





# Wu Yushan and His Pursuit of Faith in the Great Dynastic Transition

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## A LOYALIST'S FAMILY BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL PASSIONS

Wu Yushan was born at a time when the Ming dynasty was falling to the rising Manchus. During that era of great change, loyalists as well as traitors came to the fore. Everyone, consciously or unconsciously, expressed his position towards the transition by his attitude to life. Wu Yushan was no exception.

Wu Li 吴历, who took "Yushan" as his style name, was born in 1632. When he was twelve years old, Qing troops invaded through the Shanhaiguan Pass 山海关 and put an end to the Ming dynasty. Thus, as a teenager, Wu experienced the devastating anguish of losing his beloved country. Yushan was a descendant (eleven generations removed) of Wu Na 吴讷, a Deputy Censor-in-Chief in the Ming dynasty who was given the posthumous title of Duke Wen-ke 御史文恪, and whose biography can be found in *The History of Ming Dynasty* [*Ming Shi* 明史]. Therefore we can safely say that Yushan was born into an eminent Ming family. Wu Na's grandson Wu Chun 吴淳 became an imperial scholar in 1448; Wu Na's great-grandson Wu Tang 吴堂 achieved the same status in 1499. However, by the time of Yushan's father, Wu Shijie 吴士杰, the Wu family had declined. Wu Shijie died in Hebei 河北 while serving the Ming court during the early reign of Emperor Chongzhen 崇祯. Wang Ruren 王孺人, his widow, brought up their

three bereaved sons all by herself, through terrible hardship. The eldest son was Qitai 启泰, the second Qiyong 启雍, and the youngest Qili 启历—Yushan's original name.<sup>1</sup> Despite the decline in his family, we can see little evidence of it in Yushan's extant poems. Instead, he took great pride in his family background and maintained his loyalist integrity throughout his life. Among his friends there were many loyalists. According to the work of Prof. Zhang Wenqin 章文钦 of Sun Yat-sen University, Yushan's loyalist friends included Zhang Chunpei 张春培, who lived in a thatched hut by Yushan Hill 虞山 and practiced medicine to help the poor; one descendant of Yan Na 严讷, who was Prime Minister during the reign of Emperor Jiajing 嘉靖; Yan Shi 严栻, who led the armed struggle against Qing rulers in Changshu 常熟 and became a Buddhist monk after it failed; Chen Fan 陈帆, who was as famous as Yushan in the fields of calligraphy, painting and poetry; and Mao Zijin 毛子晋, who studied poetry with Yushan under the same teacher, Qian Qianyi 钱谦益.<sup>2</sup> Qian was another of Yushan's loyalist friends. Though he served as an official in both the Ming and Qing dynasties, in his old age, Qian became very remorseful about this fact. To redeem the error of his ways, he plotted with his students Qu Shisi 瞿式耜 and Zheng Chenggong 郑成功, also known as Koxinga, to restore the Ming, and even considered going into exile with Koxinga after the latter failed in his attempt to recapture Nanjing 南京. As Chen Yinke 陈寅恪 points out, "The surrender to the Qing conquerors, forced upon Qian who was of a weak and timid disposition, remained a blemish for him throughout his life. It is unreasonable, however,

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"Mountains and Rivers, in Imitation of Huang Gongwang 黄公望" (colour on paper, 21 x 14.9 cm), painted by Wu Li in 1661, at age 30. Shanghai Museum collection.







to say that he did it of his own free will" (*Biography of Liu Rushi* [*Liu Rushi Bie Zhuan* 柳如是别传]: 1024).

Yushan's deep grief over the loss of his country is a recurrent theme in his poems. When the remains of Qu Shisi, who had resisted the Qing rulers and been beheaded for it in Guilin 桂林, were brought back and buried on Yushan Hill, the 23-year-old Yushan wrote a passionate poem entitled "Lamenting Prime Minister Qu, Earl of Lin'gui" [*Ku Lin Gui Bo Qu Xiangguo* 哭临桂伯瞿相国]. This poem echoed an essay written by the Song loyalist Xie Ao 谢翱 entitled "Weeping at the West Terrace" [*Xi Tai Tong Ku Ji* 西台恸哭记]. Xie wrote the essay while offering a sacrifice to Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, a Song prime minister, at the West Terrace where Yan Ziling 严子陵 used to go fishing. Xie invokes the memory of Yan Zhenqing 严正卿, a minister of the Tang 唐 Dynasty, to allude to Wen Tianxiang. His melancholy prose expresses Xie's great grief, through sentences like, "I only remember your words at parting. Whenever I am moved, I shall search for you in my dreams, in the mountains, rivers, waterside pavilions, clouds, and grass. When I come across a place that reminds me of where we parted, I shall pace restlessly, searching for you. Although I am sad, I dare not weep." Yushan wrote something very similar to express his feelings over the loss of the Ming Dynasty:

"For the past ten years I have been drifting, my eyes not yet dry from weeping at the West Terrace. Desolate new houses stand everywhere, but who now looks after the old caps and robes? Poems remain at the riverside though the spring tide has ebbed, and geese fly north of the Great Wall though it is still frosted with snow. As the dust of war has not yet settled, who has the heart to take up the old fishing rod?"

Looking at Yushan 嗜山, I cannot help but shed tears. Who has offered a hand to rescue those drowning at sea? When I sing the requiem, I beat the time with a piece of bamboo against the rock, until both have crumbled to pieces."<sup>3</sup>

In this poem, "old caps and robes" refers to the Ming loyalists' attachment to the Han-styled official robes worn in the previous dynasty, whereas the imagery in the next two lines describes the iron heels

of the Manchu troops trampling upon the loyalists in Jiangnan 江南 (literally, "south of the river"). "The dust of war" invokes the anti-Qing movement in the years of Southern Ming and the tragic massacres that took place in Yangzhou 扬州 and Jiading 嘉定. Yushan was the last stronghold of the Southern Song 南宋 against the Yuan 元 invaders; it was here that Lu Xiufu 陆秀夫 drowned at sea with the young Emperor on his back when the Song army was defeated in 1279. This poem is a clear allusion to the fall of the Ming dynasty. What is surprising is that the poem, so full of anti-Qing innuendoes, passed the severe censorship of the Manchu rulers and has survived until today! This stroke of luck makes it possible for us, hundreds of years later, to understand Wu Yushan's grief and indignation.

