Emergence and Development of Spiritual-Religious Groups in the People’s Republic of China after 1978

Dissertation

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Essen

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Koreferent: Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Pohl

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Preface

In the course of the working process, dissertations and their related aspirations change. This might be due to growing insight into the research topic, to suggestions and encouragement from advisers, colleagues, and friends, as well as to pressures related to time and other tasks needing to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, this dissertation aspires to make a pioneering contribution to the study field of spiritual-religious groups in China after 1978. A systematic, theoretically grounded analysis of this multifarious and colorful topic has remained absent. Hence, this dissertation attempts to fill this gap and address the question of how the two dominant spiritual-religious movements after 1978 have emerged and developed, also with regard to other actors in the spiritual-religious field. It is my hope that this study will prove helpful in inspiring further research in this area.

I wouldn’t have been able to complete this project without the dedicated support of many people. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my adviser, Prof. Dr. Xuewu Gu, for his never-ceasing encouragement and very helpful guidance throughout my work on this dissertation. Also, I would like to thank my second adviser, Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Pohl, for his great responsiveness and support. This dissertation was inspired through work on my Master’s thesis, and I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Sebastian Heilmann for having shared his great insight and inspiring enthusiasm with me.

I have strongly profited from exchanges with scholars and colleagues. Of particular importance to me are the talks I had with Father Roman Malek, Dr. Kim-Kwong Chan, and Prof. Dr. Lauren Pfister at various stages of this project. I am particularly indebted to various Chinese scholars, especially Prof. Dr. Xi Wuyi, Dr. Zeng Zhaogui, and Mr. He Zuoxiu, all of whom shared information and evaluations with me and deserve my heartfelt thanks. In a similar vein, I am grateful to Nadine Leonhardt and Maximilian Mayer for their insightful comments.
and encouragement.

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Finally, my thanks go to my parents and my brother for their ongoing support which cannot be expressed in words. To them I dedicate my dissertation.

Above all, none of this would have been possible without the strength and wisdom I have received from our Lord God to whom my praise and thanks eternally belong.

Kristin Kupfer

Hattingen and Beijing, January 2008
Technical Notes

All Latin transcriptions of Chinese terms follow the Hanyu Pinyin rules. Names of organizations are written in one word, like “Zhonghuarenmingongheguo.” Only if they become too long and too complicated to understand are words divided into meaningful subunits.

A glossary of key terms with the Chinese characters can be found as an appendix to this study.

All Biblical references are based on the New International Version Bible, available online at http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearch.php.

As Chinese websites are often quickly erased by the authorities, the Internet Archive (http://www.archive.org) proved very helpful in tracing previous versions of websites. In cases where this has been used, a reference was added to the website link address.
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<tr>
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<td>Associated Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRA</td>
<td>Bureau of Religious Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>BYD</td>
<td>Beijing Youth Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Science</td>
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<td>CCBC</td>
<td>China Catholic Bishop’s Conference</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>China Christian Council</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<td>China Catholic Patriotic Association</td>
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<td>CCTV</td>
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<td>CONSTAND</td>
<td>Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence</td>
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<td>Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference</td>
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<td>GMD</td>
<td>Guomindang</td>
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<td>GMRB</td>
<td><em>Guangming Ribao</em> (Guangming Daily)</td>
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<td>GRRB</td>
<td><em>Gongren Ribao</em> (Workers’ Daily)</td>
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<td>FLG</td>
<td><em>Falungong</em></td>
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<td>MPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>New Religious Movement</td>
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<td>NSM</td>
<td>New Social Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAST</td>
<td>National Association for Science and Technology</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
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<td>SMO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJZJYJ</td>
<td><em>Shijiezongjiaoanjiu</em> (Research on World Religions)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>TSPM</td>
<td>Three Self Protestant Patriotic Movement Association</td>
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<td>UFWD</td>
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<td>WOIPFG</td>
<td>World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of <em>Falungong</em></td>
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Appendix 1: Overview of Key Spiritual-Religious Groups

Appendix 2: List of Key Chinese Terms with Characters

Bibliography
1 Introduction

1.1 Spiritual-religious Groups as a Remunerative Topic of Research

For nearly ten years the *Falungong* group (FLG) has kept Chinese leaders anxious and occupied: only after the recent call for “all the brutality, resources, and persuasiveness of the Communist system,” as one party official put it,\(^1\) has Beijing apparently been able to quell public resistance to the movement. Although organized FLG activities have largely disappeared from the public sphere in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the group is still able to challenge accusations and questions of moral legitimacy made by the Chinese government through their globally situated, well-connected, and devoted followers as well as through the recently established media institutions associated with the group. The tradition of secret societies as well as spiritual-religious developments in modern China, however, indicates that FLG is only the most prominent example of a more far-reaching phenomenon.

Starting in 1978, spiritual-religious life in China has manifested a strong and diverse awakening due in large part to the weakening ideological and organizational control of the Communist Party. Traditional folk practices, like fortune-telling, worshipping of gods and ancestors, or *Fengshui* have enjoyed enormous popularity even with party cadres. *Qigong* masters command cult status and riches as “miracle doctors.” In the 1980s, during a rising tide of popularity for *Qigong* (*Qigongre*), up to 3,600 different forms of breath and movement exercises existed. Most of these were newly invented and not registered with the state. Christianity also recorded a growing number of followers, especially among the mostly autonomous “house churches.”\(^2\) These churches, which sprang up in the 1920s and 1930s, mix aspects of both Western charismatic revival and Pentecostal movements.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) *International Herald Tribune*, August 6, 2001.
\(^2\) The term “house churches” refers to smaller congregations that are not registered as part of the official Protestant church. They are often connected through personal networks and

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Under the influence of folk religion and Protestantism, groups like “Teachings of the Eastern Lightning” (Dongfangshandianjiao) or “Society of Disciples” (Mentuhui) have mushroomed within the countryside since 1978. Characterized by a charismatic leader, a hierarchical and flexible structure of organization, and teachings of healing and salvation, they claim their position within the long tradition of secret societies in China. Since the Ming dynasty, they have been perceived as an indicator of socioeconomic instability and potential political unrest, therefore posing an ideological and organizational threat to the Chinese state. In the course of power consolidation having taken place in the 1950s, the communist regime fought a fierce nationwide battle against the secret societies. In the 1980s the government demonstrated its increasing anxiety by classifying these societies as the “biggest counterrevolutionary group.”

Since 1978, the Chinese government has already officially labeled fourteen groups as “heretical teachings” (xiejiao), and the number of followers is officially estimated at three to four million. Internal documents and the aggressive campaigning of the state, however, point to a high degree of threat perception within the Chinese leadership. Beijing has of yet been unable to find an efficient method to stop activities of spiritual-religious groups. Finding a more comprehensive approach to religion and to the interlinked socioeconomic problems as well as invoking binding social values are among the great challenges for the future of the Chinese government.

Three factors particularly add to this challenge:
Throughout Chinese history, spiritual-religious groups have appeared during periods of organizational and idealistic loss of state control challenging the legitimacy of the emperor.


Allan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, Protestantism in Contemporary China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Gonganbu yi ju (First Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security), Fan huidaomen (Fight Against Huidaomen) (Beijing: Quanzhongchubanshe, 1985), p. 2

This number refers to Christian-inspired groups; besides Falungong, several other Qigong-based groups have been designated “harmful groups” by the Chinese government, and their followers have been persecuted.
Spiritual-religious groups combine Chinese as well as Western idealistic traditions, forms of organization, and religious beliefs. Still afraid of “foreign infiltration” through religious channels (especially from the U.S.A., Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea) the Chinese government is also confronted with indigenous forms of spiritual traditions which are often unorganized and therefore difficult to control. Founders of spiritual-religious groups draw upon these resources and integrate them into their own form of doctrine and organization.

Spiritual-religious groups mirror shortcomings and contradictions within Chinese society resulting from rapid social change as well as an organizational and idealistic retreat of the state. Hence, the groupings easily find space and followers for their idealistic and material offers. Disappointed cadres and intellectuals along with marginalized parts of the population are attracted by the promise of a new spirit of community and sense of life.

The phenomenological richness of spiritual-religious groups in China is astonishing, especially after a period of religious repression during the Cultural Revolution. As recent research has proven, however, religious activities during the 1960s were much more vivid and alive than previously known or expected. Juxtaposed against the long history of secret societies and religious rebellions, increasing religious activities could be understood as a mere reemergence from a vivid breeding ground. However, many of these groups have made use of modern communication technologies and produced various innovations within their teachings. They have created a futuristic utopia embedded into the present political, social, and cultural institutions, and have stimulated the transformation process from present opportunities and shortcomings.

As these groups were a phenomenon accompanying the Chinese transformation process, it might be assumed that analyzing the groups might also provide some insight into dimensions of the Chinese transformation process. As Potter has put it: “The Chinese government’s policies and practices on religion offer a useful explanation of the dilemmas of regulation of social relations generally . . . While the regime faces the imperative of repressing aspects of socioeconomic change that threatens its political authority, it must
still present a general image of tolerance for increased autonomy among the populace at large.⁶

A systematic, theoretically grounded analysis of spiritual-religious groups in PRC after 1978 is still missing. Existing studies present contradictory interpretations of the phenomenon of spiritual-religious groups: while the Chinese government and some scientists portray these groups as harmful and dangerous “heretical teachings” (xiejiao), other studies present these groupings as harmless and oppressed victims of the Chinese authorities. Hardly any studies exist that strive for a more complex analysis of this phenomenon. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the emergence and development of spiritual-religious groups in the Chinese transformation process after 1978.

Additionally, this study attempts to make a small contribution to the general research of social movements. Cases of movements in Asian countries in a nondemocratic context are rarely analyzed. Most of the theoretical concepts derive from studies within Western contexts or countries with a democratic political system. Therefore, the analyzed groups provide a valuable testing ground as for whether or not these concepts possess explanatory force when transferred to a different context. This is especially the case with Christian-inspired groups in the Chinese context; therefore, the utilization of Western traditions within an Asian context will be an interesting empirical litmus test for the theories.

1.2 Useful and Used Definitions

Why are these groups defined as spiritual-religious groups? Herview-Léger emphasizes the linkage to a legitimating authority of a tradition as a distinctive feature of religious belief. Due to this linkage, followers of a religious group will be integrated—taking up the Latin term for religion “relegare”—into a community of believers. Therefore, she defines religions as “the ideological, symbolic, and social device by which the individual and collective awareness of belonging to a particular lineage of believers is created, main-

tained, developed and controlled.” Following a more common conceptualization, Stark refers to religion as “... any system of beliefs and practices concerned with ultimate meaning and which assumes the existence of the supernatural.” The connotations of spirituality, not necessary in contrast to religion, points to a less organized or ritualistic but rather more flexible and fluid relationship with otherworldliness. Spirituality in religion points to a believer possessing a faith less dogmatic, more open to new ideas and a myriad of influences, and more pluralistic than the doctrinal faiths of mature religions. Those who speak of spirituality as opposed to religion generally meta-religiously believe in the existence of many “spiritual paths” and emphasize the importance of experiencing one’s own path over following a given one. People involved in new religious movements tend to regard spirituality not as religion per se, but as the active and vital connection to a force/power/energy, spirit, or sense of deep self. As cultural historian and yogi William Irwin Thompson put it, “Religion is not identical with spirituality; rather religion is the form spirituality takes in civilization.” Some modern religions see spirituality in everything: pantheism and neo-pantheism. Religious naturalism, in a similar vein, has a spiritual attitude towards the awe, majesty, and mystery seen in the natural world. In conclusion, the adjective “spiritual” is added to the notion of “religious” to capture the fluid, less-organized aspects of the groups’ conceptions of the supernatural.

The term “spiritual-religious group” is used as a neutral category to separate itself from inadequate alternatives. Calling these groups “sects”—as the Chinese government is sometimes prone to do, in English texts as well as in foreign media—is problematic as it is used in a pejorative way.

As within religious studies, the term applies either to schismatic groups which break away from existing religious tradition or to a group which possesses a very intense form of the religious tradition from which they origi-
nated. The word “cult,” originally referring to a group orientated to supernatural concepts possessing innovative culture, is likewise used as a label to discredit a group. The Chinese government labels these groups as “heretical teachings,” with an official translation given as “evil cult.” Although “cult” is used in scholarship on religion as a technical term, the Chinese government uses it in a pejorative manner, a connotation the term has acquired worldwide within the media and the general populace.

Hence, spiritual-religious groups are defined as having a charismatic founder or leader, a sophisticated, mostly hierarchical organizational structure, as well as teachings of healing and salvation. Following Collins, charismatic leaders will be understood as “. . . individuals who have become the focal point of an emotion-producing ritual that links together a large coalition; their charisma waxes and wanes according to the degree to which the aggregate conditions for the dramatic predomination of that coalition are met.”

Following common classification schemes within social movement theories, four different types of spiritual-religious groups in the PRC can be identified: Christian-inspired, Qigong-based, Buddhist-based, and traditional secret societies. As they have obvious similarities and emerged during the same period of time, I found a comparative analysis could be very fruitful, preventing singular analytical conclusions. Since the Qigong-based and the Christian-inspired groups comprise the largest number of individual groups, these two types have been selected for the comparative study.

The adjective “Christian-inspired” points to a relationship with Christian concepts—due to the specific Chinese background, more with Protestantism than with Catholicism. Groups which are categorized within the type “Christian-inspired groups” draw on terms, concepts, rituals, and organizational forms of Protestantism.

The origin and meaning of the term Qigong are manifold. Dictionaries give a translation equivalent to “breathing exercises.” Translations embedded into a contextual definition take different connotations of the two terms “qi”

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and “gong” into account and refer to Qigong as “to work with energy” or the “internal effect of vital force.” Palmer describes gong as “. . . the virtuosity of the martial artist: a perfect mastery of the body and mind which is the fruit of a rigorous training discipline culminating in the manifestation of magic powers.” The roots of Qigong proved by written sources can be traced back to the sixth century B.C.: various practices for controlling and nourishing the qi were used to cure and preserve illness in order to ensure longevity as well as to foster spiritual cultivation.

Body training was closely linked with politics in ancient China. An important prerequisite for the emperor to perform the sacred rituals was the cleansing the body through fasting and meditation. The body of the emperor served as a link between the order of the cosmos and the order of the empire. Interestingly, the Chinese word “zhi” refers to healing as well as governing. Different elements of these practices can be found in Buddhist, Taoist, as well as Confucian traditions. Chinese authors in particular point to a mystical origin of Qigong, connecting it to a five-thousand-year-old history. Explanations remain rather vague and according to Heise mainly serve the Confucian idea of high legitimacy due to long history: “Insgesamt scheint es, dass die Darstellung der Fortsetzung der Kulturtradition wichtiger ist als die wirkliche, inhaltliche Kontinuität.” Sometimes a linkage between Qigong and Shamanism is evoked. However, Qigong and Shamanism became two different juxtaposed poles, for Qigong embarked on the path of healing and became a part of TCM, whereas Shamanism became a magical and mystical path. Heise notes that some information pertaining to the history of Qigong has been influenced by ideas of Mao Zedong about “fighting between two lines” (liang tiao lu xian) and fail to reflect the historic truth. Socialism has clearly left its footprints on Qigong historiography: sketching a “brief history of Qigong,” a table within the Qigong magazine Chinese Qigong (Zhongguo Qigong) mentions “labor” as the origin of Qigong, which is therefore a product of “the struggle between mankind and nature.”

13 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 10.
goes on to describe commonly recognized roots in Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The term “Qigong” dates back to the 1930s, but only after 1950 did it become widely used to refer to a variety of practices which emerged under manifold names throughout Chinese history. “Like other newly defined categories qigong has had its own newly written history, a history which represents it as a national treasure sanctioned by millennia of experience.”

In the time of Nationalist government Qigong became closely connected with Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) which was subordinated and even rejected as “incompatible with (Western) science.” In the early period of the PRC in 1949, Mao Zedong placed TCM at the service of people’s health and even advocated for cooperation between Western and Traditional Medicine. Therefore, the success of Doctor Liu Guizhen in utilizing “internal nourishing exercises” (neiyanggong) to treat patients with stomach ulcers was politically supported and led to the establishment of various Qigong sanatoria and departments throughout the country. Liu acquired these health-preserving skills via the traditional transmission channel from master to only one pupil of the next generation, healed his own stomach ulcer, and decided to break with the traditional transmission way as he started to teach and treat in public. To overcome the lack of modern medicinal facilities, the communist leadership appointed Liu to head a clinical team charged with researching breathing techniques. After the foundation of the People’s Republic, the leadership embarked on a mission to “. . . extract Chinese body cultivation techniques from their ‘feudal’ and religious settings, to standardize them and put them in the service of the construction of a secular, modern state.” Liu founded the world’s first Qigong clinic in Tangshan, Hebei Province, and various high-level cadres paid the clinic frequent visits.

17 Palmer 2003 (see note 12), p. 81.
After the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, however, large parts of TCM\(^\text{18}\) and also Qigong, along with most cultural traditions, were rejected as bourgeois and unacceptable, with nearly all Qigong departments being closed down. Only the Qigong sanatorium in Beidaihe remained open being that Mao and many high-level cadres still wanted to utilize its resources for preserving and improving their personal health. After Mao’s second wife Jiang Qing contracted uterine cancer, Mao agreed to the advice of his personal doctor, Li Zhisui, who indicated that Jiang should practice Taijiquan in Beidaihe. The incongruity between the formal party line and informal practices were one precondition for a quick reemergence and revival of Qigong after 1978. Likewise, many other spiritual and religious practices didn’t completely vanish during Cultural Revolution.

1.3 Motivation and Focus of Research

The initial idea for and motivation of this study was to make sense of these spiritual-religious groups, starting with huge and heavily laden questions aimed at the system level: Were they simply a reemergence of spiritual-religious groupings in times of crisis, as has been witnessed so many times in Chinese history? To what extent are the groups new? To what extent are they the result of change in China, and to what extent have they also fostered new change? On some level this interest reflects an observation by the author positing the overall Chinese transformation process as a twofold and rather contradictory process.

While not the focal point of the analysis, this study will prove that the spiritual-religious movements is especially suitable for capturing the different, often controversial forces which have shaped the Chinese transformation process, illustrating its pitfalls and its opportunities, especially the pitfalls of social and cultural modernization in China. The analysis of these groups and its contribution to the understanding of the complex nature of the Chinese transformation process might be compared to the use of a kaleidoscope: “...\(^\text{18}\) According to Hsu some parts of TCM still continued to be utilized, especially by barefoot doctors. See Elisabeth Hsu, *The Transmission of Chinese Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 38–39.
it has been remarked that one can learn a great deal about a society from studying its attitude to new religions. Through its treatment of the new religions in its midst, a society may vividly demonstrate its own values—whether, for example, its primary concerns centre on the family, its notions of individual or group freedom, individual or national financial or social security, or the preservation of traditional customs.”¹⁹ Many policy sectors, especially the spiritual-religious field, have often been portrayed as a hegemonic state operating through central command and harsh control. Existing associations that have been officially approved, or linked with the party-state, have been assumed to be merely a tool of the authorities.²⁰ During the preparation of this study, however, it has become clear that such an analysis method would become hopelessly entangled in either a generally abstract or even normative dimension.

Moreover, since this is a pioneer study on spiritual-religious groups with no analytical material to draw on, I felt that a thorough description and analysis of the phenomena is necessary, which would suggest a more actor-centered approach. Being that as of yet no scientific studies on spiritual-religious groups in China after 1978 have been undertaken, I have chosen to focus research interest of this analysis on the question of how these groups have emerged and developed rather than on why, with the latter pointing more towards a macro level analysis referring to political, social, and economic structures.²¹ Still, the study will not totally abandon its initial motivation but will review it from a well-focused base, linking it with the observation at the beginning, the amazing richness of different groups within the spiritual-religious realm.

1.4 Methodical-Theoretical Considerations and Guiding Questions of Research

After clarification of the research topic and the guiding focus of interest, the quest for meaningful methodical and theoretical approaches must guide the next stage, and correspondingly the next chapter of this study.

Methodical
Although a detailed description of the groups would have urged a field study, this was out of reach for basically three reasons: firstly, these groups are persecuted in the PRC and free research even for Chinese scholars is only possible on a very limited scale; secondly, interviewing members of the groups would have involved a great personal risk for the interviewees; and thirdly, some of the groups no longer exist. Nevertheless, I pursued interviews with Chinese experts and religious personal as well as with some members of the researched groups. Therefore this study is mainly based on a literature corpus (for further methodical information see 1.5).

Theoretical
Due to the nature of the topic as well as the focus of research, it quickly became clear that the theoretical realm of social movements offer valuable approaches to analyzing spiritual-religious groups.

While drawing on concepts from social movement theory, the question of whether spiritual-religious groups can be captured as social movements was first treated with minor importance as it would not have thwarted the application of respective theoretical concepts. Still, it will be argued that the Qigong groups and the Christian-inspired ones can be identified as social movements. Due to various terminological dimensions, this question will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.1.

In the following, the focus of research is taken up again and the guiding questions of research as a result of methodical and theoretical considerations will be laid out.

This study features the understanding of social movements—especially concerning the question of interest as to how such a variety of groups
emerged—from an actor-centered analysis, or so-called agency-centered approach. As Moodie stated: “... [social movement] theory must recognize the role of imagination and initiative in strategy and must not deny the dynamism and contingency that is so much the fabric of actual collective action.”\textsuperscript{22} Still, a meaningful understanding of agency must relate to the environment, which is understood not to be static or objective, but to be subject to different perceptions and the usage of different actors. The actions and interactions of different actors will also shape and refine their capacities, and also the environment.

I will not attempt to solve the longstanding problem in political and social sciences concerning the relationship between agency and structure. Rather, I will start from the subject of my analysis, the spiritual-religious movements, and understand them as one actor within a field. I will be focusing on the field of the spiritual-religious movement, on their major actors and their resources. The guiding questions of the study revolve around a comparison of the emergence and development of two types of spiritual-religious groups: How were these two types of groups able to emerge and develop? What has their specific movement capacity been? How could some become so dominant (like FLG) and others not? Were the Christian-inspired ones and Qigong ones using different resources? Which resources were particularly important for their emergence and development?

Proceeding from the mentioned guiding question, this implies four subquestions: yet while for analytical convenience these steps are presented in chronological order, I am well aware that they in fact occur simultaneously or maybe even in reverse order.

1. What are the main actors in the field and how do their specific resources for emergence look like?

2. What patterns of interaction have evolved?

These questions set the main constitution of the field, which is not understood as a fixed state but as a dynamic entity since stimuli for change stem from actions and interactions of the actors as well as from external events.

With the third question the field will be revisited after a major stimuli/change:

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 47–65, here p. 51.
3. How did the action and interaction between actors within the field of spiritual-religious movements reflect back on the designed resources? Did the movements change their characteristics? Have there been any adjustment processes? Which resources are most important? Why did some groups survive and others not?

This study will show the complexity of resource sharing, copying, development of different identities and strategies, as well as interactions among state authorities, societal actors, and spiritual-religious movements. Therefore, this study does not focus on case studies but instead at identifying general characteristics which will be illustrated with representative examples.

1.5 Review of Resources

The information base for this study is rather frustrating due to two aspects: on the one hand, the amount of literature on social-movement and new-religious-movement theory is nearly inapprehensible, while on the other hand only scattered sources are available concerning the subject of analysis, the spiritual-religious movements.

Scholarly interest in the field of social movements was inspired by the civil rights movements in the United States and in Europe, with early publications dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, research has been vivid, resulting in a multifarious and large amount of literature. Many early scholars, among these especially Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, David A. Snow, Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Dieter Rucht, have continuously published and also refined their analytical perspectives. As this

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study emphasizes the role of leadership resources, the publications by Marshall Ganz\(^2^4\) have been particularly helpful for the conceptualization of research. The literature on new religious movements is likewise voluminous.\(^2^5\) The studies by William S. Bainbridge and Rodney Stark during the 1970s and 1980s still have a huge influence on the field of studying religion from a sociological perspective.\(^2^6\) However, most research on social or religious movements focuses on countries and societies in Europe, America, or Africa. Studies on Asia and China are rather rare. The protest movement around Tiananmen Square during the spring of 1989 has motivated some social movement researchers to apply their categories and concepts to the Chinese context. Research has produced some valuable insights into the emergence and dynamics of protests but overly project a homogenous, politically goal-oriented protest movement.\(^2^7\) As a rare exception, the studies by Elizabeth Perry, who has published widely on social protest in China, capture the political as well as social and cultural notion of social movements.\(^2^8\) Related to the political sensibility of the research topic, especially after 1999, the Chinese literature must be evaluated very carefully. Cross-checking of information will be done whenever possible. However, due to the actor-


centered research approach, information, such as from official sources or scholars, can be meaningfully and consciously embedded into a subjective perspective. After the ban of FLG, a vast number of publications have been published both in China and abroad. While Western studies tend to portray FLG either as a harmless meditation movement or to simplify their significance to a political dimension, Chinese literature subjected to the full-scale persecution and education campaign on the part of the leadership describes FLG as an evil cult. However, exceptions exist on both sides. Concerning Western sources on FLG, the studies by Thomas Heberer, Ronald Keith and Zhiqiu Lin, Benjamin Penny, Hubert Seiwert, and James Tong all capture the complex dimensions of FLG very well. Barend ter Haar and Philipp Clart both provide excellent bibliographical overviews of literature on FLG and the spiritual-religious sphere respectively. On the Chinese side, the publications by Chen Xingqiao (a scholar on Buddhism), which were both published before the ban on FLG, and three publications exploring FLG from a psychological point of view widely stick to an analytical, nonpolitical evaluation of the group. On the wider context of Qigong, the publication by Shen Zhenyu and his colleagues gives a good overview on the context of FLG within the emergence of the Qigong movement in the PRC.


publications on Qigong mostly focus on its medical/psychological aspects, with sociological/anthropological studies being rare. Thomas Heise was one of the first scholars to explore Qigong in depth as a social phenomenon. David Palmer produced a series of outstanding essays on the Qigong movement, lately culminating all of his knowledge into one groundbreaking monography. \(^3^2\)

Concerning the Christian-inspired groups, a monography or systematic articles of these groups are still rare. Concerning Western sources, mostly Christian institutions and scholars have published some information on the groups. \(^3^3\)

Chinese house churches have produced a remarkable amount of literature on Christian-inspired groups. Although their accounts often present a detailed and knowledgeable picture of the groups, their analysis is sometimes also influenced by the political campaign of the government against these groups. \(^3^4\) Additionally, publications by Chinese scholars on “heretical teachings” also contain useful information as several publications have been researched and published for the Ministry of Public Security

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\(^3^4\) For example Dalu Zhiti [Christian Leaders in China], *Jiechuanshandian xiejiao (Reveal the Occult – the Eastern Lightning in China)* (Singapore: Every Home Crusade, 2001); Wen Lu, ed., *Yidian rao Zhonhua (Heresy Perturbs China)* (Hong Kong: Christian Communications, 2000); Tianen Zhao et al., eds., *Zhenli yiduan zhenweibian – tuoshi dalu jiaohui yiduan wenti (Discussion on Truth and False of Heresy – Understanding the Problem of Heresy in the Mainland Church)* (Hong Kong: Zhongfu, 2001), available online at http://www.pcchong.com/2Heresy7c.htm (accessed January 22, 2005).
which has the best access to sensitive information. This information, how-
however, is often politically interpreted.  

The first systematic scientific analysis of “heretical teachings” was pub-
lished by Wu Dongsheng in 2005. As Wu has been involved in official han-
dling of “heretical teachings,” he has been able to access and collect much
first-hand material while having conducted various small-scale field studies.
While Wu doesn’t ground his research in any theoretical framework, he
basically applies a hermeneutical approach of “thick description” focused on
five “aggregated functional mechanisms” (juhe jizhi)—translated as “re-
gime” by Wu. These mechanisms include “ideational resources” (jingshen
ziyuan), “operational mechanisms of organization” (zuzhi yunxing jizhi),
“communication mechanisms” (chuanbo jizhi), “supportive mecha-
nisms” (zhichi jizhi), and “interactive mechanisms of the people” (minzhong
jizhi).  

Wu mentions four shortcomings concerning the research on contemporary
“heretical teachings.” First, since “heretical teachings” are defined as a po-
litical problem, and with research lacking a scientific and rational attitude,
“. . . scholars become the vassals and slaves of politics.” Second, research
falls short of concrete evidence and micro-level analysis. With theoretical
approaches grounded in materialism and atheism, scholars tend to simply
and cover up their results. Third, an uncritical transfer of Western theories
on new religious movements and cults might lead to misjudgment concern-
ing specific features of Chinese cults. Fourth, firsthand material on “hereti-

35 For example Jiasen Jiang, Duliu – Dangjin Zhongguo xingxing sesame de xiejiao zhuzhi (An
Ulcer – All Kinds of Heretical Groups in Present-Day China) (Beijing: 
Quanzhongchubanshe, 2000); Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui (Editorial
Committee of Series on Research of Social Problems) ed., Lun xiejiao: Sho jie xiejiao wenti
guoji yanjiu talunhui lunwenji (Papers Collection of the First International Conference on
Zhao Li, Xiejiao, huidaomen, heishehui: Zhongwai minjian mimi jieshe zonghengtan
(Heretical Teachings, Societies, Ways and Schools, Mafia: Discussion on Popular, Secret
Associations in China and Abroad) (Beijing: Quanzhong chubanshe, 2000); Zhihui Chen
and Xianglin Zhang, Xiejiao Zhenxiang (xia): Yiguandao, Huhanpai, Beiliwang,
Zhushenjiao, Mentuhui (Truth of Heretical Teachings, Part 2: All-Pervading Principle,
Shouters, Anointed King, Teachings of the Supreme God, Disciples Society) (Beijing:
Dangdaishijiechubanshe, 2001); Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui (Editorial
Committee of Series on Research of Social Problems), eds., Zai lun xiejiao: Xiejiao,jiaopai
yu jiduanxingwei lunwenji (Again Discussing Heretical Teachings: Paper Collection on
heretical teachings, religious schools, and extreme actions) (Nanning:
Guanxirenminchubanshe, 2002).
36 Dongsheng Wu, Xiejiao de mimi: Dangdaizhongguo xiejiao juhe jizhi yanjiu (The
Secrecy of Cult: A Study on the Regime of Evil Cult Assembly in Today’s China [given
translation]) (Beijing: Shenui kexu wenjian chubanshe, 2005).
cal teachings” is difficult to access for scholars and many don’t want to make an effort to conduct social surveys. While this study can’t overcome the fourth shortcoming, it sets out to make an effort concerning the first three ones. To prevent an entanglement with biased sources, all information will be cross-checked and validated with at least two sources to the greatest extent possible.

During research trips to Beijing in 2002 and 2003, the following magazines were systematically checked for information on the spiritual-religious movements.


During preparatory research trips while writing my Master’s thesis in 2000 as well as during a longer stay in China in 2001–2002 I talked with Chinese scholars from both the CASS as well as with several authors of the listed publications. Additionally, I was able to sporadically get in touch with (former) members of both types of spiritual-religious movements. Both scholars and members were extremely careful and reluctant to talk to me out of fear which was due to the political sensitivity of the topic. I was hence forced to abandon the original plan of field study. It is my hope that Chinese scholars as well as Western scholars will have the opportunity to fill this gap in the near future.

1.6 Structure of Analysis

In the second chapter, firstly various facets of the term “social movement” concerning the application of the term to the analyzed groups will be explored. Different approaches respecting the emergence and development of

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37 Ibid., pp. 14ff. Wu himself was able to access archive material from Jiangsu province as well as conduct systematic surveys and interviews, see his bibliography.
social movements are sketched out in the second part of this chapter. Finally, based on an agency-centered approach, a new analytical framework serving as a basis for the following analysis will be generated. The model integrates theoretical concepts from research on social movements, on new religious movements, and the theory of actor-centered institutionalism. In the third chapter, this model is applied to the empirical data divided into three temporal phases. Every subchapter follows the same patterns of analysis, providing a link with the former phase. Resources of the three actors, namely the party-state, societal actors, and the groups themselves, are analyzed, grouped into the three realms of ideational, organizational, and action resources. In a second step, patterns of interaction between the groupings and the party-state as well as other relevant societal actors are identified and different orientations of interactions (alliance, neutrality, conflict) are pointed out. Within the concluding fourth chapter, the study sums up results on the question of how the spiritual-religious movements have emerged and developed, and project final thoughts on role and influence of spiritual-religious movements in the transformation process of the PRC.
2 Analytical Framework

This chapter aims at outlining the analytical framework for the analysis of spiritual-religious groups in China. To cope with the complexity of the guiding questions for research, a combination of theoretical approaches will be necessary, including concepts from sociology of social movements, religious sociology, and political science.

In the first part, various facets of the term “social movement” concerning the application of the term to the analyzed groups will be explored. Different approaches concerning the emergence and development of social movements are sketched out in the second part of this chapter. Finally, I will present a new framework serving as a basis for the following analysis.

2.1 Spiritual-religious Groups as Religious Social Movements

“Definitions are more or less useful, not more or less true . . . while concepts are necessary, when we draw the boundaries—what we include and exclude—is arbitrary. [A] concept . . . can mean whatever we wish it to mean.”

Scholars looking for orientation on how to locate their subject of research within the field of religious social movements are confronted with two different realms of theoretical definitions and concepts. However, both approaches deal with religious social movements from their respective perspective.

From the perspective of social movement research, the religious content of religious movements is mainly related to questions of ideology and identity. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, research on so-called new religious movements or cults links up religion with processes of social change and also questions organization and mobilization.

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This chapter gives an overview of various dimensions of these terms, arguing that
1) religious movements can be considered a type of social movement, 2) three dimensions for analysis can be deduced from both approaches and research realms.

2.1.1 Social and/or Religious, Old and/or New?

As within other fields of research, studies of social movements are based on a variety of definitions originated from different theoretical approaches (see 2.2) and therefore motivated by divergent cognitive interests. Scholarly interest in the field of social movements was inspired by the civil rights movements in the United States and in Europe. Having emerged from that background, many definitions highlight the element of protest and direct challenge to the political authorities as vital to a phenomenon being defined as a social movement. For example, Charles Tilly describes social movements as “. . . challengers that address demands to the established members of the polity.” Doug McAdam terms social movements as “. . . those organized efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to non-institutional forms of political participation.”

With the intention of encompassing the spiritual-religious groups in the PRC within this definition, two aspects had to be considered.

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40 For an overview on different definitions, see Harald Bender, Die Zeit der Bewegung – Struktur und Transformationsprozesse: Beiträge zur Theorie sozialer Bewegungen und zur Analyse kollektiven Handelns (Frankfurt am Main et. al.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1997), pp. 17–33.
The first aspect concerns the context of the Chinese political system. As China had just started to move from a totalitarian to an authoritarian system after 1978, the sociopolitical realm, including the spiritual-religious field, has been strongly controlled by the state. Besides, the brutal repression of all spiritual-religious activities and the generation of a temporary “cult of Mao Zedong” have left their marks on the field. Therefore, the chances and methods for verbalizing deviant ideas outside the officially sanctioned channels can be assumed to differ from more democratic states. As Thornton noted, irony, ambiguity, and metonymy play important roles in the voicing of dissent and protest in the Chinese context. Zhou mentions that in the PRC protest is not only manifested in “. . . open resistance and demonstrations, but also in more subtle forms of noncompliant behavior that fall outside the conventional scope of collective action.”

In addition, nearly all organized actions can easily be ascribed to the Chinese authorities, with the intention of fostering social change or challenging the authorities. Although the actors themselves might not state social change as their intent or may not engage in actions fostering change, they could, however, be forced to deal with the perception and ascription by state authorities of being a challenging social force and the respective repressive policy measures.

The second aspect refers to spiritual-religious groups in general, with the definitional notion of challenging state authorities or state laws ignoring movements which might not be characterized by political or protest activities at the first place—movements whose appearance and activities are rather directed at existing social or cultural orders and are not embraced as potential research objects. As Goodwin and Jasper note: “Moral or ‘prefigurative’ movements that put unorthodox values or norms into practise . . . these movements challenge dominant cultural beliefs and ideologies without directly confronting, and in some cases intentionally

avoiding, the state or polity members.” Therefore, they argue for a greater inclusiveness concerning different actions of social movements. According to their understanding, social movements “... are a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices.”

In this sense, the term “new social movements” (NSM) provides a more encompassing concept. NSM refers to a plethora of social movements that have come up in various Western societies roughly since the mid-1960s, such as environmentalism or gay liberation. Different from the “old” social movements, these NSMs tend to promote social changes in lifestyle and culture rather than push for specific changes in public policy or for economic change. According to Klandermans and Tarrow, ideology of NSM tends to be anti-modernistic, seeking new definitions of body, work, consumption, and the sexes. Their form of actions is rather unconventional, preferring decentralized and nonhierarchical organizational forms. Membership can be no longer based on class or social status but is formed around issues. However, participants feel either marginalized or frustrated by modernization due to various reasons. Well-educated young people often form a core category within the NSM.

Definitions from the study of (new) religious movements link up with this and provide additional enriching facets for analysis.

For Stark, religious movements are “... social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain and supply religion to some set of

46 Ibid., p. 3.
individuals.”

Emphasizing the aspect of intentional action towards goal achievement related to social movements in general, Bainbridge defines religious movements as a “relatively organized attempt by a number of people to cause or prevent change in a religious organization or in religious aspects of life.”

The term “new religious movement” (NRM) gained wide usage by scholars looking for an alternative for compassing the pejorative connotation of the category “cult.” Paralleling the adjective “new” related to social movements in general, the label “new” concerning new religious movements is subject to continuous discussion. The attribute “new” is sometimes related to the time of appearance, namely after the Second World War. As the term emerged within the context of Western societies, it also includes new concepts from other religious traditions, formerly unknown in the West. Facing great variations in degree of elaboration and systematization of teachings, organizational arrangements, membership, and character of the leader, Barker maintains that “... the only generalization which can be made about new religions is that one cannot generalize about them ...” However, she goes on to name a few characteristics: nonrepresentative membership due to free-will conversation, easy-to-understand and straightforward teachings including exclusivity and charismatic leaders.

Based on the overlaps deriving from the above-mentioned dimensions of definitions concerning new religious and social movements, the analyzed spiritual-religious groups are understood as belonging to a “religious social movement.” Whereas Kniss and Burns utilize this term without further defining it, within this study religious social movements are: “Collective and sustained efforts to create and develop a system of beliefs and practices concerned with ultimate meaning and the existence of the supernatural challenging or changing dominant beliefs and practices.”

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52 Ibid., pp. 19ff.
Subsequently, three analytical criteria of religious social movements can be deduced from the above-elaborated dimensions of definitions. Their dimensions should be briefly pictured by referring again to concepts of social movement theory as well as religious sociology. These criteria and their related questions should serve as inspiration and guidance for the examination of the groups in Chapter 3.

*Religious social movements are carries of ideas that foster collective identity*

The religious contexts within social movements construct and maintain identities and provide their followers with meaning for experienced difficulties and challenges as well as for a movement’s goals and actions. Whether religious movements are more successful in maintaining their members’ commitment if their teachings are in tension with the larger social and cultural setting is subject to discussion. Advocates argue that by creating an otherworldly perspective, challenging or contradicting mainstream culture and society, is a necessary precondition for internal unity and strong member commitment. Other scholars stipulate that a rather word-accommodating movement could encourage people to participate while not having to cut off other societal ties. 54 This also relates to the question as to whether active involvement in social affairs, especially politics, results in a weakening of the liveliness and innovation of religious movements.

*Religious social movements are characterized by sustained actions including a range of organizational forms*

As related to the concept of NSM, a movement might not only consist of formal organizations but also be composed of rather loose networks as well as strong individual figures. Within scholarly research, the transformation from sects and movements to more formal organizations like churches is often described as weakening the movements’ dynamics—their capacity for innovation and adaptation—as well as sustaining impetus for action. 55

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54 Ibid., p. 708.
Questions of recruitment and maintenance of followers’ commitment is another central topic related to religious movements. Lofland and Stark have identified a seven-stage theory of conversion, outlining two key factors for sustained commitment: the creation of affective bonds with core members as well as a limitation and break-up of external bondages. This was critically reflected by social movement scholars, notably Snow and his colleagues. They emphasize the importance of friend- and kinship networks for recruitment and commitment.

Religious social movements are products as well as agents of social change within the sociocultural, socioeconomic, and/or political realm.

According to Max Weber, charismatic movements and sects are one of the most important channels for social change. They arise during periods of crisis or demand within a group and might become an agent for change when attracting enough followers. However, Weber doubts that these movements will survive longer than one generation of leadership due to their routinization tendency. However, he regards such movements as ever-present potential for change, for breaking out of the “iron cage,” a bureaucratic-rational attitude attributed to modernization that benumbs the human spirit.

Under what circumstances religious movements might foster social change—or, on the contrary, act rather as a conservative force—is also a point of discussion among scholars. Additionally, one movement might serve as a facilitator or obstacle for other movements. Besides portraying religious movements as agents of social change, analysis in the tradition of Emile Durkheim depicts them as a functionalist adaptation to cultural crisis, socioeconomic breaks or natural catastrophes. The relationship between

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religious movements and the state are often mentioned as an important factor affecting which kind of religious movements can flourish and in which manner.

2.1.2 Classifications

Having identified the respective clusters of groups as suitable to be termed religious social movements, the question of whether to consider the two types as two subtypes of one movement or two separate movements has been a point of ponderment for some time.

In consulting existing models for classification from the realm of social movement study as well as analysis of new religious movements, including possible differentiations within one type of movement, a common parameter for classification is the constituency, the cause or topic of concern. Mary Bernstein advocates a categorization according to the “logic of action”: identity-orientated movements would see their goals fulfilled, at least partly, by being active, regardless of activity outcomes; strategy-orientated ones would regard action as a tool which, if successfully employed, can lead to goal realization. To some extent this reflects back on the above-stated differentiation between “old” and “new movements.” In spite of the tendency to diminish this difference by designing encompassing definitions of the term “social movement,” it might be useful not to drop it altogether.

As this study is located in a society simultaneously undergoing overlapping process of industrialization, modernization, and even postmodernization, it can be well expected that emerging social movements also reflect that synchronic transformation processes. Dieter Rucht takes a different approach, presenting three different models of possible movement structures, building on their structural features, their main resources, and their mode of operation. He identifies

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a) a grassroots model, characterized by a rather loose, informal, and decentralized structure, with committed followers as the main resource, and a tendency for illegal, radical protest activities.

b) an interest-group model, relying more on a formal structure, with knowledge, money, and access to decision makers as main resources, while aiming at influencing policy through legal channels.

c) a party-orientated model, based on a formal organization, on membership, and focusing on party politics.\(^{62}\)

Within new social movements, Kriesi differentiates between three types:

1. instrumental: specific collective goals, but of less importance for the collective identity of its followers; peace movement

2. subcultural: production of collective identity important, achieved mainly through intergroup interaction; gay movement

3. countercultural: identity-orientated as well but mainly constituted in conflictual interaction with authorities; urban autonomous movement\(^ {63}\)

As additional analytical stimulation, Roy Wallis’s classification in reference to religious movement attitudes as world-rejecting (condemnation of present order, promulgation of apocalypse and new world), world-affirming (embracing secular values, using unconventional means to achieve them), and world-accommodating (concentration on interior life and rather unconcerned with worldly matters) could be linked up here.\(^ {64}\) On a more general level, Dawson differentiates more traditionally orientated new religious movements from those emphasizing communal life and exclusive commitment and more modern-orientated NRMs, largely non-communal and open to plural commitment.\(^ {65}\)

Judging from the above-stated criteria for classification, especially concerning interaction with state authorities as well as the divergent ideational models, a preliminary differentiation of the analyzed spiritual-religious realm seems necessary.

\(^{62}\) Dieter Rucht in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 185–203.

\(^{63}\) Hanspeter Kriesi, “The Organizational Structure of New Social Movements in a Political Context,” in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 152–84, here p. 158.


Therefore, the following study will explore a Christian-inspired movement in contrast to a Qigong-based movement. Still, both movements will be considered to be part of the same movement family,\textsuperscript{66} the spiritual-religious movement, as they posses several resembling characteristics and were after 1999 both perceived as “heretical teachings” by the Chinese authorities. The groups as organized units will be referred to as Qigong-based movement groups (abbreviated Qigong-based groups). Likewise, a Christian-inspired movement is juxtaposed against Christian-inspired movement groups (abbreviated Christian-inspired groups).

In both cases this analytical differentiation is of great value, as it will be argued that, especially during the emergence phase of the two movements, a number of individual spiritual masters as well as mystical phenomena—while not condensing into a more structured unit—helped to foster the breeding ground for successive emerging groups.

As this study aims at comparative analysis not only on the level of the movement, but also within one movement, among the groups, the classifications laid out above will also be used to analyze variations within one movement type.

### 2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Reviewing the vast literature on social movement theory, five major perspectives can be identified: collective behavior, political process, resource mobilization, framing, and collective identity.

The occurrence of the approaches can be arranged along a chronological line, their development being understood as a critical reaction to a previous one as regards its explanatory value in light of changing focal points of interest concerning various social movements.

The following clear-cut presentation of five distinguished approaches provides analytical ease as well as clarity. However, as within many fields

of research, it brings along an unavoidable simplification and arbitrary classification obfuscating the present complexity of current theoretical approaches on social movements. Therefore, before proceeding with the analysis of the approaches, three points should be made.\footnote{Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, \textit{Social Movements: An Introduction} (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), pp. 3ff.}

1. These approaches are in no way homogenous schools but rather provide a common roof for multiple ideas and concepts, having evolved around a central concern with variations mostly deriving from different empirical backgrounds.

2. Individual scholars who have emerged as founders or representatives of one approach have themselves accumulated ideas from several theoretical perspectives. What is more, in the course of their intellectual development, they have refined or broadened their own concepts.

3. Not least for this reason is the current state of research on social movements characterized by a tendency of convergence and crossover as well a quest for integration. Among many scholars, an agreement concerning crucial elements necessary to understand social movements has been reached. Chapter 2.2.6 will deal with this.

After introducing the approaches and critically examining them, I will evaluate their strengths and weaknesses arguing that this is very much dependent on the specific research focus and on the specific type of movement within the analysis. Furthermore, I will advocate that regardless of research focus, an integrative framework is necessary to even begin to comprehend social movement complexity.

\subsection*{2.2.1 Individual Deprivation and Collective Behavior}

Initially, research on social movements had a normative impetus on two grounds: on the one hand, the interest of many scholars in the study of social movements has been derived from their own background as movement activists; on the other hand, many scholars have had a Marxist background and have focused on structural strains and class conflicts in society.
Therefore, research has focused on social psychology, collective grievances, and generalized beliefs as (sufficient) preconditions for the emergence of social movements; discontent has been seen as a product of (combined) structural conditions.\textsuperscript{68}

In the course of accumulated empirical work from various case studies, the approach has come under growing contestation. The empirical results have not always confirmed a strong link between individual or structural deprivation and emergence of movements. Besides, the questions of how exactly movements come into being could not be answered. Therefore, deprivation was only seen as a weak precondition, often a secondary one, for origin of movements. Scholars started to assume that “. . . there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group.”\textsuperscript{69}

Another understanding of social movements was to emerge: they were no longer considered to be the product of collective behavior mobilized by accumulated, class-based collective grievances. Instead, the emphasis was shifted to their organized nature.\textsuperscript{70}

In consequence, two different approaches concerning movement organization have evolved.

\subsection*{2.2.2 Political Processes}

One stream, mainly shaped by Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam, has framed social movement organizations like political parties advocating interests of their followers. Social movements were regarded as embedded into a political process and above all influenced by the outlook of the political system. The analysis concentrated on “political opportunities” at the macro level as well as the meso level, on the immediate surroundings of the movements which provide them with social capital in organizing collective action.

\textsuperscript{68} John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see note 45), p. 170.
Consequently, the structure of the political environment was regarded to be the central focus of analysis as “. . . people join in social movements in response to political opportunities and then, through collective action, create new ones. As a result, the ‘when’ of social movement mobilization—when political opportunities are opening up—goes a long way towards explaining the ‘why’. . . [E]ven groups with mild grievances and few internal resources may appear in movement, while those with deep grievances and dense resources—but lacking opportunities—may not.”

The political process model or political opportunity structure is indeed the most heavily criticized approach, not necessarily due to its many weaknesses, but because it still dominates social movement research. Building upon the political process model, many scholars have tried to refine the concept of “political opportunities” or “opportunity structures.” Four issues often stirring controversial debate have emerged as key points of this effort.

The first issue concerns the role and the conception of the state related to political opportunity. Sidney Tarrow observed an emerging difference between “proximate” and “state-centered” opportunity structures. The former are couched in a group or subnational level, focusing on incentives from the immediate issue or policy-specific environment of a particular group or incentives from shifts related to the constitution and societal position of a group. In contrast, the latter focus on national institutions and structure of the political system.

While referring extensively to Tocqueville as the first modern scholar creating linkages between social movements and the structure of the state, Tarrow denies a simple one-way linkage between constitution of the state and type of social movement. He argues for a “dynamic statism” in the context of state-building and change of institutions. Consequently, he defines political opportunity structures as “. . . consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent, or national—signals to social and political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements.”

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72 Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 29.
73 Sidney Tarrow, “States and Opportunities – The Political Structuring of Social Movements,” in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 41–61.
74 Ibid., p. 54.
focusing on state-centered opportunity structures, Tarrow also reasons that besides changed constitutions within state structures and institutions, the groups themselves also influence opportunities with the possibility of enlarging their own ones as well as expanding opportunity structures for other actors, may they be allied or opposed groups or state actors.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 58–59.}

Most of scholars agree that political opportunities should comprise rather stable long-term as well as more dynamic short-term aspects, differentiating between formal institutions and the constitution of actors’ alliances within the elite. Gamson and Mayer emphasize that different analytical realms need different definitions of opportunity structures. A focus on the more stable elements of opportunities—such as capacity or centralization of state institutions—is more useful in aiming at a comparison of different country cases, while considering more volatile aspects—for example shifts among allies and elites, social and economic trends—engenders an analysis dealing with dynamic developments over time. However, they regard the more volatile elements as more important for the mobilization of movements.\footnote{William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, “Framing Political Opportunity,” in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 275–290, here p. 277.}

Taking up different concepts of political opportunity structures, a commonly accepted synthesis includes three components:\footnote{Doug McAdam, “Conceptual Origins, Problems, Future Directions,” in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 23-40, here p. 27. See also Kriesi in ibid., p. 161, and Rucht in ibid., p. 191.}

1. Relative openness/closeness of political systems (formal institutions, legal system).

From empirical case studies it can be suggested that movements, especially engaged in protest, are most likely to appear within systems which posses a mix of open and closed structures. This is because partially opened access offers movements new opportunities, including the possibility to challenge and change the existing structures.\footnote{Tarrow in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 54.}

2. Stability/instability of elite alignments.

This might either refer to changing coalitions due to elections, but also to power struggle or challenge by urban elites within nondemocratic systems. Elite divisions might encourage resource-poor groups to take the risk of
action but also may lead elite circles to stand up as “voice of the people” to increase their own political influence.\textsuperscript{79}


Whereas strong official capacity hampers the emergence and development of social movements, repression might also function as a catalyst or enforcer for social movements with a looser network organization.\textsuperscript{80} Della Porta’s five categories for conceptualizing state repression will be kept in mind for this study. These categories are: range of behavior (repressive vs. tolerant), range of groups subject to repression (selective vs. diffuse), timing of political repression (preventive vs. reactive), degree of force (hard vs. soft), and respect for legal or democratic procedures (dirty vs. lawful).\textsuperscript{81}

A second issue of debate deals with how to find a balance between too narrowly and too broadly defined political opportunities structures. Anthony Oberschall argues for a widening of political opportunities from its domestic context to an international arena. Success of protest movements in other countries or international events might translate into spill-over opportunities for domestic protest movements.\textsuperscript{82}

Likewise, Dieter Rucht brings up the concept of “context structures.” Additionally, political opportunities, cultural opportunities (attitude, behavior, and values), and social opportunities (i.e. social milieus, networks, infrastructure of communication) should be also taken into account.\textsuperscript{83} On the contrary, William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer worry: “The concept of political opportunity structure is in trouble, in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment . . . Used to explain so much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all.”\textsuperscript{84}

McAdam therefore favors a more narrowly defined concept to better determine their relative contribution to the development of social

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 55.
\textsuperscript{80} Rucht in ibid., p. 192; Charles Kurzman, “The Poststructuralist Consensus in Social Movement Theory,” in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 111–20, here p. 117.
\textsuperscript{82} Anthony Oberschall, “Opportunities and Framing in Eastern Europe Revolts in 1989,” in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 93–121.
\textsuperscript{83} Rucht in ibid., pp. 189–90.
\textsuperscript{84} Gamson and Meyer in ibid., p. 275.
movements.\textsuperscript{85} This issue of too narrow vs. too broad and overarching conceptualization remains considerably contested as critics of the one side fail to meet their own demands. Rucht’s demand of “broadened, specified, and refined . . .”\textsuperscript{86} context structures is hardly ever possible. Goodwin and Jasper call this the “horns of definitional dilemma.”\textsuperscript{87}

A third focal point stirring controversy is that congruence between opportunities and their perception affecting possible actions should not be taken for granted. For example, Charles Kurzman has pointed to a possible mismatch between structure and perception of opportunities. “Opportunity is like a door . . . [There] may be a case in which people saw that the door was closed, but felt that [they were] powerful enough to open it.”\textsuperscript{88} Therefore, he inspired a differentiation between objective and subjective opportunities. Rucht likewise defines context structures as socially constructed and dependent on how movements perceive and frame them.\textsuperscript{89}

Related to this, a fourth critic relates to the term of “opportunity”: as some empirical cases have shown movement also emerged and developed under contracting political opportunities, so to say, repression. Movement mobilization can taken place as a reply to shrinking political opportunities, as “. . . for some challengers increased political openness enhances the prospects for mobilization, while other movements seem to respond more to threat opportunity.”\textsuperscript{90} Therefore Dieter Rucht prefers to abandon the term “opportunities” altogether and champions the use “context structures,” which describe “. . . conditions external to a given movement . . . which either restrict or facilitate the building and maintenance of movement structure devoted to conducting protest activities.”\textsuperscript{91} Gamson and Meyer have noted: “. . . for many of the political opportunity variables . . . there is no consensus on

\textsuperscript{85} McAdam in ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{86} Rucht in ibid., p. 189.
\textsuperscript{87} Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), p. 6.
\textsuperscript{89} Rucht in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 189.
\textsuperscript{91} Rucht in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 188.
exactly how they affect opportunity. Some seem to open and close political space simultaneously.\textsuperscript{92}

Taking all the aforementioned criticism and limitations into account, political opportunity structures seems to be at least one helpful concept for basically answering the questions as to WHY movements might or might not emerge, while a variation of range and type of structures depending on the empirical cases studies can’t be avoided. Especially the focus on political opportunities structure suggests that this approach might be most gainful when applied to movements with very obvious political aims and activities.\textsuperscript{93} For a further quest of WHY some movements can or cannot use structures or opportunities and HOW they utilize them, other approaches are needed.

2.2.3 Resource Mobilization

Another stream, represented by scholars like John D. McCarthy or Mayer Zald, has portrayed movements as an industry with firms paralleling single movement organizations. To found a movement and to work successfully towards goal attainment as well as to participate equals “. . . the selection of incentives, cost-reducing mechanisms or structures, and career benefits.”\textsuperscript{94} The question of resource mobilization became central to this approach: What kind of existing institutions (like media, social networks, or occupational structures) are utilized in which way to build up resources (like money, staff, and facilities) of the movement?
As a consequence, the analysis of movement actions and strategies diversified: besides trying to counter the authorities influence, a movement or an organization aims at winning over some elite actors, creating a positive image in the public, and recruiting new adherents or supporters. McCarthy defines mobilizing structures as “. . . ways of engaging in collective action which include particular ‘tactical repertoires,’ particular ‘social movement organizational’ forms . . . I also mean to include the range

\textsuperscript{92} Gamson and Meyer in ibid., p. 282.
\textsuperscript{94} McCarthy and Zald in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see note 45), p. 171.
of everyday life micro mobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of the state structure itself.”

Similar to the opportunity approach, discussions on various types of mobilizing structures have come up. McCarthy maps out existing concepts under two dichotomies movement vs. non-movement and formal vs. informal. Concerning the former, he basically contrasts various internal movement networks, groups, and organizations against external ones. The latter contains networks of kinship and friendship as well as communities of memory, subcultures, and informal structures of everyday life, on the one hand, and more formal resources like churches, unions, or professional associations, on the other.

Going beyond a focus on the organizational realm, typologies of “movement resources” have been influenced by the conceptualizations of “capital” beyond the narrowly economic dimension. Edwards and McCarthy differentiate between moral, cultural, and socio-organizational human resources as well as material resources. Resource types vary according to their fungibility (possibility of transfer) and proprietary (extent of access). Resources can be accessed in four ways: via aggregation (from members or supporters), self-production, co-optation (through fostered relationships), and patronage (resources endowed by supporters).

Different opinions on effects of formal organization are also debated among scholars: Gamson argues that movements organized along formal lines are more successful due to the persistent nature of rules and formality. He likewise claims that those groups tending to adopt a more formal structure run the risk of being incorporated into the political establishment and, while taking a rather accommodating stance, diminish their initial goals of change. Elisabeth Clemens challenges this argument on two grounds: firstly, there is not only one model of bureaucratic hierarchy to which all groups might tend while improving their efficiency, and secondly, adoption of more formal

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96 Ibid., pp. 143ff.
organization does not automatically lead to a more moderate position of the
groups towards authorities. She brings up the term of “organizational
repertoire” as a “. . . set of models which are culturally and experientially
available,” providing a link between internal structure of a movement and
external structure of the movement field. Consequently, social movement
organizations can and will choose from this organizational repertoire. Their
choice will be affected by their goals as well as the background (awareness
of and familiarity with existing organizational models) of leading activists
and adherents.

Therefore, social movement groups might consider the employment of a—
within the cultural context—legitimate and legal yet—in the realm of
politics—non-dominant or no longer dominant model of organization, as a
strategy for challenging dominant organizational patterns. Furthermore, this
might enable them to effectively organize their group due to familiarity of
adherents with that particular organizational principle. However, very
familiar structures might also challenge the organizational capacity of social
movements if they are too demanding and stir conflict between the different
social contexts in which adherents are embedded, for example family
relations. Digging deeper into organizational principles—again taking up
Weber—Clemens also discusses the “rule to follow the money.” If paid
administrative staff evolves within social movement organizations (SMO),
the structure of SMOs might be pushed towards a more conservative
direction as participants develop a strong interest in securing their positions
and material interests.

The criticism concerning the resource mobilization approach resembles the
one brought up against the political process model: due to the broad
definition of mobilizing structures, a huge range of sources could be
relevant for the movement’s recruiting. Any conclusion on how and when
certain structures contribute to a movement’s mobilization is rather
impossible.

98 Elisabeth S. Clemens, “Organizational Repertoires,” in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see
99 Ibid., p. 189.
100 Ibid., p. 192.
Respectively, as “environmental structures” might facilitate opportunities as well as constraints, resources of mobilization might foster or hinder movement mobilization, as, for instance, social relations might either be a recruitment channel or a potential barrier or even threat to a movement.\textsuperscript{101} Organizational principles, then, are pictured to be preexisting and laying in waiting to be utilized by social movements. The active task of social movements to create organizational structures—to choose, to adapt, and to invent—is rarely taken into account.\textsuperscript{102} Nevertheless, more recent research on resource mobilization mentions that availability and distribution of resources should be taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{103}

2.2.4 Framing

As the framing approach was inspired by the question of successful recruitment needs, it is often presented as a sub-stream within the resource mobilization approach, basically enlarging the understanding of resources by an ideational component. Since framing has deployed and developed a variety of different methods and ideas differing from the resource mobilization approach, it is legitimate and fruitful to consider it as an individual approach. The framing approach was inspired by four different sources: firstly, cultural studies concerning continuities and transformation in meaning systems, as e.g. advocated by Clifford Geertz; secondly, social psychology, which later focused on cognitive perception and its influence on behavior and on conceptualized frames as makers which attach meaning to the environment and provide channels for behavior; thirdly, rhetoric and dramaturgy, deriving from literary theory and theories of persuasion; and finally, Charles Tilly’s concept of “repertoire of action,” including ideas of innovation and learning, as well as Ann Swindler’s notion of “culture as a


\textsuperscript{102} Goodwin in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{103} Edwards and McCarthy in Snow et al. 2004 (see note 39), pp. 116–52.
tool kit, “whereas components might be grouped into specific modes to foster a defined behavior.”

Frames are “. . . specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternatives modes of action.” Unlike culture—which is also based on mediated, shared beliefs—and ideology—a set of beliefs utilized to interpret the sociopolitical order—framing additionally aims to mobilize “. . . potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.”

In the context of a social movement, framing presents the ideas of the movement in a way that attracts potential followers, as frames can take the form of symbols, stories, slogans, or catch words. Advocates of the political process model present “framing” as “. . . mediating between opportunity, organization, and action” being “the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation.” For them, frames are twofold: both part of the environment, equaling what some scholars of opportunities have called cultural opportunities, and also belonging to agency, to the actions of movements. McAdam, however, champions the inclusion of action into framing according to his defines movement goals.

Snow and Benford distinguish three different types of frames needed for successful recruitment:

1. diagnostic: a problem exists and needs to be dealt with
2. prognostic: persuasion that the movement uses suitable tactics to do so
3. motivational: convincing potential followers to engage in the movement

Following recent works by Oliver and Johnston as well as by Benford, Feree and Merill conceptualize a three-level pyramid model of framing: “discourse” at the top, followed by ideology, being much more coherent and

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108 Gamson and Meyer in ibid., p. 276.
110 Snow and Benford in Klandermans et al. 1988 (see note 47), p. 203.
carrying a normative dimension, and finally by frames themselves on the bottom level, whereby the frames, as opposed to ideologies, impart considerations to make but do not imply any normative judgment. The final component, the framing process, connects all three elements. By linking frames to the overall discourse of a respective society, existing social institutions and mechanisms can be identified for explaining the specific tactics and framing work as well as social movement identity.\textsuperscript{111} The weakness of most framing approaches is their assumption of participants as driven by rational self-interest, blinding out an emotional and cognitive dimension of movement engagement. Function of movements, and especially of ideals, extends beyond an instrumental dimension as it also gives followers personal meaning and identity.\textsuperscript{112}

2.2.5 Collective Identity and New Social Movements

The aforementioned “new” social movements are, for the most part, not directly involved in politics or focused on protest for reaching declared political goals or change. They are rather aimed at fostering new consciousness and identities. Therefore, the political process model, including the political opportunity approach as well as the resource mobilization approach, has suited the analysis of these movements.\textsuperscript{113} The category “collective identity” is sometimes described as an independent approach, closely linked to resource mobilization and framing.\textsuperscript{114} It is often evoked by relating it to NSMs. Melucci defines “collective identity” as a “... process of ‘constructing’ an action system. Collective identity (CI) is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals ... and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action

\textsuperscript{111} Myra Marx Ferree and David A. Merrill, “Hot Movements, Cold Cognition: Thinking About Social Movements in Gendered Frames,” in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 247–61.
\textsuperscript{113} Hellmann in Klein et al. 1999 (see note 47), pp. 91–113.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
takes place.”115 In an earlier definition, Melucci had emphasized the linkage with resource mobilization as CI “. . . enables them [participants] to assess their environment and to calculate the costs and benefits of their actions.”116 Different features of CI are shared via language—incorporated within a set of artifacts and practices, linked to a network between individuals who interact—and include emotional mobilization. In times of tension, CI might increase as people need it to make sense of their actions; it may also enable them to withstand cutoffs from external social relations generated by rising conflict.117

In addition to identity, “culture” is regarded as a key concept related to NSM perspective. Johnston and Klandermans differentiate between three dimensions of culture related to social movements: as a characteristic of the movement’s environment, as a performing process by the movement, and as a characteristic of various features of the movement.118 Ann Swindler’s concept of “culture as a toolkit”—of rituals, symbols, stories, and world views that persons might use to construct strategic action—emphasizes the dynamic aspect of culture.119

Having originated with European scholars—being labeled a “European culturalist” approach and opposed to the “American structuralist” approaches—sometimes also caused some unnecessary displeasure among scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. Lately, American scholars also have taken up the concept of culture and identity.120 Still, this approach has proved to be very stimulating towards other approaches in rethinking and incorporating the issue of “identity” within their own concepts.

116 Cited after Michael Billig, “Theoretical Psychology, Ideological Thinking and Imagined Nationhood,” in ibid., pp. 64–81, p. 64.
117 Melucci in ibid., pp. 48–49.
120 Myra Marx Ferree and Silke Rothe, “Kollektive Identität and Organisationskulturen,” in Klein et al. 1999 (see note 37), pp. 131–43.
2.2.6 State of the Field: Two Schools and Two Tendencies: Tendency for Small-Scale Models and the New Quest for Synthesis

The current field of social movement study is marked by two approaches: on the one hand, a refined version of the political process model, having incorporated parts of resource mobilization and framing approaches and, on the other hand, a rather constructionist model with focus on identity, meaning, and emotions.

Although the emergence of a new paradigm has somehow led to the decline of another one, the current state of research on social movements is characterized by an agreement that all elements of the above mentioned approaches are interconnected and must be all considered in some way. Still, two tendencies have evolved: scholars, not all but those dominantly constructivist-leaning, tend to develop more small-scale models, while advocates of the political process model quest for larger, comprehensive frameworks.

The first “camp” wants to drop the idea of pursuing a complex theory or analytical framework and instead aims at developing smally scaled models for looking at social movements, taking up and refining parts of broader frameworks.

For example, Mary Bernstein makes the valuable approach of reconciling the often-described/fostered gap between a strategic side of identity (taken up by or assigned to the framing approach, and also via incorporating “framing” into their models by the political process model) and a goal/value in itself and a normative side of identity, ascribed to “New Social Movement” representatives. Likewise, Francesca Poletta aims at lifting the constructed contradiction between structure and culture by redefining culture as “. . . symbolic dimension of all structures, institutions, and practices (political, economical, educational, etc . . .”). Organizations and actors are likewise embedded into memories, taboos, and values, e.g. a state’s capacity for repression does not solely depend on hard figures but is

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121 Bernstein in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see note 45), p. 237.
122 Francesca Poletta, “Culture Is Not Just In Your Head,” in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 97–110, here p. 100.
also shaped by a legal and legitimate framework; especially the latter is linked to tradition.

Rather embedded in the constructivist camp, Goodwin and Jasper state that “. . . the explanation of empirical variation will likely consider conceptual and theoretical variation as well . . . Parsimonious models are not very useful when they explain only a limited range of the empirical cases that they are meant to cover.”\textsuperscript{123} They plea for more attention to culture, strategy, and emotions in pointing to the complexity of social movements.

Still, many scholars strive for an integration of elements into a broader analytical framework in emphasizing one or two elements, which they find most convincing, also in accordance with their respective case studies. For example, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald have gathered several scholars within a volume about comparative perspectives on social movements, making an effort to create dynamic relations between the three components of political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing.\textsuperscript{124}

Still, they maintain their foundation in political process theory: in the introduction, they put the above-mentioned elements in a fixed order: first, political opportunities are produced by social changes; second, seizing these opportunities depends on sufficient resources/organization; and, finally, framing links these opportunities with the resources.

They also argue that they “. . . see the central analytic focus of movement research shifting over the life of the movement. While environment opportunities would seem to play the critical determinant during the emergent phase of collective action, thereafter the movement itself comes to occupy center stage.”\textsuperscript{125} This “opportunity structures first” tendency, while combining them with concepts from resource mobilization and framing, can be also seen in other contributions in this volume.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{123} Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{124} McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59).
\textsuperscript{125} McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, Introduction to ibid., p. 17.
The most complex and recent framework for analyzing social movement emergence and development is presented by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly.\textsuperscript{127} Compared to McAdam’s thesis in the cited self-edited volume, he changed his “opportunity first” assumption by differentiating general “broad changing processes” and their respective “interpretation and collective attribution of opportunity or threat.” The latter is crucial for a following “appropriation of existing organization and identity” as well as “innovative collective action.” Aside from the challenging groups, McAdam wants the aforementioned analytical steps to also be applied to the state or other elite actors, taking interactions between these two actors into account.\textsuperscript{128} Rethinking my research focus in the light of the above outlined discussions, the necessity for the development of a synthetic and integrative framework is compelling.

A comparative analysis of how two movements within the same environment have emerged and developed must tackle the problem of how to deal with and how to relate:

1. Resources of the movement as regards leader and activists, ideology, organizational structure, and action repertoire, as well as other relevant actors within the spiritual-religious field
2. Dynamics features as concerns interaction between actors, their respective development, as well as development of the field

Although having disagreed with Rucht many times, I do agree with him that “. . . the degree of complexity [of models] is not simply a matter of scientific ‘style’ or individual ambition, but depends largely on the scope and level of analysis. To understand the changes in movement structures, and the interplay of various sets of factors ranging from the context structure, to social movement properties, to movement outcomes, we must go beyond simple models.”\textsuperscript{129} I believe that many traps can be avoided by consequently abandoning the “opportunities—or context structures first” obsession.

\textsuperscript{127} Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
\textsuperscript{128} Doug McAdam, “Revisiting the U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Toward a More Synthetic Understanding of Origins of Contention,” in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 201–32.
\textsuperscript{129} Rucht in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 204.
The following framework is understood to offer interrelated and rich theoretical propositions, which will be used to ground the empirical data presented in chapter three.

2.3 Conceptualizing a New Dynamic Model of Multilevel Analysis

Framing the analysis within a spiritual-religious field allows a meaningful and manageable linkage between the aforesaid two dimensions. The spiritual-religious field comprises all spiritual and religious phenomena. Due to the object of analysis, the focus here will be on Qigong and Protestantism that can be both understood as subfields of a larger one. The field as well as the analysis are composed of two elements: first, relevant actors and their resources, second, patterns of interactions, and third, the relationship towards and the respective state of the field itself. Each of these elements will be elaborated within the following subchapters. Although these dimensions are interrelated and mutually influence each other constantly, a focus or an emphasis is needed for analytical procedure as well as clarity. For two reasons, the analysis takes actors and actions as a starting point to define the spiritual-religious field.
Chart 1: Theoretical Framework for Analysis of Emergence and Development of Spiritual-Religious Groups in the PRC after 1978
To begin with—as this study aims at analyzing how these two groups have emerged and developed—the actors and their behavior form the key points of consideration in a search for answers.

Secondly, having reviewed pertinent literature on social movements, it is obvious that opportunities and resources for emergence and development cannot be “objectively” (or at least intersubjectively) deduced from the environment. Bourdreau appeals to the analyst’s critical mind with his statement that “... opportunities do not preexist in structures; they only appear so in retrospect.” Therefore, contrary to approaches based on reactions or adaptations of actors to a (changed) environment, this study argues that environmental structures or resources are subject to actors’ perception, background, experiences, and skills—with it depending on actors as to whether, and how, these potentials become real assets.

This makes particular sense when taking into account that in 1978 the environment for any spiritual-religious activity was hostile in China, as the People’s Republic had just started to emerge from the totalitarian era and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.

Nevertheless, the actors are understood as being part of, influenced by, and interacting with the field. They are embedded into organizational and ideational resources/institutions existing within the field. The concept of embedding includes regulatory (what is legal), normative (what is acceptable or appropriate), and cognitive (what is familiar judging from background of the actor) dimensions.

Actors make decisions on how to build up and how to develop their organization or network, but “... they are constrained in what they can say and do, not only by their own experiences but also by the experiences of the people they are trying to mobilize.”

Nevertheless, the basic assumption again deriving from the research focus is that their outlook, their specific resources, as well as their actions should be

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viewed as a lens for observing the field in order to understand which structures were important for them and enabled them to start with and to develop their activities.\textsuperscript{97}

The alternative approach—first laying the field structures and then placing the actors with their respective characteristics inside—implies the danger of interpreting before describing the object of analysis. As Clark McPhail has commented in reference to the relationship between movement and mobilizing structures: “In my judgment this places the cart before the horse. It is misguided to debate the pros and cons of competing explanations before the phenomena to be explained have first been examined, specified and described.”\textsuperscript{98} In the same manner, McCarthy and Zald, starting out from their resource mobilization approach, point to the fact the resources are not simply there and waiting for use; time and knowledge of the “user,” the social movement activist, are needed to put them into effect. Besides seeking to extend resources, the existing ones need to be equipped in a creative way.\textsuperscript{99}

2.3.1 Relevant Actors of the Field and Their Resources

Following Rucht, this study asserts that social movements can be only comprehended in relational terms as they seek allies and face opponents during their process of emergence and development.\textsuperscript{100} Davis et al. identify three categories of actors important for the analysis of a field: dominants, which shape the field; challengers, which dispute the stance of the dominants within the field or structural-procedural characteristics within the field; and governance units, which exercise field-level authority.\textsuperscript{101}

To bind the study in a manageable way—linked with the research focus—the analysis concentrates on internal actors, who directly participate in the spiritual-religious field in China. External actors, units, or individuals not participating in the spiritual-religious field but whose impact can be

\textsuperscript{97} Meyer et al. 2002 (see note 60), p. 19.
\textsuperscript{99} McCarthy and Zald in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see note 45), p. 171.
\textsuperscript{100} Rucht in Snow et al. 2004 (see note 39), pp. 197–216.
\textsuperscript{101} Doug McAdam and W. Richard Scott, “Organizations and Movements,” in Davis et al. 2005 (see note 95), pp. 4–40, here p. 17.
recognized, e.g. international religious associations, will be only factored in as they provide organizational or ideational resources to the Chinese SRMs. As relates to the Chinese field context, the totalitarian legacy has had a strong impact on all sectors, especially and continuously within the spiritual-religious realm. Therefore, the “party-state” can be equalized with the dominants defined by Davis et al. As it is assumed that Chinese party-state shape the spiritual-religious field, they will be analyzed before the two spiritual-religious movements.

Within the spiritual-religious field, the category party-state relates to any organizations within the political regime, including party organs and state organs.

Considering only one actor for the whole realm of the party-state does not imply a pre-analytical black-box view. Although studies on religious policy do not suggest great variety or even controversy concerning the official realm, the possibility of diverging resources will be taken into account. As the party-state actor is treated on the same analytical level as the two movements, a potential of diverging resources concerning individual movement organizations can be likewise depicted within individual units of the party-state.

Whereas the formal hegemonic structures of power is acknowledged, the category party state also takes into account individual identities, intentions, and actions interwoven into the formal organizational structure.

Consequently, the necessary analytical logic and clarity of a comparative design is well-balanced.

The category “societal actors” was a long point of ponderment within the design of the analytical framework. Given the gradual emergence from a totalitarian to an authoritarian system, depiction of a group of actors being able to develop independent organizational or ideational resources, particularly in the very sensitive spiritual-religious sphere, seemed bizarre. Considering the whole social sphere as simply subjective to state control, however, would have missed potential dynamics which have unfolded in other sectors of the Chinese society.

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Actors might not only consider organizational entities but individuals that, despite belonging to an organization, might stimulate divergence. Therefore, even within religious associations, media, and scientists—to name only some examples of existing actors within the spiritual-religious field—heterogeneity cannot be taken for granted.\(^{103}\)

Acknowledging organizational interrelations and dependences between state and societal actors, the differentiation is based on the assumption that ideational resources might vary.

Classification of individuals to one or the other category will be based on their dominant working environment, e.g. a scientist being a member of the National Science Commission will be considered a representative of state authority, and a scientist working at a lab of a university will be envisioned as a scientist. This study would rather risk enforced differentiation than exclude microlevel dynamics.

This analysis of actors’ resources builds on Marshall Ganz’s concept of “strategic capacity” deduced from the nature of leadership and organization concerning the knowledge of and ability to extract issue-specific information as well as the specific motivation.\(^{104}\)

Regarding the focus of research, however, several adaptations have had to be made:

— In analyzing a spiritual-religious field within an emergent authoritarian political system, the ideational realm must be added as an important resource for both the party-state as well as the two movements. Moreover, this study argues that it is important to overcome the dichotomy of the ideational (cultural framing) and organizational (resource mobilization) realms, as these two are both capacities of actors for building up and developing their respective group. Moreover, the possible interplay of these two capacities is regarded to be highly important especially in the spiritual-religious realm. While these categories are examined separately

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\(^{103}\) See, for example, Monika Gänßbauer, *Parteistaat und protestantische Kirche: Religionspolitik im nachmaoistischen China* (Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2004), pp. 46 and 50.

for analytical convenience, their mutual relationship will be also kept in mind.\textsuperscript{105}

— Likewise, actions are considered to be part of the resources of the actors. They point to the capacity of an actor to put their respective organizational and ideational resources into practice. “Action resources” indicate an actor’s capacity for goal attainment. Concerning the spiritual-religious movements, the study will differentiate between inward-orientated action resources, serving internal mobilization (like practices and performances) and outward-orientated action resources functioning as means for recruitment and managing public relations.\textsuperscript{106}

— The category “leadership” has only been defined as an independent category related to the two types of movements. Although personal skills and experiences might have influenced ideational and organizational resources of the party-state as well as societal actors, this influence might be considerably weak compared to the spiritual-religious movements. However, major key figures shaping resources of the party-state as well as the societal actors will be included under the category “organization.” The resulting unbalance between the three actors as related to analyzed categories can likewise be well justified with the main research focus—the comparison between the two movement types.

\subsection*{2.3.1.1 Leadership}

Particularly in relation to the movements, the leader figure will be a central analysis category. Campbell compares strategic leadership to entrepreneurialism and defines it as “. . . innovation and organization and movement building in the first place.”\textsuperscript{107}

A lack of leadership analysis within SM study is often noted, especially concerning their very concrete skills and the way they use them (e.g. biography, therefore familiar/available resources). As Flacks states: “Activists are people whose identities and daily lives are strongly structured by their commitment. Such identity structures may have its roots in particular cultural (ethnic, political, or religious) traditions, critical life

experiences and personality formations, occupational positions, or frameworks of ideological allegiance. In general, activist commitment arises from life circumstances that are different from the social and cultural ‘mainstream.’”

Depending on their background and skills, leaders might have different access to resources, or they might also choose them due to suitability to their aims.

In case of leaders starting and developing a spiritual-religious movement, charisma is a resource to be considered. The social implications of such an asset can be understood in reference to Max Weber’s categorization, which stresses the collective dimension of charismatic authority—dependent on being freely and voluntarily accepted by those who participate in it.

Weber contrasts creativity and innovation of charismatic authority with the more inert nature of traditional and legal-rational authority. Anthropologists Stephan Feuchtwang and Wang Mingming do not put the bursts of collective enthusiasm evoked by charisma in opposition to tradition. Rather, the root them in traditional hopes for transformation presented as the memory of an idealist past.

Every traditional authority contains a strong hope for transformation, which legitimizes an alternative to existing authority, or for innovation, even though it presents itself as restoration. Charisma is the name for the innovative and restorative potential of tradition. It is a potential released in explosion of social movement and invention when internal and external disturbances and dissatisfactions sharpens boundaries between a present that does not live up to traditional expectations which are “remembered.”

Gamson and Meyer suggest: “The lack of realism in assessing opportunity is generally as healthy for movement activity as it is for economic activity of entrepreneurs . . . Of course, it can also lead to misadventures and disasters in which real constraints are ignored until too late. . . . Perhaps a healthy internal debate . . . is the mechanism for maintaining the proper balance.”

Not only within the Chinese context, but also in Western societies, the

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109 Weber 1922 (see note 58).
contemporary image of a religious leader for seducing his fanatic followers into self-destructive teachings or conflict with the state is centuries old.\textsuperscript{112} Characterized by charismatic leadership, the two spiritual-religious movements will be a valuable object of analysis in providing some new insights.

As Ganz notes, the analysis of leadership is particularly important when it comes to the question of how movements have emerged and developed, as compared to others with perhaps better resources.\textsuperscript{113} This is likewise stressed by Bainbridge and Stark in relation to the formation of NRMs. They outline three models of cult formation: the psychopathology model, the entrepreneur model, and the subculture-evolution model. The underlying assumption is a rational understanding of religion and cults as “social enterprise to create, maintain, and exchange supernaturally based general [or for a cult, “novel and exotic’’] compensators.”\textsuperscript{114} The first is closely related to deprivation theories of social movements. It considers cults to be “novel responses to personal and societal crisis.”\textsuperscript{115} Individuals suffering from mental illnesses obtain their “vision” during psychotic episodes, utilizing this stimulus to create compensators for coping with one’s own needs—committing to this either because it is believed to be truth or since the vision offers some relief. During times of social crisis, this vision might meet the acknowledgement of people suffering from similar pressures. As a result, the leader might at least be partly healed due to his invented compensators gaining affirmation by others, and he will get some real rewards from the followers. Criticism is two-fold: the leader might only contract physical illness because of rejection or even suppression of their cult. On the other hand, according to different scholars, the vision might be either an expression of psychosis or the opposite, rather a therapeutic process performed by persons under extreme stress and already ill.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{112} Philip Jenkins, “False Prophets and Deluded Subjects: The Nineteenth Century,” in Dawson 2003 (see note 48), pp. 73–88, here p. 73.
\textsuperscript{113} Ganz in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 177–98, here p. 179.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 61.
Within the second model, cults are understood to be “. . . businesses which provide a product for the customers and receive payment in return.”\footnote{117} Persons are motivated by profit, which they can gain by selling novel compensators to customers. Their judgment on whether to invest in cult business might be profitable or not is likely to be based on self-experience with other cults. Former membership made them well-equipped with necessary knowledge and experience. Therefore, they might either take over some parts of previously or already successful compensators, or else develop an existing model further. As a result, linkages between various groups are common. Ideas for completely new compensators might come from any cultural or personal background, but leaders will be careful to launch them and always check with market response.

“Essentially, the inventor takes cultural configuration of an existing cult, removes some components, and replaces them with other components taken from other sources. Often, the inventor may simply splice pieces of two earlier cults together. In some cases, the inventor preserves the supporting skeleton of practices and basic assumptions of a cult he admires, and merely grafts on new symbolic flesh.”\footnote{118}

The cult entrepreneur can be convinced either that his or her compensators are valuable, including from previous knowledge gained in other cults, or they could try to trick people to believing and “buying” their teachings. Concerning the latter, the authors propose three types: audience cult, which sells mythology, very specific and weak compensators which only develop a short-term fascination; second, the client cults, designing compensators for relatively specific compensators (magic), like for some illnesses or problems, and likewise, people would engage in relatively stable relations without being formal members; and third, a cult movement, possessing elaborated teachings (religion) including general compensators, with followers committing to full membership.\footnote{119}

The third model does not stress the role of the individual founder but conceptualizes the formation as a group interactive process. Cults are seen to be resultant from new social systems, small and initially created by a few

\footnote{117}{Ibid., p. 63.}
\footnote{118}{Ibid., p. 66.}
\footnote{119}{Ibid., p. 64.}
intimately interacting individuals. These individuals often are already involved in cultic groups but might similarly come from a secular background. They gather to commit themselves to obtaining certain rewards while exchanging other rewards and affecting during this process. If they come to experience failure in achieving original rewards and goals, they begin to exchange compensators as well. Encapsulation appears during intensification of this process, leading to internal adjustments, strengthening of internal and weakening of external ties, and later on the formation of a distinct group or net, which has to cope with challenges of relating themselves to their environment (including recruitment of new members).

Within literature on leadership, two dimensions of leadership can be found: a task-orientated and a people-orientated as well as a democratic vs. autocratic leader. However, most empirical studies conclude that as regards the former, more often both types appear at the same time and—as with the second dimension—their relation to movement success is very ambiguous. For the Chinese case, Elizabeth Perry mentions a dichotomy of “rebel leader” and “mandarin” leader, rule breakers and rule makers or keepers. Again, usually both capacities are need at different times. Leaders of spiritual-religious groups are dominantly male. Women rarely obtain spiritual leadership, although this might be a driving factor for their participation in a NRM group. As in most traditional religions, like Christianity, and many Asian religions, women are denied leading posts or never actually achieve one due to lack of role models. Therefore, only few women in NRMs have attached themselves to a male-based charismatic leadership form; they mostly tend toward a more feminine style, based on motherliness with attributes like kindness, intuition, practicality, caring, healing, forgiveness, holism, and social engagement.

Respecting the spiritual-religious realm, scholars have documented that most leaders of such groups could not succeed in establishing an enduring

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121 Ibid., pp. 113ff.
As this study deals with different groups over a long-range time horizon, some knowledge related to this statement might also be gained. Subsuming, all three actors in the field will be analyzed as relates to three categories of resources: ideational and organizational ones as well as the action repertoire.

Again, imitating from the research focus, the spiritual-religious movements, and their formation, is understood to be a three-step process: firstly, a leader is motivated to initiate a spiritual-religious group; secondly, its teachings must be conceptualized by the leader; thirdly, he or she must gain social acceptance of these ideas, possibly implanting them in an organized form; fourthly, the commitment of potential followers must be maintained, and new adherents must be recruited; fifthly, the group must find its place within the overall field, also against other actors and changing circumstances due to their actions and interactions.

Consequently, the ideational resources will be analyzed first, as they form the basis of an actor’s capacity. Special attention will be paid to how the actors frame their resources, how they embed the content in “interpretative schemata that enable participants to locate, perceive and label occurrences.”

### 2.3.1.2 Organizational Resources

The category “organization” is understood to include “agents,” which refers to individual components, be it persons or institutional units, and “structure,” comprising the overall organization design.

Respecting the structure, three components will be taken into account:

1. Formalization = of membership criteria, formal statutes, procedures, offices

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2. Professionalization = management by paid staff members, career options for members
3. Internal differentiation = division of labor (task structure), territorial decentralization (subunits); coordination and centralization of decision making.

Drawing on McCarthy’s second dichotomy regarding non-movement mobilizing structures, organizational resources might by traced in informal networks, like kinship, friendship, or work-based and formal associations, such as religious associations or local organizations. The configuration of organizational resources resembles coordination between different organizational resources within the field. A diversification of incentives and resources decrease dependence on a particular constituency.¹²⁶

Adherents and their respective motivations will be mainly understood as part of the organizational resources of the groups. As this study couldn’t undertake systematic field study, the followers might not receive the attention they might deserve. Only modest theses can be drawn on their contribution to the group. Adherents might have different motivations to join or support a religious social movement. These may be related either to their biographical availability or to structural availability, like the larger social environment also influencing the emergence of the respective group or movement. In general, explanations based on psychological factors are juxtaposed against types of rational choice theories.¹²⁷

Several key characteristics, which could potentially increase the likeliness of people to join religious social movements, have been raised by scholars.

— Mental health disposition, relative deprivation, and experience of crisis. Bainbridge critically remarks that everyone experiences crisis at times in life and possesses a feeling of absolute deprivation in the face of death, illness, and other tragedies.¹²⁸

— Few and weak external affective bonds as well as few social and economic obligations. This points again to the linkage between biographical background and the readiness to join a SMO. For some potential adherents

¹²⁶ Kriesi in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), pp. 154ff.
¹²⁷ Dawson in Dawson 2003 (see note 48), p. 120.
¹²⁸ Bainbridge 1997 (see note 49), p. 51.
with strong family ties, SMOs demanding full-time engagement, and even a break with the family, might be an obstacle for commitment.

- Few and weak ideological alignments.
- Access to rewards, including affection, self-esteem, esoteric knowledge, material and social aid, security, new career opportunities, and forms of prestige.
- If paid administrative staff evolves within SMOs, participants—again following observations by Max Weber—will develop a strong interest towards securing their positions and material interests, also towards family maintenance, pushing organizational structure again into a more conservative direction.\(^\text{129}\)

Although empirical research has only confirmed some of the conditions,\(^\text{130}\) aspects can still serve as an important reference point for this study.

Findings from NRM membership within a Western context suggest that each group will attract a rather homogeneous group of followers, although the overall membership of NRM might be very diverse. Additionally, followers of NRMs are disproportionately young, well-educated, and from middle-class households. Concerning their religious background, ambiguity of result research prevails.\(^\text{131}\)

Inspired from research on NRM, the role of women in spiritual-religious groups will be also analyzed. Based on interviews with female followers, scholars meet with mixed experiences: some women have viewed their involvement in a group as empowering, as a chance to try new identities within an alternative and supportive social context. Others, however, have suffered from repressive attitudes towards motherhood, womanhood, or female gender roles. As Elizabeth Puttnick mentions, NRMs are dominantly patriarchal: although they might grant women positions of real or spiritual power, this is often couched into a traditional and restrictive female ideal.\(^\text{132}\)

Women often function as “bridge leaders” at an intermediate level of leading positions, being responsible for recruitment, and emotional work.

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\(^\text{129}\) Clemens in Goodwin and Jasper 2003 (see note 45), p. 192.

\(^\text{130}\) Dawson in Dawson 2003 (see note 48), p. 118.

\(^\text{131}\) Ibid., pp. 121ff.

and play dominant roles during times of crisis. In this context, the issue of sex scandals and accusations of abuse—a popular image linked with some movements and their dominantly male leaders—must be carefully treated: such accusations should be neither easily dispelled nor readily taken for granted. Bringing up claims about some kind of sexual deviance, even when lacking related evidence, is a common strategy of opponents to discredit groups.

2.3.1.3 Ideational Resources

This category includes norms, values, language, symbols, through which identity is created vis-à-vis the spiritual-religious sphere. Lofland’s six locations and dimensions regarding degree of culture evoked by a movement offer will be used to evaluate the capacity of the actors’ ideational resources. His dimensions of degree include sharing among participants— distinctiveness in relation to larger society or other groups, scope of life (e.g. economic, religious, political, educational, and familial), elaboration concerning amount and quality of information, quantity, and expressiveness related to evocation of emotions.

Again following Lofland, four out of his six realms of ideational resources will be analyzed:

— Values are the positive goals which a movement wants to realize within the society.
— Objects are “. . . material times that participants view as physically expressing their enterprise.” Objects include identifiers (e.g. symbol or logo), persons (leaders or symbolic persons), artifacts, events, and places.
— Stories, which might take the form of slogans, sayings, or songs.

136 Ibid., p. 200.
— Persona, accepted and enacted gestures, and forms of emotional expression within a social movement.

According to Lofland, movement leaders might utilize already existing, mainstream ideational resources and overlay the existing meaning and symbolism with movement’s meaning.\(^\text{137}\)

Norms function as a code of conduct for proper behavior and expectations the followers have of each other as well as of their leader. They concern beliefs as well as practices.

Likewise, the elaboration of goals is part of the ideational resources of a group. On the micro level, the groups might aim at the cultivation of the individual adherent. Worship the spiritual or real leader and spreading his or her teachings is often a second aim. Fostering or preventing change within the spiritual-religious field as well as related to socio-political questions can be identified as a third motive for people joining these groups.\(^\text{138}\)

The leaders might frame sexual relationships between leader and followers, or among adherents, as means of spiritual growth. However, traditional religious teachings like Tantra regulate such relationships alongside strict ethic rules which are mostly absent within NRMs.

This “economy of love,” devotion, and sexual service—most often offered by the female follower for the sexual, emotional, as well spiritual fulfillment of the leader—frequently ends in pain and disillusion for the victims and loss of reputation for the leaders.\(^\text{139}\)

### 2.3.1.4 Action Resources

The capacity concerning organization and meaning of an actor affects strategies and tactical choices.

Adapting McAdam’s concept of six hurdles for handling movements,\(^\text{140}\) it will be assumed that actors must act towards fulfillment of three crucial tasks:

1. Finding new recruits

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\(^{137}\) Ibid., p. 203.
\(^{138}\) Bainbridge 1997 (see note 49), pp. 162–63.
\(^{139}\) Puttnick in Dawson 2003 (see note 48), pp. 234–35.
2. Sustaining commitment and control of current adherents (morally and materially)

3. Working towards realization of stated goals (within meaning system)

Related to recruitment patterns, existing social networks and interpersonal bondages are primary channels for gaining new members for NRMs in the West. The popular image of people getting “brainwashed” has been rejected by a majority of scholars. Related to the question of sexual abuse within NRMs, a recruitment technique named “flirty fishing”—for attracting potential, often male, followers by seduction or prostitution—has been affirmed by several case studies.

Recruitment is likely to be influenced by requirements related to full-time or part-time commitment, influencing existing bondages and obligation, the degree and type of hostility faced by joining this group, as well as the presence of competitive groups.

Turning to the Internet as a channel for recruitment, its efficiency for this purpose is evaluated as rather low. Personal relationships and interaction are commonly seen to be the most common form of recruitment, and “disembodied devices” like advertisement, radio shows, or videos seem to have little significance for obtaining new followers. The websites of groups serve primarily as cheap information delivery to a large audience of potential followers for NRMs. Although the social profile of new users is similar to adherents of NRMs (young, well-educated), there is up to now no evidence that Internet users are more prone to join NRMs than nonusers. However, a relationship between the rise of the Internet and endangerment for central authorities of religious groups can be stated as Net followers might post their own opinion about a group’s teachings to the worldwide community, even pretending to act in the name of the leader. For NRMs, “excessive pluralism”—an easier accessibility of religious groups via the Internet, including the foundation of cybergroups—brings about greater competition and the need for radical innovation.

142 Puttnick in ibid., p. 234.
As this study also analyzes the development of actors, it will be important to ask how the actors can manage sustainability according to these three tasks. McAdam assumes that though the emergence of movements requires significant effort, the survival—especially in a changed, even hostile environment—might be a more challenging task for movement activists. Likewise, Lorne L. Dawson, building on NRM research, notes that an intense interaction between newly recruited adherents with other group members is pivotal, not only for a successful recruitment but also for sustained commitment. The choice of mobilization structures must be framed both internally (towards adherents) and externally (bystanders, opponents, authorities), with success depending on the efforts of the leader to create “cultural connections” between their forms and (pre)existing elements.

Contrary to the image of “constructive cults” evoked in the media and sometimes taken up by government officials, most NRMs are not determined to go violent. Still, repeated cases of mass murder and/or suicide worldwide enhance the necessity to understand dynamics which make NRMs turn violent. Within the research of NRMs, some relationships have been suggested. Hall suggests six internal features as necessary preconditions for a group to turn violent: a charismatic religious movement; an apocalyptic ideology; organizational form capable of maintaining solidarity; capacity to exercise control over the followers; sufficient economic and political resources; and, finally, life within cognitive isolation from larger society. However, additional precipitating factors are needed to trigger events of mass murder, basically related to the capacity of potential opponents of the group. If the opponents are perceived as possessing a high degree of solidarity, an ability to shape media coverage along their frame, and if state authority is in full grasp, then a leader’s group might consider suicide or murder as the only way out.

Additionally, Mayer explains motivations of mass suicides as a seemingly sincere belief that their deaths were only a “transit” to a higher place of

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146 Dawson in Dawson 2003 (see note 11), p. 120.
147 McCarthy in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 149.
existence, and in service of a greater purpose to which they had sacrificed their lives.¹⁴⁹

2.3.2 Patterns of Interaction

The patterns of interactions will mainly focus on the interaction between the governance units, the societal actors, and the movements respectively. However, potential intra- and inter-movement interaction will also be taken into consideration. While analyzing the patterns of interactions, it is assumed that this will be shaped by the ideational as well organizational resources of a group. High-risk activism in particular requires a great amount of internal solidarity for creating identity.¹⁵⁰

The patterns of interactions will include three different types.¹⁵¹

1. alliance/support
   As Kriesi has mentioned, an alliance with state authorities might prove two-fold: it might offer resources but threaten independency of a movement in the long run, as the ally might try to control capacities, to “kidnap” parts of a movement’s capacity for their own aims, or to alienate a section of the movements’ adherents.¹⁵²
   Rucht subsumes cooperation and conflict both under his category of “alliances.” However, he mentions that friendly and non-interfering competition, which might even be constructive for attention and adaptation competence of movement groups, could quickly turn direct and fierce. Then the line towards conflict is easily transgressed.¹⁵³

2. indifference/neutrality

3. conflict

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¹⁵² Kriesi in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 154; Tarrow in ibid., p. 60.

¹⁵³ Rucht in Snow et al. 2004 (see note 39), pp. 204ff.
The criteria suggested by Taylor and van Dyke related to effectiveness of protest will be used to evaluate the process and outcomes of such an incident. They mention novelty (based on the assumption that innovative tactics are more successful), militancy, variety, size, and cultural resonance (ability to frame a link between protest goals and participants’ worries and dissatisfaction).  

When secular forms of criticism and protest are repressed by a political regime, religious groups, even when tightly controlled, might use their ideational or organizational space as a direct or indirect channel to voice dissent. However, some groups, especially religious ones—though initially with no hostility against the state—might end up only turning against it when faced by a battle touching on their very existence.  

In focusing on state actors, McAdam’s observation that “. . . the perceived degree of threat conveyed by a movement’s actions and tactics is a powerful determinant of other groups’ responses to the movement” should be taken into consideration.  

McAdam also states that “. . . an understanding of the emergence of contentious politics requires much more attention to the interaction of state actors and challengers in advance of what is typically perceived to be the onset of movement . . .” The study will follow his argument that “. . . it seems more sensible to see state and non-state actors as simultaneously responding to exogenous change processes and ultimately to each other as they seek to make sense of their situations and to fashion lines of action based in these shifting interpretations of reality.”  

Tilly offers four criteria for measuring the capacity of protest, termed WUNC: worthiness, that is, sobriety, evidence of previously unjustified suffering; unity, creation and affirmation of common identity, e.g. during marching; numbers; and

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154 Verta Taylor and Nella van Dyke, “‘Get up, Stand up’: Tactical Repertoires of Social Movements,” in Snow et al. 2004 (see note 39), pp. 262–93.
157 McAdam in McAdam et al. 1996 (see note 59), p. 341.
158 McAdam in Goodwin and Jasper 2004 (see note 42), pp. 220–21.
commitment, willingness to take costs or risk, readiness to persevere and to resist.  

The actors are considered to be embedded into organizational and ideational resources/institutions existing within the field. The concept of embedding includes regulatory (what is legal), normative (what is acceptable or appropriate), and cognitive (what is familiar judging from background of the actor) dimensions.

Field embedding could be understood as a rather unconscious process, not expressly broached by the actor vis-à-vis others, or as an explicitly voiced process. In the case of the latter, this will be also be highlighted within the category “action repertoire.”

Analytically relating the actors’ resources to the field will provide information on which elements of the field have—from their point of view—mattered to them for building up organizational and ideational capacities. The composition of the field might offer constraints as well as opportunities due to existing institutions or to perceived holes/lacks within existing institutions.

Therefore, themes and elements, which are used by the SRMs, will be compared to the resources used by the party-state and the societal actors. Additionally, they will also be placed within the context of the overall transformation process.

The analysis will be threefold: to begin with, to what extent have the actors built on existing resources (also from other actors), and then, to what extent have they adapted and changed existing resources, and finally, to what extent have they (re)invented new forms, for instance by importing ideas from external field environments.

As with actors’ capacities, concepts of organization and meaning are regarded to be interrelated/reciprocal resources of the field/existing within the field. It will be especially interesting to analyze whether the two movements have used the same or different resources in drawing on similar or distinguished elements from the field.

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160 Campbell in Davis et al. 2005 (see note 95), pp. 65–66.
2.3.3 State of the Field: New Impulses Mark the Beginning of New Phase

In keeping up with the second part of the research focus—how the movements have developed—it is necessary to add a diachronic dimension. As Della Porta has mentioned, “. . . diachronic studies allow for a higher level of generalization to be reached . . . expanding the time span reduces that risk [of “third” variables], allowing an in-depth historical knowledge . . .”\(^{161}\) Again taking up McAdam and Scott, it will be assumed that a field tends towards institutional balances, “. . . agreement[s] negotiated primarily by the efforts of field dominants (and their internal and external allies) to preserve the status quo that generally serves their interests.”\(^{162}\)

From the analysis of the relevant actors, their interactions, and the relationship with the field, statements on the “state of the field” will be drawn. Consequently, if new resources, events processes, or activities diverging from the stated constitution of the field can be observed, a new phase of analysis will start, proceeding with a revisit of the above outlined steps. These analytical steps will help to answer the questions of how the two movements developed, that is, if and how they have adapted to new dynamics penetrating the state of the field.

It is important to note, however, that this study does not intend to prefix or prejudice which dynamics have influenced a possible adaptation or even disappearance of actors, as this would lever the above set up of actors-first logic. As this study is mainly concerned with questions of how the movements have emerged and developed, the analysis will start with revisiting the resources of the actors in the next phase on two grounds: first, have the respective actors adapted their resources by abandoning or inventing new ones? Second, did new individual actors emerge, especially new spiritual-religious groups, and do they use the same or different resources as compared to their predecessors?


