I would like to spend the next 25 minutes or so discussing China’s official lists of banned religious groups. These lists have been consolidated and published erratically. However they appear to be an important aspect of the contemporary religious scene in China. I wish to investigate these two questions:

• What is their significance?
• What can we learn from them?
First proscription published in 1983

Agencies Involved:
- Various Public Safety Bureaus 公安局
- General Office of the State Council 国务院办公厅
- General Office of the Central Committee 中共中央办公厅

Let me start by saying I am focused on the published documents and what they indicate. I am not going to argue for or against the government’s position, or whether or not this group or that deserves to be singled out. I am going to suggest that the material in the lists is of special interest to scholars of new religions.

The first group to be singled out was a group referred to as the Shouters, in a circular of 1982. Other groups were singled out over the years. Consolidated lists were published in 1995, 2000, and again in 2014. These three are the “lists” proper. They constitute important documents reflecting religious policy. I will discuss the circulars as well as the consolidated lists, since many of them were published in list form, and they provided content subsequently compiled into lists.

A range of agencies are involved in these circulars, but the major lists are published by Public Safety, the State Council, both government agencies, and the General Office of the Central Committee, a department of the party.
Background:
Chinese Government Structure

Source: China Business Review
http://cesran.org/images/stories/CCP_government_structure.jpg
Organs Under the State Council

Public Security: Ministry under State Council

State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA)

State Administration for Religious Affairs of P.R.C.
Organs Under the Party

中共中央办公厅
General Office
of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of China

Leadership Organs of the Chinese Communist Party
(18th Central Committee, 2007-2012)

- CCP Politburo Standing Committee*
  (9 Members)
- CCP Politburo**
  (25 Members)
- CCP Central Committee
  (204 Full Members, 167 Alternate Members)

Note: The seven CCP departments shown (bottom right) are formally subordinate to the Central Committee, but normally receive policy directives from the Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee, as channeled through the Secretariat.
Background: Historical Stages (a simplified view)

In the initial period of Communist rule there was a period of quiet as the party consolidated power and prepared for change. Many religious groups continued business as usual. Starting in 1950 this began to change. Religious institutions were brought under state management within the “five established religions” rhetoric. In 1953 a series of Movements, the Five-Antis, which targeted specific religious groups, notable Yiguandao, Jesus Family, and Little Flock/Local Churches.

- **Consolidation** (1949-1966)
  - State co-option & control
  - “Anti” movements

- **Cultural Revolution** (1966-1978)
  - Eradication & radical attacks on religions
  - Rapid growth in rural areas

- **Reform & Liberalization** (1979-2016)
  - Normalization & tolerance of some religious activity
  - Growth of unregistered religions
In my view, the most devastating blow to all Christians in the late 1950s was the anti-rightist movement, which punished arbitrarily hundreds of thousands, shut down dissent or even dialogue with the state, and nearly criminalized religious belief itself, despite the state constitution.

Then came the Great Leap Forward in 1958, which occasioned...the closing of over 90 percent of the churches which were still open...

Daniel Bays
A New History of Christianity in China, 2012
The Cultural Revolution 1966-1978

The Cultural Revolution is often depicted as a catastrophe for religion. But recent opinion is coming around to the view that with the state bodies busy with political struggle, it was a time of hiatus. True, places of worship were damaged. But much religious activity simply went underground.

“...religions disappeared only from the public scene. Not only did many people maintain their faith in secret, but persevering believers also gathered for worship at home or in the wilderness. Religion simply went underground.”

Fenggang Yang


Province and Cities may issue other notifications.

The pronouncements do not spring from a vacuum. They are often preceded by articles or commentary in the press, official publications, or, today, online commentary. One important example was the publication in 1982 of an article “Concerning the basic perspective and policy toward the religious question during the period of socialism.” This was publication 19 in 1982 from the Central Publication Bureau of the Communist Party. This article hinted at the need to control unregistered groups claiming to be religious.
The Consolidated Lists

I begin with the second list. 14 groups are listed, included 6 copied from the preceding, 1995 summary document. A useful definition of xiejiao is given. This list is widely available on the internet. Note the official Public Security chop, dated 2000.

