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Resistance and Accommodation: The Catholic Church in Post-Mao China

Anthony E. Clark

Whitworth University, aclark@whitworth.edu

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JAMES MADISON PROGRAM Seminar Talk (Princeton University)
 Professor Anthony E. Clark, 9 March 2009

TITLE:

"Resistance and Accommodation: The Catholic Church in Post-Mao China"

ABSTRACT:

The Catholic bishop of Shanghai, Gong Pinmei, who was imprisoned from 1955 until 1985 for being a "counter-revolutionary," once said: "If we renounce our faith, we will disappear and there will not be a resurrection. If we are faithful, we will disappear, but there will be a resurrection." For China's Catholic community, the knotty problem of how to faithfully retain and practice religious belief has resulted in a highly complex system of resistance and accommodation. Two communities have emerged in China's Catholic landscape, the "underground" church that navigates precariously outside of party sanction, and the "aboveground" church that operates under the watchful scrutiny of party-appointed officials. My talk will discuss the contours of Catholic resistance to China's present state ideology, and the methods of accommodation employed to keep churches and sacraments available to the rising number of faithful. In recent years the lines between "underground" and "aboveground" have become increasingly dim as these two communities begin to collaborate more often in a new, collective resistance to party control in post-Maoist China.

BIOGRAPHY:

Anthony Clark received his Ph.D. (2005) at the University of Oregon in Chinese literature and history, and is presently an Assistant Professor of early-modern Chinese history at The University of Alabama. He has an edited volume forthcoming on the topic of East-West religious and cultural interaction entitled, *Beating Demons and Burning Their Books: Views of China, Japan, and the West* (University of Michigan Press), and has just completed a book on China's Catholic saints, *Martyrs of the Middle Kingdom: A History of China's Catholic Saints*. Clark returned in December from a four-month research trip to China, where he visited several archives, Catholic villages, and "underground" and "aboveground" Catholic clergy for his present book project on religious and state antagonisms in China's recent history.

[Fig. 1] First of all, thank you for inviting me here to speak about a topic I have become impassioned by in recent years – I have heard much about Princeton's James Madison Program, but this is my first visit to Princeton.

a. I especially thank Professor Michael New and Elizabeth Schneck for helping organize my talk here today.

b. My talk is about Catholic resistance and accommodation in post-Mao China, and I'd like to preface my remarks with two anecdotes from my recent four-month research trip to China, largely intended as an information-gathering foray into China's Catholic communities on behalf of the Holy See.

i. [Figs. 2-3] During a recent visit to the restored St. Joseph's Catholic Cathedral at Wuhan, Hubei, I met with several of the priests in

1949 - The Chinese govt. took over a fractured country with 1 million Protestants & 3 million Catholics - Today China has conservatively 10 million Catholics & 30 million Protestants

Who
 Colleagues
 26 years
 Xtrandy
 1949 H
 Today's H

1952 -
 1st PRC
 Constitution
 X Article 88
 Religion
 Freedom
 Mao's speech
 - Counter-revolutionaries

Today - Deng's reforms
 Intro
 My colleagues who pay attention to world economics are paying special attention to China.
 Perhaps China has the fastest growing economy - other than its economy - the fastest growing thing in China.
 Wuhan
 Hubei



residence there. One of the priests (Fr. Peng Xin) was quite welcoming, spoke French well, and had studied at the Missions Étrangères de Paris. Another priest was noticeably uncomfortable meeting me, especially after seeing my Vatican card.

Fr. Peng made almost nothing of himself in a humble way @ the cathedral - the 2 who worked for the CPA had dinner for personal com - lived in palatial suites by the standards...

1. Later that evening I received an urgent phone call from the first priest, asking me to meet him discreetly at a nearby park.
 2. During our discussion he informed me that the other priest I had met was the local director of the Catholic Patriotic Association, and was one of two priests at the cathedral who collaborate with the Party. It was suggested to me that these two priests were among those who work with and for the local authorities – agreeing with the government’s insistence that the Chinese Church remain distinctly separate from the leadership of the Pope.
 3. The Catholic faithful in Wuhan are necessarily placed into a position of resistance to both the local authorities and several of the sanctioned priests who work for the government.
 4. The situation in Wuhan for Catholics is tense:
 - a. Phones are tapped; priests with open loyalties to Rome are carefully monitored; and faithful are forced to attend Masses offered by priests who “compromise” Catholic teachings or locating clergy who conduct clandestine liturgies and sacramental rites.
 5. The Diocese of Wuhan is, like the Diocese of Yunnan, bitterly divided into “underground” and “aboveground” Catholic communities — *that are largely antagonistic.*
 - a. Even the priests within the sanctioned community are divided – some are even accused of being implants by the Communist authorities.
 6. Wuhan is an area of Catholic antagonism and resistance in China, but not all dioceses are alike.
- ii. Immediately after my visit to Wuhan I traveled to another Catholic community attached to the Diocese of Taiyuan, in Shanxi Province.
1. [Fig. 4] I was met at the Taiyuan Railway Station by Fr. Zhang Jinqing, wearing his black clerics with a visible Roman collar, something one rarely sees in China outside of liturgical services.

