A Dialogue between Confucius and Christ: The Development and Influence of Chinese Jesuits in Kiang-nan (Jiangnan) during the Late Qing Period (1842–1912)

Li Qiang
Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai, China
qiangleesh@gmail.com

Steven Pieragastini
Independent Scholar, San Francisco, CA, USA
spieragastini@gmail.com

Abstract

When the Jesuits returned to China during and soon after the Opium War (1839–42), one of their first tasks was to establish a novitiate in Shanghai and begin preparing Chinese novices for formation in the Society. This essay focuses on the role of these Chinese Jesuits and their associates, in particular Huang Bolu (黃伯祿, also known as Pierre, Petrus, or Peter Hoang), who wrote several influential texts on scientific, legal, economic, and political topics in both Chinese and French. Although deeply committed to the church, Huang also tried in subtle ways to reform or redirect certain practices of the Jesuits in China, in particular, the reliance on the French Religious Protectorate. In doing so, he drew together the worlds of global Catholicism and late imperial Chinese literati. The works and experiences of Huang, Chinese Jesuits, and other Chinese Catholics within the orbit of the Jesuits allow us to hear the voice of indigenous Catholicism while also demonstrating the complicated interaction between spirituality, identity, empire, nationality, and the supranational church. This article is part of the special issue of the Journal of Jesuit Studies, “Jesuits in Modern Far East,” guest edited by Steven Pieragastini.
Keywords


Introduction

Upon returning to China in 1842, one of the Jesuits’ first tasks was to establish a novitiate in Shanghai and begin preparing Chinese novices for formation in the Society. Between the Jesuits’ establishment of their first novitiate in Jiangnan in 1843 and the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, seventy-nine Chinese novices began the process of Jesuit formation.¹ Not all of these novices completed their formation for a variety of reasons, and others who did complete their formation eventually left the order. Still, for the sake of simplicity, we will refer to these seventy-nine scholastics collectively as the “Chinese Jesuits” of the “new” China mission. This essay will focus on the role of these Chinese Jesuits and their associates. Some, such as the educator Ma Xiangbo (馬相伯, 1840–1939), are well-known, others much less so, but all fulfilled essential functions for the Jesuit mission in China. Their situation was quite complicated, as they were forced to negotiate the relationship of the church with Western, specifically French, imperialism due to France’s self-proclaimed Religious Protectorate and the dominance of French Jesuits in the China mission.

An essential set of texts for this essay are the works of Huang Bolu, a Chinese priest who produced a voluminous output on various topics. His works in French include introductions to Chinese political and legal administration, property ownership, marriage, seismology, banking, and more. These texts not only aided the mission but were picked up by diplomats and Sinologists of several nations because they were the only or the definitive work on these subjects in a Western language. In Chinese, he published a multivolume text on folk religious beliefs, an apologia for Catholicism, and collected several volumes of representative correspondence between the church and local Chinese officials (Handu juyu 函牘舉隅, Exempla epistolorum inter missionarios et mandarinos, Modèles de lettres entre missionnaires et mandarins) for fellow Chinese and even Western priests to use as a model. Aside from his publications, Huang worked as a secretary to the vicar apostolic (bishop) of Jiangnan, an important role that used his linguistic skills and knowledge of the Chinese administrative

¹ See Catalogus Patrum ac Fratrum S.J. Missionis Nankinensis (Kiang-nan) 1842–1921 (Chang-hai: Ex Typographia Missionis Catholicæ in Orphanotrophio T’ou-sè-wè, 1921).
system. The works and experiences of Huang and the Chinese Jesuits allow us to hear the voice of indigenous Catholicism while also demonstrating the complicated interaction between spirituality, identity, empire, nationality, and the supranational church.

More specifically, historians of Christianity in China have long debated the degree to which Catholicism, in particular, was tainted by its associations with French imperialism. The French Jesuits who managed the Jiangnan mission have been seen as particularly haughty in their treatment of Chinese culture and resistant to moves towards indigenization.\(^2\) We find that, about the “new” Jesuit mission of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an examination of Chinese-language sources, especially those written by Chinese Catholics, reveals a more complicated picture than a narrative of Catholicism as cultural imperialism would allow, and indicates that the process of indigenization began earlier than has generally been appreciated in studies of modern Chinese Catholicism.\(^3\)

Through their efforts, at the social level of religious dissemination, the conflict between Confucian traditions and Christian beliefs was relatively moderated, the integration of the two was promoted, and communication between modern Chinese and Western societies was facilitated.

