The Puzzle of Korean Christianity: Geopolitical Networks and Religious Conversion in Early Twentieth-Century East Asia[1]

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This article uses the puzzle of Christian success in Korea to develop a model for understanding religious diffusion beyond national borders. The authors argue that the microlevel network explanations that dominate the research on conversion cannot by themselves account for the unusual success of Protestantism in Korea. Instead, events in East Asia in macrolevel, geopolitical networks provoked nationalist rituals that altered the stakes of conversion to either promote or retard conversion network growth. At the turn of the 20th century, unequal treaties both opened this region to missionaries and provoked nationalist rituals. In China and Japan, these rituals generated patriotic identities by attacking Christianity, and network growth slowed or reversed. In Korea, Christianity became compatible with these rituals, and conversion networks grew. This example highlights the greater explanatory power of nested networks for understanding international religious diffusion, relative to microlevel accounts alone.

THE PUZZLE OF CHRISTIAN SUCCESS IN KOREA

When newspapers reported in 2007 that 23 Korean Christians were kidnapped by the Taliban, many Americans may have been surprised to learn that Korea had become the world's second largest source of Chris-

tian missionaries (Onishi 2004). In fact, Christians constitute nearly one-third of the Korean population (Onishi 2004). These are astonishing figures, given that Christian adherents represent 3% and 2%, respectively, of the populations of China and Japan (U.S. Department of State 2007). The success of Protestant Christianity in Korea has been an anomaly in Asia, and in this article we develop a theoretical framework for understanding this historical puzzle.

The unusual success of Protestantism in Korea has captivated a number of scholars (Palmer 1967; Adams 1995; Mullins and Young 1995; Lee 2000; Park 2003; Oak 2005). Park (2003) summarizes the explanations advanced in earlier work, only to dismiss each as unpersuasive. Some have argued that Christianity's greater success in Korea was due to the fact that elements of Korean folk religion bore strong similarities to Christianity (e.g., Palmer 1967), but Catholicism shared the same theological affinities and was not successful (Park 2003). Other scholars have emphasized the role of Christian social and political activism in Protestant success, but Park (2003, p. 14) writes that this argument is ahistorical: the church continued to grow even while avoiding nationalist, anti-Japanese activity. Finally, another group of scholars (e.g., Moffett 1998) attributes Protestant success to the mission methods used in Korea, but these same methods were used in Japan and China, with both better funding and staffing, yet Christianity foundered in those countries (Park 2003). Instead, Park (2003, p. 17) argues that the emergence of Japanese imperialism and colonial rule helped eliminate Korean hostility toward Western countries, thus proposing a geopolitical answer to a long-standing religious puzzle.[2] These historical accounts provide an important departure point for understanding more specifically how geopolitical dynamics can affect the microlevel phenomenon of religious conversion.

In this article we will demonstrate that microlevel theories of conversion alone cannot account for Christian success in Korea. We argue instead that the macrolevel sets a context for the microlevel; more specifically, geopolitical networks provoke nationalist rituals that alter the stakes of conversion at the microlevel. The puzzle of Christian success in Korea can therefore allow us to develop a more general model of religious diffusion. In the next sections we sketch this model and how it fits into current research before turning to a discussion of the shortcomings of microlevel approaches to conversion and the empirical cases.

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[2] Like Park, Adams (1995) and Lee (2000) have acknowledged the potential contribution of this geopolitical dynamic to Protestant success, but this was not a focus of their research, and neither of these authors did a systematic comparison of Christianity in East Asian countries.

MICROLEVEL CONVERSION NETWORKS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The importance of social networks for conversion is one of the most established findings in the sociology of religion (Smilde 2005). In the seminal work on this topic, Lofland and Stark (1965) discovered that new adherents almost always had preexisting ties to members of the movement (see also Stark 1996). More specifically, they found that people were more likely to convert when they had more attachments to members of the movement than to individuals outside of the movement (Stark 1996).

Therefore, while church growth is customarily measured by numbers of adherents, underpinning these numbers are the rarely countable microlevel conversion networks. By the term "networks," we mean the pattern of ties supporting or opposing conversion, and more specifically, individuals' ties both to Christians and to non-Christians. Although data collected on numbers of adherents are not relational—that is, the connections between converts are not captured in counts—these connections nevertheless make an important contribution to these numbers.

The pattern of these ties might best be thought of in terms of *structural availability*. Drawing on research on deviance (Hirschi 1969), social movement and religion theorists have argued that the desire to maintain solidarity with and the good opinion of significant others increases our "stakes in conformity," making religious "innovation," namely, the conversion to a new religion, less likely (Stark 1996; Smilde 2007). By contrast, the relative absence of these ties, a state referred to in this literature as structural availability, leaves the individual open for the possibility of conversion (Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). Investigating the structural availability of potential converts has been one of the most common ways of approaching social- and religious-movement recruitment (e.g., Rochford 1985; Cable 1992; Stark 1996; Kitts 1999; Williams and Queen 1999; Schussman and Soule 2005; Smilde 2005, 2007).

While network theories have gained deserved influence in explaining conversion, sociologists of religion agree that there is more work to be done. In particular, they argue that we need to do more to establish why conversion works in one direction rather than another (Gould 2003). In other words, what reason do we have in any given case to assume that a tie between a social movement participant and a nonparticipant will result in a change in the nonparticipant's behavior, rather than the reverse (Gould 2003)? We will suggest that answering this question is the key to understanding religious diffusion across national boundaries, and we believe that incorporating macrolevel networks into the explanation will address both issues.

Microlevel Networks in Macrolevel Context

Currently the conversion networks that are examined are almost exclusively microlevel (Long and Hadden 1983; Gartrell and Shannon 1985; Staples and Mauss 1987; Hall 1998; Granqvist 2003; Chen 2005; Chao 2006; Zhang 2006), but some sociologists have begun to raise the need for situating microlevel networks in a macrolevel context (Yang 1998, 2005). For instance, conflicts or alliances in these geopolitical networks can make religions associated with foreign powers more or less attractive options. We will demonstrate that these geopolitical dynamics better explain country-level patterns of conversion than do microlevel dynamics alone.

One rare work that explored systematically the connection between geopolitical factors and conversion found a negative correlation between a dominant society's aggressive behavior and the appeal of the religion brought by missionaries from this dominant society (Montgomery 1996). For instance, Christianity failed to spread to Persia because Christian Rome and later Constantinople were enemies of Persia (Montgomery 2001). Although Montgomery (2001) now considers religious pluralism to be more important than intersocietal relationships in accounting for the spread of Christianity, he notes that intersocietal relationships increase in their importance for explaining Christian expansion after the advent of colonialism (p. 118).

Montgomery's acknowledgment of the potential importance of geopolitical factors during the colonial period is a point of convergence with the claims of Koreanists (Mullins and Young 1995; Lee 2000; Park 2003) about the significance of Japanese imperialism for Protestant success in Korea, as well as Yang's (1998, 2005) call to situate microlevel conversion networks in a macrolevel context. Taken together, these sociological and historical accounts suggest that geopolitics are of paramount importance for understanding the spread of religion in the colonial and postcolonial eras. We suggest that geopolitical theory has the potential to supplement microlevel accounts to provide a fuller understanding of country-level variations in conversion patterns.

Geopolitical Theory and Geopolitical Networks

While a variety of work makes reference to geopolitics or geopolitical factors (e.g., Vu 2006; Baban and Keyman 2008), geopolitical theory provides the most systematic account of how these factors interrelate and affect macrolevel phenomena. In our account we seek to extend geopolitical theory to improve our understanding of the context in which microlevel conversion networks operate. (As do most studies on religious

growth, we see these networks through the lens of numbers of adherents.) We do this in part by arguing that treaties were the embodiment of ties in an Asian colonial network that shaped both the options of member countries and the fates of microlevel conversion networks.[3]

Geopolitical theory argues that the history of states is best examined from the perspective of interstate relations, with special priority being given to the militaristic aspect of these relations (Collins 1999). Geopolitical theory's focus on interstate relations implies a conception of geopolitical powers as networks, even if theorists from that tradition have generally not engaged formal social network theory.[4] A network is usually considered to be a defined set of objects linked in a particular way (Knoke and Kuklinski 1982), and the military and economic relationships among France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, the United States, China, Japan, and Korea would seem to qualify this set of actors as a network.

Acknowledging the network aspect of macrolevel dynamics means making the ties between states more central to our account than is generally the case in comparative-historical analyses, which tend to make a categorical entity—a state, a city, a revolution—the unit of analysis. Giving priority to the networked aspect of actors makes apparent the extent to which these nations acted based on their relations with one another and their knowledge of others' relations.

In other words, we believe that what enabled or constrained conversion networks was not the nations themselves but the nature of their interrelations. This was evident when East Asian nations chose different actions—such as negotiating with Western powers at all—than what they would have chosen without pressure from other network members, or without the knowledge of how other Asian countries were faring in their relationships with Western powers.

For instance, Townsend Harris, the first U.S. consul general to Japan, was ultimately able to gain more favorable concessions from Japan in 1858 than Matthew Perry had in 1854 because Harris was able to use the example of the Arrow War in China to his advantage. The result was

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[3] We frequently refer to the geopolitical network of interest in this article as the "Asian colonial network." This refers to the Asian countries that were linked together historically as tributaries of the Chinese Empire and that came under the influence, directly or indirectly, of Western powers in the 18th and 19th centuries. This group includes Southeast Asia, but we of course focus more of our attention on East Asia.

[4] One example of a geopolitial theorist who has engaged with network concepts, however, is Mann (1993), who conceptualizes power as vested in networks rather than in static entities. By conceptualizing societies as organized power networks, Mann avoids the common problem of exaggerating the unity and coherence of states while shedding light on how the complex intertwinings of classes and nation-states led to World War I (see also Gorski 1995).

a series of treaties signed between the United States and Japan despite
Japanese reluctance to engage with Western powers.

