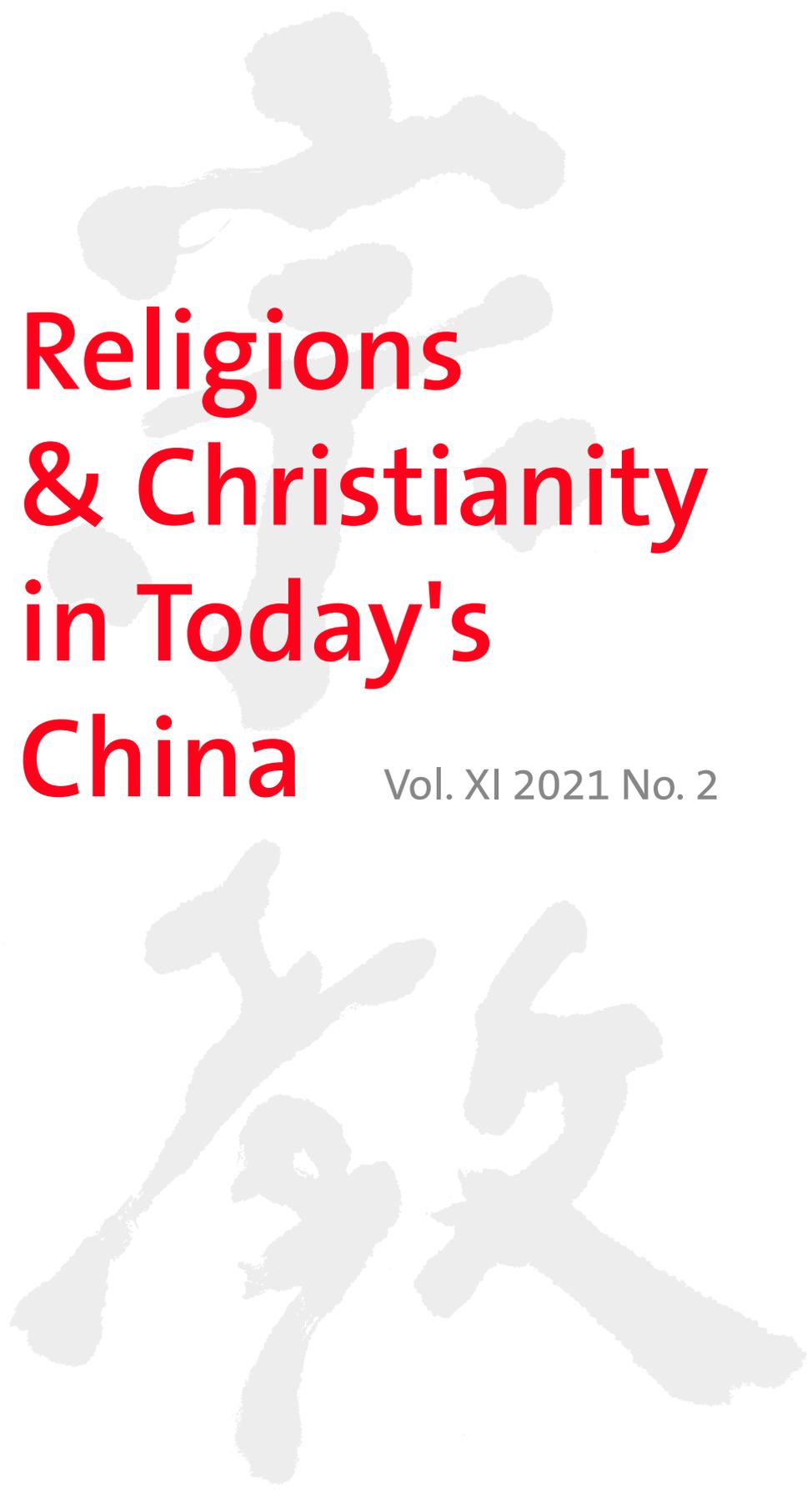


中國宗教評論



Religions  
& Christianity  
in Today's  
China

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we present to you the second 2021 issue of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

The issue includes the regular series of News Updates on recent events and general trends with regard to religions and especially Christianity in today's China.

This year Katharina Wenzel-Teuber has again compiled "Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China" with an "Update for the Year 2020." Besides many details and trends of the various numerically measurable developments in the religions of China, the focus in this year's Statistics is on the question of "Western religion fever" in rural China, the identification with Chinese culture of religious adherents, the connection between religiosity and the willingness to donate, the development of Buddhist monastic life in China and reasons why Chinese become Christians.

*Religions & Christianity in Today's China* is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de). Additionally, readers who subscribe to *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* will regularly receive e-mail updates providing web links to the contents of each newly published issue. – The China-Zentrum is a non-profit organization. For the publication of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* we are dependent on the generosity of our friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we would be very grateful if you could consider sending a voluntary contribution.

*Sankt Augustin, May 2021*

*The Editors*

## News Update on Religion and Church in China November 27, 2020 – March 11, 2021

*Compiled by Katharina Feith, Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle)  
and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber with a contribution by Willi Boehi*

*Translated by David Streit SVD*

*The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum ([www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2021, No. 1, pp. 3-16) covered the period October 1 – December 2, 2020.*

### Politics in General

December 3, 2020:

#### Xi Jinping declares the end of absolute poverty in China

When President Xi came to power eight years ago, the fight against absolute poverty was one of the main goals of his government. Xi told the Politburo Standing Committee on December 3 that in the past eight years, the income of almost 100 million people has risen above China’s official poverty line – defined as those who earn less than 11 Yuan (or 1.68 US dollars) a day. According to a report by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the World Bank defines people as extremely poor if they have less than 1.90 US dollars a day at their disposal.

China’s Communist Party describes the overcoming of absolute poverty as a step towards “modest prosperity” for the entire population. In the course of the campaign against poverty, however, tens of millions of people were relocated from remote villages to newly built settlements near cities. Elderly and disabled residents have received cash payments and the government has launched employment programs for people who were previously unemployed or dependent on subsistence farming. In November 2020, China removed the last nine counties, all of which are in Guizhou, from a national list of the poorest counties. In view of slower economic growth and the effects of the Corona pandemic, however, the topic of poverty will continue to accompany China in the future (*Bloomberg* Dec. 4, 2020; *Merics China Briefing* Dec. 10, 2020; [www.bmz.de/de/service/glossar/A/armut.html](http://www.bmz.de/de/service/glossar/A/armut.html)).

## Religious Policy

December 2020 to March 2021:

### Religions during the Corona pandemic

As reported (cf. *China heute* 2020, No. 2-3, pp. 75-76 [in German]; *RCTC* 2020, No. 4, pp. 5, 11), after the end of the nationwide lockdown, a process of reopening the religious sites lasting several months began in early June 2020. The picture is incomplete for the months of winter 2020/2021. At Christmas, Catholic services were held in various parts of China under preventive measures, as reports from the Catholic website *Xinde* show; in other places, such as Shijiazhuang, they had to be canceled. According to a *China Christian Daily* report on Protestant Christmas services in Beijing, most churches there, including Haidian Church, Gangwashi Church and Fengtai Church, had to move their services online at short notice. The article describes one of the few face-to-face Christmas services in Beijing; it was held under very extensive security measures; photography was prohibited in the church and cell phone signals were blocked.

At the beginning of January 2021, there were COVID-19 outbreaks in the provinces of Hebei (see entry of January 7, 2021 in the section “Catholic Church”), Heilongjiang and Jilin. On January 8, 2021, all 155 religious sites in Beijing were closed. A circular from the State Council on January 18 instructed all provinces to step up prevention due to rising infections and, among other things, to “temporarily cease collective activities in religious sites and to stop illegal religious activities in accordance with the law” in rural areas. In the run-up to the Chinese New Year (February 12), the central government called on the population to avoid traveling as much as possible. An announcement by the Chinese Buddhist Association dated January 27 indicated that, although collective religious activities in temples should be discontinued, temple visits should continue to be possible in a controlled manner. On March 16, 2021, *Xinde* announced that “after Sichuan and Zhejiang, Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Jiangxi, Xi’an in Shaanxi, Baotou and Chifeng in Inner Mongolia have either opened their sites for religious activities one after the other or will open them soon” (*AsiaNews* Jan. 8, 9, 2021; *chinabuddhism.com* Jan. 28, 2021; *chinachristiandaily.com* Dec. 28, 2020 / Jan. 4, 2021; *gov.cn* Jan. 18, 2021; *NZZ* Jan. 4, 2021; *scmp.com* Jan. 8, 2021; *xinde.org* March 16, 2021).

December 4, 2020:

### ChinaAid: Elementary school teachers in Wenzhou’s Longwan District had to sign a pledge not to believe in any religion

ChinaAid, a US-based organization, reported that teachers from elementary schools in Longwan District, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang City, were asked to sign a form: “Letter of Commitment for Teachers Not to Believe in a Religion” (教师不信教承诺书). A local source reported that at a meeting on November 30 at their school, teaching staff had to fill out a form that ChinaAid published a photo of. The form contains fields for personal details and a 4-point declaration to be signed. Point 1 obliges the undersigned “to stand firmly in the Marxist conception of religion, to strengthen atheist education and teaching, not to believe in religion, not to take part in any religious activities and not to preach or spread religion anywhere.” The undersigned also undertakes not to participate in “cults” such as Falungong, not to engage in “feudal superstitions” and instead to stand up for socialism and the “mandate to raise people for the party and the state.” According to the source, teachers who belong to the Communist Party had to fill out the form “Obligation for Party Members Not to Believe in a Religion.” According to ChinaAid, 10% of the population of Wenzhou are Christians (*AsiaNews* Dec. 10, 2020; *chinaaid.net* Dec. 12, 2020).

It has been reported before that in some places schoolchildren and their parents had to commit themselves in writing not to take part in religious activities (cf. *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, pp. 8-9; 2020, No. 4, pp. 5-6). For several years there have also been reports from an increasing number of places in China that minors are not allowed to attend church services or take part in religious education.

January 4 / February 21, 2021:

## “Central Document No. 1” for the revitalization of rural areas calls for increased action against “illegal religious activities in the countryside”

The first political document of the year 2021 – the “Central Document No. 1” of the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council – deals, like the corresponding documents of previous years, with measures to promote rural development. In Section 25, “Strengthening the Building of a Spiritual Civilization,” there is a sentence on the subject of religion, with only negative connotations; it reads: “According to law and with increased vigor crack down on illegal religious activities and overseas infiltration in rural villages, according to law stop religious intervention in rural public affairs.” The same sentence was already in Document No. 1 of 2018 (see *RCTC* 2018, No. 2, p. 7). First and foremost, section 25 is about deepening ideological education. Among other things, propaganda activities with the motto “Listen to the party, feel the goodness of the party, walk with the party” are to be carried out in the villages – this slogan is omnipresent in the run-up to the 100th anniversary of the CPC’s founding in July 2021. The Chinese peasant civilization is to be given new contemporary content, and rural customs are to be transformed and simplified. Practices such as point-collecting systems, “moral evaluation committees” (*daode pingyihui* 道德评议会) or “red-and-white councils” (*hongbai lishihui* 红白理事会) [the colors stand for wedding and mourning] should be promoted in order to regulate bad customs such as high bridal prices, lavish funerals, waste and “feudal superstition.” Instead, good, simple morals are to be encouraged (The document can be found at [www.sara.gov.cn/ywtdt/351548.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/ywtdt/351548.jhtml), dated Jan. 1, published Feb. 21, 2021; rfa.org Feb. 25, 2021).

January 5, 2021:

## Chinese Communist Party publishes Regulations for United Front Work – Party members are not allowed to believe in any religion

The document is a revised version of the first version published in 2015 for trial use. The party’s internal document contains a chapter on “religious work,” i.e., the party’s management of religions. In addition to well-known principles of Chinese religious policy, the chapter (as does the 2015 version) contains the principle: “Members of the Communist Party should unite with the masses of religious believers, but they must not believe in any religion.” Chinese text of the “Regulations for United Front Work of the Chinese Communist Party” 中国共产党统一战线工作条例 at [www.xinhuanet.com/politics/zywj/2021-01/05/c\\_1126949202.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/zywj/2021-01/05/c_1126949202.htm); a German translation of the chapter on religious work of the regulations can be found in *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 16-17.

February 7, 2021:

## Wang Yang welcomes leaders of the official organizations of the religions

At the meeting on the occasion of the upcoming Spring Festival, the chairman of the Political Consultative Conference told the assembled religious leaders: “The celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party should be an occasion to continue the beautiful tradition of unity, cooperation and harmony between the religious circles of our nation and the Communist Party of China, to resolutely support the leadership of the Communist Party of China and to continuously promote the ‘five identifications.’” (people.com.cn Feb. 8, 2021).

It appears from many reports that the religions (along with all other sectors of society) are called upon to celebrate the Party on the occasion of its birthday and to show signs of loyalty; cf. the entries of March 8, 2021 in the “Buddhism” section and of February 16, 2021 in the “Catholic Church” section. China’s communist party was established in Shanghai in July 1921.

February 9, 2021:

## “Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel” published

On February 9, the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) published “Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel” (hereinafter referred to as “Measures”), which took effect on May 1, 2021. To date there has not been such a comprehensive legal norm for the state administration of this aspect of religious life. The new “Measures” were initially published on November 18, 2020 as a draft for soliciting public opinion (see *RCTC* 2021, No. 1, pp. 4-5, with an initial overview of the content).

