

## **Catholic Orphanages in Fujian during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries\***

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### **Abstract**

As part of an effort to prevent infanticide, various institutions in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century began to establish orphanages in China. They included local governments and Buddhists organizations, but Catholic and Protestant churches also played an especially significant role, the former of which started organizing orphanages as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The creation of the Holy Infancy in 1843—an international institution and sort of modern NGO raising funds all over the world to support missions worldwide—and the opening of ports following the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) drove a particularly active period of orphanage development in China until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In order to address this broad topic, we have focused on orphanages in Fujian and Taiwan run by the Spanish Dominican sisters and Filipino or Chinese beatas (blessed virgins) from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We seek to provide a better understanding of the scope of the abandonment of girls, the services and structures of these institutions, and the family mores and constraints in those regions of China at that time. Additionally, we examine the activities and motivations of these institutions

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in terms of their recognition of the dignity of female infant orphans, and their attempts to rescue and educate them to ensure a proper status in life.

**Keywords:** orphanages, infanticide, Fujian, Dominican nuns, *beatas*

## 1. Introduction: The Problem of Infanticide

Even if the legal code of Qing-dynasty China provided for the prosecution of parents for killing their child, the fact is that infanticide was tolerated and legal action was rarely pursued by the government, especially in difficult times like those of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) and the succeeding years. Michelle Tien King provides a relevant cultural study of infanticide in China, from the end of the Taiping Rebellion to the years following the Tianjin Massacre (1870). She confronts the traditional perception of Western observers, particularly that of the French Jesuit Gabriel Palatre (1830-1878) with contemporary moral tales addressed to the Chinese general audience, written by educators such as the schoolteacher Yu Zhi 余治 (1809-1874), a person who even promoted the use of regional theaters as a tool for social reform.<sup>1</sup> She defines three different approaches to understanding infanticide: First, a detached commitment to abandoned girls was shaped by Taoist and Buddhist traditions that might explain Chinese society's tolerance of infanticide; the second is a Confucian approach which views orphanages as a social necessity, but follows a highly pragmatic implementation to expedite the girls to a permanent arrangement outside the orphanage; and third is that of Christian churches, which adopted an approach that addresses the problem as a longer-term commitment.

For King, Chinese writings like those of Yu Zhi can be categorized as

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1 Wong Kwok-yiu, "Reform Spirit and Regional Theaters: Yu Zhi's (1809-1874) *Shuji tang jinyue* and the *Xiqu* Reform Movement," *Monumenta Serica* 65, no. 2 (July 2017): 363-400.

Buddhist and Taoist tales that encourage the prevention of infanticide through moral arguments based on the law of karma, and on impulses towards rewards and punishments. Confucian administrators promoted prevention by persuasion and rationalization. But in those cases, the number of victims was not an important issue. On the other hand, Palatre takes a religious and quantitative approach, showing that the inability of officials to effectively enforce regulations resulted in an increasing number of children that cannot go to heaven because they were not baptized. Consequential differences in these two viewpoints had an impact on the treatment of surviving girls and arrangements for their futures.

Palatre's study was motivated by anticlerical propaganda in France at the end of 1875 agitating against the provision of funds to China by the Holy Infancy, an institution created in France three decades earlier, which provided assistance to orphanages on five continents, and particularly in China, through a kind of crowdfunding addressed to Catholic children all over the world. A notably active participant in anticlerical propaganda was the journalist Francisque Sarcey, who produced a series of articles in *Le XIXe siècle*. Sarcey did not deny the existence of infanticide but relativized the question by saying that China was not different in this regard from other European countries, and that "the little French school children were being duped into collecting money for the coffers of the Catholic Church based on exaggerated reports of infanticide in China."<sup>2</sup> Palate, who was in charge of the orphanage in the Jesuit compound of Zikawei 徐家匯 (Shanghai) collected many Chinese documents and writings to examine alternative approaches and mindsets. His book was published in 1878, the same year of his death.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Michelle Tien King, "Drowning Daughters: A Cultural History of Female Infanticide in Late Nineteenth Century China" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2007), 59.

3 Gabriel Palatre, S.J., *L'Infanticide et l'Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance en Chine* (Shanghai: Autographie de la Mission Catholique a l'Orphelinat de Tou-sè-wè, 1878). A lithographic copy can be viewed in the Propaganda Fide Historical Archives.

Palatre wrote about his experience in Shanghai and he created a model defense for the Catholic orphanages. The purpose of the present study is to move the focus of this topic to the area of Fujian, where Spanish Dominicans were in command of the missions. We will see how the Holy Infancy institution evolved, how the Catholic missionaries moved beyond anecdotal accounts of infanticide designed to evoke pity to develop a deeper, more theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, how they established orphanages (also called holy infancies), how they entrusted this work to the Dominican nuns or beatas (blessed virgins) to work according to its aims, and finally, the outcomes of their efforts.

Our study is mainly based on information taken from Dominican publications such as *Correo Sino-Annamita (CSA)* (Letters from China and Vietnam) in the years 1866-1916 and *Misiones Dominicanas (MD)* in 1917-1943. Other data comes from other missionary magazines, including *El Siglo de las Misiones* and the Spanish edition of the official periodical of the Holy Infancy institution, *Anales de la Obra Pontificia de la Santa Infancia (AOPSI)*, which provide many scattered references to different Chinese Catholic orphanages.<sup>4</sup>

Before Palatre, one of the earliest missionary descriptions of infanticide practices is found in the 1867 issue of *Correo Sino-Annamita* in a report by the Dominican Tomás Maria Gentili, a missionary in Dingtou 頂頭 (Tein-tau),<sup>5</sup> a village eight leagues southeast from Fu'an 福安. Gentili, after presenting the motives of the non-Christians for killing their baby girls (“it is beneficial for them to die, thus to avoid a life of suffering, etc.”), explains five common ways of

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4 For example, for the years 1915-1916, those in northeast Hubei (*Anales de la Obra Pontificia de la Santa Infancia* [1915]: 59-61 [hereafter *AOPSI*]), eastern Hubei (*AOPSI* [1916]: 184-86), and southern Hunan (*AOPSI* [1915]: 61-62, 209-12; *AOPSI* [1916]: 58-59) were of the Spanish O.E.S.A.; and those in eastern Zhejiang (*AOPSI* [1916]: 100-103, 200-202) were of the Lazarists.

5 In the cases we cannot trace the proper Chinese name, we use the same romanization used in the sources.

killing girls that he had seen or heard of in his district: “It is different among the gentiles, the way they sacrifice the wretched girls; some are thrown to the ground amid all the dirty things that accompany her birth; and this is the most common among them, thus it is very difficult for us to find a way to baptize them. Others pour boiling water on top of their bodies suffocating them.” Gentili did not mention the possibility of bringing the girls to orphanages because the Dominicans had yet to establish one in northern Fujian, but did express an expectation of receiving help from the Holy Infancy from France. The following table presents an overview of girls rescued in central Fujian, most of whom would later die at the orphanage, and provides an initial approach to examining trends in the abandonment of girls:

**Table 1: Rescued Girls in the Orphanages of the Fuzhou Vicariate (global)**

1882-1891:	10,104	1922:	3,901
1892-1901:	21,805	1923:	3,466
1902-1911:	36,402	1924:	3,695
1912-1921:	43,941	TOTAL:	123,314

*MD VIII* (1925): 35.

## 2. Motives of the Abandonment of Girls by Families as Seen by Missionaries in Fujian

Dominican missionaries perceived the frequency and practice of infanticide practices as varying among Eastern societies. For example, Vietnam had few orphanages,<sup>6</sup> and parents would only turn their infants over

6 In the area of Tonking (Vietnam), the most important holy infancy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Bui-Chiu, the center of a small network. One magnificent unpublished study kept in the archives of the Holy Infancy (Propaganda Fide) is that of P. G. B. Bragella, *L'Infanticide et la Sainte Enfance avec une mention détaillée pour la Chine* (Milan: Institut des Missions Etrangères, 1920).

to missionaries in times of great difficulty.<sup>7</sup> Since infanticide was in fact forbidden in China, the practice was carried out secretly within the family, limiting the government's ability to restrict it. According to missionaries, local governments or philanthropists had established orphanages in China, but these were few in number and had limited resources. For the few that did exist, Dominicans did not intend for them to be engaged in long-term care of the abandoned girls. Dominican documents do not report infanticide or abandonment of girls from Catholic women, who were rather seen as being more prone to act as wet-nurses.