The Intertwining of Networks and Culture

Geopolitical events established ties between China, Japan, and Korea and
the Western powers that then became reified through "unequal treaties."[5]
These treaties were cultural texts, steeped in ritual, that enabled the per-
petuation of the balance of power and limited members' strategies for
network change. For instance, the most favored nation (MFN) clause of
these treaties, which provided the other major powers with the same
privileges that were granted to any one of them, prevented East Asian
countries from adopting a *tertius gaudens* role that would have allowed
each state to play off the Western powers to its advantage (Simmel 1955)—
an important network strategy. The MFN clause prevented Japan from
achieving treaty revision in 1871 because the government would have
had to renegotiate with all of the Western powers, each of which would
seek extra concessions that would then apply to all the others, such as
the opening of additional ports—a major compromise for Japan (Auslin
2006).

In this article we build on earlier attempts to incorporate culture into
network theory (e.g., Bearman 1993; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994;
Gould 1995; Erickson 1996; Fuchs 2001; McAdam 2003; Mische 2003;
Passy 2003; Kane 2004; Cardon and Granjon 2005; Smilde 2007). How-
ever, while social network research has privileged a conception of culture
that views it as an outcome or correlate of network structure (e.g., Bear-
man 1993; Gould 1995; Erickson 1996; McAdam 2003), our work follows
in a Weberian tradition that views culture and structure as mutually
reinforcing (Weber [1930] 1992). In this case we see an interweaving of
networks and culture: the geopolitical network structure produced cultural
texts that reinforced that structure.

These cultural texts also led to the formation of microlevel conversion
networks by introducing Protestant missionaries into the East Asian coun-
tries. While the presence of a missionary was not important for any par-
ticular conversion (enthusiastic converts might be more effective at
spreading Christianity than foreign missionaries), the establishment of
conversion networks was nearly impossible without the initial presence
of missionaries (e.g., Dunch 2001), and missionary presence greatly in-

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[5] This moniker derives from the fact that East Asian states usually did not win the
same concessions from Western powers that they were forced to grant.

creased as a result of treaty stipulations.[6] However, whether conversion networks persisted depended on other outcomes of geopolitical network conflict.

Nationalism and Rituals

How did the geopolitical network of East Asia influence microlevel conversion networks? If, following Gould (2003), the chances should be equal that a non-Christian with a tie to a Christian would convert, geopolitical transformations in this context loaded the dice. More specifically, changes in the geopolitical network changed the direction of influence in ties at the microlevel in patterned ways by provoking nationalist rituals that altered the stakes of conversion.

Nationalism is a "cultural blueprint for experiencing and constructing reality" (Greenfeld and Eastwood 2005, p. 251) because it is composed, at least in part, of rituals, which create or recreate "a temporarily shared reality, ideas which act as symbols of group membership within that little group" (Collins 1975, p. 402). It is this symbolic element, along with the formal properties of rituals, that place rituals in the cultural realm and create a "nationalist aesthetics" that leads people to become so emotionally invested in the nation (Berezin 1997; Zubrzycki 2006, p. 28).

Interaction rituals create the "shared reality" of nationalism that makes some people willing to die for their nations (Collins 2004). When participants in successful interaction rituals share a common focus of attention, this produces a shared emotion, which is amplified by the awareness that it is experienced by the entire group (Collins 2004). In this way even a small group can generate a powerful emotional energy, which produces strong feelings of solidarity, confidence, and righteousness. This sense of righteousness can transform into righteous anger and violent action against those who disrespect the group (Collins 1975, 1999, 2004). We believe that it is the intense experience of participating in a ritual or serving as the object of its righteous anger that factors into the stakes of conversion.

Figure 1 outlines our theoretical model.[7] While unequal treaties contributed to the initial formation of conversion networks in each East Asian country, nationalist rituals, or the cultural response to geopolitical network

[6] Korea might seem to be a counterexample, since Catholic communities emerged in Korea before any missionary entered the country. But knowledge of the religion—and the first baptisms—came from contact with Jesuits in China.

[7] As with all figures in this article, fig. 1 is a conceptual model rather than a causal one. I.e., we acknowledge that there were other potential influences on the phenomena the model describes. These models are simply intended as guides to our argument.
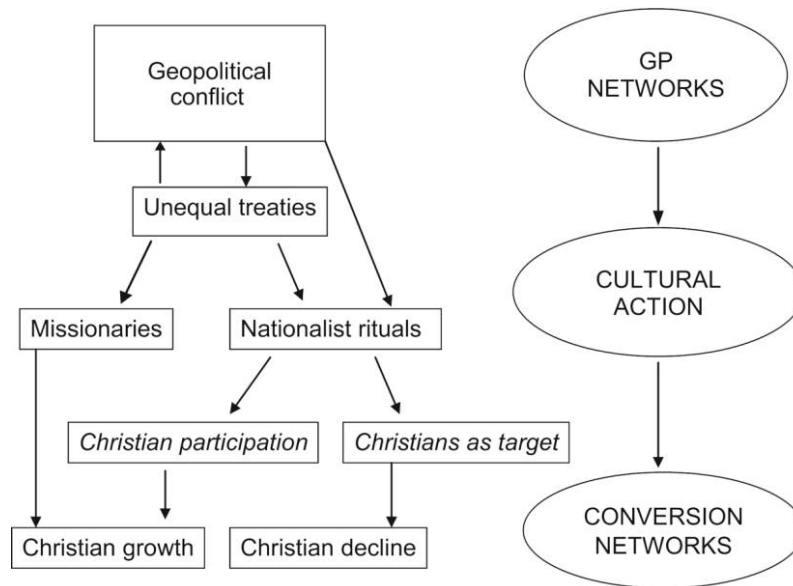
FIG. 1.—Theoretical framework

conflict, shaped the longer-term success of these networks. In this way we argue that accounting for Christian success in Korea requires us to incorporate both macro- and microlevel networks as well as the intertwining of networks and culture.

We find that in East Asia unequal treaties provoked nationalist, antiforeign reactions among some and an interest in Westernization among others. The balance between pro- and antiforeign sentiments in the court of public opinion and, hence, the fate of Christianity depended on successive geopolitical events. In Japan the modernizing government quelled most antiforeign agitation so that Westernization and Christianity emerged as viable options for self- and national improvement, and a patriotic Christian identity was cultivated in an intensely ritualized atmosphere at Western-run schools throughout the country. Then, frustration with the slow pace of treaty revision (along with other events) allowed earlier anti-Western sentiment to reemerge, and nationalist rituals made a patriotic Christian identity untenable. In China, defeat at the hands of Japan increased openness to Christianity, and Protestant institutions fused faith with patriotism, increasing the appeal of conversion. Then, perceived double-dealings by the West provoked anti-Christian rituals that made the link between Westernization and Protestantism a liability.

In Korea, while the growth of Catholicism was undermined by its

association with the fear of a takeover by the West, as Park (2003) and others have pointed out, when Protestantism arrived on the scene, the threat from Japan was greater. Yet to some it appeared that Protestant missionaries were colluding with the Japanese, and church membership actually began to decline during the Japanese Protectorate. It took a spectacular nationalist ritual like the March First Movement to firmly establish the link between Protestantism and patriotism. Before turning to our cases, we discuss why microlevel theories of conversion alone do not account for the unusual success of Christianity in Korea.

MICROLEVEL ACCOUNTS AND THE PROBLEM OF KOREA

Consistent with Yang's (2005, p. 424) contention that an "individualistic approach is inadequate for explaining the phenomenon of large-scale conversions," we will suggest that comparing microlevel networks across East Asian countries does not solve the puzzle of Protestant success in Korea. We conclude this section by raising the possibility that considering a macrolevel context not only addresses this puzzle, but also provides a new answer to the challenge of predicting the direction of tie influence.

A micronetwork approach would lead us to expect that in Korea ties to Protestants would overbalance ties to non-Protestants, while in Japan and China we should see the opposite pattern. There are no data for the patterns of ties and religious affiliations for the populations of these countries at the time of the introduction of Protestantism, so we cannot answer this question directly. We can, however, try to reconstruct the conditions that would make conversion more or less favorable in terms of structural availability—a strategy employed by Stark (1996) in explaining the growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire—and try to determine whether these conditions would vary in a way consistent with the pattern of church growth in East Asia. We focus here on family dynamics and natural disasters, two commonly used indicators of structural availability (McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Stark 1996; Smilde 2007).

Given the Confucian tradition common to China, Japan, and Korea, we would expect structural availability to have been relatively constant.[8] More specifically, family embeddedness should have limited structural availability and reduced the likelihood of conversion. Kin networks seem to have been a double-edged sword from the point of view of conversion:

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[8] We do not mean to imply that family structures were identical across East Asia; to the contrary, important differences have been documented (e.g., Bernstein 2003; Ko, Haboush, and Piggott 2003). The centrality of family life in these countries has not been disputed, however, and it is the prominence of the family in individual lives that we believe, following Smilde (2007), could inhibit conversion to a new religion.

although the tight-knit, hierarchical structure of kin networks could mean a bonanza of conversions once the family patriarch joined the church, this same structure—embedded in a village of similar structure—meant that the stakes in conformity were high for every individual, which could work against the "cultural innovation" of conversion (Smilde 2007).

The embeddedness of families in villages characterized by a similar close-knit, hierarchical structure based on dependency could mean that conversion would cause problems not only for the individual but also for his or her family. In rural Japan, for instance, the individual was bound to both family and village, and the village could exact both economic sanctions on the households of deviants (such as cutting off access to water or firewood) as well as symbolic sanctions, such as cutting off ties with those who caused the village to lose face. Given the embeddedness of rural Japanese in family and village structures, it is not surprising that the base for Christian growth was in urban areas (Yamamori 1974).

