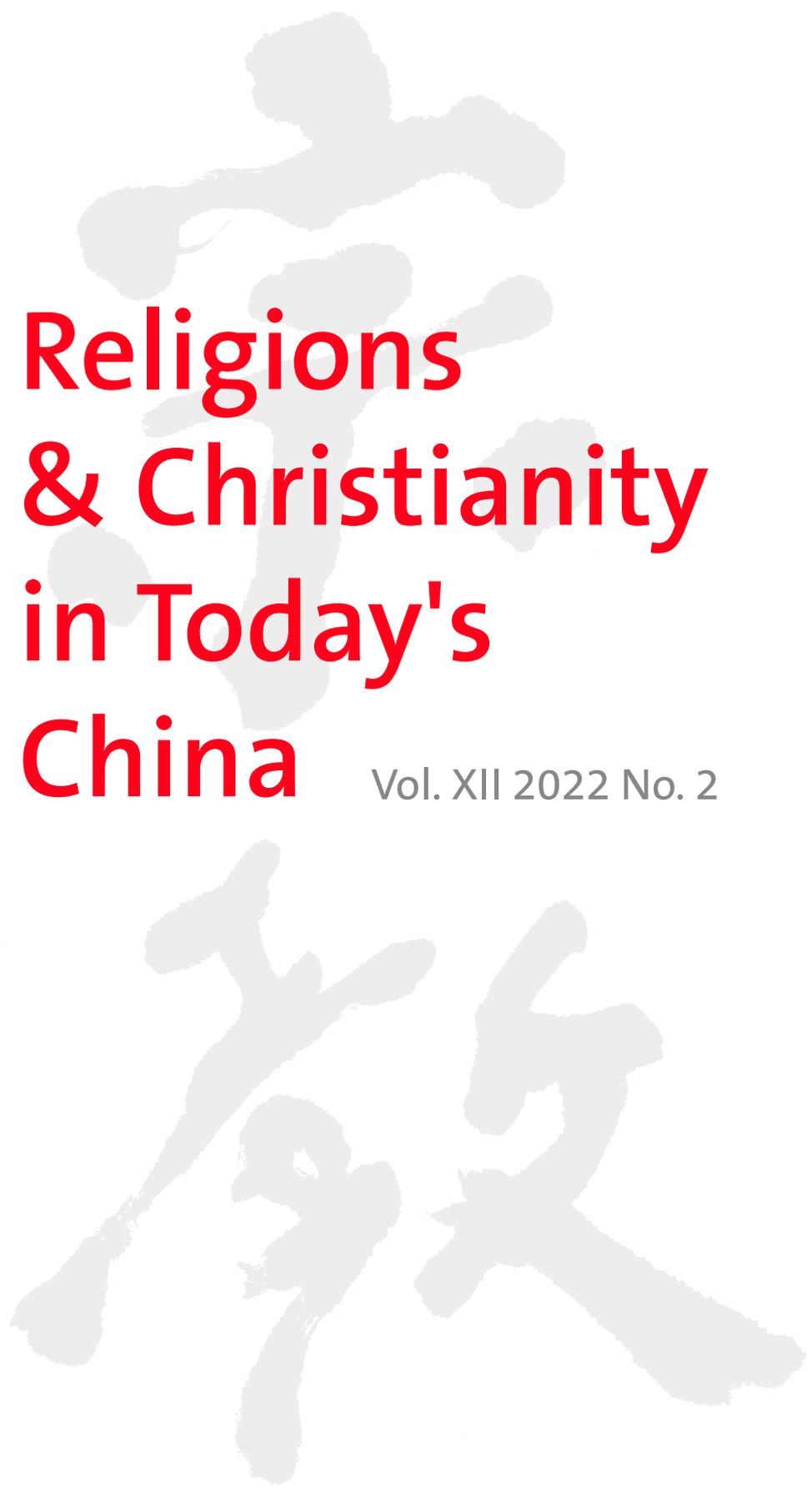


中國宗教評論



Religions  
& Christianity  
in Today's  
China

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Here you find the second 2022 issue of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

We continue with 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 and in Singapore" with an "Update for the Year 2021." Besides many details and trends of the various numerically measurable developments in the religions of China, this year's statistical update covers the results of a survey on the response to different Bible translations among Catholics in Mainland China. New data are presented on the religions in multi-ethnic Singapore, where the population is 74.3% ethnic Chinese.

The article "A City Set on a Hill": A Priest and His Church Whose Design Had Been Revised Seven Times" by Song Mingyan, editorial journalist of *Xinde*, describes the beautiful and eye-catching design of the Liulin Catholic Church in Lüliang City, Shanxi Province and its development process.

This issue closes with a book review by Prof. Dr. Elisa Giunipero, Catholic University of Sacred Heart in Milan, of Bibiana Yee-ying Wong, *The Short-lived Catholic Central Bureau: National Catalyst for Cultural Apostolate in China (1947–1951)*.

*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 2022*

*The Editors*

## News Update on Religion and Church in China November 13, 2021 – March 27, 2022

Compiled by Katharina Feith, Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle) and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

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 2022, No. 1, pp. 3-13) covered the period September 10 – December 4, 2021.*

### Religious Policy

March 1, 2022:

#### “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” come into force – training for “information reviewers” begins

More than three years after the publication of a draft to gather opinions (see RCTC 2018, No. 4, pp. 9-10), on December 3, 2021, the National Administration of Religious Affairs, together with four other agencies – including the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of State Security – published “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” (互联网宗教信息服务管理办法).

This very restrictive administrative regulation provides that for offering “information on religious teachings and precepts, religious knowledge, religious culture, religious activities, etc., transmitted as text, images, audio or video through means of Internet websites, applications, forums, blogs, micro-blogs, public accounts [e.g. on WeChat], instant messaging, webcasts, etc.” – that is to say, any utterance on religion on the Internet – to the public, an “Internet Religious Information Service License” (互联网宗教信息服务许可) has to be obtained first. Applicants must be legally established domestic organizations (Article 2). Licenses must be applied for from the religious affairs departments on provincial level, with a transitional period of six months for existing religious Internet services, and are valid for three years.

Sermons and religious training on the Internet are allowed only within extremely narrow limits – the latter may only be given by licensed institutes for religious education [such as theological seminaries, Buddhist academies, etc.], and only for their students or for religious personnel (Articles 15, 16). “No religious activities may be carried out on the Internet, and religious ceremonies such as Buddha worship, incense offerings, Buddhist or Daoist ordinations, script recitations, [Church] services, masses or

baptisms may not be transmitted directly or in recording in the form of text, images, audio and video” (Article 17) – this prohibition applies in general, i.e., also for providers holding an Internet Religious Information Service License. Fundraising on the Internet in the name of religion is prohibited; however, charities founded by religious organizations, institutes for religious education institutions or sites for religious activities may solicit donations on the Internet in accordance with the provisions of the Charity Law (Article 19).

In order to apply for the license, the applicant must prove, in accordance with Article 6, that it has an information reviewer (信息审核人员). On February 28, the Commission for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of Zhejiang Province published a notice calling for registration for training as an “Internet religious information reviewer” (text of the “Measures” can be found at [www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/364755.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/364755.jhtml), an informal translation at <https://bitterwinter.org/crackdown-on-religious-content-coming-march-2022; mzw.zj.gov.cn> Feb. 28, 2022). *kwt*

March 21, 2022:

## Wang Zuo’an publishes an article on Sinicization and Marxism

The Vice Minister of the United Front Department of the CCP and Director of the National Administration of Religious Affairs published his article in *Xuexie shibao* (*Study Times*), the journal of the Central Party School. In it, Wang underpins the concept of Sinicization with the “historical logic” of Marxist religious theory. According to this argumentation, only those religions in China can be continued in the long term that “Sinicize,” i.e. adapt to the social transformations initiated by the Party. Wang also formulates consequences and measures for religious policy ([www.zyztz.gov.cn/tzyw/368880.jhtml](http://www.zyztz.gov.cn/tzyw/368880.jhtml)). For more details on the content of the article, see *China heute* 2022, No. 1, pp. 5-8 (in German). *kwt*

## Religious Studies

March 18, 2022:

## New Institute of Marxist Religious Studies inaugurated in Hangzhou

The new Institute of Marxist Religious Studies in the New Era (浙大城市学院新时代马克思主义宗教学研究院) is located at Zhejiang University City College in Hangzhou. It is led by two leading scholars in the field of religious studies, Professors Chen Cunfu 陈村富, born in 1937, and Wang Xiaochao 王晓朝, born in 1953. Both are known for their studies and publications on the philosophical foundations of Western thought and the history of Christianity. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of the various religions in China. The Institute aims to establish Zhejiang as a model province for the Sinicization of religions in China and to contribute to the modernization of the work of the Chinese religious affairs authority. A training system for the new discipline of Marxist religious studies is to be created for the training of talent in this discipline. A special focus of the project will be on research into practical problems ([https://difang.gmw.cn/zj/2022-03/20/content\\_35599005.htm?msclkid=9d7848a2aea211ecabacc8b19f90003b](https://difang.gmw.cn/zj/2022-03/20/content_35599005.htm?msclkid=9d7848a2aea211ecabacc8b19f90003b)).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

## Religions in General

From December 2021:

### New outbreaks of COVID-19 in China: Religions participate in relief efforts

Towards the end of the year, the number of COVID-19 infections increased in various regions of China. From December 23, 2021, a one-month strict lockdown was imposed on Xi'an. Other cities and regions have been placed under lockdown from mid-March 2022, such as Changchun in Jilin Province, Shenzhen, and, from March 28 also Shanghai. As in 2020, the religious communities participated in the relief measures, among other things by helping to carry out the Corona tests or by procuring and distributing relief supplies. Religious sites in many places had to remain closed for Corona prevention (see also the entry of March 20, 2022 in the section "Catholic Church"). *kwt*



Corona engagement of religions – here a few examples from Catholic communities: Loading relief supplies at Jilin Seminary (top left) and Xi'an Cathedral (bottom left). A community in Xi'an prepares *jiaozi* dumplings for aid workers in the field (top right). Conducting Corona testing in Xi'an (bottom right). Photos: xinde.org.

February 4–20, March 4–13, 2022:

## Olympic Winter Games and Winter Paralympics in Beijing – Religions remain invisible

In 2008, in the run-up to the Beijing Summer Olympics, public blessing ceremonies and prayers for the success of the Games were held by all five recognized religions of China, and it was publicly reported how China's religious communities were preparing for providing religious services to the guests (cf. *China heute* 2007, No. 3, p. 66; No. 6, pp. 195-196; 2008, No. 3, pp. 71-72 [in German]). In 2022, China's religious communities were not publicly mentioned in connection with the Winter Games – which a number of Western states diplomatically boycotted with reference to the human rights situation in the country. On the websites of the umbrella organizations of the Chinese religions, the Games were almost not discussed at all. The exception was a series of Buddhist congratulatory calligraphies on the website of the Chinese Buddhist Association. The Catholic website *Xinde* brought a number of good wishes for the Games from representatives of the universal Church – including Pope Francis' greetings at the end of the General Audience of February 2, 2022 (see entry of February 22, 2022 in the section “Sino-Vatican Relations”) and a greeting from Bishop Nazzareno Marconi of Macerata, birthplace of the Italian China missionary Matteo Ricci SJ.

In Hebei Province – in the north of which the venues Zhangjiakou and Chongli are located – the churches (and presumably also the sites of the other religions) remained closed not only during, but also before and after the Games due to the pandemic situation. However, a number of Catholics are said to have volunteered in the preparation and implementation of the Games. About a quarter of China's Catholics live in Hebei, in northern Hebei most of them practice their faith in the underground. Chongli – better known in Church history under the local name Xiwanzi – was an important Catholic center in northern China from the early 19th century (chinabuddhism.com.cn Feb. 6 to March 3, 2022 [16 episodes]; faz.net Feb. 8, 2022; *Verbiest Update* No. 51, January 2022; www.xinde.org/show/52289 [Feb. 4, 2022]). *kwt*

March 2, 2022:

## China Anti-Cult Network: Leader of the Mentuhui movement indicted as “head of a criminal organization”

The state-run website China Anti-Cult Network reported on March 2 that a man named Zi from Lu-liang County in Yunnan, a deacon of the Mentuhui 门徒会 (disciple community) “cult,” was taken into custody on May 7, 2021, and formally arrested on June 10. On behalf of the Kunming branch of the Mentuhui, he and two other deacons organized the Mentuhui small groups at the lower local level, carried out evangelization and in 2020 caused members of a small group to raise money for the Mentuhui by selling pesticides and fertilizers, the website reported. According to the China Anti-Cult Network, Zi has “voluntarily pleaded guilty” and will now be charged as the head of a criminal organization.

Already on November 25, 2021, the China Anti-Cult Network had reported that eight members of the Mentuhui had been sentenced to fines by the People's Court in the Dalat Banner, City of Ordos, Inner Mongolia, according to Article 300 of the Criminal Law (for “organizing/using a cult organization to undermine implementation of the law”). The defendants were said to have recruited followers for the group between 2017 and 2018. The portal *Bitter Winter* of CESNUR (Turin) also reported on this court case. According to *Bitter Winter*, in 2020 a nationwide campaign was launched against the Mentuhui, which – as *Bitter Winter* said – like other “illegal” religions has experienced some growth during the Corona pandemic.

The Christian-inspired Mentuihui movement was founded in 1989 by Ji Sanbao, who was previously a member of the True Jesus Church, and has been on the list of banned “heretical cults” since 1995. According to *Bitter Winter*, its doctrine is also known as “Teachings of the Third Redemption” because it sees itself as the third sign of salvation– after Noah’s Ark and the cross of Jesus Christ. Ji Sanbao is said to have called himself a representative of God or Jesus ([bitterwinter.org](http://bitterwinter.org) Dec. 30, 2021; [chinafxj.cn](http://chinafxj.cn) Nov. 25, 2021; March 2, 2022; <https://de.bitterwinter.org/eine-weitere-xie-jiao-die-apostelgemeinschaft/>; Kristin Kupfer, “Christlich inspirierte, spiritualuell-religiöse Gruppierungen in der PR China seit 1978 (I),” in: *China heute* 2002, Nr. 4-5, S. 119-127, Tabelle 1). *kwf*

## Buddhism

December 1-2, 2021:

### Buddhists on both sides of the Taiwan Strait hold “Online Conference 2021 on the Development of Humanistic Buddhism”

The theme of the conference was “New Tendencies for the Spread of the Dharma in the Post-Pandemic Era.” Organizers were the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) and the Taiwanese United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, Chunghua (中華人間佛教聯合總會). Master Zongxing, vice chairman of the CBA, said at the opening that the Corona pandemic is a challenge for the spread of Buddhism and interaction with each other. It has caused anxieties among the people, so the contents of the Dharma dissemination must be aligned with the needs of the time; Master Zongxing said that this is also the basic meaning of the idea of humanistic Buddhism.

After an online group photo, the participants discussed the topic in four areas: 1. In which direction should Buddhism develop in the post-pandemic era? 2. New trends for the spread of the Dharma (I): Online and offline dissemination; 3. New trends (II): For students of Buddhism– how to continue learning when classes stop? 4. New Trends (III): Know yourself and the other – understand the thinking patterns of the e-generation. According to the participants, this time the exchange was particularly intensive and practical because there were a lot of common topics of discussion due to the pandemic; they said that they would like to see more such online meetings on specific topics – according to the report on the CBA website ([chinabuddhism.com](http://chinabuddhism.com) Dec. 3, 2021). *kwf*

December 27, 2021:

### Conference in Beijing on “Humanistic Buddhism and the Sinicization of Buddhism”

The conference was organized by the Research Institute of Buddhist Culture of China, an institute under the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA), in collaboration with the CBA’s “Research Base for the Thinking of Humanistic Buddhism” established in 2020. Around 30 experts from various research institutions from all over China took part.

