Building a Church which is at one and the same time Chinese and Catholic, that is to say universal, and combining a cultural identity with a religious identity, both of which are complex, has never been an easy feat for Chinese Catholics. This volume outlines a rigorous historical reconstruction of this challenge throughout the 20th century, from the end of the Qing dynasty, during the Republican period and after the Communist revolution of 1949 up to the present. This result is possible thanks to contributions by European and Chinese academics, historians of the Church and specialists on China, with a plurality of mutually complement ary approaches. Particular attention is given to the sources available for studies on Chinese contemporary Christianity, with it being increasingly possible today to make a historical analysis of the events of the Christian Churches in China in the 20th century based on original documents. Authors: Andrea Riccardi, Zhuo Xinping, Agostino Giovagnoli, Guido Samarani, Liu Guopeng, Wang Meixiu, Gianni La Bella, Elisa Giunipero, Ren Yanli, Edoardo Bressan, Angelo S. Lazzarotto, Marina Miranda, R.G. Tiedemann, Jean-Paul Wiest, Chan Kim-kwong, Zhou Pingping, Kang Zhijie.
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Catholic Church and China in the 20th century

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Introduction

The history of the Church in China in the 20th century is above all the history of the tormented and passionate challenge to build a Church that was both Chinese and Catholic at the same time, in other words universal. Combining a cultural identity with a religious identity, both of which are complex, has never been an easy feat for Chinese Catholics. This volume, which collects the proceedings of the international conference “In the footsteps of Matteo Ricci. Church and China in the 20th century” (Macerata, 8th-9th March 2007), outlines a historical reconstruction of this challenge, from the end of the Qing dynasty.

The serious consequences produced by the xenophobic Boxer Uprising (1898-1900) weighed heavily on the life of the missions and the Catholic communities in the early years of the century, especially due to the strong anti-Christian feelings widespread in the population. The well known identification between Catholicism – perceived as a foreign religion or, worse, as the religion of the aggressors – and economic and political interests of the Western powers in China, deeply marked the life of the Church in the first decades of the 20th century. However, the beginning of the Republican period, in 1911, was the start of a time when, although with a thousand difficulties, the Church succeeded in establishing its presence in the country more strongly. This period was marked by deep-reaching transformations in Chinese society and culture, with the opening to the West and the reconsideration or even the rejection of a tradition which, in certain aspects, was thousands years old. The relationship with modernity and the pressure to find a Chinese way to modernization are the subject

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