The provisions of the very restrictive document require that religious clergy “must adhere to the principle of independence, autonomy and self-government of the religions” (Article 3) and that “Catholic bishops are approved and consecrated by the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference” (Article 16), a body not recognized by Rome. Massimo Introvigne of *Bitter Winter* called these provisions a “slap in the face of the Vatican.” However, Anthony Lam, a Hong Kong expert on the Catholic Church in China, told the *South China Morning Post* that the Sino-Vatican agreement, which gives the Pope the final say in episcopal appointments, would not be affected.

In the context of the problem that underground Catholic clergy are being pressured by the authorities in many places to sign declarations in support of the principle of independence against their conscience, one change in the final version of the “Measures” compared to the November 18 draft should be noted: Article 13 contains the provision that the national religious organizations lay down the requirements for the recognition of religious personnel of their own religion. However, in the final version, this point was added, “the requirements for recognition must contain the provisions set out in Article 3 of these measures” – including adherence to the principle of independence (text of the “Measures” at [www.sara.gov.cn/ywdt/351324.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/ywdt/351324.jhtml); English translation and commentary at <https://bitterwinter.org/enter-the-administrative-measures-for-religious-clergy>; scmp.org Feb. 19). A somewhat more detailed account can be found in *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 3-4 (in German).

## Daoism

November 27–28, 2020:

### 10th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA)

The 352 Daoist delegates and 48 guests met in Jurong (Jiangsu) on the Maoshan Mountains. The assembly elected a new leadership team of the CDA: a 204-strong executive committee and a permanent executive committee with 92 members. The Daoist priest Li Guangfu (born 1955), who is also president of the Daoist Association of Wudangshan, was re-elected as president of the CDA. He will be supported by 18 vice presidents in the future. Li Hanying became the secretary general. The statutes of the CDA and other documents were revised, 13 new regulations were passed, including a “Code of Conduct for Daoist Religious Personnel.” Wang Zu’ān, Vice Minister of the CPC’s United Front Department and Director of the National Bureau of Religious Affairs, emphasized in his speech to the National Assembly that the CDA has “restored” the ordination ceremonies of the Quanzhen school and has “further standardized” the liturgy of the conferring of registers (ordination) of the Zhengyi school. As serious problems he named an insufficient inner motivation to advance the Sinicization of Daoism (*sic!*), a lack of discipline in some monasteries, a passion for fortune-telling and Fengshui as well as a generally low “quality” of the clergy. In future, Wang urged the Daoists to promote the “patriotic spirit,” including on the occasion of the centenary of the founding of the CPC; to draw a clear line between “normal religious activities” and “feudal superstitions” and to offer resolute resistance to all “illegal and unlawful activities that make use of Daoism.” He called on Daoism to “keep up with the times” in interpreting its teachings and rules. The “style” of Daoism should be corrected, “the precepts be taken as master” (*yi jie wei shi* 以戒为师). Traditional Daoist precepts and rules (*jielü* 戒律) need to be ordered, simplified and standardized, said Wang. The system for the exclusion from the Daoist clergy needs to be improved and a web-based reference system for excluded persons needs to be set up so that “whoever has violated the precepts (*jie* 戒) in one place will be restricted everywhere” – postulated Wang (sara.gov.cn Dec. 15; taoist.org.cn Dec. 18; zytzb.gov.cn Nov. 30).

The national assemblies are the highest official bodies of the five recognized religions; they meet on a rotating basis every five years. The 9th National Assembly of Daoists took place from June 26-29, 2015 in Beijing; see *RCTC* 2015, No. 3-4, pp. 23-24.

## Popular Beliefs

December 21, 2020:

### “Measures for the Administration of the Registration and Numbering of Sites for Popular Belief Activities of Guangdong Province” are being adopted

In the People’s Republic of China, for a long time only sites belonging to the recognized “five religions” could acquire legal status by registering with the state. For some time now, the authorities have been trying out methods of officially permitting traditional folk religious practices and incorporating them into the state administration. The first to issue administrative measures for the registration of popular religious sites was the province of Hunan in 2009 (see *China heute* 2011, No. 2, pp. 87-89, 103-106 [in German]).

The “Measures” (广东省民间信仰活动场所登记编号管理办法) adopted by Guangdong Province in December 2021 define popular belief as “phenomena of non-institutionalized belief in which a variety of deities are worshiped with the main purpose of asking for blessings and averting harm that are closely related to traditional customs and that are spontaneously passed on among the people.” Confucius temples (*wenmiao* 文庙) and ancestral halls of clans (*zongzu citang* 宗族祠堂) do not count as sites for popular belief activities in the sense of the “Measures” (Article 2). Sites for popular belief activities that have a land area of at least 500 square meters or a building area of at least 300 square meters or that hold an annual individual activity with at least 1,000 participants must be registered and numbered (*dengji bianhao* 登记编号). Smaller sites are registered and archived but they are not given a number. Like the larger sites, they are to be fed into the “Administrative System for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of Guangdong Province” (Article 4). The village or residents’ committee of the place where the site is located organizes the democratic management body of the site to submit an application to the government at the community level, enclosing the necessary documents (including proof of ownership or right of use of the property). After verification, the government at the community level forwards the application material to the government at the county level, which then issues the corresponding registration certificate (Article 5).

Implementing measures of the City of Ningbo (Zhejiang Province) of November 16, 2020 on the same topic name as criteria which would exclude a site for popular belief activities from registration such things as: “religious personnel lives there permanently” (*sic!*) and “heretical [*xiejiao* 邪教], superstitious or other illegal activities are being carried out there” (documents at [http://mzzjw.gd.gov.cn/gkmlpt/content/3/3155/post\\_3155269.html#617](http://mzzjw.gd.gov.cn/gkmlpt/content/3/3155/post_3155269.html#617) and [www.ningbo.gov.cn/art/2020/11/16/art\\_1229096003\\_983380.html](http://www.ningbo.gov.cn/art/2020/11/16/art_1229096003_983380.html)).

## Buddhism

December 27, 2020:

### In the “Tibet Policy and Support Act,” the USA threatens sanctions in the event of the Chinese state interfering in the succession of the Dalai Lama – China rejects this

On December 27, then-US President Donald Trump signed the Tibet Policy and Support Act. The law requires that the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, be left to the Tibetan Buddhists alone. Chinese officials who interfere in the process of selecting Tibetan Buddhist leaders will be subject to sanctions, including refusal to enter the United States. China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Huang Chunying had already dismissed the bill as a serious violation of the principles of international relations and interference in China’s internal affairs when it was passed by the US House of Representatives on January 28, 2020.

In a long interview with the state news agency *China News Service* published on January 14, 2021, Zhu Weiqun, former vice minister of the CPC’s United Front Department, also rejected the law and reiterated the official Chinese position on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Zhu said that Tibet and the succession of the Dalai Lama are an internal matter of China. He said that since the beginning of the Dalai lineage, the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama has never been personally decided by the previous one; it must go through a certain process, the core of which is the recognition of the supreme authority of the Chinese central government in matters of reincarnation of Living Buddhas. If the USA and the Dalai Lama claim that only the Dalai Lama himself had the right to determine his successor, and if the next “so-called Dalai” would be created in this way, this could only be a “false Dalai” – Zhu said in the interview (*AsiaNews* Dec. 22, 2020; [chinanews.com](http://chinanews.com) Jan. 14, 2021; [fmprc.gov.cn](http://fmprc.gov.cn) Jan. 29, 2020).

In 2007 the Chinese government issued “Measures for the Administration of Reincarnations of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism.” The now 85-year-old 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso made a detailed statement in 2011 on the question of his reincarnation in which he declared that at the age of around 90 he would decide with other high lamas whether the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue, and if so, would leave clear instructions for the procedure of seeking and recognizing the 15th Dalai Lama. No candidate selected by others, such as the rulers of the People’s Republic of China, should be recognized (German translation of both documents in *China heute* 2007, No. 6, pp. 220f., and 2012, No. 1, pp. 15-20).

January 21, 2021:

## Human Rights Watch: 19-year-old Tibetan monk dies after being released from police custody

According to the human rights organization, the monk Tenzin Nyima from the Dza Wonpo monastery in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Ganzi (Kardze) in Sichuan Province was arrested on November 9, 2019 for participating in a brief protest calling for the independence of Tibet. He was released in May 2020 but was arrested again on August 11, presumably for sharing information about his detention online. In October, the prison authorities asked his family to pick him up from prison due to his medical condition. According to information from Tibetans in exile with knowledge of the case, he had been seriously injured, which they attributed to ill-treatment in custody. After unsuccessful attempts at medical treatment, Tenzin Nyima died in January 2021. The trial against him and six other Tibetans involved in the protest (including four monks from Wonpo Monastery) took place on November 10 and 12, 2020 at the Sershul Intermediate People’s Court, according to Human Rights Watch. On December 14, 2020, the six other Tibetans were sentenced to prison terms of one to five years (hrw.org Jan. 21, 2021).

February 5, 2021:

## “List of Tibetan Buddhism Rinpoches in Sichuan” published, containing 411 names

According to a press release, which appeared on the website of the Chinese Buddhist Association, the list includes the names of 411 “government-approved Living Buddhas” in the Tibetan areas of the province, including 119 in the Aba (Ngawa) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, 291 in the Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and 1 in the Muli Tibetan Autonomous County. (For the Chinese word *huofo* 活佛, usually translated as “Living Buddha” in official Chinese documents, the English title of the list uses the Tibetan expression “Rinpoche”.) The list was published by the Communist Party United Front Department, the religious affairs department and the Buddhist Association of Sichuan Province and can be found at [www.sctyzz.gov.cn/sczcfjhfm1/default.htm](http://www.sctyzz.gov.cn/sczcfjhfm1/default.htm). The database contains the name of the Living Buddha, the school of Tibetan Buddhism and the monastery to which he belongs as well as its location. In contrast to the complete database for living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism in the People’s Republic of China on [sara.gov.cn](http://sara.gov.cn), it is accessible without the user having to register. The press release points out that the television broadcaster CCTV recently exposed some “false Living Buddhas.” Three days earlier, *Xinhua* reported on the case of a Han Chinese in Shenzhen who allegedly obtained a false Tibetan identity and pretended to be a Living Buddha; he “distorted religious teachings to carry out feudal superstitious practices,” enriched himself and endangered the health of people, *Xinhua* said (chinabuddhism.com Feb. 5, 2021; *Xinhua* Feb. 2, 2021).

March 8, 2021:

## Jingdezhen Buddhist Association publishes call for activities “Study the Party’s History, Feel the Party’s Kindness, Listen to the Party, Walk with the Party”

In response to the party’s 100th anniversary in 2021 and in response to a speech by Xi Jinping on February 20 in which the CPC General Secretary exhorted everyone to study the party’s history, the Buddhist Association of Jingdezhen (Jiangxi Province) – “under the guidance the United Front Department of the [party] committee of Jingdezhen,” as the Associations appeal says – called on all Buddhists in the city to “study the party’s history, feel the party’s kindness, listen to the party, walk with the party” (学党史, 感党恩, 听党话, 跟党走). The appeal states, among other things: “In the last 100 years our party has led the masses to stand up from a leaky boat, to walk from the brink of collapse towards wealth [...], it has turned the fate of the Chinese nation from downfall to ascension, from suffering to glory. Without a prosperous and strong country, there would be no flourishing of the religious cause. We should always stand firmly in love for the country and religion, know the kindness of the party, feel the kindness of the party, praise the kindness of the party and love and respect the party from the bottom of our hearts” (text of the appeal at <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2qm1yHtAVRnxARoUon0mjg>). All official religious organizations have plans to mark the 100th anniversary of the party in July.

## Islam

December 8–10, 2020:

### Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) holds Hajj work session

On December 1, new governmental “Measures for the Administration of Muslim Hajj Affairs” came into effect (see *China heute* 2020, No. 4, pp. 186-188 [in German]; *RCTC* 2021, No. 1, p. 8). Islamic representatives from different parts of China studied the new legal norm and adapted the system for Hajj work accordingly, the report on the CIA website said. They also discussed punitive measures against Islamic clergy who organize or participate in illegal Hajj pilgrimages. According to state regulations, only the Hajj organized centrally by the CIA is legal. There was also an exchange about how the Hajj organization could be improved under permanent COVID-19 prevention measures. In 2020, Saudi Arabia did not allow foreigners to take part in the Hajj because of the pandemic ([chinaislam.net.cn](http://chinaislam.net.cn) Dec. 17, 2020).