Blasco, a missionary in the Xiamen 廈門 district, provides vivid descriptions in *Correo Sino-Annamita* of 1907 on the different ways in which parents disposed of baby girls, including abandonment in fields or being set adrift in rivers, echoing the observations of Gentili forty years earlier. He mentioned a lake near Xiamen named "Kín-a-hô," which translates into "Child Lake" due to the frequency with which the corpses of baby girls are found floating in the water. Blasco adds, with possible exaggeration, "according to the best statistics, 40% of the girls die annually in such circumstance."<sup>8</sup>

In China, many reasons have been cited for the infanticide or abandonment of girls, including poverty and other social considerations. According to the missionary Bravo, the value of a girl increases with age, while that of a boy falls, and a boy 12 to 14 years old can be bought quite cheaply. Thus, he notes the urgency of rescuing young girls.<sup>9</sup> Other missionaries held similar understandings of infanticide in China and of the mission of the holy infancies.

Socio-economic constraints are the most commonly cited causes for child

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7 Pablo Fernández, *Dominicos donde nace el sol: historia de la provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas de la Orden de Predicadores* (Barcelona: Talleres Gráficos Yuste, 1958), 606-607.

8 José Vicente Blasco, "La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy," *Correo Sino-Annamita* 35 (1907): 45-46 (hereafter *CSA*).

9 José Vicente Blasco, "Relación sobre la Santa Infancia," *CSA* 35 (1907): 114.

abandonment or infanticide, with increased frequency in times of famine or bad harvest. The bishop of Fuzhou 福州 reported:

In 1913, we received from the holy infancies of this Vicariate 4,518 girls. Two causes may explain this growth: first, the scarcity of rice [...] as well as priceincreases for other basic necessities; second, the progressive disappearance of the prejudices that Chinese previously held about the holy infancies, which have beencaused by the calumnies of the mandarins and literati.<sup>10</sup>

A second socio-economic cause is related to dowry costs. Girls were seen as a kind of commodity whose value can vary over time. The bishop Aguirre reported in 1914: “Twenty years ago [around 1894], a girl to be married in the Prefecture of Hing-hoa cost 80 pesos, for this reason many girls were collected in the holy infancy, but they now cost 300 pesos, that is why we only receive the lame, blind or crippled girls.”<sup>11</sup>

Infant abandonment was selective and largely limited to girls, and thus, the motivation for abandonment is also cultural. Missionaries mentioned four specific cultural reasons, the most prominent being the need to preserve the family name. According to Escalé, the inability of women to carry the family name significantly reduces their social value.<sup>12</sup> The second reason is related to superstitions attached to the year of the tiger, with Sister Joaquina, from the apostolic vicariate of Amoy (Xiamen) noting: “One of the most common superstitions is what they call ‘protectors or governors of the year.’ To please these protectors they offer in sacrifice their innocent creatures, of course, only girls. The last year was the year of the tiger, and we have received a great number

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10 Francisco Aguirre, “Relación de la Santa Infancia del Vicariato de Fo-Kian Norte. Foochow. 12 June 1914,” *CSA* 40 (1914): 42-48.

11 *Ibid.*, 42-48.

12 Buenaventura Escalé, “La Santa Infancia de Ngu-chen (Hnc-duán),” *CSA* 35 (1907): 178-94.

of girls, because this protector may fill his protégées with great happiness, but girls are excluded.”<sup>13</sup> The third reason is the fear of a baby girl dying at home after birth, which was seen as bringing bad luck on the family. Prefect Tomás de la Hoz explained this in the early 30s: “It is well known that the Chinese fear having a person die at home, especially if that person is a wretched infant that had not earned a penny and had offered no support to the family.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, society at large presented a general lack of acceptance of disabled persons, especially girls, though disabilities were one of the few reasons for which boys would also be abandoned. For example, Bishop Aguirre reported that while they had received many girls in 1914, they had only received eight boys, but all of these were “blind and crippled.”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, there were also cultural phenomena that argued against infanticide, particularly among the Hakka ethnic minority. Bishop Aguirre mentioned in 1925 that in Tingchów, a Hakka area, girls were rarely abandoned and then only due to superstition. The reason he gives is that “the Hakka do not practice foot binding because the women work in the fields more than the men themselves, then women are very useful and they are not thrown away out of poverty or for thinking that they will not contribute.”<sup>16</sup>

Though this study does not seek to analyze the demographic consequences of the preference for male offspring, Arthur P. Wolf’s analysis of 14,402 cases of Chinese women concludes that very “few women were raised by their natal families [...] and that women that failed to bear male children were more likely to be divorced.”<sup>17</sup> Wolf also mentions that “in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

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13 Joaquina del Santísimo Sacramento, “Relación hecha para el Director de la Santa Infancia de Lyon en 28 de febrero de 1892,” *CSA* 26 (1892): 35-64.

14 Tomás de la Hoz, “La Santa Infancia en Formosa,” *Misiones Dominicanas* XV (1932): 178 (hereafter *MD*).

15 Aguirre, “Relación de la Santa Infancia del Vicariato de Fo-Kian Norte,” 42-48.

16 Francisco Aguirre, “Breve reseña de la Santa Infancia en la Provincia de Fukién,” *MD* VIII (1925): 35.

17 Arthur P. Wolf, *Sexual Attraction and Childhood Association: A Chinese Brief for Edward Westermarck* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), ix.

total fertility in China averaged six births and total marital fertility seven and a half births [...]. Marriage was early and universal because the Chinese wanted as many children as possible.”<sup>18</sup>

The preference for boys, combined by China’s high birth rate has aggravated the country’s gender imbalance, resulting in considerable unrest and discontent.<sup>19</sup> Statistics show a clear discrimination against girls in favour of boys through the 20<sup>th</sup> century in China and also Taiwan:

**Table 2: Sex Ratio among Children Born into Families Living in Nine Districts of Hai-shan (Taiwan)**

Year of Birth	Number of Boys	Number of Girls	Boy-to-Girl Ratio (x: 100 )
1906-1910	715	722	99
1911-1915	775	750	103
1916-1920	827	720	115
1921-1925	908	882	103
1926-1930	1,063	996	107
1931-1935	1,216	1,110	110
1936-1940	1,323	1,258	105
1941-1945	1,335	1,164	115

Source: Arthur P. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 233.

Wolf initially suggested this imbalance is the result of female infanticide, but

18 Arthur P. Wolf, “Fertility in Prerevolutionary Rural China,” in *Family and Population in East Asian History*, ed. Susan B. Hanley and Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 154-85.

19 For example, Jonathan Spence mentions how at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century “in the region of Daoyi 20% of men never married at all. The Chinese idealization of the family [...] must have seemed a cruel jest for these millions of men.” See Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 96. Commenting on the Nian Revolution that started in 1851 in that region of China, he adds: “As many as 20% of the men were unable to find wives and start families, making of them a rootless and volatile group capable of swinging into action with an aiding party at any time.” *Ibid.*, 185.

later allows that the difference could be explained by the practice of the adoption of girls into a family as future wives for their young sons, a practice known as *sim-pu-a* 媳婦仔 (little daughter-in-law)<sup>20</sup> that was described and condemned by missionaries.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Holy Infancies as a Western Contribution

The Holy Infancy has worked in different countries since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was founded by the French bishop of Nancy, Charles de Forbin Janson, in 1843 as an association to help the poor children within France, but quickly expanded its mission abroad. Forbin, who had a great appreciation for China, was able to send funds in 1844 to the bishops of Fujian, Manchuria, Su-Tchuen (Sichuan 四川), Macao, Tche-Kiang (Zhejiang 浙江), Peking, Mongolia and Nanjing. This relationship was intensified starting from 1849, and the Holy Infancy emerged as a significant source of support for the orphanages. Nevertheless, orphanages in China were still subject to challenges through popular and official opposition and misunderstandings, since “Catholic orphanages were suspected of collecting overwhelmingly abandoned female babies for gruesome uses, such removing their eyeballs for use in Western medicine or photography.”<sup>22</sup> Some of these misapprehensions resulted in violent conflict, such as the Tianjin Massacre. Nevertheless, the activity continued in China as well as in Taiwan until World War II. Henrietta Harrison

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20 The institution was popular in Fujian and Taiwan, but started to disappear in the twenties. For this institution, see Wolf and Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China*. Other reasons might exist beyond this institution: for example, allowing mothers better control over their daughters-in-law, conforming with folk beliefs related to fecundity, or simply a family's desire for a daughter.

