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### Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools and China's Drive toward a Modern Educational System (1850-1950)

*Les écoles catholiques primaires et secondaires face aux réformes de l'enseignement en Chine (1850-1950)*

天主教中小學與中國現代教育體系的建立 (1850-1950)

Jean-Paul Wiest

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## **Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools and China's Drive toward a Modern Educational System (1850-1950)**

*Jean-Paul Wiest*

### **Introduction**

From its inception, the Roman Catholic Church has understood teaching to be its most important tool of evangelization: “Go to the whole world and preach the Good News to all mankind” (Mark 16.15). It refers to itself as the *Magistra* to whom Jesus entrusted its *Magisterium*, which is the authority and power to teach and interpret the good news. Its calling is to proclaim the salvific love of God in Jesus Christ and to urge all human beings to love one another as God loves them. Religious and secular education have therefore been traditionally inseparably linked to the evangelizing mission of the Church.

In 1622, the Holy See established the *Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith* (also known as *Propaganda Fide*) for the specific purpose of centralizing the evangelization of non-Christian countries.<sup>1</sup> Since its instruction of 1659 to the first vicars apostolic it sent to Asia, this office has periodically issued directives reiterating the importance of Catholic schools in mission territories. In China, however, the traditional educational structure and long periods of persecutions were not conducive to the establishment of Catholic schools until the middle of the 19th century.

In a previously published work I showed how a century long Catholic educational work in China (roughly from 1850 to 1950) served two purposes,

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1. In historical studies, the *Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith* is often referred to as *Propaganda Fide*, an abbreviation of its Latin name. Missionary regions directly under its supervision are called either prefectures or vicariates Apostolic. Considered under the immediate jurisdiction of the pope, these regions are administered by means of prelates called prefects or vicars apostolic. The role of *Propaganda Fide* in a particular country ends usually when the local church is organized on a regular basis into dioceses headed by resident bishops. In 1982, Pope John Paul II changed its official name to *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*.

each representing a different current in the understanding of what it meant to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. The first trend, especially noticeable at the lowest levels of the missionary educational enterprise, stressed the preservation and nurture of faith among Catholic believers. The second characteristic, more prevalent at the higher echelons of education from the 1920s on, reflected a commitment to train China's elite and provide modern Chinese society with a profound and lasting Christian influence.<sup>2</sup>

The present essay has two objectives. The first is an attempt to find out to what extent Catholic elementary and secondary schools adopted, opposed and even influenced pre-1949 China's drive toward a modern educational system. My other intention is to shed some light on the printed tools the Catholic Church in China developed not only to inform clergy and Christian educators but also to enable them to share comments, suggestions, and action plans on the latest developments regarding private school education at the Church, state, and local levels.

### **Catholic Schools in Late Qing**

The new wave of Catholic missionaries who began to arrive in the 1840s brought along a typical Counter Reformation Church whose model was further reinforced by the difficulties of preaching openly in China. Since over 90 percent of Chinese converts and catechumens were uneducated farmers, emphasis was placed on elementary education. For the most part, missionaries favored a Church that regrouped the faithful into Catholic villages. The strategy was to nurture a strong faith among rural Catholics whose deeds and words would, in time, convince their relatives and friends in neighboring villages to believe. These communities, it was thought, would become in the long run the foundation of a future vibrant native Church.

*Propaganda Fide* endorsed this procedure in its *Instructions* of October 18, 1883, and urged the heads of missions in China to expand even further by establishing institutions of primary and higher education. The text of the document shows that the Roman office did not view Catholic schools as an important avenue of conversion but rather as the proper religious environment to protect children of the faithful and catechumens from adverse influence.<sup>3</sup>

Missionary schools, therefore, grew gradually from places strictly for religious instruction — known as prayer schools (*jingtang*) — to establishments offering the basic primary school curriculum in separate buildings for girls and

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2. Wiest, "From Past Contributions to Present Opportunities."

3. *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, vol. II, p. 193.

boys.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, the Jesuits of the Jiangnan mission were the frontrunners of the Catholic effort. As early as 1853, they had already laid down the foundation of a multi-level Catholic education:

If we count all the places where children are receiving some instruction we have 144 schools for boys and 33 for girls. In the more narrow sense of the word, we have 78 primary schools all financially supported by our benefactors and us. Among these, three function somewhat between the level of a village (primary) school and a junior high school.<sup>5</sup>

By 1886, the Catholic Church ran eighteen hundred basic primary schools for whole of China. The missionaries' egalitarian policy toward boys and girls was in sharp contrast to the traditionally male oriented Chinese system of education and began to set Catholic girls apart from their non-Christian counterparts. In 1898, reform-minded Jing Yuanshan (1840-1903), opened the first Chinese-run private girls' school in Shanghai. But it was not until 1907 that the Qing government began to establish public elementary and secondary schools.<sup>6</sup>

As chart I shows, the Catholic missions in 1900 reported some fifty thousand students in some three thousand schools. These schools until then catered mainly to Catholic children because the main goal was to produce the lay leaders, the clergy, and the sisterhoods that would assist if not replace missionaries. Schools for non-Christians were disparaged as a waste of time. Indeed the few attempts at running such schools in the hope of converting "pagan" parents through their children had proven largely unsuccessful.<sup>7</sup>

A notable exception, however, were the schools in the Jiangnan vicariate. The Jesuits set up educational institutions that aimed at "reaching for the higher stratum of the society and not only cater to the Christians and the poor."<sup>8</sup> Their educational effort aimed first at putting in place a system that would channel students from elementary to high schools and prepared the most talented ones for official examinations and more advanced studies. The results were impressive.

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4. The first girls' school was most probably opened in Ningbo in 1844 by Miss Aldersey of the British Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East: see Robert, *American Women in Mission*, p. 171.

5. Brouillon, *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la mission du Kiang-nan*, p. 103 and 107.

6. Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 173. See also Cheng Weikun, "Going Public through Education."