Though it is sometimes presumed that Yushan would have given anything to restore the Ming, this author believes there is no need to overemphasize the extent to which Yushan was "ashamed to serve two dynasties;" it is especially pointless to search for groundless evidence to illustrate his political resistance. Nonetheless, it is an indisputable fact that Yushan hated the Qing rulers. This is evidenced in such poems as "For No Reason" [*Wu Duan Ci Yun* 无端次韵] and "On Reading 'Weeping at the West Terrace'" [*Du Xi Tai Tong Ku Ji* 读西台恸哭记]. He also portrayed a number of famous men of resistance in his paintings "Figures from The Historical Records" [*Shi Ji Ren Wu Gu Shi Ce* 史记人物故事册]—figures such as Qu Yuan 屈原, Jing Ke 荆轲, and Zhang Liang 张良—in a way that revealed his admiration of them. This choice of motif in the paintings reflects the artist's personal values and orientation. However, he also fully understood that it was impossible to change the situation. His indignation and helplessness are reflected in his poem "A Sick Horse" [*Bing Ma* 病马], which reads, "The horse is sick in the depths of autumn though its hair and bones are still different from those of the others. The grass grows verdant on the battlefield, and the valiant soldier can but sing a song of lament over the bones of his comrades. Exhausted, how many years can the horse go on whinnying? Tears of blood drip onto the grass, for it cannot repay the kindness of its master." As a scholar, Yushan could not do much to save his beloved country, nor was he even able to provide for his hungry family. In his *Postscripts to Paintings by Mo Jing* [*Mo Jing Ti Ba* 墨井题跋], he



<sup>3</sup>"Mountains and Rivers, in Imitation of the Old Masters" (No. 8 of 10, colour on paper, 46 x 30.4 cm), painted by Wu Li in 1666, at age 35. Nanjing Museum collection.



## HISTÓRIA DE ARTE



clearly indicates that he indulges in painting in order to “escape the world”: “The loyalists in the Jin and Song dynasties drank to escape the hardships of this world, and at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the gentry immersed themselves in painting to distance themselves from officialdom and fame. Many of them led carefree lives in the forests, and ultimately died there.” Statements like this indicate Wu Yushan’s intention to turn from a loyalist into a hermit.<sup>4</sup>

## A PROUD AND UNAPPROACHABLE DISPOSITION

Wu Yushan is one of the six famous painters of the early Qing. His paintings reflect his position as a member of the gentry. Yu Jianhua 俞剑华, a distinguished modern art historian, sings high praises of Yushan in *The History of Chinese Painting* [*Zhongguo Hui Hua Shi* 中国绘画史]:

“Though Yushan’s style was based on that of the Yuan masters represented by Huang Gongwang 黄公望, his bold vision, vigorous strokes, and layers of mountains carry a deep meaning that is all his own, unmatched by the “four Wangs” (Wang Shimin 王时敏, Wang Jian 王鉴, Wang Hui 王翬 and Wang Yuanqi 王原祁), simply because he was too proud and aloof to follow the trends. He was further distanced from other gentry after he became a Catholic in his old age. He had few students, and only a few of his paintings survive. However, true art, with a life and value of its own, does not require the help of any outside force for survival. Later authors have arbitrarily said that Yushan’s paintings are tinged with western techniques, simply because he converted to a western religion. But in point of fact, Yushan’s paintings are quite typically Chinese. Had he enriched his paintings with western techniques, he may have made even greater artistic achievements. It is a pity that Yushan never made any remarks in this respect” (Yu Jianhua, *The History of Chinese Painting*, Shanghai Bookstore, 1995, p. 179)

This author fully agrees with Mr. Yu’s assertion that not only was Yushan’s artistic achievement greater than that of the four Wangs, but also that Yushan never used western techniques in his paintings. Despite the fact that the Society of Jesus, of which Yushan was a member in his old age, promoted Baroque art (featuring sinuosity of line and form, and the portrayal

of spiritual ecstasy), and that Jesuits in China such as Giuseppe Castiglione and Denis Attiret were dedicated to the assimilation of Chinese and western painting styles, Yushan’s paintings remained uninfluenced. But this author does not agree with Mr. Yu’s conclusion that adopting western techniques would have enriched Yushan’s art. Yushan’s paintings, though typical of the Chinese gentry style, have their own distinct characteristics and lasting value.

The history of Chinese painting can be traced to the “Eight Diagrams” [*Ba Gua* 八卦] painted by Fu Xi 伏羲, who used very simple lines to express changes in the universe. The Taoist and Buddhist philosophies that later become the basis for the development of landscape, flower and bird painting also originated in quiet observation, seeking the internal rhythms and resemblances in the universe. The quality most valued in Chinese art, especially in paintings by literati, is what is known as “spiritual resemblance.” The essence of this quality, which is the expression of subjective emotions, carries very strong individualistic characteristics. Although the Six Canons—the principles of painting developed by Xie He 谢赫 during the Wei 魏 and Jin 晋 period—stress “conformation with objects in order to portray their likeness” and the “application of colours according to the characteristics of the objects,” the ultimate goal is “to make the objects vibrate with life.” This is even more the case in the field of philosophy than in that of painting. Dong Qichang 董其昌, a great Ming artist, believed that making the object vibrate with life was the highest subjective spiritual goal a painter could possibly reach, after he had rid himself of interference from his environment. Such ability is something an artist is born with; it cannot be acquired. A good artist should be able to capture this essential spirit of an object and discard all extraneous elements—such as the pursuit of verisimilitude and contrast of colour between idea and substance—before he can express his individual character. Only in this way can he free himself of the shackles of conventional thinking and create paintings that can be passed down from one generation to another. For example, Kun Can 髡残 and Shi Tao 石涛, both eminent monks born under unlucky stars in the early Qing period, experienced the grief of losing their country and were made homeless as a result; but instead of painting their suffering directly, they tried to portray their inner world