21 Blasco, “Relación sobre la Santa Infancia,” 122-23.

22 D. E. Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 93.

offers a general explanation of the Holy Infancy:

[It was] an organization through which French children could give money to rescue Chinese babies from infanticide. The main aim of the Association was to find and baptize abandoned infants. In most cases the souls of the children would then fly straight up to heaven where they would be powerful intercessors for the conversion of China to Christianity, but the association also ran orphanages to rear any that survived.<sup>23</sup>

While Harrison offers considerable insight into the general situation, the broad diversity of local conditions requires local studies to better understand the complexity of the problem.

The association was strategically headquartered in France because this country had unilaterally assumed responsibility to protect all the Catholic missions in China and Vietnam. However, the holy infancies had a smaller presence in peripheral areas, such as Fujian, which were left to rely much more on the help of religious orders like the Dominicans and on their own newsletters and other propaganda as vehicles to attract donations.

The orphanages themselves were established in various ways. Typically, a priest would begin a rescue operation on his own initiative in response to babies found abandoned in the streets. He would seek a shelter for them and arrange for their immediate needs, such as wet nurses. As the operation grew organically, he would seek help from *beatas* (blessed virgins, but not religious women) who had a personal commitment to the service of the mission. These women were called *zhennü* 貞女 in China or *gupo* 姑婆 in Taiwan. If the orphanage remained small, it could continue under such an organization over the long term, but if operations expanded again, the institution would request help from religious

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23 Henrietta Harrison, "The French Holy Childhood Association and Families of the Poor in 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century China" (presentation, "Infanticide in East Asia: A Comparison of Historical Responses in China and Japan," AAS Annual Meeting, Boston, 22-25 March 2007).

nuns. When the orphanage reached a more established status, with three or four nuns, it could apply for regular economic assistance from the bishop in charge of the mission, who would add it to his general request to the Holy Infancy headquarters in France. The girls would be divided in two groups, an “external infancy” group of girls under the age of 4, who were under the care of external wet-nurses, and an “internal infancy” group for girls aged 4 to 16 years old, which will be described in more detail later.

As a “transnational” institution, the organization of the Holy Infancy consisted of a headquarters in Paris that worked with representative offices in dioceses abroad to raise funds to directly support its orphanages all over the world. Each country organized its own representative office. For example, the Holy Infancy in Spain was formally recognized by the Spanish Queen Elizabeth on 21 December 1852, while the archbishop of Toledo was serving as the institution’s president.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. Financing of Orphanages

Regarding the organization’s financing, Harrison—quoting the *Annales*<sup>25</sup>—states:

From 1843 to 1870, the Holy Infancy’s growth was extraordinary. Its annual income reached 250,000 francs in 1851, and nearly 2 million by 1869. Membership also spread to other countries, with the largest donors outside France being some dioceses in Belgium, Italy, and Germany. In North America, the association was active in Catholic schools in Baltimore,

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24 *AOPSI* 1 (1853): 27-68.

25 *Annales* 3 (1851): 290; *Annales* 11 (1859): 94-100; *Annales* 18 (1866): 80-85, 160-63; *Annales* 21 (1869): 75. Also, see Paul Lesourd, *Histoire générale de l’Oeuvre Pontificale de la Sainte-Enfance depuis un siècle* (Paris: Centre Catholique International de Documentation et de Statistiques, 1947), 109.

New York, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Boston. Its journal appeared in fourteen languages, including Czech, Maltese, Polish, and Danish. As the Holy Infancy’s membership expanded, so did its activities, caring for example for children in Indochina, India, Africa, and Southeast Asia as well as China.<sup>26</sup>

The missionary publications refer to many places such as parishes, religious schools, etc., and their means of collecting money, with collections usually recorded over two-year periods.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 3: General Income of the Holy Infancy**

Year	Francs	Reference
1851	250,000.00	Harrison (2007)
(1868)-1869	2,000,000.00	Harrison (2007)
1908-1909	3,761,954.24	<i>AOPSI</i> (January 1915): 15
1914-1915	3,238,471.49	<i>AOPSI</i> (January 1916): 136

Funds were collected through Holy Infancy members in two categories: (a) all “baptized” boys and girls to the age of 12, and (b) the “associated,” meaning those beyond that age.

For 1936, we have complete general information about funds officially collected in the year 1935-1936 by the Universal Holy Infancy, with 8 million boys and girls contributing nearly 18.5 million francs:

26 Harrison, “The French Holy Childhood Association and Families of the Poor in 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century China.”

27 In just one case, the diocese of Zaragoza founded its Holy Infancy in 1853, and in 1915, had 7,000 associated children, collecting more than 2,000 pesetas annually. *AOPSI* (1915): 233.

**Table 4: Detailed Income of the Holy Infancy for 1935-1936**

Ordinary Income	18,468,717.83 francs		
Other Receipts	5,848,535.90 francs		
Total:	<b>24,317,253.73 francs</b>		
<i>European Contributions (francs):</i>			
France	4,799,034.44	Spain	385,968.96
Germany	4,307,415.52	England	357,375.00
Italy	1,203,561.90	Ireland	327,332.60
Holland	1,369,099.00	Poland	242,930.00
Belgium	1,026,976.28	Check-Slovakia	108,000.00
Switzerland	475,000.10	Other European countries	387,219.10
		Total	<b>14,974,912.81</b>
<i>American Contributions (francs):</i>			
United States	1,743,630.00	Argentina	183,723.05
Canada	438,431.33	Other American countries	101,952.65
		Total	<b>2,477,640.99</b>

*MD XX* (1937): 57-58.

Despite the support provided by the institution's Paris headquarters and local dioceses, day-to-day administration created significant challenges. In 1914, Francisco Aguirre, the apostolic vicar of Fuzhou, reports:

Although it is very comforting to receive so many girls [...] it is not very hard to see that we do not have enough resources to rescue more. In the year 1912, I finished with a deficit of 6,000 francs on my accounts; in 1913 the deficit was 16,825 francs that I have to cover with the capital that the Holy Infancy has here, but it seems this capital will not last too long.<sup>28</sup>

Again, in October 1917, Aguirre said in *Misiones Dominicanas* that he was eager to create orphanages in the main cities of the vicariate and to staff them with nuns, in order "to bring 10,000 girls to Heaven every year instead

28 Aguirre, "Relación de la Santa Infancia del Vicariato de Fo-Kian Norte," 42-48.

of 4,000.”<sup>29</sup> But Aguirre lacked sufficient funding. For example, in 1917, the number of girls under the care of wet-nurses in that vicariate was 600, while another 625 resided in the orphanage.<sup>30</sup> *Misiones Dominicanas* lists private donations,<sup>31</sup> but the administrators also began to explore other means of attracting funding, such as direct sponsorship.

