

# Religious Minorities and China

AN MRG INTERNATIONAL REPORT • RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND CHINA



BY MICHAEL DILLON



## RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND CHINA

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## MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL

MRG works to secure rights and justice for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, and indigenous peoples worldwide. MRG is dedicated to promoting the cause of cooperation and understanding between communities.

Founded in the 1960s, MRG is a small international non-governmental organization that informs and warns governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and the wider public about the situation of minorities and indigenous peoples around the world. This work is based on the publication of well-researched Reports, Books and Papers; direct advocacy on behalf of minority rights in international meetings; the development of a global network of like-minded organizations and minority communities to collaborate on these issues; and the **challenging of prejudice and promotion of public understanding** through information and education projects.

MRG believes that the best hope for a peaceful world lies in **identifying and monitoring conflict** between communities, **advocating preventive mea-**

**asures** to avoid the escalation of conflict, and **encouraging positive action** to build trust between majority and minority communities.

MRG has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and has a worldwide network of partners. Its international headquarters are in London. Legally it is registered both as a charity and as a limited company under English law with an international governing Council.

## THE PROCESS

As part of its methodology, MRG conducts regional research, identifies issues and commissions Reports based on its findings. Each author is carefully chosen and all scripts are read by no less than eight independent experts who are knowledgeable about the subject matter. These experts are drawn from the minorities about whom the Reports are written, and from academics, journalists, researchers and other human rights agencies. Authors are asked to incorporate comments made by these parties. In this way, MRG aims to publish accurate, authoritative, well-balanced Reports.



*Muslim men at a mosque in  
Kashgar, Xinjiang*  
IAN TEH/PANOS PICTURES

# Religious Minorities and China

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## Relevant international instruments

### **United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, 25 November 1981**

#### **Article 1**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

#### **Article 2**

1. No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or other belief.  
(...)

#### **Article 3**

Discrimination between human being on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enunciated in detail in the International Covenants on Human Rights, and as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations.

#### **Article 4**

1. All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life.
2. All States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter.

#### **Article 5**

1. The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up.
2. Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.
3. The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.
4. In the case of a child who is not under the care either of his parents or of legal guardians, due account shall be taken of their expressed wishes or of any other proof of their wishes in the matter of religion or belief, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.
5. Practices of a religion or belief in which a child is brought up must not be injurious to his physical or mental health or to his full development, taking into account article 1, paragraph 3, of the present Declaration.  
(...)

#### **Article 6**

In accordance with article 1 of the present Declaration, and subject to the provisions of article 1, paragraph 3, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, the following freedoms:

- (a) To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;
- (b) To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
- (c) To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;
- (d) To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;

- (e) To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;
- (f) To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;
- (g) To train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;
- (h) To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief;
- (i) To establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.

#### **Article 7**

The rights and freedoms set forth in the present Declaration shall be accorded in national legislation in such a manner that everyone shall be able to avail himself of such rights and freedoms in practice.

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, 18 December 1992**

#### **Article 2**

1. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.
3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.
4. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations.
5. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989**

#### **Article 30**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

### **United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965**

#### **Article 5**

In compliance with the fundamental obligations laid down in article 2 of this Convention, States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights:

- (vii) The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- (viii) The right to freedom of opinion and expression;
- (ix) The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;

### **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966**

#### **Article 13**

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

# Preface

The treatment of religious minorities lies behind many of the headlines from China in recent years. China's treatment of the Falungong and its policies in Tibet receive regular comment in the West, but rarely is this commentary informed by an understanding of how China's policies towards religious minorities as a whole have developed. This new MRG Report, *Religious Minorities and China*, fills that gap and provides an authoritative overview of the major world religions in a country that is as diverse as it is vast.

Both Tibet, with its Buddhist population, and Xinjiang, with its population of Muslim Uyghurs, are contested territories with contested histories. However, as this Report highlights, both are subject to the laws and regulations on religion that are enforced by the People's Republic of China (PRC). As such, their inclusion in this Report is crucial. The Report does not purport to provide a commentary on the political status of Tibet and Xinjiang, but the situation in both territories clearly demonstrates how the activities of the religious communities within China shape the actions of other religious communities and, in turn, determine the state's response to and treatment of minority religions.

This Report focuses predominantly on Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. These major world religions are considered synonymous by the state with separatist movements and thereby a threat to its sovereignty. In addition, they are seen to have strong support – financially and otherwise – from communities outside China. As a consequence, they receive the greatest share of attention from the Chinese authorities. While it can be argued that some of the smaller and local religions practised by ethnic minority groups enjoy a certain degree of protection from China's undoubted nationalist response to the major world religions, what holds true for all is the threat of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policy of assimilation and the social, political and cultural consequences of its approach to economic modernization.

As Dr Michael Dillon highlights in the Report, territorial integrity is an overriding political priority of the CCP in the twenty-first century, including maintaining and protecting the borders that China has held on and off since the Qing dynasty. In practice this translates into retaining control of Xinjiang and Tibet, protecting itself from the influence of foreign powers and asserting its status as a world power. Any activities that are considered to undermine the state by lending support to separatist tendencies or deemed to be advancing the interests of other states are viewed with suspicion. More often than not this results in the suppression of religious freedom and association.

Religious communities, desperately attempting to retain their identity and resist the erosion of their culture, continue to oppose resolutely the imposition of a national or ethnic unity by the state through its assimilation policy.

Such attempts are manifested in the form of separatist movements within Tibet and Xinjiang; demonstrations and various other forms of resistance by the Protestant and Catholic communities; as well as protests by some of the new religions, the Falungong in particular.

As Dillon reports, within the prevailing environment, it is fairly safe to predict that there will continue to be conflict between the CCP-dominated state and leaders of both recognized and unofficial religious groups as the latter attempt to retain their culture and identity and push forward the boundaries of the religious freedom to which they feel entitled.

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) believes that the most effective resolution to these conflicts is for the rights of religious minority communities to be respected and acted upon. In particular, the state is encouraged to allow for more effective participation of religious and other minorities in public life and increased freedoms of religion and association. The set of policy recommendations contained at the end of the Report concludes by urging the PRC to take steps to implement the provisions of international standards on minority rights and freedom of religion and to fulfil its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and other instruments to which it is party. Last, but by no means least, the PRC is encouraged to ratify and implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which it signed in 1998.

China has a rich and diverse religious heritage. Guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities will enable China to recognize that heritage as an asset rather than a threat.

**Mark Lattimer**

*Director*

October 2001

# The historical context

The People's Republic of China (PRC), created by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, is officially an atheist state.<sup>1</sup> Religious belief and worship have been tolerated to some extent, although the degree of toleration has varied considerably with the political climate. The CCP has always been concerned about the threat to its authority posed by religious organizations. Sects of the traditional Chinese religions, Buddhism or Daoism, have a long history of involvement with underground secret societies and were frequently implicated in the overthrow of governments in the 2,000 years of the Chinese Empire. With religions of foreign origin, particularly Christianity, there is the added dimension that they are perceived to be undermining both the authority of the state and traditional Chinese values, and patriotic fervour has from time to time been mobilized against them.

There is a clear distinction in the minds of the authorities between officially recognized religious groups and unofficial, unregistered groups and they are treated very differently by the state. Official religious bodies, whether they are Buddhist, Christian, Daoist or Muslim, have some representation in government through various United Front organizations. These organizations were created by the CCP in the early 1950s, when it recognized the fact that it did not have universal support and needed to win over large sections of the population who were either opposed to, or were indifferent to, the policies of the Party. These bodies, supervised by the United Front Work Department of the CCP, were designed to give a voice to political, ethnic and religious minorities, and to provide a means for the government of the CCP to demonstrate to the outside world that it was taking minority views into account. The most important organization in which non-Communist Party groups have representation is the main national forum for ethnic and religious minorities and other interest groups including overseas Chinese and their relatives and former businesspeople, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). This institution, like the quasi-parliamentary body, the National People's Congress (NPC), is often regarded as simply a rubber stamp for CCP policies. The reality is more complex than this, and the CPPCC has at times had considerable influence on national policy and plays an important role in implementing government policy at grassroots level.<sup>2</sup>

Unofficial groups are generally regarded by the Communist Party as potentially subversive and unpatriotic, and are subject to periodic and arbitrary repression. In some cases, notably the Tibetan Buddhists and the Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang, there is active support for secession. It is an article of faith for the CCP that China must remain a unified state forever with its present borders.<sup>3</sup> The case is less clear for non-Tibetan Buddhist organizations, Daoists and Christians, but the CCP has maintained its control over China since the 1950s by attempting to con-

fine all social activity, including pressure for the rights of workers and women, within 'mass organizations' that are run from Beijing, and has ruthlessly suppressed any independent bodies. The perceived threat from unofficial religious organizations such as house churches – groups of Christians who gather to worship in each other's houses rather than in a church – is as much because of their independence as because of their beliefs.

In contemporary Chinese usage in the PRC, a distinction is made between *zongjiao* ('religions'), which are permitted although not encouraged, and *xiejiao*, which is translated as 'heresy' in many Chinese-English dictionaries. It has connotations of both evil and heretical religion and corresponds to the pejorative Western term 'cult'. It was applied most notably to the Falungong and similar groups of *qigong*<sup>4</sup> practitioners in the 1990s and 'cult' seems more appropriate than 'heresy' for these. Chinese official publications have also consistently criticized *mixin* ('superstitions'), a broad category which encompasses local traditions, shamanism and the religions of the smaller ethnic minorities, as well as some aspects of the larger religions.

## Religion and the Constitution

Religious freedom has been guaranteed formally by the successive Constitutions of the PRC.

### 1954 First Constitution (Article 88)

'Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.'

### 1975 Cultural Revolution period (Article 28)

'Citizens enjoy freedom of speech, correspondence, the press, assembly, association, procession, demonstration and the freedom to strike, and enjoy freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism.'

### 1982 Reform and Opening period (Article 36) (incorporating revisions by National People's Congress 1999)

'Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the right to religious belief. No state organ, social organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in any religion or not believe and neither may they discriminate between citizens who are believers and those who are not. The State protects normal religious activities. No-one may use religion to destroy social order, damage the health of citizens or obstruct the activities of the state educational system. Religious organizations and religious work must not be controlled by foreign forces.'

## Religious traditions before 1949

The traditional religions of China are usually said to be Confucianism, Daoism (often written as Taoism) and Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> Daoism and Buddhism fit into any conventional Western concept of religion, but Confucianism is more an ethical system than a religious belief and appears to have very little spiritual or transcendental content, although the concept of *tian* (heaven) is central to Confucian teachings. However, the influence of Confucianism on traditional Chinese society was all-pervasive and persists to the present. It has also influenced society and government in China's neighbours, notably Japan, Korea and Vietnam. In addition to these major belief systems, that were practised throughout the whole of China, there were very many popular religions and local cults and deities, frequently associated with secret societies which also had social and political agendas.<sup>6</sup>

Confucianism was perceived as having been antipathetic to women, and this was one of many reasons why radicals in the twentieth century, including the CCP, attacked the Confucian value system. During the 1940s, the CCP targeted women and recruited large numbers, attracting support with its policies of ending concubinage and forced marriage, and promoting education and employment for girls and women. These policies were enshrined in law in the very early years of the PRC and more women than ever before in China found themselves able to play a role outside the narrow confines of the home, in schools, in work and, to a certain extent, in government. This predisposed large numbers of women, especially younger ones, to the non-religious policies of the CCP.

Islam has had a presence in China since the seventh century, and is most evident in the northwest of the country, the region that was settled by Central Asian Muslims, beginning with those brought back by the conquering Mongols in the thirteenth century. It has become particularly deep-rooted in the province of Gansu and the Xinjiang Uyghur and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Regions. Clashes between Muslims, the Han majority and the authorities have been a regular occurrence in these areas and the turmoil in Xinjiang in the 1990s (see p. 19) was only the latest manifestation of this. In spite of the length of its history in China, Islam, unlike Buddhism, continues to be viewed as an alien religion by the majority of the Han Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Christianity of the Nestorian creed may have entered China as early as the seventh century and maintained a presence there until the tenth century. Nestorianism was regarded as a heresy by mainstream Christianity as it distinguished between two separate natures of Christ, the human and the divine. It later became the doctrine of the Eastern or Persian Church. However, it was the work of Jesuit missionaries, beginning with Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century, and the Protestant missionary endeavour, at its height in the nineteenth century, which formed the basis for the present-day Christian community in China.

## Religion and the CCP

Marxism advocates atheism and Marx's view of religion was that it was a product of society. He argued:

*Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion, as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness.<sup>8</sup>*

Marx's views on religion may have been inspired by libertarian concerns, but the way they were used by Stalinist regimes, both in the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from its origins in the Constitution of 1923 until its demise in 1991, and in the PRC, was distinctly authoritarian.

The CCP drew heavily on the experiences of the Communist Party of the USSR in dealing with and repressing religious organizations. Before 1949, the CCP had little direct experience of religious groups and this was one of the major problems it faced when coming to power. The successive Constitutions drawn up by the CCP appeared to provide for freedom of religious belief as long as this did not conflict with the security of the state. According to Article 88 of the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* published in 1954, 'Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.'<sup>9</sup> This clause was deleted during the Cultural Revolution but restored in the 1982 Constitution, the first to be adopted after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. However, the 1982 Constitution made a clear distinction between what it described as normal religious activities and those that threatened the stability of the state, and stated explicitly that religious bodies and religious affairs should not be 'subject to any foreign domination'.<sup>10</sup>

Since religious observance was always considered to be a potential threat to the state, this freedom was always limited and was often completely illusory. Religious affairs were placed under the overall control of the United Front Work Department of the CCP's Central Committee, a department that also had responsibility for relations with ethnic minorities and for the integration of all minorities into the new Chinese society. Views on the desirability of integration have varied considerably and depend to some extent on the changing political climate. At one extreme some 'Great Han chauvinists' rejected the existence of minorities and argued for total assimilation, while other more liberal voices argued for the tolerance of differences and genuine autonomy for minorities. This range of views still exists within the majority Han population today.

The Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), an organ of the State Council with close links to the CCP, was created in 1954 on the basis of an earlier Religious Affairs Office and remains the state organization charged with the detailed supervision of religious activities. Its name was formally changed to the State Religious Affairs Bureau of the State

Council in March 1998. The RAB created national associations for Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism and Islam and used its branches at county level to regulate and control the practice of these religions so that they did not constitute a threat to the power of the CCP. As the sociologist C.K. Yang has noted, these organizations closely resembled the 'central and local agencies in the imperial government for control of the Buddhists and Taoists'.<sup>11</sup>

The observations of Wing-tsit Chan, professor of philosophy and student of religions in China, made after a research visit to China in 1948–9, just as the CCP were taking control of the country, make interesting reading fifty years later:

*'Communist triumph in China seems on the surface to forecast the termination of religion in China. Viewed in the historical perspective and in the patterns of Chinese religious thought, however, Chinese religion has outlived many political systems and ideologies. Communism may change Chinese religion but Chinese religion may change Communism too.'*<sup>12</sup>

C.K. Yang, writing during the first decade of CCP rule in China, had detected a contradictory attitude towards religion. On the one hand there was a marked trend towards secularization, especially among modern educated intellectuals, and many temples were sequestered by the central or local government and put to secular use. At the same time there was a revival of interest in Daoism and Buddhism among the population at large and a move to repair old temples and build new ones.<sup>13</sup>

Temples, churches and mosques which were registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau were given a limited degree of freedom and their members were allowed to worship, at least during relatively liberal periods such as 1950–6, 1960–5 and after 1979. However, in the periods during which radical Maoism was the dominant political culture, the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), and particularly during the latter, bureaucratic control was superseded by mass action against religious institutions that were seen as representatives of the old 'feudal' order. During the Cultural Revolution, the students, schoolchildren and young workers who joined the Red Guards were encouraged to criticize the Four Olds: old customs, old culture, old habits and old thinking. This gave them *carte blanche* to attack both secular and religious institutions; tens of thousands of people were arrested, sent to labour camps, or subjected to severe public criticism; many thousands of monasteries, temples and mosques were destroyed or damaged. While this destruction took place throughout all of the regions of China, the non-Han areas, including Tibet and Xinjiang, were affected particularly badly.

## Document 19

The history of the PRC is inextricably linked with the life of Mao Zedong, Chairman Mao. According to the official versions of Party history, he was at the head of the

CCP from the time of the Zunyi Conference of January 1935, which took place during the epic Long March. Recent research suggests that Mao was far from being the pre-eminent leader then and that he did not become Chairman of the Politburo until 1943 after the 'rectification campaign' that he waged within the Party.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, by 1949, Mao was unquestionably the leader of the CCP, although he was never able to be an absolute dictator in the mould of Stalin, whom he greatly admired, and he had to resort to devious means and mass campaigns against his opponents within the CCP to retain his supremacy.

Mao Zedong stood for what has been described as a 'revolutionary romantic' position, best exemplified by grand radical gestures such as the Great Leap Forward (1958), when he tried to turn China into a leading industrial nation overnight, and the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76 when he mobilized hundreds of thousands of students and young workers as his Red Guards in the fight against bureaucracy and revisionism. His main rivals were the bureaucrats and *apparatchiks*, notably Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who favoured a more gradual transformation of society and the creation of Soviet-style institutions, and who were verbally and physically attacked by the Red Guards.

The death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 removed the major obstacle to social and cultural change. The 'Reform and Opening' policy of Deng Xiaoping, which began in 1978, heralded a period of openness and cultural vitality unprecedented since 1949. The official attitude to religion in this period is best exemplified by *Document 19*, which first emerged as part of the documentation of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Congress of the CCP in 1978, but remained unpublished until 1982 when a revised version appeared in the 16 June edition of *Hongqi (Red Flag)*, the official journal of the CCP. *Document 19* considered the historical background of religion in China, analysed how the CCP had dealt with religious affairs since 1949, including the 'leftist' errors of the Great Leap and Cultural Revolution, and laid down guidelines on Party policy towards religion. Essentially this was to ensure that there was a body of religious professionals who were prepared to work with the CCP and foster 'patriotic' religious organizations. The publication of this directive made possible the open publication of many more articles on what had been a taboo subject for at least 15 years.<sup>15</sup>

*Document 19* acknowledged the existence of religion and its role in 'the development of human society'. It outlined the history of religions in China among both the Han and ethnic minorities. It advocated Lenin's exhortation 'to be especially alert, to be very strict' on the question of religion, an acknowledgement of the potential power of religious movements. The CCP's policies on religion were submitted to a critical analysis, concluding that sensible policies of winning over the 'broad masses of religious believers', which had been adopted in the 1950s, gradually gave way to 'leftist' errors, for which Lin Biao and Jiang Qing were blamed. They 'forcibly forbade normal religious activities by the mass of religious believers' and attacked 'patriotic' religious leaders. This culminated in the physical destruction of Buddhist and Daoist temples, churches



and mosques, and the forcible closure of many more during the Cultural Revolution.

Outlining the CCP's post-Cultural Revolution policy, *Document 19* stated unequivocally that, while 'normal religious beliefs and practices were permitted, religion should never be allowed to regain its 'feudal' power and privileges, nor would religious organizations be allowed to 'make use in any way of religious pretexts to oppose the Party's leadership or the Socialist system, or to destroy national or ethnic unity'.

*Document 19* also analysed the clergy of the various religious communities ('religious professionals', to use the term preferred by the CCP). It estimated that there were approximately 59,000. Of these 27,000 were Buddhist monks and nuns, including lamas of the Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist orders, and 2,600 were Daoist priests and nuns. There were 20,000 imams, 3,400 Catholic priests and 5,900 Protestant clergy. The majority were assumed to be 'patriotic and law-abiding' with a small minority actively opposed to the regime or colluding with foreign counter-revolutionaries. Supporting the patriots in each denomination and suppressing the anti-communist minority was a key part of CCP policy.<sup>16</sup>

The document accepted that temples, churches and mosques should be restored and maintained but insisted that rebuilding must be controlled. In particular 'the indiscriminate building and repairing of temples in rural villages' must be guarded against, in case they became foci of dissent. *Document 19* also noted that some 'normal religious activities' took place in the homes of believers and that these should be permitted. However, some home worship was clearly a cause for concern: 'As for Protestants gathering in homes for worship services [*sic*], in principle this should not be allowed, yet this prohibition should not be too rigidly enforced.' Services in officially approved temples, churches and mosques were preferable as they could be regulated more easily.<sup>17</sup>

Implementing the CCP's religious policies was the task of the eight national 'patriotic religious organizations', most of which dated back to the early years of the PRC. These had fallen into abeyance during the Cultural Revolution but were reconvened in the 1980s. The eight are:

Chinese Buddhist Association  
 Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association  
 Chinese Daoist Association  
 Chinese Islamic Association  
 Chinese Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement

Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference  
 Chinese Catholic Religious Affairs Committee  
 China Christian Council

The Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Associations were established under the direction of the Religious Affairs Bureau in 1957 and the Catholic, Protestant and Islamic organizations were set up along the same lines.<sup>18</sup> The final three bodies were created in the 1980s and do not have the degree of political influence enjoyed by the other five since they do not send representatives to the CPPCC.

These organizations were given the responsibility for establishing 'seminaries' to train the new generation of

clergy: 'the task of these seminaries is to create a contingent of young religious personnel who, in terms of politics, fervently love their homeland and support the Party's leadership and the Socialist system and who possess sufficient religious knowledge'. The order of priorities is interesting.

*Document 19* makes clear that CCP members cannot be believers or take part in religious activities, but does accept that this may be more problematic for ethnic minority CCP members and that patience is required to attract minority cadres who do not have particularly strong beliefs. This is a serious issue for the CCP in its recruitment of members in Tibet and Xinjiang, and the Hui areas of Muslim northwest China.<sup>19</sup>

*Document 19* also articulated the fears of the CCP leadership that religious organizations and activities could be used as a cover for criminal or counter-revolutionary activities. Members of secret societies, fortune-tellers, witches and wizards are marked out as illegal practitioners who are punishable under the law.

The international dimension of religious activity causes the CCP the greatest concern and it is the foreignness of certain religions, mainly Christianity, that has provoked the greatest opposition from both Communist and earlier political leaders in China. *Document 19* recognizes that international religious contacts are likely to increase as China opens out, but warns against 'reactionary religious groups abroad, especially the imperialistic ones such as the Vatican and Protestant Foreign Mission Societies, who strive to use all possible occasions to carry on their efforts at infiltration to return to the China mainland'. The complete independence of Chinese churches is seen as the only way to prevent these foreign organizations from taking control of significant sections of society in China.<sup>20</sup>

*Document 19* is one of the most important documents on religion in post-Mao China, as it set the tone for the debate on the key issues of freedom and control of religion in the years of 'Reform and Opening'. However, individual provinces and autonomous regions have also formulated their own regulations to apply central policy to local conditions. There are significant regional differences in the way that religious organizations are managed by the local authorities.

The new atmosphere introduced by the reform policies created fertile ground for the revival of religion. Central and local government were encouraged to restore temples and encourage the restoration of local festivals and rituals to attract foreign visitors and bring in much-needed tourist revenues.

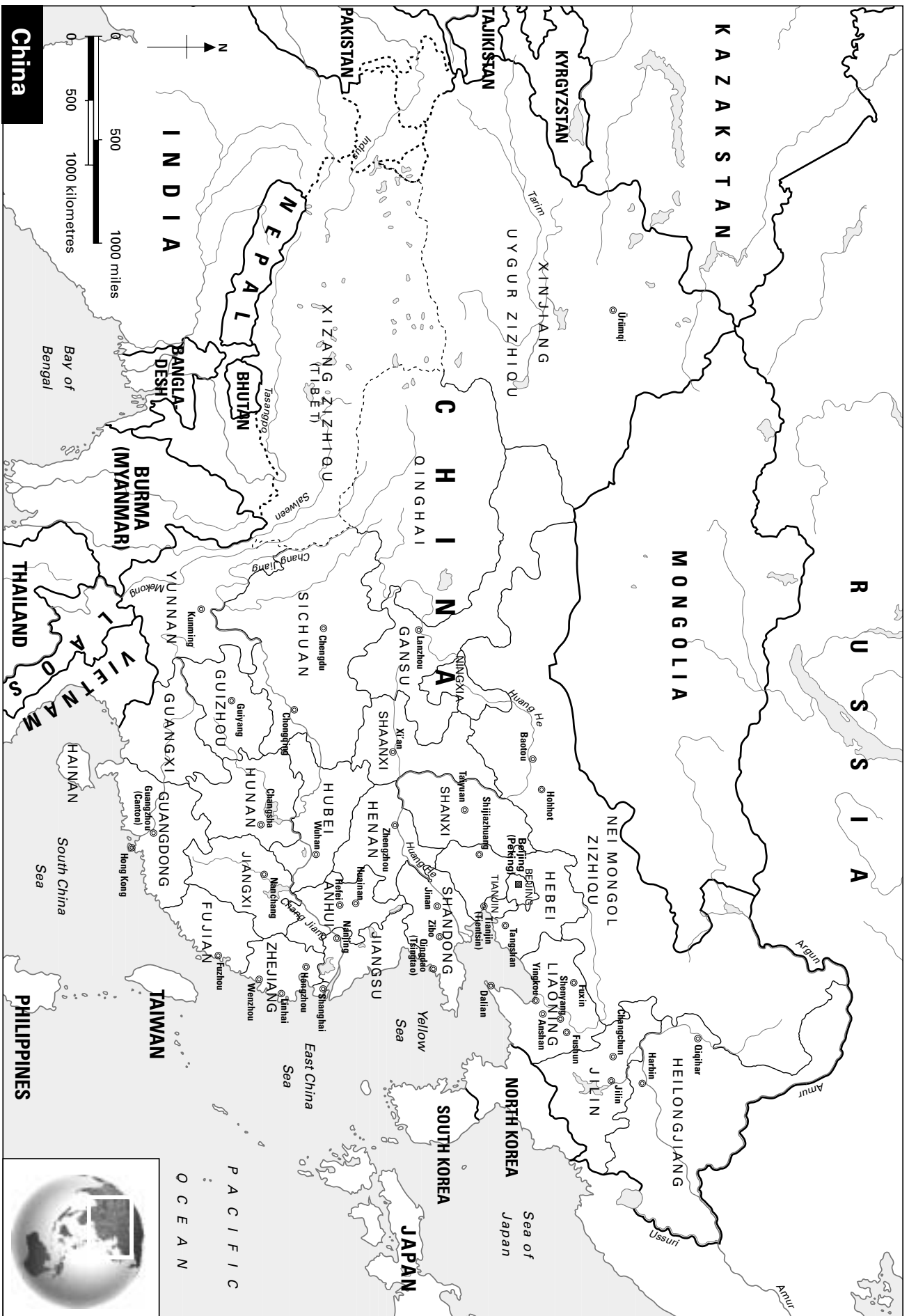
## Hong Kong

Hong Kong was reincorporated into China as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in 1997, after a century and a half as a colony of the United Kingdom. It was and remains a special case. It retains a strong Christian presence, which developed during the colonial period. The traditional Chinese religions of Daoism and Buddhism were not suppressed as they were in China and have survived and thrive. There were fears that, once China reasserted its control, religious freedoms that had

been similar to those enjoyed in the West would be curtailed. These fears do not appear to have been justified so far and Hong Kong's religious institutions remain largely untouched. China has controlled Hong Kong with considerable subtlety and has, by and large, allowed the SAR administration considerable autonomy.

The issue of Falungong (see pp. 21–2) severely tested this autonomy. Although the organization was proscribed in China in 1999, it remained legal in Hong Kong. When supporters of Falungong organized a conference in Hong Kong in January 2001, there was considerable pressure from the National People's Congress and the CPPCC for it to be made illegal in Hong Kong as well. The Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, told the Hong Kong legislative assembly (LegCo) on 8 February that Falungong would not be allowed to use Hong Kong as a base from which to subvert China. He met the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, in Beijing on 5 March and Jiang made it clear that the regulation of Falungong in Hong Kong was a matter for the administration of the SAR. In spite of considerable speculation in the press, there has been no attempt to legislate against Falungong.





RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND CHINA

# Major religions

## Confucianism

Over the centuries, Confucianism does not play a significant role in Chinese society today, but it is worth mentioning because Confucian attitudes and ways of thinking have persisted. Confucianism is synonymous with China and is often counted as one of China's religions. Confucianism is in fact primarily an ethical system that has both religious and political aspects; it played a vital role in holding together Chinese society under the empire. In the Chinese world it is known as *Rujiao*, the teaching of the scholars. Confucius probably lived from 550 to 479 BCE and was a peripatetic teacher of princes rather than a professional politician. His teachings are preserved in a number of texts, primarily the *Analects (Lunyu)*. Among the central tenets of Confucianism are moral leadership by cultivated and scholarly men (*junzi* – often translated as 'gentlemen'), social responsibility and mutual obligation according to one's place in the social hierarchy, filial piety and the pursuit of an elusive concept, *ren*, translated variously as 'benevolence', 'humanity' or 'goodness'.

In traditional China, as in many if not all pre-modern societies, the status of women was very low. This is often blamed on Confucianism but in reality Confucianism only articulated the prejudices of a traditional patriarchal society in a form that reflected Chinese culture.<sup>21</sup> The role of women was to be subservient to their fathers until they were married, then to their husbands and, if they were widowed, to their sons. Confucian writers codified this state of affairs and made it explicit, but there are close parallels in other traditional Asian societies.

Radicals and reformers from the end of the nineteenth century onwards blamed Confucianism for the poverty and backwardness into which China had fallen. Anti-Confucianism was an important component of the political thinking of Chinese radicals, including the CCP.

Confucianism never became an official state religion in spite of its influence in the educational system and numerous attempts over the centuries to make it so.<sup>22</sup> Emperors from the Han and Tang dynasty onwards ordered the construction of temples to honour the sage, clearly indicating his importance to the court. The Nationalist Guomindang (the party in power in China from 1928 to 1949, and in Taiwan since 1949) attempted to revive Confucianism, but, by the time the CCP came to power in 1949, Confucianism was moribund with no national organization and no periodical. There was a national holiday in honour of Confucius but the CCP abolished that.<sup>23</sup>

Confucian temples and shrines were closed down during Land Reform and the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s, and many were converted into workshops, warehouses or grain stores during the Cultural Revolution. Confucius and his legacy were among the main targets of the Cultural Revolution: Red Guards attacked his ancestral home in the town of Qufu in Shandong and his tomb was desecrated.<sup>24</sup>

After the Cultural Revolution this trend was reversed and Confucius came back into favour. Qufu became a tourist attraction and temples, tombs and other sites associated with the Kong family, the descendants of Confucius, were restored and repaired. The Association for Research on Confucius, an academic body, was established in 1985, reviving the study of Confucianism, which had ceased, at least officially, in 1962.<sup>25</sup> During the 1980s, some officials and intellectuals attempted to reintroduce Confucian values in a modified form to help stabilize a society that was experiencing rapid change. The inspiration for this was the economically successful and multi-ethnic state of Singapore, where the political culture is strongly influenced by traditional Chinese Confucian mores.

## Daoism

Daoism is (together with popular and folk religions) found only in China and among Chinese communities abroad. Shinto occupies a similar position in Japan and there are parallels between the two religions. Daoism, especially in its popular form, overlaps with Buddhism, a second-century import that is nevertheless also regarded as a Chinese religion. Daoism has two aspects. Literary and philosophical Daoism, exemplified by the classical texts *Zhuangzi* and *Daodejing*, advocated that human beings should accommodate themselves to the flow of the natural world. Popular Daoism, on the other hand, was a religion with its own texts and rituals, focused on 'immortals' and the quest for everlasting life. It was fragmented and frequently at odds with authority. The popular tradition of Daoism persists today, openly in Hong Kong and Taiwan; on the mainland it remained underground until the 1980s and has been linked with new religious sects and clandestine organizations branded as criminal by the CCP.

Wing-tsit Chan, on his visit to China in 1948–9, concluded that Daoism was defunct along with folk religion in general. Temples, shrines, idols and priests were still in evidence, although their numbers were in decline, and Chan felt 'the real spirit of the religion [was] dead, and its vitality [was] fast disappearing'. When the CCP established the CPPCC in 1949 to provide a forum for and a means of controlling political, ethnic and religious minorities, there were delegates representing and Buddhism, Islam and Protestant Christianity, but none from the world of Daoism. The Daoists had no effective leadership and no programme. Its influence was limited to art, rituals and festivals.<sup>26</sup>

Chan clearly overstated the decline of Daoism and his view is challenged by present-day authorities, notably Kristofer Schipper, who point out that the collapse was superficial and that the importance of Daoism is in the way that it is inseparable from the rituals of daily life in China.<sup>27</sup>

Daoism survived by ‘metamorphosing into religious societies’, secret societies which also drew on Buddhist tradition and had political agendas. Some of them permitted women to play a role in their activities, and in some parts of China there were women’s societies that provided mutual defence and support. These include the White Lotus and the Guiyidao (the Way of Returning to, or Following, the One). Chan observed that, although many of these religio-political associations had been in decline since the 1930s, one, the Yiguandao (Way of Pervading Unity), had ‘gained strength and extended its activities during the Second World War’. Many religious groups, including the Yiguandao, flourished during the Japanese occupation of China (1937–45) and provided a degree of self-defence for the rural population.<sup>28</sup>

Daoism was forced to abandon its apolitical and detached position and adapt to the conditions of the 1950s. Daoist temples lost much of their land during the Land Reform movement, as did other religious institutions, and this considerably weakened their economic positions. Monks were obliged to take manual jobs to support themselves and this was seen as a positive change by the CCP. Even official Communist Party publications now accept that during the Great Leap Forward of 1958, many ancient and precious Daoist artefacts such as bells and cauldrons were melted down in the ‘backyard furnaces’ campaign to produce steel at any cost.<sup>29</sup> In spite of this repression, the Daoist tradition continued, particularly in the countryside, sometimes underground and sometimes openly. In the 1980s the police were reporting the arrest of members of the Yiguandao, a proscribed organization which was supposed to have been wiped out during the 1950s.

Daoist temples and monasteries re-opened in the 1980s, sometimes first as tourist attractions, but they gradually regained their religious functions. Monks were recalled from retirement or from work units to which they had been assigned; funds were raised to rebuild or repair temples; local seminaries were set up to train priests but some novices were also sent to Beijing for training. The Chinese Daoist Association was re-established in 1983 and based at the Baiyun (White Cloud) Temple in Beijing, the largest Daoist temple in northern China. The Association was originally set up in 1957 but suspended during the Cultural Revolution. The Baiyun Temple was closed in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution started and only reopened in March 1984 with over 30 resident monks training Daoists from over a hundred monasteries registered with the Chinese Daoist Association.<sup>30</sup>

In the southeastern province of Fujian, one of the areas that has benefited most from the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping, Daoist temples were re-consecrated by former monks. Rituals and local cults that had appeared extinct were revived and once again began to play a significant role in local politics.<sup>31</sup>

Belief in Daoism has persisted in spite of decades of repression. It is noteworthy that, like the Falungong, Daoism draws support from government employees.

## Buddhism

Although Buddhism, which originated in India, is technically a foreign religion it has been established in China for so long that it is regarded as Chinese. Buddhism was well established in Central Asia by the first century BC and began to spread to China in the early Christian era.<sup>32</sup> During the Han dynasty, one of the formative periods of Chinese culture, the main centres of Buddhism in China were Pengcheng in the south of what is now the province of Hebei, and Luoyang. Another centre, Tonkin, is now in Vietnam.<sup>33</sup>

Buddhism acquired particular influence during the Tang dynasty (618–907) when it attracted support from the imperial court.<sup>34</sup> Buddhist monasteries became extremely wealthy on the basis of donations, and acquired land, social influence and economic power. There is some evidence that financial support for mainstream Buddhist monasteries in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) often came from endowments made by women, wealthy women naturally, but this could not be recorded directly and was often attributed to their husbands.<sup>35</sup> This supports evidence from literature that women were more enthusiastic about Buddhism than men, though support for the religion is always represented in Chinese historical writings as having been entirely masculine.

By the later years of the Ming dynasty, prosperity and stability had created a large landowning gentry class, far more than were needed for official government positions. For many, Buddhist monasteries were to become the focus of their social lives, either as patrons or as monks. Consequently monasteries acquired immense wealth, prestige and authority.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the Buddhist establishment, there were many sects linked with secret societies, such as the millenarian White Lotus, which drew on the tradition of the Maitreya, the Buddha who is yet to come, and which took part in rebellions against the Manchu Qing dynasty in the eighteenth century. White Lotus ideas were influential in the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1901 and remain influential in parts of rural China to this day.<sup>37</sup>

In the early years of the PRC, hundreds of thousands of monks were compelled to leave their orders and work on farms, in workshops or in factories. At the same time the CCP recognized Buddhism as an official religion and allowed two Buddhist delegates to attend the meetings of the CPPCC.<sup>38</sup> The author of a major study of Buddhism in China summarizes the official status of the religion in the first 17 years of the PRC: ‘until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, it was the policy of the Chinese Communist Party to protect Buddhism, while at the same time keeping it under control and utilizing it in foreign policy’.<sup>39</sup> This did not prevent the destruction of temples and their contents, and physical attacks on Buddhist clergy during the campaigns for Land Reform (in spite of clauses in the Land Reform law prohibiting this) and the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries. Although the general tenor of Marxist writing in China was anti-clerical there was some ambiguity, even in the writings of Mao Zedong, where there is some respect for peasant religious beliefs and an acknowledgement that if those beliefs were to be over-

turned it should be the peasants themselves who decide to do so.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that support for Buddhism remained strong although repressed during much of Chairman Mao's period of rule, and observation suggests that more women than men visit, pray in and give donations to temples.

The career of Juzan (Chü-tsan) is instructive in indicating the position of Buddhism in the early years of the PRC. He was considered to be 'modern and progressive in outlook'<sup>41</sup> and was one of two Buddhist delegates to the CPPCC. Juzan became a monk in 1931 having studied under Taixu, 'the leading Buddhist reformer of the Republican era'. He moved to Hong Kong in 1948 and came into contact with a group of people who were to be extremely influential in the PRC. As the CCP came to power, he lobbied for the preservation of a reformed Buddhism, under the Communist state, by placing it at the service of New China. In June 1950 he became the editor of the journal *Modern Buddhism*. 'This was ... the nucleus of a Buddhist front and the precursor of the national Buddhist association that was to be established in 1953.'<sup>42</sup> The journal and association were part of the system for controlling religious activity, and to a lesser extent soliciting feedback from believers, that was established by the CCP in the 1950s.

Land Reform was the single most important policy implemented by the CCP in its early years in power. Designed to alleviate dreadful rural poverty and to distribute land, albeit temporarily, to peasant families who had been the party's power base, it also undermined the traditional social structure of rural China and effectively abolished the landowning class. Buddhist monasteries had acquired large holdings of land over many centuries, and were treated as landlords. During Land Reform, many of them lost land and thus their means of livelihood, although the Agrarian Reform Law was implemented unevenly and not all monasteries suffered.<sup>43</sup>

As collectivization succeeded Land Reform, monks formed themselves into cooperatives and farmed or worked in craft industries to avoid being criticized as parasites. In 1958, the year of the Great Leap Forward, donation boxes at Buddhist shrines were outlawed and monks were forbidden to carry out divination for money.

Many monks and nuns left their monasteries and became lay people, working in agriculture or industry. Many monasteries and temples were taken over by the government and converted into schools, museums, administrative offices or even army barracks. This was not unprecedented as there were instances of the previous Nationalist Guomindang government requisitioning monasteries. Some smaller temples were also destroyed during the 1950s. The net effect of these policies was a dramatic decline in the *sangha*, the community of Buddhist clergy, which, along with the Buddha and the *dharma* (or doctrine), were the Three Jewels, the essential components, of Buddhism.<sup>44</sup> However monasteries and temples remained open and were visited by foreign Buddhists who travelled to China.

With the Cultural Revolution of 1966, the destruction of Buddhism appeared almost complete. Mao Zedong's youthful political shock troops, the Red Guards, were encouraged to attack the Four Olds: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. Although Buddhism was not

specifically named as a target, by the end of September 1966 almost all Buddhist monasteries and temples had closed down (at least in the cities), as had mosques and churches. Many of these were converted into flats or for other uses. Buddhist icons were damaged or destroyed and thousands of monks were arrested and ill-treated. Many were criticized in public meetings and the work of the Chinese Buddhist Association came to a halt although it was able to resume some of its responsibilities in 1972 following the intervention of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai.<sup>45</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Buddhist temples were once again opened, and, although there were very few monks to be seen, it was quite common to see votive offerings of money or fruit that had been left in the outstretched hands of the statues of Bodhisattvas. Official estimates suggest that there are now over 13,000 Buddhist temples in China and more than 200,000 monks and nuns. Out of this total, there are probably 120,000 lamas and nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition with 3,000 temples and 1,700 Living Buddhas.<sup>46</sup>

## Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism

The question of Tibet is one of the most complex and thorniest political, ethnic and religious issues in Asia. There is no universal agreement on the boundaries of Tibet, what its status is now or what it has been in the past. The official Chinese claim, that Tibet has always been part of an unchanging China, is clearly untenable. However, the nationalist case, that Tibet was a completely independent sovereign country for centuries until the armies of the Chinese Communist Party occupied it in 1950, is simplistic. Tibet, like Xinjiang, was incorporated into the Manchu state that ruled China as the Qing dynasty from 1644 to 1912. The Qing maintained a military garrison in Lhasa and appointed officials, *amban*, as its representatives in the Tibetan capital. What is certain is that from 1913, when the 13th Dalai Lama arrived back in Tibet after a period of exile in India, until 1951, when the 14th Dalai Lama put his signature to the disputed Seventeen-Point Agreement, Tibet was ruled by Tibetans without Chinese interference. It is this period of independence that many modern Tibetans take as their model.<sup>47</sup>

A clear distinction can be made between 'political Tibet', the area clearly under the control of successive Dalai Lamas, and 'ethnographic Tibet', which is much greater in size as there are five ethnic Tibetan populations in the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan, which have common borders with 'political Tibet' or the Tibetan Autonomous Region as it is has been defined today.<sup>48</sup> The complexity of the Tibetan issue means that it is even more difficult to separate religion from politics than with other faiths in territories controlled by Beijing.

