

### **Between China and the World: Yu Rizhang and the Chinese YMCA in the 1920s**

Existing studies on mission work has identified an encounter between Protestant Christianity and nationalist sentiment. Imprinted with the Western outlook, the development of churches and Christian institutions in countries where Western colonialism was a daily presence confronted local hostility. The cultural penetration perceived as a by-product of colonialism by native people aroused their resistance and anti-colonial movements. At the turn of the twentieth century, as R. Pierce Beaver has noted, a growing desire towards independence from European and American control intensified after the Russo-Japanese War, which “was also a mighty force in China, Korea, Turkey, India, Ceylon, Persia, Siam, Java, the Philippines, Egypt, and the natives of South Africa.” The growing tide of patriotic fervour in host countries had an impact on mission work. The issue of nationalism in local mission fields consequently received attention at the first World Missionary Conference in 1910.<sup>1</sup>

This local sentiment towards foreign missionaries was scholarly “discovered” by a paradigm shift from centring Western missionaries to local agency and indigenous religious movements. By adopting the local-centric analytical framework, such as the one proposed by Paul Cohen in Chinese studies, the life of indigenous Christians and their agency in the development of Christianity in a local context gradually appeared in historiography.<sup>2</sup> Despite the merits of this paradigm shift in presenting a comprehensive historical contour, its emphasis on either Western or non-Western context is often limited to capture the complexity of the development of Christianity, in which local converts, like their Western counterparts, possessed transnational connections and assumed roles on a global stage.

This paper visits a historical juncture in China when local Christians actively engaged in international communications through transnational activities. From the mid-nineteenth century, China had increasingly become an integral part of an emerging new world order, wittingly or unwittingly. Chinese history of the Republican era, as William C. Kirby has argued, “was defined and shaped—and must ultimately be interpreted—according to the nature of its foreign relations.”<sup>3</sup> In Kirby’s viewpoint, the lens of an international perspective helps to restore the connections between China and the outside, which might be overlooked simply adopting the China-centric paradigm proposed by Paul Cohen. The outbreak of the First World War and the signing of a series of international policies afterwards further complicated the issue of nationalism with an international dimension. The end of the First World War witnessed the advent of an ever-interconnecting world where internationalism emerged as a new force that was pivotal in the making of a modern nation-state. This new era posed multi-faceted challenges to Christians: how should Christians view international collaborations amidst nationalist sentiment; should Christians participate in politicized international affairs; what was the stance of Christians towards international conflicts; and so on.

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1 R. Pierce Beaver. “Nationalism and Missions.” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 03/1957, Volume 26, Issue 1: 25.

2 Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press).

3 William C. Kirby, *The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era*. *The China Quarterly*, June 1997, No. 150: 433.

The 1920s was thus a crucial decade when attempts and reflections were made among nations to solve international conflicts and clashes in a globalizing world. As a part of the global evangelical movement, the Chinese YMCA at the time played a crucial role in bridging China and the world through transnational collaborations. Founded in 1844 in England, the Association later shifted its centre to America and developed into a key agent in global missionary work at the turn of the twentieth century. It aimed to promote Christian principles among the youth in aspects of their body, mind and the spirit. In the 1890s, the YMCA established its first branch in China and developed quickly in the beginning of the twentieth century. Like its expansion in other nations, the work of the Association in China from the outset adopted a local perspective while maintaining transnational collaborations. As Charles Andrew Keller has pointed out, "Since the establishment of the Y in China, the goal of the American and Chinese leaders was to create an indigenous institution completely self-governing and self-supporting."<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Y in China had two bodies: domestic and international. The Chinese YMCA was under the leadership of the National Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations of China and the International YMCA was the North American YMCA in China. These two bodies "were in regular contact with each other" while working in separate offices.<sup>5</sup>

This paper examines the work of Yu Rizhang (also known as David Z. T. Yui, 1882-1936), the general secretary of the Chinese YMCA in the 1920s. It was a time when the organization attempted to internationalize China amidst nationalist fervour. It shows that the Chinese YMCA under the leadership of Yu endeavoured to integrate China into the global community through international networks and transnational communications. When the governance of China was split between Beijing and Guangzhou for most of the 1920s, Yu played a crucial role to defend China's sovereign stance in the international arena. His participation in international conferences made him a leading public diplomat in enhancing China's international stance. Within the nation, the Chinese YMCA launched citizen training programs that aimed to facilitate an international understanding among the youth. This paper discusses the two key themes—nationalism and internationalism—that underpinned Yu's activities. As they are contested political concepts, I aim to show the original meanings attached to them by different authors. When using these terms outside a detailed context, I refer to a general idea of nationalism that was driven by patriotism and to internationalism as one that valued cooperation between different nations. This paper draws on the institutional mouthpiece of the Chinese YMCA entitled *Association Progress (Qingnian Jinbu 青年進步)*, writings of the YMCA leaders, conference notes, and periodicals published at the time. An exploration of Yu's work in the 1920s sheds light on how the relationship between Christianity, nation, and the world was appropriated, negotiated, and reconstructed in a politically and culturally dynamic period.

### **Public Diplomacy: An Alternative to the May Fourth Nationalist Fervour**

A large group of scholars viewed the May Fourth Movement through the lens of nationalism. It was widely accepted that the movement marked China's first nation-wide patriotic event primarily led by Chinese students. The movement happened in a context when great powers negotiated about

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4 Keller, Charles Andrew. *Making model citizens: The Chinese YMCA, social activism, and internationalism in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Dissertation, 1996), 10.

5 Kristin Mulready-Stone, "Character Conservancy in Shanghai's Emergency," in *YMCA at war: collaboration and conflict during the World Wars*, edited by Jeffrey C. Copeland and Yan Xu (), 144.

the new world order after the First World War. Sided with the Allies, China entered the war by sending a number of 140,000 workers as labour force into the wartime zones of France,<sup>6</sup> gaining herself a seat in the Paris Peace Conference after the war. The carving up of parts of China in the Versailles Treaty, however, turned against what Chinese people had hoped for. On 4 May 1919, thousands of students in Beijing paraded the streets to protest foreign imperialism and Republican government's failure at the Paris Peace Conference. Angry students burned down residence of some government officials and launched boycotts of Japanese products. The patriotic event soon spread into other cities and was joined by people coming from other groups of the society.

