

Catholicism on Chinese Education from the 19 Century to 20 Century: Aurora College for Women in Shanghai

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Abstract: Some studies worldwide have described Catholic schools in China in the 20th century in some detail, encompassing the establishment, causes, and effects of Catholic schools. However, many studies have focused on male missionaries and elite male teaching models, and women have been neglected by academics in the study of Chinese Catholicism. Against this background, this paper examines the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, the first university in China to admit women in the 20th century by Sisters of the Sacred Heart. To present the experience of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai at different periods and to explore its influence on Chinese education, this paper cites handwritten letters from the sisters of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai from the Italian and Shanghai archives as primary sources. The documents in the Italian Archives are the correspondence and records of the sisters in the archives of the Rome headquarters. These primary sources from the Rome headquarters are rarely cited and are of great importance to the study of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai. It is also combined with secondary sources, which include newspapers, books, related photography, and government-published intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The study found that the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai was a crucial point in women's education in three parts: (i) the popularization of Catholic schools in China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, (ii) the size and characteristics of the school, (iii) the survival strategy. In addition, the holistic education proposed by the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai concluded that the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai contributed to the education for all and produced independent and self-reliant women. With these findings, this paper explores the spread of Catholicism in China through the lens of women and help enrich the meaning of Catholic schools.

Keywords: Aurora college for women, China, Education, Catholic sisters

1. Introduction

Aurora College for Women in Shanghai is a Catholic women's college founded between 1937 and 1951 in Shanghai, China by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The Aurora College for Women in Shanghai is an important Catholic education school in China. Not only was it the first women's college established in Asia by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, but it was also the only women's institution established by the Catholic Church in China [1]. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Chinese education system was predominantly male-centric, despite the existence of distinct primary,

secondary, and higher education divisions. Whether modern women's education was deficient and insufficient [2]. Aurora College for Women in Shanghai may have filled a void in the education of Chinese women. Concurrently, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart's success in founding schools in Shanghai promoted the expansion of Catholicism overseas [3]. However, many studies concentrate on male missionaries and elite education for men, but few publications highlight the significant impact of female missionaries [4]. The initial phases of operation were challenging for the Sisters. During the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, the majority of schools were either shuttered or transferred. Shanghai became a devastated area during the occupation. Despite these obstacles, the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai persisted in its educational efforts and achieved success [1]. Its distinctive educational model completely represents the Sisters' wisdom and educational philosophy. In addition, Aurora College for Women in Shanghai reflects Shanghai's educational requirements and living environment.

There are few research on the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, although there are numerous primary sources preserved in local and international archives. This study utilises the letters and records of the sisters located in the archives of the Rome headquarters as well as the unpublished records of meetings, oral interviews, and memorials located in the Shanghai archives. The educational experience of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai from 1937 to 1951 was portrayed through the analysis of numerous materials.

As a result of the unequal treaties, some foreign missionaries, such as Catholicism, started their missionary work in China at a particular time and shifted their missionary focus to education. This paper will focus on the following three points: a) the establishment of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, b) the scale and teaching characteristics, c) the survival strategies. A preliminary study of the contribution of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai in the field of education will be conducted based on archival historical materials from Italy and Shanghai.

2. The Spread of Catholic Schools in China in the Late 19 and Early 20 Century

2.1. Socio-Historical Background

In China, the spread of Catholicism was not without incident. Regarding China, the Catholic Church debated whether the Chinese emperor or the Roman pope held supreme authority. This conflict prompted the Qing dynasty to prevent certain foreign missionaries from entering China. The number of prohibited missionaries climbed gradually [5]. Additionally, the scope of the restriction was enlarged. During the Qing Dynasty, there was a halt to the spread of Catholicism in China.

The Catholic Church has witnessed a renaissance of the missionary cause since the middle of the 19th century, when unequal treaties were closely linked to the missionary clause. China and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Nanking on 29 August 1842, following China's loss in the Opium War. One of the "missionary clauses" was followed by the Western imperialist countries. The clause stated that "Jesus Catholicism was originally a way of doing good, and since then there have been missionaries from China, protected as one [6]." The missionary clause of the Treaty of Nanking became the first successful attempt by foreign missionaries to break the ban of the Qing Dynasty. After this, many countries included missionary clauses in their unequal treaties. When China and the United States signed the Treaty of peace, amity and commerce [7], between the United States of America and the Chinese Empire in 1844, the unequal conditions were further expanded to allow Americans to trade at ports of commerce. The signing of the unequal treaties provided economic and help for the spread of Catholicism in China.

