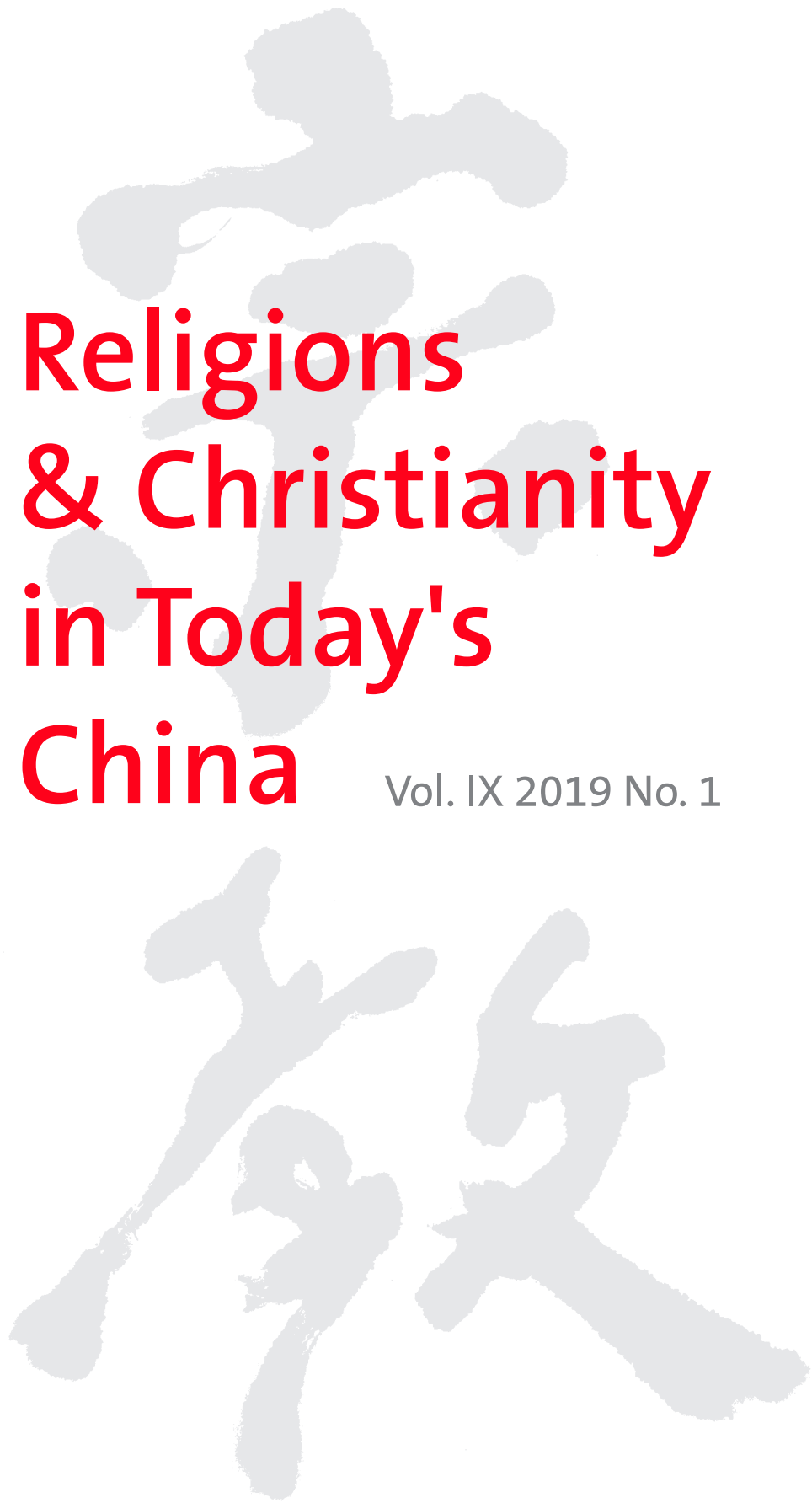


Religions  
& Christianity  
in Today's  
China

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中國宗教評論



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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we present to you issue No. 1/2019 of our online-journal *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中國宗教評論). As usual, you can find News Updates on religions and especially Christianity in China, this time covering the period from September 29 – November 26, 2018.

The main article in this issue deals with Sr. Marie-Aloys Yuan Yin of the Society of Helpers who passed away on November 17, 2017 in Hong Kong. Fr. John Baptist Zhang (Faith Institute for Cultural Studies, Shijiazhuang) with his contribution “Stories of a Hong Kong Sister and Her Congregation in China” offers some aspects of their long time service for the local Church.

*Religions & Christianity in Today's China* is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://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, February 2019*

*The Editors*

## News Update on Religion and Church in China September 29 – November 26, 2018

*Compiled by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber and Katharina Feith  
Translated by David Streit*

*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, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum ([www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2018, No. 4, pp. 3-30) covered the period June 26 – October 3, 2018.*

### Religious Policy

November 21–23, 2018:

#### “First Promotion of and Scientific Conference on The Chinese Character of Religious Buildings” in Xi’an

The high-level conference discussed questions concerning the “system of religious architecture,” such as its sinicization, history and present, artistic particularities, social function and social value. The organizers were the Institute for World Religions (IWR) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Chinese Association for Religious Studies 中国宗教学会 and its commission for religious buildings. Zhuo Xinping 卓新平, former director of the IWR and now director of the Chinese Association for Religious Studies, said in his speech that experts had already compiled a first list of 50 religious sites that can be used as models to promote Chinese-style religious buildings; of these 50, some also reflect in a special way China’s “red revolution culture.” Zhuo said that they are an encouragement to hold on to China’s cultural self-confidence and to continue work on its realization of the Chinese Dream. The conference also featured a promotional film about these 50 model sites. 40 renowned scientists from the Chinese Daoist Association and various academies and universities throughout the country took part in the conference (see report on the website of the IWR, [iwr.cass.cn](http://iwr.cass.cn), Nov. 23).

November 23, 2018:

#### ***Bitter Winter*: Since September 2018, the Communist Party’s United Front Work Department (UFWD) has been carrying out its first, secretly kept, nationwide inspection of “religious work”**

*Bitter Winter* (BW), the news website of the Center for New Religious Studies (CESNUR) in Turin, based its report on government documents and sound recordings of sessions from various provinces

it had gained access to. A document from Gansu cited by *BW* states that the CCP Central Committee has decided “to conduct a nation-wide supervision on religious work, the first time in China’s history, with the aim to examine and measure how the central government’s policies and arrangements are promoted and implemented in practice through this high-degree, widespread, and in-depth supervision work.” According to *BW*, the program is made up of two stages. During the first stage, called “self-inspection and correction,” provincial and municipal authorities were called to review the implementation of religious policy measures in their jurisdiction and to report the findings to the UFWD. According to *BW*, the second stage began in October 2018 with the deployment of teams of Central Government officials across the country to review the results of the “self-inspection” and to identify problems. *BW* said that in one city of Henan Province, the following religious-political tasks, among others, have been identified as being in need of improvement: online propaganda; the promotion of “patriotic” clergy; a crackdown on the underground Catholic Church and on South Korean religious sites, and on the prevention of evangelization in schools and universities. *BW* reported that in officials’ meetings, the strict confidentiality of the inspection campaign was emphasized so as to avoid unfavorable public opinion and international reporting. From January 2019 onward, according to an internal CCP document referred to by *BW*, the central inspection authorities have been called upon to implement the necessary actions of rectification based on the results of this year’s inspection (more details and photos of parts of an official document in *BW*’s message at <https://bitterwinter.org/ccp-secretly-conduct-s-religious-inspection-across-china/>).

## Religious Study

October 19, 2018:

### Conference for the tenth edition of the journal *Renwen zongjiao yanjiu* 人文宗教研究 (*Journal of Humanistic Religion*) discusses religious studies with Chinese characteristics

The conference was held at Beijing University, since editor-in-chief of *Renwen zongjiao yanjiu*, Li Si-long 李四龙, is also vice rector of the faculty of humanities (*renwenxue* 人文学) at this university. The conference involved discussions on how to build a “theory system for religious studies with Chinese characteristics.” The conference assigned an important role to the term *renwen* 人文 (English: “humanistic”). The term refers to the “humanities” in general, but apparently is also used to characterize a specific Chinese, human-centered religious tradition that differs from that of the West. For example, at the conference, Prof. Lou Yulie 楼宇烈 postulated that the term *renwen zongjiao* 人文宗教 (translated as “humanistic religion” in the official English title of the acclaimed journal) exemplifies “the most fundamental characteristic of religious belief in Chinese culture”; according to Lou, Chinese religion is most in tune with the spirit of the times, because “there, there is no Savior of the world of any kind at all, [one has] to redeem oneself based on oneself, that is the fundamental characteristic of the Chinese religion.” The journal currently concerns itself mainly with Buddhism. In future, there will also be articles on other religions and popular beliefs (see the official conference report on [iwr.cass.cn](http://iwr.cass.cn) of Oct. 22). – Thanks to colleagues for reference to the term *renwen*. (kwt)

October 20, 2018:

## Forum to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the publication of the “Blue Book of Religions”

The first “Blue Book of Religions” (the actual title is *Zhongguo zongjiao baogao* 中国宗教报告 *Annual Report on Religions in China*) was published in 2008 by Jin Ze 金泽 and Qiu Yonghui 邱永辉, both researchers at the Institute for World Religions (IWR) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). The first volumes of the annual report in particular, which contained surveys and field studies on the different religions, met with much international response. Qiu Yonghui, who has been the sole editor of the “Blue Book of Religions” since the reporting year 2014, presented the forum with a kind of summing up of the past and wished every success to Chen Jinguo 陈进国 – an IWR staff member who has excelled in researching popular beliefs in particular and who now takes over at the helm of the “Blue Book.”