Confucian ritual and tradition also seemed to keep Koreans embedded in kin networks, and Christian belief could directly threaten these attachments. Kin networks were fundamental to Korea, and disgraced members could be expelled from them (Seth 2006). Missionaries denounced Confucianism as paganism, and insisted that converts end practices of ancestor worship (*chesa*) that were enshrined in law, including paying homage to grave sites and the ancestral tablets (Park 2003, p. 120). Church practices of mixing men and women as well as old and young during worship and Bible study were also an affront to the Korean Confucian sense of family relationships (Sohn, Kim, and Hong 1982; Park 2003). There are therefore multiple reasons to suspect that family members would discourage interest in Christianity across East Asia.

Where national differences emerge that may have affected structural availability, Korea seems *less* ripe for conversion than, for instance, China. Consistent with Stark's (1996) account of the often desperate conditions of the Roman Empire that underscored Christian charity efforts and hence inspired conversions, turn-of-the-century China witnessed several catastrophes that resulted in death, sickness, and social dislocation. For instance, between 1876 and 1879 North China experienced the most severe famine in its recent history, claiming the lives of nine and a half million (Bohr 1972). The first significant breakthrough in conversions to Protestantism in China came in the late 1870s in connection with the famine relief provided by missionaries in Shandong and Zhili (Tiedemann 2001). Qing government relief efforts were hampered by inadequate roads and transportation facilities, corruption, and insufficient resources, creating an opening for Christian relief (Bohr 1972). Missionaries, who had earlier made contacts through their itinerations, were able to set up famine-relief centers. One source notes a clear correlation between famine relief and

conversion in Shandong: statistics for 1880–1900 show that the highest number of conversions occurred for the American Presbyterians, the Baptist Missionary Society, and the Methodist New Connection Society in those areas where famine relief had been distributed by missionaries (Tiedemann 2001, p. 121).[9]

Korea seems to have fared better. Despite a severe famine in 1812–13, a "green revolution" in agricultural production managed to keep pace with population growth, so that the number of famines appears to have declined after 1750, leading one historian to conclude that "there does not seem to have been any great ecological or economic crisis in the nineteenth century" (Seth 2006, p. 215). Therefore, we would expect 19th-century Chinese to have experienced greater, more systematic structural availability than Koreans, at least with regard to the presence of natural disasters. Yet Christianity did not succeed in China.

This brief discussion suggests that Koreans were no less embedded in family networks than were Japanese. In addition, given the tremendous loss of life in the North China famine, it is possible that Koreans experienced less structural availability than did many Chinese, who would have lost family members who were potential opponents to conversion. Differences in structural availability, therefore, do not seem to account for the success of Protestantism in Korea.

Moreover, neither Gould's nor Smilde's account of why ties to movement participants would result in conversions (rather than apostasy) would seem to explain the different patterns of Christian success in East Asia. Gould (2003, p. 250) argues that sacrifices made by participants intensify their common experience: "Just as friendships formed in combat are more intense than those forged in everyday life . . . friendships cultivated in an activist context are endowed with special significance." However, as noted, Christianity required sacrifices from converts in each East Asian country; there is no reason, therefore, to believe that friendships would be more enhanced through a common Christian experience in Korea than in Japan. Smilde (2007), on the other hand, highlights the ability of participants to provide interpretations of the problems the nonbeliever confronts in a way that enhances the significance of the movement. But there is no reason to suppose that Christians in Korea were better able to provide religious meanings to difficult experiences than were Christians in China or Japan.

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[9] Based on the history of conversion research, it seems likely that it was not only the relief that resulted in these conversions. These disasters provided both an opportunity for Christian relief and also an increase in potential converts' structural availability. In other words, famine and rebellion increased the likelihood that family members, often a countervailing force to conversion, would be absent (Snow et al. 1980).

Therefore, two problems beset microlevel network approaches to the puzzle of Protestant success in Korea: structural availability does not seem to vary in the predicted way, nor can we explain why influence flows in a different direction in Korea than in Japan and China. In the following cases, we seek to demonstrate that appreciating the nested nature of networks can address both of these issues.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

The case of Japan illustrates how nationalism triggered by changes in the Asian colonial network could tip the direction of tie influence in microlevel networks, resulting in surges and drops in conversions, as the geopolitical pendulum swung back and forth (fig. 2 captures these dynamics). In other words, while microlevel networks and structural availability played an important role in the rise and decline of adherents, the direction of influence—toward or away from Christianity—was shaped by the larger political climate, which in turn was shaped by events in the geopolitical network.

Westernization and the Establishment of Microlevel Conversion Networks

The shogunate's concessions to the Western powers in the Ansei Treaties of 1858 provoked a sense of shame and cowardice among Japanese, and treaty revision became a top priority for the next government.[10] Thenceforth, Japan pursued treaty revision in two main ways: (1) through a mission of top Japanese statesmen sent abroad in 1872 (led by foreign minister Iwakura Tomomi) to ask Western leaders what changes Japan would need to make to renegotiate the treaties and (2) through an intensive program of Westernization, based on the belief that if Japan showed itself to be an equal of the West, the unequal treaties would be overturned.

The interactions between Western and Japanese representatives during the Iwakura mission accelerated the establishment of conversion networks by leading the Japanese foreign ministry to remove publicly placed sign-

[10] In 1854 the shogunate signed the Kanagawa Treaty, which opened two ports for trade with the United States, among other stipulations. In 1858 Townsend Harris was able to press on Japan the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, and the Netherlands, Russia, Great Britain, and France made similar negotiations (through the MFN clause), collectively known as the Ansei Treaties. These treaties opened five additional ports for foreign trade and residence, effectively deprived Japan of its control of foreign trade by fixing low import-export duties subject to international control, and dictated extraterritoriality; these last two provisions were "concessions no Western state would have made to another Western state" (Mason and Caiger 1997, p. 264).
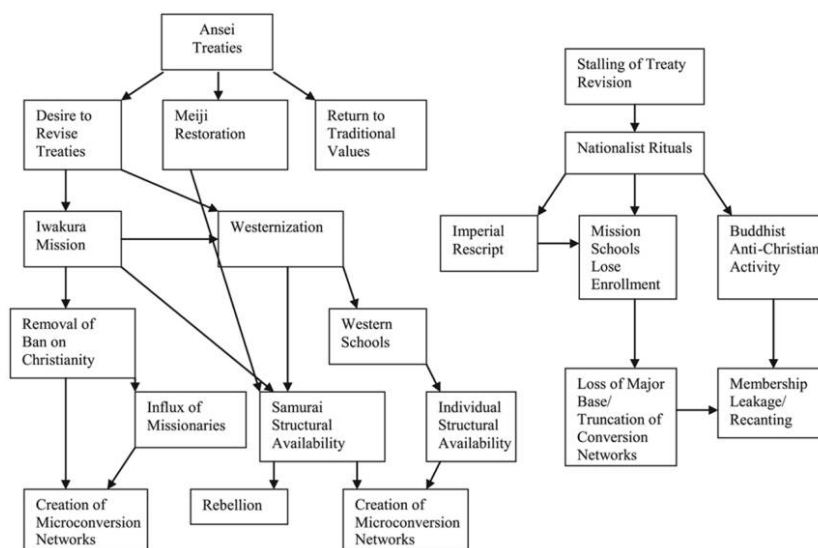
FIG. 2.—Conceptual model of the rise and fall of Christianity in Japan

boards prohibiting Christianity. Although a clause of the 1858 treaty contained provisions for Christianity for Americans, Japan had forbidden its citizens from converting, and those who did were often persecuted. Clearly the threat of persecution would have made it difficult for Christians to persuade others to join the movement. In the terms set by Gould (2003), if there were a tie between a Christian and a non-Christian in this environment, we might expect the non-Christian to prevail, or at least to resist attempts at conversion.

While the mission was abroad, the Japanese government continued persecuting Japanese Catholics. In Europe, British chancellor of foreign affairs Lord Granville, French minister of foreign affairs de Remusat, and Dutch minister of foreign affairs Gercke d'Herwitjuen told Iwakura that the persecution of Japanese Christians would hamper efforts to obtain revised treaties (Yoshiya 1978).[11] Ito Hirobumi, a junior councillor for foreign affairs who was a vice-ambassador in the mission, petitioned the caretaker government in Tokyo to lift the ban on Christianity (Edstrom 2002). The diplomatic pressure experienced by this embassy was responsible for the end of the ban (Jansen 2000, p. 463; Edstrom 2002).

On February 24, 1873, public notice boards proscribing Christianity were taken down. Whereas between 1859 and 1872 there had been prac-

[11] Mass demonstrations, perhaps inspired by articles in the Catholic press criticizing Japan's actions, in London, Paris, the Hague, and Brussels reinforced their point.

tically no church growth, after the notice boards were removed, membership slowly began to grow, and year by year the number of missionaries increased (Yamamori 1974). Removing the ban on Christianity eliminated one major obstacle to the formation of conversion networks—the fear of persecution—and provided one impetus for their creation, the addition of missionaries.

Members of the Iwakura mission assumed important council positions when they returned to Japan. They launched a program of Westernization, influenced by their experience abroad, aimed at moving Japan into the "community of nations" (Keene 2002; see also Nish 1998). While in some quarters the Ansei Treaties provoked a conservative response advocating a return to traditional values, the government viewed treaty revision as a short-term problem that could be addressed by making dramatic changes (Auslin 2006).

Because the government dominated by Iwakura and other embassy members favored modernization, knowledge of English as well as Western science and technology could dramatically improve an individual's career prospects. For this reason many ambitious families sent their children to Western schools. These schools were usually run by deeply religious Westerners, if not by actual missionaries. Some of these schools were residential; being cut off from their families increased students' structural availability. This individual-level structural availability in conjunction with the dislocation of the samurai class (to be discussed shortly) meant that schools led by Westerners were some of the most important sites for conversion; many sources agree that the largest number of converts were students (Yamamori 1974).

