, 1933.



Figure 40: The missionaries Hilma and Henrik Tjäder visit Hilma's brother Josef Blomberg in Michigan in 1933 on their way back home to Sweden from China. From left to right: Henrik Tjäder, Hilma Tjäder, Josef Blomberg, Emilie Blomberg and their daughter Margaret.

Return to Sweden

During their emotional farewell service in 1933, the Tjäders were presented with a set of two traditional hanging scrolls (tiáo fú, 条幅) inscribed with Chinese characters, beautifully summarizing their decades of devotion to the Christian community of China (Figure 41). The profound gratitude of the indigenous church was captured in the translation:

'You have painstakingly travelled several tens of thousands of miles to come and preach the True Doctrine to us, thereby transforming the bad customs into good ones. How magnificently true it is to be called Christ's faithful servants. Also, during more than ten years, through laborious and diligent work, you have succeeded in

establishing a school and founded five Christian congregations; in truth it can be said that you have cared for our souls [72].'

Following their definitive return to Sweden in 1933, the Tjäders established their residence at Nobelvägen 86, Malmö (Figure 42). They found their new spiritual home at the city's Immanuel Church (Immanuelskyrkan). A contemporary biographer vividly described their integration into the congregation with the following words: 'I remember well when the missionary couple Tjäder was presented to the congregation. They both became preachers. Both took part in Malmö for decennia in the local Kina-syförening [the China sewing and mission club]. Over the next decades, their remarkable lives were summarized and celebrated by various authors [73], serving as an enduring inspiration of missionary zeal. Today, the concrete

fruits of their cultural and spiritual journey remain preserved for posterity. The numerous photographs and material artefacts related to their anthropological and ethnographic work are housed within the collections of the *National Museums of World Culture* (Världskulturmuseern), accessible via the digital Carlotta database [74]. Furthermore, their historical context connects beautifully with the *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* (Östasiatiska Museet), which is situated on the historic island of Skeppsholmen in the heart of

Stockholm, standing as a monument to Europe's long-standing dialogue with the cultures of the Orient. Henrik himself is rightly classified as an ethnologist, a (proto) anthropologist, however, more research is needed to label him as a (proto) sinologist such as Jozef L.M. Mullie (1886-1976) [75]. The question sprang up: how to combine Christian religion and the rationality of modern science? Murphy claimed that the community of the Christian mission in China was the laboratory to assess the question [76].



Figure 41: In EÖM's office now hang these two stately text scrolls handed down to the couple Hilma and Henrik Tjäder when they went home to Sweden for a rest period in 1933. See text.



Figure 42: The senior Hilma in Sweden had a cosy room, with harmonium and hymn books. The thick puffer jacket insulated her body from freezing temperatures. A picture with a crucifix. A pot with pencils, the Chinese tool for calligraphic work of the Mandarin. Some clay pots are memories of the experience in China.

Following the epochal Xinhai Revolution (Xīnhài Gémìng 辛亥革命) of 1911, China sought recovery through decades of immense upheaval: the Warlord turmoil (1911–1927), the First Civil War (1927–1937), the devastating war with Japan (1937–1945), and the Second Civil War (1945–1949)—a turbulent trajectory that culminated in the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Later, the 'Great Cultural Revolution' (Wénhuà dàgémìng 文化大革命 1966–1976) under the absolute reign of Mao Zedong brought

a total collapse of social structures. During this apocalyptic era, a wave of severe persecution against Christian believers, antiquities, schools, and old habits was unleashed.

Over the subsequent decades, a new episode unfolded as China emerged as a major social and economic entity; the enigmatic publications *China Reconstructs* (founded in 1952) and *China Today* (1990–2007) documented full-colour about political, economic, and social restoration [77]. When the couple left the field in 1933

after more than 40 years of service, mission regulations dictated that Henrik, due to his advanced age, should retire from active service. Yet, Henrik's heart, entirely captured by God's call, had other plans. Fully determined to return to his beloved flock, he secretly buried the motorcycle that had served him so faithfully during his extensive trips across Henan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi provinces. Ultimately, the machine remained buried; the mission board, standing on practical wisdom, chose not to send pensioners back into the sacrificial hardships of a mission field entering one of the most volatile chapters in Chinese history.

