The Works of Li Wenyu (1840–1911):
Bibliography of a Chinese-Jesuit Publicist

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Li Wenyu 李問漁 (1840–1911) was the most prolific Chinese-Christian author of the late Qing period, one of the most versatile translators of his time, and the first Chinese editor of a Chinese-language newspaper in late imperial China’s emerging publishing capital Shanghai. Between 1871 and 1911, Li published 70 monographs, more than two thirds of which were translations or digests of works originally written in French or Latin, on a broad range of subjects ranging from Catholic doctrine and liturgy to history, science, philosophy, and logic. In addition, he served as founder and editor-in-chief of two long running newspapers: the Yiwenlu 益聞錄 (I-wen-lou, “Record of Useful News”),¹ founded in 1878 and continued under different names—Gezhi yiwen huibao 格致益聞匯報 (I-wen-lou et Revue scientifique) between 1898 and 1899,² and Huibao 匯報 (Revue pour tous) from 1899 to 1911³—until two months after Li’s death, and the Shengxinbao (Messager du Sacré-Coeur), a monthly journal that appeared from 1887 to 1949.⁴

¹ Yiwenlu 益聞錄 (I-wen-lou). Nos. 1–1800 (16 March 1879 – 13 August 1898). Prior to the first official edition six sample issues (cebao 冊報) were published in fortnightly intervals from 16 December 1878.
³ Huibao 匯報 (Revue pour tous). Nos. 100–3106 (9 August 1899 – 22 August 1911). Between September 1908 and autumn 1909, the Huibao was temporarily split into two separate editions: the Huibao shishi huibian 匯報事實彙編 ("Huibao News digest"), which was published twice weekly, and the Huibao kexue huibian 匯報科學彙編 (Revue scientifique), which appeared once every two weeks.
Despite these achievements, Li Wenyu’s life and work are almost entirely forgotten.⁵ No study in any language devotes more than a handful of pages to this uniquely resourceful publicist or any of his diverse writings.⁶ Indeed, the indifference toward Li extends in almost equal measure to the press for which he composed most of his works: the Imprimerie de T’ou-sè-wè (Tushanwan yingshuguan 土山灣印書館) which was established at the Jesuits’ Chinese headquarters in Zikawei (Xujiahui 徐家匯) near Shanghai in 1864 and remained one of the most productive and technologically advanced publishing houses in the city throughout the final decades of the Qing and beyond. In a forthcoming article, I try to show that the neglect of the Tushanwan Press and its most prolific author are unfortunate omissions.⁷

Even if Jesuit agents and institutions had only limited impact on China’s transition to modernity, our understanding of the emergence of modern Chinese print and publishing culture and of the multiple channels through which “Western knowledge” of the most diverse kinds was propagated in the late Qing will remain incomplete as long as their contributions are elided from the historical record.

The bibliography of Li Wenyu’s works that I offer in the following pages is a small contribution to start filling this gap. It is based on the catalogues of the Tushanwan Press,⁸ existing bibliographical

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⁵ Even biographical sketches of Li Wenyu are scarce. Cf. Fang Hao 方豪, Zhongguo tianzhujiao shi renwu zhuan 中國天主教史人物傳 (Biographies related to the history of Catholicism in China) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), vol. 3, pp. 284-288; and Chen Baixi 陳百希, Tamen yingxiang le shijie 他們影響了世界 (They influenced the world) (Taipei: Guangqi she, 1961), pp. 66-69. The most reliable outline is an anonymous article published soon after Li Wenyu’s death in his own newspaper: “Huibao faqiren jian zhubizhengsanshier nian zhi xiaozhuan” 匯報發起人兼主筆政三十二年之小傳 (Short biography of the Huibao’s founder and editor-in-chief for 32 years), Huibao 33, no. 38 (June 16, 1911), pp. 1-3.


