International Journal of Asian Studies, **4**, 2 (2007), pp. 259–273 2007 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017|S1479591407000769 Printed in the United Kingdom

REVIEW ARTICLE

IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES

Minghui Hu

University of California, Santa Cruz
E-mail mhu@ucsc.edu

Huang Yi-long. *Liangtoushe: mingmo qingchu de diyidai tianzhu jiaotu* (Two-headed Snakes: The First Generation of Catholic Converts in Late Ming and Early Qing China). Xinzhu: Guoli qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2005. The simplified Chinese version, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006.

China has become the most enthusiastic and indispensable player in the contemporary development of global capitalism. Unlike their intellectual predecessors who rejected or condemned their tradition as a backward and stagnant one, many Chinese scholars today rather turn to China's positive contribution in the global development since 1500 and attempt to explain several key encounters between China and the West in a more neutral tone. A large literature of this kind emerged in about two decades.[1] Among them, Huang Yi-long stands out as a very successful and eloquent spokesman. Trained as a radio astronomer at Columbia University, Huang made an audacious decision to join the Department of History at Tsing-hua University (Taiwan) in 1987 and started his venture as a historian of science. At the initial stage of his "conversion," Huang had been acutely aware of his limitations in historical training and constantly sought to combine his strengths in exploring archaeo-astronomy, history of astronomy and astrology, military technology, cultural contact and exchange, as well as the social implications of scientific or technological change. He has now proved himself a respectable historian and produced an astonishing collection of 112 publications downloadable from his website. In 2005 he published his first scholarly monograph *Two-headed Snake*s (*Liangtoushe*), which symbolizes the two minds of one person.[2] This book is a timely and important intervention in this growing field.

The central theme of *Two-headed Snakes* is the dilemma of the first generation of Catholic converts in late imperial China. This thematic unity, crystallized from a series of case studies and being the major contribution of Huang's volume, points to two general arenas of elite culture in late imperial China: kinship and politics. Unlike the pioneering

1 Good examples can be found in Zhang Guogang 张国刚, *Mingqing chuanjiaoshi yu ouzhou hanxue* 明清传教士与欧洲汉学 (Missionaries in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and European sinology). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001.

2 All my citations to *Liangtoushe* will refer to the 2005 version published by Guoli qinghua daxue chubanshe.

Western historians Jonathan Spence and Jacques Gernet,[3] who suggest that this cross-cultural contact was an intellectual and theological exchange or misunderstanding across cultural borders, Huang shifts his focus to the primal dilemma of the first generation converts as choosing between family and God as well as between loyalty and faith. The dilemma of the Chinese Catholic converts lies not in intellectual or cultural, but rather in political and familial domains. Precisely because of this shift, Huang urges historians to look at the dynamics of Sino-Western exchange and conflict through the eyes of the literati rather than the Jesuits. This methodological tilt resonates well with what many have advocated in North America, and the nuances of their approaches merit our attention.[4] To further appreciate the methodological nuances, the dynamics of Sino-Western exchange and conflict should first be framed in the big picture.

THE BIG PICTURE

From Xu Guangqi's collaboration with the Jesuits in the 1607 Chinese version of the first six chapters of Euclid's *Elements of Geometry* until the watershed of a Protestant translation of a calculus and algebra textbook in 1859, how exactly did the Chinese intellectual elite cope with Western culture, science, and societies? Incommensurable misunderstanding? Manipulative evasion? Blunt rejection? Skilful accommodation? Partial transmission? Or concomitant reinvention? All these have been used to frame the intense cultural contact and exchange between the Jesuits and the literati in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries.[5] Among them, Jesuit astronomy and mathematics as knowledge and practice originating from the Jesuit colleges in Europe remained the most significant impact on China before 1800. The rapid appropriation of Jesuit astronomy by the Chinese literati and officials occurred when European natural philosophy also underwent dramatic shifts. The ground-breaking natural knowledge outside of the disciplinary structure of medieval universities began to permeate into Catholic educational institutions, within which Jesuit natural philosophy evolved.[6]

But the advancements of Jesuit astronomy and mathematics could not be completely introduced to China. For example, the Jesuit Christopher Clavius (1538–1612) was an important figure in Jesuit natural philosophy and had enormous authority in producing astronomical texts for the Collegio Romano in Rome, the flagship of the Jesuit colleges in Europe.[7]

3 Jonathan Spence. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984; Jacques Gernet. *China and the Christian Impact: a Conflict of Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

4 Paul Cohen. *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 149–98; Benjamin Elman. *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 3–23.

5 Paul Demiéville. "The First Philosophic Contacts between Europe and China." *Diogenes* 58 (Summer 1967), pp. 75–103.

6 Donald Lach. *Asia in the Making of Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965–1993; Peter Dear. *Discipline and Experience: the Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995; Mordechai Feingold, ed., *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

7 Robert Westman. "Copernicans and the Church." In David Lindberg and Ronald Numbers, eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 93–95. See also John Gascoigne. "A Reappraisal of the Role of the Universities in the Scientific Revolution." In David Lindberg and Robert Westman, eds., *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 207–60.

Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) introduced Clavius' work to the literati in the late Ming; and Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666) and Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), with a brief interruption in 1664, consolidated Jesuit astronomy and mathematics in the Qing court. The Jesuits in China may have been informed of that dramatic change in natural philosophy that was happening in Europe, but they nevertheless were more concerned with their theological debates and evangelical privilege. They also had to present their mathematics and astronomy to the Qing court as incrementally successive doctrines rather than a dramatically different cosmology. Otherwise, they would have been taken, as happened a number of times, as deceptive and misleading foreigners.