7. Havret, *La Mission du Kiang-nan*, p. 51-53. Catholic school statistics for the 19th century are incomplete and difficult to come by. Most of them are very localized. For some yearly statistics see for instance *Missiones Catholicae*.

8. *Lettres des nouvelles missions de la Chine*, II, p. 317-320, letter of Poissemeux, January 30, 1850. De la Servière, *Histoire de la mission du Kiang-nan*, I, p. 165.

By 1860, the Jesuits of the Jiangnan vicariate were responsible for the education of 5,600 students in 224 primary schools for boys and 89 for girls.<sup>9</sup> They had also been running, for the past ten years, a secondary school with an average of ninety Christian and non-Christian boarders. Known as *College St. Ignace* in French and *Xuhui gongxue* in Chinese, the institution gradually grew into a seven-year secondary school divided into two sections. The first one prepared students to take the first of the Chinese civil servant examinations. The other section went beyond the Chinese traditional type of education by adding other requirements. Moreover students preparing for the seminary had to study also Latin. Those who opted for a business career could choose either French or English and had in addition to take courses in history, geography, mathematics, and natural sciences. It was from this last group that the Jesuits hoped to recruit young men who would aim at even higher learning.<sup>10</sup>

By the turn of the century China counted already a large contingent of foreign Sisters and Brothers whose purpose and training was the education of youth. They not just raised the quality of instruction of many *jingtang*, they also opened new primary and secondary schools patterned on current Western curriculum and educational methods. By 1907 they had boosted the number of schools to 5,227 and the student enrollment to above 94,500. The Sisters played an especially important role in making education even more available to the female population.

The imperial government's 1903 adoption of a modernized system of education and the 1905 abolition of the traditional civil service examinations further enhanced the attraction for the Western-style educational structure and curriculum already in place in Catholic schools. The superior schooling of teachers was an additional incentive. As more and more educated and progress minded Chinese parents enrolled their non-Christian children in Catholic institutions, the notion of schools as tool of evangelization gained momentum among missionaries. A more diversified understanding of the role of Catholic schools began to take shape. To the original goal of safeguarding the faith among

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9. *Lettres des nouvelles missions de la Chine*, II, p. 238-239, letter of Gotteland, January 22, 1849; II, p. 331-333, letter of Poissemeux, April 23, 1850; III (part 1), p. 72, letter of Languillat, June 4, 1854; III (part 3), p. 255, statistics. De la Servière, *ibid.*, I, p. 171-173. In French, the school was always officially known as *College St. Ignace*; in Chinese, however, the name *Xuhui gongxue* (College of Xujiahui) rapidly replaced the awkward transliteration Sheng Yinajue gongxue (College St. Ignace).
10. *Lettres des nouvelles missions de la Chine*, III (part 1), p. 2, letter of Poissemeux, February 19, 1852; III (part 2), p. 50-58, letter of Lemaitre, September 29, 1857. De la Servière, *Croquis de Chine*, p. 19 and p. 31-32. De la Servière, *Histoire*, I, p. 173-174 and p. 329; II, p. 94-95 and p. 271-273.

Catholics were added as equally important those of converting non-Christians and cultivating civil virtues. Gradually an ideal educational system common to all Catholic missions emerged: a lower primary school in each station with a resident priest, a higher primary school in each mission district, a junior middle school and/or a normal school in each vicariate, and a least one complete middle school in each ecclesiastical region.<sup>11</sup>

This model remained flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances, the perceived needs of each place, and the financial resources available. So while some missions kept pace with Western latest educational methods and subject matters, which the Chinese-run schools would eventually adopt, others continued to concentrate on providing the most basic education to the poorest of the population.

### **Catholic Schools in the Early Republic and Warlord Period**

In the aftermath of the birth of the Republic in 1911, many educated Chinese already deeply interested in intellectual currents of the world looked for ways to infuse new ideas into the old traditional culture. China opened its doors to new ideas from abroad. A wide range of books and periodicals translated the writings of Western philosophers and discussed the concepts of individualism, freedom, science, and democracy. This influx of new ideas and the release of creative energies became known as the “New Culture Movement” (*xinwenhua yundong*). The necessity to reform the old system of education was high on the agenda.

In 1912, the provisional government created a Ministry of Education and reorganized the school system to replace the cumbersome 1903 educational program. For the first time the first four years of elementary education were made compulsory. Unfortunately, the lack of a stable government and competent political leadership were not conducive to positive educational advance and enforcement. With few exceptions, ruling warlords paid scant attention to education. The reorganization and compulsory primary education enacted in 1912 could not be carried out for lack of public schools, money, and teachers. In too many places, teachers were not only poorly paid and inadequately prepared, but their salaries were often months in arrears with no definite prospect of funds being made available. For more than a decade, lack of discipline, poor attendance and sub-par teaching seem to have been the sad characteristic of

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11. The First Plenary Council of China held in Shanghai in 1924 approved this modus operandi for Catholic schools in China. The lower primary schools covered only the first three years of primary education.

many public schools. By 1922 China had more than sixty million children of primary school age but only 10.7 percent registered in government schools. When broken down by province, the percentage of elementary students to the total local population showed a great disparity with Shanxi, Zhili and Shandong at the top and Xinjiang, Guizhou and Anhui lagging behind.<sup>12</sup>

In such a context, Christian schools offered the best hope for sustained education. By 1921-1922 their enrollment had increased substantially. Protestant missionaries ran 6,885 primary and secondary schools with a total of 163,694 students. If one adds the young students who attended Bible schools the number increases to 166,353. Catholic primary and secondary schools totaled 7,228 with an enrollment of 165,620 students. If one includes the traditional 1,021 *jingtang* in existence, the student population jumped to 181,147. Between 1900 and 1922, therefore, the number of Catholic schools for students between the age of 6 to 17 almost tripled and the enrollment almost quadrupled their original size.<sup>13</sup>

As exemplified in this 1922 letter of a Maryknoll missionary, many Catholic schools had lost their previously narrowly defined purpose of safeguarding the faith among Catholics:

Our Catholic schools in China are not only safeguards (for our Catholic boys and girls) against pagan corruption, but positive nurseries of manly virtues and refined habits. So much so that pagan parents are anxious to send their children to our schools and conversions of both parents and pupils result.<sup>14</sup>

Yet the impact of Christian schools on the population at large remained limited when we consider that the total enrollment of their elementary schools amounted to merely 0.54 percent of the sixty million children of primary school age. Moreover with 43 percent of Protestant schools concentrated in Fujian, Guangdong and Shandong, and 40.5 percent of the Catholic schools congregated in Zhili, Jiangsu and Hupei, the two Christian groups were poorly represented in

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12. Clougherty, "Educational Development in China." The figures given by Clougherty are very revealing and deserve more study; for instance, among all the provinces, Shanxi, under the control of warlord Yan Xishan (1883-1960), had the highest percentage of students in relation to its total population. See also Becker *et al.*, *The Reorganisation of Education in China*; this report also mentions Shanxi as the province with the highest percentage of primary school children and estimates the national attendance in elementary institutions at 9 percent of the total population.

13. Statistics are compiled from three sources: *Christian Education in China*, No. 146, Appendix I, table II; reports and accounts of *Les Missions de Chine* (1922), and *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 1 (1928), p. 18. The major difference between Protestant and Catholic schools was the Catholic Church's greater emphasis on primary education.

14. Letter from Father Francis X. Ford, August 7, 1922, Maryknoll Mission Archives.

many provinces. What is more significant, however, was the role they played in bringing the education of girls to the forefront. While the ratio of girls to boys in government schools stood at just 6.32 percent, it reached 35 percent in Catholic schools and it was very likely similar in Protestant institutions.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Impact of the May Fourth Movement**

Meanwhile the 1919 May Fourth Movement turned out to be more than an outburst of public anger against the betrayal of the West at Versailles and the treachery of the Beijing warlord government. This incident intensified the rise of nationalism and led to violent reactions against foreign imperialism. The influence of communism and the Bolshevik movement, which until then had remained rather small, gained rapid acceptance among intellectuals because they provided a practical philosophy with which to reject the Chinese superstitions and religious beliefs of the past and to attack Christianity as an arm of capitalism and Western imperialism. Articles published in the YMCA magazine *Qingnian jinbu* in preparation of the eleventh Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation scheduled to meet at Tsinghua University in Beijing on April 1922 further aroused the hostility of several Chinese intellectuals and led to the formation of a Chinese Anti-Christian Student Federation (Fei jidujiao xuesheng tongmeng). These profoundly nationalist educators and students were convinced that one of the primary functions of education was to inculcate patriotism. They accused private schools in the hands of Western missionaries of denationalizing students and demanded more stringent policies towards Christian schools.<sup>16</sup>

Engulfed by this upsurge of antforeignism and anti-Christianism, the republican government in Canton in 1921 and the warlord government in Beijing in 1922 released similar measures requiring the registration of private schools, and curriculums and daily operations in conformity with regulations set by their Ministry of Education. Until that time, as chart I shows, only 778 out of some 8,250 Catholic schools — or less than 9 percent — were officially accredited. Most of these institutions were city based elite schools that needed to confer government-recognized diploma so that their graduates could find work in the administration or further studies in government high schools and universities. Foremost among these institutions were those run by the Marist

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15. *Christian Education in China*; Planchet, *Les Missions de Chine et du Japon*. The proportion was probably even higher because at least fourteen Catholic prefectures and vicariates apostolic did not list boys and girls separately, in which case I counted the enrollment as “boys.”

16. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, p. 219-222.



Brothers such as Sacred Heart School (Shengxin xuexiao) in Beijing. Its primary section received government approval as early as 1913 and its middle school was officially recognized in 1924 barely one year after it opened doors.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the late 1920s, some Catholic primary and secondary institutions heeded to the new regulations. For instance, Sacred Heart in Kochow (Gaozhou) became the first registered Maryknoll elementary school in South China.<sup>18</sup> The majority of missions schools continued however to consider government registration unnecessary and did not bother to apply. Until it became specifically forbidden in 1929, compulsory religious courses remained part of the normal curriculum. Meanwhile the political situation of China was too unsettled for any government to enforce successfully the new regulations on private schools.

The purge of the Communists in Shanghai in April 1927, and the subsequent ousting of all Communists from the Nationalist Party and government dealt a serious blow to the Bolshevik movement. Antiforeignism did not disappear altogether, but gradually the Catholic Church ceased to be a target for demonstrations or harassment except in Communist controlled areas.

This turning of the Chinese national government from "Red" to "White" coincided with the Holy See's repeated efforts to respond positively to Chinese nationalism. Both the apostolic letters *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV on November 30, 1919, and the encyclical letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* of Pope Pius XI on February 28, 1926, were written with China in mind — condemning imperialistic attitudes among missionaries. Pope Pius XI was particularly eager to establish good relations with China. Consequently one of the first acts of his pontificate was to appoint Archbishop Celso Costantini, first apostolic delegate to China. In 1926 he followed up on his encyclical by writing specifically to the missionary bishops of China urging them to respect lawful civil authority and Chinese patriotism. That same year he also consecrated the first six Chinese bishops.<sup>19</sup>

## **The Nationalist Regime's Control of Education**

With the success of the Northern Expedition and the reunification of the greater part of China, the Nationalist Government was determined to assert a nation-wide control over education. The new educational system first inaugurated

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17. *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 1 (1928), p. 430-432.

18. Maryknoll Archives, Kochow Diary, August-October 1923; *The Field Afar*, February 1924, p. 40.

19. Papal letter *Ad Ipsos Pontificatus Primordiis* of June 15, 1926. Prior the consecration of the six bishops in St. Peter Basilica on October 28, 1926, the only other Chinese bishop had been Lo Wenzao, consecrated in 1685.

in February 1928 had in fact already been enacted the previous November in Northern China by warlord Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928). After defeating him, the Nationalist Government made it its own and applied it to the whole of China. Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles (*sanmin zhuyi*) were enshrined as the core philosophy and their study added to the curriculum. Over the next year and an half, the Ministry of Education published several revised versions aimed at improving and clarifying the regulations. The final form of the new educational system promulgated on August 29, 1929, superseded all the previous texts. This program remained for the most part in vigor until the Communist victory of 1949.

