

Research article

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Jie Kang*

The Concept of Social Network in Chinese Christianity

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Social network analysis has been key to much sociological investigation for at least sixty years since its explicit development by Barnes (1954) and later by Bott (1957), Epstein (1969), Mitchell (1969; 1974) and Boissevain (1974). It was preceded by the work of Simmel (1955/1922) and Moreno (1934). The concept offered a way of studying details of social organisation that could not be captured through the study of bounded corporate groups and structures. Social networks were seen to cut across different group memberships and depended more on the actions of individuals than on those of collectivities. They were also used to differentiate densities of social interaction and to trace patterns of communication and transaction between actors making up a network. While networks can become relatively bounded and so can begin to resemble groups, they are more commonly seen as open-ended and extendable chains of social relationships. They vary according to the nature of the activities around which they are built, but are intrinsic in some form or other to all societies. As a phenomenon networks are thus socially universal. But, as a concept, we have to take account of the particular problem and of the kind of society we are addressing.


The problem addressed in this article is the development of Christian networks in China, expressed through what have come to be known as house churches in the rural and urban district of Linyi, Shandong Province. Although China is one of a number of post-socialist societies in the world, it is highly distinctive and perhaps unique in ways that do not obtain, at least until present, in Russia, East European and Southeast Asian countries. It has undergone very rapid economic growth, urbanization and an explosion of capitalist-style urban consumerism to a far greater

extent than those other post-socialist societies. Although, like them, it has constrained religious practices, it has regarded Christianity especially as a ‘foreign’ religion and, formerly, as a tool of western imperialism. Its solution of how to control Christianity has been to establish the official Three-Self Church. But most Christians in China prefer to organize themselves independently through the informal house churches. They have even been called ‘underground’ Christianity, which is a misnomer and exaggeration but conveys something of their special status. It is the interpersonal networks linking these house churches which are the subject of this article. I want to show that, unlike the formal, visible and bounded formal churches sponsored by the state whose activities are easily surveyed by local and central governments, the house church social networks have been able to spread almost unnoticed and so to recruit over wide areas.

How do they do this? Boissevain proposes that “A social network is more than just a communication network, for the messages are in fact *transactions*. By transaction I mean an interaction between two actors that is governed by the principle that the value gained from the interaction must be equal to or greater than the cost (value lost)” (Boissevain 1974:25-26).

But this view that networks operate and expand through transactions and not just communication has to be modified in the case of the Linyi Christian network. Believers are indeed expected to help each other charitably, that is to say, to exchange help and kindness. But they are expected to do so in a spirit of self-sacrifice and without consideration of gain. It is therefore too crude to say that they seek only to profit from such interactions. On the other hand, it is true that individuals do seek recognition and even prestige and enhanced status by drawing on relationships within the Christian network. Indeed, the attempts on the part of preachers (Chuandaoren 传道人) to become pastors (Mushi 牧师), are part of this quest for recognised status, as well as confirming the sincerity of their beliefs. As we shall see from case material in this paper, this kind of status transition is made possible by drawing on resources available in the network.

*Corresponding author: Jie Kang, Research Fellow, Department of Religious Diversity, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Email: kang@mmg.mpg.de

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Modern adaptations such as Latour's so-called actor-network-theory (ANT) (2005) include the idea that the interpersonal relationships making up a social network are mediated by material objects acting as a resource. As well as material assets or capital, the concept of social capital is central to that of networks. It is mainly developed by Bourdieu (1985). Echoing Boissevain, it is defined by Portes on the basis of an extensive literature review as "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes 1998:6). So, just as people draw on material assets to advance or defend their social positions, they may also strategically draw on an accumulated repertoire of useful relationships in their networks. They convert material resources into social capital, and vice versa, e.g. just as money or goods buy favours, so special relationships may provide opportunities for securing material benefit. It is this mutual exchangeability of material and social capital, set within a network of relationships that allows individuals to move within society and through different statuses and conditions.

As this article shows, in the case of Linyi, urban and rural churches themselves undergo different material, physical site and organizational changes in response to rapid urbanization. During the changes, churches draw on but also create material and social resources, such as the size and layout of church buildings and the size, composition and leadership of worshippers and the strength of their beliefs. The churches' use of material and social capital can, then, only be understood by seeing actors, such as believer, preacher and pastor and their various churches, as playing roles within a network of relationships. They do not act within pre-established groups with fixed identities, but within flexible networks of individuals that are dependent on active preaching.

All this might at first seem to be a far cry from the situation described long ago by Fei Xiao Tung (1939: 83-94) for a village in Yunan before communism. At that time it was kinship, broadly defined and metaphorically extended to include 'pseudo-adoption', that was the idiom in which extensive relationships were recognised within and with respect to the village. Particular terms such as *chia* 家 (a patrilineal extended family including wives' relatives) and *tsu* 族 (a larger patrilineal grouping comprising about eight *chia*) helped make kinship and affinity the salient bases of what we would now call the ego's social network. Since the time of Fei Xiao Tung's fieldwork, extended families have become smaller and were replaced in their role by communist work units. This has lessened the importance of the idiom of kinship for identifying and acknowledging extensive social relations.

Yet, despite his emphasis on patriliney as the basis of social affiliation, Fei Xiao Tung described the spread of these and maternal and affinal ties beyond the village, Fei Xiao Tung's approach in fact anticipated the later focus on social networks as a counterpoint to the then current concerns with territorial groups demarcated by kinship. He argued that this networking process was a distinctively Chinese one, though not unique to China. He developed the idea that, notwithstanding the significance of the kinship idiom, an individual stood at the centre of a social network of relations. This network was dense immediately around that individual but less so further out.

In this article I take into account this feature of networks as containing areas of social density. I describe relationships clustered around particular churches as the most interactive but note that the more thinly dispersed relationships beyond them remain significant. This is because such thin strands can connect different and perhaps distant clusters within the network. But for this to happen, and for us to understand the consequent spread of Christianity, we need to distinguish two broad types of social network. It is that between formal and informal networks. Formal networks are those whose lines of communication are defined and used by formal institutions, such as government, commercial and educational bodies, as well as those of formal organised religion. By this I mean that there are certain acceptable and legitimate ways in which members of these institutions can communicate, transact and interact with each other. If they break the institutional rules defining such communication and interaction, then they may be subject to penalties and other sanctions. We are well aware, for instance, of politicians, financiers or members of the professions being accused of improperly providing or receiving advice, information or assets from each other. Of course such people can and do still engage in informal contacts and transactions but, if discovered, they will be judged as doing so illicitly and even illegally. The extent to which this happens varies internationally: what is accepted as informal practice in some countries' institutions (where in extreme cases the line between formal and informal is negligible) is 'corruption' in other countries. Formal networks are, then, indirect dimensions of 'governmentality', because ultimately the state sanctions the way they operate.

Informal networks escape formal institutional rules. They operate, or try to operate, out of the reach of governmentality. They are created through activities and interactive clusters of belonging such as kinship, clanship, ethnicity, common territory and common faith or common ideology. These provide the basis of interaction which may

spread to new situations, such as migration from county to town or to another country altogether.