A xiejiao is defined as any illegal organizations that:

a. establishes an illegal organization in the name of religion, Qigong, etc;

b. deifies their leaders;[8]

c. initiates and spreads superstitions and heterodox beliefs迷信邪說

d. utilizes various means to fabricate and spread superstitions and heterodox [or cultic] beliefs to excite doubts and deceive the people, recruit and control its members by means.

e. engages in disturbing social order in an organized manner that brings injury to the lives and properties of the citizens.危害公民生命財產安全等活動。

The term xiejiao is here used as “cult.” In fact this term has a long history. It was borrowed in the 1990s as a convenient, well-known term for translating a foreign word that had its own complex background.
Consolidated List 2: 2000-39

Notification on Situation and Working Opinion Regarding Public Security Proscription of Shouters and other Evil Cult Organizations

- Total 14 Groups
- Listed the six proscribed groups in Document 1995-50 and one more (no document) verified as xiejiao by the National CCP Central Committee and the State Council
- Listed an additional 7 certified as xiejiao in Public Security announcements between 1995 and 1999
- Defines an evil cult:
  a. Illegal organizations established in the name of religion, qigong, etc.
  b. that deify their leaders;
  c. that initiate and spread superstitions and heterodox beliefs
  d. that utilize various means to fabricate and spread superstitions and heterodox [or cultic] beliefs to excite doubts and deceive the people, recruit and control its members by means;
  e. that engage in disturbing social order in an organized manner that brings injury to the lives and properties of the citizens

中央办公厅、国务院办公厅下发《关于转发〈公安部关于查禁取缔" 呼喊派" 等邪教组织的情况及工作意见〉的通知》（厅字[1995]50号）
Consolidated List

1: 1995-50

And now, the first chronological list, from 1995. I place this second because of a problem I have in the research: I cannot find a hard copy. Kim Chan and I have looked hard. For some reason this document not easily available. Very different from #2000-39. But it exists--its contents make up the core of #2000-39.

There are 6 groups referred to in @1995-50.

1995年11月，中央辦公廳、國務院辦公廳下發了《關於轉發〈公安部關於查禁取締「呼喊派」等邪教組織的情況及工作意見〉的通知》（廳字[1995]50號）

Central Office, National Congress General Office
Circulated “Regarding the Circulation of Public Security Department Notification on the Circumstances and Opinions Regarding the Proscription on the Shouters and other Cult organizations” (1995-50)

Total Six Proscribed groups
And now to the third list, from May, 2014. You can see that this one is not issued by a government agency at all. It is a widely disseminated list from the China Anti-Cult Agency, published June 4, 2014, in response to the McDonalds Eastern Lightning incident. None of the groups on this list are new--they all appeared on list #2.
After the McDonalds Incident...it’s all done through the media

Consolidated List 3: May, 2014;
20 Groups...

NONE NEW
Sidebar: A Suggestion

Each pronouncement is the public face/expression of a network of interlaced factors: public security actions, court orders, opinion pieces, and customary practises.
The Individual Groups

Now I turn to individual groups, batched together for convenience.
Pre-1995 4 Groups

Few circulars were issued before 1995.
1995  7 Groups

A ton of groups came into view in 1995, as reflected in #1995-50 consolidated list #2. Clearly the increased religious activity, especially in the countryside, had created concern in the government.

At this time a new police agency was created:
Public Security Anti-Cult
公安部反邪教组

1999年6月10日
610办公室
“610 Office”

The anti-cult department under Public Security. The insignia used is that of the police.
1995-1999 8 Groups

The late 1990s saw more circulars. Consolidated List # 2, 2000-39, included Falungong, which had exploded on the scene in 2000. (Many qigong groups were declared illegal at the same time, but not included on this cult list.)

Another new organizational development in this period:

- the Unification Church 相信主神会: founded 1954 by Mun Son-myung in South Korea (1997)
- Three Grades of Servants 三班仆人派: founded in 1988 in Hefei by Li Hongzhi 李洪志 (suppressed from 1999)
- Falungong Falun Gong: founded in 1992 in Jilin by Li Hongzhi 李洪志 (suppressed in 1999)
- Yundunfa 圆顿法门: founded by Xu Chengjiang 许成江 in Heilongjiang in 1998 (suppressed as a branch of Ching Hai from 1999)

The late 1990s saw more circulars. Consolidated List # 2, 2000-39, included Falungong, which had exploded on the scene in 2000. (Many qigong groups were declared illegal at the same time, but not included on this cult list.)

