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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we can present you with the November 2026 issue of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论), which is the fourth issue this year.

We continue with the regular series of News Updates on recent events and general trends with regard to religions and especially Christianity in today's China.

Prof. Dr. Leopold Leeb, Renmin University of China in Beijing, in his article "A Milestone for the Catholic Church in China: The Consecration of Six Chinese Bishops in 1926" gives an overview of this decisive event for the indigenization of the Catholic Church in China. The bishops were personally ordained by Pope Pius XI. on October 28, 1926 in Rome. Prof. Leeb also gives details on the life and the ministry the newly ordained undertook in China after their return back home to their individual dioceses.

Prof. Dr. Hans Ingvar Roth, Professor of Human Rights at the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Stockholm University and Associate Professor in Ethics at Lund University, in his article "The Unknown Architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – P.C. Chang and His Contribution" portrays the Chinese philosopher and diplomat P.C. Chang (Zhang Pengchun 張彭春, 1892–1957), who in the drafting process influenced the overall character of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The issue closes with an obituary for David E. Mungello (1943–2026) by Dr. Dirk Kuhlmann, Monumenta Serica Institute in St. Augustin. The American sinologist and renowned scholar of the history of cultural exchange between China and the West focused in his research on the history of Christianity in China and played a pivotal role in shaping this field over the course of decades.

Religions & Christianity in Today's China is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, www.china-zentrum.de. Additionally, readers who subscribe to *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* will regularly receive e-mail updates providing web links to the contents of each newly published issue. – The China-Zentrum is a non-profit organization. For the publication of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* we are dependent on the generosity of our friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we would be very grateful if you could consider sending a voluntary contribution.

Sankt Augustin, November 2026 *The Editors*

News Update on Religion and Church in China June 19 – September 24, 2026

Compiled by Katharina Feith, Katrin Fiedler, Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle), and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Translated by David Streit S.V.D.

The News Update on Religion and Church in China appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today's China (RCTC). *Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, chronological overlaps may occur between News Updates of two consecutive* RCTC *issues. All News Updates can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum* (*www.china-zentrum.de*). – *The last News Update* (RCTC *2026, no. 3, pp. 3–24) covered the period March 14 – June 26, 2026.*

Miscellaneous

August 17, 2026:

MERICS on the challenge of *hukou* reform

For many years, demographic movements in China – particularly between urban and rural areas – were regulated by the household registration system (*hukou* 户口). Dating back to imperial-era practices, this system designates households – and the individuals associated with them – as permanent members of a specific household, entailing specific rights and obligations, such as land rights in one's home village or the right to attend school in one's hometown. For individuals with a rural *hukou* who migrated to cities in recent decades, this meant restricted access to urban public services as long as their registration remained in a rural area. In response to these limitations – and to boost the economically necessary mobility of the workforce – the system has undergone multiple reforms in recent years, such as the abolition of the distinction between rural and urban *hukou* status (2014) and a further easing of residency restrictions since 2019; many cities have also implemented additional measures. On May 22, 2026, the State Council issued a directive to local authorities mandating that social services be provided based on place of residence rather than *hukou* status. This marks the first time that nationwide access to social services has been decoupled from the location of long-term household registration. Currently, 357 million people in China live away from their place of household registration. Cities particularly affected by in-migration – such as Dongguan in Guangdong Province, where around two-thirds of residents did not hold a local *hukou* in 2025 – are now warning that they risk being overwhelmed, *MERICS* reports. Expanding infrastructure will take time and presents cities with financial challenges. *MERICS* further notes a risk that cities might respond to this strain by erecting bureaucratic hurdles to artificially limit the number of people eligible for services. Others, such as *Jamestown*, view the directive primarily as a maneuver to shift the state's costs for roughly a quarter of the population onto local governments; they also criticize the fact that the *hukou* system itself – and the inequality of opportunity resulting from regional disparities – remains in place (*Jamestown* May 29; *MERICS* Aug.

17; State Council of the PRC May 22, "Opinions of the State Council on Implementing the Provision of Basic Public Services Based on Place of Permanent Residence" (国务院关于推行常住地提供基本公共服务的实施意见, https://archive.ph/M41Ae). *kfr*

September 1, 2026:

Regulations for micro-dramas come into force

Micro-dramas are ultra-short series ranging from one to twenty minutes in length; optimized for smartphone viewing, they often feature sensational and highly simplified plots (for more on micro-dramas, see, e.g., www.theworldofchinese.com/2025/09/welcome-to-the-micro-drama-nation-china/). They are particularly popular in China and the USA. The new regulations, titled "Measures for the Administration of Micro-Drama Development" (微短剧发展管理办法), were adopted on July 27, 2026, by the National Radio and Television Administration. Productions covering topics such as politics, the military, foreign policy, national security, United Front work, ethnic issues, religion, the judiciary, and public security fall under the provisions for the so-called "Category 1." Micro-dramas in this category require registration and public announcement; once approved, the script cannot be altered. Broadcasting of Category 1 micro-dramas is permitted only after review (upon application) and approval. Article 25 stipulates that micro-dramas must not contain content that serves to "incite the subversion of state religious policy or propagate cults and superstition." Furthermore, the measures mandate, among other things, that the mental health of minors be safeguarded. The use of dialects is permitted only when artistically necessary (*Weiyan zongjiao* via *Xinde*, https://xinde.org/show/59363 Aug. 4). *kfr*

Religious Policy

Before September 2, 2026:

Hebei Province: New official document regulating volunteers at religious sites

On September 9, the two Catholic governing bodies of Hebei Province held a study session. According to a report on the event, a document titled "Work Steps to Strengthen the Standardized Management of Volunteers and Staff at Religious Activity Sites" (关于加强宗教活动场所义工和工作人员规范管理的工作举措) was discussed during the meeting. The report states that this document was issued jointly by the Hebei Provincial Religious Affairs Bureau and the Hebei Provincial Department of Human Resources and Social Security. Neither the full text nor the specific contents of the document could be found online (https://xinde.org/show/59602). – The existence of this new document serves as further evidence that authorities are increasingly extending their efforts to control religious communities to include lay adherents as well. Volunteers (*yigong* 义工) play a significant role at many religious sites, undertaking tasks such as maintenance, charitable work, visitor services, and the dissemination of religious teachings. The following regulations concerning volunteers are already known: "Measures for the Management of Volunteers at Han [Chinese] Buddhist Sites" (汉传佛教活动场所义工管理办法), adopted by the Chinese Buddhist Association on October 13, 2024; and "Measures for the Administration of Evangelists in Chinese Protestant Churches" (中国基督教传道员管理办法) – featuring a chapter on "volunteer evangelists" – published on January 16, 2026, by the Chinese Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council (German translation in *China heute* 2026, no. 2, pp. 86–92). Regarding the trend toward tighter control over the religious grassroots, see *China heute* 2026, no. 1, pp. 3–5 (in German). *kwt*

Religions in General

June 30, 2026:

Report on United Front transnational activities

A new report by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime reveals links between the United Front and criminal networks in Southeast Asia. Within Chinese political structures, the United Front is an actor with a long history. Its core mission is to integrate individuals and groups lying outside the CCP's direct reach – such as civil society organizations or religious adherents (who are generally barred from Party membership) – into the political system. For some time now, the United Front has been operating increasingly transnationally. According to the report, the United Front's cross-border activities – such as cultural exchange programs involving the overseas Chinese diaspora and their associations – are leveraged to expand China's political reach. Drawing on examples from Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, the report illustrates how the Chinese state uses the United Front to gain access to local elites – often of Chinese descent – and, in some instances, to secure political influence. These local elites are frequently involved in legal or illegal business activities (e.g. cybercrime). According to the report, the United Front tolerates or even actively supports the latter when doing so serves Chinese interests. The report describes a "latent network," in which private business actors and organizations pursue their own objectives while remaining within informally established boundaries that align their own interests with those of the CCP (*Bitter Winter* June 30; Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime: https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-chinese-party-state-and-geocriminality-in-south-east-asia/). *kfr*

Daoism

July 26, 2026:

Founding of the Shanghai Center for the Promotion of the Art and Culture of Bronze, Stone, and Oracle Bone Inscriptions

In July, the inaugural event for the Shanghai Center for the Promotion of the Art and Culture of Bronze, Stone, and Oracle Bone Inscriptions (上海市金石甲骨文艺术文化促进中心) took place at the city's Daoist Academy. The center was initiated by Ms. Xu Mei, Deputy Director of the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the Municipal Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and will collaborate with the Daoist Academy. An agreement regarding the "Culture Enriches Teaching" program was signed at the event. Future plans include offering joint courses on historical scripts – such as bronze, stone, and oracle bone scripts – while incorporating the Daoist principle of the "unity of heaven and man" into the aesthetic approach. In addition to an exhibition showcasing calligraphy and seal carving, the center's launch day featured a lecture titled "The Beauty of Oracle Bone Inscriptions." Attendees included experts in ancient scripts, seal carvers, calligraphers, political representatives, and Yao Shuliang, President of the Shanghai Daoist Association. According to a report by the Shanghai Daoist Association, this collaboration represents the Association's response to policy directives calling for the Sinicization of religions and the enrichment of religious practice through culture (Shanghai Daoist Association via WeChat July 26, republished on www.daoisms.com.cn/2026/30/11/128029/). *kfr*

August 21, 2026:

World Federation of Daoism: First training course for personnel involved in international Daoist exchange completed

A ceremony in Shanghai marked the conclusion of the World Federation's first training course for Daoist personnel dedicated to international exchange. Over the course of two months, 30 participants from across China received training in English proficiency, intercultural exchange, and international project management. The curriculum also covered comparative religion, a comparison of world cultures, and practical exercises focused on external outreach and the international dissemination of Daoism. According to a report by the Shanghai Daoist Association, the course was offered against the backdrop of efforts to "sinicize" religions in China and signals a shift toward proactive international exchange, moving beyond merely responding to invitations. Yan Kejia, a researcher and former director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, spoke at the closing ceremony; he urged the graduates to leverage the momentum of the Belt and Road Initiative to become pioneers in international Daoist exchange (Shanghai Daoist Association WeChat channel Aug. 21, via www.daoisms.com.cn). *kfr*

Popular Religion

June 23, 2026:

18th Straits Forum: Meeting of folk religion temples from both sides of the Taiwan Strait held in Fuzhou

Due to historical migration from mainland China to Taiwan, many folk religion temples in Taiwan trace their origins to temples in Fujian. This spiritual connection fosters various forms of exchange among figures involved in folk religion on both sides. A well-established format for civil society exchange across the Taiwan Strait is the Straits Forum (海峡论坛); its main event took place this year on June 13 in Xiamen (Fujian). As part of the 18th Straits Forum, around 500 representatives from religious, political, and academic circles also met in Fuzhou on June 23 to discuss "The healthy transmission and practice of Daoist culture in Fujian and Taiwan." Attendees included experts and scholars from universities and research institutes on both sides, such as Sichuan University, Fuzhou University, Fujian Normal University, National Taiwan Normal University, and National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology. In his address, Huang Haikun, Vice Chairman of the Fujian Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, expressed the hope that the meeting would contribute to peaceful coexistence between the two sides and that the participants would "shape, hand in hand, a bright future for the reunification of the motherland and the rejuvenation of the nation." In his speech, Guo Hanwen, Vice President of the Chinese Daoist Association, emphasized the spiritual bond forged by shared deities and expressed the hope that an awareness of this common spiritual home would continuously reinforce the believers' sense of belonging to "nation, history, and culture" (WeChat channel of the Fujian Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau June 24, via www.taoist.org.cn). – For more on the institutional characteristics of exchange programs between folk religion temples on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, see also Chang Kuei-Min, "The Paradox of Exchange: Institutional Asymmetry and the Limitations of Religious United Front Work Across the Taiwan Strait," in: *China heute* 2026, no. 2, pp. 95–107 (in German translation). *kfr*

Buddhism

July 6, 2026:

The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on his 91st birthday: "It seems I may yet live to be 130," "I hope to help the people of China through the teachings of the Buddha."

The main birthday celebration took place in Leh, in the Ladakh region of northern India. There, addressing some 25,000 followers, the Dalai Lama explained that every morning upon waking, he recites the following prayer: "Wherever the Buddha's teaching has not spread / And wherever it has spread but has declined / May I, moved by great compassion, clearly elucidate / This treasury of excellent benefit and happiness for all." He went on to say: "There are people in the world who have no spiritual belief. When I went to China in 1954–55, Mao Zedong told me that religion was like opium. However, practice of the Dharma is not just about propitiating deities and saying prayers. It's actually about transforming your mind and turning your mind towards the practice of virtue. The significance of the practice of Dharma is to have a calm mind, to train the mind. [...] I say the above prayer every day and I feel it is being fulfilled. Among Chinese people Buddhism is being revived and is spreading widely. And in many other parts of the world people are taking interest in the teaching of love and compassion." He concluded his speech by saying: "I'm 91, but according to indications in my dreams it seems I may yet live to be 130. So, I hope to be able to help Chinese people through the teaching of the Buddha and also to help people around the world to lead good, positive lives. This is what I aspire to do." – A statement by the Kashag (the Tibetan Cabinet-in-Exile) marking his 91st birthday criticized the Chinese leadership's efforts to "assimilate the non-Chinese nationalities under its rule into a singular Chinese national identity." The Kashag expressed particular alarm regarding the "Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress" – which came into effect on July 1 – and its claim to legal authority beyond China's borders (www.dalailama.com/news/celebrating-his-holiness-the-dalai-lamas-91st-birthday; https://tibet.net July 6). *kwt*

From approx. July 13, 2026:

Demolitions at the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy

According to information from a source of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a new round of demolitions began around July 13, 2026, at the renowned Tibetan Buddhist academy. It is located in Sertar County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The authorities reportedly designated at least 1,060 dwellings belonging to monks and nuns for demolition. Satellite images analyzed by the ICT indeed showed demolitions in the center of the academy grounds in August. According to ICT sources, the current demolition phase was scheduled to end on August 20; however, the organization expressed concern that a further phase might follow in order to reach the target of at least 1,060 dwellings. – Prior to 2016, around 10,000 followers of Tibetan Buddhism – including many Han Chinese – reportedly lived and studied at the academy, which was founded in 1980. In 2016 and 2017, authorities halved the number of residents through the mass expulsion of monks and nuns and the destruction of housing. Since then, there have been repeated expulsions and other measures taken against the academy, most recently around the turn of the year 2024/2025 (https://savetibet.org July 17; Aug. 24). For more on events at Larung Gar, see also *RCTC* 2016, no. 4, pp. 3–4; 2017, no. 4, pp. 8–9; 2020, no. 2, pp. 8–9; 2025, no. 2, p. 6. *kwt*

From July 30, 2026:

Official Panchen Lama stays in Tibet to carry out his "official duties"

This was reported by the official *Xizang Daily*. According to the *Tibetan Review* (Delhi), the 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, lives in Beijing under the supervision of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party and spends about six months each year in Tibet. – According to official Chinese media, the Panchen visited the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa on August 4, where he conducted his first Buddhist ceremony in Tibet of the year (!). In the following days, he presided over several meetings and conferences of the Tibet branch of the Chinese Buddhist Association, including a symposium marking its 70th anniversary on August 20. On August 14, a conference for non-Party members in Tibet was held in Lhasa to study the "Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress," which had been in effect since July 1. In his speech at this conference – according to *China Tibet Online* – the Panchen praised the new law as a "powerful instrument of national law and also an embodiment of the true Dharma on which religious precepts should be based." He stated that he would guide monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists to understand and observe the law. On August 24, the Panchen traveled on to Shigatse. – In 1995, the Chinese government abducted the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama and installed its own 11th Panchen, Gyaltsen Norbu. The Panchen Lamas are considered the second-highest spiritual authority in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama and play an important role in identifying his reincarnation (*China Tibet Online* [http://eng.tibet.cn] Aug. 4; *Xizang Ribao* as found at https://chinabuddhism.com.cn Aug. 25; www.tibetanreview.net Sept. 17). *kwt*