Wang Zheng argues that the May Fourth Movement pointed to "a grand conspiracy among the Western powers," which underpinned the anti-Western imperialism discourse of the following decades in China.<sup>7</sup> The May Fourth Movement, however, was not a unified event that was solely underpinned by anti-foreign nationalism. Jarkko Haapanen argues that aside from the patriotic sentiment, a "cosmopolitan spirit" and a desire for "international cooperation" was evident among the May Fourth intellectuals (1917-1921).<sup>8</sup> By drawing on influential journals such as the *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年), Haapanen observes that the concept of nationalism after the First World War "was usually given negative meanings as it was associated with imperialism and other ways of thought that had led to the war." Acknowledging the nationalist discourse at the time, some of the May Fourth intellectuals, according to Haapanen, envisioned "a new period in international relations that was not to be based on power and aggressive foreign politics, but on equality and cooperation." This scholarly finding opens a new avenue to look at the post May Fourth era that focused on attempts to save China through following "the prevailing international thought trends."<sup>9</sup>

Increasing attention to China's foreign policy was not confined to intellectual discussion. "Citizen diplomacy" (*guomin waijiao* 國民外交) was a term coined to refer to non-government force emerged in late Qing period and thrived in the 1920s to facilitate China's stance in the world. In a time when the Republican government featured a split between Beijing and Guangzhou (Canton), there was "no single government capable of exercising sovereignty."<sup>10</sup> The political weakness thus provided space for non-official groups to assist the government in seeking international understanding. They constituted a great part of China's diplomatic efforts centring around major international events.

The Citizens' Diplomatic Association (*guomin waijiao xiehui* 國民外交協會, CDA) was formed by late-Qing politicians and intellectuals before the Paris Peace Conference. The Association was deeply concerned with safeguarding China's interest in the international arena. It hoped to assist in strengthening the nation's diplomacy and endeavoured to spread the public opinions of China to the

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6 Etō, S. (1986). China's international relations 1911-1931, in J. Fairbank & A. Feuerwerker (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China (The Cambridge History of China, pp. 74-115)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 101.

7 Wang Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 185.

8 Jarkko Haapanen, *Chinese People and the Others: Notes on Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and the May Fourth Movement*. JCIR 2019: 1.

9 Haapanen, 2-3, 7.

10 Etō, S. (1986), 106.

world.<sup>11</sup> In response to China's failure at the Paris Peace Conference, the CDA immediately took actions to protest the Versailles Treaty utilizing domestic and foreign media in China. One day before the May Fourth Movement, the CDA sent a telegram to the chambers of commerce and all public bodies and the press in China. On 10 May, its English version was circulated through the *North China Herald*, an influential newspaper in China at the time. The main message was to denounce Japan's claims on the Twenty-one Demands Treaty signed in May 1915 with China by force. It declared that Chinese citizens would never recognize these agreements as valid. Furthermore, the CDA held a general meeting of citizens at the Peking Central Garden on 7 May to "make a formal declaration and to request" the government to ask the delegates not to sign the Treaty.<sup>12</sup>

Another surge of public concerns about international policies occurred before the Washington Conference that was from November 1921 to February 1922. While the Conference was proposed mainly to protect the interest of Britain, Japan, and the United States in China without falling into conflicts with each other,<sup>13</sup> it was largely viewed by Chinese intellectuals as a great opportunity for China to seek possible solutions to cease the unequal treaties and restore territorial integrity. A careful study of the Conference was evident in the Chinese intelligentsia. In October 1921, *The Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌, an influential magazine popular among Chinese intellectuals), published a special issue on the Washington Conference. One of the articles addressed that the primary theme of the Conference was to restrict armaments especially of the naval military. It detailed the context of the Far East situations, analysed the competition between great powers and their interest in China, Conference agenda, representatives of different nations, and China's preparation for the Conference.<sup>14</sup>

Various groups formed and functioned as public diplomacy that aimed to assist the Beijing government at the Washington Conference, which also aimed to put government officials under the pressure of public will. From the establishment of the Council of Pacific Issues (*Taipingyang wenti yanjiu weiyuanhui* 太平洋問題研究委員會) in July 1921 to the Beijing Citizens Diplomacy Association (*Beijing ge tuanti guomin waijiao lianhehui* 北京各團體國民外交聯合會) in September that year, Zhou Bin writes that public diplomacy around the Washington Conference period shifted to a centralized one when 118 groups from 17 provinces joined the National Citizens Diplomacy Conference in Shanghai in late November. The disappointing results from the Washington Conference as well as China's weak domestic regime later generated strong anti-imperialist sentiments that fuelled the National Revolution in the following years.<sup>15</sup>

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11 According to Xiong Xiling's telegram (11 Feb 1919), leaders of the CDA included Zhang Jian (1853-1926), a well-known politician and entrepreneur, the philanthropist and politician Xiong Xiling (1870-1937), and Chinese educators Yan Xiu (1860-1929) and Fan Yuanlian (1875-1927, who was also a politician served in the Minister of Education). For Xiong Xiling's telegram, see "请主持国民外交协会致南通张季直电" in Zhou Qiuguang ed., *Xiong Xiling Ji. Qi* (熊希龄集. 七), Changsha: Hu nan ren min chu ban she, 2008. For Fan Yuanlian, see "出色学员" in 湖南时务学堂; for Xiong Xiling, see "时务学堂主要行政人员" in 湖南时务学堂, both in Hu nan jin xian dai ming xiao shi liao. Yi 湖南近现代名校史料. 一 Changsha: Hu nan jiao yu chu ban she, 2012.

12 Citizens' Diplomatic Association (May 7), *The North China Herald*, 10 May 1919: 347.

13 Etō, S. (1986), 103-4.

14 黄惟志, 华盛顿会议提倡之经过《东方杂志》1921年10月第18卷第1819期1-22页.