### Background

Among the Jesuits of the “old” China mission, that is, before the suppression of the order in the late eighteenth century, eighty-one of the 456 Jesuit fathers and brothers in China between the years 1581 and 1780 were Chinese, or about eighteen percent.\(^4\) Although less celebrated in Western-language missionary sources than leading European Jesuits, stories about the Chinese Jesuits deeply

---

2 These debates are summarized in David E. Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), which leans decidedly towards the argument that imperialism irreparably stunted Catholicism in China. This debate has some intersections with a similar argument about the early modern Jesuit missions and the “failure” of their accommodationist approach, an argument made most forcefully in Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme: Action et réaction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).


affected Catholics’ religious practices in Jiangnan. The biography of the last of the Chinese Jesuits of the old China mission in Jiangnan, Jean Yao (姚若翰 Yao Ruohan, 1722–96), was preserved and spread by generation after generation of local Catholics, who also sent letters to Rome asking to send Jesuits back to China. Eventually, the French Jesuits took this mission. They aimed to re-establish the cultural and scholarly output of the old China mission, which faded out in the early nineteenth century, especially their scientific works in the emperor’s service in the Forbidden City and elsewhere in Beijing.5

Having been provided free passage on the frigate L’Érigone by the French minister of the Navy, three French Jesuits, Claude Gotteland (1803–56), Benjamin Brueyre (1810–80), and François Estève (1807–48), began their journey to China from Brest on April 27, 1841. After having short stays at Manila and Macau, they left for Dinghai, part of the Zhoushan Islands, together with a French Lazarist and two Italian Franciscans on the English transport Maria.6 On July 11, 1842, Gotteland and Estève arrived in Wusong by a British Navy ship, the Anna, and from there, Chinese Christians took them by boat to the Catholic community at Pudong.

The first task of these Jesuits of the new mission was to establish a seminary for the Jiangnan Mission to form native priests. Initially, the seminary was to be located at Dinghai in Zhoushan, an island off the shore of Zhejiang under British occupation; Brueyre had eight to ten students learning Latin and Chinese there. The bishop, Ludovico de Bési, was initially happy to have these new Jesuits arrive in Jiangnan to serve as his pastoral assistants. In 1842, Bishop de Bési published a pastoral letter to local Catholic parents soliciting them to send their sons to the soon-to-be-opened seminary. In his letter, the bishop emphasized that the newly arrived Jesuits would contribute significantly to the opening of this seminary.7 On February 3, 1843, the seminary was finally opened at Zhangpuqiao (張樸橋), a village near Sheshan (佘山) in Songjiang (松江府). It was funded by Bishop de Bési but was organized along the lines of the Jesuit colleges in Europe.8 The Jesuits, especially Brueyre, were responsible for the educational and spiritual affairs of the Chinese seminarians. The bishop praised the Jesuits’ efforts and works on forming indigenous clergy but forbade them to build close spiritual connections with the young Chinese seminarians. The bishop even asked seminarians to swear not to let the Jesuits listen to

6 Strong, Call to Mission, 1:1–2.
8 Strong, Call to Mission, 1:16.
their confessions and not to enter the Society of Jesus, to limit the influence of Jesuits among the Chinese seminarians.

Therefore, the Jesuits were constrained in developing native members of the order among these first seminarians. However, some seminarians had a great zeal and were determined to become Jesuits, such as Jean Feng (馮書田 Feng Shutian, known in Western sources as Johannes Vong, courtesy name 望之), who was from an “old Christian” family in Songjiang (meaning a family that had converted in the late Ming or early Qing era). Feng was born in 1829 and entered the seminary in 1843, one of the first group of seminarians. In 1852, he applied for permission to enter the Society of Jesus from Bishop Spelta (de Besi had since been replaced), but failed. In 1853 and 1854, he even tried to get permission from Rome and Pope Pius IX (r.1846–78) but met obstacles from Spelta. Only on June 23, 1857, one hour before his death, was this young Chinese seminarian allowed to enter the Society. Thus, the Catalugus of Jesuits in Jiangnan only showed his position as “Novit. Schol.” Nevertheless, on the second day after his death, Jean Feng was buried at the tomb of Jesuits outside the south gate of the walled city of Shanghai.9 His brother Feng Qiufang (馮秋舫, Aloysius Feng, 1844–1906) also entered the Society in 1867, becoming a Jesuit priest and proselytizing in Suzhou and elsewhere in Jiangnan.

On May 29, 1862, the Jesuits established a novitiate in Xujiahui, marking the restoration of the Jesuits in China in significant numbers. At the outset, it accepted eleven Chinese novices (初學修士), including nine from the Jesuits’ elite high school in Xujiahui, the Collège Saint Ignace (徐匯公學), and two from the seminary.10 Among these eleven novices were seven scholastics and four lay coadjutors.11 These men became leading figures among the Chinese Jesuits in Jiangnan in the following decades.

