

CHINA: PERSECUTION OF A PROTESTANT SECT

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I. INTRODUCTION

Thirteen members of a banned evangelical Protestant sect called the "Shouters" (*Huahan Pa*) were serving lengthy sentences in labor camps or prisons in Henan Province, China, as of May 1994. They were arrested in two sweeps, in 1983 and 1987, together with more than thirty-five others, some of whom have died in custody or been released. All were sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to fifteen years for peaceful religious worship outside the aegis of the official Chinese church (see Appendix I). In addition to these arrests, the Shouters have continued to experience various forms of government persecution and harassment, including destruction of homes and property. In its actions against the Shouters, the Chinese government has violated internationally recognized rights to both freedom of religion and freedom of association, as well as its own constitution. Human Rights Watch/Asia calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the thirteen prisoners whose cases are described in this report.

II. THE "SHOUTERS": ORIGINS AND BELIEFS

The Shouters, who refer to themselves simply as Christians,¹ were an outgrowth of an indigenous Chinese religious sect, variously known as the "Local Church," the "Assembly Church," "Christian Assemblies" or the "Little Flock." The original group, particularly strong in the provinces of Zhejiang, Henan, Fujian, and Guangdong, was founded in 1922 and is associated with the religious philosophy of Ni Tuosheng (1903-1972), better known as Watchman Nee. Imprisoned in 1952 during a government campaign aimed at the "bourgeois" private sector, Ni was accused of "having stolen a [huge amount] of national medicine, information, and property." He was sentenced in 1956 to a fifteen-year term as head of a counterrevolutionary clique, and died shortly after his delayed release in 1972.²

Ni's disciple, Li Changshou, or Witness Li, who differed with Ni on tactics and doctrine, was primarily responsible for organizing the Shouter splinter movement. Its roots date back to the mid-1930s when "Local Church" congregants added external vocalizations, such as "Oh, Oh Lord" and "Amen," to quiet prayer.

The Shouter creed is evangelical, mystical, subjective, intuitive, apocalyptic, and individual.³ According to Shouter literature, believers reject any human thought that goes beyond what the Bible says because they consider it the completed divine revelation. Thus, Bible reading is central to religious practice, and it is the duty of every Shouter to go out and preach the gospel to relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. The Shouters then "nourish" the converted by visiting their homes regularly and leading them in Bible reading, singing, and prayer. Members meet in small groups with neither "appointed

¹ Shouters is the name used in references to the sect in most of the literature about Christianity in China. In some places, local leaders of the official Chinese church referred to the Shouters as the "Amen Party."

² Tung Siu Kwan, "The Waves of the 'Local Church,'" in *Bridge*, Hong Kong, No.56, November-December 1995, pp.13-15.

³ Ralph R. Covell, *Confucius, Buddha, and Christ: A History of the Gospel in Chinese* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), pp.196-202. For additional background about the Shouter movement see also National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, *Documents of the Three-Self Movement* 1963; and Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp.162-64).

speakers or teachers." Anyone moved to preach can, although it is usually the already recognized leaders, or elders, who do so. There is no professional ministry, and each local group is autonomous. Congregants meet clandestinely in each others' homes; hence they are categorized with other Protestants who resist association with the official Chinese Christian Church, as "house church" members.

The Shouter creed has brought its members into open conflict with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official body responsible, under the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), for monitoring all Protestant affairs.⁴ The intrusion of Party doctrine and politics into religion in the official churches violates the sect's principle that the church is not and should not be a human institution. The Shouters' interest lies strictly in Bible study; they eschew involvement with broad social, political or economic matters and resist participating in socialist campaigns. The evangelical nature of Shouter practices violates the Religious Affairs Bureau's three-fix policy.⁵ Shouters also resist government restrictions on what legitimately can be preached; in particular they resent government curbs on sermons dealing with the "second coming," a central tenet of Shouter faith. The Chinese government regards the belief in a "second coming" as inherently antithetical to development, in fact, to the very need for development.

III. REPRESSION IN THE 1980S

Initial harassment

Throughout the 1980s, Shouters in Henan Province were pressured to give up their independent "house churches" and to join the Three-Self Patriotic Association. When they did not, they were detained and subject to enforced "study" sessions. Those who persisted in "defying" the government, were arrested, tried, and sentenced, with local Shouter leaders in many Henan counties receiving long prison terms.

Large-scale persecution of the Shouters began in May 1983. By then the number of Shouters in and around the Lushan area, the sect's center, numbered some 200,000, and the rapid growth of the movement was alarming to government authorities. The crackdown, however, had been in the making ever since the 1979 order rescinding the anti-religion policy in effect throughout the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Before then, when "normal" religious practice under government control had been permitted, Shouters were already under pressure to join the Three-Self Movement.⁶

Shouters in Lushan, who considered their organization the indigenous local church and who had

⁴ The TSPM even issued a forty-page refutation of Shouter beliefs and practices. See Tang Shoulin and Ren Zhongxiang, "Firmly Resist the Heretical Beliefs of Li Changshou," *Jiaoca* (special issue), April 1983.

⁵ The "three-fix" policy, fixed personnel, fixed meeting point, and fixed sphere, is part of the rules under which "free" religious belief may be practiced in China. None but officially approved personnel may be church leaders; each leader must be affiliated to only one congregation; and he may not leave a governmentally determined geographic space to preach or proselytize.

⁶ For additional information on the pre-1979 repression of Shouters, see the works cited in footnotes 2 and 3.

continued to worship clandestinely throughout the Cultural Revolution, met together with the Three-Self leadership. But the basic theological differences cited above, and the belief that Shouters were trying to take over congregations who had not yet joined the Three-Self Movement, could not be resolved. According to Shouter documents, the TSPM charged Shouters with "foreign connections and accepting bribes." When the accusation did not cow the Shouters into submission, the TSPM brought a case in provincial court where, in May 1983 it was determined that the organization was counterrevolutionary, a conclusion that is still in force.