In his speech at the opening of the conference, Master Yizang, vice president of the CBA and head of the research base, stated that increased research on humanistic Buddhism is essentially the same as promoting the Sinicization of Buddhism. Similarly, many other participants equated humanistic Buddhism with the Sinicization of Buddhism. Wei Daoru of the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said that traditional Chinese culture is the historical foundation of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in the New Era. He stressed that Buddhism is also part

of traditional Chinese culture, but felt that this is not taken into account enough in publications on the “excellent traditional culture of China.”

For the future development of humanistic Buddhism, Hong Xiuping, director of Nanjing University’s Research Center for Eastern Philosophy and Religious Culture, saw two directions: first, as a religion, with the mission of transmitting the teachings of the Buddha; second, as a culture to provide spiritual-cultural nourishment to the whole society. – An overview of all lectures held can be found in the conference reports on [chinabuddhism.com.cn](http://chinabuddhism.com.cn) (Dec. 29, 2021; Jan. 1, 2022).

The reform idea of “humanistic Buddhism” (人间佛教) goes back to the monk Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), who advocated a stronger this-worldly orientation of Buddhism and its adaptation to modernity. In the People’s Republic of China, the concept is placed in the foreground in the “Sinicization” of Buddhism demanded by religious policy and serves as a projection screen for various contents (cf. Carsten Krause, “Zur ‘Sinisierung’ der Religionen: Was heißt das für Buddhisten?,” in: *China heute* 2021, No. 1, pp. 37-51, here pp. 39, 42-43.). *kwt*

January 20, 2022:

## International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reports on efforts to curb the spread of Tibetan Buddhism to the East

ICT reports on various recent measures taken by Chinese authorities to curb the influence of Tibetan Buddhism in Han Chinese Buddhist circles. This includes the removal of Han Chinese practitioners from the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy in Sertar County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Founded in 1980, around 10,000 followers of Tibetan Buddhism, including many Han Chinese, are said to have lived and studied at the academy before 2016. After massive expulsions in 2016/2017, there has been an informal quota of about 2,000 Han Chinese monks and nuns among the remaining approximately 5,000 practitioners in recent years, according to ICT. Now ICT reports it had learned that there is only a “minuscule number” of Han Chinese left in Larung Gar. ICT said that Chinese practitioners are sent back to their hometowns by the authorities where they have to report to the police on a regular basis. There are also checkpoints on the road to Larung Gar and security personnel on the trekking routes to the monastery. In addition, shelters of monks and nuns are regularly checked for unauthorized residents.

ICT also reports that the many groups of Han Chinese Buddhist practitioners which had sprung up in Chinese cities for the study of Tibetan Buddhism have been banned. It said that until a few months ago, Han Chinese practitioners still had internet access to their Tibetan teachers. However, ICT fears that this access most likely will be controlled significantly or even denied permanently with the entry into force of the “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” on March 1, 2022. According to ICT, the authorities have already shut down the successful webcasts of Larung Gar’s teachers in November 2021.

As a further indication of the effort to curb Tibetan Buddhism, ICT published the translation of a document available to it, which was issued on May 23, 2019 by the Buddhist Association of the Weibin District of Baoji, Shaanxi Province. It states that, without prior permission from the provincial authorities, Chinese temples in Weibin are prohibited from inviting Tibetan Buddhist religious figures to carry out religious activities or exhibiting symbols of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Tara statues, prayer wheels and prayer flags with Tibetan texts, thangkas or vajras (savetibet.org Jan. 20, 2022).

For Larung Gar, see also *RCTC* 2016, No. 4, pp. 3-4; 2017, No. 4, pp. 8-9; 2020, No. 2, pp. 8-9. *kwt*

## Islam

January 7, 2022:

### **Radio Free Asia: Uyghur woman sentenced to 14 years in prison for teaching Islam to children and hiding copies of the Quran**

The US broadcaster *Radio Free Asia* (RFA) cites two sources wishing to remain anonymous, as well as local authorities. According to the report, Hasiyet Ehmet, a 57 year old Uyghur woman living in Manas County of Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang, was arrested by police during the night of May 2017, interrogated and detained for 15 days. In September of the same year, she was formally arrested and then convicted. According to RFA, a Manas County court official confirmed that Hasiyet Ehmet had been sentenced to 14 years in prison “because of teaching kids the Quran and hiding two copies of Quran when authorities were confiscating them, and later getting caught.” According to RFA, her husband was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2009 on separatist charges.

In 2017, RFA had reported that from January 2017, authorities in Xinjiang had ordered residents to hand over all editions of the Quran published before 2012 and confiscated them because they contained “extremist content.” According to the State Council’s Xinjiang White Paper of 2015, in 2013, “the new Uyghur edition of the Quran was published and 230,000 copies were sold” (rfa.org May 25, 2017; Jan. 10, 2022; White Paper “Historical Witness to Ethnic Equality, Unity and Development in Xinjiang,” September 24, 2015). *kwt*

## Judaism

November 13, 2021:

### **Concert in Shanghai in memory of the Jewish refugees of the Second World War**

The concert, which commemorated the lives of Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II, took place at the Shanghai Concert Hall and included songs, piano recitals and performances from the novel *Song of Survivors* by Chinese-Canadian writer Bei La. The book is based on the true love story of a young Jewish couple who fled the Holocaust and ended up in Shanghai. Their son Mike Medavoy is an award-winning American film producer. Bei La has been researching and writing about the Jewish community in China and Shanghai for years. *Song of Survivors* was translated from Chinese into English by Jewish sinologist and translator Howard Goldblatt and published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press in 2020. A film adaptation is to be released in cinemas in China and the USA next spring (*Sixth Tone* Nov. 16, 2021). *kf*

## Protestant Churches

December 7, 2021:

### **Study Day on the National Conference on Religious Work**

On December 7, 2021, the leaders of the two Protestant umbrella organizations gathered in China to study Xi Jinping’s speech at the National Conference on Religious Work, held in Beijing from December 3 to 4, 2021 (cf. *RCTC* 2022, No. 1, pp. 4-5). Pastor Xu Xiaohong, chairman of the two national

Protestant associations, Pastor Wu Wei, president of the two Protestant associations, Pastor Shan Weixiang, vice president and general director, Pastor Shen Xuebin, vice president of the China Christian Council, and Gu Mengfei, general secretary, attended the meeting in Shanghai. They welcomed General Secretary Xi Jinping's landmark speech as important and far-sighted, and declared themselves to be in line with the guiding ideology and new strategies of religious work, as well as policies to intensify Sinicization. Xu Xiaohong said the nine imperatives of the speech must become obligatory for every church and church leadership in the coming weeks and months. This means that Marxist religious theory must be internalized and put into practice; political slogans and terms should find their way into the sermons; national feeling and identification with the communist leadership must be strengthened (ccctspm.org Dec. 8, 2021).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

### Beginning of January 2022:

#### Seven years in prison for online bookseller Chen Yu

At the beginning of January, the sentence of seven years in prison and a fine of 200,000 RMB against the operator of the online bookstore "Wheat Bookstore" (小麦书房), Chen Yu, was handed down in the second instance. His arrest in September 2019 was followed a year later by the now confirmed verdict. His online trade, based in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, was accused of distributing illegal Christian publications from Taiwan and the United States, as well as sending several thousand copies of the book "The Gospel Revolt" (福音的政变) by Pastor Wang Yi, of the Early Rainbow Covenant Church in Chengdu. On December 26, 2019, Wang Yi was sentenced to nine years in prison for "inciting the overthrow of state power" (cf. *RCTC* 2020, No. 2, p. 9). The remaining stock of 12,684 books was confiscated and destroyed. Customers of the "Wheat Bookstore" identified by the police should expect to be questioned. They have been instructed to return any ordered goods (bitterwinter.org Jan. 11, 2022; <https://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2022/01/7.html?msclkid=5c2131e5b40b11eca8e19b9990a58aba>).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

### Between January 27 and March 27, 2022:

#### Participants in Christian conference in Malaysia released upon completion of prison sentences in Shanxi – two sentences are still pending

The parishioners of the Reformed Church of Zion (询城归正教会) in Fenyang, Shanxi Province, were sentenced to six, seven and eight months in prison in early January 2022 for "illegally crossing the border." Following their arrests on July 28, 2021, they had served prison sentences ending on January 27, February 27 and March 27 respectively. The background to their arrests was their participation in an international Christian conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, under the motto "Building the heavenly body of Christ on earth" (建立属天又地的基督身体), January 28–31, 2020. This conference was organized by Chinese evangelist Tang Chongrong 唐崇荣 who lives abroad. Because of his criticism of the CCP and its restrictive religious policies, Pastor Tang's sermons have been blocked on the Chinese Internet. In November of 2021, community leader An Yankui and Mr. Zhang Chenghao were also arrested on the same charges (cf. *RCTC* 2022, No. 1, p. 9). They are also accused of a close relationship with the Early Rainbow Covenant Church in Chengdu, which is critical of the government. A verdict in the case of the two is still pending (*UCAN* Jan. 14, 2022; <https://ipkmedia.com/132408/?msclkid=3fa7a6aeb41d11ecbf4dd0ff3f65d6f3>).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

February 20, 2022:

## Arrest of Christian activist in Beijing's Zhongnanhai government district

On February 20, for a few moments, Zhou Jinxia held up a sign at the entrance to Beijing's Zhongnanhai government district, calling on President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan to embrace the Christian faith, citing God's love for the world. Pictures of it were briefly shared on social networks. Since 2009, Ms. Zhou has repeatedly attracted public attention with her demonstrative petitions. First, with written submissions, she demanded compensation for her destroyed residential property in the city of Dalian. Since her conversion to Christianity, she has hoped for the realization of divine justice through the conversion of political rulers to the faith. Since 2014, for example, she has been taking to the streets with evangelization messages in politically central places, first in front of the city government and the party committee of Dalian, and since Christmas of the same year, she has repeatedly done the same in the state capital. Ms. Zhou was arrested in Beijing in 2015, 2016 and 2018 and detained for 10 days each. In October 2020, she settled in the capital. In June 2021, an expulsion from Beijing and the confiscation of her property followed. One day after her arrest for "rioting" on February 20, Ms. Zhou was transferred to the Dalian authorities. In the course of her work as a petitioner, Zhou Jinxia has already been arrested over 50 times (*LiCAS* March 7, 2022; [https://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2022/03/blog-post\\_80.html?msclkid=97ed4d26b40211ecac5e1b7cc9179bec](https://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2022/03/blog-post_80.html?msclkid=97ed4d26b40211ecac5e1b7cc9179bec)).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

## Catholic Church

December 5, 2021:

### Diocese of Guangzhou ends the "Year of Saint Joseph" proclaimed by Pope Francis – Joseph action in the Diocese of Ningbo

At the end of the year dedicated to Saint Joseph, Bishop Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou held a solemn Mass in Guangzhou Cathedral. In his homily, the bishop called on young couples in particular to follow the example of Saint Joseph and to take responsibility for their families. The bishop encouraged all the faithful to be, like Saint Joseph, diligent, courageous, creative, loving, tolerant, honest and kind and, together with all nationalities, to build a modern socialist country.

That same day, a testimony meeting of the participants of a Joseph action was held in the Xushan parish in the diocese of Ningbo in Zhejiang. Seventeen representatives of the 148 families who took part gave testimony. They reported how the action "Saint Joseph comes into my family," combined with the seven virtues of the saint listed by Pope Francis [in the letter *Patris corde*], had revived their personal life, but also the life of the family and the community (*xinde.org* Dec. 6, 17, 2021).

Pope Francis had declared the period from December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021 the Year of Saint Joseph. Previous special years proclaimed by the popes have been celebrated intensively by the Chinese Church, such as the Holy Year 2000, the Pauline Year 2008/2009, the Year of Faith 2012/2013 and the Holy Year of Mercy 2015/2016. The Year of Saint Joseph, on the other hand, has left fewer traces, at least in the Catholic media. Joseph and Mary are the most popular patron saints of Chinese Catholics. *kwt*

January 9, 2022:

## For the first time, Hangzhou Cathedral admits women to service at the altar

At Sunday Mass, twelve women of the cathedral congregation were entrusted with this liturgical ministry. In the future, they will carry it out together with the male altar servers of the parish. This should also give the lay women the opportunity to exercise their baptismal priesthood even more comprehensively, the report says. According to the report, this is also in response to Pope Francis' *Motu proprio Spiritus Domini* of January 11, 2021 [in which the Pope, by modifying Canon Law, officially decreed that women can also be entrusted with the liturgical ministries of lector and acolyte – as has long been customary in parish practice in many places]. The congregation is pleased that for the first time in the 400-year history of Hangzhou Cathedral, women have served as altar servers, the report said (xinde.org Jan. 12., 2022).

The incident shows that unity with the Pope continues to be very important to the Chinese Church. Female altar servers have been common in the Chinese Church for some time, but not yet everywhere. At the same time, in many places it is no longer possible for children to serve as altar servers because of the authorities' prohibition that prevents minors from entering churches. *kwt*

February 21, 2022:

## Underground Bishop Zhang Weizhu of Xinxiang still in detention

Nine months after his arrest on May 21, 2021, Bishop Zhang Weizhu of the Apostolic Prefecture of Xinxiang in Henan Province remains in custody, a Catholic has told *AsiaNews*. During a police raid on an old factory building in Shaheqiao, Hebei Province, used by the prefecture as a seminary, 10 priests and 10 seminarians were arrested together with the bishop. All but the bishop were released a short time later. The seminarians, however, were not allowed to continue their seminary studies. During the Chinese New Year, two people were allowed to visit the bishop briefly. Bishop Zhang Weizhu, consecrated in 1991, was appointed Bishop of the Apostolic Prefecture of Xinxiang by Rome in 1998, but was never recognized as such by the government, which instead appointed an administrator for Xinxiang in 2010 (*AsiaNews* Feb. 21, 2022; see also *RCTC* 2021, No. 3, p. 13). *kf*

March 7, 2022:

## Bishop Shen Bin speaks at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)

CPPCC member Shen Bin, Bishop of Haimen, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Bishops' Conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, gave a speech during the CPPCC's annual meeting as a representative of the religious circles on the topic "Raise the level of self-management, promote the healthy transmission of our country's religions." According to a report by the state news agency *Xinhua*, he called for the Sinicization and adaptation of religions to the socialist society with Chinese characteristics. The question of the correct "religious style" has to do with the healthy transmission of religious heritage and even with the survival of religions, Bishop Shen said. For healthy transmission, he called for "courage for self-purification." Outdated rules and bad habits that do not meet the requirements of the era and public interest should be abolished, he said. The understanding that the state is above religion, that state law is above religious law and that religious adherents are first and foremost citizens must be firmly anchored, said Bishop Shen, among others (*Beijing ribao* and *Xinhua* as found at chinacatholic.cn March 8, 2022). *kwt*

March 20, 2022:

## Diocese of Shanghai cancels Marian pilgrimages to Sheshan again for May 2022

According to a letter from the Shanghai diocese, in view of the pandemic situation and in accordance with the city's Corona prevention requirements and regulations, the diocese has once again decided to suspend the May pilgrimages to Sheshan this year. During this time, the basilica at the top of Sheshan, the church halfway up the mountain and the corresponding areas [such as the Stations of the Cross] will be closed, no collective religious activities are carried out and no pilgrims will be received, the letter says. It is not signed by name – Bishop Ma Daqin of Shanghai has been under a kind of house arrest on the Sheshan since 2012 and is not allowed to exercise his office ([www.xinde.org/show/52517](http://www.xinde.org/show/52517)). The pilgrimage to Sheshan has not taken place since the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. Sheshan is one of the most important Catholic pilgrimage sites in China. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI declared May 24, the Feast Day of Mary Help of Christians, who is venerated on the Sheshan, a “World Day of Prayer for the Chinese Church.” *kwt*

