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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Chinese Protestant Pentecostalism and Its Global Spread, 1907-2024

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Abstract: This article surveys Chinese Protestant Pentecostalism from its origins in 1907 to the present day. It investigates the origins of Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and their links to Western Pentecostal missionaries, then elaborates on how Chinese indigenous Pentecostal-Charismatic churches came into being under Chinese leadership despite opposition and rejection from both Chinese and Western mainstream denominations. Particularly, it highlights the formation and adaption of three remarkable local Pentecostal-Charismatic churches—the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission, the True Jesus Church, and the Jesus Family Church—given their unique experiences of the Holy Spirit. These indigenous churches expand abroad to the Chinese diaspora. Focusing on the Pentecostal revivalist overseas mission work of John Sung (宋尚节) and others, this article explores how Chinese Pentecostals became linked to the rest of the world and extended their profound influence on overseas Christians—reshaping local ecclesiastical landscapes through a new form of Pentecostal preaching and practice.

Keywords: Chinese Protestant Pentecostalism, Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission, True Jesus Church, Jesus Family Church

Introduction

This article is focused on the emergence and development of three Chinese indigenous Pentecostal churches in China. To illustrate the rise of these churches and their distinctive beliefs and practices from mainstream Chinese Protestantism, I shall trace back to their earliest links to Western Pentecostal mission work in the early twentieth century and their responses to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. I shall then articulate how these three local Pentecostal-Charismatic churches were formed under the Chinese leadership. Of these three churches, the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission and the True Jesus Church extended their mission trips to Southeast Asia to build up overseas Chinese Pentecostals. Resulting from these trips

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came the success of the fruitful outreach of John Sung and his follower, Lim Puay Hian (林佩轩), which will also be highlighted.

The Rise of Chinese Pentecostalism

When Chinese Pentecostalism emerged in the early 20th century, it introduced a new form of Christianity to China and reshaped the Chinese ecclesiastical landscape.[2] Since the 1980s, Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has experienced rapid growth, becoming perhaps one of China's most dynamic and fastest-growing denominations. The earliest forms of Chinese Pentecostalism had much in common with various Western Pentecostal missionaries, but those early Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic groups quickly gained independence in terms of finance, evangelization, and propagation. This enabled local Pentecostals to create indigenous forms of Pentecostalism to perform unique spiritual practices, integrating distinct nuance into their theological perspectives and experiential expressions of faith.

Missionary origins

The general consensus is that, given its foreign origin, Pentecostalism marks its advent on Chinese soil[3] with the arrival of the first Pentecostal Holiness missionary from North Carolina, Thomas James McIntosh (1879–1955). He received the Spirit Baptism at Azusa Street and embarked on a mission trip with his wife, Annie Eleanor Edens 1882–1958), to the Portuguese colony of Macao on August 7, 1907 (Woods 2003). Upon their arrival, the couple initiated Pentecostal meetings with the assistance of other American missionaries—A. E. Kirby, Mabel Evans, and several natives who received baptism with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Apostolic Faith, 1908).

Their mission encountered severe resistance from locals, who warned McIntosh against evangelization and promised to have the Portuguese government deport him (Bays 1999, 52, 58–59). Under this fervent opposition, the couple shifted their mission to Wuzhou in Guangxi province, where two Chinese Christians and a few Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) missionaries received the Baptism of the

[2] The term "Pentecostalism" applies to the classical and charismatic groups identified in this article. I would like to extend a special thanks to the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center for its generosity in allowing access to its online archive freely for this article.

[3] The term "Chinese soil" indicates the Chinese culture and people who lived there. Though Hong Kong and Macau were colonized by Portugal and Britain, respectively, at that time, the people and culture inhabiting those spaces were primarily Chinese/Asian.

Spirit through McIntosh's Pentecostal meetings—although most who were baptized ultimately returned to their previous beliefs (Woods 2003). Despite expanding the mission's work to Hong Kong and elsewhere, the entire McIntosh enterprise in China ultimately bore no fruit for the church (Tiedemann 2011: 119).

Following the McIntosh missionary footsteps, another American missionary couple, Alfred Goodrich Garr (1875–1944) and his wife, Lillian Garr (1878–1916), arrived in Hong Kong just two months later, in October 1907. Soon upon their arrival, the Garrs commenced a nightly Pentecostal revival gathering with two other American Pentecostal missionaries, E. May Law and Rose Pittman, who had arrived in Hong Kong on October 12, 1907 (McIntosh 1907: 1; Garr 1909: 4).

These meetings took place on Ladder Street at a church owned by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and Mok Lai Chi (莫礼智)—a reputable Chinese Christian leader—served as a Chinese interpreter. Western Pentecostal missionaries usually believed that they had been gifted foreign languages such as Chinese and Hindi to preach the gospel when they experienced the Baptism of the Spirit in the early days of the Pentecostal movement. But they found their language skills were, in practice, inadequate, requiring assistance from locals. With Mok's help as interpreter, the Garr Pentecostal revival meetings with the healing ministry continued for months and achieved unprecedented success.