Buddhism was brought into Tibet from India, with the first known monastery established near Lhasa around AD 779, and gradually absorbed the native animistic folk religion, Bon, which still coexists with Buddhism. Buddhism's temporal authority was strengthened during the rise of Mongol power in Asia in the thirteenth century and the title of Dalai Lama was first bestowed on Sonam Gyatso,

a prominent lama of the Gelug or Yellow Hat sect, in 1578 by the Mongol ruler Altan Khan. Tibetan Buddhism, often known as Lama Buddhism (although this name is not favoured by Tibetans), also spread to Mongolia. It was and remains quite distinct in its organization, scripture, liturgy and culture from Buddhism practised in most of China proper.

The rulers of the last dynasty of the Chinese Empire, the Qing, ran Tibet as a protectorate rather than attempting to absorb it into the Chinese administrative system of provinces. In the eighteenth century the Qing stationed substantial numbers of troops in Tibet but Tibet retained 'its own language, officials and legal system and paid no taxes or tribute to China'.<sup>49</sup> The Qing dynasty declined in the nineteenth century and finally came to an end in 1911, whereupon the 13th Dalai Lama, exiled to India after being outlawed by the Chinese, returned to Lhasa. He arrived in the Tibetan capital in 1913 and was officially recognized by the first president of the new Republican government of China, Yuan Shikai.<sup>50</sup> Tibet enjoyed *de facto* independence between 1913 and 1950 and this is the basis for independence claims today by Tibetan nationalists. The period of independence ended in 1950 with the arrival of the People's Liberation Army and the signing (reluctantly and under pressure on the Tibetan side) of the controversial and contested Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.<sup>51</sup> In 1959, after fierce Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule exploded in insurrection, more troops were moved from China into Tibet and the Dalai Lama fled into exile in Dharamsala, in northern India. Tibet was created an autonomous region of the PRC on 9 September 1965. The Dalai Lama and his senior religious and political officials remained in Dharamsala, depriving Tibet of the leadership that most of the population recognized.<sup>52</sup>

The Cultural Revolution of 1966–76 increased the scale of attacks on Tibetan Buddhism and its material culture that had begun in the suppression of the 1959 rising.<sup>53</sup> The death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 led to a period of relative liberalization in the mid-1980s, influenced by CCP Secretary General Hu Yaobang (whose premature death in 1989 precipitated the Democracy movement and the demonstrations in Tian'anmen Square). There was an increase in the number of The Tibetans participating in government and the status of the Tibetan language and culture was enhanced in government and education.<sup>54</sup> Hu Yaobang visited Tibet in 1980 on the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Seventeen-Point Agreement and was openly critical of the policies and attitudes of Han Chinese cadres in Tibet.<sup>55</sup>

Partly in response to the new liberal atmosphere and partly in response to a major international diplomatic initiative by Dharamsala to try to procure a settlement to the Tibet question, a wave of demonstrations began in Tibet in 1987, led by monks and nuns who supported an independent Tibet under the Dalai Lama. The first demonstrations were by monks of Drepung monastery to the west of Lhasa, the senior monastery in the Gelug or Yellow Hat tradition. They carried out religious circumambulations of Lhasa and were arrested when they marched on government offices. The demonstrations became violent after demonstrators were arrested and assaulted, and

police fired on the crowds killing some demonstrators.<sup>56</sup>

Demonstrations continued, led by monks and nuns whose courage and fortitude in the face of alleged brutality was recognized internationally. A further riot took place in 1988 when the Panchen Lama (who died on 28 January 1989) visited Tibet in an attempt to ensure the success of the Great Prayer Festival which is held during celebrations of the Tibetan New Year. Many monks felt that their festival had been hijacked by the CCP and a minor contretemps exploded into riots that were followed by mass arrests and a political and religious clampdown. A nationalist Tibetan Buddhist movement had been formed, stimulated by but isolated from and essentially independent of the leadership in Dharamsala.<sup>57</sup>

The death of the Panchen Lama in January 1989 and the search for a successor precipitated another crisis. The Panchen Lama is second only to the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan hierarchy and some place his spiritual authority ahead of that of the Dalai Lama. In the twentieth century, successive Panchen Lamas have generally been closer to governments in Beijing than any other high lamas. Beijing tried to control the selection process which also needed confirmation by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama announced his candidate, Gendura Choeki Nyima, on 14 May 1995 but in November Beijing endorsed a different contender and the whole process ended in complete disarray.<sup>58</sup>

Conflict between the Tibetan religious leadership and Beijing about the Panchen Lama succession was highlighted when the Abbot of Kumbun monastery in the province of Qinghai, part of old Tibet, was expelled from the CPPCC in June 2000 after leaving China for the USA in 1998. Agyo Lobsangtubdain Gyurma had been a member of the Chinese committee entrusted with locating the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama but spoke out in support of the Dalai Lama and rejected the Chinese choice of Gyaltsen Norbu.<sup>59</sup>

The Dalai Lama gave an interview to the journal *Asia-week* in which he reflected on the effect his death would have on Tibetan people. He said 'if I passed away, the reincarnation would logically come outside Tibet, in a free country. But China will choose a boy as the next Dalai Lama, though in reality he is not.' He added that Tibetans would reject the Panchen Lama nominated by Beijing.<sup>60</sup>

Reports of ill-treatment and brutality continued to come out of Tibet, and monks and nuns, the standard-bearers of Tibetan national and religious identity, were frequently the targets. Five nuns, arrested after demonstrations in May 1998, were interrogated in Drapchi prison and beaten with belts and electric batons after calling out Tibetan nationalist slogans when ordered to sing Chinese patriotic songs. They committed suicide.<sup>61</sup> In Tibet, young nuns have often been in the forefront of separatist or religious demonstrations and appear to have suffered particularly from violence and indignities at the hands of Chinese paramilitary police and prison officials.

A young lama, virtually unknown outside the Tibetan community, left Tibet in December 1999 to join the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. The 17th Karmapa Lama, who was 14 years old at the time, left the Tsurphu monastery to the northeast of Lhasa saying that he was going abroad to buy musical instruments and black hats worn by previous

incarnations of Karmapa. Unusually, the Karmapa Lama Ugyen Trinley Dorge, the son of nomads, was recognized by both Beijing and the Dalai Lama as a reincarnation of the previous head of the Kagyu sect in 1992.<sup>62</sup>

The flight of the Karmapa Lama embarrassed the authorities and was followed by a crackdown on monasteries in Tibet. Thirty monks were expelled from the Jokhang temple in Lhasa in June 2000 and the government threatened reprisals against those taking part in pilgrimage during the festival of Sagadawa. Children were told they would be expelled from school, officials that they would be dismissed and pensioners that their pensions would be stopped. There were also reports of houses being raided and the seizure of religious objects and photographs of the Dalai Lama. Members of the CCP and teachers who had photographs of the Dalai Lama in their possession were fined.<sup>63</sup> The US Ambassador to China, Admiral Joseph Prueher, visited Tibet for the first time during this crackdown and met Legqog, Chair of the Tibetan Autonomous Regional Government.<sup>64</sup>

The following month, the Tibetan government in exile published a report on *China's Current Policy in Tibet*, claiming that Beijing was aiming at the 'total destruction' of Tibetan culture. The report also argued that the Dalai Lama had moderated the more extreme elements of Tibetan nationalism and that China's refusal to have any contact with him could lead to more violent expressions of protest.<sup>65</sup>

## Christianity

There is no single term in Chinese to refer to the whole body of churches that would be regarded as Christian outside China. There are separate terms for Protestantism (*Jidujiao*) and Catholicism (*Tianzhujiao*) and they are effectively treated as if they are two unconnected religions. Orthodox Christianity, which has a following in northeast China and in the Russian communities of Xinjiang, is also often referred to as if it were a completely separate religion, *Zhengjiao*.

The main issue in relations between the churches and the CCP state has been the extent to which Christian churches in China are independent Chinese organizations or are part of worldwide Christian organizations and therefore subject to the control of authorities outside China. The CCP does not allow genuinely independent organizations or branches of international organizations of any kind, religious or otherwise, to exist in China, and Christian organizations in China are supposed to be under the control of the CCP state. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement was established in the 1950s to allow Christians to belong to churches that were considered to be patriotic. However, significant numbers of congregations refuse to be part of this government-sponsored movement and worship in underground and house churches. The Catholic Church in China is similarly divided, with two sets of bishops, one group ordained with the sanction of Beijing and the other with the authority of the Vatican.

Christianity in its Nestorian form probably first appeared in China as early as the seventh century AD but was crushed during a period of religious persecution in

the mid-ninth century though it did have supporters in the Mongol court in the thirteenth century.

Jesuits had a far greater impact on Chinese society and culture, the first missionaries of the Society to visit China being Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. Ricci established a Jesuit mission in Beijing in 1601 and was the first of a series of scholars and priests who were frequently present at the courts of the Ming and early Qing dynasty. The question of whether Christian converts could also participate in Confucian rituals (a matter on which the Kangxi emperor insisted) led to the Rites Controversy, conflict between the Jesuits and the Vatican, and the disbanding of the Society of Jesus by the Pope in 1773.<sup>66</sup>

The Protestant mission to China began with Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society, who arrived in Macao in 1807. During the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries from all the Western countries were active in China. Their main purpose was to create Chinese converts but they contributed greatly to social reform in China, especially in the fields of education and medicine.<sup>67</sup>

Wing-tsit Chan, returning to China for a research visit in 1948, was impressed by what he termed the Lay movement in Chinese Christianity, an emphasis on the individual believer rather than the clergy, a trend that he believed was particularly Chinese and could be traced back to Chinese Buddhism, which had long been a mass religion rather than merely a monastic one.

*In short it is the layman who has given Chinese religion its vitality, strength and leadership. ... Christianity can hardly escape the same influences. Since the National Christian Council was established in 1922, the [centre] of Christianity in China has gradually shifted from the clergy to the layman.'*

An example of this was the Jesus Family. This community of families, who lived, worked and worshipped as a religious extended family, was established in 1921 by Jing Dianying in the village of Mazhuang in the Taian region of Shandong province to the south of the provincial capital. By January 1950, Chan estimated that the Jesus Family was about 10,000 strong with 179 linked families.<sup>68</sup> Bob Whyte has a lower estimate of 6,000 followers. Accusations of sexual immorality and other offences against Jing led to his imprisonment and the dissolution of the Jesus Family.<sup>69</sup> Other Christian groups of debatable orthodoxy active at the time of liberation included the True Jesus Church, which had most support in the coastal province of Fujian, and the Little Flock, whose leader Watchman Nee (Ni Duosheng) was imprisoned for corruption during the 5-Anti campaign. This campaign was launched by the CCP in 1952, ostensibly to counteract bribery, fraud and tax evasion in the business community, but it also brought about the downfall of many members of the former upper and middle classes.<sup>70</sup>

### Protestantism

The China Christian Council estimated that in 1981 there were 4,044 Protestant churches in China, a quarter of them recently built, but nearly 17,000 meeting places for Christians altogether. Estimates of the total number of Protestants varies enormously. The figure



accepted by the China Christian Council is 5 million, but unofficial estimates are much higher. The greatest concentration of believers is in the provinces of Henan, Zhejiang and Fujian. Lay leadership, as identified by Wing-tsit Chan, remains an important part of church organization although theological colleges train clergy.<sup>71</sup>

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement is the vehicle through which Protestant Christianity is simultaneously licensed and controlled by the CCP. It grew out of the Christian Manifesto signed by 19 Protestant leaders at a meeting with Zhou Enlai in April 1950 and a meeting of 151 Protestant leaders the following year as part of the CCP's United Front bridge-building policy.<sup>72</sup> The Three-Selfs are self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, concepts which pre-date the CCP and its Religious Affairs Bureau, and which some have traced back to the China Inland Mission of the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> They were used to indicate that Christianity would be tolerated provided that it remained a Chinese Christianity, away from the control of foreign churches. Bob Whyte has pointed to the fact that the use of 'patriotic' in the title of the association was unique to Christians.<sup>74</sup>

Six leaders of underground Protestant churches were sentenced to various terms of 're-education through labour' in Nanyang (Henan). They were among 40 church leaders arrested in August 1999. Among the six were Zhang Rongliang and Zheng Shuqian of the Fangcheng church, one of the most enduring of the underground Protestant churches. The others belonged to the Chinese Evangelical Fellowship.<sup>75</sup>

Leaders of underground churches that had integrated Christian doctrines with local culture were arrested in November and December 1999 during a major campaign which had concentrated on the Falungong. Groups affected included the All Scope, set up in Xiangtan (Hunan) in 1985 with foreign assistance, the Zhushen in Nanxiang (Guangdong), whose leader Lui Jianguo was under arrest charged with rape and other offences, and the Orient Lightning in Tanghe (Henan).<sup>76</sup>

In May 2000, 20 members of the Disciples, a group founded by Ji Sanbao in Shaanxi Province in 1989, were detained, beginning with the arrest of one of its leaders Li Xueqing on 28 March. Li was sentenced to a year in a *laojiao* (education-through-labour camp), and the Disciples were branded a cult, their chief offence having been opposition to China's family planning policies.<sup>77</sup>

One of the largest reported mass arrests of Christians took place in August 2000 when 130 members of the church in Fangcheng, Henan province, were detained. The founder of the church had already been arrested and sentenced to two years in a *laojiao* camp in December 1999. Among the 130 detained were three missionaries of Taiwanese origin who held US passports, Henry Chu, his wife Sandee Lin and Patricia Lan, who were quite clearly acting outside the law.<sup>78</sup> They were released on 25 August and left China. Of the 130 members of the Fangcheng church, 85 were charged with cult membership in September 2000.<sup>79</sup>

Further arrests of underground Protestants were reported in Guangshui (Hubei), Yucheng (Hunan) where members of the China Evangelical Fellowship were detained, and Hejin (Shanxi).<sup>80</sup>

The reasons for the crackdown were made clear by Luo Guanzong, the chair of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the body that speaks for the official Protestant Church in China and is approved by and broadly speaking supports the policies of the CCP on religion. He said that Chinese churches had been independent for 50 years and that they would never again come under the control of foreigners so they could be used by imperialists to invade China.<sup>81</sup>

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement marked the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation on 23–4 September 2000 with a concert and a service of thanksgiving. Bishop Ding Guanxun, who chairs both the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council, called for the adaptation of theology to suit the conditions of a socialist society.<sup>82</sup>

### Catholicism

The official Catholic Church in China also subscribes to the Three-Self policy and its churches, which have no formally acknowledged links with the Vatican, are supervised by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (again the term 'patriotic' is used in the title). This has caused much conflict within the Catholic churches as many bishops, priests and laymen remain loyal to Rome and they have been described as an underground Catholic Church.<sup>83</sup> In practice there is often cooperation between the official and underground churches at the local level.<sup>84</sup>

The simplistic division of the Catholic Church in China into the official and the underground, the 'patriots' and the 'faithful', masks a complex and changing reality. By 1989 'more and more of the "patriots" were openly declaring their allegiance to the Pope, and among the "faithful" many found working with the government-sponsored Patriotic Association an acceptable *modus vivendi*. On the other hand a new group, calling itself the "underground church" was emerging with a clear confrontational policy.<sup>85</sup> The confrontation resulted in the arrest of underground Catholics setting up illegal churches, and the detention of 30 clergy, including six bishops, between December 1989 and February 1990. The underground church involved in these clashes was based on Catholics who refused to recognize the leadership of the Patriotic Association in the 1950s on the instructions of the Vatican. They worshipped privately with the assistance of priests who similarly rejected conformity with the United Front policies. The underground church, from the 1980s onwards, has become more organized and assertive. It ordains priests secretly and sends them around China to work against the Patriotic Association. The growth of the underground church was given a boost in 1979 when the Vatican relaxed regulations for underground pastors, including regulations for ordination.

