

RELIGIONS OF CHINA UPDATES

FEBRUARY 2014

4 Updates

- 1. Muslim in China, Chinese in Egypt**
- 2. China official seeks tougher rules on religion after Xinjiang blasts**
- 3. Religion in China beyond Christianity**
- 4. Islam a peaceful religion, opposes terror attacks**

1.

Muslim in China, Chinese in Egypt

27th January 2014

Newsweek

Muslim in China, Chinese in Egypt

By Giulia Marchi/Anzenberger

‘Musilin’ means Muslim in Chinese. This project records young people moving from China to Egypt to study, and understand Islam. They are Muslim - but they do not know much about this religion. Once in Egypt they discover it through the study of Arabic, the Koran, and through life in Cairo. Over the last year, I spent time inquiring within this hidden world, documenting their daily life as young foreigners with struggles between religion, culture, and genders’ divide.

I decided to tell this story through the experience of Ding Lan (Fatima is her Muslim name), a 22 year old young woman that I met in Cairo. Young Chinese Muslims like Ding Lan come for Al Azhar, the highest Islamic Institution, worldwide known and free. They are Huizu (a Muslim minority in China), from regions as Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia or Henan. They are between 20 and 25 years old, as average and live in two specific areas in Cairo: Abbasseya and Nasr City. After Cairo, I followed Ding Lan back to her home in China in Henan province. There, I searched for the Muslim elements in her life and cultural background to understand her choice to move to Egypt. Through her eyes and my documentation, I aim to show Islam in all its cultural diversities.

More: <http://www.newsweek.com/muslim-china-chinese-egypt-227171>

2.

China official seeks tougher rules on religion after Xinjiang blasts

27th January 2014

China official seeks tougher rules on religion after Xinjiang blasts

By Michael Martina; Editing by Ron Popeski

BEIJING

(Reuters) - A senior Chinese official called for stricter management of religious activities, state media said on Monday, following explosions in China's western region of Xinjiang which authorities say were masterminded by a religious extremist.

Police shot dead six people and six more died when explosives they were carrying detonated in Xinhe county, according to weekend media reports. Blasts struck a beauty salon and a vegetable market.

Yu Zhengsheng, a member of the Communist Party's seven-man Politburo Standing Committee, called for action to ensure that religious practice did not spill over into illegal acts.

His remarks, quoted by the official People's Daily, made no direct reference to Xinjiang. But China has long objected to unauthorized activities associated with religious practice by Xinjiang's large Muslim minority as well as other groups, like Buddhists in restive Tibet and various underground churches.

"Religious followers must expand consciousness of the state, the law and citizenship within religious circles so that the faithful naturally conduct religious activities within the bounds of law and policy," he said.

The official Xinhua news agency quoted police in Xinjiang as saying a man identified as Ibrahim Qahar had organized a group of 17 people to produce the explosives at a rented house.

It said police had seized devices, but gave no details on their nature.

"A man named Ibrahim Qahar had organized illegal religious activities and spread religious extremism since May last year," Xinhua said.

Five suspects were captured and one policeman was slightly wounded in the incident after the group rode three motorcycles to set up the blasts on Friday evening, Xinhua said.

A spokesman for the main Uighur exile group, the World Uyghur Congress, had suggested at the weekend that the beauty salon was a front for a brothel that had offended Uighurs' "traditional lifestyles".

Xinjiang has been the theatre of numerous incidents of unrest in recent years, which the

government often blames on the separatist East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), although experts and rights groups cast doubt on its existence as a cohesive group. Authorities blamed Uighur extremists for a suicide attack last year in Beijing's Tienanmen Square.

Muslims in the region, who speak a Turkic language, chafe at restrictions they say authorities impose on their culture. The region lies on the borders of ex-Soviet Central Asia, India and Pakistan.

Around 100 people, including several policemen, have been killed in violence since last April, according to state media reports. In 2009, nearly 200 people were killed in the Xinjiang capital, Urumqi, in rioting between Uighurs and Han Chinese.

3.