The Jesuit mission in China also produced many Christian texts in Chinese. Most literati regarded them as coming from a geographically remote place previously unknown to them.[8] Converts to Christianity are estimated to have numbered 200,000 between 1695 and 1703, the middle of Kangxi's reign (r. 1662–1722), and the number of missionaries and clergy reached a peak of between 140 and 160 around 1700.[9] In comparison with orthodox Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism, Catholicism remained insignificant in China. Nonetheless, despite the scarcity of Catholics in the provinces, at the Qing court the Jesuits had a visible impact on court-sponsored scholarship after Ferdinand Verbiest's (1623–1688) victory in 1664, in a dispute over the calendar, which consolidated the Jesuits as an important faction at court.[10] As their status now compelled the court literati to take notice of their astronomy, the Jesuits shared the reconstruction by 1700 of Chinese astronomy and mathematics. The Jesuit library collection in Beijing's Northern Church (*Beitang*), for instance, reveals the knowledge reservoir of Jesuit mathematics and astronomy. Only the catalogue of the library collection has survived to our time; the collection has not. The catalogue contains about 400 volumes on astrology and astronomy. Many of those listed came from both pre-Copernican and Copernican systems, such as Riccioli, Hevelius, Kepler, Pini, Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, Ptolemy, Regiomontanus, Marinonius, Kircher, Galileo, Alcmarianus, etc. The catalogue even listed a few of Isaac

8 Willard Peterson gives a comprehensive survey of *tianxue* 天學 in "Learning from Heaven: the Introduction of Christianity and Other Western Ideas into Late Ming China." Chapter 12, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 789–839.

9 Nicolas Staendart. "Number of Christians." *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume One: 635–1800*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 380–93; and Nicolas Staendart. "The Jesuit Presence in China (1580–1773): a Statistical Approach." *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 13 (1991), pp. 4–17. My thanks to Eugenio Menegon for this reference.

10 Huang Yi-long 黃一農. "Qingchu tianzhujiao yu huijiao tianwenjia jian de zhendou 清初天主教與回教天文學家間的爭鬥 (The struggle between Jesuit and Muslim astronomers in early Qing). *Jiuzhou Xuekan* 九州學刊 5:3 (1993), pp. 47–69; Huang Yi-long 黃一農. "Zeri zhizheng yu kangxi liyu 擇日之爭與康熙曆獄 (Debates over date-selecting divination and Kangxi calendar case)." *Tsing-Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報 21:2 (1991), pp. 247–80; Huang Yi-long 黃一農. "Cong Tang Ruowang suobian mingli shixi qingchu zhongou wenhua de chongtu yu tuoxie 從湯若望所編民曆試析清初中歐文化的衝突與妥協 (An analysis of conflicts and compromises between Chinese and European cultures in early Qing: a case study of the popular calendar made by Adam Schall). *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 (*Tsing-Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*) 26:2 (1996), pp. 189–220; Huang Yi-long 黃一農. "Qingqianqi dui zuican liangsu xianhoucixu de zhengzhi" 清前期對觜參兩宿先後次序的爭執 (The controversy on the sequence of Zui and Can Lodges in Early Qing). In Yang cuihua 楊翠華 and Huang Yilong 黃一農, eds., *Jindai zhongguo kejishi lunji* 近代中國科技史論集 (Science and Technology in modern China). Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academica Sinica, 1991, pp. 71–93; Huang Yi-long 黃一農. "Qingchu Qintianjian zhong ge mingzu tianwenxuejia de quanli qifu 清初欽天監中各民族天文學家的權力起伏 (The power structure of ethnic astronomers in the Directorate of Celestial Surveillance of early Qing)." *Xinshixue* 新史學 (New History) 5:1 (1991), pp. 75–108, esp. 77–81; Chu Pingyi. "Scientific Dispute in the Imperial Court: The 1664 Imperial Calendar Case." *Chinese Science* 14 (1997), pp. 7–34.

Newton's texts.[11] Despite the existence of the *Northern Church* collection, the Jesuits in the Qing court faithfully followed their predecessors and only presented the Tychonic cosmos to the Chinese literati and officials.[12]

Given the above sketch, many historians have come to realize that the complex accommodation and reconstruction of the early modern West in late imperial China requires symmetrical measures of both missionary and literati operations. The daunting task to disentangle the contact and exchange between both ends of Eurasia, as Huang Yi-long has undertaken for us, lies in the bewildering spectrum from the early modern West to late imperial China. Huang's volume, however, does not follow the "mainstream issues" of current historiography. The main problems, as Huang sees them, should go beyond what has been narrowly conceived by many historians of science, technology, medicine, and religion in China. In short, Huang wants to frame these problems in the big picture.

A BLIND SPOT

The Ming and Qing literati's appropriation of the early modern West shows a great distance, or even a rupture, from the so-called "industrial culture" of our modern world. The industrial culture of the West can be traced, so the story goes, back to what historians have described as the Scientific Revolution. The technological change following the Scientific Revolution, the capitalistic mode of production, and the militant colonialism in nineteenth-century Europe shook the rest of the world.[13] From the perspectives of non-Western intellectuals, the Western powers concealed modern science as the secret of Western might and wealth. It appeared especially so for those who were defeated by gunboats and railways from the nineteenth century on. Almost without exception, political elites outside the West quickly emulated, in one way or another, the institutional forms of modern science.[14] Informed by some social Darwinists and positivists in Europe, many Chinese intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century strongly believed that China had become a nation on the brink of extinction. Many of them also believed that such a dangerous time called for radical action. The configuration of evolutionist and nationalist narratives, as Prasenjit Duara suggests in his comparative study of Chinese and Indian nationalism, provides the dominant understanding of the history of Chinese "nation" and "science" on the one hand, and obscures the alternatives on the other.[15]

11 *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pè-T'ang: Mission Catholique des Lazaristes a Pèkin.* Pèkin: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1949. For an introduction to this catalogue, see Boleslaw Szczesniak. "Note on Kepler's *Tabulae Rudolphinae* in the Library of Pei-t'ang in Pekin." *Isis* 40 (1949), pp. 344–47.