Another new organizational development in this period:
China Anti-Cult Association (CACA)  中国反邪教协会

Est. Nov. 2000

“voluntary,” non-profit organization

Media treats announces as official notices: June 4, 2014 Front Page

The China Anti-Cult Association was established in 2000. Note this was set up as a pseudo-NGO, not an agency of the police or the Party. Yet the media treated its announcements as official circulars.
Post-1999 4 Groups

Four more groups were declared illegal in the 2000s.

Zhōnggōng 中功: established in the 1987 as a qìgōng group by Zhāng Hóngbǎo 张宏堡 (2000)

South China Church 华南教会: founded 1990 in Húběi by Gǒng Shèngliang 龚圣亮 (2001)

Pure Land Learning Association 净宗学会: founded by Buddhist Master Chin Kung 净空 in Taiwan in 1984 （deemed illegal 2011）

Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会: a non-profit first founded in California by Fred and Linda Chamberlain in 1972 （deemed illegal 2011）
Consolidated List #3: A quick reminder, the list from 2014, Consolidate List #3, contains 20 groups, none of them new. Only Zhonggong, the qigong group, is not listed.

1. Falungong 法轮功
2. Church of Almighty God 全能神
3. Shouters 呼唤派
4. Disciple Society 门徒会
5. Unification Church 统一教
6. Guanyin Method 观音法门
7. Bloody Holy Spirit 血水圣灵
8. Full Scope Church 全范围教会
9. Three Grades of Servant 三班仆人派
10. True Buddha School 灵仙真佛宗
11. Mainland China Administrative Deacon Station 中华大陆行政执事站
12. 灵灵教
13. South China Church 华南教会
14. Anointed King 被立王
15. Lord God Sect 主神教
16. World Gospel Mission Society 世界以利亚福音宣教会
17. Perfect and Sudden Dharma Gate 圆顿法门
18. New Testament Church 新约教会
19. Dami Mission 达米宣教会
20. Children of God 天父的儿女
And now, on to a consolidated list.

Not officially published.
The Consolidated List: 23 Groups


- The Disciple Society 门徒会 (méntúhùi): started by Lǐ Sānbǎo 季三保 in Shānxī 陕西 (1989)


- Guanyin Method 观音法门 (guānyīn fǎmén), founded 1988 by Chìng Hǎi 青海 (qīnghǎi) in Taiwan (1995)


Consolidated List (cont.): 23 Groups


• the Unification Church 统一教 (tǒngyijiao): founded 1954 by Mun Son-myong in South Korea (1997)


• Three Grades of Servants 三班仆人派 (sānbānpùrénpái): founded in 1988 in Hénán by Xu Wēnkū 徐文库 (1999)

• Zhōnggōng 中功: established in the 1987 as a qīgōng group by Zhang Hóngbào 张宏堡 (2000)

• Fǎlúngōng 法轮功: founded in 1992 in Jilin by Lǐ Hóngzhì 李洪志 (suppressed from 1999)

• Yūandùnfànmén圆顿法门: founded by Xu Chéngjiāng 许成江 in Hēilóngjiāng in 1998 (suppressed as a branch of Ching Hai from 1999)


• South China Church 华南教会 (huánnánjiao): founded 1990 in Húběi by Gǒng Shèngliáng 龚圣亮 (2001)

• Pure Land Learning Association 净空学会 (jìngkōngxuéhuì): founded by Buddhist Master Chin Kung 净空 in Taiwan in 1984 (deemed illegal 2011)

• Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会 (shēngmìng yánjiù jījīnhùi): a non-profit first founded in California by Fred and Linda Chamberlain in 1972 (deemed illegal 2011)
Consolidated List:
Noting 10 *Overseas* Groups
Fully 43% are said to have overseas ties.