Among the supporters of the missions in Fujian were the missionary nuns of Berriz (Vizcaya, Spain). Until 1919, this was a regular Mercedarian cloistered convent for nuns in the town of Berriz, but in that year, two missionaries on their way to China and India passed through and gave some lectures to the student interns. These presentations had a great impact on the religious figure in charge of the interns, Margarita López de Maturana, who developed an epistolar relation with the missionaries, and their enthusiasm was extended to the interns and to the convent itself. This enthusiasm can be seen, for example, in one of the letters of López de Maturana addressed to Bishop Aguirre of Fuzhou published in *Misiones Dominicanas* ([October 1921]: 343-44). The Association was divided into nine sections, one of which was responsible for the Fuzhou mission. In 1926, the first group of Mercedarian missionaries from Berriz arrived at the Jesuits mission in Wuhu (Anhui province). Other letters from China to Spain showed similar levels of enthusiasm, such as a 28 February 1925 letter from the girls of the holy infancy of Au-poa 後版 to donor girl students of the Dominican School in Villava (Navarre, Spain) to express appreciation for their financial support and to offer their benefactors some news from the mission.<sup>32</sup>

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29 *MD* II (1918): 18

30 *MD* II (1918): 237-38

31 For an example report, see *MD* VIII (1925): 93-94.

32 Dolores Ulíbarri, “A las niñas colegialas del cuarto de la Beata Imelda del Colegio de Madres Dominicanas de Villava,” *MD* VIII (1925): 175-77. We must add that the old convent of Berriz was transformed in 1930 into a missionary institute, retaking their original ideal of recovering captives from the infidels. See León Lopetegui, “El movimiento misionero en España, de 1914 a 1953,” *Studia Missionalia* 8 (1954): 210-11.

As for the allocation of donations to the orphanages, an overview to the official report, *AOPSI*, implies two different patterns depending on the area in question. For example, the general statement of 1862 includes a total of 3,992,136 reals collected globally from donations and how the alms were distributed.<sup>33</sup> These figures, however, do not include funds collected in Spain which were sent directly to Spanish missionary bishops abroad, rather than being routed through the institution's Paris headquarters; consequently, missionaries would later issue separate receipts to Paris and Madrid. This explains why the official figures reflect such low allocations to Fujian. Table 5 presents the total figures for China:

**Table 5: Distribution of Remittances to Holy Infancies in China (1862)**

Vicariate	Francs
Peking North	35,000
Peking South-West	20,000
Ho-Nan	18,000
Kian-Si	55,000
Tché-Kian	36,000
Ning-Po	50,000
Su-Tchuen (N-W)	45,000
Su-Tchuen (S-E)	25,000
Su-Tchuen (W)	12,000
Konen and Canton	40,000
<b>Fo-Kien</b>	<b>5,000</b>
Hong Kong	20,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>361,000</b>

*AOPSI* (1862): 296-98.

33 We presume that this quantity was equivalent to 1,057,176 francs, because this amount had been spent in the following way throughout the world: administration, trips, etc., was 84,703; remittances to missions all over the world was 835,500; and the remainder yet to be spent was 136,973. *AOPSI* (1862): 295.

This bifurcated allocation can be partly explained by the fact that even though many diocesan councils of the Holy Infancy were established early in 1852, they did not become very well organized until ten years later.<sup>34</sup> Beginning in 1933, remittances were recentralized and sent directly from the Holy Infancy headquarters, ending direct remittances from Spain.

In 1932, the Holy Infancy headquarters distributed a total of 795,980 francs to institutions worldwide, with more than 37% of the total (296,340 francs) destined for China, as shown in Table 6:<sup>35</sup>

**Table 6: Distribution of Remittances to Chinese Holy Infancies (1932)**

Vicariate of	Religious Order	Francs
Anking	Franciscan nuns	23,040
Anking	Jesuits	34,400
Wuhu	Jesuits	39,200
Yen An Fu	Franciscans	23,500
<b>Amoy</b>	<b>Dominicans</b>	<b>32,000</b>
<b>Foochow</b>	<b>Dominicans</b>	<b>48,500</b>
<b>Funing</b>	<b>Dominicans</b>	<b>18,500</b>
<b>Formosa</b>	<b>Dominicans</b>	<b>17,200</b>
Pingliang	Capuchins	14,500
Kweitehfu	Augustin Recolects	12,500
Changteh	Augustin Eremitans	20,000
Lickow	Augustin Eremitans	13,000
TOTAL:		296,340

*AOPSI* (1933): 130-31.

Assuming that the quantity of the allocations is proportional to the number of infants in the orphanages, we can see that the orphanages in the four vicariates of Fujian were the most heavily populated in all of China. These

<sup>34</sup> *AOPSI*, serie III, tomo I, no. II (1867): 5-11.

<sup>35</sup> Other destinations of funds were the holy infancies in Africa, South and Central America, and Oceania.

vicariates would divide the money proportionally into the different orphanages according to their needs.

## 5. The External Holy Infancies: External Care and Lactation

As soon as a new girl arrived at a holy infancy, the administrators must compensate the porters who brought her, and this compensation encouraged an unceasing flow of arrivals, putting the institutions under great financial stress. For example, up to 1918, the vicariate of Fuzhou accepted an average of 5,000 girls each year, requiring the porters to be “compensated with half peseta for each girl.”<sup>36</sup> This procedure was at the center of some controversy. The missionaries strenuously denied that they were buying human beings, but rather were compensating the effort of those who had brought the children to the orphanage as, absent this compensation, the children would have been left to die elsewhere. In many cases, however, girls were left at the orphanage without demand for compensation. Bishop Aguirre reported in 1914: “In Kien-nin-fu, Fr. Quiñones received in 1913, 13 girls abandoned in the streets and roads. He said that people have offered to him 80 girls, but he cannot handle so many.”<sup>37</sup> The subsequent concern for the missionaries, and the main aim of the Holy Infancy, was to administer the sacrament of Baptism to the wretched girls as soon as they arrived at the orphanage, because many of the new arrivals did not survive long.

Until about the age of 3, the girls lived away from the orphanage with wet-nurses under a system Fr. Blasco called the “external” holy infancy; however, the vicariate continued to assume legal responsibility for the girls. Recruitment difficulties often resulted in shortages of wet-nurses. When selecting wet-nurses, the missionaries gave preference to Catholic women who

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36 *MD* II (1918): 238.

37 Aguirre, “Relación de la Santa Infancia del Vicariato de Fo-Kian Norte,” 42-48.

were not only presumed to be more likely to assist, but would also provide a better environment for the girls' early education as Christians and because the missionaries could better use their authority to address potential problems or, if necessary, remove the child from the woman's care. Nuns cited several problems in dealing with wet-nurses including:

- a) Wet-nurses might seek to change a girl's identity. To prevent this, the orphanage administrators would sometimes make a secret mark on the child's body by which she could be identified, thus ensuring the child could be retrieved.<sup>38</sup>
- b) Wet-nurses would declare a child had died, and then keep the child for themselves. To prevent this, vicariate authorities would require wet-nurses to present the child's body.<sup>39</sup>
- c) Wet-nurses or their family might try to adopt the girl as a sim-pu-a, an undesirable outcome from the missionaries' standpoint as such girls were more likely to end up in abusive marriages or domestic situations. In such cases, the missionary would first file a report with the local district authority (Tê-pó) and, if necessary, appeal to a civil tribunal.<sup>40</sup>
- d) Wet-nurses could be highly demanding and each assignment entailed a degree of negotiation for benefits or compensation. Sister Encarnación Pérez, from the holy infancy of Zhangle 長樂 (Tsiangló), reported: "Before a wet-nurse decides to take care of the baby, we start a kind of bargaining. First, they complain about the physical situation of the girl [...]. Wet-nurses are unhappy with the clothing provided for the child [...]. After a long conversation, they take the girl, but we cannot be totally sure that the matter is settled."<sup>41</sup>
- e) Finally, there was the issue of payment for wet-nurses. Catholic or otherwise,

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38 Blasco, "La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy," 54.