Enrolling in a Western school was not only a means of self-improvement; for some it was a patriotic act. Westernization initially linked Christianity with patriotism in the minds of some Japanese. Many believed there was a connection between Christianity and the Western economic and military prowess coveted by Japan, and both prominent figures and everyday Japanese advocated conversion. Originally a Confucian scholar, the samurai Nakamura Masanao concluded that Christianity was necessary for modernizing Japan and that the emperor should take the lead in being baptized (Scheiner 1970).

Converts to Christianity could be open about their patriotic aims. For instance, Tamura Naoomi wrote, "I was still a nationalist. . . . I was interested in Christianity simply because I thought that it was a religion in a civilized nation and much more modern and cultural than Buddhism or Shintoism. Thus only Christianity could bring us the culture of Europe" (quoted in Scheiner 1970, p. 46).

The transformations in the Asian colonial network that led to the removal of bans on Christianity and the association of Christianity with

Westernization seem to have promoted the growth of microlevel conversion networks as measured by the increase in number of adherents. Reconstructing numbers of conversions in late-19th-century Japan requires piecing together information from a variety of sources that sometimes disagree in the specifics, but some patterns emerge. After the removal of the ban, the church grew so quickly that many missionaries predicted that Japan would become a Christian nation (Iglehart 1959; Thomas 1959; Moffett 1998). Japan's first Protestant church was organized in 1872, and by 1889, there were nearly 40,000 Protestant Christians in Japan (Moffett 1998).

Consistent with our contention that the positive association between Christianity and Westernization contributed to conversion-network growth, the sector most open to the West, urban upper- and middle-class intellectuals, was the most responsive to Christianity: by 1889 30% of church membership came from the old samurai class and from the upper middle classes of teachers, merchants, rich farmers, and office workers (Yamamori 1974, p. 61). Significantly, this is the same class that experienced the first stirrings of nationalism (Greenfeld 2001).

Samurai Responses to Westernization: Protest or Conversion

To understand better this growth in adherents, the subsequent decline, and the networks that underpinned these changes, we focus on an extremely important segment of the upper middle class, the hereditary warrior class of the samurai. The modernizing climate of the 1870s and 1880s opened up some new possibilities to the samurai class, and whether for personal gain or out of patriotic sentiment, some decided to take advantage of them. For instance, Lord Hosokawa Morihisa of the Kumamoto domain believed that training the domain's youths in Western knowledge would allow them to take leadership of Japan, which would help restore the region to its earlier prominence in national affairs (Scheiner 1970, p. 70). With that aim the Western Academy was established in 1871 under the leadership of L. L. Janes, an officer in the American Civil War.

While students, who uniformly aimed to become politicians, intended to study only the Western practical techniques they would need for modernizing Japan, the school eventually transformed into a microlevel conversion network. Janes told some of his most promising students that Christianity was the basis of Western civilization and invited them to Bible classes in his own home. Fourteen or 15 agreed, based on the belief that it would help their English; by the following year the number had reached 50 (Kishimoto 1956).

The structure of the school no doubt helped foster this interest. One historian's account of young samurai students provides almost a definition

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of structural availability: "There were in these cities a large number of young people in whom the spirit of adventure was strong. Though not altogether free from family influence, they were not so much under the control of the family system as those who stayed around the old home. They were more easy to reach" (quoted in Yamamori 1974, p. 36).

Kumamoto's organization became a very efficient means of spreading the religion through the dormitory from the first upperclassmen converts (Scheiner 1970, p. 80). Christian ritual became an increasing part of students' lives. Janes had 60 students at his weekly Bible studies in 1874, and in May of 1875 he added a regular Sunday worship. In November of that year a prayer meeting was added. By January 1876 "the whole school found itself immersed in a revival" and students "became filled with a religious fervor that was close to madness" (Notehelfer 1985, p. 195). Other studies were put aside as groups of students gathered to study the Bible in the dining hall and private quarters. Prayer meetings often went until dawn, punctuated by midnight ice baths or fasts "to harden their faith and commitment" (Notehelfer 1985, p. 195).

These intense rituals generated a symbol that expressed the students' new shared reality: a public declaration of faith. On January 30, 1876, 35 students climbed Mount Hanaoka and signed a covenant of belief. The Mount Hanaoka oath stated that to be a patriot one must be a Christian: "If one holds the spirit to serve the nation, then one must stand firmly, sacrifice one's life and then explain how Christianity is fair and right" (Scheiner 1970, p. 93). The Kumamoto graduates' shared reality fused Christianity and patriotism, an association enhanced by the fact that many of them became figures of national importance in Japan.

The trajectory of the Kumamoto band illustrates how geopolitical networks could encourage conversion-network growth. Unequal treaties contributed to the change in government that led to the dislocation of the samurai class and a desire for Westernization, which in turn led to the establishment of the Kumamoto school. The fusion of Christianity with patriotism helped spur on the conversions at the Kumamoto school by students eager to play a role in leading the country. Students' structural availability at the school made them ripe for conversion.

In this brief moment—spanning just a decade from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s—the difficulty of rebellion against the Westernizing trend, combined with the opportunities for personal advancement and patriotic service that Western schools and religion provided, most likely increased the appeal of Christianity. Surely this climate would have contributed to the direction of influence in a tie between a Christian and a non-Christian; certainly the growth rate of Christianity in this period suggests that it did (Yamamori 1974).

The Turn against Westernization and Christianity

But the scales would tip in the other direction by the end of the 1880s when the government turned away from Westernization. Appeals to traditional values and nationalism not only reemerged but managed, with imperial support, once again to effectively remove the foreign religion as a viable option for patriotic Japanese. As the geopolitical tide turned, the dramatic growth witnessed by late 19th-century missionaries proved to be short-lived. This turn was related to actions in the Asian colonial network. The same geopolitical forces that fostered the creation of conversion networks contributed to their demise. A series of dates in the 1880s and 1890s marked geopolitical events that were important turning points for the Westernizing trend; we focus here on the failure of treaty negotiations in 1887 and 1889.

Despite Japanese optimism about treaty revision, negotiations moved at an excruciatingly slow pace. Japanese foreign minister Inoue Kaoru convened a conference with the Western powers in 1882 to work out the issues impeding treaty revision, but no progress was made because the British minister Harry Parkes refused to make significant changes to the extraterritoriality and tariff clauses of the treaties.

Numerous scholars argue that the failure of treaty revision dealt a death blow to Protestant membership (Thomas 1959; Yamamori 1974). Reduction in church growth came about primarily through membership loss (Yamamori 1974). In the years 1890–1902 there was leakage as high as 94% from the Congregational Church and 84% from Presbyterians (Yamamori 1974, p. 74). Even the Episcopal Church, which experienced the least amount of leakage, still lost 46% of its adherents in this period (Yamamori 1974, p. 74).

Nor was leakage offset by gains in new converts, which declined throughout this period. While in 1889 Protestant churches had gained 5,667 new members, in 1890 the number of additions dropped to 1,199 (Thomas 1959, p. 183). In the aftermath of the failure of treaty revision, Christianity was associated with humiliation and seemed to endanger the future of the nation (Thomas 1959, pp. 187–88). In the 1890s Christianity in Japan came under attack as antipatriotic and proforeign (Jansen 1984). In the 1880s enthusiasm for Christianity had run strong, with newspapers publishing the names of prominent persons who converted, but only a decade later the tide ran in the opposite direction (Jansen 2000, p. 467). After the nationalist reaction to Christianity, growth in membership slowed (Beaver 1957) while growth in apostasy increased (Kishimoto 1956).

As the premier battleground of values, schools became an important site of the change toward ultranationalism, embodied in the 1890 rescript

on education issued by the emperor. The rescript became a poignant indicator of how Christianity came to be seen as incompatible with loyalty and patriotism when the Christian teacher Uchimura Kanzo failed to participate in rituals venerating the document (Thomas 1959; Drummond 1971; Lee 1981; Jansen 1984, 2000).

The imperial rescript set forth the ethical principles on which the new order would be founded, and "in stressing traditional ideals of social harmony and loyalty to the Throne, it implicitly sought to counter moral values and liberal political ideals introduced from the West" (Pyle 1969, p. 121). Copies of the rescript were distributed throughout Japanese schools, where they became the focus of elaborate school rituals (Breen 2003). The rescript was memorized by every schoolchild and worshipped along with the imperial portrait (Nolte and Hajime 1983). In 1891 the prestigious First Higher Middle School in Tokyo held a ceremony to acknowledge the rescript.

The teacher Uchimura Kanzo feared that the requisite bowing to the rescript compromised his Christian faith. As he told it (recounted in Lee 1981, p. 86), his failure to bow became an act of lèse majesté. He was accused of insulting "the nation's Head, desecrating the school and being a traitor to the nation" (Lee 1981, p. 87). Uchimura's actions provoked a wave of anti-Christian invective and put Christians on the defensive for decades (Lee 1981, p. 87; Breen 2003). Soon Japanese Christians came under increasing pressure to demonstrate their independence from foreign influence (Jansen 2000).

Thenceforth leading ideologues of the 1890s argued that Christianity was a subversive element in Japan (Seat 2003). Imperial Professor Inoue Tetsujiro was one of the most influential of these. In his essay "The Conflict between Religion and Education," published in 1891, Tetsujiro argued that the internationalism of Christianity undermined the nationalistic spirit and that it preached disloyalty to the state: "Paul's attitude is that one should obey the rulers because they represent God's will. . . . In other words, one does not obey the rulers themselves, but only God. . . . If Christians pay their highest fealty to Paul's opinions, they cannot be loyal to Japan's emperor" (quoted in Kishimoto 1956, p. 257).