Regarding the future of the “Blue Book,” the forum participants, according to the report, “unanimously” said that 1.) The authors must base their research on “traditional humanistic (*renwen*) research,” take the Marxist view of religion as a guide and combine the methods of religious anthropology, the sociology of religion and the psychology of religion; 2.) Only then can the Blue Book’s “think tank” function be fulfilled if they look at the problems from the point of view of the long-term benefits to both the state and nation; and 3.) The authors must strive to overcome bottlenecks in obtaining data, combine qualitative and quantitative research, and use more graphs and tables of objective, comprehensive data. The forthcoming *Annual Report on Religions in China (2019)*, edited by Chen Jianguo, is scheduled for publication in May of 2019 (iwr.cass.cn Oct. 22).

## Religion in General

November 5–7, 2018:

### Singapore: Second Christian-Daoist Colloquium

“Christian and Daoist Ethics in Dialogue” was the motto of the Second Christian-Daoist Colloquium in Singapore, attended by 70 experts and both practicing Christians and Daoists from Singapore, China, France, South Korea, Malaysia, Switzerland, Taiwan and the Vatican. The colloquium was organized by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Daoist Federation of Singapore. The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences and the World Council of Churches were also represented. The first Christian-Daoist Colloquium took place in 2014 in Taiwan (*Eglises d’Asie* Nov. 12; *Vatican News* Nov. 7; *Zenit* Nov. 8; [www.vaticannews.va/de/vatikan/news/2018-11/singapur-zweites-treffen-taoisten-vatikanvertreter.html](http://www.vaticannews.va/de/vatikan/news/2018-11/singapur-zweites-treffen-taoisten-vatikanvertreter.html); see also *China heute* 2017, No. 2, p. 72 [in German]).

## Buddhism

October 11, 2018:

### The two rival incarnations of the Karmapa issue a “Joint Statement” expressing the wish to overcome the split in the Karma Kagyu lineage

The Karmapa Lama is the head of Karma Kagyu, one of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. For the current 17th Karmapa Lama, a different boy has been confirmed as the reincarnation by various high-ranking lamas of the lineage. The Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, born in 1983, came to India as a child and was trained there. The Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, born in 1985, is also recognized by the Dalai Lama (who is the head of another school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Gelugpa) as well as by the Chinese government. He was trained in the People's Republic of China under government oversight and fled to India at the end of December 1999.

At the beginning of their Joint Statement it was announced that the two Karmapas had met for several days at a rural location in France with the goal of getting to know each other personally. There, for the first time, they were able to speak freely with each other, thus laying the foundation for something which both expect to “develop into a strong connection,” the statement said. According to the statement, the two Karmapas also talked about the unfortunate split in the Karma Kagyu lineage. They declared that, “We view it as our duty and responsibility to do whatever we can to bring the lineage together.” The statement was published on their official websites in both English and Tibetan, accompanied by a Chinese translation.

According to *Buddhistdoor Global*, a majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa, while an influential minority recognize Trinley Thaye Dorje. In turn, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, who has spent the past year in the US, complained in a video message in March 2018 about the burden of expectations which have been placed on him and the suspicions of the Indian government that he was a Chinese spy (see *RCTC* 2018, No. 2, pp. 8-9). According to *AsiaNews*, he has since acquired a passport from the Caribbean island state of Dominica because of the travel restrictions imposed on him by the Indian government. In mid-September, *Buddhistdoor Global* reported that there were indications that India would ease its stance on Ogyen Trinley Dorje. It quotes the advisor on Tibetan affairs in the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs as saying, “India doesn't doubt ... [that the Karmapa] is the future face of Tibetan Buddhism” (*AsiaNews* Nov. 2; *buddhistdoor.net* Sept. 12; Joint Statement of October 11 on the websites of the two Karmapas: [www.karmapa.org/joint-statement-of-his-holiness-trinley-thaye-dorje-and-his-holiness-ogyen-trinley-dorje/](http://www.karmapa.org/joint-statement-of-his-holiness-trinley-thaye-dorje-and-his-holiness-ogyen-trinley-dorje/) and <https://kagyuoffice.org/joint-statement-of-his-holiness-ogyen-trinley-dorje-and-his-holiness-trinley-thaye-dorje/>).

October 25-30, 2018:

### The *Global Times* and Human Rights Watch report that the Chinese authorities are sending specially trained Tibetan monks and nuns into the monasteries to propagate government policies

Teams of “prestigious monks, legal professionals and officials” have been sent to the temples in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to teach monks about the legislation and its enforcement, the semi-official Chinese *Global Times* (*GT*) said on October 25. Earlier, the *GT* had reported that Buddhist monks and nuns “tasked with spreading government policies” in the TAR had been trained in Lhasa from May 31 to June 2, 2018, in order “to strengthen their political beliefs.” According to Human Rights Watch, it



is unlikely that the monks selected for such training would have been able to refuse to participate. The *GT* quoted Xiong Kunxin of Minzu University of China as saying that it was more effective to spread government policy by using Buddhist “facilitators” among the monks and nuns, since they “have a better understanding of the thoughts and habits of their own group.” The *GT* also said that after the 19th Party Congress in 2017, “more than 20,000 party cadres in Tibet were sent to local villages, 7,000 to temples to preach the spirit” of the Party Congress.

Human Rights Watch further reported that the authorities have recently stopped allowing Tibetan monks who have acquired the rank of Geshe in Indian exile monasteries from functioning as teachers in monasteries in Tibet. The rank of Geshe is Tibetan Buddhism’s highest academic qualification. The reason given is that for some time now a national program had been initiated by the Chinese Buddhist Association for the formation of Geshes (globaltimes.cn June 4; Oct. 25; hrw.org Oct. 30).

October 28–30, 2018:

## 5th World Buddhist Forum meets in Putian

According to Chinese state media, more than a thousand participants from 55 nations, including both Buddhists and researchers into Buddhism, came to take part in the event in the coastal province of Fujian. Like the previous four World Buddhist Forums (2006, 2009, 2012, 2015), this year’s event was organized by the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) and the China Religious Culture Communication Association. The theme was “Exchange with Mutual Learning: Middle Way for Perfect Harmony.” A main forum and seven sub-forums covered topics such as “Buddhism and the 21st-century maritime Silk Road,” “Buddhism and environment protection” and also “Buddhism and charity.” At the end, a declaration was issued. Wang Zuo’an – deputy minister of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party and head of the National Religious Affairs Administration – gave a speech in his role as head of one of the co-organizers, the China Religious Culture Communication Association. In it, he said his association, along with the CBA and the Buddhist organizations of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, will continue to hold the World Buddhist Forums and intends to make them “the most influential multilateral dialogue mechanism of world Buddhism” (german.china.org.cn Oct. 30; globaltimes.cn Oct. 29; xinhuanet.com Oct. 30).

On the website of the CBA, there is a link to a sub-page on the 5th World Buddhist Forum: [www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=660&id=40217](http://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=660&id=40217). For the 4th World Buddhist Forum of 2015 see *RCTC* 2016, No. 1, p. 8.

## Islam

October 20–21, 2018:

## Conference in Xi’an on “Researching Islam in the New Age”

This was the Fourth National Conference on Islamic Studies. Three panels discussed twelve different themes revolving around “Islam in the New Age” and its indigenous characteristics; the Silk Road Initiative; the common destiny of humanity; new perspectives in Islamic research; Sino-Arab strategic partnership; Islam and Confucianism and resistance to the discourse hegemony of the West. Organizers were the Islam Research Unit of the Institute for World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Western China and Border Regions of Shaanxi Normal University. The third co-organizer was the Expert Committee on Islam of the Chinese Association for Religious Studies, founded in August 2018. According to the conference report, the purpose of this new Expert Committee, in following the course “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let one hundred schools compete”



(sic!), is to coordinate the research of domestic and foreign scholars on Islamic topics in an interdisciplinary and multi-faceted way, taking Chinese Islamic Studies to a new level in a new age. According to the conference report, Chinese Islamic research is at a crucial stage: The fragmented system of scientific disciplines does not meet the needs of the time, which call for the deployment of “big research.” Chinese Islamic studies need to bring together experts in ethnic and religious matters, in international relations, in language and culture, regions and states, security and anti-terrorism in order to serve the state’s development strategy – explains the conference report (iwr.cass.cn Nov. 2).

## Xinjiang / Islam

October 9, 2018:

### Revision of the Regulations on De-Extremification of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region “legalizes” re-education centers

In the revised version of the “Regulations on De-Extremification of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” 新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例, the use of so-called “vocational education and training centers” (职业技能教育培训中心) was adopted as one possible measure. Article 17 of the revised text states that people’s governments at and above the county level can set up “institutions and management authorities for transformation through education, such as vocational education and training centers, to educate and transform those who are under the influence of extremism.” Article 14 mentions as the content of the transformation by education “a combination of education in rule of law with activities that support this education,” ideological education, psychological support, behavioral corrections, the study of the common language and writing of the country [i.e., standard Chinese]. Article 21 mentions “authorities for the management of transformation through education” (教育转化管理部门), whose task it is to coordinate the various institutions and bodies involved. The revision, adopted by the Standing Committee of the Xinjiang People’s Congress on October 9, came into effect that same day (text at [www.guancha.cn/politics/2018\\_10\\_10\\_474949.shtml](http://www.guancha.cn/politics/2018_10_10_474949.shtml)). For the content of the Regulations on De-Extremification of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region adopted on 29 March 2017, see *RCTC* 2017, No 2, pp. 7-8.

