

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: CHN17483
Country: China
Date: 29 August 2005

Keywords: China – Bishop Yang Shudao - Fujian Province – Catholics – Arrests

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. Is Catholicism strong in Fuqing?
2. Is/was the Archbishop of the Fuqing/Fujian area Shudao Yang?
3. Was he born in 1920, and did he serve at St Joseph's Church in Changle City and then Fuqing?
4. Was he arrested with thousands of believers in 1955, and did he serve 26 years in labour reform, and was he released in 1981?
5. Did this lead to the area near the sea in Fujian becoming a focal point for Catholicism?
6. Was he arrested many times from 1991 to 1998?

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine
UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

RESPONSE

1. Is Catholicism strong in Fuqing (in Fujian)?

No information was found in the sources consulted on Fuqing being 'a Holy Land for Catholicism'.

It has been estimated that 1.2% of the population in Fujian province (34,300,000) are Catholic [calculated by the researcher to be 411,600] (Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason 2001, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*, Paternoster Lifestyle, 6th ed, Cumbria, p.169 – Attachment 1).

In a 1999 publication Lambert estimated that there were about 210,000 Catholics in Fujian. He also noted that there were some 150,000 Christians in Fuqing county (Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, p.210 – Attachment 2).

Lambert continued:

...In general, the official religious policy has been applied relatively liberally in Fujian, although there have been occasional crackdowns on house churches and 'underground' Catholics (Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, p.210 – Attachment 2).

Attached are RRT Country Research Responses and Canadian advices concerning Christians or Catholics in Fujian:

RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response CHN17381*, 27 June, quest. 3 / pp.3-4 – Attachment 3;

RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response CHN17352*, 7 June, quest. 2 / pp.4-5 – Attachment 4;

RRT Country Research 2003, *Research Response CHN15799*, 12 March, quests. 1-2 / pp.2-5 – Attachment 5;

RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response CHN15645*, 23 December, quests. 2-3 / pp.2-14 – Attachment 6;

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, 'Catholicism in Fujian' in *CHN33598.EX – China: Catholic Church and Catholicism in China; treatment of Catholics; relations between the underground and open Churches; differences between Catholic worship in China and elsewhere; differences in practice between the underground Church and the open Church; beliefs, practices, holidays and ceremonies; update to CHN33002.EX of 8 October 1999 regarding Christians in Fujian province*, 27 January <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/?action=view&doc=chn33598ex> – Accessed 25 August 2005 – Attachment 7;

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1999, 'Situation of Christians' in *CHN33002.EX - China: Freedom of religious practice and belief in Fujian province*, 8 October http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/publications/index_e.htm?docid=6&cid=50 – Accessed 25 August 2005 – Attachment 8).

2. Is/was the Archbishop of the Fuqing/Fujian area Shudao Yang?

A range of sources have identified Yang Shudao as serving in Fujian/Fuzhou.

Charbonnier in the *Guide to the Catholic Church in China* has referred to Yang Shudao as a bishop, not recognised by the Chinese government, in Fuzhou, Fujian province (Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, p.7, 506-507 – Attachment 9).

Sources indicate that Yang Shudao serves in the Fuzhou diocese (Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, p.507 – Attachment 9); ('Christian prisoners' list' 2005, *Open Doors*, January, p.11 <http://www.offenegrenzen.ch/en/pris.pdf> - Accessed 26 August 2005 – Attachment 10).

China Infodoc information of March 2005 describes John Yang Shudao as a monsignor and an archbishop of the diocese of Fuzhou ('List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps' 2005, *China Infodoc*, source: AsiaNews - www.asianews.it, 5 March – Attachment 11).

Charbonnier also shows Fuqing as being under the Fuzhou Diocese (Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, pp.507-513 – Attachment 9).

3. Was Shudao Yang born in 1920, and did he serve at St Joseph's Church in Changle City and then Fuqing?

The Cardinal Kung Foundation appears to be the source most often cited on Yang Shudao's birth date. In a 2000 press release the Foundation stated that Archbishop Yang was born in Lianjiang County, Fujian Province on 16 April, 1919 ('Another Arrest of Roman Catholic Bishop in China' 2000, The Cardinal Kung Foundation, 13 February <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/press/000213.html> - Accessed 26 August 2005 – Attachment 12).

Some sources slightly vary the year of birth.

A March 2005 China Infodoc source states the John Yang Shudao was 84 years old ('List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps' 2005, *China Infodoc*, source: AsiaNews - www.asianews.it, 5 March – Attachment 11).

The year of birth in another source appears to be 1920 ('Christian prisoners' list' 2005, *Open Doors*, January, p.11 <http://www.offenegrenzen.ch/en/pris.pdf> - Accessed 26 August 2005 – Attachment 10).