⁷ Joachim Kurtz. “Messenger of the Sacred Heart: Li Wenyu (1840–1911) and Jesuit Publishing in Late-Qing Shanghai.” In Cynthia J. Brockaw and Christopher A. Reed (eds.). From Woodblocks to the Internet: China’s Print and Publishing Culture in Transition (in preparation). I am grateful to Professors Brockaw and Reed for their permission to publish this bibliography prior to the publication of their forthcoming volume.

sources, in particular the comprehensive *Bibliothea Missionum* which unfortunately does not provide Chinese characters, and archive and library researches in Paris, Shanghai, and Rome. The titles in the bibliography are listed in alphabetical order. In addition to basic bibliographical data, the list provides, wherever available, information on numbers of pages and illustrations, reprints, alternative editions, and the original texts on which Li Wenyu’s translations and digests were based. Like many authors of the period, Li used a variety of names in his publications, among them Li Haoran 李浩然 (his original *ming* 名), his *hao* 號 Li Di 李杕 and, less often, his second style Damuzhai zhu 大木齋主; in Western contexts he went by his baptismal name Laurentius Li or its French and English variants Laurent Ly and Lawrence Lee. I have refrained from listing the names used for each individual title in the bibliography, not least because different editions of the same work could appear under different epithets.

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(One of the few remaining pictures of Li Wenyu, taken ca. 1908 in his study at Zikawei. Source: Xujiahui da xiuyuan 徐家匯大修院 (ed.). *Jiangnan xiuyuan bai zhou jinian* 江南修院百周記年. 1843–1943. *Memorabilia de Seminario Kiang-nan*. Shanghai: no publisher, 1943.)

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Beizhonglou 備終錄. Preparatio ad mortem (Preparation for death) (Based on a work by Alfonso Maria de Liguori [1696–1787]). (vi + 165 fol.). Xujiahui: Tushanwan yinshuguan [date of 1st ed. unknown]; 2nd ed. 1902; 3rd ed. 1907; 4th ed. 1913; 5th ed. 1926. [Translation begun by Father Tian Wendi 田文端; completed by Li Wenyu.]


Daoyuan jingcui 道原精萃. Selecta doctrinarum fundamentalium collectio. (Collection of excerpts on the fundamental doctrine.) 8 vols. (643 fol., 245 photographs). Xujiahui: Tushanwan yinshuguan 1888 (xyl.); (typ.) 2nd ed. 1926. [Li Wenyu authored vols. 5 (de actis Apostolorum), 6 (de vita Beata Virgine), and 8 (tractatus de Romano Pontificae com chronologia SS. Pontificum). Vols. 1–4 contain reprints of works by Giulio Aleni; vol. 7 reprints of works by Alphonso Vagnoni.]


The Works of Li Wenyu (KURTZ)

(102 +140 pp.). Xujiahui: Tushanwan yinshuguan 1905 (First serialized in Yiwenlu.) [Cf. Ephémérides 2.7 (1 May 1912, pp. 73-74)].


[34] Shengmu zhuai 聖母傳. Vie de la Très Sainte Vièrge (The life of the Holiest Virgin). Xujiahu: Tushanwan yinshuguan [no date, must be < 1889].


[44] Tian ti 天梯. Scala coeli, seu parvus tractatus de fiducia in Beata Virgine (Stairway to heaven, or small treatise about the Sacred Virgin). (Based on Alfonso Maria de Liguori. Les Gloires de Marie. Paris: Gaume 1835.) (54 fol.). Xujiahu: Tushanwan yinshuguan 1888; 2nd ed. 1899; 3rd

[45] Tianyan lun boyi 天演論駁義. Refutatio evolutionismi. (Refutation of evolutionism.) (36 pp.). Xujiahui: Tushanwan yinshuguan 1910; 2nd ed. 1923; reeditions 1930; 1932. (First published 1907 as an appendix to [65].)


philosophicae. Rome: Aureliana 1861 [or later editions]) (65 fol.). Xujiahui: Tushanwan yinshuguan 1904; 2nd ed. 1918.