Actually Li had begun to direct the reorganization of the Christian Assemblies within China in 1978. He sent in books, magazines, and tapes; organized teams to preach his vision of Christianity; recruited new members; and verbally castigated the official TSPM. In 1979 in Lushan, more than ten people, including Wang Xincai, Guo Shan, Ma Tiansong, and He Tianen, held family assemblies in people's homes to talk about the Bible. As the movement grew, some of the leaders went to Guangzhou to meet with Li's lieutenants, as Li himself had moved to Taiwan. Returning to Lushan with books, tapes, and Bibles, they hosted four large meetings, each one consisting of seventy to eighty recruits. They made contact with organizers in Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province, in Fuzhou in Fujian Province, and in Hongkong. During 1979, the Lushan leaders encountered few difficulties in traveling or proselytizing and penetrated further and further into the Henan countryside and to Hebei and Shandong provinces. All told, some thirty counties and cities were involved. In some places, meetings went on until 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. In some places, according to unconfirmed reports, as many as 1,000 people showed up at gatherings. Shouter influence even extended to other areas of China. Partly as a result of an article in *Tian Feng*, the official TSPM magazine, criticizing the sect, Christians from other areas came to Lushan to learn about the movement and bring its tenets back to their own communities.

At the same time, Chinese government officials were orchestrating a campaign to criticize the "pernicious influence" of Li Changshou. In the winter of 1980, a disparaging letter from a Shanghai resident was sent to a former Beijing co-worker of Watchman Nee in the hopes of broadening a campaign already in force in Shanghai. The letter accused Shouters of "beating, smashing, looting, fighting with the police, and seizing assembly halls." In 1982, 90,000 copies of an article titled "A Critique of Li Changshou's Heretical Beliefs" were distributed among Christians all over China with the object of educating and warning them about the Shouters. Those who disagreed with its contents were sent to be educated, criticized, and even punished.

Surveillance by local Public Security Bureaus forced cancellation of a province-wide meeting in Lushan in September 1982. Detentions of Lushan Shouters increased in March 1983 when ten "brothers" and "sisters" were secretly held and questioned for five days. From then on, Shouter leaders, to avoid drawing attention to themselves, cut back their participation in large-scale community affairs such as weddings. Instead they confined activities such as communion to individual households.

On May 5, 1983, the *lianghui*, the term used to refer to the two official Christian organizations, the TSPM and the Chinese Christian Council, held a meeting about the Christian Assemblies. The Religious Affairs Bureau notified all churches to resist the activities of the Shouters. With the cooperation of TSPM personnel, who considered Li a heretic, arrests began. According to an unconfirmed account, reportedly from Ding Guangxun, chairman of the TSPM, some 2,000 Shouters were arrested throughout China with the most severe persecution in Lushan, Ye, and Baofeng counties and Pingdingshan Municipality in Henan

Province.

Many of those arrested were forced to attend an eighteen-day re-education meeting and exhorted to abide by the religious policy of the government, to accept the leadership of the Party, and to be mindful of the "ten don'ts," which included not preaching to people outside church premises, not engaging in faith healing and exorcism, and not instilling religious thinking in those under eighteen. Participants had to examine their own mistakes and submit a written self-criticism to their instructors for approval.

Arrests and trials: 1983-84

During the night of June 1, 1983, thirteen Shouters were arrested and secretly interrogated. The county Security Bureau posted notices denouncing the sect as a "counterrevolutionary organization" and prohibiting it from continuing its activities.

A month later, on July 3, 1983, in front of several thousand people, the detained Shouters, those whom local authorities considered the "worst elements" or leaders, were arraigned in the Lushan County Square. The crowd had been assembled through their respective work units. Those attending did not find out the nature of the meeting, "the mass arrest of counterrevolutionaries," until they arrived. Each "brother" was dragged on to the stage, made to kneel (a position of humiliation), formally arrested, and escorted under heavy guard back to jail. Immediately following, in line with a "kill one, warn all" (*sha yi jing ba*) policy, a huge parade was organized to denounce the offenders publicly. For four days, to the accompaniment of drums and gongs, ten Shouters, each wearing a placard giving his name and condemning him as a "counterrevolutionary element," and ten "common" criminals were tied up, deployed in fourteen trucks, and driven through some ten villages.⁸ At times the crowds were so thick, the vehicles had trouble getting through.

Nine days later, on July 12, those who had not been arrested, some 1,000 from Lushan, were forced to attend a "study session" dedicated to "exterminating the Shouters." In actuality, the class, held in a detention center, was more an interrogation than a study session. Although its objective was to brand Li's theology heretical and his politics counterrevolutionary, "teaching" methods were harsh. Shouters were bound with rope, forced to stay on their knees for extended periods of time, physically abused, and forced on pain of torture to renounce their faith, expose their leaders, and join the Three-Self Movement. Some detainees were in custody only a few days; some for almost two months. Some were fined, some detained further, and others arrested and eventually sentenced.

⁷ For an earlier account of the sentencings of Shouters in Henan and Zhejiang provinces, see Asia Watch, *Detained in China and Tibet: A Directory of Political and Religious Prisoners* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), pp.272-4 and p.399. There is no new information available about Dan * dong, Lu*, Chen*, Li * shou, and Li * shun. These cases were reported in *Criminal Case-Studies Series (Vol I: Crimes of Counterrevolution)*, compiled by the Supreme People's Procuratorate and published by Zhongguo Jiancha Chunbanshe (Beijing), November 1992. In many cases, parts of the prisoners' names were censored by the editors. These omissions are denoted here by asterisks.

⁸ The trucks have open backs where the prisoners are made to stand.

On July 7, 1984, one year after the first rally, at least 5,000 people (accounts differ) attended a "Judgment Pronouncing Rally," a combined public trial and sentencing hearing at Lushan County Square. According to an eyewitness account, "the plaza was surrounded by police, who made a show of strength. The atmosphere was terrifying. The entire plaza was shrouded in an unspeakable sense of terror." Government agents videotaped and voice-recorded the scene; the proceedings were broadcast live through loudspeakers set up in the plaza. Those to be tried and sentenced were hauled on stage one by one. Wang Xincan, who had previously "confessed" to his "counterrevolutionary" crime, recanted in front of the crowd, saying, "My previous statement was guided by you under intimidation. It was not a true statement." Eight "brothers" received sentences ranging from fifteen to six years. One person was exempt from punishment.⁹ The judgments against the nine, who had been held incommunicado since their indictments, actually had been signed and sealed by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court on June 2, 1984, more than a month before the public trial and sentencing rally. In addition to those sentenced in public, another six persons, five men and one woman, received lesser terms, six to two years.