## Sino-Vatican Relations

February 2, 2022:

## Pope Francis greets participants and organizers of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

At the end of the General Audience, Pope Francis said, referring to the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing: “I warmly greet all participants. I wish the organizers every success and to the athletes that they may give their very best. Sports, with its universal language, can build bridges of friendship and solidarity between individuals and peoples of all cultures and religions.” The pope further said: “With a special thought, I embrace the whole Paralympic world: we will win the most important medal together, if the example of athletes with disabilities will help everyone to overcome prejudices and fears and to make our communities more welcoming and inclusive. This is the real gold medal. I also follow with attention and emotion the personal stories of refugee athletes. May their witness help to encourage civil societies to open up with ever greater confidence to all, leaving no one behind. I wish the great Olympic and Paralympic family a unique experience of human fraternity and peace: blessed are the peacemakers! (Mt 5:9)” ([www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20220202-udienza-generale.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20220202-udienza-generale.html)). *kwt*

March 22, 2022:

## Pope sends telegram after deadly crash of China Eastern Airlines plane

The day following the crash of a China Eastern Airlines Boeing 737 on March 21 en route from Kunming to Guangzhou, in which all 132 people on board died, Pope Francis offered his condolences to President Xi Jinping in a telegram. The text was signed, as is customary in such cases, by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State. The Pope expressed his “heartfelt condolences” to Xi and his fellow citizens. The Pope said he is saddened by the news and is praying for those who have lost their lives and for the consolation of those who grieve them. He asked for the “Divine blessing” for everyone, the telegram reads. *Xinde* published the text in a Chinese translation with a screenshot of the Ital-

ian original from the Vatican website (press release of the Holy See of March 22) (*Vaticannews* March 22, 2002; xinde.org March 22, 2022; <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/22/0199/00433.html>). *kf*

## Hong Kong

December 30, 2021:

### **Reuters: Chinese bishops exchanged views on Sinicization with Hong Kong clerics in October**

According to a December 30, 2021 *Reuters* report, on October 31, 2021, in a one-day, non-public, formal online meeting, Chinese bishops and priests briefed senior clerics in Hong Kong on Xi Jinping's vision of a religion with "Chinese characteristics." The Hong Kong Central Government Liaison Office, as well as officials from the State Administration of Religious Affairs, are said to have monitored the Zoom meeting, which was attended by three leading bishops and about 15 religious figures from mainland China's official Catholic Church, as well as about 15 senior Hong Kong clerics. Names of mainland participants are not mentioned in the report. The speakers from the mainland had described how Xi's policy of "Sinicization" coincided with the Vatican's long-standing policy of inculturation – "without mentioning Xi," the report said. But Xi was the elephant in the room, according to one of the Hong Kong clerics interviewed. "We all know the word sinicization carries a political agenda behind it, and they didn't have to spell that out," another cleric said. The Hong Kong side was led by Reverend Peter Choy, who was considered close to Beijing by local Catholics and who used to be Beijing's preferred choice for the episcopate, *Reuters* says. Bishop Chow (who at that time was still awaiting his episcopal ordination on December 4) attended the event shortly after the opening, "which may give him room to manoeuvre in future," according to three of the clergy. Cardinal John Tong opened and closed the event, they said. The October meeting ended with a loose understanding by both sides that more meetings should be held in the future, but no dates were set, the clergy said. "The pressure is building on us in Hong Kong ... some of us see (sinicization) as code for Xi-nification," one of them said. "We are going to have to be clever to resist" (*Reuters* Dec. 30, 2021). *kf*

January 13, 2022:

### **Cardinal Joseph Zen reaches the age of 90**

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun SDB, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, celebrated his 90th birthday on January 13. Cardinal Zen is known worldwide for his commitment to religious freedom and human rights in his native China. The Cardinal celebrated his birthday with a small group, which included his successors in the episcopate Cardinal John Tong and Bishop Stephen Chow.

Cardinal Zen was born on January 13, 1932 in the Diocese of Shanghai. He entered the Salesian Order and was ordained a priest in Turin in 1961. During his priestly ministry, he was a lecturer at the seminary in Hong Kong and in various seminaries in mainland China. He also served as provincial superior of the Salesian China Province. On September 13, 1996, a few months before Hong Kong was returned to China on July 1, 1997, he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Hong Kong by Pope John Paul II, succeeding Cardinal John Baptist Wu in the episcopate in 2002. He was appointed cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 and headed the diocese until 2009. Cardinal Zen has repeatedly made his convictions known in public, for example by taking to the streets personally alongside the students during the protests of the Umbrella Movement (*AsiaNews* Jan. 13, 2022). *kf*

January 31, 2022:

## Chinese New Year: Leaders of the Six Religions send greetings for the Year of the Tiger

In its annual New Year's message, the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders in Hong Kong, as in previous years, conveyed greetings and prayers to Hong Kong residents. The signatories are Most Ven. Kuan Yun, President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association; Bishop Stephen Chow Sau-yan SJ, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong; Dr. Tong Yun-Kai, President of the Confucian Academy; Ibrahim Sat Che-Sang, Chairperson of the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association; Rev. Wong Ka-Fai, Chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Council, and Leung Tak-Wah, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Taoist Association. Their message focuses on the Corona pandemic, which has hit Hong Kong hard, as well as the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's "return to the Motherland." At the end of the letter, the religious leaders summarize their wishes as follows: "That the pandemic will vanish, that everyone will live in peace and comfort and that every family stays safe and healthy. We also bless the World with peace and happiness, that our Motherland continues to thrive and prosper and that Hong Kong be blessed with long-lasting stability and peace" (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Jan. 31, 2022). kf

February 5, 2022:

## Former representative of the Holy See in Hong Kong appointed Nuncio of the Republic of the Congo and in Gabon

In a press release dated February 5, the Holy See announced that Msgr. Javier Herrera Corona – the former head of the Holy See Study Mission in Hong Kong – has been appointed Apostolic Nuncio in the Republic of the Congo and in Gabon. Msgr. Herrera Corona was born on May 15, 1968 in Autlán, Mexico, and was ordained a priest on September 21, 1993. He holds a degree in canon law. According to the press release, Javier Herrera Corona entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See on July 1, 2003 and served in the pontifical representation in Pakistan, Peru, Kenya, Great Britain and the Philippines. His position in Hong Kong is not mentioned in the communication. Officially Msgr. Herrera Corona belonged to the Pontifical Nunciature in the Philippines. According to the *Sunday Examiner*, he has served on the Holy See's Study Mission in Hong Kong (responsible for the Church in Mainland China) since September 2016 and has been the leader of the Study Mission since January 2, 2020. Msgr. Herrera Corona countered speculation in the media that the Vatican had withdrawn its representatives from Taiwan (see entry of January 31, 2022 in the section "Taiwan") and Hong Kong because of possible diplomatic relations with China. Msgr. Herrera Corona said, according to *UCAN*, that these are regular transfers and that the Vatican will not give up its missions in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The establishment of a diplomatic mission in China is "the last of the least objectives" of the Holy See (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Feb. 6, 2022; *UCAN* Feb. 11, 2022; <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/02/05/220205b.html>). kf

February 24, 2022:

## Hong Kong churches closed again due to high Covid numbers

In accordance with the government's measures to combat the Corona pandemic, Hong Kong's churches and chapels, which regularly hold public masses, will remain temporarily closed from February 24 to April 20, unless it is a wedding (attendance no more than five people) or a funeral (no limit on the

number of participants). However, those who participate in the two religious ceremonies must meet the condition for entering churches or chapels, that is, present a vaccination certificate required by the government; all persons over the age of 12 must then be vaccinated at least once. All other divine services were again moved to the Net, as has been the case several times in the last two years. The celebrations during Holy Week and Easter will also take place exclusively online, many of which will be personally presided over by Bishop Chow.

Hong Kong was hit largely unprepared by a huge wave of infections with the Omikron variant of the coronavirus in the first months of this year. As of March 18, more than 1 million cases had already been recorded among the 7.5 million inhabitants – with over 5,000 Covid deaths. The reasons include low vaccination rates among the elderly, low rates of pre-infections and an overburdened health system coupled with the cramped housing conditions in Hong Kong (see the website of the Diocese <https://catholic.org.hk/en/cn20220224/>; <https://catholic.org.hk/en/cn20220314/>; *The Guardian* March 18, 2022). *kf*

**March 17, 2022:**

## Bishop Chow visits Rome

According to a statement from the Press Office of the Holy See, on the morning of March 17, Pope Francis received in an audience “S.E. Mons. Stephen Chow Sau-yan, Vescovo di Hong Kong (Cina)” / Bishop Stephen Chow Sau-yan, Bishop of Hong Kong (China). This was confirmed by the Diocese of Hong Kong on March 22 on its website: “Bishop Stephen Chow Sau Yan, S.J. of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong was invited to make an unofficial visit to Rome in early March after his episcopal ordination [December 4, 2021]. During a meeting with Pope Francis, Bishop Chow suggested the Holy Father to give his Blessing to the Church in China and in Hong Kong during this pandemic, and the Pope gladly accepted. The Pope then gave his blessings in Italian.” In two video messages, which Pope Francis spontaneously recorded, he addressed his greetings and blessings to Catholics in mainland China as well as in Hong Kong (<https://catholic.hk/4t9>; <https://catholic.hk/7424e6>; <https://catholic.org.hk/en/media-20220322/>; <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/17/0181/00389.html>). *kf*

## Taiwan

**January 31, 2022:**

## Chargé d’Affaires of the Holy See in Taiwan appointed Nuncio in Rwanda

A press release from the Holy See dated January 31 stated that Msgr. Arnaldo Catalan has been appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Rwanda by Pope Francis. This marks the end of his tenure as the Chargé d’Affaires of the nunciature in Taipei, a position that he has held since 2019. According to the press release, Msgr. Catalan was born on September 18, 1966 in Manila, Philippines. “He was ordained a priest on 25 March 1994, and incardinated in the metropolitan archdiocese of Manila. He graduated in theology and canon law. He entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See on 1 July 2001, and served in the pontifical representations in Zambia, Kuwait, Mexico, Honduras, Turkey, India, Argentina, Canada, Philippines and China (Taipei). He knows Italian, English and Spanish.” Interesting is the name “China (Taipei)” and not the official name “Republic of China.” It remains to be seen in what form the nunciature will be reoccupied, also in view of the Sino-Vatican relations. The Holy See main-

tains full diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan), but the mission there has been led by a Chargé d'Affaires for decades (<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/01/31/220131b.html>; see also the entry on Hong Kong of February 5, 2022). *kf*

February 15, 2022:

## Tsou priest Fr. Norbert Pu Ying-hsiung is appointed Bishop of Chiayi in Taiwan

On April 2, in the diocese of Chiayi in central Taiwan, the episcopal ordination took place of the diocesan priest Norbert Pu, who is a member of the indigenous mountain people of the Tsou. Norbert Pu was born on August 26, 1958 in Alishan, Chiayi, Taiwan. He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1980 and a degree in theology from the Faculty of Theology Saint Robert Bellarmine of the Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei in 1985. He was ordained a priest on January 1, 1987. From 1994 to 2000 he studied at the then Philosophical-Theological Faculty of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in Sankt Augustin, Germany, where he obtained a licentiate degree in theology. Norbert Pu is one of the few priests belonging to the Tsou people. The Tsou traditionally live in the mountainous region of Alishan near Chiayi in southern central Taiwan. Today, the ethnic group has about 6,500 members. Pu Ying-Hsiung's grandfather was a tribal chief (<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/02/15/220215a.html>; personal information). *kf*

## Singapore

December 11, 2021:

## Singapore's Catholic Church celebrates its 200th anniversary

In his homily during the festive Mass on December 11, Archbishop William Goh of Singapore expressed gratitude for the continued growth of the Church in the city-state, as seen in the recent census. The Singapore government is secular but encourages the cooperation of religions in the development of social, moral and spiritual values in the population, the bishop explained. "Religions here in Singapore are respectful and supportive of each other," he said. Among the faiths in the city-state, there is a "very strong interreligious harmony ... something painstakingly built over many generations," the bishop said. According to the *LiCAS* report, the first Holy Mass in Singapore was celebrated by the Frenchman Saint Laurent Imbert, MEP, who landed in Singapore on December 11, 1821. The report puts the number of Catholics in Singapore at around 300,000 (*LiCAS* December 14, 2021).

Results of the above mentioned Singapore Census in 2020 will be discussed in the "Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China and Singapore" in this *RCTC* issue. The 2020 census identified 242,681 Catholics in Singapore's resident population over the age of 15. The higher number in the *LiCAS* report is probably due, among other things, to the inclusion of Catholic children under the age of 15. *kwt*

## Authors' Abbreviations:

*kf*: Katharina Feith

*kwt*: Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

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## Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China and in Singapore – Update for the Year 2021

*Katharina Wenzel-Teuber*

*Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge*

This year our annual statistical update covers the results of a survey on the response to different Bible translations among Catholics in Mainland China. The subject is topical because religious communities are currently being asked to revise the translations of their sacred scriptures in the context of the government's policy of "Sinicization." In addition, new data are presented on the religions in multi-ethnic Singapore, where the population is 74.3% ethnic Chinese. The analysis of the results of the last population census of 2020 shows an increase in the number of people in Singapore's population who have no religion. Both topics will be dealt with at the end of this statistical update.

In the field of Buddhism and Daoism in Mainland China, with which as usual the update begins, there are new, official numbers for the ordinations of 2015–2020. This time there are no new data on Islam and the Protestant churches; here we take the numbers of the previous years. In general, hardly any results of new field studies on topics of religious life in the country could be found in Mainland China's religious studies journals in 2021.

Unless expressly stated, the numbers given in the following text refer to religions in Mainland China.

### 1. Buddhism, Daoism and Popular Beliefs

There are no official data on the number of Buddhists and Daoists in Mainland China. The White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018) states: "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."

For this largest sector of religious life in China, the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) of 2007<sup>1</sup> still offers some orientation; among others it came to the following figures:

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1 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

- 185 million self-identify as Buddhists, i.e. 18% of the population above the age of 16.
- 17.3 million have taken the triple refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), i.e. have formalized their adherence to Buddhism through ritual.
- 12 million of the adult population clearly identify with Daoism [corresponding to 1,17% of the population above 16 years, kwt].<sup>2</sup>
- 173 million have exercised some Daoist practices or taken part in such, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular belief.

In the absence of other, more recent data, we refer once again to a study discussed here two years ago: On the basis of China Family Panel Studies (CFPS)<sup>3</sup> surveys of 2012, 2014 and 2016, Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni of Peking University determined in 2019 the following percentage of “nominal” adherents of Buddhism and Daoism in the total population – meaning the participants of the CFPS 2016 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>4</sup>

- 17.7% of the CFPS 2016 sample were “nominal” Buddhists.
- 1.27% of the CFPS 2016 sample were “nominal” Daoists.

These percentages are very close to the results of the CSLs.

The Chinese Buddhist Association reports in a self-portrait on its website in 2017 the number of adherents of Buddhism in China as “currently more than 100 million.”<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1 Buddhism

- 34,090 registered Buddhist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2022,<sup>6</sup> of which:
  - 28,528 Han-Chinese Buddhism
  - 3,857 Tibetan Buddhism
  - 1,705 Theravada-Buddhism

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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.