Chinese Jesuits as Cultural Intermediaries

In 1869, Li Wenyu, Ma Xiangbo, and other members of this initial cohort became priests12 and immediately undertook missionary work throughout Jiangnan, dedicating their efforts to specific tasks within the mission or

---

9 Li, “Between China and the West,” 74–75.
10 See Xue Kongzhao, Brief Biography of Mathurin Lemaître [薛孔昭, 梅德尔神父小传], 123. Servière, Histoire de la Mission du Kiang-nan, 2:92, 97.
11 “Le F. Hersant à un F. Coadjuteur, Zi-ka-Wei, 13 Juin 1862,” in Lettres des Nouvelles Missions de la Chine, 4:256.
scientific research. Under the influence of the Jesuit educational system, some of them also subsequently formed a particular group of Catholic intellectuals who influenced the development of Catholicism in Jiangnan and promoted the integration of Catholicism into Chinese society. Li Wenyu’s (李問漁, Laurentius Li, 1840–1911) experience is very representative of this group; in 1878, he was transferred to Dongjiadu as a professor at the seminary by order of the diocesan hierarchy, and on July 31 of the same year he took his vows. From that time, he generally lived in Xujiahui and began his thirty-three-year-long writing career, becoming a leading figure among the Chinese Jesuits in Jiangnan in the late Qing Dynasty and launching numerous publications, the most enduring of which was Sacred Heart (Shengxin bao 聖心報), which was published in Shanghai for over fifty years with minimal interruptions from various wars and unrest.

Under the special circumstances of the late Qing Dynasty, the Jesuit Li Wenyu used his publication Yiwenlu and other newspapers as a dissemination platform to compile Western knowledge. Other Chinese Jesuits also participated, spreading Western learning, especially in the compilation of geographical works, a major concern of Chinese intellectuals at the time. European Jesuits praised their Chinese confrères’ scholarly works introducing

---

13 Shen Zegong and Xu Caibai taught at the Collège Saint Ignace, Li Wenyu was a parish priest in Songjiang, Shen Zexin was a parish priest in Chongming and Haimen, Ma Xiangbo was in charge of scientific and missionary affairs in Nanjing, Shen Zekuan was also in Nanjing as a priest, and Shen Xunliang was in Anqing. See Catalogus Sociorum et Officiorum Proviciæ Franciæ Societatis Jesu (Parisiis: Excudrbat Adrianus le Clere, 1871), 51–53.

14 For more on Li, see Joachim Kurtz, “Messenger of the Sacred Heart: Li Wenyu (1840–1911) and the Jesuit Periodical Press in Late Qing Shanghai,” in ed. Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Christopher Alexander Reed, From Woodblocks to the Internet Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, Circa 1800 to 2008 (Leiden: Brill 2010), 81–109. Sun Yi, “Research on Yiwenlu, the First Catholic Publishing Agency in China” (MA thesis, Northwest University, 2011) [孙潚,天主教在华第一份机关刊物《益闻录》研究 (硕士学位论文, 西北大学, 2011)], Fang Yunfang, “Li Wenyu and the Eastward Spread of Western Learning in the Late Qing” [房芸芳, 晚清西学东渐中的李问渔] (PhD diss., Fudan University, 2016), 32. On the centenary of the return of Jesuit missionaries to Jiangnan in 1942, an article by the American Jesuits (California Province) in the English magazine Catholic Review published in Shanghai introduced the representative figures of the Jiangnan diocese in the past century. From the perspective of global Catholicism, this article analyzes Li Wenyu’s motives as a “journalist” who participated in the “Western learning spreading to the East” in the late Qing Dynasty and provides another perspective for understanding the role played by the Jesuit community in the late Qing Dynasty in the process of the “modernization” of China. “Outstanding Centenary Personalities, Journalist: Father Laurent Li, S.J. (1840–1911),” Catholic Review (July–August, 1942), 265.
Western knowledge into Chinese society and even dubbed Yiwenlu as the Études of China (Études being the Jesuits’ most renowned journal then).\(^{15}\)

Other members of this initial cohort were not engaged in missionary work \textit{per se} but left important marks on the history of modern Chinese and Western cultural exchanges. The works of Ma Xiangbo as both an educator and an official under the tutelage of Li Hongzhang are fairly well-known. Despite his troubled relationship with the Jesuits, Ma played an important role in the early history of the Collège Saint Ignace, as well as helping to found both Zhendan and Fudan universities. Ma’s long life, mastery of multiple languages, and public prominence meant that he interacted with many of the leading intellectuals of the late Qing and Republican eras. The Chinese Jesuit Brother Petrus Lu (陸伯都 1836–80) managed the Tushanwan Painting Studio (土山灣畫館), and his student, another Jesuit brother, Simon Liu (劉必振, 1843–1912), explored syncretic painting techniques and styles.