12 Keizo Hashimoto. "Hsü Kuang-Chi: The Organizer of the Astronomical Reform." In *Hsü Kuang-Chi and Astronomical Reform: The Process of Chinese Acceptance of Western Astronomy 1629–1635.* Osaka: Kansai University Press, 1988, pp. 74–142.

13 Eric Hobsbawm. *Industry and Empire.* (The Pelican Economic History of Britain.) New York: Penguin Books, 1968, 1969; Margaret Jacob. *Scientific Culture and the Making of the Industrial West.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

14 Gyan Prakash. "Translation and Power." *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 49–85; Peter Buck. "Science and Revolution: China in 1911." *American Science and Modern China 1876–1936.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 91–121.

15 Prasenjit Duara. *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China.* University of Chicago Press, 1995; see also Lin Yü-sheng. *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness – Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979; and Hao Chang. *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning, 1890–1911.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

These "May Fourth" intellectuals therefore wanted to rewrite their past from their memory and wished to start with a clean slate. But, in practice, they merely rejected their very recent past. This "uncompromising rejection" of China's immediate past, commencing around the 1890s and culminating in the political protest against the Versailles treaty on 4 May 1919, took place in the name of wholesale Westernization but was, in part, informed by several intellectual currents of China's remote past.[16] After Japan defeated China's navy in 1895, Yan Fu (1853–1921), and other late Qing literati, began to privilege Western ideas and values but provided no ultimately satisfactory way to balance foreign and domestic thought.[17] In less than two decades (1890–1910), most of the intellectual elite in China were still struggling either to embrace or to combat Western ideas and values; namely, the way Europeans made their machines and organized their nation-states. The immediate concern during the 1910s was to elevate the elite's awareness of China's clear and unprecedented danger of being devoured by the Western powers and to search for alternatives in rescuing China from backwardness.[18] From then on the specter of May Fourth has haunted China as a lingering vision of "catching-up." The so-called May Fourth spirit not only became a stimulus to renovate almost every sector of the Chinese state and society, but also established how Chinese intellectuals today still conceive it as the unavoidable destiny of their "modernization." Recently many scholars have begun to challenge this intellectual regime in the Chinese-speaking world but its transformation remains to be seen in the future.[19]

On the other hand, the second half of the nineteenth century overwhelmed these Chinese intellectuals with social upheavals and ecological disasters. After the attack of the Taiping rebelling army (1851–1864), the Qing Empire nearly collapsed and subsequently appeared to the European colonizers as simultaneously a spectacular relic and an inscrutable monstrosity. In contrast to the internal turmoil in China, the West began to harvest the fruits of international trade and industrial productivity. Before the acceleration

16 Yü Yingshi. "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century." *Daedalus* (Spring 1993), pp. 125–50; and *ibid.* "Xiandai ruxue de huigu yu zhanwang: cong mingqing sixiang jidao de zhuanhuan kan ruxue de xiandai fazhan 現代儒學的回顧與展望:從明清思想基調的轉換看儒學的現代發展 (Retrospect and Prospect of Modern Confucianism: Viewing the modern development of Confucianism from the viewpoint of the transformation of Late Imperial thought)." *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化 11 (July 1995), pp. 1–25. See also Lawrence A. Schneider. "The Counterfeiters." *Ku Chieh-Kang and China's New History; Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 188–257; Wang Hui 汪暉. *Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* 現代中國思想的興起 (The rise of modern Chinese thought). Beijing: Sanliang bookstore, 2004, pp. 1395–1438.

17 Benjamin Schwartz. *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964; Theodore Huters. "Appropriations: Another Look at Yan Fu and Western Ideas." *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005, pp. 43–73.

18 Li Zehou 李澤厚. "Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou 啟蒙與救亡的雙重變奏 (The dual variation of enlightening the people and saving the nation)." *Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun* 中國現代思想史論 (Essays on modern Chinese intellectual history). Beijing: Dongfan chubanshe, 1987, pp. 7–49.

19 Wang Hui 汪暉. *Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* 現代中國思想的興起 (The rise of modern Chinese thought), pp. 1–102; Benjamin Elman. "Delegitimation and Decanonization: The Pitfalls of Late Ch'ing Examination Reform." *A Cultural History of Civil Examination in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 569–625; Theodore Huters. "Lu Xun and the Crisis of Figuration." *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, pp. 252–74; Prasenjit Duara. "Critics of Modernity in India and China." *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 205–27.

of capital accumulation in Britain (commencing between 1845 and 1849), social and ecological changes in Asia and the Islamic world were critical forces in the establishment of the European global dominance of the nineteenth century.[20] The growth of new ideas and overseas expansion within the "British empire in Europe" and the Western Hemisphere prevailed as never before. France and Germany soon entered the overseas competition. The competition between and expansion of European nation-states resulted in the colonization of Africa, the Islamic world, India, and some parts of East and Southeast Asia.