2 The percentage 1.17% was calculated by the author of this statistical update (kwt) by analogy with the data given by CSLs for Buddhists (185 million equals 18% of the population over 16 years).

3 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS, Zhongguo jiaoting zhuizong diaocha 中国家庭追踪调查) is an annual longitudinal survey conducted by the Institute of Social Science Survey at Peking University. Since 2012, data on religiosity has also been collected. A fixed panel of 16,000 households is surveyed in 25 of the 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions of the PRC.

4 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.

5 “Zhongguo fojiao xiehui jianjie.”

6 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 8, 2022. These figures from the NRAA database are unchanged from the last retrieval on March 1, 2021. 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.

- 222,000 Buddhist religious personnel (monks and nuns) recognised 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)

### Buddhist Ordinations 2015–2020

The National Assembly of Representatives of Buddhism in China met from December 1–2, 2020. As is customary, at this meeting of the highest body of official Buddhism which takes place every 5 years, the board of the Chinese Buddhist Association gave a report of its work since the last national assembly in April 2015. According to this report, since 2015

- 32,878 Persons [monks and nuns] were ordained (*shoujie* 受戒) in 69 ordination ceremonies (*chuanjie* 传戒).

Verification of qualifications for ordination has been stepped up over the past five years, pilot tests have tested the introduction of pre-ordination examinations, and record keeping on new ordinations has been improved, says the report.<sup>7</sup>

### Database on state recognized “Living Buddhas” of Tibetan Buddhism in Sichuan

- 411 Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism in the Province of Sichuan

are included in a database entitled “Name Index of the Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism in Sichuan” (Sichuan Zangchuan fojiao hufo minglu 四川藏传佛教活佛名录, English: “List of Tibetan Buddhism Rinpoche in Sichuan”) that was put online again on February 5, 2021 after a revision. This figure, mentioned in a press release<sup>8</sup> on the launch of the renewed database, was unchanged a year later (access on March 9, 2022). Listed are the names of the Living Buddhas, the school of Tibetan Buddhism and the monastery to which they belong, as well as the location. According to the website’s impressum, the database is run by the Information Centre of the United Front Department of the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China.<sup>9</sup>

7 Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Buddhists 2020, p. 11. – The above-mentioned supervisory measures correspond to the provisions in the Chapter 5 on “Supervision and Administration” in the “Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel” (*Zongjiao jiaozhi renyuan guanli banfa* 宗教教职人员管理办法, Decree No. 15 of the NRAA dated Jan. 18, 2021, in force since May 1, 2021, Chinese text at [www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/351322.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/351322.jhtml)). The supervisory measures prescribed there include, for example, the obligation of religious organisations, institutes for religious education and sites for religious activities to keep records and to pass on data on religious personnel to the authorities, as well as the digital recording and management of the data by the authorities.

8 “Zui xin zui quan zui quanwei! Sichuan 411 ming Zangchuan fojiao hufo minglu chongbang shangzian.”

9 The Chinese state claims control over the traditional process of identifying and enthroning Tibetan Buddhist re-incarnations (Tibetan: *tulku*, Chinese: *hufo* 活佛, literally “Living Buddha”), i.e. the lineages of Tibetan religious teachers. To this end, in 2007 the NRAA adopted “Measures for the Administration of Reincarnations of Living

## 1.2 Daoism

8,349 registered Daoist sites for religious activities according to NRAA-database 2022,<sup>10</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)

### Daoist Ordinations 2015–2020

At the National Assembly of Representatives of Daoism in China, held from November 27–28, 2020, the board of the Chinese Daoist Association also gave a report about its work during the last five years. The report stressed the strengthening of the administration of the Daoist clergy. In particular, according to the report, the aim was to get a good grip on the ceremonies of *guanjin* 冠巾 (Quanzhen tradition) and *chuandu* 传度 (Zhengyi tradition), so that they could be used as a first “gateway” (*guankou* 关口) to acquire the official status of a religious clergy. Uniform *guanjin* and *chuandu* certificates have been designed and produced nationwide, and certificates for Daoist religious personnel have been replaced, the report said.<sup>11</sup>

Between 2015 and 2020 according to the report, certificates were given as follows:

more than 10,000 *guanjin*-certificates (Quanzhen tradition)

more than 20,000 *chuandu*-certificates (Zhengyi tradition)<sup>12</sup>

Possession of a *guanjin* or *chuandu* certificate is, according to the currently valid regulations of the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA), the presupposition for recognition as a Daoist religious clergy,<sup>13</sup> i.e. as *daoshi* 道士 – Daoist priest or Daoist priestess.

As Lai Chi Tim, professor for Daoism-Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, wrote in the year 2017, the measures for the issuance of certificates for Daoist religious personnel have been standardized in the last ten years (i.e. now fifteen years). In the monastic Quanzhen Daoism, according to Lai, a traditional regulation for the ordination of *daoshi* was reintroduced in 2007, namely through the ritual of “taking the cap” (*guanjin* 冠巾), also commonly called “small ordination” (*xiao shoujie* 小授戒), in which the monk or nun receives a Daoist cap, a Daoist robe and an ordination name from his or her master.

Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism” (*Zangchuan fojiao huofu zhuanshi guanli banfa* 藏传佛教活佛转世管理办法, Chinese text at [www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/316496.jhtml](http://www.sara.gov.cn/bmgz/316496.jhtml)).

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

11 Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Daoists 2020, p. 32.

12 *Ibid.*

13 See Article 3.3 of *Daojiao jiaozhi renyuan rending guanli banfa* 道教教职人员认定管理办法 (Measures for the Recognition and Administration of Daoist Religious Clergy, 2020). Text at [www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1664](http://www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1664) (accessed on March 9, 2022). Measures of the CDA for the administration of the *guanjin*- and *chuandu*-activities can also be found in the collection of regulations on the website of the CDA at [www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsByC2Action.do?c2=gzzd](http://www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsByC2Action.do?c2=gzzd).

Since then, *guanjin* ceremonies have been organized in Quanzhen temples all over China. Similar to the Quanzhen *guanjin* ritual, according to Lai, the CDA requires that an adept of the Zhengyi tradition must undergo an ordination ritual usually called *chuandu* 传度 in order to become an officially recognised *daoshi* of the Zhengyi tradition and receive a credential as a Daoist religious personnel. According to Lai, *chuandu* means literally that the student receives a “method of saving the world” (*du shi zhi fa* 度世之法) from the master.<sup>14</sup>

Given that the number of new *guanjin* and *chuandu* certificates issued between 2015 and 2020 with the combined total of 30,000 already accounts for three-quarters of the State Council’s 2018 figure of 40,000 Daoist religious personnel, it can be assumed, according to the author of this statistical update, that among the recipients of the new certificates many have been active as *daoshi* for a long time. With reference to the Zhengyi Daoism, Lai explains that according to the requirements of the CDA a Daoist priest of the Zhengyi tradition who resides in a temple (*gongguan daoshi* 宮觀道士) must first go through a *chuandu* ceremony. However, apart from these Zhengyi priests residing in temples (who can be married), there are according to an estimate given by Lai another 60,000 married Daoist priests who live with their family (*sanju daoshi* 散居道士) and perform ritual services in local communities, thus carrying out rituals mainly outside temples.<sup>15</sup>

According to the currently valid regulations of the CDA, *daoshi* of the Quanzhen tradition, who have “taken the cap” at least two years before, can receive the next level of ordination (*shoujie* 授戒 or *chuanjie* 传戒).<sup>16</sup> According to Lai, only a small number of the Quanzhen monks and nuns receive this form of ordination. It took place in 1989 for the first time after a 50-year interruption. In 1995, 2012, 2016, 2017 and 2018 further *chuanjie* ordinations took place. According to the CDA work report mentioned above, at the three *chuanjie* ordination ceremonies held in 2016 (at the Changchunguan, Wuhan), 2017 (at the Laoshan Taiqinggong, Qingdao) and 2018 (at the Nanyue Hengshan daoyuan, Hunan), a total of more than 500 Quanzhen Daoists received the *santan dajie* 三坛大戒 (“triple platform ordination”).<sup>17</sup>

In a parallel provision of the CDA, *daoshi* of the Zhengyi tradition who have at least two years of *chuandu* may receive the ordination of “conferring registers” (*shou lu* 授箓).<sup>18</sup> According to the above-mentioned CDA work report, a number of such “conferring registers” ceremonies took place between 2015 and 2020 with national, and in some cases international, participation, but no information is given on the number of ordained persons.<sup>19</sup>

14 Lai 2017, pp. 86-87, 89-90.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

16 See Article 9.2 of *Guanyu Quanzhen pai daoshi chuanjie de guiding* 关于全真派道士传戒的规定 (Provisions for the Ordination [*chuanjie*] of Daoist Priests of the Quanzhen School), first version 1989, most recent revision 2020. Text at [www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1656](http://www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1656) (accessed on March 9, 2022).

17 Cf. Lai 2017, pp. 87-89; Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Daoists 2020, p. 32.

18 See Article 9.3 of *Guanyu Zhengyi pai daoshi shoulu de guiding* 关于正一派道士授箓的规定 (Provisions for the Conferring of Registers of Daoist priests of the Zhengyi School), first version 2001, most recent revision 2020. Text at [www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1657](http://www.taoist.org.cn/getDjzsById.do?id=1657) (accessed on March 9, 2022).

19 Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Daoists 2020, pp. 32-33.

## 2. Islam

In 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 6th population census of 2010, around 23 million people belong to these ten ethnic groups, that is 1.74% of the entire population,<sup>20</sup> distributed as follows:

Table 1: 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.

A 7th national census took place in the PR China in 2020. As far as is known, a detailed evaluation of this census with regard to the population of the Muslim ethnic groups has not yet been published.

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]

## 3. Protestant Churches

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)

20 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.

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) <sup>21</sup>
22	theological seminaries (Gao Feng 2018)

The number of 38 million probably originates from a study by the researchers Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni (Peking University). They analysed religion-related data from the 2012, 2014 and 2016 surveys of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) and concluded that there were around 40 million Protestants in China in 2016.<sup>22</sup>

There are also higher estimates, such as that of the Pew Forum which in 2011 arrived at the number of 58 million Protestants.<sup>23</sup> In 2020 five researchers and pastors told the Protestant portal ChinaSource their “preferred estimates” for the current number of Protestant Christians in Mainland China; these ranged from 50 million to 116 million (the latter being an estimate of Yang Fenggang, Purdue University).<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, lately some have also reported a decrease in the number of Protestant Christians.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Catholicism

It has become more difficult to give reliable statistics on the Catholic Church in Mainland China. The data provided by the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC) of Hong Kong Diocese continue to serve as a basis, however, its last statistics on the Catholic Church in Mainland China published in early 2021 in its periodical *Tripod* refer to the status at the end of 2020.<sup>26</sup> The HSSC did not publish any new data for 2021. Account is also taken of information from the official Catholic governing bodies, according to their work report presented in 2016 at the 9th National Assembly of the 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 website of the Shijiazhuang (He-

21 Why the entry for the number of religious personnel / clerics and preachers is so much higher in the State Council's White Paper than in the work report of the Protestant bodies is not clear.

22 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019. Cf. discussion of their detailed study in Wenzel-Teuber 2020, pp. 21-30, here esp. p. 27. On CFPS see above, note 3.

23 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.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/12/ChristianityAppendixC.pdf](http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/12/ChristianityAppendixC.pdf), published on Dec. 19, 2011, last accessed on March 25, 2022; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2013, p. 21.

24 Joan Pittman, “How Many Christians in China? Preferred Estimates,” three-part series on the portal ChinaSource, 2020, at [www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/how-many-christians-in-china](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/how-many-christians-in-china) (last accessed on March 25, 2022); cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2021, pp. 33-34.

25 For example, two pastors of the official governing bodies of the Protestant churches of Shandong Province and Guangzhou City reported in October 2018 at the “Forum of Christianity Research 2018” organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that the number of Protestant Christians in their area was sinking. See “Kan Baoping mushi: Bu yao jujiao yu neidi jidutu shuliang zhenglun, yao jieli jianzao jiankang jiaohui” 闞保平牧师: 不要聚焦于内地基督徒数量争论, 要竭力建造健康教会 (Pastor Kan Baoping: We should not concentrate on the dispute regarding the number of Protestants in the country, but rather give our best to build up a healthy church), *Fuyin shibao* 福音时报, Nov. 15, 2018; <https://gospeltimes.cn/index.php/portal/article/index/id/46244> (last accessed on March 14, 2022); cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2020, p. 29.

26 HSSC 2021.

bei Province) based Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*), [www.xinde.org](http://www.xinde.org) (in the following shortened to: *xdo*; other web address: [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org)), and other Catholic websites in Chinese, such as the portal *Zhenli wenhua* 真理文化 (*Veritas Culture*), [www.yzzhenli.org](http://www.yzzhenli.org).



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

**People’s Republic of China: Provinces, Direct-Controlled Municipalities and Autonomous Regions – 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.

**4.1 General Data**

**Faithful**

- ca. 10 million total number of Catholics, including both the official part of the Church and the Catholics in the underground, according to HSSC 2021
- over 6 million number of Catholics according to data of the official Catholic governing bodies (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016)
- 6 million number of Catholics according to state data (State Council 2018)

**Dioceses**

- 147 (116 dioceses plus 31 other ecclesiastical circumscriptions), according to the Catholic hierarchy (HSSC 2021)

95 dioceses plus 7 under the care of other dioceses, according to the Chinese government (HSSC 2021)

### Bishops

98 of whom  
 71 bishops in the official Church  
 27 bishops in the underground Church<sup>27</sup>

Since September 2018 all Chinese bishops have been recognized by the Pope.

### Priests

ca. 4.000 total (the number of new unofficial priests and of those who refuse to officially register were not available) (HSSC 2021 for the end of 2020)

### Seminaries and Seminarians

6 major seminaries (theological seminaries) with a total of around 350 seminarians in the official Church (HSSC 2021 for the end of 2020)

Of the original 10 major seminaries in the official Church of Mainland China, therefore, only six are still functioning, even though government agencies (e.g. State Council 2018) continue to give their number as nine. No data is available for formation communities in the underground Church.

### Sisters

4,600 in total, of whom  
 approximately 3,250 in the official Church in 87 congregations (HSSC 2021 for the end of 2020)  
 approximately 1,350 in the underground in 40 congregations (HSSC 2021 for the end of 2020)

### Churches

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

## 4.2 Baptisms

Again no baptism statistics were published for 2021. Baptisms were only sporadically made known through reports on *xdo*. The baptisms given in Table 2 are, therefore, only individual examples from which the total number of local distributions cannot be deduced. However Wenzhou, the “Chinese Jerusalem,” is noticeable for especially numerous

<sup>27</sup> The numbers of bishops were calculated by the author of this statistical update on the basis of the figures of HSSC 2021 (as of the end of 2020), taking into account the deceased bishops and episcopal consecrations that became publicly known in 2021 (cf. point 4.3 below). According to the same calculation, 68 of the 71 official bishops were in office at the end of 2021, as well as 14 of the 27 underground bishops; however, retirements are not necessarily announced in the media, so these figures are uncertain. For the end of 2020, HSSC 2021 had reported the number of bishops as follows: 99, of whom 72 were bishops in the official Church (66 in office) and 27 bishops in the underground Church (14 in office).



Easter Vigil 2021 in Hangzhou: A good amount of baptismal water is blessed (above), 11 catechumens receive baptism and confirmation. Photos: *xdo*.

baptisms. Many baptisms took place during Easter Vigil on April 3, 2021. Some reports mention that, due to Corona, for a long time no courses for baptismal candidates could take place or that the churches were closed. As far as can be ascertained from photos or text, those baptised were adults.