After Catholic missionaries arrived in China, they identified a flaw in the Chinese educational system: the unequal allocation of educational resources, which included class inequality schooling, male and female education, and education disparities based on gender [8]. Based on this discovery,

the Catholics centered their missionary efforts on the cause of education. They began to investigate the social environment in China, establishing kindergarten, secondary, and university education and bringing in missionaries from other regions as teacher resources [1]. In order to more effectively disseminate their religious beliefs, Catholic schools frequently have a strong religious undertone and environment. For instance, religious paintings on school walls, religious topics in the curriculum, and work and rest patterns. Pupils were immersed in the atmosphere of God's "love, beauty, and joy," which promoted a thankful faith in God and a cordial rapport between teachers and students [5].

In conclusion, the missionary clause in the unequal treaties offered financial and political support for the establishment of Catholic schools in China. During this time, Catholic missionaries were permitted to preach and construct schools. Likewise, the introduction of Catholic schools in China compensated for the shortcomings of the Chinese educational system and contributed to the growth of Chinese education.

2.2. The Emergence of Catholic Schools

Catholic missionaries began to spread widely in China under the promotion and protection of unequal treaties. In 1860, the Sino-French Treaty of Beijing between China and France formally required the Chinese government to repay Catholic property during prohibition [9]. The signing of such unequal treaties not only gave the missionaries the right to preach freely but also the privilege of acquiring Catholic assets and being protected by China. The missionary work of Chinese Catholic missionaries during this period showed a booming trend [10]. According to statistics, the number of churches and missionary sites in China from 1843 to 1933 exceeded thirty [11].

In order to prevent the prohibition policy of the previous era from again causing significant losses to the Catholic missionary cause, the Church pioneered innovative missionary strategies. Regarding the Church's image, positive effects were vigorously promoted to counter allegations from the previous period, such as missionaries killing babies. On the social side, the development of health care, disaster aid, and education became essential missionary activities. Additionally, Catholic schools began to arise.

2.3. The Development of Catholic Schools

Catholic education in China went through several critical periods, such as the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), and has always maintained a development trend. Catholic schools in the Chinese region are divided into two main parts, primary and intermediate schools, and higher schools, respectively. The elementary school were more and were established almost wherever there was a church [1]. The elementary school primarily assisted youngsters of the Catholic faith with their education, and there are identity disparities between believers and nonbelievers. According to the statistics files in the Yantai Archives of Yucai School, the data tables are clearly labelled by gender and religious affiliation, such as "religious boys" and "non-believing girls [12]." According to incomplete statistics on missionary work in China, the number of Catholic schools founded in China in 1920 and 1921 is shown in Table 1 [13].

Table 1: Statistics of catholic schools founded in China.

Men's Primary School	3518
Number of students	83757
Women's Primary School	2615
Number of students	53283
Teacher Training College	16
Number of students (Male & Female)	612
Academy	61
Number of students	4503
Total number of students	142155

3. Case Study

3.1. Foundation: Aurora College for Women in Shanghai 1937-1951

From 1937 through 1951, this article examines the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai. It was a university college in American style [14]. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart administered it in Shanghai. In China during this period, there were two Catholic universities, Aurora University in Shanghai and Catholic University in Beijing [14]. These two universities focus mostly on foreign missionaries and male elites, with Chinese laity women in the Catholic Church receiving minimal attention. Chinese women have made major contributions to Catholic education in China, although their achievements have been neglected in academic research. Shanghai Aurora College, the first Catholic school in China to offer higher education to women, plays a crucial role in the study of Chinese Catholic education [15].