\(^{162}\) McAdam and Scott in in Davis et al. 2005 (see note 95), p. 18.
In summary, the four major features and advantages of the outlined approach are:

— Bringing the leader back in: the neglect of the leadership category within social movement studies has long been criticized. The outlined research approach is based on leadership capacity as well as related ideational, organizational, and action repertoire resources.

— Actors first: the statism and obscurity of the common “opportunity structure first” approaches are overcome by focusing on the actors and their resources.

— Range of resources: the understanding of resources broadened to include a systematic threefold concept (ideational, organizational, actional)

— Dynamic approach: patterns of interaction between different actors is added as an important stimulus for the emergence of groups—including analysis of various periods so as to follow the development of groups (and resources).
3 Analysis of the Emergence and Development of Spiritual-Religious Movements

3.1 Phase One (1978–1989): Formation of the Field

In accordance with the logic of the actor-centered approach as well as due to the research focus, this chapter will refrain from a detailed presentation or analysis of macro structures and developments within the economic, political, societal, and cultural realm after 1978.\(^{163}\) Still, for contextual orientation, two tendencies which characterize the development after 1978 should be mentioned.

First, the transformation of the political system from a totalitarian type towards an authoritarian one—basically characterized by a gradual withdrawal by the party-state from overall control to limited freedom—created space for new organizational and ideational dynamics from within the population. This tendency had started to show even earlier as a result of the institutional breakdown and economic disaster at the end of the Cultural Revolution period. The self-initiated abundance of the collective production system by peasants can be named as one prominent example. In addition, the Reform and Open Policy of Deng Xiaoping aimed at stabilizing and rebuilding a solid economic and political foundation for a prosperous development of the country as well as a secure power grip of the CCP. With a gradually increasing emphasis on self-responsibility, incentives, and performance within the economic realm, the encompassing control of society and individuals had to be relaxed to fit the new economic requirements. Still, the

Chinese government had to establish an institutional framework for the monitoring and guidance of society. As harsh repressions against movements demanding political change showed, the relaxation/losing grip of the authoritarian system had its limits. Second, the gradual withdrawal of the state also created gaps and upheavals, especially related to the social security system as well as to ideological orientation, forcing the individuals to cope with increasing competition for goods and services, choices of goods and ideas, as well as self-responsibility for lifestyle and decisions. Former valid and useful orientations and behavior failed to make sense and had to be replaced with a new mixture of legitimate and legal ones. Overlapping and sometimes contradicting social and economic dynamics created a complex and complicated environment. In the search for (new) meaning and social bondages, some people formed or turned to spiritual-religious practices and groups which (re)emerged—often from having been driven underground during the Cultural Revolution—after 1978.

To analyze the emergence of the two mentioned spiritual-religious movements, the following chapter unfolds the organizational, ideational, and action-directed resources of the party-state, societal actors, as well as the two movements themselves. For structural clearance, resources related to Qigong-based and Christian-inspired groups will be looked at separately. However, a brief comparative conclusion will be given after each resource analysis. Finally, this chapter identifies patterns of interactions between the three actors.

3.1.1 Party-State

During the Cultural Revolution, the regime had stigmatized and persecuted all societal spiritual-religious activities and had partly cultivated its own pseudo-religious leadership cult. As a result, spiritual-religious activities were not annihilated but went underground to survive. Concerning Christianity, some accounts even point to a rise in the number of converts
and a growth of faith and the Church during the 1960s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{164} Besides, the totalitarian leadership cult resulted in a collective trauma for major parts of the population and an erosion of trust and legitimacy. Therefore, the Chinese party-state was confronted with two challenges: Firstly, they had to create an ideological foundation explaining the existence and function of spiritual-religious phenomena and needs without endangering their atheist footing and legitimacy. Secondly, they had to establish institutions which, on the one hand, were suited to giving space to the spiritual-religious need within the population but which, on the other hand, gave the party-state enough leverage to effectively monitor, guide, and, if necessary, to suppress spiritual-religious activities. Organizational setup and ideological conceptualization influences the action repertoire that the party-state can develop and utilize within the spiritual-religious field. All three layers constitute the strategic capacity of the party-state therein. With regard to the Christian-inspired SRGs, broader aspects concerning the overall religious policy with a focus on Christianity need to be touched upon.

3.1.1.1 Organizational Resources

Christian-inspired Groups

The administrative structure concerning the religious field emerging during the 1970s was marked by three components: cooptation, control, and repression. Although the basic organizational layout resembles that of the 1950s, some new elements have also been added. Since then, this basic structure has not changed.

\textsuperscript{164} For detailed accounts concerning the development of Christianity during the Cultural Revolution, see e.g. Tony Lambert, \textit{The Resurrection of the Chinese Church} (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994); Dries van Collie, \textit{Der begeisterte Selbstmord: Im Gefängnis unter Mao Tse-tung} (Freiburg et al.: Herder Verlag, 1965).
The United Front Working Department (UFWD, Zhongyang zhonggong tongzhanbu) was reestablished in March 1979 after it had been labeled as “revisionist” and “capitalist” during the Cultural Revolution. It has been responsible for ideological and organizational supervision within the religious field, while being responsible to the CC of CCP where overall con-
control remains. The UFWD trains staff in leading positions within the five officially accepted “patriotic religious associations” (Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and the two denominations Catholicism and Protestantism) concerning the guidance of the organization in accordance with the idea of the “United Front.” An internal research department advises the CC of CCP on religious matters, which assigns the department with formulation of religious guidelines.

The Bureau of Religious Affairs under the State Council (BRA, Guowuyuan Zongjiao Shiwoju) has been in charge of policy implementation. Therefore, it has a lower status than the UFWD and deals mainly with implementation of policy decisions made at higher levels. “Document No. 19,” the key stipulation for religious policy, declares that all religious sites are under the administrative control of the BRA, while the religious associations are self-responsible for organization and administration. Therefore, BRA has been responsible for managing religious personnel, influencing it to support Party policy and remove adverse religious leaders. Theoretically, BRA should have branches at the provincial level as well as in bigger cities. However, during the 1980s BRA had only a few local branches with rather minimal staff of low motivation and no expertise in religion.

Resembling the need for control, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS, Gonganbu) have been an important part of the administrative structure. As concerns religious matters, they become active in the following areas: general surveillance and monitoring of foreign influence as well as arresting participants of illegal religious activities often linked with requests of ransoms and extortion. The Bureau of Culture has been put in charge of

165 The “United Front Strategy,” developed during the CCP struggle against the GMD, was based on a winning of support, or at least acquiescence, of all major sectors of Chinese society for political goals of the Communist regime. Potential oppositional forces—not only from the field of religion, but also intellectuals, former capitalists, members of minorities, or overseas Chinese—should be therefore reduced and kept under control. Their resources and skills should be used to work for the cause of stability and modernization of the PRC. “Although party officials and religious leaders have different beliefs, they nevertheless can together to build a “heaven on earth”—constructing our great socialist fatherland.” See Xia Xianfa, Head of Religious Affairs Bureau (1981), quoted after Lambert 1994 (see note 2), p. 26.


167 MacInnis 1989 (see note 102), pp. 18–19.

168 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 54.

169 Ibid., p. 56.
propagating national culture and local traditions. They evaluate “healthy” and “evil” cultural and religious activities. 170 Within the (Religious Committees of the) Political Consultative Conference (Zhengxie zongjiao weiyuanhui), representatives of all five officially recognized religions are present. It has mainly functioned as a platform for discussion and coordination but sometimes also examines the implementation of polity/political norms. 171

The seven state-sanctioned religious “Patriotic Associations” were basically a revitalization of the respective organizations of the 1950s. Concerning the Christian religions, however, two were established in October 1980: the China Catholic Bishop’s Conference (CCBC, Zhongguo tianzhujiao zhujiaotuan) and the China Christian Council (CCC, Zhongguo jidujiao xiehui) for Protestantism. Formally, they had practiced a share of responsibilities. Whereas the organs dating back to the 1950s—called the China Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPC, Zhongguo tianzhujiao aiguohui) and the Three Self Protestant Patriotic Movement Association (TSPM, Zhongguo jidujiao sanzi aiguo yundong weiyuanhui) respectively—deal with political control (supervision of ties with foreign institutions, policy formulation, and implementation), the latter founded ones are mainly occupied with Church matters (ceremonies, issuing of material). 172 This organizational double structure, often referred to as the “two meetings” (liang hui) reveals a greater anxiety of the Chinese leadership vis-à-vis Christian religions involving the possibility of “foreign infiltration.” In practical terms, especially at local levels, the two organizations nearly merged into one: they have often been located in the same building, and key positions are fused in one person.

The religious associations were indeed state-led, e.g. within the sensitive realm of Christianity, the UFWD as well as the BRA were constantly present at TSPM meetings.

171 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 48–49.
172 Zhongguo ge minzu zongjiao yu shenhua da cidian (Dictionary of Religions and Legends of All People in China) (Beijing: Xuefanchubanshe, 1990), pp. 153 and 218.
However, within the official Protestant Church, at least two factions emerged during the 1980s. A liberal wing, headed by Bishop Ting, engaged actively in discussions, often critically against interference by political institutions into church matters, and on behalf of the Christian church in general. Politically more conservative voices strongly opposed such views.  

Likewise, only the party-state organs have the authority to formulate religious policy, the religious associations being obliged to implement and execute the decisions. Occasionally, they were granted an advisory role.

“Document No. 19” stipulated clearly that “. . . the party must powerfully direct and organize all relevant departments, including United Front departments, the Religious Affairs Bureaus . . . and other people’s organization. . .”

As a general effect of decentralization, in many politic fields local governments apply different political principles than the central government. As relates to religious policy, costal provinces often practice a more liberal policy which might have been connected to their early and frequent exposure to overseas and foreign visitors. Interior provinces, however, seem to suffer more from religious persecution. As with other policy areas, central government authority/control over organs at lower levels had been a problem noticed early on within the spiritual-religious realm.

As work at religious organizations had low prestige due to its relative unimportance compared with other policy issues, cadres were hence unmotivated and lacking religious expertise. Religious policy was a matter of ideology; therefore, the institution with the most expertise, the Bureau of Religious Affairs, had not much influence. Coordination between the various organs had been rare. Obviously, resistance from more leftist-oriented cadres at some local institutions hindered a coherent, professional set up within the religious field.

174 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 41.
177 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 32.
handling of illegal—not registered—Christian-inspired groups should have been touched upon the authority of the Security forces, government representatives, and the Bureau of Culture.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

The emerging organizational structure of the Qigong field clearly resembled the three aspects of Qigong: Qigong Medical Treatment, extraordinary abilities with Qigong, and Martial Arts Qigong.

Chart 3: Party-State Organizational Resources Concerning the Qigong Field

Whereas the administrative responsibility for the medical and the sports sector continued from the 1950s, the party-state had to put the phenomenon of “extraordinary abilities” (*teyi gongneng*)\(^\text{178}\) under suitable administration. With mushrooming cases involving extraordinary abilities, immediately the question of proof, measurements, and accountability of these abilities came up. These questions fell to the chosen administrative responsibility of scien-

\(^{178}\) According to Palmer, extraordinary abilities are “the magical or paranormal powers said to appear at a high level of Qigong practice”; see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 19.
tific units. The National Association for Science and Technology (NAST; *Zhongguo kexue jishu xiehui*; short: *Guojia kexie*) was in charge of approving the establishment of provincial Qigong research societies, the National Science and Technology Committee (*Guojia kexue jishu weiyuanhui*; short: *Guojia kewei*) monitored various extraordinary ability case, and their local branches were in charge of examining such phenomena.  

Compared to the religious field, the initial authority for administration of the extraordinary ability sector of Qigong had been placed at a rather low level and within existing organizations. Only after the numbers of cases with extraordinary abilities mushroomed, bringing also controversies and accusations, the party-state felt the necessity to establish a specific unit. Besides calling the Propaganda Department of the CC to manage the growing controversy around extraordinary abilities, the party-state kept a rather low profile.  

However, until October 1989 no official stipulation concerning administration of Qigong was issued by the party-state.  

Only in 1986 die the party-state feel a necessity to establish a new, central unit besides the scientific one for managing the vibrant Qigong sector. The foundation of the China Qigong Science Research Society in Beijing in 1986 marks a new quality of party-state involvement in the Qigong sector. The China Qigong Science Research Society (*Zhongguo Qigong kexue yanjiuhui*) most likely replaced the China National Qigong Science Research Society (*Zhonghua quanguo Qigong kexue yanjiuhui*), which had been established in Beijing in 1981. The society was approved by the National Commission on Economic System Reform, attached to the National Defence Industry Commission, and might considered as a quasi-state  

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180 Ibid., p. 83.  
organization.\textsuperscript{182} This large organization consisted of six Honorary Presidents, 16 members of the advisory board, 110 Honorary Chairmen, 135 committee members and some 25 deputies, one head of the executive committee, as well as one general secretary and three deputies. It developed into the central institution concerning Qigong science and was tied to the party-state by high-level politicians who took up central posts as well as by the charter which stipulates a clear subordination of the Research Society under the CCP.\textsuperscript{183}

Additionally, in 1986, a “Small Leading Group on Somantic Science” (\textit{Renti kexue lingdao xiaozu}) was established for guiding research on Somantic Science. The three initial members were Wu Shaozu—then member (later vice-director) of the Committee of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (\textit{Guofang kexue jishu gongye weiyuanhui}) and later head of the sports administration—Qian Xuesen and Jia Chunwang—then at the Ministry of Public Security, and Teng Teng of the CCP Propaganda Department. They considered the research of extraordinary skills as very valuable for national defense and security, thus deciding to keep related research under a cloak of secrecy.\textsuperscript{184} In 1987, a fourth person entered the group, Mr. Guo, Vice-Director of the National Science Committee. They set up an office and experts’ groups aligned with Institute No. 507 under which one of the famous Qigong masters, Zhang Yusheng, also worked. They even managed to get their research into the National Science Research Plan, thereby securing some funding.

By December 1990 the group had six members, with Mr. Li, Vice-Director of the National Science Committee and then Minister of Health, Chen Min. The name was changed to “Working Group on Somantic Science” (\textit{Renti kexue gongzuozu}). As a new wave of criticism against research on Somantic Science emerged in the mid-1990s, Wu Shaozu, then head of the National


\textsuperscript{183} Heise 1999 (see note 14), pp. 136ff.

\textsuperscript{184} Zhaogui Zeng, “Zhongguo kexue yu weikexue douzheng dashiji (Major Events of the Fight Concerning Chinese Science and Pseudo-Science),” http://www.oursci.org/ency/pseudo/062.htm (accessed November 27, 2006); Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 163. The text of the website is reprinted from the book with the remarkable exception that in the online version the full names of persons are given while in the book the names have been made anonymous.
Commission of Sports (Guojia tiwei), managed to petition against high-level leadership and reached a reaffirming of somantic science research.\textsuperscript{185}

The engagement of the “Small leading group on thinking” (sixiang lingdao xiaozu) under the CC of CCP indicates that the party regarded the debate on “extraordinary skills” as matter of principle. Still, it was discussed and handled within smaller circles and organizations and did not became a topic of more broad-based discussions within larger and more formal party organizations like the Standing Committee of the CC.\textsuperscript{186}

However, individuals rather than organizations shaped the handling of Qigong on behalf of the party-state. Several persons placed in various organizations were involved in building up a strong official network and support for Qigong and, later on, also for the disputed Extraordinary Skills. The core persons derived from the military circle. Zhang Zhenhuan and Wu Shaozu become two key figures willing to use all the power and influence they could muster to shield Qigong and Extraordinary Skills from attacks and to promote them. Zhang was an old and honored general from the revolution days. He served as Vice-President of the Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (CONSTAND). Wu was elected to the Central Committee of the CCP in 1982 and appointed Vice-Minister of CONSTAND in 1983. In 1988 Wu became Sports Minister.\textsuperscript{187}

Additionally, Li Pei, administrative secretary of Propaganda in the political department of science working committee of the National Defence Ministry, was an active author and editor in respect to the promotion of famous Qigong masters.\textsuperscript{188}

From the Standing Committee of the 12\textsuperscript{th} Politburo (1982–87), at least two members were known as supporters of Qigong and extraordinary abilities, the first being Ye Jianying, a veteran of the Long March and Vice-President of the Central Military Commission. He underwent treatment at the Beidaihe Sanatorium. The second was Zhao Ziyang, who as then Governor
of Sichuan province witnessed the unfolding “ear reading children” at the end of the 1970s. Peng Zhen was also reported as being supportive of Qigong. Other high-level supporters included Peng Chong, Vice-President of the Standing Committee of the NPC, and Wang Zhen, Vice-Premier of the State Council.\footnote{Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 84.}

### 3.1.1.2 Ideational Resources

**Christian-Inspired Groups**

The solution to the challenge of how to deal with spiritual-religious phenomena within a socialist society was –ambiguity. While still promoting as axiomatic the ultimate disappearance of religion, a limited freedom of religious belief needs to be allowed for a transitional period. Lambert attributes this to cleavages within the leadership as leftist forces regarded religion with unchanged hostility.\footnote{Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 32 and 60.} It seems that these very forces also fostered the development of Qigong, maybe as a counterbalance to the religious rise. This “floating” ideology and strategy respectively equipped the party-state with the flexibility to exercise a more tolerant (out of pragmatic or fear of counterproductive effects) and more restrictive power on the spiritual-religious realm, according to shifting political situations and perception of overall political stability of the CCP regime. Likewise, a series of conferences within the party-state apparatus, also seeking input from academic circles, were preceded by the first detailed revealing of the official thinking on religion in March 1979. A column published in the People’s Daily (*Renmin ribao, RMRB*), “Religion and feudal superstition” (*Zongjiao he fengjian mixin*) included all major themes of the new thinking of the Chinese leadership concerning religion and spirituality.

*First, separation of religion and superstition*

While religion is still being considered an opiate and illusion, it must be separated from “feudal superstition” (*fengjian mixin*). Only world religion with scriptures, doctrines, and rites were allowed freedom of religious belief while other practices were prohibited.
Second, religion as long-term problem
The solution of the religious problem, and its still proclaimed disappearance, will be a long-term process, basically dependent on the weakening of class contradiction (and social grievances) as well as the popularization of science. The party should enhance “propaganda and education” on religious believers, but also “admit, allow and respect their convictions.”

Third, freedom of religion embedded in government policies and organs, and protected against misuse
Religious believers and workers can practice their faith, but they must obey to state law and organizations. Religion must be also safeguarded against misuse of hostile forces, “the class enemy,” and illegal activities.

Fourth, incorporation of religion to realize goal of socialist modernization
Based on the above laid out setting, the party-state as well as assigned academic institutions and scientists added more details and illustrations to these cornerstones of the spiritual-religious ideology. Religious belief and life of the individual may just be submitted under the overall task of the building-up and modernization of the nation. Within the Protestant context, Christians who had gained the status of a model worker were highlighted in public view.

For the existence of religion, three reasons were commonly mentioned. First, the social realm: as China is still in the initial phase of socialism, unbalanced socioeconomic development evokes feelings of insecurity within the population which seek comfort in religion. Second, the natural realm: natural calamities also make people cling to religious explanations. Third, the cognitive realm: owing to a low level of education and scientific

191 “Zongjiao he fengjian mixin (Religion and Feudal Superstition),” in RMRB (March 15, 1979).
knowledge, people compensate their non-knowledge with religious explanations. More generally, as science has still left many “enigmatic” or “unknown” spots, religion is able to fill this gap. As the people will “. . . adopt a scientific attitude toward the world and life, [they] will no longer need to look for spiritual support form the illusory world of gods.” As “religion [is] a temporary by-product of individual crisis or deprivation,” religion was conceded to possess a certain “utility” concerning the dealing with psychological problems. The acknowledgement of religion and establishment of state-religious associations is therefore presented as a paternalistic act of caretaking.

Still, religion is denied of any transcendental value or experience as it is “an illusion, an error of the own mind.” Some authors of party-state institutions point to the “dangers of religious thoughts” in the sense of the Marxist terminology “opiate of the people.”

This terminology did not appear in official documents, nevertheless it was stated that the exploiting classes used religion “. . . as an important spiritual means to poison and control the masses.” But religious believers should be no longer regarded as class enemies, as most of them are laboring people.

Obviously, the Chinese leadership came to the conclusion that the goal of an annihilation of religion during the period of the Cultural Revolution proved to be rather counterproductive.

In an internal “Document No. 19 – The Basic View and Policy on the Problem of Religion in the Socialist Period,” issued on March 31, 1982 by the CC of the CCP, it is stated that: “[The leftists] framed up many wrong, false, and misjudged cases . . . They used violence to solve religious problems, so that religious activities even had some development in a situation where they were dispersed and in secret.”

195 Luo 2001 (see note 175), pp. 299 and 304.
198 Although not part of the official legislation, party documents can be considered to have binding character, e.g. for cadres working within the spiritual-religious field.
The “Document No. 19” established the new official standing on religion and includes the following concepts:

— Religion is a private affair, with the freedom to believe or to not believe protected by the constitution.

— Religion belongs to “internal contradictions of the people” but can develop antagonistic features under certain circumstances. The interests of the people, the authority of the law, ethnic harmony, and national unity need to be protected.

— Religious activities need to operate within a legal framework administered by the state. Normal religious activities will be protected and criminal ones—misuse of religion—will be persecuted.

— Religion should be independent, autonomous, and self-handled, with interference from outside being rejected.

— “Mutual adaptation” (xiang shiying) of religion and socialism is to be guided.

— Important are the promotion of scientific thinking and dialectical materialism among the masses, especially the youth, enhancing people’s “quality of moral thinking” (sixiang daode sushi).\(^{200}\)

Remarkably, the section on Protestant house meetings calls for a flexible and tolerant handling of even illegal gatherings: “The meeting of Protestants gathering in private houses for worship is in principle not allowed. But this ban should not be enforced too strictly.”\(^{201}\)

More pragmatic and empirically related aspects within the ideational conceptualization of the religious field could also be found. On a political level, the recognition of religion is presented to be related to minority policy and national unity, as well as to the importance of religion within international relations (also as a tool to win over pro-Taiwanese states). However, the international dimension of religion was also a source of worry for the party-state. Texts frequently refer to “counterrevolutionary” or “hostile” foreign forces that might use religion as a tool to destabilize China.\(^{202}\)

Moreover, religion and spirituality is presented to be an “ancient and universal, social and cultural phenomenon in the history of mankind” as well as an “important part of the national culture.” This conceptualization enables the

\(^{200}\) Ibid.
\(^{201}\) Ibid.
\(^{202}\) Dai 1996 (see note 197), p. 136.
Chinese regime to allow cadres belonging to one of the 55 minorities to keep their religious faith as it is a part of their respective culture. On an economic level, commercial exploitation of religious sites and festivals, as well as possible attraction of investments by Overseas Chinese into their hometown/home of their parents by legalizing ancestor worship.

All in all, the underlying moral tone of party-state articles and documents is that the freedom of religious belief is “. . . a privilege which is granted by the CCP, and not an inherent human right.” Evidence for a rather restrictive understanding of religious freedom can be also found within the Chinese Constitution, of which Article 36 grants all citizens “the freedom to believe in a religion” (zhongjiao xinyang ziyou). According to Harro von Senger, the official English translation “freedom of religious belief” is juristically not correct. Besides, several Chinese scholars also point to the rather restrictive understanding of the constitution, referencing it as “negative religious freedom.” The former constitution of 1979 supported this view by stating “. . . the people have freedom to believe, and the freedom not to believe in a religion as well as propagate atheism.” However, judging not only from the occasionally artificial conceptualizations but from recognized problems with policy implementation, the ideational resources concerning religion still contained slight contradictions and obscurities. Extending the official framing of religion, the party-state also needed to conceptualize the limits of the freedom of religion. The constitution enshrined the protection of “normal” (zhengzhang) religious activities.

206 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 60.
208 Official articles mentioned “leftist thoughts” of cadres who considered the protection of the freedom of belief as “propagation of idealism” and, at the other extreme, cadres who got actively involved in religious activities and promotion; see Dai 1996 (see note 192), p. 140.
Religion should not be used to “. . . disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state.”

No further characteristics are given describing “normal” religious activities, but within an internal party document of 1979 it is stated:

By religion, we chiefly mean worldwide religion, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and the like. They have scriptures, religious ceremonies, organizations, and so on. . . Religious freedom, first of all, refers to these religions . . . There still are, among the people, certain long-standing activities such as ancestor worship and belief in ghosts and deities. Although they are kind of superstition, we generally do not prohibit them as long as they do not affect collective political and economic activities . . .

For further conceptualizing “abnormal” religious activities not officially tolerated and protected, the party-state aimed at creating ideational resources which both morally discredited these activities and also could serve for justification of a strict persecution.

Turning to ideational concepts in this initial phase, the Chinese state referred to various labels. Firstly, activities or groups were conceptualized as “non-religious,” “exploiting” a religious tradition or acting “in the name of” a religion. Secondly, the term “counterrevolutionary (fandong) or “counterrevolutionary elements” (fandong fenzi) endeavored to demonize

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210 Translation quoted from MacInnis 1989 (see note 102), pp. 34–35. Referring to the constitution, Zhao names the following activities as “normal”: worship of Buddha, reading of scriptures, burning of incense, participation in worship activities, praying, preaching, baptism, vegetarian diet, celebration of religious festivals; Guowei Zhao, ed., Woguo de zongjiao xinyang ziyou (Religious Freedom in Our Country) (Beijing: Huawenchubanshe, 1999), p. 173.

activities and groups, as this was also the terminology used in the Criminal Code. Adding the term “fight,” this labeling appealed to the still well-remembered actions against counterrevolutionary forces during the 1950s and 1960s.\(^{212}\)

Third, “superstition” (mixin), nearly always combined with “feudal” (feng-jian)—although presented more neutrally and moderately within the 1979 party document—was not only criminalized with the Criminal Code but also increasingly labeled as part of a backward and close-up time period, an expression of ignorance to modern knowledge, and hostile to freedom and progress.\(^{213}\)

Fourth, the term *Huidaomen*, first used back in the 1950s to refer to those reemerged or newly formed secret societies\(^{214}\) continued to be used during the 1980s. *Daomen* which might be translated as “sects or schools of the way” was used to refer to groups with a strong religious background, whereas *Huimen* names brotherhood-like associations based on oaths and practicing martial arts. *Huidaomen* were classified as “superstitious groups” and associated with “counterrevolutionary” actions, language, and elements based on feudal clan structures and on the utilization of superstitious practices.\(^{215}\)

Fifth, “money cheating, raping, casting out demons of ill or disabled people, and destroying social order” were characteristics specifically attached to Christian-inspired groups during the latter half of the 1980s. While not denying potential justified references, the generalized usage and experiences from the imperial times point to the labeling usage of such a feature.


\(^{214}\) Chi 1999 (see note 210); Gonganbu yi ju 1985 (see note 7).

\(^{215}\) Guojiazongjiaoju zhengefaguisi (see note 213), pp. 44ff.
Sixth, non-tolerated religious activities were often linked to “hostile foreign forces” or to “rogue counter revolutionary elements abroad” (liumang zao guiwai de fandong fenzi).\textsuperscript{216}

Within the Christian realm, the concept of the “three self” (self-rule, zizhi, self-financing, ziyang, self-proselytizing, zichuan) functioned as a marker between legal and illegal Christian groups.\textsuperscript{217} However, as regarded the so-called “house churches”—non-registered home meetings of Protestants—the party-state again took a rather ambivalent attitude.

At the beginning of the 1980s, though being anxious about the extent of the house-church meetings, statements from officials revealed that a temporary and reluctant tolerance was preferred over strict persecution.\textsuperscript{218} Towards the end of the 1980s, calls for a more liberal religious policy grew stronger—probably also in face of the continuing growth of non-registered congregations as the official churches—as the TSPM became more and more alienated from Christian believers. Bishop Ding Guangxin, then head of the TSPM, called for reforms and even referred to it as “too authoritarian” and “an anachronism.”\textsuperscript{219} Academic reports for internal party use portrayed Protestantism as a positive social force which—alongside Marxism—could contribute to the build-up of a “socialist spiritual civilization.” Moreover, the Chinese government was said to be planning to issue a new Religious law, an internal discussion paper concerning the drafting process, resembled the existing two views of the cadres dealing with religion. Obviously, some more liberal tendencies, e.g. concerning the question of abolishment of registration or publishing authority for each religion, could be found.\textsuperscript{220}

Towards the end of the 1980s, some voices within the Chinese leadership,


\textsuperscript{217} Although the “three self” concept wants to distinguish the Chinese Church from the foreign one, the concept itself was raised by two foreign mission societies, the Church Mission Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. See Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{218} Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., pp. 207–208.

\textsuperscript{220} Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 206.
namely Zhao Ziyang and Yan Mingfu, advocated for reforms within the relationship between religion and politics.  

Summing up, the party-state created several concepts and categories as an ideational basis for dealing with religion, and with “abnormal” religious activities in particular. This ambiguity of concepts produced some problems related to policy implementation, but it also provided the party-state with considerable normative leeway for discrediting and punishing unpleasant religious groups.

The ideational resources presented were basically shared by the political elites and have not been fundamentally changed, even today.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

As related to the concept of “normal and abnormal religious activities,” the party-state likewise brought up a separation between Qigong and Pseudo-Qigong (wei Qigong), also called “superstitious rumors” (mixin chuanshuo). The foremost judgement criterion was the concept of science. In 1979, in a statement by the CCP Propaganda Department, the great and fast popularization of the first big incident of extraordinary abilities—the reading of characters using ears—was blamed on a “lack of scientific knowledge” of the responsible cadres. The public propagation was disapproved as “. . . China is still a backward country. Spreading these kinds of things [extraordinary skills] will only increase people’s belief in superstition and cause chaos of thinking.”

Another parameter evoked by the party-state was health. Again, related to the very first scandal of Pseudo-Qigong, the protection of the health of children was mentioned to be endangered by such superstitious activities. Contrary to the unity within the party-state concerning the framing of religion and Christianity/Protestantism in particular, considerable differences with respect to the conceptualization of extraordinary abilities can be recognized within the party-state apparatus. The topic even polarized single organizations. For example, the National Science Committee was divided over

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221 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 138.
223 Even within the “Small Leading Group on Thinking” under the CC, conflict emerged which according to the procedure of CCP would have been handled internally. Yet, the
opinions on “external energy” (wai qi): the supporters were represented by Director Guo, the critics by Vice-Director Wu Mingyu and Secretary Lin Zixin, who was also editor of the “Science and Technology Daily.” The latter organized the visit of a US-American delegation headed by famous magician James Randy, which did not please the former camp. They argued that the Americans should not be allowed to meet with top Qigong masters like Zhang Yusheng, because they might “touch on Chinese soil,” so to say robbing them of knowledge. High-level Qigong should kept secret, and only at the lower levels could the delegation be allowed in. However, the support of Qigong and its related concepts dominated the conceptualization process. Extraordinary abilities was framed to be “a big thing” for the whole scientific community in China. “Once a breakthrough is made, many contents of modern biology and physics had to be rewritten,” cited the vice-director of the Second Military Medicine University, Li Yushi. Therefore, Qigong was by no means “apolitical,” as Chen suggested. Qigong was considered a tool to free China from its “backwardness” and to enable it to catch up and compete equally with foreign nations. According to Zhang Yaoting, director of the Leading Work Group on Somantic Science, Qigong is a promising part of the Chinese tradition, which could once again help the People’s Republic to rise to internationally respected power. And General Zhang Zhenhuan stated: “Imagine more than a billion people using Qigong to increase their intelligence: what would be the magnitude of such power when combined?” Gradually, this ideational framing of Qigong advocated by some persons and sectors within the party-state emerged as a large-scale consensus. Qigong, conceptualized as “Somantic Science” (renti kexue), was incorporated in the concept of the “four modernizations” (si ge

supporters of extraordinary abilities published their stance and critic in RMRB, see Yu in Yu 2002 (see note 186), p. 151.  
224 The concept of outer energy refers to Qi that is projected outside the body of the practitioner.  
225 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 183 and 192. This link between Qigong and nationalism can be traced back to the Republican time where the Guomindang promoted “new martial arts” as a kind a of “national essence” (guo cui); see Nancy N. Chen, *Breathing Spaces: Qigong, Psychiatry and Healing in China* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 9.  
226 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 35.  
227 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 56.  
228 Cited after Palmer 2003 (see note 12), p. 92.
Qigong was chosen as the science in which China could show the world its outstanding heritage and quality of contemporary research. Therefore, the loss of face vis-à-vis foreign countries was also brought up to reinforce the bad nature of Pseudo-Qigong. Consequently, the visit of popular Qigong master Yan Xin’s visit to the United States was covered at large with repeated features and reports on China Central Television (CCTV).

Besides framing Qigong as a vehicle to promote China’s strength (including at the stage of international politics) and as a modern Chinese science, it was also highlighted as a powerful phenomenon of traditional as well as modern Chinese culture. This should be regarded in the context of the emerging debate on culture, also called “culture fever” (wenhuare). In the quest for China’s modernization, the former elite-related tradition of Confucianism as well as the newly promoted socialist tradition appeared increasingly at odds with an effective and popularly appreciated and simultaneously Chinese way of modernization. Correspondingly, a vacuum of values arose, partly also induced by rising materialism dominated by Western goods, and by corruption. Hence, a debate on the essence of Chinese culture and its suitability for modernity broke out. The Chinese leadership was eager to foster a new concept of culture, also including more popular elements like Qigong. The strong emphasis of Chinese culture and a “Chinese way of modernization” was also directed against rising demands of a “fifth modernization,” more political freedom and democracy, with intellectuals and journalists, headed by Wei Jingsheng.

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229 The “four modernizations” referred to the modernization of agriculture, industry, defense, and science.

230 Adopted as a goal in September 1986, the concept intended to counter the decay of moral behavior and values due to the impact of the rapid development of materialism and consumerism. It includes being a “socialist citizen with ideals, morality, manners and discipline” and rejecting “all the vicious aspects of capitalism [like corruption]”; see Zhonggongzhongyang weiyuanhui (CC of CCP), “Zhonggongzhongyang guanyu shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe zhidaobao fangzhen de jueyi (Decision of CC of CCP on Guiding the Direction of the Building a Socialist Civilization),” http://www.people.com.cn/GB/news/6056/20011023/587955.html (accessed January 12, 2008).
With the entering of Qigong on the stage of the Chinese New Year Evening Gala show, the party-state clearly demonstrates its dedication to framing Qigong as part of national culture.\(^{231}\)

All the above mentioned aspects were enshrined in the statue of the China Qigong Science Research Society as the new official line towards Qigong. The state encourages 

\[\ldots\] development of a strong pioneer spirit to open up the treasure of Qigong which has a long history in China; research and systematization of practical experiences with Qigong; examination and discussion of the relationship between Qigong to any science, and an examination and discussion of theoretical foundations of Qigong science . . . Qigong science should promote the science of life for the sake of the socialist, scientific culture.\(^{232}\)

Due to the heat of the “Qigong fever,” many people with varying levels of Qigong knowledge and training felt qualified to teach and treat other people illnesses. As reports about worsening of heath conditions and psychological deviations, or deterioration due to wrong practice or treatment, started flourishing during the latter half of the 1980s, the party-state felt the necessity of readjusting their stance on Qigong. However, these new conceptualizations only did emerge after the first official stipulation on Qigong in October 1989. During the Qigong field’s initial phase, supporters were able to dominate the development of ideational resources. They conceptualized Qigong (including extraordinary abilities and external energy) in three themes for legitimization of their quest in promoting Qigong: Qigong as a tool for power, Qigong as a modern Chinese science, and Qigong as part of both traditional and modern Chinese culture.

### 3.1.1.3 Action Resources

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

Based on the above-mentioned organizational and ideational resources, the party-state utilized three different types of action resources related to the religious field.

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\(^{231}\) Lu 1999 (see note 188), p. 21.

\(^{232}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 77–78.
First came the incorporation using the “United Front Strategy,” developed during the CCP struggle against the GMD. This was based on a winning of support, or at least acquiescence, of all major sectors of Chinese society for the Communist regime’s political goals. According to the United Front Strategy, society consists of three different forces: the progressives (which the party can easily work with), the moderates (the majority of which can be won over), and the reactionaries (which should be eliminated). The definitions “progressives,” “moderates,” and “reactionaries” have been purely relative, depending on the target, which shifts all the time. The goal was to unify the nation for a higher goal, i.e. the building up of socialism, and to use the resources and skills of the moderates for the causes of PRC stability and modernization. Religious groups basically belong to the “reactionary forces” (like the Christian-inspired ones) or the “moderates” (the state-sanctioned religious organizations), whereby they have been forced to submit to the utmost authority of the party-state. As Xia Xianfa, Head of the Religious Affairs Bureau, mentioned in 1981, “Although party officials and religious leaders have different beliefs, they nevertheless can together build a ‘heaven on earth’—constructing our great socialist fatherland.”

A second type of action resources were campaigns. In the reinforcement of the party-state’s denouncement of religious activities outside the official realm, it was also linked to at least two campaigns directed against the ideational/spiritual sphere during the 1980s. The “Anti Spiritual-Pollution”-campaign, raging from October 1983 until February 1984, was closely connected to the building of a socialist spiritual civilization. Deng Liqun, an old veteran party cadre guiding the campaign, defined “spiritual pollution” as “. . . things that are obscene, barbarous, or reactionary; vulgar taste in artistic performances; efforts to seek personal gain, and indulgence in individualism, anarchism, and liberalism; and writing articles or delivering speeches that run counter to the country’s social system.” While initially directed against foreign influence, moral decay, and rising crime rates, the campaign was broadly implemented, sometimes overzealously and arbitr-
Religion as a target was mentioned in one RMRB commentary: “Some people use their unhealthy ideology, works and performances to pollute the people’s souls . . . A few works even propagandize sex and religion.”236 Religious activities also became the target of the campaign against “bourgeois liberalisation” (zichan jieji ziyouhua) initiated at the beginning of 1987. Directed against a “wholesale Westernization”—particularly against reforms intending to use Western political concepts for analyzing the problems in China’s political system—religions, especially Christianity as a Western religion, were also targeted. The zeal among some cadres in attacking religion reached such a point that even the then director of the BRA, Ren Jiyu, called for a limitation to party members stating that religious authorities as well as non-party members should be allowed to keep their faith as long as it did not interfere with politics.237

The control of religion through legislation and repression was a third type of action resources. This religious legislation resembles the ambiguous nature of the aforesaid ideational resources and is based on three documents: first, the internal “Document No. 19”; second, Article 36 of the constitution of April 27, 1982; and third, the Criminal Law of 1979. The first two documents were already analyzed in Chapter 3.1.1.2. However, in addition to the two former stipulations enacted by the central government, several provinces or cities issued their own religious guidelines since the national regulations are very general and leave leeway for interpretation. Whereas some of these stroked a far stricter tone than the national regulations, others were more tolerant. As Hunter and Chan note: “This is where the complexity arises, since the level of tolerance changes according to the political situation and local conditions.”238

Lambert has reviewed several such regulations. Related to the definition of “normal” religious activities—of relevance to the development of spiritual-

236 Renmin Ribao (October 31, 1983), cited after Gold 1984 (see note 243), p. 971. Due the rising objections of several foreign investors and managers whose products were attacked, China’s economic development came under pressure. Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang finally convinced Deng Xiaoping to stop the campaign.
238 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 51. These local guidelines were defined for internal use only, although some became publicly known through sources in Hong Kong.
religious groups—these local guidelines define the following activities as illegal:239

— convening outside officially designated churches or meeting points;
— prohibition of itinerant evangelism
— evangelization or participation of people under 18
— proselytism by persons not ordained with TSMP/CCC
— distribution of unauthorized Christian literature (whether produced in China or imported from Hong Kong and overseas)
— exorcism and prayer for healing purposes which discourages people from seeking medical treatment

However, at the national level, the Criminal Code also referred to measures focusing on illegalization and punishment of unwanted activities in the religious field.

Since the Ming dynasty, the Criminal Code has been a tool of regulating religious activities. The newly established Criminal Law of 1979 shows astonishing continuities involving the categorization of crimes. Paragraph 99 (exploitation/use of religious groups for counterrevolutionary purposes) and Paragraph 165 (use of superstitious activities to spread rumors and to engage in financial fraud) take up the traditional trias of subversion, misguidance of the population, and illegal enrichment.240 Additionally, the differentiation between “leaders” and “core members” (gugan fenzi), on the one hand, and the “confused/defrauded population” in the traditional Chinese criminal code, on the other, is also reflected in the Criminal Law: heavier and lighter sentences depending on the graveness of the crime are distinguished.241 During the 1980s, the party-state issued three additional stipulations for enhancing their action resources as concerned the punishment of “illegal” religious activities. Interestingly, official stipulations emerged in an inductive kind of way.

Documents first covered individual cases, only later utilizing practices and principles embedded into more general stipulations.

239 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 82–83.
240 Anthony 1993 (see note 211); Weggel 1993 (see note 211), pp. 918–94; Overmeyr 1976 (see note 211).
After a special document called “Report on the Handling of the so-called ‘Group of the Shouters’ problem”—jointly issued by the CCP United Front Department, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council—the party-state merged their policy against “abnormal religious groups” into the broad-based “Strike Hard” (Yanda) campaign, initiated in August 1983. As the first of four stipulations to supplement the penalty code, the Standing Committee of the NPC issued “Decision on Severe Punishment of Criminal Elements Endangering Social Security” (Guanyu yancheng yanzhong weihaizhehui de fanzui fenzi de jueding) on September 2.

The decision states: “Concerning the following criminal elements endangering social security, punishment going beyond the highest penalty given in the Criminal Code, even the death penalty, can be issued . . . Sixth, organizing Huidaomen or utilizing feudal superstition to conduct counterrevolutionary activities and severely endangering social security.”

As cases of Christian-inspired groups increased during the 1980s and the “Full Scope Church” became a second target of official persecution, the party-state felt the need to create a more focused stipulation in 1988. For the first time the State Bureau of Religious Affairs got involved. Together with the Ministry of Public Security, it issued a “Notification on Curbing and Handling Illegal Activities Conducted in the name of Christianity” (Guanyu zhihi zu chuli liyong jidujiao jinxing feifa weifa huodong de tongzhi).

For—due to the “interference of hostile foreign religious forces”—the scope of “abnormal and illegal” religious activities conducted in the name of Christianity had increased. The stipulations “. . . don’t permit activities

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which in the name of Christianity conduct money cheating, raping, casting out demons of ill or disabled people and destroying social order.” The distribution of publications and the training of religious professionals was also limited. But anxiety about increasing foreign influence seemed to have motivated the stipulation in the first place, as much emphasis was given on the ban of listening to foreign Gospel radio as well as nonacceptance of foreign support in any way. Enactment of policy related to “illegal” Christian activities was influenced by special incentives related to the common practice of ransom requests. Christians became a favored target for this practice as they were known for not making trouble, and fee demands were often met by the congregations.²⁴⁵

Besides utilizing existing general legislation and campaigns related to religion, the party-state developed specific action resources to deal with Christian-inspired groups. Resembling the overall religious field, the party-state framed repressive measures within a legal ground but utilized arbitrary concepts due to lack of clear definitions.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

As the ideational and organizational resources of the party-state in the Qigong field were rather scattered and not always consistent, the action resources were likewise fragmented. In addition, throughout the 1980s, the party-state didn’t consider the Qigong sector a necessary subject for official regulation or legislation. Due to controversy within the party-state, it didn’t initially develop a consistent and systematic approach to Qigong. Therefore, action resources seemed to be rather situation-based and very flexible, and with some turnaround the above-mentioned influence of several key individual figures can be seen. The first official reaction concerning the realm of Qigong came up after the exposed swindling of a popularized case of “extraordinary [Qi] skills” in April 1979. On April 12, the CCP Central Propaganda Department, headed by Hu Yaobang, issued a “propaganda trend” (xuanchuan dongtai) which criticized the media and “some comrades” for believing in and spreading such news.²⁴⁶ Following up, the National Science Commission reflected on

²⁴⁵ Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 57.
the overall situation in two “Brief Reports of Letters and Calls” (*xinfang jianbao*). The first one illustrates the scope of several cases and their respective exposure, with the second commenting on the investigation report by Sichuan Medical School, which uncovered the very first case “reading characters with ears.”247

After the published exposure of the cases and several “self-criticisms” of persons involved, the party-state considered the matter of “extraordinary skills” settled.248 As the revival of the whole field unfolded in the media, the CCP Propaganda Department issued, on April 20, 1982, a “Notification Concerning the Non-Allowance of Propagating or Criticizing of Extraordinary Skills of the Human Body on Publications” (*Guanyu buyao zai baokan shang xuanchuan huo piping renti teyi gongneng de tongzhi*), known as the “three no policy” (*san bu fangzheng*): no propagation (*bu yao xuanzhuan*), no debating (*bu yao zhenglun*), no criticism (*bu yao piping*) of Qigong. After strong reactions from the supporters of Somantic Science—namely Qian Xuesen, an influential scientist responsible for the design of China’s nuclear weapon program—to the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the CCP Propaganda Department, Yu Wen, Hu Yaobang reaffirmed his policy in another letter but compromised on permitting continuance of small-scale research. Again, a wave of letters, this time from the critics of Somantic Science and extraordinary energy, reached the CCP Propaganda Department, as they were particularly dissatisfied with the nonallowance of any critical voices. On June 16, 1982, a second “Notification on Questions Concerning the Propagation of Extraordinary Skills of Human Body” (*Guanyu renti teyi gongneng xuanchuan wenti de tongzhi*) was stipulated, enshrining the slightly changed line to allow ongoing small-scale research. Yu attributes the small but important policy change not only to the leverage of the Somantic Science supporters, but also to a change of leadership within the CCP Propaganda Department. Hu Yaobang took a firm stance on the non-propagation of “extraordinary skills,” but after his promotion to the reestablished Secretariat of the CC of CCP he was “too busy” to take care of the propaganda work and transferred these responsibilities to Wan Renchong.249

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248 Ibid., p. 150.
Action resources for support of the Qigong included conferences and publications for building up a network of Qigong supporters, also with societal actors and Qigong masters. In July 1979, Lü Bingkui, Director of the Ministry of Health’s National Administration of Chinese Medicine, chaired a “meeting for scientific reports on Qigong” (Qigong kexue huibaohui) at the Beijing Xiyuan Hospital. A number of high-ranking cadres attended: Minister of Health (Qian Xinzhong), Director of National Sports Commission (Wang Meng), and several members of the State Council, including three vice-premiers. Besides speeches, some successful demonstrations of power of “external Qi” were given. A follow-up meeting took place some five days later. This meeting was the inauguration for the powerful Qigong network, which actually brought together not only politicians, but also masters, scientists, and practitioners. Various party-state conference and work meetings followed.250 Serving the new ideational conception of Qigong as part of a modernization with Chinese characteristics, the party-state became more actively involved in the promotion of Qigong. For this, they unfolded a whole repertoire for publicizing Qigong and even introducing it into the educational system. The visit of popular Qigong master Yan Xin to the United States, for example, was covered at large with repeated features and reports on CCTV, paralleling coverage of state visits by politicians. Qigong performance also emerged as one item at the Chinese New Year Evening Gala.251 Likewise, the party-state used the newly established China Qigong Science Research Society to promote Qigong in nearly all sectors of society. For example, in the province of Guangzhou, Qigong practice was introduced in schools to improve student achievement as well as to treat shortsightedness. In 1998, the Shandong University even offered a study course on “Body Science – Qigong and the Study of Extraordinary Abilities.”252 Likewise, classes for the training of extraordinary skills were embedded in the professional sports education system, resulting in an increase of gold metals won by Chinese athletes. Qigong masters were as-

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250 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 5ff.
251 Lu 1999 (see note 188), p. 21.
252 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 81.
signed to tend the wounds of the athletes, offering relaxation and quick recovery sessions.²⁵³

3.1.2 Societal Actors

Under the PRC political system of the 1970s and 1980s, any societal actor was subject to various degrees of party-state control and incorporation. However, to simply consider actors such as scientists, associations, or media as part of the party-state might miss potential dynamics and variations from resources of the party-state. Therefore, the category “societal actors” refers to organizations and individuals which might be associated with the party state but did not officially stand or act as its representative. Being that neither was a full-scale actor in the entire field, their capacities will therefore be regarded under one category.

²⁵³ Heise 1999 (see note 14), pp. 187 and 194–95; Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 79.
3.1.2.1 Organizational Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Chart 4: Societal Actors’ Organizational Resources Concerning the Field of Religion/Protestantism

Unlike the party-state’s organizational resources concerning the religious field, societal actors’ organizational resources had to develop from ground zero, as they in general had no space to unfold resources before 1978.

The organizational resources of societal actors were mainly composed of three components: research institutes, academic research and educational institutes, and autonomous Christian communities, also known as “house churches.”

In 1978 the Institute of World Religions (Shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo), which had already been established in 1964, was put under the newly founded Chinese Academy of Social Science.254 Some twenty graduates from various specialities entered the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) and the Institute for Religious Studies of Nanjing University, one of the first-ever education centers on religion that had been established since 1974. Majors in religious studies included Christianity, Buddhism,

254 See the website of the institute at http://iwr.cass.cn (accessed August 12, 2008).
Islam, Daoism, Confucianism, and atheism. During the 1980s, religious studies were also initiated at the University of Beijing. Likewise, two more academic institutes were set up in Chengdu and Shanghai.  

1979 also witnessed the set-up of the first-ever academic association in this field, the Chinese Association of Religious Studies in Kunming, offering academic networking among professional and amateur researchers from various institutions and universities throughout the country. The Institute for World Religions and the Religious Studies Center in Nanjing began issuing three magazines at the same time called “Studies on World Religions” (Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu), “Material of World Religions” (Shijie Zongjiao Ziliao), and, from the institute in Nanjing, “Religions” (Zongjiao).  

Among the religious and philosophical traditions, Christianity was the one receiving the least attention among societal actors. Research mostly focused on theoretical issues in support of official policy or dealt with Daoism and Buddhism, as the latter was likewise considered a genuine Chinese tradition and therefore less sensitive. However, three scholars made an impact on Christian studies during this first phase and beyond: He Guanghu, Gao Shining, and Zhuo Xinping.  

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256 Ibid.


258 He obtained his Ph.D. on the Study of Religion from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing in 1989 and became a research fellow at the Institute of World Religions at CASS. In 2002 he was appointed professor at the People’s University.

259 Born in 1950, Gao currently holds a position as Professor at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. Gao has translated several Western theological books into Chinese. Last year, she was the first scholar who “dared” to do field work on autonomous “house churches.”

260 Zhuo was one of the first graduates from the newly opened Department of Religious Studies at CASS. Born in 1957, he earned his Master’s degree in 1981. In 1987 he finished his Ph.D. studies (Philosophy, Theology, and Sinology) at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. He has spent his entire career at the Institute of World Religious at CASS, of which he currently acts as director.
The autonomous Protestant communities\textsuperscript{261} had been a no-go area of research. Nevertheless, their impact on believers was huge as many of them joined autonomous congregations out of lack of alternatives (no official church or congregation around), rejection of political submittance and control, as well as due to the more intimate atmosphere within the autonomous congregations. Members might have considered meetings at official churches too large.\textsuperscript{262} Indeed, on account of their personal, quasi-informal atmosphere and their emotional style of worship as well as spiritual healing, the autonomous communities seemed to well address the needs of many people for community, spiritual consolation, and recognition in community.\textsuperscript{263}

Officially registered meeting points (juhuidian) as well as the autonomous Christian communities descended from a tradition of independent lay churches in China. The autonomous Christian communities stand in the ecclesiastical tradition of the Chinese independent church, which evolved during the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{264} The autonomous communities have rejected an occupational clergy and stressed the equality of their members; everybody can contribute something to their meetings. Equally, they have rejected professional staff and hierarchical structures and often have called each other “brother” or “sister.” However, in some congregations a tendency towards charismatic and authoritarian leadership has been also witnessed. From their midst have arisen leadership figures primarily equipped with considerable talent for preaching and curing or well-known as “walk-

\textsuperscript{261} Hunter and Chan prefer the term “autonomous communities” over the more common one, “house churches.” They argue that several communities expanded in size and also didn’t meet at home. Besides, the term “house churches” might apply to official Bible study meetings who meet at the home of followers. See Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 25.


\textsuperscript{263} Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 169ff.

\textsuperscript{264} Already in 1873 the first independent Chinese Denomination originated in Guangzhou, and in 1920 the first conference of autonomous churches with about 189 denominations took place, most of them concentrated in Zhejiang and Henan. As reasons for their desired independence, the Chinese believers mentioned the wish for independence from foreign influence, a reconciliation between Chinese Christians and non-Christians, as well as a more effectual conversion; see May M. C. Cheng, “House Church Movements and Religious Freedom in China,” China: An International Journal, No. 1 (2003), pp. 16–45, here pp. 27ff.
Leadership figures have often gathered a national network around themselves within which a high flexibility and efficiency exists, for example in relation to printing and transport of materials. One of the best known protagonists of the autonomous Christian communities, Xu Yongze, formed a network of about 3,000 communities in Henan, Hubei, and Anhui at the end of the 1980s. Although in big cities autonomous communities could have also been found, the majority are concentrated in rural areas, especially in Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang. Congregations have been based on extended family networks, a tendency which was reinforced during the Cultural Revolution where all meetings had to take place in secret. Consequently, the following lack of official churches became one reason for people turning to autonomous congregations.

The composition of membership has varied according to type and size of the community, with the elderly and women amounting for a relatively high number. Other reports have also mentioned youths brought in by family or friends. Women have tended to play an important role in individual congregations, which have provided them with opportunities for practicing their talents and receiving attention and acknowledgement for their actions often denied by the society at large. Many believers from the autonomous communities have worried about the moral decay of society and emphasize Christian ethics and family values in sermons. Their members have clung to the ideal of a simple life open to making sacrifices. Strongly influenced by the Revival and Pentecostal movements from the USA, several indigenous Christian groups had been founded in the 1920s, two of which have remained active in the 1980s and up to the present-day, exercising a strong influence on the autonomous Protestant communities.

The Jesus’s Family (Yesu jiating), founded in 1921 in Shandong, propagate the model of the first Christian community as given in the New Testament:

265 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 132.
266 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 31.
267 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 82–83.
268 Ibid., pp. 130ff.
living in a commune without any hierarchy or central authority. In 1940, some 100 “families” existed with about 100 members each. After years of repression during the Cultural Revolution, the group grew to more than 3,000 members during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{270} The True Jesus Church (\textit{Zhen Yesu jiaohui}) was founded in Los Angeles in 1907, when three Chinese believers carried it to their home, and the first local church was established 1917 in Tianjin.\textsuperscript{271}

In summary, the organizational resources of societal actors within the field of religion/Protestantism were thin and scattered, clearly dividing scientific and religious actors, with the former being principally in opposition to the latter due to official policy.

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

**Chart 5: Societal Actors’ Organizational Resources Concerning the Qigong Field**

Due to the label of science, study or research societies were involved as the dominant organizational structure within the field of Qigong. The first one was set up in 1979 in Beijing, and by the early 1990s some 32 local socie-


\textsuperscript{271} Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 120ff.
ties existed in 29 locations (including Hong Kong and Macao, excluding Tibet and Taiwan).\textsuperscript{272}

Table 1: Qigong Research Societies Established During the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Founding</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliated with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>China National Qigong Science Research Society (Zhonghua quanguo Qigong kexue yanjiuhui)</td>
<td>National Study Society of Traditional Chinese Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China National Traditional Chinese Medicine Medical Qigong Research Society (Zhonghua quanguo zhongyi xuehui yixue qigong yanjiuhui); Head: Gao Heting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>School of Chinese Qigong Advanced Studies (Zhonghua Qigong jinxu xueyuan), Beijing; Head: Lü Bingkui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 (4.4.)</td>
<td>China Qigong Science Research Society (Zhongguo Qigong kexue yanjiuhui), Beijing; Head: Zhang Zhenhuan</td>
<td>Chinese Science Association (Zhongguo kexue xiehui)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>China Sports Qigong Research Society (Zhongguo tiyu qigong yanjiuhui); Head: Zuo Lin</td>
<td>National Administration of Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>World Qigong Research Society (Shijie Qigong yanjiuhui); Head: Cui Yueli</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Li 1993 (see note 272) p. 78ff.

In May 1981, advocates of Somantic Science set up the “Research Society of Human Body Science” (Renti kexue yanjiuhui), which was composed of one representative per province, with Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan getting an additional seat. The Standing Committee included seven members from Beijing, Jilin, Yunnan, Sichuan, Hubei, and Shanghai (two).\textsuperscript{273} The first research lab on Qigong was set up in 1983 under the roof of the Research Academy of Chinese Medicine (Zhongguo Zhongyi yanjiuyuan).\textsuperscript{274} Various institutes within the Chinese Academy of Science as well as universities, headed by the famous Qinghua University, established spe-

\textsuperscript{272} Li Wan, Qigong liu xiang: Zhongguo Qigong de guoqu, xianzai ya weili (The Direction of Qigong: Past, Present and Future of Chinese Qigong) (Beijing: Guangmingchubanshe, 1993), p. 77.  
\textsuperscript{273} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 52.  
\textsuperscript{274} Zhang 1996 (see note 181), p. 2.
cial research labs for Qigong. Universities also offered Qigong classes, and by the end of 1980s some 40 universities had set up such courses. Aside from research departments, various medical organizations linked to Qigong evolved. By the end of 1980s, 34 Qigong hospitals existed and many hospitals instituted Qigong departments, including the General Hospital of the PLA, the General Hospital of the Air Force, and the Beijing Xiyuan Hospital.

Although the first cases of a child with “extraordinary skills” emerged in Dazu, Sichuan—and therefore local organizations were engaged with initial research activities—Beijing and Shanghai emerged as an early stronghold for the research and stipulation of “extraordinary abilities.” Research on various aspects of Qigong was initiated mostly by natural scientists. Both tendencies might have been related to even earlier activities related to Qi skills. In 1978, Gu Hansen, a biologist in Shanghai, initiated research on Qigong and published results about her discovery of “outer energy” (wai qi) in the newly founded Nature Magazine.\(^{276}\) From the outset, distinguished and hence politically well-connected scientists contributed to the promotion of Qigong research. Qian Senlin enthusiastically promoted research on extraordinary abilities of Qigong. As the designer of China’s nuclear weapons program, Qian was one of the most politically influential scientists, possessing several important posts: Vice-President of the National Association of Science and Technology, Vice-Chairman of the National Defence Science and Technology Commission. He somehow had to be regarded as closely incorporated by the party-state. The second significant figure providing links to the party-state was Nie Chunrong, Secretary-General of the National Association of Science and Technology.\(^{277}\)

Another early advocate of Qigong research was Feng Lida.\(^{278}\) In 1984 the research center on immunology, with Feng as head, was established at the

\(^{275}\) Heise 1999 (see note 14).
\(^{276}\) Zhang 1996 (see note 181), p. 2.
\(^{277}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 67–68. Probably for reasons of anonymity, Chinese sources don’t give these two concrete names, instead using only references like “a famous scientist” or “Mr. Somebody.” Still, from other sources it can be traced that the context points to Qian and Nie.
\(^{278}\) She had studied TCM as well as Western medicine first in Urumuqi in 1944, then at California University in 1946, and finally after 1949 in Moscow where she started to do research on immunology. Returning to China, she first worked for the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, while later on being transferred to the General Marine Hospital of the Chinese Liberation Army.
General Marine Hospital of the PLA. At this center, Feng conducted broad-scale research on the effect of “outer energy,” with special emphasis on Qigong Immunology with Chinese characteristics (Zhongguo tese de Qigong mianyixue). Feng could therefore utilize her own organizational resources to conduct self-designed research on “external energy.” Additionally, she possessed considerable social capital resources due to her active involvement in building up the People’s Republic of China, especially in the health sector. The reputation of her father, Feng Yuxiang, also contributed to her well-connectedness.279 Later on she became Vice-Chairman of the “International Qigong Science Union” (Guoji Qigong kexue lianhehui) as well as “Chinese Qigong Science Union” (Zhongguo Qigong kexue lianhehui). Many of the scientists know each other and probably have been connected through a rather loose network, though no collaborative research activities can be proved. All respective scientists kept to his or her own research lab.

Similarly, the supporters—early critics of “extraordinary abilities”—also emerged from the natural science camp. Deng Weizhi, editor of the encyclopaedia publishing company in Shanghai, was mentioned as the first one to “break the silence” in voicing criticism in public. Having observed betrayals and failures at several performances of extraordinary abilities, he published various articles in which he called for an objective survey of extraordinary abilities and an ongoing debate about it.280 Director of the Research Group on Natural Dialectics, Yu Guanyuan, was another early critic and became an inexhaustible author of a huge volume of articles. He was joined by Zhou Jianren, the brother of the famous novelist Lu Xun. On the September 15, 1981, Zhou Peiyuan, Director of the National Association of Science Technology, said he was unconvinced by a demonstration he witnessed and that he would oppose a sponsorship of NAST for an Extraordinary Abilities Research Society.281 A few weeks later, in October 1981, Yu became the head of a “Joint Group for the Investigation and Re-

search of Questions Concerning Human Body Extraordinary Abilities”
(Renti teyi gongneng wenti diaocha yanjiu lianluozu), which was set up as a
cooperation of the National Science Committee, the Chinese Academy of
Science, and the Research Group of Natural Dialectics; it was established
under the latter institution. Equipped with 50,000 RMB, its task was to
investigate and research, to organize experiments, and to publish their re-
results. However, the group stopped its work after the CCP Propaganda
Department issued its notification on Somantic Science in May 1982.\textsuperscript{282}
This probably contributed to Yu’s self-estimation about his activities during
that time: “In 1981 and 1982, I played the leading role. As I restarted writ-
ing articles after a time of break, as was not me any longer who played the
leading part . . . From 1983 till 1989, the amount of articles I wrote became
less and less.”\textsuperscript{283}
Media served as an important platform, but basically only for the supporters
of Qigong and extraordinary abilities. This included national newspapers,
local newspapers, and a variety of Qigong magazines having emerged dur-
during the 1980s. The media had a huge influence on the spreading and some-
times also on the fabrication of incidents related to “extraordinary abilities.”
Their reporting on emerging cases of children capable of reading characters
by using ears sparked the debate on “extraordinary skills.” The Sichuan
Daily termed the children’s case as a “new discovery of science” (kexue de
xin faxian), a label which proved to be formative for the supporters’ camp of
these phenomena. As the Qigong fever (Qigong re) unfolded during the
1980s and Qigong masters achieved great fame and prestige, sensational
stories on Qigong, especially the “extraordinary abilities,” surely managed
to attract a large readership. In the cause of the overall marketization of the
economy, publishing houses were also pressured to bring in revenue. There-
fore, bestsellers which suited the popular taste were needed for the newspa-
pers to secure their survival. As the party-state largely endorsed and further-
more boosted the popularity Qigong, supportive reporting on Qigong did not
create any tension for the journalists.\textsuperscript{284} According to Shen et al., critical

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{282}] Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 58.
\item[\textsuperscript{283}] Guanyuan Yu, “Di er bian: 1983 nian dao 1989 nian lunshu de jieshao (Second Part:
\item[\textsuperscript{284}] Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 56.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
opinions concerning “extraordinary skills” seldom got published, and the media did not even report on unsuccessful performances and observed dissatisfaction with “happening of irrational things” of the people.\textsuperscript{285} The promoters of Qigong and related topics were able to found a variety of special Qigong magazines that appeared as quickly as the Qigong research societies. At the beginning of the 1990s, the total number was 44.

Table 2: Qigong Magazines Founded During the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliated with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Qigong; Quarterly, since 1983 bi-monthly, after 1987 monthly</td>
<td>Magazine of TCM in Zhejiang, Hangzhou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Qigong and Science (Qigong yu Kexue), Guangzhou; Quarterly, 1983 bimonthly and later monthly</td>
<td>Guangdong Qigong Science Research Society Supported by Guangdong Provincial government, Department of Health, Sports Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Chinese Qigong (Zhonghua Qigong), Beijing/Wuhan; Quarterly, edition of 300,000, after 1988 bimonthly “Research on Extraordinary Abilities of Human Body” (Renti teyi gongneng yanjiu)</td>
<td>China National Medicine Study Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>“China Qigong” (Zhongguo Qigong), Hebei</td>
<td>Beidaihe Qigong Recovering Health Hospital and China Qigong Science Research Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>“Qigong and Sports” (Qigong yu tiyu), Xian; after 1988 bimonthly</td>
<td>International Qigong Science Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“Qigong,” Zhejiang</td>
<td>Zhejiang Hospital of Chinese Traditional Medicine Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>“Eastern Qigong” (Dongfang Qigong)</td>
<td>Beijing Qigong Research Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“Qigong and Human Body Science” Qigong yu renti kexue, Shanghai</td>
<td>China Human Body Science Society; Shanghai Communications University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Li 1993, (see note 272), p. 80.

The organizational resources of the societal actors within the Qigong field were linked up with various parts of society: research, education, and health. Besides, individual scholars were able to use political ties to foster their

\textsuperscript{285} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 36 and 69–70.
promotion of Qigong and extraordinary abilities. The supporters of Qigong were basically able to monopolize official media and successfully establish a wide number of Qigong magazines to spread their views. The supporters were able to suppress any attempt by the critics to organize quickly and rigorously, or to even voice their opinion.

3.1.2.2 Ideational Resources

Christian-Inspired Groups
Discussion about Christianity during the 1980s were closely connected to the overall ideational concepts on religion. Especially at the beginning, the complex ideational line on religion promulgated by the party-state prompted many scientists to explore and comment on the new official concepts. Although a new period of religion and the treatment of religion was embraced, the “old” terms and questions were still taken as valid starting point. The authors—probably also for legitimacy reasons—referred at length to scriptures by Marx and Lenin and therefore basically validated their theoretical approaches. Over the course of a decade, considerable change took place. Whereas at the beginning of the 1980s several scientists emphasized Marxist theory as guidance within their religious studies, towards the end of the 1980s voices arguing for a more critical reflection of Marx’s concept of religion arose. Some authors pleaded for a change in Marxist wording to avoid “provoking religious believers’ feelings” (ciji zongjiaotu de zongjiao ganqing), e.g. terms like “the demonical forces of religion” or “battle against religion” should be annihilated. Other voices were eager to warn against a too friendly or relaxed attitude towards religion, as religion is still an illusion and a “... deranged world point of view.”

Within the given ideational framework by the party-state, scholars explored various topics:

286 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 54 and 232–45.
Reasons for the Existence of Religion

Sources and reasons for the continuing existence of religion under socialism was one of the most debated questions during this period. The writings expressed the urge to match the obvious continuance and also rise of religion as well as the policy of religious freedom of the party-state with the theoretical foundations of Marxism which would indicate a vanishing of religion under socialism. Besides citing the reasons also given by the party-state, scholars named two additional reasons for the existence of religions. One referred to incorrect, corruptive behavior of party-state units creating feelings of injustice and inequality, therefore people feeling helpless and turning to religion. The second mentioned that a religious conscience is a necessary step in the development of an independent mind. Interestingly, it was emphasized that not all believers belong to the category ignorant masses but rather are intelligent persons still stuck in an illusionary stage of their cognitive process.

Functions of Religion

During the 1980s, a controversy about the function of religion came up. One group focused on the Marxist view of “religion [being] an opiate for the people” for enduring exploitation. This should not lead to a “beautification” of religion as much as to overly attached importance as an ideational support of the masses in their fight against the ruling class. Therefore, the power of religion in various mass movements, e.g. the Taiping, was only limited to an “outer appearance” without much essence, always leading to a bad end. Religion was considered a necessary historical phenomenon, vanishing under mature conditions. The other position considered religion as possessing a long-term social function and rejected the one-sided perspective of religion as only being the “opium of the masses.” Religion is closely connected to cultural history and had influenced it greatly, and religion also contributed to medical and chemical knowledge in respect to research and Daoism. What is more, religion also improves the ability of abstract thinking and creativity, turning to Zen Buddhism. Finally, the

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289 Wenzuan Jiang, “Shehuizhuyi shehui zong zongjiao c unzai de genyuan he tiaojian (Conditions and Sources for the Existence of Religion within the Socialist Society),” SJZHYJ 3 (1985); Yu 1986 (see note 287).
290 Among others, Lü 1982 (see note 288), p. 89.
contribution of religion to a balanced spiritual life is also emphasized.\textsuperscript{291} Towards the end of the 1980s, even more favorable views on religion were voiced. For example, religion could serve as a political force for releasing power of the suppressed, such as in Latin America. Even the idea of integrating religion into the socialist ideology was mentioned.\textsuperscript{292}

**Problems with the Implementation of Religious Policy**

In relation to the complex new ideational line of supporting religious freedom—while still holding onto its cessation and the spreading of atheistic thoughts and concepts inspired by Marx, Lenin, and Engels—scholars identified several problems with the implementation of religious policy, the two main issues being:

- overzealous approach towards promulgation of atheism which hurts religious believers’ feelings; or rejection of the policy on atheism as not necessary and counterproductive
- difficulty in distinguishing between religion and superstition. Some cadres misunderstood the policy of religious freedom and also tolerated superstitious activities, some even actively participating in such events.\textsuperscript{293}

**Religion and Superstition**

Scholars basically took over the definitions from the party-state.\textsuperscript{294} However, scholars as well as religious actors have pointed to the importance as well the difficulty in differentiating between religion and superstition. Otherwise, normal religious activities might also be a target of overzealous party cadres.\textsuperscript{295}


\textsuperscript{293} Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 255–56.

\textsuperscript{294} Yousan Wang, “Zhongguo wushenlun zai fan shenxue de douzheng zong jiejue de ji ge lilun wenti ji ju xian (Some Theoretical Problems and Limitations within the Fight of Atheism against Theism),” *SJZJYJ* 1 (1984), pp. 144–51; Jiang 1985 (see note 289), pp. 112–120.

\textsuperscript{295} Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 255–56.
Christianity
Since Christianity is regarded a foreign religion connected to the “imperialist” suppression of China before 1949, it has to be handled with special attention. Therefore, the localization (bentuhua) was stressed as an important condition of the existence of Christianity in China. Consequently, Christianity should serve the policy goals of the party-state, especially in promoting patriotism and an optimistic outlook on present—and not only on future—life. One author mentions that the content of several Christian songs was changed to seek happiness in this life and not the next and to facilitate patriotism.\textsuperscript{296} Additionally, in context of Christianity, several religious scholars as well as the head of the CCC, Bishop Ding, often raised concerns about political interference in church affairs. Especially the BRA and TSPM became an object of criticism throughout the 1980s, with some voices even calling for the abolishment thereof.\textsuperscript{297}

Christian-Inspired Groups
Christian-inspired groups was not a topic of systematic analysis in this initial phase. They were only sporadically mentioned and only in a negative context. Individual cases of people who longed for a better life in the other world and therefore attempted or succeeded in suicide to “rise to heaven” (sheng tian) were mentioned. Liang Jialun describes a man called Fang who founded several house church communities. He produced crosses out of red cloth and sold them to his followers as a protection against the evil.\textsuperscript{298} Likewise, the ban of single groups like the “Shouters” was also mentioned as a “penetration” of “imperialist forces” for undermining the stability of China.\textsuperscript{299}

Departing from scholarly discussions, additional ideational resources were derived from the autonomous Protestant communities. On account of the high esteem of Bible studies, members and, in particular, leaders of autonomous communities often have possessed detailed knowledge about the New Testament, these being linked with individual experiences and interpreted

\textsuperscript{296} Jiang 1985 (see note 289), p. 118.
\textsuperscript{297} Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 132ff.; Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 55.
\textsuperscript{299} For example, Jiang 1985 (see note 289), pp. 11–12.
Music has played a large role: rhythms and melodies of Chinese national songs are connected with Christian texts, which have then also been sung after the common meetings, for example, in field work. The facet of religious healing forms another aspect of their religious concepts, either in the form of common prayers for sick people or consultation of “healers,” possibly the leader of the community, who were assigned special powers of healing. Treatment could happen, for example, by laying on hands. Relig-ious healing and collective, spiritual experiences play a central role in their teachings. Besides emphasizing community, religious healing, and speaking in tongues, the True Jesus Church stressed baptism in “living” (that is, running) water. Their name is an expression of a partly vehemently represented, absolute validity claim of their teachings. Building on a historical legacy of a rich tradition of evangelicalism and revivalism, the autonomous congrega-tions placed an emphasis on spiritual and emotional matters. Suffering and hardships in this world were juxtaposed against a new and better world of God. Compared with the official church, not much difference related to theology and doctrinal orientation existed. Both congregations advocated a rather conservative, moralistic interpretation of the scriptures. Social gospel was mostly missing in both types of congregations.

Although the dominance of the party-state’s ideational resources within the field of religion/Protestantism made a huge impact on the societal actors, scholars were nevertheless able to raise some different ideas about religious concepts. Interestingly, their analyses—if listened to—would have provided the party-state with some helpful starting points for clarifying their own religious conceptions and for making their policy more efficient. In part due to an overzealous religious policy as well as to additional ideational re-sources the official churches lacked, autonomous Protestant communities were on the rise during the 1980s.

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300 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 31.
302 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 263.
QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

As related to the field of religion/Protestantism, scholars were the main facilitators of ideational resources for the societal actors within the Qigong field.

Cases of children who read characters with their ears inspired early concepts which were first unrelated to Qigong. Explanations concerning “reading characters with ears” referred to an elaborate level of magic tricks (moshu), then a “non-visual ability of image recognition,” (fei shijue qiguan tuxiang shibie de gongneng) and further “special somantic section functions” (Renti teshu ganying jineng) leading to the term “extraordinary somantic abilities” (Renti teyi gongneng). Extraordinary abilities were classified into two subcategories: one is spontaneously (zi fa) developed, mostly by children, and the second one can be acquired by Qigong masters as they can send out external energy. External energy was conceptualized as material, as a kind of “information/message” (xi), either living or nonliving.

Qian Senlin built on spreading enthusiasm about extraordinary abilities, announcing that it merited serious studying and working towards placing it in an institutionalized and accepted setting. As “extraordinary skills” had created dissonance among the public, a new label “Somantic Science” (renti kexue) should be used to foster greater acceptance. This discussion about somantic skills was then embedded into what might be called a paradigm change of the concept of “qi” within the term “Qigong.” This arrived in October 1981 as Qigong pundit Liu Guizhen established an important redefinition of Qigong. In the preface of his reedited book *Practice of Qigong Therapy* (Qigong liaofa shixian), Liu defines “qi” in “Qigong” not only as “breath,” but also as “the original qi in the human body” (yuanqi).

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305 During pre-reform times, “qi” was basically understood as “breath” and as a measurable value placed on the context of natural science and Western medicine. “Qigong” was reduced to a materialistic-functional nature of exercising one’s breath to improve or preserve physical health. The other original aspect of exercising one’s “qi” to foster spiritual cultivation linked with a mystical dimension in Buddhism and Daoism had been denied and cut off. Although a Qigong research group in Shanghai had voiced the broadening of “qi” to include aspects of mind disposition at the end of the 1950s, it quickly vanished in the heat of the anti-tradition quest during the Cultural Revolution which affected the whole Qigong field. Only after 1978 did the relaxed political atmosphere vis-à-vis tradition allow scholars to reestablish Qigong as valuable object for research, pointing to its broad-based potential. In
In part due to his reputation, Liu’s book became the official door opener for Qigong as a complex scientific issue. Whereas until 1981 publications on Qigong had been often classified as “nonpublic” (neibu) material, a vibrant public discussion on Qigong flanked by numerous articles and books materialized. Although ideational resources of Qigong emerged as part of an interrelated ideational network, two parallel strands within the publications and respective discussions can be noted, which started rather separately but became closely interwoven after 1983. One concentrated on the practice and styles of Qigong, and the other mainly dealt with theoretical aspects, especially of the newly established “somantic energy.”

After 1981 two camps—supporters and critics—evolved around the topic of Somantic Science and made it a highly debated theme among the public. Nothing less than the traditional notions of science and knowledge were suddenly at stake and open for negotiation—against the traditional Chinese concept of unity between human beings, nature and cosmic forces—and for both sides natural science became the benchmark for argumentation.

To support their claim of the existence of Somantic Science, supporters brought up various arguments:

Against the accusation by critics that Somantic Science is not provable and would falsify all existing scientific knowledge, Nie Chunrong, Head of the Secretary of Chinese Science Association, said: “We should not regard something as not real because it negates modern science. When Einstein brought up his theory of relativism, wasn’t that also against common sense of science?”

Meng Gefei, Vice-Director of the Institute of High Energy Biology, argued similarly, that there are many fields in science in which human knowledge is still limited, extraordinary skills being just one of them. All of them agreed on putting more emphasis and effort into scientific research and reducing the former common performances. This confidence in future scientific evidence that will “… [verify] more and more ‘mysterious’ concepts…” was also expressed by Ren Yingqing, Vice-Director of the Institute of...
President of the All China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Referencing the large number of famous scientists involved in its research and testing, he ask if it “... could it be that they are all betrayers ... and doing superstitious things?” Advocates of Somantic Science and Qigong also took up the idea of conceptualism as a discussion on “existence of spirit,” the “physiological/material human being” (shengli ren) and “immortal human being” (wuxing ren). Based on this differentiation, “ideal abilities/telekinesis” (yinian gongneng) should become the basis for new kind of communication for bridging long distances, for example phone calls between two stars or transportation of things. The potential use of Somantic Science for x-raying (due to skills for seeing through material), geography, archaeology, and even customs security was mentioned. Supporters also voiced the usage of Qigong for the reform of the educational system, being that Qigong could help improve knowledge. In addition to presenting Somantic Science as being the potential basis of a “revolution of science” (kexue gemin), promoters labelled it as a chance to “restore Eastern literature and art” (dongfang de wuyi fuxing), as embedded into a specific “Eastern culture” and also a “natural philosophy with Chinese characteristics” that equally acknowledge nature of mankind and nature as well as mankind and the spirit (jingshen). This way of thinking penetrated the development of every scientific realm and in fact can be considered as the “essence of Chinese traditional culture.” This essence, juxtaposed against an overly atomic and positivistic approach of Western science, should make a great contribution to the development of science worldwide. “Taking human body science as the core element, we will conduct interdisciplinary research. This will be of vital importance for the thriving promotion of modern natural sciences.” Furthermore, the need to foster research was made evident with reference to China being a “latecomer” in this field already opened on an international scale. As China has famous

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310 Ibid., p. 51.
311 Ibid., pp. 90–91.
312 Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 135.
masters and excellent ancient scriptures on Qigong and Chinese medicine, the advocates were confident about obtaining successful research results.\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 42 and 50.} This ensured a strong effort, advocated by the leading figures of the China Qigong Research Society, to incorporate Qigong into the political field, e.g. to utilize it for the construction of a spiritual civilization.\footnote{Chong Peng, “Guanche gaige jingshen, zhua jin zhua hao: Qigong kexue yanjiu he jingshen wenming jianshe (Practice the Reform of Spirit, Hold it Tight, Seize it Well: Qigong Science Research and Construction of Spiritual Civilization),” \textit{ZGQGKX} 11 (1995), p. 4.} Qigong was also presented as a governmental theory (\textit{zhiguo zhi lun}) and a method for bringing about a peaceful and stable nation.\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 144.} Qian Xuesen closely linked Somantic Science with the communist doctrine. “In the manifest of the Communist Party it says ‘A ghost, the ghost of communist is roaming around Europe,’ isn’t it that the ghost of Somantic Science is now roaming around us? . . . It [Somantic Science] is not just a matter of science and technology, but a social movement . . . It will become the science of Marxism . . . to handle it well it needs an explosive revolution of science . . . we could consider it as an Eastern revolution of science.”\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 150–51; Heise 1999 (see note 14), pp. 125ff.}

Especially after Qigong and Somantic Science had become more and more interwoven, external energy developed as one core category of the debate stemming from the growing publication of results from various experiments on external energy. The Qigong Research Society in Beijing had already discussed results and effects of external energy back in 1981, with a more encompassing research volume appeared in 1986.\footnote{Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 125.} To reinforce the authoritative claim of external energy, Qigong was framed within a theoretical system. It was said to have four ingredients: electromagnetic waves, absorption of static electricity, low frequency of magnetic information, and movements of particles. The healing power of external energy and Qigong practice in general became another important ideational resource towards the end of the 1980s. Various studies with statistics of healed or improved cases related to Qigong were published. Besides the successful therapy of chronic illnesses like insomnia, stress, or migraines, Qigong practice was
also positively recognized in relation to treatment of tumors and even cancer.  

The zeal of the supporters in their quest for promotion of Qigong and Somantic Science can be seen in their denunciation of their critics. They compared them to the “Gang of Four” and “extreme rightist thinking” as well as a “non-understanding of science.”  

Like the supporters, critics of Somantic Science also armed themselves with a variety of arguments. Yu Guanyuan, head of an early jointly set up group for research on extraordinary abilities, drew on results from experiments as well as from theoretical knowledge. He put up five major claims against Somantic Science:

- it is not a new or only Chinese phenomenon, but rather a restaging of Western parapsychology
- propagating Somantic Science is not real, but a misuse of magicians’ tricks
- critical essays and voices of Somantic Science have no chance of getting published
- it had not withstood real scientific experiments

He also linked Somantic Science to idealism—having been wrongly put into a framework of Marxist materialism—as well as to knowledge based in inspiration—having been wrongly put into a scientific frame. Zhou Peiyuan, Head of the Chinese Science Association, also considered Somantic Science to be “against natural law,” which is objective, whereas the will is subjective. Referring to his research, Zhang Honglin said that extraordinary abilities are nonexistent and only the result of mental suggestion. Other critics, like Pan Shu, did not discredit the whole field of Somantic Science but claimed that some phenomena of this sector, like “reading characters with ears,” are betrayals or tricks.

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318 Ibid., pp. 202ff.
319 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 70.
320 The critics avoided the word “science” and just spoke of “somantic extraordinary abilities.” For language convenience, these terms will be used as neutral synonyms without any judgement.
322 Ibid., pp. 70ff.; Guanyuan Yu, “Yao lingxue haishi yao ziran bianzhengfa (Do We Want Psi Study or Natural Dialectics),” in Yu 2002 (see note 186), pp. 80–93.
323 Zhang 1996 (see note 181), pp. 49ff.
324 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 93ff.
The above-mentioned controversy continued well into the mid 1980s, as discussions on external energy spread through the country. After the first extended research reports appeared, the two camps reformed themselves under two new labels: supporters called the newly discussed phenomena “New Science” (xinxing kexue) and advocated further research. Critics referred to it as “Pseudo Science” (wei kexue), “lies” (huangyan), and “feudal superstition” (fengjian mixin).325 Hinting at the rising combination of various topics and terms, Yu Guanyuan shaped the label “three ‘Pseudo,’ one ‘so called’” (san wei yi suowei) referring to “Pseudo Life Science, Pseudo Somantic Science, and Pseudo Qigong” as well as to “so-called Somantic extraordinary abilities.” Yu didn’t call the latter “Pseudo” as this would admit there are “true” extraordinary skills, and according to him none exist at all.326 Adding increased leverage to their position, critics made crossreference to international terminology and debates on parapsychology and related topics. This probably also aimed at an invalidation of the claims by supporters about a “new discovery.”

In addition to labeling practice, the critics positioned themselves against the supporters in a dualistic, mutually exclusive way: “Concerning the question of ‘outer energy’ it is no longer a simple academic controversy, but competition between science and superstition, true and false, materialism and idealism.”327

Not surprisingly, the ideational resources of Qigong and Somantic Science supporters closely resemble those brought up by the party-state. However, scientists thought to take it even several steps further and apply it to various realms, which might have been an attempt at securing extra funding and influence. This was probably also one reason for the zealous ideational battle of both sides of the “truth.” It might also signal a common yearning for clear-cut orientations after years of changing political definitions of right and wrong. “Science” became the only legitimate and trustworthy measure for truth and falseness, therefore supporters and critics alike clung to it.

325 Ibid., p. 174.
However, they both related the arguments to overall political concepts like Marxism.

### 3.1.2.3 Action Resources

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

As a result of their weak organizational resources, action resources of societal actors within the field of religion/Protestantism were very limited. Scholars normally stuck to the publication of articles in the mentioned scientific journals of religion. They didn’t have access to the official media. Some religious authors have tried to draw the attention away from potential critics on religion in general. They have pointed to “illegal” religious activities as a real danger to state and society. While criticizing an overrigid control of patriotic religious activities, Xiao Zhitian advised the party-state to focus on illegal religious activities instead.\(^{328}\)

As they possessed a strong communal base, the autonomous Protestant communities naturally had several action resources to build on. Most of them derived from their existence as a religious group and their practices. Hymns, prayers, and sermons were the most important congregational elements. Emotional elements like collective, loud praying, meditative repetition of certain syllables (for example, “Ah-Lu” as a shortened form of “Hallelujah”), and the spiritual gift of “speaking in tongues” have been very common, in Shandong and Henan particularly. Some groups like the “Local Meeting Points,” however, reject them as “unnatural” and position Bible studies in the center of their religious practices.\(^{329}\)

Important elements of the non-registered communities are personal testimonies, especially cases of healing and prayers, often loudly appealing “Jesus Christ,” being primarily understood as a Savior and Healer.\(^{330}\)

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

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\(^{329}\) Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 132ff.

\(^{330}\) Ibid., p. 7.
Publishing became one major instrument for establishing claims and ideas by both supporters and critics of Somantic Science. The supporters co-opted nearly all media and established extra Qigong magazines. Often one newspaper came up with a story, and then another followed up on it. In the case of Qigong master Yan Xin, the Guangming Daily (Guangming ribao, GMRB)—at that time one of the most influential newspapers in the scientific world—published two long articles on Yan’s external energy ability, namely the restructuring of cells. Over the consecutive two days, RMRB as well as China Daily (CD) ran similar stories, therefore enlarging Yan’s scope of publicity. Another report on Yan Xin even changed the facts concerning his originally and self-admitted failed attempt to heal famous nuclear scientist Deng Jiaxian. The article stated that Yan through his healing powers extended the life of Deng for one month.\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 169–170; Zhang 1996 (see note 181), pp. 47ff.} Likewise, the media helped promote Zhang Hongbao’s “Chinese Gong.” Just after he started to appear in public in November 1987, Beijing Youth Daily (BYD, Beijing Qingnianbao), RMRB, and many others published articles about his style in January 1988.\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 216.} In other cases, magazines and newspapers censored or hid critical articles in the interest of protecting Qigong masters and related vested interests. Therefore, the critics had to issue their own circulars as a vehicle to get their voices heard.

One was called “Research Material of Investigation Concerning Somantic Extraordinary Abilities” and the other “Reference Material of Research on Somantic Extraordinary Abilities.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 59.} In the second half of the 1980s, whole books on Qigong became very popular: especially books on Qigong masters having emerged as bestsellers.\footnote{Lu 1999 (see note 188), pp. 7–10; Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 147ff.} Also, books on Somantic Science were published, interestingly first by publishing companies from Sichuan (an early base of Somantic Science) and companies attached to military organs. Heise states that publications of private individual Qigong masters exceeded the impact of books edited by scientists or editing boards.\footnote{Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 143.} Again according to Heise, a chronological and encompassing treatise on Qigong literature...
was manageable only until 1983. Afterwards the density and frequency of publications accelerated to a rather unmanageable level. 336

The organization of conferences became a second resource of action, since conferences not only strengthened regional, national, and international networks but also reinforced the identity of Qigong as a scientific discipline. At the beginning of the 1980s, several provinces held conferences, experiments, and set up study groups for Somantic Science. 337 Two major national conferences were held; the first one—the “First Scientific Symposium on Somantic Extraordinary Abilities”—took place in Shanghai for six days from February 2–14, 1980 with representatives attending from six provinces. The second one, “Second Session of National Scientific Symposium on Somantic Extraordinary Abilities,” gathered in Chongqing in May 1981 for seven days with 380 delegates from all over China. Participants included high-level party-state representatives: the Party Secretary of Sichuan Province, Party Secretary of Chongqing City Committee Cui Liansheng, Secretary of Secretariat of China Science Association Nie Chunrong, Vice-Director of Science Committee of Sichuan Province Ye Taolu, and Head of Bureau for Chinese Medicine under the Ministry of Health, Lü Bingkui. Corresponding with increasing consensus for presenting Qigong as a vital and glorious part of a new concept of science rooted in national tradition, in the latter half of 1980s conferences were held on an international scale. Already back in 1981, the American Parapsychological Association visited China by invitation of the State Council. This led to a visit of Chinese researchers on Extraordinary Qigong Abilities to Cambridge University. Articles of Qian Xuesen and others were also translated and published in various parapsychological magazines. 338 The first international Qigong Meeting was held in 1986 in Shanghai. In September 1989, the Second International Qigong Meeting (Guoji Qigong hui) took place in Beijing. During the conference it was announced: “On July 13, Qigong Master Song Jiping will launch a time-marking scientific experiment. Using Qigong information and will power, he will change the DNA of midges. The experiment progresses into the forty-fourth day, more than 90 percent is already accomplished. We

337 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 42ff.
338 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 70.
ask every Qigong fan to help in observing whether stings of midges on humans have already decreased, whether most of them have already started to sting trees, leaves or worms . . .” Likewise, the critics—the “Joint Group” respectively—held a conference “Research Conference on Investigation of Somantic Extraordinary Abilities” in Beijing on March 1982 for two days with over 60 participants from ten provinces and a wide range of institutions. Participants included Vice-Director of National Science Committee Yu Guangyuan, Director of Institute of Psychology under Chinese Academy of Science Pan Shu, Vice-Director of Institute of Biology, Hong Chaosheng, several medicines from Hospitals in Beijing and representatives from publishing companies. Notably, the critics always omitted the word “science” from the name.

A third action resource for both sides were tests and experiments, often linked with the above-mentioned conferences or within the institutions mentioned as organizational resources. Interestingly, both sides used the same action resources to promote their stance.

### 3.1.3 Movements

Taking up critical remarks on lack of leadership analysis, especially when it comes to their concrete available or familiar resources, i.e. inherent in their biography, the first subchapter deals with worldly and spiritual assets inherited or acquired by the movement leaders. Here, the structure resembles the already above-made analytical separation into organizational and ideational resources.

#### 3.1.3.1 Leadership Resources

The leadership capacities encompass not only real assets, but also ascribed (either initiated by the leader or his associates) and believed ones (by the followers). Boundaries between these two spheres are often blurred and

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339 Lu 1999 (see note 188), p. 11.
341 Ganz 2003 (see note 94); Morris and Staggeborg 2004 (see note 133).
subject to disputes, especially between party-state actors and the groups, as in the case of the birthdate of Falungong founder Li Hongzhi.

If one considers potential motives for the founding of spiritual-religious groups, Wakeman’s comments relating to historical secret societies in China also appear valid to the present time: “[It is] difficult . . . to distinguish messianic self-conviction from charlatanic self-service.” The interview with the “Supreme God” after his arrest might be taken as proof of the latter: “From my experience with the ‘Established King,’ I have recognized how superstitious people were. They do not really know what gods are. Therefore you just have to pretend you are divine and people will believe in you and give you everything they have. I thought then, if Wu Yangming [head of the ‘Established King’] can be a God, why could I not? . . . To be honest, with the help of the ‘Teachings of the Supreme God,’ I just wanted to satisfy my own needs.” On the other hand, preachers who arose from within “house churches” like Lin Yage or Xu Yongze have not strayed from their religious thoughts and activities despite having been repeatedly sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Wu Yangming, leader of the “Established King” group, had to undergo an “education class” on two separate occasions and served two prison sentences in labor camps. It is difficult to classify which actions to consider religious beliefs and which the messianic calls of preachers, but the existence, and the effects, of both are an integral part of this analysis.

3.1.3.1.1 Biographical Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

A majority of group’s founders were peasants in their fifties and sixties. Besides their familiarity with rural life, being male and of a respectable and


343 Bin Wu, *Zouru diyu: Ershi shiji shijie xiejiao heimu* (Entering Hell: The Black Curtain of Heretical Teachings Worldwide in the 20th Century) (Shenyang: Liaoning renminchubanshe, 1999), pp. 178ff. An article from the Associated Press (AP, October 18, 1999) cites this statement in indirect speech, the source being an “official report” which was printed in a Beijing newspaper after Liu’s arrest. It is unclear, however, under what circumstances the interview took place and what motives Liu might have had for making such a statement.

trustworthy age helps the founder to establish their claim for leadership. Most leaders initially use their own home as a base for starting to recruit followers and slowly expanding their activities. While initiating their groups, the leaders’ biographical backgrounds equipped them with two resources, a familiarity with Christianity and experiences of persecution serving as spiritual reassurance within the Christian context of suffering. Under the influence of family or friends, the leaders got in touch with Protestant, mostly non-registered, congregations, chiefly influenced by the Pentecostal or Charismatic movement, namely the “True Jesus Church” or the “Shouters.” In China’s rural areas, most communities follow an evangelical tradition and, due to lack of churches or harassment of local authorities, many believers just meet at home. This background explains the leaders’ detailed knowledge of the Bible, which can be recognized in the name and the teachings of the group. Disharmony experienced in their former congregations often leads to their decision to set up their own groups. The founding father of the “Shouters,” Li Changshou (Witness Lee), was only present and actively evangelizing in China in the 1940s. Later on he still managed to influence the group from the United States and emerged as a central worship figure within the group’s teachings. Li was born in Yantai City, Shandong province, in 1905. He became a coworker and evangelist of Ni Tuosheng’s (Watchmen Nee) indigenous Chinese Church movement (Little Flock Movement) during the 1940s. As opposed to other leaders, Li acquired—and was also involved in—drafting a very complex system of theology firsthand. After 1949, he was sent to Taiwan to spread the teachings of “Little Flock.” In Taiwan, Li started developing his own teachings, then in 1962 he immigrated to California and founded the “Shouters” group. During the 1980s, he sent his coworkers to spread his teachings in China. He died in 1997. Other leaders were influenced by the “Shouters” group. Wu Yangming, the founder of the “Established King,” was born in 1945 in a village in Anhui province and became a Christian believer in 1979, in 1983 joining the “Group of the Shouters.” Having come across the passage in the Gospel of

See the website on Li Changshou (Witness Lee), http://www.witnesslee.com (accessed December 24, 2008).
Luke (2:34) talking about Jesus as the “anointed king” (Beiliwang), Wu decided to start his own group in this name in autumn 1988.\(^{346}\) The head of the “Teachings of the Soul,” Hua Xuehe, was born in 1949 and worked as a primary school teacher in a Jiangsu province district. In 1979, Hua joined the “True Jesus Church,” resigning his teaching post as well as his party membership.\(^{347}\)

The family of Xu Shengfu, the founder of the “Grade of Three Servants Group,” also belonged to one of the earlier families to be converted to Christianity in his home village Lingliu, in Zhenping county, Henan province. Xu was born on June 18, 1946.

It was said that Xu’s mother had a throat disease and the family did not have any money to pay for treatment. So she began to believe, and then the family followed. Villagers from his home recalled that Xu followed a Christian man Wang Huaru—seemingly also influenced by the “Shouters” tradition—to preach at the age of 12. Wang was a cripple, so Xu had to carry him around for preaching. Gradually, Xu established a reputation as a “religious leader” himself and became surrounded by a large number of followers.\(^{348}\)

Most leaders endured punishment in labor camps or prisons due to “illegal religious activities” even before they started to found their own group.

Hua got arrested for setting up an agency of the “True Jesus Church” in 1982. After his release and having been “enlightened by the Spirit,” he started his own activities and was finally expelled from the “True Jesus Church.” After another spiritual revelation, he and five others went to neighboring places in the Henan provinces to spread the gospel.\(^{349}\) After having served one year of labor-camp imprisonment for “illegally organizing religious activities” in 1987, Wu found his former sphere of activity being taken over by another follower, so he went to Henan to spread the teachings of the “Shouters” and, later, of his own group. Despite being


\(^{349}\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 65–66.
heavily criticized during the Cultural Revolution and arrested twice before 1990, Xu continued with his religious mission.\textsuperscript{350}

It looks as if these punishments not only didn’t stop them from “illegal religious activities” but even stirred up their commitment to their cause. As within many other religions, Christian believers might regard sufferings and hardships at the will of God and as a lesson to learn in their spiritual growth. As Wu Yangming stated:

\begin{quote}
Being locked up by the Public Security one time means succeeding in the Spirit for one time. We didn’t commit any sin, the cadres of the CCP are evil demons, we use the Gospel to save China.\textsuperscript{351}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Qigong-based groups}\textsuperscript{352}

Three biographical features shaped the resources of the Qigong groups’ leaders: a poor family background, their educational background, and a cultivation of relationships with persons supporting their cause. Similar to Christian-inspired groups, poor childhood provided the Qigong leaders with a driving force for the foundation of their Qigong style. This was often related to bad health conditions and the inability to afford medicine.\textsuperscript{353}

The biographical description of Xie Zhanrong, founder of \textit{Yinyanggong}, confirms this view. Xie was born into a poor family and suffered multiple illnesses during childhood. With his family lacking money for medicine, he looked for teachers for studying healing methods. In 1985 he decided to “... bring luck to the people and save them,” designing his \textit{Yinyang} Qigong style.\textsuperscript{354} Zhang Hongbao surfaced in the Qigong field in November 1987 when he started to spread his Zhongong. Zhang was born on January 5, 1953 in Harbin as son of a “normal working-class family.” His childhood was full of hardships, so he started to practice Qigong and traveled to Henan,

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{350} Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 186).
\textsuperscript{351} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 66.
\textsuperscript{352} For a general analysis of the origin, biographical background, and strategies of Qigong masters in the 1980s and 1990s, see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 86–101.
\textsuperscript{353} Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 70.
\textsuperscript{354} Yi Hui, “Gaogong ji neng, shen yi sheng de (High skills, Miraculous Abilities, Mystical Doctor, Holy Virtue),” \textit{ZGQG} 2 (1993), p. 34.
\end{footnotes}
Shanxi, Hebei, Sichuan, and Beijing looking for teachers.\textsuperscript{355} According to a Chinese news magazine report, Zhang was sent to the countryside as part of Mao’s “Up to the mountains and down to the counties” education campaign for intellectuals. Zhang stayed in the countryside for 10 years.\textsuperscript{356} The family of Tian Ruisheng, founder of Xianggong, is described as poor, his lifestyle as modest, and he is said to have donated to areas hit by calamities.\textsuperscript{357} The large majority of Qigong masters interviewed by Chen recite self-healing as their initial motivation for starting to practice Qigong themselves.

Education, often in medicine, became a second important resource for Qigong leaders.

Xie worked at an institute for Qigong therapy before he decided to quit his job.\textsuperscript{358}

Yan Xin, founder of \textit{Yan Xin Qigong}, graduated from the Academy of Chinese Medicine in 1977. He was transferred to the Institute of Chinese Medicine in Chongqing and while doing clinical work used “outer energy” to heal some people. In 1984, after having been interviewed by a \textit{GRRB} reporter, he gained a reputation, with more interviews and reporting following, making him a healer in demand. Later on, he was invited to work at the research lab of Qinghua University.\textsuperscript{359} Zhang Zhixiang, the “modern transmitter” of \textit{Yuanjigong}, was born in December 1943 in Ezhou City, Hubei province. His family had a strong medical background and was said to be a transmitter within a lineage of an 800-year-old cultivation practice called “The Way of Supreme One” (\textit{Taiyidao}). When he 20 years old, Zhang began to take up the heritage of his family and started researching the \textit{Yuanjigong} system as well as healing. In 1978, for “bringing happiness to the people,” he decided to “break with the old tradition of secret family

\textsuperscript{357} Miao Liu, “You she laizi xiang: Ji Zhongguo Xianggong jichuan ren Tian Ruisheng (Having Mochsu Coming from Flagrance: Record of Xianggong and its Transmitter Tian Ruisheng),” \textit{ZGQG} 6 (1991), pp. 28–32.
\textsuperscript{358} Hui 1993 (see note 354), p. 34.
transmission” and started to teach *Yuanjigong* in public.\(^{360}\) He is pictured as a modest and ordinary man who sacrificed a lot, even his own capital, to promote *Yuanjigong*.\(^{361}\)

Zhang Hongbao’s educational background greatly differed from that of other Qigong leaders. In 1977 he passed the entrance exam to study mineral separation at an institute in Harbin. After graduation he worked for 5 years at a mineral separation unit of Heilongjiang. In 1985 he was sent to the Beijing Iron and Steel Study Institute (now called Beijing University for Science and Technology) to study business management.\(^{362}\)

Many Qigong masters cultivated and profited from the political connections or positions they took up. Yan’s professional contacts helped him secure an initial support base, as he was willingly promoted as a “superman” of Qigong. He was discovered and drawn into the political circuit. Then Vice-President of COSTAND and Chairman of the China Qigong Research Society Zhang Zhenhuan heard of Yan’s abilities and asked him to treat several friends and high-level cadres. Through Zhang’s networks, Yan increased his reputation considerably.\(^{363}\)

Zhang Hongbao showed political ambitions from the very beginning. Having entered the Communist Youth League at the age of 17 and the CCP after graduation, Zhang Hongbao engaged in Party matters and participated in various training sessions.\(^{364}\) After his retirement, Tian Ruisheng became head of a neighborhood committee and also a member of the Luoyang’s People’s Congress.\(^{365}\) His publicity and neighborhood acquaintances provided Tian with a significant potential base of followers. The website of *Xiangong* portrays Tian as selfless and self-sacrificing. Besides pictures on the website showing him with other persons, photos of Tian wearing a blue

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\(^{362}\) Sun and Li 2003 (see note 256).