It is important to note that Jesuits emphasize the unity of the religious order, and an important means of achieving unity is to shape identity within the community; the Chinese Jesuits played a major role in shaping their own intra-group identity. For example, Shen Jinbiao (沈錦標, Firminus Shen, 1845–1929), who entered the Jesuits in 1867, compiled an 1881 book entitled \textit{The High Standard of the Deacons} (執事高標), which cataloged the deeds of 107 Jesuits from various countries and eras in the history of the Society. By this time, Shen was already a Jesuit priest, and he used his linguistic skills to compile the history of the Jesuits’ intellectual activities. In the preface to this text, Shen explicitly conveyed that his purpose in compiling the book was to shape the Jesuits’ community identity.\(^{16}\)

Chinese Catholics who entered the Jesuits came from a variety of family backgrounds, which not only influenced their decision to join the Society but also their personal character and talents, as well as their “academic aspirations” and missionary approach after joining the Society. A typical example is the three Shen brothers who entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1862: Shen Zegong (沈則恭, Franciscus Shen, 1836–1908), Shen Zekuan (沈則寬, Matthæus Shen, 1838–1913), Shen Zexin (沈則信, Joan-Baptista Shen, 1840–86) (they were nicknamed “big Shen,” “second Shen,” and “third Shen” 沈大, 沈二, 沈三). They came from a Songjiang family with a long history of “serving the faith” (奉教). According to church histories, the Shens were a family of teachers and scholars, including a family member who had served in an official capacity at

\(^{15}\) “Extrait d’une lettre du F. V. David au F. Demutb, à Jersey, Zi-ka-wei, 4 Avril 1882,” in Lettres de Jersey 1 (1882): 149.

\(^{16}\) Shen Jinbiao, \textit{The High Standard of the Deacons} (Shanghai: Cimutang Press, 1881) [沈錦标，執事高標 (上海慈母堂刊本, 1881)].
the Hanlin Academy.\footnote{Auguste Colombel, S.J., Histoire de la mission du Kiang-nan [manuscript], 3:1186. Shen Zekuan and his works are discussed in John T. P. Lai, Literary Representations of Christianity in Late Qing and Republican China (Leiden: Brill, 2019), Chapter 4, “Bible on Stage: Chinese Catholic Dramas of the Republican Period.”} Therefore, literary culture was quite strong within their family. After Shen Zekuan became a Jesuit priest, he became a prolific writer and communicated with local literati and intellectuals through the Catholic periodical Yiwenlu (益聞錄).

All three Shen brothers enrolled in the Collège Saint Ignace and, under the influence of their principal, Angelo Zottoli, chose to join the Jesuit novitiate. After a Jesuit formation of a strong academic nature, all three became Jesuit priests and played a great role in developing Catholicism in the Jiangnan region. For example, Shen Zegong translated the biography of St. Ignatius (聖依納爵), while Shen Zekuan not only managed the Tushanwan Orphanage (土山湾孤兒院) for many years but was also a scholar of biblical studies and had several works published on translating biblical-related texts, such as Short Histories from the Old Testament (古史略) and Short Histories from the New Testament (新史略).

Aside from the Shens, a familiar figure with the status of “literati scholar” among the Chinese Jesuits and their affiliates was Jiang Chaofan (蔣超凡, Justinus Jiang, 1817–84). Jiang was a native of Chongming Island, from a family that had been Catholic for generations, and was a successful candidate for the imperial examinations from a young age. After the establishment of the Collège Saint Ignace in 1862, he came to the school to work as a teacher, and the first group of Chinese Jesuit novices in 1862 can be said to be his “disciples.” On March 15, 1858, when Jiang Chaofan was over forty years old, he entered the Dongjiadu Seminary and was ordained a priest on May 7, 1863. He began formation as a Jesuit novice on May 23, 1863, but left the Society of Jesus soon afterward. The Catalogus does not explain the reason, however. He remained in the Jiangnan diocese as a parish priest to preach and serve as a secretary to the bishop, a special role just like the one Father Huang Bolu would later play.

Jiang was not the only member of the early cohorts of seminarians to leave the Jesuits. Xu Bin (許彬, Joan-Baptista Hiu, 1840–99) was born in Pudong on August 20, 1840, and entered the Zhangjialou Minor Seminary at the age of fifteen and studied theology at the Dongjiadu Major Seminary. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1862 and was among the first group of seminarians in the major seminary to enter the Society and become priests. He was ordained priest in 1868, but like Jiang, he left the Society in 1884. According to the historical materials of the church, Xu Bin quit the Jesuits mainly because Valentin...
Garnier (1825–98), bishop at the time, ordered him to focus on translating the New Testament. From that point, Xu Bin lived in Tushanwan, working on a Latin-Chinese dictionary. He died on March 15, 1899, without completing his translation of the New Testament or the Latin-Chinese dictionary. He did, however, publish several works, including a collection of biographies of his family (許太夫人傳略) and a biography of the Flemish Jesuit Philippe Couplet (1623–93) (柏應理神父傳略), who played an essential role in the early China mission in the seventeenth century, including leading the partial translation of the Confucian Classics into Latin (Confucius Sinarum philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis Latine exposita).18