For these industrial colonizers, China looked dark and low. The Chinese elites, on the other hand, repeatedly resisted the superiority of the West in the realms of ideas and values,[21] while the European machines that produced commodities and killed people *en masse* seemed to become the most significant measure of all.[22] The May Fourth intellectuals reversed this adamant resistance to foreign ideas and values and denounced the very heritage that their precursors held dear. They wanted to modernize "their nation", revolutionize "their society", and enlighten "the masses."[23] In this world of nations, as the May Fourth intellectuals frequently put it in social Darwinian terms, "only the fittest could survive" (*shizhe shengcun*). The contexts of this form of evolutionism and nationalism may have come from the impact of European imperialism, but the desolate rejection and bitter lament for China's failure resulted, in part, from the destruction of a long-lasting orthodox Confucianism, which incorporated and classified almost every branch of knowledge in China.[24] Some intellectuals, such as Liang Shuming (1893–1988), characterized China as a civilization fundamentally incompatible with the West. This essentialist thinking provided the May Fourth intellectuals with the necessary weapon to entirely flatten the old Confucian past and it allowed them to pursue a wholesale Westernization.[25] It is almost mandatory, henceforth, to read Huang's book as a bypass of the above May Fourth blind spot.

20 Eric Hobsbawm provides thus far the best overview of this global process in *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848*, *The Age of Capital, 1848–1875*, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*, and *The Age of Extremes, 1914–1991*. Cf. Giovanni Arrighi, "Industry, Empire, and the 'Endless' Accumulation of Capital." *The Long Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 1994, pp. 159–238; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

21 Mary Clabaugh Wright. *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862–1874*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957.

22 Michael Adas. "Global Hegemony and the Rise of Technology as the Main Measure of Human Achievement." *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, pp. 133–98.

23 For the ironies of this new ideology in China, see Prasenjit Duara. "The Campaigns against the Religion and the Return of the Repressed." *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, pp. 85–113; see also Arif Dirlik. "From Enlightenment to Socialism: Radical Intellectuals, Labor, and Social Radicalism in May Fourth Thought." *The Origins of Chinese Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 57–145.

24 R. Kent Guy. *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987; Benjamin Elman. *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2001.

25 Guy Allito. *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 82–125.

SITUATING TWO-HEADED SNAKES

Huang organizes eleven case studies, sandwiched by an introduction and conclusion, into his book. Huang's book bears a distinct intellectual self-renewal because Huang does not merely collect his previously published pieces into a book. Some of them are brand new whereas others are structurally revised based upon newly discovered evidence. He not only challenges himself in the most serious and scholarly manner but also transcends his own previously published works. Since the promotion criteria of professors and researchers in Taiwan and perhaps other Asian regions are based upon the number and quality of published articles in peer-reviewed and ranked journals (mostly in Chinese or English), both social scientists and humanists are normally discouraged from planning their research projects leading toward a monograph. Despite these institutional constraints, the thematic unity of kinship and politics nevertheless consistently prevails throughout Huang's volume. Let me select some materials to illustrate both themes: first on kinship and then on politics.

The most recent and significant contribution to Chinese kinship literature comes from gender studies in Chinese history, and Huang's volume engages this gender literature in a rather interesting way.[26] Taking a concubine for the purpose of reproducing male descendants was crucial for the competitive survival of the gentry and merchant families in late imperial China. Those literati who were converted, or who were tempted by conversion, to Catholicism came without exception from the top of Chinese polite and commercial society. They were deeply embedded in their patrilineal kinship. This familial obligation essential to their literati identity was directly contradictory to the Catholic doctrine of monogamy introduced by the Jesuits. For the Jesuits, the very distinction between the mundane and the divine was lost, while these literati had to consider their kinship priorities and political loyalty. The irony, however, was that the Jesuits could only manipulate the mundane and deny any symbolic religiosity in China to insinuate the divine they introduced.

Huang first reveals this irony by combing through the massive materials of the Qu lineage.[27] He reconstructs the following scandal from many previously obscured or misinterpreted sources: Qu Rukui had sex with his elder brother's wife surnamed Xu. The scandal sent a shockwave through the entire clan and was dealt with quietly. As a result, Qu Rukui was deleted from the Qu lineage book. The elder brother, Qu Ruji, Xu's husband, was driven to immerse himself in Buddhism while the younger brother, Qu Rukui, was subsequently expelled from the Qu family. As for the woman Xu, between these two brothers, we know virtually nothing about her. The only thing we know is that her natal family refused to take her back. Therefore she had to, as we can only imagine, spend the rest of her miserable life in the Qu family. This story of the Qu lineage is, however, not aimed at exposing women's suffering and marginality but intended to trace the origins of the Catholic converts in China. During Qu Rukui's exile, a serendipitous rendezvous

26 For further discussion, see Susan Mann. "Women, Families, and Gender Relations." *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 9, Part One: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 428–72; Francesca Bray. "Encoding Patriarchy." *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 91–150.

27 *Liangtoushe*, pp. 33–62.

between him and Matteo Ricci proved to be decisive in the commencement of Ricci's evangelical work. Qu's small cohort, impressed by Ricci's charisma, subsequently formed the seed of "the China mission" that continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The most important Catholic converts centered on Ricci are the so-called three pillars of the Catholic converts in late Ming China: Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), Li Zhizhao (1565–1630), and Yang Tingyun (1606–1645).[28] In addition to them, Huang provides a sweeping coverage of many not-so-well-known Catholic converts and indicates that many of them developed very interesting dialogues with the Jesuits.[29] These two-headed snakes, as Huang calls them, struggled from the fall of the Ming state, through the Shun state, to the consolidation of the Qing state. Each state demanded loyalty from the two-headed snakes in their own way. In a way, Huang almost suggests that these two-headed snakes also appeal to us as a lost generation with their impossible choices. Therefore we must examine the structural conditions in which they would have to make their impossible choices.