The Shanghai Sisters of the Sacred Heart, who were administrators of Shanghai Aurora College, had a tortuous and challenging experience in Shanghai. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart began missionary activities in Shanghai in 1926 and continued for 26 years (1952) [1]. This period was marked by several critical periods in Chinese history, such as the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), and the early years of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. From 1926 to 1937, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart established kindergartens and elementary schools while at the same time examining the background and conditions for the establishment of universities. The Sisters published an epistle detailing the operations of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai during the war and the political regime shift. The original of the letter is stored in the archives of Italy and Shanghai. Using the letter's manuscript from the Italian and Shanghai archives, this essay will analyse the establishment of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, the curriculum's features, and its survival strategy.

In October 1937, the school officially began admitting students [16]. Aurora College for Women in Shanghai was not combined with Aurora University until September 1951. Aurora College for Women in Shanghai existed for fourteen years and underwent three distinct phases.

The first stage (1937-1945) was the founding period. For 26 years, 60 Sacred Heart missionaries from 13 countries came to Shanghai to carry out missionary activities. In 1925, Mary Sheldon (Tokyo Superior General) and Conchita Nourry came to Shanghai from Japan to explore the feasibility of building a Sacred Heart Mission in Shanghai on the ground [14]. After visiting the Jesuits, they received encouragement from the Jesuits, "They will do it [17]." This journey to explore Shanghai

was very successful. It was then announced that a convent of nuns would be established in Shanghai in 1926 as the 151st. Sister Nourry was also appointed as the first Mother Superior [1].

On September 11, 1926, the Sisters arrived in Shanghai. The first school for foreign children, the School of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, was opened (1926). However, the Sisters encountered difficulties in establishing an independent university [1]. 1928, February 6, the Regulations on Private Schools promulgated by the Grand Academy of the Republic of China stipulated that foreigners must file a case with the Chinese government to establish a school in China and that an independent university must be established with more than three colleges [18]. However, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Shanghai lacked resources and did not know the local language [14]. The regulations of the Ordinance were somewhat tricky for the Shanghai pioneers. The sisters took advantage of the 1935 National Diocesan Congress to declare Proposal No. 13 [2], "The Catholic Church should establish a college for women. According to the proposal, the Catholic Church has created primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges in China. However, there were not enough women in college. Some students who wish to continue their education are forced to attend private institutions, which is not favourable to educational growth. Consequently, the religious sisters advocated establishing a public university for women in a large city with convenient public transportation. This proposition was ultimately approved after heated debate. The prominent Catholic and president of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Lu Bohong [1], also aided the nuns.

In order to solve the problem of the Regulations, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart decided to put the newly established Women's College under the name of Aurora University. On June 1, 1937, Shanghai's "Shanghai Daily" published that Aurora University was recruiting more women. On October 5, 1937, the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai was officially established at 181 Pushi Road (now Changle Road) in the French Concession of Shanghai. Although the College was nominally a branch of Aurora University, it had a high degree of autonomy. It was managed in a "family-style" manner [1]. "

In 1937, less than 55 students participated in the entrance examination, and only 25 students attended the official opening report (October 5). However, the number of students who applied and were accepted subsequently increased, reaching approximately five times the number in 1937 in 1943, with a total of 239 students [5]. For accommodation, students and teachers were temporarily housed in the ground floor classrooms of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Shanghai, as the school building was not yet fully constructed. It was not until April 27, 1939 that the building was completed and the ceremony held, at a cost of 356,700 yuan, most of which was raised by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Rome [19].

The second stage (1945-1949) was the revival and development stage. According to the letter preserved in the Italian Archives, below, the number of students increased substantially. Sun Huifang, a format student at Aurora College for Women, wrote a letter to Reverend Mother in which she stated that there were more than 400 students at the school before Christmas, and that 58 of them were Catholics [20]. During this period, Aurora College for Women in Shanghai also became the center of activity for the Legion of Mary.

The third phase (1949 - 1951) was the final phase. After the liberation of Shanghai, the new regime reorganized Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, and on September 9, 1949, the Board of Trustees announced that Aurora College for Women in Shanghai would no longer be affiliated with Aurora University [21]. The independence of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai also meant a conflict of leadership between the representative sisters and the school administrators, and in 1950, the school nursing committee began banning the Sisters of the Sacred Heart from the school, which was later re-integrated into Aurora University. Since then, the story of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Aurora College for Women in Shanghai has come to closure.