The government took the position that, except for the source of support and responsibility for management, there should be no major difference between private and public schools. All school, private or not, were placed under the direction and guidance of the government educational authorities. So although the overall structure of the 1929 educational system was very similar to the 1921 one, the government enforcement of the registration requirement and of other regulations brought the first major challenge to Christian schools.

The regulations not only required all "privately established" (*sili*), including Christian schools to register. They also stipulated that foreigners could not establish new grade schools without the prior approval of the local bureaus of the Ministry of Education. The responsibility for the private school rested with a Board of Directors whose chair and two-third of the members had to be Chinese citizens. But by far the provision that met with the greatest opposition from Christian educators was that religion classes and the attendance to religious services could not be required while the teaching of the Three People's Principles — the dogma of the Nationalist party — was made compulsory.<sup>20</sup> As the two charts show and I will explain later, Catholic schools were slow to comply. The fundamental objection after all was not so much about the Three People's Principles but rather about the two-fold prohibition from article V:

A private school is not permitted to teach religion as a required subject (*zongjiao kemu*), nor is religious propaganda (*zongjiao xuanchuan*) permitted in class instruction. If there are any religious exercises (*zongjiao yishi*), students shall not be compelled nor induced to participate. No religious exercise shall be allowed in primary schools.<sup>21</sup>

Read properly, the article meant that elective religious courses could be given in any private school no matter whether they were primary, secondary, or university

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20. Clougherty, "Recent Changes in Educational Legislation" and "The Government and the School," in *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 1 (1928), p. 32-39, p. 237-242. *Renseignements scolaires et autres* 46 (18 Sept., 1929), p. 1-4.

21. *The China Missionary* 1 (1948), p. 163.

and that religious ceremonies could be held in secondary and tertiary institutions but that no one should be compelled or induced to attend them. In primary schools however no religious ceremonies were permitted. Unfortunately, quite a number of missionaries as well as local bureaus of the Ministry of Education read the regulation as if it banned religious classes in primary schools. For missionaries the article became a reason for rejecting registration, for government school inspectors it was a cause for denouncing schools that maintained religious courses. This misinterpretation explains in great part why the percentage of registrations among lower primary schools lingered at less than twenty percent for many years. It also explains why in 1931 there were eight times more prayers schools than in 1921 and why during the same period the number of lower primary schools dwindled by almost two third. Indeed, many lower schools that had advertised themselves as primary schools became *jingtang* to evade registration. By contrast most higher primary and secondary schools gradually complied with the government curriculum and regulations in order to be able to deliver officially recognized diplomas.

### **Rome Again Reaching out to the Chinese Government**

As already mentioned, Pope Pius XI since his accession to the chair of St. Peter in 1922 had already given China many proofs of his commitment to foster strong ties between the Catholic Church and China. In August 1928, while most Western leaders still hesitated to give recognition to the Nanjing regime, Pope Pius XI responded positively to the news that China was at peace and unified after years of internal struggle. His message to “the great and most noble people of China” expressed hope for universal recognition of their legitimate aspirations; acknowledged the greatness of their history and culture; and reminded them to respect and obey legitimate authority.<sup>22</sup>

The pope’s gesture, perfectly in accordance with his statements of 1926, was well received by the Nationalist government, which began a series of overtures to the Catholic Church. Although, as previously described, the government prohibited compulsory teaching of religion in schools and required registration, it made repeated endorsements in support of religious freedom. With Rome urging missionaries to respect civil authorities, and the Nationalist government casting off its Communist ties, missionaries in China began to revise their opinion of the Nationalists. They stopped labeling Sun Yat-sen a villain and put up his picture in their classrooms. At the same time, the opposition to registration of schools and to the teaching of the Three People’s Principles began to fade

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22. *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 1 (1928), p. 202-206, p. 231-236.

away. The year 1929 had not even come to an end that the Jesuit Pascal d'Elia published an annotated translation that had endorsements from the Jesuits, the local bishop, and the apostolic delegate. The book, rapidly sold out, received praise from the education minister who ordered 5,000 copies of the second edition. This revised publication not only carried the previous endorsements but also two congratulatory letters, one from the education minister Jiang Mengling (Chiang Monlin, 1886-1964) and the other from Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.<sup>23</sup>

### The Catholic Schools through the War Years

Between 1929 and 1937, the Catholic Church took steps to consolidate its educational system by discontinuing schools that were too small and by encouraging its larger schools to register in order to provide government-recognized diplomas. Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Divini illius* of December 31, 1929, reaffirmed the importance of Catholic education as a means of evangelization and confirmed educators in their resolve to maintain well-run Catholic schools at all costs. While in communist controlled areas Christian institutions were often forced to close, in the rest of China they enjoyed such a good reputation for solid teaching, good discipline, and high moral values that local offices of the Ministry of Education were unwilling or found it almost impossible to close those that flouted the requirement to register.<sup>24</sup> Among the many articles debating the question of registration, the following excerpt from *Les écoles catholiques en 1930* seems to summarize best of the Catholic Church position:

If the government and the local authorities let us free... to give religious courses outside regular class hours, *why not register our schools? This is to our advantage.* But in places where they want to forbid the teaching of religion and its ceremonies, we shall refuse to register because doing so would render our schools useless.<sup>25</sup>

As chart II shows, in 1937 the number of registered higher primary and secondary Catholic schools stood at less than 50 percent and the lower primary schools at

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23. D'Elia, *Le Triple Démisme de Suen Wen; Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 2 (1929), p. 156-157, p. 251-252; 3 (1930), p. 306-307.

24. *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 3 (1930), p. 183-184.