Seeing church identities and inter-connections in terms of networks is therefore a much more complicated picture than can be presented by classifying churches into types. Nevertheless, Yu Jianrong (2010) does classify house churches into three types in his “Research on the Legality of the Chinese Christian House Churches”, based on a year-long study of twenty provinces. His definitional criteria are: church size; relationship to the Three-Self Church; gathering locations; openness of churches; and management modes. His three types are traditional house churches, open-style house churches and urban emerging/new house churches. According to Yu the traditional house churches are generally small in size with a relative stable group of followers. They are a typical small group of acquaintances and relatives who communicate with each other on an oral, face-to-face and loose organizational basis and who have no relationship to the Three-Self Church and are closed to the public. They generally do not set up any priesthood and normally adopt a paternalistic management. The open-style house churches are not organized on the basis of relationships among family members and relatives, but on the regulation of churches set up by church workers according to church statutes. The management of this type of house church is more transparent, standardized and institutionalized, and uses electronic communication equipment. Some of these house churches have even managed to construct church buildings where followers gather and pray. Its resistance against and hostility towards the Three-Self Church is less, though it still does not maintain any contact with the Three-Self Church. Its governance model is based on a separation and balance of power. Yu’s third type, urban new house churches, are even more independent and free of the control of the Three-Self Church, and have no affiliation with traditional house churches. They are very open to new members, most of whom are well-educated, young white collar urban workers.

Yu’s analysis outlines some possible tendencies in the overall situation of Chinese house churches from an outsider’s viewpoint. But, based on my personal observation and insider analysis, the house churches in Linyi, Shandong province, particularly with regard to rural and urban connections, do not fit into the three categories. First of all, the small traditional house churches with a stable group of followers, or the open-style house churches whose development is pretty much institutionalized, all maintain some sort of lingering and complicated relationships with the Three-Self Church.

This is due to the peculiar history of church development in Linyi, since many of the house churches evolved from or grew out of the Three-Self Church and many of their leaders were originally from the Three-Self Church. This has not so much to do with the sizes and management models of the house churches themselves, but more to do with the way house church leaders have used their previous organisational experience and interpersonal relationships in the Three-Self Church to set up house churches.

Secondly, in Linyi, the vast majority of house churches are not completely independent, but instead have formed local or trans-regional church fellowships involving an international missionary network. In the same fellowship, there are both house churches with traditional gatherings and the more open house churches. The preaching arrangements are decided uniformly by the leaders of the fellowships, with preachers rotated between different house churches. House church organizational management, worker allocation and other aspects are all intertwined and overlapping and preclude clear-cut classification of churches. Even if they have different locations, church sizes, forms of service and groups of followers, house churches of the same fellowship share the same group of preachers and are subject to a common organization of church work and functions.

Thirdly, due to the relatively less constraining political environment in Linyi, compared with Beijing, the house churches do not try to keep their locations of services or gatherings secret. Just as their activities are transparent and open to public view, so are the locations where they hold their services. Some villages have built their own church buildings, while others indicate “Christian church” at the entrance to where their gatherings meet. While open in this way to outsiders, the composition of staff and followers and the way they congregate are not much different from the traditional churches.

Finally in Linyi there is a branch of what is known as Wenzhou Church, a consortium based in the city of this name in Zhejiang province whose leaders include successful businessmen. They have set up branches in other areas of China to which they migrate, and are often closely linked to government officials in the city. Wenzhou Church has indeed some features of the urban new house churches, such as an absence of secrecy and followers who are young and long settled in town, with some of its branches registered and therefore a kind of semi-Three-Self Church. The Linyi branch is called Wenzhou South Church. In view of this overlap,

therefore, we cannot refer to Linyi Wenzhou South Church as just a house church because of its nature and form. If it is to be considered a house church, it should be regarded as an exception among the house churches.

In summary, then, Yu's classification into three types of church at best identifies three tendencies or models but is not a hard and fast distinction. There is in fact so much overlap of the criteria he uses among churches, such as size, service, and gathering site, that it is hard to see many as conforming consistently to any one of his types, even as Ideal Types in the Weberian sense. Moreover, if one focuses too much on churches as separate in this way from each other, one may miss seeing their interconnectedness and inter-relatedness. That is why I analyse them as making up a network. Based on my research in Shandong and in Beijing, I have discovered that the network of relationships spreading across churches has a tremendous impact on their development.

In the following, I will elaborate on the way church networks play a role in church development by focusing on the break-up and splitting into two of a rural church in Li Jia Town in Y County in Linyi and by describing the network of relationships of local churches in rural and urban Linyi, of churches and seminaries in Beijing, and the inclusion of South Korean missionaries.

The more socially detailed approach of network analysis means that we can also focus on central concepts in the language that people use to describe their interrelationships. This is important because, through use of indigenous terms, we can better understand the nature of ties within a network and the way parts of it encompass other parts. A network is not, after all, a spread of relationships of even social density and social distance. It also includes internal boundaries though these do not demarcate clearly distinguished groups. One term which indicates some of this internal separateness and varying social density is *Xitong* 系统, which can roughly be translated as 'system'. Church leaders belonging to a system were trained in the same theological seminary, and their followers identify with that seminary. For instance, I was a member of a system because it was generally recognised that I had been 'adopted' by my pastor in Beijing and introduced to other pastors in his system. I could only belong to their system and not another, and yet I was also part of an on-going chain of people who share a common seminary or who sponsor each other. Yet, in other respects there is contact between people of different systems such as invitations to give sermons, collaborating in setting up children's summer camps, and sharing Bible training. A 'system'

is large and, as in my case, can extend from Linyi to Beijing, and is of recent origin. As more people graduate from theological seminary, a system gets larger. A second key term is *tuangqi* (fellowship 团契): people here are said to "belong to one ship". A 'fellowship' is older and was once more extensive but now is localised, for example within and around Linyi prefecture in Shandong province. The data in this study are drawn from mainly two fellowships (Shandong Linyi Fellowship 东临团契 and Urban Fellowship of Linyi 临沂城区团契) and one system, but there exist many instances of both in Linyi.

The notion of 'fellowship' has been in use in Linyi since the early 1990s at a time when there was very little theological training and many rural preachers were hostile to theology. The concept of 'system' came into being more recently and, as explained, rests on common theological seminary training. The concept came into being when churches made clear their theological basis and differentiated themselves from churches not wishing to identify with theology. In this way they gradually built up their distinctive 'system'.

Conscious planning does go into the building of a system and fellowship. This occurs through meetings of church leaders once a month. They discuss how to expand churches and church membership and how to get certain existing churches to conform to their view of the importance of theology. The current model of fellowship building is therefore different from that of the past, when they did not promote full-time pastors nor group Bible study and lacked organizational support from Beijing and more distant connections. As it is put, they have more stable organizational *guanxi* 关系 nowadays. The current model derives from Korean missionaries, via developments in Beijing, but is adapted to local conditions.