Commentators saw the revision of the regulations as a belated “legalization” of the re-education camps in Xinjiang, where hundreds of thousands and perhaps even up to 1 million people are being held. Eva Pils of King’s College London told the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) that the revised text “completely fails to acknowledge that there are internment camps where people are held coercively against their will.” She further pointed out that the document did not contain any options for lodging an appeal or give details as to how long someone could be interned. Pils also expressed concern that Xinjiang could serve as “trial ground” for future nation-wide legislation. According to the SCMP, Li Lifan, an expert on Central Asia at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the revision represents a timely legal backing for countering terrorism. She pointed out the threat posed by Chinese citizens who had fought for the Islamic State in Syria.

Chinese media did not at first report within China on the re-education centers in Xinjiang, however, beginning in mid-October, a number of reports appeared in the Chinese media that painted a positive image of these institutions. Shohrat Zakir, head of the Xinjiang government, said in an interview given to *Xinhua* that the vocational education and training centers are “people-centered,” and that many trainees who were previously affected by extremist thought would now realize “that life can be so colorful.” He stressed that public security in Xinjiang has improved significantly (*BBC Monitoring* Oct. 24; *South China Morning Post* Oct. 13; *The Washington Post* Oct. 16; *Xinhua* Oct. 16).

November 6, 2018:

## China defends its education centers in Xinjiang before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva

In its report for the Universal Periodic Review, China had stated that it was making nationwide progress in both education and health care. Representatives from North American and European countries called on China to end the internment of Uyghurs and other members of minority groups and to respect freedom of religion, expression and association. According to the *New York Times*, China's deputy foreign minister Le Yucheng, who led the Chinese delegation, dismissed these accusations, calling the education centers a preventive measure to deter people from terrorism and enable them to fit into society. The *New York Times* also reported that criticism of the re-education camps came almost exclusively from western nations, while representatives from Africa or the Middle East praised China's economic progress. James Leibold of La Trobe University in Australia told the *New York Times* that it would be far more damaging for China if Muslim countries would begin to consider such detentions unacceptable (*New York Times* Nov. 6).

November 15, 2018:

## Reuters tells of a joint letter by diplomats of 15 Western countries on the situation in Xinjiang

According to *Reuters*, 15 ambassadors stationed in Beijing called for a conversation with Xinjiang party leader Chen Quanguo. The news agency reported that it had obtained a draft of the letter addressed to Chen but that it was unclear whether the letter had actually been sent. The letter bears the names of 15 ambassadors from Western countries, namely Canada, Britain, France, Switzerland, the European Union, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia, as well as Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, Estonia, Finland and Denmark, the agency said. *Reuters* described the letter as an "unusually broad and coordinated action by a group of countries over a human rights issue in China." According to *Reuters*, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that she had not seen the letter and that ambassadors were welcome to Xinjiang, but diplomats should not interfere in the internal affairs of the country where they are stationed (*Global Times* Nov. 16; *Reuters* Nov. 15).

November 26, 2018:

## In a joint statement, 278 "concerned scholars" from 26 countries are calling on China to end the mass internment of members of Muslim minorities in Xinjiang

The scholars, who – according to the statement – study China, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Central Asia and other related world regions, want to express their concern about the current mass human rights abuses and deliberate attacks on indigenous cultures in Xinjiang. They are calling upon the international community to take action on this issue. They describe the mass detention without trial of about 1 million members of Muslim Turkic peoples and the severe limitations of personal freedoms by state surveillance systems for 10 million members of these peoples in Xinjiang. As regards timing, they see a connection between these measures with China's Belt and Road Initiative and the expansion of state "social management" with the social credit system. They are concerned that such extreme measures could be applied to other parts of the Chinese population in the future. They warn

that China could export such methods and technologies and that other authoritarian states could copy them if the international community does not address the situation in Xinjiang now. The statement urges states and institutions to call on China to immediately abolish the “transformation through education” detention system and asks them to impose sanctions on Chinese authorities and companies involved. They urge them to stop deporting members of the affected groups to China and to speed up asylum procedures. Academic institutions with formal partnerships in China are expected to express their concern and should even consider suspending their partnerships.

Signatories include leading Western experts on Islam in China, such as Dru Gladney and Michael Dillon. As of December 9, 2018, 601 scientists from 39 countries had already signed the statement. The text and list of signatories can be found at <https://concernedscholars.home.blog/>

## Christianity

November 16, 2018:

### **AsiaNews: More and more churches are being forced to fly Chinese flags and even put up portraits of Mao and Xi Jinping**



The sanctuary of a Protestant church, decorated with the portraits of Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong left and right of the cross and the national flag. Photo: *AsiaNews* / Internet.

Ever since the official organizations of the five religions published a joint appeal on July 31, 2018 to hoist the national flag at all religious sites (see *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, pp. 6-7), growing numbers of reports from all over China indicate that more and more municipal authorities are demanding that flagpoles be erected in front of the churches and that the flags should be hoisted. The same thing is happening to temples and mosques. In some cases, churches and Christians are even forced to hang flags and portraits of Mao and Xi Jinping in the sanctuary or in their homes. *AsiaNews* released two photos on November 16, one showing the sanctuary

of an apparently Protestant church with the national flag on the side and the portraits of Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong on the left and right of the central cross. On the second, above the sideboard of a presumably Catholic household, a large Xi poster hangs next to a smaller image of Christ.

## Protestantism

November 27-29, 2018:

### **New Church Constitution for Chinese Protestant Church – New leadership of Three-Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council**

On November 27, the working committee of the combined council of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council discussed and approved a revised version of the Church Consti-

tution for the Chinese Protestant Church 中国基督教教会规章. The current version dates from the year 2008.

At their National Assembly on November 29, the representatives of Chinese Protestantism elected a new leadership for the two official Protestant governing bodies. The new chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is Pastor Xu Xiaohong 徐晓鸿. The Rev. Kan Baoping 阚保平 remains in an important capacity as one of its nine vice-chairmen. The post of secretary general has been given to Pastor Gu Mengfei 顾梦飞.

The new president of the National Christian Council is Pastor Wu Wei 吴巍. The director-general and also one of nine vice-presidents is Pastor Shan Weixiang 单渭祥. He is well known as editor of the church magazine *Tianfeng*.

Pastor Dr. Gao Feng 高峰 has been appointed director of a new body which will operate at both the national and provincial levels. The Chinese name of this new department is: 监事会 (*jianshi hui*). In English it will be known as a “Supervisory Board.” His deputy is Wu Jianrong who will also serve as the head of the national Chinese YMCA.

For further details see the article in *China heute* 2018, No. 4, pp. 208-209 (in German).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

## Catholic Church

September 29–30, 2018:

### Bishop Han Zhihai of Lanzhou becomes Chairman of the local Patriotic Association

At a meeting of the Patriotic Association in Lanzhou on September 29 and 30, representatives elected Bishop Han Zhihai as their Chairman. The then “underground” Bishop Han, secretly ordained bishop of Lanzhou in 2003, was officially installed on 10 November 2017 as the local Ordinary of the Diocese of Lanzhou. As reported by *AsiaNews* at the time, religious officials had previously described the installation to the priests and religious sisters of Lanzhou as the result of negotiations with the Vatican. Bishop Han is said to have worked for a long time in order to achieve recognition by the Chinese government. Speaking immediately after his recent election as Chairman of the local Patriotic Association, Bishop Han emphasized that the Catholic Church of Lanzhou must “adhere to the principles of independence and autonomy,” “love the homeland and [...] love the Church,” *AsiaNews* said, “knowingly accepting the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party” and “carrying out religious activities according to the law” (*AsiaNews* Oct. 17; *RCTC* 2018, No. 1, pp. 15-16).

October 11, 2018:

### Hebei Province: Four underground priests in police detention – Unsuccessful attempts by the State to convince them to accept official registration

Four diocesan priests from the dioceses of Xiwanzi and Xuanhua in Northern Hebei Province were arrested by the police in October. Two of them, Fathers Zhang Guilin and Wang Zhong, belong to the Diocese of Xiwanzi. Fathers Su Guipeng and Zhao He are from the Diocese of Xuanhua. Following their detention on October 11, Zhang and Wang were taken to several places to be, according to *Asia News*, “indoctrinated on the religious policy of the Chinese government” because they rejected membership in the Patriotic Association. According to *UCAN*, they were forced to meet with bishops from

the official Church who “tried to persuade them to accept the principles of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the church, to apply for priest certification and to switch the official church.” Only then would they be considered legitimate clerics by the government. Father Su was placed under house arrest on October 13, and Father Zhao was taken to a hotel on October 24.

In a campaign, actually intensified after the Sino-Vatican Agreement, the government has been attempting in forced “study courses” to persuade underground priests under intense pressure to join the Patriotic Association. According to *AsiaNews*, many are ready to accept registration with the government but do not want to join the Patriotic Association (*AsiaNews* Nov. 5, 14; *UCAN* Nov. 2, 21). Still remaining in custody or disappeared from sight are Baoding’s 86-year-old underground Bishop Su Zhimin and 47-year-old underground priest Fr. Liu Honggeng, also from Baoding. Fr. Liu was abducted three years ago by the authorities, and Bishop Su was arrested in 1997 (*UCAN* Oct. 5).