Religion in China beyond Christianity

14th January 2014

Imperial Valley News, California, USA

Religion in China beyond Christianity

By Amy Patterson Neubert

West Lafayette, Indiana - While attention is focused on the explosive growth of Christianity in China, a Purdue University religious studies expert says that the popularity and trends of other religions need to also be studied in the world's largest country.

"China is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world in less than two decades, which is astounding considering religion was banned just a few decades ago and is still restricted today," says Fenggang Yang, a professor of sociology and director of Purdue's Center on Religion and Chinese Society. "But, how the country's religious scene is changing beyond Christianity needs to be understood as well, as these changes can affect the economical, cultural and political landscape of the world's largest country."

Yang, who is launching a new study of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Taoism in mainland China, says this year will be interesting as the country's new leadership, established last year, has not yet set a clear religious policy. The topic is expected to be addressed this March during the National People's Congress. In China, the government approves the practice of five religions - Buddhism, Catholicism, Taoism (also Daoism), Islam and Protestantism under patriotic associations.

"There are still many other faiths not approved by the government, but they exist and some are thriving," says Yang, author of "Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule." "It will be interesting to see what tone this government sets, or doesn't, regarding tolerance or support that could influence religious groups."

The government provides some basic statistics of religious sites - churches, temples and mosques, and Yang is interested in collecting more demographic data that could identify specific religious trends such as which religions are embraced by different economic or urban and rural groups in massive China.

Purdue's Center on Religion and Chinese Society is partnering with the China Data Center at the University of Michigan on the "Spatial Study of Chinese Religions and Society." The research focusing on Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Taoism is funded by a three-year, \$400,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. Yang's collaborators are Z. George Hong, professor of history at Purdue University Calumet and co-director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society, and Shuming Bao, director of the China Data Center at the University of Michigan.

"The religious landscape in China is still limited as we rely on government-provided data, so collecting additional data can help expand what we know about religious groups," Yang says.

The researchers will work with various scholars on the data collection and collaboration. Yang, who is president-elect of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and editor of Review of Religion and Chinese Society, has been instrumental in training many of the scholars in China who are studying religion. Since 2004 Yang has led many summer institutes and organized a series of empirical research projects on religion and Chinese society with the goal of training new scholars and rallying well-known scholars in the world for U.S., Europe and China to develop the social scientific study of religion in China.

In addition to linking religious sites with demographic data, this project will make the information publicly available. The goal is to build a platform for people to learn more about religion in China. Yang says teachers, journalists and religious leaders are some of those who may be interested in access to this information.

Yang, whose research focuses on immigrant religion in the United States, Chinese Christianity around the world, and religious change and church-state relations in China, also is the author of "Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities."

4.

Islam a peaceful religion, opposes terror attacks

6th January 2014

CCTV - China Central Television

Islam a peaceful religion, opposes terror attacks

By Han Peng

Across Xinjiang, the power of religion is strong. Muslims pray every day to show their faith to Allah. But some religious extremists are using their faith by distorting Koran to incite

violence and killings.

A direct link to Allah.

For more than six hundred years, Muslims have gathered here daily in Kashgar's Id Kah Mosque, the biggest mosque in China.

They express their faith to Allah and pray for good life. Unlike other religions, which may need a priest to interpret their scriptures, Koran allows its believers to interpret the doctrines of Allah individually.

It tells people to be kind and show peace. Violence, yet alone murder, is condemned and banned.

Reporter: "But the situation here is not as calm as it seems. The Imam at this mosque, who's shared his views with us many times before, declined our interview this time. And Uyghur Muslims have also become reluctant to speak about their religion on TV. This is a sensitive time, and everyone is being very cautious."

Throughout 2013, a string of deadly terror attacks rocked Kashgar. All of them were planned and organized by what the authorities "the three evil forces", which are separatism, terrorism and religious extremism.

Like Al-Qaeda, they are attempting to infiltrate remote regions and set up underground sermon halls, in which they distort the Koran, using it to incite Uyghurs into violence.

While most Muslims ignore their approach, there is a growing concern in the region that those who openly speak against them could face retaliation.

Kashgar has increased security to protect people's safety, and make sure that Muslims in China can continue to enjoy the freedom of religion.

END