The system which I observed has strong denominational leanings towards so-called 'Calvinist reformed theology'. Fellowships of my acquaintance outside my system do not have such strong denominational or theological preferences. They call themselves 'trans-denominational' (*kua zongpai* 跨宗派) or 'syncretists' (*hunhe zhuyi* 混合主义). In the past, the Donglin fellowship contained some churches which did not have a Calvinist theological background, such as Wenzhou Church, which in fact withdrew from the fellowship. The reason given by their church leader for this withdrawal was that some leaders in the Donglin fellowship had become 'hyper-Calvinistic' (*jiduan Calvinism* 极端加尔文主义).

I thus use the concept of network to illustrate Christian churches' connections with each other in Linyi, Beijing and internationally. The churches are neither

organized hierarchically nor around a ‘central point’ but constitute nodes or knots insofar as they are each related to a number of other churches. They are points marking the interconnections which make up the network. It is true that theological seminaries do each bring together church leaders who then set up and manage churches, but the seminaries do not act as centres. They ‘set up a platform’ (*jianli pingtai* 建立平台) which creates a zone within which churches, as nodes in the network, can be contacted. At the inter-regional level are the more dispersed yet interconnected sets of churches known as the system or *xitong*. At the most local level particular groups or sets of nearby churches are gathered together and make up what is referred to as the fellowship or *tuangqi*. Within a locality as a whole neighbouring churches may belong to different fellowships and different systems, in the manner of cross-cutting relationships. It is these levels of interrelationship of churches as nodes in the Christian network which has enabled Christianity to grow in Linyi and in China generally. The term *guanxi* is used more for denoting interpersonal contacts and communication, both between individuals but also in an individual’s relationship with God. *Tuangqi* and *xitong* refer to institutionally organized relationships within and between churches. It is said that if each node in the network has a good *guanxi* with God, then the *tuangqi* and *xitong* will also each have well connected relationships. In this sense, God is in fact at the centre of the human network. A widely used example of this is the image of a husband and wife surmounted by God. They form a triangle with God at the top or apex and the man and woman at each of the bases, separated from each other. As each of them moves up towards the apex, they together come closer to God, and themselves come closer to each other.

In summary, network is an analytical concept, for which the term *wangluo* 网络 is used by academics and IT personnel but not by local Christians themselves. I similarly talk of a Christian social network as an outsider’s concept. But Christians in Linyi talk mainly of the older, local *tuangqi* (fellowship) and the more recent, inter-regional *xitong* (system), with *guanxi* used generally for divine connectedness. It should be remembered that, although each fellowship sees itself as belonging to a system, it is not the case that neighbouring churches necessarily belong to the same fellowship, nor that they belong to the same system. Fellowships and systems thus cross-cut each other within localities. Church leaders and followers of different fellowships and systems do however interact with each other in Christian and non-Christian contexts and this reinforces the strength of the informal Christian network of relationships.

Cooperation, Conflicts and Splits Among Local Churches

As in the history of the development of Western churches, the rural churches in Linyi manage to grow and expand through conflicts and divisions, and cooperation and alliances. In Linyi, the churches are open and receptive to preachers from other areas. Therefore, it is safe to say that the rural churches are a system open to others, and at a certain period, may have strong absorptive capability. This feature makes the networks among churches from different areas extremely active. Both followers and preachers have many contacts, interactions and exchanges, gradually forming a relatively stable entity which holds gatherings and services, seminars and trainings regularly, and has church staff meetings as well. Inevitably a fellowship of cooperative relations is born.

Meanwhile, this tradition of being open to relationships with followers of other churches inevitably allows the churches to come in close contact with various types or schools of beliefs. Prior to 2000, the local house churches had few members with theological training or with deep biblical knowledge. Their understanding of God was not derived from set or codified scriptural description and exhortation but was diffuse, with heightened emotional expression, and argued on the basis of individuals’ intuitions and feelings. When preachers from other areas were invited to preach in such churches, many of the congregation were easily and quickly touched and accepted the viewpoints of outside preachers, such as those belonging to the Charismatic Movement or the Shouters, Lighting from the East. Nevertheless, there were those who were not so moved and who rejected such preachers, and it was this difference that caused churches to split. Such fragmentation added to the numbers of churches, widening the outreach of the church network. For instance, W Church is located in A village and broke away from a ‘parent’ and formed an alliance with another group. Li Jia Town in Linyi currently has five villages A, B, C, D, E. Three of the villages have four churches, which have split off from the same church X. All belong to different factions, such as the Charismatic Movement, the Sola fide¹, the Truth Christian Church² and the Calvin

¹ A local church leader told me that Sola fide means “as long as you believe in it, that is enough. It does not require actions, therefore do whatever as pleased.”

² I was told that they have only a limited number of followers, start their gatherings from five to six every morning and go to the fields for work, believing that only what they believe is the truth while other churches are impure.

Reform Church. The original mother church has a history of thirty years and was set up by an old preacher. It was a part of the Three-Self Church. The followers in and around Li Jia Town all went to this church X for services. But after the preacher died, the church started fragmenting owing to different belief perspectives. The W church was started in the early 1990's by some followers wishing to leave the church. Pastor Liu Endiang told me, "I stayed with the X church for three years. Afterwards, in view of the fact that I had some contact with the Charismatic Movement³, the sister who served the Lord, which means the church was set up at her house, thought that I had accepted some heresy and kicked me out of the church. Back then, it was a very painful thing. We had eight families who left the church and started to hold gatherings at Elder Zhang's house, which is the location of the present-day W church. And this church became the first church that I shepherded."

Actually, such splits were commonplace in the area. Liu had earlier left his own village's church in F Village due to some differences of view before he came to the gatherings at the X church in Li Jia Town. Everybody in Liu's family is a believer, but as they have different viewpoints regarding belief, they go to different churches. His elder brother is with the Three-Self Church, his younger brother and his wife are in the Sola fide while his sister is with the Shouters. What is interesting is that while we can witness such factions, divisions or schisms in belief in one area or even in one family, the house churches are forming trans-regional, trans-provincial, trans-city and even trans-national alliances.

House Church Fellowships

The local church fellowships in Linyi area serve as a link among the churches. They were originally formed among churches in the same district or county on the basis of geographical proximity and convenience. It was after having developed trans-regional, trans-provincial and trans-city links, that they later even became part of international Christian networks. By themselves, rural village churches, particularly if they are not affiliated with the Three-Self Church, are normally very weak with few followers, compared to the urban churches in Beijing. These days, most young folk in the villages are leaving or have left for cities as migrant workers. Those staying behind are mostly seniors and women with children. Seniors are used to participating in gatherings and services

³ He means that he went to listen to the preaching given by preachers from Henan Fangcheng and Tanghe Fellowship.

every day, listening faithfully to the preaching. Faced with such routine religious practice and followers, preachers remaining with one particular church find personal and church growth difficult without outside support to change the status quo. But when these tiny churches without organizational structure are formed into one alliance, often triggered by a split from one church followed by a link with another of similar disposition, the preachers are no longer alone and without outside help. The churches become active nodes in the fellowship networks, sharing and contributing resources and keeping small village churches alive. While church fellowships in this way meet the needs and demands of rural churches, there is also competition for power, since the larger a fellowship grows, the more power it will assume and more resources it will get. In urban areas, churches expand their influence by setting up new churches or gathering places. But in rural areas, it is achieved by making alliances among already established churches or with or between breakaway ones, in this way setting up a part of the church network in the form of fellowship. The basis on which the fellowships are formed is clearly fluid and changing. From the 1980's to 1990's, there were inconsistent beliefs and uneven personal relations among preachers. After the late 1990's, there was a shift to founding the fellowships according to the different theological backgrounds. The organizational structure of fellowships thus changed from that of church workers in the same area to schoolfellows who had graduated from the same seminary.