**October 18, 2018:**

## **Symposium in Beijing to mark the 50th anniversary of the “Sigao (思高) Bible”**

Forty people attended the symposium organized by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Bishops’ Conference on the 50th anniversary of the publication of the Chinese Studium Biblicum Bible Version (“Sigao Bible”). It is the edition of the Bible most commonly used by Chinese Catholics. The Sigao Bible was translated by Blessed Gabriele Allegra, OFM, with his team from Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, first in Beijing and then in Hong Kong. It was the first complete Catholic translation of the Bible into Chinese. Bishop Guo Jincai of Chengde, Secretary General of the Bishops’ Conference and officially recognized by Pope Francis as bishop in September of 2018, mentioned in his opening address that since 1993, 4.5 million copies of various editions of the Studium Biblicum version have been printed in mainland China. At the symposium, members expressed, among other things, the desire to establish a Bible Society on the mainland as well as the desire for greater use of social media. Bishop Shen Bin, Vice-President of the Patriotic Association and of the official Bishops’ Conference, said in his concluding address he hoped that the proposals made at the symposium would be implemented in the future and that he was interested in hearing feedback from the more than 40 Chinese priests and sisters who have pursued Scriptural Studies abroad. Among those taking part in the symposium in Beijing were representatives of China’s eight official major seminaries as well as the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies and Bishop Yang Xiaoting of Yan’an. Studium Biblicum did not send any representatives to the symposium. On its Facebook page, the Institute announced that it would not be organizing a celebration on its own nor would it attend the events in Beijing, Hong Kong and Taiwan (*UCAN* Oct. 31; see also *China heute* 2007, No. 6, pp. 205-206 [in German]).

**October 26, 2018:**

## ***AsiaNews*: A priest of the official Church from Henan has been temporarily detained and his priesthood suspended, presumably for his work with young people.**

Father Liu Jiangdong from Zhengzhou Diocese in Henan Province was arrested in early September and held for one week, allegedly for having “unordered financial accounts” and having “used public money for private purposes,” according to *AsiaNews*. He was accused of “having violated religious politics and regulations on religious activities.” On the last Sunday of September, government officials announced



in the church that Fr. Liu would be suspended from the priesthood. In addition, local authorities dismantled the cross from atop the central tower of his parish church.

Fr. Liu was ordained in 2005 and was pastor of Sacred Heart Church of Zhengzhou. He was very active in youth work, organizing prayer meetings, catechism courses, young people's meetings to discuss vocations, and encouraging youth to do charitable work, despite recent bans on religious education for children and adolescents under the age of 18 in Henan Province. To *AsiaNews*, another priest from Henan confirmed that Fr. Liu had been removed from his position because "he did too much: he founded so many communities of young people and old people. And since he does not follow the regulations, the government is angry" (*AsiaNews* Oct. 26).

October 28, 2018:

## "First Summit of Catholic Entrepreneurs" in Beijing



Young Catholics at the job fair held on October 28. Photo: chinacatholic.org.

Two hundred Catholic entrepreneurs from 11 Chinese provinces and municipalities who have established their own businesses in Beijing met in the Niufang Church in Daxing District, Beijing. Their Sunday Mass together was followed by a job fair, at which those entrepreneurs present introduced their companies. Many young Catholics took the opportunity to learn about the companies and to apply for possible future employment in them. In the afternoon, ten Catholic entrepreneurs gave talks about their experiences with business and their faith and a panel discussion followed.

The summit meeting was initiated by Fr. Liu Zhe, pastor of the Niufang Church (five other priests from

Beijing and Hebei were present). Among the organizers of the summit were two dedicated Catholic business women: Huang Xiuhong and Li Wenxiang. The purpose of the meeting was – as the report on *Xinde's* website suggests – that in the conduct of their business Catholic entrepreneurs should always put their faith first, share common values and support each other. At the end of the event, the "Niufang Parish Beijing Diocese Entrepreneur Association" was founded.

When interviewed by a journalist from *Xinde*, some of the participating entrepreneurs praised the idea of the job fair. They said that mutual interest among Catholic employees or employers is great, because "people who believe keep a (moral) bottom line in their actions." One has to integrate the faith into the business process to be light and salt, according to one manager. Everyone agreed that such meetings should be continued (chinacatholic.org Oct. 30).

November 23-24, 2018:

## Underground Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin and Fr. Lu Danhua have been released from detention

Bishop Shao of the Diocese of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province was taken away by government officials of Yueqing's Religious Affairs Bureau on November 9, 2018, and held for 14 days. He was probably detained for having celebrated a Mass at the grave of Bishop Lin Xili, which is located in Yueqing. Bishop Lin Xili was the first bishop of Wenzhou. Bishop Shao had celebrated Mass for 500 faithful gathered at Bishop Xili's gravesite. On November 23, the 55-year-old bishop returned home. It was the eighth time,

according to *UCAN*, that Shao had been arrested or taken away since his ordination to the priesthood in 1999, with the reason for his detention partly given as “study or tourism trips.” The last time that Bishop Shao first disappeared and then was under house arrest outside of his diocese was from May 18, 2017 to January 3, 2018. In June of 2017, both the German Ambassador in Beijing and the Holy See had called for Bishop Shao’s release in public statements. Among the reasons for his detention were attempts made in vain to exert pressure on him to join the Patriotic Association.

Diocesan priest Lu Danhua had already been taken away from his parish in Qingtian by religious officials on December 29, 2017, and brought to an unknown location. According to a source available to *UCAN*, he was allegedly housed in a luxury hotel near the church for the whole time until his release on November 24. The hotel was usually used to monitor the behavior of government officials accused of violating the rules of the Communist Party. Sources claimed that Fr. Lu had been arrested for celebrating Mass illegally. Fr. Lu, who had been ordained by Bishop Shao in 2016, is the only priest of the neighboring Diocese of Lishui, which is co-administered by the Bishop of Wenzhou (*AsiaNews* Nov. 13; *UCAN* Nov. 13, 30).

## Sino-Vatican Relations

October 2018:

### Pope Francis and East Asia – two invitations, one travel plan

The Office of the President of South Korea made the announcement on October 9 that at the inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang in September of the same year, South Korean President Moon Jae-in had proposed to North Korean President Kim Jong-un to meet Pope Francis. According to an *UCAN* report, Moon had told Kim that Pope Francis is very interested in peace on the Korean peninsula. Kim Jong Un is reported to have answered that he would “ardently welcome the Pope if he visits Pyongyang.” During the summit, Kim also spoke with South Korean Archbishop Kim Hee-joong, chairman of the Korean Episcopal Conference. According to an article in the *South China Morning Post*, President Moon said after his audience with Pope Francis on October 18 that the Pope had agreed to accept if he received a formal invitation.

Taiwan’s Vice-President, Chen Chien-jen, who attended the canonization of Pope Paul VI on October 14th, used the occasion to once again invite Pope Francis to Taiwan. However, on October 18, Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said that no such visit by the Holy Father was being planned.

According to *Vatican News*, on September 9, 2018, Pope Francis told representatives of a Japanese association that he would like to visit Japan next year (press.vatican.va Oct. 18; *South China Morning Post* Oct. 19; *UCAN* Oct. 10; vaticannews.va Sept. 12.).

For the invitation to the People’s Republic of China by Bishop Guo Jincai see the entry of October 15, 2018 in this section.

October / November 2018:

### Following the Sino-Vatican Agreement, *AsiaNews* and *UCAN* publish comments from within the Chinese Church – Feelings of “confusion and loss” are being reported among many in the underground

Father John, an underground priest, told *UCAN* that before and after the signing of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China on the Appointment of Bishops [on September 22, 2018], underground priests in his area held several private meetings to discuss the



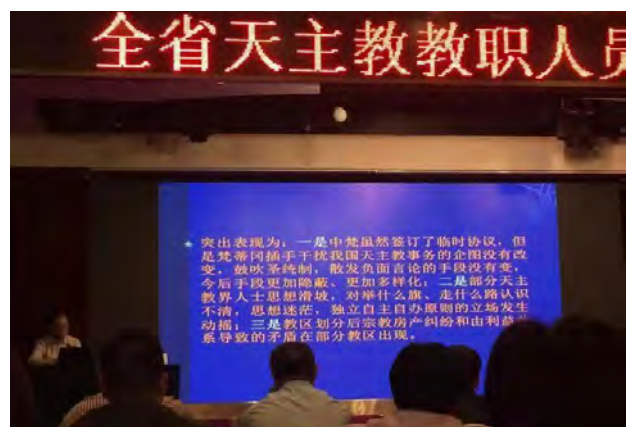
situation. They unanimously decided that “if we are to become official, we will act together; in other words, if the Pope wants us to be open, we will be open together; otherwise, we will together keep in the state of being underground.” But now, John said, “we are confused.” He said that they would agree with the Pope that the agreement was concluded out of pastoral necessity, but they do not understand how the Pope could recognize those eight illegitimate bishops. Does his acceptance mean “there is no problem with the independent election and ordination of those bishops?”, Father John asked. Without religious freedom, they would not see any advantages in being “official” over continuing to evangelize in the underground Church. According to Fr. John, the agreement might actually increase the division in the Church. He told *UCAN* that since the agreement, some priests are inclined to join the Patriotic Association because they think the Pope is not against it. On the other hand, Fr. John said, some Catholics from the official Church regard underground priests who become open as being too close to the government. “With the authorities asking the church to raise the national flag and sing the national anthem, they feel the church is no longer like a church, so they choose to go underground,” Fr. John said. Several Catholic sources told *UCAN* that some underground priests had been threatened that action would be taken against their parents, or that they had been abducted and “brainwashed,” or that their parish churches had been forcibly taken away from them by the authorities. *AsiaNews* quotes underground priest Fr. Peter as saying that in particular, the Holy Father should care for those bishops who are still imprisoned. One priest from the official Church who employs the pseudonym “Zaoxu” stated that further negotiations after the agreement are extremely important. “Given that the clandestine bishops are not allowed to participate, the Conference of Chinese bishops has existed only in a nominal and instrumental way, devoid of content. Only when all the bishops, without exclusion, participate will it exist in an appropriate sense,” Zaoxu wrote in his comment which was published by *AsiaNews*. Another priest, Fr. Paul Xie, wrote that, from a human point of view, Pope Francis has taken a risky step, but “fortunately the Church is the Church of God. [...] The Church in China needs to learn from the faith of Abraham” (*AsiaNews* Sept. 10, Nov. 19, 28; *UCAN* Nov. 7, 30).