## Judaism

December 12, 2020:

### Further pressure on Chinese Jews in Kaifeng

After reprisals against the Jewish community in the city of Kaifeng (Henan Province) became known in April 2016, *The Telegraph* reported on December 12, 2020 that there was further pressure on the small community. The paper sees this in connection with President Xi Jinping’s ongoing campaigns against foreign influence and officially unrecognized religions, including Judaism. Around 1,000 people in Kaifeng today claim Jewish heritage, around 100 of whom are believed to be practicing Jews. The Jewish community of Kaifeng emerged in the early Song period (960–1126) and later merged into its Chinese environment through assimilation; the Chinese state does not recognize the Kaifeng Jews as

a religion or an ethnic minority. “It’s government policy,” said a descendant of the Jews in an interview with *The Telegraph*, “their goal is to make sure the next generation doesn’t have any Jewish identity.” The state obviously does not want the Jewish community in Kaifeng to establish relations with Jews abroad. In terms of numbers, they are insignificant, but their existence could “raise a lot of attention among the international Jewish community,” says Noam Urbach of Bar-Ilan University in Israel, who has researched Jews in Kaifeng. In 2016, among other things, the Jewish center in Kaifeng was closed, signs commemorating the historic Jewish community were removed, Jewish tour groups were no longer allowed into the city and community members were monitored by security forces. The Jews practice in secret today, meetings on the Shabbat take place in secret. They also no longer dared to meet to go to a restaurant together, according to a parishioner. Since religious materials are not for sale, they buy Christian Bibles and read the Old Testament in them. However, the suppression is not a form of anti-Semitism, according to Anson Laytner, President of the Sino-Judaic Institute (*The Telegraph* Dec. 12, 2020; see also *RCTC* 2016, No. 3, p. 8 as well as Anson Laytner, “The Changing Status of the Kaifeng Jews”, in: *Points East* 29 (2014) 3, p. 1 and pp. 4-10).

## Protestantism

November 26, 2020:

### First doctoral exams at the National Theological Seminary in Nanjing

On November 26, Ms. Wang Jiawei and Mr. Luo Chengzan passed their exams at the National Theological Seminary in Nanjing. This makes them the first people to be awarded a doctorate within the framework of the internal church examination system by the Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement. Their doctoral course began in 2016. The degree is not recognized by state universities. Ms. Wang’s work on Christology with Kathryn Tanner was supervised by the director of the Baptist University Hong Kong, Prof. Joshua Cho; Mr. Luo’s work on Athanasius of Alexandria was accompanied by Prof. Miikka Ruokanen, among others. The external specialist supervisors have the status of guest lecturers at the Nanjing Seminar. – On December 20, He Wenbo, Dong Yanhui and Chen Kuangrong passed their exams to obtain the Doctor of Ministry. The doctoral studies accompanying their service within the church began for all three in 2017. Mr. He wrote a study on “Pressure and coping strategies of church leaders in the Yangtze Delta,” Mr. Dong dealt with “Retirement provision for church leaders,” Ms. Chen with “Conflicts and Communication of Middle-Aged Congregation Leaders.” External experts such as Prof. Zhuo Xinping from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences or the head of the Theological Seminary in Fujian, Dr. Yue Qinghua, rounded out the examination committee made up of professors from the Nanjing Seminary (microblog 今日金陵生活 Dec. 2, 26, 2020; njuts.cn).

*Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle*

## Catholic Church

December 22, 2020:

### Fr. Peter Liu Genzhu is ordained bishop of Hongdong (Shanxi) with the consent of the government and the Pope – This is the fourth episcopal ordination since the Sino-Vatican Agreement of 2018



The future bishop Peter Liu Genzhu, then still a priest and vicar general, in 2014.  
Photo: Maria Lozano.

The ordination of the 54-year-old was presided over by (Arch-)Bishop Meng Ningyou of Taiyuan. Bishops Wu Junwei of Yuncheng, Ding Lingbin of Changzhi and Ma Cunguo of Shuozhou (all Shanxi Province) concelebrated. According to *UCAN*, the letter of appointment from the official Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference read during the ceremony mentioned the candidate's papal appointment. Bishop Liu was elected bishop-candidate on June 10, 2020 following the official Chinese process; his papal appointment was confirmed in November 2020, as reported by *UCAN*. In fact, he had been Rome's candidate for bishopric for many years, as *AsiaNews* wrote. One month earlier, on November 23, Chen Tianhao had been ordained bishop of Qingdao in Shandong Province (cf. *RCTC* 2021, No. 1, pp. 11-12). A Vatican source told *UCAN* that both ordinations were considered "authentic fruits of the [2018] agreement."

Bishop Liu Genzhu was born on June 12, 1966. He studied at the Xi'an Seminary and was ordained a priest in 1991. Since 2010 he has been vicar general of the Diocese of Hongdong/Linfen, which had been without a bishop since 2006. The diocese has around 40,000 Catholics (*AsiaNews* Dec. 22, 2020; *chinacatholic.cn* Dec. 22, 2020; *UCAN* Dec. 23, 2020).

December 30, 2020:

### Underground Bishop Han Jingtao of Siping, Jilin, dies

Bishop Andrew Han died at the age of 99. He was born into a Catholic family on July 26, 1921 in Shanwanzi Village, Weichang County, Hebei Province. In his early school years he attended a school directed by Canadian missionaries from Quebec. In 1934 he entered the Minor Seminary in Siping Diocese, and in 1940 he entered the Changchun Seminary. He was ordained a priest on December 14, 1947. With the support of his bishop, Priest Han founded a congregation of Sisters and developed the work of the Legion of Mary in the diocese of Siping. He was arrested in 1953 and spent a total of 27 years in prison and in labor camps. In the early 1980s he was employed as an English teacher at Changchun Normal University and shortly afterwards as an associate professor at Northeast Normal University. At the university he also taught Latin and Greek. In 1982 he was appointed Bishop of Siping by the Pope, but was not consecrated in secret until 1986. Believers called Bishop Han a "giant of culture and faith." Since 1997, Bishop Han was once again under constant surveillance, and the congregation of Sisters was also confronted with convent closings and secret re-openings.

In the early 1980s, the government united all Church districts in Jilin Province into a single diocese, Jilin Diocese. From the perspective of the Vatican, the diocese of Siping continues to exist, it includes parts of the provinces of Jilin, Inner Mongolia and Liaoning. The diocese today has around 30,000 Catholics, including around 20,000 underground and 10,000 in the official Church, as well as 20 priests and around 100 religious Sisters (*AsiaNews* Dec. 31, 2020; Jan. 5, 2020; *Fides* Feb. 23, 2021; [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_500cf6040102yo9r.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_500cf6040102yo9r.html)).

January 5, 2021:

## Death of Bishop Zong Huaide of Sanyuan

The bishop emeritus of the diocese of Sanyuan, Shaanxi Province, died on January 5 at the age of 100. Bishop Zong was born into a poor Catholic family on June 16, 1920 and ordained a priest on June 5, 1949. He spent the years 1965–1980 in prison and in labor camps. In 1983, Zong Huaide became Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, and on August 9, 1987, he was ordained Bishop of Sanyuan. At first he was not recognized by the authorities as a bishop, but has been allowed to work openly since the early 1990s. This made him one of the first underground bishops to be officially recognized. Bishop Zong was held in high regard by both underground Catholics and Catholics in the official Church. He made an important contribution to reconciliation within the Catholic Church in China. On December 23, 1997, Bishop Zong was received in a personal audience by Pope John Paul II. In 2003 he retired. He is succeeded by Bishop Han Yingjin, who was ordained in 2010. Bishop Zong's funeral took place on January 11. Bishop Zong was one of the last great Church leaders of the old generation in China.

January 7, 2021:

## The Patriotic Association and the Diocese of Shijiazhuang issue a statement rejecting rumors that the Catholic Church was to blame for the corona outbreak in Hebei

In Hebei Province – which has the highest proportion of Catholics of all provinces in China – there was a major corona outbreak in early January; the provincial capital Shijiazhuang and the city of Xingtai were completely cordoned off. Rumors spread across social media that Catholics were to blame for the outbreak. On January 7, the Patriotic Association and Shijiazhuang Diocese published a statement in which they wrote that individual WeChat accounts and microblogs were deliberately spreading fabricated rumors. According to the statement, one rumor spread on the Internet claimed that Xiaoguo-zhuang in Gaocheng [the district where the first patient in the outbreak came from] is a Catholic village that had religious activities 20 days ago, attended by “many European and American priests” without taking preventive measures, “now you see, these missionaries brought the European virus,” etc. The statement replies that Xiaoguo-zhuang is not a Catholic village, that so far there is only one Catholic among those infected in Shijiazhuang and that, according to the responsible Catholic pastor, there have been no foreign visitors in the area since the winter of the year before. It informed that an official complaint has been lodged against the perpetrators of the rumors.

According to *Jidu shibao* (*Christian Times*), the national TV broadcaster CCTV reported on January 9 that Hebei Province, Shijiazhuang City and Xingtai City had all stated in press conferences about the epidemic that there was no evidence that the outbreak was related to religious activities, and that all religious sites have been temporarily closed.

The United Front Department of Xingtai City issued a notice on January 9 offering a reward for anyone reporting on religious sites that open despite the ordered closure, as well as any “illegal” religious meetings in meeting points and households.

The editorial team of *China heute* saw reader comments posted on the *Renmin ribao* WeChat channel on January 9, under a report on the Hebei Province’s press conference mentioned above. They included comments such as: “Religion just won’t do,” “In some areas, there is a church in every village, that’s terrifying, something should be done about it” and “It’s time to get a grip on religious heretic cults in the underground and Islam, or something bad will happen.” Christian Solidarity Worldwide estimated that over 1,000 such comments were visible for days without being deleted by the censorship (*AsiaNews* Jan. 8, 9, 2021; *csw.org.uk* Feb. 19, 2021; *licas.news* Jan. 11, 2021; *scmp.com* Jan. 8, 2021; *UCAN* Jan. 13, 2021; [www.christiantimes.cn/news/33947/](http://www.christiantimes.cn/news/33947/)天主教就石家庄疫情相关谣言发表严重声明).

January 9, 2021:

## More than 50 catechumens are baptized in Huangzhong Parish in Wenzhou, Zhejiang



Baptisms at Wenzhou Cathedral at Christmas of 2020.  
Photo: [xinde.org](http://xinde.org).

According to the report on the website of the Catholic newspaper *Xinde (Faith)*, the catechumens – the photo accompanying the report shows adults – had previously completed a five-month baptismal preparation. The parish priest, assisted by 4 other priests, carried out the baptisms. On Christmas Day 2020, 18 people were baptized in Wenzhou Cathedral. At Christmas, baptisms also took place elsewhere, for example, 11 in Jinan Cathedral (Shandong Province). It is unknown whether fewer people than usual were baptized in the Catholic parishes of mainland China in 2020, when the churches were closed for months due to the pandemic, as *Xinde* did not publish any baptism statistics for 2020 (*xinde.org* Dec. 28, 2020; Jan. 14, 2021).

February 16, 2021:

## National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) reports on the “Work Plan 2021” of the official Catholic governing bodies

The text was distributed on *Weixin zongjiao*, the NRAA’s WeChat channel, with the note that it had appeared in print in the January issue of the NRAA’s magazine *Zhongguo zongjiao* and that it was “originally produced by One [Patriotic] Association and One [Episcopal] Conference” – but it cannot be found on the two bodies’ website. Specific projects in 8 areas of activity are named. Under point 1 (“ideological structure”) there is a plan for a conference of Catholic circles to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. The plan is to “unearth moving stories of how Chinese Catholic circles supported the Red Army,” and to publish a book entitled *Catholic Churches Along the Route of the Long March*. “Training courses in cooperation with the Central Institute of Socialism”

for members and co-workers of the patriotic bodies at the provincial level, lay leaders etc. are to be continued. In “key regions” not specified in detail, the election and ordination of bishops should be promoted “actively and reliably” (point 3). Point 4 “construction of theological thinking” contains the implementation of the “7th Forum for Sinicized Theology,” which will deal with the Sinicization of liturgy, art and music. It is also planned to have architecture experts design a series of church building templates that meet the requirements of Sinicization and can be offered to local churches as a reference. Point 7 “exchange with foreign countries” provides for “standardizing work in foreign affairs, maintaining strict discipline in foreign affairs and revising and improving the system for foreign affairs” (*Weixin zongjiao* Feb. 2, 2021 at <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/EuUKoOOyTKfLy6hLO4OzSQ>). – For more details see *China heute* 2021, No. 2, pp. 4-5 (in German).

February 19 – March 25, 2021:

### **AsiaNews: Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Yining, Xinjiang, not demolished in spite of order of the local authorities**

*AsiaNews* reported in February that believers had to clear the church on February 19 as authorities ordered it demolished. The authorities ordered the demolition even though the church had all the necessary permits from the religious bureau and gave no reasons for doing so; it is assumed that the land was to be used for construction projects. On March 25, *AsiaNews* reported that the church has not been destroyed after all, probably because (as one Catholic from Yining told the news agency) *AsiaNews*' article put some pressure on the local authorities, and the destruction activities had also been curbed by a directive from the central government that warned against land seizures to avoid reactions from the population. However, according to the second *AsiaNews* report, “the church of Yining remains impossible to use. First of all because the faithful, in anticipation of the demolition, took away all the furnishings and decorations, leaving the bare building. In addition, the government, which had begun the demolition, cut off electricity, water and other services.” The local authority said in March it would cover the costs of restoring the building.

Earlier, in 2018, Christian reliefs, two statues and the cross of the church had been dismantled (cf. *RCTC* 2018, No. 2, pp. 19-20).

According to *AsiaNews*, 2,000 Catholics, some of them descendants of exiles from the time of the Qing Empire, live in the Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of Yili, the capital of which is Yining. According to the news agency, at least four other Catholic churches in Xinjiang have been destroyed in recent years: one each in Hami and Kuitun and two churches in Tacheng. The churches had the necessary permits and received no compensation (*AsiaNews* Feb. 19, March 25, 2021).