The sweep was not limited to Lushan County. In mid-1984 in nearby Baofeng County, five more Shouters were sentenced to prison terms ranging between fifteen and eight years. In the municipality of Pingdingshan, another eleven "brothers" and three "sisters" received sentences varying between fifteen and three years.

On July 16, 1984, five men from Ye County were indicted. On September 12, they were sentenced to terms ranging between fifteen and eight years on charges similar to those for which the Lushan County Shouters were tried. One is still in prison; of the two sentenced to twelve-year terms, one died in prison and one was released allegedly for good behavior, but in reality because of a severe lung infection. Two who have been released are still denied their political rights, as are many other released Shouters throughout Henan Province.¹⁰ They are deprived of their rights to freedom of speech, expression, assembly and association. They may not vote, stand for office, hold any position in a state organ or a leading position in any enterprise, institution or people's organization.¹¹

Other arrests occurred in Dengfang, Yu, and Fugou counties and in the Luoyang area. All those detained in these locales may not have been Shouters; alarm over the growth of the sect served as an excuse for rounding up religious practitioners unsupervised by the TSPM.¹²

Indictments and Trials

By labeling the Shouters a "counterrevolutionary organization" for the failure of its congregants

⁹ A person "exempt from punishment" goes to trial, is judged guilty, but does not serve a prison term. The problems associated with a criminal record, such as dismissal from employment and loss of housing, remain.

¹⁰ See Appendix I for information on the current status of prisoners sentenced in the roundups.

¹¹ *The Criminal Law of China*, Article 51.

¹² Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1991), pp.84-5.

and congregations to join the TSPM, and by labeling those convicted in Lushan County as "backbone" elements engaged in "counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement," the government was able to stay within the limits prescribed in *The Criminal Law of China* and still impose long prison sentences. By contrast, the Shouters themselves maintained that their differences with the official church were confined to theological interpretation and style of worship and were in no way related to politics or counterrevolution. Meeting and living according to the Bible and spreading the Gospel, they said, were the bases for convictions.

"Proof" of the counterrevolutionary intent of some of the convicted Lushan Shouters was cited in sentencing documents originating with the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court. Charges included visits to Guangzhou for the purpose of establishing and maintaining contact with "overseas reactionary" Shouters and supplying them with information about the activities of the Lushan County Shouters; "receiving instructions and [subsequently] distributing 2,000 copies of reactionary books from abroad, [such as] *How Can One Say There is No God* and *The Fallacy of Apes Evolving into Man*, as well as [distributing] 1,400 pages of... *The Bugle Call of Truth*, *Living Together with Christ*, and *Seven Golden Lampstands*; [taken from] tape recordings of reactionary speeches by the overseas reactionary chieftain Li Changshou. They also received 1,300 *yuan* in cash and five recording machines." Some defendants held "illegal" meetings in their homes, played the tapes they had received "for some 400 people so that...reactionary views...were spread far and wide....In this way, they conducted propaganda, incited the masses, and confused and poisoned peoples' minds."

Other so-called counterrevolutionaries invited a "reactionary element," Huang Tianwei from Guangzhou,¹³ to visit "illegal" meeting points to inspect the activities of the local Lushan Shouters and to discuss Li's reactionary views. During the meetings, Huang allegedly "viciously attacked the socialist system, conducted propaganda, and incited the people to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat." These same counterrevolutionaries, the document continued, held frequent and regular meetings of their own to lecture on and to discuss Li's views. They also began to proselytize in nearby counties in Henan Province. In September 1982, they even organized a province-wide conference subsequently outlawed by the government. Nevertheless, three province-wide meetings followed, attracting some 300 people from twenty-seven counties. Funds for maintaining the Shouter network allegedly were solicited at these gatherings. In June 1983, over 300 participants attended a three-day "youth drill" called by some of the defendants to further spread "reactionary" dogma. Some Shouters were accused of compiling, illegally printing, and selling 300 copies of the book *Household Chores Communications*, and acting individually and collectively, they ordained 230 elders and deacons in four counties in Henan. Other defendants allegedly mimeographed and distributed large quantities of additional "reactionary" pamphlets such as *What is the Church*, *The Question of the Heavenly Kingdom*, and *How to Wield Power on Behalf of God*.

According to indictment and sentencing documents from Ye County, between the end of 1981 and early 1983 the five indicted on July 16, 1984 colluded and "conspired with overseas reactionaries and their agents," received orders and financial subsidies from abroad, spread reactionary ideas, including the

¹³ Huang, who received a seven-year sentence, is now living in the U.S. He was recorded as "in custody" in two court documents, those of Wang Xincal et al (see below) and Wang Yaoqiang et al (see below). Li Jianrong, also recorded as in custody in the same two documents, died in 1989 shortly after his release from prison.

transport and distribution of reactionary books and the broadcast of reactionary tapes, carried out counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement on a "massive scale," and "attempted to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system." (See Wang Yaoqiang below for further information.) Some of the allegedly reactionary books, pamphlets, and tapes included: *Spiritual Exercise, Bugle Sound of Truth, Huhan Can Save You, Spirit and Life, The Secrets of Reverence, What is the Church, Bible Lectures - the Gospel of Matthew.*

IV. REPRESSION IN THE 1990S

The persecution of Shouters did not end in the 1980s, although the methods of persecution changed. Beginning in 1990 and continuing at least through March 1994, instead of continuing to sentence Shouters to long prison terms, the Chinese government resorted to short-term administrative sentences without benefit of trial or legal counsel, and fines and other forms of harassment. Local authorities began to detain Shouters indiscriminately, then hold them incommunicado and begin negotiations over fines. During the process, their local jailers would bind the Shouters with rope, chain their hands, apply electric batons, and stuff gags in their mouths if they continued to call on Jesus. Those able to pay the fines, often with the help of overseas relatives, were released but remained in danger of re-arrest and harassment. Others were administratively sentenced, including some Shouters who only recently had served out their 1983 or 1987 terms, to between one and three years' re-education through labor. For example, **He Fuxing**, imprisoned in 1983 and sentenced to a seven-year term, was re-sentenced in 1990 to a three-year term.

