

Religion and Human Rights in China | Abstracts and Biographies

30 May 2009

Pitman B. Potter | Human Rights and Religion in China

This presentation examines China's law and policy on religious freedoms in the context of international human rights standards, and also by reference to the PRC *Human Rights Action Plan* and the dissident document known as *Charter 08*. Regulation of religion by the Party/state in China can usefully be viewed in the context of changing development conditions and challenges for regime legitimacy. Following the tragedy of the Tiananmen massacre of 1989, the Party/state has attempted to build political legitimacy based on a 'development bargain' that promises material wellbeing in exchange for political subservience. As part of this process, the regime has offered limited religious freedoms, and applied requirements of legal and regulatory process to the mechanisms for controlling religious behaviour. Nonetheless the regime faces continued challenges of maintaining legitimacy for its policies of control – particularly as ever wider segments of society come to be left out from the material prosperity promised through market development policies. This presentation suggests that the Party/state's efforts to legalize its control of religious behavior raise significant questions of compliance with international human rights standards and also face ongoing challenges of political legitimation domestically.

Dr. Pitman Potter is a professor of Law at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Law Faculty and Hong Kong Bank Chair in Asian Research at UBC's Institute of Asian Research. Dr. Potter's teaching and research are focused on PRC and Taiwan law and policy in the areas of foreign trade and investment, dispute resolution, intellectual property, contracts, business regulation and human rights. Dr. Potter serves on editorial boards of *The China Quarterly*, *The Hong Kong Law Journal*, *Taiwan National University Law Review*, *China: An International Journal*, and *Pacific Affairs*. He has published numerous books, book chapters and journal articles. He has served on the Board of Directors of several public institutions, including Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, where he is now a Senior Fellow. In addition to a JD and PhD in Political Science, he graduated from Vancouver School of Theology with an M.Div in 2008. (potter@law.ubc.ca)

Joseph Tse-Hei Lee (李樹熙) | Politics of Faith: Patterns of Christian Activism in Modern China

This presentation discusses the role of Protestant Christianity in relation to the rise of rights consciousness in modern China. It focuses on the interactions between Christianity and state power, and the state's influence on the religious and political identities of Chinese Christians. It argues that the growing awareness of social rights among Chinese Christians today has resulted from the earlier experience of religious persecution in the Maoist era (1949-1976) and from the ongoing actions to organize the church and prevent it from falling apart during the Reform period. Many Christians refused to submit to the control of the state and adhered to the belief in the autonomy of the church, proclaiming that each church should be an autonomous body, governing its affairs and remaining independent from state control. They referred to their experience of persecution as *chiku* (吃苦), literally translated as "tasted bitterness." This narrative of suffering reveals the Christians' awareness of their marginality and of the need for state recognition of their rights today.

Joseph Tse-Hei Lee is professor of history and co-director of East Asian Studies at Pace University in New York. His research focuses on the church-state relations in modern China. He is the author of *The Bible and the Gun: Christianity in South China* (New York: Routledge, 2003)

and the co-editor of *Marginalization in China: Recasting Minority Politics* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009). (jlee@pace.edu)

Brian Swords | Catholics in China

I will speak from my experiences teaching English in Urumqi, Xingjiang, PRC over the past four years. I will offer observations and opinions with some implications on points of interest with particular reference to minorities, Catholics, etc. Specific items related to the Catholic Church in the northwest of China will also be touched. I will also reflect on the local Catholic Church in a few areas.

Fr. Brian Swords has spent 14 years teaching in China, most recently for three years in Urumqi, Xinjiang. He was the Moderator of Scarboro Missions for 10 years. Founded in 1918 by Fr. John Mary Fraser as the China Mission College to train and send priests to China, it evolved into Scarboro Missions, a society whose members now serve in China, elsewhere in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Canada. Brian has an MA in Linguistics from the University of Hong Kong (1979) and an MA in Missiology from the University of St. Paul in Ottawa (2007). In his early ministry, he worked in Hong Kong and Taiwan for 11 years. (brianjs@web.ca)

David Matas | Falun Gong and Human Rights

Why are Falun Gong practitioners persecuted? Why is their persecution more extensive and more vicious than the persecution of any other victims in China? How can the spread of the practice of Falun Gong contribute to respect for human rights in China? These are the questions this paper attempts to address. The persecution of Falun Gong practitioners is superficially puzzling since Falun Gong is an exercise regime with a spiritual foundation. It has no political agenda. Its sources and inspiration are ancient Chinese traditions. Before it was banned, official Chinese voices encouraged the practice as healthful. Yet, once the Communist Party of China decided to ban the practice, both the verbal invective and the physical attacks against Falun Gong practitioners knew no bounds. The persecution went so far as the killing of Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, which were sold to transplant tourists. The paper examines the etiology of persecution of this particular victim group, attempting to identify its causes and to explain its forms.