\(^{363}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 139.

\(^{364}\) Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356).

Mao Zedong-style suit and hat invoke the atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{366}

Contrary to most other Qigong masters, Zhang Xiangyu, who started spreading her \textit{Tiранzhonxin Qigong} in 1986, was not associated with high-ranking cadres. She was the only popular female Qigong master. Born in Xining, she had been an actress in the Qinghai Performance Group and, according to her autobiographical novel \textit{Soul of Great Nature (Da ziran de hunpo)}, she was no different from others, a very common person, and had never previously practiced Qigong.\textsuperscript{367} However, Chen described Zhang Xiangyu as “youthful and vivacious.”\textsuperscript{368} A lack of substantial ties with influential persons might have been a reason why she was arrested in 1989, being made the public scapegoat for blaming the rising problems and irregularities within the Qigong sector discussed by societal actors and noticed with awareness by the party-state.

### 3.1.3.1.2 Spiritual Resources

Spiritual resources mostly concerned the ascribed characteristics of the leaders as mentioned above. However, they often functioned as complementary resources to the biographical ones.

**Christian-inspired Groups**

Three resources can be related to the leaders of the Christian-inspired groups: a call or spiritual revelation, the formerly mentioned experience of suffering, and an ascribed charisma.

#### Call/Spiritual Revelation

Wu Yangming, head of the “Established King,” described his experience of a call in a statement given to the Public Security Office after his arrest. While reading the Gospel of Luke, he was struck by the word “established” and could not grasp its meaning. After repeated prayers, Jesus appeared in


\textsuperscript{367} Citation from her book according to Tongling Zhang and Hongtao Xu, eds., \textit{Zou huo ru mo mian mianguan – Qigong chu pian (Survey of Qigong Deviation)} (Beijing: Renminweishengchubanshe, 1997), p. 199.

\textsuperscript{368} Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 75.
his dream, entrusted him with preaching the Gospel, and anointed him the
“Established King.” After awaking from the dream, not only did every word
in the Bible appear clearly to him, but also his call to be the “resurrected
Jesus Christ” Xu Shengfu, head of the “Three Grades of Servants Group,”
received a revelation offer after several days of feasting. Hua Xuehe,
leader of “Teachings of the Soul,” mentioned that he received a revelation
of the spirit twice on his spiritual journey. He also explains his vocation
with his biographical background. Hua Xuehe refers to himself as the “Sec-
ond Jesus” because his name differs from the Chinese translation of the
name “Jehovah” only in one character (Hua Xuehe and Ye Hehua; “He,” in
both cases, stands for “harmony,” and “Hua” means “flourishing”). Hua
mentioned that he, like Jesus, was born in winter (the Chinese character
“xue” is translated as “snow”) and had been following a similar course of
suffering. The birthday of Hua Xuehe, on the January 17 of the moon calen-
dar, was then fixed as the birthday of the “Savior” within the “Teachings of
the Soul”

Suffering
Within the Chinese cultural contest, “to endure bitterness” not only resem-
bles a real biographical feature of most people growing up during the 1950
and 1960s; this description is also used as praise of the strong character and
life skills of a person. Within the Christian context, narrating a life of suffer-
ing relates to the life and figure of Jesus. Unlike Hua, however, not all lead-
ers refer themselves directly to Jesus. Within an internal biographic
introduction, Xu Shengfu, head of the “Three Grade of Servant Group,” is
referred to as “servant of the Spirit,” as have been other preachers before,
like Wang Mingdao or Ni Tuosheng.

Suffering occurred linked to various different themes. Firstly, suffering was
framed as a characteristic of life. “During his hardships, the servant [Xu
Shengfu] worked hard like Paul, the disciple. He made bricks for other peo-
ple. He used the earned money to pay for the transportation fee to spread the

369 Zhaoming Deng, “Recent Millennial Movements on Mainland China: Three Cases,”
370 “Jiaohui jianjie (Short Introduction to the Church),”
371 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 80.
372 “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
Gospel. He never bought anything to eat or clothes. He ate the leftovers of other people in cantinas and wore the clothes which other people threw in the dustbin. If nobody hosted him at his place, he slept at the railway station, on the streets. If the weather was too cold, he slept in the underground pipes. Correspondingly, he acquired, due to his bitter life, considerable survival knowledge: “He knew which plants are edible, and which are not, which one can be used for healing. He also knew what to do when meeting a snake, how to cross a river, how to get on a boat and many other things. The Spirit presented him with much wisdom.”

Secondly, suffering of the “Servant” is directly linked to his success in spreading the Gospel. “Every time he met persecution, the Gospel opened up one city.”

Thirdly, in the face of all his suffering, he was guarded by God. “But the Spirit loved the life of his servant. So he freed him from enduring trials and tribulation [while in custody]. He rested at home, having neither food nor money for medicine. But after one month, his body recovered. Thanks to God who saved his servant’s life from death.” Because he suffered not for himself, but for Jesus Christ.

Charisma

Various adherents witnessed Hua’s spiritual charisma and loving care for his followers. A follower named Li is said to have testified:

Hua Xuehe is “King of Ten Thousand Kings, God of Thousand Gods.” When Hua went to Henan for missionizing, he didn’t eat for 16 days; this testifies that Hua is a God. People who are doomed to death have just to be touched by Hua Xuehe and their illness will go away . . . Hua Xuehe is a miracle. When he got beaten by the police officer, he told him, “Beat me, just wait until you will beg me.” After the officer went home, he found his daughter’s body covered with purple spots. As he went back to beg Hua for healing, Teacher Hua told him to admit his mistake, and as the officers arrived back home again, the spots on his daughter’s body were gone.

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374 Ibid.
375 Ibid.
376 After his arrest, this follower Li testified that he fabricated all the evidence. Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 81–82.
Another follower named Li is cited to have described Hua as “...an ever-burning vessel of light which will always lead his loved people within familiar waters. Teacher Hua, you are an outstanding spiritual engineer shouldering the responsibility of life. You used your heart and blood to nourish generations of sons and grandsons. You are like a candle, lightened yourself to shine for others ...” Others compared Hua to be “more praiseworthy than the beauty of spring” or to a “Red Sun arisen from Jiangsu [Hua’s birth place].”377 During an online discussion concerning the group “Three Grades of Servants” at the BBS “Life” (Shengmingluntan), a self-claimed police officer wrote about his admiration of the group’s founder while overseeing him serving a three-year “Education through labor” punishment:

During the investigation of his case and supervision his punishment, I came to admire his patience and loving heart and was moved by it. He cared for other people, helped them with their work ... He was not like the others, not taking like everybody, he knew everything from literature to science. Concerning his knowledge on the creation of all things, heaven and hell and human life, he was even more like a supernatural. He also read the Bible and talked about the logic of Jesus to the other prisoners The atmosphere in prison changed totally because of him, the dying air became more lively, quarrels and fights no longer happened, everybody was following the rules.378

Within some branches of the “Shouters,” Li has been worshipped as the second person of the Trinity, replacing Christ.379

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

The Qigong masters depicted basically two resources for conceptualizing how they have acquired Qigong skills: illness and mystical teachers.

Illness

Zhao Jinxiang, founder of Hexiang Qigong, could neither build on a family tradition nor on long experience for establishing his Qigong style as a legiti-

377 Cited after ibid., p. 80.
379 Ibid.
mate and trustworthy one. Although he mentioned that his father utilized his “extraordinary abilities” to heal, Zhao put his own severe illness and its cure at the center of his claim for authority. This links to the traditional proverb “a long illness originates a healer” (jiu bing cheng yi).\(^{380}\) Having contracted tuberculosis, conventional therapies failed to cure him. Only after Zhao met several Qigong masters, whose identity remain rather mysterious, and himself turned to Qigong therapy, could he be cured. Zhao cited his compassion for other sick persons and his wish to serve society as his reasons for compiling and spreading his Hexiang Qigong.

Chen describes, among many other cases, the case of Master Dong, who obtained metastatic cancer and underwent several surgeries to remove tumors. He began to practice at a Shanghai athletic Qigong course in 1983. After practicing “moving Qigong (donggong)” in the morning for curing his cancer, he would turn to “quiet/meditative Qigong” (jinggong) for relaxation. After having suffered from a severe illness, Dong cited that he felt very sensitive to diagnosing and treating the illnesses of other people.\(^{381}\) In her books, Zhang Xiangyu described her acquirement of skills as a kind of spontaneous feeling of possession.

My skills were produced naturally. On the 8th of June, maybe around noon, I was reading a popular study book on Buddhism; I suddenly felt a force which forced me upward. I felt very nervous and wanted to go out. I stood up and went out, I wanted to go to a place with plants, water, and clean air; later on I often went to the park. Since then, a kind of force leads me to all kind of movements. At the beginning, every few weeks, there was one movement, later on one movement per week, and finally one movement a day. All of this was not directed by me, but came naturally.\(^{382}\)

According to her description, Zhang might have experienced a kind of seizure disorder. However, Zhang and Xu doubt that she hadn’t studied Qigong before and state that Zhang studied one year of Daoist Qigong in 1983.\(^{383}\) Tian Ruisheng suffered from many illnesses as a child. At the age of 12, he started to see things just because he imagined seeing them, for example far away places.\(^{384}\)

\(^{380}\) Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 224.  
\(^{381}\) Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 71.  
\(^{382}\) Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 204; Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367), p. 199.  
Teachers

Related to the traditional way of acquiring legitimacy within the Qigong sector, a transmission from master to pupil, creating a genealogy of teachers was an important task for Qigong masters. According to the author Wan Li, Yan Xin’s first contact with martial arts was rather mystical. At the age of four, Yan Xin was selected to be a “transmitter” (chuan ren) by a superhuman called “Old Mountain Uncle” (lao shan bo) and practiced Wushu with him. Later on, Yan had some 20 teachers, including the famous “Master Fadeng” from the Shaolin Wushu tradition from which he learned Qigong as part of the martial arts tradition. From another teacher, a medical scientist Zheng Bozhang, he acquired medical healing techniques related to Qigong, so Yan had already started healing people at the age of 13.

Although Zhang Xiangyu received the initial impulse for her teachings from a “kind of force,” she also referred to an “ancient teacher” (xian shi) with whom she could communicate, sometimes hearing a male, sometimes a female voice. She called herself the “daughter of the Jade emperor” (Yu huangdi de nuer), and to claim her identity as “princess” she even knelt down before a statue of “Heavenly Mother” (Wangmu Niangniang) and expressed her wish to be loyal to her mother in the future. Additionally, Zhang named herself “one, two, three” which she probably took from Laozi’s verse “Dao gives birth to one, one to two, and two to three.” Zhang suggested that she was able to create all things. Zhang Hongbao didn’t acquire his mysterious abilities by practicing for a long time, but “soul guides” (lingxing daoshi) just put these on his body. When he was 16 years old, he obtained some extraordinary abilities like foreseeing and mental perception.

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386 Wan 1993 (see note 272), pp. 65–66.
387 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 75; Shen et al. 2000 (see note 17), p. 204.
Tian Ruisheng, the head of Xianggong, was the only Qigong master who explicitly called himself not a founder but a transmitter, the “the only modern transmitter of Chinese Xianggong” (Zhongguo Xianggong de dangdai weiyi chuanren), which credits him with a historical as well as exclusive claim to teach Xianggong. Already his birth bore the footprints of this special vocation. Born on June 15, 1926 in Luoyang, Henan province, his mother described the circumstances of his birth as very mysterious: after he was born, a smell came up as well as a colorful light. That’s why she called him “opportunely born” (Ruisheng). Once, he meet an itinerant monk called Shi Wukong outside of his village who taught him Xianggong and told him, “after 50 years you should go public and heal other people.”389 After 50 years of dedicated practicing, he respected the teachers’ order and on May 8, 1988 made Xianggong public to the world. His stated purpose is: “To save the world, to heal people, these and nothing else are the wishes of my life.”390 Zhang Zhixiang, head of Yuanjigong, was described as a “modern transmitter” of an 800-year-old cultivation practice called “The Way of Supreme One” (Taiyida). He acquired access to his skills via birth but then had to work hard to make progress in understanding this practice.

3.1.3.2 Organizational Resources

3.1.3.2.1 Followers

Christian-inspired Groups

Information concerning followers of Christian-inspired groups in the initial phase is nearly non-existent. Therefore only few general observations can be made.

With regard to the above-stated background on the worldly and spiritual identity of the founders, early followers were mostly fellow believers from the founders’ respective home community. They functioned as trustworthy pillars for further development of the group and for recruitment of new followers. The importance of existing social networks and interpersonal

389 “Xianggong’ chengyuan” (see note 384); Ren 1994 (see note 365), pp. 72ff.
bondages is commonly observed within the context of the recruitment processes of NRM in the West.\textsuperscript{391}

Looking at motives for joining the Christian-inspired groups, several observations can be made. The quest for healing has been a dominant driver for many followers. Faith healing has been an important component for Protestant believers, especially in rural areas.\textsuperscript{392} Based on witnesses or self-experience of healing, they were willing to join the group. Healing also included a psychological dimension, related to stress and frustration suffered in everyday life. Protection against evil was often closely related to this point. Participation also included feelings of worthiness and status. Suffering from social isolation or an unhappy family life, women in particular considered these groups a chance for new social relations.

Based on available information, it is difficult to judge whether followers made a conscious choice for a particular group, rejecting the possibility of joining another, or whether it was simply a choice based on availability.\textsuperscript{393} Material and spiritual incentives can often be difficult to separate. Certain requirements or work of focus by the groups in relation to their targeted members can give some indications about the actual types of members. However, most of the groups had not spelled out a special target group. Only the “Teachings of the Soul” had focused specifically on young people, singing “soul songs” and practicing “soul dances” during the meetings.\textsuperscript{394}

\textbf{Qigong-based Groups}

As with the Christian-inspired groups, information on followers of the Qigong-based groups are scattered. From case accounts of followers as well as typologies developed by, for example, doctors facing a rising number of cases with mental disturbance resulting from Qigong practice, some clues

\textsuperscript{391} Dawson in Dawson 2003 (see note 56), pp. 116–30.
\textsuperscript{392} Währisch-Oblau 1999 (see note 301), pp. 5–21.
\textsuperscript{393} Yip notes that his analyzed cases for many people the Christian communities had the same function as popular religion before, just in a more effective way. See Ching-wah Yip, “Protestant Christianity and Popular Religion in China: A Case of Syncretism?,” \textit{Ching Feng} 42, No. 3/4 (1999), pp. 130–69, here p. 137.
Female followers seem to exceed male ones. Concerning the age spectrum, Qigong followers can be roughly placed at both ends of the age scale, being either under 25 or over 55. The community of Qigong practitioners has transgressed societal boundaries linked to status or profession. “In the eyes of Master Xie [founder of Yinyanggong] there was no division of high, low, rich or poor. His students and patients were professors, journalists, writers, soldiers, cadres, workers, and peasants and so on. He treated them all the same. Students who don’t have any income he teaches for free. He would help people in need.”

Judging from literature accounts, followers had different reasons for starting to practice Qigong.

The initial contact with Qigong happened either indirectly via existing popular publications or directly with participation in a Qigong course or practice in the parks. Naturally, the first contact often led to the second one. It seems that practitioners generally held more than one reason for getting started with Qigong. Similar to followers of the Christian-inspired groups, seeking for healing was a primary motive.

Some regarded Qigong as an exercise for health care, while others wanted to practice Qigong to treat some small illnesses, and for some, Qigong became the last hope for healing severe illnesses, and yet another group used Qigong to cope with pressures and problems from work or private life.

Heise and Chen both note in their studies that self-healing was the most often cited motivation by the practitioners they spoke to. According to Heise, persons who practiced Qigong as a therapy for curing either underwent other treatments without success or combined it with other traditional or else Western medical therapy. Additionally, Qigong gatherings offered the practitioners social space for mutual support, physical space that was limited in the crowded urban context, and psychological space for emotional release, e.g. the opportunity to laugh and cry uncontrollably. Within new emerging social vacancies—which meant holes and gaps difficult to cope with,

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396 Hui 1993 (see note 354), p. 35.
397 Ji 1993 (see note 395), p. 139.
398 Heise 1999 (see note 14), pp. 22–23.
399 Chen 2003 (see note 225), especially p. 46.
but also free room which people could structure according to their own desires—Qigong became for many part of a newly experienced personal life. Chen cites a practitioner, a man named Gao, an architect in his forties, as follows: “We need to have a personal life in addition to our official life . . . As modern people we need both levels in our life to gain meaning. Without the personal we would just be machines.” Originally interest in spirituality also drew people to practice Qigong, which according to Heise had been a minority. Another group of followers seemed to start practicing Qigong rather unintentionally, without a primary motivation, as they grew curious about the practice of relatives or friends, or they came across a book about Qigong. The reason for practitioners choosing a particular Qigong style also varied. The popularity of a master as well as word-of-mouth recommendations seemed to have a large influence on the choice. Stories from followers often mentioned that friends or neighbors had called a certain Qigong master to their attention. Accidental exposure was another factor. Looking for an opportunity to practice Qigong, some practitioners just came across a book or a poster and hooked on to that style. It seems that the majority of people did not consciously choose between several Qigong styles. Commitment to one Qigong style could easily be switched if another new or more famous one entered the environment of the practitioners.

### 3.1.3.2.2 Structure

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

The structure of the Christian-inspired groups were composed of five to seven administrative levels with different posts arranged according to the principle of strict responsibility. The leaders of all religious groups claimed absolute authority. They often placed relatives or close friends at important positions within the hierarchy. In the case of the “Three Grades of Servants

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400 Ibid., p. 53.
401 Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 223.
402 Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367).
403 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 53.
Group,” head Xu’s younger sister as well as her husband assumed important posts within the group.\(^{404}\)

The structure of the “Anointed King” group was poised to become a role model for other groups.

Chart 6: Organizational Structure of the “Established King”

The “Established King” “called” (mengzhao) sixteen women “Goddess” (Zhu), also called “Great Power Holder” (Daquanbing), just below his own rank. They formed the core of the group:

Table 3: “Goddesses” of the “Established King”

| Goddess of the Precious Stone (Baoshizhu) | Goddess of New Heart (Xinxinzhu) |
| Goddess of Fine Gold (Jinjingzhu) | Goddess of Good (Liangshanzhu) |
| Goddess of Pearl (Zhenzhuzhu) | Goddess of Sapphire (Lanbaoshizhu) |
| Goddess of Rightfulness (Zhenchengzhu) | Goddess of Sacrifice (Fengshenzhu) |
| Goddess of Devotion (Fengxianzhu) | Goddess of Concentration (Zhuanxinzhu) |
| Goddess of Roses (Meiguizhu) | Goddess of Cleverness (Qiaomiaozhu) |
| Goddess of Longing Desire (Panwangzhu) | Goddess of Praise (Songchangzhu) |
| Goddess of Brightness (Kaixinzhu) | Goddess of Everlasting Youth (Changqingzhu) |

The “Full Representatives of Power” were responsible for evangelization by traveling around and had joined the group for a longer time. The “Vice

405 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 104.
Representatives of Power” had not yet participated in evangelization as they normally had just joined the group for a short time. The “Power Holders” heading the meetings points were supposed to recruit new followers locally.\(^{406}\)

In accordance with their name, the “Three Grades of Servant Group” introduced different grades within their organization. “Big servant” was the highest grade, equivalent to Jesus’s disciple Moses in the Bible. Correlative to Joshua in the Bible are the “Little Servants,” key positions within the hierarchy of the group. Further down is the “Missionary Girl,” who was responsible for recruiting new followers in one or two provinces. Following were the “coworker,” the “Little coworker,” and the “Church Pillar Stone,” all of whom administered and preached at the county or local level.\(^{407}\) In their own introduction of their group, the “Servants” stipulate that they organize themselves like a house church. Some 20 or 30 followers form a meeting point.\(^{408}\)

Some groups have practiced communal living at their headquarters. In Heilongjiang province, supporters of the “Teachings of Elijah” (Yiliyajiao) lived together as a rural community: during their arrest due to the denunciation by one of the members, the police discovered two houses and a church on a hill nearly 10 km from the city center. The property covered several hundred square meters and the leader held a 25-year lease in the name of three members from the local authorities. Most of the followers carried out agricultural work.\(^{409}\) The female leader of the “Group of Everything for Common Use” (Fanwugongyongpai) claimed that only by “entering the arch” (fangzhou; commune of the group) could one escape the doomsday of the world and reach the heavenly realm: “children who do not submit to the God-like order are traitors. You shall be no longer stray sheep.”\(^{410}\) The

\(^{406}\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 103.
\(^{407}\) Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 348), p. 3.
\(^{408}\) “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
formation of ad-hoc communes of smaller groups can be noticed in relation to the announced end of the world.411

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

At its initiative stage, the Qigong movement was dominated by individual Qigong masters who were attached to a formal research institution and/or surrounded by a loose network of practitioners. Their contacts with adherents were not direct or structured, but mostly limited to huge meetings, so-called “power-inducing lectures” (dai gong baogao) within sports stadiums.412

At the ground level and apart from the likewise widely popular mass meetings, much space was left to practitioners themselves for organization. Practitioners could set a personal balance between retreat and quietness of individual practice as well as a feeling of community while attending to collective practicing. This balance could be redefined everyday anew, and weighed against obligations from family or work as well as feelings of loneliness. This fits well into the gradually transformed view of personal space and leisure time as fostered by the shift in the economic system. A full-time commitment or a stable membership was not intended by the Qigong groups; they rather existed as a loose network with nevertheless regular meetings, which could be well-integrated into everyday life. Engaging followers in fulltime commitment, going along with a break-off from former labor and family relations, has been an organizational style mostly used by—or at least ascribed to—swindlers within the Qigong movement. According to literature, this organizational style always failed.413 As Chen notes: “Qigong reframed the very boundaries of public and private spheres, opening different possibilities for the organization of daily life time in time and space.”414 This might also have been one reason why Qigong seemed to have been much more popular in urban than in rural areas.

413 Ji 1993 (see note 395), pp. 129ff.
The pillars of organization among Qigong practitioners were the so-called “guidance or tutorial stations” (fudaozhan). According to literature, it remains unclear whether they were basically established from above, or, what seems more reasonable, formed from below. However, as soon as a Qigong group established a Qigong Research Society, it seemed to control the different tutorial stations to some extent.

Being at the top level of any Qigong group organizational structure, related research societies were named after the national Qigong roof organization, the “Chinese Qigong Scientific Research Society,” under which the groups had been registered.

Registration didn’t seem to have a direct effect on popularity or organizational capacity of Qigong groups. It normally took some time from the first public stipulation of the Qigong teachings until an organization was established. The masters had to build a sufficient base of adherents, and the registration procedure also took its time. For example, Tian Ruishengm, head of Xiangong, started spreading his teachings in 1988, whereas the Xianggong Research Society was not established until 1991.415

This basic organizational resource was founded on previously known concepts of Qigong masters in the 1960s and 1970s, and Guo Lin in particular made a contribution to the internal organizational structure of Qigong.416 Zhongggong and Yuanjgong were forerunners in setting up a more complex organizational structure. Zhang Hongbao, head of Zhonggong, managed to establish a considerable number of schools, therapy stations, and sales departments. However, only after 1990, having experienced a small setback, did Zhang advance the organizational build-up of Zhonggong (see Chapter 3.2.3).417 The head of Yuanjigong, Zhang Zhixiang, invested some 100 million Yuan and set up a 25,000 square kilometer large area for Yuanji Studies at Lianhushan Mountain close to his hometown of Ezhou in 1987. This base included facilities for research, teaching, clinics, traveling, and business.418

416 Wan 1993 (see note 272), p. 64.
417 Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356).
Many Qigong groups started out from one regular practicing base: Zhang Hongbao’s was said to be at Liuli Bridge in Beijing, Pang Heming’s at Qinhuandao in Hebei province, and Zhang Zhixiang’s at Lotus Mountain (Lianhuashan) in the Hubei province.\textsuperscript{419}

Several steps towards a sustaining organizational structure can be witnessed. First, Qigong masters rely on their own social capital, relatives, and friends of relatives, who he started out healing. They would spread the message to other relatives and friends, and therefore the numbers of patients or followers would slowly increase. As a second step, Qigong leaders would open a clinic or establish an association or a school to provide a regular base for relatives and friends. Afterwards, if they could gain some influence, they might organize a lecture tour, including in other regions and provinces, spreading their Qi powers. This was often accompanied by fabricating commodities like books and magazines.\textsuperscript{420}

3.1.3.2.3 Internal Communication

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

Apart from a complex hierarchy, codified behavior and disciplinary measures were key elements of the organizational resources of the Christian-inspired groups. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the illegal status of Christian groups forced them to develop measures to avoid being discovered by the police, and to sidestep the spying activities of the government.\textsuperscript{421}

The number of assemblies taking place among groups that were not organized in communes vary, but most of them stick to Saturdays or Sundays as one important day of assembly. In the case of the “Teachings of the Soul,” a bigger assembly takes place each Wednesday and Saturday, and on other days members gather in smaller groups. The “Three Grades of Servants” advised their subgroups to meet at least twice a week. Everyday meetings were also encouraged.\textsuperscript{422}

Codes of behavior reinforce identification with the group and its leader, keep followers in check, and mount pressure not to leave. With their peculiar mixture of “enforcing security in an insecure (hostile) environment,”

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\textsuperscript{419} Wan 1993 (see note 272), p. 74.
\textsuperscript{420} Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 167–68.
\textsuperscript{421} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 229.
\textsuperscript{422} “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
while at the same time evoking fear of being expelled from the group or of not fulfilling requirements and thus remaining isolated with no hope of “salvation,” the networks have seemed to be able to bind followers over a considerable period of time. Likewise, the rules of “Teachings of the Soul,” which were referred to as the “Ten Commandments,” order followers to “love God Jehovah, not to worship other idols, to praise the name of God, not to make false declarations in the name of God, respect the Sabbath day, to be filial to mother and father, not to kill, not to rape, not to steal, not to make false testimonies, and not to be greedy for money.”

The “Three Grades of Servants” request that their followers lead a steady life:

They should not play Majiang, not smoke, not rape, not watch useless TV programmes or read useless books. They should not go to Karaoke bar, sauna or to other places of entertainment. Life-style should be modest, no useless talking. Followers are requested to search for a pure life; they should acquire knowledge which is valuable to their work for the Spirit. The “Group of the Three Grades of Servants” forbid marriage and advocate separate living of men and women. They should prepare themselves to work for the Spirit.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Zhang Hongbao’s Zhongong was said to possess an “iron disciple” and strict rules. Members were required to develop a strong group conscience and organizational skills.

However, Xiangong seemed to have been the only group laying down detailed “regulations” for practitioners, which are closely related to their strong moral thrust as analyzed as part of their ideational resources. Although no indication is given of the consequences of violating these rules, the specific disciplinary measures developed by Xianggong reflect the lan-

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423 Jiang 2000 (see note 347), pp. 135 and 160.
425 “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
guage of the CCP and are similar to those of the Christian-inspired networks. Answered what would happen to someone who turned “bad,” Tian Ruisheng declared that he or she might be expelled by a Xianggong conference, stripped of certain “skills,” or dealt with internally.  

3.1.3.2.4 Finances

Aside from information on followers, not much is known from the present sources about the financial assets and practices of either the Christian-inspired or the Qigong-based groups. The importance of generating financial income seemed to have been of secondary interest to both types of groups (and their respective leaders) during the initial phase. There was also no need for raising large income since their activities and organizational style didn’t require many financial assets.

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Donations by their followers was the most important source of income for these groups. Following the tradition of the first Christian communities as handed down in the Bible, the group of the “Anointed King” asked everyone to donate one tenth of his respective income to the group. Individual accounts stated that the sum of collections might be as much as 30,000 Yuan. The “Shouters” also practiced the giving of the tenth. People from the cities were supposed to donate 10 percent of their income, and peasants 10 percent of their harvest. The “Three Grades of Servants Group” mentioned only that they depended on the givings of their followers. They emphasized that they didn’t depend on any governmental support. When followers traveled to proselytize, other sisters and brothers were expected to host them for free.

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430. Ibid., p. 257.
431. “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
**Qigong-based Groups**

The main sources of income were the mentioned “power-inducing lectures.” Practicing was free and most of the Qigong masters didn’t write any books in the first phase. Tickets for the performance of Zhang Xiangyu cost 35 Yuan each.\(^{432}\) Tickets for Yan Xin’s “power-inducing lectures” were sold for up to 100 Yuan, a month’s wages at that time, on the black market. Palmer said that Yan refused any payment, so the money probably went to the organizers of that event, primarily the China Qigong Research Society. Some 5,600 supporters of Yan were said to have donated over 10,000 Yuan for the rebuilding of his hometown as a site for pilgrims.\(^{433}\)

As concluded from the analysis of the respective organizational resources of the two movements, the search for healing was one key motivation for the followers of both groups. It would be very interesting to know if followers even endeavored to choose between Qigong-based and Christian-inspired groups, or even changed from one to the other. It seems that their choice, including from one particular group within the respective movement, was rather accidental, influenced by availability as well as friends and family.

The Christian-inspired groups were more tightly controlled organizations in comparison to the loosely-knit Qigong ones based on voluntary participation. This might be attributed to already existing state persecution, which demanded a greater degree of secrecy from the Christian groups. In addition, they clearly put more emphasis on attaching religious names to the ranks, and on incentives for advancement within the group. A quest for secrecy, community, along with religious pureness also inspired the strong internal discipline within the Christian-inspired groups. As the Qigong ones didn’t aim at creating a fixed community and could practice in the open, they didn’t feel much need for disciplinatory measures. However, they also pursued ideas of purity and exceptionalism within their ideational resources.

\(^{432}\) Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367), p. 15.

\(^{433}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 144–45.
3.1.3.3 Ideational Resources

3.1.3.3.1 Naming, Myths, and Symbols

Christian-inspired Groups

Names and symbols used by the Christian-inspired groups basically pointed to their Christian base. Groups of the “Anointed King” or the “Teachings of the Soul” as well as the “Group of the Three Grades of Servants” also appealed to potential followers with a non-Christian background as somehow mystical. Regarding the religious names attached to ranks within a group’s hierarchy, the attributes utilized by the group of the “Anointed King” for its Goddess—such as rightfulness, sacrifice, or everlasting youth—could also be applied to religious traditions in China. Furthermore, the reference to “precious stones” could have been taken from the context of the novel “Dream of Red Mansions.” Likewise, “pearl” was not a Christian, but a more meaningful symbol when put in a Chinese context.\footnote{Pearls often symbolize wisdom, beauty, or purity.}

Qigong-based Groups

“Information” or “message” (xinxi) was a central ideational symbol for many of the Qigong groups. According to Zhang Xiangyu, this “information” came directly from the universe. As she referred to herself as a mystical master, she also framed stories of patients along these patterns, taking up myths and symbols forming the context of Chinese folk religion. Once she told a brother and his younger sister that their father was a heavenly god and punished them for not studying well. She could heal the sister’s illness, but their father would get angry, so finally she declared that she had to fight against him on the Altar of Heaven. Another female patient was said to be a “fox spirit” who tried to bewitch her, for the spirit once lost a fight against Zhang. Likewise, she stated—facing the impossible healing of children—that this child was a holy child of Venus and therefore couldn’t die. She also labeled other people as a “Jade Rabbit turning the world” (Yu tu zhuang shi) or a “real body of a dragon” (zhen long hua shen).\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 206–207.}

Since Tian Ruisheng, head of Xianggong, understood himself as a transmitter, the historical and mystical origin of the Qigong school itself is placed

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more significantly in the foreground as compared to other groups. According to a website maintained by a claimed Xianggong follower, Xianggong was founded 2,500 years ago by a Buddhist monk (“Master of the law,” fashi), and it was passed down in secret, without any scriptures and only to one respective person. The monk Xuan Zang\(^{436}\) is mentioned as having been the teacher of Xianggong in the Tang Dynasty, and in the later Song Dynasty Buddhist master Daji (Li Xiuxian at other sources) is referred to as a Xianggong master. This linearity suits the background of Qigong teachings as well as the legitimation of claims to Chinese culture in general. The name “Xianggong” (by Luo translated as “Aromatic Qigong”) derives from the changing aroma which can be smelled at every place of exercise, a “rare phenomenon within the history of Qigong,” and a product of “sincerity.”\(^{437}\)

While “Xianggong” is widely used as a convenient short form, the full name is much longer and echoes a clearly more philosophical tone: “Chinese Flagrant-type wisdom and intuition qigong” (Zhongguo foufa fangxiang xing zhi wu qigong). Tian gives only brief explanations on the meaning of “wisdom” and “intuition,” because he didn’t want to put too much emphasis on theory.

Yuanjigong had a central symbol, a picture of its “Original Principle” (Yuanji). The “yuanji” is based on the symbol of Yin and Yang (Taiji) and adds a yellow (or golden) small circle directly in the center of the Yin and Yang. Taiji gives birth to the forces Yin and Yang, and their interaction finally creates all things under heaven. Yuanji describes a process of creation as three-folded, an infinite one: “aggregation (juhe), polarization (jihua), and recovery (fuyuan).”\(^{438}\)

\(^{436}\) The monk Xuan Zuan, also known as Tang Sanzang, left China from the capital of the Tang Dynasty Changan for India to fetch original scriptures of Buddhism as he was not satisfied with the Chinese translations. The novel Journey to the West (Xiyouji) tells his story linked with many mystical encounters and hard challenges until he succeeded in his goal. For an online version of Journey to the West, see http://www.chine-informations.com/fichiers/jourwest.pdf (accessed January 18, 2008).


\(^{438}\) Jia 1988 (see note 360), p. 137.
3.1.3.3.2 Teachings

Healing

The teachings of religious groups are centered around the task of physical and spiritual healing, and to some extent the salvation of their followers by (a reunion with) a higher moral authority. Healing is understood in both group contexts as a process equally related to body and mind. The causes of illness are therefore diverse: besides individual physical and psychological malfunctions, diseases are interpreted as signs of unmoral behavior.

Christian-inspired Groups

The Christian groups spread the notion that illnesses or unfortunate incidents are the result of possession by “evil spirits” or “demons”\(^\text{439}\) and could be related to sinful conduct as defined in the code of behavior for adherents described earlier. Hence, people who have already tried various hospitals and treatments in an effort to cure their illness or have experienced a number of “unsatisfactory events” are more disposed to believing in the help of spiritual powers. Most current sources mention “exorcizing of demons” only in the context of injuries and deaths. According to Wu, the “Teachings of the Soul” regularly conducted so-called “punishments of demons” (shenpan mogui) during which members were mistreated. Related to the “Society of Disciples,” the source mentions several cases of ill people who died due to rejected or belated medical treatment. This is also described as a trigger for doubts by the followers.\(^\text{440}\)

\(^{439}\) Within the Holy Scripture, “demons” and “evil spirits” are often interpreted not as real but as being symbols for fear, guilt, greed, or other emotional/psychological states.

As a stirring concept against the Chinese habit of drinking “hot boiled water” (bai kaishui) for health, the “Cold Water Church” considered the drinking of cold water in relation with prayers as a complete cure for illness. The “Teachings of the Soul” proclaimed illness to be a sign of approaching “doomsday”: “Doomsday has come, epidemics will descend on the world, and there will be hunger, floods and locusts...” The end of the world not only caused current illnesses but was also responsible for the exodus of large sections of the human race and their descent into hell.

**Qigong-based Groups**

For most of the groups, healing could be achieved either through continuous individual or collective exercising or by transmission of Qi by the teacher. Still, different ways to conceptualize illness and healing were presented. Zhang Xiangyu’s health promise was to be able to strengthen the body within 100 days and after 100 days be ready to heal others. She claimed that her style could heal several illnesses and even undertake operations; it wouldn’t need injections, medicine, use of knife, and no blood would run. The healing effects are not confined by distance. Xianggong also favored a kind of “long-distance healing” with the help of drinking “message water” (xinxi shui). Water can receive Tian’s Qi (shou gong), for example during promotion sessions performed by him at another city, then becoming “message water.” In similar fashion, a handkerchief can also carry Qi and when touched might heal, for example small pox.

In contrast to other Qigong groups, Xianggong doesn’t permit pupils to use their skills to heal others because this will harm the “fundamental qi” (yuan qi). Once in a while or with the help of “message material” it might be

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441 “Reactions to Religious Suppression,” excerpted from *Mingpao Daily News*, August 1, 1996, p. B10, in *Inside China Mainland* (November 1996), pp. 73–75. “Cold water” runs like a thread through the teachings and rituals of this smaller group. Instead of fertilizers, cold water—combined with prayers—will kill insects and other parasites on the fields. Before entering one of the group’s meeting places, members must drink a bowl of cold water (according to traditional Chinese medicine, boiled hot water [baikaishui] is said to have healing effects). To find the “right” passage in the Bible for study and prayer, the leader of the group opens the Bible on any page and reads until he comes across the word “water.” This is considered to be a sign of the Holy Spirit to start with the sermon from that part on.

442 Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 43 and 55.

acceptable.\textsuperscript{444} Xianggong also presented cases of spontaneous healing during “study sessions” where the “message material” is very strong. Besides healing hip or back aches, Xianggong can also make mute people hear and talk, make blind people see, and can even “snatch a person from the jaws of death” (\textit{qi si huisheng}).\textsuperscript{445} People brought even the ill to him, like a daughter whose mother had been in coma for 34 years. At the end of a promotion session in Xian, the mother woke up and could even walk away on her own.\textsuperscript{446}

Although all groups promote the healing skills of the practice, they also point to the limits of their abilities. “. . . Qigong isn’t omnipotent, can’t heal all illnesses, Xianggong doesn’t do diagnostics and isn’t plainly\textsuperscript{447} for healing people.\textsuperscript{448} People with epilepsy, cancer in an advanced stage, or acute inflammations should not hesitate to go to a hospital. In similar fashion, Tian stresses that Western medicine and Xianggong supplements do not contradict each other.\textsuperscript{449} But still, faith is essential and, what is more, Tian states in a subclause that “. . . Qigong isn’t omnipotent, can’t heal all illnesses, Xianggong doesn’t do diagnostics and plainly isn’t for healing people. If you believe (\textit{xiangxin}), [your illness] maybe will be healed faster, if you don’t believe, it will take longer time.” This somehow presents a rather mixed picture of the capabilities of Xianggong and even of Tian’s own convictions.\textsuperscript{450} Concerning the effect, however, he states that faith is a precondition (\textit{cheng ze ling}). If one starts to doubt, one has to start all over again, and doubts will even make one feel bad.\textsuperscript{451}

Within the context of healing effects, references to spiritual salvation transcending the individual well-being were rarely stated. An exception is Zhang Xiangyu as she stated in the epilogue of her book:

\begin{quote}
This Qigong style will spread around the world, only this Qigong style can save mankind. If this Qigong style would not exist, there would be no escape from great catastrophe . . . The changes of the 21st century will overthrow the
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{444} “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Question 57.
\bibitem{445} “Tian dashi tan” (see note 437).
\bibitem{446} Ren, “Tian Ruisheng yu Zhongguo Xianggong“, p. 73f.
\bibitem{447} “Tian dashi tan” (see note 437).
\bibitem{448} “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).
\bibitem{449} “Zhongguo Xianggong danhdai chuanren,” (see note 428), Question 51.
\bibitem{450} “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).
\bibitem{451} Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367), p. 207.
\end{thebibliography}
world, what to do? Just impart this Qigong style quickly, so it will soon de-
velop into a higher imparting method . . . To take mankind courageously to-
wards the great universe, this is the best way of rescue. Otherwise we will face
self-annihilation and death. 452

Cosmology and Morality

As healing is understood not only as a physical problem but also as having a
psychological cause, it is embedded within a larger philosophical concept
within the group teachings.
The state of the body is linked to the moral state of character, as well as to
the state of the cosmos.

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Christian-inspired groups interpreted the decay of morality and social values
as the prelude to an apocalypse. As the “Shouters” 453 stated:

According to the circumstances today, according to the prophesy, time can’t be
delayed anymore. The end of the world must be a dangerous day, therefore the
day of world’s end will be extremely hazardous. Not even because of natural
catastrophes, but human damage. Every follower must think carefully, to love
God, to love the world, today a decision must be made. Lord Jesus is about to
come, the world will be destroyed. Don’t cultivate, don’t build houses, and
don’t marry. 454

Some groups used special dates or events to reinforce their doomsday
prophecy. The “Teachings of the Spirit” stipulate:

The end of the world is near, epidemics will come over the world, there will be
starvation, floods, locusts, only by joining the “Teachings of the Soul,” the
catastrophe can be avoided. Otherwise it is difficult to escape from death. On

452 Cited after ibid., p. 200.
453 The group of the “Shouters” offers the most complex ideational system. Within China,
many different styles of the “Local Church” have emerged, and ideational concepts have
been changed. Therefore, it is difficult to say which of the original concepts is still in
keeping. In the following, only ideational resources found within the Chinese context will
be quoted. For more information on the “Shouters,” see “The Teachings of Witness Lee of
the ‘Local Church’ (Church of Recovery),” The Bereans Apologetics Research Ministry,
http://thebereans.net/arm-wlee.shtml (accessed January 1, 2007); “‘Local Church’
Information Site,” http://www.lcinfo.org (accessed November 29, 2007); “Yelusaleng
caanan de rizi: Guanyu Huhanpia (The Misfortune Jerusalem will meet, On the Shouters),”
Heresy – What a Heresy – Two Divine Fathers, Two Life-Giving Spirits, And Three
November 30, 2007).
454 Cited in Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 42.

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June 27, 1987 a flood will destroy the world, the whole mankind will be eliminated, mankind already arrived at the end-time, don’t build houses any longer, because nobody will live in them, nobody will eat wheat, only foreign military outposts, if you have money, just buy something good and eat.\[455]\[455]\[455]

Although the above-stated date passed without world’s end, the “Teachings of the Soul” were able to set up post-event prophecy, linking the impending end of the world to the great fire in the Daxinganling district, Heilongjiang province (May 6, 1987) and an outbreak of a Hepatitis A epidemic in Shanghai in order to claim the approach of the apocalypse.

Anticipation of the new millennium had fostered anxiety all over the world. Not surprisingly, the groups also connected the year 2000 with the end of the world. The “Anointed King,” for example, mentioned: “In the year 2000, the end of the world will come; the ‘Anointed King’ takes over worldly power. People, who don’t believe in the ‘Anointed King’, will die.”\[456]\[456]\[456]

With regard to the above-mentioned vision of “doomsday,” all leaders of the Christian groups propagated that only their followers would survive the exodus of mankind and escape being condemned to hell. Consequently, belonging to such a group was tantamount to being “good.”\[457]\[457]\[457] Material possessions were also no longer “reliable,” according to the group teachings. Therefore, members should give these in the form of a “donation” or an “offering,” to the leader as an investment in their own salvation and future life. The group of the “Anointed King” promised a “tenfold multiplication” of the presented goods in the upcoming “Heavenly Kingdom.”\[458]\[458]\[458] The “Full Scope Church” preaches the act of crying loudly as a path to rebirth and salvation from the doomed world and mankind.\[459]\[459]\[459] The purchase of “letters of indulgence” (zuizhai) for “overcoming the sins” (zuiguo) is a tenet of the “Protestantism of Lin Youlai,” a notable, but exceptional, parallel to Christian history.\[460]\[460]\[460]

\[455]\ Cited from ibid., p. 44. Epidemics and locusts are not only symbols of world’s end in the Bible, but also strike up feelings of fear due to events in the Chinese history. Especially the locust plague in 1959, a result of Mao Zedong’s mindless “Anti-sparrow campaign” at the beginning of the “Great Leap Forward” is still considered to be one reason for the great famine in the following three years, having put at least 30 million people to death.

\[456]\ Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 44.

\[457]\ Li 2000 (see note 344), pp. 208ff.


In addition to offering a vision of a doomed world as well as rescue option, some groups even stipulate their claim to establish the reign of the Holy Spirit:

As Christians, we should not only break away from sin, but also break away from the state of Satan. God wants us to overthrow the state of Satan. For the coming of God, Satan must be driven away from the earth . . . The Heavenly State is reined by heavenly powers and is managed as well as restricted by Heaven. Therefore, do we really also need the police to take care of it? Could it be that we still need Public Security Bureaus and legal courts? We have a task, to take the power for God. God gave us the power to reign on earth. We use this power to restrict the unlawful actions of Satan, and to fight with him . . . We should not compromise. People must take power; in the name of God people must drive his enemies from the earth. People must destroy the power of Satan, destroy his whole work.\textsuperscript{461}

\textbf{QIGONG-BASED GROUPS}

Qigong-based groups presented their ideal moral behavior as a reflection of a natural balance of the cosmos and therefore as a path for individual as well as social healing and harmony. The Buddhist conception of “accrue merit” (\textit{gongde}) was a key concept for nearly all Qigong-based groups. For \textit{Yinyanggong} virtue was the root of civilization. Therefore he urged ill people to do more good things and to balance the relationships with other people well: “. . . the Yin and Yang of one’s body will get balanced too, diseases will get healed and skills will improve.”\textsuperscript{462}

Based on their understanding of a threefold process of nature (aggregation, polarization, and recovery), \textit{Yuanjigong} envisioned the parallel human cultivation process as a syncretic combination: “‘to see the [true] nature with an enlightened heart’ (\textit{ming xin jian xing}) of Buddhism, the ‘to cultivate the truth and practice one’s nature’ (\textit{xiu zhen lian xing}) of Daoism as well as the ‘cultivate virtue and enrich the nature’ (\textit{yang de jin xing}) of Confucianism.” Therefore, one should “treat people with the mind/heart

\textsuperscript{461} Cited from internal publications of the “Shouters,” translated after Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 36.

\textsuperscript{462} Hui 1993 (see note 354), p. 35.
(xin), to move people with virtue, to transmit to people with inner principles (li) and to choose people with fidelity (xin)."\(^{463}\)

Xianggong stipulated a very similar understanding: everybody is required to do good things for the society, because this is the way to heal one’s illnesses. “The more [good things] you do, the faster you get healed.”\(^{464}\) Tian Ruisheng linked charity to a positive physical stimulus to the brain, like a “massage.” If somebody is too old or ill to do good things, relatives can take on this task. Relating merits to the dual concept of Yin and Yang, Tian differentiated between “yanggong,” being charitable in the open, and “yin-gong,” doing good things in secret, as ascribed to Lei Feng. Tian also added a political dimension to his vision of morality. Doing good things is equal to propagating party politics, like “supporting reform and opening, obeying the leaders, uniting comrades, and having moral integrity.”\(^{465}\)

According to Luo’s website, Xianggong practitioners were required to follow the order of “serving the motherland, healing people’s illnesses” (fuwu zuguo, wei min liaoji). In addition, students of Xiangong must also cultivate merits and virtues (gongde). Therefore, eight rules (shouze) were given, which according to the title only apply to Mainland Chinese followers (guonei xueyuan shiyong). This seemed only applicable to specific political features of the guidelines, because Tian mentioned during a question and answer session that the social and moral demands are fundamental for all Xianggong followers. The rules aimed at modeling the Xianggong followers as good citizens in the true sense of communist and Confucianist ideals. They touch upon three topics. First, the obedience to political principles is stressed, like “loving socialism . . . supporting the four basic principles of the party.” The mentioning of Lei Feng and other self-sacrificing characters like Jiao Yulue or Zhao Chune, however, points to idols of the Mao Zedong era. Although Mao and his achievements are part of the party history, he is also used as a symbol to directly or indirectly express dissatisfaction with society and politics nowadays. In similar fashion, the described virtues—a second topic of the rules—reflect values closely connected with the time of Mao, like doing good things for society, being united, working hard regard-

\(^{463}\) Jia 1988 (see note 60), p. 153.

\(^{464}\) “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).

\(^{465}\) Ibid.
less of criticism, and being modest, being honest to other people, protecting common goods, not betting or stealing. But practitioners are also told twice to fight against factionalism, an evil habit also attributed to the Mao era. Besides Maoist virtues, Confucian values—such as possessing strict self-discipline and showing tolerance towards others, being pious to parents, respecting elders, and loving children—are also praised. A third topic of the rules instructed the students to advocate Qigong science and to fight against superstition.466

**Positioning Towards Religion or Science**

Both type of movements have purposely or non-purposely positioned themselves within their related neighboring disciplines and reference categories, in a way along a line of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

As within other local Christianity contexts, the attitude towards orthodox Christian concepts and the Bible varied among the groups. The “Shouters” didn’t reject the Bible but warned against a fundamentalist interpretation and overzealous approach to Bible reading. “Within the Bible there are many things which are like bones in your food, you should not eat them. . . . We must listen to the living Christ, not to words and sentences. . . . If only taking literally, the Bible harms people, destroys them, and let them away from the Lord.” Given the strong fundamentalist tradition within Chinese “house churches,” the “Shouters” probably had wanted to set themselves apart and offer an easier or more flexible understanding of Christianity. However, the reference to the “living Christ” might also point to an uttermost authority of the leader of the “Shouters.”467

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466. "Xiangong xueyuan (see note 427).
467. From the sources available, it cannot be ascertained as to what extent the teachings of the “Shouters” in China, being an ascendant from the “Local Church” movement of Witness Lee founded in California in the 1960s, vary from the original ones. The “Local Church” originally uses the Recovery New Testament version of the bible which is printed by them and contains a number of extensive footnotes, all of which are written by Witness Lee, showing support of his particular theological slant. See the Apologetics Research Ministry, Church of Recovery (aka “Local Church,” “Lord’s Recovery”), http://thebereans.net/prof-cor.shtml (accessed December 1, 2007). The website of the “Local Church” offers a variety of further links of their critics as well as supporters (see note 291).
The “Shouters” rejected the concept of “Trinity” and stipulated the idea of modalism:

He is all in all. He is God, the Creator, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and also the proper man. He is the reality of all divine attributes and of all human virtues. The hinge of all the aspects of this all-inclusive Christ is the living Spirit. We have no choice except to tell our fellow Christians that our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the living Spirit. Undoubtedly, He is the Lamb of God and the Redeemer, but these are simply two aspects of this all-inclusive One. Christ, the all-inclusive One, is everything. The Bible even describes Him with the term ‘all in all’ (Col. 3:11). Christ is the reality of every positive thing. He is light, life, righteousness, holiness, redemption, salvation, and everything. In our experience, He is the life-giving Spirit indwelling our human spirit. Because we proclaim this, we are accused of being heretical. Our critics say that we teach heresy in telling people that Christ, the Son, is the Father as well as the Spirit. Today, many Christians do not believe that Christ is not only the Son, but also the Father and the Spirit.468

At the opposite position, the “Three Grades of Servants Group” emphasized the absolute authority of the Bible. In line with a fundamentalist attitude, they have rejected any self interpretation of the Holy Scripture.469

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS
Although the Qigong groups drew on cosmological concepts, some of them have clearly rejected any supernatural realm.

As Tian Ruisheng classified Xianggong to be a Buddhist type of Qigong, he also used some central concepts of the teachings of Buddha-like compassion. But he clearly limited the scope of Buddhism to concern with earthly matters. “Shakamuni was a human being, not a divine being . . . The Great Wisdom (da zhi) is to clearly comprehend the things in the world, the Great Compassion is to sacrifice one’s own interests for the sake of others, to serve the people with full will and heart . . .”470 The illusionary aspect of all worldly things stated by Buddhist traditions pointing to another state of mind, Nirvana, is therefore excluded.471 Tian also stated that, although it is not possi-

468 Lee (see note 453).
469 “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
470 “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Questions 63 and 65.
ble to understand Xianggong’s principle with today’s level of scientific development, there is no obstacle to practicing it. Xianggong is a science, not superstition. However, Tian has constantly stressed the importance of faith: “What I explain about Xianggong . . . if you don’t believe, it sounds like a mystical story.” Tian also suggested that he possesses a higher level of understanding concerning certain things, and because some things are “knowledge of the fifth dimension,” he can’t go on to talk about it—words are incapable of conveying the true meaning. In the same fashion, he somehow talked around questions concerning “high level Qigong” (gaoji gong). At the website maintained by Luo, it is even stated that the historical teacher of Xianggong forbade Tian to talk about the principle of Xianggong. Zhang Xiangyu clearly pointed to the scientific essence of her Qigong style, and she promised that more and more people had stated that practicing her style might be useful in limiting and improving the conditions concerning the air quality and climate in general. She wrote in her preface: “. . . Today I stand on the edge of the mud pit being called ‘slipped to idealism’ and ‘feudal superstition.’ But I still believe as science of mankind develops, these phenomena will be studied and acknowledged by people. Is it feudal superstition or science? History will give explanation in the end.”

Yan Xin identified the embedding of Qigong to religion as a cause of decay. He framed a three-period development plan of Qigong, which he understood as renaissance of the ancient Chinese civilization. In ancient times, Qigong “was largely used by society in all aspects of human life . . . And, most importantly, it laid the foundations on which religions were created.” During the second period of Qigong which lasted from 2000 years ago until modern times, religious were founded by Qigong masters. Religion then gradually replaced the essence of Qigong and its teachings vanished. The third, contemporary era is characterized with a widespread recognition of

472 “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).
473 “Tian dashi tan” (see note 275).
475 Ibid., p. 201.
Qigong and a reappearance of its exceptional functions. Like other Qigong founders in this first phase, Yan Xin also linked Qigong to a moral sphere:

[Qigong is] an ideal, all-encompassing form of erudition which includes multiple forms of knowledge, allows mankind to know himself and the universe, has an epistemology and a methodology, and contains a philosophy of life, of the world and the cosmos . . . [Qigong requires one] to stay in an enlightened, virtuous and moral state of mind, nourished by a high ideal. The ancient Qigong masters of high antiquity had already recognized that man, if he wants true happiness, must have a luminous and infinite inner heart, and be benevolent to men and things . . . It involves linking our thoughts to the great common aspiration of the whole world.  

3.1.3.4 Action Resources

Both types of movements developed inward-orientated action resources, i.e. activities happening inside the group, and outward-orientated action resources, i.e. activities relating to the sphere outside the group.

3.1.3.4.1 Inward-Orientated Resources: Practices

Christian-inspired groups

During assemblies of the Christian-inspired groups, one main activity was “speaking in tongues,” which the groups themselves refer to as either “communication with the God” (yu shen goutong), “spread the words in the place of the god” (ti shen chuanyan), or “revelation of God” (Shangdi qishi). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, members talk in a manner unintelligible to outsiders. Accounts do not state whether this experience is an individual one, stimulated through the collective atmosphere, or a group experience. Within some groups, for example the “Teachings of the Soul,” some members

479 “Speaking in tongues” or “glossolalia” is practiced mostly by Charismatic/Pentecostal Christian congregations. Speaking in tongues by Christians first occurred during Pentecost. Luke records the account in the book of Acts (2:2–4). Filled with the Holy Spirit, the believers began to speak in languages other than those they had learned or could understand. Whereas non-Charismatic Christians might argue that this gift was lost after the apostolic age, others still consider it as a revelation of the Holy Spirit by blessing believers through the gift of tongues. For a detailed analysis of “speaking in tongues,” see http://www.speaking-in-tongues.net (accessed January 19, 2008).
“translate” the uttered words of others, serving as a “spiritual medium.” As their name implies, the “Shouters” shout the words “Lord!,” “Amen!,” and “Hallelujah!” as part of their services, believing this will help their spirits be liberated. The “Full Scope Church” claims crying loudly to be a path to rebirth and salvation, and the “Teachings of the Soul” practice the singing and dancing of “soul songs” and “soul dances.” Folk songs and pop titles both serve as melodic and rhythmical models. The “Anointed King” group even created new lyrics for the melody of the well-known revolutionary song “The East is Red” as a way of worshipping their leader. In addition, gatherings of their subgroups had a particular ceremony, which they performed: a chair covered with red cloth was put onto a table in the middle of the room. After female and male members had entered the room separately and had sat down on the ground, the leader of the group (normally a woman) sat upon the chair and started preaching. The “Teachings of Soul” admission ceremony used obvious Christian elements like blessing by laying hands on the candidate and recitation of the “Ten Commandments.”

Followers of the “Full Scope Gospel of Blood, Water, and the Spirit” had to be “baptized” three separate times (with blood, water, and spirit). To strengthen the identification of their members with the group and to train them for their task of evangelizing, the “Full Scope Church” conducted various “training classes” for their members. Long-term classes ran for half a year, shorter ones from one to three months. The classes covered topics from church building to doctrines. After the course concluded, people were divided into groups of two or three and sent outside to spread the Gospel. During participation, however, no contact with the outside world was al-

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480 Jiang 2000 (see note 347), p. 373. The function of a “spiritual medium” is similar to the tradition of “spiritual writing” (fu ji: “fortune telling from unintentional written characters on sand”), which some traditional secret societies, for example the “Way of the All Pervading Principle” or the “Way of the Former Heaven” (Xiantiandao), practiced. The medium went into a trance and received spiritual impulses that he or she transferred with the help of a stick onto a sandy surface. Two other followers of the group transcribe the lines and strokes into Chinese characters and interpret the message: see Zhongwei Lu, Yiguandao neibu (Inside Yiguandao), Zhongguo mimishehui congshu (Series on Secret Societies in China) (Nanjing: Jiangsurenminchubanshe, 1998), pp. 131–36.


483 Ibid., p. 19.


485 Deng 1996 (see note 369). The group refers to 1 John 5: 6-8.
lowed; the members even used fake names to cover up their identities. Since 1998, the “Full Scope Church” conducted more than 70 short-term training classes in Henan and Hubei, and four middle-term ones.\textsuperscript{486} The “Group of the Three Grades of Servants” also conducted special training classes. During these classes, they practiced a “military-like administration: fixed times for rest, getting up at 4 o’clock in the morning to do exercises body and mind, arranged time for praying, reading the Bible, practice of preaching.”\textsuperscript{487}

According to various sources, the leaders of some groups stipulated that to reach salvation, women must be “called” be the Spirit.\textsuperscript{488} To be “called” by the Spirit happened by sexual intercourse with the leader. Wu Yangming, head of the “Anointed King” group, also postulated that unmarried women should not marry and married ones should no longer engage in sex with their husbands. Wu was said to have lived with six women at once, having children with several of them.\textsuperscript{489}

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Traditionally, many Qigong styles as well as Wushu schools have formulas for incantation (\textit{kou jue}). But Zhang Xiangyu was rather exceptional in adding sounds as part of her teachings. She referred to it as “language of the universe.” This concept can be also found with \textit{Yuanjigong}, which refers to formulas for incantation as well as to acquiring the ability of communicating with nature after reaching a state of harmony with men and heaven.\textsuperscript{490}

Many Qigong group styles belonged to the “moving Qigong” (\textit{donggong}) group, which enjoyed increasingly popularity. Mixing elements of tradi-
tional Daoist Kunlun Qigong, “Great Goose Qigong,” and parts of modern “Crane Qigong,” Wei Lian, a Qigong master from Nanjing, initiated the so-called “spontaneous Qigong” (zifa gong) style. This form of Qigong doesn’t only practice in silent meditation or slow movements but rather includes expressive forms of being spontaneously moved by Qi: crying, laughing, dancing, rolling on the ground, et cetera. It also involved close body contact between master and pupils. While also exercised by a small group of practitioners in parks or other public places, at larger “study lectures” impulsive movements were more actively encouraged.\textsuperscript{491}

Amalgamation was the dominant characteristic of the Qigong practices. Besides utilizing elements of already existing popular styles, Qigong leader also incorporated parts of ancient Daoist or Buddhist Qigong forms. Zhang Zhixiang composed his Daoist-inspired Yuanqigong from elements of “Way of the Primary Supreme” (Taiyidao), dating back to the Jin and Yuan dynasties.\textsuperscript{492}

Nearly all Qigong styles emphasize the possibility of acquiring extraordinary abilities. The most remarkable list is offered by Zhang Xiangyu.\textsuperscript{493}

Some of the most common ones include:

\begin{itemize}
  \item “external energy”: including perception of illness by the laying of hands, healing all kinds of illnesses
  \item “internal energy”: strengthening the body, “improving ‘inner qualities’ (suzhi)
  \item “sensual skills”: x-ray view, ability to communicate with dead people and nature
\end{itemize}

The Qigong groups mostly stressed a gradual acquisition of different levels of their respective style. Xianggong consisted of three parts—beginner (chuji), intermediate (zhongji), and advanced (gaoji)—only the former two of which were taught by Tian. Asked about the reason for this, Tian eluded a direct answer and responded that beginner and intermediate levels already belong to a high level because of their healing skills. Later on, he added that

\textsuperscript{491} Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 85ff.; Heise 1999 (see note 14), pp. 113–14.
\textsuperscript{492} Heise 1999 (see note 14), p. 120.
the advanced level can’t be openly taught, and the teacher will only teach it to one pupil.494

On a website, Xianggong is compared to Buddhist pagoda with 13 stories. The level for beginners is the foundation of the pagoda, the first level, with the intermediate level forming the other twelve stories, and the advanced level not knowing any limits of highness, reaching up to the nine stories of heaven.495 Following their theoretical concept, Yuanjigong also laid out a three-phase practice built on “the true words of the cross” (shizi zhen yan).496 In the first phase, the three forces of aggregation, polarization, and recovery should be nourished within the body while cleaning oneself of illnesses. In the second phase, the level or quality of the body will be changed and one will discover many new skills, like being able to communicate with nature and attaining harmony with all things. While reaching harmony with heaven during the third phase, one will also acquire real knowledge.497

Xianggong laid out a number of detailed rules concerning the outer circumstances for practicing. During earthquakes, lighting, and thunder, solar and lunar eclipses, the hottest and coldest days of the year (san fu Ian, san jig tian) practicing is not allowed. This appealed to folk traditions and concepts from Chinese medicine. Xianggong shouldn’t be practiced outside in the evening alone. Judging from the questions arising on this topic, this seemed peculiar to many followers. Tian argued that all acupuncture points are open while practicing; therefore some harmful “messages” might easily enter the body. Training in a group creates a strong magnetic field and wards off dangerous “messages.”498 “With” is mentioned to be one key word of Xianggong, which means to learn and to practice with others.499 Equally, Xianggong exercises should not take place close to a river or a road or from under a fan or in range of a draught, which probably has practical

494 “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Questions 11 and 13.
496 Jia 1988 (see note 198), p. 37. The word “cross” might not necessarily point to a Christian background. However, the three phases and the concept of a trinity replacing the traditional duality makes one wonder where Zhang got his inspiration from.
497 Ibid.
498 “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Questions 11 and 13.
499 “Tian dashi tan” (see note 437).
reasons to avoid accidents. After meals, one should wait 20 minutes before practicing and shouldn’t drink cold water, wash with cold water, or sit under a fan after finishing Xianggong exercises.\footnote{500}

On the contrary, Zhang Xiangyu stipulated that her style is not limited to a special time for practice and is sustainable against any disturbances from the environment. If one needs to do urgent tasks, one can sent out some “information” on this and the study session will stop automatically.\footnote{501} That Qigong became an open, group-based activity of everyday life practiced in parks or at the workplace, was initiated by the Qigong master Guo Lin who in the early 1970s broke with the traditional and often secret style of transmission as a direct contact from master to pupil.\footnote{502}

\subsection{3.1.3.4.2 Outward-Orientated Resources: Recruitment/Public Relations}

\textbf{Christian-inspired Groups}

One of the most vital tasks of Christian-inspired groups was proselytizing. The “Three Grades of Servants Group” named proselytizing a “duty of every follower.”\footnote{503} The assignment of different posts to a particular region was a common feature of network organization. The key technique of evangelization was face-to-face communication, first of all among relatives and friends. This direct means of communication left a strong impression on others and also made him or her more reluctant to reject the speaker and his message.

\footnote{501} Cited after Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367), p. 207.
\footnote{502} Previously, Qigong was basically done in five ways: face-to-face transmission at a limited local spot and over a long period of time; transmission to a limited group, mostly ill people; Buddhist style collective meditation (while not involving aspects of teaching); rather mystical, arranged assemblies, e.g. for offering sacrifice to ancestors of gods; small-scale, slowly proceeding group sessions; see Wan 1993 (see note 110), p. 64. Guo also added more variety to existing breathing concepts and changed the former simultaneous control and practice of relaxing, will power, and guidance of the Dantian, called “simultaneous crossing of key points,” to a consecutive one. For details, see Guo Lin Qigong Yanjiuhui (Guo Lin Qigong Research Society), “Guo Lin Xin Qigong, qian yan (New Qigong of Guo Lin, Preface),” http://888.aawww.net/com/kf66/index.php3?file=detail.php3&kdir=1021975&nowdir=1021975&id=358083&detail=1 (accessed January 1, 2007).
\footnote{503} “Jiaohui jianjie” (see note 370).
The “Group of Everything for Common Use” recruited new members through house visits in the tradition of itinerant preachers: after opening the door, one member of the group walked straight into the room or house of the owner, took his Bible out of his pocket, crossed himself and said, “I am the manifestation of the Almighty God, I have come to save the life of many out of the sea of bitterness.”

The organizational structure of “Teachings of the Soul” was closely related to their missionary work. They divided Chinese territory into three “pieces” or “parts.” The appointed heads of the “pieces” were responsible for the establishment of smaller administrative units for the purpose of evangelizing. They divided the territory to cover the “Main Area East of Henan” (Yuedong zongpian) and the “Main Area West of Henan” (Yuexi zongpian).

Group members would go to local congregations, seemingly just pretending to be fellow followers. After a process of familiarization and talks about the Christian content, group members would introduce potential new adherents to their own group. Several groups also offered material incentives, like mobile phones or a “salary” for each newly recruited follower. Nonmaterial incentives for recruitment were the “testimonies” (zhengjian) of members, especially related to healing.

The groups used several techniques to cover up their actions. Followers of the group of the “Anointed King” were told to use “soul names” when communicating with each other. Also, they should tell nobody their real name and address. Meeting points for activities had to be protected since they constantly faced the danger of being arrested for “illegal gathering.” The “Full Scope Church” informed participants only about the meeting time, and later on somebody would pick people up and guide them to the meeting place. Followers used public telephones, but only for two or three calls. If someone was paged and didn’t call back within a couple of minutes, the caller left the phone booth. On mobile phones, no numbers were saved.

According to Wu, during the initial phase of development, the teachings of the Christian-inspired were mainly spread by word-of-mouth influence, leaf-
lets, and small booklets.\(^{509}\) Taking the group of the “Anointed King” as an example, titles include: “The New Life of Christ on the Cross” (*Jidu zai Shizijia de xin shengming*); “The Accomplished Way” (*Wanquan de dao*); “Holy Words” (*Shenyan*); “Way of the Completed Man” (*Wanquan ren de dao*), and “Power Holders and Submittance” (*Quanbing yu shunfu*).\(^{510}\) However, the “Teachings of the Soul” as well the “Shouters” are the only known groups who didn’t issue any publications. Their teachings are based on interpretation and explanation of the Bible by their respective founders.\(^{511}\)

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Concerning the practice and spreading of Qigong, Qigong masters have utilized several resources.

First, they turned towards research institutes, clinics, and party-state institutions to increase their legitimacy and contacts. The Qigong leaders Guo Lin and Yan Xin contributed to the broadening and deepening of research on Qigong. Whereas in the 1950s, research on Qigong had mainly taken place within medical organizations, in the early 1970s research extended to science labs and university research institutes. Under the influence of Yan Xin, research on Qigong became more complex, and he also initiated experiments on distance transmission of Qigong.\(^{512}\)

Second, they also aimed at spreading Qigong within the population via so-called “power-inducing lectures” (*daigonghui*), mass meetings. Yan Xin was the first to introduce the rather informal collective study sessions that also conveyed an immediate Qigong effect to the participants. He held over 200 lectures between 1987 and 1989, drawing an audience of up to 20,000, and could last for some ten hours without interruption.\(^{513}\) The founder of Xianggong, Tian Ruisheng, performed in big stations before some 20,000 people. These sessions were a mixture of advertising, explanations, and ac-

\(^{509}\) Ibid., p. 26.

\(^{510}\) Li 2000 (see note 344), pp. 198–99; For a complete list of all groups’ publications, see Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 26–29.

\(^{511}\) See “The Teachings of Witness Lee” (see note 453); “Local Church’ Information Site” (see note 453).

\(^{512}\) Wan 1993 (see note 272), pp. 71ff.

\(^{513}\) Ibid., pp. 69–70; Palmer 2003 (see note 12), p. 89.
tual Qigong performances. *Xianggong* hence can be said to have favored a collective manner of healing.\(^{514}\)

The majority of Qigong leaders rather tended to lean on word-to-mouth recommendations and on the effects of their large study sessions. The organization of practice on the ground level was left to devoted practitioners. However, emerging “guidance stations” probably also attracted various followers, who had just happened to watch other people doing exercises or maybe even were brought in by friends and family.\(^{515}\) The Qigong groups stressed voluntary participation and possibility for quitting at any stage. *Xianggong* also stated that one could change to another style of Qigong if *Xianggong* is not suitable. It was also possible to resume *Xianggong* after a “detour” of practicing another style of Qigong. But one was advised to not practice *Xianggong* and some other type of Qigong at the same time.\(^{516}\)

Zhang Xiangyu was the only master who stated that it should not be practiced together with other ways—and that everybody could only be taught one Qigong style in his or her lifetime.\(^{517}\) It seemed, however, that during the first phase of the field, stable networks of practitioners were rather weak. Third, the Qigong masters also utilized the increasing commodification of the media market. As dramatic and colorful stories of miracles and heroes suited readers’ taste well, the media willingly reported on Qigong masters’ experiments and actions. Yan Xin was a prominent example. He became famous overnight after several newspapers and magazines picked up a case of Yan Xin healing a worker in the city of Chongqing, in the then Sichuan province.\(^{518}\)

Most Qigong masters didn’t write a book but rather edited the transcripts of their lectures or hired journalists or writers to compose such a book. Often, their political supporters were asked to write a calligraphic forward to increase the authority of the publication.\(^{519}\)

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\(^{515}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 100.

\(^{516}\) “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Questions 9 and 52.

\(^{517}\) Cited after Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 367), p. 207.

\(^{518}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 138.

\(^{519}\) For example, Peicai Li, *Da ziran de linghun: Ji ziran zhongxin gongfa chuanshouzhe Zhang Xiangyu* (The Soul of Nature: Zhang Xiangyu, Teacher of the Qigong of Nature’s Centre) (Beijing: Changhongchubangongsi, 1998); Yunlu Ke, *Da Qigongshi* (The Great Qigong Master) (Beijing: Renminwenxuechubanshe, 1989).
3.1.4 Patterns of Interaction

In this formative phase of the field, various patterns of interactions emerged.

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

**Chart 8: Patterns of Interactions within the Field of Religion/Protestantism**

Christian-inspired groups became an early target for repression, as they were viewed as part of the flourishing *Huidaomen* at the beginning of the 1980s. Even before the Standing Committee of the NPC created administrative legal tools for serving action against *Huidaomen* as one target of the first “Strike Hard” campaign of the PRC in September 1983, the party apparatus had already targeted the “Group of the Shouters.” During 1982 and 1983, various local clashes between the “Shouters” and authorities were recorded.\(^{520}\)

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Several slogans are ascribed to the “Shouters”:521

— “There are three enemies of the Church, the first one being the Three-Self-Movement, the second one the Communist Party, the third one the People’s government.”
— “To build up strong tendencies for break-off in the rural areas strongly controlled by the Communists, to realize the Reunion of China with the Lord.”
— “The Communist Party represents humans; we listen to God, not to humans.”
— “To call all believers to throw themselves into this battle of the spirit to let the power of the enemy crumble.”
— To organize the church to fight against the Communist party.”
— “To take over Zhejiang and Fujian in one year and in two years the whole of China.”

It is unclear, however, whether the groups pursued political aims in the first place or whether they got politicalized only after local authorities started to persecute them.

For some groups, the main opponent was not the party-state directly, but rather the official church. The “Group of the Three Grades of Servants” stated that “the small gate are the house churches and the narrow gate are the open [official] churches.”522

After five months of local action by related public security starting in January 1983, the CC of the CCP forwarded the report jointly issued by CCP United Front Department, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council. This forwarding marked the beginning of concerted action of national scope. However, this campaign didn’t stop the spreading of the “Shouters.” In 1987, the party-state had to initiate a second wave of arrests as group activities flourished especially in Henan, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. As the “Full Scope Church” emerged as a second challenging group and object of official persecution in 1988, the party-state obviously felt the necessity to enshrine their actions against Christian-inspired groups in a broader official context. In October 1988, the

521 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 36. Unlike other citations, these slogans are not documented with respective reference to the group’s publications or any kind of source information. Various Chinese publications listed these slogans, raising doubts about whether or not they copied it from other second-hand sources.
522 “Zhongguo Chenxi’ zhuanti jiangzuo” (see note 424).
Bureau of Religious Affairs under the State Council and the Ministry of Public Security jointly published a “Notification on Stopping and Handling Illegal Activities Conducted in the Name of Christianity.”

Although the autonomous Protestant communities likewise experienced persecution from the local Bureaus of Public Security, their patterns of interaction with official Church institutions were ambiguous. Whereas on both sides, denouncing voices can be found, a majority seemed to have settled a relatively tolerant working relationship of mutual coexistence. In some cases, officially registered congregations were afraid that the often more appealing autonomous congregations were drawing away their followers and intervening at the local Religious Affairs Bureaus when some autonomous communities applied for registration. Autonomous leaders accused the official church of too many compromises with an atheistic state; extreme positions even called the government “devil’s tools.” A poor image of the CCC/TSPM representatives and preachers of the official congregation—being termed egoistic and at odds with each other—also made autonomous communities reluctant to register. On the other hand, many members of autonomous congregations also visit services of registered churches if the group they belonged to didn’t put an exclusive claim on membership.

During the 1980s, party-state attitudes and actions towards autonomous Protestant communities also varied. Implementation and penetration of laws depended on the mood of local cadres: believers from all parts of China reported cadres creeping into local communities covertly as spies. Stories about arbitrary arrests as a “violation of regulations” and convictions as “counterrevolutionary criminals” were also common.

According to a statement by a former head cadre, local branches of the United Front Department executed a strategy of “divide et imperare” for

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523 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 87; Cheng 2003 (see note 225), pp. 31ff.
524 The large influence of the local CCC/Three-Self Movement on registration with state authorities violates the policy of the national CCC/Three-Self Movement. According to national policy, groups not belonging to the official church were also allowed to register with local state authorities; see “Churches in Henan: To Cooperate or Not: Two Cases involving the True Jesus Church,” Amity News Service (ANS), March 9, 1996, http://is7.pacific.net/hk/~amityhk/Articles/ans96/ans96.3/96_3_9.htm (accessed January 26, 2001).
525 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 85.
526 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 31.
keeping religious groups, especially autonomous Protestant communities, under control. This suggested that the party-state handled the group according to their size and/or organizational skills.

As Christian-inspired groups were rarely discussed by societal actors during the initial phase of the field, they didn’t enter into any kind of interaction with the party-state or the groups themselves. However, they were supportive of attacking illegal religious groups.

Taking advantage of the overall more liberal and open atmosphere during the second half of the 1980s, religious actors were able to secure a certain high-level autonomy from the party-state and sometimes voiced criticism concerning the religious policy. During the second half of the 1980s, voices of scientists advocating the necessity of a national law on religion were on the rise. What is more, some figures within the official church, notably its leader Bishop Ding himself, aliened themselves within sections of the party-state, driven by Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang, working towards a more liberal religious policy, discussing reform and even abolishment of the politicalized TSPM. Some representatives of the Bureau of Religious Affairs took up this claim and stated, “Enacting a realistic and workable religious law with Chinese characteristics is already on our agenda . . . The question we face today is . . . how the religious departments . . . place their handling of religious affairs on a stronger legal base.” Whether this was motivated by sympathy for religious conviction or strategic concerns for smoothing relations between the party-state and the church might be debated.

However, in periods of overall crisis, this autonomy vanished quickly. The initial stance of the official Protestant representatives during the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square was supportive of the students’ activities. After the violent crackdown on the movement, however, the leadership of the Patriotic Protestant Church took over the evaluation of Chinese leadership.

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527 Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 93ff.
528 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 206ff.; Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), pp. 94–95.
The formative field of Qigong was dominated by a strong alliance between various party-state actors, societal actors, and Qigong masters. This alliance proved to be of benefit to all sides, as they could use concerted resources to promote their aims. Societal actors and Qigong actors entered into a mutually beneficial alliance for the sake of the promoting Qigong. Societal actors also contributed to the popularization of Qigong leaders as they used them for their own research aims. Later on, the cooperation turned into a win-win relationship as both sides shared interest in upholding and strengthening “outer energy.” Media actors mainly used the sensationalism and fame of Qigong actors to increase their own standing.530

To what extent officials became involved in the Qigong field can be deduced from one report describing the complicated entanglements between local authorities, scientists, and military actors, causing the author to wonder whether any famous investigative journalist would dare to report.531 The Beidaihe Qigong Sanatorium evolved as a pontifex between Qigong master and the state. The foundation of the China Qigong Science Research Society in Beijing in 1986 marked a new quality of party-state involvement in the Qigong sector.532 Two more organizations, founded in 1987, manifested the close network between scientists and official promoters of Qigong. The China Sports Qigong Society was established 1987 under the sponsorship of the State Sports Commission. It published the magazine Qigong and Sports which was launched by the United Front Work Department of the Party Committee of the province Shaanxi. Likewise, the China Somantic Science Society, headed by Zhang Zhenhuan and with Qian Xuesen as an honorary Chairman, was founded in 1987. The 245 members vowed to promote research on “extraordinary abilities.”533

Close contact between Qigong leaders and the party-state could also be traced. For example, having just started to spread Zhongong in public in

530 Wan 1993 (see note 272), p. 82.
531 Ji 1993 (see note 395), pp. 204–215.
533 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 77.
November 1987, an article in the China Electronic News (Zhongguo dianzi bao) from January 22 was entitled “Zhang Hongbao Opened Qigong Classes in Central Party School” (Zhang Hongbao zai Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao kai ban Qigong ban). Qigong master Zhang Baosheng was even appointed to the No. 507 Institute of Aeronautical Engineering of the CONSTAND for researching the possible military applications of his powers and, according to Palmer, also to “keep him from putting them to the wrong use.”\(^{534}\) Zhang was also said to have had special access to Zhongnanhai and to have met with Deng Xiaoping.\(^{535}\) The first well-known Qigong master, Yan Xin, clearly put Qigong at the service of the official political line. At a Qigong assembly in Beijing, he was reported to have elaborated on the nature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. As Qigong is a specialty (tese) of China, adding it to socialism results, according to Yan, in socialism with Chinese characteristics. He stated that the history of Qigong is closely connected to Chinese history and culture, therefore an understanding of Qigong becomes a necessity for the comprehension of Chinese history and culture.\(^{536}\)

Yan Xin cooperated with two organizations which became valuable pillars of support: firstly, the Chinese Qigong Science Research Society, namely the head of the board of directors, Zhang Zhenhuan, and secondly, Qinghua University, namely Lu Zuyin and Li Shengping from the Departments of Biology and Chemistry. Additionally, the Sichuan Daily and later on the GMRB promoted Yan Xin’s abilities through comprehensive reporting.\(^{537}\)

At the height of Qigong fever—powerfully incorporating the successful cooperation between the Qigong masters, the state, and the media—Qigong was invited on stage during the glamorous Chinese New Year Festival Evening Gala in 1988. Before a national audience in the highly merited show, a Qigong master from Hubei performed various actions belonging to the field of “light Qigong” (qinggong).\(^{538}\) The entrance of Qigong into this sacrosanct national arena provoked controversial discussions within the Qigong sector.

\(^{534}\) Ibid., p. 74.
\(^{535}\) Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{536}\) Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 145.
\(^{537}\) Zhang 1996 (see note 181), p. 47.
\(^{538}\) Lu 1999 (see note 188), p. 13.
Throughout the 1980s, voices supportive of “external energy” were able to dominate and control the critics and effectively protect famous Qigong masters from the public exposure of their failure. For example, in 1988 He Zuoxiu and other scientists participated in a performance by Zhang Yusheng, a then celebrated “superman” of Qigong. His performance turned out to be a complete failure; he wasn’t able to complete a single task successfully. Not until 1995 did He Zuoxiu and others publish an article in the BYD detailing the facts he had observed seven years ago. As Shen Zhang, another attendant at that performance, suggested, the reason for the belated publication might be a cover-up of Zhan’s tricks to save face for the leaders concerned.\(^{539}\) Another example involving the case of Yan Xin could serve as a good example: Zhang Hongbao’s critical article on research results at Yan’s base, the Qinghua University, in January 1989 was censored by the editors of Health (Jiankangbao) on the grounds that they were not sure about the real situation at the Qinghua research lab and that it would also touch on issues of a famous university. Later, the editors decided to send another two reporters and Zhang to expose facts about research at Qinghua University, and the whole background story finally was revealed by end of 1989.\(^ {540}\) Direct interactions between the two camps by the scientists were rare, as supporters grew more reluctant to allow critics to attend experiments or to participate in their conferences. Within their respective publications, however, direct mutual references can be traced. Interestingly, the supporters ascribed their concepts to the critics, describing, for instance, Yu Guanyuan as possessing great “extraordinary skills” and being the only living person in China with an “Opened Buddha Eye” (foyan tong). Failed performances by several Qigong masters were explained by the presence of Yu and his great Qi, being stronger than that of the masters.\(^ {541}\)

The split amongst the societal actors and the evolving discussion concerning the question of “extraordinary abilities” and the nature of “Somantic Science” neither weakened the alliance nor the status of Qigong. Because key

\(^{539}\) Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 198–99.

\(^{540}\) Zhang 1996 (see note 181), pp. 48–64.

figures within the societal sphere, who fostered close personal relationships with the party-state or were incorporated into the party-realm, used these linkages to insure a at least tolerant policy towards Qigong and “extraordinary abilities”. How much influence politically well-connected scientists had on official policy can be seen from the letter of Qian Senlin, having induced an important policy change in the stance on research by the CCP Propaganda Department.\footnote{Yu 2002 (see note 186), pp. 153–54.} Hostile actions against Qigong by the party-state only emerged towards the end of the 1980s. Still, close to the end of the 1980s, signs indicating a more repressive attitude by the party-state towards Qigong were on the rise. In 1988, Feng Lida established the “Academy of Qigong Medicine,” a educational organization. But just after one term (four months), she had cease this activity, since the relevant offices did not approve.\footnote{‘Feng Lida weiyuan jianyi chuangzao ban ‘Zhonghua Qigong yi xueyuan’ (Commissioner Feng Lida Suggests Establishing a ‘China Academy of Qigong Medicine,’” printed in Feng 1999 (see note 279), pp. 459–60.} In June 1988, Zhang Hongbao’s “illegal clinical Qigong activities” \footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 219.} were declared illegal by the Beijing Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Regarded from the rear-view mirror, these events represented the prelude to a changing mood to come.
Chart 9: Patterns of Interaction within the Qigong Network of Party-State and Societal Actors

Standing Committee of CC

Ministry of Health

State Council


State Administration of Chinese Medicine, Lü Bingkui, Director

State Sports Commission, Wu Shaozu, Minister

National Association for Science, and Technology (NAST), Qian Xuesen, Chairman

Leading Work Group on Body Science, Wu Shaozu, Director

China Qigong Science Research Society, Zhang Zhenhuan, Director

China Somantic Science Society, Zhang Zhenhuan, Chairman, later: Chen Xin

All-China-Medical Qigong Science Society, Lü Bingkui, Chairman

International Qigong Science Federation, Wu Shaozu, Chairman

Institute No. 507, Chen Xin, Director

Chinese Qigong magazine

Beidaihe Sanatorium

Chinese Qigong magazine

China Sports Qigong Society, Zuo Lin/Guo Zhuli, Directors

Qigong and Sports magazine

Critical Scientists

Joint Group for Investigation and Research of Questions

Qigong-Based Groups

Source: Slightly adapted from Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 83.
The field of religion/Protestantism was marked by a conflict between party-state authorities and the Christian-inspired groups. Regarding organizational and action resources, societal actors played a rather marginal role within the field. However, the ideational resources of the party-state are non-stringent and therefore presented an ambiguous concept of how to deal with religion. Therefore, on the policy implementation level, the handling of autonomous Protestant communities varied between persecution and tolerance. Conversely, the Christian-inspired movement was able to develop strong organizational resources and present alternative ideational resources appealing to the needs of potential followers. Their action resources likewise equipped them with a strong tool for recruiting and binding followers. Therefore, Christian-inspired groups managed to counter the hostile attitude towards them within the field.

A broad-based alliance on mutual gains between party-state, societal as well as Qigong-based groups themselves dominated the field of Qigong. Against this dense network, conflictual interaction patterns were only able to emerge within the scientists’ camp. Critical voices were marginalized due to weak organizational resources and a lack of innovative ideational resources. Rather than creating their own concepts, critical voices also tried to occupy concepts by the supportive scientists, like the term of science itself. Unlike the Christian-inspired movement, there were no incentives for developing innovative resources for the Qigong-based movement, as it was more effective to adopt the official and openly existing resources for securing support and followers. Their ideational and organizational resources were rather weak when compared to the Christian-inspired groups.

In the face of rising hostility and conflict within the overall spiritual-religious field after the Tiananmen Massacre 1989, the next chapter will revisit the resources of the party-state, societal actors, and the movements, focusing on continuities or changes within the constitution of their resources as well as their patterns of interaction.
3.2 Phase Two (1990-1999): Field Heat

The aftermath of Tiananmen also opened a new chapter for the development of the spiritual-religious field in China: rising pressure and, at the same time, growing demand.

On the one hand, the officially launched criticism against the entire spiritual-religious realm, with a special focus on Christianity, also mounted in rising pressure and doubts against Qigong. The large-style, rather uncontrolled mass “power-inducing lectures” initiated by Qigong masters like Yan Xin and the performances of “extraordinary activities” as part of the annual TV show at Chinese New Year were the two main points of criticism. Ke Yunlu’s book *Great Qigong master (da gongshi)*, the 1989 bestseller, was the first known publication supportive of “extraordinary abilities” censored by the state after June.

On the other hand, as an author with the pseudonym “earthly heart” (*tu xin*) wrote, “after a large political turmoil was over, many new strains of thought came up, and more people started to pay attention to questions concerning human existence.”

3.2.1 Party-State

3.2.1.1 Organizational Resources

**Christian-Inspired Groups**

The organizational resources within the field of religion/Protestantism didn’t change during the second phase. However, two tendencies can be witnessed.

First, according to Document No. 6 (see Chapter 3.2.2.1), public security bureaus were explicitly called on to join in the fight against illegal religious organizations.

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547 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 228.
Second, the declarations and bans of various Christian-inspired groups as “heretical teachings” during the 1990s were stipulated either by the Ministry of Public Security or the State Council. The agency with the better or at least more appropriate expertise, the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, was largely not involved in these decisions.\footnote{The Center for Religious Freedom, “Report Analyzing Seven Secret Chinese Government Documents on Religious Freedom,” released February 11, 2002 (Washington: Hudson Institute), http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/religiouslibertyFeb2002.pdf (accessed February 26, 2008).}

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Similar to the religious sphere, the organizational resources developed during the initial phase didn’t change much within the field of Qigong. In accordance with the two main sectors within the Qigong field, Qigong therapy belonged to the realm of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Health Ministry respectively, while Qigong as a sport practice/health exercise was administered by the National Administration of Sports, headed from the onset by an old promoter of Qigong, Wu Shaozu.

However, the most vibrant sector of Qigong—various styles and groups founded and promoted by Qigong masters—only partly came within the administrative realm of the state. During the first phase, the most common legal option for Qigong masters was to acquire a license from the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. During the 1990s, Qigong masters wanting to obtain a legal status mostly opted to register as a direct subbranch (zhishu fenhui) of the China Qigong Science Research Society. The legal status of the society changed from a direct organ under the National Sports Commission to a social group registered under the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Still being somehow linked to the state, the China Qigong Science Research Society seemed to practice a rather independent way of registering Qigong styles, at least until 1996. Another legal option for Qigong groups was registration as a business enterprise with the relevant offices of industry and commerce.
In summary, the administration of Qigong stretched over five realms of administrative responsibilities.\footnote{Zhonggong xuanchuanbu (Propaganda Department of the CCP) et al., “Guanyu jiaqiang shehui Qigong guanli de tongzhi (Notification on the Strengthening of Social Qigong Administration),” http://www.chinasfa.net/zcfg/zyzc/gyjqsl.html (accessed December 19, 2004).}

After 1995, a new quest for a recentralization and for stricter registration of Qigong groups was initiated. A call for the groups to subordinate under the guidance and leadership of the party-state was voiced. Especially local Qigong Research groups developed a considerable degree of independence and were somehow reluctant to subordinate themselves under centralized guidance, as the head of the Center for Wushu Administration under the National Sports Administration, Li Jie, mentioned in an interview in February 1999.\footnote{Wenzheng Nan, “Guojia tiyu zongju wushu zhongxin fuzeren Li Jie: tan Shehui Qigong guanli de zongti silu (Spokesman of Wushu Center under National Sports Administration Li Jie: Talk on Comprehensive Thoughts about the Administration of Social Qigong),” \textit{ZGQGKX} 2 (1999), pp. 3–4.}

While during the first phase the party-state considered the National Administration of TCM as the central administrative organ, the National
Sports Administration emerged as the central role in the rising supervision of the Qigong sector. Its head, Wu Shaozu, was also appointed head of the Leader’s Work Group on Somantic Science in 1990; in 1993 he headed the first World Taiji Cultivation Congress and gave Qigong an important place in the new National Plan of Physical Fitness for All Citizens. The task of public security was to search the parks and public places for non-registered practitioners. Within the National Sports Commission, the Center for Wushu Administration was responsible for handling day-to-day affairs.

With high-level polity, the “(Leaders’) Working Group on Somantic Science” (Guojia renti kexue (lingdao) gongzuozu), initiated as a “small leading group” in the 1980s attached to the State Council, continued to be an important monitoring organization for research and information gathering. Coming under criticism at the beginning of the 1990s, it was relocated under the Martial Arts Research Institute of the State Sports Commission and broadened to six members, with sports minister Wu Shaozu, known as a strong supporter of Qigong, as its head. Annual conferences were attended by politicians, scientists, and Qigong masters to discuss research projects and progress, with special attention to “extraordinary abilities” and “outer energy.” As the latter two came under increasing attack during 1995, the meeting in 1996 reaffirmed the importance and legitimation of these two concepts. However, with the rise of a less tolerant policy, which stopped the public application of somantic science, the Leaders’ Working Group was finally disbanded in 1998.

The Qigong Science Research Society, having emerged as one central institutional actor during the first phase, lost its function and influence during the latter half of the 1990s. Especially after the death of its long-term head and influential Qigong promoter Zhang Zhenhuan in March 1994, it was increasingly criticized by other state organizations, in particular the

551 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 146.
552 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 169.
medical administration, for its autonomous registration practice and its promotion of somantic science. Different levels of membership existed, and a registered Qigong group could rise from “low-level research group” (diceng yanjiuzu) to a “directly associated branch” (zhishu fenhui). The society was accused for being party responsible for the rising number of Qigong swindlers and for problems of physical and psychological deviation within the Qigong field. As a reaction, the society, under its new head Huang Jingbo, undertook several internal administrative reforms: building up of a double monitoring structure, including the national body in accordance with the local branches, re-registration of Qigong groups with provision of encompassing material on style, followers, research et cetera. The necessity of better training for Qigong masters, referred to as “ganbu,” was applied to practice with the foundation of a “Research and Education Center for Qigong cadres.” However, Huang did not have the capacity to avoid the shift of administrative responsibility for Qigong from the Research Society to medical and sports authorities in 1996. With this new policy, the society “... lost any real authority ... and ceased to function after 1996.”

In 1997, the National Party Congress became slightly involved with the topic of “heretical teachings” (xiejiao) as a working group titled “Absolute non-permission of incitement, holding on fighting against heretical activities” (Jue bu chongxu songyong, zhichi fan dong xiejiao huodong) was initiated. The meaning of “heretical teachings” referred to possible astray Qigong-based groups as well as Christian-inspired ones.

### 3.2.1.2 Ideational Resources

**Christian-Inspired Groups**

As the CCP was struggling to reestablish their control in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, religious affairs seemed less of a high public priority. Still, documents and reports from committee meetings revealed that

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556 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179) p. 267.
560 Guanyuan Yu, “Fan xiejiao guangfan de tongyi zhan xian (Broad-Based United Frontline against Heretical Teachings),” in Yu 2002 (see note 186), p. 177.
the leadership—like at the end of the 1970s—once again struggled with the task of framing ideational concepts between the two extremes of a total suppression of religion and a too liberal attitude endangering their grip on power. At a national meeting of the United Front Work Department and RAB in 1989, it was echoed that the general line of the “Document No. 19” should continue to be the guiding principle of religious policy. At that time, cadres were warned against slipping to ultra-leftist tendencies, that is, harsh and unlawful repression of religious activities. Yet they were also told to be careful concerning the danger of religion, especially Christianity, as it aims at “peaceful evolution” as means to topple the Party through “bourgeois liberalization.” Premier Li Peng and Ren Wuzhi, then-head of RAB, delivered a more clear-cut message at a national meeting of the State Council in December 1990, pointing to a more hard-line interpretation of the “Document No. 19.” Also Jiang Zemin, then newly enthroned General Secretary of the CCP, stated in a discussion with leaders from the five officially recognized religions that the party must “. . . prevent and curb illegal elements from using religion or religious activities to stir up disorder . . . [and] to sabotage hostile forces from outside the border who use religion to perpetrate infiltration.”

Moreover, a new circular—called Document No. 6 “Concerning certain problems in further improving religious work”—was issued by the CC of CCP on February 5, 1991. Besides confirming the previous document, it took up the more hard-line remarks of “hostile forces” using religion to set on with their strategy of “peaceful evolution.” Evangelistic activities outside of the state realm were to be resolutely suppressed and illegal schools, seminars, and convents to be “eliminated.” In 1992, the head of Public Security Bureau, Tao Siju, was cited as having named religion as one of the six harmful forces from abroad. He blamed religious persons and groups using the bible to topple communism in China.

Consequently, at a United Front Working Conference in 1993, Jiang Zemin slightly adjusted the official standing on religion, summarized as the

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561 Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 226ff.
562 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103, pp. 87–88.
“three sentence” (san ju hua) concept: “First, wholly and correctly implement the party’s religious policy; second, strengthen administration of religious affairs based on the law; third, energetically engage in guiding mutual adaptation of religion and socialism.” Interestingly, an official explanation mentions that the focal point should be understood to be on administrative strengthening.\(^{564}\) The “White Paper on Freedom of Religious Belief in China,” published in 1997, echoed this tone: religion must “conduct their activities within the sphere prescribed by law and adapt to social and cultural progress,” and “religion should be adapted to the society where it is prevalent.” Also, more coercive themes were stipulated. Religious believers who “are a serious danger to the normal life and productive activities of the people” or who “severely endanger the society and the public interest will be punished.\(^{565}\)

The party-state developed a catalogue of reasons and accusations which could be legally used to persecute autonomous Protestant communities: noncooperation with Three-Self movement; reception of overseas funding; usage and import of books/bibles from overseas; contact with anti-China foreign subversive forces; gathering in non-registered place; reception and publishing of illegal underground material. In addition, evangelism to children under eighteen years as well as exorcism and healing prayers were also prohibited.\(^{566}\) The “mutual adaptation” of religion and socialism remained a dominant frame throughout the second phase of field development. That it should be rather understood as conditional incorporation of religion into socialism became even more clear from another new term officially attributed to Li Huiran, then acting chairman of the CPPCC, the so-called “four protections” (si ge weihu): “In our country, any person or group, including any religious group, must protect the dignity of the law, the interests of the people, the solidarity of the nationalities, and the unity of the state.” According to an official commentary, “. . . whenever religion violates one of these

\(^{564}\) Guojia zongjiao shiwuju zhengce faguisi 2000 (see note 213), pp. 18–19.
principles, it will be lead into the garden path effect, loosing its status within the state, then ‘mutual adaptation’ is out of reach.”

Related to the existence of religion, a former unmentioned reason gained momentum: the psychological realm that was largely unrecognized during the initial phase. People are experiencing a faster rhythm of life, competitive pressure, more complex and short-term human relations, the disintegration of the family concept, as well as increased insecurity due to economic and social reforms. Therefore, people not only seek individual comfort within religious worshipping but also participate in religious communal life to satisfy affectional needs experienced in honest and respectful human relationships. Official accounts cite surveys covering rural areas pointing to a large proportion of women and elderly, as the weakest parts of society, adhering to religious faith.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Due to the heat of the “Qigong fever,” many people with varying knowledge and training of Qigong felt qualified to teach and treat other people illnesses. As reports about worsening of health conditions and psychological deviations due to wrong practice or treatment flourished and the controversy over “extraordinary abilities” and “external energy” deepened, the party-state felt the necessity to readjust their stance on Qigong. However, neither did the party-state want to totally give up their former ideational resources embracing Qigong as a vital part of the scientific and cultural concept of China. Therefore, as in relation to the religious field, the overall concept of Qigong became more ambiguous. Recognizing the success and achievements of the Qigong therapy sector, party and government officials detected several problems within the Qigong sector, also referred to as “Pseudo Qigong.”

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569 The label of “Pseudo Science” given to parts of the Qigong sector derives from the overall quest for a scientific spirit which was already considered to be essential for successful modernization of the nation in the days of Imperial China. After the bitterly recognized defeat by Japanese and, later on, by Western troops and the successive forceful opening up of China, the embrace of modern science was by many considered to be the way to regain national strength and wealth. Whereas Mao linked science with social function and a correct political conscience, science and technology became the base for
anarchistic tendencies and spreading of feudal superstitions within Qigong teachings; corrupt and morally degenerated Qigong teachers
— scattered and ineffective administration, insufficient market mechanism to monitor research; inadequate training for Qigong teachers
— propaganda of media and other societal actors
— some Qigong groups developed vertical and horizontal ties nationwide thriving for independence and some even objected to the party as well as to socialism only to then “become a political problem.”
— level of social and economic development, decreased level of attention paid to work of popular science, “weakening of Marxist thoughts”

Interestingly, the latter bunch of reasons echoed the reasons given for the existence of religion already mentioned in the first phase. “Extraordinary abilities” of some Qigong masters, referred to as “Pseudo Science,” were incorporated into the realm of spiritual-religious activities, indicating their increased level of influence and potential danger perceived by the party-state. “Some superstitious, ignorant activities spread increasingly; Anti-Science or Pseudo Science activities take place more and more, making one wonder and worry . . . One must fully recognize the long-term, complicated, and difficult nature of abolishment of Anti-Science and Pseudo Science . . . One must resolutely, according to law, attack criminal activities using feudal superstitions, and resolutely, according to law, prohibit counterrevolutionary sects and secret societies.” The wording “long-term, complicated, and difficult nature”—previously only used in the religious context—verifies a transfer of labeling and a broadening of the spiritual-religious sphere within the view of the party-state. Again, paralleling phras-
ing within the religious sphere, a historical as well as international dimension was added to the issue of “Pseudo Science”: the “combat against superstition” was named a phenomenon with “. . . long history and international scope” as well as a “. . . long-term international responsibility.”

Still, there were conflicting concepts about the relationship between religion and Qigong.

Vice-head of the council of the China Qigong Research Society, Zhang Jian, stated the necessity of a differentiation between Qigong and “traditional religion” as well as “extraordinary abilities.” Zhang refrains from further comments on these concepts, leaving them open to evaluation.