No information was found in the sources consulted on whether Yang Shudao had served in St. Joseph's Church in Changle City, or Fuqing. However, Charbonnier shows both Fuqing and Changle as being under the Fuzhou Diocese (Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, pp.507-513 – Attachment 9).

It is of interest that there is a St. Joseph's Church in Changle (Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, p.510 – Attachment 9).

4. Was Shudao Yang arrested with thousands of believers in 1955, and did he serve 26 years in labour reform, and was he released in 1981?

A March 2005 China Infodoc source states in respect of Mgr. John Yang Shudao:

...Altogether he has spent 30 years in prison. He was arrested in 1955 for refusing to join the Patriotic Association. Released in 1981 after 26 years...('List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps' 2005, *China Infodoc*, source: AsiaNews - www.asianews.it, 5 March – Attachment 11).

The Cardinal Kung Foundation states that Yang Shudao:

...was first arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1955 for his refusal to denounce the Pope as the supreme authority of the Roman Catholic Church and for his refusal to cooperate with the government to form a Chinese independent church, the Catholic Patriotic Association. The Chinese communist government controls this Patriotic Association church and it is the only church sanctioned by the government as the official church. All other religions are illegal. Archbishop YANG was released in 1981, having served twenty-six years. He was arrested again in 1988 and served another three years. Since then, he has been re-arrested many times ('Another Arrest of Roman Catholic Bishop in China' 2000, The Cardinal Kung Foundation, 13 February <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/press/000213.html> - Accessed 26 August 2005 – Attachment 12).

No information was found in the sources consulted on whether Yang Shudao served this period in labour reform.

In respect of the 1955 arrests Madsen writes in the following terms:

At the same time that it was establishing the "Catholic reform committees" (which were eventually renamed "Patriotic Associations"), the Chinese government was imprisoning clergy and laity whom it considered disloyal. Most active Catholics were inclined to resist. It was clear enough that the autonomy they were supposed to claim from the Vatican would only place them even more under the control of a Chinese government that was hostile to their religion. As Catholic resistance continued, arrests and persecution increased. By the end of 1955, fifteen hundred Shanghai Catholics had been arrested, including Bishop Gong Pinmei, the most influential Catholic leader in China. Similar waves of arrests took place throughout the country (Madsen, Richard 1998, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p.37 – Attachment 13).

5. Did this lead to the area near the sea in Fujian becoming a focal point for Catholicism?

No information on this specific question was found in the sources consulted.

However, a Political Counsellor of the Canadian Embassy in Beijing reported on a fact-finding mission to the Fuzhou Metropolitan Counties of Lianjiang, Mawei, Fuqing and Changle. Included in the report was the following:

Reports of the recent arrest of Yang Shudao, Archbishop of the Fuzhou Archdiocese, who has consistently refused to cooperate with the CPA, is a cause for concern. Archbishop Yang has served close to 30 years in detention in China since his first

arrest in 1955. However his arrests have not directly impacted on the activities of local congregations in the four rural counties which are the subject of this report. In recent years Catholics there have been allowed to profess their faith in accordance with their own consciences. There is no indication that this is about to change (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, *CHN34099.E - China: Report of a fact-finding mission to Fuzhou by Political Counsellor, Canadian Embassy, Beijing, 23 March – Attachment 14*).

Madsen, in his 1998 book, notes that in the southern coastal areas of China, like Fujian and Guangdong, “there is a great deal of new temple building”, often using Overseas Chinese money (Madsen, Richard 1998, *China’s Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p.157n5 – Attachment 13).

Lambert also wrote:

Fujian has a thriving and rapidly-growing Christian community. As a coastal province in the southeast, it was one of the first to be evangelised from the early nineteenth century...(Lambert, Tony 1999, *China’s Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, p.209 – Attachment 2).

6. Was Shudao Yang arrested many times from 1991 to 1998?

A March 2005 China Infodoc source states in respect of Mgr. John Yang Shudao:

...he was rearrested in 1988 and spent another three years behind bars. He is regularly arrested and under surveillance. He, too, is very ill (‘List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps’ 2005, *China Infodoc*, source: AsiaNews - www.asianews.it, 5 March – Attachment 11).

The Cardinal Kung Foundation confirms that Yang Shudao was rearrested in 1988 and imprisoned for another three years; since then, he has been rearrested many times, including on 10 February 2000 (‘Another Arrest of Roman Catholic Bishop in China’ 2000, The Cardinal Kung Foundation, 13 February <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/press/000213.html> - Accessed 26 August 2005 – Attachment 12).

On Yang Shudao’s 1988 arrest Asia Watch wrote:

Bishop John **YANG Shudao**, the clandestine bishop of Fuzhou, Fujian Province, arrested on February 28, 1988 at 8 A.M. in Liushan village, was released in February 1991 and is living in a church near Fuzhou. According to an Asia Watch source, he is still under surveillance and is under severe pressure to join the official church. Secretly consecrated in 1987, Bishop Yang served a previous prison term which terminated in 1980 (Asia Watch 1994, *Detained in China and Tibet: A directory of Political and Religious Prisoners*, Human Rights Watch, February, New York, p.242 – Attachment 15).