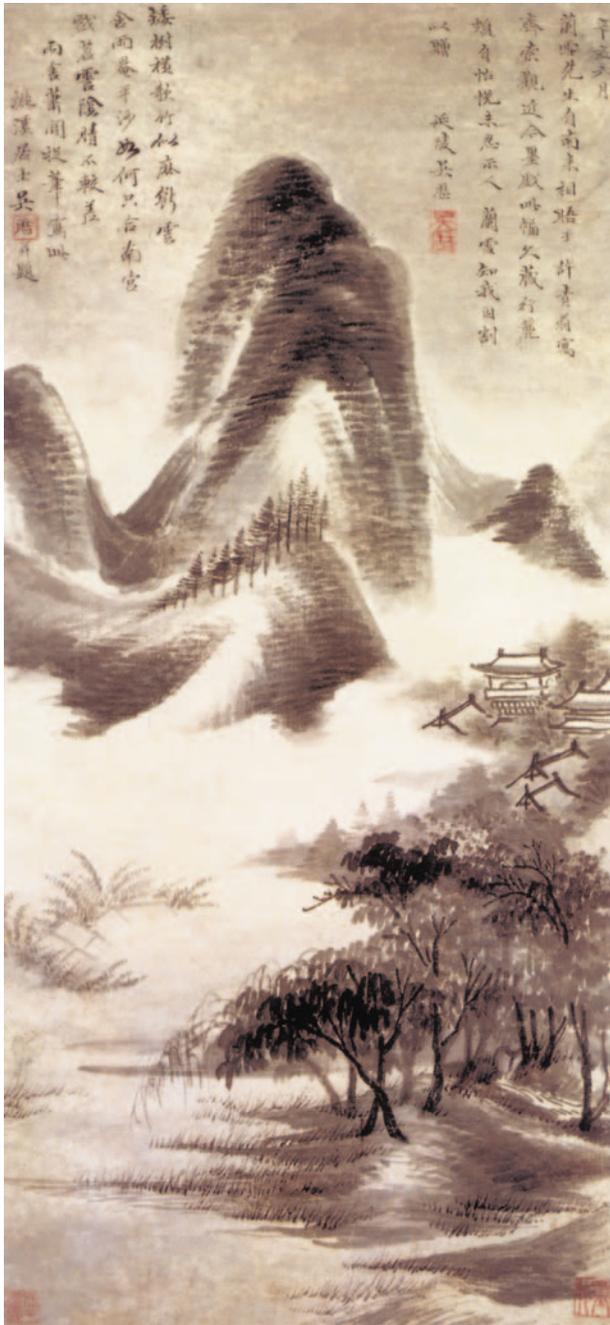


## ART HISTORY

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“Mountains and Rivers, in Imitation of Mi Fu 米芾”  
(62.3 x 28.7), painted by Wu Li in 1671, at age 40. Beijing Palace Museum collection.

by choosing implicit motifs, painting distorted figures, and writing inscriptions that were obscure, ironic, unrestrained, or detached. Over the past 2,000 years, these canons have gelled into an indestructible tradition that is still in use today.

Another characteristic of the paintings by Chinese gentry was their combination of poetry, calligraphy and painting, and the fusion of personality with painting. As one of the authors of the original preface to the *Selected Poems by Mo Jing* [*Mo Jing Shi Chao* 墨井诗钞] says: “Poetry and paintings are closely related. Poems are paintings in sound and paintings are silent poems. Poems contain paintings and paintings reflect poems. It is very difficult to see one who excels both at painting and poetry composition.” Fang Hao 方豪, a historian, states that in the history of Catholicism in China since the Ming Dynasty, there has only been one all-around artist—namely Wu Yushan—who has had the talent to compose poetry, play the zither, write good calligraphy, and paint well too.<sup>5</sup> Father Li Wenyu 李问渔, in “The Deeds of Wu Yushan” [*Wu Yushan Xing Zhuang* 吴渔山行状], compares Yushan to the Tang dynasty artist Yu Shinan 虞世南: “Emperor Taizong 太宗 of the Tang Dynasty often praised Yu Shinan, a loyal and unremitting artist, for his five supreme attainments in morality, loyalty, elegant prose, erudition, and calligraphy. Yushan was also talented in music, poetry, calligraphy and painting. Later he studied religion and became a priest. For three decades, he tended his flock in Shanghai 上海 and Jiading. His efforts were unmatched by his vulgar contemporaries. Isn’t it appropriate for us to count this as his fifth attainment? His teachers were all famous at the time. He studied poetry with Qian Qianyi, painting with Wang Shimin, and music with Chen Min 陈岷, and made great progress... He was especially good at painting and excelled at landscape in particular.”<sup>6</sup>

Both *The Biography of Mo Jing, the Ink-well Taoist* [*Mo Jing Dao Ren Zhuan* 墨井道人传], written by Zhang Yunzhang 张云章, a lay Buddhist at Pucun Village 朴村 in Jiading, and “The Deeds of Wu Yushan” by Father Li are based upon the claim that one of the reasons Yushan was so dedicated to painting was that “he wanted to support his mother with its proceeds. Since his paintings were so good, people bought them like hotcakes.” Poverty was surely a factor that drove Yushan to perfect his painting skills. Yet it was not only a commercial pursuit: Yushan was also passionate about the art of painting itself. For example, when imitating paintings by the ancient masters, he became so preoccupied that he forgot to eat and sleep.



“Mountains and Rivers in Ink Brush” (No. 12 of 12, ink brush on paper, 18 x 20 cm), painted by Wu Li in 1708, at age 77. Beijing Palace Museum collection.

Shimin, proud to have such a diligent student, gave Yushan access to all the Song and Yuan masterpieces in his collection. “Yushan studied them day and night, and tried his best to capture the essence of the masters in his imitation.” His devotion clearly set him apart from those who painted only for a living.

Tang Yuzhao 唐宇昭, author of the preface to *The Peach Stream Collection* [*Taoxi Ji* 桃溪集], believed that Yushan was influenced by the ancient masters not only in calligraphy, painting, and poetry composition, but also his attitudes and comportment.

Let us take a look at the following passage from the preface:

“For a long time, although I had heard of Yushan, I had never seen his paintings. When I finally saw them, I thought they were no inferior to the works of the great masters of the Song and Yuan dynasties. Likewise, I saw Yushan’s paintings before I met him. When I finally met him, I knew that he was just like the great sages of the arts such as Wang Xizhi 王羲之 and Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 of the Jin Dynasty. Finally, I met Yushan before I read his poems. When I read them, I



found them to be on a par with those by Li Bai 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫 of the Great Tang period. The reason I met Yushan, saw his paintings, and read his poems at different times was because he is such a modest person that he never brags about his talents in painting and poetry. This made me think that he was different from any of his contemporaries. Then I started to ask for his paintings, which are on different themes, including landscapes, birds, flowers, and human figures. He always obliged me and never showed any sign of fatigue. Then I begin to ask for his poems, which are uncollected on loose pieces of paper. I remember he only showed me one collection, which included the poems that Qian Qianyi appreciated so much. The range of styles in Yushan's paintings indicates his versatility as a painter. Reflecting back upon his personality, I think he is rather simple, even foolish! That is why I say that Yushan is different from any of his contemporaries."

Both Qian Qianyi and Chen Hu 陈瑚 praised Yushan's poems for being "clear in thought and seasoned in style." Today, when we read his *Three Remainders* [*San Yu Ji* 三余集], *Selected Poems by Mo Jing*, and *São Paulo and Other Poems* [*San Ba Ji* 三巴集], we feel their elegance, distinction, and righteous indignation. Some of the poems reveal his grief at losing his beloved country, similar to the poetry of Xin Qiji 辛弃疾; others eulogize the tranquillity of nature, in the tradition of Wang Wei 王维. His poems are both solemn and graceful. As for his love of calligraphy, the following story may indicate how devoted he could become:

"As to calligraphy, Yushan loves best the work of Su Dongpo 苏东坡. Once, on a visit to Wuxing 吴兴, he asked to be received by the prefect. As the prefect was engaged at the moment, Yushan wandered into a nearby monk's place, where he was fascinated to see "Record of the Old Tippler's Pavilion" [*Zui Weng Ting Ji* 醉翁亭记] in Dongpo's handwriting. He immediately returned to the inn where he was staying, bought some brushes and paper, and copied the handwriting for three days straight without showing any sign of exhaustion. The prefect and his men searched everywhere for him, but in vain, and the innkeeper did not know his whereabouts either. After he managed to imitate Dongpo's style successfully, Yushan left happily without even saying goodbye to the prefect."

