

Banned Chinese Author Publishing Book in U.S.

Chinese dissident Liao Yiwu has found a publisher for his latest book. Harper Collins just announced it will publish *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China*.

In *God is Red*, Liao reveals that Christianity is undergoing a resurgence in China, a country typically associated with Buddhists, Taoists, and Communist atheists. According to the World Christian Database, 5 percent of China's population practices Christianity, making it the country's largest formal religion.

By sharing the stories of a wide range of astonishing and unique characters, Liao aims to provide a glimpse into a deeply complex religious and political reality and explores whether Christianity can provide a spiritual haven for the Chinese, or whether it will make people more submissive to a totalitarian government that continues to persecute Christians and keep a close eye on any spiritual movement that might challenge its authority.

Liao was scheduled to appear at the PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature which began on April 25 in New York. Chinese authorities originally granted permission for Liao to travel to the United States for the event, then barred him from leaving China only days before he was due to travel. Liao was also asked to sign a document agreeing that he would no longer seek to publish his "illegal" works overseas. According Liao, he signed the document "because I believed all of my books are legal and the restrictions don't apply to me."

Salam Rushdie, the chairperson of the PEN World Voices Festival, issued a letter to Liao stating, "In denying you

permission to be with us, your government has not only once again impinged on your right, guaranteed under Chinese and international law, to write, speak, and travel freely; it has impinged on our right to see you and hear you in person." An empty chair marked Liao's absence at Monday evening's "Written on Water" reading at the Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers.

Mickey Maudlin, senior vice president and executive editor at HarperOne, says, "*God is Red* incorporates the beauty and wonder of what books can do—transporting us into an unknown and hidden world with depth and intimacy. We are proud to be able to publish Liao Yiwu."

Liao Yiwu is a Chinese author, reporter, musician and poet. He is the author of *The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories*, and *China from the Bottom Up*. In 2003, he received a Human Rights Watch Hellman-Hammett Grant, and in 2007 he received a Freedom to Write Award from the Independent Chinese PEN Center. As someone who has been incarcerated because of his writing, Yiwu feels strongly about freedom of expression and freedom of religion.