It was recorded that more than 700 people were drawn to Pentecost; the majority were Chinese, and some were Westerners. Among the Chinese was Huang Suzhen (黄素贞), who first received the Baptism of the Spirit at home after the meeting on November 9, 1907. In the following days, Mok, Sung Teng Man (宋鼎文), and Sung's wife (黄节基) received Pentecost (Tai 2020: 80). Soon after, Mok became profoundly involved in Pentecostal evangelization and played a pivotal role in facilitating and stabilizing the ministry when the Garrs began to lose focus on the Hong Kong mission due to its itinerant nature coupled with bereavement and Lillian's illness. As Connie Au (2019, 89) comments, this reflects the earliest Pentecostal missionary pattern in China in which Western missionaries initiated the ministry but were hardly committed to it; the McIntosh mission was no exception, establishing a mission station at Sainam (西南) in 1910 and quickly departing for other mission trips, leaving the station to another American missionary couple for development (Tiedemann 2020, 198).

Despite the noncommittal pattern of missionaries, the Hong Kong Pentecostal revivals managed to thrive thanks to Chinese Pentecostal efforts and local financial resources—even as they garnered opposition from local churches and non-

Pentecostal Western missionary agencies. For example, the CMA and the China Inland Mission dismissed the movements, with the Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal (1908) reporting that these Pentecostal gatherings disrupted the local religious order. The China Congregational Church (中华基督教会公理堂) even accused the Garrs of hypnotism and demagoguery and refused to lend their church to Pentecostal services (Tai 2020, 80). In their letter to American supporters, the Garrs confirmed that they received no support from Western missionaries in Hong Kong and had to rely only on Chinese resources (Pentecostal Truths 1910).

This resistance forced Hong Kong Pentecostal meetings to take place at Mok's private school (乐群书塾). Mok was a highly educated and respected Chinese Christian leader and director of the Morrison English School. He used his substantial and extensive influence among the Chinese to dispel tensions and continue the Pentecostal ministry. The growth of the ministry led Mok, with assistance from the Garrs during their stay in Hong Kong, to establish the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM)—the first Pentecostal church in the British colony—in 1907. Mok played a vital role in this church's establishment and development and became its prominent leader after the Garrs returned to the US in 1908; he became fully committed to the AFM in early November, 1909.

Under Mok's leadership, the AFM remained open for local Pentecostal services and served as a mission station for Western missionaries who were staying there en route to mainland China (Au 2019, 86). The AFM was renamed the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission (HKPM) in 1910, indicating its Chinese indigenous identity (McIntosh 1908: 1). In 1911, the HKPM split from Western missionaries along national lines, with Mok anchoring the church and achieving full independence by 1913 (Mayfield 2021, 66). Its revival mission continued to thrive at the time, and the HKPM still exists today, with two locations, at Castle Road on Hong Kong Island and Waterloo Road in Kowloon.

Pentecostal Newspapers

To further preach Pentecostal truths and advance the Pentecostal message amid criticism, Mok worked with McIntosh to create the Chinese-English (but mostly Chinese) periodical, *Pentecostal Truths* (五旬节真理报), in 1908 (Au 2017, 74–76)—the first Chinese Pentecostal newspaper outside the Western world. The premier issue was entirely in Chinese, with subsequent issues including an English section to facilitate reaching a wider audience. *Pentecostal Truths* covered sermons, testimonies, mission reports, and instructions on receiving the Baptism of the Spirit; it also included translated articles from English Pentecostal papers. The earliest issues circulated

quickly in China and overseas, reaching a variety of Chinese readers, foreign missionaries, and believers in other countries. Distribution stands were set up in Guangzhou in 1909 and in Shanghai in 1910. 8,000 copies were reportedly distributed in 1915, extending tremendous influence on potential prospects (Iap 2021: 72). The newspaper had a profound impact on Chinese and foreign readers, becoming an essential instrument not only for its own continuation through donations of supporters to cover the large expenses of printing and postage, but also for the further ministry (Mok 1909, 1).

The Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission

As Pentecostal newspapers became self-sustaining and able to spread the Pentecostal message throughout China, the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission positioned itself as the mission centre to launch Chinese Pentecostal missionary outreach in neighbouring areas of South China. Mok himself was actively involved in mission activities, making evangelistic trips around Guangdong to preach in revival meetings and providing local preachers with financial support to travel and strengthen new Pentecostals' beliefs (Au 2019, 96–97).

The HKPM's members based in Hong Kong maintained strong ties to their families and relatives in mainland China; they took the lead to visit their hometowns to preach Pentecostal teachings, perform healing ministries, and distribute Pentecostal newspapers and tracts.

These dedicated mission works bore fruit: a family in Zhongshan (中山) converted to Pentecost through Mok's preachings and devoted its wealth to fund the Yuanfeng Pentecostal church (later renamed Yuanfeng church) in 1917. This church closed during the Cultural Revolution but reopened under the leadership of a retired minister of the HKPM at the end of the 1980s; it continued to thrive and obtained significant financial support from the HKPM to rebuild its crumbling church building in the 1990s (Au 2019, 97–100). Also in Zhongshan, in Pingnan (平南), HKPM member Kwok Tit Chiu (郭𨱏超) founded another church by generously opening the ground floor of his building to provide a space for church services; his daughter and son-in-law ministered there together (Au 2019, 100–101).