Recent detentions include that of **Shang Tingdal**, who had not regained his political rights after serving nine years of a ten-year sentence. He was seized sometime between January 15 and 20, 1994. After hearing a report that there would be a gathering of eighty people, three police cars arrived at Shan's house expecting to detain those present until each paid a 200 *yuan* fine. According to a Human Rights Watch/Asia source, the money was to be used for New Year's bonuses for Public Security Bureau officers. Although no meeting was in progress, Shang was arrested and held at the Ye County Detention Center for five days. Before release, the police demanded a fine of 2,000 *yuan*, but settled for the 500 *yuan* the family was able to raise. Such exorbitant demands are routine in an area where yearly family income in both cash and kind only comes to approximately 1,000 *yuan*.

In October 1993, two Shouters from Yu County were sentenced. Seven from Lushan County were arrested that same month. Five were released after they paid fines. As of March 1994, the other two were still in detention. On July 25, 1992, eighty Shouters held a meeting in preparation for a trip to Kaifeng, Henan Province, to greet a long-term prisoner whose release was imminent. Police broke up the gathering and arrested twenty of the group's leaders, each of whom was fined 200 *yuan*. Two members of the group then proceeded to Kaifeng. Both were seized and ultimately fined and released, but not before one was seriously tortured. Almost six months later, in January 1993, the Public Security Bureau "came to investigate" after a gathering, which they assumed was of a religious nature, at the home of the brother of that same long-term prisoner. The "religious gathering" was in fact a wedding party. The incident was in no way remarkable; the police routinely question village heads about gatherings of any size in locales where house church activity is widespread.

Shouter populations in other provinces have not escaped detention. In October 1993, seven people were arrested in Anhui Province; and on December 23, 1993 in Fuqing County, Fujian Province, **Lin Zilong**, a

seventy-nine-year-old peasant from Qinlin Village, Yuxi Township, and five others were arrested at a meeting in his house. This was Lin's fifth arrest. His fourth, in 1983, resulted in a ten-year sentence (date of release unknown). During one of his prison terms, Lin composed hymns which were smuggled out of prison and published in book form. During his 1993-94 detention which lasted close to three months, the police wanted more information about the hymns and their publication. They also wanted to make sure Lin understood very clearly that the Shouters were still classified as a banned counterrevolutionary organization. Of the five arrested with Lin, only two have been identified: He Xiaping, a fifty-three-year-old peasant from Nanlu Village, Jiangjing Township, and Han Kangrui, a peasant from Haiyou Village, Longtian Township, forty-eight years old. Han was held in a detention center in Longtian; He Xiaping in a detention center in Jiangjing; and Lin in Fuqing City. It is not known whether Han and He have been released.

A program of "smashing `family study groups'" which started in the 1980s, was drastically escalated by April 1990. At the beginning, those attending family meetings were detained, interrogated, and had their houses ransacked. With the increase in the number of family groups, some with memberships as high as twenty or thirty individuals, the government ordered a program of "study sessions" lasting one to two weeks, to try to convince people that Li Changshou's organization was counterrevolutionary and his theology heretical. The authorities listed three specific goals: to convince Shouters to give up their religious beliefs, to wipe out family study groups, and to entice Shouters into joining the TSPM. Furthermore, the government decreed that henceforth it would be illegal to attend a family study session.

One method of "recruiting" Shouters for the study sessions was to have people who pretended to be Christians infiltrate the family groups. When the informers found out how many in a group, who was in charge, and where meetings were held, they called the police.

During the sessions, which were really a form of detention since no one could voluntarily leave, Shouters were ordered to publicly express their renunciation of their faith, and to write a statement as a guarantee that they would not join a family group. Those who refused were fined between one hundred and 1,000 *yuan*. Should a person be unable to pay, his valuables were confiscated.

An account by one Shouter forced to attend a session, gave additional details. Several cadres came to his house, told him to take fifty *yuan* and go to a study place. Two others were there when he arrived. All were asked to hand over eighty *yuan* for their "re-education." The cadres then gave the participants an oral list of their wrongful beliefs, including the fact that "brothers and sisters bathed together" (baptism), that they believed in faith healing and sacrifice, and that they preached about the "second coming" 2,000 years hence. By the third day, the cadres' lectures turned to threats. The detainees were told that if they wanted to go home they had to join the TSPM or else they would be sent one level up to face county authorities. Finally, the three paid up and were allowed to return home. Other personal accounts told similar stories, except that in some instances "study" sessions contained upwards of forty people.

In July 1990, the Public Security Bureau of Lushan County issued a public notice, *Dealing with the Unlawful Activities of Those Who Call on the Name of the Lord*, detailing the expansion of attempts to re-educate those in the county who were "deceived" by the Shouters. The notice's language made clear the extent of the problem in and around Lushan County as perceived by the Chinese government. According to

the notice, "the majority of believers learning the reactionary nature of the Shouters...which is anti-Party and anti-socialism, one after another decided to separate themselves...and they promised not to attend their illegal religious activities. "However," it went on, "some stubborn elements...continued to...ignore law and order..in contacting and deceiving believers, directing illegal organizations, and planning illegal assemblies." The notice then made clear the duty of "those masses still deceived to wake up...thoroughly change their standing, report those who offend the law, expose the criminal activities of stubborn elements...and hand over illegal `action tools' [books]."