## **Sino-Vatican Relations**

January 29, 2021:

### **Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin in an interview: “I respect anyone who criticizes the Holy See’s policy on China”**

In an interview with the French broadcaster KTO on January 29, the cardinal also spoke about the Holy See’s China policy, he said: “I would say first of all that I deeply respect anyone who has a different opinion and who criticizes, let’s say, criticizes the Holy See’s policy on China. And it’s a right to do so because it’s an extremely complex and difficult situation. There can be different points of view. We decided this path of ‘small steps’ – it’s true that there has been work done before, but there was a great im-

petus from Pope Francis. Also take into account that this agreement was not intended to be, and could not be, an agreement to resolve all the problems that the Church faces in China, but simply a small step from which to start, to seek to improve the situation of the Church. So there is no claim that this is the ‘final word.’” Parolin compared the agreement to a small seed “which, we hope, with the grace of God and the good will of each one, will be able to grow and bear fruit. This is our hope. And it requires a lot of patience. A lot of patience.” ([www.ktotv.com/article/entretien-exclusif-avec-le-cardinal-pietro-parolin-secretaire-detat-du-saint-siege](http://www.ktotv.com/article/entretien-exclusif-avec-le-cardinal-pietro-parolin-secretaire-detat-du-saint-siege), quoted here from [ncregister.com](http://ncregister.com) Jan. 1, 2021).

February 8, 2021:

## Pope Francis speaks about China in his address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See

In his address to the assembled ambassadors, the Pope also spoke about international agreements concluded last year; in connection with this, he said: “Additionally, on 22 October 2020, the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China agreed to extend for another two years the Provisional Agreement regarding the Appointment of Bishops in China, signed in Beijing in 2018. The agreement is essentially pastoral in nature, and the Holy See is confident that the process now begun can be pursued in a spirit of mutual respect and trust, and thus further contribute to the resolution of questions of common interest”.

([www.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2021/february/documents/papa-francesco\\_20210208\\_corpo-diplomatico.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2021/february/documents/papa-francesco_20210208_corpo-diplomatico.html); *UCAN* Feb. 11, 2020).

## Hong Kong

December 7, 2020:

### Hong Kong freezes church accounts

On December 7, by order of the police, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (HKSB) froze the accounts of the Good Neighbor North District Church, allegedly for tax evasion and money laundering. Since parishioners and pastors are known for their support of the pro-democracy demonstrations, political reasons are suspected behind this measure. The new security law allows law enforcement officers to intervene without providing sufficient evidence. Dozens of charities and welfare organizations in Hong Kong have protested the freezing of the community’s accounts and campaigned for the Good Neighbor North District Church to continue its social services to the marginalized and the homeless. At least 100 homeless people, social workers and church workers are affected by the measure. Pastor Wu Chi Wai speaks of a message addressed to all Christian communities reminding them not to be politically active (*AsiaNews* Dec. 14, 2020).

*Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle*

February 4, 2021:

### Primary school pupils should already receive instruction on the safety law

The Hong Kong Education Bureau published new guidelines on February 4 to implement the national safety law in primary and secondary schools, which came into force on June 30, 2020. It becomes

part of the curriculum, but goes way beyond that. The guidelines cover every aspect of the school system, from management to classroom content to student behavior, even out-of-school, according to the *South China Morning Post*. As part of the campaign, the government launched an animated film in which a wise owl teaches children what patriotism, loyalty and strictly obeying the law mean. The guidelines state, among other things, that teachers should make it clear that “safeguarding national security is the responsibility of all nationals and that as far as national security is concerned, there is no room for debate or compromise.” Ip Kin-yuen, president of the teachers’ union, said the guidelines would create uncertainty and anxiety among teachers and enforce a “restrictive and suppressive” education style that would prevent students from developing and thinking independently, according to *Reuters*. Hong Kong’s Minister of Education, Kevin Yeung, told the press that the curriculum changes were aimed at creating a national identity. Primary school students should internalize that they are Hong Kong citizens and Chinese at the same time. Audiobooks and picture books have been developed for primary school and the pupils have to learn the text of the Chinese national anthem “and internalize how to behave respectfully when it is played,” according to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. “In the further course of primary school, the young Hong Kongers should learn which four offenses pose a threat to national security: they are about secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers. In the secondary school, in addition to the 15-hour learning module on the Chinese constitution and the Hong Kong constitution, there will be a three-hour supplement to the law on national security” (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Feb. 8, 2021, there was also the video; *Reuters* Feb. 5, 2021; [www.scmp.com/video/hong-kong/3121229/hong-kong-teach-new-national-security-law-classrooms](http://www.scmp.com/video/hong-kong/3121229/hong-kong-teach-new-national-security-law-classrooms) Feb. 2, 2021).

February 5, 2021:

## Chinese New Year: Leaders of the six religions send greetings for the Year of the Ox

In their annual New Year message, the Colloquium of the Six Religious Leaders in Hong Kong sent greetings and prayers to residents. The signatories are Most Ven. Kuan Yun, President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association; Cardinal John Tong, Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong; Dr. Tong Yun-Kai, President of the Confucian Academy; Ibrahim Sat Che-Sang, Chairman of the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association; Rev. Dr. Eric So Shing-Yit, Chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Council; and Leung Tak-Wah, Chairman of the Hong Kong Taoist Association. In their message, the focus is on the Covid-19 pandemic, which has also affected Hong Kong. At the end of the letter they summarize their wishes as follows: “... that the epidemic vanish soon and our daily life return to normal; that our country grow more prosperous and powerful and all people be happy; and that Hong Kong society enjoy social harmony, prosperity and stability” (*Sunday Examiner* Feb. 5, 2021).

February 28, 2021 / March 15, 2021:

## 47 pro-democratic activists remain in custody for the time being

47 politicians and activists – the leadership of the pro-democratic opposition in Hong Kong – initially remained in custody after four days of hearings in early March. The trial is expected to resume on May 31. Many supporters had gathered outside the courthouse in West Kowloon, including Cardinal Josef Zen. Diplomats from Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, among others, also asked in vain to be admitted to the courtroom. The defendants were arrested on February 28 on charges of violating the national security law and have now been charged. The group (53 people at the

time) was first arrested in January and released. Some have been in custody for a longer time for other alleged offenses, such as the prominent opposition activist Joshua Wong. The democratic politicians are accused of holding “illegal” primaries in July of last year for the parliamentary election, which was later canceled due to the Corona pandemic. In these primaries, pro-democratic candidates were selected. This was a “threat to the state.” About 600,000 Hong Kong residents took part in the primaries. The national security law provides for up to life imprisonment depending on the offense. In the meantime, as of March 15, 2021, 11 of the defendants have been released on bail.

The well-known Hong Kong publisher and democracy activist Jimmy Lai is still in custody, also charged with accusations under the security law. His trial is scheduled to begin in mid-April.

On February 25, the Chinese University of Hong Kong announced that it would end its relations with the Student Union, whose new leaders are accused of making “false” statements that threatened national security, according to *AsiaNews*. Students who incite “illegal behavior” would be suspended or expelled (*AsiaNews* Feb. 12, 26; March 1, 3, 2021; *LICAS* March 15, 2021; *Der Spiegel* March 4, 2021; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* March 1, 2021; *Die Welt* Feb. 17, 2021).

**March 11, 2021:**

## Beijing adopts electoral reform, thereby increasing control over Hong Kong

At the annual meeting of the Chinese People’s Congress, the Chinese government passed a legal reform for Hong Kong, according to which Beijing wants to examine and control the political sentiments of all election candidates and to redefine the districts for the election of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. According to Foreign Minister Wang Yi on March 7, the changes are “Hong Kong’s transition from chaos to governance,” according to the *Spiegel*. The transition is “in the full interest of all parties” because loving Hong Kong and patriotism were exactly the same thing. The Hong Kong media – according to *Die Zeit* as of March 11 – reported that the committee for the election of the Hong Kong Chief Executive would be enlarged from 1,200 to 1,500 members. In the future, the Election Committee would also decide who is allowed to run in the parliamentary elections, “which means that candidates would indirectly depend on Beijing’s approval.” According to the reports, the Hong Kong Legislative Council should be enlarged from 70 to 90 seats.

This is a further step to marginalize the forces close to democracy (*Der Spiegel* March 7, 2021; *Die Zeit* March 11, 2021).

## Taiwan

**February 8, 2021:**

### Pope Francis greets Taiwan on the Chinese New Year

On the sidelines of this year’s New Year’s Reception for the Holy See Accredited Diplomatic Corps, Taiwan’s Ambassador to the Holy See, Matthew S.M. Lee, conveyed to the Pope New Year greetings on behalf of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and all of the Taiwanese people. According to a report from *UCAN*, Lee said, “the Pope was in good spirits, wished a good start to the lunar year and promised to continue to pray for Taiwan.” In January, President Tsai sent a letter to Pope Francis in response to his message for the 54th World Day of Peace on January 1. In the letter she mentions, among other things, how Taiwan, which is only slightly affected by the Corona pandemic, expressed global solidarity and sent tens of millions of medical masks and protective clothing to Central and South America, Asia, the

EU and the USA. It also commemorates the humanitarian efforts of Ambassador Matthew Lee, who distributed food and blankets to the homeless on the Taiwanese National Day in October in Rome. At the same time, she expressed her displeasure that the 23 million Taiwanese are still excluded from the World Health Organization.

For years, the PR China has prevented the island from being granted observer status or even membership in the WHO (*AsiaNews* Jan. 1, 2021; *FAZ* April 4, 2020; *UCAN* Feb. 2, 2021; <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6093>; see also *RCTC* 2021, No. 1, p. 16).

February 6, 11, 2021:

## Taiwan: Sino-Burmese protest against the military coup in Myanmar

Wearing red, the color of the National League for Democracy (NLD) of Aung San Suu Kyi, 300 people demonstrated on February 6 in “Little Burma” in New Taipei’s Zhonghe District against the military coup in Myanmar on February 1. Ko Ko Thu, 54, who fled to Taiwan after the 1988 bloodily suppressed protests and helped organize the Taipei rally, told the *Taipei Times* on February 7: “Taiwan is a very democratic country. I hope that in the future, even if I am dead, that Myanmar can be democratic like Taiwan.”

In “Little Burma” near the Nanshijiao metro station on Huaxin Street – the signs in the Burmese language on the facades of the shops shape the atmosphere there – around 40,000 immigrants from Burma, most of them ethnic Chinese, have settled in the last few decades, reports *Diplomat Brief* of March 18, 2017. Many are descendants of Kuomintang members who fled to Burma (now Myanmar) at the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949 in the fight against the communist guerrillas and were initially stuck there after Chiang Kai-shek sought refuge in Taiwan. In 1954, after the recapture of China had proven hopeless, an estimated 7,000 soldiers and their descendants were repatriated to Taiwan. Others have fled Myanmar in recent years due to repression and anti-Chinese resentment. At first, many found it difficult to get used to local life and languages, the Taiwanese dialect and Mandarin. Trade between the two countries is now flourishing and over 200 Taiwanese companies operate in Myanmar.

Thousands of members of the Christian minorities in Buddhist Myanmar, including priests and women religious, took part in the protests in Myanmar, which have been going on since February 1 and against which the military is using ever greater violence. The Archbishop of Rangoon, Cardinal Charles Bo, also called several times for non-violent protests against the military coup.

According to estimates, the population of Myanmar is around 54.5 million. According to a 2014 census, the religions are divided as follows: Buddhism 87.9%, Christianity 6.2%, Islam 4.3%, Hinduism 0.5%, popular tribal beliefs 0.8%, others 0.2% and without religion 0.1%. According to a report from *UCAN* on November 20, 2020, the 750,000 Catholics occupy a modest place.

*Willi Boehl*

This “News Update” was first published in *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 7-15 (in German).

## Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China – Update for the Year 2020

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge

In this issue of our annual statistical update, we present, as always, some newly published studies. This time it is about “Western religion fever” in rural China, the “Chinese cultural identity” of religious adherents, the connection between religiosity and the willingness to donate, the development of Buddhist religious life in China and reasons why Chinese become Christians. We also bring figures on the individual religions from the year 2020 or – since new figures are not available for each religion every year – from previous years.

### 1. From Chinese Research

Since 2015 at the latest, “Sinicisation” of religious teachings and religious precepts has been a central demand of religious policy under Xi Jinping.<sup>1</sup> This goes along with the concern to increase the identification (*rentong* 认同) of China's religious followers “with the great fatherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese socialism with Chinese characteristics” – as stated in the new regulations for the Party's United Front work.<sup>2</sup> The dichotomy of “Western” versus “Chinese” religiosity has come back into focus. All this is reflected in different ways in the publications by Chinese researchers discussed in the following.

#### 1.1 “‘Western Religion Fever’ in Rural China: Myth or Truth?”

A year ago we reported here on the attempt of the authors Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni, using results of the China Family Panel Studies, to answer the controver-

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This article was first published under the title “Statistik zu Religionen und Kirchen in der Volksrepublik China. Ein Update für das Jahr 2020” in *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 24-36.