From this point on, nationalism won out, and Christian influence diminished (Pyle 1969, p. 218 n. 25). The majority of Japanese thinkers turned away from the West and repudiated Christianity (Hirakawa 1989, p. 491). Multiple factors played a role in Japanese disillusionment with Christianity, including the divisions that arose among Christian groups, the discovery of the gap between Christian ideals and Christian practice, the arrival of liberal Christian theology, and anti-Christian thought (e.g., Cary 1909). Nonetheless, scholars have agreed that "the event which brought to a focus all the other factors and precipitated the change in

national mood was the failure of the Japanese government in the 1880s to secure revision of the unequal treaties of customs and extraterritoriality with the various Western powers" (Drummond 1971, p. 198). Despite optimism among missionaries that Japan would become a Christian nation, by 1900 Christians made up only 1% of the Japanese population (Barrett 1982).

The ascendancy and decline of Protestantism in these intense two decades are captured by juxtaposing two significant rituals involving Christianity: the Mount Hanaoka oath in 1876 and the failure of Uchimura Kanzo to bow fully to the imperial rescript in 1891. The drama of these rituals must surely have influenced how individuals perceived the stakes of conversion, and in the rapidly transforming geopolitical network, the direction of tie influence could change in just 15 years.

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

The trajectory of growth of Christianity in China was similar in some ways to that in Japan. Conversions increased when Christianity was conflated with Western prowess and offered a route to both personal mobility and national salvation, but this early success was followed by a strong counterreaction when China suffered renewed national humiliation at the hands of Western powers. Figure 3 provides a schematic view of these developments. As in Japan, these shifts were quick and fairly dramatic; in China, rapid growth in the first decade of the 20th century was reversed during the 1920s. An important difference, and one that captures the networked aspect of geopolitical relations, is that China suffered defeat at the hands of Japan in a war in 1894–95, which many scholars argue made China more receptive to Christian influence—albeit temporarily.

Early Responses to Christian Missions: Violence or Conversion

To the extent that mission work is related to microlevel conversion-network growth, early growth in China was closely tied to 19th-century treaties. Although a few Protestant missionaries began to arrive in China in 1807, the propagation of Christianity was illegal at that time (Cohen 1963). Missionaries were restricted, like merchants, to residence in Canton (Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province) part of the year or to Portuguese Macao year-round. Because of this geographical restriction, they made few converts (Bays and Grayson 2006).

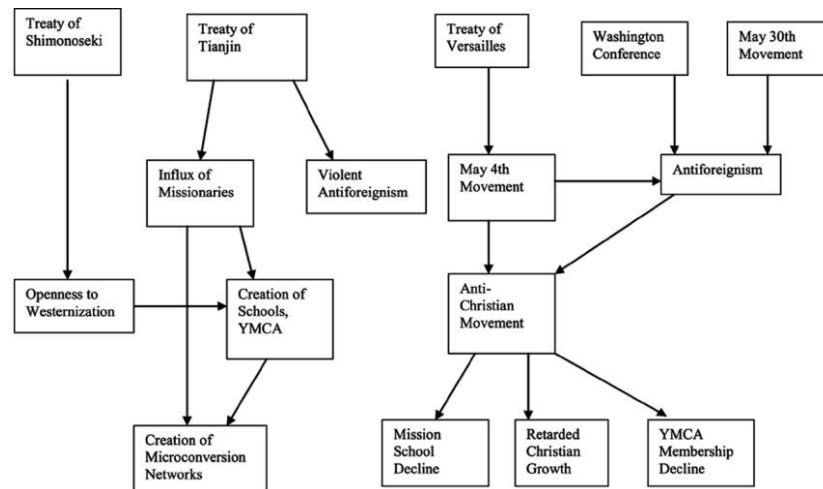But by the mid-19th century, Western treaties, backed by strong military

Fig. 3.—The rise and fall of Christianity in China

pressure, pried open China to a tremendous expansion of mission work.[12] At the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1858, the Qing emperor dispatched two officials to sign the Treaty of Tianjin, which gave the right to Catholic and Protestant missionaries to settle freely in the interior and to own land and buildings there (Gernet 1982). To enforce the treaty terms, British troops again invaded and in 1860 burnt to the ground the Yuan Ming Yuan, the summer palace built for the Qianlong emperor in the Peking suburbs.

The unequal treaties provoked seemingly contradictory responses to the West and to Christianity. The Tianjin treaty was associated with a tremendous upsurge in antiforeignism after 1860 (Cohen 1963; Spence 1990; Lee 2003). In China, this antiforeignism was more likely to be violent than in Japan. The most spectacular example was the Boxer Uprising in 1900, when 30,000 Chinese Christians and 200 foreign missionaries died

[12] The first treaty China signed with the Western powers was the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which concluded the First Opium War of 1839–42 and ceded Hong Kong to Great Britain, opened five ports to trade and permanent residence of foreign consuls and their families, and abolished a government-sanctioned monopoly of Chinese traders (the *cohong*). The supplemental Treaty of the Bogue in 1843 established extraterritoriality, granted MFN status to Great Britain, and gave that nation the right to fix the customs duties on British imports. The Americans and French signed similar treaties in 1844, the U.S. Treaty of Wangxia and the French Treaty of Whampoa, which included the right to propagate Catholicism. The Treaty of Tianjin in 1860 concluded the Second Opium War of 1856–60 and established 10 additional treaty ports, granted the treaty powers the right to establish embassies in Beijing, and gave free movement to Christian missionaries (among other stipulations).

(Lutz 1988, 2001). For many, Christianity was inextricably bound up with Western imperialism. Even one missionary observed that "most non-Christian Chinese regarded the missionary as the vanguard of foreign armies" (quoted in Moffett 1998, p. 483).[13]

At the same time, the treaties allowed missionaries to expand their networks and gave them unprecedented access to potential converts. Since the Treaty of Tianjin allowed Christian preaching and the free movement of missionaries, the number of Protestant missionaries grew from 1 in 1807 to 1,324 in 1893 (Moffett 2005, p. 473). As of 1919 more than 90% of the 1,704 counties in China proper and in Manchuria experienced mission activity (Feuerwerker 1983, p. 165). Protestants came to dominate the public arena of mission work, particularly in the establishment of hospitals and schools (Moffett 2005, p. 473). Schools increased in number over the 19th century and provided education to the poor and to girls (Spence 1990).

The connection between the treaties and Christian growth was clear to the editors of the *China Year Book* (Woodhead and Bell 1925), who wrote that "with the Treaty of Tientsin began another period of expansion" (p. 527). Consistent with the argument that open mission networks would lead to Christian growth (Stark 1996; Montgomery 2001), the explosion of Protestant institution building in the decades between 1860 and 1900 was followed by an impressive rate of Protestant growth between 1900 and 1915: Chinese Protestants numbered about 100,000 in 1900 and 270,000 in 1915 (Bays and Grayson 2006, p. 500). The Treaty of Tianjin can therefore be linked to the slaughter of the Boxer Uprising on one hand and the phenomenal growth of Christianity on the other.

The Sino-Japanese War, Openness to the West, and Christian Growth

While the Treaty of Tianjin stimulated missionary activity, another geo-political event seems to have increased Chinese receptivity to Protestant efforts. Foreshadowing an important development in Korea, Christianity seems to have benefitted from Chinese losses at the hands of Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. Christianity displayed a high level of growth between 1899 and 1919, when the number of Christians increased tenfold (Feuerwerker 1976). Many scholars agree that the impetus for this growth came from the defeat of the Chinese by Japan in 1895 when both countries attempted to intervene in Korea after a domestic rebellion there (Cohen 1978; Feuerwerker 1983; Dunch 2001). The resultant Treaty of Shimonoseki, which forced China to cede the Liaodong Peninsula in Man-

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[13] One Chinese bibliography lists more than 50 events in a single decade that were significant enough to require top-level diplomatic treatment (Cohen 1963, p. 3).

churia as well as treaty ports to Japan (among other stipulations), was a disaster for China (Spence 1990, p. 223). The international humiliation that came from the peace treaty imposed on China after foreign troops crushed the Boxer Rebellion (the Boxer Protocol of 1901) also created a readiness for change (Lutz 2001).

The period after this defeat, from 1900 to 1920, was a rare time of openness in China. The setbacks of the last years of Qing rule, beginning with the 1895 defeat by Japan, raised doubts about the accepted world-view (Garrett 1970; Dunch 2001). In a dynamic that anticipates the case of Korea, Japan at this moment was viewed as a greater threat than the West, particularly with regard to the United States, which sent the lion's share of Protestant missionaries to China (Moffett 1998). Given this dynamic, Protestant advocacy for a modern, Christian, republican China had considerable appeal (Dunch 2001, p. 179). The conflation of Western success with Christianity, encouraged by the missionaries themselves, helped the religion gain favor (Lutz 2001). In the early years of the 20th century, Christianity prospered because "after more than a half-century of mediocre results, it forged a temporary link with the domestic forces of reform which had a use for it" (Feuerwerker 1983, p. 166).

Protestant Institutions

Also similar to the case of Japan, Christianity in China was perceived as a route to improvement both for the nation and for the individual. And, as in Japan, mission schools provided an important route to mobility. During the period 1907–20, the number of mission school students quadrupled so that by 1920, Protestants were operating 7,000 schools enrolling about 213,000 students (Feuerwerker 1983, p. 174; Lutz 1988, p. 43). While only in one in 75 school-age children was receiving an education, one in three Christian youths was enrolled in a mission school (Feuerwerker 1983, p. 174). By 1920 in Fujian Province, Protestant missions created a network that linked rural schools to boarding schools in county seats and high schools or seminaries in Fuzhou, "providing a conduit for social mobility for rural dwellers that was without parallel in Chinese society before the Republican period and, arguably, until the 1950s" (Dunch 2001, p. 35).

At the same time, business opportunities were also emerging in import-export firms for Chinese who knew English, increasing the appeal of mission-run schools. Graduates of these schools were ready to join the ranks of the Chinese progressive elite. In this way, mission school education seemed to assure Protestantism an important place in the new China.