Pastor Liu began establishing church fellowships in the early 1990's, the original fellowship being formed mostly with the churches in Li Jia Town and the surrounding villages. Liu said, "At the beginning, we started the relationship between this village and that village, then this town and that town. We set up a seven-person church worker fellowship. We selected seven persons because we felt seven is a perfect number. There were ten churches involved. Once a fellowship was formed in one place, the place then had an organization." The purpose in setting up fellowships was to provide connections between churches, compensating and complementing one another in various respects and offering preaching in rotation. The fellowship gradually expanded into what is called the Y County Fellowship with a total of six sub-fellowships. Li Jia Town fellowship is one of the sub-fellowships.

It was after Liu Endian graduated from the Beijing Grace Seminary in 2000, that he started preparations to establish a branch of the Grace Seminary in Linyi, the Glory Seminary. On the basis of the branch seminary, he then formed a church worker fellowship with the graduates of the seminary as its core. They named their

fellowship the Donglin Fellowship, meaning that it emphasizes the setting up of such a fellowship network in the three districts and nine counties in Linyi, Shandong Province. Again, we see in this creation of a localised fellowship and sub-fellowships the same process of expanding interconnectedness as in the creation of the more extensive 'systems'. The Christian network thus reaches out at a local as well as a national level. The two levels are of course themselves connected but, while the system is aimed at more widely dispersed contacts within the network, the fellowship and sub-fellowships are directed at believers who are more likely to know and interact with each other.

We can say that, increasingly, church leaders lean towards seeing affiliation to a fellowship as a vital condition of church development, which many wish to see, despite the evident difficulties of stable organization. In fact, most churches in Linyi now belong to a certain fellowship, which may be large or small. Several large scale fellowships may have several dozen churches across the entire Linyi area and even Shandong province, while the smallest are centred only in their own towns with a few small churches as members. Lacking the centralised administration of fellowships and their creation, it is not surprising that these fellowships are generally not established according to detailed plans and organizational or geographic structures. Therefore, churches in the same county are often affiliated in a cross-cutting way with different fellowships, between which there exist tensions and competition.

International Networking

It is well known that South Korean missionaries have exerted great influence in China. They arrive in China through various channels and conduct missionary works in all walks of life. They normally bring their families with them, starting with a regular job in a certain field, such as teaching or medicine. After their missionary work takes root and gradually unfolds, they then become full time missionaries. South Korean missionaries have demonstrated strong dedication and commitment to their cause. Some of them died in China due to various reasons, but chose to give their life to China, becoming acknowledged martyrs for Christianity in China. They asked their families to bury them in China instead of in South Korea. They make this declaration that they are willing to die for the spiritual well-being of the Chinese. Their reputation for selfless dedication and spirit of sacrifice is regarded as having inspired many Chinese Christians, who refer to the South Korean missionaries as

loving China more than the Chinese themselves.

In South Korea, a Korean pastor encouraged the Chinese house church leaders by saying that God revived the South Korean churches in the 20th century and would revive the Chinese churches by spreading the gospel back to Jerusalem taking the route through China. He said that owing to the enormous size and population of China, this gospel revival in the country would have a major impact around the world. The Korean pastor stressed that this hope for the gospel lay in Chinese house churches and that through them China would be blessed. He saw the Chinese church revival as coinciding with China's economic miracle over the last twenty years, which was similar to what had happened in South Korea: and that God's whole purpose and will was for economic growth to be for the better development of churches. In the minds of the South Korean missionaries, therefore, they are to awaken China, the sleeping lion, for then it will spread the gospel to the rest of the world.

The impact of Korean missionaries in Beijing has been tremendous in setting up seminaries, graduating many theology students and training scores of full-time and professional pastors for house churches in China. They have formed student fellowships in various universities and colleges, making the younger generation of believers the reserve force for the cause of Christianity, established churches and places of gatherings, participated in the ministry of Chinese house churches and supported their growth. They have set up a Christian conservatory of music, training professional music talent to serve the Chinese house churches. But the most effective impact is seen as not by establishing these entities or schools, but through the sacrifice of their own lives.

Conclusion

This article began by suggesting that informal networks of communication, interaction and exchange could expand more fully than networks which are constrained by institutional rules and procedures. Government-sponsored Christian authorities have tried but have not succeeded in significantly preventing intercommunication between people making up the informal Christian network linked by house churches. Moreover, the informal network's expansion in China and beyond rests on more than Christian and missionary zeal. It has also been driven by the needs of people who have moved from rural to urban areas, who encounter interpersonal problems as a result of settlement in town, and who turn to house churches for help. So, while the Christian informal network develops under its own momentum it is nevertheless premised on

a fundamental feature of modern China, namely its rapid rate of urbanization and depletion of young people in rural areas.

A dominant feature of the rural house churches remains their openness to different Christian points of view. Their persecution during the Cultural Revolution introduced tension between them and the rest of society. Nevertheless, internal relations remained active within their own Christian trans-regional and international network. Earlier, the rural areas were relatively closed off and lacked resources, so that church followers expressed themselves as being like a herd of hungry sheep, longing to be 'shepherded', open to all outside Christian missionaries and absorbing them completely, without regard for selection or choice. This hunger served in fact as the necessary pre-condition for the development of rural house church networks. Thus, in recent years, the current development of the rural churches, in terms of pastoral training and routine functions, the missions and training for new believers, and financial resources, is dependent on the help and cooperation of urban churches, so reinforcing the rural-urban network of activities.

The urbanization of some rural areas and the increasing number of rural Christians migrating to cities and joining urban house churches has the consequence that these believers become bridges linking churches in the two areas. Missionary teaching claiming and aiming for the universality of Christianity provides theological justification for the ever-growing trans-regional networking and expansion by the churches, encouraging dedicated and ambitious Christians to look beyond their own regions and pursue missions in other places, believing that they are 'universal' Christians, a part of the big Christian family in the world.

However controls imposed by national government religious policies exacerbate the tension between house churches and society, forcing them to operate with small congregations. The smaller they get, the more committed they become and the more easily they can exercise internal control (Stark and Finke 2000). This has added to an emphasis on the purity of religious organization, obliging churches to build their internal network relations in secret and strengthening their closeness and trust in

one another. All these factors enable the house churches to grow rapidly and develop within trans-regional but closely linked networks.