- 1 In May 2015, Xi Jinping declared at a Party meeting on United Front work that the orientation towards Sinicisation must be maintained in religious work; he repeated this in his keynote speech at the National Conference on Religious Work in April 2016.
- 2 “Regulations on the United Front Work of the Chinese Communist Party” (*Zhongguo gongchandang tongyi zhanxian gongzuo tiaoli* 中国共产党统一战线工作条例), revised version issued by the CCP Central Committee on Dec. 21, 2020, published on Jan. 5, 2021 at [www.xinhuanet.com/politics/zywj/2021-01/05/c\\_1126949202.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/zywj/2021-01/05/c_1126949202.htm). For a German translation of the chapter on “Religious Work,” see *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 16-17.

sial, long-standing question “How many Protestants are there really in China?”<sup>3</sup> In 2020, the three researchers from the Department of Sociology of Peking University took up the question of whether there is a “Western religion fever in rural areas” (农村西方宗教热). China Family Panel Studies (*Zhongguo jiating zhuizong diaocha* 中国家庭追踪调查, abbr.: CFPS) is a “nationally representative, annual longitudinal survey” funded by the Chinese government through Peking University.<sup>4</sup> Since 2012, the study participants have also been regularly surveyed on the topic of religion.

Wu Yue, Zhang Chunni and Lu Yunfeng explain in the introduction to their article<sup>5</sup> published in the journal *Zongjiao* why they find it necessary to question the hypothesis of a “Western religion fever in rural areas.” According to the authors, this hypothesis has been receiving a great deal of attention in various circles in China for almost 20 years, with demands for State intervention against the supposedly uncontrolled growth of “Western” religions being derived from it, for example, with the argument that China’s “cultural security” must be protected. Especially influential – according to the authors – is a study of the Xiuyuan Foundation with the title “The Spread of Western Religion in Rural China” (in the following: “Xiuyuan Study”).<sup>6</sup> This study argues that over the last three decades, Western religions, mainly Christianity, have completely replaced traditional religions and folk beliefs as the dominant religions in rural areas. According to the Xiuyuan Study, over 95% of rural religious adherents are Protestants, of whom 70% belong to “underground Protestantism” (house churches and “heretical cults”). Wu Yue, Zhang Chunni and Lu Yunfeng criticise the fact that the Xiuyuan Study does not cite any sources for its figures. In three points they therefore want to test the plausibility of the hypothesis of Western religion fever in the countryside with the help of the data from the CFPS.<sup>7</sup>

### 1) Are Western religions in the rural areas more popular than the traditional religions?

Using data from the CFPS survey of 2016 (CFPS 2016 for short), the authors first examine whether the Xiuyuan Study’s hypothesis of the dominance of Western religions in rural China is actually valid. To do that, they look at the results of CFPS 2016 in terms of the proportion of religious adherents in the rural population, their degree of organisation, the frequency of their religious practice and their attitude towards religion. For the purpose of

3 Using different methods of assessment, they came to the conclusion that there were almost 40 million Protestants in China in 2016. Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2020, pp. 21-30, here especially p. 27.

4 Since 2010, the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University has periodically surveyed a fixed panel of families and individuals in 25 of China’s 31 provinces, direct-controlled municipalities and autonomous regions of [Mainland] China, i.e. all except Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Hainan. The survey has a target sample size of 16,000 households. Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are not included in the survey. For the religion-related findings of the survey already discussed in *RCTC*, see Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 21-28; same 2017, pp. 26-28; same 2020, pp. 21-30.

5 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020. The writing of the article was financially supported by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League as part of the project “Study of the Situation of Religious Affiliation of Today’s Rural Youth”; *ibid.* p. 5.

6 Xiuyuan Foundation [2014]. According to Wu, Zhang and Lu, this study has similarities with the “theory of religious ecology” (*zongjiao shengtai lun* 宗教生态论); see Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 5. The Xiuyuan Foundation (修远基金会, English name Longway Foundation), based in Beijing, operates the website [www.xiuyuan.org](http://www.xiuyuan.org).

7 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, pp. 5-6.



Map: [d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=27749&lang=de](http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=27749&lang=de)

**Provinces, Direct-Controlled Municipalities and Autonomous Regions of China – Map and List of Abbreviations**

AH Anhui, BJ Beijing, CQ Chongqing, FJ Fujian, GD Guangdong, GS Gansu, GX Guangxi, GZ Guizhou, Hain Hainan, HB Hubei, Heb Hebei, Hen Henan, HL Heilongjiang, HN Hunan, JL Jilin, JS Jiangsu, JX Jiangxi, LN Liaoning, NM Inner Mongolia, NX Ningxia, QH Qinghai, SC Sichuan, SD Shandong, SH Shanghai, SN Shaanxi, SX Shanxi, TJ Tianjin, XJ Xinjiang, XZ Tibet, YN Yunnan, ZJ Zhejiang.

the study, the authors define Protestantism and Catholicism as “Western religions,” Buddhism and Daoism as “traditional religions.”<sup>8</sup>

Around 13% of the rural respondents to the CFPS 2016 survey described themselves as religious believers. Of these, 76% indicated belief in traditional religions, 19% in Western religions, 3% in Islam and 2% in other religions. This means that, according to CFPS 2016, traditional religions continue to dominate the religious composition in rural areas, accounting for three quarters of all religious adherents, almost four times as many as Western religions.<sup>9</sup>

At 56%, the degree of organisation among the surveyed adherents of Western religions was significantly higher than among adherents of traditional religions (8.9%). According to the authors the reason lies in the different forms of organisation of the religions: In the traditional religions even pious lay persons do not think they have joined a religious

8 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 6. Folk belief was not asked about in CFPS 2016, but according to the authors, this even strengthens their argument, because if folk belief had been included in the survey, its adherents would be added to the balance in favour of traditional Chinese rather than Western religiosity. *Ibid.*

9 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 7.

organisation, only monks and nuns are organised, whereas in the Christian churches the lay persons are also registered members or at least feel they belong to a specific church.<sup>10</sup>

The proportion of those actively practising their religion in rural areas was higher among the followers of Western religions surveyed, at 51.8%, than among the followers of traditional religions, at 40.9%. However, among the followers of Western religions, the proportion who said they never practised was also higher, at 23.8%, than among the traditional religions, at 12.1%.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the authors compared the attitude of rural religious adherents to their faith, i.e. their answers to the question of how important faith is to them. There were clear differences: for 62.4% of the adherents of Western religions surveyed by CFPS 2016, religion was “very important,” but it was “very important” to only 30.3% of the adherents of traditional religions.<sup>12</sup>

The conclusion of the authors: In rural areas adherents of traditional religions still predominate. However, due to the higher degree of organisation, the high level of activity and the great importance of religion for the followers, the “visibility” of Western religions is higher in rural areas, giving the impression that there is a “Western religion fever” there. This impression, however, is explained by the inherent differences between the two types of religions in terms of organisational form and religious practice.<sup>13</sup>

### 2) *Are Western religions more popular in rural areas than in the cities?*

That hypothesis of the Xiuyuan Study is also not supported by the CFPS-data. For this the authors Wu, Zhang and Lu compare the results of the 2012 and 2016 surveys. In CFPS 2012, 2.4% of rural respondents and 1.9% of urban respondents described themselves as adherents of Western religions; in CFPS 2016, 2.4% of rural respondents and 2.6% of urban respondents did so. A comparison of 2012 and 2016 shows that the percentage of adherents of Western religions in rural areas remained the same, whereas in the city it rose by 0.7 percentage points. Growth of Western religions is therefore greater in cities than in rural areas, not the opposite, according to the authors.<sup>14</sup>

### 3) *Differences between the religious situation in North and South China using the example of Henan and Guangdong*

With this comparison (figures according to CFPS 2016), the authors show how great the regional differences are in the religious structure of the population. In Guangdong’s rural areas, the proportion of traditional religious adherents is greater than the national aver-

10 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 7.

11 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 7. In the CFPS 2016 survey, for traditional religions, those believers were considered active (*huoyue* 活跃) who reported practising (*baibai* 拜拜, *shao xiang bai fo* 烧香拜佛) at least once a month, and for Western religions, those who reported attending worship (*zuo libai* 做礼拜) at least once a week. *Ibid.*

12 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 7.

13 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, pp. 7-8.

14 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 8.

age, whereas in Henan’s rural areas, the proportion of Western religious adherents is above the national average.<sup>15</sup>

Table 1: Population proportion of adherents of traditional and Western religions in the rural areas of Guangdong and Henan provinces

	Guangdong	Henan
Proportion of adherents of traditional religions in the total rural population	16.6%	7.5%
Proportion of adherents of Western religions in the total rural population	0.5%	8.1%
Proportion of adherents of traditional religions in the religiously observant rural population	95.7%	47.4%
Proportion of adherents of Western religions in the religiously observant rural population	No data given	50.9%

Data: CFPS 2016. Table compiled according to data from Wu – Zhang – Lu 2020, p. 10.

In their conclusion, the authors call for a rethinking of the term “Western religion fever” in the countryside. Firstly, they find the use of the term “religion fever” – which originally referred to the resurgence of religions after the Cultural Revolution – inappropriate in this context. Secondly, they argue that, while the number of Protestants in China has grown very rapidly, from 3 million in 1982 to nearly 40 million in 2018, there are, however, very large regional differences, and nationwide Protestantism is nowhere near as widespread as traditional religions. Furthermore, they point out that the net growth of Western religions is higher in cities than in rural areas. “So as urbanization increases, it is more worthwhile to keep an eye on the development of Western religions in cities.” In short, “The ‘Western religion fever in rural China’ is better described as a myth, not a fact.”<sup>16</sup>

## 1.2 What factors influence religious believers’ identification with Chinese culture?

A study by the researcher Liu Ying deals with another religious-political term – the “Chinese cultural identity” (*Zhonghua wenhua rentong* 中华文化认同).<sup>17</sup> The core issue here is whether “Western” religions alienate their adherents from Chinese culture. According to Liu Ying, cultural identity in a broad sense includes not only identification with the spiritual culture, but also with the material and political (system) culture of the country.<sup>18</sup> Liu Ying begins by referring to Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at the 2016 National Conference

15 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, p. 10. – On the religious situation in Henan Province, see also the study by Duan Qi 段琦, “Henan Kaifeng he Nanyang de zongjiao geju ji chengyin baogao” 河南开封和南阳的宗教格局及成因报告 (Field Study Report on the Present State and Pattern of Religions in Kaifeng and Nanyang, Henan Province), in: Jin Ze 金泽 – Qiu Yonghui 邱永辉 (eds.), *Zhongguo zongjiao baogao (2013)* 中国宗教报告 *Annual Report on Religions in China (2013)*, Zongjiao lanpishu 宗教蓝皮书 Blue Book of Religions, Beijing 2013, pp. 252-280; presented in Wenzel-Teuber 2014, pp. 31-37.

16 Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020, pp. 10-11.

17 Liu Ying 2020. The author is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, College of Humanities & Social Development of Nanjing Agricultural University.

18 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 82-83.

on Religious Work, describing his own study as reference material for practical efforts to increase religious believers' identification with Chinese culture.<sup>19</sup>

Liu Ying attempts to answer the question of which factors influence the identification of religious believers with Chinese culture by looking at the faith group of Protestants. To this end, he randomly selected two Protestant congregations in each of the four cities of Nanjing, Kunshan, Taizhou and Huai'an in Jiangsu Province for a rather small field study. In each community, 200 questionnaires were distributed to individuals between the ages of 18 and 50. The response rate was 1,317 validly completed questionnaires.<sup>20</sup>

To determine Chinese cultural identity, the aspects "festivals" and "Confucian culture" were selected. First, the study participants were asked, "Which festival do you think is more important?" If they chose Chinese New Year or Qingming (the memorial festival for the dead), then they were considered more connected to Chinese culture; if they chose festivals such as Christmas or Easter, that was considered to indicate a lower level of identification with Chinese culture. Regarding Confucian culture, the participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "Confucius is a great man" (孔子是了不起的人); "We can read Confucian classics" (我们可以读儒家经典); and "We can venerate Confucius" (我们可以崇拜孔子).<sup>21</sup>

Other questions asked for personal information (including level of education). To determine their religious background, the study participants were asked to state how devout they considered themselves to be (in four gradations from "very devout" to "not devout at all") and whether they had been baptized. Furthermore, they were asked the questions: "There are many gods in the world, Shangdi 上帝 [the Christian God] is one of them" and "Everything in the Bible is correct"; here the participants could choose between "I agree" and "I disagree." In addition, they were asked about the frequency of their attendance at church services, their Bible reading and personal prayer.<sup>22</sup>

These variables were then related to each other.<sup>23</sup> Here, it suffices to address the main results, which are presented by Liu Ying as follows:

In the case of feast days, according to Liu, education had a "positive" influence: the higher the respondent's level of education, the higher the degree of identification with traditional Chinese feasts; per level of education (elementary school, lower middle school, upper middle school, college [*dazhuan*], bachelor's degree and above), it increased by 8%. The degree of devotion had a "negative" influence: Christians who considered themselves comparatively devout were 32% less likely to identify with traditional feasts than those who considered themselves comparatively less devout. Baptism and prayer also had "negative" effects: Among baptized Christians, identification with traditional feasts was 41% lower

19 Liu Ying 2020, p. 82.

20 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 82, 84.

21 Liu Ying 2020, p. 84.

22 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 84-85.