The political transition between the fall of the Ming in 1644 and consolidation by 1680 under Qing rule created an ephemeral climate for many literati and Catholic converts alike. The leader of the peasant rebels Li Zichen (1606–1645) began the uprising from 1637 against the Ming dynasty. After the rebels took control of the North China plain and captured Beijing in 1641, Li established a new but short-lived dynasty called Shun. The Manchu prince Dorgon (1612–1650), helped by a Ming general Wu Sangui (1612–1678), expelled the rebels and destroyed the Shun state in 1644.[30] Meanwhile, three rather tragic Catholic converts Wei Xuelian (1608–?), Wang Zheng (1571–1644) and Han Lin (1596?–1649), all detailed in Huang's volume, had lived with their impasse and dilemma in these political upheavals. Wei, Wang, and Han were by no means the norm. The historian Frederic Wakeman has attributed the success of the Manchu conquest and the subsequent establishment and consolidation of the Qing (Manchu) state, in part, to the support of the preceding Ming bureaucracy and to the gentry–merchant alliance. This means that most bureaucrats, gentry members and merchants switched their allegiance to the new Manchu conquerors. The struggling two-headed snakes, on the other hand, must have been the exceptional few in comparison with the majority.[31]

In fact, these two-headed snakes were disseminated across the entire political spectrum. First, some were forced to serve under the transitional and short-lived Shun state led by the peasant rebel leader Li. Second, others, as well as some Jesuits, served the surviving loyal family members of the fallen Ming house, and they resisted the Manchu regime tenaciously. For example, Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) and the Qu Shilu family, a

28 For these three "pillars," see Gregory Blue; Peter Engelfried; Catherine Jami, eds., *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633)*. New York: Brill, 2001; Nicolas Standaert. *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China: His Life and Thought*. Sinica Leidensia 19, Leiden: Brill, 1988.

29 *Liangtoushe*, pp. 65–130.

30 Lawrence Kessler. *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of the Ch'ing Rule, 1661–1684*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. Lynn Struve. *The Southern Ming 1664–1662*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

31 Frederic Wakeman, Jr. *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 1129–1137.

branch of the aforementioned Qu lineage and closely related to the Jesuits, supported a Ming loyalist regime in Fujian and died with the regime.[32] Third, some were flip-flops: for example, Martino Martini (1614–1661) first sided with the loyalist regime and then quickly defected to the Manchus.[33] And fourth, the most powerful Jesuits in Beijing and their converts quickly sided with the Manchu regime under the Shunzhi emperor (r. 1644–1661), even though their colleagues elsewhere were more hesitant. After the Manchus and their Mongolian and Han Chinese allies welcomed the Jesuits' backing, Adam Schall, the leading Jesuit astronomer and cannon-maker to the Ming, seized this opportunity in 1644 to present Dorgon with a calendar based upon what he called "a new method from the West Ocean" (*xiyangxinfa*).[34] Across this political spectrum, many converts committed suicide or considered suicide as one of their political options; but that was a terrible sin for Catholics.

The most melodramatic example among Huang's Catholic converts is the case of Wang Zheng. Here is an example dramatic enough, Huang believes, to be made into an epic movie. The main protagonist Wang was among the very few who were baptized. Wang passed the metropolitan examination and became a *jinshi* (presented scholar) in 1623 after ten failed attempts. He believed that it was God's blessing for him to pass. In the same year, Wang turned fifty-two and none of his sons had survived childhood because of smallpox. Under his kinsmen's pressure, Wang secretly took a concubine surnamed Shen (1609–1678), who was only fifteen at the time. This action became an overwhelming source of guilt for Wang. For the rest of his life, he struggled to cope with his guilt and finally made peace with it in 1636, when he was already sixty-six years old, by publicly confessing his sin of taking a concubine. Wang swore never to have sex with Shen and decided to keep her merely as a friend in the house. After the peasant uprising leader Li Zichen entered Beijing, Li asked Wang to serve his new Shun dynasty. Wang refused and committed suicide. Wang's wife surnamed Shang was also dying at this time, and she asked the concubine Shen not to commit suicide, so that she could manage and preserve Wang's lineage. Shen agreed, so she cut her hair short and ruined her face to show her determination not to remarry. Shen managed the Wang lineage and raised Wang's two grandsons until she felt she had accomplished her duty. She eventually killed herself in 1678, in her seventieth year. Once again, Huang's analysis not only aims to show the melodrama of Shen's life but also illustrates the dilemma of Wang in the contexts of kinship and politics.

32 *Liangtoushe*, pp. 312–22.

33 See Louis Pfister. *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine. 1552–1773*. Shanghai, 1932, pp. 130, 257. See also Erik Zürcher. "In the Yellow Tiger's Den: Buglio and Magalhaes at the court of Zhang Xianzhong, 1644–47" presented at the *Europe in China* conference in 1998, pp. 15–18. Eugenio Menegon. "A Different Country, the Same Heaven: A Preliminary Biography." *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* XV (1993), pp. 27–51.

34 For Adam Schall's success in Shunzhi's court, see Chen Yuan 陳垣. "Tang Ruowan yu Mu Chenmin" 湯若望與木陳忞. *Chenyuan xueshu lunwenji* 陳垣學術論文集 (The academic essays of Chen Yuan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2 volumes, 1980, pp. 510–15. For Schall's astronomical issues, see *Chouren Zhuan* 疇人傳 (Biographies of mathematical literati), 45:1a–2a. Huang Yi-long 黃一農, "Qingchu Qintianjian zhong ge mingzu tianwenxuejia de quanli qifu" 清初欽天監中各民族天文學家的權力起伏 (The power structure of ethnic astronomers in the Directorate of Celestial Surveillance of early Qing). *Xinshixue* 新史學 (New History) 5:1 (1991), pp. 75–108, esp. 77–81.