Xu Bin, Shen Zekuan, Li Wenyu, and Ma Xiangbo all joined the Society of Jesus in the same year (1862). They undertook the task of translating the Bible into Chinese during this period (no complete Catholic translation of the Vulgate had yet appeared at this time, and in fact would not until the 1960s). According to an obituary produced by the mission in 1898, one of the main contributions of the French Jesuit Valentin Garnier, who served as the bishop of Jiangnan mission from 1879 until his death, was to guide a translation of the four Gospels conducted by Chinese Jesuits.19 In other words, the Chinese Jesuits received the bishop's permission to translate the Bible into Chinese. Moreover, as the Chinese Jesuits of the late Qing Dynasty had reached a level of learning in both the Chinese and Western traditions that would allow them to translate the Bible, their translation activities reflected a strong sense of autonomy on the one hand, that is, letting the Chinese laity have direct access to the text of the Bible, but on the other hand, they were limited mainly by the church hierarchy's restrictions on translating the Bible into Chinese, focusing on the four Gospels. Their translation also showed their personalities and talents; Xu, Li, and Ma used very formal classical Chinese (wenyan), while Shen used colloquial Chinese (baihua). Undeniably, these Chinese Jesuit translations of the Bible were an important part of the localization process of Catholicism, and together with other Catholic Bible literature in Chinese translation, laid

18 There were, of course, others who withdrew from the Society of Jesus before completing their formation for a variety of reasons. A special example, the result of a cultural clash between Chinese and foreign Jesuits, was the decision of Ma Xiangbo and his brother to leave the Society, which has been brilliantly and thoroughly studied by Li Tiangang; Li Tiangang, “Belief and Tradition—Ma Xiangbo’s Religious Career.” [李天纲，信仰与传统——马相伯的宗教生涯] in ed. Zhu Weijing, Brief Biography of Ma Xiangbo (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2005) [朱维铮编，马相伯传略 (上海：复旦大学出版社，2005年)].

The role played by Chinese Jesuits in the translation of the Bible into Chinese is more evident when one examines the changes in the bibliography of the Jesuits who came to China to translate the Bible into Chinese in modern times. For example, in the 1876 General Catalogue of the Scriptures (經書總目), the Bible category (“De Scriptura Sacra”) includes only two translations by early Jesuits who came to China, namely, Wider Benefit from the Bible (聖經廣益) and Direct Explanation of the Holy Scripture (聖經直解), while in the 1934 publication of the Price List of the Books of the Tushanwan Ci-Mu Church Printing House (土山灣慈母堂印書館圖書價目表), the category of “The Bible” was expanded to thirty-one Chinese texts, which included all the relevant published translations by the Chinese Jesuits mentioned in this article.21

Huang Bolu between Chinese and Western Worlds

Attending the Collège Saint Ignace in their youth being initiated into the Society of Jesus by the religious formation of foreign Jesuits with the will to “cultivate oneself” was the primary way in which most Chinese Catholics became members of the Society. They had already received a relatively complete education in the Chinese tradition at the Collège Saint Ignace, and many of the school’s graduates took the imperial examinations, becoming xiucai (秀才) or gongsheng (貢生), which gained them social and legal privileges, and the opportunity to sit for the provincial or even national-level exams. They had reached the intellectual level of the lower and middle-level literati and had the advantage of early exposure to “Western” education compared to the traditionally educated Chinese intellectuals. The Chinese Catholics who joined the Society of Jesus, especially the scholastics, received systematic academic training from the Society of Jesus and had a dual intellectual structure combining East and West, but in terms of social orientation, they could still be classified as literati.


21 Catalogus Librorum Lingua Sinica Scriptorum: Qui Prostant in Orphanotrophio T’ou-sè-wè (Shanghai: Typographia Missionis Catholicæ in Orphanotrophio T’ou-sè-wè, 1934).
Thus, they had a dual identity as a traditional literatus and a Catholic priest. For example, the former identity facilitated a dialogue between Jiang Chaofan and Guo Yousong (郭友鬆 1820–87), a local scholar in Songjiang. Guo learned the biblical story of Job from Jiang, leading to his theory of reconciling “the way of Confucius and Mencius” with the religious teachings in the Bible. Undoubtedly, Jiang Chaofan’s traditional literati status was crucial to the practice of such a dialogue between Confucius and Christ. As mentioned above, Shen Zegong, who joined the Society in 1862, bore the title of a poet and called himself “a useless outsider” (世外散人), likely a reference to the famous poet Li Bai (李白 701–62). There were many Chinese Jesuits in Jiangnan in the late Qing Dynasty who could write poetry, which undoubtedly became a kind of unique cultural capital for their social interactions. For instance, when Shen Zegong undertook pastoral work at Rugao (如皋), he built a good relationship with local officials and gentry by writing poetry; as a result, their interactions were constructive for the mission. Another Chinese Jesuit, Feng Qiuqang, also developed this kind of literary reputation with local officials.22