Wu Yushan, Yun Shouping 恽寿平, Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi are

known as the six master painters of the early Qing Dynasty. Though Yushan's achievements in painting are outside the scope of this paper, we may note in passing a comment by Bi Long 毕沅, in his work *A Catalogue of Famous Paintings* [*Xu Zhai Ming Hua Lu* 虚斋名画录], here quoted from Chen Yuan 陈垣:

"Wang Hui's paintings, especially those done in imitation of the Song and Yuan masters between his 30s and 50s, are superb. The paintings he did between the ages of 50 and 80, however, lost their innate spirit because during this period he was too preoccupied with socializing. On the contrary, since Yushan returned from Macao in his old age, he put what he saw there into his paintings, which not only give us a sense of boundlessness and simplicity but also capture the essence of the ancient masters. The scroll entitled 'Rain in the Village' [*Nong Cun Xi Yu Tu* 农村喜雨图], a masterpiece of his later life, is outstanding both in painting and calligraphy. That I have it in my collection makes me feel not only lucky but also convinced that consecrated things travel far even without feet." (Bi Long, in the dead of winter, 1785.<sup>8</sup>)

Bi Long wrote the above in defence of Yushan against the criticisms lodged by Zhang Geng 张庚 in his *A Catalogue of Qing Paintings* [*Guo Chao Hua Zheng Lu* 国朝画征录]. After his return from religious study in Macao, Yushan had not only converted to Catholicism, he had actually become a Catholic priest. During this period, he painted little. As to the influence of religious thought and feeling on his painting, and whether or not his paintings truly "not only give us a sense of boundlessness and simplicity but also capture the essence of the ancient masters," let us leave these questions to the art historians.



## PURSUIT OF FAITH

Many of Yushan's contemporaries were intellectuals loyal to the fallen Ming dynasty. There was nothing particularly unusual about this phenomenon. What was unique about Yushan was his conversion to Catholicism as an intellectual. This is what interests us here.

Let us first take a look at his character. As a child, Yushan was carefree and unreserved. This was probably due to the early death of his father and the decline of his once-eminent family. Born with this character, Yushan kept a distance from the secular world, and





even held a critical attitude toward it. According to *The Biography of Mo Jing, the Ink-well Taoist*, “Yushan showed little interest in the secular world and remained apart from it all his life.” “The Deeds of Wu Yushan” describes him as “a quiet, self-controlled man who did not mix with the vulgar.” People with such a personality are often inclined to become Buddhists or even Buddhist monks. In his early part of life, Yushan had a lot of contact with Buddhist monks. Both Chen Yuan and Zhang Wenqin have examined the relationships that Yushan formed with these monks.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Morong 默容, Shengyu 圣予 and Zhengyan 证研, all monks at the Xingfu Temple 兴福庵, forged close friendships with Yushan. Morong often kept a clean bed ready for Yushan. This was why he acquired so many of Yushan’s paintings. “Morong appreciated Yushan as a person but liked his paintings too.”<sup>10</sup> Yet despite his close contact with these monks, Yushan never converted to Buddhism.

Some evidence indicates that Yushan began to think seriously about his faith after the death of his beloved mother. In 1660, when Yushan was 29, he asked his teacher Que An 确庵 (namely, Chen Hu) to write in advance an epitaph for his mother. For some reason, Chen failed to accomplish it in time. According to *The Works of Que-an* [*Que An Wen Gao* 确庵文稿], “Wu Yushan, a student of mine, is not only good at music and poetry, but also excels at calligraphy and painting. In the summer of 1660, he asked me to write an epitaph extolling the virtues of his mother, saying that ‘since my father died early, I was brought up by my mother who has worked very hard over the past 40 years. As she is getting old, may I ask you to write an epitaph for her so that she may live forever?’ I promised to do so, but failed to accomplish it in time for some reason.”<sup>11</sup> Qian Qianyi, Yushan’s poetry teacher, wrote an epitaph for Yushan’s mother that same year (see *On Erudition* [*You Xue Ji* 有学集], op. 42). Yushan’s mother, who was 66 at the time, died two years later at age 68. Chen Hu, in the epitaph he wrote after Yushan’s mother passed away, records Yushan’s deep grief:

“In the spring, Yushan told me in tears: ‘my mother has followed my father to the other world. And in ten days I’ll bury her inside the grave of my father. Would you kindly write an epitaph for her?’ I did as requested because Yushan is a filial son who wants the future generations to remember the virtue of his beloved mother.”<sup>12</sup>

From the above passage, we get a picture of Yushan as a typical filial son in the Chinese tradition. Shortly afterwards, Yushan began to think seriously about the question of life and death, and to explore the meaning of life. According to the doctrine of Christianity, bodily death does not mean the end of life, but a change of life form. For their belief in Jesus, Christians are rewarded with resurrection and eternal afterlife in heaven. This mystic explanation might have touched Yushan. Father Li writes an important passage in “The Deeds”:

“After his marriage, Yushan had two sons. The death of his mother devastated him. Since he had no interest in seeking office, he became curious about the meaning of life. A man is not born without a reason, and he does not die without a reason either. But he could not arrive at an answer, no matter how hard he sought it. Before long, he learned about Catholicism and befriended some priests, who taught him the doctrines of Catholicism. As a result, Yushan became more enlightened and decided to be baptized (Mr. Gao 高氏 states in his *Chronicles of Religious Mission* [*Chuan Jiao Zhi* 传教志] that Yushan became a lay brother after his mother’s death, but unfortunately he does not specify the year). After his wife passed away, Yushan joined the Society of Jesus and took the three vows.”<sup>13</sup>

It is evident from this passage that it was his interest death and the afterlife that led him to Catholicism. Apart from this, however, there were other external reasons related to Catholic activities in the Jiangnan area during the Ming-Qing transition. First, the Jesuits had been operating frequently in Changshu, Yushan’s hometown, and its neighbouring areas, where there were many well-known Chinese Catholics, including Xu Guangqi 徐光启 in Shanghai, Sun Yuanhua 孙元化 in Jiading, and Qu Taisu 瞿太素 and Qu Shisi in Changshu. According to Chen Yuan, “Giulio Aleni arrived in Changshu in 1632. Though he did not stay long, his preaching was very effective. Nine years later, Yushan, a great artist, was born there. This is no coincidence.”<sup>14</sup> Ever since Wu Na had moved from the east end of the county seat to settle by Esquire Yan’s Homestead in Ziyou Lane [Ziyou Xiang 子遊巷], near Literature Bridge [Wenxue qiao 文学桥] the Wu family had always lived there. Esq. Yan’s Homestead served as a Catholic church in the late Ming dynasty. In 1724, when Western religion was banned in China, the church was restored to its original use. East of





“Mountains and Rivers in Ink Brush” (No. 9 of 12, ink brush on paper, 18 x 20 cm), painted by Wu Li in 1708, at age 77. Beijing Palace Museum collection.

