

Abstract:

Using the perspective of religious studies the thesis analyzes the so called Boxer Uprising that swept the north China in 1900. It briefly summarizes the current state of scholarship and confronts the belief that the Boxers were a secret anti-government movement with connections to the White Lotus sect, or a nationalist movement fighting against the foreigners and the influence of imperialism. The common appellation Boxers refers to the Yihetuan 義和團 movement, but the thesis uses the translation Militia United in Righteousness instead because it better reflects the motives and goals of the movement. The objective of the thesis is to show that the Militia was a popular religious movement that was principally loyalist and fought primarily against the Christianity perceived as a danger to the social structure. Therefore the thesis investigates various aspects of the movement, including spirit possession and rituals of invulnerability, as well as the motives for anti-Christian attitudes. By putting the movement into a broader socio-cultural context it is shown that in order to understand the traditional China it is necessary to understand its religions. That is the reason for the emphasis on correcting misunderstandings concerning the Chinese religions and Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The thesis thus confronts the biased view of religions and tries to show meaningfulness of rituals, and a religious worldview in general.