The kinship and political structure, in which these two-headed snakes were embedded, provides simultaneously the constraints and degrees of freedom for their actions. Huang is consistently sympathetic in portraying these two-headed snakes as actual human beings struggling to better themselves in historical contexts. Other than the impasse they found themselves in and the dilemma they faced in making difficult decisions, Huang also extends his analysis to various kinds of cultural and intellectual hybrids between the early modern West and late imperial China. The body of texts produced by two-headed snakes is precisely their legacy mediated in kinship terms and transmitted to us. Huang labels these texts as their internalization of Western learning (*Xixue*) and Western doctrines (*Xijiao*) and contextualizes them in a way parallel with Benjamin Elman's *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship*.[35] Although both authors analyze the classical and Jesuit knowledge running along the vein of kinship structure, Huang and Elman, however, differ in significant ways, one of which is the distance between knowledge and politics. Let me now turn to Huang's final examples to illustrate this point.

THE RITES CONTROVERSY

No one who writes about the Jesuits in China could bypass the issues ambiguously dubbed under the rubric "rites controversy." After Huang sets up kinship and politics as the baseline of his discussion and builds several cases upon it, he returns to issues on the rites – the perpetual bickering over the translation between the Chinese heaven and Catholic *Deus* as well as the Chinese practice of ancestor worship – in his last two cases.

According to Arnold H. Rowbotham, the history of the rites controversy may be divided into five periods: (1) from the death of Matteo Ricci in 1610 to the appointment of Charles Maigrot (1652–1730) as Vicar Apostolic in 1682; (2) from Maigrot's arrival in China in 1683 to 1697, when the receipt of Maigrot's report in Rome caused the Holy See to order a re-examination of the rites question; (3) from 1697 to 1702, when the Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne condemned Le Comte's *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine*; (4) from 1702 to 1710, the years of de Tournon's legation; and (5) from 1710 to 1742, the period between the decrees of *Ex illa die* and *Ex quo singulari*.[36]

Huang's book covers many aspects of every single period of the history of the rites controversy, and his last cases are an attempt to provide a new perspective on it. From compiling previously unused materials in European archives, Huang basically argues that many Chinese converts were anxious, threatened and confused by the perpetual bickering among the Jesuit, Franciscan and Dominican fathers. These Chinese converts therefore decided on various occasions to offer their interpretations and resolutions on the rites issue. Their opinions, however, mattered very little and were subsequently ignored by the Catholic priests of every denomination. The collective "Chinese" interpretation of the rites issue, Huang strongly suggests, makes sense and appealed to many gentry members,

35 Benjamin Elman. *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 1–35.

36 Arnold H. Rowbotham. *Missionary and Mandarin: the Jesuits at the Court of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942, p. 132. Many details and special jargon are left unexplained here. For curious readers, please see Rowbotham's volume or *Liangtoushe* in pp. 387–401.

bureaucrats, merchants and even the Qing emperor of the time. At this point of his analysis, Huang has come full circle – from individual cases of two-headed snakes to the collective interpretation of key Catholic issues in late imperial China – in which a deeper level of cultural contact and exchange is circumvented.

A specific moment in the journey of the French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) seems particularly suitable to engage Huang's discussion on the ignored "voices" in the rites debates. Bouvet's sojourn in France coincided precisely with the moment when Maigrot sent his decisive report to the Holy See, and the tide was turned against the Jesuits in China. This was the turning moment for Huang's analysis as well. Moreover, Bouvet was an unexpected figure in the debates over both the Catholic interpretation of Chinese customs and rites as well as the Qing state's construction of the orthodox interpretation of the canonical *Classics*. Of the six French Jesuits who arrived at Beijing in 1688, Bouvet was roughly the same age as the emperor.[37] He and Jean-François Gerbillon (1654–1707) taught the emperor astronomy and mathematics from 1691 to 1692 and performed dutifully as his majesty's courtiers. Following Gerbillon's death, Bouvet continued his intellectual adventure even after the Kangxi emperor passed away in 1722.

Among many others, Maigrot's *Mandatum seu Edictum* of 1693 triggered the main debate over the meanings of the Chinese rites and was an attempt to consolidate his authority for his vicariate, Fujian province in southeast China, and to revive the old attack on the Jesuit accommodation of Chinese terms and rites. Among Maigrot's list of seven prohibitions, the first declares that "the only and true God is to be called exclusively by the name Tien-chu (*Tianzhu*), Lord of Heaven, which has been adopted for a long time." The other two Chinese terms Tien (*Tian*, Heaven or the cosmos), and Xang-ti (*Shangdi*, Emperor from the above), previously used by the Jesuits, were now completely prohibited. This seemed to Bouvet a direct denial of the Jesuit development in China and he was prepared to confront Maigrot. In particular, the sixth statement (of the seven) on Maigrot's list rejected the Jesuit belief, especially Bouvet's, that "the book the Chinese call Yi King (*Yijing*, the *Classic of Change*) is the sum of the best physical and moral teachings."[38] The debates, centered on Maigrot's *Mandatum seu Edictum* of 1693, thus began to spread like wildfire through the Jesuit networks across Eurasia.