*Taiyuan
Fr. Zhang*

Nanzhang

2. One of the stops we made during my several-day tour of churches and pilgrimage sights in Shanxi was the Catholic church at Nanzhang Village.
 - a. The church was directly across the street from the village Party headquarters; in fact the Catholic church cast an enormous shadow over the small, crumbling Party office.
 - b. [Figs. 5-6] I asked the church caretakers how they felt about being across the street from the Party headquarters, and they smiled as they responded. We feel great about the Party office being so close, especially since they paid to have this church built.
 - c. It was then that Fr. Zhang informed me that the Church in Shanxi is more powerful than the Party.

Though this seems quite unimaginable to me.

Banquan Mtn

3. [Fig. 7] As I stood at the summit of Banquan Mountain, where the local Catholics believe Mary appeared during the Ming dynasty, Fr. Zhang pointed out nine church spires punctuating the valley below. what I recall to be accurate

Taiyuan Cathedral

4. [Figs. 8-9] Chinese Catholics will tell you that Shanxi is a success story – it is an area of accommodation, where there is no “underground” community to speak of because issues of obedience to Rome seem hardly relevant in an area where Catholic churches dot the countryside, and a large number of Taiyuan’s wealthy elite attend Sunday Mass at the massive city cathedral.

And the H.F.'s photo is hung behind the bishop's desk (Li Jiantang)

5 years ago (pre-Olympics)

Recent Publications

a. The churches and cathedral display images of the Pope prominently. this situation was caught diff.

II. There has been a proliferation of books and articles published lately on the history of the Catholic Church in China; most have focused on events during the Maoist era (1949-1976) – very few works have considered what has happened in the post-Maoist era.

- a. Some examples of recent studies on the post-Mao Catholic Church in Chiunua include:
 - i. Richard Madsen, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in An Emerging Civil Society* (UCP, 1998).
 - ii. Eriberto Lozada, Jr., *God Aboveground: Catholic Church, Poststructuralist State, and Transnational Process in a Chinese Village* (Stanford, 2001).

New works are needed - my talk is intended to fill in this gap.

The Maoist Era
(Recap.)

iii. Beatrice Leung & William Liu, *The Chinese Catholic Church in Conflict: 1949-2001* (Universal Publishers, 2004).

iv. Hong Hong priest, Fr. Lin Ruiqi, *Shei zhu chensu 誰主沉浮* (HK, Holy Spirit Research Center, 1999). *(This book is actually "smuggled" into #3 for its critical material)*

b. I should say something about the history of the Catholic Church in China during the Maoist era before I discuss the Catholic community's evolution after Mao's death in 1976.

i. Perhaps the most important point to make here is that it was during Mao's early rule in the PRC that the Catholic community divided into two very distinct communities:

1. The "underground" community = which operated on the premise of resistance to the Communist government.
2. The "aboveground," or "Patriotic," community = which operated on the premise of accommodation, perhaps even collaboration with the Communist authorities.

Three-Self Movement.
三自運動
Dec. 13, 1950

c. My larger point today, one that I hope I can illustrate well, is that in the post-Maoist era these categories are growing vague, in some places almost vanishing into outdated historical memory.

i. On December 13, 1950, the Chinese authorities launched the Three-Self Movement, which as one Catholic priest expressed in a Chinese newspaper article, "determined to sever all relations to imperialism, to do all we can to reform ourselves, to establish a new Church that shall be independent in its administration, its resources, and its apostolate."

Fr. Wang Lianzuo

1. What this "independence" really meant for Chinese Catholics was the forced rupture between themselves and the central authority of their religious faith.
2. This led to a conflict between China's new government and the Vatican, and worse, it led to conflicts within the Chinese Church regarding whether to follow the government "and survive" or "remain loyal to Rome" and go underground.

d. One of the historical antecedents of the "underground"- "aboveground" Catholic division during the Maoist era was the Korean War (1950-1953).