23 The mathematical formula used for that purpose and two tables with the results can be found in Liu Ying 2020, pp. 85-88.

than among Christians who had not yet been baptized; among Christians who prayed frequently, identification was 42% lower than among Christians who rarely prayed.<sup>24</sup>

Agreement with the statements “Confucius is a great man” and “We can read the Confucian classics” increased with the level of education, among other factors; religious factors hardly played a role. In contrast, for the statement “We can venerate Confucius,” religious variables had significant effects: the more religious the respondents considered themselves, the higher was [surprisingly] their endorsement of veneration of Confucius. However, the higher their affirmation of the belief in one God, the less they agreed with the veneration of Confucius. Among those already baptized, agreement with the veneration of Confucius was 60% lower than among the unbaptized, and among frequent Bible readers it was 47% lower than among infrequent readers. According to Liu’s assessment, the religious variables played such a large role in attitudes toward the veneration of Confucius because believers generally see here a conflict with the church teaching, “Thou shalt not worship false gods.” The approval of Confucius as a person, on the other hand, is unproblematic from their religious point of view. Liu Ying’s conclusion: Only when formal conflicts occur between elements of Chinese culture and religious doctrine does the cultural identification of Christians decrease; where such conflicts do not exist, it is high.<sup>25</sup>

For the practice [of religious policy], Liu makes the following suggestions: 1. Education, especially schooling, can effectively strengthen emotional identification with Chinese culture among the population, including adherents of religions. 2. Interpret religious teachings and religious precepts in a way that is consistent with the content of Chinese culture. Here, the author exhorts – with reference to Xi Jinping’s speech on religion – that scholars and religious representatives work together to “unearth those doctrines that are consistent with Chinese culture” and “pay greater attention to the parts where there are slight formal conflicts.” 3. Provide appropriate training to religious personnel, as their interpretation of religious teachings directly influences believers’ understanding of religious and Chinese culture.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3 Are religious persons more generous donors?

Liu Li and Ruan Rongping<sup>27</sup> explored this question in a study for which they analysed data from another nationwide survey, the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, *Zhongguo zonghe shehui diaocha* 中国综合社会调查),<sup>28</sup> which also collects information on religious belief. They used data from the 2012 CGSS survey (CGSS 2012), which included a total

24 Liu Ying 2020, p. 86.

25 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 86-87.

26 Liu Ying 2020, p. 89.

27 Liu Li belongs to the Faculty of Economics and Management of China University of Petroleum (Beijing), Ruan Rongping to the Faculty of Agriculture and Rural Development of Renmin University, see Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 5.

28 According to its official website, the 2003 CGSS is “the earliest national representative continuous survey run by [an] academic institution in China mainland.” The CGSS aims “to systematically monitor the changing relationship between social structure and quality of life in both urban and rural China.” The Department of Sociology of the Renmin University of China and the Survey Research Center of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology jointly launched the CGSS in 2003. It now involves a network of more than 40 Chinese universities and academies. See <http://cgss.ruc.edu.cn/English/Home.htm> and the subpages in the section: “About CGSS.”

sample of 11,763 people. The survey also included a question module on charitable giving with a sample of 5,818 people. In their analysis, the researchers focused on the relationship between religion and donations.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the religion-related variables, Liu and Ruan first differentiated in their study whether the respondents believed in a religion or not. Following international research, in a second step, Liu and Ruan differentiated between “religious belief with high salvation orientation” (*gao jiushuxing zongjiao xinyang* 高救贖性宗教信仰) and “religious belief with low salvation orientation” (*di jiushuxing zongjiao xinyang* 低救贖性宗教信仰) among respondents who had indicated a religious belief. This classification was based on how closely, according to the teachings of each religion, the effect [of earning merit] through donations is seen to affect the afterlife.<sup>30</sup> Of the religions that could be chosen by the respondents in CGSS, the authors categorised Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, other Christian groups, Judaism, Hinduism and others as religions with high salvation orientation, Buddhism, Daoism and folk beliefs (worship of Mazu, Guangong, etc.) as religions with low salvation orientation.<sup>31</sup>

The donation module asked whether the respondents had made donations (that was the case for 31.88% of the 5,818 respondents), and if so, for what purpose. For their study, Liu and Ruan distinguished between religious donations and secular donations, i.e. donations for all purposes other than religion, such as for poverty alleviation, disaster relief, animal welfare, education, culture, etc.<sup>32</sup>

Here only a few of the main results<sup>33</sup> of the study will be given:

The quantity of donations<sup>34</sup> was 47-49% higher among respondents with religious faith than among respondents without religious faith.<sup>35</sup> Religious believers also donated significantly more to secular causes than non-believers. Religious faith – so the authors conclude – also benefits the development of civil society.<sup>36</sup>

29 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 9.

30 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 9. Liu and Ruan cite here as models for their typologisation of religions: R.M. McCleary, “Salvation, Damnation, and Economic Incentives,” in: *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22 (2007) 1, pp. 49-74; H. Tao – P. Yeh, “Religion as an Investment: Comparing the Contributions and Volunteer Frequency Among Christians, Buddhists and Folk Religionists,” in: *Southern Economic Journal* 73 (2007) 3, pp. 770-790; J. Thornton – S. Helms, “Afterlife Incentives in Charitable Giving,” in: *Applied Economics* 45 (2013) 19, pp. 2779-2791; for an online version, see [www.asrec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Helms-Thornton-Afterlife-Incentives-in-Charitable-Giving.pdf](http://www.asrec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Helms-Thornton-Afterlife-Incentives-in-Charitable-Giving.pdf). The categorisation of religions in the studies mentioned above varies. Tao and Yeh, looking at religions in Taiwan, see the role of merit for the afterlife as highest for Christianity, followed by Buddhism, and lowest for folk beliefs (cf. Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 7). In contrast, a table of typologisation according to McCleary presented by Thornton and Helms with their own interpretations sets the “salvific merit” as low for most Protestant groups, medium for Hindus, Catholics and Sunnis, and high for Buddhists, Pentecostals, Jews and Sufis; cf. Table 1 in the online version cited above. The background to these theories is described by Liu – Ruan 2019, pp. 5-8.

31 The authors do not explain exactly how they arrive at this classification.

32 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 9.

33 For the statistical method used and the corresponding tables, see Liu – Ruan 2019, esp. pp. 8-15.

34 Chin. *juanzeng shuliang* 捐贈數量. It is not clear to the author of this Statistical Update whether this refers to donation frequency or donation amount. However, this makes no significant difference to the overall message of the study.

35 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 11.

36 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 14.

Differentiated according to the two types of religion, the authors arrived at the following results:

Followers of religions with a low salvation orientation, compared to non-believers, were 3% more likely to donate, and within the group of donors, their donation quantity was 23-45% higher.

Followers of religions with a high salvation orientation, compared to non-believers, were 53% more likely to donate, and within the group of donors, their donation quantity was 48% higher.<sup>37</sup>

The authors conclude from this that religions that place greater emphasis on salvific merit for the afterlife have a particularly motivating effect on donation behaviour. They admit, however, that this is a hypothesis and that the higher willingness to donate among followers of certain religions could also be related to differences in the organisational form of the religions.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. Buddhism, Daoism and Folk Beliefs

“China has numerous Buddhist and Taoist believers, but it is difficult to accurately estimate their numbers as there are no set registration procedures which ordinary believers must follow as part of their religion. [...] China also has many folk beliefs which are closely linked to local cultures, traditions and customs, in which a large number of people participate” – according to the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018).

For this largest sector of religious life in China, the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) of 2007<sup>39</sup> still offers some orientation; it arrived at the following figures, among others:

<p>Correction: * 185 million</p> <p><del>85 million</del></p>	<p>self-identify as Buddhists, i.e. 18% of the population above the age of 16.</p>
<p>17.3 million</p>	<p>have taken the triple refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), i.e. have formalized their adherence to Buddhism through ritual.</p>
<p>12 million</p>	<p>of the adult population clearly identify with Daoism [corresponding to <del>2,54%</del> of the population above 16 years, kwt].<sup>40</sup></p>
<p>Correction: 1.17%</p> <p>173 million</p>	<p>have exercised some Daoist practices or taken part in such, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular belief.</p>

In the absence of other, more recent data, reference is again made to a study discussed last year: Based on the 2012, 2014 and 2016 surveys of CFPS, in 2019 Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni determined the following percentages of “nominal” adherents of Buddhism and Daoism in the total population – meaning participants of the CFPS 2016

37 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 15.

38 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 16.

39 For the CSLS, from May to July 2007, a sample of 7,021 individuals aged 16 to 75 years was interviewed in 56 selected localities of different size as to their religious self-identification. In July 2010, Yang Fenggang from the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University (West Lafayette, USA) presented the results of the study in Beijing. Figures quoted here according to Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

40 The percentage ~~2,54%~~ was calculated by the author of this Statistical Update (kwt) by analogy with the data given by CSLS for Buddhists (~~85 million~~ correspond to 18% of the population over 16 years of age).

Correction: 1.17%  
Correction: 185 million

Corrections on this page added on May 19, 2022.

survey who had indicated in at least one of the three surveys (2012, 2014, 2016) that they adhered to Buddhism (or believed in Buddha and Bodhisattvas) or Daoism (or believed in Daoist gods and immortals), with the following result:<sup>41</sup>

17.7% of the CFPS 2016 sample were “nominal” Buddhists.

1.27% of the CFPS 2016 sample were “nominal” Daoists.

These percentages are close to the CSLS results.

## 2.1 Buddhism

34,090 registered Buddhist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2021<sup>42</sup> (2020: 34.100), of which:

28,528	Han-Chinese Buddhism (2020: 28.538)
3,857	Tibetan Buddhism (unchanged)
1,705	Theravada-Buddhism (unchanged)

222,000 Buddhist religious personnel (monks and nuns) recognized and registered with the authorities according to NRAA 2017 (as also State Council 2018), of which:

72,000	Han-Chinese Buddhism
148,000	Tibetan Buddhism
2,000	Theravada-Buddhism

41 Buddhist academies (State Council 2018)

### 2.1.1 Thesis of a “Plateau” in the Development of Buddhist Monastic Life in China

Douglas M. Gildow, Religious Studies professor specialising in Buddhism at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, published an essay in 2020 entitled “Questioning the Revival. Buddhist Monasticism in China since Mao.”<sup>43</sup> In it, he questions common periodisation that generally speaks of a revival period of monastic life in Chinese Buddhism from 1978 onwards. According to Gildow’s findings, the phase of strong revival that began after the end of the Cultural Revolution ended around the year 2000 at the latest. He uses very little, official numerical material, but many insights gained from field research in some 30 mon-

41 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 173, Table 4. Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2020, p. 25. Since Tibet, Qinghai and Inner Mongolia – areas where a particularly large number of Buddhists live – are not covered by CFPS, the proportion of Buddhists in the population of the PR China could actually be even higher; cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.

42 National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) database “Basic Data on Sites for Religious Activities” at [www.sara.gov.cn/zjhdcjsjbx/index.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zjhdcjsjbx/index.jhtml), data retrieved on March 1, 2021. The figures in brackets reflect the results of the retrieval on March 30, 2020 (Wenzel-Teuber 2020, p. 31) – so there was a change (reduction) only in the area of Han-Chinese Buddhism, otherwise the figures have remained unchanged since 2018. The results of a detailed search conducted on March 17, 2016 which also takes into consideration the distribution according to province is found in Wenzel-Teuber 2016, p. 27, Table 1.

43 Gildow 2020.



Buddhist monks in China. Photo: Dr. Hans-Wilm Schütte.

asteries and 13 “Buddhist seminaries” (academies) in 15 provincial-level administrative units of China in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012/2013 and 2019.

Gildow first points out that the understanding of who should count as a monastic in the Chinese Buddhist context is not uniform. For example, religious scholars usually include novices, while state documents only recognise ordained monks and nuns as religious personnel of Han Buddhism (to which Gildow refers exclusively in his contribution).<sup>44</sup> He believes that official figures for Han Buddhist monks and nuns are basically accurate and do reflect trends of growth or decline. He estimates that if novices and unofficially ordained monks and nuns are included, the total number of monastics is about 30% higher than the official data, and that this percentage has been relatively stable over the past 20 years.<sup>45</sup>

Gildow then compares the following official Chinese figures in particular:

1997 (NRAA *et al.*): 200,000 Buddhist religious personnel, of whom 70,000 are of the Han tradition.

2014 (NRAA): 222,000 Buddhist religious personnel, of whom 72,000 are of the Han tradition.

<sup>44</sup> Gildow 2020, pp. 12-15, especially p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Gildow 2020, p. 21.