Following crucial societal shifts, the HKPM's overseas church planting began in 1997, the year Britain's 99-year lease on the New Territories expired. In the countdown to Hong Kong's return to China, many churchgoers, including lay leaders and pastors, responded to the sociopolitical changes. Some filed immigration petitions and moved to Canada, considering Hong Kong's uncertain future and the churches' internal

dilemmas and conflicts caused by stark ideological positions regarding the Chinese central government's potential approach to Hong Kong. Two HKPM leaders settled in Vancouver to offer Cantonese-speaking Pentecostal services with the support of their headquarters in Hong Kong. With the increasing number of Hong Kong participants, the Vancouver Tabernacle was formed in 1997. Settling into life in Canada, further generations became integrated with the language and customs of their new home, and English-speaking services led by these generations have become essential in the continuance of the church.[4] Given how the first Pentecostal church in China formed and developed, we can see that Chinese Pentecostalism owes its existence to the dual efforts of the missionaries and the local people who helped them. The earliest Chinese Pentecostal movement drew its vitality from antecedent Pentecostal revivals in North America, as the earliest leading pioneers either emerged from Azusa Street or originated from North America.

Formation and Local Expansion of Chinese Indigenous Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

Beginning in 1908, Pentecostal mission movements also launched in northern China, where the most prominent local Pentecostal leaders arose and Chinese independent Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, such as the True Jesus Church (TJC, 真耶稣教会) in Beijing and the Jesus Family Church (JFC, 耶稣家庭) in Shandong, formed and flourished.[5] Like the HKPM, these indigenous churches have historical links with the earliest Western Pentecostal missionaries, achieved independence rapidly, and experienced steady growth.

Historical evidence suggests that Christian revival movements paved the way for this success, and Chinese revivalists such as Dora Yu (余慈度) and Li Shuqing (李叔青) played a prominent role in the arrival of Chinese Pentecostalism in northern China (Wu 2004, 124, 147–72). Following the Manchurian revival of 1908, the Shandong revival of 1930–1932 took on a more Pentecostal-oriented focus, featuring the "Spirit Baptism", with manifestations of people being hurled to the ground, "holy laughter",

[4] This piece of information was collected from an HKPM member through a telephone interview on November 16, 2024.

[5] Some Western scholars, such as Allan H. Anderson (2000, 115–32), have identified the Little Flock (小群派) as a Pentecostal form of the Chinese church. However, the Little Flock church objects to this classification and considers itself an evangelical form of Protestantism. This view is confirmed through my conversations with pastors and deacons of the Little Flock based in China and Germany, and I concur with the Little Flock's ecclesiastical position, given its theology and practice. For these reasons, the Little Flock is not discussed here as a Pentecostal group.

all-night prayer meetings, and healings (Orr 1973, 158–60). Shandong and Beijing became focal points of the earliest Pentecostal beginnings and development in north China in the early twentieth century, and they were the cradle of the TJC and JFC. Many of the earliest Chinese Pentecostals came from various local preexisting evangelical bodies such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, London Missionary Society, and American Presbyterian Mission.

The True Jesus Church

The TJC can trace its roots to Beijing, where its founder, Wei Enbo (魏恩波, Paul Wei, 1876/7?–1919), took inspiration from Bernt Berntsen (1863–1933, 贲德新), the Norwegian-American missionary of the Apostolic Faith Church. While a member of the London Missionary Society at Ciqikou (磁器口), Beijing, Wei was transformed into a Pentecostal in August 1916; Berntsen and his son performed divine healing ministry upon Wei and his daughter (Wei 2023, 6), and this miraculous healing drew Wei to Berntsen's church. Meanwhile, Wei immediately facilitated charismatic-pattern prayer meetings with his Chinese colleagues at his business shop (恩信永, En Xin Yong), where, in September 1916, Wei received the Baptism of the Spirit and spoke in tongues for the first time (Wei 2023, 7). The filling of the Spirit remained with Wei for the rest of his life and had a profound influence: Wei sold his estates, abandoned his business, and built a preaching group of committed followers to promulgate Charismatic practices.

The mission work was particularly effective through the practice of prayer for miraculous healing. Throughout the early years, from 1917 to 1919, Wei's mission work bore fruit: two TJC churches based in Huangcun (黄村), Beijing, were founded in July and August of 1917. Starting in the summer of 1918, the mission expanded to other parts of the North, such as Tianjin, Shanxi, and Shandong, where additional branches of the TJC were set up (Wei 2023, 19–20, 307). In the following years the expansion continued, bringing the Charismatic message as far as Henan, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, and Fujian in the early 1920s through the TJC network and Pentecostal brochures (Lian 2010, 51).

The novel phenomenon of the Pentecostal movement was seen as foreign to non-Pentecostals and naturally led to some conflict with other Chinese-Western evangelical Protestant churches; for example, many Christians, who followed different doctrines and practices, perceived Wei's fervent prayer, tongue-speaking, devil exorcism, and healing ministry as heretical (Wei 2023, 8). In contrast, however, Chinese non-Christians were drawn to miraculous phenomena, particularly healing miracles and their efficacy manifested in addressing deafness, blindness,

tuberculosis, and opium addiction. From a religious and cultural perspective, the overt and lively spirituality of the Pentecostal practice resonated with the Chinese religious experience, making it an easy transition to Pentecostalism because local Chinese folk religions also were centred around miracles. This allowed Wei to become highly regarded as a spiritual leader and authority figure.

The success in evangelization through a powerful healing ministry convinced Wei that his divinely ordained mission, vision, and capacity were directly endowed by God alone; meanwhile his earthly task was to correct both Chinese and Western established denominations' false teachings and corrupted churches. Holding this conviction, Wei adopted restorationist beliefs and his unique accounting of Pentecostal practice to regulate ecclesiastical rules in instructing his followers. These instructions include imitating Jesus and the apostles, facilitating baptism by facedown immersion rather than by sprinkling, Baptizing of the Spirit as evidenced by glossolalia, observing the Sabbath on Saturday not Sunday, and living an egalitarian and simple life (Wei 2023, 25, 29–33).