In May 1999 the Cardinal Kung Foundation advised a Canadian government authority that Yang Shudao “remained under surveillance in Fuzhou and continued to resist official pressure to join the officially sanctioned church” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1999, *CHN31907.E – China: Update to CHN19904.E of 13 March 1995 on the current situation and whereabouts of Bishop John Yang Shudao of the underground Catholic Church*, 26 May – Attachment 16).

A July 2005 listing by the Cardinal Kung Foundation also states that Bishop John Yang Shudao was arrested on 10 February 2000. He was released and is under house arrest ('Prisoners of Religious Conscience for the Underground Roman Catholic Church in China' 2005, Cardinal Kung Foundation website, 31 July <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/prisoners/> - Accessed 24 August 2005 – Attachment 17).

A Minority Rights Group report notes that Yang Shudao was in "brief detention" in February 2000 (Dillon, Michael 2001, *Religious Minorities and China*, Minority Rights Group International, p.16 – Attachment 18).

Of interest is an August 1999 DFAT advice which, in respect of arrests in Fujian, includes the following:

In Fujian province, which has a Catholic population of several hundred thousand, there have been several reports during recent years of Catholic priests being detained for periods ranging from several hours to one week. There was one report in 1997 (length of detention unspecified) and one in 1998 (one week)...(DIMIA Country Information Service 1999, *Country Information Report No. 297/99 – Refugee claims relating to treatment of Catholics in southern China* (sourced from DFAT advice of 12 August 1999), 12 August, para. 9 – Attachment 19).

List of Attachments

- 1 Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason 2001, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*, Paternoster Lifestyle, 6th ed, Cumbria, p.169 (RRT Library)
- 2 Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, pp.209-210 (RRT Library)
- 3 RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response CHN17381*, 27 June, quest. 3 / pp.3-4
- 4 RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response CHN17352*, 7 June, quest. 2 / pp.4-5
- 5 RRT Country Research 2003, *Research Response CHN15799*, 12 March, quests. 1-2 / pp.2-5
- 6 RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response CHN15645*, 23 December, quests. 2-3 / pp.2-14
- 7 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, 'Catholicism in Fujian' in *CHN33598.EX – China: Catholic Church and Catholicism in China; treatment of Catholics; relations between the underground and open Churches; differences between Catholic worship in China and elsewhere; differences in practice between the underground Church and the open Church; beliefs, practices, holidays and ceremonies; update to CHN33002.EX of 8 October 1999 regarding Christians in Fujian province*, 27 January (<http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/?action=view&doc=chn33598ex> – Accessed 25 August 2005)

- 8 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1999, 'Situation of Christians' in *CHN33002.EX - China: Freedom of religious practice and belief in Fujian province*, 8 October (http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/publications/index_e.htm?docid=6&cid=50 – Accessed 25 August 2005)
- 9 Charbonnier, Jean 2000, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication (Singapore), Singapore, pp.3-7, 506-513 (RRT Library)
- 10 'Christian prisoners' list' 2005, *Open Doors*, January, p.11 (<http://www.offenegrenzen.ch/en/pris.pdf> - Accessed 26 August 2005)
- 11 'List of bishops and priests in prison, isolation or labour camps' 2005, *China Infodoc*, source: AsiaNews - www.asianews.it, 5 March (CISNET China CX117462)
- 12 'Another Arrest of Roman Catholic Bishop in China' 2000, The Cardinal Kung Foundation, 13 February (<http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/press/000213.html> - Accessed 26 August 2005)
- 13 Madsen, Richard 1998, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p.37,157 (RRT Library)
- 14 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, *CHN34099.E - China: Report of a fact-finding mission to Fuzhou by Political Counsellor, Canadian Embassy, Beijing*, 23 March (REFINFO)
- 15 Asia Watch 1994, *Detained in China and Tibet: A directory of Political and Religious Prisoners*, Human Rights Watch, February, New York, p.242 (RRT Library)
- 16 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1999, *CHN31907.E – China: Update to CHN19904.E of 13 March 1995 on the current situation and whereabouts of Bishop John Yang Shudao of the underground Catholic Church*, 26 May (REFINFO)
- 17 'Prisoners of Religious Conscience for the Underground Roman Catholic Church in China' 2005, Cardinal Kung Foundation website, 31 July (<http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/prisoners/> - Accessed 24 August 2005)
- 18 Dillon, Michael 2001, *Religious Minorities and China*, Minority Rights Group International, p.16
- 19 DIMIA Country Information Service 1999, *Country Information Report No. 297/99 – Refugee claims relating to treatment of Catholics in southern China* (sourced from DFAT advice of 12 August 1999), 12 August (CISNET China CX36797)