39 Ibid., 55; Escalé, "La Santa Infancia de Ngu-chen," 213.

40 Blasco, "La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy," 56.

41 Encarnación Pérez de Giriza, "La Santa Infancia de Tsiangló (Yem-pín)," *MD X* (1927): 3.

wet-nurses expected compensation, though Catholic wet-nurses were expected to be more compassionate and cooperative in response to acute need. While the standard compensation would be two pesos per month, this was frequently beyond the financial means of the vicarage, and wet-nurses often only received half that.<sup>42</sup> The account by Sor Joaquina to the holy infancy of Lyon presents a detailed description of the arrival of girls at the Amoy orphanage, along with their incorporation into the external holy infancy, and the tasks performed by the nuns and beatas.<sup>43</sup>

## 6. The Internal Holy Infancies: Nourishment and Education

According to Blasco, the girls surviving to the age of 5 or 6 were then returned to the orphanage. If the wet-nurse was reluctant to return the girl in her care, a missionary would be sent to collect her. If the wet-nurse's family was deemed to be trustworthy (e.g., if the family was Christian), the girl might be left in the care of the wet-nurse, who would then have to refund the 30-40 pesos the holy infancy had provided for her care. In that case, the missionary was required to ensure that the girls would not be held as a bonded servant or as a candidate for a minor marriage.<sup>44</sup>

In the orphanage, meals were served in bowls, with the girls seated on simple benches in an inner courtyard for larger groups, while smaller groups would eat in interior rooms. Contemporary photographs show elder girls being served meals by the nuns and staff, without specific work assignments during meal times.

According to Blasco, “[F]rom five or six years old to ten or twelve [...]

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42 Blasco, “Relación sobre la Santa Infancia,” 136.

43 Joaquina del Santísimo Sacramento, “Relación hecha para el Director de la Santa Infancia de Lyon,” 35-64.

44 Blasco, “La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy,” 63-64.

the girls only are playing, eating, sleeping and studying the basic rudiments of religion and catechism. These are all their obligations.”<sup>45</sup> Their first communion was an important milestone in their lives, for which they wore special dresses. Photographs were taken to be sent to their protectors abroad.

For social education, from the age of 6 to 10, the girls remained under the guidance of religious women. Fr. Blasco said in 1907 (still during the Qing dynasty) that those that did not take a vocation to become *beatas* would start binding their feet in preparation for their future marriage. During these years, the girls learned how to cook, sew, wash clothes, etc. Finally, when they were mature, they could decide upon their future: marrying or becoming *beatas* or nuns.

Dominican missionary sources provide frequent reports criticising footbinding, but their ambivalence towards the practice capitulated to local customs. However, in 1874, sixty Protestant women gathered in Xiamen to discuss the issue under the auspices of the local pastor, and created an association to persuade the local women of their church to not subject their own daughters to foot binding. Protestant pastors in Fuzhou also opposed the practice in the local press.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of the education of the girls, Fr. Blasco continues his report of 1907 saying:

[The period] from nine or ten years old to 20 or 22, when they often get married, is the hardest time for the girls, ending for them the time of regular leisure. They have bound feet, so they refuse to do any exercise. They don't accompany the younger ones for a walk. They take care of the washing rooms and other house chores. Some clean clothes, other cook, some learn

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45 Ibid., 64.

46 Jessie G. Lutz, *Mission Dilemmas: Bride Price, Minor Marriage, Concubinage, Infanticide and Education of Women*, Occasional Publications 16 (New Haven: Yale Divinity School Library, 2002), 9-11.

how to make clothes, thresh rice, and all of them have to learn all the things that will need in the future.<sup>47</sup>

## 7. Leaving the Orphanage

Many girls in the holy infancies left upon getting married, after their education in their mid- to late teens had focused on the skills that they would need as wives in local households. The nuns were responsible for making a good match for the girls, one that would situate them in a safe environment. Making a good match for an orphan girl represented a successful outcome for the missionaries, and wedding ceremonies were reported in missionary newsletters and correspondence. For example, *Correo Sino-Annamita* in 1916 describes the processional committee accompanying a holy infancy girl on her wedding day and provides other details on the wedding ceremony.<sup>48</sup> While comprehensive statistics are difficult to come by, the vicariate of Fuzhou reported in 1904 that six girls got married, while one of the 71 girls in the holy infancy of Gu-chen 龍田 was married, as were five of the 47 girls in the holy infancy of Pin-hay 平海.<sup>49</sup>

In 1923, *Misiones Dominicanas* presented several stories on how the nuns in charge of the orphanages had to screen marriage proposals to ensure the safety of their wards.<sup>50</sup> For example, a letter from Sister Presentación Guerendiáin to her father, in which she first invites him to be the [distant] godfather of the girls under her care who would be getting married in the coming months, describes the displeasure of the mother superior at the

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47 Blasco, "La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy," 67-68.

48 "Letter from Fr. Giner to the Provincial, Takao-Lieng á Hao, 20 of April 1915," *CSA* (1916): 420-24.

49 "Statistical annexes," *CSA* 41 (1916): 418-424.

50 Dolores del S. C. de Jesús, "Episodios de las Santas Infancias," *MD VI* (1923): 358-61.

prospective mothers-in-law, who “when they can see the candidates, come always as soon as possible to choose the younger and pretty girl, but the elder ones that are not so nice or even ugly they also want to get married. Besides we have to be very careful to know if the husband-to-be is a widower, or an old person, because in that case he cannot marry a young girl.”<sup>51</sup> Sister Guerendiáin also pointed out that the girls were not forced to get married and had considerable latitude in making a choice of their own: “For one of them we are preparing now the necessary clothes, but she does not know yet anything about the marriage we are preparing for her. Once she knows the person, if she manifests opposition, we look for another one and everybody is happy.” The 1924 issue provides a more detailed description of the marriage preparations for five girls in Fuzhou.<sup>52</sup>

All of these reports provided useful material for soliciting further sympathy and donations. For example, in the 1932 issue of the apostolic prefect of Taiwan, de la Hoz mentioned that suitable marriages had been arranged for all of the girls, which he attributes to two possible causes: “The dowries required for holy infancy girls are lower than for other girls, and the holy infancy girls also enjoy good reputation.”<sup>53</sup> He added that sometimes the girls would receive marriage requests before they reached the proper age, making it easy to find them a suitable husband through the sixty Catholic churches scattered throughout Taiwan. Despite being raised under the care of foreign Spanish nuns, the girls were still culturally Chinese, fluent in the language, and comfortable operating within local social customs and mores.<sup>54</sup>

As an alternative to marriage, the girls had the option of becoming

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51 Presentación Guerendiáin, “Como se casan las chinas de la Santa Infancia,” *MD VI* (1923): 328.

52 Trinidad Arraiza, “Frutos de la Santa Infancia,” *MD VI* (1924): 376-79.

53 de la Hoz, “La Santa Infancia en Formosa,” 179.

54 This can be seen, for example, in a report of José Vicente Blasco about the holy infancy of Amoy. *CSA 35* (1907): 67-68.

either beatas or nuns, which is presumably a more rewarding outcome for the missionaries. In 1932, of the 23 beatas in Taiwan, six came from the holy infancy.<sup>55</sup> *Misiones Dominicanas* in 1943 reports four girls “graduating” from the holy infancy of Mamoy 馬尾, with two getting married and two taking vows as nuns. One such nun, Min Tai-chu, managed the forced transfer of the Fuzhou orphanage operations to the new communist regime in 1927 and later joined the congregation of Saint Paul of Chartres in Hong Kong. Another graduate, Alu Ni-muey, the daughter of a Christian man and a Creole woman from Reunion Island, actively served at a holy infancy and later took her vows as a novitiate in Hong Kong.

## 8. Statistical Figures

Quantifying the abandonment of girls in the three Fujian vicariates during the 19<sup>th</sup> century presents difficulties due to a lack of primary data. In practice, beginning in 1881, local missionaries would provide their superiors in the Philippines with statistics for publication in *Correo Sino-Annamita*. However, these figures were not particularly systematic. An attempt to systematize the data was undertaken in 1884, but data for the holy infancies was only included in the years 1890, 1892, and 1896 (see table 7). From 1898 to 1901, *Correo Sino-Annamita* temporarily ceased publication because of the Spanish-American War. It resumed in 1902, but with less comprehensive reporting, and no issues were published in 1904, 1909, and 1912 due to social unrest associated with the collapse of the Qing dynasty as well as 1915. The last issue was published in 1916 and its reporting responsibilities were taken over by *Misiones Dominicanas* which, while providing more comprehensive general reporting, did not include systematic statistical data.