August 26, 2026:

Influencer sentenced to prison for "inciting ethnic hatred online"

According to identical reports on the websites of various religious patriotic associations, a court in the city of Yueyang (Hunan Province) has sentenced an influencer to three years and six months in prison for "repeatedly inciting ethnic hatred" (see, e.g., https://chinabuddhism.com.cn/web/details/76782 Sept. 11). The influencer – identified by the surname Song – reportedly used various social media platforms to disseminate false information and evil rumours about others. "For some time now, a small number of individuals with questionable motives have treated the internet as a lawless space where they publish false remarks that undermine ethnic unity and distort public perception," the text states, going on to discuss in detail the "correct" reporting on ethnic coexistence in China. The fact that these websites adopted the report from *Zhongguo minzubao* (中国民族报 Ethnic Groups in China) using the exact same wording and photographs suggests that, beyond the specific case at hand, the intention is to make an example of the individual to demonstrate the courts' firm stance against the misuse of the internet. The article is titled "Use of the Internet to Incite Ethnic Hatred Will Be Punished" and provides a detailed overview of the relevant laws and control measures. This conviction and the associated report must be viewed against the backdrop of the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress as well as ongoing efforts to strictly regulate online religious content (see also the "Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services," in: *China heute* 2022, no. 2, pp. 91–97 [in German]). For instance, the online sale of religious items is heavily regulated; in late July, the Chinese Buddhist Association once again issued a warning against the unauthorized online promotion of items with a religious appearance – such as amulets (https://chinabuddhism.com.cn July 25). *kfr*

August 31, 2026:

Official Panchen Lama prays for victims of the flash flood disaster in Gyirong County – Dalai Lama sends message of condolence

At Tashilhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lamas, Panchen Lama Gyaltsen Norbu joined monks in reciting sutras for the souls of the deceased and for the survivors. The prayer ceremony lasted an hour and a half and was attended by over 200 of the monastery's monks as well as religious representatives from Shigatse, according to the state-run portal *China Tibet Online* (as found at www.xztzb.gov.cn Aug. 31). Gyirong County, which borders Nepal, was particularly hard-hit on the Tibetan side by the flash flood of August 26. Like Tashilhunpo Monastery, it is located within the administrative area of Shigatse City in the Tibet Autonomous Region. – On August 27, the Dalai Lama sent a message of condolence to the bereaved and those affected. In it, he also urged that "appropriate follow-up measures will be taken, wherever possible, to help ensure that such disasters do not recur." (www.dalailama.com Aug. 27). The flash flood in Nepal and Tibet on August 26, 2026, claimed numerous lives. *kwt*

September 15, 2026:

Enthronement of the reincarnation of the 5th Gangchen Tulku Rinpoche at Gangchen Monastery

Gangchen Monastery is located in Sakya County, within the administrative area of Shigatse City. The official Chinese outlet *China Tibet Online* reported in detail on the proceedings – which, from the perspective of the Chinese state, were exemplary in their adherence to regulations: As early as 2011, the 5th Gangchen Tulku Rinpoche (1941–2020), who lived abroad, reportedly met the 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, in Beijing and "personally entrusted him with overseeing his own reincarnation." Following the death of the 5th Gangchen Tulku Rinpoche in Italy, the Tibet branch of the Chinese Buddhist Association reportedly established a steering team for the search under the leadership of the Panchen Lama, who provided guidance on the search through prayers, scripture recitation, dream interpretation, and divination. The actual search team reportedly traveled 3,500 kilometers and selected three candidates from among 200 boys visited secretly; the Panchen Lama then identified one of them as the reincarnation by drawing lots. Following approval from the authority for religious affairs of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Panchen Lama reportedly performed the tonsure ceremony for the child and bestowed upon him the religious name Jamyang Choephel Jampa Gyaltsen. On the day of the enthronement, a representative of the Religious Affairs Bureau read out the certificate of approval, and the Tibet branch of the Chinese Buddhist Association presented the "Living Buddha" certificate. According to *China Tibet Online*, this demonstrates "that the Communist Party of China's policy on freedom of religious belief has been fully implemented in Xizang Autonomous Region" and underscores the authority of the "Measures for the Administration of Reincarnations of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism." – According to the *Tibetan Review* (Delhi), the Milan-based 5th Gangchen Rinpoche was a controversial figure due to his promotion of the protective deity Dorje Shugden. The Dalai Lama has strongly advised Tibetans against worshipping Dorje Shugden, arguing that the deity is sectarian and harms the Tibetan cause. According to Tibetologist Thierry Dodin, the Chinese government exploits the Dorje Shugden conflict within the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism by promoting the cult through state-sponsored means (*China Tibet Online* [http://eng.tibet.cn] Sept. 15; www.tibetanreview.net Sept. 17; info-buddhismus.de/Proteste-Dalai-Lama-Dorje-Shugden-Konflikt-Interview-Dodin.html). *kwt*

September 21, 2026:

International Campaign for Tibet (ICT): Whereabouts of Tibetan Buddhist leader and educator Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche, detained nine months ago, remain unknown

According to the ICT, Choktrul Dorje Ten – head of the Minthang Osel Thegchok Chokhorling Monastery in Chikdril (Chinese: Jiuzhi) County, Golog Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province – was detained by authorities around December 4, 2025. His whereabouts have remained unknown since then. ICT said that formal appeals made to the authorities by the Rinpoche's family members and students, seeking information on his location and well-being, have gone unanswered. Choktrul Dorje Ten Rinpoche advocated for the preservation of Tibetan language and culture. Following his detention, various educational and cultural institutions founded by him were reportedly closed, including the Dorje Ten Ethnic Vocational School, where instruction was conducted in Tibetan. Born in 1967, Choktrul Dorje Ten studied Buddhist teachings within the Nyingma tradition – including under Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok – and received the title of Khenpo at the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy. The ICT notes that Choktrul Dorje Ten had previously been commended by Chinese authorities for his educational efforts (https://savetibet.org Sept. 21). *kwt*

Islam

July 6–8, 2026:

Conference on mutual understanding and cultural enrichment between Islam and Confucianism in Shenyang (Liaoning)

The conference – hosted by the China Islamic Association (CIA) and organized by the Liaoning Provincial Islamic Association – brought together over one hundred scholars, religious representatives, and government officials. Participants included representatives from the United Front Work Department and its affiliated research institutions, professors from universities and research bodies such as Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and regional leaders of Islamic associations. Professor Ding Hong 丁宏 of Minzu University of China presented the historical integration of Islam during the Ming and Qing dynasties as a positive example of how Chinese culture enriched Islam – a model that, according to her, remains inspiring today – while emphasizing that such a process enriches both sides. Similarly, other speakers focused primarily on the enrichment of Islam by Confucianism (which evidently serves as a shorthand for Chinese culture); notably, the conference reports contain no mention of the reverse dynamic – the enrichment of Confucianism by Islam. Accordingly, Zhang Zhiming, Deputy Director of the Liaoning Provincial United Front Work Department, stated that the "dialogue between Islam and Confucianism" and the "cultural enrichment of religion" are systematic measures designed to advance the Sinicization of Islam in China (www.chinaislam.net.cn July 9–10). *kfr*

Orthodoxy

June 19, 2026:

"Difficult and stimulating": Metropolitan of Singapore and Southeast Asia discusses work across 13 countries in *TASS* interview

The Russian Patriarchal Exarchate of Southeast Asia has existed for nearly eight years; it is organized into four dioceses – Singapore, Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines – and covers a total of 13 countries. In an interview with the Russian news agency *TASS*, the Patriarchal Exarch, Metropolitan Sergiy, discusses the work involved in navigating highly diverse cultural contexts and spanning five time zones. Recent achievements include the registration for a parish in Myanmar and plans to build a cathedral in Singapore. Work is also being done to translate liturgical texts. Using the term *dao* 道 – which renders the Greek word *logos* in Chinese Bible translations – the Exarch explains the specific challenges inherent in such translations: "When we find a term in a foreign language that shares a similar depth, we simultaneously introduce the entire spectrum of meanings native to that language – and these can distract from Christian theology." However, Metropolitan Sergiy notes elsewhere in the interview that the liturgical reality is often characterized by services where multiple languages are used simultaneously to accommodate the congregation. – In China, the Orthodox Church is estimated to have only a few thousand believers. Alongside established indigenous communities in the northeast, the presence of Russian migrant workers has also led to a revival of Orthodox life in the country. The Orthodox Church in China has been independent since 1956; unlike Catholic and Protestant Christianity, however, it possesses state-recognized churches in only a few locations. Nevertheless, contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church have been established in recent decades, for example through official visits and the training of priests in Russia. As the Russian Patriarchal Exarchate of Southeast Asia emphasizes on its website, the presence of Orthodox communities in Southeast Asia stems in particular from the missionary work of Russian Orthodox missionaries who initially operated in China and subsequently became active in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco plays a particularly significant role in this context (*AsiaNews* June 25; https://exarchate.asia/en/patriarshij-ekzarhat, accessed Oct. 5; *TASS* [https://pravoslavie.ru/178413.html, in Russian] June 19). Due to the conflict between the Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Churches, the Russian Patriarchal Exarchate of Southeast Asia stands in opposition to its Greek Orthodox counterpart, the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. Regarding the Russian Orthodox Church in China, see also *RCTC* 2025, no. 1, pp. 31-36. *kfr*

Protestant Churches

July 4, 2026:

Release or deportation of Pastor Ezra Jin to the USA

On July 4, Pastor Jin Minri – better known abroad as Ezra Jin – was unexpectedly released from custody; he arrived in Los Angeles, USA, as a free man that same morning. His arrest on October 10, 2025 – which coincided with the arrests of 27 other pastors and church leaders from the Zion house church network across China – had sparked significant international media coverage (cf. *RCTC* 2026, no. 1, p. 8). Pastor Jin's daughter, who lives in the USA, gave interviews denouncing the lack of religious

freedom in China – a stance that garnered strong support and attention worldwide. During his visit to China in May of this year, US President Trump had requested Ezra Jin's release. The Zion Church – declared illegal and banned in Beijing as early as 2008 – along with its network (widespread particularly among intellectual circles) and its leader, Pastor Jin (who had been under house arrest since 2008), represent a provocation to the Chinese religious authorities. All measures aimed at halting the activities of the Zion house church network have so far been unsuccessful. The date of Pastor Jin's expatriation is noteworthy. Why was he flown to Los Angeles to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States? (*Bitter Winter* July 6; *UCAN* July 9). *Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

July 20–23, 2026:

Anti-Heresy Campaign by the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)

From July 20 to 23, more than 60 individuals in leadership positions within China's official Protestant church gathered in Yantai, Shandong Province, for a training session themed "Resisting Heresy and Safeguarding the True Faith" (反邪匡正). The participants included provincial representatives from the TSPM and the CCC, as well as faculty members from theological seminaries. Pastor Shan Weixiang, a permanent staff member of the China Christian Council, emphasized the damage caused to the reputation of Protestantism by the activities of sects that masquerade as Protestant. He argued that combating heresy is essential not only for social harmony but also for the healthy transmission of Protestantism in China. The issue of heresy was explored through five presentations: Pastor Ms. Dr. Wang Jiawei discussed historical examples and lessons from the past; Senior Police Superintendent Yang Mingbo from Qingdao explained the legal definition of heresy, methods of infiltration, and specific risks; Pastor Shan Weixiang raised the question of why heresies so frequently emerge under the guise of Protestantism and called for theological reflection on the matter; Professor Luo Cheng outlined the tactics of the South Korean sect Shincheonji and proposed potential counter-strategies; and Pastor Ms. Dong Meiqin shared insights from her practical ministry experience in Shandong Province. On September 6, a mandatory training session on how to address heresy was held for all volunteer staff at the Community Church (Guoji Libaitang 国际礼拜堂) in Shanghai. It can be assumed that, in addition to the leadership-level conference for churches and seminaries in Yantai and the training sessions for volunteers, a series of professional training events for full-time church staff were held across the country (www.ccctspm.org July 27). *Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

Katholische Kirche

June 29, 2026:

Mass of thanksgiving and ceremonial reopening of the Beijing South Church following renovation

On Monday, June 29 – the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul –, the South Church, Nantang 南堂, in Beijing was reopened with a solemn Mass of thanksgiving for its successful renovation. The new altar was also consecrated during the Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Li Shan 李山. The current structure of the church, located in the Xuanwumen district – officially the Church of the Immaculate Conception –, dates back to 1904. It is the fourth church building to stand on this site, where the first chapel was erected in 1605 under Matteo Ricci SJ. Johann Adam Schall von Bell SJ subsequently commissioned the construction of a church in 1650 on land donated by the Imperial Court. In 1775, two earthquakes and



Bishop Li Shan consecrates the new altar of the South Church in Beijing on June 29, 2026. With reference to the history of the church, it bears the symbol of the Jesuit order on the front. Photo: https://xinde.org June 29.

a fire destroyed the building, which was by then serving as a cathedral; its reconstruction was supported by the Emperor with a grant of 20,000 ounces of silver. On June 14, 1900, this church burned down during the Boxer Rebellion; it was rebuilt in its present form in 1904. Since 1996, the church has been included on the national list of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level of the People's Republic of China (*Xinde* July 1; *Guide to the Catholic Church in China* 2014, pp. 37–39). *kfr*

July 2026:

Extreme weather of historic proportions in China – Jinde Charities provides aid in disaster-stricken areas

"Once-in-a-hundred-years disasters have become routine in China," noted *AsiaNews* in early August, citing a series of record-breaking events – including flooding in the Taklamakan Desert – all occurring just halfway through the 2026 typhoon season (*AsiaNews* Aug. 4). Beyond climate change, factors such as human interference with ecosystems, inadequate drainage and sewage infrastructure, and the aging of numerous dams are contributing to dam failures, flooding, mudslides, and other disasters. As in previous years, Jinde Charities provided disaster relief in several locations. Following floods in Guangxi, the Catholic aid organization – working alongside the China Siyuan Foundation (中华思源工程基金会) – delivered peanut oil and rice to 700 families in Guigang in mid-July. In a subsequent phase, and in collaboration with their long-standing partner, the China Foundation for Rural Development (中国乡村发展几乎), they assessed further needs. Plans were developed to provide equipment and services for clearing mud and disinfecting affected areas, as well as initiatives to help restore livelihoods. In a separate incident, Jinde Charities also responded to a tornado that struck the town of Taihe in Hubei province on July 6. In coordination with local authorities and in partnership with local organizations and volunteers, Jinde Charities delivered relief supplies to over 300 families, including chainsaws, shovels, tarpaulins, blankets, bamboo brooms, essential oils (for insect bites and motion sickness), and drinking water. (*Xinde* July 8, 17, 27). *kfr*

July 6–11, 2026:

3rd National training course for religious superiors in Beijing

According to a report on the official website of the Chinese Bishops' Conference and the Patriotic Association, the training course was organized by the "Department for Religious Sisters" of both bodies and held at the National Seminary in Beijing. 36 religious superiors from 35 religious communities – representing 31 dioceses across 19 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities – participated. The report stated that the training program was closely aligned with the practical requirements of religious leadership and the challenges of the times. Listed as speakers were the priests Frs. Wang Dongcheng, Liu Jinping, and Wang Heping as well as Sister Qiao Bianyun; they delivered lectures on topics such as religious rules, biblical leadership figures, and "ethics of life." On July 8, Bishop Li Shan – Bishop of Beijing Diocese and Head of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association – gave a lecture titled "The Mission and Witness of Religious Sisters in Contemporary Society." Bishop Guo Jincai, Bishop of Chengde and Rector of the National Seminary, delivered the closing address on July 11. While acknowledging the success of the training course, the bishop also stated – according to the report – that the sisters should remain committed to the path of the Sinicization of Catholicism in China and "continuously develop" their political competence and spiritual formation (www.chinacatholic.cn July 13; *Xinde* July 16). *kf*

July 16, 2026:

"Talents with Dual Competence": Kick-off for the second part of the training series

On July 16, the kick-off event for the second part of the "Talents with Dual Competence" (*shuangtong rencai* 双通人才) training series took place in the Diocese of Shanghai. The goal of this state-initiated program – which is also offered in a similar form to other recognized religious communities – is to cultivate leaders who are, on the one hand, "reliable" regarding state religious policy and patriotism and, on the other, well-versed in traditional Chinese culture and its classics, thereby advancing the Sinicization of religions. Seventy individuals from Shanghai are participating in the program, including priests, religious sisters, and committed laypeople. The training series is jointly offered by the Catholic Diocese of Shanghai and the Department of Philosophy at Fudan University; the three-month follow-up course comprises approximately 200 hours of instruction. Speakers at the kick-off event included Bishop Shen Bin, the Party Secretary of Fudan University, and a representative from the United Front Work Department. Shen Bin emphasized the importance of this training for implementing the state's religious policy directives and urged participants to incorporate what they have learned into their pastoral care and evangelization efforts, and to play a pivotal role within the diocese (*Xinde* July 16). *kfr*

July 22, 2026:

After a 20-year vacancy: 42-year-old priest Joseph Chang Yanfeng is ordained Bishop of Chifeng in Inner Mongolia under the Sino-Vatican agreement

In the first episcopal ordination in China this year, Bishop Meng Qinglu of Hohhot ordained Fr. Joseph Chang Yanfeng 常彦峰 as Bishop of the Diocese of Chifeng. The co-consecrators were Bishop Pei Junmin of Shenyang/Liaoning and Bishop Yao Shun of Wumeng (Ulanqab/Jining), Inner Mongolia. As usual, Fr. Yang Yu, Secretary-General of the Chinese Bishops' Conference, read out the Bishops' Conference's letter of approval. Chang Yanfeng had been selected as the episcopal candidate for Chifeng

on March 20, 2026, an announcement made by the official Catholic governing bodies (the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Bishops' Conference) on the day of the ordination. Also on the day of the ordination, the Holy See – following the practice adopted for episcopal appointments in mainland China since 2024 – announced in its *Bollettino* that Pope Leo XIV had appointed Chang Yanfeng as Bishop of Chifeng on June 15, 2026. Regarding this ordination and subsequent ones in Bameng, Datong, and Chongqing, the papal news agency *Fides* emphasized that the "process leading to the appointment and ordination [...] took place under the pontificate of Pope Leo XIV." – Bishop Joseph Chang Yanfeng was born in 1984; he is the first Chinese bishop born in the 1980s. Aged 42, he was [at the time of his ordination] the youngest Catholic bishop in the world, according to *Zenit*. He studied theology at the Shenyang Seminary from 2000 to 2006. From 2007 to 2010, he earned a licentiate degree in Biblical Theology from the Catholic University of Daejeon in South Korea. He was ordained a priest in 2010. According to reports from the Catholic governing bodies, Bishop Chang serves as chairman of the Patriotic Association of the city of Chifeng. Vatican sources indicate that he had been the diocesan administrator of Chifeng since 2021. The Diocese of Chifeng had been without a bishop since 2006 – a period of twenty years. According to *Fides*, the diocese comprises over 50,000 Catholics, around 30 priests, and approximately 20 religious sisters (www.chinacatholic.cn/ccic/report/2607/0100-1.htm; https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/07/22/260722a.html; *Fides* July 22; *Zenit* Sept. 9). *kwt*

July 22, 2026:

Release of Fr. Ma Xianshi of Wenzhou after 18 months in prison

As reported by Andrew Law in *AsiaNews*, more than a hundred people – believers and relatives – awaited Fr. Ma Xianshi 麻显士 outside the Yiwu detention center on the day of his release; they greeted him with flowers and, after he had received a haircut and new clothes, escorted him to Wenzhou in a convoy of dozens of cars. There, another 400 Catholics from his former parish of Lucheng had already gathered at the cathedral. The authorities finally permitted Ma to celebrate a thanksgiving Mass – not inside the cathedral itself, but in a hall alongside three other priests. According to Law, as of late July, it remained unclear whether Ma would be able to re-register as a religious cleric (i.e., resume work as a priest) following his imprisonment or whether Catholic bodies would revoke his official clergy credentials. Law wrote that Ma's place would initially be by the side of his ailing 90-year-old mother. – Fr. Ma Xianshi, who had served as administrator of the official part of the Wenzhou Diocese in Zhejiang Province since 2016, was arrested on November 22, 2024, alongside Catholic businessman Zhuang Qiantuan 庄千团; they were tried before the People's Court in Yiwu on charges of "illegal business activities" (specifically, the sale of hymnbooks – for details, see *RCTC* 2026, no. 1, p. 11). The 18-month prison sentence handed down to Ma – who had pleaded not guilty during the proceedings – only became known in the summer of 2026. Zhuang had been released in February 2026. It is suspected that the actual reason for Fr. Ma Xianshi's arrest was something else – possibly a meeting with Vatican representatives. The Diocese of Wenzhou has a Catholic population of around 200,000. According to *AsiaNews*, the official branch comprises nearly 50 priests and over 40 religious sisters. Fr. Ma Xianshi has since been replaced as leader by Fr. Hu Longjian 胡龙建. The Bishop of Wenzhou, Shao Zhumin 邵祝敏, operates underground; this underground community – consisting of 24 priests and over 40 sisters – is facing increasing pressure. Evidently, the authorities intend to replace Bishop Shao – appointed by the Holy See for the entire Diocese of Wenzhou – with a candidate of their own choosing (*AsiaNews* July 28). *kwt*

July 29, 2026:

Fr. Francis Xavier Duan Yongkun, aged 45, is ordained Coadjutor Bishop of Bayannur (Bameng) in Inner Mongolia

Just one week after the previous ordination, another bishop was ordained in Inner Mongolia. Once again, Bishop Meng Qinglu of Hohhot – the capital of the autonomous region – performed the ordination. Concelebrating bishops included Yang Xiaoting (Yulin), Du Jiang (Bameng), Yao Shun (Wumeng), and Chang Yanfeng (Chifeng). Fr. Yang Yu read the letter of approval from the Bishops' Conference. As announced in separate statements by the official Chinese governing bodies and the Vatican on the day of the ordination, Fr. Duan Yongkun 段永昆 had been elected as the candidate for coadjutor bishop of Bameng on March 18, 2026, and appointed coadjutor bishop of Bameng by Pope Leo XIV on June 15. – Coadjutor Bishop Francis Xavier Duan Yongkun was born in 1980. He studied theology at Hebei Seminary in Shijiazhuang from 2000 to 2007 and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Bameng in 2011. The Vatican's *Bollettino* also reported that he studied at Peking University and Beijing Foreign Studies University from 2008 to 2013, as well as at the Catholic Fu Jen University in Taiwan from 2013 to 2016, and that he directed the local formation center [in Bameng Diocese] from 2016 to 2020. In 2020, he was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of Bameng. According to the report of the Catholic governing bodies, Bishop Duan also serves as a vice-chair and secretary-general of the Patriotic Association and the Commission for Church Affairs of the city of Bameng. – According to *AsiaNews*, the Diocese of Bameng was separated from the Diocese of Ningxia by the official Church in 1989. *AsiaNews* speculates that the local bishop, Matthias Du Jiang – who is only 63 years old and was secretly ordained with a papal mandate in 2004 before being officially installed in 2010 – requested a coadjutor bishop with the right of succession for health reasons. The Diocese of Bameng, described by *Fides* as very active, has around 40,000 faithful, approximately 30 priests, and 20 religious sisters (www.chinacatholic.cn/ccic/report/2607/0117-1.htm; https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/07/29/260729b.html; *AsiaNews* July 29; *Fides* July 29). *kwt*

July 30, 2026:

60 seminarians completed studies at official major seminaries in 2026

As the Catholic news service *Xinde* reported on July 30, 2026, "nearly 60" seminarians have completed their seminary studies and returned to their dioceses. In addition, a number of religious sisters and laypeople have also finished their studies. The following five seminaries are listed: the National Catholic Seminary of Philosophy and Theology in Beijing, the Catholic Seminary of Theology and Philosophy in Beijing (Beijing Diocesan Seminary), the Chinese Catholic Sheshan Seminary (Shanghai), the Catholic Seminary of Theology and Philosophy in Shaanxi (Xi'an), and the Catholic Theological Seminary of Hebei Province (Shijiazhuang). The seminaries in Jilin and Chengdu (Sichuan Province) are not mentioned. *kf*

August 18, 2026:

Exhibition hall dedicated to Bishop Dong Guangqing (1917–2007) – one of the first two bishops in China consecrated without a papal mandate – designated a "National Model Base for the Sinicization of Catholicism"

A plaque was unveiled at the "Exhibition Hall for Bishop Dong Guangqing's Deeds of Love for Country and Religion" (董光清主教爱国爱教事迹陈列馆), designating it a "National Model Base for the Sini-

cization of Catholicism" (全国天主教中国化示范基地). The unveiling ceremony was attended by the heads of the national Catholic governing bodies: Bishop Li Shan of Beijing, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), and Bishop Shen Bin of Shanghai, Chairman of the Chinese Bishops' Conference. In his address, Bishop Li Shan praised Bishop Dong as the "first self-elected and self-consecrated Catholic bishop of New China" and a "pioneer of an independent, autonomous, and self-governed Church." The local bishop, Cui Qingqi of Wuhan, also delivered a speech (*AsiaNews* Aug. 25; www.chinacatholic.cn Aug. 22). – The exhibition hall is apparently housed in the premises of the former minor seminary in Boquan, located in the Dongxihu District of Wuhan. The site also contains the grave of Dong Guangqing (https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/柏泉天主堂). – Following the expulsion of the Italian missionary bishop of Hankou, Maurice Rosa OFM, in 1952, Fr. Dong Guangqing OFM – according to an obituary by Roman Malek – became "administrator of the diocese in 1955 and, following the establishment of the Patriotic Association in 1957, was elected bishop under pressure. Although Dong's election was communicated to Rome by telegram despite all difficulties, Rome issued a firm rejection of such an election process. Under continued political pressure, Dong Guangqing was – as he frequently recounted – finally consecrated bishop on April 13, 1958, alongside Fr. Yuan Wenhua. [...] His episcopal consecration in 1958 was seen as a symbolic beginning of the 'autonomous' Catholic Church in the PRC. Subsequently, a total of 45 bishops were elected and consecrated prior to the Cultural Revolution." According to Malek, Dong was likely recognized as a bishop by Pope John Paul II as early as the mid-1980s. Bishop Dong played a major role in rebuilding his diocese after the Cultural Revolution. See R. Malek, "Die Kirche in der Volksrepublik China und ihre *dramatis personae*: Nach dem Tod von Bischof Fu Tieshan (Beijing) und Bischof Dong Guangqing (Wuhan)," in: *China heute* 2007, no. 3, pp. 89–89, here pp. 87–88. *kwt*

August 25–26 and September 24, 2026:

Training sessions for Catholic financial personnel in Hebei and Jilin provinces

On August 25–26, the official Catholic governing bodies of Hebei Province organized a training session for financial personnel from the province's dioceses. 26 individuals participated, including diocesan office managers and accountants. Experts from academia and the Party's United Front Department provided practical instruction on regulations regarding religious policy, financial management, and the drafting of official documents (*gongwen* 公文). – In Jilin Province, 46 financial staff members from 30 Catholic parishes attended a training session organized by the provincial Catholic governing bodies on September 24. Relevant regulations concerning the financial management of religious sites were clarified; furthermore, as stated in the report on *Xinde* website, „daily procedures for parish income and expenditure, rules for expense reimbursement, and requirements for the auditing and archiving of receipts were explained in detail; specific training sessions on fixed-asset inventory, financial record-keeping, and annual budget preparation methods addressed weaknesses in grassroots financial operations." The report contextualizes this training within the religious education campaign – "Study legal norms, uphold religious discipline, emphasize self-cultivation, and build a positive image" – which has been underway since October 2025. The campaign was likely triggered by the case of the Buddhist abbot Shi Yongxin, who was placed under investigation in July 2025 and sentenced to 24 years in prison in May 2026 for offenses including embezzlement. For some time now, there have been reports that the finances of religious sites and communities are being audited by the authorities at all levels (https://xinde.org Sept. 11 and 30). *kwt*

August 31, 2026:

After a 21-year vacancy: Fr. Paul Liu Honggang is ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Datong (Shanxi)

Bishop Shen Bin of Shanghai, Chairman of the Chinese Bishops' Conference, officiated at the ordination. Four bishops from Shanxi Province participated in the ceremony: Bishops Ding Lingbin of Changzhi, Liu Genzhu of Linfen, Ma Cunguo of Shuozhou, and Ji Weizhong of Lüliang. Fr. Yang Yu read the letter of approval from the Bishops' Conference. As announced in separate statements by the official Chinese governing bodies and the Vatican on the day of the ordination, Liu Honggang had been elected as the episcopal candidate for Datong on April 28, 2026, and appointed Bishop of Datong by Pope Leo XIV on August 10. – Bishop Paul Liu Honggang 刘红刚 was born in Shanxi in 1970. He studied at the Fenyang Seminary [*sic*] from 1988 to 1992 and at the National Seminary in Beijing from 1992 to 1996. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Datong in 1996. According to the Vatican *Bollettino*, he had served as the diocesan administrator of Datong since 2005 – that is, since the death of his predecessor, Bishop Guo Yingong, in that same year. According to the official Catholic governing bodies, Bishop Liu is a vice-chairman of the Patriotic Association of Shanxi Province. – The Diocese of Datong is located in the north of Shanxi Province and borders Inner Mongolia. According to *Fides*, it has around 10,000 Catholics, 15 priests, and a women's religious congregation (www.chinacatholic.cn/ccic/report/2608/0114-1.htm; https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/08/31/260831b.html; *AsiaNews* Aug. 31; *Fides* Aug. 31). *kwt*

September 8, 2026:

After a 25-year vacancy: Fr. Andrew Ding Yang ordained (Arch)bishop of Chongqing

Bishop Li Shan of Beijing, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, ordained the 44-year-old. Bishops He Zeqing of Wanzhou, Luo Xuegang of Yibin, Cui Qingqi of Wuhan, and Xiao Zejiang of Guizhou, along with Auxiliary Bishop Zhen Xuebin of Beijing, participated in the ordination. Fr. Yang Yu read the letter of approval from the Chinese Bishops' Conference. – Archbishop Andrew Ding Yang 丁杨 was born in Chongqing in 1981. According to a 2008 report by *Xinde*, Ding Yang was the first in his family to be baptized, receiving the sacrament in 1996 at the age of 15. He studied at the Beijing Seminary from 2000 to 2006 and was ordained a priest in 2007. On April 15, 2026, he was elected as the episcopal candidate for Chongqing. Pope Leo XIV appointed him Archbishop of Chongqing on July 28, 2026. While the Vatican's division of dioceses in China includes archdioceses and ecclesiastical provinces, such structures are not provided for in the official Church's organizational scheme. The Vatican *Bolletino* notes further details of his life: Ding Yang studied at the University of Saint Joseph in Macau from 2009 to 2011 and at the University of Santa Croce in Rome during 2014–2015. In the interim, from 2012 to 2014, he taught at the National Seminary in Beijing. According to the Catholic governing bodies, Bishop Ding Yang serves as deputy secretary-general of the Chinese Bishops' Conference [which is not recognized by Rome]. Ding's consecration marks the 18th episcopal ordination under the provisional Sino-Vatican agreement on the appointment of bishops concluded in 2018, and the seventh under Pope Leo XIV. – The municipality of Chongqing – a city under direct central government administration – was established in 1997 after being separated from Sichuan Province. Its administrative territory is roughly the size of Austria and has a population of just under 32 million. Two Catholic dioceses – Chongqing and Wanzhou – are located within the territory of Chongqing. According to *Fides*, the Archdiocese of Chongqing comprises approximately 120,000 Catholics, 30 priests, and one women's religious congregation. The Archdiocese had been without a bishop since the death of Bishop Luo Beizhan in 2001 (www.chinacatholic.cn/ccic/report/2609/0029-1.htm; https://

press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/09/08/260908a.html; *Fides* Sept. 8; *Xinde* Jan. 30, 2008). *kwt*

September 10, 2026:

Statue of the Jesuit Robert Émile Jacquinot de Bésange – founder of the first safety zone for refugees in Shanghai during World War II – unveiled in his hometown

To mark the 80th anniversary of his death, the city of Saintes – located near the Atlantic coast north of Bordeaux – has unveiled a statue of Fr. Jacquinot de Bésange (Chinese name: Rao Jiaju 饶家驹; 1878–1946), who was born in the city. During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), the French Jesuit priest saved the lives of more than 300,000 civilians in Shanghai – including 80,000 children – by establishing a protected area known as the "Shanghai Safe Zone." Jacquinot had arrived in China as a missionary in 1913. At the outbreak of the war, he succeeded in persuading the warring parties that organizing a safety zone and providing for refugees would be mutually beneficial. Following his death, his concept of safety zones was incorporated into the protocols and commentaries associated with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. – Following Fr. Jacquinot's example, and with the Jesuit priest's mediation, the Hamburg businessman John Rabe also established a safety zone in Nanjing in 1937, where approximately 200,000 Chinese people found refuge. – The bronze statue of Fr. Jacquinot, standing roughly two meters tall, was created by the Chinese sculptor Li Xiaochao; it was presented to the city by the Paris-based association Les Amis de Wu Jianmin and the Shanghai Anti-Japanese War Studies Association, the latter of which donated the statue. 150 people attended the unveiling ceremony, including former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. – A commemorative plaque had already been dedicated at Jacquinot's grave in the Heiligensee Cemetery in Berlin on September 10, 2013 (*Xinde* Sept. 20; www.facebook.com/VilledeSaintes/posts/retour-en-images-inauguration-de-la-statue-du-père-robert-jacquinot-à-loccasion-/1358925222992722; www.klauspegler.de/texte/frohnau-frohnau/robert-jacquinot-de-besange/; see also *RCTC* 2015, no. 1, p. 17). *kf*

Sino-Vatican Relations

August 28, 2026:

Fides: Chinese translation of Pope Leo XIV's dissertation published in Hong Kong

The Pope's doctoral thesis in canon law is titled *The Office and Authority of the Local Prior in the Order of Saint Augustine*. Robert Francis Prevost defended the thesis in 1987 as a young Augustinian friar at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. The text has now been translated into Chinese by Fr. Peter Zhao Jianmin 赵建敏, a priest of the Diocese of Beijing who earned his doctorate in canon law in Leuven, and revised by Fr. Peter Ren Panji 任磐基, a priest and lecturer at the Beijing Seminary who holds a doctorate from the Faculty of Canon Law at the Gregorian University. The translation was published in Hong Kong by the Centre for Catholic Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Zhao Jianmin explained to *Fides*: "This classic work is not merely an academic study, but also a practical guide for Church governance and pastoral ministry. Although it was written almost forty years ago, it retains considerable depth and offers valuable guidance. This is the first Chinese translation of the work, and we hope that, whether clergy, religious or Church leaders,

everyone will be able to draw wisdom from it and reflect anew on how authority can be placed at the service of love" (*Fides* Aug. 28). – The Chinese translation certainly also reflects a desire to gain a better understanding of Pope Leo's way of thinking. However, for readers in mainland China, the Hong Kong publication will likely only be available through indirect channels. Book details: 羅伯特 · 普雷沃斯特/教宗良十四 (Robert F. Prevost / Pope Leo XIV) 著, 趙建敏 譯注, 任磐基 審校, 奧斯定會會院院長的職務與權威, Hong Kong: Centre for Catholic Studies, CUHK 2026. ISBN / ISSN: 978-988-71168-1-3. *kwt*

Starting September 10, 2026:

The papal agency *Fides* publishes a series of commentaries by authors from Mainland China on the ordination of the first six Chinese bishops in 1926

One hundred years ago, on October 28, 1926, six Chinese men were ordained bishops in Rome – the first such ordinations in modern times. This event is considered a milestone in the indigenization of the Catholic Church in China (see the article by Leopold Leeb in this issue). While no references to this "Roman" anniversary had appeared in Mainland Chinese Catholic media by the end of September 2026, *Fides* began publishing a series of articles on the subject by authors from Mainland China in September. Fr. Peter Zhao Jianmin, Director of the Institute for Catholic Studies and Culture in Beijing, described the bishops' long sea voyage and their visits to Italy, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands following their ordination (http://fides.org/en Sept. 10). Priest and blogger Fr. Paul Han drew parallels between the 1926 episcopal ordinations and the 2018 Sino-Vatican agreement (*ibid.*, Sept. 14). Prof. Liu Zhiqing of Anyang Normal University, who has conducted extensive research and published widely on the history of Chinese dioceses, is contributing overviews of the histories of the six dioceses involved (two installments have appeared by the end of September: Diocese of Puchi, Sept. 22; Diocese of Anguo, Sept. 28). It remains to be seen whether the event will be commemorated in any form by the local Church in China or within the six dioceses themselves. *kwt*

Hong Kong

June 28, 2026:

Autobiography of Cardinal John Tong published in Hong Kong

"主為我牧 – 湯漢樞機自傳" "The Lord is my Shepherd – Autobiography of Cardinal John Tong" is the title of the autobiography published in Chinese in May 2026 by the Catholic Truth Society and the diocesan Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong; it was officially presented at the Catholic Diocese Centre on June 28. It is the first Chinese-language autobiography by the 87-year-old Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong. According to the publisher's brief description, the 224-page work documents his life's journey – from his wartime childhood and his calling to religious service, through his ordination as a priest and bishop, to his ministry in the Diocese of Hong Kong and his connection to the universal Church. In the book, thus the description, the Cardinal reflects on pivotal moments in his life, his experiences of faith, and his insights, while also shedding light on the development of the Church in Hong Kong and mainland China. The book contains numerous photographs, pastoral letters, and homilies. Furthermore, the text notes that various individuals were asked to contribute pieces sharing their observations and experiences from their long-standing collaboration with Cardinal Tong. "This gives readers a deeper insight into how Cardinal Tong has humbly held fast to the profession of

faith 'The Lord Is My Shepherd' throughout his life and borne witness to God's guidance and grace." According to the *Sunday Examiner*, the project to create a biography of Cardinal Tong began when Vicar General, Fr. Peter Choy Wai-man, commissioned Prof. Cindy Chu Yik-yi of Hong Kong Baptist University to interview the Cardinal. The result is the English-language biography *Cardinal John Tong. Renewal within Tradition in the Catholic Church of Hong Kong*, edited by Cindy Chu (Palgrave Macmillan 2024). According to the *Sunday Examiner*, due to high demand from local readers for a Chinese version, "Cardinal Tong personally undertook the task of expanding the text into a comprehensive new Chinese volume." The Chinese autobiography was also presented at the Hong Kong Book Fair – a major event for the Asian region – held from July 15 to 21. Bibliographic details: Tang Han 湯漢, *Zhu wei wo mu – Tang Han shuji zizhuan* 主為我牧 – 湯漢樞機自傳, edited by Xianggang Gongjiao Zhenli xuehui 香港公教真理學會 (Catholic Truth Society), Hong Kong 2026 (https://www.catholiccentre.org.hk/product-page/主為我牧–湯漢樞機自傳; *Sunday Examiner* July 3). *kf*

July 2, 2026:

One aspect of Hong Kong's crisis: Tens of thousands of taxi drivers over 60 years of age

According to an *AsiaNews* article from July 2, this situation reflects not only Hong Kong's aging population but also the financial hardships facing many older residents. As their pensions are often insufficient to cover living expenses, many seek to earn an income – or supplement their existing one – by working as taxi drivers. Citing statistics from Hong Kong's Department of Transport and Logistics, the article notes that the average age of taxi drivers is 58; 110,000 individuals over the age of 60 – including approximately 30,000 aged between 70 and 79 – hold a valid taxi driver's license. Since 2021, Hong Kong has been classified as a "super-aged society," a term for regions where more than 20% of the total population is aged 65 or older. *AsiaNews* reports that, according to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, this figure is projected to rise to 36% by 2046. The article also quotes Professor Wang Xiaohu of the City University of Hong Kong, who states that many older people prefer not to retire; they fear boredom at home and believe a flexible job in the taxi industry might suit them. However, the underlying reason for this choice is the risk of falling into poverty without employment. Wang's research, thus *AsiaNews*, highlights a significant wealth gap in Hong Kong, with older people making up a large percentage of the population living in poverty. Although people in lower-income brackets benefited from public housing and free public healthcare, they still struggled to cover their daily expenses (*AsiaNews* July 2). *kf*

July 15, 2026:

Hong Kong booksellers arrested for violating National Security Law

Following several earlier instances of independent booksellers facing arrest this year, two more bookstores were raided by police in mid-July – citing Hong Kong's 2024 National Security Law – and their staff members were arrested. According to the police, the booksellers were suspected of "displaying seditious materials and selling seditious publications on the premises." The police action followed a tip-off from customs authorities. The affected shops were Have A Nice Stay and Greenfield Book Store, both located in the Mong Kok district. Those arrested were later released on bail. Shortly thereafter, Have A Nice Stay announced plans to close, citing financial difficulties and unclear "red lines." The Christian NGO Society for Truth and Light subsequently protested the absence of a list of censored publications. Chris Tang, the Secretary for Security, reiterated the government's stance that it would

not publish a list of banned books. He argued that such a list would merely prompt those seeking to circumvent the security law to alter the titles of their publications. At the same time, he warned against such practices, explaining that security authorities review books based on their content. Works that evidently fall under the new provisions of the security law include *Let Only Red Flowers Bloom: Identity and Belonging in the Xi Jinping Era*, published by the Taiwanese firm Acropolis Publishing. In the past, a bookstore had faced trouble for stocking a biography of the disgraced media tycoon and pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai. The recent arrests coincided with the opening day of the Hong Kong Book Fair (*Bitter Winter* July 22; *The Standard* Aug. 17; *UCAN* Aug. 3). *kfr*

July 31, 2026:

World's oldest Trappist monk dies in Hong Kong



Fr. Benedict Chao. Foto: *Sunday Examiner*.

On July 31, the 108-year-old Trappist Fr. Benedict Chao died in a Hong Kong hospital. Born in 1918 in Zhengding, Hebei Province, on the Chinese mainland, he entered the Trappist Priory of Our Lady of Joy in Zhengding in 1941 at the age of 23. Ordained a priest in 1949, he was able to carry out his priestly ministry for more than 70 years. Prior to the communist takeover in 1949, there were two Trappist monasteries in Hebei: the Abbey of Our Lady of Consolation in Yangjiaping (now Zhangjiakou) – founded in 1883 by French monks from Sept-Fons – and the Priory of Our Lady of Joy, established in Zhengding in 1928. The abbey had over 100 monks but was destroyed by communist militias in 1947. 33 martyrs lost their lives, including 30 Chinese, one Frenchman, one Dutchman, and one Canadian. A monastery was successfully re-established on Lantau Island, Hong Kong, in 1951. Fr. Chao served as prior there from 1974 to 1998. According to the *Sunday Examiner* in Hong Kong, Fr. Chao guided the Trappist community through significant periods for the monastery, such as the expansion of its dairy in the 1980s and its expansion into Taiwan through the founding of the Holy Mother of God Monastery in Shuili, central Taiwan, in 1984. Fr. Chao was the last Trappist monk to have survived the expulsion from China. In 1999, the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists) recognized the community on Lantau as an independent abbey. In January 2000, the abbey – previously known as Trappist Haven Monastery – resumed the name Our Lady of Joy, which dated back to the Hebei era (*AsiaNews* Aug. 9; *Sunday Examiner* Aug. 12). *kf*

August 21 to September 11, 2026:

Security Law: Prison sentences for organizers of Tiananmen commemorations and democracy activists

In Hong Kong, organizers of the formerly annual vigil marking the violent crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protest movement have been sentenced to multi-year prison terms for "subversion." Those affected are former lawmaker Albert Ho (74), labor unionist Lee Cheuk-yan (69), and lawyer Chow Hang-tung (41). While Lee and Ms Chow pleaded not guilty, Ho had pleaded guilty at the start of the

proceedings, hoping for a potential sentence reduction due to health reasons. Lee received a seven-year prison sentence, while Chow was sentenced to seven years and three months; Ho faces five years and two months in prison. The German Federal Foreign Office expressed "deep regret" regarding the sentencing of Chow, who was awarded the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law in 2023. For many years, Albert Ho and Lee Cheuk-yan led the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements (or "the Alliance" for short). The retroactive application of the security law is notable, given that the Alliance has not organized any such commemorative gatherings since the Tiananmen vigils were banned in 2020. According to the reasoning behind the verdict – as reported by *AsiaNews* – the organization at no point specified concrete methods or timelines for overthrowing the one-party system, nor did it advocate for violence. However, the judges deemed the repeated adherence to this objective to constitute a criminal offense (*AsiaNews* Aug. 21; *Die Zeit* Sept. 11; *UCAN* Sept. 11). – In separate proceedings, pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong (29) pleaded guilty to the charge of "conspiracy to collude with foreign forces." He is accused of having campaigned abroad in 2020 for sanctions, blockades, and other hostile acts against Hong Kong. During the court hearing, he admitted to signing an online petition urging foreign digital forensics companies to cease cooperation with the Hong Kong police following the enactment of the security law (*UCAN* Sept. 2). *kfr*

September 4, 2026:

Appeals court upholds verdict against Cardinal Joseph Zen and four other trustees of the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund

The Hong Kong Court of Appeal has upheld the conviction of five trustees for improperly administering the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund. The legal dispute was about the correct name of the fund and the legal form and registration to be chosen. According to the court, the fund should have been registered as a "society," while according to the defendants the fund was a trust, not an association or company. During government protests in 2019, the fund was used to finance medical assistance and legal assistance for arrested activists. In addition to Cardinal Joseph Zen (94), former MPs Margaret Ng and Cyd Ho, academic Hui Po-keung, and singer and activist Denise Ho are among the convicted trustees. They announced that they would appeal in the final instance (*LICAS* Sept. 4; *UCAN* Sept. 4). *kfr*

Macau

July 2, 2026:

Pro-democracy former lawmaker Au Kam San to face trial

Au Kam San (Ou Jinxin 區錦新), 69, a long-serving member of Macau's legislature until 2021, had previously advocated for an independent judiciary, transparent administration, and free elections for the position of Chief Executive. In July 2025, he became the first citizen of Macau to be arrested under the territory's National Security Law, which had been significantly tightened in 2023. At the time, the EU condemned his arrest and expressed concern over the "erosion of political pluralism" in the former Portuguese colony. On July 2, a court announced that Au was a key figure behind crimes involving the "subversion of state power" and would have to stand trial for these offenses. He was also suspected of colluding with foreign forces in this regard. Under the new law, crimes involving the subversion of state power carry a penalty of up to 25 years in prison. Furthermore, since March 2026, judges in Macau have been legally authorized to hear national security cases behind closed doors. In such cases, defense lawyers must obtain permission before they are allowed to appear in court (*AsiaNews* July 9; *UCAN* July 9). *kfr*

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中国宗教评论

A Milestone for the Catholic Church in China: The Consecration of Six Chinese Bishops in 1926

Leopold Leeb

Translated by Anna Clart

The Early Attempts to Train Chinese Priests

In 1305, the first great Franciscan missionary in China, Giovanni da Montecorvino (1246–1328), wrote a letter to Rome in which he for the first time hinted at training members of the Catholic clergy:

> *I have gradually acquired 150 pagan boys who are aged between seven and eleven and previously knew nothing of religion. These I have baptised and raised according to our rite; I have taught them Latin and Greek and written them psalm prayer books and other helpful things. Our emperor here delights in their singing.*[1]

Although Montecorvino was consecrated as bishop in 1308, he is not known to have ordained any of his pupils as deacons or priests. Unfortunately, all evidence of this so-hopeful first mission, carried out amongst the turmoil of dynastic change from Mongol to Ming Dynasty rule, have utterly vanished. Not a single document, stone monument or building remains in China that bears witness to the ecclesiastical culture of this period. Nor does the monk Odoric da Pordenone, who was in Beijing from around 1325 to 1328, mention any Chinese priests in his account.

The second wave of Catholic missions reached the Far East in the 16th century in the person of the leading Jesuit Francis Xavier, who came to Japan in 1549 and soon achieved great successes. But it took half a century, until 1601, for the first Japanese priest, Sebastian Kimura 木村, to be ordained. Only one decade later, Japan launched its large-scale persecution of the Church. The Portuguese port settlement of Macau was then the centre of seminary training and where many Chinese Jesuit candidates received their foundational education. Between 1591 and 1634, fifteen young Chinese men joined the Society of Jesus. Although several became successful catechists and missionaries, none were ordained

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A German version of this text, including the appendix, was first published in *China heute* 2026, vol. XLV, no. 3, pp. 179–189.

1 Cited in D'Elia 1927, p. 18. Original text: "Item enim (=emi) successive 150 pueros filios paganorum aetatis infra septem et undecim annorum, qui nullam adhuc cognoscebant legem, et baptizavi eos, informavi eos literis Latinis et Graecis ritu nostro, et scripsi pro eis psalteria et alia opportuna, et dominus Imperator delectatur multum in cantu eorum."

as priests. There were multiple reasons for this. First, many Portuguese missionaries in Macau did not believe in the Chinese and judged them more suited to work as catechists (Jesuit brothers) than as priests. A second problem was presented by Latin education, which was considered too difficult for the Chinese. In 1613, the Belgian Jesuit Nicolas Trigault was accordingly sent back from China to Europe to obtain Pope Paul V's permission to read Mass in the Chinese language; this, he argued, would allow even those Chinese who understood no or very little Latin to be ordained. In 1615, permission was in fact given: the Bible was to be translated into the Chinese language and both missionaries and Chinese priests were to be permitted to celebrate Mass in Chinese.[2] One difficulty of this Bible translation was the question of disputed Chinese theological terms (the so-called "Terms Question"). In 1627, the official name for "God" was thus set as *tianzhu* 天主 (Lord of Heaven), while other versions, such as *shangdi* 上帝 (Ruler on High) and *tian* 天 (Heaven), were suppressed. The main reason why no Chinese priests were ordained after this was the unrests of the Late Ming period. The Manchus began to threaten the Chinese empire in the 1620s; the missionaries were driven out between 1616 and 1620, and some of the erudite Jesuits in Beijing (one of them Cologne-born astronomer Johann Adam Schall von Bell, 1592–1666) were preoccupied with academic studies. They gave no thought to training young clerics. Less well known than Fr. Schall is the Italian Fr. Luigi Buglio SJ (1606–1682), who spent his last decades in Beijing and there translated into Chinese not just the *Missale Romanum* (*Misa jingdian* 弥撒经典, 1670), the sacramental liturgy (*Shengshi lidian* 圣事礼典, 1675), and the *Breviarium* (*Siduo kedian* 司铎课典, 1674) but large parts of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* (*Chao xing xue yao* 超性学要, 1654–1678) – a truly towering achievement and the precondition for liturgy and theology in the Chinese language. Yet while the Jesuits hesitated to ordain Chinese seminarians (partially, too, because they had no bishop resident in China), the papal attitude shifted around 1685, and Rome withdrew permission for the liturgy to be celebrated in Chinese.[3]

It was then Alexandre de Rhodes SJ (1593–1660), a pioneer of the Vietnam mission, who in 1645 departed from Macau to Europe in the company of a Chinese seminarian. This companion, Manuel Zheng Manuo 郑玛诺 (1633–1673), was to study theology in Italy and thereby became the first Chinese priest to be ordained within the Jesuit order. He set off back to China in 1670 and even reached Beijing in 1672, but sadly died there just one year later.

The First Chinese Bishop, Luo Wenzao, and His Times

While the Jesuits were dreaming of a Chinese-language liturgy and thus neglecting to train their seminarians in Latin, the Franciscans and Dominicans, who had been active in southern China since 1630, were banking on the value of a classic, Latin theological education. It thus did not take long before they were sending Chinese candidates abroad, namely to the Philippines. The most well-known of these seminarians from Fujian Prov-

2 D'Elia 1927, p. 21.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

ince is Gregorio Luo Wenzao 罗文藻 (1616–1691),[4] who from 1640 studied in Manila, entered the Dominicans and was ordained as the first Chinese priest in 1640. Luo was then active in China during the persecution period (1665–1670) and visited the scattered Catholic communities of Fujian, Zhejiang, Shandong, Hebei, and other places. His ministry was recognised as so vital that he was consecrated as bishop in 1685. In 1688, this allowed him to ordain the Chinese priests Wu Yushan 吴渔山, Liu Yunde 刘蕴德, and Wan Qiyuan 万其渊, Jesuits all. In 1690, he then ordained another Chinese Jesuit, Francis Xavier He Tianzhang 何天章, as priest. At the same time, Bishop Luo asked the Propaganda Fide congregation for permission to ordain twelve further Chinese priests who had no or little knowledge of Latin, but received a resounding "no" in response. Rome insisted on a shared ecclesiastical language, to enable clerics to read the Church's documents.[5]

It is a pity that the first Chinese priests as well as Bishop Luo left almost no texts behind. From Zheng Manuo, only a single Italian letter to the Jesuits' Superior General is preserved, while Bishop Luo Wenzao has left behind few letters or fragments that are clearly written by his own hand. Wu Yushan is known as a painter and scholar, yet he composed a negligible number of theological texts, among them several poems.

Thus, the laurels for being the first theologically well-educated Chinese author must presumably go to the priest Andrew Li Ande 李安德 (known also as André Ly, 1693–1774), who from 1715 to 1725 studied in Ayutthaya (today's Thailand) at the seminary of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (Missions étrangères de Paris, MEP). From 1743 to 1763, Andrew Li penned many reports from the mission in Sichuan. These valuable contemporary documents were published in Paris in 1906, under the title *Journal d'André Ly* – a veritable gold mine of information on the Church in China during the period of the persecutions, but also an extraordinary Latin document, running to 600 pages and revealing the spirituality and missionary activity of the priest Li Ande.

The 17th-century attempts to train priests not only within China but without Latin were doomed to fail. More and more, candidates were thus sent abroad for their studies. An important factor here was the approach adopted by Fr. Matteo Ripa (1682–1746), who was active in Beijing from 1711 to 1723 but then journeyed to Italy in the company of four seminarians and founded the Collegium Sinicum in Naples. Between 1732 and 1888, this seminary trained around one hundred Chinese seminarians and secretly sent them back to China. The most well-known of these foreign students was Li Zibiao 李自标 (1760–1828), who accompanied the Macartney Mission to Beijing in 1793 and worked as a translator for the English diplomats.[6]

Both Li Ande and Li Zibiao spent the last years of their lives leading minor seminaries, in which they prepared small groups of Chinese seminarians for studies abroad or in Macau and instructed the young people in Latin. This must be seen as an important element in the indigenisation of the Catholic Church in China: Chinese people preparing candidates for (theological) studies abroad. These attempts to establish seminaries within China itself were then carried on by the foreign missionaries, such as the MEP priests in

4 His real name was presumably Luo Wenzhao 罗文炤; see the long (546-page) monograph by Moreno 2024.

5 D'Elia 1927, pp. 28–29.

6 See the study by Harrison 2021.

Sichuan and Yunnan, where Fr. Thomas Hamel (1745–1812) spent many years leading the seminary in Luoranggou 落壤沟 and trained 27 Chinese priests.[7]

In 1740, the Jesuits also began sending some of their candidates to Europe. Most returned to China after a few years and there ministered in secret in the Christian communities.

Western Missionary Zeal, Major Seminaries, and the Difficulties of True Equality

When the Napoleonic Wars had passed and the Jesuit order had been reestablished, missions in China blossomed. The various orders – Lazarists, MEP, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, and later the C.I.C.M. Missionaries (Scheut Missionaries, 1865) and the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD, 1882) – ran numerous seminaries in different provinces, training more and more local seminarians. After 1860, the small, secret communities of the underground transformed into large institutes with sizeable seminary libraries and regular lessons, allowing the linguistic studies and theological knowledge of the Chinese seminarians to slowly approach international standards. Yet as anyone who has studied theology knows, European requirements were and still are quite high and the various disciplines (such as Bible studies) were continually developing over the course of the 19th century. China's seminary training thus had to be correspondingly thorough: first six years of middle school, which already included Latin lessons, then three years at the minor seminary, where Latin instructions were joined by ecclesiastical history, liturgy, and music. Then came the major seminary, with two years of philosophy and four years of theology. Textbooks were now in Latin and exams had to be sat in Latin too. In 1926, China's seminaries could boast of a total of 304 philosophers and 458 theologians.[8] From around 1910, especially gifted seminarians were also sent to study in Rome, which by the 1930s was always hosting around a dozen young theologians from China.

There was a true problem of inequality: the missionaries from the West (the majority of Catholic missionaries were French and Italian) were at an advantage not just because of their languages and theological training but also because they usually possessed not insignificant financial resources provided by donors in Europe. The Europeans were also much more respected by Chinese authorities and local populations than the Chinese priests were. Even in the 1920s, many bishops in China were therefore still hesitant to suggest Chinese priests as episcopal candidates – they lacked both means and esteem within Chinese society.

The Breakthrough: *Maximum Illud* 1919, Shanghai 1924, the Consecrations of the First Six Bishops and Their Missionary Work

In the face of the catastrophe of the First World War (1914–1918) and the incipient nationalism that came on the heels of the Manchu Dynasty's collapse in China (1911), plac-

7 D'Elia 1927, p. 43.

8 D'Elia 1927, p. 59. There were then 2.3 million baptised Catholics in China.



The six Chinese priests shortly before their episcopal consecration in St. Peter's Basilica on October 28, 1926. Source: Anthony E. Clark, Whitworth University – Archives de la Société des Auxiliaires des Missions, Brussels.

ing Church leadership in the hands of native Chinese became ever more important. In 1919, Pope Benedict XV published the encyclical *Maximum Illud*, in which he stressed the significance of the native-born clergy, arguing that native priests were better placed than foreign missionaries to both reach the people and influence them in the long run.

At the same time, the Holy See's first delegate in China, Msgr. Celso Costantini (1876–1958), was nominating Chinese priests to become apostolic prefects and vicars in China. He prepared the momentous episcopal synod, held in Shanghai in May 1924, that decided that all Church offices should be open to Chinese priests.

In 1926, six Chinese bishops were thus nominated and then consecrated on 28 October of that same year by Pope Pius XI. After this consecration, which aroused much sensation at the time, the six bishops were accompanied by heavy media interest as they travelled to France and Belgium, where those receiving them in December 1926 included the Belgian king and Fr. Vincent Lebbe (1877–1940). They did not return to China until early 1927. Who were these six men, and what ministry did they undertake in China after their consecrations?

The first to be named is usually **Philippus Zhao Huaiyi** 赵怀义 (1880–1927), who came from a Catholic family in Zhengfusi 正福寺, Beijing. His father, Zhao Yaoting 赵耀庭 (1844–1900), ran a workshop near the North Church (Beitang). In 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion, the father brought his wife and children into the North Church, where they weathered the difficult period in safety, but he himself remained outside and so fell victim to the Boxers.[9] In 1893, young Philippus Zhao entered the minor seminary in Beijing. Two of his five brothers became priests. The eldest entered the Trappist abbey of Yangjiaping, about 150 km west of Beijing, as early as 1889, when he was 17 years old; he died in 1927. The fifth brother, Zhao Huaixin 赵怀信, was ordained around 1910 and later became a

9 For a report of the life and martyrdom of Peter Zhao Yaoting, see his translated biography from Planchet 1920, in the appendix of this article.



Pope Pius XI, wearing the mitre, kneels at the altar next to the papal throne (Cathedra Petri), while the six priests lie prone before the altar. October 28, 1926. Source: Anthony E. Clark, Whitworth University – Archives de la Société des Auxiliaires des Missions, Brussels.

professor at the minor seminary in Beijing. He accompanied the six bishops on their journey to Rome and then wrote a 400-page retrospective of the last two years (1926 and 1927, up to Bishop Zhao's death).[10] This retrospective consists largely of a collection of contemporary newspaper reports – revealing how popular the six bishops were in their time.