Thirteen people¹⁴ were named in the notice as having been arrested for organizing meetings and distributing illegal books. The books were confiscated and those arrested were instructed to "repent in writing." There is no information as to the disposition of their cases. Some Shouters, as in the 1980s, were arrested, tried, and fined for their beliefs; and family meeting study classes were outlawed.

V. PRISONS AND PRISON CONDITIONS IN HENAN PROVINCE

Little is known about prison conditions in Henan Province and virtually nothing about conditions in local detention facilities and provincial labor camps. The five high-security facilities housing "common" criminals sentenced to terms of ten years or more and alleged counterrevolutionaries, all house factories. However, not all prisoners work in the plants or are taught a skill. Some spend their entire prison careers performing low-level tasks such as cleaning bathrooms.

Henan Provincial Prison No.1, in Kaifeng, also known as Kaifeng *Xin Xin* Paper Mill, is both a paper factory and a brick factory. Some of the 4,000 prisoners carry the dried wheat chaff used in the making of paper, from the field to the factory. Each one who does so must move one hundred kilograms in an eight-hour day. According to prisoners' accounts, the food is "fit only for pigs" and, in fact, what the prisoners do not eat hot, is fed cold to the prison's pig population. Each inmate receives four-and-a-half steamed *mantou* (wheat buns), totaling approximately one pound, per day. More often than not, the buns are partly raw or soured from over-fermentation. Vegetables are sparse. Without food parcels from home many inmates, in particular the younger ones assigned the most arduous labor, would be malnourished.

There are two prisons in Xinxian City. Henan Provincial Prison No.5, known also as the Xinxian Shirt Manufacturing Factory, houses only women. It manufactures "Jun Niao"-brand (Pretty Bird) western-style suits and clothes, and "Shuzhan"-brand (Stretch) shirts for export. According to one Chinese internal *(neibu)* source, "Henan Provincial Prison No.5's products...are exported to almost ten countries and regions around the world, including the United States, West Germany, Holland, and Hongkong."¹⁵ In 1988, the factory had business dealings with at least one Hongkong company, the Jia Lu Mei Enterprise Company.

¹⁴ Those listed included both men and women: Li Defang, Niu Songlin, Ma Yuhua, Cao Mengcheng, Zhang Maixia, and Kong Xintai from Malou Township; Wang Tao, Jin Xiaohui, twenty, Song Qingzhi, forty-three, Chen Mei, thirty, Zhu Gui, thirty, Wu Qingli twenty-three, and He Xia, twenty-nine, from Zhangdian County, Junwang Village; and Liu Qinyun, twenty-nine, and Ye Juhua, sixty-eight, from Xinji County, Xiaoheli Village. There is no way of telling which thirteen out of the fifteen listed were arrested.

¹⁵ *Research in Crime and Reform (Fanzui Yu Gaizao Yanjiu)*, No.1, 1988, p.59.

The other Xinxiang City prison, Henan Provincial Prison No.2, known also as the Xinxiang Internal Combustion Engine Plant, manufactures diesel engines. It produces the Huang He brand X195-model which, under the "Jin Ma" label is also manufactured in other labor camps in China. Those made by the Xinxiang plant have been exported to Pakistan, Australia, and Kenya.¹⁶ Provincial Prison No.2 also produces fire-fighting equipment, 3,000 to 5,000 watt diesel-engine electrical generators, motorized three-wheel trucks, and hand-operated vertical hydraulic jacks.

Henan Provincial Prison No.4 in Luoyang City is also known as the Luoyang *Xinghua* Bearing and Steel-Ball Forging Plant. It was first set up in 1955 on the banks of the Yellow River as a prisoner-operated sulphur and iron ore mine. By 1985, the mine reserves neared exhaustion, and in June 1989 the prison was moved in its entirety to Luoyang. It has since become "China's largest specialized manufacturing base for unfinished bearing castings."¹⁷ Technical and production output progress has been so rapid since the move to Luoyang that Provincial Prison No.4 is characterized as developing at "the speed of Shenzhen."¹⁸

Provincial Prison No.3, in Yu County, is a pottery factory.

As of July 1993, the Henan Provincial Labor-Reform Bureau planned to set up sino-foreign joint ventures with at least two of the Henan prisons, Provincial No.1 and Provincial No.4.¹⁹

Prisoners' accounts attest to routine abuse in detention centers and prisons in Henan Province no different than that in other parts of China.²⁰ For example, according to official sentencing documents, Chinese authorities claimed that the Shouters' "criminal activities were attested to by witnesses' testimony, material evidence, and books." But inmates' reports obtained by Human Rights Watch/Asia vividly document the "vicious whippings" and the police insistence that some of those interrogated "hand in the problems" (falsely accuse their co-religionists). When one prisoner replied that he had "nothing to hand in...they immediately stripped my clothes off and began to whip me with leather whips saying, 'hand in the counterrevolutionary name lists, hand guns, explosives, and locations of underground radio stations and communications materials.' When I replied that 'I never saw any of these things and I did not know

¹⁶ *1986 Henan Province Yearbook*, p.189.

¹⁷ *Research in Crime and Reform (Fanzui Yu Gaizao Yanjiu)*, No.4, 1993, p.56-59.

¹⁸ Shenzhen, a special-economic zone in southern China, went from being a small village to a mini-Hongkong in the space of a few years.

¹⁹ *Research in Crime and Reform (Fanzui Yu Gaizao Yanjiu)*, No.7, 1993, pp.16-19.

²⁰ For general information on the prison system and prison conditions in China see, Human Rights Watch/Prison Project, *Global Report on Prisons* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), pp.137-150. For conditions in one specific prison, Beijing No.2, see Human Rights Watch/Asia and Human Rights in China, "The Price of Obscurity in China: Revelations About Prisoners Arrested After June 4, 1989," 1994, Vol.6, No.5, pp.6-9 and pp.36-40. For information about prisons in one province, see Asia Watch, *Anthems of Defeat: Crackdown in Hunan Province 1989-1992* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992).

what they were,' they punished me with other cruel physical abuse tools such as binding my whole body with nylon ropes and lusing[an electric cattle prod." The informant's entire body was wound so tightly with rope that blood circulation was restricted..."causing floods of perspiration. [I] could not stand it or sleep and my heart hurt so much as if it were going to burst."