Table 7 presents available statistical data from the Amoy vicariate at the

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55 de la Hoz, “La Santa Infancia en Formosa,” 177-80.

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Table 7: Girls in the Orphanages of the Amoy Vicariate (1890-1896)**

		1890		1892		1896		1904
Amoy 廈門	Rescued girls	24	0%	442	53%			
	Deceased girls	24	<i>surv</i>	208	<i>surv</i>			
	External orphanage	26						96
	Internal orphanage	65		55				
	Nuns and native novices in charge	(3+5)						
Au-poa 後版	Rescued girls	714	20%			566	21%	
	Deceased girls	575	<i>surv</i>			447	<i>surv</i>	
	External orphanage (with wet-nurses)	148						366
	Internal orphanage	55		33		112		
	Nuns and native novices in charge	(2+3)						
Kang-boe 港尾	Rescued girls	120	44%					
	Deceased girls	67	<i>surv</i>					
	External orphanage	55						217
	Internal orphanage	15		10				
	Nuns and native novices in charge	(2+0)						

1890: *CSA* 25 (1891): statistical annexes.

1896: *CSA* 30 (1897): statistical annexes.

1892: *CSA* 27 (1893): statistical annexes.

1904: *CSA* 33 (1905): statistical annexes.

Note: No statistical data for holy infancies is available for the years 1891, 1893, 1894, 1895 and 1897.

These figures are difficult to interpret, exemplified by the proportion of surviving (*surv.*) girls to deceased girls.<sup>56</sup> The Amoy data seem contradictory, while those from Kang-boe 港尾 seem exaggerated. Only the data for Au-poa remain consistent over the two-year period and seem both more reasonable and representative with around 20% of the girls arriving to the orphanage surviving.

<sup>56</sup> It seems that, in 1892, 442 girls were received in the orphanage, almost half of which (208) died upon arrival or in the few days to come. The survivors (234) supposedly were given to wet-nurses, but these large figures are difficult to reconcile with the smaller number of those residing in the orphanage (55). Most likely the actual survival rate was less than the 53% reported. All operations were managed by 10 women, either nuns or novices. The orphanages of Au-poa and Kang-boe were next in terms of importance. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were more orphanages, but most were on a very small scale and are not included here for the purpose of simplicity and clarity.

This high mortality rate is confirmed in one note accompanying the figure of 714 rescued girls in 1890: “This number includes girls rescued in Nia-tao and Soa-sia, because those surviving (which are very few) are brought to be educated in the orphanage of Aupoa, remaining with wet-nurses until three and a half years old.” Additionally, Fr. Jimeno, commenting on the 112 girls in the Aupoa internal orphanage (ranging in age from 3 to 12 years old), said: “They are learning how to sew, weave, make socks, wash, everything that a responsible housewife must do, and especially to be good Christians.”<sup>57</sup>

Unfortunately, reports from the 20<sup>th</sup> century were simplified, offering only a single number, thus probably combining the girls in the internal and external infancies. While these years show an increasing systemization of data collection, it is difficult to ascertain trends.

**Table 8: Girls in Amoy Vicariate Orphanages (1906-1913)**

	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Amoy 廈門	152	189		150	154		197	52
Au-poa 後版	328	350		151	142		112	56
Kang-boe 港尾	160	161		166	203		209	36
Chiang-chiu 漳州	123			130	83			
Chioh/be	87	87		64	52			
Tang-Oa 同安?	7	10		14			6	
Lampilau	4	5		8	5			
An-khoe 安溪?				2	1			
Soa-sia	13			17	14		7	
Fangoa					8			

57 “Carta del P. Jimeno al P. Provincial. Aupoa. 24 January 1896,” *CSA* 30 (1897): 100.

	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Chiu-pho	2							
Kang-khau		4						
Total	776	806		702	662		531	

Sources: 1906: *CSA* 35 (1907): statistical annexes. 1910: *CSA* 38 (1911): statistical annexes.  
 1907: *CSA* 36 (1908): statistical annexes. 1911: *CSA* was not published.  
 1908: *CSA* was not published. 1912: *CSA* 39 (1913): statistical annexes.  
 1909: *CSA* 37 (1910): statistical annexes. 1913: *CSA* 40 (1914): statistical annexes.

This table confirms the enduring importance of the three orphanages of Amoy, Au-poa, and Kang-boe, as well as showing an overall decline in the total number of girls in residence.

For the Fujian-North vicariate (Fuzhou) in 1891-1892, only a single orphanage is mentioned, probably the one in Fuzhou under the care of three Dominican nuns which cared for 65 girls in the orphanage and an additional 270 maintained externally by wet-nurses.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the data of years 1906-1913 in Fuzhou are similar to those in Amoy:

**Table 9: Girls in Fuzhou Vicariate Orphanages (1906-1913)**

	1906	1907	1908	1909		1910		1911	1912		1913	
				in houses	in the orphanage	married	single		married	single	married	single
Fuzhou 福州	476	240		180	130		379		40	350	29	329
Mamoy 馬尾	79	40		60			106		2	50		163
Pin-hay 平海	42	68		50			13		2	24		
Haysan 海壇島	3	11		11			13		1	17	3	15
Gu-chen 龍田	148	48		104		7	96		8	53		

<sup>58</sup> *CSA* 26 (1892): statistical annexes.

	1906	1907	1908	1909		1910		1911	1912		1913	
An-tao 涵江	32	60					34		6	35		
Hin-hua 興化				34	10							
Total	780	467		439	140		641					

Sources: 1906: *CSA* 35 (1907): statistical annexes. 1910: *CSA* 38 (1911): statistical annexes.  
 1907: *CSA* 36 (1908): statistical annexes. 1911: *CSA* was not published.  
 1908: *CSA* was not published. 1912: *CSA* 39 (1913): statistical annexes.  
 1909: *CSA* 37 (1910): statistical annexes. 1913: *CSA* 40 (1914): statistical annexes.

In 1909, the missionary reports started differentiating between internal and external infancy wards, and later reports began including additional information, such as numbers of marriages. This was likely at the urging of the vicar of Fuzhou, Fr. Aguirre, who in 1911 was appointed as apostolic prefect by the Holy See. In fact, Aguirre was very active in reporting the holy infancies' conditions to *Misiones Dominicanas*.<sup>59</sup>

## 9. Comparison with Protestant and Civil Orphanages

Protestant orphanages were also widespread in China. From some of them we have references, such as the Diocesan Native Female Training School founded in Hong Kong in 1860, which was renamed the Diocesan Boys School and Orphanage in 1869.<sup>60</sup> Other cases refer to the work of British Anglican missionaries in Gutian 古田 and Pingyang 平陽, and also in some districts of Fujian, from late 1892 to mid-1895. This was the site of the Huashan 華山 massacre (1 August 1895),

<sup>59</sup> There was a third vicariate, the one of Fu'an, but its data was included within the reports of Fuzhou. For example, 193 girls were reported in the Fu'an orphanage in 1913, of whom only one married, while the Gutian (Kesen) orphanage reported 6 girls, along with another 6 who married.

<sup>60</sup> W. T. Featherstone, *The Diocesan Boys School and Orphanage, Hong Kong: The History and Records, 1869 to 1929* (Hong Kong, 1930).

in which some missionary women were killed some 25 years after the Tianjin Massacre.<sup>61</sup>

Dominican missionaries of Fujian reported some general differences between Protestant and Catholic orphanages based on their experience. For example, Fr. Blasco mentioned in 1908:

The Protestants in these two prefectures of Chiang-chiu 漳州 and Chông-chou 泉州 only receive grown up girls, with the idea of educating them as catechists for women. Also, I think that they only receive them in the area of the Amoy harbor, not having any building for that [...]. Better to say these places are like storage for girls, providing girls to those looking for a little spouse [*sim-pu-a*], or slave, or something worse; and the proof of that is that they do not have girls older than 3 or 4 years old.<sup>62</sup>

Scholars note other differences. For example, Jessie G. Lutz mentions that Protestant pastors also forbade infanticide, but sometimes they had to accept unwanted girls from Christian mothers.<sup>63</sup> D. E. Mungello expresses in a more general view that Catholic missionaries in China were devoted to establishing orphanages to save the weak, while Protestant missionaries founded schools and hospitals to foster the strong.<sup>64</sup>

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61 These missionaries were settled in a district centre such as Gutian, or in a village such as Dong Gio or Sek Chek Du, visiting smaller villages, rarely staying more than one or two days. Through this process, missions built up a network of village congregations, schools, leper villages, orphanages and medical clinics. See Ian Welch, "Women's Work for Women: Women Missionaries in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China" (presentation, Eighth Women in Asia Conference 2005, University of Technology, Sydney, 26-28 September 2005).