As a seminarian Philippus Zhao witnessed the terrible turmoil of 1900 and was then ordained as priest in Beijing in 1904. After four years of teaching at the minor seminary, he became chaplain in Xuanhua 宣化, about 150 km northwest of Beijing. He later became a rural missionary in Xin'an 新安 and then spent four years as director of a Catholic middle school in Beijing. In January 1923, when the papal delegate Msgr. Costantini came to China, he appointed Philippus Zhao as his secretary – one may thus assume that Costantini and Zhao discussed many questions together. In May 1926, Zhao was nominated as Apostolic Vicar of **Xuanhua**. He returned from Europe to Beijing in early 1927 and celebrated his enthronement in April, in Xuanhua. He spent the following weeks and months extremely occupied with both ecclesiastical and charitable tasks, for the war that was then being waged in that region between different generals brought hundreds of fleeing people into Xuanhua's large churchyard. Zhao was worried about the many refugees, and when he saw a family without blankets or mattress in the yard, he fetched them coverings from

10 See Zhao Huaixin, *Ernian de huiyi* [The following, recently published article summarises the stops along this European journey: Zhao Jianmin, "One hundred years later. The long journey of China's first Bishops to receive Episcopal Ordination from the Successor of Peter," *Fides* Sept. 10, 2026, http://fides.org/en/news/78150-One_hundred_years_later_ The_long_journey_of_China_s_first_Bishops_to_receive_Episcopal_Ordination_from_the_Successor_of_Peter. Ed. note.].



Group photo of the six Chinese bishops immediately after their consecration, October 28, 1926. From left to right: Bishop Zhu Kaimin (Haimen), Bishop Hu Ruoshan (Taizhou), Bishopf Chen Guodi (Fenyang), Bishop Zhao Huayi (Xuanhua), Bishop Cheng Hede (Puqi), Bishop Sun Dezhen (Lixian – the vicariate was later called Anguo).
Source: Anthony E. Clark, Whitworth University – Archives de la Société des Auxiliaires des Missions, Brussels.

his own chamber. A moment later, he spotted a mother and child, also without blankets and exposed to the elements, and so gave them his own coat. He then returned to his chamber but spent a freezing night, soon felt unwell and died the next day. It was October 14, 1927. Bishop Zhao's gravestone within Xuanhua's cathedral is well preserved; the Latin inscription can still be easily read. The episcopal motto he chose was "Impendam et superimendar" ("I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls," 2 Cor 12:15). Xuanhua's church itself is also well renovated and features an extraordinary ceiling, constructed out of dark wood.

Zhao's extended family and his relatives preserve his memory to this day. They meet once a year in a place in Beijing or in Xuanhua to uphold the commemoration of their great ancestor. Most are devout and practising Catholics. About 15 years ago, I was able to take a car journey with Zhao Chunying, a great nephew of the bishop, to the Trappist abbey in Yangjiaping – an experience for which he has my deep gratitude, as the route is far and hard to find.

The second bishop born in Beijing was **Melchior Sun Dezhen** 孙德祯 (1869–1951). He studied at the minor and major seminary in Beijing and was ordained as priest in 1897. Two years later, he joined the Lazarists. (He, too, had a brother who also became a priest.) He spent twelve years teaching Latin at Beijing's minor seminary; he then became a rural missionary in Niufang 牛房 and other places southeast of Beijing, once again for twelve

years. In 1924, he was named Apostolic Prefect of Lixian 蠡县, a district in Hebei. In May 1924, he participated in Shanghai's National Council. In 1929, he took up his new residence in **Anguo** 安国, where he remained until 1936, when he ended his term as Vicar of Anguo and went into retirement. He was by then already 67 years old. He spent the last years of his life amongst the Little Brothers of the Congregation of St. John the Baptist (Sheng Yaohan xiao xiongdi hui 圣耀汉小兄弟会) in Qinghe, Beijing, where the major seminary of the Archdiocese of Beijing is located today. In 1927, it was thanks to Bishop Sun that Fr. Vincent Lebbe, who had left China several years earlier, was invited back into the country and was active in the Vicariate of Anguo, where he founded the Little Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus (Delai hui 德来会) and the above-named Little Brothers of St. John. According to the elderly Sun Yaolan 孙耀兰 (born 1940), who still lives in Beijing today and is the only member of her family to still remember Bishop Sun, he was of average build, at 1.75 meters, and highly educated, for he spoke six languages, including Latin, French, and English. His parents' names are unknown. In the last years of his life, he was forced to witness the Communist takeover shattering the Church in Beijing. Whenever he held a Pontifical Mass (*zhujiao misa* 主教弥撒) in the North Church, the inflow of worshippers was high.

Ms. Sun bears the first name Yaolan. The character *yao* 耀 (honour) was suggested by Bishop Sun, who believed that Catholics should use it more frequently when naming their children. It is a connection to Fr. Vincent Lebbe, who called his congregation the Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist, "Yaohan" 耀汉 ("Honour for China") and also propagated the use of *yao*. In our 2024 interview, Sun Yaolan also told me that Bishop Sun was originally buried in the big cemetery Zhalan, which also holds the grave of Matteo Ricci. In 1954, the government occupied the cemetery and instructed affected Catholics in Beijing to rebury their relatives and bring their mortal remains to Dongbeiwang 东北旺. (A few years later, however, Dongbeiwang was assigned to the Protestants and the dead had to be moved once more, this time to Xibeiwang 西北旺, where the Catholic cemetery remains to this day.) Sun Yaolan, who was then 14 years old, remembers that Bishop Sun's coffin was raised and opened, and that the bishop's body was undecayed. It looked, she said, as though he were sleeping. She thought that it would be good to have a souvenir, and someone removed his glasses from his face – but in that instant one of his ears fell off. That is what she remembers. The glasses unfortunately went missing, as did everything else. She remembers seeing the gravestone, which was around 150 cm high. The coffin was then brought to Dongbeiwang, but Sun Yaolan was never there and does not know what the grave looks like.[11]

The only one of the six bishops to study abroad was **Odoric Cheng Hede** 成和德 (1873–1928). Born in Laohekou 老河口 in Hubei, he began his school career in the Catholic settlement Chayuangou 茶园沟 in Gucheng 谷城. When he was ten years old, a Franciscan missionary took him along to Italy, where he continued his studies. In 1894, he entered the Franciscan monastery La Verna, where St. Francis received his stigmata. On June 15,

11 Interview with Sun Yaolan on November 3, 2024 in Beijing's North Church (transcription in the author's possession).

1900, when he had completed his philosophical and theological studies, he was ordained as priest in the monastery Santa Margherita da Cortona; in 1903, he travelled back to China. He served as a rural missionary and spent fourteen years teaching at the minor seminary in Chayuangou, then later philosophy at the central seminary in Wuchang, Hubei. In March 1924, he was named Prefect of **Puqi** 蒲圻, a district in Hubei Province that in 1926 contained only 1,821 Catholics but had 3,900 catechumens. He, too, was present at the National Synod in Shanghai. Yet he died suddenly and young after his return from Rome, passing away on November 14, 1928 at only 55 years of age. Bishop Cheng had previously travelled to Hengyang 衡阳 in Hunan to participate in the consecration of the Italian bishop Raffaelangelo Palazzi (1886–1961). He apparently fell ill on the ship journey and was already very weak upon his arrival in Hengyang. He died the next day. Today, not a trace of either his grave or his former episcopal church remains.[12]

In his time, Bishop Cheng was arguably one of very few Chinese who spoke Italian fluently. He even composed a textbook for Italian.

The episcopal candidate from Shanxi Province, **Alois Chen Guodi** 陈国砥 (1875–1930), was also a Franciscan. Born in the village of Anyangcun 安阳村 in Lu'an 潞安 (Shanxi), he studied in Taiyuan's seminary from 1888 onwards and in 1896 entered the Franciscan order in the village of Dong'ergou 洞儿沟, where the Italian Franciscans had their convent. In 1900, after the Boxer Rebellion, the governor and imperial representative Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 asked him to assess the state of Christianity in Shanxi and judge the damage it had incurred. Fr. Guo served as a rural missionary for nine years, then worked as secretary for two Italian bishops in Taiyuan. He was also temporarily a member of the Educational Commission of Shanxi Province. At the same time, he was a teacher of apologetics and Latin at the seminary in Taiyuan. He was named Vicar of **Fenyang** 汾阳, leading its Church together with seventeen Chinese priests. He founded a minor seminary there, but also died not soon after. After falling ill to tuberculosis, he died on March 10, 1930 at the age of 55. He was a humble person but very educated. He spoke not only Latin and Italian but could communicate well with French and Spanish missionaries too.

The cathedral in Fenyang was not completed until the episcopacy of Bishop Liu Jinwen 刘锦文 (1872–1951). Bishop Chen's grave remains preserved in the diocese's Catholic cemetery, but the original gravestone has not survived. It was replaced after 1980.[13]

Bishop **Joseph Hu Ruoshan** 胡若山 (1881–1962) was born in Dinghai 定海, Zhejiang Province. He lost his parents at the age of five and was raised in the Catholic orphanage. He was educated at the Catholic primary school of Dinghai, the minor seminary of Ningbo 宁波 and the central seminary of Jiaxing 嘉兴, which was run by Lazarists. He joined the Lazarists (Vincentians) in 1906, and he was ordained as priest in 1909. He served as a rural missionary for six years before becoming a teacher of philosophy and dogmatic

12 See "Commemorative text for the 90th anniversary of the consecration of six Chinese bishops 1926–2016" (2016, Chinese manuscript, not formally published), p. 23.

13 See "Commemorative text for the 90th anniversary," p. 28, which also has photos of the gravestone, the seminary built by Bishop Chen, and the cathedral.



Group photo with European and Chinese Church dignitaries immediately after the consecration in St. Peter's Basilica, on 28 October 1926. Source: Anthony E. Clark, Whitworth University – Archives de la Société des Auxiliaires des Missions, Brussels.

theology at the seminary in Ningbo. In May 1924, he was present at the National Synod in an advisory role. For his episcopal office, he selected the quote "Quis ut Deus" (Who is like God?)

His vicariate was **Taizhou** 台州, south of Zhejiang, which in 1926 had only 5,000 Catholics.

> *The cathedral by which Bishop Hu Ruoshan resided is preserved to this day, as is the convent of St. Teresa's Sisters of Charity* (*Delan Ren'ai xiunühui* 德兰仁爱修女会). *Unfortunately, only the Virgin Mary's Hill, which was built then, still belongs to the Church; the convent is used by several city residents and as a factory. Bishop Hu's old gravestone has already been reconstructed and stands within the Catholic cemetery of Qiaotoucun* 桥头村 *Village, Huangyan* 黄岩 *District, in the city of Taizhou.*[14]

Of the six bishops, **Simon Zhu Kaimin** 朱开敏 (1868–1960) reached the most advanced age. He came from one of Shanghai's most well-known Catholic families. The Zhu clan had a Catholic tradition that stretched back three hundred years. Bishop Zhu's mother was a sister of the noted Catholic school founder Ma Xiangbo 马相伯 (1840–1939). She had seven children. One daughter entered the Auxiliatrices (Zhengwanghui 拯亡会, Congregation of the Helpers) – a sisterhood that came to Shanghai in 1868. Simon Zhu was the younger brother of the industrialist Zhu Zhiyao 朱志尧 (1862–1955), who made a journey to the West around the turn of the century and then began implementing Western

14 "Commemorative text for the 90th anniversary," p. 30. See also the photos from the sisters' convent and his grave on p. 31.

technology (textile processing, steam ships) on a large scale in Shanghai, where he opened his own shipyard in 1905. The same Zhu Zhiyao also held a leading position in Catholic Action. In 1928, twelve Chinese Catholics received the Papal Order of St Sylvester, among them Zhu Zhiyao.

Simon Zhu was 15 years old when he entered the minor seminary in Dongjiadu 董家度. He then studied at the major seminary in Xujiahui 徐家汇 and in 1888 decided to join the Jesuits. Ten years later, he was ordained in Shanghai at the age of 30. He spent many years serving as a rural missionary – beginning in Jinjiaxiang 金家巷, Pudong 浦东, and then shifting to Changshu 常熟 after 1903 – and he founded the Chongzhen School 崇真学校, which earned him an honorary plaque from the provincial governor.[15] In 1926, he was made Vicar of **Haimen**, which then had over 32,000 Catholics. He was able to spend many active years in this vicariate, opening schools and Catholic clinics. He presumably spent his last years under house arrest, and died on February 22, 1960. Several of his nephews were also priests and Jesuits, with some confined to labour camps for many years – this was the fate of both Francis Xavier Zhu Shude 朱树德 (1913–1983) and Vincent Zhu Hongsheng 朱洪声 (1916–1993).

The anonymous author of the Chinese "Commemorative text for the 90th anniversary of the consecration of six Chinese bishops 1926–2016," written ten years ago, gives the following very brief comment:

> *The great church of our dear Lady of Lourdes, which Bishop Zhu Kaimin had erected in the city of Langshan* 狼山*, is today a well-known pilgrimage church of the Zhejiang-Jiangxi-Shanghai region, and has been declared a cultural monument by the municipal government of Haimen Diocese. For certain reasons, however, Bishop Zhu Kaimin's grave could not be preserved.*[16]

Recognition of the Chinese Bishops in China Today

It is typical of the current atmosphere in China that the six bishops' hundred-year anniversary cannot be celebrated in any great style. Their consecration was a momentous event at the time, but it also fell into the Nationalist (Guomindang) period – about which it is now hard to report anything positive. That the three bishops who lived longer (Sun, Hu, and Zhu) had many contacts with the foreign "imperialist" missionaries and were, after 1945, themselves of an anti-communist persuasion and expressed themselves as such is almost beyond doubt. Public memorial celebrations of any kind are thus impossible – any search for images or statues in official locations would probably be in vain. Presumably, pilgrimages to the three preserved graves of bishops Zhao, Hu, and Chen will be undertaken by only very few Catholics in China, not least because these burial locations are all

15 Zhao Huaixin, *Ernian de huiyi*, p. 17.

16 "Commemorative text for the 90th anniversary," p. 32. Photos of the church in Langshan and the episcopal residence of Bishop Zhu on p. 33.

but unknown. Yet one can expect articles and photos of the (almost) forgotten bishops to appear on certain online platforms.[17]

Will anyone go to the effort of collating these scarce pieces of information and few images into a passable book? It's questionable. The publication of such a work is impossible in China today, and one can only rest one's hopes in historians in Taiwan or Western countries.

Yet one may hope that in a few years, when religion has once more risen in esteem, it will be not merely these six who earn public commemoration, but the other largely suppressed Chinese Church dignitaries of the period before 1949 as well: from Cardinal Tian Gengshen 田耕莘 (also known as Tien Kensin, Tian Gengxin, 1890–1967), the first cardinal of Asia, to Cardinal Yu Bin 于斌 (also known as Yu Pin, 1901–1978), along with the many priests, brothers and sisters who had to suffer so much for their faith. And who knows? Perhaps someone in a future time will publish a book entitled *Great Chinese Catholics* that grants these six bishops their places of honor, alongside Bishop Luo Wenzao and the sanctified Chinese martyrs.

Appendix:

Peter Zhao Yaoting (1844–1900), Father of Bishop Zhao Huaiyi (1880–1927)[18]

Zhao Yaoting 赵耀庭 received the baptismal name Peter 伯多禄; his father was called John (Ruohan) and his mother Elisabeth (Yisabo'er). They originally lived in Anping 安平[19] County, Zhili. Peter Zhao had four siblings, and was himself the third-born. From childhood onwards, he accompanied his father to the area near Xisi Gate (Xisi pailou 西四牌楼), where they ran a shop selling wooden beams[20] of the Xishun 西顺 brand.[21] As this was the entire family's income source, they eventually moved to the capital. Peter Zhao married a woman named Yu 于 from Tiancun 田村 Village, west of Beijing, but she died young and he was married once more, this time to a woman called Zhou 周 from Zheng-

17 The best photos of the six bishops are found not in China but in contemporary publications in Europe, such as the Dutch commemorative text [original version, undated], *De Kerk Groeit. Gedenkschrift ter Gelegenheid van de Wijding der eerste Chineezen tot Bisschoppen der H. Kerk 28 October 1926*, Netherlands.