October 8–11, 2018:

## Political training for Catholic clergy in Hubei: Representative of the provincial religious affairs authority warns against attempts by the Vatican to meddle and by Catholics who do not know “which flag to hold up”

According to *UCAN*, 80 priests, sisters and lay people participated in the government’s political education seminar for Catholic personnel throughout Hubei province. During the seminar, Xiong Xiaqi, deputy director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Hubei Province, gave a lecture. A photo of the seminar session depicting a screen with one of the slides of Xiong’s PowerPoint presentation, showing readable text, has somehow found its way onto the internet. In this slide, Xiong raises three points:

“First, although China and the Vatican have signed the provisional agreement, the attempts of the Vatican to interfere in and



Political Training for Catholic clergy in Hubei: The photo shows one PowerPoint (PPT) slide of the lecture given by Xiong Xiaqi, deputy director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Hubei Province. For a translation of the slide contents, see left. Photo: *AsiaNews* / Internet.

to disturb the affairs of our country's Catholicism remain unchanged. Their methods of propagating Church hierarchy and disseminating negative opinions are unchanged. In the future, these methods will be even more hidden and even more diverse. Secondly, the thinking of a part of the people in the Catholic circles is slipping. They are not clearly aware of which flag they should be holding up or which way they should go. Their thinking is confused, their standpoint on the principles of independence, autonomy and self-government is shaken. Thirdly, after the division of dioceses, disputes over religious property and interests have led to contradictions in some of the dioceses" (*UCAN* Oct. 17; the photo with the PPT slide screen was published by *AsiaNews* Oct. 11).

October 14–16, 2018:

## Three Chinese bishops take part in the “Bridges of Peace” in Bologna

Representatives of different religions and cultures came together for the meeting “Bridges of Peace: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue,” organized by the Community of Sant’Egidio in cooperation with the Archdiocese of Bologna. As reported on the website of the Sant’Egidio Community, it was the “32nd meeting in the Spirit of Assisi, started by St. John Paul II in 1986 and continued by the Community of Sant’Egidio.” Three Chinese bishops from the People’s Republic of China were also invited to the meeting: Bishop Anthony Dang Mingyan from Xi’an (Shaanxi), Bishop Joseph Shen Bin from Haimen (Jiangsu) and Bishop Joseph Yang Yongqiang from Zhoucun (Shandong); the three were accompanied by a priest, Fr. Zhang Qiulin. Bishop Shen spoke publicly twice, once from the podium, speaking on the subject of “Solidarity between generations,” and a second time before a large audience assembled for the closing ceremony in Bologna’s Piazza Maggiore. The delegation arrived in Rome a few days earlier, just before Bishop Yang Xiaoting and Bishop Guo Jincai, who took part in the first 12 days of the Youth Synod, returned to China on October 15 (*AsiaNews* Oct. 21; [santegidio.org](http://santegidio.org) Sept. 23; see also entry of October 15 in this column). The speeches of Bishop Shen are available at: <https://preghieraperlapace.santegidio.org/pageID/30660/langID/en/text/2804/Speech-of-Joseph-Shen-Bin.html> (Bishop Shen’s presentation to the plenary on Oct. 15); <https://preghieraperlapace.santegidio.org/pageID/30660/langID/en/text/3000/Speech-of-Joseph-Shen-Bin.html> (Bishop Shen’s speech in Piazza Maggiore on Oct. 16); <https://preghieraperlapace.santegidio.org/pageID/30660/langID/en/video/77276/Video-della-Cerimonia-Finale.html> (Video of the entire closing ceremony).

October 15, 2018:

## Chinese bishops return home after the Synod on Youth. They invited the Holy Father to visit China

After having attended 12 days of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the topic “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” (from October 3–28), Bishop Guo Jincai of Chengde and Bishop Yang Xiaoting of Yan’an returned to China on October 15 before the conclusion of the Synod. According to the October 16 issue of *Avvenire*, the newspaper of the Italian Bishops’ Conference, October 15 was the date that had been set in advance for their return. Bishop Guo is one of the seven bishops whose situation was regularized by the Pope on September 22 and is currently serving as Secretary General of the official Bishops’ Conference. Bishop Yang Xiaoting was consecrated in 2010 with both papal and state approval. He is one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Bishops’ Conference and head of the commission for theological research. The two were the first Chinese bishops ever to attend a synod in Rome.

In an interview with *Avvenire*, Bishop Guo said that when Pope Francis greeted them at the beginning of the Synod it was as if 70 years of suffering had disappeared in a moment. He said that they stayed at Santa Marta guesthouse where they could live together in daily life with the Pope. “He said that he loves us, loves our country and always prays a lot for the Christians in China. ... During those days we have invited Pope Francis to come to China. We are waiting for him. Only the Lord knows when that will happen. But we pray for it, we pray the rosary, so that this moment might come soon, just as our presence here once seemed impossible but has now become possible.” Bishop Guo said that the Church is one big family, with one baptism and one faith. “We are witnesses of one Church united in diversity,” he continued. The youth and related questions, including political problems, were not touched upon in the interview.

In Rome the two bishops also celebrated Mass with Chinese Catholics. The Mass was celebrated in the Church of St. Bernardino of Siena (*South China Morning Post* Oct. 16; *Vatican Insider* Oct. 16; [www.avvenire.it/chiesa/pagine/i-vescovi-cinesi-al-sinodo-esserci-stato-un-miracolo](http://www.avvenire.it/chiesa/pagine/i-vescovi-cinesi-al-sinodo-esserci-stato-un-miracolo) Oct. 16; see also *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, pp. 26-27).

October 29, 2018:

## The semi-official Chinese *Global Times* takes a look at the future of Catholic underground bishops in the wake of the “Provisional Agreement”

On September 22, 2018, the day the “Provisional Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops” was signed by the foreign ministers of China and the Vatican, seven in the Church’s view illegitimate bishops were recognized by Pope Francis – however, as the *Global Times* (*GT*) rightly notes, “what will happen to the over 30 underground bishops in China is still unclear.” Francesco Sisci, a senior researcher at China’s Renmin University, told the *GT* that the problem was “what kind of recognition” was acceptable to both the government and the bishops; he said that “This is what Beijing and Rome are working on now.” Wang Meixiu, an expert on Catholicism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the negotiations on the underground bishops would be complicated and time consuming, since changes having to do with Church property and [the division of] dioceses will likely be involved. According to Wang, underground bishops of some dioceses could be demoted, transferred to other dioceses or asked to retire. One priest from Mindong, Fr. Luo Wen, is quoted by the *GT* as saying that the underground community of the Diocese of Mindong is prepared for the possibility that Bishop Guo Xijin will be demoted from his current rank of “ordinary of the diocese” to that of an “auxiliary bishop” ([globaltimes.cn](http://globaltimes.cn) Oct. 29).

Bishop Guo, who is not recognized by the government, has been the ordinary bishop of Mindong, to which office he had been appointed by the Pope. In the eyes of the government, however, Bishop Zhan Silu, who had been consecrated without papal approval but on September 22 has been recognized by Pope Francis, is the legitimate local bishop (ordinary) of Mindong. There can be only one “local bishop” in any diocese. [Update: According to reports, the transfer of the position of local bishop from Msgr. Guo to Msgr. Zhan in Mindong Diocese has been realized in mid-December, 2018, when Archbishop Celli visited Beijing and brought the relevant nomination documents from the Vatican to the bishops involved; see *UCAN* Dec. 19.]

Regarding the increasing pressure being placed on the Catholic communities in the “Underground” see the entries of October 11, 2018, and November 23–24, 2018, in the section “Catholic Church.”

## Hong Kong

November 19, 2018:

### Hong Kong: Opening of trial against leaders of the 2014 “Umbrella Movement”

Accused of conspiracy and disturbance of public order by organizing blockades and sit-ins in various parts of the city, nine leading members of the 2014 pro-democracy demonstration movement are on trial in Hong Kong. Among them are the leaders of the protest movement known as “Occupy Central,” founded by them in 2011. They include law professor Benny Tai, sociologist Chan Kin-man and Baptist pastor Chu Yiu-ming. Two of the other six defendants are Tanya Chan and Shiu Ka-chun, both members of the Hong Kong parliament. All of the defendants might face long prison sentences. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, including many high school and university students, literally paralyzed the city for 79 days in the fall of 2014. Among the underlying causes for the protests were calls for more democracy and free elections in Hong Kong.

According to *Der Tagesspiegel* on November 19, Benny Tai told the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*: “I have confidence that the courts in Hong Kong are still independent and just. But I am preparing for the worst.” When they proposed civil disobedience at that time, they were prepared to go to court, according to *Der Tagesspiegel*. Tai has been pessimistic about developments in Hong Kong, which is becoming increasingly “authoritarian.” At the start of the trial, all nine pleaded “Not guilty!” to the charges (*AsiaNews* Nov. 19; *Der Tagesspiegel* Nov. 19; *South China Morning Post* Nov. 20; see also *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149 [in German]).