25. "Si le gouvernement et les autorités locales nous laissent la liberté... de donner des cours de religion en dehors des heures de classes, *pourquoi pas ne pas faire enregistrer nos écoles? Nous n'avons qu'à y gagner.* Là où l'on veut nous interdire l'enseignement de la religion et les cérémonies religieuses, refusons de nous faire enregistrer, car dans ce cas une école catholique devient inutile," *ibid.*, p. 255-256.

not even 20 percent. Prayer schools did not have to comply unless missionaries wanted them to be recognized as primary schools.

The majority of Catholic higher primary and secondary schools operated under the direction of Chinese principals. Educators in registered institutions followed curriculums imposed by the government but complained frequently about the antireligious tone of some of the textbooks. The teaching of religion was no more a required course; it had instead been replaced by the teaching of the Three People's Principles. Religion in most cases was taught outside school hours at a different location.

Chart II also illustrates the profound disruption brought about by the Sino-Japanese conflict and World War II. The onset of the Japanese invasion and the fall of Nanjing affected all schools in China. This explains the sharp decline in the number of Catholic prayer and primary schools and the number of enrolled students during 1937 and 1938. As the Japanese invasion slowed down over the next two years, many schools reopened. But the intensification of the fighting in 1941, resulted in another large-scale closure of schools, especially in the countryside. Between June 1937 and June 1945, prayer schools dwindled by more than half from a high of almost 12,000 to about 4,500. Lower primary school also steadily declined from about 4,000 to less than 2,500. The enrollment for both combined also took a nosedive from about 380,000 to about 290,000 students.

The war however had an almost opposite impact on higher primary and secondary schools located in large towns and cities. In striking contrast to government and Protestant schools that closed their doors and moved out of Japanese occupied areas, the Catholic Church kept most of its institutions in place and had to open new ones. For several years, Catholic schools remained about the only educational outfits in occupied territories above the lower primary. Chart II shows that despite the destruction of several buildings by Japanese bombardments Catholic higher primary and secondary schools increased in number through 1945.<sup>26</sup> And the same can be said of their non-Catholic population, which grew by fifty-five percent.

During most of the war, the regulations against teaching religion in school were repealed or at the least suspended. Indeed at a meeting of missionaries in Hankou in April 1938, Madame Chiang Kai-shek stated that, in appreciation for the work Christian missionaries had done for the wounded and the refugees, the President had decided to permit the teaching of religion as an optional course.

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26. In 1939, for instance, there were 111 secondary schools on the Catholic registry but 0 had been too damaged to reopen. Carroll, "The Educational Work of the Catholic China Mission, 1929-1939"; *Renseignements* 367 (April 8, 1943), p. 1.

Accordingly, the following year the Ministry of Education revised the private school regulations by allowing religious courses and exercises in private schools as long as students remained free to attend or not:

If, in private schools, there are courses of religion, students are completely free to participate in them as facultative subjects. If, outside of schools hours, there are religious ceremonies, students are free to attend them (Article IX).<sup>27</sup>

## The Catholic Schools after World War II

At the end of World War II the Catholic Church petitioned for keeping in force the 1939 decision. In May 1947 the Ministry of Education replied that it had no record proving that the Executive Yuan (*xingzhengyuan*) had officially approved the document. Therefore the ministry ruled that all religious schools had to abide by Article VI of the May 1947 “Revised Regulations for Private Schools”, which repeated word for word article V of the 1929 regulations.

Meanwhile, with China in the midst of a civil war, the political situation remained unstable. Convinced that Catholic schools could make a significant contribution to the rebuilding of the country, the papal internuncio, Archbishop Antonio Riberi, decided to convene a national meeting on education. This First National Catholic Educational Congress, convened at Aurora College for Women in Shanghai in February 1948, had the threefold agenda of identifying and solving problems common to Catholic schools, finding means to improve Catholic education, and making plans for the future. Delegates to this weeklong gathering numbered over one hundred including Cardinal Thomas Tian and twenty-some bishops. Also in attendance were several civil authorities including the Chief of the Social Education Department of the Ministry of Education and the Chief of the Bureau of Education for the city of Shanghai.<sup>28</sup>

Speakers more than once remarked that unfriendly local inspectors still wrongly used article V (now article VI) to prohibit religious instruction in private primary schools. Overall however, they welcomed the lessening of the anticlerical stance in the Nationalist government and attributed it in great part to the strong increase in registered Catholic schools and the good impression they made on inspectors. The overall sentiment was that the current situation called for an even more complete cooperation between both parties because post

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27. *The China Missionary* 1 (1948), p. 163. *Hsin Wen Pao*, March 2, 1939 published the entire revised regulations.

28. *The China Missionary* 1 (1948), p. 133-148. See also Madeleine Chi, *Shanghai Sacred Heart, Risk in Faith, 1926-1952*, quoting on pages 108-109 t, *Zhongguo gongjiao jiaoyu huiyi jiyao*.

World War II China was in need of the “constructive spiritual force” inherent in the Catholic Church.<sup>29</sup>

During the conference it was also repeatedly pointed that government approved textbooks contained erroneous and derogatory statements regarding the Church. It was recommended that a committee be appointed to point these passages to the Ministry of Education and to consider the publication of textbooks under the auspices of the Catholic Church.<sup>30</sup> Of course, the change of regime the following year, prevented these recommendations to come to fruition.

Differences with the Nationalist government over the way children education should be conducted did not affect the overall trend in Catholic schools toward a greater attention to post elementary education. Between June 1946 and June 1948, the decrease in the number of prayer and lower primary schools accelerated due both to the continuation of the consolidation process and to the closing of many outfits in communist controlled areas. Prayer schools were the most affected. Their enrollment dropped 31 percent. Lower primary schools seemed to fare better with their overall enrollment falling only 15.5 percent from about 174,000 to 147,000 students. Yet when Catholic and non-Catholic enrollments are compared, one ends up with a drop of 36.5 percent in the Catholic population while the non-Catholic population far from decreasing did in fact increased slightly.