While in Paris, Bouvet wrote a letter addressing the situation and declared his commitment to defend the *Classic of Change*: "Though this proposition [referred to Bouvet's opinion] cannot be read as an overall sentiment of the missionaries of our Compagnie," Bouvet noted:

> The majority have until now always seen the book entitled Yi King as a book full of superstitious doctrines that did not contain anything solid; however, I believe I have been fortunate to discover an unquestionable road to make known the legitimate principles of the Chinese philosophy, which, being well

37 For details, see Isabelle Landry-Deron. "Les Mathématiciens envoyés en Chine par Louis XIV en 1685." *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 55 (2001), pp. 423–63; Florence Hsia. "Creating a Scientific Mission: French Jesuits and the Paris Academie des Sciences." *French Jesuits and the Mission to China: Science, Religion, History*. Dissertation. University of Chicago, 1999, pp. 1–62.

38 Claudia von Collani. "Charles Maigrot's Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy." In David Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994, pp. 149–61.

> heard, will appear as healthy at least as that of Plato or Aristotle, and I dare state that the proposition condemned by M. Maigrot appears very true to me.

Bouvet confided to his correspondent (unknown to us, probably Bouvet's superior) that he had discovered the key to Chinese philosophy – the *Classic of Change*. Bouvet hoped to

> show the truth by analyzing the enigmatic figures of the book Yi King under which Fou-hi [Fuxi], the founder of monarchy and the first philosopher in China, contained his principles. As a matter of fact, as I do believe that nothing could be more appropriate to dispose the spirit and the heart of the Chinese to embrace our Holy Religion than to show how much it is in conformity with the principles of their old and legitimate philosophy (as the modern one I agree that it is not healthy), I will work to finish off some memoirs which I have prepared on this matter.[39]

By memoirs, Bouvet meant a detailed translation of the ancient Chinese text with his own commentary, which he later published in Chinese entitled *Mirrors of Ancient and Modern Worship of Heaven – the Essentials of the Learning from Heaven* (*Gujin jingtianjian tianxue benyi*).[40]

Bouvet left La Rochelle on 6 March 1698, arriving at Canton by the end of the same year and reaching Peking in September 1699. Soon after Bouvet returned to the Kangxi emperor's service in 1700, he sent a letter to Charles Le Gobien (1671–1708), founder of the collection of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, one of the most important sources of information for the history of Catholic missions. Bouvet stressed

> I believe that one must suppose as a very certain thing, that the canonical books and the Chinese characters are much older than the Chinese themselves, and that they are faithful monuments of the oldest tradition, that the common Fathers of all the nations left with their descendants, and that the Chinese preserved more carefully than the others.[41]

39 This letter is kept in the Jesuit archive in Vanves, APPSI, MS. Vivier 52 (32 pp.), and listed as no. 65 in Jannette Gatty's very useful list of Bouvet's work and letters, entitled "Bibliographie des Ouvrages et des lettres du P. Bouvet," in Joachim Bouvet, *Voiage de Siam du Père Bouvet: Précédé d'une introduction avec une biographie et une bibliographie de son auteur*, par Jannette C. Gatty, Leiden: Brill, 1963, pp. 89–117. It is also published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 43, 1987/3.

40 I found two versions of *The Essentials of the Studies of Heaven* (*Tianxue benyi* 天學本義) in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [Borg.Cinese.357(9) & Borg.Cinese.317 (15)] and another two versions of it in Bibliothèque Nationale [BN Chinois 7160 & 7162]. Borg.Cinese.357 (9) contains detailed yet formative argumentation; and Borg. Cinese.317 (15) is a more presentable version with Han Tan's preface. I will then rely on Borg.Cinese.317 (15) dated 1707 with the full title *Gujin jingtianjian tianxue benyi* 古今敬天鑒天學本義. Cf. David Mungello. "Unearthing the Manuscripts of Bouvet's Gujin after nearly Three Centuries." *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 10 (1988), pp. 34–61.

41 Quoted from Joseph Dehergne, "Un envoyé de l'Empereur K'ang-hi a Louis XIV: le P. Joachim Bouvet." *Bulletin de l'Université Aurore*, Shanghai, 1943, série III, tome 4, no. 3, pp. 651–83. It is also listed as no. 78 in Gatty's "Bibliographie des Ouvrages et des lettres du P. Bouvet" list.

Here Bouvet became more radically sinocentric than the two-headed snakes. He was bringing an early modern European construction of Chinese history to China and suggested that ancient China had been an instance of the natural religion of post-diluvian mankind. According to Bouvet, China had a unique place in the history of the human race after the Deluge and the Confusion of Tongues in the Old World. China's distinction lies in its preservation of ancient sacred texts.

The contrast between a French Jesuit, regarded as a lunatic by his Jesuit colleagues, and the generation of two-headed snakes is very telling. Any kind of crossfire, miscommunication, or even appreciation would now have to be routed through the political medium in late imperial China. The meanings of Heaven or God cannot be open to random or, especially, foreign interpretation. The politics of the Chinese converts was obvious to the Chinese authorities. The emperor also became more suspicious of proposals made by the Jesuit counselors. For example, the emperor told his literati-officials in 1706, immediately after he confronted the papal legate in 1705, that he only wanted to use Jesuit techniques and arts (*jiyi*) and could not care less about their evangelical agenda.[42] In 1711, the emperor warned his officials and counselors: "What the Jesuits told us now appears quite different from before, we should be careful!"[43] For the emperor, it was politically savvy to prevent the Jesuits from taking any decision-making or counseling roles after the arrival of the pope's emissary Charles de Tournon (1668–1710). The emperor demonstrated that he would never surrender his authority to any outsider or even chance doing so, and this attitude was conditioned by the utility of mathematics and astronomy in the expanding Qing empire and must be distinguished from a chauvinistic isolationism.