Prisoners' accounts also reported that Chinese authorities prohibited Shouters from prayer and Bible reading while in prison. Wang Xincal managed, in prison in Yu County, to secure a Bible and tear the pages apart so as to share them with others. "I was caught reading...a thorough search was conducted and they found the Bible. All the prisoners in the same room were whipped. Since I was the leading Bible reader, I was shackled with a thirty-eight-kilogram [eighty-three-pound] leg weight, the heaviest of all weights. It was so painful to have to walk, and my skin was worn through. It was my fellow prisoners who bound my wounds with their clothing, dressed, and fed me. Since it was difficult to go to the toilet, I did my best to eat and drink as little as possible." When Yuan Shunlun (see Appendix I), in prison in Xinxiang, continued to pray, he was removed to an isolation cell, as was Guo Dilal. Shen Tingdai, who not only prayed but gathered together others to do so, also spent time in isolation.

Those Shouters who attempted to proselytize in prison were severely punished, as were new converts. Guan Guizhi, a woman worker suffering from asthma (see below), was made to meditate all day every day, beginning in November 1984,²¹ in a "walkway,"²² "sometimes facing the wall," and at night she had to sleep on the walkway's concrete floor. According to her report, some believers were handcuffed and forced to "reflect" in a "cold and dark dungeon...for two whole months."

VI. THE OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS POLICY OF CHINA

The persecution of Shouters takes place in the context of the Chinese government's generally repressive attitude toward religious practice. In theory, the Chinese constitution (Article 36) permits freedom of religious belief and "protects normal religious activities." In practice, the five permitted religions – Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism (labeled Christianity by the Chinese government), Islam, and Daoism – are tightly controlled by official "patriotic associations" under the Religious Affairs Bureau. This structure was installed in the early 1950s but suspended along with all religious practice during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). At the end of the decade, the government again moved to rejuvenate the patriotic associations. At the same time, the authorities recommenced a concerted effort to organize all Protestants, regardless of differences in doctrine or liturgy, into one "post-denominational" Chinese Christian Church supervised by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

Any religious activity outside government-sanctioned churches, according to Chinese regulations, is illegal.²³ Congregations not registered with the authorities are subject to closure and their members subject to arrest. To eliminate foreign influences, all recognized churches must comply with the official "three-self" policy: self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation.

²¹ No indication of how long the punishment went on was given.

²² Probably a corridor.

²³ See footnote No.5.

The Chinese government also makes a distinction between religion and what is termed "feudal superstition." Practices such as healing, exorcism, fortune-telling, and divination are so classified, and those guilty of such practices are subject to prison terms as long as seven years. Sects, such as the Shouters, have also been subject to harassment for alleged superstitious practices.

At the beginning of 1991, the government escalated the pressure against unregistered house churches and on January 31, 1994, Premier Li Peng signed two sets of regulations enacted by the State Council, Document No.144, *Regulations on the Administration of the Religious Affairs of Foreigners within the Borders of the People's Republic of China*, and Document No. 145, *Regulations on the Registration of Places for Religious Activities*. Despite clarifying the scope of permitted religious activities, the regulations set out concrete legal measures that local cadres can use to tighten control over unregistered congregations such as the Shouters, and which further impede support for local congregations from suspect overseas religious group.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Shouter prisoners whose cases are described in this report, Human Rights Watch/Asia calls for an end to the persecution, harassment, arbitrary arrest, and fining of religious practitioners who do not identify with official churches.

Human Rights Watch/Asia also calls on the Chinese government to release all religious prisoners held solely for the peaceful practice of their faith.

The U.S. should also continue to press the Chinese government for the release of some fifty religious figures imprisoned, under house arrest or restricted in their movements. Their names appeared on an illustrative list presented in October 1993 in Beijing by Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck.

Human Rights Watch/Asia also calls on China's major trading partners, including the U.S., Japan, Australia, and members of the European Union, to urge Beijing to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance to visit China and make recommendations for specific reforms to enhance respect for religious freedom.

APPENDIX I: SENTENCED AND RELEASED SHOUTERS: HENAN PROVINCE 1983-94

I. STILL IMPRISONED

- **Cheng You**, from Lushan County, arrested in 1987, is serving a fifteen-year sentence in Henan Provincial Prison No. 1 in Kaifeng City.
- **Dai Guoji**, from Guishi County, arrested in 1987, is serving his ten-year sentence in Henan Provincial Prison No.1 in Kaifeng where he works in a paper factory.
- **Fang Pingxian** is serving a fifteen-year term in the provincial prison in Xinxiang. Although the whereabouts of **Guan Qunshan**, who received a thirteen-year sentence, are unknown, it is known that he is still in prison. Both men are from Baofeng County and were sentenced in 1984.
- **Guo Song**, from Ye County, arrested in 1987, is serving a ten-year sentence in the Henan provincial prison in Xinxiang.
- It is unclear if **He Xixing**, a fifty-three-year-old peasant, and **Han Kangrul**, forty-eight, a peasant, arrested December 23, 1993 in Fuqing County, Fujian Province, are still being held. (For details see above.)
- **Lan Qiangshi**, from Ye County, arrested in 1987, is serving an eight-year term in the Henan provincial prison in Luoyang.
- **Wang Chongcai**, the younger brother of Wang Xincal (see below), arrested in 1987, in Lushan County, was still in prison in Luoyang as of May 1994. The length of his sentence is unknown.
- **Wang Xincal**, thirty-one at the time of sentencing, a peasant from Zhandedu Village, Fuling Brigade, Xinji Commune, Lushan County, is due to complete his fifteen-year term for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement on June 1, 1998. His political rights will be suspended for an additional five years. Wang has been in Henan Provincial Prison No.3 in Yu County since his sentencing on June 2, 1984 in Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984.
- **Wang Yaoqiang**, forty-two when he was indicted on July 26, 1984 by the Pingdingshan City People's Procuratorate, was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment and five years' subsequent deprivation of political rights on September 12, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court. He is due for release from Henan No.1 Prison in Kaifeng on June 20, 1998. As the "principal culprit" among a group of Ye County Shouters, he was charged with "disturbing social order." According to his indictment, Wang, a peasant from Yanzhuang Village, Longquan Township, whose movements were monitored from June 21, 1983 until his arrest on July 21, 1983 and subsequent incarceration in Ye County Jail (a pre-trial detention facility or *kanshousuo*), went to Guangzhou twice and sent others a total of seven times to "make secret contacts with overseas reactionaries," to "receive orders," to report on "government attacks" against Shouter leaders such as Wang Xincal (see above), and to help bring back over 300 reactionary books, a tape recorder and over fifty tapes, and 1,500 *yuan* in subsidy. Wang Yaoqiang allegedly purchased a