Like Mok, Wei created a Pentecostal newspaper—the Universal Correction Church Times (万国更正教报)—to evangelize nonbelievers who had not been eyewitness to Wei's miraculous mission and to reaffirm Pentecostal newcomers (Wei 2023, 22). This newspaper also served as a new medium to boost the TJC across China. In Fujian, for example, the newspaper stirred up the faith of local Seventh-Day Adventist churches, quickly converting them to the TJC. These new churches flourished to the extent that Fujian became another significant revival centre at the time. The TJC's other newspaper, Holy Spirit Monthly (圣灵报), was founded in 1926 and became influential in promulgating the TJC's teachings both in China and overseas.

Wei's ministry was remarkably effective, and his death in October 1919 led his son, Wei Wenxiang (魏文祥, Wei Yisa), to carry on the TJC's vision and mission with other leaders, ushering in the peak of its nationwide growth in branches. This burgeoning can be credited to influential leaders; among them, Gao Daling (高大龄) was a prominent Confucian scholar and educator, the head of the Young Men's Christian Association. He also served as a Chinese-language teacher for the renowned British missionary, Timothy Richard, with whom he established Shanxi University.

Gao converted to the TJC in 1920, and his remarkable background and network leveraged him to constitute more than 100 branches of the TJC in Shanxi, comprising more than 10,000 believers. His mission trips even reached central and northeastern China, where more branches were established (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 2, chap.

6, sec. 3). Meanwhile, TJC mission trips also reached southern China through Barnabas Zhang (张殿举), another gifted evangelist. Zhang headed to Fuzhou and stirred up local churchgoers, particularly Seventh-Day Adventists, to baptize hundreds of congregations into the TJC and establish new TJC branches (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 2, chap. 11, sec. 2–3). Among these converts, Guo Duoma (郭多马) emerged as the TJC's national leader, and he disseminated TJC beliefs beyond China.

In 1929, Zhang broke new ground in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, opening branches there. By 1951, 1,100 TJC churches were operating with more than 100,000 believers in cities and rural areas (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 9, chap. 3). During the Cultural Revolution, however, the TJC headquarters in mainland China collapsed, branches lost connection with each other, and many were closed and very few gathered at home secretly. In 1967, the headquarters in Taiwan called for a national gathering of TJC leaders to reunite TJC churches; in 1975 the TJC established the World Delegates Conference in Taiwan and then relocated to California in 1985 for global mission (True Jesus Church n.d., "Well-Connected City").

The Jesus Family Church

A different form of Chinese independent Pentecostalism, embodied by the JFC established in Shandong in 1921, represented a practice distinct from that of the TJC. Before this Pentecostalism reached Shandong, Marie Monsen (1878–1962) and Jonathan Goforth (1859–1936), the Norwegian Lutheran and Canadian Presbyterian missionaries, had exerted significant influence over local churches through their revival movements (Tiedemann 2012: 213–14). However, with the steady development of Pentecostal movements elsewhere in China, the Assemblies of God established an official presence in central China by 1915 and quickly extended its mission to Shandong.

In Tai'an (泰安) county of Shandong, a notable breakthrough was the conversion of Leslie Madison Anglin and Ava Anglin—Baptist missionaries—to Pentecost in 1916; this conversion led them to attach their church to the Assemblies of God, moving away from the Baptist denomination. The Anglins opened an orphanage—the Home of Onesiphorus (HO)—to train local orphans with essential skills for life and ministries (Consortium of Pentecostal Archives 1916). The HO's pragmatic ministry attained nationwide recognition and drew locals to its Pentecostal revival meetings, wherein Jing Dianying (敬篯瀛, 1890–1957) received the Baptism of the Spirit and turned to Pentecost in 1924 (Tao 2012, 53, 84).

Jing was a Chinese-language teacher at the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) mission at the time of his conversion, and upon learning of Jing's Pentecostal involvement, the Protestant missionaries ostracized him. Perry O. Hanson, the AME ministry and school leader, was profoundly averse to Pentecostalism and perceived Jing's conversion as a radical disruption; he swiftly dismissed Jing to keep his Pentecostal message from penetrating the AME (Tao 2012, 86). Jing then landed an accounting and supervisory job at the HO in 1925. He stayed only a few months, but long enough for the HO's self-sufficient lifestyle and Pentecostal spirituality to inspire in Jing an alternative church model—an egalitarian Pentecostal community that would become the JFC (Bays 1988: 3).

Unemployed and disillusioned by his recent experiences with missionary agencies, Jing returned to Mazhuang (马庄), a remote village in Shandong, where, in 1926, he and fellow Pentecostals established a Christian charity to support widows—the Silkworm-Mulberry Tree House (SMTH) for the Learning of the Way (蚕桑学道房). Thornton Stearns, an American missionary physician, donated funds to support this ministry (Tao 2012, 90). In the same year, the Saints' Credit and Savings Society (圣徒信用储蓄社) (SCSS)—funded by Jing and his family in 1921, ceased operations and transferred its funding to the SMTH.