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中国基督教的社会网络概念

康婕

社会网络分析法，自该方法由Barnes (1954) 提出到后来经过Bott (1957), Epstein (1969), Mitchell (1969; 1974) 和 Boissevain (1974)的发展，六十年来一直是社会学调查研究的关键方法。这种方法以Simmel (1955/1922) 和 Moreno (1934)的研究为先导。这种观念提供了研究社会组织细节的方法，是对仅研究有边界的团体和机构是无法获得的。社会网络是跨越不同的群组成员关系，更多的依赖个人行为，而非集体行为。这种方法还可用来区分社会互动的密度，追踪构成网络的成员之间的交流互动模式。虽然网络是相对有边界的，开始类似团体，他们更普遍是被视作开放性的、可扩展的社会关系链条。根据建立网络所进行的活动性质，这些社会网络互不相同，但是对所有社会在某些形式上是共通的。作为一种现象，社会网络具有社会普遍性。但是，作为一个概念，我们必须考虑特定的问题以及我们所讨论的社会类别。

本文讨论的问题是基督教徒社会网络的发展，以山东临沂城市和农村地区的家庭教会发展为例。尽管中国是世界上为数不多的几个后社会主义国家之一，但其独特性至少在到目前无法在俄罗斯，东欧和东南亚国家中找到共通之处。中国经历了经济的飞速发展，城市化进程和资本主义式的城市消费主义膨胀，其发展程度远远超过了其他后社会主义国家。尽管，像这些国家一样，中国也会约束限制宗教活动，也曾将基督教视作“外来”宗教，一度将其视作西方帝国主义的工​​具。控制基督教的解决方法就是建立官方的三自爱国教会。但是，中国大多数基督徒都希望通过组织非正式的家庭教会来实现其自我独立。他们曾经被称之为“地下”基督教，尽管有些夸张和不妥，但也一定程度上反映出他们的特殊地位。这些将家庭教会联系在一起的人际网络关系是本文的研究对象，其发展与国家资助的、受国家和地方政府监控的正式教会不同，家庭教会的社会网络发展几乎不易被觉察，因而更容易在大范围地区发展新成员。

Boissevain认为：“社会网络不仅是一个交流的网络，因为交流传递的信息实际上是一种互动。这里所说的互动是指两个受相同原则支配行动者，从其互动中获得的价值必须等于或大于所失去的价值。” (Boissevain 1974:25-26)

但是这种认为社会网络运转和发展是通过相互影响而不单单是交流的观点在临沂地区基督徒网络案例中必须得到修正。信徒们确实如所期待的那样彼此慷慨相助，也就是说互相帮助和善待对方。但是实际他们是以

一种自我牺牲的精神做到互助，没有考虑得失。因而说他们从互动中只是为了获取利益未免显得太过草率。另一方面，个体确实很期待利用基督教徒社会网络中的关系来获得认同，甚至威望，提高地位。实际上，传道人想要成为牧师的愿望正是体现了认同地位的诉求，也是信仰虔诚的表现。通过本文所呈现的案例研究材料，我们发现这类地位转换是通过吸收利用网络中的资源实现的。

这一观点的现代版改写，例如拉图尔的所谓“行动者网络理论” (2005) 包含这样一种观点，认为构成社会网络的人际关系是需要通过物质实体作为一种中介实现的。和有形资产或资金一样，社会资本对于社会网络也是极为重要的。这一观点主要是由布尔迪厄 (1985) 发展的。Portes在1998年的文章中定义为“参与者借助在社会网络或其他社会结构中的成员地位谋求利益的能力”，此定义回应了Boissevain，也成为了更为广泛文献综述的基础 (Portes 1998:6)。因此，正如人们会通过有形资产提高或捍卫他们的社会地位，他们也同样会在社会网络中策略性地使用积累的人脉关系。他们可以实现物力资源和社会资源之间的相互转换，正如金钱或礼物可以赢得赞许支持，特殊的人际关系会提供保障物质利益的机会。正是在人际关系网络内这种物质和社会资本之间的彼此可交换性使得个人可以在社会内、不同社会阶层和地位间流动。

如本文所示，在临沂的案例中，为回应城市化加快的进程，城市和乡村的教会都经历着不同的物质、地理位置、组织结构变化。在变化过程中，教会也在吸收并且创造物质和社会资源，像教堂建筑的规模和布局，信众的组织架构和领导能力，以及他们信仰的力量。为要理解教会对物质和社会资本的使用，我们必须通过对行动者进行研究观察，如信众、传道人、牧师和其不同的教会在整个关系网中所发挥作用。他们不是以固定的身份在提前建立好的群体中，而是在由个体构建的可变通的网络中发挥作用。

这似乎和费孝通 (1939: 83-94) 中描述的新中国成立之前云南一个村落的情况大不相同。那时，亲属关系，广义的定义包含着收养关系的亲属，这一词语包含了村内和村落有关的最广泛的亲属关系。特别的术语如家 (指的是父系的大家庭，包含妻子的亲属) 和族 (指的是更大的父系族群包含8个家) 让亲属关系和姻亲关系成为我们现在称之为自我社会网络的最显著基础。从在费孝通进行实地调查的时候，大家庭的规模已经缩小，其角色已经被中国共产党的一些单位取代。这就使得亲属关系对于识别和确认广泛社会关系的重要性减少了。但是，尽管费孝通强调父系制度是社会群聚性的基础，他描述的这些母系和姻亲的关系超越了村庄界限，实际上费孝通的方法预见到未来对社会网络的关注，与当时以亲属关系划定区域群组的方法形成对比。他认为这种社会关系网络建立的方式尽管不是中国人独有的，却也是很具有中国特色的。他提出这样一个观点，尽管亲属关系有重要意义，个人仍然是社会网络关系的中心。社会关系

网络会以个人为中心迅速密集发展起来，但在外围会稀疏一些。

本文中作者会考虑社会网络包含社会网络密度区域这一特征，以描述聚集在特定教会周边互动最强的网络关系，但需要注意的是这些关系之外稀疏分散的关系也是有意义的。因为这样的细链条可以连接网络内不同的，或许是较远的群组。但是为了实现这一点，而且为了让我们能够理解基督教的传播，必须区分两种不同的社会网络，即正式网络和非正式网络。正式网络中，沟通的渠道线路都由正式机构来确定，例如政府、商业和教育机构，以及正式的有组织的宗教。这里我所说的正式是指这些机构中的成员彼此之间通过可接受的和合法的方式进行交流、影响和互动。如果成员违反了机构制定的交流和互动的规则，那么就要接受惩罚和其他形式的制裁。例如，我们清楚的意识到政客、融资人或从业人员被指控不恰当地提供或接受建议、信息或资产。当然，这样的人确实可以仍然进行非正式的接触和交易，一旦发现，会判定他们的行为不当甚至是违法的。国际上这种情况发生的程度不同：有些国家的机构视作非正式的做法（在一些极端案例中，正式与非正式之间的界限没有那么明晰），在另一些国家却视作“贪污”。正式网络是“治理性”的间接维度，因为最终国家以他们运转的方式实施惩罚。

非正式社会关系网规避正式的制度规则。他们超出治理性的范畴运转或尝试运转。通过活动和互动的其归属群体来建立这些网络，这些归属集群包括如亲属、宗族、族群，共同的地域、信仰和意识形态。这些为社会互动提供了基础，可能蔓延到新的状况，比如从县到镇的迁移或是移民到另一个国家。