Yun Zhou

Compared with the aforementioned public diplomacy, the work of the Chinese YMCA stood out as a continuous attempt that worked as a channel between China and the world. Chinese Christians were in general often at the frontier of the encounters with foreigners. In particular, the Chinese Y was a hub of Sino-Western interaction. From its establishment in 1895, the Chinese YMCA had long been regarded as an organization that valued Sino-Western interactions, either in exchange of ideas or in forms of events and activities. The YMCA was introduced to China in a context of self-strengthening campaign after China's loss at war with Japan in 1895. China's desire for modern technologies and knowledge worked to the benefits of foreign missionaries, who often resorted to education and modern medical services to "make Christianity more attractive or to instruct children in religion while they were still pliable."<sup>16</sup> Unlike early missionaries who emphasized the salvation of individual souls, a group of Protestant missionaries who came at the turn of the twentieth-century China was influenced by liberal thinking. In contrast to fundamentalists, missionaries influenced by social gospel and liberal thinking in the nineteenth century expended considerable effort introducing Western knowledge to Chinese literati, including medical services, education, politics, and science. As one of the Christian organizations underpinned by social gospel, the YMCA's work aimed to achieve a collective salvation by improving the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and physical conditions of the youth in China. When China was increasingly involved in international affairs in the 1920s, the Chinese YMCA assumed the task of public diplomacy and worked to advance China's international position utilizing its existing transnational networks. Yu Rizhang, the general secretary of the National Committee of the Chinese YMCA from 1916 to 1932, was a central figure in promoting China's international presence.

#### **Yu Rizhang: A Christian, A Nationalist, and An Internationalist**

In my inner consciousness I find in this no occasion for compromise or for a conflict of loyalties, between being a nationalist and an internationalist, or between being a nationalist and a Christian.

Yu Rizhang, 1928

In 1928 when Christian leaders from fifty nations gathered at the Jerusalem Council to discuss challenging issues of the era, Yu Rizhang made a speech on contemporary China including domestic and international circumstances. While acknowledging "how powerful nationalism is as a cause for inter-racial conflict," Yu advocated that "it may be built into an international inter-racial brotherhood." As an embodiment of internationalism and nationalism, he declared that "I am a Chinese nationalist, I do not belong to any party. I am an internationalist. I am a Christian."<sup>17</sup>

In a world of conflicts between nations, Yu Rizhang's speech pointed to a harmonious relationship between nationalism and internationalism. His speech at the Rotary Club of Shanghai on 26 November 1926 titled "Nationalism and Internationalism" provided a detailed account. According to Yu, the advocacy of nationalism as national interests or national unity and independence was

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15 Zhou Bin 周斌, A Brief Comment on the National Conference of People-to-People Diplomacy 论华盛顿会议前后的全国国民外交大会, *Journal of Hunan City University* Jan 2006 (Vol.27 No.1): 72-77.

16 Shirley S Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926* (Massachusetts, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 5.

17 Basil Mathews, *Roads to The City of God* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, INC., 1928), 64-65.

generally accepted. Problems occurred when the differences in national interests were not properly recognized. Yu diagnosed that it was people's wrong viewpoint and prejudiced attitude towards different national interests that created conflicts among nations. Having said that, Yu insisted on an "unquestioned devotion to our country" and felt a shame when Chinese people failed to demonstrate this type of nationalism to the West.<sup>18</sup> It was highly likely that what Yu was referring to was the lack of the expression of the love for the country on a global platform since China's failure at the Paris Peace Conference. By positioning a nation in an interconnected world, Yu upheld a type of nationalism that pointed to one's national duty of developing the gifts and natural resources the people were endowed with, which would contribute to "the sum-total of the world's civilization." Furthermore, this nationalism "should inspire and guide each nation to walk in the pathway of righteousness, justice, and truth, and it should also impel her to go to the assistance of weaker and less advanced nations even though at the time it may seem to be at real sacrifice to herself."<sup>19</sup>

The incorporation of other nations into the development of one's own nation was perceived by Yu Rizhang as a must adjustment to the changing conditions brought out by scientific inventions and new discoveries. The increasing connections between nations made "isolated national life ... impractical and unwholesome." To cope with the changing tide, he proposed the concept of "world-brotherhood," meaning "the consumption of the family of nations," as a defining feature of internationalism. He urged that this "brotherly spirit should permeate every thought and act" and "everything should contribute toward the common good." It was on this basis that nationalism and internationalism were in "perfect harmony and peace."<sup>20</sup> It was this belief that undergirded the efforts of the Chinese YMCA among the Chinese young generation.<sup>21</sup> For Yu Rizhang, promoting the world-brotherhood was his goal, in which "each nation as a member of this world-family on an exactly equal basis with the rest."<sup>22</sup>

Yu Rizhang's interpretation of nationalism and internationalism was influenced by traditional Chinese philosophy, although not in a strict way. Yu based the connection of one's country and the world on *The Great Learning*, one of the four Confucian canons. His translation of the first chapter of *The Great Learning* is as follows.

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own countries; ..... their countries being rightly governed, the whole world was made tranquil and happy.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that the translation of *tianxia* to the world carried a modern connotation. What Yu promoted was a cosmopolitan vision of a decentralized world instead of the traditional worldview where the classical idea of *tianxia* denotes that all people were under the authority of a single ruler. As the governance of each country is ultimately linked to the whole world, Yu thus called

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18 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 3-4.

19 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 5.

20 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 7.

21 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 8.

22 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 10.