Among the Chinese Jesuits and their associates, perhaps the most prolific was a parish secular priest and administrator in the Jesuit Mission named Huang Bolu (黄伯禄, known variously as Pierre, Petrus, or Peter Hoang in Western-language sources, courtesy name 斐默). Although he has been almost entirely forgotten today, Huang was one of his day’s most productive and respected Sinologists. His works in French were cited by scholars throughout the Western world and were also influential on Chinese intellectuals of the late Qing and early Republican era, including Hu Shih (1891–1962).

Accounts of Huang’s life and works come from various sources, including a family genealogy, reports in Chinese and Western-language publications from the time of his death in 1909,23 and publications from the Republican period (1912–49). From these, we can know that Huang’s paternal ancestors were originally from Chongming Island and migrated to Da’an village (大安镇, now 大安村), Haimen (海门) in the last years of Qianlong’s reign at the end of the eighteenth century.24 Huang was born in Haimen, where he would spend much of his career as a parish priest, in 1830 to a family of old Catholics deeply connected with broader networks of Catholics stretching throughout Jiangnan. Thus, his background was pretty typical of Chinese Catholic youth.

drawn to the Jesuit institutions established with the new mission. Huang entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1843, becoming a priest in 1860.\footnote{Li, “Between China and the West,” 7593.} Ironically, given his later scholarly output and his excellent academic performance among the seminarians, he never completed his formation as a Jesuit for similar reasons as Feng Shutian, though he may have intended to do so late in life, just before his death.\footnote{Xuhui Grand Seminary, “Commemoration of Centenary of Jiangnan Seminary, 1843–1943,” 54; Li, “Between China and the West,” 191.} Although he never became a full-fledged Jesuit, Huang did embody the spirit of the Jesuits in his mastery of multiple languages and prolific scholarly output.

Huang Bolu published many celebrated works in an astonishing array of fields. His works related to religion and theology included *Jishuo quanzhen* (集說詮真, 1878), *Xunzhen bianwang* (訓真辨妄, 1884), and *Shengjiao lizheng* (聖教理證, 1884). These three books are internally organized according to themes, and they can all be regarded as documents of the “distinction and apologetics” (辨教護教) category. He also wrote related works that had the function of “teaching history,” that is, explaining the history of Catholicism to a skeptical audience of Chinese literati, including *Zhengjiao fengchuan* (正教奉傳, 1877) and *Zhengjiao fengbao* (正教奉褒, 1883). These works tended to intersect with each other to construct a formidable apologia and theological argument for Catholicism. *Shengjiao lizheng* used an apologetic “question-and-answer” format standard in the Catholic Church at that time to respond to questions on social subjects by using Catholic principles as a basis. *Xunzhen bianwang* originated with extensive revisions and additions to *Shengjiao lizheng*. *Jishuo quanzhen* extensively cited the *Commentaries on Zhouyi* (周易註疏), *Commentaries on the Book of Documents* (尚書註疏), and 261 other canonical Chinese texts covering the fields of classics, history, and anthologies (經史子集), including citing directly from Buddhist and Daoist scriptures. Like Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and other late Ming and early Qing missionaries, Huang Bolu criticized Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism from the standpoint of Catholic theology, showing the homogeneity of identity brought about by faith. However, the *Jishuo quanzhen* was unparalleled in terms of its content, especially the examination and discernment of falsifications.

Huang was also an accomplished Sinologist, writing several works in the field in Latin and French, introducing the Western world to various aspects of the Chinese natural sciences, traditional culture, and political system. Huang was involved in eight of the sixty-six issues of the series “Variétés sinologiques” published and translated by the Jesuits, including: *Notions techniques sur la...
propriété en Chine (1897), Le mariage chinois au point de vue légal (1898), Exposé du commerce public du sel (1898), Mélanges sur l'administration (1902), Catalogue des tremblements de terre signalés en Chine (1909), and posthumously, in translation, Concordance des chronologies néoméniques Chinoises et européennes (1910), Mélanges sur la chronologie chinoise (1920), and Catalogue des éclipses de soleil et de lune (1925).