One of the staunchest supporters of the underground church until his death in 1992 was Bishop Fan Xueyan of Baoding, known to be particularly close to the Vatican. The underground church published a document, *The Thirteen Points*, in September 1988 which shook Catholicism in China. Essentially, the underground church was gaining support for their argument that marriages and baptism by 'patriotic priests' were invalid.<sup>86</sup>

In the early 1990s there was a change of attitude in the official Catholic Church and it appeared to move closer to the Vatican, with worshippers praying openly for the Pope and declaring themselves 'united with the Holy See' without necessarily attracting the ire of the authorities. Moves towards establishing diplomatic relations between Beijing and the Vatican were thought to be behind the changing situation, but CCP concern at the 'growing strength of the underground church' may also be an important factor. In April 1989 the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued 'Directives of the Party on how to deal with the Catholic Church in the new situation', commonly referred to as Document No. 3, which appears to tolerate moves of the official church towards Rome while urging the eradication of the underground church.<sup>87</sup> This was reinforced in November 1999 when the Vatican's Fides news agency reported that it had obtained a CCP Central Committee Document which included plans for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and China, broken off in 1951; and the break-up of the underground church, with its leaders either joining the Catholic Church approved by the state or risking imprisonment or administrative detention.<sup>88</sup>

The effect of a possible agreement with the Vatican made the state-approved Catholic Church in China very positive about the future for Catholics in China. Li Duan, Bishop of Xi'an in the official church stated: 'Underground bishops say we do not recognise the Pope. That is not true of course. But now if the Pope recognises China and China recognises the Pope, there is no point in staying underground any more.' There was even discussion of the possible abolition of the China Patriotic Catholic Association.<sup>89</sup>

The power struggle between the Vatican and Beijing continued with plans to ordain three new bishops, for Nanjing, Suzhou and Hangzhou, in the official Chinese Catholic Church on the same day that the Pope was to ordain new bishops at the Vatican.<sup>90</sup> Cardinal Ignatius Gong Pinmei – who had been imprisoned for 30 years in China, moved to the USA and died in March 2000 – had been Bishop of Shanghai and Apostolic Administrator of Suzhou and Nanjing. The Vatican reacted with 'surprise and regret' at the ordinations and indicated that Beijing's moves would hinder the normalization of relations.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, the official Catholic Church proceeded with the ordination of Matthew Cao Xiangde as Bishop of Hangzhou. The ordination in May 2000 of Zhao Fengchang was, in contrast, also approved by the Vatican and leaders of the official Catholic Church in China expressed the hope that pragmatism would prevail and that normal relations between Beijing and the Vatican would be possible.<sup>92</sup> Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan, the president of the government-sponsored China Patriotic Catholic Association, told *China Daily* in August 2000 that religion in China was entering a new golden age but warned of the danger of cults.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, the campaign against the underground Catholic Church continued. Jiang Shuang, a priest in the underground church was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for illegally publishing the Bible and other religious material in Cangnan (Zhejiang). Seven unregistered churches were also closed down by police and a number

of underground priests disappeared.<sup>94</sup> Another underground priest, Gao Yihua from Jinfengzhen (Fujian), was arrested while celebrating Mass in a private house on 19 August 2000, after he apparently refused to register with the China Patriotic Catholic Association.<sup>95</sup> Other reports spoke of the arrest of 24 underground Catholics in Fujian, and violence against a priest, Liu Shaozheng.<sup>96</sup> Yang Shudao, Archbishop of Fuzhou, remains under police surveillance after his release from brief detention in February 2000. The Bishop of Zhaoxian (Hebei), Joseph Jiang Mingyuan, was arrested in August.<sup>97</sup> Bishop Zeng Jingmu was detained in Jiangxi and Liao Haiqing, a priest in the underground Catholic Church, was also arrested. In Fujian, Ye Gongfeng, another underground priest, was arrested and ill-treated.<sup>98</sup>

Cardinal Roger Etchegary, a veteran emissary of the Pope, visited China in the middle of September 2000, while these arrests were taking place, to attend a meeting organized by the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, but also to talk to leaders of the Catholic Patriotic Church.<sup>99</sup> He protested against the arrests of Catholic clergy and lay people and celebrated Mass in Beijing, the first cardinal to do so since 1949.

The decision of the Vatican to canonize 120 missionaries and Chinese martyrs further fuelled the dispute with Beijing. The date chosen for the canonization was 1 October, the feast day of St Thérèse of Lisieux, the patron saint of missions to China. With its long history of sinological studies, the Vatican cannot have failed to notice that 1 October is China's national day and that 1 October 2000 marked 51 years of Communist rule. Beijing's reaction was predictably furious and many of the martyrs, mostly killed in the nineteenth century, were described as criminals and sinners. Many died during the Boxer Rising of 1899–1901.<sup>100</sup>

The new saints, 87 Chinese martyrs and 33 European missionaries to China, were canonized at a ceremony in St Peter's Square, Rome on 1 October. No representatives travelled from China. The Pope named Agostina Zhao Rong, who died in 1815, Anna Wang and Chi Zhuzi, but very little detail was forthcoming about their lives or the nature of their martyrdom. 'The celebration at present is not the best time to come to a judgement on these historical periods, what could have and what should have been done in another See.'

At an audience for pilgrims he said: 'If there were any [mistakes in Christian missionary activity in China] – and is man ever free of defects? – we ask forgiveness.'<sup>101</sup>

## Islam

The total number of Muslims in China and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is difficult to estimate precisely. Documents published in the Islamic world before the Second World War often referred to 50 million Muslims, a figure now accepted as having had no basis in fact as the first census in China that had any claim to accuracy was in 1953. A more realistic estimate would be 20 million.<sup>102</sup>

These Muslims can be divided into two major groups,

according to their language. The Hui, also called the Chinese Muslims, are spread throughout, with a significant concentration in the northwest provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. They speak the Chinese of their region although they do retain some Arabic and Persian in their everyday language. Hui Muslims follow *Gedimu*, or orthodox Sunni Islam, but many are also members of one of the many Sufi orders to be found in the northwest, which have frequently come into conflict with the *Gedimu* leadership and the state over the building of tombs for their founding *shaykhs* (spiritual leaders). The non-Hui Muslims are considered separately (see next section).

*In spite of its 13 centuries in China, Islam has remained a foreign religion on Chinese soil. Cut off from the world Islamic community at large, and isolated from Chinese culture and life, it thrives by itself. Since its introduction into China it has had almost no contact with the outside Islamic world until our own time.*

Wing-tsit Chan's analysis in 1949/50 is mainly accurate although more recent studies have pointed out that *hajj* pilgrimage and Central Asia missionaries travelling to China both made significant contributions to the development of Sufi orders, particularly in the northwest.<sup>103</sup> However, the sense of isolation from mainstream Islam is still keenly felt by Muslims today, particularly in the rural areas of Ningxia, Gansu and Xinjiang, in spite of the improvements in transport and communications and the relative freedom to travel. The familiar division between officially recognized religion and underground groups also exists in Islam in China and the division can be traced back well before the appearance of the CCP.

Muslims of the *Gedimu* (Arabic *al-qadim* – the ancient tradition) have been responsible for building and running most of the mosques, *madrasas* (Quranic schools) and colleges for training imams since Islam arrived in China, and certainly since the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), a period for which documentation is fairly reliable. During the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911), a period of travel restrictions while the dynasty consolidated its control was followed by territorial expansion into Central Asia and relatively free travel. Muslims from China came into contact with radical, reforming Islamic groups in Central Asia and the Middle East as they travelled on the *hajj* and brought back new ideas into China. As a result of these links, organizations like the Ikhwanî (an offshoot of the eighteenth-century Wahabbist revivalist movement that was the spiritual inspiration for modern Saudi Arabia) and a proliferation of Sufi orders appeared in China, mainly in what is now Gansu, Ningxia and Xinjiang. These groups were frequently in conflict with the *Gedimu* leadership and the Chinese authorities.

This conflict occasionally spilled over into widespread violence, notably in the insurrections of 1862–78 and 1895, which devastated the northwest and drastically reduced the population of Muslims. These conflicts have often been portrayed as simply rebellions of ethnic and religious minorities against a corrupt and declining Manchu state, but conflicts *within* Islam also played an important role.<sup>104</sup> The Manchu and Chinese authorities

certainly regarded the insurrections as rebellions against their legitimate authority and brutally suppressed them. Muslim communities in the early twentieth century kept a very low profile after this, and played down the differences between themselves and the majority Han population, although there was a resurgence of Muslim organization after the 1911 Revolution toppled the Qing and a brief period of republican government was inaugurated.<sup>105</sup>

Independent Sufi and other religious orders flourished and one powerful community in the southwest of Gansu, the Xidaotang, became wealthy from its agricultural and business enterprises. Its collective resources provided for education and other services for over 400 families. The combination of wealth and religious authority made the Xidaotang a considerable power in northwest China in the 1940s.<sup>106</sup>

### China and the Naqshbandiyya

The Sufi orders, including the Naqshbandiyya, although not directly under that name, spread further east into the Hui communities of what are now Ningxia and Gansu in northwestern China, extending the reach of transnational Islam in its Sufi form. In this part of China, the central organization of the Sufi pathway (Arabic *tariqa*) evolved into the *daotang* 'hall of the path or doctrine' or *jiaotang* 'hall of teaching' often based on the tomb (*gongbei*) of the founder, paralleling the *mazars* of the Uyghur Sufis of Xinjiang. The equivalent of the Arabic *silsila* (the inherited chain of succession) is probably the *menhuan*.<sup>107</sup>

In the 1980s, when the outward expression of Muslim identity was possible in northwest China, members of the Sufi *menhuan*, who had continued to perform their *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) in secret, emerged and began to reclaim the land on which the tombs of their *shaykhs* stood. Mosques and *daotang* were rebuilt and refurbished, and the tombs once again became a centre for Sufi worship. There was particular resistance to rebuilding the tombs of the *shaykhs* of the Sufi orders, from local CCP officials and local government. In addition, there were disputes between rival branches of Sufi groups, which sometimes led to violent conflict between them.

### Xinjiang: religion and ethnicity

Almost all the Muslims whose first language is not Chinese are found in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Eastern Turkestan). Most are speakers of Turkic languages, mainly Uyghur and Kazakh, although there are speakers of an eastern variety of Tajik (Wakh) in the Pamir mountains.<sup>108</sup> There are also Hui communities in Xinjiang. Because the authorities see their religious beliefs as tied closely to separatist ideas, the Turkic-speaking Muslims are subject to greater controls and are far less free to practise and express their faith than are the Hui. At times when Hui mosques have been open and busy with worshippers, Uyghur and Kazak mosques remained closed, even in the Xinjiang capital Urumqi, which is generally stable and thoroughly under Chinese control.<sup>109</sup>

Among Xinjiang Muslims there are also numbers of

Sufi groups, including the Naqshbandi, order which is noted for its active involvement in politics in the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia. A nationalist separatist tradition in Xinjiang, which had been suppressed between 1949 and 1976, began to flourish again after the end of the Cultural Revolution and gradually developed into an active opposition movement, parts of which are strongly influenced by the radical political Islam of Iran and Afghanistan. Separatist sentiment has been strengthened by fears that the original population of Xinjiang is being deliberately overwhelmed by the migration of Han Chinese from the east. Economic development, designed to solve the problems of Xinjiang by relieving poverty, is giving rise to new conflict as many Uyghurs perceive that new economic opportunities are going to the Han incomers rather than to their own community. Serious disturbances began in Baren in 1990 and reached a climax with the riots in Yining/Ghulja in February 1997, which cost many lives and resulted in many more casualties.<sup>110</sup>

Hui Muslims also consider themselves to be ethnically different from the Han Chinese. However, they are Chinese-speakers so the differences between them and the Han are not as clear-cut as they are in Xinjiang, where the level of understanding of standard Chinese and local dialects varies considerably. Many Uyghurs in the rural areas know little spoken and no written Chinese.