23 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 8. The original Chinese is "古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；……國治而後天下平。" 《大學》

for developing nationalism to a high level that would “naturally moves in the direction of internationalism.”<sup>24</sup>

What also underpinned Yu Rizhang’s worldview were Christian ideals on equality and justice. The world-brotherhood resonated with the theology of the fatherhood of God. According to Yu, “The brotherhood of men should be founded in the fatherhood of God, and this foundation will endure forever.”<sup>25</sup> This Christian universalism of equality permeated throughout Yu’s work within and outside of the Chinese YMCA. Yu even appealed to Western Christians to restore Christian values during the Washington Conference (also known as the Pacific Conference) in the early 1920s. In Yu’s viewpoint, the ambiguous attitude of Euro-American countries manifested in the mission work that promoted benevolence and justice contradicted with the “greedy and crafty” scheme adopted by their governments. He therefore called for his Western counterparts to Christianize the Washington Conference. As “the ultimate and highest aim” was “permanent peace,” Yu believed that the way to attain it was through the “the application of Christian principles in the lives of the delegates that will attend, in the conduct of the Conference itself, and in the lives of the nations that will be represented.” He encouraged Christians and Christian organizations worldwide to “insist on the Conference giving full application to the Christian principles of love, justice and service in studying every problem on the agenda.”<sup>26</sup>

The unification of nationalism, internationalism, and Christianity, nevertheless, was not appropriated by many Chinese Christians due to the mounting tide of nationalist hostility. The awakening of the anti-imperialist nationalism of the 1920s put Christianity at the spearhead of the nationalist movements. When news of the conference of World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) to be held in April 1922 in Beijing reached nationalist Chinese students, they launched a series of anti-Christian actions. In February that year, a group of students in Shanghai formed an Anti-Christian Student Federation, which opposed the conference of the WSCF and criticized Chinese churches in assisting “the bourgeoisie in plundering the proletariat and supported the former to suppress the latter.”<sup>27</sup> Parallel to this was the movement for gaining education rights from mission societies. In March that year, Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), the president of Beijing University and a man of liberal thinking, advocated the separation of religion and education in an article entitled “Jiaoyu duli yi” 教育独立議 (On the Independence of Education).<sup>28</sup> Two years later, the movement for gaining education rights from mission societies escalated after the British headmaster at the Anglican Trinity College in Guangzhou prohibited the formation of a student union and expelled some dissident students on 22 April. Other students later escalated the incident into an anti-imperialist movement, which ignited an on-going campaign for gaining education rights from Western missionaries during the following years.<sup>29</sup>

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24 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 8.

25 David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang), *Nationalism and Internationalism* (1926), 10.

26 David Z. T. Yui, “The Christian Movement in China and the Pacific Conference: A Symposium,” *The Chinese Recorder*, October 1921: 666-668.

27 “Fei jidujiao xueshengtongmeng xuanyan” 非基督教學生同盟宣言 (Declaration of the Anti-Christian Student Federation), *Xianqu 先驅* Vol. 4 (15 March 1922): 1.

28 Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, “Jiaoyu duli yi” 教育独立議 (On the Independence of Education), *Xin jiaoyu 新教育* Vol. 4 No. 3 (March 1922): 317-9.

29 Yang, *Jidujiao yu minguo zhishifenzi*, 207-8.

Yun Zhou

Amidst the patriotic fervour and anti-Christian sentiment, a group of Chinese Christians started to reappropriate Christian teachings through the lens of nationalism. In his research on two prominent Christian magazines (1919-1926), *The Life* (生命 *Sheng ming*) and *The Truth* (真理 *Zhen li*), Wu Guo'an argues that writings during the 1920s manifested an approach to reconstruct Christianity into an indigenous one through a cultural approach that aimed to seek "Chineseness" in Christianity. Facing the first wave of the anti-Christianity movement that attacked the foreignness of Christianity in early 1920s, editors and writers of the two magazines blended Christian ideals with Confucianism, aiming to prove that Christianity was not against Chinese culture and their promotion of social reform was patriotic. However, when Christianity was attacked for its entanglement with foreign powers during the second wave of anti-Christian movement in 1924, Wu comments that the cultural approach was no longer effective. On the contrary, it framed Christianity in the historical narrative that valued new cultural norms rather than carrying on the historical continuity of Christian ideals that featured eternal values. As Chinese society at the time longed for a political solution to its turmoils, the Sinicization of Christianity approach thus hardly worked.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, Yu Rizhang's advocacy fit well into the universal claim of the Christian ideals and the growing nationalist sentiment. In the 1920s, Yu was involved in a series of non-official diplomatic activities. From the Washington Conference to the Institute of Pacific Relations, Yu strove to promote internationalism that was based on international good will and China's national claims. His attention on enhancing China's international presence started in 1919 when China's diplomat weakness was foregrounded.

### Internationalizing China

Yu Rizhang's non-government diplomatic trajectory needs to be situated in the overall work of the Chinese YMCA. The Y's work in China was an integral part of the world Christian movements. Its connections with the World's Alliance of YMCAs and the World's Student Christian Federation provided opportunities for leaders to engage in transnational communications and overseas travelling. Yu's awareness of the necessity for public diplomat and national revival was stimulated on his trip to attend a conference for the International Committee of the YMCA in New York.<sup>31</sup> On 8 April 1919, Yu embarked on the vessel in Shanghai and arrived in San Francisco on 29 April and then continued his journey to New York.<sup>32</sup>

During his three-month stay in the United States, Yu Rizhang came to realize how information on Chinese circumstances outside of China was lagged and incorrect. Other than Chinese students in the United States who launched some activities to protest the issue of unequal treaties after the Paris Peace Conference, Yu said there was no response among the Chinese Americans. The primary reason, as Yu attributed to, was the lack of news on the China's side. Even at the height of the May Fourth Movement, little was mentioned about China in any American magazine. By contrast, there

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30 Wu Guo'an, , 140-142.

31 个人讯息：余日章君旅美返国通函, *Association Progress*, 1919 第 27 期, 87.