Korean War
↓
Patriotism
↓
Catholic "reforms"

Chang Beda, S.J.

Pope Pius XII
Ad Sinarum Gentem
- 1954

- i. The Three-Self Movement (三自愛國運動委員會 – self-governance, self-support, self-propagation) was fused together with the “Resist America and Aid Korea Committee.”
 1. Chinese Catholics were at first requested to demonstrate patriotic support in the war effort against “imperialist America,” and then they were asked to “reform” the Chinese Catholic Church by severing its ties with the Vatican.
 - a. As to be expected, Catholics responded with the assertion: “If we cut ties with the Pope, we are no longer Catholic.”
 - b. Some argued that if they were required to renounce the Pope today, then tomorrow they would be asked to deny the Lord himself.
 - c. But this problem also seemed to involve the erasure of the Catholic community in China if it did not somehow at least ostensibly cooperate with the state.
 - e. One answer to the dilemma of obedience was to, according to a paraphrase of the Chinese Jesuit martyr, Chang Beda, S.J., (1905-1951), “Compromise in the non-essentials, no compromise in the essentials.”
 - i. The larger problem with this principle was a problem of praxis – what constitutes the “essentials”?
 - ii. For many Catholic clergy at the time, associating with the Three-Self Movement was merely a way to preserve the sacramental life of the Church in China: they argued that without cooperation with the authorities, the Church would disappear.
 - iii. In 1954, Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) responded to the Three-Self Movement with an encyclical Ad Sinarum Gentem (To the People of China), where he affirmed unequivocally: “... it will be entirely essential that your Christian community, if it desires to form a part of our Society divinely founded by Our Redeemer, be subject in all things to the sovereign pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and that it must be most clearly united to Him as far as concerns religious faith.”²
 1. The Pope’s message was clear: following the new Three-Self Movement was effectively to separate from the Catholic Church, for in his letter, Pius XII asserts that to establish a “national” church would “be Catholic no longer,” because it would no longer be “universal.”

Catholicism is largely the Sacraments
Sacramental – and the priests
require available priests

2. From this point in time Chinese Catholics were placed in the difficult position of choosing between country and faith: most chose to retain the faith, though they felt compelled to do so in private, and without recourse to the Sacraments.

Arch bishop Zhou Jishi, C.M.

* [a. The "underground" community was thus formed by those Chinese Catholics who chose to remain loyal to the Rome by not affiliating with the official Three-Self Movement.

Began post-1954

f. Knowing that Catholics needed a Pope, but still not understanding its theological implications, the Communist government approached the Vincentian prelate, Archbishop Zhou Jishi, C.M., (1892-1972) and asked him to be the "Pope of China."

Wanted to be the Pope of the whole world

i. Of course he refused, and was accused of opposing the "reform of the Church" and being a lackey of the U.S.; he was finally imprisoned.

ii. [Fig. 10] The most famous bishop to be arrested in China is Cardinal Gong Pinmei (1901-2000), who spent thirty years in prison for retaining his loyalty to the Pope.

Dissemination on him by Jesuit Father, Paul Mariani, SJ.

2007 Uof Chicago

Catholic Patriotic Association
1957

III. The rupture between the Church in China and the Vatican was deepened on July 15, 1957, when a party-sanctioned National Assembly of Chinese Catholics was established with 241 delegates, including bishops and priests.

a. It was during this meeting that the Catholic Patriotic Association (中國天主教愛國會) was created.

b. This Association was to function as a parallel Church in China without ties to the Holy See in Rome.

i. It was to select and consecrate bishops without the approval of Rome – bishops who were loyal first to China's authorities and China's independence.

1. In his 1958 (July 29) encyclical, *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, Pope Pius XII (r. 1939-1958) declared that bishops who consecrate priests to the episcopate selected by the Association are excommunicated.

a. Those who are consecrated were also to be excommunicated.

Pope Pius XII
Ad Apostolorum Principis
- 1958

ii. This widened the chasm between Catholic clergy and faithful in the "underground" and "aboveground" communities.

iii. The then bishop of Shanghai, Kong Pinmei, asserted that, "If we renounce our faith, we will disappear and there will not be a resurrection. If we are faithful, we will disappear and there will be a resurrection."³³

1. Bishop Kong's remarks echoed what the majority of China's Catholics felt during the first two decades of the Maoist era.