He concludes that according to this data, the number of monks and nuns of the Han tradition grew by only 2.9% between 1997 and 2014, a lower growth rate than that of the total Chinese population.<sup>46</sup>

More revealing than these figures is the following background information: Several monks shared with Gildow in 2010 and 2013 that many Buddhist monastics have returned to lay life in the last five to ten years. A senior Chinese scholar of Buddhism even told him in a conversation about ordination figures that “over half disrobe.” Gildow’s assessment here is that monks in particular (and fewer nuns) are turning their backs on monastic life.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, according to Gildow, there are indications that the number of novices is declining significantly. An informant told him in 2013 that in the early 1990s senior monks had so many novices that they could afford to be very strict and scare many away. Now (in 2013), however, he said, there were far fewer novices, who were therefore “pampered like precious commodities.” Reports Gildow received from monks in the summer of 2019 indicated a continuing decline in recruitment to Buddhist monastic life, although one monk suggested that recruitment was more stable among nuns than among monks. According to Gildow, some Han Buddhist academies are said to be struggling with declining student numbers. Overall, then, Gildow sees no evidence of a quantitative resurgence of Han Buddhist monasticism.<sup>48</sup> Instead, “at some point over the past two decades, the growth of monasticism probably reached a plateau, or possibly even entered a modest decline.” Gildow attributes the lower numbers of Buddhist monks and nuns, in addition to several other reasons, to China’s declining birth rate: parents are less willing to have their only child enter a monastery. Gildow also sees no evidence for a revival of Buddhist monasticism in China in qualitative terms.<sup>49</sup>

The following references are also interesting: According to Gildow, the sites for Han Buddhist religious activities listed in the NRAA database – 28,528 according to NRAA database 2021, see above – are not all monasteries, rather they include “lodges for lay Buddhist disciples” (*jushilin* 居士林). Moreover, in his experience, some of the sites listed as “monasteries” would not have a monastic community at all, or at most a “caretaker monk” employed by the commercial operator of the site.<sup>50</sup>

According to Gildow, there are about 50 Han Buddhist “seminaries” (academies) in China, which serve to train monks, nuns and novices, with about 3,000 “seminarians.” He explains the discrepancy with various official figures [e.g. 41 academies according to State Council 2018, see above] partly by the fact that the official statistics “ignore some

46 Gildow 2020, pp. 21-23. – The figures cited by Gildow for 1997 correspond to those in the 1997 White Paper of the State Council “Freedom of Religious Belief in China”; cf. the comparative list of the 1997 and 2018 White Papers on religious freedom in Wenzel-Teuber 2019b, p. 24. The source for 2014, part of a “reader” of the NRAA, has also already been discussed in *RCTC* (cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2015, esp. pp. 20-21, 28-29). Gildow also mentions the figures of the 2018 White Paper on religious freedom [State Council 2018], which also show 222,000 Buddhist religious personnel without further differentiation. The figure was even lower in an internal publication of the Chinese Buddhist Association on its 50th anniversary in 2003 cited by Gildow, namely “over 50,000 monks and nuns of the Han tradition.”

47 Gildow 2020, p. 23.

48 Gildow 2020, pp. 23-24.

49 Gildow 2020, p. 28.

50 Gildow 2020, pp. 15-16.

seminaries entirely.” In 2019, he had heard from informants that there was less tolerance for formally not recognised religious institutions since the party took over the direct administration of religious affairs [in 2018]. He had also heard at the same time that over the next two years, all government-recognised institutes for religious education are to receive funding from the state for 80-85% of their regular operational expenses. So far, according to Gildow, most Buddhist seminaries had received little or no regular financial support from the state.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.2 Daoism

8,349 registered Daoist sites for religious activities according to the NRAA-database 2021,<sup>52</sup> of which:

- 4,011 Quanzhen tradition
- 4,338 Zhengyi tradition

ca. 40,000 Daoist religious personnel (State Council 2018)

10 Daoist academies (State Council 2018)

## 3. Islam

In the multi-ethnic state of the People’s Republic of China, ten ethnic groups are considered Muslim. In the statistics presented by Chinese authorities and academics their population numbers are generally equated with that of the Muslims in China. According to the census of 2010, approximately 23 million people belong to the 10 ethnic groups rated as Muslim, that is 1.74% of the total population,<sup>53</sup> distributed as follows:

Table 5: Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Population 2010 (Persons)	Percentage of the Total Muslim Population (%)
Hui	10,586,000	45.74
Uighur	10,069,000	43.51
Kasakh	1,462,600	6.32
Dongxiang	621,500	2.69
Kirghiz	186,700	less than 1
Salar	130,600	less than 1
Tajik	51,100	less than 1
Usbek	10,600	less than 1
Bao’an	20,000	less than 1
Tatar	3,556	less than 1

Data: 2010 census. Table compiled according to Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 71.

51 Gildow 2020, pp. 18-19.

52 The number of registered Daoist sites listed in the NRAA database has remained unchanged since 2018.

53 Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 70-71. – In 2014, Liu Xiaochun published an analysis of the population structure of the members of ethnic groups considered Muslim based on data from the last, 6th, national census in China in 2010. It was presented in detail in Wenzel-Teuber 2016, pp. 30-34.

According to the White Paper (State Council 2018), Islam in the People's Republic of China has

35,000	sites for religious activities [mosques]
57,000	religious personnel
10	institutes for religious education [Qur'an institutes]

#### 4. Protestantism

The official figures on Protestantism in China are still those from the work report of the official Protestant governing bodies, Chinese Christian Council and Three-Self Movement, at the 10th National Assembly of Chinese Protestantism in November 2018 (Gao Feng 2018) and from the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018):

38 million	believers (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
60,000	churches (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
14,000	professional clerics (male and female pastors, teachers, presbyters) as well as 22,000 male and female preachers (Gao Feng 2018)
57,000	religious personnel (State Council 2018)
22	theological seminars (Gao Feng 2018)

Regarding the number of clergy / religious personnel, there is a surprisingly large discrepancy between the work report of the Protestant bodies and the White Paper of the State Council.

In 2020 Joann Pittman of the Protestant website *ChinaSource*<sup>54</sup> asked various researchers and pastors for their “preferred estimates” for the present number of Protestant Christians in Mainland China. Among them were the following estimates:

Yang Fenggang (sociologist, Center on Religion and Chinese Society, Purdue University): 116 million

Carsten Vala (political scientist, Loyola University Maryland): over 100 million, ca. 100 million or 85-90 million (three estimates).

These two researchers assumed an annual growth rate of 7.3% (Yang) or 7% (Vala) for the Protestant population in China. Yang used the Pew Forum's 2011 figure of 58 million Protestants as a starting point,<sup>55</sup> Vala used three different numbers from various sources (including the Pew Forum's 2011 figure) as a basis for his calculations and therefore came to three different estimates. Yang has drawn attention with very high estimates before.<sup>56</sup>

54 In 1997 *ChinaSource* began as a joint project of several North American evangelical institutions, it is registered in California; cf. [www.chinasource.org](http://www.chinasource.org).

55 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (ed.), *Global Christianity. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population* (with “Appendix C: Methodology for China”), [www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-worlds-christian-population.aspx](http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-worlds-christian-population.aspx), published in 2011; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2013, p. 21.

56 The British newspaper *The Telegraph* quoted Yang Fenggang on 19 April 2014 as predicting that China “is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world very soon,” with more than 247 million Protestant and Catholic Christians in 2030. At that time, Yang assumed an annual growth of China's Christian population of 10%. On the controversy this triggered, cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 32-33. Yang was also in charge of the CSLS

*ChinaSource's* aim with this survey campaign was to show that estimates differ and are arrived at in different ways.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.1 Reasons why Chinese become Christians

*ChinaSource* also published an interesting survey in 2020 asking about the motivations for people to become Christians and the ways they come to (Protestant) Christianity. The survey was conducted by “Steve Z.” who, according to *ChinaSource*, is a “pastor, writer, researcher and specialist on church development.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, unlike the studies presented in the first chapter of this Statistical Update, it was not conducted by a state research institution with state funds, but is unofficial and has a church background, which is also reflected in the question. Several times in his report Steve Z. contrasts his survey with the household survey conducted in 2008/2009 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (hereafter “CASS survey”).<sup>59</sup> It is difficult to assess how representative Steve Z.’s survey is of Protestantism in China, but it is in any case an insightful addition to the academic-official studies. The following is a summary of Steve Z.’s report.

The survey was conducted between spring 2017 and summer 2018. As the pressure from the authorities on the churches increased strongly during this time, only just under 70 churches from 18 provinces in China finally participated instead of the 1,000 invited. The questionnaires – there was one set of questions for church members and one set for church leaders and church staff – were completed on the church premises. A total of 1,655 validly completed questionnaires for church members and 110 for church leaders and staff were returned. Among the participating churches were 11 rural churches, 43 urban churches, 5 migrant worker churches and 6 “traditional Three-Self churches.” None of these churches had been founded by foreign missionaries. Three churches had a “long history,” i.e. existed before 1979.<sup>60</sup> Analysis of the data collected gave the following results:

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cited above. On the *Atlas of Religion in China* published by Yang with the support of J.E.E. Pettit in 2018, cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019b, pp. 25-28.

- 57 Joann Pittman 2020; there one finds details on the estimates of the five interviewees with their respective explanations of how they arrived at their estimates. In addition to the above-mentioned scholars, three interviewees with relevant practical experience of China had their say, with estimates of 90 million, 70-90 million and 50 million. In an alternative calculation with an assumed annual growth rate of 3%, Vala arrived at 50-60 million Protestant Christians (house churches and official churches) in 2020; *ibid.* – On the statement of a pastor that the number of believers, at least in the “three-self churches,” is tending to fall, cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2020, p. 29.
- 58 The text was published by *ChinaSource* in 2020 as a blog series; the following quotes from the PDF version dated 11 June 2019 (Steve Z. 2019/2020), also published by *ChinaSource* in 2020. Some results of the study have already been presented by Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle) in the “News Update on Religion and Church in China,” in: *RCTC* 2020, No. 4, p. 12.
- 59 According to this CASS study, 23.05 million people considered themselves Protestant Christians (regardless of membership in official or unofficial groups), of whom 67.5% were baptised. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan shijie zongjiao yanjiusuo ketizu 中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所课题组 (Research Group from the Institute of World Religions, CASS), “Zhongguo jidujiao ruhu wenjuan diaocha baogao” 中国基督教入户问卷调查报告 (An In-House Questionnaire Survey on Christianity in China), in: Jin Ze 金泽 – Qiu Yonghui 邱永辉 (eds.), *Zhongguo zongjiao baogao (2010)* 中国宗教报告 *Annual Report on Religions in China (2010)*, Zongjiao lanpishu 宗教蓝皮书 Blue Book of Religions, Beijing 2010, pp. 190-212. The results of the CASS study were presented in Malek 2011, pp. 32-33, 51-53.
- 60 Steve Z. 2019/2020, pp. 11-13. Also, the originally required participation rate of 30% of church members and 50% of pastoral staff [probably with the intention of arriving at representative results] was not strictly implemented due to the difficult security situation and only about 20 churches met this requirement. The 18 provinces were:

**Personal information:** At least 72% of the respondents were women.<sup>61</sup> The great majority were born between the 1950s – 1980s, visibly less in the 1990s and significantly less in the 2000s; the strongest age groups were those born in the 1960s. Steve Z. spoke of a high “feminisation rate” in the churches and a “high degree of ‘ageing.’” While with regard to sex and age the findings of Steve Z.’s survey corresponded to “the three many” which are often attributed to the Protestant communities in China,<sup>62</sup> the educational level of the respondents – as Z. pointed out – had increased significantly compared to the CASS survey: 22% had a university degree (B.A. or above), only 8% were illiterate and 23% had only a primary school certificate (six years of schooling).<sup>63</sup>

**Religious Background:** Of the 1,655 respondents the vast majority – more than 1,200 persons – had a Protestant background that for some could go back as far as the 1950s, e.g. a Protestant member of the family. According to Steve Z., this reflects the fact that China’s social environment does not allow for the free (public) dissemination of Christian ideas, and they are therefore primarily passed on in the private sphere of life.<sup>64</sup>

**“Who had the greatest influence on you becoming a Christian?”** By a wide margin the pastor was indicated by 501 respondents and church employees by 331 respondents. They were followed by mothers (215), friends (189), other relatives (150) and spouses (127). Foreign Christians (65) and fathers (36) were mentioned rather rarely.<sup>65</sup>

**“What media had the greatest influence on you becoming a Christian?”** Here the Bible took first place without competition (named by 863 respondents), followed by books (310). The Internet was referred to by only 157 respondents, thus it had much less influence than evangelisation through written works.<sup>66</sup>

**“Why did you want to become a Christian?” and “What were the most important reasons that led you to become a Christian?”** The answers to these two questions appear in Chart 1 and Chart 2 – evidently multiple responses were possible.

AH, BJ, CQ, GD, GS, GZ, HB, Hen, HL, HN, LN, NM, QH, SC, SD, SN, SX, ZJ; *ibid*, p. 12. The focus of the study was on “Han churches” (汉族教会); *ibid*, p. 2.

61 “At least” because one church did not require study participants to answer questions about their personal information; Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 13.

62 The Chinese expression for this phenomenon is “san duo” 三多 or “lao san duo” 老三多 (three old many), this means “many women, many old, many with low cultural level [educational]” (妇女多、老人多、文化程度低者多); cf. Fredrik Fällman, “‘Two Small Copper Coins’ and Much More Chinese Protestant Women and Their Contributions to the Church – Cases from Past and Present,” in: *RCTC* 2018, No. 3, pp. 39-55, here pp. 39-40 with note 2. Steve Z. mentions “the three many” only in connection with the high proportion of women, not with the age and educational level of the believers.