mimeograph machine to print religious pamphlets, and he helped organize over fifty illegal gatherings. All of his activities were said to constitute the crime of counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement for which he was sentenced under articles 102, 22 (section 1), 24, and 52, of the *Criminal Code of the People's Republic of China*. Wang joined the Shouters in 1981 and later became an elder.

■ **Yuan Shenlun** is serving a fifteen-year prison term in the provincial prison in Xinxiang; **Lu Zhanwen** received a fourteen-year sentence and is in the provincial prison in Luoyang; **Luo Nian** was sentenced to a twelve year prison term and is in the Henan provincial prison in Luoyang. **Wang Bo**, arrested in 1983, is serving either a fourteen- or fifteen-year term in the provincial prison in either Xinxiang or Luoyang. All four were sentenced in 1984 in Pingdingshan City.

II. DIED IN PRISON OR ON MEDICAL PAROLE

■ **Liu Yulan**, sentenced in 1984, was fifty-four years old when she died in prison after her three-year term was extended by a year. As the result of a stroke some six months after her imprisonment began, she was paralyzed on one side and could barely perform manual labor. Nevertheless, when Liu's release date came, she was retained for another year because she was "not honest; she pretended to be sick; didn't work well; believed in God; preached to others; and broke prison rules." According to Shouter accounts, the extra year was added solely because of her unrepentant attitude. When Liu's jailers asked her "If you can't read a newspaper, why do you read a Bible?" When you go home are you going to continue to practice religion?" She replied, "Of course." Liu was from Lushan County.

■ **Zhang Yunpeng**, a peasant from Zhaozhuang Village, Houying Brigade, Zhanian Commune, Lushan County, sixty years old when sentenced to fourteen years' in prison and five years' deprivation of political rights for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, died on January 24, 1990 in prison in Xinxiang. He had been sentenced on June 2, 1984 in Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984.

■ **Zheng Dongsheng**, a peasant who lived at 39 Guluwan Village, Rendian Township, Ye County, died from liver cancer in July 1992, one month after his early release from a sentence of twelve years' imprisonment and five years' deprivation of political rights. (For details of his indictment and trial see Wang Yaoqiang.) Chinese sources reported he was let go only because the authorities did not want him to die in prison. Zheng's formal arrest on July 15, 1984, came one year after police placed him in "residence monitoring" (see Bai Shuqian) and sent him to the Ye County Jail. Charged with disturbing the public order and sentenced for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement for "spreading reactionary ideas to confuse and poison peoples' minds," Zheng was moved after his sentencing on September 12, 1984 to a prison in Xinxiang. A Shouter adherent since 1981, Zheng later became an elder.

III. RELEASED

- **Bai Shuqian**, a peasant from Xiawan Village, Jiuxian Township, fifty-four at the time of his indictment (see Wang Yaoqiang for details), was released on July 28, 1992 from Henan Provincial Prison No.1 in Kaifeng. His early release, after serving nine years of a sentence of twelve year' imprisonment and five years' subsequent deprivation of political rights, was attributed to his good behavior while in prison. In fact, Bai had been hospitalized with a serious pulmonary infection (*lei yan*) just prior to his release. After having been in what his sentencing document euphemistically called "residence monitoring," actually Ye County Jail, a detention center - where conditions were "terrible," much worse than prison - for over a year, Bai, who joined the Shouters in 1981 and later became an elder, was formally arrested on July 12, 1984. Police even broke into his house at night to see if a religious meeting was in progress. The presence of a blackboard and hymnal, was as far as the authorities were concerned, evidence of complicity. Initially charged with disturbing public order, Bai was eventually sentenced on September 12, 1984 on charges of counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement for organizing and participating in over ten illegal gatherings, and shipping over twenty booklets and more than eight broadcast tapes. His appeal was rejected. Altogether Bai spent thirteen years and four months in prison. His first sentence, from October 4, 1975 until January 5, 1980, also was for "illegal" religious activities. During his second term, Bai worked cleaning bathrooms and in the prison factory.

- **Bai Tiansong**, a peasant from Lushan County, received a two-year sentence in 1984.

- **Bai Zhensheng**, originally from Lushan County, was sentenced in 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court to a twelve-year term, but released early for reasons unknown.

- **Chen Halyin**, arrested in 1983, was released after serving a ten-year sentence in Henan Provincial Prison No.1. He is from Luanchuan County.

- **Cui Zhongshan**, a worker from Chengguan Township, Lushan County, thirty-seven at the time of sentencing, who received a twelve-year term and five years' subsequent deprivation of political rights for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, was released early for "good behavior." He had been sentenced on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally July 7, 1984.

- **Geng Minxuan**, a peasant from Sunzhang Village, Malon Commune, Lushan County, fifty-eight when sentenced to an eleven-year term and five years' deprivation of political rights for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, was released early for medical reasons. Sentenced on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984, he was due to be freed on June 2, 1994.

- **Guan Gulzhi**, a worker from Lushan County, thirty-one years old when she was sentenced in 1984, served a four-year term.