3.2. Sacred Heart Education Philosophy - Whole Person Education

In designing their study plan, the Sisters articulated their mission to send girls into the world who are prepared for life. They discovered that the teaching of youth was a path to their devotion to the Sacred Heart and that their students needed to be brought together as a family. The educational approach at Aurora College for Women in Shanghai is intended to empower students via the cultivation of their values, personalities, and a focus on principles and religious reliance.

Shanghai Aurora College follows the Sisters' American College, always upholding their practice in the United States: "Sacred Heart College in the United States offers a liberal arts curriculum, organized according to a general pattern, through a wide range of prescribed subjects, including religion, philosophy, English, history, Latin, modern languages and mathematics, religious who hold fast to the educational traditions of the Society and wish to develop in their students the spiritual skills and discipline essential to a well-trained mind [22]." As archives mentioned, at the graduation ceremony, the graduates go up to the stage one by one to face the bishop and take the oath: "I promise to be faithful to the ideals and goals of our college and to use the knowledge and training I have acquired to serve God and my country [23]." The recipient then receives the diploma from the bishop and dons a graduation cap. At Aurora College for Women in Shanghai, the ideas of diversity education are interwoven into the social practise of fostering independent individual thinking skills through education in a vast array of subjects.

For example, Aurora College for Women had a home economics. The Department of home economics and the Department of Chemistry have laboratories that provide students with hands-on opportunities in cooking, pastry making, and chemistry experiments [1]. The home economics course instructs students in designing and constructing. In addition to teaching students about designing and creating clothing, house decoration, and child care, the home economics course opens a kindergarten where students learn about child education. Later, based on the requirements of society, more Students complete internships in hospitals and health offices during their fourth year of college, and many graduates remain in hospitals as nutrition technologists. Many graduates work as nutrition technicians in hospitals with physicians to provide nutritious meals for patients. Students also provided medical, housing, and relief counselling services to the lower class. Additionally, the institution educated students in a variety of civilian welfare efforts.

Aurora College for Women has a groundbreaking approach to the college curriculum that emphasizes the modern concept of "education of the whole person" [1]. Beyond basic knowledge, the college promotes curiosity, imagination, and determination. Students are directed to investigate "meaningful lives" and concentrate on personal development. Second, the Academy actively encourages students to study for their own development rather than for tests. This perspective differs from the traditional Chinese education system as outlined by the imperial examinations. Students are encouraged to develop autonomy and independent thought [8]. The goal is to develop students' learning ability and confidence in self-exploration long after graduation. This philosophy was also reflected in the way grades were communicated, as the faculty meeting of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai held at three in the afternoon of January 10, 1941 decided: "The notification method will be used instead of the announcement method." This change not only protected students' self-esteem, but also contributed to their personal psychological growth [21].

In conclusion, Aurora College for Women in Shanghai adheres to the Sacred Heart Education philosophy, which aims to educate independent individuals able to think independently and contribute to society. Through its educational ideas and curriculum, he fully embraces the notion that education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the protracted investigation of a way of life.

3.3. Survival Strategies of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai

Aurora College for Women in Shanghai's entrance examination was held the day after the Lugou Bridge Incident [24]. As a result of the Lugou Bridge Incident, Shanghai also fell. Numerous buildings in Shanghai were destroyed by aeroplanes and explosives, which became a daily occurrence. During the conflict, one-third of the institutions of higher education were destroyed. In such a time of instability and unrest, only the nuns of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai were able to continue their educational endeavours, utilising local policies in Shanghai to ensure the school's existence, as they were unwilling to give up the chance to finish their study. The existence of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai's Education depended on Shanghai's unique geographical position and the college's distinctive characteristics.

Shanghai's unique geographical location and the special nature of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai may have been important reasons for its survival during turmoil.