Other voices, like the former Minister of Public Security and State Council member, Wang Fang, urged the necessity for Qigong to “. . . rip off its mystical religious outer cloths as well as old habits and bad customs.” The then Vice-director of the CCP Party School, Gong Yuzhi, placed the combat against “Pseudo Science” and “Superstition” in the same line as the activities of the May 4 movement as well as Mao Zedong’s concept of the “three great harms” (san da hai): superstition, illiteracy, and non-hygiene. However, he warned against “carelessly” referencing “Pseudo Science.”

Official commentary spelled out “protecting people’s health” and “safeguarding the quality of Qigong therapy” as the main driving forces for the regulation of the medical Qigong sector. The importance of regulating Qigong therapy was also justified in the light of an international reputation of Qigong therapy and worries about “causing harmful effects to the international community.”

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577 „Zhonggongzhongyang dangxiao Gong Yuzhi“ (see note 573) in Zhang 1996 (see note 181), p. 335.
578 „Guanyu jiaqiang Qigong yiliao guanli de ruogan guiding (shixing) de tihui (Knowledge about Studying the ‘Several Regulations Concerning the Strengthening of Management of Qigong Medical Treatment (Trial version),’)” ZGQG 2 (1990), pp. 2–3, p. 2; Feng Qiu, “Mantan dangqian Qigong yanjiu de yixie wenti: Fang Zhongguo Qigong kexue yanjiu hui mishuzhang Li Zhinan (Free Talk on Some Problems Concerning Current Qigong Research: Interviewing the General Secretary of the China Qigong Science Research Society Li Zhinan),” ZGQG 1 (1992), pp. 23–24, here p. 24.
At a press conference related to the stipulation of new regulations for TCM in October 1989, Hu Ximing, deputy minister of health and head of national administration of TCM, stated that treatment with external energy was a not-yet-mature method of therapy. Therefore a “scientific attitude” (*kexue de taidu*) was strongly urged and the usage of external energy was advised to be basically limited to research institutes.\(^{579}\) This stance was reaffirmed by Wu Shaozu, the head of the National Sports Administration after a coordination conference with various organizations on Qigong. Wu mentioned that “extraordinary activities” are all right, as long as they remain tied to research institutes and don’t emerge as “social activities.” Ideationally, “extraordinary abilities,” like other areas of Qigong as well, should emphasize “virtue” or “work for virtue” (*gongde*) as a part of building up a socialist spiritual culture.\(^{580}\)

Hence, the party-state aimed at framing Qigong within a medical context to be able to channel control, but also to make use of the unfolding dynamics in the sector. Chen calls this strategy the “medicalization of Qigong.”\(^{581}\) Authorities established Qigong deviation as a psychiatric category in order to regain control over the Qigong sector.\(^{582}\) Besides the concept of Pseudo Science, the category of “Health Qigong” was defined as part of the stipulations issued on February 22, 1998. Health Qigong should not “conduct any cheating or feudal superstitious activities in the name of Qigong; illegally publish, edit Qigong books and magazines, video tapes, or other information materials; through media, broadcasting, posting, or mailing spread any propaganda or advertisement which has not been authorized by related sports organs; disturb or harm law and order of society.”\(^{583}\)

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\(^{579}\) The population should concentrate on “internal nourishing practices” (*neiyanggong*), “health preserving practices” (*baojiangong*), or “still-standing practices” (*jiangzhuanggong*). These ideational concepts were laid down in an official policy stipulation called the “five principles” of the Leader’s Group in Sonamtic Science and were issued in basic confirmation of the compromising line of 1982 after interventions by Qian Xuesen against rising criticism. 1) no criticism, 2) no promotion, 3) no polemics, 4) organization of solid scientific research, and 5) ban on the terms “Qigong” and “extraordinary abilities” in all cases of feudal superstition; see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 167.

\(^{580}\) Wu 1997 (see note 572), p. 6.

\(^{581}\) Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 145.

\(^{582}\) Ibid., pp. 107–108.

While criticizing and denouncing “Pseudo Qigong” as well as indirectly “unhealthy Qigong, the party-state also conceptualized an affirmative stance towards Qigong with incorporating it into the broader political concept of “construction of a socialist spiritual culture.”\(^{584}\) Likewise, ideational resources like Chinese tradition, “revolution of Science,” and “brilliant Eastern culture” were still promoted by the supporters.\(^{585}\) Individual voices attached great value to Qigong. Besides its positive effect on health, and a reduction of public medical costs, Qigong could “. . . change life habits, lifestyle and way of thinking as well as moral notions of people . . . It [Qigong] is positive for enduring hardships and working hard, concentrating one’s efforts, being persistent and dauntless . . .”\(^{586}\) As an elder cadre reports, Qigong also brings about an ease of mind, reduces gambling or bad temper. Practicing also provides an opportunity for the elderly to meet and to talk as well as an opportunity to study (human body science).\(^{587}\) Paralleling different connotations related to “extraordinary abilities,” some officials framed Qigong in a context going beyond existing political concepts. Guan Qian envisioned the idea of a “Great Qigong” (da Qigong) “. . . aiming at a World Utopia, breaking up all bonds concerning skills and ideas, going beyond schools, sciences, scholarly factions, ethnics, even beyond borders, a common Qigong for mankind.”\(^{588}\)

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586 Yuqing Chen, “Qigong xiulian ying chengwei ganbu ting tong zhinan xiaotong de yizhong huoong zhongli (Cultivation of Qigong Should Become One Sort of Form for Cadres to Improve the Overall Inner Quality),” \(ZGQGKX\) 11 (1997), p. 4.

587 Demin Zhou, “Gongzhangdangyuan yai zai Qigong huoong zhong qian cuin zuoyong (Members of the CCP Have a Boosting Effect on Qigong Activities),” \(ZGQGKX\) 1 (1997), pp. 8–9.

3.2.1.3 Action Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS
As Christianity was newly framed as a potential tool of “hostile foreign forces” for overthrowing the Chinese government, the party-state respectively adjusted their action resources.

The first national conference on religious policy was held in December 1990. It was convened by the State Council and attended by over 200 senior cadres, including then Premier Li Peng who opened the conference. Although the party-state considerably sharpened the tone concerning religion, they did not return to a complete condemnation or suppression such as mass arrests.\(^{589}\)

Newly issued regulations targeted foreign religious activities as well the organizational capacity of religion. Concerning the former, the State Council enacted Decree No. 144 “Regulations Concerning the Governing of Religious Activities of Foreigners within the Borders of the People’s Republic of China.”\(^{590}\) Self-initiative preaching and evangelism by foreigners, including people from Hong Kong and overseas Chinese, was prohibited. Besides, foreigners were not allowed to set up their own religious organizations or meeting places. To manage to rising numbers of Christians and Christians meetings\(^{591}\) the State Council issued Decree No. 145 “Regulations Concerning Administration of Religious Venues.”\(^{592}\) To get registered as a religious venue, various conditions related to staff and finance had to be met. On the one side, “normal” religious activities of these registered sites enjoyed legal protection, on the other, it forced meeting places to submit to state control concerning content and structure of their meetings. Autonomous Protestant as well as Catholic congregations were therefore often

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\(^{589}\) Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 100.
\(^{591}\) Statistics from Beijing, Tianjin, and Chengdu reveal that new CCP membership CCP decreased while numbers of people joining churches shot up by over 100 percent. In some areas, Christian students and teachers were pressured with poor assignments or even dismissal if they helped their faith; see Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 236–37.
reluctant to register. Consequently, they faced the constant threat of being closed down by the public security forces.

Despite these new national regulations, legal enforcement seemed to vary locally, as during the initial phase. Lambert suggests two relationships: a high density of Christians seemed to induce a more repressive religious policy, e.g. in Henan province. Contrarily, there are also some clues that a large number of Christians have led to a more relaxed attitude of local cadres, if the overall political atmosphere so permits. Generally speaking, urban areas are subject to stricter surveillance than rural ones, as are likewise areas in the north and the interior in comparison to southern coastal areas.\textsuperscript{593}

The authorities developed a large repertoire of repressive measures towards autonomous Christian communities. These included: buying of a religious “identity card,” with non-possession equaling “illegally believing in religion”; need to obtain permission for baptism at RAB; arrest and sentence for “re-education through labor”; beatings on the spot; desolation and demolition of houses; confiscation of money and goods; fines, writing of self-criticism, withholding of registration (as a pretext for prohibiting Christian activities), offering of bounties (dead/alive). To cover up torture and fatal beatings, local police offered “rewards” to the family.\textsuperscript{594} As a consequence, the revised Criminal Code also offered various possibilities to link heretical teachings to crimes.

\textsuperscript{593} Lambert 1994 (see note 164), p. 72.
\textsuperscript{594} Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 274ff.
Table 4: Possibilities of Criminalization of Spiritual/Religious Groups

Based on Criminal Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Punishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentalization of religious groups for counterrevolutionary aims</td>
<td>§99 (1979)</td>
<td>Up to three years of fixed-term imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of superstitious activities for spreading of rumors and financial fraud</td>
<td>§165 (1979)</td>
<td>Two to seven years of fixed-term imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crimes with counterrevolutionary aims</td>
<td>§90-104. (1979)</td>
<td>Imprisonment or death penalty for “especially grave crimes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complot against state power or attempted overthrow of the socialist system</td>
<td>§103-113</td>
<td>Death penalty for “especially serious crimes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... for leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td>At least ten years of imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... for complices</td>
<td></td>
<td>Three to seven years of imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption of public order</td>
<td>§277</td>
<td>Three to ten years imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to public security</td>
<td>§114,115</td>
<td>Three to ten years imprisonment, up to death penalty for “serious crimes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal business activities (Disruption of market regulations)</td>
<td>§225S</td>
<td>Maximum penalty: life term imprisonment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Through organizing** 
  Huidaomen, “heretical teachings” or due to superstition
  a) Breaking state laws or administrative regulations
  b) Causing suicide or self-injury
  c) Guidance to self-immolation or self-explosion (Zibao) [2001]
  d) Raping of women and/or seducing or raping minors
  e) Obtaining money illegally
  f) Propagating the spread of “superstitious teachings”
     - complot/subversion
     - fraud
     - infringement of state secrets at event
  g) Obstruction of civil servants

| Source: Hongxing Chen and Chenjing Dai, *Falun Gong yu xiejiao (Falun Gong and Heretical Teachings)* (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1999), pp. 241–244; Zuigaorenminfayuan, zuigaorenminjianchayuan, „Guanyu banli zuzhi he liyong xiezjiao zuzhi zui anjian juti yingong falu ruogan wenti de jieshi (Explanations of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme Procuratorate concerning laws applicable to handling cases of organizations and employing heretical cult organizations to commit crimes)“ (Beijing: Beijing Falü chubanshe, 1999); Zuigaorenminfayuan, zuigaorenminjianchayuan (Supreme People's Court and the Supreme Procuratorate), „Guanyu banli zuzhi he liyong xiezjiao zuzhi fanzui anjian juti yingong falu ruogan wenti de jieshi (er)“ (Second Explanation Concerning Several Questions of Laws Applicable to Handling Cases of Organizations and Employing Heretical Cult Organizations to Commit Crimes), June 4, 2001, http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/gb/content/2001-06/11/content_19028.htm (accessed on February 14, 2002). |

| a | The explanation of the People’s Supreme Court and Supreme People’s Procuratorate name the following matters as facts for organizing and utilizing these groups: encirclement and disturbance of order of official institutions, illegal assemblies, resistance against orders by authorities, continuance of forbidden activities, disturbance, fraud, or publication of materials for spreading heretical teachings (Zuigao 1999, p. 4). |
| b | Gravity of crime according to size and scope of the group, participation of foreign groups or persons, amount of produced material, harm or death of members (Zuigao 1999, p. 5). |
As a new action resource, the party-state aimed at incorporating the “fight against heretical teachings” into a broader policy framework to generalize and broaden the effect. In a “Decision of the CC of CCP on Several Serious Problems Concerning the Agricultural and Rural Work,” action against superstitious and heretical activities is combined with an effort to stop various immoral activities like gambling, pornography, or doping. All these phenomena are regarded to be the result of a lacking or monotonous spiritual culture in the countryside. Consequently, more cultural activities—but also improved scientific education—are mentioned as methods for countering a flourishing demand for heretical teachings.

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Although the level of criticism didn’t reach that of within the field of religions/Protestantism, the party-state also had to cope with various negative and dangerous tendencies within the Qigong field. The leadership stuck to two different action resources: stipulation of new regulations within the three sectors of Qigong and an enhanced propaganda of science to counterbalance Pseudo Qigong.

After increasing reports on health problems due to malpractice or maltreatment of Qigong, however, the medical Qigong sector became the first field of regulation. On the October 19, 1989, the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine issued “Several Regulations Concerning the Strengthening of Management of Qigong Medical Treatment.”

Qigong medical treatment is a kind of health preserving method . . . Lately, because of rising demand concerning medical treatment and health care, Qigong medical treatment has drawn on the attention of many people and . . . made some contributions to the health of the people. But due to an administrative work lag, an incomplete legal framework, a lax implementation of laws and the current rather chaotic state of Qigong medical treatment order, with severe problems within the realm of “giving outer energy” to heal sick persons, some

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people have exaggerated the use of Qigong, have even betrayed the masses and swindled money, and have had a bad influence on society.  

Important points of the regulations include:

— Performance of Qigong therapy is now licensed and limited to several conditions: first, a three-year medical education and at least thirty successful records of Qigong treatment to be controlled by a board of experts.

— Public guidance/instruction courses for recuperative Qigong practices must be approved by the local administration for TCM and Health. Applicants need to present their methods (gongfa), content (neirong), effect (liaoxiao), style (xingshi), and price (shoufei), which all must be “appropriate and practical.”

— Hard Qigong (ying Qigong) and martial arts Qigong (wushu Qigong) are excluded from these regulations.

— Media coverage should be correct and advertisement on Qigong must approved by state authorities.

— Violations will result in fines, revocation of license, and imprisonment.

— Omission of retrospective inspections within hospitals will be also punished.

Licenses as officially acknowledged Qigong masters to use Qigong for medical treatment could be obtained in several ways: having a medical degree and taking extra courses at a TCM school; undergoing training with an already officially registered master; or by proving the efficiency of one’s healing powers by bringing former patients as witnesses and performing before a board of experts. Practitioners had to likewise register themselves. Within parks, banners and plats marked the place, style, and date of registration, subjecting Qigong practitioners to administrative surveillance.

The existing controversy within the party-state apparatus on how to deal with several questions of Qigong as well as with the variety of Qigong-re-

596 Guojiazhongyiyao guanliju (State Administration of Chinese Medicine), “Guanyu jiaqiang qigong yiliao guanli de ruogan guiding (Several Regulations On the Strengthening of Management of Qigong Medical Treatment).” http://www ccpss.com/yiyao/yiyao_news_detail.asp?N_id=1686 (accessed December 30, 2006). According to estimations, some 200 meeting points for practicing 60 different Qigong schools existed in the large parks of Beijing. Wondering about their legal status, the author of the article went to the local Administration of Chinese Medicine, where he was told that no individual or organization had applied for registration. The article mentions one reason for the obvious chaotic management of the Qigong sector, its subdivision into three separate administrative sectors (medical, martial arts, and extraordinary abilities); see Jiang Zhuan 1995 (see note 181).

597 Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 149 and 153.
lated administrative organizations resulted in an intensifying policy battle between critics and supporters of Qigong and its various aspects. To some extent, it turned out to become a battle about administrative and ideational authority between the civil and medical realms, namely between the State Administration of Chinese Medicine, which favored a stricter attitude towards questionable aspects of Qigong, and the realm of sports, namely the National Administration of Sports, and the Leaders’ Working Group on Somantic Science, the latter of which favoring a more tolerant attitude towards extraordinary abilities and outer energy. As a reaction to the new regulations, party-state actors supportive of Qigong tried to counterbalance the new policy. Zhang Zhenghuan, president of several Qigong organizations, suggested the creation of a new administrative body to deal with Qigong under the State Council since he didn’t want to see the power of control go to the Medical Department. After his plan failed, Zhang and other party-state actors supportive of Qigong didn’t actively apply these new regulations.\(^\text{598}\) After a request of the Leading Work Group on Somantic Science, being under rising pressure from critics, the CC of the CCC and the State Council decided in July 1990 that research on “extraordinary abilities” could be carried on. However, after the death of Zhang Zhenhuan in March 1994, the Ministry of Civil Affairs prohibited in October 1994 the “International Qigong Science Federation” (\textit{Guoji Qigong kexue lianhehui}) headed by Wu Shaozu on the grounds that it had not been registered. One of the key figures was Feng Lida, a well-connected researcher at the Marine Hospital. She did not receive any punishment, most likely due to her standing, and her research on “outer energy” continued rather unaffected.\(^\text{599}\) Soon afterwards the State Council embarked on its policy for the popularization of science. However, Wu continued to use his political power to protect the field of “extraordinary abilities” and enabled the Leaders’ Working Group and

\(^{598}\) Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 164.

\(^{599}\) Honglin Zhang, “Huan Qigong benlai mianmu jingxuan (Chosen from ‘Restore the Original Honor of Qigong’), Lei tai feng yun lu (Record of Heights in the Fighting stage),” http://www.oursci.org/lib/zh11/index.htm (accessed January 12, 2007). Interestingly, it can be noted that the chapter on Feng Lida is omitted in the printed version of the book. This reinforces the claim that Feng was able to protect her position due to high-level contacts.
Somantic Science once again to speak out on behalf of the extraordinary abilities and Qigong in general.  

Only in 1996 did the policy of the party-state clearly begin to show a harsher attitude towards Qigong as all actors already began to feel the rising autonomy of Qigong movements like Zhonggong or Falungong. Being a joint effort of seven organizations and departments, the “Notification on Strengthening of Social Qigong Administration” was issued on August 5, 1996, signed by the Propaganda Department of the CCP, National Administration of Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Public Security, National Administration of TCM, and Administration Bureau of Science and Industry. All departments have been involved in the various issues of legal status and affairs touched upon by the Qigong sector. The notification recognizes the growth of Qigong to include mass activities and acknowledges its contribution to health improvement.

To counter the influence of money swindling and of superstition-spreading phenomena, the notification emphasizes law enforcement, especially for permissions, as well as increased cooperative work between the various organs, while clearly defining the National Sports Administration as the head of coordination processes. A high-level coordination conference took place on January 30, 1997, directed by the State Council, with the National Human Body Science Working Group and the National Sports Administration participating. As a first expression of the effort to restructure Qigong administration, the National Sports Commission examined and endorsed twenty-one Qigong styles to be included in the “China Sport Health Methods” (Zhonghua tiyu jianshen fangfa). Facing more than 300 different Qigong schools, the hope of the party-state was probably to focus people’s attention on these limited and therefore controllable number of Qigong schools. Judging from available sources, the chosen Qigong styles didn’t represent the most popular ones and for the most part belonged to the school

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600 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 173.
602 Wu 1997 (see note 572), pp. 4–6.
of “inner Qigong” or “quiet Qigong.” From the analyzed Qigong groups in this study, only Zhinenggong and Dayangong made it on the list.\textsuperscript{603} In January 1998, the Leaders’ Working Group on Somantic Science was finally disbanded as the final meeting decided to stop the public application of somantic science due to continuing problems and deviations. “[T]he Qigong movement thus lost its institutional lobby at the centre of the government."\textsuperscript{604} Subsequently, on February 22, 1998, the two stipulations on Health Qigong were issued. While the first one dealt with administration of Qigong activities, the second one focused on the Qigong masters’ technical skills. According to the “Methods for Administration of Health Qigong,” the National Sports Commission, with the Center for Wushu Administration as its executive organ, was appointed as the supervisory body for the Health Qigong administration. Health Qigong activities should “... support the guidance of the CCP, ardently love socialism, respect national law and social values, as well ardently love the Health Qigong enterprise.” Qigong masters were subject to the second stipulation called “Methods for analysis and judgement on technique degree of Health Qigong masters” (\textit{Jianshen Qigongshi jishu dengji pingshen banfa}), published by the Nationals Sports Commission on the same date. Skills of the Qigong masters were divided into four levels: third, second, first, and high-level.

All Qigong masters should adhere to some general principles corresponding to rules issued in the first stipulation and reflect problems discussed, e.g. no conduct of individual worshipping or propagation of religion, being engaged with science, and rejecting feudal superstition. Criteria for rating included: seizure of Qigong theory and practice; guidance ability for other Qigong teachers; experience in practicing and teaching; ability to cope with problems emerging while practicing; research experience and attachment to/support of research organizations; publishing activities.\textsuperscript{605}


\textsuperscript{604}Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 181.

Following the new regulations, in October 1998 the National Sports Administration endorsed eleven Qigong styles including Huaxia Zhineng Qigong, Yan Xin Qigong, Da Yan Qigong, Mi Litang Liuzijue, Huiming Qigong, Xin Qigong, Panshan Yinyang Qigong, Guo Lin Xin Qigong, Xuling Qigong, Xingfu Qigong, and Yunji Qigong. The revealing article stated that the endorsements were made based upon “. . . the suitability to requirements of constructing a socialist spiritual culture, clear origin, rather complete style, rather scientific, having a certain value and positive influence on society through approval of practice within the population or from experiments within research institutions . . .”606 Li Jie, spokesman of the Center for Wushu Administration that monitored and decided on the examinations, emphasized the trial character of these certificates and noticed several parts which are necessary for change in relation to the respected Qigong styles. From Li Jie’s explanations it appeared that the National Sports Administration was not satisfied with the overflow and uncontrollable registration of Qigong styles at the Qigong Research Societies. According to Li, the National Sports Administration will not recognize endorsements of the Qigong Research Society. In the scope of competition for influence and power, the Qigong Research Societies have developed a high level of autonomy and resistance. Li continues to maintain that all Qigong styles should register with him, as they otherwise might not be able to participate in rating and will not receive any support.607

Interestingly, like in the field of religion/Protestantism, some local governments stipulated their own regulations, like the city of QiQiha’er having issued the “Seven Prohibition” in reference to Qigong activities: no propagation of religion and superstition; no establishment of vertical leadership networks; no worshipping or initiation rituals like feudal sects; no setting up feudal religious codices; no lies and falsenesses, no robbery; no high-price income; no worshipping of the master.608 The CCP propaganda department

607 Nan 1999 (see note 550), p. 4.
608 “QiQihaershi guiding Qigong huodong ‘qi buzhun’ (QiQihaer City Stipulates ‘Seven Prohibitions’ of Qigong Activities),” *ZGQGKX* 3 (1997), p. 44.
of the Keshan district published a “Notification concerning the popularization of Qigong” (Guanyu Qigong kepu xuanchuan de tongzhi). To besides issuing new regulations for the Qigong sectors, the party-state designed a large-scale campaign dealing with the popularization of science. On December 5, 1994 the CC of CCP and State Council issued “Some Opinions on Strengthening of Work on Popular Science and Industry” (Guanyu jiaqiang kexu puji gongzuo de ruogan yijian). To solve the rising problems of “Anti Science,” “Pseudo Science,” and other superstitious activities, the “Opinions” suggest two methods. First, a resolute attacking and prohibiting, as permitted by law, of these activities, and second, an increase in efforts towards the popularization of science. More regulations followed. As a consequence, party-state officials became more involved in scientific conferences and also started to initiate conferences themselves: in May 1995, after a seventeen-year break, the second “National Congress on Science and Industry” (Quanguo kexue jishu dahui) took place in Beijing with the slogan “Mobilizing the whole party and the whole Chinese people to comprehensively carry out Deng Xiaoping’s thoughts ‘Science and Industry is the first productive force.’” Scientific and party-state units (National Science Commission, CCP Propaganda Department, and Chinese Science Association) held the first joint “National Work Conference on the Popularization of Science” (Quanguo kexue puji gongzuo huiyi) in February 1996 in Beijing. Likewise, on August 22, 1994, the Ministry of Education supported a “Second National Scholarly Symposium on the Application of Qigong for Primary and Middle School Students” (Quanguo di er jie zhongxiaoxue Qigong yingyong xueshu yantaohui).

609 “Zhonggong Keshanxian weixuanchuanbu zhongshi he zhichi Qigong kepu xuanchuan (CCP Propaganda Comission of Keshan District Pay Attention to and Support the Popularization Work of Qigong),” ZGQGKX 10 (1997), p. 9. Judging from other articles and reports by local party cadres, local party-state organizations having been confronted with a strong presence of one or more Qigong groups felt the need to issue concrete stipulations for coping with the situation. This practice is also common in other policy areas. However, local stipulations on Qigong seemed to have been in line with central government policy.

610 “Zhonggong zhongyang” (see note 574).


612 Zuoli Han, “Zhe shi shifen lin ren gaoxing de da shi (This a Happy and Great Event),” ZGQGKX 10 (1994), p. 2; and following articles.
During the 1990s, the party-state became increasingly concerned about the apparent disorganization and chaos within the Qigong field. However, the success attempts to regulate the field more effectively was limited. This was due to a continuing controversy between single departments and a lack of unity concerning ideational resources.

3.2.2 Societal Actors

3.2.2.1 Organizational Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

As religion, and especially Christianity, remained a rather marginal discipline within the scholarly field, religious scientists continued to comprise the dominant organizational resource. Luo Weihong, born in 1947 and a graduate of Philosophy from China Eastern Normal University in Shanghai, focused her research on modern religion and Christianity. Later, she also contributed many articles on heretical teachings. Institutional bases for religious studies broadened. From the late 1980s to the 1990s, nearly ten institutes for the study of religion were set up by provincial Academies of Social Sciences in Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia, Yunnan, Shanxi, Tianjin, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet. More than ten institutes or centers of religious studies appeared on the campuses of various universities, and two of them (Beijing University and Wuhan University) opened religious studies departments.\(^613\)

What is more, scholars of history appeared within the field of religion/Protestantism, dealing with heretical teachings based on research about historical Chinese sects. Cai Shaoqing, born in 1933, graduated with an M.A. in history from Beijing University from which he was later transferred to the Department of History at the University of Nanjing, engaging in research on Chinese secret societies as well as on contemporary criminal organizations.\(^614\) Several of his doctoral students, such as Kong Xiangtao, Li Zhao,  

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\(^{613}\) He 2003 (see note 255), p. 35.

\(^{614}\) Nanjing Daxue, “Nanda lishixi xueren sumiao (Sketch of Scholars at the Faculty of History of Nanjing University),” http://www.nju.edu.cn/cps/site/ndxh/886/xygs.htm (accessed January 24, 2008).
or Wang Qingde, focused on various aspects of secret societies, *Huidaomen*, and heretical teachings.

Some natural scientists who had been involved in research on Qigong also started to write on heretical teachings, the most notable of which being biologist and philosopher Yu Guanyuan.

The autonomous Protestant congregations became a more visible and active part of the field as they faced increasing repression from the party-state. In summer 1998, various groups of autonomous Protestant meetings undertook a common initiative to draw attention to repressions. A group of sixteen representatives from four of the biggest house churches issued two public documents explaining the reason why they didn’t want to register.\(^\text{615}\)

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Compared to the initial phase, and accompanying the increasingly strong criticism against “Pseudo Qigong,” the media generally offered more space for the positions of critics.

The media also seemed more and more willing to ignore the existing “Three No Policy” concerning critical commentaries on cases of extraordinary abilities. The breakthrough came from the Beijing Youth Daily which on May 25, 1995 published a long-time suppressed/censored report of He Zuoxiu, Lin Zexin (former editor of *Science Daily*), and Chong Chengrui on a failed performance of a Qigong master in the presence of high-level party-state cadres in 1988.\(^\text{616}\)

The existing Qigong magazines emerged as a comprehensive platform of the field. Their content was multifold:

1. Introductions of individual Qigong styles divided into portrait of the founder, theoretical basis, and style with added pictures for better illustration.
2. Portraits of individual Qigong celebrities
3. Reprinting and promotion of official stipulations
4. Advertisement for Qigong classes


5. Articles referring to theoretical concepts or hot questions about Qigong

Although publishing articles which took up controversial aspects of Qigong, the magazines basically served as a platform for the supporters of Qigong, extraordinary activities, and external energy.

On June 7, 1997, a new bimonthly magazine called *Science and Atheism* (*Kexue you wushenglun*) was initiated by the CASS. It became the platform for critics of various Qigong-related aspects.⁶¹⁷ Also, religious magazines and publishing companies played an increasing role as channels of expression for critical voices. In September 1997, the editor of the magazine *Fayin* (Voice of the Dharma), Chen Xingqiao approached the “Religion and Culture” publishing company for a book publication based on his various articles on FLG. His book was published in June 1998 and became the first systematic critique of FLG. Consequently, the magazine “Chinese Religion” and the publishing company also cooperated on further publications related to *Falungong* and “heretical teachings.”⁶¹⁸

**Critics**

During the 1990s, scientists critical of Qigong gained more momentum after the party-state had called for the exposure of “Pseudo Science.” Partly a result of increased activities and joint efforts, a broader, loosely connected network emerged. Ironically, supporters of Qigong also contributed to a joint line up of their opponents. As individual critics were all faced with threats and even attacks by the supporters, they started to recognize and support each other. As their respective professional backgrounds varied, they all could bring in slightly different and mutual supplementing resources to pursue their common aim. Scientists again played a major part, like the already known Yu Guanyuan. He Zuoxiu, who since the mid-1980s has already been involved in the exposure of Qigong, became an active exposers of “Pseudo Qigong” during the 1990s. Having developed a firm knowledge and strong support for Marxism-Leninism theory during his work for the Propaganda Department, he felt responsible “as a scientist as well as party

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member” to support the party-state efforts to spread popular awareness and knowledge of science as stipulated in December 1994. He was labeled as one of “four vicious persons” (si de e ren) by the camp of the Qigong supporters. Two other “vicious persons” likewise included scientists and newcomers to the field of Qigong research: Zhang Honglin, a professor of Chinese medicine, and Guo Zhengyi, a chemistry scholar and director at Institute of Popular Science at Chinese Science Committee. He Zuoxiu acquired broad knowledge and insights into various aspects of “feudal superstition” for he had to undertake several surveys and to publish a large number of research reports on topics like burial ceremonies or fortune telling. Guo was able to build not only on his contextual knowledge, but also on his familiarity with suitable language and techniques for educational purposes. Guo and Zhang initiated frequent consultations with the media representatives. Whereas in the 1980s critics from science and media basically worked in the same direction—though did not stage projects together—after 1989 a closer cooperation emerged. Concerning the media sector, Sima Nan became a leading figure, with him being the first non-scientist to become actively involved in the struggle against false Qigong. Having been a Qigong master and proponent of extraordinary abilities himself, Sima only slowly became convinced of the critics’ position through several talks with Zhang Honglin. Once convinced, he became one of the most dynamic activists promoting the exposure of “Pseudo Qigong” and

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619 He 1999 (see note 619). According to his own writing, a case of scientists who were wrongly punished for exposure to dangerous rat poison became the impetus for his attention towards effects of “Pseudo Science” in 1994.
621 Guo Zhengzi was trained in chemistry at Beijing University where he taught and conducted research until the beginning of the 1980s. In 1981 he was transferred to the Institute of Popularization of Science; see “Guo Zhengyi: Huaxuejia (Guo Zhengyi – Chemist),” http://www.qg108.com/2006/mrda/066211494018849.htm (accessed January 13, 2007).
622 Born in 1965 in Heilongjiang, he studied Business Administration, was transferred into state administration, and worked in the education and foreign affairs sector. Later, he got into media, wrote articles, and hosted several TV shows. Since childhood, he had liked and studied TCM as well as Chinese Martial Arts. In his book “Inside Story of Mysterious Qigong” (Shengong neimu), also published as a documentary in 1989, Nan Sima describes in detail his personal experiences in practicing Qigong, starting to heal people, and his feeling of confidence towards his acquiring of “extraordinary abilities”; see Nan Sima, Shengong neimu (Inside Story of Mysterious Qigong) (Beijing: Zhongguoshehuichubanshe, 1995).
623 Zhang 1996 (see note 181), pp. 68–86; Lu 1999 (see note 181), pp. 28ff.
could contribute a wealth of inside knowledge for enhancing the position of the critics.

Religious scholars also entered the Qigong discussion on the side of the critics. In September 1997, the editor of the Buddhist magazine Fayin (Voice of the Dharma), Chen Xingqiao, approached the Religion and Culture Publishing Company for a book publication based on his various articles on FLG. His book, published before the ban of FLG in 1998, became the first systematic critic of FLG, and Chen Xingqiao emerged as a prominent expert and critic within the field of heretical teachings. On the relationship between Qigong and religion, some religious scholars warned against too generalized criticism of spiritual belief. However, other religious voices also criticized Qigong or styles of Qigong, opposing a misuse or instrumentalization of religion by Qigong.

Supporters
Like their counterparts from the critics’ camp, new figures within the camp of supporters also for the first time came from other sectors than natural science. Several writers started to write in a fictional fashion about Qigong or even special Qigong styles, for instance Zheng Shunchao’s novel Way of the Great Way (Da Dao xing) on Wang Liping’s Yangsheng Qigong or Ji Yi and Li Peicai’s novel Soul of Great Nature (Da ziran guipo) on Zhang Hongbao’s Zhonggong. The most prominent writer supporting extraordinary abilities and external energy was Ke Yunlu. Ke initially started writing novels about the mysteries and miracles of Qigong. Later on he turned into a Qigong master himself, mixing up different styles of Qigong, lecturing and performing inside of his “Chinese Academy for Life Science” (Zhongguo shenming keuxueyuan). After his academy was closed in 1995,
he continued his publishing work.\textsuperscript{629} Some prominent figures from the initial phase also remained active contributors to the ongoing debate. Qian Senlin and Feng Lida’s ongoing activities are particularly remarkable. Being very well connected within the leadership, they were able to advocate and publish topics considered to be outside the officially sanctioned frame. As cases of Qigong deviation increased, doctors who treated patients suffering from physical or often mental disturbances entered the field as new actors. As the first official regulation on Qigong facilitate a medical understanding and differentiation, they were put in the challenging situation of substantiating and somehow legitimating the party-state’s position, not least in order to distance themselves from “unhealthy Qigong.” With Qigong being part of TCM, the medical world, however, had to attempt to shield some common concepts from overzealous critics. The Institute of Spiritual Health at the Beijing Medical Science University established a “consultation room for deviation of Qigong practice” (\textit{lian gong chu pian menzhen}).\textsuperscript{630} Reports from medicines as well as from relatives of affected persons kept appearing in newspaper and magazines.\textsuperscript{631}

\subsection*{3.2.2.2 Ideational Resources}

\textsc{Christian-Inspired Groups}

Discussion on heretical teachings as well as on superstition dominated the second phase.

The question of the religious nature of some phenomena, which had been officially labeled as real or potential troublemakers and therefore likely to become the target of persecution, has been a very sensitive one. This is due to the possible impact on religious activities and the freedom of religious belief. Consequently, the relationship between religion and heretical teachings has been a topic of controversial debate among various scholars.

Some scholars linked heretical teachings to the religious realm. Cai Shaoqing and Kong Xiangtao, historical scientists from Nanjing University, de-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{630} Jiang and Zhuan 1995 (see note 181), p. 434.
\textsuperscript{631} For a collection, see Zhang 1996 (see note 181), pp. 428–39; Tongling Zhang and Hongtao Xu, eds., \textit{Zou huo ru mo mian mianguan – Qigong chu pian (Survey of Qigong Deviation)} (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1997).
\end{footnotesize}
fined “heretical teachings” as the opposite of “orthodox teachings,” hence sharing some common features with orthodox religions. What is more, following the classical “church – sect – cult” within Western religious studies, heretical teachings are “extensions of extremism of orthodox religions.”

According to Cai and Kong, “heretical teachings” are marked by the following features:

- Against orthodoxy (fan zhengtongxing): deification of the leader
- Against this/real world (fan xianshixing): spreading of doomsday theories; rejection of this world
- Against society (fan shehuixing): interference in followers’ everyday life; violating society’s morals, cheating money, destroying families, ravaging women, establishing secret underground kingdom with absolute power control
- Against the government (fan zhengfu xing): stipulation of establishing a heavenly kingdom; some groups militarizing themselves and taking on a violent character

However, debates within religious magazines were dominantly focused on “superstition” (mixin). Characterization followed the official frame from the first phase. The spread of superstitious activities has often been linked with shortcomings within the local administration of religion. Local cadres have sometimes gotten themselves involved in “superstitious activities”: “... don’t like to care and don’t dare to care.”

Faced with a “religious fever” (zongjiaore), paralleling the “Qigong fever,” scholars looked for explanations. The aspects mentioned didn’t differ much from the overall given reasons for the existence of religion: compensation for uncontrollable natural powers and comfort for difficulties of life. However, related to the rise of religion in rich areas, protection and good fortune for existing wealth and good business have been given as an additional rea-

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son. Furthermore, weakened moral values and ethics as well as a rising feeling of isolation among individuals creating a “spiritual need” which “differentiates human beings from animals” were also mentioned. Scholars observed that personal networks have been a crucial factor for the final decision to join a religious community.\(^{635}\) The need for healing has been identified as one of Christianity’s strong driving forces in the countryside.\(^{636}\) Only towards the end of the 1990s did authors start to refer to Christian-inspired groups and Qigong ones simultaneously within one article and under the above mentioned label of heretical teachings.\(^{637}\) Whereas empirically based studies on “heretical teachings” mostly focused on foreign groups,\(^{638}\) two Chinese Christian-inspired groups were discussed: the group of the “Anointed King” and the “Teachings of the Supreme God.” These two cases figured prominently in the media, and therefore were known in the public, since their two leaders were arrested and sentenced to death in 1995 and 1998 respectively. The most frequently cited groups from the Qigong realm were \textit{Zhonggong} and \textit{Yuanjigong}. FLG was seldom mentioned. All in all, research and discussions on “heretical teachings” represented only a small part of religious studies. Dealing with contemporary religious phenomena has always been considered much more risky than researching historical questions and case studies.\(^{639}\) Although several religious scientists expressed their worries concerning a politicalization of Christianity and an overall negative assessment of the Christian faith, they never worried about wrongly labeling religious activities due to political motivations. Likewise, many religious actors shared the party-state’s warning about infiltration of hostile forces. Only some religious scientists outside the Church called for a more differentiated view on “infiltration.”\(^{640}\) Faced, for one, with the more restrictive official policy towards Christianity and also with the mushrooming of autonomous Protestant congregations, the official Protestant church feared a negative influence on their own development. In 1998 Bishop Ting,

\(^{636}\) Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 206.
\(^{639}\) Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 55.
\(^{640}\) Ibid., pp. 184ff.
supported by religious scholars, initiated a movement for “strengthening of theological reflection” (\textit{jiaqiang shexue sixiang jianshe}; theological reconstruction). According to Ting, this was a move against “absurd fundamentalist tendencies within the Chinese church.” Ting mentioned that these concepts—conservative and discriminating against non-Christians—have been thriving in the countryside and were mostly introduced by Western missionaries.\textsuperscript{641} As a result of rising party-state pressure, the official church reintroduced so-called “study sessions,” a common technique used between 1959 and 1979 to insure loyalty towards the state.\textsuperscript{642} The official church highlighted several shortcomings in their own congregations. Unpopularity of local pastors due to their immoral behavior and/or lack of preparation and enthusiasm for preaching was seen as a major reason of a rising influence of Christian-inspired groups.\textsuperscript{643} However, scientists at a conference on religion organized by CASS in November 1999 were eager to stress that the majority of believers outside the official church were not necessarily politicalized or even anti-CCP.\textsuperscript{644}

\textbf{QIGONG-BASED GROUPS}

The discussion on the nature and problems of Qigong intensified. As the stance of the party-state had changed, supporters of Qigong were worried about a rising denouncement of the Qigong sector as a whole. While pressured to acknowledge several problems within the Qigong field, supporters were eager to transform these shortcomings to the performance sector of Qigong.\textsuperscript{645} However, they basically stuck to the same ideational measures of the first phase and could not present any innovative ideational frames. The critics profited from the revised official standing, growing media support, and the newly emerging media and medical actors who supported their stance with new ideational frames from their respective professional perspective.

\textsuperscript{641} Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 146–47.
\textsuperscript{642} Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 103.
\textsuperscript{643} Duohao Li, “Women zai zheli zhong xiale leishui (We Planted Tears Here),” \textit{Tian Feng} 6 (1995), p. 25.
\textsuperscript{644} Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 99.
Supporters

As the officially sanctioned frame of discussion was tightened after 1989, more differentiated or positive opinions concerning the relation between science and Qigong, “outer energy,” or “extraordinary abilities” had to be voiced thoughtfully. The supporters drew on the already familiar frames of science, tradition, and nationalism. The new ideational resources included a framing of Qigong to serve as a political tool and moral basis for the Chinese society and an embedding into larger concepts of philosophy and health. However, nearly all supporters first acknowledged several problems within the Qigong field before bringing up their own arguments.

In the scientific frame, Qian Senlin remained the most famous and influential actor. His confidence concerning the importance of Human Body Science is unbowed: “What will the next century be like? A fifth industrial revolution initiated by [Qi] information (xinxi), which will unite the whole world.” The authority of his articles equaled important speeches, reports by politicians or policy documents, as commentaries on how to study his articles emerged. Linked to the frame of science was the concept of tradition and nationalism, as Qigong was presented as a “new life force” (xin shengji) or a “mysterious culture of the East” (dongfang shenmi wenhua), which can handle all problems and complications caused by overly Western-dominated science and industry development. In emphasizing the need for Qigong research in China, Ji Yi even stated “. . . The United States and other Western European countries undertake experiments for the use of Qigong in warfare.” As regards the political frame, some authors have pointed to a fruitful alliance between Qigong and Marxism. Qigong edu-

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650 Yi Ji, Qi zai Zhongguo: Shi nian Zhongguo qigong dachao xiemi (Qi in China: Big Waves and Disclosing Secrets of Ten Years Chinese Qigong) (Harbin: Guoiji wenhua chubanshe, 1993), p. 245.
cates, convinces, and changes people, making them better citizens. An author named Hou Zhengian stated that “a union of the Chinese Qigong enterprise and politics of Marxism, mutual complementation and help, has an inestimable value not only for the healthy development of Qigong, but also for development of Marxism and the construction of the two cultures.”

An author named Wen Si portrayed extraordinary abilities with ten characteristics that read like a catalogue of heroic and ideal virtues of a utopian past juxtaposed against current reality. These characteristics included a readiness for self-sacrifice and for giving up life pleasures to achieve the desired aim; a modest lifestyle and indifference towards material gains and losses; an introverted character, while pure, honest, and upright in human relations; enjoying of nature and cultural heritage; disliking of modern amusement; simple lifestyle and nutrition, with no smoking, drinking, or gambling. The other new resource developed was a systematization of Qigong and its integration into a broader philosophical context. Ke Yunlu, who was clearly supportive of “extraordinary abilities,” took up this method.

While practicing Qigong, people enter a state of total relaxation, a retreat from rationality and logic. They can bridge the dualistic structure of the universe (Yin-Yang) and return to their “original spirit” (yuan shen). In this state of consciousness—which all people have to the potential of reaching—one can communicate with all living beings in the “language of the universe” (yumiao yu).

Like Ke, Feng Lida, a prominent and politically well-connected supporter of the idea of external energy, also presented her concepts in a wider framework. She treats Qigong and external energy as part of her concept of health.

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beauty, and long life. Her way of defining and presenting single terms is astonishing, taking the officially launched criticism into account. As the book was published under the roof of a well-known publishing house, the “People’s Sports Publishing House,” any accidental slip can be excluded. Consequently, the only valuable explanation that Feng could continue to use her own ideational resources, even negating the official line, is her well-established reputation due to her own merits as well as to her father’s name.

Critics

For the critics, the label “Pseudo Science” has already emerged in the initial phase, becoming more precise and distinguished and becoming the dominant term for denouncing those Qigong activities linked to extraordinary abilities. With the emergence of new types of actors, the critics also utilized ideational resources from the field of medicine as well as religion.

Guo Zhengyi defines Pseudo Science as “... spreading mysterious power of the supernatural, super material or several frauds under the banner of science.” Having elaborated on the positive functions of Qigong—including aiding in entering a state of calmness (ru jing) and healing functions—Zhang Honglin gave a definition of pseudo qigong (wei Qigong):

Activities under the label of Qigong whose theoretical content is not based on strict experimental evidence, but on illusory assumptions and performances, and [therefore] could not stand repeated testing. Pseudo science strictly rejects scientific experimental evidence.

While in the initial phase ideas and concepts had been basically utilized to foster ones standing and identity, several authors focused on an analytical approach to describe certain aspects of Qigong. However, they mostly revealed a critical attitude towards aspects like extraordinary abilities or external energy.

Scholars named several reasons for the spread of Pseudo Science/Qigong.
— The current economic transformation making people seek fast profit
— Ignorance and lack of understanding within the scientific community
— Emphasis on science and talent, but not on scientific content
— Healing function through psychological suggestion
— Hope for super power to overcome difficulties
— Daoist-inspired popular thought as means for gaining eternal life deeply rooted in population
— Irresponsible behavior by hygiene departments and administrative organizations concerning the harm of people’s health
— Support from (party) organizations, media, and famous scientists
— Wavering in Marxist-Leninism belief by leading party cadres
— Qigong satisfying double the human seeking of spiritual consolation as well as physical health, even to the extent of possessing superhuman powers
— Self-appointed masters relating themselves to political reign and betraying masses
— Many practitioners only learning Qigong based on books and theory; due to “unscientific language,” getting confused about the concepts
— Practitioners’ blind worshipping of masters, wrong attitude of fulfillment of pleasures while practicing Qigong; holding Qigong above all, rejecting Western culture and modern science, connecting Qigong with a utopia of the ideal society

Interestingly, many of these reasons resemble the reasons given for the existence of religion in the first phase, and the existence of superstition in this second phase.

Qigong and health was a new frame which appeared during the 1990s, basically transferring the former boundaries of pro and contra, but nevertheless providing new ideational resources for the critics. Since the latter half of the 1980s, an increasing number of Qigong practitioners showed up in TCM clinics or were hospitalized within psychiatry by relatives. They suffered

from *chu pian*, the occurrence of deviations from normal states of body and mind as well as *zou huo ru mo* (literally “to walk on fire and entering of demons”), which implies physical or mental accidents and illnesses due to the loss of control of Qi during cultivation of spiritual or martial arts practices.658

The medical actors were the ones who mainly influenced this topic-related discussion, as they were those to encounter many cases of Qigong deviation and were in a position to offer firsthand experience. As a new actor and in relation to their own above-mentioned interests, they carefully presented their position within the field. Corresponding to state-induced discussion on harmful Qigong, they brought up several reasons for Qigong deviation:659

— Problems within “spontaneous Qigong” styles
— Low quality of some Qigong masters
— Over-practicing of Qigong and over-tension
— Influence of psychological problems (“unhealthy character” [*xingge bu jiangkang*] such as a disinclination to associate with others, being introverted or sensitive)
— Influence of environmental problems (unemployment, tense relationships with others, family problems; natural catastrophes, accidents, or pollution)
— Reasons for recent increase of *chupian*: increasing numbers of practitioners, especially those who seek treatment with “outer energy,” quest for “extraordinary abilities”; “irresponsible chaotic promulgation of books, magazines, and newspapers

Nevertheless, the medical world was reluctant to just follow the new official line by the party-state. Although Qigong deviation was already listed in the

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658 According to TCM, Qigong deviations might be characterized as “... sensory disturbances related to perceptions of abnormal qi flow, motor disturbances exhibited by uncontrollable or spasmatic movement stemming from qi blockages, or psychic disturbances such as altered consciousness, spirit possession, distracting thoughts, and men.” Besides, Qigong deviation was mostly ascribed to forms of spontaneous Qigong (*donggong*). People talked to imagined spirits or voices, perceived themselves to be “holy,” “enlightened,” or even “called to higher tasked” acting presidents or foreign ministers of China. Performance of strange movements or positions to receive “messages” from their masters as well as rejection of eating and drinking were other often witnessed signs. Patients described experiences of being possessed and under control of an outer force, sometimes even telling them to kill themselves; see Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 80ff.; Rong Kong, ed., *Zou huo ru mo (Deviation)* (Beijing: Zhongguoyiyaokejichubanshe, 1990), pp. 1–4; Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 634), pp. 157–73.
Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders—revised in 1984—Chinese psychiatrists were reluctant to label disorders with this category as they found it difficult to differentiate between Qigong-induced mental disorders and other mental illnesses. Additionally, patients might have been mentally ill before taking up the practice while being disinclined or unable to perceive their condition. Although external energy might only be based on suggestion, it would be too simplistic to deny them any therapeutical value.

A second new frame was linking Pseudo Qigong with religion and providing societal actors critical of extraordinary abilities with several new ideational resources. First, they could associate and equate extraordinary abilities with phenomena already proven dangerous in other countries. An author by the name of Yuan Zhong connected “Pseudo Qigong” or “Modern Witchcraft” (xiandai wu shu) to the case of Aum in Japan and characterized “Pseudo Qigong” with a sect-like definition: “At the same time, there are several Pseudo-Qigong Great masters who have their own base, some ten thousand followers, thousands of companies, large amounts of money, and have built up a strictly organized group structure; they can easily become a destructive anti-social force.” Another prominent figure echoing a more hard-line strife against the spiritual-religious realm as a whole has been He Zuoxiu. Arguing from an atheist’s point of view, he called “Pseudo-Science” and theology a pair of twins and opted for the exposure of both. According to the “great truth” offered in the International Hymn, “no savior from on high delivers . . .” He depicted theologies as a the greatest harm to mankind.

Starting from opposite interests, societal actors from the religious world, primarily Buddhist associations, raised critical remarks towards Qigong groups instrumentalizing and hijacking Buddhism for its own ends, harming the teachings and the image of Buddhism. Chen Xingqiao described FLG as

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660 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 93.
661 Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 634), p. 181. A similar remark on the effect of “outer energy,” which is still not clearly defined, can be found on p. 185.
“pseudo-Buddhist heterodoxy with folk religious characteristics” (juyou minjian zongjiao te dian de fufo waidao), mixing up various religious elements including those of “reactionary religious sects” (fandong huidaomen). As a Buddhist scholar and adherent, for Chen FLG is clearly “heretical” (xiejiao), also based on the juristic definition given by the Criminal Code of 1997. However, Chen concentrated on a religious evaluation of FLG.\(^{664}\) Different from societal others as well as the party-state, the primary focus of his publications is to analyze what kind of movement FLG is and to differentiate it from Buddhism.\(^{665}\) An author by the name of Li Jun has explained why so many temples had a sign at their front door reading: “Inside the temple it is prohibited from practicing Qigong.” Qigong and Buddhism have many differences, and an important one concerns aiming at worldly things versus aiming at liberating oneself from worldly things. The word “Qigong” is not part of Buddhism, and Buddhists don’t accept their cultivation styles as a kind of Qigong, because moving the Qi inside the body hinders cultivation. However, Buddhism doesn’t reject Qigong altogether since it has a positive effect on health. Like the analysis of Chen, that of Li also revealed a concern about the misuse of religion by Qigong and a consequent discrimination of the whole religious sector.

3.2.2.3 Action Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

While the party-state paid more attention to religious issues than it had previously, the scientific world also drew more attention to matters of religion. In November 1990, the CASS organized the first national conference on religion, conveying a rather moderate message in respect to religious questions. For preventing unsound policy and for clarification of the overall

\(^{664}\) Chen 1998 (see note 627); Xingqiao Chen, “Falungong ji qi weihai (Falungong and Its Harm),” ZGZG 3 (1998), p. 58.

situation—especially in relation to the differentiation between religion and heretical teachings/superstition—the drafting of a religious law was recommended.\footnote{Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 99.}

Chinese religious scholars extended their research from the history of Buddhism and Daoism into many alien areas like New Religions. Besides drawing on philosophy and theology, research designs inspired from sociology and anthropology or even multidisciplinary backgrounds became widely used. This phase also witnessed the publication of a series of encyclopedias, dictionaries, and popular readings, even cartoons offering the Chinese readers religious knowledge that was much more objective and balanced than before.\footnote{He 2003 (see note 255), pp. 36ff.; Emily Dunn, “Heterodox Christian Doctrine in Post-Mao China: The Case of Eastern Lightning”, Unpublished manuscript, p. 29.}

Faced with rising persecution after 1989, the autonomous Protestant congregation developed different tactics against party-state persecution. Believers sent their sons or daughters into the party, enabling attendance at officially protected religious meetings. In addition, they only married religious Protestants in order to protect themselves from infiltration. In the summer of 1998, various groups of autonomous Protestant meetings undertook a common initiative to draw attention to repressions and to get in touch with the government. A group of sixteen representatives from four of the largest house churches issued two public documents. From the beginning, they clarified their position towards the Chinese government, referring to themselves as “patriotic, respecting the unity of the state.” They also claimed to “respect and protect the Chinese constitution and the leaders and people’s government established by God.” Although they had often been persecuted by the government, they “don’t foster any counter revolutionary activities.”

Furthermore, the document explained for the first time why house churches didn’t want to register.

First, because the principles of registration contradict the principles of the Bible in three ways:
A. Definition of place: religious activities can only take place at registered places. Otherwise they will be illegal religious activities. But the Holy Bible tells us that wherever we gather in the name of the Lord, he is with us.

B. Definition of people: only people with sermon permits issued by the Bureau of Religious Affairs can preach. But according to the doctrine of the Bible, preachers only have to receive the call of the Lord. Besides, people assigned and acknowledged by a congregation can also preach.

C. Definition of place: preachers’ activities are limited to their own meeting place, no preaching beyond borders is allowed. But the Bible tells us that we should go everywhere to bring the Gospel to the people, and to establish congregation.

Second, because the policy doesn’t allow people under 18 to preach or to be preach to and baptized. But Lord Jesus said “Let the children come to me, don’t prevent them.” So people under 18 should also have the opportunity to listen and to believe in the Gospel.

Third, the policy allows no prayers for the ill, to heal and to cast out demons. But Jesus did pray for the ill, healed and cast out demons. And he gave us the power to pray for the ill, to heal, and to cast out demons.

Four, the policy doesn’t allow the reception of visitors from far away. But the Bible requests so.

Five, the policy doesn’t allow house churches to get in touch with foreign congregations. But the Bible says: the Church is universal; there is no separation into Jews, Pharisees, Chinese, or Foreigners. Because believers from all nations were bought by the blood of Jesus. Because on the common ground of the Bible, loving each other is natural.\textsuperscript{668}

They also started to utilize media for announcement of persecutions, a clear turning away of the up-to-then silent opposition.\textsuperscript{669}

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Networking via conferences and institutionalization continued to be an important element, especially for the supporters of Qigong and “extraordinary abilities,” for they needed support to cope with growing criticism. The China Science Association held a series of conferences with the slogan “Scientific thinking, scientific methods, and scientific spirit,” placing spe-

\textsuperscript{668} “Zhongguo jiating jiaohui dui zhengfu, zongjiao zhengce ji sanzi de taidu” (see note 618).

cial focus on the spiritual-religious realm, including witchcraft, mysticism, soothsaying, and on Qigong and healthy body cultivation.\textsuperscript{670}

As media gradually opened more space for critical reports on Qigong, the importance of publications grew on the side of the critics. He Zuoxiu was the first one to collect material on special groups and cases with the intent of preparing files to pass on to official authorities. His article “I don’t endorse Qigong practice by youth” (Wo bu zancheng qingshaonian lian qigong)—published in the Tianjin-based magazine \textit{Youth Science and Technology Reading} (qingshaonian keji bolan) in May 1999—triggered the large-scale demonstration of FLG adherents around Zhongnanhai on April 25, 1999.\textsuperscript{671}

Lectures still were a dominant instrument of Anti-Pseudo-Qigong activities. With the entrance of Sima Nan, who practiced Qigong for a long time, the critics acquired a new instrument for pursuing their aim: they combined theoretical lecturing with performances of extraordinary abilities and the subsequent revelation of its respective tricks. They copied the methods of the Qigong movement but mocked them by adding one more step—the debunking—which totally ridiculed performances of extraordinary abilities. The first of this new kind of lecture took place in Beijing on August 8, 1990. The organizers invited more than 100 persons from science and media as well as cadres from all the relevant political sectors, like the CCP Propaganda Department, Ministry of Public Security, and the State Administration of TCM. After Sima Nan performed many of the already well-known miracles from other Qigong masters, including the early “reading characters with hands,” he told the audience that everything was just a trick and fake.\textsuperscript{672}

In the initial phase, publication activities of supporters as well as critics of Qigong were limited to written products, like books or articles. As activists with a media and writing background joined the Qigong field on the side of the critics, their skills and contacts enabled them to open up a new field of media: photography, TV, and film. Photographs became very popular in the


\textsuperscript{671} He 1999 (see note 619), pp. 228ff.

\textsuperscript{672} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 232.
Qigong magazines to facilitate visualization, for instance “information radiance” (xinxiuguang). Analyzing the printed pictures from a present-day view, the trickery can easily be revealed. But back in the 1990s, many of its readers were probably not very familiar with the possibilities of photography.

On the side of the critics, Si Manan produced a documentary, Inside Story of Mysterious Qigong (Shengong neimu), in late 1989 where he unmasked several extraordinary abilities phenomena and associated Qigong masters.\[^{673}\]

Using his media background, Sima Nan staged another event stirring public attention: taking up an earlier offer by the US magician Randy, he promised 1 million Yuan to anyone who could show any evidence of “extraordinary abilities” or superpowers under testing conditions.\[^{674}\]

Likewise Ke Yunlu, on the side of the supporters, designed a twelve-part documentary called Quest for Life Science, wherein he interviewed Qigong masters and documented various ES performances. After every case, name and even identity card number of those witnesses vouching for correct and true reporting have been given.\[^{675}\]

3.2.3 Movements

On the one hand, movements in the second phase could potentially profit from the established ideational and organizational resources of the first one. On the other hand, especially in the Qigong sector, new and old groups faced rising competition between various schools.

By the mid-1990s, some 3,000 different styles of Qigong existed, with practitioners reaching sixty million.\[^{676}\]

Therefore, groups had to attract people’s attention by creating a somehow more effective and more fascinating style.\[^{677}\]

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\[^{673}\]\(Sima 1995 (see note 625).\)
\[^{674}\]\(Ci De, “Qi rong Sima Nan dubo Qigong (How Can It Be That Easy for Sima Nan to Gamble with Qigong),” in \textit{ZGQGKX} 10 (1998), p. 29.\)
\[^{675}\]\(The script of the film is printed in Ke 1994 (see note 653), pp. 217–416.\)
\[^{676}\]\(Chaoxuan Fu, “Qigong kexue yu jingshen wenjianshe (Qigong Science and Construction of Spiritual Civilization),” in \textit{ZGQG} 3 (1997), pp. 37–38.\)
\[^{677}\]\(Jianxin Li, “Dazanggong xianqi Qigong di san ci langchao (Dazanggong Begin the Third Wave of Qigong),” in \textit{ZGQG} 3 (1994), pp. 2–8, here p. 2.\)
3.2.3.1 Leadership Resources

3.2.3.1.1 Biographical Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

The founders of Christian-inspired groups in this second phase basically used the same sources as their counterparts in the initial phase: a rural background and early Christian experiences. However, they could profit from already established groups, which they often joined as members.

Born in 1937 in a village Shanxi province, Ji Sanbao, the founder of the “Disciples Society,” grew up with Christianity, although he was not baptized until age forty, in 1977, by a pastor from the “True Jesus Church.” Afterwards he became a self-declared preacher and traveled around Hubei and Henan to spread the Gospel and heal people. In 1985, he decided that Ankang district in Shanxi province would be a good place for missionizing.

Unlike the other groups, Ji’s foundation process was the work of nearly half a year and of cooperation with fellow Christians. Finally, in February 1989, Ji proceeded over an “Examination and Voting Meeting for Disciples” (jixuan mentu huiyi) at his home.678

Liu Jiaguo, head of the “Teachings of Lord God,” was born in 1964 in a village in Anhui province. He was the youngest among the founders. At the age of thirteen, he started joining a local congregation, probably the “Shouters,” in the district city. According to his own account, he didn’t study well, only finishing primary school, but in the church he became an active and very worthy member as all 100 church members would know him. Since an internal conflict in the meeting point resulted in its closedown, Liu joined the “Established King” group in 1991 and was sent to the city of Xiangtan in Hunan province for proselytizing.679 Liu recalled his first contact with the group of the “Established King”: “One day two unfamiliar young people approached me and told me of the resurrection of Jesus. Later on they asked me if I wanted to see the ‘gods,’ of course I wanted to.”680 According to his own description, Liu felt deceived just after having joined the group as he

678 Jiang 2000 (see note 347) pp. 131–32; Li 2000, p. 218. Although the founding of the “Society of Disciples” fell in the first phase, the group’s formation clearly took place during the second phase.
679 Chen and Zhang 2001 (see note 346), pp. 109ff.
680 Wu 1999 (see note 343), p. 175.
found that Wu Yangming was only a human being like himself, and he
didn’t care for Wu. In 1993 Liu had to hide from a warrant of the local po-
lice related to “illegal activities.” This experience of danger probably was
the final trigger spurring Liu to start his own group. Together with a female
follower from “Established King,” a woman ten years older called Zhu from
Xiangtan, Liu established his “Teachings of the Supreme God” in 1993.681
The head of the “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China,” Wang
Yongmin, was born in 1949, likewise in Anhui province. In 1989 he joined
the “Shouters” and in 1991 participated in a branch group, headed by a
peasant named Cheng from Henan called “Mainland Deacon Station”
(Zhonguo Dalu zhishizhan). After Cheng got arrested in May 1994, Wang,
together with another former member of the “Shouters,” established his own
group in Anhui.682
Zhao Weishan, founder of the “Church of the Almighty God,” was a mem-
ber of the “Shouters” before he split off with a group called “Church of
Everlasting Foundation” (Yongcun de genji jiaohui) in 1984. After official
authorities banned this group as heretical in 1991, he temporarily reunited
with a branch of the “Shouters” in Henan province. In 1992 he revived his
former group, changing the name to “Church of the Real God” (Zhenshen
jiaohui). The girl named Deng, whom he enthroned as the “Almighty God,”
seemed mentally ill after not scoring well in her university entrance
examination and was brought to the “Group of Shouters” by friends.683
The “Church of the Almighty God” is the only known case in which the
founder and spiritual leader are two different persons. The “Almighty God”
was worshipped as second though female incarnation of Jesus as a king with
absolute power (s. Chapter 3.2.3.1.2). In contrast to the Bible which de-
scribes the life and deeds of Jesus in detail, not much is known from the

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681 Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 67ff.; Chen and Zhang 2001, pp. 109ff. [can’t find source info]
682 Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 68–69.
683 “Jiepou xiejiao ‘Dongfang shandian’ (Dissect the Heretical Teaching of ‘Eastern
(accessed November 28, 2007).
present sources on the worldly life of the “Almighty God.” She was “born in the modest family in the North of China.”

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

During the second phase, Qigong masters had professional skills outside the Qigong realm which they could either directly utilize in building up their Qigong group or indirectly utilize by drawing on networks built up during their professional career outside the Qigong realm. Additionally, published descriptions of the masters by their followers emerged as a new resource for strengthening their status.

Liu Jineng, the leader of *Guogong*, was born in June 1969 in Wanxian county of Sichuan province. Official sources just give “high school” as his educational background. Besides his martial arts skills acquired during his youth, Liu is portrayed as also being capable of fine arts like calligraphy painting, poetry, and writing. He was said to hold a Master degree at Beijing University and Doctor Degree in literature. He acted as Vice chairman of the World Zen Association for Calligraphy and Painting and was a member of the Writers Association of Sichuan Province. Liu wrote for the journal “Health and Life,” edited his own newspaper called “The light of Guogong” and composed a poetry volume titled “Mind of Sun and Moon.” This portrait of being a calligrapher and poet reverts to ideas of traditional skills by officials and statesmen in Imperial China, which was continued in the person of Mao Zedong, having been admired for his poetry.

Hu Wanli’s writing skills also helped him to draw followers. In 1995 he wrote an article entitled “Divine words created by a prisoner” (*Yi ge qiutu chuangzao de shenhua*), which was published in a magazine and inspired

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684 During the third phase, the group denounce “rumors” that Deng was the worshipped incarnation of Jesus Christ. This denouncement might be linked to internal conflicts or further development within the groups’ teachings (see Chapter 3.3.3.3).
many ill persons to travel to Xinjiang to seek healing from Hu. After his release from prison in May 1997, Hu opened a hospital in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, and later on he started operating the Zongnanshan Hospital, which attracted some 10,000 people, 146 of whom are said to have died. After he had to close it, he operated a third hospital in Shangqiu, Henan province, for some time.688

Li Hongzhi, founder of Falungong, was born in Changchun, Jilin province, on July 7, 1952. According to other accounts, especially the biographical information given by FLG, he was born on the exact day of Shakyamuni, the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, in that year being on May 13.689 His birth name was Li Lai; in 1966 he changed his name into Li Hongzhi, which carried a more “revolutionary” tone. In 1971 (1970) Li became a soldier at the forest guards playing the small trumpet; afterwards he worked at the guard’s guesthouse as a waiter.690

Li’s educational background helped him get in touch with the military, which proved to be a key asset concerning the development of ES Qigong within the initial phase.

As Li learned to play trumpet, he was hired by cavalry regiment looking for artist soldiers and later on was transferred to Inner Mongolia as part of the “Mao Zedong thought propaganda troop” (Mao Zedong sixiang xuanchuan-dui). Shen, Zeng, and Xu have proposed that Li’s artistic background made it easy for him to learn Qigong skills.691

688 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 236ff.
689 Three biographical versions of Li Hongzhi exist. In the first edition by Zhongguo Falungong from 1993, Zhu Huiguang’s essay entitled “Falun xuanzhuan xin tiandi – ji Li Hongzhi xiansheng he ta chuangli di falun gong (The Dharma Wheel Revolves the New Cosmos – On Mr. Li Hongzhi and the Falunggong He Founded) appeared. This essay became a major source for the later authorized, and much shorter, biography in the book Zhuan Falun (Turning the Dharma Wheel), 1994. The third biography was published by the research department of the Ministry of Public Security, Gonganbu yanjiu shi (Research Desk of the Ministry of Public Security), “Li Hongzhi qiren qishi (Li Hongzhi: The Man and His Deeds),” Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), July 23, 1999, p. 4. An official English version also appeared: “The Life and Times of Li Hongzhi,” People’s Daily Website, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/special/fagong/19990722200A106.html (accessed December 5, 2007). One is tempted to speculate that the Chinese authorities were closer to the truth as the second much shorter official biography omitted some of the rather strange parts concerning the spiritual trainings of Li mentioned in the first essay. What is more, it was excluded from the book in 1996 (as the first wave of critic against FLG appeared) and also removed from the FLG website in 2001. After the ban of FLG, Li’s biographical background became a huge issue of debate between the party-state and FLG; see Penny 2003 (see note 385).
690 Zhu 1993 (see note 693), p. 3.
691 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 258ff.
Unlike other Qigong masters, Li underwent a solid training in several Qigong realms. According to the FLG biographical account, Li started to investigate national and international Qigong and also took part in some classes. In January 1988, Li enrolled himself in a class on “Secret Zen Qigong” (chanmigong) of Li Dongwei at the Health Center of the Jilin Qigong Research Society. Li Dongwei was also familiar with Bagua, massage techniques like Tuina, and had experiences in clinical use of Qigong. According to Shen et al., he was Li’s “teacher of enlightenment.” Later on, Li met Yu Guangsheng, from whom he learned a Daoist martial arts technique of “Circles of nine palaces and eight trigrams” (Jiugong bagua quan). Li is said to have been a very diligent student.

During a visit to Thailand in 1990, Li gained knowledge in Buddhism and material arts, studying the “Soul Mountain True Buddha School” (Lingshanzhenfozong). He also learned the gestures and ways of dressing of the monks, which proved very important for his own way of presenting himself as a holy person.

Secondhand accounts of the Qigong masters’ abilities functioned as an additional resource for improving their reputation. In this sense, Guogong-founder Liu Jineng was portrayed as possessing broad wisdom and highly developed skills. He is described as “strong and tall” as well as “handsome.”

A participant in a Guogong training class wrote that “for the cause of Guogong, the Great Teacher studied hard, led a simple life, worked day and night and used his over the years saved money to buy a piece of land.” Descriptions echo ideals of a model worker or even an ideal party cadre who like Liu “… walks or takes the bus and spends only 100 Yuan per month and … for poor students, he stretches out his hand to help.”

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693 Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 262–63.
697 Dian 1999 (see note 689), p. 22. This differs from official news sources after 1999 that have denounced Liu as “amassing wealth” and “making profit” from his students’ fees; see “Sichuansheng Mianyangshi yi fa qudi ‘Guogong’ zuzhi” (see note 690); “Xiaozhang daidui bozhong jingshen yapian, ‘Guogong’ gugan fenzi ruyu (School Director Sows
moted, such a view, can’t be judged from the present sources. Although difficult to prove, the “making or shaping of a Master” by his followers, however, is a factor of great importance, similar to official denunciations based on fact and fiction.

An early article cited colleagues of Li Hongzhi describing him as upright and enjoying of his company. He was said to have seldom quarreled or have lost his temper. But some people also considered him a fool for not seeking materialistic gains or personal advantages. Even faced with hatred, Li always kept smiling. In the first biographical essay, the impression of Li as a balanced and serving person was reinforced:

Some people ask: Is the teacher a normal human or Buddha? If you look at his wooden pullover with holes, his patched underwear, if you look at his modest life style, if you hear his modest way of talking, he is just a very normal person. Really, although he has supernormal abilities, but his modest character doesn’t make you feel that he is special. Towards cadres, he is neither haughty nor humble, towards average people neither soft not abandoning, towards the ill fully warm-hearted, always fulfilling requests of his colleagues, he didn’t think or fight for money and power, he never complained about rushing and tired work, for spreading Falungong, he gave up his job and left his home. His only wish is that more people get healthy and happy.

Within the official biography in the Zhuan Falun, Li was even indirectly compared to Mao Zedong.

Falun Dafa founded by Mr. Li Hongzhi is like a red sun rising from the east, whose radiance with unlimited vitality will illuminate every corner of the earth, nourish all the living things, warm the whole world and play an unparalleled role in the realization of an ideal and perfect human society on this planet.

3.2.3.1.2 Spiritual Resources

Christian-Inspired Groups

Besides involving the motive of suffering, the leaders of the Christian-inspired groups developed two new spiritual resources: utilization of spiritual

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698 Zhu 1993 (see note 693), p. 3.
699 Ibid., pp. 3ff.
700 Cited after Penny 2003 (see note 385), p. 651.
titles and attributes as well as drawing on their former membership within an earlier group.

_Suffering and Supernatural Skills_

According to an early publication titled _Flashing Soul Journey (Shanguang de lingcheng)_ Ji Sanbao, the founder of the “Disciples Society” had to withstand numerous attacks and sufferings during the process of establishing his teachings.

... The chaos of Dao, attacks from outsiders, pressure by authorities, rejection of the family clan, the attacks of brothers and sisters, he stepped in every trap possible. He didn’t waver or compromise, he didn’t give in or retreat... He suffered and tasted the sweet, sour, bitter, and the hot, he underwent all conceivable hardships. To save mankind, he once fasted for 32 days and prayed through the nights, the care of the Holy Spirit, the miraculous of his kingdom and many principles, were bit by bit taught to him, made him understand what he had to accomplish in the future. His spirit traveled outside his body, saw paradise and hell.  

In the publications by the group, Ji’s extensive suffering and endurance of hardships were described in detail. It was also suffering which made Ji himself turn to Christianity. Two children of Ji Sanbao have died, which in the publication is described as a punishment of God, for Ji had been a harsh assailant of Christian believers before he became a believer himself. His third child was also close to death, upon which his wife suggested asking Christian believers for a healing prayer. “Sanbao vowed to say: ‘If only the kid will be healed, I will believe. Who said it is healed who I will believe.’... Facing the recovering of his child, Ji Sanbao developed the highest admiration and fear for God.” After his conversion, Ji is pictured like a second Jesus: having walked on water, having healed the blind, and having delivered several persons.

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701 Cited after Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 32.
702 Li 2000 (see note 344) pp. 218ff; Wu 2005 (see note 73), pp. 53ff.
703 Cited from Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 70.
704 Ibid., pp. 73ff.
Presentation of Former Membership as Legitimative Claim

While leaders related themselves to a former group, references to the Christian concept of the “holy trinity” and the traditional Chinese worship of ancestors were common. Liu Jiaguo, head of the “Teachings of the Supreme God,” legitimized his group by relating himself to the “Established King”: the latter would be “the father” and he would be the “Supreme God,” or the “son.” Because the “father” died (having been arrested and sentenced to death), the followers were instructed to worship him, the “son.” To further justify the group, he created an evolutionary path called “process of seven steps of the soul” (qibu lingcheng) that starts with the “Three-Self Movement” (sanzi yundong) and concludes with his “Teachings of the Supreme God.” Following the creation of the Trinity, Deng Xueguang, a former member of the “Teachings of the Soul” made a direct link to his newly founded “Way of Resurrection” (Fuhuodao): the former leader of the “Teachings of the Soul” would be the “Holy Father” (shengfu), and he would be the “Holy Son” (shengzi) whom the followers should now worship. Eventually, he claimed that one of his female members was the “Holy Spirit” (shengling), and she served as his “right hand.” The head of the “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China,” Wang Yongmin, is the only one known so far who didn’t deify himself but rather the leader of his root group, Li Changshou of the “Shouters.”

Spiritual Titles and Attributes

Various titles, mostly taken from the Bible, were used to establish the spiritual authority of the leaders. For example, the head of the “Teachings of the Lord God” was called the “Resurrected Christ” (jidu fuhuo), “Word becoming flesh” (dao cheng roushen) “Saviour of the World” (zhengjiu shijie). In a publication entitled Truth, Way, Life, the naming of “Lord God” was further explained: “When Jesus comes to the earth for the second time, will he be called Jesus?, God needs to cover up himself, only when the true light

707 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 52.
appears can he fully appear. Therefore, when he comes he doesn’t call himself Jesus. For today his name is Lord God, the Almighty.”

The “Church of the Almighty God” also attributes various characteristics and skills to their worshipped God.

Practical God – the Almighty, a body that has openly showed forth glory, a holy spiritual body gas appeared. She is completely and utterly God Himself, and changes all the flesh in the world, ascending the mountains and transfiguring God’s nature. She wears a golden crown on her head and pure white clothes on her body, a gold belt is fastened around her waist, and the whole world is under her feet. Her eyes are as flames, and in her mouth are two swords, she holds seven stars in her right hand, the Kingdom way is bright and without end.709

The “Almighty God” was said to have many visions and dreams, and wrote down messages of the Spirit.710 Spiritual might ascribed to the leaders was also believed to be transferred to material goods. For the “Way of the Resurrection,” food and beverages left unfinished by the leader are said to be “sacred.” Followers fought hard for these leftovers because they hoped to make spiritual progress in order to “gain the Dao and ascend to Heaven” (de dao sheng tian).711

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

As in the first phase, notions of suffering, hard work, and mystical meetings were evoked for spiritual legitimation of the Qigong masters.712

The youth of Liu Jineng, founder of Guogong, was fraught with hardships, but he was “determined to cultivate himself.” According to first essay, Li had been born into a “completely poverty-stricken” family and had acquired a “spirit of bearing hardships and tolerating hard work.” However, in the second biography noted that Li was born into an average family. Penny concludes that this change might have been made to enable potential followers

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708 Ibid., p. 50.
709 “Quanneng shen shengjie lingti chuxian le (The Holy and Clean Soul Body of the Almighty God has appeared), Zhenli shengshi di yi ji, wu (Holy Songs of Truth Series 1, No.5), Gen suizhe Gaoyang chang xin ge (Sing a New Song with the Lamb),” http://chinese.hidden-advent.org/music/index_sh1.php (accessed October 8, 2007).
710 “Jiepou xiejiao ‘Dongfang shandian’” 2005 (see note 687).
712 Penny mentions that this follows the ancient patterns of religious biographies to be found in Buddhism as well as Daoism in China; see Penny 2003 (see note 385), pp. 653–54.
an easier identification with Li as someone from an average background. Hardships and suffering also feature prominently in the spiritual way of Di Yuqi, the founder of Zangmigong. To acquire the skills of healing and foreseeing, he left his home in Xining, went to Tibet in 1985, and worked hard for several years for an old teacher as well a Lamaist monk, who taught him in return. To get in touch with all different kinds of Gongfu skills, Yuqi opened a restaurant just at the foot of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Whoever could show some real Gongfu would enjoy free food and drinks.

**Mystical Meetings**

Liu Jineng was enlightened by many hermits while practicing Taijiquan and Bagua. Having completed middle school, he retreated to Shennongjia for meditation and received the crafts of mystical Shen Nong. In May 1992 he “surfaced” (chu shan), started to teach and heal in public, and founded his Guogong school in Mianyang, Sichuan province.

Di also retreated to the 6,000-meter-high mountains, where he stayed for a couple of years. After hearing “Buddha’s music,” a symbol of reaching the third realm according to Mizong Buddhism, he felt he should “surface” and teach his skills to mankind. As he traveled around, practicing divination and also fêng shui [spelling according to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary], he earned the name “the eccentric from the snow field” (qiren xueyu). In 1993 he started conducting study sessions in Beijing. When Li Hongzhi was very small, he suddenly noticed an old Buddhist monk with a colorful radiance upon his head following him. This monk, called Quan Jue, became Li’s first teacher, teaching him playfully by his reactions when Li behaved well or poorly. When Li was eleven or twelve years old, the first teacher left him, but not without telling him that another teacher would come to see him. This second teacher was a Daoist, coming and leaving at will and teaching Li Daoist Wushu. This teacher, called Baiji Zhenren, often took Li to remote places and accompanied him practicing for long hours. Before leaving, this teacher told Li that a calamity will come over China, but he should not interfere, should only assiduously practice Qigong. Soon after, the Cultural

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713 Ibid., p. 657.
714 Li 1994 (see note 681), p. 3.
715 Dian 1999 (see note 689), p. 23.
716 Li 1994 (see note 681) p. 3.
Revolution broke out. After Li was transferred into the artist troop, a third teacher came, another Daoist, called Zhen Daozi, who often took the shape of an average person to teach Li lessons. In 1974, another teacher, a female one, approached Li; she taught Buddhist Qigong and principles of Buddhism. Afterwards, Li had twenty more teachers, and every time he completed another stage, a new teacher came.\(^7\) Regardless of his true birth date, as Li was able to make his followers believe, he could foster authority as spiritual-religious leader. What is more, he has been described as having shown moral rectitude and compassion during childhood. This gives the impression that his development has been prefigured or even preordained.\(^8\) This might be also the reason why references to his family life, present in the first biographical essays, were later on deleted. These changes focused the attention of the followers and readers more firmly on Li as the key figure and founder. Family and relatives might have only disturbed that focus or could have made Li appear too human.\(^9\) Some Qigong masters emerged in the first phase, adorning themselves with new titles that they received from their followers or due to their fame. Xie Zhanrong, founder of Yinyanggong, was called the “Buddha’s pupil of the east” (dongfang fouzi).\(^10\) Participants also pictured Liu in strong mystical even godly light, that is, “. . . some people saw Great Teacher Liu’s seven-colored gloriole while he promoted skills.”\(^11\) Zhang Xiaoping portrayed himself as a “second Mao Zedong.” On the leaf of his book Precious Miracle of China – True Scriptures of Secret Transmission of “Ten thousand methods return to one-Qigong” (Zhonghua qibao – ‘wanfaguiyigong’ michuan zhenjing) two vertical lines of characters stated “The Northeast brought out a red sun—Buddha’s pupil Zhang Xiaoping—a man who decided to astonish the world.”\(^12\)

\(^7\) Zhu 1993 (see note 693), p. 3. The official biography in Zhuan Falun ends after the departure of the second master.
\(^8\) Penny 2003 (see note 385), p. 654.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 658.
\(^11\) Dian 1999 (see note 689), p. 23.
\(^12\) Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 247.
3.2.3.1.3  **New Trends**

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

Several arrests of group leaders took place in this second phase. Whereas previous experiences of imprisonment strengthened the determination of the leaders, consequences of arrests in this second phase were twofold. After the leaders of two groups were sentenced to death for heavy crimes for rape—Liang Jiayu of the “Group of Everything for Common Use” in 1988 and Wu Yangming, head of the “Anointed King” in 1995—their groups ceased to exist. However, Liu Jiaguo, a former member of the “Anointed King,” was able to build up a new group based on the elaborated organizational resources of the “Anointed King” (see Chapter 3.1.3). The “Group of Everything for Common Use” practiced communal living and lacked a broader-based organizational structure. However, Liu was likewise sentenced to death for rape in 1998. None of his members were able to revive his group, though his followers might have been drawn to other groups.

Contrarily, although the head of the “Three Grades of Servants Group,” Xu Shengfu, was arrested twice, his group continued unchanged. In 1991, the Shaanxi police placed Xu under educational reform for illegal assembly, and in 1993 Xu was punished to three years labor administration for organizing an evil cult. Still, he and his group managed to survive, probably due to the help and loyalty of those family members whom Xu had placed in key positions.

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

This second phase was characterized by three different trends: arrests of two leaders, one leadership transfer, and weakening of leadership presence. The first Qigong master arrested was Zhang Ping. Not much is known about the

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{723}}\] Rape has been a common label for denouncing spiritual leaders worldwide, and was—from the perspective of the Chinese authorities—also suitable for the harsh legal punishment based on the Criminal Code. However, in the case of the “Supreme God,” evidence looked very convincing. After his arrest he was said to admit the “calling” of several young women to his bed, but on a voluntary basis. However, female followers gave detailed accounts of raping in their testimonies. See the Associated Press, “Claiming to Be a Supreme Being Can Serve a Charlatan Well in China,” October 18, 1999, http://www.rickross.com/reference/cs/cs10.html (accessed January 25, 2000) and Wu 2005 (see note 138), pp. 84ff.

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{724}}\] Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 348).
background of his arrest. Interesting is the case of Zhang Xiangyu. She
was “taken into custody and examined”—a term referring to migrants with-
out legal residence—on April 14, 1990 and formally arrested on December
5 by the Police Bureau of Haidian District in Beijing. Her arrest was based
on violation against then valid regulations of the State TCM Administration.
For publicly using clinical Qigong, permission by the local health and TCM
administrations must be obtained. According to Shen et al. she organized
twenty-seven Qigong assemblies with more than 11,693 participants within
only thirteen days between March 18–31, 1990. Additionally, she was ac-
cused of having induced several cases of deviation. Therefore, the only
female Qigong leader did not “survive.” This could be a coincidence. But
proof also exists that the authorities considered her to be a “convenient
scapegoat” enabling the authorities to reaffirm their grip on the increasingly
dynamic Qigong sector. Unlike the other leaders, Zhang had not formed any
relations with powerful party-state or societal actors. As one female fol-
lower of Zhang remarked: “How dare they lock her up . . . The reason they
locked her up was that she was a woman, and she did not have powerful
enough clients to back her up when she started to make a lot of money.”
Another reason for her arrest might be that mystical knowledge transmis-
sion—physical features of masters performing “extraordinary abilities” as
well as social skills—were closely linked to masculinity within popular im-
ages.

One leadership transfer took place. As within the context of spiritual-reli-
gious movements, here great importance is attached to charisma, for a
leadership transfer poses a very crucial challenge to a group. The head of
Xianggong, Tian Ruisheng, died on September 30, 1995. However, his three
girls—Tian Tongyin, Tian Shufang, and Tian Aifang—didn’t publicly an-
nounce his death. Her father had introduced them to Xianggong at an
early age, therefore they were equipped with a necessary familiarity of the

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726 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 165.
727 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 76.
728 Ibid., p. 72.
teachings. It was his middle daughter, Tian Shufang, who took over the promotion of Xianggong. On websites published in 2002, Tian Shufang is constantly referred to as “Teacher Tian Shufang,” whereas her father is called “Great Master Tian” (Tian dashi). Associating herself with the charisma of her father, she nevertheless integrated new features to establish her own authority. She claimed to have reached a stage of Qigong at which she constantly emits Qi visible as radiance around her head, even when she sleeps. Radiance around one’s head is believed to be a common expression of a human being powerful in Qi. This presents a departure from her father’s style, for he didn’t mention having had a halo around his head. Besides, the coincidence with the Christian gloriole is striking. Interestingly, the omittance of several parts of the first biographical essay on Li Hongzhi in the second version also reflected a larger trend during this second phase. Whereas Li was an ever present figure at the beginning of the movement with personal experiences, he gradually retreated from the practitioners’ scene after 1994. At the beginning of the movement, the extended biography and Li’s presence were necessary to establish FLG and to prove its difference from other Qigong styles. During the latter stage, FLG managed to grow and stay alive in spite of losing an important asset—his founder’s biography. For most of his followers, Li has become a medial image without any physical presence.

In 1994 he decided to no longer teach classes, and in 1995 and 1996 he started spreading his teachings to the United States, Europe, and Australia. In 1997 Li finally moved to the United States. Li was not the only one who relocated to the United States. In the summer of 1995 Zhang Hongbao, master of Zhonggong, declared the end of the initial growth phase of Zhonggong and stipulated a three-year period of adjustment and consolidation. He himself ended up disappearing from the stage. But Zhang Zhixiang, head of Yuanjigong, chose the opposite strategy: he enhanced his resources during the second phase by taking up two political posts, namely member of the

731 Penny 2003 (see note 385), p. 661.
732 Only in February 2000 did Zhang resurface on the island of Guam; Palmer 2007 (see note 8), p. 279.
3.2.3.2 Organizational Resources

3.2.3.2.1 Followers

It was only during the 1990s that some Qigong-based as well as Christian-inspired groups were able to build up a large base of followers. Others remained or emerged with a small-scale base of adherents, the actual number of which can only be gleaned from the scattered information obtained from available sources. Even for the groups themselves it might have been difficult to estimate the number of followers, especially if formal membership were to have been lacking.

As regards the number of followers, Christian-inspired groups don’t reach the scale of Falungong or some other Qigong-based networks. Nevertheless, large-scale groups attract up to several hundred thousand people. According to present sources, the “Society of Disciples,” the “Born Again Group” (Chongshengpai), as well as the “Shouters” seem to have the largest base of followers. Medium-scale groups have tens of thousands of followers, while small-scale groupings may only reach a number of some hundred or thousand people. In 1995, Ye Xiaowen, then Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau, cited published estimations by the Ministry of Public Security listing fifteen “heretical” groups with an overall membership of 500,000. According to the Information Center for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in Hong Kong, ten groups account for three million members. The latter figure appears to be more reasonable taking into account some recently released internal documents from the Ministry of Public Security and other party-state organizations. According to these documents, the larg-

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est groups were the “Disciples Society” (some 500,000 followers in 1995) and the “Shouters” (200,000 followers).\textsuperscript{736}

Concerning the overall dimension of the Qigong movement, several numbers floated throughout literature. Li stated that “according to statistics” more than 100 million people were engaged in Qigong practice.\textsuperscript{737} At least three groups developed up to several million followers respectively: Zhonggong, FLG, and Xianggong. In 1996 FLG had already claimed to have 100 million followers. In 1999, during the encirclement of the Tianjin Educational College, they spoke of 200,000 disciples in Tianjin and 1 million in Beijing. Guo cites statistics estimating FLG followers at approximately two million.\textsuperscript{738} Official accounts mention the figure of 2.1 million in the context of the precise number of guidance stations and of practice points.\textsuperscript{739}

One Zhonggong source mentioned that Zhang Hongbao attracted a large number of followers, more than two hundred million in two or three years.\textsuperscript{740} Another sources talk about some ten or twenty million followers.\textsuperscript{741} While applying for political asylum in Guam, USA in 2000, Zhang Hongbao issued a letter in which he mentioned some forty million followers. For Xianggong it seems that the number of practitioners is calculated with the help of the study classes or with local research societies that were established all over China except Tibet, Hainan, and Macao.\textsuperscript{742} In the written script of a taped “study report” (xueshu baogao) in Lanzhou on May 1994, Tian Ruisheng himself referred to twenty-three or twenty-four million followers, also mentioning it might be more because “some people practice at home, some have not yet been counted.”\textsuperscript{743} A Xianggong website also mentioned numbers of followers outside China: in 1994 some 2.6 million

\textsuperscript{736} The Center of Religious Freedom 2002 (see note 548).
\textsuperscript{738} Zhengyi Guo, “Li Hongzhi de yao yan he yao yan (Li Hongzi’s Heresy and Rumors),” in Guo 2002 (see note 658), pp. 251–52.
\textsuperscript{739} “‘Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao (FLG Really is a Heretical Teachings),” in RMRB (October 28, 1999), printed in Zhonggongzhongyang xuanchuanbu jiaoyuju, “Falungong” jiu shi xiejiao (FLG Really is a Heretical Teaching) (Beijing: Xuerichubanshe, 1999), pp. 1–11, here p. 7.
\textsuperscript{741} Wang 1998 (see note 488), p. 158.
\textsuperscript{742} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{743} “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).
were practicing *Xianggong* in Japan, 2.3 million in Taiwan, and in Hong Kong there were also millions of followers.\(^744\) According to a HK website officially quoting sources, *Xianggong* has thirty million followers.\(^745\)

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

As in the first phase, systematic information on followers of the Christian-inspired groups was still rare. In his book, Wu presents two surveys of followers of the “Teachings of the Lord God” conducted in 1998, but their explanatory power is very limited. The two significances that can be clearly filtered out are that most of the followers were peasants and of a low educational level. Both features are unsurprising, taken into consideration that the groups’ realm of activity is the countryside and access to education in rural areas is poor. Likewise, statistical data based on arrested members from the “Society of Disciples” only reveal the most obvious: a low level of education and a majority of women. Due to migration of many men to the cities as well as lesser occupational involvement, women simply might have more time and opportunity to dedicate to religious activities.\(^746\)

Young women with a middle level of education account for a key membership segment. Some are the possible victims of the leader having attracted them to the group with financial and spiritual promises. Others may have joined the groups of their own will, then to be confronted with the chance of a quick ascent within the group’s hierarchy, either due to their level of education or their appearance. For women, it may be a chance to gain social and financial prestige, which is still difficult for them to achieve in modern Chinese society. Twenty-year-old Li Ping rose to the third highest hierarchical level of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” and represented the leader during the first “National Conference of Delegates” for the group held in Hunan. Interestingly, all top-level positions under the head of the group were taken by women. The leader of the “Way of Resurrection” chose twenty-year-old Wen Qiuhui, named “Holy Spirit,” to be his companion.\(^747\)

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\(^744\) "Zhongguo Xianggong jianjie” (see note 390).

\(^745\) "‘Xianggong’ chengyuan yu sanqianwan ren chuan jiang chenwei xia yi ge zhengsu mubiao (‘Xianggong’ Followers Exceed 30 Million and Are to Become the Next Rigid Aim),” *Xinwen ziyou daobao* 294 (August 27, 1999), http://www.pressfreedomcom/pfg/gb/content/29x/294.htm (accessed on August 6, 2005).

\(^746\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 91–92.

\(^747\) Wang 2000 (see note 409), pp. 166 and 185.
Motives of people for joining a group didn’t seem to vary considerably from the first phase. Healing remained one of the dominant reasons. Especially people who have already tried various hospitals and treatments in an effort to cure their illness or have experienced a number of “unsatisfactory events” are more disposed to believing in the help of spiritual powers. Mrs. Cai, a forty-five-year-old follower of “Teachings of the Supreme God,” is cited as follows:

When I was twenty, I had heart disease, and at twenty-nine, arthritis. My bones often broke, I had headaches, stomach pains, and my whole body was diseased. The sickness just wouldn’t leave me. I went to Gulou Hospital, . . . but they never really cured me. My mother told me one day that “Mr. Cai from our village said believing in Jesus can cure disease and asked if the family were believers. If you’re cured, you don’t have to sit at home” . . . The old ladies in the group said I just have to pray with all my heart and the illnesses will go away. They also said God created mankind, so he must be able to cure disease. You have to have faith and keep God in your heart.748

Apart from seeking aid for healing, the feeling of being an important part of a mission, of being charged with an important task, seems to have been a reason for joining the groups. In a diary, a member of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” noted:

I needs to have rules and discipline, should not be lax on myself, and should control every word and action of myself. Must obey to every word of the God, can’t reject it on my own or consciously look for difficulties, must take the overall situation into account . . . Everywhere I go, I should stand strong and be a good leader, be an example for others. Should use my real light to enlighten others, to bring out one’s own glory and not to humiliate God . . . Should have a strong professional attitude, do my work well. Should deal with all different kinds of difficulties, and be patient. To hold up a spirit of a hard battle.749

These lines reveal a strong desire for clear-cut order and meaning. While Chinese society during the 1990s became freer and more liberal as well as pluralistic, a rising feeling of disorientation, especially from the perspective of economic losers, has emerged.

749 Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 98–99.
Mrs. Kuang’s statement, follower of the “Three Grades of Servants,” point in the same direction:

I loved the songs and the discipline. I used to get angry with the children before they taught me how to change my personality. I learned that you must eliminate hate from your mind.  

Ideational disappointment—a felt loss of values and ideas—was another motive for joining a group. The statement of Mr. Wu, fifty-one years old, retired, and a party member, reflects this motivation:

We were searching for truth, for the right way; we wanted to hold on until the end. We wanted to put out a glorious human value system, were ready to pay every price to save the people. Fighting for oneself, fighting for the family, one must not be weak, create heroes, and examine talents. Drill one’s will to create ourselves in these difficult surroundings . . . We should open the door of God for every loyal human, the love of God embraces everything. We should let the real light shine in every corner, be strict towards oneself to bring happiness. We must strive for it like warriors.

Accounts of followers directly related to political dissatisfaction or political ambitions were rare.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Due to a growing popularity of Qigong during the 1990s, the base of followers likewise broadened.

A participant of a Guogong teacher’s training class at Mianyang gives a sketch of his circle 100 follow students from over twenty provinces and regions: “[There were] government officials, employees, pensioners, also unemployed, peasants; there were university students, master students, pupils and illiterates; there were old men and women in their 70s and 80s, and also girls and boys around the age of 20 . . . They all came for different reasons, a lot of them wanted to cure their illnesses. Some were doctors, but couldn’t cure their disease, therefore they turned to Guogong for help.”

752 Ibid., pp. 212–13.
753 Yuanhao Ren, “Women suo jianshi de Guogong: Lai zi Zhongguo ziran teyi gong di shi jie shici peixunban de baodao (The Guogong We Experienced: A Report from the 10th
According to FLG sources based on surveys made in several cities in 1998, three quarter of the followers were women and almost two thirds were over fifty years of age. Over one fifth were college graduates, a much higher number compared with the national average.  

A rather female and elderly base of followers could also be traced for Xianggong, extracting information on age, sex, and occupation extracted from a booklet containing various cases of healing reported by followers in Jiangsu province.

According to Xianggong’s leader, Tian, numerous military officials practiced Xianggong, including many generals as well as cadres with a rank of vice-minister or above. Besides active followers, Xianggong seemed to have a broad base of supporters within political organizations.

As with the Christian-inspired groups, the quest for healing remained the dominant motivation for many practitioners to start practicing. Xianggong healing accounts revealed that followers had often tried various other treatments and turned to Qigong as the last resort. The statement of a follower by the name of Zhou Daoxing is very representative:

I got a slow-acting kidney inflammation, the whole body was swollen, my face was purple and black. I stayed at Peixian hospital for two years, was transferred to Xuzhou Hospital, and after three months my illness got worse. My vision became unclear and my legs were so swollen that I couldn’t put on pants. Later on in the Military Hospital of Nanjing, an expert said that my kidney disease is not easy to heal, I should go home, eat and drink more . . . In Nanjing I stayed in two hospitals, but it got worse, my body was swollen like a cow . . . When there was no way out, my niece told me: “Uncle, practicing Xianggong can heal all kinds of difficult illnesses, it is really miraculous! You try it!” I thought, “I spent ten, twenty thousand yuan, all famous experts could not heal me, what is practicing Qigong good for?” . . . When I went to a Xianggong study class, I could only push my bicycle, after class I didn’t feel pain, I could ride it home . . . At first, my illness got worse, everybody said I will not make it long and advised me to stop practicing . . . But after some days, everything

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754 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 258.
756 “Xianggong chengyuan” (see note 750).
got better . . . After harvest I went for a check-up to the hospital and my kidney disease was gone, everything was normal.\textsuperscript{757}

Healing also included psychological healing, since at least several FLG followers having experienced broken relationships in various ways were searching for meaning in life.\textsuperscript{758} The Qigong group offered a new feeling of community. A twenty-eight-year-old female Ph.D. student and FLG follower stated:

As I just started to participate in small groups to study the Dharma, I found it quite ridiculous: so many people sitting together studying Zhuanfalun, it seemed like the study session during the Cultural Revolution. But then I came to notice the good aspects of such a group. I felt I didn’t need to be afraid that somebody would utilize my shortcomings to hurt me. Falungong stipulated “truth, benevolence, forbearance” and everybody stuck to that. So I got to like this group.\textsuperscript{759}

The attraction of Qigong groups for providing ideational orientation based on familiar resources is observed by a lecturer of politics at a university:

Now it is very difficult to teach politics at the university. Some years ago that was due to the incongruity of theory and practice, now difficulties arise from a renaissance of local culture. For example, Marx has a big beard, Chinese don’t have beards; it is difficult to establish approval on ethnic grounds. Several activities concerning worshipping Confucius are much livelier than the search for Marxism. Confucius became a giant and Marx a dwarf. Nowadays, all these Qigong lift up Confucius, Laozi and Indian Shakamuni, nobody cares about Western culture, not even Marx.\textsuperscript{760}

Results of in-depth interviews with forty-four FLG followers by the Research Group on “Heretical Teachings” at the Chinese Academy of Science in 2002 indicated that some 41.9 percent were not satisfied with society and didn’t like to engage in social relations. Also, upon being asked as to why

\textsuperscript{757} Jiangsusheng peixin Xianggong fudaozhan 1993 (see note 760), pp. 106–107.
\textsuperscript{758} Zhongguokexueyuan xinliyanjiusuo “fanxiejiao” yanjiuketizu (Research Topic Group “Anti-Heretical Teachings” at the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Science), “Falungong” xianxiang de xinliue fenxi (A Psychological Analysis of the Falungong Phenomenon) (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2002).
\textsuperscript{759} Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{760} Lu 1999 (see note 82), p. 25.
they started FLG, 72.7 percent replied that they “wanted to be good persons (zuo haoren) and to cultivate their disposition (xiu xinxing).”

The account of Mr. Wang, thirty-one years old and master student, describing how he became interested in FLG might serve as an example of this view:

My grandfather was a Buddhist, I got influenced by that, from childhood I believed in spirits. Of course this deistic thinking was slowly disappearing as I got older and my knowledge became larger. In 1996 some relatives, my father’s and my mother’s grandmother died. During these times of sadness, I really got to feel the impermanence of the world. Besides, the spreading of some bad social phenomenon conflicted with natural pure and good-hearted instincts. I felt floating and confused, and wanted to get some answers from religion. I read some Buddhist, Daoist and Christian books, but I didn’t really understand them. With this emotional setting I read the book Zhuan Falun which somebody introduced to me. Within the book it said that “truth, benevolence and endurance are the highest characteristics of the universe, these are the only measures to balance good and bad people.” I felt a strong agreement in my heart. So I went into the ranks of Falungong followers.

Disillusion with reality often meet with idealism and the wish to change the world. As a fifty-seven-year-old vice-professor mentioned:

At that time I believed that great people who try to make a contribution to mankind should make changes to society. So I wanted to become a philosopher . . . I deeply engaged in thinking about society’s problems . . . If somebody asked me, “Why do you read all these books?,” I would reply, “Because I want to be a human in the right sense of the word” . . .”