The advent of the Falun Gong, through the reaction of the Communist Party of China, has brought out the worst in China. But, through the spread of Falun Gong practices and beliefs, it has also brought out the best in China. I will also consider how the rise of the Falun Gong can lead to enhanced respect for human rights in China.

David Matas is an international human rights lawyer with over 30 years of distinguished service in the legal, academic, political and human rights worlds. These include work with Amnesty International, B'nai Brith Canada, Canadian Bar Association, Canadian Council for Refugees, Canadian Jewish Congress, the Government of Canada and Rights and Democracy. He is author, with David Kilgour, of *Bloody Harvest: Report into Allegations of Organ Harvesting of Falun Gong Practitioners in China* (2007). Among his many honours are the International Commission of Jurists Walter Tarnopolsky Human Rights Award (2007) and Order of Canada (2009). (dmatas@mts.net)

Rukiye Turdush | Religious Dominance of CCP: Tool of Control over East Turkistan

Although Chinese communist ideology is atheist and hostile to all other religions, China shows some level of religious respect on Islam to demonstrate its tolerance and good reputation to the world community, especially to the governments of Muslim countries that are hostile to Western ideology. However, that is not the case in East Turkistan. The religious freedom of Muslim Uyghurs is strongly suppressed. Uyghur religious activities enjoy only as much freedom as local and national authorities choose to allow at any given moment. They are regulated and closely monitored by the government. This talk argues that eroding Uyghur identity through religious repression is not the only goal of China. China is also focused on eliminating political freedom of Uyghurs by harshly attacking religious freedom. This talk also highlights the impact of religious repression that both devastated the Uyghurs and threatened the Chinese government, by analyzing the reasons behind the tough religious policy of China in East Turkistan that highlight Chinese colonial policy.

Rukiye Turdush was born in Gulja, East Turkistan. She studied history in Shanghai East China Normal University, graduating in 1994. She returned to East Turkistan and was unemployed until 1996 when she was hired by Xinjiang TV university newspaper and became a school reporter. In 1997, she was forced to quit because of her political views. In 1998, her father immigrated to Canada and sponsored her. From 2001 to 2002, she studied French in Quebec. In 2003, she entered the University of Windsor and earned her BA Honors degree in International Development. Currently, she is President of the Uyghur Canadian Society. (ibirlik@gmail.com)

Michael Dillon | Muslims in China: Communist Party Policy, Dissent and Human Rights

This paper is based on research carried out during visits to Muslim communities in Ningxia, Gansu, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang between 1988 and 2005. Muslims in China belong to one of two broad categories. The Chinese-speaking Hui are found across the whole of China. Muslims who are not Chinese-speaking live mainly in Xinjiang and the majority of these are Uyghurs. Although both communities draw essentially on the same historical and religious tradition and Islamic texts, their organizations and religious practices are largely separate.

The two groups are also treated very differently by the state. Since the 1980s, Hui Muslims have been relatively free to practice their religion in their mosques and in Sufi and other organizations, as long as these have been registered with the Religious Affairs Bureaux. The religious activities of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang have been subject to far greater control by the Chinese state, particularly since the 1990s because of their links (real or perceived) with Uyghur nationalism or separatism.

The leaders of religious organizations among the Hui Muslims are accepted as representatives of their communities and are included in consultations with local government as part of the united front policy. Dialogue with Uyghur religious leaders is much more restricted and there are unregistered Sufi organizations among the Uyghurs that have a nationalist political agenda. It is not possible to separate the discussion of the role of Islam in China from the ethnic and political background of the various Muslim groups and this, in turn, has a bearing on the human rights of Muslims in China.

Dr. Michael Dillon is Senior Visiting Scholar in Contemporary Chinese Studies at the Global Journalism Institute of Tsinghua University, China. He was Senior Lecturer in the Department of

East Asian Studies at the University of Durham, where he taught Chinese and Chinese history, and was founding Director of the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies. He has done fieldwork in China for over 25 years. He is a frequent commentator on Chinese and Asian affairs for the BBC and expert witness in refugee and asylum cases relating to China.