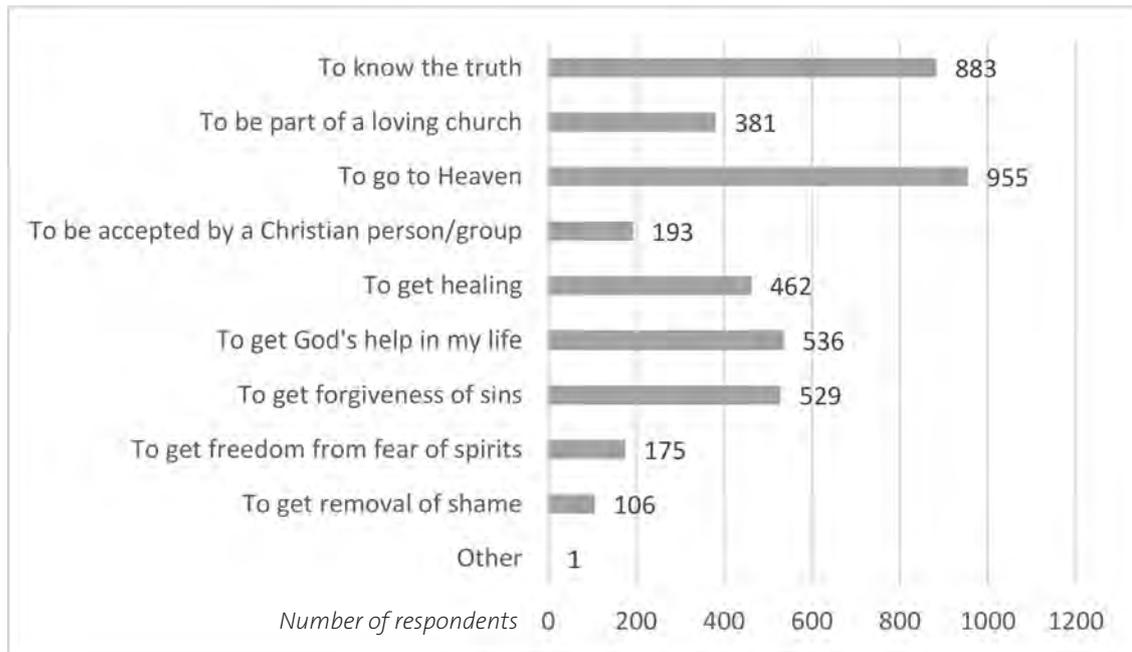
63 Steve Z. 2019/2020, pp. 13-15. In the CASS survey, 54.6% of Christians were illiterate or had only a primary school certificate.

64 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 16.

65 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 19.

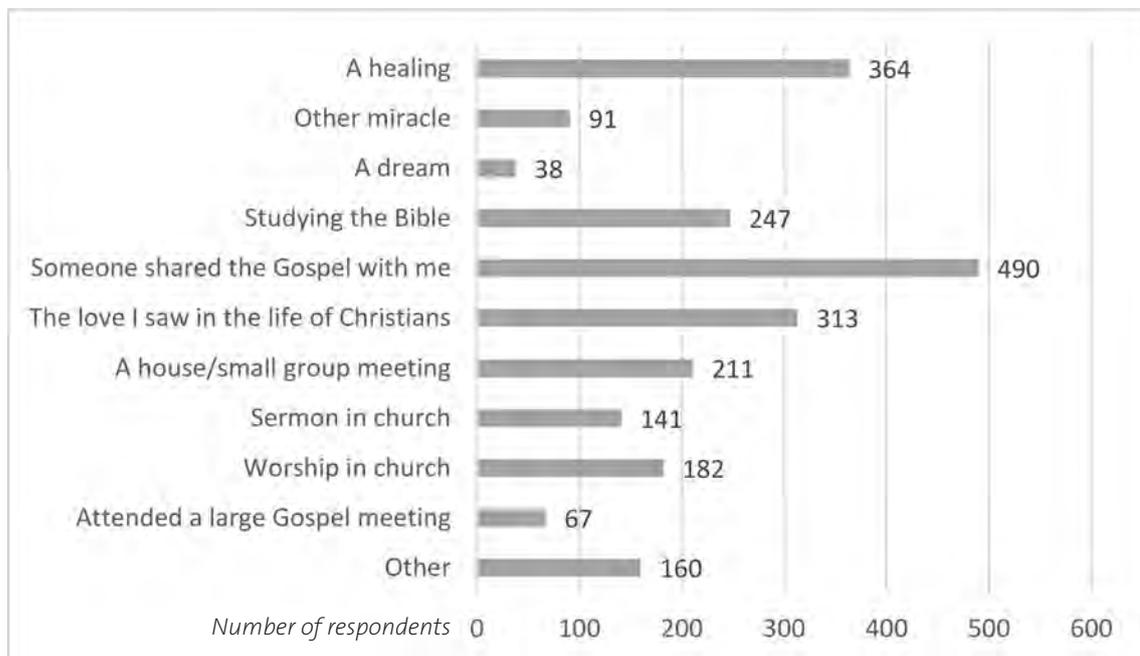
66 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 20. – Z. does not address the question whether the limited influence of the Internet could also be related to the age structure of the participating churches.

Chart 1: “Why did you want to become a Christian?”



Source: Steve Z. 2019/2020, chart on p. 17.

Chart 2: “What were the most important reasons that led you to become a Christian?”



Source: Steve Z. 2019/2020, chart on p. 18.

Steve Z. stresses that most respondents cite metaphysical motives for becoming Christians. “To know the truth” and “to go to heaven” are the reasons given most frequently in Chart 1, far more frequent than the search for healing from sickness. Forgiveness of sins also has a relatively high significance. This shows, according to Steve Z., that there are more idealists among China’s Christians than utilitarians. He points out that this result is fundamentally different from that of the CASS survey according to which 68.8% of the

Protestant Christians surveyed at that time had given personal illness or illness of family members as the reason for their conversion to Christianity.<sup>67</sup> The results presented in Chart 2 confirm that healing from sickness is not the most important factor for conversion to Christianity. It is, rather, personal evangelisation and various forms of engagement with Gospel content that play the most important role.<sup>68</sup>

One of the central conclusions from the study for Steve Z. is therefore: “The pursuit of metaphysical ideals is the primary reason for the growth of the Chinese Christian community.”<sup>69</sup>

## 5. Catholic Church

The following figures on the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2020 are based on data from the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC) of the Diocese of Hong Kong,<sup>70</sup> that specialises in studies on the Catholic Church in Mainland China. Account is also taken of the information provided by the official Catholic governing bodies, specifically their work report presented in 2016 at the 9th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Catholic Church (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016), and the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018). Other important sources are the Shijiazhuang (Hebei Province) based Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) and its website [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org) (other Web address: [www.xinde.org](http://www.xinde.org)), as well as other Chinese Catholic websites.

### 5.1 General Data

#### Faithful

Ca. 10 million total number of Catholics, including both the official part of the Church and the Catholics in the underground, as estimated by HSSC.

Over 6 million number of Catholics according to the official Catholic governing bodies (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016).

6 million number of Catholics according to state data (State Council 2018).

#### Dioceses

146 (115 dioceses and 31 other ecclesiastical circumscriptions) (according to HSSC, corresponding to the Catholic hierarchy)

95 dioceses, plus 7 under the administration according to the government (HSSC)

67 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 17; the percentage mentioned is found in *ibid.*, p. 9. Cf. Malek 2011, p. 52.

68 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 18.

69 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 21.

70 I thank the Holy Spirit Study Centre for making available its figures on the Catholic Church in Mainland China (as of the end of 2020) quoted in the following.

### Bishops

99 of whom

72 bishops in the official Church (66 in office) (HSSC)

27 bishops in the underground Church (14 in office) (HSSC)

Since September 2018 all Chinese bishops are recognised by the Pope.

### Priests

ca. 4.000 in total (the number of new unofficial priests and of those who refuse to officially register is not available) (HSSC)

### Seminaries and Seminarians

6 major seminaries (theological seminaries) with around 350 seminarians in the official Church (HSSC)

5 formation communities with around 70 seminarians in the underground (HSSC)

Thus of the original 10 major seminaries in the official Church of Mainland China, only six are still operating, even though government agencies (e.g. State Council 2018) continue to report their number as nine.

### Sisters

4,600 in total, of whom

approximately 3,250 in the official Church in 87 congregations (HSSC)

approximately 1,350 in the underground in 40 congregations (HSSC)

### Churches

More than 6.000 churches and oratories (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016 and State Council 2018)

## 5.2 Baptisms

No baptism statistics have been published for 2020. The last baptismal statistics published by *Xinde* gives a figure of 48,365 baptisms for 2018 in the country's Catholic parishes.<sup>71</sup>

## 5.3 Bishops

### Bishops Who Died in Mainland China in 2020

Han Jingtao 韩井涛, Andrew (1921–2020), Siping (JL).

Ma Zhongmu 马仲牧 (Mongolian Tegusbeleg), Joseph (1919–2020), Yinchuan/Ningxia (NX).

Zhu Baoyu 朱宝玉, Joseph (1921–2020), Nanyang (Hen).

### Bishops Consecrated in Mainland China in 2020

Chen Tianhao 陈天浩, Thomas (b. Dec. 1962), Bishop of Qingdao (SD), November 23.

Liu Genzhu 刘根柱, Peter (b. October 12, 1966), Bishop of Hongdong (SX), December 22.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019a, pp. 24-26.

Both consecrations took place with the approval of the Pope and the civil authorities. Since the signing of the provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops in 2018, a total of four new bishops have thus been consecrated with mutual consent (as of March 10, 2021).

### **Bishops Consecrated without Government Permission Publicly Installed in 2020**

Bishop Lin Jiashan 林嘉善 of Fuzhou (FJ),

b. 1936, episcopal consecration 1997, officially installed as local ordinary on June 9.

Bishop Li Huiyuan 李会元 of Fengxiang (SN),

b. 1965, episcopal consecration 2014, officially installed as local ordinary on June 22.

Bishop Ma Cunguo 马存国 of Shuozhou (SX),

b. 1971, episcopal consecration 2004, officially installed as local ordinary on July 9.

Bishop Jin Yangke 金仰科 of Ningbo (ZJ),

b. 1958, episcopal consecration 2012, officially installed as local ordinary on August 18.

Thus, since the signing of the provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops, a total of 5 bishops consecrated without official permission have been officially installed (as of March 10, 2021), and another underground bishop has been officially recognised as bishop emeritus.

### **5.4 Priestly Ordinations**

In Mainland China 39 deacons were ordained priests in 2020 (see Table 3 on next page). That was the lowest number in recent years. Due to the Corona pandemic, no ordinations took place after January 6, 2020; they were resumed only on August 8. The number is certainly incomplete; there were probably additional priestly ordinations in the underground Church. In previous years the following numbers of newly ordained priests counted were: 2019 – 48 new priests; 2018 – 75; 2017 – 97; 2016 – 61; 2015 – 59; 2014 – 78; 2013 – 66; 2012 – 78.

According to reports in *Xinde*, three of the new priests had studied abroad. Some are late vocations. In many southern Chinese dioceses, some of the new priests continue to come from northern China, especially from Shaanxi and Hebei provinces.

Table 3: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2020

Province / Metropolis	Diocese	Number of Ordained	Date of Ordination	Ordaining Bishop*	Names of Those Ordained
BJ	Beijing	8	Sept. 21	Li Shan	Feng Pengji 冯鹏基, Hu Po 胡坡, Jiang Liequn 姜列群, Kang Shuo 康硕, Long Quanbing 龙全兵, Lu Xiaowei 卢小伟, Ren Xugui 任旭贵, Zhang Songsong 张松松
FJ	Xiamen	1	Sept. 19	Cai Bingrui	Ren Hao 任浩
GD	Shantou	1	Jan. 1	Huang Bingzhang	Zhou Weibin 周伟斌
		2	Dec. 28	Huang Bingzhang	Li Shaolei 李少雷, Lin Shuili 吝水利
GZ	Guiyang	1	Nov. 22	Xiao Zejiang	Zhang Tian 张天
HB	Yichang	2	Dec. 21	Shen Bin (Haimen)	Shen Haiyong 申海勇, Shen Hongjun 申红军
Heb	Handan	3	Oct. 21	Sun Jigen	Chen Xuefei 陈雪飞, Guo Diangang 郭殿刚, Zhang Xiangang 张献刚
	Hengshui	4	Jan. 6	Feng Xinmao	Geng Tianlun 耿天仑, Meng Chongwei 孟宠伟, Wang Tianya 王天亚, Yue Xueyan 岳雪岩
	Tangshan	1	Oct. 7	Fang Jianping	Fan Shenglin 范胜林
	Xianxian	2	Nov. 21	Li Liangui	Song Tianmin 宋天民, Zhao Qingsong 赵青松
HL	Harbin	1	Oct. 22	Yue Fusheng	He Jingbo 何静博
JS	Nanjing	1	Dec. 8	Lu Xiping	Yang Xiaojie 杨肖杰
SN	Sanyuan	3	Aug. 20	Han Yingjin	Kang Chengxin 康诚信, Li Cunliang 李存亮, Zhao Ruo 赵若
	Zhouzhi	3	Aug. 22	Wu Qijing	Chen Hao 陈浩, Liu Wutao 刘武涛, Zhao Shenggang 赵圣刚
ZJ	Hangzhou	3	Aug. 8	Xu Honggen (Suzhou)	Jin Xiongwei 靳雄伟, Tian Kun 田昆, Zhang Junjun 张军军
	Ningbo	1	Nov. 21	Jin Yangke	Chen Yuxiang 陈羽洋
	Wenzhou	2	Nov. 11	Xu Honggen (Suzhou)	Ren Zhihui 任智慧, Zhang Xingxing 张星星
Total		39			

\* The diocese is named here only if the ordaining bishop is not the competent local ordinary of the diocese where the ordinations took place but was invited from another diocese to administer the ordination.

Sources (2020): chinacatholic.cn Jan. 2, 15; chinacatholic.org Aug. 21, 22; Oct. 21; Dec. 21; xinde.org Aug. 9; Sept. 17, 19; Oct. 23; Nov. 11, 23; Dec. 8, 30; yesushanmu.com Oct. 13.

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