### Xinjiang Sufism

Sufi orders and their leaders, are known in Xinjiang, as in the rest of Central Asia, as *Ishan* (*Yishan* in Chinese). This is a highly respectful form of address for Sufi *shaykhs* which was then applied by extension to the organizations whose loyalty they commanded. The term derives from the third person plural pronoun meaning 'they' or 'them' in the Persian language. In the fourteenth century, the leaders of the Sufi orders were sanctified, and their disciples, out of respect or fear, did not address them directly by their personal names, instead calling them *Ishan*. This gradually evolved into the name used for the leaders of the orders. In Chinese, all Sufi groups are known as *yishanpai* and their leaders as *yishan*.

The *Ishan* are considered by their followers to be something approximating to contemporary living saints. They are seen as the protectors of the well-being of their disciples both in this life and the next, and are believed by some to be able to perform miracles. Because of this they are venerated and obeyed by their followers.

The hereditary and hierarchical nature of the Sufi orders is important as an explanation of their persistence and the firmness with which they were able to exert control over their organizations. Succession to the post of *Ishan* normally passed from father to son, but the *Ishan* could instead choose a favoured disciple. The orders imposed tight communal discipline on their members through education, ritual and worship at the tombs (*mazars*) of the *shaykhs* or founding fathers of their order.

In general, the towns and villages of the far south and southwest of Xinjiang, the Altishahr, being the furthest from Chinese influence, have preserved the most distinctively different Uyghur culture. Of these, the best-documented, and one of the furthest west in Xinjiang, is the

great religious, intellectual and commercial centre of Kashghar (Kashi in its Chinese form) and the rural areas that surround it.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Islam in Kashghar society up to the point at which it came under the control of the CCP after 1949. It has been estimated that in the early 1950s, there were more than 12,000 mosques of different size and status in the prefecture in which Kashghar is situated, while in the Muslim sector of Kashghar city itself (known in Chinese as Shufu), there were no fewer than 126. The *waqfiyya* system of land owned by mosques and other Islamic bodies, and the Islamic courts were also central to the power of Islam, but Sufism also played an important role. Some *waqfiyya* land, for example, was attached to the *mazars* of the Sufi orders.

### Khotan 1950

The first major incident of resistance to the CCP after it took control over Xinjiang in 1950 was probably the Khotan rising by a Pan-Turkic organization Emin (the name deriving from the Arabic *amin*, which means faithful, loyal or trustworthy), led by Abdimit in December 1954 and strongly influenced by Sufi thought. Declaring its intention of establishing a Muslim state, the Emin group published a document entitled *Guidelines for an Islamic Republic*, issued many posters and pamphlets, and elected a government in which Abdimit was to be President. On 31 December, Abdimit led more than 300 supporters from the Karakash, Hotan and Lop areas, all of them followers of one of the Sufi orders, in an attack on a prison camp (the Chinese term for this is *laogai nongchang* labour reform farm) in Karakash during which an officer and seven soldiers were killed. It is not clear from the Chinese sources with which of the Sufi orders the attackers were associated.

They seized weapons and a vehicle, launched an attack on the county town of Khotan, and sent disciples to nearby towns and cities, including Kashghar, where anti-Chinese disturbances took place. The main activists of the Emin group escaped and fled abroad, but between December 1954 and the Lop riots of May 1956, in which supporters of Abdimit seem to have played a part, there were eight major disturbances in the Khotan area under the slogans 'Allah commands us to fight for religion' and 'The Communists have stolen the land, food, minerals and property of the Muslims', the latter clearly referring to the confiscation of land during the implementation of Land Reform. It is quite clear that Abdimit used his position and influence as a Sufi *shaykh* to motivate his supporters to rise up against the Chinese, gathering them together in a large group in Moyu (Karakash) county and getting them to take an oath of loyalty to him while holding the Qur'an. In this way he developed a considerable following in the rural areas which seems to have persisted even after he left Xinjiang. From this point onwards, it is extremely difficult to be precise about the religious affiliations of organizations and individuals as their activities have been carried out in the face of severe repression by the Chinese state, i.e. banning of all religious organizations other than those registered by the state, and close supervision of religious activities by police and civil authorities.

## Baren 1990

The most serious large-scale disturbances in Xinjiang in this period, and perhaps the crucial events which determined the region's slide into conflict and violence, were the riots at Baren in Akto county, which is in the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture in southern Xinjiang, in April 1990. Akto is to the south of the great trading centre of Kashghar and close to the Pamir mountains which form China's border with Afghanistan. A group of Kyrgyz men attending prayers at a mosque on 5 April began criticizing CCP policies towards ethnic minorities, including birth control, nuclear weapons testing and the export of Xinjiang's resources to 'inland China'. This developed into a mass protest, with some activists calling for a *jihad* to drive the Han unbelievers out of Xinjiang and to establish an East Turkestan state. One hundred police officers sent to quell the riot were overpowered and their weapons and ammunition stolen. Disturbances continued on 6 April, with rioters firing small arms and throwing bombs at police and officials who were surrounding them, and blowing up part of the local government building. According to the official account of the events, the rising was finally suppressed by the Public Security Bureau, People's Armed Police from the Kashghar garrison and militia units, but there were also reports that 1,000 regular PLA troops were brought in, and local politicians later visited injured soldiers in hospital to thank them for their part in suppressing the rising.<sup>111</sup>

There were conflicting reports of the number of casualties in the insurrection, with the foreign press quoting over 60 dead and Tomur Dawamat admitting that six People's Armed Police officers and one Uyghur cadre had been killed, and that 15 demonstrators had also been killed and over 100 arrested. The Chinese-language channel of Xinjiang Television on 22 April showed film of Uyghur-language documents, which it claimed gave instructions for a *jihad* combined with an armed Turkic nationalist uprising for an East Turkestan Republic. The Chinese media reported that young Uyghur militants had been receiving weapons and unarmed combat training in an Islamic Holy War Force financed by contributions (extorted, according to the Chinese authorities) from the local Muslim population. Some reports suggested that the rebels were supplied with arms by *mujaheddin* units in Afghanistan and named the leader as Abu Kasim from Karghalik, a town south of Yarkand in the Altishahr, near the border with Afghanistan. Chinese officials blamed foreign interference, in particular the long-established group of Uyghur exiles in Turkey associated with Isa Yusuf Alptekin and his family. In September 1990 there were similar disturbances, but on a smaller scale, in northern Xinjiang near the border with the former USSR.<sup>112</sup>

What appeared at the time to have been a spontaneous act of defiance against Chinese rule in Baren was in fact, according to Chinese scholars, a well-planned and highly organized operation, confirming the Xinjiang television reports. The rising had been prepared in great secret the previous year by a group led by Zeydin Yusuf, who recruited members to his Eastern Turkestan Islamic Party at prayer meetings in the mosques. They were making plans for an armed uprising to create an East

Turkestan Republic based on Baren. The youth wing was formed into an 'Islamic Dare to Die Corps' (*Yisilan gansidui*). Party members set up loudspeakers in the courtyards of mosques in the villages of Baren and Tur and played cassette tapes praising the virtues of *jihad*. They held ceremonies in which they placed knives on the ground and got people to swear their support for the *jihad* on the Qur'an, threatening to kill those who betrayed Islam. There is no explicit proof that these disturbances involved members of Sufi orders, but the *modus operandi* was very similar.<sup>113</sup>

After the 1989 demonstrations, a campaign had been launched to bring unofficial religious schools under central control, and in southern Xinjiang two were closed and imams whose qualifications were not recognized officially were stripped of office. Following the 1990 Baren insurrection this clampdown was intensified, to include a ban on foreign preachers and a move to close down 'illegal Islamic schools, forced donations for mosque building and anti-Han activities'. This was formalized in two sets of regulations enacted by the Xinjiang Region government in September 1990, the *Regulations for Religious Personnel* and *Regulations on Religious Activities*, which are designed to restrict religious activities to those which do not threaten the status quo in Xinjiang, and to prohibit religious leaders other than those approved of and licensed by the authorities from practising. In Akto county, site of the Baren rising, 50 mosques, described as 'superfluous', were closed and the construction or planning of 100 projected new mosques was halted. All imams were required to write a letter to the government pledging their loyalty. Islam was subject to the same controls as all other religions in China, that is, the only religious activities permitted were those registered with and formally approved by the authorities. In the case of Islam, these regulations were designed to exclude groups such as Sufis, which were beyond the control of the registered imams.<sup>114</sup>

## 'Strike Hard': the long hot summers of 1996 and 1997

A systematic crackdown on crime throughout the whole of China was launched at the end of April 1996. It was known as the 'Strike Hard' (*Yanda*) campaign, and was initiated after a working conference of the Bureau of Public Security, the date of which has not been made public.

However, in addition to this crackdown on crime in general, the campaign was quite clearly directed against unofficial political organizations and, in particular, separatist activists in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and, of course, in Xinjiang. A meeting of senior government and party officials held in Urumqi on 30 April called for the campaign to be deepened, and a statement issued demanded that the crackdown 'should mainly focus on the violent and terrorist cases organized and manipulated by national separatist forces'. The statement continued:

*There is every indication that national separatists are working in collusion with all kinds of criminal and violent elements. Their reactionary and sabotage activities are increasingly rampant and have seriously threatened the safety of people's lives*

and property, as well as social stability and the smooth progress of the modernisation drive in Xinjiang.<sup>115</sup>

The following week, the Xinjiang Party Committee explicitly linked separatism with what it termed 'unlawful religious activities' and launched a campaign to reduce their effect in schools, in publishing and throughout the region. The Party pointed to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps as 'a major reliable force with the assignment of maintaining Xinjiang's stability and building and defending the country's frontiers', indicating the important role that it continues to have in policing and controlling the region.<sup>116</sup>

In April 1996, a 13-Article document outlining regulations for controlling Islamic books, periodicals and audiovisual products was drawn up by the Party's Propaganda Department, United Front Work Department, Press and Publications Bureau, Culture Department, Public Security Department and Nationalities Affairs Commission, the range of bodies involved giving a good idea of the importance attached to the issue by the government of the Autonomous Region. The regulations stipulated that all publications connected with Islam, whether for internal consumption or wider publication, had to be vetted and approved before they appeared.<sup>117</sup>

Party officials openly admitted that they had lost control of many of the grassroots organizations in rural Xinjiang to separatist and Islamist groups. 'Some village-level organizations are but empty shells and are dominated and controlled by illegal religious forces. These localities have often become fortified villages of national splittist and illegal religious activities.'<sup>118</sup>

Reports of the effects on the ground of the clampdown were patchy at first, and it was extremely difficult to assess the degree of repression that it created in Xinjiang. Uyghur nationalist sources clearly had reason to emphasize the size and strength of the opposition to Chinese rule, while, conversely, the official Chinese media have tried to demonstrate the success of its rule in Xinjiang and the weakness and criminality of the independence movement. The authorities in Xinjiang were acutely aware of the parallels with the Chechen struggle for independence against Russia, and gave the war in Chechnya as one of their reasons for clamping down so hard. On 29 April, *Xinjiang Ribao* reported on the success of the crackdown, claiming that over 1,300 arrests had been made, 70 criminal organizations had been destroyed and large quantities of weapons, ammunition and money acquired during robberies had been seized. Two days earlier, the same newspaper had reported on the celebration of the Muslim festival of *Corban* (*Id al-Adha*, the Feast of Sacrifice) by the political leadership of Xinjiang in a show of ethnic unity, solidarity and stability.<sup>119</sup>

The CCP in Xinjiang was also becoming increasingly concerned about the influence of separatist as well as Islamic ideas within its own ranks. Its Discipline and Inspection Commission issued a statement that Party cadres who persisted in taking part in religious activities, or produced books and other materials that promoted the idea of national separatism and religious education would be punished, as would any who were found to have been

associating with criminals or terrorists.<sup>120</sup>

Another in the series of trials related to separatism in Xinjiang was announced by the Chinese authorities on 1 March 1999. Eight people were executed and 45 others were given suspended death sentences, or sentenced to imprisonment for what were described as 'illegal religious terrorist activities'.<sup>121</sup> The execution of Abduhelil Abdulmejit, described by the Eastern Turkestan Information Centre as the chief organizer of the 5 February Ghulja Uprising, was announced by the Centre on 22 October 2000. It is alleged that he was subject to sustained interrogation and ill-treatment in the Chapchal Su detention centre in Yining county in the northwest of Xinjiang before he was killed and then buried secretly.<sup>122</sup>

At the time of writing, it is impossible to determine with any degree of precision how many of the political and religious activists of the 1990s are associated with the Sufi orders. But it is highly likely that much of the most active resistance is connected with Sufism, and particularly the Naqshbandi order.

## New religions

New religious movements have mushroomed in China since the relaxation of central control in the 1980s. Some have developed within established traditions, particularly Chinese folk religions, but also in the Christian Church. Both the authorities and existing religious bodies in China have had the same problems as the rest of the world in attempting to distinguish between religions which are generally considered to be socially acceptable and cults which are not. The term *xiejiao* ('heterodox and evil teaching') has been used to distinguish undesirable groups from *zongjiao* ('religion'), a term which suggests the teachings of the clan and its ancestors. Followers and supporters of the newer religions do not share these distinctions and the case of Falungong is the most obvious of these.

Rural cults and secret societies in the Buddhist and Daoist tradition, which had been declared extinct by the Cultural Revolution, began to re-emerge in the 1980s and the newspaper *Zhongguo fazhi bao* (*China Legal Daily*) has reported many police actions against these groups. Among the revived groups which were reported to have been broken up by the Public Security forces were the quasi-Buddhist Shenmendao (Way of the Spirit Gate), Yiguandao (Way of Pervading Unity), Taishangmen (Gate of the Supreme Overlord) and Shengxiandao (Way of the Saints) of Jiangsu province, the Xiantiandao (Way of the Prior Realm) in Jiangxi. Two men who set up an underground Buddhist organization were executed in Xiangtan (Hunan).<sup>123</sup> Similar societies emerged throughout China according to an internal classified document published by the Ministry of Public Security in Beijing in 1985. In many cases, elderly former leaders of these sects or their relatives were the focus of the revival, and the police complained that the sect leaders used their positions to swindle money and property, treated medical conditions when they were not properly qualified and molested women.<sup>124</sup> These are standard accusations against religious and other unofficial leaders and, although they may have

some basis in reality, some are simply slanders.