因此，从网络角度来看教会身份和内在联系会比对其进行简单的教会分类呈现更为复杂的图景。于建嵘在2010年“中国基督教家庭教会合法性研究”一文中，基于其对于20个省的研究，将家庭教会分为三个类型。他的分类标准如下：教会规模；与三自爱国教会的关系；集会地点；教会的开放性和管理模式。这三类分别是传统家庭教会、开放式家庭教会和城市新兴家庭教会。根据于建嵘的分类，传统家庭教会通常规模小，拥有相对稳定的信众群。这种教会是典型的小范围的熟人和亲属构成的，他们之间通过口头的，面对面的交流，组织基础相对松散，与三自爱国教会没有关系，也不向公众开放。这类教会一般不设立任何教会职位，通常采用一种家长式的管理。开放式教会的组织不是建立在家庭成员和亲属的关系之上，而是建立在教会工作人员根据教会章程确立的教会规定上。这个类型的教会，其管理更加透明、标准化、制度化，并且使用现代通讯设备。这些教会中有一些甚至自己建造教会楼房供信众们集会和祷告。对三自教会的抵触情绪逐渐淡化，但仍不与三自教会往来。它的治理模式是分权和制衡。于建嵘所说的第三种类型，城市新兴教会甚至更加独立，不受三自爱国教会的约束，和传统的家庭教会也没有隶属关系。他们以非常开放的姿态吸收新成员，多数成员都是受过良好教育的城市青年白领阶层。

于建嵘的分析以教会外人士的视角列出了中国家庭教会总体情况的一些可能的发展趋势。但是，基于我的个人观察和教会内部人士分析，山东临沂的家庭教会特别是城乡连接的教会无法归入上面提到的三个类型。首先，无论是拥有稳定信徒群的传统家庭教会或是开放型的家庭教会，其发展都相当的制度化，均与三自爱国教会保持着错综复杂的关系。这是临沂地区特殊的教会发展史所决定的，因为很多家庭教会是从三自教会发展出来的，其带领人往往都来自三自教会，曾经受过三自教会的培养。这和教会的规模和管理模式似乎没有关系，很多家庭教会的领导者甚至使用之前在三自教会的组织经验和人际关系，成为其建立和发展家庭教会的基础。

其次，在临沂，大多数的家庭教会并非完全独立，相反他们形成了很多当地或跨地区的团契，同时涉及国际传教士网络。在同一个团契中，既有传统式的家庭教会，也有更开放的家庭教会。布道的具体安排由团契的带领人共同决定，传道人在不同家庭教会轮回讲道。家庭教会的组织管理、人员分配和其他方面都交织在一起，很难有非常清晰的划分。尽管他们有不同的聚会地点，教会规模，服侍方式和信众群体，同一团契的家庭教会事实上共用同一群传道者，服从统一的教会组织和工作职能。

第三，与北京相比临沂的政治环境相对宽松，因此家庭教会对于聚会的地点并不保密，他们的活动透明，向公众开放。有一些村子已经修建了自己的教堂，另一些则在他们聚会地点入口处清楚地标明“基督教会”。但是尽管他们的聚会是向外界开放的，但是教会带领人和信众的构成以及聚会敬拜的方式与传统家庭教会的差别也不一定很大。

最后，在临沂有一个特殊的教会是温州教会，教会领导层往往是一些成功的商界人士。这些成功的温州商人也在中国的其他城市建立很多教会，通常会与当地官员建立密切联系。温州教会实际上具备城市新兴教会的某些特征，例如公开聚会，信众都是长久定居城市的年轻人，有些温州教会甚至注册成为三自教会，但是仍然保持某种程度上的独立，温州教会的带领人称之为一种半三自教会类型，在临沂的温州教会被称为“温州南方教会临沂分会”。因此，我们不能因为它的性质和形式就把温州南方教会仅仅看作是一个简单的家庭教会。如果非要视作家庭教会，那也应当是这些家庭教会中的一个例外。

总的来说，于建嵘对教会的三种分类仅仅确定了家庭教会三种总体的趋势或模式，并非一种精确的区分。实际上，其分类的标准如规模、宗教仪式、集会地点等有很多交叉重叠之处，所以很多家庭教会事实上很难对号入座，符合其中的某种类型。而且，如果我们将教会如此分割地去看，就会忽略他们之间的互相联系和内在关联，这既是为何需要从网络角度分析教会的原因。基于在山东和北京进行的研究，笔者发现遍布教会的关系网络对于教会的发展有着巨大的影响。

下面，我将以临沂李家庄的教会为例，详细阐述教会网络是如何影响教会发展的，描述教会如何分裂成两个教会，进而分析临沂农村和城市地区教会的关系网络，北京教会和神学院的关系网络以及韩国宣教士的参与。

用社会网络研究方法意味着要对研究对象描述其相互关系时所用使用语言中的一些重要的概念进行分析。通过使用其自己固有术语，我们可以更好的理解一个网络中各种联系的本质，理解一部分包含另一部分的方式。毕竟，网络不是平均延展的，其社交密度和距离都是不均等的。它也包含内部边界，但这些都不能清晰地界定不同的群体。有一个术语可以表明这种内部边界，体现不同的社会性密度，这个术语就是系统，英文中大致对应的是system。同属于一个系统的教会领导者是在同一个神学院受训，他们的信众也认同这个神学院。举例来说，我是一个系统的成员，因为通常认为我已经被属于此系统的一位的北京牧师“接受”并且介绍给这个系统的其他牧师。这种情况我只归属于他们的系统，不属于其他系统，我也是属于同一个神学院并互相支持的人际关系链条的一部分。但是，在其他方面不同系统的人们也有接触联系，如邀请讲道，共同开展儿童夏令营和查经训练活动等等。“系统”的范围可以很大，就像在我的案例中，可以从临沂扩展到北京。这个术语是新近才产生的，由于越来越多的人参加神学培训，并从神学院毕业，系统则日益壮大。第二个关键术语是团契（fellowship）：团契是指“同一条船上的人”。“团契”并非新术语，早已被广泛使用，但现在逐渐地方化，例如在山东省临沂市内及周边。本研究中的材料主要源于两个主要的地方团契（东临团契和临沂城区团契）和一个系统，但是在临沂有很多这两个团契的实例。

早在20世纪90年代“团契”的概念在临沂就已经开始使用，那时几乎没有神学培训，很多农村的传道人很排斥神学。近期才出现的“系统”概念，是依靠传道人共同的神学院背景。当教会弄清楚了他们的神学基础，并与那些不认同其神学观点的教会划清界限时，系统的概念就已形成。通过这种方式，他们逐步建立了自己与众不同的“系统”。

建立系统和团契需要有意识的规划，这是通过每月一次的教会带领人（教会同工）会议来实现。他们讨论如何扩大教会规模，信徒人数，如何让更多已存在的教会认同其神学观点。因此当前的团契建立模式和过去的不同，过去的团契没有全职牧师，也没有小组查经，缺少来自北京或者更远地方的有组织的支持和联系。而目前，团契有更稳定的组织关系，这种模式来源于一些韩国宣教士，在北京得以发展，但是调整后适应当地情况。