CONSEQUENCES

What happened to the first generation of Catholic converts in China? After the Jesuits were gone, what kind of impact did they produce? Did it last? We must now return to the big picture and to the blind spot to assess Huang's own conclusion. Huang concedes that in the end the Chinese side of the two-headed snakes prevailed.[44] In an interesting statistic, Huang also shows that, despite the decline in the number of Jesuit priests in China from 1700 onward, the number of Chinese Christians slowly dropped from its peak of around 200,000 in 1700 to 150,000 but equally slowly climbed back to a number between 200,000 and 250,000 before the year 1850.[45] This statistic is misleading because the Chinese population doubled from 150 million in 1700 to 300 million in 1800. If we take into account the entire Chinese population, then the ratio of the Chinese Christians actually declined. Moreover, Huang may have conflated the Catholic and Protestant converts

42 Li Guangdi 李光地. *Rongcun yulu; Rongcun xuyulu* 榕村語錄;榕村續語錄 (The oral record and its sequel of Li Guangdi). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995, p. 643. Nicolas Standaert uses this same evidence for a different illustration in his critical review, see "The Jesuits Did NOT Manufacture Confucianism." *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 16 (1999), p. 125.

43 *Kangxichao manwen zhupi zouzhe quanyi* 康熙朝滿文朱批奏摺全譯 (The translation of the Manchu memorials with the Emperor's red-ink reply in the Kangxi reign), Zhongguo diyi lishidanganguan 中國第一歷史檔案館, ed., Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1997, Doc. 1779.

44 *Liangtoushe*, p. 482.

45 *Liangtoushe*, p. 478.

between 1800 and 1850 in China. In addition, the Protestant missionaries used very aggressive evangelical tactics, targeting peasants, and luring them into faith by modern medicine. This aggressiveness may have been effective at first but later backfired and contributed to the peasants' resentment toward the missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Huang's pluralist predisposition may have also colored his conclusion. Past scholarship celebrates the arrival of Jesuit science, blames Jesuit manipulation, or laments the failure of the Qing court to adopt science.[46] These views assume that modern science would have flourished if the proper seeds of early modern science had been planted in Chinese soil. This kind of wishful thinking has two fatal flaws: First, the development or dissemination of modern science outside Western Europe proved to be dependent on the political, institutional, and social settings of each region. Second, the first importation of Western learning in China was indeed a misleading version of early modern science. Huang manages to avoid the pitfalls of this teleology but replaces it with a yearning for China's cosmopolitan future in his conclusion. He may have projected his own hopes of cosmopolitanism onto the significance of the first generation of Catholic converts. Unlike Joyce Appleby's *Inheriting the Revolution: the First Generation of Americans*,[47] which examines what generated the momentum of a broad political, social and cultural pattern yet to come, Huang would probably have to confront the plausible scenario that the generation of two-headed snakes vanished into history and mutated into something completely different.

No matter if we accept Huang's conclusion and assessment or not, his book is filled with wonderful details. Some informed historians may experience reading the book as picking up gems along a winding river. For example, when I first encountered Liu Ning's text *Records of True Awareness* (*Juesilu*) in Paris in 2000, I had no idea who Liu Ning was and how his text relates to others. I later used it as an example in a dispute over the origins of Jesuit astronomy.[48] At that point, I did not know that Adrian Dudink had identified Liu as the editor of the manuscript *The Collected Exegeses of the Heavenly Learning* (*Tianxue jijie*) and that Huang builds upon this evidence and further analyzes *The Collected Exegeses* to fully contextualize Liu in relation with other Catholic converts.[49] This would have enriched my work significantly if I had known. Another example is Wang Zheng and his explication of Jesuit machines. Huang cites Wang's very interesting text on the making of machines (*zhiqi*) as well as historian Zhang Baichun's analysis of the specific text *Illustration of Newly Made Machines* (*Xinzhi zhuqi tushuo*).[50] I recently obtained a

46 Xi Zezong 席澤宗. "Lun Kangxi kexue zhengce de shiwu" 論康熙科學政策的失誤 (On the mistakes of Kangxi's science policy), *Ziran kexue shi yanjiu* 自然科學史研究 (Studies in the History of Natural Sciences) 19:1 (2000), pp. 18–29; Du Weiyun 杜維運, *Qing qianjia shidai zhi shixue yu shijia* 清乾嘉時代之史學與史家 (Historians and historical studies in the Qian-long and Jia-qing eras). Taipei: Wenshi congkan, 1962, p. 3; Benjamin Elman. *From Philosophy to Philology*, pp. 75–76.

47 Joyce Appleby. *Inheriting the Revolution: the First Generation of Americans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

48 Minghui Hu. "Provenance in Contest: Searching for the Origins of Jesuit Astronomy in Late Imperial China." *The International History Review* 24:1 (March 2002), p. 20.

49 *Liangtoushe*, pp. 68–74.

50 *Liangtoushe*, pp. 136–37.

photographic copy of the text and have found it fascinating. Huang's detailed description of Wang's life and works is a precious reference for historians like me to work on Wang Zheng's mechanical knowledge. The last, but not least, example is about Han Lin's lineage and the civil service examination. Huang documents in various places that Han's lineage, a successful merchant family, infiltrated the academic network of civil examinations (Wu Ahen, Han Kuan and Xu Guangqi, etc.). Wu, a friend of Han Lin's lineage, passed the metropolitan examination by benefiting from this network.[51] An historian could start from this information and write about the social intersection between examination success and Jesuit evangelical networks. All in all, Huang's book is a rich source of information wherever you look. I will definitely keep *Two-headed Snakes* on my bookshelf and take it down every now and then to provide references for my own work.

51 *Liangtoushe*, p. 280.