62 Blasco, "Relación sobre la Santa Infancia," *CSA* 36 (1908): 128-29.

63 Lutz, *Mission Dilemmas*, 15.

64 D. E. Mungello, *Drowning Girls in China: Female Infanticide since 1650* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 83. This view of Mungello is more in tune with the retrospective long report made during communist times about the protestant orphanage of Xiadu 下渡 in Fuzhou. The report says that the orphanage started in 1910 accommodating

As for the government orphanages, the Dominican missionary Gentili in Fujian reported: “This year [1876] the pagans, after several requests from the Court, have opened four new orphanages in every gate of the city, besides the one they had before [...]”<sup>65</sup> Two decades later, in 1891, a letter from Fr. Burnó reports a public orphanage under the responsibility of local mandarins, located near the village of Kang-boe.<sup>66</sup> This orphanage accepted 25 to 30 girls daily, but this rose to 45 in 1890 (due to infestation rather than famine), resulting in overwhelmed administrators offering girls to anyone interested in adopting them, with the remaining ones being carried out in baskets to be sold in nearby villages.

Blasco also mentioned in 1907 that the orphanages under the administration of the mandarins [in places such as Xiamen] were established

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100 orphans (not abandoned girls) over the age of 5 or 6 and operated under the scheme of an elementary school. Later, it was expanded with workshops reaching 300 students and some of them were sent to study abroad. For example, “in 1950, 207 were in elementary schools in China and the United States, another 58 were studying abroad (for the future help in the churches), 12 were in wood workshops, 10 were in printing workshops, and others few in the farm of the orphanage.” The person reporting on the life of this orphanage during pre-communist times reflects some admiration for the work done, but at the same time, he said that the level of education in the school was not good, since only few people can continue their studies in secondary school, creating a division among those that remain with manual education and those pursuing higher studies, who look down upon the other ones. Other criticisms he made are that the orphanage, which was advertised as charity, and its operating method was in fact completely capitalist for the sake of growing its real state. Finally, he said that it had had a certain degree of influence in politics, economy, culture, religion and other aspects in the lives of those in Fuzhou. See Qiuxinyancai 秋心彥材, “Fujian gueryuan jianji” 福建孤兒院簡記, in *Jidujiao Tianzhujiao bian* 基督教天主教編, *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian* 文史資料選編, vol. 5, ed. Fujiansheng zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 福建省政協文史資料委員會 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2003), 580-81.

65 “Letter of Fr. Gentili to the Provincial in the Philippines. 5 November 1876,” *CSA* 12 (1878): 79-80.

66 “Carta de Fr. Burnó to the Provincial. Lampilao. 7 April 1891,” *CSA* 25 (1891): 68-70.

along the Catholic and Protestant example.<sup>67</sup> Blasco offered praise for some civil orphanages organized by wealthy Chinese, saying that they were even better organized than those of the Protestants. These orphanages, he reports, accepted all girls brought to them, but then sought to immediately place them in families as *sim-pu-a* for a minor marriage or as junior servants, providing the family with a one-*peso* subsidy to cover the child's immediate nourishment requirements. As a result, these orphanages had rapid turnover and did not have girls older than 3 or 4 years old. Blasco praises these orphanages in that they actively rescued girls and placed them with families, but notes that they did not place emphasis on their development, with the orphanages organized more as warehouses for young girls awaiting a buyer. This evokes and even complements the different Chinese vision that we presented at the beginning of this paper; that is, it is based on the one hand on the law of karma (of retribution and punishment) to explain the girls' situation, and on the other hand, on Confucian action (based on rationalization and persuasion), complemented now with practical solutions. The other side is represented by Palatré's quantitative approach, which is preoccupied by the girls' spiritual salvation and ascension to heaven for those who died, and for finding a dignified situation for those who survive to adulthood.

Blasco added also that these civil orphanages, such as the one in Zhangzhou (Chiang-chiu), raised an additional problem in terms of using the girls for arbitrage. A family would adopt a girl from the civil orphanage and collect the one-*peso* sustenance subsidy, and then turn around and give up the same girl to the holy infancy of Au-poa, which would provide an additional *peso* as incentive, thus simply moving the girls from one institution to another while siphoning off funds from both. Once this issue came to light, the civil and Catholic orphanages coordinated to eliminate the incentives for this trade.

A final comparison with the government orphanages was made by Bishop

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67 Blasco, "La Santa Infancia en el Vicariato Apostólico de Emuy," 52.

Aguirre, who reports in 1914: “In the cities of Yem-pin, Kien-nin and Fun-nin the mandarins made a kind of orphanage, but since those taking care of the girls do not have charity and do not administer properly the money, many people prefer to send their girls to us.”<sup>68</sup> The missionaries thus imply that the government orphanages perpetuated the “orphanage culture” as explained by Catherine Neimetz, who refers to a kind of adult-directed caregiving “with interactions confined mostly to routine physical care, [and] the caregivers’ overall interactions with the children as emotionally detached.”<sup>69</sup>

## 10. Beginning and End of the Holy Infancies

Most of these modern holy infancies (as opposed to those of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>70</sup>) were created in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting with the one in Fuzhou in 1857, only 13 years after the establishment of the Holy Infancy in France. In the report of 1868 introducing all 14 districts of the Fujian vicariate, only Fuzhou is mentioned as having “a place to receive abandoned girls, under the direction of two Dominican religious women of the Tertiary Order.”<sup>71</sup> This magnifies the efforts of Fr. Saínz, who started the Formosa mission in 1859 and established a provisional orphanage in Tainan 臺南 two years later. Without proper resources or support, the Tainan institution shut down a few years after his departure from Taiwan in 1869. The second

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68 Aguirre, “Relación de la Santa Infancia del Vicariato de Fo-Kian Norte,” 42-48.

69 Catherine Neimetz, “Culture of Caregiving in a Faith-Based Orphanage in Northeastern China,” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2007), 35.

70 For a case study of Spanish Franciscan missions in Shandong, Jiangxi, Guangzhou and Fujian during the years 1729 to 1774, see Marina Torres Trimállez, “Franciscans, Baptisms and Rescues of Abandoned Children in Eighteenth Century China: A Point of Charity?” *Cauriensia* XIII (2018): 503-28.

71 “Letter from the Vicar of Fukien, Fr. Ignacio Ortúzar, to the Provincial of the Philippines. Hoeng. 26 of December, 1867,” *CSA* 3 (1868): 78.

important holy infancy was in Xiamen, especially when the apostolic vicariate of Fujian was divided in 1883 into Fujian North (Fuzhou) and Fujian South (Xiamen).

The foundation of new orphanages followed a similar pattern. Typically, a priest would take it upon himself to establish a provisional orphanage to address local problems, and then seek approval and financing from his superiors for its permanent establishment. This was the case of Fernando Sainz (1861) and of the later creation of the orphanage in Longun 羅源 (1909). Other patterns included the establishment of a branch of an existing orphanage to handle overflow or to expand the coverage area. For example, the orphanage in Fuzhou established two branches in Nguchen (Gu-chen) in 1895 and Mamoy in 1899 to respectively accommodate twelve and eight girls for whom the original facility had insufficient room.