Table 2: Examples of Baptisms in a Few Selected Catholic Communities of Mainland China in 2021

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Location	Date	Number if baptized
BJ	Beijing	Beijing, West Church	Sept. 12	8
Heb	Tangshan	Wujiashuang Cathedral	April 3	16
JS	Suzhou	Yangang, Changshu	April 3	5
JX	No data	Jiujiang	May 16	3
LN	Liaoning	Chaoyang	Dec. 19	33
NM	Hohhot	Hohhot	April 3	19
NM	No data	Baochang, Taibus Banner	April 3	4
NM	No data	Aozhen, Otog Front Banner, Ordos	June 23	10
SD	Jinan	Jinan, Cathedral	April 3	1
SD	Zhoucun	Zhangdian, Cathedral	April 3	3
ZJ	Hangzhou	Hangzhou	April 3	11
ZJ	Wenzhou	Huangzhong, Longgang	Jan. 9	over 50
ZJ	Wenzhou	Wenzhou, Ximen Church	April 3	38
ZJ	Wenzhou	Wenzhou, Ximen Church	Nov. 13	10

Sources (2021): *xdo* Jan. 4, 14; April 5, 6, 8; May 17; June 23; Sept. 14; Nov. 15; Dec. 20.

The last baptismal statistics published by *Xinde* give the number of 48,365 baptisms for 2018 in the Catholic communities of Mainland China.<sup>28</sup>

### 4.3 Bishops

#### Deceased Bishops of Mainland China in 2021

Bishop em. Zong Huaide 宗怀德, Joseph (1920–2021), Sanyuan (SN).

Bishop em. Cao Xiangde 曹湘德, Matthew (1929–2021), Hangzhou (ZJ).

Bishop em. Yang Xiangtai 杨祥太, Stephan (1923–2021), Handan (Heb).

#### Episcopal Consecrations in Mainland China in 2021

Liu Hui 李辉, Antonius (b. 1972), Coadjutor Bishop of Pingliang (GS), July 28.

Cui Qingqi 崔庆琪, [O.F.M.], Joseph (b. February 1964), Bishop of Wuhan<sup>29</sup> (HB), September 8.

Since the signing in 2018 of the Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops, altogether six new bishops were consecrated with mutual consent (as of March 21, 2022).

**Public installation** of bishops consecrated without government permission did not take place in 2021.

28 Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019a, pp. 24-26.

29 Pope Francis appointed Cui as bishop of Hankou/Wuhan on June 23, 2021. The three dioceses established by the Vatican, Hankou, Hanyang and Wuchang, were amalgamated by the official Chinese Church as the diocese of Wuhan many years ago.

## 4.4 Priests

Table 3: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2021

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Number of Ordained	Date of Ordination	Ordaining Bishop*	Names of Those Ordained
AH	Anhui	1	July 31	Liu Xinhong	Gao Ruifeng 高瑞峰
CQ	Wanzhou	1	May 5	He Zeqing	Chen Xiaoli 陈晓利
GD	Jiangmen	2	Jan. 14	Liang Jiansen	Chang Jiangfeng 常江峰, Cheng Sangen 程三根
Hain	Hainan	1	May 1	Gan Junqiu (Guangzhou)	Zan Pengbo 咎鹏博
Heb	Chengde	3	April 11	Guo Jincai	Li Bingbing 李兵兵, Li Pengju 李鹏举, Xue Zhiyong 薛志勇
Heb	Zhangjiakou	3	May 11	Guo Jincai (Chengde)	Song Li 宋利, Sun Yibao 孙义宝, Zhang Jianwei 张建伟
Hen	Zhengzhou	1	April 20	Zhang Yinlin (Anyang)	Chang Xiaoliang 常晓亮
Hen	Shangqiu	1	April 21	No date	Yan Shuai 闫帅
HN	Hunan	2	April 13	No data	Liu Yongfen 刘勇芬, Zhai Shengbo 翟胜波
JS	Suzhou	1	May 3	Xu Honggen	Chi Shaolong 池少龙
JS	Nanjing	3	June 11	Lu Xinping	Kang Yayi 康雅义, Ma Yateng 马亚腾, Zhou Jun 周俊
JS	Haimen	1	Oct. 1	Shen Bin	Liu Xingfeng 刘星峰
LN	Shenyang	1	Oct. 28	Pei Junmin	Li Hongdong 李洪冬
NM	Wumeng (Jining)	1	April 23	Yao Shun	Zuo Wei 左伟
SC	Nanchong	1	May 14	Chen Gong'ao	Hu Xiaodong 胡晓东
SC	Yibin	1	Sept. 26	Luo Xuegang	Wang Yuke 汪宇科
SH	Shanghai	4	June 5	Shen Bin (Haimen)	Mi Jizhou 米计周, Ning Yongwang 宁永旺, Wu Shun 武舜, Zhou Jia 周嘉
SN	Weinan	1	Jan 6	Tong Changping	Li Yongxin 李永信
SN	Xi'an	2	April 29	Dang Mingyan	Dang Gang 党刚, Long Zhiguang 龙志广
SN	Sanyuan	1	Aug. 4	Han Yingjin	Wang Tao 王涛
SX	Jinzhong	1	June 24	No data	Chang Jie 常杰
SX	Hongdong	2	June 29	Liu Genzhu	Guo Kaikai 郭开开, Zhao Chongfu 赵重福
YN	Dali	2	March 19	Ma Yinglin	Jin Xiangnan 金相楠, Paozhong Nuoweng 跑中糯翁 (both ethnic Jingpo)
ZJ	Taizhou	2	Sept. 25	Jin Yangke (Ningbo)	Wen Xiaomin 文小敏, Zhu Xinchao 朱鑫超
ZJ	Wenzhou	1	Sept. 25	Jin Yangke (Ningbo)	Shi Yongxiang 史永详
Total		40			

\* The diocese is only given here 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 (2021): asianews.it June 7; *xdo* Jan. 8, 15; March 19; April 13, 21, 27, 30; May 2, 3, 6, 11, 14; June 14, 30; Aug. 2.; Sept. 27, 29; Oct. 6; Nov. 6; [www.yzzhenli.org/index/content/9438/](http://www.yzzhenli.org/index/content/9438/) 【壹明头条】|2021年中国大陆教会晋牧、晋铎及神职安息主怀名单/.

## Priestly Ordinations

40 deacons were ordained priest in Mainland China in 2021 (see Table 3) – one more than in the previous year, but much less than in the years before that. 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 were counted: 2020 – 39 new priests; 2019 – 48; 2018 – 75; 2017 – 97; 2016 – 61; 2015 – 59; 2014 – 78; 2013 – 66; 2012 – 78.

In many dioceses in south China, part of the priestly vocations continue to come from traditional northern Chinese Catholic families. One example is the priest Liu Xingfeng, who was ordained on October 1, 2021 for the Diocese of Haimen in Jiangsu Province. He comes from a Catholic family in Fenyang Diocese in Shanxi Province. Apart from him, out of four siblings, his sisters Liu Xuemei and Liu Xueyan also followed a spiritual vocation, they belong to the diocesan Sisters' congregations of Fenyang and Yuci, both in Shanxi (*xdo* Oct. 6, 2021).

## Deceased Priests in 2021

For some years the Chinese Catholic media has appeared worried by the growing number of priests who die comparatively young. A list on the website *Zhenli wenhua* (*Veritas Culture*) has the names of 15 priests who died in Mainland China in 2021. On average they only lived to be 53 years old.<sup>30</sup>

## 4.5 Sisters



Joy of the St. Joseph's Sisters of Beijing Diocese: Sister Liu Chunli (left) entered the novitiate on March 18, 2021.  
Photo: Sanzhi gaoyang gongzuoshi / *xdo*.

30 [www.yzhenli.org/index/content/9438/](http://www.yzhenli.org/index/content/9438/) 【壹明头条】|2021年中国大陆教会晋牧、晋铎及神职安息主怀名单/. – The oldest of the deceased was 102 years old, the youngest only 32. However, the large generation gap among the Chinese priests has to be taken into account. Whereas of the priests of the old generation trained before 1949 or in the 1950's only a few very old ones are still alive, the priests of the "young" generation who were trained after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) are for the majority under the age of 60.

Vows of religious sisters are reported far less regularly than ordinations of priests. The first, temporal or final vows given in Table 4 are, therefore, only to be regarded as examples. Sisters in the majority of diocesan women’s congregations continue to play an important role in the life of China’s Catholic Church. As with priestly vocations, for many years the number of women’s vocations has also been diminishing strongly – as the very low numbers of novices and first professions in Table 4 show.

Table 4: Examples of Entrance to Novitiate and Professions of Women Religious in Mainland China in 2021

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Congregation	Date	Entrance to Novitiate	Vows
BJ	Beijing	Sisters of St. Joseph	March 18	1	several temporal
ZJ	Wen-zhou	Sisters of St. Therese, the Little Flower	Jan. 9		1 first <sup>31</sup>
SD	Linyi	Diocesan congregation	May 11		2 temporal, 4 perpetual
Heb	Handan	Sisters of the Holy Spirit the Consoler	Oct. 1		6 temporal, 3 perpetual
JS	Haimen	Sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus	Oct. 1		16 temporal
GD	Shantou	Sisters of the Queen of all Hearts	Nov. 18	1	2 temporal

Sources (2021): *xdo* Jan. 14; March 19; May 13; Oct. 1, 6; Nov. 24.

#### 4.6 Survey of the Use and Reception of Different Bible Editions among Catholics in Mainland China

In early 2014, Monica Romano, who holds a degree in Chinese Studies and a PhD in Ethnology and Ethno-Anthropology from the Sapienza University in Rome, used an on-line tool to survey Chinese Bible users about their Bible reading habits, ownership and preferred use of different Chinese Bible editions, their understanding of individual Bible passages and their expectations of future Bible translations. Chinese Catholics and Protestants and some non-Christians from China and other countries (especially Italy) took part in the survey. In an essay published in 2022, which will be presented here, she analysed exclusively the replies of Mainland Chinese Catholics from different dioceses in the whole of China.<sup>32</sup>

The total of 289 Catholic respondents of the survey in Mainland China comprised the following: 55% were men, 45% women. 99% of the respondents were baptised. 35% of them were priests, seminarians or religious sisters. 18% were between 18–24 years, 25% were 25–30 years, 32% were 31–40 years, 19% were 41–50 years and 5.5% were over 51 years old. 55% had a university qualification [i.e. Bachelor], another 13% a postgraduate degree. 54% of those questioned had no formal theological training, 32.5% had studied Theology, 23.5% Canon Law, 22% Church History, 19% Christian Ethics and 17% Biblical studies. 12% of the lay persons surveyed were students. The participants in the survey were recruited through local contacts and, to a lesser extent, via social media. This sur-

31 According to the report, this was the first time since 2013 that first vows were taken in this congregation; *xdo* Jan. 14, 2021.

32 Romano 2022, esp. p. 81, note 12.

vey method, said Romano, does not claim statistical relevance, but the aim was to collect feedback from a wider audience than would have been possible solely through individual interviews.<sup>33</sup>

The following Chinese Bible editions play a part in the survey:

- **Studium Biblicum Version** (*Sigao shengjing* 思高圣经): This first complete Catholic Chinese Bible was translated from the original languages by the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Hong Kong. It appeared in Hong Kong from 1961 in parts, and in 1968 for the first time as a single-volume edition. From 1992 it was also published in Mainland China.<sup>34</sup> The Studium Biblicum translation – as also confirmed by the survey – is still considered the standard Chinese Catholic edition of the Bible today.
- **Pastoral Bible** (*Muling shengjing* 牧灵圣经): This is a Chinese version of the Christian Community Bible, which appeared in the Philippines in 1988 as an English version of the *Biblia Latinoamericana*. It was produced by a group of Chinese translators coordinated by the Claretian Father Bernard Hurault (1924–2004), published in 1998 in Hong Kong and in 2000 printed in Mainland China. As Romano explains, through its clear and fluent language it achieved a certain popularity, although, however, it was also accused of inaccuracies and the biblical and theological formations of the translators was questioned.<sup>35</sup>
- **Sheshan 佘山 NT**: This refers to a translation of the New Testament made by the Shanghai Bishop Jin Luxian (1916–2013). It first appeared in 1994 with the title *Shengjing xinyue quanji* 圣经新约全集, in 2004 a revised edition appeared. As its textual basis *La Bible de Jérusalem* was used. Named after the Shanghai Seminary on Sheshan, this translation is commonly referred to as the Sheshan edition.<sup>36</sup>
- **Union Version** (*Heheben* 和合本): The Union Version is the most widely used Protestant translation of the Bible in modern Chinese. It has always been considered – as Romano puts it – “the Chinese Bible par excellence.” It was produced by an inter-denominational translation team and first appeared in 1919.<sup>37</sup>
- **Today’s Chinese Version**: This Protestant Bible edition was translated from the *Today’s English Version* in the 1980’s by the United Bible Societies. A Catholic version of the NT was also published in which only the Chinese terms for “God” and “Holy Spirit” were exchanged according to Catholic usage. Translation was made according

33 Romano 2022, pp. 53-56.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 57. – On the Studium Biblicum Version, the Pastoral Bible and the Sheshan NT see also John Baptist Zhang Shijiang, “Die Förderung der Bibel im gegenwärtigen China und die Evangelisierung,” in: *China heute* 2007, No. 6, pp. 230-236. For a comparison of the Studium Biblicum Version with the Pastoral Bible see Raissa De Gruttola, “Reading and Praying with the Studium Biblicum Version (*Sigao Shengjing*),” in: Cindy Yik-yi Chu (ed.), *The Catholic Church, The Bible, and Evangelization in China*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan (Christianity in Modern China) 2022, pp. 33-49.

35 Romano 2022, p. 52 and pp. 80-81, note 4.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 52 and pp. 79-80, note 3. – In the imprint of the 1994 edition, the Sheshan Seminary appears as the translator.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84, note 32. – On the Union Version cf. also Shen Xuebin, “Die ‘Union Version’ der Bibel und die Sinisierung des Christentums,” in: *China heute* 2021, No. 2, pp. 106-110.

to the principle of “functional equivalence” and not according to the greatest possible formal correspondence with the original text.<sup>38</sup>

## Survey Results

### ***“Every week how often do you read the Bible?”***

More than 43% of respondents stated that they read the Bible every day, 21% two or three times a week, 7% only on Sundays. 21.5% stated that they did not read the Bible every week. Of the priests, seminarians and sisters questioned, 81% read the Bible daily. Younger ones read the Bible less frequently than older respondents: only 14% of the 18–24 year olds, but 60% of the 31–50 year olds read it daily.<sup>39</sup>

### ***How many Bible editions do you have?***

99% of the Catholic respondents had a Bible at home. 24% had only one Bible edition, 33.5% had two, 19% three, 10.5% four, 3% five and 10% more than five Bible editions. The proportion of those who only had one Bible edition was higher in the younger age groups. The priests, seminarians and sisters among the respondents tended to have more Bible editions: 17% of them had four and 12% five or more editions, whereas in the group of lay persons 7% had four and as many as 9% had five or more editions.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Which Bible translations do you have?***

88% of the Catholic respondents had the Studium Biblicum Version, 40% the Pastoral Bible. In third place was the Protestant Union Version with 21%. 18% had the Sheshan NT. Only 7% had the Today’s Chinese Version. (See Chart 1 on the following page).