Esquire Yan's house was the Ink Well. To the west lay Jing Fu Hall [Jing Fu Tang 井福堂], which Yushan called Gui Quan Hall [Gui Quan Tang 归全堂]. Yushan's home lay to the west of the church.<sup>15</sup> Bishop Gregorio Lopez (Luo Wenzao 罗文藻), who later ordained Yushan into the priesthood, wrote in a letter dated Oct. 3, 1688 to the Evangelization of Peoples, in which he stated that Yushan had been baptized as a child. From this evidence we can imagine that Catholicism had been an influence on Yushan since his childhood. Secondly, quite a few of Yushan's gentry

friends had connections to Catholicism. Father Fang Hao reveals in his famous essay “The Religious Faith of Wang Shigu” [*Wang Shigu Zhi Zong Jiao Xin Yang* 王石谷之宗教信仰] that in a letter to Shigu, Yushan admonished the latter to examine himself, redeem his sins, take communion, and accept the grace of God so that he could enter heaven as a devout believer.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, Shigu 石谷 had also been baptized, but his faith had grown weaker as he became preoccupied with fame and socializing. Another of Yushan's friends who had connections to Catholicism was Xu Zhijian 许之渐



of Wujin 武进. An imperial Censor, Xu was removed from office in 1665 for his involvement in the Johannes Adam Schall von Bell case. Yang Guangxian 杨光先 lodged a false charge against Xu, accusing him of writing a preface to *An Introduction to Catholicism* [*Tian Xue Zhuan Gai* 天学传概] by Li Zubai 李祖白, a student of Schall von Bell and an official at the Office of Astronomy, even though Yang knew that the preface was not authored by Xu. In the book, Zubai claimed that Fu Xi, widely regarded as the first ancestor of the Chinese people, was a descendant of Adam. He wrote that “[our] Chinese ancestors are the descendants of Jews,”<sup>17</sup> a statement that Yang attacked as being heterodox. Xu, however, took the blame upon himself, for he did not want to have other people involved in the case. As a result, he was removed from his office and sent back to his hometown.<sup>18</sup> Xu and Yushan consequently become close friends. They “drank and wrote together, and socialized with local officials and gentry;” “treated each other like brothers, travelled together, and wrote poems for each other, which accumulated into many volumes.” Though Xu Zhijian was not a Catholic (he became a Buddhist monk in his old age), he had sympathy for Catholicism. That is why he and Yushan became so close. Third, Yushan also had personal contact with European missionaries. According to Chen Yuan, in the edition of *São Paulo and Other Poems* edited by Father Li, there is a poem entitled “Ode to the Late Father Zhou” [*Song Xian Shu Zhou Duo* 颂先师周铎], which provides us with evidence that Yushan’s Catholic mentor was one Father Zhou, whose name, however, is not listed in Aloys Pfister’s *Biographies of Jesuit Missionaries in China* [*Ming Qing Jian Ru Hua Ye Su Hui Shi Lie Zhuan* 明清间入华耶稣会士列传]. The poem goes as follows:

“I met you at Rongcheng 茸城 where you were hiding. You’ve come all the way to China to preach... Five decades of hard work has brought enlightenment to the Orient, and seven years of kindness has comforted my soul. If we meet in China sometime in future, I’ll still treat you as my respected teacher.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Chen Yuan, Rongcheng refers to Huating 华亭, hometown of Madam Xu (granddaughter of Xu Guangqi) and her son Xu Zuanzeng 许缙曾. When the Qing court banned Western religion in the early years of the reign of Emperor Kangxi 康熙, many missionaries sought protection under Madam Xu. This is what Yushan

meant by “hiding in Rongcheng.” The missionary mentioned must have been preaching in China for five decades and Yushan must have been in close contact with him for seven years. From this poem Chen Yuan presumes that Yushan first met Father Zhou around 1675.<sup>20</sup> In the inscription on his painting “Spring on the Lake” [*Hu Yian Chun Se Tu* 湖天春色图], Yushan mentions “Rougemont,” whose full name was Francisco de Rougemont, a Belgian Jesuit missionary. Unfortunately, Rougemont died on Nov. 4 of the same year and was buried outside the Northern Gate of Changshu. Around that time, Yushan stopped calling on Buddhist temples. Fang Hao says that “that is worthy of our attention.” Philippe Couplet, another well-known Belgian Jesuit, took the 50-year old Yushan to Macao in 1681.

#### RELIGIOUS STUDY IN MACAO

Among the early Jesuits in China, Philippe Couplet was one who tried to localize Catholicism. Since his arrival in 1656, Couplet had preached in Songjiang 松江, Shanghai, Jiading, Suzhou 苏州, Zhenjiang 镇江, and Chongming 崇明, in the Jiangnan area. By that time, Nicolas Trigault and Ludovicus Buglio were already translating some of the religious canon into Chinese in preparation for localizing the Church. One of the purposes for Couplet’s trip to Rome, via Macao, was to show the Pope these documents, which included the *Masses* [*Mi Sa Jing Dian* 弥撒经典] in Chinese, translated by Ludovicus Buglio.<sup>21</sup> Yushan, already fifty years old, decided to follow Couplet to Europe for religious study. After reaching Macao, however, he was prevented from continuing his travels. Father Li recorded this event in “The Deeds”:

“Upon his arrival at Macao, Yushan was put up in the Jesuit Church (also known as São Paulo Church). The Father of the church, upon learning of Yushan’s intention, asked him to study there at the church instead of going all the way to Europe. Yushan agreed and gave up his plan to go west, while Couplet proceeded to Rome. In the following year, he entered the Society, and studied its rules, Latin, theology, and

“Bare Trees and Pavilion, in Imitation of Ni Zan 倪瓚”  
(ink brush on paper, 34.8 x 28.1), painted by Wu Li in 1678,  
at age 47. Shanghai Museum collection.