## Taiwan

October 14–18, 2018:

### First interreligious meeting of Christian and Buddhist nuns

“Contemplative Action and Active Contemplation: Buddhist and Christian Nuns in Dialogue” was the theme of the first joint international conference of nuns of both religions, which took place at Foguangshan near Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the Association of Major Superiors of Religious Women in Taiwan, Foguangshan Buddhist Monastery as well as Dialogue Interreligieux/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (DIM MID) were the organizers of the conference. Seventy Buddhist and Catholic nuns from Taiwan in particular, but also other countries such as from South Korea, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Cambodia, the Philippines, Brazil, Italy, Germany, Norway and the USA took part in the dialogue. Also present was a delegation from the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The conference ended with a final statement which, among other things, called for the continuation of interreligious dialogue (*AsiaNews* Oct. 24; *Vatican Insider* Oct. 17).

October 24, 2018:

### Civil groups protest against the draft of a law on religion

On October 24, 2018, about 50 civilian groups demanded the recall of the bill for a new “Basic Law on Religion” (宗教基本法), which in their opinion would have given religions a status above Taiwan’s

constitution. A short time before that, the Legislative Yuan had canceled a reading of the draft due to public indignation.

According to Wang Kuo-yan (翁國彥), chairman of the Taiwan Association of Human Rights, the draft is based on a misinterpretation of the constitution. Wang said that article 490 guarantees the protection of religious freedom, namely the right to choose religious denominations or religions, but it does not place religious freedom above other human rights or grant privileges to religious groups that other organizations do not have. The bill provides for “religious autonomy” (宗教自主權), which would exclude religious organizations from government oversight in many areas, such as land use, education, human resources and financial management, according to the *Taipei Times*. Many people are worried that this could lead to corruption, environmental damage, religious discrimination and other human rights violations in the name of religion, the newspaper said. Since the draft exempts religious organizations from the ban on professional discrimination, they may refuse to employ people who do not conform to their teachings, such as gays and lesbians, or women who have aborted, said the manager of the Gender Equality Education Platform, Chang Ming-hsu (張明旭). Another critic claimed that the bill could even encourage illegal land use by granting religious communities the legal use of public land that they had previously seized illegally and had held for five years. “This draft bill is ridiculous,” since it undermines or ignores many other laws, mocked DPP deputy Yu Mei-nu (尤美女).

The draft was originally introduced by three KMT members and one DPP member of the Legislative Yuan. It was supported by more than 30 other legislators. Due to the growing popular anger, however, 17 legislators of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party DPP withdrew their support on 24 October. Whether the draft will be introduced again is currently up in the air (*Taipei Times* Oct. 25).

*Willi Boehi*

**November 24, 2018:**

## In a referendum, the Taiwanese vote against same-sex marriage

In a referendum, held alongside local elections, the Taiwanese voted on several proposals from various activist groups. The Taiwanese Constitutional Court ruled in May of 2017 that the current legal arrangement of marriage, i.e., that marriage can only be between one man and one woman, violates the constitutional principle of equality. It gave the government two years to redraft the law, with the two options of opening up marriage for all or creating the possibility for registered partnerships. If the legislature does not comply with this, “the court still declares marriages between same-sex partners valid,” according to the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on May 25, 2017.

According to the official referendum results, 67.26% voted against opening up marriage to homosexual couples, while 72.48% voted to limit the definition of marriage to one man and one woman. Voters also voted against introducing the topic of LGBT relationships into the school curricula. Though the result of the referendum is not binding, it nonetheless forces the government to take action. – In early November, Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan of Taipei spoke out against any discrimination against same-sex persons, but at the same time he expressed his unequivocal opposition to same-sex marriage. The referendum also came under pressure from other opponents of same-sex marriage, among them Christians and Buddhists (*CNA Deutsch* Nov. 28; *EDA* Nov. 26; *Frankfurter Rundschau* May 25, 2017; *SRF* Nov. 24; *UCAN* Nov. 22).

*Including one contribution each by Willi Boehi and Isabel Friemann*

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## Stories of a Hong Kong Sister and Her Congregation in China

*Fr. John Baptist Zhang*

*Translated by Sr. Cecile Leung and Dominic Niu*

### I. Preface

At 3:10 am on November 17, 2017, Sr. Marie-Aloys Yuan Yin 袁引 (Yeu Yin) of the Society of Helpers (拯望會) passed away peacefully at the Caritas Hospital in Kowloon, Hong Kong at the age of 94. Relatives and friends, her fellow sisters around the world all offered their prayers and Masses in her memory, among whom were many friends from Xingtai Diocese (Hebei Province), including sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of All Souls (COLAS, 煉靈中保聖母會). After the memorial Mass on that same day, a group of sisters and priests remained for a gathering to commemorate this beloved sister. They remembered her as the superior emerita of COLAS, a caring mother and a strict father for the sisters, and, above all, a faithful companion of the local Church in her most difficult times. From 1994–2004, Sr. Marie-Aloys traveled every year to serve the COLAS, a diocesan congregation located at Zhaozhuang 趙莊, the site of the diocesan cathedral. Each time she would stay for about six months, taking care of the formation for the aspirants, postulants, novices and sisters in temporary vows and accompanying all in their growth.

On November 25, 2017, her own congregation and the local Church community celebrated her funeral Mass at the Cosmas and Damian Parish Church in Tsuen Wan (荃灣聖葛達二聖堂), Hong Kong. Present at the Eucharist were friends from both the Hong Kong Diocese and the Xingtai Diocese, the Society of Helpers, the Congregation of Our Lady of All Souls, Tsuen Wan Providence Primary School (荃灣天佑小學), St. Teresa Parish Church, representatives of the “Associates and Friends of the Helpers” (希望之友) in Hong Kong and Sr. Marie-Aloys’ relatives from Shanghai.

What is offered here is the story of the long time service Sr. Marie-Aloys and her congregation have generously given to a local Church. Originally my intention was to just write an article in honor of Sr. Marie-Aloys, however, in the process of gathering data I was also deeply touched by the past of her congregation as well as the renaissance process of a local Chinese congregation. Their stories kept pushing me to delve deeper into my research.

The Helpers have served China for more than a century. Their success and contribution in the field of education exceeded my expectations. Telling the story of this outstanding

missionary sister is in fact stepping into the great river of the Church history in China that has flowed through contrasting stages of development in the past hundred years or so, wrapping along with it various facts, both ecclesial and political, national and international, temporal and spatial. As a matter of fact, the focus on one individual sister opens up a much bigger horizon, namely the contributions of Catholic women's communities to the Church and society in China, an area largely ignored and thus in dire need of serious study and research.

## II. Life of Sr. Marie-Aloys

Sr. Marie-Aloys was born on May 14, 1924, in Shanghai. She graduated from Xiaoming Secondary School for Girls (曉明女中) and later from Aurora University (震旦大學). She taught at Xuhui Secondary School for Girls (徐匯女中) before joining the Society of Helpers in 1943, where she professed her first vows in 1946. In 1952 she took her perpetual vows at the Mother House in France. She collaborated with Sr. Marie-Agathe Chu (朱兆娟), also a Helper from Shanghai, in establishing the Chinese Nan Yang Secondary School for Girls (南洋女子中學, 1953) in Makassar, Indonesia and later also Tsuen Wan Providence Primary School in Hong Kong, where Sr. Marie-Aloys served as its founding supervisor and principal for 24 years (1960–1984). In 1964, together with Sr. Marie-Eugénie Shih and Sr. Marie-Agathe Chu, she started the “Associates and Friends of Helpers” in Hong Kong (the membership stands at 4,000 today). In 1985 she did a sabbatical in the U.S. and upon her return she began serving at the St. Teresa Parish. In 1994 Sr. Marie-Aloys began her missionary service for COLAS of Xingtai, a commitment that lasted until 2004 when her age no longer allowed her long-distance travels. In 2011 she moved into St. Joseph's retirement home in Shangshui. On November 17, 2017 she was called to her heavenly home and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery of Shanshawan on November 25.<sup>1</sup>

## III. Brief History of the Society of Helpers

The Society of Helpers, originally called the Society of Helpers of the Holy Souls, was founded in 1856 in France by Mother Mary of Providence (1825–1871). They adopted the Ignatian Spirituality – seeing God's presence in all things – and had Jesuits as their spiritual guides. Their charism was to assist the souls in purgatory as well as all those in need through prayers. On May 26, 1957, Pope Pius XII beatified Mary of Providence, with the feast day set on February 7, the anniversary of her death. The Helpers came to China in 1867, per invitation of the French Jesuit Bishop Adrien Languillat (郎懷仁, 1808–1878), then Vicar Apostolic of Kiangnan (江南, Shanghai). They served as educators, operators

1 See “Sr. Marie-Aloys of the Society of Helpers, a co-founder of the Providence Primary School, Hong Kong, Passed Away” 拯望會袁引修女安息，曾創辦荃灣天佑小學，in: *Kung Kao Bao* 公教報, No. 3849 (November 26, 2017), p. 3.



of orphanages and pastoral workers, in Shanghai as well as in Chili Southeastern Apostolic Vicariate (直隸東南代牧區), both Jesuit missions.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics show that the Helpers' Convent of the Holy Mother (le Convent de la Sainte Mère, 聖母院) at Xujiahui 徐家匯 (Zikawei) had taken in more than 10,000 abandoned baby girls in their nurseries and orphanages. They also operated a kindergarten and a school for the deaf-mute. The girls did sewing, embroidery and laundry works in the convent or artifact works at Tushanwan (T'ousèwè) Workshop (土山灣工藝品廠).