The SCSS was created as a business shop and church to employ Christian morality as a means to transform local communities and the broader society through fair trading and evangelization, but their ministry was less influential (Tao 2012, 74–5). However, the ministerial experience and common belief of SCSS members forged unity and loyalty among them to form the Silkworm-Mulberry Tree House (SMTH). Embedded in a profound Pentecostal spiritual foundation, these members decided to set the SMTH's core values as following the Christian ethos of love, equality, and mutual support to live a communal life and pursue spiritual gifts of being filled with the Spirit.

Being a Pentecostal community, the SMTH made prayer the priority for daily life, with each member rising daily at 4:00 am to start loud prayer, sharing with each other their spiritual testimonies at 5:00 am, and moving back to prayer until 8:00 pm. The early-morning emotional prayer meetings featured loud crying and simultaneous prayer manifestations of the Spirit, like speaking in tongues, trances, and revelations through dreams and visions, characterizing their Charismatic aspects of spirituality. In gatherings, singing hymns (Jing wrote many Chinese hymns) and sharing personal spiritual testimonies also became essential for members' beliefs (Tao 2012, 189–91).

In 1927, the SMTH officially became a Christian Charismatic community and was renamed the Jesus Family Church (Tao 2012, 87–91). At first, the JFC faced serious material challenges stemming from war and natural disasters. Following the early church model depicted in Acts 2:41–45 for surviving harsh living conditions, JFC members donated property and possessions and lived together; each person was treated equally as a brother or sister; every day they farmed together and prayed together and were filled with awe at the many wonders and signs; and they performed spiritual songs, danced, and spoke in tongues (Tao 2012, 92).

By 1930s, JFC living conditions had improved. A new house with seven rooms was built on land donated by Jing (inherited from his parents) with financial support donated by Nora Dillenbeck (1883–1938) of the AME and supplemented by the JFC's collective farm proceeds. This economic achievement enabled the JFC to serve as headquarters for hosting Pentecostal visitors nationwide and to provide revival training meetings that gave visitors a taste of the JFC's communal life while promoting the Pentecostal message. In 1932 and 1933, thousands of Chinese believers attended Jing's Pentecostal gatherings and brought home what they witnessed (Tao 2012, 103–6, 122, 138).

The Jesus Family Church continued its expansion even during wartime, managing to survive and thrive as a collective leadership formed through both female and male participation alongside professionals involved in eclectic work. These professionals included merchants, craftsmen, educators, and doctors, and their engagement significantly consolidated the community's self-sufficient lifestyle. Particularly, the medical and social services support they could provide for the broader society during a period of material and medical deprivation spread an influential positive message that attracted more like-minded Christians to join this community. Tao (2012, 113–4) notes that the JFC provided relief to more than 1,000 natural disaster victims in 1927 and 1928. By the mid-1930s, the JFC had grown into multiple subfamilies locally and had established similar settlements in other provinces, including Shanxi, Jiangsu, Henan, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia (Lian 2010, 72).

The JFC's regular evangelization and revival meetings had laid a solid foundation for this expansion in addition to the unprecedented—and inadvertently conducive—sociopolitical conditions. During the Japanese invasion of Shandong (1931 to 1937), war crimes against the Chinese were commonplace, and the eschatological and apostolic message endorsed through the JFC's preaching echoed the chaotic world and ensured hope for the return of Jesus for war-torn people. Being bound together through Pentecostal power and communitarian life, as exemplified through the JFC, seemed to be an ideal earthly destination for the displaced.

At the same time, the longstanding religiocultural context of northern China bred ground for locals to embrace Pentecostalism. To a degree, local Pentecostal practices exhibited considerable syncretism between traditional folk beliefs and Christian ideas. Being filled with the Spirit accompanied by visions, miracles, and tongue-speaking, for example, was reminiscent of traditional Chinese spirit possession. Former Boxers were exemplary in embracing this religious practice in that they requested a spirit or god to attach to their body so that they could wield unearthly powers in battle (Lian 2010, 73). Within this environment, locals tended to find Pentecostal preaching and practice preferable to Christian mainstream teachings, leading many Christians to dispose of their possessions and settle in the JFC.

Responses to Pentecostalism

However, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement was not well received by Western missionaries. Despite its religiocultural relevance, Pentecostal practice in general and the JFC's spiritual practice in particular hardly transformed the dominant pessimistic attitudes to them expressed by non-Pentecostalists. In Western missionary groups, the root cause of this pessimism was disruption arising from Pentecostal converts leaving their denominations as the Pentecostal movement burgeoned in the late 1920s. For example, influential Chinese leaders such as Nathan Ma (马兆瑞) left the Presbyterian church for the Assemblies of God (Abbott 1931, 767–8); following in his footsteps, Yang Rulin (杨汝霖) and Sun Zhanyao (孙瞻遥) also withdrew and collaborated with Ma to establish an independent church associated with the Assemblies of God in 1930 in Feixian (费县), the southern part of Shandong (Lian 2010, 98). This Pentecostal church gradually drew more Chinese Presbyterians, and its influence even spilled over to other local denominations and locations.

Nora Dillenbeck not only financially sponsored Jing to initiate his church, but later completely retreated from the AME to embrace the JFC (Tao 2012, 124). Hanson came to harshly criticize Pentecostalism and drew parallels between Pentecostalist emotional expression, such as weeping and shouting during gatherings, with similar behaviour seen at Chinese funerals (Lian 2010, 68). The Chinese Recorder (1932, 767–72) featured extreme cases—casting out demons from a lady by beating her and inciting or aggravating people's mental disorders through overly strict spiritual practices—to justify the negative evaluations of Pentecostal beliefs. With these criticisms, few missionaries acknowledged the theological legitimacy of the Pentecostal movement or the independence of its churches that operated without foreign funding or foreign leadership (Smith 1935, 110).