Finally, in relation to the literatus side of his identity, Huang appears to have written an extensive body of poetry. The manuscript of Huang Bolu’s Poems (詩), currently in the Xujiahui Branch of the Shanghai Library (徐家匯藏書樓), includes his poetic output from his early religious life and provides an insight into his spiritual world.27 The cover of this manuscript bears Huang’s collection chop (藏書章), and based on its contents, it can be inferred that it is a collection of poems written by Huang himself and sung with his friends to each other, inspired by the social practices of literati around the Confucian classic the Book of Odes (詩經).

Although Huang was primarily recognized in his lifetime for his Sinological works, he also had an important practical impact on the work of the mission around issues relating to jiao’an (教案), that is, incidents involving missionaries or Chinese Catholics. There were hundreds if not thousands of such incidents in the late Qing period, which could range from legal wrangling over property ownership, rents, and taxes to violent attacks against Catholics, often with the knowledge if not active participation of local literati and even some Qing officials. These incidents tended to come in waves depending on prevailing economic and ecological conditions and the geopolitical shifts in the relations between China and foreign powers. Although local conditions were the catalyst for jiao’an, and participants in anti-Catholic riots were often guided by perceptions that Catholics were practitioners of dark magic (particularly in their orphanages, which were seen as a front for acquiring the organs of Chinese children), they arose against the backdrop of wider national and international issues. The jiao’an were not only a problem for the church but also for the Qing government, which had to dispatch troops to quell unrest and pay indemnities (arranged by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to the church, deepening the perception that they were unable to respond to foreign threats. These settlements hardly resolved underlying tensions, allowing for the potential of future unrest in the same area. On the whole, Jiangnan saw fewer jiao’an than many other parts of China. The region was practically untouched

27 For instance, we can learn about his friendship with another seminarian who went to Europe by reading his short poem (貞修歷歷上雲梯，臥雪襟期孰與齊。此後清明增遠感，踏青人去鳥空啼) lamenting the distance and time separating the two friends.
by the mass violence of the Boxer Uprising, in no small part due to the refusal of Viceroy Liu Kunyi (刘坤一) and other officials to carry out the Qing Court’s June 1900 declaration of war on foreign powers.

Still, a number of other factors must be considered to explain this “Jiangnan exception” to the trend of anti-Catholic sentiment and violence in the late Qing. For one thing, we can see considerable variation within Jiangnan, and where jiao’an did occur, they tended to be in areas of Anhui or northern Jiangsu where the presence of Catholics prior to 1840 was minimal, if non-existent. In the areas around Shanghai and Nanjing, Catholic families were prominent and well-accustomed to living under pressure because of their faith. The proximity to Shanghai, with its Jesuit institutions, French diplomats, and, if necessary, foreign troops, was also an advantage. But an underappreciated factor was also the adaptation of Jesuits and lay clergy alike to prevailing conditions, particularly finding a modus vivendi and even a degree of collaboration with Qing officials and local literati. For this last factor, Huang Bolu deserves much of the credit for his work as a mission secretary handling much of the bishop’s correspondence, and for his tome Handu juyu, published in stages from 1882 to 1904 and stretching to over one thousand pages.

Handu juyu is a very extensive collection of anonymized correspondence between priests and local officials, categorized into sections by type, such as “disturbances,” meaning violent jiao’an, temple donations, property disputes, controversies over morals and decency (polygamy, Catholic chaste virgins, divorce, heterodox Catholics), as well as some representative exchanges of niceties with local officials. In his preface, Huang notes that attacks on Christians are driven by ignorance and that Chinese priests should strive to educate other Chinese about their faith. The letters were most instructive for interacting with local officials, but the structure and formalities of correspondence that Huang encouraged priests to use had broader applications. Huang believed that writing to local officials in proficient Chinese and referring to them by their proper titles could go a long way toward a more amicable relationship between them and the church. This work shows that Huang was deeply committed to the church and the mission but opposed some of the more provocative acts of missionaries (such as intervening in legal cases or demanding disproportionate indemnities for anti-Christian incidents) and probably felt uneasy about the French Religious Protectorate, since his main aim in Handu juyu was to develop relationships between priests and local officials that would prevent the need for French diplomatic and military support for the church.28

28 Li, “Between China and the West,” 197–98.
It is difficult to judge the impact of *Handu juyu*, although anecdotal evidence suggests that it was seen as invaluable to those able to read and utilize it. Its circulation was restricted to within the mission, and it was written in classical literary Chinese. Huang's primary audience was Chinese priests, but foreign Jesuits were expected to gain familiarity with written Chinese, and, from the late nineteenth century, an increasing number of foreign Jesuits wrote correspondence to Chinese officials in Chinese, which may itself reflect the work's influence. Therefore, for both Chinese and foreign priests, the book offered important information that could be put to practical effect in interactions with local officials.29

Conclusion

It is worth noting how Chinese Jesuits perceived the status of *literati* as a model, which is crucial to understanding their social self-positioning. In a French letter to the Jesuits in Europe, Shen Jinbiao pointed out that if Chinese priests could attain the characteristics of *literati*, they would be better accepted by the wider community of *literati*. He especially took Feng Qiufang, who joined the Society at the same time as him, as an example: “Father Feng is the right person to represent the Church. In one's interactions with scholars and *literati*, if a Chinese priest lacks literary points of view, he will lose prestige.”30 Feng also gained respect among *literati* and officials for his poetry and painting ability. This respect, in turn, created favorable conditions for the mission's success.