Judging from an early report by a FLG adherent called Zhu Huiguang, “spiritual cultivation” as a core element of FLG was of special attractiveness for potential followers as it differs from other Qigong styles. Zhu also stresses the suitability of FLG for modern life as practicing is not limited by certain rules or circumstances. What is more, as Li Hongzhi utilized his “Dharma Bodies” (fashen) to protect every individual practitioner, FLG

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761 Zhongguo kexueyuan 2002 (see note 758). This booklet is a remarkable account of non-politically driven research on FLG. The ten in-depth interviews with FLG followers are presented without any prejudgment on their answers.
762 Ibid., p. 85
763 Ibid., p. 79.
appeared much safer as regards danger of deviation than other Qigong styles.\textsuperscript{764}

Again the findings from the “Heretical Teachings” research group support this view: although some 43.6 percent mentioned the aim of training and health improvement as reasons for joining FLG, a much higher percentage (72.7 percent) opted for moral cultivation.\textsuperscript{765}

During the 1990s, Qigong magazines increasingly published reports by adherents from various Qigong styles praising their effectiveness. Followers were increasingly willing to actively support their respective groups when it came to testifying for healing success due to increasing criticism and looming accusation as reports of Qigong deviation mushroomed during the 1990s.\textsuperscript{766}

Followers and participants in training classes have given lively accounts of people who becoming cured:

> In these recent years, [Liu Jineng, the head of Guogong] voluntarily healed more than 200,000 times . . . some dumb and deaf could speak, some paralyzed people walked away . . . more than 150 different illnesses got treated.\textsuperscript{767}

A participant of a study class wrote a detailed account about the effects of Xianggong. Out of approximately 3,000 people, the health of 1,422 participants either improved significantly or their disease disappeared altogether. During the afternoon sessions people who had been cured by Xianggong came up on stage and reported their story. Present were the deaf and dumb who could speak, those paralyzed who could walk, tumors having been “moved away,” blind who could see, and organic stones having been “beaten down.”\textsuperscript{768}

Participants have also cited some very concrete cases. For example, “Zhang Jiafang from Anhui, a doctor from some hospital. She had a bronchial illness for several years. Before class started, she asked me several times very


\textsuperscript{765} Zhongguo kexueyuan 2002 (see note 758), p. 67.

\textsuperscript{766} “’Zhonggong’ nai shengong ye (Therefore ‘Zhonggong’ is a Mysterious Qigong),” \textit{ZGQG} 4 (1991), pp. 42–45.

\textsuperscript{767} Dian 1999 (see note 689), p. 23.

\textsuperscript{768} Qing Zhuo, “Shenqi de Zhonggong (Mysterious Zhonggong),” \textit{Zhongguo Qigong} 4 (1992), p. 5.
doubtfully, ‘Will Guogong cure my disease?’ After the course started she explained that her state got better every day . . . At the end, she threw away her medicine.” In another case there was “. . . T. Anguo, who practiced other Qigong styles before, a pensioner from some fabric in Sichuan. He wrote: ‘Since February 1996, my legs didn’t work well, no feeling in the right one, I couldn’t even turn in bed. After three days of studies, I can now walk easily with power.’” Other participants eliminated habits like smoking or received a new understanding of the whole world, as a university student has written. Practitioners have also expressed different views on Qigong deviation. For some, this experience was but one step within the process of practicing. Other followers blamed themselves as having practiced too long or having pursued higher kills (gao gong tai).

3.2.3.2.2 Structure

Christian-Inspired Groups

Existing Christian groups from the first phase functioned as a breeding ground for new groups: the “Group of Shouters” provided the impetus for at least seven splinter groups. These offshoots usually developed due to a conflict between the leader and one of the followers. The latter would then decide to establish his or her own group, often taking over not only large parts of the original congregation but the organizational structure and teachings as well. By deliberately maintaining a connection with the former group, the new group is able to legitimize its own teachings and also attract former members.

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769 Ren 1996 (see note 758), p. 31.
770 Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 84ff.
771 Tan and Kong 2001 (see note 411, p. 252.
772 Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 195.
During the second phase, the organizational structure of the groups came to be more sophisticated, including labor division and territorial differentiation. The “Teachings of the Supreme God” combined several organizational elements that were only used partly or in a more simplified form by other groups. Their organizational structure can therefore be considered a combination of all possible factors and thus a representative model.
Chart 12: Organizational Structure of the “Teachings of the Supreme God”

The “Supreme God” leader, Liu Jiaguo, left his wife and daughter at the beginning of the 1990s after he met Zhu Aiqing. Because of her detailed

knowledge of the Bible, Zhu instructed Liu on theoretical concepts and scriptures for his teachings, rising to the second highest rank within the group. The “Four Living Things” (Si huo wu) formulated the “interior policy” (nei zhengce) as well as the teachings of the group and functioned as “Standing Companions” (chang peiban) of the “Supreme God.” Personal bodyguards who served the leader were responsible for helping him at meals, with dressing, and with washing, a practice also known in the “Way of Resurrection.”

The hierarchical stages spanning from “Same (Level) as the Supreme” through “The Seven Angles” are specific developments of the “Teachings of the Supreme God.” Similar positions assigned to specific tasks—such as evangelizing, responsibility for holding meetings, receiving followers from other provinces, taking care of finances—can be found in the organizational structure of other groups as well.

However, other groups favored more functional titles and organizational elements. The structure of the “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China” seemed to be highly branched.

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774 A more detailed search for the sources of the naming would be of great value. The “Four Living Things” and the “Seven Angels” might derive from the Revelation (4:7 and 8:2).
775 Jiang 2000 (see note 347); Li 2000 (see note 344); Wu 2005 (see note 36).
Chart 13: Organizational Structure of the “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China”

Interestingly, the “Church of the Almighty God” is the only known group whose worldly and spiritual leader are actually two different persons. Initially, the founder of the group, Zhao Weishan, enlisted seven people, mostly women, as holders of power, assigning them titles like “All Wisdom” or “All Honor.” He also included himself as “All Power” (quan bing). Only later did he promote one of these women, Deng, to the top of the group’s spiritual hierarchy, referring to her as “Almighty God” (Quanengshen). Its organizational structure reflects the priority of suiting an effective labor division as well as a clearly arranged hierarchy.


776 ‘Jiepou xiejiao ‘Dongfang shandian’” 2005 (see note 607).
Other groups have a slightly more collective style of leadership. The “Disciples Society” has a “Main Assembly” consisting of twelve members (paralleling the twelve apostles), three of which form a core known as the “three limbs” or “three pillars.” While there are some similarities to Christian concepts, the overall structure is again reminiscent of secret societies and composed of a hierarchical system referred to as “Seven Seven,” which relates to the number of levels and the number of organizations at each level. The seven levels have been designated letters A to G. Whereas the top levels are restricted to seven members, the lower ones are limited to three to five persons. If the number of followers within one unit exceeds the given number, a new unit should be established.\(^7\)\(^7\) Work divisions linked to several posts were instituted at every level: besides the “main deacon” and the “assistant deacon,” ranks like “sisters workers” (jiemei gong), “communication worker” (lianluo gong), “spiritual worker” (ling gong), and “good worker” (shan gong) were created.\(^7\)\(^8\) The structure of the “South China

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\(^7\)\(^7\) Jiang 2000 (see note 347), pp. 132–33.
\(^7\)\(^8\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 104.
Church” was headed by an “assembly” (yihui), comprised of the leader Gong Shengliang, Ms. Li, the niece of Gong, who was responsible for propaganda work, and Ms. Sun, in charge of finance.779

Interestingly, similar to the Qigong groups, the “Three Grades of Servants” slowly developed an entrepreneurial structure after 1991. Followers lacking the ability to preach in public or whose loyalties were in doubt were sent out to learn skills according to their interests and abilities. They were then asked to set up barber or tailor shops, auto repair stations, restaurants, hotels, etc. These facilities would serve the “Three Grade of Servants” as meetings places and shelter as well as serving to raising money.780

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

In the second phase, the degree of movement organization increased. The emerging Qigong leaders no longer attached themselves to an existing research institute at a university or academy but instead aimed at setting up their own organizational structure. Whereas some groups had already developed their basic organizational elements back in the first phase—like research societies and guidance stations—more complex structures did not evolve until the 1990s.

In general, Qigong groups established a three-tier organizational structure with research societies as the core and top unit. The positions within a research society often included director, vice-director, secretary-general, secretary, and office worker. These correspond to the positions within the Communist Party structure. Functioning as a familiar indicator of power, these positions may have held special appeal for party cadres and those with reservations about religious titles.781 The core leadership of Zhonggong consisted of about ten people, who were members of the so-called Zhongyang International General Assembly. They came from a wide range of backgrounds, including the Chengdu branch of the PLA.782

At the middle organization level, the Qigong groups set up local branch research societies as well as schools that offered classes with trained teachers. Although most groups registered for a national scope of activities at the

780 Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 348).
781 “Xiangong chengyuan” (see note 758).
China Qigong Science Research Society in Beijing, not all of them set up their base in the capital. This was due to various reasons.

For example, Xianggong was registered in Beijing, but their headquarters were set up in Henan, as this was the birthplace of founding Master Tian. Due to his career as a delegate of the local people’s congress, he probably could mobilize useful political ties.  

After Zhang Hongbao’s activities in Beijing were banned in 1988, he transferred his operational base to Sichuan and established an exercise station in the city of Jiangkan. There he managed to obtain the necessary papers and to purchase additional land for founding other institutions. Sichuan became the base for the national expansion of Zhonggong.  

Sichuan, often dubbed a rebellious place, was also an important base for Guogong.  

Besides the usual central research society, Guogong also established one central school in Mianyang City, Sichuan province, close to Liu Jineng’s home. According to the account of one follower, this school was approved by local authorities. Li Hongzhi originally wanted to obtain registration at the Jilin branch of the China Qigong Science Research Society, probably also to make use of his local connectedness and familiarity with the region. After his failed registration in Jilin, Li Hongzhi managed to obtain enrollment into to China Qigong Science Research Society in Beijing. At least until 1996, FLG hierarchy included main stations (zongzhan) at provincial, regional, or municipal levels, branch stations (fenzhan) in cities and districts, guidance stations (fudaozhan) at county, urban, and district levels and many practice sites as well as study groups. Main stations normally consisted of several functional committees (zu), being responsible for doctrine and recruiting methods, logistics and operations, or propaganda.

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783 Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren (see note 428), Question 58.  
784 Zhang even founded a Kylin City there resembling the design of imperial cities with various halls, pavilions, and gardens; see Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 225–26.  
787 The main stations in Changchun, the first of FLG founded by Li Hongzhi himself, and the main station in Wuhan were of particular importance. The latter one was the national distribution center for FLG books and materials and responsible for communication between Beijing and the main stations in South China.  
788 Tong 2002 (see note 791), pp. 645ff, based on official sources from the newspapers; Songqiu Tan, Baoqi Qin, and Xiangtao Kong, eds., Falungong yu minjian mimi jieshe: Falungong and ordinary people’s resistance.
According to official accounts, Li is said to have set up thirty-nine head stations (fudao zongzhan), 1,900 guidance stations (fudaozhan), and some 28,263 practice points (liangongdian) by 1999.\textsuperscript{789}

\textsuperscript{789} \textit{Xiejiao “Falungong” neimu da jiemi (Falungong and Folk Secret Societies: The Disclosure of Secrets Inside the Heretical Teaching “Falungong”) (Fuzhou: Fujian chubanshe, 1999), pp. 55ff.}

\textsuperscript{789} “‘Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao” (see note 743), pp. 1–11, here p. 7.
FLG sources point to an organizational evolution after 1996. After Li left for the United States and his membership with the China Qigong Research Society was terminated, FLG followers claimed that FLG ceased to exist as a roof organization linking various stations and guidance stations. Still, to gain some legal ground for their practice, followers first attempted to register with the National Minority Affairs Commission as a non-religious group, then with the China Buddhist Association as a cultural organization for the

Source: Tan et al. 1999 (see note 247), pp. 57-58.
study of Buddhism, and finally with the United Front Department as an academic organization. After all organizations rejected their request, FLG followers decided to turn FLG into a more loose organizational structure to avoid getting into legal trouble. It abandoned its nomenclature and services, formally declared the FLG Research Society as dismissed, and also instructed former liaison officers to collect not any more information from practitioners.\textsuperscript{790}

Liu Jineng, head of Guogong, placed trusted allies—for the most part relatives or fellow countryman—in positions central to Guogong’s organizational structure. Although Liu himself headed both organizations, while personally teaching at the school and travelling around the country for “sessions to bring skills” (\textit{daigonghui}), he had a group of core members—all highly educated peasants from his home region, four or five years younger than him—helping him with teaching and administration. Correspondence courses have been taught at some sixty branches of the central school in twenty-two provinces. An advertisement lists contact addresses and names for two branches in Beijing and one in Shanghai, Chengdu, Taiyuan, Xian, Tangshan, and Chongqing, the latter also being referred to as “research institute” (\textit{yanjiusuo}).\textsuperscript{791} Another follower mentioned by name, Deng Guoquan, acted as teacher at the central school where more than twenty classes had been held. A class at the central school averaged from seven days to four weeks and was organized with morning and afternoon classes as well as collective practicing in the evenings.\textsuperscript{792} In addition to or within the scope of the subbranches at the schools and the research society, “guidance stations” form the basic tier of administration. As for Guogong, these guidance stations have performed similar functions as units (\textit{danwei})\textsuperscript{793} or neighbor-

\textsuperscript{790}“Falungong zhenshi de gushi (The Real Story of Falungong),” Minghui website (accessed August 14, 1999), cited after Tong 2002 (see note 791), p. 640.

\textsuperscript{791}“Sichuansheng Mianyangshi yi fa qudi ‘Guogong’ zuzhi” (see note 690).

\textsuperscript{792}\textit{Dian} 1999 (see note 689), p. 23.

\textsuperscript{793}The work unit (\textit{danwei}) system began to erode as the reform of state-owned enterprises got under way in the latter half of the 1990s. Faced with growing unemployment and urban poverty, people are obliged to change accommodation more frequently. Former homogenous residential areas now consist of a floating and more diverse population, and consequently lost their function as social networks.
hood committees, for the latter ones have increasingly lost their function as social networks.\textsuperscript{794}

One \textit{Guogong} adherent wrote:

The guidance stations “became a warm home . . . If somebody was ill, station leader Cao went to the hospital to visit, if somebody didn’t have the money to pay the doctor, she convinced everybody to spent some money or other things to support him. If a family had trouble, she always patiently advised them and helped them to overcome their quarrels. If a student wasn’t filial to the old ones, she persuaded them that caring for the elderly is the duty and virtue of the younger generation. A lot of people went to Cao, she became a confidante (\textit{tiexinren}) . . . Some elderly played Majiang to relax or had nothing to do, now they are laughing, they have something to do . . .”\textsuperscript{795}

The leader of a guidance station was also responsible for overlooking the “quality” (\textit{suzhi}) of other teachers. \textit{Guogong} even took over the Communist fashion of “modeling” and assigned guidance stations as “model stations.”\textsuperscript{796} The community spirit of a guidance station was also illustrated within a report from members of a \textit{Xianggong} guidance station in Luoyang, Henan province. They have described the process of setting up the guidance as one of self-organization, motivated primarily by longing for health improvement and cultivation. However, they have emphasized the heterogeneous profile of participants, and the nevertheless harmonic nature of the practicing.\textsuperscript{797}

Unlike former Qigong styles that were based on the self-organizing efforts of its adherents, \textit{Falungong} showed—even from the ground up—clear signs of more sophisticated organizational features. According to Chen, every practice site or cell group had a volunteer spokesman and organizer to deal with public affairs and who was also assigned to recruit new members.\textsuperscript{798}

\textit{New Trends: Commercialization, Professionalization, and Spin-Offs}

As the Qigong sector’s development proceeded, several examples of commercialization appeared. This was also related to tightened regulations

\textsuperscript{794} “Women zhege Qigong fudaozhan (This our guidance station)”, \textit{ZGQG} 3 (1991), pp. 30-31.
\textsuperscript{795} Wang 1997 (see note 698), p. 9; “Renren neng xuehuo Guogong” (see note 690), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{796} Wang 1997 (see note 698), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{797} “Women zhege Qigong fudaozhan” (see note 799), p. 30.
\textsuperscript{798} Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 173.
and policy. As the party-state began to readjust its administrative system within the Qigong sector, several groups opted for a registration as a business unit to get away from official monitoring.\textsuperscript{799} Already back in 1987, Zhang Zhixiang, head of Yuanjigong, was the first to establish the foundations of an enterprise at large scale. By the mid-nineteen-nineties, he established twelve research facilities and more than sixty schools with some 500 researchers. He acquired circa twenty-seven high-level, state-financed research projects. In 1994, as one of the first Qigong masters, Zhang started to expand his business to the United States, establishing research facilities at several American universities, including Stanford.

Legal problems have also seemed to prompt Zhonggong to implement business-based organization. Since the legal status of Zhonggong as a medical entity was officially revoked in 1988, Zhang Hongbao chose to become a Qigong entrepreneur. The development of the Zhonggong enterprise is unique—probably related to Zhang Hongbao’s management skills and knowledge. Several sources mention that Zhang followed a business-like plan to construct his enterprise, namely five steps. First, he secured support from intellectuals at institutes of higher education in Beijing. Due to his academic background and his talent for communicating with people, they helped him open other doors or supported him by providing research facilities. Second, he started to network with research institutes, successfully establishing a class at the Chinese Academy of Science and obtaining acknowledgement from the world of science. As a third step, the media started to release many articles about Zhang Hongbao, making him known to society at large. Fourth, he could infiltrate legal state organs and align himself with more party cadres. Finally, he started to promote Zhonggong nationwide through a dense network of institutions.\textsuperscript{800}

As Zhang Hongbao successfully managed to establish a solid support base in all relevant sectors, he provided Zhonggong with a new foundation: he enlarged it to the national and international level. Already back in October

\textsuperscript{799} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 248; Yu, Cong Shen Chang “Xinxi cha,” p. 15.7

According to official accounts, Li Hongzhi also set up companies to manage publishing, a concrete name is given as Wuhan Shenshen Association. This might be a valid information as his publications were banned after 1996 and he obviously had to look for alternative channels for printing, see “Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao” (see note 743), pp. 1–11, here p. 6.

\textsuperscript{800} Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356).
1988 Zhang established a Chinese-American Joint Venture Company called “Beijing International Qigong Service Corporation Limited” (Beijing Guoji Qigong fuwu youxian gongse), approved by the Economic Committee of Beijing and The State Administration for Industry and Commerce (Guojia gongshang ju), which provided all kinds of services relevant to Chinese Qigong such as performance, training, and health care. In 1989 Zhang founded the Beijing International Qigong Company, the Chongqing International Life Science University, and the Kylin Culture University. Later on, he set up teaching facilities nationwide, and by October 1990 Zhonggong spread to all regions of China, reaching a membership of eight million followers—in 1992 he claimed to have 5,000 branches, 180,000 backbone staff (gugan duiwu), and thirty million adherents. The main staff received a monthly salary. By 1995, he identified six “market zones” (shichangqu), with each covering five provinces, thirty sales companies at provincial level, more than 300 at prefecture or city level, 2,790 departments at county level and more than 100,000 in towns and villages. Finally, in 1995 he founded the “Kylin Group” as a conglomerate with the intention of placing the companies and stores from all five industries, including almost 10,000 employees under one roof. An article published in 2003 stated that the Zhonggong Kylin Group had employed nearly 10,000 people, having established various branches. An article from the Hong Kong Standard reported that 12,000 employees were thrown out of work, while the total workforce might number 40,000, and that 3,000 branches of Zhonggong’s business imperium were shot down by police action.

804 Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356), pp. 8–9.
805 “Zhang Hongbao yin wu xiang zuiming bei qisu (Zhong Hongbao is Prosecuted Due to Five Different Crimes),” Unknown, 5 (2003), p. 63.
The pillar to the far left most closely reflects Qigong activities in the original sense of the word. Zhonggong maintained schools and fitness institutes (jianshenyuan) at city as well as county levels. These institutes, of which the addresses and telephone numbers were given in magazines, were called research centers or schools for life science (sheng ming kexue) or human body science (renti kexue) as well as martial arts schools. Other sources refer to “main guidance stations” (zong fudao mianshou zhan) offering all four classes of Zhonggong. According to one journal advertisement, one could study Zhonggong at nineteen locations just in one province, Hunan. This points to a really dense network of study localities.⁸⁰⁷

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⁸⁰⁷ “Xuehui Zhonggong, shou yi yi sheng (Learn Zhonggong and You Will Benefit a Lifetime),” Jiankang bi du 2 (1997), p. 32. In other advertisements, the following names and addresses of schools are mentioned: Beijing Fengtai District Communal Wushu School (with a multi-language service); Guangdong Changshou Village Fitness Institute; Life Science Education Center in Dujiangyan City, Sichuan Province [Li would personally teach there]; Martial Arts Qigong Institute in Yuji City, Shaanxi Province [Li would personally teach here]; Kylin Life Science Advanced Studies School, Changsha, Hunan Province [Li would personally teach here]; Life Science Research Center in Beijing [Li would personally teach here]; Beijing International Qigong Service GmbH, Fengtai District, Liuliqiao, nanli xiaojing, jia No. 6; Chongqing International Life Science and Industry University, Qigong Training Department, Chongqing, Jiangbei District, Diancecun No. 309; Qingchengshan Human Body Science Training School, Sichuan, Jianghuan City, Zhongxingzhen
Zhinenggong also expanded its scope considerably during the 1990s. However, unlike Zhonggong it concentrated more on research and education and didn’t evolve into an enterprise. The “Huaxia Zhineng Qigong Center” (Huaxia Zhineng Qigong Zhongxin) was registered as a “non-enterprise unit,” established by Pang in November 1988 in Shijiazhuang, with the group moving to the city of Qinhuandao by the end of 1991. The center functioned as a main office for three different subsectors: research, education, and recovery.

Chart 17: Structure of Zhinenggong


Pang recruited several persons with military or political backgrounds to be vice-directors and also to serve as leaders at the bureau center. Two of the vice-directors were generals, and two more bureau members held posts

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Wuxiangang; Xian Overseas Traditional Life Cultivation Technic Training Center, Xian, Fuxuinan Lu No. 6
China Changdong Huangshan Qigong Travel Treatment Center, Anhui, Zixi County, Xiong Lu; see in particular “Zhang Hongbao Zhonggong ba bu gaoji gongfa yi zhi wu bu gong sucheng ban changnian zhaosheng (Zhang Hongbaos’s High Level Eight Step Qigong Style Zhonggong Enrolls All the Year New Students for Crash Courses in Levels 1 to 5),” ZGQG 5 (1992), p. 24.
within the local party hierarchy. During the nineteen-nineties, some 4,000 students and patients were present at the center every month. Since its establishment, the Zhineng Center has handled approximately 250,000 students with a staff of 300 persons.  

As some groups grew into larger organizations, internal split-offs emerged. Having risen to the position of guidance station head within the Zhonggong group, Shen Chang decided to found his own group called “Shen Chang Somantic Science and Industry” (Shen Chang renti keji). Likewise, Ji Yi, another adherent of Zhonggong, left to spread his “Great Buddha Qigong” (Da fogong) which he later renamed “Way of thorough Healthy Body” (Yitong jianshenfa).

3.2.3.2.3 Internal Discipline

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

The Christian-inspired groups deployed a variety of measures to ensure internal discipline. Motives were threefold. First, due to the rising persecution of the party-state they were forced to develop measures to avoid being discovered by the police and to sidestep the spying activities of the government. Second, the regulations, however, also resembled a moral code of conduct inspired by Christian core values to be enforced within the group. Third, the regulations were intended to ensure loyalty and obedience to the name of God and, often, to the leader of the group respectively.

To strengthen the internal organization, the “Disciples Society” pursued a highly exclusive marriage policy, whereby group members were only permitted to marry among themselves. Non-members were referred to as “people outside the gang.” They also set up special “Truth Groups” or “Small Control Groups” to investigate violations of their highly detailed rules, a practice also common in “Teachings of the Soul.” The respective titles of documents, such as “Temporary Rules for Administration of the Renaissance of All Things,” resemble the language of the Communist

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The “Disciples Society” investigated eleven sorts of offences, including repeated embezzlement of goods given as merciful acts (donations), collaboration between men and women, husband and wife working together long-term, disregard of the Messenger, disobedience, inability to carry out a task for the second time; arrogance, violence, disrespect, bickering, rebelliousness against God over a longer period; elevation of oneself, giving up things, creation of chaos, taking finances from God’s family, eating and dressing luxuriously, inability to endure hardships, not engaging deeply in work tasks and distancing oneself from the group for a longer period. In the same fashion, the “Teachings of the Supreme God” drafted a catalogue of punishment with various punishment levels related to the “crime.”

For the purpose of strengthening internal organization by increasing pressure on core members as well as of increasing efficiency of recruiting, Liu Jiaguo, the head of the “Teachings of Supreme God,” laid out several requirements for his followers, called “Rules of God’s Family.” These included:

1. God stands above all, wanting to know him from the heart and soul, never changing ones heart.
2. No matter where and when, follow the rules, tighten ones actions, be polite towards others.
3. Be attentive and subordinate.
4. No smoking, no drinking, no gambling, no watching TV or reading unhealthy publications.
5. No flirting or dating, males and females must work separately and keep appropriate distance. Men and women can’t enter each others rooms freely. Men and women should study separately. They are not allowed to communicate one-on-one.
6. People doing work [missionizing] should have a high level of thinking. They should not take their family as the center, they shouldn’t often communicate with their family. Try to keep work apart from family, fully concentrate on saving people. Under normal circumstances, people should go out and return on time.

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810 Jiang 2000 (see note 347), pp. 132–33.
7. 20 district cities with 500 people each should be recruited before July 1, 1997.

8. Preserve the circumstances of every church.812

For the “power holders,” a key position related to recruiting, special rules were laid out, such as:

1. Loving heart for being a power holder
2. Be obedient, control the waist with a modest temper
3. Judge oneself with high standard
4. Reach a level of abandoning family and profession
5. Concentrate fully on the task of “saving people”
6. High spirit of being a Master, wisdom, courage, humanity, virtue, and severeness813

“Power holders” are also subject to approval: if 80 percent of the adherents don’t support him or her, he must step down from his post. The group also established special training classes for them.814 The “Church of the Almighty God” laid out similar demands for “district supervisors”:

If the former leader of district is not qualified, then the best from within the leaders of this district can be chosen . . . They can also be selected from the deacons of the church. But they must accept the genuine, handling matters according to principles, and solve problems with truth. Leaders of the Church have high trust from the followers. Three conditions should be fulfilled: first, a quite good personality, handling matters with justice and supportive of fairness, and being kindhearted; second, an ability to accept the genuine truth and be hungry and thirsty for the admiration of justice; third, responsibility for the church, being anxious like God, contemplating God, willing to shoulder work for God’s home without bickering about individual reward, being satisfied with spending for God.815

Some groups, like the “Society of Disciples” or the “South China Church” stipulated additional rulers to ensure the hierarchical order of the group. The “Society of Disciples” clearly stated that lower levels should ask for permission and wait for confirmation before they initiate a larger activity. Likewise,

813 Ibid., pp. 94–95.
814 Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 204.
815 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 95.
they should follow any orders given by higher levels. Financial matters were also subject of surveillance.\footnote{816}

In 1996, the “Three Grades of Servant Group” began the expiation of sins or breaking of rules by flagellation. Depending on the severity of the sins, the “Servants” and the “Missionary Girls” decided on the number of lashes (from 40 up to 100). If a person is unable to endure the lashes, they will be put on hold until the next occasion. Several believers ended up owing several hundred lashes. “When they saw a ‘servant,’ they began to shiver because they were afraid of being whipped. Thus, they lived in terror and anxiety every day.” This might have been a reaction of an attempted leave of several members in 1994 that contacted other preachers and wrote a book.\footnote{817}

**Qigong-Based Groups**

As in the case of the Christian-inspired groups, internal discipline within the Qigong-based groups referred to loyalty to the group and to the master, as well as to being a morally person in the sense of the groups’ values.

FLG is the only known group to have issued a “student card” to their followers, until 1994 at least, fostering a group identity as well as keeping track of their followers.\footnote{818}

FLG followers were subject to five rules laid down in “Preliminary Instructions for Cultivators of FLG” (Falun dafa xiulian zhe xuzhi).\footnote{819} Religious propaganda in the name of FLG is not allowed, and obedience to state law and regulations is strongly urged as followers should bear full responsibility in any case of violation. In addition, safeguarding of the “unity of followers” (xiulianshi de tuanjie) is requested. Without permission from Li Hongzhi or relevant leading followers, adherents were not allowed to treat people or charge money. Finally, Li pressed adherents to not interfere in state policy or engage in any extreme political activities, but instead to concentrate on cultivation. Although no date of issuance is given, the first two aspects suggest that these regulations might have been issued in reac-

\footnote{816}{Ibid., p. 229.}
\footnote{817}{Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 1348), p. 5.}
\footnote{819}{“Falun dafa xiulian zhe xuzhi (Preliminary Instructions for Cultivators of FLG),” http://www.falundafa.org/book/chibg/dymf_4.htm#one (accessed March 18, 2007).}
tion to mounting criticism against FLG after 1996. Judging from a “Notification on Severely Clearing the Spreading of Private Non-Great Dharma Material,” Li Hongzhi had severe internal discipline problems. The “notification” addressed all FLG guidance stations, pointing at several cases of deformation of the Great Dharma as people stipulated their own understanding of the teachings. He also warned leaders not to see themselves as masters, collecting money or longing for personal authority. Furthermore, they were banned from healing other practitioners. Likewise, the FLG Research Society issued several notices to stop the production and acquisition of lucky charms. In 1994, Li issued “Requests to the Guidance Stations of FLG” (Dui Falun Dafa fudaozhan de yaoqiu), which again appealed to the stations’ adherence to the law and to the school’s teachings. For “persons of the guidance stations” (fudaoyuan)—probably heads or workers of the guidance station as specified among the “students of the Great Dharma” (dafa xueyuan)—five criteria were laid out by Li. They were to “love this Qigong style” (re ai ben gongfa), serve voluntarily, and actively organize the practice of the students. Furthermore, Li requested them to be self-disciplined but tolerant towards others (yan yu lüji, kuan yi dai ren), helping others with friendly affection. Accepting money or bribery was forbidden as they should not seek for profit but only for virtue (de).

For discipline enforcement, Zhang Hongbao, head of Zhonggong, set up a “discipline inspection team” (jichaxunchatuan) with the intention of “clearing” any kind of disobedience or violation of law. Twice a pupil had to be

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821 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 243 and 256. Li experienced a break away of his pupils. Song Bingchen, one of his early pupils, parted with Li after Song, who had provided his office car for Li’s transportation, was punished by his employer following accident-induced car damage. Li did not pay any compensation and even stipulated that Song should be lucky that he, Li, had saved them from a far worse accident. So Song decided to quiet FLG and even started to denounce Li at party state organs. Li Changfeng, another pupil, was expelled by Li as he returning after having treated a person in the outskirts of Beijing and not delivering any financial revenue to Li; see Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 265–66. Two other cases—later mentioned by the official and FLG sources alike—are those of Li Jingchao and Liu Fengcai; see Tong 2002 (see note 791), p. 660.
expelled as he tried to establish his own Qigong school.\textsuperscript{824} In a report on Zhonggong, He Zuoxiu and Guo Zhengyi cited a stipulation from 1992 on “Regulations concerning the investigation of discipline violation for transmission of [Zhong]gong ” (\textit{Guanyu xuncha weijiji chuan gong xingwei de guiding}). Pupils of Zhonggong deprecating the master by denouncing his skills and praising their own are to be expelled from the group.\textsuperscript{825} The case of a local station leader who proclaimed himself to be Zhang’s successor and Manitoba Buddha—and was therefore expelled from the group—was published in a circular and made known to all Zhonggong stations.\textsuperscript{826} Zhonggong was also said to have “Protected the Dharma” (\textit{hufadui}) which was known internally as “Bodyguards” and to outsiders as “Fighters Group.” In the book “Kylin Culture” a chapter entitled “War Song of Protecting Dharma” describes this group as “... not afraid of any risk, like a sharp sword, all flee from them, they can overcome everything, they become a quick–reaction team to correct and assist to righteousness.”\textsuperscript{827} Likewise, Xianggong also introduced the expulsion of followers as a disciplinary measure, which also points to a registration procedure for Xianggong followers.\textsuperscript{828}

3.2.3.2.4 Finance

In the second phase, this aspect is of particular importance due to two points. On the one hand, although spiritual-religious groups might be able to mobilize considerable resources just through spiritual energy or rewards, they still need to finance publications, rents, travel fees, and other activities as they started to expand their structure. On the other hand, sources and transparency of finance are particular sensitive because the Chinese officials very often denounce and legally punish group leaders on grounds of financial fraud.

\textsuperscript{824} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 228.
\textsuperscript{825} Zuoxiu He and Zhengyi Guo, “Guanyu ‘Zhonggong’ huodong qingkuang de fanying cailiao (Material on Reflection on the Situation of ‘Zhonggong’ activities),” in He 1999 (see note 619), p. 88.
\textsuperscript{826} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 215.
\textsuperscript{827} Wang 1998 (see note 488), pp. 154–55.
\textsuperscript{828} “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Question 58.
CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

From the sources available, not much information on the financial situation of the Christian-inspired groups can be obtained. Chinese accounts give some information in the context of the exposure of financial fraud. Donations by followers continued to be one important source of income. As related to the proclaimed doomsday in the teachings of several groups, donating was conceptualized as an investment in the future. “Give one Yuan now, and you will get back 1,000 Yuan later,” was one of the slogans connected with the “Teachings of the Supreme God.”

Upon the arrest of its head, Liu Jiaguo, in 1998, the group collected 300,000 Yuan in cash, 700,000 Yuan in goods value, and 20,000 kilos of grain at their headquarters in Hunan. The group did accounting on each of donation made by followers, with individual contributions ranging from 20 to 200 Yuan. The “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China” requested an “entrance fee” from every follower, 100 Yuan and 100 kilos of grain. Their head, Wang Yongming, scared people by saying: “This money will be used to build the heavenly kingdom, to overcome great calamities. If you don’t donate, then the money will be taken away by others. When the heavenly kingdom comes, it will turn to ashes, the life of the family can’t be saved.” Collected donations from a couple of meetings might reach several hundred thousand Yuan.

Some groups also resorted to business activities. The “Three Grades of Servants Group” was said to have started setting up enterprises throughout the 1990s. Followers, who were hardworking and lived modestly, contributed in a Weber Ian fashion to the great wealth accumulation of the group.

The groups used their raised money in several ways. Reports related to the use of money for individual pleasures of the leader are common. The

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829 As financial fraud has been one of the most frequent crimes of which the groups have been accused, information in Chinese sources after 1999 should be handled with care. However, Wu states at the beginning of his chapter on finance in a footnote: “At present, most mainland scholars and government officials describe the financial matters of the heretical groups from the viewpoint of destruction. This book places extra emphasis on describing financial matters of heretical groups from an inside functional perspective, to analyze their sources of finance and their use.” See Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 253.
831 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 257.
832 Deng 2006 (see note 404), p. 3.
“Teachings of Supreme God” were widely connected with financial fraud.\textsuperscript{833}

The “Administrative Deacon of Station of Mainland China” invested large amounts into printing machines. The “Disciples Society” used donations to support followers with financial difficulties. They laid out detailed guidelines for charity support:

1. From February to April the focus of support is to be on solving food problems
2. In summer the focus is to be on support for seasonal changes
3. In winter, the focus of support is to be on clothing.

Followers of the “Society” visited households with difficulties on a regular basis, maybe once a month.\textsuperscript{834}

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

The commodification of Qigong accelerated during the second phase. Not only books but also video tapes and various objects containing “messages” from the Qigong masters could be purchased during the study lectures. Prices of books on Qigong were about 10 to 25 Yuan, equaling a day’s wage for the average factory worker at that time.\textsuperscript{835} The founder of Dazangong, Yuqi, sold so-called “treasure bottles” (baoping), a Buddhist method originating from Guanyin. “Dharma power” (fail) is infused into the bottle, and the bottle can be used for healing. Signed fans of Yuqi, which made adherents feel a great wind or flagrance, became another precious object for many followers.\textsuperscript{836} The party-state claims that FLG had by December 1999 generated some 135 million in sales and 42.5 million in profits by selling books, voice tapes, VCDs and video tapes, as well as batches and small photos of Li Hongzhi. FLG sources don’t deny the selling of products but argue that the lion’s share of the income went to distributors, organizers, and publishing companies.\textsuperscript{837}

\textsuperscript{833} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 269.
\textsuperscript{834} Ibid., p. 268.
\textsuperscript{835} Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 60. For example, Yi Ji, *Da Qigongshi chushan: Zhang Hongbao he tade gongfa mizong* (The Qigong Grandmaster Comes Out of the Mountain: Zhang Hongbao and the Esoteric Secrets of His Qigong Method) (Beijing: Hualing chbanshe, 1999); Jiangsusheng peixian Xianggong fudaozhan 1993 (see note 760).
\textsuperscript{836} Li 1994 (see note 681), p. 7.
\textsuperscript{837} Tong 2002 (see note 791), p. 653.
Study sessions or lectures continued to be a viable source of income. For the first public lecture of Li Hongzhi, tickets were sold at the price of 30 Yuan a piece.\textsuperscript{838} Study sessions were also an important revenue source for Xianggong, although their financial resources remain somehow obscure according to the sources available. Its leader Tian mentioned that his performance in the Capital Sports Hall was sold out and that some 3,000 people could not obtain tickets.\textsuperscript{839} At another performance in Beijing on April 1 and 2, 1995, organized by the Women’s Association, tickets were sold for 100 Yuan and above, with Tian taking forty percent of the ticket price and not even paying any taxes.\textsuperscript{840} Study courses became a new channel of income during the second phase.

\textsuperscript{838} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 264.
\textsuperscript{839} “Tian Ruisheng dashi” (see note 443).
\textsuperscript{840} Zhengyi Guo, “‘Xianggong’ toumu Tian Ruisheng si le, qi zi xing pian bei kuan (The Head of ‘Xianggong.’ Tian Ruisheng is Dead, His Daughter Cheated and Got Punished),” Unknown 5 (2003), p. 63.
Table 5: Selected Course Fees of Various Qigong Styles from Advertisements in Qigong Magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhonggong\textsuperscript{841}</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>38 Yuan (93 USD)</td>
<td>68 Yuan (188 USD)</td>
<td>80 Yuan (188 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence Course: 66 Yuan (88 USD)</td>
<td>Correspondence Course: 108 Yuan (138 USD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiangong\textsuperscript{842}</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>55 Yuan (all inclusive)</td>
<td>80 Yuan (all inclusive)</td>
<td>108 Yuan (138 USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55 USD for overseas students</td>
<td>80 USD for overseas students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence Course: 40 Yuan (22h), overseas price six times higher</td>
<td>Correspondence: 60 Yuan (18h)</td>
<td>Correspondence: 120 Yuan (18h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhongguo Hongling Qigong\textsuperscript{843}</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>28 Yuan (plus accommodation and food)</td>
<td>68 Yuan</td>
<td>88 Yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence: 40 Yuan (22h), overseas price six times higher</td>
<td>Correspondence: 60 Yuan (18h)</td>
<td>Correspondence: 120 Yuan (18h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yinyanggong\textsuperscript{844}</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>55 Yuan (12 to 15 days), accommodation and food not included</td>
<td>80 Yuan</td>
<td>125 Yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falungong\textsuperscript{845}</td>
<td>1992–1994</td>
<td>45–50 Yuan (per session) “Certificate Stating Extraordinary Skills”: 30 Yuan Card with Falungong Logo: 3 Yuan “Graduation Certificates”: 3 Yuan Fee for Healing Session: 10 Yuan</td>
<td>280 Yuan (7 days)</td>
<td>Training for guides (200 Yuan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994\textsuperscript{846}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dazanggong\textsuperscript{847}</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>120 Yuan (2 days)</td>
<td>280 Yuan (7 days)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sansanjiuchengyuangong\textsuperscript{848}</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>300 Yuan (500 USD) Correspondence course: 80 Yuan (150 USD)</td>
<td>350 Yuan Correspondence course: 120</td>
<td>350 Yuan Correspondence course: 150 Yuan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Official accounts accuse Li Hongzhi of having gained some 3 million Yuan from fifty-six study courses between 1992 and 1994.\textsuperscript{849} Based on the course fees mentioned above, some 500 people must have been taken part in every

\textsuperscript{841} ‘Zhang Hongbao Zhonggong ba bu’ (see note 813), p. 24.
\textsuperscript{843} ‘Zhou Hao Zhongguo linggong gaoji gongfa changnian zhaosheng (Zhao Hao’s High Level Linggong Style enrols Students All Year),’ ZGQG 3 (1993), p. 45.
\textsuperscript{844} ‘Beidaihe juban Zhongguo yinyanggong’ (see note 724), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{845} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 265.
\textsuperscript{846} ‘Zhongguo Falungong xueixiban zhaosheng (Study Class of FLG Enrolls Students),’ ZGQG 10 (1994), p. 48.
\textsuperscript{847} ‘Yuqi zhuchi Die r jie quanguo zhongji ban (Yuqi Holds the Second National Middle Level Class),’ ZGQG 3 (1995), p. 47.
\textsuperscript{848} ‘Sansan jiuchengyuangong (Sansanjiuchengyuangong),’ ZGQG 7 (1999), p. 2.
\textsuperscript{849} ‘Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao’ (see note 743), p. 6.
course. FLG did not dispute that it charged 40 Yuan per training session. They reject, however, the officials’ claims on three grounds: first, the party-state didn’t take into consideration that repeated participants only paid half price. Second, as the China Qigong Research Society served as the official organizing body, FLG had to pay them a fixed sum or percentage of their income. Moreover, FLG also had to meet expenses for material, travel, accommodations, and teachers.\textsuperscript{850} Obviously, FLG fees were less pricy than other Qigong groups’ charges. FLG’s income from the two books legally printed before the publication ban in 1996, entitled \textit{Falungong} and \textit{Zhongguo Falungong}, added up to 860,000 Yuan. The first book, \textit{Falungong}, was printed at the cost of 0.4 Yuan and sold at a price of 3 Yuan. The printing cost of the second one, \textit{Zhongguo Falungong}, was 2.4 Yuan per book, and they were sold for 6.6 Yuan each.\textsuperscript{851} Aiming to concentrate all financial resources in one hand, all revenues from book sales, tapes, and workshops were to be turned directly over to the central FLG research Society. Li didn’t allow general training stations or any other organizations to take any money.\textsuperscript{852}

According to an advertisement in his magazine \textit{Qilin Culture}, study fees for \textit{Zhonggong} varied depending on the course level as well as on the economic level of the region. Prices were given as follows:

\textbf{Level 1 (Yibu gong):}

For average regions within \textit{Zhonggong} enterprise institutions: 58 Yuan; for “Instruction stations” (\textit{fudaozhan}) and poor regions the price can be floated between 18–48 Yuan after approval; Guangdong, Fujian: 58–68 Yuan; Shenzhen and Zhuhai: minimum charge 68 Yuan.

\textbf{Level 2 (Erbu gong):}

For average regions within \textit{Zhonggong} enterprise institutions: 98 Yuan; for “Instruction stations” and poor regions the price can be floated between 68–88 Yuan after approval; Guangdong, Fujian: 98–118 Yuan; Shenzhen, Zhuhai: minimum charge 118 Yuan. Foreigners should be charged ten times the price of the average regions.

\textsuperscript{851} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 260.
\textsuperscript{852} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 244.
Correspondence teaching course: Level 1: 18 Yuan, Tape and Material: 38 Yuan; Level 2: 38 Yuan, Tape and Material: 70 Yuan.\textsuperscript{853} Crash courses for Level 2 and 3 were given at 160 Yuan for six and five days respectively, accommodation and food not included.\textsuperscript{854} Wu Qiu Zhi, a woman living close to Zhang’s Institute in Sichuan said that at the International Life Science Institute patients had to pay 100 Yuan for twice-daily Qigong treatments plus additional expenses for medicine and other treatments. A former employee at a hospital in Chengdu, who took part in a Zhang Hongbao promotion session at the beginning of the nineteen-nineties, remembered that a can of “life-caring” tea cost 30 to 40 Yuan, and a bottle of Coca-Cola or Soda “full of Qi” around 20 Yuan. According to Guo Zhengyi, a researcher on “Pseudo Science,” Zhang later started spreading the notion that one has to pay for Qigong, that free Qigong is false Qigong. Just to let Zhang touch the head cost his students 400 Yuan each.\textsuperscript{855} All later articles claim that Zhang had acquired wealth through unfair means “in his later time.” Just for laying on hands Zhang charged 400 Yuan. He also encouraged his followers to donate. For a donation of 5,000 Yuan, one could take a picture with him, but to share a meal with him, one needs to donate 10,000 Yuan. For personal treatments followers must even pay more.\textsuperscript{856} To finance his construction projects, he issued an advertisement for individual or institutional sponsors. In both categories, different financial levels of sponsoring were offered.\textsuperscript{857} Like Zhonggong, Guogong’s fees for study classes are openly stated in the advertisements and range from 30 to 186 Yuan depending on the level, with beginner classes running cheaper than the advanced courses. Prices given for publications are around 15 Yuan, equaling an average to slightly expensively priced book at the end of the nineties. The central school in Mianyang has also offered special classes for recovering from illnesses, and fees are charged “according to the severity of the disease.”\textsuperscript{858}

In addition, Liu Jineng offers further services pointing to a more business-like strategy of financial mobilization. First, he offers naming ceremonies,

\textsuperscript{853} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), pp. 224–25.
\textsuperscript{854} “Zhang Hongbao Zhonggong” (see note 860).
\textsuperscript{855} Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356), p. 10.
\textsuperscript{856} “Zhang Hongbao yin wu xiang zuiming qisu (Zhang Hongbao is Prosecuted Because of Five Crimes),” Not Known 5 (2003), p. 63.
\textsuperscript{857} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 225.
\textsuperscript{858} “Renren neng xuehui guogong” (see note 690), p. 4.
or the changing of names for individuals at a fee of 200 Yuan. Prizes for companies, work units, or groups are subject to negotiation. Secondly, the central school of Guogong also offers an issuance of state-approved working/employing licenses as a Qigong Doctor (Qigong yi shi shanggang zheng).\(^859\) As Liu frequently contributes articles to journals, he might also be paid royalties for his publications. Generous donations by individuals have provided the groups with additional income. Just from three followers alone, FLG has taken in over 2 million Yuan.\(^860\)

As with Christian-inspired groups, Qigong-based groups are also linked to charitable activities.

One follower wrote that Liu, head of Guogong, donated some 2,000 Yuan to help a primary school in Hebei and paid the travel fees for a seventy-six-year-old man from Xinjiang who came to Mianyang in the hope of being cured.\(^861\) According to one article, Xianggong donated a significant sum of money to help support social welfare organizations like school and hospitals. In 1992 Liu was in Xian and donated around 20,000–50,000 Yuan; on April 30, 1993 he also donated his entire income, some 30,000 Yuan. During a study session in Lanzhou, Tian declared that the Xianggong Research Society in Henan would furnish 15,000 Yuan as a prize to anyone refuting his claims of fifteen people having been healed from smallpox.\(^862\)

In the official biography of Li Hongzhi, his unselfish attitude towards finance is mentioned:

Wherever he holds the session, Mr. Li insists upon the lowest charge . . . The impartment session of Falun Dada has always charged such low fees that there had to be a repeated consultation with the authorities concerned. It won’t do to charge no fee at all. Money is needed to rent the lecture hall and pay the service charge to the organizations. What is left of the money is all spent in the construction project of Falun Dafa. Mr. Li often says, “Since we offer salvation to all sentient beings, we should not add to the burden of the learners.” Falun

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\(^{859}\) Ibid.

\(^{860}\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 261.

\(^{861}\) Dian 1999 (see note 689), p. 23.

\(^{862}\) “Tian Rusheng dashi” (see note 443).
Dafa is not short of ways to make money. He [Mr Li] reiterated his aim: serve the people.863

3.2.3.3 Ideational Resources

3.2.3.3.1 Naming, Myths, and Symbols

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Continuing from the first phase, names of the groups still point to their Christian background. As a new resource, several groups conceptualized a holy or mystic founding place. The leader of the “Way of Resurrection” describes the special meaning of his founding place, Fangcheng, a city in Henan province, as follows: “According to the Bible, Jerusalem is situated in the West of the river [He, Jordan]. Fangcheng [base of the group] is situated in the Western part of Henan [He = river]. Jerusalem is said to be a square [Fangzhen] city [cheng], so Fangcheng must be Jerusalem.”864 The “Teachings of the Supreme God” claimed Nanjing to be “the city chosen by the Holy Spirit where he will ascend the Jade throne.” Jiangsu province was therefore named the “Emperor’s Palace of the Rising Sun in the East.”865

According to secondary sources, the “Church of the Almighty God” referred to Kaifeng, a city in Henan Province, as “the place of the second incarnation of God”: because she should “rise in the East,” meaning coming from China, and since Kaifeng was named “Eastern capital ‘Bianliang’”866 (Dongjing bianliang) during the Song Dynasty, the reasoning being that the “Eastern Capital in the East” is the city where God has been reborn.867

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

After 1990, Zhonggong founder Zhang Hongbao started to use two new terms concerning his ideational framework in an attempt to systemize the theoretical foundations of his teachings.


865 Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 212.
866 The name is also the name for the local beer brand (Bianjing Beer).
(shengming kexue bao) launched by Zhang, the editorial stated that “. . . Zhang changed from a Qigong master to a Life Scientist . . . He has acquired the golden key of Life Science and the miracle of Qigong and extraordinary abilities and guides Chinese Qigong Science to the heights of Life Science.”

Another phrase, “Kylin Culture” (Qilin wenhua), became the brand for the whole theoretical concept of Zhonggong. Zhang linked the theory of the five elements with official philosophy and modern science to express the so-called Kylin philosophy from which the Kylin culture evolved. Kylin culture is a synthesis of six major cultures in the world, namely Communism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, and Islam. “The Great Harmony (datong) is embedded in Kylin Culture.” Therefore, Zhang also created a new symbol called “Supreme Whirl” (xuanji), a modification of the Chinese symbol Taiji (Supreme Ultimate). It relates to the origin, function, and development of all creatures and could be described as two lying eagle heads.

Interestingly, Zhonggong also took up the concept of a mystical founding place but with a strong political undertone. The origin place of its Kylin Culture was called “purple light council-chamber” (ziguangge), referencing a chamber of the same name inside of Zhongnanhai, a Chinese governmental building complex. In the “purple light council-chamber” the Prime Minister and the President receive foreign guests.

As in the first phase, the appearance of “message material” (xinxiwu)—often in form of light curves with different colors—was propagated by the Qigong groups. Not everyone is supposed to see them, but they can be photographed. Some pictures were placed online, in book, or in Qigong magazines.

Only FLG possessed a central symbol, the Falun, or Dharma (Buddhist law) Wheel.

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869 Ibid., p. 229.
870 Ibid., p. 229.
871 For example, see Zhongguo qigong yu kexue 1 (1999), p. 2; Jiangsusheng peixian Xianggong fudaohan 1993 (see note 760).
872 In Buddhism, the dharmacakra or falun refers to the Buddhist truth itself, which is set in motion when Buddha gave his first lecture after his enlightenment. This Dharma Wheel originated in India. One mystic history concerning this wheel was a warrior king who’s carriage had golden wheels by which he managed to smash the enemies and to unite the country. The Wheel of Dharma has three meanings: first, the overrunning of all
Li’s explanation of an implementation of the Falun into the adherent’s body to aid in his or her cultivation path can be also found in relation to his first teacher, Zhang Dongwei, who used a “block of eight triagrams” (bagua pan) in the same way.\textsuperscript{873}

According to Li’s explanations, the Falun is a contracted picture of the universe, which moves automatically like the universe, the earth, and the sun. The wheel catches the power of the universe and cultivates people even when they don’t actively practice.\textsuperscript{874}

The Falun is an intelligent, rotating body of substance and pure energy. The Falun I placed in the underbelly of followers rotates steadily 24 hours a day.

The one who really cultivates himself, reads my books, watches my video tapes on the explanation of the Dharma, listens to my tapes on the explanation of the Dharma, or cultivates himself practicing with other followers, can receive a Falun.\textsuperscript{875}

3.2.3.3.2 Teachings

Healing

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Although the quest for healing remained one dominant motive for followers, the Christian-inspired groups in the second phase didn’t put healing, at least in a physical sense, at the core of their teachings. On the contrary, sources mentioned—in relation to the “Society of Disciples”—several cases of ill people who died due to rejected or belated medical treatment. This is also described as a trigger for doubts by the followers.\textsuperscript{876}

The “Church of the Almighty God” hasn’t denied the healing power of Jesus. However, as they preach that God has become flesh for the second time and a new era has started: “Don’t dream of seeing him healing people and fortifications and being all-conquering, including sins of mankind and ignorance of the people. Second, having an everlasting validity and effect; and third, being perfect. Five Buddhist pupils in India used the term “initial turning of wheel” (chu zhuan falun); see Penny 2003 (see note 385), p. 42.\textsuperscript{873} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 262.\textsuperscript{874} Huiguang Zhu, ed., “Yanboshi li zhuan ‘falun’ (Turning the Falun Inside the Broadcasting Room),” ZGQG 5 (1994), pp. 2–7, p. 3.\textsuperscript{875} Hongzhi Li, Zhuan Falun (Turning of the Dharma Wheel) (New York: The University Publishing Company, 2000), p. 5.\textsuperscript{876} Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 185; “Yaoyan huozhong canhai yiji (Demonical Words Confuse the Masses and Agoning the Unfamiliar),” in “Henan Nongcunbao (Henan Village Daily),” Tianfeng 5 (2000), p. 24; Wang 2000 (see note 409), p. 171.
driving out demons once again. Don’t always want to see miracles. It is no use! Those miracles cannot make people perfect! To put it more clearly, today the real God who was incarnated in the flesh, she only proclaims the word and does not do things.”\(^{877}\) However, the Church also provides testimonies of followers who came to believe in the Almighty God due to healing experiences.\(^{878}\)

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Similar to the Christian-inspired networks in the first phase, the Qigong-based ones closely connect the state of the body to the state of the mind. As one *Guogong* follower cited, the explanation of a teacher at the central school in Sichuan:

If somebody did a bad thing, his heart will maybe be nervous, he will be on tenterhook. This will make his nerves feel tense, the burden on his heart will get heavier, energy of the stomach will sink, the heart frequency will get abnormal, immunity ability will go down, and he will get different sorts of diseases . . .”\(^{879}\)

Zhang Hongbao integrated the questions on the relationship between moral and illness into his “Principle of Cause and Effect” as one of eight assumptions which compose his very comprehensive “Kylin philosophy.” Like the “Disciples Society,” Zhang also put illness within a larger social context. Interestingly, the last lines of the following quote could have been also taken from the Old Testament.

Mao Zedong said: “In this world there is no love without a reason and also no hate without a reason.” . . . For example: keeping practicing Qigong hard is the reason, a healthy body is the effect, doing good things for society is the cause, growing in ones gong abilities and getting wise is the result.\(^{880}\)

FLG’s understanding of human health and healing is also closely linked to the order of the universe. The human body is understood as a small cosmos


\(^{879}\) Ren 1996 (see note 758), p. 11.

with the need to seek harmony with the outer great cosmos. As the good nature of the universe is incorporated in the three words mentioned earlier—“truthfulness,” “benevolence,” and “forbearance”—humans should also cultivate themselves based on these principles. During a radio show, Li explained that “forbearance” is the most difficult one.\footnote{Zhu 1994 (see note 880), p. 4.}

The philosophical cause of illness as an expression of evil is the estrangement of human with the Gods and religion (see subchapter on moral teachings). On a more concrete level, illness is caused by “living beings with intelligence who exist in another sphere” who possess the body of human beings. The healing offered through FLG is directed at those living beings and also protect followers against lower evil spirits.\footnote{Li Hongzhi 2000 (see note 881), pp. 70ff.; Hongzhi Li, “5. Qigong Treatments and Hospital Treatments, Chapter I”, in Hongzhi Li, Falungong, 4\textsuperscript{th} Translation Edition, April 2001, http://falundafa.org/book/eng/flg_2001.htm (accessed November 20, 2007).}

Some Qigong styles, like 	extit{Dazanggong}, exclusively focus on healing and extraordinary abilities. Therefore, 	extit{Dazangong} concentrates its ideational resources at developing a theory on the human body. According to 	extit{Dazanggong}, many potentials of the human body remain unused, and by practicing its style many wonders of the human body and nature can be discovered. The human body is comprised of three parts: the electronic field of Yang, with the wisdom and spiritual capacities of mankind; the electronic field of Yin, the soul; and thirdly the neutral electronic field, the body which serves as an intermediate sphere of the former two. Through practicing 	extit{Dazanggong}, one could absorb the spiritual power (\textit{lingli}) of the universe and improve ones own abilities. Illness is interpreted as a disturbance of the organic fields that can be restored with the help of the spiritual power of the universe.

To underpin the healing effect of 	extit{Dazanggong}, many stories of healing were published.\footnote{Li 1994 (see note 681), pp. 6–7.}

During the second phase, the Qigong movement still had to cope with the loomed discussion of Qigong deviation. Different opinions were voiced. Although Tian and Luo emphasize the convenience of 	extit{Xianggong}, making comparisons to other groups, they also make the largest effort to cover its teachings against potential critics and attacks by portraying limits and obsta-

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\textsuperscript{881} Zhu 1994 (see note 880), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{883} Li 1994 (see note 681), pp. 6–7.
icles for exercising, such as limits due to states of body or mind: exercising is not permitted to those intoxicated, previously bitten by a dog or a snake, or believing in ghosts. Furthermore, thieves, drug dealers, gamblers, and sellers of fake goods and medicine are forbidden from practicing. But still, as a way out for the latter type of people, Xianggong can even help to heal them if they want change. Optimistic and cheerful people also reach a much better result by practicing Xianggong.

Limitations or obstacles are also mentioned to explain why some people can’t see, hear, or feel effects of Xianggong. While talking of the ability to see hidden things, Tian put it very generally: “... age, figure, blood type, character, level of education, profession, situation of family and work, all matter.” Concerning side effects (so-called “chu pian”), a topic of heated debates in the nineteen-nineties, Tian used an unusual sharp tone: “If there are any side effects, you can’t blame Xianggong, blame yourself...” And likewise: “Friends of Xianggong, you need to bring a bit of the power of understanding, and if not, you won’t understand my words and the effect will be bad.”

Guogong shows most confidence in its healing abilities: “[The high energy of the pure qi within the alchemy] is stronger than some modern antibiotics, some diseases can’t be cured with present-day medicine, we have a way to cure it,” is Liu noted in one article. 884

Remarkably, Liu Jineng doesn’t speak of any limits, but he is cited as having stated that if humans live up to the moral principles inherent in nature they don’t have to practice. 885

“If the energy lanes (qilu) of a human body are not okay, then he will become ill, for they carry “ill energy” (bing qi). To treat somebody one just must repulse the ill qi, and supply some real/regular qi ... then the human body will recover automatically,” writes Liu Jineng in his book Qigong Medical Studies (Qiyixue). 886

884 Rui 1998 (see note 890), p. 16.
885 Ibid., p. 16.
886 Ibid., p. 15.
Li Hongzhi warned his pupils to not try to heal other people as this might destroy the Great Dharma.\textsuperscript{887} As opposed to other Qigong-based groups, FLG goes beyond the dimension of healing and offers a path to eternal life. Due to cultivation, all cell molecules will be filled with high energy. The atomic configuration doesn’t change, but the energy within them. “Metabolism will no longer occur. A person thus transcends the five elements, having turned his or her body into one composed of substances from other dimensions. This person will be young forever, as he or she is no longer restrained by our space-time.”\textsuperscript{888}

\textit{Cosmology and Morality}

\textbf{Christian-Inspired Groups}

Compared to the first phase, the groups’ presentation of a doomed world due to human misbehavior (the groups rarely frame it in the Christian category of “sin”) and to a juxtaposed path to salvation and a new life became more sophisticated.

Representative for others, the “Teaching of the Lord God” painted a clear picture of the depraved state of contemporary society:

\begin{quote}
This world is too bad and too vicious. Today’s society is shrouded by layers of thick black fog. See: doing favors and bootlicking, profiting at the expense of others, often always seeking loopholes, pretending to be polite in front of others but wanting to deceive them, what a tragedy is this! Virtues have retreated, killing is everywhere, violence and swindling, justice is far away from us, righteousness doesn’t come to us, how many people hope for the light, but it is dark, how many people are still healthy, seems like half of the people died, how many people cry out in sorrow?\textsuperscript{889}
\end{quote}

The groups have linked this view of a failing world with eschatological scenarios. Like all over the world, the approaching of the new millennium served as the perfect date of reckoning. The stipulation of the “Society of Disciples” is cited as representative for many groups:

\textsuperscript{889} Cited after Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 39.
In the year 2000, all kinds of calamities will befall the world, the world will be eliminated. Those who believe in God will enter paradise, those who don’t will go to hell. At the great calamity of the year 2000, states will attack states, people will hit people. Believers can escape the catastrophe, sulfur will come down from heaven, the earth will explode, it is no use to raise farm crops.\(^{890}\)

The “Church of the Almighty God” has developed the most complex system of teachings. Not accidentally are they the only group conceptualizing the decay and end of the world as a battle between good and evil. The “evil” is symbolized as the “red dragon.” Parallels to the Revelation chapter in the Bible are compelling: John presents a vision of the future world and the final battle in which the red dragon, symbolizing the devil, is finally defeated by the angels. In their writings the “Church” explains:

> It could be said that all the suffering we receive because we believe in God comes from the great red dragon . . . All the tribulation we have received and will receive has been caused by the great red dragon; the great red dragon is the source of all disaster, the root of all sin . . . Therefore we hate the great red dragon even more, abhor it, stand on God’s side and curse the great red dragon . . . We mustn’t forget that God hates the great red dragon, and that we must hate the nature of the great red dragon that is in us, and all things that belong to the great red dragon.\(^{891}\)

Against these eschatological concepts, the “Church,” as other groups, has unfolded their vision of a future life, often connected with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The “Society of Disciples” painted a utopian picture of life, juxtaposing it to the reality numerous followers face. In this “new era of God”—a time of eternal sources of wealth and food—“. . . what is asked for will be received, what is sought will be found.” In a “world of equals,” poverty, injustice, and

\(^{890}\) Cited after Jiang 2000 (see note 347), p. 137. The only known group who proclaimed the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world in the first phase was the “Three Grades of Servants Group.” Xu predicted that Jesus would return to the earth and eliminate disbelievers in 1989. However, after this did not happen, Xu explained that even God misjudged how long Abraham’s descendants would stay in Egypt. He then set a second date for the Second Coming (1993), but no third one after. This might suggest that false millenarian prophesies might not always have a destructive influence on the group as long as it not the key concept their teachings is based on. Kahn 2004 (see note 755).

\(^{891}\) “100 Shenme jiao hen e da honglong (No. 100 What is ‘Hating the Great Red Dragon?’),” http://voicefromthethrone.org/truth_and_com/truth_and_com190.php (accessed September 12, 2004).
falsehood would no longer exist. The overall vision presented by the “Almighty God” is a reunion of believers with God in a new “era of nation” through the second coming of Christ.

To reveal my glory to the people of the future world, to reveal my whole work to the people of the future world, to reveal my glory face to the people who have waited for me for so many years . . . Let the people all come on front of my jade throne, let them see my face, let them hear my voice, let them see my work, this is my wholehearted will. This will be the climax of my plan and the aim of my working. Let ten thousand states worship God, let ten thousand mouths acknowledge him, let ten thousand people trust, let ten thousand people return to obedience . . .

The second coming of Jesus might take considerably different forms than God’s first incarnation in flesh. The “Teachings of the Supreme God” have asked “Will Jesus, when he comes for the second time, still be named ‘Jesus’? First of all, he must cover himself up, until he can revel himself . . . That is why he will not be called ‘Jesus’ . . . His name will be ‘Supreme God,’ the Almighty.” The Church of the Almighty God stipulated the second coming of Jesus as a woman, the “female Christi” (nü jidu), also called “Almighty God” (quannengshen). Only an incarnation of God as a

892 Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 221.
893 Hua zai rou nei xianxian (The Words Appear in Flesh), Neibu shiyong (Internal Use), 1548 pages, p. 128, pp. 192–93.
894 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 50.
895 To prove their basic assumption of the second coming of Jesus, the “Church of the Almighty God” refers to several parts of the bible:
“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1 John 4: 2) [Group’s proof for the second incarnation of Jesus].
“The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it” (Matthew 12: 42) [Group’s proof for a female Jesus].
“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27) [Group’s proof for a female incarnation of Jesus].
“The Lord will create a new thing—a woman will surround [protect] a man” (Jeremiah 31: 21) [Group’s proof for a female incarnation of Jesus].
“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:27) [“East” is interpreted as “China” by the group].
“Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service . . .” (Isaiah 41:2) [see above], see Amity News Service (ANS), Millennial Movements Gain Momentum in China, http://is7.pacific.net.hk/~amityhk/Articles/ans99/ans99.1099_10_1.htm (accessed January 26, 2001); Jiang 1999 (see note 328), pp. 25–26; Anhui jiatinghuizonggong (Member of Anhui House Church), “Dongfangshandian (san). Jielu pizhe jidujiao waiyi de dongfangshandian (Dongfangshandian (3). Dismantling the Christian mask of Eastern Lightning),” in Tianen Zhao et al., eds., Zhenli yiduan zhenweibian – tuishi dalu jiaohui yiduan wenti (Discussion on Truth and False of Heresy – Understanding the Problem of
woman would prove the fact that God is the Lord of humankind, and not only of men.  

Supposing, when God became flesh, he only came as a male, wouldn’t people decide that God was a man and that he was a man’s God? They would never think that he was a woman’s God too. Then men would think of God as having male gender and as being the head of man. What about woman? This wouldn’t be fair. Wouldn’t it be biased? In this way, all those that God saves would be men like he is, and no woman would be saved? When God created mankind, he created Adam and Eve. He didn’t only create Adam, but created Adam and Eve according to his image. God isn’t only the Lord of men. He is also the God of women.

Related to the concept of a future kingdom and the second arrival of God, several groups have laid a distinctive chronology, which entails a three-phase division, as a timetable to salvation. The “Teachings of the Supreme God” define the period as the appearance of the spirit or the “transmigration of souls” (lunhui), which would rule mankind for 6,000 years and be divided into three phases of 2,000 years each: from Adam to Noah, from Noah to the birth of Jesus Christ, and from Jesus to the “Appearing of the Supreme God” (1996). The year 1997 was set to be the year 2001 of the “Supreme God” period, and the end of the world (undoubtedly postponed afterwards) was supposed to occur in 1999. According to the tenets of the “Supreme God,” the “Heavenly realm” had already existed, but remains invisible until its “revelation.”

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898 Li 2000 (see note 344), pp. 208ff. This doesn’t only resemble Christian concepts. Several folk religious groups conceptualized various cycles. For example, Yiguandao followers believed that some 6,000 years have passed since the parting of the heavens.
The Church of the Almighty God also lays out a “six-thousand-year management plan” (liuqian nian jingying jihua) of God’s work. This framework relates strongly to the ideational concepts of the Dispentionalists, a system of theology which, among other things, stipulates the idea that God’s road to salvation is revealed to mankind in different ways within different periods.³⁹⁹

Table 6: Salvation Plan of the “Church of the Almighty God”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name of God</th>
<th>Character of God</th>
<th>Sex of God</th>
<th>Place of God’s Work</th>
<th>God’s Audience</th>
<th>God’s Appearance</th>
<th>God’s Way of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period of Law</td>
<td>Jehova</td>
<td>Secretive</td>
<td>Not in scriptures</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Israelites</td>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>Work through the soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Grace</td>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Merciful, graceful</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Judea</td>
<td>First Israelites, later all of mankind</td>
<td>Jewish appearance</td>
<td>Work through the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of State</td>
<td>Almighty God</td>
<td>Righteous, authoritative</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>All Christian believers</td>
<td>Chinese appearance</td>
<td>Word alive in the flesh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Jiepou xiejiao ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 687), pp. 8–9.

As these various timetables of doom and salvation have been presented as God-given, followers have been urged to follow a moral behavioral codex to ensure that the promise of salvation might be also hold true for themselves. Therefore, the “Teachings of the Supreme God,” the “Church of the Almighty God” as well as the “Disciples Society” have issued versions of their “Ten Commandments,” presenting of mixture of moral guidance and obedience to God. For example, the “Ten Administrative Rules” (Shi tiao xingzheng) of the “Church of the Almighty God” include the following:

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³⁹⁹ Even closer to the concept of different periods was the Buddhist concept of the three kalpas (jie), during each of which a divine being would appear guiding humankind back to the Eternal Mother. In the past—also called the period of the “green yang” (qing yang)—the Lamp-Lightening Buddha (randengfo) was dispatched, while during the present—the period of red yang (hong yang)—the Sakyamuni Buddha (shijifo) appeared, and in the future—period of white (bai) yang—the Maitrya Buddha (milefo) will be taking care of mankind’s salvation; see Overmyer 1976 (see note 111), pp. 139–40.
³⁹⁸ For further information on Dispensationalism, see Michael J. Vlach, “What is Dispensationalism,” http://www.theologicalstudies.org/dispen.html (accessed December 1, 2007).
1. People should not have high self-respect, should not elevate themselves. They should highly respect God.
2. Every action should serve the interest of God . . . One should protect the name of God, his testimony and his work.
3. All possessions, including financial possessions, are part of God’s family and can be only used by God and his power holders . . .
4. Humans, bad-hearted, have desires, so . . . the law prohibits work arrangements of different sexes. When discovered, he or she will be expelled.
5. One shouldn’t discuss the matters of God. One should do as one is supposed to and talk as one should, not exceeding one’s limits . . .
6. When doing your duty, you should make every effort, otherwise you will not eat and drink the word of God and are not suited to stay in the house of God.
7. In work and all matters related to the church, besides being obedient to God you should listen to people used by the Spirit. Even a bit of disobedience it not allowed . . .
8. Believers should obey God and not humans . . . There should be no place for humans in your heart. You should give people differently . . .
9. For the work of the church, you should abandon the future of the body and break up the matters of the family, fully giving yourself to the work of God . . .
10. You should reach out to unbelievers, the house of God has enough members . . .

Besides promises of salvation, the “Church of the Almighty God” is the only group who has stressed the importance of obedience and the negative results of disobedience to God. The task of the “Almighty God” is to make Christian believers receive his revelation through obedience with the aim of being saved when the end of the world comes. Therefore, the vision of a new life and the way to achieve it is presented as a strict and hard one:

Punishment, judgment, cursing, making people subdue through the nature of the righteousness of God, letting them subdue with words and acts.\footnote{Hua zai rou nei xianxian (see note 899), p. 798.}

Those who will not obey or even try to hinder the work of the “Almighty God” will be punished. On their website, they present two volumes of per-
sonal stories of punishment, including persons stuck by misfortune, illness, or even death.\textsuperscript{901}

The cover of the first publication shows the pictorial understating of that judgment. According to Dunn,\textsuperscript{902} the people in the front stand for clergy of the official church whereas the plainclothed people resemble leaders from the house churches. The wolf head could evoke the phrase “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” (pi\_he yangpi de lang).\textsuperscript{903} The traditional character for “word” (hua) inflamed, together with the illuminated sword, hurt and death among the people, illustrating the power of the Almighty God. Cracks in the ground and flames in the background appeal to the image of the apocalypse, in Christianity as well as in folk Buddhism.

\textbf{QIGONG-BASED GROUPS}

Paralleling the development of the Christian-inspired groups, the teachings of the Qigong groups also complexified. As compared to the Christian-inspired groups, they placed greater emphasis on the design of the universe. According to Guogong, Qi is the basis for the origin of the universe as well as of human existence. Certain moral principles are inherent in nature, and humans are expected to live up to them, searching for their fulfillment. Nature is understood as a pure power “. . . just and upright, fair and compassionate, dignified and not wicked”.\textsuperscript{904} All things have to obey to this principle. If one is doing well, one will rise, if one does poorly, one will fall. Cultivating oneself is the way to live up to these principles. Cultivating is the way of alchemy (dandao), whereby one is actually cultivating the inner

\textsuperscript{901}The first is called “Typical Instances of Leaders of All Christian Denominations Resisting Almighty God and Meeting With Punishment (Gezong pai shouxiu didang Quannengshen zao changfa de dianxing shili).”

The publication compiles 887 cases written in first person singular, carrying a date and place. The second publication is called “How the Spirit Restifies, Moves People and Leads them back to Almighty God (Kan! Shenling shi zhenmeyang qishi gandong yindao ren gui xiang Quannengshen de). It includes four different kinds of stories: the A type (A lei) covers some 170 cases of Protestant and Catholic believers who were guided back the Almighty God; the B type contains some 450 stories of Protestant and Catholic believers who were guided back by a special dream; the C type includes cases of believers who found back to the Almighty God through the witness of wonders; and the D type covers cases of new believers of the Almighty God Church which also came back after the witnessed miracles.

\textsuperscript{902}Dunn (see note 671).

\textsuperscript{903}Probably resembling to Matthew 7:15, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in the sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

\textsuperscript{904}Rui 1998 (see note 699), p. 16.
alchemy (neidan)\textsuperscript{905} as well as the external alchemy (waidan). To cultivate one’s alchemy is to cure oneself, because inside of the alchemy resides pure energy. To cultivate oneself to the highest level, to become unified with the principle of nature, is to cultivate the Golden Cinnabar or Golden Medicine (jindan).\textsuperscript{906} FLG has given a more detailed description of these moral principles of the universe. He termed the three values of “truthfulness,” “benevolence,” and “forbearance” as his ideals of morality.

“Truthfulness” requires that one should behave honestly, tell the truth, not cheat anyone, tell no lies, conceal no faults when he commits them and return the origin and go back to the truth in the future. “Benevolence” requires that one should have compassion, not bully, show sympathy for the weak, give help to the poor, be ready to help others and do more good deeds. “Forbearance” means looking at the bright side of things in the face of difficulty and insults, enduring them without resentment or hatred, grudge or revenge, and being able to beat the greatest hardship and tolerate what an ordinary person cannot tolerate.\textsuperscript{907}

Like the “Church of the Almighty God,” FLG is the only group who has provided a conceptualization of the evil having led humans away from these moral principles. According to Li, the source of evil—including resulting illness—is caused by the estrangement of human beings from the gods and religion. Mankind already has been destroyed eighty-one times and every time been reestablished by a few survivors. Modern technology and science has been given to humans by aliens attempting to infiltrate mankind by making humans believe only in technology and hence becoming dependent thereupon. FLG’s aim is to free people from this control through bodily as well as spiritual cultivation.\textsuperscript{908} Following the Buddhist idea of karma\textsuperscript{909}—though framing it as a rather materialistic and unequivocally bad thing—Li has determined that the object of the cultivation process is to eliminate

\textsuperscript{905} For an explanation of the term “inner alchemy” see e.g Florian Reiter, Religionen in China. Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur (München: C.H.Beck, 2002), pp. 118ff
\textsuperscript{906} Rui 1998 (see note 699), p. 16.
\textsuperscript{907} Li Hongzhi 2000 (see note 888), p. 134.
\textsuperscript{909} For a detailed analysis of Li’s usage and interpretation of Buddhist terms, see Penny 2003 (see note 385).
karma (or “bad forces” [yeli], as he also calls it) and to transform it into “virtue” (de) and finally into what Li called “energy” (gong). This process requires pain and suffering.\textsuperscript{910} Cultivation is likewise understood as purification and being a cosmological principle. On these grounds Li advises his followers to not take any medicine but instead let the illness take its natural course and found her roots. In accordance with his purification logic, he defames mixed marriages as being an affront against the cosmological order and purification.\textsuperscript{911} He also calls for teetotalism in respect to alcohol, extramarital sex, and gambling. He rejects homosexuality and children of mixed races as unnatural and therefore deny the mentioned groups of people cultivation. Followers are warned to watch out for immoral “sex demons” in the form of “beautiful men or handsome women.”\textsuperscript{912} To cultivate therefore also implies the negation of the self. Practitioners have been asked to reject any ambitions towards seeking influence or reputation for themselves, being requested to instead be happy serving the Great Dharma. Physical and psychological suffering is seen as a step towards enlightenment and cultivation. Zhang Hongbao has even outlined a paradise-like future created by Qigong:

The world is currently pregnant with the fourth technological revolution (also called the forth wave). This revolution differs from the three previous ones in that its central focus will be biological engineering . . . When Qigong is practiced by the entire population, and when Body Science will have made some important breakthroughs, mankind will not only enjoy full health and physical and mental vigor as well as a superego intelligence, but there will be innumerable Qigong grandmasters and persons whose Extraordinary Abilities will be triggered by Qigong . . . Such a world may very well become a fairyland (shen shan leyuan).\textsuperscript{913}

Zhonggong opted for a complex philosophical system, obviously trying to broaden their base of followers. Kylin Culture is composed of eight parts,

\textsuperscript{910} Li 2000 (see note 881), pp. 33ff.
\textsuperscript{911} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 237.
\textsuperscript{912} Li, “7. Demonic Interference, Chapter III,” in Li 2001 (see note 888).
\textsuperscript{913} Ji 1999 (see note 841).
presenting a combination of traditional and modern concepts, Western and Chinese ideas, as well as science and spiritual aspects.914

1. Kylin philosophy: e.g. principle of cause and effect, cosmic power of Yin and Yang
2. Kylin Life Science: methodology of biological and mental functions and theory of Extraordinary Skills
3. Kylin Special Medicine: categories of Western and Chinese medicine as well as Qigong therapy
4. Kylin Aesthetics and Art: including Qigong architecture, music, spontaneous poetry, etc.
5. Kylin Education: training for improvement of intelligence and Extraordinary Skills
6. Kylin Management Theory: combination of traditional Chinese concepts (Book of Change, Sunzi bingfa, etc.) and modern management knowledge
7. Kylin Rites and Rules: codex of behavior for creating a new man
8. Kylin Health Preservation: Qigong style known as Zhonggong

The teachings of FLG stand out from other teachings in several ways. Generally speaking, the importance of ideational principles is reinforced vis-à-vis the actual Qigong exercises, but in the case of FLG ideational principles outweigh the importance of exercises far more than related to any other group. This is carved into the aforesaid cultivation of Li himself, as his first teacher didn’t teach him any Qigong style but rather key ideational principles; only later did Li acquire knowledge of Qigong techniques.

Second, according to an early article on FLG, Li started to design his style in 1984 after having observed the features of modern people’s life. As traditional cultivation processes took too long, he had to find a way to adapt to the limited time modern people have for practicing. Li thought that all people long for the good and beautiful, that only if they have lost their inner balance has it resulted in bad things. Therefore cultivation should start from the heart and guide bodily cultivation.915

914 For a detailed description, see Ji 1999 (see note 841), pp. 155–60; Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 113–17; “Zhonghua yangsheng yizhi gong” (see note 744).
915 Zhu 1993 (see note 693), p. 3.
Position towards Other Groups

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

The “Church of the Almighty God” is the only known new group of the second phase to have picked up the issue of its connection to Christian teachings, thus relating itself to Christianity. While not rejecting the authority of the Bible, it stipulates that the Bible is outdated, thereby presenting a new version that is to be validated with the second coming of Christ.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Li Hongzhi has devoted considerable passages of his writings to expounding his relationship with Buddhism. Li stipulates the idea of a “Buddha School” that is much more encompassing than Buddhism and that also includes Falun Gong.

Our Falun Dafa is . . . one of the eighty-four thousand cultivation ways in the Buddha School, and it has nothing to do with the original Buddhism or Buddhism in the Dharma-ending period; neither is it related to modern religious . . . Buddha School qigong is not the Buddhist religion . . . Religion has religious forms. Here we are teaching the cultivation part of our school. Expect for those monks and nuns who are Falun Dafa disciples, everyone else should not observe religious forms. Therefore, our school is not Buddhism in the Dharma-ending period.916

As Penny mentions, with this separation of religion into segments—both essential, such as texts, and inessential, such as rituals—Li follows an interpretation of religion popular within the party-state.917 Furthermore, his emphasis on not being a religion is probably also aimed at lowering possible suspicions from the Communist regime. Li frames Buddhism as being inferior to his constructed “Buddha School” due to limits of human understanding which Sakyamuni had also taken into consideration while teaching his pupils. Besides, according to Li—echoing other criticism of today’s Buddhism—present-day Buddhism has been “distorted beyond recognition” due a lack of enlightened monks following Sakyamuni departure.918 Nevertheless, Li uses several Buddhist terms, adding his own interpretations in order

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916 Li Hongzhi 2000 (see note 881), pp. 196ff.
917 Penny 2003 (see note 385), p. 41.
918 Li Hongzhi 2000 (see note 881), pp. 11ff.
to attract potential followers who might have some basic understanding of Buddhism.  

**New Trends**

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

Teachings of Christian-inspired groups increasingly showed more calls for action during this second phase. Whether they genuinely had ambitions to attack the government, or whether this new content was a reaction to rising repression from the authorities, is unclear. From the perspective of the Chinese government, any announced fight against an authority must have been perceived as a latent attack on its own power. Paced within the overall context of Christian doctrine, these calls for action could be extracted from a rather fundamentalist reading of the Holy Scripture and must not be directed first and foremost against the Chinese party-state.  

The groups, however, must have been aware of the fact that such statements would be perceived as a legitimate threat by the party-state. It is interesting to note, however, that the party-state easily equates itself with the image of Satan. The Church of the Almighty God pictures different aspects of this creature, symbolized as the Red Dragon. Based on several passages in the writings, the red dragon might be viewed as the ruling Chinese government:

> Many people explain hating the great red dragon as hating a remote Satan evil spirit . . . [This] is too vague because the devil, Satan, and evil spirits have already become incarnated as people and rule as devils despots over them . . . It is precisely these Princes of the Devil who yield power and tyranny on earth, using their power and influence to rob people of freedom . . . This gang of fiends is indeed the incarnation of the great red dragon, they are its representation. How many saints have died under their sword! Today many are still in their custody, spending their lives in dark dungeons.

In another section it is stated:

> On the bodies of the sons of the Chinese people is the poison of the big red dragon . . . The Spirit does not say this directly . . . not to point openly to the scars of the humans and endanger their future. As sons and grandsons of the

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919 See Penny 2003 (see note 385).
920 The Call for a Holy battle based on the Bible can be found throughout the history of mankind.
921 “100 Shenme” (see note 897).
big red dragon they [the Chinese] do not want somebody to mention this in front of other people. For them the characters “big red dragons” seem to be shameful, none of them want to talk about it. Therefore the spirit only says: “The emphasis concerning this step of my work relates to your body, this is one meaning of my reincarnation in China.” To be more precise, the spirit comes mainly to subdue a typical representative of the big red dragon . . .

When the hymn is heard . . . the firmament will tremble as will the strings within the heart of mankind . . . and I will have smashed the state of the big red dragon and establish my own state . . . On my arrival among the human beings let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred birds sing together and all things under heaven happily dance. The rule of Satan will tumble and smash under the thunderous sound of the hymn. It will never be erected again.  

The appearance of the “red dragon” as “Satan” is probably based on the Revelation of John (Chapter 12: 1ff.). The Chinese refer to themselves as “sons of the dragon” which not only has a positive and powerful connotation in Chinese mythology but is a symbol of the emperor associated with the color yellow. The “red dragon” suggests a reference to the Communist Party whose leadership must be fought. The allusion to the slogan of the “Hundred Flower Movement” points ironically to a symbol used by the Communist Party to get rid of unwanted critics.

Political ambitions can be seen even more clearly from the writings of the “Administrative Deacon State of Mainland China”:

We dare to be like a modern Chen Sheng, Wu Guang, . . . we have been creating spirit to act against the tide. We attack the authorities (jianshan), create royal power, take power from Satan. That isn’t reactionary, but against the tide. To take the power away from Satan, we must make God publicly known, let all the people believe in God . . . The “Administration Deacon Station of Mainland China” wants to unite the world with a common home and wipe out all rubbish.  

The “Society of Disciples” was said to have put their political ambitions in an even more aggressive language:

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922 Hua zai rou nei xianxian (see note 899), pp. 291, 293, and 461.
923 In 209 A.D., Chen Sheng and Wu Guang led the first large-scale peasant uprising in Chinese history, which led to the downfall of the Qin Dynasty. After toppling the emperor, Chen and Wu were defeated by the Qin army, headed by Liu Band and Xiang Yu.
924 Cited after Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 37.
The CCP will fall from power, Li Sanbao should be King and establish the Kingdom of Christ, and in the future the Society of Disciples will reign over everything under heaven. First kill the party, than the youth league, cadres of the districts and townships should all be killed. Half of the cadres at village level should be killed, and for the leading cadres, look at their performance.\textsuperscript{925}

These aggressive verbal attacks on the CCP point to a will to use all means to justify the stated end, the establishment of the groups’ faked or real vision of a “Heavenly Kingdom.” However, other stipulations sound more balanced while also referring to an envisioned better future of China under the reign of Christ. The “Full Scope Church” propagated that “Marx and Mao Zedong could not save China, only Jesus can,” and they wanted to walk “the way of the Cross” and “pray that the leaders of China become the son and daughters of God to realize the evangelization of China, the nationalization of the Church and the Christianization of the Chinese culture, together taking power.”\textsuperscript{926}

Likewise, in their “Thirteen Regulations” (\textit{Huanan shisan tiao}) the “South China Church” laid out their agenda for action:

To plea to God for change of heavens and earth, to change humans and the Spirit, to put on the battle uniform granted by the Lord, to put in the white knife and to pull out the red one, to fight to the end against Satan. To take over the reign if Satan crumbles, to establish an everlasting reign, make the reign on the earth into a reign of Christ.\textsuperscript{927}

Another innovative feature of the teachings of the Christian-inspired groups emerged from the necessity of justifying their legitimation based on a former group (see also Chapter 3.2.3.2.2). The origin of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” can be traced back through the group of the “Established King” to the “Group of Shouters.” At the age of twenty-three, the later “Supreme God,” Liu Jiaguo, was initiated into Protestantism by his mother, and shortly thereafter joined the “Group of Shouters.” When their leader was arrested in 1989, Li became a follower of the “Established King.”\textsuperscript{928}

\textsuperscript{925} Ibid., p. 40.
\textsuperscript{926} Jiang 2000 (see note 347), p. 153.
\textsuperscript{927} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 38.
\textsuperscript{928} Wang 2000 (see note 409), p. 178. Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 2001, also cites 1989 as date of entry but Bin Wu names 1991 as the year of joining; see Wu 1999 (see note 343), p. 178.
ing a conflict with the head of this group, Li established his own community two years later. The “Established King,” Wu Yangming, was arrested in 1995 and sentenced to death. The subsequent dissolution of the group gave Liu the opportunity to integrate the old followers into his own group. He proceeded to legitimize his group by relating himself to the “Established King”: the latter would be “the father” and he would be the “Supreme God,” or the “son.” Since the “father” had died (having been arrested and sentenced to death), the followers were instructed to worship him, the “son.” To further justify the group, he created an evolutionary path called the “process of seven steps of the soul” (qìbù lǐngchéng) that starts with the “Three-Self Movement” (sānzǐ yùndòng) and concludes with his “Teachings of the Supreme God” (Li 2000: 201, 207). Following the creation of the Trinity, a former member of the “Teachings of the Soul” (Línglíngjiào) made a direct link to his newly founded “Way of Resurrection” (Fúhuódào): the former leader of the “Teachings of the Soul” would be the “Holy father” (shèngfù), and he would be the “Holy son” (shèngzǐ), whom the followers should now worship.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

During the 1990s, Qigong leaders had to cope with rising criticism and attacks against Pseudo Science. Therefore, Guogong stresses that one of the special characteristics of Guogong is that “[it is] scientific and safe . . . no superstitious touch, closely connected with modern science, and connected with Chinese and Western culture . . . it is also supported by state institutions. It was established according to the law and is protected by the law . . .”

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929 The “Three-self-movement,” was founded in 1954 as a mass organization for the control of the church by the State. The “Three-self” stand for being “self-supporting” (ziyang), i.e. no financial support from abroad, “self producing” (zichan), i.e. preaching the gospel only through Chinese preachers, and “self administrating” (zizhi), an administration independent from foreign congregations or authorities (Malek 1987: 35).


When asked during an interview if practicing Guogong is just so miraculous, Liu Jineng answered: “It’s not miraculous, this is science . . . This is a form of human body science, its principle lies at the stimulation of nerves by human mental activities (ren de siwei chuandao).”  

Li Hongzhi availed of these attacks as an expression of the “devil’s actions and words.”

However, Li also warned against other “evil” Qigong masters, echoing the accusations which the government was about to bring up against his groups some five years later.

Do not be taken in by how reputable some sham Qigong masters are. A well-known person does not necessarily know things well . . . Nowadays some sham Qigong masters have made things chaotic, and use Qigong as a means of securing fame or fortune. They are cults expanding the evil influence, and they outnumber those genuine Qigong masters many times. Every day people all say things and do things this way, and just believe them? You may think Qigong is just like that, but is it not. What I am saying is the genuine principle.

Furthermore, Li integrated the handling of pressure and resistance as an important experience and chance for cultivation. Replying to a follower who asked about how to behave in the wake of FLG demonstrations, Li said:

I have already explained as early as can be. Each time there is an incident, a major incident like that [the demonstration] one, it is the best age for disciples to pass a test in order to attain accomplishment, it is their best chance. Among us, there are some who are capable of making that step, but there are some who, while they cultivate just stay put. They have a chance to reach accomplishment, but they don’t even move: whatever you do, you don’t even deserve accomplishment.

Most likely motivated by a combination of reasons, including reactions to other schools and critics as well a drive for uniqueness, Li Hongzhi has introduced new elements to his teachings since the end of 1994, including

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933 Rui 1998 (see note 699), p. 15.
935 Li Hongzhi 2000 (see note 881), p. 87.
the following aspects.\textsuperscript{937} Stressing that FLG is not a form of Qigong but a higher universal Dharma, Li also has forbidden his followers to mix FLG with any other Qigong methods or Taijiquan. Likewise, practitioners should read neither any kind of religious or medical classics nor any other books.\textsuperscript{938} He has presented himself as an all-knowing and all-embracing savior (hence changing his birthday to the birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha): “I only appear to be a man . . . The difference between me and you is that my brain is completely open, but not yours.”\textsuperscript{939} Li also states: “Presently I am the only one in the whole world who is teaching the orthodox Dharma (zhengfa). What I am doing has never been done before . . . I will not be transmitting the Dharma among humans for long . . .”\textsuperscript{940} He has strengthened apocalyptic elements within his teachings. This came along with his order to practitioners to not heal others, the change of his birthday to May 13, and the withdrawal of FLG from the Qigong Research Society.

\textbf{3.2.3.4 Action Resources}

\textit{3.2.3.4.1 Inward-Orientated Resources}

\textbf{Christian-Inspired Groups}

As a reaction to rising persecution, meetings points for communal activities had to be kept secret and very flexible to allow for changing to another location in the wake of danger. Normally meetings were still held at the homes of members, for the number of participants would normally not exceed eight. The “South China Church” bought several houses in Hubei province to be used as meeting points. The meetings would generally be held during the late evening; members would arrive alone or in small groups and were urged not to use their mobile phones.\textsuperscript{941} Chinese accounts often emphasize that many of the activities happen at night and therefore attribute a mystical

\textsuperscript{937} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), pp. 233ff.
\textsuperscript{938} Ibid., p. 236.
\textsuperscript{941} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 239.
and illegal character to the groups. Nevertheless, nightly gatherings can also indicate the necessity for concealment.

In order to reinforce the concept of “being chosen” and “being saved” from calamities and the end of the world, and also to reinforce a followers’ subordination as well as to foster group identity, groups link various rituals with submission to the community. Before initiation, candidates of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” had to sign a “declaration of intention” and submit a resume. The “Church of the Almighty God” requested potential members to sign a “Guarantee Warrant” on entering the group to receive the groups’ publications.

To be uttermost dutiful in the house of God is my wish. Regardless of which circumstances my family meets I will never put any requests to God, I will not complain or betray God.

1. Regardless of whether my family needs help or not, I don’t want to make any request.
2. When I meet illness, accidents or unlucky family events, I will not complain. This is not related to the house of God.
3. If I were to be arrested, I would not give away the interests of God’s family or the brothers and sisters.

Should I not live up to the above stated paragraphs, I wish that God punish and bluster me, and let me die by the bite of a snake.

Communal prayer has been still a common activity for the groups. The “Teachings of the Lord God” has adapted a slightly changed version of the common prayer, focusing more on fulfillment of personal wishes than on the will of God:

God, you savior, who created heaven and earth, have mercy on our Lord God, begging Lord God to listen to our prayers, to hear our calls to his ears, begging the God Savior to not give any calamities to my family, and no danger, grant my family health and me patience, give peace to my family. Thank you, Lord!

Singing and songs have also played an important role in delivering messages to the followers. The “Society of Disciples” has written several songs

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942 Ibid., p. 267.
945 Cited after Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 51.
related to the key ideas of their teachings and activities. For example, related to the upcoming doomsday, they have created the following song:

Brothers and Sisters! Wake up quickly! All things of the world will not exist for long, the end of all things will come!

The Savior in Heaven [Emptiness], lifted up by humans, seven years of calamities will come down from heaven, huge calamities for seven years.

Heaven and Earth will be dark, sun and moon will have no light, all kinds of calamities, crawled together, this time you will think of dying but can’t . . .

To believe in the Lord will not be regretted, seven years of calamities, when the horn sounds he will cry, the pain at that time must be.

Wake up quickly! The merciful Lord calls us, he is put to the cross, buys our sins with his blood. You see how big his grace is . . .

Beloved Soul-Sisters and Brothers, prepare well quickly, the Lord Jesus will come for the second time, I fear you will be left back in the word.946

Likewise, the “Church of the Almighty God” has compiled psalms and praise hymns called Sing a New Song with the Lamb, based in part on texts from their own writings.947

Training classes for followers also continued during the second phase. The “Teachings of the Supreme God” had organized a very packed time table for their adherents.

946 Ibid., p. 60.
947 “Gensui gaoyang chang xinge (Sing a New Song with the Lamb),” http://www.hidden-advent.org (accessed February 14, 2008).
Table 7: Timetable of Training Class of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” in 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wake-up</td>
<td>6:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study</td>
<td>6:00–7:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>7:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Political Ideas</td>
<td>8:00–9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the Bible</td>
<td>9:40–11:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Answers on Difficult Issues</td>
<td>11:30–12:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>12:30–13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>13:00–14:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the Bible</td>
<td>14:00–15:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Answers on Difficult Issues</td>
<td>15:40–17:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelizing</td>
<td>17:30–19:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>19:00–20:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening Singing</td>
<td>20:00–21:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Discussion</td>
<td>21:00–22:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>22:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A class would last for two or three days, with the exact place and the time being announced at the end of one day. The “Teachings of the Supreme God” highly emphasized communication skills. Therefore, they placed high requirements on their members, that is, talking with courage and rhythm, downgrading oneself, lifting others up, as well as giving other members space to talk during discussions. According to their own documents, the aim of such training classes was threefold: first, improvement of knowledge and educational levels; second, improvement of working ability; and third, reinforcement of internal discipline.948

As in the first phase, sources reported group leaders having constructed a relationship between sex and salvation. In case of the “Teachings of the Supreme God,” a former member reported threats by the “goddesses” (position within the grouping, KK) to the group: “If you do not obey, a disaster will break upon you. If you agree to the ‘appeal’ by the ‘Supreme God,’ you must keep silence or the punishment of God will meet you.”949 Another former member, Ms. Chen, having been a middle-school student at the date of joining the “Supreme God,” later told the police that she had been raped six

948 Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 121–22.
times by the “Supreme God” and gave a detailed account of her meeting
with him.\footnote{Wu 2005 (see note 36), pp. 86ff.}

**Qigong-Based Groups**

**Qigong Movements**

As so-called “moving Qigong” (*donggong*), “spontaneously moving
Qigong” (*zifa donggong*) styles in particular were discredited in official
stipulations after reports on physical or psychological deviations
mounted,\footnote{Only a few exceptional “moving practices” were tolerated for popular practice, like
Feng Lida’s New Qigong or “Crane Qigong” (*Hexiangzhuang Qigong*), Heise 1999 (see
note 14), p. 154.} forcing Qigong masters to revert to “Quiet Qigong” (*Jinggong*)
or to mix several styles in order to blur the origin and to legitimize
classifications.

Mostly, the advertised Qigong styles were a synthesis of two or more other
Qigong schools.

In the case of FLG, Li Hongzhi and one of his early pupils from
*Jiugongbaguzhang* designed the movements on the basis of *Chanmigong*
and *Jiugongbaguazhang*.\footnote{Ibid., p. 120.} The mystical version of the FLG style design,
depicted in FLG’s publications and also in an early article on FLG, indicates
that Li started to craft FLG, after having studied present Qigong styles,
based on four principles: the Dafa should be unselfish; suit the principles of
Zhen, Shan, Ren; possess supernatural abilities; and be secure (concerning
possible deviation).

He stands on the high level of the universe, summarizing positive and negative
aspects of all Qigong styles in history, he visited all kinds of mysterious pow-
ers in the universe, after a detailed analysis and truly judgment, he sorted out
the rubbish and picked up the best features and put them into FLG. He totally
overcame the prejudices of styles’ boundaries and took the best aspects of each.
The Falun of Buddhist, Yin and Yan of Daoist, everything from all ten direc-
tions of the world can be found again in FLG.\footnote{Zhu 1993 (see note 693), p. 3.}

In the first introduction of FLG in the Qigong magazines, the author empha-
sizes the security of FLG concerning deviation, obviously driven by the
rising cases of Qigong deviation and related criticism. The articles proceed

\footnote{\textcopyright 2000 Springer-Verlag.}
to name four features proving the effectiveness of FLG: first, strengthening of the body with several proven cases from Beijing, Changchun, and Xian; second, healing, several examples given; third, casting out of heretical and evil forces [of other Qigong styles]; and finally, improvement of personal disposition.954

The exercises of FLG consist of five movement cycles with four to thirteen movements each. The explanation said that only the first series should be practiced alongside the given order, but that the other movements might be practiced freely. It also emphasizes that there are no special conditions regarding time and place, and that the “collection of gong,” a special way to end and close up one’s Qi, is not necessary either.955

*Zhonggong* consists of eight parts, but only four are taught to date. In some way this hints that people are not yet ready for high-level *Zhonggong*. Healing dominates the study of *Zhonggong*, which is slowly and gradually acquired—already in the first stage one can obtain three extraordinary abilities. The speedy progress of learning and quick obtainment of results is emphasized: “In only one unit (1–3 hours) one can to send/give Qi, after two units one can take/collect Qi, and after just three units one can heal illnesses,” like kidney problems, female ailments, breathing problems, or burning of joints.956 Besides acquiring the *Zhonggong*-style movements and several healing abilities, the crash course Level 3 also offers a brief introduction into the history of Qigong and the philosophy of *Zhonggong*. This underpins the importance of the ideational system which was an integrated part of *Zhonggong*, at least for the advanced followers.957

**Extraordinary Abilities**

Despite growing criticism and concerns about Qigong deviations and “extraordinary abilities,” these “extraordinary abilities” have still remained a “selling” by-product of the practice of Qigong movements.958 Groups even have presented theories on extraordinary abilities.

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954 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
956 “Zhonghua yangsheng yizhi gong” (see note 744).
957 “Zhang Hongbao Zhonggong” (see note 860), p. 42.
958 Li, 3. Gong Potency and Supernormal Abilities, Chapter I,” in Li 2001 (see 888); Zhang and Xu 1997 (see note 634), p. 20; Ren 1996 (see note 758), p. 31.
Liu Jineng, head of Guogong, has given a physical explanation for extraordinary abilities: “Through the interchange of heaven earth, Yin, Yang, the two energies, the miraculous power of all things crisscross and become magnetic. Many things create magnetic natures, we call them “energy fields” (qi chang). The structure of energy fields is the energy transmitted between all things of the great natural universe. Through interactive refraction they become waves.”

According to Zhonggong, everybody has the potential for extraordinary abilities—they are Yin-like abilities. But as each person’s innate intelligence differs, so does the level and means of developing these abilities vary, and therefore their expression shows a great variety. Zhang Hongbao has laid out a broad-based classification along with ways of developing extraordinary abilities. There are six important channels aiding in the production of extraordinary abilities, including experiencing severe illness, being enlightened by other people, and practicing Qigong. Additionally, Zhonggong has pictured eight sorts of people with super abilities, such as peaceful rulers (Da Yu, Huang Di, Zhu Yuanzhang, Liu Bang, Mao Zedong), saviors (Shakamuni, Lao Zi, Jesus), and rebels (Zhang Jue, Huang Chao, Hong Xiuquan, peasant rebels).