After the commencement of the War of Resistance against Japan in 1937, northern and southern China fell successively, and the entire nation descended into anarchy. As a rented area, Shanghai's security was superior than that of other cities, attracting a large number of inhabitants from the middle class and above. According to statistics, the population of the Shanghai Concession increased by 780,000 between 1937 and 1942. During the Liberation War, the population of Shanghai peaked at approximately 5.4 million [25]. The flood of capital, industry, and population caused Shanghai's economy to exhibit symptoms of burgeoning growth. At that time, drinking establishments, singing, and dancing constituted the majority of Shanghai's nightlife. In addition, the migration of middle-class individuals increased the demand for education in Shanghai. During the War of Resistance and Liberation, a large number of Chinese colleges were shuttered or relocated, denying the children of educated households access to higher education. Aurora College for Women in Shanghai was likely one of the few institutions to continue its educational pursuits at this time, hence addressing the educational demands of these individuals.

Initially, during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, ties between Japan and France were positive; consequently, the Japanese were more liberal in their administration of the French Concession. The then-president of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Shanghai was French, and the order was formed in France; hence, French was the order's common language. During the Japanese occupation, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Shanghai had good connections with the French Concession, which decreased the sisters' rent by fifty percent, so greatly easing their financial burden [26]. The president was not placed on the detention list when the Aurora College for Women was later designated as an internment camp for the sisters of foreign missions. Through its affiliation with the French Concession, Aurora College for Women in Shanghai insured that the school's instructional environment would not be significantly impacted.

Second, the first college to admit women was the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai. The placement of the institution matched the specific educational needs of particular individuals. In the history of Chinese education during the 20th century, education for men was the primary focus, while education for women was absent from the system. In a survey questionnaire maintained in the Shanghai Archives, eleven out of seventeen respondents cited the fact that Aurora College for Women in Shanghai was a women's college as the reason they attended. Admission of female students has been a distinguishing feature of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai; consequently, many influential families send their daughters to this institution for further education.

4. Conclusion

This essay begins with the establishment of unequal treaties in China and concludes with the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This article presents a basic examination of how

Catholicism entered China and what opportunities led to its continuing development over the past century. To further reinforce the spread of Catholicism in China, education was incorporated into missionary efforts. This essay examines the Catholic contribution to the development of women's education in China and highlights the founding of the first Catholic university for women in Asia, Aurora College for Women in Shanghai. Shanghai's Aurora College for Women was a pioneer in women's education in China, addressing the paucity of women's education in contemporary China. In the meantime, the success of Shanghai Women's College stimulated the formation and growth of additional Catholic schools, which played a crucial role in the propagation of Catholicism and the global education field.

Education of the Sacred Heart, the distinctive educational philosophy of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, is a very forward-looking educational philosophy. The concept of "whole-person education" continues to be applicable to education in the twenty-first century. Schools are encouraged to provide programmes in many areas of interest to provide pupils with life skills and spark their interests and imagination as part of curriculum preparation. Whole-person education leads to self-study and the ability to think for oneself without being bound by book information or structured knowledge. "Self-exploration" is the foundation of whole-person education, which fosters personal development and the enhancement of individual skills. This is one of the significant difficulties facing modern education in China. The lack of compassionate management procedures and severe assessment standards in schools (particularly universities) may be incompatible with the concept of whole-person education. The relationship between academic education and social life is a topic that requires additional investigation. This work lacks a comparison between the educational philosophy of Aurora College for Women in Shanghai and modern educational philosophy; future research is required in this area.

This essay cites authentic materials from archives in Italy and Shanghai, China, which describe the survival and instability of the Aurora College for Women in Shanghai during two crucial times in Chinese history: the Japanese occupation and the civil war. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart contributed significantly to the growth of Catholicism in China by preserving the originality and tenacity of education with compassion and discernment. Some portions of the material have not been evaluated due to language barriers; therefore, future academics may attempt to analyse the Catholic education of women in China further.

This study investigates Catholic education in China from the perspective of women and presents a localised picture of Chinese national education using primary materials in Italy and Shanghai Archives, thereby supplying additional historical resources for the investigation of Aurora College for Women. Moreover, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart's notion of "Whole Person Education" at the end of the 20th century has parallels with China's "double reduction" programme in the 21st century. Using historical materials, scholars may be able to examine the connection and evolution of the two in order to identify new educational pathways fit for China's "double reduction" education policy.

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