The Helpers began their work as assistants to the Jesuits at the Jingyan Primary School (經言小學, 1876) and moved on to eventually establish three reputed girls' schools, namely Xiaoming Secondary School for Girls (曉明女子中學, 1871), Chongde School for Girls (崇德女校, 1898) – later Xuhui Secondary School for Girls (徐匯女中, 1934) – and the Qiming School (Aurore College) for Girls (啟明女校, 1904). Xiaoming was the origin of today's Shanghai Gezhi Secondary School (上海格致中學), whereas Chongde/Xuhui and Qiming were the precursors of today's Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School (上海第四中學).<sup>3</sup>

The Helpers left China between 1950 and 1953. They continued their mission in Indonesia (1951), Hong Kong (1954) and Taiwan (1960). Currently, the Society of Helpers has 104 communities serving in 24 countries worldwide, including India, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan in Asia. 2017 was the 150th anniversary of their arrival in China and with Sr. Marie-Aloys' death, their missionary era in China was formally concluded.

#### IV. Their Contribution and Influence in China

In 1950, at the time of the Helpers' departure from China, there were more than ten women's religious congregations working in Shanghai and with 176 sisters the Helpers were the largest. Besides Shanghai, they were also active in Hebei and Beijing, in the fields of education, social work, art and culture as well as pastoral works.<sup>4</sup>

The girls taken in by the Helpers, together with the boys educated by the Jesuits in their orphanages and many other young people, made important contributions to modern Chinese painting and sculpture in the areas of the East-West cultural exchanges, especially through their works at the Tushanwan Workshop. Among them many with hearing and speaking disabilities were educated by the Helpers. The Helpers had sent their sisters for special training and opened a school for the deaf-mute in 1893, which “marked the beginning of special education in Shanghai.”<sup>5</sup> This was some 20 years ahead of the Shanghai

2 Xiaohong 小紅, “The First Bishop after the Revival of the Jesuits – Msgr. Languillat, the First Vicar Apostolic of Xianxian” 耶穌會復興後的第一位主教—獻縣教區首任代牧郎懷仁, <http://www.amdgchinese.org/2016/05/09/耶穌會復興後的第一位主教-獻縣教區首任代牧/>; see also the Chinese Wikipedia entry at <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/郎懷仁>.

3 Bin Fen Shanghai's Blog 繽紛上海的博克, “Urban Memory: The Precursor of Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School, the Beginning of Chinese Women's Education” 城市記憶: (上海市) 第四中學前身, 曾開中國女子教育的先河 (July 13, 1919), [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_af4379240101b19g.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_af4379240101b19g.html).

4 Tian Nianci 田念慈, “Stories of Xujiahui” 話說徐家匯 (7), [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_51a238b40102wqo0.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_51a238b40102wqo0.html).

5 Zhang Hua 張化, “Resolving the Death Rate Mystery of Orphanage at Xujiahui Shengmuyuan” 徐家匯聖母院育嬰堂嬰兒死亡率揭迷, <https://www.xzbu.com/4/view-4259282.htm>.

School for the Blind (上海市盲童學校), established by the famous Anglican missionary John Fryer (傅蘭雅) and his son George B. Fryer in 1912. The Helpers' three schools for girls contributed enormously to China's modern education. In particular, Qiming was deemed "one of the earliest girls' schools in China, marking the beginning of Chinese women's education."<sup>6</sup>

Not only did the schools educate committed women religious like Sr. Marie-Aloys, even more significantly was the fact that they have educated for modern China generations of outstanding women like Yang Jiang, a renowned author, theorist, interpreter and scholar.<sup>7</sup> In the education of the students, the Sisters implemented demanding rules akin to those applied in a convent and thus, their schools were known for discipline. On the other hand, their holistic educational approach, which maintained a healthy balance between science and arts, both oriental and occidental, was highly appreciated and well received. Thus recalled Yang Jiang, perhaps the most well-known alumna of Qiming, with fond memories of her alma mater in her old age: "My father always believed that Qiming provided excellent education, strict discipline and thus a solid foundation for both Chinese and foreign languages. Hence, in our family, two aunts, a cousin, two elder sisters were all sent by him to Qiming." Apparently, Qiming was the first choice for girls in Yang's family.<sup>8</sup>

Yang also wrote: "The corridor in front of our classroom was so long, running from east to west, passing a dozen classrooms." Not only was Qiming very big for her, it was also a fascinating new world, so much that even after almost a century this centenarian still vividly recalled those caring "Mumus" 姆姆 (Chinese rendition of the religious title "Mother") as well as a lot of unique expressions only used at Qiming, such as "yue tou libai" 月頭禮拜 (holidays at the beginning of each month), "miao hua" 描花 (drawing), "qia qin" 掐琴 (playing piano), "san xin" 散心 (walk following a meal), etc.<sup>9</sup>

At the turn of the 20th century, the graduation and entertainment activities of Qiming were even covered by *Shun Pao* (申報), a very popular newspaper in town. This gives an idea of which social influences the Helpers enjoyed in the field of education. As a matter of fact, Xiaoming and Xuhui made equally important contributions. It is only unfortunate that, merely due to lack of research work or memoirs like the one written by Mrs. Yang, they remain virtually invisible to the society at large.

## V. A New Chapter in China

On November 23, 1992, Father Lucien Schmitt OMI, then head of the Asia Department of Missio Aachen, paid a visit to Xingtai Diocese, accompanied by Theresa Yeung Cho

6 Shanghai Xuhui District Information Office 上海市徐匯區新聞辦公室, "Xuhui's Centenarian Schools – Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School, Yang Jiang also Studied Here" 徐匯百年老校之上海市第四中學, 楊絳也曾在此就讀, <http://dy.163.com/v2/article/detail/CEJ8MJEH05149R72.html>.

7 Yang Jiang (1911–2016) was the wife of Qian Zhongshu (1910–1998), a renowned Chinese scholar and author. Fluent in English and French, she made notable contributions to Chinese literature with her translations. Yang Jiang also translated *Don Quixote* from Spanish to Chinese, and it still remains the most popular Chinese version.

8 Yang Jiang 楊絳, "I Studied at Qiming" 我在啟明上學, <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/RS/565568.htm>, originally published in: *Wen Hui Bao* 文匯報, May 15, 2004.

9 *Ibid.*

Woon (楊祖媛) of the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong. They took a tour to the minor seminary as well as the sisters' community at Zhaozhuang. During their conversation, Bishop Joseph Hou Jinde 侯進德 and Mother Song Xiuzhen, an elderly sister from the neighboring Xianxian Diocese who was helping Xingtai rebuild its sisters' community, shared with the guests the sisters' struggles and challenges in the area of formation. They also inquired about the Helpers who used to work there. Ms. Yeung did not know the Helpers, but as soon as she saw on a poster the charism and mission statement of the Zhaozhuang sisters, she recalled having seen something similar in Hong Kong. Ms. Yeung suggested that Bishop Hou write a letter to the Helpers, so that she could try to connect with them once she was back in Hong Kong. On that same day Bishop Joseph Hou wrote and signed a letter to the Helpers on behalf of the Zhaozhuang sisters, with the assistance of his secretary, Father Joseph Ma Yinglin 馬英林 (now bishop of Kunming, President of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China).<sup>10</sup>

In the letter Bishop Hou talked about the situation of the newly founded community, their urgent needs in formation and their shared charism. He wrote: "We hope you could guide and assist us, and through our solidarity we could inspire each other in the mission of saving souls for the greater glory of God. We invite you to visit our community at your convenience. All sisters are looking forward to a meeting." Bishop Hou also told them about the challenges they faced in formation: "In these days of the renaissance of the Church we are facing many difficult challenges, especially the break of tradition caused by the age gap between the two generations. We need good collaboration in the areas of education and formation so that these young women could grow into good sisters who can keep alive the tradition in adapting to the new era and give their contribution to the Church." As soon as Ms. Yeung returned to Hong Kong, she contacted the Helpers and eventually met with Sr. Marie-Agathe and Sr. Marie-Aloys, both born and bred in Shanghai just like herself.

The first thought that came to these sisters after reading Bishop Hou's letter was: "This is an invitation from the Holy Spirit!" They were joyfully surprised that God called them to a new service in such an unexpected manner. They prayed, discerned and, following the Superior General's suggestion, responded generously. After much communication and preparation, on September 3, 1993, Sr. Marie-Agathe and Sr. Teresa Lai from Taiwan arrived at the Zhaozhuang Church and visited the sisters' community. During this visit, they were able to meet and talk with Bishop Hou, Mother Song, as well as all the young sisters.

Following their visit and talks with Bishop Hou and Mother Song regarding the urgent needs of the Zhaozhuang community, the Helpers decided to send Sr. Marie-Aloys to Xingtai to assist Mother Song in her formation work. On January 17, 1994, Sr. Marie-Aloys, already 70 years old, leaving behind her work as well as all the comforts in Hong Kong, embarked on the journey to Zhaozhuang, accompanied by Sr. Clara Wu from Taiwan. What awaited them were the harsh winter in northern China and the frugality a village could offer in the 1990s. Despite all these, Sr. Marie-Aloys began her brand new life with great enthusiasm and devoted herself unreservedly to the formation work. Liv-

10 Letter of Bishop Hou to Mother Superior of the Society of Helpers (Hong Kong) on November 23, 1992.

ing and working among the young sisters, she seemed to have found a second spring in her own life. On May 20, 1994, Bishop Hou passed away due to illness. On his deathbed, he entrusted the Zhaozhuang sisters to the care of Sr. Marie-Aloys. And thus, the bond between this elderly sister from Hong Kong, with her congregation behind her, and the young sisters of Zhaozhuang was sealed for good.