The groups didn’t engage in any direct comparison with other styles or mention superiority vis-à-vis other Qigong schools. Participation and withdrawal still remained basically on a volunteer base. A Zhonggong website sets forth that “[i]f you don’t want to continue [after the second part, KK] this is fine to use for a lifetime. If you would like to go further, you must take part in the next section of studies.” However, it is also described that new pupils of Zhonggong had to face the statute of Zhang Hongbao with hands clapped together, to recite the “eight virtues” (ba de) and “eight readings” (ba nian), and to finally sit down to listen to the introduction concerning rules and behavior of Zhonggong pupils. A new adherent also had to vow loyalty to Zhang. Some people even signed promises like “Following the great master

Xu 1997 (see note 634), p. 20.
Zhonghua yangsheng yizhi gong” (see note 744).
a lifetime, never changing the heart” or “Alive a Zhonggong person, dead a Zhonggong ghost.”

Li Hongzhi has strictly forbidden his practitioners to mix FLG with other Qigong methods and Taijiquan, and he also doesn’t want them reading the classics or medical books, reciting chants, donating money to the temples, worshiping ancestors, or buying talismans. In his stipulations for guidance station personal, Li Hongzhi put down that cultivation of another style equals the automatic loss of the “qualification” (cige) as a station worker and as a student of FLG:

Li laid out special instructions for the conveyance of FLG by pupils. In the process of imparting the movement’s teachings, adherents should only use “Master Li explains . . .” or “Master Li says . . .” Were they to teach FLG with their own wordings or intentions, the Great Dharma would be destroyed. Personal opinions and the FLG content stipulated by Master Li should be not mixed. They shouldn’t accept money or any kind of bribery for their teaching, for otherwise they wouldn’t be pupils of the Great Dharma. While Li might want to prevent chaotic transmission and money swindling, these regulations could have also served to prevent single pupils from gaining a strong organizational base.

Training of Teachers

The Qigong schools also functioned as a training ground for teachers or promoters of the respective Qigong style.

To become a promoter (chuanren) of Guogong, one has to seek the agreement of the Guogong School and participate in a special six-day training course with Liu Jineng. Afterwards, one can establish “promotion groups” (chuangongtuan), teach Guogong, and heal. Liu himself emphasizes that the instructors of Guogong have a high-level of educational background and have practiced Qigong for more than ten years. They possess elevated skills and a profound understanding of theoretical background. Promoter of Xianggong—which requires permission to hold the so-called “promotion
sessions or lectures” (dai gong hui, dai gong baogao)—is another position that, according to Tian, can be achieved by merely a few people. However, participation in “study classes” (xuexi ban) to become an average teacher of Xianggong, probably at one of the guidance stations, doesn’t seem to be restricted. Interestingly, participation in a study class makes teaching obligatory (yiwu jiao gong). This drive to spread Xianggong—not found with other groups—might be understood as at least a slight parallel to the missionary impetus of the Christian inspired groups.\footnote{968}{“Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Question 59.}

Li Hongzhi has also placed high requirements on his leaders and assistants. They have the responsibility not only of teaching the movements, but also of being able to teach theoretical aspects of FLG, the Dharma.\footnote{969}{Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 242.} Zhonggong’s trainers similarly had to undergo specific training and meet several requirements and duties. Loyalty towards the master, making group interest the first priority, teaching without mixing in some elements from other Qigong styles, and explaining extraordinary abilities phenomena in a scientific way are among these requirements. Accordingly, they had also had to fulfill recruitment targets. Per year a minimum of 600 had to be taught, of which some fifty percent were required to sign up for Level 2 workshops and one hundred percent to buy the book for Level 1.\footnote{970}{Ibid., p. 210.}

3.2.3.4.2 Outward-Orientated Resources

Christian-Inspired Groups

Recruitment via face-to-face proselytizing remains, as in the first phase, the dominant activity. However, strategies have become more sophisticated, with publications playing an increasingly important role.

The “Teachings of the Supreme God” had formulated a very distinct strategy of expansion, a strategy not dissimilar to the Guerilla tactics of the Communist Party: infiltrate from the countryside to the cities, from the peasants to the cadres, intellectuals, and other higher levels of society. Their members were encouraged to study administrative law, staff regulations, and other related topics.\footnote{971}{Tan and Kong 2001 (see note 411), pp. 251–63, p. 263.} In terms of schooling, the “Teachings of the Su-
preme God” hold Bible examinations every ten days, and offer training for rhetoric, courage, and social intercourse.\textsuperscript{972} Adding to their recruitment strategy, the “Teachings of the Supreme God” has assigned recruitment tasks according to individual provinces.

Table 8: Distribution of Mission Work within the “Teachings of the Supreme God”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Distributed Provinces/ Direct Administrative Municipalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Support” (\textit{zhanzai}zhu), “Goddess of Self Wishes” (\textit{ziyu}anzhu)</td>
<td>Fujian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Little Cleverness” (\textit{xiao cong}mingzhu)</td>
<td>Jiangxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Expectation,” “Goddess of Search” (\textit{xun}zhaozhu)</td>
<td>Guangxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Longing Desire”</td>
<td>Hubei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Trust”</td>
<td>Henan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Grace”</td>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Capability” (\textit{neng}li\textit{zhu})</td>
<td>Guizhou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Pearl,” “Goddess of Glory” (\textit{guang}rongzhu)</td>
<td>Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Strength,” “Goddess of Agreement” (\textit{sh}ouyue\textit{zhu})</td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Preciousness” (\textit{guizhong}zhu)</td>
<td>Anhui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Double Luck”</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Goddess of Brightness,” “Goddess of Happiness”</td>
<td>Tianjin and Beijing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While missionizing, the group ordered their followers to not stay in hotels, to speak Mandarin only, and to not carry identity cards.\textsuperscript{974} The “Holders of Power” seemed to have been appointed by Liu Jiaguo at the meeting of the “National Congress” in May of 1997. Along with the collection of “gifts” (financial support), they were responsible for disseminating the teachings, as well as for supporting or replacing the “Female Goddesses.” There were quotas to fill: every “Provincial Holder of Power” had to evangelize twenty districts, and the “District Holders of Power” had to recruit at least five hundred people.\textsuperscript{975} The “Church of the Almighty God” sent “signs” of God’s

\textsuperscript{972} Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 205.\textsuperscript{973} Pinyin transcription is added in brackets for terms, which have not already appeared in the original hierarchy (see Chart13). Whether Liu established these positions later on or whether the source is inaccurate or incomplete remains unclear. Double appointments might point to a very intensive sphere of action, but, surprisingly, the province of foundation, Hunan, is not included.\textsuperscript{974} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 229.\textsuperscript{975} Guanghui Cao, “Xiejiao ‘Zhushenjiao’ fumieji (Protocol of the Fall of the Heretical Teachings ‘Teachings of the Supreme God’),” \textit{Liaowang} (April 24, 1999), pp. 29–30.
miraculous power in the form of doves carrying messages bound around their claws, eggs with the imprint “God will come,” and messages like “The Almighty God has already come, quickly accept the real God, otherwise a big catastrophe will come upon you.” The “Three Grades of Servants Group,” however, used just an opposite approach. In case of families in financial trouble or struck by illness, they would send a preacher to their home to read the Bible and to pray with them. They might even help the family with work in the fields.

The “Church of the Almighty God” has issued a whole booklet on methods of recruiting new followers called “Detailed principles on problems concerning ‘touching ground’ and ‘preparing the road’” (Modi pulu wenti xice). Besides offering sumptuous food or luxury items, they developed strategies like enticing men and woman, sneaking into a house church congregation pretending to have escaped from some “heretical teachings” and being eager to help. Presenting themselves as committed believers, they get to know details of the house church members and start to lure the most influential and active people away.

Even kidnapping has appeared to be one means of recruitment: the case of luring away members of the “China Gospel Fellowship” generated ripples throughout the international Christian community.

Sources from the Chinese house churches divide the recruitment policy of the “Almighty God” into several phases:

1. Preliminary or “vulgar” (cusu) phase (1992–1995): targeting of “good” Christian groups like the “Local Assemblies” in the tradition of Ni Tu-
sheng or the “Shouters” (Li Changshou); placing their publications with some money inside the houses of preachers.

2. Middle or “desire and violence” phase (1992–1998): broadening of sphere and human resources, especially due to finance and education; every method is right for succeeding in the goal, more violent action.

3. After or “swindling” phase (1998–2000): targeting of heretical groups as well as Catholic and official Protestant Christian Churches; means of sexual deceiving; expansion to thirty provinces and regions.

Only the “Church of the Almighty God” clearly limited the scope of their designed “era of the state” to China and the Chinese people and warned about the infiltration of foreigners if followers didn’t show enough commitment.\textsuperscript{982} Additionally, only believers of Jesus Christ can be saved, the “door of mercy is already closed to nonbelievers.”\textsuperscript{983}

The “Society of Disciples,” in a later stage of their development, changed their main target groups from young people to more highly educated ones, especially professors and party cadres. Therefore the group promised to pay 50 Yuan for each newly recruited member, 500 Yuan for each new Youth League member, and as much as 1,000 Yuan for a police officer or a district or town cadre.\textsuperscript{984}

In respect to the cover-up of actions necessary for preventing persecution, the “Church of the Almighty God” has laid out the detailed “Wisdom of Going Out”:

1. Take your identity card with you. On the bus or in public places, don’t interfere in things, talk less and don’t be favorable to anybody . . .

2. If you get checked on the route, take out your ID card, don’t lie, handle your matters well. If something happens, everybody takes care if himself first and informs the others later.

3. If you stay overnight outside, don’t stay in homes where meetings often take place or at famous homes. If you get checked, give your real name and address. If you use a borrowed ID, then your information must match the ID information.


\textsuperscript{983} “Jiepou xiejiao ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 687), p. 10.

\textsuperscript{984} Jiang 2000 (see note 347), p. 68.
4. If you ask for directions, ask elder people. If there are two of you and one of you has a strong accent, this one should not buy tickets or ask for directions.

5. If you talk to other people, don’t talk about matters of state or politics.

6. On the phone you should not talk about the real things of God. For important matters, it is better to use a public telephone.  

Publications

Christian-inspired groups increasingly used publications to spread their teachings. The booklets were handed out only within the respective community and sometimes labeled “for internal use” (neibu shiyong). The titles of these booklets clearly point to their Christian-inspired content. According to available sources, the “Disciples Society” published the largest number of booklets. Their titles include Shining Journey of the Soul (Guangshan lingcheng), Compassionate Motherly Love (Ziyang de mu’ai), People, Please Listen to These Words (Zhongren qing ting ci daoyan), and Main Answers to the Reappearance of all Things (Wanshi fuxing yaodao huida).

Likewise, the “Church of the Almighty God” also produced an impressive number of publications. According to an official from the Public Security office in the city of Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, the number of booklets reached nearly 870,000 between 1989 and 1999. In addition to books, the “Almighty” also distributed CDs and DVDs. They produced two types of written publications, with one presenting their new revelation. The most authoritative, and also the thickest, is Word Reveals in the Flesh (Hua zai routi xianxian). Other titles include The Secretive Work of God (Shen jimi de gongzuo), Lightning from the East (Dongfang fachu de shandian), God Wants to Talk to the Whole Universe (Shen xiang quan yu fa sheng), and The Seventh Horn has Already Been Blown (Qi hao yijing chuixiang). The other publications are work manuals, with rules and advice related to missionizing. Most of the groups used these publications in addition to the Bible; the only known group to reject readings from the Bible as “outdated” is the “Church of the Almighty God.”

986 Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi (see note 982).
987 Ibid.
In the publications, “testimonies” of members have become an important tool for recruitment. The following testimony given by one member of the “Teachings of Supreme God” relates the experience of the God’s power:

In October 1997 I participated in a training class at the home of Enci. The “Goddess of Waiting” told us at class that at some place some people of our group had been arrested by the police. On the way to the police station, the two officials had died. Some people said the policemen had been killed by the preachers. But the autopsy proved that they were not killed by human force. So the chief of the police station let them free. She [the “Goddess of Waiting”] told us that if we don’t believe in God, then our family will not leave in peace.\(^{988}\)

Other testimonies aimed at explaining past and present catastrophes as well as miracles. The “Society of Disciples” compiled a “Testimony Collection” (zhengjian huibian) recounting miracle healings. On their website, the “Church of the Almighty God” offers a huge volume of testimonies giving witness to the power of the Almighty God.\(^{989}\)

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Due to the Qigong fever in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the Qigong field became very popularized and commercialized. However, judging from the number of Qigong styles, the demand was large enough to present many Qigong styles with a chance for development and survival. Nearly all groups have praised their Qigong style as easy and quick to study, suitable to the conditions of modern society and able to attract many followers. The groups haven’t engaged in direct comparisons with other styles or mentioned superiority vis-à-vis other Qigong schools. Only few groups have seen the necessity to point out features that differentiate them from other Qigong groups.

Due to the direct cultivation of “cinnabar medicine” (danyao), one can shorten the time of exercising, writes Liu in one of his articles. “Everybody can learn Guogong.” Normally, it only takes several days to learn

\(^{988}\) Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 141.
Guogong—there are no taboos, so it can just naturally proceed. Therefore, one could practice either while sitting, standing, sleeping, or even on the bus.  

Xianggong goes even further in promoting their style: “At the moment you see it, you understand it, you study it and you can practice at once. Men, women, old or young, it takes only 15 or 16 minutes to do the exercises for beginners’ level. This Qigong does neither disturb study, work, or professional success nor influences leisure time. Some comrades practice while watching TV in the evening.” Even the movements and positions must be only roughly—not perfectly—exercised. Still, to master Xianggong’s beginner level and to advance to the intermediate level, it takes approximately three and a half months. Therefore it is necessary to practice at least two times a day. 

Judging from the picture often accompanying the introduction of a Qigong style in a Qigong magazine, it is eye-catching that exercises of Xianggong only involve hand movements. Other styles’ exercises also include body or at least leg movements. Tian himself, along with several other accounts, emphasize the absence of will (yizhi) within Xianggong, differentiating it from other Qigong styles. “If the will is overemphasized and thoughts are not kept well together, deviation often happens, nerves get wrong or in disorder. Therefore, some people don’t dare to practice any longer. Xianggong doesn’t add any will, dispensing people’s worries.” Tian’s daughter, Tian Shufang, adds more details to practicing. Ideally, one should perform every movement thirty-six times, but due to health reasons less exercise is also fine. She stresses the importance of “receiving gong” (shou gong) while taking a break during the exercises.  

Contrary to other groups, Li puts strong emphasis on the difference between FLG and the other Qigong styles. 

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990 Liu 1998 (see note 938).
991 “Tian dashi tan (see note 437).
992 “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren” (see note 428), Question 15.
995 “Tian Shufang tan Xianggong” (see note 188).
Throughout the entire course of my lecture on the fa and cultivation process, I have been responsible to society and practitioners. The results we have received have been good, and their impact upon the entire society has also been quite good. A few years ago there were many Qigong masters who taught Qigong. All of what they taught belongs to the level of healing and fitness. Of course, I am not saying that their ways of practice were not good. I also know the Qigong situation in the entire country. At present, I am the only person genuinely teaching Qigong towards high levels at home and abroad.\footnote{Li 2000 (see note 881), p. 1.}

According to Wu, FLG paid special attention to migrant workers as they were regarded as very loyal and as being helpful in the quick spreading of FLG teachings among the local networks.\footnote{Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 167.}

Study lectures and classes still remained an important instrument for recruiting adherents. Xianggong offered large-scale “study classes.” One participant wrote about a week-long class in March 1992 with more than 3,500 students. They met every afternoon for six days in the Sports Hall of Zhengzhou City, Henan Province.

Besides cases of healing, reported by the author in great detail, people could witness some side effects during the study sessions reinforcing the mysterious flair of Tian and Xianggong: long-distance acupuncture, appearance of glances and circles close to Tian’s body during he launched energy, aromatic scents not only during the study session but also—as Tian announced—in the hotel room, appearance of Tian’s figure within the “message water,” and the non-functioning of electronic devices.\footnote{Qing 1992 (see note 773).}

Large-scale study classes at a prominent place, Beidaihe, were also offered by Dazanggong. Just half a year after his “surfacing,” Yuqi, the founder of Dazanggong, already held the First National Study Class of the Second Level of Dazanggong (Quanguo shoujie Dazanggong di er cengci xuexiban) from June 18–28, 1994. Some 3,000 adherents from over thirty localities participated. The study class was organized in a very appellative way. Against the backdrop of beautiful Beidaihe beach scenery, around 3,000 people, all dressed in identical T-shirts inscribed with the characters of “Dazanggong,” simultaneously engaged in the same movements. Masses
were flanked by slogans like “Seek truth with science, for the happiness of the people.” In contrast to most other denominations, FLG pursued an offensive propagation strategy comparable to the evangelization efforts of the Christian-inspired groups. Practitioners were told to openly engage in the spreading of FLG. They were directed to talk about the Dafa with others, often reciting it in noisy and crowded places. Followers were increasingly requested to play a more active role within the movement. In April 1996, a so-called “Experience Sharing Assembly” was initiated, with various persons talking about their attainments.

Publications

Qigong masters increasingly used publications and advertisements in the Qigong magazines. During the nineteen-nineties, advertisement became an important channel for attracting new adherents. Mostly, they offered detailed contact information to interested audiences. Similar to universities or schools, Qigong classes likewise titled their advertisements with the words “enroll students” (zhao sheng). This possibility for open advertising was an advantage vis-à-vis the Christian groups, but it also meant facing fierce competition during the 1990s. Most ads gave detailed descriptions on how to reach the teaching facilities by bus, along with name, address, and telephone number of a contact person. The Zhonggong website promises that all major and middle Zhonggong bases are located close to famous mountains or rivers, in quiet, rural areas, proximate to but not directly in the city, with convenient traffic and pick-up service for students. Facilities such as fax services, copy shops, supermarkets, security, hairdressing, and hospitals are also close at hand. The quality of instructors is likewise emphasized: all handpicked by Zhang Hongbao. For minority areas, special language services are offered. Every major base is said to have English-language services, and in Beijing Japanese, French, Russian, Korean, Mongolian, and Czech services can even be found.

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1001 Ibid., p. 257.
1003 “Zhang Hongbao Zhonggong” (see note 860).
Zhonggong went so far as to organize a “campaign for free medical consultations” (yizhen huodong) in resident complexes for the elderly or in nursing homes.\textsuperscript{1004} The rubric “Letters from the Ill” in some Qigong magazines has offered Qigong styles another opportunity to record and stipulate successfully treated cases. Judging from the popularity of various Qigong styles, there is no reason to believe that these letters were made up by the editorial team of the magazines.\textsuperscript{1005} Most Qigong masters didn’t write (or weren’t able to write) theoretical books but rather edited the transcripts of their lectures or hired journalists or writers to compose such books. Often, their political supporters were asked to write a calligraphic forward to increase the authority of the publication.\textsuperscript{1006} Tian Ruisheng didn’t write any scriptures on Xianggong himself, but when asked about which written material he considers appropriate for studying, he mentions several books and articles by other authors.\textsuperscript{1007} A magazine article mentions that Xianggong had more than thirty different publications in 1994.\textsuperscript{1008} Guogong is characterized by widespread publication activities. Unlike other groups, Liu Jineng—besides writing articles for Qigong journals—additionally published a poetry collection entitled The Mind of Sun and Moon (ri Yue xin) reflecting elements of his concept of the universe and the unity between men and nature. This “Qigong poetry,” as one professor of Sinology put it, “. . . is deeply rooted in the essence of the three thinking schools which make up Chinese traditional culture, and confirms self-experiences of many cultivators of mind and nature.”\textsuperscript{1009} Liu also wrote books on “Qigong Medicine Science” (Qi Yi Xue), and he may also be the author, or at least editor, of circa twenty books, such as Chinese Natural Extraordinary Skills (Zhongguo ziran teyigong), What is Spread under the People Is All Love (Sa xiang ren jian dou shi ai)—which

\textsuperscript{1006} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 100; Jiangsusheng Pei xian Fudaozhan 1993 (see note 760).
\textsuperscript{1007} “Zhongguo Xianggong dangdai chuanren,” (see note 428), Question 4.
\textsuperscript{1009} Zheng and Xu 1997 (see note 63), p. 19.
could be also a Christian title—and *Mind of Flash* (*Shanguang xin*). These books had a print run of 90,000 according to official Chinese news sources. *Guogong* also printed its own newspaper called *Light of Guogong* (*Guogong zhì guāng*), and more than forty issues, equaling 80,000 to 90,000 papers, were published from 1995 through July 1999. The verdict for Liu and his younger brother was also based on “illegal publishing, printing, and distribution.”

Although the publications of FLG became downloadable for free, and FLG always claimed that their publications were offered for free, an advertisement in a Qigong magazine gave prices for the books, postal fee included, ranging from 9 to 14 Yuan. Different sets of video tapes were offered for 160 and 300 Yuan respectively. After the ban of FLG publications in 1996, preluded by two failed attempts at publishing books and portraits of Li Hongzhi via the “Religion and Culture” publishing company, the group concentrated its resources online.

**Communications**

While extending his enterprise, Zhang Hongbao also refined his communications system. He started to copy the official issuance methods and publishing regulations from the media. Recruiting matters were also formally announced in respective publications, for example, a “Notification Concerning the Establishment of Commanding Department of the Kylin City Project at the International Life Science University” (*Guanyu chénglì guójì shēngmíng kexué dàxué qílín chéng gōngchéng jiănshì zūzhī de tōngzhī*). Nevertheless, not all information was publicly announced. Information on main stations at provincial, municipal, and district levels were kept secret and their location rotated. Additionally, taking pictures inside the bases was 

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1010 “Renren neng xuehui Guogong” (see note 690), p. 4.; “Xiaozhang daidui bozhong jingshen yapian” (see note 701); “Sichuansheng Mianyangshi yi faqüdi ‘Guogong’ zuzhi” (see note 690). Interestingly, the latter two newspaper articles vary on the number of books and papers distributed considerably. What is more, the later-dated article reports much smaller numbers than the earlier-dated one.


1012 Sheng 1999 (see note 621).

not allowed, especially within the “Hall of Wisdom Dharma” (*Huifating*).\(^{1014}\)

Li Hongzhi intensively used radio programs to publicize his teachings. During a program he would be given the opportunity to explain central concepts of his teachings as well as treat calling persons via phone. Each person would positively react towards Li’s long-distance stimulus, enhancing the impression of FLG’s miraculous power even further.\(^{1015}\) FLG mainly used telephone lines and cell phones as primary instruments of communication. FLG also used various techniques to gather mobile phone numbers for disseminating their messages via smss.\(^{1016}\) Whereas party-state sources claim that FLG possessed a documental classification system like the CCP, Tong rejects this claim.\(^{1017}\) Starting in the mid-1990s, the Internet became an important instrument for organization and communication. Nearly all Qigong groups started their own website or were linked up with the China Qigong Research Society. Adherents of FLG in the United States started to set up a web domain for FLG in 1995, which was officially announced on June 15, 1997. After Li Hongzhi settled in the US, several additional websites emerged.\(^{1018}\)

*Enlargement of Sphere of Activity*

A national scope of activities became a central aim of Qigong groups, although their choice of locations for a base or the next step for geographical extension did not always reveal a planned regional development strategy. Since Zhang Hongbao’s activities had been illegalized by the Beijing Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, he shifted his focus to other cities and held lectures and courses in the cities of Guilin, Dalian, Tianjian, and Hangzhou. Later on, he expanded his teaching facilities to the whole of China.\(^{1019}\)

Li Hongzhi started to expand his sphere of activity in November 1992 after having left Beijing and first going to Taiyuan, where he was rather unsuccessful. However, in Tianjian, his second stop, he attracted such a

\(^{1014}\) Ibid., p. 226.

\(^{1015}\) Zhu 1994 (see note 880), pp. 2–7.


\(^{1017}\) Tong 2002 (see note 791), p. 648.

\(^{1018}\) Ibid., p. 647.

\(^{1019}\) Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 219; Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 77.
large number of followers that some could not enter the hall and ticket prices quick rose from 20 to 50 Yuan. In 1993 and 1994 FLG became more and more of a nationwide group due to Li’s traveling but also to the published material on FLG.\footnote{Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 269.}

*International Contacts*

After 1989 international travel and the contact base of Qigong groups increased slowly, mostly focusing on the United States. While details of the arrangement cannot be traced from available literature, it can be assumed, taking economic potentials and political circumstances into account, that contacts were initiated mostly by foreign actors in order to cater to the growing domestic interest in Qigong. However, Qigong leaders were willing to utilize these opportunities for supplementing resources to their movements on three grounds. First, it was a measure for increasing their base of followers. Second, international leverage added to national legitimacy and fame. Third, as Qigong came under pressure at the beginning of the 1990s, this might have been a comfortable means of escaping public criticism. In October 1996 Li Hongzhi went to the United States to advertise FLG for the first time. During 1997 he tried several times to get another visa and finally brought his wife and daughter to take up residence in New York in February 1998. Quickly afterwards, he obtained a green card. Explanations on how he managed to get permanent residence status vary: students from the US helped, or Li invested one million US dollars to fulfill related requirements, or the CIA wanted to use Li as a tool against the Communist government and therefore supported him.\footnote{Ibid., p. 270; Tong 2002 (see note 791), pp. 640–41.}

After Li settled down in the United States, he slowly set up *Falungong* practice stations in thirty-eight US states, fostered the translation of his books into other languages, and saw to the further spreading of FLG to Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Zhang Yuanming, founder of Yuanming Qigong, also set up an International General Union of Yuanming Qigong (*Guoji Yuanminggong lianhezonghui*) and a Research Society of International Qigong Medicine (*Guoji qigong yixue keyan zonghui*) in the United States.\footnote{Yongqiang Jiang, “Qigongshi xin renge de jueqi (Rise of Qigong Masters with New Personality),” *ZGQG* 5 (1995), pp. 21–22.} Consequently,
Qigong underwent a growing institutionalization in foreign countries. Linked to the process of founding the World Qigong Federation under the roof of the East West Academy of Healing Arts (established in San Francisco in the 1970s), the First World Congress of Qigong did take place in Berkeley, California in 1990. San Francisco was the location of the Second and Third World Congress in 1997.\textsuperscript{1023}

\textit{Educational and Research Activities}

Zhang Hongbao moved away from simply teaching \textit{Zhonggong} courses and engaged himself in educational and research activities. In April 1990 he founded an “Academy of International Life Science and University of International Life Science and Technology” (\textit{Guoji shengming kexueyuan, Guoji shengming keji daxue}) in Chongqing, with “Xian Kylin Culture University” (\textit{Xian Qilin wenhua daxue}) and an “International Life Science Academy Kylin City” (\textit{Guoji shengmin kexueyuan Qilin cheng}) later following.

Zhang always made sure to gain the necessary legal approval by the respective organizations. In August 1990 he even obtained registration as an institute for “post-academic adult education” by the government of Chongqing. He also went back to his old alma mater to hold several lectures on “Chinese Gong” as well as presentations on “Life Science and Methodology” (\textit{Shengmin kexue yu fangfalun}), “Theory of Extraordinary Skills” (\textit{Teyi gongneng lilun}), and “Spreading of Human Extraordinary Medical System in China” (\textit{Renlei teyi tixi zai shenzhou fengyu zong yansheng}). Furthermore, he launched his own magazine \textit{Life Science (Shengming kexuebao)}, in connection with the university.\textsuperscript{1024} In a similar way, Yuqi, the founder of \textit{Dazanggong}, aimed at establishing close links with research institutes in Human Body science. He obviously had the intention of spreading his style primarily within institutional contexts and among central Qigong figures.\textsuperscript{1025}

\textit{Zhinengong} also initiated several scientific conferences aimed at fostering scientific research in many different realms like medicine, education, or

\textsuperscript{1024} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 221.
\textsuperscript{1025} Li 1994 (see note 681), p. 5.
agriculture. Officials from relevant sports or medical institutions were always named as participants. Besides making a special contribution to officially promoted scientific development, these conferences also functioned as fostering links with official and societal representatives.\(^{1026}\)

### 3.2.4 Patterns of Interaction

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

As a result of the more repressive policy after the Tiananmen massacre, and the regulations for registration in particular, a more complex landscape of Christian groups within the Protestant context emerged. Rejecting state control of content and staffing of religious activities, many congregations preferred a rather insecure, illegal existence and were driven underground. Against this background, several Christian-inspired groups emerged. The official Protestant Church departed from their at least ambiguous stance towards autonomous forms of religious activities, and—also as a result of rising pressure—joined forces with the government to denounce these activities. However, the outspoken and liberal Bishop Ding was able to survive and continue to battle for a more autonomous church.\(^{1027}\) Autonomous churches became a major focus of confrontation from both the official church and the party-state. Various accounts of waves of arrests and closures of communities were reported, especially in Henan, Zhejiang, and Fujian, which were provinces with a very high level of religious activities.\(^{1028}\) However, some local TSPM pastors were unhappy with the more repressive policy issued by local BRAs and tried to argue about their sense and effectiveness.\(^{1029}\)

As a result, some house churches distanced themselves from the Three-Self-Movement on several grounds in an open letter:

> First, because the leader of the two [Three-Self and house churches] are different: the Three-Self is headed by the government and manages the

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\(^{1026}\) “Zhinenggong zhaokai di liu jie quanguo kexue xueshu jioaliu dahui (Zhinenggong Opens the Sixth National Science Scholarly Exchange Conference),” \(ZGQG\) 3 (1998), p. 36.  
\(^{1027}\) Hunter and Chan 1993 (see note 166), p. 98.  
\(^{1028}\) Ibid., p. 103.  
\(^{1029}\) Lambert 1994 (see note 164), pp. 231–32.
church with religious policy. The house churches are headed by Christ and manage their congregation with the guidance of the Bible.

Second, because the personnel of the two is not the same: The Three-Self personnel must be all approved by the Religious Affairs Bureaus. The house churches are equipped with the grace of God and the truth. They are acknowledged by the church and established by the Soul of Christ.

Third, the foundations of the two are not the same: the Three-Self is a product of a governmental initiative of a new third resolution, and a mainstream based on Social Gospel by Wu Yangzong. Some founders of the Three-Self are not Christians . . .

Fourth, the path of the two is not the same. The Three-Self practice unity of politics and religion. They follow the religious policy of the government and participate in political movements. The house churches advocate the separation of politics and religion. Based on the principles of the Bible, they submit themselves to the government. But if the two are in conflict, they “follow the Spirit, and not people” . . .

Fifth, the mission of the two in the not the same. The Three-Self church can undertake religious activities within registered churches. They put themselves a prison. The house churches following a big mission, they proselytize and build up churches under great difficulties to develop fast. 1030

Interaction between the official as well as nonofficial communities and the Christian-inspired groups also increased and became more hostile. Various congregations have reported on the clever and sometimes even aggressive recruitment tactics of the “Church of the Almighty God”:

Beginning in 1998, the church met with attacks from “Lightning” and lots of fellow workers and followers were confused and led astray. Over the last two years, their influence has been everywhere in the towns and countryside. They use all sorts of reasons to attack the church and the fellow workers, such as begging for food, pretending to be looking for someone, and mending shoes and umbrellas. Sometimes they even use threats and intimidations. 1031

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1030 “Zhongguo jiating jiaohui dui zhengfu, zongjiao zhengce ji sanzi de taidu” (see note 618).
Moreover, the house churches also clearly dissociated themselves from some heretical teachings, like the “Church of the Almighty God” or the “Group of the Three Servants,” which had become the target of repression. The house churches likewise turned against those groups accepting only some books out of the Bible or advocating a gradation of the Trinity (father is better than the son than the Holy Spirit).  

The arrest of Xu Yongze, leader of the prominent “Born Again Group,” in March 1997 stirred lively discussions among the house churches as to whether his grouping should be considered “heretical” or not. Samuel Lin, a house church leader from Guangdong, has been one of Xu’s most zealous critics, while others have defended him.  

In the context of three specific groups, accounts do give more concrete evidence for activities that oppose state organizations: the “Group of the Shouters” is said to have founded the “Mainland China Administrative Base” (Zhonghua dalu xingzheng zhishizhan) in Anhui in 1994 and issued the slogan “fight for the state power, establish the power of the king, conquer the power of Satan.” They were also said to have shouted at meetings: “the Church faces three big enemies, first the ‘Three-Self Movement,’ second the Communist Party, and third the government” and “we will kill the one who listens to the government.” Members of the “Teachings of the Supreme God” are said to have held their first “national congress” in Hunan province in April 1996 in order to broaden their organizational structure. The leader had announced the establishment of a “Heavenly Kingdom” with “the Supreme God as core leader” and propagated the “encirclement of the cities from the countryside.” Additionally, as it has been formerly pointed out in Chapter 3.2.1.3.2.3, several groups’ writings also point to at least latent political ambitions. Still, it is difficult to judge whether these were originally initiated by the groups or were more a reaction to rising state persecution. In the second phase, the government systematically persecuted several groups. From 1990 through 1992, the “Society of Disciples” became a target.

1034 Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 192.
1035 Chen and Dai 1999 (see note 738), p. 251.
by authorities in Shaanxi, Hubei, and Sichuan. In 1991, the party-state kicked off the fight against the “Teachings of the Soul” in Jiangsu, Anhui, and Henan. The “Society of Disciples” again became the target of concerted action within the provinces of Shaanxi, Hubei, and Sichuan. In May 1995, the authorities acted against the “Group of the Shouters” as well as the “Administrative Deacon Station of Mainland China” in sixty-seven large and middle-sized cities all over China. In 1996 and 1998, the group of the “Established King” and the “Teachings of Supreme God” were successfully dissipated with the execution of their leaders. Several groups were declared illegal based on their identification as “heretical teachings.”

Table 9: Groups Declared Illegal by the Chinese Party-State during the 1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Handling Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group of the Anointed Kind</td>
<td>08/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Scope Church</td>
<td>11/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples Society</td>
<td>11/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Almighty God</td>
<td>11/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of the Shouters</td>
<td>11/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Deacon’s Station</td>
<td>11/1995</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Mainland China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of Three Grades of Servants</td>
<td>03/1999</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On a local level, however, party cadres even joined several groups. According to the study on the membership structure in a Sichuan province district, nearly five percent of the followers were party members. In certain places where the community is “especially active,” members recruited within the ranks of the “good-hearted worker” (shangong; responsible for the daily life of the peasants) have been known to take over the functions of the party cadres. They have to obtain permission from the “Society of Disci-

\[1036\] Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 274. 
\[1037\] Li 2000 (see note 344), p. 214.
ples” to hold meetings. Additionally, party cadres joined the group in some villages. In a Shaanxi province district, one hundred party members and eighty delegates of the People’s Congress were members of the local “Society of Disciples” in 1995.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

As regards the realm of Qigong, throughout the nineteen-nineties various patterns of interactions coexisted: on the one hand, critical actions of societal as well as of party-state actors against the Qigong movement emerged. On the other had, party-state actors still kept supporting various Qigong groups. Furthermore, Qigong groups entered actively into various interaction patterns with the party-state. The unfolding confrontation between FLG and the Chinese authorities dominated the field towards the end of the 1990s. Chen has noted the increasing mutual perception and competition among Qigong groups. On the one side, some Qigong masters might have felt that entrepreneurial self-promotion has gone too far, stirring rising criticism of the authorities and endangering the entire Qigong field. On the other side, having been part of spiritual market with several dozen styles of Qigong competing for practitioners, the presence of widely popular masters was often regarded anxiously.

1040 Chen 2003 (see note 225), pp. 171ff.
1041 Due to a lack of data it is difficult to sketch a clear and systematic picture of how the rising competition between Qigong groups affected the follower’s choice. Yu Guanyuan, who investigated the situation of FLG in Suzhou, mentioned that due to the former strong influence of Shen Chang Qigong, FLG couldn’t develop a strong foothold in that area. He claims this on two grounds: first, the authorities lead an effective campaign against Shen and were therefore aware of such dangers, and second, “. . . this stuff of Li Hongzhi, people in Suzhou were already familiar with from Shen Chang. Therefore no matter whether fall for Shen’s line or not, they could easily see through Li’s stuff.” However, other indicators point to a possible strengthening or an easier establishment of some Qigong groups adding on already existing resources brought up by former groups. The rising numbers of Qigong also enabled the emergence of spin-off groups. The rising number of Qigong groups and mutual perception enabled some groups to profit from or even take over resources of other groups. This happened either through direct personal linkages, as adherents broke away from one group and founded their own one, or by usage of ideational, organizational, or action-related resources which became part of a publicly accessible pool of resources. Yu stated that Li Hongzhi was probably influenced by Shen Chang as Shen firstly established encirclement of authority buildings as a means for protest. See Guanyuan Yu, “Cong Shen Chang ‘xinxi cha’ dao Li Hongzhi ‘Falungong’ (From Shen Chang’s ‘Message Tea’ to Li Hongzhis ‘Falungong’), in Yu 2002 (see note 186), pp. 155–59, here p. 157.
Societal actors still remain the driving force behind critical activities against the Qigong movement. With the participation of people like Sima Nan, the activities became more action-orientated, going beyond the formerly written criticism and denouncements. The appearance of the action-orientated, provocative, and charismatic Sima Nan stirred a league of harsh verbal counterreactions from supporters of “extraordinary abilities.” Articles titled “Declaring War on Sima Nan” revealed that the provocative questioning of “extraordinary abilities” was perceived by some involved actors as an authoritative challenge and attack of personal status. Whereas early articles dealt with issues, later reports focused on denouncing Sima Nan’s personality and his motives. Other examples were Zhang Honglin and Guo Zhengyi, who also engaged in direct encounters with Qigong masters. As the official stance on Qigong grew increasingly critical, the activists used these newly emerging spaces to direct their fight against Pseudo Science towards the official political agenda. He Zuoxiu, Guo Zhengyi, and Gong Yuzhi gave a speech at the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 8th Session of the Political Consultative Conference in March 1997 on the activities for legally fighting against feudal superstition. Zhonggong leader Zhang Hongbao was quick to denounce any kind of criticism from societal actors and didn’t hesitate to bring up lawsuits against them.

As in the first phase, Qigong masters advertised their (claimed) links with political and military authorities as a means of increasing their legitimacy and reputation. Zhang Xiaoping claimed to have healed Deng Xiaoping from a grave illness which he had contracted after the suppression of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. Out of gratitude Deng signed an inscriptions for him and even offered him a car and a room at the Diaoyutai Guest

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House if he would act as personal Qigong master to high-level cadres.\textsuperscript{1046} Zhinengong was said to “have placed itself under the guidance of the party.” Since its establishment, the group had set up a party branch within its organization and recruited new members.\textsuperscript{1047} Likewise, Yuanjigong is reported to have set up a party branch at their base in Hubei province and even succeed in attracting new members for the CCP. Zhang received an award prize for his “excellent private technology business” in 1993.\textsuperscript{1048} Li Hongzhi also successfully cultivated relationships with political leaders and the CCP just after having launched his teachings.\textsuperscript{1049}

The party-state’s attitude towards the Qigong movement has become two-fold and has varied among actors: support and suppression have coexisted. Individual party-state officials continued to support Qigong groups, for example the Vice-Commander of the Nanjing Military Zone, Zhang Ming, who reported the healing effects of Xianggong to the Minister of Defense, Chao Haotian, who likewise praised Qianggong. Dazanggong was promoted by the head of the National Sports Commission, Wu Shaozu, and also by other societal actors from the realm of Qigong such as Zhang Zhenhua or Feng Lida.\textsuperscript{1050} Jiang Zemin is said to have invited a member of Zhonggong to treat him for arthritis and neck pains in 1992.\textsuperscript{1051} The tenth anniversary of the Zhinenggong Health Center was celebrated in the presence of high ranking cadres, for instance from the National Political Consultative Conference, the provincial government of Hebei, the National Sports Administration, along with local party cadres. All significant state media likewise participated in the celebration.\textsuperscript{1052}

After the first official stipulation in October 1989, the party-state started to act against Qigong masters. The first arrest of Qigong master Zhang Ping

\textsuperscript{1046} Shen et al. 2000 (see note 179), p. 247.
\textsuperscript{1049} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 222.
\textsuperscript{1050} Li 1994 (see note 681).
followed just four months after the publication of the document.1053 The case of Zhang Xiangyu was another early example of the changing winds. On April 14, 1990, she was “taken into custody and examined”—a term referring to migrants without legal residence—and formally arrested on December 5 by the Police Bureau of the Haidian District in Beijing. Her arrest was preceded by a violation against the then valid TCM State Administration regulations. For publicly use of clinical Qigong, permission from local health and TCM administrations must be obtained.1054 The arrest of Zhang was propagated widely and with great effort as to give a warning sign to other masters as well as to practitioners.1055 As a result, some of the famous Qigong masters having emerged in the first phase, like Zhang Yusheng or Yan Xin, were forced out of the public sphere, at least for a certain time. Yan Xin left China in June 1990 and only came back in March 1994. This had been arranged by the former head of the China Qigong Research Society, Zhang Zhenhun, as he wanted to keep Yan away from rising criticism against Qigong. Besides the rising concern about harm caused by Qigong practice, some voices called for a connection between Qigong and the protest movement in June 1989.1056 In interviews no reasons were solicited or provided for this long stay outside of China. Interestingly, after his comeback Yan issued critical comments against the development of Qigong in China, especially the lax registration procedure of Qigong groups by the China Qigong Science Research Society.1057 Likewise, Zhang Hongbao’ International Qigong Science Co. was closed in 1994 by local Beijing municipal authorities, and the police received a warrant to arrest him. The reasons for this act remain unclear. Zhang had to flee and to restructure his movement in other parts of China. However, from 1995 to 1998 many Zhonggong organizations were investigated.1058 

Ke Yunlu’s book Great Qigong Master (da gongshi), a bestseller in 1989, was

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1053 “Jia fozi Zhang Xiaoping luowangji” (see note 729), pp. 425–30.
1055 Ibid., p. 76.
1056 Besides the rising concern about harm caused by Qigong practice, some voices mentioned a connection between the Qigong and the protest movement in June 1989. According to Palmer, there is no evidence that Qigong played any role in the 1989 urban protest movement. See Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 166.
1057 Kai Shi, “Yan Xin Dashi gui guo fangtan lu (Record of Interviewing Returned Great Master Yan Xin),” ZGQG 8 (1994), pp. 8–12.
1058 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 218.
the first known publication supportive of the “extraordinary abilities” censored by the state. Going beyond the fictional story of a Qigong master searching for truth and spiritual powers, the book embodied critical commentaries on contemporary life, the loss of values, the decadent lifestyle, and the corruptive practices within the party-state bureaucracy. The world of Qigong was juxtaposed against the existing social and political order perceived by the party-state as a threat to their legitimacy and power. A year after the book was published, authorities raided bookstalls, and they asked larger bookstores to stop selling it. In both January and July 1997, the Ministry of Public Security ordered two national investigations on accusations that FLG were involved in “illegal religious activities.” The report didn’t uncover any results. A year later, another investigation—this time motivated by the potential of being a “heretical cult”—likewise ended without any results. However, party-state policy towards the Qigong was not consistent. In 1995, more than eighty dominantly male Qigong teachers were invited to the Beidaihe Qigong Sanatorium to reexamine their theoretical and practical skills. Courses for retraining of Qigong teachers also took place. Also, Wu Shaozu and Zhang Zhenhuan, having emerged as two key figures, continued to promote Qigong and largely ignored newly issued regulations. Wu Shaozu showed increased effort at promoting Qigong sports networks, protecting discussions, and researching “extraordinary abilities” as well as at integrating Qigong into the broader fields of sports. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the necessary legal and organizational foundation for a strengthened administration of the Qigong sector, the party-state as a whole seemed to be confident about its capacity to manage the Qigong sector in an effective and non-confronting way. Societal actors

1060 “Li Shi huidu (Looking Back at History),” Falungong Document Script of a Radio Program Broadcast Outside China, cited after Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 265. Palmer points to a potential internal struggle between a supportive FLG faction and critics inside the Public Security departments. It is certain that FLG also had followers within the security apparatus. Without support from the Public Security departments, the encirclement of Zhongnanhai in April 1999 could not have been accomplished.
1062 Zhang 1996 (see note 181); Palmer 2007 (see note 8), p. 173. Interestingly, it can be noted that the chapter on Feng Lida is omitted in the printed version of the book. This reinforces the claim that Feng was able to protect her position due to high-level contacts.
as well as parts of the Qigong movement itself appeared ready to cooperate with the party-state: whether motivated by a win-win calculation and/or due to personal entanglement is difficult to judge from the sources available.

Gradually, a consensus between some party-state actors, societal actors, and Qigong masters emerged indicating that too much swindling with the Qigong sectors made several actors’ to worry about their interests. Voices calling for a reclassification of the various schools and an end to deification of masters as well as of quick profit making could be heard from all three sectors. After the stipulation of the “two methods” in spring 1998, the magazine *China Qigong Science* presided over an informal discussion meeting to exchange views. Participants included the head of the Qigong section from the Center for Wushu Administration, Hao Huaimu, Vice-Heads of the Council of China Qigong Science Research Society, Qiu Yucai and Guan Qian, along with masters from various Qigong groups like Xianggong, Zhi-neng Qigong, Yan Xin Qigong. The report on the meeting painted a harmonious picture, but also revealed some disagreement related to registration procedures.

In the middle of concerted interactions in search of a new administrative working base as well as ideational consensus, the FLG incident started to unfold. Interestingly, initial party-state investigation into FLG was stirred by followers themselves. As a reaction to several letters from former FLG pupils, the National Sports Commission assigned a team of medical experts to investigate the effects of FLG on people’s health in 1996. Around 12,000 practitioners

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1063 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 175.
1065 In early 1994, Song Bingchen and other former pupils of Li Hongzhi wrote letters to the China Qigong Science Research Society, the National Sports Administration, the State Administration of Religious Affairs, CCTV, and other media as well as local organizations in Changchun to uncover deceits of Li. In their letters the following points were mentioned: the fabrication of Li’s birthday, his extraordinary abilities, his announcement concerning the explosion of the world, attack on other people, his problematic treatment of illnesses, setting up a religious organization in the name of Qigong, mind control of followers, and swindling of their money. Their move probably had been motivated by the changes which Li Hongzhi had made to his doctrine, especially concerning the ban of healing actions by practitioners. As one of his earliest disciplines, Li taught them to heal, and they have gained a certain influence among other practitioners in Changchun. Therefore, they had planned to open a FLG clinic, which Li forbade; see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 246.
form Guangdong were asked about the previous medical records and their physical status while practicing FLG. 97.9 percent claimed that their health improved due to FLG. The team report estimated that such health benefits could save the state some 1,700 Yuan per person per year—a total of 12 million Yuan. 1066

According to their own report, the China Qigong Science Research Society received several letters from FLG practitioners conveying the spread of superstitions like apocalyptic ones, worshipping of Li, and problematic aspects within Li’s book *Shifting Dharma Wheel (Zhuan Falun)*, and they thrice invited him for discussion, but Li refused to come. On September 1996, the Society decided to terminate the registration of FLG and published its decision in the magazine *China Qigong Science*. On November 10, 1997, they reiterated their position, although FLG actively protested against the decision. 1067

According to FLG sources, Li first notified the Society himself in September 1994 that he would terminate training sessions in China to devote more time to the study of Buddhism. In March 1996, Li instructed his pupils Ye Hao and Wang Zhiwen, two *Falungong* leaders in Beijing, to file for an official withdrawal from the China Qigong Scientific Research Society. 1068

At the same time, a request by FLG followers to register a new FLG Cultivation Research Society—representing only followers and not Li—was rejected by various party-state organizations. As Li informed the Society that there would be no more training seminars in China in September 1996, the research Society terminated his membership in November 1996. 1069

Likewise, at the end of 1997, the FLG followers reported to the Ministries of Civil Affairs and Public Security that their attempts to register a new society failed and they would no longer apply for any formal registra-

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1066 “Lishi huigu” (see note 1066).
1068 Li was among other Qigong masters unsatisfied with the administrative monitoring of the Research Society, including the claiming of large shares (up to 40 percent) of the Qigong groups’ income; see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 180.
1069 Ye 1999 (see note 856); “Falungong zhenshi de gushi” (see note 795), cited after Tong 2002 (see note 791), pp. 640ff.
tion. However, the FLG Research Society continued to issue notices until the end of July 1999.

On the July 24, 1996 the National Press and Publication Administration issued the “Notification on Immediate Recollecting and Stopping ‘Chinese Falungong’ and Five Other Publications” (Guanyu liji shouji fengcun ‘Zhongguo Falungong’ deng wuzhong shuji de tongzhi). In spring 1998, critical accounts of FLG with cases of psychological or physical cases emerged. In April 1998, the Urumuqi Evening News published an article “Please Look What Matters is FLG,” providing details of death cases related to a refusal to take medicine. Afterwards nearly 3,900 followers demonstrated in front of the newspaper agencies.

The impetus of the following heated interaction between FLG and the party-state started with a written statement by He Zouxiu. His article “I Don’t Endorse Qigong Practice by Youth” (Wo bu zancheng qingshaonian lian qigong) was published in the Tianjin-based magazine Youth Science and Technology Reading (qingshaonian keji bolan) in April 1999. In the article, He rejects Qigong practice by youth on two grounds: first, several hour-long meditations requiring sitting and cessation of thinking can harm young people’s bodies and minds; second, Qigong practice could induce deviation and mental diseases. He goes on to elaborate on cases of nine people having committed suicide due to a conviction that could “walk on clouds.” He then cited the case of a doctoral student at his research institute, who twice had to be sent to mental hospital after having lost his sanity from practicing FLG.

1070 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 248.
1071 Gebing Qiu, “Woguo de xiejiao fanzui yu fan xiejiao lifa (China’s Heretical Crimes and Anti-Heretical Legislation),” in Shehui wenti yanjiu congshu bianjihui weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 130ff.. After Li Hongzhi left for the United States, some of his followers started lobbying the party-state to reregister their group with the Qigong society, but the authorities had already started to question various aspects of FLG. See Powers and Lee (see note 824), p. 263.
1072 “Sanbai duo ci weigong de zhizhi mudi (Political Aim of More Than Three Hundred Encirclements),” in “Falungong” jiu shi xiejiao” (see note 743). Already back in 1998, some thousand FLG practitioners have demonstrated around the Beijing TV Tower against critical reports in FLG. Every time a critical report appeared, FLG followers staged a small-scale protest. For an overview of FLG demonstration in 1998–99 see Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 255.
The reaction of FLG was prompt. In the name “ten thousand followers of FLG in Tianjian” a letter was sent to the editors of the magazine. They mentioned three severe problems concerning the published article:

1. Violation of the official guideline for media reporting on Human Body Science.
2. Violation of Paragraph 38 of the Constitution protecting personal dignity and reputation.
3. Violation of moral standards in the media sector, although FLG assumed that the magazine had published this false information “indeliberately” (contrary to He himself, who was denounced as acting deliberately).\textsuperscript{1074}

Based on the statement above, FLG raised three demands: first, an apology and rectification through a report based on objective evaluation; second, recall of the issue in question; and third, public notification of the wrong content and prohibition of further usage for citation.

FLG sent copies to the Propaganda Department of CCP, the Tianjin City Education Commission, General Administration of Press and Publication of the PRC, Tianjin Bureau of Administration of Press and Publication, Sports Commission of Tianjin, and China Journalist Association. Additionally, FLG followers “of all ages” kept calling on and visiting the magazine’s publishing institution, Tianjin Educational College, repeating the stated requests and threatening authorities not to underestimate this issue otherwise “the impact would be unimaginable.”\textsuperscript{1075}

On April 21, 1999, FLG followers, instructed by the Vice-Head of the Beijing guidance station, Wang Zhiwen, assembled at the Tianjin Educational College. During the following two days, the number of followers rose to over 2,000 and 6,000 respectively. Later on, some 2,000 adherents also demonstrated in front of the party and state organs in Tianjin.\textsuperscript{1076}

According to official accounts, the initial impulse to transfer the demonstrations to Beijing was raised by two leading figures of the Falun Dafa Re-

\textsuperscript{1074} It is important to mention that until the ban by the party-state in July, FLG always used legal channels for protest as well as sticking to a rather nonaggressive language; see Powers and Lee (see note 824), p. 265.

\textsuperscript{1075} The article of He, the letter of FLG, and two Tianjin Education College reports are reprinted in He 1999 (see note 619), pp. 97–103.

\textsuperscript{1076} Aimin Niu et al., “Li Hongzhi cehua zhihui ‘4-25’ feifa juji shijian zhenxiang (The Truth about Illegal Assembly Event ‘4-25’ Planned and Directed by Li Hongzhi),” in “‘Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao” (see note 743).
search Society, by the names of Li Chang and Ji Liewu: “These things in Tianjin can’t be carried to some institutions in Beijing, one must look for the central [party] and the state council,” as an article cites Ji as having stated. However, official accounts portray the event as having been brought on rather spontaneously, resulting from the developments in Tianjin and not having been planned long-term.

According to FLG, three requests vis-à-vis the party-state should be brought up: first, the relief of the arrested; second, provision of a tolerant atmosphere for FLG; and third, permission to publish FLG material. The organizing team, comprised of six people, agreed on Li’s leaving to Hong Kong on the morning of April 24 in order to shield him from possible consequences. However, Li remained in continual contact with the organizing team via telephone.

According to official accounts, not until the afternoon of April 24 were FLG leaders from other provinces informed via telephone about the planned event. Organizers might have chosen this short-term notice as a means of avoiding a possible whistle-blowing or leaking of information. But it also reinforced claims by the government on the remarkable organizational capacity of FLG. Starting late in the evening of April 24, small groups of people appeared at various locations throughout the government district. In the morning, several adherents were received by the Petition Bureau of the General Office of CCP and State Council. After it turned out that they had not been informed about the FLG requests, five members of the organizational team finally entered into consultations with the officials.

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1077 Ibid., p. 35. According to the logic of the petition system—appealing to higher instances—this has been a common practice by many Chinese petitioners. For an overview of the Chinese petition system, see “Seeking Justice: Is China’s Administrative Petition System Broken? Carnegie Endowment,” April 6, 2006, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=870&&prog=zc (accessed February 20, 2008).

1078 Li went on to sketch further details emphasizing the necessity of letting average followers be in the first line. Leading persons of the Research Society and guidance stations were not supposed to get involved. To convince and stimulate the participation of a large number of followers, rumors concerning arrests and death of FLG practitioners in Tianjin were spread via guidance stations. Additionally, practitioners were told that they could “increase their skills” (zhang gong) and “erase their bad karma” (xiaoye) and work towards “perfect cultivation” as they participate in this “Qi field” (qi chang).

1079 Later on reports appeared in the overseas Chinese press—which were after 2005 also picked up by FLG sources—that the demonstrators didn’t have the intention of encircling Zhongnanhai but that they were led there by the police as part of trap designed by Luo Gan, then of the Ministry of Public Security. See Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 270.
The FLG put forth four demands:

1. An announcement that FLG is a legitimate organization; recognition of the legitimate status of FLG; provision of venues for practicing.
2. The release of forty-five followers, who had been arrested the previous week during the protests in Tianjin, being that FLG is an antigovernmental organization.
3. An announcement that the siege is not antigovernment activity but rather an attempt at seeking support from the party-state.
4. Participants involved in this present activity should not be persecuted.\textsuperscript{1080}

After they returned from the office in the evening, they consulted with Li on whether or not to call off the demonstration. Official accounts depict the decision to end the demonstration as a kind of miscommunication: either the members of the organization team—advertently or not—made Li believe that although they hadn’t yet achieved results, consultations were supposed to continue the next day. Li was cited as having left the decision to Li Chang, who called on followers to leave. After Li had learned on April 26 that consultations wouldn’t continue, he was said to have been enraged. In the afternoon, he left Hong Kong for Sydney.\textsuperscript{1081}

It is important to mention that FLG stuck to legal channels to solve the issue, to the above-mentioned petitioning system. Although Li must have estimated that the CCP would perceive the encirclement of Zhongnanhai as a highly political act, he basically framed it as “protection of Dharma.” And since, according to his own instructions, FLG followers should not engage in politics or political activities, Li had to offer a convincing label for the necessity of the action.

As the siege rose, Luo Gan, responsible for security issues, was instructed by Jiang Zemin to convene an emerging meeting. Premier Zhu Rongji joined Luo and other cadres from security and Beijing offices as the main representative during talks with Falungong practitioners on April 25. Later that evening, Jiang Zemin wrote a letter to the party’s top leadership and framed FLG as the largest collective action since 1989. He became one of the driving forces behind the initial phase of handling Falungong, revealing


\textsuperscript{1081} Niu, “Li Hongzhi” (see note 1082).
the graveness of the challenge felt by the party-state. Subsequently, three meetings of the Politburo—on April 26, June 7, and June 17—approved further steps for the campaign against *Falungong*.\textsuperscript{1082}

Whether, and how, communication with FLG during this initial phase continued has remained largely in the dark. However, a statement by the spokesman of the Petition Bureau of the General Office of CCP and State Council—containing four points on the dialogue with FLG petitioners published by Xinhua on June 14—gives at least some hints that the leadership kept communications going. As the “610 office,” responsible for the coordination of the crackdown on FLG, is said to have been set up on June 19,\textsuperscript{1083} and the dialogue seemed to have no crucial impact on policy decisions.

On June 14, the official news agency Xinhua published a statement by the spokesman of the Petition Bureau of the General Office of CCP and State Council containing four points on the dialogue with FLG petitioners. He refrained from passing any direct judgement on FLG and only commented on the present situation. First, the spokesman called on the population to remain calm and refrain from listening and even trusting ongoing rumors spread by a minority of FLG practitioners, like “party members who practice FLG will be expelled,” or “China prepares to use the 500 million US-dollar trade surplus to extradite [Li Hongzhi] home [from the US].” Second, he reiterated the policy of the party-state towards Health Qigong. Third, the spokesman requested a study of the issued *Questions and Answers for Legal Knowledge on Protecting Social Stability*, a book published on May 25, 1999.\textsuperscript{1084} Fourth, people were advised to contribute to the stabilization of the situation.\textsuperscript{1085}

\textsuperscript{1082} James Tong, “Anatomy of Regime Repression in China,” *Asien Survey* 42, No. 6 (2002), pp. 795–820, here pp. 796ff. For a detailed description of dealings with FLG after the siege, see also “Handling the Falungong Case” (see note 1086), pp. 407–70.


One week later, on June 21, 1999, a commentary on “Upholding Science, Discarding Superstition” was published in the RMRB. The articles picked up only familiar concepts and frameworks, including criticism on the behavior of some cadres and institutions as related to engaging in superstitious activities. The only hint of the challenge posed by FLG was a remark on the power of science and superstition. “Concerning the accumulation of money and the development of history, the power of science has never been stronger than today. In this respect, the power of ignorance and superstition has never been more absurd and ridiculous, petty, and low.”

Was this perception also shared by other Qigong groups? The only known direct reaction to the staged encirclement of FLG from within the Qigong movement was a stipulation issued by the group “Empty Soul Qigong.” On April 28, the “Empty Soul Qigong Committee of China Sports Qigong Research Society” (Zhongguo tiyu Qigong yanjiuhui) issued a “Notification on ‘Ten Prohibitions’” (Fabu ‘shibuzhun’ tongzhi). It said:

The Xulinggong Committee asks everybody to protect the social reputation of Xulinggong like one’s own eyes. Every guidance station must firmly implement the “ten prohibitions” of Xulinggong. Specifications are as following:

1. It is prohibited to publish any opinions which are not in line with the party headquarters direction by Jiang Zemin.
2. It is prohibited to watch or participate in protests, demonstrations, or sit-in activities.
3. It is prohibited to circulate, paste, or store wallpapers.
4. It is prohibited to watch or listen to foreign counterrevolutionary radio or TV programs; no listening or believing rumors.
5. It is prohibited to participate in any religious group or religious activities.
6. It is prohibited to utilize the name of Xulinggong to soothsay, to practice geomancy, to burn incense, to pray to gods, or to do spirit dancing.
7. It is prohibited to call oneself “great master,” or to open enrollment classes with costs in the name of “pupil of Ye Tingyang” or “General Qigong Performance Group.”

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8. It is prohibited to open up a clinic for fee-based treatment without a medical license from the Health Bureau and a business license from the Industry and Commerce Bureau.

9. It is prohibited to utilize Xulinggong to promote any goods or to stage any activities to worship masters.

10. It is prohibited to have any relationship with illegal societal groups or politically problematic persons.  

Finally, on July 22, 1999, the party-state banned FLG as an “illegal group” and a week later a warrant for the arrest of Li Hongzhi was issued. With the ban on Zhonggong in September 1999, and following additional stipulations issued by the state council, it quickly became clear that the party-state was about to widen the campaign against FLG to other Qigong groups and heretical teachings.

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1088 Speculations have arisen as to why it took the CCP leadership three months—ranging from the demonstration on April 25 until finally declaring FLG illegal—to decide on and to set up how to handle the FLG incident. Tong suggests that this was mainly due to the necessity of gathering intelligence on FLG. See Tong 2002 (see note 1088).

1089 Sun and Li 2003 (see note 356), p. 9.
3.3 Phase 3 (Since 2000): Field Restructuring

The ban of the FLG movement on July 1999 marked a major challenge for the very existence of the spiritual-religious field as it implied growing radicalization and antagonism between all actors. Actors, especially within the Qigong field, had to mobilize resources to assure and justify their position. The party-state, the societal actors, as well the groups themselves faced the challenge of enforcing their stance without antagonizing other actors or creating a strong reaction. The previous engagement of official as well as societal actors with Qigong added to the difficulty of this task. The self-immolation of declared followers of FLG on Chinese New Year 2001 at Tiananmen Square proved to be a dramatic climax to these dynamics.

Actors within the religious field in general had to carefully balance their acknowledgement of the ban and the danger of FLG against the prevention of a spillover to their sector. The party-state and the societal actors had quickly differentiated FLG from religion in order to ensure their own existence. Although the existing Christian-inspired groups themselves had already managed to survive in a hostile environment, the new pressure made them turn against each other in the struggle for position. Cases of kidnapping by the “Church of the Almighty God” and those of murder linked to the “Three Grade of Servants Groups” can be understood as products of these developments.
3.3.1 Party-State

3.3.1.1 Organizational Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Giving the increased pressure from the ban of FLG and its declaration as “heretical teaching” the public security organizations have continued to play the dominant role in dealing with Christian-inspired groups. At some local levels, special “anti-evil-cult” squads have been established within the relevant departments of public security agencies.\(^{1090}\) They might correspond to the “610” offices, originally created for dealing with FLG and later on having been put in charge of dealing with “heretical groups” in general (see 3.3.1.2).

Select information suggests that the party-state has put more emphasis on National Bureau of Religious Affairs’ expertise. The director of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ye Xiaowen, himself said that the assignment of his officials to develop a new theoretical concept of religion and socialism was rather usual.\(^{1091}\) Additionally, it has been reported that the National Bureau of Religious Affairs has recently instigated a new department to deal with “new religions.” But the precise motives for the establishment, the tasks, and the goals of this department remain unclear.\(^{1092}\) And religious affairs offices are still not involved in identifying and investigating potentially “heretical groups.” This belongs to the work segment of local public

\(^{1090}\) Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 348).

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Given the pronounced ban of FLG, the party-state was facing three challenges. First, effectively enforcing the prohibition of FLG, second, circumventing possible resistance from within the state apparatus which had been supportive of FLG and/or Qigong, and third, restructuring and effectively regulating the overall Qigong field.

The public security sector was chosen as the main agent for dealing with FLG, pointing to a highly perceived security threat. During the first two meetings on FLG as well as within the latter Leading Group on FLG, representatives from the juristic as well as social fields, like the Ministry of Civil Affairs or the Sports Commission, were absent.\footnote{Tong 2002 (see note 1088).} Only after the strategy for the campaign against FLG was fixed did the party-state return to more administrative procedures. The ban of FLG was first officially issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which was responsible for the registration of social organizations.\footnote{The declaration of the Ministry of Security was published on the same day. However, it is mentioned only after the document of the Ministry of Civil Affairs in official Chinese publications as well as within FLG sources. See Sifabufazhixuanchuansi, ed., Yi fa jiepi “Falungong” tuji (Illustrated Book of Unmasking “Falungong” by Law) (Beijing: Falüchubanshem, 1999) as well as Zhuichapohai Falungongguojizuzhi (World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falungong, WOIPFG), “Guanyu ‘610 bangongshi’ de diaocha baogao (Investigative Report on the ‘610 Bureau’),” 2003, http://www.zhuichaguoji.org/cn/index2.php?option=content&task=view&id=64&pop=1&page=0 (accessed December 20, 2004).}
Initially, the central party leadership made all major decisions without consulting or seeking consensus within the state bureaucracy. Luo Gan and Jiang Zemin emerged as two prominent figures during the decision process. According to FLG sources, Jiang Zemin opted for the harsh measures while then Premier Zhu Rongji favored a more measured approach. That is why Jiang Zemin became the target of various lawsuits by FLG followers accusing Jiang of “slaughter” and “crimes against mankind.”

For managing the unfolding campaign against FLG and later also against other groups, the party-state established the “610 office”; its name is related to the date of its foundation, June 6.

It was initiated as an executive arm of a special ad-hoc committee on FLG. Headed by Luo Gan, the office was entrusted to working on a strategy for dealing with Falungong. Later on, this temporary work organ was reestablished as a more permanent agency and designated “Central leading group for dealing with Falungong related questions” (Chuli ‘Falungong’ wentilingdaxiaozu) under the Central Committee which was at that time headed by Li Lanqing. In September 2000, furthermore, the “Bureau for Preventing and Dealing with Heretical Teachings” (Fanfan he chuli xiejiao wenti banggongshi) was established under the State Council. These two organs are considered to be “one institution under two names” (liangge paizi,

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1097 However, only after the self-immolation event of several designated FLG followers on January 23, 2001 did the Office for Prevention and Dealing with Heretical Teachings appear in public. Liu Jing, named as acting director and then Vice-Minister for Public Security, presented his office and its portfolio at a press conference; see “Guowuyuan fanfanyuchuli xiejiaowenti bangongshi you he zhize (What kind of Duty does the Office for Prevention and Dealing with Heretical Teachings Have?),” *RMRB* (online version), February 27, 2001, http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/19/20010227/404354.html (accessed December 20, 2004). A report by *World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falungong* named Wang Maolin, Member of the Leading Group on Falungong-Related Questions, vice-head of the Leading Group of Political Propaganda as well as the Leading Group for Fighting against Pornography and Illegal Activities, as acting director; see “Zhuichao pohai Falungong guojizuzhi 2003 (see note 1095).
yige jigou)\textsuperscript{1098} and can be found on all administrative levels of the political hierarchy, mostly subordinate to the Commission on Politics and Law.\textsuperscript{1099} FLG sources suggest that the “610” offices have been part of the key agency for coordinating actions against FLG from a range of party and state agencies.\textsuperscript{1100}

Besides, or beneath, this newly created core agency, existing ministries and agencies have also been incorporated into a broad-scale state campaign against FLG, often based on inter-agency cooperation. For example, the Department of Propaganda of the CCP—often in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, the General Administration for Press and Publication, as well as the General Administration for Radio, Film, and Television—have been responsible for destroying of FLG publications, surveying the Internet, and creating various forms of anti-FLG publication material.\textsuperscript{1101} All institutions of the party-state have been engaged in study sessions denouncing FLG with the aim of uncovering potential followers.\textsuperscript{1102}

The party-state also has extended their campaign against FLG overseas. Materials and exhibitions portraying FLG as an “evil cult” have been presented via the Chinese embassies and consulates abroad. Additionally, Chinese diplomatic institutions have been obliged to undertake various meas-

\textsuperscript{1098} This explanation can even be found on city websites, for example at “Zhongong xinyishiweizhengfaweiuyuanhui (Political and Legal Committee of the Party Committee of Xinshi City),” http://www.xinyi.gov.cn/dpbm/zfw/jsjg.htm, or at “Fuyangsh 610 bangongshi (610 Office 610 of the City of Fuyang),” http://610bgs.fuyang.gov.cn (accessed December 20, 2004).

\textsuperscript{1099} Zhuichapohai Falungongguojizuzhi 2003 (see note 1095).

\textsuperscript{1100} Sarah Cook, “China’s Secret 6-10 office,” Compassion 6 (2007), pp. 13–16.


\textsuperscript{1102} “Jianjue guanche Zhongyang zongzhi shenru pipan ‘FLG’ zuotan hui (Firmly Carrying Out the Central Decision: Discussion on Deeply Criticizing ‘FLG’),” Qiushi 845, no. 16 (1999), pp. 10–16.
ures to enforce the campaign against FLG, including blacklisting _Falungong_ adherents who wish to visit China, refusing to renew Chinese nationals’ visas, confiscating passports, spreading anti-FLG materials on campuses, influencing college student club activities, and assigning people to spy on FLG practitioners.  

Initially fully engaged with the campaign against FLG, the party-state has started to restructure the Qigong field. The former core agency in charge of dealing with social activities of Qigong groups and schools, the China Qigong Research Society, was closed down after the FLG ban. Like in the second phase, but now with more strictness, the party-state wanted to limit Qigong activities to the medical sector. Administrative management of the Qigong sector was divided into two or three sectors. According to a regulation issued by the Ministry of Health on July 10, 2000, the National Administration for Traditional Chinese Medicine has been named responsible for the supervision of the whole Qigong therapy sector. For the sector of “healthy body” (_jianshen_) Qigong, the National Sports Administration functions as administrative head. On June 5, 2001, the Center for the Administration of Health Qigong (_Jianshen Qigong guanli zhongxin_) was founded, replacing the former Center of Wushu Qigong.  

The party-state has also reestablished quasi-state social institutions like the “China Health Qigong Association” (_Zhongguo jianshen Qigong xiehui_) in 2001. The association should serve as a belt between party-state and Qigong population and is intended to initiate and monitor research and

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1104 Zhongguojianshen Qigong xiehui, “Qigong, nuli manzu renmin duoyuanhua tiyu jianshen xuqiu (Qigong, Great Effort to Fulfil the Multiple Requirements for Sports and Fitness of the People),” http://www.qingyunju.com/qigong (accessed February 20, 2007).

1105 Due to the strong institutional drive and influence from the party-state, these institutions will be grouped under “party-state” in this phase.
Qigong activities. Likewise, they are also in charge of organizing training classes and publishing relevant material.\footnote{1106} The China Association of Medicine Qigong (\textit{Zhongguo yixue Qigong xuehui}) serves as the pendant in the other sector of Qigong. According to their own webpage, it has been approved by Ministry of Health and the National Administration for TCM as well as already registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs back in 1993. However, the necessary reregistration was completed in August 2002. Its tasks focus on research and study projects.\footnote{1107}

\section*{3.3.1.2 Ideational Resources}

\textbf{CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS}

As the Qigong sector, previously overall supported and embraced by the state, came under pressure and suspicion, the ideational frame of the religious field that had previously already been suspiciously viewed faced severe challenges as well.

Concerning the overall religious field, the concept of “... actively guiding the mutual adaptation of religion and socialism” has remained the general framework for policy towards religion. Despite the violent crackdown against FLG in 2000 and 2001, the party-state deepened cautious accommodation of religion within the above mentioned framework. Jiang Zemin, in his speech at the National Conference on Religious Affairs in December 2001, instructed officials to adhere to the principles of religious freedom and to refrain from repressing normal religious activities by

force. Jiang redefined the functional nature of religion mentioning three characteristics: first, religion has deep historical roots and will therefore survive for a long time, second, religion is closely connected with economics, cultural and political questions and is therefore an important contributor to social stability, and third, religion shapes international politics.

After 2001 a new conceptualization even emerged; the “religious theory of socialism” (shehui zhuyi de zongjiaolun). As its mastermind, Ye Xiaowen has described himself in an interview with the magazine Qiushi, the title having been quite provocative as it implies that there might be a religious theory of capitalism, of feudalism, et cetera. On top of that, why is socialism supposed to develop a theory of religion?

Although the party-state claimed ideational and organizational sovereignty over the religious realm, it clearly acknowledges positive and constructive aspects of religion, especially in the realm of morality. Besides, charity activities of religious communities as well as their engagement in the “fight against heretical teachings” is positively emphasized. This latter aspect points to a rising effort of the party-state to utilize state-sanctioned religious activities as a counterforce against “heretical teachings.” Coming from the side of Qigong, the difference between “heretical teachings” and religion in general is widely emphasized. An early article in RMRB stated: “The word

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‘teaching’ of ‘heretical teachings’ doesn’t indicate ‘religion,’ but points to some vicious preaching and vicious forces.”1111

Wang Zuoan, the vice-head of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, also clearly differentiates between “heretical teachings” and religion, rejecting a conceptualization of “heretical teachings” as “heretical and evil religion” common in the Western context. According to Wang, three features characterize the different nature of religion and “heretical teachings”: different worshipping concepts, different organizational levels, and different social functions.1112 This was also elaborated at length by the head of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ye Xiaowen.1113

Sensing potential anxiety on the side of religions concerning the harsh repression of FLG—and aiming to prevent any alignment between religious groups and FLG—the party-state was eager to stress its protection and idealistic acceptance of religion in general. Commenting on the party-state’s definition of “heretical teachings,” legal scholar He Bingsong explained that China protects “... ‘the freedom of religious belief’ and not ‘freedom of religion.’”1114 Therefore, “heretical teachings” can’t be accepted as any kind of religion. In this context, efforts to strengthen research on religion were made.1115 Likewise, the establishment and strengthening of a “united

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1114 He 2001 (see note 1111), p. 199.
1115 Some voices within the RAB fostered a stricter understanding of the adaption of religion to socialism. If religion does not adapt well and will not be a peaceful factor within the Chinese society, “it will not have a difficult life” (zongjiao de rizi bu hao guo); see Qiu 2003 (see note 1110); Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 84.
front between the Communist Party and religious circles” was defined as an important aim of party policy.\footnote{1116}

Lately, the party-state has underlined the constructive role of religion as pertains to its concept of “building a harmonious society.” Jia Qinglin, who supervises the country’s religious affairs and also acts as chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, has repeatedly stressed the contribution of religion to harmony and stability of China,\footnote{1117} indicating that concepts of ethnic unity and harmony should be advocated among religious believers. This was also stipulated by Ye Xiaowen, director of the National Administration for Religious Affairs, who framed religious believers as “active forces for building a harmonious society.”\footnote{1118}

Pan Yue, then Vice Director of the Economic Restructuring Office of the State Council, has emphasized the constructive role of religion in a far more liberal way. He emphasizes the multiple functions of religion, including contributing to the establishment of a new value and belief system.\footnote{1119}

However, the liberal line of Pan is not representative for the whole party-state. The Chinese leadership still underlines that religion should


\footnote{1117} “Religious Leaders Invited to Zhongnanhai over Chinese New Year,” \textit{Tian Feng Newsletter} (May 2006).


subordinate itself to the party-state. Wang Zuoan, Vice-Director of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, clearly stated: “This [mutual] adaptation does not mean an adaptation of the socialist society to religion, but the other way round: an adaptation of religion to the socialist society. These relations should not be turned upside down.”

In July 2006, SARA Director Ye Xiaowen, during an interview with Xinhua News Agency, pointed out that the Chinese government would work “to help the religions restrain their negative elements and promote their positive ones through enhancing management according to the law and adhering to the established practice of running religious affairs in an independent and self-support way.”

The old frame of “hostile Western forces,” allegedly having used religion to bring the Soviet Union as well Eastern Europe to a downfall, was still vividly found within some discussions. For example, Jia Qinglin also asked religious group leaders to “support the government’s measures to prevent and crack down on separatist activities instigated and fanned by overseas hostile forces.” Similarly, Luo Gan stressed the importance of the suppression of disruptive religious activities. The one explicitly mentioned Christian-inspired group, the “Church of the Almighty God,” was likewise portrayed as an internationalized, political group.

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1123 China’s religious leaders urged to play “active role” in achieving social harmony; in People’s Daily Online, February 13, 2007 via USCCB Newsletter, March 3, 2007, Digest No. 367.
1125 Li and Fu 2002 (see note 1093), p. 68.
QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

During the second phase, the party-state developed a separate ideational concept of “pseudo-Qigong” to cater to the rising voices of critics. However, the overall support for the Qigong field as a powerful resource for health improvement—and for proving and reestablishing the exclusiveness of Chinese culture—was maintained. Since the ban of FLG, the party-state has had to develop a legitimate and convincing concept for the campaign against FLG as well as for the overall Qigong field.

Right from the beginning, the party-state has opted to place the campaign against FLG in the greater context by labeling it as a “heretical teaching,” transgressing the former boundaries of Qigong and Christian-inspired groups. The party-state might have sensed the potential danger of the overall spiritual-religious field, taking FLG as the most singular example. Interestingly, FLG remained the only Qigong-based group to be labeled as a “heretical teaching”. Although still largely applied to Christian-inspired groups, the frequency and scope of its usage increased greatly after the FLG incident.

“Heretical teachings” became an officially defined legal term. The “Explanation on Several Questions Concerning the Concrete Application of the Law to Handle Criminal Cases of Organizing or Using Heretical Groups” by the Supreme Court and Supreme People’s Procuratorate, issued in October 1999, defines “heretical groups” as

...pointing to illegal groups established by falsely using the name of religion, Qigong or other names, deifying its most important members, creating and spreading superstitious teachings and other methods to bewitch and betray other people, recruit and control members, and harm society.\(^\text{1126}\)

\(^{1126}\) Zuigaorenminfayuan, zuigaorenminjianchayuan, „Guanyu banli zuzhi he liyong xiejiao zuzhi zui anjian juti yingong falu ruogan wenti de jieshi (Explanations of the Supreme People’s Court and the Supreme Procuratorate concerning laws applicable to handling
Referring to the above mentioned document, the Ministry of Public Security gives a quite similar definition, especially specifying the two latter aspects of the previous definition. “Any organization with the following characteristics shall be identified as a cult: . . . those that engage in disturbing social order in an organized manner that brings injury to the lives and properties of the citizens.” The reference to “disturbing social order” reenforces the arbitrary conception of the definition. Texts published by party-state organizations give further explanations on the meaning and scope of “heretical teachings”.

- Rejecting the orthodox way of worshipping an abstract deity and deifying the religious founder, crediting himself with “supernatural abilities”
- Pressuring and frightening followers with doomsday teachings, inciting followers to commit suicide or to harm society in search of a heavenly kingdom
- Illegal internal group life and ethics violate sociality and humanity as the groups aim to control and frighten their followers, “. . . ravaging body and soul . . . cheating money, exploiting the masses, destroying families, ravaging women, ruining lives, deliberately mystifying things, inducing people’s injury or death . . .”
- Opposing the government, trying to overturn the leadership

The choice of “xiejiao” as the official ideational frame also enabled the party-state to link up with international discussion on sects and cults. The official English translation used is “evil cult.” Official texts are eager to

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cases of organizations and employing heretical cult organizations to commit crimes

(Beijing: Beijing Falü chubanshe, 1999).


underline the international usage of the term and link it to examples of international well-known groups like Branch Davidians, the Aum sect, or the Solar Temple Cult. But, unlike the internationally common understanding of “sect”, they strictly separate the concept of “heretical teachings” from any religious content. “Heretical teachings are anti-religious,” states the Vice-Director of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, Wang Zuoan. Therefore, he rejects an incorporation of the term within the concept of “new religious movements,” as practiced by some Western countries. Likewise, he reflects upon the neutrality voiced by secularized government towards the religious sphere as an act of noninterference out of respect for religious liberty.\footnote{Wang 2002 (see note 568), pp. 356–61.}

This larger ideational concept of “heretical teachings” has been linked to FLG, with similar descriptions being used to denounce it. The overall ideational justification of the campaign against FLG is to “maintain stability” (weihu jiding). Therefore, the party-state has taken great efforts to expose the political, social, and cultural dangers of FLG.\footnote{“Tigao renshi, kanqing weihai, bawo zhengce, weihu jiding (Improve Knowledge, Recognize Clearly the Harm, Control Policy, Maintain Stability),” \textit{RMRB} July 23, 1999, printed in \textit{Qiushi} 743 (1999), pp. 12–13. For a systematic account of topics of denouncement related to FLG, see Danny Schechter, \textit{Falun Gong’s Challenge to China: Spiritual Practice or “Evil Cult”?} (New York: Akashic Books, 2001), pp. 120–27.}

Early articles in the national official newspapers of summer and autumn 1999 quickly took over the officially employed term “xiejiao” and the respective categories, familiar and ready for usage in describing FLG. Early articles within \textit{RMRB} both denounced and ridiculed FLG based on its own wordings. As mentioned above, arguments were underlined by quoting from Li’s writings. Judged on random sampling, the citations were correct but often quoted out of context.\footnote{Zhonggongzhongyang xuanchuanbu jiaoyuju 1999 (see note 743).} Featured characteristics of FLG include:\footnote{“Pin Li Hongzhi jiqi ‘Falun Dafa’ de zhengzhi benzhi he yanzhong weihai (Comment on the political nature and danger of Li Hongzhi and his ‘Great Dharma Wheel’),” \textit{Qiushi} 743 (1999), pp. 12–13.}
- Deification of the leader: Li stipulated himself as the world’s saviour, for “only he could turn the right Dharma.” The stipulation of “scriptures” (jingwen) was mentioned as another indicator of his deification.
- Psychological control of the practitioners (xiulianzhe). Although official accusation mention a strict organization, followers of FLG have not been called “members”
- Culture of unhealthy lifestyle: neglecting and sacrificing of body, disturbance of everyday life, hampering of production
- Fabrication of iniquitous teachings: equalization of material and spirit; “doomsday theory” and a “earth explosion theory” mixing Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and modern science. Li is cited as telling one of his early pupils that “without exaggeration nobody will believe”
- False reports on cases of healing
- Swindling money: money fraud refers to course fees as well as “illegal” publishing, with sums ranging from 3 million to 90 million RMB.
- Leaking of state secrets: between April 25 and July 22, FLG members seized thirty-three secret documents
- Political conspiration: stipulation of uselessness of government; end of the world, establishment of a heavenly world
- Secret association: the number of established guidance stations and practice points (39 main stations, 1,900 guidance stations and 28,263 practice points), a division of work, as well as rules for behavior issued by Li Hongzhi are given as criteria
- Harming society: creating disharmony within families; followers absorbed by the teachings of Li and practising retreat from society, neglecting professional and personal obligations; false healing reports fabricated by Li

To emphasize the destructive force, FLG is linked with various “anti” and “no” labels.

Prof. Zhang Tiange from the National TCM Qigong Education Base, called FLG the “great Dharma of five anti” (wu fan dafa), and later on more characteristics have been added. Especially the topic of health endangerment has been stipulated as a major ideational “weapon” for demonstrating the dangerous character of FLG and framing the ban of FLG as well as the repressive policy as a necessary step vital to the survival of the Chinese people. Numbers of cases pointing to illness or death induced by FLG are reported in great detail. For example, the number of people having lost control of their psychological capacities was raised from nine cases in 1996 to twenty-two persons in 1998. By February 2001, some 651 people had suffered from psychosis, 144 people had been injured, and 1,660 people died, including 239 having committed suicide. By the end of 2001, official sources had reported 1,700 deaths, indicating 1,400 deaths prior to July 1999. The topic of health endangerment has also become a central pillar in the party-state effort to frame FLG as an organization violating human rights. As a reaction to mounting criticism of the policy towards FLG as violating human rights, the party-state took up the category human rights themselves to analyze FLG, depicting it

1134 FLG is stated as being anti-party (fan dang), anti-socialism (fan shehui zhuyi), anti-human (fan renlei), anti-science (fan kexue), anti-rule of law (fan fazhi), anti-medicine (fan yixue) and anti-rational (fan lixing); see Zhang, Tiange, Pipan Li Hongzhi, “‘Falun dafa’ waili xieshuo: Wei Qigong zhengming (Criticize the crook reasons and heretical teachings of Li Hongzhi’s ‘Great Dharma Wheel’: To rectify the name of Qigong),” ZGQG 9 (1999), pp. 11–12, here p. 11; Jiang 2001 (see note 1133), pp. 49–52.


1136 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 4.

as an antihuman “evil cult.” The teachings of FLG are said to prompt many people’s retreat from life, with them leaving their families, binding them like slaves to the teachings, inducing mental illnesses, and even driving them to death by refusing any medical help. “As all humanness is lost, how can one talk about ‘human rights’? Who really wants to protect human rights should take a clear stance in exposing and criticizing FLG.”

Since Li Hongzhi was the leader of FLG and the designed masterer, the party-state has created a special ideational concept of denunciation based on criminal evidence, moral disgrace, as well credibility. According to the warrant issued on July 29, Li was officially criminalized for enrichment due to heretical publications, disturbing public order by organizing mass organizations, being an agent of U.S. intelligence. A reward of 6,000 USD was offered for any information leading to his arrest. As respects the accusation of financial fraud, Li is also framed for leading an extravagant lifestyle: he had three cars, four luxurious residences in Changchun, Beijing, New York, and Atlanta, and also deposited more then 6 million Yuan in overseas accounts.

However, various labels have been used to also denounce him morally, for example claiming that Li Honzhi’s soul is evil (linghun zui e), that his actions are reactionary, that he has “wild ambitions” (ye xin), he is “fake, evil, and disgraceful” (jia, e, chou)—as juxtaposed against Li’s only claims of FLG as holding up “truth, compassion, and forbearance” (zhen ren shan). Besides denouncing Li Hongzhi’s morality, the party-state was eager to weaken Li’s credibility by dismantling his biography. The following points have emerged as key issues: his date of birth, his mystical acquirement of

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1138 Lianchan Nan [Head of the Section of Border Science at the China Qigong Science Research Society], “Falungong shi jianta renxing de  xiejiao (FLG is a heretical teaching trampling on humanity),” ZGQGKX 1 (2000), p. 9.
1139 Chang 2004 (see note 1057), p. 10.
Qigong skills, and his role in relation to the demonstrations on April 25 around the government compound.

A research report by the Ministry of Public Security states that Li changed his birth date on September 24, 1994, citing documents from the district police bureau in Changchun. Whereas some of his personal documents, like his residence registration or cadre resume, list May 5 as his date of birth, others, like his identification card, designate his birth date as July 7. In order to invalidate Li’s account of his supernatural encounters with Qigong masters, the report brings up evidence by former classmates and colleagues pointing to the fact that Li was far too much employed with studies and work, especially when he was a member of the Forest Guard, to have had sufficient time for practicing Qigong. What is more, nobody saw him practicing during his youth. The report continues to provide testimonies of Li’s early pupils, who validate that Li only began studying Qigong in 1988, participating in a study class of Bagua.

Concerning Li’s role related to the demonstrations around Zhongnanhai on April 25, 1999, Li’s initial comment on May 2 in Sydney is contrasted with his later explanation that he only stayed in Beijing for one day and did not meet with anybody. Based on flight data, the Ministry of Public report sketches Li as the mastermind of the demonstration, actually having stayed in Beijing for some forty-four hours and meeting with leading persons from the Beijing FLG guidance station. An article jointly published by three journalists from Xinhua News Agency and a fourth one from RMRB give a detailed picture of events leading to the large-scale encirclement of the

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1142 Gonganbuyanjiushi 1999 (see note 1141) p.12.
“most serious political incident since the political wave of 1989.”\textsuperscript{1143} The main intention of the article was to portray Li as the mastermind of a well-planned event illustrating the organizational capacity of FLG. Respecting the development of the \textit{Falungong} exercises, the biography published by state authorities mentions that Li made up his exercises on the basis of two other Qigong schools where he had studied himself, \textit{Chanmigong} and \textit{Jiugong baguaggong}. It claims that two of his early followers, Li Jingchao and Liu Yuqing, helped to develop this \textit{Falungong} system and that it was only complete one month before the first official appearance by Li.

Also due to Li’s stay in the United States, one of the greatest worries of the Chinese leadership, especially in connection with Jiang Zemin, were possible overseas FLG connections. In his letter to the party leadership on April 25, Jiang referred to an “overseas background” (\textit{jingwai beijing}) of the Zhongnanhai siege. At the Politbureau meeting one day later, he framed it as “intervention by overseas organizations” (\textit{jingwai zuzhi chashou}), and during the June 17 meeting, Jiang talked about a “serious political struggle” between the party and “enemies in and outside the country.”\textsuperscript{1144}

The picture of FLG cooperating with “foreign hostile forces” (\textit{guowai didui shili}) is often evoked.\textsuperscript{1145} Several factors are frequently mentioned: foreign FLG followers who staged a protest on Tiananmen Square; protest of FLG adherents and sympathizers in foreign countries, for example before the awarding of the Olympic Games in 2000, anti-China U.S. politicians and media utilizing FLG to stir trouble and to denounce China for human rights violations, dissemination of top-secret documents, and support of FLG by

\textsuperscript{1143} Aimin Niu et al, “Li Hongzhi cehua zihui „4-25“ feifa juji shijian zhenxiang (The Truth about illegal assembly event “4-25” planned and directed by Li Hongzhi),” in Zhonggongzhongyang xuanchuanbujiaoyuju 1999 (see note 743), pp. 31–44.


\textsuperscript{1145} Nan 2000 (see note 1138), p. 9.
Taiwanese “separatists.”

The proclaimed support of FLG by foreign powers has also been linked with the aim of harming China, namely to “westernize” (xihua), to “segregate” (fenhua), and to “weaken” (ruohua) the country. In order to enhance the purported danger of FLG, it was also linked with foreign cults that ended in massacres, like the U.S. Branch Davidians, the Swiss Solar Temple, the Japanese Aum Shinryko, and the “Restore the Ten Commandments” sect in Uganda. After the tragic events of September 11, the Chinese government increasingly referred to Falungong as a “terrorist” group.

Li is said to have taken advantage of the longing of people with chronic diseases. He also manipulated feelings of dissatisfaction within the population with the party and government. What is more, he filled a lifestyle vacuum which had arisen due to the economic reforms. Many people acquired a level of lifestyle which included space for a rich cultural and spiritual life, as they have to work less hours, thus possessing a considerable amount of spare time. They feel overwhelmed by the many possibilities of selecting among different norms and values and were not able to find peace in life.

1150 Zhang 1999 (see note 1134), p. 11.
1151 Li 2000 (see note 1133).
Although the party-state was highly suspicious towards the whole Qigong sector, a total abandonment and illegalization of Qigong was out of question.\textsuperscript{1152} While not shortening the popularity of Qigong and its value as part of the Chinese tradition, the party-state had to integrate it into a controllable ideational reference system. While having used the concept of “pseudo Qigong” during the first and second phase, the party-state has defined various characteristics of “harmful” and “illegal” Qigong.

\textsuperscript{1152} “Guan Qian tongzhi jiu cizhi deng wenti (Comrade Guan Qian’s resignment and other questions),” \textit{ZGQGKX} 11 (1999), pp. 16–17.
Table 10: Characteristics of “socially harmful” or “illegal” Qigong groups according to official stipulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Printing of superstitious books or books which deify the founder</td>
<td>Yijian 1998,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban on distribution of non-official material</td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Economic Activities</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbance of public/social order and security</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbance of order of traffic, production, and life</td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense of social morality, manners, and customs</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-promotion of scientific culture and health</td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading of “dull superstition (yumei mixin)”</td>
<td>Yijian 1998;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of citizens’ health</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deifying of the group’s founder</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration according to schools, establishment of branches</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities around state and party institutions, media institution, foreign</td>
<td>Yijian 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offices, military facilities, and railway stations, airports, harbors,</td>
<td>Banfa 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important squares and streets as well as schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities like “daigong baogao”, “huigong”, “guanding” (energy-inducing</td>
<td>Yijian 1998,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings), or „Hongfa“ (meeting to praise the Dharma)</td>
<td>Banfa 2000,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banfa 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of religious language or personalized group name, application</td>
<td>Banfa 2000,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of “China”, “Asia”, “world” or „universe” to the group’s name</td>
<td>Banfa 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Aside from efforts to delegitimize and demoralize FLG along with “heretical teachings” in general, the party-state has been eager to revitalize their own ideational concepts, presenting them as a counterforce to replace FLG. “Scientific belief” (kexue xinyang), framed within Marxism and atheism, was conceptualized as a “bright political ensign” (xianming de zhengzhi qizhi) and a “sharp ideational weapon” (ruili de sixiang wuqi). Citing Deng Xiaoping’s remarks about the power of belief (xinnian) in communism and idealism (lixiang), which helped China fight its way out of difficulties, the “scientific belief” is likewise portrayed as the root of a firm settlement of
mind for concentrating on the pursuit of communism.\textsuperscript{1153} The improvement of the “basic essence of scientific culture” is conceptualized as the core of a lifestyle model. The communist party argues for clear-cut values and morality embodied in the “three views” (\textit{san guan}): possessing a firm goal in life, a firm conviction, and a firm attitude towards life. These should be devised from the best features of tradition and modernity, Chinese and foreign sources, while the national essence should not be corrupted by capitalist decadence. However, while common features concerning lifestyle should be guided (by the party-state), attention should be also paid to differences according to varying levels and backgrounds of people’s lives.\textsuperscript{1154} Furthermore, the party-state has reframed terms and phrases used by Li Hongzhi in their own Marxist frame of reference in an attempt to reclaim ideational sovereignty:

The “truth” of Li Hongzhi points beyond reality to an absurd “great universal Dharma.” According to the truth of Marxism, creating happiness for the people, we just need to be grounded in reality, face the challenges of the 21st century, take the road of science to make the nation prosper, accelerate the modernization of socialism . . . The benevolence of Marxism is grounded in reality. Without questioning it admits and includes the joyful helping of others, forsaking individual wishes for those of the public and other personal characteristics. But to be more precise, the benevolence of Marxism is the truth sublimated within the moral realm, sublimation for collectivism, for communism . . . Li Hongzhi’s “benevolence” is also imagined on the basis of his “truth.”

Additionally, the party-state has tried to detect the deeper social, cultural, and political roots of the emergence of spiritual-religious movements. Already during a working conference on June 23, 1999, a then member of the

\textsuperscript{1153} Xiaoai Liu, “Kexue xinyang bu neng dongyao (Scientific conviction should not waver),” \textit{Qiushi} 826, No. 15 (1999), p. 44; Jiang 2001 (see note 1133).
\textsuperscript{1154} Li 2000 (see note 1133), pp. 25–27.
Standing Committee of the Politbureau along with Vice-President Li Lanqing urged research on the cultural life of the elderly: “... enriching elderly people’s spiritual cultural life has a special and important meaning as it touches upon the great problems of social stability, development, and progress. The elderly desire a healthy and colorful cultural life and have a great requirement for spiritual culture. Every institution, especially cultural departments and all cultural workers, should do good work concerning cultural projects for the elderly.”\footnote{Li Lanqing fu zongli shuo: yao fengfu laonianren jingshen wenhua shenghuo (Vice-President Li Lanqing said: Necessary to enrich spiritual culture life of the elderly),} Particular importance is paid to the promotion of a balanced physical and spiritual life since the government identified the health issue as one main reason for people’s attraction to spiritual-religious groups. In an internal party document dealing with religion and spirituality, it is stated that relevant departments should help the people “to acquire the habit of good behavior, and to scientifically and reasonably conduct physical exercises, health care, living, sightseeing, recreation, and entertainment.”\footnote{“Party’s Secret Directives on How to Eradicate Religion and Ensure the Victory of Atheism,” Asia News, December 2, 2004, http://www.aisianews.it/view_p.php?=en&art=2029 (accessed June 26, 2006).}

3.3.1.3 Action Resources

Christian-inspired Groups

Although the party-state emphasis ideational and organizational sovereignty over the religious realm, it increasingly acknowledges positive and constructive aspects of religion, especially in the realm of morality. Besides, charity activities of religious communities as well as their engagement in the “fight against heretical teachings” is positively emphasized.

\footnote{Li Lanqing fu zongli shuo: yao fengfu laonianren jingshen wenhua shenghuo (Vice-President Li Lanqing said: Necessary to enrich spiritual culture life of the elderly),}
Based on a speech by Jiang Zeming on December 10, 2001 at the National Religious Work Conference, the head of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ye Xiaowen, was put in charge of crafting a new theory for embracing religion deeper in the CCP. As Ye noted, the original title was much more in accordance with the old line of the CCP and was to be called “A New Edition of Historical ‘Socialism and Religion’.” However, according to Ye, the editor of Qiushi proposed the present title which was finally agreed upon.\footnote{Ye 2003 (see note 1091), p. 8.} On April 30, 2003, the National Bureau of Religious Affairs issued a “Notification on further research of the ‘Religious Theory of Socialism’” and promoted an intensive studying of the spirit of the 16th Party Congress as well as the spirit of the National Religious Work Conference.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 12–16, here p. 14.}

Worries about religious dynamics have also been expressed along the way. A secret document on how to stop the growth of religion and spiritually among the Chinese was issued by the CC of the CCP and the Propaganda Department in December 2004 following a work conference on religion in October. In face of the rise of “Westernizing” and “disintegrating trends,” the party-state expressed particular concern in relation to a rising number of young people as well as party members converting to religions. Therefore, the importance of Marxist atheism propaganda and education as well as research is emphasized.\footnote{“Party’s Secret Directives” (see note 1156).} According to a survey by the Central Discipline and Control Commission with the CCP, at least one-third of party members regularly participate in religious activities. In the prosperous areas of Southern China in particular, party cadres openly practice their religious faith.\footnote{“Liangqianwan dangyuan ganbu canjia zongjiao huodong (20 Million Party Cadres Participate in Religious Activities),” Asia News, February 28, 2006, http://francechine.mepasie.net/zh-cn.20.77.content.htm (accessed June 26, 2006).}
On March 1, 2005 a new regulation on religious affairs was enacted. The fact that it took six years to draft it expresses the aforementioned divergent opinions within the Chinese leadership.\footnote{Similarily, year-long discussions concerning the stipulation of a religious law have not seen any results so far. See Hornemann 2006 (see note 1121).} After their promulgation on November 30, 2004, several national and local religious study conferences have been jointly organized by the party’s Organizational Department and the Bureau of Religious Affairs with the aim of educating cadres working in the religious field. The regulations present an effort of systemizing and centralizing various local measures. The overall control of national authorities over the whole range of material and personal resources for religious groups has been strengthened. Supervision of individual activities and everyday business has been reduced.\footnote{James Tong, “A New Framework for State-Religious Relations: the regulations on Religious Affairs in China, March 2005”, presented at the Forum on China’s Regulations of Religious Affairs, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California, March 2, 2005, pp. 1–20, here p. 4.} In view of the broading persecution of “heretical groups,” it is astonishing that the new regulations fail to declare “superstitious activities” illegal or even specifically mention them. However, the authorities might also have kept in mind that by lifting a ban on former illegal activities such as healing, people would no longer feel drawn to the spiritual-religious groups, for new individual actors might offer the same services.

After the promulgation of the new regulations, several local governments issued new religious regulations without mentioning a need to crack down on “superstitious” activities like fortune-telling or exorcism. The City of Beijing even dropped a whole article on the ban of these activities, hence indirectly granting them legal status.\footnote{Hans Petersen, “Despite New Regulations, Religious Policy Still Under Strain,” F18 News, March 8, 2006, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=740 (accessed October 3, 2008).} Regarding the various new regulations mentioned, the fundamental and rather pragmatic attitude of the Chi-
inese leadership towards the enforcement of legal documents persists. Cracking down on some groups, such as house churches, enables them to heighten pressure on the whole field while trying not to alienate the more moderate voices within the leadership as well as within the official religious organizations.

Aiming to foster the new alliance with religious leaders, they were invited to Zhongnanhai by Jia Qinglin over Chinese New Year in 2006.1164 State president Hu Jintao wants to embrace religion in order to contribute to his concept of a “harmonious society.” In December 2007, he has held a meeting with religious leaders and told them that “the knowledge of religious people must be harnessed to build a prosperous society.”1165 In this respect, the Chinese government has also been promoting unity within different Christian denominations. Some cities and local regions have issued special documents on how to seek reconciliation between them.1166 Although not encouraging, but somehow accepting different denominations, this policy also aims at drawing people and attention away from the denominationally influenced “heretical groups.” Regarding the dealing with “heretical groups,” some local police units have increasingly focused on gathering intelligence about the groups in contrast to the former quick arrests and interrogations. Infiltration of the groups by special agents already placed in religious communities is also mentioned. Local agencies additionally call for an Online Data Management System-based cooperation on local cases of “heretical groups.”1167

1164 “Religious Leaders Invited” (see note 1036).
1166 Hornemann 2006 (see note 1121).
QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

After the decision to ban FLG and gradually also other Qigong groups, the party-state launched a full-scale campaign targeting FLG in particular and “heretical teachings” in general.