It was the rise of Falungong, founded by Li Hongzhi in 1992, which alerted observers to the emergence of new religions in China. Falungong, or Falun Dafa as it is also known, drew on Buddhist and Daoist traditions, meditation and *qigong*. To date it has been by far the most popular of the new religions, and its success in attracting educated urban dwellers, including senior members of the CCP, as well as people from all walks of life in both town and country, brought about a ferocious crackdown. Some estimates have put the number of Falungong practitioners as high as 70–100 million but it is impossible to substantiate this figure.

Falungong has posed particular problems for the leadership of the CCP, first, because it is Chinese in origin and inspiration. It could not therefore be dismissed as a foreign import. Second, it is not even overtly religious (although it has a considerable body of doctrine) as its main public manifestation is the practice of *qigong* exercises which is commonplace in China. Third, its members are, generally, urban, educated, often middle-aged, and include members of the CCP, armed forces and police. It is seen as a political threat for these three reasons, and also because CCP leaders are aware of the role that religious secret societies have played in overthrowing governments in history. There have been suggestions that *qigong* masters were cultivated by senior CCP members and even by the PLA as it was thought the practice might have some military value.

Falungong came to prominence on 25 April 1999 when over 10,000 of its supporters demonstrated outside Zhongnanhai (the headquarters of the CCP) in Beijing to demand that the movement be officially recognized. This was the largest demonstration seen in the Chinese capital since the violent suppression of the Democracy Movement in the area round Tian'anmen Square in June 1989, and clearly brought back memories of that period to China's leaders. The Beijing demonstrations followed the publication in Tianjin of an article by He Zuoxiu, a senior nuclear physicist, in which he criticized the group as superstitions and anti-scientific. Demonstrations and arrests followed and the group decided to take their protest to the centre of power to demand recognition and the release of those arrested.<sup>125</sup>

The founder and leader of Falungong, who was until then unknown outside the movement, is a former *qigong* instructor, Li Hongzhi who, by the time of the demonstrations, had moved to live in the USA. His teachings were popularized through his book *Zhuan Falun* and by Internet web-sites and videotapes. The movement, which claims to have over 100 million followers, is financed by the sale of books, tapes and other products such as meditation cushions.

The local daily newspaper *Beijing Ribao* reported the demonstrations in its 28 April edition in some detail, referring to the Tianjin journal that had published the original criticism of the group. It also reported a government and police statement warning Falungong not to believe rumours and asking for complaints to go through proper channels and for no actions to be taken that might threaten social stability.

There were further demonstrations in Beijing in June

1999 and again many Falungong members were arrested.<sup>126</sup> Initially the CCP denied that there was a crackdown, but police leave was cancelled and travellers entering Beijing by road and rail were stopped and questioned.<sup>127</sup> By 22 July the mood had changed and the Ministry of Public Security issued an order banning the Falun Dafa Institute and the Falungong movement. The order specifically prohibited the display of pictures, banners or other Falungong insignia, the sale of their books and audio and videotapes, and gatherings of Falungong supporters. Police in Wuhan seized and destroyed 130,000 books and 27,000 tapes containing Falungong material, and similar raids took place in Xinjiang and Tianjin.<sup>128</sup>

The extent of the involvement of members of the Communist Youth League, the CCP and of government officials in Falungong gradually emerged and intensified the resolution of the CCP to break it up. In July police arrested 1,200 officials suspected of involvement and *People's Daily* instructed officials to have nothing to do with the movement.<sup>129</sup>

It was noticeable that support for Falungong came disproportionately from women. Reports of imprisonments and administrative detentions for following the teachings of Falungong name more women than men although precise figures are not available.

Beijing issued an arrest warrant for Li Hongzhi but Interpol was not prepared to act, on the grounds that this was a religious or political matter and not a criminal case. Police also raided a printing factory in Liaoning province where Falungong books were being printed and broke up the Falungong organization in Jilin.<sup>130</sup> Li Hongzhi's alleged luxurious lifestyle was attacked in the press.<sup>131</sup> By August, *People's Daily* was announcing that Falungong had been stamped out, that 99 per cent of the 31,000 members Falungong had in Beijing had left the group,<sup>132</sup> and that the organization had already been smashed in various provinces.<sup>133</sup> The response of the authorities was a return to the mass campaigns of public condemnation. Falungong was compared in the Chinese press to Aum Shinrikyo which was responsible for the Sarin gas attack in the Tokyo underground and the Branch Davidians in Texas. *People's Daily* published a long article entitled 'Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin on materialism and atheism' as part of an anti-religious and pro-atheist campaign that continued relentlessly throughout August.<sup>134</sup>

The authorities confirmed that they would treat Falungong leaders as criminals but that ordinary members would not be punished in the same way.<sup>135</sup> Human rights groups estimated that some 300 members of Falungong were being held by the police so that they did not disrupt celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Liberation.<sup>136</sup> Six of the main organizers of Falungong who were to be charged were named by China Women's News in October 1999. They are Xu Yinquan, who was also a former deputy director of the Public Security Bureau in Changchun, Fu Lixin, who was involved in demonstrations in Tianjin, and Zhang Haitao, who ran a Falungong website. The other three, Zhang Guoliang, Deng Jin and Lu Yuzhong, had published Falungong books.<sup>137</sup>

Protests continued and there were more arrests near the Great Hall of the People in October. The term *xiejiao*

(‘cult’) was used for the first time in *People’s Daily*.<sup>138</sup> Reports began to emerge of the ill-treatment of Falungong members in custody, sometimes resulting in the deaths of the detainees,<sup>139</sup> and in December 1999 and January 2000 *People’s Daily* carried a series of recantations from Falungong members who had left the group. Trials resulted in lengthy prison sentences for Falungong supporters but protests continued and there were arrests at Tian’anmen Square on 4 March 2000.

Hundreds of Falungong supporters were arrested after demonstrations in Tian’anmen Square at the National Day celebration on 1 October 2000. Instructions on where demonstrations were being held were conveyed by one of the Falungong’s websites in the USA.<sup>140</sup> The official press continued its campaign against Falungong, a clear indication that it has not been wiped out as the authorities have stated.

Members of the Falungong and sympathizers, both within China and abroad, not surprisingly take a completely different view of the movement. Falun Dafa practitioners in the UK solicited support for nominating Li Hongzhi for the Nobel Peace Prize ‘for his significant contributions to our society and for his profound teachings of the universal principle of *Zhen–Shan–Ren* or Truth–Compassion–Forbearance’. Campaigners against the suppression of Falungong by the Chinese government describe it as ‘one of the traditional Qigong exercises, aimed at health improvement and stress relief. There are moral principles underlying Falungong which encourage its members to be truthful, compassionate and tolerant.’<sup>141</sup> Falungong literature states unequivocally that ‘Falun Dafa is neither religious nor political, as it does not have any political agenda or religious rituals.’<sup>142</sup>

Falungong claims that, during the repression of their organization, over 40,000 practitioners have been detained and sent to education-through-labour camps (*laojiao*). People can be sent to these camps by the police or government officials without a court appearance which is necessary for the reform-through-labour (*laogai*) camps. They also report brutality by police, 24 deaths in police custody and that members are being held in mental hospitals.<sup>143</sup> Five people set themselves on fire in Tian’anmen Square on the eve of Chinese New Year 2001 and one died. Although Falungong sources denied that there was any connection with the movement it is clear that the self-immolation was a protest against the campaign against Falungong. Beijing mobilized opinion against the suicide protest. Leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Daoist Association, Chinese Islamic Association and the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and a leading Buddhist from the Guangji Temple in Beijing, condemned the actions of the five and argued that it confirmed the official view that Falungong is a cult.<sup>144</sup>

Although Falungong received by far the greatest coverage because of the scale of its support and the ferocity of the government repression, it was far from the only *qigong* organization that arose in the 1990s and *China Sports Daily* announced that all *qigong* organizations would have to register with official sports bodies and would be banned from taking part in religious activities.

The Zhonggong movement, also classified by the Chi-

nese authorities as a cult, came under the spotlight in January 2000 when its leader, Zhang Hungbao, applied for political asylum in the US-owned island of Guam in the Pacific. Over 100 offices of Zhonggong were closed down in a clampdown that began in November 1999; the headquarters of the movement was also raided by police who sequestered assets to the value of US \$6 million. Zhonggong followers were originally accused of practising medicine without a licence.<sup>145</sup> Zhang faces serious charges in China, including rape and robbery, but he claims that he is being persecuted as a political dissident and US immigration officials are considering the possibility that these charges have been fabricated.<sup>146</sup>

In the province of Hunan, Liu Jianguo, the leader and founder of a religious movement known as Zhushenjiao (Supreme Spirit), was arrested and charged with a range of crimes including multiple rapes. Other members of the sect have also been tried for fraud and rapes. Liu was sentenced to death and executed.<sup>147</sup> Another *qigong* group, Bodhi Gong, protested its innocence of charges of giving illegal medical treatment and asserted its allegiance to the CCP. Many similar groups exist.<sup>148</sup> Leaders of two other groups – the Way of Compassion in Hubei and the National Way – were arrested in late 1999.<sup>149</sup> Police in Suzhou arrested Shen Chang, the founder of Shen Chang Human Science, a *qigong* group which claims to have as many as 5 million followers, and charged him with tax evasion and disturbing social order by assembling a crowd.<sup>150</sup>



# Conclusion

On 26 September 2000 the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) issued new regulations designed to control religious activities by foreigners. *Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the People's Republic of China*, a document which strengthens controls imposed by legislation in 1994. According to Ye Xiaowen, director of the SARA, foreigners would only be permitted to take part in the religious activities in monasteries, temples, mosques and churches that were registered with the Chinese authorities. None would be allowed to run religious organizations or schools of their own.<sup>151</sup> Christian groups in Hong Kong believe that these restrictions apply to them as well as to foreigners.

Despite this, there is no doubt there has been very much greater freedom for religious activities since the 'Reform and Opening' policies of Deng Xiaoping began in 1979. If these policies continue, and at the time of writing that remains the most likely projection in the short and medium terms, that freedom will continue to develop. However, unless there is a colossal and unpredictable change in the nature of the Chinese political system, restrictions on that freedom will also continue. Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology no longer has any great influence in China, although some of the rhetoric remains, but the atheist element of it is still deeply ingrained among the ruling elite, in spite of the success that Falungong has had with some former government and military cadres. Maoism has effectively been replaced by a new kind of nationalism which some commentators have described as a positive nationalism, pragmatic and rational but committed to asserting what are perceived as the national interests of China. Where religion appears to serve these interests it may well be tolerated and even encouraged to a limited extent. Where it appears to conflict with those interests it will be restricted or even suppressed.

This study has concentrated on the major world religions. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam all have strong support from communities outside China and, to a greater or lesser extent, receive funding and publicity from those communities. There are many other minority religions in China including shamanism, ancestor worship and local religions practised by ethnic minority groups, particularly in the central and southwestern provinces. These do not have the presence on the world stage of the larger religions and, because of this and the small size of their communities, they are arguably under greater threat from CCP policies of assimilation and the social consequences of economic modernization. The fact that most of these religions are not influenced by foreign organizations does, however, protect them to a certain extent from Beijing's nationalist response to the world religions.

The overriding political priorities of the CCP in the twenty-first century are territorial integrity (maintaining and protecting the borders that China has had since the

eighteenth century, notably retaining control of Xinjiang and Tibet and reabsorbing Taiwan), reversing the humiliation of a century of poverty and subordination to foreign powers, and asserting its right to be a world power rather than just a regional one. Religious activity that can be defined as patriotic has a place in this scheme. Any activities, including religious activities, that appear to undermine the state by lending spiritual support to separatist tendencies or might be construed as advancing the interests of other states, and the USA in particular, will be viewed with suspicion.

It is fairly safe to predict that there will continue to be conflict between the CCP-dominated state and leaders of both recognized and unofficial religious groups as the latter attempt to push forward the boundaries for the religious freedom to which they feel entitled. It is much more difficult to predict when and where those conflicts will develop and which groups will be involved. The religious-political differences between Beijing and communities in Tibet and Xinjiang clearly have the potential to be long-running conflicts and the CCP authorities have identified these as the ones that cause them most concern as they involve China's national boundaries and relations with Tibetan and Uyghur communities living outside China. In contrast, the rise of Falungong was predicted by no one. It had been known since the early 1980s that religious groups and secret societies were making a comeback in the rural areas in spite of the fact that the CCP claimed to have wiped them out in the 1950s, but there was no warning that a religion, drawing on Chinese traditions and appealing to a largely urban and better-educated public, could achieve the degree of support that Falungong enjoys. This support is likely to continue in spite of the repression and there could be further and more serious demonstrations by Falungong practitioners against state policy.

The rural areas just mentioned are a source of potential conflict with Beijing. As China joins the World Trade Organization and moves towards a more urbanized and industrialized society there are bound to be large numbers of peasant farmers who are not willing or able to migrate to the cities in search of new and modern employment and are likely to be left in dire poverty. If the history of China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is anything to go by, many of these may well be attracted to underground and secretive rural religious groups, some already in existence and others yet to be formed. In the vast and already poor countryside these groups could once again coalesce into an opposition to the CCP in the same way that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (*Taiping Tianguo*) rose up in rebellion against the imperial Qing dynasty in 1851. The armies of the Qing eventually suppressed the rebellion but only after 13 years, loss of life on a scale that changed the demographic picture of China for generations and with consequential damage to the economy from which China is still recovering.