墨井道人





“White Clouds and Green Mountains” (colour on silk, 26 x 117 cm), painted by Wu Li in 1668, at age 37.

other subjects. After two years of study, he professed the three vows.”<sup>22</sup>

By the time Yushan arrived in Macao, the city had already enjoyed a century of prosperity. When the Portuguese first arrived in 1557, Macao was a desolate island, populated only by a few fishermen living off the sea. After the Portuguese got permission to settle there, they enclosed their settlement with bamboo fences and built houses around the church. Gradually this settlement developed into their civil, military and religious centre. By the time the Dutch invaded in 1622, Macao had already grown into a well-fortified city, with strongholds on the hilltop and batteries along the coast. These strongholds and batteries were connected by a strong city wall built of cement and crushed shells. The Portuguese lived inside the city, known as the “Cidade do Nome de Deus de Macao na China,” whereas the Chinese lived in a village called “Mong-Ha” outside the city walls. The city was characterized by a Mediterranean architectural style, whereas the village boasted traditional Chinese houses, bamboo groves and Buddhist temples.<sup>23</sup> Beginning in 1573, when Pope Gregory XIII issued “*Super Specula Ecclesiae*,” declaring Macao a diocese with jurisdiction over China, Japan and Korea, the city developed into a Jesuit base in the Far East. The São Paulo Church, where Yushan stayed during his sojourn in Macao, was designed by the Italian Jesuit Carlos Spinola and built between 1603 and 1638. Its façade, totally European in style, was based on the churches in Milan and Genoa of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with Chinese-

style details and symbolic decorations. On the façade, there are not only sculptures featuring the Holy Spirit, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the founder of the Society of Jesus, but also Chinese hieroglyphs and mystical animals. Carlos Marreiros, a Macanese architect, calls it “a symbol of East-West exchange and Portuguese universal evangelization.”<sup>24</sup> In Yushan’s writings we can see his first impression of the exotic customs prevalent in Macao. He describes the Western rites and customs, language, paintings and signatures as follows:

“Macao is also known as Hao Jing 濠鏡, where I have seen some western social customs that are entirely different from our own. For example, in China, when we receive guests, we put on our caps and robes, but here they remove theirs. The same is true with the written word and painting. Chinese characters are composed of strokes, whereas theirs words are formed of letters. We write vertically, and they horizontally. When we paint, we pay attention to essence rather than form, but they to shape and shadow. We put our signatures on the upper part of the painting, they on the lower part. Such differences are too numerous to be counted.”<sup>25</sup>

He also noticed differences between Portuguese and Chinese in their lifestyles, occupations, clothes, and appearance:

“In Macao there are no paddy fields. Instead there is a lot of sand and stone. As the land is infertile, the locals don’t farm, but rather engage in trade. There are no mulberry trees around and the women have never even heard of silkworms. Some people cover



## ART HISTORY



their bodies with red and purple flowers, revealing only their eyes. When someone dies, the rest wear black clothes in mourning. Men wear long hair that reaches their shoulders, and big hats which they remove upon meeting others. Their furred jackets are rather short, with narrow sleeves. And there are four rows of buttons on the mid-front part of their apparel. They wear leather shoes and carry two swords, one long and the other short, tucked under their belts. The one who carries a rattan stick in hand, however, is an officer.”<sup>26</sup>

It is highly possible that the Jesuit Church where Yushan stayed was actually the São Paulo College next to the São Paulo Church. He repeatedly mentions his observation of the ocean’s waves from its first floor: “On the first floor I can hear the thunderous waves even on a windless day. And flocks of seagulls, chasing the waves, fly into my paintings.” In the following passage, written while meditating and watching the sea, Yushan expresses his transcendent state of mind:

“I am studying religion at São Paulo at the age of fifty. Living on its first floor, I have watched the ocean’s waves for five months. Comparing fifty years of worldly affairs with watching the sea, I cannot tell whether today is better than yesterday. I don’t know whether the sea is more dangerous than the secular world. Thus I put all this into my painting in the hopes that someone wiser might teach me.”<sup>27</sup>

According to Fang Hao, the above inscription was written on a painting for made for a senior religious personality on the day following Couplet’s departure for

Europe. Obviously it is a reflection of his feelings. Faced with the surging and treacherous sea, Yushan became detached from the secular world, and his thoughts travelled to the distant shores of the eternal ocean.

In the archives of the Society of Jesus, Yushan’s name was first mentioned in 1683 as Simão Xavier da Cunha, “who is a healthy new brother, with one year of membership.” This evidence indicates that Yushan entered the Society in 1682. In “Miscellaneous Poems Composed in Macao” [*Aozhong Za Yong* 澳中杂咏] collected in *São Paulo and Other Poems*, there are several poems recording Yushan’s religious study in Macao. One of them describes his study at the São Paulo College: “The religious teachers are all foreigners and the students all teenagers. The preparatory and college-level classes are held either early in the morning or late in the afternoon.”

Chen Yuan believes that Yushan had studied Latin with Rougemont and Couplet before he came to Macao. In Macao, he again took up Latin, which he describes as incomprehensible:

“Under the dim light, we converse in our native languages. When we cannot make sense of each other, we try to communicate in writing. I write characters and he writes words, but it is even more confusing as he has to read vertically and I horizontally.”

Of all the Jesuits in China, Yushan admired St. Francisco Xavier the most. That he took Simão Xavier as his religious name is an indication of his respect. Chen Yuan believes that this view was influenced by Rougemont, who himself held Xavier to be his most respected mentor. Yushan often asked people to take Xavier as a role model. In *São Paulo and Other Poems*, edited by Father Li, Yushan praises Xavier as “a specially chosen pillar of Catholicism who followed the word of God and experienced untold hardships... Like a torch, he sheds light on us. He is not only a pillar of the Church, but also a kind Father of Asia.”<sup>28</sup>

## PRIESTHOOD IN OLD AGE

On Aug. 1, 1688, Gregorio Lopez, a Chinese bishop, ordained Yushan, Liu Yunde 刘蕴德 and Wan Qiyuan 万其渊 into the priesthood—the first group of Chinese priests ever to be ordained by a Chinese bishop.<sup>29</sup> According to a document discovered by Fr. Augustine de San-Pascual in Rome, which was published in 1925 by Mons. Reynaud in the January-

吴雁





February issue of *Newsletters from Ningbo* [*Ning Bo Tong Xun* 宁波通讯], after the ceremony, Bishop Lopez told the three new priests:

“There is some similarity between your promotion to the priesthood and my appointment as bishop, because we are all Chinese. We are so honoured simply because we are brothers, despite the fact that you are Jesuits and I am a Dominican. Were we born in the West, we would only be qualified to serve as doorkeepers for the church.”<sup>30</sup>

The above passage is sufficient enough to demonstrate Bishop Lopez’s modesty. Yushan’s explanation of why he was made a priest is more straightforward: “Why did the Pope appoint me priest? He is afraid that should western missionaries perish in China, there would be no one to preach their teachings here.”<sup>31</sup>