笔者所观察的系统有强烈的所谓的“加尔文改革宗神学”宗派倾向，而此系统之外我所认识的团契事实上并没有如此清楚强烈的宗派或神学倾向，他们称自己为“跨宗派”或“混合主义”。过去，东临团契中也曾

有一些没有加尔文神学背景的教会，例如温州教会，但是最后从团契中撤出，温州教会的带领人对于其撤出东临团契的解释是：东临团契的一些领导已经成为极端加尔文主义的追随者。

因此，用网络的概念来说明临沂、北京和国际间教会的联系，这些教会既不是分等级的组织在一起，也不是围绕一个“中心点”组织起来，他们构成网络中的节点，每一个教会都和若干其他教会相连，这些节点构成了其间互相联络的网络关系。神学院确实将建立和管理教会的教会领导者们聚在了一起，但是它并不是中心，而是一个平台，在这个平台上创造了一个网络中的教会可以互相联系的区域，在这个区域内教会就像这个网络的一个个节点。在跨区域的层面，会有很多分散但互相联系的教会，这些被称为系统。但在大多数的地方层面，特定的团体或附近一系列教会聚集在一起，构成fellowship或团契。总的来说在一个区域内，地理位置邻近的教会可能以交叉的方式属于不同的团契和不同的系统，正是这些在基督教的网络中作为节点的教会间相互关系，使得基督教在临沂和中国普遍得到发展。关系这个术语更多的用于表示人与人之间的联系和沟通，既是个体之间的，也是个体和上帝之间的关系。团契和系统指的是教会内部和教会之间的制度化组织的关系。基督徒们认为，如果网络中每一个节点和上帝有着良好的关系，那么团契和系统分别也会有好的联系。从这个意义上看，实际上上帝处在人类网络的中心。另外一个被广泛使用的例子是上帝与妻子的关系所形成的三角形，上帝在顶端，男人和女人分别在底部的两角，彼此分开。当两人都向顶端的上帝靠近的时候，夫妻之间的关系自然也会越来越近。

总之，网络是一个分析的概念，通常只是专业学者和IT行业人士使用，当地基督徒并不使用这个概念。同样，笔者所说的基督徒社会网络也是作为一个外部人士的概念。临沂的基督徒徒所用的概念主要是本土的团契和较新的跨区域的系统，关系指的是和神的联系。应该注意的是，尽管每个团契归属一个系统，但并不是邻近的教会一定属于同一个团契，或属于一个系统。在区域内，团契和系统因而是彼此交叉的。不同团契和系统的教会带领人和信徒在基督教和非基督教背景下相互作用，从而加强了非正式基督教关系网络的力量。

当地教会的合作、冲突与分裂

正如西方教会的发展历史，临沂农村教会也是通过合作与结盟、冲突与分裂而逐渐发展和壮大起来。在临沂，教会对其他地区的传道人的态度是开放和接受的。因此，可以说这些农村教会是一个对外部开放的系统，并且在某些特定的时期有很强的吸收能力。这一特点使得不同地区教会之间的网络极其活跃，无论是传道人之间和信徒之间都有频繁的联系，互动和交流，逐渐形成一个相对稳定的组织，定期举办聚会、集体崇拜、论坛和

培训，以及教会人员会议。不可避免地，这种带有合作关系的团契就此诞生。

同时，这种对于其他教会和信徒开放的传统必然导致教会与不同信仰派别建立密切联系。截至2000年前，当地家庭教会只有很少的成员接受过神学培训或拥有深厚的圣经知识。他们对上帝的理解并非源于编辑整理过的文稿和系统的讲道，而是一种分散的带有浓烈感情色彩的表达方式，会基于个人的感动和领受不同产生争论。当其他地区的传道者应邀到这些教会传教时，很多当地的信徒会很快被感动并立刻接受外部传道者的观点，比如“灵恩派”、“呼喊派”以及“东方闪电”。但同时，有些信徒则不为所动，拒绝或者强烈反对这些外来传道者，这种不同的态度最终往往导致教会分裂，而正是由于教会不断地分裂，而使教会数量自然增加，无形中则扩大了教会网络的覆盖范围。例如，临沂Y县李家庄目前有五个村，这里暂且以A, B, C, D, E命名。其中三个村庄有四个教会，事实上都是从同一个教会X脱离衍生而来的。每个教会隶属不同的宗派，例如“灵恩派”、“因信称义”¹、“真基督教会”²以及“加尔文改革宗教会”。原本的母教会X由一位年长的传道人创立，属于“三自爱国教会”，至今已有三十年的历史。从前，李家庄及周边的信徒们都在X教会参加聚会。但当老传道人去世以后，由于信仰分歧，教会开始分裂。20世纪90年代，一些信徒离开了教会，并创立了W教。一位名为刘恩典的牧师告诉我说，“我在X教会待了三年以后，因为接触了灵恩派³，那个时候服侍主的那家姊妹（教会是设在她家的），认为我接触的是异端，就把我赶出来了。那时我非常痛苦，我们一共有八个家庭同时离开X教会，开始在张长老家聚会，就是现在的W教会，这是我牧养的第一个教会”。事实上，这种分裂很常见。刘恩典最初由于信仰观念不同离开了其本村（F村）的教会，加入了李家庄X教会。事实上，刘家一家兄弟姐妹四人都是信徒，但由于信仰观点不同，他们各自加入不同的教会：兄长加入“三自爱国教会”，弟弟和弟媳加入了“因信称义”教会，而姐姐则在“呼喊派”的教会。有趣的是，尽管我们看到同一地区甚至同一个家庭内部信仰上的不同，分歧和分裂，家庭教会却正在悄悄地形成跨地区、跨市、跨省甚至跨国界的联合体。

家庭教会团契

临沂地区的家庭教会的团契成为联系教会间的纽带，他们最初形成于地理位置邻近的区、县，其后发展成为跨区、跨省市的联络，甚至成为跨国界的基督网络的一部

1 当地的一位教会领导者告诉我说“因信称义”的意思是“只要你相信就够了，不需要行动，所以可以做任何你想做的事情。”

2 我听说这个教会的信众人数不多，每天早晨5、6点钟聚会，然后去田间劳作。认为只有他们相信的才是真理，其他教会都不纯正。

3 这里他是指他去参加来自于河南方城和唐河团契所派来的牧师讲道。

分。就他们自身而言，如果是农村教会特别是如果他们不属于“三自爱国教会”，则一般比较弱小，与北京的城市教会相比而言，信徒人数并不多。因为越来越多的年轻人正在离开或已经离开农村去城市打工，留下来的几乎都是老人、妇女和儿童。年纪大的信徒往往习惯于每天聚会，听讲道。面对这种约定俗成的宗教仪式和固有的信徒，服侍在同一个教派的传道者会发现，如果没有外部的联系与支持，很难扩展自身网络并实现教会发展。但是，当这些没有组织架构的小教会从原来教会分裂而后重新形成一个联合体，就不再孤立无援，这些教会于是变成教会团契的一个个节点，共同贡献资源，同时共享资源，使得这些农村的小教会运转起来。教会联合体在某种程度上满足了农村教会的需求，但教会与教会之间，不同的团契之间的竞争也由此而生，因为随着联合体的扩张，它的权力随之增加，能获得更多的资源。在城市里，教会通过发展新教会（所谓的“植堂”）或扩大教会所影响的范围来扩展影响力。但在农村，则是主要通过现存的教会之间建立新的联合体实现扩展，以团契的形式建立教会网络分支。自从上个世纪八十年代到九十年代，传道人之间信仰各自不同，彼此之间的个人关系也亲疏不同。九十年代末期以后，出现了一种根据不同神学观点成立团契的转向。这些团契的组织架构因此从基于地理位置临近的教会传道人间联合转变成基于同一神学院的校友之间的联合，因此在某种程度上扩大了网络范围，加强了网络联系的基础，大大地增进了各个节点对于网络资源的利用。