| 1. | The Shouters 呼喊派 |
| 2. | Full Scope Church 全范围教会 |
| 3. | The Disciple Society 门徒会 |
| 4. | The Lingling Sect 灵灵教 |
| 5. | Anointed King 被立王 |
| 6. | Church of Almighty God全能神教会 |
| 7. | Guanyin Method 观音法门 |
| 8. | Mainland China Administrative Deacon Station 中华大陆行政执事站 |
| 9. | Children of God 天父的儿女 |
| 10. | Dami Mission 达米宣教会 |
| 11. | True Buddha School 灵仙真佛宗 |

| 1. | New Testament新约教会 |
| 2. | World Elijah Gospel Mission Society 世界以利亚福音宣教会 |
| 3. | the Unification Church 统一教 |
| 4. | Lord God Sect 主神教 |
| 5. | Three Grades of Servants 三班仆人派 |
| 6. | Zhōnggōng中功 |
| 7. | Fǎlǔngōng法轮功 |
| 8. | Yúandùnfǎmén圆顿法门 |
| 9. | Bloody Holy Spirit血水圣灵 |
| 10. | South China Church华南教会 |
| 11. | Pure Land Learning Association 净宗学会 |
| 12. | Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会 |
Consolidated List:
Noting 16 Christian-inspired Groups
70% are Christian-inspired

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian-inspired Groups</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consolidated List: Noting 7 Syncretic and Buddhist-inspired Groups (30%)

| 2.     | Full Scope Church 全范围教会 | 2.     | World Elijah Gospel Mission Society 世界以利亚福音宣教会 |
| 3.     | The Disciple Society 门徒会   | 3.     | the Unification Church 统一教 |
| 4.     | The Lingling Sect 灵灵教     | 4.     | Lord God Sect 主神教 |
| 5.     | Anointed King 被立王        | 5.     | Three Grades of Servants 三班仆人派 |
| 7.     | Guanyin Method 观音法门     | 7.     | Fǎlǔngōng 法轮功 |
| 8.     | Mainland China Administrative Deacon Station 中华大陆行政执事站 | 8.     | Yúandùnfǎmén 圆顿法门 |
| 10.    | Dami Mission 达米宣教会     | 10.    | South China Church 华南教会 |
| 11.    | True Buddha School 灵仙真佛宗 | 11.    | Pure Land Learning Association 净宗学会 |
|        |                                | 12.    | Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会 |
Minor Groups

This consolidated list still leaves off many minor or local groups. Some examples...

- **Kindness Sect** 恩惠教
  - Declared heretical Nov. 1999 in circular from Urumuqi Public Security
  - Founded 1997 by Pan Wei 潘卫
  - 30 house-church groups in Xinjiang

- **China Gospel Fellowship** 中华福音团契
  - Tanghe County, Henan

Duihua Research July 10, 2014

www.duihuaresearch.org/search/label/Religion
Finally, let me focus on the last two additions. I include these for a reason. The Pure Land Learning Association was growing very quickly in southern China throughout the 2000s. I personally saw many traditional temples in Gaungzhou were actually used as workshops to pack CDs and handouts of Master Chin Kung. He seemed utterly conventional. So when this group was made illegal it surprised me. One possibility is that it became too popular.

Pure Land Learning Association净宗学会: founded by Buddhist Master Chin Kung净空

in Taiwan in 1984（deemed illegal 2011）
The Latest Additions: 2011

The second group, Alcor Life Extension, is not a religious group at all. It's included here because it was included in the same circular as the Pure Land Learning Association. It suggests a level of concern. And for us, a new direction of research. Perhaps in this case the Party is ahead of us??

Alcor Life Extension Association 生命研究基金会:

a non-profit first founded in California

by Fred and Linda Chamberlain in 1972

( deemed illegal 2011 )

“The world’s leading cryonics organization.”
Conclusion

• Official pronouncements continue to be considered useful for social control.
• The pronouncements partially reflect state policy and concerns, plus ambiguities.
• Pronouncements may be dated—not reflecting current thinking.
• Inclusion on the list—illegal status—is a major barrier to dialog and activity.
• The List does reflect only a portion of activity on the ground.
• The list is nevertheless useful to scholars.
• A major distinction exists between cults 邪教 and religions 宗教 (new or established).
• Post-2000 the government switched to indirect means besides Public Security Circulars...reflects the influence of the internet and a more nuanced media policy?
Thank you!

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