32 Ancestry.com. San Francisco, California, Chinese Passenger Arrivals and Disposition, 1903-1947 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. For Original data, see Lists of Chinese Applying for Admission to the United States through the Port of San Francisco, California, compiled 07/07/1903-01/07/1947; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1476, 27 rolls. ARC Identifier 4482916); Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

was a plethora of news on Japan, praising its politics, economy and military power.<sup>33</sup> According to Yu's speech after returning to Shanghai, he said,

Each year Japan spends millions of dollars to agitate public opinion, even dispatching people to the United States to lobby at the church. Japanese citizens also hire lobbyists to deliver speeches and Japanese magnates hold luxuries banquet to treat influential American figures. Their methods [of influencing public opinion] are numerous. As a result, American newspapers publish articles with positive attitudes towards Japan. ... According to the Japanese lobbyists in the United States, ... what Japan obtained [from the treaty] was economic control over a very small territory. As Japan's population grows rapidly, it must seek colonies.<sup>34</sup>

According to Yu, Japan also adopted similar methods in other countries such as Britain and France by approaching to editors and journalists to foment public opinion. In his speech, Yu deeply felt it necessary to seek "justice" for the Shandong's case. He utilized the YMCA platform and delivered speeches on China's circumstances everywhere he went during his stay in the United States. He also collaborated with overseas Chinese students to appeal Japan's insulting activities and oppression in China, aiming to change foreign opinion towards China. As a result, news on China appeared in headlines about a month before Yu's departure.<sup>35</sup> For example, Yu's speech had been published in the Bulletin of The Merchants' Association of New York entitled *Greater New York* on 9 June 1919. As early as 1915, Yu had become familiar with the Members' Council of The Merchants' Association during his trip to New York as the honourable secretary of the Commercial Commissioners of the Republican government. When Yu faced 1,400 members of the Association in 1919, he made a speech to update the audience of a modern China. Yu addressed that China's task was to build a democratic country, which European countries had already achieved, and China would "join you in your programme to make this world safe for democracy!" Yu proudly mentioned that "the Chinese people today are rapidly awakening to their own responsibility, not only to China but to the rest of the world, in this programme for the extension of democracy."<sup>36</sup>

While Yu referred implicitly to Japan as "another country," his message was well received by the audience. The front page of the Bulletin summarised, "He made no direct allusion to Japan by name, but he appealed indirectly to this country to aid China against Japanese aggression."<sup>37</sup> In Yu's view, his efforts won the understanding of American citizens who embraced justice and supported China.<sup>38</sup> It was reported that the audience of the Merchants Association in New York showed decided sympathy for China.<sup>39</sup> In the following decade, Yu Rizhang and the Chinese YMCA committed to further internationalizing China.

#### *The Washington Conference*

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33 杨立人, 1.

34 记余日章之谈话, Shenbao, 4 September 1919.

35 杨立人, 2.

36 China Asks Aid: Mr Yui Arouses Applause by His Appeal to America, *Greater New York*, 9 June 1919: 6.

37 The *Greater New York*, 9 June 1919, front page.

38 纪余日章硕士之演讲, Shenbao, 6 September 1919.

39 The *Greater New York*, 9 June 1919, front page.

The 1919 American trip instilled in Yu Rizhang's mind a determination to save China through both strengthening China and internationalizing her global stance. Shortly after he returned to Shanghai, Yu engaged in collaboration with foreign missionaries and leading Chinese figures to promote national salvation. Under Yu's leadership, the Shanghai YMCA hosted a meeting in December 1919 to promote a national salvation society, which was established on the first day of 1920 and known as the Christian National Salvation Society (基督教救國會 *Jidujiao jiuguohui*).<sup>40</sup> The self-strengthening efforts were most evident in the work of the Chinese YMCA. Peter Chen-main Wang notes that, based on his Western experience, Yu Rizhang "suggested that the YMCA could play a much more active role in laying a solid foundation for a strong China" at the national convention of the Chinese YMCA in April 1920. Wang identified the three programs of the YMCA, character building, mass education and citizen training, with an aim to building a strong nation.<sup>41</sup>

Yu Rizhang's non-official diplomatic efforts, though briefly mentioned by Wang, were crucial when the state was weak. He was selected as the citizens' representative together with the educator Jiang Menglin (1886-1964) by the Pacific Conference Association (PCA, 太平洋會議協會 *Taipingyang huiyi xiehui*) to attend the Washington Conference from November 1921 to February 1922. This proposal was approved by the Beijing government and was fully sponsored by the PCA, which was comprised of nine groups including the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce.<sup>42</sup> Existing scholarships on the Washington Conference reveal the intertwined networks and relationships between different groups in China. According to Ma Jianbiao, the work of Yu and Jiang during their stay in the United States covered three aspects, mediating opinions between Association of Chinese Students in America, representatives of Chinese Americans and government officials; communicating with American politicians; and reporting conference progress to Chinese citizens.<sup>43</sup>

During his lobbying in the United States, Yu Rizhang's emphasis on China's moral awakening was often shadowed by his talks on politics. However, the stress on moral upstanding was central to Yu's vision of a modern nation in a new world. At the special meeting at Columbia University on 7 November 1921, Yu spoke highly of China's progress that was embodied in "the increase of schools and universities ... the people's willingness to support worthwhile projects." He called for an "urgent need of 'men and women of sterling character,' who can unite together, and stand always for justice and goodwill!"<sup>44</sup> In his letter to the Chinese Student Christian Association in North America in late December 1919, Yu presented China's current situation with an emphasis on "the general awakening of the entire country" in students' work and the work of YWCA.<sup>45</sup> Even during his previous speech at The Merchants' Association in New York in 1919, Yu attempted to convince his audience that China was at its "moral awakening" and asked for American people for help "in order to bring about a complete moral awakening of the four hundred million people" in China.<sup>46</sup>

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40 基督徒将开救国会, *Shenbao*, 20 December, 1919; 基督教救国会成立大会, *Shenbao*, 1 January.

41 Peter Chen-main Wang, Yu Rizhang: Patriot, Peacemaker, Prophet, in *Salt and Light*, Vol. 3, edited by Carol Lee Hamrin with Stacey Bieler, 2011, 46.

42 太平洋会议国民代表之近讯, *Shenbao*, 22 September 1921.

43 马建标, 多方的博弈: 余日章、蒋梦麟与华盛顿会议, *史林* No. 6 2011: 133.

44 *Club News: Columbia, The Chinese Students' Monthly: Conference Number*, November 1921, Vol. XVII No. 1: 149.

45 *Personal, Local and Home News, Christian China* v.6 Oct-June 1919-1920: 220-221.

46 *China Asks Aid, Greater New York*: 7.