18 The following text was composed on the basis of a biographical entry for Peter Zhao Yaoting, the original Chinese version of which can be found here: Jean Marie Planchet (ed.), *Quanshi Beijing jiaoyou zhiming* 拳时北京教友致命 [Catholic Martyrs in Beijing at the Time of the Boxer Rebellion], Beijing: Lazarist press 1920, vol. 1, pp. 19–23. The footnotes are Leopold Leeb's.

19 Anping is located in Hebei Province between Baoding and Hengshui, around 250 kilometres south of Beijing. The Catholic family very likely moved to Beijing after 1860, when the Catholic Church was granted permission to operate openly. Peter Zhao was then 16 years old.

20 The term employed here is *xuan huo* 镟货, which i.a. refers to lathed products, probably wooden pieces fashioned through turning. But the products in question may also have been screws, bolts, or round pieces for axles and supports, so Zhao's workshop was probably viewed as a "Western shop" with "Western products" (yang huo 洋货). Business presumably flourished in the years of rising Western influence in Beijing, for it was sufficient to feed a large family. It is equally possible that the Zhao family used a Western lathe or equipment pieces they had received from French missionaries.

21 The name Xishun means "Western Luck" – perhaps a reference to the products' possible Western origins.

fusi Village.[22] She was baptised under the name Cecilia and had five sons. The eldest entered the Cistercian monastery in 1889, when he was just 17 years old.[23] The second[24] and fifth[25] were ordained as priests after 1900 and worked as missionaries in Beijing Diocese.

From childhood, Peter was upstanding and honest. His humility, simplicity, patience, and goodness were particularly noted. All who knew him remembered his good nature. Whenever he had been cheated during the day in business matters, he added a prayer for his enemy to the church's general evening prayers. This ritual became such a habit that his family, upon hearing an extra prayer amongst the evening ones, would conclude that Peter had been cheated or humiliated that day. They would ask him and always receive a bashful response. That is how much he loved his enemies!

When it came to his sons and daughters, he was very formal and careful in both word and deed; never was he in the least casual or lax. No one, whether within or outside of his family, ever heard him utter a rebuke. This was an ideal he followed for his whole life. Nor did he use curse words, and he regularly gave his children firm instructions to love God, their neighbours, and even their enemies. He would sometimes appear at church carrying his toddlers on his back, and when it was very cold outside, he would hold a little baby hand in his mouth to keep it warm. He brought the babies to church to show his other children that they must begin to serve the Lord in earliest childhood. He did not shy away from physical exertion and hard work, and he fulfilled all of his duties. He even took the task of saving others' souls upon himself. When he met Catholics who were indifferent or failed to observe the rules, he would find a way to caution them or put them right. On the occasions where he was forced to issue clearer admonitions and thereby antagonised someone, he did not regret his words. When he met a non-Christian who wanted to learn more about the faith, he instructed them with vigour and joy, and explained the faith. He found ways of guiding and encouraging these people, even when to do so meant an arduous task. This was his way of working as a missionary.

As for his piety and worship, he was extremely devoted and devout. He rose early each morning, went into the church and attended Mass from beginning to end. Only once Mass was complete did he leave the church. Whether it was hot or cold, raining or storming, he visited the church each day – even until the last weeks of his martyrdom, when entering the church was almost impossible and he was forced to change his daily routine. On every Sunday and feast day, he would send his apprentices away from the shop to attend Mass – always on a rotational basis, even when business demands in the shop were pressing. Before high feast days, he would urge his apprentices to go to confession and receive holy communion. Each evening, he led his family to attend the church's evening prayers and there read aloud several chapters of spiritual books. Everyone in church would listen to his reading. When something prevented him from reading in church, he would read in

22 Zhengfusi Village was the site of the French cemetery (from about 1720 onwards) and was shaped by Catholicism.

23 This date implies that Peter Zhao's eldest son was born in 1872, meaning that Peter Zhao must have married a second time around 1870.

24 The second son was Zhao Huaiyi 赵怀义 (born 1880). This also means that Peter Zhao very likely fathered several daughters between 1872 and 1880. Alongside his five sons, he thus probably had a series of daughters.

25 The fifth son, Zhao Huaixin 赵怀信, was born in 1893 and accompanied his brother to his episcopal consecration in 1926. He compiled the volume *Ernian de huiyi* (see bibliography) in remembrance of this European journey.

private. In periods of frustration, or when something was weighing on him, he would read the spiritual books with even more joy, as though he drew all his comfort and inspiration from these devotional books. The spiritual books he cherished most his whole life long included a Chinese translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, the reading material issued for the liturgical year *Shengnian guangyi* 圣年广益 as well as the spiritual guide *Chongxiu yin* 崇修引.[26] These three books accompanied him throughout his life, and he carried one of these volumes around with him at all times. From his youth on, he was a member of the prayer community (*gongjinghui* 公经会) of [Beijing's] North Church. Whenever it was his turn to lead the prayers, he was always very eager to do so. The Way of the Cross, in particular, frequently moved him to tears, as he sang the texts with his stirring and devoted voice – something which never failed to affect those at prayer. When the people heard him, they too began to cry. He was a member of this prayer community for several decades, always adhering to the regulations and fulfilling his tasks as diligently as on the first day. He never took a rest from his duties. He upheld the Ten Commandments and the four functions of the Church [proclamation, liturgy, service, and community]. He avoided even minor sins and was extremely conscientious. This was his way of praising the Lord.

At the time of the Boxer Rebellion, altars (*tan* 坛) with meeting points[27] were erected across the city. Peter Zhao was in good cheer, for he hoped to lay down his life for the Lord. This seemed very natural to him. Whenever he spoke with someone, he would say:

> *The current times offer a most rare opportunity, an opportunity for which one must wait a thousand years. The gates of Heaven stand open, just in front of us! One simple step forward, and we can enter!*

His fifth son was then only seven years old. When Peter had the time, he would teach him what answer to give the Boxers – how he was to react if a Boxer kidnapped him. Again and again, he would teach his son by questioning him as follows: "If a Boxer takes you and asks if you are Catholic, what will you answer?" The boy said: "I am Catholic." He asked another question: "And if the Boxers say to you, 'If you say that you are not Catholic, we will buy you something nice,' how will you respond?" The boy said: "I am Catholic." He continued: "But if the Boxers say, 'How dare you say that you are Catholic? We will kill you!' – what will you say then?" The boy said: "I will say that I am Catholic." This drilling of question-and-answer became the boy's most important exercise. The second son[28] was home for a while around this time, and Peter Zhao said to him: "You can put the fifth son, your little brother, to the test and ask him how he will respond when the Boxers kidnap him." The second son thus asked his little brother the same questions, and the boy's answers did not change. When Peter Zhao learned this, he declared himself satisfied.

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26 *The Imitation of Christ* – or *De imitatione Christi*, to give it its original title, was translated by Manuel Diaz (d. 1659) into Chinese (*Zun zhu sheng fan* 遵主圣范). *Shengnian guangyi* contained the gospels for Sundays and feast days and was published in 1738, as 24 volumes. Meanwhile, *Chongxiu yin* was a later work by the Chinese priest Xiao Jingshan 萧静山 and was probably not published until 1895. The three-volume *Chongxiu yin* is composed in classical Chinese and difficult to understand.

27 The Boxers' altars (*tan* 坛) were usually old temples that had been repurposed as Boxer meeting points. There were cult rooms with traditional Chinese deities. Christians were often abducted and brought here, forced to worship these deities, and many were executed there as well.

28 This second son was Zhao Huaiyi.

Around May 11, the Boxers were raging through Beijing and many terrible rumours spread. Peter Zhao sent his entire family into the North Church to seek temporary shelter. Yet he himself returned home because he had to put his shop's receipts into order. It was as though he were preparing himself for his final days, yet he still went into the church each morning and attended Mass. On these occasions, he would also visit his family, who had found shelter in the churchyard. On May 17, the danger grew; after mass that day, his wife asked him not to return home but to wait a while with them in the church instead. She was afraid that it would soon be impossible for him to flee back to the church. But Peter responded:

> *Today He Yulin 何玉林 is in the shop with me – a Catholic whom I converted. I want to send him home to his widowed mother. She has only this one son, and if something were to happen to him, how could I look his mother in the eye? But before he goes, I want to ask him to come into the church to receive confession and holy communion – just to be safe. I will therefore go home and ask him to come into the church for confession, and tomorrow, when he is to receive holy communion, I will accompany him into the church and then not return home.*

With these words he left them, but he had taken only a few steps before remembering that the iron rosary he used daily required repair. He returned to the church and asked his second son to undertake this task. Tears were visible in his eyes. This was the last time that Peter Zhao saw his family members and bid them goodbye.

On May 18, the Boxers shut Xi'an Gate and held it fast, setting a guard to prevent anyone from passing through without a struggle. Neither Peter Zhao nor his friend He Yulin could thus go to the church to receive communion or hide themselves. Peter Zhao remained at home and calmly prepared to meet his martyrdom on the day of his arrest. He was tranquil and even in good spirits, showing no signs of despondency or fear – just as though there were no danger. Zhang Genyuan 张根源, one of his neighbours who was baptised after 1900, was unwell in those days, and Peter Zhao paid him a visit to comfort him. He said:

> *Have no fear, these troubles have naught to do with you non-Christians. Look at me, who am a Christian. Even in danger of death, I have no fear. So you should fear even less.*

Another neighbour, Liang Shunde 梁顺德, tried to encourage him as follows:

> *When the Boxers come, you should make a temporary exception and answer that you are not a Catholic. Then they will leave you in peace. After the troubles, you can be a Christian again – that shouldn't be a problem.*

But Peter interrupted his words and spoke:

> *It is well that you have not said more. We Catholics cannot be compared with other faithful. Even with a knife held to our neck, we will not back down and deny our belief in God.*

Because Peter's answer was a little too blunt and harsh, it left Liang fairly upset.

A rumour was then circulating that the Boxers would come to Xisi Gate on May 24 at midday, to trap the Catholics. Yet the Boxers arrived earlier that day, already between 9 and 11 o'clock in the morning, and swarmed towards the gateway of Peter's house. Four people were in hiding there: the wife of Yu Dewang from Tiancun Village named Li, a lady by the name of Wang (a relative of Peter's), as well as two further relatives, one man and one woman. All had tried to seek refuge in the North Church, but they had not succeeded and thus remained in Peter's house. As shouts that the Boxers had arrived rose outside, the five took ladders and climbed over the house's back wall. They sprang into the courtyard behind the western wall, which was a fruit garden. There they hid in the grass behind the trees, attempting to escape an encounter with the Boxers and to return to their home afterwards. What they had not counted on, however, was a Boxer named Zhang Gou,[29] who watched them from high above on a building. All the Boxers thus crowded into the fruit garden, where they arrested Peter and the four others. They drove them towards the eastern entrance of the Yangrou-Hutong neighbourhood (羊肉胡同), and from there brought them north up to Zhuangwangfu 庄王府 corner.[30] At the same time, Boxers were raiding Peter Zhao's house and warehouse, and finished by setting the house alight. On Zhuangwangfu corner, the Boxers asked Peter: "Are you an *er maozi* 二毛子 or not?"[31] Peter answered: "I am not an *er maozi*!" The Boxers asked again: "Are you a Catholic or not?" Peter answered: "Certainly I am a Catholic." He did not hesitate for a moment. The Boxers continued: "Today we will kill you all. Do you not regret this?" Peter answered: "There is nothing to regret about dying for the Lord." The Boxers responded: "If that is the case, then kneel down facing towards the southeast." When Peter heard this, he told those who were to die alongside him the following: "We may not kneel towards the southeast. We will instead kneel down towards the northwest. Pray to God and prepare yourselves for martyrdom." There were many spectators, a large proportion of whom said: "This old man is truly unafraid."

In this moment, the Boxers hacked at Peter twice with a knife, but the blade could not pierce his body and left behind only two white, bloodless wounds. The Boxers were astonished and said: "This old man has magical powers. We must search him." They stripped him of all his clothes and discovered that he was wearing two parts of a holy scapular (*shengyi er pian* 圣衣二片). The Boxers used their knives to remove it and then hit him with a further blow that sent his head falling to earth.

Peter was a man aged 56 when he died. The other four were also martyred on the spot. This site was located north of Xisi Gate, on the road outside the western junction of Taipingcang Street. Later, the Boxers blew trumpets, struck gongs and brought the corpses to the city gate of Fuchengmen 阜成门, where they threw them in the pit outside the gate.

29 The name Zhang Gou means "Zhang the Dog" – probably not the man's real name.

30 This site is located on the southwestern corner of the junction of the Taipingcan-Hutong neighbourhood with Xihuang chenggen beijie Street.

31 The term *er maozi*, literally "second-degree hairy one," comes from a derisive designation for foreigners, *da maozi* 大毛子, "big hairy ones," The "second-degree hairy ones" were the Chinese Christians, and the *san maozi* 三毛子, "third-degree hairy ones," were the traders who dealt in Western goods. According to Boxer ideology, all must be killed.

Several days later, however, they brought these and other corpses to the Catholic settlement in Zhalan, where they tossed them in a well.

The first part of what is chronicled above was recorded according to the oral testimonies of Peter Zhao's relatives; the second part, in which he held out at home before being discovered, was reported by his neighbours, and the story of his martyrdom was passed down by the wife of Zhao Baocun 赵保存. She had heard it from a man who lived in the same street. The name of this man is Dashitou 大石头, and he knew every particular of the homicide. Dashitou was then serving as a sentinel (*chai* 差) on Zhuangwangfu Corner. As an eyewitness, he could report every detail.

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中国宗教评论

The Unknown Architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – P.C. Chang and His Contribution

Hans Ingvar Roth

The Chinese philosopher and diplomat P.C. Chang (Zhang Pengchun 張彭春, 1892–1957) has been described as a renaissance man by many people. He had several capacities and roles in his professional life, i.e., he was a researcher, an educator, a diplomat, a theatre director, and a playwright. He belonged to the same generation as Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek, and he experienced the Qing Empire, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. He was involved in various cultural and professional circles in China and in the US during his time as a student, lecturer, and researcher. For example, he was a tutor of the famous playwright Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910–1996) and a friend of the distinguished Chinese philosopher Hu Shih (Hu Shi 胡適, 1891–1962). He was also pivotal in the creation of Tsinghua University in Peking, which today is one of the most prestigous universities in China.

Furthermore, he was involved in the American and Russian tours of the opera singer Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 during the 1930s. Chang also became involved in the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Chang's best friend, the linguist Y.R. Chao (Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, 1892–1985), who came to the US with the same scholarship programme as Chang, The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Fund, was Bertrand Russell's official translator during Russell's trip to China 1920–1921.

Chang's skills as a diplomat, mediator, and negotiator were remarkable according to several of his colleagues at the UN. He was described as a "master of compromise" by the law professor John Humphrey from Canada, who was the secretary of the Human Rights Commission during the process of drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Hernán Santa Cruz, the Chilean delegate to the UN, also called Chang one of the most original persons who worked in the UN (Roth 2018). Chang used metaphors as well as lucid and concise language to solve stalemates in the discussions. His broad learning – he was bicultural in the sense that he was well read both in Western and Eastern tradition – often made his attempts to solve impasses successful.