Conclusion

This essay has analysed the life, itineraries, and works of Henrik Tjäder, one of approximately 700 Swedish Protestant missionaries who laboured in Inner-China from the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. Guided by the Spirit of the Western Awakenings, Henrik was deeply a family personality, a sentiment fully shared by his beloved partner, Hilma. Anchored in an orthodox Christian faith and propelled by a vibrant evangelistic zeal, they recognized their sacred duty to join the ranks of those bringing Christ to China. It was an amazing, daunting task: stepping into an unfamiliar world dominated by complex syncretistic philosophies, cults, and ancient rituals—not to mention a language whose challenging pronunciation and intricate (traditional) characters could easily make a person shiver.

A pivotal moment in this global spiritual 'movement' was their participation in the historic 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which laid the foundations for modern ecumenical co-operation. Yet, their true joy lay on the ground. Within the China Inland Mission, they found faithful local colleagues, dear Chinese tribal assistants, and an overcrowding harvest of souls [78]. Driven by love, they evangelized in small villages, crossed turbulent rivers, climbed rugged mountains, and walked endless narrow paths to spread the message of salvation. Alongside their shared hours of communal reading and prayer, daily life was filled with educational duties, music, needlework, and moments of recreation like sports and swimming. Together, they marvelled at the fabulous beauty of God's creation, collected local handicrafts, and admired the achievements of Chinese architecture. Following emotional family visits across America and Europe, they sailed the great oceans until they finally found a peaceful home in Malmö, Sweden—a sanctuary to rest and remember a wonderful, profoundly blessed life that was lived entirely as a gift to the Lord (Figure 43). Anno 2026, the detailed field reports of these early pioneers are being studied with renewed academic vigour. This resurgence of interest exists largely because, to an extent greater than modern secular academia might traditionally dare to acknowledge, these missionaries in Asia were asking fundamental questions regarding the inner workings of local societies that strikingly mirror the very enquiries that urge contemporary historians, anthropologists, philosophers, and sociologists today to participate in more research (Figure 44) [79].



Figure 43: The tombstone of Hilma Blomberg and Carl Tjäder at Sankt Pauli Mellersta Kyrkogård (Middle Cemetery), Knuts väg 17, Malmö, Skåne, Sweden. Epitaph: 'Kinamissionären' and 'Kristus Rennes liv' (China missionaries. Her life was [in] Christ). After this inscription, Henrik was buried there.



Figure 44: The tombstone of the children of Hilma and Henrik Tjäder-Blomberg. Carl (1898-1980), daughter in law Rut (born Andersson, 1902-1960), Carl Torsten Ivar (1928-1955). All buried at the same graveyard of Figure 43. The son Karl Tore Theodore Tjäder (1925-2001) was in another grave.

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The links of the worldwide web given in this text have been checked September 3-5, 2026.

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- Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- The family name was initially spelled as Tjader, in this essay following archives the umlaut was added: Tjäder. The Swedish name Tjäder means black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) or mountain chicken. This emblem was used by silversmiths as a mark for purity on watches, meaning a content of 0.800 or higher.
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- The H.Q.-China of CIM was situated in the Sin-K'ai Lung/Xinkailong Road, Shanghai and managed finance, mail, and property as well as the hosting of the coming and parting of inland missionaries. The first missions house for the Lammermuir starters group; In 1890 C.I.M. 's 25th anniversary; Sjöholm, Wilhelm, and Fredrik. A. Wennborg (ed). *Tjugofem år i Kina: Svenska Missionsförbundets Kinamission* [Twenty-Five Years in China: The Swedish Missionary Society's China Mission]. Stockholm: Svenska Missionsförbundets Förlag (SMF) [The Swedish Mission Covenant Church Publishing House], 1916, pp. 445–464 (biographies)
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