His publications include: *China's Muslims* (Oxford); *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migrations, Settlements and Sects* (Curzon); *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (Routledge Curzon); *Religious Minorities in China* (Minority Rights Group); *China: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary* (editor, Curzon); and *Contemporary China: An Introduction* (Routledge Curzon).
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Tsewang Tethong | Violation of Human Rights and Religious Freedom in Tibet

Tibet has been militarily occupied by the Communist Chinese Regime since it came into power in China in 1949. This is in spite of the 17 Point Agreement, signed by both the Chinese and the Tibetan representatives in 1951, guaranteeing a peaceful co-existence. The Chinese Communist Regime had assured the Tibetan Government, headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan people, that China would not impose or introduce any reforms or changes in the way the Tibetans lived without the consent of the Tibetans and their government. Despite all these assurances and promises to work in peace and harmony with the Tibetans, the Chinese carried out drastic changes that affected the lives, religion and the very basic human rights of the Tibetan people.

The most devastating of all of these policies carried out by the Chinese authorities was the systematic suppression of freedom of religion. Tibetans are devout Buddhists. Religion is their life and the source of Tibetan identity, culture, and language. In the past 50 years of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the key policy of the Communist Party has been to destroy and to disrupt the Tibetans spiritual life. In order to achieve this policy, China has carried out the most oppressive destruction of the very core of the Tibetan people's spiritual life. Hence, thousands of monasteries (places of higher learning) have been destroyed and are still being destroyed. Monks, as well as lay people, had to undergo a rigorous re-education campaign. The administration of the monasteries has been placed under the direct control of the Chinese Communist party.

This, and many other hardships imposed by the Chinese authorities, has led to successive mass protests over the last 60 years. Tibetans throughout Tibet, since the 1950s, have not experienced freedom of religion. This has led to the recent protests in 2008 by Tibetan monks and lay people across the entire Tibetan plateau. These protests have resulted in the death of hundreds of innocent people and the imprisonment and disappearance of thousands of others. As a result of China's occupation of Tibet, more than 1.2 million Tibetans have died (out of population of six million) and more than 6,000 monasteries have been destroyed.

Tsewang C.Tethong is Honourary Professor at the Institute of Asian Research, Contemporary Tibetan Studies Program, University of British Columbia. He retired from his position as the Minister for Information and International Relations of the Tibetan Government in Exile in 2001. After the escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1959, Mr. Tethong was called to serve as English translator for H.H. the Dalai Lama. From 1960 to 1963, he studied Political Science at the

University of Tübingen, Germany. Since 1963, he has served in various positions representing Tibet working with the Government of India.

In Canada Mr. Tethong taught at the Lester B. Pearson College in Victoria for four years. He was the founding member of the Canada Tibet Committee, and served as chair in 2002-2003. He is currently working on a multi-media project on "50 Years in Exile - A Tibetan Refugee Story". (tethong@shaw.ca)

Paul Webster | "China's Leap of Faith: The Gods Come Home"

China's Leap of Faith, a two-part documentary made for VisionTV in 2008, examines both the impact of China's spiritual rebirth, and the government's continued efforts to control religious faith. Part One, "The Gods Come Home" probes the Chinese government's scramble to contain the explosive re-awakening of Buddhism, Taoism and traditional folk faiths across China. The producers gained permission from the Chinese government to present both sides of the regime's policies and practices with respect to religion. The production managed to secure a rare interview with Ye Xiaowen, head of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. "Historically, regime change in China has often hinged on religious developments, so we had to work very cautiously with the government," said director Paul Webster. "We had an assigned official who monitored every step we took. Even so, this project marks the government's acknowledgement that it is now time to start talking about religion."

Paul Webster is director of "The Gods Come Home". He writes for numerous publications in Canada, the U.S. and Europe and has directed documentary films for CBC, BBC, SWR Germany and Vision TV. He has received numerous awards from groups including the National Magazine Foundation, the Canadian Association of Journalists, Hot Docs, the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (pwebster@sympatico.ca)

Razmik Panossian | Religion and Human Rights

The presentation will draw on a Rights & Democracy report published entitled *Religion and Human Rights* (www.dd-rd.ca). The report examines four aspects related to this topic: a) the relationship between the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion; b) discrimination against minorities and questions of public order and citizenship; c) the role of education, dialogue and the promotion of tolerance; and finally d) policy recommendations. The presentation will focus on the second point, examining arguments that "justify" the repression of religious freedoms in the name of public order, or in the name of "culture" and exclusionary citizenship policies.

Dr. Razmik Panossian is the Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning at Rights & Democracy (Montréal, Canada) where he manages the international programming of the institution (including in China). Prior to his move back to Canada in 2003, he taught courses on nationalism and ethnic conflict, post-Soviet transition/democratization, and comparative politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He edited the Rights & Democracy report *Religion and Human Rights*. (rpanossian@dd_rd.ca)