The initial strike against FLG seems to have been made in three waves. Even before the ban of FLG was publicly announced, some FLG leaders within the army had already been arrested. The second wave of arrests started on July 20, with some 5,600 FLG practitioners detained. The third phase was marked by the announcement of the ban. The political magazine Zheng Ming from Hong Kong reported that by July 24 the party-state had summoned and interrogated some 4,525 followers, held in custody and investigated some 1,748, and arrested and investigated 427.1168

As a common feature dating back to imperial times, legal and nonlegal measures against members of a spiritual-religious group have been enacted according to a classification of followers. State documents and articles have repeatedly emphasized the necessity of differentiation between the majority of “tricked masses” and a few “criminal elements”—the former should be basically freed and educated, while the latter would be severely punished.

A RMRB article from October 28, 1999 stated:

As this battle just started, the central government pays attention to the policy, and takes note of differentiation. It promulgates uniting the majority, educating the majority, transforming the majority, liberating the majority, arresting and attacking the minority.1169

The huge number of party members, up to high levels, was one major grievance of the party-state concerning the handling of FLG. Therefore, it might not be surprising that the stipulation of the “Notification of the Central

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1169 “‘Falungong’ jiu shi xiejiao” (see note 743), p. 10.
Committee on party members’ prohibition of cultivating ‘Falun Dafa’” (Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu gongchangdang bu zhun xiulian “Falun dafa” de tongzhi) preceded legal prohibition, which was published three days later. In order to cleanse their own ranks of FLG adherents, the CCP initiated an educational campaign (jiaoyu huodong) consisting of three elements: improvement of knowledge, transformation through education, and disciplinary handling. According to the “Notification,” the dealing with FLG adherents within the CCP will be intergraded according to their degree of involvement with FLG:

- Ordinary (yiban) practitioners of FLG who actively retreat from FLG and ideationally draw a strict line between them and FLG will not even be mentioned

Ordinary key persons (gugan) of FLG who actively retreat from FLG, ideationally draw a strict line between them and FLG, and expose the problems of FLG, will not be investigated

- Important key persons with severe errors will receive light disciplinary disposal; those who immediately express their repenting will not investigated or only lightly punished
- Those who don’t change after repeated education will be encouraged to leave the party, otherwise they will be expelled
- A minority who have had political intentions and participated in planning and organization will be firmly expelled from the party

On August 24, 1999, the Petition Bureau of the General Office of CCP and State Council issued a notification concerning the strict seizure of the policy

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1170 Zhonggongzhongyang (Central Comittee), “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu gongchangdang bu zhun xiulian ‘Falun dafa’ de tongzhi (Notification of the Central Committee on party members’ prohibition of cultivating ‘Falun Dafa’),” ZGQG 10 (July 19, 1999), pp. 3–4. Adherents of secret societies during the imperial times had been classified in a very similar manner, see Chi 1999 (see note 212), pp. 11ff., Anthony 1993 (see note 211), pp. 190–203.
boundary related to the above-mentioned differentiation. The notification emphasized that the majority of followers joined FLG for health reasons, didn’t know about any political aims, and should therefore be considered “victims” (shouhaizhe). This can be understood as a “contradiction within the people” (renmmin neibu maodun). Solving the problem through the supportive “transformation and relief” (zhuanhua jietuo) work, these practitioners “. . . should feel the care and warmth of the party and the government.”

For reeducation and transformation of FLG followers, various institutions have been set up by the names of Legal System Education Center, Legal System Education Class, Legal System Education School, Education Transformation Center or Care Center. These institutions have been established nationwide at municipal, township, and county levels, while the largest ones are situated in North China, especially in Northeast China, the birthplace of Li Hongzhi and the first base of the FLG movement. Most of these institutions function directly under the respective local governments.

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1172 The importance of education can be noticed through a stipulation of the Ministry of Education, issued even before the ban of FLG. As the whole incident of FLG started from a college, the party-state was probably prone to get this sensitive societal realm under control as soon as possible. The “Notification on problems related to Qigong on campus” (Guanyu xuexiao nei you guan Qigong wenti de tongzhi), stipulated on July 5, 1999, prohibited all Qigong practice on campuses and asked teachers, the “engineers of mankind’s soul,” to strengthen education on dialectical materialism and related concepts; see “Guanyu xuexiao nei you guan Qigong wenti de tongzhi (Notification on problems related to Qigong on campus),” http://web1.zjedu.org/manage/add/file/100036496.phtml (accessed April 4, 2007).
and are supported by local party committees, public security agencies, and juridical departments.¹¹⁷³

Transformation Study and Reeducation classes have been held by public security departments, government branches, universities and colleges, as well as business sectors, and also in the scope of prisons and forced labor camps. According to investigations by FLG and human rights organizations, during these “classes” participants are often deprived of sleep and subjected to physical torture, are forced to watch interviews with former FLG followers that denounce the movement as well anti-FLG videos produced by the state. If they don’t pay close attention or don’t applaud and denounce FLG, they will undergo more physical punishment, such as beatings or treatment with electronic shocks.¹¹⁷⁴ According to FLG sources, 3,229 people have died due to persecution by the Chinese government from July 1999 until the end of 2008.¹¹⁷⁵ Typically, the surroundings of these transformation classes are equal to those in prisons: with locked doors and strong bars in front of the windows and with rooms often kept all dark during daytime. Transformation Study Classes end with a “Guarantee Statement” signed by the participants in which they are to finally denounce their FLG practice. Relatives and/or working units have to pay several thousand yuan of

so-called “living costs” and “transformation fees” for the participants.\textsuperscript{1176} Whereas the link between Qigong and psychology already loomed in the second phase, only after the FLG incident did the Chinese state actively utilize and order the hospitalization of FLG practitioners as “mentally disturbed.”\textsuperscript{1177}

Besides punishment and education classes, the party-state launched a propagandistic publicity campaign against FLG, aiming at a fully penetrating Chinese society. Media as well as universities, schools, and work units have been incorporated in the campaign. The first “(informal) discussion meeting” (zuotanhui) was organized only a week after the ban of FLG, organized by the two party-state media, RMRB and Qiushi. Representatives from all different sectors of society briefly stated the condemnation of FLG and their support of the party-state policy. Institutions included the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the General Office of CC, and the Ministry of Education.\textsuperscript{1178}

Television has played a key role in the initial anti-FLG campaign: in the weeks following the ban on July 22, the thirty-minute evening news were turned into one-hour anti-FLG reports, followed by more in-depth re-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1176}] Keith and Lin 2003 (see note 1096), pp. 623–42. Administrative punishments are not covered by the Criminal Code; they can be enforced by the police and require no legal process.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
ports.\textsuperscript{1179} Especially after the self-immolation incident on January 23, the authorities used powerful pictures of the victims before and after the suicide attempt to deliver the message that FLG destroys lives. Indeed, public opinion, including outside of China, began to quickly change against FLG after this incident.\textsuperscript{1180}

More recently, on January 24, 2004, the Chinese state media succeeded in hacking into the New Tang Dynasty Television Channel (NTDTV), the TV channel of FLG, and sending their Soring Festival Gala instead of the one produced by NTDTV.\textsuperscript{1181} The Internet has become a second major tool of denouncing FLG. All FLG sites were blocked in China. Meanwhile, the regime has continuously invested in new software and technology for dealing with attempts at going beyond the firewall and illegally accessing FLG websites. The party-state has set up special websites and also encouraged major providers to do likewise.\textsuperscript{1182}

Only four months after the start of the crackdown, in October 1999, the party-state issued its first legal documents.\textsuperscript{1183} The campaign was thereby also widened to potential heretical groups in general. The two documents by the Standing Committee of NPC as well as the Supreme People’s Court and Supreme People’s Procurate have provided the state with further legal instruments for dealing with FLG and other groups. The day after the declaration was made public, the courts brought the first formal charges

\textsuperscript{1179} Yu 2004 (see note 1148), p. 7.


\textsuperscript{1181} “Zhong gong shentou meiti, hua fu 56 tai xin tan jiemu bei ‘diaobao’ (The CCP infiltrates the media, NTDTV programs on Washington-based Channel 56 ‘swapped’),” \textit{Dajiuyuan (Epoch Times)}, February 6, 2004.

\textsuperscript{1182} For a list of websites, see Yu 2004 (see note 1148), p. 17. However, several websites haven’t been updated since 2002 or have even ceased to function, http://www.mingjing.org.cn/wzlj.html (accessed November 17, 2008).

\textsuperscript{1183} Tong mentions that the option to deal with all FLG practitioneers through the legal apparatus was due to the limited scope of legal personnel not considered to be an option by the party-state; Tong 2002 (see note 791), pp. 805f.
against FLG leaders for organizing a cult and violating national security laws. On December 26 they were sentenced to eighteen years in prison after a one-day-trial. After the self-immolation incident of declared FLG followers in 2001, this action was also covered within the definition of a heretical teaching by a second declaration of the judicial agencies. Five individuals were arrested for “organizing, masterminding, instigating, and assisting” the suicides and were sentenced to seven years imprisonment.1185

1184 Chang 2004 (see not 1057), p. 12.
1185 Ibid., p. 18.
Chart 18: Important Official Documents Referring to “Heretical Teachings” after July 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Issued</th>
<th>Name of Document</th>
<th>Issued by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 18, 1999</td>
<td>“Guanyu jiaqiang jianshen qigong huodong guanli youguan wenti de yijian (Opinions on Questions Related to the Strengthening of Administration of Health Qigong)”</td>
<td>National Administration of Sports, Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28, 1999</td>
<td>“Guanyu chuli moxie dui shehui youweihai de Qigong zuzhi de ruogan yijian (Opinion on Relevant Issues Concerning Dealing With Some Socially Harmful Qigong Organization)”</td>
<td>Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, State Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 1999</td>
<td>“Guanyu banli zuzhi yu liyong xiejiao zuzhi fanzui anjian juti yingyong falue ruogan wenti de jieshi (Explanation on Questions Concerning the Concrete Application of Laws in Handing Criminal Cases of Organizing and Making Use of Heretical Organizations)”</td>
<td>Supreme People’s Court, Supreme People’s Procuratorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 30, 1999</td>
<td>“Guanyu qudi xiejiao zuzhi, fangfan he chengzhi xiejiao huodong de jueding (Decision on Banning Heretical Organizations and Preventing and Punishing Heretical Activities)”</td>
<td>Standing Committee of National People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22, 1999</td>
<td>“Guanyu chajin qudi ‘Yuandun famen’ xiejiao zuzhi de tongzhi (Notification concerning the ban of the heretical group ‘Yuandun famen’)”</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>“Zhonggongzhongyang, Guowuyuan guanyu chuli dui shehui you weihai de qigong zuzhi rouguan wenti de yijian (Opinion on Relevant Questions Concerning Dealing Socially Harmful Qigong Organization)”</td>
<td>Central Committee and State Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30, 2000</td>
<td>“Guanyu rending yu qudi xiejiao zuzhi youguan wenti de tongzhi (Notice on Various Issues Regarding Identifying and Banning of Heretical Organizations)”</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8, 2000</td>
<td>“Jianshen qigong guanli zanxing banfa (Temporary Measures of Administration of Health Qigong)”</td>
<td>National Administration of Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Document Title</td>
<td>Issuer</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 4, 2001</td>
<td>“Guanyu banli zuzhi he liyong xiejiao zuzhi fanzui anjian juti yingyong falii ruogan wenti de jieshi (er) (Second Explanation Concerning Several Problems Regarding the Handling of Heretical Groups and Their Crimes According to the Law)”</td>
<td>Supreme People’s Court, Supreme People’s Procuratorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>“Jianshen qigong huodongzhan dian guanli banfa (Measures for the administration of the activities’ places of Health Qigong)”</td>
<td>National Administration of Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>“Guanyu zai quanguo nongcun kaizhan fan xiejiao jingshi jiaoyu huodong de tongzhi (Notification on the Implementanation of Anti-Heretical Teachings Educational Activities in the whole countryside)&quot;</td>
<td>Office for Question Concerning Prevention and Handling of Heretical Groups under the State Council, Organizational Department of the Central Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28, 2004</td>
<td>“Guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang Makesizhuyi wushenlun yanjiu he xuanhuang jiaoyu gongzuo de tongzhi (Notification on Further Strengthening of Educational Work Concerning Research and Propaganda of Marxism and Atheism)”</td>
<td>Organizational Department, Propaganda Department of Central Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Besides FLG, the party-state had been worried about the Qigong sector as a whole and had already initiated several administrative restructurings since the late 1990s. Following the “Opinion on Relevant Questions Related to the Handling of Socially Harmful Qigong Groups” issued at the beginning of 2000, the party-state listed some fourteen Qigong groups under this category. The lists include: Zhonggong, Bodhi Gong, Cibei Gong, Zhineng Gong, Yuanjigong, Dazanggong and some more. Some sources report that
Zhongong and Cibeigong might have been also declared as “heretical teachings” like FLG.\textsuperscript{1186}

On December 13, officials lead investigations against Zhang Hongbao, the head of Zhongong, on three cases of rape which Zhang was said to have committed in 1990, 1991, and 1994 and on faked documents he used in 1993. Zhongong offices were sealed and its properties confiscated.\textsuperscript{1187}

Concerning the area of Health Qigong, just one month after the ban of FLG, the three core organs involved, Nationals Administration of Sports, Ministry of Civil Affairs (registrations of societal groups), and the Ministry of Public Security issued “Opinions on problems related to the strengthening of the administration of Health Qigong,” functioning as a policy orientation and preview for upcoming legal regulations. Although the content reflects the FLG events, terminology and structure can be understood as continuity from earlier stipulations, especially the “Notifications on strengthening administration of social Qigong” of 1996. Already in 1996 the party-state mentioned complexity and fractions within the administrative field. The newest document names various forms of illegal activities and statutes (illegal publishing, illegal business operation, illegal assemblies, depicting multifactorial and complex circumstances within the Qigong sector. The document entitled “Opinions on problems related to the strengthening of the administration of Health Qigong)\textsuperscript{1188} lists six points which are not allowed or, on the contrary, must be obeyed by Qigong groups, touching upon idea-


\textsuperscript{1187} Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 279.

tional as well as organizational characteristics and activities. While the document features several forbidden aspects of teachings (no violation of public morals, no superstition, no deification, no endangerment of health, no harm to people’s health, no disturbance of social order or stability), tightening the grip on organizational structures is the core element of the document.

Formation of subbranches or any vertical or horizontal ties are forbidden. Activities must take place on a small scale, scattered and voluntarily, with former large mass meetings for spreading the Qi strictly being banned.”

What is more, Qigong activities are not allowed to take place close to public buildings or infrastructure. The party-state was obviously worried about organizational capacities of Qigong groups. The importance of this document with organizational control at its core is further underscored by the forwarding of the General Office of the State Council. They urge every government to strictly implement these regulations and to closely monitor and research ongoing Qigong activities.\(^\text{1189}\)

Based on the “opinions,” the “Temporary Measures of Health Qigong administration” (Jianshen Qigong guanli zynxing banfa) were issued by the National Administration of Sports, replacing two regulations (on administration of Health Qigong and Examination of Quality of Qigong masters) on September 8, 2000. The methods confirm regulations already published in the “Opinions” in more detail. Qigong activities must obtain permission beforehand, with many and difficult to meet requirements. A new element is the ban of certain words within Qigong names, like “China,” “Asia,” “World,” Universe,” eschewing organizational or organizational propa-

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The second new stipulation, “Jianshen Qigong huodongzhan guanli banfa (Measures for the administration of the activities’ places of Health Qigong) basically enshrined the already existing or published principles. However, for the first time, public security organs have become involved in the early stage of registration. Relevant sports departments must coordinate their decision with the public security offices and report this for approval to the respective Office for Prevention and Handling of Heretical Groups.

Concerning the area of Therapy Qigong, on July 10, 2000, the Ministry of Health stipulated the “Temporary regulation for administration of Qigong therapy” (Yiliao Qigong guanli zanxing guanli banfa). According to the regulations, Qigong treatment can only be undertaken within medical institutions; these are subject to the “Regulations for administration of medical treatment institutions” (Yiliao jigou guanli tiaoli). Medical institutions wishing to offer such treatment must apply for permission based on the necessary documents provided. Medical staff must also furnish the relevant papers for the proof of their abilities and legal preconditions to practice as defined in the “Law for Practice of Doctors of the PRC” (Zhonghuarenminguohuoguo zhiye yishi fa). Institutions that have already obtained permission must apply for re-registration according to the new regulations.

regulations. The latter legal documents were both adopted before the ban of FLG. Violations were punished according to the “Methods for administration of law and order of mass cultural activities” (*Qunzhongxing wenhua tiyu huodong zhan guanli banfa*) which were issued on November 18, 1999 and contain special passages on Qigong activities as well as references to “heretical teachings.”\(^{1194}\)

Besides strengthening of the administrative layout, the party-state also wanted to provide the people with approved styles of Health Qigong. After the establishment of the above-mentioned Center on Health Qigong Administration in June 2001, it initiated a joint research project with medical as well as scientific organizations to search for appropriate Qigong styles. In February 2002, a conference was held in Beijing to discuss research results, resulting in four Qigong styles: *Yijingjing* (Muscle-Bone Stretching Exercise), *Liuzijue* (Six Chinese Character Formula), *Wuqinxi* (Five Animals Play), and *Baduanjin* (Eight Segments of Brocade). All these styles are deeply rooted in tradition and belong to the school of “inner Qigong” (*nei Qigong*).\(^{1195}\) However, during a nine-month period of further research and testing, “. . . the best features of tradition were taken and the waste sorted out . . .” Finally, in November 2002, the four styles were officially recognized as the four styles to be officially promoted. On December 24, 2004, the China Health Qigong Administration Center issued a “Decision on the commendation of national advanced units for testing to promote the four Qigong styles and on the commendation of national advanced stations and workers testing Qigong administration” (*Guanyu biaozhang quanguo shxing quanguo huodong zhuan lei yu quanguo shuo quanguo xing feng shxing quanguo zhe renzhen biaozhang quanguo xing feng xuanchuan zong she*).

\(^{1194}\) See [http://library.jgsu.edu.cn/jygl/gh01/TYYYSJYGLFLFG/1071.htm](http://library.jgsu.edu.cn/jygl/gh01/TYYYSJYGLFLFG/1071.htm) (accessed February 14, 2007).

According to the above mentioned legal regulations, these and probably later on also other institutions can establish Health Qigong groups which must apply for registration at the relevant local civil affairs offices. The local sports offices will be responsible for administration. Going beyond punishment, education, and regulation of the Qigong field, the party-state has have strengthened their own ideational concepts related to the spiritual field. Lately, in March 2006, party and state leader Hu Jintao initiated the “eight honors, eight shames” (bai chi, ba rong) as a new set of moral concepts primarily targeting party members but also all citizens. They are likewise part of a larger effort of “building up spiritual civilization in the new socialist countryside.” This includes the appeal to moral values as well as growing numbers of cultural resources, like libraries or radio stations. The rapid spread of religious activities in general and “heretical teachings” in particular are given as one reason for this new policy. It is embedded into the promotion of selected aspects of Confucianism as a moral foundation for state and society.

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1196 “42 bumen bei guojia tiyi zongju jianshen Qigong zongxin shouyu xianjin chenghao (42 departments have been awarded the title ‘advanced’ by Health Qigong Center of the Nationals Sports Administration),” Jiefang Ribao (December 24, 2004), http://news.chinabit.net/118/2004/1224/10276463.phtml (accessed December 29, 2004).


civilization resembles earlier efforts from the 1980s and 1990s, but the rural focus has been inspired by the strengthened agricultural policy of Hu and Wen. These counter concepts that the campaign against various “heretical teachings” is also aimed in a preventive move at the Chinese society at large. Various public security documents have stressed the special importance of the cultural realm, universities and colleges, as well as the economic field, especially joint ventures and troubled companies which might provide a base for “heretical” activities.1200

Facing the challenge of handling the campaign against FLG and other “heretical teachings” as well as enforcing and reshaping their grip over the spiritual-religious field, the party-state has basically chosen to mobilize resources alongside previously known patterns. However, some of them were reshaped according to the new circumstances. By choosing the ideational frame of “xiejiao,” the previously applied for Christian-inspired group, the party-state has aimed at including the whole spiritual-religious sphere, probably out of caution and prevention concerning other FLG-like groups. The party-state has placed the concept of “heretical teachings” in a legal context to obtain a justification for the persecution. Additionally, the idea, translated as “evil cult,” has also given them the opportunity to link up with international dangers and denouncement of sects and cults.

Concerning the Qigong field, this has been flanked by a focus on morally denouncing FLG. It has translated into education and propaganda as the main actions. The necessity to construct multifarious frames linking to health, culture, social stability, and nationalism, reveals that the party-state has perceived FLG as a serious and broad-based challenge. To master this challenge, the Chinese leadership has been well aware that it not only had to win over ideational resources of FLG, but also to win over the minds of its population.

1200 “Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147).
Additionally, the party-state has opted for an organizational restructuring of the Qigong field, probably in the wake of facing entanglements of former agencies with the Qigong movements. The necessity to develop own concepts to cater spiritual needs have been recognized but have so far not been very actively and convincingly developed and implemented. However, the party-state has decided to mobilize official religious communities and actors within the fight against “heretical teachings,” therefore cautiously accommodating existing fears of an anti-religious atmosphere by religious actors and affirming the role and contribution of religion in its concept of a “harmonious society.”

3.3.2 Societal Actors

3.3.2.1 Organizational Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Several legal scholars and lawyers have entered the field. Some of them publicly advocate the case of Christian-inspired groups as well as house churches. The most prominent recent example has been Professor Wang Yi, a professor of law at Chengdu University in Sichuan Province. He is a self-proclaimed Protestant Christian who, in May of 2006, met US President George W. Bush and testified before the U.S. Congress’ Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{1201}

Others in the wake of the “civil right protection movement” (\textit{weiquan yundong}) have started to defend accused leaders from the Christian-inspired groups as well from the house churches. Beijing-based lawyers Li Baiguang, Teng Biao, Fan Yafeng, or Li Heping are prominent examples. Some of

these lawyers, like Li and Fan, are Christian themselves. A second new group of actors have emerged: Christians from both official and the house church narrate their own encounters with some Christian-inspired teachings and warn their fellow Christians against them.

**QIGONG-BASED GROUPS**

Nearly all associations and institutions were drawn into or engaged in the officially initiated campaign against FLG and heretical teachings in general. Scholars have been engaged in large-scale research projects, sponsored by the party-state, notably the research section of the Ministry of Public Security, partly resulting in openly available publications. The CASS has also established an interdisciplinary research task force on the FLG phenomenon—an “anti-heretical teachings” group was set up at the research institute of psychology at CAS.

Also, while media and publications in the first and second phases demonstrated considerable variations from the official view, during this period the party-state phased media according to their ends. Throughout 1999 up to the beginning of 2000, the Qigong magazines continued their business as usual. Articles denouncing FLG were frequently printed, likewise critical

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1204 For example Li 2000 (see note 344), Chen and Zhang 2001 (see note 346) or Jiang 2000 (see note 347). The “Publishing House of the Masses (*Qunzhongchubanshe*)” is subordinated directly under the Ministry of Public Security.

1205 Wu 2004 (see note 1136), pp. 7–8.

1206 On media coverage see Chen 2005 (see note 1178), pp. 16–37; Power and Lee 2002 (see note 1178).
reports on “Pseudo Qigong,” “heretical teachings,” with various questions concerning their differentiation from real Qigong and science. Also, advertisements and reports about other Qigong styles and their related masters kept appearing. Several Qigong-related magazines were discontinued at the beginning of the year 2000.1207

Concerning individual scholars, still different camps and positions can be noticed.

Scholars who were already taking a rather noncompromising stance on any spiritual phenomenon easily picked up the official hard line. One example is He Zuoxiu, who has been a firm atheist and natural scientist and had rejected any legitimacy of the existence of any spiritual phenomenon even before the crackdown on FLG. He is a key representative of the “atheists” who actively engaged in the battle against “heretical teachings.” This camp mostly consists of elderly scholars from the natural sciences.1208 They are only loosely connected, using the “Website of Science and Atheism” (Kexue yu wushenglun wangzhan)1209 as a common platform for publication. However, religious scholars like Chen Xingqiao or Xi Wuyi have opted for a multilayered analysis of the reasons for and respective measures against heretical teachings.1210

Three new groups of actors have entered the field of Qigong: psychologists, legal scholars, and religious actors. Psychologists provided the field with

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1208 Other scholars belonging to this camp include Wang Yusheng, Du Jiwen, Guo Zhengyi, Yu Guangyuan, Ren Jiyu, et cetera.
first-hand material from individual talks or group sessions with FLG followers. Besides taking over state-labeling, they rarely denounce statements of the followers but rather take a neutral stance without any forced interpretations. They thereby indirectly give the followers themselves a voice to explain their motivation and attitude towards heretical teachings. Besides, people referring to themselves as former FLG practitioners have engaged in anti-FLG publications and have also acted as tutors in reeducation classes.

The heads or vice-heads of religious associations have all published statements denouncing FLG, supporting the official decision to ban FLG. To various degrees they all express the worry that FLG has influenced the destiny of religion and harmed the image of religion. Therefore, religious leaders have been eager to frame FLG as non-religion and to emphasize the importance of differentiation between normal and illegal religious activities as well as the protection of freedom of belief. In searching for reasons effecting the popularity of FLG, its appeal to the worries about illness and death of the people is mentioned as the foremost reason. Religious associations and their related heads have been careful not to use their religious identity and criteria to judge FLG. They have rather followed the more political framing of the Chinese government.


1212 For example Jin Song, “Li Hongzhi yiji ‘Falungong’ pianren zhiliang mian mianguan (Li Hongzhi and the various aspects of how he betrayed people),” in Zhuang 2006 (see note 1211), pp. 131–35; Bin Chen, “You de fangshi, dayi jiehuo, rang ‘Falungong’ chimi zhe chedi baituo Li Hongzhi de jingshen kongzhi (Some swear to willingly understand their confusion, let fanatics of ‘Falungong’ break out of Li Hongzhi’s Mental Control),” in Zhuang 2006 (see note 1211), pp. 365–69.

On November 13, 2000 the China Anti-Cult Association (CACA) was founded under the Chinese Association for Science and Technology. The Association is mainly composed of natural scientists, and only two religious actors were within the founding circle. As stated in its statute, it aims at “promoting scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, protection of the respect of the law, respect of religious freedom.” The CACA is responsible for educational activities and public relations and endeavors to foster the exchange between and linkage with foreign scholars and related cases. Up to now more than twenty local associations exist on the provincial as well as urban administrative level.¹²¹⁴

Like within the Christian-inspired field, several lawyers have entered the field of Qigong, taking on cases of FLG followers. For example, Gao Zhisheng came into contact with some followers and was shocked about the extent of violent persecution and torture thus deciding to break a taboo by taking up their defense.¹²¹⁵

### 3.3.2.2 Ideational Resources

**Christia-inspired Groups**

While ideational concepts of Christian-inspired groups by societal actors reflect the party-state stance, Christian actors in particular have also been

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voicing concern about the rejection of the whole religious field in the wake of the “anti heretical teachings” campaign.

Following the official ideational framing, the official Christian church has characterized the core members of the Christian-inspired groups as immoral, utilizing sexual and material incentives to seduce followers. The “ordinary believers” of the groups were misguided but basically without any fault. The official church links the phenomenon of Christian-inspired groups to the necessity of improving their own capacities related to church work.

At the Seventh National Christian Conference, Cao Shengjie, the head of the China Christian Council, stated:

> At present, these heresies are mainly active in rural areas and small towns, because rural Christian’s educational level is lower and they lack a correct understanding of Christian truth; there is also a serious lack in rural villages of pastors with theological training. These serious facts tell us that if we do not pay attention to rural church work, and strive to raise the quality of believers there, the future of all Christians in China will be affected.¹²¹⁶

Cao’s remarks on raising the educational level (sushi) of the believers is part of the broader campaign on theological reconstruction started in 1998. Likewise, offering an explanation for the rise of the “heretical teachings,” author Li Pingye mentioned that the theological thinking of many Christians is backward. Therefore, this has in some areas given rise to some chaotic and illegal activities under the cloak of religion.¹²¹⁷

The official church discourages Christians to believe in the second coming of Christ as well to rely on faith healing, which is labelled as a product of a


low “level of education/character” (suzhi). They argue that faith healing is equal to “feudal superstition” and that God made doctors and medicine to heal people. They compare Christian groups practicing faith healing to the Falungong group. By utilizing the official condemnation of Falungong, the official church has hoped to scare and prevent followers from joining Christian-inspired groups. Related to individual Christian-inspired groups, the “Church of the Almighty God” group, the “Society of Disciples,” as well as “Group of Three Classes of Servants” were mentioned most frequently. The criticism of Christians by the official church mostly refers to ascetics of their teachings, like the stipulation of the second coming of Jesus or their “secret way of meeting” and their strict rules concerning lifestyle. Christian literature on the Internet also often presents in-depth analysis of theological orthodox and heterodox teachings as well as measures for congregations and individual Christians on how to deal with and protect themselves against heretical teachings.

The countryside is commonly identified as the breeding ground for the Christian-inspired groups. Scholars mention a low level of culture related to insufficient education, lack of administration, as well as one-sided knowledge of the Bible in rural areas as reasons for the emergence of Christian-inspired groups. Other articles put more emphasis on the socioeconomic circumstances and detect reasons for a rise in groups’ activities with

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1219 Zhang 2006 (see note 1211), p. 28; Cui 2006 (see note 1211), p. 29.
an expensive and deficient health system, a lack of cultural activities, as well as a communal system of mutual help.\textsuperscript{1222}

The historical cultural background of religion in China has been frequently mentioned as one important breeding ground for heretical teachings. Being representative for many related studies,\textsuperscript{1223} the article by Lu Yao presents three most commonly cited religious traditions in a comprehensive way: many groups have taken their concepts of “soul dancing” and “spiritual communication” from the Chinese shamanism culture (\textit{wu wenhua}). The attribution of spiritual skills to the leader likewise relates to this background. The “folk religious culture” (\textit{minjian zongmen wenhua}) with its core element of time division within Buddhist cosmology, including so-called “end of Dharma” (\textit{mofa}) time, has served as a second resource for the teachings of the groups. The third mentioned background is the spreading of evangelical movements in China during the beginning of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{1224}

Comparisons of historical and contemporary socioeconomic circumstances related to the rise of secret religious groups and heretical teachings respectively have been also made, emphasizing the similarities.\textsuperscript{1225}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Yun Wu, “Dangdai Zhongguo nongcun xiejiao chengyin guan (Conjecture on Reasons for the Emergence of Heretical Teachings in Rural China),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 221–28.
\item Gebing Qiu, “Mingqing jiaomen ya wenhua jiqi shehui gongneng (Subculture of the Religious Schools in the Ming and Qing dynasty and their social function),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 54–63; Runguo Jia, “Cong Zongjiao de lishi leixing lun xiejiao bu shi zongjiao (From Historical Types of Religion Discussing that Heretical Teachings are not a Religion),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 182–195.
\item Lu 2004 (see note 1221).
\item Chao Meng, “Mingqing shiji mimi jiaomen manyan he lujin bu zhi de yuqinyin poxi (Exploration and Analysis of Spreading and Repeated Failure to Prohibit Secret Religious Groups in the Ming and Qing Dynasty),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394); pp. 229–51; Baoqi Dai, “Lun Zhongwai “moshilun” zaiti baoli xingwei de xinyang genyuan (Discussing Roots of Beliefs Related to Violent Actions Induced by ‘Doomsday Theory’ in China and Abroad),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 33–50.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The concern about the rising discord against religion and Christianity has emerged as a third ideational topic. Ding Guangxun, until 2002 head of the Protestant Three Self Patriotic Movement and the CCC—referring to the immolation incident related to FLG—claims that FLG is inhuman and that FLG shouldn’t be regarded as any kind of religion but even as rejecting religion itself. “We should clarify yes and no, we should purify our Christianity, which is now also an important task,” he wrote in one article.  

Likewise, Fu Tieshan, then head of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and vice-head of the China Anti-Cult Association, has emphasized the “opposition” of religion and heretical teachings. He advocates a stronger role for religion in the battle against heretical teachings, including the stipulation of a stronger participation of religion in the filed of social charity. 

Chen Xingqiao, a Buddhist scholar, has mentioned that religion can be “an effective medicine” against “heretical teachings” and that more research is urged since “. . . in our society there exists much ignorance, many misunderstandings, and much mistrust concerning religion.” 

While not echoing this strong stance in favor of religion, other voices also underscore the importance of the “religious world” in the fight against heretical teachings. Provided that religion should adapt itself to socialism (and vice versa), charity and social welfare activities of religious groups might help “weak groups” within the population to overcome their hardships. 

1227 Tieshan Fu, “Yu xiejiao jinxing changqi bu xie de douzheng shi ge zongjiao gongtong de ren wu (Engaging in a Long-lasting Battle with Heretical Teachings is a Common Task of All Religions),” in Zhuang 2006 (see note 124), pp. 11–14.  
Since Cao Shengjie has become the head of the CCC in 2002, she has been more reserved concerning an adaptation of religion to socialism in general. Discussion about the movement initiated in 1998 to “strengthen theological reflection” was also controversial. Some theologians warned against politicization as “. . . the important social functions of religion lie not within the political field.” Others worried about a one-sided adaptation of religion and a change of Christian faith. An internal CCC document mentioned concrete obstacles related to an adaptation of socialism, namely preachings of an impending doomsday in the face of natural catastrophes or illnesses.

Scholars have also joined the church in voicing their concern that the attack and suppression of “heretical teachings” leads to an overall strife against religion in general. Some scholars state that “heretical teachings” should be strictly separated from the notion of “religion.” Following official statements, any impression of violating religious freedom by persecuting FLG should be dispensed. Religious scholars as well as heads of religious associations fear that FLG has already influenced the destiny of religion and harmed its image. Therefore within the statements all the religious leaders have been eager to frame FLG as non-religion and to emphasize the importance of differentiation between normal and illegal religious activities as well as protection of the freedom of belief.

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1231 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 160ff.
1232 Lei Wang, “Miandui zhongguo jiaohui de mingtian wo men chongmanzhe xinxin he liliang (Facing the future of the Chinese church we keep faith and strength),” Tianfeng 1 (2003), pp. 52ff.; Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 152.
1233 He 2001 (see note 1111), pp. 197ff.; for other scholars taking this position, see Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 12.
1234 “Zongjiaojie renshi pingshuo ‘Falungong’ (Public Figures from the Religious Circle Comment on ‘Falungong’),” ZGZJ 4 (1999), pp. 11–13; Yu Shi, “Li Hongzhi – Zongjiao changshi dixia de pianzi (Li Hongzhi – a swindler with low knowledge of religion),” ZGZJ
Zhuo Xinping, Director at the Institute of World Religious Affairs at the Academy of Social Science, warned against dealing harshly with religion as it might influence social peace. For Zhou, faith is important for the life of a nation. Pertaining to circumstances of untamed material quests, religion might function as an alarm bell and shed light on the spiritual situation of a nation.\textsuperscript{1235} At the end of his book, Wu reflects on the policy of the party-state towards “heretical teachings.” He mentions the importance of a more scientific understanding of the emergence and development of such groups with a critical reflection on the shortcoming of the ideological work of the party-state. Besides, he also doubts the effect of one-sided, harsh repression as this might turn the people into enemies of the state. Additionally, Wu also stresses the importance of guaranteeing the freedom of religion and suggests even using “orthodox religion” to fight against the “heretical groups.”\textsuperscript{1236} Several Christian actors have raised issues of self-administration and less political interference related to the Christian church, a discussion which was staged throughout the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{1237}

\textit{Positions of House Churches}

Some within the house church sector have placed the question of heresy within an overall theological framework. They differentiate between “heresy” (\textit{yiduan}), “extreme teachings” (\textit{jiduan}), and “heretical teachings”


\textsuperscript{1235} Xinping Zhuo, “Die Welt des Geistes und ein Leben im Geist,” in Monika Gänßbauer, ed., \textit{Christum chinesisch – in Theorie und Praxis (Chinese Christianity – in Theory and Practice)} (Breklum, 2002), pp. 85–93. The scholar Zeng Zhaguo told me in an interview on February 17, 2002 that in the process of the establishment of the China Anti-Cult Association, the viewpoint of religious scholars were marginalized. They have greatly worried that the association might turn into an anti-religious association as it has been dominated by natural scientists and often outspoken atheists.

\textsuperscript{1236} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 278.

\textsuperscript{1237} Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 140ff.
(xiejiao). “Extreme teachings” are basically understood as still belonging to the accepted theological field but existing at the limits or borders of biblical concepts, for example related to the understanding of baptism or the question of “justification by faith.”

However, house churches warn about harsh actions against extreme groups as they should be not mixed up with “heresy.” “Heresy” is framed as a pure theological concept and linked with the following characteristics: holding up one’s own faith as the highest truth, claiming higher authority than the Bible, rejecting of Jesus Christ, compiling one’s own Bible, spreading doomsday scenarios, and rigidly controlling their group. The term “xiejiao” is linked to heretical groups which harm society. Furthermore, the definition of “xiejiao” as stated by the party-state is often explicitly acknowledged.\textsuperscript{1238}

One of the most criticized groups is the “Teachings of Eastern Lightning” (Church of the Almighty God). Various sources criticize their teachings for rejecting several of the core Christian concepts, such as the Trinity. The illicit and immoral practices within the group, as well as related to proselytization, are another frequent point of criticism.\textsuperscript{1239} One source even refers to it as a “mafia organization” (heishehui zuzhu), exceeding the official terminology.\textsuperscript{1240}

Various reasons for the emergence of “heresy” are given: inability to explain the truth of the Bible in a right way, fulfilment of personal pleasures, poor economic conditions that make people vulnerable to promises, crisis of faith making people long for spiritual orientation, and a absence of theological knowledge or deeply rooted faith.\textsuperscript{1241}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1238} “Zhongguo Chenxi ’ zhuanti jiangzuo (see note 424).
\item \textsuperscript{1239} “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian (see note 982).
\item \textsuperscript{1240} “Zhongguo Chenxi’ zhuanti jiangzuo” (see note 424).
\item \textsuperscript{1241} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Several house church members have reported on cheating measures and tricks that they have employed in order to achieve their objective of attracting followers.

[Our] church also was disturbed by Eastern Lightning. They use prayer healing and do business in many different ways. They also put poison in the food to harm the brains of others and force away followers in Christ. They bring great harm to whole society.

The house church here faces destruction because of Eastern Lightning. Out of 21 people, 19 people have been misled, rejecting the salvation of Christ and starting to follow the female Christ. They have also misled other limbs of our church. They all have been Christians for some ten to twenty years.1242

Handwritten testimonies by believers relating their encounters with “Eastern Lightning” have been collected from all over China:

One sister from the city of Dengzhou in Jiangsu province has told us, she herself went to the hide-out of Eastern Lighting to have a look. She found a 27-year-old woman tied up there. The woman told her, she has a husband and a little daughter, she isn’t allowed to leave. The sister said: “I’ll go to your husband and let him free you.” The woman said: “Please, I beg you not to tell him. If he comes here, he will be also forced to stay here. Here we have already entered the period of State, laws don’t bind people any longer. Lying, beating, sexual immorality, even killing people is no longer a sin.” Another sister from Anhui was also deceived. They first collected all her money and then lured her into their heretical teachings. She was beaten unconscious and nearly died. These events show clearly that “Lightning” is no religion at all, but a devious trick by Satan or even has some other aims.1243

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1242 Ibid.
1243 Dalu Zhiti 2002 (see note 984).
FLG is the only Qigong-based group which is included in the house churches’ list of heretical teachings. Concerning FLG, their statement mostly resembles the language of the party-state. One author of a book published in Hong Kong, which is also widely distributed within house church circles and on the Internet, took a more benign stance on FLG. He classifies the group as a “moral revivalist religious group” (daode fuzhen xing jiaopai). He goes on to compare the teachings of FLG and Christianity as relates to moral teachings, concepts of sin, and visions of another life. While not denouncing FLG concepts, the author identifies them as shallow and incomplete. What is more, according to the author, Li Hongzhi as a human can in no way be compared to Jesus Christ, as only he has the power to transform people to be born again and have a new life. Despite his more tolerant view of FLG, the author also warns of the potential dangers of practicing Qigong. He describes them as contact with or even possession by evil spirits which might result in a floating of the body while meditating or invunerablely. Thus, Christians should not practice Qigong. Still, he calls on Christians to not discriminate FLG followers, but to consider them as “lost sheep” who should be missionized and saved by God’s grace.1244

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Discussions within the Qigong-field have resembled many parallels with the Christian field. Worries about the damage of the whole field due the fight against FLG have become the dominant ideational concept. Scholars have engaged themselves in various definitions to emphasize the difference between Qigong and Pseudo-Qigong, as a continuance from the second phase. While the concept of internationalization suits the party-state’s attempt to gain legitimation by placing their own stance and actions into a broader concept, the societal actors have used this framework to direct attention away from the broader domestic field of Qigong.

1244 Lu 2004 (see note 988), pp. 60–65.
Concerning FLG, the scope of the official propaganda has left societal actors only little space for alternative statements. Still, some derivation could be found. While the party-state characterizes Li Hongzhi as having pursued political aims, some scholars have mentioned that only after 1998 did Li take a more political stance by teaching his followers that only by acting against the government and society could one reach a higher level and perfection. Another author argues that only in May 1999 did FLG—by stipulating the joining of the Political Consultative Conference by Li Hongzhi—show any clear signals for political engagement. Due to the ideational resources having emerged in the first and second phase, most scholars have pictured FLG only as the most prominent outcome of a longer-term development. Yu even pictures a seven-phase model concerning the “fight between science and Pseudo science.” However, after the persecution of FLG was initiated, the whole Qigong sector was politicized. The societal actors have used the concept of politicalization as a strategy to protect the overall existence of Qigong. One report mentioned that “... only


by supporting the leadership of the party, Qigong activities have a clear political orientation . . . Supporting the leadership of the party is evidence of a healthy development of Qigong groups . . . Correct leading of a party branch make Qigong activities to develop a favorable effect for society.\textsuperscript{1249} Embeding Qigong into a political context also reveals the effort of defending the generally positive nature of Qigong and purifying it of its cracked reputation.\textsuperscript{1250}

Other articles embedded Qigong in a clearly sportive or medical context and aimed to draw a clear line between Qigong and “Pseudo Qigong.”\textsuperscript{1251} The claim that Qigong is a science is repeatedly emphasized, although some aspects still appear miraculous and are hard to explain. How to recognize “Pseudo-Qigong” has become one major issue of discussion. Several criteria were put forth:

- No historical background, especially no evident lineage of transmission
- Promise of a “modern,” “quick,” or “easy” cultivation process. Practice of Qigong should be rather a hard and long-term process.
- Ideational conflict with values, ways of thinking, laws, et cetera in society
- Accumulation of bad experiences and effects on many people
- Acquiring “extraordinary skills” as a goal (the author, however, doesn’t deny the existence of “extraordinary skills” but instead mentioned that there is no scientific proof so far)\textsuperscript{1252}

\textsuperscript{1249} Kaigan Liu, “Jianchi dang de lingdao Qigong jiankang fazhan (To Support the leadership of the Party: Healthy development of Qigong),” ZGQG 9 (1999), p. 20.
\textsuperscript{1250} Haiqiao Cheng, “Bianzheng weiwulun yu Qigong shijian renshi lun (Epistemology of dialectical materialism and Qigong practice),” ZGQG 7 (2000), pp. 4–5.
\textsuperscript{1251} Fucheng Yang, “Sishi nian qian Qigong yu tiyu zai zui gao xuefu (Qigong and sports at institutions of higher learning 40 years ago),” ZGQG 11 (1999), p. 23; Wei Yang, “Yong kexue fangfa renshi Qigong, Zhongyi (Utilizing scientific method to get to know Qigong, TCM),” ZGQG 11 (1999), pp. 25–27.
The topic of “extraordinary skills,” a vividly debated topic in the first and second phase, was either only briefly touched upon or avoided completely. Obviously, authors perceived it to be a sensitive topic. However, a complete rejection or denouncement hasn’t very often occurred. Most authors advocate a careful handling: while within the Qigong world, research on “extraordinary skills” could be conducted, only scientifically verified results should be published.\(^{1253}\)

Many societal actors related to Qigong have expressed their concern about the negative light that the FLG incident shed on the whole Qigong sector. “The FLG incident attacked Qigong. Many people don’t dare to practice any longer; the media also treat Qigong as a taboo topic. It seems that Qigong became an epidemic, with people keeping away from it.” According to author Ding Wen, this is not surprising as many organizations, media, and individuals have “. . . had complicated and relationships with FLG that are not clear-cut.”\(^{1254}\) Voices fearing a total denouncement of Qigong as a whole were eager to stress the positive effects of Qigong. Its healing effect was constantly mentioned as a great contribution to society. Some authors take up concepts from the first and second phase to justify the importance and effectiveness of Qigong, like effect on human mind and mood, character, as well as moral principles and lifestyle.\(^{1255}\)

Concerning the question how FLG or Pseudo-Qigong could develop this way, several explanations were offered:


\(^{1255}\) Jisheng Wang, “Qigong keyi wei jingsheng wenming zuo gongxian: Lun Qigong youhua qinglü, yizhi yu xingge (Qigong can contribute to the spiritual culture: Debate on Qigong excellent mood, will and character),” *ZGQGXX* 9 (2000), pp. 13–14; Cai 2000 (see note 1253).
(FLG) believe in illusions due to lack of knowledge (medicine, biology) and suggestions evoked by masters’ guidance; psychological effects

(FLG) use of two covers, Qigong and religion

Weak administration

Flourishing of Qigong groups and discussions on “extraordinary skills,” supported by well-known societal actors.

Appeal to the worries about illness and death of the people

“Ideational corruption” (sixiang shang de fubai)

Long-term suppression of criticism towards “Pseudo Science.”

**Internationalization**

Like the party-state, societal actors placed FLG and other Chinese cases of “heretical teachings” in an international context of catastrophic outcomes of major cults and sects. Besides FLG, scientific publications on other specific groups are rare. Scholars have increasingly absorbed foreign research on sects and cults. Reception of more neutral research on “social or religious movements” is broadly missing. Research on foreign spiritual-religious groups are much more common than on Chinese ones. This reflects the high degree of political sensibility of the topic.

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1256 Qi 1999 (see note 1245), p. 12.
1257 “Po ‘Falungdafa’” (see note 1245), p. 6.
1258 Ibid., p. 7.
1259 Shuguang Li, “Xiejiao de zisheng manyan yu minzhong de xinyang xintai (The Spreading and Nourishment of Heretical Teachings and attitude of the population towards faith),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 70–76, here p. 72.
1261 Yu 2002 (see note 186), p. 140.
1262 Guanyuan Yu, “Zhuhe ‘Kexue yu Wu shenglun’ chuankan (Congratulations to the initial number of ‘Science and Atheism’),” in Yu 2002 (see note 186), p. 165.
1263 Kangsheng Dai, ed., *Dangdai xinxing zongjiao (Contemporary New Religions)* (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1999); Xiantao Kong, *Shijie xiejiao yu fan xiejiao doucheng (Heretical Teachings Worldwide and the Battle against Them)* (Nanning: Guangxi renmin
The frame of internationalization has been invoked for different reasons. On the one hand, prominent cases and respective policies in other countries were taken as a point of orientation. On the other hand, following the official line, internationalization was also used as a scapegoat. Guo stipulates that “. . . we must prevent a cultural invasion of hostile forces (fangzhi didui shili de wenhua ruqin).” He goes on to list several published translations of foreign books on the supernatural and the universe which, according to Guo, became a valuable source of citation for FLG. Guo also warns against plans of intrusion of foreign cults, again pointing to several translations of foreign cults’ books which have been recently published. “Li Hongzhi is a tool for the U.S.-American anti-China forces to use,” states another author, Xin Wen. These anti-China forces hope to use FLG to stir disquietness in China. As evidence Xin lists several meetings and hearings as well as staged demonstration by FLG followers after the illegalization. This will make the fight against FLG “. . . long, sharp, and complicated,” a term often used in the context of dealing with religion.

Terrorism

After 2001, scholars increasingly linked the discussion on heretical teachings with concepts of terrorism. Although mostly stressing that heretical groups can’t be equated with terrorist groups, several scholars point to the possibility of heretical groups becoming terrorist groups if they utilize vio-

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1265 Guo 2002 (see note 1264), pp. 226–27; also Aimin Niu and Leiqu Wang, “Chanchu xie’e qiankun lang (Eradicate the evil, Heaven and Earth will be bright),” ZGQGKX 8 (2000), pp. 11–12.
lence or clearly state a political aim for their actions. One frequently cited example is the gas attacks by the Auum cult on the Tokyo subway in 1995.\footnote{Kangsheng Dai, “Dangdai kongbu zhuyi huodong yu xiejiao jiduan xingwei (Contemporary Terrorist Activities and Extreme Actions of Heretical Teachings),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), p. 7–13.} Some scholars identify terrorist activities with FLG, like threatening of persons, attempts to overthrow the government, self-immolation at the Tiananmen Square, stirring of suicides, or attacks on Public Security officials.\footnote{Yan Lu, “Xiejiao zuzhi de hongbu zhuyi huodong chu tan (Primarily Discussion on Terrorist Activities of Heretical Groups),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 14–24.}

**Blurring Borders**

Due to the common usage of the term “heretical teachings,” the border between the realm of Qigong-based and Christian-inspired groups has become more and more blurred, a tendency which already started in the second phase of field development.\footnote{Qiming Duan, “Xiaochu zongjiao xinyang ziyou de mo xie wuqu (Eliminating Several Errors on Religious Freedom),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 126–136.} Especially as the search for reasons to explain the rise of FLG and groups has become an urgent task and dominant topic of discussion, an increasing number of articles have analyzed both types as well as other groups within the same context. A definition of “heretical teachings” has become an obligatory part of nearly every article while only slightly differing from the one given by the party-state.\footnote{For some articles dedicating large space to questions related to definition, see Xiangtao Kong, “Xiejiao wenti lungang (Sketch of Questions on Heretical Teachings),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), p. 178–181.} Some scholars mention that “heretical teaching” is basically a political term and its definition may vary across different national back-
Despite the general usage of the term “heretical teachings,” attempts for classification have emerged. Tan/Kong differentiate between groups using the name “Christianity” and those using the cover of “Qigong.”

Since 2000, research on “heretical teachings” has become much more empirically grounded. Former articles bickered about definitions and characteristics on a mere theoretical basis without mentioning any empirical evidence.

The harm of heretical teachings emerged as another large topic within publications. Scholars identify various dimensions:

- Violation of personal freedom via mind control
- Destroying of families
- Illegal accumulation of money
- Seducing and raping of women
- Endangerment of life due to fake healing, rejection of medicine, and suicide
- Spreading of rumors (doomsday theories) and disturbing social order
- Resistance against government and damaging of national security
- Damage to established religions (Buddhism, Christianity)

Therefore, the fight against “heretical teaching” is termed the “protection of human rights.”

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Touching upon the protection of rights, legal scholars have discussed the violation of individual rights due to heretical teachings. Especially after the legal stipulations of the NPC as well as by the Supreme Court on heretical teachings, the legal dimension dealing with “heretical teachings” turned up as a new realm of ideational resources. Legal scholars reject the idea of regarding members of heretical groups as non compos mentis. Although their belief in heretical teachings might reveal psychological problems, they nevertheless should be liable for any committed crimes.

Legal scholars criticize the scattered penal legislation since for many concrete crimes related to heretical teachings references to various paragraphs are made. Furthermore, they advocate a broadening of liability from natural persons as subject for punishment to legal persons. The latter would enable the legal system to break up the organizations, including companies, more efficient.  

Another cluster of reasons detected as being responsible for the growth of spiritual-religious groups is linked to social change. With the “crack of the iron rice bowl”—the state’s retreat as a comprehensive supplier of social security—people had to cope with rising competition and felt increasingly “lost.” Furthermore, corruption, “worshipping of money” (baijin zhuyi), and incidents of injustice flourish. Consequently, many people are reluctant to

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depart with the “social life filled with holiness” of the 1950s and 1960s as they find themselves unable to adapt to the new circumstances. The psychological constitution of the individual was brought up as an initial new ideational resource within this phase, also differing from official descriptions. Wu Dongsheng marks out seven different states of mental health acting as movers to participate in spiritual-religious groups:

1. Hope of healing for self or family members
2. Longing for peace of mind facing unhappiness
3. Salvation of calamities and hope for material rewards
4. Psychological relief and hope for realization of personal values and hopes
5. Dissatisfaction with society and hope for betterment
6. Dissatisfaction with CCP and government and hope for improvement
7. Introduction of friends and family

Additionally, Wu attributes a strong sense of utility to the followers “... concerning questions of what the far away other world looks like or how the soul is saved they don’t care.” Sheng Hui, the head of the Chinese Buddhist Association, also points to the good-heartedness of people striving for moral perfection being misused by heretical teachings.

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1277 Ibid., p. 82.

1278 Hui Sheng, “‘Falungong’ shi xiejiao zhong zuixie’s de xiejiao (‘Falungong’ is the most Vicious Heretical Teaching within the Heretical Teachings),” in Zhuang 2006 (see note 124), pp. 15–23.
Scholars have increasingly looked into the spiritual-religious realm to identify the reasons, a second ideational explanation not found within the party-state realm.

The rise of FLG and other groups is interpreted as a “crisis of faith” (xin-yang weiji): “If this loss of norms can’t be controlled, a ‘vacuum of values,’ ‘vacuum of norms,’ and a ‘vacuum of authority,’ the stability index of society will go down.”\textsuperscript{1279}

A third ideational explanation not mentioned by the party-state but by religious actors is swallowing religious knowledge.\textsuperscript{1280}

Scholars offer various countermeasures of how to cope with spiritual-religious groups in general.\textsuperscript{1281}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Strengthening of the reeducation
  \item Differentiation of different circumstances related to motives and types of followers
  \item Greater control and stricter prevention of extremist activities by hardcore members of heretical groups
  \item Strengthening the building-up of a socialist spiritual civilization
  \item Completing an “anti-cult” law
  \item Strengthening international exchange and cooperation on the prevention of extremist actions of heretical groups.
\end{itemize}

Previously mentioned scholarly camps can be also identified within the debate on suitable countermeasures. The position of atheists who identify the

\textsuperscript{1279} Qingle Liu and Qinlan Wang, “Xiejiao mangcong yu zongjiao xinyang de wenhua bianxi (Differentiated Analysis of Culture concerning the Blindness of Heretical Teachings and Religious Faith),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 64–69, here p. 66.
\textsuperscript{1280} Sheng 2006 (see note 1278)., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{1281} Yufeng Wang, “Shitan xiejiao zuzhi jiduan xingwei de sixiang xinyang genyuan yu fangfan duice (Trial Discussion on Ideational and Religious Roots of Extreme Actions of Heretical Groups and Guarding Against it),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui 2002 (see note 1275), pp. 71–75.
promotion of a scientific worldview as the only effective measure against heretical teachings is a remnant of the 1980s. Most elderly scholars, however, stick to that reasoning.1282 Other authors have urged the adoption of a patient and warmhearted attitude while dealing with FLG and other followers as forced attempts to let them withdraw from a heretical teaching in a short period of time might rather prove counterproductive.1283 Some authors go even one step further and interpret the emergence of FLG as a sign of a “rising feeling of idealism melting away” and as a “rising feeling of exploitation” within “not little parts of the population.” These latter narratives must sound like bankruptcy to a communist regime striving for the abolishment of exploitation of the masses.

Remarkably, economist He Qinglian even dares to predict that “... if one bans Falungong today and doesn’t take any measures to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people, sooner or later another ‘mystical Qigong [group]’ will emerge.”1284 Likewise, Kang Xiaoguang even advised the leaders to take a more constructive approach in dealing with the issue of “heretical teachings”: “To solve the root of the problem, measures towards broad and deep social change are fundamental. Establish a healthy society of citizens and

1283 Li, Zhaoguang, Falungong chimi zhe jiduan xingwei de sixiang genyuan yu duice (The Ideational Roots of Extremist Actions of the obsessed FLG followers and counter policy), in Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui 2002 (see note 1275), pp. 212–17, here p. 216; Sheng 2006 (see note 1278), pp. 22–23.
solve religious problems within such a framework. Open up social structures and establish a social security system."  

3.3.2.3 Action Resources

Christian-inspired Groups

Societal actors have mainly stuck to publishing activities for education. The official magazine *Tian Feng* has continued to print the cartoons by Sister Martha, denouncing the teachings of Falungong as heretical. Martha also reminds her readers of the importance of the protection of normal religious activities and denounces any kind of heterodoxy. Within the Christian field, the CCC revised their statute, expressing their obedience towards legal control: “The Chinese Christian Council accepts legal supervision by the State Bureaus for Religious Affairs as well supervision and control by the civil administration authorities.” As some voices within the party-state as well as some influential scholars have called for a stricter handling of religion in general, this move can be interpreted as a signal that the CCC will not engage in illegal activities and is not afraid of supervision by state authorities.

The nonregistered congregations have started to educate their members against the Christian-inspired groups. Various booklets on several groups have been published. Based on the Bible, they refute the theological concepts of heretical groups. Some house churches have compiled a manual for training small groups of believers. It contains twelve lessons on the ba-

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1286 Dunn (see note 671), p. 27.
1287 Cited after Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), p. 142.
sics of Christianity, various so-called sects, and how to recognize and rebut heresy. At the end of each lesson, a Bible verse or a jingle (Shunkouliu) for easier remembrance and subsumption of content is added. As Dunn mentioned, the endeavors of the house churches were limited due to their own forced secrecy.  

After having issued individual statements underlining the harmful and heretical nature of FLG, official religious representatives partly engaged in the establishment of the China Anti-Cult Association. The head of China’s Buddhist Association, Sheng Huifa, emerged as a leading actor. Buddhist circles might have felt the greatest urge to act as FLG mainly related itself to Buddhist roots.

Sheng held a speech at the NPC and CCPCC sessions in March 2001 calling for a concerted effort on the part of all religious associations to fight against heretical teachings. Wang Zuoan termed these activities “religion fights heretical teachings” (zongjiao fan xiejiao).

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Conferences were held, not only to scientifically understand and learn more about Qigong/FLG but to also provide an opportunity to justify and legitimate one’s own position, and to find out about positions and opinions of others.

After the stipulation of the two new legal regulations in September 2000, a study conference with participants from the party-state and the Qigong sec-

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1289 Dunn (see note 671), p. 31.
1290 Hebeisheng Fouxie foujiao cishan gongdehui (Charity and Virtue Meeting of the Buddhist Association and Buddhist Followers of Hebei Province), ed., Zheng yu xie de jiaoliang: Foujiaojie pipan “Falungong” wenxuan (The Competing of Orthodox and Heterodox: Selected Articles from the Buddhist World criticizing “Falungong”), 2000.
tor was organized by the magazine “China Qigong Science.”

The two regulations were—according to the article reporting on the conference—interpreted as a general commitment to and acknowledgement of the Qigong sectors. Despite the fact that some passages within the stipulations are rather strict, they nevertheless provide a positive stimulus for the whole Qigong sector.

Methodologically speaking, field research and publication of related results has advanced. Since 2000, three international conferences on “heretical teachings” have been organized by the China International Association for the Advancement of Friendship (Zhongguoguoji youyi zujinhui) in Beijing. The conferences are aimed at an interdisciplinary research exchange between Chinese and foreign scholars on various aspects of “heretical teachings.”

Publications have increased; various organizations have edited collections of books related to the purging of superstition or heretical teachings and the upholding of science. Other books have focused on FLG, ranging from scientific publications, for example providing detailed interpretations of the book *Turning of the Dharma Wheel* (*Zhuan Falun*) to rather sensational re-

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1293 Wu 2001 (see note 1276).

1294 For example Yonghua Zhu, *Xuanji jiemi (Revealing the Secrets of the Mysterious of the Universe)*, Pochu mixin congshu (Book Collection on Purging Superstition) (Beijing: Kexuepujichubanshe, 1999); Weihong Luo, *Shiji mo niliu (Reverse current at the end of the century)* (Beijing: Kexuepujichubanshe, 1999); Congbao Pan, Chongshang kexue, pochu mixin (Upholding science, discard superstition) (Nanjing: Jiangsukexuejishuchubanshe 2000).
ports on the story of FLG. All major Chinese media and web portals have set up special topic sites related to FLG and “heretical teachings.” Legal scholars and lawyers having entered the picture—pointing to a lack of evidence on which to base punishments of FLG followers, a lack of definition of “heretical teachings,” and the illegal existence of labor camps which violates the principles of the Chinese constitution—has added to the action repertoire of the societal actors.

Despite the political pressure to conform to the full-scale party-state campaign and lacking organizational resources, the societal actors have vividly developed ideational resources of their own, not seldomly parting from the black-and-white, dogmatic concepts of the leadership. Although they have been overall supportive of the government’s policy, scholars as well as religious and legal activists have been eager to voice concern and even critic as the official policy threatens to endanger their interests and space of activities.

### 3.3.3 Spiritual-Religious Movements

In the wake of the increasing hostility against the spiritual-religious field, several Qigong groups from the second phase have disappeared from the public. Other groups have undergone major transformations concerning the

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organizational structure and their action repertoire. Interestingly, during the initial period of the Anti-FLG campaign, one spring-off group emerged from FLG, called Yuanrongfa (Dharma of Interfusion).

3.3.3.1 Leadership Resources

Since the persecution of FLG and many other Qigong styles after July 1999, the life of many former leaders is unknown according to available sources. The life and fate of founders of Christian-inspired groups can’t be traced after 1999 according to available sources.

3.3.3.1.1 Biographical Resources

Not much is known about the leader of the newly emerged spin-off group, Yuanrongfa. Huang Lian was born in 1952 and worked as a caretaker at a middle school in a district in Jiangxi province. One of biographical resources has been his experience as a former follower of FLG. He got arrested twice for being illegally involved in FLG activities. After he was released from labor camp in March 2000, he started to spread his teachings, linking them to FLG. In this way he could enhance his own legitimation and easily attract former FLG followers who felt lost after reeducation classes and were looking for spiritual comfort.\textsuperscript{1297}

Concering former groups, information can only be attained on Zhang Hongbao, founder of Zhongong, and Li Hongzhi, founder of FLG. Although both of them have migrated to the United States, Zhang has chosen to portray himself as a man of encompassing wisdom, and political activist Li has conveyed a picture of himself leading a rather retreated life, besides occasionally appearing at public FLG meetings and conferences.

\textsuperscript{1297} Tongyou Zhu, “Dui Huang Lian zichuang Falungong xin paibie ‘Yuanrongfa’ de lixing sikao (Some Reasonable Thoughts on the new off-spring of FLG ‘Dharma of Interfusion’ created by Huang Lian),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu cong shu bianji weiyuanhui 2001 (see note 394), pp. 318–27.
By the time of his death on July 2006, Zhang Hongbao had successfully relaunched his former conglomerate in the United States. However, while different from the first and second phase, the whole enterprise seems to be much more tailored to his person. The first webpage on the Tianhua Culture website features his picture, with nearly all of the subcategories’ titles directly linked with his name, that is, “Zhang’ Country Governing Ideology,” “Zhang on the Art of Leadership,” or “Zhang on Tactics and Strategies.” Besides, he used the similar resources as he had during the establishment of his business in China, namely broad-based educational credits and activities, presenting himself as an all-knowing superman. Zhang completed a self-studied MBA curriculum awarded in 1998 by Harvard University in the U.S. and a doctoral curriculum in public administration (Chinese distance learning courses). In addition to his formal education, Zhang continuously mentioned his efforts to self-study, including alongside work. According to his presentation, Zhang “studied independently” various fields of medicine, military strategy, Western political studies, various fields of psychology, hotel administration, real estate development and management, banking, public relations, journalism, photography, aesthetics, college administration, pedagogy, and history of philosophy. However, “besides being immersed in standard modern education in both science and culture, over the past thirty

1298 On July 31, 2006, Zhang died in a car accident at a highway intersection in northern Arizona. His car was crushed by tractor-trailer truck traveling towards it at sixty miles per hour. Rumors had it that the accident was a political assassination by the Chinese party-state; see John Kusumi, “Zhang Hongbao, qi gong master, Chinese dissident, and lightning rod for controversy dies at age 52,” September 10, 2006, http://www.chinasupport.net/buzz09100601.htm (accessed November 15, 2008).


1300 See http://www.tianhuaculture.net.
years, I also engaged in systematic studies of traditional Chinese culture, especially cultivation studies, medicine and philosophy (to be specified later), as well as comparative cultural studies and comparative religious studies, particularly on areas where the modern civilization and traditional cultures can interact with each other.”

In his self-introduction, Zhang also put emphasis on international honors. He mentioned an invitation by the State University of Pennsylvania to set up a college of management and to act as its dean. However, this was never mentioned again later on. Additionally, he also mentioned having been a visiting professor at the research institute on alternative medicine of the Korean Pochan CHA University and having been an advisor for the International Natural Therapeutic Medical association.

As a major difference from the second phase, Zhang increasingly portrayed himself as a political activist against the Chinese government. According to an essay entitled “My Resume” on the website of his enterprise, he organized and set up the “Chinese Shadow Government” in November 2002 of which he became operating president in August 2003. In the spring of 2003 he was elected “Honorary President” of the “World Chinese Association.” Both seem to be organizations which Zhang had set up himself, for no information on them can be found except for on the Tianhua Culture website. It is even stated that “Mr. Zhang Hongbao is ‘the founding father of the Democratic China’ and . . . has been regarded as the biggest potential rival of Jiang Zemin and his CCP regime and therefore, he has been constantly

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1302 Zhang, “My Professional Studies and Accomplishments” (see note 1301).
persecuted severely since the ’90s. Zhang is said to have had founded some Chinese overseas dissident organizations in the United States. Contrarily, Li Hongzhi has taken a rather low-level stance concerning his life in the United States after 1999. During his speeches and in his essays, Li has seldomly talked about his own situation, instead placing more emphasis on the followers’ activities.

[My appearances] have become infrequent lately, for you have truly matured and really know what to do. So I don’t have to worry as much. The focus for you right now is simply to find ways to do better, to be more efficient, to have a greater impact, and to save more people.

This lack of self-representation created a manner of leadership vaccum. Consequently, on “Clearwisdom Net” several bit of information concerning the state of Li Hongzhi floated around. Some people asserted that, according to “Turning of the Dharma Wheel,” Li had left this world at 50 and that a new master has already arrived. Others voiced that Li has been pushed aside and put under house arrest by Li Erping and Ye Hao. Therefore, Li surfaced from his shelter and started to write regular “scriptures” for FLG adherents. Additionally, Li put a great emphasis on his spirtual resources as can be seen within the following subchapter.

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1304 “World of Shadows” (see note 1299). Some sources suggest that Zhang had been involved in a power struggle within other Chinese dissidents; see Kusumi 2006 (see note 1298).
### 3.3.3.1.2 Spiritual Resources

During the times of persecution, spiritual resources for strengthening or redefining the leaders’ legitimacy can be expected to be of increasing importance. Again, Zhang and Li chose different ways. Paralleling his list of educational credits, Zhang Hongbao was also eager to boost his spiritual ones, aiming especially at creating an international recommendation. According to an introduction on the website of Tianhua Culture,

> in 2004 he was elected “H.H. the Hongbao” by the World Religion the Vatican; also in 2004, World Religion Federation appointed his as the Honorary Chairman; Japanese Hongguan Taoism entitled him with “Huanglun Great Master,” “Honorary Great Monk”; World Religion Federation co-granted him “World Religion Federation Grand Prize.” World Religion the Vatican and World Religion Federation co-granted him “World Peace Service.” He was thus awarded “Dharma Culture Medal.” He is also awarded a Medal by Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.\(^{1307}\)

However, due to the heavy persecution primarily of FLG followers in mainland China, for Li the situation of proving and renewing his spiritual authority has been much more challenging than for Zhang. While Zhang could mainly rely on titles, Li has been forced to explain his spiritual role and leadership in the wake of persecution and suffering. He has portrayed his powers as too mighty to prevent these things from happening.

> Some students are thinking, “Master doesn’t acknowledge the old forces’ arrangements. So why doesn’t Master instantly destroy the old forces?” Master is able to do that, and no matter how large they are, Master could still do it. But have you thought about this: if I were to redirect the enormous, gigantic

energy in the Fa-rectification back here into the Three Realms to do things, it
would be like hitting a mosquito with an atomic bomb, it’d be a clumsy use of
force . . . Earlier I told you that as I was going around the Three Realms,
those final elements of the cosmos’s cosmic bodies took advantage of it and
entered. So those gigantic and numerous beings who haven’t been rectified by
the Fa created a partition, even between my surface flesh body here and my di-
vine body and enormous gong on the other side . . . My situation isn’t some-
thing that ordinary beings can imagine. During the Fa-rectification Master has
taken into his body the lives of all beings in the cosmos and the lives of all the
various elements. First off, it’s for safety reasons in the Fa-rectification—the
lives of all beings are here with me, so no one can do things that would
jeopardize the cosmos.1309

Although Li has emphasized the mysteriousness and might of his spiritual
powers, he has been also quick to reject claims of being a supernatural being.

The head of the evil in China has spread lies that I claim to be Jesus or Saky-
amuni. You all know those are shameless lies made up by that bum who just lies
at will. I’m not Jesus, and I’m not Sakyamuni, but the Fa has created millions
and millions of Jesuses and Sakyamunis who have the courage to walk the path
of Truth, who have the courage to risk their lives for the sake of the Truth, and
who have the courage to devote their lives to saving sentient beings.1310

Like leaders of Christian-inspired spin-off groups in the second phase, the
founder of the spin-off group Yuanrongfa, Huang Lian, has to link himself

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1308 Hongzhi Li, “Fa-Lecture During the 2003 Lantern Festival at the U.S.West Fa
Conference,” February 13, 2003, in Hongzhi Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and
2008).

1309 Hongzhi Li, “Teaching the Fa at the Washington, D.C. Fa Conference,” July 22, 2002,
in Hongzhi Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2001 and 2002,”
2008).

1310 Ibid.
to Li Hongzhi, calling Li a “primary student” and the Zhuanfalun of low quality. He, Huang, was the “real person from the High Level.” Referring to the pronunciation of his last name, Huang called considered himself to be an “emperor” to be chosen to “arrange” (anpai)—taking up a syllable from his first name “Lian”—a place for everybody in the Heavenly Kingdom. As an additional claim, Huang mentioned the name of his labor camp, “Gaoan,” which he understands as “Life in a High Place to arrange people” (zhu gaochu anpai ren).

3.3.3.2 Organizational Resources

3.3.3.2.1 Followers

Information on numbers of followers have become even more scattered than in the second phase. Regarding the Christian-inspired groups, the “Church of the Almighty God” has still assembled the largest number of followers. According to sources from house churches, their members rose to one million by the end of 1999. The number of the “Three Grades of Servants” has been given as 500,000 in 2006. No information on followers of Qigong-based groups in mainland China are available. However, information on structure and attitude of followers has increased, revealing different ways of coping with the persecution.

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

The “Church of the Almighty God” has considerably expanded their followers’ base.

1311 Zhu 2001 (see note 1297).
1312 Ibid., p. 320.
1313 “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
First, due to a changed recruiting strategy, followers with some background on Christianity as well as power resources related to their position in government units have joined the group. This has added new administrative and ideational skills that have improved the overall organizational resources and strengthened protection, again related to the resources of official members. Besides integrating political resources from within the party-state apparatus, the “Church” might have also added resources from Chinese political activists overseas. Official sources mention that followers from dissident circles, even former participants of the protest movement in spring 1989, have joined the “Church” overseas.1315

Second, while during the first and second phase, the “Church” mainly focused on the Chinese, sources indicate that since 2000 they have also started to target foreigners.1316 Moreover, the profile of followers from the first and second phase has still prevailed. Based on the information about age, place, and gender cited within several case studies, most of the followers who joined after 2000 have been female, in their mid-forties to mid-fifties and from Northern China.1317

Several descriptions by people about how they became followers of the “Church” after 2000 that have been published on the “Church’s” website

1315 Bi 2002 (see note 1167).
1316 “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’ (see note 982).
1317 “Ironclad Proofs of Being Conquered by God’s Word.”
http://english.endtimeworkofgod.org/conquered/index.php (accessed November 6, 2008);
“Testimonies to the Holy Spirit Guiding People to Return to Almighty God: One Hundred Cases Selected from among Tens of Thousands of Cases,”
http://english.endtimeworkofgod.org/witness/index.php (accessed November 6, 2008);
“Witnessing Before the Judgment Seat of Christ, “The Experience of Accepting the Judgment and Punishment of the Word of God,”
The equivalents on the Chinese website are called “Quanengshen jiaohui baiwan ren bei shenhua zhengfu de tiezheng,” http://chinese.endtimeworkofgod.org/huibian/index_1.php (accessed November 6, 2008) and “Jidu shenpan taiqian de zhengjian: Guodo zimin jingli shen huayu shenpan xingfa de jingli jianzheng.”
reveal that many of them had first struggled against getting in touch with followers and books of the “Church.” Since news of its “heretical” nature had been already spread mostly via internal Christian materials, several recent converted followers have been previously engaged in denouncing the “Church” and guarding their own congregations against it. Many followers experienced a weakening of their church work and their own faith before they still reluctantly started to read some of the “Church’s” scriptures. Their theological power and authority, especially related to apocalyptic projections, convinced people to join the group after all. As within the second phase, experiences of healing also have remained a strong motive for followers to join the group.

In July 2002, Brother Gao in our denomination came with excitement to preach Almighty God’s end-time gospel to me as soon as he accepted it. However, I not only didn’t accept it myself but also disturbed and dragged back the three brothers and sisters who had just accepted it. Moreover, I said many blasphemous words to them. For example, it was a heresy, a cult and so on. With a loving heart, Brother Gao came to fellowship with me over ten times altogether, but I always turned him down. He advised me, “You shouldn’t blaspheme God even if you don’t believe. Otherwise, God will punish you!” I said, “Then just punish. No way will I follow you to believe!” With a hardened heart, I still said slanderous and blasphemous words frequently . . .

In November of the same year, I suddenly got renal calculus and wasn’t cured until after I underwent over twenty days of treatment. Immediately afterwards, my son got hemorrhagic fever and was also treated for over twenty days.

1318 It is impossible to verify whether these case descriptions have been made up by the “Church” or whether they are real stories. They mention concrete names of people and places, give many quotations of direct speech, and are written in a lively way and without an overestimating tone. However, they can either be taken as perceived or real characters of their followers. The case descriptions emphasize that neither money nor any kind of cohesion made people join the group—as stated in many official and Church-based publications.
Unexpectedly, right after he recovered from his illness, my renal calculus re-
curred. After the spring festival of 2003, surprisingly, I got hemorrhagic fever
too. When I had it treated in the hospital, the doctor found, in addition, that my
diabetes had developed into four “+.” At the same time, my wife and daughter
caught flu frequently . . .

By March 2003, my diabetes had become more and more serious . . . My eyes
bulged out and my vision blurred. The skin on my body fell off piece by piece,
and I almost lost a normal person’s appearance. Everybody in my village
talked behind my back, saying that there was no way I could recover and that I
simply needed to wait for my funeral . . .

A few days later, Brother Gao came again to fellowship with me. At that time,
I had truly come to a dead end. I thought to myself, “Since I’m going fast, I’ll
listen to it!” After listening to his fellowship, I felt that it made quite a lot of
sense and that there was nothing particular wrong; so I said, “Let me read the
book then!” Then I started to read the book of God’s word from the beginning
of April 2003 . . .

Right on the fifth or sixth day after I started to read God’s word, I didn’t feel so
thirsty anymore and my vision somewhat recovered as well. Feeling thankful
and remorseful, I read God’s word every day; and my condition gradually
turned better along with the reading. Twenty days later, I went to the municipal
hospital for a reexamination; it turned out that my “blood sugar” and “urinary
sugar” both returned to normal. The doctor at the Specialist Outpatient Depart-
ment of Diabetes was very surprised, “How come you recovered so quickly?
This illness can’t be eradicated. Once you get it, you won’t be able to leave
medicines for the rest of your life. But how could you thoroughly recover in
such a short time?!”

The doctor’s words made me understand completely. Immediately after I got
back home, I prayed to God, “O God, my illness was actually your discipline,
but this is exactly your love for me. Otherwise, a corrupt man like me was unable to come before you! In the future, I’m willing to make more effort to preach the gospel to people and tell my experiences of resisting God to them so that more people can come before you!” Right on the third month after I accepted Almighty God’s new work, my constitution was restored completely and I was able to work normally. . . 1319

From the end of July 2001 to early November, my daughter preached Almighty God’s new work to me many times. I not only refused to listen to it but also said many words of resisting and blaspheming God, and moreover, I drove my daughter away. At about 12 noon on November 21, my nose bled suddenly; after my nostrils were blocked, blood streamed out from my mouth instead. After three days of treatment in the local hospital, I still couldn’t stop bleeding. . . My family members cried themselves into a mess. At the critical moment between life and death, I cried in my heart continually, “O the God whom my daughter believes in! Please help me! Please help me immediately!” Soon afterwards, the bleeding of my nose lessened . . . After being released from the hospital on December 2, I called my daughter over hastily. My daughter brought me a book of God’s word. Through eating and drinking God’s word, I understood God’s end-time work and even more knew God’s nature of not tolerating man’s offense. So I followed Almighty God resolutely. 1320

1319 “The Typical Examples of Testimony About the Christians and Catholics in the Mainland of China Returning to Almighty God Because of Being Punished for Their Resistance Against Almighty God” (B), no. 38; Liang X from Heilongjiang Province, male, 38 years old, formerly a believer from the Three-Self denomination, in “Testimonies to the Holy Spirit” (see note 1317). The equivalents on the Chinese website are called “Shengling yindao ren gui xiang quannengshan de zhengjian: Jidujiao, Tianzhujiao xintu guixiang quannengshen de jianzheng jingli,” http://chinese.endtimeworkofgod.org/witness/index_1.php (accessed November 17, 2008).
1320 “The Typical Examples of Testimony About the Christians and Catholics in the Mainland of China Returning to Almighty God Because of Being Punished for Their Resistance Against Almighty God” (B), n. 13; Yang X from Henan Province, female, 59
Additionally, experiences of signs and wonders have also become a source for conviction.

On August 4 and November 1 of 2002, some people came to preach God’s end-time work to me two times, but I didn’t accept it yet said to them, “Even if you come every day, I won’t believe in it! Only Catholicism is the true way!” . . . On November 11, I opened *Imitation of Christ* (a book used by Catholics) and suddenly saw a line of shining words appear right in the middle of the book—“Find back what you have lost quickly!” When I looked again after a blink, those words disappeared. The next evening, I opened *Imitation of Christ* again, and another line of shining words appeared in the middle—“Pursue the truth quickly!” Then it disappeared in a flash. On the third evening, once again, I opened *Imitation of Christ*, and once again, a shining line appeared in the middle—“The Sacraments don’t count anymore. They are all out of date!” Seeing these words, I was more astonished: The Sacraments were the guarantee for the believers. If they were all out of date, then wouldn’t what we believed in be all in vain? At that time, my waist and legs hurt more severely; I was utterly confused and disconcerted, and was lost in a puzzle. On November 15, two brothers came to testify about Almighty God’s end-time work to me. After listening to it, I suddenly realized what had happened. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for appearing to me again and again to save me. So, I accepted Almighty God’s new work gladly.  

Since March 2002, brothers and sisters who believed in Almighty God had come to preach God’s end-time salvation to me many times, and I accepted it after listening to it. However, because of the disturbance of the leader of our former denomination, I gave it up. . . . On the afternoon of January 31 (the Chinese New Year’s Eve), my teeth suddenly hurt unbearably. I could neither eat nor sleep, and the medicines didn’t take

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years old, formerly a believer from the Three-Self denomination; “Testimonies to the Holy Spirit” (see note 1317).

1321 “The Typical Examples of Testimony About the Christians and Catholics in the Mainland of China Returning to Almighty God Because of Seeing Signs and Wonders” (C); Xie X from Henan Province, female, 48 years old, formerly a deputy head from the Catholic denomination; “Testimonies to the Holy Spirit” (see note 1317).
effect either. At about 7 p.m. on February 2, while I was watching TV, all of a sudden, the color of the TV screen changed from the black and white to the dark yellow. Instantly, some frightening frames appeared on the screen: Some people held up their hands in pain and leaned their bodies, which looked as if they were surrendering; some scurried around like frightened rats; some bent down, whose guts flowed out from their bellies; and some human skeletons lay higgledy-piggledy on the ground . . . There was a cross above these people. Then, a voice came out from the TV, but I didn’t hear clearly what had been said because I was in a hurry to call my husband to come and look . . . Thinking of what I had done, I realized that it was God’s warning to me. So I hurriedly went to the sister who had preached the end-time gospel to me and also made a resolution: “No matter who comes to disturb me in the future, I won’t falter but will follow Almighty God forever!”^1322

While these various portraits present the followers as hard to convince, but then extremely devoted, they also aim at emphasizing the power of the scriptures of the “Church.” However, this real or invented preserverance of its followers, especially after having overcome their initial doubts, might have provided the “Church” with one important resource for their vitality at least until 2004.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

What has happened to the vast number of Qigong adherents, especially those of groups from the second phase, has largely remained unknown due to present sources. However, like with the Christian-inspired groups, details about which ways the FLG followers have chosen to cope with the new situation of overall persecution have emerged at large.

^1322 “The Typical Examples of Testimony About the Christians and Catholics in the Mainland of China Returning to Almighty God Because of Seeing Signs and Wonders” (C); Guo X from Henan Province, female, 38 years old, formerly a junior leader from the Hua Xuehe denomination; “Testimonies to the Holy Spirit” (see note 1317). The picture described by the women is the one found on the website of the “Church.” The possibility of manipulation of the TV by the “Church” can be at least easily imagined.
According to official sources, some people felt disappointed and disillusioned by FLG and started to doubt its teachings. Still, especially after several years of cultivation, they felt their own beliefs and hopes washed away, without being able to reach the ultimate goal of perfection. Therefore, while entering reeducation, some former adherents only pretended to cut loose with FLG. Once back in society, they were easily attracted by the off-spring of FLG, Yuanrongfa. Its founder, Huang, is quoted as having felt boring and lost after the reeducation classes finished. “I wasn’t interested in watching TV or reading the newspaper, I just idled away my time . . . When meeting with FLG friends after they finished reeducation we all asked each other about how were things lately. It could be noticed easily that they felt the emptiness like me.”

According to FLG sources, followers only gave in to signing a statement after immense physical and psychological torture. They describe the process as a struggle of conscience, including after they were let out of detention.

I will never be able to forget the agony. I was covered with wounds, my back was injured, and I lay in a bed like a dead fish, unable to move. The only thing I heard was the agonizing screams from other Falun Gong practitioners who were being tortured. Tears streamed down my face. I thought even hell could not be worse! What hurt most, however, was from inside. Since the persecution began, I had lost my excellent job and my loving family had been torn apart. I was sent to the labor camp and deprived of all dignity and rights. I was suppressed and insulted and lived a painful life worse than that of a slave. Even in such misery, the police still would not leave me alone and kept up the torture until they destroyed every bit of my dignity, my innocence, and my belief . . . I had vowed to follow and practice Truth-Benevolence-Forbearance, but I went against my conscience and gave in. How will I live to face my

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1323 Zhongguo kexueyuan 2002 (see note 758).
1324 Zhu 2001 (see note 1297), p. 322.
Teacher? I dared not think about how to face my colleagues, friends, and neighbors, and how to face anyone I knew. I didn’t want to let them know that I was a coward, a treacherous, weak-kneed person. I broke down . . . When I was in desperation, it was once again Falun Gong that lifted me up . . . 1325

Other followers, however, have chosen to either hang on to practicing, even under severe torture and psychological pressure in prison. According to their accounts, their belief in FLG as well as communal support enabled them to do so:

Once the guards tried to force us to shout anti-Falun Gong slogans, which I refused. The guards came over and cursed me badly; a guard also punched and kicked me, saying, “How dare you not shout?” I replied, “I won’t say those words. Had I agreed to say these words, I would have been released long ago and I would not even be imprisoned to begin with.” We stood there staring at each other; I could feel the righteousness filling my body. The guard turned around and said, “Who else refuses to shout the slogan?” Three practitioners stepped forward and stood next to me. Later the four of us were forced to stand for a long time as punishment while the others were allowed to sleep. I was also locked up in a small cell for seven days . . . Falun Gong practitioners started to realize that we could not just passively endure the persecution. Later, the guards restricted our toilet usage to twice a day, which we successfully opposed collectively. From this, we realized our strength in being of one mind and gained more confidence. We gradually started to refuse and resist the persecution . . . Eight guards came in and stripped off my clothes. They knocked me down to the floor and shocked me with several electric batons.

simultaneously. They shouted, “See if you practice! See if you practice!” I replied, “It’s such a great way of cultivation, how can I give it up?” My voice was shaky due to the electric shock. Hearing this, the guards intensified the shocks as if they were out of their minds. Later I was unable to speak. After this torture, my heart would often palpitate irregularly. The other two practitioners were also shocked with electric batons to such an extent that they were beyond recognition. At 8 a.m. the next morning, when the guards came to work, they found that Wang Hui and I were doing the meditation in the small cell...\(^{1326}\)

Others have started to actively engage into the fight for FLG after witnessing or experiencing the persecution of the government.

I didn’t know the reason behind the “April 25 Peaceful Petition,” but I stopped practicing Falun Gong. I was very much convinced by the government’s propaganda between April 25 and July 22, and I tried to convince my mother and others to give up the practice. After July 22, I turned in mother’s Falun Gong books and signed the pledge to renounce Falun Gong for her. I found, however, that what I did brought tremendous agony to my mother... At the same time, I started to question the propaganda on TV; nowhere in Zhuan Falun was the subject of the earth exploding discussed, nor did it prohibit people from taking medicine. Moreover, none of the practitioners I knew committed suicide, let alone killed other people... On December 4, I received a notice from the authorities asking for money. It said that my mother was detained because she had gone to Beijing to appeal... I opposed mother’s appeal, but I didn’t like how the government handled this issue. Maybe because I had always believed...

\(^{1326}\) The follower named as Liu Chengjun was finally able to flee out of the labor camp and wrote his report on August 7, 2001. On March 2002 he was sentenced to nineteen years in jail for participation in hacking into local TV stations in Changchun. He died on December 25, 2003. See “The Falun Gong Report” 2005 (see note 238), pp. 93ff. See also Human Rights Watch, *Dangerous Minds: China’s Campaign Against Falungong* (New York, 2002), http://hrw.org/rseports/2002/china (accessed November 12, 2008).
in the principles of Falun Gong, maybe because I was moved by the unselfishness and fearlessness of some practitioners, maybe because I believed that a peaceful appeal is every citizen’s right granted by the constitution, I decided not to interfere with what my mother wanted to do. She should have her freedom. She should be respected. She had not done anything wrong. However, shortly after that, my mother was beaten to death.\textsuperscript{1327}

According to official sources, practitioners were radicalized by the scriptures of Li Hongzhi as well as the rising persecution of the government.\textsuperscript{1328} Liu Yunfang, one of the followers who attempted to immolate herself on January 23, 2001, was cited by Chinese sources as having told other followers during practice sessions: “I entered into a stage of super nature while studying and practicing. I felt I should go to Tiananmen Square, pour fuel all over my body, I also drank quite a lot. I pressed my lighter, and at that time my Buddha body came out from my head, it shined in unlimited colours. My basic Qi (yuan qi) went out, it was an enlightening by the Master.” Liu Yun was praised by many FLG followers as truly having transmitted FLG.

Liu Baorong, another participant of the self-immolation case, stated: “Li Hongzhi repeatedly told in his scriptures that there are some people who have not yet ‘walked out’ If I had not ‘walked out,’ then I couldn’t have reached real perfection . . . Perfection is to go to the ‘World of Heaven,’ this is a good thing, it is momentary, there will be no feeling of pain.”\textsuperscript{1329}

Like with the “Church of the Almighty God,” these accounts of followers’ suffering strongly witnesses the spiritual power of FLG beliefs. As the last

\textsuperscript{1327} The Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group 2005 (see note 1325).
\textsuperscript{1328} Li 2002 (see note 1283).
\textsuperscript{1329} Xuanlin Zhang, “Fan renlei, fan shehui shi Falun xiejiao cuican shengming de zhuyi tezheng: Falungong Tiananmen guangchang zifen an pouxi (Anti-Human, Anti-Society are the main characteristics of the heretical teaching Falung to ruin life: Analysis of the case of self-immolation of FLG at the Tiananmen Square),” in Shehuiwenti yanjiu congshu bianji weiyuanhui 2002 (see note 1275), pp. 183–88, here p. 185.
account shows, several followers have only become willing to risk their life for FLG after the Chinese government stepped up their campaign. Followers of FLG have appeared to be one important resource for the continuance of FLG activities, especially as Li Hongzhi has retreated into a more hidden life in the United States.

3.3.3.2.2 Structure

Christian-inspired Groups

News about several groups have decreased after 1999. Information about activities of the “Society of Disciples,” the “Church of the Almighty God,” as well as the “Three Grades of Servants” have appeared most frequently.1330 Among the scattered information three tendencies can be noticed. For instance, some groups are said to protect their organization by linking it to business activities. This is a common strategy within the sector of nongovernmental organizations.1331 The “Three Gardes of Servants” have been said to have twenty enterprises.1332

The “Society of Disciples” having decided to reorganize their administrative structure on a local level has resulted in a more dense organization, breaking with the former, strict 7-7 hierarchy. This, according to public security officials, has enabled them to quickly reorganize their meeting points after one was closed by the police.1333

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1331 “Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147.
1332 Deng 2006 (see note 404).
Having been able to build on strong personal resources, the “Church of the Almighty Good” has become internationalized, with strong branches in the United States, in Australia, in Southeast Asia, and even in some parts of Europe. In 2000, the leader of its group, Zhao Weishan (aka Xu Weishan), first went to Tokyo and later on to New York. He has established a head office, several websites, as well publishing houses. In June 2001, Zhao Weishan applied for political asylum due to religious persecution in the United States, which was subsequently granted. Since then, he has been managing the international coordination of the “Almighty” work in various countries.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

While all of the organizational structures of the Qigong groups seem to have vanished in mainland China, several of their followers continue to practice on their own or in loose networks. Regarding Zhonggong, public securities of the Anhui province have mentioned that they possess a strong capacity for reorganization and secret communication. The newly emerged group Yuanrongfa established its hierarchy using imperial titles. Huang served as “emperor” on top and a Mrs. Cao as his “empress” (huanghou). His wife and a Mr. or Mrs. Wei were referred to as “left and right Prime Minister” (chengxiang). Regarding FLG, small cell groups based on personal relationships were the only formally organized units which have survived the repressive measure of the party-state. According to new official stipulations, some groups have undergone an organizational transformation. Some details are known related to the Zhineng group. First, after the Central Mili-

1334 “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
1336 “Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147).
1337 Zhu 2001 (see note 1297), p. 320.
tary Comission issued a document that retired military cadres should not practice Qigong, Zhinenggong had all members and staff at the center retire. Moreover, they dispensed their organization, the research society, and applied for registration under the Wuhsu Administration Center of the National Sports Administration. Additionally, they terminated all courses as well as advertisements with Qigong magazines and stopped recruiting followers, instead dedicating themselves to scattered (fensan), small-scale (xiaoxing), local (jiudi), and voluntartily (ziyuan) administration practices.\textsuperscript{1338}

The two major groups, Zhonggong and FLG, both transferred sections of their organizational structure abroad prior to 1999. However, concerning other resources, they have continued to reshape their organizational structure in different ways. While Zhonggong, cut off from his resources in China, has evolved into a one-man-enterprise tailored to Zhang Hongbao, FLG has set up various, rather self-sufficient new agencies to enhance its influence on policy matters as well as in public relations.

Until his death on July 2006, Zhang Hongbao, the leader of Zhonggong, sucessfully relaunched its former conglomerate in the United States. However, in contrast to the first and second phase, the whole enterprise seems to be much more tailored to his person. The first webpage of Tianhua Culture website features his picture, and nearly all of the subcategories’ titles are directly linked with his name, that is, “Zhang’ Country Governing Ideology,” “Zhang on the Art Of Leadership,” or “Zhang on Tactics and Strategies.”\textsuperscript{1339} In lack of other sources related to his organizantional structure and only judging from the appearance of his website, it seems that Zhonggong’s former structure has basically demobilized. Tian Culture seemed to have basically been a one-man enterprise. Although the website

\textsuperscript{1338} Qin 2000 (see note 1047), p. 13.
\textsuperscript{1339} See http://www.tianhuaculture.net.
mentions some institutions, such as the “Chinese Shadow Government,” “World Religion the Vatican,” or the “World Chinese Association,” no further information or any hints of membership can be found.

Setting up various agencies, FLG has aimed at gaining new organizational resources to diversify their activities beyond the scope of spiritual cultivation.

1340 According to the Tianhua Culture website, the “Chinese Shadow Government is a party not in office yet not without responsibility—it supervises the party in power, it is the shadow of the figure of the party in power . . . The goal and aim are to supervise the party in power in practicing law, promoting political reform, pushing China to progress, realizing democratization and republicanism, and enriching the people and country.” See “Zhang Hong Bao Put Forward His Eight Motions on Amending the Constitution to CCP Leaders; CSG Started Mechanism Supervising Modern Chinese Regime,” May 5, 2003, http://www.tianhuaculture.net/eng/a02_1_18.html (accessed November 14, 2008). An article on the establishment of the “Shadow Government” on the Zhang-related website http://www.world-chinese.com suggests that it was largely motivated as an escape strategy to mobilize support of Chinese dissidents in the United States as well the American public, which both had helped Zhang before in relation to his plea for political asylum, in the wake of facing a judicial trial for allegations of beating and imprisoning his housekeeper; see “World Chinese Federation: Zhang Hongbao Forced to Rebel at Last,” August 8, 2003, http://www.chinaaffairs.org/gb/detail.asp?id=36529 (accessed November 14, 2008).

1341 The website http://www.world-chinese.com probably hints at that organization; it mainly compiles news related to various political and economic issues, linking to Zhang Hongbao as well as Zhonggong and Tianhua Culture.

Two types of organizations can be recognized. One type, with the “FLG Human Rights Working Group” and the “World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falungong” as representatives, have committed themselves to monitoring and exposing ideational as well organizational settings of official repression against FLG. They have aimed to place the persecution within an international human rights context as well as to establish legal liability related to crimes against mankind/genocide. Work tasks, design, and activities resemble the structure of international human rights organizations. While the core staff is often comprised of ethnic Chinese, members and supporters from various countries, mostly North America, as well as multiple language versions of their websites all stress the international sphere of activity.

The other type of organization is media agencies. Besides various websites, FLG has set up one agency in the TV sector, the radio sector, and in print media respectively:

Although no linkage with FLG is mentioned on their websites, the references to links of FLG, to he FLG-based initiatives “ Quitting the CCP” and
to its publication the “Nine Commentaries”, the at least ideational linkage with the group is obvious. News directly and only related to FLG, however, are rare. The institutions have rather aimed at establishing themselves professional media platforms with a special focus on human rights and social issues. Additionally, paralleling efforts of FLG, they also promote various aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Their main audience has been the Chinese-speaking community to provide them with “uncensored coverage” of events in China. While the major news focus of the radio station is still China, the Epoch Times as well the New Tang Dynasty TV Station have chosen to broaden their content of coverage in an attempt to gain full-scale media recognition.\textsuperscript{1343} Subsuming, the recent established institutions by FLG all aim at presenting a picture of socially and politically committed and constructive group beyond a pursuit of their own interests.

3.3.3.2.3 Finance

Christian-inspired Groups

The “Teachings of Spirit” continued to raise donations from their members based on the idea of the “vineyard of the Lord” as paradise. To enter the “vineyard” where unlimited food and drinks as well eternal life will be enjoyed, everybody must pay over 2,000 Yuan. They also encourage followers to donate surplus grain not needed for their families.\textsuperscript{1344} The “Church of the Almighty God” also practiced the donation of one-tenth of respective income. According to a bank account transfer in 2002, subgroups in seven cities collected some 2.8 million Yuan.\textsuperscript{1345} Starting business activities became new a channel for facilitating money for the Christian-inspired groups. The “Teachings of the Spirit” leased a piece of land in the name of a dress and adornment company and started a fishery

\textsuperscript{1343} See their various website content.

\textsuperscript{1344} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 258.

\textsuperscript{1345} Ibid., p. 259.
business. Likewise, the “Group of the Shouters” initiated a marketing company with support from the United States as well as Taiwan.\textsuperscript{1346} The “Grade of Three Servants Group” set up twenty enterprises worth 5.8 million Yuan.\textsuperscript{1347}

For some groups, the selling of publications became one source of income. From June 1999 through February 2001, a subbranch of the “Group of the Shouters” in Fujian province earned some 50,000 Yuan from the selling of books.\textsuperscript{1348}

Foreign funding seems to play a considerable role for some of the groups. Some sources have mentioned a possible foreign funding of the “Church of the Almighty God” due to their high bonus payment for recruiting a new follower. Besides, their website is maintained in the United States, where their publishing company is also located.\textsuperscript{1349}

**Qigong-based groups**

The new leader, Huang, financed his group with a reevoked “tribute” system. He stated that nearly everybody is able to reach a high place in the Heavenly Kingdom but that the level attained would depend upon how much the follower is willing to pay. Sums for tribute could range from 10 to 990 Yuan. Just within half a year, Huang is said to have amassed some 240,000 Yuan, 15,000 Yuan in cash and several goods.\textsuperscript{1350}

The financial background of either Zhongong or Falungong is totally in the dark. On the Tianhua Culture website, Zhang’s conglomerate buildup in the second phase is presented as his economic basis: “His Qilin Group has 120,000 members, 30 health-nurturing bases, almost 10,000 chain offices,

\textsuperscript{1346} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1347} Deng 2006 (see note 404); “Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147).
\textsuperscript{1348} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 265.
\textsuperscript{1349} “’Zhongguo Chenxi’ zhuanti jiangzuo” (see note 424); “Pouxixiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982), p. 7.
\textsuperscript{1350} Zhu 2001 (see note 1297), p. 320.
directly supporting 400,000 employees. Zhang Hongbao is a successful entrepreneur.”

3.3.3.3 Ideational Resources

CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS

Although the increased persecution of the party-state directed at the whole spiritual-religious field hasn’t brought any new challenges to the Christians-inspired groups, they nevertheless have aimed at several adjustments related to their teachings.

Although the millennium passed, the Christian-inspired groups still found new dates to link to a doomsday prophecy. The “Rebuild Church of the Holy Spirit” has interpreted the “9/11” terrorist attacks as a prelude to the “real castastrophe.”

There are many natural and manmade calamities, like September 11, the earthquake of Tangshan, and the Taiwan earthquake, but the real catastrophe has not yet come. The real three-and-a-half-year catastrophe will come fast. When it arrives, it will be frightening, cities will be torn into two pieces, islands won’t be seen any more. At that time, mountains will tumble and pieces of ice, weighing 45 kilos, will fall down. Contemporary calamities are insignificant compared to the coming one . . . Only the church can avoid this frightening disaster. Because before it comes, the church will be carried into the glory and triumph of the battle.

The SARS lung disease that raged in China in 2003 was also used by the “Disciples Society” as proof that the end of the world was near.

Like FLG, the “Church of the Almighty God” was also quick to incorporate the attacks and critique voiced against into their teachings.

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1352 Cited after Wu 2004 (see note 48), p. 45.
We all suffered much pain as a result of experiencing the judgement, punishment and testing of God’s word, and at the same time met with the great red dragon’s cruel persecution of the church. This enabled us to discern the frightful face of the devil Satan and our own ugly nature. We sincerely felt that Almighty God’s work had truly redeemed us, enabling us to escape from Satan’s dark power and return to God.1353

Followers of the “Group of the Three Grades of Servants” likewise relate to sufferings due to repression as a precondition to greater happiness to come.1354

Additionally, to test and strengthen the commitment of their followers, the “Almighty God” in its most recent words blames many followers for their indifference or even their resistance and blasphemy against him. He therefore states:

Those who cannot completely accept my word, those who cannot put my word into practice, those who cannot find their goals in my word, and those who cannot receive salvation by my word are all the ones condemned by my word and much more the ones losing my salvation. My rod will never depart from them.1355

A collection of cases of followers who have resisted the “Almighty God” and who have suffered from his respective punishment, in the form of deadly illnesses or accidents, adds to this doctrinal emphasis:

No. 36. Guo X from Deting Township in Song County, female, 35 years old, a junior leader from the Spiritual denomination. Between 1997 and 1998, some brothers and sisters testified about Almighty God’s end-time work to her many

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1354 “Sanpanpurenpai lingxiu bei pan si xing” (see note 227).
times, but she always blasphemed God and condemned God’s work wantonly. Moreover she, despite her pregnancy, bustled around hindering others from returning to God. Because of her disturbance, her mother, who was willing to accept Almighty God, dared not accept. On January 20, 1999, after Guo X gave birth to a baby, she suffered from both vomiting and diarrhea. She breathed out her life before being sent to the hospital. What a tragic death! It really was retribution!