The data confirm that the Studium Biblicum Version remains the most widespread Catholic Bible translation. However, the proportion of respondents who had this edition increased with age, it was lowest among the 18–24 year olds with 81% and highest among the 41–50 year olds with 96%. A similar tendency appeared with the Pastoral Bible. The proportion of those who had the Union Version was highest in the age group of the 31–40 year olds at 28%. 98% in the groups of priests, seminarians and sisters had the Studium Biblicum Version in contrast to 83% in the group of the laity.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Which Bible translations do you generally use?***

Here multiple answers were possible.

The great majority of the respondents, namely 85%, responded that they generally used the Studium Biblicum Version. However, this proportion was somewhat lower than the proportion of those who possessed that edition (88%). 15% of respondents also generally

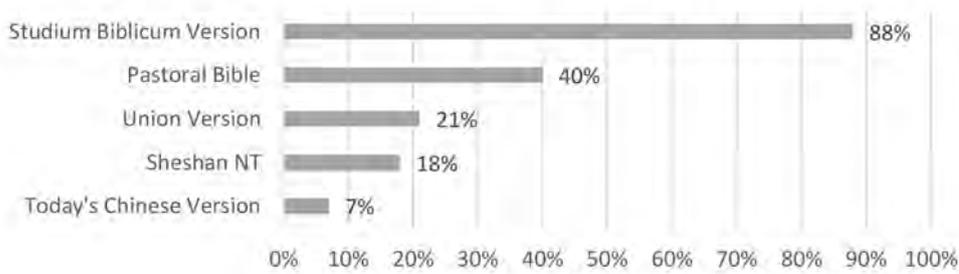
38 Romano 2022, pp. 84-85, note 33.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. – As for the lower reading frequency of 18-24 year olds compared to the older ones, this could also be due to the fact that the group of priests and women religious among the respondents who frequently read the Bible is more likely to belong to the middle age groups. According to Canon Law, the minimum age for ordination to the priesthood is 25. However, Romano does not give any information on how lay people on the one hand and priests, sisters and seminarians on the other hand are distributed among the age groups.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63.

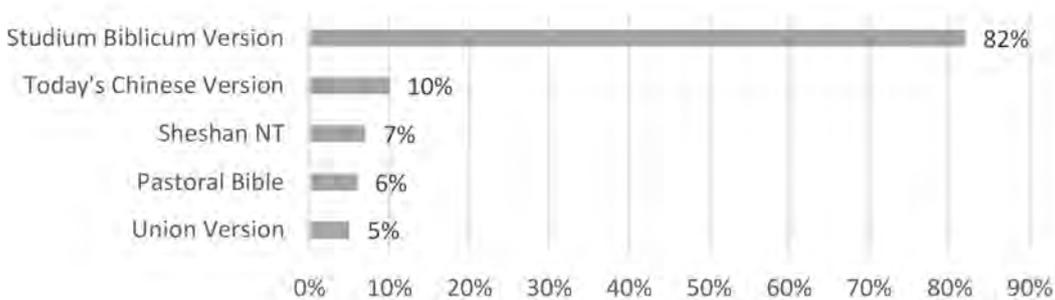
41 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

Chart 1: Which Bible translations do you have?



Source: Romano 2022, p. 65, Fig. 4.8.

Chart 2: Which are your preferred Bible translations?



Source: Romano 2022, p. 71, Fig. 4.17.

used the Pastoral Bible. The Sheshan NT, the Union version and Today's Chinese Version were each used by 6%.

In terms of general Bible use, there was also a tendency for the Studium Biblicum edition to be used more in the older age groups than by the younger ones. 95% of priests, seminarians and sisters generally used this version, compared to 79% of the laity.<sup>42</sup>

***Which Bible translation do you use most?***

Only one answer was possible here. 83% of respondents named the Studium Biblicum Version.<sup>43</sup>

***Which Bible translations are mostly used for Mass and Church/group activities?***

Here again the Studium Biblicum Version came in first place by far. In group activities (such as training courses, retreats or Bible classes) the Pastoral Bible had 15%. The Protestant Union Version was used neither for the Mass nor for Church group activities.<sup>44</sup>

***What is the best Bible translation from the pastoral point of view?***

77% named here the Studium Biblicum Version, 8.5% the Pastoral Bible, another 3.5% the Union Version and also 3.5% the Sheshan NT. A further 3.5% were apparently of the

42 Romano 2022, pp. 67-69, esp. p. 67, Fig. 4.11, and p. 68, Fig. 4.13.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

opinion that from a pastoral point of view none of the existing Bible translations deserved to be rated “the best.”<sup>45</sup>

### ***Which are your preferred Bible translations?***

Up to three names were permitted. The distribution of the responses is found in Chart 2.

Here again the Studium Biblicum edition came out top with 82%, far above the other editions. [An astonishing second place with 10% goes to Today’s Chinese Version – which only 7% of the survey participants own. The Pastoral Bible, at 6%, ranks even behind the Sheshan NT at 7%].

The difference in preference among priests, seminarians and sisters compared to the laity was relatively large: whereas 95% of the first-mentioned preferred the Studium Biblicum Version, it was preferred by only 75% of the lay persons. On the other hand, the preference for the Pastoral Bible was slightly higher among the laity and significantly higher for the Today’s Chinese version than among the priests, seminarians and sisters.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the survey participants gave reasons for preferring the Studium Biblicum Version. The majority considered this translation to be more authoritative, more accurate and reliable, because it is based on the original texts. Other persons stated that they were more familiar with this version because it is commonly used in their Church community and contains the proper names of persons and places that are customary there. Some value the detailed commentary or the style of the language.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Is the Bible difficult to understand?***

10% of respondents find the Bible difficult to understand, for 3% it is very difficult and for 48% somewhat difficult.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Preferred translations of Jn 1:14 and Lk 4:18***

Monica Romano also presented the survey participants with different translations of individual Bible passages and asked for their preferences. This part of her study is particularly engaging because it illustrates problems and fundamental choices in translating the Bible into Chinese.

#### ***“And the Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14)***

Here 71% of the respondents preferred the translation of the Studium Biblicum Version, “shengyan chengle xuerou” 圣言成了血肉. Here especially the translation of *logos* (word) is debatable, which in the Catholic context is usually translated with *shengyan* (“holy word”), but in Protestant Bible translations is consistently translated with the term *dao* 道 – a central concept of Chinese philosophy and culture like *logos* in the Greek context. Some of the respondents stated that *shengyan* is the better translation, because *dao* is ambiguous and could be associated with Daoism. There were, however, participants in the

45 Romano 2022, p. 78, Fig. 4.25.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 72, Fig. 4.19.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 74, Fig. 4.22.

survey who advocated *dao*, because that term connected the translation more closely to the Chinese cultural tradition.

Another difficulty is the translation of the term “flesh.” The Studium Biblicum Version translates *xuerou* (literally “blood and flesh”). Other Bible translations, such as the Pastoral Bible and Today’s Chinese Version, avoid the literal translation and instead use *ren* 人 (human being), thus more freely translating “And the Word became a human being.” 77.5% of the priests, seminarians and sisters asked and 67% of the lay persons stated that they preferred the *xuerou* translation.<sup>49</sup>

### **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me” (Lk 4:18)**

In this passage the difficulty in translating – as Romano explains – lies in the term “anointed,” which is difficult to understand without some knowledge of the Jewish cultural background. Almost 40% of the respondents expressed a preference for the translation of the Studium Biblicum Version, “yinwei ta gei wo fule you” 因为他给我傅了油, which translates “anoint” literally with “to put on oil” (*fu*<sup>50</sup> *you*). A further 20% of the respondents (25% of the priests, seminarians and sisters, as well as 18% of the laity) opted for the translation of the Sheshan NT: “yinwei ta gei wo fule you” 因为他给我敷了油, that translates “anoint” similarly literally but with a different character (*fu you* 敷油, literally “apply ointment”). Almost one third, however, preferred the more free translation of the Today’s Chinese Version, which translates as “yinwei ta jianxuanle wo” 因为他拣选了我 (literally “because he has chosen me”); in the group of lay persons this preference was at 42% clearly higher than in the group of the priests, sisters and seminarians with 13%.<sup>51</sup>

### ***What should be done [in the future] to provide Chinese Catholics with the best [possible] Bible translation?***

This final question was about expectations for the future of Chinese Bible translation and whether the survey participants thought a new translation of the Bible was necessary.

#### **Responses of the Laity**

42% of the lay persons asked were in favour of continuing to use the same translation. 37.5% were in favour of making a new translation and 7% were in favour of changing the translation being used. 10% replied with “Don’t know,” 3.5% “Other.” More women (41.5%) than men (34%) were in favour of a new translation. Differentiated by age groups, the wish for a new translation was surprisingly highest in the group of 41–50 year olds.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Responses of the Priests, Seminarians and Sisters**

This group was given an additional response option to choose from, namely to “revise an existing Bible translation.” 37% of this group chose the option to revise an existing translation, 34% were for continuing to use the same translation and 16.5% were for making a new translation. 11% replied with “Don’t know,” and only 1% voted for changing the

49 Romano 2022, pp. 74-75.

50 Romano reads the character *fu* 傅 erroneously as *chuan* 傳 and so arrives at the translation “to spread oil.”

51 Romano 2022, pp. 75-76.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

translation being used. Among the religious women the number of those who voted for a new translation (35%) was clearly higher than among the priests and seminarians (7.5%). Almost all – namely 97% – of those who were in favour of a Bible revision indicated that the Studium Biblicum Version should be taken as the basis.<sup>53</sup>

Monica Romano comes to the conclusion that the Studium Biblicum Version, even 50 years after its publication and 30 years since its introduction in Mainland China, continues to be the most widespread and most commonly used Bible translation among Chinese Catholics on the Mainland. It is considered authoritative, reliable and elegant. Nevertheless, according to Romano, more than one-third of the Catholic respondents expressed the wish for a new Bible translation or a revision based on the Studium Biblicum Version.<sup>54</sup>

## 5. Religions in Singapore: Results of the 2020 Census

Every ten years a census is taken in Singapore. In June 2021 the Singapore Department of Statistics published a brochure with the results of the 2020 census regarding demographic characteristics, education, language and religion (Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a). Since in 2020, according to the census, 74.3% of the 4,0442 million Singaporeans – that is, over 3 million persons – were ethnic Chinese, the data is of interest for our statistical update on Chinese religiosity. For the census, the basic population count and characteristics were compiled from administrative records. Further, more detailed information – including on religion – was obtained from the survey of a sample of 150,000 households.<sup>55</sup>

As shown in Table 5, Buddhists form the largest religious group, followed by those with no religion, Christians of all confessions and Muslims. The fifth largest group are the Daoists / adherents of Chinese folk religious traditions. Hindus and Sikhs play a smaller role.

Table 5: Singapore’s Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion

Religion	Number of Persons	
No Religion	692,528	
Buddhism	1,074,159	
Daoism*	303,960	
Islam	539,251	
Hinduism	172,963	
Sikhism	12,051	
Christianity	Catholics	242,681
	Other Christians	411,674
Other Religions	9,827	
Total	3,459,093	

\*“Daoism” includes Chinese traditional beliefs.

Table compiled from data in Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a, p. 198, Table 51.

53 Romano 2022, pp. 77-78.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

55 Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a, p. i. A note in the publication states that figures in the statistical tables may not add up to the totals due to rounding; *ibid.*, p. vi.

The breakdown of religious affiliation by ethnic group is interesting – see Table 6. It shows that Buddhists and Daoists are almost exclusively found among the ethnic Chinese and that also a large majority of the Christians belong to this ethnic group.

Table 6: Singapore’s Resident Population aged 15 Years and Over by Religion and Ethnic Group

Religion	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians	Others
Total	3,459,093	2,606,881	447,747	299,056	105,410
No Religion	692,528	669,097	1,640	6,443	15,347
Buddhism	1,074,159	1,052,114	447	2,031	19,566
Daoism*	303,960	303,095	133	63	669
Islam	539,251	11,953	442,368	69,964	14,966
Hinduism	172,963	458	223	171,326	956
Sikhism	12,051	11	80	10,265	1,695
Christianity	654,355	562,861	2,743	37,605	51,146
– Catholics	242,681	184,158	1,097	21,853	35,573
– Other Christians	411,674	378,703	1,646	15,752	15,573
Other Religions	9,827	7,292	113	1,357	1,065

\*“Daoism” includes Chinese traditional beliefs.

Table compiled from data in Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a, p. 200, Table 52.

In its evaluation, the Singapore Department of Statistics also shows developments in the religiosity of the Singaporean population since the last census in 2010. It indicates that between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of those who reported no religious affiliation increased.<sup>56</sup> A look at Table 7 shows, however, that the increase of those with no religion occurred mainly at the expense of Buddhists and Daoists / Chinese folk religious traditions, whereas the proportion of Christians and Muslims actually increased a little.

Table 7: Singapore’s Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion in 2010 and 2020 (%)

	2010	2020
Population aged 15 years and over	100	100
Buddhism	33.3	33.1
Daoism*	10.9	8.8
Christianity	18.3	18.9
Islam	14.7	15.6
Hinduism	5.1	5.0
Other Religions	0.7	0.6
No Religion	17.0	20.0

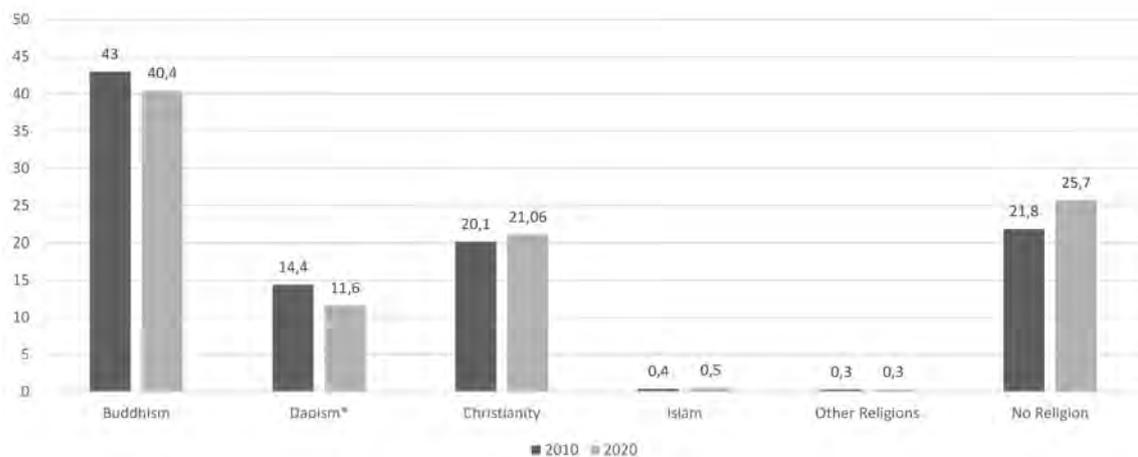
\*“Daoism” includes Chinese traditional beliefs.

Table compiled from data in Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a., p. x.

This development becomes even clearer if we only look at the ethnic Chinese Singaporeans (Chart 3):

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Department of Statistics Singapore 2021b.

Chart 3: Singapore's Ethnic Chinese Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion in 2010 and 2020 (%)



\*“Daoism” includes Chinese traditional beliefs.

Chart compiled from data in Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a, p. x.