# Recommendations

1. The steps taken by China towards liberalization of society have brought it dividends in terms of increased international cooperation in the diplomatic and trade domains. Combined with its economic development, this should give the leadership the confidence to recognize the right to freedom of religion and association. China should allow, in fact and in law, religious organizations, including those not under direct control by the state, to function freely, and recognize the right of all of its citizens, including CCP members, to freedom of religion and freedom of association. Any limitations to these rights should strictly adhere to international human rights standards, including the right to a fair trial, and the right to liberty and security of person, with all the specific protections which those rights entail, in keeping with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This clearly also applies to 'new' religions or movements such as Falugong (Falun Dafa).
2. The state should refrain from labelling organizations as 'patriotic' or 'unpatriotic'; not only may this have negative consequences on rights to freedom of religion and association, guaranteed by international human rights standards, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (UNDM) and the ICCPR, they may also serve to incite hatred among the wider population and inappropriate acts by private individuals.
3. There is considerable overlap between ethnic and religious minorities, and it is very important that China develops policies to allow ethnic minorities to assert their cultural identities in this multi-ethnic nation. Religious identities are an important part of these identities for many ethnic groups. The state should design and implement laws to eliminate intolerance in both the public and private spheres, and implement education programmes in schools and universities to promote the principles of tolerance of all cultures, ethnicities and religions, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
4. The state should allow religious communities and organizations to maintain links with communities and organizations outside China, in keeping with international human rights standards such as the UNDM. These contacts can serve to promote international understanding and tolerance. At the same time, religious bodies outside China should be sensitive to local feelings when liaising with co-religionists in China. Many Chinese, not only the political elite, are very sensitive to the issue of external influence in their affairs.
5. The state should allow a greater role for participation of religious minorities and their representatives in public life, in keeping with human rights standards. The participation of some religious groups in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is to be applauded, and the state is encouraged to open up participation in this body to a wide range of religious groups, including those not controlled by the state. The state is encouraged to view effective participation of religious and other minorities in public life and increased freedoms of religion and association, within the framework of the law, as a mechanism for reducing tensions between communities, mitigating the grievances, perceived or real, felt by communities who have traditionally felt excluded from mainstream life in China, and encouraging them to see themselves as true stakeholders in society.
6. State development programmes should take into account the interests of religious and other minorities. Programmes, especially those implemented in regions strongly populated by religious minority communities, should allow for the participation of those communities in all aspects of the programmes, from design, through execution, to evaluation.
7. The continuing repression in Tibet and Xinjiang has created an untenable situation of conflict and instability, and has placed China in the position of comprehensively failing to fulfil its international human rights obligations. As a first step towards resolving the conflict, China should implement, in law and in fact, the full range of freedoms of religion and association, as well as other fundamental rights. The international community should deploy full diplomatic efforts towards encouraging China to achieve this end.
8. China should take steps to implement the provisions of the UNDM, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and fulfil its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other instruments which it is a party to. China is also encouraged to complete the process it began in 1998 when it signed the ICCPR, by ratifying and implementing the covenant.

1. This Report does not include any discussion of the religious situation in Taiwan. The island of Taiwan was on the margins of the Chinese Empire, became an important trading base for the Dutch and had brief periods of independence. It became part of the Japanese Empire in 1895 and remained a colony until 1945. The Guomindang established a base there during the Civil War of 1946–9 and continued their Republic of China government on the island after the CCP took control of the mainland in 1949. The social and political context of Taiwan is therefore completely different from the PRC. Likewise, Hong Kong is covered only briefly.
2. Barnett, A. Doak, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 198, 208–9.
3. Both Tibet and Xinjiang are within the borders of the People's Republic of China, are under its administrative control, and are therefore *de facto* part of China. They are included in this Report although they are contested territories with contested histories. Both are subject to the laws and regulations on religion that are enforced by the PRC. There is considerable sympathy in the international community for the independence of Tibet, but there is still a great divergence of opinion on Tibet's status in international law.
4. *Qigong* is the art or science of deep-breathing exercises.
5. The concept of the three religions was popularized in the English-speaking world by the Revd W.E. Soothill's series of twelve lectures, published in 1929 as *The Three Religions of China*, London, Oxford University Press. The Chinese phrase on which he drew was *Ru Shi Dao sanjiao*, 'The three religions of *Ru* (Confucianism), *Shi* – from the first syllable of the Chinese transcription of Sakyamuni, a name of the Buddha – (Buddhism) and *Dao*.' 'Dao' and 'Daoism' are modern spellings, reflecting the *pinyin* system of romanization used in China since the 1950s, 'Tao' and 'Taoism' are based on the older Wade-Giles spelling.
6. Feuchtwang, S., *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China*, London, Routledge, 1992; Chesneau, J., *Secret Societies in China in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Hong Kong, Heinemann, 1971.
7. Dillon, M., *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects*, London, Curzon, 1999.
8. Bottomore T.B. and Rubel, M., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967, pp. 41–2.
9. *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1954, p. 50.
10. Whyte, B., *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity*, London, Fount (Collins), 1988, p. 342.
11. Yang, C.K., *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967, pp. 180–217, 393–4.
12. Chan, Wing-tsit, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, New York, Octagon, 1978, p. x.
13. Yang described Chan's book as 'an excellent account of the religious movements in the Republic', Yang, *op. cit.*, pp. 354, 358, 367.
14. Kampen, T., *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the Evolution of the Chinese Communist Leadership*, Copenhagen, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000.
15. An English translation of *Document 19* can be found in MacInnis, D.E., *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice*, New York, Orbis, 1989, pp. 8–26.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
18. Yang, *op. cit.*, p. 394.
19. MacInnis, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
21. Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 181–3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
23. Chan, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 19, 53.
24. Swart, P. and Till, B., 'A revival of Confucian ceremonies in China', in Julian F. Pas (ed.), *The Turning of the Tide: Religion in China Today*, New York, Royal Asiatic Society in association with Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 210–14.
25. MacInnis, *op. cit.*, p. 375.
26. Chan, *op. cit.*, pp. 146, 154–5.
27. Schipper, K., *The Taoist Body*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993.
28. Chan, *op. cit.*, pp. 153, 156.
29. Gong Xuezheng et al. (eds), *Minzu wenti yu zongjiao wenti jiangzuo* (Ethnic and Religious Issues), Beijing, Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao (CCP Central Party School), 1994, pp. 163–4.
30. MacInnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–20; Hahn, T.F., 'New developments concerning Buddhist and Daoist monasteries', in Pas, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–101, Pas, J.F., 'Revival of temple worship and popular religious traditions', in Pas, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–85.
31. Dean, K., *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
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33. Ch'en, K.K.S., *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 16–20, 40–1.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
35. Brook, T., *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, Cambridge, MA, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1993, pp. 188–91.
36. *Ibid.*
37. The Boxer Rising was a popular anti-government movement, successfully turned, by the Qing court, against foreigners, especially missionaries.
38. Chan, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–2.
39. Welch, H., *Buddhism under Mao*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 6; Gong Xuezheng, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Yang Zengwen, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
40. Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–7.
41. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
42. Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–11, 389–407.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–52.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–83.

45. Ibid., pp. 340–63; Yang Zengwen, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
46. Yang Zengwen, *op. cit.*, p. 73. Living Buddhas are the reincarnated high lamas in the Mongolian tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.
47. Goldstein, M.C., *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. xix. The Seventeen-Point agreement is the document agreed by the new Central People's government of the CCP and a Tibetan delegation signed in Beijing in April 1951, which formally incorporated Tibet in to the PRC and set out the parameters for the relations between Beijing and Lhasa and the roles of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, the two most senior spiritual leaders of Tibet.
48. Goldstein, M.C., *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet and the Dalai Lama*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.
49. Ibid., 1997, pp. 14–20.
50. Ibid., p. 30.
51. A translation of this document can be found in Shakya, Tsering, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947*, London, Pimlico, 1999, pp. 449–52.
52. Ibid., pp. 163–211.
53. Ibid., pp. 314–47.
54. Goldstein, *op. cit.*, 1997, pp. 61–75.
55. Shakya, *op. cit.*, pp. 381–2.
56. Between 6 and 20 Tibetans are reported to have been killed (Goldstein, *op. cit.*, p. 79).
57. Ibid., 1997, pp. 79–83.
58. Ibid., pp. 100–11.
59. SCMP (*South China Morning Post*) 29/6/00.
60. PTI New Delhi 11/10/00 via Uighur-L (an Internet news group for Uyghurs and people interested in their cause).
61. BBC on-line news.bbc.co.uk, 6/10/00 (all references to the BBC are to on-line news unless otherwise indicated).
62. *Financial Times* 9/1/00; BBC 8/1/00.
63. Agence France Presse 27/8/00 via Uighur-L.
64. SCMP 28/8/00.
65. SCMP 30/9/00.
66. Whyte, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–78, 79–92.
67. Ibid., p. 96 and passim.
68. Chan, *op. cit.*, p.177–8.
69. Whyte, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 240.
70. Ibid., p. 241.
71. MacInnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 313–59.
72. Whyte, *op. cit.*, pp. 217–18, 222.
73. Ibid., p.122.
74. Ibid., p. 233.
75. SCMP 27/12/99.
76. BBC 9/12/99; SCMP 10/12/99.
77. SCMP 19/5/00.
78. BBC 24/8/00.
79. SCMP 5/9/00; BBC 4/9/00.
80. SCMP 28/8/00.
81. Xinhua News Agency 25/9/00.
82. SCMP 23/9/00.
83. MacInnis, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
84. Ibid., p. 289.
85. Tang, E., 'A year of confrontations: the Catholic Church in China in 1989', in A. Hunter and D. Rimington (eds), *All Under Heaven: Chinese Tradition and Christian Life in the People's Republic of China*, Kampen, Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1992, p. 69.
86. Ibid., pp. 73–6.
87. Ibid., pp. 76–9.
88. SCMP 10/9/99, 13/9/99.
89. SCMP 15/12/99.
90. BBC 4/1/00.
91. BBC 4/1/00.
92. SCMP 27/6/00.
93. Reuters 24/8/00 via Uighur-L.
94. Uighur-L 29/5/00.
95. SCMP 30/8/00.
96. SCMP 5/9/00; HFP 1/9/00.
97. BBC 5/9/00; SCMP 6/9/00.
98. BBC 25/9/00.
99. BBC 15/9/00.
100. BBC 25/9/00, 26/9/00; SCMP 28/9/00.
101. Vatican website; SCMP 2/10/00; BBC 1/10/00.
102. This is based on an aggregation of the official census figures for ethnic groups that are predominantly Muslim. Zhang Tianlu et al. (eds), *Zhongguo Musilin renkou* (China's Muslim Population), Yinchuan, Ningxia People's Publishing House, 1991.
103. Chan, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–7; Fletcher, J., 'Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800', in J.K. Fairbank and D. Twitchett (eds), *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10, part 1 and 'The heyday of the Ch'ing order in Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet', in Fairbank and Twitchett, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, part 1; Ma Tong, *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai yu menhuan zhidu shilue* (Brief History of Sects and the Sufi Pathway System in China's Islam), Yinchuan, Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1983.
104. Dillon, *op. cit.*, 1999, pp. 60–74; Lipmann, J.N., *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997; Chu Wen-djang, *The Moslem Rebellion in North-West China 1862–1878: A Study of Government Minority Policy*, Mouton, 1966; Broomhall, M., *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem*, London, 1910.
105. D'Ollone, Commandant, *Recherches sur les Musulmans Chinois*, Paris, 1911; Dillon, *op. cit.*, 1999, pp. 75–85.
106. Ibid., pp. 131–52.
107. For more detail see Ma Tong, *op. cit.*, p. 107; Mian Weilin, *Ningxia Yisilan jiaopai gaiyao* (Muslim Sects in Ningxia), Yinchuan, 1991, pp. 19–21.
108. The ethnic composition of Xinjiang is complicated. The Uyghurs consider that they are the autochthonous population of Xinjiang and are very closely related in language and culture to the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan. Other Turkic-speaking communities include the Kazakhs of northern Xinjiang, themselves related to the main ethnic group of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz whose relatives are in present-day Kyrgyzstan.
109. Personal observation.
110. The numbers are hotly disputed. Official Chinese sources say that three or four people were killed; Uyghur exiles have said that hundreds were killed and hundreds more arrested.

111. Zhang Yuxi, 'Xinjiang jiefang yilai fandui minzu fenliezhuyi de douzheng ji qi lishi jingyan' (The struggle against ethnic separatism in Xinjiang since Liberation and its historical lessons), in Yang Faren (ed.), *Fan Yisilanzhuyi, fan tujuezhuyi yanjiu* (Pan-Islam and Pan-Turkism), Urumqi, Xinjiang Social Science Press, 1997, pp. 333–4.
112. BBC SWB/FE (Summary of World Broadcasts Far East) 0745, 0746, 0747, 0748, 0749, 0751, 0753, 0763; all April 1990.
113. Zhang Yuxi, *op. cit.*, pp. 338–41.
114. BBC SWB/FE/ 26/10/90, 30/10/90, 22/12/90 citing *Xinjiang Ribao*, 23/11/90.
115. BBC SWB/FE 6/5/96.
116. BBC SWB/FE 9/5/96.
117. BBC SWB/FE 17/4/96.
118. BBC SWB/FE 6/6/96.
119. BBC SWB/FE 17/5/96, 22/5/96.
120. BBC SWB/FE 28/5/96.
121. BBC on-line News World: Asia Pacific 1/3/99.
122. Eastern Turkestan Information Centre (ETIC) Report 22/10/00.
123. SCMP 1/5/99; BBC News on-line 13/10/99.
124. Munro 1989.
125. SCMP 28/4/99–3/5/99.
126. SCMP 7/6/99.
127. SCMP 12/6/99.
128. BBC 27/7/99.
129. *New York Times* 27/7/99; SCMP 27/7/99.
130. SCMP 4/8/99; *People's Daily* 4/8/99.
131. SCMP 6/8/99.
132. BBC 8/8/99.
133. *People's Daily* 3/8/99.
134. *People's Daily* 10/8/99.
135. BBC 9/9/99.
136. Liberation (*jiefang*) is the term used to refer to the establishment of the PRC in 1949. BBC 19/9/99; SCMP 20/9/99.
137. SCMP 13/10/99.
138. BBC 28/10/99; *People's Daily* 28/10/99.
139. SCMP 14/12/99.
140. BBC 1/10/00; SCMP 2/10/00.
141. Letter from Falun Gong Association, UK, 21/8/00.
142. *Falun Dafa: Peaceful Journey of Truthfulness – Compassion – Forbearance*, compiled by Falun Dafa practitioners, 1st edn, July 2000, p. 3.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 4 and *passim*.
144. *Xinhua News Agency* 31/1/01 via BBC Monitoring.
145. BBC 3/1/00.
146. SCMP 16/9/00; BBC 24/9/00.
147. BBC 13/10/99.
148. SCMP 27/7/99.
149. BBC 2/11/99.
150. SCMP 29/8/00.
151. SCMP 27/9/00.
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