Other Protestant institutions were initially able to fuse religion and

patriotism in institutions that fostered the growth of conversion networks. Perhaps the most significant of these reform societies was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The broader Chinese progressive elite shared with the YMCA board and members a sense that the nation's crisis stemmed from moral issues. As an example, reformers like Lin Bingzhang of the Anti-Opium Society and the legislators of the Provincial Assembly believed that opium use was destructive both to individuals and to the nation as a whole—the constitution of the Anti-Opium Society declared that smokers were "lacking in national consciousness" (Dunch 2001, p. 221 n. 103). Hence the YMCA, with its nation-strengthening gymnasiums and vocational classes, came to be seen by even non-Christian members of the progressive elite as an appealing alternative for young men (Dunch 2001).

When Protestant conversion can provide a means of attaining both individual success and the success of a group with which an individual identifies—in this case, a nation—we can imagine how the direction of influence in a tie between a Christian and a non-Christian could tip toward Christian conversion. Moreover, participation in Protestant organizations like the YMCA could tip the direction of influence in a similar way by adding value to the relationship (Gould 2003). As Gould (2003) noted, friendships are enriched by an activist context and are endowed with special significance because actions taken on behalf of the collective feel sacred. Patriotic self-improvement at the YMCA could hence imbue relationships that shared this focus with added meaning. In this way, participation—and perhaps conversion—could outweigh the alternative of nonparticipation.

Geopolitical Events and Anti-Christian Agitation

Yet, just as in Japan, the conflation of Christianity and Westernization in China became the religion's undoing when geopolitical circumstances changed. In particular, a series of geopolitical events beginning in 1919 punctuated the 1920s and fostered a strong anti-Christian movement that led to declines in membership in Protestant institutions, including churches, schools, and the YMCA. The decline of Christianity in China corresponded to the growth of the anti-Christian movement, which was the direct descendant of the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist protest set against a background of raised-then-dashed hopes of treaty reform, similar to that experienced by Japan (Lutz 1988, p. 5).[14]

[14] After Germany's defeat in World War I, anticipation ran high that the German concessions in Shandong would be returned to China. But in return for Japanese naval assistance against the Germans, Great Britain, France, and Italy signed a secret treaty

This disappointment was followed by another: the failure of a Beijing delegation to end the unequal treaty system in a Washington conference in 1921–22. Anxious to curb Japan's increasing power and to protect its own position in East Asia, the United States held meetings from November 1921 until February 1922 with China, Japan, and six Western powers. When Alfred Sze (Shi Zhaoji), who led the delegation from Beijing, included among his demands returning tariff autonomy to China and ending extraterritoriality, the other powers delegated these issues to separate meetings, "a blow to Chinese pride" (Spence 1990, p. 380). It took another six years for Western powers to sign a treaty allowing China to set its own tariffs, and extraterritoriality remained in effect until 1943.

Shortly after the Washington conference, in March 1922, the Anti-Christian Federation was formed. The announcement of the organization was made first by students in Shanghai in a protest directed at the upcoming World Christian Student Federation conference to be held at Qinghua University in Beijing, and the first declaration of the anti-Christians spoke of the humiliation suffered by China at the Washington conference (Yip 1980, p. 23). As the movement developed, the argument solidified that Christian schools and institutions were agencies of cultural imperialism.

By 1924, there was a concerted effort to attack Christian institutions, and now mission school students participated alongside their peers from governmental and private institutions (Lutz 1988, p. 93). In December 1924, for instance, a Chinese instructor struck a student in the course of trying to separate two students when a fight broke out at a football game between the Yale-in-China preparatory school in Changsha (in Hunan Province) and another Christian school.[15] The incident culminated in a strike of 200 students, followed by additional strikes in six parochial schools in the vicinity, some of which were forced to close (Lutz 1988). But despite the national publicity these strikes received, the anti-Christians had not gained sufficient momentum for national-level activity. Although protests spread beyond the Yale-in-China school, they were still confined to the province.

The Anti-Christian Movement was given new life on May 30, 1925, when British police fired on Chinese demonstrators in Shanghai's inter-

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that transferred Germany's rights to Japan after the war. The transfer to Japan was announced at Versailles, and the settlement provoked mass protests on May 4, 1919, in Beijing, followed by demonstrations throughout China.

[15] Yale-in-China, or Yali, was founded by Yale graduates who created an educational compound that included a middle school, a college, and a medical school, including other endeavors.

national settlement.[16] The National Student Union (organized after students scored a concession from the Chinese government following its weak response to the Treaty of Versailles) and the Anti-Christian Movement, which had been floundering in early spring, gained new popularity after this (Lutz 1988). Students and other groups highlighted the Christian roots of the May Thirtieth Incident. The National Student Union Congress passed a resolution in June calling the YMCA the "hawks and hounds" of the imperialists (Lutz 1988, p. 166).

May Thirtieth seemed to have had a dramatic effect on Christian institutions. Despite the YMCA's public condemnation of the incident, it found itself attacked on many sides. In July the National Student Union adopted a number of resolutions regarding the YMCA at its seventh annual convention. For instance, one resolution stated that "YMCAs constantly use athletics, popular education, etc., to do evangelistic work so as to smother the political thoughts of the youth. They are a detriment to the patriotic movement. Student Unions everywhere should expose them continuously. . . . Student Unions everywhere should appoint special delegates who will try to induce Christians to leave the church and will publish the names of Christians when they have made such a decision" (quoted in Garrett 1970, p. 179).

Within a year of the incident YMCA membership for the city associations had declined by 13%; income fell by 15%; and many of the YMCA service clubs and Bible societies in government institutions had closed (Garrett 1970, p. 180). In Wuhan, the YMCA school closed, and the headquarters was covered with placards calling the association "the vanguard of imperialism" (Garret 1970, p. 181). In Fuzhou the national trend against Christianity was reflected in the decline in YMCA membership. The nearly two-decade trend of growth was reversed in just three years when membership fell from a peak of 2,369 in 1921 to 1,875 in 1924 (Dunch 2001, p. 152). A year later, in 1925, membership fell again to 1,569—a 16% drop in just one year and a 34% drop over four years.

Mission schools were also a main site of agitation. In 1927 radical teachers and students in multiple schools and at the Fukien Christian University attempted to take over their institutions and hand them over to the new Nationalist government. In the process, arson attacks destroyed buildings in the university as well as Foochow College, Chinese teachers were threatened or assaulted, and the Chinese principal of an Anglican school, Reverend Lin Buji, was paraded through the streets and then

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[16] Earlier that month Chinese strikers had been locked out of a Japanese factory; when the angry strikers broke in and smashed the machines, the Japanese guards opened fire, killing a worker. The May Thirtieth Incident was part of a resulting wave of public outrage, student demonstrations, further strikes, and arrests (Spence 1990).

denounced at a mass meeting "in a manner that was to become all too familiar in China after 1949" (Dunch 2001, p. 193). That the stakes of conversion—or of even attending a mission school—had changed is captured in the observation of Edward Hume, president of the Yale-in-China mission, that Chinese boys were afraid to enroll in Christian schools, and those who did found it "quite difficult to walk on the streets with foreign teachers. They [were] called 'foreign slaves' by bystanders" (quoted in Spence 2002, p. 179). Thousands of students withdrew from mission schools (Lutz 1988).

Province-level data on the decline of Christian institutions such as the YMCA are consistent with national-level data that indicate a dramatic slowing of Christian growth. Although exact numbers during this period are somewhat suspect, there are data that can give us a sense of the magnitude of conversion. In the period 1900–1915, the number of Protestant communicants increased by 170,000 (from 100,000 to 270,000; Bays and Grayson 2006, p. 500), while in the period 1919–35, the number grew only by 135,684 (from 345,543 to 481,227; Woodhead and Bell 1932–35; Feuerwerker 1976).

The difference is even more dramatic if we consider the growth rate before the anti-Christian protests of the 1920s: between 1889 and 1919, the number of Protestant communicants multiplied almost 10-fold, from 37,000 to 345,543 (Feuerwerker 1976). The increase in the number of converts slowed even as the population was growing from an estimated 342,639,000 in 1910 (Woodhead and Bell 1929/30) to an estimated 479,084,651 in 1936 (Spence 1990, p. 424). As one historian of the anti-Christian movement noted, the ostensible contradictions between Christianity and nationalism raised the social cost of conversion (Lutz 1988).

We have already noted a number of similarities with the Japanese case (while also observing how Japanese influence produced its own effects on Chinese Christianity). China might be thought of in some ways as a "middle case" because it shared similarities with Korea as well. The Japanese threat lessened resistance to Protestantism in Korea, and Korean Christians were at the vanguard of the nationalist cause. But whereas in China Christian patriotic activity could never outweigh Christianity's association with the West, in Korea it did not need to.

CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA

Despite Christianity's ultimate success in Korea, it had less promising beginnings there than in China and Japan. In Korea the radically different fates of Catholicism and Protestantism underscore the role of geopolitical factors. Therefore, we begin this section by describing the early history

of Catholic Christianity and suggest that Catholicism was effectively extinguished because it was associated with an international power that represented a threat to Korean national security.

If the association with the West proved to be the downfall of Catholicism, this same alliance was the boon of Protestantism. The emergence of Japan as the most salient threat to Korea in the late 19th century made a Western alliance beneficial and Christianity a source of Korean nationalism. While "Christian patriot" became an untenable identity in Japan and China, in Korea this identity, charged up through ritual action against a non-Western aggressor, remained a viable option. Figure 4 demonstrates the different trajectories of Catholicism and Protestantism in Korea.