Chart 3 shows that among Singapore’s ethnic Chinese population, the proportion of adherents to Buddhism and Daoism / Chinese folk religious traditions – traditionally the most widespread religious faiths in China – has decreased by even more percentage points over the past ten years than in the population as a whole. In contrast, the proportion of Christians and Muslims increased slightly. It is perhaps interesting to note in this context that during the same period, the use of the Chinese language among Singaporeans also declined: According to data from the Department of Statistics, among ethnic Chinese Singaporeans, the proportion speaking Mandarin Chinese at home fell from 47.7% (2010) to 40.2% (2020), and those speaking a Chinese dialect at home fell from 19.2% (2010) to 11.8% (2020), while at the same time the proportion speaking English at home rose from 32.6% (2010) to 47.6% (2020).<sup>57</sup>

If one compares the results on the religious affiliation of ethnic Chinese according to the Singapore census with estimates on the religious affiliation of the population in Mainland China, it is striking that the proportion of those who profess a religion is disproportionately higher in Singapore than in Mainland China: While around three quarters of all ethnic Chinese Singaporeans indicated a religious affiliation, there are, according to official government figures (State Council 2018), only “nearly 200 million” religious adherents in Mainland China out of a total population of 1.4 billion. The proportion of Buddhists, Daoists and Christians in the ethnic Chinese population of Singapore is significantly higher than, according to available estimates, in the population of Mainland China. For instance, the CSLS cited above arrives at 18% Buddhists in the Mainland Chinese population over 16 years of age – compared to 40.4% in Singapore’s Chinese ethnic population according to the 2020 census. 21.6% Christians in Singapore’s population of Chinese descent far exceeds even the most optimistic estimates for the number of Christians in Mainland

57 Cf. Department of Statistics Singapore 2021a, p. x.

China.<sup>58</sup> Even though the data come from very different sources and are only comparable to a limited extent, a much stronger role of religion in the social life of Singapore's ethnic Chinese can clearly be seen in comparison to Mainland China.

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58 Even Yang Fenggang's extremely optimistic estimate mentioned above “only” arrives at 116 million Protestant Christians in Mainland China – which is well below 10% of the population.

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## “A City Set on a Hill”: A Priest and His Church Whose Design Had Been Revised Seven Times

Song Mingyan  
Translated by Eveline Warode

“It feels like God lives in it!” Netizen Albion may or may not have faith, but these seven simple words are undoubtedly an extremely high valuation for a church.



The Liulin Catholic Church of Liulin Town, Liulin County, Lüliang City, built on the highest point of the town.  
Photo: *Xinde*.

The Liulin Catholic Church is located in Liulin Town, Liulin County, Lüliang City, Shanxi Province. The consecration ceremony of the Liulin Catholic Church was held on October 20, 2021. More than 1,000 priests and parishioners attended the solemn High Mass.

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Song Mingyan is editorial journalist of *Xinde*. This article was first published in Chinese on the website of *Xinde* ([www.xinde.org/show/51813](http://www.xinde.org/show/51813)) on November 9, 2021. A German translation by Eveline Warode was published under the title “Eine Stadt, die auf einem Berg liegt’: ein Priester und seine siebenmal im Entwurf geänderte Kirche” in *China heute* 2021, No. 4, pp. 242-247. The translations are done with kind permission of *Xinde* and the author.



On October 20, 2021 the solemn High Mass for the consecration of the Liulin Catholic Church was celebrated. Photos: *Xinde*.

Everyone marvelled at the ingenuity and beauty of the church design. But who would have thought that the design drawings of the Liulin Church had to go through seven drafts because the parishioners found that they “did not resemble a church enough.” In this process of changing the design seven times until settling on one design, priest Ren Min 任敏, the priest of this church, proved his “tenacity” and “comprehension.”

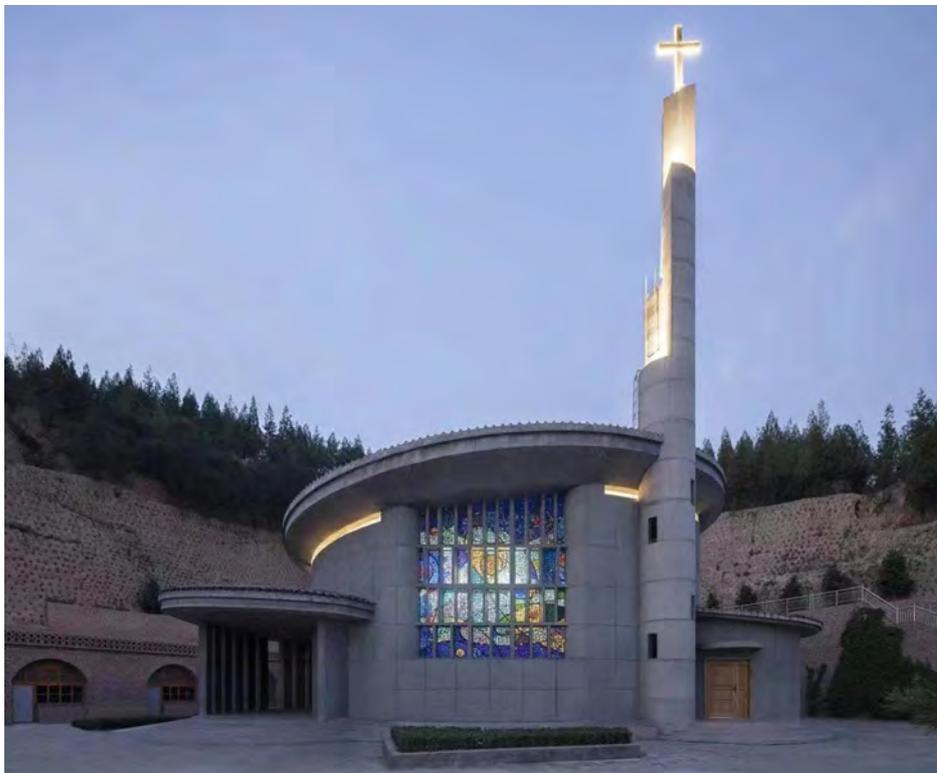
Liulin Town is located on a high loess slope, which is criss-crossed by gullies. Looking down, the town’s landscape of jumbled, brightly coloured steel panels and grey concrete roofs of varying heights stretches out. On road embankments and in courtyards there are

some trees with mostly gnarled branches. And the priest Ren Min built the church in such a high place in the town that he speaks of it as a “city set on a hill.”<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who has seen the Liulin Catholic Church will definitely have the Japanese master architect Andō Tadao 安藤忠雄 in mind. The name of Andō Tadao may be unfamiliar to those outside the circle of architectural designers, but if one were to bring out pictures of his best-known trilogy of church designs – the church on the water, the church of the wind and the church of light, it would surely suddenly dawn on people, “originally it was him.”

The Liulin Catholic Church is obviously not a magnificent, large-scale church in the traditional sense, towering high through the clouds into the sky. It is made up all around of solid, hard, exposed concrete and forms a strong contrast to the loess and the cave dwellings in the background. The exterior of the church does not have much colour, apart from a group of stained glass windows. The visual effect of the cement grey of the building conveys an introspective and calm atmosphere. Stepping into it, instantly feels like entering a different world. Sunlight enters through several stained glass windows set into the wall and causes a feeling of sacredness and awe to involuntarily flow through the hearts of the people.

In terms of space, the Liulin Catholic Church is not complicated. Around the circular main hall, a series of round structures form functional spaces such as the chapel, the sacristy, the small reception room and the office. The soaring bell tower is also circular and it has become a landmark clearly visible from the bottom of the hill.



The Liulin Catholic Church with bell tower as a landmark. Photo: *Xinde*.

1 This quote is taken from the Gospel of Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Translator’s note.



The round structures of Liulin Catholic Church seen from a different angle. Photo: *Xinde*.

Talking about his church of light, Andō Tadao once said that he did not need pictures on his walls because the sun, this painter, would paint for him. And the simplicity, plainness and restraint of the Liulin Church also means that it does not need more decoration and interpretation; it has its own recluse character.

When the lights go on, the elevated railway line that runs through the town forms a band of lights; like a silk fabric winding its way between the mountains and dancing elegantly through the night. On one side there is the church that reflects it. The church is wrapped in a halo of light like a pearl in the night sky, inlaid into the silk fabric. And every



The Liulin Catholic Church offers a different visual impression at night and during the day (see next page). Photos: *Xinde*.



morning when the mist rises over the mountains Liulin Church is very “friendly” again. In the rays of sunlight, it shows a touch of golden colour. From time to time roosters crow and dogs bark from near and far. Obviously, it is a dwelling located in the countryside, full of the smell of smoke and fire from the neighbourhood.

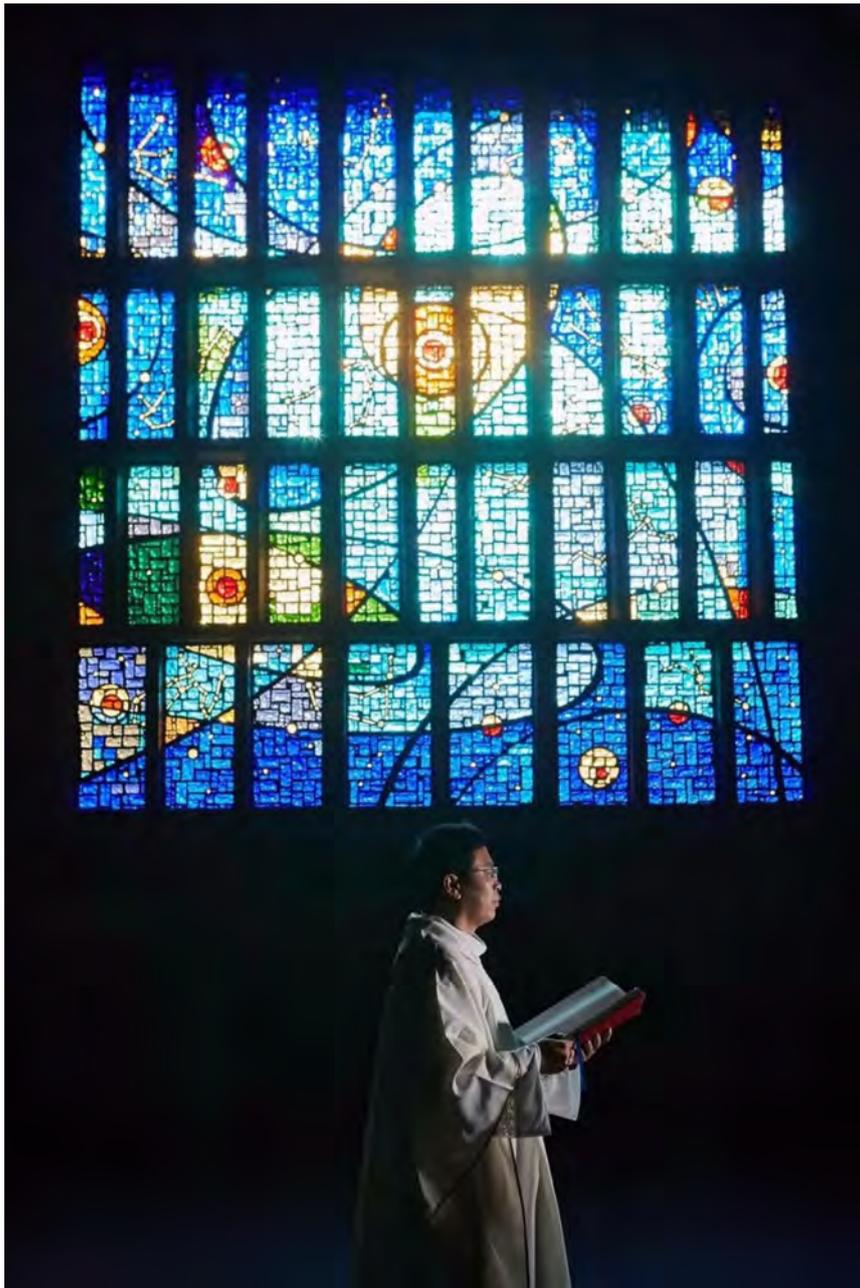
“Actually, I’m not just building a church for people of faith.” Priest Ren Min has more far-reaching considerations. He is full of enthusiasm for dialogue and integration of church and nature. He wants to create a world where people are equal and get along well with each other and walk around freely in nature. And he wants to let all the people who come to visit the church find peace and tranquillity, just as the netizen said: “It feels like God lives in it!”

## Questions and Answers

(Questions: *Xinde*; Answers: priest Ren Min)

*Question: What was the reaction to the construction of a modernist church in a town with such traditional and conservative ways of thinking and not much economic wealth?*

*Answer:* There were basically few parishioners who did not object. The architect of the church worked out a total of seven drafts until the church was finally built. There are still many parishioners who think: “Does that look like a church at all?” A church in their mind’s eye should be a traditional Gothic or Romanesque church with a large cross in the most prominent place in the centre. That’s what a church is like. Some parishioners even felt that the use of stained glass windows inside the church led to dim lighting; but they are rather used to bright, clear windows, wide windows for large buildings.



Priest Ren in front of the stained glass windows. Photo: Xinde.

In fact, I think that it is precisely the ray of light in the darkness that gives people a feeling that is different from that in other buildings; become inwardly quiet, rejoice in God. And when I showed the first draft of the design to the parishioners, their first reaction was: “This doesn’t look like a church at all!” After that, the architect revised it, one draft after the other, each time trying harder to modify the original and bring it closer to the shape the parishioners had in mind for the church. And in the end, by the time of the seventh draft of the design, everyone still thought that it was difficult to see the shape of a church.

You see, this is a little insight into the whole process of building a church, and it can quite well represent the contradictions in the entire architectural design process.

*Question: Why did you want to build such a modernist church? How did you eventually convince everyone to accept your design concept?*

Answer: Personally, I like modernist churches very much, and modernist churches are not only clearly distinct from ordinary buildings, they make people calm down and reflect on nature and life, and they can leave future generations with an impression of the life and aesthetics of people today. So when I first decided to build a church, I went around collecting these types of churches everywhere and during this process I got to know the architect of our Liulin Church, the Catholic Li Yikao 李以靠, through a picture of a completed modernist church – the Qichun Catholic Church in Hubei.

When I approached Li Yikao to ask him to design the Liulin Catholic Church, he told me that he would only design churches in the modernist style, otherwise he would not accept the assignment. Secretly, I was a little glad that he was so much in line with my ideas. And on this basis it was finalized.

But like you said, the churchwarden and the parishioners grew up in this local environment with very traditional thinking and ideas, and in my opinion, just talking would not have had any effect. So I took them around to visit different places to see and hear what the people there share. Finally, they still only reluctantly accepted my idea. Nevertheless their thought was: “Even though I don’t accept it, what the priest is doing has never been wrong.”

*Question: Changing the design several times and starting anew was really no small challenge for the architect.*

Answer: Yes, that’s right. The architect, Li Yikao, is a very devout Catholic parishioner. He helped design Liulin Catholic Church without taking any remuneration. When the draft was rejected several times, I said, let me at least give you some money for your travel expenses, but he refused. I think it was in keeping with his design level and reputation. If the cost of his design had to be paid according to the market price, I would hardly have been able to pay it. His commitment is enormous and I am very moved. Those who know that he serves the Church gratuitously are also most touched by his magnanimity.

I once saw an interview with him in the media in which he related the following story:

He said, in the past he used to think that designing churches would make one famous. At that time, he was designing a garden for a priest in his hometown. The priest liked his design very much but there were many people who rejected it. The priest asked for his opinion. But he insisted on creating the garden. Later, the priest left that place for various reasons. This incident was something that since then always gave him a feeling of shame and remorse.

This time he designed our Liulin Church and he himself thought the first draft was particularly good but the parishioners were very much against it. The parishioners wished the church to appear in some traditional, concrete form and that could not be something that does not look like a church. In fact, these claims of everyone were also justified. After he had spoken about his design twice, he again met with the parishioners for face-to-face communication on site. After one round of adjustments he reported once again. This time no one expressed any objections and he thought that the deal was now closed.