Yu Rizhang's keenness to demonstrate China's moral awakening during his non-official diplomatic trip resonated with the three self-strengthening programs of the Chinese YMCA on character, citizen and education. Through the Washington Conference, Yu deeply felt China's internal politics and the moral status of Chinese citizens hindered China's progress, which led to the diplomatic failure at the Conference. The YMCA under the leadership of Yu Rizhang therefore launched projects with a purpose to instil a broader sense of patriotism into Chinese students that emphasized citizens' responsibility and moral integrity.<sup>47</sup> To a certain degree, these programs echoed the Confucian teachings on the importance of moral upstanding in nation-building. As Yu said, "the character of the individual is the key to all national problems." The improvement of citizens' character brought out by the Y's educational work thus suggested that in a few years "China's present problems would be far easier to solve."<sup>48</sup> Thus throughout his American trip, Yu endeavoured to assure the American audience that China was in progress to be a strong nation through the improvement of moral standards.

### *Advocating a World Citizenship*

Throughout the early 1920s to the mid-1930s, the Chinese YMCA launched a series of movements to cultivate modern citizenship. Less scholarly attention, however, is paid to the role of the Chinese YMCA in distributing new ideas about a world citizenship. The organization's mouthpiece *Association Progress* circulated discussions crucial to the concept of a world citizenship in the mid-1920s when Yu Rizhang was liaising with foreigners to promote an international platform for world peace, later known as the Institute of Pacific Relations.

In 1924, *Association Progress* published several articles on international issues. One article translated the work of the Norwegian internationalist Christian L. Lange on the concept of internationalism. According to Lange, internationalism was the political and social idea of reorganizing human societies and building up a new basis for international connections. Regarding the relationship between nationalism and internationalism, Lange viewed nationalism was the first step for internationalism as the former was the prerequisite for the latter.<sup>49</sup> Another article referred to the Lord's Prayer to illustrate the concept of internationalism. It depicted Christ as one that embraced internationalism and Christian God as heavenly father that nurtured all nations. The article attributed difficulties in realizing internationalism to the lack of justice, equality and forgiveness advocated in the Lord's Prayer.<sup>50</sup> Another article published in the same issue enumerated ten international Christian organizations that worked to advance internationalism, which included YMCA and WSCF.<sup>51</sup>

Some Chinese Christians noted international issues within Chinese churches and proposed solutions. Being at the forefront of Sino-Western encounter, Christian churches in China were faced with many internal problems. In his article published in the 1924 special issue on international problems and Christianity, the leading Christian theological thinker Zhao Zichen (1888-1979, also known as T.C.

47 谢扶雅, 青年会会务本月分概文, 青年进步, 1924 May No.73: 170. 黄文治, 中华基督教青年会公民教育运动(1923-1930), 甘肃社会科学 2010 年第 6 期: 157.

48 Contemporary Chinese Christian Leaders: I. David Z. T. Yui, *The Chinese Recorder* January 1927, 10.

49 Christian L. Lange, translated by Pi Gongyu, *Internationalism*, *Association Progress*, 1924 No. 76: 29.

50 毛拔, 国际观的主祷文, *Association Progress*, 1924 No. 73: 37-42.

51 公侠, 基督教国际团体的举例和说明:一个综合的研究, *Association Progress*, 1924 No. 73: 63-79.

Chao) identified six “consciousnesses” when looking at the “international life” in Chinese churches.<sup>52</sup> One prominent problem was a divided stance among Western missionaries towards transferring leadership to Chinese Christians. To solve international problems in Christian communities, Zhao believed the best way to repair international relationship was through the daily practices between Western and Chinese Christians that were in line with Christ’s mind and spirit. In addition to the internal problems, Zhao also noted another international problem between Chinese churches and Chinese people which was caused by the entangled relationship between Western imperialism and Christianity. Zhao called for Chinese Christians, Western missionaries, and non-Christian Chinese to be conscious of this problem and work together to amend the hostility caused by a narrow sense of nationalism as seen in the work of Yu Jiaju.<sup>53</sup>

It is worth noting that nationalism was not widely discussed in the magazine in the early 1920s, which had been widely discussed in the Chinese intelligentsia and was closely associated with a narrow sense of nationalism that led to anti-Christian movements in China. What the Chinese YMCA attempted to promote was a broad sense of nationalism that coexisted with internationalism. When the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 occurred, it foregrounded the issue of nationalism and writings in the *Association Progress* elaborated on the concept of nationalism. One article articulated how Christians should deal with national and international affairs. At the height of anti-Christian movement, the article argued that Christians should influence national and international affairs. It criticized the governments of Christian nations who meddled with China’s domestic politics and Christians who failed to interfere their government’s international policies. It advocated that Christians from strong nations should not be confined by a narrow sense of nationalism but instead should monitor the foreign policy of their nation to promote friendship with weak nations.<sup>54</sup> The political conflict as seen in the Incident raised the question of how to apply Christian ideals that emphasized international good-will while not meddling with politics. In a speech at the Shanghai YMCA in 1926, Yu Rizhang addressed that compared with interfering with politics, what was more inappropriate was the inability to display Christian ideal on peace. In this light, Yu argued that churches should advocate for the Christianization of politics rather than politicizing Christianity. The *Association Progress* later published Yu’s speech and called for Christians to concern about national affairs as well as to facilitate international reconciliation.<sup>55</sup>

#### *The Institute of Pacific Relations*

Yu Rizhang’s efforts to facilitate international contact and mutual understanding between peoples were most evident through his work related to the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). It was initially proposed by Yu Rizhang at a national YMCA conference in Beijing in 1922. The idea was not successful until 1924 when Yu travelled to the United States for medical treatment. Yu’s proposal was agreed by his American friends and soon it was decided that in 1925 there would be the first conference for the IPR.<sup>56</sup> Every two years members from the Pacific rim such as China, Japan, Korea,

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52 Zhao Zichen, 中华基督教的国际问题, *Association Progress*, 1924 No.73: 15-26.

53 Zhao Zichen mentioned Yu Jiaju’s monograph entitled *The Education of Nationalism*. For Yu’s work, see Yu Jiaju, *国家主义的教育*, 中华书局, 1923.