- **Guo Dilai**, thirty-two at the time of his indictment (for details see Wang Yaoqiang), a peasant from Zhongzhang Village, Longquan Township, was formally arrested on July 15, 1984 and charged with receiving a currency subsidy of more than 1,000 *juan* and a tape recorder. He had been in "residence monitoring" in Ye County Jail (see Bai Shuqian) ever since June 26, 1983. Sentenced on September 12, 1984 to an eight-year prison term and three years' deprivation of political rights for counterrevolutionary propaganda and

incitement, Guo was moved to the provincial prison in Xinxiang.

■ **Li Shenghua**, who served ten years in prison in Henan Provincial Prison No.1; **Zhang Jiahua**, who received an eight-year term; **Chen Yuhe**, sentenced to a one-year term in 1983 and a seven-year term in 1987; **Chen Mang**, the wife of Li Zhenjiang (see below), imprisoned for five years; and **Wang Xiuyun**, a woman who received a three-year term, have all been released. **He Fuxing**, after serving most, if not all, of a seven-year term, was re-sentenced in 1990 to three-years' re-education through labor. He was released in 1993. All six were first sentenced in 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court.

■ **Li Zhenjiang**, arrested in 1987, served a five-year term in Henan Provincial prison No.1. He reportedly is from Pingdingshan City.

■ **Lin Zilong**, a seventy-nine-year-old peasant from Qinlin Village, Yuxi Township, Fuqing County, Fujian Province, arrested on December 23, 1993, has been released. (For details, see above.)

■ According to Shouter accounts, in 1979 when Christian Assemblies were being set up in Baofeng County and Pingdingshan City, **Ma Tiansong**, from Lushan County, helped write down the names of those who joined. After the police confiscated the list, Ma was forced to "confess" his counterrevolutionary "crime," but he continued to be tortured until he revealed more information about the organization and its leaders. He was finally sentenced in 1984, but the length of his term is not known; and it is unclear if Ma Tiansong and Bai Tiansong are the same person.

■ **Pan Chuanfa** and **Xu Defa**, arrested in 1983, were released from Henan Provincial Prison No.1 after serving respectively ten- and nine-year terms. Both men are from Gushi County.

■ **Qin Zhenjun**, a forty-nine-year-old cadre when sentenced to a nine-year term ending on June 1, 1992, has been released. He had been charged with counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement and sentenced on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984. From Xinji Commune, Lushan County, Qin is still serving an additional four years' deprivation of political rights.

■ **Shang Tingdal**, fifty-four at the time of his indictment (for details see Wang Yaoqiang), a peasant from Damaitao Village, Xiali Township, Ye County, and a member of the Shouters since 1981, received a ten-year sentence on September 12, 1984 from which he was released on July 30, 1992, one year early, and five years' deprivation of political rights. He was charged with counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement. Police moved Shang to "residence monitoring," (see Bai Shuqian), in Ye County Jail on July 31, 1983 and formally arrested him on July 16, 1984. He was transferred after sentencing to a prison in Xinxiang. For details of Shang's short-term detention in 1994, see above.

■ **Si Jiangong**, from Ye County, arrested in 1987 and sentenced to a six-year term, presumably has been released from prison. According to Human Rights Watch/Asia sources, as of July 1992, he was still being held.

■ **Wang Baoquan**, sixty-seven when sentenced, from Second Street, Chengguan Township, Lushan

County, received a six-year term in 1984.

■ **Wang Guozheng**, a peasant from Malou Township, Lushan County, thirty-two when sentenced, completed his five-year term for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement on June 1, 1988, then was without political rights for three years. He had been sentenced on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984.

■ **Wang Qingzhou**, a peasant, thirty-four years old when sentenced in 1984, received a six-year term. He is from Lushan County.

■ **Wang Zhong** and **Liu Yuji**, arrested in 1987, received three-year terms. They reportedly are both from Pingdingshan City.

■ **Xiao Fuxin**, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment; **Xu Pingguan**, who received a nine-year term, and **Shang Hongcan**, who served an eight-year term, presumably have been released. All three are from Baofeng County and all were sentenced in 1984.

■ **Xue Wen**, twenty years old when sentenced in 1984, a peasant from Linshuang Village, Xinhua Brigade, Zhangdian Commune, Lushan County, served six years. He was listed in previous Asia Watch documents as **Xue Guiwen**.

■ **Yue Huichuan**, a fifty-two-year-old cadre when sentenced for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, completed his six-year term on June 1, 1989 after which he was without political rights for three years. Yue, from Malou Township, Lushan County, had been sentenced on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984.

■ **Yun Xuemin**, a peasant from Maoying Village, Chengguan Township, Lushan County, sentenced to a fourteen-year term and five years' additional deprivation of political rights, was released early for reasons unknown. He was not due to be freed until June 1, 1997. Yun was thirty-two when sentenced for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement on June 2, 1984 by the Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public rally on July 7, 1984.

■ **Zhang Lizhen**, a peasant from Lushan County, thirty-four years old at the time of sentencing in 1984, served a four-year term.

IV. EXEMPT FROM CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT

■ **Guo Shan**, a forty-year-old peasant at the time of his trial, from Malou Township, Lushan County, "although his activities already constituted the crime of counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, was exempted from criminal punishment in view of the fact that he voluntarily surrendered himself, informed against the others and exposed their crimes, thereby doing a deed of merit." Such a verdict, handed down on June 2, 1984 in Pingdingshan Municipality Intermediate People's Court and at a public

rally on July 7, 1984, does not eliminate Guo's criminal record, nor does he necessarily escape the problems attendant on such a record. Duan Pingwen, mentioned in the sentencing document as having had a meeting in his house, was also exempted.

V. CURRENT STATUS UNCLEAR

■ The whereabouts of some Shouters named in a July 1990 Lushan County Public Security Bureau notice as having been arrested for organizing meetings and distributing illegal books are unknown. Included in this group are Li Defang, Niu Songlin, Ma Yuhua, Cao Mengcheng, Zhang Maixia, Kong Xintai, Wang Tao, Jin Xiaohui, Song Qingzhi, Chen Mei, Zhu Gui, Wu Qingli, He Xia, Liu Qiuyun, and Ye Juhua. For further details, see above.

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