During the early years of the Republican period of China, Fujian featured a constellation of institutions with different administrative structures, each seeking to best alleviate suffering under the rapidly changing political conditions within China. An especially notorious case was the arrival of the Kuomintang armies in Fuzhou in 1927, accompanied by young marxist revolutionaries who dislodged the nuns and orphans to take over the orphanage building for their own use.<sup>72</sup>

The situation in Taiwan started to change after the Japanese took control in 1905. Japan's infanticide practices were similar to those of China, but by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, authorities had begun to discourage the practice, with the Meiji court seeking to abolish it entirely. In this context, the Japanese authorities

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72 This particular incident was reported in detail in publications of the missionaries. Modern Chinese reports about the history of the Catholic Church in China just only mention it without offering details. See Lin Quan 林泉, "Fuzhou Tianzhutang zhi youlai ji qi yanbian" 福州天主堂之由來及其演變, in *Jidujiao Tianzhujiao bian* 基督教天主教編, *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian* 文史資料選編, vol. 5, ed. Fujiansheng zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 福建省政協文史資料委員會 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2003), 5.

established measures that raised challenges for orphanages. In 1907, Fr. Giner reports:

No one can change residence without registering with the police of the new district, and must obtain in advance a copy of the registration in the original district. This raises a lot of problems when we have to receive girls. Many times they come without previous registration, and then we cannot register them, because the police request the place of birth, the name and surname of the parents. If we were to admit they were not registered, we would be abused and required to pay a fine.<sup>73</sup>

In 1911, Fr. Rodríguez noted a shift from the abandonment of girls towards selling them into prostitution: “Today the human industry [...] had improved its merchandise. The former ruthless parents who kill or abandon their girls after the birth, had become merchants without conscience, that feed their small creatures in order to sell them at 300 or 500 dollars in a prostitution house, or the girls became a kind of living real estate that give the parents a daily income.”<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a progressive shift from the use of orphanages to regular schools for girls, known in Fujian as “schools for Chinese girls” (*escuelas de tártaras*). Taiwan presents a clear example in the foundation of the Blessed Imelda School 靜修, which in this case was mainly for Japanese girls.

In Taiwan, the traditional holy infancy of Takao was shut down in 1941 by the Japanese prefect Mgrs. Satowaki, with the remaining orphans being distributed to Christian families of the city.<sup>75</sup> In Fujian, the Chinese communist regime dissolved the holy infancies there in 1952, with administration duties being assumed by government officials similar to when the communists

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73 “Letter from Fr. Giner to the Provincial. Soa-kha. 8 August 1907,” *CSA* 35 (1907): 592-94.

74 “Letter from Fr. Rodríguez to the Provincial. Chiu á Kha. December 1911,” *CSA* 39 (1913): 333-50.

75 *Province of St. Vicent Ferrer: Mission 100 Years* (Taipei, 2003), 105.

took over Fuzhou in 1927.<sup>76</sup> However, while the newly established People's Republic of China strongly condemned infanticide, the practice endured. As Karin Evans notes: "Infanticide, the saddest evidence of ancient prejudice, was on the wane after the Communists came to power in 1949, but severe hardship—first in terms of agricultural disaster of unprecedented proportions, then the government's strict population policies—soon caused a resurgence."<sup>77</sup>

## 11. Conclusion: Women Working for Women

Investigating infanticide and the abandonment of girls along with the establishment and operations of rescuing institutions is complicated by incomplete primary sources. While scattered statistical information and personal reports provide some insight, it is difficult to discern long-term trends describing the evolution of orphanages, not only because local clergy were either unable or not incentivized to collect accurate data, but also because, as noted by Bernice J. Lee, "Westerners who described the practice were prone to exaggerate its extent, and Chinese scholars rarely mentioned it. Those who did practice infanticide were very unlikely to discuss it outside the family, let alone with a complete outsider."<sup>78</sup> This reflects that while infanticide may have been denounced publicly in China, there was no incentive for officials to actually act against it. Christian missionaries collected data based on their own daily experience, but may have been prone to exaggeration in reporting of second-hand accounts or unconfirmed suspicions.

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76 B. Martínez, ed., "Heroismo de las niñas de la Santa Infancia de Foochow," *MD* XIII (1930): 303; Francisco Aguirre, "Las niñas de la Santa Infancia en libertad," *MD* XV (1932): 11-13.

77 Karin Evans, *The Lost Daughters of China: Adopted Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 99.

78 Bernice J. Lee, "Female Infanticide in China," *Historical Reflections* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 163.

Among Chinese elites, the rescue of abandoned girls was seen as a noble philanthropic activity and a useful expedient as it quickly placed the girls with a family, though the actual treatment they would receive within the family was still open to question. In the case of Catholic orphanages, the rescued girls would enter a family structure managed by two kinds of women: religious figures (beatas or nuns) and wet-nurses. The interaction between these three kinds of women took place in the orphanage, where they sought to keep the girls alive and prepare them for an uncertain future. The orphanages adequately prepared girls for marriage, providing an upbringing similar to that available in peasant families, and offered outcomes more favorable than the *sim-pu-a* model, in which the girls would be adopted by a family as a domestic servant or as a potential bride for a son, thus minimizing domestic costs. This custom was the primary concern for missionaries in ensuring that girls returned to the orphanage from their “external infancy” at the age of 3, rather than remaining with the wet-nurses’ families. Returning to the orphanage allowed them to continue their development to secure a suitable marriage.

The Catholic orphanages, or holy infancies, were first established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as charitable concerns, but only achieved long-term sustainability in the 1860s thanks to international relief funds from the Holy Infancy headquarters. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a model emerged with four or five holy infancies per Chinese prefecture, which were frequently the target of suspicion and superstition. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the orphanages enjoyed more stability, better facilities, and more social respect, but operated in a broader context of extensive efforts by missions or local parishes. Finally, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the holy infancies were either dissolved or taken over by government authorities. This happened much earlier in Taiwan, where they were minimized because of the Japanese government’s prohibition of infanticide and enforcement of birth registrations.

Regarding the overall impact of the orphanages, Paul A. Cohen notes that even if these institutions were misunderstood by the Chinese and provided

a major focal point of anti-foreign popular sentiment, they addressed a clear need.<sup>79</sup> Though the orphanages were never able to completely dispel the cloud of suspicion among local residents, they gradually enjoyed more acceptance during the Republican period, though with exceptions, including communist antireligious and antiforeigner campaigns, as in Fuzhou in 1927. However, it remains clear that the institution of the Holy Infancy contributed to the development of the new concept—revolutionary to the popular Chinese conception—that girls should be seen as having dignity equal to that of boys, and that this provided a significant impetus for the development of progressive universal education for girls.

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# 十九及二十世紀在福建的 天主教孤兒院

鮑 曉 鷗\*

## 摘 要

十九世紀後半葉，有許多的組織團體開始在中國興建孤兒院，其目的是為了要預防殺嬰的現象蔓延，並且拯救嬰兒的生命。這些機構部分由地方政府與佛教團體所創立，不過天主教和新教亦扮演著舉足輕重的角色。早在十七世紀開始，就已經有一些天主教傳教士在各處興建孤兒院。而到了十九世紀，一個名叫聖嬰（Holy Infancy）的國際組織（一個透過募資來支援國際任務的非營利組織）在 1843 年成立，以及 1858 年天津條約的簽訂而開放港口，皆擴大了孤兒院在中國四處的發展。這種現象一直持續到 20 世紀中葉。為了進一步理解這個議題，本文將聚焦於福建及臺灣，由來自西班牙的道明會修女以及來自菲律賓與中國的 *beatas*（貞女、真福）的合作，在十九世紀末到二十世紀初間所經營的孤兒院。從中進一步分析這些機構的服務範疇與組織特性。並且理解這些常有所聞的棄女嬰現象，如何反應了特定時空背景下、許多在中國的家庭所持有的習俗觀及其所遭受的日常困境。此外，本文也試圖理解這些機構的設立宗旨與執行，如何定位在其對於被棄養女嬰的人性尊嚴的維護，並且期許透過撫養與教育的手段來改善她們日後的生活境遇。

**關鍵詞：**殺嬰，孤兒，福建，道明會修女，貞女，姑婆

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