IV. Once the Cultural Revolution had begun in 1966, however, all Catholics, regardless of affiliation, were forced into hiding.

a. During the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, Catholics suffered from the worst persecution since the Boxer Uprising violence of 1900.

i. [Fig. 11] In an interview with Bishop Wang Chongyi of Guiyang, Wang stated: "There are martyrs who were buried alive, beaten, or starved to death under the Communists – saints whose sufferings will remain forgotten. The Chinese authorities have erased them; only God knows the whole story. But I saw it."³⁴

ii. Bishop Wang also said that, "No-one then really knew who was Catholic. After the churches reopened we sometimes knew for the first time that our neighbors had all along been praying the rosary in the house next door."³⁵

b. During the Maoist era Chinese authorities confiscated Catholic churches all over China. *(This was re-compense, the Govt. asserted, for what was taken during the Unequal Treaties of the 19th Century...)*

i. In Beijing, for example [Figs. 13-15]:

1. West Church was used as a warehouse for Tongren Tang Chinese Herbs.

2. St. Michael's Church was made into a primary school and restaurant.

3. And according to the diocesan records, North Cathedral was used during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) "for other purposes."⁴

c. [Fig. 12] One "underground" bishop I spoke with recently, Bishop Hu Daguo (b. 1920), was ordained a priest in 1950, only one year after the founding of the PRC.

Cultural Revolution

Wang Chongyi

MAO'S LAND REFORM
Policy
Church Property Confiscations
(through the 50s)

Hu Daguo

i. Bishop Hu was one of the priests who refused to affiliate with the Catholic Patriotic Association, and after the Cultural Revolution had been inaugurated in 1966, 300 of Mao's Red Guards detained Fr. Hu, placed a white dunce cap on his head, and beat him while shouting denunciations. Still refusing to apostatize, Hu Daguo was arrested and placed in prison for "re-education."

1. He spent over twenty years in prison for refusing to apostatize or affiliate with the Patriotic Association.

a. He was subjected to four methods of "re-education":

Denied sacraments as re-education articles in

i. Marxist classes.

ii. Women for marriage.

iii. High-salary position.

iv. Torture.

d. So, now that I've outlined the situation during the Maoist era, laden as it was with division and persecution, let me render a more nuanced view of Catholic resistance and accommodation after Mao's death.

V. Along with Deng Xiaoping's (1904-1997) economic reforms (革命開放), which began in the late seventies, Catholics began to see slow improvements.

a. In the eighties, churches began to be restored and reopened, and priests returned to the altars.

i. Though, the authorities employed new methods of monitoring and controlling Catholics.

1. Asked those entering the church if they could make the sign of the cross.

a. If yes = their name was taken.

b. If not = they were refused admittance.

b. But, the shared persecutions of the sixties and seventies functioned to coalesce the "underground" and "aboveground" communities.

i. This new trend toward collaboration was largely facilitated by the government's permission for "Patriotic" priests to allow the current Pope's name in the Canon of the Mass, and the post-Conciliar

*Re-education
Methods*

Deng Xiaoping

Mass - VII

pastoral and liturgical decrees were adopted by the churches under the auspices of the Patriotic Association.

1. [Figs. 16-17] Previously, Catholic rites in the "aboveground" Church were offered only according to the Tridentine formula. *in Latin*

- c. And as Bishop Wang Chongyi has said, many of those who had affiliated with the Catholic Patriotic Association had included the Pope's name in the Canon of Mass all along - they had done so, they say, in their hearts.
- d. Despite these new circumstances, many of the "underground" bishops and priests remained outside of the official Patriotic Association, choosing instead to offer the sacraments in private homes.
 - i. Many underground priests and bishops began to collaborate with bishops and clergy of the "aboveground" Church.

The memory of the Maoist Era left the "underground" community alive.

1. The post-Maoist era, with its renewed freedoms under Deng Xiaoping, ~~show~~ ^{is seeing} the gradual erasure of the line between the so-called "Official"/ "Schismatic" Chinese community, and the "underground"/ "legitimate" Catholic one.

e. In addition, the post-Mao era Popes began to dispatch surreptitious ecclesial envoys to China to secretly legitimize bishops who had previously been considered excommunicated.

VI. The environment of Catholic activities in China today is considerably more complex than it was when clerical divisions were more clearly defined - and the situation of China's Catholics is largely representative of religious freedom in general in China during the post-Mao era. *growing*

a. My recent research in China has yielded several examples of how this change had evolved:

i. The previous bishop of Wuhan, Dong Guangqing (1917-2007), was one of the first two priests to be consecrated bishop in 1958 without the Pope's approval, and he remained out of communion with the Vatican until he reconciled with Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) in 1984.