Early Christianity in Korea

The association with geopolitical threat marred attempts to spread Catholicism in Korea from the beginning. The first organized persecution of Catholics in Korea in 1791 initiated a series of similar events that culminated in the Great Persecution of 1866–71, in which half of the membership of the church suffered martyrdom (Kang 1997; Grayson 2002, p. 146). The execution of nine French clergy and more than 8,000 believers made this the most severe persecution in the 500-year history of the Choson Dynasty (Grayson 2002). These events had lasting effects on the future of Catholicism in Korea (Kim 1996). In particular, Catholicism took on a "quiescent flavor" (Baker 1997, p. 136) that would later give an edge to Protestant groups.

Why did Catholicism elicit such a dramatic response? There is consensus among scholars (Grayson 2002) that the ferocity of the first major persecution of Catholics in 1801 derived from the interception by Korean officials of a letter written on a bolt of silk by the scholar Hwang Sayong, who wrote to church officials in Beijing requesting, among other things, a Western navy and army to protect the church from the Korean government (Grayson 2002, p. 143):

> In your pastoral message to us last year, you promised that in a few years you will be able to dispatch foreign warships to Korea to protect our Catholic community. . . . Korea does not have a strong military. . . . The king is still a child and cannot lead [the people] into combat. . . . At the first sign of trouble, the Korean army will disintegrate. . . . Here is how you can take advantage of this situation. Dispatch a fleet of several hundred ships, filled with fifty or sixty thousand of the best troops, along with lots of cannons and other deadly weaponry. (Quoted in Lee and de Bary 2000, pp. 135–37)

Korean alarm over this letter is unsurprising, and in the minds of many,

A. CATHOLICISM

Contact with Jesuits in China → First Catholic Missionaries

Contact with Jesuits in China → First Converts

First Converts → Burning Ancestral Tablets

Burning Ancestral Tablets → 1791 Persecution

First Catholic Missionaries → 1801 Persecution

1801 Persecution → Whang Sa-yong Letter

Whang Sa-yong Letter → Persecutions of 1810, 1815, 1819, 1820

Discovery of French Missionaries → 1839 Persecution

Russia Demands Trade and Residency Rights → Great Persecution 1866-1871

Great Persecution 1866-1871 → ½ Church Membership Martyred

Great Persecution 1866-1871 → Catholicism Turns Inward, Doesn't Build Institutions (Schools, Hospitals) Associated with Growth

B. PROTESTANTISM

Sino-Japanese War → Anti-Japanese Sentiment/ Interest in the West

Russo-Japanese War → Anti-Japanese Sentiment/ Interest in the West

Anti-Japanese Sentiment/ Interest in the West → Establishment of Hospitals, Schools

Jemulpo Treaty → First Protestant Missionaries

First Protestant Missionaries → Establishment of Hospitals, Schools

First Protestant Missionaries → Formation of Conversion Networks

Establishment of Hospitals, Schools → Formation of Conversion Networks

Formation of Conversion Networks → March 1st Movement

March 1st Movement → Strengthened Association between Christianity and Patriotism
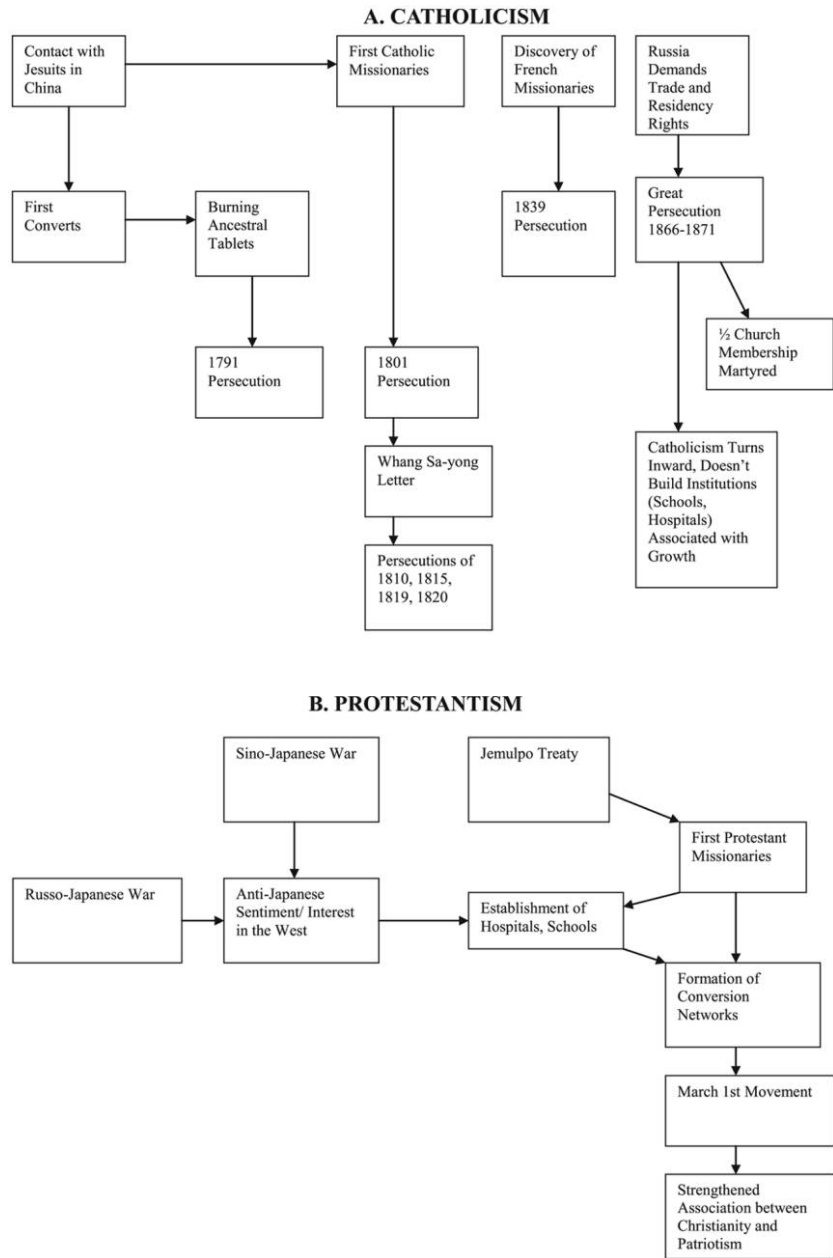
FIG. 4.—A: The rise and fall of Catholicism in Korea. B: Protestant success in Korea

Catholicism was fused with the threat of a takeover by a foreign power. In addition, details in the letter about the execution of the Chinese priest Father Chou Wen-mu threatened Korea's relationship with China. The execution of a Chinese seemed certain to provoke a conflict with Korea's "sensitive and powerful neighbor" (Chung 2001, p. 8).

The Sinyu Persecution of 1801 was followed by large-scale persecutions in 1815, 1827, and 1839. The targets of the persecution in 1815 were the Catholic refugees who had fled to the mountains to escape the Sinyu Persecution (Grayson 1985). The Kihae Persecution of 1839 resulted from the discovery of foreign missionaries in Korea, "which raised the fear of subversion of the Korean state by foreign powers" (Grayson 2002, p. 144). Finally, the Great Persecution of 1866 lasted for five years and aimed to eradicate Catholicism and all foreign influence in Korea. In addition to an attempt to desecrate the tomb of the father of the prince regent in 1868, the triggers were again geopolitical. This last persecution resulted from Russian attempts to seize part of Korean territory and was fueled by the appearance of French and American fleets off the Korean coast. At every turn Catholicism became associated with a threat to Korea's sovereignty.

Japanese Ascendancy and Christian Growth

Significantly for the spread of Christianity, it was Japan that forced on the Korean government the first Western-style treaty in 1876, the Treaty of Kanghwa.[17] Treaties with Western powers followed, including the Jemulpo Treaty with the United States, which, among other stipulations, granted noninterference to Christian missionary work. As in China, mission activity could provoke violence or conversion. Moreover, in another parallel to China, an interest in Westernization, provoked by Japanese aggression, could help tip the scales in favor of Christian conversion. In Korea, however, this favorable response was sustained.

By the end of the 1880s, except perhaps for Russia, none of the European powers were as vitally concerned with Korea as were China and Japan; the latter was determined to defeat China and force it to relinquish its nominal suzerainty over Korea (Grayson 2002, p. 149). Japan's opportunity arose in 1895 when Chinese forces assisted the Korean government in putting down the Tonghak peasant rebellion. Japan forcibly annexed Korea in 1910, after which the conqueror launched a program to "Japanize" Korea, ultimately requiring Koreans to adopt Japanese names and worship in Japanese Shinto shrines (Yi 1995). Land was expropriated

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[17] Like those imposed on Japan, this treaty opened ports to trade and provided for extraterritoriality (Tong 1980).

from Koreans to give to Japanese colonials, and all school instruction was conducted in Japanese.

As in Japan and China, the association between Christianity and progressive reform made the religion appealing to many Koreans. In particular, some Korean reformers came to view Western beliefs as the source of Western science and institutions (Wells 1991, p. 27). Christianity particularly appealed to the progressive *kaehwap'a* group, which comprised alienated young elites and a few pragmatic officials, who promoted adoption of Western civilization (Park 2003, p. 119). Protestantism grew slowly but steadily by converting Koreans estranged from the Confucian establishment; an association between reform and Protestantism came early in evangelical efforts (Park 2003, p. 120). Indeed, the Protestant church community "was the sole organizational center for reform endeavors in the late nineteenth century" (Park 2003, p. 124).

In Japan and China, Christianity had also benefited from an association with governmental reform, but the humiliation that came from the failure to renegotiate unequal treaties generated anti-Christian nationalist rituals and erased gains in growth in conversion networks. Given that the main threat to Korea came from (non-Christian) Japan, geopolitical conditions would seem to have favored the growth of Protestantism there.