刘恩典牧师从90年代开始建立团契，最早的大多与李家庄的教会和周边村子的教会联结形成。刘说：“最早的时候，我们在这个村和那个村之间建立关系，然后是这个乡和那个乡。我们建立了一共七人的工作人员团契，之所以定七个人是觉得7是一个完美的数字。总共有十家教会参与。只要在一个地方形成团契，这个地方就有了组织。”教会团契的目的是在各个教会之间建立纽带，在各个方面互相帮助和补充，轮流布道。这个团契逐渐扩展成为后来的“Y县团契”，有6个分团契，李家庄就是其中的一个分团契。

刘恩典2000年北京“恩泽神学院”毕业后，便开始准备在临沂成立神学院的分院，“荣光神学院”，并以荣光神学院分院的毕业生为主体建立“东临团契”，意在强调团契的工作范围涵盖山东临沂的三区九县。在这个例子中，我们可以看到，不管是庞大“系统”或者是本地的团契及其分支的创立，都同样经过扩展旗下教会彼此间联结的过程而实现。基督教的网络就这样在地方范围和全国范围伸展开来，系统和团契两个层面肯定是彼此相连的，但系统旨在更广泛的联结网络内的节点，而团契和其下的小团契则侧重于加强信徒间彼此的认识和互动。

因此，我们可以说，越来越多的教会带领人认为建立教会间团契的联合是教会发展的一个重要条件，尽管组织的稳定性是显而易见的困难。事实上，临沂绝大多数教会都属于某个特定的或大或小的团契。大的团契可

能在整个临沂甚至山东省已经有几十个教会，小的团契则仅局限于本村镇，涵盖本村几家小教会而已。由于缺少集中管理和统一组建，这些团契一般都不是基于细致的规划和组织架构、地区架构建成的。因此，同一个县的教会往往隶属于不同的团契和系统，彼此之间因为神学观点，牧会方式的不同而有竞争，使教会之间或者互不来往，有些甚至关系紧张。

国际网络

众所周知，韩国的宣教士在中国有很大影响，他们通过各种渠道到达中国，在社会各界开展传教活动。他们通常携家而来，开始时在某地从事普通的工作，如教育或医疗行业。随着传教工作逐渐展开并稳定以后，他们再转变成全职宣教士。韩国宣教士对向中国宣教的事业具有强烈的决心和使命感，有些宣教士因种种原因死在中国，选择把生命献给中国，成为中国基督教的殉道士。这些宣教士生前主动要求其家人将其葬在中国，而不是回到他们的祖国韩国，就此表明他们愿意为了中国人而献身的精神。这种无私奉献和牺牲精神激励了很多中国的基督徒，他们认为这些韩国的宣教士比中国人自己还要热爱中国。

在韩国，一位韩国牧师这样鼓励中国教会的带领人：上帝在20世纪使韩国的教会复兴，是为了接下来复兴中国的福音，而中国是将福音传回耶路撒冷的重要途径。他说，由于中国幅员辽阔，人口众多，中国福音的复兴将影响整个世界。他强调，这个希望落在中国家庭教会身上，通过这些家庭教会使整个中国蒙祝福。他认为中国教会的复兴与中国过去20年间的经济奇迹是一致的，这一点类似韩国，即上帝让经济发展的目的和旨意归根结底都是为了让教会从而有更好发展。在韩国宣教士心里，他们要唤醒中国这头睡狮，然后将福音传遍全世界。

在北京的韩国宣教士纷纷设立神学院，培养众多神学学员，为中国的家庭教会培养大量的全职或专业的牧师。他们也建立了很多大学和院校的学生团契，把年轻一代的信徒培养成基督教事业的储备力量，同时建立教会和聚会点，参与中国家庭教会的服侍，支持教会发展。他们还建立了基督教音乐学校，为中国的家庭教会培养专业的音乐人才。但是韩国宣教士最具有影响力的地方并不是他们所建立这些学校或机构，而是他们将生命奉献给中国的精神。

结论

本文伊始认为非正式的网络沟通、互动和交流在某种程度上比受制于机构规则和程序制约正式网络能得到更快更广的扩展。官方基督教的管理部门曾尝试阻止人们通过家庭教会结成非正式网络，但并不成功。另外，这种非正式网络在中国国内外的扩展不仅依赖基督徒和宣教

士，同时也受到从农村迁移到城市人群的需求所驱动，这些新移民在遇到难处的时候往往从家庭教会寻求帮助。所以，尽管基督教的这种非正式网络有其内在驱动力，其形成的重要原因也基于中国现代化进程中迅猛的城镇化以及因此而产生的农村人口的流失等特点。

农村家庭教会的一个主要特点依然是其对于不同基督教观点的开放性。文化大革命期间的迫害导致他们与社会其他阶层关系紧张，但在基督教会内部，其跨区、跨国的网络关系却极其活跃。以前的农村地区相对封闭，缺少资源，因此信徒们把他们自己比喻成饥渴慕义的群羊，渴望得到“牧养”，因此对所有外来的传道人完全开放，为了吸收养分，而不清楚也不在意其教义和宗派的来源。这种“饥渴”事实上成为农村家庭教会网络发展必要的前提条件，因此近年来，农村教会在牧师培训和日常工作、信徒培养和传教以及资金来源等方面依赖城市教会的帮助和配合，从而加强了城市与农村教会之间的网络活动。

城镇化使越来越多的农村基督徒涌入城市，并加入城市教会，使这些信徒成为沟通两地交流的桥梁。宣教士所教导的普世基督教的传教活动和目的，为日渐增多的跨地区网络联系和扩展提供了神学依据，激励有抱负、献身于基督教的信徒们冲破区域限制，在更广泛的地区传教，并相信他们是普世的基督徒，是全世界基督大家庭的一员。

政府宗教政策对基督教发展的控制加剧了教会和社会之间的紧张关系，迫使家庭教会从事经营小型的信仰团体。规模越小，他们越发委身于其所信仰的，则越容易加强内部控制（Stark and Finke 2000: 180）。此外，对宗教组织纯洁性的强调，使教会秘密地建立其内部的网络关系，强化彼此之间的信任和亲密关系。所有这些因素使得家庭教会高速发展，形成跨区域但又彼此紧密联结的网络关系。

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