However, Chinese practitioners and theologians were less inclined to adopt an absolutely negative approach for engaging Pentecostalism. Leading independent practitioners Wang Mingdao and Sung Shangjie (宋尚节, John Sung), for example, took part in revival movements in Shangdong in the 1930s, and their witness of the Pentecostal movement led them to affirm its significance while urging Pentecostals to pursue confession and life transformation rather than only embrace outward signs like speaking in tongues and healing (Wang 1995, 45–73).

Likewise, prestigious Chinese theologian Zhao Zicheng (T. C. Chao) proposed a balanced stance to assess Pentecostalism: he expounded how Pentecostal performances resonate with Chinese superstitious beliefs and practices, while its essential message was oriented toward improving Christian goodness and morality. Most importantly, from Zhao's perspective, the Pentecostal message ignited people's hope to overcome a life-transforming crisis in the time of their mass bankruptcy (Zhao 2007, 614–7).

Other Chinese Christian leaders also viewed the Pentecostals favourably and emphasized their conspicuous contributions. Cui Xianxiang (崔宪详) of the National Christian Council of China (中华基督教协进会) commented that these Chinese Pentecostals' visible life transformation and passion for evangelization were factual (Cui 1933, 44). More than that, it is recorded that the Pentecostals' spiritual mission engagement lit a fire within local lukewarm Christians and improved church attendance (Tao 2012, 100–2).

These positive assets were the driving force of the Pentecostal movement and led to its expansion; from 1927 to 1936, more than 10 JFC subfamilies formed in northwestern and central China, where participants donated their lands and built houses with funds sponsored by Western missionaries and local members (Tao 2012, 114–5). Jing and his key members played a part in this expansion, launching en-route evangelization that departed from Tai'an and toured Shandong province, eventually reaching Henan, Gansu, Shanxi, Ningxia, and Gansu between 1933 and 1937 (Tao 2012, 106). Shandong became the centre for the external expansion of subfamilies.

From 1946 to 1949, the JFC's mission strategy was to focus on cities and plan to develop 10 subfamilies per year. The JFC's headquarters assisted the new subfamilies through funds and leadership; 127 subfamilies grew out of the JFC and extended their subgroups to eight provinces, and 113 JFCs were in existence by 1949 (Tao 2012, 199–200, 223). In 1952, the JFC faced internal division and drastic external sociopolitical change, forcing it to terminate its activities. In 1980, the JFC in Tai'an

restored its church services, and the church reopened and registered with the government in 1993 (Tao 2012, 313).

The Spiritual Gifts Society

Alongside JFC development in central Shandong, another Chinese independent Pentecostal organization, the Spiritual Gifts Society (灵恩会) (SGS), was formed by Li Sigong (李思功) in Feixian, southern Shandong. Its origin is linked to the Chinese independent Pentecostal revival movement conducted by Nathan Ma, who ran an Apostolic Faith (使徒信心会) orphanage in Nanjing. Ma collected orphans from Feixian in 1928 and, having forged meaningful relationships with those in Feixian, local Chinese Presbyterian leaders invited Ma to preach at their churches there in 1930.

Ma's spiritual and emotional preachings and his independent church advocacy stirred up local Presbyterians, prompting Li to withdraw from his Presbyterian church to help establish the SGS. Under the SGS, a spiritual formation house was set up in Qishan (岐山), where Li served as a pastor and Zhanyao Sun (孙瞻遥) as president. Four Pentecostal churches were built near Qishan and operated through these new Pentecostal converts from Presbyterian churches (Tiedemann 2012: 224). The SGS was operated by Chinese Pentecostals with no external funding and without association with any Western establishment until it dissolved in 1958. Ma's Pentecostal evangelization also reached other parts of China from 1931 to 1936, having significant impact in Anhui, Henan, Guangdong, Tianjin, Beijing, and Shanghai, where Chinese people were baptized into Pentecostal churches and received the Baptism of the Spirit through Ma's Pentecostal preachings (Iap 2021: 101–3).

Global Expansion and Transnational Missions

With Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the Chinese independent Pentecostal revival movements thriving throughout the 1930s in China, it became feasible to reach out to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas. Fujian's Pentecostal revival and its connection to overseas Chinese immigrants were particularly instrumental in rendering the True Jesus Church's mission trips abroad possible. In Fujian, Taiwanese businessmen (and brothers) Huang Chengcong (黄呈聪) and Huang Chengchao (黄呈超) collaborated with Barnabas Zhang and Guo Duoma to spread the TJC's message to Taiwan after their conversion to the TJC through Zhang and Guo in Zhangzhou (漳州) in 1925.

Taiwan

The first mission trip of Zhang, Guo, and Wu Yuehan (吴约翰) to Taiwan created a lasting impact. Upon their arrival they split into two groups, reaching out to central and southern Taiwan with some local Pentecostals. Their powerful preachings overwhelmed the locals, and many were baptized into the TJC. Three churches were established in 1926—the Shengang (伸港) church, Qingshui (清水) church, and Meihua (梅华), which still exist today (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 3, chap. 5, sec. 14).