No. 128. Gao X from Boxing County in Binzhou City, male, 52 years old, a leader from the Three-Self denomination. On April 12, 1998, two people from that denomination accepted Almighty God. After he learned that, he went to disturb them and said that they two were deceived. Moreover, he spoke blasphemous words wantonly in the meeting house: “This is not true. Could God speak such words? This book cannot save people.” And he even said that he would make the brothers who had accepted Almighty God suffer. On June 22, 1998, Gao X was bitten by a vicious dog on the way to gathering grain husks in the field. On that very afternoon, he was hit by a train while crossing the railway and was thrown more than ten meters away. He died on the spot.

This devil was cursed. Disasters pursued him and didn’t let him go!1356

The “Church of the Almighty God” also aimed to clarify several aspects of their teachings. At the beginning of the new century, as several secondary sources have reported, the Church’s advocated female incarnation of a Jesus Christ is said to be a woman named Deng, living in a cave in Henan.1357

The antichrist and wicked elements have dared to directly attack the flesh of the Almighty God and have committed the heinous sin of blasphemy. They say, “The Church of the Almighty God believes in a woman surnamed Deng from


1357 For example Forney 2001 (see note 248).
Zhengzhou, Henan, who was once possessed by a demon.” This is pure fabrication. In fact, the place where she was born as flesh and dwells isn’t in Henan province at all, and the surname is certainly not Deng. The rumors concocted by these wicked elements don’t even come close to the truth—it is as if they were talking in their sleep.\footnote{1358}

Dunn explains this differences as “. . . some areas of divergence between the beliefs of the authors of the statement on the website and those of at least some believers on the mainland . . . The fact that the website is based in the U.S., but inaccessible in China suggests that there could well be a lack of communication between the upper and grassroots levels of the organization.”\footnote{1359} The group’s own explanation suggests that these ideas might have been made up to harm the group. Concrete theological fabrications to discredit a group have never been part of the ideational concepts of the party-state for denouncing “heretical groups.” Therefore, they could steam from religious actors themselves. However, secondary sources on the Church of the Almighty God written by pastors show a much more sophisticated critique based on the scriptures. For these reasons I also tend to support Dunn’s explanation as the most likely one.

Another evolution of their teachings has happened. Whereas the “Church of the Almighty God” promulgated that the final stage of God’s work, which was already started when Jesus Christ returned again as the female Almighty God, only Chinese people will be saved. However, these passages are no longer included within their available resources online. Since their founder Zhao moved to the United States and their structure has become

\footnote{1358} “Dui di Jidu gongji Quannengshen jiaohui de si da yaoyan de pouxi (Analyzing and Refuting the Four Main Rumors Spread by the Antichrist to Attack the Church of the Almighty God),” http://pici.picidae.net/browse.php?r=95a76ef6340c7529316f34350a7078b2 (accessed October 6, 2007).

\footnote{1359} Dunn, \textit{Heterodox Christian Doctrine} (see note 131).
more international, they have also had to adapt their teachings.\textsuperscript{1360} Consequently, most of the works of the “Church” have been translated during the years 2005 and 2006 into English.\textsuperscript{1361}

This internationalization has been probably induced by rising pressure from within China. The “Church” has openly admitted that due to persecution by the Chinese government and also due to attacks from other Christian denominations, the spreading of their gospel has temporarily come to a standstill.\textsuperscript{1362} However, the “Church” explains the necessity of becoming attaining an international scope from a more positive point of view.

God’s work in mainland China has finally come to an end with glorious circumstances. The government of the great red dragon has eventually finished rendering its service and begun to receive God’s righteous punishment . . . At the present time, God’s end-time work has reached its climax in mainland China, and in all denominations and sects in the entire Christianity, the majority of those who seek after the truth have returned before the throne of God. It is as if that the entire religious circle has been cleaned up.\textsuperscript{1363}

Interestingly, the “Three Grades of Servants Group” takes up some of the most common ideational accusations by the party-state or ascribes features to heretical teachings, denouncing them to separate itself from other heretical teaching. “We reject that any person refers to himself as Jesus; we reject sayings that Jesus has already appeared the second time; we reject all kinds of heretical teachings. Christians should not divide themselves; we reject theory of denomination.”\textsuperscript{1364}

\textsuperscript{1360} “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 152).
\textsuperscript{1362} About us (see note 306).
\textsuperscript{1363} Ibid.
QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

The campaign of the party-state has challenged the Qigong groups to provide their followers with ideational resources to give meaning to the persecution as well new perspectives for their practices.

The founder of FLG, Li Hongzhi, framed the persecution of his followers in various ways. Already before FLG was declared illegal, appeals to the preserverence of his followers were made as part of their cultivation process. Talking of fears and excuses for giving up, Li said: “A great cultivator can let go of his ego and all of the thoughts of an average human being during great tests.” However, even before the beginning of the party-state campaign, he urged that “we are cultivators, we shall not participate in politics, we shall not be disturbed by those issues, we shall calm down.”

After June 2000, he published a series of “scriptures” entitled “Walking Towards Perfection” (Zou xiang yuanman), “Excluding disturbances” (Paichu ganrao), “Rationality” (Lixing), and “Giving up the Last Attachments” (Qu diao zuihou de zhizhuo). Within these scriptures he explains the cause of the persecution as “long arranged by history” and as a “test” for the persistence of his followers: “Do you know? On one the greatest excuses of the old evil powers to destroy the Great Dharma is covered by your fundamental stubbornness . . . If you can really let go of these human fundamental stubbornness during the process of cultivation, this evil and the difficult circumstances will not be so evil in the end.”

Li also has related the persecution of FLG to the prophesy of Nostradamus. Li cites the 72nd of the 10th set of quatrains of Nostradamus, “In the year 1999, seventh month, from the sky comes a great King of terror. In order to

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bring back to life the great king of Angolmois. Before and after Mars reigns in the name of bringing people happiness,” and comments:

What he [Nostradamus] said about . . . refers precisely to a few people with ulterior motives in the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party using their power to initiate a vicious, comprehensive suppression of the Dafa . . . As to the sentence of Nostradamus “before and after Mars reigns . . .,” it means to say that Marx is ruling the world before and after the year 1999 . . .

Providing a frame of an already predestined persecution of FLG, Li adds more significance to the resistance to the persecution and to FLG as well as to his person in the first place. Later on Li offers another historical dimension to the suffering: “In the history of destruction, the persecution of the evil forces against cultivators is not the first time either. Isn’t it a reoccurrence of what Jesus went through at that time? Didn’t Shakyamuni also experience it?”

Li increasingly portrays the persistence against the persecution as a matter of life and death, a battle of the good against the evil. He rarely gives any consolation or encouragement. “The great Dharma and the students have come through [this time of persecution, KK] in their performance as the greatest cultivators of the right Dharma . . . When a cultivator can give up his thoughts of life and death under whatever circumstances, the evil will definitely be afraid; if all students can do it, the evil will be eliminated.”

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1369 Penny 2002 (see note 1354), p. 167.


He calls on his followers to “bear the unbearable (ren wu zhi ren).”
In these scriptures, Li states that “the evil persecution against the Fa (law) can no longer be tolerated.” He called on his pupils by saying: “[I]f the evil is already at a stage of no help, use different kinds of methods to stop and to eliminate it.”

After the attempted self-immolation of followers at Tiananman Square on Chinese New Year 2001, Li considerably moderated his messages. He showed more tolerance and pity towards persecuted followers. “Under a confused mind and will, some students were forced to to sign some so-called ‘stop practicing’ or ‘letters of regret,’ these kind of things . . . Although they have attachments . . . did something which a follower should not do, but one should look at the whole actions of a follower. I don’t accept these things. When they will come to their senses, they will immediately do what a follower should do.”

He also praises the followers for holding on, for “these disciples of the worst evil are used to the very last, because they are still pupils of the Great Dharma which continuously go astray, therefore the old forces of evil need to use them to test the pupils of the Great Dharma.”

Li has advocated “Fa retification,” “clarifying the truth,” as well as “sending righteous thoughts” as new ways of dealing with the persecutions: “The path we take has to be righteous. Whatever you do today, the future people will remark, ‘That’s how Dafa disciples did it back then,’ so we can see that many things are major. This is why we have to be pure when we send forth

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1373 Ibid.
righteous thoughts . . . Through Dafa disciples giving their all in clarifying the truth, many people have really come to see all of this, and they have a lot of righteous thoughts. I think, then, that for these people it’s not just an ordinary matter of seeing what Dafa is—they might also come to say some fair things about Dafa, and then they will have in fact already laid for themselves an excellent foundation for their beings in the future.”

Li has been always careful not to become involved in any political judgements. He has been circumspect in not equating the CCP with evil. Instead he has stated: “We’re not interested in political power, and we don’t want to overthrow your CCP. It’s the evil’s chief wretch in the human world who brought down the CCP itself while using the CCP in this persecution.”

Overall, when asked about political issues, like Hong Kong or Taiwan elections, Li has been always careful to not pass political judgement on this.

However, facing heightened propaganda by the Chinese party-state, and since the issuance of the “Nine Commentaries,” his tone has changed:

Recently the CCP’s lies and propaganda have again been pushing fabrications such as the “self-immolation” and been spreading fake versions of the *Nine Commentaries* so as to further poison the minds of the world’s people. This has created more obstacles for clarifying the truth and saving the world’s people. And so, to have the world’s people be aware of that vile party’s nature and why it has persecuted Dafa disciples, it has become necessary for people to learn about the *Nine Commentaries* . . . The current situation shows that now, and especially since the publication of the *Nine Commentaries*, many of the world’s people have woken up. The Chinese people, more than others, have

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1377 Ibid.
1378 Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and 2004” (see note 1308).
been kept in the dark for too long by the Party culture’s false appearances that were created by the evil Communist ideology. People are gradually becoming clearheaded and their own, true natures are reviving. Since the publication of the *Nine Commentaries*, you have experienced a great many things, things of all kinds—both positive and negative. Most notably, on a daily basis thousands of people have been withdrawing from the Party, and this has terrified the malevolent Party’s evil specter and the bad people. Now, before its imminent collapse, the evil is once again saying—as it riles people up, confuses and poisons people, and makes up lies—that we are doing political things.”

Li has also shown sympathy and support for advocates from the democracy movement overseas, and he still calls on his followers to not directly engage in political actions, designating them “not so appropriate for a follower.”

The tactics used in the persecution by the CCP thugs and the extent of the persecution’s wickedness help people see the CCP for what it is. Thus the CCP has once again, so as to confuse right and wrong, pulled out the bogus line that Falun Gong students are “getting political.” They do so to confuse those whose thoughts are being led along by the CCP and yet think they are clear on things, vainly attempting to sustain the persecution and give it theoretical grounds. The truth is, mankind’s “politics” were not designed for the persecutors’ use. If “getting political” can expose the persecution, if “getting political” can stop the persecution, if “getting political” can help clarify the facts, if “getting political” can save sentient beings—if “getting political” can do all of this good, then why not do so?

During a speech in Los Angeles on February 28, 2004, he stated:

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We pupils of the Great Dharma should take actions in a kind-hearted, rational and calm way . . . Whether we talk to other people or participate in any activities, we should show people the pure beauty and the kind-heartedness of the Great Dharma pupil. Never do anything overexcitedly . . . Where there are no pupils of the Great Dharma, you could go to protect the Dharma. But it is too difficult and too close to the vicious gangsters which persecute the pupil of the Great Dharma. So temporarily you should not go, because there will be some next steps to do.\footnote{1383}

Likewise he stated:

When you send righteous thoughts you need to have your mind more focused, purer, and steadier, so as to mobilize your greater abilities, disintegrate all of the dark minions and rotten demons, and eliminate the final disruptions that are in other dimensions. Stop letting the evil exploit gaps, and stop being interfered with by human attachments. Do well the things that Dafa disciples should do, and walk the last leg of the journey well. Righteous thoughts, righteous actions.\footnote{1384}

As a result of various websites and bulletin boards, statements of FLG became more broad-based and did not always comply with the interests of Li himself. For example, shortly after the 11th of September, posted statements referred to the power of Li as his original/essential spirit having foreseen the developments. Therefore he used his Dharma bodies to visit adherents in their dreams for warning them not to get on a flight or to get close to the World Trade Center. It was also states that Li wanted to tell President Bush


\footnote{1384} Hongzhi Li, “Eliminate the Dark Minions with Righteous Thoughts,” March 16, 2004, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and 2004” (see note 1308).
also, but was hindered from entering his room since a cross was hanging on
the wall. As Christians in the USA reacted fiercely, wondering whether Li
might be the devil, Li quickly expressed the official position of FLG.\textsuperscript{1385}
Also, the latest change of strategy related to the handling of persecution
might not have been initiated by Li himself. While FLG and the party-state
agreed that FLG is not a religion, the group’s stance changed after having
found out that this label might be useful for framing their persecution in the
international context, and with international human rights organization in
particular.\textsuperscript{1386}
Although Li communicated with his followers via the Internet, his physical
absence nevertheless created a vacuum. Some of his statements might have
suggested that he has gradually withdrawn from his formerly prominent
leading role:

I didn’t want to make a public appearance, because if I did, all the public’s fo-
cus would be on me. Now you are the ones who are validating the Fa among
the world’s people, and you’re the ones who are saving sentient beings and
consumating everything of yours in the process of clarifying the truth among
the world’s people. So I wanted to leave the opportunities for you and let you
do these things.\textsuperscript{1387}

Elaborating on the nature of persecution has become a central message of
Li’s lectures. He has seldomly talked about FLG teachings, of values, aside
from the importance of focusing on studies.\textsuperscript{1388} Although Li has acknowl-
edged and welcomed the increasing internationalization of FLG, he has still
put special emphasis on China by mentioning the persecution and the
superiority of the Chinese culture vis-à-vis others. He has called it a

\textsuperscript{1385} Guo 2002 (see note 1306), p. 270.
\textsuperscript{1386} Keith and Liu 2003 (see note 1096 ), p. 630.
\textsuperscript{1387} Hongzhi Li, “Teaching the Fa at the Washington, D.C. Fa Conference,” July 22, 2002,
in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2001 and 2002” (see note 1309).
\textsuperscript{1388} Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2001 and 2002” (see note 1309).
“semi-divine nature,” saying that the Chinese characters are very close to the ones in heaven, and has therefore also rejected the translation of the explanation sheets for the exercises.\footnote{1389} Li has advocated a Chinese cultural tradition, drawn from before the Cultural Revolution with a special emphasis on Tang Dynasty, as opposed to contemporary “party culture.”\footnote{1390}

However, he was eager to incorporate actual events into his messages:

The fact that SARS managed to appear in Beijing, and even managed to break into Zhongnanhai and topple a few of the Politburo Standing Committee members, I’ll tell you, this is \textit{not} a simple matter of an infectious disease like the world’s people think it is. That’s where the evil seals things off the tightest. The evil has been annihilated to this degree, to the point that it can’t even guard its home nest, so Gods have been able to penetrate the center of its evil.\footnote{1391}

Because of the ongoing persecution, Li has been increasingly facing questions and doubts of some followers:

Some students are thinking, “Master doesn’t acknowledge the old forces’ arrangements. So why doesn’t Master instantly destroy the old forces?” Master is able to do that, and no matter how large they are, Master could still do it. But have you thought about this: if I were to redirect the enormous, gigantic energy in the Fa-rectification back here into the Three Realms to do things, it would be like hitting a mosquito with an atomic bomb, it’d be a clumsy use of force . . . There’s another issue, which is, a few students recently have had some incorrect states. This problem is very serious, to . . . One primary reason is, since your levels have risen and Master has told you the Attainment Status you’ll

\footnote{1389} Hongzhi Li, “Eliminating the Evil,” February 25, 2006, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2005 and 2006” (see note 1305).
\footnote{1390} Hongzhi Li, “Teaching the Fa at the Meeting on Writing Music,” April 7, 2007, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2005 and 2006” (see note 1305).
\footnote{1391} Hongzhi Li, “Teaching the Fa at the 2003 Midwest-U.S. Fa Conference,” June 22, 2003, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and 2004” (see note 1308).
achieve, you are more confident and bold now, and you feel pretty
self-assured—I can only describe it with these lower words of human beings,
since there aren’t any fitting words for it. So some people have said, “We don’t
need to respect Master anymore. We just need to follow the Fa, and take the Fa
as teacher . . . There are also students who . . . with my situation that I talked
about earlier, a very small number of students aren’t able to recognize that
situation, and as a result they’ve become disrespectful of Master, and they’ve
begun to dare comment on how high the level of this Fa is and on different
things about me, their Master. Of course, it’s not that I don’t let you, the stu-
dents, talk about those things. But from your words I see your attachments and
the terrifying direction you’re heading in. Besides, what you’ve seen is just so
low, some of the things aren’t at all what you think they are, and a lot of them
are false appearances that result from your thoughts being unrighteous.1392

The feeling of disillusion and hesitance by many former FLG followers, be-
ing that they have had to cope with pressures related to their engagement
with FLG as well as to everyday sorrows, have been on the rise. Starting
from 2003, after many public lectures, Li has taken extra time to answer
follower’s questions.

Question: After hearing Master’s teaching of the Fa in the morning, I felt very
sad inside. I want to ask Master, did you teach us those Fa-truths ahead of
their occurrence?

Teacher: No, that’s not how it is. Right now there are a lot of things that I don’t
intervene in, because you have to walk your own paths well yourselves. That’s
the case for everybody. It’s what you will leave behind after you reach
Consummation in the future, and also a chance for you to establish mighty vir-

1392 Hongzhi Li, “Fa-Lecture During the 2003 Lantern Festival at the U.S.West Fa
Conference,” February 13, 2003, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and 2004”
(see note 1308).
If you, as a student [of Dafa], do not follow Master’s requirements, it is definitely no simple thing. The old forces have arranged for all Dafa disciples a set of their things, so if a Dafa disciple doesn’t follow Master’s requirements, he must be following the old forces’ arrangements.

This doubts and disillusions surely contributed to the success of Huang’s group. Familiar with FLG resources due his former participation, Huang linked his teachings with Li Hongzhi’s.

Huang stated that “Li teaches things of inner Dharma and I teach outer things of the Dharma.” Echoing Li’s three pillars of truthfulness, benevolence, and forbearance, Huang put out his own three principles: “abandoning” (she), to abandon stubborn mind of normal people, “iture” (de), pointing to a natural-born conscience, and “comprehension” (wu), the power to comprehend the Buddhist law and cultivation.

But Huang’s teachings sound much more accommodating than Li’s, as Huang aims at establishing a happy and cheerful family through the mingling of all different cultures of mankind. Huang refers to three relationships: upper, middle, and lower:

Concerning the upper, this includes respect for the state, paying respect to parents, treating people honestly, and respecting higher ranks; on the middle level, understanding is eternal, mutual understanding and help, honestly and full heartedly treating other people; on the lower level, also treating people with honesty, teaching them well and helping them.

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1393 Hongzhi Li, “Explaining the Fa During the 2003 Lantern Festival at the U.S.West Fa Conference,” February 15, 2003, in Li, “Teacher’s Articles and Lectures 2003 and 2004” (see note 1308).
1395 Zhu 2001 (see note 1297), p. 320.
1396 Ibid., p. 319.
Following these principles, one could be the “master” within this and also the other world, called Heavenly Kingdom. Huang stipulated that not only a small number, but 90 percent of the people can reach a good place in the Heavenly Kingdom—arranged by Huang. Only five people obtained a very high place: Huang’s wife Mrs. Tan, a certain Mr. or Ms. Cao, Wei, Guo, as well as Li Hongzhi’s wife. Whether Li was excluded from this list on purpose or whether these places only included dead people remains unknown.

Huang stressed that the “Dharma of Interfusion” should be the only teacher, and that adherents should not bind themselves to either his or Li’s theories. In the scope of the much broadened teachings of Zhang Hongbao, no trace of his former followers or their persecution can be found. Unlike Li Hongzhi, Zhang had already placed his teachings within an entrepreneurial context and therefore wasn’t dependent on an ideational legitimation and mobilization under pressure. Additionally, he already drew out of the China in 1995 and his followers there might easily have given into the party-state order to no longer practice Zhonggong.

The Tianhua Culture is based on Zhang’s Kylin culture buildup during the second phase. The innovative aspect is a transference of his stated philosophical principles, like Yin and Yang or the “generation and inhibition of the five elements,” to the political as well as economic fields.

In respect to his political ideas, Zhang sketched a picture of China with a democratic political system. He advocated a peaceful political transition, starting from amendments and enforcement of the current constitution of the People’s Republic of China. Despite advocating the United States of America as a political role model, he identified roots for modern democracy in traditional Chinese culture:

“The Law of Inhibition and Generation of the Five Elements,” from the Perspective of the Universal Law of Development, Critiques the Irrationality of the Power Structure of Totalitarian Autocracy and Affirms America’s Tripar-
tite Political Structure . . . I found that, thousands of years ago, Chinese traditional theory about “the inhibition and generation of the five elements” offered a thorough explication of the principle of check and balance. Moreover, it configured for mankind a prototype of dynamics and change that is universally applicable, pointing out the law and principle of perpetual dynamics and equilibrium in movement. According to the traditional concept of “five elements,” everything in the universe is born as a result of the intercourse between Yin and Yang, and things can be categorized into five major categories: earth, metal, water, wood and fire. There exist inter-promoting and inter-checking relationships among these elements.1397

His publications on international politics relate a somewhat contradictory outlook for the future of China as well as international society. On a probably more idealistic, visional level, Zhang presented his theory of “reorganizing the countries” towards global village overcoming nation-states.1398 However, in a article called “CCP’s Post-Nuclear Super Weapons and Its Geostrategic Goal” Zhang predicted a war of conquest by China against the United States timed for a triumphal inauguration of Chinese hegemony at the 2008 Olympic Games. Zhang goes on to describe three classes of super-weapons he believes the Chinese are pursuing in order to destroy the United States per this timetable. The first is a space-based weapon designed to disrupt electrical power, the second is the power to induce powerful earthquakes and tsunamis. The third one referred to Zhang’s original expertise in Qigong, stating:

Supernatural ability will definitely be used as lethal weapons for world domination . . . The effect of doing within ten meters is the same as doing one

hundred thousand meters far away. Therefore, supernatural ability persons can
cut people’s hair thirty meters away, if the distance is three hundred thousand
meters away, can the hair be cut? If using invisible scissors to distantly cut the
hair, can he distantly cut the enemy head’s throat? . . . Take a further example,
if he can transport at his pleasure numerous ancient and modern, Chinese and
foreign coins and golden fishes to the appointed places and person’s body, can
he transport chemical weapons to enemy’s commanding office or enemy’s sen-
ate or representatives house and directionally put these chemical weapons to
the body of enemy head or relative persons? If releasing energy to change the
water into ice, can he remotely freeze person’s heart, blood or brains? 

About his refinements for the cultivation method Yuandungong, based
on his former Zhonggong, as well his other essays on management culture,
medical systems, and the art of leadership, the English as well as the Chi-
nese versions of his website only provide a list of contents or the direction
“under construction.”

Like Li Hongzhi, Zhang Hongbao failed to further elaborate on his concept
of ethics and virtue. However, the Tianhua Culture website mentions the
“eight virtues and eight principles” including “success without arrogance,

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1399 Zhang, Hongbao, “CCP’s Post-Nuclear Super Weapons and its Geostrategic Goal,”
http://www.tianhuaculture.net/eng/a02_3_1.html (accessed November 15, 2008). Some
sources mention that Zhang seemed to have lost credit and support among overseas Chinese
dissidents due to these rather bizarre ideas; see Kusumi 2006 (see note 1298).
1400 “Yuan” might mean “round” and “dun” probably “suddenly.” Zhang also refers to
popular Buddhist sects in the Ming dynasty, called “Teachings of Yuandun” (Yuandunjiao)
and its main scripture “Longhuajing.” The authenticity and orthodoxy of the scripture is
subject to scholarly discussions. Zhang published a so-called “authentic version” of the
scripture; see “Yuyan Hongbao Dafawang chuan yuandun dafa de gujing ‘Longhuajing’
zhennan quanwen (The Prophet and King of Great Dharma Hongbao transmits the real
version of the ancient scripture ‘Longhuajing’ of Yuanda Great Dharma),”
honor, without pride . . . facing sexual desire with lewd thoughts . . .; be efficient and effective, be patriotic and law-abiding.”

*Other Qigong Groups: Incorporation of Politics Into Their Teachings*

After the Chinese leadership declared FLG illegal and an evil cult, statements by some Qigong groups were published. Not surprisingly, the groups emphasized their own commitment to the party and their policy. But they did not simply overtake official wording but instead incorporated the party line into their own teachings. For example, *Xulingong* stipulated their own propaganda degree called “one, two, three, Xuling spirit” (*yi, er, san, xuling jingshen*): “one degree: to serve the health of the people wholeheartly; two combinations: combination of *Xulinggong* with people’s fitness and spiritual culture; three rejections: reject Qigong becoming religious, becoming spiritualized, and become commercialized.” In a short passage on politics, *Xulingong* also mentioned Deng Xiaoping and Marx, yet Mao Zedong’s name, a central figure within the moral codex of many groups, appeared twice. *Xulingong* ends its statements appealing to its practitioners to study the “eight commandments” (*ba jie*): no smoking, no drinking, no drugs, no visiting prostitutes, no gambling, no corruption, no acceptance of bribes, no entrapping or slandering of other people.

Pang Ming, the founder of *Zhinenggong*, published an article depicting problems within the Qigong sector. He advocates the importance of a differentiation between false and true Qigong, although Pang admits difficulties due to a lack of knowledge on the definition of Qigong science.

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1402 See http://www.tianhuaculture.net/eng/index.htm (accessed November 15, 2008). The paralleling tone—with the “eight shames, eight virtues (*ba chi barong*)” set moral guidelines ascribed to Hu Jintao issued on March 2006 as a moral yardsick for party officials—is striking; see “CPC promotes ‘core value system’” (see note 100). However, Zhang or the website maintainers might have been also inspired, as Hu, by the noble eightfold path of Buddhism.

Many miraculous things within the Qigong world can be verified by science and this should be publicly accepted and further research must be initiated.\textsuperscript{1404}

Under rising pressure and closer examination, the legitimacy of some leaders was not strong enough to cope with. In July 2003, according to a Chinese news report, the death of Tian Ruisheng (who died in 1995), the founder of Xianggong was finally discovered. For receiving continuous pension pay worth some 13,000 Yuan, Tian Tongyin was punished to ten months of fixed-term imprisonment and a fee of 10,000 Yuan.\textsuperscript{1405}

3.3.3.4 Action Resources

\textsuperscript{1404} Xiangjiu Zhang, “Jianchi dang de lingdao, jianchi zhengque fangxiang: Chongdu Pang Ming ‘Tanxin Zhongguo Qigong zhi lu’ yi wen you gan (Upholding the guidance of the party, upholding the correct direction: Some thought after re-reading Pang Ming’s article ‘Searching for the way of China’s Qigong’),” ZGQGKX 12 (1999), p. 41.

Christian-inspired Groups

Basic rituals of the groups do not seem to have changed much. Healing prayers have continued to be one central activity of the “Society of Disciples.”\textsuperscript{1406} The “Church of the Almighty God” is said to relate to the year 2000 as a doomsday date just as in August 1999. Therefore, they had urged members to participate in a “prayer for world peace” on Tiananmen Square on August 14, 1999.\textsuperscript{1407}

In August 2000, the “Fangcheng Headquarters of the Christian Church in Mainland China” (Zhongguo dalu jidujiaohui fangcheng zonghui), which has evolved from the “Full Scope Church,” was able to organize a “training class for coworkers” with some 120 participants. An overseas Chinese from the United States was invited to preach.\textsuperscript{1408}

The increase of “training sessions” is also mentioned in connection with other groups. Additionally, some groups also have conducted “communication sessions.” In the wake of rising persecution, the necessity of preparing and readjusting the group has become on major focus.\textsuperscript{1409}

The “Church of the Almighty God” has developed a whole set of rules for protection against police interference—like scattering of the gathering posts, using aliases and false addresses among members, frequent change of phone, provision of lodging for core members in reliable but never the same households, which change frequently with up to several places in one day, requests for single-line contact between subordinates and superiors, and resis-

\textsuperscript{1406} Zhang 2006 (see note 1333), p. 43.
\textsuperscript{1407} Bi 2002 (see note 1167).
\textsuperscript{1408} Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 117.
\textsuperscript{1409} “The Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147).
tance to confession in case of interrogation.\textsuperscript{1410} Healing prayers have continued to be one central activity of the “Society of Disciples.”\textsuperscript{1411}

\textbf{QIGONG-BASED GROUPD}

Li Hongzhi himself rarely mentioned the practice of FLG. However, in May 2001, the website Mingrui Net announced that Li Hongzhi will transmit a magic formula [to his followers], to “Upright Principles of Heaven and Earth by the Dharma, and to whole destroy the Evil” (\textit{Fa zheng qian kun, xie’e quan mie}). The transmittance of Li’s “right thoughts” was announced as taking place on May, 25, 28, and 30 as well as June, 3. Thereby, followers might curse the “evil persons” in the heart to death.\textsuperscript{1412} Whether and how the practice of other Qigong groups continued can’t be evaluated from the sources available.

\textit{3.3.3.4.2 Outward-Orientated Resources}

\textbf{Christian-inspired Groups}

Probably due to more frequent arrests of members, the “Society of Disciples” strengthened internal measures to protect them from formerly arrested members who might return as agents of the public security forces.\textsuperscript{1413} Recruitment using force has been linked with the “Church of the Almighty God.” On April 16, 2002, the group kidnapped thirty-four top leaders of the China Gospel Fellowship (CGF), claiming to be from the Singapore Haggai Leadership Institute, in the name of leadership training.\textsuperscript{1414} The “Church of the Almighty God” never issued a statement in relation to the case.

\textsuperscript{1410} Bi 2002 (see note 1167).
\textsuperscript{1411} Zhang 2006 (see note 1211), p. 43.
\textsuperscript{1412} Guo 2002 (note 1306).
\textsuperscript{1413} Zhang 2006 (see note 1333), p. 43.
Violent measures by followers of the “Church” have been reported widely within the house churches and also the official churches.\textsuperscript{1415} This event has caused great concern among fellow Christians both in and outside of China.

The “Church of the Almighty God” particularly acts on house churches as they know these non-registered meetings facing threats and violence are often reluctant to call the police.\textsuperscript{1416}

Christian sources indicate that since 1999 the “Church of the Almighty God” has been operating a broad spectrum of different tactics to recruit new followers, including the following:

- Operating undercover: either telling people they belong to a different kind of house church or visiting established houses churches for a long time following, studying, and praising their preaching
- Familiarization with potential candidates: they might stay for a long time in a house church getting to know the leaders, elders, and most active believers as well as their relationships with each other. They mostly will try to lure away leaders so that other members of the house church will easily follow
- Talking to potential followers only in split-up groups, often luring them to remote places for studies
- Sexual seduction and blaming it on the seduced followers of the house churches
- Brain washing: utilizing doubts of believers to connect to their own teachings
- Testing: ascertaining if a new follower is really committed and has internalized their teachings, they let one of their core followers act as a non-follower and ask the new recruit to preach to him or her\textsuperscript{1417}

\textsuperscript{1415} “Pouxixiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
\textsuperscript{1416} “Zhongguo Chenxi’ zhuanti jiangzuo” (see note 424).
To stir the missionizing zeal of the followers of the “Church of the Almighty God,” they were given a special quota of new members to recruit within a certain deadline.\textsuperscript{1418}

Since 2000, the “Church of the Almighty God” has increasingly focused on new target groups. They have tried to recruit new members from, firstly, other spiritual-religious groups like “Teachings of the Soul,” “Group of Hua Xuehe,” or “Teachings of the Three Classes of Servants”; secondly, members from the underground Catholic church; thirdly, members from the local TSPM church leadership; and fourthly, cadres from government units.\textsuperscript{1419}

Adding new administrational and ideological skills might improve overall organizational resources and strengthen protection, again related to the resources of official members.

The “Church of the Almighty God” also utilizes financial incentives for recruitment. For every new believer, 3,000 Yuan will be paid, and for every preacher joining the church the successful recruiter will receive as much as 10,000 Yuan.\textsuperscript{1420}

Statements by followers posted on the website of the the “Church” present a completely different picture, granting credit for recruitment and commitment of followers only on the power and authority of the publications. The power of the “Almighty God” is said to have been often revealed to them through dreams, a strong echo of the authority of dreams given in the Bible. The case descriptions also emphasize that commitment to the “Church” is a return, therefore suggesting some continuity between the former belief and the new one.\textsuperscript{1421}

\textsuperscript{1417} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1418} Deng 2006 (see note 404).
\textsuperscript{1419} Bi 2000 (see note 1167); “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
\textsuperscript{1420} “‘Zhongguo Chenxi’ zhuanti jiangzuo” (see note 424).
\textsuperscript{1421} “Ironclad Proofs of Being Conquered by God’s Word” (see note 230) and “Testimonies to the Holy Spirit” (see note 1317).
It is impossible to verify whether these case descriptions have been made up by the “Church” or whether they are real stories. They have a great sense of authenticity and appeal: they mention concrete names of people and places, cite many quotations from direct speech, and are written in a lively way. The description of doubts and pressures after joining the “Church” add to the authenticity of the stories.

Due to their international expansion, the “Almighty God” has started to target overseas Chinese in other countries. Several Chinese followers with “mid level skills” have been transferred overseas, probably to help establish the “Church” among Chinese outside of China. In addition, they have set up a website with changing mirror sites and since 2004 have translated most of their publications into English. A translation of the main publication of the group, “The word has appeared into flesh,” was finished in February 2006 and January 2008 respectively. The recent state of activity of the “Church”, however, is unclear. Although the website is updated regularly, on November 6, 2008, the latest, the latest words from the “Almighty God” are dated from May 28, 2003. The last sentence might even suggest a kind of end concerning the work of the “Almighty God”: “Perhaps his watching is timeless, or perhaps his watching has come to its end, but you should know where your heart and your spirit are now.”

1422 “Pouxijing zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
Qigong-Based Groups

Right after the illegalization of FLG was officially declared, followers of FLG in the United States were quick to organize an open “experience sharing conference” in San Jose, California, on July 22, 1999. Participants were monitored while entering the site, but nobody was turned away. During the carefully structured event, followers of FLG appeared on the stage in front of a large FLG banner and read a testimony of how FLG had healed him or her. “Only one person referred to the events in China. One youthful grandmother, newly arrived from Guilin, started to mention the tightened controls over followers at home and began to sob. The organizers quickly yanked her offstage to calm her down. After she returned to the stage, she stood by mutely with red eyes as an organizer finished reading her story.”

At the end, organizers urged the participants to reflect on the events and on how to enhance membership, particularly among non-Chinese people. For Chen, this quickly organized and well-structured event is a clear sign of the organizational resources of Falungong.

According to Thornton, in officially published versions of Li’s writings, which circulated after FLG was declared illegal, the implicit political references have been largely removed by FLG. For example, his early statements on Maoism and Lei Feng are no longer present in his current version.

“If a person were emulating Lei Feng now, perhaps we’d have to say s/he is mentally unsound. But in the 50s and 60s who said he was psychologically ill? Mankind’s moral standards are in a great decline; public morals are declining day by day, and people are bent on nothing but profit; if it benefits them, they

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1427 Ibid., p. 177.
are willing to harm others, and strive to overtake each other for personal gain by fair means or foul."^{1428}

Communications

Apart from the situation of FLG followers in labor camps and prisons as well education classes, only scattered information about the possibilities of communication outside the virtual world within mainland China could be obtained. During a trip to China I found a leaflet called “Clear Wisdom Weekly, Shanxi Edition” (Minghui zhoubao, Shanxi ban) in a neighborhood, obviously being spread there by FLG followers or sympathizers. It was designated Number 14, dated from May 10, 2005. On its two pages, stories about the persecution in China and the number of deaths in individual provinces were printed next to articles on the situation of FLG in foreign countries. Two pieces expound on personal testimonies of FLG followers from Shanxi. The printing quality is very good, including the quality of pictures, which are colored.^1429

Shortly before the staged demonstrations around Zhongnanhai, Ye Hao fled to Canada and set up the website “Clear Wisdom Net” (Minghuiwang) with six mirror sites. Since the ban of FLG, the Internet has become a very important channel of communication. With two years, from July 1999 through August 2001, FLG was able to enlarge the number of national websites from fifteen to twenty-five. In the United States alone, the number of websites has increased from forty in 40 states to eighty in 46 states. In February 2001, the online newspaper Mingrui Weekend was founded.^1430

As the repression on spiritual-religious groups increased, the Internet became a central tool of communication. At a press conference in Sydney on

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^1430 Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 135.
May 2, 1999, just a couple of days after the encirclement of Zhongnanhai, Li emphasized the importance of the World Wide Web as his sole channel of communication with his followers in China. Additionally, FLG has been successful at undermining Internet control by the Chinese authorities. They have used various programs for safe web browsing, set up proxy servers, and have even provided mainland followers with software to break through Internet censorship.

**Publications**

Li has issued a series of “scriptures” to encourage and support his followers to not give up practicing FLG and to resist the influence of “evil power” intending to harm the Great Fa.

Various authors mention that, as respects resources available online, FLG has reedited Li’s publications. Statements attacking the religious world, some statements related to a call for action against the party-state, as well as some passages mentioning prophesies as well as miraculous healings and rejection of medicine were eliminated.

Publishing of essays seemed to have been Zhong Hongbao’s main activity after his settling in the United States. However, besides his above-mentioned voluminous writings on politics and on Tianhua philosophy, many of his writings are—at least online—only presented as fragments and content structures.

Since Zhang’s death, the activities of the group have ceased. The latest news published on the website revolves around a condemnation of the “illegal appropriation” of the Zhonggong’s business license and name, written by a

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former staff member and General Secretary of the Anti-Political Persecution Alliance, Zhou Yungjun, dated August 1, 2007.  

Media

Especially after the self-immolation incident and Li’s call to calm the measures of resistance, followers of FLG have focused more on publicity strategies and less on protests. The movement has used various international meetings, the anniversaries of their protest around Zhongnanhai and their ban, as well as visits of Chinese officials abroad to raise their issues and concerns. They have put up booths in public places and at events, attempting to talk to everyone who is willing to listen about FLG. They have arranged press conferences and marches and issued numerous press releases and documents focusing on China’s human rights abuses.

Inside China, FLG has also used fax, text messaging, and e-mail to deliver news about their group and to counter the official version of FLG purportedly being an “evil cult.” They send several mysterious automated voice messages to mainland phones. Once the phone rings and is picked up, a voice starts praising FLG. Leaflets and brochures have been spread throughout neighborhoods. Followers sometimes even have managed to put up large posters and banners at public bulletin boards or places. Internet has become a key component of FLG’s ability to survive and counteract the propaganda war of the Chinese government. FLG is presented well online with websites in all major languages, though predominately in English and Chinese. For followers, the Internet has become an

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1435 Yu 2004 (see note 1148), pp. 10ff.; see also Humans Rights Watch 2002 (see note 1326); The Falun Gong Human Rights Working Group 2005 (see note 1325).
important tool for expressing identity as a follower and to link and exchange with the FLG community.

From 2002 on, FLG successfully interrupted both national cable TV networks to briefly show a video of their own persecution. During the World Cup soccer finals between June 23–30, nine CCTV channels and at least ten provincial TV channels were hijacked. On almost every important occasion, like Spring Festival, National Day or, more recently, China’s celebration of the first man in space, FLG were able to break into state TV and disseminate their message.\textsuperscript{1436} Likewise, they also hacked into satellite signals.\textsuperscript{1437}

Another strategy for denouncing the claims of the party-state was denial of the frame used by the party-state for describing events and the creation of a new framework. In the case of the self-immolation at Tiananmen Square in 2001, as well as the satellite signal hijacking, FLG denied having been involved in the activities and accused the party-state of having staged these events to denounce FLG.\textsuperscript{1438}

Aside from directly negating claims and statements by the Chinese government and pointing out the repressive nature of the governmental policy, FLG has also started to discredit the Chinese party-state in a broader way. They have portrayed then party secretary and head of state Jiang Zemin as the mastermind and driving force behind the official campaign against FLG, even describing it as his “personal crusade” to direct dissatisfaction and anger of the people related to the state of society away from him and present himself as the “defender” of the nation as well as consolidating his political power against internal rival. Former Prime Minister Zhu Rongzi is often portrayed as having been advocating a more tolerant stance towards

\textsuperscript{1436} Yu 2004 (see note 1148), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{1437} Guo 2006 (see note 1418), pp. 106–111.
\textsuperscript{1438} Ibid., p. 107.
FLG.\textsuperscript{1439} In international publications, FLG has constantly called the “610” office, which is responsible for dealing with Falungong within the party-state hierarchy, a “gestapo.”\textsuperscript{1440} However, in 2004–2005 FLG widened its campaign against CCP, aiming at discrediting the party as a whole with the publication of the “Nine Commentaries” and the launch of the movement for the withdrawal from the party.\textsuperscript{1441} In addition, FLG followers have tried to file lawsuits in the United States, in South Africa, and in Europe against Jiang Zeming, as well as against some other high-level party members such as Zeng Qinghong, Bo Xilai, Luo Gan, accusing them of torture, genocide, and crimes against humanity.\textsuperscript{1442} The latest issue exposed by FLG is the transplantation of organs of prisoners, including many FLG prisoners, to criminally cater to demands of wealthy and customers willing to pay, mostly from overseas. According FLG research as well as to foreign experts, Chinese military and security plays a prominent role in organizing the business of organ harvesting.\textsuperscript{1443}

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Besides denouncing and defaming the party-state, FLG has increasingly placed more emphasis on portraying their version of events. Regarding the continuous demonstrations and resistance of FLG followers towards the party state, they stress the peacefulness, the spontaneity, the non-bitterness, and the suffered hardships in their efforts to speak out for humility and conscience.

FLG activists outside of China have engaged in promoting traditional Chinese culture abroad, targeting Chinese as well as foreign citizens. This is based on Li’s advocation of Chinese tradition as opposed to a “party culture.” Focusing on the importance of the Chinese New Year Evening Gala broadcasted by CCTV and watched by Chinese around the world, FLG created its own Chinese New Year Global Gala produced by New Tang Dynasty Television.1444

Since then, the movement has organized various performances, exhibitions, and presentations supported by their media, New Tang Dynasty Television, The Epoch Times, and Sound of Hope International Radio. In 2008, a series of International Chinese Competitions were held in fields like Culinary Arts, Traditional Martial Arts, and Violin.1445

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1444 Yu 2004 (see note 1148), p. 17.
**Defense/Justification of Other Qigong Groups**

Continuing his quest against FLG, Ye Fangyang, head of Xulinggong, publicly denounced FLG as acting against party leadership, being anti-science, and being counterproductive to the safeguarding of public opinion.¹⁴⁴⁶

*Xulinggong* is the only known group which has actively maintained a clear line between themselves and FLG. An article written by Hu Yunlong, a follower of Xulinggong, undertook the task of proving Xulinggong’s conformity with the CCP (“party-character,” *dangxin*) and its “scientific nature” (*kexuexing*).¹⁴⁴⁷ By taking up these two criteria, Xulinggong follows officially stipulated ideational categories to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate Qigong styles. Hu doesn’t mention FLG and explains “the gaining of money by cheating, or the undertaking of feudal superstitious activities, the use of Qigong to stage a political conspiracy, and to destroy social order” by a “lack of legal administration” and “a misuse of people having ulterior motives.”¹⁴⁴⁸

Some Qigong styles have also held study sessions after new official stipulations were published. Zhinenggong followers reprinted several copies of the new regulations that emerged in September 2000 and distributed them to their followers. Besides showing their loyalty towards the party-state, followers should also be reassured through the practicing of *Zhinenggong*.¹⁴⁴⁹

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¹⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Xuzhou Yingan lingongchang (Qigong Practise Place in Yongyan, Xuzhou), “‘Jianshen Qigong guanli zanxing banfa,’ gei women chi le ‘don gxinzhi’ (‘Temporary provision on administration Health Qigong’ have us a tranquillizer),” *ZGQGKX* 11 (2000), p. 12.
3.3.4 Patterns of Interaction

**CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED GROUPS**

The heated interaction between Falungong and the party-state as well the increasing persecution against heretical teachings have also resulted into more intense activities of the Christian-inspired groups as well as the societal actors.

To avoid or decrease the level of persecution, some Christian-inspired groups have opted for an attempted alliance with the party-state. They have increasingly tried to win the support of local officials by trying to draw them into their organizations.\(^{1450}\)

Other groups, like the “Society of Disciples” have chosen an opposite strategy: they increasingly protested against arrests of their members. Sportingly, they have tried to win over support of the population with collecting money and distributing it to the poor while that the government is not helping them but they will.\(^{1451}\)

Probably due to a narrowing of the field and a rising feeling of competition, Christian-inspired groups have also started to interact with each other. Additionally, the “Church of the Almighty God” has targeted other groups for recruiting new members. Profiting from severe splitting tendencies within the “Born-Again Group” and their similar worship practices, the “Church” could lure away many of their followers. In March 2002, all core members of the “Hua Xuehe” group converted to the “Church.”\(^{1452}\) A “battle” broke out between the “Church of the Almighty God” and the “Three Grades of Servants,” leading to sixteen known murders by “Servant” followers against twenty missionizing believers of “Almighty God” during

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\(^{1450}\) “Bulletin of the Department of Anhui Public Security” (see note 1147); Bi 2002 (see note 1167).

\(^{1451}\) Zhang 2006 (see note 1333)

\(^{1452}\) “Pouxi xiejiao zuzhi ‘Dongfang shandian’” (see note 982).
the year 2004. As Liu and Deng noted: “Under the double pressure from the police and hostile churches, Xu’s church became even more secretive and mysterious.”

After 1999, the “Three Grade of Servants” began to lose members, with a considerable number going over the “Church of the Almighty God.” In 2002, several believers of the “Three Grade of Servants” kidnapped four of their former members and subsequently two “Almighty God” followers, and three days later the two latter were buried alive in the fields. Xu and others members of his group were accused of murders as well financial fraud of 20.5 million Yuan). The trial and the executed death sentences in November 2006 aroused the suspicion of many observers, who stated that the case violated several legal procedures and principles. For example, the only concrete witness who would accuse Xu of “disposing people” was a former fellow believer, Zhang Min. Statements about forced testimony caused by torture sprang up after the final verdict.

The increasing violence related to the Christian-inspired groups as well the persecution of the party-state has placed the autonomous Christian congregations in a particular difficult situation. Besides their increased publications and testimonies of the dangers and harm of the Christian-inspired groups to warn members of their congregations, they readily supported support the government campaign against “heretical teachings” in an attempt to secure or even improve their own situation.

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1453 “Sanpanpurenpai lingxiu bei pan si xing” (see note 1314).
1454 Liu and Deng 2006 (see note 348).
1455 Deng 2006 (see note 404), p. 2
However, their activities have been only partly successful. Reality indicates ongoing and widespread persecution of house churches in recent years. Several house churches have tried to register directly with the local Bureau of Religious Affairs being that the intervention of the local patriotic Protestant organizations has been described as fierce. Yet Dunn suggests that the existence of Christian-inspired, spiritual-religious groups has given house churches more autonomy vis-à-vis the party-state. The authorities have sensed that their repression could result in an increase of so-called “heterodox teachings.” The tendency to at least to bestow the officially recognized Christian congregations with a more positive and constructive role within Chinese society has been obvious from the party-state’s recent policy measures. Due the common rejection of the Christian-inspired groups, a more placable tone has occasionally emerged between the authorities and the nonregistered churches. When members of the China Gospel Fellowship were kidnapped by the “Church of the Almighty God,” their members reported the case to the authorities in Beijing and were helped. As a reaction to the heating of the whole spiritual-religious field, some Christian religious actors and scholars have advocated a closer adaptation to socialist society as a way to ensure their own interests. But another group of religious scholars and activists as well as lawyers have opted to challenge and criticize the harsh repression policy of the Chinese leadership within the limits of political system. The more tolerant stance of the


1458 Hornemann 2006 (see note 1092).

1459 Dunn (see note 671), p. 33.


1461 Gänßbauer 2004 (see note 103), pp. 160ff.
party-state vis a vis the role of religion might be partly attributed to the persistence of their activities.

QIGONG-BASED GROUPS

Without doubt the interaction between FLG and the party-state has dominated the Qigong sector. Their interaction has evolved as a kind of call-and-response schema. Especially concerning the ideational framing, both sides have referred to very similar frames, attacking the opponent with a mirror or counterframe.

The party-state has described FLG as a cult with a secret, tight-knit organizational hierarchy, with teachings aiming at brainwashing and mind control, obtaining followers’ money by fraud, and striving to overthrow the government. Alongside these approaches, FLG has laid their two-fold counterframe.

The first one has drawn a counterpicture of FLG, rejecting all the accusations brought up by the party-state. FLG followers join these cultivation methods by free will and can leave at any time, and followers enjoy individual freedom and live a normal work and family life. Li Hongzhi has no political ambitions at all. The second one, starting slightly later, has sketched the party as an “evil cult,” turning the party-state’s FLG description against them.

Both sides have used similar benchmarks to denounce the opponent. The number of dead and injured people became a very important benchmark. The government claimed that until February 2001, some 651 people suffered from psychosis, 144 people were injured, and 1,660 people died, including 239 having committed suicide.\footnote{Wu 2005 (see note 36), p. 4.} FLG stated that by April 2002 more than 365 followers have died in custody or through persecution.\footnote{Chang 2004 (see note 1057), p. 25.} While official sources doesn’t give any recent figures, FLG puts the most
recent number of followers tortures to death at 3229 (until the end of 2008). The presentation of FLG sources seem more convincing as they presented details with names and short description of the cause of death.\textsuperscript{1464}

From 1999 to 2001, FLG followers kept showing up at the Tiananmen Square, either on their own or in small groups, sitting down in the Lotus position, unfolding banners, or shouting slogans like “Falungong ist good.”\textsuperscript{1465}

By the winter of 1999, the average Beijing citizen could sketch a profile of the typical protester. A gregarious taxi driver explained it this way, “They look like they are from out of town. But instead of going to the square to take photos like ordinary tourists, they carry plastic bags or small satchels with their toothbrush and wash cloths, because they know they’ll be in the slammer for a while.”\textsuperscript{1466}

Over 35,000 protesters were detained between July 22 and October 30, 1999. After Li’s speech on December 9, 2000 and respective postings on Mingrui Net stating that “the last test” has already arrived and the chance for passing the test and reaching perfection will soon be over, on New Year’s Eve alone an estimated number of 2,626 people were arrested on Tiananmen Square.\textsuperscript{1467}

The interaction with FLG was perceived by the CCP as being a “battle.” Organizational but, based on the above mentioned labels, also ideational superiority and command was at stake. The Vice-Director of the Party School, Yang Chungui stated:

The battle between us and “FLG” doesn’t belong to the normal conflict between materialism and idealism and is also no battle over the realm of

\textsuperscript{1464} Minghui New, “3229 bi hai zhi siwang (3209 deaths due to persecution),” http://library.minghui.org/category/32,96,1.htm (accessed November 17, 2008).
\textsuperscript{1465} Power and Lee 2002 (see note 1178), pp. 263ff.
\textsuperscript{1466} Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 177.
\textsuperscript{1467} Guo 2002 (see note 1306).
consciousness, it is a political battle. Li Hongzhi’s vicious teachings openly challenge the leading thoughts of our party, Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong thoughts and Deng Xiaoping theory... This battle touches upon the fundamental belief (xinyang) of the party, the general ideational base of the unity of all people, as well as the future fate of our party and the state. The seriousness, sharpness, and complication of this battle really need to be noticed.1468

With the attempted self-immolation of seven FLG followers, the interaction between FLG and the party-state reached a climax. Both sides, the party-state as well as FLG, tried to interpret the events in order to increase their legitimation within this confrontation.1469

The party-state framed this event as a proof of the evil and harmful nature of FLG. One the one hand, Li Hongzhi was held responsible for encouraging his followers to sacrifice themselves for FLG; on the other hand, the danger of the teachings, which has driven various followers insane, was once again reaffirmed.

FLG itself denied that Li or anybody else have encouraged people to self-immolation. They denied that the participants were FLG followers and said that the whole event was staged by the government to discredit FLG.1470

1468 Xu et al. (see note 1135), p. 63.
1469 For a detailed analysis of this event, see (for the party-state perspective):
1470 See “A Staged Tragedy: Self-Immolation in Tiananmen Square” (see note 1456).
After the self-immolation incident, public opinion in China as well as abroad became very hostile towards FLG. Li might have felt that started to lose ground. Since 2004, he has called on mainland followers to moderate their actions. As a result, the number of FLG followers conducting various acts of protest on Tiananmen Square decreased compared to the years before.\footnote{1471}

Since 2004 the interaction has been largely transferred to the outside of China and became a rather indirect one. Although FLG is still very active, the groups seem to be largely reticent about utilizing their resources inside mainland China. As the Chinese leadership worries about the international support and financing of FLG, especially from the United States, many overseas Falungong practitioners speak of having been interrogated by state security officials about their ties with the Central Intelligence Agency.\footnote{1472}

Like the autonomous Christian congregations, other Qigong groups also had to balance the choices of either fully aligning themselves with the party-state an somehow guard their autonomy and a persuading legitimation vis a vis their followers.

Since the Chinese leadership declared FLG illegal and an evil cult, several conferences have been initiated by the party-state, including participants from the Qigong sector.\footnote{1473} These conferences might have been used to gather opinions and information from experts of the field. However, the intention of finding out more about the potential dangerous capacity of other Qigong groups in the tradition of a “Let hundred flowers blossom” campaign should not be ignored.

After the Chinese leadership declared FLG illegal and an evil cult, the magazine “China Qigong Science” printed statements from Qigong groups,

\footnote{1471} Zhao, “2004 nian” (see note 1369, p. 129.}
\footnote{1472} Hornemann 2006 (see note 1092).}
\footnote{1473} Chunsheng Li, “Zhongguo Qigongkexue yanjiuhui zai jing juxing, jiepi Li Hongzhi ‘Falundafa’ dahui (China Qigong Science Research Conference took place in Beijing: Revealing and criticizing Li Hongzhi’s ‘Falundafa’ Society),” ZGQGKX 9 (1999), p. 33.}
Zhinenggong, Xulingong, and Xianggong, which, according to the editor, “. . . are representative for the whole Qigong world.” Not surprisingly, the three groups emphasized their own commitment to the party and their policy. Zhinenggong stated that FLG was like a malignant tumor for the Qigong world and that the group also opposed modern science as well modern civilization. Although the head of Zhinenggong, Pang Ming, was praised for his engagement within the fight against FLG, his group nevertheless was added to the list of “harmful Qigong groups” in 2000.

The Qigong groups have not been willing to simply serve as tools of the party-state. While not simply repeating official phrases, the groups present their own profile and stipulations, in a way very similar to the CCP. Xianggong even has stated: “We thank all local governments for their great support of Xianggong,” and the Zhinenggong statement said: “The mass character of Qigong activities is very strong. Within a class society, every mass power can become a political power.”Ironically, with this sharp-witted analysis they marked their own destiny, for it fit the perception and analysis of CCP. Not only FLG, but several other groups, which the CCP found possessing potential capacities/resources to challenge the party, have become the target of persecution.

According to a Chinese newspaper report of 1999, Guogong was accused of spreading doomsday theories, a claim which wasn’t raised again later on. Judging from the present sources, no evidence for a doomsday theory can be found, although Guogong, like all the other groups, portray a kind of utopia concerning the aim of moral cultivation. The party-state also has started to act against other Qigong groups. Following the “Opinion on

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1474 “Po ‘Falungdafa’” (see note 1245), p. 5.
1475 Qin 2000 (see note 1047).
1476 Li 1999 (see note 1462); Xu et al. (see note 1135), p. 64.
Relevant Questions Related to the Handling of Socially Harmful Qigong Groups” issued at the beginning of 2000, the party-state listed some fourteen Qigong groups under this category. The lists includes Zhonggong, Bodhi Gong, Cibeigong, Zhineng Gong, Yuanjigong, Dazanggong. Some sources report that Zhonggong and Cibeigong might also have been declared “heretical teachings” like FLG. On December 13, investigations were initiated against Zhang Hongbao, the head of Zhonggong, on three cases of rape which Zhang was supposed to have committed in 1990, 1991, and 1994 respectively as well as on faked documents he had used in 1993. Zhonggong offices were sealed and its properties confiscated.

While the party-state has been overall successful to eliminate resources of the Qigong groups, they nevertheless still face some challenges. According to Forum 18, a Scandinavian Christian initiative, reports indicate that within the government young officials doubt the efficiency and necessity of the repression of FLG. Another trend of a more conflict-laden patterns of interaction between the party-state and societal actors. Paralleling trends within the religious field, scholars have voiced their concern related to the one-sided and destructive policy. Some lawyers, for example Gao Zhisheng, have taken up the task of defending FLG-related cases and of writing letters to Chinese institutions like the National People’s Congress to point to illegal aspects of persecution and punishments. Especially Gao has won international prominence by his persistence in speaking for FLG followers and

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1479 Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 279.
1480 Hornemann 2006 (see note 1201).
other persecuted persons. As seemingly their only available action resource, the party-state has started to persecute and harass them as well.¹⁴⁸¹

4 Conclusion

Analyzing the spiritual-religious field over three decades has painted a colorful picture of a China in transformation since 1978. Different actors and their resources within the spiritual-religious field strongly have reinforced the fact that the Chinese transformation process has not been driven by only one dominant, party-state-led trend, but instead by various, sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory dynamics. While the party-state’s ambiguity respecting the spiritual-religious sphere has enabled a rather undogmatic and often flexible stance, it has also given rise to a fragmented, nonprofessional, and simplifying policy. Although lacking considerable organizational resources, societal actors have been able to bring up a variety of concepts, explanations, and critique in relation to the spiritual-religious sphere, shaping and sometimes challenging the party-state’s ideational resources. The resources utilized by the spiritual-religious groups for their emergence and development have been shaped by a twofold process. While on the one hand they have had to demarcate themselves against other actors, on the other hand they have also striven for their support or at least tolerance. Their employed resources can be understood as a mixture of the creation of new, even challenging resources related to the other actors as well as the adaptation of those already existing resources employed by other actors.

Against this background, the concluding chapter will deal with three aspects: First, what have been the key resources shaping the emergence of the spiritual-religious groups, taking leadership resources as the starting point, what are the similarities and differences between the two types, and how do their resources relate to those of the party-state as well as the societal actors? Second, which resources have been important for their development, in relation to each other but especially in relation to the party-state and the societal actors? Third, what is the significance of spiritual-religious groups for the Chinese transformation process?
4.1 Healing by Restoration: Key Resources for the Emergence of Spiritual-Religious Groups

From the preceding analysis of the resources of spiritual-religious movements a central conclusion concerning how they emerged can be drawn. The emergence of both Christian-inspired and Qigong-based groups has been founded on their leaders’ ability to mobilize ideational as well as organizational resources formerly utilized by the party-state, mixing them with and/or redefining them in relation to elements from the Qigong sector, folk religious notions, and Christian concepts respectively. Following Levi-Strauss, Oberschall defines such a process as “bricolage,” an innovative recombination of existing resources.\(^{1482}\) It is widely recognized that the dominance of the Communist leadership concerning ideational as well organizational resources has been weakened, partly due to voluntary retreat, partly due to erosion as a result of a lack of legitimacy and due to growing pluralism.\(^{1483}\) The emergence and also development of the spiritual-religious movements, however, point to a lasting impact of the party-state’s defined or utilized resources.

The core of the movements’ ideational as well as organizational reference systems encompass the notions of social security and harmony along with a longing for paternalistic guidance and communal support. These ideas reflect some of the core principles of socialism as stated by the CCCP.\(^{1484}\) However, in the wake of the reform policy after 1978, these ideals have been subject to growing competition and pluralism of a market economy. The party-state increasingly changed the notion of social harmony and social security from a provided and guaranteed idea to a marketable commodity subject to individual and economic efficiency. Much discontent and conflict within the population has been induced. As a result, the era of Mao

\(^{1482}\) Oberschall 1996 (see note 59) pp. 95ff.

\(^{1483}\) See for example Saich 2001 (see note 163), pp. 75ff.; Thomas Heberer and Claudia Derichs, _Einführung in die politischen Systeme Ostasiens_ (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2008); Perry and Selden 2000 (see note 163); Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999 (see note 163).

Zedong has been increasingly perceived by many as a time of rather poor living conditions and less individual freedom, but also as a period of social equality and collective spirit guided by a totalitarian yet benevolent state. The longing for a return to the “better old days” started to unfold within several sections of the population.\textsuperscript{1485} Besides grievances over the above-mentioned degeneration and rising expenses as well as protests by laid-off state workers and pensioners regarding non-paid but promised social services, a psychological factor adds for many to the rising sensation of insecurity and disillusion. Peasants feel discriminated against in comparison to urban citizens and, while having being regarded as the “revolutionary base of the Communist Party” during the Mao years, now perceive themselves as having been betrayed and abandoned by their own party. Since the mid-1980s, the state has obviously been emphasizing urban modernization at the expense of rural development.\textsuperscript{1486} State workers, who enjoyed elitist social service provisions until 1978, feel likewise cast aside by a state that is perceived as using money for its own ends (corruption) and that is willing to sacrifice social equality for the goal of economic efficiency. Being faced with a growing number of migrant workers in the cities adds to the urban workers’ feeling of insecurity as they fear that they must share tight social and economic resources.\textsuperscript{1487} Migrant workers, in contrast, feel frustrated with the unequal treatment vis-à-vis the urban citizens and worry about the ever-present possibility of having an accident or being denied payment after months of work.

While the above-described changes and moods have served as a background for the ideational resources of the SRGs, affected personal relationships...


\textsuperscript{1486} Lately, the government has emphasized rural development, but without major changes concerning land ownership, residence status, or establishment of peasant associations, not much improvement can be expected. See “‘New agricultural development’ ignores farmers’ problems,” \textit{AsiaNews}, January 3, 2006, http://www.asianews.it/view_p.php?l=en&art=5025 (accessed May 21, 2006).

(guanxi) through rapid economic development and social change have emerged as an important breeding ground for the mobilized organizational resources of the groups.

The necessity of communicating with people outside of one’s personal network has risen, and relations have become more temporary. Faced with rising competitiveness for goods and services, which have become much diversified commodities with huge demand and limited supply at the high-quality end of the chain (e.g. enrollment at top schools for children since only top schools can provide adequate preparation for entrance examinations to universities, making the nurses really look after a patient or obtaining an appointment for an operation at a well-known hospital), the necessity of securing resources through guanxi has become an urgent task. Furthermore, a rising incidence of fake goods and false services have induced a loss of trust “. . . from providers of goods and services which widened to mistrust against all ‘outsiders.’ Members of family, and friends, so-called ‘acquainted people’ became the target of aggressive and fraudulent multi-level marketing, even eroding trust in ‘one’s own people.’ As the instrumentalist side of personal relationships has started to dominate many parts of life, Chinese society increasingly suffered from what several scholars call a ‘crisis of trust.’” The participation and feeling of belonging to a community provide followers “. . . with the communal confirmation of their own meaning system, which is no longer given in ‘natural’ communities. Emotional links woven inside voluntary groups tend to replace a spontaneous sense of continuity, shaped in the shared experience of family, neighborhood, village, occupation etc., in the societies of the past.”¹⁴⁸⁸ In conclusion, the spiritual-religious groups after 1978 reconstructed individual nostalgic feelings from the Mao era as collective memory and community.

Consequently, and picking up at the point of departure for the conclusion, the spiritual-religious movements have made use of concepts that the party-state has been no longer willing or able to offer to its people, but which are kept as memories of the “better old days” within several parts of the population.

The aforementioned familiarity and longing for paternal guidance has served as a key point for the emergence of charismatic leaders invoking their charisma as a “potential released in explosion of social movement and invention when internal and external disturbances and dissatisfactions sharpen boundaries between a present that does not live up to traditional expectations which are remembered.” 1489 Contrary to Max Weber’s notion of charismatic authority, which is rather opposed to tradition or restoration, 1490 but following Feuchtwang and Wang, the leaders have based their authority on a revival and redefinition of the past era in the 1950s and 1960s. 1491 Interestingly, the concept of charismatic leadership itself is juxtaposed against the party’s attempt at de-emphasizing personal leadership and at fostering collective governance to prevent irrational and arbitrary decision-making as well as an irrational and destructive leadership cult. 1492 

The emergence of Christian-inspired leadership figures is closely interwoven with the development of Protestantism in the People’s Republic of China, which is strongly influenced by the evangelical (Charismatic/Pentecostal) movement from the United States. Following an argument by Hunter and Chan, the emerged Christian-inspired groups might even be seen as a further adaptation of Christianity to a Chinese surrounding, also showing resemblance through their usage of folk religious concepts. 1493

All founders of the Christian-inspired groups have been members of nonregistered congregations or existing spiritual-religious groups. There they became familiar with a pool of ideational as well as organizational resources which they could later utilize for their own purposes. Consequently, they have established their leadership authority based on the Christian understanding of transcending worldly resources and powers, namely their real or ascribed poor family background as well as suffering due to illnesses.

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1490 Weber 1921 (see note 58).
1491 Feuchtwang and Wang 2001 (see note 101).
The evoked ability of “enduring bitterness” has served as praise of strong character and life skills, both within the Christian and often a prescribed Chinese cultural context.\textsuperscript{1494} Interestingly, the notion of illness has also served as a carrier of authority for the leaders of Qigong-based groups. While not presented in the context of suffering, Qigong group leaders describe illness as precondition for their own developed healing powers. That the notion of illness has become such a central resource related to both types of leaders might also have to do with the fact that it resembled a real biographic feature and urgent problem of many Chinese, especially in the countryside.\textsuperscript{1495} The poor family background can be seen as another feature not only ascribing authority but also presenting potential followers with familiar problems for identification.

Contrary to the leaders of Christian-inspired groups, Qigong-based leaders have drawn on resources which have been widely shared and fostered by societal as well as party-state actors: educational credits, powerful teachers, and political connections.

Newly emerged leaders of both types during the second phase could obviously profit from the already accumulated resources of both types of movements during the first phase. However, due to the early persecution by the party-state and respective arrests, leaders of Christian-inspired groups were able to turn arrests and the dissolution of one group into a resource for legitimation. They linked their new group, and often their former membership, to a former group through the framing a spiritual chain of ancestry.

Again, as with the notion of illness, this idea is not only adaptable to Chris-
tian concepts but also to traditional ideas of lineage and the importance of ancestry worship within the Chinese tradition.\textsuperscript{1496}

Although both sorts of networks somehow grew on the same breeding ground, the two types clearly attracted different kinds of followers. Cases of followers switching from Qigong to Christian networks are not known according to present sources.\textsuperscript{1497}

Preexisting or emergent personal ties, as mentioned by Snow et al. as one condition of probability for being recruited into a particular movement, are clearly reflected in the structure of followers in both types.\textsuperscript{1498} People with a Christian background and/or a stronger wish for community and spirituality tend to more easily opt to become followers of a Christian-inspired group. Methods of recruitment as part of the outer-oriented actional resources have focused on proselytizing. Disappointed party cadres, students, teachers, and scientists lacking a religious background or personal ties with religious groups and/or persons with a Qigong background have been prone to join Qigong networks. The Qigong-based groups have used their ties to research institutes and party-state organizations as ways of advertisement and recruitment. Due to the information available being scattered, the role of followers as part of the organizational resources during the emergence of the movement groups remains unclear.

Being that sufficient data on the structure of followers is also missing, the second condition mentioned by Snow et al., the factor of availability—followers joining a group simply because there are no other networks around—should be taken into consideration. This is of particular importance since both followers of Christian-inspired as well as Qigong-based groups have mentioned the quest for healing as an important motive for joining the groups.


Results of a survey conducted in 1997 presented by Wu suggest that a strong relationship exists between the density of often unregistered meeting points and the Christian-inspired groups. As has been already mentioned, the line between spiritual-religious groups and house churches is difficult to draw. What is more, people might get involved in a spiritual-religious group not as a result of their personal choice but just accidentally due to the group in question being the closest available group or the meeting point having started to develop features of a spiritual-religious group.\textsuperscript{1499} Due to a shortage of data, it is difficult to sketch a clear and systematic picture of how the rising competition between Qigong groups has affected followers’ choices.

Yu Guanyuan, who investigated the situation of FLG in Suzhou, mentioned that due to the former strong influence of Shen Chang Qigong FLG couldn’t develop a strong foothold in that area. He claims this on two grounds: first, the authorities lead an effective campaign against Shen and were therefore aware of such dangers, and second, “. . . this stuff of Li Hongzhi, people in Suzhou were already familiar with from Shen Chang. Therefore no matter whether they have fallen for Shen or not, they could easily see through Li’s stuff.”\textsuperscript{1500}

A complex concept of health and harmony has served as the key ideational resource for the emergence of both types of movements. Leaders of both types of groups have been able to frame health both in a physical as well as a psychological sense. That the physical need for healing has been able to attract a large number of followers has once again reinforced the already stated observation of rather deficient, deteriorating, or overpriced health services, with the party-state slowly having slowly withdrawn from the their former role as a free provider of social services.\textsuperscript{1501} Additionally, reinforced by the crowded or even broken-down hospitals during the Cultural Revolution, people have been accustomed to relying on self-medication like herbal teas or special diets.

\textsuperscript{1499} Wu 2006 (see note 36), pp. 188–89.  
\textsuperscript{1500} Guanyuan Yu, “Cong Shen Chang ‘xinxi cha’ dao Li Hongzhi ‘Falungong’ (From Shen Chang’s ‘Message Tea’ to Li Hongzhis ‘Falungong’),” in Yu 2002 (see note 186) p. 157.  
Remedies and recipes have been generally shared with family members and friends, as has any medicine obtained. Qigong links to this attitude of self-treatment, and many people have also believed that Qigong is good for healing not only one but many ailments, even at the same time. Moreover, the Qigong groups have been able to build on the existing resource in tradition and therefore on the familiarity and trustworthiness of Qigong as a medical treatment. The above-mentioned resource of self-medication, along with physical and psychological unity in the Chinese understanding of well-being, has also been able to serve the Christian-inspired groups as a valuable asset that has fit in well with the Christian concept of healing through praying.

In contrast to the Christian-inspired groups, the Qigong-based groups have offered not only healing but also health preservation and physical fitness. Especially for younger adherents in their thirties and forties, the health-preserving and vitalizing function of Qigong has offered a valuable resource to urban dwellers who have had to live up to rising pressure in performance and competition within the gradually unfolding capitalist market economy.

However, both types of movements have been able to extend the concept of physical healing or well-being to the dimension of social and even cosmic harmony. They have juxtaposed their presented ideal outlook of society based on a heavenly or cosmic harmony against a present-day society ailed by moral decay and unequal opportunities. The Qigong-based groups present a glorious past as their future utopia based on the Buddhist notion of acquiring merit by good deeds as well as the spirit of Lei Fang and a nostalgically remembered era of Mao Zedong. The Christian utopian version is that of a “heavenly kingdom,” a total, often apocalyptic break with the past and the worthy realm. However, their designed societal outlook has also resembled the notion of a nostalgically remembered Mao era. As Ole Brunn put it: “Christianity has been the closest rival and most determined alternative to Marxism-Leninism in the battle against the old social order, and they shared between them a number of revolutionizing concepts.

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1502 Chen 2003 (see note 225), p. 46.
1503 See Währisch-Oblau (see note 301).
and virtues: equality, humility, sincerity, self-discipline.”1505 Besides providing potential adherents with a validation and interpretation of their dissatisfaction and suffering, both movement types also present a freely available method—their actional resources—for not only enduring, but ultimately overcoming individual physical as well as psychological feelings of illness and/or dissatisfaction. Additionally, training in various skills, acquiring knowledge, social status, and even financial rewards has offered adherents new living perspectives. Within the Christian-inspired groups, many of the higher level positions have been occupied by young women. Some are the possible victims of the leader who initially attracted them to the group through financial and spiritual promises. Others may have joined the networks of their own accord and are confronted with the opportunity to quickly rise within the group’s hierarchy, either due to their level of education or their appearance. They might have been seeking a chance to gain social and financial prestige, which is still difficult for women to achieve, at least in rural Chinese society.

Organizational resources of the two types of movements have likewise reflected a desire for a feeling of belonging to a specific community as well as social security based on communal support. Since the Qigong-based groups mostly emerged in urban areas, their leaders initially created a rather loose network-like organizational structure based on voluntary participation. The groups could therefore offer flexible communal support which could be harmonized with other existing personal ties and suit the lifestyle of urban citizens.

The Christian groups, however, possessed a tight-knit hierarchical structure that is much more binding for their members and have sometimes even fostered a break with preexisting relations. To foster their groups, the founders have not only drawn on Christian resources but also on traditional concepts of Chinese folk religion and secret societies. The organizational structure in particular resembles features of Chinese secret societies but also of the Chinese Communist Party.1506 Not many of the groups seem to be really stress-

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1506 According to Zhu De, secret societies, not the Leninist party model, shaped the cell system of the CCP: “Foreign and Chinese reactionaries charged that the cell system of the
ing an equal community as Christian ideas would suggest. This specific design of organization might have different reasons. First, although the founder familiarized himself more or less with principles of equality within the house churches, his ambitions induced a highly hierarchical structure. Second, due to traditions of secret societies and the dominance of the CCP, he perceived this structure as being the only possible one for running the group effectively. Third, he found the structure useful in satisfying his members’ aspirations of status and power as well as in fostering their commitment to the group, especially in younger women facing strong barriers to social elevation within rural communities. Fourth, since the emergence of the Christian-inspired groups has been sidelined by repressive measures of the party-state, a more tight organizational structure could have better served the needs for protection and secrecy.

Although the two types of movements emerged from the same breeding ground, their leaders developed two different sets of specific resources that enabled their peaceful coexistence within the same field. This design of specific movement resources has not only been shaped by the leaders’ specific backgrounds and abilities, but also by the existing resources of the other actors present in the field.

Related to the resources of the party-state, the emerged Christian-inspired groups have been basically able to profit from the quite fragmented organizational and rather ambiguous ideational resources on the part of the Chinese leadership. The inability and unwillingness of the officials to incorporate resources of societal actors, which has reflected much more expertise and therefore a rather accurate assessment of the groups and reasons of their emergence, has additionally helped the Christian-inspired groups to flourish. Additionally, the groups could profit from resources offered by the Protestant congregations and especially the house churches.

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Although the repressive policy started early on challenged the very existence of the movement, the groups have nevertheless been able to turn it into a constructive driver for their emergence and resource-shaping. The persecution prompted the Christian-inspired groups to design a flexible but tight and secretive organizational structure. Additionally, it provided them with fuel for claims of a doomed society as well as reasoning to explain their sufferings. Stepping slightly ahead of the next subchapter, the rather hostile relationship with the other field actors, the Christian-inspired movement has proved to be well-equipped for their future development.

Both the party-state and the societal actors provided the Qigong-based groups with specific ideational and organizational resources. Lacking both clear-cut administration and legislation for the Qigong sector, various Qigong leaders and groups could not only flourish but also cross the boundary into the supernatural and mystical. The heated discussions and rhetorical battles among the two evolving factions within the official as well as societal realms on the concept of “extraordinary abilities” have kept both sides occupied and have produced fragmented ideational, organizational, and actional resources. Again stepping slightly ahead of the subsequent section, the consequences for the Qigong field have been twofold. On the one hand, the party-state has lacked resources for a critical assessment as well as handling of the Qigong movement. On the other hand, many groups in the Qigong movement have proven to be rather short-lived being that their resources have been too closely interwoven with the other actors. Consequently, many of them have lacked distinctive and autonomous resources in the wake of rising criticism and later persecution.

4.2 Making Sense of Suffering: Key Resources for the Development and Survival of Spiritual-Religious Groups

The outburst of the field starting at the end of the 1990s has been the result of an accumulation process due to ideational as well as organizational resources of the groups, which increasingly started to challenge the resources of the party-state. Martin mentions that “religious associations can generate
a latent power that may only become activated after many years, or decades. Examples are the power of speech, increased social activity, a more methodical approach to life . . .”\textsuperscript{1507} Therefore it is not surprising that the most powerful group of each respective movement type didn’t evolve until the second phase and was hence able to build on previous resources and experiences. Based on the framework provided by Stark related to the success and failure of new-religious movements,\textsuperscript{1508} the following resources proved to be relevant for the development as well as survival of the spiritual-religious movements. Drawing on the remarks about types of leaderships noted in Chapter 2, the development of both types of groups can be analyzed within the concept of the entrepreneurial model, aiming at expanding and reshaping their ideational, organizational, and actional resources according to the necessity of a changing field constitution.\textsuperscript{1509} Groups whose leaders fostered their authority with forced or exaggerated actional resources, as in the case of the group of the “Established King” or “Teachings of the Supreme God” as well as Zhang Ping or Hu Wanli from the Qigong-based movement, haven’t been able to survive for a long time. Either their followers started to doubt their legitimacy and/or the party-state arrested them. A clear justification of leadership with a rather modest or non-enforcing performance of leadership framed within the utilized ideational proved to be one key resource for groups’ survival. Under this condition, the total absence or rather limited presence of the respective person didn’t sufficiently weaken the groups’ overall capacity for development. The “Church of the Almighty God,” the “Group of Three Grades of Servants,” and the “Group of the Shouters” all have leadership acting on the base of a more symbolic or spiritual ground. Although Li Hongzhi, founder of FLG, has been clearly designated a mystical leader with supernatural powers, he—especially in the wake of rising doubt and persecution—increasingly limited his active, performing role within the group, retreating to the United States, and only started to reappear more frequently as his ab-


\textsuperscript{1509} Bainbridge and Stark 2003 (see note 114), pp. 63ff.
sence started to raise doubts among his followers. In contrary, Zhang Hong-bao, founder of the Zhonggong group, also managed, based on his specific biographical as well as spiritual resources, to develop his group into a huge business conglomerate. Slightly before the campaign against his group in the PRC started, Zhang successfully applied for political asylum in the United States. As he restructured his group basically as a one man show, the number of his followers decreased considerably.

Leaders who in combination with their respective organizational resources have offered possibilities for participation and promotion within the system of authority based on an appreciation of special skills and qualifications have also managed to sustain and even develop their leadership. While the “Society of Disciples” and the “Teaching of Soul” have practiced a more collective form of leadership, their organizational layout has clearly differentiated between different layers of hierarchy and various posts ascribed with titles. With a rising level of persecution, the organizational structure of the Christian-inspired groups has become more and more sophisticated. Likewise, the most successful Qigong groups—namely FLG, Zhonggong, and Guogong—have all developed their organizational layout from a rather loose-knit grassroots network into a multilayered hierarchy. Related to the heretical organizational structure is the notion of internal rules, a codex of behavior possessed by all rather successful groups. “Zhonggong can be described as a commercial-bureaucratic organization modeled on the CCP and managing a vast economic enterprise. . . None [other Qigong group] had gone as far as Zhang Hongbao in a strategy of expansion, commercialization and management.” However, on an organizational level, FLG has been able to (re)structure itself much more flexibly due to its rather loose network structure. Zhonggong was built upon a large and heavy bureaucratic-style organization which was easy to detect and difficult to quickly adapt to new circumstances. The ability to expand the organizational resources abroad, as a means of encompassing persecution as well as raising additional organizational as well as actional resources, has been a key factor for organizational sustainability both with the Christian-inspired groups and the Qigong-based groups.

\[1510\] Palmer 2007 (see note 11), p. 217.
Related to the ideational resources, complexity and non-empirical aspects concerning the designed system of health and harmony have proven to be dominant. Especially Christian-inspired groups which had predicted the end of the world in 2000 were hardly hit by the failure of the prophecy. The “Church of the Almighty God” possesses the most voluminous as well as complex ideational resources and has survived for over fifteen years. Its offers a whole drawing board of explanations on human life in the past and present along with an outlook for the future.

Followers of FLG have explicitly mentioned the design of spiritual cultivation, not or not that precisely find within the ideational resources of other groups, as their core attraction with the group. While many Qigong adherents have faced an overwhelming and often puzzling choice of all of these flouting Qigong groups, the doctrine of Li Hongzhi “... was not only able to give explanations, but also lead Qigong practitioners to a new level... Its doctrine gives meaning to suffering... Furthermore it offers a clear and simple path of liberation from the sufferings of the world: a single master, a single book and a single practice.” In the wake of the popular debate on “human body science,” the Qigong groups were able to link symptoms like “summarization” and “expression of personal and social in an idiom of bodily complaints and medical help seeking” to social problems and degenerated moral order. The FLG texts in particular ascribe the moral responsibility for these illnesses to the party-state. The designed treatment, the Qigong movement, “... implicitly pits the individual practitioners against the moral foundations of the regime.” The negation of the self along with the framing of suffering as a necessary step towards enlightenment has been FLG’s strength in the wake of repression, also compared with other groups. Like some of the Christian-inspired groups during their emergence phases, FLG has been able to turn persecution into a new resource for providing its followers with meaning for their suffering in the scope of reeducation classes, labor camps, and clinics, as well as with motivation for their participation in demonstrations, the spreading of leaflets, and a withstanding of pressure from family, colleagues, and officials to give up their practice. Against a common combination of tradition and modern science advocated by many Qigong groups, Li rejected both and framed FLG as being another
pure and new form of knowledge and legitimacy. The withdrawal from the Qigong Research Society signaled that at least Li Hongzhi and the core leadership of FLG were not ready to be integrated into relationships with societal and party-state actors. He created a new moral legitimacy independent of the Chinese regime, rejecting and denouncing their presiding social reality. With several changes in his doctrine, especially adding apocalyptic elements, he has at least been prepared for a confrontation with the party-state, although he might not have been actively seeking it.1511

With the field having turned increasingly hostile after 1999, the role of followers has become more and more important. The most successful groups have attracted highly motivated and committed followers due to opportunities for participation and promotion, and commitment to the group. The “Church of the Almighty God” has not only increasingly targeted church leadership personnel of both official and autonomous congregations for recruitment; they have also equipped their followers with the necessary skills, especially with rhetorical abilities. Core adherents of the Christian-inspired groups and individual FLG adherents have not only proved to be active recruiters but also tough endurers when it has come to persecution. As part of their teachings, the “Church of the Almighty God” has requested that their followers cut off all family relations in order to throw themselves completely into serving God. The strategy of recruitment for incorporating new networks or organized skills of educated people has been very obvious in the case of the “Church.”

Concerning actional resources, groups related to both types of movements having utilized extreme and violent methods of recruitment and/or managing of public relations have often produced a rather negative impact on their capacity for development. Regarded as short-term measures to strengthen adherents’ level of commitment, such methods have proved only successful for a short time. The “self-immolation incident” at Tiananmen Square in 2001 forced a change in Falungong tactics as it considerably damaged the image of the group. The daily small-scale demonstrations in Beijing ceased all together. The leadership within the FLG group may have concluded that the protests had outlived their usefulness for demonstrating Chinese abuses

or for informing an overseas audience of Falungong’s harmlessness. The organization’s tacticians may also have been fearful of further self-immolations and of the damage that another such incident might do to Falungong’s international reputation. In addition, stepped-up surveillance by China’s security forces may have prevented practitioners from reaching Beijing, or the danger to protestors may have become too great to tolerate. Li Hongzhi, probably in cooperation with the FLG leadership abroad, has lately been able to moderate their actional resources, increasingly focusing on public relations and media work outside the PRC.

Likewise, the image of the “Church of the Almighty God” has suffered and increasingly promoted strong denouncements from the house churches as they have utilized kidnapping or seduction as a method for recruitment. Although they run several websites and have recently translated most of their publications into English, they haven’t seemed to have managed to revive their activities with more moderate resources as of late. Compared to FLG, their ideational and organizational resources are less world-accommodating and non-compromising. What is more, they haven’t been able to raise any additional resources, especially abroad, beyond their own membership. How have these respective resources related to the resources of the other actors? The ideational, organizational, and actional resources of the party-state have proven to be rather ineffective in dealing with the developing Christian-based spiritual-religious groups.

Due to ideological restraints and an absence of expertise, the launched attacks against “heretical teachings was successful in cracking down on individual groups and leaders, but followers have been able to reorganize the groups, to change their names and new groups have come into being. Additionally, the practice of legislation and the classification of spiritual-religious groups vary both regionally and within the responsible administra-
Local government officials have either arbitrary cracked down on groups or they have been willing to protect or even support the groups, often due to promised material or spiritual rewards. Moreover, due to the harsh policy of the party-state, some groups have started going underground or have been only politicized just after repressive measures by the Chinese leadership. The strategy of the party-state of strengthening the role of officially recognized religious communities in order to balance the influence of the Christian-inspired groups has proved to be only partly effective. The societal actors, especially persons with a religious background, have developed a considerable amount of ideational resources to express their worry on the politicalized understanding of “heretical teachings” by the party-state. Especially the house churches and a growing number of Christian lawyers, while being critical of the Christian-inspired groups, have become increasingly alienated from the party-state and willing to utilize the enhanced organizational resources to protect their interests. Only lately has the party-state started to incorporate the ideational resources of the societal actors, for instance through analysis on groups by scientists as well as other religious groups with an aim to create a more sophisticated religious policy and a more professional handling of the Christian-inspired groups.

Concerning the Qigong sector, the party-state has been unable to channel the early critical warnings on the Qigong movement into effective actional resources being that organizational resources were scattered and a struggle for influence has captured the institutional layout of the sector. Early accounts of societal actors painting an ambiguous picture of the Qigong movement and FLG in particular remained largely unrecognized through 1999. The ideational as well as organizational resources of the advocates for a broad promotion of Qigong and the linked “extraordinary abilities” within the party-state as well as society have proven to be more sustainable as the respective resources of the critics. The advocates have presented the notion of Qigong as an asset for developing a leading science with Chinese

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1515 Pouxi xiejiao zhuzhi “Dongfang shandian” (see note 987).
1516 Jiang 2000 (see 347), pp. 133ff, here p. 166.
characteristics and as an asset for fostering China’s international reputation and strength. Their organizational resources have been based on close and flexible interpersonal networks which may easily encompass institutions and ignore unfavorable policy measures. Only after the FLG groups have developed considerable resources to challenge the position of the party-state have the officials been able to mobilize ideational as well organizational resources to break the public resistance and the organizational structure of the group in mainland China.

4.3 Spiritual-Religious Groups in the Context of the Chinese Transformation Process

While this study has focused on the emergence and development of spiritual-religious groups, its secondary aim has been to prove that the spiritual-religious movements are especially suitable for understanding the different, often controversial forces which have shaped the Chinese transformation process, illustrating its pitfalls and its opportunities, especially the pitfalls of social and cultural modernization in China. While a full-fledged analysis is beyond the scope of this study, three preliminary observations have been made. First, various dimensions of demand for the spiritual-religious sphere as a frame of meaning for the rapid and often unsettling Chinese transformation process; second, the capacity of the Chinese leadership to deal with the spiritual-religious sphere; and third, the role of spiritual-religious groups within the Chinese transformation process. The emergence and development of the spiritual-religious movements have reflected at least two different demands and aspirations in relation to the resources evoked by the spiritual-religious movements. They have proved that within a period of social economic instability, radical changes, and increasing social disparity and atomization, the longing for spiritual-religious orientation goes well beyond the notion of a compensation for socioeconomic marginalization. Within various strata of Chinese society, an increasing wish for a spirit of community and a search for identity is appar-

ent. Since the Chinese state has failed to reconcile their socialistic values with an increasing capitalist reality, the groups can be understood as a counter-transformation reaction strongly drawing on concepts commonly linked with the era of Mao Zedong. By living in an intimate group striving for morality and social security as well as harmony, spiritual-religious groups provide the means for this aspiration. At the same time, groups with rather more flexible organizational layout have also enabled the adherents to find a meaningful space for physical as well as psychological resting, healing, and empowerment against the odds of a contradictory and frustrating reality.\footnote{1518} Beyond the notion of an individual search for meaning and identity, the Qigong movement, as promoted by various persons within the party-state as well as in the societal realm, also points to the framing of the spiritual-religious sphere as a binding agent for a strong national community—a strong, revitalized Chinese nation being able to overcome suffering and setbacks since the mid-nineteenth century.\footnote{1519} As Palmer has put it, “Qigong was an attempt to reconcile opposing visions of traditions and modernity, which have confronted each other throughout the twentieth century, holding out the hope of China regaining its traditions and dignity while becoming a leader of world scientific development.”\footnote{1520} Although this usage of Qigong is placed within an often-enforced scientific context, the emphasis on “extraordinary abilities” clearly points beyond it.

While at least sections of the party-state have wanted to utilize the Qigong movement as a method for fostering and strengthening the nation, the spiritual-religious movements, however, have revealed considerable weaknesses on the part of the Chinese leadership in handling the spiritual-religious field, and autonomous groups, labeled “heretical groups,” in particular. The predominantly repressive policy of the government has proven to be increasingly anachronistic and shows the degree of its structural dilemma.

\footnote{1518} Palmer 2005 (see note 18), pp. 90ff.
\footnote{1519} The search for a “wealthy and strong” (fuqiang) Chinese nation has been the quest of several generation of scholarly intellectuals and politicians; see for example Suisheng Zhao, A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Spence 2001 (see note 163); C. X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu, Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001).
\footnote{1520} Palmer 2005 (see note 18), p. 95.
For one, through the suppression of spiritual-religious groups the leadership has run the risk of politicalization of former apolitical adherents, as initially happened in the case of FLG. Besides, not only followers of the groups but also bystanders have been increasingly alienated by the policy of the leadership. Lu cites an example of an incident in the community of Miaotang, Sichuan province: an arrested member of the “Society of Disciples” fled from the local police station, fell into a well, and drowned. Immediately following, several hundred village people demonstrated angrily in front of the district government’s office. The helpless authorities locked themselves in the building and were forced to call in the public security officials who broke up the protest. The former director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ye Xiaowen, pleads in an essay on “Questions Concerning ‘Heretical Teachings’” for a strict separation of problems which refer to religion and others which arise from “heretical teachings.” He points to the fact that “if we, in the course of fighting against and banning cults, extend prosecution to new religious movements, religion in general, or even human beings who turn towards religion out of a feeling of unbalance or loss, then we risk antagonizing human beings.” Several aspects have motivated the repressive policy of the state: on the one hand, there exists a historically traumatic fear of secret societies, especially given their strong presence at the end of several dynasties, and an “obsession” with the threat of “foreign infiltration and separation.” On the other hand, the government worries about rising social tensions and deficits which increase the allure of spiritual-religious communities, as has been the case with FLG. In addition, a strictly restrictive, almost destructive strategy as along with diversely established working relations between the local authorities and the religious communities may well result in increasingly opaque spiritual-religious activities. As suggested by Lyman Miller in the context of the scientific community, when members of Chinese society bind their loyalty to norms more powerful than those

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1522 Xiaowen Ye, “Xiejiao wenti de xianzhuang, chengyin ji duice (The recent situation and reasons for the development of the problem of heretical teachings and countermeasures),” in Chen and Dai 1999 (see note 738), pp.160–71, here p. 168.
articulated by the party-state, regime legitimacy becomes a serious problem.\textsuperscript{1523}

On the other hand, a more tolerant policy involves the danger of an awakening of autonomous groups which may again challenge the position of the government.

The religious scientist Lu states that “a simplistic formula of ‘suppression plus punishment plus education’” has only limited success.\textsuperscript{1524} He pleads for a constructive policy of what he terms “substitution of function” which would be achieved through the following two measures: first, through an empowerment of the elected village committees and second, through the improvement of state religious organizations. Recent policy decisions by the Chinese government point in this direction. Their framework of “building up a harmonious society” acknowledges and encourages the contribution of religion as offering moral principles of love and respect, guarding national unity, and fighting against “heretical teachings” that endanger social harmony.\textsuperscript{1525} However, this carries the danger of encouraging and even strengthening conversions and religious activities by the party cadres. Several reports indicate that the number of party cadres involved with religious activities is on the rise.\textsuperscript{1526} Furthermore, a rising number of religious believers are already Communist Party members or are seeking membership. They


\textsuperscript{1524} Lu 1998 (see note 1521).

\textsuperscript{1525} All officially recognized religions (Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism) and their respective leaders are engaged in contributing to “building a harmonious society.” Still, the Chinese government places special emphasis on Buddhism as it doesn’t interfere with worldly affairs and has less contact with outside forces, which are often considered to use religion (Christianity, Islam) to “Westernize” or to “divide” China. Therefore, Buddhism can also comfortably used to boost China’s image as a country treasuring religion and trying to ease tensions by human rights critics. It was an important driving force for China to have hosted the World Buddhism Forum for the first time in April 2006. See “Buddhism can reduce social divisions better than Christianity and Islam,” \textit{AsiaNews}, April 11, 2006, http://www.asianews.it/view.php?id=en&art=5887, (accessed May 5, 2006); “Zongjiao yu hexie shehui (Religion and Harmonious Society),” Collection of 22 essays on the website of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, http://www.sara.gov.cn/GB//xwzx/ztbd/zjyhxsh/index.html?allpage=3&allCol=22&pages=1 (accessed: May 12, 2006); “Zongjiao yu goujian hexie shehui (Religion and the Building of Harmonious Society),” \textit{Xuexi shibao (Study Times)}, http://www.studytimes.com.cn/chinese/zhuanti/xxshb/1199508.htm (accessed May 3, 2006).

belong to the society’s elite, being engaged in business or philanthropic activities. Their success and activities have often gained them the respect of government officials. It seems that successful believers wanting to join the party don’t have to denounce their faith. Communism and religion are viewed as no longer incompatible by some members within the party. The Chinese government allows freedom of private belief but still clearly restricts the freedom to collectively practice faith.\textsuperscript{1527} However, the elimination of groups which are perceived as a potential danger—an alternative organization or bearer of an alternative idealistic concept—remains the guiding principle of the Communist regime. In a recent development, the president of the Beijing house-church alliance, Zhang Mingxuan, was thrown out of the capital before the Olympic Games and told he was unwelcome when he returned. In early June, the state government of Henan arrested half a dozen house-church members on charges of illegally sending charitable donations to Sichuan earthquake victims. The U.S.-based China Aid, which closely monitors Christian groups, claims that harassment of house churches is on the rise.\textsuperscript{1528} According to the latest Amnesty International Report on Human Rights in China, some one hundred FLG practitioners have died as a result of torture.\textsuperscript{1529} Although Falungong practitioners seem to be allowed to stick to their beliefs at home, collective or public activities are still suppressed.

The handling of spiritual-religious groups by the party-state reveals that the Chinese system hardly possesses any resources for peaceful conflict settlement. The harsh persecutions of FLG are according to Keith and Lin much more extreme and violent than the handling of the repressions of the protest movement in 1989.\textsuperscript{1530} Legal channels as a rational and moderate way of dealing with conflict, for example for lawyers who try to defend the interests of followers and leaders of spiritual-religious movements, are nearly


\textsuperscript{1528} “Sons of Heaven” (see note 1526); see also the website of the China Aid Association, http://www.chinaaid.org (accessed December 24, 2008).


\textsuperscript{1530} Keith and Liu 2003 (see note 1096), pp. 628–29.
nonfunctional for the party-state keeps on politically influencing related lawsuits.\footnote{2423}

While not justifying the repressive policy of the Chinese regime, an evaluation of the spiritual-religious-movement resources in the context of the Chinese transformation process must also bear several critical issues in mind. The groups themselves can be understood as a symbol for the contradicting dynamics within the Chinese development. While on the one hand they serve as compensators and innovators of ideational meaning and organizational belonging, they have also created new tensions and setbacks. First, with many members having joined these networks on a kinship basis, membership has sometimes created tension between family members due to principles of inclusion and exclusion, enforced within the Christian-inspired networks. Second, several groups favor their concept of healing over medical treatment and even advise followers not to see a doctor. If they can’t get cured while being within the group, they should blame their own insufficient commitment and effort. Third, the hierarchical organizational structure and the respective charismatic leader of the networks point to paternalistic structures. Some teachings reflect an overzealous, non-pluralistic approach to reality, obfuscating the past by glossing over negative accounts of the Mao Zedong era. Some groups within the movement could be well-captured with the notion of “fundamentalism.” Following Kniss and Burns, fundamentalist movements refer to “. . . conservative or traditional religious movements that are politically active in contesting at least some aspects of modernity and the dominance of Western culture in the emerging global order.” The movements were so successful not because they offered resources or ideas, but because they offered a revived version of the old sinicized version of Communism. Therefore their role as providers of constructive resources able to garner major support within the Chinese élite as a driving force for the Chinese transformation process is very limited.

## Appendix 1: Overview of Key Spiritual-Religious Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Founder, Date and Place of Foundation</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QIGONG-BASED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Buddha Qigong (Dafogong)</td>
<td>Ji Yi former adherent of “Zhonggong”; famous author;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Bell Qigong (Tiangong)</td>
<td>Chen Letian (Journalist)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gliding Crane Qigong (Hexianggong)</td>
<td>Zhao Jinxiang (founded in 1980)</td>
<td>10 million (1988)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Utmost Qigong (Yuanjigong)</td>
<td>Zhang Zhixiang (*1943), Wuhan; own research society</td>
<td>400.000 (1996)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan Xin Qigong</td>
<td>Yan Xin; own research society</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom and Ability Gong (Zhinenggong)</td>
<td>Pang Heming</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma Wheel Gong (Falungong)</td>
<td>Li Hongzhi 1990/1, Jilin/Beijing</td>
<td>2 to 100 million</td>
<td>1999: Illegalized, still active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHRISTIAN-INSPIRED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Leader/Location</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Status &amp; Additional Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of the “Established King” (Beiliwang)</td>
<td>Wu Yangminng 1988</td>
<td>100,000 (1995)</td>
<td>1995 Wang Yangming sentenced to death for raping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachings of Eastern Lightning (Dongfang shanfandian jiao) aka Church of the Almighty God (Quannengshenjiaohui)</td>
<td>Zhao Weishan, 1991 in Zhengzhou (Henan) Mrs. Deng as „Female Christ (nü jidu)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Still active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of the Three Servants (Sanbanpurenpai)</td>
<td>Xu Shengfu/Xu Wenku Beginning of 1980s in Shandong,</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Banned as “heretical teachings” in 1999, Death sentence for Xu Shengfu in 2006; still active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Group (Chongsheng pai) aka Group of Cryers (Ku pai) aka All-Scope Church (Quan fanwei jiaohui)</td>
<td>Xu Yongze 1968 in Henan 1984</td>
<td>3 to 10 million including spin-off groups</td>
<td>Banned as “heretical teachings” in 1995, still active</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 2: List of Key Chinese Terms With Characters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hanyu Pinyin</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Daigong baogaohui</td>
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<td>Power-inducing Lecture</td>
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<td>Dong gong</td>
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<td>Fudaozhan</td>
<td>辅导站</td>
<td>Tutorial Station</td>
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<td>Gongde</td>
<td>功德</td>
<td>Work/energy for virtue</td>
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<td>Gugan fenzi</td>
<td>骨干分子</td>
<td>Core members</td>
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<td>Heishehui zuzhi</td>
<td>黑社会组织</td>
<td>Huidaomen (literally Societies, Ways and Schools; collective term for secret societies)</td>
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<td>Huidaomen</td>
<td>会道门</td>
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<td>Jianshen Qigong</td>
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<td>Qigong to train the body/healthy body Qigong</td>
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<td>基督</td>
<td>(Jesus) Christ/Redeemer</td>
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<td>Extreme</td>
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<td>Quiet/meditative Qigong</td>
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<td>Kexue xinyang</td>
<td>科学信仰</td>
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<td>Somantic Science</td>
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<td>San zi</td>
<td>三自（自治，自资，自传）</td>
<td>Three self (self-rule, self-financing, self-proselytizing)</td>
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<td>Xiejiao</td>
<td>邪教</td>
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<td>Xinxi</td>
<td>信息（信息物，信息水，信息光）</td>
<td>Message, Information, Energy (filled with qi)</td>
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<td>Xiu (lian)</td>
<td>修炼</td>
<td>To cultivate</td>
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<td>Yiduan</td>
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