1. Fr. Peng Xin, one of the priests in residence at Wuhan's cathedral, informed me that "aboveground" Bishop Dong actively collaborated with the "underground" community after Mao's death, and in fact shared his accommodations with "underground" clergy.

↳ Probably - mostly after his reconciliation w/ Rome.

Secret episcopal legitimizations

Bishop Dong Guangqing 1958 CPA ordination

the Hu Daguo's residence @ Guiyang Cathedral

Offices - Guiyang and Kunming Yunnan

ii. Also, my recent interview with the "underground" bishop, Hu Daguo, was conducted at his residence, which is located at the Guiyang cathedral where the government-sanctioned Bishop Wang Chongyi lives.

1. [Figs. 18-20] In fact, Bishop Hu resides with Bishop Wang not more than thirty feet from the Guizhou Catholic Patriotic Association office, which stands today largely empty.

a. Other than the Patriotic Association office in China's capital, Beijing, all of the offices I saw consisted of little more than white signs that designated the space as the *Aiguobui* 愛國會 - but inside these offices were quite empty.

b. In Guiyang, for example, the Catholic hierarchy has persuaded the local Party officials to appoint one of the diocesan priests as Director of the Provincial Catholic Patriotic Association, which has rendered the Association essentially powerless.

i. The Catholic Patriotic Association in Yunnan is located in what is presently an abandoned building.

iii. Even in Beijing, which is carefully overseen by the Association's administrative functionaries, the "aboveground" clergy clandestinely associate and collaborate with the "underground" community.

1. [Fig. 21] The pastor of Beijing's West Church, Fr. Pang Wenxian, informed me that part of his ministry involved collaboration with "underground" clergy and faithful in his neighborhood.

Pang Wenxian

iv. [Figs. 22-23] And one final example: the last survivor of the 1947 massacre of the Trappist monks of the Yangjiaping Abbey near Beijing, Bro. Marcel Zhang, informed me in an interview that after the People's Liberation Army tortured and stoned to death his confreres, the Hubei Catholic community went resolutely underground.

Bro. Marcel Zhang

1. Today, Bro. Zhang, along with ^{much} most of the "underground" community in and around Beijing, attend Mass at the Patriotic North Church, once owned by the Jesuits and Vincentians.

- b. During the Maoist era Catholics were divided into two groups – those who **resisted** government control by practicing their faith “underground,” and those who **accommodated** government ideology by existing in an “aboveground” ecclesial structure putatively separate from the Roman Pontiff.
 - i. In the post-Maoist era, however, China’s Catholics in both communities have begun to work, and even live, together.
 - 1. Resistance has largely become a collective project.
 - 2. Accomodation has largely become a façade – like the empty offices of the Catholic Patriotic Association.

Ungoing Problems

- VII. In the end, though, the old Maoist hardliners still have a voice in China’s religious landscape.
 - a. Wuhan still has a few priests who operate under Party guidance, and benefit financially by their willing cooperation.
 - b. Fr. Pang’s West Church still has three surveillance cameras that record everyone who enters and exits his church.
 - c. When I appeared suddenly at Beijing’s seminary with a Vatican I.D. card, the seminary rector informed me directly that he was not interested in any “orders from the Vatican.”
 - d. “Underground” Bishop Hu Daguo’s last comment to me as I was leaving his small room was: “As long as Communism is even remotely represented in China’s political system, Satan will continue to strangle and persecute the Church.”
 - the guards at the front gate actually refused my entrance @ first...*
 - e. An finally, after I returned from China, I received a worried email from two Chinese Catholic friends who discovered after I left that they had been “watched” by the State Security Bureau.
 - “We were about their time for other with foreigners...”*
 - f. The post-Maoist era has brought increased freedom to Catholics and some other religious groups, but problems persist, and paranoia still emerges from time to time when meeting with priests, whether they are in the “underground” or the “aboveground.”

Selected Notes:

¹ Fr. Wang Lianzuo, in *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily paper), Shanghai, December 16, 1950.

² Pope Pius XII, *Ad Sinarum Gentem*, 11.

³ In Fr. Paul Mariani, S.J., *Communist Power and Catholic Resistance: Shanghai, 1949-1960* (University of Chicago Dissertation, 2007), 1.

⁴ *Church of Xi Shi Ku* (Beijing: Beijing Catholic Diocese, 2004), 6.