54 徐诚美, 基督徒对于国家与国际应抱怎样的态度, *Association Progress*, 1925 No. 79: 62-65.

55 Yu Rizhang, *基督教与政治*, *Association Progress*, 1926 No.98: 8-13.

56 1930年太平洋国民代表大会经过 1930年余日章《希望月刊》第七卷第六期, p4.

United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada would attend the conference hosted by the IPR. Up until its closure in the 1950s, the IPR served as an international non-governmental platform for scholarly discussions and debate. The IPR was proposed to be neither diplomatic nor political. It aimed to seek the facts, obtain wisdom, and discuss lingering problems.<sup>57</sup> In an article on the purpose of the IPR, Frank C. Atherton, the business and YMCA lay official, addressed that

A few years ago the suggestion was made that since the Y.M.C.A. as an organization, had representatives at work among young men in all the countries around the Pacific Ocean, it might be advisable to hold a conference of laymen and secretaries to discuss a plan for larger and better work among young men. ... As we thought and planned along these lines, we came to realize that there were many and serious problems confronting the peoples of all these countries, both in relation to their internal national policies and to their contacts and attitudes towards their neighboring countries. ... Instead we decided to bring together representative men and women from some of the countries bordering the Pacific and to hold an institute. In such a gathering we could freely and frankly discuss all matters of real moment to the peoples of these various countries, especially those that affected their relations to the peoples of other nations.<sup>58</sup>

During its first three conferences which was held in 1925, 1927 and 1929 respectively, the IPR constituted a group of YMCA leaders, many of whom were delegates from China.<sup>59</sup> The promotion of IPR in China was largely credited to Yu Rizhang, who initiated to form a Chinese committee for IPR, lobbied among various groups, and launched meetings to prepare for the IPR conference. In his mobilization of Chinese citizens' involvement in the IPR, Yu emphasized China's poor international stance and expected Chinese citizens to be active in enhancing China's international presence. IPR was thus promoted to Chinese citizens as an international platform among peoples from different nations to discuss international issues and seek solutions for problems lingering in the Pacific rim.<sup>60</sup>

While Yu Rizhang did not attend the 1925 conference due to his tight schedule at the Chinese YMCA,<sup>61</sup> he attended two IPR conferences, one in Honolulu in 1927 and the other in Kyoto in 1929. At the 1927 IPR conference held in Honolulu, Yu Rizhang presented problems that China encountered externally and internally. He briefed major incidents and conferences pertaining to Sino-foreign relations. Aside from calling for abolishment of unequal treaties, foreign troops and gunboats in China, Yu also reported on China's progress embodied in the Nationalist movement that worked towards the unification of the nation.<sup>62</sup> At the 1929 IPR conference held in Kyoto, Yu stated

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57 2. The Approach to Pacific Problems by Arthur L. Dean, 49.

58 3. The Purpose of the Institute of Pacific Relations by Frank C. Atherton, INSTITUTE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS, HONOLULU SESSION JUNE 30- JULY 14, 1925. HISTORY, ORGANIZATON, PROCEEDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND ADDRESSES Honolulu, Hawaii: The Institute, 1925, 57-8.

59 Akami mentions that in the 1927 conference of the IPR, delegates from China were all Christians. See Akami, 118.

60 For Yu's activities in organizing the Chinese Committee for the IPR, see 加入联太平洋会议之筹备, 申报, 1925年2月22日; 太平洋会议中国筹备会昨讯, 申报, 1925年3月9日.

61 Wang, 54-55.

62 Dr. David Z. T. Yui, China and Pacific Relations During 1925-27, in *Problems of The Pacific: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15 to 29, 1927* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), 17-22.

the work of the National Government in legal and judicial reform as well as the social reconstruction in Chinese cities. China was depicted by Yu as a young nation where developments were evident, and problems coexisted with opportunities. Regarding extraterritoriality, Yu advocated that it should be abolished as “the right of China to self-determination in the return of her domestic policies will not be denied by enlightened persons today.”<sup>63</sup> In response to critiques of Chinese internal problems that rendered conditions for abolishing extraterritoriality, Yu pointed out the direction for the solution:

each party must sincerely respect the full sovereignty of the other and regard it as inviolable; each party must sincerely try to understand the other and to establish mutual relations of equality, helpfulness and peace; each party should fulfil its own obligations towards the other without imposing any conditions which will interfere with autonomous internal administration; neither party should ask terms which it would not be willing to accept from the other party under similar but reversed conditions. Our international relations should be built upon the foundation of mutual understanding and appreciation, sincerity and reciprocity, confidence and goodwill. This foundation alone can assure a lasting peace for the world.<sup>64</sup>

When Yu returned to China after the 1929 IPR conference, he reported the process to *Shen bao*, an influential newspaper in Republican China. As the Manchuria and Mongolian Problem was at the core of the conference, tensions arose among the Japanese delegates during the session when China’s delegates gave reports. It was said that the Japanese delegates wanted to leave the meeting but were successfully convinced by the British chairman and stayed till the end of the session.<sup>65</sup> Overall, however, Yu commented that Japan displayed tolerance and goodwill and concluded the conference as a successful one.<sup>66</sup> To Yu and many other YMCA colleagues, ideal international relations should be based on equality and good intention. He was neither against nor for Japan, the guiding line is to treat those who treat China equally with goodwill and those with unequal treatment with hatred.<sup>67</sup> Through the IPR platform, Yu Rizhang had demonstrated himself as a firm believer of international goodwill.

#### *Other Activities*

Aside from the IPR, Yu Rizhang also utilized his transnational networks to publicize China. For example, a historical account pointed to Yu’s non-official diplomat work at the 113th New York Luncheon Discussion in 1929. Together with Hong Ye (also known as William Hong, 1893-1980), who was an exchange professor at Harvard University at the time, Yu was invited as the guest speaker to address to members of the Foreign Policy Association and the radio audience under the theme of “Nationalist China.” Hong gave a general background of the history of China’s foreign relations and elaborated on the question of “What type of policy does Chinese Nationalism want?” In short, Hong

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63 David Z. T. Yui, China and the Pacific World, *Pacific Affairs*, Jan. 1930, Vol. 3 No. 1: 44.