The 1947-1948 figures also reveal an upward trend in the level of instruction in Catholic elementary schools. Considering the fact that the total of elementary schools for both years remained about the same, the sharp 1948 rise in the number of higher primaries is not as odd as it may seem. The reality is that for several years already lower primaries had been offering classes at the higher primary level. By 1948, often as a result of the registration process, many of these institutions taught the entire elementary curriculum and therefore were no more counted as lower primary but rather as higher primary schools.

Higher primary schools continued to experience the growth begun during the World War II period. Between June 1946 and June 1948, the enrollment grew by 13 percent for Catholics and by 38 percent for non-Catholics. A look at the statistics for Catholic secondary schools reveals that by then the push for more such institutions was accelerating. After discounting the three Catholic tertiary schools and their students enrollment of about 4,600, one finds in the three year period to 1948, the number of secondary schools jumped by one half from 125 to 189 and the total student population increased by more than one half from 30,000 to about 47,000.

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29. *The China Missionary* 1 (1948), p. 135, 151 and 164.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 137-138, p. 144 and 793.

Differences over the way children education should be conducted did not affect either the overall support the Catholic Church had shown for the Nationalist regime throughout the war of resistance against Japan. Their common resolve to fight the growing communist threat drew them even closer. This relationship ultimately became a liability for the Church, which the Communists were quick to exploit first in the territories they controlled and then all over Mainland China after the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan. In September 1950, the Ministry of Education of the new regime issued “The provisional Regulations for the Management of Private Educational Institutions” (*Sili xuexiao guanli zhanxing banfa*). The document gave the People’s Republic of China control of private schools that ran out of funds or failed to abide by the country’s atheistic educational policy. By 1955, all Catholic educational institutions had either been forced out of existence or confiscated by the new regime.

### **Keeping Missionaries Informed of Government Policies and Catholic Schools**

Considering the importance the Catholic Church attached to education, it had to make sure that missionaries in China be updated in a timely fashion on three matters all crucial to the viability and success of Christian schools: statements from the Holy See, changes in the Chinese government educational policies, and conditions of Catholic schools in different locations. Regarding government regulations and local situations, missionaries needed to receive advices on how to face regulations and situations that could favorably or adversely impact their schools.

As mentioned in note 7, prior to 1900 there is not much published and shared information between China missionaries about their educational enterprises. Missionaries after all did not show much interest in establishing schools until the late 1840s. Sources on that period were published abroad and mainly meant to inform Western readers.

Gradually however the success of Catholic schools and the needs for missionary to be better informed led some vicariates apostolic to publish information on these schools and the government schools. Not surprisingly, the Jesuits of Shanghai, who since the late 1840s had spearheaded the establishment of schools, took the lead. In September 1896 they began the publication of the fortnightly bulletin *Nouvelles de la Mission* to update missionaries about the situation of the Catholic Church in China. In 1901, they also started a yearbook by the name of *Annuaire de l’Observatoire de Zikawei* that contained a number



of statistics and tables regarding the Church mission districts, seminaries and schools in China.<sup>31</sup>

The Vincentians in Beijing followed suit in the 1910s with two publications of their own. The first issue of the monthly *Le Bulletin Catholique de Pékin* appeared in September 1913. It carried news about the universal church, the church in China, and most specifically the church around Beijing. As schools in that vicariate increased, information on their status increased. The famed Vincentian historian Jean-Marie Planchet was the mastermind of another publication named *Les Missions de Chine et du Japon* that first came out in 1916. Hereafter it was published on an average of one substantial volume every two years. While the *Annuaire* with its tables of comparison and statistical data provided an overall view of different aspects and trends within the church in China, *Les Missions* provided the grassroots detailed information on parishes, schools, seminaries, and clergy in each vicariate and prefecture apostolic.<sup>32</sup>

But the real impetus to disseminate school information on a large scale did not really begin until the arrival in late 1922 of Archbishop Celso Costantini, the apostolic delegate to China. One of his first public statements upon landing in Hong Kong in November 1922 was to declare that his mission in China concerned only “religious and educational matters.”<sup>33</sup> Once settled in Beijing, he immediately began laying plans for a plenary council that would renew the face of the Church in China by making it more Chinese. The First Plenary Council of China held in Shanghai from May 15 to June 12, 1924 identified education as a major priority of the Church in China and voted the establishment of a permanent “Commission on Schools, Books, and Press” alongside with a “Commission to Translate the Holy Scripture in the Ordinary Language” (known as *baihua*) and a “Commission to Develop a Uniform Text of Catechism and Prayers”.

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31. The first issues of *Nouvelles de la mission* bore in fact the title of *Nouvelles de Chine*. The yearbook *Annuaire de l'Observatoire de Zikawei* (Zikawei: Bureau sinologique de Zikawei, 1901-1949) changed name several times. The first change occurred in 1922 when it became *Missions, séminaires, écoles en Chine*; in 1933 the title became *Annuaire des missions catholiques de Chine*; and finally after the establishment of the Chinese hierarchy in 1947, the name was modified into *Annuaire de l'Eglise Catholique*.
  32. *Le Bulletin catholique de Pékin*. Planchet, *Les Missions de Chine et du Japon*. In 1935, because of the need to focus exclusively on China, the book title was shortened *Les Missions de Chine*: two more volumes still appeared in Pékin [Beijing] (1935-1937) but hereafter the books were published in Shanghai first by Willow Pattern Press (1938-1940) and then by Pax Publishing Company (1942-1948).
  33. *Nouvelles de la mission*, 792 (November 13 1922), p. 4; quoting *North China daily News* of November 9, 1922.

The Commission on Schools, Books, and Press began officially in 1928 and played the most important role because its scope, in a sense, embraced that of the two other committees. Its task was to promote Catholic education at all levels of society and to make use of Catholic Action, schools and the press in the campaign for the intellectual reconstruction of China. The commission was therefore also responsible for diffusing news on the progress and the work accomplished by the two other commissions.