Not much later, Li Yikao received another phone call from me. When he heard that the parishioners still did not agree, it was actually he who insisted that I continue to push



The architect Li Yikao during a site survey. Photo: Xinde.

the design further. One day, however, when he sat down and read the Bible, he thought of the priest in his hometown whom he had encouraged and with whom he had insisted on creating the garden. So, he decided to offer a few more drafts for everyone to choose from.

Later, the construction drawings which had emerged from two drafts were rejected again, and in the end a design came out with which everyone was relatively satisfied, but

which he personally did not like so much. Finally, the church was built. He said: “This case really taught me to make concessions and compromises in the design and to look at problems from the user’s point of view. When I make a draft now, I put myself in the position of the client and calculate the investment costs. Furthermore, I develop the design strictly according to the budget and I do not use the resources of other people to satisfy my own design aspirations.”

Li Yikao said that his conceptions of architectural design had now changed compared to the past. To be an architect is a profession with a sense of mission. “God let me become an architect out of His amazing grace. Designing a church is, so to speak, God’s training for me, so that I do not become impatient and careless, and gradually come into contact with and reflect on the most essential matters of architecture. When you design for a priest, the budget is always tight. You can only plan for very low-cost materials and should control the budget strictly. You cannot allow the church not to be built because you want to express something about yourself.”

*Question: Why did you stand by your ideas despite so many people opposing them?*

Answer: Bishop Meng Ningyou of Taiyuan Diocese once uttered a sentence that made a deep impression on me and that I have always kept in my heart. He said, no matter whether a church is big or small, whether its decoration is opulent and magnificent or not, the church has to be a place that has its own uniqueness and shines before people’s eyes. Building such a church also means leaving a “photo” to the future: Look, this is the architecture of our time!

To be more precise, I am not only building a place for parishioners to participate in Mass and Church activities. Rather, I want to integrate the church set on a hill with the environment and the lives of all the people living in the small town down the hill. When they experience inner unrest, when they want to look for a quiet place, when they as family want to enjoy recreational and leisure activities, in all these cases, they can always come to church to escape the annoyances of the secular world. From above, they can even look down on the small town where they themselves live year in, year out. They can also sit on benches in front of the church watching the children running around in the great outdoors.

*Question: This church cost a total of more than 3.15 million RMB, not including volunteers and materials that were donated. Surely that wasn’t so easy for you and the local Church. Could you please tell us something about your experience of the construction phase of the church?*

Answer: In 2016, the construction of the church began with the laying of the cornerstone, and it was fully completed only in May of this year (2021). Over this period of about five years, construction was carried out and stopped many times. I would like to thank the parishioners for their donations and their support. Also, I wish to thank the architect Li Yikao for his strong support. Not to mention the dedication of the parishioners; not only did Li Yikao not take any payment for his design, but he also continually brought in a great many experts helping for example with sound planning, lighting, etc. And when

these people saw that the design was for a church, they all helped out free of charge. For example, the rose window, valued at over 200,000 RMB, was also donated by a friend of Li Yikao.

Every time after a break in the construction, before the construction work resumed again, I was worried that the funds for the construction of the church would not be sufficient and there would be no materials available. But just before work resumed, miraculously, someone would come along and ask: “Father, is there any money left? If there is nothing left, I can donate something.” “Father, do you need anyone else? If there is no one else, I can take it over.” After the church was erected, my greatest feeling was: “Although we are not rich, we have never lacked anything.” It is all the Lord’s grace. This coincides with the thematic design of “five loaves and two fish” in the interior of the church. Everything is so perfect. The construction of this church has been done with the enormous efforts and the sweat of very many people! Thanks be to God! Many thanks to all the people who worked so hard!

*Question: Today everyone talks about Sinicization. But you did not choose to construct the church in the style of a traditional Chinese temple hall. Does this contradict the Sinicization we advocate?*

*Answer: The definition of modernism in the internet is: From the words and actual works of Walter Adolf Georg Gropius (1883–1969), Le Corbusier (1887–1965), and other architects it can be seen that the “modernist architecture” they promote is emphasizing the need that the architecture keep up with the times, and that modern architecture should adapt to the industrial society; “modernist architecture” stresses the need that the archi-*



The interior of the church. Photo: Xinde.

itects investigate and solve practical functions and economical questions regarding the buildings; it advocates the active use of new materials and new structures, and applies the specifics of new materials and new structures to the architectural design; it favours a resolute shifting away from restrictions of outdated architectural styles and gives free rein to create new architectural ways of expression; it advocates the development of new architectural aesthetics and the creation of a new architectural style.

As far as our church is concerned, since the Second Vatican Council “inculturation” is favoured. But what does inculturation mean? Does that mean the outer appearance is designed like the Imperial Palace or the Temple of Heaven and in the inside, icons of traditional Chinese painting are hanging? I do not think so. Sinicization or inculturation should be internalized, should take root in the hearts of the Chinese and should influence



A painter at work on the fresco of the church. Photo: *Xinde*.

the mode of their thought and behaviour subtly. If you look closely, you can see the roof tiles of the church. Is that not an “Easter egg”?

In the case of the church I built, an impression is given of the local people and the local life in the area, as well as of today’s religious life and of the aesthetic habits and, furthermore, this is all naturally integrated into one unity. Surely that is a different kind of Sini-cization.



View of the Liulin Church from above. Photo: *Xinde*.

*Question: We have found that the Liulin Church has now become an internet sensation. Many young people post pictures of the Liulin Church because they like it and want to have been there themselves. Can you tell us something about your plans for the future of the church?*

Answer: Thank you all very much for the “likes.” Indeed, there are a lot of young people from very different places who come to the church in person. Moreover, you have not yet addressed the fact that a lot of priests also come to visit with their parishioners. One priest said: “Father, if only you had built this church a little earlier, then I could have built a church following your example.” This is a great encouragement for me and for anyone who has worked hard for the church.

Actually, there are a lot of young people who are attracted to come here now. Young people are a symbol for vitality, development and future. Good things are naturally attractive in themselves. For the future I can only say: keep your eyes open and wait.

## Book Review of:

**Bibiana Yee-ying Wong, *The Short-lived Catholic Central Bureau: National Catalyst for Cultural Apostolate in China (1947–1951)*, Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute 2021. xxxii, 303 pp., Prefaces, Introduction, Map, Tables, Photographs, Bibliography, Index. ISBN 978-957-29848-7-1 (HB)**

*Elisa Giunipero*

In December 1947, Mgr. Antonio Riberi, Apostolic Internuncio to China, inaugurated and took over the direction of the Catholic Central Bureau (CCB), based in Shanghai. This was the birth of a new national body which, according to the intentions of its founders, was mostly aimed at a cultural function which was undoubtedly ambitious and strategic: to spread knowledge and sympathy for Catholicism among the educated and wealthy social classes of Chinese cities. A more active and deeper involvement of the Catholic Church in the social context of the country was in fact perceived as an urgent and necessary task, first of all by strengthening the role of the local clergy and laity with an adequate training, as the Holy See had long recommended. It was therefore necessary to finally remove the infamous label of “foreign religion” from Catholicism and try to attract, dialogue with and eventually influence Chinese intellectuals in their troubled search for a new and modern identity. The widespread perception the Chinese people had of the Catholic Church in the 1940s was generally negative due to the well-known consequences of the French protectorate on the missions and to the identification of Christian missionaries with European and American imperialism, but at the same time Western cultural models were as important in China’s transformation as ever before. It was thus an epochal challenge before which the Catholic Church resorted to the idea – definitely not new – of a “cultural apostolate.” The CCB aimed to evangelize the educated classes through partly new missionary methods that made extensive use of publications, news service, newspapers and magazines, cinema, theatre, radio and all kinds of modern media. It was not by chance that the headquarters were located in Shanghai, a cosmopolitan and economically developed city, with the presence of wealthy Catholic families but also a diocese where the Catholic laity was active and where the Jesuits in Zikawei had the previous experience of animating an extremely lively Catholic centre of cultural and editorial development in the early decades of the 20th century.

The history, the functioning, the purposes of the CCB and the articulation of its structure are reconstructed and described in detail in the book by Bibiana Wong. Incidentally,

it should be noted that the Chinese name Tianzhujiao jiaowu xiejin weiyuanhui 天主教教務協進委員會 chosen for the Catholic Central Bureau differs from the English name and suggests the idea of a body to coordinate the educational activities of the Catholic Church. The book has without doubt the merit of shedding light on a significant but hitherto little studied experience, drawing extensively on sources from various missionary archives, among which the Maryknoll Mission Archives (USA) and the Columban Fathers Central Archive (Ireland) stand out for the interest and originality of the documents cited. As the author herself acknowledges, the missing piece is the documentation on the pontificate of Pius XII, kept in the Vatican Archives and now available for consultation, which would contribute to complete the examination of the sources on the CCB's history.

The volume *The Short-lived Catholic Central Bureau* also makes extensive and interesting use of Chinese-language sources which, in addition to the official press and the collection of the CCB's numerous publications, systematically include the CCP Central Committee's directives on religious policy in the early years of the People's Republic of China, collected in *Jian guo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* 建國以來重要文獻選編 (Selected Important Historical Documents since the Founding of the PRC) and in *Tongzhan zhengce wenjian huibian* 統戰政策文件彙編 (A Collection of United Front Policy Documents).

As the author points out, the CCB was entirely financed by Propaganda Fide and divided into departments and sections in which missionaries of different nationalities, belonging to different congregations and religious orders, as well as Chinese priests who had studied abroad and were particularly qualified, were called to work. The different origin of foreign missionaries prevented the CCB from being identified with the country they came from. Despite the fact that only men and no women worked there, it was an entity where a plural environment was established, with different sensitivities and a good presence of Chinese priests. It was also a transversal environment with respect to the different missionary orders – a fact that is not secondary given the strongly negative impact of the so-called “congregationalism” in the history of missions in China.

The almost four years of activity of the CCB (December 1947 – September 1951) coincided to a large extent with the terrible civil war between Nationalists and Communists that followed the dramatic years of another war, what in China is called the War of Resistance against Japan, and then with the birth of the People's Republic of China. Beyond the intentions of its founders, who had probably initially imagined developing this project in a China governed by the Guomindang, it was precisely this general historical-political framework, in which the CCB's experience was set, that heavily influenced its subsequent developments, transforming it from an institution for cultural promotion into a centre for the defence of Catholic doctrine against Communism.

The book brings us to consider the complexity of this history, striving to reconstruct in a multifaceted way the non-obvious logics and points of view that oriented the reactions of Catholics to the rise of Communism and, on the other hand, the positions that Chinese Communists developed in those years towards Catholics. At the heart of this study is in fact the description of the activities of the CCB in response to the launching of the Three Self Movement and the experience of the Legion of Mary.

At the end of 1950, when the Three Self Movement was launched through the Guangyuan Manifesto, the CCB published some documents first of all to explain the positions of the Church on the three proposed autonomies (self-financing, self-government, self-propagation of the faith), to indicate what could be acceptable and, at the same time, to warn Catholics about the risks of the feared creation of a Church independent from Rome. Faced with the confusion that was being generated, the CCB first felt the need to clarify and, based on the decree of the Holy Office of 1949, condemn any form of collaboration of Catholics with Communists. The anti-Communism expressed in the documents signed in the same months by Mgr. Riberi and the identification of the CCB with the Internuncio quickly shifted the confrontation from a cultural to a political-diplomatic level; and this brought about the end of the CCB which was closed and whose staff was arrested, in conjunction with the campaign for the expulsion of the Internuncio.

On closer inspection, however, the CCB, from the very beginning and by its very nature, was in competition and conflict with the Chinese Communist Party because the field within which it moved belonged to moral values, culture, education and conscience of the population, a field on which the Party was determined to have a monopoly in order to guide the construction of the new socialist society to which all Chinese citizens were to adhere. Chinese Communists were well aware of the intentions of the CCB and added to this was the climate of confrontation between opposing blocs fed by the Cold War (the Catholic Church was then irremediably identified with the Western side) as well as the closeness of the Catholics and the trust – perhaps excessive, as Bibiana Wong points out – they placed in the Guomindang, a party that was actually corrupt and weak.

The substantial failure of the Three Self Movement, which Catholics did not join, shows that the Chinese clergy and faithful remained united, with very few exceptions. This reaction later forced the party to change strategy and launch another movement, the Anti-imperialist Movement of Love for the Country and for Religion. It was only in the years of the Great Leap Forward that some priests who had previously been arrested and had resisted heavy pressure chose to join the Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics and accept illegitimate episcopal consecrations (despite this, they would later become victims of the Cultural Revolution).

All this confirms that the complicated events of the Catholic Church in Mao's China cannot be understood by simply referring to abstract ideological schemes. Explanations of the incompatibility between Catholic doctrine and the Church's anti-Communism on the one hand and the ideology of militant atheism professed by Chinese Communists on the other are not fully convincing.

In between these two poles, in fact, there are those people who have given voice to the different positions and there is the concrete life of missionaries and Chinese Catholics who have been able to withstand very strong pressures and find unexpected spaces for survival.

The experience of the Legion of Mary, promoted in China, at the explicit request of Mgr. Riberi, by one of the most active priests in the CCB, the Irish Columban missionary Aedean William McGrath, also fits into this framework. The story of this lay organization is partly known and the book presents it as an effective but excessively late attempt to

form a laity that could support the resistance of Catholic communities after the expulsion of foreign missionaries. This experience is to some extent dramatic because – due to the dedication and loyalty of its members – it represents a clear example of how the Catholic Church could compete in the mobilization of consciences that the Party wanted to achieve among the population in those years.

Two texts are worth mentioning for their originality and interest: the unpublished interview with Zhou Enlai by Father Patrick O'Connor, a missionary and journalist who was also active in the CCB, on his concept of freedom of religious belief and the CCP's religious policy, and the speech by Xi Zhongxun (President Xi Jinping's father), then Secretary-General of the State Council, who in May 1955, in his concluding report at the Third National Conference of Religious Work, declared that the Legion of Mary had been completely eradicated.

Much attention is given in the book to the biographies of the clergymen, five foreign missionaries and five Chinese priests, who were called by Mgr. Riberi to animate the activities of the CCB, with different tasks and competences. Especially with regard to the figures of the Chinese priests, this is an appreciable effort as they are very little known, even though they were people who – as in the case of Father Chen Zhemin, secretary of the Internuncio, with two doctoral degrees obtained abroad – were able to make a significant cultural contribution, despite the short time in which they could serve.

Among these protagonists in the work of the CCB, special mention should be made of the personal story of Bishop James E. Walsh, CCB's General Secretary; he came from the United States and was one of the very few missionaries who managed to stay in the People's Republic of China for a long time, avoiding expulsion, probably because of the embarrassment caused by the international resonance of the case of the death of his confrere, Mgr. Ford, and the consequent desire of the Chinese Communists not to create other "martyrs." Arrested in 1958 on charges of being a spy in the service of American imperialism, after long years of detention, Mgr. Walsh was freed in 1970, in the thaw between the PRC and the USA which preceded Nixon's historic visit to Beijing two years later.

The last part of the volume is dedicated to the pursuit of the CCB's activities after the closure imposed by the Chinese government in Shanghai, first in Taipei, where it was reestablished by Mgr. Riberi continuing its activities until 1970, and then in Singapore, where it served especially for the evangelization of the Chinese in diaspora.

Overall, this book, that is the result of extensive research, provides a great deal of information and, although it focuses on an object of study which is limited in time, it is useful for those who wish to understand the history of the Catholic Church in today's China. The roots of a unique, contradictory and painful historical situation the Catholic Church has fallen heir to in the PRC are to be sought precisely in the early 1950s.

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