Yet Korea might easily have followed the religious path of its East Asian neighbors, in which early growth of conversion networks ultimately faced a reversal. While the early Protestant churches provided some benefits to Koreans, many considered the missionaries to be dubious allies. Initially the missionaries welcomed the Japanese, hoping that they would better the situation in Korea (Ku 1985; Lone and McCormack 1993). Acceptance of the Japanese administration was the official policy of the Presbyterian mission, the largest in Korea, and missionaries reassured the Japanese that any Korean Christians suspected of political activities were "kept from responsible positions in the Church" (Kang 2006, p. 98). Many pastors openly disapproved of political activity in the church (Yi 1991). Even after the Japanese protectorate, when many missionaries became disillusioned with the invaders, following instructions from diplomatic representatives in Seoul, many missionaries maintained a policy of strict neutrality in Korean-Japanese relations.

This neutrality seemed to evolve into open support shortly after the Japanese government arrested leading Korean Christians and several missionaries on trumped-up charges of conspiring to murder Governor-General Terauchi in 1910. The missionaries immediately denied harboring subversive sentiments and presented a memorial to the governor-general expressing their desire to cooperate in suppressing any subversive tendencies (Ku 1985, p. 34). As a result, some missionaries were openly

criticized by Koreans as being traitors because they preached "obedience to the powers that be" (Ku 1985, p. 30).

In a pattern already familiar from the cases of Japan and China, following tremendous growth, conversion networks gradually began to shrink. Baptisms began to decline; one missionary wrote that the total number of Christians in 1919 was fewer than in 1911—there were 116,319 members of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in 1911 and 104,781 in 1919 (Wasson 1934). Yet Japan, rather than the West, remained the major geopolitical threat. It would therefore seem that the mere absence of geopolitical threat is not sufficient to maintain growth in conversion networks. We therefore turn to the role of Christianity in nationalist rituals.

March First Movement

In China and Japan, nationalist rituals eventually cast Christianity as the enemy of patriotism, and hence the religion served as a basis for creating a solidarity in opposition. By contrast, the March First Movement, a major watershed in the history of Korean nationalism, was pivotal in identifying Christianity with nationalism, both by demonstrating Korean Christians' willingness to suffer for nationalism and by turning Western missionaries' neutrality into active support (Robinson 1988; Park 1997; Lee 2000). As a measure of the significance of this ritual, Lee (2000, p. 120) writes that "it was in this that the Korean Protestant Church contributed some of the most potent symbols of Korean nationalism, symbols that are still celebrated in (South) Korea and bespeak the positive association between Protestantism and Korean nationalism."

On March 1, 1919, people gathered in public parks, school-yards, and market commons to hear movement leaders read a declaration of independence from Japan. Afterward, Koreans marched through the streets shouting *manse* ("long live Korea") "in a massive show of solidarity and patriotism" (Robinson 1988, p. 44). Japanese soldiers killed more than 7,000 people in response (Yun 2004, p. 95).

In the weeks that followed, demonstrations spread from Seoul to other parts of the country. On March 11, 2,000 Christian female students demonstrated in Pusan; in mid-April there were thousands more demonstrators in Ulsan and Namhae (To, Pak, and Chǒn 2004). As the demonstrations diffused across the country, the Japanese arrested thousands of Koreans, seized printing presses, harassed shopkeepers, searched homes, and closed schools.

Christian participation in the March First Movement was crucial for the image of the religion—and the growth of conversion networks—in three ways. First, nearly half (16) of the signatories of the declaration of

independence were Christians.[18] In addition, despite missionaries' initial discouraging of movement participation, they quickly came to the aid of injured Korean participants. Although the movement began in the spirit of nonviolence, after Japanese soldiers and residents indiscriminately beat and shot demonstrators, the violence escalated. Koreans began attacking police stations and civilians, which prompted the sending of more Japanese soldiers to the peninsula. By the time Japan regained control one year later, the Koreans had suffered many casualties: according to Japanese records, 7,645 were killed and 15,961 injured (Lee 2000, p. 134).

Reversing their earlier policy of neutrality (or even active compliance with the Japanese), missionaries not only actively cared for the injured, but also appealed to the Japanese to desist from using brutal tactics on demonstrators. When these efforts failed, missionaries used their contacts abroad to publicize Japanese atrocities. The international outrage damaged the country's image, and at that point, Japan began to take a more conciliatory attitude toward Koreans (Grayson 2002, p. 150).

Foreign missionaries' efforts in the nationalist cause were coupled with those of Korean Protestants. The YMCA, which had brought Christianity to lower-status Koreans, played an important organizational role in the movement (Chang 2001; Sin 2001). Significantly, Korean Protestants cooperated with other nationalist groups (including the antiforeign Ch'ondogyo; Sin 2001; Yun 2004, p. 135). Protestants shared in the planning of the movement and also suffered its consequences. Korean Christians everywhere played a major role in demonstrations (Wasson 1934; Chang 2001).

According to a 1919 report by the Japanese military, of the 19,525 people arrested,[19] 3,371 were Protestant; in other words, while Protestants represented only 1% of the population, they accounted for 17% of those arrested (Lee 2000, p. 139). Of 7,835 major participants in the movement, 1,719 (22%) were Protestant, exceeding even the rate of arrest for Ch'ondogyo members (15%; Sin 2001). The Presbyterian Church alone experienced the arrest of 3,804 church leaders and laypersons (Sin 2001; Park 2003).

The March First Movement in itself was a failure: Korea did not achieve independence from Japan. However, Protestantism managed to regain its appeal among Koreans. After the downward trend in membership starting in 1910, Protestant denominations enjoyed renewed growth after 1920

[18] The other signatories were 15 members of the Ch'ondogyo organization, an outgrowth of the nativist, antiforeign Tonghak group, and two Buddhists.
[19] One Korean source (Yun 2004, p. 95) puts the number of arrests as high as 46,498 for the period March 1–May 30. It seems possible that Japanese reports may underestimate arrests and some Korean sources may overestimate the number.

(Wasson 1934). In 1922 there were 128,987 Methodist and Presbyterian communicants, more than the 104,781 believers in 1919 as well as the 116,319 in 1911 (Wasson 1934, p. 166). Although Protestantism would again face severe challenges when the Japanese exercised stricter controls in the 1930s and 1940s, by that point Christianity had established itself in the minds of many Koreans as a viable religious option, owing in no small part to Christian participation in the March First Movement. In South Korea, March 1 remains a national holiday, and "believers and nonbelievers alike acknowledge the inextricable association established between Protestantism and their nation in 1919" (Lee 2000, p. 140).

CONCLUSION

In this article we aimed to identify the role that geopolitical networks play in the diffusion of religion across national boundaries. More specifically, we demonstrated how geopolitical networks enable or constrain microlevel conversion networks by provoking nationalist rituals that alter the stakes of conversion. In this way, we believe that a macrolevel approach can suggest new ways of answering a primary question facing researchers of conversion networks: How do we predict the direction of tie influence?

In East Asia the right geopolitical configuration made missionaries available for the creation of microlevel conversion networks through the cultural text of unequal treaties. These same treaties, however, provoked nationalist reactions that could undermine the growth of conversion networks. This was the case in China and Japan, where frustration over these treaties (and the failure to revise them) led to nationalist rituals that made a patriotic Christian identity untenable, and conversion-network growth declined.

In Korea, Catholics suffered from the same association with geopolitical threat, but Protestantism entered the country when Japan was the primary aggressor. Nonetheless, Protestantism could have faltered in Korea as well, given perceived missionary complacency with regard to the invader. But Korean Christians (and eventually missionaries) came to play a central role in fomenting nationalist rituals against Japan. While today only 3% of the Japanese population and 8% of Chinese are Christians,[20] more than 25% of Koreans have claimed this faith since 1981 (Clark 1986, p. 1; Adams 1995, p. 13).

In addition to highlighting the nested nature of conversion networks,

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[20] Data are from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (http://worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/); retrieved March 1, 2008.

this article has also demonstrated the intertwining of social networks and culture in the diffusion of religion. The structure of geopolitical networks became reified in the cultural text of unequal treaties, which both limited negotiation strategies in the geopolitical networks (as in the MFN clause) and gave impetus to the formation of microlevel conversion networks. Both conflicts in the geopolitical network structure and the unequal treaties themselves provoked cultural action in the form of nationalist rituals that named the stakes for identifying as a Christian, ultimately shaping the parameters for growth for conversion networks. We therefore believe that the case of religious diffusion demonstrates how specifying precise network-culture linkages allows us to avoid both structural determinism and cultural determinism and to capture how "relationships are reproduced or reconfigured over time" (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, p. 1447). Considering networks and culture allows us to understand more deeply the dynamics of social change.

At the same time, understanding the nesting of networks and their cultural embeddedness suggests one way to answer a key theoretical question about conversion: Why would a tie between a believer and a nonbeliever lead to conversion rather than apostasy (Gould 2003)? If the religion in question is foreign in origin, the geopolitical context and national reaction are the places to begin any inquiry.

Indeed, future work might investigate the utility of this culture-network model for understanding contemporary religious conversion. For instance, the Protestant penetration of Latin America has been called one of the most dramatic developments of our time, with countries such as Guatemala reaching a rate of 30% faithful (Martin 1990, p. 51). Will high rates of conversion continue or be sustained, as in the case of Korea, or will these trends reverse, as happened in China and Japan? To the extent that Protestantism is associated with North America, what role will the relationship between the United States and Latin American countries play in the growth or failure of conversion networks? How will the increasingly negative image of the United States in the world affect the missionary efforts of Mormonism, the religion perhaps most strongly identified with this country? And do geopolitical events affect the spread of other religions, such as Islam, in the same way?

Finally, while we have focused on the role of geopolitical conflict in the diffusion of religion, we expect that the associations found here should hold in other cases of cultural diffusion as well. Future research might consider not only cases of modern-day transnational evangelicalism, but also the significance of geopolitical events for the diffusion of ideologies such as communism and democracy.

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