As “perish” is a euphemism for being martyred for their religion, we can imagine the harsh situation Catholics found themselves in during that period. By the time Yushan embraced Catholicism, the Catholic Church was undergoing a very difficult period in China. Firstly, in the forty years from 1644 to 1684, Manchu troops were trying to unify China from north to south. To cut off contact between the Southern Ming and its supporters overseas, and to suppress Koxinga’s anti-Qing forces on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Qing court instituted a strict ban on all sea travel. All along the coast, from Shandong 山东 in the north to Guangdong 广东 in the south, everyone was ordered to withdraw at least fifteen kilometres inland. No one was allowed to fish in the sea. Under this policy, not only were Chinese subjects forbidden to go to sea, but

Western missionaries were also forbidden to go inland. Secondly, beginning in 1664, the conservative forces represented by Yang Guangxian started to persecute missionaries in Beijing 北京 on the pretext of the “calendar case.” As a result, Johannes Adam Schall von Bell and Ferdinand Verbiest were imprisoned, and many Chinese at the Office of Astronomy were put to death. The persecution then spread to other parts of the country and did not subside until Emperor Kangxi took power in 1667. But for a long time afterwards, local officials still harboured suspicions of and even disgust for Catholics. Thirdly, deep-rooted conflicts within the Church made it impossible for the missionaries in China to effectively localize their work. In the first hundred years after the European geographic “discoveries,” the expansion of Catholicism overseas, especially in the Far East, took place under the protection of the *Padroado*. Over the years, the Vatican came to realize the problems with this policy. In particular, the Portuguese king’s right to nominate bishops directly interfered with the internal affairs of the Church. In 1622, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples was established to deal with this matter. Alexandre de Rhodes, a Jesuit expelled from Vietnam in 1645, was the first to propose that bishops should be dispatched by the Congregation in the name of the Vicar Apostolic, and that bishops should be directly under the jurisdiction of the Congregation and the Pope so as to bypass interference Portugal and Spain under the *Padroado*. In 1658, Pope Alexandre VII appointed three Vicars for the Far East.<sup>32</sup> In a directive issued the following year, he encouraged missionaries to retain as many Chinese customs and



“The Pen River, in Imitation of Bai Juyi 白居易” (ink brush on paper, 30 x 207.3 cm).





cultural traditions as possible, because their mission was to bring faith, not nation, to China.<sup>33</sup> These measures met with strong resistance from Portugal and Spain.

In July 1673, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples promoted Bishop Gregorio Lopez to the position of Vicar because, during the period in which the Qing court had banned both sea travel and Western religion, he had demonstrated his ability to administer almost every aspect of the project of spreading the Gospel in China. However, the Portuguese authorities in Macao opposed the appointment, and even the Dominican Order (of which Lopez was a member) in the Philippines treated him as an enemy. Though Pope Clement X officially announced the appointment in January 1674, it was not until eleven years later, in April 1685, that Lopez finally accepted it.<sup>34</sup> Bishop Lopez paid a great deal of attention to the training of local priests. The appointment of Yushan and two others as priests three years later is proof of his way of thinking. But he did not nominate a Chinese to be his successor, for fear of triggering internal conflicts. Finally an Italian was chosen to succeed him. In a letter, he remarked sadly, "Every country is trying to gain something for itself."

The above facts give us a glimpse into the hardships experienced by Chinese priests in the Church. The Church promoted Chinese missionaries as a result of the ban on sea travel and Western religion, but never intended to give them any real power.

Yushan's faith and zeal in Catholicism, however, were not dampened by these injustices. Throughout the thirty years of his priesthood (he was ordained at

age 57 and died at 87), he was totally dedicated to the Church. In *Biographies of Jesuit Missionaries in China*, Aloys Pfister writes:

"After Yushan became a priest, he bought back most of the calligraphic works, paintings, and poems he had created before he took to Catholicism, and burned those that had the taint of superstition. To compensate for the bad effects that his poems and paintings might have produced, he dedicated himself to the writing of songs in praise of the Holy Father and the Virgin Mother, and other works that he believed might inspire his fellow believers. Despite his old age, he always travelled on foot when visiting church members. When persuading non-believers to join the church, he was always full of zeal. His daily talk was also largely about Catholicism."<sup>35</sup>

To spread the Gospel, Yushan often moved between Shanghai, Jiading, Changshu and Suzhou, where there were thousands of lay brothers but few Chinese priests. However, he stayed in Shanghai and Jiading the longest. When Bishop Lopez travelled to Shanghai and Hangzhou 杭州 on an inspection tour in 1690, he was very satisfied with Yushan's work. In a letter to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, he wrote: "In my two-month stay in Shanghai, accompanied by two priests, I visited a number of churches including the one headed by Yushan, who is deeply loved by his flock."<sup>36</sup> One year later, Bishop Lopez passed away in Nanjing. When the sad news reached Shanghai, Yushan refused to believe it. After the obituary came in the mail, however, he immediately wrote "In Memory of Bishop Gregorio Lopez," to express his deep grief. After the death of the bishop, it



吴雁





was probably Yushan who took charge of religious affairs in the region. Every spring and autumn, he would visit churches and church members, and perform religious duties. Sometimes he was accompanied by laymen. At that time, grass-root churches, known as chapels, were scattered around the Jiangnan region, which was crisscrossed by rivers. *The History of Missionary Work in Jiangnan* [*Jiang Nan Chuan Jiao Shi* 江南传教史] describes such chapels like these:

“Every chapel has a common house specially built for the congregation. In the hall there is a curtain-framed altar with a tea table on each side. On the altar are usually placed a crucifix, a portrait of Jesus or the Virgin Mary, and four to six crudely made candleholders. The walls are covered by curtains. Over the tea tables there are two pictures of angels, one featuring a guardian angel guiding a Chinese child, the other the Archangel Michael defeating Lucifer in the War of Heavens. Beside the hall are the priest’s quarters, partitioned into two sections; the inner half serves as the bedroom, and the front half as the dining room.”<sup>37</sup>

By this time Yushan was already in his 70s. Though he was very weak and as thin as a bamboo stalk, he was still busy tending his flock. He visited church members rain or shine, wearing a straw hat and a pair of cloth shoes. Sometimes he hid himself in a fishing boat, sometimes he walked along country paths, and other times he had to evade government persecution and informants who treated Catholics as enemies. Sometimes he would rest in a secret chapel for a few days without daring to venture out for fear of bringing trouble to his fellow believers. In the evenings he performed religious duties, ministered to the sick, and administered the last rites to the dying. His life of tending his flock was, as he put it in his poem, “even harder than fishing.”