Since 1994, when Sr. Marie-Aloys took over the tasks of formation and administration, she also started to prepare a future leadership for the local community. Yet, during all these years, she never “stole” even one candidate for her own congregation. Her service was an entirely selfless one. This was also a confirmation of the principle endorsed by all Hong Kong bishops, from Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung to Bishop Michael Yeung, that the service for the Church in the Mainland must be a disinterested one. Just like many other Hong Kong Catholics, Sr. Marie-Aloys and the Helpers have given exemplary witnesses to this spirit.

From 1994 on, Sr. Marie-Aloys traveled to Xingtai consecutively for ten years and stayed for at least six months each time. Later, when she could no longer make this trip but had to stay in Hong Kong, her heart and her thoughts were constantly with the people in Xingtai Diocese, remembering and accompanying them with prayers, letters and numerous phone calls. Not only did she invite other fellow sisters to continue this service, she even encouraged her former students and friends to visit the people there. It is no exaggeration to say that, ever since she accepted Bishop Hou’s request, Sr. Marie-Aloys had given all to the Church of Xingtai, especially to the sisters.

## VI. A Grain Has Born Much Fruit

Encouraged by Sr. Marie-Aloys, some of her students from Hong Kong have visited the COLAS sisters multiple times and, to carry on the service of the Helpers both in Hong Kong and in the Mainland, they took the initiative to found Ji Wang (= Hope) Association (冀望團體) at the time when Sr. Marie-Aloys was already bedridden in a nursing home. Louis Zhou, one of the co-founders of this charitable organization, gave the following explanation: “Ji (冀) stands for Hebei and Wang (望) stands for the Society of Helpers. Though Sr. Marie-Aloys and Sr. Marie-Agathe are gone and the Helpers have also left, we as their students hope to continue this bond of love between Hong Kong and the Mainland via this new bridge – the Ji Wang Association, so as to keep alive the great love of the Helpers and carry on Sr. Marie-Aloys’ undying service of love.” This lay voluntary association is the newest fruit born from the work of the Helpers.

## VII Coincidence or Providence?

Chili Southeastern Apostolic Vicariate, Kiangnan Apostolic Vicariate (江南代牧區), Zhaozhuang 趙莊, Weixian 威縣, Zhangzhuang 張莊 in Xianxian 獻縣: Who would have believed that one day these random geographical terms could all be connected through one name – the Society of Helpers?

On May 30, 1856, the Vatican divided Beijing Diocese into three Vicariates, namely Chili North, Chili Southwest and Chili Southeast. The first two Vicariates set up their episcopal sees in Beijing and Zhengding Fu respectively. As for the Southeast Vicariate, Bishop Languillat, its founding Vicar Apostolic, first chose Zhaozhuang in Weixian County as it had a relatively large Catholic population. However, due to security concerns caused by bandits, he eventually moved it to Zhangzhuang in Xianxian County. In 1864, Languillat was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Kiangnan Vicariate (Shanghai). It was he who, during his sojourn in Paris, invited the Helper Sisters to China in August 1867. That marked the beginning of the Helpers' missionary service in Shanghai, Hebei and Beijing.

Hence, the historical coincidence is this: Whereas Bishop Languillat began his episcopal tenure at Zhaozhuang, the sisters whom he had invited to China ended their missionary service exactly at the same place 150 years later. To a person of reason, it probably is just a pure coincidence. Nevertheless, in the eyes of a person of faith, nothing is coincident in history, as God is the real author of history. True, it is difficult to explain; but so was Jesus' death on the cross, which was a defeat in the eyes of all; yet, his "failure" offers the salvation to humankind. The same should be said of the services given by thousands of China missionaries like the Helper Sisters. They had to flee the Mainland and abandon their missionary works. Yet what they had sown was not wasted; it had born and continues to bear abundant fruit among the Chinese faithful.

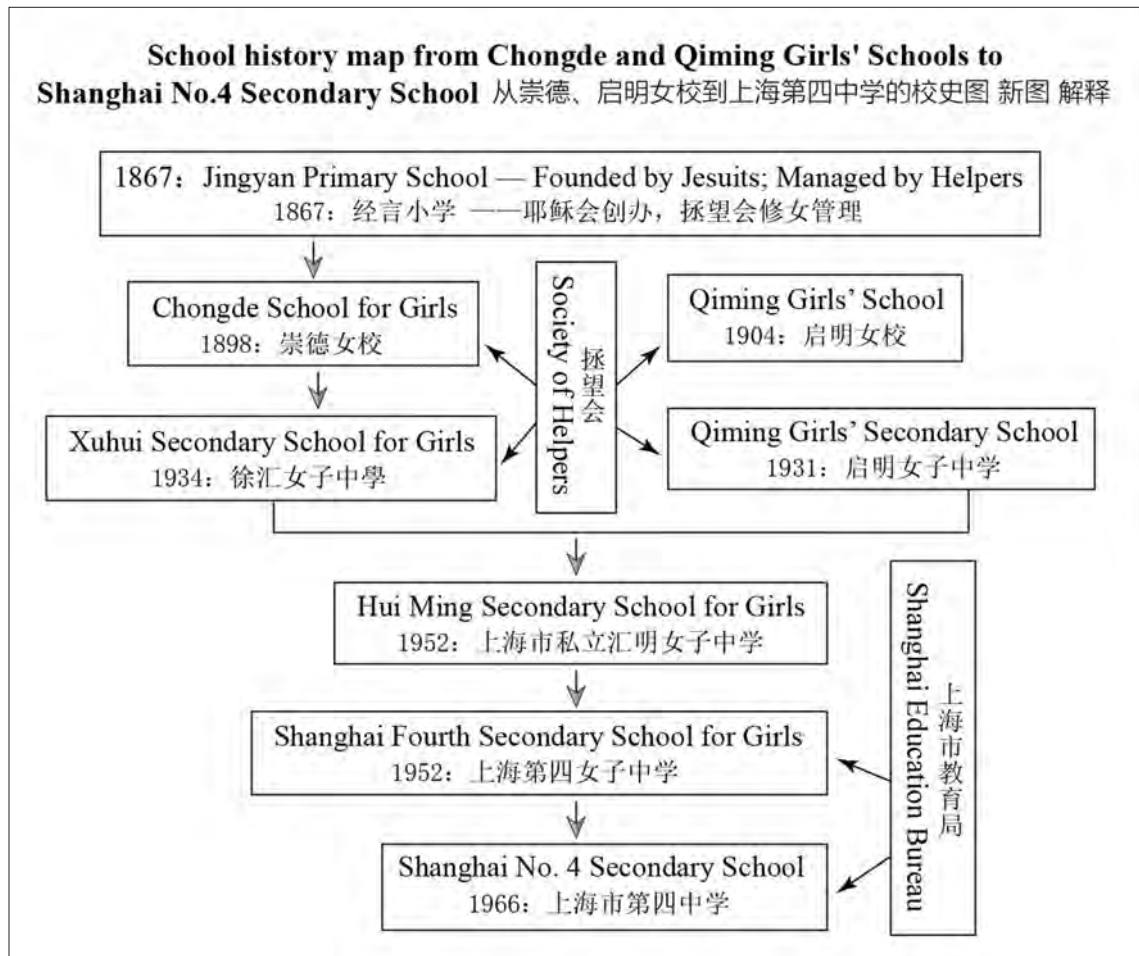
## VIII. Conclusion

In Hong Kong, the Helpers arrived in 1954. Six years later, they opened the Providence Primary School, which was handed over to the Diocese in 1980. This also marked the conclusion of their half-century service for the Church and the society in Hong Kong. In China, from their arrival in 1867 to the forced departure of all the non-Chinese and some Chinese sisters in the 1950s, the Helpers served for almost 90 years. This was renewed with their missionary service in Xingtai, beginning in 1994. Then, Sr. Mary-Aloys' departure in 2004 formally concluded the Helpers' mission in China, which lasted a century and a half.

Traversing time and space, the Helper Sisters have left behind a rich legacy for the Chinese, especially in the area of education. This could be well demonstrated by the schools they had created: From Chongde School for Girls at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1898) to today's Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School (1966) (see table below); from Xiaoming Secondary School for Girls (1871) to today's Shanghai Gezhi Secondary School (2003); from Nan Yang Secondary School for Girls in Indonesia (1953) to Providence Primary School in Hong Kong.

2017 commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Helpers' China mission; it coincided with the 150th anniversary of Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School, beginning with the founding of Jingyan Primary School in 1867, which was remembered in a solemn celebration on October 28. Tracing back to its roots, no one could skip Chongde and Qiming, the first girls' schools "marking the beginning of women's education in China." The site of the old Qiming Girls' School was officially declared as Protected Cultural Heritage by Xuhui





District. In fact, in the entrance hall of Shanghai No. 4 Secondary School, the old school motto is still solemnly written on the wall: “Honoring Virtue (崇德), Enkindling Light (启明), Seeking Truth (求真), Building People (树人).” The fact that its old motto is honored today shows that the Helpers’ tradition is still very much alive in many people’s mind and heart. Not only is this a token of remembrance and great tribute to the Helper Sisters, it is also a symbol of continuation of their great altruistic spirit, a sign of respect for history, for the invaluable contributions the countless missionaries of the Catholic Church had made for China.

Though the older generations of Helpers are gone, their memories are treasured forever in the hearts of many. In the schools they were once so proud of, at the Center of Associates and Friends of the Helpers and Ji Wang Association, among the Helpers of Xianxian and the Sisters of Our Lady of All Souls of Xingtai, their charisma and mission continue to live on. The new generation of sisters and the Catholic faithful, the many teachers and students touched by the Helpers are carrying on the legacy of the good Helper Sisters like Sr. Marie-Aloys. R.I.P. Sr. Marie-Aloys! Be our patroness in the presence of God!

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