Almost immediately, the Commission on Schools, Books, and the Press became known, in short, as the Synodal Commission. Its five-member team, four Western missionaries and one Chinese priest, worked in Beijing under the apostolic delegate. One of the main tasks of the commission was the publication of a new monthly periodical that would be the bulletin of the apostolic delegation and would spread the work of the Synodal Commission. From the start the periodical commonly known as *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* was multilingual to reflect the diversity of the clergy in China. For that reason the masthead often also displayed the additional titles of *Dossiers de la Commission Synodale*, *Digests of the Synodal Commission*, and *Gongjiao jiaoyu congkan*. Articles appeared mostly in Latin, French, English, and Chinese, with the addition of German and Italian from January 1940 on. As a rule, most important articles were published in bilingual form or preceded by a summary in Latin.

The expressed purpose of the periodical as stated in its first issue of May 1928, was to provide the clergy of China with practical information on the three general topics of education, the press, and catholic youth. It also served as a forum for exchanging ideas and presenting successful methods of evangelization.<sup>34</sup> Most copies contain the following sections: in depth-essays on a particular question; shorter articles updating issues previously dealt with; official Chinese documents; church documents; excerpts from the Chinese and Western press; annotated bibliography and book reviews; and miscellaneous information.

Today, the *Collectanea* are a rich source of valuable materials for almost any field of research. On the topic of educational development in China and how it affected Catholic primary and secondary schools, the researcher is amply rewarded from the first issue on, which retraces the various efforts at modernizing the educational system from the edict of the Guangxu emperor in 1898 to the legislation of November 1927 regarding private schools. Most official documents are presented in their original Chinese form. Then, throughout the following issues, the educational question is updated with excerpts from the press, letters

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34. *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* 1 (1928), p. 3, p. 52; 3 (1930), p. 1. See also Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina*, vol. I, p. 5-7.

from missionaries, and reprints of regulations and statements from the Ministry of Education. In just two years of existence, *Collectanea* produced no less than eighteen articles on Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, presenting part of the original text and translations of both the students' and the teachers' versions, complemented by a detailed analysis of the contents. Over the following three years, *Collectanea* also introduced 2,525 words and expressions used in the Three People's Principles that missionaries should know. Until it ceased publication in 1947, topics such as registration, curriculum, formation of teachers, opening of student hostels, and inspection of schools figure prominently in almost every issue. This is to say nothing about the wide coverage given to the three Catholic tertiary institutions.

After the Holy See, in April 1946, raised the Catholic missions in China to the rank of a local church by converting all the vicariates apostolic into dioceses, the newly-established hierarchy decided to expand the responsibilities of the Commission on Schools, Books, and the Press to respond better to the new situation and further unify the mission work. The commission re-emerged in Shanghai as a new body called the "Catholic Central Bureau" that began publishing in the spring of 1948 an English-French bilingual review under the masthead of *China Missionary* and *Le Missionnaire de Chine* and its counterpart in the Chinese language called *To Sheng*. School news filled many pages of both journals.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile the Jesuit of the Sinological Bureau of Shanghai also responded enthusiastically to the call of the First Plenary Council of China for a more extensive dissemination and exchange of news on education. In January 1927, their bulletin *Nouvelles de la Mission* began carrying a new section called *Nouvelles scolaires* (School News). Growing demands for extra copies of this insert led the Jesuits that same November to turn the *Nouvelles scolaires* into a separate fortnightly bulletin they named *Renseignements scolaires et autres*, which they shortened to simply *Renseignements* in April 1930. Like the *Collectanea*, the *Renseignements* were widely distributed, especially among French missionaries and Chinese priests they had formed. They too are a rich mine of information that present-day researchers have not yet fully exploited.

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35. China Missionary had on occasion articles and book reviews in Chinese and Latin. In September 1949, the editorial board moved to Hong Kong and renamed the publication *China Missionary Bulletin*. In September 1953 the name changed again to *Mission Bulletin* and then finally to *Asia* in January 1960, each time to reflect a broader focus on missionary activities in the greater Asia.

## **Conclusion**

The story of Catholic primary and secondary schools in China needs to be researched in greater details. During the 100 years under study, Catholic educators were in a continuous balancing act. On the one hand, they aimed at contributing to the national educational effort with schools of all levels and for all kinds of people. On the other hand, they viewed their schools as a means for preserving the faith of Catholics and a tool for the evangelization of non-Christians. For that reason, they fought to preserve in their curriculum the teaching of the Catholic religion — at least as an optional course. This characteristic certainly did set apart Catholic schools from government schools and other non-denominational private schools.

Besides the religious aspect, Catholic elementary and secondary schools displayed at least three other striking features. First, these schools focused on people's needs, giving priority to the poor uneducated rural population. The mission schools gave the first rudiments of literacy to villagers who otherwise would never have had that opportunity. In cities, missionaries build hostels to allow poor students from the villages to pursue higher studies.

Second, Catholic schools contributed to the modernization of rural China by introducing ideas that had already been accepted in big cities, including basic practices such as hygiene. Third, Catholic schools contributed to counter China's traditional attitudes toward females and to give a new status and role to Chinese women. The education provided to girls put them on a par with their male counterparts; the marks they received proved that they could perform intellectually as well as boys. As young women in China were on the threshold of a type of life new to most Chinese females, Sisters who taught them offered models of what it meant to be an educated woman and a teacher.

Chart I: PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS 1886-1935

	1886	1900	1907	1918	1921	1930	1931	1932	1934	1935
	<i>Data incomplete; many schools not included</i>									
<b>Prayer Schools</b>										
Number of schools					1 021		8 824	9 442		11 523
Enrollment:										
Boys						170 397	162 485	188 018	122 461	125 498
Girls									96 031	104 041
Catholics										
Non-Catholics										
<b>Lower Primary Schools</b>										
Number of schools					7 130		2 763	3 177		4 117
How many registered					9 % of total			17 %		17 %
Enrollment:										
Boys					65 %	83 476	94 407	107 616		
Girls					35 %					
Catholics									82 918	94 013
Non-Catholics									68 278	76 740
<b>Higher Primary Schools</b>										
Number of schools					99		309	309		Included in Lower Prim.
How many registered								46 %		46 %
Enrollment:										
Boys						21 970	18 776	15 699		
Girls										
Catholics									Included in Lower Prim.	Included in Lower Prim.
Non-Catholics									Lower Prim.	Lower Prim.

## Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools

	1886	1900	1907	1918	1921	1930	1931	1932	1934	1935
<b>Secondary &amp; Tertiary Schools*</b>					Included in Higher Prim.					
Number of schools							100	126		88
How many registered								46,70 %		47 %
Enrollment:										
Boys						16919	13007	18028	17455	
Girls										
Catholics										4400
Non-Catholics										7863
<b>Grand Total</b>										
<b>Schools</b>	<b>1812</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>5227</b>	<b>6255</b>	<b>8250</b>	<b>12500</b>	<b>12000</b>	<b>13054</b>		<b>15728</b>
<b>Students</b>	<b>25873</b>	<b>50000</b>	<b>94503</b>	<b>144344</b>	<b>181458</b>	<b>293772</b>	<b>288705</b>	<b>329901</b>	<b>387133</b>	<b>412555</b>

Compiled from *Missiones Catholicae*, 1886-1922; *Renseignements du Bureau Sinologique de Zi-ka-wei* 109 (Feb. 19, 1932); 273 (Jan. 12, 1939); *Nouvelles de Chine* 1060 (March 29, 1933).

\*Normal schools are not included. By the end of 1935, the enrollment of students at the three universities was less than 2,000.

**Chart II: PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS 1936-1948**

	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1946	1947	1948
<b>Prayer Schools</b>										
Number of schools	11 827	11 163	8 731	9 865	10 110	8 700	6 662	4 460	2 722	2 243
Enrollment:										
Boys	126 534	121 736	107 272	116 874	123 276	103 085	76 670	57 399	46 892	38 405
Girls	106 241	108 331	92 583	92 583	107 302	91 505	76 400	57 097	36 865	33 307
Catholics										
Non-Catholics										
<b>Lower Primary Schools</b>										
Number of schools	4 283	4 274	3 111	3 248	3 416	3 919	2 807	2 298	1 564	1 469
How many registered	18 %								42 %	46 %
Enrollment:										
Boys				117 598	117 602		112 629	108 035	87 049	90 064
Girls				58 426	63 870		67 427	66 193	56 286	57 291
Catholics	99 195	96 182	88 934	81 498	88 467	104 232	79 637	75 984	49 157	48 232
Non-Catholics	81 479	81 393	63 506	94 526	93 005	129 521	99 519	98 244	94 198	99 123

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	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1946	1947	1948
<b>Higher Primary Schools</b>	Included in Lower Prim.	Included in Lower Prim.	Included in Lower Prim.			Included in Lower Prim.				
Number of schools				364	424		498	450	445	542
How many registered	47 %								90 %	95 %
Enrollment:										
Boys	25,000:	Included in Lower Prim	Included in Lower Prim	18 784	20 939	Included in Lower Prim	22 517	21 269	26 396	28 253
Girls	Included in Lower Prim			11 739	13 392		14 961	14 895	17 429	18 952
Catholics				11 181	11 777		12 002	9 634	9 772	10 902
Non-Catholics				19 342	22 554		26 076	26 530	34 053	36 303
<b>Secondary &amp; Tertiary Schools *</b>										
Number of schools	103	97	98	91	107	120	123	128	159	192
How many registered	47,50 %								62 %	87,70 %
Enrollment:										
Boys					13 046	27,000 boys	16 553	21 154	27 885	31 751
Girls					7 474	and girls	11 182	13 245	17 711	19 893
Catholics	6 007	6 236	6 138	5 782	5 350		6 151	5 315	6 506	8 116
Non-Catholics	12 597	13 868	12 631	12 719	15 170		21 584	29 084	39 090	43 528
<b>Grand Total</b>										
<b>Schools</b>	<b>16 213</b>	<b>15 535</b>	<b>119 405</b>	<b>13 568</b>	<b>14 007</b>	<b>12 739</b>	<b>10 145</b>	<b>7 336</b>	<b>4 890</b>	<b>4 446</b>
<b>Students</b>	<b>432 053</b>	<b>427 746</b>	<b>371 064</b>	<b>434 505</b>	<b>466 901</b>	<b>455 343</b>	<b>398 039</b>	<b>359 251</b>	<b>316 433</b>	<b>317 916</b>

Compiled from *Renseignements du Bureau Sinologique de Zi-ka-wei* 273 (Jan. 12, 1939); 298 (March 13, 1940); 299 (March 21, 1940); 324 (April 26, 1941); 367 (April 8, 1943); 421 (Mai 15, 1947); 431 (March 15, 1948); 444 (April 15, 1949).

\*Normal schools are not included. By the end of 1948, the enrollment of students at the three universities was about 4600.

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#### CHINESE CHARACTER LIST

baihua 白話  
Fei jidujiao xuesheng tongmeng 非基督教學生同盟  
Gongjiao jiaoyu congkan 公教教育叢刊  
Jiang Menglin (Chiang Monlin) 蔣夢麟  
Jing Yuanshan 經元善  
jingtang 經堂  
Qingnian jinbu 青年進步  
sanmin zhuyi 三民主義  
Sheng Yinajue gongxue 聖依納爵公學  
Shengxin xuexiao 聖心學校  
sili 私立  
Sili xuexiao guanli zhanxing banfa 私立學校管理暫行辦法  
To Sheng 鐸聲  
Yan Xishan 閻錫山  
xingzhengyuan 行政院  
xinwenhua yundong 新文化運動  
Xuhui gongxue 徐匯公學  
Zhang Zuolin 張作霖  
zongjiao kemu 宗教科目  
zongjiao xuanchuan 宗教宣傳  
zongjiao yishi 宗教儀式