64 Ibid.

65 1929年11月20日申报 余日章报告太平洋会经过.

66 1929年11月10日申报太平洋会闭幕.

67 In a trip to Japan with Chinese businessmen in 1926, Yu was once asked by a journalist of an English newspaper that if he had changed his anti-Japanese attitude. See 1926年6月3日申报 華商赴日參觀團之任務.

Yun Zhou

said that the answer was “a real open door policy.”<sup>68</sup> Yu started his speech with greetings from the Chinese YMCA and passed on a message from the National Chamber of Commerce of China. The message was to assure American people of China’s unified status that was governed by a strong national government. A large part of Yu’s speech introduced China’s progress and expectations in politics, education, economy, social reconstruction, and religious freedom. Internationally, Yu addressed that

We hope that the Chinese people will be inspired to support the efforts to outlaw war and to preserve the peace of the world and we hope that peace will be built upon the foundation of justice, understanding, and cooperation. Internationally we hope that the new China will, on account of her own achievements and contributions, win an honorable place in the family of nations.<sup>69</sup>

In the Q&A section, both Hong and Yu addressed questions raised by the audience. Some questioned the pattern of the Nationalist government and some asked about the famine relief in China. While Yu mentioned the Christian work of the Chinese YMCA and the high ratio of Christians in the new government cabinet, he also introduced to the audience the Confucian teaching, which pre-existed to Christ by five hundred years. Saying that “all men within the four seas are brothers,” Yu believed it was “about time for us to put it into our every-day life.”<sup>70</sup> This shared value of brotherhood found both in Chinese philosophy and Christian ideals serve as the rationale for many Chinese Christians like Yu Rizhang, who were both nationalist and internationalist, in their promotion of China’s global stance.

### **The Fleeting Dream**

Between the 1920s and early 1930s, China’s contact with the outside featured a mixture of public and private organizations. It was until the end of the Northern Expedition in 1928 that the national regime was consolidated under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. Public diplomacy was gradually dissolved and replaced by the Nationalist government. The escalation of warfare in the 1930s on a global scale also fuelled political intervention in the activities of IPR. Unlike the visions of the American founders of the IPR of the 1920s who promoted a “region-centred perspective” that “emphasized a mission of educating the public/society,” the IPR shifted in the mid-1930s to a world-centred vision where the United States desired to “play an expanded role in the region and in the world,” economically and militarily. In her research on the institute, Tomoko Akami identifies Wilsonian internationalism as a dominating ideology underpinning the IPR during interwar period.<sup>71</sup> Along with the growing political influence, the change in the representatives of China’s group in the 1930s further reduced the impact of Christian leaders in the IPR. In 1931, Yu Rizhang, who had played a leading role in organizing the Chinese committee for the IPR, resigned from his position due to poor health. Instead, the internal power of the China’s group, as Zhang Jing notes, shifted from the YMCA leaders to non-Christian scholars. From 1939 onwards, the escalation of warfare

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68 Nationalist China, 1929, 6.

69 Nationalist China, 18.

70 Nationalist China, 1929, 17.

71 Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919-1945*, 275.

intensified Chinese government's interference in the China's delegate group, which aimed to strengthen its wartime international connections.<sup>72</sup>

Within China, the increasing political interference of the Nationalist government also hindered the Chinese YMCA's attempts at promoting international good-will among China's young generation. A recently published article by Yucheng Bai argues that in the 1920s "the YMCA's Citizenship Education Movement testifies to the association between one's religious devotion and an international understanding of citizenship." In the 1930s, however, the Nationalist Party harnessed the Movement and integrated it into the nation-building project in the 1930s.<sup>73</sup> When China's war with Japan escalated into a total war in 1937, Keller notes that "the Chinese YMCA gave up internationalism and participated in the war for national survival by implementing its 'War Work' program."<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

The global expansion of the YMCA throughout the tumultuous twentieth century crystallizes some of the thorniest questions lingering in Christian history. While the Chinese YMCA, as Charles Andrew Keller notes, committed to a notion of "Christian internationalism,"<sup>75</sup> an ignorance of its entanglement with nationalism may miss critical nodes in the development of Christianity in China. Amidst the rising tide of anti-imperialist sentiments after the May Fourth Movement, Christians in China were viewed with suspicion by their fellow Chinese people. Chinese Christians also often found themselves grappling with their dual identities as being Chinese and Christian. This mindset of being conscious of one's national identity characterised the discussions and activities of Republican Chinese converts of the 1920s.

In dealing with national allegiance and religious faith, the Chinese YMCA under the leadership of Yu Rizhang demonstrated an alternative that emphasized world brotherhood and international goodwill. Yu's work at the YMCA served as a crucial force that contributed to the course of contemporary public diplomacy when the nation needed the most. Meanwhile, he demonstrated how Christians responded to the national call under the framework of Christian universal ideals on justice and equality. His efforts at internationalizing China's situations through transnational platforms were aimed to abolish the unfair treatment towards China and restore equality among nations. The works of Yu and the Chinese YMCA reflected an ideal world in the mindset of Chinese Christians that would be governed by principles of equality and universal brotherhood. This ideal world was vulnerable to many challenges presented by the reality of the time as China was enmeshed in global and regional conflicts. Nonetheless, Yu's efforts and thinking are still of great relevance to today's world that is increasingly divided by contesting political agenda and ideologies.

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72 张静, 国民外交与学术研究: 中国太平洋国际学会的基本活动及其工作重心的转移, 社会科学研究 2006 年 4 期: 152. Akami observes a detachment from the YMCA leaders occurred in the mid-1920s. See Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 117-118.

73 Yucheng Bai, *God's Model Citizen: The Citizenship Education Movement of the YMCA and Its Political Legacy*, *Studies in World Christianity*, Feb 2020, vo. 26, No. 1: 42-62

74 Keller, 148.

75 Keller, Charles Andrew. *Making model citizens: The Chinese YMCA, social activism, and internationalism in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Dissertation, 1996), 176.