When Father Li edited the *Mo Jing Collection* [*Mo Jing Ji* 墨井集], he included in it *A Sequel to Services and Daily Speeches* [*Xu Kou Duo Ri Chao* 续口铎日抄] by Zhao Lun 赵仑. This is an important record of Yushan’s life as a priest in Jiading from 1696 to 1697. As the Rites Controversy grew bitter, fewer and fewer people showed any interest in the church. In his poem “In Memory of Bishop Gregorio Lopez,” Yushan laments this fact. One of his poems says that worms grow fat eating the pages of the Testaments, as no one reads them anymore. To consolidate the faith of his flock, Yushan

set up a branch of the Franciscan Order and put up banners in the church asking members to “take St. Francisco Xavier as a role model, make the best of everything, preach benevolently and persuade others rationally.” The branch, headed by Yushan, had six members, namely, Zhao Lun, Zhu Wanjiu 朱畹九, Zhu Yuanrong 朱园荣, Zhang Qingchen 张青臣, Zhang Jiushang 张九上, and Yang Shengsheng 杨圣生. Their philosophy was “to persuade as many people as possible to worship God, and to spread the Gospel no matter how long it may take...”<sup>38</sup> This demonstrates Yushan’s zeal and persistence in his religious work.

In the eyes of local believers, Yushan, an itinerant priest of advanced age, was an ascetic, pure and simple:

“After landing, Father Yushan declined to use the sedan, and walked to the house instead. At dinner, the courteous host invited Yushan to be seated at a different table where there was better food. Yushan beckoned me to sit with him and share his meal because he thought I was different from the rest of the group. My impression is that he is a courteous, gentle, and modest person.

After Mass the following day, Yushan was invited to the countryside. On his way, he got out of the sedan to call on Zhang Zian 张子安. Seeing that I was waiting on him, he said, “let’s go on foot.” This shows he has not taken to comfort and pleasure.

After the Sabbath, Catholics are allowed to eat meat. At dinner, however, Yushan ate only half of his usual meal, and drank only half a cup of wine. He did not touch the chicken or mutton, saying that his tooth ached. Though he insisted on having a simple meal, he did not want to displease the others.”<sup>39</sup>

In the same book, Zhao Lun records a conversation between Yushan and a Mr. Shen 申某, a non-believer, which can serve as testimony to his faith:

“Mr. Shen, a non-believer, was at the dinner table. Huan Shi 桓式, Zhao Lun’s nephew, asked him to join the Church, saying, “You are a Confucianist, but according to my observation, not all Confucians are good.” “I just want to add that not all Catholics are good either,” came the reply. Upon hearing this, Yushan said, “I am trying to persuade you to join the Church, rather than asking you to follow any particular man... Our life, like a sampan on the sea, will sink when struck by a storm. Temporary happiness means nothing. Instead of becoming consumed by regret in your old age, why not find a place where you can rest your soul?” Mr. Shen became silent.”<sup>40</sup>

墨井道人





Clearly, Yushan treats the Church and religion as two separate things. He knows that “not all Catholics are good,” but is convinced that Christianity is the ultimate “resting place” of human faith. Confucianism does not give him such a sense of belonging; that is why he turned to Catholicism, and why he regarded it as a place where he could rest his soul. Ma Xiangbo 马相伯, a contemporary Catholic closely connected with the Society of Jesus, wrote something very similar in the preface to the *Mo Jing Collection*: “Man can control neither his birth nor his death. Those who have faith in God may go to Heaven in the afterlife. If one does not believe in God, where can he find a place to rest his soul? That is why it can be said that a person may have more self-respect when he is a believer.”<sup>41</sup>

#### THE TORCH OF CHRISTIANITY WILL SHINE FOREVER

Chen Yuan has said something very important about Yushan’s entry into the Society of Jesus:

“Mathew Ricci won many gentry followers after he came to China. But Yushan was the first intellectual who actually became a priest. Though Zhong Mingren 钟鸣仁 and Huang Mingsha 黄明沙 were ordained before him, they were not members of the gentry. Ever since the time of Wu Na, the Wu family had carried on the tradition of learning. That is why in the archives of the Society of Jesus, Yushan is called the “learned brother” who is an expert in Chinese literature.”<sup>42</sup>

The above comment provides us with an important observation: earlier Chinese brothers like You Wenhui 游文辉, Huang Mingsha, and Qiu Lianghou 邱良厚—all of whom were Chinese born in Macao—were of low social status and came from humble families. Even Zhong Baxiang 钟巴相, the first Chinese brother from a merchant family in Guangdong, was no match for Yushan in terms of his family background. As far as social status is concerned, the family origins of these earlier priests excluded them from the mainstream Chinese elite tradition. By contrast, Yushan’s entry into the Society of Jesus not only proves the success of the Jesuits in their policy of education and their dissemination of knowledge, but also demonstrates Yushan’s remarkably individualistic character. As Chen Yuan goes on to say, “though Xu Guangqi and Li Zhizao 李之藻 were known as pillars

of the Church, Yushan, who later became a Catholic priest, is even more important.”

Yushan was, doubtlessly, a great intellectual. His pursuit of Catholicism indicates that his capacity for rational thought and his erudition in Chinese culture, though not in direct conflict with his faith, still could not accommodate such faith. In his preface to the *Mo Jing Collection*, Ma Xiangbo quotes St. Thomas Aquinas as saying: “The torch of Christianity will shine forever on those who follow the word of God” Rational nature results in grace, which does not destroy nature, but perfects it.”<sup>43</sup> While nature endows humanity with the ability to think rationally and create artistically, it does not extinguish humanity’s attachment to the mysteries of religion. When editing *Mo Jing Collections* Father Li discovered that many of Yushan’s old friends and biographers regarded his conversion to Catholicism as wrong. Not knowing how to explain his pursuit of faith, they would often write something perfunctory, like “in his old age, Yushan went overseas and his whereabouts are unknown as a result.” But Father Li believes:

“Compared to other pursuits such as chess, calligraphy, painting and music, Yushan cherished religion the most. When he learned about it, he decided to follow it. When he found it difficult to follow it at home, he left home and studied it in a far-away place. But chronicles such as Suzhou and Qinchuan 琴川, in an attempt to avoid these facts, say simply that Yushan “went overseas in his old age and his whereabouts are unknown as a result.” Are Yushan’s biographers really not aware of the facts? They deliberately avoid mentioning them for they believe that Yushan was foolish! But I think they are the fools, not Yushan. Yushan believed that one should serve God diligently and maintain one’s integrity toward life. That is why he converted to Catholicism, which he saw as the orthodox religion, and treated fame and wealth as superficial and worldly pursuits. Zeng Wenzheng 曾文正 writes: “The difference between a man of virtue and a man of wickedness lies in the fact that the former is courageous enough to correct his mistakes.” Yushan was a man who corrected his mistakes.”<sup>44</sup>

Today, some three centuries after his death, people are still deeply impressed by Yushan’s indefatigable and courageous spirit in his pursuit of truth. **RC**

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