In short, the Jesuits developed a localized character of this international order in Jiangnan. Internationality was the basis for the internal system of the Jiangnan Jesuits’ success in forming a series of missionary and secular activities. The foundation of internationality lay in forming and developing a group of local Chinese Jesuits. The missionary environment of the Jesuits in the late Qing Dynasty was completely different than it had been in the late Ming and early Qing eras, and there were bound to be major structural changes in missionary methods and internal membership. Therefore, the missionary and academic activities of the Chinese Jesuits, while reflecting the religious traditions of the Jesuits, also showed many aspects of the conflict and integration between Catholicism and Chinese society.

29 Li, “Between China and the West,” 201.
This internationality first allowed them to share the historical tradition of the order with Jesuits worldwide, strengthening their own Jesuit identity, that is, sharing the missionary experience of every Jesuit since the foundation of the Society. That is to say, every Jesuit, regardless of nationality, is first of all a member of the Society of Jesus, and this diversity ultimately constitutes the international character of the Jesuit community. The international nature of the Jesuits also enabled the Chinese Jesuits to communicate with the global Jesuit community. While acquiring global knowledge, they also shared China’s local knowledge with the latter. A typical example is Xu Boyu (徐伯愚, Etienne Zi, 1851–1932), who compiled a pamphlet in Latin (Parva rerum Sinensium advmbratio scholasticis ad Sinas recens appulsis accommodata) in 1879 while he was still a scholastic novice to help newly arrived European Jesuits adapt to Chinese political, historical, and cultural traditions, as well as understand a brief history of Catholicism in China.

Like Huang, Xu Mai published works in French providing practical information on Chinese statecraft and administration, namely the Pratique des examens littéraires en Chine (1894) and Pratique des examens militaires en Chine (1896). Huang and Xu shared the prestigious Sinological award, the Prix Stanislas Julien, in 1899, the first Chinese to win it. Huang and Xu were recognized as authorities by the French Sinological community and became a common source for the Western academic community’s studies of Chinese society.

One can immediately appreciate their international character by reading the French-language correspondence between Chinese and European Jesuits. Shen Jinbiao introduced the relationship between Feng Qiufang’s scholarship and missionary work to European readers. Another Chinese Jesuit, Simon Gong (龚柴 1850–1914), wrote a letter to European Jesuits in 1883, revealing that

---

31 Xu was the third and fifth editor of Sacred Heart (圣心报), dying in 1932. An obituary for him (“《圣心报》主任徐伯愚司铎逝世”) was written in Shengjiao Zazhi (圣教杂志) in August 1932.

32 Earlier winners included James Legge, Herbert Giles, Henri Cordier, and the Jesuits Séraphin Couvreur and Angelo Zottoli. In the early twentieth century, the Jesuits Léon Wieger and Henri Doré also won the prize, while Huang was posthumously given a second Prix, Stanislas Julien, in 1914. Wang Guoqiang, “Huang Bolu and Xu Boyu—the Two Earliest Chinese to Win the Prix Stanislas Julien,” International Sinology 13, no. 4 (2017) [王国强，黄伯禄和徐伯愚——最早获得儒莲奖的中国人，《国际汉学》总第 13 期，2017 年第 4 期], 127–32.

33 For example, the British Sinologist Edward Harper Parker, in his China and Religion (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1905), mentioned Huang Bolu’s theology and religious studies.
the purpose of Yiwenlu was to spread the faith. Huang Bolu interacted with European Sinologists via foreign Jesuits in China, and other Chinese Jesuits also participated in international knowledge exchanges. The global nature of the Jesuits enabled Li Wenyu and other Chinese Jesuits to acquire more comprehensive knowledge of Western learning and to translate Western books under the sponsorship of foreign Jesuits to use this cultural capital to integrate into the broader intellectual trend of “Western learning spreading to the East” (西學東漸) in the late Qing period.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that the Jesuit’s internationality is composed of each Jesuit’s locality. The locality of the Chinese Jesuits was the fundamental religious force that drove them to join the Society; that is, they first and foremost came from the local church, served the local church, and developed local religious activities for the local church.