The TJC continued to spread despite opposition and persecution from local Presbyterian churches and other folk religion followers; a fourth church was founded in October 1926 in central Taiwan, and the Tainan church was formed in 1927. By 1945, 22 churches were constituted and had survived Japanese invasion and colonialism (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 3, chap. 5, sec. 14). The TJC's development in Taiwan laid a consolidated foundation for the Taiwanese TJC to further its evangelization to Japan in 1942. Huang Chengcong visited Japan to confirm their beliefs when the Japanese version of the *Spirit Times* stirred up five Japanese Christian pastors. Soon after this visit, these pastors travelled to Taibei to confirm their Pentecostal beliefs, and they were baptized into the TJC in June 1942.

Returning to Japan, Rev. Cunjing (村井) gave witness to his beliefs in Fukuoka, followed by miraculous spiritual experiences of speaking in tongues and prophecy, and 20 people received the TJC's teachings. Other Japanese pastors proclaimed the TJC's message in Kyushu, Osaka, and Tokyo. In November 1942, Huang Chengcong returned to Japan to organize Pentecostal meetings with these Japanese pastors. Many participants attended meetings and witnessed the outpourings of the Spirit and being filled with joy and power amid World War II (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 7, chap. 2, sec. 17).

Hong Kong

While the TJC was expanding to Taiwan and Japan, Barnabas Zhang established the TJC's southern headquarters in Hong Kong in 1929 after he split with TJC leadership. Due to its close proximity to Hong Kong, the Guangzhou TJC sent its deacons (朱恩光, 吴约生, 黄基磐) to Hong Kong in 1930 to support Zhang's ministry. Their hard work with local member efforts bore fruit: one church was built in To Kwa Wan (土瓜湾), two female deacons were ordained in 1934, and another was ordained in Kowloon in 1935 (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 6, chap. 13).

With the TJC's steady growth in the region from 1930 to 1935, two influential local leaders, Maria Qiu (邱马利) and her younger brother, Cephas Qiu, established additional TJC churches in the New Territories (新界). Maria Qiu received medical training in Malaysia to become a midwife, and her professional work mingled with supernatural healing through the Spirit; as she demonstrated the power of her Pentecostal beliefs, she won over many followers in Sha Tau Kok (沙头角).

Qiu and her brother set up a prayer house in 1935 for these new Pentecostals, which grew in membership to become a TJC by 1938. Another prayer house opened in 1935 to support the sick in Tai Po (大埔), where a patient, Peter Qiu, with intractable diseases, experienced spiritual and physical healing performed by Maria Qiu. On his baptismal day, Peter Qiu's testimony touched his relatives and friends, who assisted the Qiu siblings in planting a church in Tai Po (大埔) in 1947 (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 6, chap. 13).

South East Asia

The TJC revival in Fuzhou also facilitated overseas missions to Southeast Asia beginning in 1926. Enlightened by the Spirit, Fujianese Pentecostals reached out to their extended families overseas, mailing TJC newspapers and sending out evangelists. Two pioneers first arrived in Singapore where a TJC church already existed; they headed to Malaysia for evangelization, where Chinese Presbyterians and non-Christians converted to the TJC. Churches were subsequently set up in SiIpoh, Sandakan, and Kuala Lumpur. When a second church was formed in Singapore, a Fujianese elder arrived to assemble a TJC branch to manage its churches and prayer stations. It is reported that the TJC, both in Singapore and in Malaysia, was strengthened through the mission work of Barnabas Zhang in 1927 and 1928.

The TJC continued to develop in Southeast Asia, planting churches in the Malay Peninsula, Pinang, and Kuala Lumpur between 1931 and 1936 (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 6, chap. 17, sec. 2). Local believers also reached out to Indian ethnic groups in Ipoh and established a church made up of Indian Pentecostals in 1934 (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 6, chap. 15). By 1947, there were 22 churches in Malaysia, and these provided financial support to the TJC headquarters in China.

Hawaii

By 1930, the TJC's Pentecostal message had also reached the Chinese diaspora in Honolulu, through familial connections. Earlier, Li Aizhen (李爱真), the TJC deaconess

in Shanghai, had earnestly prayed for her family and relatives to receive the TJC's beliefs and mailed them numerous copies of the *Holy Spirit Times* (圣灵报). Her prayer was answered by an elderly woman who returned to Shanghai for the TJC's baptism. This conversion encouraged Li to give up her medical career and sell her valuables to embark on the first missionary trip to Honolulu in May 1930.

Her hard work paid off, and Guo Duoma joined her second mission trip to baptize new believers in June 1931, which led to the first TJC established in Hawaii Territory in August 1931. The church was made up of mostly Chinese immigrants along with American, Portuguese, Japanese, and indigenous Hawaiian residents, and church services were instructed in English.

The successful evangelization of Chinese immigrants can be attributed to two factors: cultural affinity and racial discrimination. These immigrants still identified with Chinese culture and identity while being impacted by Western culture, so they felt more connected to those from a shared culture to explore religious practice; racial discrimination also led them to reject Western Christianity and embrace the TJC as a Chinese entity (Tracing TJC History n.d., part 6, chap. 16).

As the TJC developed rapidly in China during the 1980s, it became interwoven with Pentecostal missions around the world. Today, there exist at least 27 physical churches in the US, seven in the UK, five in Canada, two in Germany, and one each in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Columbia, the Dominican Republic, and France. The TJC has also arrived in Bolivia. These overseas church services are offered in the local language (True Jesus Church n.d., "Find a Church").