Chang was the vice-chairman of the Human Rights Commission from 1946 to 1948, a commission that had the responsibility to create a new international rights document, i.e. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), after the establishment of the

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The first meeting of the Drafting Committee on International Bill of Rights, Commission on Human Rights, at Lake Success, New York, on Monday, June 9, 1947. Dr. P.C. Chang, China, Vice-Chairman, greets Mrs. Eleanor D. Roosevelt, USA, Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights. In the background, left to right: Mr. Plain, USA, adviser; Louis K. Hyde, USA, adviser; Mr. Hendrick, USA, Adviser.

United Nations in 1945. The chairperson was Eleanor Roosevelt, with whom Chang had a very good professional relationship. At the beginning of the 1950s, after his work with the UDHR, Chang was involved in drafting the human rights convention that was finished and presented in 1966.[1]

He resigned from the UN in 1952 because of health problems, and he died in the small town of Nutley, New Jersey, near New York City in 1957 after several heart attacks. Before he began his work in the UN, he worked as a professor of philosophy at Chicago University and as a professor of philosophy and education at Nankai University in China during

1 Editor's note: On December 16th, 1966, the United Nations General Assembly adopted two covenants in its resolution 2200 A (XXI): the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These covenants are reinforcements concerning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

the 1930s. He also worked as a diplomat in Turkey and Chile at the beginning of the 1940s (Roth 2018). In addition to the above mentioned professional experiences, he worked as a theatre director and playwright, primarily during the 1920s and 1930s in the US and China. Chang was also eager to report the atrocities committed by Japan during the 1930s and the 1940s, and he travelled to various countries to gain support for China in the war against Japan.

Chang belonged to an "educationally hungry" and well-situated family from the port city Tientsin (Tianjin). His older brother, Po-ling Chang (Zhang Boling 張伯苓, 1876–1951), was a co-founder of the famous Nankai school system, which in 1919 developed into a university. Chang and his older brother were eager to learn from other countries and cultures, and both of them studied at Columbia University's Teacher's College in the US during the 1910s and 1920s. One of their tutors was the famous American philosopher and educator John Dewey, who visited China at the beginning of the 1920s.

Chang is not as well-known as some of his peers of the same generation, such as the philosopher Hu Shih, who was also a student with the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Fund at Columbia at the beginning of the 20th century. In later years, people from the People's Republic of China classified Chang as a member of the Kuomintang, which was never the case according to his son Stanley; however, this impression has lingered on through the years, with the result that Chang has been excluded as a major figure from history books in Mainland China. He has also been described as a scholar who was strongly influenced by Western culture through his college education in the US. Hence, his thoughts and writings have not been seen as relevant for people with Non-Western traditions by these critics, despite the fact that Chang was bi-cultural or multicultural in his approach to ethics, culture and politics.

In addition, regarding the history of the UN and UDHR, countries such as the US and France have been eager to stress the great importance of Eleanor Roosevelt and René Cassin among the drafters rather than that of Chang. However, John Humphrey often stressed the great importance of Chang and of the Lebanese philosopher Charles Malik. He perceived them as the main architects of the UDHR (Roth 2023). In Taiwan, Chang has never been really well known, and many people still do not know much about his life and his great contribution to the UDHR and the UN. According to his son Stanley, his father was estranged from the Kuomintang establishment and had no really positive feelings towards Chiang Kai Shek as a political leader. (On the other hand, he was a student friend of Chiang's wife Soong May Ling during his undergraduate years at Clark University in the US.)

Chang's Great Contribution to the UDHR

As vice-chairman to the Human Rights Commision and as a delegate who was present almost all the time during the two year writing process, Chang had opportunity to influence the UDHR in striking ways. Even though the document as a whole was a product of the UN bureaucracy and different civil society organizations, some people in the drafting committee were especially important, such as P.C. Chang from the Republic of China,

Charles Malik from Lebanon, René Cassin from France and Eleanor Roosevelt from the US. As it was the first time in human history that a document like the UDHR was created with a focus upon the individual person – and also tied to a global organization (the UN), these facts gave the main drafters an unique opportunity to leave their mark on the document. What was, then, Chang's main contribution?

Chang influenced the overall character of the UDHR. According to Chang, it should be a religiously neutral document in order to fullfill its universalism. It should be a document that most people could identify with. The focus should be on "the art of living" and ethics – not metaphysics or controversial theological topics. This was also in tune with Confucian philosophy, which stressed earthly life in this world. For example, Chang was neutral concerning theism and polytheism, and he did not want any trace of natural rights thinking in the declaration. The main purpose of the text was "the humanization of man." He also influenced the logical structure and the literary style. For Chang it was important that the document should be written in a plain, ordinary language that the layman could easily grasp. Hence, it should not mainly be a document for legal experts or diplomats.

The specific human rights in the document should also stand in focus, and it was desirable that they form a logical progression to one another. The key notions of the French revolution – liberty, equality, and fraternity – should be the guiding lights for the location of the specific rights in the declaration. The articles that he especially influenced were Article 1 (the foundational article), Article 25 (the socio-economic rights), Article 27 (the cultural and science article) and Article 29, which emphasized the duties one has towards one's society. Chang thought it logical that duties should be mentioned after the human rights, as the latter should stand in focus for the UDHR. Chang also contributed to the Preamble in a crucial way, as he stressed the importance of the notion of respect for human dignity.

His contribution to Article 1 has been praised especially. Chang wanted to introduce the concept of "two-man mindedness" or benevolence in this article. However, the fundamental notion "*ren*" from Chinese ethics was translated as "conscience" in the UDHR which, according to some sinologists, does not really capture the whole idea of "sympathy for others." Benevolence or human heartedness (*ren* 仁) belongs to the family of five virtues in Confucian ethics; the other four virtues are righteousness (*yi* 义), propriety (*li* 礼), wisdom (*zhi* 知), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信). This list has similarities with the list of moral virtues formulated by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. Chang also stressed in Article 1 that people should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood. The stress on human rights in the UDHR was not to give the impression that the document endorsed a selfish individualism.

As mentioned before, Chang did not want any metaphysical or theological underpinning of the UDHR. Chang justified the document through an argument based on "intercultural ethics." This implied that different ethical traditions could converge concerning the acceptance of the articles in the document. In other words, one could more or less reach the same kind of basic ethical stance even though one adhered to different faiths and ideologies.

Chang supported his anti-metaphysical stance with five arguments:

1. Religious or metaphysical commitments would be unreasonable if one endorsed agnosticism;

2. A reasonable decision on a metaphysical matter is not something you can reach through a voting procedure;

3. References to specific worldviews could threaten the impartiality and the universalism of the UDHR, as this would show a cultural partiality or parochialism;

4. A reference to religion also ran the risk of triggering serious conflicts, which would be a danger for peacebuilding and peacekeeping;

5. It was irrelevant for the UDHR, as the main purpose of the document was "the humanization of man."

Chang did not only pay great attention to the justification of the UDHR, with its specific articles and the Preamble. He was also engaged in the crucial question of how to implement the rights. Given the fact that there is no world government (which for many people would not be desirable), the question arises of how to uphold human rights in other ways. Chang endorsed the view that one should stress so-called positive measures such as education and encouragement instead of negative measures such as correction and punishment. These methods should be used in national and regional contexts, but also in smaller social settings.

Conclusion

Chang is a good example of an extraordinary person during the 20th century who remained largely unknown because of his, comparatively speaking, brief life. In contrast, his colleagues in the drafting group such as René Cassin and Charles Malik lived much longer lives, and they were able to tell the world about their contribution to the UDHR, as they had distinguished international careers during the 1960s and the 1970s. The Communist regime in China had little interest in human rights questions during the post-war period, which is another reason why Chang is not well known in Mainland China. As mentioned before, Chang was also estranged from the Kuomintang establishment in Taiwan. Even today it seems that not many people on the island recognize his name. But hopefully in the future, Chang will be an important person in the history books of modern China.

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In memoriam

David E. Mungello (1943–2026)

Dirk Kuhlmann[1]

The American sinologist and renowned scholar of the history of cultural exchanges between China and the West, David Emil Mungello, passed away on July 4 this year. In his research, Mungello focused on the history of Christianity in China and played a pivotal role in shaping this field over the course of decades.

After earning a B.A. in philosophy from George Washington University (Washington, D.C.), Mungello continued his studies at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1965. There he settled on his future field of research through an M.A. in Asian Studies in 1969 and a Ph.D. in history, which he completed in 1973. Mungello's dissertation, published under the title *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord* (1977), merged the broad themes that would accompany him throughout his entire academic career: intercultural philosophy, the comparative history of ideas, and the history of encounters between China and Europe. After a long period of wandering years teaching at various places such as Lingnan College (Hong Kong), Briarcliff College (New York), and Coe College (Iowa), Mungello became professor at the Department of History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, in 1994, where he stayed until his retirement in 2017. Mungello was married for over 30 years to Christine McKegg Mungello, who passed away in 1997. He is survived by a daughter and a son, five grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

With more than fifty years of scholarly work, Mungello established himself as one of the leading historians of Sino-Western relations in the early modern period. His research has profoundly enriched our understanding of the Jesuits' method of accommodation, missionary studies on China, the history of Christianity in China, and the intellectual foundations of European sinology. His academic career, as well as his connection and cooperation with sinologists all over the world, was supported by various prestigious international fellowships. Most notably and influential among these were a fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and a fellowship as a visiting scholar at the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel. Both stays in Germany associated with these fellowships enabled Mungello to conduct archival research which laid the ground for many of his later

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Dirk Kuhlmann received his Ph.D. in Contemporary Sinology at the University of Trier in 2011. His research interests include the history of Chinese-Western intercultural encounters, historiography and perception of Christianity in China, and the contextualization of Christianity in China. Since 2006 he has been working at the editorial office of the Monumenta Serica Institute in Sankt Augustin, Germany.
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publications, not least *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (1989).

Mungello's approach was distinctly shaped early on by a willingness to move beyond the narrow confines of a historiography of Christianity in China limited only to the missionaries' perspective. Instead he examined this historical phenomenon from broader perspectives, including the viewpoints of comparative philosophy, Enlightenment ideas, intercultural translation, gender studies, the history of religion, and the dynamics of changing perceptions of "the Other" and "the Self" in the encounter between China and Europe.

His studies provided significant impetus for future research. In addition to the works already mentioned, these included: *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (1994), published as volume 33 of the Monumenta Serica Monograph Series; *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou* (1994); *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (1999); *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650–1785* (2001); *Drowning Girls in China: Female Infanticide since 1650* (2008); *Western Queers in China: Flight to the Land of Oz* (2012); *The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity* (2015); *This Suffering Is My Joy: The Underground Church in Eighteenth-Century China* (2021); *Interracial Lovers in Revolutionary China* and *The Silencing of Jesuit Figurist Joseph de Prémare in Eighteenth-Century China* (both 2023).

From this impressive body of work, a few titles shall be examined in greater detail here, starting with the two books most closely associated with Mungello's research approach: *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* remains to this day a seminal work for understanding the Jesuit method of accommodation and its significance for the development of sinology as an academic discipline. Drawing on his comprehensive expertise in both the European and Chinese intellectual-historical contexts, Mungello describes the Jesuits' attempts to understand core elements of Chinese culture in order to convey their missionary message more effectively. He also presents works that emerged from this "proto-sinological" research, such as Álvaro Semedo's *Imperio de la China* (1642), Magalhaes' *Nouvelle relation de la Chine* (1688), and *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687), authored by Prospero Intorcetta, Philippe Couplet et al. Likewise, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* is an important milestone for research on cultural contacts between China and – predominately – Europe. It is precisely here that Mungello's remarkable academic curiosity becomes most evident, as does his willingness to continually reflect on his own approaches and to blaze new trails in research: The book was reprinted five times, and with each new edition, Mungello shifted the focus slightly to incorporate further insights into his analysis. In this respect, *The Great Encounter* became Mungello's quintessential magnum opus.

Other books on this list, such as *Drowning Girls in China*, *Western Queers in China*, *Interracial Lovers in Revolutionary China*, *This Suffering Is My Joy*, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, and *The Silencing of Jesuit Figurist Joseph de Prémare*, testify to another aspect of Mungello's academic endeavour: They all shed light on topics and groups that have been largely marginalized in previous research; they draw attention to them and give them – quite literally, in the case of the Jesuit de Prémare – a voice. *Western Queers in China* explores the exotic and erotic allure that China – where the general attitude toward homo-

eroticism ranged from indifference to tolerance, particularly among the urban scholarly elite – exerted on Western homosexual men, as illustrated by 23 case studies spanning the 17th to the 20th centuries. It is highly likely that a personal experience he described in his autobiographical work *Remember This: A Family in America*, prompted Mungello to address this topic. It was evidently so important to him that he also discussed queer sexual identities in depth in the fifth edition of *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*, in the newly added subchapter "Differing Sino-European Attitudes toward Sexual Relations." The very same empathy for people on the margins also permeates *The Catholic Invasion of China*. Contrary to what one might expect from the provocative title, this is a nuanced study of the history of Christianity in China during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mungello critically examines, among other topics, the intertwining of mission work and imperialism, as well as the patriarchal structures which shaped the missionary Church and their inherent potential for abuse. At the same time, he describes with deep compassion the efforts by Vincent Lebbe and other missionaries to indigenize the Catholic Church in China. Mungello's great empathy, combined with his gift for keen observations and concise descriptions, is also evident, e.g., in his obituary for Knud Lundbaek (published in *Journal of Asian Studies* 54 [1995] 3, pp. 921–923).

It is therefore hardly surprising that Mungello was not content with finding fulfilment through pursuing his studies as an academic "lone wolf." From the very beginning, he saw himself as part of a community of scholars that he was determined to support to the best of his abilities. As a platform for academic exchange, he founded the *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* in 1978 (published from 1979 to 1989 under the title *China Mission Studies* [*1550–1800*] *Bulletin*), which he also served as editor-in-chief until 2016. Never has the saying "Don't judge a book by its cover" been more apt than in describing this journal, whose "zine"-style layout stood in stark contrast to the depth of the articles' content. What looked like a xeroxed student magazine provided a credible forum for both emerging and leading scholars of cultural exchange between China and the West. The list of regular contributors reads like a Who's Who of research on the history of the early China mission (especially the Jesuits): Claudia von Collani, Jonathan Chaves, Adrian Dudink, Noël Golvers, Gail King, Lin Jinshui 林金水, Knud Lundbaek, Eugenio Menegon, Lauren Pfister, Paul Rule, Nicholas Standaert, John Witek, as well as the long-time director and editor-in-chief of the Monumenta Serica Institute, Roman Malek (1951–2019). Other individual contributions also came from distinguished authors such as Adrian Hsia, Susan Naquin, Huang Yilong [*sic*] 黄一農, and Matteo Nicolini-Zani.

For decades, David E. Mungello maintained close ties with the Monumenta Serica Institute in Sankt Augustin in various capacities – his expertise as an advisor for *Monumenta Serica*, as well as his regular contributions of peer reviews to the journal and his role as a reviewer of the institute's publications in the *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*, were highly appreciated by us. David E. Mungello had very fond memories of his time in Germany, which became quite evident in our personal correspondence with him. He enjoyed putting his knowledge of German to use and was also willing to review works and evaluate articles written in German. Both his broad knowledge and his kind, humorous demeanour will be sorely missed.

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