South East Asia – John Sung

In addition to the TJC's influence overseas, John Sung's missions were catalysts for Pentecostal revival movements in Southeast Asia, creating a long-lasting and profound impact on local churches. Sung was Fujianese, and his testimony and preaching with power gained a prominent reputation in Fuzhou and other parts of China. Fujianese overseas settlers were intimately connected with their hometown and heard their relatives' testimonies to the Spirit's power. As these Chinese immigrants suffered from racial oppression, they maintained their cultural and linguistic closeness to China and tended to welcome ethnic Chinese evangelists. This attitude opened the door for the arrival of Chinese Pentecostalism through Sung's mission trips. He made three trips to Southeast Asia between 1935 and 1940; from May to October 1935, Sung crossed Manila, Singapore, Malacca, Penang, and Sumatra to hold campaigns (Sung 2011, 248).

In Manila, the Chinese churches of the Episcopal, the United Evangelical, and the Christian Assembly invited Sung, and his preaching message and healing ministry deeply stirred up these churches (Lyall 1954, 142). Sung's second trip to Singapore in 1936 circuited Penang, Kuala Lumpur, and Yangon to strengthen local churches (Sung 2011, 290–302). On his final trip to Singapore, Sung swept through churches in Thailand from north to south, covering Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Phrae, and Bangkok, and also reached Java to give witness to God.

In Sung's revival meetings, Christians from near and far filled the church, and both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches accepted his preaching. Among southeastern churchgoers, Singaporean Christians were particularly drawn to Sung's preaching and teachings. Sung visited Singapore 7 times in his lifetime and founded the Singapore Christian Evangelistic Leagues to strengthen local ministries (Tow 1988, 61). Sung's campaigns also ignited Singaporean Christians' spiritual lives and a new desire for Bible study. Many ordinary church members engaged actively in voluntary evangelistic work and became a powerful force for spreading the Gospel.

Following in Sung's footsteps, Lim Puay Hian (林佩轩) carried on the Pentecostal revivals in southeast Asia when Sung was with God. Lim was transformed through Sung's revival campaign in Shantou (汕头) in 1933, and, finding himself better equipped linguistically than Sung, he could preach to a Hokkien-Teochew audience without interpreters. In 1938, Lim preached at the Teochew Life Church in Singapore, where hundreds of participants were saved; meetings at Chin Lien Bible School added 14 preaching bands to the Evangelistic League originally founded by Sung. When Lim's campaigns reached several cities in Malaysia, Sung's followers assisted him in forming the Penang Evangelistic League and a new church in north Malaysia (Tow 1988, 78–81).

Lim also received an invitation through Sung's previous connection to revive Chinese churches in Burma. Under Lim's direction, the Burmese Bible was translated, resulting in the conversion of the Karens—the first evangelized tribe (Tow 1988, 85). Most significantly, Lim's Hokkien and Teochew linguistic skills led him to preach directly to overseas Hokkien-Teochew audiences; Lim was particularly welcomed in Chinese churches in Indonesia (Tow 1976, 19). In a manner similar to Sung's style of preaching and placing healing hands on the sick, Lim produced thousands of zealous converts who were redeemed through the Spirit's power.

Today, the number of Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in China continues to increase, and their historical links to overseas Chinese churches empower them to collaborate with overseas counterparts for sustainable missions. The recent Pentecostal-Charismatic revival conference held by Malaysian and Chinese Pentecostals, aiming to equip Chinese mainlanders and the diaspora worldwide, is a prominent example. At this conference, most participants were Chinese Pentecostals from mainland China, and they played a vital role in organizing and facilitating various workshops and meetings. [6]

Conclusion

Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic movements arose in China in the 1920s, where they swiftly gave rise to indigenous Protestant Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the south and north. Their inception had both foreign and domestic influences; Western Pentecostal missionaries brought their teachings of the Spirit to the locals, while local Pentecostals strove to transform their people into Spirit-filled communities through their direct and unique spiritual experience of the Spirit.

Like other forms of evangelical Protestantism, Chinese Pentecostalism stresses the significance of the Bible, the necessity of the new birth, and the confession of sin—though speaking in tongues, Baptism of the Spirit, and divine healing are equally endorsed. From the beginnings of the movements, regional leaders simultaneously set out on local and global missions to reinforce followers and reach out to Chinese nonbelievers. The movements profoundly influenced Chinese Christian tradition and contextualized Western practice.

Regardless of local church denominations and affiliations, Pentecostal-Charismatic beliefs and practices have more or less integrated into Chinese Christians' personal and ecclesiastical performance. For example, emotional prayers, spiritual hymns, and miraculous cures are widely recognized in non-Reformed, registered, and unregistered churches regardless of denominational backgrounds.

One might surmise that Pentecostalism represents a major pattern of Protestant Christianity in China, with a large population among the house churches scattered across cities and rural areas. It is worth noting that the existing Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic churches emerged as distinct faith-practice communities. Unlike Western

[6] Chinese Pentecostal leaders from Wenzhou and England collaborated with Malaysian Pentecostal leaders to organize the second Asia Revival Conference, June 14–17, 2023. I was invited to join a panel discussion on the significance of Theological Education for Pentecostal churches.

Pentecostalism, however, they have not developed a separate denomination to differentiate themselves from other churches in theology and practice, and it seems to maintain their historical traditions, they have no intention to pursue it.

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